In many countries, visiting a toy store or looking at the signs around the city, listening to magic tales and legends, or reading history books, one will see a multitude of bears. Originally symbolizing strength, courage and valor, they became true heroes for many nations. The image of the bear can be found in most European traditions before Christianity, starting from Ancient Greece where the bear was a cult animal of Artemis, and proceeding with Germany, Great Britain, Poland, Belgium, Switzerland, Finland and many others. This tradition was passed to the United States where the bear appears on the flags of two states, California and Missouri, and where the production of “teddy bears” was started.

The Symbols of Russia: The Russian Bears
~ By Ekaterina Sutton

If you ask a foreigner about what images are associated with Russia, the bear will be one of the most probable responses. A creative mind will add to that a pair of felt boots, an ushanka-hat and a balalaika, but the bear itself holds its position as one of the central cultural symbols of Russia.

The stereotype about bears freely walking through the Russian streets was born after one of the travelers, Sigismund von Herberstein, who visited Moscovia in winter of 1526, left peculiar notes about his journey. Unfortunately for the traveler and all the Russian folk, the winter of 1526 was extremely severe, and indeed the bears whose hibernation was interrupted by frost, would rush into peasants’ houses seeking warmth, food, and scaring the owners. These occasions impressed the traveler and gave origin to a historical anecdote, supported also by the facts that indeed Moscovia was famous for a number of street performers who would travel with a tamed bear, and indeed tamed bears were imported from Moscovia to European countries. Needless to say, the bear also appears on many city and regional emblems of Russia, as well as on logos of many cultural, sport and other events.

This is, however, only one part of the story. So let us go on a journey and take a look at several other aspects of the “bear” presence in the Russian culture.
The mythological roots of the image of the Russian bear descend to the times when there was yet no state or unanimous nation, but a number of tribes populating the territory of modern Russia. At that point the tribes had a variety of pagan beliefs; each was unique, but certain features repeated in many.

In her article about the image of the bear created by Permic tribes, J. Koshkarova talks about the place that the bear held in their model of the Universe. As in many other cultures, the Permic model of the Universe was divided into three vertical layers: the upper world (heaven), the middle world and the lower world (earth). The middle world in its turn was horizontally divided into three spheres: the sphere of man (society), the sphere of the forest (nature), and the sphere of spirits. All of these worlds were populated by different creatures: men, animals, fish, birds, spirits etc.; but the multitude of roles that some of them fulfilled did not allow to fit certain archetypal creatures in one precise category – they either dwelled in the middle or crossed the borders and appeared in different places, revealing a variety of correlating qualities. Already in pagan times, the bear was a powerful image and a mediator, appearing in all spheres and levels of the Universe and linking them together. J. Koshkarova describes the whole fourteen motifs of the archetypal image of the Permic bear. Let’s take a look at some of them:

→ A bear as a descendant of the god of sun and heaven, Yen. In this quality the bear itself becomes the symbol of warmth and active sun of spring and summer tide, and also with fertility cult.

→ A bear as a descendant of the god of the lower world, Omul. The bear was traditionally worshiped by the Permic tribes as the creator of landscape, especially mountains and swamps. As a result, this image of the bear also has traits of a lizard or a dragon, and that is why the descendant of this bear, Kudym-Osh, obtained his ability to grow back his limbs lost in battles.

→ A bear could also be a representative of the afterworld. The black bear was used by Permic tribes as an image of Death. Surprisingly, in this quality a bear could have some traits of a cow, because the bears were called “the cows” of the mistress of the lower world, Yoma.

→ One of the strongest motifs connected to bears was the motif of a human-looking bear or even a superhuman bear, which ascended from the common beliefs that bears and people are related.
The superhuman bear was able not only to grow back his severed limbs, but also to resurrect from the dead, to understand human speech, and of course, to demonstrate incredible strength in battles. This image of the bear resulted in a multitude of protective, healing and cleansing rites, and this was one of the ancient instances when the bear was first viewed as a protector, which lead to making him a totem animal. It was believed that the first man from the knyaz (prince) family was a descendant of a bear, and thus the dynasty name was “Osh,” which meant “bear” in Komi-Permic language.

The idea of the bear-human later developed in many beliefs about were-bears, shape-shifters who were able to transform into humans, most often to steal a wife. A union of a bear and a human, according to ancient Permic beliefs, alike in many other similar cases in world mythology, would result in a birth of a magical, miraculous child, who, most likely would become a bogatyr or a wizard. That is how two of the most important Komi-Permic bogatyrs, Kudym-Osh and Oshpel, appeared. As Koshkarova writes, all bear-related bogatyrs were impervious to weapons, incredibly strong, cunning, resourceful and merciless to the enemies. However, in times of peace they were friendly and hospitable.

