

2. 2022
popular science journal



SCIENCE

First Hand



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According to world statistics, earthquake death rates in different countries are directly related to the level of corruption in construction industry

Carl Linnaeus to Johann Gmelin: "I was reading your Siberian journey for a long time this night; no one is more worthy in botany than you."

In the South Kuriles, researchers discovered a white-flowered form of *Rhododendron brachycarpum*, a rare Asian exotic plant, as confirmed by genetic analysis

The death of young and healthy sperm whales near the southern coast of Kunashir Island could have been caused by military exercises or an earthquake, which generated a water hammer effect that caused disorientation in the animals

A Journal
for Inquisitive People

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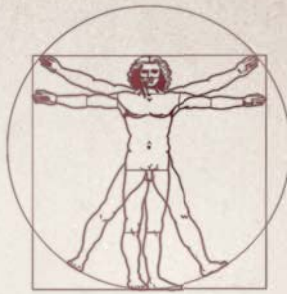
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*“The natural desire
of good men is knowledge”*
Leonardo da Vinci

Periodical Popular Science Journal

Published since January 2004
Three issues a year
Founders: Siberian Branch of the Russian
Academy of Sciences (SB RAS)
Rzhanov Institute of Semiconductor Physics
(SB RAS)
Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography
(SB RAS)
Limnological Institute (SB RAS)
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(SB RAS)
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and Geophysics (SB RAS)
Limited company INFOLIO
Publisher: Limited company INFOLIO

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The Journal is registered
at the Federal Supervision Agency
for Information Technologies and
Communications

Certificate EI No. FS77-37579
of September 25, 2009

ISSN 2310-3000

Date of publication: December 30, 2022

Open price

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Dear friends!

The readers would agree that traveling is one of the most enjoyable ways of getting to know the world. In this new issue, the readers will travel to the impenetrable wilderness of Kunashir Island, where the specialists of the Kurilsky Reserve have discovered, after a long and difficult search, a bush of a rare, “elusive” rhododendron, blooming with white flowers. As shown by molecular genetic analysis, this plant’s closest relatives grow on the Japanese islands of Hokkaido and Honshu. Also, few will be left untouched by the tragic story of two whales accidentally trapped in shallow water near the southeastern coast of Kunashir Island. Working knee-deep in icy water, researchers performed an autopsy of the dead giants’ bodies to discover most valuable scientific material and draw conclusions about the causes of the tragedy.

Thrill-seekers might want to travel to Portugal’s capital, which was destroyed in 1755 by the Great Lisbon earthquake, which triggered the only known transoceanic tsunami

in the Atlantic. This most powerful earthquake, which happened on All Saints’ Day, shattered the minds throughout the enlightened Europe, raising the question of the “goodness of God” and the role of Providence in the world order and human affairs.

Those readers who take an interest in history are in for an even greater journey with the Russian academician of German origin Johann Georg Gmelin, who was studying the nature of Siberia for ten long years as part of the academic detachment of the Second Kamchatka Expedition, a grandiose research project of the 18th century. The great biology reformer Carl Linnaeus called Gmelin “the father of botany,” noting that during his ten-year expedition he alone discovered as many new plants as all the other scientists taken together.

Here, we cannot but recall the famous words by the American writer William S. Burroughs, “It is necessary to travel. It is not necessary to live.”

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