

# grass roots

*Newsletter of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa*

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Winner of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa prize in the Special Category of the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists National Finals held at the University of Pretoria Sports Centre on 2nd of October 2004 was Megan Dreyer of Ladybrand Primary School. Megan, a grade 5 learner, illustrated the highly enriched soil of termite mounds and how termite activity increases veld potential.

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# EDITORIAL

This is the last Grass Roots of the year and also my last as editor. From the new year, Nicky Findlay and Alan Short at Cedara will be taking over. I wish them the best of luck, especially when it comes to contributions, which remain a problem.

My thanks to those of you who have contributed over the years, to the rest, get typing and mailing so that the Grass Roots can grow and be a reflection of the dynamic organization which is the GSSA. Many thanks are due to Freyni (now Mrs du Toit), for all her hard work on the production, and also in obtaining contributions.

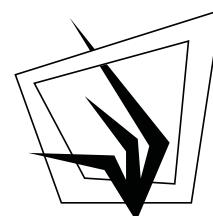
Congratulations to Annelie de Beer, immediate past president, who has moved up to a Deputy Director post with the North West Department of Agriculture. Although not with Grassland research anymore, I am sure that you will retain your links with the society. I am sure that everybody in the society will join me in wishing you all of the best in your new position.

As the year winds down, and those of us in the summer rainfall areas get really busy, there are exciting happenings being planned for 2005. One of which is the tour / bush symposium being put together by Chris Dannhauser of the University of the North. The tour will take place in Feb/March in Limpopo province; more details to follow in the New Year. Another is the annual congress to be held on the KZN south coast. The water will be warm enough for swimming, and the sardines might be running.

A point that we can perhaps debate or discuss in the new year is the effect of global warming and climate change on grasslands, and what our response as grassland scientist/users/managers should be. We are all aware of the drought we are currently experiencing: the Western Cape wheat crop is a case in point. In northern KZN where I am we are into our fourth successive summer with below average rainfall, with the 2003/04 season receiving 490mm (only 3 or 4 falls > 20mm) vs the long term average of 780mm. If, as meteorologists are telling us, we are moving to lower more erratic rainfall and higher temperatures, there are numerous questions that must be asked. For example, what will happen to the vegetation in composition and production? What is our response as individuals, and also collectively as a society? Think about it and send in your thoughts on the matter.

I would like to wish all our readers and their families and peaceful and safe holiday season, and a productive New Year.

Graham



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# SYSTEMATIC BIOLOGY CONFERENCE

The fifth Conference of the Southern Africa Society for Systematic Biology (SASSB V) will be held at Goudini Spa, Worcester, Western Cape Province from 2 to 4 February 2005. The Preliminary Program will be made available in early January after the close of the conference registration deadline, which is 10 December 2004.

For more information on the conference, contact:

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