

# CO-EXISTING WITH NATURE IN A SUSTAINABLE AND BUSH-FRIENDLY MANNER

*A GPNR forum on guidelines relating to the interaction between humans and the natural environment*

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## Guideline 2 from our Constitution:

***To promote bush atmosphere and appearance within the parameters of the Reserve (clause 7.7).***

## Comments received from readers (abbreviated)

1. **Bush atmosphere refers to** a sense-of-place, wildness and natural character. It is possible to successfully conserve nature but completely mess up the aesthetics of an area. To a large extent this relates to limited infrastructure and careful management intervention in a reserve. It also refers to architecture of buildings and other infrastructure. These should fit in with the character of the area.
  
2. **“Bush atmosphere and appearance” is determined specifically by what we see and hear:**

- a. Auditory

The less unnatural (human produced) sounds there are the greater the sense of wildness.

Audible intrusions into the fabric of wilderness include:

- Loud music and conversations/shouting,
- Generators, concrete mixers etc.,
- Vehicular noises like revving engines and tyre-noise from vehicles, especially speeding ones, rattling trucks and trailers, trains, car alarms or hooters, leaving the engine running unnecessarily,
- Domestic animals, especially barking dogs,
- Hammering and other noises from construction sites.

b. Visual

Some types of impact are subtle and others less so. Here are a few which might be overlooked because they have been in-situ since time-immemorial:

- Fences and gates (especially ostentatious entrance gates and “sculptures” to individual plots),
- Dilapidated and unnecessary buildings, fence posts, building rubble, cables etc.,
- Litter like tissue paper and cigarette butts in the bush, particularly at the Picnic Site,

*(See this forum in the January 2017 Newsletter for notes on what to do with rubbish and rubble.)*

- Alien (and illegal) plants and unnaturally green and lush gardens filled with exotic decorative plants,

*(See this forum and other articles in the November 2016 Newsletter for information about alien plant species.)*

- Obnoxiously bright and exposed or plentiful external lights causing light pollution and irritating neighbours in a wide radius,
- Unnatural manipulation of habitat i.e. excessive clearing/wood collection, dam construction, irrigation etc.

*(See this forum in the December 2016 Newsletter for the do’s and don’ts of collecting firewood.)*

- Overhead powerlines
  - Disrespect for wildlife in terms of not giving them right of way, cutting them off,
- Speeding vehicles AND not slowing down when approaching another vehicle, engulfing them in a trail of dust.

**3. Bush atmosphere is:**

Creating a reserve where owners and visitors can experience a natural wildlife encounter with as little outside disturbance as possible. I think we all accept that, due to human impact and intrusion, true wilderness is something impossible to achieve in many areas of the world today. As such, we need to accept the fact that humans have left footprints almost everywhere, but what is important is to reduce the visible impression we create. We can achieve this in a number of ways.

We can attempt to hide human dwellings from passers-by by building in areas where there is low visible impact, or in cases where this is not possible, we should try to blend buildings into the environment by using natural colours and substrates.

We need to reduce the visibility of any rubbish and remove any that is found. It is important to encourage owners to remove their rubbish or reduce, reuse or cycle where possible.

We have already achieved a lot with making signage around the reserve more consistent and creating a standard which is less intrusive.

We need to encourage and promote the idea of not dumping rubble in the bush and either removing it from the reserve, or if not possible, at least burying it effectively.

It also includes sound impact. We need to ensure that any audio impact on others should be reduced to an acceptable minimal level and allow people to enjoy the natural bush sounds. This equates to not allowing excessive noise from music, machinery, domestic animals and people.

All in all bush atmosphere must be summed up as the ability to enjoy the aesthetics and wonders of the natural environment as much as possible with as little intrusion from human influence and interference.

**4. To create bush atmosphere, we should be more specific about certain things:**

- a. Finish buildings to blend in with the bush: Brown earth tones are best. Avoid terracottas, ochres, creams and whites.
- b. Visible water tanks can be disguised by wrapping them in latte poles.
- c. Unnecessary sheds and reservoirs should be demolished.
- d. Spotlights left on at night are intrusive and generally unnecessary. If they are essential, they should point downwards and not outwards.

***Thank you for your contributions!***