



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

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Waterberg Nature Conservancy

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Newsletter items by John Miller
unless otherwise attributed

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Next General Meeting

Thursday, 7 February 2013
2:00 pm
Vaalwater Rivier Oord

Guest Speaker: Andre Uys
Marakele Park (Pty Ltd): Past Present, and Future

with
Pete Oxford and Renée Bish
Photographers in Residence at Marakele Park

and more:
Eco Schools, Water Research, Biosphere Update,
Conservancy Projects

Andre Uys, a veterinarian with a focus on wildlife, has been working in conservation in the southern Africa region for many years. Since July 2011 when he became General Manager of Marakele Park (Pty Ltd), a private section of Marakele National Park and a Big 5 area, he has embarked on an ambitious conservation and management plan to maintain and protect the substantial and varied game population and fully reclaim the exceptionally beautiful and diverse reserve.

Pete Oxford, a long time resident of Ecuador, has produced many books on the country. He is a biologist by training, working with his wife Renée Bish as a full time professional photographer. His photographic magazine credits include, National Geographic, Time, Smithsonian, Life Magazine, Nature's Best, Wanderlust, Geo, International Wildlife, BBC Wildlife, Africa Geographic and Africa Birds and Birding.

Pete and Renée are currently based as 'Photographers in Residence' at Marakele Park in order to document the reserve and helping to promote it.

Inaugural Conservationist of the Year Award 2012

At the beginning of this year, the Waterberg Nature Conservancy created the award of Conservationist of the Year in order to recognise the efforts of individuals or groups – not necessarily members of the Conservancy -- that have made truly outstanding, lasting contributions to the conservation of the Waterberg.

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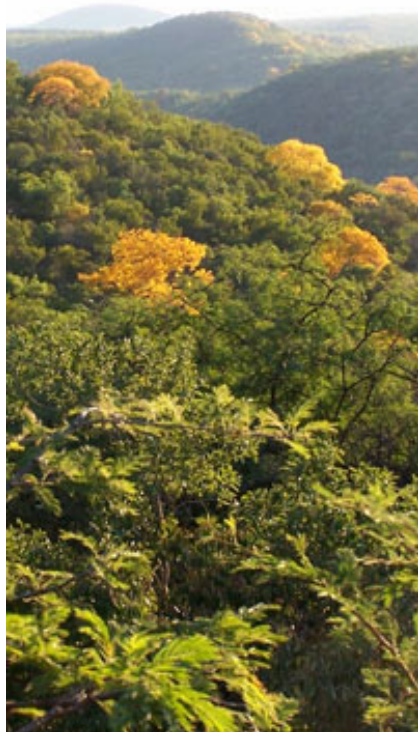


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Such contributions could be in the form of erosion control; removal of alien / invasive vegetation; rehabilitation of degraded farm land; creation of authentic eco-tourism facilities; initiation of, or support for sustainable, relevant skills-development programmes among the community; or active participation in conservation-related organisations in the region.

While many members of the Conservancy, and several other local residents, have fine records in one or more of these fields – and to them we and future generations owe a debt of gratitude – the purpose of the award is to identify those few examples whose commitment to conservation in every way has been quite exceptional and an example for the rest of us to follow.

The inaugural Conservationist of the Year award, made at our 2012 AGM in December, went to:

**Sam and Peggy van Collier
and the team at Lindani Lodges led by
Naomi Marakela, Solly Nkhumane, Johannes Mosima,
Cry Ranthlaku, and Glynis Brown**

Peggy and Sam first came to the Waterberg over 20 years ago when they acquired the property Klipheuvel, which old farmstead they eventually converted into the wonderful home and exquisite garden where they now live. Although of necessity they continued to live in Johannesburg in those early years, all their free time was devoted to their new Waterberg property, which gradually expanded as portions of neighbouring farms, like Koperfontein, Doornsloot, Buffelshoek and Doornkom, became available.

Several of these farms had old, dilapidated homesteads on them. Slowly, with loving care and attention to detail, these old houses were renovated and turned into cosy, comfortable but affordable self-catering cottages. The farms were also infested with alien and invasive plants and degraded, abandoned crop lands. Before long, programmes were in place to remove them – a process that continues to this day, although most of the property has now been returned to its natural condition.

