

**KOGELBERG
Branch of the Botanical Society of SA
P.O.Box 85 Betty's Bay 7141.**

**Newsletter:
January 2014**

News Editors: Ed & Merran Silberbauer

**THE BATTLE OF BETTY'S BAY
ROUND 610**

The next attack takes place on Sunday 2nd February 2014, from 9am to noon
VENUE: Lakeside Drive, on the right hand side of Porter Drive when approaching from Centre Shop, the area is next to the last house on the left. Look for the Hack signpost on Porter Drive.

TALKS

Thursday 16th January 2014. Hilary Guise, who is in South Africa to lecture at UCT's Summer School, has selected **Flowers in the Art of the Great Masters** from her wide repertoire of lectures on the history of art. After the talk there will be wine and snacks and a chance to meet Hilary. In the Nivenia Hall at 6p.m. At her request the collection money will be donated to Harold Porter Gardens. Please note this is a Thursday.

Friday 21st February Arboretum de la Sedelle a garden in the woods with Nell Wanty, who will be visiting from France where she (horticulturalist) and her husband Philippe (botanist) have created an arboretum near Limoge which is home to a collection of over 400 species of trees and shrubs from all over the world including a world class collection of maples and which is open to the public in summer. It is classed *jardin remarquable* (Remarkable garden) by the French Ministry of Culture and the committee for parks and gardens of France. Nell is the daughter of Lyn & Hanie Hanekom of Betty's Bay. In the Nivenia Hall, 6pm on a week night - a Friday.

At all talks a voluntary collection will be taken and there will be liquid refreshments. Please check the posters for possible changes of venue. Contact Merrilee 028 272 9314.

WALK

Saturday 18th January. Amida Johns will lead a walk through Hangklip Valley with the opportunity for those who wish to walk up the Peak. Meet at **8a.m.** in the car park of HPG.

For further details (duration, severity, water etc), contact Barbara 0823384109.

REPORT ON HACK NO 609

The weather was really kind to us, allowing a first class turn out of 35 troops both young and old to clear a large area of youngish myrtles. (from 2 pm that afternoon and through the night 75 mm of rain fell upon us – good timing!) This area was consumed by a fierce fire in April 2011 so we

had relatively easy access to the enemy. The heavy Brigade did have a few arduous sorties into a forest of *Psoralea pinnata* and keurboom to destroy many large Albizia heavily seeded, and Port Jackson. Albizia is becoming more and more of a problem in Betty's Bay – as are a multitude of other aliens which are spreading from private properties. The small arms Brigade – many small arms ranging from 4 to 11 years of age - all amazingly agile and willing – tackled the really hard task of hauling out all the dead bodies and lining them up along the road ready to be collected by the burial cart. All available tree poppers were in use (15 of them) to good effect.

All hacks are useful and gratifying but this one was particularly so as the result of the morning's hard labour was clearly visible to all.

Our tea time hosts, Jaap and Annie van Deventer kindly provided a table and chairs which were much appreciated by:- Peter & Merrilee Berrisford with son Stephen and grandchildren Xavier and Zara, Martin and Hilary Mauve with son Anton, daughter-in-law Jessica and their children Amelia and Nina (who all flew back to the UK that afternoon) and another granddaughter Meg Rose Mauve Lawrence, John & Andrea Benn with friend Jane Verge, Tim Attwell, David Bossenger, Tom Dreyer, John Whitehead, Frik Potgieter, Allan & Helene Heydorn, Barbara Jenman, Gordon Rushton, John McNaught Davis, Malcolm Pollard, on holiday from George with son-in-law Martin Bensch and grandsons Sean and Michael, Peter Digby whose mother Louise had kindly chauffeured tea maker Merran, Lewis, Caroline, who made the sandwiches, and Ed Silberbauer.

Ed Silberbauer, Convenor.

PRINGLE BAY HACK NO 91

There was no hack scheduled for December. The next hack is **Sunday 26th January**. As usual we will meet on the pavement opposite Drosters Centre in Central Avenue, Pringle Bay and then proceed to the hack site. Everyone who would like to help rid Pringle Bay of alien vegetation will be welcome. The hack stops at 11.30. Hacking tools are provided. Contact John at (028) 273 8807 or Ian at (028) 273 8589 or just turn up at the meeting point.

John Whitehead, Convenor.

