



***Botanical Society of South Africa
KZN Coastal Branch***

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON SUNDAY, 29 AUGUST 2021 ON
THE ZOOM CONFERENCING PLATFORM AT 10H00**

PRESENT ONLINE :

Suvarna Parbhoo Mohan (Chairperson)
Himansu Baijnath, Margaret Burger, Mahomed Desai, Tony Dickson, Graham & Kate Grieve, Katy Harries, Michele Hofmeyr, Gary Hoile, Dave Henry, Belinda Hingle, Ellie Hollis, Miki Jooste, Barry Lang, Andries Lombard, Janet Longman, Patricia McCracken, Hilton Maclarty, Monica Ndlovu, Allimuthu Perumal, Elsa Pooley, Jane Troughton, Sandra Dell (Minutes)

Proxy votes: Chris Adams, Jenni Bell, Marilyn Bodasing, Charles Botha, Gill Browne, Dave & Jacquie Button, Frances Callanan, Richard Foster, Gavin Goodwin, Susan Henderson, Di Higginson Keath, Beate Kleim, Janet Levy

APOLOGIES : Muhammad Adamjee, Chris Adams, Jenni Bell, Marilyn Bodasing, Charles Botha, Lindsay Bowker, Gill Browne, Dave & Jacquie Button, Frances Callanan, Howard Cook, Mary de Haas, Manjula Dhanjee, Richard Foster, Margret Gehner, Gavin Goodwin, Rosemary Harrison, Susan Henderson, Di Higginson Keath, Beate Kleim, Talia Krishanlal, Janet Levy, Bruce & Judy Mann, Thandeka Mzoneli, Lydia Petre, Anne Skelton, Norman & Anne Ward, Rose Williams

1. WELCOME

The Chairperson, Suvarna Parbhoo Mohan, opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

It was confirmed that 22 members present and 13 proxies comprised a quorum.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the previous AGM were adopted (Proposed by Hilton Maclarty and seconded by Janet Longman).

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

4. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Suvarna's report was in the form of an MS-PowerPoint [presentation](#) ; with Notes: (Appendix 1).

On completion Suvarna asked if there were any questions. Allimuthu Perumal commented that we should partner not only with eco-estates but engage all body corporates to plant indigenous. Suvarna agreed and said that it was just different terminology used between 'estates' and 'body corporates'. Margaret Burger agreed and said that they must be encouraged not to mow verges. Suvarna noted that the City of Cape Town had stopped mowing verges during the peak flowering season. Ethekwini was looking at areas in Outer West where mowing procedures were being regulated, and we definitely needed more anti-mowing procedures in place.

Prof Himansu Baijnath enquired at what level the youth members were, matriculants or studied further? Suvarna said that some were matriculants, and some were graduates; they were identified as individuals with whom the Branch or its members had liaised.

Suvarna was thanked. The Chair's Report was then accepted: (Proposed: Dave Henry; seconded: Himansu Baijnath).

5. TREASURER'S REPORT (& HAWAAN BIODIVERSITY PARK)

The financial statements had been published on the Branch website and were shared during the meeting from Suvarna's screen.

Dave Henry, the Treasurer, reported that Branch funds were retained at roughly R250 000 and were invested on call, although yields were low. Results for the year were that there had been a small net surplus of R5 500. Revenue increased, partly due to more book sales. Interest received decreased, but the branch levy allocation from the National Office increased, to compensate. Our expenses, like phone, stationery, and overheads were lower because of decreased activity. The major expense was the mural at the Durban Botanic Gardens without which there would have been a healthy surplus, but our surplus had been applied to something positive. The challenge was membership and how to attract more members, which would lead to more revenue, but for this to happen there needed to be benefits. There could be an opportunity to get corporates on board, and it was important that we continued to strive to be relevant in the community.

