



Southern African Bulb Group

www.sabg.tk

SABG Newsletter no. 41 March 2020

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News

★ A report on the 2019 Bulb and Seed Exchange by Jon Evans is included in this Newsletter.

★ Because of the developing Covid-19 coronavirus emergency, our Spring meeting is cancelled; its effect on future activities is unclear at present.

Dates for your diary

★ **Cancelled** Saturday 21st March 2020: NAAS *Lachenalia* visit day, Exbury Gardens

★ **Cancelled** Sunday 29th March 2020: SABG Spring Meeting (Hale, Farnham, Surrey)

★ Sunday 11th October 2020: SABG Autumn Meeting (a decision on whether to go ahead with this meeting will be made later, as the situation becomes clearer)

From the Editor

Rather belatedly, I wish you all a Happy New Year. Nowadays of course we are all concerned with the coronavirus and its increasing effects on our activities, resulting in the cancellation of most, if not all, plant

society meetings, including our own. However, let us hope that our plants will flourish, and at least some of us may have more time at home to cultivate and appreciate them! Some of our activities might be able to continue to some extent in the online domain – more information in due course, after I have completed this newsletter, which I don't want to delay any further. The good news is that, like the watch-maker's apprentice¹, I have nearly enough left over to make another one!

There are two articles from SABG members in this edition. Jon Evans has reported on the Bulb and Seed Exchange he ran in 2019 and Jonathan Hutchinson has produced an excellent article on his recent trip to Zimbabwe hunting *Scadoxus*. Many thanks to you both.

Notices and Requests

Books on S.A. plants for sale

Janice Bennetts has the following books on South African wild flowers for sale. The prices included are those quoted by online sellers, but Janice is open to any offers. She would prefer to sell the S.A. Wild Flower

¹ who, on his first day of instruction, was asked to take a watch apart and put it back together again

Guides as a complete set of 11: offers for the whole set would take priority, but feel free to make offers for individual volumes, e.g. to complete your set. Please send your offers directly to Janice by email at ujbennetts@gmail.com, by phone 023 8025 2149 or by post to 2 Terriote Close, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Hants SO52 2QF, to arrive by April 30th.

Title	Author/s	Date
Mountain Flowers, A Field Guide to the Flora of the Drakensberg and Lesotho	Pooley, Elsa	1992
Photographic Guide to the Wildflowers of South Africa	Manning, John	2003
South African Wild Flower Guide 1 – Namaqualand – out of print	le Roux, Annelise & Ted Schelpe	1988
South African Wild Flower Guide 2 – Outeniqua Tsitsikamma & Eastern Little Karoo £26.50 online	Moriarty, Audrey	1982
South African Wild Flower Guide 3 – Cape Peninsula – out of print	Kidd, Mary Maytham	1983
South African Wild Flower Guide 4 – Transvaal Lowveld and Escarpment including Kruger National Park – out of print	Onderstall, Jo	1984
South African Wild Flower Guide 5 – Hottentots Holland to Hermanus – out of print	Burman, Lee & Anne Bean	1985
South African Wild Flower Guide 6 – Karoo – out of print	Shearing, David	1994
South African Wild Flower Guide 7 – West Coast – out of print	Manning, John & Peter Goldblatt	1996
South African Wild Flower Guide 8 – Southern Overberg, - £44.99 online	Muscart, Penny, Richard Cowling, Janice Albertyn	1997
South African Wild Flower Guide 9 – Nieuwoudtville, Bokkeveld Plateau & Hantam £54.99 online	Manning, John & Peter Goldblatt	1997
South African Wild Flower Guide 10 – Cederberg - Clanwilliam & Biedouw Valley – out of print	Rooyen, Gretel van; Hester Steyn	1999
South African Wild Flower Guide 11 – Eastern Cape – out of print	Manning, J	2001
Wild Flowers of Southern Africa	Patterson-Jones, Colin	1998

SABG meetings

Reports on the second half of the October 2018 and the whole of the April 2019 SABG meeting were promised for this Newsletter, but have had to be held over until the next Newsletter.

Report on the Autumn 2019 SABG meeting

Our last meeting was held on Sunday 6th October 2019 at the Badger Farm Community Centre near Winchester.

