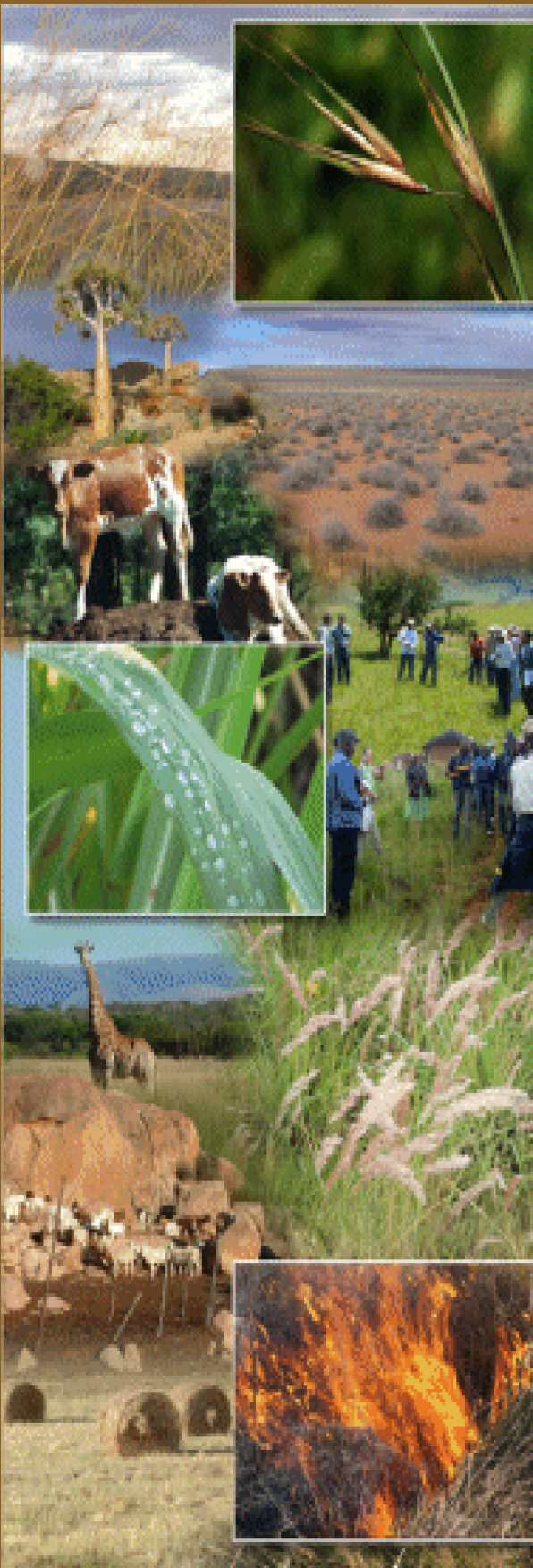


# GRASSLAND SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA ANNUAL REPORT

2006/07



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

The Grassland Society of South Africa (GSSA) has been active since 1966, and the activities of the past year are clearly presented in the presidential message. The vision of the Society is to advance rangeland ecology and pasture management in Africa. The Society aims to create a dynamic and inclusive forum for scientists and practitioners in rangeland ecology and pasture management and to champion the sustainable use of rangelands and pastures for the benefit of the people and the environment. It strives to achieve its mission by organising and annual congress where information and knowledge is shared amongst scientists from a wide range of disciplines, as well as between scientists and practitioners. The Society further encourages the scientific and sustainable use of rangelands by awarding the farmer that performs best in the application and practise of scientific and conservation principles, in the region where the congress is held.

The publication of a high quality and relevant scientific journal is another approach that the Society uses to achieve its objectives. The scientific journal is the foremost African rangeland journal and is among the 20 South African journals with the highest impact. Publications cover rangeland and pasture science topics from all parts of Africa. The quarterly newsletter (Grassroots) forms the link between the scientists and the practitioners, where new scientific findings are presented in a practical and understandable way.

