



2nd CIRCULAR

The **African Arachnological Society (AFRAS)** is delighted to invite members of the arachnological community and accompanying guests to the **15th AFRAS Colloquium**, organized by the **DITSONG: National Museum of Natural History**, Pretoria, South Africa.

This is a wonderful opportunity for international and local arachnologists to connect and discuss potential collaborative projects on the hugely diverse African arachnid fauna.

COLLOQUIUM WEBSITE AND CONTACT

Details on the 15th AFRAS colloquium will be updated on the colloquium website (<https://afras2027.carlamani.com/>). The website can also be reached via the AFRAS website at <https://afras.ufs.ac.za>.

Or contact Tharina Bird:

tharina@mitsong.org.za | Landline: +27 (0)12 492 2158 | Mobile & WhatsApp: +27 (0)72 317 8814.

Delegates are encouraged to get in contact with colloquium organizers with any enquiries.

DATES & TIMELINES

- Abstract Submission Opens: 1 August 2026
- Colloquium Registration Opens: 17 August 2026
- Abstract Submission Closes: 2 November 2026
- Outcome Notification: 9 November 2026
- Registration Closes: 7 December 2026
- Provisional Programme: 11 December 2026
- Colloquium dates: 10 – 15 January 2027

VENUE



Lapalala Wilderness School (<https://www.lwschool.org/>) is about 50 km from the small town of Vaalwater in Limpopo Province, South Africa and 3.5 hours from Johannesburg.

The rammed earth venue is an **award-winning, off-the-grid, eco-built educational facility**, providing a fully immersive nature experience. It falls within the UNESCO-declared Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. **Comfortable accommodation** ranges from private lodge-style rooms to shared dormitories with a unique one-to-one guest-to-bathroom ratio available to delegates on a first-come basis.

While nested in the southeast corner of the **Big 5 Lapalala Wilderness Reserve** (<https://www.lapalala.com/lapalala-wilderness/>), a secure fence separates the two properties to ensure a safe walking environment. The reserve has 73 small and large mammal and 278 bird species recorded. For arthropods, much remains to be discovered in this recognized biodiversity hotspot.

COLLECTING

The venue is surrounded by bushveld savanna, situated on the banks of the Palala River with an unpolluted night sky. Delegates can **move freely and collect specimens** across the secure, fenced 1,170-hectare property.

A Limpopo Province collecting permit will be available to all delegates. *Delegates who would like to collect in other provinces, should contact the colloquium organizers for further details.*

REGISTRATION AND ACCOMMODATION FEES

Registration Fees

Africa (based in Africa):	R 4,940.00 (\$310)
International:	R 5,940.00 (\$360)
Day visitor (incl. lunch):	R 800.00

Accommodation Fees (including all meals)

Photos of the different accommodation types are available on the colloquium website and at the end of this circular.

<i>Accommodation type</i>	<i>Max occupancy per room</i>	<i>Inventory</i>	<i>Total (5 days)</i>
Dorm shared	4–8 guests	4 dorms	R 2,380.00 (\$150)
Dorm shared	maximum 3 guests	6 dorms	R 2,680.00 (\$168)
Dorm (private single)	1 guest	6 dorms	R 3,335.00 (\$210)
Single rooms	single or couple	8 rooms	R 3,335.00 (\$210)
VIP rooms (standalone)	single or couple	4 rooms	R 8,035.00 (\$500)
VIP rooms (shared cottage)	single or couple	2 rooms	R 8,650.00 (\$540)

If you have sharing preferences, please indicate the names of the persons you want to share with, or contact the colloquium organizers for assistance.

All fees:

- Are quoted in South African Rand (ZAR); the approximate USD costs provided in brackets are based on the current exchange rate. **Invoicing will be in ZAR.**
- Include all local taxes and bank charges.
- Cover all meals -- including a welcoming finger-food dinner, colloquium dinner, and themed dinners -- a Big 5 safari game drive, and a colloquium package.
- **Apply equally to participating delegates and accompanying persons**, thanks to the low, all-inclusive rates secured for the colloquium.

