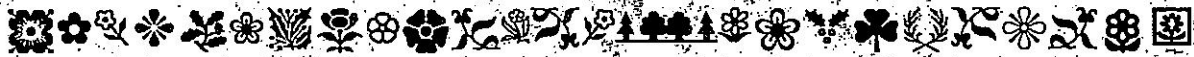


**PHYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**FIKOLOGIESE VERENINGING
VAN SUIDELIKE AFRIKA**

**NEWSLETTER
NUUSBRIEF**

**NO. 45
DECEMBER 1997**



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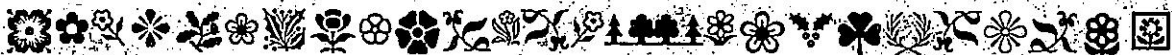


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From the Editor

Hi Everyone

Hope this newsletter reaches you before the festive season.

Please take note of the letters regarding "The State of Algal Taxonomy in South Africa" and come with your opinions and suggestions to the AGM to be held at the same time as the PSSA 1998 Congress. PSSA Secretary-Treasurer Dr Sileen Campbell has also requested all members to provide her with information on publications, students ect. (see page 5).

Happy holidays and best wishes for Christmas & 1998.

Regards

Janine



PSSA CONGRESS 1998 - FINAL UPDATE

18 - 21 January
Oaklands Holiday Village
Simons Town

NEWS FROM THE ORGANIZING
COMMITTEE : GAVIN MANNEVELDT



This could possibly be the largest delegation of participants to any PSSA congress. We have a total of *56 attending delegates*. Of these, 27 will present oral presentations (15 student presentations) and 20 will present posters (8 student presentations). We are fortunate in that we have *7 international visitors* and our guest lecturer is *Prof. Michael Guiry* from the National University of Ireland at Galway in Ireland. Prof. Guiry is a world renowned phycologist not to mention that he is president of the International Phycological Society. As the theme for next years PSSA meeting is '*Algae in the economy: scope for community development*', Prof. Guiry's lecture will be on '*The Irish Seaweed Industry Organization: an interface with the community*'.

The programme has a number of exciting sessions including:

1. AQUACULTURE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
2. ECONOMIC ALGAE
3. NUISANCE ALGAE AND HUMAN AFFAIRS
4. SYSTEMATICS
5. ECOLOGY AND PHYSIOLOGY

A sneak preview of the congress logo is given below. It will be in colour and will appear on the programme cover and T-shirt.





NEW PSSA MEMBERS 1997

Dr Wendy Stirk: PSSA Membership Secretary



PSSA has six new members this year.

Student members

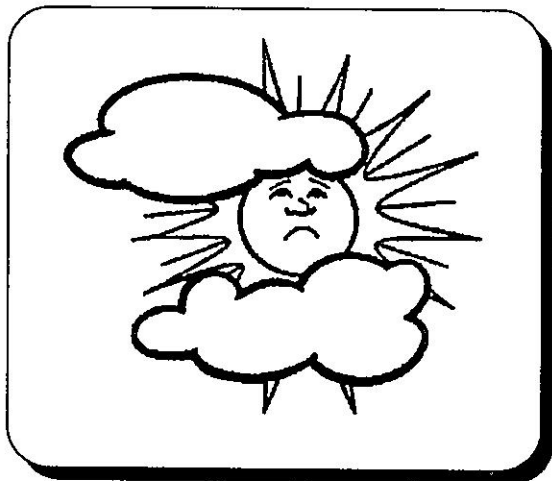
Melanie-Jane Skeggs and Althea Foster :
Botany Department, University of the
Witwatersrand

Paul-Pierre Steyn and Tommy Bornman:
Botany Department, University of Port
Elizabeth

Ordinary members

Dr. Vernon Coyne : Microbiology Department
at University of Cape Town, whose research
interests lie in *Gracilaria*.

Dr. Takeo Horiguchi: Hokkaido University,
Japan. Dr Horiguchi is an old member who has
rejoined the Society. His interests are in
dinoflagellates.



EL NINO UPDATE



El Nino no threat to Port Elizabeth - Port Elizabeth Express (6 Nov. 1997)

El Nino should be of little threat to the city of Port Elizabeth. According to the local weather bureau, temperatures will only vary slightly, if at all. Rainfall is only expected to be lower than expected. This is due to the nature of El Nino, that effects summer rainfall and the local rainfall pattern is frontal not seasonal.


The local Department of Water Affairs is not in full agreement, as the cities' rainfall for the period of September was a third lower than usual. Currently there is not a foreseeable shortage of water for the city.

