



Waterberg Nature Conservancy Newsletter

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

Number 13, January 2011

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

John Miller, Chair
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Newsletter items by John Miller unless
otherwise attributed.

Next General Meeting

Date: Thursday, 10 March 2011
Venue: Farmers Hall, Vaalwater
Time: 2:30 pm

Guest Speakers from The Bateleurs: Avroy Shlain and Justin Bass

Avroy and Justin are both pilots and members of the Board of Directors of The Bateleurs, one of the largest environmental, flying, not-for-profit organisations in Africa.

Since its founding in 1998, The Bateleurs have flown hundreds of missions for conservation and the environment. The 130 volunteer pilot members, each with their own light aircraft, fly missions for those who need an aerial perspective of the issue they are addressing.

The Bateleurs have assisted more than 120 beneficiary organisations, including wildlife conservation bodies, government decision-making bodies, and non-governmental organisations. They provide decision-makers, researchers, educators, NGOs and the media with information which assists them to make sound environmental decisions.

Their missions have focused on illegal mining; roads; housing; tracking cheetah, wild dog, leopard or elephant in various conservation areas; counting dugong, giant sable or other rare species; and often assisting groups with aerial surveys that save their personnel hours or even days on the ground.

Avroy and Justin will speak to us about recent missions in the Waterberg area.

Also on the agenda:
Richard Wadley

Echoes from the Hills – Fragments of Waterberg History

Cash Bar and Light Supper at Very Reasonable Prices

RSVP to Heidi Carlton by Tuesday 8 March 2011
(contact details at left)

Invasive and Exotic Vegetation

by Wendy Adams

If you have visited Vaalwater over the last two months, you have no doubt seen how prevalent Pompom weed is in the town and how fast it is spreading outwards into agricultural land. Please do your part in controlling the spread of Pompom before it destroys our grazing and our wilderness landscape. Encourage your neighbours, business associates and friends to do likewise.

If you do not know the correct control measures for Pompom, contact Wendy Adams on equus@equus.co.za for assistance. Note that if you

are spraying the plants, it is imperative that you also collect all the flowerheads carefully in a plastic bag and burn them as the seeds will still be viable for a couple of weeks after spraying. You need to implement control measures right now before the seeds dry out in late January/February and are dispersed by the wind. March is too late and the problem will be tenfold next summer.

At our last general meeting, we had a presentation by Phetole Manyama of the Early Detection and Rapid Response Programme (EDRR) for Emerging Invasive Alien Plants. This programme is run by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and its aim is to protect our ecosystems from the negative impact of invasive plants through surveillance that enables early detection of invasions and allows for appropriate action. Please report any new outbreaks of Pompom weed to Sikhauli Nkhangweleni on 012 843 5029 with GPS coordinates and photos if possible. We will shortly be sending out to members the list of Priority Category 1a species for the northern regions of South Africa – these are the invaders which are considered the most serious threat to our biodiversity.

The Working for Water programme is active in our area and can provide assistance in controlling alien and invasive species, either with herbicide assistance or with teams of workers if the invasion necessitates it. Their website has useful information: www.dwaf.gov.za/wfw. The Project Manager for the Mokolo Catchment area (which includes Vaalwater) is Norman Malemela, 079 153 1608, normanledikwa2@gmail.com. The Project Manager for the Lephalale Catchment area is Ayefeli Mudau, 014 717 4912, mudaua@iafrica.com. The Area Manager for the Waterberg is Piet Schlemmer, 082 806 3587, 013 262 2407, pietsch@lantic.net.

WNC Executive Committee

Your 2011 Executive Committee members are in place. Please feel free to contact any of us about any Conservancy issue.

John Miller, Chair
Kelly Abram, Vice-Chair
Richard Wadley
Conway Volek
Peggy Parham
Ken Cowie
Shaun McCartney
Anne Scotting

WNC New Members

A warm welcome to new members Richard and Gisela Lotringer from Tholo Bush Estate on Witkop Road (about 40km from Lephalale).

