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**HISTORY OF ICHTHYOLOGICAL RESEARCH AT SBS–IBSS
(ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ICHTHYOLOGY DEPARTMENT)**

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In 2026, the A. O. Kovalevsky Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas of RAS, the successor of the Sevastopol Biological Station, celebrates its 155th anniversary. This year also marks the 60th anniversary of the Ichthyology Department, founded by an outstanding hydrobiologist Professor V. A. Vodyanitsky. Ichthyological research has been conducted throughout the history of the first marine biological institution in Russia, which played a significant role both in national and global science. The article examines the stages of development of ichthyological research at SBS–IBSS: from the first ecological and faunistic surveys in the Black Sea to large-scale studies in the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific oceans. Material is presented on the origins of the Ichthyology Department, the formation of scientific schools, prominent researchers, and key achievements.

First studies of Black Sea fish at the Sevastopol Biological Station. From the first years of the Sevastopol Biological Station (hereinafter SBS) existence, its researchers studied the Black Sea flora and fauna, *inter alia* analyzing the taxonomy and anatomy of Azov–Black Sea fishes. Systematic surveys were conducted by A. Ostroumov, who headed the station in 1891–1897. He participated in expeditions of the Black Sea Fleet and other organizations, exploring the Black Sea and Sea of Azov, mouths of the Danube and Dnieper, and the Bosphorus region. A. Ostroumov’s collections of fish and invertebrates were pretty rich. His work allowed him to elucidate the general history of the origin of the fauna of the Black Sea, Sea of Azov, and Marmara Sea. In 1896, A. Ostroumov published the first “Identification Guide to Fish of the Black Sea and Sea of Azov” covering 154 species.

In 1902, S. Zernov, a graduate of the Moscow University, became the head of SBS. He attracted many specialists and students, engaging them in ichthyological and hydrobiological research. In 1902–1904, he published three reports on fisheries in the Taurida Governorate covering issues of economics, fishing techniques, and biology of fish. The results of long-term observations of seasonal changes in the species composition of fish, their biology, and behavior were summarized in the monograph “On the Study of Life of the Black Sea” published in 1913. In 1902–1914, while heading the station (as a senior zoologist), S. Zernov together with L. Yakubova (a junior zoologist) organized a practical course on Black Sea fauna. Annually, it was attended by about 40 lecturers and students from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Kyiv, Kharkiv, and other Russian universities and institutes. Among the participants

were future academicians: E. Pavlovsky (he collected material on poisonous fish), F. Kopp (he studied the brain of fish), and a privat-docent A. Leontovich (he analyzed the circulatory system of rays) [Puzanov, 1971].

In the 1920s, SBS staff studied mullet reproduction under a contract with the Azov–Black Sea Administration of Fisheries and Fish Farming.

In 1931, the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union invited V. Vodyanitsky, who had headed the Novorossiysk Biological Station, to the newly established position of SBS deputy director. He investigated fish reproduction, species composition, and seasonal distribution of fish eggs and larvae in plankton. A comparative study of the ichthyoplankton of the Sea of Azov, Black Sea, and Mediterranean Sea, and fish spawning migrations allowed V. Vodyanitsky to formulate a hypothesis about the origin of Black Sea ichthyofauna, specifically about its colonization by Mediterranean fish, whose larvae do not perform significant vertical migrations [Vodyanitsky, 1940]. During his research, he recorded large quantities of fish eggs in open waters, and this discovery helped to disprove the notion of low biological productivity of the Black Sea [Vodyanitsky, 1941].

In 1934, a northern part was added to the station building, and it housed the Ichthyology Laboratory, where in 1934–1941, L. Arnoldi and K. Fortunatova studied feeding and growth of Black Sea fishes.

During the Great Patriotic War and the occupation of Sevastopol, only one researcher, M. Galadzhiev, remained at SBS: he was appointed curator of the station. The situation was extremely difficult, but he conducted ichthyological and parasitological surveys of fish in the Sevastopol bays [Ignat'ev et al., 2008].

Establishment of the Ichthyology Department and research in the Mediterranean basin. In the postwar years, a comprehensive study of the bioresources of the Azov–Black Sea basin began. SBS director V. Vodyanitsky continued his research on fish reproduction and development. The materials of the Black Sea scientific and commercial expedition of VNIRO (All-Union Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography) in 1949–1951 allowed for a detailed characterization of the spawning and distribution of eggs and larvae of many fish species. Based on these data, the “Identification Guide to Pelagic Eggs and Larvae of Black Sea Fish” was published [Vodyanitsky, Kazanova, 1954].