From the outset, Sam and Peggy were determined that their investment in the Waterberg should include the social upliftment and education of everyone in their employ. They, together with managers Johan Kotze, followed by Oldrich van Schalkwyk, put in place bold programmes to develop the skills of employees and to reward them with senior positions of accountability and responsibility. Today, Lindani is run largely by these now highly skilled and experienced members of the team.

Lindani's excellent reputation among environmentalists, birders, mountain bikers and the self-catering eco-tourist community is a fine tribute both to the personnel involved and to the dedicated, passionate, skills-development initiatives launched years ago by the van Collers.

But Peggy and Sam did not confine their interest and enthusiasm to Lindani itself. They helped found the Waterberg Nature Conservancy, which Sam later chaired for several years, and for which he drew up the development guidelines still used by both the Conservancy and Waterberg Biosphere Reserve today.

They became involved with the Telekishi community eco-tourism project, to which Sam and members of the Lindani team devoted many, many hours of manual labour and skills training, as well as substantial injections of personal money, equipment and marketing efforts. They never sought thanks for all this investment, seeing it as a tangible way of creating employment opportunities for the community.

Back on Lindani, the team has now developed an exciting set of mountain biking trails and this year held a hugely successful racing event, which is to be repeated in 2013. Peggy has trained several staff to prepare a range of appetising meals, which guests tiring of the self-catered option may order for delivery to their lodges.

Here's what Sam and Peggy have to say about Lindani:

"We are trying to achieve many things at Lindani – let nature be itself, protected from so much that can damage it, enable employees to grow and enjoy life, provide guests with the opportunity to renew their souls within a beautiful environment, let families spend quality time together in the bush, establish positive relationships with the communities around us. In essence we want Lindani to be a place of peace and joy for all who associate with it."

To Sam and Peggy van Collier and the Lindani team:
Please accept the Waterberg Nature Conservancy's
Inaugural Conservationist of the Year Award, 2012.

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Photo: standing, from left to right: John Miller, Johannes Mosima, Cry Ranthlaku, Naomi Marakela, Peggy van Coller; kneeling: Sam van Coller, Solly Nkhumane.

Waterberg Conservationist of the Year, 2013

As announced above, we awarded Sam van Coller and the entire Lindani team our first Waterberg Conservationist of the Year 2012. We are now seeking your nominations for candidates for the 2013 award.

Given that we are privileged to live within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, much of which consists of unspoiled terrain of great scenic beauty and biodiversity, it is all the more important that we recognize individual residents who display an awareness of this privilege and who work proactively to safeguard it.

Among our residents, there surely are some whose contributions to conservation, either in the course of their commercial operations or the management of their properties, stand out from the rest of us and who could serve as champions for us to emulate.

Help us identify individuals who might be candidates for what we hope will become a prestigious and sought-after accolade. It is not necessary for a candidate to be a member of the Conservancy in order to qualify for the award (in fact we might find that the award leads to increased membership!) – although of course that would be welcomed too. It is important for nominees to have demonstrated unusual concern for the environment through their operations, policies and actions. The award criteria are the following:

- The candidate is a 'permanent' resident of the Waterberg.
- The candidate has incorporated effective conservation principles into his / her normal land management.
- The candidate is supportive of formal conservation programmes, even though he or she might not be a high-profile, active participant.
- The candidate displays a high level of responsibility for both the natural and social environment in which we live.
- The successful candidate would be an influential advocate for conservation and an important example for others to follow.

Think about it, and let us hear from you with your nominations.

Career Opportunities

The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) is providing support for the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve to fill the following four positions:

Environmental Educator
Biodiversity Monitoring Officer
River and Wetland Officer
Communication Officer

The closing date for applicants is 31 January 2013. Further information is available from Kelly Abram at info@waterbergbiosphere.org.

Legal Requirements regarding Fire Breaks and Fire Fighting by Richard Wadley

Every autumn, landowners are faced with the obligation, in terms of the relevant legislation (the National Veld and Forest Fire Act, No. 101, of 1998) to create or renew the firebreaks around their properties. For the record, this is what the law has to say on the subject:

Duty to prepare and maintain firebreaks

12. (1) Every owner on whose land a veld fire may start or burn, or from whose land it may spread, must prepare and maintain a firebreak on his / herside of the boundary between his / her land and any adjoining land.

Note, however, the following concession, which can be quite useful in cases where boundaries traverse inaccessible terrain:

(7) Owners of adjoining land may agree to position a common firebreak away from the boundary.

