



**MCSA**  
THE MOUNTAIN CLUB OF SOUTH AFRICA

EXPLORE • DISCOVER • CONNECT • PROTECT

## September 2023 Newsletter



# Contents

1	President's Rambles	3
2	TARGA D'ARGENTO (Silver Plate) Award	3
3	2023 Free State National Mini Camp	4
4	MCSA National Committee News	5
5	Diversity and Transformation	6
6	SuperTramp Award	7
7	Meet Our Supporters, Sponsors & Partners	7
8	UIAA General Management Committee	8
9	Kromrivier Hut 70th: Die Groot Viering (By Kuba)	8
10	Whatsapp Groups: Scourge or Management Tool? (Thoughts of a Solution by Elsie: PW Meets Co-ordinator)	10
11	Confederation of African Mountain Clubs	11
12	MCSA KZN July Camp 2023	11

Main gully Wolfberg. Photo Garreth Bird

# 1

## President's Rambles

Due to the reduced number of National Newsletters this newsletter is packed, and we now struggle to find a place for all the events and news!!

If you have a solution to a common challenge or burning issue, let us help you get it off your chest! Please submit it for inclusion in the next newsletter.

# 2

## TARGA D'ARGENTO (Silver Plate) Award

The MCSA has been awarded the prestigious Targa Argento "Silver Plaque - International Alpine Solidarity Award".

Since 1972, a Committee set up in Pinzolo Italy, in the Alps, annually awards the prestigious International Award, now in its 52nd edition, to a person or entity. Thanks to a special Statute, the awarding of the prize for Alpine solidarity is regulated, with a vision that goes far beyond the scope of those who have dedicated so much of their lives to the Alpine Rescue, to extend to all those who have distinguished themselves in helping people in

difficulty in the mountains, to civilians and soldiers who have worked in risky rescue operations, to mountain guides, doctors and service managers, firefighters, technicians, even journalists engaged in witnessing the culture and the correct way to approach the alpine environment.

The handover ceremony of the 2023 Award takes place on Saturday 23 September 2023, in the presence of numerous political, military and religious personalities and various delegations from all over the world.

Stretcher transport Narrow crack.  
Photo Garrreth Bird



# 3

## 2023 Free State National Mini Camp

The 2023 National Camp was hosted by MCSA Free State Section at Balloch farm, Reedsdell farm and Lyons Den areas near Barkley East. What an amazing week with wonderful people! Mountaineering is a way to connect with nature and often gives us pause to reflect on our lives and relationships, and at time to suffer! However, majestic mountains and impenetrable woods often stir something deep inside!!

Our grateful thanks to Anneline and her Team for the exceptional organisation, their commitment and contribution to a remarkably successful Camp and Dinner which was a fitting tribute to and celebration of the Free State Section, the MCSA and the Mountains.

The Camp reflected the true “spirit” of the mountains and the environment. Songs, Campfires and jovial company of rough mountaineers! The MCSA National dinner, which was held at Wartrail Country Club, was delicious. I had never hiked in that area and was awestruck by the magnificence of the Witteberg Mountains. This, notwithstanding that on our last morning our tents were covered with a thin layer of sheet-ice!!

More photos can be obtained on the brand-new website of the Free State Section: <https://freestate.mcsa.org.za/>





## 4 MCSA National Committee News

The national committee and MCSA AGM were hosted by PW Section in May 2023, and we were privileged to enjoy scrumptious meals, comfortable accommodation and spectacular day walks provided by our gracious hosts of PW. The positive, sometimes robust, passionate interaction between the Chairs of each section was an inspiration. The Hawequas Scout Adventure Centre was the perfect venue for this event, and we hope that other Sections will volunteer to hold the 2024 AGM and NatComm meeting in May 2024. 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 2021. The digital membership cards and MCSA App are the next on the ‘hitlist’.



