



MCSA
THE MOUNTAIN CLUB OF SOUTH AFRICA

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July 2025 Newsletter



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Cresta del Amici

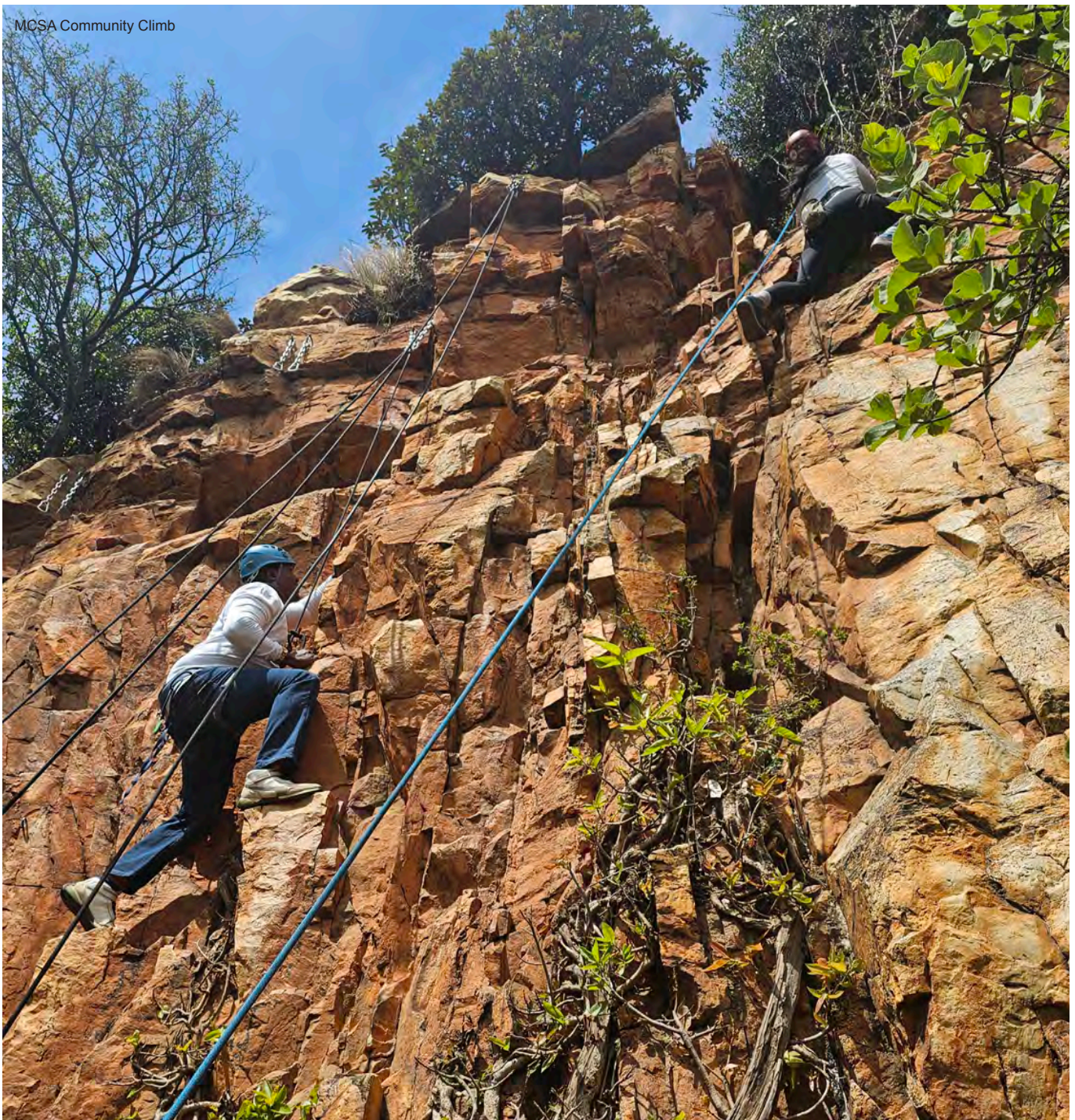
1

President's Rambles

Embarrassingly it is now over a year that we have published a National Newsletter, I trust this has been missed by all! However perhaps we have all been so active in the Mountains, there has just not been time.

