



Southern African Institute of Forestry, Postnet Suite 329, Private Bag X4, Menlopark, 0102
www.saif.org.za, saif@mweb.co.za

Welcome to Dr Neelse de Ronde as our new editor of the Southern Forest Journal

By Hannel Ham

Dr Andrew Morris indicated at the end of 2018 that he would like to step down as the Editor of the Southern Forest Journal after ten years of hard work and dedicated service. The SAIF council embarked on a process to find a new editor and we can announce that Dr Neels de Ronde was appointed to this position. Neels is well known amongst foresters and academics alike for his work on fire behavior and fuel load reduction. He has impressed us with his energy and ideas and we are looking forward to a good relationship with him

Neels' vision for the Southern Forest Journal is "To make this a popular Journal for all foresters and other interesting readers, locally as well as abroad. This can only be done by publishing articles that can still meet the required scientific standards and simultaneously addressing the most pressing problems in the forest industry with a flair for arriving at solutions, straight to the point". He also emphasizes a commitment to the readers.

For those of us not familiar with Dr Neels de Ronde. He was born in Driebergen, The Netherlands, and immigrated with his parent in 1957 to South Africa. He studied at Saasveld Forestry College between 1962 – 1963, received an MSc in Fire Ecology at the University of Natal in 1978 and a PhD in Forestry from Stellenbosch University in 1994. Neels worked in Forest Management and Forest Research and has been consulting on fire related topics since 1994.

He describes himself as a person with a keen love for nature and adventure and as a forester with a "burning interest" for fire-use and fire impact studies. He has a lifetime commitment to work towards a compromise between man and nature with controlled fire, at an international level. Neels has published more than 30 articles and book chapters and presented at numerous symposiums.

It is impossible to stop and restart a journal when a new editor takes over. Neels will therefore work with Andrew during a transition and handover phase. He is also tasked with developing an online submission system for the Journal which he will done in collaboration with our publishers. We wish Neels all the best in this new role. At the same time would we like to thank Dr Andrew Morris for his dedicated service towards the Southern Forest Journal and the SAIF.

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SAIF AGM 2019: Mpumalanga

The **51st SAIF National Annual General Meeting** will be held in Mpumalanga

Date: **Tuesday 9th April 2019**

Venue: **Ingwenyama Resort**, White River

Time: **17h00 to 19h00**

This will coincide with the Focus on Forestry event, 10 – 12 April 2019 @ Ingwenyama Lodge

Guest speaker: Ruddolph Hoffman, Country Operations Manager at Green Resources in Uganda "What it means to work as an expat in forestry in Africa"

Contact Corine at saif@mweb.co.za for more information!

SAIF photo comp. prize winners

SAIF Gauteng branch members receive their prizes as a result of the Stihl sponsored SAIF photo competition. Here the Stihl representative hands over prizes to Brett Hurley (first place) and Izette Greyling (third place). The Gauteng branch continues its dominance of the photo competition!



SU's Forest Operations Research Unit

The Department of Forest and Wood Science has formed a strategic and fully funded partnership with SAPPI, Mondi and York through the formation of a specialised Forestry Operations Research Unit (FOR). It is headed by Simon Ackerman, former research scientist at the Institute for Commercial Forestry Research. Ackerman is a widely respected researcher and brings an extensive research network to FOR and the industry which will be to the benefit of all the industry partners.

FOR became an entity as from the beginning of July last year and will be part of the Forest Engineering/Operations discipline in the Department of Forest and Wood Science. FOR will concentrate on high-level research and will complement SU's long-standing collaboration with the Forestry Industry. It will take advantage of new disruptive technologies and analytical methodologies, in the form of "Big Data analytics," to aid decision making within the forestry supply chain. FOR's main objectives include research on compartment characterization and the effect on end of

rotation processes and the forestry value chain; fulfilling the role as South African co-ordinator at the EU 2020 Tech4Effect initiative and maintaining the partnership with NIBIO through the project, and continuing to contribute to the management and execution of the productivity improvement initiative developed by SU in 2015. FOR will also serve as a resource base for testing trending technology and techniques, and will address shorter-term research questions from industry partners.

CFA Young Forester Award 2020

As part of the Commonwealth Forestry Association's commitment to supporting the professional development of young foresters, they are pleased to announce the launch of the CFA Young Forester Award 2020 in conjunction with the Faculty of Forestry at the University of British Columbia.

