

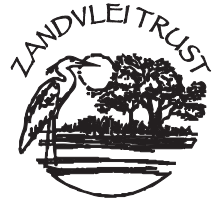
THE ZANDVLEI TRUST

Non-Profit Organisation - Fund Raising No: 004-011-NPO

Fax: +27 (21) 705 5224 • P O Box 30017, Tokai, 7966

Enquiries: David Muller on +27 (0) 21 788 1086

www.zandvleitrust.org.za



Caring for Zandvlei since 1988

Application for 12 month membership - valid from January 1 to December 31

Tick appropriate box: New Member Renewal

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Annual subscription: single member R80, couple (each may vote) R100

Can't afford the fee, but want to remain a member? Call David Muller on +27 (0) 21 788 1086

Deposit into bank account:

Paid Electronically (fax deposit slip):

Cheque enclosed:

Account name: Zandvlei Trust

Bank and Account number: ABSA savings account - 116 774 453

Branch and Code: Tokai - 632 005

Subscription sum R..... single couple

Donation sum R.....

What skills can you offer the trust?.....

I/we will uphold the aim of the Zandvlei Trust to conserve the indigenous fauna and flora of the Zandvlei and to enhance this natural resource for all.

Date:..... Signature:.....

ZANDVLEI TRUST

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2011



Caring for
Zandvlei
since 1988

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LEOPARD
TOAD**

**BIODIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF
CAPE TOWN**

**ONE SWALLOW
DOES NOT MAKE
A SUMMER?**

The Zandvlei Trust

NPO 004-011 • PO BOX 30017, Tokai, 7966

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The Zandvlei Trust aims to conserve the indigenous fauna and flora of the Zandvlei and to enhance the the natural resources for the benefit of all.

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CHAIRMANS REPORT

It's Kite Festival in a few days' time. A time when we realise how kind the wind is. The moment our kite is aloft affords us a treasured moment in our lives. While gazing skywards at the array of colourful kites as they sway to and fro like brush strokes on a blue canvas giving the painting a joy only found in the delighted eyes of children as they hold, securely mind, on to their kite string, we stop to reflect. Small wonder the funds raised over this October weekend at Zandvlei finds its way into the Cape Mental Health coffers.

Thanks to Nomadik Tents for once more donating a tent to shelter the Trust together with the hard working staff of the Reserve as we promote the jolly good work you, dear members, are doing together with Cassy and her team. The Zandvlei and surrounds are receiving the attention it deserves. Yes, there are numerous challenges in and around each waterway, along every bank, down each canal, but I believe together we can sustain this water and land called Zandvlei so that our children and their children will live to enjoy it too.

As we gaze up reflecting let us pause for a moment to think of a few special individuals who need special mention... Maybe a celebration at the end of the year is in the pipeline. A celebration where we can indulge just a little, in some cheerful, delightful, happy and joyful festivities. And while you are considering the idea, kindly excuse me while I consult the committee, who have never failed in their delivery, on what to do about it. Until next time, happy reading and kite-like reflecting.

David Muller

The Zandvlei Trust is in need of an IT volunteer amongst our members who could help us into Facebook, onto Google and the like so that we can have a broader foundation for the world to land on when surfing, flying and visiting Zandvlei, Muizenberg and Cape Town.

Please contact the Chairman or any other committee member if you can help

1 Cover photograph: The male Barn Swallow has longer outer tail streamers than the female. See page 7. Picture thanks to Angie Wilken
www.barnswallow.co.za



At the recent Grant-in-Aid ceremony from l to r. Chairman of Zandvlei Trust David Muller, Alderman Felicity Purchase, Sub-council Manager Desree Mentor and Zandvlei Trust Committee member Lucia Rodrigues. The funds granted are to be used in revegetating the slope above Main Road at Old Boyes Drive.



Some of the lovely young girls and Walter, that accompanied Mark Arendse, the EE officer of Zandvlei Nature Reserve, and Sharon McCallum of Zandvlei Trust on a walk up Kalk Bay mountain during the last school holidays – one very hot day.

BIODIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF CAPE TOWN

The City of Cape Town is situated right in the Cape Floristic Region which is one of the world's botanical hotspots. (Biodiversity means the range of organisms present in a particular ecological community or system.)

The greater municipal area covers 2,460 km² and there are almost 4 million people living in this area. Nineteen vegetation types occur within the City's boundaries. Of these nineteen vegetation types six are endemic which means they are species of organism that are confined to a particular geographical region and occur nowhere else on Earth. Nine of these nineteen vegetation types are classified as Critically Endangered.

Thirty percent (3400 species) of the species in the Fynbos Biome occur within the City and obviously these species are under constant threat from development and human interference.

Parts of the City, like Table Mountain, enjoy a high conservation status but many of the Lowland areas (Cape Flats), where most of the development has taken place, have not been so lucky. This is why the 200 hectares that comprises the Greater Zandvlei Nature Reserve is of such importance.

The work done by Robin and Pat Burnett to create the Zandvlei Herbarium bears testimony to the value of the Reserve. Over 430 of their collections are now housed in the Bolus Herbarium at U.C.T. Over 350 of their specimens are at the Zandvlei Nature Reserve office complex. Of the total number of collections made by the Burnetts about 30% are of aliens or introduced species growing within the Reserve area.

Six of the species they collected from the Reserve are threatened. *Leucadendron levisanus*, *Passerina paludosa* and *Psoralea glaucina* are Critically Endangered and one of their collections *Muraltia mitior* is a very rare little legume that grows around the fringes of seasonal wetlands.

The hack group, led by Gavin Lawson, are clearing the slope above Main Road and adjacent to Old Boyes Drive more species are being discovered that do not grow in

the Reserve and it is estimated that another 30 or more species will be added to the list of the Reserve.

Look out for the very lovely *Gladiolus angustus*, which has cream to pale pink flowers with a pink diamond on the lower petal and *G. undulates* with whitish cream flowers and also with a pink diamond on the lower petal. The *Moraea fugax*, with white flowers and yellow nectar guides all start coming into flower at this time of the year.

PK



The Cape Flats conebush, *Leucadendron levisanus* once occurred in huge stands on the Cape Peninsula from Paarden Island to Kommetjie.

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WHAT'S ON

Kite Festival

The annual Kite Festival, which has become an internationally recognised festival, takes place on Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd of October. Come and visit The Zandvlei Trust stand the Reserve staff will be on hand to answer any questions and your committee will also be represented on the stand.

This is an important fund raising event for the Trust.

Cape Bird Club has outings to Rondevlei Nature Reserve on the first Saturday of the month. These outings are for Rondevlei enthusiasts and beginners are welcome. From the M5 turn East into 5th Avenue and then at the first traffic lights turn right into Perth Road. Follow the signs. A small entrance fee to the Reserve is payable at the gate.

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MICHAEL LAMBRECHT
Art Director • Designer

0 7 3 5 4 8 6 6 4 1
michael@monkeyshadow.co.za

www.monkeyshadow.co.za
Marina da gama, Muizenburg

Our website - www.zandvleitrust.org.za - is regularly updated with information about the nature reserve and our activities. Please visit it regularly. If you have photographs/anecdotes about your experiences and sightings around the estuary, please send them to Gavin Lawson at glawson@xsinet.co.za. We would love to post them on the site for everyone to enjoy.

ZANDVLEI NATURE RESERVE – OPEN DAYS

Open Days for 2011 will coincide with the CWAC (Co-ordinated Waterbird Counts).

These days will run from 8am to 1pm.

The dates are as follows:

22 October

21 January 2012

PHOTOS FOR THE NEWSLETTER.

We are keen to publish good, clear photos of our special environment, but so often we are unable to publish submissions because they quality is unsuitable for printing purposes. What looks good on a PC screen may not be of a high enough resolution to print on paper. Please remember that we print in black and white so a green frog against a green background reproduces as a black splodge. Wait for the subject to get into the light or open shade, if possible, with a clear background. Also, please set your cameras to record the image at a resolution between 150 and 300 dpi. The file size of the image should be atleast 1mb-1.5mb. Also, photos taken with a cellphone are just not good enough.