El Nino and Global warming - (taken from internet 12/11/1997)


It seems that global warming may make the El Nino a permanent feature of the world's weather system. The events normally occur roughly every 5 years, and last up to 12 - 18 months. On the other hand, it is now suggested that the El Nino weather system could occur every three years, making it a dominant and almost a permanent weather feature.

Some of the effects during the year:

- Drought in Australia and Papua New guinea.
- Delayed monsoon in South East Asia, leaving forest fires to rage out of control, blanketing the region with choking smog.
- Storms on the Pacific coast of South and Central America from Chile to Mexico.
- Drought in Southern Africa
- Threat of floods in Peru and California



**STATE OF ALGAL
TAXONOMY IN SOUTH
AFRICA**



Over the past few years, the Society has been negotiating with NBI about their policy with respect to Phycology in South Africa. Dr Rob Anderson (past PSSA president) sent a letter to the chairman of the National Botanical Institute. This letter and the response are provided below. NBI chairman referred the matter to SAAB and the NBI Research Committee but requested that more information be made available regarding the lack of taxonomic expertise. Prof Bolton (UCT) is taking up this issue which will be discussed at the forthcoming PSSA AGM.

Recommendations have come from the Chairman of SAAB (Prof. J. Grobbelaar) that PSSA joins with SAAB and motivates strongly through this forum for support from NBI. This will also be discussed at the forthcoming AGM. PSSA President, Prof Robertson and secretary, Dr Campbell have called on all PSSA members to supply information on students and publications in order to summarize PSSA's outputs over the years.

**LETTER FROM DR R. ANDERSON
(PAST PSSA PRESIDENT) TO
NATIONAL BOTANICAL INSTITUTE
CHAIRMAN PROF C. JOHNSON**

24 December 1996

Professor Colin Johnson
Chairman
Board of the National Botanical Institute,
Private Bag X7, Claremont 7735

Dear Professor Johnson,

On behalf of the Phycological Society of Southern Africa, I would like to convey to the

Board of the NBI our grave concern at the lack of algal taxonomic expertise in South Africa. We believe that the NBI, as the primary organization responsible for plant systematics in this country, should recognise the importance of this group of plants in our marine and freshwater ecosystems.

At present no state organization takes responsibility for algal systematics, and the lack of any qualified algal taxonomists in the country is hindering research in both freshwater and marine environments. With South Africa party to the International Biodiversity Convention, and considering the green paper on biodiversity that is currently in draft, this deficiency is even more strongly highlighted.

In 1991 Dr John Bolton (UCT) raised this issue with the NBI, and Prof. Eloff, as head of research, replied that while NBI recognised algal systematics as part of its brief, it was not of sufficiently high priority for support. Subsequently Dr Derek Keats (UWC) raised the issue again, on behalf of PSSA, but received no reply from Prof. Huntley.

In 1956 a seaweed section was created under the predecessor of the NBI, in the Department of Agriculture, with systematics as its primary function. This was later transferred to the Sea Fisheries Division of the Dept. of Industries, where resource biology replaced systematics as the research function. However the current unfortunate situation arose, it seems that, at present, NBI should be the organisation responsible for algal systematics in SA.

We would therefore like to know:

1. Is the NBI responsible for research on the systematics of algae?
2. If so, what do they intend to do about the lack of expertise in SA?
3. If not, who do they consider to be responsible?

Yours sincerely,
Dr R.J. Anderson
President, Phycological Society of Southern Africa.

**REPLY FROM PROF HUNTLEY (NBI
DIRECTOR)**

27 June 1997

Dr R.J Anderson
President: PSSA
Department of Botany
University of Cape Town

Dear Dr Anderson

Algal Taxonomic Expertise in South Africa

Firstly, please accept this tardy response to your letter of 24 December 1996 that you addressed to Prof Colin Johnson, chairman of the Board of the National Botanical Institute. Your letter was included in the agenda of the NBI meeting of 14 March 1997.

At the Board Meeting it was resolved that the matter be referred to the South African Association of Botanists and the NBI Research Advisory Committee for comment. To facilitate the process it was decided that the Phycological Society should be invited to provide these two organisations with more detail regarding the lack of algal taxonomic expertise in the country, e.g. how many members do the PSSA have and how many of them are practising taxonomists? An indication of what the national need for algal taxonomists might be, in terms of number of professional plus infrastructure, would also be useful. Comparative statistics for other countries would provide an idea of the state of algal taxonomic resources internationally.

While it is unlikely that the NBI would take on a national responsibility for algal taxonomy, the preparation of 'state of the art' review by PSSA would help NBI, SAAB and others to mobilise support from the government towards addressing the problem.

