



grass roots

Newsletter of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa

Incorporating the Bulletin of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa
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Stall-feeding
goats with
market residues

Bursaries and
research
opportunities

*Conservation
community shocked
by tragedy*

Degradation
ecology: soil
properties and
nutrition

*National
Grasslands
Programme update*

Advancing rangeland ecology and pasture management in Africa

Editorial

Dear Members

Happy New Year, and I trust you had a reasonable break and a chance to recharge the batteries.

On January 22nd, the Cape Times broke the news of the discovery of Theo Manuel's murdered body in his home. His friends and colleagues were devastated at the news. Theo was not a member of the GSSA, but he was a dedicated conservationist and a member of the Fynbos Forum, and many of our members knew him well. Our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

I hope some of you (in the brief periods when you have electricity) have been able to visit the Society's new website. It's looking fantastic, and is packed full of useful and interesting features. Khanyi and Freyni have done a superb job of keeping the website relevant. One feature of the new website that I'd urge all of you to utilize is an electronic archive of member's publications—so if you have dissertations or useful reports of general interest, please send them through.

Alan Short

The Grassland Society of Southern Africa is dedicated to the advancement of the science and practice of range ecology and pasture management.

We welcome any contributions to the Grassroots, in the form of news, informative articles, reports, short research notes, scientific papers and letters to the Editor. Email alan.short@dae.kzntl.gov.za or admin@gssa.co.za or fax 033-3559 605 or 033-390 3113

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On the cover: Advanced degradation (p. 15). Photo: Brent Forbes

News

Contribute to Valuable African Remote Sensing Market

The GSDI Association has joined forces with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and Global Marketing Insights, Inc. to collect African Remote Sensing Research. Your industry knowledge and insight is needed to complete this valuable research.

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey by going to the URL link below and selecting the appropriate survey that best represents the area that you are employed in or affiliated with. www.empliant.com/USGS-remote-sensing-research

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has awarded the 2008 USGS Remote

Sensing survey and analysis of the AFRICAN Remote Sensing Market to Global Marketing Insights, Inc. as a follow on to last years study of Asia, North America and Europe (which was sponsored previously by U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). This study which will survey the African Remote Sensing market will focus on remote sensing data type usage, application usage and data needs as well as include both a five-and ten-year analysis of the political, economic and technical trends impacting the African remote sensing market globally and

will be completed by year-end 2008.

If you are interested in participating as an Alliance Team Member please contact Sherryloy at sherryloy@globalinsights.com.

This research will be free to everyone who participated in the survey at year end 2008 by logging onto <http://www.globalinsights.com>.

To access both the 2005 U.S., Canada and Europe, and the 2006 final studies please go to www.globalinsights.com/splash.asp Thank you for assisting in the collection of this industry research!



Conservationist found murdered in Cape Town home

Award-winning conservationist Theo Manuel was found murdered in his home in Cape Town, the Cape Times reported on 22 January. Theo was a valued member of the Fynbos Forum. In 2006 he was awarded a Silver medal by the Cape Action for People and

the Environment (CAPE) for his PhD work on the attitudes of the communities of Mitchell's Plain and Khayelitsha to the Wolfgat Nature Reserve. Theo had extensive conservation experience in several government departments, in addition to

working as a maths and biology teacher in Mitchell's Plain. He had recently established a private environmental consultancy. Theo was much admired for overcoming major physical disabilities to reach his goals.



Grasslands Research Task Team meets for the first time

Mahlodi Tau
National Grasslands Biodiversity Programme
Email: tau@sanbi.org

The 1st Grasslands Research Task Team meeting of the National Grasslands Biodiversity Programme (*see article on page 8*) was held on the 31st January 2008 at SANBI offices – Pretoria. The Research Task Team members met to discuss processes to develop a research strategy and to identify research priorities in the grasslands biome.

SANBI has been tasked with developing a national biodiversity research strategy which is a priority under the National Biodiversity Framework (NBF). The NBF states that a national research strategy should articulate priorities by biome, guide allocation of research funding and should link with bioregional programme research strategies where these exist. The Grasslands research strategy will therefore link with the national biodiversity research strategy and should identify research priorities that need to be addressed to further conservation implementation

in the grasslands biome. To achieve this, the research priorities and research areas in the strategy will be guided primarily by the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and secondarily by the priorities of the National Biodiversity Framework.

