



MYKHAYLO ANATOLIEVICH VOINSTVENSKY
(1916–1996)

It is become 100 years since Mykhaylo Voinstvensky, an eminent ornithologist, Doctor of Biological Sciences, Professor, Honoured Science Worker was born in a family of a military doctor Anatoliy Pavlovych Voinstvensky and literature and language teacher Nina Leontiyivna Voinstvenska on February 14, 1916.

Mykhaylo graduated from the middle school in 1930 and became a student at Kyiv Agronomic Technicum (High School) from which he graduated in 1932. His inquisitiveness and love for the nature and all living matter have transformed into a passion of researcher and yearning for deepest investigation of the animal world.

In 1933 M. V. entered the biological faculty of Kyiv State University, which he graduated from in 1938. He was very lucky to have first-rate professors: V. M. Artobolevsky, I. I. Schmalhausen and M. M. Voskoboynikov, who had a great influence on his scientific interests as ornithologist, zoogeographer, taxonomist and evolutionist. A talented postgraduate was hired by the Zoological Museum of Kyiv State University. During his postgraduate doctoral years he studied ecology and systematics of the Tits, Nuthatches, and Treecreepers in the fauna of Ukraine and makes his first essential contribution into science by the revision of the genus *Aegithalos* (Long-Tailed Titmice); he completed his studies and thesis, but had not defended it before the invasion of German Army into the USSR. He was mobilized and served in military hospitals in Kyiv, Hrebinka, Lubhy, Kharkiv, and Tomsk. In 1944 the Ministry of Education of Ukraine recalled him from Tomsk for teaching at the Kyiv State University. He actively works for its revival and organization of studies and especially for the ruined Zoological Museum. He was sent to Moscow, where he has shown his worth for bringing back to Kyiv the museum collection after evacuation to Russia or removing to Germany as spoils of war.

Mykhaylo Voinstvensky successfully defended his PhD degree in 1946 and later published his thesis as a monograph entitled “Nuthatches, Treecreepers, and Tits of Ukrainian SSR” (1949). The same year, he was hired as associate professor of the Chair of Vertebrate Zoology of Kyiv University. Since then he studies ornithofauna of the Steppe Zone of Eastern Europe and its natural history. He identified bones of the Pliocene fossil bird *Gryzaja odessana*, hitherto considered to be a swimming bird, and found it to be an otidid. M. Voinstvensky elaborated new principles and approaches of zoogeography of the Steppe Zone and Crimea, which were resulted in his Doctor of Sciences thesis defended in 1956 and published then as a monograph “Modern Condition and Origin of Ornithofauna of the USSR European Territory Steppe Zone” (1960).

In 1956 M. A. Voinstvensky was elected for a position of the head of Museum Section at the Institute of Zoology of the Academy of Science of Ukrainian SSR in Kyiv. He guided an enormous work on reconstruction of Museum expositions and organization of the scientific collection funds. In 1959 the Museum was reorganized into the Department of Vertebrates, which was headed by M. A. Voinstvensky for almost 30 years studying the fauna of Ukraine, its changes, systematics and ecology of many species of birds, mammals, and other vertebrates. He organized numerous expeditions for studying faunas of Ukraine, sea shores of the Barentz, White, Baltic, Black, and Caspian Seas. He visited the Syvash Lake and mountain Lakes of Switzerland and Bulgaria. M. A. Voinstvensky dedicated most of his life to studies of ornithofaunas of deltas and estuaries of big rivers, such as the Dnipro, Danube, and Dnister.

In 1959 M. V. received a certificate of Professor. He started up studies of ecology of the game animals. Along with fundamental studies, M. A. Voinstvensky paid special attention to the development of applied aspects of vertebrates: nature conservation, studies of bird migrations and overwintering, etc. The Laboratory of Ecology of Gaming Fauna of Ukraine in the Department of Vertebrates was established on his initiative. Based on the results of these studies, numerous recommendations were elaborated and introduced into practices of the Ministry of Forestry and State Committee of Nature Conservation, e. g., on the appraisal and ordering of the gaming forests (registration, optimum density of gaming animals, feeding ability of forests, planning shooting of gaming animals and breeding of wild animals).

On Mykhaylo Voinstvensky's initiative, a group for studying migration of the birds throughout Ukraine was organized at the Department. It gave solutions for certain practical problems (safety of plane flights, passage of viruses by birds as vectors, game farming, etc.) and raised up the conservation of valuable birds on their migration ways, as well as in the mass overwintering sites in the South of Ukraine.

The department of vertebrates gave a birth to the Museum, Department of Population Ecology, Laboratory of Conservation of Terrestrial Animals, and Department of Monitoring and Conservation of Animals.

In 1963–1968 M. A. Voinstvensky was the Deputy Director for Scientific Work at the Institute of Zoology of Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. Since 1975, he became a director of the Natural History Museum and the Head of the Museum Council of the Academy of Sciences of Ukrainian SSR.

M.V. is the author of more than 200 scientific and popular papers, inclusive 18 widely recognized by scientists monographs and books. He was a skilled writer and actively popularized nature conservation and ornithology on radio and TV.

It is impossible to overestimate merits of Mykhaylo Voinstvensky in training of young scientists. His captivating, talented lectures and field excursions determined scientific interests of many students. He was a supervisor of 46 successfully defended PhD dissertations, consultant or referee of many theses for the DSc degree.

Since 1963 and for almost 20 years M. V. was the president of Ukrainian Society for Nature Conservation in Ukraine (on a voluntary basis). He was the first and long-termed president of the Ukrainian Ornithological Society, which consolidated scientists of academic institutions, universities and nature reserves. Later he became its Honorary President.

M. A. Voinstvensky was the Head of the Scientific Council for the problem “Biological Principles of Reclamation, Reconstruction and Conservation of the Animal World” since 1954 till his death in 1996.

In 1967 Mykhaylo Voinstvensky became vice-president of the Eastern European Committee of the Commission on Education of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), giving talks on meetings in Switzerland, Romania, Hungary, Germany, Czechia, Poland, Iran.

M. A. belonged to the pleiad of scientists, who determined high level and main direction of Ukrainian ornithology in the second half of XX century. He possessed encyclopedic knowledge in the paleontology, zoogeography, nature conservation and philosophic principles of biology. Along with his scientific interests, he has passion for hunting, fishing and photography.

In the last years of his life M. A. Voinstvensky paid big attention to the philosophic questions of origin and evolution of ecosystems and biosphere. He believed that the biosphere evolution must be considered as a stage of development of the geosystem as a whole and try to recognize, which physical, chemical and biological laws caused beginning of life and development of biosphere on Earth, which protects geosphere from leaking of energy into space. This big work was published for his 80th birthday.

Mykhaylo Anatolievich Voinstvensky was an unsurpassed researcher, and merely an open and kind Man. May his lifework continue in the works of his students and followers.