

Projects supported by the BOTSOC

2017 - 2020

INTRODUCTION

- The society supports four major projects two of which have been ongoing since the early 2000's and two of more recent initiation.
- The two longstanding projects are the CREW (Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers) and the Stewardship projects
- The two more recent projects are the support for educational resources and training for endangered Cycads and support for nature conservation students in terms of resource support.
- All these projects have been well planned, past by council and are in their mid-term stage, completion due in 2020

INTRODUCTION (CONTINUE)

- A feature of all these projects is that they involve very active partners such as SANBI, KZN-Ezmvlo, WESSA, the Primary Schools Project and the national Department of Environmental Affairs.
- On the budget side approximately one third of the R6m three year cost is supported directly from BOTSOC funds, a third from donors (mainly trusts) who have supplied finance to the projects on the back of their confidence in the society's record and ability to manage the projects, and the remaining third is mainly from staff support of the partners to implement training and operations of the projects
- I will cover a brief history of each project and update members on the current situation

CREW

- CREW had its beginnings in 2003 when the society's Conservation Unit was still active. It followed on from the successful Protea Atlas project.
- The idea was to involve civil society in surveying plant species of conservation concern mainly in areas outside of formal conservation protected areas. From its inception it involved a partnership arrangement with SANBI.
- From its initial operation in the Cape Floral Kingdom the CREW programme is now countrywide

CREW(cont...)

- The CREW programme has been recognised internationally as one of the better run citizen science projects and its continuation is presently embedded in the agreement between BOTSOC and SANBI.
- There was an external review conducted in 2018 and the review was overwhelmingly positive with a few suggestions and challenges raised. SANBI and BOTSOC will be addressing these.
- The new council will need to decide on the future operation of this project beyond its termination date in early 2020

STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

- This project also had its origins under the society's Conservation Unit and essentially champions conservation worthy sites on private land that have been identified through fine-scale planning.
- A good example of this was the Biodiversity and Wine Initiative which involved getting conservation protection on wine farms that had been identified as having areas of conservation importance. This very successful project is now run under the auspices of WWF

Stewardship(cont...)

- The Botanical society presently employs one ecologist in KZN who works closely with private land owners, KZN wildlife and the CREW and Cycad project executants in identifying conservation sites on private land.
- Once this has been achieved the task of persuading the landowners to commit to a conservation plan begins and hopefully after considerable negotiation a stewardship agreement is formally put in place
- A number of private sites have been granted a form of stewardship agreement in the past few years

CYCAD PROJECT

- Protecting CYCADS is akin to the protection of rhinos, as cycads are generally rare, often have their main habitat outside protected areas and suffer hugely from illegal collection and trade.
- BOTSOC and a number of partners got involved in the national Cycad Strategy and Action Plan of the department of Environmental Affairs in a bid to inform society of the need to protect cycads

CYCAD PROJECT.(cont...)

- BOTSOC does not employ any personnel on this project but has committed to producing resources for partners to use in education programmes.
- BOTSOC essentially supported the development of a Cycad poster and workbook which are used in training.
- The idea of the poster and workbook followed on from the society's highly successful project in the early 2000's where six posters and workbooks were produced for the biomes of South Africa

CYCADS(cont...)

- The added benefit of the present project is that partners run training workshops for schoolteachers using the resources and the idea is to include the Cycad programme in the school curriculum.
- BOTSOC partners with SANBI where training sessions are held in Botanical Gardens, with WESSA through its eco-schools programme across the country and with the Primary Schools Project who run workshops and will assist in getting the concept included in the school curriculum

CYCADS(cont...)

- 25 000 posters and workbooks have been produced to date
- It is estimated that over 5 000 000 pupils will have been exposed to the Cycad project over the next few years.
- This project is a good indication of the merits of working closely with identified partners to assist in a conservation issue of national importance
- Most importantly the resources are not simply handouts but are presented through attendance at courses and training workshops delivered by educational professionals

CPUT STUDENT SUPPORT

- This pilot project was aimed at supporting under resourced conservation students to attend important fieldwork courses and to provide resources (field guides, V & F) for use in their curriculum.
- This is by far the smallest of the four projects in terms of BOTSOC financial support but is important in supporting human capital development.
- Students are expected to write reports which might be suitable for publishing in V & F and the host department is required to report back on the success of the initiative

CONCLUSION

- BOTSOC members should feel proud of the above four projects and progress on them is regularly reported in the member's journal Veld & Flora
- A key to successful projects is working with partners to achieve the goals of the project
- BOTSOC is a well known and respected NGO and by continuing to initiate and drive projects will enhance support from donors, such as large trust funds