



Steenbok September 2017 Newsletter

It is now over three months since we issued the Survey Summary Report and we are approaching the quarterly anniversary of the devastating Knysna fires. To all those effected directly by the fire, and these include some dear Friends intimately involved with the management of Steenbok, we offer our sincere condolences as they seek to recover from their horrific experiences. Pledge Nature Reserve was also ravaged by the fire and we are committed to promoting this magical nature reserve when it re-opens to the public.



Membership

Mainly as a result of the survey conducted in April, we have increased our membership of Friends of Steenbok by 33. Welcome to you folk and thanks for your interest and financial support. We expect to finish the 30 September financial year end ahead of budget and in a healthy financial position.

Appointments

Following the resignation by Rickie Maskew from our Management Committee we are pleased to welcome Arjen Meter as LIRA's representative. Thank you Ricky for your contribution over many years of service. We look forward to working with Arjen Meter who has already displayed his inexhaustible energy.

We also welcome David Stromberg who has been commissioned by LIRA to work with us in identifying the physical boundaries of Steenbok with its neighbours the Leisure Isle Boat Club and Leisure Isle Country Club, embracing the bowling and tennis clubs. This will be valuable once the new zoning scheme is adopted by Knysna Municipality. David will also advise on the most practical manner in which to record the area of Steenbok to be designated as nature reserve and this could involve discussion with our neighbours.

Actions implemented as a result of the April survey

Notwithstanding the drought and the adverse effect on flora the numbers visiting Steenbok continue to grow. This is understandable as "peace and tranquillity" were singled out in the recent survey as the most liked attributes of Steenbok Nature Reserve. This is reinforced by the large number of respondents that liked the peacefulness, beauty, openness, naturalness, views and 'everything' of the Reserve.

Since the survey we are not aware of any problems caused by dogs not on leads. Only one enquiry indicating interest in attending open debate should this be requested. No other requests were received.

There appears to be acceptance of our reluctance to avoid too many rules on this and other issues. We rely on all users to respect the rights of others.

Additional poo and municipal bins have been installed. There are now a total of 33 bins in the Reserve. This, coupled with a weekly service by a responsible "hired hand" picking up un-bagged dog dirt, discarded fishing

tackle and other litter should ensure that Steenbok Nature Reserve becomes known for its cleanliness and concern for others.

Thanks to the professional guidance from Dave Reynell indigenous trees in the three tree copses along the paved pathway are now identified with botanical name, common name and tree number.



Due to their shorter life and rapid growth this system of identification is not practical for other plants. Instead we are considering enhancing our website (www.steenboknaturereserve.org.za) with a more sophisticated data base system to enable use of mobile phones to easily access photos and descriptions of flora and other species by searching via colour and other characteristics. The introduction of the new system could then be combined with an audit/freshening up of information currently existing on the existing data base. We can only proceed with this upgrade if a new volunteer with the necessary interest and skills can be found. Any persons interested should contact Roger on 083 754 5390 to discuss.

Following consultation with SANParks we learnt that cutting of all grass areas could permanently discourage the free growth of those areas currently not cut. As this could change the whole character of the Reserve we have abandoned the plan to introduce additional grass cutting.

Recent special maintenance has included repair of plastic bag dispensers and replacement of edges breaking away on the concrete pathway. Digging by dogs along the pathway continues to be a problem and we appeal to dog owners to discourage this practice. A tremendous amount of undergrowth along our Links Drive boundary verge has been cleared to allow free movement of pedestrians.



We have recently realised that an ideal parking off point for wheelchairs exists under the large Milkwood at the north-west end of the concrete pathway.

Special Maintenance



After the violent winds at the time of the fire our well known Manataka tree (*Myoporum tenuifolium*) that is so loved by kiddies as a jungle gym and play centre, appeared as if its days were numbered.

The main stem appeared to have been pulled out of the ground and a large part of the tree was lying on its side. However after drastic pruning this natural facility has been restored with a completely new look. We wish kids many more happy hours of enjoyment.

Also as result of the exceptionally high winds in recent months and the non-availability, because of the fires, of normal municipal services to dispose of Steenbok tree cuttings and garden refuse we resorted to a chipper service from Ivy Garden Service to clear the enormous backlog. In a morning 14 large piles of tree cuttings and garden refuse were reduced to chips that were then returned to the soil as mulch in the Steenbok gardens. We are now committed to finding ways to pursue recycling all our garden "waste".



