

# Southern African Institute of Forestry

Delivering a professional service to forestry

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## Editorial

### Spring has sprung!

It is spring-time, and we are all experiencing the changing of the seasons and transition from winter to summer. The seasons are still fighting and down south we have first-hand experience of an even fight. Just when you think that summer has arrived, another cold front makes its appearance, and you have to clothe accordingly. Somebody said recently that contrary to popular belief, we actually have five seasons here in the Southern Cape and you are likely to experience at least three of them on one day!

For many people it also marks and opportunity to do a "spring clean" and for others it is a stark realisation that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the year has passed and that with only a quarter of the year left, the year is racing towards its end and that there is very little time left to complete the tasks at hand and achieve the goals and objectives set earlier in the year. For students and matric pupils or -learners it marks the end of the year exams coming up and likewise they experience the pressure which is familiar with this time of year. We also look forward to the Science Symposium scheduled for the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of November. If you have not registered yet, please do so as soon as possible. The deadline for registration is 1 November 2024.

Time doesn't stand still however, and this time of the year also marks a change of the guard at the Institute. I would like to humbly apologise for the very late completion of the Newsletter and robbing readers of a separate edition for the month of September and in particular our new president who meticulously prepared and wrote his article during the month of September. Thank you also to everybody for their contribution to this Newsletter.



## From the President's Desk



### **Let's get together and call ourselves an institute**

'Let's get together and call ourselves an institute' - the lyrics of Paul Simon and Ladysmith Black Mambazo's 'You can call me Al' from their Gracelands album, and one which often comes to mind when the word institute pops up in a conversation. A case in point, just a few weeks ago I heard of a local Institute that consisted of only 2 people, both appointed as co-directors. Our institute, the SAIF, on the other hand, is nothing like that. It is broadly founded across space and time, and populated with dozens of enthusiasts. Wikipedia (not a source we encourage in scientific work) defines an Institute as an organizational body created for a certain purpose. It is precisely that *certain purpose* of the SAIF that many of us should be clear about, not least the incoming President. If any of you, like me, have taken a look at the 'About SAIF' on [www.saif.org.za](http://www.saif.org.za) website lately, you might have seen that there is a mission statement, a number of objectives, a Code of Ethics, and reference to the SAIFs constitution.

You can probably guess where this is headed, but a change of Presidency is also a good opportunity for all of us members to reconsider what our motivation is, what our roles are, and what our main mission and objectives are, and perhaps use this in reevaluating our relevance as an institute in a changing world.

The website states that the Council of the SAIF has the objective of ensuring that the Institute remains current, relevant, progressive, and offers real value to its members. One thing that we can say is that the environment that SAIF operates in and serves has changed considerably over its lifetime of XXX years.

The mobility of people, the connectivity offered

through online conferencing facilities, and the overwhelming amount of easily accessible information has short circuited many of the more conventional roles that an Institute like the SAIF was originally configured for. It is no longer a rather stifled science-based organization, but more a vocational one accepting forestry professionals with a wide variety of backgrounds across Southern Africa. Despite that, member demographics indicate that we will need to once again reconsider the value that the Institute offers, not only in how numbers can be grown, but how the perception of value and affiliation to a useful organisation can be articulated in attracting and elevating those numbers. Remember that the SAIF is the only organization that exclusively represents the forestry professional, i.e. the individual who has chosen forestry as a career path, not the grower or the industry, but the professional forester. While it certainly has had its share of challenges this year, the forestry industry remains vibrant and thanks to organizations like Forestry South Africa (FSA) fighting our political battles, is well positioned to continue to offer and grow career paths for our members into the future. With the advent of new schools, we now educate more foresters than ever, so the basis for providing tomorrow's aspiring young professionals looks healthy. It is precisely this large group of foresters that the SAIF is here to serve, and to whom we look in justifying our continued existence. It is perhaps a little futile to emphasize this in a newsletter going out to existing members, as the message is not aimed at you, but for the greater part of forestry professionals that are not members. Your active participation and feedback is needed in effecting change, and we will be calling on you to do so.

As Arbor month draws to a close, I want to express our thanks to the DFFE for their role in supporting and promoting the awareness of trees and forestry. Many of you might have been involved in a related event, and if you weren't, there is still time to do so. Remember though that in the end it is not so much about physically planting a tree, but rather sowing a seed in the hearts and minds of our youth.

Wishing you all the best.



## Meet the new Vice-President of the SAIF

**Dr. Christopher Komakech**



Christopher gained extensive experience working initially as a forester in the midlands with SAPPI from February 1998 in forestry plantations (Clan, Shafton, Windy Gap etc.). I later moved to research as a research assistant for Cold Tolerant Eucalyptus (CTE) and Pine breeding based in Tweedie Shaw Research Centre.

