



The Rooikat

A newsletter produced by the Friends
of Vrolijkheid

No 41 ~ Sept 2009

 Please consider the environment and print only if strictly necessary

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Feedback from our Readers

The article on the fur trade in China was horrid and too awful to believe. How could any human being treat animals in such a way?! No matter how poor people are, there is no excuse for this abominable behaviour. They deserve to be treated in just the same way as the poor, defenseless raccoon dogs and other animals they slaughter for the fur trade.

– Disgusted in Montagu

Sadly, each year in China more than 2 million cats and several hundred thousand dogs are killed for their fur. In a new report, PETA investigators visited a rabbit farm where 600,000 animals will die in the forthcoming year, after living in the most inhumane conditions. Pledge your support and go fur-free. Visit www.peta.org for more information.

Can I still pay my annual membership fee for this year?

– Robert

Sure, Robert. Subs are due in June of each year, validating your membership for the next 12 months. If you pay yours now, you will remain a Friends of Vrolijkheid member until June 2010. It is important to be up to date, otherwise your membership automatically falls away. Frances Doering in McGregor is responsible for subs and membership records. See page 4 for further information.

We would love to hear from you, our members and readers. Your article in English or Afrikaans, comments and/or feedback are most welcome. Please write to us at alisonmdownie@yahoo.com or send a letter to PO Box 436, McGregor 6708.

Did You Know – by Dr Ernst Baard

Did you know that ...

- crocodiles developed out of the Archosaurs, an early reptile lineage that gave rise not only to dinosaurs, but birds as well!?
- crocodiles are therefore more closely related to birds than they are to other reptiles like tortoises, turtles, terrapins, lizards and snakes (genetic evidence corroborates this more and more)?
- crocodiles have a 4-chambered heart like birds and mammals, while other reptiles have a 2-chambered heart?
- crocodiles have a longitudinal cloacal opening, different to the transverse cloaca of other reptiles such as lizards and snakes?
- crocodiles have an ankle-bone arrangement (yes, crocodiles have ankles!) that allows for the characteristic crocodile gait, unlike that of lizards?
- there are currently 24 living species of crocodile, arranged into three different families, the crocs, the caimans and gharials?
- the Nile crocodile, which is the only representative in South Africa, can grow up to 5.5 m and weigh up to a ton?
- the saltwater crocodile of the Indo-Pacific is the largest crocodile (and reptile) alive (the Nile croc is regarded the second-largest)?
- crocs usually spend nights in the water, preventing their body temperatures from dropping too low?
- crocs can close their nostrils and ears to facilitate feeding underwater?
- stones found in the stomachs of crocodiles are thought to function as ballast, increasing the specific gravity of the animal to allow it to dive more easily, also allowing it to take approximately 12% more air into their lungs during dives?
- croc females will actively defend their nests against predators, and when ready to hatch, hatchlings will call from within the egg to attract the female's attention. She will then dig open the nest, pick up the young in her mouth and carry them, a few at a time, to the safety of the water?
- the female will even pick up some eggs and gently (imagine!!) crack them open to assist the youngsters to hatch!



- The koala sits in a tree smoking a joint. The lizard walks past and asks him what he's doing. "I am smoking a joint. Why don't you come up and join me?" The lizard joins him for a smoke, gets really thirsty and tells the koala he is going for a drink at the river. He loses his balance and falls in but a friendly crocodile sees him. He saves the lizard and helps him to the riverbank. The crocodile, angry with the koala's irresponsible behaviour and for causing all the trouble, walks up to the tree and shouts: "Hey, you!!" The koala, having just finished his second joint, looks down and says: "Sheeesh dude, my man! How much water did you drink!?" ♦

Fynbos Conservancy in the Witteberg – by Frik Linde

A privately-owned fynbos conservation area and heritage site, the Witteberg Private Nature Reserve, was recently established on the farm Elandskloof in the heart of the Witteberg just south of Matjiesfontein. Matjiesfontein is specifically referred to in order to avoid confusion with the Witteberg in the Eastern Cape and the Witteberg in the Free State.

The size of the nature reserve is about 44 square kilometres (4,300 ha) and includes three fynbos vegetation units, namely Matjiesfontein Shale Fynbos, -Shale Renosterbosveld and -Quartzite Fynbos. There are two Witteberg-endemic fynbos species, namely *Leucadendron cadens* and *Leucadendron osbornei*.



Indigenous fauna includes grey rhebok (pictured left), klipspringer, duiker, steenbok, aardwolf, aardvark, black-backed jackal, leopard, caracal, bat-eared fox and many more. Prolific birdlife includes many colourful nectar sippers.

