



NEWSLETTER

NOV/DEC 2013



It always astounds me just how grateful life in our bush is for every miserly drop of rain. Plants live in fast-forward here, managing their entire life cycle from bursting into leaf, to flowering and producing seed sometimes in a matter of mere days. After the dry season when anything vaguely edible has been consumed, the few remaining aloes zebrina that were considered too tiny to be worth eating by even porcupines literally grow centimetres after every light shower. Of course swarms of beetles and bugs have also just been waiting for those first drops of rain before crawling out of chrysalides with what seems the sole intention of gaining entrance to my house so they may hurl themselves relentlessly against any available light bulb before falling on their backs and dying a Franz Kafka-ish death. However the onslaught of bugs comes with a perk. The migratory birds have returned and the plaintive call of cuckoos can be heard again. Birds advertise their eligibility from every tree. Hornbills solemnly woo their lady loves with delectable bugs or sometimes just a dry leaf. Even the most shrivelled leaf is accepted with courtly manners which must take a great deal of forbearance. Animals that have been existing on the most unpalatable plants whilst eyeing our fenced gardens with longing are suddenly surrounded by plenty. Giraffe gather to saunter among the trees nibbling from the fresh canopy while impala flicker between the bushes and warthogs elbow in the new green stubble. The impala are dropping fawns and warthog mums are venturing from their burrows with skinny new piglets.

Christmas beetles shrilling in the mopane remind me that it'll soon be the festive season. Christmas is wonderful for a lot of reasons. It's a time for over indulgence and family and decorating a dry acacia branch with too much glitter and a lifetime of baubles. And it's followed by New Year and that invigorating feeling of motivation that accompanies fresh starts.

This will be the last Newsletter for 2013, so until the next edition in 2014 here's wishing you and your families a MERRY CHRISTMAS and ALL THE BEST FOR THE NEW YEAR.

COMMITTEE UPDATE by Hans Schmid

Committee Structure

Peter Meier has agreed to take responsibility for the following portfolios:

1. Committee representative in liaison with CARE.
GNR submitted a list of its concerns regarding CARE to the caretakers of the centre about a year ago. Certain recommendations were made concerning the responsibilities of maintaining a rehabilitation centre within a nature reserve. It was agreed to have quarterly follow up meetings.
2. Recycling depot at gate.
3. Committee representative in liaison with owners along Baboon and N'Kaya roads.
4. The future of the Vulture Restaurant.

We thank you all for appreciating our predicament and accepting Neil Bridges as the acting treasurer for the Committee. We have not received a single objection.

Change of Ownership

We confirm that Mr. Ian Lourens from Gauteng has purchased plot 100 and the empty plot 70. Ian has signed the Constitution and his membership application was approved on 9 November. We wish him a warm welcome to Grietjie.

There are no further developments in the sale of Tulani. FOREVERSA has requested more details concerning the labour accommodation upgrade on plot 64 prior to granting us permission to proceed. This has been attended to and we are awaiting a reply.

Cheryl Kleyweg has confirmed that the sale of Kulungi is in progress and details of the new owners will be supplied once the deal is finalised.

Subdivision of Plot 126

The Committee has approved the principle of subdivision. The survey plan submitted by Dr Engelbrecht gives an area of 21.35 ha which satisfies the constitutional requirement. We have sought expert opinion from Liz Lewis on the "Memorandum of Understanding" for the Vulture Restaurant between Bird Life SA and GNR/E Engelbrecht. The duration of this MoU terminates in December 2013 and the structure will then become property of the Landowner (Dr. Engelbrecht). We will continue to negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement on the future of the VR between the remaining 2 parties, GNR and Dr. Engelbrecht. This issue can thus have no implication on the proposed subdivision which now should be granted.

As the Land Claims Commissioner needs to be notified of this subdivision, it will be interesting to see if Emiel gets a reply within the prescribed 30 days. A green light could mean that the Commissioner may not hand Grietjie over for restitution.

Finances

Financially we are still cash positive thanks to Neil who has already sent out invoices and statements. There has been a good response and thank you to those of you who have paid within 30 days of invoice (and

received a 5% discount... it's worth it). Total expenses for October amounted to R60,992 including an exceptional cost of R12,700 to repair the Landcruiser differential. Income was R65,720 and we are still within budget.

