



Waterberg Nature Conservancy Newsletter

Occasionally issued news of interest to WNC members and others in the Waterberg

Number 15, August 2011

In This Issue:

- Next General Meeting
- In Memory
- WNC New Members
- Photos, Photos, Photos
- Stories, Stories, Stories
- New Book . Birds of the Waterberg
- Game Farm for Sale
- Modimolle Fire Protection Association
- Conservancy Website
- Rail Plans in the Waterberg
- Mining in the Waterberg
- Vaalwater Community Forum
- Environmental Crusaders in Gauteng
- New CSIR Water Study in the Waterberg
- Can Alien Vegetation Help Alleviate Poverty?
- Member Profiles

**Contact the Waterberg Nature Conservancy through
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www.waterbergnatureconservancy.com

John Miller, Chair
jdmliller@telkomsa.net

Newsletter items by John Miller unless otherwise attributed.

Next General Meeting

Date: Thursday, 8 September 2011

Venue: Vaalwater Rivier Oord

Two km past the Spar on the old Ellisras Road, turn left.

Time: 2:30 pm

Birds and Birding

Guest Speakers:

Nikki McCartney, BirdLife SA

**Projects and programmes the organisation is involved in.
Terrestrial and seabird conservation.**

Avitourism Division.

Important Bird Area programme.

Gerhardt Lorist, Wildlife & Ecological Investments

Birds of Welgevonden (and the Waterberg)

Also on the agenda:

Cheetah Metapopulation Project

Vincent van der Merwe, Endangered Wildlife Trust

and

**SANParks Honorary Ranger Programme, Mogol Sub Region
Johanna and Ben Van der Merwe**

Cash Bar and Light Meal

RSVP to Heidi Carlton by Tuesday 6 September 2011

(contact details at left)

We're still determined to produce a map showing the properties of all our members. The properties of some of you comprise more than one farm name, sometimes many more. Please come to the meeting with your exact farm names in hand. The attendance register will have a place to enter those names.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THE AGM IS SCHEDULED FOR
THURSDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2011**

In Memory

Our hearts reach out to the families and friends of Joy Baber and Brett Cathrall who lost their lives in a road accident on 13 August.

Joy was a true joy to know . upbeat, committed, caring, selfless and efficient at whatever she was involved in, certainly including the Waterberg Welfare Society where she was a most effective Project

Manager for more than four years.

Nine-year old Brett, the son of Grant and Louise Cathrall and grandson of Joan Baber's sister Protea, was a student at Bellavista School in Johannesburg.

Joan Baber and Mary Stephenson are recovering from their injuries.

The impact on the Baber and Cathrall families and the Waterberg community cannot adequately be expressed. We offer our most heartfelt condolences to all who loved Joy and Brett.

WNC New Members

A warm welcome to the following new Conservancy members who bring our membership to 64.

- Alan William Randall, resident on Melkriver Farms cc for the last year. (1500 hectares)
- Dawood Akoojee, from Olievenfontein Private Game Reserve, focussing on tourism and game ranching. (333 hectares)
- Sylvie Geerkens, from Alkantrant, focussing on tourism and hunting. (2100 hectares)
- Marc and Christine Dieltgens, Johannesburg residents with a stand at Nyathi. We note with great thanks their generous donation to the Conservancy.

The Conservancy reflects a variety of bush activities . private reserves and private homes, tourism operations, game ranching, hunting, commercial agriculture, conservation research, environmental education, small business. Think about your neighbours and friends who might be interested in joining us. We will provide them with full information, and invite them to join. Let us know.

For those of you in the Waterberg who are receiving this Newsletter but are not Conservancy members, please join us. In recent months, you've missed presentations about the Limpopo River (Clive Walker); solar power (Philip Calcott); the Bateleurs, the non-profit environmental flying organisation (Avroy Shlain and Justin Bass); Waterberg history (Richard Wadley); Invasive and Alien Vegetation (Phetole Manyama); Lapalala Wilderness School (Anthony Roberts); Parasites (Peter Oberem); and much, much more.

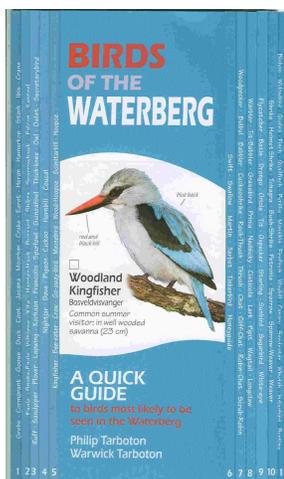
Photos, Photos, Photos

We need your photos for the Conservancy Newsletter.
Good photos, interesting views, unique pictures . please share!