THE GREY SQUIRREL - SCIURUS CAROLINENSIS

I don't know if you have noticed an increase in the numbers of grey squirrel but in Lakeside we never saw them until a year or so ago writes Muriel Darke.

Squirrels may be cute to look at but they are contributing to a decline in bird numbers.

A few years ago it was common to see Cape Francolin along the mountains above Boyes Drive in groups as big as ten or eleven, but no longer.

The finger of suspicion points at grey squirrels, introduced by none other than Cecil John Rhodes who, homesick for the animals of his native England, instructed his minions to catch and import not only grey squirrels but also European Starlings.

Squirrels are omnivores and will eat just about anything, but particular favourites are birds' eggs. They have been seen actually pushing aside a francolin and stealing the eggs on which she was sitting. Guinea fowl being more gregarious and seldom alone are not so vulnerable. So for those of you who care about the future of francolin and their smaller cousins like sunbirds, sugarbirds, doves and others, if you see squirrels, DON'T FEED THEM! Chase them away.

Some additional information from the World Wide Web tells us that;

"In Europe, *Sciurus carolinensis* is considered extremely destructive to native trees.

The Grey Squirrel has made it to the Invasive Species Specialist Group of the World Conservation Union's list of "100 of the World's Worst Invasive Alien Species."

British and Italian environmental groups have ranked the Grey Squirrel as second in negative impact only to the Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*).

The most damaging food item enjoyed by the Grey Squirrel is tree bark. In winter when food is scarce, the Grey Squirrel can strip maples, pines, hemlocks and others of their protective bark, leaving the tree vulnerable to disease.

Although the grey squirrel is a pretty, appealing and entertaining little animal, it can be a great nuisance in a garden, especially to a bird lover. It is very bold and soon learns to take food from bird tables. It will also destroy birds' nests to eat eggs and nestlings."

The Grey Squirrel is originally from the U.S.A



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ZANDVLEI TRUST - ALIEN VEGETATION CLEARING (HACKING)

We need your help!

Where

We are currently working the area of Old Boyes Drive between Main Road Muizenberg and Boyes Drive.

What to bring

Bring your energy and enthusiasm, gloves, a garden lopper or a small bow saw. There is various litter about, you can fill bags, which will be supplied. Dress suitably for the weather. Wear sturdy footwear. Training will be provided.

When

On the 2nd Saturday afternoon of each month at 14h00 till 16h00.

Only 2 hours of your time and effort.

Contact Gavin Lawson on glawson@xsinet.co.za or 021 705 5224, for more information.

Why

This area is the remaining biodiversity corridor linking the Muizenberg mountain to Zandvlei and helps to extend this corridor along the coastline to the Kogelberg Biosphere in the east.

The idea is to remove the invasive species, so that the biodiversity of indigenous plants may be encouraged. This also promotes the diversity of other living species, insects, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, birds etc, which make up or are part of habitats and ecosystems.

The invasive vegetation dominates areas, where it grows and often suppresses the indigenous plants. These exotic plants grow very quickly, removing large amounts of water from the soil and also creating a shady canopy. This prevents the sunlight reaching the ground, where the low growing ground covers, bulbs and seedlings struggle to grow.

The exotic plants can, and some do, alter the soil char-

acteristic by adding nitrogen to the soil. These invasive plants tend to dominate, as their host insects and parasites are not present.

Fynbos vegetation usually grows in nitrogen poor soils.

Come and help us, and you may learn much and see the benefit and the results of the work we do.

History

The Cape Bird Club has had a long history at Zandvlei, and monthly 'hacks' were initiated for the Cape Bird Club by Alan Morris back in 1978.

Bill Rudings took over as leader in 1985 and subsequently Gavin Lawson in 1991.

Zandvlei Trust members have regularly cleared the invasive species from the Reserve area for more than 20 years. Since the GZENR (Greater Zandvlei Estuary Nature Reserve) was proclaimed in October 2006, we have worked in the extended area beyond the "old" Reserve boundary.