The Society also strives to develop young scientists by rewarding outstanding academic achievements at tertiary institutions in the field of range and forage science, as well as younger students at the Young Scientist Expo.

The activities of the Society are determined by a strategic plan that is updated by the Council members every year and is revised in totality every fourth year. The Society has a professional register as well as an expertise database that is available on the GSSA website.

The future activities of the Society will be focussed on improving the impact and quality of the scientific journal, upgrading the newsletter, improving the support to the professional members, and increasing the number of symposia that are aimed at practitioners at the annual congress. We also hope to make the GSSA website a tool where members can easily and efficiently access and communicate with a network of range and forage scientist with similar interests and challenges.

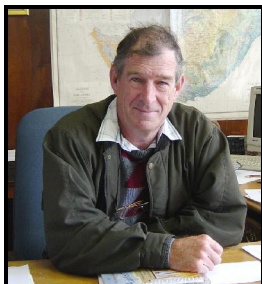
## CONTENTS

---

<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Message from the President .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>GSSA Council Members .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>GSSA Vision and Mission Statement .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>History of the GSSA .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Strategic Plan .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>GSSA Activities 2006/07 .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Congress 42 2007 .....	7
Publications .....	9
GSSA Website .....	10
Public Relations .....	10
Professional Affairs .....	11
GSSA Expertise Database .....	11
<b>Financial report .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Way forward .....</b>	<b>11</b>

## MESSAGE FROM THE GSSA PRESIDENT

---



It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as President of the GSSA for the past year. We are going through exciting times repositioning the Society to cope with the rapid socio-economic and political changes that have occurred over the past decade.

To focus briefly on our successes over the past year:

- Our administration has never been stronger
- Our financial difficulties are being addressed and we are now in a process of rebuilding the financial viability of the Society
- We have a well managed and high quality, internationally recognised Journal
- Through our newsletter and website we update members on relevant issues within our discipline and provide members the opportunity to exchange views on pertinent issues
- The GSSA Trust has been re-vitalised
- The Professional Affairs Committee is now at full strength and in a better position to support our Professional members and attend to the Society's response protocol
- Council is guided by a structured Strategic Plan
- We have re-structured the format of our Congresses so that we accommodate special sessions, workshops and symposia organised by members and interest groups.

Over the past 20 years issues involving rangeland ecology and management have dominated our congresses and publications. We have been very successful in providing a forum for scientists, technical advisors and managers in rangeland and wildlife conservation to present and discuss their work among their peers. Over the past decades we seem to have built an extensive knowledge-base on aspects such as fire and its role in vegetation management, the response of species and communities to defoliation, restoration techniques, plant/animal interactions, rangelands and people and so on.

This knowledge-base continues to grow and is being used by conservation agencies to manage conserved areas and is often incorporated into legislation. From this perspective the Society is sound and vibrant, and can look forward to an exciting future.

However, the Society must also strive to remain effective within the major changes that have occurred in the socio-political and economic environment in South Africa in particular and southern Africa in general. These changes have had a massive impact on the role that Society members have traditionally played in developing understanding of rangeland function and process, pasture management and forage production, and the development of systems that support the sustainable use of resources.

In my opinion the current "soundness and vibrancy" of the Society is a function of the increasing dominance of rangeland ecology that has emerged over the past 15 to 20 years. Unfortunately there has been a parallel decline in the contribution to the Society's activities by traditional grassland scientists, pasture agronomists and practitioners. This is not to say that I believe there is anything wrong with having an enthusiastic, strong and active membership that is involved in all aspects of rangeland ecology. On the contrary, the Society is has come through difficult times with flying colours because of the enthusiastic contribution of these members. What we need, however, is to provide the framework within which we can achieve those parts of the Vision and Mission that "advance pasture management", provides a "forum for scientists and practitioners in pasture management" and "champions sustainable use of pastures ...".

We have made a start. The dairy symposium and post-congress dairy tour organised for our 2007 Congress in Grahamstown was a great success. We are in the process of approaching the pasture and forage industry and practitioners regarding their need for a forum that would advance all aspects of pasture management in Africa. The challenge for the Society in general, and Council in particular, is to maintain the momentum.

