

July 2025

Volume 25

Number 2

*Celebrating the 60th GSSA Congress:
We do some digging*

Into the Archives

***Karoo Plant
of the Month***

**Southern Africa's rangelands
do many jobs**

What is a GSSA?

Advancing Rangeland Ecology and Pasture Management in Southern Africa



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Newsletter of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa

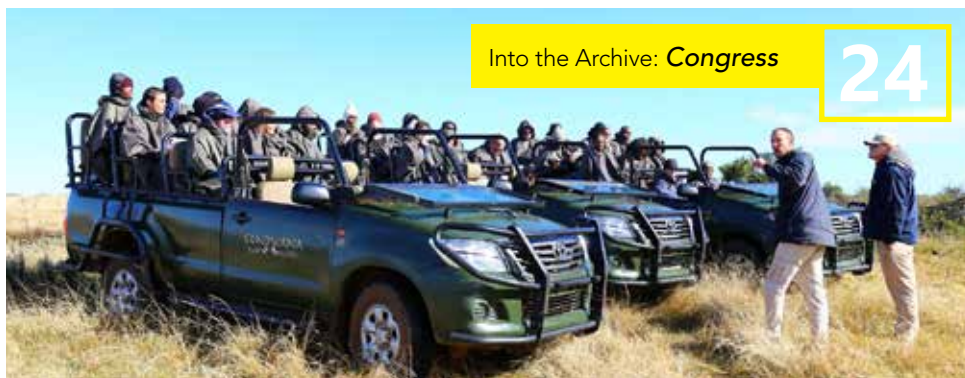
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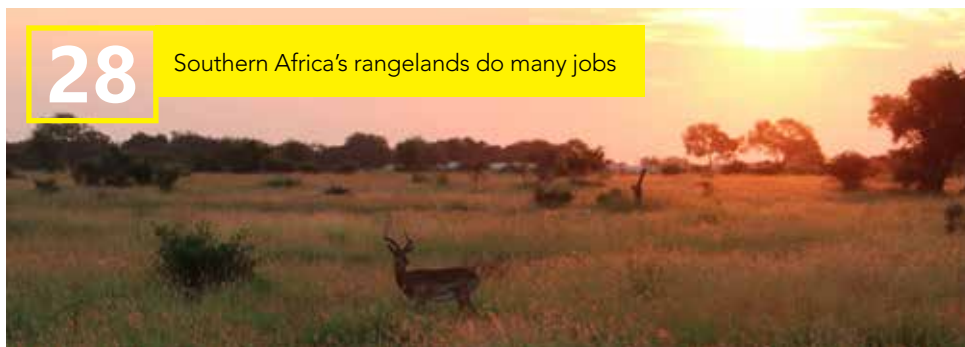
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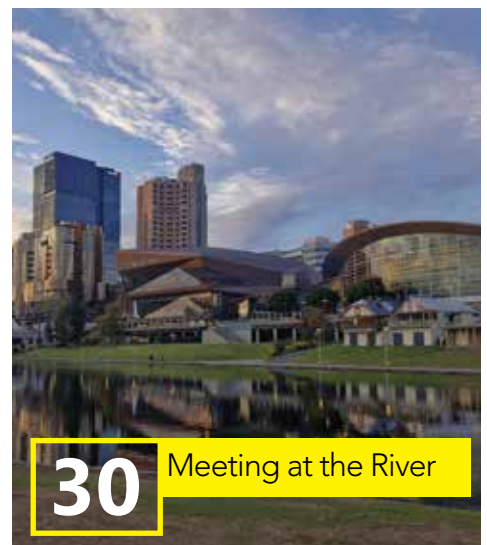
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From our editor

Dear reader,

We have put a special version of Grassroots together. As the society celebrates their 60th Congress and the African Journal of Range and Forage Science looks back on decades grasslands research, we looked back on the Grassroots newsletters.

We've taken a break from the usual content and instead done something crazy. For this issue we've done some serious digging into the archives of just under 100 Grassroots newsletters from the last 23 years. We've found many interesting articles, photos, and we are excited to share some insights from this time capsule with you all. Given the recent change of the newsletter to a mailer, it's a great chance to look back.

We start off looking at the history and future of Grassroots newsletters, over the years it has gone through different formats, designs, and editors. Funnily enough it appears that asking the society for contributions to share in the newsletter is a persistent problem! We then take a step back and reflect on the purpose of Grassroots, and it's next steps forward, and the GSSA as a whole. Regarding recent news, we have an article about African Journal of Range and Forage Sciences' special issue. I highly recommend checking out this special issue. We have a reflective report back on the International Rangelands Congress held last month in Adelaide, Australia. As well as a look at what we can learn from grassland forbs.

A recurring theme is the people that make up our society. We are a trans- and interdisciplinary society full of people from different fields (quite literally), held together by a shared interest in the grassland and rangeland ecosystems of Southern Africa. As a previous a Grassroots editor, Alan Short, said "The disciplines that are found within the GSSA are diverse and our members can be found tucked away in all sorts

of interesting or obscure corners of the country, in laboratories, on farms and at research centres. That diversity is possibly our greatest strength, but it also means that we need be united on issues of importance."

The hard work of many individuals over many, many years have kept this society going. I would like to acknowledge everyone who helped pull this issue off, I would like to thank Jay Matthews in particular, for rolling up her sleeves and helping me dig through all the old newsletter and find recurring themes and put articles together, to Roy for helping with editorial tasks, to Robyn Nicolay who organised all the printing and logistics, J.C. for doing the layout and design, and Kevin Kirkman and the Congress 60 organising committee for financing it. I would also like to thank Freyni du Toit and Craig Morris for sharing info and insights on the society and Minette van Lingen for assistance and sharing documents. We have article contributions written for this issue from Robyn Nicolay, Sindiso Nkuna, Craig Morris, Rudi Swart, and Marnus Smit.

In closing, I would like to let you know that this is my last newsletter serving as editor. After two and half years, I will be handing over to a new editor as voted in at the AGM. It was great putting these newsletters together and I would like to thank all the writers who contributed to the newsletter and to the readers.

We always welcome suggestions, articles, news, and if you have anything to add or corrections, please share with us! We would be happy to publish it.

For everyone there at the congress, I hope you have a fantastic time. I hope you enjoy this special edition Grassroots newsletter! If you enjoyed looking back in time or a snippet caught your eye, the good news is that these historical issues are available to read on our website.

Til next time,

Lisa

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Contact us

If you have any feedback, comments, or suggestions, feel free to contact us at:
info@grassland.org.za



Despite the care and attention that we devote to the structure of this newsletter and the information it contains, the Grassroots Editorial Team cannot guarantee the completeness and accuracy of the data. The opinion expressed in each article is the opinion of its author and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial team.

What is a GSSA?

Jay Matthews and Lisa Matthews

Current Address: Grassroots Editorial Team

To answer the question “what is a GSSA?”—a title appropriated from Craig Morris’s memorable December 2024 article “What is a grass?”—we might consider beginning with the individual units the GSSA is composed of—the individual. One may be tempted to look for a “neat solution” in the way that Justin du Toit (September 2019) enlightened us on the term for a singular cattle. However, it is to the credit of GSSA that there is no way to pin down a profile of its archetypal member.

Over the course of its many decades of existence, the singular GSSA member has come from various work, background, place, and importantly, perspective! Academics, scientists, agricultural and environmental officers, farmers, students and any other persons interested in grasses, range and forage studies have made up this society one way or another over the last 60 years. To complement the diversity of expertise in this society, it seems that every GSSA member has a passion for matters related to grasslands! Whether it’s impassioned pleas for the smallest of endangered animals (see August 2011) or H. A. Snyman’s impressive 8 article treatise on fire (“*Short-term influence of fire in a semi-arid grassland on*”), the archives of Grassroots are a great tribute to the dedicated and sometimes thankless work of members in this society.

Perhaps it’s worth considering that the individual unit of a GSSA is not the individual but the relationships and connections—between colleagues, to broad fields or particular sides of large ongoing debates.

At least two expressions of the same idea can be found throughout the Grassroots archives:

1. A block quote from December 2008 states: “It is not possible for a scientific community which is so compartmentalized to obtain insight into the complexity of rangeland and cultivated pasture problems”. That is to say, because we are not compartmentalised, which makes us more like a “circle with

The GSSA Society is now formally registered as a public benefit organization and for VAT. The first tax return for the Society was completed in November 2006. The registration as a non-profit organisation is still being processed.

Over the past four decades, society has changed and the GSSA has changed too

The GSSA is a nursery for new scientists, and young scientists are welcomed rather than patronized

The vision and mission of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa

Vision
Advancing rangeland ecology and pasture management in Africa.

Mission
We provide a dynamic and inclusive forum and publish quality research.

Through embracing diversity and change, we seek to promote:

- Science into practice
- Human capacity development
- Trans-disciplinary views

and support the understanding of ecosystem services to achieve production, conservation and biodiversity goals.

Diversity is the GSSA’s greatest strength, but also its greatest challenge.

Figure 1. The Grassland Society of Southern Africa has gone through many changes over the decades. The Grassroots newsletter offers some reflections on the society. Today’s Vision and Mission in published at the end of this issue.

dashed borders that is porous” as per Charné Viljoen in the Presidential address (November 2023), we stand a better chance at being able

2. to effectively tackle this problem the second is from a letter from Geof, who in February 2006 said: “For too many years too many of us

Grassroots: Newsletter of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa • May 2008 • Vol 8 • No 2

The Society

Defining a future direction for the GSSA

**GSSA Strategic Planning meeting 26 - 27
March 2008, Kenosis Retreat,
Pietermaritzburg**

Alan Short and Lorraine van den Berg
Grassland Society of Southern Africa
Email: Alan.Short@dae.kznil.gov.za

Introduction

Over the last few years the GSSA had made major efforts to become more professional in its approach to managing and growing the Society. In the modern world, the Society is competing for members’ time and resources with a great many other priorities. Like any business, the GSSA needs to be guided by a clear vision and measurable goals. In order for the GSSA to remain relevant to its members and true to its core values, the Society embarked on a strategic planning process ten years ago. At the end of March 2008, the Council and several Society veterans met again to revisit the strategic objectives of the Society and measure the achievement, or relevance, of those objectives decided four years ago.

The workshop was facilitated by Harry Biggs of SANParks, himself a Society veteran and a veteran of many high-profile strategic planning exercises in various organisations. His experience and humour kept the workshop focused over two exhausting but rewarding days of intense discussion and debate.

planning exercises in various organisations. His experience and humour kept the workshop focused over two exhausting but rewarding days of intense discussion and debate.

Previous strategic objectives

Justin du Toit presented the results of a preparatory survey that had been conducted among Council members and several experienced Society members, on the achievement of the original strategic objectives decided four years ago. The 14 strategic objectives could be broadly divided into three categories according to how well they had been accomplished over the past few years.

The objectives that had been accomplished well related to the Congress, which has attracted enthusiastic participation for several years from a wide range of organisations, the administration of the Society (more about that later), and some technical and legal issues

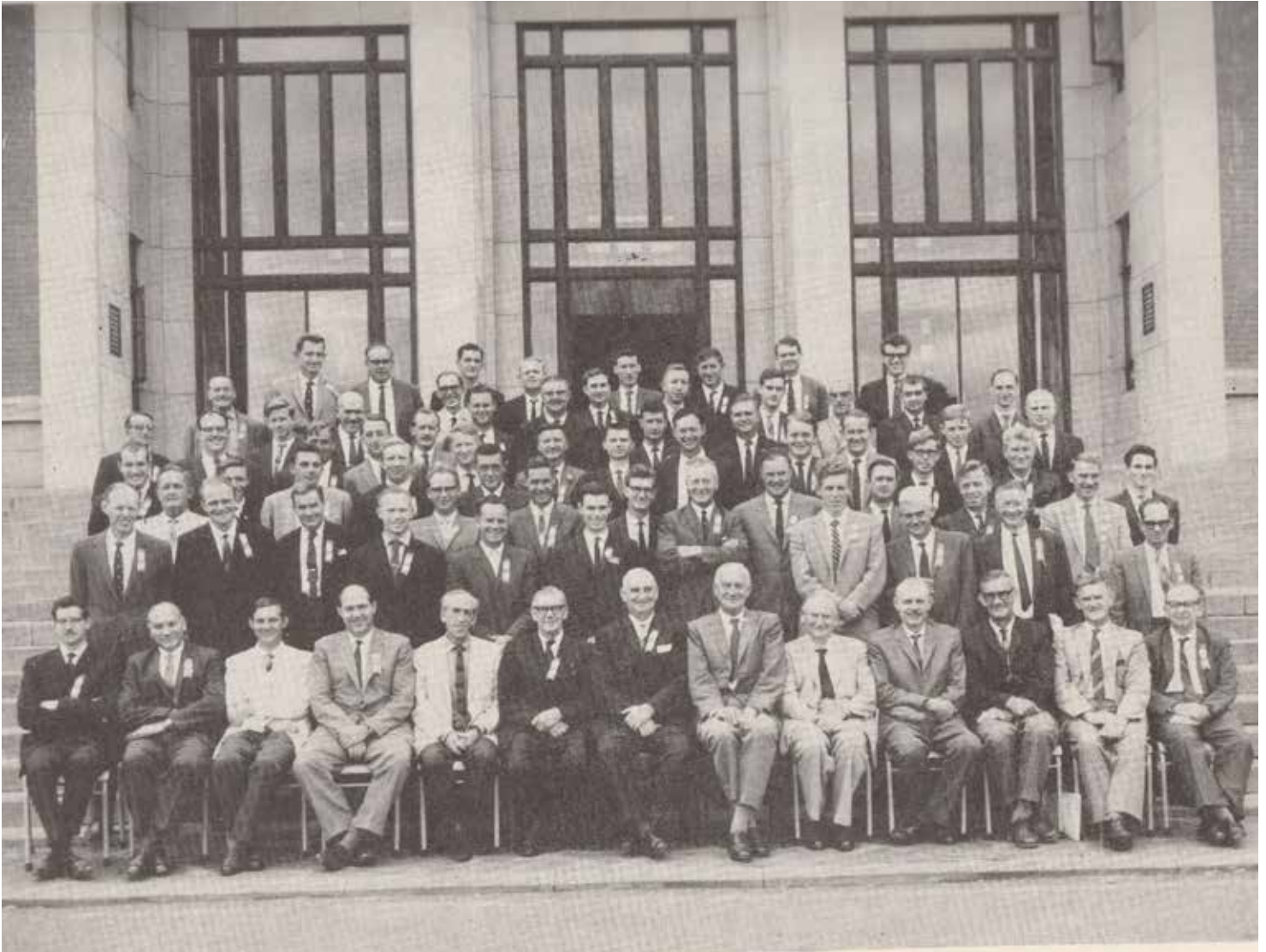


Figure 2. The first GSSA congress in 1966

have tended to concentrate on our own 'little boxes'...[with] good reason in some cases, but to the detriment of the 'whole' in the broader sense."

This leads me to the question of "what is a GSSA?"

In a 2003 presidential address, Klaus Kellner once said that the GSSA was: *"A professional society with an interdisciplinary group of scientists and practitioners working in a collaborative way amongst themselves and with other institutions, organizations, agencies and individuals with a common goal in varied resources of rangeland and pasture conservation and management."*

However, this was more than 20 years ago. Our understanding of the world and our field has been drastically shaped by new science and technologies, the political and social landscape of South Africa has also continued to change. Many times over the last 22 years of what is now Grassroots, there

have been big questions about what the specific purpose of the GSSA in particular is and whether it is fulfilling that purpose. To the GSSA's credit, it has been responsive to input—from greater efforts to include students in the society to changing the Grassroots format to A5. A brief overview of the logo and design will show that things are always changing, evolving to meet the needs of the grasslands and you, the scientist, institution representative, practitioner, student, organisation, or grassland enthusiast!

Mike Peel's Presidential Address published in the August 2010 edition presented a history of the journal between 1966 and 2010. Some difference he noted was how the focus of the Society had already then become less focused on their initial point of study, which was the commercial farmer. By 2010, the focus had changed to include communal and commercial farmers.

"...the nature of South African scientific organisations means that we often do not have the critical mass within a single

organisation to be effective and therefore MUST network with scientists from other institutions to remain relevant and effective — this I believe is a real strength."

After all these years some things still ring true, such as this block quote from a May 2006 feature:

"The conservation of grassland and wetland areas is the responsibility of everyone for the benefit of all."

