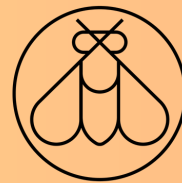


Issue 117  
August 2025

# ROSTRUM

NEWSLETTER OF THE ENTOMOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA



Cover image: Obese Lily Weevil (*Brachycerus obesus*) found in Langebaan (10 Aug 2025)  
Photo by Perryn Richardson

## IN THIS ISSUE

Conference Report Backs  
MSc report backs  
Introduction of LepSoc  
MoziMac project  
And much more!



## News from the Editor

Early Career Entomologists! We are looking for a new ECE representative.

The ESSA 2025 congress has come and gone! The packed programme was exciting with a range of novel topics with regular drinks and snacks helping keep the cold at bay in Bloemfontein. As usual, at the in-person conferences a new president was announced. Congratulations to Dr Charlene Janion-Scheepers from UCT on being elected. This is the first time Charlene has taken on this role after many years on the ESSA executive committee. Charlene's previous role on the Publicity and Communications Officer has been taken over by Dr Ashley Burke. This means that the Early Career entomologist position is vacant, and we are looking for a replacement member.

Some notable highlights from the congress were the presence of The Dipterists Society and LepSoc, the Lepidopterists' Society of Africa. The Dipterists Society hosted the first ever session dedicated to Diptera, while LepSoc introduced their community of highly dedicated enthusiasts to the wider society. Both of these organisations are accepting new members, and the ESSA is a logical partner for them. We encourage you to consider these societies, details can be found on our website.

In this edition, we have conference report backs, a report on a dissertation and a PhD project which forms part of a broader project, as well as an introduction to LepSoc.

We would like to remind everyone that we are still accepting entries for the photography competition! The Young Entomologists Essay Prize (YEEP) has two extremely relevant topics as themes for the competition. Please do not forget that both of these competitions have cash prizes. The YEEP is open not only to students but all early career entomologists, so please consider submitting an entry. We would also really like to highlight the work done by students in the form of project report backs. Furthermore, this is not limited to students, and we encourage hosts to support their post-doctoral fellows to submit project summaries where possible.

Please remember that we welcome contributions to *Rostrum* all year round!

Shüné Oliver  
Rostrum Editor  
shuneo@nicd.ac.za



# PhD Opportunity

## A fully-funded PhD scholarship in the Integrated Pest Management of macadamia felted coccid (*Acanthococcus ironsidei*)

Macadamia  
Protection  
Programme



We invite applications for a full-time study of a **PhD in Entomology** at the University of Pretoria within the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI).

### Study background

*Acanthococcus ironsidei* Williams (Hemiptera: Eriococcidae), commonly known as macadamia felted coccid (MFC) is a sap-sucking insect that is naturally found in Australia. Its host range is restricted to the Macadamia genus, and it is currently the only scale insect that can cause serious damage to macadamia. It was recorded in South Africa in 2017 and has adverse effects on tree health and nut yield. Currently, farmers rely on a limited number of insecticides to control the invasive pest. Designing an integrated pest management programme for macadamia felted coccid is essential for sustainable farming.

To design an integrated pest management programme, this study will focus on:

- investigate the phenology of MFC in South African orchards
- determine its degree-days
- determine its economic injury levels (EIL's)
- investigate the toxicity of insecticides of MFC on its biological control agent, *Metaphycus macadamiae*

### Supervisors

Dr. Rosali Moffat, Prof. Gerda Fourie, Anthony King

### Bursary details

A full bursary (incl. tuition costs) for three years

Start date: January 2026

Performance will be reviewed after 12 months

The candidate will be based at the University of Pretoria. The study will be conducted in the field and laboratory and will include interactions with farm managers and the macadamia industry.

### Application requirements

- A MSc degree in Entomology or a related field
- Demonstrated analytical/statistical abilities and writing skills
- High attention to detail and self-motivated
- Valid South African driver's license
- Willingness to plan and execute field trips
- Willingness to assist with rearing of the study insects
- Willingness to work over weekends and after hours when necessary

Please submit your CV, contact information of two references and a cover letter to **Dr. Rosali Moffat** ([rosali.moffat@fabi.up.ac.za](mailto:rosali.moffat@fabi.up.ac.za)) or **Prof. Gerda Fourie** ([gerda1.fourie@fabi.up.ac.za](mailto:gerda1.fourie@fabi.up.ac.za)) before **31 October 2025**.



# Yebo Gogga 2025

Charlene Janion-Scheepers and Ashley Burke

ESSA Executive committee



The Entomological Society of Southern Africa participated in the 24th Yebo Gogga Yebo amaBlomo Event which took place at Wits from 14-18 May 2025, hosted by the School of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences (AP&ES). This highly popular annual event welcomed 4,500 visitors, of which 2,883 were learners. There were 28 exhibits ranging from SANParks Honorary Rangers, AP&ES Service Learning, to Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo and many more! The theme for this year was 'Connections'. This year's Yebo Gogga exhibition explored "the incredible web of Connections—where every creature, ecosystem, and action is linked in ways you never imagined!" The annual lecture presentation was shared by ESSA's Shüné Oliver (Title: Breaking bad connections) and Charlene Janion-Scheepers (Title: Building good connections).

We thank Donald McCallum and James Harrison for their support!

