



FRIENDS OF TOKAI FOREST

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CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE **Sunday 18th December 05** **Tokai Arboretum**

This popular annual event is our main fund raising activity and most of the proceeds will once again go to funding the Baboon monitoring programme.

Ticket sales will commence at 5.15pm and the Pipers will arrive at 6.30pm to lead the children through the Arboretum to Listers Place. There will then be a musical interlude and the Carol Service will start at 7.30pm – this is 30 minutes later than last year so that the magical atmosphere created by the candles amongst the trees can be enjoyed for a longer period.

For those who do not feel like preparing a picnic supper, Listers will again be selling their delicious hamburgers, hot dogs and cold drinks. Wines will be on sale and the entry fee is R15 for adults and R5 for children. Our special thanks to the Rotary Club of Newlands who organise and manage the Carol Service each year.

BABOON MONITORING - (from John Green)

The current situation with the Tokai baboons is fairly stable. From early this year the Tokai troop was severely disrupted by major competition between 3 dominant males which resulted in several splits in the troop and a number of breakaway groups at different times. As we all know, this made management very difficult and there were numerous incidents of baboons entering suburbia from Klein Constantia, Sweet Valley, Dennendal, Morningside, Pollsmoor, Zwaanswyk and Steenberg Estate. With increased monitors and management by Table Mountain National Park, the situation was stabilised by August.

During September, it appears that one of the competing males has been banished from the troop and he may have relocated to the Klein Constantia area where he is habituating. The residents are dealing directly with Cape Nature on this specific management issue. The consequence of his leaving the troop appears to be a normalisation of the troop dynamics. John Travolta has rejoined the main troop and the combined troop is mainly

ranging in the mid Tokai plantation. Since the beginning of November, the monitoring force has been reduced to 2 men working a 5 day week with at least one monitor on duty each day to dissuade the troop from moving in suburbia. To the best of my knowledge, there have been no reported instances of raiding over the past 6 weeks, except for Klein Constantia. I heard a baboon in Lower Zwaanswyk one night last week but did not hear of any raiding.

We also hear unofficially that notice to prosecute has been served on a resident of Zwaanswyk for allegedly shooting and killing a baboon earlier this year.

The bad news is, that despite Cape Nature's widely publicised grant of R3.5 million in February 2005 from the National Department of the Environment's Poverty Relief Fund for managing baboons in the Western Cape over the next three years, we are yet to receive one cent of this funding. I do not want to criticise, but there appears to be a serious lack of competence and despite Civil Society's repeated offers of assistance, no progress is being made. This is very serious and is making any planning of baboon management in the Peninsula virtually impossible. We will bumble on through to the New Year and inform you when any progress is made.

In the meantime, please keep donations coming in. We have only been able to contain the situation, both to the benefit of residents and the baboons, because of the help of a number of concerned residents and ongoing contributions from the City and National Park. As usual, the kitty is again virtually empty and we need to keep our management programme going at this minimum level through the summer. This costs R900 per week and the monitors now also need some leave. Donations to Friends of Tokai Forest, PO Box 30658, Tokai 7966, or a/c 1009 603 280 06 Nedbank, St George's Street Branch. Please write your name and "baboons" on your deposit slips to enable us to identify your donations.

Please note our new address
P O Box 30658 TOKAI 7966

CEPF Project completed

The CEPF (Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund) funded project of "Promoting Public Participation in Caring for Tokai's Core Cape Flats Flora Conservation Site" officially came to an end at the end of August this year. The CEPF donated US \$10,000 to the project as they recognized the lower plantation conservation site as a biodiversity hotspot of global importance.

