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## OBITUARIES

**Nikolai Vasil'evich Parin**  
(1932–2012)

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### Bruce B. Collette<sup>1</sup>

ON April 18, 2012, Russia and the world lost its leading expert on flyingfishes (Exocoetidae), cutlassfishes (Trichiuroidei), and other deep sea and pelagic fishes, and we lost a beloved colleague, Nik Parin of the P. P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow (Fig. 1). He survived a stroke in February 2006 and was in poor health, suffering from cancer until his death in Moscow. He is survived by his devoted wife Olga Vladimirovna Parina and his son Nikolai Nikolaiovich Parin and family with two grandchildren.

**Early life.**—Nik was born on 21 November 1932 in Perm, Russia. He had two brothers and one sister. His father, Vasily Vasilievich Parin (1903–1971), was a prominent researcher in space medicine, an academician, a deputy minister for health care in the USSR, and vice-president of the Soviet Academy for Medical Science. In 1937, the family moved to Moscow but returned to Perm during World War II as the German armies approached Moscow. The family survived the war fairly well and returned to Moscow in 1943 after the German retreat had begun. Nik developed an early interest in nature; his father was also interested and knowledgeable in such matters. Family outings in the summer offered opportunities to explore and study nature. He also developed an interest in collecting stamps with fish images. Nik finished his grade schooling in Moscow in 1950. After WWII, Vasily Parin visited the United States as part of an official Russian delegation to U.S. medical centers. Upon his return, Vasily was summoned by Stalin to provide him with a personal report as to what he had learned and observed in the U.S. Vasily's report indicated that the U.S. programs were more advanced than those of the Soviets. This so angered Stalin that he ordered Vasily to be arrested as an American spy and he remained imprisoned until Stalin's death in 1953. He was then appointed as Director of the Institute for Medicine, where among other activities, he helped train Yuri Gagarin for his space trip.

His father's arrest prevented Nik from entering Moscow State University because he had been named as "the son of the enemy of the people." Exclusion was not explicit, but ways were found to keep him out. As Nik told it, his entry exam in physics had several questions. He correctly answered the first three easily, but his examiners found one question that he couldn't answer and used that as an excuse to deny his entrance. Instead, Nik entered the Moscow Institute for Fisheries, which no longer exists. Nik graduated with honors from the Institute of Fisheries in 1955 and began his career at the P. P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology, Moscow, as a technician on the first vessel *Vityaz* in Vladivostok where he worked for more than a year



**Fig. 1.** Nik at the front door of IOAN, the Oceanographic Institute of the Academy of Sciences in June 1993. Photo by Matthias Stehmann.

in 1959 (at TINRO) before returning to study for his advanced degrees in the Nekton Laboratory under the guidance of Teodor S. Rass. He received two degrees: one was equivalent to our Ph.D.; the second was a higher degree, Doctor of Science. The first degree was based on "The Flying Fishes Exocoetidae and Oxyporhamphidae" (Parin, 1961) under the guidance of Teodor S. Rass. After six years, he received the Doctor of Science degree based on "Ichthyofauna of the Oceanic Epipelagic" under the guidance of A.

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Andriashev and G. Lindberg (Parin, 1968). The laboratory subsequently was divided, and Nik went with the Laboratory of Oceanic Ichthyofauna where he became chief in 1973. He studied pelagic fishes for his entire career until his death, and he spent many months at sea (20 long cruises totaling eight years) on various Soviet oceanographic vessels, building an exceptionally important collection of oceanic pelagic fishes at the Institute of Oceanology.

Nik and Olga became acquainted at the Institute in 1963 where Olga was working in the Laboratory of Microbiology. They married in 1966 after rafting down the wide river Ural which flows into the Caspian Sea. It was a happy time for both as they, together with their faithful dog, an Irish setter named Dana, fished, hunted, and admired nature. While Olga never took part in any of Nik's oceanic cruises, she always eagerly awaited his return and often regretted that she could not see the interesting countries and islands that he had visited. After the political situation in Russia changed, Olga was able to accompany Nik on visits to the USA, Germany, South Africa, Australia, and Japan where she recorded her impressions in her diary.

