

**KOGELBERG  
Branch of the Botanical Society of SA**

**Newsletter:  
September 2013**

News Editors: Ed & Merran Silberbauer

**THE BATTLE OF BETTY'S BAY  
ROUND 606**

The next attack takes place on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2013, from 9am to noon  
**VENUE:** Agapanthus Road, off Porter Drive.

**TALKS**

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September IN THE PRINGLE BAY COMMUNITY HALL “The Tanzanian Igamba Falls Controversy: snails versus hydro power”.** Speaker **Prof. Richard Fuggle**, previously of the Environmental Studies at U.C.T. and later a consultant to a World Bank inspection panel which examined projects where investment led to negative effects, where what had originally been designed to improve a situation had in fact proved detrimental.

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> October Bryan Havemann** will talk on his life in conservation and especially his years in Rwanda leading the rehabilitation of Akagera National Park. Venue Nivenia Hall.

At all talks there will be liquid refreshments and a voluntary collection will be taken. Please see the posters for any possible change of venue for the talks,

**WALK**

There will be a walk on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> September for details please contact Barbara 082 338 4109 or Merrilee 028 272 9314

**REPORT ON HACK NO 605**

For the third time the monthly hack has been cancelled; 360mm rain during August ensured that the battle scene became a dripping wet swamp. Fear not for we shall get there in the end: and, ever optimistic, gather at Agapanthus Rd on the 6<sup>th</sup> October.

Ed Silberbauer, Convenor.

**PRINGLE BAY HACK NO 87**

On Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2013 the Hack Group concentrated on Australian Myrtle, Rooikrans and pine trees on the public reserve bordering on Carla Road. Progress was made but more hacks will be necessary. The hackers present were Frik Potgieter, Sue Folb, Penny and Neil Berens,

Ian Cushny, and John Whitehead. The mid-morning coffee and sandwiches were provided by Marion Cushny.

The next hack will be on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2013. As usual we will meet on the pavement opposite Drosters Centre, in Central Avenue, Pringle Bay, at 08:30 and will then proceed to the hack site. Everyone who would like to help rid Pringle Bay of alien vegetation will be welcome. The hack stops at 11:30. Hacking tools are provided. Contact John at (028) 273 8807 or Ian at (028) 273 8589, or just turn up at the meeting point.

John Whitehead, Convenor.

### **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE KOGELBERG BRANCH AUGUST 2013**

Three significant anniversaries and an important award make 2013 a very special year for the Kogelberg Branch: the Botanical Society of South Africa and Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden were founded a hundred years ago, in 1913; our own Betty's Bay Hack Group celebrated its half century and long-standing member, Merran Silberbauer was a most worthy recipient of Honorary Life Membership of the Botanical Society of SA ( there are only fifteen in the whole Society).

It was Merran who organised the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration of the Hack Group, a lunch in Nivenia Hall, Harold Porter on the actual birthday, Sunday February 3<sup>rd</sup>. The excellent meal was provided by a professional spit-braai team, with the costs covered by the municipal Grant-in-Aid. There were some eighty invited guests, long-term hackers and VIP's who included the Mayor of the Overstrand, Nicolette Botha-Guthrie, the President of the Botanical Society, Dr Ted Oliver, past-President, Dr John Rourke and Zaitoon Rabaney, Executive Director of the Botanical Society. The Mayor gave a short address praising the Hack for its sterling efforts; she explained that the Municipality had given the Branch a Grant-in-Aid to recognize the Hack's contribution to the environment, particularly on municipal lands, made over many years. The President, then spoke of Honorary Life Membership, the only award that is open only to members of the Botanical Society. This area already had several Honorary Life Members, our own Jill Attwell and Avril Nunn and also John Rourke, Abri Meiring and Janette Yeats, members of other branches. Now there was to be another from the Kogelberg Branch: Merran Silberbauer who received her medal to huge applause. Merran has rendered exceptional service to this branch making an all-round contribution sustained over many years.