From February 1999 employed temporarily by NCTas assistant Forester Ingwe estate responsible for managing silvicultural activities.

From November 1999 to July 2014 took up tree-breeding roles at ICFR, MONDI and CSIR carry out the following functions which include:

- Cold-tolerant Eucalyptus breeding (Pulp and Paper production)
- Sub-tropical Eucalyptus and pine breeding for pulp & paper production
- Breeding for solid wood production (CSIR)
- Managed CSIR forestry project on mined dunes in the Richards Bay area
- Managed NRF-funded international projects in Eucalypt breeding in Egypt, Kenya and India (2010 to 2014)
- Director of genetic resources for forestry development trust in Iringa Tanzania (2014 to 2019). Working with stakeholders (East Africa) in advancing tree improvement activities in the region specifically Tanzania. (Ministry of Natural Resources, Universities, Forestry colleges and Tree Grower Associations)
- 2020 to 2023 full-time doctoral Student University of Free State (UFS) Conservation biology/Genetics.
- Consultant currently in East and Southern African countries in tree breeding-related matters.



**26 & 27 November 2024**

The core theme of this year's symposium is sustainability, with the event providing a collaborative platform for scientists, foresters and managers to discuss the current and future topics and challenges that will no doubt shape the sustainability of the forestry sector, while expanding their own forestry networks. The symposium is also an opportunity for developing scientists to present their work to the industry, their peers and mentors.

### **The Venue and Accommodation :**



### **Additional Accommodation**



Closing Date for registration :

**1 November 2024**

Please visit the Symposium website for details :

<https://icfr.co.za/forestry-science-symposium/>



## **Renewal has arrived !**

By Rob Thompson

The organization that I work for, experienced a major and destructive setback exactly a year ago.

Our chip mill complex in Richards Bay was razed to the ground in an unprecedented and most devastating apocalyptic fire event.

Well, this week saw the very first wood chips emerging from the now repaired and refurbished chip line, landing on a clean, carbon free and pristine stock yard floor. Those first few chips will hopefully comprise the start of an immense and impressive commercial chip pile which will effectively restore full functionality of the chipping complex once again.

To all stakeholders in the chip complex, this is certainly a time of renewal, and we embrace and celebrate the restoration of our chipping capability after a long and challenging year.

Renewal offers opportunity for reflection.

Looking back on the events during and post-fire, one common element is very apparent and that is the resilience displayed by the staff who, by implication, are highly invested in the chip mill complex. The mills wellbeing implies their well being and seeing it reduced to ashes had a profound and, in my opinion, an eye-opening effect on their psyche.

One might have expected a wringing of hands and panic mode setting in. Conversely however, we witnessed hitherto unknown capabilities and positive attitudes emerge. It seems that the brutal and unannounced stripping away of the staffs' essential chip-milling purpose and identity, exposed their inner, yet under-utilized and lessor known creativities in the face of having to survive the immense crisis that now faced them.

Without going too deeply into the traumas and details of the tragedy, it was an amazing experience to see hidden talents and "can-do" attitudes emerge and be applied during the containment, restoration, and recovery phases of the disaster. From the initial and frightening fighting of the fire (over a period of literally two weeks); through to damage assessment.

liaison with authorities; environmental assessment and restoration; insurance assessments; carbon containment; debris removal and disposal; site clearing; specialized contractor appointments; project management; stakeholder communication; press releases; replacement equipment sourcing; and a myriad of other tasks and operations, staff demonstrated amazing creativity, adaptation and resilience which was most often outside of their normal job descriptions and quite frankly the organizations' wildest expectations of them.

This experience has taught us all that a crisis strips people of their previous labels, exposes their hidden assets (which everyone has for the finding) and presents opportunity for these now revealed assets, to be applied and add immense value to the collective. The trick is to encourage and allow engagement of opportunity creatively, and outside of the constraints and authorities of normal accepted protocol. This "directed freedom" approach takes courage by both management and the staff members concerned but it definitely works if all levels of the organization are facing the same crisis.

Suddenly problem solving is being addressed by far more people. Multiple viable and potential solutions to complex problems are generated for assessment, these ideas are generated by those most affected by the outcomes, and a sense of ownership develops deeply within all those affected.

Moving swiftly on from the mill fire to a recent industry wattle field day. The popular event attracted a number of people from across the industry and afforded opportunity to rekindle acquaintances and catch up with those last seen in the distant past. Informal conversation topics turned towards the wave of personnel retirements that the industry appears to be facing currently and the ramifications that that this may carry for the industry.