CEPF funding enabled significant changes to be made in the Lower Tokai Plantation over the last two years. Firstly a half-hectare site was cleared on the edge of the forest next to Orpen Road and burned to restore the fynbos. This area has been maintained free of invasive alien vegetation and the naturally resuscitated indigenous flowers this spring were glorious. The hectare of resuscitated fynbos known as the Diastella area has been expanded to the north by clear felling a half-hectare of plantation pines. The Soetvlei wetlands adjacent to the conservation site have been cleared of alien vegetation by Working for Wetlands and replanted with about 4,100 plants. Restios, Sedges, Arums, Cifortias and Pelegoniums were specially propagated for the area. The pines to the south of the Diastella area were clear felled in November and the total area under active conservation is now about 7 hectares.

CEPF funding has paid for 323 workdays and R40,000 has gone directly into local disadvantaged communities in the form of wages. The initial conservation work in the wetlands by the FOTF provided the initiative for Working for Wetlands to start the rehabilitation of Soetvlei and this has directly created an additional 395 workdays for the local community.

CEPF funding has allowed the FOTF to build a trail through the lower plantation which links up with the trails of the Constantia valley. The Diastella Trail provides easy access to the resuscitated fynbos and wetland area. A notice board was erected to inform the public of the conservation activity in the plantation and surrounds.

CEPF funding has enabled the FOTF to create an awareness of the Core Cape Flats Flora Conservation site, the Soetvlei wetlands and the need to create a vegetation corridor from Source to Sea. This has been achieved through active participation in the Fynbos Forum, the Wetlands Forum and the Friends of the Constantia Greenbelts. Interaction with other Friends groups, like the Friends of Die Oog who also have a CEPF grant, is facilitated by WESSA, C.A.P.E. and the Wetlands Forum.

Most importantly CEPF funding enabled the FOTF to commission a Management Plan and a Biodiversity study of excellent quality. Dr Patricia Holmes, the author of both reports, has continued to work with the FOTF as a volunteer and serves an important role as a committee member. The Management Plan has become the backbone of our future conservation plans.

In September we had the pleasure of meeting Nina Marshall, the CEPF Grant Director for Africa. Nina followed our progress from start to finish and was thrilled to be on site. We were able to thank her personally for the significant contribution the CEPF is making to the conservation of the Cape Floral Kingdom.

THE BIODIVERSITY CORRIDOR – FROM SOURCE TO SEA

The Table Mountain Fund is funding a scientific investigation into the feasibility of creating a biodiversity corridor "From Source to Sea". The source is the valley below the Elephants Eye and the corridor follows the Prinskasteel River down the mountain through the Soetvlei Wetlands to the Keyzers River, Zandvlei and False Bay. The investigation also includes recommendations as to what work needs to be done to the river course and the wetlands it runs through. The corridor will also, where possible, serve as a trail for recreational and access purposes for both the local communities and tourists.

THE DIASTELLA AREA HAS BEEN EXTENDED

The MTO have harvested the pine trees between the Diastella Area and the Prinskasteel River as planned. Great care was taken by the harvesting team to minimize the damage to seed banks in the soil. This is the first *planned* step to conserve the rare endemic plant species found in the Lower Plantation.

On the 11th of October 1994, Nicholas Cole of the Protea Atlas Project wrote to SAFCOL about the Diastella proteoides and Serruria glomerata in the Tokai Plantation. It is interesting to revisit his letter as it is even more relevant to-day as it was 11 years ago;

"As I mentioned on the phone, two of our atlassers do a lot of walking in the Tokai Forest, and are constantly on the look out for Proteaceae. They seemed to have discovered one of a few remnant patches of fynbos that has Proteaceae present within your plantation. This is the plot marked on the map. I feel that this is worthy of protection, even if it is a poor reflection of what was found in this area in the past"...."it would seem that these plants have a limited ability to survive disturbance. However as a remnant population they are worth conserving"

In 1998 we were down to a single *Diastella proteoides* when a fire broke out in the lower plantation. The lower plantation was then declared a Core Cape Flats Flora Conservation Site. Today we have a population of about 35 *Diastella proteoides*. With the recent expansion of the *Diastella* area and careful management, the *Diastella proteoides* and *Serruria glomerata* now have a reasonable chance of survival in their natural environment.

