

FRIENDS OF BRACKEN NEWSLETTER: MARCH 2010

ACTIVITIES SO FAR THIS YEAR



*The Belladonna breakfast, 13 March, being enjoyed by:
Thea, Jacques, Carla, Neville, Robin, Cornè, Lindie and Elzette. Ashton took the picture.*

The March lilies are flowering in profusion, and we even had a brunsvigia (“kandelaarblom”) out, just around the corner from the Piempiempie picnic site.

In February we visited **Bellevue** estate where all were treated to a cellar tour and wine tasting, after visiting the signal **cannon** that had been on Bracken koppie more than 120 years ago. The owner, Dirkie Morkel, has joined FoB.

Other new members are Francois van Zyl, Lionel Dreyer and Willie Slabber. Welcome!

Our enthusiastic speaker at the meeting of **15 March, Mark Ogilvie**, explained where the CTEET program started, and that about 1200 children are taken camping each year, in order to learn about Nature as well as life skills. They also train volunteers to help with camps.

Membership cards have been handed to paid-up members, for free entry to the Reserve at all times. For security reasons visitors are usually allowed in only while Staff are on duty. Since Friends, however, are deemed responsible and not likely to cause damage, we are allowed in later (to enjoy sunsets and after-work de-stressing walks!), on showing the cards to Security. Please come along and collect yours at the meeting.

As usual, the **“Year-start-braai”** was a great social event of getting to know each other.

AGM: **19 APRIL 2010, 19h00** at the EE Centre, Bracken Nature Reserve.

There will be more wine tasting on the **19th April**, when Melina from Kaapzicht wine estate will be bringing some wine to our AGM. Dr Christopher Cupido from SANBI is willing to assist Bracken with the establishment of our own herbarium, and is coming to tell us about how to go about it. This is the ideal opportunity to learn more about the more than 260 species to be found in our reserve, and to become actively involved.

Business will be kept to a minimum. However, three of the committee members have completed their (second) terms of two years, and will be stepping down. Jo Hobbs, our very able secretary, has requested a break. She is planning on getting married in April. Thank you so much for all your dedicated and meticulous work, Jo! Fob is truly blessed to have had your services from the start, as our potential teething troubles could have been quite painful without your help. May your future with John be long and happy!

On a sadder note, we regret to announce that Carla has recently lost her mother. Our prayers are with you, Carla.

Lindie (Vice chair), thank you for all your particularly specialized contributions, which none of the rest are able to do! She will be available for re-election, as will Thea (Chair). The rest of the committee is Cornè van Zyl (treasurer), Carla de Klerk (Membership), Brenda Adams (Additional member) and newly appointed Marlene van Niekerk (Assistant Secretary).

According to the constitution there should be at least five committee members, but no more than seven. The committee would like to have some new input from fresh members, and particularly from the men! Please consider nominating potential persons for this election, and if you are willing to assist, do come forward as volunteer. We need you!

WHAT HAS THE COMMITTEE BEEN DOING?

Finances have been meticulously recorded. FoB received grants from City as well as the Roland and Leta Hill Trust. These were earmarked for specific projects, on which we needed to report back. Projects included the assistance with **plants**, a **bench** and **pond** with pump for the educational garden. Thanks Eddie. Plants were also **propagated** and bought for introduction to the Reserve. Registration with **SARS** has been completed.

Funds were allocated for promotional materials. You might have noticed the **banners** and flapper **flags** at FoB events. The printing of 5000 glossy **brochures** for wide distribution is in its printing stage. So too is a pamphlet which will be available at the entrance gate. This has a detailed **trail map** with information for visitors who want to walk in the reserve. Both English and Afrikaans versions are available. Thanks to Nico Weyers for his map drawing, and for attaching the new **OPEN/CLOSED** sign at the gate.

Recycling has been put on hold temporarily while plans are being made to keep this activity neat. Collections have not been as expected, resulting in litter. Watch this space.

COMING EVENTS

Edward Foster has supplied us with dates for future **Stargazing** events on Friday evenings. Please diarise these. More detail will be circulated closer to the time:

7 May
16 July
6 August
15 October
26 November

On **Easter Sunday, 4th April, at 06h45**, there will be an interdenominational **Sunrise Service** at the Piempiempie picnic site. The gate opposite Protea Village Shopping centre (Spar) will be open. This celebration of the resurrection of Christ, while the sun is rising, will be quite informal. Everybody is welcome. Please remember to bring your own chairs, rugs or cushions. Song sheets are available. There will be a children's message, and a short message with singing. Do bring a picnic for breakfast afterwards! Also see if the belladonnas are still flowering. In case of rain or wet conditions, we will go to the EE Centre at the main entrance.

AGM (See above).

The **Friends of the Liesbeek** have invited us for a "drive and walk" along the river. This will be in the week, Wednesday, **12 May**, or in case of rain, **19 May**. More detail later.

On **16 August** there will be a talk on **snakes**, while we finalise plans for our Spring Event. This year it will be fun run in the main reserve, with other attractions as well. Donations of prizes for the participants will be welcome.

Saturday 11 September is the big event! Persons may put up stalls or help with our own fund raising. Be there!

On **Tuesday 12 October**, our intern, Robin Adams, will be offering a presentation of his research of the distribution of a rare plant.

Thursday, 18 November sees our already traditional **Sundowners picnic** on Perdekop. Great fun!

In all of the events and projects FoB has worked closely with the manager, Tshepo, and her staff. Myrna and Khumbudzo, we miss you, but welcome the new student and intern, Robin and Ashton. They have already gone the extra mile (overtime!) to be there for us. May we continue this co-operation in the interests of conservation, restoration and community awareness.