See the website www.zandvleitrust.org.za then look under the heading Task Teams.

Good News!

Some great news from the Nature Reserve is that Mark Arendse, the Environmental Education Centre Manager, had a group of 44 international visitors recently. He gave them a presentation on Environmental Issues which included Fynbos, Birdlife and the work that they do in the Reserve.

The visitors were so moved and impressed with the efforts of the Reserve staff that they 'passed the hat around' and collected a R900 donation to the Environmental Education Centre transport fund. Well done everyone and especially to you, Mark.

ONE SWALLOW DOES NOT MAKE A SUMMER?

The Barn Swallow is the national bird of Estonia. A state in the Baltic region of Northern Europe.

The Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) is the most widespread species of swallow in the world and they have just started arriving in the area around Zandvlei after their 10,000km flight from Europe. The Barn Swallows that come to South Africa are usually from Central Russia and they are joined by those coming from Britain.

Bird and animal migrations are probably one of the most awe-inspiring natural phenomena that we are able to witness and we are fortunate enough to be able to spot these swallows as they arrive from halfway across the world from our armchairs around the Zandvlei Nature Reserve.

About half of the world's bird species migrate and approximately 1800 of the world's 10,000 bird species are long-distance migrants. This means that they migrate from their breeding areas to non-breeding areas and back on an annual basis.

The reason for this annual migration is usually to find a good food source once winter arrives in their breeding areas. As swallows feed exclusively on aerial insects they are forced to leave their breeding grounds due to the complete lack of flying insects during the cold winter months.

When they migrate, Barn Swallows fly during the day and roost in reed beds at night. In South Africa, as spring arrives, the migratory Barn Swallows start to appear. Mount Moreland, adjacent to the new King Shaka International Airport north of Durban, is South Africa's largest roost. The initial small flocks swell to thousands and then to millions. By November three to five million Barn Swallows can be seen every evening over the Lake Victoria wetland roost at Mount Moreland.

Mount Moreland is known as a 'staging post' or as a 'hot spot' for the Barn Swallow and many local enthusiasts take a deckchair and picnic basket and

witness the arrival of the birds at that wetland which is covered with indigenous Phragmites reeds.

The reed bed lies on the flight path of aircraft using the King Shaka airport, and there were fears that it would be cleared because the birds could threaten aircraft safety. However, following detailed evaluation, advanced radar technology has been installed to enable planes using the airport to be warned of bird movements and, if necessary, take appropriate measures to avoid the flocks.

The Barn Swallows at Mount Moreland and their roosting habitat are now recognized as a world famous Barn Swallow site and it is an IBA (International Birding Area).

The Barn Swallow prefers open country and normally uses man-made structures (barns) to nest in. They have spread far and wide as more and more structures offer them nesting sites. They build a cup nest from mud pellets in barns or similar structures and feed on insects caught in flight. This species lives in close association with humans, and its insect-eating habits mean that it is useful and tolerated by man.

Young barn swallows stay in their nesting area in Europe, roosting in local reed beds where they are protected from predators by the water where the reeds grow. Prior to their migration flocks often form on telephone wires from where they practice their flying skills and feeding techniques.

By the time they are ready to start flying south many more birds will have gathered and their roost would have grown in size and contain birds that have come from many different areas.

Their trip to the south is fraught with danger. Their first challenge is to cross the English Channel which is at least 35km of uninterrupted water over which there could be strong winds or storms. It then takes them three to five days to cross France at the end of which they have to fly over the Pyrenees mountain range into Spain. This is their first experience of mountains and the weather that

ONE SWALLOW DOES NOT MAKE A SUMMER? cont.

is associated with them.

Once they have crossed Spain they face the Mediterranean Sea. If they cross to Gibraltar it is a 13km flight at the narrowest point but if they do not get this spot on they could end up doing as much as 500km to get across the sea to reach Africa.

When they reach the African coast there are colonies of Eleonora's Falcon spread along the coast who have timed their breeding to coincide with the autumn migrants moving through thus ensuring a ready supply of fresh meat for the falcons and their chicks.