13. An owner who is obliged to prepare and maintain a firebreak must ensure that, with due regard to the weather, climate, terrain and vegetation of the area –

(a) it is wide enough and long enough to have a reasonable chance of preventing a veld fire from spreading to or from neighbouring land;

(b) it does not cause soil erosion; and

(c) it is reasonably free of flammable material capable of carrying a veld fire across it.

Note that the Act does not say how wide a break should be. The Modimolle Fire Protection Association (FPA), which is Government's authorised agent in our area, recommends a width of three metres in normal terrain, but less in mountainous terrain. In fact, we all know that even a 50 metre firebreak will not be wide enough to stop a determined fire backed by a strong wind. So, what's the point?

Well, firstly, we need – for insurance purposes – to comply with the law. Secondly, and of more value perhaps, is that a firebreak, especially if it is a road, allows fire fighters access to an area; and it provides a line from which to either resist an oncoming fire, or, more usually, a line from which to start a controlled back burn.

Many landowners, especially those in difficult terrain, prefer to burn firebreaks around their properties during autumn, rather than trying to create and maintain cleared tracks, which can be difficult, expensive, or even impossible to achieve; and which can cause serious erosion. It could even be argued that a burnt firebreak is a better, more environmentally friendly, cheaper and more efficient option than a scraped road; but it does mean that there might not be access for vehicles along the break in the event of a need to combat an advancing fire.

The Act has quite a lot to say about burning firebreaks; and landowners who choose this option need to be familiar with the following:

12. (2) (a) If an owner intends to prepare and maintain a firebreak by burning, he/ she must determine a mutually agreeable date or dates with the owner(s) of adjoining land for doing so, and inform the FPA for the area.

(b) If agreement cannot be reached [those who drafted the law about intransigent neighbours!], such owner must give to the owners of adjoining land and the FPA at least 14 days' written notice of the day/ days during which he / she intends burning firebreaks, fire danger permitting.

(3) An owner of adjoining land who has agreed [to the burning on a particular day/days] must –

(a) burn his firebreak on the boundary concerned on the same day / days;

or (b) be present, or have his agent present, at such burning; and

(c) ensure that a sufficient number of persons are present on his / her side of the boundary to prevent any spread of fire when the firebreak is burned.

NB (4) An owner may not burn a firebreak, despite having complied with the above if –

the FPA objects to the proposed burning; or

a warning has been published...because the fire danger is high in the region; or

the conditions are not conducive to the burning of firebreaks.

The FPA has teams of personnel trained in managing and extinguishing fires. Members of an FPA can request the services of these teams in burning their firebreaks. The cost of using a team is limited to the cost of transporting the team from its base to and from the property to be burned. Contact the FPA for further information.

Remember, that failure on the part of an owner to create a fire break is a criminal offence, punishable by a fine, jail sentence or both.

Fire Fighting: Readiness for fire fighting

The Act stipulates what landowners need to provide for on their properties in order to prevent / combat fires; and also the circumstances under which they may enter other people's properties:

17. (1) Every owner on whose land a veld fire may start or burn, or from whose land it may spread must –

(a) have such equipment, protective clothing and trained personnel for extinguishing fires as are –

(i) prescribed; or

(ii) in the absence of prescribed requirements, reasonably required in the circumstances;

(b) ensure that in his / her absence, responsible persons are present on or near his / her land who, in the event of a fire, will –

(i) extinguish the fire, or assist in doing so; and

(ii) take all reasonable steps to alert the owners of adjoining land and the relevant FPA.

(2) An owner may appoint an agent to do all that he / she is required to do in terms of this section.

Actions to Fight Fires

18. (1) Any owner who has reason to believe that a fire on his / her land or the land of an adjoining owner may endanger life, property or the environment, must immediately –

(a) take all reasonable steps to notify –

(i) the Fire Protection Officer [of the FPA concerned] or, failing him / her, any member of the executive committee of the FPA; and

(ii) the owners of adjoining land; and

(b) do everything in his / her power to stop the spread of the fire.

(2) Any person who has reason to believe that a fire on any land may endanger life, property or the environment may, together with any other person under his / her control, enter that land, or land to which the fire can spread, in order to prevent that fire from spreading, or to extinguish it.


For those who are interested in understanding the overall legislation, the full Act is readily available (in pdf) either from me, from the Conservancy's website, or from your local FPA.

