



## Editorial

**Alexander P. Dyachenko has celebrated his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday**

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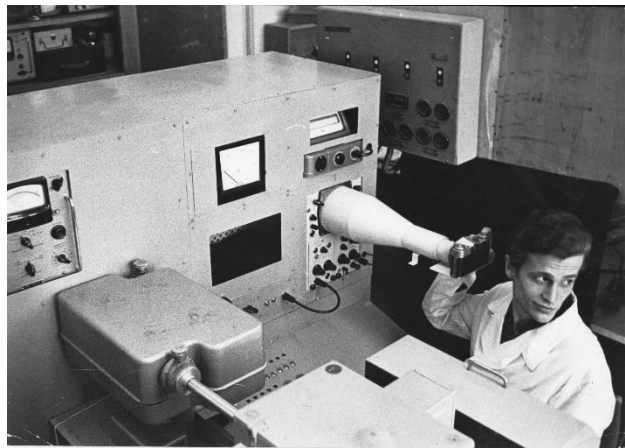
Alexander P. Dyachenko 11 July 2019

July 11, 2019 marked the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Russian bryologist Alexander P. Dyachenko. He has been retired for more than ten years but continues his research, editorial work and teaching at the Ural State Pedagogical University, where he is a professor at the Department of Biology, Ecology and Teaching Methods. He has also been actively working on identification of mosses collected across the territory of the Russian Federation and in neighbouring countries.

Since his childhood, Alexander has been interested in biology. In 1966 he was admitted to the Biology and Chemistry Faculty of the Krasnoyarsk State University and graduated in 1971. He was then enrolled as a PhD student at the Department of Plant Physiology and Biochemistry of the Ural State University in Yekaterinburg, where he studied under the guidance of Prof. Adolph T. Mokronosov, a future member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. With a break in 1972–



Second-year student, field practice in zoology. Novosibirsk University, Krasnoyarsk Branch Biostation, Krasnoyarsk, July 1968. Photo by H. Manukovsky



Ural State University, Department of Plant Physiology and Biochemistry, second-year postgraduate student, a study of photosynthesis in mosses, 1972. Photo by A. Dobrov

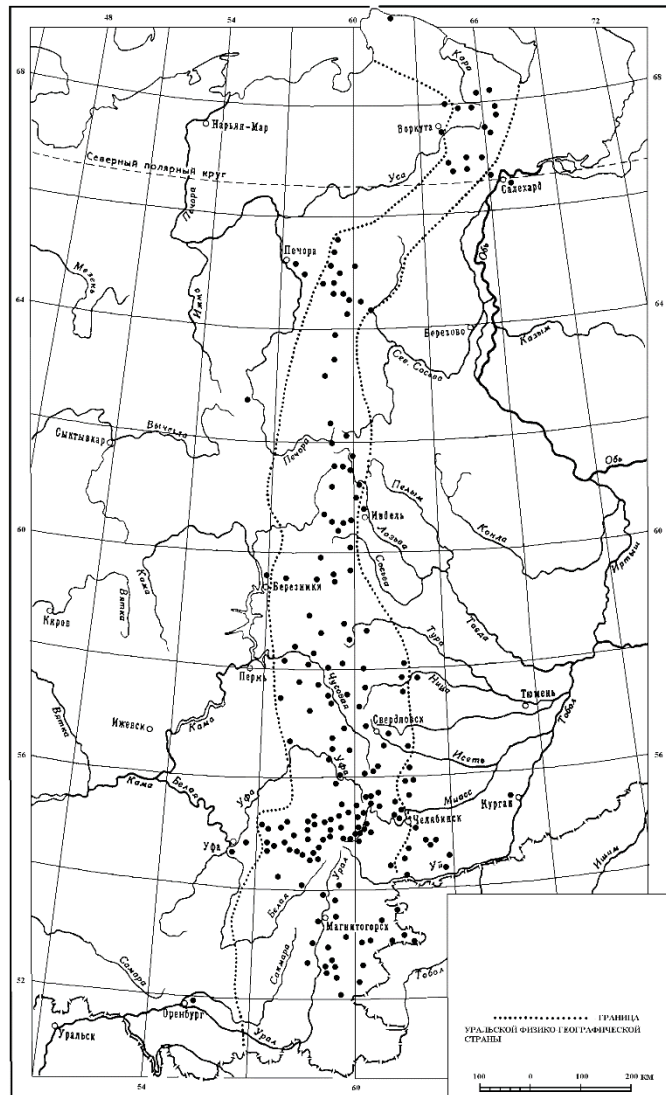


Ural State University, Department of Plant Physiology and Biochemistry, second-year postgraduate student, research on photosynthesis in mosses, 1972. Photo by A. Dobrov

