



Waterberg Nature Conservancy Newsletter

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

Number 17, February 2012

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Newsletter items by John Miller unless
otherwise attributed.

Next General Meeting

Date: Thursday, 1 March 2012

Venue: Vaalwater Rivier Oord

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

Time: 2:30 pm

**Guest Speaker: Arnaud le Roux
Endangered Wildlife Trust**

Operation Oxpecker: The Oxpecker's disappearance and re-appearance in the Waterberg

Operation Oxpecker is aimed at preserving the existing populations of Yellow-billed Oxpecker (*Buphagus africanus*) and Red-billed Oxpeckers (*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*) on privately owned and state owned land in South Africa and also at expanding these populations into other areas where oxpeckers used to occur before the introduction of oxpecker incompatible ectoparasiticides.

This has particular relevance to the Waterberg. The Red-Billed Oxpeckers were indigenous to the area, and in fact, quite common. In the early 20th century, the introduction of arsenical followed by organophosphate dips were nothing less than a total disaster for the oxpeckers and other beneficial creatures. They were re-introduced in Lapalala Wilderness in the late 1990s, followed by an additional release in the Waterberg in 2008. Oxpeckers now thrive in the Waterberg.

Arnaud le Roux has been with the Endangered Wildlife Trust for seven years, serving as its Animal Health and Vegetation Management Coordinator of the Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Programme in southern Africa. He is well equipped to advise land owners and managers on a wide range of conservation and rangeland management issues, including the responsible use of agrochemicals in the environment.

Food and Drink

RSVP to Heidi Carlton by Monday 27 February 2012
(contact details at left)

Executive Committee

At the AGM on 17 November, we re-elected the same 2011 Executive Committee and at our ExCo meeting on 4 January we re-elected the same 2011 Chair and Vice-Chair. Thus, in 2012, we are

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

Bursary Programme, Expanded

In 2010, we established a programme to support 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 or environmental protection. Since then, we have had one applicant, who we were pleased to be able to assist in her Water Quality studies. In an effort to reach out further to Waterberg Matriculants in need, we have now expanded the eligible fields of study from nature conservation and environmental protection to any field at all. We urge Conservancy members to identify and inform any student you know who merits such a bursary. Full information may be obtained from Heidi Carlton.

Pompom Weed Day

by Kelly Abram

On Monday 30 January, a collaboration between the Waterberg Nature Conservancy and the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve organised a pilot event for Pompom Weed eradication and awareness. Welgevonden supplied a team with vehicles and herbicide and the Waterberg Biosphere organised a team from Timothy House (at Waterberg Welfare Society). The idea was to spread the message about Pompom Weed and tackle the issue of the plant invading the town of Vaalwater and the surrounds. There have been teams from both South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and Working for Water (WFW) in and around the area battling with Pompom Weed over the last couple of months. It is apparent, however, that unless local people and land owners get behind this invasive plant issue we will be seeing the kind of takeover of our grasslands that has been experienced in KwazuluNatal. Unless we can stop this plant now we will be fighting a losing battle and we will see our grasslands and wetlands destroyed.



There were about 21 people involved in Pompom Weed Day, actively cutting and spraying the weed. After carrying out a quick survey of the town and surrounding roads and recording GPS coordinates of Pompom Weed, the teams concentrated on two areas of dense Pompom Weed on private land in Vaalwater. These were the areas around the silos and the land behind the silos. Because they were on private land, SANBI and WFW teams had not been able to spray. We deemed these priority areas, which if uncontrolled will produce a source of seeds that will spread further into the surrounding areas. Thanks to Abrie Zaayman for permission to enter his land so that we could work on Pompom Weed.

Pompom Weed was removed by one team cutting off the flower and seed heads and the second team following with spray packs with herbicide that weaken and kill the plant after so many cycles of spraying. To control and eradicate Pompom Weed requires a long term commitment due to the herbicide being only effective with long term use. The WNC and WBR will continue their efforts to both assist in the control and eradication as well as the important communication and awareness of this dangerous plant in the future. With this pilot day, we are better equipped to organise a much bigger event in the next flowering season and get many more people involved. Our thanks goes also to the Welgevonden team for assisting with spraying and herbicides and also to the Timothy House volunteers.

If you come across Pompom Weed on your property, here is how it should be removed and controlled:

For small areas of plants you can cut the plant down. The best method is to cut off any flower or seed heads and burn them. You can then cut down the rest of the plant down to the ground. It is not advisable to pull out the plant as the disturbance and breaking of the root stimulates the plant to grow more. During the growing season you can repeatedly cut the plant down. This will use food reserves in the roots and stress the plant eventually killing it.

For large areas you will need a herbicide treatment.



Assistance either in the form of the herbicide and/or teams is available from Working for Water. Contact Norman Malemela on 079 153 1608 or email normanledikwa2@gmail.com for more information.

What not to do – please do not ignore Pompom Weed. It must be eradicated now. If left alone it will spread aggressively and take over our grasslands.

Any new sightings of Pompom Weed can be reported to Kelly Abram Waterberg Biosphere Reserve – email info@waterbergbiosphere.org and also to Lesley Henderson Henderson@sanbi.org (Include date, GPS or approximate locality, habitat and abundance).