We look forward to next year's event, scheduled for 13-17 May 2026, with the theme 'Food'. We welcome volunteers from all academic and industry-based group to assist with the ESSA stand and sharing your enthusiasm for entomology at next year's event. Please contact Ashley to volunteer [ashley.burke@up.ac.za](mailto:ashley.burke@up.ac.za)

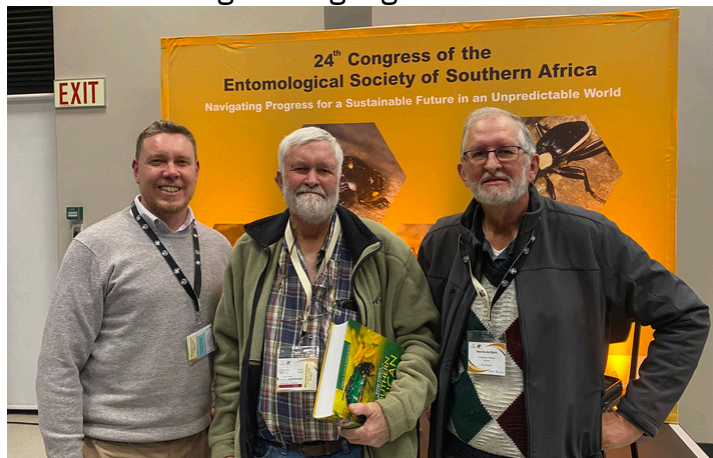


# ESSA 24: Entomologists descend on Bloemfontein

## Shüné Oliver and the ESSA executive

Winter in Bloemfontein is a challenge, but a group of enthusiastic entomologists braved the weather and descended (swarmed if you will) onto the University of the Free State. UFS last hosted the conference in 2011, and welcomed its return! The conference started off on Tuesday evening with the launch of the 2024 edition of “Biology, ecological importance and diversity of southern African insects” by Clarke Scholtz and Hennie de Klerk. The book, filled with over 3000 gorgeous colour photographs was a hit, and lucky conference attendees could purchase the hefty volume at a reduced price.

The conference started off with a plenary from newly elected ESSA lifetime member Prof. Johnnie Van den Berg. He gave interesting insights from his long career with much of it spent boots on the ground protecting food security. The first day covered agricultural entomology, biodiversity and climate change, biological control, and soil biodiversity. The day ended with an interesting and well-attended discussion on ethics in entomological research, as the country is moving towards implementing ethics for invertebrates outside of decapod crustaceans and cephalopods. The ESSA is therefore at the forefront of guiding this process to align with ethical research but to prevent research from stagnating due to restrictive policies. Prof. Meghan Barrett from Indiana University brought interesting insights to the discussion. Prof. Barrett is neuroethologist and physiologist with a specific focus on insect welfare. She is the founding director of the *Insect Welfare Research Society* and is interested in insect pain experience and the welfare of farmed insects. The discussion was stimulating and highlighted the interest of society in the subject.



Chris Weldon, Clarke Scholtz and Hennie de Klerk.



Plenary speaker 1: Johnnie van den Berg.



Plenary speaker 2: Pedro Cardoso.



Plenary speaker 3: Subramanian Sevgan.

While the ethics discussion was unique to this meeting, the conference year marks an AGM where a new society president is elected. Dr Charlene Janion-Scheepers from UCT succeeded Prof. Chris Weldon. Chris will still continue his society work as co-chair of the ICE2028 committee with African Entomology editor Prof. Iain Paterson. Charlene will be assisted by her vice presidents Dr John Midgley (KwaZulu-Natal Museum) and Dr Caswell Munyai (University of KwaZulu-Natal). After the packed day it was party time with a happy hour and the student function at Centennial Hall. After a filling meal of burgers and chips, students participated in an entertaining but challenging entomology-themed pub quiz. Along with the usual categories (i.e. general and music), this year debuted an AI section. Students had to determine what was wrong with AI generated insects. Personally, it is quite surprising at exactly how many insect-themed songs there are.

The second day started off with a plenary from Dr Pedro Cardoso who provided interesting insights on the use of AI for arthropod conservation. Day 2 had a theme of interaction with sister societies with Lynn Katsoulis from LepSoc introducing their society (more information on the society later in this edition). New topics on the second day included a Lepidoptera session, as well as an edible insects, technological innovation in entomology, ecology, and physiology sessions. There was also a dedicated session on Diptera, suitably covering a diverse range of topics including flies of medical importance, biodiversity, endosymbiotic bacteria, systematics, and the effect of climate change. The day ended off with the gala dinner, where the next conference venue was announced. For the first time ever, the ESSA congress will go to the University of Mpumalanga in Mbombela in 2027.



From left to right: vice-president John Midgley (right), president Charlene Janion-Scheepers (middle) and vice-president Caswell Munyai.



Outgoing ESSA president Chris Weldon and current president Charlene Janion-Scheepers.

The final day started off with a plenary by Dr Subramanian Sevgan discussing the role of insect ecosystems in a One Health context. Suitably, the Medical, Veterinary and Forensic Entomology session followed. The final session was the Taxonomy, Systematics and Zoogeography session. A prize-giving ceremony then concluded the conference.



Posters on display at the conference centre.



Centennial Hall, where the student function took place.



Free State flair at the gala dinner.



Chair of the ESSA 2025 Organising Committee Vaughn Swart.

The following students were awarded prizes for their presentations:

Poster Presentations:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Thembeke Mkhize - University of Pretoria
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Simphiwe Dlamini - Stellenbosch University
- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Tshepiso Motolo - University of the Free State

Oral Presentations

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Place: Zion Jordamus - Stellenbosch University
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Bridget O’ Connor - Stellenbosch University
- 1<sup>st</sup> Place: Micke van Rooyen - Stellenbosch University

Congratulations to all the winners!



Best Poster Presentation:  
Tshepiso Motolo (UFS)

Best Oral Presentation:  
Micke Van Rooyen (SU)



The first ESSA congress group photo taken by drone.



