

## Vladimir Mikhailovich Loskot (1938–2021)

## Владимир Михайлович Лоскот (1938–2021)

V.A. Payevsky, Ya.A. Red'kin, A.F. Kovshar & A.M. Peklo

В.А. Паевский, Я.А. Редькин, А.Ф. Ковшарь, А.М. Пекло

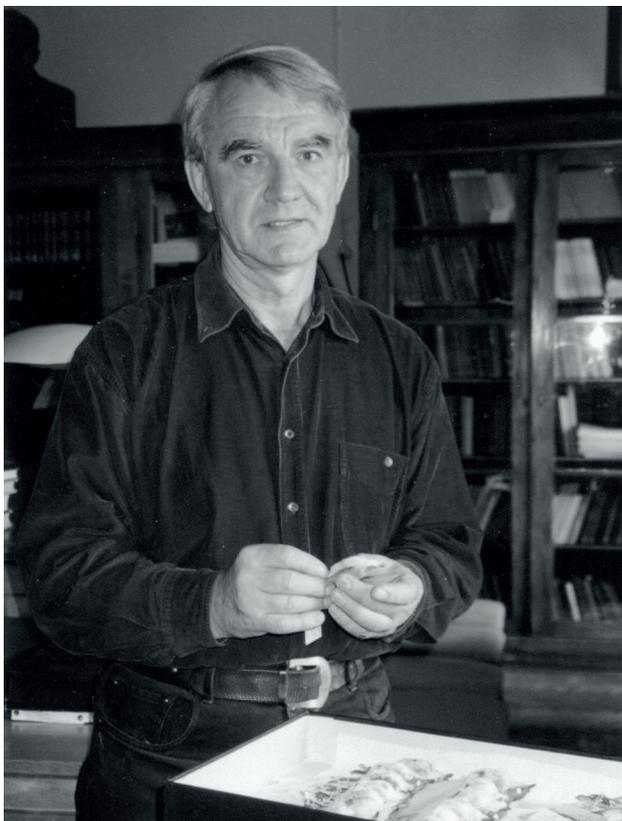
Vladimir A. Payevsky , Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1 Universitetskaya Emb., St Petersburg 199034, Russia. E-mail: [payevsky@yandex.ru](mailto:payevsky@yandex.ru)

Yaroslav A. Red'kin , Zoological Museum, Moscow State University, 2 Bolshaya Nikitskaya St., Moscow 125009, Russia. E-mail: [yardo@mail.ru](mailto:yardo@mail.ru)

Anatoly F. Kovshar , Institute of Zoology, 93 Al-Farabi St., Almaty, Kazakhstan. E-mail: [ibisbilkovshar@mail.ru](mailto:ibisbilkovshar@mail.ru)

Alexander M. Peklo , National Museum of Natural History and Science, National Academy of Science of Ukraine, 15 Khmelnytsky St., Kyiv 01601, Ukraine. E-mail: [alxpeklo@gmail.com](mailto:alxpeklo@gmail.com)

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Vladimir Mikhailovich Loskot died of Covid-19 related complications in a hospital in St Petersburg, Russia, on 15 May 2021 at the age of 82. He was a Ukrainian/Russian ornithologist, leading research fellow at the Zoological Institute of Russian Academy of Sciences and the last representative of the classic ornithological systematics at the Zoological Institute. An ethnic Ukrainian, he grew up, received his zoological training and spent the former half of his life and career in Kyiv (Kiev) and the latter half in Leningrad / St Petersburg; both these cities consider him their citizen.

Vladimir Mikhailovich Loskot was born on 24 August 1938 in the village of Kobzarivka in the Kharkiv Province (Ukraine). In 1960, he graduated from the Department of Vertebrate Zoology of Taras Shevchenko Kyiv State University (today Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv), where he was trained by the well-known mammologist Prof. Alexander Korneyev (1903–1987) and the leading Ukrainian ornithologists Prof. Alexander Kistiakivsky (Kistiakowsky) (1904–1983) and Prof. Mikhail Voinstvensky (1916–1996).

