



Steenbok Nature Reserve Newsletter

November 2018

As we approach the holiday period and the end of what has been a busy year we issue this report in the form of a newsletter to be tabled at our annual general meeting to be held on 21 November 10:00 a.m.

FINANCES

Our financial position remains sound with our reserves amounting to approximately one years' expenditure. Grants from Leisure Isle Residents' Association and Knysna Municipality (52%) together with subscriptions from Friends of Steenbok (40%) and interest on surplus funds (8%) cover normal expenses.

Our income was boosted in the past year with surpluses on the sale of Shared Recipes and licence disc holders and in the new year, as all production costs have been borne by three sponsors; we anticipate significant income from the sale of the kiddies nature book "Look Deep into Nature".

FRIENDS of STEENBOK NATURE RESERVE

THE FRIENDS OF STEENBOK NATURE RESERVE TRUST

AGM

Wednesday 21st November 2018, at 10.00am

At the Leisure Isle Boat Club

Following the formalities members and those present will be afforded the opportunity of voicing their suggestions and concerns for consideration by management

All Welcome

GROW TOGETHER

RECOGNITION AS A "PROTECTED AREA"

We are thrilled to report positive progress in obtaining recognition from SANParks as a protected area. By invitation four of our Management Committee were invited to a planning think tank in July where we were given the opportunity of putting forward our conviction that a legal structure should be put in place to ensure that Steenbok remains as a nature reserve in perpetuity. This was followed when, with other committed landowners, we were invited to present a 10 year plan for Steenbok and to confirm willingness to enter into a conservation agreement with SANParks. Steenbok's plan and commitment were well received.



We have subsequently been advised that Steenbok Nature Reserve is incorporated in the updated SANParks Management Plan. The precise status will depend on the feedback received after presentation and submission to the Minister. It will be included in some form and we are assured that whatever the designation it will guarantee security 'in perpetuity'.

REFLECTION SEED POD

During the Knysna Fires of 2017 Jayne Brink and Gina Potgieter initiated The Seed Shop project through Two on Toast and Madam Botany. Their intention was to bring some kind of normality back to the donation process by setting-up a space in which the best of the donated items received were thoughtfully displayed allowing those in need to 'shop' for what they required. They invented a 'seed' currency and each household registered received a seed voucher which could be used to buy items on the shelves of the shop.

With the residual funds from this venture they were able to build a Reflection Seed Pod in memoriam of the Knysna Fires. The Seed project was partnered with Eden Community Initiative to project manage the installation with Kluys & Co responsible for construction and installation. The design is based on a seed pod, inspired by the overwhelming emotion of the initial tragedy, and then more importantly the spirited response from Knysna residents, giving birth to hope and encouragement.

“The project team scanned the town for a suitable location and identified Steenbok Nature Reserve on Leisure Island as the ideal position. It is not only beautiful and well maintained but is also inclusive and welcoming to all Knysna residents and visitors to our town. It allows a 360 degree view of the actual 'ring of fire' that threatened our town. This all-encompassing view provides the perfect vantage point from which to appreciate the magnitude of the threat our town was under.



During a recent moving ceremony the monument was unveiled by Mayor Mark Willems and the Pod was handed over to the future care of Steenbok Nature Reserve.

LOOK DEEP INTO NATURE

This 60-page book which explores the wild and wondrous place that is Steenbok Nature Reserve was officially launched during the recent Leisure Isle Festival.

It is described as a children's book filled with educational facts, informative content, fun activities and all-round entertainment. However the whole family will not only enjoy and appreciate every single page but also find the humour in it that makes it so special.

Produced for Steenbok by Di Stromberg and Sue Thomopolous it is a fun, hilarious, entertaining and interactive book containing scientific information in a very simple, easy-to-understand way with crosswords and puzzles, fun tasks and physical activities, checklists and colouring-in sections.



