

Tribute to G.I. Baranova (1931–2023)

Introduction

Galina Ivanovna Baranova died on 12.04.2023. She started working as a laboratory assistant in the Laboratory of Theriology, Department of Terrestrial Vertebrates in the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) in September of 1957. In 1973, she was transferred to the position of senior laboratory assistant and since that time up to 2012, the year she retired, totally 55 years, she was a permanent keeper of collection of small mammals encountering more than several hundred thousand specimens. Over the course of these years, Galina Ivanovna remained a classic example of impeccable scientific curator and collection manager. Galina Ivanovna formally had neither a scientific title, nor a degree, but both her authority among the laboratory staff, researchers in the field and her scientific qualifications corresponded to at least the rank of senior researcher. Not a single dissertation defended in the Laboratory of Theriology from the 1980s to the 2000s could be completed without her help, consultations and advice. Thanks to her dedicated daily work, the laboratory's collection was preserved in exemplary order. Galina Ivanovna belonged to the category of people



Galina Ivanovna Baranova, late 1960-s.

who shaped the history of the Zoological Institute. She is the last of a galaxy of excellent Soviet zoologists-theriologists, such as I.M. Gromov, A.A. Gureev, M.N. Meyer, P.P. Strelkov, P.P. Gambaryan.

Her life

Galina Ivanovna Baranova (born Smatko) was born on 22 December 1931 in the family of Leningrad intellectuals. Her father, Ivan Eliseevich Shmatko (b. 1887) graduated from the Military Medical Academy, took part in the First World War as a doctor. After the war, he worked in Leningrad and was a well-known and respected pediatrician. During the Great Patriotic War, he worked throughout the siege in Leningrad in a hospital. Awarded the medal "For the Defense of Leningrad" (1943).

Her mother, Olga Emilievna Theremin (1893–1967) belonged to an old French noble family; her ancestors emigrated from France to Russia in the 18th century. Olga Emilievna was a talented pianist.

Galina Ivanovna's grandfather, Theremin Emil Fedorovich (1837–1896) — Actual State Councilor, Doctor of medicine, worked as a pediatrician at the St. Petersburg orphanage. Her cousin, Lev Theremin, was an outstanding scientist, talented physicist and musician, is world famous as the inventor of the world's first electronic musical instrument, named in his honor "thereminvoks". No surprise that brought up in such a family, Galina Ivanovna was a very gifted person herself. She loved and understood music, she sang wonderfully, but since her childhood passed during the war



G.I. Baranova and her parents, around 1947.



G.I. Baranova, 1945.

years, she was not able to receive a musical education. Galina Ivanovna was a versatile creative person, she drew beautifully, was interested in and understood history and art.

She graduated secondary school with a golden medal in 1949, the same year she entered the Leningrad State University named after A.A. Zhdanov (now – Saint Petersburg State University), and in 1954, she graduated with honours from a full course in the spe-



G.I. Baranova and M.N. Baranov, wedding photography, 1954.

cialty “vertebrate zoology” and right after it, Galina Ivanovna was enrolled in postgraduate school at the Department of Vertebrate Zoology of Leningrad State University, where she carried out work under the supervision of Doctor of Biological Sciences P.V. Terentyev. In the same year, 1954, Galina Ivanovna married her classmate, Mikhail Nikolaevich Baranov (1931–1988), the future recognized biochemist, Doctor of Biological Sciences. In 1958, the couple had a daughter, and in 1967 a son.

Her work

Despite the fact that Galina Ivanovna held the position of senior laboratory assistant and scientific activity was not part of her direct responsibilities, she published 20 papers on the fauna both of extinct and recent rodents. Her special love were flying squirrels (the subfamily Pteromyinae), the evolutionary history of them is still poorly known. In cooperation with N.I. Konkova, G.I. Baranova described the new extinct species *Pliopetaurista moldaviensis* from the middle Pliocene of Moldova. Together with G.F. Baryshnikov she described 3 new subspecies of rodents from the Pleistocene of Caucasus.



G.I. Baranova with her daughter and son, 1969.

As a researcher of fossil rodents, Galina Ivanova was a very thorough specialist; always tried to go “deeply” into the material, carefully searched for diagnostic characters, which was facilitated by her artistic flair and a faithful “eye,” she always used a large comparative material and all available literature. Of particular note is her ability to accurately and concisely characterize taxa and present their descriptions in simple but expressive language.