The Task Team agreed to prepare a first draft of the grasslands research strategy that will be available for comment in June 2008. The strategy will be circulated to all programme stakeholders via e-mails, will also be accessed from the Grasslands Programme website, and will liaise with GSSA to publish draft in the *Grassroots* newsletter for further comments.

Three key research areas were identified for the grasslands biome research strategy:

- **Threats and drivers of change:** Research questions under this theme focus on the biodiversity impact by different land uses and climate change, the need to understand

consequences of such threats and identify drivers of change for optimal biodiversity management. Other key questions include the effects of fragmentation, effects of restoration methodologies and to better understand land uses and their implications for biodiversity, such as under livestock grazing.

- **Ecological dynamics of grasslands:** Key research questions include the need to better understand the dynamics and diversity of grassland vegetation types and to identify impact of threats on species dynamics.
- **Quantify the value of grasslands:** Research questions include an economic assessment of different vegetation types within the grasslands biome, and quantifying ecosystem services of the grasslands in the light of major economic activities (e.g. mining, urban development, etc).



Bursaries

Savanna and grassland research opportunities

Post-graduate research opportunities are available in our Zululand Tree Project funded by the NRF and the Andrew Mellon Foundation. The main focus of our research is on what limits trees in grassy biomes. C4 grassy biomes occupy about a quarter of the world's vegetated land surface and are the most widespread ecosystems in Africa. They support a large proportion of the world's human population in the tropics, and are of central importance for conservation of Africa's surviving megafauna. There is also growing recognition that grassy biomes have large impacts on earth systems and that changes within them may have major feedbacks on global climate. Variation in woody cover is of central importance to utilisation, conservation, and vegetation/climate feedbacks. Tree cover varies greatly both spatially and temporally

in C4 grassy ecosystems. The causes of this variability remain controversial and unresolved after nearly a century of debate. This means that we are still unable to make clear predictions on the future of grasslands and savannas in response to global change nor can we evaluate the potential for changing tree cover to contribute to global change.

We are exploring both top-down (fire, herbivory) and bottom-up (nutrients, climate, grass competition) limitations on tree cover using a variety of research approaches. We have used experiments to test competing ideas, modelling to help generalise the work, and remote sensing to extend the geographic domain of analysis. Though the field team is based in Hluhluwe–Imfolozi Park in KwaZulu-Natal, we also work in Kruger National Park and in private

and public lands where appropriate for the problem. We have research links with groups elsewhere in Africa, Madagascar, Australia, North America and South America and have encouraged visits by our postgraduates to other regions to help broaden their experience. Within UCT, we work closely with Ed February, Lindsey Gillson and Jeremy Midgley with interests in ecophysiology and stable isotope ecology, palaeoecology and population biology respectively.

We have post-graduate bursaries available for 2008 within our ZLTP programme. If you are interested in post-graduate work with us, please contact William Bond and Mike Cramer in the Botany Department, UCT, for more information.

William.bond@uct.ac.za
Michael.cramer@uct.ac.za



Membership Changes

The GSSA saw a number of changes in membership in 2007, with several veterans retiring and a number of new people joining the Society. The Society membership continues to grow—there were 18 resignations and 24 applications for membership. In future, a regular column with the names and some background of new and retiring members will be published in each issue of the *Grassroots*.

Resignations:

Dr Pete Bartholomew

Mr Clement Cupido
Mr Russell Dalldorf
Mr Gideon de Klerk
Mr Gerhard de Kock
Mr Rick Dillon
Ms Sheila Househam
Mr Bryan Mappedoram
Mr Rob Markham
Dr Neil Miles
Mr Geoff Painter
Mr Mark Rynhoud
Mr Trevor Simpson
Mr Richard Smart
Dr Francois Smith
Mr Louis Steyn
Mr Graeme Tupper
Prof Dirk Wessels

New members

Ms Yvette Brits
Mr Charl du Plessis
Mr Patrick Duigan

Mr Brad Fike
Ms Lisa Hebbelmann
Mr Dylan Ludick
Ms Jennifer Manganye
Mr Jameson Masingi
Mr Chris Mbuti
Mr Ntuthuko Mkhize
Ms Mosima Molopa
Mr Musawenkosi Fano Msomi
Mr Messia Mtshali
Mr Petros Ngwenya
Ms Phuti Phukubye
Mr Patrick Ramaselele
Mr Sauli Ramatla
Mr Keith Ramsay
Mr Tshepo Sefara
Dr Adrian Shrade
Mr Trenly Spence
Mr Tian von Wielligh
Ms Julia Wakeling



