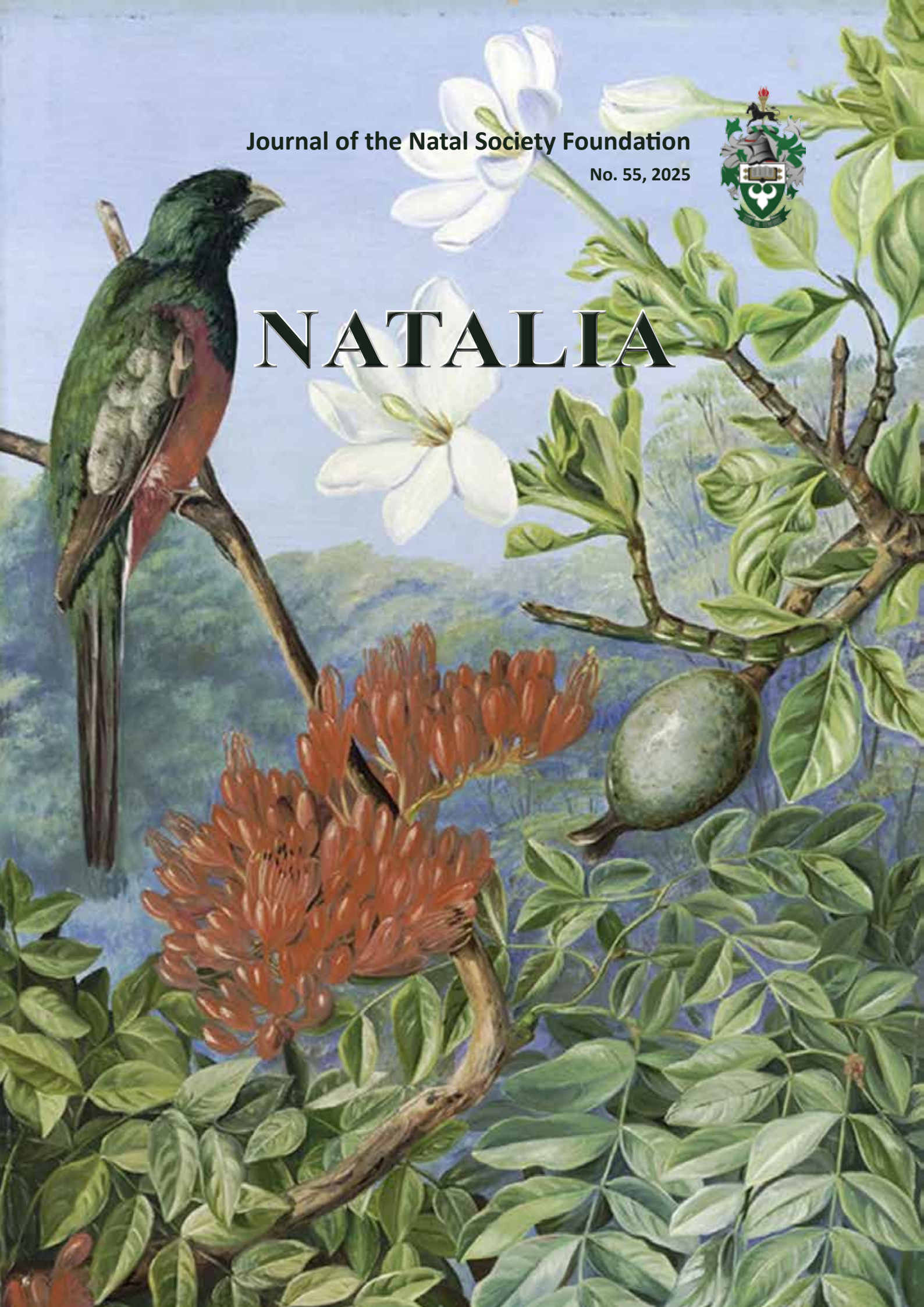


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Editorial

In April 2025 the Natal Society Foundation Trust published as an e-book what may well turn out to be its last monograph. Certainly, the focus of its efforts in future will be this annual publication, *Natalia*, and maintenance of its website which at present receives an average of about 300 visits per month. Work is currently underway to modernise it, make updating easier, and to improve retrieval.

The website is a valuable resource and a fitting twenty-first century monument to Ron Brown, university librarian in Pietermaritzburg, who compiled and published *Natal Notes and Records* in 1969 and 1970; in effect *Natalia*'s forerunner. In 1971 *Natalia* was established under the editorship of Colin Webb and it has been published continuously since then with a couple of minor blips. An annual journal and a website are well within the current human and financial resources of the trust.

This issue of *Natalia* breaks little new ground except that it does contain Nontobeko Ngubane's article on early Natal cottage hospitals; the first contribution to emerge from liaison between the trust and the oral history project of the Pietermaritzburg branch of the government archives. There is also Neil Bloy's intriguing history of the Little Church at Van Reenen.

Otherwise, the contributors have all published in *Natalia* before. There are four articles on significant figures in nineteenth (Fodo kaNombewu, Lady Anne Barker and Marianne North) and twentieth century (Alan Hattersley) history; and two on aspects of the history of the University of Natal/KwaZulu-Natal, both based on personal experience.

The revival of the tradition of publishing obituaries continues, all the more important now that the University of KwaZulu-Natal has no interest in remembering figures from its past and the *Witness* has an erratic attitude to obituaries. There are six in this issue and they form part of the general article section. This is apt because they should perhaps best be described as celebrations of significant lives. To conclude, there are half a dozen book reviews.

CHRISTOPHER MERRETT