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!

Book Review

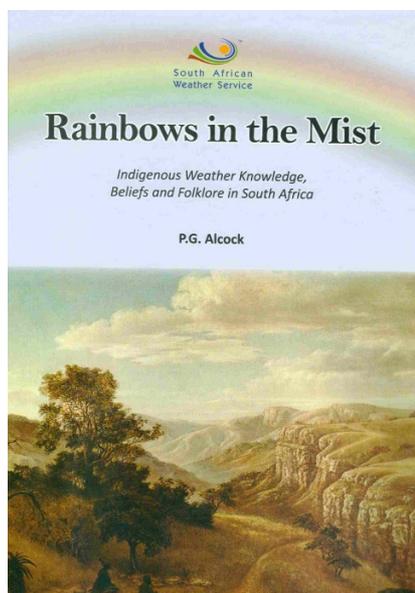
by Richard Wadley

Rainbows in the Mist: Indigenous Weather Knowledge, Beliefs and Folklore in South Africa

By P.G. Alcock, 2010.

South African Weather Service (SAWS), Pretoria. Hardcover, A4, 582 pages. R390 + postage.

Order directly from SAWS: elsa.dejager@weathersa.co.za ; or tel: 012 367 6022.



The Weather: this is the one subject everyone has something to say about; the one topic about which almost any opinion can be given without causing offence; the one variable that no amount of money, prayer or patronage can influence; and the one factor which, despite its potentially profound impact on our lives and environment, remains notoriously difficult to predict.

But so dependent is all life – and humankind in particular – upon what the weather will deliver, that ever since our ancestors began to think and communicate, humans have spent inordinate amounts of time and effort in trying to understand the forces that determine different weather features; to influence these forces in one way or another; to identify and interpret signs that might predict what weather is approaching; and to rationalise and explain why different weather-related incidents occur.

Useful science-based weather forecasting is both a relatively recent development (only in the last 160 years) and one embraced mainly by educated, urbanised citizens. In the recent past, and even currently among many rural communities (arguably those communities most directly and immediately affected by changes in the weather), explanations of meteorological phenomena were / are based on traditional, experiential and mythological inputs, or religious dogma.

Until now, there has not been a concerted effort to collate and document the many historical accounts, both written and oral, that contain fascinating and quaint tales, fables and mores related to the weather. Dr Peter Alcock's new book, ***Rainbows in the Mist***, has achieved the objective of recording these stories admirably. Dr Alcock is a noted geographer with a long professional involvement in water matters, especially in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal. Yet here, he has successfully shed his academic gown to compile a treasure trove of essentially non-scientific stories about South African weather. This effort has required him to glean material from a remarkable variety of often obscure sources; to translate it into a consistent format; and to arrange it into logical and interesting groupings that make for an absorbing read.

And what a delightful surprise to learn that the publisher is none other than the national weather service, SAWS! Over the last year or two, SAWS has made an enormous effort to modernise and make its offering to the public

more relevant, primarily through a transformation of its website (www.weathersa.co.za) – a fine example that many other stuffy government departments with public faces could follow.

Rainbows in the Mist is a big book: almost 600 large format pages packed with text. Topics are grouped into 22 chapters that include the sun and moon, seasons, floods and drought, rain ceremonies, thunder, lightning and hail, plant and animal life. Each topic commences with an introductory section, and then delves into anecdotes drawn from tribal beliefs and rituals, through the accounts and interpretations of early travellers, to those of more recent white settlers.

A serious shortcoming, in my view, is the absence of *any* illustrations in the text (apart from some images on the end-papers and a few maps of limited value). There must have been many that could have been used, both to augment the written descriptions and to provide relief from the unrelenting script. Given the scale of the project and the undoubtedly extensive research on the part of the author in compiling the book – during which he would certainly have encountered relevant pictorial material - it is all the more disappointing that illustrations were omitted.

As evinced by the book, drought is probably the single most critical weather phenomenon in the minds of most South Africans; and efforts to prevent or alleviate drought gave rise to elaborate rain-making rituals, in both traditional and contemporary societies. As Dr Alcock notes, “*Drought...can virtually destroy rural districts...and leaves debt, hopelessness and despair in its wake*”.

Among numerous enjoyable anecdotes in this chapter, Dr Alcock recounts the view of the 18th century traveller Sparrman that the aridity of the central Karoo was due to “subterraneous [i.e. underground] heat” rather than to the nature of the sparse rainfall (occasional high intensity storms). The council of the Karoo town of Fraserburg resolved, in 1899, to declare a public holiday (*‘n damvakansie*) every time the town’s dam overflowed: “*the town clerk, on such rare occasions, solemnly visited all businesses to advise them of the holiday*”. It was a rare event.