The heritage aspects cover Early-, Middle- and Late Stone Age artefacts, San rock art, marine trace fossils, several heritage buildings and other historic structures. The Stone Age artefacts indicate that the Witteberg area has been inhabited for thousands of years, possibly even by the extinct *Homo erectus*.

The farm's first settlers were a couple by the name of Kriel who arrived at Elandskloof in around 1853. JG Kriel and his wife initially held the farm on a quit-rent basis, but purchased the farm in 1862. The couple had 17 children, six of whom died at a very young age. The original homestead, which, over the years, has been renovated and extended several times, still stands. Interestingly, during one of the renovations the doors of a 1938 model Pontiac were used as a substitute for windows.

Unlike other farms in the area, Elandskloof functioned as a vibrant rural settlement. The 11 surviving Kriel children inherited the farm in 1913, each getting a 1/11th share of the property. Mostly daughters, the surnames Steyl, Ellis, Wolfaardt, King, du Toit, van Eeden and Harmse joined the ranks. The 11 families plus their workers and "bywoners" lived on the property, where they all had their own homes.

At least 24 homes and a school are documented to have existed on the property. Most of these structures disintegrated over the years. However, several remnants of stone and mud structures can still be seen. The buildings that remained intact are the "Boonste Huis", "Koos Ellis se Huis", "Piet Spogter se Huis", the "Grasdakhuis" and the school. It is not known when the school was built, but it was already in existence in 1906. In 1945, one of the Kriel descendants, Alwyn Steyl, started buying up the 11 portions of the farm. By 1954 he had consolidated Elandskloof again.

A network of mountain trails covering about 48 km provides easy access by 4x4 to all corners of the nature reserve. These trails were specially constructed for veld flower harvesting.

Various farming activities were practised on Elandskloof over the years, including the harvesting of veld flowers mentioned above, but none were sustainable. The current owners believe that conservation with related tourism facilities is the only sustainable land use option. The nature reserve was established in August 2005 and registered under CapeNature's stewardship programme as a Voluntary Conservation Site in May 2006. A biodiversity assessment, subsequently done by Dr AnneLise Schutte-Vlok from CapeNature's Scientific Services, resulted in the reserve being recommended for Contract Nature Reserve stewardship status. Our own Corné Claassen is very much involved as the property falls in his conservation support area.



The tourism facilities planned include the renovation of the five heritage buildings and the construction of several new buildings as holiday accommodation units. Some of these units are intended for sale and some for short-term rental. The development application process commenced in January 2007 and is still in progress. In the meantime, while awaiting development approval, some well-appointed self-catering accommodation is offered. ♦

Contact details tel: 023 551 1946, fax: 086 551 3612, email: frik@witteberg.co.za (website www.witteberg.com/www.witteberg.co.za to be completed by end September)

Boardwalk Bird Hide Project

We Friends have started a “donate a log” campaign for the bird hide and we thank Geoff and Denise Brown-Rigg, and Boris and Ann van der Riet for their contribution towards the construction costs. They each contributed a wooden pole towards the bird hide, many of which will be needed to complete the project. Nonetheless, Bruce Milne and his trusty assistant Gerhard Kotze have begun construction, hoping for the facility to be in use before next winter. We as members ought to be extremely grateful to them for halving what it probably would have cost had they not offered their expertise in the form of design and construction.

We are pleased to announce that the jazz concert in summer will be back! Diarise this date: Saturday, 14 November. John Hargreaves and his merry band (“The Whole Shebang”) will be returning for an evening of your favourite melodies, general hilarity and superb give-away prizes. This is our biggest fundraising event of the year and we hope to garner the support of each and every member of the Friends of Vrolijkheid. Invite your family and friends and make a weekend of it!

In McGregor tickets (R50 for unreserved seating and R60 for tables) are available from Alison and Frances (who will be away from mid-Sept, returning on 20 Oct) and in Robertson from Ann or Gilly (see committee box for contact details).

Debbie and Jimmy at Eseltjiesrus Restaurant have kindly agreed to have us back. Please remember that the venue is licensed and no alcohol may be brought onto the premises. Wine, beer, cider as well as cooldrinks will be available for purchase at reasonable prices and two bars will be provided to ease congestion. We respectfully ask that no drinks be brought to the concert. Last year a number of wine glasses also went walkabout so check your belongings before you leave, ensuring that glasses are returned.