Apart from the events set out below, I have been privileged to attend meets at Towerkop climbing, Leopard Trail, Magaliesberg climbing, Wilgepoort, conservation meets and a Community sports climbing meet at Strubens. A climbing highlight was the Cresta del Amici in Montagu with Tony Lourens and celebrating Tony and Bennie de Wet's joint birthday with Ed February!

If you have a solution to a common challenge or burning issue, please submit it for inclusion in the next newsletter.



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TARGA D'ARGENTO (Silver Plate) Award

You will remember that The MCSA was awarded the prestigious Targa Argento “Silver Plaque - International Alpine Solidarity Award” on Saturday 23 September 2023. On the anniversary of the Award, some members who attended the ceremony attended the 2024 Award (at own cost) to fly the MCSA flag, and support the Targa d’Argento

institution, as award winners we are welcomed back every year. The 2024 team included Steve Cooke (MSAR Head and KZN member), Andre Dalais (KZN and JHB member), Harry Loots (Amajuba member), Ernie Reibeling (JHB member) and myself. Of course while we were there we had to spend time in the Dolomites and the via ferratas of Switzerland!



Ferrata playground



Targa d'Argento Awards



Ferrata halfway breather



Ferrata in Switzerland



Attempt by Ernie and Andre

3

Vrystaat Bergklub Se 70ste Verjaarsdagvieringe (Met danke aan die “BILLIE”)



FS Section 70th Dinner

Die Vrystaat-tak het besluit om die Bergklub se 70ste verjaarsdagvieringe op Lesoba plaas, naby Fouriesburg te hou op 15 November 2024. Nelia, Anneline en Lorene het koppe bymekaargesit en 'n spyskaart is uitgewerk en voorbereidings is gedoen so 'n week voor die tyd. Ongeveer 30 lede het die funksie bygewoon. Almal het Vrydagmiddag op Lesoba gearriveer. Almal was baie opgewonde oor die naweek. Almal is teen 18h00 verwelkom met sjampanje om die naweek se vieringe af te skop. Die ouer gardes van die Bergklub wat die naweek bygewoon het, was Louis & Pat Fourie, Das en Helena Steyn, Nico & Elsa Combrink en natuurlik Anneli Vivier by wie die funksie gehou was. Paul Carstensen, president van Bergklub SA, het al die pad van Gauteng gery om ook deel te wees van die vieringe. Staaltjies is natuurlik deur Louis vertel en is daar weer baie gelag en ou herinneringe opgedelf en gedeel oor die klub. Daar is heerlijk gebraaai en gekuier die Vrydagaand om die naweek af te skop.

Die Saterdagoggend vertrek een groep na die Meiringskloof watertunnels in Fouriesburg vir 'n stap, gelei deur Anneline Swanepoel. Die tweede groep het saam met Anneli na die Dinosaur Femur op Lesoba plaas self, gaan stap en was dit baie interessant om dit te kon sien. Daarna het Nelia, Lorene en Anneli begin met die aandete om alles reg en gaar te kry vir 'n heerlike aansit-ete. Teen 15h00 die middag was daar heerlike wortelkoek en koffie om die verjaarsdag behoorlik te

vier. Teen 18h30 het almal, opgetof, weer by die lapa bymekaargekom en is daar aangesit. Nico Combrink het ons toegesprek en die geskiedenis van die klub wyd gaan haal. Baie interessante staaltjies is ook deur hom met ons gedeel. Dit was ook 'n voorreg om ons nasionale voorsitter, Paul, in ons midde te kon hê en te luister na sy praatjie. Hy was ons tak so goedgesind dat hy spesiaal vir ons elkeen bekertjies laat druk het met die embleem en “70ste verjaarsdag” daarop. Pryse was uitgedeel as volg: 40jaar+ lede van die klub aan Das & Helena Steyn en Nico Combrink; 30-39jaar se lidmaatskap aan Louis & Pat Fourie. 10 jaar toekennings is aan volgende persone gegee: Ettie Wessels; Steven Adendorff; Coen Bezuidenhout; Erika Meeding; Lorene Erwee; Nelia Venter; Anneli Viviers; Uwe Siegert

Sondagoggend het ons na die gat in die berg van Lesoba gestap en daarna vertrek almal weer huistoe na 'n baie genotvolle naweek met vol siele. More photos can be obtained on the website of the Free State Section: <https://freestate.mcsa.org/>.