In 2002, the Conservancy had 24 members. In 2008, there were 40 members. In 2010, we lost five members, but gained ten new ones. We are now 60 members. With your help, we can continue to grow.

We reflect 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. We will provide them with full information, and invite them to join. Let us know.

WNC Website

www.waterbergnatureconservancy.com

Our website is looking better and better, full of interesting and useful information. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

WNC Community Support

Bursary: Our bursary programme supports a Matriculant from any Waterberg secondary school who chooses to pursue his or her education at the tertiary level in a field related to nature conservation, environmental protection, or tourism management. For the 2011 academic year, we are now accepting applications.

For the 2010 academic year, we supported Salome Seaba in her fourth and final year of studies for a National Diploma in Water Care at Tshwane University of Technology. She did very well on all her courses, including passing four courses with distinction.

This is an important qualification, but she's not stopping there. She has now embarked on a BTech degree in Water Care, also from TUT. When I asked her what kinds of jobs this all may lead to, she said "a process controller, water technician, or operator in microbiological or water laboratories". She said she could work in

places such as "Eskom, Sasol, Sappi, leather producing companies, steel companies, abattoirs, gold fields, coal mines, SAB, dairies, municipal water boards, Department of Water Affairs and Environment". Wow. We continue to wish Salome the very best of luck, and hard work.

Charitable Organisation and Conservation Projects: We are now accepting applications from local charitable organisations and conservation projects for WNC support to their causes. Members are encouraged to identify worthy projects and invite them to apply.

Basic information and an application form for these WNC initiatives are available from Heidi Carlton.

WNC Members - Your Contact Details

We have taken very seriously our responsibility to keep your contact details private and to not use them for any purpose other than Conservancy business. Over the last few years, we have said no to several requests. We have said no to a local travel and tourism company. We've said no to someone who wanted to market a commercial product to each of us. There've been others as well.

Right now, we have two requests for your contact details. One is from the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve which would like to incorporate Conservancy members' contact details into its own database. Important undertaking, but I'm saying no. If, however, any of you would like to be on the Biosphere's database, you should write directly to Kelly Abram, the new Programme Co-ordinator of the Biosphere: info@waterbergbiosphere.org.

The other current request is from Conservancy member Sam van Coller who would like to help the three adult children of his Lindani staff find a job in the area. If you'd like to see if you could help, Sam has CVs of the three to share with you. They have spent the last year learning lodge and farming skills, and just as importantly, they've learned a sound work ethic. Write Sam directly at dvancoller@telkomsa.net.

Waterberg Biosphere Reserve Management Plan

The Waterberg District Municipality is financing the preparation of a Management Plan for the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve. The consultant, Contour Project Managers, presented the completed draft at a stakeholder workshop on 20 January. The plan includes the organisational structure of the Biosphere, the boundaries and zones (and suggested development standards and restrictions for each) for the Biosphere, and recommended development strategies for the Biosphere. For further information, contact Joheen Boonzaaier at jb@contourprojects.co.za, 014 537 2226.

Sibusiso Vilane and Daughter Setsabile Vilane Climb Kilimanjaro

Sibusiso Vilane, our favourite climber and explorer, recently climbed Mount Kilimanjaro (the eighth time he has led a group), this time in the company of his daughter Setsabile. Now 18 and in grade 12 at Penryn College near Whiteriver, Setsabile had last year joined the President's Award for Youth Empowerment which calls on members to participate in community service, skills development and adventure journeys. Sibusiso suggested that climbing Kilimanjaro would be an appropriate adventure journey. Setsabile accepted the challenge and embarked on a fitness program of hikes, running, and regular walking (with her mother at home along the streets of Nelspruit and with Peggy Parham here in the Waterberg).

Besides Setsabile, the team of nine included three men and their sixteen year old sons. The group began on the 15th of December, enjoyed excellent weather all the way, and summited on the 21st. Sibusiso says "it was awe-inspiring to see Setsabile get to the summit with me and the rest of the team. She didn't have much climbing experience but with all the hiking that she had done and the right mindset and self belief, she was always going to make it on Kilimanjaro."



