



## Steenbok Nature Reserve February 2017

Following the Eleventh Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Steenbok Nature Reserve Trust held earlier this week we report as follows.

### Officials

Keith Hollis (Chairman), James Botha (Treasurer), Peter Godsell (member's representative), Roger Voysey and Clr. Mark Willemse continue as Trustees.

Maretha Alant, Joclyn Fearon, Peter Godsell, Ricky Maskew, Diana Stromberg, Esther Townsend, Roger Voysey (Manager), and Clr. Mark Willemse continue as members of the Management committee.

Michaelides Parker Kretzmann Inc continue as auditors.



### Finances

The financial position is sound with reserves sufficient to meet outgoings for more than the next 12 months. In the year ended 30 September 2016 income exceeded operating expenses by R5088 and a surplus is budgeted for the current financial year. Income for this year has been bolstered by R22250 being the net surplus on the sale of the highly successful recipe book project. Well done to Di Stromberg on her amazing dedication and professionalism. Appreciation to our Friends of Steenbok for their past and continuing support.

### Taxation

Since inception we have been exempt from tax on our surpluses and we have now obtained recognition as a Public Benefit Organisation under section 18A(1)(a) of the Income Tax Act. This enables our donors to claim deduction of amounts donated from their taxable income. We believe that this will enhance our fund raising efforts which are so vital to our future well-being.

### New Garden Projects

During the past few weeks the irrigation system has been extended to properly service the walkway to the Harbour road and to cover the new garden area at the north/west entrance to the concrete pathway. Sixteen irrigation stations now operate through approximately 60 sprinkler heads. Watering is programmed in some areas from 10:00pm for 3 hours and in others from 2:00am for up to 4 hours.



With irrigation now operational planting of the new area has commenced and bulk supply of plants, compost and fertilizer arranged. Planting should be completed within a week.

## Research

With the growing popularity of the Reserve it has been decided to commission professionals to undertake research to obtain feedback from those using, and interested in the facility. In particular to establish:

- How the Reserve can be improved
- Independent assessment of our strengths and attractiveness
- Why many of our local visitors are not registered as Friends and how we can better market membership.

We are currently in preliminary discussion with a specialist in this field who has recently relocated from Johannesburg to Knysna.

## Nature Reserve Classification.

Progress on the formal recognition of the Reserve as a Nature Reserve is still on track but regrettably the process is painfully slow. Draft enabling legislation was advertised by Knysna Municipality some time ago and then referred back with public comment to management. We are not aware as to when a new draft will be submitted back to Council.

In anticipation of the new legislation being adopted we are in discussion with the Leisure Isle Boat Club to clarify boundary lines.

## Degradation of salt marsh along Steenbok sea wall



In our July newsletter we expressed concern regarding the disturbing degradation of salt marsh grasses with no apparent improvement. We then represented the Reserve in a meeting with SANParks on 12 October when there was agreement that a major problem existed from a variety of different causes. However unanimity was not reached as to which are the most serious and once decided how they should be addressed. It was suggested that SANParks convene a meeting of experts to formulate the way forward.

Your Management Committee subsequently concluded that SNR were not competent to continue with any involvement. We are not aware if the “meeting of experts” has taken place.

## Public Toilet Facilities

We have clarified with the Leisure Isle Boat Club that the toilet facilities inside the boom to the Club are available for use by visitors to the Reserve. It has been agreed that we will erect a Public Toilet sign (visible to Steenbok users), improve the signage on the toilet building, upgrade the facility with replacement fittings, paint the inside and pave a walkway to the ladies. The sign will contain a notation that the toilets will be locked from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am and that when locked the keys are available from the Boat Club security.

Leisure Isle Boat Club will continue to service the toilets and provide the requisite toiletries.

## Maintenance

Garden services continue to be efficiently provided by Ivy Garden Services as does grass cutting and garden rubbish removal by Knysna Municipality.

