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# Friends of Tokai Forest

News letter No. 3. November 1996

P O Box 442 Bergvliet 7864



## FROM YOUR COMMITTEE:

Six months have elapsed since we held our inaugural meeting on that stormy June afternoon. Looking back, we have come quite a long way. The admin. things like forming a committee, agreeing a constitution, opening bank accounts and post boxes are behind us. We have also made progress in researching our forest and focussing on some of the priorities. Bridges have been built and the river banks stabilised.

The members of the committee do need help and would be only too delighted to show you what we think could be done and to hear from you what you believe we should be doing. Please give one of us a call; this is much better than organising and publicizing a work party at a time that doesn't suit you and then being very disappointed when only a handful pitch up. - JOHN GREEN.

### DATES TO DIARISE

Bus Ride to Contour path above Tokai Forest and interesting walk down through the plantation accompanied by the manager.

**Sunday 24 November 1996**

Please meet in the Arboretum Parking Area  
at 9.30a.m.

Bring water bottle and light snack.

WALK through PADDOCK Arboretum and environs.

**Sunday 26 January 1997**

Please meet in the Arboretum Parking Area  
at 9.30a.m.

Bring water bottle and light snack.

FRIENDS PROJECTS: Natural Habitat & Species: Sibyl Morris 72.4150  
Alien Invaders: Bob Lee 72.7522. Walks: Gerry Higgs 72.4176  
Arboretum: Judy McKune 75.2107. Education: J.Green 72.1341

FROM THE ARCHIVES: *The first plantings at Tokai were made in 1694, when 4,379 oaks were established here.*



## THE TOKAI ARBORETUM:

*Established in 1885, the arboretum was a testing ground to assess the suitability of various trees for commercial growing. Forty-three species were established within the forest reserve; some of the very first trees planted are among those still standing in the arboretum. Our Main and Paddock Arboreta are unique in being among the oldest extant collection of trees in South Africa, and are dendrologically and aesthetically of particular interest and merit. Their educational value is tremendous.*

*Having now fulfilled its original purpose it has become necessary to justify maintaining the Tokai arboretum in its present form; this is where our Friends Group can become crucial.*

*The sub-committee for this project held an all day meeting on October 17 with SAFCOL management and some invited experts to decide on a future vision for this valuable resource. It was decided that our mission should be to maintain the status of the Arboretum as a National Monument and to provide an educational and recreational resource by preserving, growing and displaying forest trees.*

*A number of eminently qualified people have expressed interest and offered their expertise and ideas – we still need offers of brawn though; for example ...*

1) *The Paddock Arboretum has been cleared of undergrowth and is now included in the picnic area which gives visitors the pleasure of sitting under enormous Yellow-woods, etc. We need help from our members in collecting and potting young tree seedlings from this area before the picnickers arrive.*

2) *A survey of the trees in the main arboretum has begun. Any member who feels able to join the survey team and be allotted a section of the arboretum is asked to contact a committee member.*

*- LESLEY SKARZYNSKA*



# ALIEN INVADERS:



On 9 October ten eager volunteers from a Leadership Initiative Organisation R.A.L.I. under the watchful eye of John Green successfully attacked the alien invaders in a river-course to the south of Elephants Eye path immediately above the arboretum. The R.A.L.I. group operates from April to October each year and we intend to set up regular alien hacks with them during this period.

Sadly, of the membership forms received to date, none indicates an interest in alien vegetation control. In an attempt to motivate our members, a second event in the form of a "FOREST SPRING CLEAN" took place in the lower forest on 9 November. Although the wintry weather conditions no doubt deterred many willing helpers, a significant impact was made with the replanting of the stabilised river bank area using principally *Carpobrotus edulis* (sour fig) and other indigenous species. A special thank you to those who braved the weather and provided valuable assistance with the replanting. \*

As our activities become more evident we are confident that sufficient interest will be generated to establish regular monthly events.

- BOB LEE.

## FOREST WALK:



PRINSEKASTEEL RIVERINE TO THE WATERFALL - SUN.27.OCTOBER

We started the walk at 9.30, meeting outside the Arboretum, What was anticipated by some as a leisurely ramble, turned out to be tougher than thought. What with the boulder hopping up the river, a fairly steep climb to just below Elephant's Eye and then a fast trot downhill as the allotted time was now running out, left us feeling exhilarated at the end of it all and the fact that some of us achieved what we thought we would not see the end of, produced a teenage-type "Y-E-S" with Americanized clenched fist arm pulls. It was great fun with goodwill and niceties. Some friendships were made and telephone numbers exchanged. It was a wonderful way to spend a couple of hours.

I was just sorry that so few MEMBERS were with us. But nonetheless, 15-17 nonmembers is very encouraging.

OUR NEXT TWO PROJECTED WALKS will include a BUS RIDE to the contour path and a zig zag stroll down accompanied by the plantation manager.

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② And a very beautiful unusual walk, mostly ON THE LEVEL!

There is a charge for the walks R2.00 for members-R5.00 for others.

See you all on the 24.Nov. 1996 and 26.Jan.1997. - GERRY HIGGS.

# SEEN IN THE FOREST:



Here is a list of some of the more interesting plants seen in the lower forest over the last two months.

*Lachenalia reflexa*: yellow flower, dwarf variety.

*Lachenalia unifolia*: grey-blue flower, a single leaf with maroon bands at its base.

*Gladiolus punctulatus*: small pink flowers with red dotted nectar guides.

*Moraea neglecta*: hundreds! Bright yellow, with black dotted nectar guides.

*Moraea gawleri*: small cream flower.

*Ixia dubia*: yellow flowers with reddish underside of petals.

*Watsonia humilis*: deep pink flowers, dwarf species.

*Homeria miniata*: orangey-pink tulip with yellow star-shape in centre.

*Geissorhiza aspera*; a particularly good crop this year of this exquisite blue flowered plant.

*Leucospermum conocarpodendron*: at long last in flower.

*Geranium incanum*: the pretty pink variety.

*Diastella proteoides*: flowers all year, but will be more prolific in a month or two.

As regards the birds, many walkers in the lower forest have been watching the Black Sparrowhawks with great interest. This is the first year they have bred in the lower forest, and the young have been extremely noisy in their demands for food. The Hadedu Ibis have also nested in the same area, but are still sitting at the time of writing. The Spotted Eagle Owls of the field adjacent to the forest in Drumblair are brooding two chicks on the ground. I have twice flushed a Fiery-necked Nightjar in the *Diastella* area recently, and also saw a tortoise and, I believe, a mongoose. A porcupine has been wandering around Drumblair lately; my collection of quills picked up in the area is growing rapidly.

— SIBYL MORRIS



*Since this was written we sadly report that the owl chicks have been killed. Happily, there are two more brooding pairs in the Tokai area. If readers see owl chicks on the ground, rest assured the parents are still caring for them. BUT PLEASE KEEP DOGS AWAY FROM THE CHICKS.*

*Sibyl feels strongly that something should be done about vandalism in the lower forest, especially during school holidays. For example wrecking some of the newly stabilized river banks, destroying signs and tampering with the SAFCOL bulldozer that was on loan to our group. Any suggestions from readers on how to tackle this problem? — Ed.*



## APPRECIATION

*Our special thanks to the team who produced this issue.*

