



WATERBERG NATURE CONSERVANCY
Newsletter

Occasionally issued news of interest to WNC members and others who care about the Waterberg Number 29, August 2014

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Newsletter items by Richard Wadley
unless otherwise attributed.

Next General Meeting

Date: Thursday, 18 September

Venue: Vaalwater Rivier Oord

(two km past the Spar on the old Ellisras Road, turn left)

Time: 2:00 pm

Guest Speakers:

1. Vincent van der Merwe, Endangered Wildlife Trust:
The Status of Wild Cheetah in South Africa
2. Jonathan Swart, Research Ecologist, Welgevonden Game Reserve:
Sarcoptic Mange in Blue Wildebeest

And More:

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Food and Drink

RSVP to Heidi Carlton by Monday 15 September 2014
(contact details at left)

Join the Conservancy

For those of you in the Waterberg who are receiving this Newsletter but are not Conservancy members, please join us. The over 70 members of the Waterberg Nature Conservancy reflect a variety of bush activities – private reserves and private homes, tourism operations, game ranching, hunting, commercial agriculture, conservation research, environmental education, small business.

Farewell to John Miller

It is with great sadness that we bid farewell to our Chairman of over six years, John Miller, and his partner Wendy Adams, who for some inexplicable reason have chosen to forsake this earthly paradise for a new home in the Wilderness area of the southern Cape. We have been assured that the move has nothing to do with the difference in levels of service delivery between the two provinces. John and Wendy have been fixtures of the Waterberg for many years – Wendy for over 20 – and leave behind many longstanding friends and an appreciative Conservancy membership.

During his long term as Chairman, John can take credit for having almost doubled our membership, for the initiation of our popular website (currently receiving a

facelift and a regular newsletter, which reaches many more people interested in conservation than just our members; and for having arranged and managed a full programme of interesting speakers on a wide range of topics at the several open meetings held each year. He also managed, with great persistence, to get the detailed locations of most members' properties onto a map, which was then compiled for us courtesy of Eskom.

His will be a hard act to follow.



Wendy and John among the Outeniquas

Wendy and John were presented with two field guides to the flora of the Garden Route on behalf of the membership; they leave with our best wishes for happiness and fulfilment in their new home.

In his farewell letter, John had this to say:

“As it is so often said when one departs one place for another, it is with both sadness and excitement that I must resign as Chairman of the Waterberg Nature Conservancy. I have lived in the Waterberg since 2002 and Wendy since 1992 and now it has come time to move on (to Wilderness on the southern coast of the Western Province).

As Chairman since 2008, it has been a privilege to be a part of much of the Conservancy's growth and evolution. It has not been a transformation – from a small band of ardent conservationists led in the early days by Clive Walker – but rather a continual progression toward a visible and important community organisation. In my time, membership has grown from about 40 members to over 70 members. We've published 28 issues of our Newsletter, full of relevant news and notable articles, now distributed to about 250 people interested in the Waterberg. We've established a website that captures Waterberg information and other substantive features. On important Waterberg and Vaalwater issues we've engaged with Limpopo Province and the Modimolle Local Municipality. We are an interested party to many proposed developments in the area. We have supported the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. I am personally quite pleased with the speakers that we've been able to attract, most of whom have educated and entertained us, and provided an opportunity on a personal level for us to get together with friends and make new ones.

The Conservancy remains a non-profit and voluntary group of interesting and interested people and I'm confident the Executive Committee and members will find new ways to grow and new activities to undertake to the benefit of the Waterberg.

I thank you all for your participation and support and for your wonderful gifts. - John Miller”

Hamba Kahle, Doug Loewenthal

At a Conservancy meeting on Thursday 15 May, one of the keynote speakers was Dr Doug Loewenthal, Director of the Lapalala Wilderness School. Doug, who'd then been in the position for just a year, spoke passionately and with great enthusiasm about the achievements of the LWS – and they are many; and his plans to expand the vision and range of the school's activities, both in terms of post-graduate research projects and further community outreach initiatives.

How shocked we were, therefore to learn, only three days later, that Doug had died in a vehicle accident on Lapalala. His passing was a huge loss to the school, where he'd begun to make a mark in re-defining its overall mission and

operational strategy, to take it to a new level of doing what it has already done so well for many years: delivering environmental education to the community at large.