In 1952, the Ichthyology Laboratory was re-established, and young researchers came to work at SBS. Ichthyological studies were significantly expanded to cover four areas:

- 1) the development of fish eggs and larvae in the sea (V. Vodyanitsky and T. Dekhnik);
- 2) feeding and growth of fish larvae under experimental conditions (L. Duka, E. Kalinina, T. Lugovaya, and V. Sinyukova);
- 3) biology of adult fish (N. Gorbunova, N. Lipskaya, and L. Salekhova);
- 4) functional morphology of fish (Yu. Aleev and V. Burdak).

In 1954, Yu. Aleev, one of the first postgraduate students at SBS, defended PhD thesis “Horse mackerel (*Trachurus*) of the seas of the USSR.” He soon became one of the leading Russian ichthyologists and the head of the Ichthyology Laboratory.

In 1957, the Ichthyoplankton Laboratory was organized and headed by V. Vodyanitsky [Dekhnik, 1971]. Since 1958, the geography of surveys significantly expanded: SBS received the research vessel “Akademik A. Kovalevsky,” and cruises to the Mediterranean and Red seas began. In 1962, T. Dekhnik became the head of the Ichthyoplankton Laboratory. She continued and expanded V. Vodyanitsky's research [Sivtsova, 2011].

In 1963, when SBS was reorganized into the Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas (hereinafter IBSS) of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, the Ichthyoplankton Laboratory was incorporated in the Plankton Department, and the Ichthyology Laboratory became part of the Nekton Department. In 1964–1965, T. Dekhnik led the plankton team in cruises on the RV “Akademik A. Kovalevsky” in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

In 1966, on the initiative and under the leadership of V. Vodyanitsky, the Ichthyology Department was established, comprising three laboratories: Fish Ecology, Ichthyoplankton, and Parasitology ones [Oven, Salekhova, 1971].

In 1968, V. Vodyanitsky handed over the leadership of the Ichthyology Department to T. Dekhnik [Vodyanitsky, 1975]. Research in the 1960s and 1970s provided new insights into the maturation and spawning of Black Sea fish. It was discovered that many species are characterized by continuous maturation and multi-portion spawning, and the actual fecundity of fish is many times higher than that determined by conventional methods [Dekhnik, 1971]. In 1973, T. Dekhnik published her fundamental monograph, “Ichthyoplankton of the Black Sea” [1973], with an identification guide to eggs and larvae of 103 species. The works of T. Dekhnik and A. Gordina contributed to the development of theory of fish population dynamics and facilitated the introduction of ichthyoplankton methods for assessing spawning stocks, recruitment, and the productivity of generations. L. Salekhova was the first researcher in the USSR to study hermaphroditism in fishes [Salekhova, 1966]. The works of L. Oven played a major role in the analysis of patterns of fish maturation, reproduction cycles, and fertility in the Black and Mediterranean seas, and her monograph “Features of Oogenesis and the Nature of Spawning of Marine Fish” [1976] is of particular value. L. Duka and V. Sinyukova [1976] analyzed the feeding of larvae of common species (anchovy, sprat, and horse mackerel) and showed that the food factor does not limit their survival, and the mortality mostly occurs at the stage of yolk absorption. One of the key directions was the study of biology of juvenile and adult fish under various ecological conditions conducted by L. Salekhova, E. Kalinina, N. Lipskaya, T. Lugovaya, and N. Shevchenko. Growth, reproduction, and feeding of commercial species (red mullet, sprat, anchovy, whiting, horse mackerel, and picarel) and non-commercial ones (annular seabream, peacock wrasse, and shore rockling) were investigated, both in the Azov–Black Sea basin and in the Mediterranean Sea.

In 1975, a new area of research began to develop at the Ichthyology Department, that was related to artificial breeding of marine fish. The Fish Cultivation Laboratory was established, and its head was A. Chepurnov [Khanaychenko, Giragosov, 2021]. Studies were focused on the embryology and biochemistry of fish eggs and larvae under various environments, utilizing recirculating and flow-through water supply systems developed at IBSS. The team led by A. Chepurnov included Yu. Bityukova, N. Tkachenko, B. Belyaev, A. Khanaichenko, Yu. Chuvilko, V. Vladimirtsev, N. Pustovarova, V. Fedotova, and E. Chepurnova. In 1990, the laboratory was reorganized into the Laboratory of Fish Cultivation and Early Ontogenesis and headed by Yu. Bityukova. A biotechnology for the artificial reproduction of Black Sea turbot was developed, as well as methodological principles for the artificial breeding of marine fish [Chepurnov, 1989].