After graduation, Vladimir Loskot first worked at the Zoological Museum of Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, after that at the Department of Zoology of Kyiv University, and since 1964, at the Vertebrate Department of the I.I. Schmalhausen Institute of Zoology of Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in Kyiv. At that time, Vladimir made many field trips and expeditions in Ukraine, to the Caucasus and to the arid areas of Kazakhstan and Middle Asia, where he proved to be a brilliant field zoologist. In 1974, he obtained his PhD (Candidate of Sciences degree) for the thesis 'Chats and wheatears in the fauna of the USSR', devoted to the distribution, taxonomy and biology of one of the most difficult groups of songbirds, in respect of both complex taxonomy and accessibility of many species.

After his PhD defence, Vladimir Loskot spent two years as a junior researcher at the Schmalhausen Institute of Zoology of Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, and thereafter followed the invitation by Prof. Konstantin Yudin (1912–1980) to the Zoological Institute of Academy of Sciences of the USSR in Leningrad (today St Petersburg), where he worked for the following 44 years. Here he continued to study the fauna, geographical distribution, ecology and systematics of Palaearctic birds, mainly passerines. With his characteristic energy, clear focus and meticulousness, Loskot worked on the problem of the species and studied within-species variation and speciation in songbirds, with a special focus on secondary contact zones and hybridisation of closely related forms. He performed fieldwork in many areas of the former Soviet Union, including the more remote ones: in Ukraine, in the Caucasus, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, in southern Siberia (Altai, Tuva, Lake Baikal), in the Russian Far East (Amur River) and in the southern Kuril Islands. During his expeditions, Loskot collected large important material of thousands of bird skins, which is now kept at the Zoological Institute in St Petersburg and at the I.I. Schmalhausen Institute of Zoology in Kyiv.

In 1993, Dr Loskot presented and defended his habilitation thesis (Doctor of Sciences Dissertation) 'Within-species variation and divergence of closely related Palaearctic passerines (the case of less studied species)', in which he emphasised the importance of the subspecies as a taxonomic category that reflects population differentiation at cer-

tain stages of speciation. It was typical of Vladimir Loskot to study rare and understudied species occurring in remote areas, as well as highly variable species. He studied in much detail such species and subspecies as Eastern Black-eared Wheatear [*Oenanthe hispanica melanoleuca* (Güldenstädt, 1775)], Red-tailed Wheatear [*Oenanthe chrysopygia* (De Filippi, 1863)], Common Nightingale [*Luscinia megarhynchos* (Brehm, 1831)], Sombre Tit (*Poecile lugubris* Temminck, 1820), Pallas' Bunting [*Schoenichus pallasi* (Cabanis, 1851)], Radde's Accentor [*Prunella ocularis* (Radde, 1884)], Desert Lark [*Ammomanes deserti* (Lichtenstein, 1823)], Sulphur-bellied Warbler [*Phylloscopus griseolus* (Blyth, 1847)], Caucasian Great Rosefinch [*Carpodacus rubicilla rubicilla* (Güldenstädt, 1775)]. Vladimir Loskot described a new subspecies of Caucasian Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita caucasicus* Loskot, 1991), Central Siberian Pale Martin (*Riparia diluta gavrilovi* Loskot, 2001) and coauthored in the description of a new species of Brazilian Tapaculo, *Scytalopus notorius* Raposo, Stopiglia, Loskot et Kirwan, 2006. He redescribed and revised a number of passerine taxa, in particular, demonstrated the species status of the Caspian Tit, *Poecile hyrcanus* (Zarudny et Loudon, 1905).

