



Annual General Meeting 8 May at 14:30

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Helderberg Nature Reserve will be held at 14:30 on Saturday, 8 May, at the Mike Woods Environmental Education Centre in the Reserve.

Agenda

- Welcome and Apologies
- Minutes of AGM held on 9 May 2009
- Chairman's Report
- Financial Statement
- The EEC Officer's Report
- Election of Friends' Committee Members for 2010/2011

(Please note: Nomination Forms are available at the Information Centre.)

Please make a every effort to attend. Tea/coffee will be served after the meeting. Members are asked to please bring a plate of eats.

It's time to renew your membership!

Membership for the current year expires on 31 March. All membership subscription rates for the coming year, 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011, will remain unchanged These are:

Ordinary	R85
Senior Citizens	R55
Family	R170
Patron	R275

Paid-up members may renew their membership at the Information Centre during March and will be issued with their new membership cards. We encourage you to make use of this opportunity to register before your membership expires. Hours for membership renewal/ application are from 10:00 to 15:30.

All members are asked to spread the word about the Helderberg Nature Reserve and encourage new members to join the Friends.

This gives them tremendous entry fee savings and, most importantly, contributes to environmental education in the district and the ongoing maintenance of the Reserve.

– Patrick Neale-May, Treasurer

Helderberg Friends

Newsletter No 63

March 2010

The Helderberg Nature Reserve celebrates 50 years!



PAST – little Fynbos, no dam, no Information Centre and certainly no concert area!



PRESENT – a very different place thanks to the vision, commitment and hard work of many during the past 50 years.

2010 is a landmark year for the Reserve as it celebrates the 50th year since its proclamation as a Nature Reserve in the Provincial Gazette on 23 September 1960.

To highlight this conservation achievement and the contribution made by many over the years, the Friends, together with the City of Cape Town, will be celebrating this achievement during September.

Further information to follow. Meanwhile please mark this date on your calendar.

International Year of Biodiversity

This is also a very important year internationally. 2010 has been declared the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) by the UN. It will be a celebration of life on earth and of the value of biodiversity for our lives. The whole world is being invited to safeguard the variety of life on earth: biodiversity!

The Mike Woods Environmental Education Centre will certainly be



doing its bit throughout the year. To this end, a Biodiversity Exhibition will be held during May. While the exhibition is aimed at our school learners, anyone is welcome to visit the EEC to view the various displays.

For more information about the IYB and the exhibition, read the attached EEC Newsletter – Summer 2010.



Letter from the Reserve Manager

Well folks, 2010 has arrived! The year of the Soccer World Cup and the Year of Biodiversity and therefore a year to celebrate as South Africans. It is a year where the eyes of the world will be upon us and a perfect chance to showcase our natural beauty and biodiversity. Let us encourage visitors to visit the Nature Reserve and extend our hospitality to them all.

Projects underway

As far as the Nature Reserve is concerned, many of the projects, for which we received money, are starting to take shape. Some of you may have already seen that we have moved the dirt bins into two centrally located areas. This is in preparation for the new bins that will be arriving shortly. With these bins, we are hoping that you all will assist us in our efforts to recycle. The bins will be colour coded and have stickers placed upon them indicating what can be placed inside each one.

The ablation blocks are also going to be receiving a facelift. The quotations are in and a contractor will begin with the work shortly. The buildings are to be re-painted, given some new basins and will be tiled.

Students

We again have students working in the Reserve – Romy Klusener and Grant Smith. Grant will be assisting me with the invasive alien plant removal programme and Romy with the ablation block upgrade mentioned above. They will also be involved in assisting the Education Centre with various groups.



Conservation Students 2010 (l to r)
Romy Klusener and Grant Smith

Other projects

Other projects that we are busy with include the invasive vegetation removal programme as mentioned, various monitoring programmes, as well as updating the Reserve Management plan.

We are also looking at safety and security issues in the area. I am commit-

ted to keeping the unlawful element out of our Reserve so that visitors can enjoy a walk without feeling scared or being harassed by unwelcome types. Therefore, if you see anything suspicious, please call the Conservation Office during work hours ☎ 021 851 6982 or the local police station.