# Report on the 12<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Syrphidae in Průhonice, Czech Republic

Mandisa Ndlela

KwaZulu-Natal Museum

In September 2024, I attended the 12<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Syrphidae that was held in Průhonice. This is a municipality in Prague-West District in the Central Bohemian Region of the Czech Republic. Průhonice has 2800 residents and it is known for its significant castle, which was used as the conference venue, and its breathtaking castle park that has been protected as a national cultural monument since 2010. The park was founded in 1885, and the castle was built at the end of the 13th century. The castle park has been included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites and described as the original masterpiece of garden landscape architecture of worldwide importance.



Průhonice Castle where the conference was held.

The symposium had 64 contributions (42 oral presentations and 22 poster presentations) with three outstanding plenary talks. Unfortunately, the first plenary talk by Francis Gilbert was recorded, as he could not travel. This was my favourite talk among the three as he questioned whether hoverflies are good pollinators for flowers. It was stimulating because I had not considered that they may not be. He ended up concluding that hoverflies are indeed good flower pollinators with supporting evidence from studies that the larger and hairier species are better pollinators. The overall programme covered fields such as taxonomy, systematics and phylogeny, monitoring, biodiversity assessment, and conservation, to name a few.



Presenting my *Mesembrius ingratus* paper at the conference.

My presentation was on the third day of the conference, where I presented on our paper describing the first female and first DNA barcodes of *Mesembrius ingratus* (Loew, 1858). I presented on the distribution of *M. ingratus* while showing high quality images of fresh specimens of *M. ingratus* comparing and showing the morphological differences between the female and the male of *M. ingratus*. I also presented on how the DNA barcodes of *M. ingratus* expectedly cluster with *Mesembrius sulcus* and *Mesembrius tarsatus* and briefly discussed their relationships. I must say, it was nerve wracking presenting in front of all the experts, but they were a very friendly audience, so it was fine as time went by.

After the three days of informative presentations, we went on an exciting excursion to Hrnčířské louky, which is a wet grassland locality close to Průhonice. Here we were able to explore and share knowledge about the different Syrphidae species that Czech Republic has. We then went on to Milovice Nature Reserve, which is a dry grassland with scrubland vegetation. The nature reserve was once used as a military proving ground that was later overtaken by bush grass and other expansive species causing the biodiversity to diminish. Herbivores such as the European Bison, Aurochs-like cattle and Exmoor Ponies were then introduced for conservation grazing to assist in maintaining the habitats and to save the biodiversity. These herbivores maintain open spaces, similar to elephants and rhinos in Africa, creating diverse habitats that promote biodiversity.

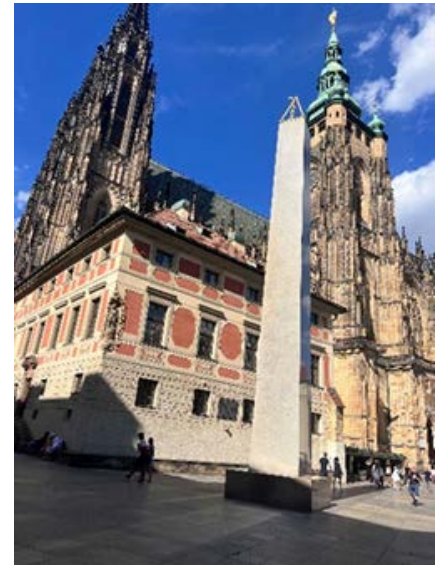


European Bison.



Exmoor ponies.

While not a formal part of the conference, we went on an excursion to Prague centre, which is famous for buildings with diverse architectural designs that mirror the country's past. My favourite building was the Great South Tower of the Cathedral. It is almost 100 metres high making it one of the highest buildings in Prague. In the process, we tried out Czech restaurants that had their national dishes. These reminded me back of back home because the taste was quiet similar despite a different texture. We also had the opportunity to explore their local modes of transport, which includes using trains and buses interchangeably, which is very different to what I am used to. We then parted ways later that day. I am grateful to have met such a passionionate group of people with different cultures who share the same quality research.



A tram in Prague centre; a Czech national dish; Great South Tower of the Cathedral.

I would like to thank the Entomological Society of Southern Africa and the Young Entomologist's Travel Grant for awarding me the opportunity to travel abroad and obtain outstanding entomology knowledge. I would also like to thank the KwaZulu-Natal Museum for granting me the funds and time to be able to attend he symposium and the DIPoDIP project for additional funding.



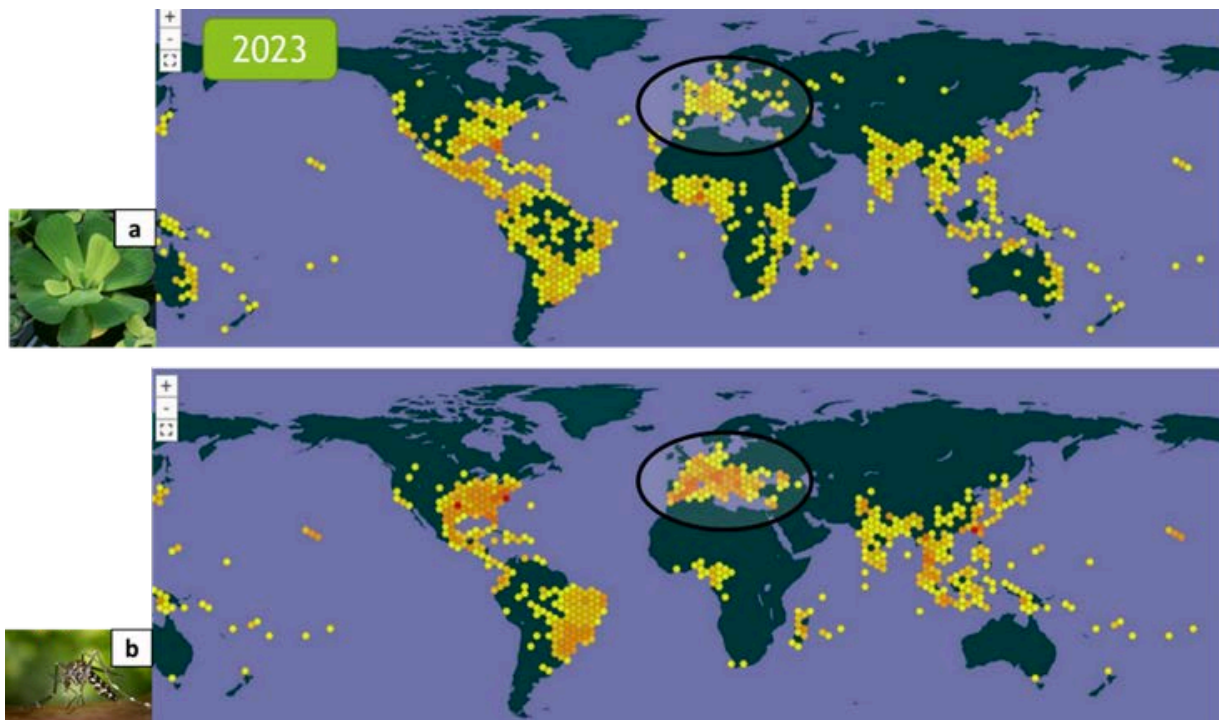
# MOZiMAC: Invasive aquatic plants and mosquito proliferation in water ecosystems

