



NEWSLETTER May 2019

OUR VISION | To be a highly effective and well-supported champion of the environment.

OUR MISSION | To implement high impact environmental and conservation projects which promote public participation in caring for the Earth.

Dear Friends of the Environment,

in addition to a report on our May outing to Rolbaken Nature Reserve there is information on our 2 June vents:

On Frida 7 June we celebrate Oceans Day at the Fat Fish Restaurant with guest speaker Louw Claassens of the Knysna Basin Project. (Booking directly – space limited!).

Saturday 15 June – Take a botanical walk in critically endangered Knysna Sand Fynbos in Brento. with CREW Outramps member Nikki van Berkel. Only 10 participants so booking is urgent and essential to Annemarie ONLY!

Our May outing to Rolbaken Nature Reserve was another success with 40 participants.

Here is a report compiled by Peter Ginn, Ingrid Vis, Roz Schubert and Annemarie Gebhardt

| Report-back on WESSA Eden – Rolbaken Nature Reserve Outing of 18 May 2019.

Dick and Mary Carr, owners of Rolbaken, were amazing and most generous hosts for this event. Some of us stayed overnight at their Guest House and were spoilt with delicious dinners and hearty breakfasts.

Dick gave us the recent history of the Nature Reserve and shared with us the plight of the Cape Mountain Zebra in the region. Thanks to the generous turn out of participants and their fees, we were able to make a donation towards feed and water provision for the Zebras, to sustain them in this drought stricken Kammanassie area.



We enjoyed an informative stroll on the farm where Dick showed us the rehabilitation strategies employed to reclaim the former overgrazed veld. During this walk, Peter Ginn pointed out some bird species such as Rock martins, swallows, Southern Double-collared Sunbirds and Cape Spur fowl. Louis Jordaan explained the intriguing co-evolution adaptations between sunbirds and a local Mistletoe plant species to facilitate pollination.

Paul Rixom described the geology of the area, outlining the formation of the fold mountains from Table Mountain Sandstone contrasted with the Shale deposits and 'Oervlakte' outcrops so characteristic to this region. The panoramic views from Rolbaken are absolutely stunning!

Mary and two of her assistants displayed a variety of attractive shopping bags that they make on the farm to reduce plastic pollution. This community outreach project is called 'Rethink Bags'. These bags are very versatile and Mary is prepared to deliver to George and Oudtshoorn. Visit www.rethinkbags.co.za for more information and let us do away with the use of plastic bags.







As an extra bonus, we enjoyed the wonderful scenery on the drive to Rolbaken and back, with many aloes in full bloom.

Photo credits Cassie van der Westhuizen & Colin Ralston

WESSA proudly presents



Oceans Day celebration with Louw Claassens of the Knysna Basin Project speaking on fishy subjects.	 7 June 2019
	 12h00
	 The Fat Fish George
	 R100.00 (Lunch)

Together with



Join us for a lunchtime talk on Friday 7 June from 12h00.

Louw Claassens – as many of you know – is a vibrant and passionate speaker on all things coastal. She will be focusing on estuaries and the value they hold as nursery areas for fish as well as discuss fishing in South Africa and the need for sustainable fishing and what consumers can do to make sustainable decisions. Louw has just concluded the Strandloper walk with Marc Dixon and his team and will bring in her observations made during this coastal hike. (See some extracts below in the paragraph on the Strandloper Project).



The participation fee of R100 includes light refreshments and 50% of the proceeds being donated to the Knysna Basin Project. More details see poster below:

As seating is limited please book directly with Fat Fish : 044 874 7803



www.facebook.com/TheFatFishRestaurant

www.facebook.com/knysna.basin.project

**FISH & CHIPS 2 FOR
SPECIAL R120**
TO THOSE ATTENDING THE EVENT



8 June Oceans Day - 2019 CONSERVATION FOCUS – Together we can protect and restore our ocean

Conservation focus: demonstrate leadership in preventing plastic pollution and share solutions that inspire and activate the global community

World Oceans Day 2019 – with the 24-member World Oceans Day Youth Advisory Council helping empower people of all ages to become leaders in their communities – will rally the world to stop ocean plastic, a growing crisis facing society and our shared ocean. World Oceans Day 2019 will build on personal awareness, actions, and commitments to reduce single-use plastic, and mobilize action on the scale necessary to bring about real change. You can be a leader by rallying others - including families, friends, schools, local businesses, organizations, and corporations - for greater involvement!



www.facebook.com/WorldOceansDay/photos/-2019-theme-together-we-can-protect-and-restore-our-ocean-2019-conservation-focu/10157581182640559/

Is your child dreaming of becoming a marine biologist and protecting our oceans?

