

During the upcoming months there will be a number of guided walks in the Reserve. In addition to the day walks, there will be two night walks each month, one at full moon, the other at new moon when, weather permitting, we hope to do some star gazing..

Please note: There will be no walks in December.

Day Walks

All day walks start at 08:00 from the Information Centre and last about two hours. While the walks are free, those who do not have a valid Friends' card will need to pay the normal entry charge. Dates and topics are as follows:

- **29 November: Fynbos** – Corey van der Laan and Andreas Groenewald
- **31 January: Birds** – Rose Mills
Note: Starting time 07:30
- **28 February: Proteas** – Corey van der Laan
- **28 March: Medicinal Plants** – Andreas Groenewald

Night Walks

This unique opportunity to walk in the Reserve after dark is being offered to members only. Walks will start from the Information Centre at 20:00 sharp (the gates will be open) and last about two hours.

Walks will be limited to 20 persons per walk. Booking is therefore essential. To book, contact the Information Centre on 021 851 4060, open daily 10:00 to 16:30.

Please note: Booking will open on 15 January, not before.

- **30 January**, Saturday – Full Moon
 - **13 February**, Saturday – New Moon
 - **27 February**, Saturday – Full Moon
 - **15 March**, Monday – New Moon
 - **30 March**, Tuesday – Full Moon
- Participants will need to bring a torch.

International Volunteers' Day 5 December 2009

A day to applaud the invaluable contribution made by our dedicated team of volunteers, who give of their time and energy in support of the Reserve and the many different Friends' projects.

Thank you one and all!

Helderberg Friends

Newsletter No 62

November 2009



This year's Sunset Concerts season at the Helderberg Nature Reserve looks set to be more popular than ever, with a diverse range of entertainers in an expanded programme of nine concerts.

Concert audiences will be sure to enjoy the benefits of the new stage which allows for all performers to be easily seen and heard, whilst the newly-established lawn provides lots of space for chairs and picnic blankets.

Visitors to the first three concerts will also find a new Art Exhibition showing in the Information Centre next to the concert venue. The exhibition consists of original watercolour paintings by the renowned landscape artist Stephen Quirke, a resident of Somerset West. The exhibition will be open on the concert Sundays in November and December.

The season begins on 29 November, with a South American theme provided by *The Latinos*, and runs through to March 2010. As can be seen from the programme, there will be something for everyone to enjoy.

Concert admission is R30 per adult and R10 for scholars. Extended parking arrangements have been put in place. All concerts start at 17:30. Tickets will be sold at the gate on the day of entry.

Programme

- ♦ **29 November 2009**
Latina – Mainly Latin American
- ♦ **6 December 2009**
Bed-on-Bricks – Funky Rock
- ♦ **13 December 2009**
AcousticA – Classical, Jazz, Blues, Pop/Rock, Ballads, Irish, Indian, African
- ♦ **3 January 2010**
Abaqondisi Brothers – 12-piece a capella group sings in English, Afrikaans, Sotho and Xhosa – and dances
- ♦ **17 January 2010**
Shiraz – Pop/Rock, Songs from Musicals
- ♦ **31 January 2010**
Tommy Dell and the Band Roadhouse – Western, 60s and Popular Music
- ♦ **14 February 2010**
Pretzel Logic – Popular Blues and Rock
- ♦ **28 February 2010**
Army and Caledonian Bands – Big Band and Scottish Music
- ♦ **14 March 2010**
Black Market – Jazz, Latin and Funky groove-based tunes

Enquiries about the concert programme and art exhibition may be directed to the Information Centre on 021 851 4060, open daily from 10:00 to 16:30.



Letter from the Reserve Manager

Hello again. I can hardly believe it is time for another newsletter – this year is really flying by!

Sunset Concert Series

The work on the concert area has been completed. New grass has been laid down and the entire area has been made bigger for more visitors to enjoy the Sunset Concert Series. The stage has also been completed and we are now just waiting for some summer weather so that we can seal the deck with varnish. I want to thank my entire team for their hard work and dedication to this project; I also want to thank Alistair Munday and his team for their contributions.

Pine removal

The pine removal project is well on track, too. Meetings have been held with relevant departments and plans have been drawn up for the systematic removal of the trees. The actual work

will get underway early next year. The reason for this is due to the huge volumes of timber currently on the market. We need the maximum value for our timber. And rest assured, the money is coming back to the Reserve for various projects!