Besides the “strength” thread in the bear-related culture, there was also a “wisdom” thread. It was believed that the bear was the first to teach humans different crafts: mining, smiting, carpentry and many others. According to the legends, the bear was also the one to introduce farming, to build fortresses and to establish trade connections with neighbors.

The most well-known belief that was later developed in folk tales, was of the bear being the king of the forest. In regards to this, the bear was frequently compared or equal to “leshii” – the traditional spirit-host of the Russian forest. The bear in Komi-Permic legends was the one to rule over the wild animals, but later he became the patron of all the domestic animals too. The image of the bear-patron was replaced by several Saints after ancient Russia was baptized.

Another “wisdom” thread of the bear influence is revealed through the tradition of wizardry. Shaman rites were not common for Komi-Permic tribes, but there were legends about wizards originating from the bear father. The most well-known one was a bear-wizard Oshlapei. He could travel between the worlds and turn into a bear. The Komi-Permic knyazia (princes) and the famous bogatyr Kudym-Osh all fulfilled functions of ancient priests because they too possessed “bear” wisdom (Koshkarova, 9-13).

Summarizing the components of the bear archetype in the Komi-Permic culture one can see the basic functions of the modern Russian bear: firstly, he is a protector of his people, possessing incredible strength; secondly, he is a knowledgeable and resourceful carrier of basic leadership qualities; thirdly, he is a creative and hospitable craftsman, a “master of the house” at the times of peace; and, fourthly, he is close to people and is treated not as an alien, but as a fellow-companion.
Comments From Nominators:

“Thanks once again for the chance to nominate - and surprise - a wonderful student.”

Nancy Titter, Binghampton University

“Thank you so much for organizing this terrific program. It is a real honor for the students.”

Olga Livshin, Boston University

“This is a wonderful program, and we are lucky to have another superb candidate this year.”

Andrea Lanoux, Connecticut College

“Thanks again for coordinating this great program. It’s so nice to be able to reward fabulous students each year!”

Kristine Shmakov, Portland Community College

“Thank you for your work on this award.”

Oleksandra Wallo, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

“Thank you for offering this opportunity. It is really quite a valuable way of recognizing our best, and I am thrilled to give my student such an award.”

Daria Kirjanov, the University of New Haven

“I remain a big fan of the program and all it does for our field. Thank you so much for all of your work! If I can ever be of help promoting the program, just let me know!”

Clint Walker, the University of Montana

“Thanks for organizing this!”

Elena Clark, Wake Forest College

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JOIN THE PROGRAM AND NOMINATE YOUR BEST STUDENT IN 2016

This is a free program offered to U.S. Russian Departments and Programs. Organized under the auspices of ACTR (the American Council of Teachers of Russian), the PSRSLA seeks to provide national recognition for our star junior and senior students—those students who best embody an enthusiasm for and love of things Russian. ACTR provides this program as a service to the profession. We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to publicly recognize your top junior or senior students.

In order to nominate a student, please follow the guidelines.

ACTR Post Secondary Russian Scholar Laureate Award Guidelines

1. Deadline for nominations is March 1, 2016.
2. For guidelines and to nominate a student go to http://www.actr.org/guidelines.html

If you have any questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me at as2157@columbia.edu

I am looking forward to getting you nomination in 2016.

With many thanks and best wishes,
Alla A. Smyslova
PSRSLA Chair
## ACTR Post-Secondary LAUREATES-2015

<table>
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<th>University</th>
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<td>The College of William and Mary</td>
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<td>Alexandra (Sasha)</td>
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<td>Drew University</td>
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<td>Jillian Demarco</td>
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ACTR PSRSLA, to be continued on p. 6
From Paganism to Christianity. Bear Rituals.

Bear rituals were one of the most important in the Eastern-European tradition. Jack V. Haney in his book *An Introduction to the Russian Folktale* devotes a particular section of his book to descriptions of bear rituals. As one can see from the roles the bear played in Komi-Permic beliefs, these animals became very closely associated with religion in pagan times. As a result, the very name of the bear became a taboo. That is how the Slavs came up with the euphemism "медведь" ("medved") which remained in modern Russian and became the primary name for these animals. However, "медведь" originates from two words: "мед" - "honey" and "ведать" "to know," and simply means "the one who knows where honey is" referring to the sweet tooth of the "host of the forest."

