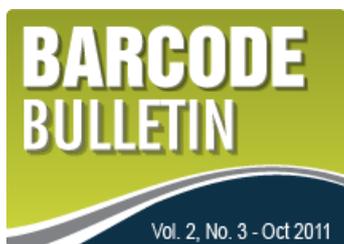




## South African barcoders head for the wetlands

Toyota Enviro Outreach rides again



The second iBOL edition of South Africa's Toyota Enviro Outreach program – 20 scientists and support staff in a fleet of eight specially equipped vehicles – set out from the Johannesburg International Motor Show October 8 on an 12-day off-road odyssey to collect plant and animal samples for DNA barcoding.

This year's destination was iSimangaliso Wetland Park – 332,000 hectares of lakes, estuaries, swamp forests and massive 25,000-year-old coastal dunes. **iSimangaliso** – the name means "miracle and wonder" – was listed as South Africa's first World Heritage Site in 1999 and is the country's third-largest national park, stretching from Cape St. Lucia in the south to Kosi Bay in the north.



[Click image to enlarge](#)

With specialists in fish and mollusks, spiders, insects and plants on hand, the goal was to explore the park's eight interlinking ecosystems, collect specimens from the broadest possible range of taxa and preserve them for DNA barcoding and deposition in [Barcode of Life Data Systems](#) (BOLD).

All voucher specimens will be deposited in major national collections where they will be available for examination and in-depth analyses by researchers. The project will also expand the electronic information base on South African biodiversity and facilitate the growth of the National Collecting Programme.

Heading the scientific team and coordinating the project for iBOL was Michelle van der Bank, head of the [African Center for DNA Barcoding](#) at the University of Johannesburg. Speaking before the fleet set out from Johannesburg, Prof. van der Bank said: "The barcode has changed our lives by making information available in a quick and easy way. The iBOL project, supported by Toyota, will do the same for living species. It is important that we go out and collect each and every species for this project and build the iBOL database."



[Click image to enlarge](#)

iBOL Scientific Director Paul Hebert said that the importance of South Africa to the iBOL initiative cannot be overstated. "From the iBOL perspective, it is the ideal combination – a country with vast biodiversity and a community of skilled scientists dedicated to the application of DNA barcoding in species identification.

"We are immensely grateful to the Toyota Enviro Outreach initiative for its assistance in ensuring that South Africa achieves its barcoding targets," he added.

**A big contribution from small collectors**

On day three of this year's expedition, the Outreach team enlisted the assistance of some young collaborators – the 278 school children at the Trelfall primary school. The Toyotas entered the school gates at the start of the day and the children were treated to a presentation on the importance of trees, insects and other living things.



[Click image to enlarge](#)

Then they divided into groups, each accompanied by a researcher, to collect insects and other small creatures around the school grounds. The researchers spent the afternoon sorting through the resulting 1,000 samples from 300 different species.



[Read the expedition blog](#)

---

[Back to Barcode Bulletin Index](#)

---

*Also posted in [News and Events](#), [South Africa](#)*

