



# SOUTHERN OVERBERG

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

## NEWSLETTER/NUUSBRIEF

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## Branch News

Perhaps a bit later than usual in the year but it is again time for the AGM.

We are hoping that this will be one of the most significant AGMs in many years as we are reviewing ways we can make the branch more effective and increase membership into areas which are geographically distant from our core in Napier.

The venue is also a change which we think you will like – The Table Café in the industrial area. (If it's cold, they even have a fireplace.) The venue also has a generous parking area.

We also think that you will be inspired by a presentation to be given by a group of young field guide students who we, sooner rather than later, hope will be joining the Botanical Society and making their presence felt in the future of our branch.

Please diarise to be there and participate. It is the members our branch and of course our natural heritage that makes planning of our future of so important. (See Forthcoming Events for date and time etc.)

Check us out on Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/botsocsouthernoverberg>  
Twitter account: S OVERBERG BotSoc



## My Hero

When the blurb on the back cover of a book describes it as Stupendous; Magnificent; Excellent; Gripping; Brilliant; etc. and winner of The Royal Society Science Book Prize 2016 and it's titled 'The Invention of Nature', it's maybe a book to read. Once read, you know absolutely why it received all the excitement. The book's subtitle is 'The Adventures of Alexander Von Humboldt, The lost Hero of Science.

Firstly the author, Andrea Wulf writes an excellent biography that has one riveted but more than her, her subject – Alexander von Humboldt is a riveting character, the first perhaps to be a true ecologist although the word would not be invented for at least another 100 years. In his travels in the north of South America in 1800, he observed and recorded the impact of man on the environment, how the destruction of forests was impacting on the rivers, how irrigation was draining swamps and that agricultural practices techniques of the day could have devastating consequences. He even back then warned on how these actions could lead to climate change.

Such were his many explorations and discoveries that more things have been named after von Humboldt than anyone else who's ever lived. Buy the book or get an e-book. You will regard him as your hero. He is certainly mine. You will be in good company. He was also the hero of Darwin who carried the first of von Humboldt's many books, when he first sailed off in on the Beagle 1831.

Although von Humboldt was world famous in his day as the preeminent scientist, hugely in demand as a speaker and author of many books, he became largely forgotten in the 20th century – 'the lost hero of science' - as he was German and so negatively associated with the world

wars plus the Nazi burning of books. This discrimination is particularly unkind as he passionately opposed slavery his whole life, wherever he encountered it.

This excellent book retails at R 221-00 at Exclusive Books and the e-book is available for about R 100.00. Whichever, read it.

## **Snippits**

### **Sustainable Harvesting**

Harvesting of our wild fynbos is a major provider of jobs up the West Coast, on the Langeberg, in the Overberg and, in fact, wherever fynbos is encountered. When an area is blessed with the richest flora in the world, we are right to exploit it, particularly as it is in high demand both at home and in the flower markets of the world. What we need to guard against however is exploiting to a point where the wild plants are being over picked and therefore ultimately jobs lost. There are also right ways and wrong ways to pick different species and there must be an understanding of how much can be harvested without causing permanent damage to a plant leaving nothing to be harvested in years to come.

Flower Valley Conservation Trust which sets standards plays a massive role because purchasers are more and more demanding that the flowers they buy have been sustainably and ethically harvested including that pickers are fairly treated. Where commercial buyers, buy in stock, they have to ensure that these criteria are met all along the supply chain otherwise the valuable Cape Flora brand will be compromised.

### **Alouise Lynch goes looking for the Bredasdorp Lily**

*Cyrtanthus guthrieae*, our Bredasdorp Lily is a critically endangered monocotyledon found in only in the Heuningsberg Reserve above Bredasdorp. There are only an estimated 250 plants left in the wild, which is fragmented into a few smaller sub-populations across the Reserve. This is quite alarming as a population that is so isolated is highly susceptible to local/total extinction.

