

# Phycological Society of Southern Africa



**Newsletter  
No. 55  
March 2004**



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## From the Editor

Well, having just come of age, celebrating 21 years in existence, we should all be proud of what we have accomplished. This very sentiment was echoed by Prof. Richard Pienaar, a founder member and the first president of the Society. At the 2004 conference banquet, Prof Pienaar gave a heart-warming account of the Society's history and the many challenges it had faced.

Just as the Society has evolved, so too has the newsletter. The present format is the one that you can now all look forward to. I must take this opportunity of thanking you all for your contributions and suggestions, all of which have culminated in the production you see before you.

On a lighter note, it was good seeing you all at the annual conference. Special thanks should go to Claudio, Shalini and Stuart for all the hard work they put into making the conference such a success. Furthermore – and I am sure that all the attending delegates will agree with me – the personnel of the conference centre were all exceptional. A special thank you to Nicolette Wagner and her team.

As before, the first issue of the year is devoted to the annual conference. The next two issues will contain substantially more news and articles from within and outside of the Society. Remember, your regional collators (see below) are always looking for new and exciting articles to forward on to me.

### Northern Areas

Stuart Sym

[stuart@biology.biol.wits.ac.za](mailto:stuart@biology.biol.wits.ac.za)

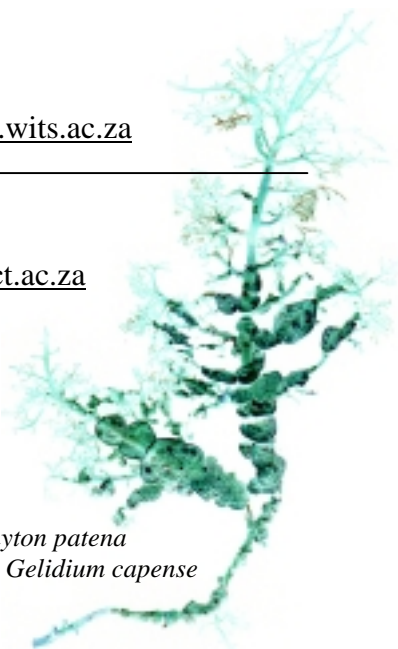
### Southern Areas

Enrico Tronchin

[tronchin@botzoo.uct.ac.za](mailto:tronchin@botzoo.uct.ac.za)

Sincerely  
Gavin

*Synarthrophyton patena*  
epiphytic on *Gelidium capense*



## Reports presented at the annual general meeting held at the Magaliesburg Conference Centre, Gauteng, South Africa, 29 January 2004

### 1. President's Report - Grant Pitcher

Thanks to those who have contributed to this report: Anderson, R [MCM], Bolton, J [UCT], Du Preez, D [UPE], Maneveldt, G [UWC], Pitcher, G [MCM], Stirk, W [UKZN], Sym, S [WITS]

The primary organizations incorporating phycology in their research programmes include: University of Witwatersrand, University of KwaZulu Natal, University of Port Elizabeth, University of Cape Town, University of the Western Cape and Marine & Coastal Management. Strong links exist between the above Institutions primarily concerned with phycology in marine systems. Links between the Society and those Institutions at which freshwater work is conducted has been eroded.

The following summary provides an indication of the focus and activities at the above organizations:

#### University of KwaZulu-Natal

*Department:* Research Centre for Plant Growth and Development

*Research Focus:* Algal Physiology [Uses of Seaweeds]

*Research Programmes/Projects:*

- South African – Hungarian / Czech Republic Collaboration on Plant Growth Regulators [specifically the cytokinins and auxins] with a focus on agricultural applications
- Links with Industry – Measuring auxin-like activity for Kelpak and auxin and cytokinin activity for Taurus

#### University of Port Elizabeth

*Department:* Botany Department [Janine Adams promoted to Professor; Eileen Campbell promoted to Associate Professor]

*Research Focus:* Surf Zone Diatoms; Solar Salt Works; Microalgal Dynamics in Estuaries; Seaweeds

*Research Programmes/Projects:*



- DWAF Contract Project [Development of reserve methodologies for estuaries]

