



A new periodical on mammals

Russian Journal of Theriology (semiannual). Editor: Alexander O. Averianov [sasha@AA1923.spb.edu]. Publisher: KMK Scientific Press Ltd., Moscow [kmk2000@online.ru], Zoological Institute, RAS, Universitetskaya nab. 1, Saint Petersburg 199034, Russia. Personal yearly subscription USD 40.00; institutional subscription USD 60.00.

Approximately one year ago a Russian colleague, Alexander O. Averianov, asked me to serve on the editorial board of new journal, the Russian Journal of Theriology (ISSN 1682-3540). I had forgotten about this promise until volume 1, number 1 arrived this past summer. As I have contributed nothing as an editorial board member to date, other than my name, I feel that I can fairly comment on this new endeavor.

The first question one must always ask is whether a new journal such as this is needed. The one word answer is “yes;” of course it is another matter whether it will survive in the crowded market place of similar journals. During Soviet times such survival was much more assured because journals produced in Russian within the country were some of the only available to many Soviet scientists. This is much different now as is witnessed by the publication of this journal in English. As a personal note, I only regret that the tongue-twisting, but euphonious Russian word for mammal—*mlyekopitayushcheye* (milk feeding)—is not part of the title. The reality is that English-language science journals are read and frequently cited more often, not because of any necessarily greater scientific merit but simply because English is now the *Lingua Franca* of international science. It is hoped that the Russian community of theriologists will be well served by this new journal. If properly advertised, this journal also could serve their foreign colleagues as well and might help to increase scientific cooperation—a desire that many scientists have.

One wise decision was to publish semiannually. I do not know if this was for economic reasons, but it does make sense in order for the journal to be better established before trying to expand. The individual cost seems somewhat steep for only two issues per year.

The volume is handsomely produced with marbled white covers, which like the paper is reasonably substantial. The cover bears a nice lithograph of presumably Eurasian rabbits, but nowhere is

there a caption or attribution for the cover. Also there is no article about rabbits in the issue. Unless this will be a permanent logo, future covers should try to use art from that issue. The journal has a large, A4 format with a double-column layout. As this particular issue shows, such a large format should serve both the reader and author well. My one major concern with layout is the coarseness of the screen used. Fortunately, most of the illustrations in this issue are line drawings, but the quality of the relatively few photographs does suffer. Interestingly, even the line drawings appear to have been screened, so possibly the volume was prepared from computer copy and screening was absent or minimal. If this were the case, then it would seem that using more dpi might increase clarity with little increase in cost.

The journal “is intended for general and special papers from all areas of theriology (taxonomy, phylogeny and evolution, morphology, palaeontology, ecology, zoogeography, [and] faunistics.” True to this broad outlook, the first issue has a profusely illustrated article on peculiarities of hind limb musculature in monotremes (Gambaryan et al.: 1–36), a comparison of hard anatomy, pelage, and alarm calls of two sympatric races (possibly separate species) of eastern Siberian pikas (Lissovsky and Lissovskaya: 37–42), the taxonomy of a subgenus of vole from sites located primarily between the Caspian and Black Seas using bacular, dental, and karyotypic data (Golenishchev et al.: 43–55), a study of the variation in bacular morphology of the Palaearctic badger (Abramov: 57–60), and the biochronology of Pleistocene mammals from the Caucasus (Baryshnikov: 61–67). In addition, there are obituaries of theriologists from the Zoological Institute in Saint Petersburg, Marina Nikolaevna Meyer and Alexei Alexandrovich Aristov. Unfortunately, it is in these two otherwise nicely written pieces that editing by an English speaker would have helped. A fairly cursory reading of the scientific papers did not reveal as many problems.

Although this first issue has a number of authors from Saint Petersburg, authors are also from Moscow and Novosibirsk in Russia, as well as from Australia, Sweden, and Bulgaria. It is hoped that the international flavor can be maintained, for both scientific reasons and to help with the journal’s survival. Finally, if at all possible, a website for the journal may well foster its growth as more people will more quickly become aware of its existence.

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