Stories, Stories, Stories

We need your stories, articles, essays, announcements for the Conservancy Newsletter.
Good stories, interesting articles, relevant essays, timely announcements . please share!

New Book – *Birds of the Waterberg*



Birds of the Waterberg – a quick guide by Philip and Warwick Tarboton, Graphic Touch Guides, Kensington, Johannesburg.

An ingeniously folded sheet, printed on both sides, with excellent colour photographs of over 230 bird species most likely to be encountered on the Waterberg plateau, produced by the Nylsvley ornithologist/photographer and his talented son.

The guide is currently on sale from the Waterberg Academy for R75 as a fund-raiser (contact Caillyn Lavery on 071 548 5780 or janelavery@gmail.com).

Two other books have also been added to our website list of Waterberg-related publications.

Waterberg-Bosveld – Prikkelgids vir Veldbewing by Chris Wagner, Hoogland Uitgewers/PNA Bela Bela. A Waterberg resident has produced this small, stimulating guide to veld management based on his experience as a farmer and conservationist in the Warmbad area for over 45 years.

Problem Plants and Alien Weeds of South Africa (3rd Edition) by Clive Bromilow, Briza, Pretoria. A comprehensive, well-illustrated and easy-to-use reference book. Of particular importance to the Waterberg, where invasive and alien plant encroachment is a growing problem.

Game Farm for Sale

The Conservancy's Executive Committee has occasionally talked about accepting adverts in the Newsletter. In principal, we do our best to avoid commercial announcements in the Newsletter, at meetings, and in the distribution of any special e-mails to members. But then we think, maybe for a minimal effort we could earn some modest amounts for the Conservancy budget. From that, we think adverts could be free to Conservancy members and for a fee for all others. We could take adverts by Waterberg service people. We could take adverts for items for sale by members and non-members. Many options to consider. In this Newsletter, we're trying an experiment. Here below is an advert by a Conservancy member. Let's see what kind of response he gets.

GAME FARM FOR SALE near 24 Rivers
House, lapa, and staff accommodation
Fully game fenced 450 Hectares with perennial river
Call or write Colin for details: 0823439513; colinpalfaman@webmail.co.za

Modimolle Fire Protection Association

Richard Wadley has gathered the following basic information about the Modimolle Fire Protection Association.

Modimolle Fire Protection Association website: www.modimolle-fpa.co.za.

New Fire Protection Officer: Dan Mokanyama (Modimolle Fire Station) 082 664 1159
New Deputy Chairman: Andre Burger (Welgevonden) 082 805 9516
Secretary: Richard Nicholson (Bush Power, Modimolle) 082 490 6227
Treasurer: Gerrit Ferreira

Membership Rates for 2011: R1 per hectare, with a minimum of R250 and a maximum of R1000 (R1500 if a commercial lodge on the property).

Working on Fire (WoF) team leader: Willem Crause 076 810 3544

The WoF team that used to be based at the Obaro co-op in Vaalwater has been relocated to Modimolle, where there are better training and housing facilities. The team is available to members of the MFPA at no charge (unless already busy); but transport will be charged at R13/km. Another team is based at Mookgophong.

Members of the MFPA can call out the WoF team at any stage that they feel they are no longer able to control a fire with their own resources (presumably including neighbours); they must still be able to make water available for the WoF team(s) on the property.

For those people who live in the Lephalale Local Municipality, the Fire Protection Officer is Barry Kruger 073 005 9392. Lephalale does not yet have a WoF team based there.

As you know, the Conservancy supports an SMS fire warning system. Anyone who would like to add their names/cell numbers to the SMS list is very welcome to do so by sms-ing or calling Richard Wadley on 083 609 1425. There is no charge.

Conservancy Website

We are adding more and more substantive content to our website. You've surely looked at the *Waterberg Books* pages already, but now take a look at the pages on *Mining* (Geology) in the *Waterberg* and *Archaeology and History of the Waterberg Plateau*. All three by our own Richard Wadley.

www.waterbergnatureconservancy.com

Rail plans in the Waterberg

Conservancy members may be interested in reading an article in the Bosveld Bulletin of 12 August 2011. It says %A

heavy-haul railway line will irrevocably change the Waterberg in to a hive of mining activity.+ See [Rail plans will change Waterberg \(www.bosveldbulletin.co.za\)](http://www.bosveldbulletin.co.za).

