



NEWSLETTER

**JANUARY
/FEBRUARY
2018**

OUR VISION | To be a highly effective and well-supported champion of the environment.

OUR MISSION | To implement high impact environmental and conservation projects which promote public participation in caring for the Earth.

Dear Friends of the Environment,

why is it it that just as life seems to be ticking over nicely something happens and the game is reset....?????

The WESSA Eden Committee was rolling along quite comfortably and then things changed at the end of last year.

Claude (Chair and Treasurer) and his wife Margaret are relocating to the greater Cape Town area to be closer to family. We thank Claude for the energy that he has contributed to WESSA Eden – as well as the Botanical Garden where he was a Trustee. He even managed to bring some order to the Henhouse at Committee meetings. We wish them both happiness in there new home and with the family now in easily reachable distance.

Janet it would appear is a workaholic and needed new challenges which could be found involving full time employment. With her time now more strapped, she feels she must devote her energies to this new challenge but happily is willing to continue keeping up the high visual standard of this Newsletter. Janet, thanks for all your bright ideas and activities in the very short time you have been with us. And hopefully we will be able to welcome you back soon.

This leaves us - again – in crisis. We need Committee members and in particular a Chairperson and Treasurer. The current Committee members are unable to do more than they already do – either for health reasons in the case of the over 60s and because the under 60s are hard at work making a living!

Where are you keen active environmentalists wanting to change the world?????

We need you here and NOW!



Saturday 10 March - GUIDED WALKS in the Fransmanshoek Conservancy

We had our first, and so far only – tour at Fransmanshoek Conservancy in January 2013. So this repeat is long overdue as much has happened at the Conservancy in the past years.

Our walks:

Rangers of the Conservancy will be guiding walks over mostly private land which is otherwise not accessible. We are offering two options. A longer one (3-4 hours) which is quite strenuous and leads over rough ground and through dense shrub. The

shorter distance walk will include a clean-up during the hike.

Both trails will be a loop starting and finishing at Fransmanshoek Point – a wonderful spot to enjoy a picnic.

Wear suitable clothing (sunhat, sunglasses) - particularly footwear. Take a walking stick, camera, binoculars and lots of water. Bring a picnic lunch, chairs, sun shade, liquid refreshments and anything else to make your day enjoyable!

Fee R50 for the benefit of the Fransmanshoek Conservancy and WESSA Eden projects. Children free, Donations always welcome!

Bookings ESSENTIAL AND URGENT to wessageorge@isat.co.za



Fransmanshoek Conservancy was established in 1994, therefore being the oldest established conservancy within the Western Cape. It is also the first to appoint full-time rangers since December 2004. The main objectives of the Conservancy are the conservation, protection and rehabilitation of the 18.5 km stretch of coastline, from Cape Vacca in the west to Springerbaai Eco-estate in the east, and associated inland sections.



Location:

Fransmanshoek Conservancy is situated approximately 35 kilometres west of the town of Mossel Bay. It consists of various private properties stretching from Springerbaai Eco-estate in the east down towards the Fransmanshoek Peninsula which is the property of Eden District Municipality. To the west of the Fransmanshoek Peninsula is the farm of Misgunst, owned by Mr H J Janse van Rensburg, which also forms a large portion of the Conservancy. Misgunst is home to the nationally recognized Vleesbaai 4x4 Dune Route.

The peninsula:

The Conservancy has implemented many conservation projects over the years, one of the most noteworthy being the erosion control and management of the Fransmanshoek Peninsula. The results of all the hard work are clearly evident today when one drives around the peninsula. The visitor facilities have been improved with adequate toilets, 'braai' places, parking areas and refuse bins provided. The "Punt Huisie" has been converted into an information centre. Severely eroded footpaths leading to the main fishing areas have been replaced with wooden board-walks and several areas have



been rehabilitated with indigenous vegetation. Information boards have been erected and various signs indicate the presence of erosion control measures. Comfortable wooden benches have also been placed at various scenic points.

www.facebook.com/fmhconservancy/?ref=page_internal



WESSA ECO-SCHOOLS SHINING

Three Garden Route schools have achieved international Eco-School Awards. This international environmental education programme is implemented in South Africa by the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (Wessa).

