



# grass's roots

*Newsletter of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa*

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***KwaZulu-Natal Biodiversity Programme:*** A programme of the Endangered Wildlife Trust:-  
Flagship species such as the Oribi focus attention on our threatened grasslands of the province.

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## EDITORIAL

Dear members,

The 2005 congress has come and gone, and by all accounts it was one of the most successful congresses we've had in years. Well done to all those involved in the organising of the congress, and especially to all the participants who presented posters and papers, as well as the audience members who kept the presenters on their toes by asking probing questions.

Leslie Brown, our new Professional Affairs Committee (PAC) chairman, has been closely involved with the discussions around the Natural Scientific Professions Act of 2003, which is currently being implemented. This act is likely to affect nearly every member of this Society, especially those who give advice to managers, or even just lecture to students. You can read more about the South African Council of Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP) in Leslie's Report in this issue. Since this act affects a great many other professional societies, it is likely that the GSSA is going to have to team up with other like-minded bodies to ensure that our voices are heard on SACNASP.

It's encouraging to see members of the GSSA are involved in organising events in several

regions in coming weeks. Axel Rothauge writes about the upcoming Namibian Rangeland Forum Meeting, Herbert Prins *et al* tell us about a programme called TEMBO, and Nicky Findlay, our PRO, is assisting with the organising of a dairy farmers' symposium together with the Milk Producer's Organisation in KZN.

A programme rather close to my heart is the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON). This is a programme to coordinate data collection and archiving of long-term ecological trials across the sub-continent. As we all know, there are a plethora of long-term experiments and monitoring programmes scattered across the region. Although most of these have yielded a great deal of valuable data, there are often hypotheses that can be tested on the trials that the original designers didn't dream of. The most obvious examples of the types of new questions that can be asked of these trials and their data are on climate change and biodiversity, both of which are relatively recent topics of interest, as well as meta-analysis of several trials to yield more insights into ecological systems. Silvia Mecenero tells more about the SAEON programme and how we can get involved.

*Alan*

# News from Council

*Sigrun Ammann*

The full GSSA Council met on 18 July 2005 before the start of Congress 40 at Kapenta Bay in Port Shepstone. The venue for the congress was excellent and certainly met with approval. It was also very pleasing to see the large number of delegates that attended the congress this year compared to previous years.

The major points of discussion were again the journal and the financial situation of the GSSA. The concern regarding the journal revolves mainly around the publishing and printing costs. The dilemma is that the journal is published and printed very professionally but it is becoming increasingly more expensive and putting the society under financial strain. Council has and is continuing to seek solutions that are sustainable financially while maintaining the quality of our journal. The financial situation could also be improved if more of the membership fees were to come in more timeously.

The strategic objectives were reviewed shortly as these are considered an integral part of the dynamic functioning of the GSSA and have to do with many of the activities performed by council members.

A detailed report about SACNASP (the South African Council of Natural Scientific Professions) and the possible implications for our profession was also discussed (see Leslie Brown's article on the subject in this issue of *Grassroots*).

Members will be kept informed through the PAC about any new developments.

It is pleasing to see that the GSSA website is receiving an increased number of hits. It means that the website has to remain current in order to keep this trend going. It will also be beneficial to get Grassroots to be available on the website. This has been the idea for a number of years and it is not due to a lack of trying. Hopefully this will soon be a reality. An appeal goes out to all GSSA members to submit articles to Grassroots.

The council said goodbye to two members namely Annelie de Beer, the Immediate Past President and to Dawood Hattas, the website coordinator. Both made major contributions to the running of the GSSA. Three new members now join the council, the new Vice President Mark Hardy and as additional members Rina Grant and Luthando Dziba.