This year’s raffle competition, back by popular demand, offers yet again many superb prizes, including dinner for two at Café Tebaldi, Green Gables, Jack & Grape and Reuben’s at the Robertson Small Hotel; a voucher to spend at Deli Girls; a *rather* large bottle of wine sponsored by Von Loveren; a weekend getaway at Anysburg, courtesy of CapeNature; a day visit to Fairy Glen Game Reserve near Worcester; a boat trip at the ever-popular Breede River Goose; and an overnight getaway at Sanbona Wildlife Reserve near Barrydale. Tickets – at only R5 each – are available from any committee member. In addition, the purchase of each concert ticket entitles you to one free raffle entry. ♦

Your committee:

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Subscriptions

Subscriptions are due annually in June; these can be paid to Frances Doering in McGregor or to Ann van der Riet or Gilly Schutte in Robertson. You may also deposit your R50 directly into the account. However, due to exorbitant cash deposit charges, we kindly ask that if possible cash be handed to a committee member or subs paid by internet transfer.

Bank: First National Bank

Name: Friends of Vrolijkheid

Branch code: 620 452 192 86

Account number: 200 413 00

Reference: Name Surname Subs 2009

Why join the Friends of Vrolijkheid? Here are the reasons why you just can't lose:

The Friends of Vrolijkheid is a community-based group aimed at supporting the Vrolijkheid Nature Reserve and the broader conservation community

Individual or family membership, at just R50 per year, will entitle you to:

- Free entry to Vrolijkheid throughout the year. (With the standard entry at R25 per person, this is an almost too-good-to-be-true opportunity)
- Organised day walks and hikes in the area
- The option to assist with projects such as improving the facilities and interpretation for visitors at Vrolijkheid, educational programs, fundraising and so forth
- Overnight excursions to places of interest such as the Cederberg and Du Toit's Kloof mountains
- Talks by experts in the field of conservation and related sectors
- Fun events such as family braais and concerts
- Film evenings on natural and cultural history
- The opportunity to assist in the preservation of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates
- Birdwatching outings in conjunction with the Robertson Bird Club
- *The Rooikat*, an informative conservation newsletter produced by the Friends of Vrolijkheid



For more information or to join contact:

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FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO IN ENGLAND – a contribution from Dave Harding

In English pubs, ale is ordered by pints and quarts. So in old England, when customers got unruly the bartender would yell at them to mind their own pints and quarts and settle down. It's where we get the phrase "mind your Ps and Qs".

Gilly's Chronicles – by Alison Downie

Not all our readers are aware that Gilly Schutte, Friends of Vrolijkheid- and Robertson Bird Club member, enjoyed an illustrious career with the Natal Parks Board before retiring to the Breede River Valley. His son Richard, whom many of us have met on various Friends events, has followed in his footsteps. He is based at Himeville in the southern Drakensburg region where he holds the position of District Conservation Officer.

During his 35 year-tenure at Ndumu Game Reserve, Gilly's photographs were regularly featured in a variety of newspapers and magazines, and his reports formed the basis of "Game Ranger's Notebook", a regular feature in the *Natal Mercury*, which was compiled by the then Chief Conservator for Zululand, Dr Ian player. Gilly recently dusted off his catalogue of articles, which we will feature in forthcoming issues of *The Rooikat*.

Going back in time, we begin in the year 1971, when Gilly and his colleagues were dealing with the joys of newborn animals and the despondency of poaching. According to the article, a poacher was arrested "for being in possession of a crocodile skin and a trap used for catching birds of prey ... He was charged R80 or 80 days for being in possession of the skin and R10 or 20 days for having the trap". Gilly was one of the rangers who was involved in the stake-out and was instrumental in persuading the suspect to admit to his guilt. Strike one for the good guys!

At the same time, two hippos had to be euthanized when they were discovered with severe injuries caused by fighting, and by snares. Said Gilly, "After it [the hippo caught by snares] was shot I investigated the animal and came across the worst snaring I have ever seen ... attached to the cable was a log which the hippo must have been dragging around for quite a few days."

But game rangers know that where there is death, there is also life. Gilly described the joy of seeing a newly-born hippo shakily making its way into the river after its mother. A black rhino calf was born, bringing the total to 20 (remember this was 38 years ago!). "Nyamithi has to be seen to be appreciated," he asserted, "it is not exaggerating to say that there are thousands of birds, especially at the eastern end [of the lake]. The flamingo flock has increased to 68, which includes both the lesser and greater. This patch of pink stands out clearly among all the different geese and ducks, spoonbills, stilts and pelicans, and I cannot help wondering how rich this lake must be ... to support these masses of birds, fish and crocodiles."

