



STEENBOK SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The survey was conducted during April and first part of May 2017. A number of different ways of collecting information were used – interviews with visitors to the reserve, paper forms distributed to homes on Leisure Isle, forms made available at public places on L. I. and finally emails were sent to all members of Friends of Steenbok. In this report we summarize the results of the survey as follows.

1 Findings

- Description of the survey sample
- Aspects that were appreciated by respondents.
- Suggestion for improvement/complaints

2 Recommendations received and responses

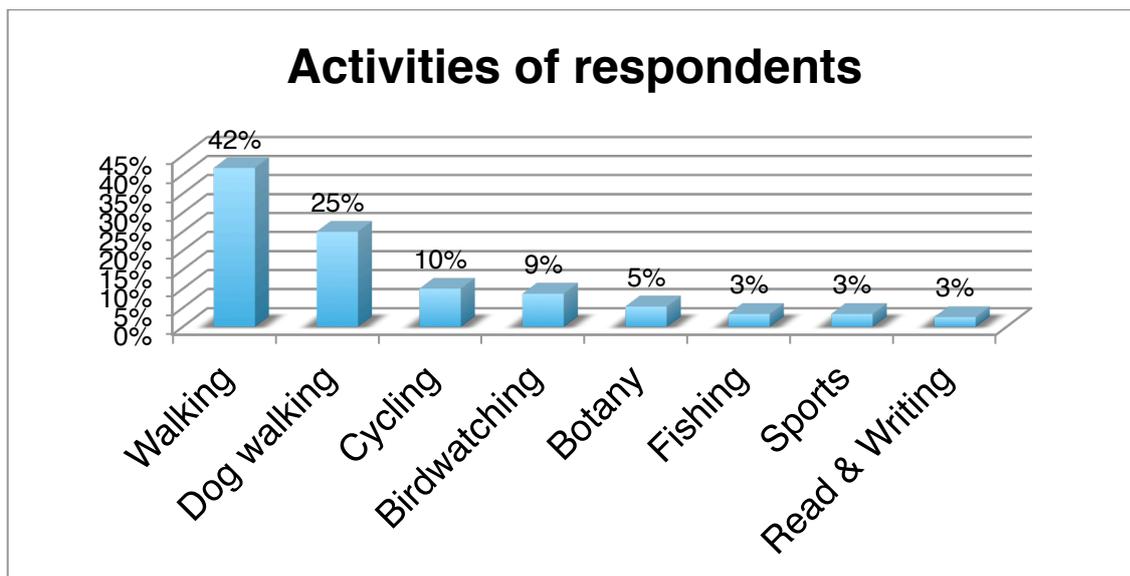
3 Acknowledgements

1 FINDINGS

1.1 Description of survey sample

Over 500 respondents supplied input to the survey. This sample size, which is more than double the number of members of Friends of Steenbok, is more than adequate to enable us to be confident that the analysis is representative of the views of those who use the reserve.

As can be seen from the graphic below, the major activities (i.e. the reason they visit) is very skewed to two activities - walking and dog walking. These were the only two activities that were each cited by more than 10% of the respondents.

