

NEUTRON STARS AND NEBULAE: HABITATS FOR PHOTONS, COSMIC RAYS AND OTHER ANIMALS

A conference celebrating the lifetime contributions of Alice Harding and Isabelle Grenier

Skukuza Rest Camp, Kruger National Park, South Africa

August 9 – 14, 2026

More information is available on the [Conference Website](#)

First Circular

About the Conference

The science of pulsar-like systems is progressing rapidly, driven by major instrumental and computational advances. Hosting a high-energy conference focusing on neutron stars and their environments in the Kruger National Park offers a timely opportunity to bring together international experts, theorists, and observers working across the electromagnetic spectrum and in multi-messenger domains. Recent discoveries with the Fermi LAT, H.E.S.S., and LHAASO telescopes have deepened our understanding of pulsar systems, revealing extended TeV halos, ultra-high-energy emission from pulsar wind nebulae, and pulsed gamma-ray emission in the TeV band. We also look forward to the contributions that will be made by current experiments as well as by the DSA-2000, SKA, IXPE, future MeV satellites, SWGO, the CTA, and HAWC, among others. The growing catalogue of multi-wavelength SNRs, PWNe, and pulsar binaries calls for a coordinated effort to synthesise data from radio to multi-TeV energies.

This meeting will foster engagement between communities studying pulsars, pulsar wind nebulae (PWNe), and supernova remnants (SNRs), and those investigating their connections to cosmic rays, gravitational waves, and neutrinos.

South Africa and Regional Context

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South Africa, with its strong regional observational infrastructure – including the MeerKAT radio telescope, SALT optical telescope, and H.E.S.S. Cherenkov Array in Namibia – offers an ideal setting for this meeting. By convening international experts in high-energy pulsar-like systems in the Kruger National Park, the meeting will facilitate collaboration between theorists and observers from both hemispheres and across subdisciplines.

This will be the third in a series of conferences hosted in the Kruger National Park. The previous editions were:

Towards a Major Atmospheric Čerenkov Detector – V, Berg-en-Dal, 8–11 August 1997.

The Cosmic Kaleidoscope – Pulsars and Their Nebulae, Supernova Remnants and More, Skukuza, 13–17 August 2012 (in memory of Okkie de Jager).

With this **third event**, we will celebrate the lifetime professional contribution to gamma-ray astronomy of internationally renowned gamma-ray and pulsar physicists **Alice Harding** and **Isabelle Grenier**, on the joyous occasion of the 75th birthday of Alice and the retirement of Isabelle.

Honourees

Dr. Alice Harding

Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, USA

Alice Harding was an Astrophysicist in the Astrophysics Science Division at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center from 1980 to 2020, after earning her PhD from the University of Massachusetts–Amherst in 1979. She retired from NASA and continues as a Visiting Scientist in the Theoretical Division at Los Alamos National Laboratory since 2020.

Her interests include pulsars, highly magnetised neutron stars (magnetars), gamma-ray bursts, and supernova remnants. She has been modelling gamma-ray pulsars for 45 years and wrote one of the first papers in this field.

A Fellow of the American Physical Society, she received the NASA Medal for Exceptional Scientific Achievement (1994, 2012), the John C. Lindsay Award (2012), and the AAS Rossi Prize (2013).

She is a member of the NICER Science Team and Fermi LAT Collaboration, continuing to contribute to pulsar and high-energy astrophysics research.

Dr. Isabelle Grenier

AIM, CEA–Saclay /
Université Paris–Cité

Isabelle Grenier, a professor at Université Paris–Cité, conducts research in astrophysics at AIM CEA–Saclay. An expert in high-energy astrophysics and the interstellar medium, she earned her PhD in astrophysics in 1988 at Université Paris–Diderot, focusing on analysis methods for sparse photon data, gamma-ray pulsars, and mapping molecular clouds in the Milky Way.

Her results on phase-resolved spectroscopy of gamma-ray pulsars provided early clues to particle acceleration in magnetospheres. She identified pulsars and their wind nebulae as dominant sources of Galactic gamma rays and discovered large reserves of dark gas as well as cocoons of young cosmic rays in our Galaxy.

In 2022, the French Academy of Sciences CNES prize was awarded to her

As a member of the *Fermi* LAT Collaboration, she continues to advance our understanding of gamma rays and cosmic rays in the Milky Way.

Registration Fees

We are actively pursuing sponsorships in order to make the conference accessible and affordable for early-career scientists. We hope to keep the registration fee (which includes conference venue and infrastructure hire, conference packs, daily lunches with beverages, two daily coffees / teas and snacks, and the welcoming reception) **below ZAR 8500 (about USD 500, depending on the exchange rate)**. There will be a maximum of **100 participants**, with about 20 of them being students / postdocs / junior members.