Contact Details

Modimolle FPA – Secretary: Gerrit Ferreira 082 562 6204

Fire Protection Officer: Dan Mokanyama 082 664 1158

Lephalale FPA – Fire Protection Officer: Barry Kruger 073 005 9392




Water Research in the Waterberg

Michela Marcatelli is a PhD Researcher in Development Studies at the International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam in The Hague, The Netherlands. She has carried out research on the right to water in South Africa, and is now studying patterns of access and use of water both in the domestic and productive sectors, with a specific focus on how they may impact the lives of the poor.

Michela is currently in the process of defining a fieldwork site to investigate access and use of water resources and to understand the complexities of the South African water sector. She is particularly interested in the competing uses of water resulting from the growing demands of agriculture, mining, conservation, and domestic services.

Michela has not yet settled on the geographic focus of her work, but the Waterberg Plateau is one of her options. She'll be in Vaalwater from 7 to 10 February, carrying out interviews and learning about the state of our water.

She would like to meet with those of you with both good insights and hard facts about water access and use in the Waterberg. If you'd like to participate in this important study and meet with Michela, please write her at marcatelli@iss.nl and plan to meet with her at 12:30 pm on Thursday 7 February, prior to our WNC meeting, at the Vaalwater Rivier Oord.



Bottled Water – A Response

In our September 2012 issue of this Newsletter, we reprinted an article, entitled 'The Bottled

Water Scam', from 'The Environment' magazine. The South African National Bottled Water Association (SANBWA) challenged several statements in the story and we give Charlotte Metcalf, SANBWA's technical manager, the opportunity to respond:

Bottled water is one of the safest, healthiest and most environmentally-friendly packaged beverages on the restaurant table or in the retailer's fridge.

Safest. SANBWA members (about 80% of South Africa's bottled water volume) are required to adhere to a locally developed but globally benchmarked standard (www.sanbwa.org.za/guidelines.asp).

This benchmark provides a vision for improvements in six areas: management commitment, quality systems, HACCP, resources (including pre-requisite programs), operational controls and environmental stewardship. Members are audited every year to ensure adherence to the standard.

SANBWA also randomly samples member products and tests them for harmful agents. The SANBWA logo therefore acts as a seal of safety and quality.

In addition, the material used to manufacture bottled water bottles – PET (polyethylene terephthalate) – is approved as safe for food and beverage contact by regulatory agencies throughout the world. PET does not contain dioxins, or Bisphenol A, or DEHA, or endocrine disruptors. PET is inert and the idea that it 'leaches' harmful chemicals when frozen or heated is unsubstantiated by credible evidence. PET bottles can be re-used by consumers if they take steps to prevent the growth of bacteria, just as you would when re-using any other food or beverage containers.

Healthiest. Rising obesity and diabetes rates make water a healthier alternative – be it from a tap or bottle. But expecting consumers to replace bottled water with tap water is a mammoth task as bottled water competes with beverages for share of throat – people do drink both. If you doubt this, ask shoppers buying bottled water at a convenience store on a petrol forecourt or at a sports event what they would do if bottled water wasn't available. Would they look for a tap or water fountain, or would they select another bottled beverage, possibly one laden with sugars?

Consumers who are unable to drink bottled water will not necessarily drink tap water instead. A recent study found approximately 30% of bottled water drinkers will choose tap water when bottled water is not available, but the remaining 70% will prefer another bottled beverage. Bottled water does not compete with tap water; it is a healthy alternative to other bottled beverages, a much appreciated fact particularly in countries where obesity and diabetes are on the rise. For soldiers on battle grounds, for victims of disasters, for mothers of infants in areas where the quality of drinking water cannot be guaranteed, and so on, bottled water is a necessary and appreciated product.

Environmentally-friendly. SANBWA members are required to conserve their water sources, and reduce the industry's impact on the environment. Their businesses are very water efficient. For example, the annual water usage by the total South African bottled water industry equates to 22,7 litres/second. This is just slightly more than that used by one – that's one – golf course during a year.

Expressed as a ratio, the local industry water usage benchmark is 1.8:1, and there are plants that achieve ratios of as low as 1.2:1 – 1.4:1 (not the 3:1 ratio of tap water mentioned in the Environment article; furthermore, most volume of bottled water is derived from natural and sustainable resources, not the tap).

All SANBWA members who bottle natural water and waters defined by origin are required to only bottle water extracted from a sustainable source, and this source is groundwater. South African legislation covering the use of groundwater is well developed, and is directed towards ensuring the sustainability of water resources, rather than depleting them.