More on Gilly's adventures in the next issue. ♦



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Global Synopsis – by Alison M Downie

June 2009, Ecuador – Conservation International scientists return from the Nangaritza Protected Forest near the Peruvian border with the news of having found at least 15 new plant and animal species. The creatures include a frog the size of a fingernail, a spiny-crested grasshopper and an alien-like salamander. They also identified fauna that is currently rare or under threat, such as the endangered glass or crystal frog, so named because it is possible to see the internal organs through the transparent skin.

July 2009, Kenya – Wildlife authorities seize \$1 million worth of elephant tusks allegedly hidden in coffins that were bound for Asia. Poaching has skyrocketed after members of CITES permitted limited trade in ivory. As a result, demand has grown and elephants not only have to contend with loss of habitat and the effects of global warming but also hunting by poachers, who slaughter hundreds of elephants every year.

April 2009, San Francisco – McAfee Inc, a security company in the US, release a report stating that spam mail is environmentally unfriendly. According to the company, 62 trillion junk emails sent last year had the same capacity of powering 2.4 million homes in the US. Just imagine how many African homes could function on the same! While each spam message creates 0.3 g of carbon dioxide, Microsoft estimates that 97 per cent of all emails received are unwanted messages.

August 2009, London – The very same day that a crucial amendment to a trade law in endangered species came in effect, wildlife police raid a traditional Asian medicine store in Chinatown, London, where 200 products were confiscated, including items from leopard, musk deer and tiger. Since “Operation Charm”, a cooperative partnership between Met police, WWF and other authorities was launched in 1995, about 40,000 items made from endangered species have been seized.

June 2009, Baviaanskloof – A male leopard is found dead in the Baviaanskloof region. The leopard had been caught in a snare, and suffocated in its effort to free itself. Says Landmark Foundation’s Director Bool Smuts, “This leopard’s death is of major concern, as a recently completed Rhodes University study indicates that this cat would have been part of a core population of territorial leopard that live in and around the Baviaanskloof Reserve. The study indicates that only about 30 territorial leopards remain in this region. Evidence strongly suggests that methods that are ethically unacceptable, such as gin traps, hunting dogs, poisons ... are also biologically ruinous and clearly ineffective in addressing the problem.” It is believed that 19 leopards have been killed in the area in the past six years, primarily from being caught in gin traps. Encouragingly, since 2004 the foundation has together with farmers rescued 27 leopards.

April 2009, New York – *Time’s* “Special Environment Issue” publishes “10 Species on the Brink”, an article listing 10 of the larger animal species on the brink of extinction. Sadly, many other not-so-cuddly species slip away without our even noticing. The tally lists the following critically-endangered species: Javan Rhinoceros (Indonesia, Vietnam) > 60, Golden-headed Langur (Vietnam) > 70, Cross River Gorilla (Nigeria, Cameroon) > 300, Vaquita (Gulf of California) > 300, Sumatran Tiger (Sumatra) > 600, Mekong Giant Catfish (Mekong of Southeast Asia) several hundred, Black-footed Ferret (North America) +- 1,000, Borneo Pygmy Elephant (Northern Borneo) +- 1,500, Giant Panda (China, Vietnam, Burma) > 2,000, and Polar Bear (Arctic) > 25,000.

July 2009, Cape Town – The *Cape Times* features an article concerning a new threat to frogs and toads in the Cape after an “opportunistic coloniser”, the guttural toad, was discovered in the province in 2000. It is thought that the toad, found in KwaZulu-Natal, Northern- and Eastern Cape, was introduced into the Western Cape with a delivery of trees. The toad has a similar appearance to the western leopard toad and can be identified by vibrant guttural snores emitted every three seconds. Its diet includes other toads, rodents and lizards, posing a threat to local amphibians such as the leopard toad and micro frog, which are essential in controlling insects and pests. In the same July 27 edition, the newspaper reported that Eric (aka “Genius”), Cape Town’s oldest baboon is making a steady recovery in the hands of the Fourways Veterinary Clinic. He was savagely attacked by two bull terriers after being displaced by two rival male baboons. (*Ed’s note: Eric was released after spending two weeks in hospital – more on Eric and his friends in the next issue.*)

June 2009, Europe – WWF releases a report stating that green industries have already surpassed “polluting industries”. A total of 3,4 million people are employed in jobs directly related to the industry, with a further estimated 5 million indirectly-related jobs. This is significant when compared to 2,8 million people employed in eco-unfriendly industries such as gas, electricity, and mining. WWF predicts that the green industry will continue to expand while employment in polluting industries will diminish.