The next obstacle is the Atlas Mountains which provide varied habitats with good feeding where they can gather their strength before facing their greatest challenge in the form of the Sahara desert. This is about 1500km of desert with only the odd oasis scattered across the distance. There are not many flying insects over the desert and dust storms are a hazard. More Barn Swallows probably perish on this section of the route than any of the other sections.

The autumn rains south of the Sahara mean that the birds can find plenty of food and can regain some of their lost weight. Their flight south through savannah and open woodland is now fairly leisurely and relatively hazard free with an abundant supply of insects.

The daily storms over the equator and the forests of the Congo basin are another hazard and they usually fly around this hazard rather than over it.

The final hazard they face when they arrive in spring in Southern Africa are the late frosts and even at times late snow falls in November and December. Un-seasonal cold when they arrive in South Africa is one of the hazards that causes the highest mortality for a Barn Swallow on their southern migration.

An adult Barn Swallow weighs about 20 grams and the mortality rate for adults on the round trip to the south and back is about 50%. For juveniles the mortality rate

is closer to 80%. After four or five months in South Africa they start building up their reserves for the return flight to their northern breeding grounds. Just watch them in April and you will see them feeding frantically to get those reserves up.

Their northbound journey is a lot quicker because the juveniles are now a good four months older, they have honed their flying skills and, after all, they are now going home to breed and reproduce their own kind.

PK



After their epic journey from Europe the Barn Swallows are beginning to arrive in our area.

Picture thanks to Angie Wilken www.barnswallow.co.za

CAPE TOWN – YOUR LOCAL “TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS”

Leif Petersen – Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation

Max (not his real name) is a formally unemployed 25 year old supporting a young family of four in a Cape Town informal settlement. He does this by harvesting wild animals and plants from the city’s “wild lands” (including protected nature reserves) for personal customer networks and the street trade of traditional medicines. The activity bolsters his family income and allows him to maintain links with his traditional and local Khoi heritage.

Max is one of a growing number of Cape Town citizens excluded from the formal job market and motivated by cash, culture or criminality to harvest wild plants and animals.

Their actions are the local version of the „Tragedy of the Commons. “The Tragedy of the Commons” was a profound and influential article written in 1968 by ecologist, Garret Hardin. In it, he clearly highlights the disastrous consequences to the planet of unconstrained population growth with its subsequent resource use and pollution.

Hardin argued quite simply that humans independently pursue their own self interests in a world of finite resources, and that as we add infinite humans the limited resources of our world will become exhausted. These consequences are pronounced in the “commons” – those places we cannot own and more-or-less share with others, such as the atmosphere which is the recipient of our pollution, and the ocean which provides both a bounty of food and receives our sewage.

Hardin’s tragedy is also playing out in the city of Cape Town. The city is a landscape of mountains, valleys, plains, beaches, ocean, skyscrapers, slums, agriculture and open space, crammed with thousands of species of plants of which 70% are found nowhere else in the world. Its middle and upper class residents are firmly ensconced adjacent to Table Mountain and world class beaches, smug in this beauty and uniqueness, with

access to all the resources they could realistically require.

Cape Town also has extensive open “green” spaces in the form of land and marine nature reserves, parks, beaches, road reserves and other open spaces. Officially protected areas are commonly revered as sacrosanct by middle class Capetonians - old school hikers, botanists, birdwatchers and the like, and have gained international recognition for their endemism and scenic beauty.

However, not all of Cape Town’s population of 3.7 million people can be so content. In fact, nearly 40% of its residents exist in dire poverty, inclusive of more than 100,000 informal dwellings – shacks - in 232 informal settlements largely on the Cape Flats. The City grows by 55,000 predominately poor, ill-educated immigrants per year.

Population growth, cultural demand and the need for cash income spells profound consequences for conservation of local biodiversity, not least of which is the growing trend of illicit harvesting from formally proclaimed protected areas emerging as commons.