The CFA Young Forester Award provides a short-term work placement of three months hosted by the University of British Columbia at their Malcolm Knapp Research Forest, between September and December 2020, where the successful applicants will be able to develop their practical skills. The Award covers flights, accommodation, local travel, subsistence costs and a small bursary to cover the period of the placement.

The 2020 Award will focus on forest wildlife management. The two winners will assist in a research project focusing on mammal community dynamics in human-impacted ecosystems which will assist in the development of conservation strategies for human-wildlife coexistence.

Eligibility criteria

Applicants must:

- Be a national of a Commonwealth country.
- Hold a forestry qualification.
- Be able to exhibit a genuine interest in forest wildlife management.
- Be below 35 years of age on 1st January 2020.
- Be able to travel to Canada and apply for a Canadian Study Permit.
- Hold a valid driving licence.

Application process

The Application Form below should be completed and submitted via email to cfa@cfa-international.org by June 15th 2020. The following information must also be sent at the same time:

- An essay of at least 400, but no more than 500, words explaining why you are applying for the CFA Young Forester Award.
- A Curriculum Vitae/ Résumé of no more than two pages.

Short-listed candidates will undergo a Skype interview. Contact Corine for the entry form: saif@mweb.co.za

SAIF Forester of the year 2018: Lungisa Tshangisa

Many congratulations to Lungisa Tshangisa on this achievement. Instead of a usual motivation that justifies the award, the SAIF has decided to share the story of Lungisa with our members. It serves as an inspiration to all of us and makes us realise once again that foresters are special people overcoming special challenges.

Q: Provide a short account of your origins, your entrance to forestry (labour level) and transgression through to Estate Manager.

A: I was born and bred in the Wild Coast town known as Port St Johns. I matriculated there in 2004. I come from a poor family with my mother working as a farm worker at NCT Baynesfield Estate, while my father was “mahlalela” (unemployed). We are 7 siblings which were the responsibility of the mother to provide food and school items for all of us. Furthering studies through university was not possible. It was even difficult to obtain money for the taxi fare to Umtata (R50 return) where the nearest University was, nevermind paying for application and registration – this was as far as the moon.

So, any young boy from the old Transkei would have 3 main options; go to Gauteng and search for employment on the mines, or go to Cape Town and stand a chance to be called a refuge, or go to KZN and look for work on a cane farm. In all of these places you would need to know a person to get in. Fortunately for me, the person I knew was my mother, who was a farm worker and I went to her. She was not happy that I followed her and did not want me to end up as a farm worker like her. She had dreams that since I was her first child to matriculate, I would be a better person and assist her alleviating poverty in the family. So with no other options, I explained that I share the same vision but I need a ladder to take the first step, something like a piece of job that will enable me to at least pay the registration fees. Looking back, I was a young and thin size 28 boy on a farm, which was not easy. On my arrival at Baynesfield, there was a soccer team which I joined, and I was pretty good. This team was managed by Siya, an NCT supervisor. I got to know him, and he knew my mother. When he was employing fixed term labourers, he gave me a chance. I was then employed as general labourer.

Around June, I attended interviews of the MSD of the SA Army. I applied for in PE and came across a prospectus of the PE Technikon. Upon reading it, I saw a forestry listed as one of the courses that they offer. It looked interesting and looked at the requirements. I met the points requirements and applied. I received the documents and filled them in and received an admission letter in September. I also applied for a NSFAS loan, which I was accepted. I wrote a letter of resignation to my manager, Peter Odell, explaining the reasons. He asked to see me. Upon realising that I would be studying forestry, the same course he did at Saasveld, he advised that I must not resign because he knows the programme and I would need to return for practical's. Then he approached NCT's Mr Dladla and Mr Jones so that I can be assisted



Financially. They were satisfied with my matric results and resolved that I must be given a loan. If I passed, it would be converted to a full bursary, but if I fail, I should pay back the money. I had only had one option, which was to pass, and I did not disappoint.

Upon Completing my Diploma in 2008, NCT had taken over the management of the Kranskop Eyethu schemes, so there was a space for me. It was where I started my carrier as a forester under the mentorship of the best in wisdom, Ed Hayter! I was exposed to labour and contractor management in all fields of forestry. I carefully leaned human relations and was exposed to community engagement through IInduna and chiefs, especial Chief Ngubane of the Mabovini clan. After I completed my BTech in 2011, my effectiveness was recognised and I was promoted to Estate Manager, which is the position I have held from 2012 to date.

