

# GCA - Ear to the Ground...

Gauteng Conservancy Association newsletter: September 2004  
(No 2)

***In this issue:*** **New conservancies;** **The Conservancy Handbook in demand;** **Nail a litterbug with Tag-a-Dumper;** **Sponsors needed;** **EIAs - understanding the process and using it;** **Feedback from conservancies (Finfoot meeting) and forthcoming events**

## Meetings with sizzle!

Every three months or so the GCA holds a general meeting in one of the conservancies. In August it was Finfoot Conservancy's turn and we all trekked up north. Finfoot's game provided a perfectly-timed dramatic welcome – as we drove in at the gate a whole herd of wildebeest dashed across the road.

As always, one left the meeting with more energy than you had when you arrived. When "doers" get together, their combined drive and enthusiasm gives one the courage and appetite to carry on!

Fifteen conservancies were represented and their report-back made for interesting listening. (See the bottom of the page for feedback details.) The issue of the day was developers and EIAs – how to keep track of what is happening in your area, what does the law say, what you can do to prevent inappropriate activities. (See below)

## New conservancy in Lammermoor

Congratulations to Lammermoor – within a few months they have laid down the basic structure of their conservancy. The main focus will be their wetland - two spruits running through the area, eventually flowing into the Crocodile River. They are looking at recycling all households' grey water, to prevent possible contamination of underground water and the wetlands. And that's just the beginning of their plans! Contact: David Korzennik: tel (011) 679-4960.

The East Rand is exploding with new conservancies. See the end of this newsletter for a list (10!) of existing and new conservancies.

## The "How to" booklet proves popular

The demand for the little green "Conservancies Handbook" has been such that the print-run of 300 copies seems to be inadequate! It explains what

conservancies are about, how to go about creating them, what the benefits are, and it gives a draft management plan plus constitution to use as guidelines. It is being translated into Afrikaans, Zulu and Sotho. If you need one, contact Ivan Parkes on 084 590 2312 or [ivan.parkes@conservancies.org](mailto:ivan.parkes@conservancies.org).

### Tag-a-Dumper

This is a GCA initiative originating from Thorntree Conservancy. This is a postcard which you can use when you see someone dumping refuse illegally in your area. Fill in the details, post it to the GCA and it will be forwarded to the relevant authority. Contact: Ivan Parkes.

### Membership and fees - relax!

The GCA membership is voluntary. Being a member gives you back-up and strengthens your "voice" when problems arise, because GCA is becoming a force to be reckoned with. It has direct liaison with GDACE and the relationship with them has improved massively. It is also a wonderful support network with like-minded people all over the province. Funds are obviously needed to run the GCA and an annual fee of R500 is recommended. THIS IS VOLUNTARY – we know some conservancies simply do not have the resources. Any contribution will be appreciated, however. The committee pays for all its own travel and admin costs, but projects like printing the Handbook obviously cost a lot.

### Help needed - letter to potential sponsors

A letter has gone out to several companies to request help with GCA projects, whether financial or via donations, e.g. a laptop and data projector for presentations (we are forever being asked to give talks), a printer, a copier, etc. If you can suggest businesses or organisations to contact, please let us know.

### Keeping developers on the straight and narrow

The Rhenosterspruit Nature Reserve/Conservancy recently had to take action when Wraypex, the developers of the multi-million Blair Atholl estate (near Lanseria) started work on the property before an EIA had been done. GDACE was notified and they served a notice on Wraypex to stop activities. They are planning 260 houses, a golf course and a small hotel. The original proposal made provision for borehole water and the RNR immediately lodged an objection.

An EIA consultant was finally appointed last week.

**Issue of the Day: Monitoring exploding development - The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process – the law, the developers and you.**

Yolan Friedman of the Endangered Wildlife Trust took us through the legislation (current, as well as the new regulations, soon to be in place) at the general meeting in Finfoot Conservancy.

For any land-use change, an EIA has to be done. Huge fines (up to R1 million) for non-compliance will be possible and rehabilitation will be enforced. Conservancy members must be alert to development efforts at all times and ensure they get registered as "Interested and Affected Parties" to be part of the process. If access to information is denied the development can be stopped. Contact GDACE (Gerard van Weele, (011) 355-1285 or [gerard.vanweele@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:gerard.vanweele@gauteng.gov.za)) for advice and assistance.