Schools in 69 countries are currently registered. South Africa was the leader in linking the Eco-Schools programme to the school curriculum.



Awards

Wessa congratulates Holy Cross Primary and Glenwood House on achieving their Gold Decade Award and Oakhill School on their Diamond Decade.

Holy Cross Primary and Glenwood House in George, and Oakhill School in Knysna have all been part of the Eco-Schools programme for more than 10 years.

The aims of the programme are to create awareness and action around social and environmental sustainability in schools and to support education for sustainable development in the national curriculum. Holy Cross Primary, Glenwood House and Oakhill School continue to do so.

Practicing what they preach

During their journey with the Eco-Schools programme, school grounds have been transformed with an emphasis on planting with indigenous Southern Cape plants.

Glenwood House has a well-established forest, fynbos and wetland section.

Holy Cross Primary has a small wetland and Oakhill School planted water-wise gardens. The school grounds are frequently used as outdoor classrooms.

Food gardens and medicinal plants are popular for supporting learning in the classroom.

Waste management and minimisation have resulted in financially beneficial rewards for the schools as well as reducing waste to landfill and litter issues.

Teachers used the drought situation to work with the learners investigating ways of reducing water consumption and looking at the water footprint in foods as well as the carbon footprint.

Over the years, the tuck shops have moved to providing healthy choices of locally grown and produced food. All three schools are involved in community outreach projects which have resulted in long-standing relationships with crèches and schools and communities in need.

Oakhill School lost their staff room during the Knysna fires. Glenwood House Enviro Society members prepared meals for firemen and those who lost their homes.

These schools have also worked with and fund-raised for animal shelters and been involved in research.

For further information about the Eco-Schools programme, contact Lorraine McGibbon on 021 701 1397 or lorraine@wessa.co.za.

www.georgeherald.com/News/Article/General/wessa-eco-schools-shining-examples-20180118

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS



SEARCHING FOR THE BRENTON BLUE BUTTERFLY

Dave Edge and Hanna du Toit began to look for the famous Brenton blue butterfly (niobe*) in the last week of October, when they sometimes emerge, but not this year.

Into November they were looking every few days whenever the weather was suitable (fine and warm with no wind) but such days were few and far between.

By the middle of the month not one had been seen and they were beginning to fear the worst.

Maybe all the caterpillars had been killed by the intense heat of the fire – the botanists were saying that the humus layer had burnt completely in some places and this could have destroyed the seeds in the seed bank.

As far as is known, the caterpillars are at least 150mm below the ground – but was this enough?

Also, there was a possibility that the rootstocks of the *Indigofera erecta* (the host plant of the butterfly) could have burnt, but fortunately by late August the first resprouting had been seen, indicating that many rootstocks had survived.

They searched on 19 November in perfect weather conditions but without success.

Conditions were again good on the 24th and they did their usual search, for the first time seeing the water bronze butterfly *Cacyreus fracta*, looking at first glance like a niobe.

They were almost done when just before 13:00 a smallish butterfly was seen behaving like a fracta but settling with its wings closed (fracta normally has its wings half open to catch the sun).

Dave crawled closer to get a better look and when he drew level he could see the underside – undoubtedly niobe with its black spots on a grey background, and no tails!

C. fracta has an intricate pattern on its underside and a short tail on each hindwing.

The niobe flew away before it could be photographed, but later, at 13.20, Hanna saw it again about 30m away, crawling on a low *Indigofera erecta* plant and she was able to get a photo.

When she called Dave over he was able to confirm it was a niobe female, although quite badly worn, with pieces broken away from its hindwings – typical damage on butterflies indicating a predator attack (probably a bird).

Searching the plant it had originally been on he found two freshly laid eggs (pale blue in colour, they go white within a day), and on another nearby *erecta*, two more eggs.

They were naturally very excited by the find and searched for more adults, but without success.

The next day the weather was again fine and they set out with high hopes of seeing more niobe but were disappointed when none could be found, despite searching the whole reserve.

Since a single swallow does not make a summer, the butterfly team (also including Christa le Roux of Brenton) will continue their search in hope of finding some more niobe adults or their eggs.

www.brentonbluetrust.co.za.

www.knysnaplettherald.com/News/Article/General/hope-lives-and-hopefully-the-brenton-blue-20171206

Community firefighting carts to save rural farms and peri-urban homes



Paul Bartels (Board member of WESSA) won the Unchartered award of the African Entrepreneurship Award

<https://africanentrepreneurshipaward.com> ceremony held early in December in Morocco.