*Students:* MSc [Gillian Taylor – Salt Works; Anita Ballantyne – Seaweeds]

### **University of Cape Town**

*Department:* Botany Department

*Research Focus:* Seaweeds [Biodiversity and Aquaculture]

*Research Programmes/Projects:*

- Proceedings of 18th ISS [10 papers on SA seaweeds]
- EU Project - Seaweeds of Africa [Website Database];
- South Africa – Netherlands SANPAD Project [Collaboration with Herre Stegenga of National Herbarium of Netherlands on Seaweeds of Proposed Pondoland Marine Reserve];
- South Africa – Flanders Project Seaweeds of KwaZulu-Natal [Identification Guide]
- Integrated aquaculture of seaweeds and abalone [funded NRF-Sweden; joint UCT, UWC, MCM & Univ. Stockholm; 3 MSc students attended a Marine Resources course in Stockholm; shift in focus to recirculation systems in abalone farming]

*Students:* 2 PhD students [L. Botes – Gymnodinioid dinoflagellates and E. Tronchin - Gelidiacea]

### **Marine & Coastal Management**

*Department:* Inshore Resources - Seaweed Unit

*Research Focus:* Seaweed Biodiversity; Management of Seaweed Resources – Kelp; Seaweed Cultivation]

*Research Programmes/Projects:*

- Kelp [Impacts of harvesting methods; monitoring exploitation; GIS system of mapping and quantifying kelp beds]
- EU Project Seaweeds of Africa [Establishment of Internet Database]
- South Africa – Netherlands SANPAD Project - Phycological training of students from HBUs [and documentation of seaweed diversity of Eastern Cape]
- South Africa – Flanders Project on Seaweeds of KwaZulu-Natal [Field Guide of Seaweeds of KwaZulu Natal]
- NRF – Swedish Project on cultivation of seaweeds on abalone farms

### **Marine & Coastal Management**

*Department:* Physical, Chemical & Biological Oceanography; Mariculture

*Research Focus:* Phytoplankton Physiology & Ecology; Harmful Algal Blooms

*Research Programmes/Projects:*

- SCOR-IOC GEOHAB Programme – HABs in upwelling Systems
- Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem Programme [BCLME] – HAB Component [6 projects]
- International Atomic Energy Agency – HAB Regional Project on Toxin Analysis
- ENVISAT MERIS Project

### **University of the Western Cape**

*Department:* Biodiversity and Conservation Biology

*Research Focus:* Systematics and ecology of encrusting coralline red algae; Marine algal biodiversity; Mariculture and seaweed growth in integrated systems; Herbivore-algal interactions on rocky shores

*Students:* 3 Honours students (phycology focus) completed their degrees in 2003

*Research Programmes/Projects:*

- Integrated aquaculture of seaweeds and abalone [funded NRF-Sweden; joint UCT, UWC, MCM & Univ. Stockholm; 3 MSc students attended a Marine Resources course in Stockholm; shift in focus to recirculation systems in abalone farming]

### **University of the Witwatersrand**

*Department:* School of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences

[Richard Pienaar Vice Principal and Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs]

*Research Focus:* Systematics, Ultrastructure and Cell Biology of

Microalgae

*Research Programmes/Projects:*

- Research Grant from International Foundation for Science [Sweden]
- GEOHAB Core Project – HABs in upwelling systems
- SANTED [WITS, Namibia, Maputo University trilateral co-operative



agreement to conduct field courses at Inhaca Island]

- International Seaweed Association [Anderson, R – Executive Committee Member]
- International Phycological Society [Sym, S – Council Member]
- SCOR-IOC GEOHAB Programme [Pitcher, G - Chairman]

## CONFERENCE & WORKSHOP PARTICIPATION

### National Conferences

- 19th Congress of the Phycological Society of southern Africa [MCM, UWC, WITS, UCT, UPE]
- Marine Biodiversity in Sub-Saharan Africa – Census of Marine Life [UCT]
- Microscope Society of Southern Africa [WITS awarded FEIG prize]

### International Conferences

- 3rd European Phycological Congress 2003 – Belfast [UKN, UWC, UCT, WITS]
- GEOHAB Open Science Meeting – Harmful Algal Blooms in Upwelling Systems – Lisbon [MCM, WITS]

