

High-level overview of institution:
governance, summary of collections,
staffing, main challenges

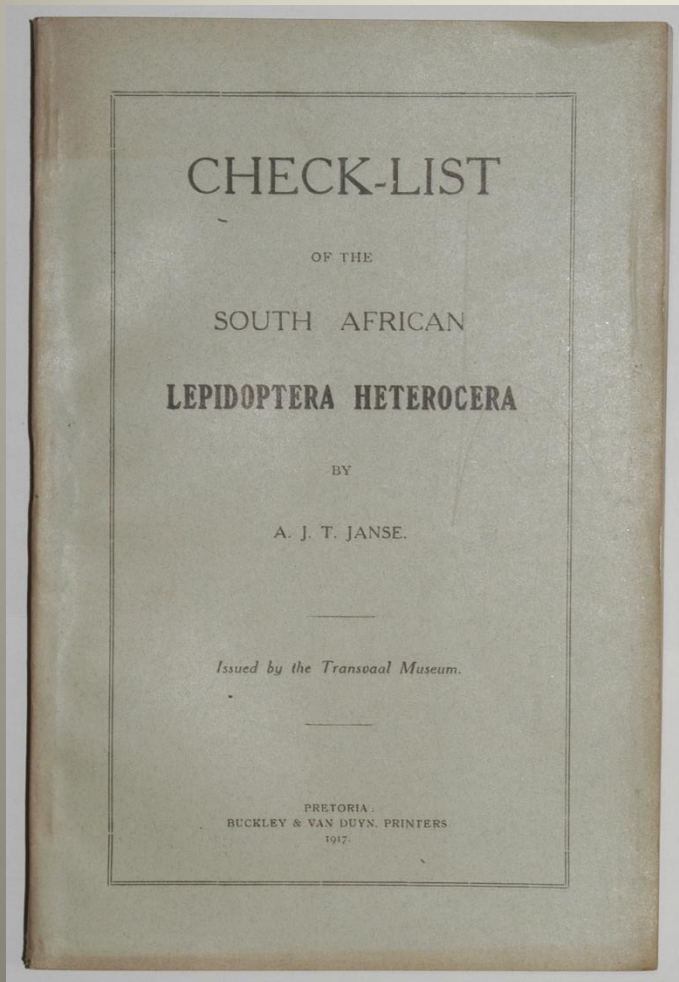
M. Krüger

Dept of Invertebrates (Lepidoptera)

DITSONG National Museum of Natural History

(formerly Transvaal Museum)

Historical background



- **Founded in 1892 to serve as the joined cultural and natural history museum of the ZAR**
- **The two branches split in 1964, to be reunited in 1999 under the auspices of the NFI, hence renamed DITSONG: Museums of South Africa**

Governance

DITSONG: Museums of South Africa is an agency of the Department of Arts & Culture governed by a Council with Sub-committees dealing with matters such as remuneration, internal auditing, &c.

Components

- DITSONG Museums of South Africa consists of three main museums (natural, cultural and military history) and a number of satellites:
- Tswaing Crater Museum, Kruger House, Sammy Marks Museum, Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum

Structure

- In addition to the Administration and Education Sections, the core collections of DITSONG: National Museum of Natural History are divided into two main sections, the Department of Invertebrates (Coleoptera, Lepidoptera, General Entomology, Lower Invertebrates) and the Department of Vertebrates (Small Mammals, Large Mammals/Archaeozoology, Ornithology, Herpetology, Plio-Pleistocene Palaeontology, Karoo Fossils)

Dept of Invertebrates: Coleoptera

- Size of collection: c. 3620 drawers containing about 20,000 described species
- Scope: southern Africa
- Staffing (current): 1 Curator, 1 Collection Attendant
- Collaborations/projects underway: the remaining curator (collection manager) is very active in sending material to specialists internationally

Dept of Invertebrates: Lepidoptera

- Size of collection: c. 7,500 drawers containing 1.125,000 specimens representing about 11.000 described species
- Scope: southern Africa
- Staffing (current): 1 Senior Curator, 1 Collection Attendant
- Collaborations/projects underway: research on selected groups of Heterocera; joint projects with colleagues in Munich and Berlin (Germany)

Dept of Invertebrates: General Entomology

- Size of collection: *c.* 133,000 dry pinned specimens plus *c.* 40,000 wet preserved specimens
- Scope: southern Africa
- Staffing (current): 1 Curator
- Projects: mainly participation in BioGaps

Dept of Invertebrates: Lower Invertebrates

- Size of collection: c. 56,000 mostly wet-preserved specimens
- Scope: southern Africa
- Staffing (current): 1 Curator shared with General Entomology
- Co-operations/projects: none as such, although the Curator is actively involved in BioGaps, the project involved with determining the viability of fracking in the Karoo

Dept of Vertebrates: Ornithology

- Size of collection: *c.* 25,000 specimens, mostly dry preserved (skins)
- Scope: southern Africa
- Staffing: none at present
- Co-operations/projects: none at present

Dept of Vertebrates: Small Mammals

- Size of collections: c. 50,000 specimens
- Scope: southern Africa
- Staffing: 1 Curator and 1 Junior Curator, assisted by several volunteers
- Co-operations/projects: actively involved in a range of various projects with universities and NGOs such as the Bat Interest Group

Dept of Vertebrates: Large Mammals / Archaeozoology

- Size of collection: c. 3,500 (mostly skeletal material)
- Scope: southern Africa
- Staffing: none at present
- Co-operations/projects: n/a

Dept of Plio-Pleistocene Palaeontology

- Size of collection: *c.* 81,000 specimens
- Scope: southern Africa
- Staffing: 1 Curator, 1 Collection Attendant
- Co-operations/projects: two ongoing international projects with collaborators in Australia and France, respectively

Dept of Vertebrates: Karoo fossils

- Size of collection: *c.* 10,000 specimens
- Scope: southern Africa
- Staffing: 1 Curator
- Co-operations/projects: one main project with Wits

Challenges

- Inability to attract and then retain suitably qualified staff
- Decline in available funding, both in terms of Government subsidy and funds being made available to organizations such as the NRF
- Increase in various types of Red Tape (PFMA, Procurement, Auditors, etc.)

Thank you