

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.

Barack Obama

The dawn of a new era for BotSoc

Celebrating our members

The Botanical Society may be a small organization in the greater scheme of things, but the commitment and passion of our many members ensures that we punch above our weight.

Celebrating its 96th year in 2009, BotSoc continues to make a major contribution to the important debates around biodiversity, climate change and conservation in South Africa and is one of the most respected non-governmental organizations in this sphere. Its success is largely due to its strong membership base. Our members and huge volunteer force enable the Society to mobilize significant funds and resources for key projects and in many respects prove the truism that committed individuals who work together can achieve magnificent things. Thank-you to you all!

Changes at the top

As an organization, BotSoc has been blessed with good leadership. During the last financial year we said a final goodbye to Dr Bruce McKenzie, who led the Society from 1997 to 2008, and who did so with integrity and dedication in a difficult time of its history. BotSoc owes him a huge debt of gratitude for getting us to where we are today.

In February 2008, when Dr McKenzie decided to take early retirement, Council opted for a flat structure for BotSoc that



Zaitoon Rabaney, BotSoc Director of Operations

would see the role of CEO split into a Director of Operations and a Director of Conservation. These roles were taken on by Zaitoon Rabaney and Mark Botha respectively.

One year down the line, this structure has shifted. Following the resignation of Mark Botha in February 2009 (to take up a new challenge with WWF-SA), the role of Director



Mark Botha, outgoing BotSoc Director of Conservation

of Conservation will fall away. The projects in the Conservation Unit that are supported and administered by BotSoc will be on-going and will be consolidated in various memoranda of agreement between the parties. The way forward for the Society on specific additional projects is under discussion and members will be able to follow updates in the *Veld & Flora* magazine.

Our thanks go to Mark for his exceptional contribution over the past ten years to BotSoc and his work in raising the profile of conservation issues across the country. In many ways Mark personified BotSoc's role as an innovator and a catalyst. He kick-started numerous initiatives – including the Biodiversity and Wine Initiative (a pioneering partnership between the South African wine industry and the conservation sector) and the Bokkeveld Stewardship Programme (an initiative to conserve threatened ecosystems by developing tools for off-reserve conservation on private land), both of which are playing important conservation roles in these sectors.

Our Director of Operations, Zaitoon Rabaney, remains at the helm and is now well settled into her new role. She is bringing new vision and vigour to the Society. Change is vital for any institution and especially so for a membership-based organization such as ours. Zaitoon will steer BotSoc into an important new era – one where new members, new growth and new clarity will emerge. These are exciting times – watch this space.

Strengthening branches

One of the first initiatives that Zaitoon, in her new role, undertook during the past financial year was to visit many of the BotSoc branches across the country. These visits will be an on-going feature of Zaitoon's activities. The aim is to draw Branches into the formulation of the vision and strategic objectives of the Society as it moves forward. The message is: we are a membership-based organization and as such we value the input of our members.

BotSoc has 16 branches across the country – and it continues to seek ways to support and engage them. During the period under review some branches opted to operate as interest groups rather than fully fledged branches (Winelands, Albany, Cederberg and Garden Route). Constitutional amendments are on the Council agenda to accommodate these changes.



Karen Carstens, newly appointed Co-ordinator of the northern region.

New appointments

To assist in keeping the various branches of the Society more connected, Council approved the creation of a co-ordinator's post in the northern regions. Karen Carstens was appointed to the post in April 2009. She is based at the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden and will work closely with Zaitoon to assist with northern outreach.

Changes to Council

New appointments were also made to the eight-member Council, which underwent a sea change at the last AGM. Last year we said goodbye to out-going members: Barry Jordan, Ena McIntyre, Peter Ryan and Di Higginson.

Our thanks to these office bearers for their invaluable contribution to the Society over many years. In their place we welcomed Mike Harper, Colin Priem, Advocate Abri Meiring and, of course, myself.

