



FRIENDS OF TOKAI FOREST

P O Box 442 Bergvliet 7964



NEWSLETTER No 4

MARCH/ APRIL 1997

Hello 'FOREST FRIENDS'

By the time this newsletter reaches your breakfast table a quarter of the 'New Year' will have vanished and the Cape summer, varied to say the least this year, should be melding into autumn. Interestingly in the lower forest the Prinskasteel river was flowing until the beginning of January and the benefits of the late rains last year are evident in the February Cape flora.

From the Toadstool

Last June you remember we met together "to organise a grouping of concerned and active 'Friends of Tokai Forest' and environs, affiliated to the Wildlife Society with the following objectives:-

- Foster resonance amongst differing interests including; natural environment, commercial forestry, recreation, residential and future development.
- Develop an awareness of species, habitats, eco-systems and resources of the area.
- Work toward conservation for the benefit of present and future generations.

At the time, I anticipated major changes and pressures on the Tokai Forest environment but the speed at which these changes are coming is staggering. We are currently working closely with the Tokai Residents Association and S.A.F.C.O.L. to "foster resonance" in the many proposed developments viz.

- A development framework process proposed by the William Porter School.
- Development of public open space between Forest Glade and the "Picnic Forest".
- Development of Steenberg Heights.

We have also been involved in the development of a future vision for the Arboretum (which now needs to move into action stage) along with the identification of serious alien invader infestations in our own area such as various Aussie wattles in the lower forest and Parrots feather water weed in the Keyser river.

All of these and many other threats and opportunities in our beautiful area require concerned and active "Friends". Many more of us need to get involved. Please spread the news and give us a call so that we can discuss how we can pull together to protect an area which interests you.

John Green Chairperson.

SPECIES AND HABITAT

"of plants and porcupines".

During the wattle pull on 15 February we were chatting about the signs of otters in the lower forest and how careful we need to be in the use of chemical controls in order not to damage their food supply chain such as crabs. Chris Botes SAFCOL manager of the Tokai plantation is very concerned about the increasing use of "Rattex". Young rats and mice are the staple diet of our owl population which together without raptor population is thriving.

(Geraldine Higgs and Lesley Skarzynski are currently researching eco-friendly alternatives and we will advise you later of their conclusions).

Ruddi Skibbe was most upset about a young porcupine drowning in his pool and this in spite of the fact that the blighters had devoured most of his spring bulbs. Most of my own arums

have also been unceremoniously dug up and devoured. The largest porcupine ever seen by the Dept. Nature Conservation was recently trapped in the Prinskasteel and relocated. Two others are known to have recently become victims of cars during their nocturnal perambulations. A suggestion was made that large numbers of arums along with other delicacies should be introduced into the lower forest for our "Porcie" friends to lure them away from residential areas. **Anyone out there want to take up the challenge?**

John Green

ARBORETUM

Lesley Skarzynski and Judy McKune have handed over the Arboretum portfolio to John Green who is very enthusiastic about turning it into an even more beautiful place than it is now. Please give John your full support.

A number of indigenous tree seedlings rescued from the "Paddock Forest" have been potting and these will be planted along the banks of Prinskasteel in the lower forest during May.

Sadly Judy is leaving the committee and we thank her for her support and efforts, particularly in the design of our beautiful owl logo and the production of the bank stabilisation diagram. We are going to miss Judy and definitely need to find a successor urgently. PLEASE VOLUNTEER; committee work is not onerous and not all of the portfolios include hacking!. It can be fun; there are some interesting people to meet and one gets to learn a great deal about trees. At the same time discover what is happening in our area and then do something about it.

Lesley Skarzynski

WALKS AND WANDERS

Life can be very rewarding from the people you meet to the knowledge they impart.

This, Geraldine has found on the walks she organises once monthly for all likened people. There seemingly is much to learn apart from the pleasantness of the company.

Our walk, held on 26 January (always the last Sunday of the month and always starting from the Arboretum car park at 09h 30) took a party of 17 down through the area below the Arboretum along the stream. It was more of a meander as we explored and discussed various issues, the stream itself appears to be clogged by a thick brown sludge. This was observed, (some brave enough to touch) and ideas and suggestions as to it's origin were discussed.

We then meandered further downstream across the road and on into the Lower Arboretum on the north side of the picnic area.

