

## Forthcoming Events

Although we plan outings and talks long term, opportunities do arise for spontaneous outings. We will advise members of these by e-mail or SMS so ensure that you have given our secretary your contact details.

**Please diarise the following activities that we are planning for this year:**

### **Cape Floral Kingdom Expo** Gaan bos – Gaan Fynbos

The Expo is being held again this year from 27<sup>th</sup> August to 30<sup>th</sup>. BotSoc and our branch will again be involved. Exciting additions this year will be more photographic displays and competitions plus the Succulent Society is planning an impressive display. Watch this space for more details.

We are also planning other outings such as one to the Harold Porter Nature Reserve. Watch out for our e-mails.

Please remember that attendance at any of our functions/outings are at your own risk and neither the Botanical Society nor this Branch can be held responsible for any injury or loss that may occur.

## Events Report Back

On Wednesday 6 August 2014 we hit the road to Worcester National Botanical Gardens. This was a great success with about 20 members making the trek. We were impressed first by the great weather, then the layout of the gardens followed by a visit to the magnificent haworthia collection then the actual walk around the gardens. The outing was finished with a lovely lunch at the garden's restaurant.

### **Ratelrivier outing**

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March, our branch held a very well supported visit to the farm Ratelrivier which now forms part of the Agulhas National Park. The farmhouses and its majestic stable, steeped in history, was severely burnt in a fire several years ago. The park is shortly going to start the extensive renovations. Our thanks to the park and its staff for making this superb outing possible which finished off with the rare sighting of a Blue-cheeked Bee-Eater.



**Eddie Cassani, Louise Hislop with Emmerentia de Kock, one of our guides at the Agulhas National Park looking at an old Village Life carrying an article on life at Ratelrivier in its heyday.**



# SOUTHERN OVERBERG

Branch Of The Botanical Society Of S.A./  
Tak Van Die Botaniese Vereniging Van S.A.

## NEWSLETTER/NUUSBRIEF

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### CONTACT DETAILS

PO Box 278, Napier, 7270

southernoverberg.botsoc@gmail.com

#### Chairman:

Stephen Smuts: 028 42 33 049

#### Vice-Chairman:

Sarah Foyle: 028 42 33 358

#### Secretary:

Dorothy Buggs: 028 42 33 128

#### Treasurer:

Vacant

#### Additional members:

Lyn Hawkins: 028 42 33 672

Louise Hislop: 028 42 33 512

Kathy Hardy: 028 42 33 761



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## Branch News

Firstly, a big apology. Just when I was getting the August edition ready for printing, I slipped and fell and broke my ankle which put me in hospital for 10 days. Only now, am I about fully mobile again.

And now it is time to turn our thoughts to the AGM which is being held slightly earlier than normal, on 30<sup>th</sup> March. It will be held in the usual venue, that being the Bredasdorp Library. It is a time when we reflect on the past year and ask our members to come up with suggestions for what outings and talks they wish the committee to organise.

We also have Greta Louw as our guest speaker giving us an insight into the world of wonder that exists in a stagnant pond and compost using a microscope and a digital projector. She shares her unbridled enthusiasm at schools around the Southern Overberg and now we will get a chance to see her in action.

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## Famine Weed – A new plant invader set to wreak havoc

KwaZulu-Natal is rapidly developing a very severe plant invader infestation that is already starting to produce catastrophic consequences for wildlife and domestic livestock as well as humans. It is not just found in KZN but can be found in the Kruger National Park and is widespread in Swaziland. This invader from South America is spreading all over the world and has naturalized in India, Australia, USA, South and East Africa, and Madagascar. The worst infestation in Africa is in Ethiopia.



Up until recently this weed has gone under the rather innocuous name of Parthenium Weed which conveys nothing. A more appropriate name is Famine Weed which is becoming widely adopted. Even though it is poisonous, it is eaten by livestock and game eventually making them sick. It also taints the flesh and the milk making it unfit for consumption. To make things worse, it is extremely allelopathic which means that plants secrete a substance that stifles the growth of other plants around it so it rapidly dominates the area in which it is growing. A single plant of *Parthenium hysterophorus*, to give it its scientific name, flowers from September to May, producing 10s of thousands of seeds which are viable for 6-8 years. The seeds which are dispersed by wind, water and animals and even by vehicles picking up mud, germinate within 4 weeks. Although it prefers heavier clay soils, mainly along rivers, it can be found along tracks wherever vehicles and livestock move. This member of the daisy family has a deep tap root and hairy stem. Australia is developing a range of biological controls using 9 insects and 2 rust fungi species which South Africa hopes to fast track for release here. In humans, the weed causes dermatitis and asthma and is a nerve depressant.

## Snippets

Our branch recently acknowledged the wonderful welcome that the Agulhas National Park extends to our branch so regularly and with such enthusiasm. Over the years, we have spent many hours at such places in the park as Bergplaas, Waterford and most recently, Ratelriver. As the Park has not been a member of the Botanical Society, the committee agreed that we would like to acknowledge the relationship by sponsoring their membership. On 27 January we met with the park manager, Bulelwa Msengi and handed her a copy of a Veld & Flora and a membership card in the park's name. We hope that following the park becoming a member of BotSoc, our branch's relationship with the park will grow even stronger.



## Farewell to Tom Ambrose

Although not a member of the Botanical Society, Tom Ambrose who passed away on 25<sup>th</sup> July after a most courageous battle against cancer will be remembered by many for the massive contribution he made in many fields, including alien clearing.

Tom enjoyed a long career in the South African Navy, joining when he was just 16. When he retired, he and his wife Engela moved to Napier some 26 years ago. They became pillars of the community, getting involved in many charitable activities. Tom also developed a highly effective alien clearing team and worked with them until very shortly before he died. When I moved to Napier back in 2001, Tom was tendering for alien clearing work for Working for Water and getting all the work that he tendered for. This was actually work that was earmarked for the previously disadvantaged so when the ANC learned that Tom was getting the work, they moved to have him barred from further contracts. What they did not know was that Tom had a wonderful relationship with the team. As they had such high regard for him, his team successfully pleaded with the ANC that if they could have a PDI nominally in charge to sign the contracts, Tom could continue to lead them. Tom was much loved and respected by his team as he knew the names of not only every one of his workers but the names of all their children and family members; had been into each one's house and ministered to their every need. He ensured that, wherever possible, a job that was scheduled to take a certain number of days, his team would complete the job within the time and be able to start a day or two early on the next job. On each task therefore some money was scored which Tom saved on behalf of his team. At Christmas, Tom took his team to Cape Town to purchase goods of real value for cash.

Tom was also a keen athlete and participated in very many Comrades and other marathons and was very involved, with Engela in arranging the Voet of Africa and the races at the Patatfees. What a team they made. At his memorial service in the NG Kerk on 30<sup>th</sup> July, Ds Barend likened Tom's life to a race well run. In honour of Tom's love of running, a commemorative run and walk was arranged for Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> August. This was well supported by many in the community. Tom will also be remembered for his fine voice in the church choir and being the other half of Engela's jam and preserves team. Our condolences go to Engela, their son and family in KZN.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

We would like to make this newsletter interesting as well as informative and would appreciate hearing from you. Possibly you have an interesting story to share with the other members? Remember that it does not have to be very long or strictly botanical. We also require articles in Afrikaans.

Please send your contributions to:

Correspondent, Box 278, Napier, 7270  
or email them to: [southernoverberg.botsoc@gmail.com](mailto:southernoverberg.botsoc@gmail.com)