Two gum trees in the Reserve west of the tennis courts were also badly damaged by the heavy winds. The main stem of the one is broken and is lying across the other which is virtually dead. Knysna Municipality is arranging for a specialist contractor to prune the damaged tree and possibly to remove the dead tree. We are informed that the contractor has already been briefed. The owl box is badly damaged and currently occupied by Egyptian geese and will be scrapped. In time it will be replaced in the same position.

Developments at the north/west end of the Park

The new garden at the north/west entrance to the Park is now firmly established. Take a stroll along the concrete pathway towards the Small Boat Harbour where you will find a different type of garden with its own attractiveness.

Another important feature in this area is the opening of modern upgraded toilet facilities for ladies and gents. This is per courtesy of the Leisure Isle Boat Club in whose grounds the facilities are situated - past the entrance boom and on your immediate right. It is effectively in the middle of the Reserve and thus conveniently within reach of all our visitors.

Gum Trees

At a recent meeting Leisure Isle Residents Association decided that the Committee of LIRA appoint two persons who have adequate and proven knowledge to provide expert opinion on:

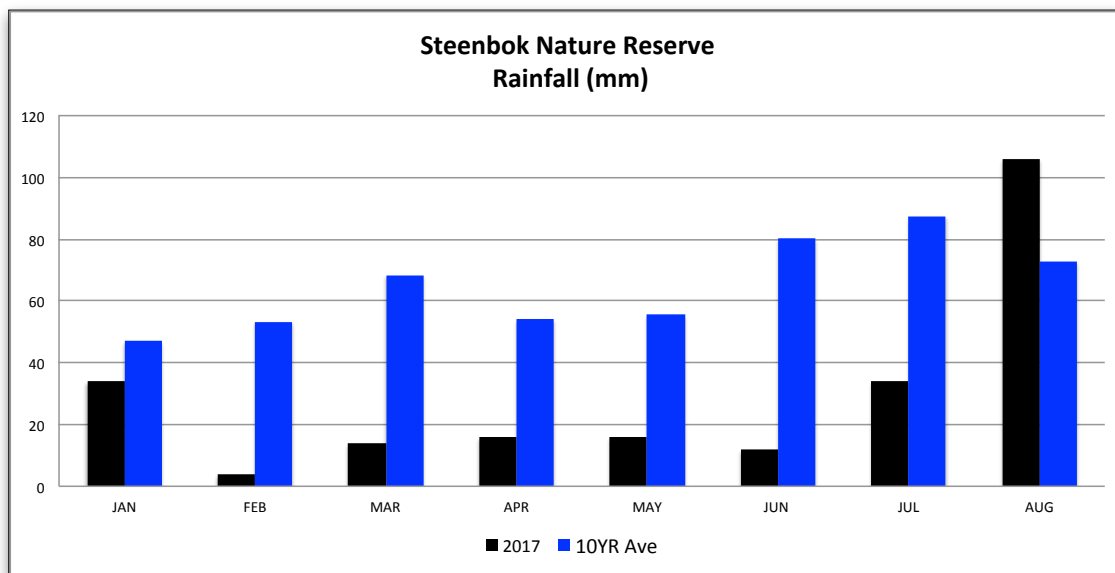
- The potential danger that the Gum trees pose from the danger of fire.
- The potential danger that the Gum trees pose from shedding branches and the tree itself falling.
- The remedial processes necessary to mitigate both these risks.



The Committee is required to report back on their findings within three months from July 20, 2017

Drought

At the time of going to press there are encouraging signs that the prolonged drought maybe broken. Soft soaking rains over-night of 16th August brought welcome relief to our parched gardens. During the 10 months from October last year till this July monthly rainfall was consistently less than one quarter of the historical average. However, thankfully , the August rainfall exceeded the 10 year average.



Photograph competition

Photographers are invited to submit photos depicting the beauty and life of Steenbok Nature Reserve. Seven photographs will be selected by the Steenbok Committee for display at the Leisure Isle Festival in A3 canvas format. These selected prints, produced professionally by IAN FLEMING PHOTOGRAPHY will be raffled at the Festival early in November 2017. We are looking for stunning photos, taken recently or in the past.

Raw photos, at a resolution of 300dpi, should be e-mailed, before the end of September, to Diana Stromberg at distromberg@gmail.com, and should include the photographer's name.

Facebook

Our Facebook site is succeeding in keeping Friends and other interested folk up to date on developments in the reserve and provides interesting information on features and happenings. All are encouraged to access this facility on [Facebook steenboknaturereserveknysna](https://www.facebook.com/steenboknaturereserveknysna).

Conclusion

Despite the prolonged drought and its devastating effect on our flora in the Reserve there are always pockets of beauty to take our breath away.



<http://www.steenboknaturereserve.org.za/>