

Prof. Karen J. Esler



Karen J. Esler received her postgraduate education at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. A BSc (Distinction, Botany) and BSc Honours (First Class) in Botany and Zoology was followed by an Ecology-based PhD. Following a post-doctoral year at UCLA, USA, she joined Stellenbosch University in 1995, first in the Department of Botany and later (2005) in the Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology.

In 2008 she was promoted to full Professor. Her research experience is in population and community ecology of semi-arid vegetation, and she has published over 100 peer reviewed publications in journals and books.

The overall goal of her research has been to understand how drivers of change (over-exploitation, habitat fragmentation and alien invasion) influence population and community structure and processes in South African fynbos, karoo and riparian vegetation by researching aspects of seed bank ecology, germination ecology, seedling establishment and phenology. The applied aspect of this work has been to give advice on aspects of best-practice management, restoration and conservation.

Esler has a particular interest in social-ecological systems and in linking research and management. She is a core team member of the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology (<http://academic.sun.ac.za/cib/>), an associate of the Stellenbosch University Water Institute (<http://www0.sun.ac.za/water/>), and a member of the Stellenbosch University Transdisciplinary PhD initiative linked to the TSAMA Hub (<http://www.tsama.org.za/>). Esler was the first woman president of the South African Association of Botanists (2006-2008), and is particularly interested in promoting women in science. She currently serves as chair of the HERS-SA board (<http://www.hers-sa.org.za/>). Her passion for Mediterranean-type ecosystems (MTEs) is reflected in her research and service. Esler serves as the South African representative of ISOMED, is a founding member of the IUCN Mediterranean-Type Ecosystem Thematic Group (MTEG) (http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/cem/cem_work/tq_mteg/) and of INCOMME, an international cooperative for the management of MTEs (<http://www.incommme.org/>). She serves on the SAEON Fynbos Node Liaison Committee, and the Fynbos Forum Committee (<http://fynbosforum.org.za/>) which organizes an annual meeting on Fynbos ecology and management. Esler has received several awards for her teaching, and has graduated 50 MSc and 10 PhD students (1998-April 2014).

For a continually updated list of Esler's publications, visit Esler's profile on Google Scholar: <http://scholar.google.co.za/citations?user=psTb5kgAAAAJ&hl=en>