

Professor M. M. Kozhov  
(Obituary)  
1890—1968



Professor M. M. KOZHov, a well known and outstanding Russian hydrobiologist, was born on November 18, 1890, into a farmer family at the village of Tutury, Irkutsk region. In 1925 he graduated from The Irkutsk State University, and in 1936 received the degree of Doctor of Biological Sciences. From 1931 up to his death he was working as Professor of Invertebrate Zoology in Irkutsk University, and from 1931 to 1963 also as Director of the Biological-geographical Scientific Institute. He founded a hydrobiological school for all aspects of the study of Lake Baikal and other lakes of East Siberia and developed the Biological Station at the village of Bolshye Koty.

M. M. Kozhov published about 111 scientific contributions, among which were 5 books: "The Molluscs of Lake Baikal", 1936; "Animal World of Lake Baikal", 1947; "Fresh Waters of East Siberia", 1950; "Biology of Lake Baikal" 1962; and "Baikal and its life", 1963 (in English, ed. Junk, Netherlands). The great review "Fishes and Fisheries in the Basin of Lake Baikal", 1958, was edited and partly written by him also.

His studies during the last 25 years have been chiefly concerned with the problem of the history and origin of Lake Baikal and other waterbodies of the East Siberia, and their fauna and flora. In the elucidation of these problems he organized many expeditions to the lakes and rivers of East Siberia and Mongolia. Autochthonous Baikal species found in these areas contributed to the clarification of the history and the classification of the East Siberian lakes.

A thorough study of the recent and fossil molluscs of Baikal and their comparative anatomy allowed M. M. KOZHOV to disprove the widely held theory of the close genetic relations between the faunas of Lake Baikal, the Caspian Sea, and Lake Ohrid. The investigation also contributed to his theory of the origin of the Baikal fauna stated in his monograph "Baikal and its life" and other papers. M. M. KOZHOV showed that the autochthonous Baikal fauna has no marine ancestors, excluding recent immigrants from the Polar Seas (seal, omul), but for its origins one must search in the Miocene-Oligocene (not Pliocene), when the initial forms inhabited waterbodies, including brackishwater areas, of South Siberia and Central Asia.

M. M. KOZHOV was the first scientist to begin regular ecological investigations of Baikal and East Siberian water fauna; previous studies had been mainly taxonomic. These ecological researches explained the interesting phenomenon of "nonmixing" of the European-Siberian and the endemic fauna in Baikal and proved that its cause was not the "heavy water", but rather the low temperature and high oxygen content. In his book of 1947 M. M. KOZHOV suggested the new idea that the diurnal vertical migrations of plankton organisms were adaptive, allowing them to escape from predators. Ecological researches of M. M. KOZHOV and his students were of great importance in working out measures for the reconstruction of the Baikal fisheries, especially those for increasing the omul stock.

M. M. KOZHOV was the first to protest against the discharge of Baikal-water into the Bratsk reservoir and against the pollution of this unique lake with the wastes of cellulose mills.

Under KOZHOV's guidance the ichthyological and fishery investigations of Angara and South-Siberian lakes were planned and carried out. He consolidated the work of scientists and institutes of East Siberia and organized in 1948 the East Siberian Department of the All-Union Hydrobiological Society and also annual scientific conferences in Irkutsk.

Undoubtedly M. M. KOZHOV was the leading authority on Baikal and its fauna and it is to his credit that Baikal became one of the best studied lakes in the world. He adored this wonderful lake and started every spring in a cruise on Baikal, "like the migrant birds", he used to say.

M. M. KOZHOV was a member of the SIL (International Limnological Association) and attended the Limnological and Zoological Congresses. The Soviet Government valued very highly his great services to the country, awarding to M. M. KOZHOV the Order of the Red Banner of Labour, the Badge of Honour and the title of the Honoured Scientist of the RSFSR.

M. M. KOZHOV died on November 4, 1968, at the age of 78, after a painful illness.

PH. D. MORDUKHAI-BOLTOVSKOI