Sibusiso will be leaving the Waterberg this year. He plans to keep on leading climbing expeditions – school hikes as well as more serious climbs. He'll continue his search and appeal for funding for future adventures such as Crossing Greenland and big mountain climbing expeditions. "Pan African Everest is my biggest dream, after which I would like to organize a Pan African Antarctica to the South Pole. Any contacts for sponsorship assistance will be most welcome. I have big dreams for myself and Africa, all to inspire and encourage Africans to strive to reach great heights in life." You'll find further information about Sibusiso and his plans at www.sibusisovilane.com.

Pioneers of the Waterberg **a new book by Elizabeth Hunter**

Waterberg native, Waterberg artist, Waterberg Nature Conservancy member – Liz Hunter launched her new book on 17 December. Richard Wadley tells us that the book is “an artistic combination of an unpublished manuscript and a selection of remarkable photographs from a hundred years ago. Together, they provide a sympathetic insight into the lives and life of an early Waterberg settler family. The story is embellished with several fascinating anecdotes about trekking and camping in the bushveld; the story of the Tamsen family of Nylstroom; the plight of Herero refugees; local characters; the scenery of the Waterberg; and more. This is a valuable addition to the small library of books dealing with the area.”

SLAPP Suits

as recounted by The Centre for Environmental Rights

The Centre for Environmental Rights welcomes the decision of the North Gauteng High Court to dismiss the damages claim of Wraypex Pty Ltd against four activists (Mervyn Gaylard, Helen Duigan, Lise Essberger and Arthur Barnes) for R170 million for alleged defamation and other damages.

This case was widely regarded as a test case for so-called SLAPP suits (strategic litigation against public participation). The litigation arose out of their opposition to a now completed 330 house luxury estate, a Gary Player designed golf course and hotel development, Blair Atholl, near Johannesburg. The estate borders on the Rhenosterspruit Conservancy as well as the Cradle of Humankind, a World Heritage site.

It was claimed by Wraypex in court papers that the four activists wrongfully and with intention to injure the developer, published false and malicious statements that it had not complied with the legal requirements for the development, that it had not submitted a comprehensive environmental impact assessment, that there had been no public participation and that Wraypex had attempted to bribe officials. As a result it claimed that its good name and reputation were damaged and that the approval of the development had been delayed as a result.

The defendants, however, claimed that the Rhenosterspruit Conservancy had opposed the development on the basis that it created a precedent for township and residential development in a greenbelt area.

On 6 December 2010, Judge Stanley Sapire handed down judgement in favour of the defendants, thereby defeating the developer’s claim. Arguments as to costs stand over until 2011. As at 7 December 2010, it is not yet known whether the developer plans to appeal the judgement.

The case has been followed closely by environmental activists and organisations across the country, many of whom have been similarly threatened by developers in the past. Some developers have even used the existence of this case to intimidate interested and affected parties in relation to other developments in other parts of the country.

Although there are developers who respect the regulatory framework within which they operate, there are unfortunately some who resent any objection to their proposed business ventures.

In recent years, the environmental sector has seen the rise of attempts to deter and threaten protest and participation in environmental governance by interested and affected parties (I&APs). These include threats of injury to the person and or property of environmental activists, as well as actual and threatened civil litigation against environmental activists and civil society organisations in order to censor, intimidate and silence critics by burdening them with the cost of a legal defense until they abandon their criticism or opposition. These are known as SLAPP suits.

Public Participation in Development Proposals

The ruling by the court in another, similar case is a well-articulated encouragement to be involved in the public participation process of development proposals. The court held that the activists’ conduct was one of

... a standard that any vibrant democratic society would be glad to have raised in its midst. Their interest in motivation is selfless, being to contribute to environmental protection in the common good. None of them stands to gain material personal profit. Their modus operandi is entirely peaceful. It is mobilised within a self-funding voluntary association. It is geared towards public participation, information gathering and exchange, discussion and the production of community-based mandates. Its accompanying public discourse and media coverage have been fair, with participants and readers alike being presented in a balanced way with the viewpoints of all sides. In my view, conduct of that sort earns the support of our constitution in this context, it should be borne in mind that the Constitution does not only afford a shield, to be resorted to passively and defensively. It also provides a sword, which groups like the Association can and should draw to empower their initiatives and interests.