According to Haney, for most Russian tribes the bear was known as "скотий бог" ("skotii bog" / "livestock god") taking or sharing the functions of Veles, the traditional Slavic god, protector of animals, and though these beliefs vanished after Russia was baptized, still in the beginning of the twentieth century one could see a bear's paw hanging over Moscow-area livestock barns, as a sign of magical protection. Also, as a symbol of fertility, the bear was the only animal to appear in Russian folk tales as a groom or a bride at the wedding (Haney, 68).

After adopting Christianity, the cult of the bear, as well as the cult of Veles, were banned by the state. However, in rural regions Russian peasants still believed in the magic powers of the bear, in Veles and by combining them came up with a general form of a forest spirit - "леший" ("leshii"). However, as folk beliefs were merging with Christian beliefs, as the pagan spring solstice combined with the birth of John the Baptist and turned into Ivan-Kupala, a similar thing happened to the bear cult. As Haney writes, the bear was associated with Saint Nicholas, for Saint Nicholas was considered to be a patron of farming, beekeeping and all the wild and domestic animals (Haney, 69).

The fact that the Slavs considered bears related to humans, however, didn't stop the bear hunts. The hunts had ritual meaning and admitting to killing a bear was taboo for many tribes. In the nineteenth century the relics of the bear cult would be expressed in ritual dances during the winter solstice, when the bear and goat masks would be obligatory parts of the celebration.

Even after Christianity was fully adopted there still remained one "bear holiday" in the church calendar. That was *komoeditsy*, celebrated on the 24th of March, on the day of Annunciation, for it was
Congratulations to the following students who were selected as 2015 National Secondary Russian Scholar Laureates.

Поздравляем всех учеников! Успехов и удачи в будущем!

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<tr>
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<td>Teacher Michelle Quackenbush, Walt Whitman High School, Bethesda, MD</td>
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<td>Teacher Katya Ratushnyuk, Bruriah High School, Elizabeth, NJ</td>
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<td>Teacher Julia Kriventsova Denna, By the Onion Sea, Arlington Heights, IL</td>
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<td>Illan Shnayder</td>
<td>Teacher Marian V. Barnum, Cherokee High School, Marlton, NJ</td>
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<td>Teacher Valerie Ekberg-Brown, Chugiak High School, Chugiak, AK</td>
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<td>Teacher Michael White, Maggie L. Walker Governor's School, Richmond, VA</td>
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<td>Brendan Chipman</td>
<td>Teacher James Michael, Middleborough High School, Middleborough, MA</td>
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<td><img src="image8.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Isaiah Gabriel</td>
<td>Teacher James Michael, Middleborough High School, Middleborough, MA</td>
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Екатерина Бочер  
Учитель  
Ирина Довжанска  
Бишоп Дунн католическая школа  
Даллас, TX

Томас Паркер  
Учитель  
Джош Уокер  
Бакингтон Браун & Ничолс школа  
Кембридж, MA

Степанида Ноэиковский  
Учитель  
Елена Соколовская  
Статен Ист Тех высшая школа  
Стаунтон, NY

Омар Асус  
Учитель  
Наталия Ушакова  
Статен Ист Тех высшая школа  
Стаунтон, NY

Джош Рэйн  
Учитель  
Бетси Сэндстром  
Томас Желфард высшая школа за науку и технологию  
Александрия, VA

Питер Дж. Рорер  
Учитель  
Бетси Сэндстром  
Томас Желфард высшая школа за науку и технологию  
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Оуэн Ли  
Учитель  
Дэн Экланд  
Глестонбери высшая школа  
Глестонбери, CT

Хектор Кастелло-Мартиноэс  
Учитель  
Мэри А. Бордес  
Браукенридж высшая школа  
Сан Атаньо, TX

**Русский литературный язык ближе, чем все другие европейские языки, к разговорной народной речи.**

**Язык — это орудие мышления... Обращаться с языком кое-как — значит, и мыслить кое-как: неточно, приблизительно, неверно.**

Можно с уверенностью сказать, что человек, говорящий на хорошем языке, на чистом, хорошем, богатом языке, богаче мыслит, чем человек, который говорит на плохом языке и бедном языке.  
А. Н. Толстой
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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rebecca Lisk</td>
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<td>Paavo Husen, Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, Aurora, IL</td>
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<td>Dimitri Raimonde</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Vlada Jackson, Vineland High School, Vineland, NJ</td>
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<td>Katelyn Sater</td>
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<td>Zach Eyler</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Ted Krejsa, Kenston High School, Chagrin Falls, OH</td>
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<td>Wilton Farmwald</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Michele Whaley, West High School, Anchorage, AK</td>
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<td>Jose Manuel De Legarreta</td>
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<td>Robert Chura, St. Louis University High School, St. Louis, MO</td>
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<td>Caroline Deitch</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Lee Roby, Friends School of Baltimore, Baltimore, MD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cianan Dewsnap</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Elizabeth McLendon, Bellaire High School, Bellaire, TX</td>
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Русский язык должен стать мировым языком. Настанет время (и оно не за горами),— русский язык начнут изучать по всем меридианам земного шара.