Well, here is their chance to find out what it's really like.

The Fat Fish is running a colouring competition in support of World Ocean's Day and the prize is an excursion out in the field with one of our internationally esteemed marine biologists in either Plett or Knysna.



Visit us at The Fat Fish in George or Plettenberg Bay and get crafty for a good cause. **#worldoceanday #marinebiologist #competition**

WESSA Knysna Plett Branch 42nd AGM

Venue: **Knysna Elephant Park at 10.30 on Saturday 8th June 2019.**

After a short meeting we will have a presentation by Prof. Charles Breen on "One cannot step into the same river twice".

Braai fires will be available afterwards or you could bring your own picnic lunch. There is a restaurant available as well.

Contact: Steve on 044-3840289 if you need more details.



Botanical walk in critically endangered Knysna Sand Fynbos

When: 15 June 2019

Where: Brenton Peninsula, at Knysna

Time: 09:00-13:00

Outing leader: Nicky van Berkel of CREW
(Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers)

Costs: R100 per person (portion of proceeds will go to CREW)

Participants are limited to 10.



The Knysna Sand Fynbos is a veld type that is endangered by human development. The property that we will visit is a wonderful example of this veld type, and although the area was devastated by the Knysna fires in June 2017, it has regenerated beautifully. Nicky van Berkel will share her intimate knowledge of the plants, in particular the wildflowers, of this area with us.



The slow-paced walk will proceed down a gentle hillside on a paved car track, a total distance of 1.6 km. Walkers can choose to do either part or the whole distance. Lifts will be arranged back up the hill from two areas, from part of the way down the hill, and from the bottom of the hill.



Afterwards, participants may choose to have lunch at the Brenton Blu Restaurant in Brenton-on-Sea, or anywhere else of their choice.

Bookings: Contact Annemarie: angebhar@telkomsa.net and provide the names of participants, contact numbers and please state your point of departure.

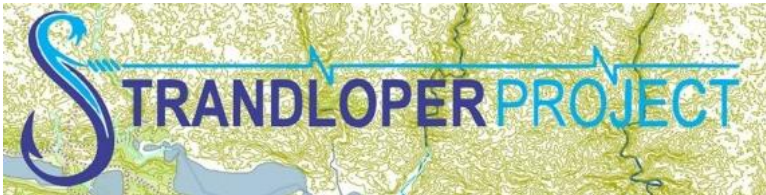
IMPORTANT: Only 10 participants can be accommodated, so bookings will be done on a first come, first served basis. Equally important, only 3 cars can be parked at the venue inside the property that we will be visiting. However, we can arrange for passengers to share lifts from a parking area in Brenton which is near the property.



The Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers (CREW) is a citizen science programme, supported by the Botanical Society of South Africa (BotSoc). CREW involves the participation of people from different socio-economic backgrounds to survey and monitor plants of conservation concern in areas known to house threatened plants. CREW has 3 nodes – Cape Floristic Region, Summer Rainfall region and the Eastern Cape that provides support to the citizen scientist groups by providing resources and identification courses and training as well as linking the groups to their local conservation agencies. Threatened plant data collected by the citizen science groups is analysed by the Red List scientists to assess the rate of extinction of South Africa's plants. The Red List dictates the status of our plant diversity and is used to implement policy and land-use planning.



www.sanbi.org/biodiversity/building-knowledge/biodiversity-monitoring-assessment/custodians-of-rare-and-endangered-wildflowers-crew-programme



And what about the Strandloper project that Mark Dixon talked to us about at our AGM??

These are the last 2 extracts from Louw Claasens posts on the Knysna Basin Project's Facebook page:

24 May 2019

Our #strandloperproject expedition is sadly coming to an end! Yesterday we set off from the most amazing #dollieskraal towards #ballotsbay . We had some more nerve wrecking descents at #gwaingbeach and also found more #oceandebris ! Our saddest moment during the day was being forced to turn around by a heavily polluted Skaapkop river - which had evidence of sewage pollution. Luckily we had some awesome help from @paulinecloete from #kaitikwa and an amazing welcome for the night by #carmelguestfarm ! Sad to be nearing the end - but what an amazing expedition! Hopefully the start of many more!

