

FORUM BOTANICUM

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NEWS-LETTER OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF BOTANISTS
NUUSBRIEF VAN DIE SUID-AFRIKAANSE GENOOTSAP VAN PLANTKUNDIGES

SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF BOTANISTS ANNUAL PRESIDENTIAL REPORT

1 JULY, 1972 - 30 JUNE, 1973:

Meetings (a) The following meetings were held by council:

- 5 July, 1972 at Johannesburg (11 members present)
- 7 July, 1972 at Johannesburg (15 members present)
- 19 August, 1972 at Bloemfontein (11 members present)
- 3 February, 1973 at Durban (10 members present)

(b) The following executive committee meetings were held:

- 4 August, 1972 at Pretoria
- 21 November, 1972 at Pretoria
- 21 March, 1973 at Johannesburg
- 2 April, 1973 at Pretoria
- 9 May, 1973 at Pretoria.

Constitution. A council subcommittee thoroughly revised the S.A.A.B. constitution. Regulations governing the presentation of the South African Medal for Botany were added. A bound copy of the constitution was forwarded to each member.

Forum Botanicum. Our news-letter has again successfully served its function of mutual contact between botanists. It appears from reports from many sources that the circle of readers is considerably wider than is generally accepted. The two honorary editors, Mr. E.G.H. Oliver & Mrs. E.P. du Plessis, are again heartily thanked and congratulated for their efforts. A comprehensive report and financial statement was presented.

Membership. The present S.A.A.B. membership includes the following categories:

- 11 Institutional members
- 184 Ordinary, affiliate, graduate and student members
- 5 Honorary members (Dr. M.R. Levyns, Dr. M.A. Pocock, Prof. H.G. Schweickerdt, Dr. I.C. Verdoorn and Prof. R.H. Compton).

Total: 200 members.

Membership growth has been as follows:

- 1969 - 70: 126 members
- 1970 - 71: 147 members
- 1971-- 72: 177 members
- 1972 - 73: 200 members

Six members have resigned during the past year.

A financial report of the association for the year 1972-73 was presented.

There are four active regional S.A.A.B. branches having the following memberships:

- Orange Free State with 16 members
- Eastern Cape with 18 members
- South-western Cape with 33 members
- Northern Transvaal with 56 members.

Natal and Southern Transvaal have as yet not formed regional branches.

The reports and financial statements for the branches were presented.

Joint Council of Scientific Societies. The S.A.A.B. is affiliated to the Joint Council taking active part in its activities. Dr. B. de Winter is the S.A.A.B. representative on this council and presented a report.

Register of botanical taxonomic research. The register compiled by Drs. De Winter & Killick for S.A.A.B. was completed and distributed to all members. World-wide requests have resulted in copies being distributed at R1-20 each.

Symposium. A symposium was organized in collaboration with the S₂A₃ having the theme: "Growing points in Science", while another entitled: "The South African Flora", was organized to coincide with the opening of the new Botanical Research Institute Building on Friday, 29 June, 1973. Various overseas and South African speakers were invited to participate in

this symposium as follows: Dr. H. Merxmüller (Munich); Dr. Q. Jones (United States Department of Agriculture); Dr. L.E. Codd, Mr. J.W. Morris and Dr. O.A. Leistner (Botanical Research Institute), and Prof. N. Grobbelaar (University of Pretoria).

Other S.A.A.B. activities. (1) Poisonous sprays on rail- and roadside plants. The South African Railways and the respective Roads Departments reacted favourably to Council's approaches. A detailed explanation, compiled by Dr. De Winter, was published in Forum Botanicum.

(2) S.A.A.B. - S_2A_3 relations. A committee, consisting of Dr. De Winter and Mrs. Du Plessis, was detailed to investigate congress problems, particularly with regard to their nature, programmes and financial aspects. A questionnaire was circulated to S.A.A.B. members in this connection. Eighty-seven replies were received. Evaluation of results is continuing. Personally, I feel that our relations with the S_2A_3 must again be carefully considered.

(3) The South African Medal for Botany. A design was accepted on principle by the executive committee, but was unfortunately not available at the A.G.M. Dr. R.A. Dyer, the first recipient of this medal, is offered our heartiest congratulations on this honour.

(4) Collection permits for plants. The serious and protracted nature of the President's illness prevented finalization of this matter. Developments have reached the advanced stage where the various regional Departments of Nature Conservation contact the S.A.A.B. for approval prior to issuing permits to non-S.A.A.B. members to collect plants.

(5) Protection of plants in Bantu homelands. The whole question of the future existence of plants in new and established Bantu homelands was discussed with the honourable Mr. Raubenheimer, deputy minister of Bantu Administration. These discussions led, amongst others, to the declaration of Mariepskop as a white area with consolidation. Various matters, such as the inclusion of certain white farms within Kwa Zulu, the *Encephalartos* plants in the Eastern Cape and the Ngoye forest of Zululand, are receiving further attention.