On the other hand, these days we are in urgency when it comes to the future of grasslands and all life forms it supports. There is an unfortunate heaviness our intersection of fields carry in light of global climate change. In this sense, Grassroots, while interspersed with write-ups recounting jovial AGMs and our "infectious and encouraging mood" (December 2008), holds an archive of slow decline, increasing alarm, and declining capacity for members to participate in the discussion.

There are as many hopeful stories as



Figure 3. The most recent congress picture I could track down, GSSA Congress 54

there are sad ones. Perhaps the work of the GSSA can be compared to a highlight from a feature in the August 2014 edition:

"Following mine closure, the mining areas will be restored to allow plants and animals to thrive again but recreating the habitat for Juttadinteria albata will not be easy."

1. Perhaps surprisingly, 'mines' are a topic of interest over many Grassroots issues, especially with regard to their environmental regulation, their negative impact on water management, and governmental restriction in favour of protecting ecologically sensitive areas.
2. The history of this society has been organised around the question of what it means for plants and animals to thrive, and what plants for what animals, or conversely, what animals for what plants!
3. The idea of 'to thrive again' is deeply wrapped up in another important ongoing discussion, which is how areas should be managed, planned, what sort of intervention is needed, and how this is to be measured!
4. Every species has a name, and because of the diversity of membership and fields, Grassroots and the GSSA has been an exceptional 'melting pot' for learning about new species and things (like Dave Goodenough's memorable explanation of endophytes in August 2005) that mean the world to the scientist telling you about it

5. It will not be easy. Pragmatically, this is clear and has always been to the members of this society. Even as in this story, having succeeded as far as a legislative win, the hard work lies ahead beyond the initial work of figuring out what must be done and how it will be measured.

Realistically, big projects as of late are given to organisations and specific practitioners rather than to a society like ours. So then, why is the Society necessary?

On one hand, Grassroots, as it has done, became a virtual notice board for sharing opportunities and supplementary writing and economic skills. But more than that, there is something important in the way that the GSSA as a meeting point becomes a way to address a fundamentally complex set of problems.

A guest editorial from November 2010 by first ever editor, Peter Zacharias, reminiscing on the changes that had taken place between the original 'Bulletin of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa' and the now familiar 'Grassroots', presents an argument for using the term 'trans-disciplinary' rather than multi- or inter-disciplinary to describe the GSSA. Trans-disciplinary, we are told, is about start to finish collaboration, rather than one discipline getting another to bail them out when they get stuck. We are told that this move towards a trans-disciplinary approach is what has kept this Society alive—an approach that doesn't

prioritise one field over another but recognises that we all need each other to solve the complex problems we are faced with.

Even within the annals of the Grassroots publication, historically many members of the council have been around for a number of years and have served in several different positions. This society and its various avenues for participation (which all members have eternally been invited into!) embody the same sort of 'trans-disciplinary' participation this Society strives for in our work.

What then does Grassroots do? Given all of the above, at its best, we may consider the letter written in the August 2006 edition by Donovan Kotze wherein he writes about an alien invasive grass species he has found that is 'poised to become a considerable problem'. By this stage he has already consulted several society members to identify the species and summarises this information about the species. He outlines the current situations and where it is present as well as its absence from herbarium records. He states his concern, highlights the priority steps and calls for suggestions from the society.

As long as there are land users, there will be a need for collaboration in deliberation and action. This is a 'skill' the society has been practicing for 60 years, where tensions between fields have been worked through together (see September 2002). As long as there

are grasslands, there is a need for a society to provide solidarity, distribute information, and share sympathies with researchers studying the minutiae of grasses and dung beetles (See February 2005).

This is not some abstract mission though, it's something that is embedded in the lives and hearts of the society members. In Susi Vetter's Presidential Address in 2024 (December 2024), she recounts:

"From those earliest days, the GSSA became a network of colleagues who mentored, supported, and provided ideas throughout my career."

It's possible that just as each member of this society has their own background, story, and reason for finding themselves in a field that intersects with grasslands in some way, each member too will have different reasons for why they joined GSSA, and what their journey has been like so far.

Just as a grass alone does not make a grassland, a grassland researcher does not make a field. And just like the work of the small invertebrates and fungi that bring the grasslands together, so may the society be one of the many wonderful networks through which information, opportunity, and camaraderie may be shared.

To summon some Savory words (August 2012) to reiterate:

Why is your profession so important? It is because the world (ordinary people, people working the land, political leaders developing policies etc.) looks to you for expert opinion on the greatest areas of the world's land surface — essentially two thirds of Earth's land area — and restoring that land mass is crucial to averting climate change, restoring fresh surface and ground water resources, feeding humanity and mitigating poverty, violence and war.

To appropriate from the feature in August 2012: We hope grassroots can inspire you to take the steps needed to avert **the worst** of this storm, **at least to not feel so alone in doing so**, and, thus, to attain great achievements as professional researchers and managerial custodians of the vital grasslands and savannas of the world.

"I can think of no single profession more vital to the future of global civilisation than range science!"

Today, we celebrate 60 years of the society. We've seen its growth and evolution over time, and remain committed to continually evolving, reorientating, welcome input and learning together as a society.

We continually strive to be a more welcoming, diverse and inclusive, and provide a trans-disciplinary forum in touch with the current needs around advancing rangeland ecology and pasture management in Africa.

We close with some of the words past president's Suzi Vetter's address:

"The GSSA's biggest strength has been its incredible diversity, bringing together academics and policymakers, agriculture and conservation, and gurus and students. Back in the early 2000s, when most professional societies were still predominantly white and male, the GSSA was electing women and black presidents and council members. Let's think about how to harness this diversity in expertise and experience to grow the GSSA into its 60s. In conclusion, the GSSA has come a long way, with significant achievements and a bright future ahead. We must continue to support and grow our society, embracing new members and ideas while maintaining our strong traditions. Thank you for your attention and dedication to the Grassland Society of Southern Africa. I look forward to our continued journey together and to celebrating our 60th anniversary next year with renewed vigour and commitment."



Figure 4. Some past presidents of the GSSA who attended GSSACongress50 at the PMB showgrounds. From left, Mike Peel, Sikhalazo Dube, Neil Tainton, Tony Palmer, Annelene Swanepoel, Winston Trollope, Loraine van den Berg, Kevin Kirkman, Igshaan Samuels, Pete Zacharias, Wayne Truter, and Dave Goodenough



Left: Exhibitions of pasture-related equipment and implements at the Pasture Expo at Cedara, KwaZulu-Natal



Right: Sigrun Kassier (ARC-RFL, Cedara Centre) talks on yield and utilization differences of forage cereal types

The financial status of the Society was summed up by Justin du Toit. The Society needs to be extremely disciplined in order to survive the next few years. A large payment from the annual Congress will from now on be built into the Congress budget. Government departments will also be approached for substantial sponsorship, as it emerged that the Limpopo Department of Agriculture had been expecting a request for far more money than the Society asked of them for Congress 41.

Left: Dave Goodenough (ARC-RFL, Cedara Centre) explains seasonal yield differences of some Italian and Westerwold ryegrasses



See



Incorporating Vol. 14-1 of the Bulletin of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa ISSN: 10166122 • Vol. 4 No. 1 • February 2004



Mr Richard Semelane (left) of the National Department of Agriculture and Prof Klaus Kellner during the CST meeting. (Pg. 19)

The financial situation of the Society is steadily improving and some defaulted members have also been convinced to pay their dues. The GSSA has also been registered as a Non-Profit Organization, which holds various benefits for the Society.



HIGHWAY IMPERILS PRISTINE WILDERNESS

from Michael Dwyer on the Pondoland Wild Coast, 26 July 2003

ONE of Africa's most pristine wilderness is threatened by plans for a £500 million highway that could ruin habitats unique to the continent. Building of a 340-mile toll road from Durban to East London, along South Africa's largely undeveloped eastern seaboard, is to begin in December and will take a year. Controversy has erupted over the proposal to lay a 65-mile swath of concrete across the Pondoland Wild Coast, home to 180 plant species found nowhere else.



LEFT: John Cunningham, Jean Dewey and John Morrison (all from Cedara) and Doretha Muller (Noodgedacht) discussing Kibaya pasture overgrown with white clover at the Oostersig Research Station.



LEFT: Treant Coetsee (Jeffrey's Bay), Richard Reynolds (OSCA, Zululand), Shelia Elliot (Cedara), Melanie Gitzum (Cedara College) and Ian Marot (Cali) discussing the Oostersig pastures.



Above: A young wattled crane released after successfully being colour ringed

The GSSA is now VAT registered, which means that membership fees will have to increase by at least 14% to cover the VAT.



grassroots

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.



The GSSA bushveld tour participants at Alldays.

Back row: Chris Dannhauser, Caiphus Khumalo, Cobus Botha, Thulani Nzuzo, Arnaud le Roux, Jorrie Jordaan, Brent Forbes, Hennie van der Berg, Parvin Shaker.
Second row: Mynhardt Sadie, Graham Peddie, Felicity Fryer, Doreen Ndlovu, Erika van Zyl, Anuschka Barak, William Diko.
Front: Alan Short

Photo courtesy Erika van Zyl

Below: Some of the small but interested audience.



community farms in KwaMkhazeni



Above: Serious conversation at Tsipise Spa.

News from Council

Sigrun Ammann

Dear GSSA members

The Council Exco and Council members from around Pietermaritzburg had a meeting on 20 April 2005 at Cedara. The deliberations were mostly about the up-coming Congress and the journal.

One of the aspects we discussed was the organizing of congresses in general and the problem of continuity and the fact that GSSA members have now become accustomed to contacting the administrator about GSSA matters, due to the GSSA now having a good administrative service. Future closer involvement of the GSSA administrator with the congress organizing committee will be explored and discussed further in the coming months.

The journal was also discussed, with one of the issues being the format i.e. printed versus on-line. This topic will be discussed at the AGM in July. The modern trend is on-line journals. There are, however, many people who still like a printed copy on their shelf. The format that the journal takes is also

linked to cost implications, which will have to be considered very seriously.

The Council feels encouraged about the way *Grassroots* has now re-established itself as the bulletin of the GSSA and hopes that members will contribute even more to its contents. Likewise the website is successful and user-friendly. Members are invited to visit the website and read the new additions such as the interviews that have been conducted with some GSSA members. Members are also encouraged to contact the website coordinator with contributions, resulting in a website that is interesting and useful.

At the AGM in July a constitutional change will also be debated relating to the quorum for the AGM. In recent years it has been very difficult to get a quorate meeting and in 2004 the AGM was in fact inoperative.

We are looking forward to seeing many GSSA members and others at Congress 40 at Kapenta Bay, Port Shepstone



Below: Now this is the way to do field work! Alan Short and Sonja Kruger



Above: How many researchers does it take? Debbie Swanepoel with her team



Grassroots, Newsletter of the Grassroots Society of Southern Africa - February 2006 / Vol 8 / No 1

"Members write to the GSSA"

This is a new spot that we are going to make permanent in *Grassroots*. A spot for anything that you would like to say (within reason, of course). Start a debate, share an anecdote, or just a suggestion. Use the GSSA address details on the front page.

Hi
I have just received my copy of *Grassroots* and take note that you are selling Magwath with the Big 5 Logo. Please could I request that the committees look into things with some of our indigenous African grasses on them as an alternative in future. I would definitely buy a set of *Thomalia* or *Conchus* glasses in future. The Big 5 Grasses would in my opinion go down well. Just a suggestion.
Keep up the good work.
Regards,
Raif Kalwa

Acacia name change

Nicky Alts



Dairy speakers: Trevor Dugmore (KZNDA).



Dairy audience: part of the 170 people who



An important factor often missed by aid and extension workers is that both range condition and range degradation should be defined in context of the objectives of the production system



Editorial

Dear Readers

Those of you who attended the GSSA research skills workshop will know that it was stimulating and exciting. More importantly, the workshop raised awareness among young practitioners of a lot of the basic skills of science. As with any profession, whether accounting or architecture, the real skills that separate the great from the rest are not taught at university. These skills are acquired through years of experience or mentorship (or rather, what used to be called apprenticeship before it became unfashionable). They are developed by spending hour after tedious hour at a workbench, in a library, in the field, or being grilled by peers at a congress, and there is no short cut to acquiring them.

The enthusiastic response of the participants was mainly as a result of the excellent talks and the speakers, but there is also a new, optimistic mood spreading through the broader agricultural/grassland science community. The owners of the lodge where my colleagues and I stayed summed it up by saying that the mood of our team compared that of a recent visit by a group of civil servants was infectious and encouraging. Several agriculture departments are still battling with desperate staff shortages and uninterested management, but there are others where a new generation of young scientists have joined and brought along their youthful optimism.

Alan Savory

(Provided by Alan Savory)



Alan Savory (left, in bare feet) elaborating on his observations on grazing effects on rangelands

GSSA Annual Report published

As a newly registered non-profit organisation, the GSSA is now required by law to produce an annual report detailing the activities of the Society.

Lorraine van der Berg, the Society Secretary, has produced a professional annual report for the 2006/07 financial year, which is accessible to any members who wish to see how their membership fees are spent. Simply visit the GSSA website or contact the Administrator

The conservation of grassland and wetland areas is the responsibility of everyone for the benefit of all.



Towards achieving our vision of advancing rangeland ecology and pasture management in Africa

Mark Hardy

Western Cape Department of Agriculture
Email: markh@elisenburg.com

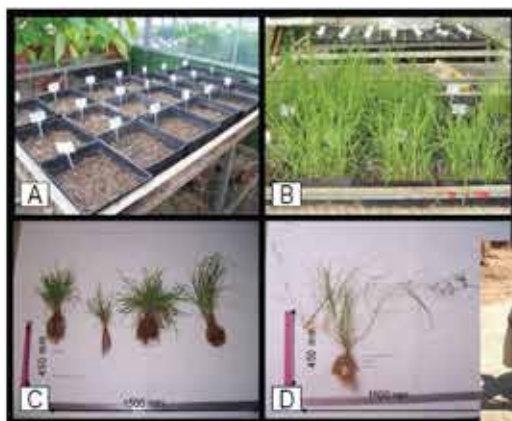


Above: Justin Becker (centre) with Prof. Brian Rellie (left) and Mike Pople (right) of the GSSA (right)

A new GSSA poster is being developed. GSSA would also like to have a roller banner with the name and logo on it as this would be useful to give the GSSA a more professional image at exhibits or farmers' days. This will be put on hold until the financial situation has improved.



Dr. Mike Pople



"Is die donkie nóg 'n wonderlike ding?" Perceptions from communal farmers in Namaqualand

William Diko (centre left) describing a Konnsklide



Photo: Nicky Findlay

Managing and developing African pastoralism

Some practical considerations

B.J. Sweet

Freelance consultant
Email: bsweet@fommnet.co.za



Engaging the global grasslands agenda

Youngest Congress delegate arrives

Froyini and Justin du Toit celebrated the birth of their first child, Max, in May 2006. Max attended the Congress with parents at the age of 9 weeks, making him officially the youngest Congress delegate ever.

Our warmest congratulations to Justin and Froyini from all the members of the GSSA.



One concern that was raised at this Congress was the decline in participation of pasture scientists, as opposed to rangeland scientists. Of course, the pasture science community in general has declined in numbers over the last decade or so, so it is not just something wrong with our Society. The organisers of next year's Congress, in Grahamstown, have been taking this issue quite seriously, and have been coming up with some innovative ideas to attract the pasture industry to the Congress. Hopefully, this time next year we'll have pasture professionals telling us what a great Congress it was. In the meantime, keep those articles coming and let's hear your views.

Linking cultivated pastures with rangelands

AJ Aucamp
National Wool Growers' Association
NWGA, PO Box 34291, Newton Park, Port Elizabeth 6055



Editorial

Dear Readers,

Welcome back to the New Year, and what an interesting year it looks like it's going to be, to put it mildly. In the last few months, the health of the world's economy plunged to lows last seen decades ago. Oil crashed from well over \$120 a barrel to \$35 a barrel within a couple of months, and the economy of the world's richest and most powerful nation, we suddenly find, was appallingly badly mismanaged by the same capitalists who created its wealth (according to *Newsweek*, a common taunt on Wall Street was 'If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?', to which we might respond, 'If you're so rich, why aren't you smart?').