Q: Outline the most exciting challenges you have experienced in your career to date and how you overcame them.

A: The challenges I came across that have made me grow were firstly, when I was employed as a general labour for mainly hoeing line clean and fire breaks. In KZN this is a woman's job, so I was expected to fail, but I was successful. Secondly, when I came to report to work at Eyethu, I came across a very different bunch of employees consisting mainly of very old people, which were mainly tractor drivers. They never understood that I had knowledge of work and also took me as child. I developed understanding and learned ways of approach and how important to show discipline even if you are in the position of power. **Cont pg 5.**

Of a mantis and some bees

By Rob Thompson

On a recent trip to Durban King Shaka Airport, to drop my wife off, (not for ever...just a short trip...promise!) we were approaching the stairs and escalators leading from the ground floor parking bays to the main concourse, when my wife noticed a large mantis on the floor near the bottom stair. It must have been attracted by the lights the night before and now found itself in distress. We passed over the insect, as doubtlessly hundreds of people before us had done, and focussed on doing what we needed to do in the airport complex. On my return to the parking bays, and the pay point, I again passed over the hapless mantis, and thought for a second how amazing it was that it hadn't by now been decimated with all of the traveller foot traffic on the stairs.

Perhaps it was the impressive size of the insect that ultimately convinced me, but, I suddenly decided that it should be rescued.

Back, once again, to the stairs where I picked up the creature, discovered it to be very lively and intact, and climbed the stairs with it in hand, on-route to the airport gardens to effect a release. A few passers-by noticed this little episode with their quizzical facial expressions telling their own stories. Clearly this was a man who had lost all of his marbles and should be given a wide berth! I released the mantis in a safe place and watched it scramble off to do whatever mantis's do. Whilst this creature was merely an insect, albeit an impressive one, I felt strangely elated at having saved it and went so far as to WhatsApp my wife, now boarding her plane to tell her of the rescue mission. "How sweet" was the response and I secretly imagined the same facial expression as displayed by the recent passers-by! My new-found elation was however sadly and dramatically subdued midway between Durban and Pietermaritzburg when I single-handedly mowed down the greater portion of a migratory swarm of bees, in the wrong place at the wrong time, namely the N3 freeway fast lane. As I warned myself that another message to my wife about this latest incident would only confirm her worst suspicions of my sanity, and vainly attempted to wipe away the sticky mortal remains of my victims from my windshield, I recalled recently reading of a ground-breaking and very concerning study of rapidly declining insect populations across the globe. Clearly I was not, at that particular moment, assisting at all with the preservation of insect numbers (mantis 1 : Bees -567 (estimated)) and this was just a simple drive to and from the airport!

Coincidentally, or more likely due to the collective karma of those sadly deceased bees, Carte Blanche presented a programme insert that same night, on the same study of declining insect populations of the world. The study has revealed that global warming, pollution (including large-scale pesticide applications), and habitat loss (read agriculture and development) are the main contributing factors to this wide scale decline. The topic of windscreen massacres was mercifully omitted. Pollination of food plants (fruit and vegetables) becomes challenging without the presence of pollinators (bees, flies et al) in large numbers and the programme illustrated this with visuals from a massive (read hundreds of thousands of hectares) pear farming industry in China, which has, out of necessity, and lack of bees, resorted to the painstaking hand pollination of flowers.

Some leading scientists (entomologists) in South Africa are of the opinion that our local insect population status remains an enigma. Not enough work has been done, to date, on population study, to gauge the health or not, of our insect numbers. Despite the lack of data, the inexorable onslaught of development and habitat loss does tell its own story and South African environmental awareness will have to improve, and quickly, in order to stave off an ultimate calamity.

For us, working within the forest industry, environmental awareness is generally of second nature. We understand the principles of biodiversity protection and habitat protection and certainly, at least, within our working circumstances, actively pursue sustainability. We have the grace to feel guilty when annihilating bee swarms. What really concerns me however, is the greater population, who continue to live lives of excess inadvertently placing a huge toll on the environment. You only have to take a trip to a shopping mall on any busy weekend to witness the unfettered consumerism that ironically, unless radically tempered, will ultimately consume us and ours!

