



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

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON SUNDAY, 21 JULY 2024 AT DURBAN BOTANIC GARDENS AT 13H30

PRESENT: Muhammad Adamjee, Himansu Baijnath, Marilyn Bodasing, Charles & Julia Botha, Margaret Burger, Frances Callanan, Virginia Cameron, Mary De Haas, Ingrid & Lee D'Eathe, Sandra Dell (Minutes), Mahomed Desai, Tony Dickson, Willem & Amanda Engelbrecht, Richard Foster, James Hallé, Dave Henry, Di Higginson, Phyllis Jenkins, Barry Lang, Lindy Lawrie, Pat Long, Janet Longman, Patricia McCracken, Adam Menne, Nkululeko Mkhize, Suvarna Parbhoo Mohan (Chairperson), Frances Roberts, Jean Senogles, Christine Sole, Naomi Stapersma, Bruce & Alice Surmon, Jane Troughton, Marion Whitehead, Rose Williams, and Siphawemusa Zama.

PROXY VOTES: None

APOLOGIES: Sheila Bamber, Heather Cairns, Diana Callear, Ivor Daniel (Durban Botanic Gardens Trust), Jenny Evans, Elizabeth Forsdick, Megan Goschen, Graham & Kate Grieve, Rosemary Harrison, Mark Liptrot & Cecily Salmon, Bertha Pitout, Elsa Pooley, Jill Seldon, Coral Vinsen

1. WELCOME

The Chairperson, Suvarna Parbhoo Mohan, opened the meeting, welcomed all present and thanked everyone for taking the time to attend.

It was confirmed that 32 members present of the 97 Branch membership comprised a quorum.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 29 JULY 2023

The minutes of the previous AGM were adopted (Proposed: Janet Longman, seconded: Jane Troughton).

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the previous AGM.

4. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Suvarna's report was in the form of an illustrated MS-PowerPoint presentation. Please see Appendix 1.

The Chairperson's Report was accepted (proposed: Charles Botha; seconded: Dave Henry).

5. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TOP PERFORMERS IN THE CITY NATURE CHALLENGE

The City Nature Challenge and Great Southern Bioblitz are international events that encourage cities to showcase their biodiversity by engaging the public in observing and recording nature. The Champions from KZN were announced (see Appendix 2), while other South African provinces also made significant progress. Notably, the City Nature Challenge takes place in April, outside the peak flowering season, making KZN's strong participation especially impressive. The Great Southern Bioblitz occurs in spring, focusing on countries in the southern hemisphere, with an emphasis on recording observations of species and sites that have not yet been sampled.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

Dave Henry presented the Branch's Annual Financial Statements.

The Branch made a surplus of R11,688 for the year. Revenue was generated from four main sources: book sales (new and used) amounting to R8,255; donations from garden tours, outings, and the children's programme totalling R19,596; interest received of R22,613; and a Plant Fair surplus of R15,501. The Branch no longer received the Branch Levy from membership fees, previously provided by the National Office to cover administrative costs, highlighting the need for increased self-sufficiency.

Accumulated funds were at almost R272 000, while R300 000 was held in the bank. A conservative approach had been maintained. However, new revenue streams were needed to support growth and broaden appeal.

Membership had declined over the years from over 300 members to 97, despite the reduced annual subscription fee of R200. The loss of SANBI's free entry to National Botanical Gardens significantly impacted membership numbers. Similarly, the Kirstenbosch Branch now has only a tenth of its former membership, reflecting a national downward trend.

The main challenge for BotSoc nationally is to stabilise and develop regular revenue sources. Dave expressed concern that the capital accumulated over many years was being depleted, and that relying on accumulated funds and donations to balance the books was unsustainable.

Questions were invited. Jane Troughton asked whether the Branch received any funding from the Woolworths "MySchool" Rewards programme where a percentage of customers' purchases was donated to the Botanical Society. As it did not, Jane suggested that this revenue should be distributed nationwide to the Branches.

A source of funding could be from corporate entities. Dave was happy to take advice on this and on any fundraising activities and strategy going forward.

Dave was thanked for his report. The Treasurer's Report was accepted (proposed: Di Higginson; seconded: Mahomed Desai).

