



BOTSOC COUNCIL NOMINEES: BIOGRAPHIES IN BRIEF

Chair of Council – Marinda Nel

Marinda Nel is BotSoc's Chair of Council. She grew up in Stutterheim in the Eastern Cape, studying at Free State University BComm with majors in statistics and economics. Following this Marinda worked at Head Office at Old Mutual for more than 30 years with the last twenty years at Old Mutual Investment Group working in business development and client relationships. This work involved growing and retaining members and creating bespoke investment solutions for institutional clients.

Marinda has been a BotSoc member since the 1980s but became more involved in volunteering for the Society in 2017 after she retired. She became involved first with the plant fair as a team leader coordinating pot-pourri. In July 2017 Marinda was co-opted onto the Kirstenbosch branch committee and later elected as branch chair.

Marinda was also part of the team that developed and proposed BotSoc's new constitution and calling for an SGM for members to vote to implement it. The SGM was called in August 2018 and Marinda became Interim Chair of the Interim Council and then elected Chair of Council in February 2019. She played a key role in restoring BotSoc to a member-driven organisation supported by BotSoc Head Office including leading the staff team during the transition period. Marinda also played a vital role in reuniting BotSoc to best achieve its mission and objectives.

Marinda brings to BotSoc a particular interest in encouraging all people to care for plants and their environment. In her leisure time she volunteers as a SANParks Honorary Ranger. Marinda's husband Hennie is a bonsai enthusiast. She enjoys spending time with family and friends as well as hiking with and learning from others who respect our natural history.

Council Members

Treasurer – Henk Beetz

I am 67, a lover of travel and wide open spaces, the diverse natural beauty that South Africa has to offer, and, as a hobbyist photographer, the amazing architecture of plant shapes. My wife is the true gardener and plant fundi in our family. We have both been members of the Botanical Society for many years.

I have a B.Com degree and am a qualified actuary. My professional work expertise and experience lies mainly in the financial and investment spheres. For many years I worked happily as the Chief Operating Officer of Old Mutual Investment Group. Since retiring from formal employment in 2010 my financial training and a curious nature have enabled me to become involved as a consultant and director in diverse fields such as renewable energy, agricultural investment, technology-based insurance, corporate lending

and credit management. I enjoy what I do, even the hard bits. My wife tells me I am very bad at learning how to be retired.

I have an abiding interest in how we can apply technology to solve problems and to enhance our day-to-day experiences of life. I have built every desktop computer I have owned but I would not consider myself a geek. I also like classical ballet.

I was co-opted into the role of National Treasurer of BotSoc in mid 2019 and am honoured to be nominated to continue in this role. I look forward to continuing to serve you as fellow members in the achievement of the Society's objectives.

Keith Kirsten

Keith Kirsten. Born in Durban, studied for his National Diploma in Horticulture at the Pretoria Technikon in 1972, and completing his NTC 1,2,3 (1st class) while doing a three-year pupillage at Durban Parks, Recreation and Beaches Department. He still exudes the same energy and style as he did back then.

One of South Africa's leading horticulturists, and our most famous gardening export, Keith's inimitable style extends from his uncompromised intrinsic values and impeccable work ethic through to his office, home and of course, his garden.

From the early 1970s Keith has been a household name and all "green-fingered" gardeners in South Africa have fond memories of him, either hearing him on radio, seeing him on his many television series running from 1975 to about 2012, in garden centres, books, articles, presentations and lectures. Keith regularly visits notable gardens both locally and abroad, and is well – versed in the latest trends in landscaping and garden design.

A preferred business consultant, the Keith Kirsten brand is synonymous with quality and excellence. Dating back to Keith Kirsten Garden Centres, established in 1978, the first true garden centre in South Africa, Keith has instilled a unique culture in all South Africans, complete with a positive attitude to indigenous planting.

He is widely known for his love of gardening, his knowledge of plants and his boundless energy and enthusiasm. For more than 40 years he has encouraged and motivated South Africans to love their gardens.