Ocean research. A new stage in the history of IBSS and its Ichthyology Department is associated with research in the Atlantic and Indian oceans after the RV “Professor Vodyanitsky” was launched in 1976. In the same year, a group for the study of cephalopods was formed in the department under the leadership of G. Zuyev. Its members were O. Ovcharov, Ch. Nigmatullin, V. Nikolsky, V. Tyupa, A. Amelekhina, and T. Beloivanenko.

In 1980, the Ichthyology Department was headed by L. Oven. The Parasitology Laboratory was transferred to another department. On the basis of the group studying cephalopods, the Laboratory of Nektonic Animal Productivity was established. In the early 1980s, young researchers joined this laboratory: A. Boltachev, V. Giragosov, E. Greze, S. Ignatiev, V. Lushchina, I. Rudneva, B. Ponomarev, A. Trofimov, M. Tamoikin, S. Tsarin, M. Chesalin, *et al.* The laboratory specialists began large-scale studies of nektonic animals – oceanic squids, lanternfish, flying fish, and mesopelagic fish – in the tropical Atlantic and Indian Ocean. Laboratory staff sampled material not only during cruises on IBSS vessels but also during cruises organized by the Marine Hydrophysical Institute, Yugrybpromrazvedka (literally Southern Basin Directorate of Commercial Exploration and Research Fleet, Kerch), and Zaprybpromrazvedka (literally Western Basin Directorate of Commercial Exploration and Research Fleet, Kaliningrad). The research was aimed to identify potentially commercial resources of oceanic fish and squid, as well as to develop biological basis for their sustainable exploration. Methods were developed to quantify abundance of nektonic squid, myctophids, and flying fish based on visual observations. This allowed for the first-ever determination of biomass of oceanic squids of the genus *Sthenoteuthis* in the Atlantic and Indian oceans. The use of midwater trawls made it possible to sample material for analysis of taxonomic composition of small epi- and mesopelagic fish and squids, as well as to study their vertical and geographical distribution, biological structure, production characteristics, and functional role in pelagic communities. Moreover, a new species of myctophids was described [Tsarin, 1993]. The results of surveys were published in many articles and monographs, including “Nektonic Oceanic Squids” [Zuev *et al.*, 1985], “Assessments of Fish and Squid Stocks” [Zuev *et al.*, 1988], “Macroplankton and Nekton of the Tropical Atlantic” [1988], and “Productivity of the Equatorial Atlantic” [1990].

In the 1980s and 1990s, the staff of the Fish Ecology Laboratory focused on the study of Black Sea fish and ichthyoplankton and participated in oceanic expeditions. The team was expanded with young researchers: T. Klimova, I. Vdodovich, and T. Chesalina. Based on results obtained in oceanic research, the laboratory published two monographs: “Ichthyoplankton of the Canary Current Area” [Kalinina, 1981] and “Ichthyoplankton of Oceanic Rise of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans” [Gordina, 1991].

In 1983–1993, the specialists of the Ichthyology Department – G. Zuyev, A. Stolbov, A. Trofimov, M. Tamoikin, and A. Boltachev – worked for many months at the Scientific Research Center of Conakry-Rogbane (Republic of Guinea) studying bioresources and ichthyofauna of the African shelf.

Research on Azov–Black Sea and freshwater fishes. In 1990, the department was headed by S. Konovalov: a renowned ichthyologist and expert in the population biology of salmonids. Ocean expeditions ceased during that period, and the staff focused on studying the variability of Black Sea ichthyofauna under the influence of abiotic, biotic, and anthropogenic factors. Two collective monographs were published: “Ichthyofauna of Black Sea Bays Under Anthropogenic Impact” [1993] and “The Modern State of Black Sea Ichthyofauna” [1995].

In the early 1990s, under the leadership of I. Rudneva, the effect of marine pollutants on physiological and biochemical parameters of various ecological groups of Black Sea fish was investigated. One of the results of this work was the publication of the collective monograph “Ecotoxicological Studies of the Coastal Black Sea Ichthyofauna in the Sevastopol Area” [2016]. In 1996, after IBSS was reorganized, its structural laboratories were disbanded. Dr. G. Zuyev headed the department. At this time, the work was focused on studying population and biological parameters of commercial and common pelagic and bottom fish, conditions of fish survival and development at the early stages of ontogenesis

as indicators of the state of coastal waters, and the variability of morphological, physiological, and biochemical characteristics of fish under natural and anthropogenic factors. Also, the staff developed methods for artificial commercial breeding of Black Sea turbot.