We were notified by CREW on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2017 that they had located a plant on one of their outings, and we immediately drove through from Napier to search - for a needle in a haystack!

When one is standing amongst the Fynbos, with very thick restiod components, one realizes that it is not going to be easy to spot this flower.

Halfway up the Bredasdorp-facing slope of the Heuningsberg we spotted a bright flare of red in the veld and were absolutely amazed at the size of this flower, and the vivid red colouration! We spent over an hour photographing and examining this beauty and were in awe!

Although the Bredasdorp Lily is not dependant on fire, the veld on the Heuningberg can do with a burn as the vegetation seems very old and thick. Regeneration after a burn will be fabulous for the next flowering season.

It was very a rewarding search – a spectacular plant to have the privilege of seeing in the wild – and definitely one we will go back for every single year.



If you want to keep up with the adventures of Keir, Alouise and Cian, follow their blog [BIONERDS.CO.ZA](http://BIONERDS.CO.ZA)

[BIONERDS.CO.ZA](http://BIONERDS.CO.ZA) was born as an opportunity to share our experiences in nature on the southern tip of Africa with anyone that might be interested. Having come from a field guiding background we have always taken incredible joy in being able to showcase the ecosystems that we are privileged to call home, and in doing so, hopefully inspire a more symbiotic relationship between our species and those we share our dwellings with.

[BIONERDS.CO.ZA](http://BIONERDS.CO.ZA) was created to allow us to share these experiences with you... to detail the ecosystems we visit, the species we encounter and the friendships we develop along the way.

Please visit [www.bionerds.co.za](http://www.bionerds.co.za) to read about our EcoExplorations. Here you will also find a gallery with picture from our trips.

Keir, Cian and Alouise e-mail : [biodiversitynerds@gmail.com](mailto:biodiversitynerds@gmail.com)

You may also like to check out 'Notes from a Cape Town Botanist' blog <http://www.capetownbotanist.com/>

Zoë Paulsen writes entertaining articles on the great work being done to conserve the Cape Floral Kingdom.

## Forthcoming Events

Without a doubt, the main event in the next month or two is our AGM set for 7<sup>th</sup> June.

This promises to be one of the most important that we have held for many years as we will be looking at branch restructuring so we can expand the footprint of our branch to cover what has largely been the Napier to Arniston corridor when we would like to offer meaningful membership to places such as Caledon and Swellendam as examples, WITHOUT creating any more work for our committee. Zaitoon Rabaney, Executive Director will be sharing her thoughts plus we will have a presentation by a group of field guide students that should blow your socks off.

Venue: **The Table Café**, Lifestyle Centre, Industrial area. Bredasdorp (072 460 2602)  
(Turn at silos)

Date : 7<sup>th</sup> June

Time : **17h30**

Please keep an eye on your e-mail and the Southern Overberg BotSoc Facebook page for outings and talks that we sometimes arrange at short notice. We are always planning and have some great outings in mind.

**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

### **33<sup>rd</sup> Birthday Celebrations**

Marion Naude's Summer Place with its amazing view across the bay at Arniston proved a perfect venue for the branch's 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday celebrations held on 26<sup>th</sup> January.

As part of our function we invited Zaitoon Rabaney, Executive Director of BotSoc to attend. She used the opportunity to chat informally with various committee members about adaptations to branch structures that we can

contemplate. Janice Albertyn, a founder of our branch shared with us her reminisces of how the branch came into being over 30 years ago. Zaitoon also shared her joy at visiting our branch and celebrating our achievements over the years. She said that we should have a similar function every year to which she hoped to be invited. Cameron McMaster concluded the formal proceedings by sharing with us a presentation on the beautiful Amarylladaceae family illustrated with his beautiful photographs.

We then got stuck into some excellent snacks and chatting.

Zaitoon is quite right that this get together is something we should do annually and invite a Head Office representative. It is such a great opportunity to get to know each other better.

### **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)