The speaker for the morning session was Christine Skelmersdale, who spoke about “The summer flowering bulbs of the Drakensberg Mountains, South Africa”. After the lunch break, Jon Evans gave a talk on “South African bulbs from the AGS shows”. A more detailed report will appear in a future Newsletter.

The next SABG meeting – cancelled

Our next planned meeting was to be held on Sunday 29th March 2020. Unfortunately we have decided to cancel this meeting in the light of concerns about the spread of the coronavirus, and it soon became apparent that this decision was in line with current government policy.

SABG Autumn 2020 meeting

The Autumn meeting is planned for **Sunday 11th October 2020**. At present, we have provisionally booked the Autumn 2020 meeting at the Badger Farm Community Centre in Winchester. Professor **James Hitchmough** of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Sheffield University is scheduled to give us two talks at that meeting. His studies concern the ecology of herbaceous vegetation and how this can be used to create more sustainable plantings in town environments. He is known for designing the plantings in the 2012 London Olympics surroundings, and the “South African meadows” at Wisley which have appeared in issues 33 and 38 of this newsletter. More details of the meeting will follow in due course – let us hope that the coronavirus emergency will have abated sufficiently by then.

2019 SABG Bulb and Seed Exchange – Report

The 2019 SABG Bulb and Seed Exchange has now closed. The size of the operation was roughly the same as last year.

	2019	2018
Donors	26	25
Items donated	577	608
Requests	62	61
Requested items	1976+	2310
Packets distributed	1688	1864 + c.40 at meeting

The material I received was generally well packed, and cleaned, so my thanks to all the donors; this saves me a lot of work.

1688 packets of bulbs and seed were sent out in parcels to 62 members. Allocation algorithms are always debatable; in general, if there is sufficient material of an item I will share it out among those who request it, so that I do not get left with surplus – I have no room to grow it on. This may mean small packets, or large ones, depending on availability and demand.

Nearly all members who requested less than 40 items received at least 90% of what they wished for. Members who requested more items than this received a smaller proportion, but still the vast majority of what they requested. There was insufficient material remaining to run a surplus distribution; a few packets were sold at the autumn meeting in Winchester.

Items/genera in particular demand included:

South African	<i>Lapeirousia</i>
<i>Albuca osmynella</i>	<i>Massonia</i> (more uncommon spp.)
<i>Babiana</i>	<i>Moraea</i> (more uncommon spp.)
<i>Brunsvigia</i>	<i>Nerine</i>
<i>Crinum</i> seeds	<i>Ornithogalum</i>
<i>Cyrtanthus</i>	<i>Pelargonium</i>
<i>Daubenya</i> bulbs	<i>Strumaria</i>
<i>Drimia</i>	<i>Wurmbea</i>
<i>Empodium</i>	Other
<i>Geissorhiza</i>	<i>Fritillaria</i>
<i>Gethyllis</i>	<i>Galanthus</i>
<i>Gladiolus</i> corms	<i>Narcissus</i>
<i>Haemanthus</i> bulbs	<i>Tropaeolum</i>

All the UK members who were not donors made a donation to the group to cover postage and packing, and the exercise made a profit for the group, which was welcome, but not the point of the exercise.

Overseas Members

I would like to clarify our policy regarding sending items to overseas members.

We are only able to send material to overseas members in ways complying with their government's regulations (i.e. no mis-labelling of contents etc), and only when conforming with those regulations is neither too onerous, nor expensive (e.g. we cannot issue phytosanitary certificates etc). We expect the relevant member to be able to guide us in following their government's requirements.

In effect, this means that we are unable to send bulbs

outside Europe, but can send seeds to some countries, if the member is conversant with their regulations.

We are currently investigating the new regulations regarding plant passports. If they apply to our distribution, this legislation may prevent us sending out bulbs altogether, but at the moment there seems to be a huge amount of confusion regarding its scope and applicability, even in the government department responsible for enforcing it.

Ephemeral Seeds

Seed from some highly desirable species of bulbs, mainly amaryllids, germinates immediately regardless of treatment, and thus cannot be kept for the main exchange. If it is sent from South Africa, it is usually growing in the packet. I believe this is properly called 'recalcitrant' seed, but that brings to mind seed which doesn't want to germinate rather than the reverse, so I am going to use the word 'ephemeral'. Such seed ripens mainly in a period of at most 2-3 months in the autumn.

