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Printed by: LT Printers - Pietermaritzburg
Published & Distributed By
 The Grassland Society of Southern Africa

Contents

50th Annual GSSA Congress

- 6** Celebrating 50 years of Rangeland Ecology and Pasture Management in Africa
- 8** Presidential Address 2015. 50 Years of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa
- 12** Mid-Congress Tour Marianhill Landfill and Conservancy
- 14** Mid-Congress Tour Dairy and Pastures
- 17** Congress Delegates Revisit Famed Ukulinga Trials
- 19** GSSA Congress 50 Awards



Features

- 50** Karoo invasion:
is history repeating
itself?
- 60** The impact of savanna
fires on Africa's rainfall
patterns



Regulars

- 5** Editor's Note
- 63** African Journal of
Range and Forage
Science Report from
the Editor-in-Chief

Awards

- 27** Grootfontein College of
Agriculture Student
Award
- 28** Learner that receives
GSSA award also wins
Gold at the Eskom Expo

News

- 30** A life of global impact on environmental science
- 33** Ecosystem Management
- 35** What South African farmers can do to protect endangered grassland birds
- 37** Stop bugging the bugs: the world as we know it would fall apart without them
- 44** SAEON launches Karoo Shale Gas Ecology Project
- 46** Farmers hold the key to nature conservation: let's treat them that way
- 48** UKZN Hosts Second PMA Agri-Food Career Fair
- 41** Havoc among bee pollinators - effects on agriculture and conservation

Editor's Note



Welcome to the fourth issue of Grassroots for 2015 – a special issue containing many reports from the half-centenary celebrations of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa. The first Congress was held in 1966 at the then University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. The Society returned to its roots in 2015, with the 50th Annual Congress, which was hosted at the Royal Agricultural Showgrounds in Pietermaritzburg. Congratulations to the Organising Committee who made this Congress a memorable one.

Although this issue focusses on the Congress which had a historical thread throughout the programme, we also draw attention to the future by highlighting relevant research topics which require attention. The first is a news article which emphasizes the importance of protecting endangered grassland birds, and provides suggestions on what South African farmers can do to protect them. Another news article stresses the importance of bugs in ecosystems, and explains how the world as we know it would fall apart without them. Similarly, the research need on honey bees and the effect agriculture and conservation may have on it is also discussed in another news article. Throughout these articles, the big role farmers play in conserving natural resources is stressed.

You will also find two very interesting feature articles in this issue. The first is on Karoo invasion of sweet prickly pear and the second on the impact of savanna fires on Africa's rainfall patterns.

These are only a taste of what you'll find in this exciting issue of Grassroots, the last issue for this year. As this year draws to an end, we wish you a happy festive season and a prosperous 2016. Happy reading!

Pieter Swarepoel