### PSSA to Host:

- XI Harmful Algal Bloom Conference [2004]
- International Phycological Conference [2005]

### Workshops

- Real-time coastal observing systems for ecosystem dynamics and harmful algal blooms, Villefrance-sur-mer, France [MCM]
- Seaweeds of Africa Workshop Luderitz [MCM, UCT]
- Annual review meeting of the Abalone Farmers Association of South Africa [UWC, UCT]

### Editorial & Committee Membership

- South African Journal of Botany [Sym, S – Editorial Board]
- African Journal of Marine Science [Pitcher, G – Editor; Bolton, J – Editorial Board]
- Botanica Marina [Bolton, J – Editorial Board]
- Harmful Algae [Pitcher, G – Editorial Board]
- Proceedings 17th International Seaweed Symposium [Anderson, R – Co-editor]

## 2. Combined Secretary/Treasurer & Membership Secretary's Report – Wendy Burnett (Stirk)

I temporarily took over the Membership Secretary Portfolio from Bernadette Brown after the last PSSA General Meeting in January 2003. Bernadette resigned as the Membership Secretary as she is no longer involved in phycological research. I would like to congratulate Claudio Marangoni on his election as the next Membership Secretary.

This year has seen a drop in numbers from 64 to the current 52 members. Twelve people were removed from the membership list, as they were three years in arrears and one person resigned from PSSA as they have now retired. There were two new paid-up student members this year although additional applications have been made from two overseas people. However, these applications were not accompanied by any payment and so still needs to be settled. Supervisors are reminded to encourage interested students to join the Society as well as other people involved in phycological research who have not yet joined PSSA. Application forms are available on the PSSA webpage. There was one conversion from Ordinary to Life membership and another from Ordinary to Retired. At present there are:

- 15 Life Members (1 Honourary and 3 are Overseas Members);
- 18 Ordinary Members;
- 3 Ordinary-Overseas Members;
- 2 Retired Members;
- 13 Student Members; and
- 1 Corporate Member (52 members in total)





There is currently R610 owed to PSSA in outstanding subscription fees from 16 members. The number of life members continues to increase so that there are now almost as many life members as ordinary members. There are some of these life members whom I have not received any communications from for quite a few years. Due to the increasing costs of producing the newsletters and postage, I would like to suggest that Claudio tries to contact the non-active life members and if need be, remove them from the membership list if their details are no longer correct.

Next, looking at the balance sheet (page 7) for last year, this is the first time in a long while that there has been a Capital loss in our total assets. Money was paid out as R400 prizes for contributions to the newsletter and for two student awards (poster and oral presentation). We received money from SASCA to cover their prize. Last year, no prize was awarded for the best commercial talk. There was also postage for both subscriptions and ballot sheets as well as costs for three newsletters and bank charges. The R1350 received in subs combined with the R3400 Interest did cover these normal running costs. We also received an additional payment of R5000 from Fergus Malloy from the PSSA Congress held in Swakopmund in 1999.

However, we have made some large payments, firstly R15 000 to Grant Pitcher for the HAB conference although we will be repaid R10 000 after the conference. Secondly, R10 000 to cover some of the expenses of Alan Miller's visit although some of this may be repaid if money is obtained from the NRF. We will also hopefully receive extra money from the profits made from both last year and this year's PSSA congresses.

All this has resulted in a net loss of R18 809.42 so that the Total Assets of PSSA now stands at R19 344.86.

We need to bear in mind that we (mainly Stuart) needs money to cover initial expenses for the IPC conference that PSSA is hosting in 2005. We will also probably earn less interest this coming year owing to our smaller balance and lower interest rates.

### 3. Newsletter Editor's Report – Gavin W. Maneveldt

We have consistently been able to produce 3 newsletters over the past two years: one for March dedicated to the annual conference and all the reports submitted at the AGM; one during June/July and the final in December. The latter two newsletters have incorporated featured articles of general interest to phycologists and student articles with more focused themes. Special thanks should go to all contributors especially those students who have responded so very well to the call for articles. This past year (2003) 6 student articles were included in the newsletters and Alan Miller (our 2004 guest speaker) has so graciously offered to evaluate these for the annual student article prize. Increasingly, more members have been submitting articles for inclusion, ranging from "report backs" to "statements of research interest" to "general announcements". You may have noticed that your newsletter package is becoming increasingly bulky.

