

Ear to the Ground

Gauteng Conservancy Association Newsletter No 18 - October 2008

www.conservancies.org / www.nacsa.org.za

~ The difference between animals and humans is that animals change themselves for the environment, but humans change the environment for themselves. ~

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Notices

- **Thorntree Conservancy Country Fair:** Sunday 2 November
Contact Ivan: ivan@thorntree.co.za
- **GCA General Meeting:** Saturday 15 November.
Venue: Seringveld Conservancy. Guest Speaker: Amanda Day, Leopard Conservation Project. All interested people welcome. Contact Bob Dehning: dehning@mweb.co.za
- **2008 NACSA General Meeting:** Thurs 6 & Fri 7 November.
Venue: Malonjeni, Suikerbosrand. All interested people welcome, program available. Contact John Wesson: janejohn@mweb.co.za
- **Smuts Farm Conservancy:**
Carols by Candlelight service: Sunday 30th November - service starts 19:00 Come early and bring your own picnic supper, drinks and chair/blanket. Candles & song sheet provided.
Irene Village Market - every Saturday from 8th November to 13th December 2008
Venue: Smuts House Museum, Jan Smuts Ave, off Nellmapius Ave, Irene, Centurion. Contact: Cheryl 083 376 1734 / friends@smutshouse.co.za

Planting Indigenous

At the recently held AGM Petro Lemmer commented on 'planting indigenous' as against 'indigenous to your area'. She explained that 'endemic', meant plants which grow nowhere else, except in that specific area. She asked people to take special care when replacing exotic plants with indigenous in natural areas and to check that the plants are indigenous to the area as against indigenous to SA. While most nurseries have indigenous plants, they are often from the eastern Cape and Natal and can sometimes become a problem plant in your area.

Do not rely on your local nursery for information, get a good book at a library or at SANBI (SA National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria Botanical gardens) on indigenous plants like '*Vegetation Map of Southern Africa*' by Musina and Rutherford, which describes plants etc for your area or use a good field guide like Braam van Wyk's *Field Guide to the Wild Flowers of the Highveld* (recently republished) and note plants for Magaliesberg area.

Yebo Gogga, Yebo AmaBlomma

Environmental expo at Wits (School of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences) held from Sat 27 to Tues 30 September 2008.

GCA was well represented and thanks to Annette Raaff, Rina de Jong, Margie Donde, Pete Irons, Gail McKerchar, John Wesson, Terry Scott, Petro Lemmer, Joan du Toit, Reg Humphrey and Belinda Laming for their help in manning the display.

50/50 and YOTV were filming at the expo, and brief sightings of the stand were seen in the 50/50 screening on 6th October.

We have been told by Caroline that we **will** be at next years show as Yebo would not be the same without us!! Next Yebo Gogga: tentative date: Thurs 8 – Sun 11 Oct 2009

Dog Hunting Conservancies Respond

We have in the last 10 years not had a single application to hunt with gin traps or dogs, and we would in any case not have given permits to do so.

Contraventions of the ordinance are dealt with by the Directorate of Enforcement. I am referring the matter to Mncedisi Mbele for further action.

Regards

Leon Lotter

Directorate of Nature Conservation

Gauteng Dept Agriculture, Conservation & Environment

Hunting with packs of dogs has become a big problem in our area; we still have a lot of open veld and koppies. People think that because it is veld that has not being farmed that it is okay to hunt. If we approach these people we get verbally abused and told that *it is our culture to hunt* and we will not be able to stop them. We have seen hares, duiker and foxes ripped to pieces. If this killing is not stopped Gauteng will become void of all small wildlife

Louise Bosman

Thorntree Conservancy

As far as hunting with dogs is concerned - we have this problem and are continually chasing these guys and their dogs out of the area. They are removing the last indigenous small game - rabbits, Francolins, Korhaans and even grassland buck - from urban and peri-urban areas. Yes, a letter to The Star from GCA pointing out the illegality of this form of hunting would be the best statement to make at this point.

Anthony Duigan

Rhenosterspruit Conservancy

Hunting with packs of dogs is just not done in the conservancy, and rejected by all landowners anyway.

