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Biography

More than 40 years of excellence: the outstanding contribution of the South African Edward A. Ueckermann to acarology

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Acarology has been a very active area of research in South Africa for many years, especially with reference to taxonomy. For this reason, mites of agricultural importance are well known in that country compared to many other countries. Edward A. Ueckermann is a South African acarologist who has contributed enormously to knowledge about the mites of his country, as well as from many other countries around the world. Eddie, as he is called by his friends, is an admirable man, both for his enviable professional qualities and for his tremendous personality. The authors of this brief biography are glad to have had the opportunity to collaborate with Eddie as authors of several publications[51, 52, 58, 70, 75, 80, 87, 92, 95, 101,103, 104, 107, 112, 114, 117, 121, 143, 151, 160, 189, 203, 207, 211], and to interact with him in many other ways.

Eddie was born in Postmasburg, Northern Cape Province, South Africa, on 19 January 1951. He completed secondary school in his hometown and after a year of compulsory military training, Eddie enrolled at North-West University, Potchefstroom, in 1971 to study a B.Sc. degree majoring in Zoology and Botany, which he obtained in 1973. He then continued at the same institution to pursue his MSc degree in Zoology, awarded in 1977. In February 1976, he joined the Agricultural Research Council - Plant Protection Research Institute (ARC-PPRI) in Pretoria as a research officer. His first project at that institute involved the study of spider mite pests on cotton.

After just six months, he was offered employment as a taxonomist, specializing in the predatory mite family Phytoseiidae. His research on this topic was submitted towards a D.Sc. in Zoology at the North-West University, awarded in 1983. To complement his knowledge on mite taxonomy, Eddie

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visited various major mite collections in Florence (Italy), Leiden (The Netherlands) and the British Museum in London in 1989. During his visit to England, he attended the Summer School in Acarology at the University of Reading.

His major research interest for more than 40 years was the taxonomy of mites of agricultural importance, especially the family Phytoseiidae, an important worldwide group of predatory mites. Also during that time, he contributed significantly to knowledge of phytophagous, parasitic (medically and veterinary), and other predatory mite families relevant to agriculture. He featured prominently in mite identification for amongst others, South African plant quarantine services, universities, farmers, the public, and the Agricultural Research Council. He continues to conduct collaborative research with researchers from different countries, including Benin [87, 92, 95, 101, 103, 107, 112], Brazil[58, 62, 87, 92, 95, 101, 107, 112, 114, 194], Cape Verde[33, 39], Egypt[181], Iran[56, 63–66, 68, 72, 73, 76–78, 82, 86, 88, 97–100, 105, 106, 111, 113, 118–120, 122, 123–126, 128, 129, 131–133, 135–137, 139–142, 145–150, 155, 156, 159, 161–163, 165, 166, 168, 172–175, 183, 184, 192, 198–202, 210], France [49, 55,67, 93], Israel[116, 167, 211], Japan[69], Kenya[117], Spain[84, 90, 154], Turkey[130, 182, 188, 193, 195, 204], United Arab Emirates, USA[157, 170, 177, 178, 185, 205], Yemen[40, 45, 79, 89, 94], Zambia and Zimbabwe[120].

Training

Eddie frequently offered training to students of the Universities of Stellenbosch and Pretoria on parasitic mites, and to South African quarantine officers on several mite groups. Because of his excellent experience on the taxonomy of mites in general, he was invited to Israel in 2012 and 2014 by the Israel Taxonomy Initiative to offer training on the taxonomy of phytophagous and predatory soil mites, and in 2016 was invited by the European Cooperation in Science and Technology to offer part of a course on the taxonomy of predatory mites associated with *Dermanyssus gallinae*, a notorious and ubiquitous ectoparasite of birds.

Main scientific and editorial contributions

Eddie had the opportunity to work with many collaborators throughout his career. As a young scientist, he had the chance to work extensively with Magdalena (Smith) Meyer, renowned South African acarologist, with whom he published 24 papers[1, 2, 3, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 35, 38, 39, 42, 44, 47, 48, 89] during the first half of his career.

Since 2001, acarologists and researchers from Israel, Iran, Japan, Kenya, Mozambique, Burundi, Zambia, Brazil, USA and The Netherlands have visited the mite section of ARC-PPRI to work with Eddie on mite taxonomy. In 2000, and again in 2005, he was invited by the University of Florida, USA to help with the taxonomy of predatory mites collected from citrus plants. In the first years of this century, he participated in a research team that conducted a major revision of the family Phytoseiidae of Africa, now often used on that continent in many important projects on biological control of pest mites. From 2010 to 2014, he was part of another team of researchers from France, Turkey, and South Africa (North-West University and ARC-PPRI), conducting a project funded by the European Union to search prospective predatory mites of solanaceous pests, especially *Tetranychus evansi*[114].

Over the years, Eddie has been a member of the editorial boards of six scientific journals, namely the *International Journal of Acarology*, *Acarologia*, *Zootaxa*, *Persian Journal of Acarology*, *Experimental and Applied Acarology* and *Systematic and Applied Acarology*. He has also contributed as reviewer of articles in many scientific journals, including those of which he was a member of the editorial board, as well as *Acarina*, *Journal of Asia-Pacific Entomology*, *African Zoology* and *Journal of Natural History*. He was also the chairman of the African Acarology Association in its first three year of existence between 1998 and 2011.

He not only helped his counterparts to publish, but he also published extensively himself. Until now, he has described 23 new genera and 240 new species, in more than 212 scientific papers[1–212].

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Professional recognition and future

In February 2009, he was appointed as Extraordinary Professor by the North-West University and was ranked as a B2 level scientist by the South Africa National Research Foundation, which entitled him to receive incentive funding from the latter institution. In recognition of his major contribution to Acarology, the honorable appointment and classification was recently renewed.

Eddie retired on January 31st, 2016, but continues participation in research activities in full professional capacity, collaborates with researchers at North-West University and other institutions, and is actively involved in supervision of graduate students. One of his principal projects includes ongoing collaborative work with the University of Florida on the identification of tea mites. A list of publications is provided in chronological order below.

We are convinced that Edward A. Ueckermann would be a dignified recipient of the "James McMurtry Award".

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