A word of appreciation

In closing, I want to thank the Friends again for the support given to me and my staff. And I am sure that 2010 will be a year to remember.

Oak Trees take their final 'bough'



Romy Klusener poses with a section of the tree that was cut down recently.

Below is the article written by Romy for local newspapers on the felling of two oak trees within the picnic site at the Reserve.

Situated within the picnic site of the Helderberg Nature Reserve, two of the shady and aged oak trees have been removed. Due to extreme old age the trees have died from the inside out.

After an assessment of the trees was made, Owen Wittridge, Reserve Manager, had the trees cut down. This was done in order to prevent them from falling and endangering picnickers in the Reserve.

Although it is sad to see two mighty and well aged trees go, it is not in vain as two indigenous trees are going to replace them and provide the same shade and aesthetic beauty as the previous resident oaks did.



Early Riser Keys

The early riser keys will only need to be changed at the beginning of July. Friends are reminded that there is a limited number available. Keys are issued to members on a first come first serve basis.

Clearing Invasives

Four hundred and ninety hours – roughly equivalent to two months of work – were contributed by the hack volunteers during 2009. A great feat and an effort much appreciated by the Friends for their ongoing contribution to clearing the Reserve of alien vegetation.



Annegret Gruner cuts down a pine during the December hack.

The average number of hackers has grown to 15. During the latter part of 2009 the group has focused mainly on the area enclosing the pine plantations in the south-east of the Reserve.

The new year signalled the beginning of a new area of focus – the reservoir in the southern part of the Reserve where we are clearing a mix of aliens including Black Wattle, Longleaf Wattle, Sesbania and Bugweed.

New hackers are always welcome. We meet at the Education Centre on the second Saturday of the month. From April we switch to winter time and start at 08:00. The hacks last about two-and-a-half hours and include a tea break.

Upcoming hacks dates are:

- 13 March 2010 at 07:30
- 10 April 2010 at 08:00
- 8 May 2010 at 08:00
- 12 June 2010 at 08:00
- 10 July 2010 at 08:00

For more information contact James Silberbauer on 078 306 1660.

Gardening Ideas from our Indigenous Nursery

With the start of cooler weather and, hopefully some rain, it's time to plan and plant your fynbos garden.

Why not try Leucadendrons?

They are part of the Proteaceae family and easier to grow. They are waterwise when established – usually after the first winter – and also add colour in autumn/winter. The smaller varieties e.g. Candles and Red and Yellow Devil grow to 1 metre and can be



Leucadendrons
Salignum (Safari Sunset)

used in containers. The taller ones e.g. Safari Sunset, Inca gold and Chameleon, are spectacular planted as accents or in groups.

Focus on Portulacaria Afra or Spekboom

This is an evergreen succulent shrub reaching up to 2 metres with red stems, small round leaves and pink flowers in winter. It can be planted anywhere and, what makes it special, is its capacity to offset carbon emissions in the atmosphere. It has been planted on farms in the Eastern Cape as food for animals as it roots easily and forms an oasis of shade and water for indigenous seeds that would not normally root, thus restoring vegetation to overgrazed farms (see *Veld and Flora*, December 2008). We should all plant at least one as our contribution to counteracting our carbon footprint.

A Yellowwood Windbreak

The nursery has a large quantity of small yellowwood (podocarpus) trees – ideal planted as a windbreak.

The nursery is open from Tuesdays to Fridays from 10:00 to 16:00 and on Saturdays from 10:00 to 14:00.



Visitors to the successful exhibition by local artist, Stephen Quirke, held in November.

Information Centre

The Guinea Gift Shop at the Information Centre is well stocked with reasonably priced goods well suited to those needing gifts to take overseas. There is a good selection of children's books, as well as books on our natural fauna and flora. Sales have been good, though we have felt the pinch of the recession. We would like to remind you that all the profit made at the shop goes directly towards helping to run the Reserve. We need your support.

There are many visitors, particularly over weekends, who enjoy the Reserve's facilities, visit the shop and view the excellent show-cases in our small but interesting museum. Children, in particular, take great delight in the birds, animals and other creatures depicted.