(6) Freeway through Kirstenbosch. The S.A.A.B. has also let its voice be heard in protest against the proposed road building projects at the entrance to the National Botanic Garden.

(7) Employment opportunities for Botany graduates. A Council Committee consisting of Prof. O.A.M. Lewis (convenor), Mrs. E.P. du Plessis and Dr. F.M. Getliffe, with Dr. J.P. Jessop as a co-opted member, were instructed to investigate all aspects of employment opportunities for graduate botanists. A questionnaire in this respect was circulated to all instances who might employ botanists. Assistance was obtained from the Bureau of the Human Sciences Research Council. Employment difficulties for Bantu and Indian graduates were also investigated.

(8) The South African Society of Plant Physiologists. Amalgamation with S.A.A.B. was approved on principle, but terms had not been finalized.

(9) Group tour to Boulder, Colorado. S.A.A.B. was prepared to arrange a group tour to attend the International Botanical Congress for Systematics in Colorado, as advertised in Forum Botanicum, but no further arrangements were made because of lack of response.

(10) Speakers for possible radio talks. A list of speakers was made available to the Joint Council of Scientific Societies for the S.A.B.C. if they should require such a list. The following persons were delegated:

Prof. N. Grobbelaar (Physiology)

Dr. D. Edwards (Botanical surveys with satellites)

Dr. S.C. Seagrief (Algae)

Prof. M.C. Papendorp (Fungi)

Prof. E.M. van Zinderen Bakker (Palynology)

Dr. J.P. Rourke (Taxonomy)

Mr. C.J. Ward (Ecology)

Dr. F.M. Getliffe (Chemo-taxonomy)

Prof. H.P. van der Schijff (Morphology)

(11) Opening of the new Botanical Research Institute Building. In celebration the S.A.A.B. presented a banquet at the Pretoria Country Club through the courtesy of Dr. and Mrs. B. de Winter. South African and overseas botanists were invited to this function. During the ceremonies, Dr. J. Heslop-Harrison, Director of Kew Botanic Gardens, acted as guest speaker.

A weekend excursion to the Magaliesberg was also organized which included

visits to the Tonkwane Kloof area and to the Bartlett's farm. The evenings were spent at the Utopia holiday resort.

(12) Leningrad congress. Botanists wishing to attend the International Botanical Congress in Leningrad should approach the C.S.I.R. for assistance in procuring visas and other documents.

(13) Destruction of plants during construction works. Strong feelings on this matter led to S.A.A.B. writing urgent letters of protest to the Director of Nature Conservation in the Cape, regarding the destruction of large numbers of *Encephalartos* plants due to road construction between Whittlesea and Seymour. Council is still giving this matter its attention.

(14) Joint memberships for husband and wife. Council has decided that husband and wife S.A.A.B. members were only liable for a R7-00 annual fee, but that a single address card only would be made for both in such instances.

(15) Funds for attending international congresses. A committee consisting of Prof. H.P. van der Schijff (convenor), Mrs. E.P. du Plessis, Dr. A. Eicker and Prof. N. Grobbelaar is investigating the possibility of initiating a fund to enable young South African botanists to attend international congresses.

(16) A list of specialists. At the request of the Joint Council, a list of specialists in the various botanical fields was made available. Council decided to appoint various regional convenors. Every convenor would draw up a list of specialists in each field of Botany in that region and this would be presented to the S.A.A.B. Council. The convenors' names would be presented to the J.C.S.S. as a starting point for interviews, queries, information, etc. The co-ordinator could, if necessary, direct the query to any specialist in that particular field. The following co-ordinators were appointed:

Northern Transvaal: Mrs. E.P. du Plessis and Dr. B. de Winter

Southern Transvaal: Prof. C.F. Cresswell and Prof. M.C. Papendorf

Orange Free State: Prof. J.N. Eloff

Natal: Mrs. E.F. Hennessy

Eastern Cape: Prof. J.G.C. Small

South-Western Cape: Dr. A.V. Hall and Prof. P.G. Jordaan.

General. I wish to convey my sincerest thanks and appreciation to my fellow council members for their co-operation and support during the past year. A

special word of thanks to Dr. A. Eicker for the efficient execution of his secretarial duties. Mrs. E.P. du Plessis, our treasurer, also deserves our sincerest thanks for the dutiful execution of her responsibilities.

H.P. v.d. Schijff - President 1972/73.

POST-CONGRESS TOUR (JULY, 1973): Several distinguished overseas botanists were invited to the opening of the Botanical Research Institute building and to the S₂A₃ Congress. Difficulties prevented a full S.A.A.B. post-congress tour, but Dr. De Winter planned a ten-day trip for the visitors to see a fair sample of South African vegetation. In addition to the visitors and members of the B.R.I. staff, Dr. Jacot Guillarmod and I were fortunate enough to be included in the group.

