



Friends of Bracken NATURE RESERVE

Newsletter / Nuusbrief

AUTUMN IS COMING!

March Lily (*Amaryllis belladonna*), Candelabra Flower (*Brunsvigia orientalis*) and April Fool or Velskoenblaar (*Haemanthus*) are all telling us that Autumn is on its way, with their splashes of pink and red in the still dry veld. As soon as the first rains fall, life will start to return to our reserve, and we as Friends are then able to start clearing some of the alien plants that have sprung up once again. In the process, we could be surprised by the odd first flowers appearing, and who knows, we might even spot another one not previously recorded here!

WELCOME TO NEW STAFF MEMBERS

This year we look forward to great things and we welcome Conette Koorts (conservation student) and Geo-Lindy Davids (horticultural student) who will be assisting our Reserve Manager, Tshupo Mamabolo. We are also delighted to welcome Elzette Krynauw, who is doing a year's internship as Education Officer at the reserve.



Geo-Lindie and Conette



Elzette



Sunday school meeting in EE Centre, showing new furniture

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - Mon. 7 April 2008 - 19h00

Please try to attend our AGM at the EE (Environmental Education) Centre next to the office in the reserve. We will be able to use the chairs and tables bought by FoB and hear all about last year's achievements and the plans for the coming year. After the business of the meeting Karen Marais of CREW (Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildlife) will be showing photographs and telling us more about the wonderful new plants discovered at Perdekop recently.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE!

FoB membership subs for 2008 are now due and can be paid at the AGM. The rates remain unchanged, and are:

Individual	R30 p.a
Family	R50 p.a.
Student or Pensioner	R15 p.a.
Corporate	R350 p.a.

Of course, donations will also be gladly received!

PROGRAMME

Our picnic at Jonkershoek on 1 March was pleasant, but we will be doing the hike to the waterfalls a little later in the year. Weekday as well as week-end hacks will be arranged, so please sign up to explore and clear Perdekop.

The rest of our programme is as follows:

26 April	Friends of Tygerberg walk (14h50 for 15h00)
April	We host WESSA Workshop (date to be advised)
May to August	Walks and weeding in Perdekop and corner of Reservoir Rd / Kruin St. from 10h00 any Sat. or Wed. weather permitting.
Meetings with talks	To be announced.
6 September	"Perdekop Wild Flower Show"!!
20 September	Inthaka Island Outing
4 October	Blaauberg Outing and Picnic
1 or 8 November	Strandfontein WWTW or Paarl Bird Sanctuary

(Watch the Tygerburger for details, or contact the committee.)

Let's enjoy what we have and strive to improve it, by also inviting others to come and experience this little known treasure in our midst.

ENVIRONMENTAL

EDUCATION AT BRACKEN

As the Environmental Education (EE) intern for this year my main goal is to build a structured EE program for Bracken Nature Reserve. My starting point was to collect resources relevant to Bracken. The EE officers of our neighbouring reserves, Tygerberg and Durbanville, made me feel very welcome to the "world of EE" and were more than willing to help me with resources. I would also like to thank the Friends of Bracken (FoB), especially Jo, Thea and Lindie for all their help and for giving me a great start to the year!

I was very happy to hear that the FoB, with support and encouragement from Councillor Marian Nieuwoudt, had been awarded a grant-in-aid fund to furnish our EE centre. We received 60 chairs and 12 tables and were able to hire a contractor to build a cupboard and a display cabinet for Bracken's interesting specimens which we will collect throughout the year. Another great addition was our curtains. Thank you very much to Lindie for organizing these for us. The EE centre is much cooler and more bearable in these hot summer days.

On Sunday 2 March I had my first group for the year! It was a Sunday School group from The New Apostolic Church. Their theme for the year focuses around trees so we discussed the environmental importance of trees. Despite the heat the children enjoyed the walk and talk through the Pick 'n Pay block, especially discovering different kinds of insects. They loved it so much that they were all keen to come again on the Monday! I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sonja Ellis for organising the outing and I look forward to working with her and having many more visits throughout the year.

Elzette Krynauw (Environmental Education intern)

LANDFILL SITE REHABILITATION - PROGRESS REPORT

First, a little background: The Brackenfell Landfill Site, managed by Solid Waste Department, reached its full capacity for the disposal of municipal waste and was officially closed in January 2007. The end-use of the landfill site (5ha) is "open space" to be incorporated into the Bracken Nature Reserve. It was planned that the site should be capped and

rehabilitated with Cape Flats Sand Plain Fynbos and Swartland Granite Renosterveld. The Nature Conservation Branch specialist, Dr. P. Holmes, recommended that the top soil layer should consist of 500mm of compatible soils from neighbouring sites, preferably granite derived soil because this was the original soil type of the area.

The capping process has already been completed, but there were unforeseen erosion problems due to excessive rainfall and poor landscape design by contracted engineers. As the result emergency erosion control measures had to be applied, berms and drainage channels were designed and biddums (wind-rows) were put in place to slow down the water flow and prevent excessive soil loss.

Unfortunately due to financial constraints only 200mm of sandy topsoil was used instead of the recommended 500mm, thus altering the types of plants species that could be used on the site. Instead we will now be focusing on planting annuals and perennials which will be better suited to the shallow sandy soils. As it was too late to sowing winter plants species, our priority has been to stabilize the dry soils with straw and rye grass to wind erosion and planting will now start with the coming rainy season. In the surrounding natural areas of the reserve hand planting of hardy vegetation and rooted cuttings will commence early May – July 2008 with plants such as *Sutherlandia frutescens* (Wild cancer bush), *Protea repens* (Sugar bush) and *Chrysanthemoides molifera*.