A weekend or two ago, I assisted with a school group conducting a miniSASS test of river health in the Duzi river. Simplistically this entails collecting macroinvertebrates (small insects) from the water, identifying the core invertebrate groups present and weighing the findings against a river health scale. Needless to say, the findings confirmed that the Duzi is literally a lost cause. This massive river flowing through some of the most picturesque scenery within KZN is seriously toxic and can no longer support extensive and varied populations of creatures and plants (including humans). Whilst I have heard a lot about the (poor) condition of the Duzi from paddling colleagues – who religiously pay for their annual dose of Duzi-guts and the joyful experience of splashing around in its waters, whilst paddling from PMB to Durban – to have seen some basic scientific evidence of its degeneration first hand, was an eye-opener and reality check.

So where do we start? How do we start to turn this prevalent don't care attitude and overall ignorance into awareness and respect? Surprisingly, and despite the doom and gloom, one of the entomologists interviewed on the Carte Blanche programme expressed his overall optimism about the future of the environment. When pressed to explain this unusual stance, given all of the evidence of the approach of Armageddon, he explained that once environmental deterioration starts to negatively affect humans directly, they will inevitably engage their inherent intellect, innovation and drive to engineer improvement. Sadly, we have to experience severe loss before we pull ourselves out of the morass that we have created.

I'm not so sure that I totally agree with his analysis but what it does highlight clearly is that the answer is not going to be soon in coming!

Perhaps my mantis experience is part of the solution? Those of us who, through training, circumstance and good fortune, do have some knowledge of sustainability and environmental respect should undertake to make this a kind of 'life-religion' and live by the insights we have. Don't just live by sustainability principles whilst at work. Apply them to all that we do.

We should do what we have to do and understand that that the quizzical expressions on the faces of those who observe what we do, are indicators of an important message being received by the bearers. Focus on the youngsters and encourage them to take a closer look at the biodiversity that surrounds us and the messages that it is bringing to us.

Share your appreciation of your surrounds with others and take time to explain to the disbelievers what you actually see in that bug that you stepped over, instead of on!

(567 bees were killed in the production of this article). A mantis however gets a second chance!

SAIF Forester of the year 2018: Lungisa Tshangisa

Cont from Pg 3. Under Ed's mentorship I was taught always to be fair on dealing with issues and put yourself in their shoes – what would you want? But this can be abused at times so it must be based on principles. I learnt discipline not to compromise principles. In this way you will be consistent with decision making and solving disputes. Then when I arrived in Harding the labour force was unionized and believed in strikes to resolve issues. This was my first time to face this. It would tend to be personal and your family could be threatened. Fires were lit on the property and when you attended to it, stones would be thrown at you. This calls for determination. I had to work hard to establish platforms of communication. I established a work forum to communicate and raise problems and find solutions together with labour representatives. Activities were established that involved them – we have a soccer team that is affiliated in the local association that I support; our team joined an UGU Departmental work and play sport programme consisting of both soccer and netball and our employees participated. These initiatives broke the ice and the element of trust developed between us. I can report that none of them are unionised at present.

Other challenges are from external such as poaching. One has to confront these armed individuals at times, which is not nice. To address this issue, you would need to apply some tough rules e.g. shoot the dogs which comes with the consequences of fires and threats on your life. But with my strong ability of community engagement, I established good relationships with traditional leaders and SAPS and we worked together to solve the issues. One would report incidents to iinduna and let them resolve the matter, where people would then be charged. However, this is ongoing engagement. Lastly, the farming community itself comes with some challenges. Most of the farmers are old school and mainly white. I found that they did not accept black foresters among them as a colleague or neighbor; you would be undermined or not treated with respect. These are the issues that makes one grow and toughen up and learn how to approach them and make the best out of the situation.

Operationally we come across new challenges every day, which mostly relate to high input costs. This places one under pressure to reduce costs and employ new technology on our small farms that will be cost efficient. My eagerness to learn and improve on things has resulted in me implementing pitting augers & Faka Jelly, that has improved production significantly.

Q: Give a summary of advice that you would give to others to follow

I would say forestry is an industry with many career opportunities, just that one must search and find them. Additionally, you must know where you want to be, otherwise any road will take you anywhere. To upcoming foresters who still want to make their names, the key is discipline. Discipline, a good attitude and dedication will take you to the great heights. Lastly, I would advise that you do not be choosy on what comes your way, as a ladder will give you the altitude and open doors for you.

Q: Your views on forestry as a career and should it be followed by school leavers into the future?

