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**EVOLUTIONARY AND ECOLOGICAL ASPECTS
OF GENETIC VARIABILITY IN POPULATIONS
OF *SICISTA BETULINA* (RODENTIA, DIPODOIDEA) FROM VALDAI HILLS**

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Chromosomal (routine, C-banding) and molecular (*cytb*) data for *Sicista* of the *betulina* group from the northern (Valdai National Park), central (the main watershed of East European Plain) and southeast (Upper Volga Basin) parts of Valdai and, for comparison, from the Moscow and Central Chernozem regions are presented and generalized. The birch mice from Valdai and the Moscow area belonging to the 32-chromosomal *S. betulina*, and that from the Central Chernozem area belonging to *S. strandi* ($2n = 44$) are confirmed. Birch mice were collected in various biotopes: individuals from Valdai National Park were sought for in coniferous forests with nemoral covering, other groups of *S. betulina* were sought for in mixed forests, and *S. strandi* were sought for in a forest-steppe. Priority chromosomal (C-banding) and molecular (*cytb*) data were obtained to indicate an originality of the *S. betulina* population from Valdai National Park differing in the studied genetic signs from other selections of the species from Valdai and the Moscow area and from *S. strandi* as well. Evolutionary and ecological aspects of the results obtained are discussed.

Key words: *Sicista betulina*, chromosomes, molecular markers (*cytb*), Valdai, genetic variability, Valdai Hills.

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