

**KOGELBERG**  
**Branch of the Botanical Society of SA**

**Newsletter:**  
**March 2015**

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**THE BATTLE OF BETTY'S BAY**  
**ROUND 624**

The next hack takes place on Sunday 5th April (Easter Sunday) from 9am to noon.  
**VENUE;** Agapanthus and Adenandra roads, as for last month

**BOOK LAUNCH**

Kogelberg Branch of BotSoc SA is about to publish a book!

For years we have dreamed of publishing a book which would encourage property owners and local authorities to act as wise custodians of their land in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve. Now this is becoming a reality, thanks to author, Tim Attwell and his team of advisors and crucially, to generous funding from the Education Fund of the Botanical Society of SA, a grant-in-aid from the Overstrand Municipality and proceeds of the raffle of a pendant made and given to us by Louise du Toit of Rooi Els.

We plan to make this book readily available to you, local estate agents, Harold Porter staff, schools, municipal officials, anyone who can affect this very special place in the Cape Floristic Region.

The official launch will be on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May in the morning at Harold Porter NBG. Details will be in the next issue of the newsletter.

Merrilee Berrisford, Chairman.

**TALKS**

**Saturday, 21 March.** An illustrated interaction between two horticulturalists, **Jane Forrester** and **Jenny Berrisford**, entitled **Some Aspects of Gardening in the Kogelberg Area**. Jane is horticulturalist at Harold Porter Gardens and Jenny recently retired from her business 'Jenny B Landscapes'. In the Nivenia Hall at 6p.m.

**Saturday, 18 April.** **Dr Michael Cramer** will speak on **Fairy circles in Namibia**. In the Nivenia Hall at 6p.m.

At all talks a voluntary collection will be taken and the attendance register will be circulated. Please note that the purpose of the register is twofold, firstly to advise the HPG for their records of the number of people attending and secondly so that regular attendees can be contacted should any alterations to the programme be made or, as has

happened, a visitor offers a talk at short notice. Liquid refreshments are also offered at the evening talks..

Contact Merrilee: 028 272 9314

## **WALK**

**Please note that this month there will not be the usual walk on the third Saturday of the month (21 March)..**

### **REPORT ON ROUND 623**

This Sunday hack took place over a weekend that was not without incident. A huge and near- disastrous fire started east of Dawidskraal in the river area on Saturday at lunchtime and virtually burnt out the whole of the vlei westwards up to Edwards Road. Although there were some close calls, no houses were lost thanks to the three helicopters and firefighting teams from all over the Western Cape, as well as our local volunteer team. All praise for a fantastic job by the fantastic men and women who fought hard and long in dangerous and difficult conditions.

Back to the hack! Our local and dedicated team was reduced due to seven hackers' houses being seriously threatened by the fire. However those who could turn up were fired up by the presence of eighteen final-year students from Stellenbosch University who kindly volunteered to help at our hack and timed it perfectly. The youngsters did a great job of weeding out the rooikrans amongst dense stands of leucadendron and other fynbos. A special thank you to Sophie von der Heyden for organising this young and enthusiastic "chain gang" "C a real shot in the arm for us oldies. Apart from the eighteen, the regulars were: Karin Smith, David Bossenger, Tom Dreyer, Jan Joubert, John Whitehead, Lewis, James & Ed Silberbauer. Chritine Dreyer made the sandwiches and Merran Silberbauer made the tea.

The next attack takes place on **Sunday, 5th April 2015** (Easter Sunday) from 9am to noon.

Venue: This was scheduled for Bass Lake (Malkopsvlei). However, the fire has made the area more difficult than can be thought possible. So we will gather around the most popular venue "C the Agapanthus/Adenandra/Aulux area. See you there!

Ed Silberbauer, Convenor

### **PRINGLE BAY HACK NO 101**

On Sunday, 22nd February 2015 the hack group continued with the eradication of alien vegetation (mainly Rooikrans and Port Jackson) on the road reserves along Bobby Road (between its intersections with Ann Road and Barbara Road) near the Beach area of Pringle Bay. The hack was tough, but extremely successful.

The hackers present were John Whitehead, Neil and Penny Berens, Frik Potgieter and Jane Fearnhead, Edward Silberbauer, Sue Fielden, Tom Dreyer, Daniel Swartling, Andy James, Sue Folb, Charles Hector, Mike Begley, Dave Muirhead, Tom Dreyer and Chris Geldenhuys. Louw and Karen Toerien, Alten Hulme and Andree Henning joined the hack as new members and they provided new energy and enthusiasm to the effort.

A special word of thanks to the members of the Bettys Bay Hack for the contribution and support provided by them to the Pringle Bay Hack. Their efforts and encouragement are, as always, greatly appreciated.

For the ever-necessary mid-morning tea and sandwiches, Helena and David Muirhead came to our rescue and that surely placed the spark back in everybody's energy levels. Thank you Dave and Helena, your input was greatly appreciated by all.

