

# The Spekboom



## The new look Bangor House

The renovations to Bangor House, which started towards the end of October 2012 are finally finished. After much banging, crashing, drilling, dust, noise, and more banging we have a new look department to be proud of. The old Honours lab has been converted to two staff offices, the down-stairs male toilets to a fab student tearoom, the old Lecture theatre to an Honours lab seating 23 students, and Music's old lecture room and Room 3 (the "Penthouse") have been converted to two Masters offices seating 15 students.



**Before**

**After**



**Honours lab**

**Students tearoom**



**New Masters offices**



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**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
*Where leaders learn*

### *Dates to remember*

- 18 April: World Heritage Day
- 22 April: Earth Day
- 11 May: World Migratory Bird Day
- 22 May: International Biological Diversity Day
- 31 May: World No Tobacco Day
- 5 June: World Environment Day
- 17 June: World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

### *Inside this issue:*

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| Thank you from Ntsika High<br>New WESSA trophy         | <b>2</b> |
| Ramesh Hari Krishnan: History<br>Matters               | <b>3</b> |
| Honours fieldtrip to Keiskam-<br>mahoeek               | <b>4</b> |
| Land Divided Conference, Cape<br>Town                  | <b>5</b> |
| Interviews with Georgina<br>Cundill and Patrick Curran | <b>6</b> |
| More photos of Lanata products                         | <b>7</b> |
| SAPECS Colloquim                                       | <b>8</b> |
| Dr Ruwanza   | <b>9</b> |



## A big thank you from Ntsika High School

Dear Gladman, Mike and all involved Ntsika has had a good year, and we were blessed in so many ways. Of course that does not mean we did not have our share of challenges, but in Grahamstown a challenge never has to be carried or fought alone. You, in particular, used your initiative, and made a tremendous difference in the lives of our learners and the landscape of the school. It is so easy to forget how important a beautiful environment is when one gets bogged down by problems, but your trees are a daily reminder of what is possible.

On behalf of the learners and staff of Ntsika I wish to thank you for your community-mindedness and your investment, not only in the environment, but in the people of our country. As you know only too well, working with our schools is not easy, for many reasons, but you persevere and remain enthusiastic!

### New WESSA trophy

This wonderful new WESSA trophy was bought with funds raised by our department at last years annual relay race. Just to remind everyone, the trophy is presented at their Science Expo and it is used for disadvantaged schools in Grahamstown. The aims of the award are to stimulate environmental awareness amongst school pupils, encourage them

Thank you for spending so many hours at Ntsika, for planting scores of trees and shrubs, but above all, thank you for opening the worlds of our learners and our teachers. We are very fortunate to be part of a community that cares so much for the children. We wish you a blessed holiday season with family and friends, and a very prosperous new year.

(a letter sent from the school in response to the tree planting we did last year).



to observe their world scientifically and encourage originality and ingenuity in solving problems.



## Ramesh Hari Krishnan: History Matters

Ramesh Kannan is a recent PhD graduate whom Charlie supervised. He did his research on invasive alien plant species and its spread and impacts on ecosystems. He is currently living in Bangalore, India. His study site was in The Western Ghats, India. A picturesque chain of mountains and harboring highly diversified fauna and flora, it is one of the important biodiversity hotspots in India. The richness of biodiversity and its spices attracted the traders from the West to explore the world.

His PhD work was focused on identifying the introductory pathways of *Lantana* introduction and its spread in India. He has also studied the socio-economic and ecological impacts of using *Lantana* by the local communities in Southern India. Ramesh's work on reconstructing the introduction and spread of *Lantana* at three spatial scales was well received and a paper

was recently published in *Biological Invasions*.

Ramesh is married and his wife works as an administrator at Porna learning centre. He also has two children, his daughter, Sridevi is 10 years old and his son, Madhaven is 7.

He has been working professionally with an Indigenous community called Soligas in the Western Ghats for more than 10 yrs. Soligas were hunters and gatherers but now hunting is banned in India so they have been settled and practicing agriculture. His job was to empower this community through alternative livelihoods. Ramesh trained them on making value added products from *Lantana camara* an invasive alien species introduced from South America by the British in 1807. Currently, more than 100 families are benefiting from *Lantana* craft in Southern India.



Ramesh's interests include reading, listening to Hindustani and Carnatic Music, travelling and photography.

