

THE 38TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF BOTANISTS (SAAB)

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Delegates attending the 38th annual conference of the South African Association of Botanists (SAAB) in 2012.

In January 2012, the Department of Plant Science at the University of Pretoria (UP) hosted the 38th annual conference of the South African Association of Botanists (SAAB). The theme of the conference was “Plants and Society”. The conference was attended by more than 260 delegates that represented various national as well as international academic and research institutions.

The conference coincided with the inauguration of the new Plant Sciences Complex at the Hatfield campus of UP. This event fitted well into the general flavor of the conference as both the new complex and the conference aimed at re-enforcing collaboration and cross-disciplinary research among scientists. This issue was highlighted by the Vice Chancellor, Prof Cheryl de la Rey, during her lecture given at the inauguration ceremony.

Thirty students and staff of FABI attended the congress of which the bulk was represented by CTHB and TPCP team members. During the conference MSc and PhD students were exposed to the broader scientific community and connected with other scientists and students with similar research interests outside of UP. The conference also provided an opportunity for students and research staff of FABI to present their work to the scientific community in South Africa.

The conference covered a diverse range of topics, discussed in parallel sessions. Topics included, Plant Biotechnology, Plant Ecology, Plant Physiology, Plant Invasions, Conservation Biology, Phytochemistry and Bioactivity, Pollination Biology, Ethnobotany, Molecular Systematics and Barcoding and Global Change. FABI presentations featured in most of these sessions.

In total, sixteen oral and twelve posters presentations were made by members of FABI. Some of the topics addressed by FABI scientists included the large-scale deaths of *Euphorbia ingens* (Naboom) trees and the role of climate change in this phenomenon, the eminent threat of the rust pathogen *Puccinia psidii* on South African eucalypt industry, the scourge of Ganoderma root rot on Jacaranda trees, and the biochemical and physiological underpinnings of defense mechanisms in *Eucalyptus* and *Pinus* trees.