Upgrade of ablution facilities

The final preparations are also underway for the upgrade of the ablution facilities in the picnic sites. Money has been made available to re-tile and paint the buildings this year and to sort out the roofing next year. I trust that everyone will appreciate these improvements.

Tips on fires

Please make time to read the article *Tips on Fires* featured on the back page of the newsletter. There are some good tips in it for everyone to take note of.

So until the next edition – thanks for the support and please keep visiting the Reserve.

– Owen Wittridge



The "Green Team" from Beaumont at work.

Clearing Invasives

The hack group has concentrated its efforts on clearing within the southernmost pine plantations in the Reserve. Quite a wide variety of alien invasives have been encountered in this area, including Australian Blackwood, Longleaf Wattle, Eucalypts and Spanish Broom. The "Green Team" from Beaumont Primary School took part in a hack in September. These youngsters made light work of a reasonably large area of young pines.

Upcoming hacks dates:

- 14 November 2009
- 12 December 2009
- 9 January 2010
- 13 February 2010
- 13 March 2010

Note: All hacks start at 07:30.

For more information contact James Silberbauer on 078 306 1660.

Eco-Centre Flag flies high



Celebrating this memorable event (l to r): Andreas Groenwald, EEC Officer, Freya Brett, EEC Volunteer, Owen Wittridge, Reserve Manager

Earlier this year, the EEC was awarded the international Eco-Centre flag in recognition of outstanding environmental education and management. The official flag-raising ceremony took place on 28 October.

A number of VIP guests were invited to join the Friends Committee, volunteers and Reserve management in the celebration. They were treated to delicious snacks and wine. After a short presentation on the history and achievements of the EEC since its inception in 1991 – the first classes were held under an old oak tree – the group proceeded to the entrance gate. There they watched as the flag was raised to the accompaniment of a thrilling drum roll by two learners from Parel Vallei High School. It was a moving occasion.

Congratulations to all who contributed to this wonderful achievement – the staff of the EEC and the Reserve and all our hard working and dedicated volunteers. You did us proud.

Information Centre

Our appreciation goes to Cathy Hannay who spent a great deal of time researching and updating the *History of the Nature Reserve* board in the Information Centre. It is invaluable to see the incredible development that has gone on here over the past 49 years. Some of the photos make the Reserve almost unrecognisable. One can only be amazed at the amount of work that has been done in order to achieve what we now enjoy. Thank you, Cathy.

– Rene Lind

Gardening Tips from our Indigenous Nursery

The colourful spring displays may be over, but the nursery is getting new stock all the time. So visit us regularly to see what is available.

♦ Try something different in your garden. The *hermannia*, *gnidia*, *freylinia* and *salvia* species attract insects and birds when in flower. *Agapanthus* is

Looking for Gifts? You could find just what you need at the Guinea Gift Shop at the Information Centre in the Reserve. It has a wide range of items for sale and is open daily from 10:00 to 16:30. Do pay them a visit.



always reliable and comes in “designer” varieties with different heights and flowering times. The colours range from white to purple/black.

◆ Remember, as the weather warms up, any new plants in the garden need to be watered *deeply* at least twice a week to establish deep roots.

◆ When planting any of the Fynbos species, please *do not* put any bone meal, super-phosphate or manure in the hole. Fynbos grows mainly in deprived soils and establishes long feeding roots.



Try something new – *gnidia*

When they come into contact with any of the above, they absorb it all at once

and die. Just a little compost in the hole and then around the plant as a mulch, will be quite sufficient.

The Nursery is open from 10:00 to 16:00 on Tuesdays to Saturdays.



HB doing his maths.!



Hadeda nestlings back in the nest after being ringed.

The Hadeda that came to school

Hadedea Ibis are an increasingly common sight –and sound – in urban areas. Lisa Jones, a teacher at Beaumont Primary School, recently contacted the EEC to say that a young, tame Hadeda had entered the school grounds. The bird was so tame that it was constantly going up to the children, and even into one of the classrooms.

Lisa was concerned about the Hadeda’s safety and the fact that it was on its own. She also noticed that the bird had been ringed.

Freya Brett of the EEC contacted Greg Duckworth, at SAFRING at the University of Cape Town, who is doing research on Hadedas. This was his response:

“Thanks for your concern over Hadeda HB (his ringed number) ... HB tried to fledge before he was ready and was unsuccessful. His parents didn’t feed him very often when he was on the ground and so he was partially hand-reared. So he’s very tame and associates people with food! It’s very exciting to be able to get that close to a wild bird and I hope that he’s cautious about who he goes up to, because this behaviour potentially allows him to be harmed. But so far it’s been good.”

