

Samantha-Leigh ('Sam') Jamison

University of Pretoria, South Africa



Sam is a PhD student from the University of Pretoria. Her thesis, under the supervision of Dr Michelle Greve, is entitled: *Patterns and drivers of bush clump development within a sub-tropical African savanna.*

Sam first came to Buffelskloof Nature Reserve as an Honours student on a university ecology field trip.

Previously, I (JB) had long been fascinated with the floristic diversity in the bushclumps that were scattered along the upper shoulders of the kloof (gorge). When we introduced the students to this diversity and posed the question: why were they so botanically diverse?, and how would they evolve further in the future? – Sam decided to answer the questions as an MSc thesis which she entitled: *Unlocking bird tree relationships: exploring biogeographical patterns across Southern Africa.*

She selected 40 bushclumps and, over two years, analyzed each bushclump and identified 105 tree species over the 40 plots, from a total of 21 500 trees identified. Her thesis will explain the dynamics of bushclump development and how it relates to the changing vegetation patterns of African savannas.



left: August 2017 – A field visit by Pretoria University students. Sam Jamison is 2nd from left.

Sam's supervisor, Dr Michelle Greve, stands far right.

Sam's bushclump studies spawned two ancillary studies. Monique Botha (*far left*) is studying the changes in functional traits of trees during forest succession, while Mathew Harris (*squatting, sunglasses*) is studying endophytic fungi in bushclump tree species.

Sam's MSc degree (2018) was upgraded to a PhD thesis, on which she continues to work.

John Burrows, 6 September 2019