I have for some time now been investigating the possibility of improving the design and print quality of the newsletter. The final newsletter for 2003 will give you some indication as to what the format and print quality of the new newsletters will be; the cost is only fractionally greater than the previous formats.

I take this opportunity of reminding you that the newsletter and all the articles therein are all available for download from the society's website. This is especially useful since all images are visible in their original colour. The website itself is receiving very little attention. We have for some time now been requesting members to check their details and to report any information lacking or inaccurate. Furthermore, at the last AGM, we had decided that all members send me their publications list for inclusion on the website. Hardly any members have responded to this request. What we now have is a navigation link highlighting our "publications" that essentially lacks information; it is like reading a book that lacks text. Remember, we are all responsible for the image that our society projects!



**PSSA BALANCE SHEET**  
**17<sup>th</sup> December 2002 - 4<sup>th</sup> December 2003**  
 Money Market Account (First National Bank)

	<b>Credit</b>	<b>Debit</b>	<b>Balance</b>
Brought forward December 2002	R 38 154.28		R 38 154.28
2002 Newsletter Contribution Awards		R 400.00	R 37 754.28
2003 Congress Awards		R 1 200.00	R 36 554.28
SASCA 2003 Congress Awards	R 400.00		R 36 954.28
Postage of Subs 2002 (B. Brown)		R 143.90	R 36 810.38
Postage of Subs 2003		R 209.80	R 36 600.58
Subs (Receipts 998-1015)	R 1350.00		R 37 950.58
Postage of Ballot Sheets		R 145.60	R 37 804.98
Newsletters (No. 52, 53, 54)		R 1684.61	R 36 120.37
PSSA Congress (Swakopmund 1999)	R 5 090.97		R 41 211.34
HAB Congress* <sup>1</sup>		R 15 000.00	R 26 211.34
Alan Miller's visit (PSSA & Southern Connections)* <sup>2</sup>		R 10 000.00	R 16 211.34
Interest for 2003	R 3 428.92		R 19 640.26
Bank Charges for 2003		R 295.40	R 19 344.86
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>			<b>R 19 344.86</b>
Capital loss for the period 17 <sup>th</sup> December 2002 (R 38 154.28) to 4 <sup>th</sup> December 2003 (R 19 344.86)			<b>R 18 809.42</b>

Outstanding:

\*<sup>1</sup> Loan to be repaid: R 10 000.00

\*<sup>2</sup> May be partially refunded if money is obtained from the NRF

Profits from 2003 PSSA Congress (UPE)

W. Burnett (Stirk)  
Secretary/Treasurer

S. Sym  
(Auditor)



**Attention All**

**1. Student Submissions and Prizes**

If you've already forgotten, or if you are unaware, this is a reminder to all student members. To promote written submissions for the newsletter, R400 will be awarded annually for the best popular student article.

Denise Saravanahkumar took the prize for the best student submission for 2003. Her article entitled *Seaweeds in Drug Development* appeared in the 54<sup>th</sup> issue of the Newsletter, December 2003. Congratulations to you, Denise.



Denise Saravanahkumar

**Guidelines:** See the website! Just follow the *Featured Articles* navigational link. Remember, there is R400 up for grabs. As of January 2004, judging of the student articles will be by the invited speaker for the annual conference. Articles should be simple, yet informative. Try to avoid jargon wherever possible.

**2. New Membership Fee Structure**

Owing to increased postage etc., it was agreed to raise the fees to:

- Corporate: from R300 to R500
- Conversion to Life: from R300 to R500
- Ordinary (South Africa and Africa): from R30 to R50
- Ordinary (Overseas): R40 to R100
- Student (South Africa and Africa): from R20 to R30
- Student (Overseas): R75
- Retired: from R20 to R30

**The Annual Conference**

**1. In a Nutshell**

The 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Phycological Society of Southern Africa was held at the Magaliesberg Conference Centre, Broederstroom, from the 28 - 31 January 2004. A total of 38 delegates attended the 26 oral and 8 poster presentations, which were given over a two-day period in the rather peaceful setting of the foothills of the Magaliesberg.