MAIN: Activity to celebrate FS Section 70th
INSET: FS Section 70th Group Photo

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2025 MCSA YEA! (Young Explorers Award)

The MCSA YEA! is now in its second year, so, if you are a young, adventurous MCSA member and need funding for a trip of a lifetime head over to our national website and read up about how to sign up – the deadline for the 2026 Award is 20 November 2025.

<https://mcsa.org.za/activities/national-events/young-explorer-award/>

This year the 2025 MCSA Young Explorers Award went to Michaela Greytenbeek of KZN Section, with the aim of a Grand Traverse of the Drakensberg and doing all 104 Passes, to raise awareness about the importance of education for earth stewardship and a sustainable future.



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MCSA National Committee News

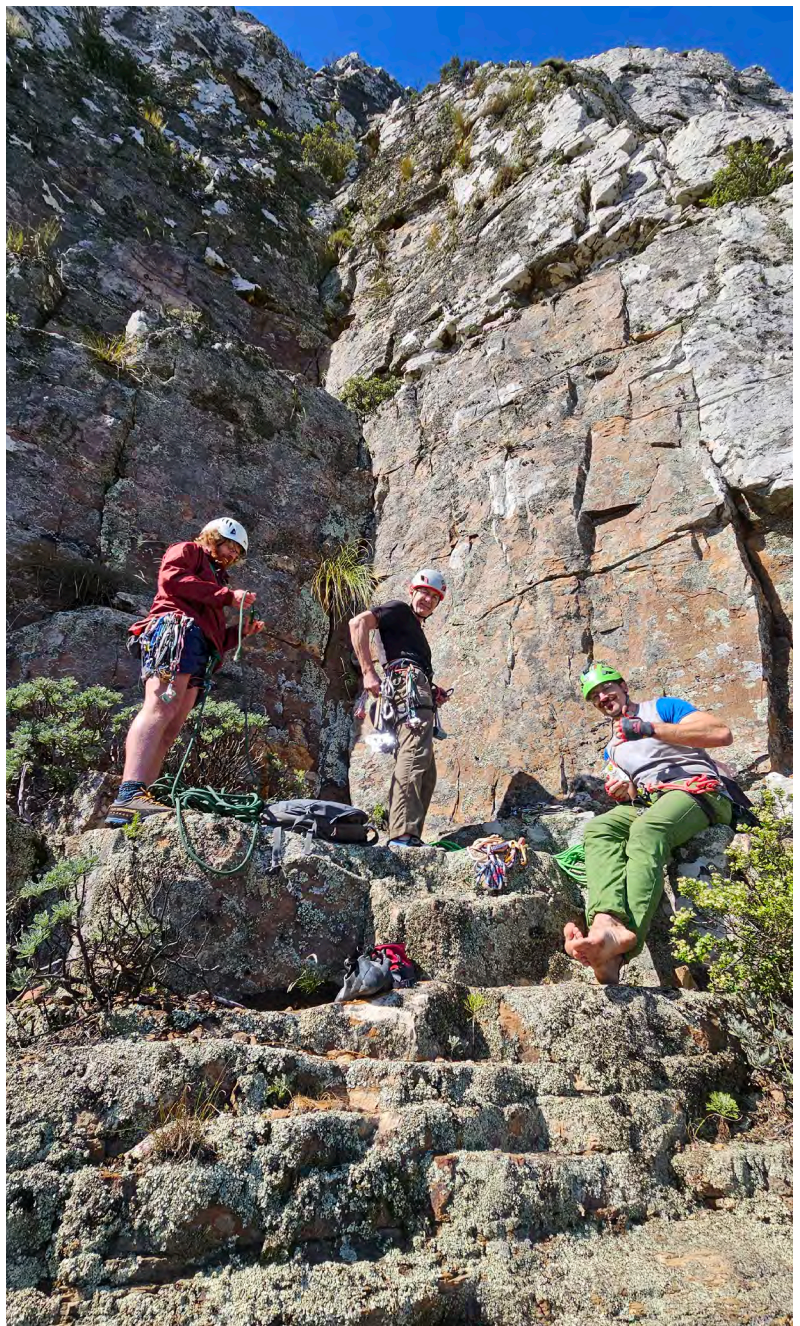
The national committee and MCSA AGM were hosted by Stellenbosch Section in May 2025, and we were privileged to enjoy accommodation at Kerrie Kwaak guest farm, meetings were held at the Stellenbosch Hotel, and activities included rock climbing on Lions Head, despite the weather. We were honoured to meet members of the Stellenbosch committee at a braai at Kerrie Kwaak after the meeting and also welcomed the new Chairs of CT: Anthea van Wieringen, and Gavin McLachlan of EP. The venue for this event was great, and we hope that other Sections will volunteer to host the AGM and NatComm meetings in May 2026. It is fantastic for Sections to meet the National Committee and for the National Committee to visit and experience the “stomping grounds” and Mountains of each Section.

