

# FRIENDS OF TOKAI FOREST

P O Box 442 Bergvliet 7864

NEWSLETTER NO 20

AUGUST 2001

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## FROM THE TOADSTOOL

**John Green** Tel:7121341

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### • LIVING ON THE 'URBAN EDGE'

The last time I saw Tokai's Councillor Wally Watson, who passed away in June, he gave me his copy of the 'Peninsula Urban Edge Study'. The objective is to define a 20 year outer extent of urban development along the edge of the Peninsula mountain chain and to formulate guidelines for the management of land use on both sides of this urban edge line. The report goes before the full Council for approval at the end of August.

We've talked about the privilege of living 'on the Edge' with porcupines rooting out our garden bulbs; the rare glimpse of a Cape Silver Fox crossing Zwaanswyk Rd; and the sadness of finding a Cape Otter run over on the Blue Route. In June, Bob and Pat Lee, were walking mid morning in the upper plantation near the Forester's House when they came across a beautiful Caracal (Rooikat), meandering across the plantation track. A water mongoose was run over in Orpen Rd early on Sunday morning.

Those living in the 'Urban Transition Zone (UTZ)', have recently experienced what living on the edge really entails. Tokai's peaceful baboon troop has moved down from the mountain fastness to forage at the 'Urban Edge'. Initially, they were busy around the Chrysalis Academy. Mark Wiley relates what a unique experience it has been for the recruits from the townships to live with nature at such close quarters but in such a non-threatening relationship.....In early July, for the first time in the 30 years we've lived here, 4 baboons came into the gardens on the Steenberg side of lower Zwaanswyk Rd, to forage guavas and nasturtium seeds. Two weeks ago we left a box of fruit and vegetables in the back of our Conquest with the boot open, while we slowly unpacked. Surprise, surprise, a large lonely male thought that he'd died and woken up in heaven:-

8 bananas neatly peeled; 6 large Granny Smith's with the cores deposited on the floor; a lettuce, and two bunches of broccoli stalks (discarded the florets). He obviously tasted and discarded the carrots and didn't bother to even try the green Avos or potatoes. Must have also sat in the front passenger seat but found the Constantiaberg Bulletin too difficult to read. Deposited a calling card on the house roof before leaving. **Moral: don't make food freely available, otherwise our well behaved and natural Tokai baboons will take the easier option.**

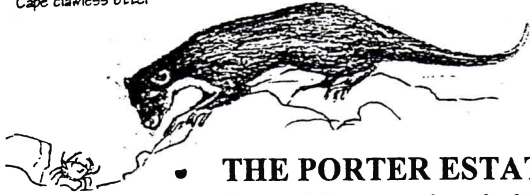
The baboons are now regular visitors to the Lower Plantation (Dog Forest), Dennendal West and the Forest Glade fringe. Yvonne Wood was fascinated watching four big fellows eating wild plum (*Harpephyllum caffrum*) seeds from the avenue but Gerry Higgs and neighbours were soon plagued with baboons all over and inside their houses. We have therefore spearheaded a short term Baboon Monitoring Task force funded, by the community, to attempt to limit their crossing the "Urban Edge" line. (See article below).

Chairman: John Green 712 1341

Secretary: Lesley Skarzynski: 712 2282/ Treasurer: Rudi Skibbe 712 9859/ Aliens: Bill vd Poll 712 8836



WILDLIFE AND  
ENVIRONMENT  
SOCIETY OF SA



TOKAI MANOR HOUSE

## • THE PORTER ESTATE DRAFT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

At the public meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> April, we were asked to serve on the 'Constantia' Valley Residents' committee to represent all the Residents' Associations regarding the consultant's proposals for developing the Porter Estate. The Committee's comments, both in principle and on a precinct by precinct basis. Our response on the broad issues can be summarised as follows:

