

# The South African Wetland Society Bi-annual Newsletter

June 2022, 2022/01



*Read about two of our  
Provincial Forums inside!*



# DEAR WETLANDERS,

This is the last newsletter from the current Board, and I'll be stepping down from the Chair position after the NWI. It has been a privilege to serve as Chair for the past 4 years AND through a worldwide pandemic – how many Chairs can claim such a dubious honour?

Reflecting on the steep, but enriching learning curve from being Chair, I can say the following:

- 1) A society is only as strong as its administrative foundation.
- 2) The Society thrives on champions, enthusiasm and determined visionaries.
- 3) One has no idea how much hard work and dedication goes on behind the scenes until you are there!

Thank you a million times over to our volunteer board members who gave everything to take SAWS forward.

- 4) We have come such a far way in the past few years but we can still do so much more!

Herewith I'd also like to thank each and every one of our members for helping us grow the Society. The Society is here to serve your needs, and it cannot thrive without your support!

To the next decade of the Society!



**LULU VAN ROOYEN**  
Chairperson

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## Board of Trustees 2021 – 2022

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# UPDATES ON:

## Changes to our administration will be announced soon

The Society has been alternating and experimenting with various ways of handling our membership database, invoicing timelines, financial matters and social platforms over the past few years. We have learnt and grown much in this regard!

Taking from these learnings and after various consultations with other societies such as ours, we are ready to migrate to a much more automated and stable administrative system.

We are in the process of getting a brand new way of doing things off the ground. We will be announcing this at the Indaba and on our platforms – so watch this space!

## Other Partnerships

SAWS is looking to strengthen ties between the wetland and hydrology community by working with the newly formed South African Hydrological Society (taking over from the previous SANCIAS initiative).

IAIASA has been helping SAWS with regards to our constitutun and mobilizing our new administrative systems.

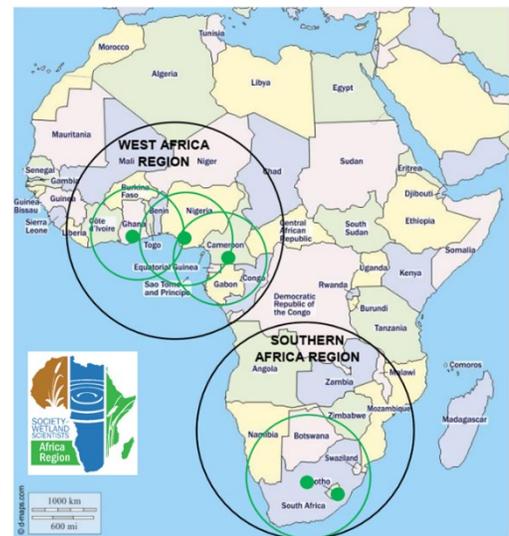
## Partnerships: SWS-Africa

Alanna Rebelo has just been elected as co-chair of the SWS International Chapter for the next three years, taking over the baton from Ian Bredin. She will be seeking to strengthen the intra-African wetland community over her term. Exciting things are planed for the Indaba - join our session at the NWI to find out more about our vision!

### SWS-Africa Vision for next 3 years

1. Supporting regional training in Africa (champion approach ●)
2. Sponsored memberships
3. Sponsorship to attend training events & certification  
~via a chapter development grant

Come join our session at the National Wetland Indaba 2022 to find out more! Regards, Alanna Rebelo (SWS International co-chair)



# CALLING FOR:

## National Wetland Awards



### Award Categories:

- ❖ Education & Skills Development
  - ❖ Science & Research
  - ❖ Stewardship
  - ❖ Young Professional

Nominate your peers at:  
[indaba.org.za/awards/](http://indaba.org.za/awards/)

## Wetland pics for the new website

SAWS is updating our website! We would like to request our members to submit good quality wetland pictures that can be used in the design of this website. Please submit pictures before mid-September to Marc at [marcdef@randwater.co.za](mailto:marcdef@randwater.co.za).

## New Board members 2022-2024

According to Section 10 of the Constitution of our Society, the Board consist of a minimum of seven members, elected at the AGM, and a co-option of further members are allowed as required by the elected Board.