Vladimir Loskot followed the current ornithological literature very closely, was often rather critical about publications and was always very particular about his own published works. Loskot invested much effort into publishing 18 issues of Atlas der Verbreitung palaearktischer Vögel (1978–1992) in Berlin. He also edited ornithological volumes of the Proceedings of the Zoological Institute (a journal since 2008, non-periodic monographic issues and collections of papers before that) and prepared 192 entries for the recent edition of the Great Russian Encyclopedia (2004–2017).

One of the coauthors (A.M. Peklo) was working on the catalogue of the oological collection of passerines of the National Museum of Natural History at the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, and Vladimir Loskot kept saying that this work had to be completed. He agreed to be the scientific editor of that volume and wrote an essay about the founder of the museum's collection of bird eggs Vitaly Zubarovsky, who was his good friend. Vladimir Loskot even donated his own

funds to facilitate publication of that book, which was then published in 2018.

Vladimir Loskot's activity in conservation of scientific collections deserves special praise. Already in his early years in Kyiv, he was a devoted taxonomist, faunist and biogeographer and had almost sacred attitude towards scientific collections and their exceptional value for research, which only increases with time. He has always been very particular about bird collections and museum specimens. Many bird mounts in the Zoological Museum in Kyiv are made by Loskot. Loskot prepared collection skins very well and could 'save' badly damaged specimens, which other workers abandoned as hopeless. He paid a lot of attention to conservation of a most diverse collection of birds at the Zoological Institute, which has been maintained in good condition largely due to his efforts. One of his achievements was replacing many collection vaults at the Department of Ornithology, which made the collection more safe and easy to work with.

In 1993–2007, Vladimir Loskot was the curator of the scientific collection of the Zoological Institute as a whole, not just the birds, and paid significant attention to the collections on other animal groups. Curator work, which included not just everyday routine work with specimens, but also intense correspondence with colleagues from around the world, took a lot of time at the expense of Vladimir's own research. In many cases when visiting scientists had a tight schedule, Loskot would stay at the department until 11 p.m. in order to give a colleague an opportunity to do more during their short visit. He was always most helpful, shared valuable advice and helped to locate necessary literature sources in real time.

Vladimir Loskot was a person who knew very clearly since his childhood who he would become, and purposefully carried out his plans. He has been passionate about birds throughout his entire life and was one of the most respected avian taxonomists in the former Soviet Union. His most characteristic personal feature was his selfless service to science. He was a very modest, to some extent

