



Newsletter / Nuusbrief

www.brackenfell.org/bnr

SPRING EVENT - Saturday 5 September 2009

The Friends of Bracken have started a tradition which we hope will be a red letter day for our community for many years to come. Since Perdekop is so special with its breathtaking variety of indigenous wild flowers, we want to open it up every first Saturday of September. In order to attract the attention of the community, some sporting event for children is organised by the management staff of Bracken Nature Reserve. The Friends support with advertising and sale of refreshments etc, also obtaining valuable sponsorships from local businesses. Spar, Protea Village, has been donating boerewors rolls each year, so come, folks; support them, please!

Thea Weyers (Chairperson)

WHAT'S NEW AT BRACKEN? - Manager's report:

Biodiversity: So far it has been an exciting year with several new plant and bird species being added to our database. All this would not have been possible without the assistance of a group of hardworking individuals from CREW (Custodians of the Rare and Endangered Wildflowers). On 28 April, Clifford Dorse and I found an individual plant of the Red Data species *Xiphotheca reflexa*. While this was an exciting find, being a new record for the reserve, the fact that only one plant was discovered in the whole reserve was of great concern, because this plant species is already under threat. However, I am delighted to inform you that another population of the *Xiphotheca reflexa* has since been sighted and 20 plants have been counted and confirmed to date!!! On that note I am also glad to inform all of you that the *Gethyllis afra*, commonly known as Kukamakranka, is also doing well. To date 12 plants have been counted in one spot. There are several other new plants that have been added to the list and that just goes to show that Mother Nature is healing herself ... With all your assistance and enthusiasm we can restore Bracken Nature Reserve into its natural functioning state and conserve the biodiversity for future generations. You are all invited to join the CREW outings, which give an ideal opportunity to get to know the Reserve while you are gaining knowledge on plants, and it's all for free...

New fence: I am sure many of you have noticed the changes as you drive near Bracken? Yes that's right; we finally have decent gates and a fence around the Reserve. I am aware that safety has been one of the main concerns for many of you and I hope that you will all feel much better and safer when visiting the Reserve.

Controlled burn at PnP block: As part of managing Fynbos vegetation, one is required to utilise fire as a management tool. Fire is vital to the health and productivity of Fynbos vegetation. It is one of the major driving forces in the Fynbos Biome for maintaining a healthy ecosystem and preventing the loss of natural biodiversity, and it also helps to prevent uncontrolled wild fires by reducing the fuel load. Fire stimulates the growth of geophytes, the regeneration of certain shrubs and through reducing the amount of old vegetation and opening the vegetation canopy, it also helps create niches for new plants to occupy, which would otherwise have been inhibited by the older vegetation.

Considering the above-mentioned factors, it was very important for us to conduct a controlled burn on the western part of the reserve, namely the PnP block (4ha in size). Cape Sand Plain Fynbos is the main vegetation type found here and it was suspected that the age of the vegetation exceeded ± 20 years. This meant that its fire cycle was long overdue, therefore posing a major threat to the biodiversity of the site and acting as a fire hazard with such a high fuel load. The fire took place on 21 April with great success. We are monitoring the site with the assistance of CREW and have noticed that since the fire, the number of bulbs has increased. In particular we have noted that *Lachenalia rubida* plants have been sighted in great numbers this year, thriving on the recent fire from the controlled burn.

Alien clearing: The alien clearing contractor has just completed clearing 13 ha at the rehabilitation site (previously known as the dumpsite). Even though most of the area is still covered by annual weeds and other alien plants, it is very encouraging when we spot signs of indigenous plants pushing through. This is very pleasing, considering that three years ago the site was filled with waste material. As a great man once said: "every piece of land can be rehabilitated, even tar", and I think the Brackenfell landfill site is testimony to that.

Tshepo Mamabolo (Reserve Manager)

GETTING THE YOUNG ONES INVOLVED

From March to May this year 27 Grade 10 pupils from Brackenfell High School took part in alien cleaning work at the reserve, either individually or in small groups, as part of their "community service" programme. In April groups of up to 40 children aged from 7 – 13 from the nearby Everite hostels helped enthusiastically with litter clear-up projects on 4 consecutive days in their school holiday. In June two groups of 40 children from the Hebron Christian School spent some time at the reserve to learn about recycling.

'YES' PROGRAMME AT BRACKEN

As part of the YES Waste Week programme two groups of 60 children from Imvumelwano and Bloekombos Primary Schools (Grade 4) visited the reserve on 5 and 6 May. Bus transport was arranged by FoB and funded by City Council. It was a three hour programme, from 09:00-12:00, arranged by Khumbudzo Ramasunzi (EE intern) and Elzette Klue. The talk covered the three R's - Reduce, Re-use, Recycle - and ways to practise those R's at their homes and schools. After the talk and a video show the children were taken for a walk to the old landfill site, and later shown how to make flowers from old magazines and newspapers which can be used for gift wrappings. They also had worksheets with crosswords to complete. The learners enjoyed themselves and their teachers were pleased because the programme covered chapters of the school curriculum.