By now every MCSA member should have access (through their home Section) to each MCSA journal in digital, smart/searchable format from 1895 to 2024. We also have 6 sections that have rolled out the digital membership card: Stellenbosch, Cape Town, Hottentots Holland, Worcester, Tygerberg with another two sections about to switch over.

Although long service awards (and where applicable, benefits) are Section specific and vary from Section to Section, NatComm appreciates that when members change Sections their long standing membership should still be acknowledged. So, if Sections have members who have been members of the MCSA for long periods, albeit not a particular Section, those members can now be acknowledged!



NatComm Braai



Lions Head NatComm climb

6

2024 KZN July Camp/2024 National Camp and Annual Dinner



July Camp National Dinner KZN Section

July Camp 2024 at Cobham certainly was a very different July Camp and, in many ways, was a very special camp.

Cobham had been the initial Camp Site of choice, but the Ablution Blocks had been condemned. Rikki, who has convened July Camp since 1996, was invited to attend a meeting with Mr Sihle Mkhize, Chief Executive Officer of Ezemvelo KZN, this also gave Carl Dreyer (MCSA KZN President) the opportunity to outline the objectives and activities of the Section.

After constructive discussion on more general Berg matters, the subject of the essential rebuilding of the ablution block at Cobham was raised and then the CEO stated that 'The ablution block will be rebuilt'. He thanked the Mountain Club for their generous offer of financial support.

So, July Camp returned to the delightful Cobham camp-site and KZN Section had volunteered to host the National Meet and saw it fitting to bestow this honour on July Camp. Thus, in addition to its usual role, July Camp also served as a convenient 'hub' for most of the national meet trips, with the climbing trips taking place, literally, just around the corner from base camp. Hikers on those national meet trips that departed from the July Camp base camp had the option of overnighing there with hot showers, cooked three course dinners and luxurious hot, cooked breakfasts of porridge, bacon, eggs, tomatoes, brinjals and toast! Towards the end of July Camp, the national dinner was held nearby at the Underberg Country Club with the theme 'July Camp Through The Ages'.

July Camp hosted 95 campers who camped for a total of 658 man-nights evenly spread across the



Mountain view of July Camp

10 days of the camp. There was the usual day trips, overnight trips and longer subcamps. Graham Smith, Tony van Tonder and Andre Dalais undertook escarpment trips.

Days in base camp were sunny and offered superb winter weather with crisp, chilly nights, the lowest being -7° . But all that changed, and dramatically, right at the end. The very small party of rearguard tailenders endured gale force winds during the post camp pack up. Graham and the four Ndlovus slaved at dismantling, sorting and folding all the kit and then manhandling it onto the back of the truck against the hideously strong and gusting wind.