7. BOTANICAL EDUCATION TRUST REPORT

The Chairman of the Trust, Charles Botha, presented his Report. Please see Appendix 3.

Charles concluded with an impromptu fundraising auction of a "lucky dip". This prize had been a gift from a leading bank in apology for a mistake. The auction was won by Suvarna Parbhoo Mohan with a winning bid of R400.00.

Charles was thanked.

8. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Branch Committee was composed of Suvarna Parbhoo Mohan as Chair, Janet Longman: Information Officer, website and Facebook champion, Sandra Dell: Branch secretary who coordinated the Branch's activities, Dave Henry as Treasurer, keeping our spending in check, Hilton Maclarty engaged with estates and championed the BotSoc tree labels. Christine Sole provided much of the writing of the newsletter articles. Christine was the Environmental Education representative and kept us in touch with Durban Botanic Gardens Education. Barry Lang represented the Durban Botanic Gardens Trust, the Conservancies and the Durban CREW group. Mahomed Desai was our resident scientific expert and was tasked with Outings. Jane Troughton and Muhammad Adamjee had been co-opted onto the committee and proved to be invaluable additions. Suvarna thanked the committee members for their time, ideas, and participation in Branch activities as we endeavoured to carry out the BotSoc Mission to Know, grow, protect and enjoy South Africa's indigenous plants.

Nominations for Outings, Membership, any Special Projects, or any other roles, were invited. However, there were no new nominations from the floor.

The committee was willing to stand again and was elected *en-bloc* (Proposed: Di Higginson, seconded: Charles Botha).

Suvarna thanked the committee and looked forward to a good year ahead.

9. GENERAL

Patricia McCracken, on behalf of Prof. Donal McCracken, a trustee of the Durban Botanic Gardens Trust, announced that the DBG Trust would be hosting a symposium on 3 and 4 October to commemorate the Gardens' 175th year. The keynote speaker would be Carly Cowell, director of conservation at Botanic Gardens Conservation International, while other speakers included Neil Crouch, Natasha Govender, Elsa Pooley and Ernst van Jaarsveld. Attendance was limited to 60 people. Anyone wanting tickets should contact Donal or the DBG Trust Manager, Koren Gnirck. Patricia was thanked.

Lindy Lawrie, on behalf of the Flora and Fauna Publications Trust, updated the meeting on the progress of the new indigenous gardening book by Elsa Pooley, Geoff Nichols and Andrew Hankey. The book was in its final edits after being 8 years in the making, and would be launched in March 2025. Sponsorship was invited; further information could be obtained from the Flora Trust table at the back of the hall. Each sponsor was truly valued.

Rose Williams acknowledged the important work of the Flora & Fauna Publications Trust in making our region's botanical knowledge available and accessible to everyone.

There were no further comments or questions from the floor.

The raffle winner of the book, *Ferns of Southern Africa A Comprehensive Guide*, was then drawn by Mrs Pat Long as Jane Troughton.


A silent auction, in favour of the Flora & Fauna Publications Trust and our Branch, would soon be held for three small David Johnstone paintings that were kindly donated by Mark Liptrot and Cecily Salmon. Further details would be made available in the coming weeks.


10. TALK

Suvarna then introduced guest speaker, ecologist Dr Mahomed Desai, who gave a fascinating and informative illustrated presentation, *More than just diamonds - The Tsau / /Khaeb*.

11. CLOSURE

The meeting then closed at 15h30.

Minutes recorded by: 
Secretary

Confirmed by: 
Chairperson

APPENDIX 1: CHAIR'S REPORT



KZN Coastal Branch

Chair's Report August 2023 to July 2024

'Know, grow, protect and enjoy South Africa's indigenous plants'

Botanical Society National Update

- National AGM held online on 6 July
- Strategic Framework presented – Transformation, Conservation, Fundraising and Marketing Strategy underway
- Monthly webinars covering a range of topics
- Hosted World Species Congress side event
- Veld n Flora, BotSoc Buzz, social media website
- Patricia McCracken – outgoing Editor of Veld & Flora