Meanwhile Lisa had found HB a home at a local farm. “He seems happy there,” she told the EEC.

Greg is completing his MSc on a Hadeda project, under the supervision of Dr Res Altwegg. “The project was initiated in 2006 by Dr Res Altwegg and Mr Doug Harebottle,” Greg said.

“Essentially, we locate Hadeda nests and ring the nestlings with unique engraved colour rings. Each colour ring

has a two-letter combination, for example HB. We started at AA and are moving down the alphabet. We are down to U now, but we’ve left out MNQR, so we’ve still got those in reserve.”

Greg made a special appeal to Helderberg Friends to be on the lookout for new Hadeda nests, and also to keep an eye open for any ringed Hadedas. “If you see any please let us know!”

About the study

According to the SAFRING web site, the range expansion of the Hadeda Ibis from the eastern regions of South Africa to the Western Cape began in the late 1960s, spreading as far as the suburbs of Cape Town by the late-mid 1980s. This expansion is believed to be due to a population increase and the provision of suitable habitat and feeding.

However, the study in which Greg is involved, is hoping to find answers to two principle questions. What factors are responsible for the large population increase in the Cape Town Metropole? Why are these birds so successful living in a man-made environment?

You can make an important contribution to this study by reporting any sightings of colour-ringed Hadedas to SAFRING at UCT ☎ 021 650 2421 and include the following information:

- The date of the sighting
- Locality GPS coordinates if possible
- Ring colour and code (AA, AB etc.)
- Habitat (e.g. field, park, garden etc.)

Your contribution will be acknowledged and a report sent to you detailing the history of the bird’s movements.

You can also access the organisation’s regular newsletter at <http://adu.org.za/hadeda.php>



A tribute to Gordon Scholtz

A loyal member of the Friends and dedicated bird ringer who passed away on 22 August 2009.

Ibegan my training as a Bird Ringer under Gordon’s guidance in 1997 and soon learnt what a very generous and patient teacher I had.

A courteous and private person, Gordon would always rather remain behind the scene, understated and getting on with what had to be done. He happily gave his time and a great deal of encouragement to trainees of all ages and particularly enjoyed bringing ringing to the disadvantaged.

Our activities took us as far as Tanqua and many local sites, including AECI beach for the summer Tern-ringing sessions – “Gordon’s moonlight picnics”.

We won’t forget his crisp sense of humour – a little wicked at times. For instance, when a fiscal shrike was netted, the unsuspecting trainee was invited to remove the bird from the bag!

It was a privilege to have known Gordon – an unforgettable 12-year interlude. Our thoughts are with Marilyn and the family.

– John Clements



Tips on Fires

by Owen Wittridge

Last summer was one of the worst for wild fires, which caused devastation in many areas, in particular the Helderberg basin and surrounding areas. As fire season approaches, Reserve Manager Owen Wittridge provided the following tips on fire safety and how to prevent fires.

Reduce the risk of fire

Fires are often air borne as burning material and sparks travel on the wind. The likely place for fires to land is on the roof of a building. Check your gutters and remove dead leaves and debris.

In many areas, homes are very close to natural vegetation on the mountain-side. These places are particularly vulnerable to fire. While authorities are doing their best to remove the invading alien vegetation that adds fuel to wild fire, so property owners are being asked to remove invading alien vegetation that provides fuel for *veld* fires.

Much research has been done into the factors that increase the likelihood of a home catching fire. Here are some things you can do to lower the fire risk on your property:

Fire prevention – safety tips

- Don't leave a flame unattended. Burning candles, braai fires and even burning garden refuse have been the cause of death and destruction.
- Smokers have a grave responsibility. Ensure that every cigarette is dead before you dump it (in a bin) and never flick butts out of car windows. Take extra care late at night when you are about to fall asleep.
- Invest in a fire extinguisher and teach all family members how to use it. A bucket of sand outside the door can also help to smother fires.
- Keep the fire emergency number next to the telephone and store it in

your cell phone.

- Remember, lives are worth more than possessions. Don't put yourself at risk trying to save these.

Preventing veld fires

Most wild fires are started by people being careless. All fires start small! But when the weather is hot, dry and windy, a small fire can quickly become a threat to life and property. *Veld* fires often start close to the home, and can cause injuries, death and loss of personal belongings. To stop these from happening:

DON'T

- ◆ Burn garbage on a hot and windy day, as the fire can easily spread and cause a wild fire.
- ◆ Play with matches!
- ◆ Throw away burning cigarette ends!
- ◆ Leave an open fire unattended.