1. **Public Input and Endorsement:** Little cognisance has been taken of public input as it pertains to the area east of Spaanschemat and Orpen Roads.
2. **Integrated Planning:** The report is diametrically opposed to the principle of Historic Constantia: Special Area Study in that it does not deal with the Porter Estate as an integral part of the Valley. The area has been dealt with as a separate entity then further sub-divided into land parcels that bear no relation to each other.
3. **Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA):** An SEA should have been completed before a development framework was produced. You provide a range of options, and likely impacts - both social and environmental - before a development framework was produced.
4. **Urban Edge:** The entire Porter Estate falls outside of the Urban Edge. In the report the consultants have recommended commercial zoning on three parcels and residential developments on two, including subdivision down to 750 square metres.
5. **Adherence to existing approved planning policies, plans and zoning:** These have had little recognition by the consultants.
6. **Traffic Impact Assessment:** At this stage, we would have expected that what is and what isn't feasible would have been tested against public opinion and against traffic generation and its likely impact. There is not even a preliminary traffic statement.
7. **Retention of Spaanschemat and Orpen Roads as Scenic Drive**
8. **Infrastructure and Service Delivery:** the framework proposes to densify areas where underground services will have to be supplied at vast cost and connected to already overloaded systems, in contradiction of the principles of the Urban Edge.
9. **Inconsistencies in Dealing with Various Leases**
10. **Densification:** the proposed framework is entirely inappropriate and there is little evidence of the important principle that the property, with its rich cultural history, is an important asset to the Valley, the Western Cape and the nation as a whole.
11. **Constantia School for Boys:** We object to the Constantia School for Boys being split into 3 precincts, and believe that the consultants need to look for a use for the whole site, for example a retirement complex or institutions that want playing fields.
12. **Rezoning the entire site to "Subdivisional Area":** This could provide a loophole for the developers to by-pass further public participation process after the rezoning of the first precinct and we therefore strongly object.
13. **Preferred Legal status of Porter Estate:** We ask that the Draft Proposals be amended with a recommendation that the entire estate be declared as a Category One 'Special Place' per the recently promulgated National Heritage Resources Act.

In our Friends of Tokai Forest submission we have supported the Residents' Committee submission. We have supplemented this with a call to formulate an overarching vision for all the State lands on the Constantiaberg mountainside prior to detailed development frameworks for any one area, such as the Porter Estate. We have re-iterated the importance of doing impact assessments prior to making development planning decisions and the critical issue of the consultants themselves being 'independent'.

## WORLD HERITAGE SITE

The revised nomination now includes not only the Cape Peninsula but also the entire Cape Floristic Region



We have pointed out fundamental misrepresentations about the purpose of the Urban Edge in the consultant's report. Attention is drawn to the baboon movements through Porter to the lowland feeding grounds and the complications of human interface with wildlife "living on the edge". We have noted the very limited public access to the mid-Peninsula mountain chain and asked for this to be addressed. The next opportunity for public participation will be on the 17<sup>th</sup> September when the consultants should be presenting the "Final Development Framework".

**FRIENDS OF TOKAI FOREST  
GETOGETHER & AGM**

**SATURDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2001  
3pm to 5pm**

**"The Sanctuary"  
Wildlife & Environment Society  
Off Pollsmoor Rd  
Kirstenhof**

**GUEST SPEAKER  
Prof JOEY COETZEE  
"GONDWANA & THE  
ORIGINS OF FYNBOS"**

Joey gave us a most interesting talk on the last occasion when SAFCOL permitted us to use the Arboretum Information Centre. We have had had many requests asking for her to talk to us again. She has evolved over the past 40 years from botany to the study of fossil pollens. She will chat about how, with the breakup of Gondwana, Proteas and other plants have dispersed from West Africa over the past 95 million years; how our Cape forests were later replaced by fynbos; how the Karoo ended up in Antarctica and other fascinating facts about the development of the rich bio-diversity of the Peninsula.

**ALL WELCOME: JOIN US IN A GLASS OF WINE AFTERWARDS**



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

## FROM THE TREE TRUNK

Mike Fowkes 7124663



### Tagging Trees in the Tokai Arboretum

In the March 2000 Newsletter it was reported that a number of white plastic tags used to mark the trees during the recent update of the Arboretum Plan were being lost, mainly due to the weather, baboons and squirrels. They were intended only as a temporary means of identification, to be replaced by a more durable method when found. It is surprising that so many of these tags have survived.