Sincere and abundant thanks, as always, are due to the team of organisers or the 'Committee' who work so hard for many months before the camp (Graham Bruschi, Lesley, Malika Matz Parker, Caroly, Pam and Rikki). Very sadly, Lesley and Malika were unable to join us for the camp this year. Thanks also must go to the advance party who arrive at the camp-site with all the kit and food five days before the camp starts and have to get everything ready to roll (Graham Bruschi, Rev

Kev, Pam, Romi, Graham Stansell, Dave, Etienne, Marilla, Roger, Henry, Carolyn, Rikki and, of course, the four men of the Ndlovu clan, led by Jabulani and Xolani and newcomers Sifiso, and Siphoh).

So, very sadly, Rikki's sixty-two-year relationship with July Camp came to an end but we hope the spirit of July Camp can continue in some form in the future.



July Camp Rock paintings

7

SA Mountain Conference 2025

KZN Section member, Morgan Griffiths, represented MCSA at the Southern African Mountain Conference 2025, being held at the Champagne Sports Resort in the Maloti-Drakensberg. Over 320 delegates from Southern Africa, Europe and North America convened to share best practice in alpine research, management and governance. MCSA is a contributing sponsor to SAMC2025, and Morgan presented a paper on MCSA members' voluntary contributions to mountain conservation; with a focus on alien invasive plant eradication, highlighting that of the MCSA-KZN Pine Busters volunteers. Seen in the photo with Morgan (right) is Rod Quick (left) also a member of Pine Busters, who presented on the ineffectiveness of ringbarking *Pinus patula* trees in the Berg. Morgan sends his thanks to all the Sections who contributed data and photos to this showcasing of MCSA's significant amount of 'hacking' efforts over the past decade.



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UIAA News

As you are aware the MCSA sits on the UIAA Management Board as the continental representative for Africa, the MCSA is also reasonably well represented in the various working groups and UIAA commissions, but we have never had a representative on the Executive.

The UIAA Executive Committee identified Johannesburg MCSA member Saray Khumalo as a suitable candidate to join their team. The General Assembly in November 2024 overwhelmingly supported the management board's recommendation and voted to appoint Saray, who will now be the first member of the MCSA to serve in that position.

Of course this is great news for Africa, it will mean the "voice of Africa" will be heard at both the Executive Committee and Management Committee level, but it is also a feather in the cap for the MCSA. We are one of the smallest members of the UIAA and will now become one of the most influential. It is also great to have another woman of the Executive Committee!

Saray is a member of the MCSA JHB Section Committee and chairs the MCSA Community

Programme (MCP) portfolio a role which she manages with passion and efficiency.

Apart from the Saray we know, she has had a strong corporate background spanning 25 years, It is this experience that has further prompted the UIAA Exco to identify the role she could play on that body. This in addition to the fact that she is an active mountaineer, having summited Everest, five of the 7 Summits and reached the South Pole (hope I got that all correct!). She is also involved with various community programmes, the founder of Summits with a Purpose and supporting female guides in Tanzania. Her appointment to Exco will thus be of great value to the UIAA, and the MCSA.

We all wish her every success in her new role, which is a volunteer position, but as we know the busiest people have the most time!

Another milestone development is that the UIAA Management Board has recommended that the General Assembly approve the application for UIAA membership by the Fédération Congolaise d'Escalade Sportive (FCES) of the DRC, it will be fantastic to have another member from Africa on the UIAA!!

Recently through the facilitation of Saray Khumalo we met with Professors Clark and Ngobeni of University of the Free State, Clark is the Director: Afromontane Research Unit & Associate Professor: Geography (UFS-QQ).

They are known to the MCSA as UFS through its the Afromontane Research Unit is the organiser of the SA Mountain Conference which the MCSA supports.

The ARU and UFS have also been in contact with MCSA Free State through its Chair Anneline Swanepoel. The ARU is essentially a research unit but both the ARU and UFS are looking to collaborate with the MCSA.



