

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

**Newsletter:
March 2014**

News Editors: Ed & Merran Silberbauer

**THE BATTLE OF BETTY'S BAY
ROUND 612**

The next attack takes place on Sunday 6th April 2014, from 9am to noon
VENUE: As for the last two months. Lakeside Drive, off Porter Drive.

TALKS

Saturday 15th March. Prof Jeremy Midgley of U.C.T. **“Pollination biology in the Cape as a model system for studying evolution”** in the Nivenia Hall at 6p.m.

Saturday 19th April. Tessa Oliver **“Reducing the risk of future fire disasters in the face of climate change in the fynbos biome”** Also in the Nivenia Hall at 6p.m. This is during the Easter weekend and we hope to encourage the weekenders to attend.

Saturday 17th May. Prof Anusuya Chinsany-Turan of U.C.T. **“The Evolution of birds.”**

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 15th March. A circular walk in the Brodie Link, the WWFSA property which links Betty's Bay and Pringle Bay. Meet in the carpark of the Harold Porter Gardens at 8.30 or Senecio Circle at 8.45 a.m. For further details as to duration, severity etc please contact Barbara.

Contact Barbara Jenman 082 338 4109.

DISCLAIMER

All participants in BotSoc events do so at their own risk. Whereas those in charge will do everything possible to ensure the safety of all participants, they cannot be held responsible in the event of unforeseen mishaps.

REPORT ON HACK NO 611

A howling north wester with the promise of rain and thick bush discouraged all but the five chainangers and a dedicated team of of three from England and Tom (of course). A number of large multi-limbed rooikrans were eliminated, cut up and dragged to the roadside. Another big job well done.

Next month same place – Lakeside Drive, off Porter Drive.

The Naafi was set up against a wall of a house to prevent the cups from blowing away and a wary eye had to be kept on Christine Dreyer's sandwiches when they were passed round. Battling the wind were:- David Bossenger, Tom Dreyer, Sue Fielden with UK vistor Linda Vernon and Mike Evans, Jan Joubert, Frik Potgieter, Lewis and Ed Silberbauer. Betsey Joubert with grandchildren Jaques (4) and Al'e (2) joined us for tea, which was made by Merran Silberbauer.

Ed Silberbauer Convenor.

PRINGLE BAY HACK NO 92

On Sunday 23rd February 2014 the Hack Group removed a considerable amount of Australian Myrtle, Rooikrans and some pine trees growing on the road reserve along Hangklip Road.

The hackers present were Frik Potgieter, Jane Fearnhead, Edward Silberbauer, Sue Fielden, Sue Folb, Penny and Neil Berens, Charles Hector, Bernard Heydenrich, Carol Wilson, Andy James, Ivan and Ria Staegmann, Natalie and Daniel Swartling and John Whitehead.

The very welcome mid-morning coffee and sandwiches were provided by Marion Cushny.

For the foreseeable future the Group will probably concentrate on alien vegetation growing on both sides of the Hangklip Road to improve the look of the entrance to the village

The next hack will be on 30 March 2014.

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 John at (028) 273 8807 or Ian at (028) 273 8589, or just turn up at the meeting point.

The cleaning up of the main road into Pringle Bay should be welcomed by all of the residents of Pringle Bay and the participation of anyone interested in helping with this project will be most welcome.

John Whitehead, Convenor.

FYNBOS GARDENING TO ATTRACT BIRDS.

Most indigenous gardens provide a haven for our local birds as I am sure you have seen for yourselves. If you have taken note of the previous articles written you will see that a well designed indigenous garden should provide our fynbos birds with a good habitat. If you incorporate the following hints you will upgrade your garden into a great habitat for them. You will already have decided if you want to have a manicured garden or one with an untamed look. The birds will probably enjoy the untamed garden more, but that does not preclude the manicured garden from attracting birds also. You could set aside a corner of the garden to be “wilder”.....in order to give nesting and perching places for the birds and to allow plant litter to collect under the vegetation for the ones who are shy and like to scratch and find insects to eat.

For those who are serious birders there are books available to buy. My favorite is “ATTRACTING BIRDS TO YOUR GARDEN IN SOUTH AFRICA” By Roy Trendler and Lex Hales. This book is beautifully illustrated and gives extensive tables of indigenous plants which will attract birds. Explanations are given as to the requirements of the different bird species, how to incorporate nesting boxes and provide extra food (beware of baboons though).

