

## Professor Stefan Hendrik Foord (1971–2023)

Thinandavha C. Munyai

School of Life Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

Professor Stefan Foord was born in Pretoria on the 4th of April 1971. He attended primary school at Zwartkop and Hoërskool Eldoraigh High School in Centurion in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. In 1993, he completed his Bachelor of Science degree majoring in Zoology and Mathematics at the University of Pretoria, Bachelor of Science Honours in Zoology studies in 1994 and Master of Science in Entomology and Zoology in 1997 at the University of Pretoria. During his university days, he was a keen rugby player and played for various local teams.

In June 1997, he joined the University of Venda, Thohoyandou, in Limpopo Province, as a full-time Lecturer in the former Department of Biological Sciences and later Department of Zoology in the School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. During this time, he moved to Louis Trichardt with his wife, Caron Foord (née Muller). In 2005, he graduated with a PhD in Entomology from the University of Pretoria. His PhD focused on the systematics of the spider family Hersiliidae of the Afrotropical Region and was supervised by Professor Ansie S. Dippenaar-Schoeman. During this period, he was also a rugby coach for the University of Venda team (2003–2005) and later the Louis Trichardt Rugby Club first team coach (2007).

Stefan was promoted to Senior Lecturer in January 2008, an Associate Professor in December 2012, and a Professor in December 2016. Between 2008 and 2016, he was Head of the Zoology Department. At the time of his passing, he was a National Research Foundation Chair (SARChI) in Biodiversity Value and Change in the Vhembe Biosphere at the University of Venda's new faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture. During his lecturing years, he presented and developed various undergraduate and postgraduate modules in his Zoology department, including diversity of life, ecology, animal physiology, biological assessment, applied animal ecology and research methods. In addition, as part of his undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, he developed various practical manuals that introduced students to the statistical programming language R. Stefan loved working on complex datasets and using R statistical program and was very good at it.

Before and shortly after joining the University of Venda, some of his postgraduate research was on seed dispersal by vervet monkeys, gashoppers in Afromontane grassland and he also studied pine plantations near Badplaas in Mpumalanga. After joining the University of Venda in 1997, Stefan's research focused on terrestrial and freshwater systems. During this period, he collaborated with colleagues within the same department. In 2005, he was among the first Auditors for the South African Scoring System (SASS5) for the Limpopo province. After completing his PhD (between 2005 and 2008), he contributed various peer-reviewed articles on taxonomic revisions of the spider family Hersiliidae, including a description of the new spider genus *Prima* (tree trunk spiders) in 2008. The genus contains just one species, *Prima ansieae* (only been found in Madagascar). He was the first to describe this species and named it after Professor Dippenaar-Schoeman. Prior to this, together with Professor Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman, they described another tree trunk spider genus, *Tyrotama*, in 2005 and further described three species of the current eight species in this genus, *T. soutpansbergensis*, *T. abyssus* and *T. taris*.

The majority of his research was in and around the Soutpansberg Mountains. On these mountains, he led the establishment of long-term and ongoing altitudinal monitoring projects focusing on ants, beetles and spiders. During this period, he collaborated and worked with the local botanist, a Soutpansberg resident Dr Norbert Hahn, and some of his earlier students. In 2008, he became a core team member for the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology based at Stellenbosch University. This collaboration was instrumental for the newly established long-term monitoring of arthropod diversity project along the western Soutpansberg Mountains. It was through this funding and collaboration that he supported various Honours, MSc and PhD students for the next decade.

### CORRESPONDENCE

Thinandavha C. Munyai

### EMAIL

caswell.munyai@gmail.com

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During this period, his primary research focused on community ecology and assembly.

Throughout his career, he obtained funding from various national and international sources, including research incentive funding from his institution's research office, the National Research Foundation's (NRF) various funding instruments, Limpopo Living Landscapes (LLL) and South African Limpopo Landscapes Network (SALLnet) funded by German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Technology and Human Resource for Industry Programme (THRIP) funded by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, and also funding from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG).

He supervised, to completion, over 30 Honours, 26 Master of Science (MSc) and six PhD students. At the time of his passing, he was supervising six Honours students, three MSc and three PhD students, and his contribution to transformation through his supervision can not be under-estimated. He has contributed various peer-reviewed articles, books, chapters in books, and technical reports, together with local and international conference proceedings. Stefan had various research collaborators locally and internationally, including scientists at over six South African Universities and three South African research institutions/organisation (Agricultural Research Council, South African National Parks, Citrus Research International, and South African National Biodiversity Institute). Internationally, he collaborated actively with scientists from University of Hohenheim, University of Göttingen, University of Hamburg, Novosibirsk Museum, University of Cologne and Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

He was a member of various national and international bodies, including African Arachnological Society, where he was a chairman (president) from 2017 up to his passing, Entomological Society of Southern Africa, IUCN Spider & Scorpion Specialist Group, a registered Natural Scientist (Ecologist and Aquatic Ecologist) with the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions. He was also a National Research Foundation rated (C-rated) scientist. He received various awards throughout his career, including the University of Venda's Best Overall Researcher award in 2011 and 2016.

Stefan was an external examiner for various South African universities, undergraduate modules and postgraduate dissertations. He served on various National Research Foundation review panels. He was an associated editor for Zookeys and Koedoe. He was a reviewer for over 35 local and international journals. He was the Chairman of the local organizing committee for the 22nd Congress of Entomological Society of Southern Africa, held from 28th June to 2nd July 2021 in Tshipise, Limpopo province.

Stefan died in Stilbaai, in the Western Cape, at the age of 52. He is survived by his wife, Caron Foord, and his daughters, Nicola and Emlyn Foord. He is also survived by his parents, Ben Foord and Woutrine Theron, his younger brother, Krügel, and his sister, Nel. His family, friends, students, colleagues, collaborators, and local and international scientific community will miss him dearly. My deepest condolences goes to his wife, daughters, parents and siblings.

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## EDITED BOOKS AND BOOK CHAPTERS

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