Mining in the Waterberg

A Letter to the Department of Minerals and Energy

Dr. Wilhelm Schack is a Wildlife Vet and Ecologist based in the Thabazimbi area. In his capacity as Chairman of the Marakele Park Forum, he has sent the following strong letter (14 June 2011) to the Department of Minerals and Energy.

The Marakele Park Forum at a recent meeting has tasked its executive committee to write a letter to the Department of Minerals and Energy to formally object against the seemingly uncontrolled and unchecked spree of prospecting rights (and also pending prospecting and mining right applications) that have been dished out to various local and foreign companies in the vicinity of the *Marakele National Park*, the *Waterberg Biosphere Reserve* and innumerable *ecotourism operations* and developments that have been established here in the past 20 years as a result of profound strategic studies, Spatial Development Frameworks, Environmental Management Frameworks, etc etc.

The **DME is the one government department which has turned a blind eye** on all the tremendous efforts by officials from other government departments (like Environmental Affairs and Agriculture) semistatal institutions like SANParks, private individuals, local communities, etc, who all have assisted and contributed towards a long term landuse program in this part of the Limpopo Province thrashed out in endless and *democratically inclusive* meetings and workshops to enable society to find amicable ~~five-and-let-live~~ solutions for local industries and landuse patterns that are diametrically opposed to each other in their inherent character (in this case mining vs conservation and ecotourism). Limitations and boundary and zonation lines have been scientifically researched, agreed upon and are currently meticulously defined and documented by relevant institutions and authorities (including government, see attached Draft Policy on Buffer Zones for National Parks)

It becomes apparent that the DME with its seemingly blind and community insensitive approach in allowing blanket mining related applications to be granted over vast tracts of highly sensitive land, is standing isolated in the South African social landscape.

In view of the fact that the conservation, ecotourism and game ranching industry has up to present invested billions of rands in establishing viable, sustainable, ecologically acceptable, community uplifting and already thriving enterprises in the mentioned area, the mining industry, as well as the Department of Minerals and Energy are well advised to take heed of the warning that they can expect **serious resistance** from this sector. The eco-industry, a most important generator of revenue and creator of a livelihood for millions of South Africans, has everything to lose if unchecked mining activities are allowed to spoil the character of the land and thereby the future of its cause.

Currently the most palpable threat to the eco-industry in the vicinity of the Marakele National Park and the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, is the pending Aquila Steel mining right application on Meletse Mountain. (Incidentally, the mountain is also home to sacred caves in the traditions of the local black community.) Should this mining right be granted by DME and a mine be established so close to the park, the ambience of the whole region will be destroyed, the local eco-economy threatened or destroyed, the sacred caves threatened or destroyed, and the whole community left poorer than ever before.

My request is that this communication to you all is taken very seriously. We cannot allow haphazard juggling with the future of our children, the future of our industry and the future of our land.

May I also invite comments from you all. This issue is now on the table, and if we want to stay true to our hard earned democratic principles, we have to speak out loud and clear.

Sincerely,
Wilhelm Schack

Vaalwater Community Forum

by Richard Wadley

At the July meeting of the Vaalwater Community Forum, it was revealed that the Waterberg District Municipality has made R0.5 million available to the Modimolle Local Municipality in the current financial year for the beautification of the town in terms of its development plan. The forum intends to work closely with the MLM to optimise the use of these welcome funds.

Other news is that Edwin Construction, the contractors busy with the rebuilding of the R33 between Modimolle and

Vaalwater, will co-operate in streamlining traffic flow along the road over the weekend of the Vaalwater Wildsfees (23-24 September). In the meanwhile, discussions with the Limpopo Roads Agency are continuing about the possibility of introducing traffic circles at each entrance to Vaalwater . and widening the main road through the town . as part of the re-building programme. The contractors are also evaluating alternative detour options around the Nekq. the long steep hill about 10km out of town . as the reconstruction of this section will require prolonged closure.

Freedom Air, a company already providing a scheduled service between OR Tambo airport and Lephalale, has offered to include a touch-down at or near Vaalwater, if a suitable airstrip and facilities can be provided. This could be a great opportunity for a landowner/entrepreneur to tap into the rapidly growing tourist traffic to the heart of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve.

The Forum can be contacted at vaalwatercommunityforum@gmail.com.