We live adjacent to the Koegelberg Biosphere reserve; so the birds are already on our doorstep, and just need a nudge to move closer to our homes. Firstly we need to provide an OPEN AREA: Our lawns fulfill this function as some birds like an open area (guinea fowl, francolin, hadeda and hoopoe for example) As I have said before, you can edge the lawn with low growing groundcovers , wild grasses etc. Many seed eating birds will enjoy this. Flowering groundcovers will attract insects for the birds too.

In a less used/busy part of the garden create the biggest bed you can, preferably to link up with the neighbour’s trees/taller shrubs. So that your EXCLUSION AREA links with this to create a bigger corridor for the birds to use. Plant your shrubs behind the ground cover; but close together and then you plant carefully selected trees also closer together than the normally “horticulturally correct distance”. Competition for sunlight will result in different levels of vegetation which will appeal to different birds. One can either place a few logs under the vegetation or leave some dead wood, insects will congregate here. If you have the space; a grouping of rocks will provide shelter for both insects and ground loving birds.

A few tall growing specimen trees can be planted on the lawn for shade, even in high traffic areas. This will provide CANOPY HABITAT for the birds....try to plant these trees so that the canopies interlink...providing corridors for the birds to move along. If you plan to entertain under a tree then choose one that the birds won’t feed on (fruit or seeds) and mess on your table or your guests.

WATER: A very important draw card. In a small garden you can place a birdbath near a to a

vegetated area with the other side facing an open area. Some birds like to approach the water from the shelter of vegetation while other like to see what is around them. The bath must be shallow enough on the edges for the birds to stand to drink, and deep enough to splash around in. If you have the space you could provide a pond with accompanying wetland. Many birds will absolutely love this and an extra source of food by way of frogs, snails etc will be provided. Any good gardening book will give you instructions as to how to create a pond/wetland. Again make sure that there is a vegetated side and an open side to the feature.

PEST MANAGEMENT: If you spread snail bait around or spray for insects you could cause the deaths of many birds. Ideally the birds should take care of the insects and wipe out the problem populations of aphids or caterpillars. Since the francolins have invaded my garden I have no more snails. These birds together with guinea fowl can dig sand baths, usually in the lawn. Provide a sandy patch for them in a well drained dry area and they will be delighted, and you will be able to designate a bathing area for them, in a place where the damage is limited.

Merrilee has told me following lovely story about Natures way of dealing with pests. The wild peach (*Kiggelaria africana*) is such a good tree to attract the birds because of their flowers and especially the seeds. The poisonous butterfly (*Acraea horta*) contains cyanide and because the birds do not parasitize this insect it flies slowly and lays eggs exclusively on the wild peach. The caterpillars which have black spikes are also poisonous and are avoided by all birds except the cuckoo ie: (Piet-my-vrou and Klaas's Cuckoo)which have evolved a mechanism by which they are not poisoned. A wasp then parasitizes the surviving caterpillars which form an amazing chrysalis about 5mm long which has on it a pattern like a greek vase. The above story illustrates so well the interlinked chain of events in nature.

A FEW SUITABLE PLANTS FOR A BIRD FRIENDLY GARDEN: Obviously included are the proteas, pincushions and ericas, especially those with long tubular flowers.

Groundcover: Shrubs for the Exclusion area:

Cape Weed: (*Arctotheca calendula*) *Num num* (*Carissa spp*) *Dymondia margaretae* (silver carpet) *Halleria lucida* (wild fuschia) *Love grass:*(*Eragrostis spp*) *Plumbago auriculata*

Vygie spp (*lampranthus*) *Leonotis spp* *Sutera pauciflora* (trailing phlox) *Aloe spp*

Trees Water/wetland plants:

Caledendron capense (Cape chestnut) *Aristea major* *Diospyros whyteana* (bladder nut) *Cyperus papyrus* (miniature papyrus) *Harpephyllum caffrum* (wild plum) *Dietes spp* (wild iris)

Rhus spp (karee) *Wachendorfia thyrisflora* (blood root) *Kiggelaria africana*(wild peach) *Zantedeschia aethopia* (arum lily) *Podocarpus henkelii* (yellow wood) *Crinum spp* *Olea europaea subsp africana* (wild olive)

So now all you need is a good book which will help you identify our wonderful birds. This will keep you captivated for hours as they live out their lives in front of us, and bring life to our gardens and joy into our lives.