@strandloperproject #oceanconservation #riverpollution #gardenroute



25 May 2019

Yesterday was the final day of our #strandloperproject expedition - a 200km hike along the #gardenroutecoastline to raise awareness of #marinedebris and #ghostfishinggear . We headed off from @carmelgeorgesouthafrica along the railway line. We stopped at #vicbay to meet up with @halfwaytoyotadealers from #George (who sponsored our backup vehicle!). We also saw @nostraws_ spreading the word! We ended off our expedition in #wilderness where we sadly found a #kelpgull with #fishingtackle hanging from its beak - another reminder of why we are doing this and that our waste management need to change. A huge thanks to the guys from the @theblindpigwilderness for helping with a clean-up and the awesome celebratory beers afterwards. We are hoping this expedition is only the start and that great things will follow!

**@strandloperproject #marinescience #bethechange #coastalconservaion
#oceanplastic #ghostfishing**



@StrandloperP



@StrandloperProject



Strandloper Project

GARDEN ROUTE BOTANICAL GARDEN



Garden Route ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTRE

The Garden Route Environmental Education Centre is now on Facebook!!

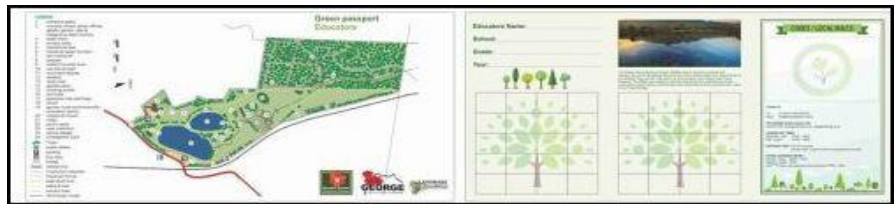


www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=2114726168656533&story_fbid=2114883405307476

The Garden Route Environmental Centre is situated in the Garden Route Botanical Garden, George. We hope to make this centre buzz with citizens of all ages coming together to learn about the natural world so that we may become compassionate, knowledgeable and ecologically minded beings.

The Green Passport.

An environmental program that focuses on advancing ecological intelligence.



Pacaltsdorp Primary was the first school to obtain their Green Passports followed by Hibernia Primary and New Dawn Park Primary



We are collecting ECO-BRICKS at the GREEC,
we have a cool project for them.



Displaying, conserving, rehabilitating, protecting, and researching the Southern Cape's flora for the benefit of the surrounding communities



www.facebook.com/gardenroutebotanical

www.botanicalgarden.org.za

Dear Friends of Botanical Garden,

We are excited to announce that the Garden Route Botanical Garden (GRBG) has been provisionally approved as a **beneficiary on the MyVillage, MyPlanet programme.**

In order to be approved, we need at least fifty (50) fully completed supporter application forms submitted before the 30th of August 2019. Your assistance with this will be hugely appreciated!

If you are interested in helping us please request a support form by emailing manager@botanicalgarden.org.za.

NOW IS THE BEST TIME TO PLANT OUT BEFORE THE NEW FLUSH OF SPRING!

WINTER PLANT SALE

Winter:
You're Half As Willing To Garden, The Plants Look Half As Nice
So At The Sale Our Plants Will Be Half Price!
(SELECTED STOCK)

Flowering Fynbos
Bulbs Galore
Limited Bonsai Potentials

49 CALEDON STREET
GARDEN ROUTE BOTANICAL GARDEN NURSERY

Friday 7th June 9am-5pm
Saturday 8th June 9am-2pm

On 7 & 8 June our FIRST WINTER plant SALE!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Garden Route Botanical Garden Trustee Elections and Information Morning

Saturday, 22 June 2019

The Trust of the GARDEN ROUTE BOTANICAL GARDEN is pleased to invite its members, as well as citizens of George that have an active interest in the Garden, to attend the 2019 GRBG information session and ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING taking place 22 JUNE 2019 (11h00) at the Garden Route Environmental Education Centre in the Botanical Garden in Caledon Street

The election of at least four trustees must take place at this meeting. Paid up voting members of the Botanical Garden will be eligible for nomination to the trust and all members are urged to come and cast their vote in this election. The profiles of nominees will be made available on display in our offices from 18 June 2019.

Members wishing to nominate candidates for election to the Trust are asked to contact the Chairperson (Roger Bath – 082-780-5214), deadline for nominations: 15 June 2019. The trust will also provide an update on progress within the Garden as well as the Environmental Education Centre.