How that will affect each of us remains to be seen. It's a general election year in South Africa, which usually means changing policies as new ministers take the place of the old ones we're just beginning to get accustomed to. Coupled to times of economic uncertainty, we'll each just have to either weather the storm or embrace the new opportunities, depending on our approach to life.

We have an interesting issue for you this month, with lots of opportunities for young scientists and students.

Embrace, explore, and enjoy!

Mpumalanga farmers warning of showdown with DME over new mines



GSSA listed as interested and affected party for new multi-products pipeline



Adaptive Livestock Management in Semi-Arid Rangelands: A Modelling Approach

Sikhelazo Dube

It is not possible for a scientific community which is so compartmentalized to obtain insight into the complexity of rangeland and cultivated pasture problems.



Justin du Toit opens the Symposium

The Goat Study Group in KwaZulu-Natal

Shirley Masey, Michelle Cole
14 Zandile Ndlovu
75, University of Agriculture and Forestry, Pietermaritzburg
Tel: 0333 555 5555



In direct opposition to some long-held beliefs, continuous grazing cannot be considered better than rotational grazing, or vice versa.

Mining now under environmental law

Mining will now be subject to the same environmental legislation as other activities, but the Department of Energy and Environment, but the



South Africa's rangelands remain the cheapest source of feed for the animal production sector but the condition of many of the rangelands has been seri-

Grassroots, Newsletter of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa • June 2007 • Vol. 1 • No. 2

Escape from the Fragment

To all members and others with an interest in cultivated pastures and forage production – what can the GSSA do for you?

Dr. Mark Hardy
E-mail: MarkH@senburg.com

The GSSA has traditionally been based on the science and practice of rangeland ecology and pasture management

around the country, are less able to justify attendance at GSSA meetings

The GSSA recognises that it

Analysis (Tongway and Hindley 1995), saw that overgrazing, even without obvious signs of soil erosion, simply left the soil less likely to absorb rain. There was general agreement that grazing management had to become more ecologically



Workshop participants inspect one of the gully sites



News from the African Journal of Range and Forage Science

Exciting times are ahead for the African Journal of Range and Forage Science as plans for improving the journal coincide with an ISI rating



Another issue that has me deeply concerned is the state of traditional grassland science research in general. The age profile of the Congress delegates is getting younger every year. Injection of new blood and new ideas into any discipline is healthy, but although we've got the new blood, I'm concerned that we don't always have the new ideas. It seems that researchers are rehashing many old questions that were addressed decades ago. This is not a reflection on the enthusiasm or dedication of the scientists; rather, it is a reflection of the chaotic state of research in many government institutions. The new generation of scientists are entering the profession with few mentors left to guide them, and with little communication between government departments. Government research needs a shake-up, and if we don't do it, who will?

Alan Short

More scientific papers, papers, papers.....



serve. Our newsletter 'Grassroots' now includes articles of a semi-scientific nature, material that will not be published in a journal format but that must see the 'light of day'.

"This species has undergone significant decline and the estimated number of individuals remaining in the wild is between 700 and 820 individuals."



Karoo Windmill - Joana Du Toit



The intrepid Grassland team tackle their project with gusto (Picture: Sharon Thompson)

"A scientist embarking upon his first major study is soon confronted by bewildering complexity."

Young Minds Look at Old Data

Nicky Allsopp, SAEON Fynbos Node



Welcome to the second edition of this Grassroots issue.

The 46th annual GSSA Congress is to be held in Grootfontein and its approaching quickly. In fact, the abstracts were due on the 29 April 2011! We better catch-up or we will be left behind.

Looking at previous issues of Grassroots, the same names (which are senior scientist) are publishing in Grassroots. As the publication editor, this concerns me. Where are young scientists? Students should use this platform to publish their reports, short articles and common challenges that they face while building their careers. The Grassroots is not just for Hennie Snyman or Alan Short but for all of us. I would like to encourage senior scientists, managers and supervisors to persuade their students to use this platform. Let's all welcome Cathrine Versfeld as our new Grassroots layout and designer.

We hope you will enjoy this selection of articles, news featured in this issue of Grassroots.

The Grassland Research Database is active!



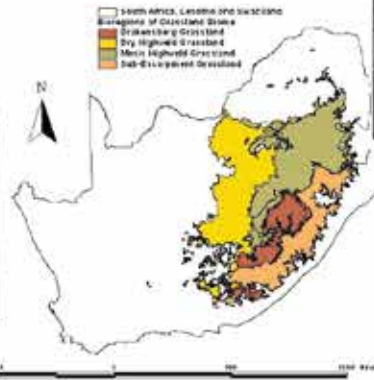
The participants in the restoration ecology heap experiment. From left to right: Joyce Kojana, Liel Maritz, Elizabeth Nakathingo, Afiwe Stokunye (MSc student, University of Namibia), Sibusiso Kucheb, Nipetika Kuyunga (MSc student, University of Namibia), Cheriele Fortuin, Ursula Wilbois and Ferdinand Mwapope. Absent: Dr Cornelis van der Waal (Gobabeb Research and Training Centre)



"Our membership is steadily increasing and members are urged to advertise the Society as widely as possible."



GSSA Group Picture
Grassroots August 2011 Vol 11 No. 3



biogeography of the Grassland Biome in southern Africa (based on Mucuna and Ruzice



William is passionate about passing his knowledge on to the next generation of scientists.

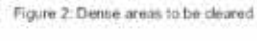
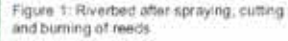
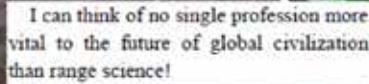
Land-use type	Transformation Km ²	
Cultivation	75,833	
Cultivation	22,041	6.10
Forestry plantations	8,932	2.80
Urban and industrial areas	5,943	1.62
Mines and quarries	833	0.26
Total		

2011 Arid Zone Ecology Forum a Raging Success

Julius Tjelele



in the Grassland Biome (L. T. is attributed to the intro. for the calculations in Table



- Conservation is mainly a commitment to a way of living, which you should do – not to get financial or other rewards, but out of respect for Creation and the environment.



Wangari Maathai



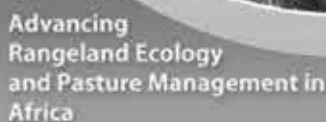
Parliament Hears

After receiving the latest copy of *Grassroots* (August issue Vol. 13 No. 3), I thought it might be worthwhile to express my opinion on the quality and content of *Grassroots*. The contents of *Grassroots* are fresh, to the point and relevant. I am impressed by the quality of *Grassroots* and commitment demonstrated by the Editor (Pieter Swanepoel) and his team of assistant Editors. It is their tireless contributions that enable us to continue moving towards our vision of being a leading source of knowledge regarding Grassland Science and related fields of expertise.

Hennie Snyman
University of the Free State
Animal and Wildlife and
Grassland Sciences

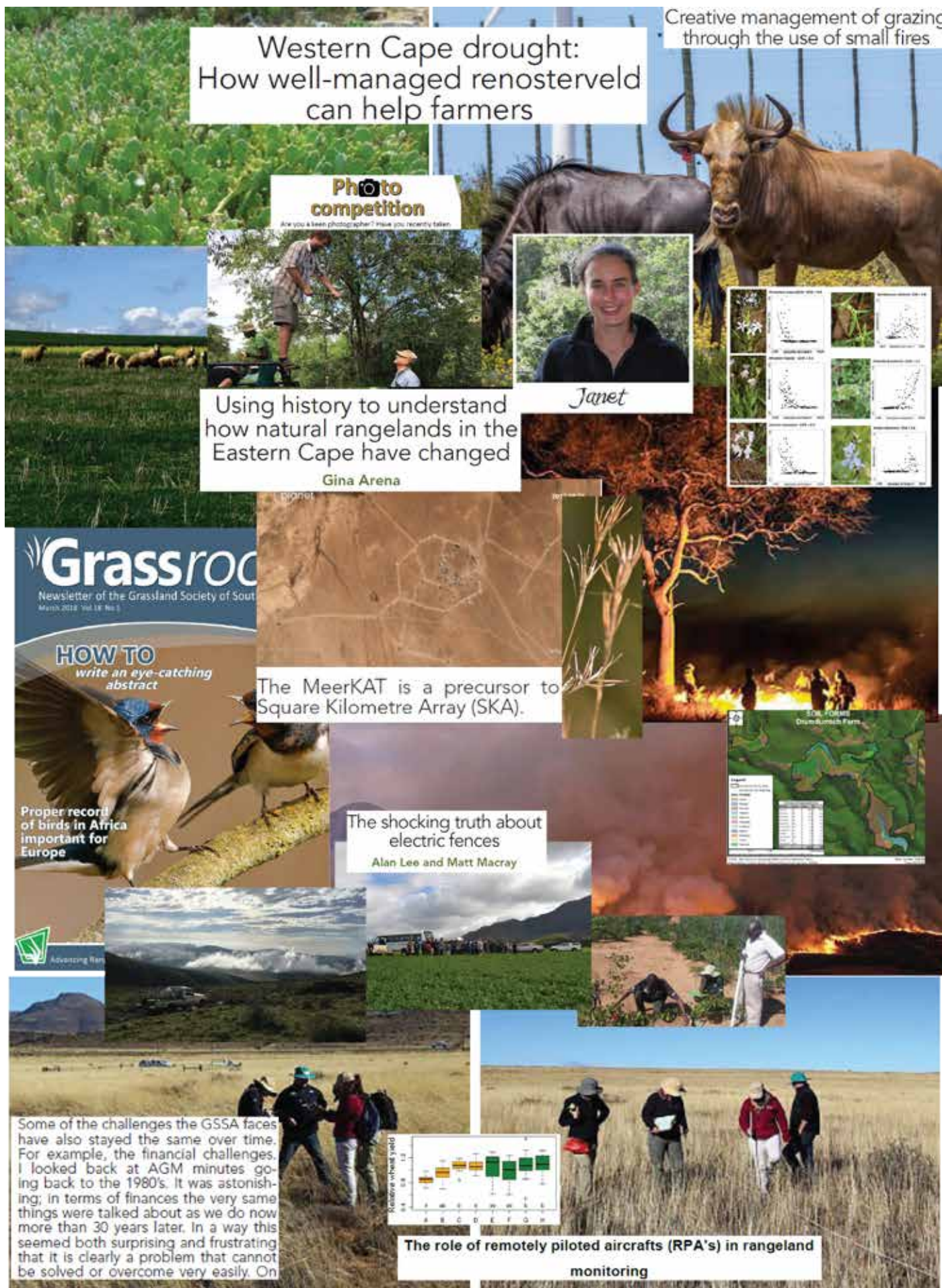


Grassland
Society of
Southern
Africa

[illegible]

14

Photo credit: Sigrun Aemmann



05 Kango plant of the month




Malissa Murphy

Agriculture must be part of the solution, not the problem

Further perspectives and results on high density rotational grazing

PASTURE GRASS OF THE MONTH

Avena sativa – Good Old Oats



I have the privilege of delivering my second presidential address to the Grassland Society of Southern Africa, 21 years after the first. What has changed? What hasn't changed? Well, in January 2000, we had just survived the non-existent Y2K catastrophe that threatened to send us back to the pencil and paper age. In 2021, we are in the middle of a global pandemic that is not showing any signs of slowing down, there are regular reports of cyber-crimes increasingly impacting various industries and multinational companies, and anthropogenic impacts on climate and the environment are becoming increasingly evident.

South Africa is not the only country in the region to have been rocked by unprecedented civil unrest, violence and looting, which has highlighted several significant schisms in our communities and the political arenas. In 2000, I stated that the only factor influencing the environment in which we operate as a Society that can be predicted with certainty is that the rate of change will accelerate. Looking back over the past 21 years, it certainly has, in many ways.

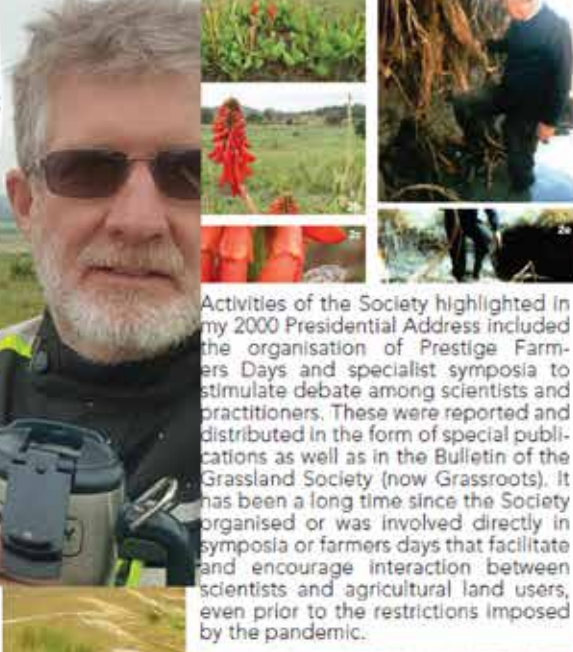
CONGRESS 55

COVID "Curveballs": first-time hosting a virtual congress during a global pandemic

Debbie Jewitt^{1,2}, Freyni du Toit³, Ed Granger⁴, Ralph Clark⁵, Kevin Kirkman⁶ and Erica Joubert⁷



Activities of the Society highlighted in my 2000 Presidential Address included the organisation of Prestige Farmers Days and specialist symposia to stimulate debate among scientists and practitioners. These were reported and distributed in the form of special publications as well as in the Bulletin of the Grassland Society (now Grassroots). It has been a long time since the Society organised or was involved directly in symposia or farmers days that facilitate and encourage interaction between scientists and agricultural land users, even prior to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.





So, in concluding the reflective look at the last 21 years, the GSSA has advanced in many ways. The journal has improved significantly and increased its impact ratings. This reflects positively on the state of our science in southern Africa. Our popular publication "Grassroots" has gone from strength to strength and is widely read online. Congresses have continued to grow in size and stature, attracting an increasingly diverse group of attendees from various fields and disciplines. What direction should the GSSA take for the next 21 years?

2016

2021



Figure 4. Development of plants in brush-packed hollows in Site 1 over five years from August 2016 until September 2021.



Figure 1: Abandoned potato production land at the Redelinghuys site.

Through Thicket and Thin: Protecting This Incredible Biome

HISTORY ON RESEARCH STATIONS

Ordos College and Research Station, Tlokweng, Botswana



Figure 5: Ordos research station

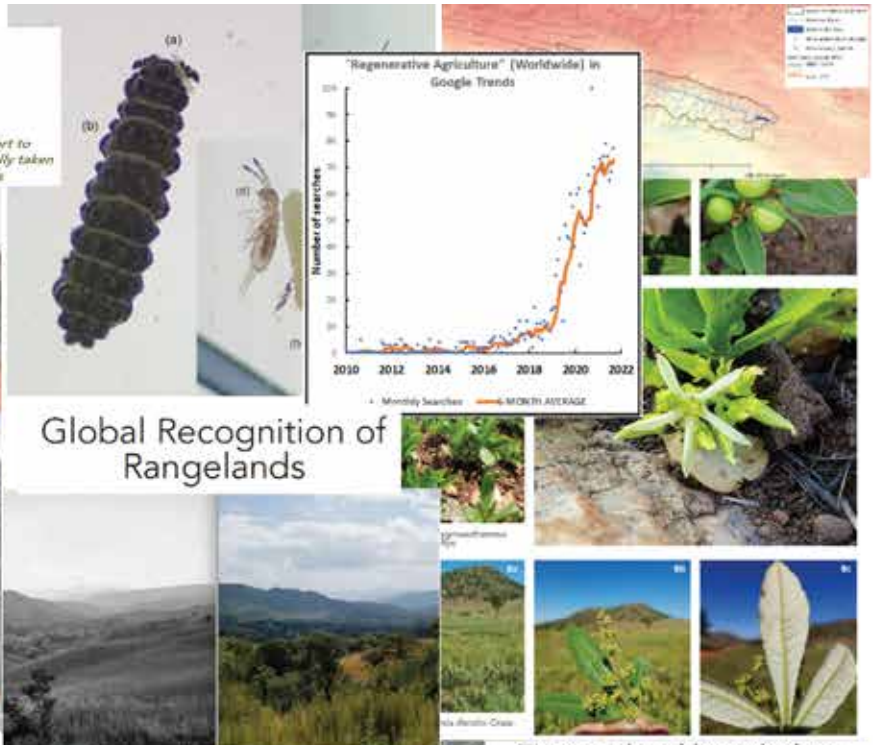
Figure 6: Ordos research station

Pastoralists push for recognition at the UN

A call for an International Year for Rangelands and Pastoralists is an effort to better recognise half of the world's land and the people who have historically taken care of it – and would particularly benefit communities in South Asia



Global Recognition of Rangelands



From the ashes: historical botanic photos destroyed in Cape Town fire resurrected

Historic botanical photos destroyed in 2017 Cape Town fire resurrected

Trusting local knowledge: the case of fire management in a Namibian park

Glynis Joy Humphrey, Gina Ziervogel and Lindsey Gillson



Figure 8. PC Ferreira says his farm is now 'fully transformed', home to livestock and wildlife. While tourism has been added as an income stream, he is protecting the region's fragile biodiversity. (Photo: Supplied)

To kill a grassland forb

Craig Morris

Figure 5: Nemesis barbata © Odette Curtis-Scott

Figure 6: Moraea atropurpurea © Odette Curtis-Scott

Botany PhD student rediscovers 'extinct' plant in Piketberg

Southern Africa's 'water tower' slipping towards ecosystem collapse

Overberg farmers open hearts to conservation of renosterveld

Farmers in the Overberg Wheatbelt who previously viewed renosterveld as wasteland are now conserving it for future generations



Karoo Space



Figure 2: Grey rhebok © Odette Curtis-Scott

The history and future of Grassroots

Lisa Matthews

Current Address: Environmental Policy group, Wageningen University

For this special issue we've done some digging, enjoy this article on the history of the Grassroots newsletter. The purpose of Grassroots is to keep GSSA members and others informed on news, events, publications, reports and opportunities in their field of interest, and to provide a forum for debate and exchange of ideas in rangeland ecology and pasture management, but over the years we've seen many versions of what this means in practice.