It has been decided to use a similar method to the one used at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens to mark their trees. This consists of an aluminium tag, with the consecutive number etched in, secured by a spring- screw bolt to the tree. This method has the approval, but not funding, of both SAFCOL and CPNP. The estimated cost of marking each tree is approximately R3 which will need to be financed by Friends of Tokai. We have decided to put in R1000 from funds accumulated from projects such as Carols in the Arboretum and the Mushroom Day. This will allow us to initially tag about 300 trees along the Oakleaf Trail. We will also probably dedicate funds donated at this year's Carols, to be held in the Arboretum on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> December, to the tagging project. Any donations to this cause will be most welcome.

In conjunction with this project, a list consisting of the consecutive number and scientific name and common name/ origin of each tree is being made up. This will probably be made available in pamphlet form to complement the permanent tree survey data mounted behind the raptor information board at the entrance to the Arboretum.

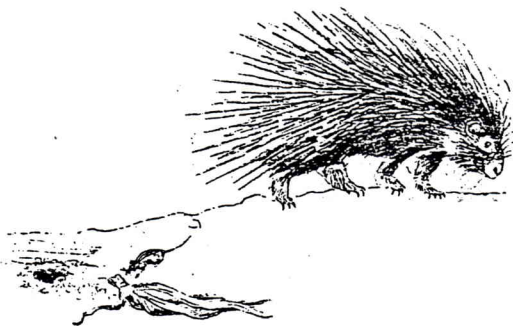
## FROM THE FOREST FLOOR

Graham Rodgers 712 7807

### More about our local arboreta:

In the previous newsletter there was some information about the Arderne Garden and the Shakespeare connection. Well it turns out that there was a very close connection: the Bard's mother name was Arden and the family came from Tarporley, a small village between Chester and Crewe. This is all recorded in an excellent little book by Arderne Tredgold Mr RH Arderne called his Claremont estate "Tarporley". Unfortunately the estate had to sold off bit by bit to keep the Arderne Garden in shape until it was eventually taken over by the Cape Town Corporation in 1926. Some of the history lives on in names of part of the old estate such as Firs Ave, Harfield Cottage, and The Hill.

To quote from "The Ardernes and their Garden": "Along Herchel School's boundary are cork oaks, Atlantic cedars, a liquid amber, swamp cypress, yews, a copper beech, and, spreading its mighty crown above them all, the gigantic Aleppo (Jerusalem) pine. The Rimu, weeping pine from New Zealand still hangs its fine needles in the centre of the ponds, that lie in a bowl of tree ferns and bamboos and are shaded by willows, mighty camphors with new leaves golden against the sky, and the old holly. There is younger growth, too, in the garden, with promise for the future, a cedar of Libanon by the top path and a fairylike silver birch. This grows near the ponds. Across the path from the birch is a lime tree and more silver birches now growing along the Herchel boundary."





- **Workparties on 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of every month**

This month we had our best work party ever. Ten people got together in the Core Cape Flats Flora Conservation Area in the Lower Plantation to continue to remove the burnt pines and allow the fynbos to regenerate after over 100 years and four generations of pine plantation. Chris Walker from Friends of Silvermine joined us with a chain saw and despite aching backs we soon had huge piles of logs and twigs stacked neatly to liberate the new growth underneath. Come and join in at 8h30 for two hours On the 15<sup>th</sup> September in the "Diastella Patch": you never know what you may come across: a new flower; a mouse, mole snake, scorpion or even a nightjar. Could the reward for a good early morning sweat have been sitting in front of TV afterwards and watching the Springboks giving the Wallabies a hard time? Got to give the Aussie invaders a run for their money.

- **Immaculata High School**

Every Thursday in term time, Morgan Merrington brings her Interact group of girls out from Witteboom for an hour from 3 to 4pm to work in the Lower Plantation. It is thanks to them that we can again experience the lovely *Chasmanthe (suurkanol)*, now coming into flower on the bend of the river, which was being overgrown by silver poplars. They have also spent the cooler months getting thoroughly covered with soot from the burnt pines while the move logs to create neat path edges around the Fynbos patch. Again you are encouraged to join them for an *uplifting experience*.

