



## BOTSOC NEWS

### June / July 2008

#### Dear Botsoc members,

The winter months are well on their way and the colours of the veld are stunning in their yellows, browns, and greys. It is a very special time of the year. A recent visit to the Sossusvlei area rekindled my love for the south. I enjoyed the vast expanses of grassy fields. Owing to the good rains even the dunes have a soft down of grass coverage. And I counted seven green trees at the edge of Dead Vlei! The south is well worth a visit at this time of the year. The climate is very pleasant and the wind bearable. Enjoy the country if you are so lucky to travel.

#### REPORTS ON PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES, TALKS AND WALKS

The regular guided walks in the National Botanic Garden on the first Saturday of each month have become a popular feature on Windhoek's calendar. They are well attended by locals and visitors alike. The social meeting after the walk with coffee and muffins has become equally popular.

The membership is thanked for the support shown at the AGM, which was particularly well attended. Please feel free to contact any of us if you wish to have a copy of last year's report.

Coleen's popular talk on "Flowers of Namibia" was once again well received and Coleen is thanked for sharing her passion with the membership.

Peggy Poncelet presented a very interesting talk on "High Value Plant Species" and how indigenous plants can be commercialised to the benefit of rural communities. She spoke on the work she is conducting for the ICEMA (Integrated Community-based Ecosystem Management) Project. Thank you, Peggy.

#### UPCOMING WALKS AND TALKS OF INTEREST

##### WALKS:

A guided walk in the National Botanic Garden will take place on **Saturday, 5 July 2008** at 08:00.

Guided walks will be held as usual on every the first Saturday of each month.

Entrance for non-members is N\$10. Muffins and tea/coffee will be on sale.

##### TALKS:

**Thursday 17 July at 18:00** at the NBRI,

**by Dr. Rolf Sprung on the Ecology and Management of Dry Forest**

Tropical dry forests support a large fraction of the human population in the tropics, and as a result, are under intense pressure. Because dry climates are preferred over very wet climates in the tropics, large population concentrations occur in dry forest life zones. The result is that tropical dry forests not only provide space for the expanding human population, but are also used intensively as a source of fuelwood and charcoal. Grazing animals are also often allowed to roam free through dry forests.

While woody plants show many adaptations to survive long drought periods and even wild fires, the net result of human activity in this life zone is the serious degradation or disappearance of dry forests in most tropical regions, and is also evident in Namibia.

Because succession is usually slow in these forests, chronic human use results in deforestation and modification of vegetation cover. Usually, degraded stands lose their understory to grazing animals, trees are repeatedly harvested, the canopy is opened, soils are exposed to erosion and water loss occurs through increased run-off and evaporation. The decline in plant diversity also reduces habitats and diversity of wild animals.

Despite these problems, the resilience of dry forests opens the opportunity for restoration and management.

Tropical dry forests are resilient in terms of their ability to root and stem sprout, to overcome droughts and to regenerate from dormant seeds, characteristics that can be used to rehabilitate forests and restore biomass. And while uncontrolled wild fires pose a serious threat to dry forest regeneration, proper fire management may be a cost-efficient tool to restore these important ecosystems.

For further talks, please watch the notices to members and the media for information.

Please diarise OPEN DAY on Saturday, 11 October 2008 to co-incide with Arbour Day.

## **BOTANIC GARDEN NEWSFLASH**

Although the garden is fairly dry at the moment, there are still a few plants in flower. *Blepharis obmitrata* is a low growing spiny herb with pale blue flowers. You will find it scattered all over the garden. *Senecio eenii* and *Senecio windhoekensis* are both annual daisies which are abundant this year. The former species has purple flowers and the latter yellow flowers. *Geigeria ornativa*, also known as vermeerbossie or Speikraut is a small woody herb with yellow flowers. It can be found along the Lily walk. In the centre of the garden, near the Damara grave you can admire our only two plants of the yellow-flowering variety of the Herero Aloe (*Aloe hereroensis* var. *lutea*). The flowers are visited by sunbirds.

The desert house is at its best now, as the succulents from the winter rainfall area are coming in to flower. Join our monthly walks to learn more about them.

### **Did you know?**

We have a 'treasure chest' in the Botanical Garden accessible from the Lily Walk path. This 'treasure chest' is part of a global activity where people find hidden treasures around the world, which is better known as Geocaching.

A secure container is hidden at a specific place, of which the GPS reading is recorded. Inside this container, you as 'keeper' of the treasure, place a few items/treasures, a notebook, pencil or pen, and instructions as to the function of this treasure, should it be discovered by people not knowing about Geocaching. Your items can be anything from small toys, key rings, interesting stones, etc., except perishables and medicine. The GPS reading is then added onto the Geocaching website, plus a few details pertaining to your chest or cache. Interested people from all over the world can then try to find your cache. Once found, they will place something interesting of themselves in the cache, and taking any one item from it that they want. The finder then writes a note of his/her find in the notebook, stating what they took, and with what it was replaced. Most cache founders will also mention their found on the Geocaching website, especially when a travel bug was placed in the cache.

Now, this travel bug is nothing like a terrible computer virus! Travel bugs are bought from the Geocaching website and are meant to travel from one cache to the other any place on earth. Unlike ordinary items found in a cache, a travel bug is not meant to be kept by the finder, but should be placed in another cache, which can be in the same city or country.