The Invited Speaker this year was Dr Alan Millar from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney and this was largely due to the hard work of John Bolton who had successfully secured funding for his trip out here. Alan had already presented at the Southern Connections Conference in Cape Town prior to our event. Alan proved a very interesting and entertaining speaker and gave the delegates an overview of the history of phycology in Australia. As Alan himself puts it, he was very fortunate in being raised, academically-speaking, during the Golden Age of Phycology in Australasia. It was very informative to see some of the faces of well-published Australian phycophiles, such as Richard Wetherbee, David Hill, Geoff McFadden, Peter Beech and to hear of Margaret Clayton, Bill

Woelkerling, Jeremy Pickett-Heaps, John West, etc., etc. Certainly Australia has been in the thick of things phycologically-speaking. It was also good to hear a little bit about the work that Alan did for his PhD and to hear about some of the students that he has seen through and who will be the future of this discipline in Oz. We thank you, Alan, for taking the time and trouble to come out to South Africa and provide us with such an interesting account. Alan did also provide us with another talk, co-presented with John Bolton on the link between Australia and South Africa, biogeographically speaking. This was also extremely interesting with regard to the



Special thanks to Alan Miller (left) for a wonderful contribution to the 20<sup>th</sup> annual PSSA conference.





shared flora and to the possible avenues of dispersal (an upwelling cell off Saudi Arabia, of all places, could have made migration between the two continents possible!).

The rest of the programme I also found very stimulating.... it is always good to hear what research is being undertaken or furthered/completed at the various institutes. It was good to see quite a few new faces and to see some new ones from last year re-appearing ... this can only bode well for the Society. It brought with it, of course, a lot of novel research areas, which does much to pique the general interest. I was also impressed by the quality of some of their presentations. As

conference organisers, we were also extremely pleased that Dotto Salum from Zanzibar, Tanzania, managed to make the necessary arrangements in



Dotto Salum from Zanzibar, Tanzania.

time to attend. It is the second time that PSSA has managed to attract delegates from that part of the world and we hope it is a trend that can be encouraged to continue. The prize giving is always an anticipated time and this year the adjudicating committee only had to judge the student oral and poster presentations, as Klaus Rottman from Taurus Chemicals was there to adjudicate the applied papers and posters. Klaus had to leave before the prize-giving, but Alan Millar kindly presented all the prize-winners with their cheques. So it is well done to Alecia Kirton, Sean Buchanan, Nick Tye, Phumelele Gama and to AJ Smit. A special mention also went to Andrew Rand as a close runner-up for the best student oral presentation. Congratulations! (The details of the



Founder member and first president, Prof. Richard Pienaar addressed the Society on its history and congratulated it on its 21 years in existence.

winning presentations can be found at the end of this report).

As this was a rather special congress (the 20<sup>th</sup> in the 21<sup>st</sup> year of the existence of the Society) we were very pleased that Richard Pienaar agreed to provide an after-dinner address about the history of the Society. Richard now has the portfolio of Vice Principal and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) at Wits, so we were extremely pleased that he could make the time to spend the Friday with us. Thanks, Richard!

In a very quiet way, the personnel of the Magaliesberg Conference Centre made for a

perfect venue for PSSA 2004. They were extremely organised and accommodated most last minute requests with very good nature and made the whole experience extremely easy for the conference organisers. We thank you, Nicolette Wagner! We also thank the predominantly marine and coastal delegation for making the effort and spending the necessary money to come inland for a change. We hope it was a worthwhile venue and that you enjoyed it. It was encouraging to note that this time as many as 4 accompanying persons were present at times. It is good to meet the other halves!

The conference was ended for some by a quick visit to the Sterkfontein Caves and to hear a little bit (literally!) about the more recent hominid fossil finds. I, for one, had not visited these caves since I was in primary school and so it was quite fun to see them again.