Details of the 'ephemeral' distribution are as follows:

	2019	2018
Donors	6	1
Items donated	16	8
Requests	17	34
Requested items	70	94
Packets distributed	59	27

This year we again ran a distribution of these, and despite a difficult wet grey autumn which meant that seed of many smaller amaryllids rotted rather than ripening, received 16 different items from 6 donors. 17 members requested and received packets of seed, and I hope that they met with some success in germinating them.

Jon Evans

A Twelve Day Trip to Study *Scadoxus* in Zimbabwe

in Conjunction with Oslo and Harare Botanic Gardens

In June 2019 I was invited to give a talk to staff members at the Botanic Garden in Oslo. This came about from an initial contact with some professors and Students who are undertaking work on specific genera of African petaloid monocotyledons including *Scadoxus*.

In the previous summer it had been suggested that I contact Prof. Charlotte Sletten BJORÅ, who was undertaking DNA research on *Scadoxus* but was limited by the amount of material that was available for the studies.

In October of 2018 I was delighted that Charlotte and Prof Inger Nordal were able to visit the National Collection of *Scadoxus*, where we spent much of a sunny weekend taking leaf samples for rapid drying in Silica gel. This preserved the quality of DNA needed for their research.

In the 1970's Inger had done much of the research and taxonomic work on *Scadoxus*, which until that time was still part of *Haemanthus*, making it a particularly easy genus to become familiar with.

She was now very keen to see this work progress and to see tested a number of hypotheses that had formed, though at the time of the initial research there was not enough material available to enable any conclusions.

I will always remember how Inger marvelled at the thickness of the flower bract of *Scadoxus membranaceus*. Asking if she had not seen the plant before she said that she had only known many of the plants previously from Herbarium specimens. Whilst I knew this was the case for much taxonomic study, it hadn't really occurred to me what an onerous task botanists and taxonomists must have to be able to provide a description from a plant that was possibly dried years before. That so much of the plant is lost due to pressing, particularly all the colour pigments, but especially the feel of the plant. How much we take for granted with the plants that we grow!

Another major topic of the weekend, and a particularly exciting one, was that I had been asked by Charlotte if I would be interested in joining a botanical trip to Zimbabwe!

She was arranging this twelve day study trip along with Prof. Clemence Zimudzi of the University in Harare and would include other professors, MSc and PhD students from both countries. The trip was based on a number of petaloid monocotyledon genera of which *Scadoxus* was one that a number of the participants had a particular interest.

Zimbabwe had been a country I had wanted to visit for many years primarily because one of the *Scadoxus* species, *Scadoxus pole-evansii*, is endemic to the Nyanga Mountains that borders Zimbabwe and Mozambique. This was such a fantastic opportunity knowing that one of the key aims was to find this beautiful species and travelling with such a knowledgeable group I was bound to get a great deal

from the experience.

Another aspect which was particularly important to Charlotte was that the distribution of *Scadoxus puniceus* which runs down the eastern side of the continent is disjunct, with distinct isolated pockets between Ethiopia and South Africa. One of these areas is in the south of Zimbabwe, limited to areas in and around Matobo National Park.

This had been the basis of one of the hypotheses raised by Inger, as to whether these isolated pockets come from a common ancestor or if they have evolved separately, but morphologically look so similar that they have been classified as the same species. Hopefully some of the material received from the National Collection and subsequently from the Zimbabwe trip will answer this question.

I had also been asked if I would like to collect material, this was something that I definitely wanted to undertake but knew it would require a good deal of paperwork. This would ensure that it complied with the Nagoya Protocols to allow for documented material to be a valuable part of the National Collection.

Thankfully due to the support of Lucy Pitman, Plant Heritage Plant Conservation Officer and Dr John David, Head of Horticultural Taxonomy for the RHS, the various problems that arose with my seed collection requests were ironed out and eventually my request to collect was granted.

Sadly, on the eve of when we were due to return from Zimbabwe, the protests that affected the whole country, due largely to massively inflated fuel prices, came almost to a point of melt down. This brought the capital to a standstill with all the businesses and offices closing down, and this of course included the offices of the Zimbabwean Research Council, where I was due to get my paper work signed off! Hopefully these will still come through to support the material that I was able to collect.

