

## A Tribute to the Sixty Fifth Anniversary of Prof. Peter D. Gunin

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Peter Dmitrievich Gunin, one of the leading scientists in the field ecology of arid lands and desertification processes in the Central Asia is reaching the 65<sup>th</sup> year of his life. He is one of the many Russian scientists who have made major contributions to the development of collaboration between scientists of two countries 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 is one of the talented teachers to educate young generations of scientists in the field of biology and geography.

P. D. Gunin was born in 7 June 1942 in the Uvarovo city of the Tambovsk province of Russia (former USSR). 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 Repeteksek National Park, Turkmenistan as a researcher.

Between 1972 and 1975 he served as a research scientist at the Faculty of Geography, Moscow State University, and subsequently he moved to the Institute of Ecology and Evolution, Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), where he is working to date. P. D. Gunin received his PhD degree in 1969 from the Moscow State University, and in 1991 he defended the dissertation for the degree of DSc. at the Institute of Ecology and Evolution, RAS.

Currently Prof. P. D. Gunin is leading a Laboratory of Ecology of the Arid Lands, Institute of Ecology and Evolution, RAS as a head of this research unit. He is also the chairman of the Russian part of a Joint Russian-Mongolian Complex Biological Expedition organized by RAS and Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

The main area of his research is diagnostics of degradation and anthropogenic effects on ecosystems of Mongolia and Asian parts of Russia. Prof. P. D. Gunin is 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 harsh ecological conditions of 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 45 years of scientific career, he has published more than 350 scientific articles in the Russian and international peer-reviewed journals with addition of more than 10 scientific monographs in Russian and English (e.g. Gunin, 1990; Gunin & Vostokova, 1995a, b; Gunin *et al.*,

1998, 1999, 2003).

In 1990-1991, under his consultation, the Government of Mongolia drew up a National Action Plan to Combat Desertification in Mongolia, and in 1992-1993 Prof. Gunin supervised the project supported by UNDP for the Establishment of National Action Plan for Creating Network of Protected Areas in Mongolia. By his initiative, the first map “Ecosystems of Mongolia” (scale 1:1000 000) was completed in 1995 with support of UNEP, which is still in use for the purpose of both scientific and practical actions although the ecosystems of Mongolia has changed significantly during past 15 years.

Prof. P. D. Gunin is a 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 is also a member of the editorial board of several scientific journals, like Arid Ecosystems, Baikal Region, our journal, MJBS etc.

Besides his research and organizational activities, Prof. Gunin teaches at the Moscow State University, where he lectures on Landscape Ecology. He supervised the dissertation studies of more than 20 graduates, including five students from Mongolia. He has received the awards, “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. I wish him a long, enjoyable and productive life in years to come.

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