August 2009, Phillipines – Botanists in the central Philippines discover a giant rodent-eating plant after Christian missionaries came across the plant after being lost for two weeks while attempting to climb Mount Victoria. This led to the eventual discovery of the hitherto unknown carnivorous species. The plant traps unsuspecting victims by closing a tube once the creature is inside. It has been christened *Nepenthes attenboroughii*, after beloved and eminent naturalist and filmmaker, Sir David Attenborough. ♦

Sources: Care2 Petition Site (www.care2.com), News24 (www.news24.com), Yahoo daily news (www.news.yahoo.com/), WWF (www.panda.org.za or www.org/), *Time* magazine (www.time.com), Cape Times (www.capetimes.co.za), *Simply Green* e-zine (www.simplygreen.org.za)

Pat-a-cake

The Friends would like to hold a fundraiser during the Apricot Festival on 5 December in the form of a cake sale, which takes place in McGregor. We need the help of all the home executives and pastry chefs out there! Would members consider baking a cake/scones/bread for a cake sale? The committee would man the stand, with the proceeds going towards the bird hide or Braille trail at the reserve. If you are willing to contribute, please contact Alison or Ann. ♦

Fun with the Friends – by Frances Doering

A gathering of the Friends enjoyed the documentary film “Sons of the Blood” made by the BBC in the late 1970s. A series of interviews with both South African and British survivors of the South African War of 1899 to 1902 provided insight into their personal experiences in combat and retrospectively their appraisal of the events which led up to the war and its eventual outcome. This evocative film highlighted the tragedy and futility of a conflict that should never have taken place. Despite the sober subject, the film was fraught with humorous comments and had us in chuckles throughout.

The documentary was shown at Caritas library, Temenos Lodge, whom we thank for providing such a super venue and at a reasonable price for our volunteer group. Refreshments were provided in the form of wine and grape juice, and a modest profit was made from the event which will go towards the building of the bird hide.

Other events that have taken place include a day excursion to the Bontebok Nature Reserve near Swellendam, day hikes in the area and a Vrolijkheid braai, which took place on a marvellously lazy winter afternoon.

With the warmer weather heralding springtime (although officially the autumnal equinox is only on 22 September), the botanical garden at Vrolijkheid is looking superb and well worth a visit when you are next at the reserve.

Piet van Zyl has had several meetings with representatives from the School of the Blind in Worcester during the past few months and it was decided to build a special “braille trail” at the reserve for those who are without sight but would like to enjoy nature. More on this project in the next issue.

The next family braai takes place on Sunday, 27 September and is sure to be another “hard day in Africa” for Friends members. (Oh well, someone’s got to do it: it might as well be us!). More outdoor activities take place at the end of October (a day hike); a three-day trip to Thomas Hut is planned for early November, with another overnight getaway towards the end of the month. For all those climbers and adventurers out there we’ll be screening “No Place to Park” at the end of November, which, from the feedback, is breathtaking and not to be missed!

It looks like a busy few months ahead for the Friends and we will make a point of sending out one or two notices to remind members of what is taking place. ♦



Members enjoy a delightful leisurely mid-winter braai with family and friends at the Vrolijkheid picnic site

Opvanggebiedbestuur in die Wes-Kaap: Energie is Nie Ons Enigste Uitdaging Nie – deur Fanie Bekker, CapeNature Direkteur: Operasies

Een van die belangrikste aspekte van biodiversiteit en omgewingsbewing is die feit dat mense leef en werk in die natuurlike landskap en dat talle 'n direkte bestaan daaruit maak. Almal van ons is baie spesifiek afhanklik van die omgewing. Alhoewel dit moeilik bly om 'n direkte waarde op die natuurlike omgewing te plaas en om die voordele van die lewensondersteunings-sisteem, wat voorsien word deur 'n gesonde omgewing, te kwantifiseer, bestaan daar geen twyfel nie dat die vernietiging en degradering van natuurlike habitate in die Wes-Kaap 'n beduidende negatiewe impak op die lewe van al sy inwoners sal hê.

Die belangrikheid van opvanggebiede en riviere in die Wes-Kaap is van die uiterste belang aangesien die provinsie 'n winterreënval-streek is met min natuurlike mere. Die nasionaal belangrike landbou-ekonomie van die provinsie is, met enkele uitsonderings, baie afhanklik van besproeiing gedurende die produksieseisoen (September tot April). Watervoorrade vir die verskeie sektore word oor die algemeen van riviere verkry en in damme gestoor alhoewel daar ook 'n toenemende aantal gebruikers van grondwaterbronne is. Gesonde natuurlike ekosisteme voorsien lewensondersteuningsisteme, en baie ander dienste, aan die mense van die streek.