### WHAT DOES BEING A TRUSTEE ENTAIL?

- 2 year term: 2023-2024, starting on 1 November 2022
- Four 2-hour Board meetings per year
- Commitment to a portfolio of work
- Bringing enthusiasm, ideas, drive to a team

### ELIGIBILITY:

Anyone may apply, but if voted in must be paid-up members of the Society. We would like to encourage each provincial Wetland Forum to nominate at least one person to the Board, which will assist in promoting your province. Board members receive **two CPD points** for each year of service. Current Board members may volunteer again.

### HOW TO APPLY:

If you would like to stand for election, please complete this form:

<https://forms.gle/k1kZgSHpD8BxknXv5>.

### HOW TO VOTE:

Voting will be open for 24 hours during the NWI. The method of voting will be announced soon. The new Board will be announced at the Gala Dinner at the NWI.

# CALLING FOR:

## Mentor- and mentee applications for the SACNASP Candidate Mentorship Programme

In June 2022, the Society were successful in their application to SACNASP for a third cycle of the CMP programme. A call has been circulated for mentees and mentors, who will be selected in early July. The deadline for applications is the 10<sup>th</sup> of July, For more information, contact, Shaun McNamara at [smcnamara@eco-pulse.co.za](mailto:smcnamara@eco-pulse.co.za) or 0845966078.

### **SACNASP have stipulated the following criteria for applicant mentees:**

- Only registered candidate natural scientists are eligible to apply
- The candidate natural scientist must have a total of less than three years work experience.
- The mentees' annual SACNASP fees should be up to date to qualify.
- Mentors should be Professional Natural Scientists (Pr. Sci. Nat.)

### **SAWS have stipulated the following additional criteria**

- Applicants must be working in the wetland field (as reflected in their CV, which must be submitted)
- Applicants should preferably be member of SAWS
- Any participation in the wetland field (e.g. in provincial wetland fora) (as reflected in their CV) will also count in the applicant's favour
- Applicants should preferably be working within an organization (private or government) either as an intern or junior scientist, but consideration will also be given to applicants not attached to an organization
- Applicants should preferably have identified someone who has agreed to be their mentor. This is not a pre-requisite but where volunteer mentors nearby are not available then having already secured a mentor would count in the candidate's favour

**SAWS would like to invite experienced scientists to volunteer as  
mentors**

Please indicate your interest to Shaun McNamara at [smcnamara@eco-pulse.co.za](mailto:smcnamara@eco-pulse.co.za)

The Society is very grateful to SACNASP for the opportunity to continue this successful programme. We look forward to welcoming in the new mentees and their mentors into the 2022/23 cycle of the programme.

# Candidate mentorship Programme:

## Current mentees

SAWS recognizes the importance of mentoring and developing wetland practitioners, particularly as the wetland field of practice is not formalized into a single qualification but draws from many different disciplines. In 2020, through SACNASP's Candidate Mentorship Phase (CMP) programme, SAWS called for applications, from which three mentees (and their mentors) were selected and completed their mentorship. The formal training received and interaction with their mentors contributing significantly to the mentees' technical and practical competency and in terms of general professional and personal development.

In June 2021, a second group of mentors were selected. Thus far, three of the mentees successfully completed the sponsored Tools for Wetland Assessment training, and the fourth mentee completed a Wetland and Hydrogeology training course, with mentees finding both courses to be very useful in terms of building foundational understanding and practical skills. Mentees also had opportunities to gain field experience and engage periodically with their mentors, which will continue in the rest of their time.

### Mentees (and their mentors) for 2021/22



**Thapelo Mongala**  
(Piet-Louis Grundling)



**Juliette Lagesse**  
(Doug Macfarlane)



**Pumla Dlamini**  
(Donovan Kotze)



**Sashin Pillay**  
(Damian Walters)

# MEET THE....

## Mpumalanga Wetland Forum



In 2020-2021, we all had our challenges during the pandemic, but most of us found ways to communicate. The virtual platforms played an important role in achieving this and in most instances communications continued.

In 2021, the Mpumalanga Wetland Forum got to a point where not much was happening. With workshops and meetings held in December 2021 with a variety of stakeholders, it was not difficult to understand the important role the Mpumalanga Wetland Forum can play in strengthen the links and communications in the wetland community on a Provincial and National level.

The first meeting in 2022 was a virtual AGM and a new management committee was elected to get the forum back on track. The first important task was to continue with the wetland celebrations and this year's celebrations were held in Wakkerstroom on 2 February at the Uthaka Secondary school.