Telkom Gets a Bell

by Richard Wadley

I am one of those who is quick to join the chorus of criticisms of our parastatals (Telkom, Eskom, Transnet etc), which so often are characterized by their dysfunctionality – as well as by the absence of a boss. Equally, however, I think it is important to sing their praises on the occasions when these are due.

On 23 December 2010 – when nearly the whole country had already gone on holiday – I was struggling to beat a year-end deadline for a consulting job when my Telkom VSat internet access was taken out by a nearby lightning strike (even though everything had been unplugged at the time).

Despondently, I phoned the relevant call centre, knowing from experience (with Johannesburg Connect, for example) that I was wasting my time. Somewhat to my surprise, a real person answered the call; even more so when the courteous respondent not only gave me the usual reference number (what one does with those, I've never figured out), but said she'd "escalate" the problem to a technician immediately.

Umm, I thought, my goose (or should that be turkey?) is cooked; I'll have to venture into the dreaded Gauteng jungle to finish my work.

Within an hour, I had a call from Siphso: he was driving up from Lephalale and wanted directions to the farm. Was this for real? Maybe.

An hour later, he called to say he'd broken down outside one of those bizarre zoo places on the Vaalwater-Marken road. He was afraid of tigers: could I come and fetch him?

Well, I did; I towed his vehicle to within a few metres of a feline's cage - where nobody would dare steal his seized-up bakkie - and brought him back to the farm. He had a new modem with him (it was actually a used modem that he'd found in his vehicle) – but, alas, it wouldn't function.

So, back to his marooned bakkie, where an apprehensive colleague had in the meanwhile arrived to collect him. "No problem", said Siphso, "I'll be back first thing in the morning". Yeah, right, I thought, on Christmas Eve. Gauteng, here I come.

At 07:00 next morning, a call: "I'm at your gate", said the now familiar voice. And he had a 'new' secondhand modem – which worked. But, by 10:00, he could not get the system to configure – a software problem that could only be resolved by a specially authorized person. His cell battery was flat, so he used my landline to call everyone he could think of – including some Telkom personnel. At last, Siphso packed up his stuff, apologized for being unable to get me up and running, but said I'd be hearing from a duly authorized technician. I started packing for town.

At midday, another call: this time from a technician *en route* from Pretoria – yes, from Tshwane, 230 km away. Could I give him directions please? At 13:30, he arrived. We fêted him with lunch, cool drinks and praise. Cheerfully, he got on to his laptop, eventually found someone still working in an office in Polokwane; and by 16:30, managed to get the system functioning.

"A pleasure", he said – "and if there's any trouble, here's my number, I'll come back in the morning". But... tomorrow's Christmas Day! "No problem – I'm on duty this weekend, my family understands and I get next weekend off. Goodbye – and a Happy Christmas!"

It certainly was – the Joburg trip was delayed by a few days!

In areas like ours, where the fixed line network is obsolete and falling apart and the bandwidth offered by the cell networks is narrower than your thumbnail, Telkom's VSat is a great solution – and if my recent experience is anything to go by, its technical support is committed and effective.

Thanks Telkom and Happy 2011. I hope they manage to find you a great new CEO – who stays...

Prescribed/Controlled Burning

Working on Fire says "Many of South Africa's biologically diverse ecosystems are fire adapted and depend on fire to regenerate and survive. However in many areas a nature-driven fire regime is no longer possible. The environment and its fuel load may need to be managed to reduce wildfire risk, while maintaining ecological patterns and processes, by using fire in a prescribed burning programme."

Are you thinking about doing some controlled burning on your land? Many of us have a lot of experience, and are confident about doing it, not only where appropriate and prudent, but legally and safely as well. But some of us are new to controlled burning. Doing it wrong, making mistakes is dangerous, might be illegal – and could result in a lawsuit.