PENNY PALMER WINS!

The Veld & Flora Committee annually awards a year's free membership of the BotSoc for the best article published that year by an amateur botanist/scientist and for 2013 our Penny Palmer and Wendy Carstens are the joint winners for Penny's article on the Betty's Bay dunes and Wendy's on proteas. Congratulations.

Eds.

FYNBOS GARDENING **HOW TO CREATE AN ATTRACTIVE FIREWISE GARDEN:**

The recent very wet winter has resulted in either very lush new growth or dead plants which have been “drowned” by the high water table.

First and foremost you need to remove all dead vegetation, and then prune back any tall growth near the house. This will certainly leave you with a huge pile of potentially hazardous material should there be a fire. Contact one of the garden service companies to remove this for you, or load up a bakkie or trailer and take it to one of the dumps.

Keep tree branches trimmed well away from the roof-line. Your shrubberies should be some distance away from the house. If you plant fire resistant ground covers around this area you will create a neat contained border which will help keep flames away from the taller, inflammable indigenous vegetation.

Again I state the obvious.....Alien vegetation; especially that which originates from Australia, is much more likely to burn, and very hotly at that. There is an exception to this situation.....our indigenous “gonnabos” or passerine. This plant was used by the voortrekkers as “firelighters” for their “bak-oonde”. The pollen, produced in spring, can cause severe allergic re-actions. Remove these unattractive plants from your erf.

It is a good idea to have buffalo lawn or sourfig (carpobrotus sp.) planted near the house. Not only will this keep the flames away from the buildings but fire-fighters will have easy access to the buildings. You could add some height to this part of the garden by adding aloes or other succulents.

Suitable attractive groundcovers will help keep the soil from getting too hot in summer while at the same time act as fire-retardants.

* indicates succulent plants

Very low growing on the outside of the bed:

Cotulata turbinata,

Helichrysum argyrophylla,

Diamondia margaretae,

Hermania angularis

*Sedum rubrotinctum,

monopsis lutea (for wet places)

Slightly taller plants towards the inside:

*bulbine frutescens,

*crassula multicava,

*tulbaghis violaceae,

*miniature agapanthus,

*plectranthus neochilus

, Gazania rigens / uniflora,

Sutera for shady areas

Be careful of the sprawling larger “groundcovers” like the Barleria species, Osteospermum sp., Arctotis sp. and Geranium incanum. These pretty plants straggle into everything and need to be

regularly pruned to keep them looking good.

GARDEN HINT: I mentioned in an earlier article how to treat the shady and often windy southern side of the building. If you wish to plant this area...now is the time...you have maximum sun and the soil temperature is warm enough for plants/cuttings to become established. Obviously some watering is required.

Jenny B.

THE LEOPARD

- a key umbrella species for Biodiversity, Conservation, and Environmental Education
- if you study them you can conserve them, a talk by Jeannie Hayward and Anita Meyer of the Cape Leopard Trust.

Of all the larger mammals that used to roam the Cederberg/Boland Mountains the leopard is the only one left in a contracted area surrounded by human habitation. The study area extends from Namaqualand to the Gouritz River. It was started in the Cederberg because of conflicts with local farmers. The study aims to conserve not only the leopards but the habitat in which they live.

During their three and a half year study Jeannie and Anita have driven and hiked each day for many hours but have not yet actually seen a leopard. They are extremely shy and elusive animals which move like shadows. How then do you study what you do not get to see?

There are signs that they leave behind.

1 – Spoor. They retract their claws when walking. Like cats the back of the pad is large, with small toe pads showing no nails. Size 6-8cm.

2 – Scats (droppings) are used as territorial markings on a trail or grass where the smell can spread.

3 – Scratch marks on trees where they sharpen claws. Secretion glands at the base of the tail serve as a chemical communication.

4 – Camera photos taken at high speed record date and time and present an ID kit for each animal. There are 2 cameras set up at each location to catch lateral side views. The pattern of spots, like our finger prints, is unique to each animal.

Most interesting also are the number of other creatures caught on camera – baboons, aardwolf, aardvark, African wildcat and kittens, klipspringer, fish eagle, cape eagle owl, honey badger, large and small genet, mongoose, polecat, scrub hare, rabbits and more.. A tiny striped weasel was photographed way out of its known territory – an exciting first.

