



# FRIENDS OF TOKAI FOREST

P O Box 442 Bergvliet 7864



WILDLIFE AND  
ENVIRONMENT  
SOCIETY OF SA

**NEWSLETTER NO 17**

**DEC 2000**

**FROM THE TOADSTOOL**

**John Green 7121341**

**Greenhse@mweb.co.za**

As we start the new Millenium, we face major planning initiatives and proposed changes to all the State properties on the mountain slopes from Steenberg to Cecilia.

- Public Works Department Pretoria this weekend advertised the Silvermine Naval Communications Base property, on the Steenberg slopes below Ou Kaapse Weg, for development tenders without first doing the mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment which is necessary to scope future possible developments.
- In mid November, the Asset Management Department of the Western Cape Province received tenders from the cream of the Cape's consulting firms to draft a future development plan for the Porter Estate and Constantia School (including the historic Tokai Manor House) and the exciting new Chrysalis Academy. They also received a tender from Rabie Developers.
- At the same time, Asset Management received eleven tenders ranging up to R10 Million for the Constantia Girls School site (the old Notre Dame Convent in Sweet Valley).
- The Cape Peninsula National Park (CPNP) is currently negotiating the terms of its takeover of the Tokai and Cecilia plantations from the privatising Department of Forestry, now known as SAFCOL, which is withdrawing from much of the Western Cape.
- The CPNP is also currently in the process of finalising its new Development Framework which will guide future "Gateway" developments to the mountain (including Tokai Forest/ Arboretum and Constantianek).

These initiatives will fundamentally change our area: whether for the better or for the worse will depend to a large degree on the amount of effort we are prepared to put into getting involved in the scoping processes for any proposed changes.

I believe that the opening words of Brian Huntley's, Roy Siegfried's and Clem Sunter's 1989 Booklet "SA Environments into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" to be some of the most important that I have ever read:



**"OUR MISSION: PEOPLE CARING FOR TOKAI FOREST"**

John Green (Chairman) 712-1341 / Lesley Skarzynski (Secretary) 712-2282 / Rudi Skibbe (Treasurer) 712-7653 /  
Gerry Higgs (Walks & PRO) 712-4176 / Les Keith (Aliens) 712-9859 / Michael Fowkes (Membership) 712-4663

FAX: 712-2448

e-mail: Greenhse@mweb.co.za

**"The present generation of mankind is the first one that can irreversibly transform our planet for the worse. It is also the last generation with the capacity to introduce the changes required to avert environmental disaster. South Africa is a microcosm of the challenges facing the world. Will we choose a path which provides a rich and sustainable heritage for our children or will we descend into a wasteland of lost opportunities?"**

On World Environment Day in June 1998 at a Friends of Tokai Forest get-together, we agreed that we should "PROMOTE A VISION FOR THE TOKAI GATEWAY" to the then newly established Cape Peninsula National Park (CPNP). We agreed that there was an urgent need for an integrated vision for the whole area controlled by State or quasi-State bodies including CPNP, SAFCOL, the Porter School and the two other Constantia Reform Schools, plus the approaches managed by Local Authorities.

We have the assurances of our national Minister of the Environment, Valli Moosa, and the Director of the SPM's Urban and Environmental Services, that the State (along with all other property owners, whether private or public) is required to follow due process with regard to a number of legislative prescriptions. Many of these are excellent new requirements which give us, as the public, many more democratic rights to guide the scoping processes than we had under the old authoritarian regime.

**Proposed changes in State or other land usage will therefore have to comply with the Land Use Planning Ordinance (LUPO); National Environment Management Act (NEMA), as well as local planning initiatives such as Constantia- Tokai Valley Local Area Growth Management and Development Plan, and the CMC initiated Peninsula Urban Edge Study (which is integrated with the baseline scoping reports for the SPM Sub- Regional Structure Plan).**

We, as a community, therefore must get involved in the public participation processes that are necessary before the any public land can be developed. We must urge and assist our new Ward Councillors to ensure that all proposed developments are compatible with our unique valley and mountainside. We have a one- time opportunity to play a significant role in *choosing a path that provides a rich and sustainable heritage for our children.*

It is essential that we ensure that we use the opportunities, which the democratic legal system now provides. Gone are the days when the State could do whatever it pleased with public land. The alternative is to *descend into a wasteland of lost opportunities.*

**ARBORETUM INFORMATION BOARDS:** Hats off to SAFCOL for mounting two new excellent information boards outside the Arboretum Tea Room. The Raptors of Tokai by the Percy FitzPatrick Institute is most descriptive and behind it, there is now the diagram of the Arboretum and each tree numbered and painstakingly checked by Mike Fowkes over the past two years. There is also a new key which is much easier to read.

#### **CORE FLORA CONSERVATION AREA IN LOWER FOREST TAKES SHAPE**

Thanks again to SAFCOL and 15 volunteers from the Chrysalis Academy, we have been able to make a major dent in removing burnt out pines from the "Diastella Patch". Lesley Skarzynski has made some wonderful new flora posters using Sibyl Morris's great photographs.

