

# FORUM BOTANICUM

Vol. 14, No. 3

March 1976  
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NEWS-LETTER OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF BOTANISTS  
NUUSBRIEF VAN DIE SUID-AFRIKAANSE GENOOTSAP VAN PLANTKUNDIGES

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S.A.A.B. COUNCIL: The new Council as elected in January for 1976 is as follows:-

Dr. B. de Winter (Pretoria) President, Dr. A. Jacot-Guillarmod (Grahamstown) and Prof. N. Grobbelaar (Pretoria), Dr. F. Getliffe, Hon. Sec. (Johannesburg), Dr. A. Eicker, Hon. Treasurer (Pretoria), Prof. J.A. de Bruyn (Stellenbosch), Prof. B. Downing (Alice), Dr. D. Edwards (Pretoria), Prof. J. Eloff (Bloemfontein), Prof. O.A.M. Lewis (Cape Town), Prof. W.J. Lütjeharms (Cape Town), Prof. H. Papendorf (Potchefstroom), Prof. H.P. van der Schijff (Pretoria) and Dr. J.J.A. van der Walt (Stellenbosch).

Please note the addresses :-

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PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT, JANUARY 1976: This year has been a successful one for S.A.A.B. as reflected by increasing membership, the wide spectrum of activities of Council and members, and particularly in the well attended Annual Congress in Cape Town where the number of papers presented rose from 21 at the 1975 Congress to 37 in 1976, causing some serious consternation among the programme organisers. This year's Congress has been arranged to immediately precede the Saldanha Bay Symposium at Saldanha which has been

organised by the Royal Society of S.A. in conjunction with S.A.A.B. and the Zoological Society of S.A. to give plant-orientated scientists the opportunity to attend both functions. It is anticipated that next year's Congress will be held in conjunction with the Grasslands Society of S.A., thus maintaining a certain amount of the interdisciplinary contact which has inevitably been sacrificed through our disaffiliation from the S<sub>2</sub>A<sub>3</sub>.

For the first time since the inception of S.A.A.B., executive control of the Association has moved from the Johannesburg-Pretoria area to the Cape as part of a deliberate policy to emphasize the national character of the S.A.A.B. However laudable the object, the transfer has brought to light a number of pitfalls in our constitution which have led to expensive inefficiencies in executive structure. The difficulties of administering S.A.A.B. with Council's executive committee distributed between Cape Town, Pretoria, Alice, Stellenbosch, Johannesburg and Grahamstown does not need much imagining, while the rising cost of travel will soon restrict Exco members to scientists who have either made exceedingly fortunate marriages or recently written very successful first year textbooks. It is to be hoped that the constitutional amendments which Council is recommending, will rectify the situation without introducing new problems.

Membership of S.A.A.B. now stands at 260 (12 institutional, 240 ordinary and 8 honorary members), an increase of 30 members over last year. Council has met three times during the year, with 11 members present at the Pretoria meeting, 10 at the Bloemfontein meeting and 12 at the recent Cape Town meeting. The executive committee of Council

also met three times, once each in Cape Town, East London and Grahamstown.

The main matters which attracted Council's concern during the past year are the following:-

1) Publicity and the Image of Botany

To promote this essential facet of S.A.A.B.'s activities, Council has elected the well known "radio botanist" Professor Kristo Pienaar of the University of the Western Cape as our publicity officer and organiser of radio and T.V. talks by S.A.A.B. members. The first of these programmes should be recorded early in the new year.

The finalisation of a fitting design for the S.A.A.B. emblem appears to have been achieved thanks to the dedication of Dr. de Winter and his artists at the B.R.I. This means that the production of S.A.A.B. posters and publicity pamphlets can at last be commenced and designs for ties, lapel badges, etc. worked out by the S.A.A.B. Publicity Committee. The design of the emblem itself is based on a stylised *Protea cynaroides* flower, already adopted by S.A.A.B. as its institutional crest, and the colours of the national flag, to which a small touch of chlorophyll 'a' green has been added. The emblem has been on display for the first time at the 1976 Congress.

