

Obituary



Nikolay Dmitrievich Ovodov (1939–2017)

On August 14, 2017, Nikolay Dmitrievich Ovodov, one of the oldest Siberian speleologists and paleotheriologists, passed away.

Nikolay Ovodov was an outstanding, enthusiastic, and hardworking naturalist; from his youth, he was wedded to the study of caves and paleofauna remnants. Ovodov considered I.D. Chersky, the famous 19th century researcher of Siberia, as his spiritual father and an example to follow.

Everyone who knew Nikolay Dmitrievich note that he was a legendary person, a man with a huge scientific and practical life equipment, a true erudite in various fields, who remained unselfish and completely devoid of careerism throughout his life, a man of great soul, attentive, responsive, a good friend and an amazing storyteller with an inimitable sense of humor.

Nikolay Dmitrievich was born on November 1, 1939 in Krasnoyarsk. Having left school in 1959, he joined the Faculty of wildlife game management of the Irkutsk Agricultural Institute and graduated from the Institute in 1964.

In his student years, N.D. Ovodov arrived at his main scientific passion: the research and study of caves, the observation of bats.

After he defended his thesis, Nikolay Dmitrievich joined the Mountain Altai Antiplague Department of the Irkutsk State Antiplague Research Institute of Siberia and the Far East as zoologist.

Thanks to the recommendation of his teacher, biologist and hunter Professor V.N. Skalon, Ovodov met with the outstanding Soviet paleontologist N.K. Vereshchagin, who advised him to enter postgraduate school. When the Zoological Institute of USSR Academy of

Sciences knew about the discovery of karst caves with bones of Pleistocene mammals in the Far East, his thesis topic was formulated as “History of Mammalian Fauna in the South of Sikhote-Alin Mountains”.

At the end of the theoretical postgraduate course, after his severance from Prof. N.K. Vereshchagin in December 1968, N.D. Ovodov, at the invitation of academician A.P. Okladnikov, started his work in Museum of the History and Culture of the Peoples of Siberia of Novosibirsk Institute of History, Philology and Philosophy of the Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences in Novosibirsk. This position allowed for Ovodov to fully devote himself to studying the mammalian fauna of Altai caves and Palaeolithic sites of Transbaikalia.

In the 1970s, this intensive field work, consisting in exploratory paleontological and archeological excavations in the caves of Altai and Khakassia, led him to a series of remarkable discoveries: Paleolithic monuments in the caves of Strashnaya, Denisova, Kaminnaya, Proskuryakov’s Grotto, the paleozoological sites in the caves of Fanatikov, Logovo Gieny, Razboynichya, Bolshaya Kyrkylinskaya, and in Tokhzassky Grotto. Extensive collection and study of excavated discoveries were conducted in numerous caves in Khakassia, Mountain Shoria, the Arga and Batenevsky ridges, as well as in the Yenissei Area of the Eastern Sayan near Krasnoyarsk.

In 1979, having summarized the results of studying the enormous block of all personally collected material in the vast territory from Altai to Sikhote-Alin, Nikolay Dmitrievich defended his PhD thesis entitled “Mammals of the Late Anthropogene of Siberia and the Far East”.

Working in the Institute of History, Philology and Philosophy of the Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences in Novosibirsk from 1968 to 1992, Ovodov made a career from a laboratory assistant to a leading researcher. From 1983 to 1989 N.D. Ovodov, headed the Laboratory of paleoecology of the Department of Archeology and Ethnography of the Institute.

Anticipating the high importance of paleofaunal findings for a comprehensive research of caves in Siberia and the Far East, Ovodov made great efforts to create a comparative osteological collection (mainly, mammals and birds), completing an extensive thematic library and the introduction of original methods for studying caves and conducting excavations.

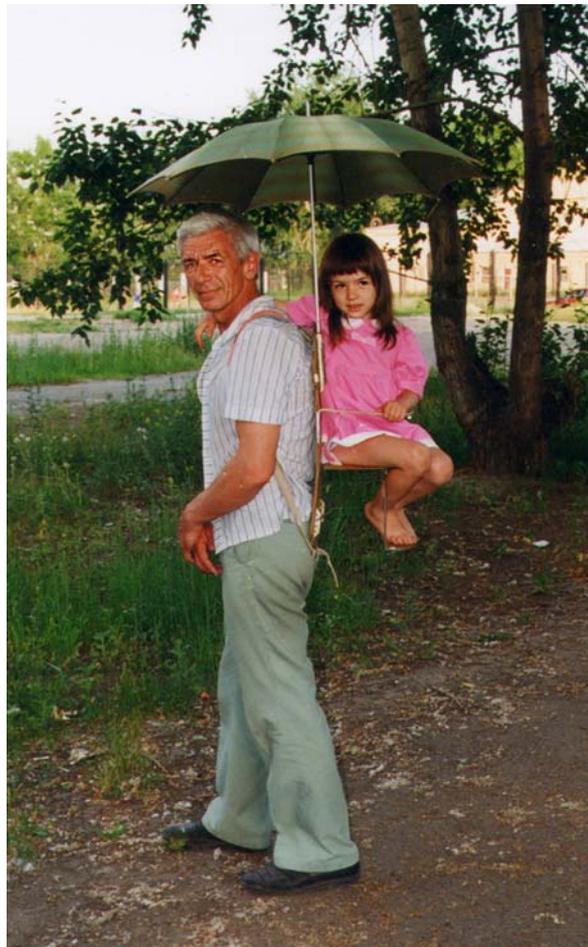
The materials obtained by N.D. Ovodov from Altai caves were so significant in terms of Paleolithic archeology that in 1982 the Institute of History, Philology and Philosophy approved a multi-year complex program on systematic archaeological study of Altai cave sites.

