

FABIANS ATTEND ORCHIDS CONFERENCE

South Africa is the epicentre for African orchid diversity because most species are endemic to the region. These plants face a constant threat of extinction due to habitat loss, climate change and anthropogenic disturbances. Wild Orchids Southern Africa (WOSA) is an organisation of South African botanists, mycologists and amateur plant lovers dedicated to the protection and conservation of these wild orchids of southern Africa in collaboration with South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and the South African Government.

WOSA organises field trips and a conference every year. The aim of this annual conference is conservation, reestablishment and protection of wild orchid species. This year the conference was held from 25 to 28 January at the Gooderson Drakensberg Gardens Golf and Spa Resort. FABI postdoctoral Fellow Dr Tanay Bose and MSc student Modjadji Makwela presented their research at this conference. Their talks focused on the mycorrhizal diversity associated with the endemic and nearly endangered orchids *Habenaria barbertonii* and *H. epipactidea*.



The research group consisting of Dr Almuth Hammerbacher, Dr Tanay Bose, Dr Martin Kemler, Prof Martin Coetzee, Prof Brenda Wingfield and Modjadji Makwela successfully barcoded the mycorrhizal diversity associated with roots and rhizosphere soil of *H. barbertonii*, *H. epipactidea* and *Brachycorythis conica* ssp. *transvaalensis* (Albertina Sisulu Orchid) using high-throughput sequencing. This is the first attempt to barcode orchid mycorrhizal diversity from the African continent.