

The negative impacts of invasive alien species on the environment at Kruger National Park – Tshepo Mathebula

The negative impacts of invasive alien species on the environment are well documented. However, despite the predominantly negative perceptions associated with invasive species, it is evident that a number of these plants have been part of the landscape for generations and have numerous commercial and non-market uses. Consequently, there is a need for research that considers the impact of invasive species on the livelihoods, well-being of local communities and the environment. This project investigated the negative impact that prickly pear (*Opuntia ficus-indica*), an invasive alien species, has on the vegetation of the white and black rhino enclosure in the Kruger National Park. Furthermore the analysis intended to dig more into the history of the site vegetation before the enclosure, during the enclosure and after the usage of the enclosure, and the impact of prickly pear on the other vegetation. The research highlighted the apparent conflict of interest between the indigenous species and alien invasive plants, prickly pear in particular.

The impact of this plant has been an ongoing issue across South Africa, related to another apparent conflict of interest between local traders (for whom the sale of the prickly pear provides a livelihood source) and the South African government which is actively seeking to remove the plant from the landscape. The prickly pear has been sighted in most of the neighbouring farms and communities adjacent to the Kruger National Park which could be the main sources of its presence in the park.



TRIBUTE



Mthokozisi Nxumalo MP

Death be not proud! We pay a sad tribute to Mthokozisi Nxumalo class of '08. It was with shock and dismay that in the year 2021 we had to announce to our alumni community the untimely passing of one of our rising stars whose life was cut short in a tragic accident on the 1st of August.

At a tender age of 30 in May 2019, Mthokozisi was sworn in as a member of the South African National Assembly deployed by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) under the leadership of Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi MP and founder of MUT. The late honourable MP graduated from MUT with a National Diploma in Construction Management and Quantity Surveying. His political career blossomed during his university days. He was chairperson of SADESMO, a student organisation wing of the IFP, as well as SRC Treasurer in the 2011-2012 student leadership at MUT. Before taking his seat in the National Parliament, Mthokozisi was employed by Nongoma district office for Public Works as Structural Works Inspector, which is a position he held until 31 May 2019.

The University is proud of the milestones and giant steps that our graduates take in empowering the lives of current and future generations. Mthokozisi still had a lot to give but we may not change God's will.

Let Maya Angelou's poem give hope to friends, alumni, and family:

*"I can accept the idea of my own demise,
But I am unable to accept the death of anyone else.
I find it impossible to let a friend or relative go into that part of country of no return.
I answer the heroic question:
'Death, where is thy sting'
With it is here in my heart and my mind and memories".
Farewell Zwide!*