The history of Grassroots

Grassroots officially started in 2002. Before that there was the Bulletin of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa, started around 1990 which ran for 10 or so volumes, and from what I could track down editors included Peter Zacharias, Craig Morris, and Graham Peddie (*Please correct me if I'm wrong – Ed*). The Bulletin consisted of small booklets which covered farmers' days and small gatherings, and research notes. While the proceedings of the GSSA Congress' went into "The Journal of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa" which became the African Journal of Range and Forage Science.

In 2002, GSSA appointed Stuart Communications to handle society administration, which included producing the newsletter which got a big make-over into "Grass Roots". Graham continued on as the first editor of Grassroots providing news reports, articles and photos for the issue. The first grassroots, then a mostly greyscale publication, was full of society news. Farmer days, tours, an evaluation of revegetation techniques, and research. As Freyni du Toit put it, it was the place "where you could send the odd thought or two".

By the second issue the name had already morphed into "Grassroots" (although it switches between "Grassroots", "Grass Roots" and even "Grass-Roots" over the next few issues). At this time the purpose of the newsletter was to have an efficient communication with the society and share research findings, events, and news. And this channel of communications came in handy



Figure 1. Grassroots covers over the years

in 2003 when Freyni, who served as the society administrator, let the society know through the newsletter that her computer hard drive had died and the

fax machine "went haywire".

Grassroots was at the time printed annually and mailed to subscribers, and



Message from the GSSA President



DAVE GOODENOUGH
GSSA PRESIDENT

I welcome the opportunity to update you on recent developments in our Society, particularly with regard to its administration, our new-look newsletter "Grass Roots" and forthcoming congresses. GSSA Council recently appointed Mrs Lolly Stuart of "Stuart Communications", Pietermaritzburg, to take over the administration of the GSSA. All future accounts for annual subscriptions will be processed by Stuart Communications, to which payments in favour of GSSA should be made.

Mrs Stuart has also agreed to produce our new GSSA newsletter, "Grass Roots" which will replace the "GSSA Bulletin". Graham Peddie, who was previously responsible for producing the Bulletin, will work closely with Mrs Stuart in providing her with brief reports, articles and photographs of interest to all GSSA members and others in related fields.

Your support for "Grass Roots" is essential if we are to publish this planned eight-page newsletter every quarter. If there is, for example, a farmers day, pastures or veld course to be held in your region which will be of interest to GSSA members and others, please inform Mrs Stuart or Graham accordingly, AND follow up with a brief summary of the farmers day you attended, AND preferably with a few photos with captions and names of those in the photo.

"Grass Roots" is YOUR newsletter and we need YOUR contributions! Please also provide names and addresses to Stuart Communications of organisations and libraries in your area who would also be interested in receiving the GSSA's "Grass Roots" newsletter.

Your GSSA Council has also recently discussed holding farmers days in different regions under the auspices of the GSSA at which top scientists and farmers will be asked to address subjects of interest to GSSA members and others. A publication of the day's proceedings will be made available to all attending and tours to a farm(s) in the area are also envisaged. More details will follow! Please contact me or other members of the GSSA Council if you feel such a farmers day should be organised in your area.

We are all looking forward to the joint GSSA/SASAS congress to be held at Christiana Aventura from 13 to 17 May 2002, inclusive. Should you have any queries in this regard please phone the congress organisers at 018-299 6707.

The VIIth International Rangelands Congress, to which all GSSA members are invited, is to be held in Durban from 26 July to 1 August 2003. For more details, visit the IRC 2003 website at www.ru.ac.za/rli/irc2003/IRC2003.htm OR contact Sue Bumpstead Conferences, P/Bag X37, Greyville, 4023 (Telephone 031-3032480; Fax: 031-3129441; or email: delegates@sbcconferences.co.za). This congress will replace the normal 2003 GSSA annual congress.

Your proactive support for the GSSA is essential if our Society is to continue to make a meaningful impact in Southern Africa.

With best regards
Dave Goodenough
PRESIDENT

APRIL 2002 in this issue:

- 1: Message from the President
- 2: GSSA members involved at Cedara farmers day
- 4: Planted Pastures tour of the Cape
- 6: Die evaluasie van lusern-kultivars onder beweidings
- 6: Revegetation of bare patches in the Karoo: an evaluation of various techniques
- 7: The persistence of clovers in grass-clover pastures
- 7: Feedback on the Annual Meeting of the Society for Range Management, at Kansas City, Mo.
- 8: Invitation to Prestige Dairy Symposium: Maximise profits with pastures and roughage

April 2002 Vol. 1 No. 1

Page 1

Figure 2. The very first cover of Grassroots in 2002

a digital pdf uploaded to the website. In 2003 we went through the first major format change: A4 publications changed to A5 with a stiffer cover. Graham wrote that "This is in response to numerous requests from members for a publication that is easier to keep on the bookshelf...Please let me, or other council members know what you think of the revised format of GrassRoots".

In 2005 Graham handed over to Alan Short as the new editor of Grassroots. Alan came in with a bang, and in his first issue opened with the question "Where does the Society fit in the modern world, especially South Africa?", publishing the Council's new Strategic

Action Plan in the issue. In 2006 the position of The Grassroots editor was officially appointed as a position on the GSSA council as Publications Editor. Grassroots got a redesign, it now had a colourful cover page (for online versions only). Grassroots also started reprinting articles from other websites for the first with starting with SciDev.net.

By 2007 electronically reading Grassroots on the GSSA website became more popular, although greyscale publications were still mailed out to members. Throughout the late 2000s, the issue continued to consist of scientific write-ups of scientific research, news, article reprints, and letters from members.

In 2009, Julius Tjelele took over as editor for Grassroots. Notably he often encouraged young scientists in the society to also submit articles to Grassroots, rather than leave it for senior scientists.

An unusual article written was published in 2009: a step-by-step guide placing LSD bars in graphs in MS Excel 97-2003 and 2007. The tradition of sharing knowledge on how to make use of changing digital technologies has continued on. In April this year GSSA run a workshop called 'Using AI to help with Agri-ecological Research'. Looking at this guide I think we can all see how rapidly technology has changed and how much the day-to-day processes of research has been changed by it.

In 2010, to celebrate 20 years since the start of the Bulletin of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa, Peter Zacharius, the first editor of the Bulletin, wrote a guest editorial commenting on how both the newsletter and Society had changed. After Julius, Pieter Swanepoel became Grassroots editor in 2013. Over this period holistic grazing was frequently debated through submitted letters to the newsletter! Slowly, reprinting existing articles became the main source of content.

From snail mail to digital magazine

The changing time is perhaps most apparent in the changing design and style of the newsletter. From a simple pamphlet like style to the later sleek magazine like style. Somewhere along the line it also transitioned from a print and mailed newsletter to an online interactive publication. In 2009 the layout and design of Grassroots was handed over to a professional, Tyrone O'Dea a photographer based at the Canadian 'studio16'. Layout and design was handed over thereafter to Cathrine Versfeld in 2011, then a local freelance copywriter. With this after 5 years of a full colour publication (for online readers), Grassroots was sent back to its greyscale roots.

Grassroots became colourful again during Josef van Wyngaard's time as editor, another change was the size of the newsletter, the amount of content practically doubled (between 40 – 50 pages)! The issues from 2017 onwards have the look and feel of today's Grassroots.

In 2017, Grassroots landed into the safe hands of design wizard J.C. Aucamp, perhaps the best thing that could have happened. J.C. has since been an integral part to creating the Grassroots' look and feel and has continued to evolved the designs as we entered the 2020s. J.C. has stuck by Grassroots for nearly



Figure 3. Graham Peddie, the first editor of Grassroots with Christi Visagie, Dave Goodenough, Kevin Kirkman, Philip Botha and Annelene Swanepoel (Left to right).

ABOVE: Graham Peddie (Dundee), Christi Visagie (Nooitgedacht), Dave Goodenough (tour co-ordinator from Cedara), Prof. Kevin Kirkman (University of Natal), Philip Botha (Outeniqua) and Annelene Swanepoel (Elsenburg) were some of the 61 tour participants.



LEFT:
Sigrun Kassier of the ARC-RFI and Dr Amie Aucamp, Director of the ARC-RFI, discussing one of the new ARC-RFI winter-vigorous ryegrass varieties.

PHOTO: JOHN TUNGAY



RIGHT:
Richard Reynolds of the KZND & EA demonstrating the disc meter for measuring pastures.

PHOTO: JOHN TUNGAY



LEFT:
Sheila Elliot of the KZND & EA talked on the evaluation of different pastures for goats.

PHOTO: JOHN TUNGAY

Attention all GSSA members

This newsletter has been sent to all GSSA members, whether you have paid your subscriptions or not. Please note that future newsletters will not be distributed to unpaid members, so we urge you, in order to benefit from this association, to please get your account up to date if this is presently outstanding.

For account enquiries, please contact Priscilla, tel: 033-3425779

a decade now, working with four different editors [including putting up with the chaos caused by me! - Ed]. Looking back at the designs and layouts over the years, I think we all appreciate his work behind the scene and how it has shaped this newsletter.

After Josef, Janet Taylor became editor, and then Malissa Murphey in 2020. Grassroots readership and engagement spiked during the covid pandemic. Although being stuck at home was not the only factor: Grassroots was now also a sleek online magazine, packed full of articles, laid out in high resolution. The digital platform allowed interactive 'page turns' mimicking a physical newsletter.

In 2021, Kevin Kirmans presidential address remarked on changes on Grassroots: "Let's look at some other predictions from 2000. I predicted that our journal and bulletin (now called Grassroots) would be published electronically. This has happened, but in 2000 there was no thought of virtual congresses, webinars and virtual meetings... A phenomenon that was not predicted at all in my 2000 address was the rise and the role of social media. The GSSA has developed an important presence on various social media platforms which serves to raise the profile of our Society and the science underpinning the Society, disseminating important scientific and other information, and maintaining a 'GSSA community' online".

When the current Grassroots as we know it started with its new very professional looking redesign, it was a three-person job, with a main editor and two-sub editors putting it together before

Firstly, thank you for your fantastic response to my request for updated information.

Secondly, a few bits of housekeeping:

1. Please note the new contact details at the top of the front page of "Grassroots". Several postal and fax items arrived at Stuart Communications with the NEW details on their page headers!!
2. My computer hard drive did what computer hard drives are best at and died near the end of May. This was shortly after the fax machine went haywire! All in all, it was a frustrating time. However, both are now in an excellent state of repair, so please feel free to use these modes of communication again.
3. Unfortunately, all of my e-mails have been lost. So, if you sent me any e-mail between 22 and 25 May 2003, this is why I have not replied. I updated all database details from e-mails sent up to the end of 21 May 2003, so if you had a different query (for example, those outstanding fees, etc.), please bear with me and resend if I haven't contacted you. Thank you.

Figure 5. Admin issues in the early 2000s.

Figure 4. A page excerpt from the 1st Grassroots.

being sent to the designer. A previous sub-editor would then take over, ensuring a smooth transition into new hands. As the years went by the Grassroots became a one-person juggling act and labour of love. In response the average duration of a single editors also decreased from 3 – 5 years, to 2 years for the editors following the big redesign.

As we relied on reprinting online articles for most of our issue's content, this became harder to do over the years. Figuring out copyright and reprint processes

for different kinds of online publications (and photos which often have their own unique authors and copyright), obtaining permissions became trickier and more time-intensive.

Simultaneously, people began reading on their phones and tablets, instead of desktop – and a Grassroots magazine is not the easiest to navigate on a mobile device! In addition our subscription to our publication platform, although very nice, became increasingly expensive to maintain for our society, and the GSSA

council decided to rather invest this into the society in new ways. This leads us to our most recent change.

This year we tried out the first new version of the Grassroots: a thinned out mailer with links to online articles. While we are still getting the hang of it, we are hoping this will allow a more streamlined approach to continue with Grassroots. Existing news will be still be shared as links, and it remains a platform for news, submitted articles and communication line for the society.

What's next for Grassroots?

This is perhaps a good moment to pause and think what is at the core of Grassroots? How can it best serve GSSA members? The world has changed over the past decades and we now have mailers, social media, and more online platforms scientific and popular articles than ever. Today and going forward what should the purpose of grassroots be?

We've seen Grassroots go through many different hands. There have been changes in design and layout (simple greyscale bulletin to a full colour professional layout) and method of distribution (mail, pdf, online magazine, mailer).

We've tried out a variety of article types from reporting back on farmers days, council news, research findings, young researcher of the month, news and events, and popular articles. Grassroots has also been a place for debate and even politics (for example distributing cards to petition against the N2 highway) – I guess we have social media for that now though!

Looking back, moments that really shine out now are those that document the society and its members.

Providing news of congresses and events, sharing opinions, perspectives and research findings. If these are the types of articles you like to see in the newsletter – consider sharing them with us! As a platform for GSSA, we'd love as much as possible to be relevant and engaging for the society and to reflect our members

So what does the future of Grassroots hold? Well, as things change, they also stay the same. Although through new formats, we remain committed to sharing news and documenting our society and congresses. But I guess that is up to the next editor, so all we can do is wait and see!



Left:
Cattle on burnt veld on Stratherne Farm



Right:
Tea under the trees before the start of proceedings



Below:
Kevin Kirkman in fine voice.

To advertise, please contact Freyni on Tel: 033 390 3113
Fax: 033 390 3113, Cell: 083 256 7202,
e-mail: admin@gssa.co.za, <http://www.gssa.co.za>

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STRIP (25mm x 180mm): R 228 / issue or R 824 / 4 issues (R 206 each)
STRIP (25mm x 90mm): R 138 / issue or R 500 / 4 issues (R 125 each)

Figure 6. The KZN prestige grazing day and Kevin Kirkman with what appears to be a nokia phone on attached to his belt.



Figure 7. : Grassroots cover in 2006 asking "after all these years...Do we really know how to manage veld?".

Graphical presentation of research results: How to place accurate LSD bars in graphs

A.O. Fatunbi
University of Fort Hare
Email: afatunbi@ufh.ac.za

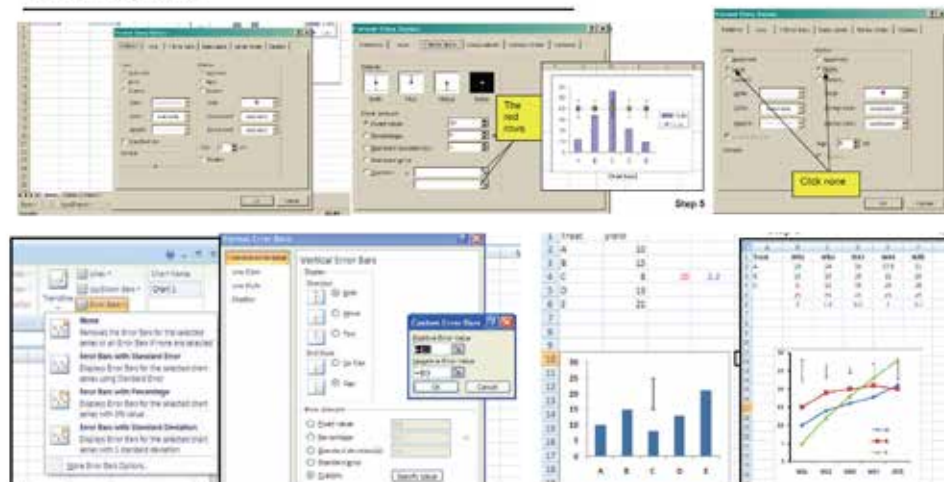


Figure 8. Excerpts from step-by-step guide to place LSD bars in graphs in excel.



