



Steenbok Nature Reserve March 2016

Following the announcement in our previous newsletter that we were reaching our 10th anniversary, we have decided to hold an Anniversary Party to recognise the amazing contributions made by a vast number of different individuals and organisations. Friends of Steenbok and all others who have provided support are invited to attend and we are especially hoping that members of Gardening@Leisure will join us.



The Reserve is now well established and popular with the local and visiting public and our assets and achievements include:

- Open vistas, wide skies, feeling of space and varied views within and beyond the park
- Diversity of vegetation and wildlife habitats:
 - Natural dune thicket, salt marsh and wetlands and 2 Km coastline with Knysna Estuary
 - Indigenous Garden containing botanical species from the Garden Route and Eastern Cape and tree copses featuring Knysna forest trees
 - Dune fynbos with many indigenous plants including prolific bird and butterflies species.
- Signage identifying the more common plants and trees, directional signage and information signage and notice boards
- Recreational areas catering for diverse activities
- Accessibility to, and within the reserve on walkways and boardwalks
- Working hand pump explaining the fresh water aquifer that exists under Leisure Isle
- Excellent relationships:
 - Nearly 200 registered Friends of Steenbok with membership open to all
 - Knysna Municipality and Leisure Isle Resident's Assoc. as major stakeholders
 - SANParks and Cape Nature
 - Knysna Basin Project

- Website www.steenboknaturereserve.org.za and active Facebook site providing comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the Reserve
- Educational boma and visits from local schools and other educational organisations
- Known and respected brand
- Efficient management
- Harmony between Trustees, management committee and the Manager.

However, we are still faced with certain challenges including:

- Invasive grass species, which if unchecked will lead to loss of flora and fauna diversity
- Illegal bait collecting off the shores of the Reserve
- The wetland (west of the sea wall access boardwalk) which is not natural; neither salt marsh or fresh water wetland
- Significant numbers of dog walkers not utilizing the plastic poo bags and litter boxes provided.
- Formalizing legal recognition as a nature reserve.

Although we have no progress to report, we remain confident of securing nature reserve status and environmental approval to proceed with the salt marsh restoration project west of the sea wall access boardwalk. In both cases, the wheels of bureaucracy are moving slowly and we can do nothing to hasten the progress. We are fortunate in having built up funds over the years sufficient to cover the estimated costs of the salt marsh restoration.

Operations



In recent months we have focused on the Bird Garden at the main entrance, Thraskii beds along Links Drive, weeding/watering of the new Restio bed in Rogers Way, clearing and opening-up the nature walk pathways west of the tennis courts, weed removal and prevention with herbicide along the brick pathway (kindly undertaken regularly by one of our Friends), upgrade of the Pump garden including pump and pond maintenance and the installation of a new benches and commencement of a major overhaul of the Indigenous Garden.

The new arrangement with Ivy Garden Service in providing garden maintenance twice monthly, is working well.

The extension to the brick pathway at the north west end of the Park, the upgrade of the main parking area and overdue thinning out of all tree copses was completed shortly before Christmas and painting and overdue maintenance on benches, litter bins and bag dispensers were attended to in January. Pic 3

We are thrilled that following diligent attention by one of our members in regularly aerating muddy patches in the Park salt marsh the restoration of this salt marsh area is now 99% complete. Janine Adams, Professor of Botany at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, recommended this action. She is an estuarine botanist with expertise in environmental flow requirements, estuary ecology and salt marsh.

During the next few months, we need to address outstanding items on our action plan to 30 September. These include signage replacements, more owl nesting poles and introduction of unobtrusive bird, bee and butterfly signage. We also need to identify and display new “dog proof” signage for tree names displayed in the tree copse areas. It is regrettable that these have been badly damaged by undisciplined dogs. A new item is installing of a new sundial in the Indigenous Garden made possible by a donation from Gardening@Leisure.



Alien trees

One of our most troublesome aliens is Port Jackson (*Acacia saligna*) that pop up regularly in certain areas of the Park. We normally control this by regularly “pulling” when they are small. However, towards the end of last year they were allowed to grow unimpeded until mid-December when a visitor drew this to our attention. We set about removing more than 100 bushes. In the Cape Flats, outside Cape Town, Port Jackson proliferated at an uncontrollable rate, having been introduced in the nineteenth century to stabilize the sands after the indigenous bush had largely been cut down for firewood.



Facebook

With the objective of better promoting the interests of the Reserve and broadening membership of “Friends of Steenbok” Di Stromberg, a resident of Leisure Isle, and a keen amateur photographer with experience in the media, has taken on the management of our Facebook site.

Look at <https://www.facebook.com/steenboknaturereserve> to see what has been achieved in a relatively short time.

Management Committee.

At our forthcoming Annual General Meeting Friends will be asked to confirm the following changes in members of our management committee;

- Resignation of Clr. Louise Hart who is now concentrating her

municipal activities in Sedgfield and appointment of Clr. Mark Willemse now ward 9 councillor.

- Appointment of Dianne Stromberg, assuming the promotional activities previously performed by Peter Godsell. This change is being made to broaden the overall responsibilities and will not alter in any way Peter’s contribution as “Father of the Friends”

Tax status

Our auditors have applied to SARS to widen the registration of Friends of Steenbok Nature Reserve Trust, as a Public Benefit Organisation, to embrace the benefits of a wider registration under section 18A of the Act. If this is successful, and we have been advised that there is no reason why it should not be, taxpayers making donations to Friends of Steenbok Nature Reserve Trust, will be entitled to claim the amount of donations made, as a deduction from their taxable income.

We believe that the securing of this recognition will give stimulus to establishing our long-term financial stability as a vibrant nature reserve.



Rainfall

We continue to experience the lowest rainfall in memory. In the past 3 month period of December/February rainfall has been recorded at below 40% of the ten-year average.

This has had a disastrous impact on the flowering of our *Brunsvigia orientalis* (Candelabra lilies). This year we have only be able to count 100 blooms, which is considerably less than past years.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE AGM OF THE FRIENDS OF STEENBOK NATURE RESERVE TRUST WILL BE HELD AT 5:30 PM ON WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH 2016 AT THE LEISURE ISLE BOWLING CLUB

The formal business of the AGM will be followed by a Party to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Steenbok Nature Reserve and to pay tribute to all those who have supported the development of the Reserve during this period. Friends of Steenbok, supporters and members of the Public are invited to attend. Light refreshments will be served and the Club’s cash bar will be open.

www.steenboknaturereserve.org.za

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