Kogelberg Branch celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of both the Society and Kirstenbosch in fine style in the evening of June 16<sup>th</sup> (June 1913 was the founding month). Close on a hundred members and friends gathered in Nivenia Hall, welcomed by blazing fires and drinks. Very fittingly we had as speaker, Betty's Bay resident, Emeritus Professor Brian Huntley, who was based at Kirstenbosch from 1990 to 2007 first as CE of the National Botanical Institute then CEO of SANBI; he is the author of "Kirstenbosch, the Most Beautiful Garden in Africa." In his talk Prof Huntley traced the links between Kirstenbosch and Kew Gardens over centuries. Afterwards the Microfrog Room was opened to present a selection of soups, bread and cheese followed by birthday cake. Betsey Joubert, Barbara Jenman and a team of stalwarts were responsible for organising the supper.

To commemorate 100 years of BotSoc, this branch is publishing a book on good gardening

practices in this area. Under editor, Tim Attwell, a team of writers is working on chapters giving guidelines for choice of plants in different environments from wetlands to mountainside, why and how to avoid invasives and more. This book will be funded from the municipal Grant-in-Aid, from BotSoc Head Office and money raised, in particular from the raffle.

During the twelve months of this report, our two senior Honorary Life Members, Jill Attwell and Avril Nunn celebrated their ninetieth birthdays; the branch sent flowers and cards of congratulation. These two signed the nomination form for Merran's Honorary Life Membership as proposer and seconder. Avril has now moved to Somerset West. The branch owes a great deal to Avril as a past chairman and long-serving committee member. As chairman she guided the process whereby the Betty's Bay Wildflower Society became a branch of the Botanical Society. Jill and Avril have long been great examples as exceptionally keen workers for the branch.

We have known that Kogelberg Branch has talented members; this year a 'secret' member with a generous spirit created an item of beauty to be raffled for branch funds. Louise du Toit of Rooi Els is a jeweller who, when she learnt BotSoc was celebrating its 100th birthday, decided to use silver and garnet to make a winged insect which could be used as a pendant or brooch. Tickets were sold, the draw done at the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and over R6000 raised which will go towards the publication of the good gardening practices book.

Judy New is another member who has made special contributions to the branch; her excellent travel presentations entertain us and raise funds. Last year her "Call of the Kalahari" brought in enough money to buy a thermal transfer printer and a quantity of tape which Harold Porter NBG now uses to make labels for the sales nursery. Previously printing had to be done at Kirstenbosch.

Education is one of the Portfolios of the branch so when it was learnt that the Botanical Society was selling off the Afrikaans version of our area's first Flower Guide, "Hottentots Holland tot Hermanus" at a low price, we bought thirty copies. These were given to twenty-four staff members at Harold Porter with one for the library. They were very well received; two of the staff who already had the latest English version asked to have the one in their own language. Local schools were also given copies; more are to be purchased for schools in Hermanus. Staying with Education, Sue Folb has established a very good relationship with the Mooiuitsig pre-school, Pikkewyntjies and has organized visits for the children to Harold Porter NBG working with the Senior Environmental Officer, Eunice Jurgens. Sue and a team go with the children and the branch provides refreshments.

When we received a request for a donation for the Botanical Education Trust of the KZN Coastal Branch of BotSoc we were quick to respond with R1 000. The Trust had been promised a matching amount up to R300 000 on a certain date; the target was met so the effect of our donation was doubled. One of the areas of research funded is the biological control of alien invasive plants.

Our monthly talks have continued to offer a range of interesting topics to the community, attendance is good, the wine is enjoyed and the collections amply cover costs. Two improvements have been made to facilities at Nivenia Hall: we were given a wooden lectern

made by Betty's Bay resident Herbert Robinson, facilitated by Judy New and the branch bought a lapel microphone. For the first time a talk was held in the Pringle Bay Community Hall which was a good alternative to Crassula Hall when Nivenia Hall at Harold Porter was not available. The variety of topics can be seen from this list of speakers and their subjects since the last AGM:

Mike Allsop - "The role played by bees in our local ecosystem"

Sean Privett - "Flowers, food and livelihood, the story of the Grootbos Foundation"

Prof Brian Huntley of Betty's Bay- "Wildlife, wild places and wild times in Angola - 1971 to 2012"

Dr Syd Cullis "Centenary of the Scott Expedition to the South Pole"

Roger Parsons of Pringle Bay - "Does Fracking Really Pose a Threat to the Ground Water Resources of the Karoo?"