It is notable that this is a transforming board reflecting BotSoc's commitment to accelerating transformation in the Society. In addition, it is a well balanced and dynamic team. The Council now has a good mix of botanical, business and governance skills – and we mean to use them well. One of Council's on-going challenges is to ensure that BotSoc operates within the legal framework governing Public Benefit Organizations and these changes will help us achieve compliance.

Celebrating our partnerships

Although BotSoc has an extraordinary membership base, we recognize that we cannot, on our own, achieve everything. One of the Society's strengths over the years has been in partnering with other organizations that have broader mandates in matters of biodiversity conservation thereby enabling us to extend our reach. Traditionally, BotSoc has played a catalytic role in starting and piloting strategic projects which, when successful, get handed onto partners who take over their funding and administration. Among our notable successes is the hugely successful Working for Water Project now run by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry.

BotSoc has long-standing partnerships with the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and WWF-SA in particular, as well as close relationships with stakeholders such as CAPE, Cape Flats Nature, the City of Cape Town, Conservation International, the Fynbos Forum and the Northern Cape Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation (DTEC). A word of thanks to

Mazda Wildlife for their generous sponsorship in support of these projects.

Every project allows members the opportunity to participate in BotSoc's mandate 'to win the hearts, minds and material support of individuals and organizations for the conservation, cultivation, study and wise use of the indigenous flora and vegetation of southern Africa'. Perhaps the most prominent project for enabling member participation is the CREW (Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers) initiative. This SANBI initiative is partially funded by BotSoc and involves volunteers from the public, largely made up of BotSoc members, in the monitoring and conservation of South Africa's threatened plant species. CREW aims to capacitate a network of volunteers (60% of which are BotSoc members) from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. BotSoc lends further support to CREW by helping to promote its work through *Veld & Flora*.

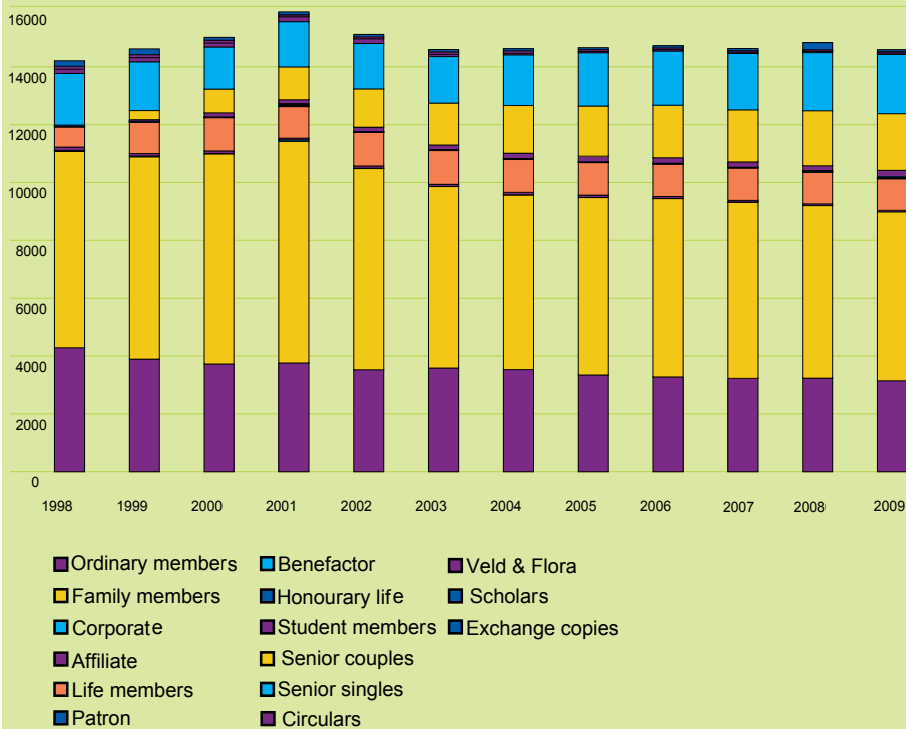
The year under review has seen BotSoc achieve some major milestones with regards to its partners. An historic Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with SANBI is in process. The two organizations are of course historically linked. BotSoc came into being in 1913 at the same time as South Africa's first National Botanical Garden (Kirstenbosch) was proclaimed. The mandate was specifically to get the public more involved in the running and funding of the new garden. The spirit of this relationship has continued – and of course expanded. BotSoc still provides support to all nine National Botanical Gardens across the country in the form of volunteer support and funding (via the Partnership Fund). In return, our members get free access to these magnificent resources.