Paul Bartels invented the WaterBok to save lives and livelihoods in rural and semi-urban environments. The entrepreneur built and prototyped Waterbok firefighting cart to provide an immediate response to small fires and prevent their rapid spread. In South Africa, many farms and communities lack access to water and fire engines. The WaterBok empowers communities to respond immediately.

The WaterBok is a proprietary, computer-designed cart made of durable plastic, wheels, and a harness for pulling the cart. It is also fitted with a roof rack for hauling wood and supplies. Many communities and farmlands in South Africa consist of bumpy or narrow roadways where access is difficult. The Waterbok is small enough to navigate hurdles quickly, and yet the water tank is large enough to provide substantial response to small fires, stopping them before they spread.

The Presidential Jury says that Paul *“provides an answer to rural farms where water is scarce and communities can be destroyed by devastating fires. His carts carry enough water to provide immediate response to a fire. The potential for saving land and people is huge, not only in Africa, but throughout the world.”*

Paul says that “Commercial farmers and rural community farmers require water to be readily available for prevention of devastating wildfire.” He plans to educate communities on how best to use the WaterBok. First and foremost, keep the cart filled and on hand. He says that, “The responsibility of fire-protection and suppression must also go to the people it most effects.” With the WaterBok, this responsibility becomes dramatically more practical.

With a \$100,000 prize in the African Entrepreneurship Award, Paul will move forward with production and take the Waterbok to the market.

Paul is Lecturer at Tshwane University of Technology, & European, Middle-Eastern & African Society for Biopreservation and Biobanking. Member of Magaliesberg Biosphere Initiative Group.



Knysna Basin Project December 2017 Newsletter

<http://knysnabasinproject.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Estuarine-Endeavours-Dec-2017-Final.pdf>

TAKE 5 AND KEEP SEAS ALIVE

George Tourism has launched a simple idea to tackle the ever-growing problem of marine litter.

A new awareness campaign called "Take 5 and Keep Our Seas Alive" will be launched on local beaches from 10 December in an effort to curb plastic pollution during the holiday season.

The 'Take 5' drive urges all beach users to pick up at least five pieces of beach litter and dispose of them correctly.

The awareness campaign ran until 10 January, but the clean-up drive will continue indefinitely.



Taking hands

The anti-pollution project is a joint initiative between George Tourism, George Rotary Club and the George Herald.

It mirrors similar successful campaigns in other countries such as the Australian "Two Hands Project" and "Take 3 for the Sea".

Tourism manager, Joan Shaw, outlines how people's influence can combat beach littering: "We believe many small individual actions can have an immense impact on our local beaches and waterways. The more people who join our campaign and take action against pollution, the more pristine our coasts will remain!"



Marine animals killed

Over 100-million marine animals are killed each year due to marine debris, according to the Sea Turtle Conservancy. Hundreds of thousands of plastic particles have washed up and continue to be deposited on our Garden Route beaches during high tides and storm swells.

Indeed, research now suggests that over 9-million tonnes of plastic debris enters the world's oceans on a yearly basis (boomerangalliance.org.au).

The vast majority of this plastic comes from land-based sources, such as domestic rubbish.

Half of this are single use items such as plastic carrier bags, plastic lined coffee cups, cigarette butts, lighters, cold drink bottles, caps, drinking straws, disposable spoons, stirrers, lollipop and earbud sticks.



Fishing waste

Fishing waste is also present in the form of lines, lures, floats, reels and bait packaging.

This plastic doesn't decompose; it is broken down into increasingly smaller pieces by the action of the sun and sea.

In time, these tiny micro-plastics enter marine food chains, as they are unintentionally consumed by birds, sea turtles, marine mammals and fish. The material causes digestive blockage, starvation and death.

Fishing line, nets, bags and other plastic items can entangle sea creatures or be inhaled into their respiratory systems.

Toxic nurdles

Inspections of local beaches are also turning up thousands of tiny pieces of plastic, less than 5mm in diameter. These plastic pellets, about the size of lentils, are called nurdles.

