



## Twelfth International Symposium on Pollination (ISPXII)



16 - 20 October 2023

Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens, Cape Town, South Africa

### WHERE HAVE ALL THE TAXONOMISTS GONE

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#### ABSTRACT

Four decades ago there was a vibrant community of taxonomists around the world. In spite of Bionet-International the Global Taxonomy Initiative and many regional and national initiatives today taxonomists are few and far between. However, the need for taxonomists is increasing. Biodiversity is apparently disappearing around the world but we cannot measure this in South Africa, and probably in most of the world. This is because we cannot monitor at species level - we cannot identify the species; we do not know their distributions and we do not know their associated organisms. However, there is a growing citizen scientist interest ready to come to the rescue. But they need appropriate tools. They are, understandably, not inclined to use identification keys in scientific journals. I am, therefore, planning illustrated guides to the bees of South Africa. Like many plant guides that do not follow taxonomic groups, like guides to trees, I'm starting with the big bees – large xylocopids, megachilids, fidelids and diggerbees. The tool of choice used by citizen scientists today is the cell phone, and these bees can be adequately photographed for identification purposes. We already have a tool, in iNaturalist, for the publication of their data, and to identify their associated plants, in Candide, to add floral associations. Enthusiasm should grow if we can pick the big fruits first, and then move onto the smaller bees.