**Examples of some of the products made from *Lantana***





## Honours fieldtrip to Cata Lodge, Keiskammahoek

On the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2013 the honours class embarked on the annual field trip. The three hour bus ride led the group to Cata village near Keiskammahoek. We stayed in the community run lodge which showed how CBNRM is being used in the area. The aim of the trip was not only to learn important field work techniques but also to bond with the group and get to know everyone better.

Prof Fred Ellery led the field trip and focused mainly on wetland ecology while Prof Charlie Shackleton managed to find his way to Cata with Alain du Plessis a new student from UCT. Prof Shackleton helped us to compare the use of forests as a fuelwood resource in different areas of the Cata valley. Valuable lessons and methods that many of us could use in our honours thesis during the year were learnt, interesting facts about classmates were also exchanged during this time.

A few of the highlights included seeing a group of 15 critically endangered Cape Parrots (except for Zoë). A group of us also embarked on the Amathola hiking trail hoping to find a wetland that Prof Ellery had pointed out on the Map. We hiked for three hours through indigenous forests before finding an incredible waterfall which signalled the end of our quest to find that elusive wetland. We also found a huge yellow wood tree which was predicted to be hundreds of years old this is very rare as this species has been logged extensively in South Africa.

Many hikes were done as a group through the indigenous forests and were always characterised by Nana's slipping and subsequent screaming. Each day a team was assigned to cook meals and surprisingly much effort and care was put into this task ensuring the group did not go hungry. The highlight though was the traditional dinner cooked by the community. Evenings were spent playing card games and sharades, on the last evening Tui got hold of the permanent markers and

everyone including Prof Ellery ended up with huge dots and a moustache on their faces. This field trip was a great success, special memories were made and new friendships were forged. The honours group would like to thank Prof Ellery, Monde and everyone at the lodge for making this field trip a great success.



## Land Divided Conference, Cape Town

The Land Divided Conference in Cape town took place at a time when South Africa is commemorating the 1913 Natives Land Act, a piece of legislation that resulted in land dispossession and obvious livelihood hardships for many black South Africans. The Act is considered a key reference point for South Africa's land reform programme that underscores the need for a land distribution programme to overturn past spatial, economic and political consequences of segregation and apartheid. Yet as South Africa approaches the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its transition to democracy, the country is still faced with challenges related to land-related issues including agricultural production, conservation and livelihoods.

Most agree that the land reform programme, a positive initiative if properly implemented, has not achieved its desired broader livelihood strategies and conservation goals. With opening remarks from the Minister of Rural Development and land Reform, Mr Gugile Nkwinti, this conference brought together policy makers, academics and practitioners to collectively ponder new ways of understanding the present and to inform existing and new land reform policy directions for the future.

The conference was organised around four themes: (a) The legacy of the 1913 Natives Land Act; (b) Land Reform and Agrarian Policy in Southern Africa; (c) The Multiple Meanings of Land - Identity, rights and belonging; and (d) Ecological Challenges-Land Questions and the Environment.



DES staff members and associates; Professors Charlie Shackleton, Sheona Shackleton and Paul Hebinck (Wageningen University), Dr Gladman Thondhlana and Ms Maura Talbot presented on a panel entitled Ecosystem Services, Livelihoods and Sustainability across the land tenure spectrum: Emphasising the importance of the 'environment'.

Our main contribution to the broader conference was highlighting that 'while ecosystem services are widely accepted as being essential for human well-being and livelihood sustainability, and critical for future resilience given the changing global environment, 'the land question' in South Africa often fails to fully appreciate the multiple uses and values of land and associated ecosystem services, including how such uses and values might assume varying significance across different social groupings.

Our panel provided a critical reflection on the multiple meanings of 'land' and the 'environment' drawing on several cases derived from different land and resource access and tenure arrangements: municipal commonages, redistributed farms, protected areas claimed under restitution, and communal areas. The panel also underscored the need for land reform initiatives to appreciate the importance of healthy ecosystems and sustained ecosystem service delivery for the livelihoods and adaptive capacity of poor communities and households in South Africa.

The many challenges in reconciling or trading-off different land uses, meanings and benefit streams, often at different scales and amongst different actors, whilst trying to ensure sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity conservation were highlighted.

