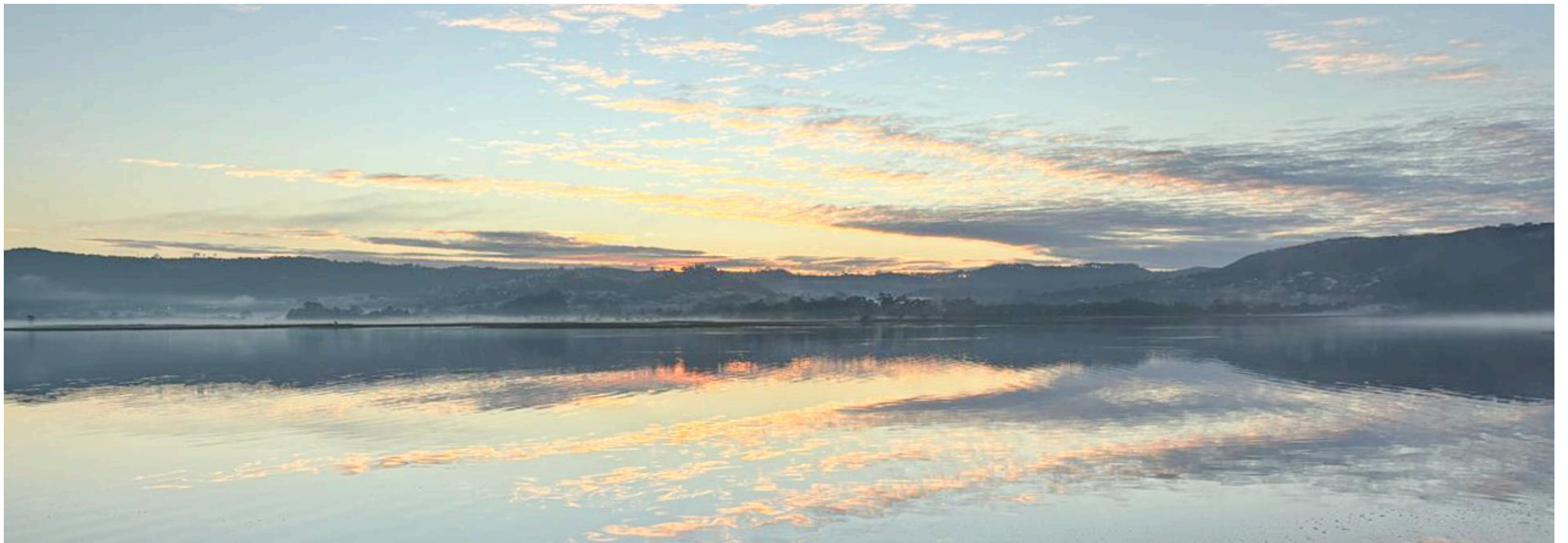


The Friends of THE STEENBOK NATURE RESERVE TRUST



JUNE 2026 NEWSLETTER



Thanks to James Botha, our Treasurer and financial wizard, who visits the Reserve nearly every day, and takes photos of Steenbok's beautiful landscapes. He then shares these with the committee to inspire us and to remind us how precious this place is.

BEFORE DAWN:

Point of view: You're up just before dawn. The world is quiet as the night insect noise fades, and the first peeps and quips of the birds begin tuning for the orchestra of the day. You're out the door and off into the budding light. Steenbok Nature Reserve is quiet as the first hominid movements begin to rumble and the sun starts to throw flames into the eastern skies. Here the smallest moments make the biggest impact: the reflection of the rising sun on the water, the dew beading the spiderwebs in the grass, the crisp touch of the air on your skin. Greeting a new day we are reminded that small things in life can create big shifts.

Please enjoy our winter Newsletter, a small collection of insights and happenings that have a big impact for Steenbok Nature Reserve.