# 5

## Diversity and Transformation

How do we meet our Objectives and implement our Strategic Plan? How do we achieve diversity and transformation? These are amongst the discussions we have been having at NatComm. Each section must consider the (sometimes uncomfortable) questions which we have below, take a step back and ask is the Section meeting the MCSA's Objects/Vision/Mission? Considering that:

1. The Objects of the MCSA state that we “conduct all its activities in a manner that is for the benefit of, and widely accessible to, the **general public**;
2. Our Vision is: “A South Africa where **everyone** has access to responsible mountaineering”.
3. Our Mission is: “To be the home of **all mountaineers** in South Africa”.
4. We have some 6000 members in 15 sections.
5. The Club membership still consists of mainly the white and/or middle-class members of society and although some progress is being made, the MCSA is not yet representative of the South African community;
6. Since 1994 the government special concessions which the Club historically enjoyed have not been continued.
7. Only our Community Engagement and Rescue activities get government approval and funding;
8. SA citizens and mountaineers do not have the public “Right to Roam” such as members of the public enjoy in some countries such as the UK;
9. Safety and security issues have made access to mountain land more difficult;
10. Costs of Club land and huts including insurance and rates and taxes, makes it impractical to allow free or even commercial use by the public;
11. Sections have different approaches towards sharing land with other clubs and the general public.

So we, as MCSA members, must ask ourselves and our Sections:

1. What must the MCSA, and each Section do to remain relevant in the society we live in?
2. What must the MCSA do to retain its status with DSAC?
3. Do Sections liaise with the other mountain or hiking clubs in their area, particularly new initiatives that are springing up after Covid?
4. What is the racial “make-up” of the hiking community in our area compared to our Section?
5. Are our Community Engagement programmes creating beneficial close links and associations with other entities?
6. Should the MCSA aspire to act as an “Umbrella body” like the BMC/Sierra Club etc?
7. In short how does National and each Section plan to practically give effect to our Objects, Vision and Mission?
8. How is each section achieving our Strategic Initiatives?
9. I know these are not new, but our Strategic Plan is, so we need to restate and re-engage!

## 6 SuperTramp Award

The revived Supertramp Award 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 2024 Award is 30 November 2023.

<https://mcsa.org.za/supertramp-award/>



## 7 Meet our Supporters/Sponsors/Partners

Although our partners and sponsors all appear on the MCSA websites and have from time to time been featured in these newsletters, it still appears that a number of members are not aware of the fact that discounts and support is available!



**Camp and Climb** offer a 5% discount on any purchase of climbing gear to MCSA members. Camp and Climb has been supplying South Africa with camping equipment for many years, and offer a great range backed up by service excellence and friendly advice. As one of the top tent suppliers in South Africa, they stock everything you could possibly need, from quality leading brand names like Tentco, Stanley, Oztrail, Petzl, & Coleman. As one of SA's top online camping stores, you are able to purchase a wide range of camping and climbing equipment and have it delivered to your doorstep nationwide.

Mountain  
Mail Order

**Mountain Mail Order** offer MCSA a 10% discount to members with an up-to-date membership card. Established way back in 1994 when 'mail order' was still around, Mountain Mail Order has grown into South Africa's premium outdoor online gear store with nationwide delivery to your door. Created by adventurers, for adventurers, they stock only the best gear from brands they personally trust. Their dedicated team consists of highly knowledgeable outdoor lovers, armed with the technical expertise and practical experience to equip you with the gear that works best for you. The physical branches of Mountain Mail Order are housed at the CityROCK climbing gyms in Johannesburg, Irene and Cape Town.

## 8

## UIAA General Management Committee

A management committee of the UIAA was held from 5 to 7 May 2023 in Leeds. The management committee meeting itself was held on Friday, 5 May 2023 with commission meetings being held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. These included the youth, legal, safety and training commissions.

The meeting was held in conjunction with the annual meetings of the BMC and the EUMA.

The income of the UIAA relies equally on member fees and on the income received from the safety commission and the anti-doping commission as the main income earners. There are also sponsors such as Petzl and Bally, although Bally sponsorship has recently been reduced.

The main business was the election of new commission members (the commissions are the working groups of the UIAA) and these included Legal Affairs, Medical, Mountain Protection, Safety, Training and Youth. **Greg Mosley**, past president

of the MCSA was elected as the chair of the Mountaineering Commission, and congratulations are in order. The MCSA is represented on most of the commissions.

The climate change task force remained a high profile and its objective is to be able to provide constructive assistance to members to measure and reduce their carbon footprint by 50% by 2030.

The Ice Climbing Working Group, which took over from the defunct ice climbing commission, has revitalised ice climbing competitions and has included more athlete participation and has received positive reaction and is growing in numbers despite the exclusion of athletes from Russia.