The panel cut across three of the major conference themes: "ecological challenges", "multiple meanings of land" and "land and agrarian reform" demonstrating the often complex interactions and linkages between these. Our panel was somehow provocative and generated extremely rich discussions on the implications of a deeper appreciation of the links between ecosystem services and livelihoods for land and agrarian reform in South Africa.



## 5 minutes with Georgina Cundill

Dr Georgina Cundill joined our dept in January this year as Senior Lecturer. Georgina is interested in linked social-ecological systems, and much of her research focuses on the human dimensions of natural resource management. She believes that successful ecosystem conservation is as much about understanding and managing people and their behaviour, as it is about managing ecosystems.

Meggan Kelly interviewed her:

10 years ago I pictured myself being ... *An intrepid social science researcher deep in a village somewhere.*

G.P.S or map? *Whats GPS?*

Beach or mountains? *Both.*

Favourite website and why? (Academic or recreational) *Who reads websites?*

Favourite book: *Frontiers by Noel*

*Mostert.*

Grahamstown is... *a strange but surprisingly cool place.*

Describe yourself in 5 words... *independent, social, supportive, enthusiastic.*

Best perks of the new position? *Getting paid to do what I always wanted to do.*

I have a little crush on which celeb? *My husband is a rockstar.*

Currently reading? (Besides a journal) *Agatha Christi - for the first time ever, and it is surprisingly fun.*

Secret skill? (eg: cooking, judo) *definitely not cooking. I'm a pretty good mom (provided you dont consider cooking an essential part of parenthood).*

A place I would love to visit? *Russia to*



*China by train.*

In another life I would be... *a writer (of things people actually read, rather than academic papers).*

I like my coffee...*with milk and no sugar.*



## Patrick Curran: A year with Camco

I left the Department and Rhodes at the end of 2011 with an MSc to move up to Johannesburg and begin work as an

Analyst with Camco Clean Energy. Camco Clean Energy is a leading global climate change and sustainable development company with offices in China, USA, UK, Kenya, Tanzania, South East Asia and South Africa. The South African office has a particular focus on advisory work in the fields of climate change and renewable energy policy development, rural energy access and carbon management.

In the year that I have been with Camco Clean Energy I have been exposed to working with national and provincial governments, private sector companies and international donors. I have been continuously challenged to inno-

vate, develop and learn in order to address the needs of our clients and engage with a wide variety of stakeholders. My day-to-day activities entail conducting research to support the successful completion of projects, engaging with stakeholders and completing reports and developing proposals in response to requests and tenders.

Projects I have been involved in range from developing feed-in-tariffs and renewable energy rules and standards for various southern African countries, to assisting large South African companies to understand their carbon emissions and develop strategies to effectively monitor and manage their emis-

## Patrick Curran: A year with Camco contd....

sions and helping to develop projects that participate in global carbon markets.

While international climate change processes have all but stalled and global carbon markets have faltered creating confusion and inaction, there are some encouraging developments, in particular at individual country levels. South Africa is no exception and there have been some exciting developments that are moving the country towards a 'green' growth path. Two developments in particular that have signalled this is the announcement of the carbon tax by National Treasury (to

be implemented on the 1st January 2015) and the successful completion of two rounds of the renewable energy procurement programme (REIPPP). These have focussed the attention of both public and private sector actors to change business as usual practices. A lot more still however needs to be achieved to decouple economic growth from carbon emissions and ultimately adapt to the effects of climate change. There are however many encouraging signs that the country and businesses are moving in the right direction and starting to come to grips with many of these issues.

In the last year it has been extremely exciting and challenging being involved as both governments and the private sector start to understand the realities of climate change and institute policies to encourage investment in renewable energy and climate change mitigation and adaptation. During my short time at Camco I have been fortunate enough to be involved in helping to create the enabling policy environment to effectively address these challenges, encourage investment and contribute to climate conscious development.

## More examples of products made from Lantana



**Toys made from Lantana**





## SAPECS Colloquium, Kirstenbosch Gardens, Cape Town

SAPECS is a programme adapted from PECS (Programme on Ecosystem Change and Society), an initiative within the ICSU global change programmes. The vision of PECS is a world where human actions have transformed to achieve sustainable stewardship of social-ecological systems. SAPECS looks to understand how ecosystem services can be used to build resilience for poverty alleviation and socio-economic development under conditions of rapid change and increasing vulnerability.