The total groundwater consumption by the bottled water industry (production volumes plus incidental use) in 2011 was 0.72 million m³. This equates to less than 0.015% of the country's total groundwater usage.

Also, South Africa uses approximately 150 000 tons (1%) of the 15 million tons of PET resin made globally every year. Of this 150 000 tons, only 6 000 tons (4%) are used by the local bottled water industry; the remaining 96% is used to bottle other beverages and other products, including food. The usage by the bottled water industry translated into 794-million 500ml bottles in 2011 (397-million litres) and not the 1.2-trillion suggested in the Environment article.

According to PET recycling concern Petco, some 42% of PET bottles in South Africa are recycled.

Conclusion. Like the planet we inhabit, our bodies comprise mostly water. Water – in all its forms – is therefore a vital component of our diet, as well as the healthiest beverage option for societies plagued by diseases such as obesity and diabetes.

Bottled water has the lightest environmental footprint of all packaged beverages – one that can be reduced by 25% if consumers were to simply recycle.

For further information please contact Charlotte Metcalf at + 011 884 5916; or charlotte.metcalf@worldonline.co.za.



Three Community Outreach Projects

Just a reminder of the three Community Outreach projects that the Conservancy has established:

Support to a Waterberg Conservation Project: The WNC welcomes applications from Waterberg organizations seeking funding or other support for worthy projects that contribute to nature conservation in the Waterberg, especially those that have limited access to other funding sources.

Support to a Waterberg Charitable Organisation Project: The WNC welcomes applications from Waterberg organizations seeking funding or other support for worthy projects that contribute to the improvement to the lives of the various communities of the Waterberg, especially those that have limited access to other funding sources.

Support to a Waterberg Student: The WNC welcomes applications from Waterberg secondary school students studying or intending to study at tertiary or university institutions for diplomas or degrees in subjects that lead to careers in nature conservation and environmental protection. Example subjects include: Nature Conservation; Field Guiding; Water Care; Hospitality and Tourism.

Do you have a writer or photographer in the family?

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The Newsletter is distributed all members at 126 addresses plus an additional 142 others who are interested in the Conservancy. That's 268 people, and still growing.

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

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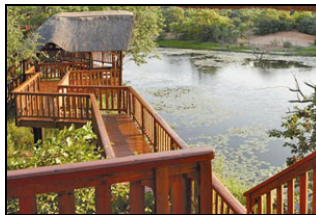
diversity of plant, bird and animal life offered by the unique environment of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve.

www.mokabilodge.com

yeldaw@mweb.co.za

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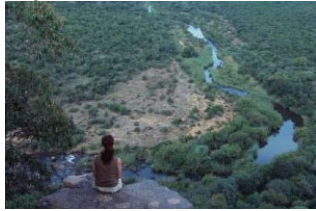


Activities include hunting trips with a professional hunter, guided walks to bushman paintings, horse riding, clay target shooting, pistol shooting exercises, bird watching or game drives in an open 4x4 vehicle.

We gladly organize elephant back rides, visits to the white lion park or a personal touch with rhinos. Longer trips to the Kruger National Park, Pilanesberg Park or other sightseeing venues or tours to God's window or Tzaneen can be organized.

www.msolosolo.com
office@msolosolo.com
014 755 4106 / 083 450 6535

Lapalala Wilderness



A private reserve that is dedicated to conservation, ecotourism, community upliftment and environmental education.

Anton Walker - anton@lapalala.com
Douglas Lewenthal, Wilderness School Director - 082 887-3912

Jessica Babich - jessica@lapalala.com
www.lapalala.com
014 755 4066

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Tessa and Ant Baber
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Wendy has retired from guiding, but Carla Lucassen is operating Savannah Horse Trails on

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Wendy Adams
John Miller
014 721 0063
equus@equus.co.za
www.equus.co.za

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Conway and Becky Volek
082 824 1750, 082 570 8494, 014 755 4170
conway@nkonka.co.za
www.nkonkabushlodge.co.za
www.nkonka.co.za

Swebeswebe Wildlife Estate



Swebeswebe is an exclusive privately owned wildlife estate and nature reserve. This impressive expanse of diverse African bush is in a Malaria free area and has 20 kilometers of riverine habitat flanked by impressive Waterberg 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 huge variety of bushveld flora, all add to the diverse charms of this secluded African retreat.

Ken Maud
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www.swebeswebe.com



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