

OPINION

by Prof. Diyan Mihailov Georgiev, PhD

Faculty of Agriculture, Trakia University, Stara Zagora
of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"
by: Field of higher education 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics;
Professional direction 4.3. Biological Sciences;
Doctoral Program "Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation"
Author: Alexander Emilov Petrov

Topic: "A comparative study on some aspects of the ecology of the fox (*Vulpes vulpes* L., 1758) and the squirrel (*Martes foina* Erxl., 1777) in different types of habitats"

Scientific supervisors: Assoc. prof. Ivelin Aldinov Mollovq PhD (Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, Faculty of Biology, Department of Ecology and Environmental Conservation) and prof. Evgeniy Georgiev Raichev, PhD (Trakia University, Faculty of Agriculture)

1. General description of the presented materials

By order No. P33-RD-21-2268 of 10.12.2024. of the Rector of the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv I have been appointed as a member of the scientific jury to ensure a procedure for the defense of a dissertation on the topic "Comparative study on some aspects of the ecology of the fox (*Vulpes vulpes* L., 1758) and the squirrel (*Martes foina* Erxl., 1777) in habitats of different types', for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the Department of Higher Education 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics; Professional direction 4.3. Biological sciences; Doctoral Program "Ecology and Ecosystem Conservation").

The author of the dissertation is Alexander Emilov Petrov - doctoral student in regular form of education at the Department of Ecology and Environmental Conservation, Faculty of Biology at Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv. Scientific supervisors are Assoc. prof. Ivelin Aldinov Mollov, PhD (Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, Faculty of Biology, Department of Ecology and Environmental Conservation) and Prof. Evgeniy Georgiev Raichev, PhD (Trakia University, Faculty of Agriculture).

The set of paper materials presented by Alexander Petrov is incomplete, according to Article 36 (1) of the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of the Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, which must include the following documents:

- a request to the Rector of the PU to disclose the procedure for the defense of a dissertation work - NO;
- CV in European format - YES;
- protocol from the departmental council related to reporting the readiness to open the procedure and preliminary discussion of the dissertation work - NO;
- dissertation work - YES;
- abstract - YES;

- list of scientific publications on the topic of the dissertation - NO;
- copies of scientific publications - YES;
- list of noticed citations - NO;
- declaration of originality and authenticity of the attached documents - NO;
- certificate of compliance with the specific requirements of the respective faculty (only for doctoral students enrolled until 05/04/2018) - YES;
- one document – ENGLISH LANGUAGE TITLE

The doctoral student has attached 5 publications, an abstract and a dissertation.

Notes and comments on the documents:

It is impressive the disregarding attitude of the doctoral student towards the seriousness of the procedure, lack of responsibility and commitment. The materials are not arranged, the titles of the documents are not unified, there are Cyrillic and Latin letters. Abstract, which is essentially an abstract in English, etc.

For me, the doctoral student demonstrates a negative attitude towards the department, the faculty, the university and the scientific jury. He completely ignored the notes made at the preliminary discussion and did not comply with the recommendations.

2. Relevance of the topic

The scientific aspect of the study is extremely relevant, as it examines the problems of urbanization of the environment, growth of agrocenoses, loss of natural habitats and synanthropization of species. The study compared two species that are typical predators and have a key role in agroecosystems.

3. Knowing the problem

The PhD student shows knowledge on teriology, ecology and botany, which enables him to complete the planned tasks. A significant volume of literature sources has been analyzed, which makes it possible to formulate working hypotheses.

4. Research methodology

The methods used make it possible to realize the purpose and tasks of the study. The use of camera traps is in accordance with the methods of the cited literature sources. The used coefficients and statistical analyzes are adequate to the applied methodology and objects of the study.

5. Characterization and evaluation of the dissertation work and contributions

The dissertation presented in this way is not finished! A good introduction and literature review has been made, but there is no conclusion at the end to direct the audience to the necessity of the conducted research. The Results section lacks discussion. Comments or discussion of the results achieved are missing, as part of the section or as a separate chapter, which suggests that the dissertation is not finished!

Therefore, it is not clear how the conclusions are formulated, and the contributions seem more like a required necessity than arising from the results.

6. Evaluation of the publications and personal contribution of the doctoral student

Five dissertation publications are presented that reflect the results of the study. Two of them are short notes (in *Ecologia Balkanica*), as well as two publications in *ZooNotes*, where, according to the requirements of the journal, short notices are published, i.e. 4 of the 5 articles mentioned. It should be noted that all publications are in reputable journals known in the zoological and environmental scientific circles, which undoubtedly increases their citation rate. All articles present the results of the study and support its relevance.

7. Abstract

An abstract was presented to complete the set of documents, because of the procedure, and the approach to present the dissertation in an abbreviated version was not followed. What I mean: inaccuracies and omissions were made during the preparation of the Abstract. There is an inscription on the title page Dissertation - not Abstract. The protocol number with which the dissertation is directed for defense is missing, and there are question marks about its necessity (indicates its absence). There is no information about the Literature review at all, etc. Rather, a way to show the existence of an abstract has been sought and its importance overlooked.

8. Recommendations for future use of dissertation contributions and results

As I mentioned at the very beginning, the dissertation is up-to-date given the key role of the studied species, territories and opportunities to conflict with people.

The results can be successfully used for biomonitoring purposes, which is an element (in my opinion) omitted in the doctoral thesis.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation contains scientific, scientific-applied and applied results, which represent an original contribution to science and meet the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of LDASRB and the relevant Regulations of Paisiy" Hilendarski University of Polvdiv.

The dissertation shows that the doctoral student has in-depth theoretical knowledge and professional skills in a scientific specialty, but does not realize them in their entirety. Since the doctoral student is supported by authoritative scientists, such as scientific supervisors and established institutions in the field of ecology and ecosystem protection, I sincerely hope that the indicated gaps in the dissertation work of Alexander Petrov will be minimized, overcome and avoided in the future!

In conclusion, I give my positive assessment of the conducted research, presented by the above-reviewed dissertation work, abstract, achieved results and contributions, and I propose to the honorable scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Alexander

Emilov Petrov in field of higher education 4. Natural sciences, mathematics and informatics;
Professional direction 4.3. Biological Sciences; Doctoral Program "Ecology and Ecosystem
Conservation".

24/01/2025

Prepared the opinion:

(prof. Diyan Georgiev, PhD)