

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

**Newsletter:
January 2013**

News Editors: Ed & Merran Silberbauer

**THE BATTLE OF BETTY'S BAY
ROUND 598**

The next attack takes place on Sunday 3rd February 2013, from 9am to noon
VENUE: East of the gate to the property "Peter John" where the road which used to go through to Hangklip and Pringle Bay now ends

TALKS

Saturday 19th January 2013. at 6p.m.in the Nivenia Hall Bill Liltved will talk on "THE CAPE ORCHIDS" Please read our Chairman's resume on the writing of the book towards the end of this newsletter.

Saturday 16th February 2013 . Rachel Saunders will talk on "Flower hunting in southern Namibia and Namaqualand". Rachel , a microbiologist, and her husband Rob, a horticulturalist, collect, cultivate and export worldwide indigeneous seeds through their business Silverhill Seeds. In the Nivenia Hall at 6p.m. Please check the poster for confirmation of the venue.

At all talks a voluntary collection is taken and liquid refreshments are served.

Contact Merrilee: 028 2729314.

WALKS

By the deadline, no copy had been received.

Contact Barbara 082 338 4109 or Betsey 028 272 9761..

REPORT ON HACK NO 597

Our third campaign in that bushed up sand dune Also the hottest hack we have had for some time with no breeze to cool the sweating brows of the old and young. Happily there were a good few young- in fact the young made up some of 25 percent of those blasting away at the enemy (by young I am refering to those under the age of 65!) We have not

rid the place of rooikrans but we certainly gave them something to think about.

The hot and thirsty hackers were Jill Attwell, John Benn, Tom Dreyer, Frik Potgieter, John Whitehead, John McNaught Davis, Barbara Jenman, Malcolm Pollard with son-in-law Martin Bensch and his sons Sean (5) and Michael(3), Peter Berrisford, Peter and Mandy Digby with daughter Amber (9) and Mandy's sister Lori Lake with son Matthew (10), Pieter de Waal, Jan Joubert, Karin Smith, Caroline, Lewis & Ed Silberbauer. Marika de Waal made the sandwiches and Merran Silberbauer made the tea.

The next hack will be that unbelievable 50th year of continuous monthly hacks. This will take place on the 3rd of February 2013. The late Denys Heesom started the whole show on the 3rd February 1963 and ran it for more than 12 years.

Where ? Drive along Delpont road until it suddenly becomes Watsonia road and then suddenly becomes no road at all as it hits the Blesberg sand dunes. We will be fighting the rooikrans on both sides of the road east of Peter John's boundary.

Work will stop at the tea time refreshment break. After tea those invited will make their way to the Nivenia hall at the Harold Porter Gardens to attend the aftermath. This will be an aftermath with a difference. Apart from the usual refreshment we will be treated to a spit braai. This is to be an INFORMAL get together starting at 12.30 to which we also have invited a few special guests.

The gate will be manned by Rea Borchards to make sure you will not be charged the entrance fee. H.P.G. is giving us the hall free of charge. It would be useful if some of the hackers could be at the hall by 12.00 to sort anything that needs to be sorted

Ed Silberbauer, Convenor.

PRINGLE BAY HACK

There was no hack in December. The next hack will be on Sunday 27th January 2013. As usual we will meet on the pavement opposite Drostersgat, 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.

FLOWER OF THE MONTH

The genus *Merciera* belongs to the family of bellflowers, *Campanulaceae*. The most common species in the Kogelberg area is *Merciera azururea*. This shrublet resprouts after fire and has stems covered with crowded bristly leaves. The blue-purple-flowers

have a funnel shaped tube. This feature helps to differentiate the species from the similar but longer, and narrow cylindrical tube species *Merciera tenuifolia*. The other species in this area, *M leptoloba* has white flowers and a short flower tube. All are pollinated by long tongue flies and are Red Data listed as threatened. Page 276 Bot Soc Wildflower Guide No 5.

Amida Johns

DOES FRACKING REALLY POSE A THREAT TO THE GROUND WATER RESOURCES OF THE KAROO?

At the beginning of his talk Roger Parsons made it clear that he did not have a fixed opinion on this subject as he had not made up his mind. He would share the science and the knowledge that he and his colleagues had gleaned, and that he would attempt to keep a neutral stance and give us the facts as they stood at present.

South Africa is an energy-hungry country and the demand for electricity will double in the next 50 years. This made the sourcing of energy a high priority. Using methane gas to generate electricity, is considered to be a feasible solution.

He pointed out that there were no experts on fracking in South Africa, the reason being that it was a totally new subject. One of his fellow investigators is Dr Danie Grovè from Freestate University who has been to the USA three times on fact-finding tours bringing back valuable knowledge and data. The other source was the internet on which he and his colleagues had to rely. The key words they used were; “ground water, contamination and fracking”, which resulted in over 800,000 hits. Among which were some well written papers on the subject, but they found only one peer- reviewed article!

Mr Parsons and his team used this multitude of papers on the internet after carefully sifting out the most appropriate ones, in an attempt to build up a body of knowledge and reference points.

Fracking was described as a form of underground drilling which not only sank a perpendicular hole into the various layers of rock but which could also drill in the horizontal plane once the required depth was reached. Water was then forced into the holes which would result in the required fracturing of the rock and subsequent release of methane gas. This type of operation takes the holes drilled way below ground water levels. Mention was made of past operations where test holes were drilled throughout the Karoo, in the quest for oil. The information and many of the core samples are still available today and are being studied. Much research has been done and in many places test holes were put down to beyond 300 meters. The proposed fracking will be done at a depth of between three and five kilometres. As put by Mr Parsons, there is a huge disconnect between where the shale gas is and where the ground water is. Furthermore

the distance of the fracking site from the boreholes is no more than 300 metres.

