



NSCF NEWS

Communication from the Natural Science Collections Facility Hub Team

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POST-FORUM BLUES?

If you are suffering from post-forum blues, not to worry, we will be giving feedback and ways forward on all the discussions and suggestions during the next few weeks. In the meantime you can access some of the forum photos on the [NSCF Google Drive](#).



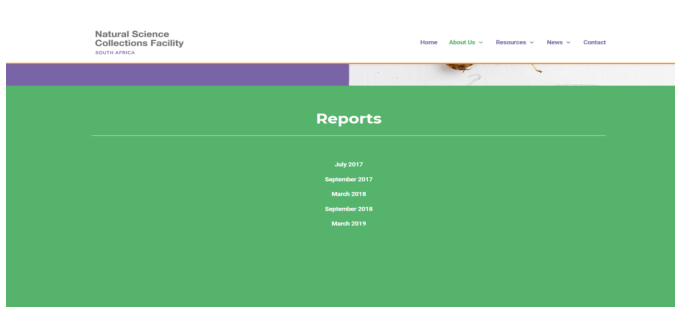
NSCF 2019 Forum delegates at Goudini Spa, 30 May 2019

One of the highlights of the forum was the Open Space Talks that took place on the afternoon of 30 May. The unrestricted emergent conversations that flowed from this process highlighted the importance of valuing our natural collections, our human capacity and connections, the building of networks and relationships.



Open Space Marketplace Wall

For those of you who requested detailed progress on the project the NSCF half-yearly progress reports are available on the [website](#). The hub team will also look into the possibility of hosting interactive feedback webinars in future.



Thank you to Audrey once again for hosting the Forum run-up features. You can read her feature and get to know your Collections Management Coordinator on our [Facebook page](#)

FROM AUDREY: LET'S VALUE COLLECTIONS

The primary purpose of a natural history collection is research, but if specimens and data are not properly preserved and cared for, we will fail the most important part of our purpose, our core function! If the history of collections have taught us anything, it's that the future will bring new and creative uses for collections. Three decades back, it was thought that the DNA from museum specimens was useless, however today, it is routinely extracted and used for research.

Collections are no longer just there to be described and named. More biochemical and other research uses of specimens are being and will be developed in the future. Collection based research has expanded considerably. As such, we need to keep collections that will always remain relevant and usable. More like moving with the cheese as per theme of change in the first NSCF forum. #AsikhoLapho

Specimens in well-sealed containers that are housed in stable, cool storage conditions should be expected to have a minimum useful life of several decades to one hundred or more years.

New ways of using data associated with specimens will be discovered. The field of biodiversity informatics is one example – using specimens from multiple natural history collections, satellite images, and climate data, sophisticated predictive models can be made (Krishtalka and Humphrey, 2000). Such changes and developments will also mean, the value of our collections as research tools (our research infrastructure) is continuously increasing.

Human activities continue to be the main cause of degradation of the natural habitat for plants and animals. Read this report <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-48169783> recently released by the UN, a summary that paints the picture of extinction.

The fact of the matter is, in the near future, there will be little or no specimens to go out and collect and most of them will become extinct before being collected (as it is suspected to already being the case). The death of a species is the death of a tremendous amount of natural history. We lose access to learning about their biology. The rich ecosystems will not be sustainable and there will be potential food crisis. The role of a well-managed collection becomes even greater, the collection will be our best shot at understanding the natural world, as well as practicing the transformative change mentioned in the shared link.

So it is very important that we are all on the same page on how best we can keep our collections relevant and usable, through changing times. The NSCF initiative aims to have institutions in the NSCF network fully compliant with legislation; to keep and make available high quality biological and environmental specimens for research; using standardised methods for collecting; to long term storage; to information and specimen retrieval; etc. Pretty much standardise every activity that we carry out in the collections, which will in turn improve the lifespan of our collections.

It is for that reason that you find yourselves having to attend national and regional meetings to discuss issues and participate in helping develop common policies and standards for the NSCF network. The involvement of institutions in policy making, is a transparent, inclusive process that aims to ensure that from the onset, everyone in the network has a voice, which is why it is critical that WG members make their input, as well as those of the none-WG members from their institutions. Involving everyone from the development stages of the documents, also ensures that we have better understanding of what each document requires and how to be compliant with it.

It also ensures that the NSCF hub doesn't just come up with these guidelines and recommendations, and impose them on the institutions, but the institutions get an understanding of where they originate and why they must be in place. If we each do all the little that we can to contribute to making a situation better, we will achieve something great. We should not focus on the effort being small, but the goal we are trying to achieve and why we should achieve it.

NEWS SNIPPETS FROM ACROSS THE WWW

[#yearofthefly](#)

The year 2019 was formally designated as international "Year of the Fly" at the 9th International Congress of DipteroLOGY in Windhoek, Namibia in November 2018. 2019 is intended as a celebration of flies and their role in nature and human society. During the year the intention is to educate the general public about the diversity, significance and beauty of flies and how they affect our lives.



KwaZulu-Natal Museum
History Museum
You and 10 others

Bews Herbarium

We are fortunate to have been hosting Prof Charles (Charlie) Stirton in the Bews Herbarium over the past two weeks, and until next week. Prof Stirton is assisting us with legume identifications and determinations, which is a great help.

He is visiting several herbaria in our country as part of an NSCF (Natural Science Collections Facility) initiative to bring more experts into our collections. He is being assisted by Ms Simone Chetty who is helping with our legume digitisation and curation through an NSCF contract.

As a previous lecturer in our School of Life Sciences (then Dept of Botany), Charlie has been regaling us with tales of the past, which has been fun. We wish him well on the rest of his trip around the country.



NSCF Travel Grants

Prof Charles Stirton was awarded a NSCF travel grant and is currently visiting four of the NSCF partner herbaria to work on Fabaceae, which is one of the largest plant families in South Africa and contains some of the largest genera in Southern Africa

Port Elizabeth Museum Herpetology

A new sand frog from Namaqualand, South Africa (Pyxicephalidae: Tomopterna)
LYLE WILSON & ALAN CHANNING

Tomopterna branchi sp. nov. is described from Namaqualand, South Africa. It differs from all other Tomopterna species by advertisement call, 16S rRNA sequence and consistent differences in adult morphology. The tadpole is similar to that of Tomopterna cryptotis. Haplotype networks of 16S and the nuclear tyr gene show that it is distinct from T. delalandii, with which it has...



MAPRESS.COM
A new sand frog from Namaqualand, South Africa (Pyxicephalidae: Tomopterna) | WILSON | Zootaxa

New sand frog from Namaqualand

Iziko Museums of South Africa

This #WorldEnvironmentDay, Iziko Museums of South Africa looks to the facts: over the last 500 years, human activity has forced over 800 species into extinction. Today, endangered species include one in four mammals, one in eight birds, one third of all amphibians, and 70% of the world's assessed plants.

Don't let museums become the only place we can see them. #TakeAction #CreateAwareness



#WorldEnvironmentDay

Agricultural Research Council

ARC's Robin Lyle discusses Biosystematics and the recently opened training centre at the ARC Rooodeplaats campus. WATCH - <http://bit.ly/AgriMedia37>. Click here for more info - http://bit.ly/ARC-PPR_Bio



YOUTUBE.COM
Grootplaas - 27 Mei 2019

#ARCTrainingCentre