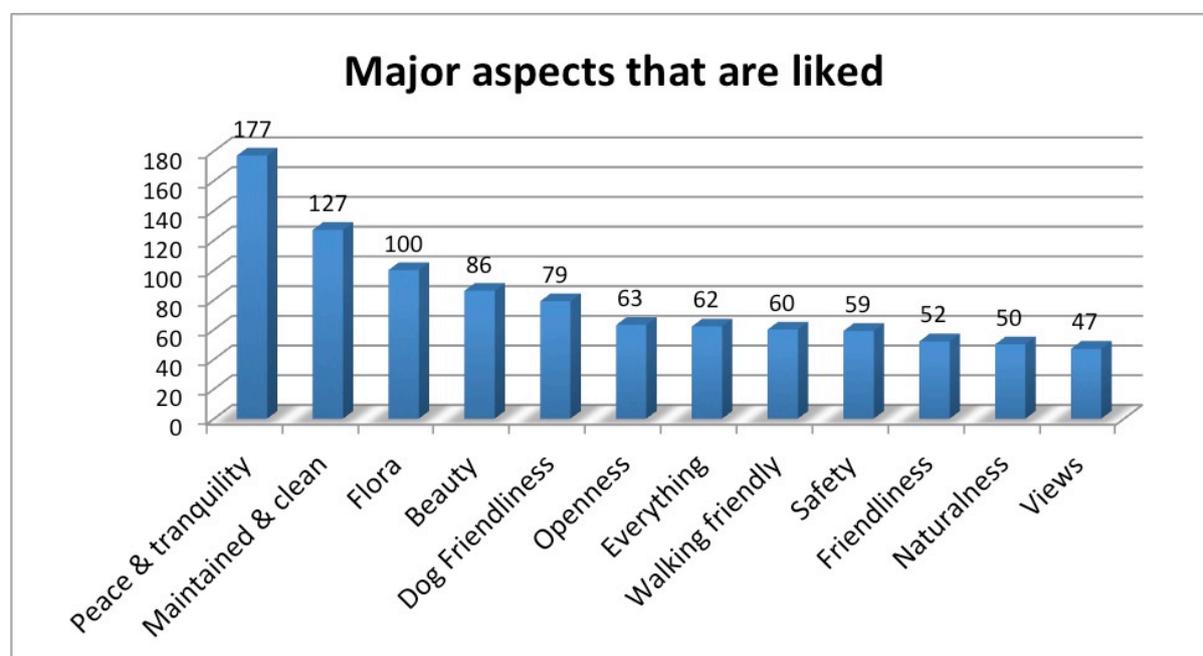


Unsurprisingly the bulk of the responses were from Knysna residents, with Leisure Isle residents being a significant group. It was pleasing that over 150 respondents indicated that they would be interested in finding out more about becoming members of Friends of Steenbok. However it was disappointing that, on sending follow up information to this group, only 10% joined.

1.2 Most common aspects that were appreciated

The respondents cited over a thousand aspects of the reserve that they particularly appreciated. The most frequently mentioned aspects were the peacefulness and tranquility, the fact that the reserve is well maintained and various aspects of the flora. The number of compliments and notes of appreciation were very encouraging.

The most quoted aspects are shown in the graphic below:



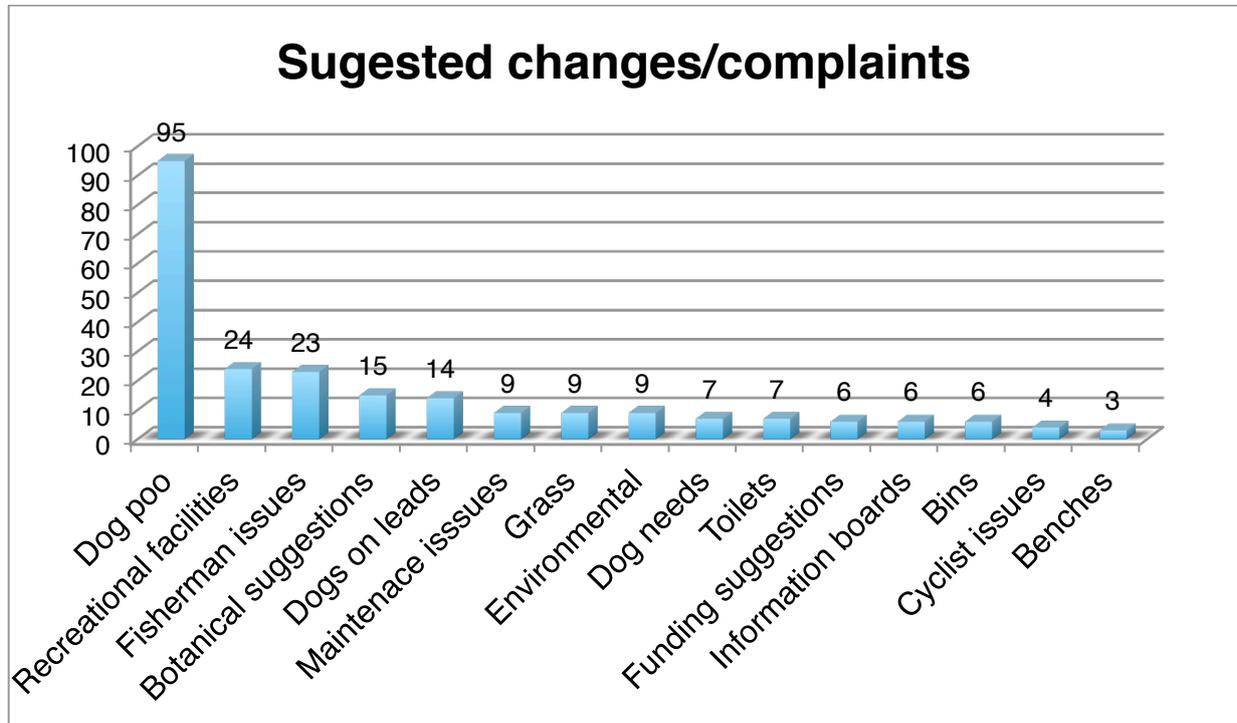
Also mentioned were aspects such as birdlife, child-friendly, benches, information and freedom from rules.

The size of Steenbok is very small - just 17 hectares. Despite this we have need to accommodate three different expectations – leisure activities, botanical interest, and nature conservation. Inevitably compromises have to be made. Compromises, by their very nature, mean that no area of interest will be fully satisfied and no area completely left out. Cynics would say, “Everybody is equally unhappy”. However at the moment we seem to have a reasonable balance.

What is common to all three groups of expectations is the desire to preserve the nature reserve in general and to protect it, in particular, from property development activities. This goal should always be given the highest weight when decisions of compromise are being made.

1.3 Suggestions for improving/complaints

Some 250 ideas for improvement/complaints were included in the survey returns. As will be seen in the chart below there was one overwhelmingly dominant issue – the problem of dog poo. Some 40% of the total suggested changes related to dog poo. The request to implement a dogs-on-leads regulation was also represented a significant number of times. In section 1.1 it is clear that dog owners are a large and appreciative segment of the reserve’s stakeholders. Hence we have to apply some “Solomon like judgment” in responding to these issues.



Twenty-four respondents requested recreational facilities such as picnic and children’s facilities and a similar number raised the problem of fishermen. Suggestions to improve the botanical aspects of the reserve and the cutting of the long grass were raised by a number of the sample.

There are a number of suggestions that although not frequently quoted, need to be acknowledged and addressed. Every suggestion made has been documented and considered.

One of the overall conclusions that we have drawn from reviewing the responses is that a significant number of the respondents did not have a good understanding of who participates in the management of the reserve and their capabilities and limitations in terms of powers and jurisdiction.

The reserve is governed by a partnership involving the Knysna Municipality, Leisure Isle Residents Association, SANPARKS and Friends of Steenbok. The day-to-day management has a fair amount of freedom in decisions regarding botanical issues; provided the annual plan approved by the governing parties is complied with. However the management does not have the power to enforce Municipal or SANPARKS regulations (e.g. bait collecting).

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The full list of suggestions received is documented and is available on request. This list has been categorized and consolidated. The key common ones are listed below with our response and planned action. The timing of implementation will depend on resource availability.

1. DOG POO

The responsibility of Jonny our part time gardener has been extended to collection of all litter in the Park area. Initially this is being done on a weekly basis and if necessary will be extended to two or more days. A similar part-time arrangement will be implemented with an employee of the Bowling Club in Rogers Way and along the western pathways.