An important note was that the Mountain Association of Montenegro was approved by the management committee as a UIAA member. There are constantly applications for membership.

## 9

## Kromrivier Hut 70th - Die Groot Viering (By Kuba)

The Kromrivier Hut is situated in the Du Toits Kloof Mountains, in the Limietberg Cape Nature Reserve. The Paarl/Wellington section made a deal in 1952 with the then Department of Forestry, to build a hut, allowing access to this wonderful mountain area. The hut is built of stone and was completed in 1953. We are fortunate that one of our members, Willem De Villier's father was on the committee when the hut was designed and built. Willem found the original plans printed on linen. At the ceremony we put up a framed copy of the plans in the hut.

There were many months of planning the Viering, and we were fortunate in being able to co-ordinate it with the National Committee meeting that was hosted by the Paarl/Wellington Section, at Hawequas Scout Adventure Centre. This provided



Old climbing buddies - Mike Scott and Pau Carstensen. Photo Mike Scott

the opportunity for Chairs of the various sections to join us for the celebration on Sunday 21 May, at the hut.

We had a plan to fly senior members of the club to the hut, for the celebration, by helicopter. In the week leading up we all watched the weather forecasts, and it became apparent that the weather gods were not going to be on our side. On Saturday morning we pulled the plug and will reschedule this part of the celebration to later in the year.

The day dawned rainy with low cloud and a cold wind blowing. Nonetheless, members and guests started the 2,5 km walk to the hut, carrying a beautiful birthday cake, eats, toddlers on their backs to congregate at the hut. The rain stopped, it warmed up and the chairman of Paarl/Wellington

welcomed all and gave a short speech. Our President, Paul Carstensen, was invited to say a few inspirational words. Paul reminded us how fortunate we were to have a Gold Badge Member in our midst, Mike Scott and his wife Doreen, who are members of the Paarl/Wellington section as well. Paul called for a moments silence, for Mervyn Prior, who had recently passed on. The guests then congregated inside the hut where the “Little People” of the club helped the chairman light the candle on the cake. “Happy Birthday” was sung, and the eating began! A wonderful day was had, rekindling friendships, swapping stories and making new friends – a true mountain experience for all!



Kuba holds the original hut plans. Photo Mike Scott



## Whatsapp Groups: Scourge or Management Tool? (Thoughts of a Solution by Elsie: PW Meets Co-ordinator)

As young adults my husband and friends relied heavily on books to lead us into the mountains. Ours were always a little out of date because we always got them second hand at a charity shop or church bazaar. Sometimes we could not even find the starting point of the hike, and we got lost many, many times. We were delighted to hear about MCSA.

I remember getting the Quarterly hiking program from MCSA in the post, complete with the postal address of the leader (and a landline number if you're lucky). Apart from MCSA I was not aware of any active hiking clubs which were not associated

with colleges and universities. If you were a young active "outdoorsy" adult then MCSA was the club for you, that way you were guaranteed a leader who knew the route and could tell you where you were.

Up until about ten years ago the club meets and weekends were very popular, but in the last decade the number of participants has not increased much. (Some section members claim that numbers have actually dropped, I have not personally researched that). Being on the MCSA PW committee I did my own bit of research and asking around; this is what I heard:

1. Mountain biking has escalated in popularity in the last decade. Many families with school-going kids believe that this is a better family sport than hiking, I disagree entirely, (not many family discussions can happen while you are cycling), but kids do love it and you can't argue with numbers.
2. The cost of fuel has become a factor that needs to be taken into account.
3. There are many walks and hikes that can be done without a leader, people are getting the information on AllTrails and any cellphone with location and "Maps" can take you to your starting point. There's also a lot of good hiking apps available; if you have not downloaded MAPS.ME (or a similar app) then I wonder why not.
4. There are many local hiking clubs now and some hikers are members of three or more clubs.
5. Almost every keen hiker (Young and Old) is also on more than one private WhatsApp hiking group.