RUBBISH BINS REMOVED FROM THE LOWER PLANTATION

The rubbish bins in the lower plantation were creating a number of problems. Some people were using the bins to dump their domestic garbage and children's parties threw leftovers into the bins so providing fast food opportunities for the Baboons. After careful consideration it was decided to remove the bins and treat the lower plantation as a wilderness area. Visitors to the lower plantation are expected not to litter and to take their rubbish home with them.

WORKING FOR WETLANDS

In the autumn a sea of Black Wattle, long-leaved Wattle and Stinkbean saplings sprouted up in the cleared wetland area. We had originally anticipated dealing with this problem by hand pulling the saplings but we were concerned that any further disturbance of the soil would only aggravate the situation. Working for Wetlands was consulted and they put in a team that sprayed the saplings, the bramble shoots and any stumps that had coppiced. The spraying has been successful and spring did not see a massive sprouting of alien seeds.

Working for Wetlands propagated a number of wetland species for rehabilitation purposes. Dr Patricia Holmes vetted all species before we allowed any planting, as we will not allow any species to be introduced that do not have genetic integrity and are not endemic to the area. To date Working for Wetlands have planted 4,100 plants in the cleared wetlands to support the natural resuscitation and a very high strike rate has been achieved.

A special thanks go to Victoria of Working for Wetlands who coordinated the planting and is always available to help and guide the Adopt a Plot team.

ADOPT A PLOT

Through the Adopt a Plot program 16 members of the FOTF have adopted about 10 plots, which represents about a third of the rehabilitated wetlands. The program is catching on and we have an increasing number of the local community helping to keep the area free of alien vegetation as

their contribution to the conservation of the Cape Floral Kingdom.

The Adopt A Plot team was encouraged to plant their own plants out of those provided by Working for Wetlands. The idea is that the amateur and professional botanists can watch their plants mature and participate in getting the wetland back to its natural state.

As an the amateur it is at first quite confusing as what to weed out of the wetlands. Pat and Tony Rebello very kindly provided on site training on the 17th of November. Pat (Dr Pat Holmes) provided this useful brief summary of the days recommendations.

- Top priority is to keep control of the alien trees & creepers, including: *Acacia mearnsii* (Black Wattle), *Paraserianthes lophantha* (Stinkbean), *Acacia longifolia* (long-leaved wattle), *Populus X canescens* (Poplar), *Rubus fruticosus* (Bramble). Others to remove from the wetland include Yellowwood, Oak, Virginia Creeper. Many of these may be hand-pulled at present, but herbicide should be considered (with care) for Poplar, Bramble & Virginia Creeper.
- The other common garden weeds can become a problem if they get too dense, so if there is time they can be controlled, either by uprooting, or for annuals, by cutting off flowers to prevent seeding (thus reducing the seed bank for next year). Species to control include, *Solanum nigrum* (nightshade), *Lactuca serriola* (Wild Lettuce), *Coryza bonariensis* (Fleabane), *Hypochaeris radicata* (Hairy Wild Lettuce) and the annual alien grasses: *Briza maxima* (Turtle Grass), *Lolium multiflorum* (Rye Grass).
- *Pennisetum clandestinum* (Kikuyu) should continue to be vigorously controlled, as it can grow very fast in damp conditions & overtake all indigenous species.
- *Typha* (Bulrush) should be kept under control if at all possible (i.e. kept to main channel) to give other indigenous wetland species a chance to establish.
- The tall tussock grass with the cylindrical inflorescence we think is *Phalaris aquatica* (Towoomba Canary Grass) introduced for pasture from the Mediterranean & naturalized here - so it can be removed (it is perennial)

If you would like to participate in restoring your heritage please contact Bill van der Poll. Bill's cell number is 082 4873038 and home number 7128836.

