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International Journal for Parasitology: Parasites and Wildlife

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijppaw

Preface to the special issue of the International Congress on Parasites of Wildlife, 15–18 September 2014, Kruger National Park, South Africa



More than two decades ago, in 1991, the Parasitological Society of Southern Africa (PARSA) organised a conference on Parasites of Wildlife, which was held at Berg-en-dal in the Kruger National Park. With the current emphasis on One Health and conservation of biodiversity, studying various aspects of wildlife parasitology is steadily becoming more important. The PARSA committee decided, therefore, that an international meeting focusing on parasites of wildlife was long overdue. Three years after being first mooted, PARSA's second international congress on Parasites of Wildlife was held at Skukuza in the Kruger National Park from 15 to 18 September 2014. The congress attracted delegates from 19 countries, who delivered 83 papers and presented 37 posters. On the final day a half-day workshop was held, aimed primarily at post-graduate students: How to Write Great Papers: From title to references, from submission to publication. The presenters were Dale Seaton, as Elsevier publisher, and Andrew Thompson, joint Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal for Parasitology: Parasites and Wildlife*.

The general feeling was that such meetings should take place more frequently.

We wish to acknowledge the contribution of the following colleagues, without whose support the congress would not have been possible:

Scientific programme committee: Professor Ian Beveridge (Australia), Professor Thoko Hove (Zimbabwe), Professor Anja Joachim (Austria), Professor Samson Mukaratirwa (South Africa) and Dr. Michael Yabsley (USA).

Local organising committee: Professor Tshepo Matjila, Dr. Sonja Matthee and Dr. Sibusiso Mtjali.

The success of the congress led to the selection of a representative set of papers presented for publication in this special issue of *IJP-PAW*. These papers cover all the major themes that were addressed during the congress and also include review papers by the three keynote speakers. These summarised the history and development of research on wildlife parasites in southern Africa (by Junker et al.), the evolutionary ecology of parasite diversity (by Morand) and the role of wildlife in the transmission of parasitic zoonoses in peri-urban areas (by Mackenstedt et al.). The research papers

included in this special issue further illustrated the diversity of current work in the field of wildlife parasitology, with specific reference to the parasites studied as well as their hosts. The selected papers range from leeches and haemoparasites in frogs (Du Preez et al.; Netherlands et al.), nematodes in eels (Dangel et al.) to competition between ectoparasites (ticks and mites) parasitising eastern rock sengis (Lutermann et al.). Further papers, also included in this special issue, focused our attention on the very important role that wildlife plays as a reservoir of parasitic zoonoses and zoonotic infections (Mackenstedt et al.; Dusher and Joachim). The congress also highlighted the importance of diagnostics and epidemiology as illustrated with the case study on *Theileria* (Mans et al.). One session was devoted to parasites as sentinels of the environment. Finally, our attention was also drawn to the role of parasites in foodwebs and their importance in trophic linkages (Demopoulos and Sikkell). The collection of papers in this special issue is therefore a very good representation of the current trends in research on parasites of wildlife and also highlights the need for continued research into this extremely important topic. The geographical regions covered in this special issue (South Africa, Namibia, Caribbean, Germany, Australia, to name a few) also attest to the truly international nature of the congress.

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