The scale of this illicit harvest is large. Our recent research (to be published in Ecology & Society) revealed a total harvest of 448 separate animals and plants taking place within the City. A total of 37 illicit harvesters, conservation officials and law enforcers revealed extraction of 250 plants from 70 different families (inclusive of three fungi spp.), and 198 marine and terrestrial animals. Of the 250 plant species, 52% are harvested for medicinal purposes, 38% are harvested for the cut flower trade, with the remainder harvested for fibre and fuelwood.

Conversely, with respect to fauna, 61% are harvested for food (primarily marine molluscs, but including four terrestrial mammals and various birds). Over 39% of animals (exclusively marine) are harvested as bait for catching food for human consumption or as primary

Cape Town – Your local “Tragedy of the Commons” cont.

food. Reptiles (especially tortoises and snakes), and locally occurring invertebrates such as arachnids and beetles are utilized in the collector trade. Thirty three animal species are harvested for traditional medicines - primarily reptiles. The majority of larger mammals are hunted for blood sports or gambling purposes.

In many cases the harvest is not illegal (such as state-approved intertidal shellfish collections) but the overwhelming majority of flora and terrestrial fauna are collected from formal protected areas within the City (illicitly), with the majority of marine species either collected or fished from the intertidal zone (either permit-based or illicitly harvested).

Harvesting is unevenly spread, but widespread throughout the City, with larger impacts clustering closer to lower income residential areas such as around the Cape Flats, or within the Table Mountain National Park adjacent to economically poor human settlements or near public transport nodes. This activity shows questionable ecological sustainability – particularly for floral biodiversity. The combined harvest of medicinal plants and cut flowers comprises 90% of the total flora harvest from within City conservation areas, of which >70% of harvesting either kills or reproductively maims the target species.

The harvesters and users of wild harvested biodiversity originate from a variety of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Some are poorer than others, some have no access to electricity, some have strong cultural attachment to biodiversity including indigenous claims, and others are entrepreneurs who (potentially despite other stated justifications) are in it for the money. And the money can be lucrative – as successful perlemoen poachers will attest.

Harvesting for local demands can also be profitable - confiscated materials in eight months of law enforcement efforts for illicit harvesters in Tygerberg last year retailed upwards of R100,000.00. The harvests are demand driven, with consolidated law enforcement data revealing a recent spike in harvesting of tortoises

within City reserves - which are shucked like oysters for the vital organs required in the medicinal trade.

Thus within the City, Hardin's tragedy of the commons unravels, driven by groups of variously motivated individuals, many incrementally harvesting for economic survival. Critically, unlike the immediate consequences of a fire, flood or tsunami, a major, long term negative change akin to the “death by a thousand cuts” is taking place under our noses, with its very gradualness being its danger.

Without any serious government commitment and action likely to resolve immense poverty and social dislocation in our City within our lifetimes we need to consider creative management, economic and enforcement solutions that will speak to a diverse audience of harvesters.

We must improve our understanding of informal economy demands for local wildlife. Knowing what drives the demand – culture, poverty, or profit for example – we can better manage its extraction. We further need to clearly understand the local habitats from where biodiversity is collected to evaluate the sustainability or otherwise of these activities in local landscapes.

Armed with improved knowledge, we can devise creative management solutions that combine existing and new conservation tools. Security, farming projects, nurseries, permits and other actions will all play a role and somehow limiting local population growth – the underlying cause of all commons crises – is key. The incremental impact of this activity will otherwise continue until our biodiversity is picked, cut, collected, sold and consumed at levels beyond the point of no return.

Leif Petersen is a Director of the Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation based in Wynberg, and this research falls within an ongoing broader study of Cape Town's informal economy.

Web: www.livelihoods.org.za

Email: leif.petersen@livelihoods.org.za

A TRIBUTE TO PAT COLES.

Pat remembers Park Island, a favourite place for her since moving into the Marina in 1986. It was like a jungle in places covered in invasive plants. That was pre - 2001 when Clifford Dorse the then, new Manager, systematically cleared the Reserve areas. She used to cycle around the island, and recalls, regular encounters with the very large mole snakes. Sadly those have been killed by unthinking, ignorant people and only the small ones remain undetected these days.