Countless billion are used each year as raw materials in the manufacturing of virtually all of the world's plastic products.

They wash into the ocean from shipping accidents and are deposited along reefs and beaches. Once released into the sea, these nurdles absorb harmful chemicals such as pesticides, herbicides and organic pollutants.

The pellets can then be consumed by wildlife, building up toxic chemicals in oceanic food chains.

High five to Take 5

Support this effort by giving "Take 5 and keep our seas alive" a resounding high five!

The Take 5 campaign calls on local people, tourists and all beach users to be champions for the planet.

The promotion is intended to develop mindfulness around plastic use and attitudes to waste disposal.

Participants are invited to share photos of their 5 items on the George Tourism Facebook page.

For more information, call George Tourism Manager Joan Shaw on 044 801 9103 or George Rotary Club Community Service Director Donald Goldfain on 083 251 8401.

Source : www.georgeherald.com/News/Article/General/take-5-and-keep-our-seas-alive-20171128



25 innovative solutions to combat plastic marine litter:

A unique tool for businesses, entrepreneurs and civil society organizations in the Med Region to take action. A new publication of UN Environment/MAP - SCP/RAC intends to inspire and provide practical indications to implement marine litter solutions.

The 25 solutions have been prioritized through a multi-criteria analysis of their effectiveness and replicability in the MENA region. They have been grouped following the different stages of the product-to-waste chain.

The digital version of the publication on 25 solutions to marine litter is finally available

<http://www.cprac.org/es/archivo-de-noticias/genericas/25-innovative-solutions-to-combat-plastic-marine-litter-a-unique-tool->

Feel free to disseminate through your own networks.

Hard copies are being very successful and we have printed extra copies to hand them over in marine litter related events where SCP/RAC takes part. In case you need some copies, I can see whether we can send you some.

We are going to promote each of the initiatives, through periodical posts, on our social media, feel free to interact with us and share your initiative when it's posted:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SCPRAC/>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/scp_rac

Once again, many thanks for your collaboration.

John Kieser, Sustainability Manager

For the latest news on projects, events and our industry, follow us on:

Twitter: [PlasticsSA](https://twitter.com/PlasticsSA)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/weloveplastic/>

Pinterest: <https://za.pinterest.com/plasticssa/>

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com>

Website www.plasticsinfo.co.za

ORGANIC FARMING SLOWLY CATCHING ON

At the recent Nelson Mandela University (NMU) seminar on organic farming, Professor Raymond Auerbach, NMU professor in soil science and plant production, was lauded as one of the best mentors in the country.

Kobus Pienaar, Woolworths Foods Farming For the Future expert and Good Business Journey manager, said NMU's research into organic farming yields, soil types and water usage is invaluable.

"The NMU students are fortunate to be able to conduct their research under the leadership of Prof Auerbach - one of the few organic farming proponents and experts who is open to debate."

Speaking at the Garden Route Botanical Garden Environmental Education Centre on 25 January, Pienaar said the most important aspect agricultural research should investigate is how to prevent plant disease and pests.

He said the organic food industry is a very slow growing market in South Africa, but now that consumers are becoming more aware of health issues, demand for organic produce is increasing.

The NMU organic farming systems trials are reaping results. "In 2017 we were in our third year and the organic system outyielded the conventional farming system.

It takes time for the soil to become biologically alive, but once this is achieved, organic farming produces an excellent crop with major health benefits and the water retention is better."

The principles of organic farming will also be rolled out to the disadvantaged areas in George, continuing with the Kos en Fynbos initiative, and learners will be exposed to the science behind organics at the Garden Route Environmental Education Centre.

Full article : www.georgeherald.com/News/Article/General/organic-farming-slowly-catching-on-20180131



**Garden Route
Botanical Garden**



CREW Outramps



SANBI is relocating its Citizen Science Virtual Museum to iNaturalist.

Most old iSpot users have already migrated.

www.inaturalist.org is the interactive website for all your pics of flowers, birds, mammals, fungi, reptiles and sea creatures. By posting your

observations, you contribute to providing data for research and a record for future generations. You also have a wonderful forum for your photos. And it's all a great deal of fun. Why not try it?



