Feel good about your contribution to conservation

2021 Annual Review
Our Mission
Our mission is to win the hearts, minds and material support of individuals and organisations, wherever they may be, for the conservation, cultivation, study and wise use of the indigenous flora and vegetation of South Africa.

Vision
Meet like-minded people who grow indigenous plants for enjoyment and conservation. Plant South African flora and watch these naturally water-wise plants create a safe haven for pollinators and wildlife at home.

Who are we?
The Botanical Society is a civil society, non-profit, membership based organisation, established in 1913 to support botanical gardens, plant conservation and activities that engage its members to know, grow, protect and enjoy South Africa’s indigenous plants.

In 2020, we re-established our conservation programme and we aim to be an active participant in the United Nation’s decade for Ecological Restoration through channeling member expertise, energy, love for plants and varied resources for plant conservation.

Know
Learn about South Africa’s diverse indigenous plant heritage, why its ecosystems matter so much, and how to conserve them in your own area and contribute to ecological restoration by working with the correct plants for your area.

Grow
Meet like-minded people who grow indigenous plants for enjoyment and conservation. Plant South African flora and watch your local plants thrive in creating a safe haven for pollinators and wildlife at home.

Protect
Initiate, implement and maintain effective and impactful conservation efforts in rural and urban landscapes, wherever you are in South Africa, with the support of knowledgeable experts and partner organisations to strengthen our network.

Enjoy
From mountain tops, river valleys, botanical gardens, urban greenbelts, right down to your own garden, our South African plants create a unique environment that offers the opportunity to connect to and enjoy nature.
During the last year, the society focused on refining our strategies in terms of transformation, conservation and marketing, to put operating systems in place to support implementation of those goals. The AGM was an opportunity to reflect on the current status of the society. While in the main, we have made great strides in re-establishing ourselves as a plant conservation society of committed members who love South Africa’s indigenous plants, there is still a long way to go, as many such conservation projects require significant funding.

In our conservation programme, we have launched a successful series of webinars and we have trained our branch committee members to participate in Environmental Impact Assessments, to mention a few achievements. We have also been very focused on involving youth in our activities and have made a concerted effort to make 500 free youth memberships available to diversify our membership demographics. As part of our suite of achievements, we are now much more accessible via a fresh and dynamic website and social media platforms (Follow us, see details on the last page). As a BotSoc member this provides continuous access to information that will keep you fully acquainted with various activities run and/or supported by the Society. With your contribution we can do more for plant conservation. Get involved, speak to us about how you can donate to support our conservation programme and your botanical gardens across the country.

The Botanical Society is:
- Solidifying its identity as an active participant in the conservation sector aligned to the United Nation’s decade for Ecological Restoration.
- Strengthening our civil society and its members and mobilising our expertise, energy and love for plants.
- Establishing modernised operating systems for a dynamic future.
- Enhancing accessibility to plant information, nature leisure activities, citizen science, participation, research, plant conservation projects and more.

Anchoring through our Strategic Framework:
Three key strategic areas of focus have been identified since 2019, i.e., Transformation, Conservation and Marketing as a member-based plant conservation non-profit, public benefit organisation.

Transformation Strategy
- GOAL 1 Take a global view in harnessing the significance of South Africa’s biodiversity as a tremendous asset to BotSoc’s ability to leverage local and international support.
- GOAL 2 Enhance BotSoc’s strategic conservation influence through botanical and ecological awareness, partnerships, enjoyment, research, knowledge, skill development and project implementation.
- GOAL 3 Grow Membership and increase member value across a diverse demographic creating an inclusive community of people for plants.
- GOAL 4 Support branch mobilisation and increase capacity for member involvement through enhanced access to information and services to know, grow, protect and enjoy South Africa’s indigenous plants.
- GOAL 5 Secure BotSoc’s sustainability by working in collaboration with partners and donors through innovative resourcing.

Conservation Strategy
- GOAL 1 Monitoring of key species and the identification of “Important Plant Areas”.
- GOAL 2 Securing key sites for plant conservation.
- GOAL 3 Reducing the ongoing loss of plant species and sites rich in botanical assets.
- GOAL 4 Support branch mobilisation and increase capacity for member involvement through enhanced access to information and services to know, grow, protect and enjoy South Africa’s indigenous plants.
- GOAL 5 Secure BotSoc’s sustainability by working in collaboration with partners and donors through innovative resourcing.