In an effort to further establish the position of botanists in South Africa, Council has commenced investigations through Joint Council of the possibility of the registration of qualified botanists on a professional register, thus providing them with a

professional standing with its concomitant benefits.

2) Financial Matters

In order to improve S.A.A.B.'s financial position, applications have now been made to the Department of Education, Arts and Sciences for financial support of our activities in connection with education, information distribution (Forum Botanicum) and scientific research (congress, symposium and workshop organisation). The result of these applications will not be known until later this year. Steps have also been taken to secure tax relief for companies making donations to S.A.A.B. funds.

A committee under Dr. Eicker is also investigating the collection of monies to establish a fund to be used for subsidising the attendance of young botanists at international congresses.

The S.A.A.B. treasurer's report appears separately.

3) Scientific and Educational Matters

The S.A.A.B. members of the Advisory Committee on Botanical Research to the Minister of Agriculture have been elected as follows :- Professors Cresswell, Grobbelaar, Lewis, Papendorf, Schelpe and Van de Schÿff. Other S.A.A.B. members such as the chairman, Dr. de Winter and Dr. Edwards are also members of the committee in other capacities, so S.A.A.B. will have a strong voice on this important advisory body.

Dr. Denzil Edwards organised a most successful Soils workshop which was run in July by Dr. Chris MacVicar and attended by 32

"students". It is intended to organise a further workshop in the coming year.

Council has viewed with misgiving the poor standard of botanical education at South African schools and it has been decided to establish an educational panel to investigate methods of rectifying this situation. The terms of reference of this panel are

- i) To keep a watching brief on all botanical aspects of the teaching of biology at S.A. schools;
- ii) To scrutinise the syllabuses for the teaching of biology in our schools;
- iii) To ensure that accurate and well-written biology textbooks are supplied to school children;
- iv) To ensure that a high standard of botanical teaching is maintained at schools by encouraging the mounting of teacher refresher courses and also "expert" lectures for combined school classes.

A committee to investigate the important issue of the training of taxonomists has been set up under the chairmanship of Professor Schelpe. The committee has held a symposium on this topic during the 1976 S.A.A.B. Congress.

- 4) Some other important matters with which Council has had to deal during the year are:-
  - a) Recommendations on the granting of botanical collecting permits.
  - b) Protests to I.C.S.U. on the exclusion of South African

botanists from the Leningrad Botanical Congress.

- c) The establishment of S.A.A.F. archives at the B.R.I. in Pretoria.
- d) The drawing up of a memorandum on the National Botanic Gardens by a committee under the chairmanship of Professor N. Grobbelaar at the request of the Prime Minister's Scientific Adviser.
- e) The setting up of a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Amy Jacot-Guillarmod to investigate the country's nature conservation ordinances.
- f) The preparation of digests of the "Quo Vadis" symposium for submission to the Prime Minister's Scientific Adviser.
- g) An approach to the Department of Agriculture to assist in the discouragement of the sale of undesirable plants by registered nurseries. The Department is to co-operate by circulating lists of such plants to nurseries with the request that they be not sold.
- h) The formulation of a protest to the Prime Minister's Scientific Adviser via the Joint Council of Scientific Societies in connection with the low priority accorded to botanical and environmental matters for government support.

In conclusion I would like to thank Council members for their hard work in the service of S.A.A.B. during the past year and the very valuable support and co-operation they have given me during my term of office as president. A special word of thanks to the secretary of S.A.A.B., Professor Brian Downing, for his loyal and dedicated service to our Association, and his efficient and effective management of the affairs of our Association under difficult circumstances. O.A.M.LEWIS, President.

SECOND ANNUAL CONGRESS

From the 30th of January to the 2nd of February 1976, S.A.A.B held its second Annual Congress in Cape Town. The venue was the Paul Hahn building, of the University of Cape Town, while most delegates were accommodated on the campus in Smuts Hall. The congress was attended by more than a hundred members and several visitors.

The first item on the programme was the excursion to study intertidal seaweeds at St. James on the False Bay coast and Oudekraal on the western coast of the Cape Peninsula. This excursion was organised by Mr. R. Simons assisted by Messrs. N.G. Jøerman and G.S. Dieckman, all from the Division of Sea Fisheries. There was ample opportunity for scuba diving. For many botanists the highlight of this outing was the crayfish and Cape wine lunch enjoyed on the beach at Oudekraal!

