

## FIRST EVER ILTER OPEN SCIENCE MEETING OFF TO AN EXCITING START



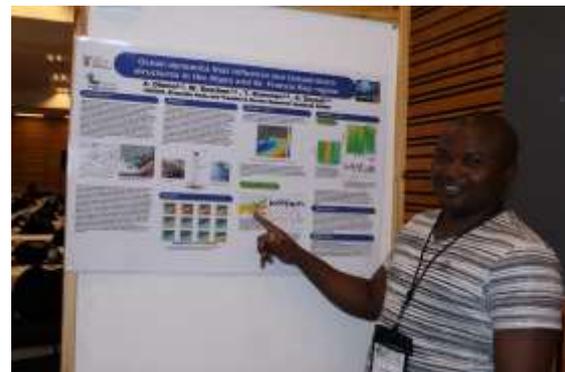
Three hundred delegates from countries as far afield as China, Japan, India, Mexico, Austria, Germany, Spain, Italy, Portugal and the United States converged on Skukuza in the Kruger National Park on Monday 10 October 2016 to share their research in 160 presentations, reinforcing the International Long-Term Ecological Research (ILTER) Network's status as an internationally acknowledged research network.

This landmark event, hosted by SAEON, coincided with Global Climate Change Week.

The conference was officially opened by Dr Phil Mjwara, founding Co-Chair of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and Director-General of the South African Department of Science and Technology. Dr Mjwara welcomed the delegates, as essential contributors to the achievement of sustainable development goals, to South Africa, the third most biodiverse country in the world. He said that the meeting's presentations and deliberations would serve to enhance our collective understanding of global change impacts, which could lead to more informed decision-making to safeguard the future of our planet.

In his address, ILTER Chair Prof. Michael Mirtl said that the first Open Science Meeting

(OSM) presented a platform for globally organised research input as well as global partnerships and collaborations. He traced the development of member networks since 1993 and highlighted the role played by ILTER scientists in contributing to high-level roundtables and the global body of knowledge by means of a wide range of scientific publications. He introduced delegates to DEIMS, a newly developed repository for research site data sets. In conclusion he provided a glimpse into future developments envisaged for ILTER, largely based on the results of a survey among its members in 2015.



Two thought-provoking presentations by internationally acclaimed scientists Prof. David Lindenmayer of the Australian National University and Prof. Bob Scholes of the University of the Witwatersrand set the tone for the rest of the day, when delegates had the opportunity to attend parallel sessions on Biodiversity, Carbon and Data Integration, followed by a lively poster session featuring 70 posters.

Dinner at a restaurant on the banks of the Sabie River with a herd of elephants passing through just below provided a fitting conclusion to an interesting and rewarding day.