



PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

At the Lepidopterists' Society of Africa's Annual General Meeting in August I was elected as President to take over from Steve Woodhall, who had decided to step down after 8 years at the helm. We all owe Steve a huge vote of thanks for his tireless efforts and infectious enthusiasm during his term of office. He was at the forefront of the many innovations and projects introduced during this time, and inspired the growth and popularisation of the Society.

My name is Jeremy Dobson and I have served as Chairman of the Highveld Branch of LepSoc Africa "The Highveld Buttermoth Club", for longer than I care to remember.....When I first joined the Society, about 15 years ago, Hermann Staude was President – I'm sure you will all agree that LepSoc Africa has changed beyond recognition (and for the better) under first Hermann's and then Steve's watch. Thanks to these two, assisted by others (notably Dave Edge) LepSoc Africa is thriving and has an abundance of exciting projects to keep us all busy and focused.

My initial focus will be to consolidate the gains of the last 15 years. There may well be opportunities for ambitious new projects, but my primary aim is to improve the structure and effectiveness of the Society. LepSoc Africa's business is studying and conserving the butterflies and moths of the sub-Saharan African mainland and islands – the second richest group of Lepidoptera in the world. I'm humbled to be elected President of a Society which is dedicated to such an outstanding topic, and with such an important role to play.

The four cornerstones of our constitution are Research; Publications; Conservation and Interaction among our members. My role will be to ensure that LepSoc Africa provides a supportive home for everyone involved in these fields of endeavour. To briefly summarise the current status of these four pillars:

Research has the Caterpillar Rearing Group (CRG) and Butterfly Evolutionary Diversity (BED) projects, and some further research concepts are under development under the able leadership of Reinier Terblanche.

Publications (which in terms of our constitution covers scientific papers and non-scientific articles): Firstly, there is *Metamorphosis*, which will continue to be our flagship publication, concentrating primarily on scientific articles. Dave Edge has decided not to take on another five year term as Editor of *Metamorphosis*. Mark Williams, who has already had several stints as Editor in the past, has gallantly taken over the reins on an interim basis. Mark (with Dave Edge and Huib Van Hamburg's assistance), will keep the journal operational until a sustainable, long-term arrangement is in place – LepSoc Africa Council are reviewing the available options. Babel Blues, our African Lepidoptera popular magazine, which features everything from observations and trip reports by members to butterfly-inspired recipes has become a firm favourite. The editorial team is currently evaluating how it will replace some key members who have resigned, so that they can continue to produce the magazine.

Conservation is currently being addressed through our COREL, SALCA, LepiMAP and Karoo BioGaps projects (full details will be on the new LepSoc Africa website). Reinier Terblanche and Dave Edge are driving these projects forward and identifying new projects as the need or opportunity arises.

Interaction amongst LepSoc members is an aspect which I intend to concentrate on, firstly by introducing a regular, two-monthly newsletter, which will hopefully keep members better informed about the Society's activities and plans. It will include news, not just from South Africa, but also from the rest of the African continent – where there are exciting things happening.

Although these four pillars will remain at the forefront of LepSoc Africa's business, they will need to be supported by stable, effectively managed and disciplined corporate-governance. Dave Edge has accepted this challenge and taken over as Treasurer from Peter Sharland, whose contributions over his own two 2-year terms of office have been greatly appreciated.

There are several issues that require resolution by Council and implementation during my own two-year term, including the future security and structure of *Metamorphosis*; the role and constitutional status of branches; a potential rebranding and name change of the Society; and an upgrade and relaunch of our website to refocus our efforts, to mention just a few.

Finally, to most, if not all of us, butterflies and moths are a hobby. There may be a few rather mundane tasks ahead to achieve our broader aims, but I will consider my term a failure if we don't have a lot of fun along the way!

PROGRESS DURING THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS

Marketing



Peter Webb informed Council at our first meeting that he could no longer continue with the Marketing portfolio, due to pressing personal commitments. Jan Praet (new Chairman of the Highveld Buttermoth Club) has very kindly taken over on an interim basis, and is already actively involved with giving guidance to Lulu Dlamini, our Marketing Intern who is being funded by the generous sponsorship of Ernest Oppenheimer and Son. Jan and Lulu have been actively managing LepSoc Africa's Facebook page and have received terrific feedback.

Lulu's marketing plan, presented at August's AGM, included proposals to re-name the Society and to develop a new logo. At the AGM it was agreed that our formal name "Lepidopterists' Society of Africa" must be retained. However, it was felt that a parallel, "brand name" was needed for general, popular use. We are some way from reaching consensus on a "brand name", but have decided to use the abbreviation "LepSoc Africa" in the interim. This differentiates our Society from the North American Lepidopterists' Society, which also uses "LepSoc"; in addition, it re-emphasises the fact that we promote the study and conservation of Lepidoptera throughout the Continent, not just within South Africa. At the AGM it was also agreed that our logo should be revised, although some thematic resemblance needs to be retained. An artist has been approached who will be presenting us with some options shortly – hopefully, we can launch the new logo early next year!

LepSoc Africa website

The current LepSoc website, which has served us well over the last five years, is in need of an upgrade and simplification exercise. Council would also like it to be combined with the *Metamorphosis* website, and therefore invited proposals from website developers, based on a new functional specification. After careful evaluation, the contract for the new website development was awarded to the developers of the existing *Metamorphosis* website. The aims of the new website are to be informative, easy to use, and attractive. A password will only be needed for access to a "members-only" section, for renewing subscriptions and accessing certain content limited to members. The new website will be launched by the middle of January.

Membership subscriptions

The AGM resolved that annual membership subscriptions will in future become due on the 1st of January each year. This is the way subscriptions were managed in the past and is in fact the system laid out in our Constitution. All current members by now should have received notifications advising you of the new rates and benefits applicable to various membership categories. Credits for next year will be given, based on the date on which you paid your subscriptions for the current year. The cost of ordinary African membership (R250) remains unchanged and I believe this represents exceptional value. Jayne Woodhall, who is thanked by the Council for all her hard work over the last few years, has handed over the reins as membership secretary to Hanna du Toit.

LepSoc Africa handbook

This handbook is a compilation of documents outlining all the procedures, regulations and specifications relevant to the management of the LepSoc Africa. The handbook will be a useful reference manual, and a comprehensive source of the information and documents required for the day-to-day running of the Society. In addition to assisting the current Councillors, the handbook is intended to improve the consistency of LepSoc Africa management and to help future Council-members carry out their duties. The completed handbook will be available on the new website.

Afrotropical Lepidoptera Workshop

On an exciting note, LepSoc Africa are in the early stages of organizing the 3rd Afrotropical Lepidoptera Workshop, which will be held in Madagascar in March/April 2018. Preliminary notifications, with initial budgets for various options will be circulated early next year. This follows the previous successful Workshops held in Ghana in 2011 and Uganda in 2014.

African Butterfly News

Last but not least, you should have received the first two editions of African Butterfly News, the Society's newsletter. This is a bi-monthly electronic-magazine, containing up-to-date news, details of upcoming events, recent photographs and relevant articles. The Newsletter however, will depend on news from you, the members of LepSoc Africa. If members submit brief articles every few months, the Newsletter will remain vibrant and pertinent and, hopefully, will become a valued part of LepSoc Africa membership.

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