In the evening delegates attended a cheese and wine reception at Kirstenbosch, presented by the Board of Trustees of the National Botanic Gardens.

On Saturday, 31st of January, the Congress began in earnest. Prof. E. Axelson, Vice Principal of the University of Cape Town, welcomed S.A.A.B. to the University. The Congress was officially opened by Mr. F.A. Loots, M.E.C. for Nature Conservation and for Roads in the Cape. His subject was "Nature and the Environment". The rest of the day was devoted to the Symposium on "Ecophysiology in South Africa - Present and Future". Several speakers read papers, notably S.A.A.B.'s official guest, Prof. K.V. Thimann, eminent plant physiologist from Crown College, Santa Cruz, California, previously from Harvard University, who spoke on "Senescence of Leaves".

The annual S.A.A.B. dinner was held in Smuts Hall on Saturday night. The guest speaker was Dr. M.C.Botha, president of the Botanical Society of South Africa who stressed the links between amateur and professional botanists and also the important contribution amateur botanists could still make to botany in South Africa.

Most non-Cape botanists looked forward to Sunday, and they were not disappointed.

On this day the all day excursion to the Fernkloof Nature Reserve on the upper slopes of the Klein River Mountains at Hermanus took place. This nature reserve is principally intended to preserve a fine, unspoilt tract of Coastal Montane Fynbos. The dominant floristic components are therefore drawn from the families Restionaceae, Ericaceae and Proteaceae while Cape endemic families are also very well represented. This excursion was very ably led by Dr. John Rourke (Compton Herbarium). Unfortunately, our enjoyment of the day was lessened by the occurrence of extensive veld fires in the vicinity and we spent some uncomfortable moments on our way back through the outskirts of Hermanus when there were huge flames on both sides of the road.

Monday, the last day of the congress, was devoted to about 30 papers on various topics, mostly delivered in two separate sessions. The annual General meeting of S.A.A.B. took place in the late afternoon, when the new members of the Council were announced. Unfortunately the venue for next year's congress could not be announced.

The committee of the South Western Cape Section of S.A.A.B., chaired by Dr. E.J.Moll, must be thanked for their excellent organisation of this Congress.



MR. H.C.TAYLOR : After spending two years as head of the Botanical Survey of the Botanical Research Institute in Pretoria, Mr. Taylor has returned to Stellenbosch as Officer in Charge of the Botanical Research Unit. The personnel of this local branch of the Institute studies the flora and vegetation of the Winter Rainfall Region. Mr. Taylor's proposed botanical survey of the mountain fynbos of this region will provide much needed information for further research in nature conservation and the protection of water catchments.

COUNCIL FOR HABITAT : The Council's Annual General Meeting will be held on 13 & 14 May at the Sunnyside Park Hotel, Johannesburg. This will include a conference on the Conservation and Utilisation of Mountain Environments in South Africa.

THE FUNCTION OF LIVING PLANT COLLECTIONS IN CONSERVATION AND IN CONSERVATION ORIENTATED RESEARCH AND PUBLIC EDUCATION : This was the theme of the conference held at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in September 1975, under the sponsorship of the NATO Eco-Sciences Panel. The conference was attended by 135 delegates from countries of every continent. Dr. A.V. Hall of the Bolus Herbarium, University of Cape Town was the only South African to attend. The meeting was especially valuable in bringing together curators, technical managers and members of the scientific staffs of many European and North American botanic gardens who now look upon conservation as one of their most significant functions. Universities, research institute and conservation agencies were well represented.

The Conference strongly asserted that the basic requirement for the preservation of the threatened floras of the world was conservation

in the natural habitat by the extension of nature protection policies and the setting up of an adequate network of ecosystem reserves in all the major floristic regions. With this as the fundamental principle, speakers examined the ways in which living plant collections could be developed and managed as conservation resources in their own right and in support of field conservation through research and education.

