

## Hunting History During Scientific Expeditions in the Second Half of the XIX – Beginning of the XX Century

**Yusufaliev Shahzodjon Zafar oglu**

Independent researcher at Denov Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy

**Abstract:** This article examines the detailed study of the fauna of the region during scientific expeditions conducted by the Russian Geographical Society after the Russian Empire's conquest of Turkestan.

**Keywords:** Fauna, scientific expedition, amateur society of anthropology and ethnography, fauna of Syrdarya region, animal world of Bukhara Emirate, list of animal world, desert fauna.

### Introduction

As the Russian Empire's interest in Turkestan increased, numerous scientific expeditions were organized in the region. In the second half of the XIX century, A.P. Fedchenko, a Russian naturalist and member of the Amateur Society of Natural Science, Anthropology, and Ethnography, was among the first to study Turkestan's fauna. He collected over 5,000 animal specimens, nearly 2,000 insect species, and more than 12,000 bird specimens. Entomologist V.F. Oshanin classified over 700 insect species in Central Asia during his research in Turkestan.

During his research, A.P. Fedchenko studied birds in the Zarafshan Valley, identifying 150 species, and compiled a comprehensive list of the region's fauna: 60 animal species, 416 bird species, 69 reptiles and amphibians, 107 fish species, and 16,313 insect species.

### Main Part

From 1857, under the leadership of N.A. Severtsov, the Russian Academy of Sciences conducted studies in Turkestan to examine the geographical distribution of animals. Severtsov collected valuable data on the region's fauna and studied the distribution of species across Turkestan. He divided the area between the Aral and Caspian regions into five zones based on altitude and vegetation:

1. Plains up to 700 feet,
2. Cultivated areas up to 2,000 feet,
3. Forested areas up to 6,000 feet,
4. Coniferous forests up to 10,000 feet,
5. Alpine vegetation above 10,000 feet.

The third zone was noted as the richest in wildlife. He observed that many European tree birds were gradually replaced by mountain birds in Central Asia. Severtsov identified 47 mammal species and 97 bird species native to Central Asia, describing their distribution across the region. He also studied aquatic animals, categorizing them into Ancient Central Asia, New Central Asia, and Ponto-Caspian fauna.

The fauna of Syrdarya region had distinctive features. N.A. Dingelstedt noted the presence of “royal” tigers resembling Persian or Bengal tigers, foxes, jackals, wild cats, otters, rabbits, deer, argali, mountain goats, gazelles, saigas, and kulans. Fish species included sturgeon, large bream, pike, snakehead, carp, crucian carp, marinka, and others. Two types of venomous snakes were also found, with little danger to humans.

Some researchers initially reported crocodiles in Central Asia, but Dingelstedt clarified that these claims were false. Large monitor lizards and marbled lizards were likely mistaken for crocodiles due to their body shape and scales.

The Syrdarya region had significant populations of pheasants and other birds, while pests like flies, locusts, and various parasites affected humans and animals. Predatory species included tigers in the lower Syrdarya and Amu Darya reedbeds, cheetahs in the Amu Darya delta, leopards and bears in the mountains, wolves, jackals, foxes, wild cats, and otters. Other animals included deer, argali, mountain goats, saigas, kulans, and wild pigs. Bird species included pheasants, ducks, geese, partridges, and others, while aquatic fauna included sturgeon, som, carp, perch, snakehead, bream, and myoblyad fish. Reptiles included snakes like *Trigonosephalus* and black snakes.

The Fergana Valley also had rich fauna. During scientific expeditions, researchers studied tigers, leopards, foxes, badgers, bears, wolves, weasels, ferrets, otters, rabbits, marmots, porcupines, wild boars, argali, deer, wild goats, and *Capra sibirica*. Birds included black-headed crows, bearded vultures, various grouse species, and many others. Fish included sturgeon, som, *Salmo fario*, and others, with venomous snakes present in some areas.

In the Fergana Valley, sedentary and nomadic lifestyles coexisted, with farming and livestock management integrated, highlighting the region’s unique characteristics. Klepper horses were the most common, with local breeds adapted for load-bearing. Sheep were mainly imported from the north, with variations in color and species. Two types of camels were found: two-humped in the north and single-humped in the south.

Russian zoologist N.A. Zarudny also studied the fauna of Turkestan, particularly in the Bukhara Emirate. He recorded new species, including unknown types of goats, sheep, and rare birds, noting their distinctiveness compared to other regions. Zarudny participated in expeditions to the Kyzylkum Desert in 1912 and the Aral Sea region in 1914, collecting specimens and documenting bird eggs and nests. Overall, Zarudny studied nearly 10,000 birds, contributing significantly to the development of ornithology in the region.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, while the Russian Empire turned Turkestan into a raw material base, it also maintained continuous scientific observation of the region’s fauna. Research conducted by naturalists of the Russian Geographical Society facilitated the development of new fields in natural sciences, particularly ichthyology and ornithology.

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