Bill Liltved - "The Cape Orchids" He had recently published two volumes on Cape orchids, many photographed in the Kogelberg area.

Rachel Saunders - "Flower hunting in southern Namibia and Namaqualand"

Francois van Zyl of Pringle Bay - "Slitheringfynbos – Snake awareness" with live snakes.

Richard and Sara Starke of Betty's Bay - "Treasuring the Oystercatchers of Betty's Bay"

Dr Kenneth Oberlander, University of Stellenbosch – "The genus *Oxalis*" In the afternoon, Kenneth lead eighteen enthusiasts on an *Oxalis* walk in Harold Porter.

Prof Brian Huntley – "Kirstenbosch and Kew"

Prof David Richardson Director of the Centre of Excellence for Invasion Biology at University of Stellenbosch – "Invasive species – science and practice"

Barbara and Betsey have been arranging Saturday morning walks each month on the day of the talk. These have included Rod's Trail, Palmiet River and valley, coastal walks. Sometimes Amida Johns is there to give expert commentary on the plants seen.

Last September members helped at the Heritage Weekend Flower Show at Harold Porter.

BotSoc Head Office has given each branch a stand with posters showing the activities of that branch. Ours is particularly attractive but not easy to move in wild wind.

Two of our Wednesday hackers were featured in action in Pasella's programme on Betty's Bay.

Our Newsletter and the Betty's Bay Hack Group are the responsibility of a remarkable couple; Merran and Edward Silberbauer, who at the moment, are the only couple in the Botanical Society to have both received awards from the Society, Merran her Honorary Life Membership and Edward the Denys Heesom medal for Conservation (there was a time when Jill and Bo Attwell were similarly honoured). Needless to say both the Newsletter and the Hack Group flourish. This Branch is very fortunate to have this dedicated couple as members.

There are a number of people who serve this branch well and deserve our thanks. Some have regular responsibilities, others are ready to volunteer, whether it is to write for the Newsletter or Veld and Flora, contribute food or pitch in to the washing up. Amida Johns designs a poster for our talks every month, Penny Palmer writes the reviews, Jenny Berrisford is giving advice on Fynbos gardening, Dierdre Richards of Hermanus writes for us for Veld and Flora. There is a

Talks and Outings sub-committee which plans activities for the third Saturday of each month. The strength of this branch lies in the large body of active members.

Finally, there is that happy bunch, the committee. Meetings are a pleasure, work is done, decisions made. Betsey has been a great vice-chairman, Barbara as secretary takes care of a number of areas, Peter is a truly diligent treasurer, Sue is our contact person for Pikkewyntjies and sees to the drinks, Andrea as our city person, scouts out good deals for items we need, Tim is busy with the book. All give wise counsel.

Kolgelberg members enjoy being together, we hack, we walk, listen to lectures, and now we are going on a jaunt to Gifberg in October; the number signed up, thirty at one stage shows the spirit of adventure is among us. What a great branch!

Merrilee Berrisford, Chairman.

### **FINANCIAL ANNUAL REPORT 17 AUGUST 2013**

This organisation is registered as a public body. It is therefore required to submit an annual report comprising a balance sheet and income and expenditure account. To get this in perspective, the turnover is less than the annual wages of a domestic servant-this was boosted by a R25000 grant in aid from the Municipality in our last financial year.

To prepare these statements, I have to account for each tea bag included in the refreshments for hackers.

I acknowledge the amazing detailed schedules provided by Merran, expenses split into hack, newsletter refreshments etc. Other expenses incurred by committee members are claimed from me. I reimburse them from my own current account every few months. I then claim reimbursements due to me from Botsoc. All the claims submitted to me are also meticulous, for which I am grateful.

Kirstenbosch head office consolidate the accounts from all 16 branches. This year, branches had to submit audited accounts by 19<sup>th</sup> April for year end 31 March. We got our bank statement on 18 April. A crazy deadline.

#### **Balance Sheet**

We had a Grant in Aid from the Municipality of R25000 in recognition of BotSoc services to the community, in particular the removal of aliens over the years. R12717 was spent of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary function to which various dignitaries were invited as well as regular long term hackers.

