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## The History and Scientific Significance of the Ornithological Collection of the Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg

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### SUMMARY

The collection of the Ornithology Department of the Zoological Institute, St. Petersburg (ZISP), one of the largest ornithological collections in Europe, comprises about 170,000 skins of more than 4,200 bird species, 2,700 skeletons of 1,080 species, 7,500 alcohol-preserved specimens of 850 species and numerous nests and eggs, altogether about 200,000 items.

The oldest specimens were collected by the G. H. LANGSDORFF expedition to Brazil in 1821-1829 and by F. H. KITTLITZ on his voyage round the world on the corvette „Senyavin“ in 1826-1829. 754 specimens of 314 bird species, among them unique specimens of species which are now extinct were received from KITTLITZ.

First collections from NW America and Kamchatka were made by I. G. VOSNESENSKI in 1839-1849. Subsequent quick increase of collection was due to receiving of material from expeditions of A. Th. MIDDENDORFF, L. I. SCHRENCK, N. A. SEVERTSOV, E. A. EVERSMAAN, R. K. MAACK, G. I. RADDE, K. M. BAER and Th. Th. BRANDT. Material of great scientific value was collected in Central Asia by N. M. PRZEWALSKI, G. N. POTANIN, G. E. and M. E. GRUM-GRZHIMAILO, P. K. KOZLOV and in Middle Asia by N. A. ZARUDNY. The identification of the collection from Central Asia was carried out by Th. D. PLESKE and V. L. BIANCHI. Of special note are two large collections received from M. A. MENZBIER and P. P. SUSHKIN early in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Later well known ornithologists B. K. STEG-

MANN, E. V. KOZLOVA, A. Y. TUGARINOV, A. I. IVANOV, L. A. PORTENKO, L. A. SHULPIN, K. A. JUDIN, I. A. NEUFELDT added a considerable amount of material to the collection.

As a result, the fauna of Russia and neighbouring countries, especially that of the Arctic region, Caucasus, Kazakhstan, Middle Asia, Central Siberia, Chukotka, Kamchatka and Primorskii Territory are represented amply in the collection. Many Palaearctic species are represented by long series of specimens which makes it possible to study the intraspecific variation, including the geographical variation. The Nearctic fauna is represented well enough; fauna of SE Asia, by considerable amount of material; material from Africa and Australia is scanty.

The collection comprises a great number of name-bearing types of taxa described by Russian zoologists, and also skins of 11 species and six subspecies of birds which are now extinct, among them *Phalacrocorax perspicillatus*, *Camptorhynchus labradorius*, *Aphaniotanus monasa*, *Columba versicolor*, *Aplonis corvina*, *Zootera terrestris* and *Chaunoproctus ferreorostris*. Most skins in the collection are well prepared and well preserved which permits the study of fine traits of external morphology, such as small differences in plumage colouration.

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