- Is there an adequate "middle" in the industry to counter the inevitable loss of more experienced personnel?
- Will newcomers to the industry receive the appropriate mentorship enabling them to become productive units within the shortest possible time?
- What ought we to be doing to ensure that organizational culture and sustainability is preserved during a time of change and "renewal"?



I think that some of the answers to these questions are to be found from amongst the experiences of the mill fire. If, for instance, we could adopt the courageous approach of seeing beyond the staff member label and rather tap into the creativity and drive inherent in the person behind the label, we should progress in leaps and bounds. I say this would be a courageous step given that we would have to allow an element of freedom to staff to “own” the task on hand and produce a result that may, on occasions, be other than that which was expected.

- Mentorship of student foresters would take the form of providing actual operational task situations and the authority to execute actions rather than merely observing others execute and ticking a box.
- Incoming foresters should be exposed to a culture of looking beyond qualification and rather towards attitude and aptitude. If from onset students and new foresters are encouraged to tap into and share their valuable creativity and logic (rather than mere rote desktop learnings) we can turn the tide of newcomers joining just for the “job” but rather as a “calling” into an understanding and rewarding industry offering mutual benefits for life.
- Organizational strategic and tactical decision processes would solicit the structured inputs of all staff ranks (yes, including labour) rather than merely tapping the intellectual capital of the so-called specialized top echelons. This delving down through the staff layers is bound to reveal nuggets of applicable wisdom that are totally unexpected (and sadly generally ignored currently).
- Existing operational silos would be encouraged to break down the silo walls and engage with wider disciplines and values. Such lateral exposure, collaborative thinking, and the resultant severing of habitual and standardized procedure would stimulate fresh avenues of approach and alternative (possibly more innovative) means to achieve objectives.
- Most important of all, regular honest and heartfelt staff recognition would become the order of the day. This would not necessarily be via a formal certificate, watch or ceremony. An informal pat on the back recognizing effort, or a thank you during a meeting, or a quick e-mail to a deserving recipient, is all that it takes to turn people from

being employees into invested partners in effort.

- A fair, sound, and transparent succession plan would allow imminent retirees opportunity to mentor those following on and fill the middle with confident and productive people able to sustain organizational culture and values and grow productivity levels as staff turnover inevitably rolls over.

What the fire has revealed to me is that people do their best work when given the freedom to contribute significantly towards their own destiny.

Strict rules tend to curb creativity and a culture of non-recognition of effort merely results in drones churning out the “same old” day in and day out.

My challenge to the decision makers within the vast components of our industry is to be courageous enough to embrace a renewed approach.

- We do not necessarily need a crisis to affect this.
- We can learn from those who have experienced crisis and assess which of the lessons learnt can be adopted and applied.

From the ashes of our mill fire I have seen revealed the immense inner capabilities of staff at all levels. Now that the smoke has disappeared and the debris removed, we are simply not able to look at staff in the same manner as before. It seems as if the rebuild of the mill has opened our eyes to a renewed vision. Each person involved has contributed in so many unexpected ways that we look forward to the future with a high level of anticipation. If a crisis has allowed us to achieve and learn so much, we cannot wait to see just what the incoming period of renewal will reveal.

Don't be observers. Take courage with us, allow latitude and ownership, recognize achievement and reap the rewards that will definitely follow.

Renewal has arrived !



**African mahogany, a pillar of tropical forests, has the potential to contribute to mitigating climate change through carbon sequestration**

By Christopher Otim Komakech

**Mahogany**

Mahogany is the collective international trade name for economically high-value tropical and subtropical hardwood timber tree species. Mahogany accounts for a relatively high proportion of the global trade in tropical hardwoods. Mahogany species are noted for their deep red-brown heartwood and are widely used in construction, boat building, interior decoration (particularly panelling and floor tiles), and the manufacture of furniture. Characteristically, they are noted for resistance to drought and pest infestations. Most mahoganies are members of the family Meliaceae, except the Shorea species (Philippine mahogany), a Dipterocarpaceae member. Over 30 species belonging to genera Khaya, Entandrophragma, Toona, Cedrela and Swietenia (*Swietenia macrophylla*) are involved in the international trade associated with the mahogany label.

**Distribution**

The genus *Khaya* consists of approx. eight species, native to tropical and sub-tropical continental Africa and its islands, including Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros Islands, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Fig 1).

