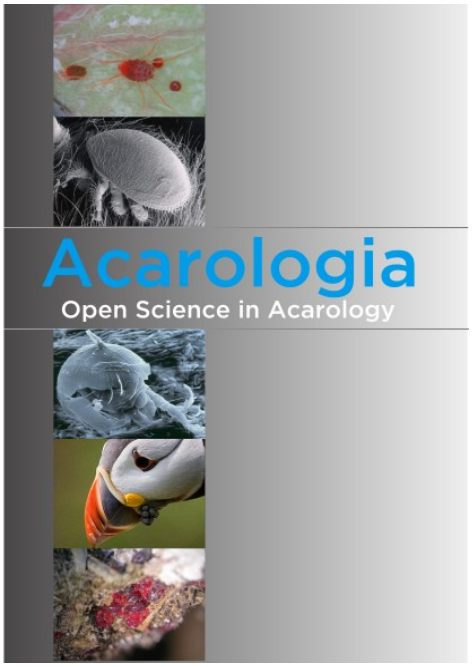

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OBITUARY
Professor Valeriy SHEVCHENKO (1929–2010)

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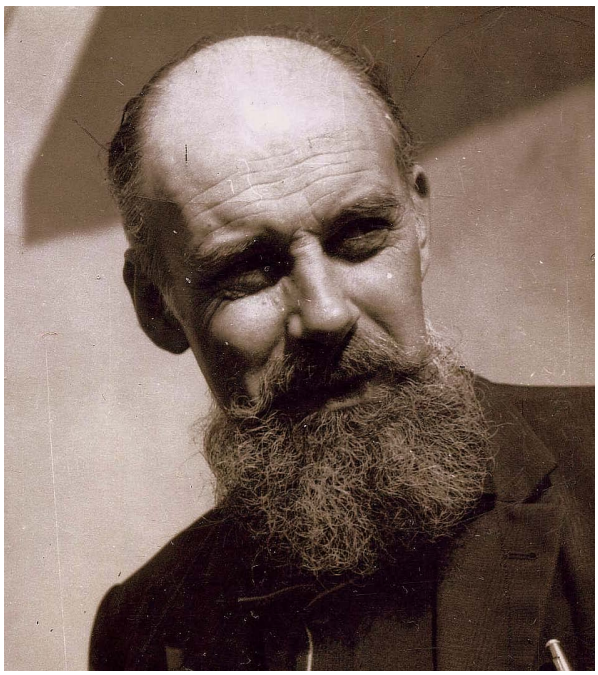
Professor Valeriy Shevchenko, an outstanding researcher of eriophyoid mites (Acari, Eriophyoidea), died on the 22nd of March, 2010, at the age of 80.

Shevchenko was born on the 3rd of October, 1929, in Vladivostok, the Far East of Russia. Soon after that, his family moved to Leningrad (today St. Petersburg), where he spent his whole life with the exception of four years when he was evacuated to Perm in World War II. Having completed the school course, Shevchenko worked as mechanic. His father and grandfather were famous engineers, experts in electric welding, but he didn't follow in their wake and in 1948 entered Leningrad State University, the faculty of Biology and Soil Sciences.

Being a first-year student, Shevchenko became interested in damages caused by eriophyoid mites on plants. As this group of mites was almost unexplored at that time, he chose it as a field of his research. In 1954 Shevchenko graduated from the university and became a post-graduate student at the Institute of Zoology of USSR Academia of Science, where his scientific adviser was a famous acarologist V.B. Dubinin.



Professor Shevchenko always had high esteem and gratitude for him, and for his university teacher V.L. Vagin, who drew his attention to the mites. He also admired the founder of eriophyidology Alfred

Nalepa. In 1967 for the 110th anniversary of the latter he wrote a special paper dedicated to Nalepa, published in 'Acarology' (Shevchenko, 1967).

In 1959 he defended his thesis on morphology of alder gall mite, *Eriophyes laevis*. In 1960-1963 Shevchenko worked at Leningrad State University as a lecturer, researcher and for three years as a deputy dean at the faculty of Biology and Soil Sciences.

In 1961 he undertook an expedition into mountain districts of the Kyrgyz Republic in order to advise the forestry specialists on methods of controlling the eriophyoid mites' injury to the juniper trees (*Juniperus semiglobosa*), cultivated in reservations. There he described the species *Trisetacus kirghisorum* Shevtchenko, 1962 inhabiting berries (cones) and destroying seeds of the juniper.

Since 1961 Shevchenko spent many field seasons in the Kyrgyz Republic, where he studied the biology of mites and their host-plants as well as methods of controlling them. It was at that time that he felt in love with the picturesque nature of central Asia, especially with mountain forests which now are threatened.

Many years later, after having finished his investigations in that region, he still kept in touch with it. In 1996 he became the head of the Kyrgyz Committee, created in the same year by St. Petersburg Scientists Union to unite representatives of sciences and humanities interested in researching Kyrgyz nature and culture.

In 1965 Shevchenko started to work at the Biological Institute of Leningrad State University. In 1968-1971 he was an acting director of the Institute. In 1968 he organized a research group for the study of Eriophyoidea, which included among its members I.G. Bagnyuck, S.I. Sukhareva and the late F.D. Sapozhnikova. Being an energetic person he managed to unite all eriophyidological studies in the Soviet Union, consulting acarologists, specialists in plant protection and agriculturists from Central Asia, Georgia, Ukraine, Baltic Republics, Altai and the Far East. He acted as scientific adviser for many post-graduate students from Russia, Central Asia, Ukraine, Egypt and Cuba that successfully defended their theses.

With the course of time the subject of study in the group became wider. Shevchenko maintained investigations of morphology and biology of mites as well as of different aspects of coevolution of mites and their host-plants. Whereas at the beginning of his career he dealt mainly with biology of the mites, later on he turned to decoding the evolution of the group. He insisted on examining the evolution of mites together with the evolution of their host-plants.

His favorite subjects of inquiry were mites of the subfamily Nalepellinae living on coniferous trees, which interested him because of his study of pests of junipers. He believed that this taxon is the key to understanding of the evolution of Eriophyoidea. Gradually eriophyoid mites, because of the damage they inflicted, became widely studied all over the world. The members of Shevchenko's team, having studied morphology and biology of mites, elaborated a theory of probable way of evolution of this group, published in a number of co-authored papers in 1991-1998 (Shevchenko, Bagnjuk, Sukhareva 1991; Bagnjuk, Sukhareva, Shevchenko 1995, 1998).

He was highly valued by his foreign colleagues as the founder of Russian eriophyidological school. At the end of the 20th century Shevchenko took part in a joint project 'World Crop Pest: Eriophyoid mites. Their biology, natural anemies and control', which summarised all available data concerning eriophyoid mites (Boczek and Shevchenko, 1996).

He was a well-rounded person whose talents included drawing, public speaking and writing poetry and novels, partly published at his web-site *http://tropy.spb.ru*. He also wrote a novel about his famous grand-father "Viktor Vologdin, the welder".

Unfortunately in the last years of his life he was unable to work actively, because his eyesight deteriorated. Still he kept in touch with his colleagues and maintained an interest in Russian politics. He was not only a great specialist in eriophyidology, but also a kind and sensitive friend and we will miss him dearly.

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