



FRIENDS OF TOKAI FOREST

P O Box 442 Bergvliet 7864



NEWSLETTER No 5

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Dear Friends of the Forest

There was serious concern about the recent Argus article headlined "Capetonians stand to lose access to green-lung forests: Tokai, Cecilia sell-off threat". We contacted SAFCOL's general management in Pretoria and received a position paper which substantially allays the fears raised in the article.

"SAFCOL fully supports the concept of a Cape Peninsula National Park and will be happy to include its Tokai and Cecilia forests in the ambit of such a park... While the plantations continue to be managed as commercial forestry and remain subject to SAFCOL's own stringent conservation practices, SAFCOL is willing to accept and apply additional environmental measures in the Cape conservation ethic, should this be required by the proposed contractual park...this will not be influenced by any potential restructuring or privatisation since strict safeguards apply to the conditions of land use...which is restricted to SAFCOL's defined commercial forestry activities. SAFCOL cannot use the forests for other purposes and any land disposal is subject to right of first refusal by the state".

Johan Raath, SAFCOL's GM Corporate Services, came down for our April 19th Friends' get-together, and expressed his thanks for the co-operative relationship that we have built up. We have also received a letter from Karen van Teylingen, SAFCOL's Cape Environmental Manager, expressing thanks and the desire for SAFCOL to become more closely involved in the advancement of environmental conservation and education. We believe that this augurs well for the future of the Tokai and Cecilia Plantations within the new National Park.

We are also assisting a fledgling Friends of Cecilia whose representatives attended the May Friends Workshop along with most of the other 26 Friends groups now operating in the Western Cape under the auspices of the Wildlife and Environment Society (WESSA). We will continue to work closely with SAFCOL and other bodies such as the National Botanic Institute, the Botanical Society, Peninsula Mountain Forum etc. under WESSA's umbrella, to ensure the survival and upgrading of this unique community facility for all users. To do this, we need a growing band of volunteers to become actively involved in making the future happen. We have a great number of ideas and are sure that you have many more - give John Green a call at 72-1341 to discuss how you can best make a contribution.

John Green, Chairman

SPECIES AND HABITAT

SAFCOL is currently implementing a programme to protect the very rare *Diastella proteoides* in the lower forest and we are preparing information boards. On the birding

side, there was great excitement when a Knysna Loerie moved into the forest next to the Plantation Manager's house in February (it's moved on again, but keep your ears open for its distinctive "kawk-kawk-kawk" call before you see its striking red wings in flight). A pellet from a Cape Eagle Owl contained long bones which could well be from a squirrel; this would be very welcome, because this little Yankee invader has no local predators to keep it under control. There are strong indications of a civet living in the top forest, well out of its normal range.

Please enjoy our wonderful forest and pass on any interesting information to Sibyl Morris , tel. 724150.

ARBORETUM

In the Arboretum we are working with the NBI to institute an education programme for school groups, and I recently had the privilege of joining a group of 60 Steenberg Primary School children in discussing wetlands and cleaning up river banks. This is a wonderfully rewarding opportunity to serve the environment in our area, and I would particularly like to hear from anyone who wants to get involved from time to time. We have also identified a problem water fungus which needs to be controlled, and Kristal Maze of the Botanical Society and Anthony Hitchcock of the National Botanic Institute have offered to assist us to develop a management plan for the wetland area in the Arboretum.

We are developing with SAFCOL the potential for a contracted educationist to start at grassroots level with children in the picnic area over weekends. We also have the use of the lovely Info Centre, which has the potential for numerous community service projects. All we need now is a few more hands to help these ideas to come to fruition.

John Green

LEARNING FROM OUR "MUSHROOM MAN"

On Saturday 19th April at our Friends Meeting in the Arboretum, the "Mushroom Man" Mr Donny Yasvojn said that all the mushrooms with sponge-like gills found in our local forest are edible, though they must be thoroughly cooked.

Mr Yasvojn informed us that all pine wood mushrooms (or fungi) consist of the part above ground that we eat, and that underground there are innumerable branching threads (mycelium) which form a dense whitish mass. This is what the fungus uses to obtain its food from the soil and pine needles, and it plays a useful role in breaking down the needles back into the soil. Mr Yasvojn thinks that there are less fungi to be found this year because the mycelium is being damaged. He suggests that one should cut off the mushroom instead of pulling it out.

We were told that there are two main types of fungi in the forest. Some have gills, rather like a fish, below the mushroom cap, and the others have a sort of sponge made up of tiny tubes hanging down side by side with the spores lining these tubes. Looked at from below, only the openings of the tubes can be seen, and the layer then looks rather like a rubber

sponge with very tiny pores. The cap colour is brown; the sponge is white at first, changing to yellow and then to greenish when old. The young fresh sponge can be eaten; however, if the sponge is soft and slimy, remove it before you leave the forest. The tastiest of these is the *Boletus edulis* (or Cep); the other numerous ones are the *Boletus duriusculus* (Popular Boletus) and the *Boletus bellini* found under the stone pine and cluster pine. These appear at the Cape in late April or early May soon after the rains have begun. The season only lasts a few weeks.

