

Branch out



A wide variety of issues were discussed including:

- The BotSoc Constitution
- Governance and the importance of compliance in terms of our Public Benefit Organisation (PBO), Non Profit Organisation (NPO), Tax exempt and Section 18A status.
- The relationship with SANBI and support for its gardens.
- Making *Veld & Flora* more representative of the northern regions.
- Membership servicing, retention and nurturing of existing members as well as recruitment of new members from different geographical regions and racial groupings.
- Transformation agendas for the membership and committees with regard to diversifying membership, greater youth interest and community outreach programmes.



this issue

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Thank you from Zaitoon Rabaney – Director Operations

It is almost twelve months since I stepped into the Director Operations position. During this time eight of our sixteen branches countrywide were visited. These were personal visits, interacting with the Chairmen as well as the Branch Committees and on reflection, were truly worthwhile.

The personal contact afforded me the opportunity to engage with all the important role players and support staff within the BotSoc countrywide.

Most importantly..... you are all VOLUNTEERS. This makes our Society so special. Your time, effort, commitment, dedication and passion cannot be measured in any small way. You make the BotSoc what it is and I am fortunate to have met you.

Thank you for your hospitality and passion. Branches visited during this period were – Bankenveld, Free State, Kogelberg, KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Lowveld, Pretoria and the Southern Overberg.

I now have a good sense of the activities and interests of the various branches and became acutely aware of the different needs and interests in the various regions. It is important not to rely on a “one size fits all” model when dealing with our BotSoc branches.

Those branches not yet visited – you are scheduled for the next round.



Appointment made in Gauteng

I am pleased to formally inform you of the appointment of Karen Carstens in the northern region. Karen is based at the SANBI Walter Sisulu garden in Roodepoort. Karen is a Head office appointee in an administration and co-ordination capacity to assist Head office with the development and support of the Northern regions (Bankenveld, Pretoria, Lowveld, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Free State and Limpopo. Her contact details are:

botsoc@sisulugarden.co.za

Tel: 011 9585177

Karen will communicate with Branches in the north along Head office guidelines. At times you will receive information from Karen as well as Head office. Please bear with us until structures and procedures are quite clear!!

To relieve our volunteers of the responsibility of "revivals" of expired memberships, I have discussed with Karen to assist in this regard for the northern branches. Head office will provide additional support. We hope this will go a long way in supporting you and in the process keep growing the membership numbers.

For all general membership enquiries please contact Simone van Rooyen or Nasera Baker at Head office as usual. All processing of new membership applications, renewals and general communications are Head Office functions.

Administration and management of the *Veld & Flora* journal is a Head office function. Karen assists with the reminders of the submission of articles deadline dates only.

"Welcome Karen...

Good Luck"

Members of the Branch committees are encouraged to assist in the process of sourcing **relevant articles** for *Veld & Flora* and pass this on to Head office. You are all encouraged to use the Branch out pages in *Veld & Flora* to "brag" about your events, activities and your local champions. Karen will be sending ongoing reminders about deadlines for *Veld & Flora*.

News from Council

a) WAY FORWARD FOR THE BOTSOC ON CONSERVATION MATTERS.....

By the time you read this newsletter; you would have received your September 2009 *Veld & Flora* containing the Annual Report of the BotSoc prepared by the Chair of Council, Mr Michael Lawrence. The report features the salient activities and achievements of the past financial year. However, I would like to highlight a few specific aspects for noting.

Mark Botha, Director Conservation, tendered his resignation from the BotSoc during Feb 2009. The project management of the Conservation Unit was reassigned to the Director Operations. The four active projects in the unit at the time were funded by WWF-SA and DTEC funding. Various Memoranda of Agreement were put in place with WWF-SA and other partners to consolidate the projects in moving forward. The BotSoc remain a partner in the Biodiversity and Wine Initiative project (BWI) as well as the Ekangala Grasslands project.

Mark has taken up a position with WWF-SA and a collaborative partnership between BotSoc and WWF-SA is ongoing in accordance with various MOA's. It is important to note that the projects under the BotSoc Conservation Unit form part of the mandates of the WWF-SA as well as that of SANBI.