SPONSORSHIPS

Limited sponsorships will be available. To qualify, the applicant must:

- Be a resident of an African country.
- Conduct studies on arachnids (non-acarine) with an African component.
- Present a poster or oral presentation at the colloquium.

To apply, upload a brief motivation (maximum 1 page), a CV, and a letter of support from a researcher based at a recognized scientific institution (max 10MB, pdf files only), via this link: <https://forms.gle/BN1nc9an6EKP5FiUA>. Your abstract for an oral or poster presentation should be uploaded to the abstract submission platform via the colloquium website.

The organizing committee reserves the right to alter conditions, pending applications received.

VISAS, TRAVEL & TRANSFERS

Visas

A special visa is not required to attend a conference in South Africa. However, standard visa requirements depend on your nationality. South Africa has three visa categories; please check well in advance which one applies to you (<https://www.gov.za/services/temporary-residence/visa>):

1. *Visa-Exempt*: Receive an entry stamp directly at the port of entry.
2. *e-Visa Eligible*: Apply online. You must obtain visa confirmation before departure.
3. *Traditional Visa Required*: Submit physical documents to an embassy or visa processing centre to secure the visa in your passport before departure.

*Delegates who are not current members of AFRAS or the International Society of Arachnology (ISA), but require an official **Letter of Invitation for visa purposes**, must provide proof of institutional affiliation or a student ID.*

Airport Shuttle

Available upon request from **O.R. Tambo International Airport (Johannesburg)** at an additional fee.

PROGRAMME, ABSTRACTS & ACTIVITIES

Provisional Programme

Sun. (10th): arrival, registration, welcoming function
Mon (11th): oral and poster presentations
Tue (12th): oral and poster presentations
Wed (13th): open day (collecting/free day/other activities (see examples below), etc.)
Thu (14th): oral and poster presentations; AGM; colloquium dinner and awards ceremony
Fri (15th): departure after breakfast

Oral presentation

Regular presentations are 15 minutes (12 minutes for the presentation plus 3 minutes for questions). There will also be a 5-minute flash presentation session (2.5 minutes for the presentation plus 2.5 minutes for questions) for students who do not have final data yet but would like to pitch their project's core idea and preliminary findings.

Abstract Submission

Abstract submitted online. The abstract should have maximum 300 words. Title and author name should be in sentence case.

Workshops and Special Sessions

Delegates may suggest workshops or dedicated sessions on topics to the programme organizer.

Facilities and Optional Activities

- Free, strong WiFi signal in all central venue areas
- Swimming pool
- Bush walks
- Visit to rock art site
- Obstacle course (for those joined by their families, or who themselves feel young at heart)
- Game drives (one inclusive on registration; additional drives at additional cost)
- Hands-on outreach activities at a rural school (additional cost to cover transport)

POST-COLLOQUIUM

Workshop

Non-acarine arachnid curation workshop: Pending interest, there will be a 3-day workshop on curation of arachnids (non-acarine) at the DITSONG: National Museum of Natural History in Pretoria during the week following the colloquium, and fully sponsored by the museum.

Collections

Delegates who would like to visit arachnid collections post-colloquium should contact Tharina Bird (for DITSONG collections; tharina@mitsong.org.za) or Robin Lyle (for the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) collections; LyleR@arc.agric.za). Details of collection curators at other institutions can be provided on request.

AFRAS

The AFRAS Colloquiums are tri-annual meetings of local and international arachnologists who research African arachnids. We strongly encourage participation by students and fellow arachnologists in Africa. AFRAS is a non-profit scientific organization. Membership is free.

We are looking forward to seeing you here!

Tharina Bird (AFRAS Chair), Xoli Mavimbela, Robin Lyle, Charles Haddad, and Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman.

