

Vera Andreevna RICHTER
(28 August 1936 – 7 February 2015)

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by

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Fig. 1: Vera Andreevna RICHTER at the '8th International Congress of Dipterology' in Potsdam, Germany, August 2014.
Photo: F. MENZEL.

Abstract

On February 7th 2015, Professor Vera Andreevna RICHTER, DSc in biology, a leading researcher in the Laboratory of Insect Systematics, Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, died at the age of 79 years following a stroke. She was a prominent dipterist, systematist of Asilidae, Tephritidae, and Tachinidae, member of the council and presidium of the Russian Entomological Society, and deputy editor-in-chief of the journal 'Entomologicheskoe Obozrenie'.

Key words

Vera RICHTER, dipterology, Asilidae, Tephritidae, Tachinidae, biography, obituary

Zusammenfassung

Am 7. Februar 2015 verstarb Frau Professor Vera Andreevna RICHTER im Alter von 79 Jahren an den Folgen eines Schlaganfalls. Vera A. RICHTER, eine promovierte Biologin, war eine führende Forscherin in der Abteilung Insektensystematik des Zoologischen Instituts der Russischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, St. Petersburg. Sie war eine herausragende Dipterologin und Systematikerin für Asilidae, Tephritidae und Tachinidae, Mitglied des Rates und Präsidiums der Russischen Entomologischen Gesellschaft sowie stellvertretende Chefredakteurin der Zeitschrift „Entomologicheskoe Obozrenie“.

Stichwörter

Vera RICHTER, Dipterologie, Asilidae, Tephritidae, Tachinidae, Biographie, Nachruf

On February 7th 2015, Professor Vera Andreevna RICHTER, DSc in biology, a leading researcher in the Laboratory of Insect Systematics, Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, died at the age of 79 years following a stroke. She was a prominent dipterist, member of the council and presidium of the Russian Entomological Society, and deputy editor-in-chief of the journal ‘Entomologicheskoe Obozrenie’. This obituary is an illustrated and slightly expanded version of the one by KOROTYAEV et al. (2015) published shortly after Vera RICHTER’s death.

Vera Andreevna’s parents were famous Soviet coleopterists: Andrei Andreevich RICHTER, a specialist on Buprestidae, and Margarita Yervandovna TER-MINASSIAN, the author of the ‘Fauna of the USSR’ volumes on Bruchidae and Rhynchitidae plus Attelabidae, and also of books on the weevil subfamily Lixinae (formerly Cleoninae). Margarita Yervandovna TER-MINASSIAN was the director of the Institute of Zoology of Armenia but lost her position during the period of repression of the biological sciences in the Soviet Union after 1948. She and her husband moved to the Zoological Institute in Leningrad where they were given some degree of protection through the help of academician E. N. PAVLOVSKIY.

Vera Andreevna started her scientific activities as a student in the Entomology Department of Leningrad State University. By the time of her graduation in 1958, she had already published two papers on checkered beetles (family Cleridae). She then had to switch to the study of Diptera because in the Soviet Union, to prevent nepotism, parents and children were not allowed to work together. In 1958 she obtained a technician position at the Zoological Institute in Leningrad, where for the next five years she worked with A. A. STACKELBERG, doing her technical work while conducting her own studies of two dipteran families, Asilidae and Tephritidae. In 1965 she presented a PhD dissertation, and, in 1988, a dissertation on Tachinidae for the DSc degree in biology. In 2003, she was awarded a professorship.

After 1960, Vera Andreevna’s main interests included morphology, systematics, evolution, ecology, and zoogeography of Palaearctic tachinids. In cooperation with Dmitriy R. KASPARYAN she carried out an analysis of the ecological distinctions between Tachinidae and Ichneumonidae, the two largest groups of insect parasitoids of sawflies (Hymenoptera, Symphyta). She also investigated an enormous material of Tachinidae from the Caucasus, Middle Asia, Transbaikalia, Yakutia, Mongolia, Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. She collected many flies and beetles herself, making important contributions to the Zoological Institute collection. Additionally, she compiled catalogues of the types of Nemestrinidae (1983) and Syrphidae (2007) in the Zoological Institute and curated the collections of many families of Diptera.

During the course of her career, Vera Andreevna published 260 scientific works, including a monograph of the robber-flies (Asilidae) of the Caucasus (1968), keys to the species of several families in the ‘Identification Keys to the Insects of the European Part of the USSR’ (1969, 1970), chapters in the ‘Manual of the Palaearctic Diptera’, and a large chapter on Tachinidae in the ‘Key to Insects of the Russian Far East’ (260 genera, 670 species). She supervised six PhD dissertations on three fly families. Her last student, Dmitriy M. ASTAKHOV, defended his dissertation on the fauna of Asilidae of the lower Volga area in December 2013 and was working with Vera Andreevna on his monograph during her last week in the Institute.

Among Vera Andreevna’s greatest contributions to entomology were the new genera and species of Diptera she described over a span of about 50 years. Within the Tachinidae, these numbered 30 genera and 113 species according to ‘Systema Dipteroorum’, an online resource for dipteran names. In the other families of special