She tells of the occasion one day quietly watching a striped field mouse climbing up a stalk of grass chewing the seeds off the top when she became aware of a movement very close to her. It was a large mole snake which had also been watching the busy mouse.

Pat and her Jack Russell terriers, George and Gina (Georgina so they both would come when called) always accompanied her to Park Island, where she put in hundreds of hours weeding the gardens which she had also helped develop. She was a regular Zandvlei Trust Arbour Day planter and has planted hundreds of plants around Zandvlei over the years she was involved. She was also a member of the "hacking team" and regularly helped Holdi Ford with the Muizenberg beach cleanups.

There is an article about the Leopard Toads in her house in one of the old Zandvlei Trust newsletters. One year her washing machine stopped working and when the technician came out he found a Leopard Toad stuck in the outlet pipe.

Pat is a very keen birder and has been on many Cape Bird Club excursions and outings all over Africa and southern Africa. The most recent was to Ethiopia. She is also a keen sailor and was often seen sailing or paddling her canoe in the Marina and on Zandvlei.

She moved to New Zealand in September 2011 to be closer to her children, now that her adopted children 'Georgina' are no longer. She will spend time in Palmerston North, a University town, where her son and his family live. She has a new grandson and will be getting to know him. She will also be closer to her daughter and her family who live in Christchurch in a beautiful old house with a wonderful garden. They will possibly move to Auckland out of the quake zone at some stage.

On behalf of the Zandvlei Trust we say thank you, for all you have quietly got on with and achieved. You are an inspiration to others who follow. We wish you well on your next journey.

Gavin Lawson.

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Pat Coles.

KIRMiTS: WESTERN LEOPARD TOAD BREEDING SEASON 2011

The KirMiTS are the Kirstenhof-to-Muizenberg Toad Savers – a group of volunteers ranging from 5 years to ‘much older (!)’ who make themselves available for the Western Leopard Toad (WLT) breeding season to work as citizen scientists, measuring, noting gender and recording toads and to help toads on their hazardous journeys from their homes in peoples’ gardens to the breeding sites scattered throughout our suburbs.

This year proved significantly different to previous years – something the experts at SANBI think may be related to low and erratic winter rainfall. While we all geared up and went out on patrol from the 27 August (in line with our experience from previous years), our Zandvlei toads stayed home until nearly a month later with major movement being recorded from 23 September onwards.

The KirMiTS put in approximately 250 man hours of monitoring, linking up in teams and going out to patrol our demarcated zones night after night – even when there was nothing to be seen. There are about 30 people who took turns to patrol at least one night per week with most of those doing more and stalwarts like Jean Fillis of Kirstenhof doing up to 7 nights per week. Others are our eyes and ears – notifying us of calling in local ponds so that our evening teams could be specific in their monitoring activities.



A fine specimen of a 9cm male of the endangered Western Leopard Toad

Around Zandvlei, our Marina da Gama team rescued about 80 toads and we lost only 6 (of which we are aware). On the other side of the Vlei in Lakeside, we rescued about 50 toads with approximately 5 toads lost. These figures are still to be finalized and while we are all pleased that the toads losses were quite low – for us 1 toad killed by a car, is one toad too many.

We are VERY grateful to our KirMiTS team for giving up 7 weeks – sometimes in the rain and cold – to be part of this amazing urban phenomenon. We hope that there may be more people out there keen to make sure these important endangered animals – found only in this part of the world – continue to greet us with their beautiful calls every August!