Tressia Chikodza

Rhodes University

Floating invasive aquatic plants have long been a concern due to their negative impacts on invaded ecosystems. These species alter water quality, physicochemical properties, and predator-prey dynamics, often to the detriment of native biodiversity. Such environmental changes to aquatic ecosystems can create favourable microhabitats for aquatic insects, including mosquitoes.

Mosquitoes are globally significant disease vectors, and their proliferation in habitats modified by IAPs raises both ecological and public health concerns. Interestingly, both IAPs and mosquito species are expanding their ranges globally, often into new, overlapping environments. Although impacts of both taxa are relatively well studied independently, the nature of interactions between IAPs and mosquito populations remains poorly understood.



Parallel shifts in the distribution of *Pistia stratiotes* (a) and *Aedes albopictus* (b) across Europe. Source: distribution data, (GBIF 2024).

The MoZiMAC is a new international research project that aims to understand the interactions between invasive aquatic plants and mosquitoes. The project integrates field surveys to assess mosquito diversity and abundance in invaded water systems, local community perceptions, controlled experiments, and species distribution modelling of selected species from both taxa. The research focuses on how floating invasive plants influence mosquito colonisation, reproduction, and survival in South Africa, Europe, and other regions. By examining how ecological changes driven by invasive plants may support mosquitoes, the project contributes to broader efforts to address and provide effective management strategies to control both invasive plants and mosquitoes across different regions.

The MOZIMAC project has already gained recognition and was recently featured in a Rhodes University [news article](#) highlighting its relevance to global health and environmental issues in South Africa.



A water hyacinth invasion on the Schoonspruit, North West Province, teeming with mosquitoes.



Adult mosquito trap set near dense water hyacinth infestations on the Enseleni dam, KwaZulu-Natal (Photo: Tressia Chikodza).



# **MSc summary: Combining GM sugarcane and sterile insect technique to manage the African sugarcane stalk borer, *Eldana saccharina* - A shade house evaluation**

Vanessa Lauchande

South African Sugarcane Research Institute & University of KwaZulu-Natal

The study focused on evaluating an integrated pest management approach to control the African sugarcane stalk borer, *Eldana saccharina*, Walker (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae), a major pest affecting sugarcane in South Africa. The study specifically investigated the effectiveness of combining genetically modified (GM) sugarcane expressing *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) toxin with the sterile insect technique (SIT), which involves releasing sterilised moths to suppress pest populations. The research aims to determine whether the synergy of these two methods enhances pest control compared to either strategy alone.

The study was conducted in a controlled shade house environment, where both GM (CRY1A) and non-GM (88H0019) sugarcane varieties were grown. One shade house served as the treatment area, receiving a mix of sterile and non-sterile *E. saccharina* moths, while the control area received only non-sterile moths. Pest infestation and stalk damage were measured after 12 months using variables such as internode damage (%INB), stalk bored length (%SBL), and infestation rate per 100 stalks. The analysis also included a statistical comparison between sugarcane types and treatment effects.

The results revealed that the GM CRY1A sugarcane significantly reduced pest damage compared to the non-GM variety. However, the SIT treatment did not significantly impact damage reduction. In fact, the treatment house recorded higher overall stalk damage than the control, suggesting potential shortcomings in the SIT implementation. Despite the low infestation levels across both environments, a significant difference in pest pressure was observed between sugarcane types. GM sugarcane consistently outperformed its non-GM counterpart in resisting *E. saccharina* damage.

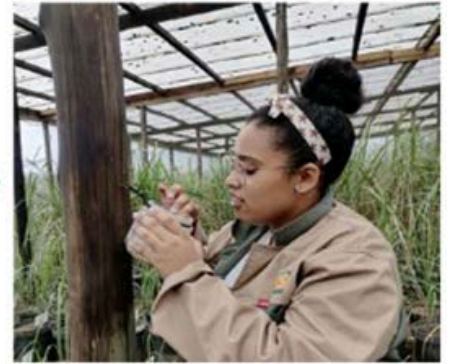
In conclusion, while the sterile insect technique alone did not yield effective control under the conditions of this trial, the incorporation of GM sugarcane showed strong potential for managing *E. saccharina* populations. The study recommends improving SIT implementation, such as increasing moth release frequency and establishing baseline pest populations and extending the duration of future trials to strengthen results. The findings underscore the value of integrating biotechnological and ecological methods for sustainable pest management in sugarcane cultivation.



