



grass's roots

Newsletter of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa

*Incorporating Vol. 15-1 of the Bulletin of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa
ISSN: 10166122 • Vol.5 No.1 • February 2005*



Above: *Inundated Karoo veld near Laingsburg in the Western Cape over Christmas. The rains brought welcome relief to local farmers and floods to the Garden Route. Other areas in SA remain drought-stricken.*

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EDITORIAL

Dear members

This is the first issue of the New Year, and my first as editor. Over the last 5 years Graham has shepherded our newsletter through several changes of format and a name change (from *Bulletin of the GSSA* to *Grassroots*). He's left a *Grassroots* that is interesting and relevant to its readers. Thanks, Graham. I'll be calling on your experience in the year to come, so don't think you can rest on your laurels just yet.

Where does the Society fit in the modern world, and especially South Africa? We believe that we still have a very important role in play. With humanity's ever-increasing pressure on the land, skilled and passionate practitioners are more than ever needed to guide the process of development. Many emerging commercial farmers will rely on livestock production from veld and pastures to make a living, and established commercial farmers are also being required to become more scientific and business-savvy in their operations than before. Who is going to advise them, if not members of our Society?

That doesn't mean that we can afford to be complacent. If the Society does not stay up-to-date - in fact, in the forefront of technology development and advice - then we will become obsolete. There are advisors out there who do not believe that the GSSA has any relevance to them or their clients. They prefer to fly overseas to obtain their information than to attend a GSSA event. That must change, and soon. The Society has done some hard soul-searching in recent months, and recently the Council and some experienced old hands thrashed out a new Strategic Action

Plan to take us forward. You can read about that in this issue, and send us your thoughts.

On a lighter note, Theunis de Bruyn remembers many years of congresses, and Richard Fynn reports on his trip to the USA and UK. Our Congress is also coming up in July - the first entirely organised by us in three years. We have the advice of Wiseman Goqwana and Winston Trollope on veld condition assessment, and a report from Dundee researcher Erika van Zyl on cowpeas. You'll also read a summary of a workshop on "Grazing and Biodiversity in the Grassland Biome" held by the GSSA in September 2004.

Keep sending your articles and letters in. We'd like to know what you're doing and why. We'd especially like to hear from students. Tell us about your projects: what the problem is, how you're addressing it, what problems and preliminary results have you found, and where this research will go in the future.

All the best for 2005,

Alan

WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

The search for the Shoprite/Checkers - SABC2 Woman of the Year is on. This is the tenth anniversary of this prestigious award for achievement by women, and the GSSA is participating in the Science and Technology category. Do you know any women who have not only achieved success in their own field but have made a tangible difference in communities and society as a whole? Nominate your candidates using the enclosed forms and submit before 11 May 2005. For more information, contact Nicky Findlay (findlay@dae.kzntl.gov.za).

GSSA Council 2004/05

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Letter to The President

Dear Dr Allsopp

When I started with my project to investigate the possibility that grass may grow on the soil of old ant heaps, I did not have a medal or a special prize in mind. I enjoyed every minute of my project and learned a lot during the process. I visit the donga regularly where I planted the grass and it is still growing.

I was very surprised when it was announced that I won the Special Prize from your Society but when my certificate arrived yesterday, I was even more surprised to find my certificate already framed. I was very honoured to be chosen as the winner of this special prize and this certificate will receive a special place in my room and will stay one of my most precious belongings.

The attached newsletter was very much appreciated and most interesting.

Thank you once again for my beautiful certificate.

Regards

Megan Dreyer

KWAZULU NATAL CRANE FOUNDATION

The Crane Foundation was established in 1989 to foster and encourage the awareness of and interest in cranes and their habitat.

MEMBERSHIP

Applications for membership are invited from interested parties.

Fees are :- ordinary R 70.00 pa

Family R 120.00 pa

Please apply to :-

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