



Keynote Speakers

Prof B Rubidge

Catalogue to our past and clues for the future - What the fossil record tells us

Curriculum vitae:

Bruce Rubidge was born in Graaff-Reinet in 1956 and grew up on the family farm in the district. From an early age he became interested in fossils, collecting his first worthwhile fossil, a gorgonopsian, at the age of 5. He received his schooling at the Union High School, Graaff-Reinet and later St Andrew's College, Grahamstown. He attended the University of Stellenbosch where he achieved his BSc; BSc (Hons) cum laude; MSc cum laude. In 1980 Rubidge was appointed as a researcher in the Palaeontology Department of the National Museum, Bloemfontein, becoming Head of the Department in 1981. While in the employ of the National Museum he completed a PhD through the Geology Department of the University of Port Elizabeth under the supervision of Professor Izak Rust. In 1990 he was appointed Director of the BPI Palaeontology, and Head of the Palaeontology Department of the University of the Witwatersrand. He has published more than 70 articles in national and international scientific journals on various aspects of vertebrate palaeontology as well as bio- and litho-stratigraphy and sedimentology of Permian-Triassic rocks of southern Africa. He serves on several national and international heritage and geoscience-related committees.

Abstract: (Summary by Erica van der Westhuizen)

Prof Rubidge presented a fascinating picture of southern Africa's ancient animal life based on the fossil record. South Africa can proudly boast of having the following:

- The oldest tortoise ancestors
- Best record of Therapids in the world
- Oldest dinosaur ancestor
- Oldest dinosaur eggs in the world
- Oldest evidence of human-made fire in the world (at Swartkrans, Cradle of Human-kind)
- Best record of an extinction event – 250 million years ago – 96% of ocean species and 70% of land species vanished

Prof Rubidge also related the importance of information storage and retrieval in palaeontology to librarianship.