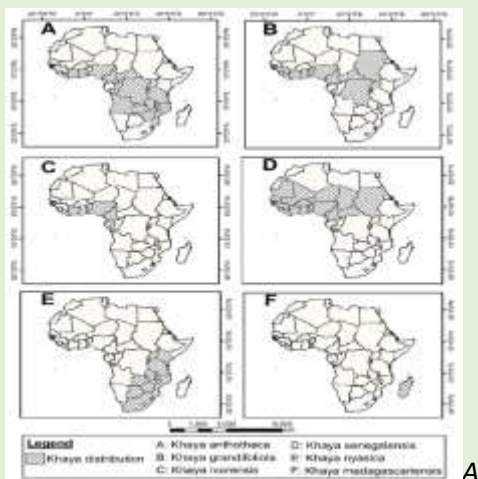


Fig. 1 Khaya distribution in Africa (A) and magnificent *Khaya senegalensis* trees in a pristine natural forest in Africa (B)

**Uses**

In their natural geographical distribution range, many rural communities depend for their livelihoods on the diverse genetic resources of the species as they provide natural products and services. For example, the bark of several species is used in traditional medicine for both humans and livestock and smaller branches are used as animal fodder. Species are also used for making furniture, palm wine, boats, musical instruments, flooring, veneers, plywood, turned items and handicrafts, carpentry, joinery and construction. Species of *Khaya* have been used as an intercrop species (*Khaya senegalensis*), as ornamentals and shade trees in streets and for other crops, such as cocoa plantations in Nigeria (*Khaya ivorensis*). Species are used for soil stabilisation, soil improvement (*Khaya grandifoliola*) and in mixed and pure plantations. The wood properties of *Khaya* species mean they are a suitable substitute for the declining and thus more expensive ‘true/genuine’ South American mahogany, *Swietenia macrophylla*.

**Trade**

*Khaya* species are in commercial trade both within Africa and internationally. The recent data reveals that the main exporters from Africa from 2010 to 2019 were Ghana, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire and The Congo. The main importers are China, the EU and the USA. International trade includes timber in numerous forms including sawn wood, plywood, veneers, machined wood and mouldings.

## Challenges

Mahogany populations across their native range are threatened by deforestation, habitat fragmentation, excessive logging and genetic erosion. Climate change will bring about a shift in the distributional range of these native species. Safeguarding the rich diversity of mahogany requires a conscientious effort in policy formulation and the enforcement of existing laws regarding the management and conservation of the species. Looking at the production system options, the potential exists if used as an integral component in agroforestry systems and reforestation efforts, as well as in the restoration of degraded forest ecosystems to protect the genetic resources of the species. Potential benefits are explored in this article if the available resources are managed sustainably in the diverse tropical African landscapes. Furthermore, funding will be required to develop the genetic resources and institute silvicultural management that unlocks the genus's true potential for commercial exploitation as a plantation crop and mixed farming in agroforestry settings. *K. senegalensis*, the most preferred mahogany species in Africa being used as a reference.

*Khaya senegalensis* is by far the most preferred species in the genus for timber production in the world. In a suitable growing condition, it can reach up to 35 m in height and 1.5 m in diameter on fertile soil, with a 10 to 16 m clean bole. According to Plant Resources of Tropical Africa (PRTA), the average specific gravity of *K. senegalensis* wood is highest at 0.76 at 12% moisture in the genus, hard, reddish and highly resistant to biodegradation. In addition, the wood has mostly straight grain orientation and a high lustre. It is one of the most economically important forest tree species that is very popular for timber and is used for high-class furniture making, joinery, building, construction purposes, and high traditional medicinal values. It is used as an ornamental tree for gardens and avenues in many countries. Furthermore, this species is a fast-growing tree, grows well under varied soil and climates and can be grown together with other exotic tree species and food crops in mixed farming systems.

With the growth of the human population and trade experienced in Africa, these resources are severely threatened by land conversion for food production and illegal logging operations. In Ghana alone, 83,000

m<sup>3</sup> export volume of timbers was lost between 1950 and 2005.

Likewise, in other African countries, these valuable tree species are becoming scarce in the wake of dwindling forest cover, with illegal logging as a major contributing factor. The declining availability of mahogany wood in the timber market is due to over-exploitation for cabinetwork, furniture, sliced veneer, shipbuilding, open boats, light carpentry work, interior and exterior panelling and joinery, and high export demands in the International Timber Trade. In another development, *K. ivorensis*, a key species of the African Mahoganies, has been included in the IUCN Red list as a vulnerable species because of habitat loss, degradation and extensive selective felling.

Mahogany plantations are not immune to factors that affect tree's health in the natural ecosystem. For example, trees at the sapling stage have had setbacks such as pest attacks by *Hypsipyla robusta* causing excessive branching and damage at the apex of the main stem on mahogany plants globally (Fig. 2)



Fig. 2 Destruction of the apical shoot of mahogany seedlings by *H. robusta*

Mahogany have been intensified across the tropics. Projects supported by International Organizations such as the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) aimed at increasing forest cover with both exotic and indigenous species. It is now generally accepted that conservation and sustainable utilization of Mahogany can be realized when successful plantations are established. Smallholder tree grower plantations for mahogany are of great interest to many organizations including the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana, collaborating foreign institutions such as Michigan Technological University, USA and funding agencies such as the International Tropical Timber Organization Managing Mahogany Plantations



in the Tropics Organization. The main aim of the project is to develop sustainable production of mahogany species in plantations in tropical Africa. Various silvicultural techniques and management of African mahogany plantations have been researched over recent years and the findings have been presented for adoption by tree growers in general especially smallholder and community farmers.

African Mahogany is a wood that continues to grow in popularity — so much so that this new millennium has seen its various species be replanted into tropical regions in the world (Central America and Australia), as well as becoming a contemporary plantation roster addition. Depending on its origin, growth conditions and specific strain (“African Mahogany”), its colour can range from a pale pink or muted orange to a somewhat darker reddish- or golden-brown Fig. 3. It can also have darker striping, and, aesthetically, it can be further enhanced through figuring (ribbon; wavy diagonal; mottled) and varying levels of chatoyance.



*K. senegalensis* log from thinning of a 10-year-old, farm forestry stands in coastal lowlands north of Townsville, Queensland Australia. Note the high proportion of dark-coloured wood on the log end (Picture by K. Harding)



Honey production from Mahogany Forests

### ***Adaptation to Climate Change***

Mahogany, a valuable wood known for its strength and resistance to changes in humidity and temperature, is facing the threat of extinction due to climate change and deforestation. As climate patterns shift and extreme weather events become more frequent, the survival of African mahogany forests is at stake. To ensure the continued existence of this remarkable tree species, sustainable mahogany farming practices are essential. By adopting sustainable approaches, African mahogany can be helped to adapt to the challenges posed by climate change while also preserving its natural habitat.

### ***Importance of Mahogany in Ecosystems***

Mahogany is not just a valuable wood for commercial use, but it also plays a crucial role in sustaining ecosystems. The impact of climate change on mahogany trees and the implementation of mahogany conservation strategies are of utmost importance to ensure the preservation of this iconic species. One of the significant contributions of mahogany to ecosystems is its role in reforestation efforts. Mahogany trees possess high seed viability and germination rates, making them ideal for restoration projects. By planting mahogany in deforested areas, we can enhance the biodiversity and ecological stability of those ecosystems.

### ***Carbon Sequestration Potential***

Research conducted so far showed that a mature mahogany tree can sequester up to 1,000 Kgs of carbon annually. This impressive carbon absorption rate highlights the critical role of mahogany in combating climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Mahogany conservation strategies are essential for protecting not only the trees themselves but also the ecosystem services they provide. By safeguarding mahogany populations, we can ensure the continued reforestation efforts, carbon sequestration, and climate change mitigation that depend on the resilience of these magnificent trees.

*Please Note that Part 2 of this interesting article will be placed in the next edition of the SAIF Newsletter.*



## Constitutional Court supports Forestry Industry's long-held legal positions on water legislation

The Constitutional Court Judgement has found that it is not in the interests of justice to grant the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) leave to appeal the Supreme Court of Appeal's ruling, which found in favour of Forestry South Africa (FSA).



Michael Peter , CEO from Forestry South Africa

The ruling finally puts an end to a five-year legal dispute between the DWS and FSA, over:

1. The Existing Lawful Water Use (ELWU) status of plantations established prior to the National Water Act (NWA) being enacted on 01 October 1998.
2. The rights of owners to freely exchange tree genera (Genus Exchange) in these plantations, without any requirement to reduce the planted area.
3. The DWS so-called "use it or lose it" policy.

While the court case was initiated five years ago, this was preceded by 15 years of active engagement by FSA with the DWS, regarding their interpretation of the laws and their regulations on genus exchange. Only when no agreement could be reached did FSA lodge an application to the Western Cape High Court, seeking declaratory orders from the Court on these matters.

The Constitutional Court Judgement upholds the rulings of the Supreme Court of Appeal that found in favour of FSA on both ELWU, Genus Exchange and the so-called "use it or lose it" policy of the DWS.

"Ultimately, this judgement means that no one can

instruct a plantation manager to remove or even reduce their plantation area from what it was in 1998 when the NWA came into effect, as the lawfulness of these plantations has been recognised. It also enables anyone who wishes to replant a forestry area from one genus (type) of commercial trees to another e.g. from pine to gum, is free to do so without having to reduce the area under trees and without having to seek approval from the DWS," comments Michael Peter, FSA Executive Director.