Mark Hardy  
GSSA President (2006/07)

GSSA COUNCIL MEMBERS 2006/07

---

**President**

Dr Mark Hardy  
Western Cape Department of Agriculture  
[markh@elsenburg.com](mailto:markh@elsenburg.com)

**Immediate Past President**

Ms Annelene Swanepoel  
Western Cape Department of Agriculture  
[annelenes@elsenburg.com](mailto:annelenes@elsenburg.com)

**Vice President**

Dr Rina Grant  
SANPARKS – Kruger National Park  
[rinag@sanparks.org](mailto:rinag@sanparks.org)

**Honorary Secretary**

Ms Loraine van den Berg  
Grootfontein Agricultural Development  
Institute  
[LorraineVDB@nda.agric.za](mailto:LorraineVDB@nda.agric.za)

**Honorary Treasurer**

Mr Justin du Toit  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
[dutoitjco@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:dutoitjco@ukzn.ac.za)

**Scientific Editor**

Prof Peter Scogings  
University of Zululand  
[pscoging@pan.uzulu.ac.za](mailto:pscoging@pan.uzulu.ac.za)

**Bulletin 'Grass Roots' Editor**

Mr Alan Short  
KwaZulu-Natal Department of Agriculture  
and Environment and Affairs  
[alan.short@dae.kzntl.gov.za](mailto:alan.short@dae.kzntl.gov.za)

**Personal Relations Officer**

Dr Luthando Dziba  
Agricultural Research Council  
[ldziba@arc.agric.za](mailto:ldziba@arc.agric.za)

**Additional Member(s)**

Dr Susi Vetter  
Rhodes University  
[s.vetter@ru.ac.za](mailto:s.vetter@ru.ac.za)

**Additional Member(s)**

Dr Khanyisile Mbatha  
University of Zululand  
[mbathakr@yahoo.com](mailto:mbathakr@yahoo.com)

**Additional Member(s)**

Dr Jorrie Jordaan  
Limpopo Department of Agriculture  
[jordaanj@agricho.norprov.gov.za](mailto:jordaanj@agricho.norprov.gov.za)

**Chairperson of Trust**

Prof Winston Trollope  
University of Fort Hare  
[winfire@procomp.co.za](mailto:winfire@procomp.co.za)

**Chairperson of Professional Affairs  
Committee**

Prof Leslie Brown  
University of South Africa  
[lrbrown@unisa.ac.za](mailto:lrbrown@unisa.ac.za)

**Administrator**

Ms Freyni du Toit  
[admin@gssa.co.za](mailto:admin@gssa.co.za)

The GSSA is involved and concerned with the science and practice of range and pasture management. This broad field involves primarily the use and conservation of natural resources. It encompasses applied fields such as livestock production, wildlife management, nature conservation, water catchment management and range and mine-dump rehabilitation. The disciplines include amongst others, ecology, botany zoology, range and pasture science, animal science, soil science and genetics.

The GSSA has a multi-disciplinary base and promotes interaction between environmental practitioners, scientists and students who are employed by a wide range of institutions including government, universities, development, agricultural, wildlife and related agencies.

## GSSA VISSION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

---

### Vision

Advancing rangeland ecology and pasture management in Africa

### Mission

- To be a dynamic and inclusive forum for the benefit of scientists and practitioners in rangeland ecology and pasture management.
- To champion the sustainable use of rangelands and pastures for the benefit for people and the environment.

## What are our objectives?

- Promote and advance the science and technology of rangeland and pasture production.
- Create awareness and opportunities in southern Africa for range and pasture scientists, technologists and farmers to confer and exchange ideas.
- Collect and disseminate knowledge and information in the field of rangeland science through congresses and publications
- Encourage liaison with other societies having similar or common interests both nationally and internationally.
- Promote the equitable, efficient and sustainable use of natural resources.