Upcoming events

From www.grassland.org.za

Universities in southern Africa as catalysts for sustainable rural development

Date: 6 - 7 March 2008

Venue: Kopanong Conference Centre, Johannesburg

Contact: Ndinannyi Brutus Malada

E-mail: brutus@cepd.org.za

Website: www.cepd.org.za

3rd African Biofuels Conference

Date: 10 - 13 March 2008

Venue: Vodaworld, Midrand, South Africa

Contact: Craig Steward

Tel: 011-771 7114

E-mail: csteward@iir.co.za

Website: www.africanbiofuels.co.za/

**Agriculture Development through
Human Capacity Building**

Date: 27 March - 14 April 2008

Venue: Galilee College, Israel

Contact: Mariel Ostrower

E-mail: mostrower@galilcol.ac.il

ISTA Seed Health Testing Workshop

Date: 7 - 11 April 2008

Venue: University of Pretoria, Pretoria,
South Africa

Contact: Prof Theresa A.S. Aveling

Email: Terry.Aveling@up.ac.za

Website: www.seedtest.org

**The 6th Seed Health Symposium:
The International Seed Testing Association**

Date: 14 - 18 April 2008

Venue: Berg en Dal Camp, Kruger
National Park, South Africa

Contact: Prof Theresa A.S. Aveling

Email: Terry.Aveling@up.ac.za

Website: www.up.ac.za/conferences/
ielc/

**Royal Society of South Africa Cen-
tenary Congress**

Date: 17 – 18 April 2008

Venue: Breakwater Lodge, Cape Town,
South Africa

Contact: Dr Margaret Avery

E-mail: mavery@iziko.org.za

**Portuguese Pasture and Forages
Society—XXIX spring meeting of
SPPF**

**Theme: Pastures and biodiversity:
New Opportunities for Forage Pro-
duction**

Date: 7 -9 May 2008

Deadline for abstracts: 15 November
2007

Deadline for texts: 15 February 2008

Venue: Centro Cultural de Samora Cor-

reia, Companhia das Lezírias, Portugal

Contact: Jerónimo Pinto

Email: sppf29primavera@gmail.com

**Organisation and Management in the
Seed Sector Training Programme**

Date: 23 June - 4 July 2008

Venue: Berlin, Germany

Contact: Dr. Walter Haege

Email: walter.haega@gmx.net

43rd Annual Congress of the GSSA

Date: 21-25 July 2008

Venue: Aventura Badplaas, Mpuma-
langa, South Africa

Tel: +27 (0)33 390 3113

Contact: Freyni du Toit

Email: admin@gssa.co.za

Website: www.grassland.org.za/annual-
congress/2008

Joint Forum- AZEF and FF

Date: 3-7 August 2008

Venue: Oudtshoorn, South Africa

Further information will be made avail-
able soon

**New World: Future World
The 10th World Conference on Ani-
mal Production;**

Date: 23-28 November 2008

Venue: Cape Town International Con-
vention Centre, South Africa

Tel: +27 12 420 3276 or +27 12 420
3290

Contact: Darlynn Louw

Email: wcap@up.ac.za



Council News

The Council met on 24 January in Johannesburg for their first meeting of 2008.

The theme for Congress 43 – New approaches to range and pasture science – has already sparked interesting discussions, and various relevant symposia and special sessions covering various topics are being planned. A number of these symposia and special sessions are specifically aimed to attract practitioners and farmers in the area. Delegates can also look forward to exciting post congress tours, such as a visit to the long term burning trials in the Kruger National Park. Remember to visit the website for updates and further information.

Council would like to thank everybody who sent suggestions and comments

regarding the new website. At this moment the website is very user friendly and interactive, but we would like to ask members to continue sending updates to Freyni du Toit or Khanyi Mbatha. We would also like to receive interesting photos, reports and dissertations to feature on the website.

Very exciting news is that NISC, the publisher of the Journal, has started testing the online article submission and tracking system on the African Journal of Range and Forage Science – so now is the time to submit all those finished manuscripts you have lying around in your office!

An improved Trust funding application form has been developed and will be in use very shortly.

This will make the application for Trust funds as well as the dispersal thereof a lot easier.

Council is currently looking into ways to improve the linkage between the range-land and pasture industries and welcomes any suggestions or comments in this regard.

The first ever Annual Report of the GSSA has been completed and is currently available on the website.

A full review of the GSSA Strategic Plan will take place at the end of March. Please feel free to contact Council if there is anything that you would like to include in the review.