The MoA formalizes this long-standing partnership and we trust that it will lead to an enhanced working relationship between us.

BotSoc Council, from left: Mr Colin Priem, Mrs Ena McIntyre, Dr Bruce McKenzie, Dr Eugene Moll, Dr John Rourke, Mr Mike Harper, Adv. Abri Meiring and Mr Michael Lawrence (chair).



BotSoc membership statistics from 1998-2009 by membership type.



BotSoc is committed to delivering resources and support to augment SANBI's mandate and we believe that our strong, passionate and well-informed membership base can play a key role in this regard.

New initiatives

A new project that deserves special mention from last year is our partnership with SANBI and the Western Cape Department of Education (WCED) on the Biodiversity, Sustainable Development and Climate Change FET Project. This is a three-year initiative (2008-2010), funded by BotSoc and implemented by SANBI's

Environmental Education Officers at the Gold Fields Centre. The project is supported by two curriculum advisors of the WCED. It aims to build capacity among identified Life Sciences teachers in the Further Education and Training (FET) band in the National Curriculum through a teacher professional development programme. (You can read more about this project on page 164 of this issue of *Veld & Flora*.)

For BotSoc, one of the most satisfying outcomes of this partnership has been that the Department of Education has taken environmental education on board as part of the Grade 11 curriculum. We think it impacts like these that are worth fighting for.

Students from South Peninsula High are engaged in an environmental education action project as part of the BotSoc, WCED FET initiative.



BotSoc Members of Council

Dr John Rourke (President)
 Mr Michael Lawrence (Chairman)
 Mr Mike Harper (Vice Chair)
 Dr Eugene Moll
 Mr Colin Priem
 Mrs Ena McIntyre (Treasurer)
 Adv. Abri Meiring
 Mrs Di Higginson (resigned)
 Mr Mark Botha, Director Conservation
 Ms Zaitoon Rabaney, Director of Operations

BotSoc Branches

Albany (Interest Group)
 Algoa
 Bankenveld
 Cederberg (Interest Group)
 Free State
 Garden Route (Interest Group)
 Kirstenbosch
 Kogelberg
 KwaZulu-Natal Coastal (Durban)
 KwaZulu-Natal Inland (Pietermaritzburg)
 Limpopo
 Lowveld
 Pretoria
 Southern Overberg
 West Coast
 Winelands (Interest Group)

BotSoc Honorary Life members

Mrs A Nunn
 Mrs J Albertyn
 Mrs G Attwell
 Miss L Du Preez
 Lt Com. R Geary Cooke
 Mr R Hall
 Mr J Latham
 Prof. O A M Lewis
 Adv. A Meiring
 Dr E G H Oliver
 Mrs J Onderstall
 Mr P Patterson
 Mrs E van der Merwe
 Mrs J Yeats

BotSoc Benefactors

Mrs L Baumann
 Mr C Heatlie
 Mr A Moore
 Mrs E Parker
 Mr I F Reddihough
 Mrs J Unsgaard

Financial performance

Three summary tables, Consolidated Capital Employed, Consolidated Income and Consolidated Membership Services Costs, are presented below. Consolidated Capital Employed shows modest growth. The values of investments have declined due

to a worldwide down-turn in the market.

Consolidated Income for the year reflects a decrease mainly due to delays in the processing of funding applications. Subscription income growth was in line with expectations and Membership Services Costs were well contained.