Dave had been working on the Hawaan Biodiversity Park project for nearly 20 years but he felt that we were still not being taken seriously by Tongaat Hulett. The site was under a proliferation of invasive alien plants. Poaching, hunting with dogs, security and the recent tragic event of the poisoning of the river were further negative aspects. Together with Ivor Daniel and others, Dave had been trying to persuade Tongaat Hulett to accept that they had a responsibility. However, they did not currently have capacity to invest money in the site or into the Sibaya Conservation Trust. The Conservation Trust was maintaining primarily the Peace Cottage forest supported by levies from the developments that they had done in Sibaya Precinct 1. Tongaat Hulett were going to be in the control of their lenders until at least 2024. Kirstenbosch received over a million visitors a year. The SANBI Botanical Gardens document identified that there was no functioning SANBI national botanical garden demonstrating the eastern coastal biome, and that there was a need for this. The landscape has been transformed by the sugar industry, so there has to be some payback by them to support environmental sector. A Biodiversity Park would become a tourist attraction for Durban, and the tourism revenue would pay for the upkeep and sustain it.

Dave thanked National Office and Bradley Bergh for setting up a simple system of financial recording.

Questions were invited. It was suggested on the chat that some funds could be placed in a fixed deposit.

The Financial Report was accepted (Proposed: Hilton Maclarty; Seconded: Barry Lang).

6. BOTANICAL EDUCATION TRUST REPORT

The Report, prepared by Charles Botha, the Chair of the Trust, was read out by Sandra Dell on behalf of Charles, who had been unable to attend. (Please see Appendix 2)

7. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Branch Committee comprised Suvarna Parbhoo Mohan as Chair (also CREW, outings), Anno Torr (Vice-Chair and Newsletter editor), Dave Henry (Treasurer, Hawaan Biodiversity Park), Barry Lang (CREW Durban group, Durban Botanic Gardens Trust), Janet Longman (Website, Plant Fair, Facebook), Hilton Maclarty (Eco-Estates, Newsletter, Tree Labels, YouTube); Christine Sole (DBG Education, Newsletter), and Sandra Dell (Secretary). Jennifer Rampersad was our co-opted DBG Horticulture representative, and Ashraf Vahed and Cebe Mlele were co-opted in March to give Youth input. Cebe resigned in August to accept an internship in Cape Town.

There had been no other nominations. Nominations were invited from the floor, but there was none.

The remaining committee members were prepared to stand again. The committee was re-elected *en bloc* (Proposed: Himansu Baijnath; seconded: Elsa Pooley).

8. GENERAL

The Great Southern Bioblitz, like April's City Nature Challenge, was an opportunity for all Southern Hemisphere countries to record organisms during spring and to showcase our beautiful biodiversity to the world. Five cities, six regions, one province and two countries in southern Africa and two in central Africa would be taking part. All interested people were invited to participate. The CREW nodes would be co-ordinating a few bioblitzes over the GSB weekend, 22-25 October, but would welcome any others organised. A series of virtual iNaturalist training sessions would be organised on Microsoft Teams from 1 September, for those unfamiliar with iNaturalist.

Elsa Pooley noted the excellent job Patricia McCracken was doing as *Veld & Flora* editor. Every edition was impressive. Graham Grieve had kept *PlantLife* alive, another excellent publication. They were two different magazines/journals but each remarkable. The editors were thanked. Patricia thanked Elsa and everyone who had helped with articles, and invited any suggestions for future articles. Patricia said that she felt proud as a Durbanite that both of these publications were housed in KZN. Graham noted his thanks.

Jane Troughton asked if there would be a BotSoc representative attending an upcoming meeting about the UPL chemical spillage. Hilton Maclarty said that he would be attending. Hilton said that there had been some discussion in Parliament about it that week where Ethekewini had been asked to provide more information including about the permission processes. Jane would be attending the meeting too, on behalf of Envirofixers and Durban North Conservancy. Hilton and Jane were thanked.

Michele Hofmeyr said that Twinstreams Nursery had available many small *Warburgia salutaris* trees should anyone need any, and also Tree of the Year posters. Himansu asked for a couple of trees for a school at which he has been planting trees for many years. Suvarna added her congratulations to Michele for being elected to the BotSoc National Council. It was fortunate that we had someone from our Branch on Council. Michele thanked the KZN Coastal Branch members for their support.

Michele said that Sappi had supported the *Warburgia* project and was now expanding it to include *Curtisia dentata* and *Ocotea bullata*. If anyone knew of a source of seed for those two species they should please contact Michele.

Dave Henry said that the Umdoni Park forest at Pennington had been under formal protection for over 100 years and there was a lot of interpretive work being done on trees, butterflies, etc to make it more educational. Visitors were welcomed.

Allimuthu noted on the chat that he would like us to hold a Plant Fair again.