Mr Parsons pointed out that there was a great deal of false information being spread widely about this process, both here and in other countries.

One of the few realistic arguments from the anti-fracking side, is the massive amount of water that will be needed for the process. Research, that is still ongoing, reveals that 20 mega litres will be needed to drill and frack one hole. This equals 650 truck trips using some of the largest such vehicles available. To put this in perspective, it amounted to 20% of the volume of water that Graaff Reinet uses for 8 weeks. This is three days supply for 8 weeks in our Hangklip area.

The major question here is how many wells are envisaged.

The gas price has dropped substantially in recent months – from \$10 to \$2. This fact alone has already had a huge impact on the whole question of fracking.

It is clear that the potential damage to the surface and the areas surrounding these wells, is far more serious than the potential damage that may be done under ground. Fracking itself does not pose a significant threat to ground water.

Mr Parsons strongly supported the need for a strategic environmental impact study as a serious priority.

Penny Palmer

THE CAPE ORCHIDS

by WILLIAM R LILTVED and STEVEN JOHNSON

“Seldom has any plant group in our local flora been subjected to such thorough, holistic scrutiny as this one, and seldom have the results of these studies been so sumptuously presented” writes John Rourke, Past President, Botanical Society of South Africa, in the foreword to ‘The Cape Orchids’ by William R Liltved and Steven D Johnson.

In the Preface, Liltved, writing of a time when he was a relatively new orchid enthusiast, says, “In 1993 I by chance met Steve and Kathy Johnson walking in the Kogelberg near Betty’s Bay, Steve was then completing his PhD dissertation on pollination systems in Cape orchids. With a common sense of purpose our long-term collaboration began, and together we clocked up thousands of kilometres between field sites....”

In 2012, nearly twenty years after that meeting, their magnificent two-volume book was published. Residents in the Kogelberg area will be lucky enough to hear about this amazing work from William Liltved himself. Bill, described as an explorer-naturalist is a

regular visitor to Betty's Bay – his mother has a house near Bass Lake – will be speaking about the book at the Kogelberg Branch of BotSoc's monthly gathering in Nivenia Hall, Harold Porter Gardens on Saturday 19th January at 6pm. All are welcome; wine and juice will be served before the talk and a collection will be taken.

Bill also writes in the Preface, "Few other living organisms, besides large mammals, capture the imagination of people as orchids do. They have a particular mystique and inspire extraordinary passion among those who seek to learn more about their intriguing ways. We thus believe that no other group of plants possesses as much potential as do the orchids for motivating South Africans to take seriously the challenge of conserving our astonishing plant biodiversity." This is surely an excellent reason for twenty years of toil. A number of the orchids in the book are from our area, some of them flowering only after a fire. This will be an excellent opportunity for discovering more about the treasures of the Kogelberg

Merrilee Berrisford.

DONATION OF FIELD GUIDES, 'HOTTENTOTS-HOLLAND TO HERMANUS'

Good news at the BotSoc Branch Convention was that as there was a large number of unsold Field Guides taking up space the prices would be reduced. Of special interest to us was that the Afrikaans 'Hottentots-Holland tot Hermanus', published in 1985 would be selling to BotSoc members for R40 a copy. The Branch bought thirty copies and will be adding to that early in the year. Barbara Jenman and I took 24 copies to give to the staff at Harold Porter, each inscribed with a personal message of thanks from the Kogelberg Branch - 'Baie dankie Loretta vir die harde werk in ons mooi Harold Porter Tuin. Met beste wense van die Botaniese Vereniging van Suid Afrika'.

Loretta was on duty at the gate and she asked, "Is this for the whole staff?" She was so obviously happy when she heard it was her own copy. Chris and Jessica working nearby were shown their books - wide smiles and warm thanks. At the nursery, Delicia said she'd wanted a book about our plants for such a long time but when she had the money there was always something she needed. We took pictures of her with smiling Leane, Charmaine and Leonard and their books. As I left, half-an-hour later, Leonard, saw me and said thank you repeatedly. Benjamin, new Chief Agricultural Development Technician, thanked me again the next time we met. The Garden's botanical artist, Ebraime Hull (Senior special groundsman), was busy making a cupboard in the office; he said that although he had the up-to-date English Guide, he'd like the Afrikaans one as well. What pleased us is that it really seemed that the staff would be having the books in their homes for children and friends to see. We put a copy in the HP Garden's Library and another in the Betty's Bay Library. Next year we'll be giving copies to Education Officer, Eunice Jurgens, and under her direction, to schools in the area.

The branch also bought a copy of the more recently published 'Stellenbosch to Hermanus Guide' which we gave to Neville Green who is Conservation Officer for the Overstrand Environmental Management Services. Barbara took it to him and said his delight was very clear; he said he'd always wanted a copy. We were grateful for the 20% discount when we bought this book.

Merrilee Berrisford.

NEWS

Llowellon Arendse of Harold Porter Gardens was awarded Best Sportsman of the Year at the Boland Central Netball Association for 2012. He was a star in the Men's Netball team at the National Championships, writes Merrilee Berrisford.

RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURES

Month	December	2011	2012
Rainfall mm		29,3	3
Temp, °C	Max	27	34
	Min	13	13

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

REMEMBER YOUR ARTICLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS ARE WELCOME

The editors reserve the right to edit contributions.

Deadline for the next newsletter is Wednesday, 6th February 2013

Please address all mail to : Kogelberg Branch of the Botanical Society of SA, P.O. Box 93, Betty's Bay 7141. E-mail : merran@telkomsa.net no graphics please.