Verskeie faktore wat druk op die omgewing plaas en deur die mens geaktiveer word, is voortdurend besig om die integriteit van ons ekosisteme te affekteer en stel dikwels die gehalte en omvang van hierdie lewensondersteunings-sisteme in gevaar. Hierdie impakte sluit in die direkte degradering en vernietiging van die habitat; die indringing van natuurlike, gesonde ekosisteme deur uitheemse spesies; onbeheerde ontwikkeling van natuurlike habitate en landskappe; die versteuring en verandering van natuurlike varswater-ekosisteme en die besoedeling van die omgewing.

Opvanggebiedbestuur en Klimaatverandering

Daar is onlangs oortuigend aangetoon dat die bedreiging van globale klimaatverandering beduidend in die Wes-Kaap ervaar sal word, veral in die westelike dele van die streek. Die Wes-Kaap blyk in die besonder weerloos te wees teen klimaatverandering weens laer en meer buiteseisoense reënval en hoër temperature, meer ekstreme klimatologiese gebeurtenisse soos swaarder reënbuie en meer gereelde vloede wat voorspel word. Daar is ook 'n nypende behoefte aan deeglike beleidstelling met betrekking tot toekomstige ontwikkeling van waterhulpbronne en watergebruik. Suid-Afrika het die hoogste reënvalwisselvalligheidskoëffisiënt in die wêreld (113%) en wetenskaplike navorsing het aangedui dat hierdie realiteite 'n beduidende impak op ons sal hê. Windsnelhede sal verhoog wat sal lei tot verhoogde intensiteit in storms en reënval. Dit sal verreikende gevolge op die hidrologie en hidroulika van ons riviere hê. Dit mag lei tot meer gereelde kitsvloede en groter vloede, verminderde hervulling van grondwater en hoër vloedlyne. Stygende seewatervlakke sal die waterbron van die seekant af laat toeneem met beduidende effekte op estuariëse ekosisteme. Daar is wêreldwyd erkenning van die belangrikheid daarvan om vleilande, vloedvlaktes en estuaria, wat 'n mate van bufferwerking teen hierdie effekte voorsien, te beskerm.



Opvanggebied tot Kus Bestuur

Met 'n bykomende toename in die herhaalde voorkoms van brande en 'n voorspelde toename in die tempo van indringing deur uitheemse plantegroei, wil dit voorkom asof die Wes-Kaap-opvanggebiede in die besonder onder toenemende druk mag verkeer. Dit is inderdaad die onderste gedeeltes van opvanggebiede wat aan die ontvangkant van landskapdruk is. Deur 'n bestuursbenadering aan te neem van "opvanggebied-tot-kus" of "bron-tot-see", is CapeNature se uitdaging as 'n bewaringsowerheid om doeltreffend op hierdie bedreiging te reageer. CapeNature is reeds in 'n posisie waar die meeste van sy beskermde gebiede óf uit groot gedeeltes van varswater opvanggebiede bestaan, óf belangrike elemente van opvanggebiede beskerm.

Vooruitskouing

Met bostaande scenario in gedagte wil dit voorkom asof die Wes-Kaap en CapeNature 'n aantal uitdagings in die gesig staar oor die volgende vyf jaar. Hierdie uitdagings sluit die doeltreffende beheer van brande, indringer-uitheemse spesies, biodiversiteitsbestuur en die voorsiening van 'n standhoudende voorraad varswater, terwyl grondgebruiksbeplanning en ontwikkeling ook spesifiek aandag sal verg. Teen hierdie agtergrond van 'n veranderende klimaat en toenemende sosio-ekonomiese druk, en ten einde doeltreffend hierop en op ander landskapdruk en uitdagings te reageer, sal CapeNature sy hulpbronne in lyn met 'n geïntegreerde benadering tot opvanggebiedbestuur moet benut. Dit sal die agentskap se potensiële bestuursreaksies saamsnoer en leiding voorsien ten opsigte van landskapprioriteite waar finansiële en menslike hulpbronne die beste aangewend kan word. 'n Omsigtige reaksie in hierdie verband sal begrypklikerwys ook beduidende voordele hê vir die onderhoud van die sensitiewe platform van die baie belangrike ekotoerisme-bedryf van die Wes-Kaap.

CapeNature se fokus op opvanggebiedbestuur verseker ook dat varswater en mariene-ekosisteme, d.i. hoogland- en laagland-riviere, vleilande, estuaria en geassosieerde mariene ekosisteme wat basies die aardlandskap saamtrek – die aandag ontvang wat dit verdien en optimale ekosisteemdienste lewer aan alle gebruikers. Hierdie benadering bevorder die onderhoud van ekosisteemdienste wat sosio-ekonomiese ontwikkeling in die Wes-Kaap ondersteun. Brande, indringerplantegroei en vleilandbestuur het reeds getoon dat dit 'n belangrike rol speel in die voorsiening van werksgeleenthede aan voorheen-benadeelde gemeenskappe, terwyl bewaringsbestuur verdere geleenthede kan voorsien vir sulke gemeenskappe aangrensend aan ons beskermde gebiede.