DO

- ◆ Get rid of hot ash and coal from heating and cooking in a safe place where there is no plant or other material that can catch alight.
- ◆ Cover an open fire with sand to smother it.
- ◆ Always work in an open, cleared area when working with power tools. Power tools like angle grinders, welders and chain-saws make sparks which can ignite the surrounding *veld*.
- ◆ Make sure that there are no illegal electrical connections in or near your home, and that electrical

appliances are correctly wired. Illegal, faulty electrical connections can get hot and start to burn.

- ◆ Keep the area around your home clear of material that can burn, such as firewood, kindling and garbage.

If you see someone playing carelessly with fire, then tell them to stop. Wild fires can hurt people and animals.

If you see someone starting a fire, report this to an official, the police or a community leader immediately.

In case of a fire

- Close all windows and doors – curtains and blinds often catch fire first.
- Put all wooden garden furniture inside.
- Hose down the property.
- Evacuate immediately if asked to do so by fire-fighters.

Surviving a fire

If you see that a fire has started, ***don't panic. Evacuate the area*** immediately.

Never ignore the fire, even if it seems far away – it can quickly become large and engulf you!

The most dangerous situation to be in is when a fire is moving up a steep slope, and you are above it with bush and grass between you and the fire.

If you feel threatened and you don't think you can outrun the fire, or if you are surrounded, then find a ***safe zone***.

A safe zone can be an area that has already been burnt, or is completely clear of any fuel that can burn, such as a wide road or an old homestead. The clear area should be as large as possible.

Remember that what will hurt you, is the heat that the fire makes and the lack of oxygen to breathe.

Lie down on the ground, cover your head, breathe deeply before the smoke gets too close, and hold your breathe when the fire passes over and around you. If you have blankets or extra clothing with you, try to cover any exposed parts of your body.

Reporting fires

All fires ***must*** be reported to the authorities. Don't presume that somebody else has reported it already. The telephone numbers for doing this are:

**021 590 1900 from a cell
107 from a land line.**

Issued by: Friends of the Helderberg Nature Reserve ♦ P O Box 2075, Somerset West 7129

♦ E-mail: helderbergfriends@telkomsa.net ♦ Information Centre ☎ 021 851 4060 ♦ Indigenous Nursery ☎ 021 851 9192
♦ Mike Woods Environmental Education Centre ☎ 021 852 8831 ♦ Website: www.helderbergnaturereserve.co.za

To be cut out and kept in a prominent place as a reminder of upcoming programme and special events.



Friends of the Helderberg Nature Reserve Programme & Special Events

November 2009

- 14 07:30 **Alien Vegetation Hack**
29 08:00 **Walk in the Reserve:** Fynbos
29 17:30 **Sunset Concert:** Latimos

Small Adventures:

An Exhibition of watercolours by Stephen Quirke, at the Information Centre from 28 November to 13 December. Open daily from 10:00 to 16:30 (until 17:00 on concert nights)

December 2009

- 5 **International Volunteers' Day**
6 17:30 **Sunset Concert:**
Bed-on-Bricks
12 07:30 **Alien Vegetation Hack**
13 17:30 **Sunset Concert:** AcousticA

January 2010

- 3 17:30 **Sunset Concert:**
Abaqondisi Brothers
9 07:30 **Alien Vegetation Hack**
15 10:00 Booking for night walks opens
17 17:30 **Sunset Concert:** Shiraz
30 20:00 **Night Walk:** Full Moon
31 07:30 **Walk in the Reserve:** Birds
31 17:30 **Sunset Concert:**
Tommy Dell and Roadhouse

For more information contact the Information Centre ☎ 021 851 4060 or visit our website: www.helderbergnaturereserve.co.za



Friends of the Helderberg Nature Reserve Programme & Special Events

February 2010

- 13 07:30 **Alien Vegetation Hack**
13 20:00 **Night Walk:** New Moon
14 17:30 **Sunset Concert:**
Pretzel Logic
27 20:00 **Night Walk:** Full Moon
28 08:00 **Walk in the Reserve:** Proteas
28 17:30 **Sunset Concert:** The Army and Caledonian Bands

March 2010

- 13 07:30 **Alien Vegetation Hack**
14 17:30 **Sunset Concert:** Black Market
15 20:00 **Night Walk:** New Moon
28 08:00 **Walk in the Reserve:**
Medicinal Plants
30 20:00 **Night Walk:** Full Moon

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