The next hack will be on **Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> March** 2015. As usual we will meet on the pavement opposite Drosters Centre in Central Avenue, Pringle Bay, at 08:30 and will then proceed to the hack site. The hack stops at 11:30. Everyone who would like to help rid Pringle Bay of alien vegetation will be welcome. Hacking tools are provided. Contact Chris on (028) 273 8588, or just turn up at the meeting point.

Chris Geldenhuys, Convenor

## ROOIELS HACK

**First Saturday** of the month **08:30 - 10:30**. Tools and refreshments provided. Contact: Anuta Scholtz at [anuta@omail.co.za](mailto:anuta@omail.co.za) or tel 083 388 8239, or Evette on tel 028 273 8483.

## FIRE REPORT - Saturday 28 February to Sunday 1 March 2015

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Overstrand Municipality and volunteer fire-fighters for the way in which the fire was managed on Saturday 28 February and Sunday 1 March. Liesel Krige, our local Councillor and many others were constantly keeping track of this fire and for more than 30 hours were watching and communicating developments. Lester Smith, the fire chief, was personally on the spot late on Sunday afternoon.

At about 9 pm on Sunday night, the fire found new energy. A sheet of flames from Otter Close to Bass Lake, pirouetted, dancing 40 m high in the strengthened SE wind. The fire was finally extinguished when it ran into Bass Lake, incinerating some canoes. By Monday morning, a smoking wasteland was left from Bass Rd to Reed Rd; all houses unscathed!

Generally speaking, the way in which the fire-fighting "forces" were deployed in relation to the constant changes in situation, was impressive. There were fire engines from Cape Town, the Overstrand, Kleinmond and the Betty's Bay and the Pringle Bay volunteers cruising around all night. Personally we got a 2 am phone call on Saturday night, from the Ratepayers' Association, to alert us that the fire was threatening. Many of us stood for hours watching flames and fire-fighters; the sky lit by huge orange flames, billowing smoke.

I am not sure how the spread of vehicles, manpower, the helicopters, and spotter planes, were managed. There must have been some central control. In any event, the various organisations collectively must have gained considerable experience in the management of such a complex operation. There must have been about 50 vehicles of one kind or another, blue and red lights flashing. No doubt our fire chief, Lester Smith will convene a meeting to pool experience and further develop fire management routines to fine-tune management of future fires.

We express our thanks and appreciation to those people, who as I write this, must be recovering from a 50-hour plus period of hard work and must be exhausted. Many property owners owe these folk for saving their houses when they were seriously threatened as the fire continually changed course, dying down in one spot, only to flare up elsewhere! Flames were as “big as houses”. Twirling and exploding in wild dances so that onlookers could not fail to be hugely impressed.

Peter Berrisford

### **BETTY'S BAY VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY FIRE FIGHTERS**

*The following email was sent out on the 5th of March by the Betty's Bay Ratepayers Association to those on its mailing list. If making a donation, please don't forget the reference BBVCFE*

Betty's Bay Fire - 28 February 2015

It has been an exhausting 5 days with crew running on 24 hour shifts, and due to limited resources, we were unable to post regular updates, but we are glad to announce that we have contained the fire and are in monitoring stages.

Thank you all for your kind and generous support! The offers of support and assistance have been overwhelming, and we are indeed very grateful.

Should you wish to assist us with other much needed operational costs, such as fuel, vehicles, uniforms, firefighting equipment, then please consider making a donation!

#### **BANKING DETAILS:**

Betty's Bay Ratepayers Association

ABSA Bank Hermanus

Branch code: 632005

Account number: 4066616439

Reference: Name & BBVCFE

### **HAROLD PORTER NATIONAL BOTANICAL GARDEN, LEOPARD'S KLOOF WALK 21<sup>st</sup> February 2015**

“There's one!” called one of our walking party, pointing high up. We scanned up and up the green cliff face to a grassy ledge sixty metres or so above the pool below the main waterfall in Leopard's Kloof. There it was, a bright red remnant of the ***Disa uniflora*** flowering season. By all accounts ***Disa uniflora*** put on a good display in Leopard's Kloof in 2015. But being latecomers among the *Disa* pilgrims up the kloof this year, we were lucky to have seen the last ***Disa uniflora*** specimen for the time being. We'll go earlier in ***Disa*** season next year.

***Disa uniflora*** is not the only reason to visit Leopard's Kloof. The trees make the trip worthwhile any time of year. Braam and Piet van Wyk's *Field Guide to Trees of Southern Africa*, with its useful Key to The Groups of trees, is indispensable in this delightful piece of Southern Afrotemperate Forest.

Spotting the difference between the two yellowwood species in the kloof, ***Podocarpus latifolius*** (Real yellowwood) and ***Podocarpus elongatus*** (Breede River yellowwood)

proved more challenging than we thought. Tree spotting goes better when you start with easily identifiable trees. Our old friend ***Cunonia capensis*** (rooiels), being in full flower, didn't disappoint. *Curtisia dentata* (assegaai) helped us feel better about our tree knowledge as we marvelled at its habit of sending up long, strong and straight shoots from points where it had been damaged, providing many a broom handle, assegaai shaft or fence dropper in days gone by. Rich yellow underbark helped identify ***Cassine peragua*** (Cape saffron or bastersaffraan). ***Maytenus acuminata*** (silky bark or 'sybas') revealed its name when a leaf was gently broken in two, showing elastic, rubbery threads holding the pieces together.

