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# FRIENDS OF TOKAI FOREST

PO Box 442 Bergvliet 7864



**WESSA**  
*People caring for the Earth*

NEWSLETTER 28

SEPTEMBER 2003

<i>FROM THE TOADSTOOL</i>	<i>JOHN GREEN (712 1341)</i> <i>'greenhse@mweb.co.za'</i>
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We understand that negotiations are continuing in Pretoria between the Departments of Environment Affairs and Water Affairs & Forestry about the **transfer of the Tokai and Cecilia from SAFCOL/ MTO into the Cape Peninsula National Park**. One of the main sticking points appears to be the period over which SAFCOL/ MTO will retain commercial forestry rights.

There is nothing new to report on the **Porter Estate and Silvermine proposed developments**. Since the enforced resignation after the Roodefontein legal action, of the former Provincial Minister of Environment and Development Planning, David /Malatsi, there has been a serious questioning of the current application of the Environmental Impact Assessment process which is an integral part of the development planning process.

Many users of the Lower Forest were very **concerned about the building of a wall over the 'Farm Bridge' and walling off a portion of the riverbank in SAFCOL's land**. We voiced our concern to SAFCOL's management and subsequently did a site visit with them and the owner. This, plus pressure from the SPA local authorities, resulted in the removal of the wall over the bridge and the erection of a 'temporary' fence while proper environmental studies and planning processes are followed. Of even greater concern, is the major wall which has illegally been built over the wetland on the Sweet Valley northern boundary. Liz Brunette, chairperson of the Constantia Hills Resident's Association, is following this closely.

The most exciting activity of Friends of Tokai Forest over the past few months has undoubtedly been our project funded by the **Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)**. Under the leadership of Bill van der Poll, Lesley Skarzynsky, James Forsyth and I have worked with Dr Patricia Rebello, Sibyl Morris and SAFCOL/ MTO management to survey all the compartments in the Lower Forest to assess the potential for highly endangered Acid Sandveld fynbos to regenerate in this Core Cape Flats Flora Conservation site. Initial indications are that the existing conservation area (the Diastella patch allowed to regenerate after the 1998 fire), could be expanded from about the existing 1 ha to 3 to 4 hectares over the next year or so. This would create a corridor from the stream banks, which we initially stabilized with SAFCOL in 1997, to the Sweet Valley wetland. This is a high priority regeneration area and the plan will additionally open up lovely views across to Devil's Peak as well as giving us the opportunity to clean out the aliens from the wetland.

**The Sweet Valley Wetland** probably has a high biodiversity potential to complement the rare Acid Sandveld. The birdlife appears to be prolific: common waxbills, warblers and paradise flycatchers.

Kate Henderson, a frog specialist who has recently joined the WESSA regional committee, is very interested in doing a frog survey here as the Cape Flats wetlands near the mountain have largely been destroyed. A wetlands nursery specialist from Kommetjie has offered to regenerate plants from wetland for replanting after alien clearance and Dalton Gibbs from Rondevlei and Wendy Hitchcock are keen to help us too. Over and over again, we have stated that our opportunities are only constrained by lack of volunteers willing to get involved to make it happen. We really have a whole host of opportunities for Friends to pick up and run with now

Four of us went off to the **Fynbos Forum** in Mossel Bay in early August to network, learn and present a most informative poster on the Tokai CEPF project. This was developed by Lesley and displays many of the wonderful photos of fynbos taken by Sibyl. We were delighted when Lesley was awarded runner up from more than 30 other posters. The Forum was attended by 250 delegates and the 3 days were an excellent mix of research and application papers and a field outing to promote fynbos conservation throughout the Cape from the West Coast to Port Elizabeth. We were privileged to be part of the crowd of passionate people from many different organizations working together to conserve our incredible heritage for future generations.

**Other opportunities for Friends to get involved** are alien clearing in the Lower Forest and Arboretum; taking school groups on education walks and maintenance on the Oakleaf Trail; maintenance of the Prinskasteel River Walk; planting indigenous seedlings from the CPNP forest regeneration project at Newlands; developing new displays for the old information center (now tearoom) at Lister's Place; walks, talks, outings etc. Your Forest Needs You!

Although the residents living on the urban edge hardly ever see them any more, **the Baboons of Tokai Forest** are alive and well. This is thanks to the very successful management plan of having sufficient monitors staying with the main troop and discouraging them from moving over the plantation boundaries into urban areas. Funded by concerned residents, the City and the National Park, previously unemployed graduates (managed by staff) from the Chrysalis Academy are out in rain, gale and sunshine monitoring the movements of some 130 baboons. The troop has split into 2, with a group of particularly large baboons making their territory above level 3, while the main troop operates mainly below level 1 from the SAFCOL offices, Porter Estate and above the vineyards. Whereas this troop appeared to comprise some 70 baboons in June, recent reports indicate that it now may be as large as 130. I am very involved with the Cape Peninsula Baboon Management Team and am trying to get a PhD or Nature Conservation student to update the last proper baboon census which was done in 1999.

We have traditionally held our Friends of Tokai Forest AGM during Arbor Week at the beginning of September. This year we want to **combine the AGM with a public participation meeting to develop a long term plan for the Lower Forest**. This plan would attempt to create harmony between potentially conflicting uses including recreation, fynbos restoration and conservation and commercial forestry. We have already seen the emotive nature of the polarization between pine huggers and pine haters. We believe that there is a middle path where commercial pines can live together with fynbos, dogs and horses on the lower slopes. We want to get all parties together with experts and data to inform the process.

