Fourth Quarterly Nugget for 2012/13
South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity

26 November 2012 – 30 March 2013
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH WORK ............................................................................. 1
2. EXPECTED IMPACTS .................................................................................................. 2
3. RESEARCH TEAM ...................................................................................................... 2
4. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ..................................................................................... 3
5. APPROVAL .................................................................................................................. 3
1 Description of Research Work

In 2005, SAIAB began to offer research internship opportunities in aquatic sciences through the Department of Science and Technology (DST) Internship Programme to empower postgraduates and to enhance their employability. The programme at SAIAB focuses on developing research skills through data collection, analysis and report writing. The internships are offered in aquatic conservation and ecology, marine fish systematics, molecular biology, marine fish systematics and in more recent years it has been extended to include information technology (IT) and science communication.

All interns (excluding the IT interns) are allocated projects under the guidance of their mentors. The IT interns work closely with the mentor on IT related tasks within the Institute.

SAIAB also works in association with Rhodes University to develop SAIAB’s staff and interns, affording them the opportunity to attend IT and other courses such as aquatic biodiversity and fish identification courses. These skills add to the research skills mentioned earlier.

Over the years SAIAB’s Internship Programme has grown to include internships funded by Rhodes University, the NRF and the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). The number of interns hosted at SAIAB has increased from three (3) interns in 2005 to eleven (11) interns in 2012 (Figure 2). The absence of interns in 2007 was due to the DST’s not allocating interns because the implementation of the programme was being transferred to the NRF.

![Figure 2 – Diagram illustrating the number of interns at SAIAB from 2005 to 2012.](image)
2 Expected Impacts

As a NRF Research Facility, SAIAB has played an essential role in inspiring interns to find their fields of interest. For many interns, working at SAIAB has given them an opportunity to meet role models and this exposure has motivated them to further their studies as they became eager to succeed as researchers in various fields. This shows how SAIAB has influenced the lives of many South African youth. From 2005-2012, 35 interns have participated in the programme. An early success was the employment of an intern into the position of Molecular Laboratory Assistant at SAIAB. Other successes have included interns gaining employment in high profile municipal and governmental communication positions. Of the interns it has been possible to track (see figure 2), 15 are in full time employment and 12 are furthering their studies. Some interns are already working on their PhDs, most are registered for Masters and a few are studying towards Honours degrees. For 2013-14, we are expecting nine NRF interns to join the programme; with a Rhodes University Communications intern and SANBI intern, the full quota remains eleven.

![Figure 2- Illustrating progress of interns after internship.](image)

3 Research team

The internship programme is coordinated by Monwabisi Mfihlo from NRF who liaises with SAIAB’s Operations Manager, Linda Coetzee. SAIAB staff members who are mentors in the programme are Roger Bills (Collections), Gavin Gouws (Research), Andrew Grant (IT), Penny Haworth (Science Communication), Garth van Heerden (ACEP), Nicola James (Research), Monica Mwale (Research), Ofer Gon (Research), Vanessa Rouhani (Science Advancement), and Alan Whitfield (Research).
4 Additional Information

Together with their mentors, staff and students at SAIAB, interns are encouraged to contribute to and participate in various research and science advancement conferences and projects. In 2012-13 such opportunities included a number of conferences, a DST Ministerial Imbizo, National Science Week, the SAASTEC Conference and, most recently, Scifest Africa. Learning to communicate about their science to their peers and the public is an important aspect of the SAIAB internship programme. Interns are fully integrated into the fabric of the Institute and participate in service driven activities such as the Wellness Committee, attending First Aid and swimming courses, playing for the SAIAB Soccer Team and volunteering. Interns leave the programme equipped to make meaningful contributions either in the world of work or in developing their academic careers.

Report¹ submitted by:

Ndiviwe Baliwe
NRF Research Intern 2012-2013

5 Approval

For Master copy only

Dr Angus Paterson
Managing Director SAIAB
28 March 2013

¹ Report compiled & edited by Penny Haworth – Manager: Communications & Governance SAIAB