

Being able to attend an international conference is one of the most exciting experiences I have had in my life. Receiving the WAAVP African Foundation Scholarship – WAAVP Student Travel Award, made for a successful and rich conference experience where I learned that you will always acquire knowledge and something to take home, be it academically or personally.

I am a PhD candidate in freshwater parasitology at the North-West University, South Africa and a member of the multidisciplinary NWU-Water Research Group. My research focus is on the parasitic communities of native and invasive fishes in our water systems. It was a great honour to be selected as an awardee, and to this I owe the WAAVP a great thanks. I was accompanied by two of my research group's members that travelled independently, and they showed me the ropes around the conference.

During the 27<sup>th</sup> WAAVP conference I learned about a whole different universe of parasitology and that there is a wide spectrum of interest in improving and understanding the role, effect and management of parasitic species in our world. This conference also allowed for interactive discussion and addressing issues or providing constructive advice during the question and answer sessions, a very dynamic experience and a first for me.

I presented a poster during the conference, the judges were one of a kind with engaging questions and a broad knowledge on the topic of parasitology, providing insightful ideas. It was really enriching. The opportunity presented itself and I met fellow freshwater aquatic parasitologists that allowed for discussion on prospective collaboration. Meeting the fellow awardees during the travel to the USA, and the tough trip back, with an extended lay-over at Heathrow, ensured for a small adventure and lunch, exchanging our experiences during the conference, and how we would like to contribute to our specialised fields of researchers as young scientist.



**Left:** Day 1 of the 27<sup>th</sup> WAAVP, in front of the lovely conference venue. **Right:** Mid-conference fun run, meeting Prof. Rosina Krecek.