In 1992, N.D. Ovodov got a position in the Krasnoyarsk Laboratory of Archaeology and Paleogeography of Central Siberia of Institute of History, Philology and Philosophy of the Siberian Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences and moved to his native Krasnoyarsk. This event marked a new fruitful stage in Ovodov's life, associated with the study of vertebrate palaeontology in many cave and open-air sites in the Yenisei area of Eastern Sayan, on the Yenisei and in Kuznetsk Alatau. Perhaps the most important and effective was a long-term study of the multilayer archaeological site in Elenaeva cave on the banks of the Yenisei, carried out in close contact with researchers from the Krasnoyarsk Regional Museum.

In this period, N.D. Ovodov also studied the theriofauna from other karstic cavities in Southern Siberia.

In the early 2000s, at the invitation of the famous American anthropologist Christy G. Turner II, Nikolay Dmitrievich was involved in a multi-year research project dedicated to issues of taphonomy, the relationship between man, predatory mammals, and ungulates in the Southern and Central Siberia in the late Pleistocene. This time-consuming study, which included both field and laboratory work, ended with the publication of a collective monograph "Animal Teeth and Human Tools. A Taphonomic Odyssey in Ice Age Siberia" in 2013 with the Cambridge University Press publishing house.

The study of osteological material, collected by Ovodov, allowed him to first identify the remains of Pleistocene Himalayan bears *Ursus (Selenarctos) cf. thibetanus* G.Cuvier on the Central Siberian Plateau (Botovskaya Cave) and the foothills of Eastern Sayan (Kremenshetskaya Cave); the small cave bear *Ursus (Spelaeoarctos) rossicus* Borissiak in Altai (Strashnaya Cave), in Khakassia (Dvuglazka Grotto), and in Eastern Siberia (Kremenshetskaya Cave); the late Pleistocene Canadian otter *Lontra canadensis* Schreber in Asia (Belyi Gorod Cave near Krasnoyarsk); the fossil



Nikolay Ovodov with his daughter Maria in 1996.

Vinogradov porcupine *Hystrix brachiura vinogradovi* Argiropulo in Altai, the 33 thousand years old remains of one of the oldest dogs in the world (Razboynichya Cave, Altai); the giant panther on the Yenisei; a rare species, the red wolf *Cuon alpinus* in many caves in the Altai-Sayan mountain region, as well as to describe new species of fossil mammals: the wolf *Canis subtilis* Ovodov, the Gebler red wolf *Cuon gebleri* Ovodov, hartebeest *Parabubalis pneumaticornis* Ovodov et Chekha, and the extinct subspecies of snow sheep, *Ovis nivicola meridialis* Ovodov.

At the initiative of Vera Eisenmann, the well-known French mammal paleontologist, an expert in extinct horses, a new species of Pleistocene horses, found in several Altai caves, is named in honor of Nikolay Ovodov *Equus (Sussemionus) ovodovi*, the Ovodov's horse.

One of Ovodov's favorite hobbies in 1960s–1970s was surveying bats in caves. In total, he ringed over 3,500 animals. For more than a decade and a half, Nikolay Ovodov conducted regular counts of ringed wintering bats in many caves, accurately recording his observations. It was a truly selfless work, which culminated in a sensational discovery of world significance:

an extraordinary longevity of Brandt's bat with a life span over 41 years! Ovodov devoted also a lot of time and effort to collection and identification of bat skulls from the floor surface in caves. After determination of the species, he sent the collected materials for storage to the Zoological Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad; in total, he sent over 2.5 thousand skulls of bats.

Ovodov left undeniable mark in the history of speleology in Irkutsk. In 1963, inspired by his inexhaustible enthusiasm for exploring the underworld, a permanent team of speleologists was created under his informal leadership at the Irkutsk City Tourist Club, which was officially recognized in 1969 as the Irkutsk City Section of Speleologists.

Based on his research results, Ovodov published over 240 scientific papers. To date, to assess the authority of a scientist, it is customary to carry out scientometric indicators of his or her activity. In the period from 1997 to 2016, in journals indexed with the Scopus international scientific citation database, N.D. Ovodov is represented by fourteen publications with 468 citations of these papers, with an h-index equal to 8; with the database of the Russian Scientific Citation Index, 91 of his publications have been indexed with an h-index equal to 10 and 1257 citations. Quite a lot of articles are devoted to Nikolay Ovodov, his own brief memories were also published.

Nikolay Ovodov is buried in a cemetery in the village of Krutaya, 30 km from Krasnoyarsk, next to the graves of his parents.

The cherished memory of Nikolay Dmitrievich Ovodov will forever remain in the hearts of his coworkers on the study of caves, colleagues, and friends.

A.G. Filippov, N.V. Martynovich & E.A. Savinkina

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