CONSTANTIA HILLS RESIDENTS VOLUNTEER GROUP

Residents of Constantia Hills have formed a volunteer group to assist in the rehabilitation of the northern edge of the Soetvlei wetlands and surrounds. Anyone who would like to join this volunteer group please contact Lynn de Keller at 712 7979.

F.O.T.F. ACTIONS RECOGNISED

At the recent Table Mountain National Park volunteer conference The Friends of Tokai were awarded a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of their valuable volunteer contribution to the Table Mountain National Park. A Certificate of Excellence was awarded to James Forsyth "for exceptional volunteer contribution to the Table Mountain National Park".

BIRD ACTIVITY

An equestrian riding down the track between the picnic site and paintball area observed a pair of very agitated Black Sparrowhawks. The reason for their agitation became clear when a Caracal walked into full view on the path. One of the birds started to "dive bomb" the Caracal which walked on and quickly disappeared into a thicket.

Ann Koeslag recorded this interesting interlude in the lower plantation:

Walking the dogs in the Lower Tokai Forest at about 8am this morning I was on the road next to the wetlands (at the horse path intersection from Soetvlei) when amongst various bird sounds I became aware that there was another call just at the range of my hearing. So I wandered down the path that crosses the reed beds and stood and listened. I was being entertained by two young Sedge warblers when it started up again - a BUFF SPOTTED FLUFFTAIL. Chris Botes tells me that he also heard the Flufftail calling there about three weeks ago.

Ann has taken some really good photographs of the birds in the Tokai plantation so I suggested, slightly tongue in cheek, that she should take a pic of the flufftail. She responded; "I would be over the moon just to see a flufftail, so I can't imagine what my reaction would be to getting a picture of one. Geoff Lockwood was describing taking people to see some flufftails. He'd had a 3 meter channel cut into the reeds and told them not to take their eyes off it for a second. After about an hour a small red rat (his description of a flufftail) shot across the opening. When he asked if they saw it they all said "saw what?"

Ann would like to know if there are other birders in the Tokai plantation as she would like to brainstorm an idea she has. Ann's e-mail address is

koeslag@discoverymail.co.za

THE ARBORETUM

The Arboretum is looking neglected. Invasive alien vegetation is becoming increasingly obvious, paths are in a state of disrepair and the Oak leaf trail has all but disappeared.

The baboon damage to the thatch on Listers Place and the entrance gate has been repaired by Table Mountain National Park. Bill van Der Poll sanded and sealed the woodwork in the entrance gate with great success but there is a lot of simple maintenance work still to be done.

Earlier this year we started work in the Arboretum but the project stalled due to the demands of the lower plantation. We would like to start again in the New Year. We are also looking for old photographs, maps and information about the Arboretum that could possibly be displayed to make a visit to the area more interesting.

JOSPEH STORR LISTER

Two of the grandsons of Joseph Storr Lister, who was Chief Conservator of Forests and the founder of the Tokai Arboretum, recently presented Listers Place with a short history of Joseph Storr Lister and a photograph of the great man. The history and photograph will be on display in the near future. Would anyone willing to help with the Arboretum please contact James Forsyth 7127975 or email jforysyth@ifrica.com.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING IN THE PLANTATION

Every second day we see a TV commercial or a picture in a magazine and say to ourselves... "I am sure that is Tokai Forest". The answer is that you are probably correct. This year alone there have been over 40 photographic and film shoots in the forest.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The year end is proving to be more hectic than ever and a suitable date for the AGM could not be found. The AGM will be held in the first week of February 2006. The Chairman, James Forsyth, will not be standing for re-election as Chairman because of time constraints this coming year and his other commitments to conservation in the Constantia Valley.

MEMBERSHIP

We appeal to all members who have not renewed their membership to please let us have their subscriptions. A renewal form is attached. Membership fees are R25 for single members and R35 for couples and groups.

All enquiries to Sylvia. Phone 712 2515 or e-mail sylvia@tokai.co.za