S. Ignatiev and M. Chesalin, both specialists of the Ichthyology Department, participated in Antarctic expeditions at the Vernadsky Antarctic Station (2002–2003 and 2005–2006, respectively). They studied the role of fish in the transformation of matter and energy in the Antarctic ecosystem.

In the early 2000s, at the initiative of IBSS Deputy Director A. Boltachev, research began on the taxonomic diversity and state of fish populations in Crimean rivers and freshwater bodies. Under his leadership, a team of researchers from the Plankton and Ichthyology departments conducted an inventory of the ichthyofauna of Crimean rivers, reservoirs, and lakes, and also along the entire coast. The results were published in the monographs “Marine Fishes of the Crimean Peninsula” (2012) and “Fishes of Inland Waters of the Crimean Peninsula” (2012). An important area of research was the survey on invasive fishes. It resulted in the publication of the collective monograph “Invasive Species in the Biodiversity and Productivity of the Sea of Azov and Black Sea” (2010).

Current ichthyological research of the Black Sea, freshwater bodies of Russia, and rivers of Vietnam. In 2021, E. Skuratovskaya headed the Ichthyology Department. To date, the key areas of research include:

- population biology of Black Sea fish species (anchovy, sprat, and horse mackerel) under conditions of commercial fishing and climate change (G. Zuyev, V. Bondarev, Yu. Samotoy, and T. Beloivanenko);
- ecology and life cycles of fish in the Azov–Black Sea basin (D. Kutsyn, I. Tamoikin, and P. Donchik);
- biodiversity of fish and decapods in the Azov–Black Sea basin, rivers of Vietnam, and the South China Sea (E. Karpova, S. Statkevich, I. Chesnokova, E. Ablyazov, A. Iskiv, and D. Shavriev);
- variability of ichthyoplankton in the Sea of Azov–Black Sea basin and other areas of the World Ocean under climate change conditions (T. Klimova, I. Vdodovich, O. Mashukova, A. Subbotin, A. Zavyalov, V. Gubanov, and D. Zabrodin);
- physiological and biochemical mechanisms of adaptation of hydrobionts to the effect of natural and anthropogenic factors (E. Skuratovskaya, T. Gavryuseva, T. Sigacheva, T. Chekmareva, A. Serbin, M. Klyueva, and B. Ponomarev).

Conclusions. The theoretical basis for ichthyological research at SBS–IBSS is the application of the structural-functional approach to the study of marine ecosystems, laid down by V. Vodyanitsky, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR. This approach involves examining all levels of life organization, from microscopic organisms to fish, in the context of their functioning and productivity. The key areas of comprehensive ichthyological research were:

- 1) studying fish reproduction and growth patterns in relation to population dynamics;
- 2) investigating trophic relationships (feeding from the larval to adult stages) as the basis for the functioning of pelagic and benthic communities;
- 3) analyzing the impact of abiotic factors (climate and hydrology), biotic (competition and predation), and anthropogenic (pollution and fishing factors) on the fish population structure and the ichthyofauna as a whole.

For 60 years, ichthyologists have been conducting high-level fundamental research and successfully solving applied problems. This has allowed IBSS to become one of the leading scientific centers in Russia and worldwide in marine biology.

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**ИСТОРИЯ ИХТИОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЙ СБС — ИНБЮМ
(К 60-ЛЕТИЮ ОТДЕЛА ИХТИОЛОГИИ)**

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В 2026 г. ФИЦ «Институт биологии южных морей имени А. О. Ковалевского РАН», преемник Севастопольской биологической станции, отмечает 155-летний юбилей. В этом же году исполняется 60 лет отделу ихтиологии, основанному выдающимся гидробиологом — профессором В. А. Водяницким. Ихтиологические исследования ведутся на протяжении всей истории этого первого в России морского биологического учреждения, сыгравшего значительную роль в отечественной и мировой науке. В статье рассмотрены этапы развития ихтиологических изысканий на СБС — в ИнБЮМ, от первых эколого-фаунистических работ в Чёрном море до крупномасштабных исследований в Атлантическом, Индийском и Тихом океанах. Представлен материал о создании отдела ихтиологии, о формировании научных школ, о ведущих учёных и о важнейших результатах.