



A Few thoughts from the President's Desk

Introduction

A new year inevitably brings about change, change in mind, at least. Resolutions aside, every new year affords us the chance to reflect of what has been, and focus with new resolve on what can be done, if we can only muster up the courage, motivation, energy, time, abilities and money to bring these dreams to fruition.

The new “shell year” – for our Society, at least – kicked off in earnest on 18 June 2016 with the election of the new Committee. In fact, certain major changes had already been ushered in at the 2014 AGM, where a new name for our organisation was voted in. For those still unaware, the old Conchological Society of South Africa (ConchSoc) was officially changed to the new and more approachable Shell Collectors SA (SCSA) in 2014. More on this a bit later.

Communications

The new SCSA Committee got off to a busy start on 9 July 2016, and following closure of the 5-hour work session (and some healthy shell-banter, of course), a way forward for SCSA had been established.

Before getting stuck into details, a word of appreciation must be given to the outgoing Committee, for having weathered the storms and having sustained the Society in its previous and present guises over the past few years. Without the dedication of these individuals, we may not have been in a position to write and forward the types of communiqué you are reading right now.

Back on topic: one area of omission identified by the new Committee was lack of proper communication to members. To address this shortfall, the following measures have been proposed, and will be either immediately implemented, or phased in over time:

- *SCSA Newsletter*. The Sea Bones will become the official SCSA Newsletter, and will be forwarded on a regular basis to all members.
- *SCSA Publication*. The Strandloper will remain the SCSA Publication; work is currently progressing on a new edition, with the aim to move up to four per year as of next year.
- *News Flashes*. New Flashes will be sent to members using a combination of emails and smartphone-based technology (e.g. Whatsapp) to inform all members of important happenings and vital information at short notice.

- *SCSA Website*. The SCSA Website is in the process of receiving a major overhaul, and will be updated regularly with news.
- *SCSA Facebook Page*. The SCSA Facebook Page has already undergone a revamp, and will receive additional improvements to allow the use of Social Media as a form of communication.
- *SA Shell Poster*. Roy Aiken is in the process of championing the development of a glossy SA-specific shell poster to be utilised as a form of awareness creation, as well as a bit of free advertising for SCSA.

In addition to the above, the Committee is working on other concepts to create awareness of our lovely hobby with the youth and other interested parties, through amongst others exhibitions, fliers and displays. The ideal is to attract the attention of the youth – which is one reason the name of the Society was changed – which should see SCSA enter into a new phase of growth.

All the above takes time, of course, and as such these measures will be implemented over time.

Vision, Mission and Goals

The Committee will be reviewing the Constitution soon, but without clear goals, we are going nowhere but in circles. During the work session, the existing Society vision, mission and goals were affirmed. To enable fulfilment of these goals, greater emphasis will henceforth be placed on the following aspects:

- *Sharing*. Shell collecting is the type of hobby that encourages sharing – stories, information, history, and any other shell-related tales. SCSA will encourage its members to share such information on a more regular basis, whether during Club Meetings, or in Publications.
- *Learning*. We can all learn from each other, and it is no different with this hobby; in fact, Conchology is such a rapidly-changing field of study – what with new species being discovered, rapid changes in taxonomy and nomenclature, and the like – that constant updates to our knowledge base is imperative. Lumping and splitting aside, the SCSA will encourage learning through mutual respect for the opinions of both the novice and the scientist.
- *Trading*. We need to face the facts: the reason we are into shell collecting is, why, to collect shells! We love adding these “colourful spirals of calcium carbonate” (to coin someone else’s phrase) to our expanding and burgeoning cabinets; without this joy, our hobby would quickly become dull and fade into obscurity. The current revival in shell auctions is testament to this fact. SCSA will be placing much emphasis on various forms of trading (including buying and selling, swapping, auctions and raffles) to allow members to add spectacular specimens to their delightful collections.

SCSA members should understand that *all* have a role to play to see these goals come to fruition. Participation is key!

Society Name

As was previously mentioned, the Conchological Society of SA officially translated into Shell Collectors SA after the 2014 AGM. The reason behind this was primarily to make us more approachable to members of the public wishing to pursue a hobby in collecting, especially the collection of natural objects. Not many people know what Conchology is, but all know what Shell Collecting alludes to.

In addition to this, the trend worldwide is to refer to those organisations focusing primarily on shell collecting, sharing of shell-related information, learning and trading, as Clubs, as opposed to Conchological or Malacological societies being organisations specialising in scientific study and research of molluscs, on a much more detailed level.

Through introduction of this change we believe we have moved in line with worldwide trends within our field of interest, while remaining true to the core vision, mission and goals of the original Society, as per the Constitution.

Strandloper Articles

The Strandloper is the official publication for SCSA, and this will remain so. Past Editors have performed a sterling job of developing The Strandloper into the world-class publication it is today – professional format and layout, resplendent with high quality and informative articles. It is pointless, however, having the potential for a spectacular publication, if no articles are presented.

Contrary to popular belief, it is not the responsibility of the Strandloper Editorial to generate articles; this is a collaborative effort, the source of which lies within the member cadre of the Society. Although all articles presented for publication are peer-reviewed, proof-read and generally edited for publication (as is the case for all shell-related publications worldwide), the origin and basic content should come from SCSA members.

We all have a tale to tell, a story to share, knowledge to impart. You need not be a Pulitzer-winning script-writer – we invite you to forward your essays to the SCSA Editorial. Who knows, perhaps you will be in time for our 2016 edition!

The Future

Having shared these thoughts, one dream remains, and that is to see the SCSA revive into the body it was in its early days, when a vibrant Cape Town Group led the charge and spawned the growth of Groups in, amongst others, KZN, Jeffreys Bay and Johannesburg. Gone are those days of nostalgia, but not forgotten. I truly hope we can pull together as a Society under a new name and a new banner, and do enough to see those Groups reform under new leadership, once again fuelling the fires of our passion, which forever will be *Shell Collecting*.



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