'n Ekonomie kan nie op elektrisiteit en brandstof alleen loop nie – ons het almal voldoende hoeveelhede skoon water nodig wat geproduseer word deur gesonde opvanggebiedbestuur en die onderhoud van lewensondersteuningsdienste. Ons is gereed om te reageer op die groeiende behoeftes van al ons belanghebbendes in hierdie verband. ♦

Baie dankie aan Frik Linde vir sy hulp met hierdie artikel

Weather Statistics for August

Rainfall				Temperatures	
Totals		Recorded stats			
				Aug min temp	1,3 ° C
Year to date (end Aug)	188,8 mm	Min	2 mm (1984)	Aug max temp	29,8 ° C
2008	417 mm	Max	157 mm (1974)	Average min	6,6 ° C
2007	315 mm	Aug total	10,4 mm	Average max	21,6 ° C
2006	335 mm				
2005	239 mm				

Identify the Plant and Win!

Can you name the plant in the photograph?

Email your answer to alisonmdownie@yahoo.com or send a postcard to PO Box 436, McGregor, 6708 by no later than 31 October 2009.

The first correct entry wins a dinner for two at the popular Café Tebaldi in McGregor! The winner will be drawn on 1 November 2009 and informed in writing or by telephone. The competition is open to FoV members only.

Congratulations to Piet van Zyl who correctly indentified the spoor in the previous issue as that of an antbear (aardvark). ♦



SEPTEMBER

Sun 27:

Family braai at Vrolijkheid from 11.00 am. Fires will be ready from midday. Should it be raining the braai will be postponed to the following Sunday, 4 October

OCTOBER

Wed 28:

Day hike in McGregor. Contact Frances to confirm details.

NOVEMBER

Mon–Wed 2–4:

Overnight stay at Thomas Hut with exploratory hikes in the vicinity

Sat 14:

THE CONCERT OF THE YEAR AT THE DONKEY SANCTUARY!!! From 6 pm

Mon–Wed 23–25:

Camping/hiking overnight excursion. Venue to be confirmed. Contact Frances for more information

Friday 27:

Award-winning mountaineering film “No Place to Park” to be screened. The film, produced by MCSA (the Mountain Club of South Africa), captures the adventures of climbers as they attempt to summit various peaks in South Africa. Venue to be confirmed. Non-members welcome.

DECEMBER

Sat 5:

FoV cake sale fundraiser at the Apricot Festival (to be confirmed)

Sat 12:

End of year Christmas potjie at Vrolijkheid picnic site from midday. Come along enjoy our final event by indulging in a delicious chicken or veggie potjie. R50 per person; please bring utensils and plate as usual. Please book by 5 December; tickets available from Alison or Frances

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All Creatures Great and Small – by June Roux

Some scientists purport that we are currently experiencing the planet's sixth worldwide extinction. They estimate that in the coming decades we will lose 20 to 30 per cent of all the species on Earth. Considering that one in four mammals is threatened, they may have a point. The last mass extinction, that put paid to dinosaurs, took place some 65 million years ago. This time, however, the cause is not climatic – it's man.

The 90-million-year isolation of the island of Madagascar has resulted in a veritable Eden and a diversity of life so vast that despite the small size of the country, it is one of the world's most prized ecological gems. The island is home to an astounding array of bizarre and unique forms of life, inimitable creatures such as the tiny fingernail-sized dwarf chameleon and the curious aye-aye. Sadly, Madagascar is also noted as one of Conservation International's "hot spots": under dire threat, yet home to nearly 5 per cent of all Earth's plants and animal species.

Alain and I spent a wonderful four weeks in the country in May. It is difficult to single out one aspect that was more special than another: The wildlife, scenery and vegetation were all fascinating and the people were happy and welcoming. Herewith a visual journey of our trip, chosen from amongst hundreds and photographs.