The YES World Environment Week's theme was "Climate change" and school visits took place on 3 and 4 June. This was also a three hour programme with the same schools, but for Grade 7 pupils. Khumbudzo gave a power point presentation on climate change, after which the learners were divided into groups of 7. They had to come up with a suggested method of slowing down climate change, and this had to be expressed by drawing and painting. The groups then presented their paintings and explained their solution, and each member of the best group received a ruler, poster and WESSA Envirokids magazine.

FoB's ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Educational garden at the entrance: Our recent activities have been centred on improvements to the entrance area to the reserve and in particular to the educational garden where the plants are already growing well. A small pond has been installed and a pump will be connected shortly. A garden bench has also been purchased. The purchase of additional plants had to await the onset of the winter rains, but over 100 Protea repens (Cape Sugarbush) and 60 other fynbos plants have been now been planted in the reserve. We must thank the Rowland & Leta Hill Trust for funding for this project. A grant-in-aid from the Cape Town City Council has funded the provision of attractive name-plates to identify the plants in the educational garden.

Spring event on Saturday 5 September: This, of course, is the main event of the year as it is the season when the reserve is at its best. Please heed Thea's invitation to come along on this morning and enjoy the spring flowers with us. We need your support!

25 May – Cheese, wine and biodiversity: There was a good attendance at our first evening meeting this year. This was not surprising as our speaker was Tielman Roos of the wine estate Mooiplaas, which is situated in the Bottelary Hills quite close to us, and he brought with him several of his award-winning boutique style wines for us to sample afterwards. Tielman spoke to us about the Biodiversity & Wine Initiative which is an association of over 100 wine farmers and co-operatives who have collectively set aside over 7 000 ha of highly threatened natural habitat on their farms for conservation. Mooiplaas itself also boasts a 50 ha private nature reserve dedicated to the preservation of the Cape Floral Kingdom. Cheese, biscuits and snacks were supplied by members, and the wine tasting rounded off a very enjoyable evening. A **hike** (9 Km) in the Bottelary Hills is being planned for Saturday 19 Sept. from 08h00 to 12h00, followed by **wine tastings** at Koopmanskloof and Mooiplaas. RSVP to 083 324 6492 or gretaetienne@polka.co.za before 4th Sept. if you would like to join in.

27 June – Soup, rolls and Perdekop: This evening it was the turn of Bracken's intern Myrna Scholtz, to tell us about her work at our very special little flower reserve, Perdekop, and we were pleased to welcome several newcomers to the meeting. In her presentation Myrna outlined some of her achievements and problems so far this year, as well as some successes in making the area better known to surrounding residents. Our forthcoming Spring Event with guided walks in Perdekop will also help in this regard. The talk was followed by some very welcome mugs of hot soup with buttered rolls. Our thanks go to Thea and Corné who supplied the soup, which went down very well on a chilly winter's evening.

July school holiday – Litter clearance: An enthusiastic group of children from the nearby Everite hostel gave up two days of their school holiday to help with litter clearance and tidying in the reserve. They were treated afterwards to refreshments provided by FoB. Our thanks go to Lindie for organising this project - her very special relationship with these kids is invaluable. We look forward to seeing some of them at our Spring Event in September.

8 August – Spring walk in Bracken: Miraculously the weather held for this, our first spring walk of the season, following several cold wet days. Even more encouraging was the attendance of almost a dozen newcomers, not only from Brackenfell, but also from North Pine, Kraaifontein, Kuils River and Bellville. We hope they will all decide to join FoB! Although it was a little early for a really good showing of spring flowers, everyone enjoyed the walk and we hope to introduce Bracken to even more visitors on our next spring walk on 22 August.

FoB MEMBERSHIP

This is a friendly reminder to those who have not yet renewed their membership for 2009 that our subscription rate is unchanged at a very modest R30 for Individuals, R50 for Families, R15 for Students or Pensioners, and R350 for Corporate Members. We would like to thank all those members who have continued to support us, and new members are of course most welcome – we need you! For full details of rates and payment you can contact our Membership Secretary, Corné van Zyl, at 021 988 2822 or cornevzyl@telkomsa.net Please talk to your friends and neighbours and encourage them to join us as Friends of Bracken.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS!

We would like to give special thanks to Michael and Rina Fletcher, Dorothy Ellis, and to Cape Boards for their kind and generous donations, which are very much appreciated.

CORPORATE MEMBERS

We have just enough space to mention some of our Corporate Members: **Cape Boards** (Gerry & Carol), whose business in Gemini Street supplies boards and hardware – you will recognise their premises as they have a tiny fynbos bed at the entrance! Then we have **Crammix Bricks** in Kruispad, whose business is well known to everyone in Brackenfell. Their company motto is “Building a Green Future” with environmentally-friendly clay bricks. And further along the Kruispad we find **Just Plants**, whose new owners, Eduard & Letitia Greyvenstein, have undertaken to propagate cuttings of indigenous plants for our reserve. Their nursery is on the left hand side, just before the junction with Bottelary Road – so do visit them if you love your garden.