Moth collection



Seedlings preparation



Moths release



Trial inspection



Sugarcane harvesting



Damage survey



# LepSoc: The Lepidopterists' Society of South Africa

Lynn Katsoulis

The ESSA Congress—South Africa’s biennial academic gathering—celebrated a unique milestone in 2025: for the first time, the Lepidopterists’ Society of Africa (LepSoc) participated in the event, despite 60 years of ESSA history and more than four decades of LepSoc’s existence. Lepidoptera are among the public’s most beloved insects, while some species’ larvae pose significant threats to food security. For members who were unable to attend, here’s an in-depth look at the society and its recent initiatives.

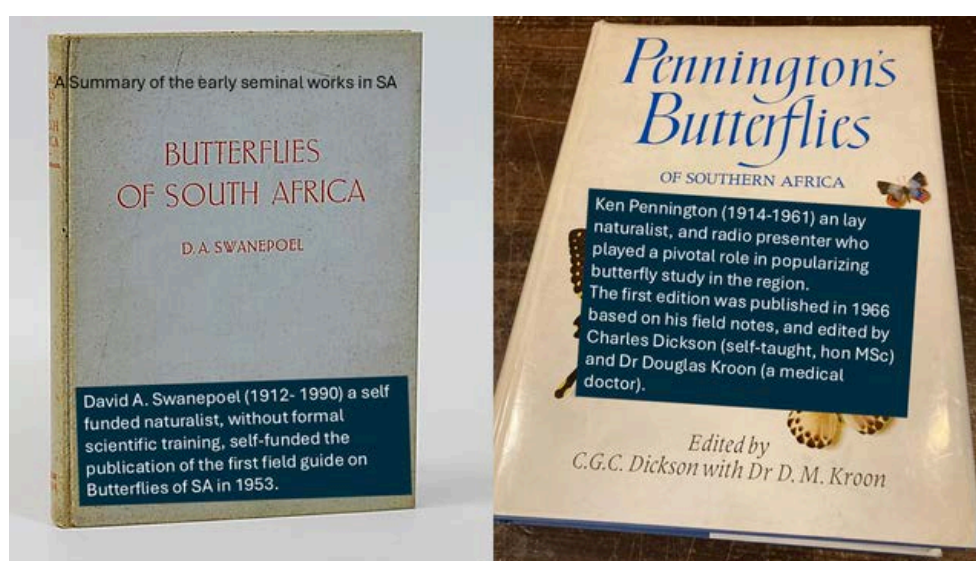
## Pan-African Scope and Mission

LepSoc was founded in 1983 as the Lepidoptera Study Group of Southern Africa to promote the study and conservation of moths and butterflies. In 1996, the inclusion of the African Butterfly Research Institute (ABRI) in Kenya extended LepSoc’s reach across Africa. Today, more than 250 members globally share a focus on African butterflies.

LepSoc’s mission: to expand knowledge, drive conservation, deliver scientific information, and boost public participation in Lepidoptera research continent-wide.

## Rich Natural History

Africa’s lepidopteran research is distinguished by both its depth and unique development. The body of knowledge available for butterflies and moths rivals, if not often exceeds, that of other insect groups in the region, especially regarding distribution, host plant records, life histories, and specimen documentation. Remarkably, this expertise has been assembled largely through the efforts of self-taught, privately funded individuals and volunteer networks. This contrasts with the government and institutionally funded research supporting the other insect groups.



Notable LepSoc publications.

This tradition is vividly illustrated in the region’s seminal works and landmark publications, and the passionate individuals behind them. Ronald Trimen, curator at the South African Museum, authored *South African Butterflies* (1887–1889), a landmark three-volume monograph produced in collaboration with Col. James Henry Bowker, and is widely regarded as the father of South African butterfly taxonomy. Lt. Col. James Fawcett, a self-taught entomologist, published *Notes on South African Lepidoptera* (1901, 1903), focusing on rearing and painting larvae with special attention to their host plants. David A. Swanepoel, a layperson who worked nights so he could devote his days to Lepidoptera, authored the widely celebrated *Butterflies of South Africa* (1953). Charles G.C. Dickson (a medical doctor) and Gowan C. Clark (director of a textile company) published *Life Histories of South African Lycaenid Butterflies* (1971), funding their own fieldwork and research. This tradition of dedicated enthusiasts continues today with Herman Staude, a mechanical engineer by training, while also being the country’s leading moth expert, authoring *Southern African Moths and their Caterpillars* (2023).

Today, the legacy of self-funded, enthusiast-driven research continues to shape African Lepidoptera studies, ensuring an ongoing tradition of personal commitment and scientific progress.

### Collections and Collaborative Science

Early lepidopterists focused on systematic specimen collection, enabling rigorous taxonomic studies and thorough distribution records. Principal collectors invested heavily in expeditions and collection curation, with some hiring full-time skilled professional collectors. ABRI, in Nairobi, was established in 1996 to house Steve Collins’ collection, growing to include more than forty major contributors and becoming Africa’s largest repository of pinned specimens. South Africa’s Centre for African Butterflies (CAB), in Hekpoort, was established more recently, as the local private repository of collections that can no longer be maintained by the collectors. These substantial specimen repositories, together with the vast collections in several museums, housing a biological record of the last 150 years, are vital for reconstructing distributions, understanding population trends, and tracking ecological shifts. Their value will increase as digitisation progresses.



Citizen Science is essential for LepSoc.

## Impact of Photography

The spread of high-definition digital photography and citizen science platforms like iNaturalist has fuelled a surge in Lepidoptera observations and geo-referenced data. This influx expands participation and helps map species distributions, informing conservation monitoring. However, photographic data often favour common, showy or easy to photograph species, and in many cases insufficient detail is included to make definitive identifications, or may lack critical biological context, underscoring the need for continued physical specimen collecting and robust research permitting processes.