With best wishes
Yours sincerely

Brian Huntley (Prof)
Chief executive

**REPLY FROM PROF GROBBELAAR
(PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN
ASSOCIATION OF BOTANISTS)**

22 July 1997

Dr R.J Anderson
President: PSSA
Department of Botany
University of Cape Town

Dear Rob

Your letter to Prof. Johnson regarding the NBI's responsibility in terms of algal systematics in South Africa, was referred by them to the Board of SAAB for comments. The following is the gist of what my responses where:

I think it concerns more than only algal systematics. It entails phycology in general and there is a need that somewhere responsibility for this should be taken. NBI is hesitant, but with enough pressure and persuasion they might be interested. The most important constraint is their limited budget, meaning to include phycology would need additional funding. If the phycologists in SA could help with the motivations and fundraising efforts, I am sure that should such funds be allocated, then the NBI will oblige. This is a tall order and one may then ask the question, if funds are found, whether the NBI is the organisation that should have phycology under its wing.

Another point that was made was that PSSA should promote itself and not expect other organisations to do it. In this regard, I want to invite PSSA to join with SAAB and am certain that we should be able to strengthen each other. An idea could be that PSSA forms part of SAAB, but functions under its own "management" or be a "working group" within SAAB. As I already mentioned to you, we need to strengthen each other and guard against fragmentation (this was my major concern when PSSA was formed).

Prof Johan U. Grobbelaar
President of SAAB

**URGENT REQUEST
FOR
INFORMATION**

Dear PSSA Members

Over the past few years, the Society has been negotiating with NBI about their policy with respect to Phycology in South Africa. As part of this discussion recommendations have come from the Chairman of SAAB (Prof. J. Grobbelaar) that PSSA joins with SAAB and motivates strongly through this forum for support from NBI. Prior to our planned discussions proposed for the conference at Simonstown in January, we would like to ask for information about the activities of PSSA members. Would you kindly bring the following information to the conference, or if you cannot make it to the meeting, please forward the details to me before the conference:

- 1. Scientific publication list.*
- 2. Names of students graduated from phycological courses.*
- 3. Titles of student theses, dissertations or projects.*
- 4. Conference presentations; both oral and poster.*
- 5. Popular articles.
(Only info about phycology, thanks)*

This information will be used to compile a document for submission to NBI/FRD as to the importance of phycological research in South Africa. It will also form a basis for our discussions with respect to the invitation to join SAAB.

Thank you so much for your help.

Prof. B.L. Robertson &
Dr. Eileen Campbell
Botany Department
University of Port Elizabeth
PO Box 1600
Port Elizabeth
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btaeec@upe.ac.za



DID YOU KNOW ?



Answers to a recent 1st year exam on algal toxicology.

QUESTION

What triggers red tides along our coastline and why are these red tides sometimes toxic ?

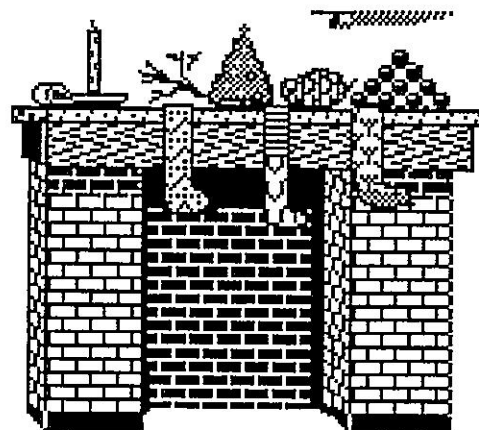
SOME ANSWERS

"Triggered by toxins such as *Microcystis aeruginosa*".

"Upwelling cysts germinate and dinoflagellate diatoms are scattered".

"Upwellings of phytotoxins eg. *Gonyaulax*".

"The bacteria that decompose the red tide species often remain inert in its digestive system resulting in the red tide species being toxic when eaten by humans."





APPLICATION FOR PSSA MEMBERSHIP

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....
.....

RESEACH INTERESTS:.....
.....

TEL:.....

FAX:.....

E-mail:.....

The Physiological Society of Southern Africa aims to promote an interest in phycology and establish and maintain communication between persons interested in the algae of Southern Africa and, by way of the newsletter, to collate and disseminate information concerning the Society, it's members and matters of mutual interest.

Signature:..... **Date:**.....

Indicate category of membership required (fees in SA Rand):

Student membership	R 20
Pensioner membership	R 20
Ordinary membership	R 30
Ordinary membership (overseas)	R 40
Life membership	R300
Life membership (overseas)	R400
Corporate membership	R300

Please send to: **Dr W Burnett (PSSA Membership Secretary)**
Department of Botany
University of Natal, PMB
Private Bag X01
Scottsville 3209