This global treasure hunt has no age restrictions, as anybody with a love for and interest in nature can participate. Our own cache has already received visitors from as far away as Austria.

If you are interested to look for our cache, please log onto the Geocaching website <http://www.geocaching.com> in order to find the GPS co-ordinates. Our cache is called "Dassie view". You will be surprised to find how many caches there already exist all over Namibia.

Happy hunting.

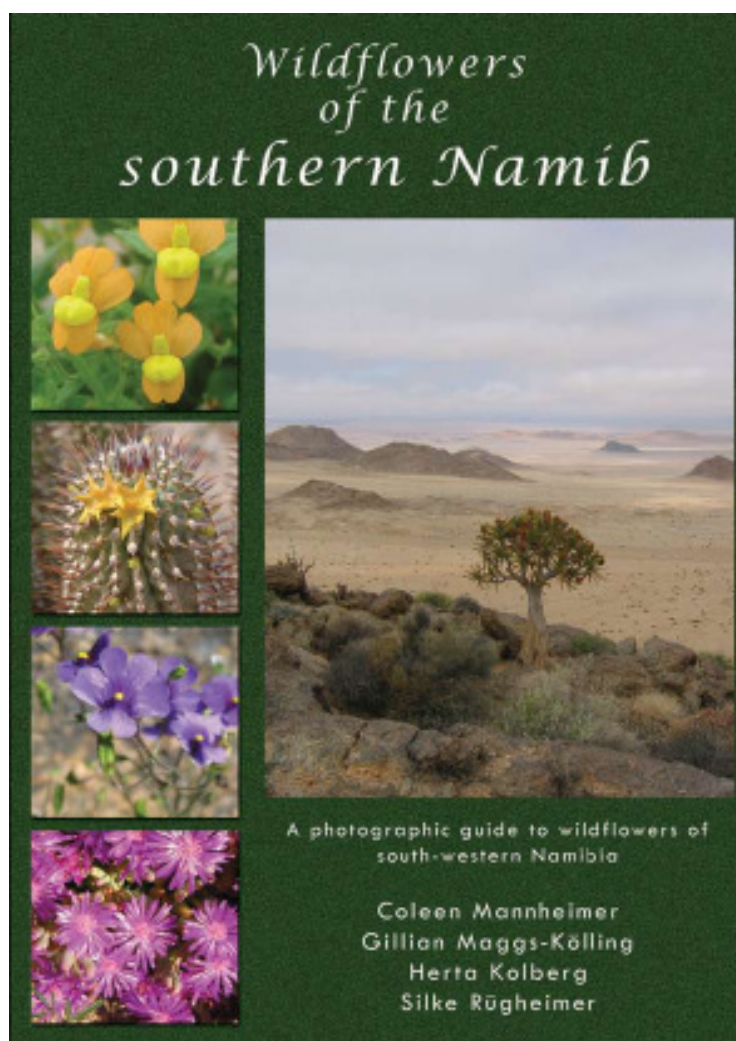


This is what the Dassie View cache looks like.

### **VIOLATION OF TREES:**

<b>Municipality:</b>	Parks & Gardens: Mr Pretorius, Mr Huysamen or Mr H Voigts	Tel.	290 3540
	City Police	Tel.	290 2239
<b>Forestry:</b>	Mr Visagie, Mr Shilunga	Tel.	208 7349
	or Emmanuel Pieters of the Forestry Directorate	Tel.	208 7323

For the above mentioned persons to take legal action against the cutting down of trees there needs to be evidence in the form of wood from the cut tree, photographs, witnesses etc. Taking photographs or filming may even be an effective way of stopping the destruction.

**NEW PUBLICATION:**

This full colour photographic guide, written by four Namibian botanists, covers the south-western corner of Namibia, mainly the southern Namib Desert ("Sperrgebiet"), although a number of common plant species that occur as far east as the Fish River have been included. The area concerned is largely a relatively pristine wilderness that is geologically and topographically very diverse, providing many habitats and niches where unique organisms have evolved mechanisms that enable them to survive in this inhospitable corner of the sub region. It harbours a unique plant species composition that includes approximately 25% of the Namibian flora as a whole (over 1000 species), and encompasses numerous endemic and near-endemic species.

Over three hundred and fifty species are covered by this guide. The emphasis is on wildflowers, but a few of the most common ferns, grasses, shrubs and trees have also been described. Wherever possible, photographs of the whole plant as well as close-ups of the flower have been included. A simple description of each plant and a brief overview of distribution, habitat and uses are provided, as well as common names used in the area.

To those who are interested in plants the southern Namib flora will provide an ongoing source of both fascination and challenge. Different species are seen from year to year, depending on rainfall patterns, and in order to see a wide variety of the plants and the mass

displays in good years, enthusiasts will visit again and again. This handbook is a must for anyone with an interest in the indigenous flora of Namibia. BotSoc will be selling these books.

**REGULAR INFORMATION & CONTACT NUMBERS****Botanical Society of Namibia - THE CORE OF ACTIVE PLANT PEOPLE (CAPP)**

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<b>National Botanical Research Institute</b> )	Web: <a href="http://www.nbri.org.na">www.nbri.org.na</a>
<b>National Herbarium</b> (	<b>8 Orban St. Windhoek, Tel 202 2111</b>
<b>Botanic Garden</b> )	open to Visitors Monday – Friday 8h00 – 17h00, no charge

With kind regards

Diana Thompson and CAPP of Botsoc