Doug Loewenthal

At a memorial service held at LWS on 11 July, a large congregation of staff, friends and well-wishers, as well as Doug's family, who'd travelled up from the Cape with Duncan Parker, owner of Lapalala, heard warm and heartfelt tributes from Clive Walker (the founder and patron of the LWS), staff and family members. A marvellous choir from one of the outreach schools at Bakenberg sang hymns and praise songs in Doug's memory. It was a fitting ceremony to remember a talented life lost so young.

Alien & Invasive species: BREAKING NEWS!

The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) published Regulations on Alien and Invasive Species (AIS) in terms of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, on Friday 1st August 2014. They will come into force at the beginning of October.

A total of 559 alien species of plants and animals are now listed as invasive, in four different categories. A further 560 species are listed as prohibited, and may not be introduced into the country.

Go to the Invasive Species South Africa website for the published regulations and species lists: www.invasives.org.za

One of the major foci of the AIS regulations is on the early detection of and rapid response to emerging invasive species. These are in Category 1a, in terms of the Regulations, requiring immediate control, including by all landowners.

Nearly all the species listed in the Conservancy's factsheets about how to deal with alien and invasive species (available on our website) are categorised as 1b in the new Regulations, meaning that they should be removed where they occur in the areas indicated in each case.

Report courtesy of Lesley Henderson of ARC-Plant Protection Institute.

Recent Wild Dog Sightings in the Waterberg

Since early May, a pack of wild dogs numbering up to ten, has been sighted on several occasions along Tarentaalstraat, moving gradually southwards from Melkrivier towards Entabeni. The pack is being monitored by the EWT, which reports that sadly, at least one dog was shot recently. Fortunately, it was not killed; and is responding well to treatment. It will eventually be returned to the pack. Most landowners on whose properties the dogs have been seen, welcome their presence and are excited about the prospect of seeing these truly rare animals.

Those who see wild dog as vermin that should be exterminated - and unfortunately, there are some local landowners who hold this view - should pause to contemplate that the total remaining population of the species in South Africa is less than 500.



Wild dog on the road near Kgama, 18 May 2014

The wild dog is classified as Endangered by the IUCN and is governed by the Management Diversity Act and Threatened or Protected Species (TOPS) Regulations which also classify them as endangered. It is an offence to shoot or capture them without a permit.

Five months after the Flood: Where are the road repairs?

In March this year, parts of the Waterberg plateau, especially around Dorset, experienced the heaviest rainfall on record: in one ten-day period, some places registered over 450 mm – close to their annual average total rainfall! The result was that many district gravel roads, already in poor condition due to blocked or broken culverts and lack of maintenance, suffered serious wash-aways, aggravated by the breaching of numerous dams (several of which had been built without authority). The main tarred road to Lephalale, the R33, was cut by the washing away of a bridge. It remained closed to traffic for several weeks until one of the construction companies involved with building the Medupi power station came and built a temporary bridge for light traffic at its own expense (see the last newsletter). Subsequently, several heavy trucks, ignoring the road closed signs, have ploughed into and through the temporary bridge, causing damage and further delays. No significant attempts by the Limpopo Provincial Department of Roads & Transport to repair the official bridge have yet been observed, five months later.

Similarly, many gravel roads in the district remain formally closed to traffic, although makeshift repairs by local residents have resulted in most of these roads now being passable once more, albeit slowly and at the drivers' own risk. Despite reports that the department has received flood relief funding from the central government, to date, there's little or no evidence of it on the ground, apart from some signage warning of holes and detours.

With the next season's rains only a couple of months away, the department has little time in which to fulfil its obligation to repair the damage. Please get going guys! - before the money leaks out of the kitty.



In Limpopo, when they say potholes, they mean POTHOLES!

Winter is Aardvark Time!

