

RHIZOBIAL COLLECTION TRIP WITH POLISH COLLABORATORS

Members of the Rhizobial Research Group (Prof. Emma Steenkamp, Prof. Fanus Venter, Dr Chrizelle Beukes, Juanita Avontuur and Derick Claassens) joined Polish collaborators Prof. Tomasz Stępkowski, Joanna Banasiewicz and Rafał Banasiewicz on a sampling trip to Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal from 27 until 31 October. The focus of this trip was the collection of soil samples and root nodules in association with indigenous genistoid legumes as well as *Acacia* hosts in both the plantation and invasive settings.



With the assistance of Dr Marianne le Roux, a legume botanist from the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), we were able to identify several indigenous genistoid species, some of which had formed nodules. These nodules will provide the basis for the isolation of rhizobia (mutualistic Gram-negative soil bacteria capable of fixing atmospheric nitrogen for the plant), which we believe could potentially prove to be undescribed species. The focus of the *Acacia* study will be to see whether the associated rhizobia were introduced into South Africa and to what extent they dominate rhizosphere soil.

We would like to thank these people instrumental to our trip: Mr Johan Nel (TWK), Mrs Elsie de Villiers (Emahlathini Guest Farm), Mr Lunga Tshangisa (NCT), Mr Kevin Penderis (Rockwood Leisure), Mrs Candice Preiss (Cumberland Nature Reserve) and Mr Ian Rushworth (Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife).