

# Southern African Society of Aquatic Scientists – serving the region for 50 years

*It has been 50 years since a small group of scientists passionate about South Africa's aquatic environment decided to come together to form the Southern African Society of Aquatic Scientists (SASAqS). Deidré West traces the history of this remarkable society of water experts.*



Dr Helen Dallas and Prof Brian Allanson at the SASAqS conference in Arniston in 2013.



Prof Jenny Day with daughter, Belinda and granddaughter, Katherine, with Prof Day's gold medal awarded at the 2013 conference.

It was 5 July 1963 and members of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science (S<sup>2</sup>A<sup>3</sup>) were gathered in Pietermaritzburg for the association's symposium. On the agenda was a discussion on the biology of southern African rivers.

The small group of biologists gathered there made use of this opportunity to hold a meeting the night before, which was chaired by Prof Brian Allanson. They founded the Limnological Society of Southern Africa (LSSA) at a time when few were even aware there was such a word as 'limnology'. The original society had 74 ordinary members, seven student members and seven corporate members. The first committee consisted of Dr AD Harrison (president),

Prof BR Allanson (vice-president), RG Noble (secretary/editor), Dr SC Seagrief (treasurer) and RS Crass (committee member).

By 1964 the Society had 121 members and had applied for membership of SIL (*Societas Internationalis Limnologiae*). This too was the year in which their first annual general meeting was held in Kimberley, and it was agreed to produce a bibliography of limnological topics for Africa south of the Sahara. Originally Mark Chutter was the compiler but, as work piled up, he was joined by two more editor/compiler – Profs Allanson and Marjorie Scott. The 1964 (Kimberley) and 1965 (East London) conferences were joint meetings with S<sup>2</sup>A<sup>3</sup>, but in 1966 LSSA felt strong enough to organise a conference of

its own, which was held in Pietermaritzburg, the founding location.

In 1967 Pretoria was the venue for a joint meeting, again with S<sup>2</sup>A<sup>3</sup>, but this time including a special limnological symposium – *Effects of Land Usage on the Aquatic Environment*. The eminent British limnologist Dr EB Worthington chaired the 1968 meeting in Grahamstown, while 1969's meeting was one to remember as members of the Society travelled up to the new man-made reservoir on the Zambezi – Lake Kariba.

This trip was in accord with the title of the association 'Southern Africa' and was to become a habit! At the 1970 AGM in Stellenbosch it was decided to de-affiliate from S<sup>2</sup>A<sup>3</sup> and Dr Harrison handed the presidency over to Prof Allanson. After the 1971

**This small group [of biologists] founded the LSSA at a time when few were even aware there was such a word as 'limnology'.**

Courtesy of SASAqS

AGM, once again in Pietermaritzburg, the Society's members visited Lake Malawi in 1972.

Dr Amy Jacot Guillarmond writes in an 1988 article in the *Journal of the Limnological Society of Southern Africa* how members "sampled the luscious local strawberries on Mount Zomba, the range of delicious freshwater fish, enjoyed the vistas of the huge and scenic lake, looked quizzically at David Eccles' submarine and sampled the cold canned beer available in every mud-walled thatched-roofed canteen throughout the country". Of course there were academic sessions too!

During the years that followed, AGMs were held in places such as Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Durban, amongst others, before venturing in to Namibia for their

1986 meeting in Windhoek. It was in 1974 that Prof Bryan Davies met up with South African limnologists at the LSSA conference held in Bloemfontein, before moving from the University Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo, Mozambique to Rhodes University.

A significant event for limnology in Africa took place when the SIL Workshop on African limnology was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1979. Sadly, the organisers were under immense pressure from outside interests to prevent South African limnologists from participating, due to South Africa's political isolation.

Fortunately, the country had strong ties with the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), which led to the organisers allowing a limited number (10-12) of South

African passport holders to participate in the conference. South African limnologists at that time were a determined bunch, however, and in the end about 45 members arrived at the conference, having travelled using a variety of foreign passports. South African limnologists and their counterparts worldwide formed strong ties of professional collaboration.

A testament to the scientific credibility that local aquatic science had achieved under the Cooperative Scientific Programmes is that the Southern Hemisphere Limnology Conference and workshop were held in Wilderness in 1984. Here limnologists from across the Southern Hemisphere were brought together for two weeks to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest. Prof Davies and Danny Walmsley edited its proceedings in a special issue of *Developments in Hydrobiology*.

During those first 25 years, southern African limnologists built up a reputation for conducting world-class scientific research, despite the great difficulties of access, equipment and methodology experienced at the time.

## THE SILVER JUBILEE

The year 1988 marked the silver jubilee of the Limnological Society of Southern Africa. In recognition of the society's 25 years of existence it was decided that there would be a commemorative issue of the *Journal of the Limnological Society of Southern Africa*. The executive committee and editor at the time commissioned a number of southern African limnologists to write a series of articles on their personal experiences in the field over the past few years.

A short list of about 20 potential candidates was compiled, most of whom were founder members. Half the candidates agreed to participate, including seven founder members, two life members and a LSSA gold medal recipient.



**Above:** Attendees of the LSSA meeting held in Grahamstown, in 1980.

**Right:** Attendees of the Southern Hemisphere Limnology Conference and workshop, which were held in Wilderness, in 1984.



Courtesy of SASA/SAPS

## THE JOURNAL

The society's journal itself has a very interesting history. At the founding of the society in 1963 a newsletter was agreed upon, which was to be compiled by the secretary who, in his capacity as editor, slipped in *Daphnia gibba* as the emblem of the society on Volume 1, No. 1 (January 1964). At the end of 1974 the Society bade their newsletter farewell, as it became the *Journal of the Limnological Society of Southern Africa* in 1975. This followed the recognition that there was a need for a dedicated regional journal which would reflect the growth of limnology in southern Africa and provide a forum to discuss issues relevant to the region.

## THE NEXT 25 YEARS

It was during the late 1980s or early 1990s that the LSSA changed its name to the Southern African Society of Aquatic Scientists (SASAqS). This change came about because the term 'limnology' was seen to be too narrow to describe properly the array of water-related work being carried out by Society members. It was also to create a setting to attract marine and estuarine researchers to become involved.

The 1990s seem to have been a very constructive time for water matters in South Africa. In 1994, with the dawn of democracy in South Africa, Prof Kader Asmal became the first Minister of Water Affairs and faced urgent equity issues over the private ownership of water. He took a strong lead in requiring the drafting of new national water legislature and put in place a strongly stakeholder-driven water law review process including innovative thinking and the results of recent research.

Prof Asmal was open to involvement wider than just the traditionally strong engineering approach to water resource management, resulting in teams highly representative of professions and sectors

being responsible for drafting the White Paper and the Act. A SASAqS member was to serve on the Ministerial Advisory Panel, so the Society organised provincial meetings to compile the inputs of members and nominated Dr Tally Palmer to represent it on the panel.

This gave ecological research a great boost, there was a great deal of technical input from SASAqS members throughout the country and Dr Palmer became an important contributor to the legislation. It was during this process, and with the help of recent research on South African methods on environmental flows by Drs Jackie King and Jay O'Keeffe, amongst others, that Dr Palmer formulated the concept of the Ecological Reserve. This concept emerged as a strong driver of water resource management policy, not only in South Africa, but also internationally.

Finally, in 1997 the White Paper on a National Water Policy for South Africa was accepted by Cabinet, and

in the same year the Water Services Act (Act No. 108 of 1997) was promulgated. 1998 saw the promulgation of the new National Water Act (Act No. 36 of 1998) (NWA).

While all this was happening, SASAqS held its annual conference in association with the International Symposium on Exploring the Great Lakes of the World (GLOW) at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, in 1996.

The 35<sup>th</sup> annual conference in 1999 was also held outside the borders of South Africa – this time in Swakopmund, Namibia. Not only was this a very successful conference which attracted water scientists and managers from all over southern Africa, but it also gave delegates the opportunity to see some of the most water scarce areas on the subcontinent.

The conference ended on a high note with Dr Palmer appropriately receiving the Society's silver medal for her contribution to the ecological principles in the NWA. Prof Charles



Courtesy of SASAqS



Members attending the 1986 conference in Windhoek (above) and the 1990 conference in Bloemfontein (left).



The logo of the Limnological Society of Southern Africa in 1978 and the Southern African Society of Aquatic Scientists.

Breen received a gold medal for a lifetime of excellent contribution to training and research in the field of aquatic sciences. Furthermore, at a ceremony in Pretoria during the

previous week, Prof Asmal was also presented with the Society's gold medal – in his case for his visionary direction for the development of the NWA.

During the next few years managers and scientists gathered in places such as Eco Island (Limpopo), Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Midrand and Grahamstown, holding joint conferences with organisations such as the Southern African Institute of Ecologists and Environmental Scientists, Zoological Society of South Africa, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, Water Research

Commission and the Entomological Society of Southern Africa. As another 'southern African' venue, Maputo was chosen for the 2006 conference, themed *From Source to Sea*.

Two international meetings took place in South Africa in 2009 and 2010. The first was the conference on International Environmental Water Allocations in Port Elizabeth, while the second was SIL 2010, the first full-scale International Limnological Conference to be held in Africa. The latter took place in Cape Town with Prof Rob Hart, Dr Bill Harding and Dr Peter Ashton delivering plenary papers.

All along, the quality and quantity of research in the aquatic sciences of southern Africa grew from strength to strength and delegates devotedly continued meeting year after year, from Magaliesburg (2009) to Cape St. Francis (2012), to share their research with one another and to discuss pressing matters.

The society's Golden Jubilee was celebrated at Arniston (Waenhuis-krans) in 2013, when Prof Jenny Day received a well-deserved gold medal. Other gold medal winners throughout the years include: Prof Brian Allanson, Dr Mark Chutter, Dr Marjorie Scott, Dr Graham Noble, Dr Arthur Harrison, Prof Bryan Davies, Prof Jay O'Keeffe, Dr Steve Mitchell and Prof Digby Cyrus.

The society is committed to capacity building. There has been an increase in student attendance at recent conferences due to the generous sponsorship of registration fees by the WRC. In 2013, students from seven different universities were supported and for the first time an international student travel award was initiated.

The 2014 SASAQs conference (see website for details <http://www.riv.co.za/sasaqs>) will be held at Black Mountain Leisure and Conference Hotel, near Thaba Nchu in the central Free State, from 22 to 26 June. Another 'southern African' conference in the near future seems in order... □

### A JOURNAL FOR AFRICAN AQUATIC RESEARCH

The *African Journal of Aquatic Science* had its origins in 1975 when the Southern African Society of Aquatic Scientists decided to turn their six-monthly newsletter into a formal journal.

From 1975 to 1988 the *Journal of the Limnological Society of Southern Africa* was published twice a year, bearing an image of the water flea *Daphnia gibba* on its plain blue cover. Then, in 1989 it got a triple face-lift in the form of a new cover design, incorporating wave patterns and a seaweed as well as the traditional *Daphnia*, a new format [quarto] and a new name, becoming the *Southern African Journal of Aquatic Sciences* [SAJAQs]. There followed 10 years of stability, with the journal still serving as the mouthpiece of the Aquatic Scientists Society.

In 1998 Mike Coke became the journal's editor, taking over from Prof Brian Allanson. The following year, the journal was incorporated into the National Inquiry Services Center (NISC). The move required the journal to establish an Editorial Board, to adopt yet another new name: *African Journal of Aquatic Science*, with another new cover design incorporating a collage of aquatic organism images – including of course *Daphnia gibba*.

From 2002 manuscript flow began to increase significantly, going from 30 in 2001 to an amazing 157 in 2013. Be that as it may, because the journal had by then narrowed its scope to exclusively 'African' subject matter, up to 60% of incoming manuscripts were rejected, either on grounds of unsuitability or of inadequate content.

At first, all the manuscript submission, reviewing and handover processes were handled by the editor

by e-mail, a task that became increasingly difficult as the flow of manuscripts increased. Eventually, the Editorial Board members got roped in as subject or associate editors and then, as pressures continued to increase, more associate editors were appointed until, by 2013, the journal had 13 of them.

For another seven years two journal issues were produced every year, whilst the number of pages published rose from 150 to over 300 per year. The journal went online-only in 2007, at the same time as enlarging to three issues per year. Meanwhile, it was being assessed for an Impact Factor rating, which eventually arrived in 2010, with a pleasing rating of 0.479.

By this time NISC was publishing in collaboration with Taylor & Francis (T&F), which increased the journal's international visibility considerably. In 2011 manuscripts began being handled via T&F's web-based system, easing both the submission and the handling processes.

But now the journal began to suffer from growing pains - more manuscripts were getting accepted than could be published per issue, or within the annual page allowance. "The only way to catch up with ourselves was to publish a jointly-funded Supplement, which was done in 2013," reports Coke. "At the same time the journal's growth took another step forward, this time to four issues per year plus an increased annual page allowance."

With 240% growth over the past ten years, going from 195 pages in two issues in 2003 to 469 pages in four issues in 2013, the *African Journal of Aquatic Science* certainly looks set to become the leader in its field.



# SOUTHERN AFRICAN SOCIETY OF AQUATIC SCIENTISTS

## IMPORTANT DEADLINES

- Closing date for submission of abstracts: 3 March 2014
- Closing date for early bird registration: 30 April 2014
- Closing date for regular registration: 13 June 2014

# SASAQs 2014 CONFERENCE | 22-26 JUNE 2014

On behalf of the Southern African Society of Aquatic Scientists, Department of Zoology & Entomology, UFS, and FREE STATE DETEA: Biodiversity Research Division, we invite you to attend the 2014 SASAQs conference to be held at Black Mountain Leisure and Conference Hotel near Thaba Nchu in the central Free State

### ACCOMMODATION

AVAILABLE AT: BLACK MOUNTAIN LEISURE AND CONFERENCE HOTEL
Standard Accommodation Bed & Breakfast: Single R605.00/day
Standard Accommodation Bed & Breakfast: Sharing R390.00/day
<b>PLEASE MAKE BOOKINGS DIRECTLY AT THE HOTEL</b>
Remember to state that it is for the SASAQs 2014 conference.
TEL: 051 871 4200
FAX: 086 750 3199
www.blackmountainhotel.co.za
EMAIL: conference@blackmountainhotel.co.za

### TRADE EXHIBITORS

Interested companies should contact the conference secretariat for more information and to book exhibition space.

### SESSIONS

#### Categories will include:

- Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems
- Wetland, Estuarine & Marine Ecology and Management
- Water Availability, Quality and Management
- Ecotoxicology
- Aquatic alien invasions
- Impact of Climate change
- Sustainable utilization of aquatic resources
- Inland fisheries and Aquaculture
- Aquatic Parasitology

PLEASE TAKE NOTE THAT ORAL PRESENTATIONS WILL BE 15 minutes PLUS 5 minutes for questions. DDD's, will include a three minute oral presentation, which will be incorporated into the program.

### ABSTRACT SUBMISSIONS

- The deadline for submission is 3 March 2014 and you will be notified by 30 March 2014 if your abstract/paper has been accepted. Please submit abstracts electronically on [www.easysubtract.com](http://www.easysubtract.com)

### SPECIFICATIONS FOR PRESENTATIONS & DDD'S

- Presentation to be generated using PowerPoint software package.
- Windows 8 operating system, Office 2010 will be used.
- The DDD presentation can be done using Office PowerPoint 2010, 2010 and 2007.
- The presentation needs to be done in LANDSCAPE. The screens being used to display the DDD's, are 21 inch touch screens. The screens will be setup in a LANDSCAPE format.
- A maximum of 5 PowerPoint slides will be allowed.
- No PDF presentations will be allowed.
- The DDD's will be displayed on screens in such a way that delegates of the congress can sit down in front of a screen and browse through the DDD presentations at own leisure.

### PLENARY/KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- **Dr Danie Vermeulen, Director of the Institute for Groundwater Studies UFS:** His presentation will deal with the very controversial shale gas development and the sensitive Karoo environment where it is taking place – one of the main questions is whether these two subjects are compatible.
- **Dr John Mendelsohn, Director of RAISON (Research and Information Services of Namibia):** Will present an overview of drainage systems in the central Kalahari Basin, especially the area south of Angola and the Great Equatorial Divide. West to east, these are the Cuvetia, Cunene, Cubango/Okavango, Cuito, Kwando and Zambezi. Some rivers flow west or east to the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, while others end in salt pans or freshwater deltas within the Kalahari Basin. Water in these areas generally have very low mineral concentrations, thus biological productivity is low. Ephemeral flow in certain areas has led to the development of lakes and floodplains that are highly productive.

### ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

- Session I: *Alien invasions in South African Aquatic Systems.*
- Chair: Prof Jo van As
- Session II: *Inland Fishery Bio-assessment, the Way Forward.*
- Chair: Dr Gordon O'Brien

### 2014 YELLOWFISH WORKING GROUP (YWG) CONFERENCE

The YWG conference will be held prior to SASAQs 2014, on Sunday, 22 June 2014, 08:00 – 17:00, also at BMH. For more information on registration, costs involved and to present an oral presentation (15 min + 5min discussion) at the YWG Conference, contact Leon Barkhuizen at [barkh@theea.fs.gov.za](mailto:barkh@theea.fs.gov.za) or Peter Arderne at [mwardern@mweb.co.za](mailto:mwardern@mweb.co.za)

### PLEASE NOTE THAT NO CORRESPONDENCE OR REGISTRATION FOR THE YWG CONFERENCE SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO SAVETCON OR THE ORGANIZERS OF SASAQs 2014!

### REGISTRATION

All delegates are required to register online at [www.savetcon.co.za](http://www.savetcon.co.za). (Registration for the YWG Conference should be done with Leon Barkhuizen or Peter Arderne.)

#### Registration includes:

- Abstract book
- Conference bag;
- Tea's/Coffee's;
- Lunches (3); Dimmers (3) and Gala event

Registration category	Payment received before 30 April 2014	Payment received after 30 April 2014
SASAQs member	R3 500.00	R3 900.00
SASAQs non-member	R3 800.00	R4 200.00
SASAQs student member	R2 500.00	R2 900.00
SASAQs student non-member	R2 800.00	R3 200.00
Day registration SASAQs member	R1 300.00	-
Day registration SASAQs non-member	R1 500.00	-

### PRELIMINARY TIMES OF SESSIONS

Sunday 22 June 2014	
16h00	Registration
19h00-	Cocktail function (Meet & Greet)
Monday 23 June 2014	
07h00-08h00	Registration - Foyer BMH
08h00-08h15	Welcoming
08h15-10h30	Session 1
10h30-11h00	Tea/Coffee Break
11h00-13h00	Session 2
13h00-14h00	Lunch
14h00-15h45	Session 3
15h45-16h15	Tea/Coffee Break
16h15-18h00	ROUND TABLE 1
19h00 BMH	Evening dinner
Tuesday 24 June 2014	
07h30-8h00	Registration - Foyer BMH
08h00-10h00	Session 4
10h00-10h30	Tea/Coffee Break
10h30-13h00	Session 5
13h00-14h00	Lunch
14h00-15h45	ROUND TABLE 2
15h45-16h15	Tea/Coffee Break
16h15-17h30	Session 6
18h00-19h00	Blue movie
19h00 BMH	Evening dinner
Wednesday 25 June 2014	
08h00-8h30	Registration - Foyer BMH
08h30-10h00	Session 7
10h00-10h30	Tea/Coffee Break
10h30-13h00	Session 8
13h00-14h00	Lunch
14h00-16h00	Session 9
16h00-16h15	Short break
16h00-17h30	AGM
19h00-	Gala dinner
Thursday 26 June 2014	
08h30-10h00	Departure

### CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT



Mrs Petrie Vogel - Registration and administration  
Tel: +27 (12) 346 0687, Fax: +27(12) 346 2929  
Email: [petrie@savetcon.co.za](mailto:petrie@savetcon.co.za)

All delegates are required to register online at [www.savetcon.co.za](http://www.savetcon.co.za)



2nd Announcement