1973 when he had to serve in the Russian Army, he completed his PhD research in 1975 and started working as an assistant at the Department of Plant Physiology and Biochemistry of the Ural State University. In 1980 he defended his PhD thesis entitled *Comprehensive analysis of*

*the production process in mosses*. It was during his work on the dissertation that Alexander became so interested in the flora of mosses that from that time on concentrated on that topic.

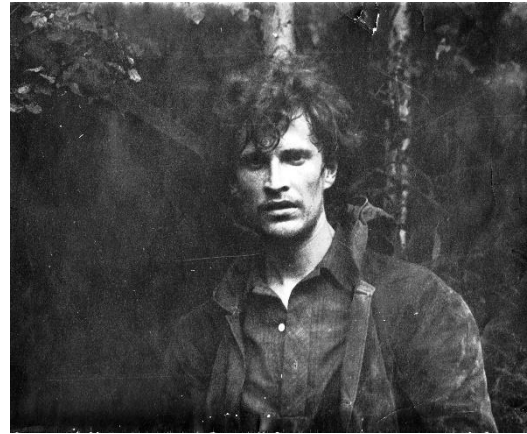
During his tenure, Alexander has organized or taken part in many expeditions to various regions of the Urals ranging from the Kara and Barents Sea Coast to the vicinity of Orenburg with the goal of investigating the flora of true mosses. The expeditions featured many memorable events—at times funny, other times dangerous. Once, while crossing a firm on a steep mountain slope, he slipped and, picking up speed, careered down to the sharp rocks that protruded at the end of the snowy area some 250 meters down the slope. All his attempts to stop with the help of his belt knife failed. He managed to slow down only when he rolled over



Locations of the surveyed areas in the Urals (indicated by black circles). The dotted line marks the borders of the Ural Physicogeographical Country



Vaygach Island, Arctic Ocean, 1973



Middle Urals, Visim Nature Reserve, 1975.  
Photo by A. Sobenin



Middle Urals, near Bolshiye Galashki, 1975.  
Photo by A. Sobenin



Subpolar Urals, Sablya Ridge, 1983.  
Photo by G. Pakin

onto his back, arched and stood on his elbows and heels, which finally brought him to a stop just a metre from the rocks, while he was naming all his saints. A few more times mother-nature attempted to pitch him into abysses via scree slopes or drown him in a mountain river when rafting, and yet all incidents ended up without serious consequences.



Southern Urals, Mount Iremel, 1984.  
Photo by A. Sazonov



Expedition to Southern Urals, radial excursions in the vicinity of Orenburg, unexpected finds, August 1985.  
Photo by A. Sazonov



Expedition to Southern Urals, radial excursions in the vicinity of Orenburg, field lunch, August 1985.  
Photo by A. Saszonov

Processing his own collections produced important results, which enabled Alexander to defend his Doctor of Sciences dissertation in 2000. It was entitled *The flora of true mosses in the Urals: Its structure and history of formation*. The work on the dissertation allowed for a more in-depth approach toward the major directions of the moss flora study in the Urals, which resulted in the publication of a monograph

in 2016 under the name *Mosses of the Urals' Mountain Ecosystems*. Lately, Alexander has been studying the moss flora of West Siberia.



Ural State Pedagogical University, Department of Botany and Biology Teaching Methods. Interview with a student, 2009. Photo by A. Buslovskava

His teaching work has included his own lecture courses on plant biochemistry, molecular biology, plant taxonomy, bryology (additionally, he conducted hands-on classes in the same disciplines) as well as plant physiology, plant geography, biogeography and soil science. In total, he participated in training of more than 1.5 thousand specialists.

Alexander grew up in the family of a military officer, a World War II veteran, and therefore, from his childhood he has been accustomed to discipline. This personality trait allows him to rationally allocate his time and thus accomplish important things while giving up everything unnecessary or secondary. His motto is 'Do your duty, come what may.' He sees himself as a happy man, as his hobby coincides with his profession. He is a father of five and has five grandchildren.

Contribution edited by Irina Kadis. All photographs are from the personal archive of Alexander P. Dyachenko