As there were no further questions or comments, Suvarna thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting. Participants were invited to stay online, to join in with an informal, social chat and catch-up.

9. CLOSURE

The AGM then closed at 11h30.

Minutes recorded by: _____
Secretary



Confirmed by: _____
Chairperson



Date: _____21 July 2022_____

APPENDIX 1: CHAIR'S REPORT: NOTES TO ACCOMPANY POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

<Slide 2> Botanical Society National Update

The BotSoc national team and Council have made remarkable efforts in engaging with the Branches over the year, perhaps a major bonus of being in Lockdown. I begin the Chair's report with a few key updates from the Botanical Society's national office before discussing our Branch's activities over the year.

As of September 2020, the completion of Branch financial accounts is virtual by an accountant contracted by the National office so that reports are consistent among all Branches, allowing for financial reports to be easily consolidated across the BotSoc. There is now a minimum Branch levy allocated on a quarterly basis.

The BotSoc held a successful virtual AGM which will hopefully become a standard to allow all members to participate. A new Chair of Council was elected together with a few younger Council members while retaining continuity through experienced members of Council.

Much discussion about the BotSoc constitution has resulted in a workshop being facilitated next Saturday, around this time – please contact Sandra for more info should you be eager to join this workshop.

The monthly webinars focussed on a variety of plant conservation topics. These are available on the BotSoc YouTube channel.

Much focus is being placed on growing BotSoc membership. Our branch membership has dropped yet again, we are now at 122 members. We hope to encourage more members with the current 10% membership discount offered if you sign up or renew via Webtickets before 30 Sept! The discount also applies if you pay now even though your subs aren't yet due. The Regional membership ('Regional Access + 4 Free Kirstenbosch visits' option) is very economical @ R326 p.a. for adult members and R266 for single senior (aged 65 and over). The National membership (unlimited access to all National Botanical Gardens) costs R525 and R405 for single seniors (aged 65 and over). The only difference between the two categories is that Regional Membership allows free entrance to Kirstenbosch NBG in Cape Town for a maximum of 4 visits during the year. Also, there is now an option to receive the quarterly *Veld & Flora* magazine either electronically or as print copies. For more clarity and info about membership you may contact Sandra Dell. Our Branch has motivated for 8 youth memberships (within the age 18-25), which we are excited about, but more about that later.

Linked to growing membership is branch branding whereby branches received branded material for Expos. The newly drafted communications strategy has improved the BotSoc's presence on social media. Apart from information shared on the BotSoc's well designed website, BotSoc has its own Blog where various topics are explored as well as a presence on all forms of social media from Facebook/Instagram/ WhatsApp, Twitter and YouTube. Training on the use of social media platforms has been provided to Branches.

<Slide 3> Botanical Society Conservation Update

I would like to provide a snapshot of the range of work being carried out by the BotSoc's Conservation Unit as each Branch is required to conduct projects that link into these broad objectives for national plant conservation.

The CREW programme, operational since 2003, surveys plant taxa of conservation concern and feeds into the IUCN Red List dataset.

Important Plant Areas is a global initiative to identify, monitor and protect the best sites for wild botanical species and their natural habitats using standardized criteria. This project is currently being finalized upon which Branches will be provided with more information for their localized regions.

KZN is the leading province in terms of Biodiversity Stewardship. In eThekweni, much focus is being placed on the communal land managed by the Ingonyama Trust Board.

Reducing the ongoing loss of habitat, and thus, our species, is an objective Branches can readily feed into with clearing of Invasive Alien Plants, inputting into EIA applications and surveying medicinal plant species. National has provided intensive EIA training a few months ago.

The close connection between BotSoc and SANBI's National Botanical Gardens is emphasized in the Conservation Strategy by assisting with propagation and reintroduction of key plant species.

Finally, is building capacity within the plant conservation sector.

<Slide 4> **Branch boundaries**

The first National update is the Branch mapping and boundary delineation process to aid in conservation activities. The extent of each branch was considered by discussing the reach of the branch, geographical features, broad vegetation group and prioritization information for conservation attention. This map shows the current BotSoc branches across the country, with several branches in the Cape.

<CLICK> In KZN the boundary between inland and coastal branches was divided by municipality coverage.

<CLICK>The coastal branch extends along the entire Indian Ocean Coastal Belt within the province which is made up of several vegetation types as seen by this colorful map.