Turning to the ferns, ***Rumohra adiantiformis*** (seven weeks or Knysna fern) caught our attention. Werner, one of our party, reported that it is exported in vast quantities from the Knysna forest for the overseas floristry industry. The large ***Todea barbara*** (grape fern), with its trunk-like rhizome giving it the appearance of a tree fern, had us musing about the supercontinent Gondwana, since ***Todea barbara*** is indigenous to the South Western Cape, north to the Chimanimani mountains in eastern Zimbabwe as well as Australia and New Zealand (see Anne Bean and Amida Johns's *Wildflower Guide number 5*, published by the Botanical Society.)

After refreshments at the pool and happy thoughts of our evolutionary ancestors swinging through these forests before migrating to the savannah and learning to walk on two legs, we set off, bipedally, back to coffee at the Red Disa Restaurant. On the way two charismatic features of sandy soil in late summer caught our attention. The first was ***Haemanthus coccineus*** (April fool), or was it *H. sanguineus*? We should have inspected the stems more closely for speckles, or lack of them. The extraordinary ***Brunsvigia orientalis*** (candelabra flower) was the other.

Tim Attwell

## FROM MOROCCO TO NEW YORK IN A ROWING BOAT "C AFRICA TO AMERICA by Vasti Geldenhuys and Riaan Manser, 21 February 2015

Sitting watching TV one evening in their Bettys Bay home, Vasti mentioned to Riaan that she would like to do something great, something she could be proud of. Riaan, the intrepid maxi-adventurer, had cycled around Africa, kayaked around Madagascar and circumnavigated Iceland with a handicapped partner. When asked if she had ever wanted to join him, Vasti had answered with a very definite NO. She had done some mountain biking, but didn't enjoy suffering for lengths of time and wasn't even a happy camper.

Riaan knew she had always wanted to visit New York, so he replied: 'OK Vasti, I'll take you to New York, but we'll do it my way'. And so the idea for this incredible journey was hatched.

The audience of almost 100 who had come to hear their amazing story felt the emotions of excitement, real fear, loneliness, panic and heart-racing moments. These were vividly portrayed through the videos and pictures screened.

The story began in December 2013 when Riaan's promise to take Vasti to New York began in Morocco. His way was in a rowing boat. This small white boat was called 'The Spirit of the Deep', measured 7 m by 1.5 m, and had state-of-the-art technology "C necessary because there was no back-up or support vessel with them. Their shelter for 133 days was a tiny cabin into which they fitted like sardines alongside the most important

water-maker. A single bucket was used as a toilet, for hand basin washing, and to wash down the boat. Each day was spent rowing for between 8 and 12 hours. Food often came from the sea, but they were carrying dehydrated food as well.

There were terrifying moments. A huge wave knocked the boat sideways and it capsized with Vasti underneath. The GPS broke and they were nearly mown down by a large Russian tanker. Riaan left the boat to take photos from the sea, drifted 20-30 metres away and just managed to grab the fishing line while Vasti reeled him in. There were other life-threatening moments when just surviving was the priority, fear of failure was a driving force, and doing your 'best' was not good enough; times when they had to go beyond their best, proving that mind and body were capable of much more.

Vasti had achieved her dream. Her complete trust in Riaan's decision-making had paid off. The Statue of Liberty was in sight. New York was waiting for this intrepid couple and crowds were there to greet them.

An amazing story and so well told. Thank you both so much. Hope the grandchildren will one day be as enthralled as we all were.

Andrea Benn

### CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Kirstenbosch staffers are collecting seed from every species of fynbos to store at Kew Gardens for the Millenium Seed Bank Project, to protect against extinction. This is obviously a huge task and they would be glad of help from people who live in the Kogelberg and who could help by locating plants they are looking for so they can collect seed at the proper time. Victoria Wilman of Kirstenbosch Millenium Seed Bank would be very willing to come and explain the project to anyone willing and eager to help.

If you are interested in helping with this, please contact Charlotte Rademeyer on 028 273-8519.

### RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURES

<b>Month February</b>		<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Rainfall mm		28 ml	19.5 ml
Temp	Max	41	35
	Min	10	14

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS/ AND/ OR STATUS OF MEMBERSHIP

If you change your address, wish to resign or change your status, please notify the Botanical Society Head Office on (021) 797-2090, as they print the labels and keep the records. We do only the newsletter, e-mails and posting. To receive this newsletter via e-mail (and save the Branch the costs of printing, packaging and postage) send your address to [peterb@5424@gmail.com](mailto:peterb@5424@gmail.com) **Please note that Peter's e-mail address has changed.**

## REMEMBER YOUR ARTICLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS ARE WELCOME

The editor reserves the right to edit contributions.

Deadline for the next newsletter is **Tuesday, 7 April 2015**

Please address all mail to: Kogelberg Branch of the Botanical Society of SA, P O Box 85, Betty's Bay 7141.

e-mail: [cradem@mweb.co.za](mailto:cradem@mweb.co.za).