Sometimes a leopard is darted and a collar fitted with a GPS monitor. Measurements are taken of feet, nails, weight and teeth. A ridge behind the canine gives an indication of age. Lifespan is 12/13 years, but a toothless male caught and darted was estimated to be 15 years old.

The Cederberg/Boland leopards are significantly smaller than those found in Kruger. 57 leopards have been identified in the Bainskloof to Kogelberg area. 7 have since been collared in the Boland, including Scott of the Kogelberg who was spotted on Hangklip, Leopard's Kloof and in

Rooiels where 2 or 3 females have been seen on camera.

To catch a leopard (not by its tail) a cage is set up as a trap, or less stressful a modified loop like a bungy cord is used. A vet is always on hand to dart and 45 minutes later to inject the reversal drug. The GPS tracking device gives accurate indications of the size of the territory and the area patrolled daily. The collar can be 'dropped' in any given area by remote signal.

Threats to our leopards include encroaching human population, fires (which also influence their ability to catch prey), and illegal snares – the leopard follows the same prey and also gets caught. A most interesting and informative talk, superbly illustrated, by two young ladies who couldn't even stop for a cup of tea as they were heading out to Groenland to do some tracking.

For people like us to get involved

- photos of leopards anywhere in RSA detailing GPS position, would be appreciated
- sign up for a My Planet card, swipe at nominated stores and thereby donate a small amount to the Cape Leopard Trust with each purchase.

Web site at www.capeleopard.org.za, and email boland@capeleopard.org.za.

Andrea Benn.

ALIEN INVASIVES: ROOIELS TO HERMANUS

Not all aliens are invasive and by the same token not all indigenous plants in S.A. are non invasive locally. To make matters worse there are vast numbers of "garden escapees" which are very difficult to deal with. The most difficult aspect of all to deal with is the attitude of the plot or land owner who says "no one tells me what I can or cannot plant". An assumption which will hopefully change when existing legislation is enforced. And too, there is the lack of knowledge.

In our area we have three invasive plant types:

- 1)Terribly invasive and extremely difficult – almost impossible to eradicate.
- 2)Very invasive but with patience and persistence can be eliminated.
- 3)Relatively easy to eliminate.

1)The New Zealand Xmas tree (*Metrosideros excelsus*).. A tree introduced into this area in the 1960's. This was a highly recommended tree particularly for Sunny Seas as it was a strong grower and did not mind gale force winds and salt laden air. It was also guaranteed not to be invasive. It took a bit of time to settle down and it was soon obvious that this tree is highly invasive, particularly in wetland conditions. The whole of our area can be regarded as wetland. It coppices vigorously and when cut, it produces a huge volume of seed which spreads. It did not take long before the population of New Zealand Xmas trees in Sunny Seas rocketed to uncontrollable proportions and remains the number one scourge over the whole area. One of the worst aspects is that it is still being planted. DONT DO IT.

2)Under the second heading falls the collection of Acacias. The worst around here being the Port Jackson (*Acacia saligna*) which coppices freely. The other common acacias are: Black wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) Australian blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) Cedar wattle (*Acacia*

elata) Rooikrans (*Acacia cyclops*).

Other bad invasives but not often recognised as such are *Pittosporum undulatum* (not to be confused with *Pittosporum viridifolium* which is indigenous) Manitoka (*Myoporum tenuifolium*) Australian myrtle (*Leptospermum laevigatum*) Hakeas and gumtree species.

3) Easy to eradicate if everyone puts their mind to it and cuts them close to the ground – the various pine species.

There are a large number of other invasive shrubs and trees in our area. Contact the Kogelberg branch of BotSoc. members of whom will be only too willing to help. There are also excellent publications on the subject, such as “Problem Plants and Alien Weeds of S.A.” by Clive Bromilow, which is well illustrated.

Ed Silberbauer.

RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURES

Month	December	2012	2013
Rainfall mm		3	11,5
Temp, °C	Max	34	34
	Min	13	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 merran@telkomsa.net

REMEMBER YOUR ARTICLES AND CONTRIBUTIONS ARE WELCOME

The editors reserve the right to edit contributions.

Deadline for the next newsletter is Tuesday, 4th February 2014.

Please address all mail to the new postal address: Kogelberg Branch of the Botanical Society of SA, P.O. Box 85, Betty's Bay 7141. E-mail : merran@telkomsa.net no graphics please.