A guest editorial from the first editor of the Bulletin of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa, musing about how our newsletter has reflected the changing Society over the past two decades.

The morphing of the "Bulletin" into "Grassroots" is a very good example of the adaptability the leadership of the Society has shown over the years. On the occasion of the 20th year of regular publication of a "popular" format we can reflect on how things have changed – or have they?

Certainly the content is quite different as when we started the "Occasional Publications" and the "Bulletin" the intention was really to get "the science into practice" and to record the good ideas emerging from field days and non-congress events (this was sort of a Journal of Good Ideas and Failed Experiments but ISI didn't like the idea so we went it alone!). What we could not anticipate was that the publication, now well established as Grassroots, would provide the forum for the development of a new medium that now characterises the programme at the formal Congresses. This has moved us as a Society and discipline into the era of trans-disciplinary agendas and we have maintained our relevance through this I believe. For those who may not have thought about this buzzword here are my definitions:

Multi-disciplinary – many disciplines working on a project and they do not really need to talk to each other;

Inter-disciplinary – as above, but they have to write a joint report so are forced to talk to each other at the end of the project. Usually these 'studies'

come about where one discipline takes on a project, gets into trouble so find some mates from other disciplines to help; and

Trans-disciplinary – here all possible disciplines (especially those very hard ones we call "soft sciences") get together and write the project proposal so they are all in it from start to end.

Of course the last of these is where the GSSA has moved itself to in my view. Whether this was done by accident or design I don't know, but this is what has and will keep this Society alive. The GSSA and all its elements have done well to survive the changes in the 'scientific' environment over the last three decades and I have no doubt that the strength-in-adaptability will prevail.

Oh, by the way, I see from Mike Peel's Presidential Address (GSSA Congress 2010) that the planted pastures issue remains. That has not changed in 30 years! Perhaps if the debate was taken into a trans-disciplinary realm, things may look different!

Peter Zacharias (PeteZac) has been a member since 1982 (Processional since 1993), served as Honorary Secretary for more years than he can remember from 1995. He was President in 1993 and has served in every portfolio, except Treasurer, available at the time he was on Council structures (1985 to 2005) and attended 21 consecutive congresses. Career decisions have distracted him from the veld since 2006 and after a 30 year association with UKZN he is now Chief Operations Officer for the Safe Blood for Africa Foundation. ☺

Figure 9 (above). A guest editorial from PeteZac, The first editor of Grassroots' predecessor, the Bulletin of the Grasland Society of Southern Africa.

Figure 10 (right). This year we piloted a change in format to a mailer, another huge change for Grassroots.

List of past editors

- ? – ? Peter Zacharias (GSSA Bulletin)
- 1993 – 1995: Craig Morris (GSSA Bulletin)
- 1996 – 1999: ? [If you know send us a mail! – Ed]
- 2000 – 2004: Graham Peddie (GSSA Bulletin – Grassroots)
- 2004 – Freyni (Guest Editorial)
- 2005 – 2009: Alan Short
- 2009 – 2013: Julius Tjelele
- 2013 – 2016: Pieter Swanepoel
- 2016 – 2018: Josef van Wyngaard
- 2018 – 2020: Janet Taylor
- 2020 – 2022: Malissa Murphy
- 2023 – 2025: Lisa Matthews

List of layout and design

- 2002 – ? : Lolly Stuart
- ? – 2009: Alan Short
- 2009: Alan Short & Julius Tjelele
- 2009 – 2011: Tyrone O'Dea
- 2011 – 2015: Cathrine Versfeld
- 2016: LT Printers
- 2016: Wilke Strydom & Joshua Visser
- 2017 – present: J.C. Aucamp

Grassroots Newsletter

Jan 2025



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Jan 2025 Issue Highlights

- New Grassroots format
- Feedback from Congress 59
- What is the grass - and how have perceptions of grassland changed over time?
- Historic climate change case at The International Court of Justice
- Video: Congress 59

✓ Subscribed

From our Editor

Dear Reader,

Happy 2025! Since the last issue, the new year has brought along some changes for Grassroots. We have moved away from our old publishing platform, towards a mailer based newsletter. Although the old 'magazine' style will be missed. This decision importantly frees up finances for the GSSA to use elsewhere for the society, improves reading on mobile devices, and allows us to share articles with copyright restrictions. There may be some growing pains as we get the hang of it, please bear with us! We'll try our best to keep as much of Grassroots the same, and are happy to publish and share your articles, news, events and more.

Open call for letters and perspectives

If you have any corrections, suggestions, or perspectives to share regarding Grassroots please share. We would love to hear.

Combined GSSA / SASAS Congress 2002

This year's annual GSSA congress was held in conjunction with the South African Society for Animal Science (SASAS) at Aventura Christiana. About 350 delegates attended what proved to be a very good congress. There was a full academic programme, and, it goes without saying at a GSSA congress, a very good social programme as well.

Congratulations are in order for Annelie de Beer and her team for the excellent job they did of organising this joint congress.

The AGM was of the opinion that the joint congress was a success and that we look to again joining with SASAS for the 2004 congress.



*Left:
Outgoing president
Dave Goodenough
hands out the awards
at the congress dinner*



*Right:
Richard Reynolds was the "winner" of the "coveted"
faux pas award, beating several illustrious co-nominees
(Rich Hurt & Kevin Kirkman among them).*

Figure 1. The combined GSSA/SASAS in 2002.

Grassroots: Newsletter of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa • September 2006 • Vol 6 • No. 3

Last Word

Congress 41 Pics



Clockwise from top left: Winner of the GSSA award for best presentation at the Eskom Science Expo, Emelia Swart; postgrad students at tea time; Prof Sam Fuhlendorf; the student volunteers who helped to make the Congress run smoothly; Prof Chris Dannhauser hands the Peter Edwards Award to André Neethling, manager of Thaba Thola Game farm. (Photos: Graham Peddie)



*Left:
Richard Fynn (centre)
receives the award for Best
Presentation*



*Right:
Kevin Kirkman (left) hands
the coveted faux pas award
to Rob Scott-Shaw*



*Left:
The hopeful candidates for
the faux pas: (from left)
Rob, Annelene Swanepoel
and Richard Fynn*

Photos courtesy Justin du Toit

Figure 2. Congress 41 in 2006.

Figure 3. Congress award winners.

Congress over the years



Figure 4. GSSA celebrating the society's 50th anniversary.



Figure 5. GSSA at Congress in 2018

CONGRESS 55

VIRTUAL EVENT

30 JUNE - 2 JULY 2020

Figure 6. Congress goes virtual due to COVID-19.



Figure 7. The Faux Pas Trophy, the most coveted award at Congress.

Figure 8. GSSA on a game tour.



Congress over the years



Figure 9. Delegates posing for a group photo by the GSSA banners.



Figure 10. The Gala dinner is the night to eat, chat, celebrate, and sometimes dance.

Southern Africa's rangelands do many jobs, from feeding cattle to storing carbon: a review of 60 years of research

Kevin Kirkman¹, Craig Morris^{1,2} and Helga van der Merwe³

Current Addresses: ¹University of KwaZulu-Natal, ²Agricultural Research Council - Animal Production and ³South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON)
Reprinted from: <https://bit.ly/3TwPMIG>

South Africa's rangelands have always had great value for the country. These areas offer more than just grazing for livestock. They provide services like purifying water, storing carbon and conserving biodiversity.

The grassland biome (28%), along with the savanna (32.5%) and the Nama-Karoo (19.5%), are collectively referred to as rangelands. They make up almost 80% of the land area of South Africa.

Their ecological services haven't always been fully appreciated. Research into rangelands has evolved in response to environmental changes, human needs and scientific discoveries.

Commercial livestock production was the main concern when academics, researchers and practitioners met for the first congress of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa in 1966. Less than 15% of South Africa's land surface area is arable. The only agricultural production possible on the balance of the land is livestock production from natural rangeland. Livestock production is thus a cornerstone of agriculture and food production in South Africa.

Six decades on, the Grassland Society has reflected – through a special issue of its journal, the *African Journal of Range and Forage Science* – on how it has tackled research challenges and adapted to shifting perceptions of rangelands.

Research has explored aspects of global change, bush encroachment and other

Figure 1. Rangelands in southern Africa span diverse climates and landscapes, from arid deserts to moist mountains. Kevin Kirkman, Author provided (no reuse)



Photo: Kevin Kirkman

changes in rangeland composition and function. Land transformation is another research area. Peri-urban sprawl, open-cast mining, timber plantations and other developments reduce and fragment rangeland. The result is increased pressure on the remaining, intact rangelands.

Widening scope

A review of research over the 60 years shows that early efforts focused mainly on forage production to support livestock industries. Research topics included rotational grazing and burning, as well as reinforcing rangelands by adding nutrients, forage grasses and

legumes.

By the 1980s, it became clear that rangelands offered more than just grazing – they were vital ecosystems.

In the early 1990s, around the onset of democracy in South Africa, local researchers became part of global conversations around rangeland ecology. In doing so, they started to use the international terminology, instead of the old Dutch-derived word "veld".

This shift was not just about geography, but about scope. Rangelands were increasingly seen as multifaceted ecosystems critical in the fight against cli-



Figure 2. Communal flocks. Justin Du Toit (no reuse)



Figure 3. Kalahari conservation. Helga van der Merwe (no reuse)

mate change. Increasing temperatures, increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels and changing rainfall patterns pose a threat to all ecosystems. Understanding the response of rangelands is increasingly important in devising management strategies to adapt to these changes.

Scientists expanded their attention to preserving soil health, restoring degraded landscapes, and maintaining biodiversity. Issues like overgrazing, soil erosion and invasive species gained recognition in southern Africa. Degradation of rangelands in South Africa was first highlighted in the mid 1700s, and became a “mainstream” issue in the 1930s. Replacing a diverse group of wild animals with a single species of grazer, such as cattle, is the reason generally given for degradation. Fire has also been linked to it (often unfairly).

The Grassland Society responded by promoting ideas like adaptive grazing management (making decisions in response to conditions, rather than following a recipe approach). It also

encouraged integrating indigenous knowledge with scientific research to create more sustainable and resilient land-use systems. This has helped shape land management practices across the region.

Many southern African rangelands face the challenge of balancing grazing with biodiversity conservation. Research on conservation agriculture and integrating livestock and wildlife systems is helping farmers and conservationists to find common ground. Wildlife, both in the conservation and the game production contexts, plays a critical role in South Africa’s economy. Tourism is one of the major contributors.

Land management is particularly important in the Mediterranean-climate regions of South Africa, where poor crop farming practices have damaged soil health. The research is guiding the development of more sustainable farming systems focused on soil regeneration and biodiversity.

A key indicator of ecosystem degrada-

tion is a decline in grassland forbs (herbaceous plants that are not grasses). They are highly sensitive to grazing pressure. So the role of wildflowers in ecosystem health and animal wellbeing has also become an important research area.

Climate change, fire suppression and overgrazing drive woody plant encroachment, where grasslands are turning into shrublands. This calls for integrated management approaches that consider fire, grazing and even controlled rewilding.

Fire is a natural element in many grassland ecosystems, and research has helped advance understanding of how it can be monitored and controlled to reduce risks while promoting healthy rangelands.

People and grasslands

Rangeland management has important social dimensions. Research is addressing issues such as land tenure, governance, community management systems on communal rangelands and indigenous knowledge in management decisions. These topics are essential for creating sustainable solutions that account for people’s livelihoods and needs.

In addition to these ecological, social and management advances, the Grassland Society of Southern Africa has worked to develop the next generation of rangeland scientists and practitioners. Through its congresses, workshops and journal publications, the society continues to foster dialogue across disciplines and communities. Its 60th congress will be held in July 2025.



Figure 4. Mountain catchments. Craig Morris (no reuse)

Meeting at the River

Land, Science, and Shared Tradition at IRC 2025

Robyn Nicolay

Current Addresses: Centre for African Conservation Ecology (ACE),
Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha

Two eyes to observe, two ears to listen, and one mouth to speak. The idea that we are meant to listen more than we speak is a timeless principle, passed down through many cultures. This was the message included in Welcome to Country at the 2025 International Rangeland Congress (IRC), held on Kurna land in Adelaide, South Australia. Uncle Mickey of the Kurna Meyunna, welcoming delegates on behalf of the First Nations of Australia, reminded us of this traditional wisdom: when we ask a question, we are only given the answer to that question, but when we truly listen, we are given all the answers to all the questions. A quiet lesson in humility and respect, and one that set the tone for the week ahead.

Uncle Mickey spoke of the gathering of

Karuna elders along the River Torrens, or Karrawirra Parri (the Red Gum Forest River), a place of meeting, of sharing knowledge, and passing down stories.

He reflected on the heritage and traditions that existed long before, and have continued long after, colonial settlement in the area now known as Adelaide, or traditionally, Tarntanya, meaning "red kangaroo place."

I found the symbolism in this welcome deeply meaningful, and how they remain vital to the communication, transfer, and continuum of science. These words opened a conference under the theme "Working Together for our Global Rangelands Future", a gathering that called for scientific exchange and deep listening.

Stories Matter

The sharing of knowledge between generations ensures that this wealth of understanding continues, passed on to younger generations with "enquiring ears". We are told the elders of the First Nation taught that we should take only what we need and leave something behind. What we leave are the stories that carry on after we are gone. Uncle Mickey reminds us that we are born with nothing, we die with nothing, and in between, we are only visitors to this place.

Storytelling is the beating heart of Indigenous culture in Australia, how history was recorded. For millennia, First Nations' stories of country, creation, tradition, and education have been passed down through generations. In many

Figure 1. Meeting at the river – IRC at the Adelaide convention centre, beside the river Torrens (Karrawirra Parri) a place of meeting, of sharing knowledge, and passing down stories. Photo credit: Prof. Susi Vetter

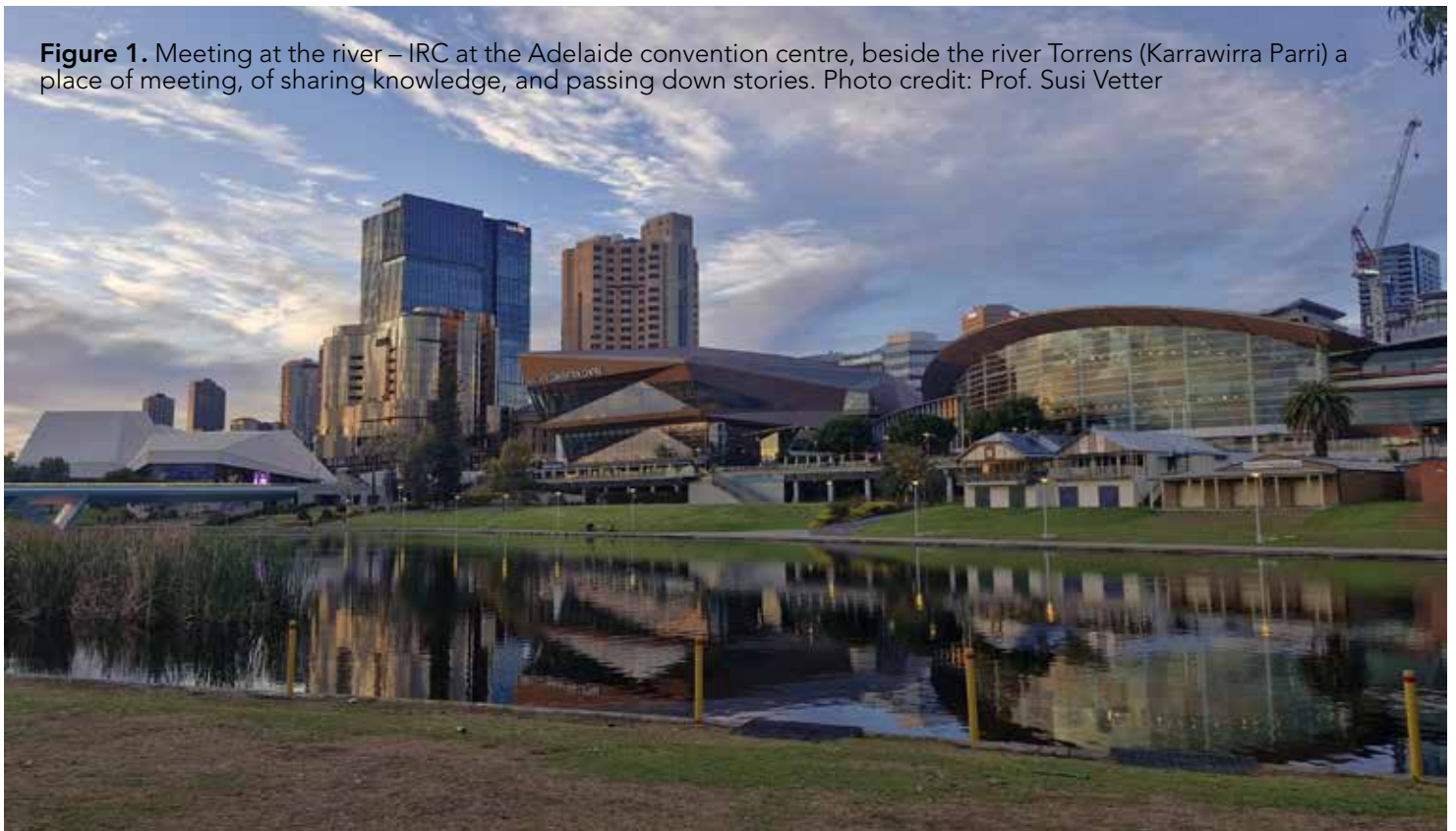




Figure 2. Uncle Mickey O'Brien. Photo credit: Dr. Michelle Tedder

communities, it is the role of elders to share their wisdom through these stories.