The ability of G.I. Baranova to make “technical” drawings of teeth and skeletal elements of large and small mammals deserves special mention. Biological qualification allowed her to find and record the most important for identification osteological features.

As an editor and illustrator, Galina Ivanovna took part in the publication of most of the keys, monographs and catalogs prepared by the laboratory staff (see below). Together with Prof. I.M. Gromov she edited and published the "Catalogue of Mammals of the USSR" (1981), which received wide recognition. Working on catalogs requires exceptional painstakingness in untangling the complex nomenclature issues. In 2003, she compiled and published "Catalogue of Type Specimens of the Collections of the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Rodents", which reflected her nomenclatural studies, thanks to which new lectotypes were identified.

In addition to work in the laboratory, Galina Ivanovna took part in numerous field trips. So, in August–September 1964, under the leadership of I.M. Gromov she worked in Bessarabia. The field excavations were carried out in the far west of the Odessa Region, on the western shore of Lake Yalpukh, in the area of the village of Kotlovina, where fossil remains of microtheriofauna with a large number of root-toothed voles from the Late Pliocene were previously discovered. Despite the difficult living conditions, they worked very hard and productively. Using the method of sifting coarse sand, more than 10 thousand teeth of voles and up to 500 of other rodents were collected. The discovery of a monkey tooth deserves special attention. At that time, only four such findings were known in the USSR.

In August 1965 G.I. Baranova together with M.N. Naumova and S.L. Shmuilovich collected material on the evolutionary history of root-toothed voles in a quarry near the village of Sennaya, Temryuk District, Krasnodar Region. Up to 2500 identifiable remains of small rodents were collected, including 500 ancient voles. These materials were used by Prof. I.M. Gromov to prepare a monograph dedicated to voles.

In July–August 1966 G.I. Baranova, as part of an expedition from the Department of Vertebrate Zoology of Leningrad State University, collected materials on fossil rodents in Moldova. About 500 fossil remains were collected. In July–August 1974 G.I. Baranova collected small mammals as a part of a field trip team



Preparation of collected material in the field trip in Tuva, 1973: G.I. Baranova, T.G. Aksenova and F.N. Golenishchev.



G.I. Baranova and M.N. Naumova in the collection room, early 1970-s.

in a GAZ-66 truck under the leadership of M.N. Meyer in the Krasnoyarsk Territory and the Tuva Autonomous Region. On this trip, 870 specimens belonging to 27 species were collected, 75 animals of six species were brought alive. Galina Ivanovna made most of the rodent carcasses on this trip.

But among all the varied activities of G.I. Baranova her main concern has always been collections and their storage. She was indeed the real mistress, a kind fairy of the small mammal collection department, among the staff of the Institute known as "Peregorodka".

It is impossible not to note her interaction with young (newly joined the department) collection laboratory assistants, who, due to their inexperience, always have many questions. No matter what urgent work Galina Ivanovna was doing at that moment, she immediately put aside her work and rushed to help. Sometimes deciphering records on labels, clarifying taxonomy, geography, etc. took a lot of time, but with her participation they always achieved a positive result.

Galina Ivanovna was the soul of our small team, the keeper of not only the collections, but also the laboratory. We really appreciated her friendly participation and support. She knew how to cheer up, organize and make any holiday interesting, and wrote wonderful poetic congratulations. Her love of flowers deserves special mention. Violets, azaleas, and amaryllis filled all the window sills, free tables, and shelves. Thanks to Galina

Ivanovna's care and concern, the entire collection department was buried in flowers. The room looked like a botanical garden, and was especially beautiful when the azaleas were in bloom. Employees of neighboring laboratories came to Galina Ivanovna on excursions. She enjoyed the love and respect not only of the laboratory staff, but also of numerous specialists from other institutions working with the laboratory's collections. A person is alive as long as he is remembered, and we will always remember and love her, and she will remain with us until the end of our days. Galina Ivanovna is survived by her daughter and son, grandson and grand-grand-daughter.

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F.N. Golenishchev, E.P. Tikhonova*

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The collection department full of flowers grown by G.I. Baranova.

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