Recipe: Fry sliced onion in butter till golden brown, then put in the sliced Boletus. After a few minutes stir in a tablespoon of flour, cook for a minute, then add milk, stir and cover. Simmer for ten minutes. Salt and lemon juice are added at the end with chopped parsley and grated parmesan cheese sprinkled over.

The other type of mushroom is the gill-fungus type, and the best to eat of these is the Pine Ring *Lactarius deliciosus*.

When young these are a very vivid orange, and as they age they become a verdigris green. Frequently they have concentric rings of darker markings on the cap and inside the stem. BEWARE! There is a poisonous fungus that resembles the pine ring called the "Copper Trumpet"; it does not have the saffron juice that can be squeezed from a pine ring, or the orange ring under the skin of the stem, nor the ring-zoning on the cap.

Mr Yasvoïn says that he pickles these mushrooms in vinegar to eat throughout the year. Another method is to dry cook them briefly on a hot griddle slightly salted.

Lesley Skarzynski

IMPORTANT! Before picking any mushrooms in Tokai or Cecilia Forests it is necessary to obtain a PERMIT. These are available either from the SAFCOL office or from Garlick, our man at the Arboretum gate. The cost is R5,00, which allows you to pick an average shopping carrier-bag full.

OUTINGS AND MEETINGS

Geraldine and Peter Higgs (tel. 724176 / 617076 continue to lead a series of interesting walks in the area on the last Sunday morning of each month, starting from the Arboretum car park unless otherwise stated. The time has now been changed to 9 am. Latecomers can find out which route we have taken from Garlick the gate keeper. Press information will always be on the Argus "Getting Out Page" the Saturday before the walk, and there will also be information in the Constantiaberg Bulletin and sometimes the Peninsula Times. Notices will also be put up at the Tokai and Meadowridge Libraries.

The last walk we did was on Sunday 27th April, and we apologise to those who did not get the information re change of time. We did not expect too many people, as many had taken advantage of the long weekend and gone away. Three of our group turned up, and it was decided under these circumstances to join Maurice Deary who was taking the Friends of Hout Bay from the Arboretum to the Vlakkenberg. It was a 5 hour walk - a little bit chilly but this and the fine fall of rain did not dampen our good spirits. We heard a troop of baboons below us, possibly raiding the fruit in the vineyards. There was also evidence of buck. We saw many a hard pedalling mountain biker coming up the gravel track which is now well utilised.

Since the last newsletter we have also done Silvermine to Chapman's Peak and back to the dam. Spectacular views like "Little Switzerland" as you approach the dam.

Programme of walks

May 25th: With the "Mushroom Man" Mr Donny Yasvoin. Hopefully we will find some and learn which ones we can eat.

June 29th: Orienteering in the lower forest. Bring a compass, notepaper and pencil. First one in who has notched the various pointers will get a prize. Great for the kids.

July 27th: To Lourensford Forestry staion in Somerset West with Chris Botes. Any offers of transport? This is our "sister" forest and the walk promises to be interesting.

August 31st: Elephant's Eye and surrounds (it's about time!)

Sept.28th: Fynbos walkabout with Sibyl Morris. We will go by bus up to Vlakkenberg then walk to Hout Bay and back.

October 26th: Either another fynbos walk or a Mushroom walk. Watch the press and our newsletters.

November 30th: Will be advised. Watch for details.

December: A busy period for all; no walk this month.

ALIEN INVADERS

Realising that Saturday mornings are perhaps difficult for families, particularly with children playing school sport, shopping etc., we decided to introduce a Saturday afternoon work party in addition to the traditional morning event as an experiment in March. In terms of support the morning party under the guidance of John Green fared better than the afternoon party. However, we are pleased to report that our combined offensive against the "Aussies" proved to be far more effective than our national cricket squad!

In April we reverted to the original morning only work party, and encouragingly we are now beginning to see the establishment of regular helpers. THANK YOU everyone who turned up to help. Our efforts in the lower forest have to date concentrated on an area immediately south of the river adjacent to the old farm bridge. This area was chosen, not because of its importance in terms of infestation, but because it's an area with high visibility and forest users are made unavoidably aware of our activities, which will hopefully encourage involvement. When we have built up a team of regular helpers we intend, in liaison with SAFCOL, to begin clearing operations in more heavily infested areas in the upper forest.

Posters, beautifully designed and produced by Pat and Judy McKune, will shortly be erected in strategic positions in the forest. These illustrate the alien plants which are the focus of our attention, and will hopefully encourage walkers to pull them up whenever they happen to see one.

The May work party will take a different form. Instead of pulling out we will be planting indigenous tree seedlings which were diligently rescued from the extended portion of the picnic forest last November/December. John Green and Lesley Skarzynski have been lovingly caring for their babies through the dry summer months and these will be transplanted along the river in the lower forest to then west of the old farm bridge.

Remember! We are able to achieve more together than we can apart - get involved!

Bob Lee