"In cases where a water use licence states the genus as a condition of the licence, that licence can and should be amended as it is an irregular condition. The finality of the Concourt judgment removes over 20 years of uncertainty that had inhibited investment and restricted economic growth, as well as the employment opportunities that come with this. It also prevents the DWS or its implementing agents from reducing the water use allocation to timber growers from what it was in 1998, irrespective of what they deem to be the current water use at the time of doing any validation and verification exercises."

"As a Sector, we are excited to move forward and work productively with the DWS to achieve the Public Private Growth Initiative objectives, while maintaining our responsible approach to sustainable water stewardship," says Peter.

Peter concludes that FSA is pleased that the lengthy court proceedings and outcome have not negatively impacted on the growing relationship with the new senior leadership of the DWS but have instead provided definitive clarity and finality on these important matters. "As a matter of fact, stronger than ever relationships have been fostered between FSA and DWS, specifically with the Director-General Dr Sean Philips and his senior staff within the department. We look forward to building further on this."

*Read more about this and other forest news in the latest edition of Forestry in Focus published by FSA.*



## ***Pinus radiata* Cutting Field Day**

By Georg von dem Bussche

A field day to evaluate the *Pinus radiata* cutting programme was presented cooperatively by Geo Parkes, Ezigro and MTO – Research on 23 July 2024. Christel Malek of MTO introduced the subject by presenting research results proving the impressive growth improvements of *Pinus radiata*, if improved seed is used, compared with commercial, or even 1<sup>st</sup> generation seed. The cutting programme makes it possible that the restricted availability of further improved genetic material can be made available on a large scale.

The management of the hedges, the first step of the cutting programme, was demonstrated and the improvement of the survival of the hedges was reported, which was important to make the programme economically feasible. Ezigro has over the last years further improved the survival rate of the cuttings so that the process of freshly cut and set cuttings via the greenhouse unto the final product at the loading area has achieved a survival rate of 88%. Further improvements, including the trial introduction to raise the cuttings in Elle-pots, is programmed by the nursery management.



Hedges of improved seed

The visitors proceeded then to the Hoogekraal plantation of Geo Parkes of Knysna, where Mr Jim Parkes joined the group. We visited first newly established *Pinus radiata* compartments, planted with *P rad* seedlings, where the natural fynbos vegetation is only controlled if the plantings are overgrown. Thereafter we went to see two compartments, established with *P. radiata* cuttings.



*Pinus radiata* cuttings ready for planting

The first compartment, H5, was planted 10 years ago. The original espacement was 2,7 x 2,7 m. The compartment was recently thinned to 700 stems per ha. The favourable and even growth was observed. The compartment will be surveyed soon and the growth data will be made available to the participants of the field day later.

The next compartment visited, H3b, was the first commercial compartment planted with *P. rad* cuttings at Hoogekraal on recommendation by the late John Mather 14 years ago. The planting espacement was 2,7 X 2,7m. The compartment was also recently thinned (refer to the photo below). After the scheduled survey the growth data will also be made available.



Christel Malek (on the right) from MTO - Research at H3b

Closing the field day Mir Jim Parkes gave credit to everyone involved so far with the *Pinus radiata* cutting programme, particularly to the late John Mather.





## New Zealand Institute of Forestry (NZIF)

I have spent some time reflecting on the New Zealand Institute of Forestry Conference which over 170 of us from around NZ attended a couple of weeks ago in Nelson.

One thing that absolutely caught my eye was the representation of young foresters among the crowd - they stood out, they brought energy, they brought passion and they brought fresh perspective. The fact that so many of us were able to attend shows the support we have from our companies and the wider industry to both connect and to grow ourselves professionally. We need people to get into our industry and we need them to stay.

Future Foresters were able to award our FRESTRA Young Forester of the Year award for the very first time to a deserving young forester - Sarah de Gouw. It is incredibly important to recognise and lift up the future leaders of this industry. There are some incredible minds coming through and it's exciting and refreshing to see that the passion is alive even in this time of uncertainty. It is vital that we see the value of a young forester in enabling a sustainable industry which will thrive into the future well after we are gone.

I believe there is a future in this industry and although we are experiencing some challenging times and things may never look the same again, this does not necessarily need to be a negative thing. This is our opportunity to innovate, collaborate and pave our way forward. We want sustainable, we want innovation and we want to do better.



Well said Kendra. 10-15 years ago, some of us older NZIF members were wondering about what the future held for NZIF with low numbers of our younger foresters as members. I am not sure who initiated the young foresters movement and it would probably be unfair to single out anyone in particular.



However, this has to be one of the most rewarding initiatives supported by NZIF over recent years and its success with some of you earlier Future Foresters now emerging into leadership roles in our wonderful industry is obvious.



So, well done to everyone involved, you must keep rolling with this.



**FINAL CALL for Registration: 14th fire management symposium 6-8 November 2024**

This will be the final reminder to register in time for the 14th Fire Management Symposium. **On 23 October 2024** registration for this event will close as we have to confirm numbers for catering and the field day.

Follow the link below or scan the QR code attached to register. After completing the online registration and filling in all the invoice details, an invoice will be generated and sent to you.

<https://forms.office.com/r/2DjiWCM6WR>



**FE 2026**  
**SAVE THE DATE**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Fire in the Earth System conference**  
**Dates: 4-6<sup>th</sup> November 2026**  
**Kruger Park, South-Africa**  
**Pre-and Post conference excursions**  
**(2-4/6-12<sup>th</sup> November 2026)**

**FIRE DYNAMICS & FIRE RISK MANAGEMENT**

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**FORESTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

## News from FABI

**Pest Alert!**  
**New invasive *Sirex* woodwasp detected in Brazil**

**Background**  
A new alien invasive species of *Sirex* woodwasp, *Sirex obscurus*, has been reported in Brazil. The species has been detected inflicting various pine species and hybrids including *P. caribaea* var. *fontinalis*; *P. caribaea* var. *caribaea*; *P. caribaea* var. *bachmannii*; *P. strobus*; *P. resinosa*; *P. guianensis*; *P. caribaea* var. *fontinalis*; *P. caribaea* var. *caribaea*; *P. caribaea* var. *bachmannii*; *P. strobus*; *P. resinosa*; *P. guianensis* in Brazil, and *P. obscurus* in the USA. The species has not yet been detected in South Africa.

**Distribution and modes of spread**  
Thus far the species has only been detected outside of its native range (southern USA and Mexico) in Brazil. Possible pathways for the introduction of *S. obscurus* into South Africa would be via untreated wood or wood packing material, i.e., importations that have not complied with either the international standard for Phytosanitary measures, IS - Regulation of wood packaging material in international trade, or via a neighboring country, if first introduced there.

**Biology**  
Like *S. noctilio*, *S. obscurus* is associated with a symbiotic fungus that it introduces into the tree during reproduction that assists with decomposing the surrounding wood making it suitable for larval feeding. The larvae will then excavate the wood, tunnelling and feeding under the bark until it is ready to pupate. Once the larvae emerge from the wood, it leaves behind a perfectly circular emergence hole. Further research in Brazil suggests the woodwasp can lay up to three generations per year.

**Research**  
Research is currently ongoing in Brazil to better understand the biology of this species as not much is currently known. Additionally, research is ongoing into possible management strategies as the parasitic nematode used as a biological control against *S. noctilio* is unlikely to be viable against *S. obscurus*, due to the wasp vectoring a different species of symbiotic fungus which the nematode utilizes as a food source.



(A) *Sirex obscurus* female (Photo by J. Orr, USDA); (B) *Sirex noctilio* female; (C) *Sirex obscurus* male; (D) *Sirex noctilio* male (Photo by R. Squires, DNR, Massachusetts)

**Morphology**  
*Sirex noctilio* has longer antennae than *S. obscurus* and the females have orange-coloured legs compared to *S. obscurus* females. The final abdominal segment of the *S. noctilio* male is dark in colour whereas the entire abdomen of *S. obscurus* is orange in colour. The leg colour of the male also differs. Overall *S. obscurus* is smaller than *S. noctilio* with longer legs and a more rounded body.

If a suspected introduction into South Africa has occurred, please contact [chirwa@up.ac.za](mailto:chirwa@up.ac.za). Please distribute this post about to spread awareness.

t p c p 

## PSHB Update

The Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer is an ambrosia beetle native to Southeast Asia. The beetle has a symbiotic relationship with the fungus *Fusarium euwallaceae*, which causes branch die-back and can kill susceptible trees. In 2017 the presence of this pest was confirmed in South Africa by the FABI team, and it has since been found in all provinces except Limpopo. This makes the PSHB invasion in South Africa the largest geographical outbreak of this beetle in the world. It is affecting trees in all sectors: the agricultural and commercial forestry sector, urban trees (public spaces, streets, gardens), as well as native trees in natural forests.

At present researchers at FABI, in collaboration with colleagues from several other Universities, are coordinating monitoring efforts and leading research on the PSHB and its fungus in South Africa. The purpose of this webpage is to provide:

- Background information on the PSHB and its management to the general public and all stake holders,
- Updated information on its distribution and its host trees in South Africa and feedback on ongoing research and monitoring efforts by the PSHB Research Network.