Keith has, for more than 40 years, touched the lives of thousands across the world, from Kirstenbosch to Chelsea, where he has been intricately involved in, and has co-sponsored the Kirstenbosch South-African exhibit at Chelsea for more than 20 years and he is currently Chairman of the Kirstenbosch Branch of the Botanical Society of South Africa.

Caroline Petersen

Caroline Petersen has 16 years of experience as a sustainable development professional at national and international levels, focusing on global environmental finance for biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation.

Following her environmental policy work in South Africa, from 2008 to 2010 Caroline managed a learning network in SANBI for the Fynbos, Succulent Karoo and Grasslands Programmes. From 2011 to 2019 she worked for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Africa, Asia and Latin America,

supporting Governments to maximise environment and development benefits through accessing the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund. From 2014 to 2016 Caroline was Acting Principal Technical Advisor: Biodiversity, heading up UNDP's \$1,2 billion Ecosystems and Biodiversity portfolio around the globe, including helping governments expand protected areas, mainstream biodiversity in production landscapes, and manage land and forest resources sustainably. From 2017 to 2019 Caroline was Senior Adviser: Strategic Initiatives with UNDP's Green Commodities Programme globally, strengthening supply chains and enabling conditions for deforestation-free agricultural commodities.

Caroline's new business, *Prosper with Nature*, supports a range of countries on nature-based solutions to climate and development challenges. Key areas of intervention include agroforestry, sustainable forest management, ecosystem restoration, sustainable land management, climate-smart agriculture, agri-processing and value addition.

Caroline has an MSc (Econ) in Economic History from the London School of Economics, and is also a qualified school teacher. Caroline lives in Plumstead with her husband and two grown sons. She enjoys doing vinyasa yoga and walking in nature, and has a passion for the fynbos.

Kevin McCann

Kevin McCann is an experienced environmental manager, holding a MSc degree in Zoology and Ecology from the University of Witwatersrand. He is currently a Director at Conservation Outcomes, a conservation NGO specialising in supporting landowners in the development of new protected areas and creating opportunities for their viability. Prior to this, he was Deputy Director with the Wildlands Conservation Trust between April 2011 and July 2016, coordinating their Conservation programme, focusing on the establishment of and support to community conservation areas within KwaZulu-Natal. He also managed the implementation of a number of grant funds including the CEPF funded Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Hotspot Fund, the Capital Conservation Fund and the Wild Series Funds, which provided grant funding to civil society organisations for conservation projects.

Prior to working for Wildlands Conservation Trust, Kevin was employed within Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to establish the KZN Biodiversity Stewardship Programme. His role was to develop a structured Biodiversity Stewardship programme for the province, which resulted in the first Biodiversity Stewardship protected areas being declared in 2009 in KZN. Kevin's passion in developing a viable Biodiversity Stewardship programme for KwaZulu-Natal emanated from his 12 years in working with private landowners while employed by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (July 1994 – March 2006), where his focus was in securing threatened species by working with private landowners. This led to his extensive experience in working with a variety of landowners, and dealing with the challenges of biodiversity conservation in production landscapes.

Bongani Mnisi

Bongani Mnisi has over 16 years and 11 years of experience in biodiversity and water resources management respectively. He is a Head of Nature Conservation in the biodiversity management of the City of Cape Town where he manages the largest part of the City's Biodiversity Network including three nature reserves. Mnisi is also appointed by the National Minister of Water and Sanitation where he serves as a Board Chairperson of the Breede-Gouritz Catchment Management Agency (BGCMA). On the BGCMA board

he also serves in the Human Resources and Remuneration Committee. He serves as a Board of Trustees and Deputy Chairperson of the Table Mountain Fund as well as their Conservation Committee. He also serves as a Council Member and Deputy Chairperson of the Botanical Society of South Africa (BotSoc).