With the passage of time many facilities are now requiring more regular maintenance. In the past year this included:

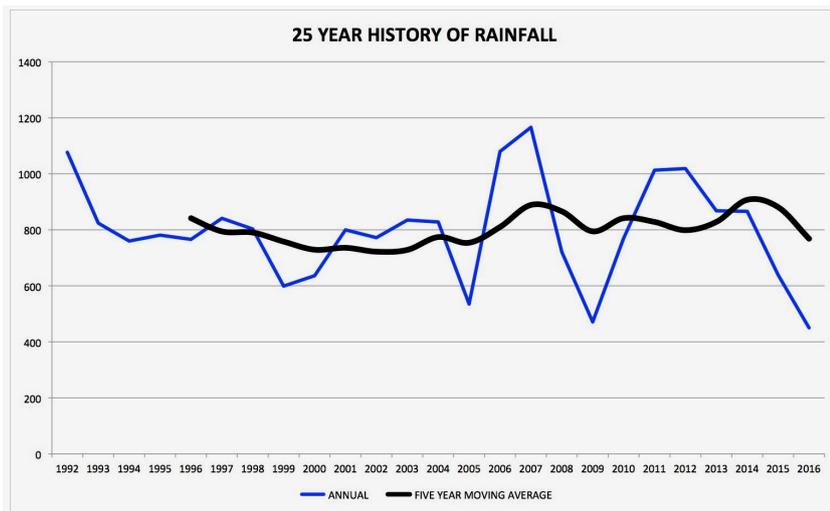
- Alien removal especially Port Jackson
- Short extension to main boardwalk
- Major removal of excess “shrubby” in Rogers Way and replanting
- Organised “litter clean-ups”
- Replacement of sundial by courtesy of Gardening at Leisure
- Painting of all timber benches
- Replacement of bladder in aquifer pump
- Installation of two new sponsored benches
- Replacement of many damaged tree identity tags.
- Replacement of all story boards and introduction of a Tidal story board
- Regular replacement of pole fencing along Links Drive



**Salt marsh restoration project and apparent “sea walls” impasse**

Having regard to a variety of differing opinions, and substantial costs in seeking environmental approval , the Management committee decided in October to abandon implementation of the salt marsh expansion project involving the placement of additional inflow/outflow pipes in the Steenbok sea wall. This marsh area will now be left to develop naturally with its own environmental characteristics.

**Drought conditions**



Whilst many are aware that rainfall in the fourth quarter of 2016 was well below the norm not many appreciate that rainfall in the fourth quarter was 45mm, a mere one third of the ten year average. As indicted in our 25 year Rainfall Graph it is even more significant to report that the 2016 annual rainfall was the lowest in 25 years. However if we look at the five year moving average line in the graphic we can see the moving average oscillating around the 800 mm level. Hence it would be premature to claim that we have a long term downward trend.

Despite the drought conditions there is always colourful beauty to be found in the reserve.



There was a slight improvement in the January rainfall with 34 mm, the same as last year and slightly below the 10 year average.

**Other features of interest during the year**

- Visits by photography and educational groups
- Arbour day celebration conducted on our Facebook site
- Introduction of popular and successful “no poop fairy” boards
- Popularising our Facebook site
- Highly successful “Shared Recipe” project
- Continuation by our helpers of valuable contributions to the upkeep of the Reserve
- Planting of memorial trees with signage.
- Two viewings of Angulate tortoises reported by Friends whilst a first was the discovery in the central irrigation box of a one metre non-venomous Olive House Snake. These are good for the control of rodents.
- Unfortunately Spotted Eagle Owls have been unsettled and unable to establish lasting relationships, and hence no babies.

**An appeal for good neighbourliness**

Regrettably there seems to be a growing jealousy between groups as to who have preferred rights against others. For example some dog walkers appear to feel that they have preferred rights over golfers and fisher people and vice-versa whilst some cyclists feel that they “own” the brick pathway, etc., etc..

Managements resists the introduction of rules to cover these attitudes and appeals to all to respect the long-time practices of fisher people, walkers, walkers with dogs on leads, cyclists and joggers.

At the end of the day the main criteria for the right to use the Reserve, is the ability to respect others’ rights to use.

