

# OBITUARY

## Professor Edward Ivanovich Gavrilo

Edward Gavrilo was born on 8 October 1933 at Veronezh, Russia. It was here that he graduated from the Department of Zoology in 1956. After graduation his interest in birds began and his first studies were based in the Volga–Ural region. Edward moved to Almaty, Kazakhstan in 1959 where until 1964 he worked at the Institute of Botany. He then moved to the Institute of Zoology where he worked under the eminent ornithologist Dalgushin studying in particular high-altitude species. Whilst participating in this study he found the first ever recorded nest of Red-breasted Rosefinch *Carpodacus puniceus*, in the Zailiyskiy Alatau in June 1967. Following the death of Dalgushin in 1966, Edward became head of the Laboratory of Ornithology at Almaty a post he held until 1990. With this post came the responsibility of completing the five volume work *The Birds of Kazakhstan* which was still in progress. This work went on to receive a state prize following its publication in 1974. In addition to this major publication over 400 scientific papers bear his name.

Edward had developed a keen interest in the migration of birds through Kazakhstan and was instrumental in the establishment of the now famous Chokpak ringing station in 1968; to date over 1.6 million migrating birds have been ringed there in the huge Heligoland traps. It was here Edward was to be found every spring and autumn.

Edward was very conscious of Kazakhstan's ornithological 'isolation' under Soviet times; he made serious efforts to improve his English which he learned at school with a view to helping communication with other ornithological communities. He was delighted when OSME expanded its boundaries to include the Caucasus and Central Asia, with *Sandgrouse* providing a vehicle for his protégés to publish the most important aspects of their studies.

During the 1990s the government funding for the Institute at Almaty almost dried up, Edward and his colleagues saw the only



**Plate 1.** Edward Gavrilo (right) with Lars Svensson, Almaty, 2006. © Andrew Lassey

way forward being to plan and participate in accompanying Western ornithologists on expeditions. It would have been in these circumstances that many OSME members will have had the privilege of meeting Edward. All who met him found him both warm and helpful whether trapping accentors in the mountains or marshalling the helpers at Chokpak. Many of us will remember with affection Edward's expressions such as when describing a resident species it would be 'he live here'. Edward became a close friend to many OSME members and time spent in his company will long remain a treasured memory for many of us.

Following a debilitating illness, Edward died on 15 September 2011. To the end he was working on his theories of migration in relation to the wing loading of birds. I was exceptionally pleased to be able to visit him in hospital in what turned out to be the last few months of his life. Amazingly even having been seriously ill, Edward and I shared a good hour of conversation (in English remarkably) covering a range of topics—all of course bird related. It is a true measure of the man when his closing remarks to me were "My friend we have shared many times and many ringing experiences but in my opinion ringing is finished—the way forward is satellite tagging, we should work on this together".

Our hearts go out to his wife Jane and his son Andrei of whom he was so rightly proud. Andrei is thankfully perpetuating his father's work at the Almaty Institute and Chokpak.

*Andrew Lassey, with assistance from Mike Pearson and Anatoly Kovshar*