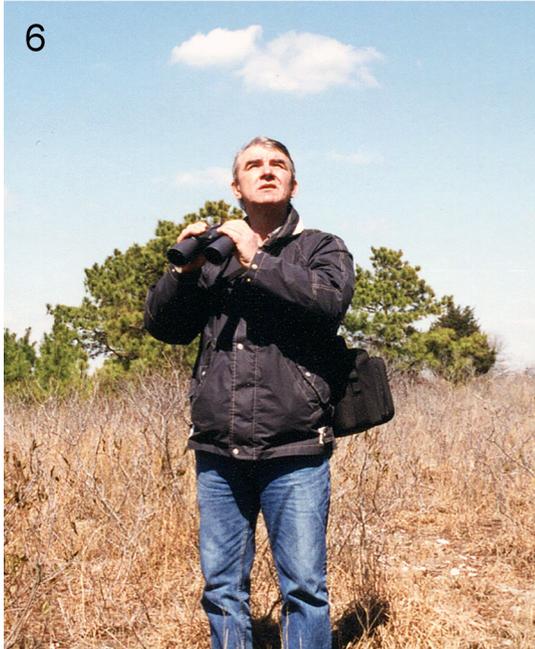
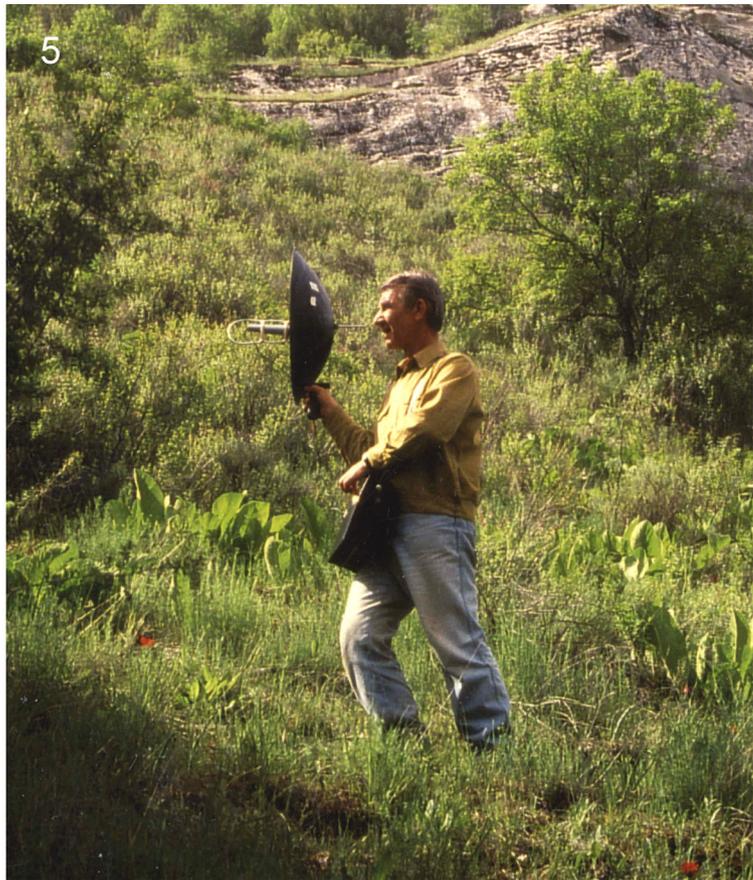
sentimental person, spoke in a low voice, a little tongue-tied, never emphasised his successes, did not climb into the front ranks, rejoiced at the successes of others and tacitly condemned the desire to use science for career advancement rather than for comprehension of the truth. He himself possessed deep knowledge, until his last days closely followed the current literature on ornithology and evolutionary theory in several languages. On a number of issues of taxonomy and the problem of the species, he adhered to somewhat conservative views. He did not really embrace the cladistics or conclusions based on the molecular analysis of single genes, especially when they clearly deviated from the established system. Loskot himself was determined that in matters of taxonomy, a thorough study of the material is necessary with an understanding of the weight of the characters. He also strived for the stability of the system, which should only be changed for good reasons. This was consistent with his personal views based on a thorough, unhurried approach. He clearly favoured the biological species concept, following the footsteps of Ernst Mayr, rather than the phylogenetic species concept.

After the passing of his beloved wife, a well-known entomologist Dr Vera Richter, his physical and psychological condition declined. He mostly worked from home, came to the Zoological Institute in the afternoon and remained as late as was possible for security reasons. An escape from loneliness was provided by his passion towards music, avian pets and certainly by systematic ornithology. Vladimir loved songbirds and always kept some at home. Until his last days, he had a Crested Lark, a Woodlark, a Goldfinch and a Linnet. During the lockdown in 2020–2021, Vladimir worked from home, and even after the lockdown was lifted, he practiced social distancing with rigour.

An amazing, extraordinary, very respectable and a little old-fashioned person and a scientist with a most responsible attitude to his work passed away. The sudden death of Vladimir Mikhailovich Loskot for us, his colleagues, was a heavy blow. We are going to miss him.

**Figs 1–3.** Photos of V.M. Loskot. **1, 2**, Vladimir at his first pigeon house on Millionnaya Street in Kyiv, 1950–1951; **3**, Vladimir and his son Yuriy in Koncha-Zaspa near Kyiv, 1975. Photo on p. 154: V.M. Loskot at the Department of Ornithology of Zoological Institute, St Petersburg, 6 September 2001 (photo by A.B. Egorov).