For more info:
<https://botanicalsociety.org.za>



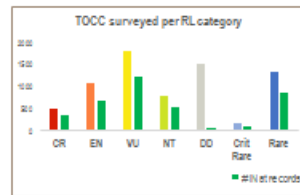
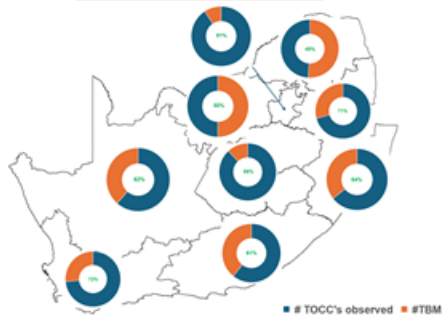
I begin the Chair's report with a few key updates from the Botanical Society's national office before discussing our Branch's activities over the year.



CREW Programme snapshot

South Africa has:

- 20 456 plant taxa
- 65% endemic
- 6% of the world's plants
- world's richest temperate flora



CREW conducted 476 fieldtrips and surveyed 42 stewardship sites during the 2023 field season



The CREW Programme is based within SANBI and funded by the Botanical Society and Mapula Trust. CREW is an integral part of the work on monitoring threatened species for South Africa. It was initiated in 2003 in the Cape Floristic Region (CFR) and expanded to the KwaZulu-Natal in 2006, Mpumalanga in 2007, Eastern Cape and Limpopo in 2013 and Gauteng in 2015. It links citizen scientists with their local conservation agencies and particularly with provincial biodiversity stewardship programmes to ensure the conservation of key sites for threatened plant species. It involves citizens from different socio-economic backgrounds, strategically recruited in areas of high plant endemism and threat, who collect population trends and threat data for the Plant Red List assessment which feeds into land use decision-making processes.

Botanical Society KZN Coastal Branch Update

Branch membership: 97

Multiple communication platform



259 2 000 Followers
supporters Posts reaching 4400 people



Monthly activities throughout the year

Gifting merchandise



Branch membership stayed constant at 97 members. We would like to thank our members for their loyalty. To this end, we would like to offer each BotSoc member here today a free copy of the BotSoc KZN Coastal Branch butterfly gardening guide, *Bring Butterflies Back to your Garden*, by Charles & Julia Botha, as well as the coffee table book, *The Durban Forest* kindly donated by the Durban Botanic Gardens Trust. Please do sign for your books before you leave today.

Our social media presence has steadily grown. We now have over 2 000 people following our activities on Facebook, with our posts reaching over 4 400 people in the last month. Thank you to all contributors and especially to Janet Longman for maintaining these sites for us. The Branch Members WhatsApp group increased to 94 members. The WhatsApp Public group for Branch members and supporters has grown to 259 people. This group encouraged increased member participation in the City Nature Challenge on the iNaturalist.com website. WhatsApp is a convenient, quick way of communication. However, there is still a place for a newsletter, giving more in-depth articles. Talia Krishanlal Moodley took on the Newsletter task since the April 2023 edition and has kept us on track with deadlines and has done an excellent job on the newsletter. The CREW Durban group continues the important work of surveying threatened plants across the Ethekwini area.

Indigenous Plant Fair



Plant Fair 2024:
14-15 September

Our branch held its 1st Fair 25 years ago at a time when planting indigenous was still considered a fringe activity and finding indigenous plants for your garden was a challenge. Though indigenous gardening is now mainstream and a wide range of plants are available, there is a need to increase the diversity of species cultivated so that gardens can provide a fuller range of food sources and habitat for urban wildlife. We see this as an opportunity for our BotSoc plant fair to remain relevant as an educational and conservation project for our branch. Apart from being our Branch fundraiser and the Society's awareness event, the event is an opportunity for our community to gather and celebrate our wonderful natural heritage, to communicate with enthusiastic and knowledgeable people and to contribute to our urban biodiversity by making a wide range of indigenous plants available to the public. We hope to encourage the propagation of plant species that are neglected by the nursery trade and make them available to the public. The Plant Fair was held at the beginning of September 2023, at a new venue, the Durban Botanic Gardens Visitors Complex. Championed by James Hallé, and organized by a small committee and a group of dedicated volunteers, ten nurseries participated as well as our own stand focussing on a range of less commonly available species. Talks by Elsa Pooley, Lance Rasmussen and Suncana Bradley were well attended, and a number of environmental groups held exhibits. The 2024 Plant Fair is on 14-15 September, again at the Durban Botanic Gardens Visitors Complex.