Photography is becoming increasingly important for the society.

## Conservation Milestones

LepSoc Africa has played a key role in establishing and supporting reserves for endangered butterflies. All these reserves are managed by local authorities or private land owners.

**1985** – Ruimsig Entomological Reserve, Roodepoort, aimed at preserving the Roodepoort Copper (*Aloeides dentatis dentatis*).

**1997** – Brenton Blue Butterfly Reserve, Knysna, with the hope of protecting the *Orachrysops niobe*.

**2005** – Alice Glockner Nature Reserve, Gauteng, for the Heidelberg Copper (*Chrysoritis aureus*).

**2024** – Karkloof Blue Butterfly Nature Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, to protect one of the last remaining breeding sites for the critically endangered Karkloof Blue (*Orachrysops ariadne*).

**2025** – Haenertsburg Conservancy, Limpopo, a new conservation corridor officially proclaimed for the critically endangered Wolkberg Zulu butterfly (*Alaena margaritacea*).

Members have also driven major conservation assessments such as SABCA, SALCA, and COREL—embedding Lepidoptera in national biodiversity planning.

## Society Publications

LepSoc's website ([www.lepsocafrika.org](http://www.lepsocafrika.org)) hosts a suite of publications:

- Metamorphosis: Peer-reviewed scientific journal.
- Afrotropical Butterflies: Online encyclopaedia.
- African Butterfly News: Bimonthly member newsletter.
- Practical Guide: Field methods and photography.

These resources ensure LepSoc's scientific and community contributions are widely available.



Access to publications on the LepSoc website.

## Research and Citizen Science

The Caterpillar Rearing Group (CRG), launched in 2012 and led by Herman Staude, unites citizens throughout Africa to document life histories of African Lepidoptera. More than 14,500 wild-caught caterpillars have been captive reared, and each documented in the database which includes detailed location, developmental stage transition dates, and images. CRG represents the most extensive dataset on caterpillar-host plant associations known worldwide. Collaborative efforts with 19 global taxonomic experts have resulted in numerous peer-reviewed publications and culminated in the Moth book. The data collection platform has recently moved onto [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org).

CRG data underpin a novel tool for ecosystem restoration, assigning biodiversity-support scores to African plants according to their Lepidoptera associations, pollinator roles, value to larger herbivores, and soil impact. The data for plants available in nurseries is being uploaded to a public website, with filters that enable purpose driven selection of plants for lay public with minimal knowledge on plants. ([www.ecorestoration.co.za](http://www.ecorestoration.co.za)).



These research and outreach initiatives align with LepSoc Africa's educational objectives. The society offers training workshops, resources, and support for early-career naturalists, thereby facilitating the transfer of skills and knowledge between generations.

### **Events and Community Engagement**

The society maintains a vibrant profile across social media, with Facebook and WhatsApp communities catering to regional interests.

LepSoc arranges an annual conference/symposium, usually in October. Details of this year's symposium are:

- Date: 25 Oct 2025
- Main venue: Pretoria Botanical Gardens Conference Centre.
- Remote dial ins: Dial in options will be available to make attendance accessible to as many people as possible.
- Satellite venues: Several satellite gatherings have been planned at universities throughout Africa. If you would like to form a satellite at your own institution, you can indicate the interest using this [link](#).

### **Research, Conservation and Community Focus**

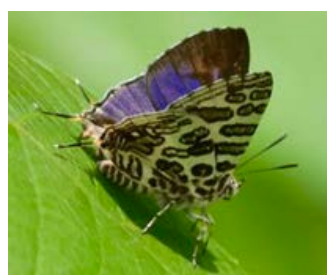
The society maintains a dual commitment to research and biodiversity conservation. The society is open to collaborations to find sustainable pest management solutions, leveraging an extensive archive of distribution records, host plant data and collections of lepidoptera parasitoids.

Citizen science remains at the heart of these efforts, with an extensive butterfly monitoring initiative in progress, designed to enhance public engagement and facilitate the identification of key conservation areas. LepSoc's advocacy for biodiversity-friendly gardening illustrates its dedication to community-driven conservation approaches.

### **Membership, Support and Future Growth**

Members of LepSoc Africa enjoy a wealth of benefits, including expert-led training, publication access, participation in conservation projects, and connection to a vibrant Pan-African network of lepidopterists. The society candidly acknowledges that self-funding alone will not sustain future activities, underlining the pressing need for new partnerships, increased membership, and more diverse financial support. Active participation in events like the ESSA Congress highlights the value of cross-institutional collaboration for the ongoing protection and study of Africa's remarkable butterfly and moth diversity.

For queries or further information, contact Lynn Katsoulis at [lynnkatsoulis@gmail.com](mailto:lynnkatsoulis@gmail.com) or WhatsApp on 083 393 4232. Website: <https://www.lepsocafrika.org/>



# Get to know your Executive Committee



The Executive Committee of the Entomological Society of southern Africa (2025). From left to right: John Midgley (vice president), Fanie Vermaak (Admin Officer), Shüné Oliver (Newsletter Editor), Ashley Burke (previous Early Career representative, current Publications and Communications), Charlene Janion-Scheepers (president), Iain Paterson (Journal Editor-in-Chief, African Entomology), Caswell Munyai (vice president), Chris Weldon (vice president and immediate past president). Insert: Riann Christian (secretary), Anthony King (treasurer).



# Mzansi Insect of the Year is here!



For many people, insects can seem harmful or scary. But the truth is we would not be able to survive without them. They provide us with many ecosystem services, for free! However, insects may be in trouble. Many global studies have highlighted that insect numbers are declining due to several factors such as pesticides and land habitat degradation, and this may have cascading impacts on whole ecosystems and on humans.