Look Deep into Nature was available at the recent Leisure Isle Festival for R150 a copy. Orders and enquiries can be emailed to distromberg@gmail.com. Donations are also welcome for the distribution of the book to schools in underprivileged areas. Production and printing costs have been fully sponsored by three well known businesses. All proceeds of book sales will be used by the Friends of Steenbok Nature Reserve in the ongoing maintenance and development of the Reserve.

FACEBOOK AND WEBSITE

Our dynamic Facebook site continues to be managed superbly by Di Stromberg and Letti Bensley. Three or four postings a week of news items ensure that our Facebook “readership” is constantly kept up to date on happenings in Steenbok. It also provides accurate and interesting facts on the countless flora and fauna species found in the Reserve. Anyone not already one of our Facebook followers are encouraged to have a look. Go onto the internet and search www.facebook.com/steenboknaturereserveknysna.

Completion of the state of the art upgrade to our website www.steenboknaturereserve.org is expected by the end of the month and early in the new year our website team will familiarise how best to use the new system and focus on updating the content. The new system facilitates the updating of ever changing information and incorporates sophisticated search facilities. Pending these enhancements the site continues to provide useful information on flora and fauna as well as comprehensive information on the history and management of the Reserve.

DO WE HAVE A DOG PROBLEM?

Since conducting the Steenbok user survey last year we remain concerned that there continues to be a “dog problem” that is of concern to many of our members and visitors. This has been succinctly stated in an email received a few days ago from Barbara Bamber.

“Last week I was walking with my dog (she was on a lead), a lady jogging with her two large dogs was approaching, her dogs ran straight for me and she had NO lead and NO control, her one dog then pinned my 14year old girl down. I was furious beyond measure, I shouted at the lady that her dogs should be on a lead but while her dog had mine pinned to the ground she says ‘ but my dog is not aggressive.’ I was totally gobsmacked. I also had to wonder if she is jogging how can she pick up poo. Now I understand that this is a public problem, your job is to make the park beautiful and keep it healthy so how can I as a dog walker help you??? I do have a suggestion. I thought that you put up a blackboard and on it write that due to numerous complaints of poo not being picked up and aggressive dogs not on leads that the committee HAS to do something. Either fines, force all dogs to be on leads or fence off a bit of the park

where dogs are allowed. I am pretty sure that would make people like me who love to see happy dogs running free reprimand others who are irresponsible. Make dog walkers monitor dog walkers.



Management is considering action which needs to be taken and welcomes comments that can be addressed to info@steenboknaturereserve.org.za.

INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES AND REHABILITATION CONTROL PLAN

This massive programme has proceeded well with completion of initial alien and invasive removals along the areas west of the tennis courts, adjacent to Links Drive. Already there are many indigenous plants coming out of the ground and showing their colours. However as expected aliens of various description are “fighting for space” and this requires continuing attention with weeding and herbicide spraying. Diligent attention to this ongoing fight will be necessary and we need to remember that our consultant Credo Environmental Services warned that we were embarking on a five year project. Expenditure to the end of our September financial year end, after receipt of a significant donation, amounted to R69 000 and an amount of R50000 is provided in our budget for the new year.



The next phase is the continuation of the programme northwards and embracing Kingfisher Creek. We will be meeting with Rudie Minnie of Credo Environmental Services on Thursday 15th November to review progress and to formulate a plan for continuation of the programme. Interested parties are invited to meet on the adjacent salt marsh with our consultant and Steenbok management at 10:00 am on that date to be informed of and discuss future plans.

STATE OF THE KNYSNA LAGOON

In a recent “Research Article” by Emeritus Fellow Richard Barnes, St Catharine's College Cambridge he concludes that “conservation management has almost no room to manoeuvre in the matter of accumulated algal material, in the Knysna estuary”. Refer to www.steenboknaturereserve for a copy of the research article.



