

A tribute to Pieter Johannes (Johann) du Preez



In memorial:

Pieter Johannes (Johann)
du Preez



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Pieter Johannes du Preez passed away on the evening of 29 December 2019 in Hermanus after a short fight against cancer. Johann as he was known to everyone, was well educated in ecology and had a passion for nature. His knowledge of the environment and willingness to share that with colleagues, students and the general public is how he will be remembered.

Johann's passing came as a huge shock to all with whom he has worked and who has known him. He has left a huge gap within the scientific world, especially within the field of vegetation science where he was well known and regarded as one of the top plant ecologists in the country. He will be remembered for his endless passion to study nature and obtain more knowledge on the functioning of ecosystems. His love for nature and conservation could be felt in his presence. He was modest, humble, understanding, supportive and always willing to walk that extra mile for the people that crossed his path.

As an academic he influenced the lives of several students who became successful vegetation scientists and researchers under his supervision. He also contributed to the literature in various fields of ecology mostly specialising in the mapping of vegetation and investigating various ecological community compositions. Many of the valuable plant samples that he collected are housed at the Geo Potts Herbarium at the University of the Free State (UFS). He is well-published and has contributed numerous publications, book chapters, conference presentations and technical reports on the vegetation of southern Africa. He produced a detailed vegetation map of the Free State Province and was co-author of the widely acclaimed ecology book *Life and the Environment: an African perspective* for which he received the Golden Merit award from the South African Academy for Science and Arts for his contribution to science. Johann collaborated on the vegetation surveys of the Stevenson Hamilton Research Supersite near Skukuza in the Kruger National Park with colleagues from the University of the Free State. Here he contributed towards our understanding of the interaction between vegetation and the environmental factors that influenced the various plant communities in the area. He was one of the main researchers of this multidisciplinary project and contributed to much of the research published in this special issue.

At the time of his passing, Johann was an active Research Fellow at the Department of Plant Sciences, UFS, where he was still involved in supervising students and playing his part in research with colleagues from other South African universities. A day in the field with Johann was equivalent to a long time in the classroom. He was cited by many people for his many achievements. Johann played a quiet, yet profound role in the advancement of vegetation science in southern Africa and we will remember him for his huge contribution not only in terms of scientific knowledge, but his energetic and positive approach to life.

This is a tribute to honour Prof. Johann du Preez, and to show our respect, gratitude and admiration when we remember the huge contribution that he has made to the research published in this special issue.

– L. Brown, A. Van Aardt, B. Janecke and the research team

(A special thanks to Prof. Leslie Brown from UNISA for his contribution to this tribute).



Note: Special Issue: Connections between abiotic and biotic components of a granite catena ecosystem in Kruger National Park, sub-edited by Beanelri Janecke and Johan van Tol.