Mzansi Insect of the Year aims to raise awareness about the importance and diversity of insects in southern Africa, and steps we can take to protect them.

**Please** go and nominate your favourite insect using this form:

## MZANSI INSECT OF THE YEAR NOMINATION

Details needed: Species name, justification for nomination (500 words or less), picture (to be used with permission). This will be open for about three months.

Only species that are present in South Africa can be nominated. Anyone can nominate their favourite insect to be considered *Insect of the Year 2025!*

Entries are limited to two nominations per person.



# ESSA Competitions and prizes

## ESSA Young Entomologists' TRAVEL GRANTS

As part of its aim to promote all aspects of entomology, the Entomological Society of Southern Africa (ESSA) initiated the Young Entomologists' Travel Grants scheme in 2018. The grants are to support young ESSA members from southern Africa to (i) present research results at international scientific meetings or workshops with entomological relevance, or (ii) gain valuable entomological skills and experience by visiting an international research group. By doing so, the ESSA hopes to support the development of professional entomologists, and to broaden the range of skills and global relevance of research undertaken in southern Africa. Each year, a number of ESSA Young Entomologists' Travel Grants, each to the value of up to R25,000, may be awarded.

### ELIGIBILITY AND CONDITIONS

To be eligible for an ESSA Young Entomologists' Travel Grant, applicants must satisfy ALL of the following criteria:

- Paid student or ordinary member of the ESSA for a minimum of two consecutive calendar years
- Resident and/or registered as a student or postdoctoral associate/fellow in a country within the Southern African Development Community (SADC; i.e., Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe)
- Thirty-five (35) years of age or younger, or within five years of completing a PhD (if older than 35) on the closing date for entries
- Accepted to give an oral presentation at an international conference or workshop outside of the applicant's country of residence and/or received notification of willingness to be hosted by an international researcher

The amount awarded will be determined based on a detailed budget provided by the applicant. Return international economy airfares and accommodation are the only allowable expenses in the budget. Conference registration fees and daily allowances must be paid by the applicant.

Applicants awarded an ESSA Young Entomologists' Travel Grant must submit a two-page report, including appropriate documentary photographs, to the ESSA within one month of their return to their country of residence. The report will be published in *Rostrum*, the newsletter of the ESSA.

### HOW TO APPLY

Applicants must complete the application form [here](#), attach the required documents, and provide a cover letter of no more than one page explaining how receipt of an ESSA Young Entomologists' Travel Grant will benefit their development as a professional entomologist and the discipline of entomology in southern Africa.

Applications must be received no less than two months prior to the proposed date of departure.

Submit entries to the ESSA President,

Dr Charlene Janion-Scheepers, by email:

[charlene.janion-scheepers@uct.ac.za](mailto:charlene.janion-scheepers@uct.ac.za)

Applications will be assessed by the ESSA Executive Committee based on the following criteria:

- Fulfilment of all eligibility criteria
- Quoted budget realistic and justified
- Quality and persuasiveness of cover letter

### ENTRY CLOSING DATE

There is no closing date for applications to the ESSA Young Entomologists' Travel Grants scheme. All applications received no less than two months prior to the proposed date of departure will be carefully considered in each calendar year and grants will be awarded based on the availability of funds.



# ESSA Competitions and prizes

## ROSTRUM PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

This is the second announcement of the 2025 photographic competition. Entries are to be sent to Shüné Oliver ([shuneo@nicd.ac.za](mailto:shuneo@nicd.ac.za)), and the entries will be judged by the *Rostrum* editorial committee as well as the ESSA executive committee and ESSA members. Three overall winners will be chosen, and each will be featured on a *Rostrum* cover. Each winner will receive a cash prize of R1000. Entrants are open all year round. By entering this competition, photographers automatically give permission to the ESSA to use their images in *Rostrum*, Neither the ESSA, nor *Rostrum* will use the image for financial gain and the image remains the property of the photographer. Please include your full name and organisational affiliation within the email body. A brief description of the subject matter of the image(s) should also be supplied, including insect identity where possible, to explain how they address the competition theme. Please save each submitted entry as follows: First name Surname\_photo name, e.g., Jane Smith\_ honey bee1.jpeg



Picture: Nina Parry, *Asarkina* sp. (Syrphidae.)



# ESSA Young Entomologists' ESSAY PRIZE

As part of its aim to promote all aspects of entomology, the Entomological Society of Southern Africa (ESSA) initiated the Young Entomologists' Essay Prize in 2014. The prize is to encourage discussion and critical evaluation of entomological issues relevant to Southern Africa by upcoming amateur and professional entomologists.

In each year that the prize is made available, an essay topic on a current issue facing the entomological profession in southern Africa will be set. Essays should be original and thought provoking. Reference to published sources of information should be kept to a minimum but are necessary when claiming a fact or providing evidence and examples. The essays must be written in English and should be between 1000-1250 words in length. Numbered referencing should be used for in-text citations. A list of cited references should be included but does not contribute to the word limit.

Entrants for the ESSA Young Entomologists' Essay Prize must satisfy ALL of the following criteria.

Entrants must be:

- Paid-up student or ordinary members of the ESSA.
- Residents, or registered as a student or postdoctoral associate/fellow, in a country within the Southern African Development Community (SADC; i.e., Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe).
- Thirty-five (35) years of age or younger on the closing date for entries.

Entries will be assessed by the ESSA Executive Committee, who may also call upon other members of the ESSA to contribute to the assessment.