**Honors.**—Nik was elected Vice-President of the European Union of Ichthyologists in 1982 and re-elected in 1985 and 1988. In 1984, he was elected Honorary Foreign Member of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists. He was confirmed as Professor in Ichthyology in 1986. Nik also held an adjunct appointment at the Paleontological Institute in Moscow, near to and on the same boulevard as his decades-long apartment home on Profsoyuznaya. In 1988 he was appointed as Editor in Chief of *Voprosy Ikhtiologii*, the primary Russian ichthyological journal, and held this position until 2010. Nik's predecessors in this editorship were the distinguished Russian ichthyologists G. V. Nikolsky (vols. 1–17, 1953–1977) and A. P. Andriashev (vols. 18–28, 1978–1988). In 1993 he became an Honorary Member of the Japanese Ichthyological Society. He was elected to the prestigious position of Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1994. In 2000, he was awarded the highest award of the Academy of Sciences—the Leo S. Berg Gold Medal—for his outstanding research on biogeography and ichthyology. About three dozen species of fishes have been named in his honor (Evseenko and Pavlov, 2012).

**Later years.**—In spite of the rigors of existence during Soviet times, the life of Nik and Olga became far more enjoyable when Nik managed to purchase “a small wooden house in a tiny village hidden in forests some 500 km NW of Moscow and was very much occupied with its repair and improvement during most of August, September, and early October, 1989” (correspondence of 5 November 1989). Nik and Olga valued the opportunity to escape from Moscow and work in their garden in the village. In June 1993, Nik wrote of the three spring weeks that he and his family spent planting a vegetable garden at “our village house.” Nik had a series of Irish setter dogs that were precious to him, several of which were called Nazca in honor of the southeastern Pacific ridge of that name, and although these were city dogs during most of the year, they were hunting dogs for Nik at his country home. Nik enjoyed hunting but probably enjoyed simply walking in the woods and looking at the lake with his dogs even more. He liked watching the birds flying in the sky and listening to their beautiful singing. Visitors to their

wooden cottage in Gulaevo included Walter Ivantsoff from Australia and Matthias Stehmann from Germany.

Perhaps the largest group of ichthyologists (13 from eight countries) ever to jointly participate in collecting and research at sea was on R/V *Vityaz* cruise 17 in the western Indian Ocean between the Gulf of Aden and south of Madagascar along the coast of west Africa, November 1988 to January 1989 (Fig. 2): Eric Anderson from the J. L. B. Smith Institute in Grahamstown, South Africa; E. “Bertel” Bertelsen and Jørgen Nielsen from the Universitetets Zoologiske Museum in Copenhagen; Dan Cohen then at the Los Angeles County Museum; Bruce Collette from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Washington, D.C.; Nigel Merrett from the British Museum (Natural History) in London; John Paxton from the Australian Museum, Sydney; Ken Sulak then at the Huntsman Marine Science Center in St. Andrews, Canada; Matthias Stehmann from the Institut für Seefischerei in Hamburg, Germany; plus the Russian ichthyologists Emma Karmovskaya, L. Manilo, and Yuri Shcherbachev, all under the leadership of Nik Parin. Many new species were found, including a new scorpionfish and a new moray eel that was named in Nik's honor, ranges were extended, and the fish fauna of Walters Shoals, south of Madagascar, was defined (Collette and Parin, 1991).

In a hand-written letter dated 20 December 1991, Nik noted that: “The life here is hard now. I think not much better than during World War II. All things are in shortage and the prices become too high for state employees. Yeltsin, the President of Russia, promised to double our salary in 1992 but that is not adequate to the inflation we have. And, nevertheless, we still trust in the better future of this long suffering country.” Nik deeply loved Mother Russia.

Perhaps because of his extensive international collaborations, Nik developed relatively good working-English abilities. Nik was an easy person to like; he was usually somewhat quiet and reserved until he got to know you well, and was always a friendly and decent colleague of great integrity. Nik's travel and professional contacts were decreased by a stroke in February 2006. In 2007, Jim and Diane Tyler visited Nik, Olga, and Nick Jr. in Moscow. Nik's speech was somewhat slowed from the stroke and he used a cane for walking, but his mind was as clear and thoughtful as ever. By now Moscow had been transformed into a vibrant city, where commercial enterprise equaled its rich cultural heritage. Nick Jr. wanted to move his parents into a more modern, spacious apartment, but Nik, in his humble and quiet way, preferred to stay in his small apartment surrounded by his impressive collection of memorabilia and biological specimens acquired during his extensive international travels. A few years later Nik was diagnosed with cancer. As the cancer worsened, Nik's son arranged for specialized treatment in Israel, but to no lasting avail, and our collaborations with this fine ichthyologist and wonderful friend are at an end, while our fond memories of him are long lasting. Nik's beloved dog Iry died 45 days after Nik's death.