“The way forward is constantly being reviewed as I continue to collaborate with all other stakeholders in the conservation arena and keep the BotSoc party to debates regarding matters of conservation relevant to the BotSoc objectives and agendas.”

b) SUSPENSION OF NEW LIFE MEMBER APPLICATIONS

Attention is drawn to the Constitution:

In terms of the Constitution the *Council is vested with certain powers, one being - to administer, manage and control all the affairs of the Society including its presently acquired and its future assets and to invest and re-invest the same as it deems necessary.*

At the June 2009 meeting of Council the Life Members' Fund was discussed. Investigations highlighted that the fund is underfunded. Council undertook to review the information and to obtain an actuarial evaluation. It was decided to suspend new applications for Life membership until further notice from Council.

A bit of history..... Back in 1996 when I joined the Society.....the then Council made a decision to offer members who had been members for a 20 year period the opportunity to become a Life member on payment of R25.00.

Life members fund capital is invested. Life members are serviced exactly as ordinary members - they receive updated membership cards, *Veld & Flora* as well as newsletters from Branches. Head office pays the branches with Life members an annual branch levy for those members as for their other members.

Council's final decision in this matter will be communicated to branches. This information is important to Branches as committees are the engines at regional levels promoting the Society and encouraging membership to the BotSoc. The action taken is within Council's mandate and authority and there will be no vote on the issue at the upcoming AGM.

**BotSoc Head office Annual General meeting:
Wednesday 23rd September
2009 at 6pm at the Old Mutual Conference Centre,
Kirstenbosch Gardens.**

Nominations to Fill Vacancies On Council

Two nominations were received. The call for nominations appeared in the June issue of *Veld & Flora*. The nominees are Mr Jacques von Copenhagen and Prof Julian Sonn.

Jacques is the current Chairman of the Pretoria branch of BotSoc. He is in fulltime Government employment, is a keen conservationist, passionate outdoor adventurer and has a strong sense of governance and good fundraising networks.

Prof Julian Sonn is a member of the Kirstenbosch Branch and is a Professor at Stellenbosch University Business School where his specialty subjects are Transformation, Leadership and Diversity and he lectures the MBA and PhD Business Management students.

The Branch convention 2008 favoured “regional saamtreds” instead of the Branch Convention. The concept is being considered and Council is planning a Branch Gathering with members of Council early in the New Year. This will be an exciting opportunity for branches and their committees to engage with members of Council. Various topics will be discussed and Branches will be approached for Agenda input.

Helga Bohn joined the Society 1 April 2009. Helga fulfills the financial management function.

Nasera Baker and Simone van Rooyen are managing the front office as well as the all the membership related matters and administrative support to branches. Nasera also assists the Financial Manager with data processing. Simone provides administrative support to the *Veld & Flora* Editorial committee.

Moosa Behardien is our very able General office assistant. Wendy Paisley is Administrator for the Conservation unit and provides project support.



Thank you to Staff and Council for all the support during the transition phase.

Thank you to all Branches and their Committees for their co-operation and support during this time of change. We are committed to providing better service to you all.

Should you need assistance regarding membership related matters or *Veld & Flora* submissions please feel free to contact the relevant Head office personnel. You are kindly requested to raise issues of a governance nature at your local committee level and your Chairman in turn raises the matter with Head office.

"Our lives are not determined by what happens to us but by how we react to what happens, not by what life brings to us, but by the attitude we bring to life. A positive attitude causes a chain - reaction of positive thoughts, events, and outcomes. It is a catalyst, a spark that creates extraordinary results. Let's change to make a change!!!

"If you focus on results, you will never change.
If you focus on change, you will get results"
Anonymous

Moving Forward...

A Memorandum of Understanding to cement the 96 year history of the Society and SANBI is currently being negotiated by the Executive of the BotSoc and the Executive of SANBI.

Our members enjoy the privilege of unlimited "free entry" to the SANBI gardens on payment of a subscription to the Society.

Subscription income is the main source of income for the BotSoc to service our members.

We'll keep you posted!!

Many thanks.....



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Director Operations,
BotSoc Head office.

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