

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2020

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1. PRESIDENT’S RAMBLINGS

Hopefully, some of you who actually read some of my rambling streams of consciousness that pass for the sort of editorials that I write from time-to-time in these National Newsletters, will have realised that my heart lies in what might be termed “greater mountaineering”, i.e. climbing mountains in remote settings. My pandemic lock-down past-time has been scanning my old(!) expedition 35mm slides to make them suitable for presentation in on-line slide shows – both for my (long-suffering) friends and for the members of the MCSA and the wider (UIAA) group of friends that I have been fortunate enough to amass.

As I noted in the last National Newsletter, the first presentation, with a limited audience worked very well and we (in the Cape Town Section) have resolved to continue with these virtual slide shows.

It also got me to thinking about expeditions in general and how we seem to have (temporarily) lost the spark that led some of us to head off into the wilderness in many different parts of the world some years ago. There are some exceptions and our National Expeditions Sub-Committee convenor is a notable example – would that more would follow her example!

At the time of our 125th Anniversary, I put together a proposal for a trip to an almost unexplored part of the Southern Patagonian Ice Cap. This unfortunately failed to materialise in the shape that I had imagined but the idea has lain dormant with me and one or two others since then.

Ever the glutton for punishment, I have resuscitated the idea and bounced it off one or two others – both in this country and in New Zealand... The basic idea would be for a joint SA-NZ trip to the area that I have in mind, possibly with the involvement of some South American climbers as well. I have chatted with my NZ counterpart on the UIAA Management Committee and he is interested and is talking to one or two of his mates in New Zealand. The advantages of a joint party should be obvious – we tend to lack snow and ice experience and the Kiwis have that in abundance.

Let’s see where this might lead!

As I noted last time, we are slowly getting to the aims that I outlined in a previous National Newsletter and there are several things that are coming to fruition. We will have a new logo and brand identity sooner rather than later – thus bringing the Club into the 21st century in terms of “marketing”. The Journals are going to be digitised as far as is possible

given the various regulations that surround that exercise. Watch this space for more news on these fronts!

And again, do look at some of the links that are provided in the sections below – there are some really interesting bits and pieces as well as ideas for future trips...

2. COVID-19 REGULATIONS

We are now elevated to Stage 2 of the lock-down regulations and it does appear that if we are vigilant and adhere to the rules, we may well be able to operate within the “new normal”. Several Sections of the Club have commenced with their modified meets programmes and huts and Club properties are being opened up on a limited basis. This is in line with various other organisations, e.g. SANParks.

As has been noted, we as an organisation, need to be seen to be following the rules otherwise we may well damage our Club’s image in the eyes of government and of the vast bulk of the people of this country. So please bear with us as we attempt to improve the situation as much as we can.

PLEASE STAY SAFE!!!

2.1 ANNOUNCING MCSA SPRING CAMP 2020

As part of the easing of the lock-down, we are pleased to note that the Paarl-Wellington Section will (hopefully) be going ahead with their National Meet in part celebration of their big anniversary this year.

MCSA Paarl-Wellington is excited to invite you to Spring Camp 2020 hosted in the Hawequas (meaning “Man in the Mountain”) mountains during the long weekend of 23-27 September.

Base camp will be set up at the Hawequas Scouts Adventure Centre. The Paarl/Wellington area is known for its heritage and various cultural walks are planned. Various family-friendly hikes will start from the Adventure Centre and for the more adventurous we’ll link up with other trails.

Every evening we will get together for a bring and braai and share the experiences of the day, followed by a briefing on the following day's hikes. On the last evening we will conclude with a spit braai to celebrate the epic adventures of Spring Camp. The Adventure Centre is fully compliant with COVID protocols and participants can choose either camping or dorm accommodation with (spaced) bunks. A day pass is available to accommodate members residing locally.

Prices are:

- Day visitors @ R300 (for the full 4 days hikes)
- Camping @ R400 (4 nights)
- Bunk beds @ R500 (4 nights)
- Children < 12 years are half price.
- Spit braai @ R150

Day visitors have access to facilities during the day and are welcome to join for the braai and kuier in the evening.

We invite all members of the MCSA to join us for this wonderful camp. Since numbers are limited to just 50 participants booking is essential!

Please book at: <https://www.mcsapw.co.za/springcamp2020booking>

3. UIAA UPDATE

The UIAA continues most of its normal activities with numbers of initiatives on the go. Members are urged to go to the UIAA web site - <https://www.theuiaa.org/> - for more information plus a load of other useful data.

3.1 COVID-19

The UIAA, through its Covid-19 Crisis Consultation (CCC) Taskforce continues to provide guidance to its member organisations. While some of the content is not strictly applicable to the MCSA in our situation here at the foot of Africa, there are some good general guidelines that bear at least a cursory glance.

