



DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology

Hosted by Stellenbosch University, South Africa

PROFILE



Contact: Prof. David M. Richardson, rich@sun.ac.za, Tel: +27 21 808-2832
Room 2039, Natural Science Building, Stellenbosch University, Merriman Avenue, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Private Bag X1, Matieland 7602, South Africa
www.sun.ac.za/cib

1. Overview

The C-I-B is an inter-institutional Centre of Excellence established within the DSI-NRF Centres of Excellence Programme, and co-funded principally by the South African Department of Science and Innovation, through the National Research Foundation, and Stellenbosch University. The C-I-B was established in 2004 with the mandate to conduct research and training in biodiversity science especially as it applies to understanding the rates, impacts and management of biological invasions.

Vision: The raison d'être of the C-I-B is to provide the scientific understanding required to reduce the rate and impacts of biological invasions in a manner that will improve the quality of life of all South Africans during times of change.

The mission of the C-I-B is to:

- Undertake research and education in biodiversity and ecosystem functioning, including investigations of the changes in biological diversity that are a consequence of biological invasions, the consequences for ecosystem functioning and of these invasions and their remediation, and the longer-term effects of invasions on ecosystem services during global environmental change;
- Remain at the forefront of research regarding biological invasions, biodiversity and ecosystem functioning by pursuing research excellence, inter-disciplinarity, and by encouraging local, regional and international exchanges;
- Enhance its national and international societal relevance by means of: 1. a coordinated programme of innovative research, the products of which will be broadly disseminated in the international literature; 2. graduates who are sought after for their knowledge, their creative and critical thinking, and for their expertise; 3. a well-supported core and associated staff who are respected and trusted by their peers, clients, and community;
- Remain relevant to the needs of the community, focusing on South Africa in the context of trends shaping Africa and the globe.

2. Research Partners, Management and Location

The C-I-B's management team and administrative hub are based in Stellenbosch, while the core research team of twenty-four senior researchers and their associated postdoctoral researchers and graduate students is distributed between ten higher education and R&D institutions in South Africa. Biographic profiles and research specialities of core research personnel can be found at www.sun.ac.za/cib/team_research.asp.

The expertise of the core team covers a wide range of fields including bio-indicators, community ecology, conservation biology, environmental management and planning, evolutionary physiology, global change, insect behavioural ecology, invasion ecology, landscape ecology, macroecology, marine ecology, freshwater ecology, molecular ecology, phylogeography, pollination biology, population biology, resource economics, restoration, risk analysis, spatial ecology and thermal ecology.

Specific research and training topics covered by the C-I-B include long-term impacts of invasions, determinants of invasion success, impact and risk assessment, interactions between biological invasions

and climate change, modelling of invasion success and spread and the efficacy of bio-control agents, the determinants of species abundance and distribution, the consequences for ecosystem functioning of invasions and the removal of invasive species, and the social consequences of invasions. C-I-B researchers have experience in environments ranging from sub-tropical to temperate and arid Africa, tropical to sub-Antarctic islands, central America, Australia, and the Antarctic, and from terrestrial to freshwater and marine biomes.

3. C-I-B Hub and Partner Facilities

Stellenbosch University is the host institution for the C-I-B hub and provides the following facilities:

- **Human resources** Besides the key academic and management personnel, the C-I-B is supported by several technical staff, a database manager, several personnel concerned with outreach, and three administrative staff. The C-I-B also draws in various ways on the human resources that are contained within a modern, research-intensive University. It is supported by a Research Assistant based at the Northern Hub at University of Pretoria.
- **Physical resources:** Offices, a display area, seminar room, storage facility and large laboratory in the C-I-B hub complex; access to lecture rooms, ecophysiology and molecular laboratory facilities and post-graduate offices in the Department of Botany and Zoology to which the C-I-B is affiliated; central University information technology infrastructure.
- **Academic and administrative resources:** Library resources in the form of books, journals and electronic media; central analytical facilities including DNA sequencing and mass spectrometry; a language centre providing tuition in scientific writing; academic marketing resources provided routinely by student recruitment services; research and contract support via the Research Development division; student administration; international student liaison; financial and human resources administration.
- **Partner institutions:** The Universities of Pretoria, Cape Town, Rhodes, Witwatersrand, KwaZulu-Natal, and Venda, as well as South African National Parks (SANParks), the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and the South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB) are hosts to one or more core team members of the C-I-B. The C-I-B also supports students at several other tertiary institutions across South Africa. The structure of these institutions and the support they provide to core team members is set out on our home page which can be accessed via www.sun.ac.za/cib.

4. Research and Training Experience

The C-I-B is a highly respected research organization, and its staff regularly publish their work in a wide variety of sources including internationally-acclaimed journals such as *Nature*, *Science*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*, *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, *American Naturalist* and *Ecology Letters*. The research standing of C-I-B researchers is reflected in editorial positions with leading international journals, and participation in international science organizations at an executive level.

The C-I-B has a major role in providing scientific expertise to policy-makers, including co-producing the first National Status Report on Biological Invasions in South Africa with SANBI, identifying the way forward for the development of alien and invasive species indicators for the Global 2010 biodiversity targets, and contributing extensively to the development of regulations for Chapter 5 of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act.

The C-I-B team draws on many years of collective experience in training early career researchers, graduate and undergraduate students. Team members are members or affiliates of accredited South African training institutions. In addition, several team members and staff are currently involved in regional training programmes, community-based outreach programmes and teacher in-service training and learner education at the secondary level.

5. Outreach

The C-I-B runs a highly-acclaimed science education outreach project that focuses on building capacity in biodiversity science and providing quality schooling for learners and educators in communities where school capacity is limited. The limbovane Outreach Project ('limbovane' means 'ants' in iSiXhosa) increases the understanding of biodiversity among educators and learners through training and by actively involving them in the monitoring of ants. The project is implemented directly in 18 secondary schools with an additional ten subscription schools using our materials, and reaches 2000 – 3000 Grade 10 learners per year. It exposes learners to hands-on science projects in order to inform, excite and motivate them to follow careers in biodiversity science.

6. C-I-B Partnerships

The C-I-B has a wide range of partnerships with R&D and training institutions. These span many countries and a range of organizations from government agencies to NGOs. Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with Department of Environmental Affairs' Natural Resources Management Programme (formerly Working for Water), Western Cape Education Department (through 18 participating limbovane schools), Western Cape Nature Conservation Board (CapeNature), BirdLife South Africa, Statistics in Ecology, Environment and Conservation (SEEC at UCT), The Nature Conservancy, Institute of Botany at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic and Institute for Ecology and Biodiversity (IEB) of the University of Concepción (Chile). The C-I-B is also founder and co-host of the Soil Ecosystem Research Group in South Africa and a signatory to the Honolulu Challenge.