Consolidated Capital Employed for the year ended 31 March 2009

	2009	2008
Accumulated Funds	2 449 903	1 881 102
Branch Reserves	2 910 617	2 599 758
Revaluation Surplus	836 948	1 606 884
Life Members Fund	969 549	905 847
Memorial Funds	37 274	34 275
Partnership Fund (SANBI)	1 931 628	2 519 053
Conservation & Education	4 440 124	3 869 880
Branch Project Funds	752 658	322 810
Wildflower Guides	1 981 028	1 879 125
Heritage	468 987	326 651
National Programmes	2 169 565	2 542 265
	18 948 281	18 487 650

Consolidated Income for the year ended 31 March 2009

	2009	2008
Subscriptions	3 502 144	3 264 197
Investment Income	362 286	347 415
Donations and Bequests	4 544 505	5 787 473
Life Membership Income	63 702	41 825
Surpluses on Sales and Fundraising	1 108 380	867 206
	9 581 017	10 308 116

Consolidated Membership Services Costs for the year ended 31 March 2009

	2009	2008
Administraion	676 203	611 109
Transfers to funds	350 242	326 420
Veld & Flora	648 206	534 747
Employment Costs	1 437 236	1 386 691
Branch Operating Costs	519 101	432 077
	3 630 988	3 291 044

BotSoc Patrons

Ball Straathof Seeds	Dr G Hollman	Mr P Ross
Dr F Busson	Interflora African Areas	Mrs V Ross
Tygerberg Nature Reserve	Ltd	Mr T Satake
Mrs H Collett	Mr I Miller	Mrs S Southey
Mrs R Ellison	Dr P G S Neethling	Mr H Whitbread
	Mrs D Rockerfeller	Sanlam

BotSoc Head Office team



Simone van Rooyen - System Administrator (Membership).



Moosa Behardien - Office Administrator.



Helga Bohn - Financial Manager.



Nasera Baker - System Administrator (Membership).



Wendy Paisley - Office Administrator (Conservation Unit).

The way forward

The world that we live in is entering new and uncharted territory where questions of conservation and biodiversity are taking centre stage. In this context, the role of BotSoc will be more crucial than ever.

To ensure that we remain at the forefront of addressing these issues in our country and communities, BotSoc will be on an all-out drive in the years ahead to grow membership. Specifically, we will be seeking to broaden the membership base to be more representative of the geographical and racial spectrum of the country. Local branches will be invited to play a key role in this regard and we will be looking at finding innovative ways to increase and

retain members. We need to get the message out there: you don't have to be a nature buff to belong to and contribute to the Society – a simple love of our fantastic natural heritage is all that is required! At the end of March 2009, Branch membership stood at 14 595 and non-Branch membership - which includes overseas members – at 1312. The greatest concentration of members is family (40%) and ordinary individual (22%) members. It will be interesting to see how these numbers can be augmented in the coming years.

Continuing to add value for members is a crucial component of increasing our numbers. BotSoc membership currently provides members with free access to all National Botanical Gardens and our Journal *Veld &*

Flora also gives them an opportunity to stay informed or comment on biodiversity and botanical debates.

In the year ahead we will seek to enhance value for members. In so doing we aim to create more social cohesion by providing members with more opportunities to engage with one another, attend to key issues and reinforce the Society's role as an agent for change.

This is your organization – use it! Our future depends on the way our members take up this challenge.

Michael Lawrence
Chair of Council

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Botanical Society of South Africa will be held on Wednesday 23 September 2009 at 18h00 in the Old Mutual Conference Centre, Visitor's Centre (Gate 1), Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden. NPO Reg No. 003-394

AGENDA

1. Welcome and Apologies
2. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 25 September 2008
3. Presentation of the Report and Financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2009
4. Election of Auditors: Council has nominated Browne and Associates, Chartered Accountants (SA)
5. Elections of Members of Council (vacancies)
6. Proposal from Council to increase the subscription rates
7. Any other business, with permission from the Chair
 - 7.1 Honorary Life Membership

Copies of the financial statements will be available.

After the business of the AGM, members will be treated to a talk by David Davidson, Gold Medal winning designer of the Kirstenbosch exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show, London.

COME AND MEET DAVID AND ASK YOUR BURNING QUESTIONS