At 8.30 on the morning after the opening of the B.R.I., our party set forth from the herbarium, leaving behind those less fortunate who had to attend to restoring order after the celebrations of the previous night.

Chris Scheepers and Hans Vahrmeijer had previously carried out a preliminary tour and prepared a schedule of the details of each day's journey - describing the geology, the vegetation types and the major species to be seen. This schedule was prepared so meticulously that it caused Prof. Ellenberg to exclaim that not only never before in his travels had the vegetation of a country made such an impact on him in so short a time, as he was able to come to grips with it by careful study of the schedule, but the schedule also enabled him to "master the impossible Latin names pronounced in an English fashion".

We travelled north through the bushveld basin to Magoeboskloof. On the next day we visited the spectacular grove of *Encenhalartos transvenosus* in the Modjadji reserve, then on to have a late lunch at the charming home of Mr. and Mrs. Klapwyk and a very late dinner at Palaborwa.

In the Kruger Park the animals outdid themselves in obligingly coming into view - a large herd of Roan antelope, a lion kill beside the road, and the elephants almost too large for Tamra Raven's viewfinder.

Where others would have found the many miles of "Mopane" a dreary monotony, Prof. Ellenberg described it as "a most exciting example of an Ecosystem".

After leaving the Park we went through the Strydom tunnel, spending the night at Blyde, then on through Pilgrim's Rest, to White River. Here Prof. Heslop-Harrison left us, returning to Pretoria with Dr. Edwards. We sadly missed his stimulating company, not to mention his incredible puns.

The rest of us went on to Josini Dam. Here Dr. Moll joined the party, taking us through the interesting vegetation of Zululand and on to Lake Sibaya, where Rhodes University zoologists made us welcome. Then down to Sodwana Bay and back to Josini, where Dr. and Mrs. Raven went on to Durban, leaving us to return to the bleak mid-winter highveld.

It was a great privilege to have been on this tour, and long will we remember Peter Raven perched on top of the landrover packing his specimens into a press stored on the roof, his inevitable box of little bottles of fixing fluid, and his unbounded enthusiasm in collecting mosses for a member of the Missouri staff, although not a bryologist himself. The stimulating discussions - Prof. Heslop-Harrison and Dr. Raven balancing on the edge of a look-out over Blyde, scarcely seeing the view, so absorbed in discussing the migration and radiation of South African species.

Bob Drummond with his very extensive knowledge of the Rhodesian vegetation made one feel that political boundaries are of little importance, as he was so completely at home with our vegetation.

With the present-day trend in botanical thought, I was delighted to note that Willis (6th edition) is still important, and that the Director of Kew could not be parted from his copy.

It should be recorded that on this trip it was settled that the collective name for a group of botanists is a 'press' of botanists - we hope the physiologists will not raise objections at the next A.G.M. (Mrs. L. Davidson).

DEPARTMENT OF PASTURE SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF THE O.F.S.: Prof. Brian Roberts has returned from a year's research in Australia. His research report (146 pp.) "Ecological studies on pasture condition in semi-arid Queensland" is available from the department (P.O. Box 339, Bloemfontein). Prof. Roberts' work concerned the establishment of floristic criteria to act as a basis for assessment of vegetation deterioration. The principles are of direct application in South Africa.

Mr. W.L.J. van Rensburg (Senior Lecturer) is engaged in detailed studies of fractions of carbohydrate growth reserves in *Themeda*. A respirometer has been built for this purpose.

Mr. D.P.J. Opperman (Lecturer) has reached an advanced stage in his studies on the influence of defoliation and moisture stress on the regrowth of *Themeda* and *Elyonurus*. He is also studying the phenological cycle of a number of the Gramineae under field conditions.

In a joint effort, the above staff members have published a complete series of ecological reprints in booklet form under the title of "Introductory Veld Ecology and Utilization". These are also available in Afrikaans ("Inleidende Veldekologie en -benutting"), and are available from the department at R1 each. The series covers South African vegetation types, migrations, fire, succession, deterioration, important grasses, shrubs, trees, legumes, poisonous plants and the general principles of ecological vegetation maintenance.

REQUEST FROM MUNCHEN: Dr. Annelis Schreiber of the Botanische Staatssammlung is searching for any duplicates of the type collection of *Lebeckia elongata* Hutch. (Papilionaceae). The specimens may perhaps be filed under *Lebeckia spinescens* Harv. The collection in question is PEARSON 9899 from South West Africa collected on the Percy Sladen Memorial Expedition in 1915-16 (Keetmanshoop-Ababies-Windhoek). Type material from the Bolus Herbarium has already been received by Dr. Schreiber who states that there are no duplicates at Kew. Any further information should be sent to Dr. Schreiber at the Botanische Staatssammlung, Menzinger Str. 67, D-8000 MUNCHEN 19, W. Germany and would be very much appreciated by her.

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