Marketing Strategy
- GOAL 1 Promote SA’s plant biodiversity under the ‘know, grow, protect and enjoy’ themes using BotSoc channels to selected stakeholders to leverage local and international support.
- GOAL 2 Strengthen BotSoc’s advocacy role as experts on indigenous plants, by increasing brand visibility and managing brand reputation.
- GOAL 3 Support membership growth and membership retention across a diverse demographic through innovative and interactive campaigns, and professional and responsive communications, supplying value to members in the shape of training, well run, “happy” branches and measurable conservation action in active branch regions.
- GOAL 4 Support branch communication with members and potential members, to inspire them to become BotSoc champions, and align branch branding to create a BotSoc family presence.
- GOAL 5 Support fundraising campaigns to improve BotSoc’s sustainability.
Our BotSoc Council
Our BotSoc Council is elected by our members and serve in the interest of the Society and its members. Council is responsible for the strategic leadership of the Society and the members of Council offer a wide range of experience, knowledge and expertise to ensure that all aspects of the Society’s mandate is catered to. All Council members are members and volunteers in their capacity as Council members.

Committees
The following committees are appointed by Council to drive specific areas of the Society’s activities to ensure member input, together with the Branches and the Staff. Here too the members of the Committees serve on a voluntary basis.

- Transformation
- Publications
- Conservation
- Honours and Awards
- Marketing

Branches Countrywide
Branches across the country are comprised of members in a specific geographic area and is supported by a branch Committee which facilitates Branch activities for its branch members. These committees members are all volunteers and are supported by the staff at the BotSoc national office.

The BotSoc National Team
The national BotSoc staff support all activities of BotSoc from Council level, across the specific Committees and at Branch level. While Branches have autonomy, vibrant personalities and unique focus areas with their biodiversity and interests steering member engagement, the staff maintain the continuity of support within the network of member operations across the country. Meet the national BotSoc team.
Support for Growing Membership

There were 17,256 active BotSoc members at the close of the previous financial year that ended on 31 March 2020. Although membership subscription income only dropped by 6% during the 2021 financial year, being an unprecedented year with the effects and economic fallout as a result of COVID-19, the actual number of active members dropped by 18% to 14,097 during the 2021 financial year as many family packages were not renewed.

Membership Drives – Key to growing our network

Getting families back out into the outdoors, enjoying and supporting the gardens and plant conservation through their membership of BotSoc is crucial to the sustainability of our organisation. Our work depends on the membership fees paid by our members.

Three membership drives were facilitated by volunteer members and staff following hard lockdown: Kirstenbosch NBG (Cape Town), Walter Sisulu NBG (Roodepoort), Pretoria NBG (Tshwane). These must and will continue as tourism by locals and international travellers improve.

Youth Focus

30 free youth memberships have been issued so far to candidates nominated by the Kirstenbosch, Southern Overberg, KZN Coastal, Kogelberg and Free State branches. See a few of our the recipients below. We aim to diversify our membership demographic through making 500 youth memberships available.

Celmar Pieterse and Thapelo Mafundityala are Nature Conservation students working their practical year with the City of Cape Town (Kirstenbosch branch)

Ricus Nel is a masters student at UFS (Free State branch)

The Overberg Eco Rangers in field in Elim (Southern Overberg Branch)
Mapping Branch Boundaries

Consultative Mapping Process

As South Africa is a world leader in serving biodiversity information spatially, it makes sense to harness the power of maps to assist Branches. A consultation process with Branch Chairs and former staff informed a status quo Branch map (Centre). All Branches then had an opportunity to engage with the process and three nodes (Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and West Coast) were chosen as pilot sites. Once boundaries were agreed on, this allowed the development of a draft prioritisation document which provides the Branch with a Biodiversity Profile which can guide and inform Branch conservation actions and ensure alignment with National conservation priorities.

SANBI and BotSoc Collaboration since 1913

Our relationship is underpinned by BotSoc supporting botanical gardens, plant conservation and activities that engage its’ members to know, grow, protect and enjoy South Africa’s indigenous plants.

Our Collaboration Agreement between SANBI and BotSoc will be reviewed in 2021. We are two separate organisations. SANBI being established in terms of Section 10 of the National Environmental Management, Biodiversity Act, 10 of 2004. The Botanical Society is a Non-Profit, Public Benefit Organisation established in terms of the Non Profit Organisations Act 71 of 1997 and the Income Tax Act 58 of 1962.

SANBI is the custodian of National Botanical Gardens and manages the gardens and not BotSoc.

Members are BotSoc members who enjoy the benefit of access to the gardens as a result of our collaboration.

Watch this space

- Two new gardens are currently being developed: Kwelera and Thohoyandou.

Supporting each other

Main support received from SANBI

- National Botanical Garden access to BotSoc members.
- Office space to BotSoc.

Key Opportunities

- Collaborate on technical expertise and volunteer input for botanical/plant conservation initiatives such as publications, citizen scientist programmes, threatened species programmes, etc.
- Joint fundraising for specific garden and conservation projects.
- Youth capacity building and job creation in the conservation sector (Youth Garden Maintenance Project) – watch this space!
BotSoc is enlarging the pool of citizen science contributors by increasing the amount of branches and members active and contributing to iNaturalist as well as broadening CREW participation.