The groups have telling names: "My hike group, Mountain Madness, Net Ons Mense, Wild, Lizzie's Group, Radical Rocks, Draken Roete, Dog Walkers, Wild Camping" and thousands more. Point 5 seems to be the biggest contributing factor for the decline in MCSA meets participation in recent years. So if you can't beat them then join them, as the old saying goes; MCSA PW created its own group and this is how it works:

1. It's called "Short Notice Hikes" and items that have been on the program for weeks may not be added unless the date changes or last minute cancellations make space available again.
2. Only MCSA members may be added.
3. Before being added, you complete an indemnity/waiver.
4. Any member who is familiar with an area and wants people to join him/her on a hike may post the information.
5. Group participants may not comment or ask for detailed information on the group, and interested parties must contact the leader personally.
6. No Photos or "Thank-you's" may be posted on or after the hike.
7. The PW Short Notice group now has over seventy participants and works well. From time to time, I still have to contact people personally to remind them of the last two points. This might sound a bit unfriendly, but it is amazing how quickly the "Happy Birthdays", and "Sorry to have missed it", slips in, and the first people to get irritated and leave are the busy youngsters, exactly the people that the club needs to thrive.

## Confederation of African Mountain Clubs

There is some concern on the UIAA Management Committee that the continent of Africa is poorly represented, but we hope this will be addressed through the Confederation of African Mountain Clubs. The MCSA is the representative of Africa.

Sierra Leone has applied for UIAA membership and recently the CAMC membership has grown to include Zambia, and Sierra Leone will also be approached to join the CAMC.