Tshepo Mamabolo (Reserve Manager)

TWO MORE EE PROJECTS

Apart from the EE programme I would like to highlight two more projects which we (our students and staff) are working on.

1. Our EE Indigenous Garden. The space between the main gate and the office has been cleared of weeds and a footpath has been laid out. While our horticulture student, Geo-Lindy, is working on the landscaping we are keeping the area weed-free and ready for planting. The purpose of this garden, which is close to the EE Centre, it to make more species available for the children to see, feel, smell and learn about. It will also give our entrance a beautiful look! Bollards to demarcate the area have been organised, and the FoB is endeavouring to source funding to cover the cost of a natural pond, suitable plants, grass for paths and a 2-seater bench.

2. New EE centre. This is a very big project, but something I am looking forward to! We want to turn the old maintenance building that is close to the rehabilitated landfill site, into a bigger EE and Resource Centre. Dormitories might also be added for overnight stays. It's a big goal to work towards but I believe with time it's possible. The whole area shows great potential; a tar road leads towards the centre, there is shade, space, the building has a good solid structure and it's only a few steps away from the Pick'n Pay block and landfill site. There is space for an office, and the electricity and water needs only to be reconnected. We have started to clean the area by pruning the trees, cutting the grass and removing litter.

Elzette Krynauw

FoB LOOKS AHEAD

Well after reading so far you will realise that the staff and students of the reserve are planning an action-packed year. We wish them well in their endeavours and will certainly support them in several ways. An important one will be by the formation of an active hacking group which Eddie Allen has undertaken to organise. With funds raised last year we were able to purchase our first Tree-Popper, which will be put to good use. On Perdekop in particular Port Jackson seedlings are already springing up. The small ones can be pulled out by hand, but the larger ones will be "popped". Members will be circulated when a programme has been arranged. We are also planning to tidy the area inside the perimeter fence adjacent to Reservoir Road and arrangements are already in hand to plant a number of Cape Sugarbush (*Protea repens*) here before the winter rains. Please come and help when you can.

LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS

We need more members! Please try to persuade your friends and family to join – use the application form provided, so that we can GROW!

INSECTS AND SPIDERS

We don't have any Big Game, but we do have little ones! Elzette reports that she is working on insect and spider lists for Bracken and has been in contact with Dr. Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman from the Agricultural Research Council. She is a Specialist Scientist at the ARC-Plant Protection Research Institute, Spider Research Centre in Pretoria. Being a spider expert, she is helping Elzette with identifying species found in the reserve and is also going to put Bracken on their database! An update on interesting species will feature in every newsletter this year.

AND SO TO BIRDS

Elzette is compiling a bird list for Bracken and doing bird checks every Thursday morning. The plan is to put the list on the website with monthly updates on what's been happening "birdwise". Did you know that the first week in May is National Bird Week and that the theme for this year is "Light a Candle for the Owl"? BirdLife SA is supplying Owl posters, background information and lesson plans to all its branches, and we have been promised a few of these for our own EE Centre. We hope to arrange one or two bird outings during the course of the year, as you will see from our provisional programme. At present two of the ponds at Intaka Island are being drained which has affected some of the birdlife, but it is hoped that the work will be complete and the ponds refilled before spring so that the spoonbills can resume nesting there. Last spring their nesting site was just below the entrance gate – a wonderful sight. We are hoping to invite one of the Intaka bird guides to visit Bracken shortly to talk to the local children about his unusual job.

AN APPLICATION FORM FOR NEW MEMBERS:

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Friends of Bracken Nature Reserve (FoB)

(NPO 058-903)

Who are the Friends?

FoB was established to assist management of Bracken Nature Reserve in promoting awareness and assist in attaining their goals of conservation in the Reserve. We are affiliated to WESSA.

Application for membership

Full name: Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms

Address (physical): Code:

Address (postal - if different) Code:

Telephone (home): (work): (cell):

Fax: E-mail:

Membership category (please tick):

- Individual – R30 p.a. Family – R50 p.a. Student/Pensioner – R15 p.a.
 Corporate – R350 p.a. I also enclose a donation: R.....

My interests are in: Plant propagation / environmental education / walks / clearing alien vegetation / other practical assistance (please specify)

I have expertise/knowledge in the following fields: Botany / education / natural history / marketing / public relations / computer skills / artwork and design / other areas

Waiver: In respect of attendance at any club meeting, outing or event I undertake to participate entirely at my own risk.

I agree that I shall have no claim whatsoever against the organizing body, any individual organiser or official, marshal, assistant helper or agent, the sponsors or any local authority or their employees in respect of any loss or damage whatsoever which I may suffer arising from any injury to my person or loss or damage to property as a result of, or arising out of, whether directly or indirectly, my participation in this event, including my arrival thereat and departure therefrom and attendance at any ceremony or function thereof however such loss or damage may arise and regardless of whether or not same shall have been caused directly or indirectly by negligence, albeit gross, of one or more or all of the aforementioned parties. In the event of my signing this form as a guardian of a minor I hereby consent to such minor being bound by the foregoing and further, I indemnify the aforementioned parties to the extent, if any, to which such minor is not capable of waiving his right as stipulated above.

Signature: **Date:**

Cheques should be made payable to **Friends of Bracken Nature Reserve** and posted to P O Box 8, Brackenfell 7561, or paid direct to Savings Account 9179197783 with ABSA Bank, Brackenfell.

Enquiries: Jo Hobbs: 021 981 1275 or Thea Weyers: 021 982 3654