A: As I mention above, it is full of opportunities that need to be

exploited. I can emphasise that school leavers must research and know what path to follow and what is forestry entail so that you know you will be doing something you love and understand.

Q: What challenge do you still have to overcome or what goal do you still want to achieve?

A: I personally need to take a path that will make me serve the NCT Farming community as a whole. I would like to be equipped to occupy a senior position to serve this excellent company. I would love to have my entire career at NCT. Therefore, I need to keep working hard and be relevant with issues of the day. My bigger goal is to unlock the forestry potential in the poor Eastern Cape. I believe this can assist with reducing unemployment and alleviate poverty.

Q: To what or to whom do you attribute your success to date?

A: I would attribute my success to my Mother who taught me discipline, perseverance and determination. My Mother told me that "ayikho inkedama eyindoda" (meaning no grown man who is an orphan). This created a desire and hunger to be independent and be my own man. Also, to Ed Hayter for his patience in mentoring and guiding me through to be a better manager one day. I cannot leave out Peter Odell for trusting in my abilities and opening doors for me, as well as Siya for employing that young man back then. Lastly the NCT's Vusi, Andy and many others who decided to award me a bursary to study through Saasveld (this was the birth of NCT Saasveld bursary scheme).

FABI attends Fungal Genetics meeting

The Fungal Genetics meeting is held in Asilomar, California every second year. This venue is not only a fantastic place to attend a meeting, but it is also the site where the causal agent of the pitch canker disease, *Fusarium circinatum* was first identified in California, in 1993. There is a poster about this disease in the conference grounds. The disease is very much in evidence with the characteristic "flagging" of branches and distinctive pitch that is produced on the infected tree trunks. This fungus has been the focus of much research in FABI, and the first fungal genome to be sequenced in Africa was that of *F. circinatum*. This was done by researchers in FABI.

Eight Fabians attended the Fungal Genetics meeting in March 2019, Prof Brenda Wingfield, Prof Emma Steenkamp, Dr Lieschen de Vos, Dr Albe van der Merwe, Dr Janneke Aylward, Minette Havenga, Dr Magriet van der Nest and Dr Markus Wilken. Each participant presented posters at the meeting

Upcoming events

- 10–12 April 2019. Focus on Forestry Conference 2019. White River. CMO and Nelson Mandela University. See <http://www.cmogroup.net/cmogroup-conferencing/>

SAIF contact details

President:	Hannel Ham	president@saif.org.za	076 452 5567
Vice-president	Wayne Jones	kzn@saif.org.za	033 330 2455
Past-president:	Andrew McEwan	past-president@saif.org.za	044 801 5022
National secretary:	admin@saif.org.za	admin@saif.org.za	082 523 8733
SF Journal Editor:	Andrew Morris	journal@saif.org.za	033 386 2314
KwaZulu-Natal:	Mmoledi Mphahlele	kzn@saif.org.za	033 329 5415
Gauteng:	Brett Hurley	gauteng@saif.org.za	082 909 3211
Mpumalanga:	admin@saif.org.za	admin@saif.org.za	082 523 8733
Southern Cape:	Braam du Preez	southern-cape@saif.org.za	044 874 0682
Western Cape:	Philip Crafford	western-cape@saif.org.za	021 808 3303
DAFF representative	Tendani Mariba	tendanim@daff.gov.za	012 309 5753

April 2019 birthdays



Apr 01	LONG L.	Apr 21	WINGFIELD M.J.
Apr 02	EDWARDS M.B.P.	Apr 22	DU PLESSIS S.P.G.
Apr 08	BRINK M.P.	Apr 23	VAN DER MERWE J.
Apr 08	LE ROUX P.J.	Apr 24	BRITZ M.
Apr 09	CLAASEN I.E.	Apr 24	DE WET A.
Apr 11	NORRIS-ROGERS M.	Apr 25	HUNTER M.
Apr 13	VON DEM BUSSCHE G	Apr 25	NAIDOO R.
Apr 14	DENISON N.P.	Apr 26	VAN DER DUSSEN A.
Apr 15	BRONKHORST A.	Apr 26	VAN ZYL J.
Apr 17	GROBBELAAR W.M.	Apr 27	RABIE J.T.
Apr 19	OLSEN G.J.	Apr 28	PAYN K.
Apr 20	MOSTERT N.	Apr 29	PHILLIPS T.D.

Newsletter compiled by Andrew McEwan