



# Smithsonian Institution

*National Museum of Natural History  
Department of Paleobiology*

August 8, 2018

Promotion Committee  
Department of Vertebrate Zoology  
St. Petersburg State University  
Universitetskaya Emb. 7/9  
199034, St. Petersburg  
RUSSIAN FEDERATION

RE: Promotion of Dr. Pavel Petrovich Skutschas

Honored Members of the Promotion Committee:

I am writing in support of Dr. Pavel Petrovich Skutschas who is under consideration for promotion to Doctor of Biological Sciences.

I know Dr. Skutschas well and am very familiar with his publications on Mesozoic and Cenozoic amphibians and reptiles.

As his dissertation demonstrates, Dr. Skutschas has already made fundamental contributions to our understanding of the early evolution of salamanders. Several of his works, especially the outstanding monograph on the Middle Jurassic stem-group salamander *Kokartus*, are already widely cited in the scientific literature. Through fieldwork and laboratory research, Dr. Skutschas has assembled a critically important fossil record of Mesozoic salamanders from Russia and adjacent territories, ranging in time from the Middle Jurassic to the Late Cretaceous.

In his research, Skutschas not only performed excellent anatomical work (following the great Russian tradition in comparative anatomy) but also studied bone histology and even the functional morphology of present-day salamanders in an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the biological aspects of salamander evolution. This synthetic work is

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critical to our understanding of the origin and evolution of all modern amphibians.

In conclusion, it gives me great pleasure to support the award of Doctor of Biological Sciences to Dr. Pavel Petrovich Skutschas. This honor will recognize not only his accomplishments to date but also the scientific potential of this young researcher who is poised to become one of Russia's leading scientists in the study of vertebrate evolution.

Sincerely,



Hans-Dieter Sues PhD  
Senior Scientist  
Curator of Fossil Vertebrates  
and  
Chair of the Department of  
Paleobiology

