

# GC&SA Ear to the Ground

Gauteng Conservancy & Stewardship Association Newsletter – No 27 –  
October 2010

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*"Don't blow it - good planets are hard to find"*

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Yebo Gogga 2010 has come and gone – what an experience!! Three days of exuberant, inquisitive children, it is so rewarding to experience the passion with which these youngsters live life and to share knowledge with them. And share is what you do as the knowledge and awareness these youngsters have is incredible and very encouraging for our future.

The weekend was busy, with parents bringing their children to enjoy the Yebo experience. This year there were snakes, spiders, scorpions, tortoises, terrapins, bees, frogs, plants from orchids to invasive species, sharks and many more interesting displays.

## ***Notices:***

**Thorntree Conservancy Country Fair** – 7 November  
Walkerville Show Grounds – call Louise 083 299 0958

**Warblers for Beginners** – 27 November 9am  
Imbabala Function Venue  
Buffelsdrift – contact Johan Rademan

**Wild Flower Identification** – 2 December (Pretoria) 3 December (West Rand)  
Contact Fritz van Oudtshoorn Bushveld Eco Services 078 228 0008

## ***Snippets from around the province***

### **Thank You from Melville Kopjies**

Thanks very much for the bags. They will be well used in the care of Melville Kopjies Nature Reserve and heritage site. The donation of bags is very welcome as it saves the volunteer committee yet another expense for the next year. We depend on donations to pay all expenses incurred in managing Melville Kopjies.



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The best kept secret in Johannesburg nestles right here in the heart of our community. **Alberts Farm.**

I walk my dogs twice a day, normally early and late. Today I walked at about 10:00 and was totally blown away by the wonderful display of veld flowers!!! Without a drop of rain... imagine what it will be after the first rains... and each year it just gets better.

Help to protect and grow this wonderful jewel. Add your voice to get the fence and dam wall repaired, to keep the quad bikes out, and to protect the guineafowl, dikkops, mongoose, the new baby geese and the little coots that should pop out of their eggs soon. Help to protect the frog chorus and all the beautiful birds.



## ***Walking on Perdeberg Mountain with Professor Tom Huffman & Dr. Johan (Moose) Kruger***

The ***Drumblade Conservancy*** waited almost a whole year to get a date with the Prof, but it was well worth it. What had been envisaged as a stiff walk up the mountain turned into something more suitable for klipspringers but we all managed it and then spent at least 3 hours roaming around on the top and down the other side enjoying the talks, the views, the wild flowers and monstrous Solifuges (related to spiders) that scuttled around us!

The Prof's knowledge of all things historical and antiquated is amazing. For the layman it was truly an eye opening experience. He could point to a piece of rock, and tell you it was a tool from the Stone Ages. Then he would proceed to demonstrate how it was made and used, by the people who inhabited the area over 12,000 years ago! What appeared to be a jumble of old stones to us were revealed as the remains of a village of living, working, farming people centuries ago. Once shown what to look for, the circles and lines of rocks clearly become walls around villages and living quarters for each family that lived there.

More importantly, the age-old question of who built the walls on Perdeberg was finally answered. Was it Stone Age man or was it the Boers whilst fighting the English? The answer was YES to both of them! Stone Age man built villages and kraals high on the koppie to protect their cattle and families. The Boers occupied Perdeberg centuries later and built kraals to protect their horses and vantage points from which to watch the British. The difference was very obvious ... when the Prof showed us what to look for.

We were fortunate enough to have Dr. Johan Kruger (a Geologist) in the group as well, and his knowledge of rocks and stones and all the things beneath our feet was mind boggling. How the meteor created the Vredefort Dome and impacted the landscape for miles and miles around many millions of years ago, was patiently explained to his eager 'students'.

Our thanks go to the Montgomery family for hosting the outing on Perdeberg Mountain, and to the 'Profs' for giving up their time to answer our questions. We are looking at other sites in the area with similar rock walls. Some of our members have already submitted interesting photos and we hope to plan another (easier) walk next year.



