

NEWS

March 2006



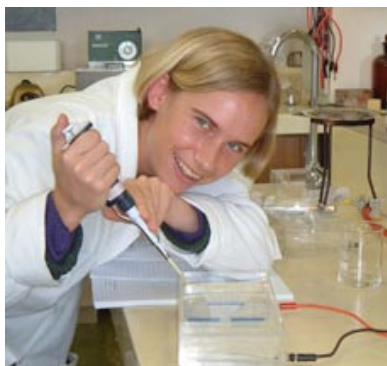
Our SAWISE treasurer, Prof. Karen Esler, to be the first woman President of SAAB (SA Association of Botanists)

Karen Esler was recently elected Vice-President of SAAB (SA Association of Botanists), which means that in 2007 she will become the first woman President of the Society since its inception 32 years ago. Karen is based at the University of Stellenbosch in the Department of Conservation Ecology. "I hope to strengthen the role that SAAB plays in the training of researchers in Botanical fields, and to raise the profile and interest in our southern African botanical riches. This is the only way to ensure the conservation of our unique biological heritage," she explained.



2006 ANGUS Scholarship Awardee: Kathryn Lannas

Our Scholarship Committee, Chaired by Prof. Jennifer Thomson, was thrilled with the calibre of applicants we had this year. It was a tough decision, but eventually the committee decided that our prestigious honours level scholarship should be awarded to Kathryn Lannas. Kathryn is registered at UCT for BSc Honours in Botany, with a focus on ecology. She is currently in the Kruger National Park on a programme called Organisation for Tropical Studies which explores savanna ecology, community involvement in conservation and resource use and conservation management. For her honours research Kathryn is "hoping to do a study on a wetland in the Western Cape, looking at the plants and invertebrates found in it and the interactions between them. I am interested in conservation, ecosystem functioning and the relationship between rural communities and environmental management."



News from our 2004 Angus Scholarship Awardee:

Melinda Griffiths completed her honours degree in cell biology at the University Of Cape Town with a first class pass. She says, "It was a year of hard work, meeting fantastic people, late nights in the lab, struggles to write up project reports, scary presentations, good times and an amazing expanse of my scientific horizons".

Her main research project involved testing an aloe extract, called aloesin, for use as a skin-lightener in treating hyperpigmentation disorders. Melinda grew cultures of skin cells and tested them to assess the effect aloesin had on their growth, viability, pigmentation and gene and protein expression. From her work, it seems that aloesin does inhibit melanin formation, by inhibiting the main enzyme in the production pathway. Most importantly, aloesin does not affect the growth or survival of normal skin cells, so it appears to be safe for use in skin-lightening creams.

Melinda is currently registered for MPhil in BioScience Enterprise at the University of Cambridge. This cross-disciplinary course combines key science and business courses for students who want to become entrepreneurs in the bioscience field.

Welcoming and Networking Function: 29 March 2006

We are delighted to announce that Prof. Kathy Driver, the new Dean of the Faculty of Science at UCT will be the Guest Speaker at our upcoming Welcoming and Networking event. This will be held at Welgelegen (UCT) at 4:30pm. This will be a wonderful opportunity to meet other SAWISE members, and to get to meet Prof. Driver in an informal relaxed setting. It is important that you please rsvp lbezuidenhout@capeheart.uct.ac.za by the 24th March.

General

Please feel free to also send us “news’ to include in our SAWISE newsletter.

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