

FABI HOSTS EXPERT ON INSECT GENOMES

FABlans were privy to the skills and knowledge of Dr. Robert Waterhouse, an expert on comparative evolutionary and functional genomics of arthropods, particularly disease-vector mosquitoes, from the Department of Ecology and Evolution at the University of Lausanne in Switzerland. Dr. Waterhouse visited FABI as part of the genome annotation jamboree of the pine tree pest, *Sirex noctilio*.

Dr. Waterhouse also presented a special seminar titled “Genome biology and evolution of harmful and helpful arthropods”. He discussed how comparative genomics can be used to better understand how insects have evolved to exploit their environment and take advantage of their ecological niches.



Dr Waterhouse referred to the studies of various arthropod genomes to illustrate how studying their genomes has shed light on how they have evolved to improve their chances of survival in their respective environments. Amongst others, he discussed studies of *Pediculus humanus* (the human body louse), *Mayetiola destructor* (Hessian fly), *Ixodes scapularis* (the deer tick), *Metaseiulus occidentalis* (a predatory mite) and *Manduca sexta* (the tobacco hornworm).

Participants in the genome annotation jamboree included Prof. Bernard Slippers, Dr. Wilma Fick, Dr. Gudrun Dittrich-Schröder, Osmond Mlonyeni, Katrin Fitza, Josephine Queffelec, Quentin Guignard, Alisa Postma-Smidt, Bianca Jardim, Sophie Makua, Edohan Clasen, Zorada Swart, Hannes Strydom, Leandri Bezuidenhout and Jacek Zawada.