Jenny B.

Please note that not all the recommended plants are endemic to our area.

ARBORETUM DE LA SEDELLE:A REMARKABLE GARDEN

Nell Wanty, speaking, for the first time in English, took us on a visual walk through this remarkable garden created by her husband Philippe and herself, where all the maintenance is done by this equally remarkable couple. The garden is 12 hectares in extent, and is a work in progress begun by Philippe in 1987, it lies in a deep valley sheltered from the sun, near the city of Limoges and runs down to the river Sedelle. The local trees are allowed to grow as in nature. Home to 400 species of trees and shrubs, collected from all over the world, dominated by the maples (*Acer*) with 100 species, sub species cultivars and varieties represented. These together with other plants such as the *Liquidamber* provide a spectacular display of autumnal foliage. In spring, pink cherry blossom, pink and white magnolia, yellow witchhazel and the handkerchief tree (*Davidia involucrata*) display their blossoms. The last was given its common name from the white bracts surrounding the insignificant flowers that dangle and flutter like waving handkerchiefs.

The garden is open to the public from May to October every year and the walk takes between one and a half and two hours through the areas each named for its dominant feature; the Pond, the Formal Garden, the River or for the species, the Oak (*Quercus*) Field, the Hornbeam (*Carpinus*) Valley, The *Cornus* (Dogwood) Garden etc. At the same time Nell showed the same view in the different seasons. The meadowland abounds in spring with wild flowers, narcissus, daffodils, wild orchids and Nell's new passion, the grasses. As a South African horticulturalist Nell misses the restios and other fynbos plants; but she and Philippe are restoring a heathland where two Mediterranean ericas thrive.

The soil is acidic and sandy with granite outcrops throughout the gardens except in the pond area. Young trees have to be protected from the deer who strip the bark and nibble the young shoots. Another unwelcome guest is the wild boar who grubs through the grass looking for earthworms. A recent problem has been the invasive pondweed as manual pulling has not proved successful and giant carp have been introduced to eat the weed.

During the open months two plant fairs are held (May and October) and outdoor concerts in the amphitheatre – smaller in scale than our Kirstenbosch or Harold Porter Gardens. For more information consult the website; arbosedelle.free.fr

Sue Fielden & Merran Silberbauer.

Walk in Buffelstal with Amida

Buffelstal is the valley inland from Pringle with the dam at the lower end and Buffelstalberg looming above. The drawcard of Amida and the Kogelberg attracted over twenty walkers to an area not open to the public; they came from Somerset West to Hemel and Aarde. Cilla and Tim, mostly resident in England, were from H and A and they were happy to meet Amida as some years ago they had bought two of her botanical art paintings.

The valley is an excellent place for understanding how the geology of the landscape determines what grows there. Amida is brilliant at explaining this. We learnt of the two sandstone layers, the Peninsula and the Nardouw and in-between them, the Cederberg shale. Then there are bands or patches of Pakhuis tillite, shallow layers of sandstone compressed by glaciers, looking brownish and supporting mosses and succulents.

The main puzzle of the walk was sorting out variants of *Erica thomae*; we saw two of the three, *Erica thomae thomae* and *Erica thomae porteri*, both with pink/red and white flowers. Amida found a low clump with fading flowers which was *Erica stokoei* which still had an extraordinary honey-like scent. *Erica pulchella* and *Erica cristata* were along the roadside.

The only slightly challenging part of the walk was crossing the landslip, a gouged out watercourse running from the top of the mountain down to the dam where it has formed a beach. The slip was a result of the rain in November when over 200mm fell overnight. Luckily all walkers had sturdy shoes, some had sticks; there were no mishaps. It is very important that our walkers come prepared with the right footwear, hats, sunblock, appropriate clothing and bring water.

Merrilee Berrisford.

RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURES

Month February	2013	2014
Rainfall mm	67,5	28
Temp C	33	41
Max		
Min	15	10

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, 9th April 2014

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