

The Young Geomorphologist Training Program at the SAAG 2023 Biennial Conference

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Report

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The conference was a transformative experience for me, marking my inaugural participation in a professional conference setting. I presented on my research titled 'Assessing the hydrological regime of lacustrine wetlands on the Maputaland Coastal Plain', as my research is still ongoing, I presented the results of my objective one which was to identify the rainfall trends of the area from 2016 to 2022. This event provided me with a valuable opportunity to learn, engage with experts in the field, and make meaningful connections, all while navigating some personal challenges.

The conference began with a one-day field-excursion going up the Elandsberg mountain, learning about scree slopes and the degradation of wetlands through the drainage of the wetlands for agricultural purposes. As someone living with asthma, participating in the physically demanding aspects of the conference, such as ascending the mountain for the field excursion, presented a significant hurdle. Nonetheless, I persevered, determined to make the most of this unique opportunity. While I could not continue with the group to the peatland for peat sampling due to my condition, I found alternative ways to engage with the conference content and participants, reinforcing my commitment to the field despite physical limitations. I learned from the other attendees that they were trained in peat sampling methods and got information on how to tell the differences of peat age through tasting and the differences in texture and color.



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One of the most significant takeaways from the SAAG conference was the wealth of knowledge I gained through the presentations, discussions, and interactions with fellow attendees. As a newcomer to the conference scene, I was pleasantly surprised by the depth and breadth of information presented by researchers, scholars, and specialists in geomorphology. The diverse array of topics covered in the sessions opened my eyes to the multifaceted nature of this field, and I found myself captivated by the innovative research and discoveries shared throughout the event. Furthermore, the questions, comments, and suggestions I received during and after my presentation sessions were invaluable. These interactions not only helped me refine my own understanding but also encouraged me to view my research from new perspectives. Constructive feedback from fellow conference-goers enabled me to identify areas for improvement in my work and gave me fresh insights into potential future research directions.

In addition to my role as an attendee, I also had the privilege of chairing a presentation session on the third day of the conference. This responsibility provided me with valuable organizational and leadership experience, further enhancing my professional skills and facilitating meaningful connections with presenters and audience members alike. In conclusion, my first-ever SAAG conference was an enriching and transformative experience. It broadened my horizons within the field of geomorphology, allowed me to forge important connections. The challenges I faced, including my asthma and the physical demands of the conference, reinforced my determination and adaptability. This conference marked the beginning of what I hope will be a long and fruitful journey in the world of geomorphology, and I eagerly anticipate future opportunities to learn, contribute, and connect within this dynamic field. I am grateful to IAG for the funding that enabled me to be part of this conference and I hope this opportunity will be open to other students and young scientists in the future to grow and excel in their respective fields.



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Figure 1: Attendees going up the mountain



Figure 2: Scree slopes (Boulders)



Figure 3: Boulder intrusions



Figure 4: Water sipping through the ground



Figure 5: Peat sampling



Figure 6: Peat sample