Environmental Crusaders in Gauteng

It's not news that the Waterberg isn't the only area of the country facing a variety of property development proposals (including mining). In the case of the Waterberg, the collective impact of such developments will all too easily, and dramatically, change the very nature of the region. Gauteng residents have similar concerns and they have taken an important step by creating Just Environmental Action (JEA). You'll see in its press release below that JEA is not proclaiming itself against development, but rather is advocating sensitive planning and appropriate development.

New citizens body for environmentally sensitive development in Gauteng. A new umbrella body to provide collective clout to concerned residents, ratepayer associations and nature conservancies in their fight for sensitive planning and appropriate development in Gauteng, has been launched.

Just Environmental Action (JEA) is a combined voice for nature conservancies, concerned residents and ratepayer associations in their efforts to ensure more effective citizen involvement in correcting the current imbalance between good conservation practice, integrated planning and appropriate development. It was launched after a series of meetings between resident and conservation activists.

Says chairperson Kristin Kallesen: "The pressure on and destruction of the environment caused by inappropriate development combined with often questionable approvals given by Government departments need to be countered by a broad spectrum of concerned organisations and individuals.

"We need to give a voice to individuals and areas that are under threat, supporting them through an informed, well-advised and experienced cooperative. That's the purpose of JEA."

JEA is developing lobbying tools that could help member organizations in their lobbying and protest actions. "An example is a standard Complaints Form which will be used to log complaints against unresponsive officials, non-compliant developers and local authorities that fail to meet their responsibilities so that a paper trail is created which can be used in the media or for possible court action," says Mary Lewis of Klipkop Conservancy, JEA's secretary.

"We are in possession of many examples of dodgy developments across the Province," says Kallesen. "Submissions and objections of residents are often ignored by the authorities and in the worst cases, objectors are threatened with court action by developers. In the meantime many inappropriate developments are continuing at speed, creating irreversible destruction. It is time to join forces and stand up for our rights and for those of the environment we hold in trust for future generations." For more information contact secretary@justenvironmental.co.za

New CSIR Water Study in the Waterberg

Conservancy members recall that at our May 2009 meeting, Paul Oberholster spoke about his research to determine the health of the aquatic ecosystems in the Waterberg. Paul is a limnologist, a scientist who studies the properties of fresh water. The study developed a set of ecological indicators that provide an accurate estimate of the ecological health of aquatic ecosystems in the area. This was only a baseline study, however, aimed at determining the current ecological status of unimpacted, reference areas. His CSIR team has now embarked on a second three-year study in the Waterberg.

The effects of coal, sand mining and coal combustion on the aquatic ecosystems and the biota living in Waterberg ecosystems are unknown. Thresholds that govern potential regime shifts are not well understood. This greatly limits the ability to plan and manage these ecosystems effectively. Effective water resources and land use planning is essential in this catchment given the immense expected pressures on both land and aquatic ecosystems. Building on previous work, the new project aims to:

- identify critical ecological indicators in the Waterberg rivers and tributaries, the drivers of change to these indicators, their associated threshold to change and the consequences of this change; and
- develop a basis for implementing appropriate water quality management responses, or possible remedial measures in conjunction with public and private sector stakeholders in the area.

Can Alien Vegetation Help Alleviate Poverty?

We often talk about the importance of eliminating alien vegetation in the Waterberg and beyond. Here below is my edited version of an article in Science and Development Network about a very technical study published in Ecology Letters. Following that is an interesting exchange, also edited, from Mozambique on the subject. Marcos Freire is the Research Coordinator for the Farmer Income Support Project in Zambézia Province, Mozambique. Jake Walter is TechnoServe's Country Director in Mozambique. Chuck Stephens, the Programme Director for Tearfund, is based now in Juba, South Sudan.

Edited version of Alien plants 'can help alleviate poverty': Alien plant species can significantly reduce biodiversity but they can also boost an ecosystem's biomass production. Introduced alien species are usually seen as a threat to biodiversity and hence to the poor who depend on ecosystems for their livelihoods. But boosting the amount of biomass produced is seen by some as more important for alleviating poverty than conserving biodiversity.

"For the rural poor who depend on what nature provides, volume matters more than the variety ... Increasing the volume of biomass nature produces is crucial for alleviating poverty." says Craig Leisher, senior social-science advisor at the US-based Nature Conservancy.