A more lasting plan involving volunteer monitors (some of whom have already offered their services) to patrol and persuade, and possibly shame offenders, will be developed with those volunteers who indicate their willingness to participate. Those interested please email us on info@steenboknaturereserve.org.za or contact Roger on 083 754 5390.

2. DOGS ON LEADS

Whilst we recognise that Knysna Municipal regulations require that dogs are only allowed in open spaces such as Steenbok Nature Reserve if on leads it is abundantly clear that dog owners value highly the privilege of letting their dogs run freely and socialising in Steenbok. We also appreciate that many people, especially the elderly, feel threatened by dogs running towards them, despite their owners giving assurances that they will not be harmed. We also know of at least one incident where an old lady was knocked off her feet and has never been the same since.

The Reserve is a large area and we believe that a compromise is possible. Provided there is sufficient support we will attempt to bring interested parties together under an independent facilitator to debate the issues and to formulate a plan for the future. Those interested in participating in planning for a future dispensation please email us on info@steenboknaturereserve.org.za or contact Roger on 083 754 5390.

3. LITTER AND POOH BINS

We experienced in the recent April holiday period a severe and ugly situation of overflowing poo bins and this is regretted. The natural response to this has been the calling for bigger, and more bins. The main problem giving rise to overflowing bins, which happened to coincide with the period of our survey, was a temporary suspension for 2 to 3 weeks of municipal bin clearing due to staff shortages. At the same time the problem was not identified by your volunteer management team.

We have now reviewed the situation and will prepare a map indicating the position of poo and litter bins and indicate new bin positions that we believe are necessary. The map will be posted on the noticeboard in June. We will request the Municipality to install 3 new green pole bins and we will source and install an additional 3 poo bins.

In doing this we will attempt to position the bins so that while being clearly in view of walkers they do not detract from the ambience and views. Although criticised as being too small we are of the opinion that the design of the poo bins is well suited to our nature reserve environment.

We will also attempt to develop a closer relationship with the Cleansing Department of Knysna Municipality so that we are informed of any disruption of bin clearing services and are then able to arrange alternative bin clearing arrangements.

4. FISHERMAN'S LITTER

The litter clearing arrangements outlined in para 1 will also encompass the shorelines below the sea wall and west of the harbour to the beach at Kingfisher Creek and will focus on dangerous discarded fishing line, hooks, etc. With a view to increasing efficiency we will also review with SANParks and Knysna Municipality the responsibilities of the large "litter collection crew" that we sometimes see ambling along the shore line. Advice will also be sought from SANParks on appropriate signage and other steps to educate the fisher folk to leave their fishing spots litter free. Our recommendation in para 3 above on placing of new bins takes account of this problem.

5. TREE LABELS

The recommendation that more tree labels be introduced is accepted. All trees in the three tree copses along the paved walk way will be identified with discs showing botanical and common names and official tree number.

6. IDENTIFICATION OF OTHER PLANTS

Unfortunately identification of plants other than trees is problematical. It would require a large team of botanically informed volunteers to continually move signs to cater for different seasons and growth patterns and informed volunteers are not available. However we are planning to produce for sale at the Leisure Isle Festival in November a pocket size identification booklet featuring plants of Steenbok Nature Reserve with coloured photos.

7. GRASS CUTTING

Was it not for the Reserve being in close proximity to the densely developed housing estate of Leisure Isle it is probable that a fire regime with regular burning of the long grass areas would have been introduced at the time serious development of the Reserve was started. Without regular burning certain of the long grasses take over and all other plant life is stunted. Subject to approval from SANParks we are planning to introduce cutting and bailing of the long grass areas. This will be done in stages with expert advice obtained from local farmers and SANParks.