AN EXCITING NEW WATERFRONT PICNIC AREA FOR STEENBOK RESERVE



Steenbok Nature Reserve is starting work on an exciting project to develop a waterfront recreation area at the bottom end of Harbour Road. This will result in an attractive spot for visitors to enjoy views of the lagoon, and for children to play. This project will require some reorganization of current parking arrangements. The grassy area facing the lagoon will be landscaped with picnic tables, bins, and information signage, resulting in a car-free area alongside the seawall. Provision will also be made for a parking area for visitor's cars.



Slipway users who currently use this area for short-term day parking for their cars and trailers will be accommodated on the two grassed areas to the west of Harbour Road. Long-term boat and trailer parking will no longer be permitted in Steenbok Reserve, and boat owners will be asked to make alternative arrangements. We plan to have the project completed in time for the start of the busy Festive Season.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

Our primary objective is to manage the ecosystem of Steenbok Nature Reserve for the benefit of all Knysna Residents, and its visitors, to ensure the natural heritage of this area is nurtured and protected for current and future generations.



Part of this mission is to create and maintain a place of enjoyment for all, while recognising and upholding protocols that apply to nature conservation areas. We are committed to establishing plant communities that are found in similar eco-locations along the Garden Route, and to protecting the flora and fauna that are indigenous to Leisure Isle and our shore line Salt Marshes.

WINTER IN STEENBOK - *Researchers warn that warming global temperatures make for increased risk of extreme weather conditions.*

The Level 8 category storm system that hammered the Garden Route this May is one example of an extreme kind of weather event. Researchers at the University of Cape Town analysed over three decades of satellite data from the ocean surrounding the African continent. Ocean currents and temperatures play a massive role in driving climate variability, and the 2025-2026 climate events that have affected Steenbok Nature Reserve and Leisure Isle (drought, surges, flooding, storms) show the warnings playing out in real time. Heeding the science we can all make small changes that collectively reduce our carbon footprint. Access a summary of the research article here: [African coastlines face unprecedented sea level surge crisis](#)



Fallen blue gum adjacent to Links Drive



Main Entrance Gardens



Main Entrance parking area



Fallen tree near BOMA Entrance

A huge thank you to Knysna Municipality, LIRA, RowaanProjects and Ivy Gardening Services for assisting with the clean-up of the numerous fallen branches, and the removal of the massive blue gum tree that fell in the storm of May 6th and 7th.



Rowaan Projects beginning to cut and remove the fallen blue gum.



Richard and Darren from Ivy Garden Services cutting and clearing dangerous, fallen branches obstructing pathways in Steenbok.



The KM team removing piles of Blue Gum branches along Links Drive.

SEA WALL UPDATE:

We are sure many of you have noticed the sinkhole along the Towpath Seawall, and are wondering what is going on. Last month, after jetting, rodding, and manual excavation, we discovered the source of the problem - a displaced tidal pipe. The tidal pipes allow lagoon water to flow freely in and out of the protected Saltmarsh that our boardwalk showcases. The displaced pipe has resulted in a washaway of sand that has resulted in the sinkhole. We have met with B&V Civils on site, and a repair method has been agreed upon. This consists of using mechanical excavation to expose and realign the old pipe, after which the sinkhole will be filled..

Work will start once tides permit, and as soon as we have resources available.

MAY RAINFALL:

The storm this May resulted in astronomical rainfall records! 317.6mm on our records.

This is the second-most monthly rainfall recorded on Leisure Isle this century- August 2006 recorded 381,2mm! The May measurement blows the ten year average of 71.9mm out of the water.



VOLUNTEERS IN STEENBOK:

A Brief History ... Steenbok Nature Reserve

Steenbok was founded in the 1990s by a dedicated group of volunteers who initiated an agreement with the Municipality to upgrade what was then a disused golf course into a Nature Reserve for the enjoyment of all Knysna's residents and visitors.

The tradition of volunteering in Steenbok has continued to the present day, with the involvement of engaging with visitors, the day-to-day care of all the natural areas, and the constant upkeep of all the garden areas.