Now there is evidence that invasive plant species may help boost the overall plant volume produced in the ecosystems they are introduced into. Alien species are often introduced to fill empty niches, reduce soil erosion and increase food production especially in developing countries. Examples of introduced species that boost biomass production include *Eucalyptus* and *Pinus* tree species in South Africa, where the latter are now spreading through the native ecosystems.

Leisher said that we may sometimes have to sacrifice biodiversity to feed a growing population. "It's not pragmatic to try and save all the species on the planet, at any cost. The surest way to provide long-term protection for nature is empowering communities to co-manage their natural areas to sustainably produce the things they value, such as fish, fuel, fodder and clean water."

Jake Walter: I agree that the potential is substantial for planted trees of alien species, including eucalyptus, in Mozambique. It will have a very large positive economic and environmental impact.

Of course, they would not be the first alien plants grown widely in Mozambique. Maize and cassava, the most widely grown plants . not to mention cashew trees, which originated in Brazil . are also alien plants, as well as groundnuts, which originated in Bolivia.

Marcos Freire: Properly managed forests planted to alien/exotic species can be beneficial both for the owner and "the country" in general. The main issue is one of balancing ownership (who owns the resource?), who benefits from the resource (who gets the profits? is it distributed to the local communities? or is it just a way of using local soil resources?), does the country as a whole really benefit from it (are we just producing raw materials? or do we process it?). In many cases these planted forests are just harvested for exporting raw materials, in which case it is usually a way of using a local resource, paying a few people minimum wage, and exporting a cheap product that will bring minimal benefits to the country.

With crops it is a bit different as most are used one way or another for direct consumption. Actually the quantity of "alien/exotic" species being used in Mozambique is huge. Let's say that, apart from cowpea most other crops (annual and perennial, fruits included) are "alien". Continuing with Jake's list: maize, rice, wheat, cotton, sesame, sunflower, groundnuts, beans, most vegetables, potatoes, sugarcane, all citrus, mangoes, cashew, coconuts, ... do you really want to continue...

Jake Walter: FAO estimates that in addition to protecting over a million hectares of forest/wildlife land, the plantation forestry industry will employ between 300,000 and 500,000 people, making it the largest employer in the country; and mostly rural employment, which the country especially needs.

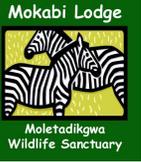
Chuck Stephens: If you visit the Arboretum in Sussundenga, Mozambique, you will find that there are various indigenous species of trees that out-grow gum trees by a long shot, in terms of cubic meters per year, without consuming so much ground water. Let's face it, gum trees were used in Australia to drain swamps. In South Africa, it is illegal to plant gum trees within a minimum distance of creeks . they just dry them up. Southern Africa has to take the water emergency more seriously. I agree that poor people need to see output and that Europeans don't eat chestnuts

any more . like they used to before potatoes were brought from the New World. But with climate change, southern Africa is already up for desertification . let's not accelerate it by planting gum trees.

**Wait, there's more in this Newsletter.
Learn a little about some of our members.**

Scroll on to Member Profiles.

Company	Contact	Contact Numbers	Email	Web Address	Brief Description
Antelope Nest and Antelope Hill Bush homes	Tessa and Ant Baber	014 755 4296 / 014 755 3584 / 083 287 2885	reservations@waterberg.net	www.waterberg.net and www.ridingsouthafrica.com	Antelope Nest and Antelope Hill are private bush homes in the magnificent malaria-free Waterberg. Enjoy fabulous horse riding safaris, guided bush walks or game drives on our privately owned property. Suitable for families, riders, honeymooners or just good friends travelling together
Driehoek Feeds / Voere	Janneman van der Merwe Karel van Vuuren Hanlee van der Walt	014 755 4370 014 755 4211 083 273 2743	Janneman@driehoek.co.za and info@driehoek.co.za	www.driehoekfeeds.co.za and www.equusfeeds.co.za	With over 20 years experience in milling, Driehoek Feeds manufactures a wide range of products. With a committed team of expert nutritionists, Driehoek Feeds has become a leader in the highly specialised Game Feeding industry. Driehoek has also recently launched the new Equus Range of horse feeds which compare to the highest international standards. For Cattle, Game, Poultry and other farm feeds, Driehoek combines research and science with value for money in every bag!
Equus Horse Safaris	Wendy Adams John Miller	014 721 0063	equus@equus.co.za www.equus.co.za		Since 1989, Equus Horse Safaris has offered exhilarating riding on well-schooled horses in scenically diverse bush. Experienced riders enjoyed personal and qualified guiding. Wendy has retired from guiding, but Carla Lucassen is operating Savannah Horse Trails on Equus Reserve, providing the same high quality riding.
Kgama Eco-Ranch (Pty) Ltd 	Steven Klagsbrun	012 362 2280 (office) 012 362 5982 (fax) 083 450 7510	steven@kdv.co.za		Conservation . Fauna and Flora . Ecological enhancement. Selected hunting opportunities.
Kololo Game Reserve 	Elize Oosthuizen	014 721 0920 / 014 721 0080 / 014 721 9910	admin@kololo.co.za	www.kololo.co.za	Kololo Game Reserve is situated in the heart of the Waterberg biosphere: A malaria-free area, home to a large variety of game makes Kololo a perfect safari destination. Visit neighbouring reserves and view the Big 5 - lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo, or enjoy a sneak preview over the fence, from the comfort of your chalet at Kololo.
Kwalata Wilderness CC  Where the real Africa begins!	Reinhard Heuser	014 755 4104 / 014 755 4249 / 082 414 5622	reinhard@kwalata.com ; caroline@kwalata.com ; office@kwalata.com ; werner@kwalata.com	www.kwalata.com	Our company's main activity is hunting. Kwalata consists of 13 000ha. Kwalata boasts 4 of the Big 5 and numerous plains game species and birds.

