

GC&SA Ear to the Ground

Gauteng Conservancy & Stewardship Association Newsletter
No 23 – February 2010

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

“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.”

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Notices:

Events happening in and around Cullinan Conservancy – for more details contact Joan Du Toit on 082 681 5122

DATE	COURSE	VENUE
13 March	Tree ID Course	Bronberg
17 April	Aurumn Flower Walk	To be determined

Events happening at Smuts Farm Conservancy – for more details contact Sue 012 667 2917, Margaret 012 809 0928 or Cheryl 083 376 1734 email: friends@smutshouse.co.za

DATE	COURSE	COST
6 March 06:00 for 06:30	Guided Bird Walk	Visitors R30 incl bird list
7 March 08:00 for 08:30	Grassland Walk (Prof Braam van Wyk, Botany Dept Univ Pretoria)	Visitors R30 incl plant list
18 March 18:00 for 18:30	Supper Talk - Alternative	Visitors R70 incl light

	Energy – Rob Tait	supper – cash bar
3 April 06:00 for 06:30	Guided Bird Walk	Visitors R30 incl bird list
15 April 18:00 for 18:30	Supper Talk – Churchill & Smuts – John Bird	Visitors R70 incl light supper – cash bar

Events happening at Rhenosterspruit Conservancy – for more details go to www.rhenosterspruit.co.za

DATE	COURSE	COST
7 March	Tellington Touch Equine Awareness Workshop	R350
13 March 12:00	Festival – Celebrating the Best of the Biosphere	Free – all welcome plenty of stalls and entertainment

Events happening in Lammermoor Conservancy – for more details contact Malcolm 083 674 8713

DATE	COURSE	COST
21 March	Bird Walk	R50 – Children under 16 free
27 April	Horseback Ride	R50 – contact Liane liane@fussell.co.za
5 September	Country Fair	

EWT will be holding a Golf day on the 22nd April at the Zwartkops Country Club, Centurion. All proceeds from the day go towards supporting the EWT's work to conserve Southern Africa's magnificent biodiversity. Support this worthy cause – enter a team or sponsor a hole. For more details contact Jo-Anne Schermeier (011) 486 1102 email: joannes@ewt.org.za

Snippets from around the province

Cullinan Conservancy's Anti-Poaching Team in Action



Cullinan Conservancy has a team of people who check fences for snares and gin traps. One of our anti-poaching team members alerted us to a “boks in die boom”

We went to investigate, armed with ladder, wire cutters and camera.

Once in the tree we were shocked to see a cage which was designed to catch monkeys attached to a strong branch. It was cut down, and removed.

Now we know to look up into trees as well as fences.



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.

Conservancy and Stewardship Association

Interesting Articles

Bad vibes for the Violin

Every now and then an email circulates showing horrible wounds purportedly caused by violin spiders. A recent newspaper article also reported a teenage boy from the East Rand dying, possibly from a “spider bite”. It's enough to make many people grab a can of Doom and spray anything with more than three legs.

“That's rubbish,” says Astri Leroy of the Spider Club of SA. “It's simply impossible that a spider bite could have caused the boy's death. As for the much-maligned violin spider – it is NOT a serious problem in South Africa. Violin spiders are regarded as rare spiders by our arachnologists, with very few specimens found in houses,” she says.

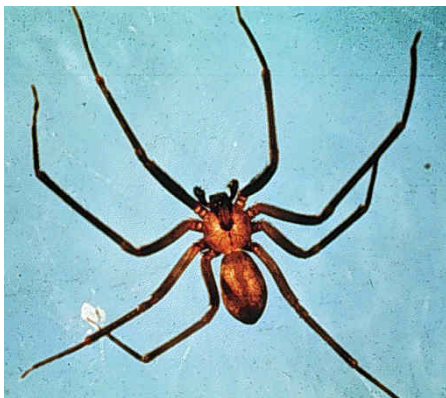
Research supports her statement. In the South African National Collection of Arachnida, which houses more than 140 000 spider specimens collected over a 40-year period, only 120 specimens are violin spiders. Of these 120 specimens, only 11 were collected inside buildings.

Their rarity is confirmed by surveys undertaken over the past three years as part of the South African National Survey of Arachnida (SANSA).

"Of the more than 10 000 specimens identified annually, very few are violin spiders," says Astri. SANSA has a 'virtual museum' containing photographs of spiders mostly found in and around houses. "Of the approximately 2 000 photographs received to date only 10 were of violin spiders, and five of these were photographed at the same locality in the Free State," she said.

So - when the next scary email arrives, delete it. Or forward it to "Same locality, Fre State".

Note: Astri's next Spider Walk in the Rhenosterspruit Nature Conservancy takes place on 27 February.



Books

Pot Plant Owl



"I am Pot Plant Owl. On the 21st August, I laid the first of 3 eggs in a pot plant that I found on the balcony of a home in the sprawling metropolis of Johannesburg. This is my story, as told by the family that live in the house and through the lens of their camera".

This is the true story of a pair of Eagle Owls that have raised their chicks on the balcony of Allan & Tracey's Radiokop house. For more details go to www.potplantowl.co.za it is a fascinating website, well worth the visit whether you purchase the book or not