The trip was made up of two excursions:

- From Harare drive south to Matobo National Park – *Scadoxus puniceus*; return to Harare
- Drive east to Nyanga Mountains National Park – *Scadoxus pole-evansii*

It was hoped that the widely distributed *Scadoxus multiflorus* would be found as we travelled through the other areas.

Matobo National Park

Travelling down to Matobo on good tarmac roads gave us plenty of opportunities to stop and look at areas of

roadside vegetation. Bulbous plants were the focus for the whole trip and we saw a number of genera to appeal to the whole party. *Ledebouria* with their very variable and marked foliage was an area of speciality for one professor and her PhD student, with a number of collections made along the journey and throughout the trip.



Ledebouria sp. with attractive foliage

Chlorophytum and *Hypoxis* were also on the list for being sought out, both genera being difficult on occasion to determine from other species.

Christopher Chapano, Head of the Botanic Garden in Harare was delighted to find specimens of *Dipcadi*, a diminutive member of the Hyacinthaceae. He said it was very poorly represented in the Botanic Garden Herbarium and so was keen to rectify that.



Gloriosa superba, Zimbabwe's National Flower

On the showier side we saw many *Gloriosa superba* in a wide range of colour forms, both bicoloured and of red or yellow. *Crinum macowanii* was also a common sight growing in damp seeps in depressions along the road side.

By the time we reached our destination the light was fading quickly, but a bulging herbarium press showed of the successful start to our trip.



Crinum macowanii growing at the road side

Matobo National Park is famed for its landscape of huge boulders and bizarre standing stones. Here we spent two days, enabling us visit much of the park.



Maleme Camp, Matopo National Park

We continued to see a wealth of plant material that appealed to the interests of the team, but of particular importance to me was to be able to gather twenty separate collections of *Scadoxus puniceus* seed.



Scadoxus puniceus growing exposed to the sun

This wonderful bounty then continued to keep me busy for the rest of my trip evenings, as not all of the seeds were ripe at the time of collection I needed to ensure that as it did ripen the red pulp that surrounded the seed

did not then turn to a soggy mass. Some of the seed then wasted no time in starting to germinate so the prior purchase of small plastic containers proved very useful for protecting the seed and their delicate radicles.

One particularly special part of the trip for the whole team was on meeting a couple of Game wardens and being asked if we would like to see some White Rhinoceros? With strict instructions from them on what we should and should not do we were led to an open expanse and were able to watch from a remarkably close distance as a small family came closer towards us.

On talking to the guards about the *Scadoxus* seed and what may eat them they said that the baboons did on occasion which had a narcotic effect upon them!



Scadoxus puniceus in fruit

After this very positive start to the trip we returned to Harare to change flower presses and prepare for travelling to Nyanga in the East.

Nyanga National Park

Having the Chalets as accommodation at Punch Rock, set amongst a beautiful stand of mature flat topped *Acacia abyssinica* was a wonderful starting point for our ventures around Nyanga National Park.

For the first day after getting our permits for access and allowing us to collect we started to drive the loop of road called the Scenic View, this soon turned out to be an area of considerable disappointment as the whole area had been taken over by *Acacia mearnsii*, one of the Australian black wattles. Some areas of this had been burnt through to leave the charred skeletons of the trees. On inspection of the blackened ground we saw thousands of emerging seedlings that would prove to be the next generation. Large tracts of ground outside the park had been eradicated of this tree so hopefully this area would also be cleared at some time.



Mtarazi Falls, Nyanga Mountains National Park: one of two locations for the endemic *Scadoxus pole-evansii*

Unperturbed by this minor setback, the following day we set off to Mtarazi Falls, which is one of the given locations for *Scadoxus pole-evansii*. After viewing the beautiful falls themselves we followed directions that took us to an area where they had been seen growing on a previous occasion. On eventually finding a couple of seedlings our anticipation of seeing further plants certainly grew but Prof. Clemence Zimudzi's call "we've found it and its in flower!" was more than any of us had expected. To see this beautiful plant in flower and in habitat was a real treat and considering it was something I had wanted to see for years, it was well worth the wait!