I felt that this respect for storytelling resonated through IRC 2025.

In her keynote, Prof. Susi Vetter dedicated her plenary talk to the late Prof. Winston Trollope; a scientist who told an important story and left this story behind not only in South Africa but globally. His influence was evident in the many remarks and tributes from rangeland ecologists in the US, Australia, and across Africa and elsewhere.

Robyn Cowley shared her story from a 30-year burning experiment in northern Australia's grazed tropical savannas. This long-term research, conducted at Kidman Springs, showed how climate variability and fire regimes have shaped vegetation. Robyn's research showed

fire helped limit woody encroachment in grasslands and supported herbaceous diversity, while in woodlands, drought also contributed to reduced tree growth. Post-fire wet-season resting further improved grassland composition.

I applaud Dr. Jamie Xavier and his team who presented work from the Prairie Project, Texas A&M, who share their research through visual summaries, and storytelling which makes science engaging. Matthew Dankwerts (amusingly from Adelaide South Africa) told a practical and transferable story on how char height on fence posts can be used as a proxy for flame length and fire intensity in grass fires, having a wide practical application as a rule-of-thumb tool in grassland management.

In the closing session, a listener spoke of the importance of bridging science

and communication and commented on the need for greater youth involvement at these gatherings. This gap, I think, is one that many scientists, certainly myself, find challenging. We strive to become good scientists, but we must also learn to be good storytellers, to continue the story of our science. Science, after all, thrives on its inability to explain everything. But through science, we move closer to what is true, and through storytelling, we can make that knowledge accessible, and enduring.

Uncle Mickey reminded us that as humans, we are a storytelling people. No matter where we come from, we grew up listening to stories, and hopefully, we will continue to be captivated by them in our adult years.

Revisiting the Old to Make Sense of the New

One of the most powerful threads running through IRC 2025 was the re-examining of traditional practices.

In her keynote, Prof. Maria Fernandez-Gimenez reflected on the knowledge held by women pastoralists, likening its transmission to the generational passing of a sourdough starter, from mother to daughter, from elder to apprentice. She spoke of her journey through feminist, decolonial, and Indigenous research methodologies and asked how these can meaningfully shape modern rangeland systems. Her collaborative work with women herders in Spain showed that women, though often invisible in public narratives, particularly in pastoral decision-making, hold deep ecological understanding and adaptive wisdom.

Acknowledging traditional ecological knowledge alongside modern science by returning to a more integrated, respectful approach, there is a chance to rebalance these relationships.

Prof. Susi Vetter emphasised that ecological knowledge must not only be available, but trusted and accessible, particularly for those making land use decisions. She reminded us that successful rangeland management requires more than data, it calls for meaningful collaboration between researchers, communities, and land users. Prof. Vetter emphasises that solutions must be co-developed, grounded in local realities, and flexible enough to adapt.

This kind of collaboration is especially critical now, as rangelands face growing pressure from carbon markets and large-scale development, increasingly being driven by monetisation. Returning to grounded, people-centred ap-

proaches may be our best chance at long-term stewardship.

In the end, these conversations remind us that rangeland systems, like the communities that care for them, are dynamic, adaptive, and deeply rooted to Place. To navigate future directions, we should also look to the past. Acknowledging harm is part of that journey, as is the willingness to do better. As research increasingly affirms the value of traditional practices, so too should policy evolve to protect them. Reconnecting people with country, tradition, and a shared understanding of Indigenous knowledge offers a path forward, to possibly restore land, but also to restore relationship with the land.

Rangelands, Capitalism, and Carbon Cowboys

Dr. Igshaan Samuels cautioned against the deletion of traditional knowledge as rangelands are reshaped by extractive systems. In South Africa and South Asia alike, he argued, the coexistence of pastoralism and agropastoralism is threatened by climate variability and socio-political neglect. Similar con-

cerns were included in multiple discussions across the conference, particularly in thoughts around the carbon credit economy. The risk of fostering "carbon cowboys", where carbon sequestration is pursued with blinkered economic motives, raises important questions.

Dr. Saravan Peacock offered a hopeful model from Australia and talks on the implementation of the biodiversity act in Australia, the consideration of the nature repair market, Indigenous knowledge cooperation and traditional products market. He outlined recent policy developments, including updates to the Pastoral Land Management and Conservation Act 1989, which now formally recognises conservation and carbon farming as legitimate uses of pastoral leases. If pastoralism is to endure, he points out that it must find its place within this changing landscape. For this to happen, Indigenous and traditional knowledge cannot be optional, they must surely be central within decision-making. There was a particularly interesting discussion around how capitalist interests may often run counter to pastoral ideologies rooted in stewardship and community. Some delegates ques-

tioned the centrality of Africa in these global conversations, reminding us that African rangelands', with their complex histories and social dynamics, cannot be reduced to models developed elsewhere.

Co-Creation, Not Control

"You can't save what you don't love, and you can't love what you don't know" - Jacques Cousteau. I thought of this quote while on the Burra and Beyond conference tour. In the class A iron-grass natural temperate grasslands of the Mokota Conservation Reserve, conservationists encountered the Adelaide pygmy blue-tongue skink, previously thought to be extinct, and now thriving in these grasslands. The excursion also carried us past Australia's largest wind farm, sparking debate about how renewable energy projects might coexist with fragile rangeland ecosystems. The dry landscape offered a sobering reminder of the regions' grapple with a three-year drought.

Dr. Anika Molesworth's keynote revolved around care, community, and what she called "grounded courage."

Figure 3. Being told the story of the pygmy blue-tongue lizard, previously thought to be extinct, and now thriving in the class A iron-grass natural temperate grasslands of the Mokota Conservation Reserve. Photo credit: Robyn Nicolay



Real change, she argued, rarely flows from top-down control; it emerges through co-creation, through recognising that we are not owners of land but its custodians. She evoked the idea of a landscape that is both heart and home.

Anika urged us to cultivate the moral courage to sit with uncertainty and still act. She contrasted collaborative stewardship versus top-down, controlling approaches, emphasising that true guardianship must foreground Indigenous-led research. To love rangelands, she said, is to accept the responsibility of leaving them better than we found them.

Navigating Change

A panel including Prof. Maria Fernandez-Gimenez, Prof. Susi Vetter and Dr. Richard Fynn discussed whether rangelands function within equilibrium states, or if they are dynamic, shifting systems. Perhaps predictably, the answer was that both truths may coexist, science is not binary, and neither is nature. The panel highlighted how difficult it is to separate ecological dynamics from social ones, increasingly viewing stability not as a fixed endpoint, but as a continuum, where managing for livelihoods means managing with change. In this view, resource management may be shaped by the natural movement of grazers in response to shifting conditions, and by the people whose lives are connected with these landscapes.

The discussion touched on resilience, catastrophe models, and the inherent instability of today's climate-driven landscapes. Importantly, it also challenged the direction of scientific authority, and whether we are validating traditional knowledge, or rather only now catching up to what Indigenous knowledge has always known.

From Big Data to Big Stories

In his keynote, Dr. Nicolas Webb emphasised the importance of consistency in how we gather, interpret, and share data. As scientific knowledge moves across geographical and disciplinary boundaries, he argued, this should be clear, coherent, and grounded. Digital tools, consistent frameworks, and shared indicators may help us translate this knowledge more effectively.

Dr. Igshaan Samuels spoke about the fading of traditional knowledge systems in pastoral regions. He urged the need to protect the rights of pastoralists and dryland croppers, emphasising that while we must look forward, many of the solutions we are looking for may lie behind us, in practices continued over generations.

Prof Tony Palmer presented findings from an eddy covariance flux tower study in the Eastern Cape exploring the presumed trade-off between carbon sequestration and water use linked to woody encroachment. Contrary to common assumptions, the study found that encroached and open grasslands used similar amounts of water, while the grassland sequestered more carbon.

Dr. Michelle Tedder brought an ecological perspective, sharing research that found South Africa's mesic grasslands to be resilient to drought, yet increasingly threatened by rising temperatures, offering a note of cautious optimism.

In a South African study presented by Dr. Andiswa Finca, 60 "champion farmers" across the grassland and savanna biomes shared their veld management strategies. Ground-based vegetation assessments showed encouraging signs of rangeland recovery through practical knowledge and local experience, largely driven by farmer-led practices like rotational grazing, stocking control, and veld resting.

Together, these contributions pointed to a greater understanding of the future of rangelands, which depends not only on the data we collect, but on the narratives we build around it.

A Story to Carry Forward

Following the IRC meeting, I hope a story of transferable knowledge will be carried forward, for "enquiring ears". So that enquiring ears may continue to love and benefit from our rangelands.

Listening to the science discussed at IRC 2025, I came to be reminded of the many parallels between South Africa and Australia, in its history, in their governance and how we need to revisit tradition, and how we can build on tradition in our approach to rangeland management.

It often seems that there is much to be worried about in the current climatic and global pressures placed on our rangelands. Still I found hope in the science coming out of this conference, the transformative and inclusive nature of science coming from around the world, and how these stories shared at IRC will travel home with us, and hopefully will continue to be told through stories of practice, policy, and passion.

As we look ahead to the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in 2026, the urgency of this work grows clearer. IYRP 2026 offers a rare opportunity to raise global awareness, to advocate for pastoral communities, and to bring rangeland systems into the centre of conversations.

Wendell Berry wrote, "The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope."

At the IRC, we were reminded, through the welcome by the Indigenous Nation of the Kaurna and through the passion of the scientists presenting their work, that we are all stewards of the land. And what greater honour could there be?

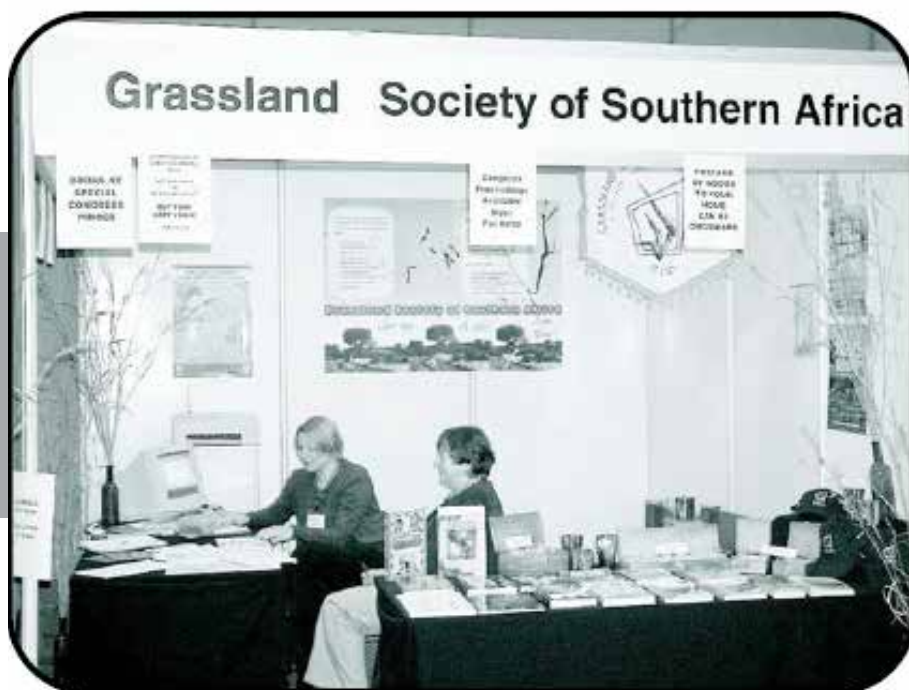
By revisiting and sharing knowledge, we recognise our innate capacity to care for the places we know, understand, and love. And what better way to do that than through collaboration, storytelling and meeting at the river - this time in Adelaide, and in the future, wherever that river may be.

My deepest thanks go to the organising committee of the 12th International Rangeland Congress for hosting a gathering so perfectly rooted in both landscape and spirit, and for supporting delegate attendance, myself included. I am equally grateful to the Grassland Society of Southern Africa Trust, whose partial sponsorship allowed two members to attend this year's meeting. The experience has been nothing short of mind-opening.



Figure 4. GSSA representing at the IRC 2025. From left to right: Khululiwe Ntombela, Andiswa Finca, Unathi Gulwa, Susi Vetter, Igshaan Samuels, Julius Tjelele, Matthew Danckwerts, Robyn Nicolay, Tony Palmer, Tally Palmer, Sindi Nkuna, and Michelle Tedder. Photo credit: Unathi Gulwa

Figure 1. The GSSA stand at the 2003 IRC held in Durban, South Africa. In 2002, to market the VIIth International Rangeland Congress, Richard Hunt from the ARC attended the annual meeting of Annual Meeting of the Society for Range Management, at Kansas City, Mo. despite having tick-bite fever.



The GSSA at the VIIth International Rangelands Congress 2003

Report for the 9th International Rangeland Congress in Rosario Argentina as the GSSA Representative

Mike Peel
Agricultural Research Council
Animal production Institute
E mail: mikep@arc.agric.za

Dr. Mike Peel is Immediate Past President of the GSSA and is also the Programme Manager Rangeland Ecology housed in the Animal Production Institute of the ARC.

The 9th International Rangeland Congress is the premier international congress for rangeland scientists in the world. The congress provided an excellent opportunity for rangeland scientists and practitioners to share their research and experience.

The GSSA is the major Society dealing with research relating to research and management of southern Africa's grasslands and rangelands. Natural rangelands provide the nutrition for almost all of South Africa's national herds (cattle, sheep, goats and wildlife) and the health of these rangelands is paramount to the sustained production of these herds.

The 9th IRC held in Rosario, Argentina, provided the international platform for the presentation of the results of research in range and forage production.

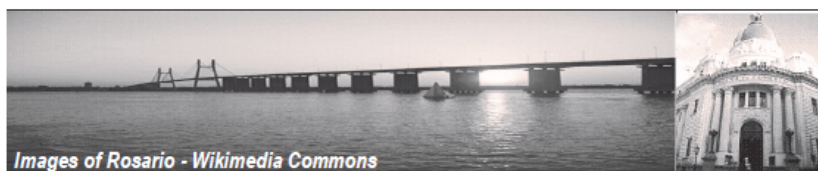
It further provided the opportunity to exchange information with international researchers from all continents and to expose these scientists to the science and practice of range and pasture management in southern Africa as strived for by the GSSA.