## Trees in a Sub-Saharan Multi-functional Landscape

P. W. Chirwa, S. Syampungani, T. M. Mwamba

Research, Management, and Policy

Paxie W. Chirwa  
Stephen Syampungani  
Theodore M. Mwamba *Editors*

Tr <http://www.springer.com/9783031698125>

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Research, Management, and Policy



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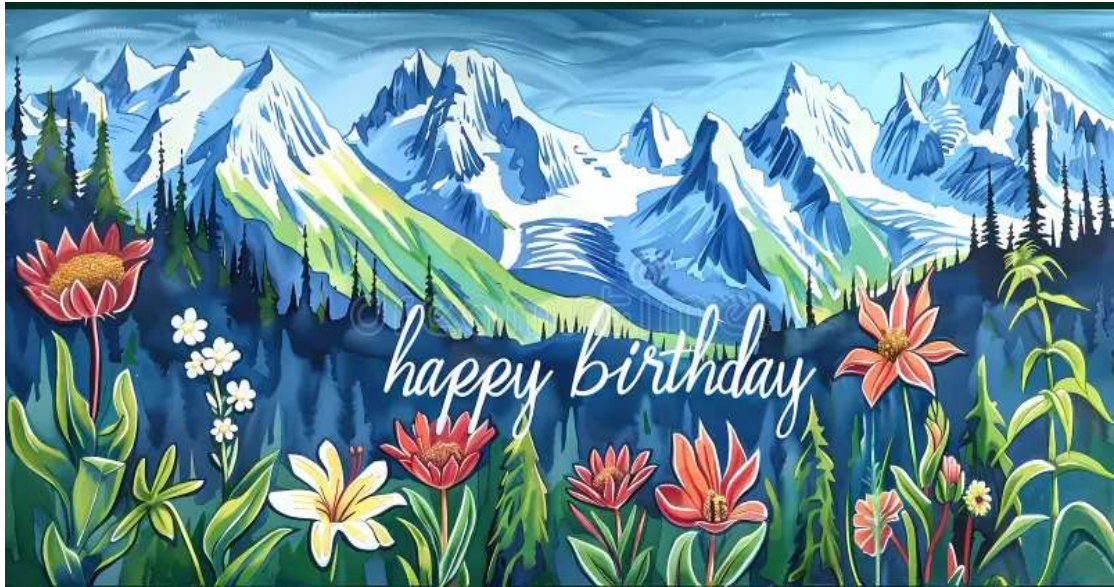
The following members celebrated their birthdays in  
September



**SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS**

01 Sep	TIAAN POOL	16 Sep	WYNAND DE SWARDT
05 Sep	BRETT DUSTAN	17 Sep	PHILLIP CROFT
07 Sep	DAVID JAMES	18-Sep	MARTIN HILL
11 Sep	PAUL CLEGG	19-Sep	GREG FULLER
12 Sep	SAMANTHA BUSH	20-Sep	EUGENE KRAAMWINKEL
13 Sep	PIETER VAN NIEKERK	26-Sep	TIENIE VAN VUUREN
13 Sep	OLIVER BOSCH		

## October Birthdays



### OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

02 Oct	SHAUN BIGGS	24 Oct	HANNES VAN ZYL
03 Oct	AXEL JOOSTE	26 Oct	ALME JONKER
08 Oct	JANNIE CONRADIE	26 Oct	DUNCAN BALLANTYNE
08 Oct	WINSTON KAMFER	28 Oct	HORST KASSIER
09 Oct	PETER MULLER	28 Oct	BRAAM DU PREEZ
10 Oct	PAUL MARWICK	29 Oct	SIDHIKA NAIDOO
10 Oct	LUNGA TSHANGISA	30 Oct	MARIUS DU PLESSIS
14 Oct	STEVE VERRYIN	31 Oct	RONEWA NETHONONDA
15 Oct	PILASANDE BHENTSHU		

## November Birthdays

The following members will be celebrating their birthdays in  
November



### NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

04 Nov	BILL BAINBRIDGE	15 Nov	RIAAN WEBB
04 Nov	RADIE LOUBSER	16 Nov	ABEDNIGO COLVELLE
05 Nov	SANDISIWE JALI	21 Nov	STEVEN DOVEY
05 Nov	MANDLAKAZI MELANE	28 Nov	PAXIE CHIRWA
08 Nov	DEON VON BENEKE	29 Nov	JAYCE LANE
10 Nov	SEAN SNEYD	30 Nov	BERRIE LINDE
15 Nov	IAN HORRELL		

*Happy Birthday and congratulations to all our members who celebrate(d) their birthdays in September and October 2024 as well as those members who will be celebrating their birthdays in November 2024*

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# The Southern African Institute of Forestry

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