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Deep mourning with the loss of Ekaterina Alekseevna (Katya) Sidorchuk (09.07.1981–20.01.2019), an excellent and promising palaeontologist

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Ekaterina Alekseevna (Katya) Sidorchuk
09.07.1981–20.01.2019

Ekaterina Alekseevna Sidorchuk (Katya to all that knew her) (Fig.1) was born in Moscow into a family of scientists: her father was a geomorphologist and her mother a Quaternary palynologist. Soil/peat microsamples from the North Russian Quaternary, the main research material of her mother, are commonly rich in oribatid mites, which Katya started to study when she entered the Geographical Faculty of Moscow State University after completing her high school education in 1998. In the Department of Biogeography, her study of Quaternary oribatids was guided by the known Russian acarologist, the late Prof. Dmitry Krivolutsky. Katya graduated from the University in 2004 and post-graduated in 2007 when she obtained her PhD degree for the study titled “Oribatid mites as bio-indicators of environmental change during the Holocene (modern and fossil bog communities of Northern European Plain)”. The next year, 2008, she entered the A.A. Borissiak Paleontological Institute and worked at the Arthropoda Laboratory until her recent untimely departure.

Katya’s interests in acarology were very wide, as her bibliography clearly shows. These cover taxonomy of a wide array of taxa, both living and extinct, their morphology, bionomy, biogeography and faunistics, and various aspects of evolution. There are many impressive discoveries in her publications including descriptions of

new families (Glaesacaridae for a previously enigmatic even if abundant, and behaviorally exclusive “*Acarus rhombeus*” of the Baltic amber; Sidorchuk & Klimov, 2011; Klimov Sidorchuk, 2011) and superfamilies (Nasutiacaroida in French Cretaceous amber; Sidorchuk *et al.*, 2015), the first mites in the Triassic amber (tiny Tetrapodili; Sidorchuk *et al.*, 2014), demonstration of mammal (erinaceomorph) parasitism of Eocene Myobiidae mites in Baltic amber (Sidorchuk *et al.*, 2018), as well as the observation that Acari were, more or less, the same small size throughout their evolutionary history (Sidorchuk, 2018). Katya’s input was also great with regard to amber studies in general, both in respect to comprehensive study of fauna of particular fossil resins (Rasnitsyn *et al.*, 2016, where Katya’s role was at least as important as that of the first author), and in development of methods and tools for precise preparation of amber inclusions for their scientific study (Sidorchuk, 2011, 2013; Sidorchuk & Vorontsov, 2014, 2018). During the last few years, Katya developed keen interest into the general aspects of biology and evolution that would have promised further diversification of her scientific activity, which, alas, could not be realized.

Katya was one of the most gifted scientists on our team and unquestionably the most attractive person there. She was internally free, open-minded, friendly, optimistic,



FIGURE 1. Ekaterina Alekseevna (Katya) Sidorchuk.

attentive to other people, and highly sociable. At the same time, she was firm in what she thought was important and was convincing in discussion. Her accuracy and reliability in description and illustration was fabulous. Katya was very successful also as an editor (*Zootaxa*, *Acarologia*) and organizer of conferences, easily communicated in different languages, mostly English and French. She felt at ease in any country and with any people. Katya was a happy person. She met her husband Dima Vorontsov, a physiologist, 12 years ago and, since then, they were virtually inseparable and cooperated closely at work. They traveled frequently all over the globe (most of Europe including Iceland, Russian North, Japan, Lebanon, both Americas, Australia and New Zealand, and, unfortunately, the Maldives, where a tragic diving accident happened). They attended jointly both her and his conferences in Russia and abroad. And all development of amber polishing methods and tools they made together with persistence and ingenuity so characteristic of both of them.

The untimely departure of Katya has left a deep empty hole in the Moscow paleoentomological team, in the paleoentomological and acarological societies in general, and in my heart.

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