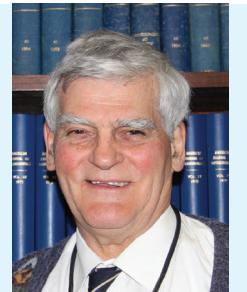


Advance Intelligence

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The eagle-eyed amongst us would have observed that the Journal has been tardy in publishing the new membership of the Board and the Association committees. This was drawn tactfully to our attention by a kind member of the Board and we hastened to ensure that the correct membership now appears on our first page. Sincere apologies to all concerned.

On a more personal level apologies have also been rendered to several of my neighbours who note that my practice of feeding two Hadada Ibis (*Bostrychia hagedash*) have so encouraged the birds to remain in our vicinity that their raucous cries and abundant droppings are a daily experience...and, so claim my neighbours, a trial and a burden! I have to confess that cleaning up after their visitations is a chore, clearly expected by my wife to be my responsibility (but in fairness, she does undertake this task without complaint!). In compensation I find great pleasure in enjoying the luminous wings of these striking birds... a bronze sheen seen only in sunlight and at close range. Every chance to have that close inspection, for both male and female will take cheese or bread directly from my hand. How intriguing the physiology of their feeding! That fearsome beak is handled so dexterously that the morsel of food is removed from my palm with only a whisper of touch. Then there are the challenges when I throw a piece of cheese onto our tiled verandah area. The beak is used with exquisite sensitivity, with absolute accuracy even for small fragments of crumbs.... and, the most amazing feature, without impacting on the hard surface, just delicately gathering the crumb, a moment of testing, then the tongue action transporting upwards (the head is still down toward the ground) and the swallow. I tried alternative foods, fruit for example... and an immediate rejection after a momentary holding of the food at the very tip of the beak.



I learn that it is in fact right there, at the tip of the beak, that most of the sensory input is gathered by... what else would it be called but the beak tip organ? Altogether a highly sensitive tactile and chemosensory organ. Located here in the beak of the ibis are sensory cells numbering in the hundreds per square millimetre. Important are the corpuscles of Herbst, which are similar to the Pacinian corpuscles of mammals. Also present are taste buds and other sensory receptors. The beak is a marvel of information-gathering efficiency!

How invaluable will be a similar function for the new Committees... a conduit into the far reaches of membership, seeking proprioceptive data on the state of the Association. Efficiency in information gathering is crucial to the success of any committee. That is why the SADA constitution provides for wide representation across the breadth and width of the organisation. Unlike the probing beak of the ibis, however, which relies on gathering data itself, our Committees should have the added advantage of receiving input directly from members who play their role in ensuring that their representatives are kept fully in the know. At the recent round of Association Committee meetings it was clear that the member on the ground is fortunate that there are those who are prepared to give time and energy to the efficient running of the Association. In turn, the elected member should have the confidence to know that his/her electorate stand ready to play their part.

The Journal is at the vanguard in the information seeking and gathering endeavour and the content this month reflects the broad canvas of contemporary dentistry: How best to deal with staining of dentures, through to the assessment of restorative materials, to aspects of oral and dental disease and a suggested improvement in the tracking of the clinical performance of students, supported by case reports which will add to our clinical acumen.

We should study these contents and peruse the Board and Committee membership lists as they now appear in the Journal and recognise that here is our Beak Tip Organ!