### Funding Branch Conservation Projects for local impact

As Branches are our on the ground conservation engines, providing guidance and resources is a key focus. In 2020/21, four projects were supported. These projects had to respond to our Conservation and Transformation strategies and spanned the range of working with communities to vegetation mapping.

### Knowledge Sharing

Ensuring our Branches and members had access to up to date and relevant conservation information took several forms. A range of authors contribute regular blogs to our Know, Grow, Protect and Enjoy tagline. Our Conservation Webinars are aimed to provide information on the Plant Conservation landscape as well as profiling established and upcoming plant people doing fantastic work.

Ongoing is the targeted sharing of information resources coupled with connecting partners to Branches at every opportunity.

### National Funded: Branch Conservation Projects

#### Algoa Branch

**Alien clearing and management of endangered vegetation remnants**

The project aims to support alien clearing and other conservation management activities at endangered vegetation remnants within Gqeberha’s urban areas which is conducted by Branch members and partners. BotSoc support has enabled expansion of their Adopt-A-Plot programme to three new sites with the supply of material and equipment.

#### Garden Route Branch

**Raising environmental awareness and local action on plant heritage, pollution and upcycling**

The Respect the River is a BotSoc branch driven project which involves local communities in the Blanco neighbourhood of George along the Malgas River. It is done in partnership with other local organisations, such as the Landmark Foundation, Garden Roots, Kos en Fynbos, Saffron Indigenous Nursery, George Municipality and the George Botanical Garden. Monthly events are hosted targeting diverse groups of participants towards learning about the local plant heritage, removal of alien vegetation, removal of litter from the river and upcycling waste materials. With BotSoc support materials and equipment is provided to support the logistics of hosting these monthly activities.
Free State Branch

*Elevating the bar to support young scientists in botanical and ecology research*

The Free State branch has been very involved in acknowledging and supporting students in the botanical and conservation field for years. Their support during this year has been on supporting research fieldwork that Ricus Nel has started as part of his MSc research on the floristic composition of the Bloemfontein Karroid Shrubland which is under severe threat in the Bloemfontein area due to urban expansion. This is a very exciting project that will deepen the science focus of the Free State branch’s varied conservation scope of work.

KZN Inland Branch

*Harnessing expertise to ensure propagation of threatened species in partnership with SANBI and the Millennium Seed Bank*

Isabel Johnson and the branch committee drive Threatened Species propagation in partnership with SANBI at the Pietermaritzburg National Botanical Garden and Millenium Seedbank. 10 Threatened Midlands species have been collected and propagated. Collection of seed, propagation and future reintroductions, monitoring of botanical inventories on stewardship sites are some of the activities. The shade house where the branch works had significant hail damage and needed urgent repair. The project provided assistance with materials and skilled labour to fix it and was co-funded by BotSoc National and the Branch on a 70/30 basis.
What is Stewardship?
Biodiversity stewardship is a tool to protect priority biodiversity areas through securing land owned by private and communal landowners. Conservation authorities, often in partnership with NGOs, work to conserve and manage biodiversity priority areas through voluntary agreements with legal status.

Strategic Stewardship Support
Rupert Koopman represents BotSoc at the Biodiversity Stewardship National Technical Working Group and the Western Cape Stewardship Reference Group. Isabel Johnson dedicated stewardship expert based in KZN.

Grassroot Stewardship Support
Isabel Johnson is part of the BotSoc Team and supports multiple partners, providing specialist botanical support to Stewardship sites in the summer rainfall area. Isabel’s experience in working with threatened plants and particularly with land owners of declared and potential stewardship sites has led to a number of achievements with the following as highlights:


It's all about collaboration

- Hlomo Hlomo Nature Reserve’s intention to declare supported by BotSoc, approved by the MEC in June 2021.
- Post declaration support has been provided for three BotSoc declared Nature Reserves (Bosch Berg, Red Desert and Ingwehumbe Nature Reserves).
- Ecological and botanical input provided by BotSoc for over ten partner Stewardship sites during the last year.

Hlomo Hlomo proposed Nature Reserve is a site with important botanical value in northern KZN; Declaration process is now well underway with the intention to declare the property as a nature reserve approved by the MEC in June 2021.


We thank and acknowledge our Stewardship collaborators:

Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers (CREW)

Fundraising and Support to CREW

What is CREW?
Is a programme within the South African National Biodiversity Institute with which BotSoc partners on conservation of rare and endangered plants. Mapula trust is a long-standing partner in supporting the operations of the programme. BotSoc members are volunteers contributing as citizen scientists to collection of population and threat data on South Africa’s Taxa of Conservation Concern.

