

The Friends of **THE STEENBOK NATURE RESERVE TRUST**



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2024

I would like to begin this year's report by paying tribute to Roger Voysey, who sadly passed away in June this year. Roger made a huge contribution to Leisure Island in his retirement years in many ways, including starting the Leisure Island Festival and becoming chairman of the Leisure Island Residents Association. Both these initiatives continue to thrive and are of significant benefit to our residents and visitors.

The development of Steenbok Nature Reserve (SNR) was probably his most important undertaking and, for him, closest to his heart. Up until Roger's involvement in 2005, the area had been through a few phases organized by concerned residents to improve it. A generous donation from the Rowland and Leta Hill Trust financed the original timber pole boundary fence and initial signage and later a group of enthusiastic members of Gardening at Leisure, the local garden club, stepped up with their time and money to further the improvements. The Reserve, however, remained under threat from possible intrusive developments and Roger sprang into action, establishing this Trust with the object of permanently protecting the area.

A substantial fund was raised from the founding members of the Trust, and this was supplemented by contributions from a number of businesses and organizations. Roger put in an amazing amount of work to make this a collaborative effort. This involved the Knysna Municipality, SANParks, the Leisure Isle Residents Association (LIRA) and a number of environmental experts in order to develop and approve the long-term plan and then obtain the necessary environmental and legal approvals. After many months of hard work and negotiations, work began on the infrastructural work including the brick pathway, the boardwalks, the irrigation system, new signage and very importantly the indigenous gardens and tree copses.

Roger's next challenge was to ensure that the Reserve could be maintained and protected on an ongoing basis going forward. LIRA willingly accepted his proposal that the Association needed to become more involved in protecting the Island's natural resources and the culmination of this was a formal agreement between LIRA and the Knysna Municipality to manage SNR. Both organizations committed to an annual contribution to the Trust and the formation of a Management Committee with representatives from LIRA, KM, SANParks and the Trust. The Trust, simultaneously, initiated a campaign for new "Friends" to contribute to the Trust on an annual basis.

These three sources of funds form the mainstay of the ongoing sound financial situation which we are in today. The retention of SNR as one of the special jewels of Knysna is now assured. Roger's Way, the pathway behind the Leisure Island Country Club, linking the two sections of SNR, was named in Roger's honor but the entire beautiful Reserve is Roger's legacy to us all. I am sure you will agree that we owe him a great debt of gratitude.

Many years ago, Diana Stromberg was appointed Roger's deputy manager of SNR, and it is largely due to her efforts that the Reserve continues to be kept in such wonderful condition. As well as managing the Reserve, Diana does a wonderful job of chairing the Management Committee. Her involvement in all aspects of the Reserve from administration to fund raising and communications and controlling all the maintenance and expenditure is immense. On behalf of all of us, I would like to thank Diana for her tireless efforts. My thanks also to all the hardworking members of the Management Committee who give so much of their time to this project.

The audited financial statements for the year ended 30 September 2024 have been distributed. A deficit of R4644 was recorded. This is a satisfactory result as the costs of a number of projects, totaling some R90000, including an overhaul to the irrigation system and the paving at the entrance, were borne during the year. My thanks to our treasurer James Botha for always producing the monthly and annual accounts timeously and our auditors, MPK Chartered Accountants, for their valuable services.

Contributions from our "Friends" remain the major source of funds and we are very grateful for their continued support and generosity. My thanks to Ingrid Meter for the great job she does in liaising with all our members and attracting new ones. Just a reminder that contributions are tax deductible and income tax certificates are issued to all donors.

As mentioned in my tribute to Roger, the involvement of LIRA and the Knysna Municipality is vital to the ongoing success of SNR and their annual grants in difficult financial circumstances of R70000 and R51000 respectively are much appreciated. In addition to their financial grant, the Municipality provides their manpower and equipment for jobs like mowing the extensive grass areas and verges and removing trees and vegetation. Their contribution is much appreciated.

We are also very grateful for all the hard work that members put into other fundraising events, including the Leisure Island Festival, and some wonderful concerts and presentations.

In conclusion, my thanks to my fellow Trustees and once again to all our "Friends" , the representatives from the Management Committee, Knysna Municipality, SANParks and LIRA.

Brian Steele

December 2024