Outings



Krantzkloof Nature Reserve: Nqutu grassland (closed to the public)



Peace Road grassland (Kloof)

Photos: WhatsApp

Our Branch organises an outing once a month with the CREW fieldtrips being additional. I will showcase a few here. These are grouped into site visits, indigenous garden tours and greening the neighbourhood activities. Our Branch was given access to Nqutu grassland in Krantzkloof Nature Reserve when it was still closed to the public, to hold a bioblitz in late October. Thank you to the EKZNW Honorary Officers for inviting us. Barry Lang led a visit at a rich grassland in Kloof's Peace road which took our minds off the intense January heat.

Greening Our 'Hood



Silverglen Nursery

Umdloti Beach

We visited Silverglen Medicinal Nursery in February. Manager Brian Abraham gave us a talk on the history of the nursery. Education Officer, Zodwa Msweli, told us about the outreach programme. Thereafter Brian gave a tour of the nursery and we bought plants at low prices with which to Green Our 'Hood.

In May we were shown by Terry Ann Rens and ecologist Allister Starke the successful community rehabilitation project at Umdloti Beach where the dunes had been stabilised with appropriate indigenous plants.

Indigenous Garden Tours



Suncana & Calvin Bradley's nature haven



Winter Gardens at Renishaw Hills Mature Lifestyle Estate

We visited the Westville nature haven of dynamic young duo Suncana and Calvin Bradley. Suncana has documented on iNaturalist the wildlife she has seen there – an inspiration as to what can be attracted to one's garden! This month we held the Winter Gardens at Renishaw Hills Mature Lifestyle Estate near Scottburgh with Elsa Pooley, who designed the gardens, leading the tours. Each garden was unique yet fitted in harmoniously with the whole. Thank you so much to Elsa, who worked so hard on the day barely sitting down between tours; also thanks to the management and staff who organised the event for us, to the volunteers and to everyone who supported it.

Children's Winter Holiday Programme



. BotSoc KZN Coastal Branch successfully hosted a repeat of last year's Winter Holiday Programme during the final week of the public-school holidays. The event welcomed both paying participants and children from care homes and places of safety, sponsored largely by BotSoc members.

Learners (aged 10–15) from diverse backgrounds engaged warmly, forming friendships and working well together. The programme ran across three venues – Burman Bush, Beachwood Mangroves, and Durban Botanic Gardens – and included guided walks, eco-themed activities, nature journalling, and creative expression using natural materials. Children were encouraged to explore and reflect in their own way, with all receiving a journal and creative supplies to support their experience.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with one institution head remarking: *"We are thrilled our children had this opportunity – away from screens and into nature and creative pursuits!"*

Heartfelt thanks to the volunteer team: Sandra Dell, Janet Longman, Di Higginson, Frances Callanan, Sim Cele, and Lulu Richmond – and to Allimuthu Perumal for providing daily treats.

Environmental Education and Awareness Activities



- eThekweni Environmental Education and Public Awareness Network – Branch represented by Christine Sole
- The Branch was represented at the eThekweni Biodiversity Forum quarterly meetings – Branch represented
- Glen Ashley Primary School with Jane Troughton and Christine Sole
- BotSoc had an expo at:
 - Friends of Palmiet Nature Reserve's Freedom Day event,
 - Westville Conservancy's Indigenous Nursery launch
 - Durban Botanic Gardens Trust's Plant Fair
 - Kloof Conservancy's Indigenous Open Gardens



PlantLife Online Journal



Total pageviews to date for all digital editions is 74 384.

These readers are from (in decreasing order):
South Africa, USA, Singapore, Romania, UK, Russia,
France, Netherlands

All issues are now available on the PlantLife blog.
Thanks to Lulu Richmond for the scanning

The next edition is to be published at the end of
July 2024.