А. Н. Толстой

Будущее отныне принадлежит двум типам людей: человеку мысли и человеку труда. В сущности, оба они составляют одно целое, ибо мыслить — значит трудиться.

Виктор Гюго
Dear Colleague!

I invite you to nominate a qualified junior or sophomore (10th or 11th graders) to receive the 2016 ACTR Russian Scholar Laureate Award. Please nominate your most deserving sophomore or junior from your Russian Classes at the secondary school level.

Nominations will be accepted until June 30, 2016.

Any school that has more than 100 students studying Russian may nominate two students (sophomore or junior.)

There is no fee for participation in this program, but your membership with ACTR must be current.

Not a current member? Please join now.

You may join online www.actr.org

A PDF file of the brochure and the nomination form can be requested from the Chair by email nushakova@gmail.com or found on http://www.actr.org/russian-scholar-laureate-award-rsla.html

Nataliya Ushakova, Chair

ACTR Russian Scholar Laureate Award

Staten Island Technical HS
485 Clawson Street,
Staten Island, NY 10306
For more than 40 years, American Councils has conducted comprehensive study abroad programs in many of the most intriguing areas of the world, including Russia, Eurasia, and the Balkans. From intensive language and cultural immersion to international internships, American Councils has a program to advance your education and career.

Language and Cultural Immersion Programs for Undergraduate & Graduate Students:

- **ADVANCED RUSSIAN LANGUAGE & AREA STUDIES PROGRAM (RLASP)** - Improve your Russian language proficiency through a comprehensive immersion program in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vladimir, or Almaty, Kazakhstan.

- **BALKAN LANGUAGE INITIATIVE** - Immerse yourself in the language and culture of Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Macedonia, or Serbia.

- **EURASIAN REGIONAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM (ERLP)** - Study less commonly taught languages and cultures in 10 Eurasian countries. Languages include: Armenian, Azeri, Bashkir, Buryat, Chechen, Georgian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Pashto, Persian (Dari, Farsi, Tajiki), Romanian, Tatar, Turkmen, Ukrainian, Uzbek, and Yakut.

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- **CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA PROGRAM** - Gain new insights into Russia's political developments and the role of mass media while in Moscow for four weeks. Taught in English - no prior language study required.

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- **PEACE & SECURITY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS PROGRAM** - Explore the diverse cultures and complex politics of the region for four weeks in Tbilisi. Taught in English - no prior language study required.

- **OPIT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM** - Boost your professional experience with an English-language internship in one of eight disciplines throughout 12 countries of Eurasia and the Balkans.

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- **TITLE VIII FELLOWSHIPS** - American Councils is pleased to announce the resumption of Title VIII funding for U.S. graduate students applying to American Councils language immersion programs in Russia, Eurasia, and the Balkans.

- **SUMMER RUSSIAN LANGUAGE TEACHERS PROGRAM** - Spend six weeks studying Russian language, culture, and pedagogy with other pre- and in-service Russian language teachers at Russian State Pedagogical University. Fellowships funded by U.S. Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad.

Start Your Journey Today.

The Summer 2016 deadline is February 15, 2016. Find complete program information and applications at: www.acStudyAbroad.org
Textivate.com: a review  
— by Michele Whaley  
Russian Teacher  
West High School, Anchorage, Alaska

We’ve all wanted to convince students to re-read a passage. When all other teacher ideas are exhausted, there’s an app to the rescue: Textivate.

Teachers buy a group membership to Textivate to be able to use it, but then they can share it with all their students. Students get a standard login and student password for their teacher, so they share no personal information with the program. Teachers can then direct students to specific reading activities by giving students the URL associated with an exercise or with a text.

Teachers type in a text their students have read and upload it by naming it. They can then create a specific gap activity or a challenge, or they can just let students use the numerous activities that exist on the site. Most of those have to do with putting chunks of text in order. It is possible to include a picture or audio with the text.

A few activities are not possible yet with Cyrillic text, but there are still four game-like ones. The teacher can make an entire set of activities associated with a text, or with several different texts, count toward points in a Challenge. The Challenge can be set for one day or several. A Challenge update board keeps students aware of current points.