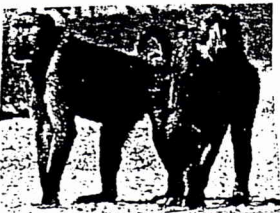
- **Sincere Thanks to SAFCOL**

During the heavy rains of last week, two SAFCOL chainsaw operators did a magnificent job of cutting up hundreds of burnt out pine trees in the Flora Conservation area. You may remember that, after the fire, we asked SAFCOL not to clear the burnt timber and replant, but rather to leave the ground undisturbed as we monitored if and how the fynbos seed would regenerate. The regeneration is very encouraging and we look forward to a very special show in the Lower Plantations after the good winter rains. Thanks also to those hard working foresters who then moved hundreds of heavy logs out of the fynbos area to the perimeter.

Good wishes to Gareth Tudor- Jones and his family as they sadly depart the Cape to start a new life in Canada. Gareth we really appreciate all the care that you have put into managing the Tokai plantations, especially after last year's devastating fire, and to the guidance that you have given us on our walks at Lourensford. Thank you also for keeping us informed about your work plans: this has enabled us to allay public fears when they see trees being felled in "their forest" and on the upper slopes

#### **BABOON PROBLEM MANAGEMENT**

At our meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> August at the Range, Dean Ferreira (Cape Town Nature Conservation) gave a brief overview of the problem. He explained that the Tokai troop is the largest on the Peninsula, some 100 members. July- September, before new Spring growth, are traditionally lean months for foraging on the mountain. He believes that the problem is currently mainly seasonal in Tokai and, that by the end of September, they should start moving back.



Dean explained what methods have been tried to contain the longstanding problem in the Scarborough area. The following does not work: shooting with salt; painting them white; firing a gas canon; introducing taste aversion; and feeding stations in the mountain.

What does work: installing an electric fence around your property; employing baboon monitors to keep baboons away from built areas; and reducing the availability of food around houses. Due to possible genetic differences, relocation is not an option.

The meeting agreed to our proposal that we raise R10,000 to fund 4 baboon monitors for a month, to be trained by Dean. Dean will join Mark Wiley, CEO Chrysalis Academy, Gavin Bell, Section Ranger CPNP, and ourselves in a Working Group.

#### WALKS WITH GERRY

Gerry Higgs 7124176.



- **Frog Atlas-ing 26<sup>th</sup> August 2001; be a "Frogger"**

This is an extension to our introductory walk a few months ago. Join us and a member of the UCT Avian Demography Department. You will be supplied with a starter kit to begin recording and mapping the sad demise of our frog population. This is a field trip. Dress warmly and bring your coffee and woolly hat: optional your tape recorder. 7.30pm Dennendal West Avenue.

- **Fynbos with Sibyl Morris 16<sup>th</sup> September 2001**

"The Core Cape Flats Flora Conservation Area" in the Lower Forest is starting to revert to the rare fynbos that covered the Valley from Constantia to Pollsmoor. Between 1915 and 1919, Dr Purcell of Bergvliet Farm recorded well over 500 species of fynbos, 27% of the Peninsula's known species in some 2% of its area. Sibyl has recorded and photographed about 180 species in the Lower Forest. We have had much more normal Cape winter at last. The "Diastella Patch" is regenerating wonderfully. This promises to be a very special walk this year. Bring sketch and note pads, binocs and camera and join Sibyl at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gate on Dennendal West at 2.30pm. By then our Baboon Monitoring Team should have ensured that you aren't accompanied by Gerry's Simian neighbours!

#### CAROLS IN THE ARBORETUM

Molly Vincent 7127764

Molly Vincent has bravely agreed to step into the breach left by Heather Jones who convened Carols last year. On **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> December** the children will again march with bagpipes from the renovated Tokai Manor House to the Arboretum to sing Carols together while picnicking on rugs under the stately canopy.

As numbers increased to some 900 last year (400 cars), and as we want to retain the low-key family atmosphere, we may have to forego having a string quartet this year. The cost of providing a suitable sound system, which can be heard by everyone under the trees, is beyond our humble Friends financial capacity.

Donations will be put towards retagging the individual trees in the Arboretum and maintaining the Oak Leaf Trail which has been badly damaged by fallen trees

Molly wants to get cracking with the organisation as early as possible. We have a well tried and tested formula, and many wonderful participators on the day. Molly would really appreciate having some helpers to pull everything together before hand. Please give her a call: you'll find it really worthwhile.

## CAROLS by CANDLELIGHT

