

Professor Peter D. Gunin (1942—2019)



Peter Dmitrievich Gunin, one of the outstanding scientists in the field ecology of arid lands and desertification in Central Asia, passed away on 25 May 2019, after an acute illness. He was one of the many Russian scientists who have made major contributions to the development of collaboration between scientists of Mongolia and Russia, and to the study of biological resources, as well as ecological conditions of Mongolia through his academic and organizational activities. Not only his activities are focused on the research of ecosystems of Mongolia, but also he was one of the talented teachers to educate young generations of scientists in the field of ecology and geography.

P.D. Gunin was born in 7 June 1942 in the Uvarovo city of the Tambovsk province, Russia. In 1964 he graduated from the Faculty of Geography, Moscow State University named

after M.V. Lomonosov, and afterwards he has worked for eight years at the Repetek National Park, Turkmenistan as a researcher. From 1972 he worked as a research scientist at the Laboratory of Medical Geography, Faculty of Geography, Moscow State University, and in 1976 he moved to the Institute of Ecology and Evolution, Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), where he worked till end of his life. P.D. Gunin received his PhD degree in 1969 from the Moscow State University, and in 1991 he defended dissertation for the degree of DSc at the Institute of Ecology and Evolution, RAS.

Since 1988 he served as a chairman of the Russian part of the Joint Russian-Mongolian Complex Biological Expedition organized by RAS and Mongolian Academy of Sciences. In 1993, Prof. P.D. Gunin initiated and established the Laboratory for Ecology of Arid Territories at the Institute of Ecology and Evolution, RAS, and led this research unit for more than a quarter of century.

Prof. P.D. Gunin was a well-known scientist in the field of ecology and functioning of the arid landscapes and desert ecosystems. He evaluated the patterns of intensification of desertification processes in Mongolia with increased impacts of human activities. Under his supervision, an investigation on the effects of aridization or droughts on plant and soil communities in the forest-steppe and steppe ecosystems has been implemented. Based on results of his research, Prof. Gunin together with his research team revealed the main factors, which lead to the interference or expansion of alkalic shrub and grass species in the forest-steppe and steppe ecosystems, and the formation of less productive, ecologically less significant plant communities for the forest and pastureland functioning.

During his more than a half century scientific career, he has been published more than 420

scientific articles in the Russian and international peer-reviewed journals with additions of 15 scientific monographs in Russian and English.

Prof. P.D. Gunin was member of several international organizations, such as Commission of National Parks and Protected Areas of IUCN, International Association on the Study of Central Asia (China), Expert Council of GEF on Biodiversity Conservation, Russian Ecological Academy etc. He was also member of the editorial boards of several scientific journals, such as *Arid Ecosystems*, *Geography, Environment, Sustainability*, *Bulletin of the Baltic Federal University* and *Mongolian Journal of Biological Sciences*.

Besides his research and organizational activities, Prof. Gunin taught many years at the Moscow State University, where he lectured on Landscape Ecology. He supervised the dissertation studies of 12 graduates, including seven graduate students from Mongolia. He received a number of awards from his home country as Diploma and Honorarium Certificate of the Russian Geographical Society (1996,

2000), N.M. Przhewalski Gold Medal by the Russian Geographical Society (2014), Diploma and Awards from the Presidium of RAS and V.E. Sokolov Memorial Foundation (2011), and Honored Scientist of the Russian Federation (2014). Also, he received such recognitions from Mongolia as “Leading Worker of Science”, “Leading Worker of Nature and Environment” from the Government of Mongolia, and the Gold medal “Khubilai Khaan” from the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. In 2005 he was awarded with the title of Honorary Doctor from the Mongolian State University of Education for his contributions to the development of biological and ecological sciences in Mongolia and long-term effort in educating young generations of biologists. His enormous career and influential works have always inspired the generations of biologists and geographers in Mongolia.

Prof. P.D. Gunin will be fondly remembered by his friends, students and colleagues as a distinguished scientist and an honored teacher. He was a man of remarkable optimism and a special taste for life.

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