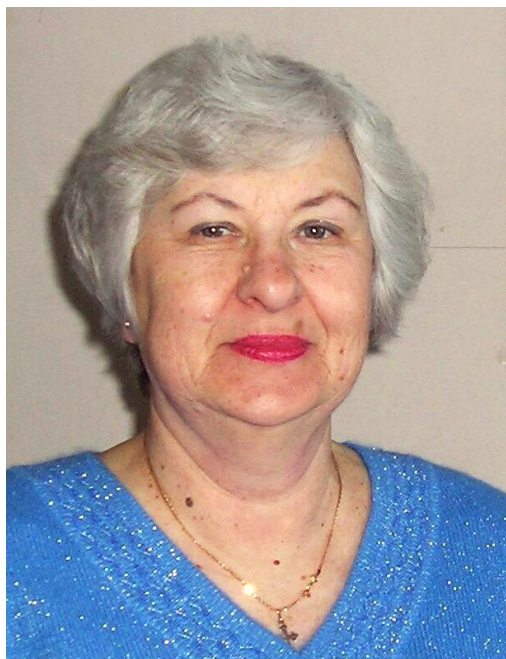


### IN MEMORIAM: NELLI SERGEEVA (20.11.1940 – 02.02.2025)



On 2 February, 2025, our colleague Nelli Sergeeva passed away – D. Sc., chief researcher at IBSS, and a specialist on Black Sea meiobenthos.

N. Sergeeva was born in the city of Ashgabat (Turkmen SSR). She graduated from school in the city of Alma-Ata (Kazakh SSR) and studied at the faculty of biology and soil science of the Kazakh State University named after S. M. Kirov (now Al-Farabi Kazakh National University). During her final years at the university, she completed coursework and pre-graduation internships in the benthos department at the Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas of Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union under the supervision of M. Kiseleva and I. Greze. After receiving a diploma in biology, with specialization in hydrobiology and ichthyology, she was assigned to work at the Kazakh Research Institute of Fisheries (the city of Balkhash).

In 1968–1972, Nelli Sergeeva studied in the PhD graduate school in hydrobiology at IBSS under the supervision of V. Vodyanitsky, director of the Institute and corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union. Upon successful completion of her studies, she joined the benthos department at IBSS. In 1974, she defended her PhD thesis “Fauna and Some Ecological Aspects of Free-living Nematodes of the Black Sea.” Her subsequent research in biodiversity and life processes in the Black Sea yielded a vast array of new data. In 2000, with advisory support from V. Zaika, the corresponding member of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, she defended her D. Sc. dissertation “Zonal Distribution of Meiobenthos and Its Key Component, Free-living Nematodes in the Black Sea.” Summarizing all the information on nematodes, she described 29 species and 4 genera new for science documenting 30 species and 30 genera previously unrecorded in the Black Sea.

Infinitely in love with science, N. Sergeeva continually expanded the scope of her interests. She studied the taxonomy and ecology of various groups of marine meiofauna, their significance for bioindication, the structure of meiobenthos, and its role in benthic ecosystems. She made a comprehensive inventory of the Black Sea meiobenthos (more than 500 species). Moreover, she conducted a detailed research of specific Black Sea benthic communities formed under extreme conditions: under hypoxia, anoxia, hydrogen sulfide contamination, and anthropogenic pollution, as well as in methane seepage habitats.

Meticulous and observant, Nelli Sergeeva made groundbreaking discoveries in the Black Sea oxygen-depleted depths previously considered lifeless (except for bacterial flora) due to hydrogen sulfide contamination. She recorded previously unknown unicellular organisms (ciliates, soft-shelled foraminifera,

and gromiids), multicellular organisms (rotifers, nematodes, oligochaetes, polychaetes, and tardigrades), and Gastrotricha genus and species that had not been registered in the Black Sea earlier. With this, she actually created a new scientific direction – the study of the Black Sea benthos within the deep-sea periazoic level.



She pioneered large-scale research on soft-shelled foraminifera in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov. She was the first to document the remarkable diversity (extensive spatial and bathymetric distribution) of foraminifera and a closely related group Gromiida. Also, she evaluated their role in benthic communities.

N. Sergeeva participated in 17 research cruises, including international ones. As a hydronaut, she dived aboard a manned submersible “Benthos-300” off the coasts of the Caucasus and Crimea. She coordinated, headed, and implemented several interna-

tional and national projects and grants of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research. She authored more than 200 scientific papers. In particular, she co-authored two monographs and contributed to chapters of nine collective monographs published both in Russia and abroad. She generously shared her scientific experience with colleagues and students.

She seamlessly balanced her intensive scientific work with organizational leadership. Nelli Sergeeva served as secretary and member of a qualification council for awarding academic degrees. In 2000–2013, she headed the shelf ecosystems department at IBSS. She participated in activities of examination boards and supervised graduate students. In 2017–2018, she served as the advisor for IBSS director. For her lifelong dedication and significant contribution to marine hydrobiology, she was listed on the city Board of Honor (2019) and awarded the Certificate of Honor of the Russian Academy of Sciences (2020).

N. Sergeeva devoted her entire life to science. She enthusiastically dived into every new field of study striving to inspire her colleagues. To her family, she was a loving mother and devoted grandmother.

The bright memory of Nelli Sergeeva, along with endless gratitude and respect for her, will forever remain in our hearts.



*Friends and colleagues from IBSS*

### **ПАМЯТИ НЕЛЛИ ГРИГОРЬЕВНЫ СЕРГЕЕВОЙ (20.11.1940 – 02.02.2025)**

02 февраля 2025 г. ушла из жизни д. б. н. Нелли Григорьевна Сергеева. Она стала автором более чем 200 научных работ, выполнила инвентаризацию состава мейобентоса Чёрного моря и приняла участие в 17 морских экспедициях, в том числе международных.