Deon Greyling

Hartebeestfontein Conservancy

However, hunting with pack dogs is so obviously unjustifiable that it is hard to believe that one has to actually explain this to people.

Annette Raaff

Hartebeestfontein Conservancy

Poaching always has & always will be a HUGE problem, if we are able to obtain any legislation to alleviate the problem then we must. How on earth any self respecting farmer can support Gin Traps or Pack Hunting of wild animals, in this day and age is beyond belief.

Klein Jukskei Conservancy is behind you on this issue and do not agree with either method of so called " vermin control " .

Warm regards,

Pauline Stacey

Klein Jukskei Conservancy

WE THINK THIS IS ABSOLUTELY TERRIBLE. WE'RE WITH YOU ALL THE WAY.
WE SAW THE PROGRAM ON TV - AND CRIED!

IF YOU NEED OUR SIGNATURES, YOU HAVE THEM.

HEDY AND RAINER KOHL

Hunting packs of dogs should be shot on sight, and possession of "hunting dogs" other than the so called 'bird dogs' should also be illegal. I don't care if it is African tradition, some traditions have to be modified or discarded as civilisation moves on. How Cape conservation could interfere with a private individual's freedom to use a more humane method of predator control is beyond me. Those officials are in the wrong job.

Graham & Margaret Pickett

Thorntree Conservancy

Re hunting with dogs, I agree that it needs to be stopped or seriously controlled - but considering how people in this country are with their dogs - leaving them while they go on holiday, chaining them up, totally unsocialised, I don't know how to get the message across. Bringing the law into it would certainly make a difference but how to patrol such areas and how you would confront someone with a pack of hunting/hungry dogs is another matter entirely. However, if you do write such an open letter and got scientific and legal backup about these two subjects, I would be very happy to put my name to it and forward it to others.

Good luck and please let me know how it goes

Many thanks

Tamsyn

The effect of the hunting dogs must be devastating on the small amount of wildlife trying to survive habitat destruction & human encroachment around the Westonia region where the hunt took place. More aptly it should be called a massacre, what's the chances of wildlife escaping so many dogs?

GCA needs to act strongly.

I'd like to get Nico Grobler's view on this matter (GDCAE Nature Cons.) I'll forward it to him for his comments.

Rgds,

Jan Visser

Seringveld Conservancy

Hunting with Dogs is not OK either. How can contravening the law be OK?

Best regards!

Petro Vlok

Hi

My thoughts on this article. I think that anyone caught with gin traps or snares should be arrested and fined R100 000.00 or get a ten year prison sentence. The people who even thought of the idea and had it placed in the newspapers should be arrested and fined R100 000.00 or better still, thrown into an enclosure with a leopard. Same applies to the person who thinks it's okay to hunt with a pack of dogs. Vermin animals, what is a "vermin animal"? The only vermin in this world are the humans who hunt and destroy animals and the developers who only look at how much money they can make when destroying priceless land and animals. My feelings. BAN ALL TRAPS AND ANY FORM OF HUNTING. After all the fauna and flora were here long before man. "Man" unfortunately, was God's biggest mistake.

Regards
Tom Botha

I would suggest taking *The Star* to task re. the dog hunting and suggesting that they get their facts right and generally educating them on the subject and asking them to either acknowledge they were wrong or printing a letter from the Conservancy on the subject. Do we know who their Env. writer is?

There is such ignorance on the horrific suffering gin traps cause and the public, as you found out, just don't know. How do we get really graphic pictures out in the public domain that shows this because that is how I remember finding out about them. I can't get them out of my mind. One animal has virtually tried to chew its own leg off in the frenzy of pain and agony.

If there is the chance to comment at the Public Comment meeting with photographs then that's one way. There will always be the abusers. I go cold just thinking of it.

Rose Johnson

Feedback on Frog Survey

Anne Mearns reported that they had started a frog survey in Gauteng and this had mushroomed into a mammoth project. She had received 112 cell phone calls from interested people, 62 emails with stories and pictures of frog and bullfrogs.