Mnisi holds an MSc degree in Botany and a BPhil degree in Sustainable Development Planning and Management from the University of Stellenbosch. He also holds a BTech degree in Nature Conservation from CPUT. He completed various certificates in Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), Conservation Stewardship and Extension and Project Management from Rhodes University, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and CPUT respectively. Mnisi is a trained Executive Coach from the University of Stellenbosch Business School.

He presented and served on expert panels on biodiversity and climate change at two international conferences both held in the United States of America, California, Los Angeles in 2012 and Long Beach in 2016.

Johann Van Den Berg

After joining the BotSoc Bankenveld Branch committee in October 2016, Johann 'pulled his weight' in many ways and stood in as acting treasurer. Johann gave his full support to the branch and was later voted to stand as branch chairman in March 2017. Johann has thus made his mark in the BotSoc community and was elected to serve on the BotSoc council at the National AGM on 12 February 2019. Johann has many years' experience in finance, working for in a Share Transfer Secretary company for over 30 years. His love for nature and photography was always a great passion, and after retirement, he was able to exploit these passions to the fullest.

He has been a member of the BEPR project for many years and his contributions and brilliant photography has made him indispensable. He developed a keen interest in raptors and do regular newsfeeds and updates to all interested parties about the Black Eagles and raptors in general. "It is my intention to put Bankenveld Branch on the map while serving on the Council" said Johann.

Hedwig Slabbig

Hedwig Slabbig has been involved with the West Coast Branch of the Botanical Society since it was founded in the early 2000s and has been Branch Vice Chairman for many years and Chairman since 2018. She was born in Cape Town, growing up in Hout Bay. She studied BA Fine Art at the University of Cape Town with english, botany and zoology as BA subjects, majoring in printmaking and book design.

While completing her studies Hedwig was involved with the veld food and medicinal plant garden, making preserves for sale at the Hout Bay Museum. In 1993 she moved to 20 ha of untouched strandveld while starting and running Die Winkel op Paternoster and later the Voorstrandt Restaurant in Paternoster. Hedwig worked with Dr Renata Coetzee in her work with veld food research and recipe development for her studies into the food culture of the Khoinkhoin and her books 'Kukamakranka' and 'A Feast from Nature'.

She has represented the West Coast Branch of the Botanical Society at various community and government organisations including the Saldanha Bay Forum and the Intergovernmental Task Team (IGTT) Stakeholders Meeting. Hedwig is a board member of the West Coast Biosphere Reserve and regularly

attends workshops on their behalf. She is also actively involved in Environmental Impact Assessment processes (EIAs) for applications for mining, wind farms and other development applications.

Hedwig was elected by the West Coast of the Botanical Society for Council and was elected to Council at the AGM in February 2019 as well as also serving as a member of the newly-formed Conservation Standing Committee.

David Henry

Dave Henry qualified as a Chartered Accountant at Natal University in 1968, he presently runs his own business as the Managing Director of Leading Logistics Planning (PTY) Ltd, a company importing electric vehicles and tow tractors. He has been a member of the Botanical Society since 1996. He has served on the committee of the KwaZulu Natal Coastal Branch both as Treasurer and Vice-Chairman. During that time, he has also been integral in managing the branch's annual plant fair.

Dave Henry has also spent 15 years driving the creation of the National Indigenous Botanic Garden and Biodiversity Park in the Sibaya/Hawaan/Umhlanga Estuary precinct using the Australia Garden at Cranbourne in Melbourne as a benchmark. He has been a custodian of Hawaan Forest for more than 35 years as well a member of the Environmental Committee for over 20 years at the Durban Country Club and Beachwood Golf Club. He was a member of WESSA Umhlanga branch from 1980 onwards and Chairman during that time. He is also a member of the Umdoni Park Trust. He has also been a member of school, club and other governing bodies and is treasurer of his Parish council. David has been married to his wife Dorothy for over 50 years and has three children and eight grandchildren.



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