Roads

We are concentrating on cleaning outlets and constructing/repairing berms on our gravel roads before the heavy rains come. If Johan only had roads to look after we could have the best roads, but as often happens, he gets diverted to tracking poachers, repairing fences and attending to other emergencies. We are grateful that Blackie de Swardt has volunteered to spend one day a week with the road gang.

Community Projects

Last month, we requested that members put forward proposals for community projects and have thankfully received some feasible suggestions:

- Tree labelling – a great idea, Brian and Janine Sears will sponsor the labels, thank you very much.
- Clean up Grietjie, especially in areas highly visible from access roads. This would include removing obsolete buildings, rubble and old fencing.
- Removal of alien plants.
- Management of indigenous encroachers (sickle bush, mopane, purple cluster leaf).
- Construct berms & drains to minimize erosion.
- Construct speed bumps on tar roads to prevent speeding.

Keep the suggestions rolling in; if we get too many suggestions we will let you know, but it seems that we should reintroduce community days.

From my experience, the construction of speed bumps slows down cars with small tyres and sometimes damages the under carriage of a low clearance car. The main culprits speeding on our roads are the upmarket 4x4's that will "fly" over anything. ANY SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO SLOW THE TRAFFIC DOWN, mainly on the tar roads?

ONGR/GNR meeting on 20 November 13

Common boundary fence - ONGR has approved our request that the section of common fence that has already been dismantled be extended to include plot 39 as well.

Speeding by ONGR vehicles – this was also discussed and a letter will be sent by ONGR to all their owners advising them to adhere to our speed limit of 40km/hr.

Resignation of Norvick

Norvick Seale has resigned from his duties on GNR as a gate guard and will be leaving us on 24 December to further his studies and ambitions. We will miss his smiling greetings at the gate and wish him well in his future endeavours.

Walking on the Reserve

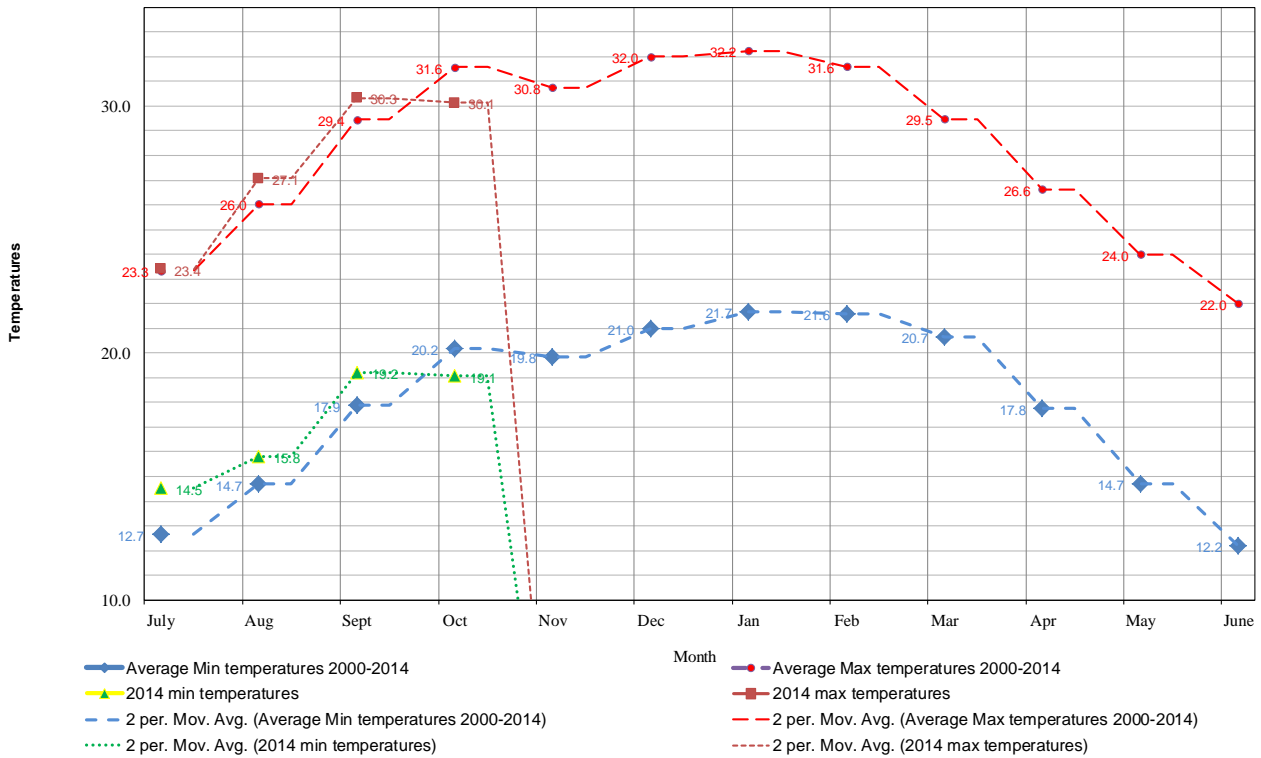
There has been an increase of pedestrian traffic along the access roads. This was discussed at great length at the last meeting and conclusions were:

- The GNR Entry Rules and signage specifically states that walking on the reserve is prohibited as it is dangerous due to the presence of wild animals, and that any person who ignores this, does so at their own risk. GNR cannot be held liable should an unfortunate incident occur.
- Any Grietjie staff member walking on the roads must have his Grietjie staff badge with him for identification purposes.
- There are numerous visitors to owners' staff that walk along the roads. The gate guards may have been lenient in the past in letting certain visitors in, but have now been instructed to apply the entry rules strictly. "a visitor to owners' staff" will only be permitted entry if the **owner has given prior approval** of the visitor to the warden **and the visitor is collected** at the gate". With armed poachers gaining entry to the reserve and to ensure both your safety and the safety of our wildlife it has become essential to tighten security.
- Please transport your staff to and from the gate. If you are not in residence and are unable to do this, please endeavour to make arrangements with your neighbours or friends to ferry staff. Each owner is ultimately liable for the safety of his/her employees.

Issues from October Warden's report

- **Litter** – The photos in the report are disturbing and the littering visible is unacceptable. Judging by the state of the litter this has obviously been going on for some time. The caretakers of the 3 transgressors have been approached by Committee members and letters from the chairman have been sent to the owners giving them 1 month to clean up.
- **Poaching** - The presence of "professional and armed" poachers on Grietjie is now a fact. Previously the Doreen boundary area was the only hot spot, but now we have to concentrate on the other boundaries as well which will stretch our limited resources even further. It is suspected that the poachers are obtaining information from people living on Grietjie. The tracks discovered about a month ago were those of the same poachers who have entered Balule on various occasions via Doreen. These poachers are known but need to be caught red-handed before a poaching case can be made against them.
- **Feeding of wild animals** – "Tame" animals have been observed in various areas on the reserve. The owners in those areas have been notified that feeding of wildlife is an unacceptable and illegal practice and should it continue, appropriate steps will be taken. We plead with all owners not to feed wild animals, and that includes the placement of salt blocks and game licks. Supplementary feeding of wildlife creates a number of problems.
 - i) When an artificial food source is readily available it artificially boosts some animal populations and creates an imbalance by attracting more animals to the area than would normally be found there, and by increasing reproduction and offspring survival rates.
 - ii) When young wild animals are taught to depend on a human provided food source they may not fully develop essential foraging skills.
 - iii) Just as pets have specific foods, so do wild animals. Feeding wild animals the incorrect food is detrimental to their health.
 - iv) Wild animals that are accustomed to being fed by humans commonly lose their fear of people. They become nuisance animals that create problems for other residents in the vicinity. This may ultimately lead to the necessity of destroying them.These are facts, not suppositions. The eco-system must manage wildlife, culling those with poor genes and controlling populations. The baboon problem on Grietjie is an example of the imbalances in nature that are created by supplementary feeding. Residents of Marloth Park have been feeding vegetable scraps and buck pellets to the warthogs, zebras and antelope on the estate over the years. They now have unnaturally large populations of these animals and not a blade of grass. Please don't create problems for yourselves and our community.

Temperature readings for Antares Field Guide Training Centre



COMMUNITY NOTICE BOARD

Please contact me on 0845808157 or at sharonaschmid@gmail.com if you want to post a message on the notice board, for example:

- Buy, swap or sell classifieds
- Property rentals and sales
- Looking for part-time staff, or have staff looking for part-time employment
- Need a house-sitter or can house-sit

It is presently a good time to remove invasive cacti from your property while the grass is low and before the growing season gets underway. You may dump the cacti in Theunis Trollip's old reservoir at the entrance to #45. Remember that any part of the plant left behind on your property will regrow.

We are relocating to Phalaborwa and are looking for long term rental for a family of 4. Do you know of any such possibilities within the Grietjie PNR?
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