## HISTORY OF THE GSSA

---

The Society held its Inaugural Meeting and Congress in 1966 at the then University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg. There were 96 delegates, which included Professor Scott, Neil Tainton, Peter Edwards, Pete Booyesen, Pierre Theron, Rob Drewes, Derek Scotney and Aubrey Venter. The Congress has been held each year since 1966 in either January or July, sometimes in collaboration with other societies and organisations, including the International Rangeland Congress in 2004, the South African Society of Animal Scientists, the South African Weed Science Society and the Thicket Forum.

Until 1983, a full proceedings 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. Since its inception publication of work from the Proceedings onwards has been peer-reviewed.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

---

All GSSA activities are planned and executed in accordance with the Strategic Plan. A mini review of the Strategic Plan was conducted in April 2007 and a full review is planned for 2008. The strategic objectives of the GSSA include the following:

- To inform key role players in the environmental field of the GSSA.
- To ensure that Congress adopts a relevant theme each year through which it can promote the Society to a broader audience.
- To promote GSSA Congresses by ensuring that Congress announcements reach the broadest possible audience.
- To ensure the translation of technical and scientific information into articles accessible to the public.
- Promote the discipline through providing links from the discipline to relevant radio and television media.
- Develop a protocol to promote the Professional Affairs Committee (PAC) to the broader environment.
- Promote partnerships between the GSSA, SADC and researchers in other African countries.
- To get ISI rating for the Journal.
- Maintain current contact with NISC.

- Implement the advertising/advertorial strategy for Grassroots.
- Determine the portfolio of additional members.
- To ensure that key administrative responsibilities are executed timeously and effectively (e.g. maintenance of membership lists, collection of subscriptions, maintenance of records such as award winners, etc.)
- Ensure that if constitutional changes are necessary they are tabled at the April meeting for timeous circulation to the membership.
- Review the strategic plan at regular intervals.

## GSSA ACTIVITIES 2006/07

---

The membership of the GSSA is growing, we are financially sound and well managed, we have a high quality scientific Journal and popular newsletter. A highlight for members is a well-organized and vibrant Annual Congress.

### Congress 42 2007

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Congress of the GSSA was held jointly with the 4<sup>rd</sup> Annual Thicket Forum Meeting at Rhodes University, Grahamstown from 16 to 20 July 2007. The joint meeting turned out to be a resounding success, thanks to a joint organizing committee which worked closely together from the beginning and also the very similar interests of the two groups.

The Congress was attended by a total of 247 delegates. Over 80 platform papers and nearly 50 posters were presented, with posters being given a prominent position and enough time for short presentations.

The Congress was off to a stimulating and thought-provoking start with an opening address by the Vice Chancellor of Rhodes University, followed by three topical keynote addresses by international speakers.

Saleem Badat, the Rhodes VC, encouraged the Grassland Society to simultaneously tackle the biological, economic and social aspects of rangeland research, policy and development, and not to be afraid to tackle uncharted territory. Richard Eckard from the University of Melbourne spoke on the effect of intensive grazing systems on greenhouse gas emissions and some recent research efforts to understand and mitigate these. Urs Kreuter from Texas A&M University highlighted the need for integrating the human dimension in rangeland research and management and echoed the sentiments expressed in the opening address.

Fred Provenza from Utah State University concluded the opening session with a talk about the links between animal genetics, learning, feeding behaviour and the impact of this on rangeland vegetation, highlighting the opportunities an understanding of these presents for innovative and low-cost range management.

