

## Honorary Member of the the Russian Society of Nematologists

Dr Esther van den Berg is awarded an Honorary Membership of the Russian Society of Nematologists. Esther van den Berg was born on November 18, 1941, in Ermelo, South Africa. Her father worked for the Ministry of Labour, and the family had to move around quite a lot, so she attended seven different schools before matriculating from Hoërskool Langenhoven, Pretoria, in 1959. Initially, Dr Esther dreamed of becoming a pharmacist, but within a month of starting her practicals, this dream dissipated, and she decided to change her choice of future profession. In 1962, Esther received a Master of Science degree from the University of Pretoria, conducting research on the taxonomy of beetles, and was accepted into Department of Entomology at the same university. In 1968, Esther moved to the to the Transvaal Region of the Department of Agricultural Technical Services, but in November of the same year she joined the Nematology Section of the Plant Protection Research Institute in Pretoria (now the Agricultural Research Council – Plant Health and Protection), joining a group of taxonomists, now consisting of Juan Heyns, Kent Kleynhans and Esther van den Berg. Together with her colleagues, Dr Esther began studying the genus *Hoplolaimus*, and then conducted research within the rest of the family Hoplolaimidae and the family Pratylenchidae.

In 1974, Esther received her PhD in Nematology from the Rand Afrikaans University (now University of Johannesburg), this was the first PhD in Nematology awarded in South Africa. Throughout her career, she has also specialised in the study of nematodes of the families Criconematidae and Tylenchulidae, describing many new species of plant-parasitic nematodes from various countries and carrying out a comprehensive assessment of the biodiversity of nematodes in South Africa. Dr Esther has published more than 150 scientific articles. For many years, Dr Esther has maintained close scientific collaboration with colleagues from Russia, and she has actively and frequently published articles in the Russian Journal of Nematology. Together with colleagues, she published fundamental works on the morphological and molecular characteristics of nematodes of the families Hemicycliophoridae, Tylenchulidae, Paratylenchidae, Hoplolaimidae, Criconematidae and the genus *Hemicriconemoides*.

Esther van den Berg is one of the founders of the Nematological Society of Southern Africa (NSSA) and one of the delegates to the first symposium in Nelspruit in 1973. She is currently an honorary member of the NSSA. In 1997, Esther and co-authors of 'Plant Nematodes in South Africa' were awarded the Rhone-Poulenc Prize award for 'Achievement in Nematology'.

Since the end of 2006, Dr Esther has officially retired, but continues to work, identify species, and study the systematics of nematodes. Dr Esther has travelled extensively over the past few decades. Her travels ranged from Alaska to Zambia and Russia. Besides travel, her other passion is animals, especially birds. Over the years, her colleagues have learned a lot from her about her very spoiled but much loved 'children'.