Aspects which we discussed were as follows:

1. ARU is an active mountain node with a vibrant active mountain community in eastern FS that could link with the MCSA FS Section and this may lead to members joining MCSA;
2. Potential for a student branch of the UFS and UFS Qwa-Qwa to associate with MCSA like the arrangement many sections have with the universities in their areas.
3. Use by the MCSA of the Witsieshoek-ARU Alpine Research Base (28o45'17"S 28o52'00"E) currently comprises two resurrected buildings of the three original Namahadi Police Border Post buildings, situated at 3 069 m – at the head of the Namahadi Pass – in the Free State (Qwaqwa Maloti) component of the Maloti-Drakensberg, South Africa. <https://www.ufs.ac.za/aru/Initiatives/aru-alpine-base/>;
4. Facilitation of transfer of skills;
5. Co-operation with Community development and mountain-behaviour awareness;
6. Provision of MCSA Journals, hardcopy and digital, they already use an incomplete set and find this useful in historical research;
7. Potential to reinforce our different efforts to make African mountains more visible on the global stage, for more ownership by Africa of its mountains, enabling a community of practice (science, policy, practitioner) for African mountains, contextualised benefits for international memberships. Instruments are UIAA; Mountain Partnership (free membership; national level and institutional level; UFS via ARU is a member); International Mountain Society (research membership; ARU is a member).
8. Increase awareness of MCSA members to the mountain research projects conducted by ARU, MCSA can benefit by use of published research articles and ARU can benefit by the many “feet on the ground” the MCSA has in the mountains.
9. Co-ordination of conservation initiatives.

Thus there are also opportunities for all MCSA sections to be involved.

10 National Camp 2025

The National Camp/Meet for 2025 will take place from 3 to 12 October 2025 in the Cederberg Wilderness Area and is hosted by MCSA Tygerberg Section.

The Cederberg was proclaimed a Wilderness in 1973, and in 2004 it was inscribed as a World Heritage Site as part of the Cape Floral Region. It spans approximately 70,000 hectares of rugged mountainous terrain, showcasing awe-inspiring sandstone rock formations, such as the iconic Maltese Cross and Wolfberg Arch. The landscape is dotted with ancient San and Khoi rock art, while the mountains glow burnt-orange due to their rich iron oxide content.

The base camp for the meet will be at Sanddrif Private Holiday Resort, located on the Dwarsrivier Farm in the central Cederberg. Activities include day hikes, overnight hikes, rock climbing (Tafelberg and Truitieskraal), swimming, birdwatching, star gazing, wine and beer tasting, and the National Dinner. Sections have all received the brochures and booking forms. https://mcsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/MCSA-National-Meet-2025-Announcement_20250501.pdf



11 138 Years of Mountaineering

This is how true mountaineers celebrate their birthdays - on a mountain top. Jean Prior (left), who will be 97 in June and Ann van der Riet, whose 84th birthday it was a few weeks ago. Together they celebrate a staggering 138 years of MCSA JHB membership...an example to all of us!

12 Annapurna – Another South African First!

by Warren Eva

After 25 years of climbing together, John and I have learnt to approach mountains with patience and planning. Annapurna however reminded us that even with the best planning in the world the mountain will decide your fate.

After the normal rush to departure from home, flights across the world and meeting and greeting in Kathmandu, we were off to Pokhara and a jeep drive up to the road head.

Our approach to Annapurna north base camp was nothing short of spectacular. With some tea stops, beautiful views and two fairly easy days we arrived in our base camp at the foot of the mighty Annapurna standing still 4 000m above us.

Our plan was to attempt the summit without oxygen, making use of four camps above base camp and three acclimatisation rotations. On arriving at BC we discovered that conditions up high were extremely icy and a C4 was not going to be possible. This was our first curved ball, a summit push from C3 is a tall order with 1 700m of ascent. After returning to base camp from our first rotation to camp 2 the weather report started showing a pending storm, set to rage for two weeks and arriving in just a few days. We had no choice but to change our plans, unacclimatised for being high on an 8 000er, we chose to use oxygen above C3 for the summit push. After a couple days of rest from our rotation left for the summit. It was a now or never decision. With that much weather and snowfall, we were sure that the mountain would not be climbable afterwards. We were right.

We moved straight up to C2, spent two nights and then for our first trip to C3 the next day. This was our first exposure to the infamous couloir that has taken so many lives and tragically lived up to its name when Ngima Tashi and Rima Rinje were killed in an avalanche that narrowly missed John.

