

Tunguska

In 1908, thunderous blasts and blazing fires from the sky descended upon the desolate Tunguska territory of Siberia. The explosion knocked down an area of forest larger than London and was powerful enough to obliterate Manhattan. The mysterious nature of the event has prompted a wide array of speculation and investigation, including from those who suspected that aliens from outer space had been involved. In this deeply researched account of the Tunguska explosion and its legacy in Russian society, culture, and the environment, Andy Bruno recounts the intriguing history of the disaster and researchers' attempts to understand it. Taking readers inside the numerous expeditions and investigations that have long occupied scientists, he foregrounds the significance of mystery in environmental history. His engaging and accessible account shows how the explosion has shaped the treatment of the landscape, how uncertainty allowed unusual ideas to enter scientific conversations, and how cosmic disasters have influenced the past and might affect the future.

Andy Bruno is an environmental historian and associate professor at Northern Illinois University. He is the author of *The Nature of Soviet Power: An Arctic Environmental History* (2016).

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A Siberian Mystery and Its Environmental Legacy

ANDY BRUNO
Northern Illinois University



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Note on Sources, Abbreviations, Terminology, and Transliteration

The research for this book has depended on the website *Tunguska Phenomenon* (<http://tunguska.tsc.ru/>), abbreviated as [TF] throughout the endnotes and bibliography. This repository of source material about Tunguska represents an impressive accomplishment in digital history and the public humanities. It contains everything from archival documents to rare and out-of-print publications.¹ My own investigations involved reading through almost all the materials available on this website and then directing my research in Russian archives and libraries toward what was not available there. Regarding citations, I have nevertheless preferred to provide references to physical copies of documents and publications when I have been able to acquire them. Therefore, many of the sources I cite without noting the *Tunguska Phenomenon* website also appear there. Items marked with [TF] after them indicate I have only been able to consult the online versions. In cases when I did not have page numbers for books only available on the website, I cite chapters instead. Many of the images that appear in this book also exist on this website. Some materials from the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ARAN) have also been made available online on the website *Informational System of the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences* (<http://isaran.ru/>). I denote archival citations to materials exclusively obtained through this site with [IS].

Standard Russian abbreviations refer to various archives and are listed in the bibliography. Additional abbreviations in archival citations also follow the usual conventions for Russian archives. Thus, I use *f.* for *fond* or collection, *op.* for *opis'* or inventory, *d.* for *delo* or file, and *l.* and *ll.* for *list* or *listy* or sheet(s). In some cases, archival materials have not been

assigned sheet numbers and so I provide brief descriptions of these documents instead, usually preferring Russian when they are on the *Tunguska Phenomenon* website and English when they are not.

In this book I use “Tunguska” to describe both the event and the place. In Russian *Tunguskii* functions as an adjective requiring a noun to modify, but the English “Tunguska” possesses greater flexibility in its usage. Additionally, I have preferred the Russian acronym “KSE” for the Complex Amateur Expedition (*Kompleksnaia samodeiatel’naia ekspedit-siia*), given that this is how the group so commonly referred to itself. Regarding transliteration, I generally adhere to the Library of Congress transliteration system. In the body of the text – but not the citations – I have excluded soft signs in names (Vasilev instead of Vasil’ev), simplified adjectival endings into more common forms in English (Vernadsky instead of Vernadskii), and sometimes used more familiar spellings of first names (Alexander instead of Aleksandr).