Members of the public wishing to attend the information session and AGM are kindly asked to RSVP to Gabriella on 044 874 1558 or email info@botanicalgarden.org.za.

Request for Volunteers to help in the Herbarium at the Garden Route Botanical

We are in desperate need for committed volunteers who are prepared to work for 3 hours a week. Venue: Southern Cape Herbarium in the Moriarty Centre at the Garden Route Botanical Garden Time : 9am to 12pm on a Tuesday Morning.

Skills required:

For those prepared to help mount specimens.
Basic filing skills. Ability to work carefully and accurately.
Possibly computer skills
(Photo on right Visiting the Herbarium during Science Week)

Tasks include:

Mounting dried, pressed plant specimens onto a cardboard sheet .
Attaching labels to specimens.
Filing specimens according to a laid down order rather like a library.



A Herbarium is like a library of dried pressed plants which can be used to identify and research the local indigenous flora which is very important and valuable today.

It can be a very enjoyable and fulfilling time with others who may become friends. You do need to have Botanical knowledge but an interest in plants would help. You will not be asked to do anything more than you can cope with. You will learn a lot of interesting things.

If you are interested please contact **Finn Rautenbach (Manager and Curator) at 0448741558 or Jenny Potgieter at 0721982619**

Tuesday 16 July - U3A's Armchair Travel:

Veronica Bruce: "My personal experience of the Flamingos at Kamfers Dam"

10:30 at Emmaüs, Hope Street. R10 for non-U3A members

An artificial breeding island was built for the Kamfers Dam's flamingos. It is the third such structure in the world. Ekapa Mining constructed the island within a two-week period moving more than 26,000 tons of calcrete, rock and clay. Initially the flamingos made regular use of the island and between 5,000 and 10,000 lesser flamingos could be seen on a daily basis. Other bird species including black-winged stilt, Cape shoveler and grey-headed gull were also using the island, with successful breeding



Contact Veronica: 083 611 6497.

Visit U3A website: <https://sites.google.com/site/u3ageorge>

MEDIA RELEASE/ARTICLE

Efforts to enlarge conservation footprint catalytic for conservation

16 May 2019



The recently launched SCLI Cape Floristic Corridor Revival and Training Programme, implemented by the Southern Cape Landowners Initiative (SCLI) and funded by the Table Mountain Fund (TMF), may be catalytic in enlarging the conservation footprint in the region.

The Southern Cape coastal plateau is a productive agricultural hub, and over time almost all land in the Southern Cape has been transformed for the purpose of maximising agricultural output.

As a result of this land transformation, river systems in the Southern Cape are now regarded as the last remaining and relatively untransformed ecological systems in the region that can possibly be reserved for the purpose of conservation. By using the river systems to connect the Outeniqua Mountains unhindered with the Indian Ocean, the option exists to establish conservation corridors, designated to the survival of biodiversity.

The Southern Cape is listed as one of a few South African strategic water source areas, which implies that it should pay special attention to the conservation of its river systems and catchments. It is also known that these very same mountain catchments and river systems are badly affected by invasive alien plants, contributing to the further degradation of what remains of sensitive regional ecosystems and loss of habitat.

Photo Knysna River, Caption: Landowners along selected river systems in the Garden Route are encouraged to participate in the establishment of the proposed biodiversity corridor conservation effort. The control and eradication of invasive alien plants are expensive, very reliant on resources and a long-term commitment to the cause. (Photo Credit: Cobus Meiring, SCLI)



Landowners hold the key to success

Interaction with private landowners along selected river systems, in order to assist them in participating in the establishment of the proposed biodiversity corridor conservation effort, holds the key to success or failure.

Convincing landowners to address the prevalence of invasive alien plants on their land is no easy task. The control and eradication of invasive alien plants are expensive, very reliant on resources and a long-term commitment to the cause from consecutive landowners.

SCLI now aims to define the geographic footprint surrounding river systems that can serve as biodiversity corridors, and then to identify and prioritise areas that are affected by invasive alien plants.

By providing support to landowners with the development of Invasive Alien Plant Control Plans, and assisting them with training and information on dealing with invasive plant eradication and control, SCLI aims to create a conservation platform that has the potential to enhance the regional conservation footprint.

