BANKENVELD BRANCH

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WALTER SISULU GARDEN

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Please advertise Bankenveld events among friends who are not members of the Botanical Society of SA. Access full information about our events on Bankenveld’s FACEBOOK PAGE.
To access this, go to: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Botanical-Society-of-SA-Bankenveld/Branch/135809653139561

You may communicate with us on this page, browse event photographs, identify plants and animals, read the latest news, and take part in discussions on a variety of topics.

YOUR COMMITTEE

2015

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CONTENTS

Page 2: New Committee Members.
Page 2: 48 years ago.
Page 3: Butternut!
Page 3: Book Review.
Page 5: An Appeal for Research Assistance.
Page 5: Upcoming Events.
Page 6: New Memberships and Renewals.
Page 7: Melville Koppies.

From the Editor

Some changes are being made to CHAT and to the notification of Members of upcoming events.
In future, CHAT will be produced quarterly, as at present, but the sequence will commence in January, not in February, as now.
Events will be notified only one month in advance, but an “interim” notification will be sent out monthly. Printed copies of the newsletter will no longer be mailed to members without the Internet. Notifications will no longer be included in the Walter Sisulu Newsletter, as these are almost always given incorrectly. The procedure for booking for events has been modified, and is covered elsewhere in this issue.
MEET YOUR NEWER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

**Wim van Zyl (Treasurer)**

Our Treasurer joined the Botanical Society in June 2014, having been “recruited” at the Sasol Bird Fair. Wim was born in Viljoenskroon, in the Free State, and studied at the North Western University and Unisa, becoming a qualified accountant. He worked in the financial arena until 2008, when he started his own business.

He has always been interested in birding, but he says not seriously. After his marriage to Michelé, who has a strong photographic interest, he expanded his own interests to include butterflies and other “small things”, as he calls them. He then discovered the beauty of the Walter Sisulu Garden.

Wim volunteered to take over the vacant position of Bankenveld Branch Treasurer at the last Annual General Meeting, and was shortly thereafter co-opted to the Society Council.

We all wish Wim the very best, and success in his new positions.

**Michelle Herb**

Michelle is a 52-year old, and rather busy, mother of three children, who has been a legal secretary since she was in her 20s, and she also does administrative work for a tennis academy. She is in the process of completing a psychology degree, and is also a Reiki Master. Michelle’s hobbies are tennis and scrapbooking, but she admits she has little time for either. Her passion is the bush, and visiting the Kruger National Park is her favourite thing to do.

Since two of her children left home, Michelle has “started doing the things she enjoys”. She joined the Sanparks Honorary Rangers about a year ago in order to become more involved in helping in some way with environmental issues. To quote; … when I was asked to join the Bankenveld Committee, I thought that was something I would enjoy, and hopefully, I can make a positive difference…

Michelle, we are sure that you can, and welcome.

**Things Haven’t Changed Much!**

“Be seeing you, Man Willing.

This cartoon, by Hargreaves, appeared in an edition of the magazine “Animals” in 1968.
**BEAT THIS!**

Although not strictly botanical and not relevant to Walter Sisulu, the editor thought the item would be of interest to readers of Chat. The enormous butternut was not “cultivated” as such, but germinated in the compost heap.

Despite its size, the butternut weighs slightly less than half a kilogramme, and is presumably inedible.

Photo – Anne Cremer

**BOOK REVIEW**

The 3rd edition of this iconic guide was published late last year, and is reviewed from the point of view of a layman with an enthusiasm for aloes, rather than a botanist. The Guide was first published in 1996, at a time when there was a trend towards “lumping” species, and recognising a multitude of varieties.

The most significant changes from the 2nd edition are the regrouping of the aloes into 12 groups (previously 10), as an identification aid only, the reinstatement of 16 species, previously recognised as varieties, and the introduction of 15 new species described since 2003. The number of aloe species recognised in South Africa has thus increased from 125 in 1996 to 155 in 2014, and the Guide from 304 pages to 376.

The layout of the Guide is very similar to previous editions, but I have found it to be more “user friendly” with somewhat expanded descriptions to aid identification, and with generally better quality photographs, where these have been added. The now colour-shaded distribution maps are a nice touch.

The definition of the genus Aloe is still in a state of flux, and the genus is in the process of being subdivided. For instance, the tree aloes become *Aloidendron*. The Guide uses the “old” classification, but covers the soon-to-be introduced new names, and includes a very useful comparison table of the various classification schemes.

**REPORT-BACK; EVENTS, OUTINGS, COURSES and LECTURES**

**Starlight Picnic in the Garden. Friday 23rd January**

This event was well attended. Shortly after the start, a thunderstorm threatened, and some attendees decided to leave as the storm approached, for fear of the lightning and possible rain. However, the storm eventually passed over to the east of the Garden, and the skies remained clear. We were treated to a “sky tour” by John, who identified stars, star clusters and Jupiter, and we also saw a passing satellite. A good time was had by all.

Thanks, John and Ella.

**Butterflies and Other Insects. Sunday 25th January.**
Presented by Peter Webb, this presentation was well attended, particularly by younger members. The event commenced with a fascinating slide show and talk from Peter, incorporating not only insects, but spiders, scorpions and others.