Unfortunately due to time pressures including the Fynbos Forum, we have not yet finalized a time or venue for the AGM and are working towards an evening in late October or early November when we can get together with fynbos and forest experts; lovers and users of the forest; and members of the various authorities who have an interest in the plantations.

**FROM THE WORKERS****BILL VAN DER POLL (712 8836)**

"bill.di @eject .co.za"

**Aliens & Habitat**

With the arrival of the winter rains the forest bulbs have sprouted but so also has the alien vegetation made its appearance.

We have a small group of dedicated volunteers meeting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month who have managed to keep the Rooikrantz, Long leaved wattle, Black wattle, Port Jackson & Spanish Broom at bay from the Diastella site but we would appreciate a few more hands to assist for an hour or two once a month.

If you are able to assist would you phone or e-mail me at the above address?

I wish to say a big thank you to all of you who have been supporting our recycling efforts. We have an igloo for waste paper & one for glass situated at Steenberg Village at the back of Pick n Pay. With the support of members and the restaurants in the area we are receiving about 2 tons of glass a month which not only reduces the landfill problem but also helps towards the costs of baboon management. Mondi waste paper have offered a second igloo if we can increase the volume of paper & magazines.

**FROM THE FORESTER****CHRIS BOTES****Ash Trees & Ladybirds in the Lower Tokai Forest**

When one walk in the Lower Tokai Forest, it is noticeable that, apart of Pine and Eucalyptus trees, there are also other isolated trees of various other species, e.g. Ekebergia, Harpephyllum, Virgilia, Calodendrum, Fraxinus, etc. It might look reasonably obvious that these species were planted for ornamental purposes, or purely to add to the variety of species already present in the Tokai Forest, but there might just as well be other reasons why earlier foresters decided to opt for them. One probable reason why Fraxinus trees were planted in Tokai Forest, is described in the next paragraph. .

During the 1980's the Department of Forestry planted small plots of the American Ash (*Fraxinus americana*) in its pine plantations in Mpumalanga and probably also in other regions. It was believed that these Ash trees are the ideal host for the ladybirds, from where they would go out and predate on the pests in the neighboring pine trees.

These plots of Ash trees were about 0.2 ha in size. It was positioned strategically near areas known to be plagued by various pine aphids like the Black Pine Aphid, the Pine Woolly Aphid, the Pine Needle Aphid and others.

Whether the Ash trees in the Lower Forest of Tokai were also planted for the same reason, is not known.

**MORE ABOUT THE LADYBIRD:** Ladybird beetles and their larvae are a bonus to any garden as they predate on aphids on a wide variety of crops. They belong to the family COCCINELIDAE, which means "little sphere"

Their appetite is quite remarkable - an adult female may consume up to 75 aphids a day and up to 350 during her life span. In many countries certain species of ladybirds are reared commercially to control mites, scales, bugs and aphids in greenhouses or for seasonal inoculation in outdoor crops. In the mid-1980's the Asian Ladybird, *Hormonia axyridis*, was intentionally introduced into the U.S.A. from Japan to control aphids in pecan orchards. Nowadays this beetle is spreading up along the East coast of N. America and pecan farmers are reaping the benefits of this natural enemy of the Pecan Aphid.

They are the well known small rounded beetles with colors varying from shiny yellow and red to black and are often bi-colored or spotted. World wide there are about 4000 species and in South Africa about 250 species.

The female often lays her eggs on plants that are heavily infested with aphids. After 5 to 10 days the larvae emerge from the eggs and start sucking the juice of the aphids.

The red and orange or black coloration is a means of protection for the beetle, because birds learned that these colors taste bad. Also the bad smelling odor produced from the beetles' legs is a form of protection for them.

Despite the small size of the mouth parts of the beetle, it can produce a distinctly felt nip on one's finger, but apart of that it is quite harmless to humans.

During our cold and wet winter months in the Cape ladybirds flock together in lofts, barns, attics and other structures where it is reasonably dark, dry and sheltered from the elements. They will not reproduce indoors; they will do no harm at all, although their droppings and the smell may be slightly objectionable. Your garden plants will benefit with the onset of Spring, when they start breeding and need many mites, scales, bugs and aphids to feed on.

Although by far most ladybirds are beneficial predators, a few species are plant feeders which feed on cultivated crops such as potatoes, pumpkins, turnips, radishes, beans and spinach. One of them, the Mexican bean beetle, is a serious pest in bean crops in North America.

**FROM THE WALKER**

**GERRY HIGGS (712 4176 or 0845500867)**

A disturbing time with many problems unfortunately disrupted the walks programme this year. It was decided, till year-end, to meet 8.30 a.m. every Sunday outside Gerry's house, Cnr. Dennendal West & Stuart Close, Drumblair. Decision of walk to and where and how long will take place on the morning - weather and group dependent. It is best to phone beforehand to confirm. New brochure in the making for the new year with some exciting outings. Happy walking. Weathers great. Enjoy. And see ya all soon.

**MEMBERSHIP**

**MIKE FOWKES (712 4663)**

There have been several requests to make subscription payments, etc, directly to F.O.T.FOREST bank account via electronic banking. Anyone wishing to take advantage of this method may do so to the following account:

**BANK: NEDBANK BANK CODE: 100 - 909 ACCOUNT NO.: 1009 603280**

It is requested that the transfer be designated e.g. SUBS +/-or DONATION, +/-or BABOONS to allow us to identify the deposit.

**THE FOTF AGM & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING**

The FOTF AGM & Public Participation Meeting is to be held at The Range on Tuesday 21 October at 7.30 p.m. All interested parties are urged to attend.