SOC

- **Dr. Matthew Baring** (co-chair) – William Marsh Rice University, **USA**
- **Prof. Christo Venter** (co-chair) – North-West University, **South Africa**
- **Dr. Alice Harding** – Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, **USA**
- **Dr. Isabelle Grenier** – AIM, CEA-Saclay / Université Paris-Cité, **France**
- **Dr. Zorawar Wadiasingh** – NASA GSFC / University of Maryland College Park, **USA**
- **Prof. Diego Torres**, Institució Catalana de Recerca i Estudis Avançats, (ICREA), Barcelona, **Spain**
- **Prof. Samar Safi-Harb**, University of Manitoba, **Canada**
- **Dr. Patrizia Caraveo**, INAF – Istituto di Astrofisica Spaziale e Fisica Cosmica di Milano, Milan, **Italy**
- **Dr. Benoît Cerutti**, Chargé de Recherche CNRS, IPAG, Université Grenoble Alpes, **France**
- **Dr. Alex Hill**, University of British Columbia, Okanagan, **Canada**
- **Dr. Marisa Geyer**, University of Cape Town, **South Africa**
- **Dr. Emma de Oña Wilhelmi**, Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron (DESY), Zeuthen, **Germany**

LOC

- **Prof. Christo Venter** (co-chair) – North-West University, South Africa
- **Dr. Monica Barnard** (co-chair) – North-West University, South Africa
- **Prof. Johan van der Walt** – North-West University, South Africa
- **Dimakhatso "DJ" Maheso** (Student Representative), North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa
- **Elanie van Rooyen** (Administration), North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa
- **Ashleigh Koortzen** (Faculty Marketing), North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa
- **Kimbal Schutt**, (PCO), TOURVEST, Cape Town, South Africa
- **Dr. Estie Nel-de Jager** (Website and Design), Dara Media and Marketing, George, South Africa

Venue

Kruger National Park

Established in 1926, the Kruger National Park is one of Africa's largest and most renowned wildlife reserves. Stretching nearly 20,000 km² along South Africa's north-eastern region, it is home to an extraordinary diversity of ecosystems, over 500 bird species, and the famed Big Five. The park combines world-class conservation with unique opportunities for visitors to experience southern Africa's natural heritage.

Please note that conservation fees may apply to international participants, in accordance with South African National Parks (SANParks) regulations. Further details will be provided closer to the conference date.

Skukuza Rest Camp

Skukuza, the largest rest camp in Kruger, serves as the park's administrative headquarters and a vibrant hub for visitors. Situated on the banks of the Sabie River, it offers a wide range of facilities including conference venues, accommodation, restaurants, and research resources. Its location makes it an ideal setting for scientific meetings while providing direct access to Kruger's wildlife and landscapes.



Important Dates

Date	Event
Jan 1, 2026	First Circular
Feb 14, 2026	Second Circular
March 1, 2026	Third Circular
March 10, 2026	Abstract Submission Deadline

Date	Event
Apr 15, 2026	Announcement of Selected Talks/Posters
May 15, 2026	Early-Bird Registration
June 15, 2026	Registration Deadline
Aug 9 - 14, 2026	Conference

Travel

Most international delegates will arrive in South Africa via OR Tambo International Airport (Johannesburg). From there, several convenient options are available to reach Skukuza in the Kruger National Park, where the conference will be held.



Flight to Skukuza (Airlink)

Daily scheduled flights from OR Tambo International Airport (JNB) directly to Skukuza Airport (SZK) inside the Kruger National Park. This is the fastest and most convenient option for most delegates.



Self-drive from Johannesburg

Delegates can rent a vehicle at OR Tambo and drive to Skukuza in approximately 5–6 hours on national highways. This option offers flexibility for those wishing to explore the region before or after the conference.



Shuttle and private transfers

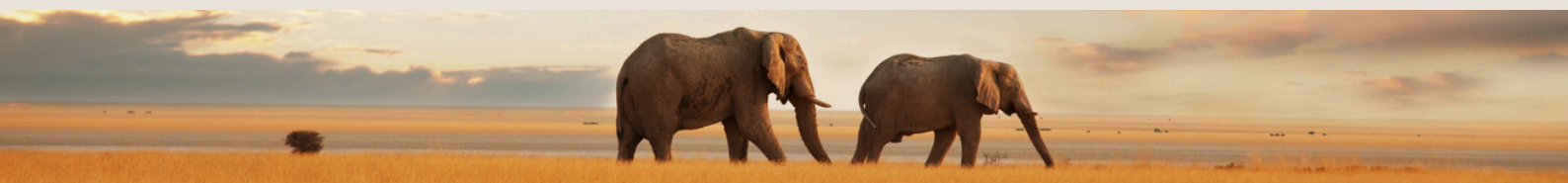
Several operators offer pre-booked shuttle and private road transfers from Johannesburg to the Kruger area. This is a comfortable option for delegates who prefer not to drive themselves.



Regional Airport + Road

As an alternative to Skukuza, delegates may fly to Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport (MQP) and continue by road (shuttle bus or rental car) to Skukuza (approximately 100 km, ~2 hours). This can be useful if direct flights to Skukuza are fully booked.

Further details on travel logistics, recommended routes and transfer options will be provided closer to the conference date. Registration, accommodation and travel arrangements will be coordinated through the official conference organiser, **Tourvest**.



Conference Organisation

Kimbal Schutt

TOURVEST Meetings & Events

Cape Town, South Africa



Registration, accommodation and travel arrangements will be handled by Tourvest. Once registration opens, a dedicated portal will be available on the [conference website](#).

Sponsors

We would like to thank the following generous sponsors:



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