The SAPECS colloquium took place 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> of April 2013 at the Kirstenbosch Gardens in Cape Town. Approximately 90 academics from different institutions in and around South Africa, as well as Sweden, Australia and Canada attended the meeting. Presentations of completed, ongoing and proposed research were given by academics from multiple disciplines at different levels of study.

Keynote speakers at the conference included Prof. Brian Walker, Dr. Katrina Brown, Dr. Marja Spierenburg, Prof. Garry Peterson, Dr. Dirk Roux and Dr. Deon Nel. The colloquium was structured around the six SAPECS research themes:

1. links between ecosystem services and human well-being, with an emphasis on poverty and inequality;
2. how governance and management institutions and practices affect social-ecological systems, including the capacity for learning and transformation;
3. potential traps and transformations in the structure and dynamics of social-ecological systems, and the consequences of different

trajectories of development for human well-being;

4. cross-scale connections that impact the structure and dynamics of social-ecological systems at different scales;
5. transdisciplinary modes of collaborative research and training;
6. and mainstreaming and communication of social-ecological systems.

The keynote speakers identified key research areas within the different themes of the colloquium on which SAPECS should focus going forward. Professor Brian Walker of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) stated that leadership, trust and networks are of paramount importance in issues determining resilience.

South Africa was recognized as one of the world leaders in ecosystems services in a diverse environment and society by Professor Garry Peterson and for this reason suggested that more work could be done in identifying the benefits of different types of methods and mapping across different schools of knowledge.

The vibrancy and enthusiasm of young researchers impressed Dr Kate Brown, and she encouraged them to start focusing on addressing the structural features that keep people poor in Africa. Finally, the importance of

transdisciplinary collaboration in tackling socio-ecological issues was emphasized by Dr Marja Spierenburg.



From left to right: Prof. B. Walker, Dr. M. Spierenburg, Prof. G. Peterson, Dr. K. Brown



Walk in the Kirstenbosch Gardens with Rhodes students and other academics



## Dr Sheunesu Ruwanza: new postdoc in the dept

I am a young conservation ecologist whose research focus is on restoration ecology and management of ecological processes that shape the world. Having passed Advanced level (equivalent of matric in South Africa) I joined the University of Zimbabwe to study for my first degree. Because of my Geography background at Advanced level I took geography and environmental science as my main courses and graduated with Honours in Geography in 2003.

In 2004 I started my MSc in Environmental Policy and Planning and completed it in 2005. I joined Chinhoyi University as a junior lecturer before registering for MSc in Conservation Ecology with Stellenbosch University in 2007. My project looked at restoration of old fields and I was based at SANBI in Cape Town. Upon completion, I joined the Centre for Invasion Biology (CIB) at Stellenbosch University for my PhD in Botany in 2010. My PhD looked at restoration of alien invaded riparian systems: the case the Berg River in Western Cape, South Africa.

### Why Environmental Science

My choice to study environmental science was divine because I started loving it when I was young. I am fascinated by how the earth's natural and social systems sustain life. However,

because of changes to nature mostly caused by humans, I desire to make a difference and find a way to preserve this world. I believe that management of ecosystems is a process that aims to conserve ecological services and restore natural resources at the same time meeting the social, economic, political and cultural needs of

current and future generations.

My career started in environmental management, but later evolved to conservation and restoration ecology. Today I am bringing the two pillars of my career together and this post-doctoral position at Rhodes presents me with such an opportunity. Meeting Dr Amon Murwira and Professor Daniel Tevera at University of Zimbabwe as well as Dr Charles Musil, Professor Karen Esler, Dr Mirijam Gaertner and Professor David Richardson in South Africa gave me the passion to continue along this path.

### Life outside Environmental Science

I enjoy being with my wife (Juliet Vongai Ruwanza ne Makumbiza) whom I married in August 2010 and daughter (Christelle Takudzwa Ruwanza) who is 14 months old. The two complete me



and we are a Christian family that believes in God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, therefore church takes the whole of my Sunday. Saturdays are for family but afternoons are reserved for soccer.

Television, music and movies keep me busy and I can't do without any of these. When it comes to watching television my wife thinks I am feminine because of my favorite TV programmes; Scandal, Rhythm City, Desperate House Wives, Pretty little liars, Revenge, Royal Pains and other soapies associated with young girls. Growing up in Zimbabwe gave me the courage to approach life with hope that I will achieve everything I want regardless of how difficult things are.



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