The group was given the project of finding evidence of our two " National Trees of the Year" - **WARBURGIA SALUTARIS** (Fever or Pepperbark Tree). This tree is one of the most endangered trees in South Africa . It is a traditional medicinal tree and evidence of bark removal was found. Today various parts of the tree are being tested scientifically for any healing or toxicological properties. Encouraging results have already been achieved. The other tree **KIGGELAARIA AFRICANA** (Wild Peach Tree) was used in bygone days for the spokes of wagon wheels (no evidence found) but we did discover numerous caterpillars eating it's leaves. The presence of this caterpillar is significant in that it is relished by the **PIET- MA-VROU** (our common cuckoo). The caterpillar eventually becomes the beautiful black and orange butterfly with the transparent forewing which you may find in your garden. It is recommended that you do NOT spray the larvae with insecticide when they move from your

tree and climb up your walls, or the common cuckoo will not be so common in our gardens any more. This butterfly is a common sight in our gardens and it would be nice to keep it that way.

But back to the walk. We passed through a Camphor Forest on the left of the picnic area which is quite evident by its smell and all marvelled at the largest Begonia tree some of us had ever seen.

Our return to the Arboretum two hours later was marred by an unpleasant incident. Three very large dogs had been left in a car whilst their owners had gone for a walk. After an hour, when the owners had not returned, we removed the dogs from the car and tied them to the door handles. Should members discover a similar instance you are legally entitled to do this provided the car is not damaged in the process. It would be best however to call the SPCA or your local Police cell. Signs at the entrance to the Arboretum clearly indicate that dogs are not permitted in the Upper Forest and there are very valid reasons for this. There is much wild life, big and small, still roaming our mountain and we would like to keep it that way.

Talking about keeping things that way.....when you go for a walk in the forest, do take a bag with you and pick up such things as glass, plastic and anything else that does not belong there. Many a dog's pad has been cut and small fires, which eventually become big ones, can be ignited by pieces of glass.

Geraldine Higgs

ALIEN INVADERS

We got off to an effective if somewhat limited start to the "War" on 15 February when Doug Chadd, Basil Bailey, Lesley Skarzynski, Ruddi Skibbe and John Green launched the offensive in an area immediately west of the old farm bridge in the lower forest. Approximately 1000 Port Jackson, black wattles, long leaf acacias, ink berries and prickly pears were eradicated along with a few robinias, castor oil plants and sesbanias.

We realise that the early morning attack on Saturdays may be difficult for people with sporty school children etc., so in an attempt to make it easier for more of us to get involved on 22 March we are having two work parties

- MORNING between 08h 30 and 11h 00
- AFTERNOON between 16h 00 and 18h 00

Please pitch up ^{where?} and help even for a short time and in addition do your bit for the war effort whenever you take you dogs for a walk. YOUR FOREST NEEDS YOU.

John Green for an indisposed Bob Lee.

GENERAL INTEREST

Buzz Off

The alarming increase in low flying aircraft over the past few years is a phenomena that can scarcely have escaped your notice and/ or your ears. Resulting from a recent meeting of local small aircraft operators and the Wildlife and Environmental Society Western Cape the helicopter operators have voluntarily agreed to tighten up their act.

Current legislation regarding minimum flight heights is 2000 feet (610 metres) above sea level generally increasing to 4000 feet (1220 metres) over the Peninsula Mountain Chain . The operators have agreed not to fly over the Peninsula Mountain Chain reserves.

Anyone witnessing a breach of this is invited to record the registration number displayed on the underside of the air-craft and report the incident to Mr Andy Cluver tel. (021) 6833626.

Membership

It is obvious that the more pro-active our membership the more the 'Friends of Tokai Forest' able to achieve. If you are at all concerned about our local environment come along to our meetings.

- Saturday 22 March Alien Plant Control Workparty Morning 08h 30
Afternoon 16h 00
- Sunday 23 March Guided Walk meet at the Arboretum car park at 09h 30
- Saturday 19 April Alien Plant Control Workparty Morning 08h 30
- Saturday 19 April Friends Get together at the Arboretum at 15h 00 followed by cheese and wine
- Sunday 26 April Guided Walk meet at the Arboretum car park at 09h 30

If you require any additional information please contact your committee members:

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