**Figs 4–7.** Photos of V.M. Loskot. **4**, expedition to Transbaikalia (Nerchinskiy Zavod Village in Chita Province), possibly 1975; **5**, recording bird's voice during field trip (1980ies); **6**, trip to the USA (Ocean City), 1998; **7**, with G.B. Bakhtadze at the Department of Ornithology of Zoological Institute, St Petersburg, in winter 2007/2008 (photo by P.V. Kijashko).

## The list of publications by V.M. Loskot (compiled by A.S. Sergeeva\*, Ya.A. Red'kin & A.A. Przhiboro\*)

*Notes.* References are arranged chronologically by year and mostly alphabetically within each year. Conference abstracts are not included if they are followed by full-text publications with the same or very similar title. The entries for the Great Russian Encyclopedia authored by V.M. Loskot are given as Electronic supplementary material (see Addenda).

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### 1962

**Kistiakowsky A.B., Smogorzewski L.A. & Loskot V.M.** 1962. New data on the northern border of the Manchurian fauna. *In: Materialy III Vsesoyuznoy ornitologicheskoy konferentsii* [Proceedings of the third All-Union ornithological conference], **2**: 25–26. L'viv. (In Russian).

### 1964

**Frantsevich L.I. & Loskot V.M.** 1964. Influence of temperature on the toxicity of insecticides to larvae of mosquito *Aedes aegypti* L. *Dopovidi AN URSSR*, **3**: 401–403. (In Ukrainian).

### 1967

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**Frantsevich L.I. & Loskot V.M.** 1967. Sensitivity of mosquito larvae (Culicidae) of some districts of the Ukrainian SSR to pesticides. *Vestnik Zoologii*, **1967**(1): 47–52. (In Russian).

**Sharpilo V.P. & Loskot V.M.** 1967. On the new records of the trematode *Collyriclum faba* (Bremsler, 1831) in the USSR territory. *Vestnik Zoologii*, **1967**(1): 75–78. (In Russian).

### 1969

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**Loskot V.M.** 1969. On the distribution of the Common Rock-thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (L.) in Transcarpathia. *Zbirnyk Prats' Zoologichnogo Muzeyu AN URSSR*, **33**: 110–112. (In Ukrainian). <https://doi.org/10.1271/bbb1961.33.110>

**Loskot V.M.** 1969. Some traits of nest building in wheatears. *In: Materialy V Vsesoyuznoy ornitologicheskoy konferentsii* [Proceedings of the fifth All-Union ornithological conference], **2**: 380–383. Ashkhabad. (In Russian).

### 1971

**Loskot V.M.** 1971. Notes on some birds of Badkhyz. *Zbirnyk Prats' Zoologichnogo Muzeyu AN URSSR*, **34**: 97–99. (In Ukrainian).

### 1972

**Loskot V.M.** 1972. Intraspecific variability and systematics of the Variable Wheatear *Oenanthe picata* (Blyth). *Vestnik Zoologii*, **1972**(4): 28–34. (In Russian).

### 1973

**Loskot V.M.** 1973. Geographical variability in European-Asian populations of the Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (L.). *Zbirnyk Prats' Zoologichnogo Muzeyu AN URSSR*, **35**: 72–77. (In Ukrainian).

**Loskot V.M. & Petrusenko O.A.** 1973. Feeding of the Mountain Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti oreophila* (Oberh.) in the Pamirs. *Zbirnyk Prats' Zoologichnogo Muzeyu AN URSSR*, **35**: 78–79. (In Ukrainian).

1974

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1982

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1986

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1987

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## The list of taxa described by V.M. Loskot

*Phylloscopus collybita caucasicus* Loskot, 1991;

*Riparia diluta gavrilovi* Loskot, 2001;

*Scytalopus notorius* Raposo, Stopiglia, Loskot et Kirwan, 2006.

## Addenda

*Electronic supplementary material.* A list of entries by V.M. Loskot for the Great Russian Encyclopedia (2004–2017). File format: PDF. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.31610/zsr/2022.31.1.154>

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