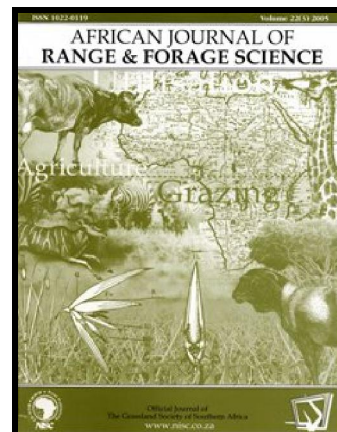
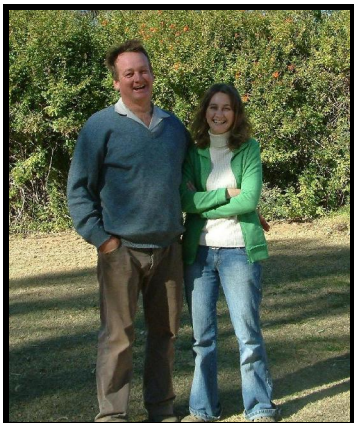
Fred's address set the scene for a symposium on linking plant-herbivore interactions theory to rangeland management. This was the first of several symposia and special sessions – others included papers and a discussion session around resource management issues facing emerging and communal farmers and a very successful day-long symposium on planted pastures and dairy farming.

The Thicket Forum held a workshop around issues in the game industry, particularly the controversial topic of the impact and role of extralimital game species, and the National Range and Forage Working Group led a workshop around a new national rangeland monitoring programme.

The crowd had a distinctly international flavour with delegates from Australia, the UK, the USA, Uganda, the Netherlands and Mozambique. A group of students from Texas A&M University attended the first day of the Congress.

Three fully subscribed post-Congress tours were held and by all accounts stimulating and much enjoyed. Winston Trollope and Wayne Vos took a group of 40 delegates to two private game reserves where they heard about the challenges and experiences involved in switching from livestock farming to wildlife conservation while keeping an eye open for the plentiful wildlife. Gillian McGregor took a tour to witness the rehabilitation of old pineapple lands to healthy pastures under the management of the Yendalls, local farmers who have been keeping Nguni cattle. Pieter Conradie organised a tour to complement the dairy and pastures symposium which highlighted different dairy enterprises in the area.

To encourage scientific and sustainable use of resources of rangelands the Peter Edwards award is awarded annually to a farmer in the area where the congress is held who proves to be the best in the sound application and practice of the principles of range and forage science and conservation. During Congress 42 2007 the Peter Edwards Award was awarded to Mr. Trenly Spence of Kriegerskraal, Graaff Reinet.



The Society has recognized the need to encourage and advise emergent farmers on the sustainable and scientific use of their resources. To achieve this, the GSSA are developing a new award and we hope to have all the criteria and procedures for this award in place by 2009.

The 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Congress of the GSSA will be held at Badplaas Aventura in the southern Mpumalanga from 21 – 25 July 2008. The main theme for Congress 43 will be – Implementing new approaches to range and pasture management.

## Publications

### *African Journal of Range and Forage Science (AJRFS)*

The Society promotes scientific communication with its journal, i.e. The *African Journal of Range and Forage Science* (AJRFS). It is the foremost African rangeland journal, devoted to understanding the processes affecting natural rangeland. It is dedicated to promoting the understanding of processes that affect forage production of rangelands and pastures in Africa.

Articles deal with plant and animal interactions (including both domestic and wild herbivores), rangeland condition assessment, forage production and human impacts on rangeland. The Journal includes peer-reviewed scientific papers, invited reviews, research notes and book reviews dealing with topics related to range and forage science which contribute to the promotion of the discipline in the African context. The *African Journal of Range & Forage Science* serves as a reference source for those interested in managing the valuable agricultural resources of Africa.

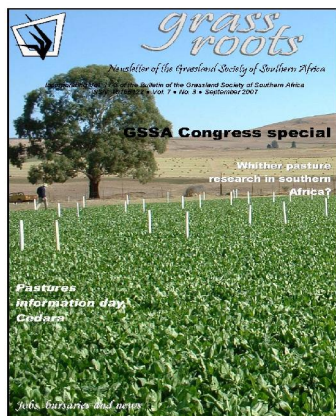
The journal full text is published on <http://www.ingentaselect.com>

The Editorial Board of the AJRFS consists of 25 members, which includes the Scientific Editor, the Administrative Editor, Assistant Editors and Advisory Editors.

Although 45 manuscripts were received in 2006, only 18 were published in Volume 23. To date 14 manuscripts have been received for 2007/08.