Here are some pictures of three activities students can do with one text.

While Textivate is not the most user-friendly application out there, owner Martin Lapworth is quick to offer support within hours of a question. Students pick up the system quickly, and they like the diversion of a new way to read.
**Featured Russian Program**
**Представляем программу русского языка**

The Portland State University Russian Flagship Program, in partnership with the University of Oregon Chinese Flagship Program, have received a grant from the National Security Education Program to support increased collaboration with K-12 schools and community colleges in the Pacific Northwest.

One particularly exciting project that the funding will support is a week-long Professional Development Opportunity for teachers of Russian in Dual Immersion Programs scheduled for June 2016. This workshop will bring together Russian classroom teachers, pedagogy experts, and curriculum designers at all levels to share and develop curriculum for dual language programs among different districts and programs.

Excitement to begin this important work is swelling. Dr. William Comer, Director of the Portland State University Russian Flagship program states, "Everything that we can do to support dual immersion teachers enriches the classroom experience for students and makes language learning more engaging and durable."

Both the Chinese and Russian Flagship Programs have a long history of working collaboratively with Portland Public Schools, Woodburn Public Schools, Anchorage School District on dual language instruction. As a result of previous NSEP funding, these collaborations produced the K-12 Russian Immersion Language Curriculum Framework (RILCF).

This rich document (available as a free downloadable PDF from the Website [www.pdx.edu/russian-flagship](http://www.pdx.edu/russian-flagship)) demonstrates ways of systematically connecting the learning of language forms and functions with content learning over the K-12 curriculum.

Another project in the new grant includes a proficiency testing initiative at Portland Community College (PCC), which will help the strong Russian program there document its student outcomes. The testing results will allow PCC and PSU improve curriculum alignment and articulation between the programs.

All of the initiatives in this grant come down to a single ultimate goal: to create clear pathways for students to continue their language learning from kindergarten through their undergraduate degree programs, so that they can become global professionals.

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**William J. Comer**  
Director  
Russian Flagship Program  
Associate Professor of Russian  
Department of World Languages and Literatures  
Neuberger Hall, Room 473
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believed that the bear emerged from his den on that day. As Haney writes, special foods were made for that holiday, and the Slavs would wear their coats inside out to imitate bear skin, and perform dances resembling clumsy moves of the animal awakening from hibernation (Haney, 68.)

**Russian Saints and Their Bear Companions**

Later the bears became associated not only with Saint Nicholas, but with several other Saints. While the 24th of March was the awakening of the bear, the 25th of September, which appears to be autumnal equinox and the day of Saint Sergii (Sergius) of Radonezh, was the time of the bear's return to the otherworld. As Haney writes, Saint Sergii "was a protector of bears, even sharing his meager meals with them and was regarded as their patron Saint" (Haney, 69).

Here's an excerpt retelling the story of Saint Sergii encountering a bear: “Once near the monastic cells Sergius saw a giant bear who was exhausted by hunger. And he felt pity for him. The furry wanderer ate the loaf. Then he started visiting Sergius and Sergius would always feed him. The bear became tamed” (Zaitsev, 2012).

The story of Saint Sergii was not the only one of this kind. Another peculiar friendship existed between a bear and Saint Seraphim of Sarov. Saint Seraphim was a hieromonk of Sarov monastery and the founder of the nunnery in Diveevo. The encounters of Saint Seraphim with the bear were witnessed by several monks and nuns and remained in their retold memories about Saint Seraphim.

One is the story told by monk Peter: “Attached by brotherly love to father Seraphim I went once to his remote hermitage to obtain a soul-saving advice of the God's elder. When approaching the hermitage I saw that father Seraphim was sitting on a log and feeding pieces of dried bread that he took from his cell to a bear standing in front of him. Struck by this strange and miraculous occasion I stopped behind one of the big trees and started praying to father Seraphim to free me from my fear. Immediately I saw that the bear headed away from the elder to the forest, in the direction opposite from me. Then I took courage to come up to father Seraphim. The elder welcomed me with joyful spirit and said that if I had been honored with seeing that forest animal beside him, then I should keep it in secret till the day of his dormition..." (Prepodobny Seraphim Sarovsky).
ACTR Letter

Newsletter of the American Council of Teachers of Russian

Elena Farkas, Chair, Editorial Board

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Dear ACTR Letter subscribers,

On behalf of the Editorial Board of the ACTR Letter, I would like to apologize for the delay with the Fall and Winter issues of the newsletters. The Winter issue will be published at the beginning of March. Please send your submissions for a spring issue by March 15, 2016.

Elena Farkas
ACTR Letter Editor

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