After reaching C3 safely, we rested for about four hours before leaving for the summit at 7pm on the 6th April. The climb out of C3 was technical



Warren and John climbing above camp 2 with the infamous couloir in the top left of the picture. Photo Warren Eva

with steep sections and crevasses but then a fairly straightforward albeit long way up to the summit.

John made the extremely difficult decision to turn around and abort his summit attempt. It is a decision which I respect knowing just how hard it was to make, but a sad moment to be without my climbing partner with whom I have shared so many summits.

At 9am, on the 7th of April, after 13 hours of climbing above C3, I sat on the very small summit of Annapurna together with Kaji Sherpa. We had the world spread out below us and it was a moment to remember as I held up the South African flag in the wind and cold but elated with the success against so many odds.

We were only halfway, we still had to get down and after about 15 minutes on top, we turned our attention to just that. We arrived in C3 a number of hours later and the following day moved down to base camp with heavy loads and we stripped tents and collected gear on the way down.

To spend time in the big mountains is a privilege and to have the support of family, friends and of the MCSA makes it possible. It is an honour to be part of our club with so many adventurers doing so many amazing trips. A big thank you to the MCSA for their support.

All that is left to say is..... What's next?

Warren Eva approaching the vertical pitch inside the couloir between camp 2 and camp 3. Photo John Black



13 MCSA Journal

From the journal editor:

This is an opportune time to say a few ‘thank yous’ as some milestones were achieved when MCSA Journal No. 127 for 2024 was recently signed off and sent to the printers – the 22nd MCSA journal designed and printed through TripleM Design. . . It is a pleasure working with them and they are as proud of our journal as we are! Thank you, TripleM! th birthday it was a few weeks ago.

And another very big ‘thank you’ to a loyal supporter: Ram Mountain. For over two decades you have consistently supported the publication of the MCSA Journal by placing ads - sometimes one, sometimes two - which is so much appreciated.

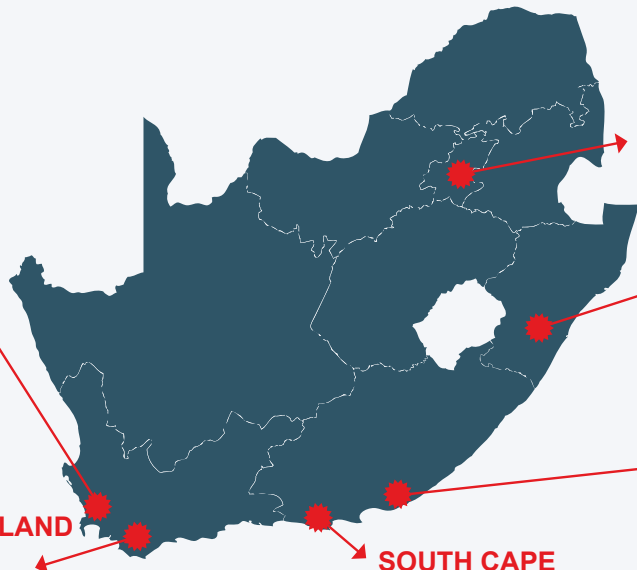
Then, of course, there are the stories and photographs from members and sometimes non-members. Well, it goes without saying that without those there wouldn’t be an MCSA Journal. It is a



wonderful resource to have, and recording the activities of the various sections through their annual reports. Let’s face it, this is the History of The Mountain Club being written, and it is inspirational. Do keep the articles coming, but without the brickbats, please.

And finally, let us not forget the folks who make up the Editing Team: your help is invaluable – ‘thank you’. Jenny Paterson.

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SECTION DETAILS

AMAJUBA	CAPE TOWN	EASTERN PROVINCE	FREE STATE	HOTTENTOTS HOLLAND
JOHANNESBURG	KWAZULU-NATAL	LIMPOPO	MAGALIESBERG	NAMIBIA
PAARL-WELLINGTON	SOUTH CAPE	STELLENBOSCH	TYGERBERG	WORCESTER



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