The project had aroused a major awareness and interest in frogs and brought about Anne Mearns's first report of a black frog with pink marks, found in Rustenburg, SA only poisonous frog. It gives off a liquid from the skin which is poisonous, not lethal, but makes animals and man ill if liquid is ingested.

Responses were received from Limpopo to Cape Province, from Natal, and from all over Gauteng. A number of nature reserves, including the National Parks, have decided to join in the survey. There had been a big response from Midrand, Randjesfontein, Diepsloot to name a few, but the biggest response had been from Cullinan, who did a frog survey in their conservancy. There were also a number of enquiries from overseas. eg Australia.

NB: *People doing frog surveys should ensure that they clean their equipment and boots before going into a new research area. There is a fungus that is affecting our frog population and clean equipment would help prevent the spread of this fungus.*

South African Police Services (SAPS) and Biodiversity:

Conservancies are encouraged to get SAPS involved in environmental problems. Thorntree Conservancy have now started informing SAPS on how and what they can prosecute on in respect of environmental issues. If the SAPS do not know what the legislation is they will not prosecute. This legislation is available on the internet, [contact Bob for info.](#)

Snippets from around the province

- **Seringsveld:** Die bewarea was besig met 'n plant opname en rehabilitasie van vleilande met behulp van twee studente van Tuks wat die omgewing gebruik vir studie. Hulle beplan om 'n ossewa pad roete te open.
- **Cullinan Conservancy:** Been listing and conserving historical buildings. Local sites like, van der Merwe Stasie, dating from Anglo Boer War and the old Dairy farm shed built in 1927. The latter had been under threat of development and destruction.
- **Hartbeesfontein** (north-west): Have started a monthly 'Grow an Indigenous Tree' project: - the first month's tree is the *Combretum erythrophyllum*, River Bushwillow Riviers Vaderlandswilg
- **Elandsvlei Conservancy:** holds a monthly Country Market as a fund raising venture. A monthly newsletter is published and distributed to over 500 readers. Actively involved in the Frog survey with Anne Mearns. Ongoing invader plant removal, namely Pom Pom (*Campuloclinium macrocephalum*). They have been obtaining indigenous trees from the Dept Agriculture, who have been most helpful, and these have been or will be planted along their streets. Have had a number of sinkholes in the area, and have now got Ekuhurleni involved. The conservancy is working with Sustainable Living and the community.
- **Randjiesfontein** -an equestrian conservancy, with horse trails all over the conservancy. Taking measures to maintain their natural grasslands and wetlands. They have noticed drop in grass and marsh owl population and are trying to improve on habitats for owls. Busy planting indigenous trees along trails and removing exotics especially Australian wattle.
- **Avondzon Bullfrog Conservancy:** - the newest conservancy founded and they are very proud their bullfrog population. They contacted local newspapers to announce the formation of the conservancy and had an impromptu radio interview, all of which helped to make locals aware of conservancy. Recent horse show in the conservancy was well attended, mostly by outsiders. They are trying to get the Erasmus house, west side of Donkerhoek quarries, to be declared a national heritage site, and to be included in the conservancy. The house was built by the same builders who built Skanskop fort and dates back to Paul Kruger's government.

Recognition for GCA from SANParks and Mail and Guardian Greening the Future

The Gauteng Conservancy Association received the Kudu Award in the category of Community Contribution by a Group and a Merit award in the category Environmental Education/Capacity Building from SANParks. Ivan was also nominated in the category Community Contribution by an Individual. We also received a Merit Award in the category Environmental Best Practice in Not-for-profit Organizations from the Mail and Guardian - *Greening the Future*.

Plastic Federation Needs Reports!!

The Plastic Federation of SA donated 50,000 plastic bags for conservancies, schools and organisations involved in clean up projects. Please send GCA report and pictures of where and when you did clean ups and used the bags. They will be supplying another 100,000 bags for cleanups in the January 2009

Please send us your news and notices of events for inclusion in "*Ear to the Ground*". This e-newsletter goes to all the Gauteng conservancies and to a long list of "friends of conservancies" plus other interested people. The list grows by the day. If you would like to contact any of the conservancies or people mentioned in this "Ear", let us know.