Louw Claasens Director of Knysna Basin Project concurs that “there is no short term solution to eradicating the “toilet paper” problem and its negative impact on the sea grass beds”. However she emphasise that “the onus falls on those that manage the catchment (e.g. the Municipality) to get their act together and to stop the excessive nutrient inputs into our estuary. These largely originate in the surrounding catchments or from Waste Water Treatment Works! Stopping excessive nutrients from entering the system

might not solve the immediate problem – but without this first step, there is little hope of solving the issue at all!

GROUP VISITS

We love hosting educational outings in the Reserve and especially remember Active Hearts with a group of 30 children from Fraaisig Primary School on a fun educational hike led by Diana and 150 children of all ages from local schools who participated in the Reserve in the sport of Orienteering, an eco-friendly, inter-school fun event. We were also proud to host the Deontological Society on a Sunday walk.



COLLECTION OF MEMBERS SUBS

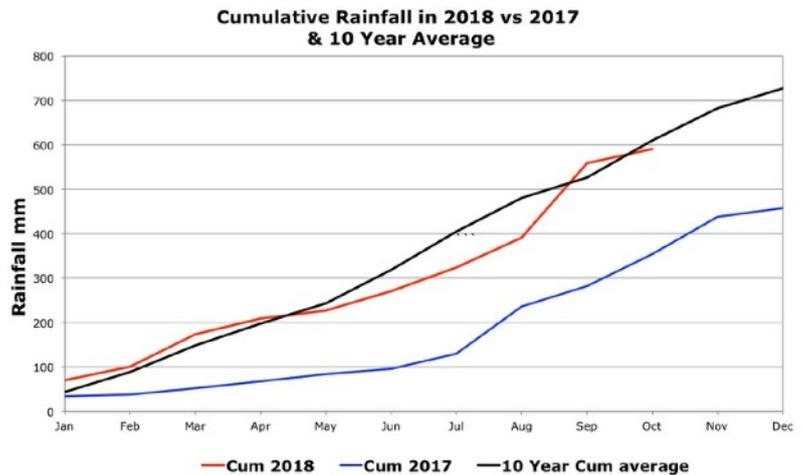
At the time of going to press we have collected nearly 80% of subs from members. Thank you to those who have been so prompt in making payment. To those who have not yet paid please take this as a friendly reminder that subs of R420 running from 1st October to 30th September are now due.

Standard Bank Knysna Branch 050-314 Account No 082579342

RAINFALL

September rainfall was the highest monthly rainfall this year and the highest monthly rainfall since 2013.

Rainfall in October was below average but cumulative rainfall for this year is close to the 10 year average.



SUCCESSION

At the forthcoming AGM we will be saying farewell to Peter Godsell as a member of the Management Committee. Peter was part of the original team that strategized the conception of Steenbok as a nature reserve and besides providing Roger with wise counsel for thirteen years has performed a host of important functions. He will continue as a trustee.



As recently announced Ramona Loxton has been appointed a Membership Secretary and in the new year will be taking over distribution of newsletters.

At a recent Management Committee meeting Roger Voysey advised that he wished to withdraw from many of the daily tasks that he performs. Schedules of these responsibilities are being compiled and we are in discussion with Arjen Meter to assume some or all of these. Coupled with this we might also employ paid “piece work” labour to perform repetitive tasks.

Any who feel they can provide assistance please contact us on info@steenboknaturereserve.org.za.

With regret we advise that Lindsay Durham and Gillie Wolff have decided to withdraw from responsibility for overseeing the entrance garden and we thank them for many years of faithful service. We might add that there are still a number of members who perform functions such as weed control on the main pathway, rain recording and who, when spotting a problem, fix it.

Members of MANCOM

Roger Voysey (Manager), Maretha Alant, Letti Bensley, James Botha, Charles Breen, Ramona Loxton, Arjen Meter, David Stromberg, Diana Stromberg, Esther Townsend and Clr. Mark Willemse.



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