

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2020

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1. PRESIDENT’S NEWS

As we approach the end of what has been a difficult year for the whole world, it behooves us to reflect on how we have come through – or are still going through – the Covid-19 pandemic.

While climbing mountains may seem like a frivolous pursuit when compared with peoples’ struggles just to survive, not least in our own country, my personal view is that the mountains can and provide an outlet for the frustrations of corona virus living. Being able to get out into the mountains and breathe the free (healthy) air is a real privilege and one that we should not take for granted.

Of course, various parts of the country are in a greater or lesser privileged position and those of us in Cape Town are in a hugely advantageous situation being able (almost) to walk outside our back door and on to the mountain. But we are blessed with a variety of mountain environments in South Africa and I hope that you have all managed to get out there at least in a limited manner. Other countries have battled more than we have!

I congratulate all Sections of the Club for keeping the proverbial flag flying and providing a necessary outlet for all our members. It is also remarkable that, here in Cape Town, the mountains are almost more crowded than was the case prior to the start of the pandemic. Whether this turns out to be a good thing or a bad thing is up to us. As has often been said – never let a good crisis go to waste!

John Donne said it best – “Any man's death diminishes me” – and it certainly is the case with the news that came through a few days ago of the passing of Doug Scott. He was certainly one of the greatest climbers of the recent past and a great guy as well. I had the privilege of getting to know Doug reasonably well over the last few years as he usually attended the UIAA General Assemblies. He was part of the High Mountain Working Group of the UIAA, convened by your President, and I sincerely hope that we can carry on the work that Doug instigated in 2014. More about that at a later date. But first and foremost, Doug was a climber’s climber. The stuff he did was inspirational and I really hope that we can carry on his legacy at least in some way.

In his younger days, he was perhaps the ultimate climbing anarchist – read Mike Thompson’s delightful piece, “Out with the boys again” for a portrait of Doug on the way to Everest’s South-west Face with Bonington *et al.* In later years, his climbing and his charitable work showed a good use of his celebrity – would that more people used it that way!



2. JOURNAL FOR 2020 - CONTRIBUTIONS

This is further call for members to submit articles for inclusion in the 2020 Journal. You may have something of historic value suitable for publication and if you do, please submit that for consideration.

Deadline for submissions is 31 January 2021. The Guidelines, Style-Sheet and a photo template can be found on the national website: <https://mcsa.org.za/about/journal/> or ask the editor for these to be sent to you. Submissions – as WORD documents – to be sent to jennyapaterson@gmail.com

3. COVID-19 UPDATE

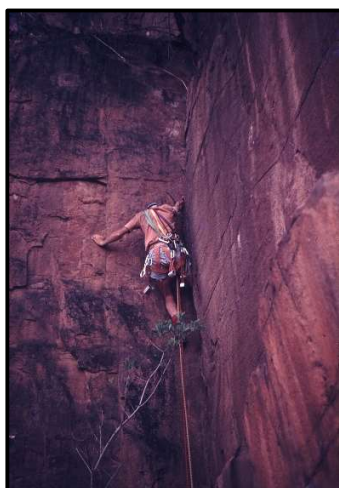
Well, I said last month that we are now in a state of near-normality – I got that wrong!! We are indeed experiencing the “second wave” that much of the northern hemisphere seems to be suffering.

But it does seem that we can get out there climbing mountains and enjoying all the activities that this Club of ours offers in all parts of the country. I think that we have all learned a great deal about a number of things over the last few months – and not all of it negative, I might add! We have, for instance learned that we can still operate via video-conferencing and even improve the communications on which we rely. But none of that is a substitute for the real thing!

We are out there again! But...

PLEASE STAY SAFE!!!

And look carefully at the guidelines and (necessary) regulations so that we can all enjoy the Club and its amenities.



4. 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.

4.1 INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN DAY

United Nations' International Mountain Day (IMD) – 11 December – the UIAA promoted a series of initiatives. These included those led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UIAA member associations, Mountain Partnership, the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI) as well as those organised by the UIAA itself.

As of 2003, IMD has been observed every year to create awareness about the importance of mountains to life, to highlight the opportunities and constraints in mountain development and to build alliances that will bring positive change to mountain peoples and environments around the world.

Mountain biodiversity was the theme of this year's IMD. Mountains loom large in some of the world's most spectacular landscapes. Their unique topography, compressed climatic zones and isolation have created the conditions for a wide spectrum of life forms. Notably here in South Africa of course.



The International Climbing & Mountaineering Federation:
Over 50 years at the forefront of Mountain Protection

#mountainmatter

 **UIAA** International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation
UNION INTERNATIONALE DES ASSOCIATIONS D'ALPINISME

**11 December**
International MOUNTAIN DAY
2020

4.2 UIAA MEDCOM CONTRIBUTES TO COVID-19 AND MOUNTAINEERING PAPER

The UIAA Medical Commission, primarily its President Urs Hefti, have contributed to a new paper 'SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19 & mountain sports: specific risks, their mitigation and recommendations for policy makers'. The publication is one of the first dedicated to Covid-19 and outdoor/mountain sports.

A summary of the draft paper is available [here](#). The full draft paper can be [downloaded from the Mountaineering Scotland website](#).