8. MAINTENANCE OF BRICK PATHWAY VERGES

Two problems require attention as follows:

- In a few places concrete edges have expanded and are breaking away. A contractor has undertaken this maintenance.
- In another area adjacent to the bench near the middle tree copse dogs have dug and scratched leaving a trench 300mm deep along a 50m length of the brick pathway. This has been the main cause of what certain folk describe as sand on the pathway that requires regular sweeping. This unsightly mess has now been tidied up with bringing in loads of top soil, introducing sleeper paving and planting along the edge.

9. PARKING OFF POINT FOR WHEEL CHAIRS

We are sympathetic to this request and are examining possible sites in the shade. One possibility is next to the bench alongside the tree copse referred to under para 8. This will be a costly item and will probably need to be deferred till October, the beginning of our new financial year.

10. ENCOURAGE ONE-OFF DONATIONS ESPECIALLY FROM ONE OFF VISITORS

A number of respondents whilst not wishing to join Friends of Steenbok indicated their willingness to make donations. The procedure for making donations by direct EFT or deposit will be published on the two main notice boards.

11. PUBLIC TOILETS

Toilets inside the boom to the small boat harbour were upgraded by Friends of Steenbok in April and are now open to the public during day light hours. The toilets are managed to a high standard by Leisure Isle Boat Club with Friends of Steenbok sharing the cost of toiletries.

12. REGULAR REPLENISHMENT OF POO BAG DISPENSORS

We take note of the dissatisfaction that bag dispenser boxes are often found empty. This service is provided by the LIRA guards. We will make representations to LIRA to introduce a regular daily service that is carefully monitored. Although the feedback from the survey is that the Reserve is safe the daily presence of the guards in the Reserve can only reinforce that it remains safe, particularly in the King Fisher Creek area.

Dispenser boxes in need of repair are also being replaced.

13. OTHER

Above, we have attempted to respond to those recommendations that are of wide concern to respondents and those which in our opinion will improve the overall ambience of the Reserve. This is reinforced by the large number of respondents that liked the peacefulness, beauty, openness, naturalness, views and 'everything' of the Reserve. We are thus cautious of tampering with an already winning recipe that has included a reluctance to avoid and publicise rules.

Other issues were raised e.g. recreational facilities, control of cyclists and more benches and a summarised list of these is attached as Annexure A.

However, if required, we would be happy to convene a public meeting where we will be happy to debate any aspects arising from this report.

3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to all who have assisted in making this survey a success. We thank the volunteers who assisted in doing interviews, Knysna Municipality for advice and support, Smart Office Connexion for sponsoring the printing, the support team and of course the large number of respondents for supplying us with their views.

May 2017

Annexure A - Less frequent mentioned recommendations.

Within ongoing objectives

- No development
- Keep it clean/maintained
- Keep as is
- Decrease invasive plants/grass
- Concern with milk wood protection
- Donation to preservation of the park
- Avoid visual pollution
- Natural wildlife to have precedence over domestic pets
- Improve natural state
- More indigenous flora
- Lands End signage
- Yellow flowers
- EFT donations put info on notice board
- LIRA to contribute - they already do and generously so
- Move sun dial into sun

More benches

- More benches - there is some room for expansion, but limited

Wheel chair site

- Shaded wheel chair site with view - we are exploring this.

Acknowledgement

- Acknowledgement to Joan Nichol co-founder of reserve

Cyclists

- Safety for children and elderly from cyclists - need to find practical approach.

Will be considered when resources allow

- Upgrade pathway along water's edge
- Water points for dogs
- More, bolder signage - inform and guide

Deemed Impractical

- Notice board record lagoon temperatures and tide times
- Introduce small entry fee
- Approach non LI residents for donations
- Dog visitors from off LI to pay R5 per dog

Considered and abandoned

- Increase salt marsh
- Pave path to Kingfisher Creek - muddy/slippery at times
- Break the mud bank to allow more water through on other side of bridge
- More board walks
- Install a bird hide
- Memorial wall for dogs/Bench sponsor for dog bench