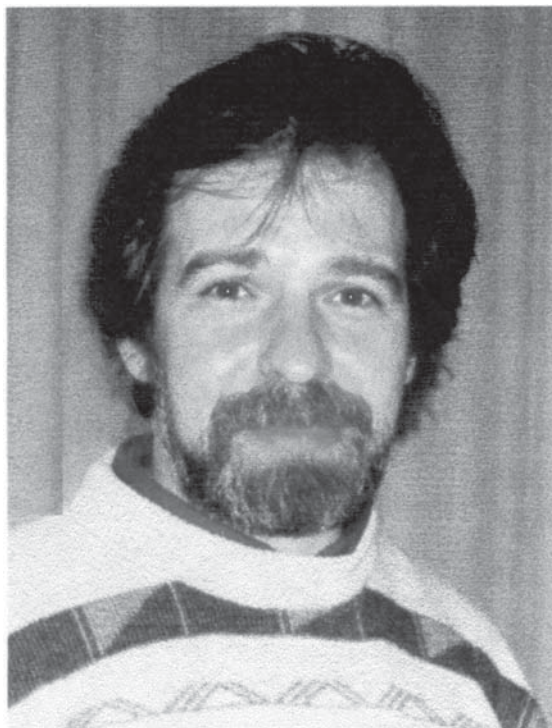


Obituary



Alexei Alexandrovich Aristov (1955–2001)

Alexei Aristov was born on October 16, 1955 in Kamyshin, Volgograd Province. In 1972 he becomes a student of the Biological faculty of the Leningrad University, but was sent down from it in 1974 because he did not want to follow the rules of the military department.

I was his first scientific adviser in the field of mammalian morphology. I first met Alexei in 1976 when he has appeared in the laboratory of mammals in Zoological Institute. I gave to him a fixed rat and my book “The Rat” as I did for all beginners, and suggested to find mistakes in the description of the muscular system. It was a simple principle, if a pupil will be able to find mistakes in the book during the rat preparation, it will be possible to give him the animals from the collection.

Alexei turns to be my first pupil who went future and very soon found mistakes that were unknown even for me. That is why I tried to put maximum efforts to restore Alexei in the University. Professor A. Malchevskii was a head of the Vertebrate zoology department at that time and we went together with him to the Faculty dean. This episode is still in my memory because a vice-dean told me that he did not recommend me to support Aristov. “Later you will regret about this because he is a real anti-Soviet person”, he said. After such a declaration I understood that it is vitally necessary to restore him in the University and it was eventu-

ally done in 1977. From this date he starts to work in our laboratory. He spent there much more time then in the University.

We often stay in laboratory until the deep evening. And always discussions and disputes were on the equal level because Alexei never recognized the authorities. He read and knew a lot and always critically accepts it. That is why it was especially interesting for me to prove my own way to understand of the process of evolutionary researches that was sometimes very hard owing to his obstinacy.

It was always interesting to dispute with him because his arguments were very original. His diploma thesis was devoted to the investigation of the limb muscles in the rodent family Muridae. Unfortunately I did not attend on its defense and he has got a “good” grade because the members of the Scientific committee decided that the pupil can not dispute with his adviser. In the future Aristov defended a Ph.D. thesis on this subject. He made a real revision of the short muscles of the hand and foot and proposed an original concept of their homologization. He studied also the evolutionary transformations of the cheek pouches in rodents, biomechanics of the locomotion of the running rodents during the turning-point, morphology of whales and pinnipeds. In the latter subject he becomes a recognized authority.

After the University when he becomes a postgraduate student another talent of Aristov as an editor was disclosed. He looks on all manuscripts in our department and edited them very well. Especially I am grateful to him for the editing of my monograph "Evolution of the facial musculature of the mammals" which improved the manuscript tremendously.

He was a first who starts to work on the computers when they appeared in our department and soon he can compile the content of future books. The first result in this sphere was an identification book of rodents by I. Gromov and M. Erbaeva. It seems to me that this book was published owing to Aristov who was a very attentive editor of it. He by himself made an original model of this book and actively helped to its publishing.

The quality of this work attracted the public attention and Aristov did many other original models of the books. He was at the same time their editor besides modeling. Here is a list of some books which he edited – "Grey Voles", two volumes on the northern sea-bear, Proceedings of the International Conference on the rare mammal species, Proceedings of the Zoological Institute.

In general owing to his shine mind, broad erudition and deep knowledge of the subject of the researches he fairly honored the reputation of one of the most qualified and educated morphologist of Russia. Without doubts it is possible to say that all theriologists from a technician to an academician valued his opinion. His untimely decease is really an irreplaceable loss for our science.

Petr P. Gambaryan