Although the paper is still to be finalised, given the immediacy and global prevalence of Covid-19, the authors have agreed to make its current version available online and they welcome constructive feedback. The project is a collaboration of international scientists and mountaineers from Scotland/UK, Germany, Switzerland and the USA.

The paper tackles the following areas:

- General information about Covid-19 the disease
- Virus behaviour and how it spreads
- Risk in participating in outdoor/mountain sports
- Measures governmental authorities have implemented
- Risk participating in outdoor/mountain sports compared to different risk levels in society
- How to reduce risk when participating in outdoor/mountain sports

The authors draw the following conclusion:

“Searches of the internet and the medical literature, and consultation with mountaineering associations, have revealed minimal evidence for transmission of SARS-CoV-2 during participation in outdoor mountain sports. This is consistent with published evidence showing that in general outdoor acquired SARS-CoV-2 infections are rare (Leclerc and others 2020; Qian and others 2020; Swinkels 2020). We conclude that the risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection during outdoor mountain sport activities is low. We emphasise however that some situations indoors or in confined spaces linked to the practice of mountain sports (such as use of busy public transport to mountain areas, stays in mountain huts, and mountain uplift) present risks for SARS-CoV-2 infections. These risks can be mitigated by avoiding high risk situations and taking common sense measures such as practicing good hygiene, appropriate use of face masks and above all maintaining social distancing as much as possible. These principles are applicable to many other outdoor sports and activities that do not of themselves involve close human contact, such as low-level walking, running, cycling, water sports, golf, and angling. At times when additional pressure on the health service must be minimised, it is important do practice any outdoor sport at a level well within one’s competence to reduce the chance of accidents. It is also essential to minimize the risk of introduction of the virus into low prevalence communities from higher prevalence areas by rigorously maintaining social distancing with respect to the local population. When designing interventions to limit spread of the virus, we suggest policy makers should take note of the generally low risk posed by mountain sport participation, along with the detrimental effects of limiting outdoor sports on the physical and mental health of large sections of the population”

4.3 UIAA FEATURES IN VOLUME 75 OF THE HIMALAYAN JOURNAL

First published in 1929 with the mission *'To encourage and assist Himalayan travel and exploration, and to extend knowledge of the Himalaya and adjoining mountain ranges through science, art, literature and sport,'* The Himalayan Journal continues to provide compelling and interesting content on an annual basis.

The recently released 75th edition of The Journal includes three articles written by three people with a close association with the UIAA.

- **Steve Long**, President of the UIAA Training Panel, in an article 'Training the UIAA Way' presents the UIAA's approach to training, its mountain leadership courses offered to member federations, and details some of the successful recent training programmes.
- **Tom Nakamura**, Honorary Member of the UIAA, a renowned explorer, cartographer and photographer, reminisces about his travels in Eastern Tibet and debates the topic of whether there are parts of the mountain world still to discover.
- **George Rodway**, member of the UIAA Medical Commission (and its former President), writes about the prevention and treatment of frostbite. Advice presented in the article aligns with that addressed both by the UIAA Medical Commission in its [high-altitude papers](#) and in the [UIAA Alpine Summer Skills Handbook](#).

Volume 75 can be downloaded [here](#).

The Himalayan Journal Archives

- The Himalayan Journal Volume 1 (published in 1928) to Volume 65 are available to view on [The Himalayan Club website](#).
- This website is currently being revamped. Newer volumes and more interactive versions will be uploaded shortly.
- UIAA member associations interested in viewing PDF or digital versions of the volumes that are not on [The Himalayan Club website](#) (volume 66 onwards) can contact office@theuiaa.org. Digital versions can be made available on request.
- [The Himalayan Club](#) is currently accessing the feasibility of introducing a fee for future access to its archives.

4.4 2019 UIAA MOUNTAIN PROTECTION AWARD

As previously noted, there will be two proposals for an MCSA entry into the prestigious Mountain Protection Award and both would appear to be worthy contenders. Following on from the last news-letter, we will start driving these projects forward so we get out entry in timeously.

The two projects are our national outreach programme with a number of sections involved and the alien vegetation-clearing initiative – largely in the fynbos regions but also elsewhere in South Africa.

5. FLORADOC

Do you enjoy looking at the flowers as you roam the mountains, but don't want to carry books with you to identify them? Anyway, none of the books available show more than about 800 of the more than 2300 species on the Peninsula. However, the FloraDoc app has

photos of more than 1600 of these, and brief descriptions from the literature of all of them - and you don't need to connect to the internet to see them.

If you are not familiar with the basics of the flora – like perhaps not recognising that what you are seeing is an Erica, or that the daisy family is Asteraceae, then this app is not for you, but if you know that what you are seeing is an Orchid then all you have to do to identify your flower is to scroll through the Orchidaceae.

FloraDoc is available from both the iStore and GooglePlay at R270, with the profits going to Friends of Silvermine for conservation of our environment.

Queries: Corinne Merry - bmerry@iafrica.com

6. MOUNTAIN RESEARCH INITIATIVE

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

7. FACEBOOK AND WEB PAGES

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

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

8. NEWSWORTHY ITEMS

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

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

Let's not mince words: Everest doesn't attract a lot of well-balanced folks. The psychological circuitry of most Everest climbers makes it hard as hell for us to quit, even when it's obvious we should

Greg Child in 1996! Even more true today...