Assessment will be based on the following criteria:

- Comprehension of the topic
- Clear placement of the argument within the context of southern Africa
- Originality of ideas
- Persuasiveness and coherency of the argument
- Appropriate and effective use of facts, evidence or examples
- Grammar and spelling

The winning entrant will receive a certificate and be awarded a cash prize of R2000. The winning essay will be featured in *Rostrum*, the newsletter of the ESSA. Readers of *Rostrum* will be invited to respond to the essay in the following issue. Only one prize will be made in each year that it is available.

It is understood that the winning entry contains the views and opinions of the winning entrant. These views and opinions will not necessarily reflect those of the ESSA.

There are two topics for 2025 is: “**AI in entomology: how can we use this technology in industry and academia?**” and “**The future of entomology: How can entomologists adapt to limited funding**”. You have the option of submitting an entry for either of these topics. In this essay, we encourage engagement in a manner that would be of interest to the broader entomological community.

Entries close on 30 November 2025. Entries must be sent directly to Shüné Oliver (shuneo@nicd.ac.za).



# New ESSA members

We would like to welcome new members to the society

Dawie Moelich - South African Table Grape Industry NPC

Wilma Nel - Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute

Imke Kritzinger - Villa Crop Protection

Luke Cousins - Citrus Research International

Pierre Lewis - South African Table Grape Industry NPC

Precious Mpofo - Botswana International University of Science and Technology

Keanu Martin - Stellenbosch University

## Calling all early career scientists!

Are you a keen early career entomologist (postgraduate student/ postdoctoral fellow)?

Are you interested in advancing the careers of other early career entomologists in the ESSA?

The ESSA executive committee has a vacancy in the profile of early career entomologist representative. This portfolio involves being involved with a range of initiatives that will increase the engagement of young entomologists, usually those seeking a permanent career position. This demographic has very specific needs and requires the insight of someone in this position to fully serve the needs of this group. If this sounds like something you may be interested in, or if you would like more information, please contact Dr Ashley Burke:

[ashley.burke@up.ac.za](mailto:ashley.burke@up.ac.za)



# Upcoming events

## International Congress of Dipterology

Since 1986, these Congresses have been held every four years in different locations around the world as a means of sharing research and enhancing communication among dipterists on an international scale. For nearly 40 years, these Congresses have been expertly accomplished by the Organizing Committees of each one, under the authority given by the ICD Council, an organization whose purpose is to provide continuity and direction for International Congresses of Dipterology. On 8 May 2025, the Council officially merged with the Dipterists Society, following the unanimous votes of both organizations, so from here on the Council operates as an Executive Committee of the Dipterists Society. This was a long time coming, as the first proposals for the formation of an international society of dipterology which included the Council were made in the [2008 Council meeting](#), so this merger represents the culmination of this idea.

The next ICD is the 11th (ICD XI), to be held from 10–16 July 2027 at the Westin Hotel in Zagreb, Croatia.

More information will be posted here in the near future!

To stay informed about International Congresses of Dipterology, please join the [Dipterists mailing list server](#), which is the list server for the Dipterists Society.



# Upcoming events



On behalf of the Organizing Committee of the XIII European Congress of Entomology, the French Entomological Society and the Praesidium for European Entomology, it is our great pleasure to welcome you to Tours, France, in the heart of the Loire Valley, from June 29 to July 3, 2026.

Following the long and successful tradition of previous ECE meetings – from the inaugural congress in Reading in 1978 to the vibrant gathering in Heraklion in 2023 – ECE 2026 continues to bring together the international entomological community to share knowledge, foster collaboration, and inspire future research.

Today, as the world faces profound ecological and sociological challenges, the role of insects has never been more vital – or more fascinating. Insects and their associated micro-organisms are recognized as key allies in addressing a wide range of interconnected societal issues. They provide essential ecosystem services – such as pollination, pest regulation, nutrient cycling, and soil enhancement – and increasingly contribute to sustainable food production, organic waste recycling, and the development of bio-based innovations. At the same time, they remind us of the delicate balance between benefits and risks: while some insects act as pests, vectors of disease, or invasive species, others offer powerful, nature-based solutions to foster ecosystem resilience, improve human, animal or plant health, and support the transition toward a more sustainable future.



ECE 2026 is the ideal forum for exploring this duality and the infinite diversity of insect species, evolutionary strategies, and insect-human interactions. With a rich program of plenary and keynote lectures, symposia, and poster sessions, our goal is to stimulate interdisciplinary dialogue – from fundamental science to applied innovation, from the molecular scale to global policy, and from biodiversity conservation to sustainable development.

And what better place to have these conversations than Tours? Nestled between the Loire River and an even more irresistible river of local wine, Tours offers the perfect place to explore the French art de vivre. Expect brilliant discussions by day, and equally brilliant wines and cheeses by night. Our historic city, surrounded by the stunning Loire Valley châteaux, invites you to slow down, taste, reflect, and perhaps even fall in love – with entomology all over again.

We are committed to making ECE 2026 a memorable and high-quality experience, full of engaging science, new connections, and yes – a bit of gastronomic inspiration. After all, where else can you attend a congress on insects, then toast to them with a glass of sparkling Vouvray?

We look forward to welcoming you warmly to Tours in 2026.

Bienvenue à Tours!

On behalf of the Organizing Committee,

<https://www.ece2026.org/>

<https://www.ece2026.org/important-dates>

<https://www.ece2026.org/fees-and-deadlines>





**ICE 2028**  
17th–21st JULY 2028  
**CAPE TOWN**  
ENTOMOLOGY FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Website: [www.ice2028.com](http://www.ice2028.com)



### **Featured social media:**

Website: <https://www.lepsocafrika.org/>

TikTok: #mozziedoc

### **Contributions to Rostrum**

Send all contributions for the next issue of Rostrum by email to Shüné Oliver before **1 December 2025**: [Shuneo@nicd.ac.za](mailto:Shuneo@nicd.ac.za) or contact the editor for details about the next issue.