– Rene Lind



New to the concert series was Abaqondisi Brothers from Kaya-mandi who wowed the crowds with their voices and moves. Spontaneous audience participation was inevitable!

Summer Concerts Series

It gives me great pleasure to say that this year's series has attracted more people than last. This in turn has generated more revenue for the Education Centre which is greatly appreciated and one of the main reasons for running the concerts. Thank you all for supporting a very good cause.

Shiraz and Banned in Evolution, the new group to our arena, drew the largest attendances of more than 1 000.

After last year's series, we embarked on a major upgrade project to enhance the concert area. This has proved a great

success. The enlarged lawn area has improved the seating capacity. The added parking areas have made parking much more manageable thanks to the Reserve management. However, don't be fooled, when we have a very popular group like Shiraz, parking is still a challenge. Having the gates close at 20:00 has also added to the overall pleasure of coming to the concerts.

This year, we have tried to provide a mix of music. From your feedback, I do believe we have achieved this goal, thanks to Grace Poole, our Entertainers Co-ordinator.

A series like this just doesn't happen without a lot of team work. To this end I would like to say a big thank you to my team and the Helderberg Nature Reserve management. It has been a pleasure working with you all and I hope I can call on you again next year.

As we come to the end of this series, I hope you have enjoyed the music.

– Alistair Munday

A chance to help the Friends and the Reserve!

We have some great opportunities for more local residents to utilise their skills and experience to help the causes of conservation and education. Right now we need volunteers for a number of tasks.

- ◆ Top of the list is our need for a Public Relations Officer who will be able to generate press releases and become our contact point for media events or enquiries. Our PR person would be able to make a great contribution towards expanding the public awareness of the Friends and our causes.
- ◆ Do you enjoy gardening? The Indigenous Nursery urgently needs people prepared to do either a morning or afternoon shift once a week/month.
- ◆ *Helderberg Heritage*, a handy guide to the flowers and history of the Reserve which was recently written and produced by John and Pat Runnals, needs someone to promote the book, as well as someone to organise a



book launch. Also needed is a person with formatting skills to refine the layout and illustrations and thus prepare the book for a wide audience.

- ◆ The Information Centre requires additional volunteers willing to assist for three hours on a Sunday every second month.

If you have half a feeling that you might be able to help, why not contact the Information Centre ☎021 851 4060 (open daily from 10:00 to 16:30) or email helderbergfriends@telkomsa.net

From two of our members

It is such a privilege and a joy to have the Helderberg Reserve on our doorstep and we appreciate all the hard work the volunteers put in to give so many people happiness and freedom to roam in the beautiful countryside.

John and Jonee McFall



Night Walks in the Reserve

During the past few months, members were given the opportunity to walk in the Reserve after dark. Pat Hapgood, shares her experience.

I took advantage of this unique opportunity to join Andreas's guided walk in the moonlight through paths in the fynbos on 30 January, the first walk.

While waiting for the rest of the group to assemble, we noticed an endangered long-eared Cape Hare emerge from the bushes next to the Information Centre, from where he watched us. Andreas pointed out that that was a good place to see some small buck feeding after dark. We set off, armed with our torches, and only switched them on once we started ascending the jeep track to the right of the concert area, in order to spot any insect inhabitants of the fynbos on either side of the track.

Looking at the stars

At this stage the slight cloud cover masking the bright face of the moon had begun to shift and a few more stars became visible. From among the sprinkling of stars, Andreas identified the 'faintly red' Mars, the Southern Cross, Orion's Belt, as well as the Twin Stars of Gemini. We also saw five satellites moving across the night sky.

Spiders, insects and frogs

As we continued our walk, torchlight pinpointed various sized camouflaged stick insects clinging to stalks of bushes, also small grasshoppers and a few small ground spiders emerging from their holes in the ground.