Our heartfelt gratitude to Plant Life editor, Graham
Grieve

<https://plantlifesouthafrica.blogspot.com/>

The last of the back issues were scanned and placed on the website. Our thanks go to Lulu Richmond for completing this task for us.

Wally Menne Memorial Book Fund

Initiated to honour the late Wally Menne, who resurrected our Branch and was the Chair and driver of the Plant Fair for many years.

Wally was a passionate environmentalist who gave away books to eager people interested in indigenous plants and might not be able to buy the books but who would use and appreciate them.

Thank you to all our donors of pre-loved books, especially over the past year

New books were granted to:

- Clever Dwiza of Iphithi Nature Reserve (Bring Nature Back to your Garden)
- Andrew van der Walt former homeless man planting up verges in Glenwood (Bring Nature Back to your Garden)
- Ferncliffe Forest Wilding Team (Forest Plants)
- 3 x community conservancies in Biodiversity Stewardship Sites as City Nature Challenge prizes (3 x Bring Butterflies Back to your Garden; 3 x Forest Plants)



Members are invited to nominate deserving recipients of new or pre-loved books.

Thank You

Our members for your ongoing support and participation

Hosts/ presenters for generously donated their time and shared knowledge

Members and supporters for kindly contributing to our fundraising activities

Activity participants for shared images for this presentation and for our various publications

The Durban Botanic Gardens team as well as the Durban Botanic Gardens Trust for the use of the office, the plant fair venue, the donation of 'The Durban Forest' books and for other privileges in the Gardens

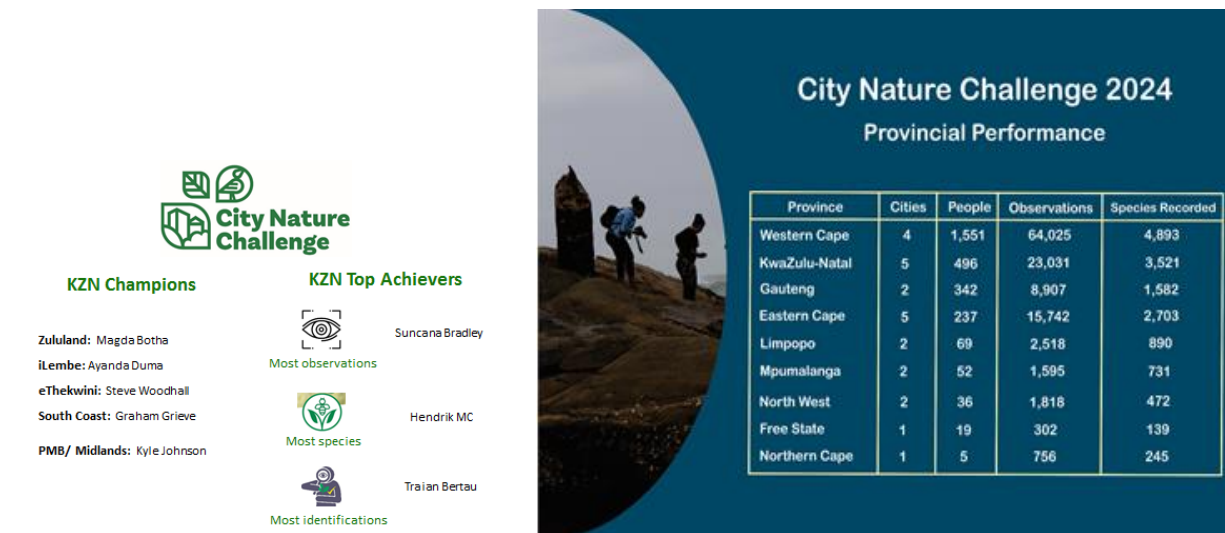
The current committee for your ongoing enthusiasm, dedication and commitment



**Know, grow, protect and
enjoy South Africa's
indigenous plants'**

<http://www.botsoc-kzn.org.za/>

APPENDIX 2: CITY NATURE CHALLENGE AND GREAT SOUTHERN BIOBLITZ





What is the Great Southern BioBlitz?

