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Vassily Albertovich Spiridonov (07.04.1957–17.12.2020)

Vassily Albertovich Spiridonov was born in Severomorsk, the Murmansk region, on the shore of one of the Barents Sea bays. This probably played a major role in his choice of a profession because he devoted his whole life to studying marine crustaceans as well as benthic ecosystems of the world's oceans.

After graduating from the Department of Invertebrate Zoology, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University in 1980, Vassily was assigned to work at the Antarctic Laboratory, National Scientific Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography, where he began studying euphausiids (Crustacea: Euphausiacea). He took part in a number of Antarctic marine expeditions and quickly became one of the leading authorities on Antarctic krill, *Euphausia superba* Dana, 1850. In 1988, he submitted his thesis entitled "Biology and distribution of Antarctic krill in the area of the Antarctic Peninsula" and was awarded a PhD. In 1990, after becoming more and more interested in taxonomy and systematic research, Vassily joined the Zoological Museum of Moscow State University (ZMMU), where from 1996 to 2000 he managed the Invertebrate Zoology Section and was the curator of the decapod collection (Crustacea: Decapoda). During this period, he conducted an audit of this ZMMU collection and began to studying brachyuran taxonomy focussing on swimming crabs (Brachyura: Portunoidea). He continued to work with the ZMMU collections until 2005 when he transferred to the Laboratory of Ecology of Coastal Bottom Communities, P.P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, as a specialist in benthic ecosystems and crustacean taxonomy. However, he continued to work with collections until recently, and his workplace at the Zoological Museum has always been reserved for him.

Vassily is the author of over a hundred scientific publications on the diversity, taxonomy, distribution and ecology of crabs, structure of benthic communities in the Northern Seas, and many popular scientific articles on nature conservation. In his scientific studies, he described a significant number of crab species new to science, three new subfamilies: Benthochasconinae Spiridonov, Neretina et Schepetov, 2014, Achelouinae Spiridonov, 2020 and Parathranitiinae Spiridonov, 2020, as well as one new family of swimming crabs; Ovalipidae Spiridonov, Neretina et Schepetov, 2014. For his own work, he often independently carried out most of the stages of the research process from animal sampling to submitting the manuscript for publication. He was an extremely experienced field worker, being an

active participant and project leader of more than 30 marine and coastal expeditions in the waters of the Sea of Japan, Sea of Okhotsk, Barents Sea, South China, Red Sea and Persian Gulf, as well as several in the Arctic and Antarctic. He frequently used SCUBA to dive in a wide variety of biotopes to collected crabs and other animals.

In 2013, Vassily presented his doctoral (DSc) dissertation, on the global taxonomy, ecology and distribution of portunoid crabs (swimming crabs) (Crustacea: Decapoda: Portunoidea): taxonomic revision, ecological features and distribution for examination. Needless to say it was accepted.

Since the 1990s, Vassily has been actively collaborating with many overseas colleagues, visiting the collections of leading international scientific institutions and museums around the world. He was a guest researcher at the Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research (Bremerhaven), the Senckenberg Research Institute and Natural History Museum (Frankfurt-at-Main) and the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (Paris). During such visits, he often participated in scientific expeditions organized by colleagues. Indeed, several new crustacean species have been described and named in his honour for example, *Metapenaeopsis spiridonovi* Crosnier, 1991, *Neocallichirus spiridonovi* (K. Sakai, 2010), *Munidopsis spiridonovi* Ahyong, 2014, *Eumunida spiridonovi* Macpherson, Rodriguez-Flores et Machordom, 2017 and *Mursia spiridonovi* Karasawa, 2018.

Since 1999, in parallel with his main scientific work, he was appointed the co-ordinator of the marine program of the Russian World Wide Fund for Nature Office (WWF), as a consultant for the programme on fisheries and marine biodiversity conservation. This work included heading many Russian WWF projects, being its consultant in the international Marine Stewardship Council which sets the standard for sustainable fishing, and was an active member on various working groups for the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

Vassily also activity contributed to the Russian Crustacean Society (RCS; www.crustacea.ru) established in 2018. He served as the head of the RCS Moscow Branch. He started the section on the history of Russian carcinology and published two chapters on the RCS web site. Results of his historical studies were presented at the International Conference "Crustacea: Diversity, Ecology and Evolution" in 2018 (http://www.crustacea.ru/5-mezhdunarodnaya-konferenciya-rakoobraznye-raznoobrazie-eko.html).

Working with Vassily was a wonderful experience, as all of his colleagues know. He was extremely knowledgeable, worked long hours, made the most out of any international visit and had a great sense of humour. This even extended to the correct spelling of his first name: it is double "s" and not one. This must have been a source of amusement over a number of years and included the fact that bureaucratic officials had even managed to spell his name "Vasily" in his passport!

Dedicating this whole number to his memory is appropriate and most fitting because Vassily was one of the founders of "*Arthropoda Selecta*" back in 1992, being the editor for crustacean submissions. Not unexpectedly, one number is not enough and additional contributions will be published in the next number of the journal because so many friends and colleagues wanted to pay Vassily their respects.

Thank you, Vassily, for your immense contribution to natural science and carcinology; you will be sadly missed.