<Slide 5> **Branch virtual platform success**

Our committee has continued to increase our Branch's exposure in the virtual world. New YouTube videos have been uploaded.

Our newsletter via MailChimp has become more regular. Our next newsletter is to be distributed in September. Thank you to Hilton Maclarty and Anno Torr for layout and editing, and Christine Sole, Corinne Winson and all the other contributors. Past issues are available on our Branch website. We are putting out feelers for a new champion to compile our newsletter.

A WhatsApp group was started for Branch members and supporters in March. The group encouraged increased member participation in the global citizen science City Nature Challenge event.

<CLICK>Facebook is our primary social media platform. Thank you to all contributors and especially to Janet Longman for maintaining our Branch website and Facebook profile. In celebration of the environmental commemorative Earth Day, we are grateful to Anno Torr for creating beautiful posters as free downloads. The 'Garden Plants for Wildlife' posters reached 3 000 people!

<CLICK>The video of plant expert Geoff Nichols showing us his inspiring wildlife garden in Southport, was previewed to members in February and then had its public premiere amid much excitement in April. Thank you, Geoff, for showing us your garden, and to Errol Douwes for the video as well as to Hilton Maclarty for assisting. Errol kindly donated our contribution for his time

and travel, to intensive invasive alien-clearing at the Manor Gardens grassland. A lucky draw was held in conjunction with the Lynwood video. Errol Douwes generously donated the prize of a framed *Erythrina lysistemon* photo. The prize was won by Erin Naude (seen with Errol in the photo). The Lucky Draw raised almost R3 000. Thank you so much to Errol and to all those who supported our fundraiser.

<CLICK> 'An illustrated story as told by the creatures that call it home', was a video of Anno Torr's beautiful photography of the delightful insect and other wildlife that captivated her (and us!) in her indigenous garden during lockdown. We have several exciting new videos currently in production....

<Slide 6> **Activities**

We are grateful to Dr Hugh Glen for being our first online speaker as he presented the Railways' surprising historical role in the formation of the National Parks, which attracted a Zoom participant all the way from the UK and Dr Eugene Moll from the Cape. However, the local attendance was disappointing, and we didn't pursue further talks.

We were excited to receive a request from a resident from St. Wendolins near Mariannhill to advise him on a potential new community mixed-use garden site with spectacular views (picture on bottom left).

Our Branch engaged in 2 events hosted by Conservancies KZN - Walk On the Wild Side in March and the annual Kloof Conservancy Indigenous Open Gardens, which provided the opportunity for us to showcase our new branding. Anno Torr created online puzzles to keep our young visitors enthused.

<Slide 7> **Tree Identification Course**

Prof Eugene Moll's almost annual Tree ID courses have become a highlight for our members. 25 participants including some from as far as Johannesburg and Cape Town, benefited from Prof Moll's amazing knowledge. 4 places for students were sponsored by the Branch. Thank you to Prof Moll, and to Dave Henry for making the arrangements and fundraising for both the Branch and the Umdoni Park Trust.

<Slide 8> **Engaging with estates**

Interesting new developments: Over the year, Hilton Maclarty has championed our eco-estate project to encourage residents to become aware of biodiversity within their estates while hopefully attracting new members. Hilton has provided 3 estates (Zimbali, Kindlewood and Umhlanga Improvement Precinct) with BotSoc tree labels with QR codes to create awareness of and unlock the secrets of the natural world. There are a few design options available.

We have also secured space in Kindlewood estate's newsletter whereby we aim to promote biodiversity. We are trying to secure an Open Day which unfortunately has been postponed twice due to Lockdown constraints. We are looking to engage with more estates, should you have any links for us to pursue, please add this to the chat. Hilton will be keen to take the discussion further. If you are interested in obtaining tree labels, please contact Hilton.

<Slide 9> **PlantLife online journal**

PlantLife journal is progressing well with 2 issues published annually. We are grateful to Graham Grieve for our Branch's flagship online.

Our Branch in partnership with the CREW programme also contributes to the Kloof Conservancy's biannual *Leopard Echo* publication which focusses on conservation activities within eThekweni municipality.