The hack replacement fund has remained unchanged for years. It's a reserve to replace hack tools as necessary. Ed keeps these in excellent condition and new tools are in fact replaced from time to time under current expenditure.

#### **Income Statement**

Subs have remained steady. There has been a small fall in membership.

A surplus on lectures of R5211 is arrived at as follows: Collections R10200. Hall hire and speakers' honorariums R3367, refreshments R1799. Collections at lectures are an important source of funds, being slightly less than subscriptions. Please keep up your contribution to the

collection box at the same level. A number of speakers do not deposit the cheques we give them. Newsletter expenses have been contained by Merran, helped by the migration of members to receiving their newsletter by email. Donations of R12681 were mainly to Harold Porter, the main items were a labelling machine and labels. We gave KZN Coastal branch R1000, for funding a Botanical Education Trust. We also gave Afrikaans books to some employee of HP Gardens and local schools.. The author was Amida.

While on the subject of fund- raising, the point must be made that funds are not raised for Botsoc itself. Rather they fund donations and projects supported by Botsoc in terms of its constitution. Without fund- raising we would struggle to fulfil our objectives and make donations.

(The recent raffle of a pendant raised about R6000.)

In general, the balance sheet is stronger than a year ago. We have R15000 in the current account and about R25000 in the 32 day account.

We thank Terry Simons, a willing auditor, and anticipate he will again audit our accounts.

Peter Berrisford, Treasurer.

### **A CAMERA HAS BEEN FOUND**

Caroline O'Brien found a camera on August 11<sup>th</sup> while walking on the wagon tracks. If you have lost a camera, please contact her giving details to prove ownership. 082 972 3600.

**Due to lack of space in this newsletter FYNBOS GARDENING is held over until next month**

Ed.

### **REMINDERS;**

for more information consult last month's newsletter:-

#### **HERMANUS' ANNUAL FLOWER FESTIVAL 26-29TH SEPTEMBER 2013.**

Open from 9 to 5 daily AT Fernkloof Nature Reserve. Entry is R15, children under 12, FREE. [botsochermanus@telkomsa.net](mailto:botsochermanus@telkomsa.net) tel.028 313 8100

#### **BIOBLITZ AT HAROLD PORTER GARDENS 23RD SEPTEMBER 2013.**

Ismail Ebrahim and some of his staff from CREW will be leading the Bioblitz targeting a particular area of the gardens to record with a smartphone or camera any biodiversity - plants, animals, insects, snakes, crustaceans, birds.

#### **THE CENTENARY OF KIRSTENBOSCH AND BOTSOC EXHIBITION IN THE NIVENIA HALL 20 - 29 September.**

### **BLACK EAGLES**

It is very seldom that we are privy to the mind and soul of a researcher, particularly one with so much talent for observation and reporting. When the subject of the study is one of the wildest of wild creatures –Verreaux's Black Eagle, we are in for a feast. Lucia Rodrigues, a member of the Western Cape Raptor Research programme, presented a lavishly illustrated programme on one of our most formidable raptors. She was quick to acknowledge the assistance she gets from a vast

variety of similarly dedicated and talented people. Many of these people are expert mountaineers and photographers, all successfully researching a variety of our wild creatures.

Verruax was a French naturalist who visited this part of the world in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century. He collected many type specimens for the French Academy of Science. These included Verreaux's Eagle and Verreaux's Eagle-Owl. One of his comments about the latter was that they would eat anything!

Lucia Rodrigues first came to the notice of ornithologists, when she discovered the pair of Black Eagles breeding at Silvermine, on the Peninsula. This area includes a much used hiking trail but the almost constant traffic did not deter the eagles who have successfully raised their chicks, almost every year. Lucia obviously admires and respects these huge birds and told us much about them.

Black Eagles mate for life and choose inaccessible cliffs as nesting sites. Some however appear to tolerate the nearness of human activity. In the absence of suitable cliffs, they will occasionally nest in a tree. On High Slent, the Paarl farm belonging to Chris and Judy New, a pair of eagles has nested successfully in a storm-blasted pine tree despite being a few hundred metres from the house, from where they have been observed successfully fledging their eaglets over a period of 30 years!