## 2. Conference Prize Winners

### **Best Student Paper:**

**Phumelele T. Gama** and J. B. Adams

Dept. of Botany, University of Port Elizabeth –  
*Seasonal distributions in phytoplankton size fraction biomass associated with changes in physical and chemical variables in a temporarily open/closed estuary in the Eastern Cape, South Africa*

### **Special Mention**

**Andrew M. Rand**, J. J. Bolton, R. Anderson, and S. Butcher

Dept. of Botany, University of Cape Town –  
*Introducing a spatial geographic information system (GIS) into kelp management in South Africa*

### **Best Student Poster:** Shared by:

**Alecia Kirton**, K. Crossley, H. P. Meintjies, H. P. and C. Rossin

School of Animal, Plant & Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand –  
*Coccolith production over time in Pleurochrysis carterae under continuous light and dark conditions and ...*

**Sean K. Buchanan**, R. O'Shaughnessy and N. Tye  
School of Animal, Plant & Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand –

*Testing for exo-toxin expression in Prymnesium nemamethecum*

### **SASCA award for the best Paper:**

AJ Smit

Dept. of Botany, University of Cape Town –  
*The current state of seaweed natural products (Bioactive compounds) in drug discovery*

### **SASCA award for the best Poster:**

Not awarded

*Special thanks to Enrico Tronchin and Claudio Marangoni for these wonderful images.*



Phumelele Gama receives the award for the best student oral presentation.



A special mention went to Andrew Rand as a close runner-up for the best student oral presentation.



Alecia Kirton (right) and Sean Buchanan (bottom left), alongside Nicholas Tye (bottom middle), received a joint award for the best student poster presentation.







AJ Smit received the SASCA award for the best oral contribution.



The 2004 Conference delegation.



The conference was concluded by visit to the Sterkfontein Caves.

## Getting to Know Your New Members

### New Members for 2003/2004

**Denise Saravanahkumar**  
([dcameron@uctgsh1.uct.ac.za](mailto:dcameron@uctgsh1.uct.ac.za))

Denise is currently registered for a PhD degree under the joint supervision of Prof. Peter Folb, Prof. P. Smith and Dr. W.E. Campbell from the Division of Pharmacology, Dept. of Medicine, Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Cape Town.



Denise Saravanahkumar

“I am interested in photography and painting. I am fairly green in both hobbies; I’m at the beginning of my potential. Similarly, I am green in my research interest, but equally excited about it. I am interested in being part of the process of drug development from South Africa’s natural resources. Hopefully this interest will take me to a place where I will be able to assist in the capacity building of South Africans in research, innovation and drug development.”

**Joseph Wakibia**  
([jwakibia@uwc.ac.za](mailto:jwakibia@uwc.ac.za); [jwakibia@kmfri.co.ke](mailto:jwakibia@kmfri.co.ke))

“Just call me Wakibia!” Wakibia is currently registered for a PhD degree under the joint supervision of Lincoln Raitt and Gavin Maneveldt (Dept. of BCB, UWC), and John Bolton (Dept. of Botany, UCT).



Joseph Wakibia

Wakibia works for Kenya Marine & Fisheries Research Institute, based at Mombasa, Kenya and is the marine scientist in charge of seaweed research and development. His primary research interests are: seaweed mariculture; ecology; polysaccharides and economics with references to



*Gracilaria*, *Euchuema* and *Kappaphycus*; and Sustainable livelihoods. Wakibia's hobbies are traveling, going to the movies, swimming and participation in community projects.

### Conference Countdown

The Department of Botany at the University of Cape Town will be hosting the following PSSA conference in January 2005. We will keep you abreast of things as they unfold. Since the IPC8 will be held during August 2005 in Durban, the following PSSA conference will only be held in July 2006, with the conference thereafter being held in January 2008.

### Calendar of Events for 2004

#### Upcoming Conferences

1. The XVIII International Seaweed Symposium, 20-25 June 2004. Website: <http://www.niva.no/iss2004/>
2. ECSA 37 - ERF 2004 Conference: "Estuaries and Change", 20-25 June 2004. Website: <http://www.scu.edu.au/ecsa37erf2004conference>
3. HAB 2004, 15-19 November 2004. Website: <http://www.botany.uwc.ac.za/pssa/hab2004/>