We personally have found ourselves helping a neighbour fight his controlled burn that quickly got out of control. He thought he knew what he was doing, but – he set the fire in the middle of a hot, windy, and dry summer day, he didn't advise his neighbours, he set the fire from multiple points, he had only one other person to help control it, and he had no water available at the burn site. Not smart.

If you think your land needs a burn, but you know you need some wise advice, don't be shy – ask someone with experience.

What is the Difference between the Waterberg Nature Conservancy and the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve?

Understandably, this question keeps coming up. The information below was first published in our November 2008 Newsletter, and has been updated now. As a founder member of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, the Waterberg Nature Conservancy shares virtually all the values and objectives as the Biosphere, but with a clearly different constituency, mandate, structure, operation, and activities.

	<i>Waterberg Nature Conservancy</i>	<i>Waterberg Biosphere Reserve</i>
<i>Objectives</i> Promote Support Represent Participate Conserve Implement Create Enhance Provide Collaborate	fauna, flora and wilderness areas, historical sites, river systems and natural heritage sites; awareness of environmental issues by way of education, research, sustainable utilisation and tourism; upliftment, education and needs of Waterberg residents; legislation or other measures affecting the Conservancy and its members; dealing with government departments, other authorities and the public generally.	UNESCO's Man and Biosphere programme; environmental conservation; fauna, flora, and cultural history; strategies for the sustainable utilization of the natural and cultural resources of the area; job opportunities, education and training programmes; tourism potential and information network; scientific and technical support service; local, provincial, national, and international institutions; stakeholders.
<i>Association Type, Dues, and Membership</i>	Voluntary association. Annual dues: R550 for land owners; R150 for other supporters; R50 for non-profits, charities, schools.	Section 21 non-profit; Forum of 30 stakeholder groups (one of which is WNC), 50% private sector, NGO, community, 50% government; one of 531 biosphere reserves in 105 countries.
<i>Boundaries</i>	No borders or boundaries, but encompasses what is commonly regarded as the Waterberg Mountain region.	Demarcated region, in review, encompassing majority of what is commonly regarded as the Waterberg Mountains.
<i>Stakeholders and Constituency</i>	65 members; over 185,000 hectares; over 1000 employees; private reserves and homes, tourism, game ranching, hunting, agriculture; research, education.	Provincial government departments of environment, education, agriculture, and land development; district and local municipalities; communities living within and on the fringe of the Biosphere; NGOs, WNC, and others.
<i>Structure</i>	Chairman, Executive Committee, and Secretary/Treasurer.	Chairman, Executive Committee, and four subcommittees.
<i>Activities and Operation</i>	four meetings per year; conservation issues (e.g., elephant contraception, invasive and exotic plants, groundwater in the Waterberg, rhino poaching, etc.); community issues (e.g., municipal rates, proposed developments, roads, Waterberg history, etc.); management of SMS Fire System; support for bursary, community project, conservation project; website; Newsletter and conservation news.	stakeholder groups; national and provincial Man and Biosphere programs; support to Integrated Development Plans, Spatial Development Framework; EIAs, land claimants, Waterberg Meander route, eco-tourism, community owned and operated tourism ventures (i.e., Telekishi)

**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	014 721 0063	equus@equus.co.za	www.equus.co.za	
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 	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.
Where the real Africa begins!					

Company	Contact	Contact Numbers	Email	Web Address	Brief Description
<p>Lapalala Wilderness</p> 	<p>Anthony Roberts (MD) Wild Revolution; Jessica Babich / Patrick Bonior (PR)</p>	<p>(014) 755-4065 (Lapalala Main Office) 084 404-7800 (Wild Revolution)</p>	<p>anthony@lapalala.com info@wildrevolution.co.za</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 the 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. 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 visits to bushman paintings, horse riding, clay 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 to the Kruger National or Pilanesberg Park sightseeing or tours to God's window or Tzaneen can also be organized.</p>