Scadoxus pole-evansii with (from left) Christopher Chapano, Prof. Charlotte Sletten Bjorå and Clemence Zimudzi

The other recorded locality for this species is a few miles away at Pungwe Falls so we decided to visit this location. Sadly, we were soon prevented as the roads were very badly pitted and flooded and there was a risk of the vehicles getting stuck. Still we returned home triumphant from what was the highlight of the whole trip.

On our return journey to Harare we continued to look for *Scadoxus multiflorus* which had been harder to find than anticipated, which Clemence said was due to the lack of rain. We stopped in areas where it had been seen previously and was known still to grow, but there were absolutely no signs of growth. Eventually, we did find a couple of specimens at an undocumented site and they were in seed so this was another success.

Everybody on the trip was very pleased with what had been achieved and was deemed a huge success on a number of counts, from the number of collections made, to an increased distribution for a species of *Chlorophytum*, which had previously been thought to only occupy a much smaller area.

To meet up again in Oslo and talk about the Zimbabwe experiences of a few months previous was great, but I felt very privileged to be asked to give two talks, about the RHS and Plant Heritage to a small audience of University and Botanic Garden staff. Charlotte also spoke about synergies between Botanic Garden and University staff while Ida and Kine the two MSc. Students gave presentations on *Scadoxus* phylogeny and the *Scadoxus puniceus* complex.

I am particularly grateful to Charlotte for enabling me to be involved in the work that they continue to undertake

and to the South African Bulb Group for providing me with funds to assist my travel to Zimbabwe and to be part of a truly memorable and worthwhile experience.

Jonathan Hutchinson

In the next Newsletter

I plan to produce the next Newsletter (no. 42) for distribution during the spring (2020). There will be an article by Jon Evans on *Empodium* species cultivated in the UK, information on the new SABG Constitution and I hope to include one or more reports on recent meetings. Do let me know of anything you would like to be included.

SABG Committee

Chairman

Paul Cumbleton cumbleton@yahoo.co.uk

Bulb & seed exchange

Jonathan Evans jonevans46.uw@btinternet.com

Treasurer

Rodney Sims rodney.sims@tiscali.co.uk

Secretary & Membership

Alina Hughes abmhughes@gmail.com

Newsletter & Web editor, Committee minutes

Richard White sabg@rjwhite.tk

Meeting supplies

Sue Bedwell bedwell1615@btinternet.com



All the participants of the trip: 5 from Zimbabwe, 5 from Norway, 1 from the UK

SABG Income and Expenditure Account for year ending 30th September 2019

<u>Income</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
Membership Fees	£48.06	£80.97
Catering	£38.68	£27.24
Pot sales	£12.26	£15.90
Donation	£20.00	£100.90
Plant Sales	£279.35	£215.94
PayPal income Bulb sales 2019	£231.38	£646.58
Admission Donations	£233.00	£213.00
loan	£200.00	£2.57
Building Society interest	£2.37	
Total Income	£1,063.10	£1,303.10
 <u>Expenditure</u>		
Hall Rental	£175.63	£170.52
Speakers	£110.00	£50.00
Catering Costs	£8.19	£10.65
Bulb Distribution costs	£257.59	£241.04
Saunders book donation	£203.99	£0.00
Printing	£0.00	£35.69
*Repay Creditors	£349.52	£347.60
Postage	£38.75	£31.04
Web site	£0.00	£0.00
Affiliation Insurance	£110.00	£110.00
Commission refund	£0.00	£0.00
Research Donation	£250.00	£200.00
Total Expenditure	£1,503.67	£1,196.54
<u>Profit/Loss</u>	-£440.57	£106.56
 <u>Financial Position at 30 September 2019</u>		
Balance Brought Forward	£2,926.63	£2,670.55
Add Profit/Subtract Loss	-£440.57	106.56
*Creditors	£349.52	£149.52
Balance Carried Forward	£2,835.58	£2,926.63
 <u>Represented By</u>		
Cash in Hand	£1.44	£23.00
Cheques not paid in	£0.00	£373.00
Treasurer's Savings Account	£2,123.39	£2,208.96
Paypal Account	£282.68	£321.67
NatWest Account	£428.07	£2,926.63
	£2,835.58	

I hereby certify that I have duly examined the books, bank statements, vouchers etc. of the Southern African Bulb Group and confirm these represent a true and accurate record.

Signed  Date 14/01/2020

David Wilson MBA