Nico Grobler, Dr Dean Peinke and Lee-Anne Meiring of GDACE also attended. Nico explained some of the problems GDACE has to deal with, eg 6 000 permits to be reviewed every year, with only 11 staff to handle that load. He suggested that conservancies should get involved in the drawing up of their local municipal Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and make sure they are acknowledged/included. Dean stressed the need for co-operation and communication between conservancies and GDACE – there are so many questionable developments mushrooming across Gauteng that GDACE has no knowledge of, because nobody thinks to alert the Department to them.

## **Feedback from the conservancies**

Anne Mearns and Ollie Olwage (Benoni) reported nine conservancies on the East Rand up and running, with two on the point of taking off. (See list at the bottom of this letter.) A new thrust is the establishment of township conservancies (Chief Luthuli Park and Etwatwa). They made a start with planting trees – 120 were donated. Fruit trees and vegetable gardens are next on the list. Anne: (011) 965-1027 and Ollie 082 464 3959.

Patrick Kwelepeta Mayibuye Wetlands Programme Soweto is also aiming for a conservancy. In the meantime he is developing a plan for rehabilitating the Klip River while focusing on environmental education for kids. He would appreciate help with outings for these kids —places to go plus transport. Tel:(011) 986-4094Cell: (072) 378-6508

**Joan du Toit of the Cullinan Conservancy** has the job of steering the largest conservancy in Gauteng – 32 000 ha! Cullinan is a difficult mix of game reserves, large farms, 21 ha plots and a town. To manage these they have established working groups for different areas, with the chairpersons serving on the main committee. They are battling with issues such as rezoning and wattle plantations claiming to be registered. Joan: tel 012 736 2069

**Nyani's Chris Maree** (and wife Karien) joined us. Nyani is two years old, they have already brought in game and the battle is to raise money for fencing – material and employment. Chicken and cattle farmers' needs and demands add to the challenge. Chris: Tel 083 376 7533

**Pam Prowse** was a new-comer – she is trying to establish a conservancy on the **Silverton Ridge** in Pretoria. This would serve as a buffer for the Botanical Gardens. Tel:012 804 5155

**Johan Janse van Rensburg's Peglerae** straddles two provinces (he's writing a thesis on How not to become Schizophrenic dealing with two Departments plus the Average Landowner). They are trying to get the Landbou-Unie's co-operation to put pressure on farmers to eradicate alien vegetation. Tel 083 491 2793.

**Fritz Kloppers and Deon Greyling of Hartbeesfontein** are involved in an exciting venture – opening the old railway line from Magaliesburg to Preroria (while battling with Working for Water, which, he says, doesn't keep its promises). Tel 082 446 4762.

Other feedback: **Smuts Farm (the Dehnings)** and its ongoing programmes of walks and talks; **Jenny Stevens** explained Finfoot's view and approach to conservation; **Thorntree** and its pain-in-the-butt dump (NOT a landfill, says Ivan) Terry Scot explained that Thorntree had 580 plots and a few large farms a real community conservancy ; **Sharon & Mike Ffoulkes from Broederstroom** (she represented the GCA at the Biodiversity Bill workshop. The GCA and NACSA are now mentioned in this Bill ) and **Anthony Duigan from Rhenosterspruit** on the issues of "development" outside the urban edge and next to a conservancy.

**List of East Rand conservancies (2001 to 2004), mainly for the protection of springs, pans, wetlands and grasslands:**

**Bullfrog Pan; Vlakplaats and Benoni Agricultural Holdings; Friends of Korsmans; Cloverdene Conservancy; Chief Lutuli Park Conservancy (township); Etwatwa- Blesbokspruit Conservancy (protection of the RAMSAR site); Sezfontein Conservancy; Sandpan Conservancy (Animal**

and bird rehabilitation established). In the pipeline: Linmed and Homestead Dam Conservancies.

Regards,

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(GCA,NACSA,RNR and Karee Chronicle)