In 1911, a severe drought in northern Natal led to a local chief deciding “*to remedy the situation by fumigating the crops in the customary manner by using magic prepared from human remains*”. Accordingly, an elderly visitor was murdered and parts of his body used. It is not recorded whether the ‘remedy’ was successful, but the chief and his accomplices were subsequently hanged for their crime. A few years later, during another severe drought, a Zulu chief “*approached the local magistrate for permission, readily granted, to turn over all the loose stones in the ward*”, in the belief that a spell had been cast and that it had been hidden beneath one of the stones. Dr Alcock continues “*The stone-turning exercise continued for several days with no satisfactory results. The drought was actually broken by the magistrate himself*”, who shot a tame guineafowl (by mistake) on the grounds of his own Residency. “*The bird belonged to a policeman. Rain fell a few days later, thereby conclusively proving that the spell had been lodged, not beneath a stone, but in the heart of the now dead guineafowl*”. Under the circumstances, the policeman apparently forgave the magistrate for his misdemeanour!

Each of the 22 chapters in this entertaining and comprehensively referenced book contains numerous similar stories, prefaced by some gentle scientific discussion about conventional thinking on the climatic or weather topic involved. So much information, so pleasantly narrated and ordered, is packed into this volume that it is possible for the reader to dip into it at any point and – even in the absence of illustrations - derive pleasure from reading whatever catches the eye.

I can recommend this work to anyone with more than a passing interest in the weather and the ways in which our tapestry of communities has attempted to interpret and influence weather conditions over the years.

85 Ways to Care for the Earth – Numbers 24 through 54

The Wildlife & Environment Society of SA (WESSA) is celebrating its 85th birthday. For the occasion, it has produced a small, fold-out booklet that identifies 85 ways to care for the earth. They’ve grouped the suggestions into five categories – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle; Get Water Wise; Biodiversity is Life; Go for Green Energy; and General Ideas to help care for the Earth. With WESSA’s permission, we’re publishing these suggestions in three Newsletters, of which this is the second. You’ll find many of these very familiar and obvious, which of course doesn’t negate their value. You’ll find some new ideas here as well. Here are numbers 24 through 54 in the categories of Get Water Wise and Biodiversity is Life:

Get Water Wise!

24. Visit the FLOW (For Love of Water: www.forloveofwater.co.za) website and join the campaign to help instill a respect and understanding for water. Learn about solutions to the water crisis, facts about bottled, tap and sea water and details about FLOW, the movie

25. Identify where the wetlands are in your area, learn more about what threatens them, and try to get interested people to help conserve them
26. Help eradicate alien invasive plants that threaten our water resources
27. Reduce water hungry lawns by replanting with indigenous hardy groundcovers, and plant more indigenous drought-resistant shrubs and trees
28. Water your garden in the early morning to prevent too much evaporation and conserve water
29. Become water meter literate at home and work. Do daily monitoring for a month to see if you can reduce demand by:
 30. Fixing tap washers
 31. Putting some volume displacement into toilet cisterns
 32. Fitting dual flush systems on loos
 33. Using timers or solenoids on taps to conserve water
 34. Setting a new short shower speed record without alienating those close to you!
 35. Recycling your bathwater by using it to flush your toilet
 36. Opt to shower rather than bath, and replace showers with low pressure (water saving) shower heads
 37. Make an attractive rain barrel in a cost effective way by building from scratch or recycling a container of at least 100 litres , and find ways to use this water instead of tap water wherever possible
 38. Lobby officials and politicians to make rain barrels or 'Jojo' tanks available to everyone
 39. Take an interest in groundwater and aquifers

Biodiversity is Life

40. Make a conscious decision to help conserve our fast dwindling wildlife and flora - "extinction is forever"
 41. Go indigenous - start at home with at least one locally indigenous plant and add more each year
 42. Get an old copy of Bring back Nature to your garden (a WESSA publication)
 43. Make cuttings or seedlings of local plants and give them as presents
 44. Ensure your home or garden is a safe and supportive wildlife corridor for small creatures
 45. Join or form a WESSA Friends group or similar organization
 46. Join or form a conservancy to protect a local area
 47. Build and appropriately position bat and owl boxes
 48. Create a bird sanctuary
 49. Encourage and make informed decisions based on reputable eco-labeling such as the SASSI seafood initiative
 50. Get schools and other involved in plot adoption and restorative work
 51. Become a biodiversity custodian at a level that suits you by:
 52. Getting an informed handle on aspects of regional biodiversity , whether animals, birds, plants, fish, reptiles or insects
 53. Participating in spatial planning, conservancy and bioregional strategy formation
 54. Making information accessible and attractive to others
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**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.

<p>Kololo Game Reserve</p> 	<p>Elize Oosthuizen</p>	<p>014 721 0920 / 014 721 0080 / 014 721 9910</p>	<p>admin@kololo.co.za</p>	<p>www.kololo.co.za</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Kwalata Wilderness CC</p>  <p>Where the real Africa begins!</p>	<p>Reinhard Heuser</p>	<p>014 755 4104 / 014 755 4249 / 082 414 5622</p>	<p>reinhard@kwalata.com, caroline@kwalata.com; office@kwalata.com; werner@kwalata.com</p>	<p>www.kwalata.com</p>	<p>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>

<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>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>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>
<p>Swebeswebe Wildlife Estate</p>	<p>Ken Maud</p>	<p>014 763 6261 087 943 3063</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>