Last August, we were thrilled to encounter an aardvark on a grassy plain on several afternoons – and eventually had a magnificent sighting of one at midday. This after over a decade of not seeing a single one, although they are frequently captured at night on IR cameras. This year has brought a repeat performance: throughout July and into August, the sighting of a lone aardvark scuffling around the plain has been a regular late afternoon occurrence, to the extent that we've been able to take guests out to view it. The animal is quite unconcerned by the approach of a vehicle, but if a human steps out, or makes a swift hand movement, it leaps away and is gone into the grass in seconds. Our dogs, veteran game viewers that they are, are as excited as their minds upon seeing an aardvark: they stand, quivering, tense, staring intensely, tails straight out behind them, breathless, thin lines of saliva dribbling from their open mouths. They are almost as much fun to watch as the object of their attentions!



Ethel out foraging on 3 August 2014 at 6pm

Questions about exotic game breeding that need to be asked

The recent interest in the breeding of rare game and colour variants has done much for the game industry. Some good and some bad. On the one hand it has heightened the awareness of the game industry and infused a great deal of money. Many an article has been written about the enormous amounts paid for buffalo, sable and other species. It has also ensured that many of these rare species that have been on the endangered list are now bred in greater numbers and are safe for the time being.



On the other hand it has introduced a greater awareness of colour variants such as Golden Gnu, Black Impala, White Kudu and others. These animals have always existed but in small numbers and for good reason. They are products of a recessive gene. Generally they stood out from the rest and were taken out by predators or did not survive due to skin pigmentation deficiencies.

Another issue is that these expensive animals are usually bred in small enclosures of 10 to 50 ha. The owner's position can be understood because he wants to protect his significant investment from predation and ticks. It also means that these animals need to be fed and this is usually done by way of special feeds to enhance the breeding capability. It fact

it is tantamount to domesticating our wildlife. How good is this for animals that have traditionally roamed free? Will they be able to fend for themselves and will their immune systems be able to cope if eventually released into game reserves or national parks? Or are they just being bred to satisfy the egos of foreign trophy hunters?



To protect these rare species and colour variants the owners have generally erected fences that have electric wires to prevent them from getting out or others from getting in. Some have gone a step further by installing 'Jakals draad' on the lower sections of the fence while others have even gone further by installing conveyor belting below ground so that nothing can crawl under the fence (see picture).

We must ask ourselves what happens to the snakes, especially protected species like pythons, that try to enter (see picture) and many of the smaller creatures like jackals, tortoises, pangolins, warthogs, to name a few. True conservation is surely holistic where each species has its place in the hierarchy. Should all this be happening in the name of conservation?

Ken Maud

Waterberg Fire Warning and Assistance Service

The Fire Season is upon us – and once again, the Waterberg Nature Conservancy is offering its members and all other interested & affected parties in the region its free, computerised sms-based fire warning and assistance service. As before, the service is offered in collaboration with the Modimolle Fire Protection Association.

All registered cellphone numbers will receive a daily sms fire warning advice on days when the fire risk is high; and be advised of any fire in their area that requires assistance to bring it under control.

In order to request assistance with a fire or to register your cellphone number on the system, contact Richard or Lyn Wadley, on 083 609 1425; or 083 609 1464 respectively.

Remember, that when requesting assistance, it is important to describe the location of the fire as accurately as possible in order that people are guided to it.




Stories and Images

We need your stories, imagery, articles, essays and announcements for the Conservancy Newsletter.

Good stories, unusual photographs, interesting articles, relevant essays, timely announcements – please share!

**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
Ant's Nest and Ant's 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	Ant's Nest and Ant's 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>Dr John Hanks Dr Douglas Loewenthal Anton Walker Jessica Babich</p>	<p>014 755 4066</p>	<p>hankspt@iafrica.com schooldirector@lapalala.com anton@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>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>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>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>
<p>Swebeswebe Wildlife Estate</p> 	<p>Ken Maud</p>	<p>014 763 6261</p>	<p>ken@swebeswebe.com</p>	<p>www.swebeswebe.com</p>	<p>An exclusive private wildlife estate measuring more than 5,000 hectares that is dedicated to conservation and environmental education. This impressive expanse of diverse African bush is in a Malaria free area and has 20 kilometers of riverine habitat flanked by impressive sandstone cliffs guarding ancient rock art paintings and is home to over 30 species of mammals. More than 300 recorded species of birds, and a variety of reptiles characteristic of this part of the bushveld, all add to the diverse charms of this secluded African retreat.</p>