
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

2019 was yet another busy year for LepSoc Africa (LSA).

On a positive note, I can say, with reasonable confidence, that we have more paid-up members than at any stage in our history and that the monetary value of membership subscriptions (in real terms) is at record levels. Much of the recent growth of the Society can be attributed to good old fashioned hard work: communication with existing members and attention to detail with regard to membership records.

Our annual Conference and AGM was held in Knysna, Western Cape, in November. Dave and Hanna Edge were responsible for the event, which was well attended and, I believe, as successful as any LSA conference in recent years.

The society is actively engaged in a wide range of projects, focused on Lepidoptera conservation and research, including COREL, CRG, BED, *Aloeides* Project, *Kedestes* Conservation and the Butterfly Index. There are a few new projects in the pipeline, such as *Lepidochrysops* (Marianne Espeland) and Edible Insects (Dr Barbara van Asch). In addition, there are other initiatives that LSA members can contribute to, such as the English Names and Transcribing projects. LepiMAP (the Lepidoptera component of the Virtual Museum) continues to collect valuable data; Fanie Rautenbach is LepSoc Africa's representative and identifies most of the Papilionoidea.

As result of the - now completed - SALCA project, the number of Critically Endangered butterfly species in South Africa has risen from 14 to 21, with a further 5 taxa listed as Possibly Extinct. There has been little positive news in 2019 and the status of two species, *Orachrysops niobe* and *Erikssonina edgei* is increasingly uncertain.

We are endeavouring to strengthen the various regional branches of the society and to increase the degree of provincial involvement in LSA affairs. KZN, Highveld, Southern Cape and Western Cape are to be congratulated on their efforts over the last season and Vaughan Jessnitz, the Chairman of the recently formed Limpopo Branch has been tireless in his efforts to attract new members and to communicate with provincial nature conservation officials.

International members form a large (and rapidly growing) component of LSA and we are delighted to have appointed a German Branch Chairman (Michael Ochse). Plans are in place to create similar UK and USA branches. While we don't expect the international branches to hold meetings or to organize events, the relevant chairmen will play a key role in promoting the Society, circulating LSA correspondence, as well as coordinating distribution of *Metamorphosis*.

Plans are well underway for the 4th Afrotropical Lepidoptera Workshop, which will be held in Gabon in November. LepSoc Africa are responsible for this event, following on from the successful Madagascar Workshop, held in April 2018. A full complement of delegates, including well-known Lepidopterists from all over the world, have already signed up: with eleven months to go, we are fully booked and have a waiting-list.

Steve Woodhall, our Marketing Officer, and Bennie Coetzer have jointly produced a blue-print for future marketing efforts. In my opinion, our traditional focus on "youth" has been largely unsuccessful and it may possibly be misguided in this modern age. Many, if not most of the people who attend butterfly talks and presentations are pensioners. These are people who have developed an interest in natural history and have the time (and financial resources) to make a significant contribution to LepSoc Africa. Why not focus on this sector? They have children and grandchildren: to my mind, it may be far more effective to let parents and grandparent indoctrinate their siblings with an interest in butterflies, than for LepSoc Africa to try and do this directly. Facebook certainly has a role to play and there are three groups in existence (our own, LepiMAP and CRG). We intend to look at this resource more closely and utilising it by for example advertising LepSoc Africa membership on the Facebook pages. Ultimately, I'd like all members of LepSoc Africa to try and market the Society at every available opportunity!

LepSoc Africa council have prepared Membership Cards for all paid-up members of the Society. The cards will be produced on 01 July each year and will be distributed to our members as quickly as possible. Although LSA subscriptions are due on 01 January, we have made the cards valid until 30 June the following year. The reasons for this are as follows:

-
- As it will take a month or two to circulate the cards, we considered it wasn't a great benefit to receive a card in say, October, which then expires on 31 December.
 - We are trying to implement permit cycles with the various provinces, which run from 01 July to 30 June the following year; this is to coincide with the butterfly season. The Member Cards will become a form of identification, linked to the permits.

LepSoc Africa members can apply, via the website, to be included on provincial collecting permits. Applications will be coordinated by the Permit Administrator (Reinier Terblanche), who will liaise with Provincial Chairmen and monitor submission of research-proposals to their respective Provinces.

LepSoc Africa Council have resolved that subscriptions, for new members, will be discounted by 50% after 30 June each year. As you know, annual subs are due on 01 January. To encourage new members to enrol during the latter months of the year, membership is available at half-price between 1 July and 31 December; thereafter normal rates apply. From 01 Jan 2020 Family Membership will be an available option for LepSoc Africa members. For R450 a married couple (or life-partners) may join LSA as full members, or for R350 if they are pensioners. In addition, membership will in future be free to children under the age of 15.

There is an urgent need for LepSoc Africa to find a storage facility for Lepidoptera specimens. I am busy looking at various options, but I appeal to all members of LSA to consider this pressing issue and to get back to me with any ideas or suggestions.

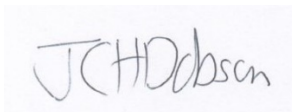
LepSoc Africa have applied to SARS to be registered as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO). The application is still being reviewed, but if successful we will be able to furnish donors with tax exemption certificates for donations.

As noted at the LSA Conference in 2018, Council spent two years focusing on procedural, corporate governance issues. We considered this was essential, in order to construct a solid base for future growth; this growth relating to membership numbers as well as our commitment to research and conservation projects. I'm happy to say that our foundations are firmly in place and that the focus is now towards growing the society. I think it's important to add that I don't consider an increase in membership numbers to be our overriding objective. While this is undoubtedly important, we should be measured by our achievements, rather than by our size.

As you are aware, Dave Edge has taken back the reins as *Metamorphosis* editor from Mark Williams. Silvia Kirkman is the Subeditor, under Dave's mentorship, and I have no doubt that Silvia will grow into the role and become a formidable Editor in years to come.

Ultimately however, *Metamorphosis* will not thrive unless it has a steady flow of high quality, relevant and interesting material to publish.

I'm happy to say that Volume 30 maintains the usual high standard of the Journal and includes a wide range of articles that will be of interest to all our members!



Jeremy Dobson
jchdobson@gmail.com
Chairman – LepSoc Africa
31st December 2019