**Collaboration.**—Nik published widely with both Russian and foreign ichthyologists, including Kunio Amaoka, Bill Anderson, Marie-Louise Bauchot, Norma Chirichigno, Bruce Collette, Al Ebeling, Bob Gibbs, Phil Heemstra, Butch Hulley, John McCosker, Izumi Nakamura, John Paxton, Bill Percy, Jack Randall, and Matthias Stehmann. Nik's few fossil fish publications were mostly with Alex Bannikov of the Borisyak Paleontological Institute, Moscow, where Nik had an adjunct



**Fig. 2.** Group photograph of the ichthyologists on board the *Vityaz* during cruise 17 in the western Indian Ocean in 1988/89.

research appointment, as well as with several other Russian paleontologists and Giorgio Carnevale of Italy.

I started research on halfbeaks and needlefishes in 1960 and began collaborating with Nik in 1965, leading to our first joint paper, the 1970 Atlante Report on Eastern Atlantic needlefishes. Subsequently, I discovered an undescribed species of the halfbeak genus *Rhynchorhamphus* in the collections of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University; however, before I could publish the description of this new species, I learned that Nik had already published the species without knowing of my work (Parin and Shcherbachev, 1972). I wrote to Nik outlining future beloniform projects with an invitation to collaborate or to pick which projects he planned to pursue independently. We chose to work on several joint projects. In 1979, Nik and I began a review of Indo-West Pacific halfbeaks (Parin et al., 1980) and then collaborated on beloniforms for the Ahlstrom volume in 1984 (Collette et al., 1984). Ultimately, we published 13 joint papers.

Nik's first visit to the United States during the Pacific Science Congress held in Hawaii. His first independent visit to the United States was arranged through the Smithsonian Institution by Bob Gibbs and Dan Cohen in May–June 1978. Bob, Dan, and I met Nik at Dulles Airport and took him to a hotel for the first few days of his visit. Then my wife Sara and I invited Nik to stay at our home, Pageland Farm, in Fauquier County, Virginia. We would study halfbeaks and

needlefishes at the museum during the day, return to the farm, change clothes, and then assist the farm workers with cutting and baling hay. The group making hay apologized to Nik for the poor state of their mechanized equipment, to which Nik replied, "we are still using pitchforks in the USSR." At the conclusion of his visit, the farm workers presented Nik with a western style hat that he wore at Dulles while awaiting boarding an Aeroflot plane for his return flight to Moscow.

Nik made a second visit to the U.S. in 1990, supported by the Smithsonian Institution, to work on flyingfishes and gempylids. One of the projects that resulted from this visit was the description of a new cutlassfish (Parin and Collette, 1993). Nik was able to bring his beloved wife Olga with him, for her first visit to a western country other than Greece. Nik and the always ebullient Olga stayed with me and my wife at Pageland and with Jim and Diane Tyler in suburban Maryland. When they were asked if there was any special place they would like to see on weekends when not at the museum working, Nik, in his quiet and gentlemanly way, deferred to Olga. She immediately said, yes, she wanted to see Niagara Falls, not fully realizing just how far away that was. So the Parins and Tylers took off by car for a week-long tour of upstate New York, staying at the home of Diane's parents in Tonawanda, New York, near Niagara Falls. Olga's dream was fulfilled as tears welled up in her eyes at the sight of the Falls, but Nik was as equally impressed by a side trip to Presque Isle peninsula

**Table 1.** List of Parin Patronyms Arranged Alphabetically by Family Name (from Eschmeyer, 2013).

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<i>Ariomma parini</i> Piotrovsky, 1987. Ariommatidae
<i>Bathylagichthys parini</i> Kobylansky, 1990. Bathylagidae
<i>Callanthias parini</i> Anderson and Johnson, 1984. Callanthiidae
<i>Pyramodon parini</i> Markle and Olney, 1990. Carapidae
<i>Cetichthys parini</i> Paxton. Cetomimidae
<i>Pseudoscopelus parini</i> Prokofiev and Kukuev, 2006. Chiasmodontidae
<i>Gnathophis parini</i> Karmovskaya, 1990. Congridae
<i>Mollisquama parini</i> Dolganov, 1984. Dalatiidae
<i>Diretmichthys parini</i> (Post and Quéro, 1981). Diretmidae
<i>Epigonus parini</i> Abramov, 1987. Epigonidae
<i>Howella parini</i> Fedoryako, 1976. Howellidae
<i>Bathypterois parini</i> Shcherbachev and Sulak, 1988. Ipnopidae
<i>Linophryne parini</i> Bertelsen, 1980. Linophrynidae
<i>Volodichthys parini</i> (Andriashev and Prirodina, 1990). Liparidae
<i>Gaidropsarus parini</i> Svetovidov, 1986. Lotidae
<i>Nezumia parini</i> Hubbs and Iwamoto, 1977. Macrouridae
<i>Melamphaes parini</i> Kotlyar, 1999. Melamphaidae
<i>Physiculus parini</i> Paulin, 1991. Moridae
<i>Gymnothorax parini</i> Collette, Smith and Böhlke, 1991. Muraenidae
<i>Diaphus parini</i> Becker, 1992. Myctophidae
<i>Dolichopteryx parini</i> Kobylansky and Fedorov, 2001. Opisthoproctidae
<i>Ichthyococcus parini</i> Mukhacheva, 1980. Phosichthyidae
<i>Pectinantus parini</i> (Sazonov, 1976). Platyroctidae
<i>Planonasmus parini</i> Weigmann, Stehmann and Thiel, 2013. Pseudotriakidae
<i>Plectranthias parini</i> Anderson and Randall, 1991. Serranidae
<i>Polyipnus parini</i> Borodulina, 1979. Sternoptychidae
<i>Eustomias parini</i> Clarke, 2001. Stomiidae
<i>Symphysanodon parini</i> Anderson and Springer, 2005. Symphysanodontidae
<i>Lycenchelys parini</i> Fedorov, 1995. Zoarcidae