Nests, built of sticks, and added to regularly, eventually become enormous structures. Some birds have several nesting sites, used on alternate years. This is believed to be because nests can become mite-infested. Often the birds refurbish and sanitise the nest by adding branches from aromatic plants such as those of the Rutaceae – the Citrus or Buchu families.

Both adults incubate the two white eggs, the female doing the majority of the brooding duty. The first egg hatches after an incubation of about 46 days, and the second hatches two or three days later. By this time the first chick is twice as big as its sibling, well-fed and strong. It attacks the smaller chick, preventing it from being fed. The second chick eventually dies from injuries and starvation. This "Cain-and-Abel" struggle is thought to be an insurance against the first egg being infertile. The initial success of the first chick then allows for the second weaker one to be eliminated, thus saving the parents from having to feed two ravenous offspring.

The surviving chick soon becomes very active and demanding, soliciting food whenever its parents are at the nest. Dassies are the prey of choice, but mongoose, hares and game birds are eaten when available. Only the female parent feeds the chick – tiny slivers of meat when it is still small, then larger chunks as it grows; the male is the main provider of prey items. The chick grows very fast and soon begins to move about on the nest, doing vigorous exercises with much jumping on the spot and wing-flapping. Lucia told us how the chick almost attacked its devoted parents to snatch a prey offering, "mantling" over the prey while tearing it to pieces.

The chick is covered in snowy white down when it hatches, but by week 5 the secondary and primary feathers are emerging on the edges of the wings and the tail. Feathering is rapid, and by week 8, the young bird appears mottled brown overall. By this time, the eaglet is old enough to be tagged, and Lucia and her assistants would weigh the chick, then attach a bright plastic tag to a sinewless area on the wing. The ability to identify the fledged juvenile provided invaluable

information about its movements and this has added hugely to Lucia's store of information. At this stage, the young eagle is ravenous and its parents spend and less time at the nest, being hard-pressed to keep up with their juvenile's appetite. A fully-feathered eaglet's food needs must be greater than its average needs over the whole nestling period and the parents respond by bringing the food that it requires. By +- 80<sup>th</sup> day, the eaglet is ready to fledge and it will spend much time scrambling over its rocky nesting area, or clambering in branches near its tree nest. Its maiden flight will be unspectacular, and the eaglet, now with rich russet plumage with each feather white-tipped, may well stay for weeks or months with its parents, being fed by them and learning the skills of life by observation. It will be clumsy at first, and will eventually be driven out of their territory by its parents. Presumably individual maturation differences as well as environmental circumstances determine that some young eagles take longer than others to leave the territory of their parents.

As for the numbers, with the help of many others, Lucia has plotted the nests of 235 Black Eagle pairs of which 186 are in the Western Cape. This is by no means even close to the total population for the WC, which she estimates to be closer to 900 pairs. Once again, with the help of others, we manage to check on nearly every one of the 186 pairs in the Western Cape.

CONSERVATION STATUS: Verreaux's Black Eagles have been upgraded from Least Concern to VULNERABLE

I am deeply indebted to Judy New for editing and correcting this article after my antique recording apparatus let me down, as did my memory.

Penny Palmer

#### **RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURES**

<b>Month August</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Rainfall mm	221.5	327.5
Temp, °C		
Max	24	23
Min	9	7

#### **CHANGE OF ADDRESS/ AND/ OR STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP**

If you change your address, wish to resign or change your status, please notify the Botanical Society Head Office on 021- 797 2090, as they print the labels and keep the records.

We do only the newsletter, e-mails and posting. To receive this newsletter via e-mail (and save the Branch the costs of printing, packaging and postage) send your address to [merran@telkomsa.net](mailto:merran@telkomsa.net)

#### **REMEMBER YOUR ARTICLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS ARE WELCOME**

**The editors reserve the right to edit contributions. Deadline for the next newsletter is Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> October 2013.** Please address all mail to Kogelberg Branch of the BotSoc SA, P.O. Box 93, Betty's Bay 7141. E-mail : [merran@telkomsa.net](mailto:merran@telkomsa.net) no graphics please.