Solifuges – fast as lightning



The Profs with their captivated audience



Exploring the old Boer kraals on top of Perdeberg Mountain

### ***A Good Reason not to chop down all the blue gums!!!***

The owner of plot 56 Mooiplaats, along the Pienaars River radioed us on Thursday last week to say there was a leopard high up in his blue gum tree and he didn't know what do about the animal. Just across the Mooiplaats road was the staff settlement of Hazeldean and the danger existed that the leopard might attack the children of the settlement. I phoned Tshwane Nature Conservation and they sent Henke Marais and a vet from the zoo that darted the animal.

Attached is a photo of the 80kg male leopard before being darted by Tshwane Nature Conservation. The leopard, presumably from the Bronberg, was taken to Pretoria Zoo and will be fitted with a radio collar tomorrow. Because it was headed northwards, Gauteng Nature Conservation decided it should be relocated to Dinokeng, rather than Suikerbosch Rand in the south. They plan to release the leopard over the weekend.

Petro Lemmer Cullinan Conservancy



### *Focus on a Gauteng Conservancy*



Cullinan Conservancy is situated North East of Pretoria, the conservancy was established in 1997 and its members have been working tirelessly on many different projects aimed at conserving the biodiversity of the area ever since.

The Conservancy has a very active alien flora species eradication program, including the education of the residents on the use of the correct herbicides and providing previously unemployed women, who are trained in the correct use of the herbicides, to assist the landowners with the eradication program. Landowners are also advised on which indigenous trees and plants common to the area should be planted to replace the removed aliens. They work closely with

DAFF and have a representative on the steering committee of the Declared Weed and Alien Plant committee.



The Conservancy has initiated several Skills development projects using recycled waste and alien vegetation. They have previously unemployed people making paper maché bowls, wire art, spectacle chains, garden screens and owl boxes.



The Conservancy has initiated a project in a local school where the pupils make "bricks" from shredded mulched newspaper, these bricks burn for 2 hours each and are an eco-friendly alternative to wood. The pupils are responsible for the marketing and sales of the bricks, the accounting records are monitored by the business economics teacher. The conservancy members now only assist with the collecting of the newspaper. If a large order is placed they assist with transport, at a cost, to enable delivery. The transport money is then used to purchase more brick makers which are then donated to the school for the project.



The conservancy has worked very closely with developers' and has managed to establish "green belts" where there are sensitive biodiversity areas which are monitored closely by conservancy members. Development in the area will be ecologically sensitive and NOT economically sensitive.

A copy of the management plan is with the local authorities who have included it in the Spatial Development Plan and the Integrated Development Plan.

This conservancy covers all aspects of conservation, as an agricultural conservancy the members are passionate about conservation and where possible leave as small a footprint as possible. They try to include as many aspects of conservation as possible into their yearly planning and cover all forms of biodiversity within the conservancy. Most land-owners are working people, who only have weekends on their farms, but as a conservancy have managed to achieve amazing results by maintaining their focus.

## ***WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FIND A BABY BIRD***

- Check to see if the parents are nearby. If the baby is not injured and the parents are hovering around or feeding it, leave it alone.
- Remove cats and dogs from the area.
- If you can find the baby bird's nest, put the baby back into the nest (you may need an adult to assist you).
- If the baby bird is injured, or the parents do not return within a couple of hours to an uninjured bird, gently pick it up and put it in a box or basket on a soft towel or a cloth (not cotton wool – beaks and claws can get caught in it).
- Place the box or basket in a safe and quiet place, under a desk lamp to keep the baby warm, while being careful not to overheat it.
- Do not give the baby bird food or water until you have spoken to FreeMe .
- Phone Freeme on 011 807-6993 to get the telephone no of a volunteer in your area, or bring the baby to the FreeMe centre as soon as possible.
- Handle the baby as little as possible and do not take it to school. This is very stressful and may kill the bird.

***You have a good chance of saving this baby bird's life if you follow these steps.***

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.