

SANBI Team Member: Reshnee Lalla Main University Supervisor: Dr. Erwin Sieben Location: Wakkerstroom + possibly Drakensberg (UKZN Westville) Level of project: Honours Working title: An assessment of the invasiveness of <i>Alopecurus arundinaceus</i>

Background

Alien grasses have tended to be understudied when compared to other alien species in South Africa, but in some cases have caused major impacts (Visser *et al.* 2017).

The grass species *Alopecurus arundinaceus* has been recorded in the Wakkerstroom wetland in 2012 (Fish *et al.* 2015) but seems to have been present in South Africa already for more than 30 years as this species can be easily confused with South African specimens of *Pennisetum sphacelatum*. It has been found that the species is present under that name and from the same location in the John Bews herbarium in Pietermaritzburg. In Wakkerstroom the species seems to be quite extensive so it would be useful to map its extent in the Wakkerstroom wetland and monitor whether it is spreading to neighbouring wetlands from Wakkerstroom. It is also useful to verify the identification of *Pennisetum sphacelatum* in various herbaria in South Africa (which can be consulted digitally) to find whether there are more locations where this species has been present for a while. Local studies of this species may also clarify why an extensive population of this species seems to not have spread any further, for example by studying the extent to which this species is utilizing sexual and asexual reproduction (sexual reproduction is necessary to spread to new locations).

Key contacts

Erwin Sieben: siebene@ukzn.ac.za, 031-2608140

Further Reading

Fish, L., Mashau, A.C., Moeaha, M.J. & Nembudani, M.T., 2015. Identification guide to Southern African Grasses: An identification manual with keys, descriptions and distributions. Strelitzia 36.

Visser, V., Wilson, J. R. U., Canavan, K., Canavan, S., Fish, L., Maitre, D. L., Nänni, I., Mashau, C., O'Connor, T. G., Ivey, P., Kumschick, S. & Richardson, D. M. (2017) Grasses as invasive plants in South Africa revisited: patterns, pathways and management. Bothalia: African Biodiversity and Conservation, 47, a2169.