The full Proceedings of the Conference will be published in volume form. In the final plenary session it was agreed that the Resolutions calling for early action should be published separately and given wide circulation. The following were agreed unanimously.

Resolutions :

1. This conference, conscious that the rich tropical floras of the world are now in great hazard, (1) urges that a strong network of nature reserves and conservation-orientated gardens should be established throughout the tropics both through the strengthening and development of existing foundations and through the creation of new ones where the need exists; (2) recommends that institutions in temperate countries should offer all possible help in this programme through technical aid, training and the secondment of personnel; and (3) urges that this aim should be pursued through the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources to ensure good co-ordination and proper understanding of the importance of the work for the tropical countries themselves and for the whole of mankind.
2. This Conference urges that special attention be given to the Conservation of Threatened Floras particularly of Islands and those parts of the world with Mediterranean or similar climates since both are often inhabited by very large numbers of narrowly endemic species of plants endangered by human activities.
3. This Conference recommends that institutions maintaining plant collections (including seed collections) for conservation purposes should, in general, give priority to their local flora, so as (1) to benefit from local taxonomic ecological, physiological and other pertinent specialist knowledge; (2) to reduce the need to simulate remote climates with the attendant costs and dependence on man-generated energy; (3) to be able to offer from direct experience information and advice concerning field conservation in the country of the institution, and (4) to provide a basis from which public interest and pride in the indigenous flora

can be developed through display and education services.

4. This Conference urges all Governments to ratify the "Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora" as soon as possible.
5. This Conference recommends that, wherever possible, all living plant collections grown for conservation purposes should also be stored in the form of seeds under appropriate conditions for long-term conservation.
6. This Conference urges that the propagation of rare and endangered species, including research into appropriate techniques, should be actively pursued by Botanic Gardens and other bodies maintaining living plant collections, and that such activities should be financially supported where necessary by Conservation, or other appropriate Organisations. Special attention should be given to economic plants and their wild relatives and to plants which are or might be commercially used.
7. This Conference urges that whenever threatened plants are taken into cultivation, this be done by means of seed and/or cuttings whenever possible so as not to deplete the wild populations.
8. This Conference, aware of the urgent need for scientifically verified lists of threatened species on a world scale, calls for the full support for the work of the I.U.C.N. Threatened Plants Committee in compiling such lists, and urges the task of propagating stocks of species on institutions maintaining living plant collections.
9. This Conference calls for the widest publicity to its full deliberations to be given in all appropriate quarters, and urges that the resolutions should be made available separately for this purpose with the minimum delay.
10. This Conference, being acutely aware of the urgency and complexity of many problems which have been raised during the sessions, urges the desirability of continued study and exchange of information, and the setting up of working parties to continue the study of outstanding issues, e.g.
  1. listing of collections, documentation and dissemination of information.
  2. commercial use of wild species.
  3. preparation of codes of practise.
  4. publicity.
  5. relationship between institutions maintaining living plant collections and organisations concerned with nature conservation.
  6. compilation of a short list of rare and endangered plants of high scientific importance to be commended to botanic gardens to bring them into cultivation.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS :

1. International Air Pollution Conference at the University of Pretoria, 26 - 29 April. Enquiries to Conference & Liaison Division, CSIR, Box 395, Pretoria.
2. Annual General Meeting of Council for the Habitat in Johannesburg on 3 & 4 May with a symposium on Conservation & Utilisation of Mountain Environments.
3. Water Pollution Control Conference in Durban from 7 - 11 June. Enquiries to Institute of Water Pollution Control, Box 4623, Johannesburg.
4. First Interdisciplinary Conference on Marine and Freshwater Research in Southern Africa at the University of Port Elizabeth, 5 - 10 July. Enquiries as for No. 1 above.

POSTS AVAILABLE : The Department of Nature Conservation of the Transvaal has six vacancies for professional officers in the field of botany. Those interested should apply to the Director, Nature Conservation, P.Bag X209, Pretoria, 0001.

The Department of Nature Conservation of the Cape has a vacancy for a botanist to be stationed at Hartswater in the Northern Cape. Apply to the Director, Nature Conservation, P. O. Box 659, Cape Town, 8000.

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EDITORS/REDAKSIE

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