After the talk, the party was led around the Garden, to “beat about the bush”. The youngsters were provided with sticks, catch trays and nets, and had a whale of a time knocking an assortment of goggas out of the bushes, which were then identified by the catchers, with a bit of help from Peter!

Many Thanks Peter

Frog Walk in the Garden. Saturday 7th February

This ever-popular event was presented by our resident “Frog Lady”, Ella, ably assisted by John. As far as we can tell, this was the best attended event in Branch history. How Ella and John managed to handle the numbers, over 60, we do not know! However, handle it they did, and it was enjoyed by all.

Many Thanks, Ella

Tree Route Walk. Sunday 22nd February.

Led by John and Ella.

Thanks again.

Member’s Tea Party. Tuesday 24th February.

The morning Tea Party was attended by about 50 people. Refreshments were provided by the Branch, and logistical support, tables, chairs, urns, etc. by Walter Sisulu. Also, Walter Sisulu donated Portulacaria afra (Spekboom) plants as small gifts for Members. It seems that a good time was had by all.

Vice-Chairman’ Thank-You Speech

The Committee wishes to give sincere thanks to Society Members for their continued support of Bankenveld Branch and their enthusiasm, the party being a small way of expressing the “Thank You”. We thank committee members and volunteers for their assistance, in particular to Karen for organising the event and to Annetjie du Plessis for all the hours she put into helping with the preparations. We also sincerely thank Walter Sisulu staff for all their assistance, particularly Andrew Hankey, Acting Curator and Nursery Manager Solly Nenungwe for the donation of plants.
The Tea Party was only a qualified success, despite the attendance of about 50 members. Many members sent in apologies for being unable to attend, as the party was held on a weekday, and working Members and children were unable to be there. We plan on having a Member’s Tea every third month, and in future, these will be held on a Saturday.

**Wetland Birds of Northern Farms. Sunday 1st March.**

The ever-popular event was presented as usual by John and Ella. The success of the event can be judged from the feed-back from Tracy Ramsden.

“Thank you so much for the wonderful outing to Northern Farms on Sunday. We saw so many amazing birds, including a pair of Fish Eagles and two Long-Crested eagles which were a first for my brother and nine year old nephew. Sorry we had to part company with the group a bit early but bird watching with a nine year old and a 14 month old creates different priorities. But they loved every minute of it I assure you, and they are both avid bird lovers”.

See you soon. Tracy Ramsden

**Birds in the Garden. Sunday 29th March.**

Presented by Ella and John. Bidding farewell to the migrant birds; Red-Chested, Dideric, Black, and Klaas’s Cuckoos, with many more. The walk was enjoyed by all. Feed-back included the note below, which sums it all up.

“Thank you for Sunday’s bird walk. We enjoyed ourselves and now know more than we did on Saturday! Please keep us on your e-mail list for future walks”.

Regards; Dorothy & Martin Flint.

**AN APPEAL FOR RESEARCH ASSISTANCE**

During Peter Webb’s presentation on “Butterflies and Other Insects”, he made an appeal to BotSoc members to assist with various research projects as Citizen Scientists. He asked that photographs of, and notes on any insects, no-matter how ordinary they may seem to the observer, be sent to the research team at Wits University. Ansie Dippenaar is interested in all “creepy crawlies”, and Peter Webb has a particular interest in butterflies and moths. Addresses for them are: DippenaarA@arc.agric.za and Peter@icon.co respectively.

Come on Guys (and Gals). CONTRIBUTE!

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Botanical Gardens – Where Science Meets Art.**

Saturday 11th April.

A walk in the Garden, led by Alice Aubrey, Environmental Interpretation Officer at the Walter Sisulu Garden. Your editor is intrigued by the title of the tour, but assures you that it is not to be missed!

Meet at the Garden gate at 9;00am.
NEW MEMBERSHIPS and RENEWALS.

New Members should, in normal circumstances, have received their Membership Cards from Head Office within a month of signing up, and Renewals should have been received within the same period. However, circumstances are not normal, due to the on-and-off Postal Strike. New Members should therefore request an extended temporary card from Karen. After renewal of membership, Members awaiting their cards from Head Office should also request a temporary card from Karen, after showing proof of payment. This can only be done on weekdays. However, after prior arrangement with Karen, you can also pick up your temporary card from WS entrance over weekends. Members can also renew subscriptions directly to Head Office by cheque, or electronic transfer but no cash please.

MELVILLE KOPPIES.

Many of our events take place in the Walter Sisulu Garden. However, our members also have the option to take part in events at Melville Koppies. Here are the details:

First, Second and Third Sunday of every month at 15:00, 08:30 and 15:00, respectively. Donation R50 per adult, R20 per child.

Three-hour group hike on most of the Fourth Sundays at 08:30. Donation R40 per adult, R20 per child.

A 90-minute group hike (with socialised dogs) on Melville Koppies West at 08:00 on the first Saturday of every month. Donation R25 per person.

See the www.mk.org.za calendar/map for the full 2015 programme or phone 011 482 4797.