In terms of the Society, three of the major objectives were achieved:

- In promoting and creating awareness and opportunities in southern Africa for range and pasture scientists, technologists and farmers to confer and exchange ideas; and
- In disseminating knowledge and information in the field of rangeland science through attendance of congresses and publications;
- Encouraging liaison with other societies having similar or common interests both nationally and internationally

Figure 2 (left). Mike Peel reported back on the 2011 IRC held in Argentina.

Figure 3 (below). PW Conradie reported back on the 2008 IRC held in China.



Images of Rosario - Wikimedia Commons

Grassroots

August 2011

Vol 11 No. 3

9

Report on combined International Rangeland and Grassland Congress held in Hohhot, China from 28 June – 5 July 2008.

PW Conradie

Manager: Pasture Science, Döhne ADI

Email:

The combined IGC-IRG 2008 congress hosted in Hohhot, capital of Inner Mongolia, People's Republic of China was attended by two pasture scientists from Döhne. Approximately 1500 delegates representing countries with rangeland and grassland vegetation attended the congress. The South African delegation of 22 was one of the largest after USA, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina and the host country China. The Eastern Cape was represented by Professor Trollope and Dr Dube, from Fort Hare University, Dr Palmer from the ARC, while Messrs Conradie and Goqwana represented the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture.

The congress had as theme "Multifunctional Grasslands and Rangelands in a Changing World" with sub themes Resources and Ecology, Production Systems and People and Policies. International phenomena such

as global warming, bio-fuel and carbon sequestration received much attention in presentations and discussion, while ongoing issues such as grazing capacity norms, desertification, encroachment of undesirable species and vegetation monitoring were also addressed.

Mr Goqwana presented a paper entitled: "Does Landcare result in changes in perceptions of livestock keepers on sustainable use of natural resources", while Mr Conradie's paper dealt with critical success factors for development projects in communal rangelands. Both presentations were well received and attracted much discussion as it addressed developmental challenges faced by many countries. Ideas were shared with world leaders in rangeland science and networking for future international collaboration was done.

During the course of the congress a special

meeting of the African delegates was attended where environmental challenges facing the continent were discussed. The Grassland Society of Southern Africa of which Mr Conradie is currently the president agreed to assist Nigeria and other African countries to establish their own societies and thereby strengthen structured research on the continent.

We would like to thank the Senior Manager Agricultural Development and Research for his support and the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture for the opportunity to attend the congress. The importance of international exposure in stimulating new research approaches and applying the latest technology is invaluable to develop a competitive research component. We strongly recommend further cooperation with grassland scientists from China, as such collaboration can be mutually beneficial.



We came across some **funny moments** in past **Grassroots** and wanted to share them with you.

In the great tradition of congress, the contest for the coveted *faux pas* award was a close one. But, in the end, the judges' decision was unanimous. As the MC, Kevin Kirkman, explained, in the old days there were overhead projectors. A speaker could highlight a point by either placing his pen on the surface of the projector, thus projecting the pen's shadow onto the screen behind him; or he could point with a long stick directly at the screen. Of course, nowadays we have laptops, PowerPoint and laser pointers, and our pointing options are more limited. Rob Scott-Shaw seemed to have forgotten that, as for several minutes he stood in front of his peers happily highlighting interesting features of an aerial photograph by pointing his laser at the screen of the laptop, until his befuddled audience realised what was happening and gently corrected him.

Beach parties and disco nights

The hotel laid on great entertainment. Ironically, the beach party was held next to the swimming pool, 50 yards from the beach, but nobody was worried about minor details like that. The one-man band had everyone dancing, until the neighbours complained, with a mixture of jazz, blues, kwaito and rock that kept the dance floor packed. The first night was a late one, but it didn't stop there. There were red eyes and grumpy "good mornings" all week. No doubt delegates stayed up late to talk business and drink tea.

Once again the annual GSSA Congress is approaching fast. It will be hosted by Limpopo province at Weesgerus Holiday Resort in Modimolle. By the way I am from Limpopo and we are usually good in everything.

I like to believe that all the delegates who attended this year's GSSA Congress 45 enjoyed it compared to last year's. There were a lot of students who presented their results and not just proposals. Credits must be given to their supervisors and/or mentors. A lot of people criticised the quality of papers and posters presented in Congress 44, Florida last year and yes it was a good critique which helped us improve. The organising committee of next year's Congress and subsequent Congresses must keep or improve the standard of Congress 45. It is not just the responsibility of the organising committee but all the GSSA members to improve the scientific quality of the Congress. To everyone who contributed to the success of Congress 45, keep up the good work.

THE MEMOIRS OF A CONGRESS DELEGATE

Thomas de Bruyn

Whilst speakers and chairpersons Theorise and dogmatise, Delegates and congressors Pensire and find sleep And abundance of indifference.	Because the eloquent oratory And flowery prose and detente Is lost upon the bourgeoisie. And the most welcome phrase Is "In conclusion, gentlemen", For then a glass we raise.
But barrages of datasets And graphs and tables and epithets Annihilate and exterminate Our only hope of sanity: Let's protest this inhumanity!	These fierce assaults on simple minds - pulverised and minimised by excesses of hops-extract - should not be allowed to distract from our mission most divine to seek solace in the fruit of vine.

Figure 8. Loadshedding during Poster Session 2



Dear Mr Darwin 2 September 1831

We regret to inform you that we can't grant you special leave and funds to go on the Beagle to the Galapagos Islands because:

- 1) You have not supplied the necessary documentation
- 2) Your proposal does not have a defendable hypothesis
- 3) As little of scientific value will arise from such a 'trip' we will rather allocate funds for new furniture for our School office.

Yours sincerely

Prof. TW Erp
Deputy Vice Head of School



© Grassroots Society 1997/18. Charles Darwin & Co. 1831

'Rhino Coin': Can a Cryptocurrency Help Save Africa's Rhinoceroses?

Can Virtual Reality emerge as a tool for conservation?

Should genetic engineering be used as a tool for conservation?

Could AI help you to write your next paper?

Figure 1 (top left). GSSA Congresses are always interesting. Here are some good times (and apparently one bad time – what happened at congress 44? I guess it would have gone better if it was hosted in Limpopo). The coveted Faux Pas award celebrates an embarrassing and often humorous mistake made by an attending delegate. It was introduced in 1995 at the 30th Congress and the first recipient was Johannes Evert Kappeyne. Last year the winner was none other than our outgoing president Ntuthuko Mkhize. Fig 8: From Ed - At my first in-person congress attendance in 2022, I had a poster presentation and loadshedding hit right during my few minutes of presenting. Without missing a beat everyone quickly responded by taking out their phones and spotlighting me and the poster. And so the poster session continued on!

Figure 2 (top right). Grassroots' first meme, Mr Darwin's unsuccessful funding request. Memes are now regularly shared through our Facebook page.

Figure 3 (bottom right). We've seen all kinds of technology popping up in Grassroots articles over the years, from directional virtual fencing, drones, to using acoustics for monitoring. Some of these have come to be extremely useful over the years (such as the usage of remote sensing data), for others we'll have to see.

Can you remember any other funny Grassroots moments?

Figure 4 (right). Anybody out there? We often ask for articles, news, and contributions for the newsletter from the society. These personal contributions go a long way into making Grassroots feel in touch with the society, interesting, locally relevant and it helps in getting to know fellow members. Sometimes we get articles and comments (Thank you!), but they can be few and far between. Taking a look back it seems like this has been a challenge from the very first issue! This is of course expected, we live in a busy world, which has only gotten busier and any free moments at the end of the day are for yourself. Still, it is amusing to see this recurring theme, as we are always working on making the newsletter more engaging, useful, and practical for the society.

Carbon Credit Plan Aims to Save Kenyan Trees and Elephants - and Help Villagers

There are many predicted effects of climate change on southern Africa and the world. The question for the Society is, are we doing enough on climate change related research? One of the feature articles in this issue of Grassroots is about the life of the late Wangari Maathai – the first African female to win the Nobel Peace prize and the founder of the Green Belt Movement.

How to make Africa's 'Great Green Wall' a success

Global Soil Organic Carbon Map a powerful tool for sustainable agriculture, climate change mitigation

Crop leftovers can store huge amounts of carbon: insights from Uganda

Spekboom Challenge warning

South African wonder plant removes more CO₂ than the Amazon

The problem with trees-for-carbon

Phantom Forests: Why Ambitious Tree Planting Projects Are Failing

Programmes to encourage tree-planting have been hailed as a solution in the fight to reduce greenhouse gases and global warming. But new research casts doubt on the likely success of trading trees for carbon.*

Congress 47 was the first attempt by the Society to reduce the carbon footprint of congress delegates and empower to the community where the Congress was held. Initiatives taken to reduce our carbon emissions included planting trees donated by Western Cape Department of Agriculture at three public schools in Langebaan and Saldanha Bay.

I've always had a problem with young researchers, technicians or students who are afraid to grab opportunities to learn from the best or make mistakes. All the Professors, Doctors and Specialist Researchers in the Grassland Society started somewhere. To all the young researchers, technicians and students; grab this opportunity and share your results, problems from your projects and the future of your research with us.

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.

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.

identified. The flagships of the Society are the journal and the congress, while both the website and the Grassroots newsletter are invaluable to the profile of the Society. In order for Grassroots to be dynamic more contributions are required from members. The discussions also precipitated that the GSSA consists of a "friendly" group of people, which makes the Society accessible to everyone. We.

next year's Congress in Kimberley. Once again I would like to encourage young scientists and students to use Grassroots as an opportunity to become good scientists by submitting their articles for publication. Keep them coming.

If one looks at previous and current published papers in African Journal of Range and Forage Science, there are very few young scientist/researchers who contributed. This is probably because writing scientific papers is not easy for most of us. Let us use Grassroots as a platform to improve our writing skills. Remember a good piece of work is nothing until it is peer-reviewed and shared with the science community. The time is now. Let us enjoy this selection of articles, news featured in this issue of Grassroots. Thank you to those who contributed articles, keep them coming.

Your support for "Grass Roots" is essential if we are to publish this planned eight-page newsletter every quarter. If there is, for example, a farmers day, pastures or veld course to be held in your region which will be of interest to GSSA members and others, please inform Mrs Stuart or Graham accordingly, AND follow up with a brief summary of the farmers day you attended, AND preferably with a few photos with captions and names of those in the photo.

"Grass Roots" is YOUR newsletter and we need YOUR contributions! Please also provide names and addresses to Stuart Communications of organisations and libraries in your area who would also be interested in receiving the GSSA's "Grass roots" newsletter.

The dearth of response to Grass Roots is leading me to believe that nobody is reading it. Please send in your comments on articles published or your own material for publication.

This is the first issue of Grassroots for 2004, and it is filled to the brim with interesting articles. In fact, there was such a great response to our desperate plea for articles, we had to add an extra four pages to fit everything in. However, don't let this sudden wave of enthusiasm discourage you from submitting your own contributions May 2004 is still empty.

ous 2020. We have appreciated all the contributions readers have made to Grassroots and encourage you all to keep them coming in 2020 – remember you can now get a single SAC-NASP CPD point for any Grassroots article published!

We would like to encourage publication of journal articles with practical implications in Grassroots in a popular format. We also encourage publication of small parts of PhD or MSc theses (side studies) that have some practical relevance.

Figure 5 (left). Spoke too soon? The potential using natural ecosystems to mitigate climate change has appeared numerous times over the years. Funnily enough often first as good news, then as a critique of widescale projects. For congress 47, GSSA ran their own tree planting to offset the carbon footprint of congress, however these trees were planted in schools and not in grasslands! Similarly, very soon after reprinting an news article on spekboom called "South African wonder plant removes more CO₂ than the Amazon", another article "Spekboom Challenge warning" was shared to raise awareness of the negative consequences of planting spekboom in endangered ecosystems.

Share them with us.

If you look down in the grass today - what can we learn from grassland forbs?

Sindiso Nkuna¹ and Craig Morris^{1,2}

Current Addresses: ¹School of Life Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa ²Agricultural Research Council – Animal Production (ARC-AP)

At first glance, a grassland might seem like a simple expanse of, well, grass. But a closer look reveals a vibrant tapestry of wildflowers and other non-grassy plants, collectively known as forbs (Figure 1). These often-overlooked plants are far more than just pretty additions to the landscape; they are crucial for a healthy and functioning grassland ecosystem (Siebert et al. 2024). A recent study examining nearly sixty years of research on Southern African grasslands (1966–2023) through the journals of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa (GSSA) was undertaken for a special issue of *African Range and Forage Science*, celebrating the GSSA's 60th birthday (Nkuna and Morris 2025). It revealed a fascinating evolution in our understanding of these vital plants, highlighting both the progress made and the crucial questions that remain.

For decades, research in southern African grasslands primarily focused on grasses, largely due to their importance as forage for grazing animals. Forbs were often relegated to the background, mentioned in passing or grouped without much attention to the unique contributions of individual species and the overall ecology of a grassland. Early studies primarily considered forbs as a food source for livestock and wildlife. However, publications that included forbs increased steadily over time in the journals of the GSSA. This growth in research has deepened our understanding of the intricate workings of grasslands and savannas. It has also increased our appreciation for the diverse and essential roles that forbs play in these ecosystems. They are not merely aesthetic additions; they contribute significantly to biodiversity, enhancing the resilience of grasslands to disturbances such as drought, fire, and grazing pressure. Moreover, forbs provide a range of vital ecosystem services, including supporting pollinators, improving soil health, and even playing



Figure 1. Grassland forbs. Photo by Sindiso Nkuna

a role in carbon storage.

The way scientists study forbs has also undergone a significant transformation. Early research often employed a simplistic approach, lumping all forbs into a single category. This made it challenging to distinguish the specific ecological functions of individual species and how they responded to various environmental factors. More recent studies in the journals of the GSSA have adopted a more refined approach, recognising the importance of identifying individual forb species, measuring their unique traits, and examining their responses to different environmental conditions and management practices, such as controlled burns and grazing regimes. This increased focus has revealed some fascinating insights. For instance, forbs can be more sensitive to environmental changes than grasses, making them valuable indicators of the overall health of a grassland. They also play a crucial role in the diets of herbivores, particularly sheep and goats, providing essential nutrients and contributing to their overall health and productivity. Furthermore, the diversity of forbs within a grassland contributes significantly to the overall stability and resilience of the ecosystem, helping it to withstand and recover

from disturbances.