WESSA MEMBERSHIP

As FoB is affiliated to WESSA (Wildlife & Environment Society of SA), some of you might like to join them as individuals. As a Regional Member you will receive their quarterly newsletter *Cape Environment* with news of local conservation matters. You can ring them at 021 701 1397 for more details.

CREW OUTINGS (Custodians of Rare & Endangered Wildflowers)

CREW members continue to do a great job, and FoB members are invited to join them on their weekly Friday morning outings. If you are interested in joining the group please contact Karen Marais at bkri@telkomsa.net or Tel: 021 945 2855. Karen sends a reminder of their weekly outing once a week to those with e-mail, and others are asked to phone her to find out where the next outing will be. Please note that they organise lifts and share transport to minimize their carbon footprint! Also note that dates and venues can change. If it rains, they meet at the Tygerberg Nature Reserve and work in the herbarium. **Forthcoming outings in September** are as follows:

Friday 4	To be advised
Friday 11	Farm Mooiplaas
Thursday 17	Paarl
Friday 18	Schoongezicht

FoB PROGRAMME for September - December 2009

Saturday 5 September **Spring Event in Bracken Nature Reserve and Perdekop**

This is our Annual Spring Celebration. We start in the morning with a Fun Walk Competition for school children in Bracken Nature Reserve, and move to the public open space opposite Perdekop in Kruijn Street for flower walks in Perdekop, refreshments, raffle, dance display etc. Do come, and bring your friends.

Saturday 19 September **Spring Walk and Hack in Bracken Nature Reserve** (weather permitting)
Hackers start from 09h00 and Walkers from 10h00. Bring refreshments for a picnic about noon.

Saturday 10 October **Walk on Rondebosch Common** (weather permitting)
Meet at Bracken at 09h00 to share transport. Maya Beukes and a member of the Friends of Rondebosch Common will meet us in the parking area on Sawkins Road, Rondebosch about 09h30 to introduce us to the flowers, birds and insects of the common. Bring flower books and refreshments.

Monday 23 November **Sundowners on Perdekop**
Meet at Perdekop at 19h00 (7 pm) and bring own snacks and sundowners for our annual year-end event. Please note that nothing will cancel this event!! Last year's Sundowner took place in a howling gale, but we hope for better luck this time!

NEXT YEAR!

As usual we will welcome the New Year with an evening braai on Monday 25 January 2010. More later.

Additional hacks and planting mornings will also be arranged. Details will be published beforehand in the *Tygerburger*. Please bring gloves, loppers and saws if you have them, and note that we have a Treepopper, which turns work into pleasure!

OTHER 'FRIENDS' EVENTS -

Friends of Bracken are reminded that they are always welcome to attend activities arranged by other friends groups as well as our own.

Tygerberg Nature Reserve walks

Our near neighbours, the **Friends of Tygerberg Hills**, arrange regular Saturday morning or afternoon walks in the Tygerberg Nature Reserve and also monthly talks or slide presentations at the Kristo Pienaar Environmental Centre in the Reserve. Look for details in the Diary section of the *Tygerburger* or phone Jurg on 083 701 8496 or via e-mail at jurgz@mweb.co.za for more details.

Forthcoming events are as follows:

September 1	Talk "Cango Caves"
September 12	Walk in reserve at 8h00
September 26	Walk in reserve at 16h00
October 6	Talk "Research done in Tygerberg reserve"
October 10	Walk in reserve at 7h00
October 24	Walk in reserve at 16h00
November 3	Talk (to be advised)
November 7	Walk in reserve at 7h00

Please note that as from the 1st July 2009 an entrance fee is payable at the Tygerberg Nature Reserve. Details as follows:

Daily entrance fees:

Adults	R10
Senior Citizens (60 and older)	R 5
Kids 3 to 13 years	R 5
FoTH members (with card)	Free

Rondevlei Nature Reserve - bird ringing and spring walk

The Friends of the Vlei invite anyone who would like to see bird ringers in action to come to the picnic site at Rondevlei Nature Reserve on **Saturdays 12 September, 10 October and 14 November** at 8 am. And on **Saturday 3 October** they will have a Spring Flower Walk, commencing at 9 am.

Rondebosch Common - spring walks

The Friends of Rondebosch Common organise spring walks on the following Sundays from 11h30 to 13h00: **13 and 27 September, 11 and 25 October and 15 November**. The walks start from the grassed area at the Campground Road side of the common. Contact Joanne Eastman at 021 685 3451 for more details.

AND DON'T MISS OUR OWN SPRING EVENT ON 5 SEPTEMBER!

THE KALKOENTJIE

To be seen flowering in Spring at the Bracken Nature Reserve, particularly at Perdekop, is this special little Gladiolus alatus, better known as Kalkoentjie. Although not tall, it has a large orange flower, with the lower petals coloured greenish yellow, and tipped with orange. If you can get close enough, smell the lovely fragrance! There are several other Gladiolus species flowering at different times, in the reserve. They are all worthy of protection!



Gladiolus alatus, (Kalkoentjie)

THE ARUM LILY

From the Penguin Dictionary of South African Quotations

There is something peremptory about an Arum Lily.
These flowers are not to be trifled with.

Lin Sampson, journalist