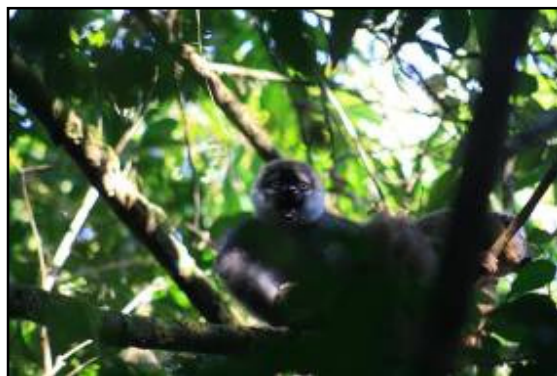
Madagascar is synonymous with lemurs: the word lemur means "ghost" in Latin and is an apt description of these primates as they are very difficult to photograph or even just see when they are at the top of very tall trees in a tropical rain forest. The exception is the ring-tailed lemur, the most widespread and most approachable. We saw six of Madagascar's 31 species of lemur: two, nocturnal; and four, diurnal.



Ring-tailed lemur: abandoned by my troop and no one cares!



Maybe it's a scarf?



Golden bamboo lemur: we eat shoots, creepers and about 500 g every day. The leaf bases of the giant bamboo that we enjoy have a high concentration of cyanide, roughly 12 times the usual lethal dose.



The **common brown lemur** lives in groups of up to 15 and eats mainly fruit, with the addition of flowers and leaves. Although they spend most of their time on the ground they are also good at leaping around in trees. We were fortunate to also see a **nocturnal lepilemur**, which live in holes in tree trunks.



The **Verreaux's sifaka** (pictured left and right) lives mainly in trees; in fact they are so well adapted to tree living that when on the ground they are only capable of hopping. They live in groups of two to 12 and are herbivorous, eating mainly leaves and vegetative matter.

These photos were taken in a spiny forest in the Berenty Reserve.



These are the two types of tortoise that we saw in Madagascar. The photograph on the right is the critically endangered **spider tortoise**, a small tortoise we found at Cap St Marie where it is protected. In a three square kilometre area they have counted 52 of these little chaps, though they only lay one egg at a time. In comparison, the count was 1,430 of the **radiated tortoise** (left), which lays three eggs at a time.



Madagascar boa constrictor or **Malagasy ground boa** is Madagascar's largest snake. There are about 60 species of ground snake in the country, none of which are capable of inflicting a venomous bite as they are all back-fanged. There are six genera of poisonous snakes in the country.

One is taken to see **giant fruit bats**, otherwise known as **flying foxes**, early in the morning when hundreds of them are roosting high up in very tall tamarind trees, making a terrific row. A good camera and a supple back help when taking their photograph (left)! The second bat (right), the **common pippistrelle**, is significantly smaller.



We saw a myriad of small creatures such as lizards, insects, scorpions, spiders and frogs as well as plants and trees, too numerous to include here. We did not deliberately go out of our way to look for birds but in spite of this we counted 51 species.

Most of them were familiar to us, especially species such as the **Indian Mynah**! The most exotic and exciting birds we saw were a breeding colony of the **Red-tailed Tropicbird** (pictured below). They are a protected species and live on the tiny island of Nosy Ve off the south coast of Madagascar.



The **Forktailed Drongo** looks exactly like our South African one except that it has a distinct crest just behind the nose. The Malagasy believe that he is the King of the Birds and there is a legend that explains this. The legend also explains why bats hang upside-down: God's kingdom caught fire. He sent all the birds to put it out, but only the bat succeeded by beating the fire with his great wings, thereby losing his feathers. The crafty Drongo, who was pure white at that time, covered himself with soot and hurried back to God before the bat.

"I put out the fire" he said, "Look how black I am". So God made him king of the birds. Then the bat arrived, but God would not believe it was he who had extinguished the fire. Angry, the bat declared, "All right then, henceforth I will only turn my rear end up at you". And so it is to this day that the Drongo remains shrewd and cunning; and the bat, upside-down!

Jeweled chameleon: according to our guide, about half of the world's 150 species of chamelon occur in Madagascar. The name in Greek translates roughly to "earth lion".





On the left is a **Paradise Flycatcher**. We also saw a **Brown Paradise Flycatcher** but unfortunately did not get a photograph. In the middle is a **Coua Coureur**. We saw three of the 10 different varieties of Coua – the **Running Coua**, **Crested Coua** and **Grande Coua**. On the right is a **Grey Parrot**, endemic to Madagascar, which we saw in a marvellous banyan tree.

All in all, the four weeks flew by way too fast but every day left us amazed at the tremendous diversity of this small but special and irreplaceable island. ♦

*But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
or the birds of the air, and they will tell you;
or speak to the earth, and it will teach you,
or let the fish of the sea inform you.
Which of all these does not know that
the hand of the Lord has done this?
In His hand is the life of every creature
and the breath of all mankind.*

– Job 12:7–10