<p>Lapalala Wilderness</p>  <p>LAPALALA WILDERNESS</p>	<p>Anton Walker Anthony Roberts Jessica Babich</p>	<p>014 755 4065</p>	<p>anton@lapalala.com anthony@lapalala.com jessica@lapalala.com</p>	<p>www.lapalala.com</p>	<p>A private reserve that is dedicated to conservation, ecotourism, community upliftment and environmental education</p>
<p>Mokabi Lodge, Moletadikgwa Wildlife Sanctuary</p>  <p>Mokabi Lodge Moletadikgwa Wildlife Sanctuary</p>	<p>Lyn and Richard Wadley</p>	<p>014 755 3506 083 609 1425 083 609 1464</p>	<p>yeldaw@mweb.co.za</p>	<p>www.mokabilodge.com</p>	<p>A luxury stone and thatch self-catering lodge set in secluded woodland affords guests a comfortable and tranquil experience in the magnificent Waterberg. Numerous clearly marked and annotated walking trails and mountain bike routes on this private game reserve enable visitors to enjoy the diversity of plant, bird and animal life offered by the unique environment of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve</p>
<p>M`solosolo Safari</p>  <p>www.msolosolo.com</p> <p>Relax in the heart of the Waterberg biosphere, private but luxury!!!!!!</p>	<p>Dr. Volker and Marita Neemann</p>	<p>014 755 4106 / 083 450 6535</p>	<p>office@msolosolo.com</p>	<p>www.msolosolo.com</p>	<p>Nestled deep in the Waterberg, you enter a quiet, malaria- and crime-free paradise. Your German hosts have been successfully involved in the hunting and lodging business for over 12 years. Activities include hunting trips with a professional hunter, guided walks to bushman paintings, horse riding, clay target shooting, pistol shooting exercises, bird watching or game drives in an open 4x4 vehicle. We gladly organize elephant back rides, visits to the white lion park or a personal touch with rhinos. Longer trips e.g. to the Kruger National or Pilanesberg Park, sightseeing or tours to God's window or Tzaneen can also be organized.</p>
<p>Nkonka Bush Lodge, Nkonka African Safaris and Idube Safari Lodge</p>  <p>NKONKA BUSH LODGE PURE WATERBERG MAGIC</p>	<p>Conway and Becky Volek</p>	<p>082 824 1750, 082 570 8494, 014 755 4170</p>	<p>conway@nkonka.co.za</p>	<p>www.nkonkabushlodge.co.za www.nkonka.co.za</p>	<p>Under the shade of the bushveld, broad leaved trees, the 4 star Nkonka Bush Lodge, provides guests with an escape to enjoy the true beauty of nature surrounding them. Enjoy the small, intimate nature of the camp on a fully or self catered basis. Informative game drives or walks with our experienced guide, mountain biking and trips to surrounding attractions can all be enjoyed during your tranquil bushveld getaway. There is also the option of a self catered rustic bush camp, which is exclusive to one party at a time, so you are able to enjoy the beautiful Waterberg in the manner you prefer.</p>