

Obituary



Vadim Aleksandrovich Topachevskiy (1930–2004)

On November 9, 2004, the great Ukrainian and globally renowned theriologist and palaeontologist passed away in Kiev on his 74th year.

Professor Vadim A. Topachevskiy was born on July 16, 1930. His parents were the prominent Soviet hydrobiologist and algologist, Academician, director of the Institute of Hydrobiology, Alexander Topachevskiy, and Professor of Botany, Maria Makarevich.

After graduation from the Kiev T.G. Shevchenko State University in 1953 V.A. Topachevskiy got a job in the Institute of Zoology of Academy of Sciences of UkSSR (Kiev), where in 1957 he had defended his Candidate of Science (PhD) thesis supervised by famous Prof. I.G. Pidoplichko. This dissertation was named “Vertebrates of Pliocene and Anthropogene deposits of the Valley of Lower Dnieper River and Molochnaya River”. Later, in 1969, he successfully defended his Doctor of Sciences thesis based on the spalacid monograph. In 1978 he became the Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences of Ukrainian SSR, and finally in 1992, V.A. Topachevskiy was elected as the Academician of Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

(since 1994, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine).

Prof. Vadim Topachevskiy was the Director of Schmalhausen Institute of Zoology from 1973 to 1987; he was the Head of the Department of Paleozoology of Vertebrates of this Institute since 1973. In 1975, the Paleontological Museum was included into the Department. Till his last days Academician V.A. Topachevskiy permanently headed both the Department of Paleozoology of Vertebrates and the Paleontological Museum (since 1995, the Department of the National Museum of Natural History of National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine).

The theriologist of broad outlook, V. Topachevskiy made valuable contributions to the number of fundamental branches of theriology such as systematics, phylogeny, historical faunistics, ecological morphology, and zoogeography. His main investigations in microtheriology addressed Spalacidae and Desmaninae (genus *Desmana*) in the scope of the world fauna. Another publication of the paramount importance is the monograph on “Neogene and Early Anthropogene lower Cricetidae of the South of Eastern Europe”. These researches contain innovative interpretations of species

of the studied families and discuss their systematic position within the orders, along with the analysis of the origin of the principal adaptations in the course of phylogenesis of these groups. Revision of the system of the studied groups was accompanied by the erection of new subfamilies, tribes, genera, and species. It is necessary to mention the considerable contribution of Prof. Topachevskiy to the study of phylogenesis and natural system of such rodent groups as Dipodidae and Arvicolinae (series of papers). In this accordance the hypothesis of the origin of arvicolines has the special place. Prof. Topachevskiy described a number of new taxa, including one subfamily, two tribes, and more than 40 genera and species of extinct Insectivora, Lagomorpha, and Rodentia.

Prof. V. Topachevskiy organized continuous studies of Neogene-Quaternary large and small mammals on the territory of Eastern Europe, mainly Ukraine and partly Moldova and Russia. Under his leadership two Doctor's theses and more than ten PhD theses were defended. Prof. Vadim Topachevskiy was also the Head of the Ukrainian Theriological Society. He was the Honored Scientist of Ukraine and Laureate of the Schmalhausen Prize.

The main subjects of Prof. V. Topachevskiy's researches were taxonomy, systematic and phylogeny of Neogene and Quaternary small mammals (Insectivora, Lagomorpha, and Rodentia) from the southern part of Eastern Europe. He was very interested in the phylogeny of such groups as Desmanidae, Leporidae, Ochotonidae, Cricetidae, Arvicolidae, and Dipodidae. Part of these studies was dedicated to historical analysis of faunas, morphology and adaptations of mammals. Academician V. Topachevskiy also elaborated and published the biostratigraphical scheme of the Neogene of the northern part of Eastern Paratethys. This profound synthesis is based on his many years' studies of small mammals in the region and the system of defined mammal associations grouped into faunistic complexes and subcomplexes. Palaeotheriologists, biostratigraphers, and geologists currently widely use this scheme.

Prof. V. Topachevskiy has published over 100 articles in well-known scientific journals and nine monographs, one of which has been translated in USA; he is also the author of more than 40 popular scientific articles mostly for the Ukrainian Encyclopedia.

He was the member of editorial boards of several Ukrainian Scientific Journals and the member, of various scientific Councils. For ten years Vadim Topachevskiy was the teaching Professor at the Biological Faculty of the Shevchenko Kiev State University. In his lectures he guided students through the world of extinct animals, showed the development of the life and geological history of the Earth.

He participated in endless excavations, expeditions and discovered numerous fossiliferous sites. In 40 years of his extremely fruitful activities he has gathered extensive collections of fossil vertebrates from the whole Eastern Europe (presently preserved in the National Museum of Natural History in Kiev) and provided description of many geological sections.

Due to the leadership of Prof. Topachevskiy the modern Paleontological Museum of NMNH of National Academy of Sciences became popular and one of the well known in Eastern Europe. The Museum's famous exhibits of Mezin and Mezirich mammoth huts became internationally popular after their numerous exhibitions abroad.

The Academician Topachevskiy was a globally known scientist, sensitive, attentive and helpful to young generation, kind to his colleagues, a person devoted to his family, fond of different "extrascientific" activities, like philately, Ukrainian, Russian, foreign literature, soccer, fishing, etc.

Prof. Topachevskiy launched the fundamental microtheriological investigation in the Ukrainian territory. By his accurate scientific practice and prolific publications Vadim Topachevskiy became the real teacher to many scientists within and outside the former Soviet Union.

The name of Academician V. Topachevskiy will be always associated with microtheriology and paleotheriology and he will live in his publications and in hearts of his colleagues all over the world.

Everybody who knew this nice person and outstanding paleontologist, who dedicated his life to the study of Neogene and Quaternary small mammals of Eastern Europe, will miss him a lot.

Colleagues and friends