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that juts into Lake Erie. Along the route there, they by chance noticed a wood-framed, onion-domed Old Believers Russian Orthodox church, where Nik could scarcely understand the ancient Russian that was spoken to him by the church attendants. A few years later, Nik returned the travel favor when Jim was in Moscow for research at the Paleontological Institute and, upon its completion, Diane joined him. The Tylers had never seen St. Petersburg and inquired about the Hermitage and conditions there during the transition to democracy, and about the health of the esteemed and at-that-time elderly Anatoly Petrovich Andriashev and the other ichthyologists in St. Petersburg. Nik and Nick Jr. (who was just completing his doctoral work at the Paleontological Institute in Moscow under Alex Bannikov) immediately volunteered to make the long drive up to St. Petersburg in their jeep-like car, which they loaded up with extra canisters of gasoline because gas was unlikely to be available along the highway during this tumultuous period—the car was a traveling Molotov cocktail. The group visited Andriashev at his home where Nik was received with great enthusiasm and obvious affection. At that time, democracy and private enterprise in Russia were in their infancy, and public places to eat were difficult to find. Their stop at a private restaurant was Nik's first time at such a place in Russia, and he much preferred a subsequent simple meal of freshly killed, roast chicken at a small wooden hut outside of St. Petersburg.

In 1991, Jim Tyler obtained Smithsonian funds to bring Nik's son Nick Jr. to Washington to continue his ichthyological/

paleontological studies at the National Museum and to attend my "Biology of Fishes" course at the Bermuda Biological Station. Nick Jr. published a number of papers on fossil fishes before economic conditions led him to take up a leadership position in a profit-making branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Nik's last trip to the U.S. was in January 1992, when he was invited by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission to participate in an international workshop "Fishing for tunas associated with floating objects" in La Jolla, California, resulting in a paper (Parin and Fedoryako, 1999).

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As part of his historical research, D. Smith interviewed Nik during the FAO East Central Atlantic Workshop in the Canary Islands in 2004 but unfortunately did not have the opportunity to complete the interview. Recollections of my interactions with Nik were enhanced by the 140 letters between us, which are now housed in the Smithsonian Institution Archives, SIA Accession 05-292, Box 2 (of 5), access to which was facilitated by I. Bowman. Nik's wife Olga Parina, son Nikolai N. Parin, and colleagues J. Tyler, M. Stehmann, W. Anderson, D. Smith, and W. Eschmeyer reviewed drafts of this obituary and provided useful details on Nik's life and accomplishments.

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through 2012 (with some papers still in press), Nik published more than 255 papers, mostly on deep sea fishes (69), flyingfishes (30 with 3 more in press with I. Shakhovskoy), other beloniforms (21), fishes of ridges and sea mounts (31), pelagic fishes (28), and trichiurids (27). He described more than 166 new species of fishes and 12 genera (see list in Evseenko and Pavlov, 2012). At least 29 species (Table 1) and one genus of fishes were named in his honor, most recently a false cat shark, *Planonasus parini* Weigmann, Stehmann, and Thiel, 2013. A recent number of the *Voprosy Ikhtiologii* containing 12 papers on grenadiers (Macrouridae) was dedicated to Nik (Iwamoto and Orlov, 2012). Obituaries have been published in the *Voprosy Ikhtiologii* (Evseenko and Pavlov, 2012) and *Okeanologiya* (Editorial Board, 2012) and I am sure there will be more.

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