

Expanding frontiers on one of the world's largest sand islands

The 2nd International Research Workshop on *Ophiostomatoid* fungi held on North Stradbroke Island, Australia from 16-18 August 2006, was organized by Prof Mike Wingfield from FABI and Dr Keith Seifert from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and preceded the 8th International Mycological Congress (IMC8). It was attended by 41 delegates from 12 countries.



Keith Seiffert (left) and Mike Wingfield (right) were the organisers of the meeting

Sixteen years ago, a small group of scientists recognized the significance of such a meeting and held the first event in the small village of Bad Windsheim in Germany. Since 1990, there have been enormous developments in the field of molecular biology and interest in species of the *Ceratocystis* and *Ophiostoma* genus has grown. So the time was ripe for colleagues and friends to come together and share new information and research on the topic.

Only one hour from Brisbane off the East Coast of Australia lies a relatively untouched island with kilometers of white sandy beaches, calm waters with incredible marine life and picturesque fishing towns. With its abundance of natural resources, North Stradbroke Island was the perfect, attractive location to host the *Ceratophiostoma* meeting. Colourful posters covered the meeting room of the Moreton Bay research centre where the three day meetings were held and the banner with the logo specially designed for this conference, was most impressive.

This workshop was a most exciting and fulfilling experience and 11 members of the CTHB had the privilege of attending it and making eleven oral and six poster presentations. The Fabians who attended the meeting were Professors Mike Wingfield, Brenda Wingfield and Jolanda Roux; Drs Bernard Slippers, Xhudong Zhou, Karin Jacobs, and Francois Roets; and post graduate students Marelize van Wyk, Gilbert Kamgan, Wilhelm de Beer and Joha Grobbelaar. Three days were filled with thought-provoking presentations covering a range of interests, from taxonomy, ecology and

pathology to fungal-insect associations and molecular studies. The sessions were packed with scientific information and constructive debate. There was a good balance of presentations between those studying *Ceratocystis* vs the *Ophiostoma* devotees. A book will be published shortly on the contents of the workshop.

All the members stayed at the Anchorage hotel on the east side of the island which was a 20 minute journey by car to the research centre. The beach was a short walk away from the hotel with stunning views of the ocean from our rooms and we spotted pods of whales and dolphins daily. In the evenings, delegates were treated to delicious cuisine; barbeques on the beach and poolside and great seafood at the local restaurant on Amity point.

The organisers wish to thank the many sponsors of the workshop for a truly memorable event. They include FABI, the DST/NRF Centre of Excellence, University of Queensland, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, University of Pretoria and most importantly, the NRF South African/Norwegian bilateral exchange grant programme for their support of this memorable, scientific event.

(Written by Joha Grobbelaar and Gilbert Kamgan Nkuekam, MSc students)