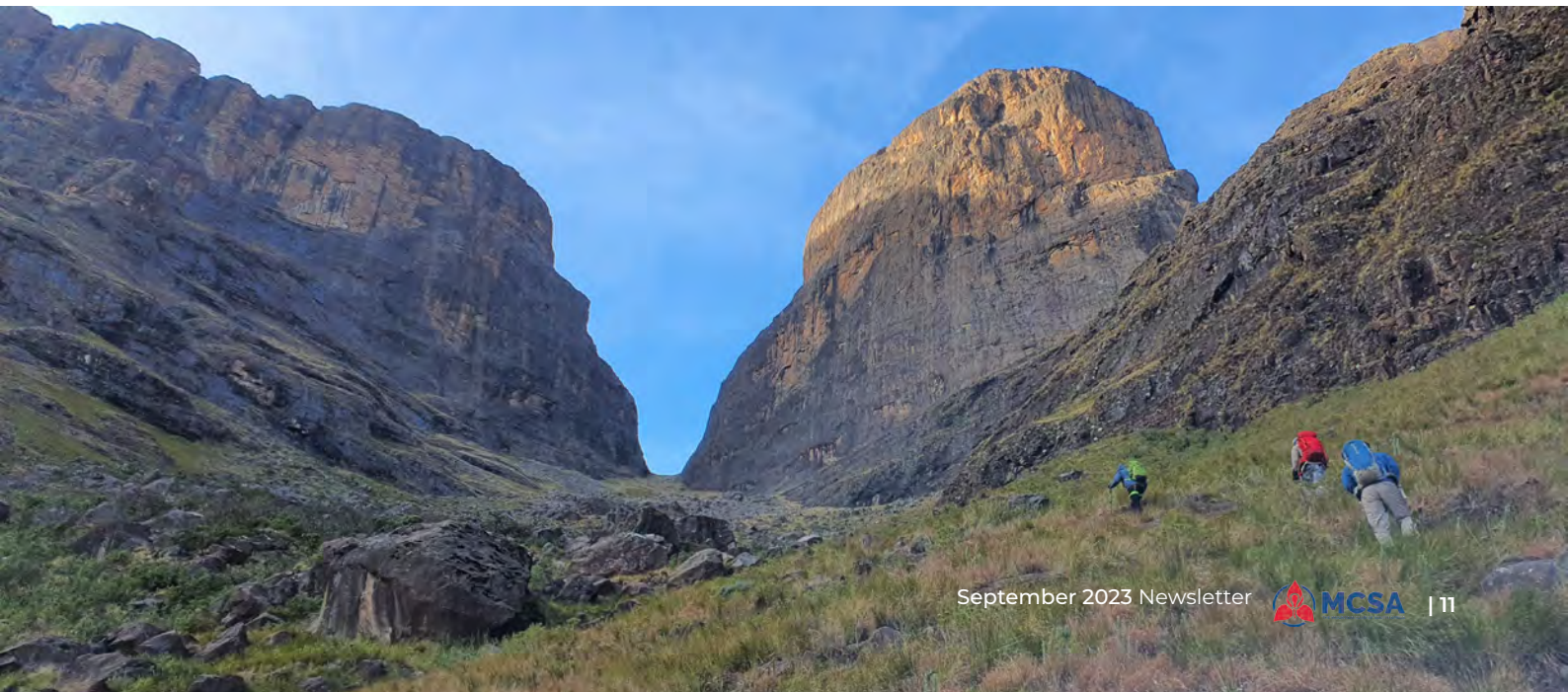
## MCSA KZN: July Camp 2023

This year’s July Camp, the 102<sup>nd</sup> Camp, was held at Monks Cowl and members explored the Cathkin/ Champagne Castle Area. This was our first time (in 103 years) in the Central Drakensberg area and there were many day and overnight hikes and direct routes to the escarpment. Even Rock Climbing was on the programme! The Camp offered dramatic and scenically rugged terrain with lush forests and exhilarating experiences in the Little Berg. Campfires, singsong, and often a wee dram of whisky to sooth parched throats. The Camp for the first time offered a self-catering option, but the traditional “full catering” was still available and included hearty open fire meals at Base Camp and often Campers were able to enjoy a plate of “seconds”!!

A small but hardy group from the Johannesburg Section attempted the South Gully Route on Cathkin, but in Berg tradition were turned back,



by snow and ice on the climb (well that’s our story, and we are sticking to it!!) But two nights at Keith Bush (which is somewhere near the bottom of Greys Pass, although a little elusive to find) made the effort worthwhile. Although I was reminded of the words of John Krakauer: “Mountaineering is like fun, only different”. We express our grateful thanks to Rikki, Graham, Malikah and the Team for their remarkable commitment and for keeping the Tradition going and we look forward to next year’s Gala, when the National Camp and Dinner will be held at the July Camp!!

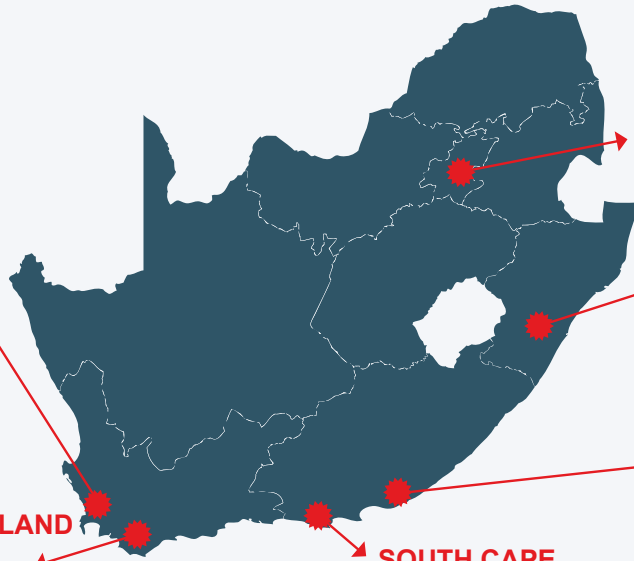


# MOUNTAIN RESCUE CONTACT INFORMATION



**WESTERN CAPE**  
Cape Town  
Tel: 021 937 0300  
(WSAR)

**HOTTENTOTS HOLLAND**  
Somerset West  
Tel: 021 937 0300  
(WSAR)



**SOUTH CAPE**  
Plettenberg Bay, Knysna, George  
Tel: 10177  
(Metro)

**GAUTENG**  
Johannesburg, Pretoria, Free State,  
North West, Limpopo, Mpumalanga  
Tel: 074 125 1385 (MSAR GP 1)  
Tel: 074 163 3952 (MSAR GP 2)

**KWAZULU-NATAL**  
Durban, Pietermaritzburg,  
Drakensberg  
Tel: 0800 005 133 (Metro)

**EASTERN PROVINCE**  
Port Elizabeth  
Tel: 10177 / 041 585 1555  
(Metro)

## SECTION DETAILS

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



# SA MOUNTAIN

SOUTH AFRICA'S DEDICATED CLIMBING MAGAZINE

With up-to-date **news coverage**, **training articles**, **gear reviews**, **celebrity profiles**, **technical tips** covering a wide variety of subjects, **event reports**, **captivating pics** and **enthralling articles**.