“As the pandemic evolves, the UIAA is focusing more on providing guidance related to general topics (travel, global climbing restrictions and trends, huts) rather than updates about the specific status of individual countries and members. The UIAA Covid-19 portal remains the ‘go-to’ resource for all the latest information.”

Specific information on particular countries is available on the UIAA web site and anyone contemplating an overseas trip is urged to go to these data for an up-date.

3.2 UIAA PUBLISHES 2018 CARBON FOOTPRINT CALCULATION

As part of its commitment to tackling climate change and reducing its own CO₂ emissions, the UIAA has published its first annual Carbon Footprint Calculation.

This report, covering 2018, outlines the ongoing results of monitoring and reporting of the UIAA’s carbon footprint, which is in response to its signed commitment in early 2019 and participation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Sports for Climate Action.

This might be something that the MCSA might attempt to emulate. Please go to <https://www.theuiaa.org/mountaineering/uiaa-publishes-2018-carbon-footprint-calculation/> for more information. Any volunteers..??!!

3.3 MOUNTAIN NETWORK SERIES

I am pleased to report that our “experiment” with an on-line slide show, was well-received in UIAA circles and it seems that further presentations of this type may well take place. One idea is that the various UIAA Commissions, e.g. Medical, Safety, etc. will present from-time-to-time – as per the extract from the UIAA web site below:

“Another type of online meeting which is proving increasingly successful as a concept for international federations are talks and workshops, or better webinars. The UIAA is keen to embrace this idea with the support of its members. Earlier this month, the Cape Town Section of the Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA) hosted an online seminar about an expedition to San Lorenzo in the late 1970s. Led by UIAA Management Committee member and MCSA President Greg Moseley, and through the platform of the UIAA, the session drew together experts from different continents including famed Argentinian climber Rolando Garibotti.”

3.4 2019 UIAA MOUNTAIN PROTECTION AWARD

Following on from the last news-letter, there have been further developments on this front. There are now two tentative proposals for an MCSA entry into the prestigious

Mountain Protection Award and both would appear to be worthy contenders – more next time.

3.5 SUNCREAM AND CLIMBING GEAR

This is an interesting topic for those of us here in sunny South Africa and the following guidelines – or in this case, lack of them - have been put out by the UIAA:

”UIAA SafeCom: What effects certain substances have on the performance of rope is an interesting topic.

Having said that, nylon products like ropes, slings and cords are the ones to be concerned about with respect to exposure to sunscreen and/or insect repellents. SafeCom does not envisage any reason why metal products would be attacked, with respect to any likely contact with a small amount of sunscreen.

For nylon used in climbing items, it is well known that some chemicals, like sulphuric acid – even in very small amounts and even as a vapour – can lead to climbing rope failure (sadly there have been accidents and fatalities due to this). And that whilst SafeCom doubts there is sulphuric acid in sunscreen, or other sprays and lotions (such as insect repellent), there might well be a chemical presence in some brands that does attack nylon. For instance, it is known that certain types of insect repellent can damage plastics, and might be prone to attack nylon climbing equipment too.

Therefore, as would seem common sense, SafeCom recommends that climbers do their best not to get sunscreen or other lotions and sprays on any climbing gear, and especially not on nylon products. Sunscreen designed for lips needs to be safe to swallow in small quantities, therefore as a rough rule of thumb is probably not going to be aggressive enough to attack your rope.

SafeCom does not currently have the resources to investigate further, but would welcome research into the following suspicion: sunscreens that contain alcohol, or other solvents that evaporate, are probably more aggressive than those that are in effect zinc oxide-based.

Furthermore, sunscreen can be very debilitating if entering one’s eyes through perspiration, and then made worse by rubbing eyes, especially if hands still have suncream on them. Is it advisable to carry a handkerchief or glasses cloth for this purpose and to wash/cleanse hands after applying suncream.”

4. ASIAN ALPINE E-NEWS

I cannot but repeat what I say every time- the Club continues to receive this fascinating newsletter and I urge Club members to investigate the latest editions – and the previous issues – at https://asian-alpine-e-news.com/asian_alpine_e-new_issue_no74.pdf

5. MOUNTAIN RESEARCH INITIATIVE

Another interesting site is the Mountain Research Initiative (<https://mailchi.mp/mountainresearchinitiative.org/mri-july-2020-newsletter?e=85c7433ba2>).

An interesting paper on this web site is – “How the COVID-19 pandemic is teaching us to tackle the climate crisis” Worth a look if you have a passing interest in climate change...

6. FACEBOOK AND WEB PAGES

6.1 National: abbreviated link for the national MCSA Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/MCSA125/

6.2 Links for all the sections' web pages are on the MCSA national webpage.

7. NEWSWORTHY ITEMS

Please send any newsworthy items for inclusion in MCSA National News Letter to Greg Moseley at: moseleyg@zsd.co.za

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

“Because it is there” does not really hack it – but it is probably the best reason that we have!