Sindisiwe Kubheka (Gert Sibande District Municipality and vice-chair of the MWF) gave a presentation on the importance and conservation of wetlands, and Mr Andre Beetge (DFFE and treasurer of the MWF) gave a presentation on the restoration and



value of wetlands. A River Bushwillow (*Combretum erythrophyllum*) was planted at the school. The day ended on a high note when Kristi Garland (Birdlife SA), Education Centre and the Working on Fire team, took the learners for a walk and talk to the wetland, where they assisted in cleaning the wetland and collected 30 bags of waste.



The Forum's first meeting was held at the Middelpunt wetlands in Lakenvlei and Bradley Gibbons (EWT) gave presentations on rare and endangered species and wetlands and took the forum for a wetland walk. The next meeting will be in the City of Mbombela in August. The idea is to have the meetings in areas where the forum are exposed to wetland projects to build capacity.

The MWF was successfully revived with the new management committee that are motivated and enthusiastic about the forum. The forum's newsletter was re-instated and first newsletter in 2 years published.

# MEET THE....



## Eastern Cape Wetland Forum

The Eastern Cape is home to several critical endangered wetland ecosystems which provide benefits to communities and are home to a diverse range of species. The ECWF has been at the forefront of protecting and advocating for these ecosystems throughout the province.

The Forum facilitates the exchange of information and expertise on the protection, management, and restoration of wetlands and -related ecosystems. Various stakeholders attend, including but not limited to government agencies at all levels with a mandate of protecting wetland ecosystems. Activities are planned, and feedback is given on existing activities at quarterly meetings. Challenges that necessitate joint decision are tabled, and solutions are provided.

COVID 19 changed how things operated. The forum moved to meeting on virtual platforms which had its own advantages and disadvantages. The attendance of the meetings decreased due to poor connectivity from other individuals, but field activities such as wetland mapping and inspections, and training, continued.

The Forum faces several obstacles that prevent it from reaching its full potential.

One such is a lack of participation from higher education institutions, which creates a gap in understanding what is happening on the ground from a research perspective. The forum also lacks the financial resources to accommodate activities and events, marketing, and funding school and community projects. Despite this, the forum is functioning successfully and fills an important gap in the Province.



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# THE EXCITING PROSPECT OF A RAMSAR SITE IN THE EASTERN CAPE



The Ongeluksnek Wetland complex is an extensive system consisting of beautiful meandering channels, alpine grassland seeps and oxbow lakes, amongst other wetland types. These host an array of bird species, a number of which are unusual; rare or endangered, such as the Artic Tern; African Skimmer; the three different cranes species; the Denham's Bustard; the Yellow-billed stork and the Southern Ground Hornbill, to name a few. The system is under major strain because of uncontrolled grazing and burning; intense alien plant infestation and land use changes, particularly, cultivation which negatively affects the functioning of the system.



The system is now in the process of being designated as a RAMSAR site – the first in the Eastern Cape. It anticipated that there will be a positive influence in respects to the protection of biodiversity and improvement in the resilience of the system to respond to climate change, and meeting the objectives of a number of conservation related strategies and action plans. It also has the potential to unlock a number socio-economic opportunities and play a vital role in water security.

Numerous stakeholders have rallied together to make this happen. The first phase is to have the Ongeluksnek Nature reserve (one of the main feeders of the system) designated, followed by the greater Ongeluksnek Wetland Complex. The reserve forms a link between the Lake Letsi La Letsa RAMSAR site (Lesotho) and the Ongeluksnek wetland complex, which presents a great opportunity for the formation of a significant cross-boundary RAMSAR corridor, being located within the Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Programme domain and the Maloti Centre of Endemism. It is recognised, that strong collaboration, which is an essential ingredient for success, has assisted the initiative in making huge strides towards the end goal.



# We hope you enjoyed this newsletter!

To submit information to this newsletter, please write to  
[pretorius.lulu@gmail.com](mailto:pretorius.lulu@gmail.com)



## Want to become a South African Wetland Society member?

E-mail [marcdef@randwater.co.za](mailto:marcdef@randwater.co.za)

Visit our website for information about the Society at <https://society.sawetlands.org/>

Like & Join our Facebook Page at <https://web.facebook.com/WetlandPortalSA/>

Browse the Wetland Portal for documents and discussions at <https://forum.sawetlands.org/>