According to the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) report published in 2006, the AJRFS was among 20 journals published in South Africa with the highest impact.

## Grassroots



*Grassroots*, the newsletter of the Society, is the mouthpiece of the Society and contains information regarding important upcoming events, notices, news, as well as scientific articles. The practical application of scientific knowledge is as important to the Society as the promotion of scientific communication. *Grassroots* is therefore aimed at distributing new scientific knowledge to the broader rangeland and pasture community. We are using the *Grassroots* as a means to broaden the reach of the GSSA, by adding senior managers in relevant government departments to the *Grassroots* mailing list.

In 2006 four issues of the *Grassroots* have been produced. The quality of printing has improved in 2007 and the latest issue boasts a new glossy cover. In 2007/08 the Society will look into the possibility of printing the *Grassroots* cover in colour.

Previous issues of the *Grassroots* are available on the GSSA website and an application has been made to Google Scholar to ensure that *Grassroots* is accessible to a wide audience through the web.

## GSSA Website

The official website of the GSSA ([www.grassland.org.za](http://www.grassland.org.za)) is an active interface for Society members, which can be used to find other professionals in similar fields of field of interest, job opportunities and abstracts of previous congresses. The website also allows online registration for congresses and submission of abstracts.

In 2006/07 the GSSA website has shown a positive growth with a large number of people visiting the homepage, members' page and upcoming events page.

All relevant information for Congress 42 2007 was given on the website and registration for Congress 42 was also successfully carried out via the congress webpage.

## Public Relations

Because of the emphasis that the Society places on the development of young scientists in the field of range and forage management, this is a very important activity. This is done by rewarding outstanding academic achievements by students in the field of range and pasture science on an annual basis. In 2006/07 five students from various tertiary institutions have received the GSSA student award.

To encourage students to take up rangeland courses at tertiary institutions, awards are also given at the Young Scientist Expo. The Society presents a GSSA Expo award to the candidate who excels in the field of range and forage science. The 2006 winner of the GSSA Expo award also had the opportunity to attend Congress 42 2007.

This year the Society nominated Professor Sue Milton for the Shoprite/Checkers Woman of the Year Award and she was chosen as one of the three finalists in the Science category.

The GSSA has been linked with various other organizations, institutions and interested parties. Banners, fliers and posters, containing information about the Society, have been developed and distributed at various occasions.

The GSSA was also promoted through television as one of our members were interviewed on Ulimo (a program targeting small-scale farmers and communities), as well as the fact that AgriTV attended Congress and covered part of the Dairy Symposium.

### **Professional Affairs**

The Professional Register of the GSSA currently has a total of 61 members. During 2006/07 four new professional members have been appointed to serve on the Professional Affairs Committee (PAC), and this Committee has streamlined various PAC activities and procedures.

### **GSSA Expertise Database**

A GSSA Expertise Database has been developed and tested with the professional members of the Society and a copy of the database has been made available on the GSSA Website.

## **FINANCIAL REPORT**

---

The financial status of the GSSA has improved over the last two years following improvements in the administration of the

Society and changes to the approach to financial planning. The main expenses of the Society are Journal publication costs and administration costs, while almost all of the Society's income derives from membership fees and the annual congress.

In 2006/07 the GSSA was registered as a non-profit organization, which holds various benefits for the Society. The Society has also become registered for VAT.

If the current trend continues, the Society looks set to soon be in a position to make financial contributions to Trust.

### **WAY FORWARD**

---

The future activities of the Society will be focussed on improving the impact and quality of the journal articles that are published and cited. We also hope to upgrade Grassroots by improving the quality of the paper and possibly including some colour pages. We also intend to increase the number of articles published.

To improve the support to the professional members we are working on improving the networking and information tools available on the Society's website. As far as the congress is concerned we would like to increase the number of symposia that are aimed at practitioners. We also hope to make the GSSA website a tool where members can easily and efficiently access and communicate with a network of range and forage scientists with similar interests and challenges.