<Slide 10> **Durban Botanic Gardens Collaboration**

We were excited to have commissioned street artist Giffy Duminy to create a *Strelitzia* mural within the Durban Botanic Gardens (DBG) *Strelitzia* garden. The mural has received much exposure with local newspapers and the BotSoc national blog and various social media platforms. The creation of the mural has been filmed as is available via our virtual platforms. The committee is keen to measure the effectiveness the mural has had toward the BotSoc by obtaining public feedback. The mechanism for doing so is still being investigated and we would welcome ideas.

Several work parties were held in the Butterfly Habitat Garden – thank you so much to our stalwart volunteers (Di, Barry, Corinne, Katy, Sandy, Christine B and Philani).

Our Committee appreciates being informed of the many fresh projects happening across the DBG and would be brainstorming projects that would best meet the BotSoc's objectives. Most certainly our tree labels will be a new feature to the garden as it links to SANBI's PlantzAfrica infobase.

<Slide 11> **Potential Collaborations and Projects**

We would like to involve our eight sponsored youth members in existing and new branch activities while providing mentorship opportunities, like to create botanical conservation-conscious communities within estates and hopefully boost our family membership, selecting projects within DBG that will be beneficial to the BotSoc, introducing 'What's Flowering Now' series and thereafter progressing to plant family discussions, sharing various aspects of plant taxonomy and how to identify the plants that we see when we are on our walks.

We'd like to stimulate the indigenous nursery industry by featuring nurseries in the Branch newsletter, host expos at nurseries, book sales and so forth.

The eThekweni Conservancy Forum as well as the various Conservancy branches, have close links with eThekweni Municipality, and we'd like to, via them, partner in biodiversity restoration projects around invasive alien plant clearing, verge gardens, open gardens and so forth.

We have been engaging with the BotSoc National Marketing team for better utilization of the branch webpage and other facilities that the BotSoc national website can offer our branch.

We encourage our members to participate in CREW field surveys and the stewardship site visits that are planned. We also encourage participation in iNaturalist courses which are also linked to international events around the Greater Southern Bioblitz as well as the City Nature Challenge.

We also want to host the national Garden Day with DBG.

The events of mid-July were a great shock to us all and the damage to the environment included the Umhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve caused by the Cornubia chemical plant fire. We thank Hilton Maclarty and other members for representing our Branch at the various community-organised engagements with the various authorities.

Related to the increase in security awareness, our Committee has been made aware of a Security APP with panic button that in an emergency links one directly to the police and security companies. It would be ideal for outings, dog-walks, etc. The APP has a monthly subscription fee which we are hoping could be an add-on to the BotSoc subscription. We will be engaging our

membership to possibly pilot this APP within our Branch before negotiating with other Branches and hopefully eventually becoming a national APP which will drastically reduce the cost.

<Slide 12> **Thanks**

In conclusion we'd like to thank various people: our dedicated and innovative committee for taking our branch into the virtual realm and maintaining various activities virtually; our members for participating in our wide range of activities; those who have shared images for this presentation and for various of our other publications; the BotSoc national office for the active virtual engagement throughout the year with branch meetings, the implementation of the financial system, new branding merchandise, interesting webinars highlighting different facets of plant conservation, as well as allowing us the use of this Zoom facility. Please follow the KZN Coastal Branch on social media, our handle is @BotSockKZNCoastal.

I'd like to thank you, and will now take any questions or comments on the Chair's Report.

APPENDIX 2: BOTANICAL EDUCATION TRUST REPORT

Since its inception in 2008, the Botanical Education Trust has made grants every year to deserving projects that advance education and research into indigenous South African flora. The Trust also funds the publication of literature pertaining to our flora. As such, it has made a substantial contribution to conservation.

All donations to the Trust are judiciously invested and only income derived from investments is used for grants. Because of the Corona virus pandemic during 2020 interest rates were severely reduced and, in addition, many companies did not pay dividends on shares. Due to this drastic drop in income the Trustees decided, for the first time ever, that it would be prudent not to make any awards during 2020.

No doubt, many people seeking funding for conservation oriented projects were extremely disappointed. But there are repercussions for conservation which extend beyond our flora, as without our indigenous vegetation even our natural parks would not be able to conserve all the wildlife they support.

Fortunately, the Trustees have agreed to resume funding suitable applications again this year.

We appeal to everyone who values our indigenous flora, and the associated eco-systems, to consider a donation, no matter how small. I would be happy to supply any further information.

Charles Botha
(Chair – Botanical Education Trust)