BotSoc Branch CREWs
Concerted efforts are currently being made to improve integration between BotSoc Branches and CREW activities for greater conservation impact. Three CREW Node offices (Cape Floral Region – Kirstenbosch, Eastern Cape and KZN) and 38 Citizen Science groups across the country.

Working together for results

- In the 2020/2021 Financial Year, the nodes and the groups conducted 172 Field Trips and collected information on 926 Taxa of Conservation Concern (TOCC). 10% of CREW citizen scientists are BotSoc members.
- 3 Focus areas have been identified for focused systematic fieldwork: Upper Breede, Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality and Ethekwini Municipality.
- The preferred method of data collection for RedListings is via iNaturalist, which is why BotSoc is encouraging branches to be much more active in this space and participate in global iNaturalist events such as the City Nature Challenge.
- CREW activities have been adjusted to Covid-19 best practice guidelines.
In a bid to grow a better understanding and participation by our various BotSoc Branches in Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes across the country this exciting opportunity aligned to Goal 3 and 4 of our Conservation strategy was explored. Our branches expressed the need to be better informed on EIAs and hence nineteen participants from fourteen branches participated in an online training course presented by Luke Verburgt of Enviro Insight. A series of eight lectures on EIAs were presented, with guidance on how to use the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment’s new Screening Tool and he provided valuable insight into making written comment in the EIA process. BotSoc considers this to be vital in becoming an active participant civil society in plant conservation to inform responsible development processes.

Conservation Conversations: BotSoc Webinars

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<td>Topic</td>
<td>South Africa’s Plant Extinction Crisis</td>
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<td>Pat Holmes Sue Milton Phil McLean Isabel Johnson</td>
<td>Suvanna Parbhoo-Mohan Tony Rebelo Shaun Swanepoel Jeremy Gilmore</td>
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Publications that have received BotSoc support

- 3rd impression (reprint) of Elsa Pooley’s Wildflowers of KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Region: a best seller botanical publication since the launch in 1998, with accessible into on over 1800 species; including keys, drawings and other identification tips. The book is arranged via colour coding and includes ecological, gardening, medicinal and other use information.

- Field Guide to the Amaryllis family of Southern Africa (Graham Duncan, Barbara Jeppe and Leigh Voight) – the accessible field companion to the landmark publication “Amaryllidaceae of Southern Africa” (2016) has the these beautiful blooms arranged into biomes and additional photos (many sourced from iNaturalist) to assist identification.

- Know Them By Their Fruit: A guide to identifying South Africa Trees – A.T. (Trevor) Ankiewicz) An experienced forester’s eye was drawn to what could be a different and accessible key to tree identification. Leaves being famously variable, Trevor noticed the most constant characteristic are the fruit and fruiting twigs. Additionally, the fruit (fresh and partially decomposed) and seed can be found on the ground, already making life easier!

Veld & Flora 2020

The V&F is our unique quarterly magazine covering wonderful experiences, events and botanical developments and celebrates our natural heritage and people who love it. It is supported by a diverse community of contributors who’s stories are gathered by our incredibly talented editor, Patricia McCracken, without whom the magic would not happen! Over the last few years this publication has blossomed to take on a fresh look and feel and air recent focus has been on developing the e-version of the hardcopy. In our changing times with unprecedented challenges, whether it be the failure of our postal service, the health risks of handling delivery of hardcopies due to COVID 19 or the costs associated with delivery, this drive towards offering our members the option to elect receiving the hardcopy or not has provided members the opportunity of choice. On sign up or when you exsend your membership online on WebTicket platform you can now make the choice to enjoy the hardcopy or only receive the e-version thus lowering our carbon footprint and overall costs as a non profit organisation. This has been a significant shift on our organisation and we are pleased to be evolving this way.
Laying down our strategic roots as a civil society, non-profit organisation for plant conservation has been our focus in these dynamic times. It has been an exciting year for BotSoc with pioneering work to refine our strategies and in parallel ensure that operations are evolving to be relevant to our changing society and its members. We have been able to maintain connection with our Branches through many online engagements enabling even more participation from across the country than ever before. Reach on the plant conservation front has been supported at Branch grass roots project level and using technology to share knowledge, experience and our collective love for plants has been a game changer. We have had our challenges, like every organisation across the globe with transitioning to online platforms, whether it be at the member sign up interface or accessing information via our social media and more. It is safe to say that we are not alone! Despite all of this BotSoc as you can see from the content of this review, we are a developing Society. In our current economic climate however, BotSoc now more than ever needs its members’ support for sustainability. We are making a special appeal to all our members for your support through your membership and for other contributions especially to resource the implementation of our Conservation Strategy. Please contact us on 021 797 2090 should you wish to make a contribution.

Message from the General Manager

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Appreciation and Acknowledgements

- All our contributors and donors
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Feel good about your contribution to conservation

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