A worldwide citizen science event throughout the southern hemisphere using the iNaturalist app and website, to showcase biodiversity within our cities.

Join the Great Southern BioBlitz southern Africa 2024 umbrella project to find your city amongst those participating in the region. Become involved and participate by observing nature.

iNaturalist is an online social network of naturalists, citizen scientists and biologists, built on the concept of mapping and sharing observations of biodiversity across the globe – and everyone is invited to participate!

Taking part is easy

1. Download the iNaturalist app on your smartphone and sign up.
2. Switch off your data and switch on your location.
3. Take good photos of any living or dead organisms, or evidence of organisms (prints, droppings, fungi, weevils, holes, tracks, nests, footprints, etc.) that you find in your garden, around your home, in your neighbourhood park, beach, reserve, etc.
4. Upload your observations at the end of your outing when you have sufficient data to get some mileage.
5. Check back to see what people say about your observations.



Find wildlife
It can be any plant, animal or any other evidence of wildlife in your city.



Photograph it
Take a photo of what you find. Be sure to note the location of the plant or animal.



Share!
Share your observations through iNaturalist.

More information
info@gsb2024.org.za
www.inaturalist.org | www.facebook.com/GSb2024




APPENDIX 3: BOTANICAL EDUCATION TRUST

The Botanical Education Trust made awards to four recipients from the eleven applications received. It was a challenging task for the trustees to select which projects would best serve the conservation of our indigenous flora. However, they were ably guided by the three botanist trustees, being Prof Braam van Wyk, Dr Neil Crouch and Prof Glynis Goodman. Prof Goodman has only recently joined as a trustee, after the retirement of Dr Hugh Glen who was a founder member of the Trust 16 years ago.

Because all donations received by the Trust are invested permanently, the awards were funded only by income from the investments during the last year. The Trustees are grateful to all the donors over the years who made these grants possible.

Three of the grant recipients were from Wits University and it is very positive that two are promising young botanists.

One is Liam Taylor who is investigating the role of baobab trees in supporting entire ecosystems. This is his second award from the Botanical Education Trust. So far, his study, in Mapungubwe National Park, has shown that baobab trees provide nesting habitats (particularly large cavities) that are non-existent in the surrounding vegetation. Thus they provide a unique and irreplaceable habitat for supporting biodiversity. He is now expanding his project to the Kruger National Park where he suspects that baobabs may have even greater keystone significance. The very large elephant populations in our national parks are causing a huge loss of large trees such as baobabs. As this is an issue that needs urgent management response, it is important to help further justify that this tree species needs protection.

The second young botanist is Saness Moodley. Having recently completed her MSc degree, she is studying the pollination ecology of mountain grassland. Grassland is the most threatened biome in our country and little is known about the interaction of the community of plants and animals that make up this habitat, especially in mountain regions. Saness will investigate how pollinators influence community structure through their interactions with these plants. Understanding the reasons for these differences aims to contribute to improved conservation management of these species as well as, more broadly, of the grassland habitat.

Like Liam Taylor, Willem Froneman also received a second award from the Botanical Education Trust. His grant was for his project entitled *Barleria* in South Africa: Waterwise, Sun-loving, Beautiful and Prickly. Of the approximately 330 species of *Barleria* worldwide, 50 are in South Africa and at least a further 12 are still being described. This project will culminate in a book which will include an up-to-date revision of the genus, detailed descriptions, distribution maps and a painting of every species to facilitate identification. It will also cover horticultural aspects and deal with propagation methods of this charismatic group of plants.

The last grant was to the Ingcungcu Sunbird Restoration Project which aims to heal the relationship between plants, birds and people on the Cape Flats. Planting locally indigenous stepping-stone gardens is creating a sunbird migration corridor across the Cape Flats, while at the same time establishing learning spaces for children. Youth volunteers, who study or are involved in conservation, botany and ornithology accompany learners on field trips. This provides learners with focused forms of engagement, as volunteers act as mentors and role models. The next generations will only preserve what little remains of our natural vegetation if they come to know and appreciate it.

Although the Empangeni High School was not successful with their grant application, the Trust nevertheless donated some gardening and plant books to their library.

Charles Botha
(Chair of Trustees)