Spring definitely brings out the best in everyone and everything. The flowers put on fresh new frocks as they unfold from dormancy and the sky takes on a deeper hue. September saw us in the lower forest with Sibyl Morris and her "Fabulous Fynbos" walk. Getting to know the most common plants is the basis of this walk with the hope that it provides one with a foundation for more detailed study. This in itself is a science that is both fascinating and rewarding. With well over 2 500 species the fynbos biome is incredibly diverse. There are a couple of books on the market, but the most comprehensive and most useful one is Mary Maytham-Kidd's *South African Wildflower Guide 3 : Cape Peninsula* (Botanical Society of SA.1983)

Here are some scientific terms you may wish to put into practice:

<b>Arboreal</b>	- living in trees
<b>Anther</b>	- pollen-bearing part of a flower
<b>Axil</b>	- upper joint between a leaf and a stem
<b>Bract</b>	- leaf-like structure from which a flower arises
<b>Compound</b>	- a leaf consisting of several leaflets
<b>Deciduous</b>	- a plant which sheds its leaves at the end of the growing season
<b>Epiphyte</b>	- an organism that grows on another but is not parasitic
<b>Indigenous</b>	- an organism occurring naturally in an area
<b>Perennial</b>	- a plant which lives for at least three years
<b>Petiole</b>	- leaf stalk
<b>Pinna</b>	- divided part of a leaflet
<b>Terminal</b>	- at the end of a stem
<b>Trifoliate</b>	- a leaf which is divided into three leaflets
<b>Ventral</b>	- undersurface
<b>Whorl</b>	- the arrangement of three or more leaves or flowers at the same point on a stem to form an encircling ring.

Mark Hawthorne's perceptive knowledge of everything that goes on around him made for an interesting morning down at Rondevlei in October. We saw Little Grebes (Debachicks). Interestingly, the young ride on their parent's back.



The aggressive Redknobbed Coot. African Spoonbills with pink faces and legs. We learnt the difference between a Darter and a Cormorant. Kelp Gulls and Hartlaub's Gulls. We saw Pelicans. Although we did not see the hippos we saw evidence of them being there. They are, of course, nocturnal. We ate strange berries from bushes, and are still here to tell the tale.

November was a disappointment. The Pantomime "Ghost of the Manor House" could not be held due to the sudden chained up situation of the Manor House. As a historical monument (built in 1795 by the famous and gifted architect Thibault) one hopes that this will be made available to the people as all national monuments are. The place is in a diabolical state and in urgent need of repair. Most of the furniture has been stolen or given away. Anyway, the tale was told and we walked the Oak Leaf Trail in the Arboretum. Always peaceful and interesting no matter how many times one does it. We were lucky to see one of the Buzzards (Forest?) flying low around and above us with a heavy catch in his talons. Someone from the Fitzpatrick Institute told me they had almost given up on identifying Buzzards. They are so similar, and difficult to identify at the best of times.



Dec. 17<sup>th</sup>, Carols by Candlelight 6.30 p.m. Listen for the strain of the lone Bagpiper. A String Quartet will play whilst you picnic. Local Valley wines to sample and Candles for sale. Not to be missed.



January 28<sup>th</sup> we will see you joining us to Howl at the Moon. We will learn a little about frogs. Bring hot coffee and a rubber mat to sit on. Also night binoculars. (Ordinary will do.) As well as a torch. 7.30 p.m. Dennendal West Avenue.

Get walkin'.

**MEMBERSHIP**

with **MIKE FOWKES**

Tel: 712.4663



Name:.....
Joined:.....
Last paid:.....
Renew?..... Close?.....

Send:	P.O. Box 442/Bergvliet 7864
Advise:	See bottom of Page 1.

Yes, this is what will happen if we can't keep our membership up. Many have not renewed. Have you forgotten? Or are you foregoing us? This in itself is sad. Printing this newsletter costs us. Posting it costs us. Without membership fees, we are unable to cover this output. Over and above, without **YOU**, we do not have the credibility to operate the worthwhile organization that we have become. The Valley is in dire straits and it needs all the support and backup it can get. **We rely on you.** Please help us, and ultimately yourselves and your future generation. Please pay your membership fees every year. It is a small amount and it gives you a newsletter every third month and enables you to join all our activities free of charge. We have adopted a new method of reminder. We trust you don't take exception. At the top of this newsletter will be a sticker with your details. If you no longer want to be a member, please let us know by telephoning, faxing, or e-mailing any one of us on the committee.

**END OF YEAR "SNIPPETS"**

**FOXES** are breeding on our mountain chain: Dogs on leads please if prone to hunting will help stabilize the situation. These little known, diminutive canids are unique in the dog family for their insectivorous feeding habits. Do take care.

**FROGS.** Do you have in the garden? If you do it is a good sign that your immediate environment is pollution free. Keep it that way by using natural herbicides and fertilizers. A frog in a pond brings a natural pleasure of sound. Like a dove on a branch or a field of flowers. It is sadly a joy we may soon all lose, for frogs are declining world-wide. A major factor is loss of habitat. Gardens have a significant part to play in the continued survival of frogs so your pond can be a success story of backyard conservation. Save a child's heritage right! Do what is right.

**FISH EAGLES.** Very active at this time of year. The thermals are just right. Listen for the sound on a whispy-cloud-like day. Pure Africa.

**RONDEVLEI.** Do pay it a visit. All the migrating summer birds have arrived.

**Problem** with your telephone lines lately? The porcupines have been busy digging them up and eating them. Are they lacking something in their diet? Or has their natural food supply depleted? And why?

**OAK LEAF TRAIL.** Ask for our new pamphlets at the Tea Room in the Arboretum. A great learning experience and fun for the kids too.

