

Associate Editor awarded Science-for-Society Gold Medal

AUTHORS:

John Butler-Adam¹ 
Nadine Wubbeling¹ 

AFFILIATION:

¹Academy of Science of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

CORRESPONDENCE TO:

John Butler-Adam

EMAIL:

j.butler-adam@gmail.com

KEYWORDS:

ASSAf; science excellence; science for society

HOW TO CITE:

Butler-Adam J, Wubbeling N. Associate Editor awarded Science-for-Society Gold Medal. *S Afr J Sci.* 2016;112(11/12), Art. #a0185, 1 page. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2016/a0185>

Professor Brian van Wilgen received the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) Science-for-Society Gold Medal award at ASSAf's annual prestigious awards ceremony on 12 October 2016. Gold Medals are the apex awards of ASSAf and the South African science system and are awarded in recognition of outstanding achievements by individuals in scientific thinking for the benefit of society.

How to describe Brian van Wilgen? There are too many ways to be counted.

Forester; botanist; ecologist; specialist in invasive alien plants; expert in fynbos, grassland and savanna ecosystems; writer on the development of sound management strategies; professor... The list goes on.

But from the perspective of the *South African Journal of Science* (SAJS), most importantly, as a knowledgeable, incisive and constructive Associate Editor of Organismal Biology. Brian has been the Associate Editor: Organismal Biology since the inception of the role in 2008 until his resignation in October 2016.

Brian's management of the peer-review process has been efficient and effective – and, when necessary, persistent. His messages to authors, whether rejecting, conditionally accepting, or accepting a manuscript were pre-eminently supportive.

Brian studied Forestry at Stellenbosch University and graduated with a BSc degree in 1974 and an honours degree in 1977. He went on to complete a master's and then a doctoral degree in Botany at the University of Cape Town. He worked for the South African Forestry Research Institute and, when the Institute was incorporated into the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), he moved to the CSIR campus in Stellenbosch.

On retiring from the CSIR in 2013, he was appointed as a professor at Stellenbosch University and worked in the DST-NRF Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology. By that time, Brian had been a member of the SAJS editorial team for 5 years and continued as an active member in 'retirement' for a further 3 years.

Brian is the author of over 250 publications, including three books. In SAJS, he has published three News and Views, nine Book Reviews, one Commentary and three Review Articles. He was also Guest Editor of the January 2004 special issue on South Africa's Working for Water Programme.

He has earned many scientific achievements and has received numerous awards. He was awarded a DSc degree by Stellenbosch University in 2008; he has also been awarded the National Science and Technology Forum award for an outstanding individual contribution to science, engineering and technology and the South African National Parks award for contributions to conservation, both in 2010.

Appropriately enough, in his generous and modest acceptance speech on being awarded the ASSAf Gold Medal, Brian confessed that, as a young boy, he knew exactly what he wanted to be: a game ranger. Fortunately, he pointed out, there were no degrees in game-ranging offered at the time, and so he studied forestry – which became the foundation for his career, and for his contributions to the SAJS.

Above all, Brian is a thoughtful, congenial and supportive colleague. The Journal is honoured to have had him as a long-standing member of its editorial team; we congratulate him on his well-deserved award of the Gold Medal – and we wish him well as he moves into the next stage of his active 'retirement'.



Brian van Wilgen receives the Science-for-Society Gold Medal from Dr Phil Mjwara, Director-General of the Department of Science and Technology, at ASSAf's annual awards ceremony on 12 October 2016.