Sally Adam's *Crassula pyramidalis* won the Observation of the week and her ".Mr Stihl and the Rhinoceros Beetle" took the coveted Observation of the Month iNaturalist- December 2017. This is a huge achievement, considering that she was competing against the rest of the world. Congratulations Sally - very rarified air!!

She wrote this on the Rhinoceros Beetle:-

"Sadly, the Small Five are not safe from poachers either. A hidden camera has caught the very moment one of the little people begins the gory task of removing the horn from the rhinoceros beetle."

(When I posted the pic and the description there was initially a deafening silence and I thought my black humour had got me into trouble again.)"



Stop Press – Dr Tony Rebelo will be giving an iNaturalist course Friday 16th February at the Saasveld Campus @ NMU starting at 8.30am.

Details below.

Our aims are.

- 1 Introduce the philosophy of the site. How it is designed and works. This centres around:

The layout:

- Observations
- Species
- Places
- Projects
- People

How it works:

- What makes an observation.
- Species and the dictionary and links
- Extracting and showcasing your data

The differences between iSpot and iNature and how to think iNature.

- 2 How to use iNature:

Practical coursework:

- How to upload an observation
- How to add CREW data
- How to edit observations, including bulk edits
- How to custom access data and updates, and use your dashboard
- How to manage your account

3 Have some more fun (time permitting):

- Creating Places and species lists
- Creating Projects and managing data
- Anything you find interesting and would like to explore in more detail.

Please bring to the course!

- Between 10 and 20 pictures suitable for uploading to iNaturalist: of 5 to 15 different organisms. Plants, animals or fungi – not people, pets or places.
- Please sign up before you come to the course: www.inaturalist.org - make sure that you are properly registered. Bring along your user-name and your password – and preferably an email address that you can access at SANBI (not one tied to your home line). Yourself, with lots of questions

No cost, but a R20 contribution to petrol costs will be welcomed. If you are interested, please email me di@strawberryhill.co.za

Commercials

Addo says goodbye to its Much Loved Patriarch Elephant Bull Valli M

Recent news revealed the sudden death of our Favourite Giant Valli M, SANParks revealed on the 28th December, having found his body in a thicket near Hapoor Dam. It appeared he had been killed by another bull elephant with a stab to the heart. Mandy Roets, Chair person of Addo Tourism wrote:

Sad news to share this afternoon: Valli, our big elephant bull, has died. Conservation Manager, John Adendorff, flew over the Park early this morning and found him killed about five kilometres from Hapoor. He seems to have got into a fight with another bull and died from his injuries about a week ago.

He was one of four Kruger bulls introduced into Addo in the early 2000's. Two of the bulls were really large - Skukuza and Valli. Skukuza met the same fate in 2010.



Valli stood out head and shoulders among the Addo animals. He is the father of many young elephants in Addo and his genes will help ensure the success of the elephant population in Addo for many years to come. Inevitably his very tusks were most likely his downfall. He would not have been as agile as a bull with smaller, more lethal tusks. Valli was just coming into musth three weeks ago. This is when these bulls are filled with testosterone and they are very prone to fights. This is really a tragic loss for Addo. Valli, who was extremely passive in nature, was an icon in the Park. It is very tragic for all who knew this gentle giant, but his offspring live on.

In his memory, the Elephant Footprints Book, a story of a Game Ranger living in the Addo Elephant National Park who wrote about stories encountered with Valli M and other icon elephants, as well as the Parks history and expansion project, is currently on offer at 50%.

This treasure of a book is the soul touching journal of Game Ranger and Wilderness Trails Guide Nicola Schwim, who lived in the Addo Park of South Africa for many years, and was so obviously and deeply touched by everything this fantastic wildlife area is.



Peppered with history and factual stories of the region, the Park and the old Gorah Farm, Nicola's beautiful writing style makes one fall in love with this place, over and over again.

Along with a stunning portfolio of the most incredible wildlife photographs, the book is a captivating compilation of elephant spirituality, wildlife stories, myths, legends, elephant graveyards, and unbelievable tear jerking memories of a lifetime.

To view more about this unique book or to place an order visit

www.elephantfootprintsbook.com



Regards, Christine Ridge-Schnauffer

Honorary Secretary WESSA EDEN



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www.wessa.org.za



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