

Veld research technician receives MSc

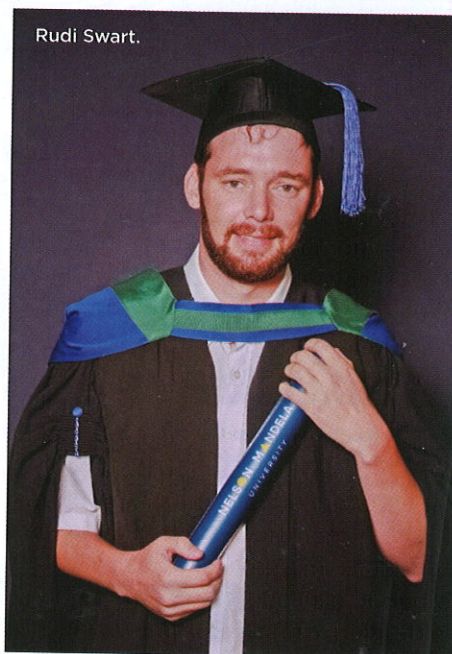
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Rudi Swart, scientific technician at the Directorate Plant Sciences of the Research and Technology Development programme, stationed at the Worcester Veld Reserve, received his MSc in nature conservation from the Nelson Mandela University during its April graduation ceremony.

The title of his thesis was "Germination potential of seeds harvested at the Worcester Veld Reserve" under the supervision of Dr Anton Schmidt from the Nelson Mandela University, Dr SJ Milton-Dean, a research associate at the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON), and Mrs Nelmarie Saayman, rangeland scientist in the department.

Palatable plants are almost absent in large parts of the Karoo because of degradation. In an attempt to return palatable plants to the degraded rangelands and improve productivity, the seeds of these species are sown, but with disappointing results. The objectives of the study were to determine the following:

- The causes of pre-sowing mortality
- The effect of drying on seed germination
- The effect of planting depth on seed germination
- The effect of storage time on seed germination



The findings of the study show that while the viability of the seeds harvested for rangeland reseeding projects is quite low, the appropriate pre-treatment, seed age and planting depth of less than 10 mm will allow a significant increase in germination. This increase in germination should provide a greater chance of establishing plants in rangeland reseeding projects. **AP**