Susan Wishart



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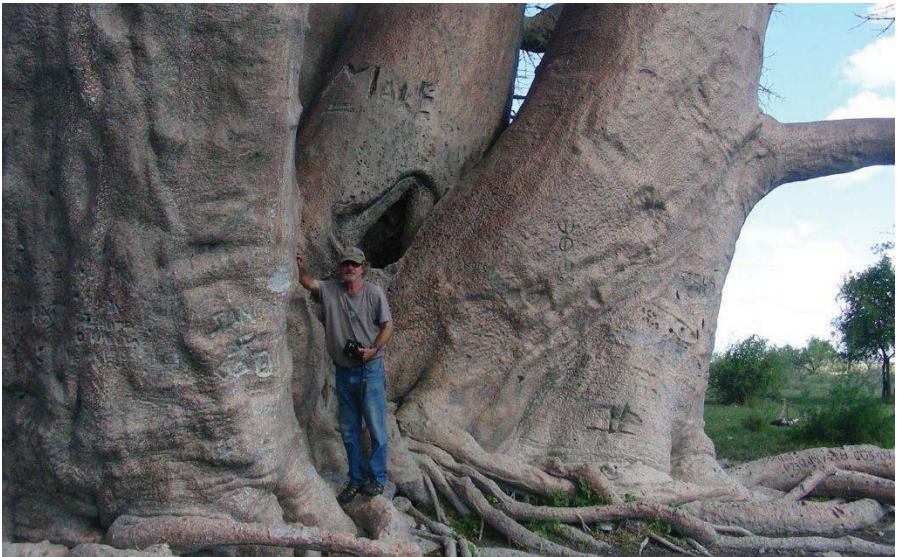
CHAPMAN'S BAOBAB

Chapman's Baobab, which has a circumference of 25m and was historically used as a navigation beacon. It may have also been used as an early post office by passing explorers, traders and travellers, many of whom left inscriptions on its trunk.

It's frequently claimed that this is the largest tree in Africa.

It is named after John Chapman (some references speak of James Chapman) who 'discovered' it in 1852 while on a hunting trip to the edge of the Kalahari Desert.

While doing the research for his book, *The Remarkable Baobab*, Thomas Pakenham, visited Chapman's baobab in 1999 and he said the following about the tree: 'Most large African baobabs rise from a single massive trunk, their branches tapering grotesquely like inverted roots. (Hence the story of the upside down tree.) But Chapman's tree is anything but grotesque. It's a masterpiece of natural sculpture. Six vast trunks, cupped like the fingers of a hand, converge at a base 85 feet in circumference. It reminded me of Rodin's famous sculpture of two hands, the bronze he called the 'Cathedral'.



Ian McCallum at the base of Chapman's Baobab on the edge of the Makadikadi Salt Pan in Botswana.

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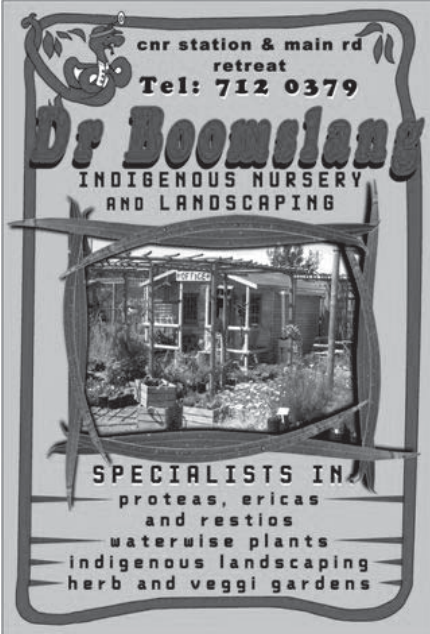
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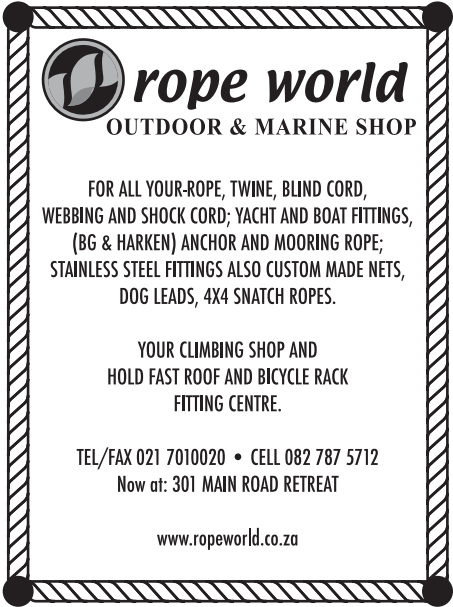


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