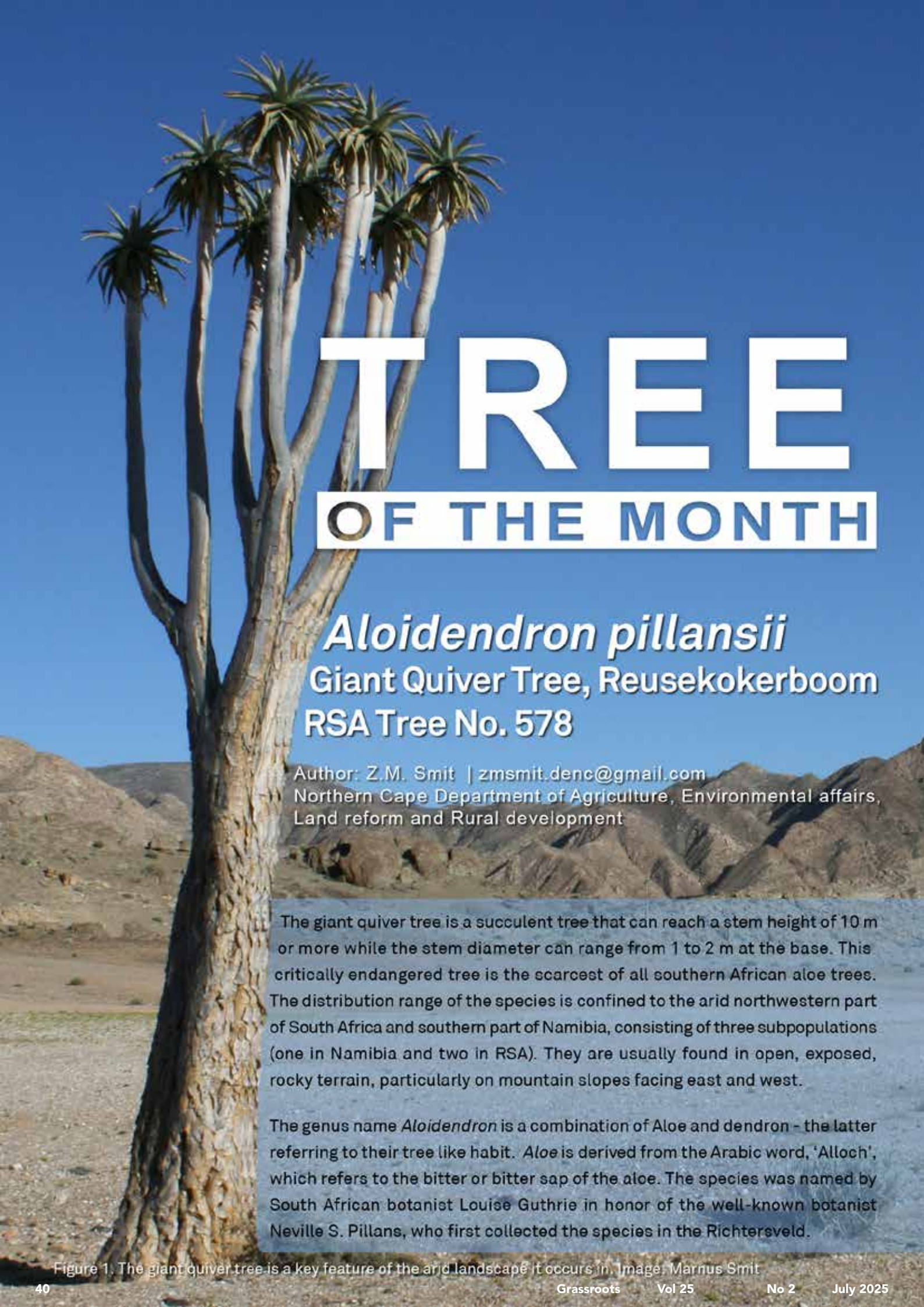
Despite the considerable progress made in understanding the importance of forbs, significant gaps in our knowledge still exist. One major challenge is the absence of a consistent definition of "forb". This inconsistency across research studies leads to confusion and makes it difficult to compare findings and synthesise knowledge. Researchers have used different categorisations, sometimes distinguishing forbs from herbs, legumes, or other plant groups, while others have used broader definitions, leading to a lack of clarity and consistency. Another key area requiring further investigation is the assessment of forb diversity. While most studies have focused on counting the number of different species present (taxonomic diversity), less attention has been paid to other crucial aspects of diversity, such as functional diversity (the variety of ecological roles that forbs play) and phylogenetic diversity (their evolutionary relationships). Understanding these different facets of diversity is essential for a more complete picture of the contribution of forbs to ecosystem functioning.

The future of forb research in southern

Africa, and indeed globally, lies in addressing these critical knowledge gaps. Scientists are advocating for the development and adoption of standardised definitions for forbs to ensure consistency and comparability across studies. We are also calling for a greater emphasis on exploring functional and phylogenetic diversity, moving beyond simply counting species to understand the complex roles forbs play in the ecosystem and their evolutionary history. Furthermore, a deeper understanding of how forbs respond to various disturbances, including grazing, fire, and drought, is crucial for developing effective management strategies. By paying closer attention to these often-overlooked plants, we can gain a more complete and nuanced understanding of grassland ecosystems. This knowledge will be essential for developing more effective strategies for the conservation and management of these valuable ecosystems, ensuring their long-term health and resilience in the face of ongoing environmental challenges. So, the next time you find yourself in a grassland, take a closer look at the forbs – they have a rich story to tell if only we take the time to look, ponder and measure.

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TREE

OF THE MONTH

Aloidendron pillansii Giant Quiver Tree, Reusekokerboom RSA Tree No. 578

Author: Z.M. Smit | zmsmit.denc@gmail.com
Northern Cape Department of Agriculture, Environmental affairs,
Land reform and Rural development

The giant quiver tree is a succulent tree that can reach a stem height of 10 m or more while the stem diameter can range from 1 to 2 m at the base. This critically endangered tree is the scarcest of all southern African aloe trees. The distribution range of the species is confined to the arid northwestern part of South Africa and southern part of Namibia, consisting of three subpopulations (one in Namibia and two in RSA). They are usually found in open, exposed, rocky terrain, particularly on mountain slopes facing east and west.

The genus name *Aloidendron* is a combination of *Aloe* and *dendron* - the latter referring to their tree like habit. *Aloe* is derived from the Arabic word, 'Alloch', which refers to the bitter or bitter sap of the aloe. The species was named by South African botanist Louise Guthrie in honor of the well-known botanist Neville S. Pillans, who first collected the species in the Richtersveld.

Figure 1. The giant quiver tree is a key feature of the arid landscape it occurs in. Image: Marnus Smit

Diagnostic features

- The tree branches dichotomously (forking into two equal branches) (Figure 1)
- The curved, lance-shaped leaves are arranged in a rosette. The edges have small white teeth (Figure 2)
- The inflorescence is branched while the flowers are yellow in colour and slightly swollen in the middle (Figure 3)
- The stem is covered with a white powdery substance which is particularly visible in younger specimens



Figure 2. Illustration of the leaves
Image: Elsabé Swart

The species is not known to be used for any medicinal purposes and is not associated with any cultural beliefs and traditions of the local Northern Cape people. Nevertheless, these plants are cherished for their longevity, resilience, and unique association with the Richtersveld. They are also highly valued for their unique growth form, making them popular choices for gardens and container planting. Their ability to thrive in arid and semi-arid environments, coupled with their rarity, has further increased their trading value.

Figure 3. The flowers are a distinct feature of the plant. Image: Elsabé Swart

Ecology and uses

The giant quiver tree is recognized as a keystone species, being one of the few perennial plants able to endure extreme drought and heat conditions in the region. It provides shelter, food, and moisture to many species. Its nectar attracts pollinators such as bees and birds, while its branches offer nesting sites and protection against predators. Mature plants contain large water reserves, which several species rely on during extended drought periods. Furthermore, the plant's considerable height creates structural complexity in the landscape, facilitating diverse animal behaviors like hunting and scavenging of raptors.



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KAROO PLANT

OF THE MONTH



Felicia filifolia

Persbergdraaibos

Author: Rudi Swart | Rudi.Swart@westerncape.gov.za
Western Cape Department of Agriculture, Veld Reserve N1, Worcester



Figure 1. Draaibos growing on a stony slope.

Persbergdraaibos, or draaibos for short, is a widespread shrub that occurs on a wide variety of habitats, though it is most common on dry hillsides and rocky slopes. It can be found throughout most of South Africa, from the Southern Cape throughout the Karoo and as far north as Mpumalanga and southern Namibia. Draaibos have daisy flowers that vary from light pink to mauve-blue and appear in early spring to mid-summer. The woody stems of this shrub are often twisted, hence the Afrikaans name, draaibos.

Diagnostic Features

- Erect, woody shrub with twisted, gnarled stems up to 1 m tall.
- Leaves are small, 10 - 15 mm long and 1 - 2 mm wide, light to dark green, borne in clusters that alternate along the stems.
- Leaves remain on the plants during drought.
- Flowerheads are about 20 mm in diameter, disc florets are yellow, ray florets light pink to mauve-blue and often curved downwards.
- The wind-dispersed seeds are 2 mm long, buff, and have a pappus of thin white hairs.

Ecological value

There are several subspecies of *Felicia filifolia*, some of which seem to be highly palatable, while others are moderately palatable to slightly unpalatable. Palatability may also differ between regions. Due to its widespread range, drought tolerance and being moderately to well utilised by game and livestock draaibos is a valuable fodder plant throughout the Karoo. It may, however, invade poorly managed grasslands. Since draaibos does not drop its leaves during drought it is particularly vulnerable to overgrazing during extended dry spells. Heavily utilised draaibos is an indication of poor veld management.



Figure 2. Pink ray florets and alternate leaf clusters of draaibos

Figure 3. Flowers vary from light pink to mauve

Figure 4. Draaibos flowers with downward curved ray florets visited by a Cape honey bee

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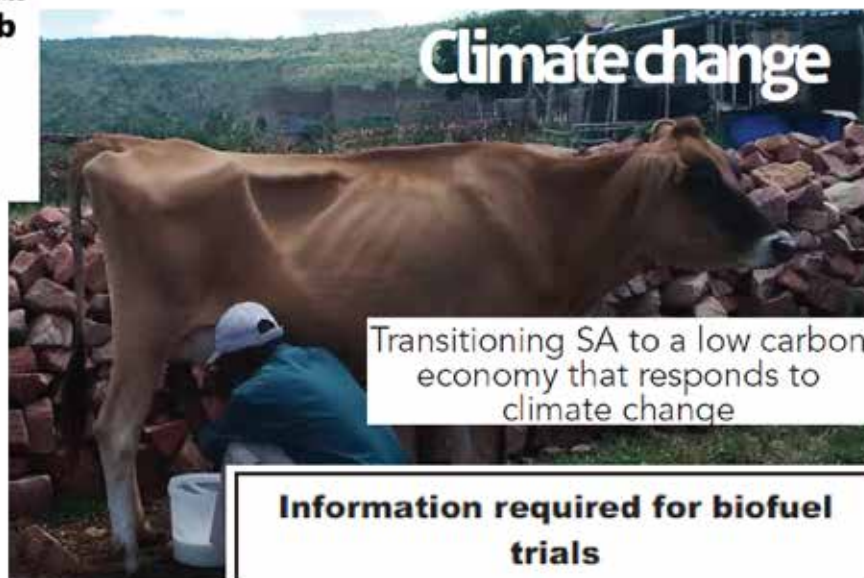
Some challenges to grasslands such as climate change, woody encroachment, and invasive species are perennial issues. These have developed over decades to centuries, and similarly take time to understand and address. Here is a small look back of their many 'pop-ups' in the newsletter over the years.

Climate change 'could disturb African savannahs'

Wagdy Sawahel
Source: SciDev.Net



Though voluntary markets have kept the value of a ton of sequestered carbon low – prices on the Chicago Climate Exchange have ranged from 90 cents to \$7.50 per metric ton, and Alberta prices have ranged from \$6.00 to \$12.00 – McCabe believes a free market in which buyers are motivated by regulatory emissions caps could reach \$65.00 per metric ton by 2020.



Climate change

Transitioning SA to a low carbon economy that responds to climate change

Information required for biofuel trials

I do not believe any informed scientist would dispute what I have laid out over the last five minutes. Yet, we repeatedly hear that agriculture will need to adapt to climate change while mainstream institutional scientists forge ahead promoting more of the very cropping and range management practices causing climate change.

Local Farmers to Feel the Effects of Climate Change

Climate change impacts on plants

The Effects of Climate Change on South Africa

CMP7 News Centre

How Africa will be affected by climate change

International Carbon Sequestration Meeting

Why is your profession so important? It is because the world (ordinary people, people working the land, political leaders developing policies etc.) looks to you for expert opinion on the greatest areas of the world's land surface - essentially two thirds of Earth's land area – and restoring that land mass is crucial to averting climate change, restoring fresh surface and ground water resources, feeding humanity and mitigating poverty, violence and war.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Soon every African Village will Know what the Weather may bring

Is spring happening too soon?

Join the SAEON Ndlovu Node in finding out

Figure 1: Africa's grasslands could be transformed if trees-for-carbon projects inappropriately target them for 'restoration' (Photo: Shutterstock)

"We are all aware that the changes in environment are directly affecting the agricultural sector, particularly subsistence farming."

Is 2015 The Year Soil Becomes Climate Change's Hottest Topic?

2016 Climate Trends Continue to Break Records



Bush encroachment in the Auas-Oanob Conservancy, Namibia:

One way to control bush encroachment... Just how strong is that fence?
Private game ranch near Musina.

Learning to use remote sensing to establish woody plant encroachment in the savanna biome

Grassroots: Newsletter of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa • May 2008 • Vol 8 • No 2

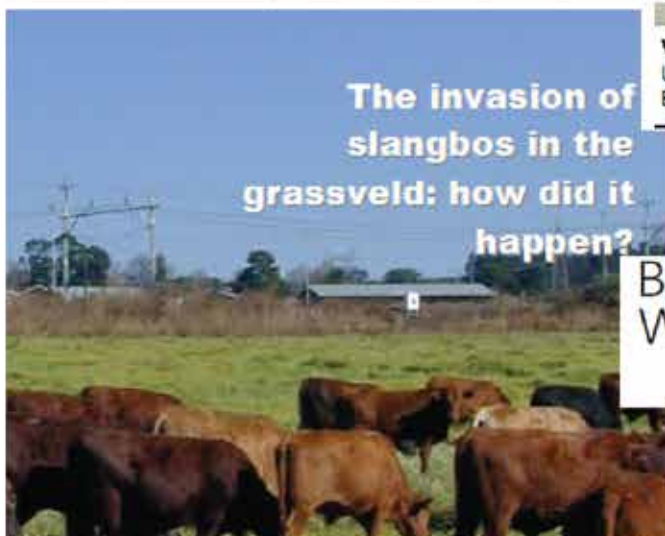
Plant Ecology

Increase of woody plants in savannah ecosystems



Vhalinavho P. Khavhagali and William J. Bond
University of Cape Town
Email: vkhavhagali@half.ncape.gov.za

The invasion of slangbos in the grassveld: how did it happen?



Bush encroachment in North West province. Is it a threat?

Happy Msiza and Khuliso Ravhuhali



Invasive species in Zimbabwe communal rangelands

Prosopis tree. Credit: Justin Du Toit

Woody plants on the march: trees and shrubs are encroaching across Africa

Grassroots: Newsletter of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa • February 2009 • Vol 9 • No 1

Editor: Ingrid Kiese

Bankruptbush (Slangbos) – A silent threat to grasslands?

Dietor Jordaan
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North West Province
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SAEON, CIRAD and SANParks Team up to Resist the Alien Invasion of the Kruger National Park

Bush Encroachment – Causes, Consequences and Cures



Invasive alien plants And their impact on wetlands

Amazing satellite photos show how alien trees are being wiped out in Cape Town

Jay Caboz

New tool to predict which plants will become invasive

How South Africa's second most invasive tree can be managed better

1954

South Africa's invasive species guzzle precious water and cost US\$450 million a year

Biological control of invasive tree species in South Africa

2010

Our Vision &



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ofSouthernAfrica



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Grassland Society of
Southern Africa



GrasslandSociety

Our vision

Advancing rangeland ecology and pasture management in Africa.

Our mission

Advancing ecology and management of African rangelands and pastures
in a changing world by:

- Publishing relevant high-quality research
- Providing a dynamic and professional annual congress at which scientifically rigorous papers are presented
 - Facilitating the translation of science into policy and practice
 - Developing human capacity to study and manage rangelands and pastures
- Providing a forum for trans-disciplinary debate, particularly between fields of production systems, biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services
- Assisting decision makers to understand the links between ecosystem services, global change, sustainability and human wellbeing

& Our Mission

Our objectives

Like any business, the GSSA needs to be guided by a clear vision and measurable goals. In order for the GSSA to remain relevant to its members and true to its core values, the Society regularly embarks on strategic planning processes to measure the achievement and relevance of the strategic objectives. The current strategic objectives include the following:

- To run successful Congresses and other satellite functions
 - To publish good quality research
- To revitalize planted pasture science within the Society
 - To support the Professional Affairs Committee
 - To increase capacity building
 - Growing the Society
- To continuously improve the Grassroots/Bulletin
 - To maintain administrative excellence

Our history

In 1965 a small committee, comprised of Prof John D Scott, Dr Pieter de V Booysen and Dr Trevor D Steinke, with Mr John Lintner as a co-opted member, was asked to investigate the matter and, if possible, convene a meeting of those interested in the formation of a Grassland Society.

The first meeting was held at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, in February 1966 and was attended by 96 delegates. At this meeting a number of papers were read by invitation and a draft constitution for the Society was discussed. The Congress has been held each year since 1966 in either January or July, sometimes in collaboration with other societies and organisations.

Until 1983, a full proceeding of each Congress was published. Thereafter saw the birth of the Journal of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa which was published quarterly until 1993 when it was reduced to three issues per year. The Journal is currently published under the name of the *African Journal of Range and Forage Science*.

Deadlines for

Newsletter of the Grassland Society of Southern Africa

grassroots

submissions

Issue 25.4: 1 August 2025

Issue 26.1: 1 November 2025

Issue 26.2: 15 January 2026

Issue 26.3: 1 March 2026

Please visit

www.grassland.org.za/publications/grassroots/submit-to-grassroots-now
for submission guidelines.