The Southern Cape Landowners Initiative (SCLI) is a public platform for landowners and land managers with an interest in the control and eradication of invasive alien plants. SCLI is a think tank for water stewardship, biodiversity management and climate change, and is supported by the Table Mountain Fund, a subsidiary of WWF SA. SCLI is also the Secretariat for the Garden Route Environmental Forum (GREF).



www.facebook.com/gardenroutedm/photos/now-on-launch-of-the-garden-route-environmental-forumthe-garden-route-environmen/2267816573238225/

WEBSITE: <http://www.scli.org.za>

MEDIA ENQUIRIES Cobus Meiring: The Southern Cape Landowners Initiative (SCLI)

Cell: 083 626 7619; Email: cobus@naturalbridge.co.za



Great Brak River Conservancy

www.facebook.com/greatbrakriverconservancy

We were delighted that representatives of the Conservancy attended our AGM in April and Ingrid Vis attended their AGM to hear more about their activities.



This is her report and is possibly of interest to residents in the area who may well feel motivated to become active members. :

On 20 May 2019, I attended the AGM of the Great Brak River Conservancy. There were about 25 attendees. The Conservancy currently has 70 members on their books. Membership is R40 per annum. Their committee is made up of a Chairman (Scott Thomson), Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and about five additional members. They hold monthly committee meetings.

Their activities include:

- Regular clean-ups (estuary, river, beach and other communal areas)
- Eight clean-ups in the past year;
- Eradication of invasive vegetation (hacking, using tree-poppers, herbicides);
- Spreading the conservation message through articles in the local newspaper and social media, manning a monthly stall at the local market, liaison with local government and conservation bodies, attending conservation forums);
- Offering regular birding outings (organised by Aussie Eybers), and erecting owl and bat boxes;
- Encouraging sponsorship by businesses for larger projects;

- Purchasing five large plastic drums for the collection of bottle tops and bread tags, and placing them at strategic points in the town, e.g. at the Spar, old age home etc.;
- Purchasing and erecting eight fishing gut disposal bins at popular fishing spots in the area;
- Monitoring four camera traps to help identify nocturnal wildlife in the area, and encouraging residents to promote conservation of indigenous fauna and flora;
- Attempting to be proactive instead of only reactive with regard to conservation concerns in the area.

They seem to be doing really good work and Scott Thomson is an outstanding and enthusiastic chairman. I spoke to him briefly after the meeting, and he is very keen to cooperate in future with WESSA in whatever way possible.

Report: MASS EXTINCTION EMERGENCY May 2019

Liz Eglington recently circulated this text:



Dear Fellow Conservationists and Earth Inhabitants

Attached please find this very topical and recent study which warns what many have warned about already- we are living unsustainably on this Planet and we are soon to pay a very serious price. I also attach a recent study on our Insect Biomass which these researchers claim have declined by 75% !

We HAVE to change the way we live, consume, shop, farm and use finite resources.

Do we understand what that means? It DOES NOT mean “business as usual” and using yield, harvest and profit as the only measurement of whether we are farming correctly.

Our unsustainable agriculture models are to a greater extent responsible for these massive declines.

There ARE scientifically tried and tested ways of farming which are more sustainable, do not kill indiscriminately, BUILD soil rather than destroy soil, encourage diversity in insect and plant life rather than destroying them- all being used successfully but not wide spread enough. Clearly not.

So what is missing? Surely it is a no-brainer?? Are we really as a species so greedy, selfish, fearful, and stubborn that we refuse to change even in the face of dire warnings of global catastrophes? I

am criticised for using these strong terms, but has tiptoeing around and “not hurting feelings” made any difference?. NO! These statistics are testament.

So perhaps MORE of us need to speak out using plain language and demand accountability. We need to hold government accountable and our fellow farmers.

We CHOOSE by not buying and consuming products which hurt the Planet and all life on her. If these products do not sell, perhaps then we will see change.

Is humanity intelligent enough to pull back from the brink?

I pray so.....

Liz

Who is Liz?

www.conservationatwork.co.za

Liz Eglington is the owner and farmer of Blue Sky Organics, which became the first certified organic olive farm in South Africa in 2001. She served on the Board of the SA National Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO) for 7 years and was instrumental in formulating the SA Organic Policy Document. Liz was awarded Woman Farmer of the Year in 2005 and is a passionate conservationist who runs workshops and training courses on her farm showing how agriculture and conservation can be synonymous.

That's a wrap for this month.

We hope you will support our events.



Regards, Christine Ridge-Schnauffer

Honorary Secretary WESSA EDEN



044 873 4203



wessageorge@isat.co.za



086 646 5458



www.wessa.org.za



www.facebook.com/wessa.eden