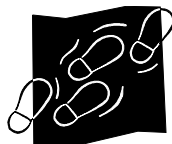
Once at the top fence, we filed off to the left, descending through the fynbos by some of the many paths. Torchlight revealed many delicate spider webs strung between bushes. Andreas identified the Orb Spider sitting in the centre of her web, skins of her meal sticking to the threads of her trap. We also saw the large, leggy Rain Spider, the Camelback Spider, as well as a Button Spider's

web, sticky with pieces of dried leaves. We were also able to take a closer look at a small green Cicada.

As we approached the lily ponds and dam, the shrill whistle of the small Painted Reed Frogs greeted us as we gradually made our way back to our cars at about 10:20.

A memorable experience

What is memorable for me, apart from the exhilarating walk in perfect weather conditions in the company of Nature lovers, the stargazing in the moonlight and the sight of those amazingly intricate spider-webs, was my sense of connection with the symbiotic relationship between the Earth, Nature's creatures, our Environment and the Cosmos. It highlights our responsibility for our stewardship of our Home.



Walks in the Reserve

Day Walks

The dates of the guided walks are listed below. All 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.

- **28 March: Medicinal Plants** – Andreas Groenewald
- ♦ **25 April: Birds** – Jill Mortimer
- **30 May: Fynbos Biodiversity** – Andreas Groenewald (The walk will include a visit to the Biodiversity Exhibition at the EEC.)
- **27 June: Proteas** – Corey van der Laan

Night Walks

Because of the interest shown in these walks, it has been decided to arrange additional night walks in April and May, weather permitting. Walks will be limited to 20 persons per walk, so booking is essential. Participants are asked to meet at the entrance to the Reserve at 18:30 and to bring a torch with them. Walks will last about 2 hours.

To book, contact the Information Centre ☎ 021 851 4060.

- **14 April**, Wednesday – New Moon
- **28 April**, Wednesday – Full Moon
- **14 May**, Friday – New Moon
- **28 May**, Friday – Full Moon

Hadedas HB

In the November issue of the Friends' Newsletter, we published an article about HB, the hadeda that went to school. We have since learnt that the person to ring HB was none other than Gordon Scholtz to whom we paid tribute in the same issue. Touching to know your work lives on, Gordon!



Greg Duckworth, who is heading up the hadeda research project, has assured us that the project is ongoing. He asks our readers to please keep their eyes open and report any sightings of ringed birds. He told of two birds that had been ringed in Somerset West and then re-sighted in Cape Town. Hadedas are therefore definitely capable of moving between these two places over a short period of time, so there's no reason why birds ringed in Cape Town, their focus area, cannot be seen in Somerset West.

Greg has one further request. As winter in the Western Cape is the hadedas' breeding season, he appeals to you to report any active nests or sightings to him at duckworth.greg@yahoo.com

Children's Holiday Club 14 – 18 June 2010

Each morning from 09:00 to 12:00 during the first week of the winter school holidays, the EEC will have a series of exciting and creative activities for children aged 5 to 12 years – a wonderful opportunity for them to explore some of the wonders of nature in a relaxed, fun-filled atmosphere.

The cost per child per day is R40. As numbers are limited to 40 children per day, booking is essential. **Booking opens on 17 May (not before).** Contact the EEC ☎ 021 852 8831.



As part of the EEC's outreach commitment, from 21 to 25 June a special holiday programme for children from disadvantaged communities is being planned. Transport will be arranged through the H.E.E.P. Bus Project.

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

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

April 2010

- 10 08:00 **Alien Vegetation Hack**
14 18:30 **Night Walk** – New Moon
25 08:00 **Walk in the Reserve:** Birds
28 18:30 **Night Walk** – Full Moon

May 2010

 **Biodiversity Exhibition**
at the EEC during May

- 8 08:00 **Alien Vegetation Hack**

8 14:30 **Annual General Meeting**
at the Education Centre

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- 14 18:30 **Night Walk:** New Moon
28 18:30 **Night Walk:** Full Moon
30 08:00 **Walk in the Reserve:**
Fynbos Biodiversity

June 2010

- 12 08:00 **Alien Vegetation Hack**
27 08:00 **Walk in the Reserve:** Proteas

July 2010

- 10 08:00 **Alien Vegetation Hack**

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