Share your vision and ideas by becoming a Steenbok volunteer

Please join us in the Reserve for our Volunteer Days where the group discusses and implements improvements to the Reserve. The Indigenous Gardens is one of the projects that has seen recent improvements. Volunteers have enhanced the views, and carved out natural pathways for visitors to admire and enjoy. We meet on the last Saturday of every month. Everyone is welcome. If you would like to join our WhatsApp group for our monthly notifications about where we are meeting, please email us with your contact details and let us know that you're interested: news@steenboknaturereserve.org.za



KID'S CORNER:

There's some fun learning material in the Children's Corner for kids of all ages. Have a look at our newest educational post on our website - it's all about the tiny creepy crawlies that stabilize the ecosystem. The Arthropods are a hugely diverse phylum that fulfills functions like pollination, nutrient cycling, pest control and sustaining food webs.



Click the link to find the [Many Mini Minions](#) post and the fabulous fun [Word Search](#) on our website!

HORNLEE PRIMARY VISITS STEENBOK

Grade 5 - 7 learners were welcomed, and had an interactive walkabout to learn more about their environment and how to love and nurture it. They learned about some of the different indigenous trees that the Reserve showcases, and had a wonderful time making observations in nature.

The walk started at the Boma, and continued until the Milkwood gardens near the Leisure Isle Boat Club. The learners found spiders, carpenter bees, a forest of young sand olives, and the elusive Knysna dwarf chameleon.

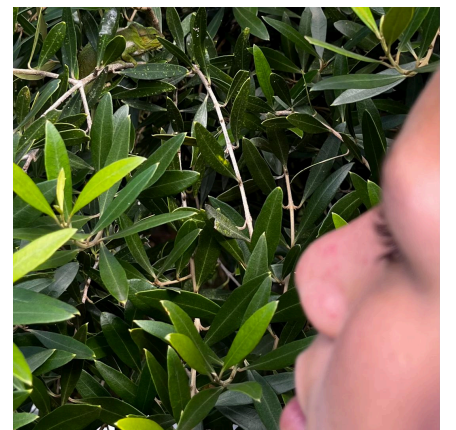


Thank you to the teachers and staff of Hornlee Primary for allowing this walk to take place. The Steenbok committee looks forward to your next visit!

SCHOOLS IN STEENBOK:

Steenbok Nature Reserve has extended an invitation to all our surrounding schools to bring the children into the Reserve for a meaningful experience in nature.

If you would like to book an educational experience in Steenbok please email us at news@steenboknaturereserve.org.za



FASCINATING FUNGI: MUSHROOMS AND THE MYCELIUM:

Between the 1700s and mid-1900s, naturalists thought mushrooms were a subcategory of the Plant Kingdom. By the 1960s to 1980s biologists realised that all fungi possessed unique biological traits that set them aside from plants in the history of evolution. When genetic analysis became possible in the 1990s genetic mapping revealed that fungi are surprisingly closer to animals than plants, sharing a genetic ancestor from over a billion years ago. Some of these defining traits are: fungal cell walls are really tough and made of chitin (the same material found in insect exoskeletons), fungi absorb and digest their food from the environment by releasing enzymes, and they reproduce by releasing spores. The mushrooms we see above ground are just the fruiting bodies of the network of cellular activity going on below ground, called the mycelium. These fruiting bodies are only there for spore production and distribution. The mycelium makes up a vital element of the biosphere; breaking down complex organic matter and recycling essential nutrients, it forms symbiotic relationships with the flora making a biological highway for nutrients and water, it also acts as a natural water filtration system, helps maintain soil structure, and sequesters massive amounts of carbon. There's no doubt about it, fungi are fascinating!



Click the link for a great YouTube video for anyone wanting to nerd out about mushrooms: [The Fascinating Map of Fungi](#)

INTERESTING FLORA:



Oxalis depressa

There are 270 unique oxalis, or wood sorrel, species in South Africa, making up one of the largest groups of geophytic plants in the Cape Floristic Region.

As a geophyte [Oxalis depressa](#) has a tiny shallow bulb below the surface of the soil. This low little sorrel has a unique relationship with light, opening its leaves for photosynthesis, and flowers for pollinators on sunny days in the winter, and closing them at night or on cloudy days. Their pollinators include, but are not limited to insects, bees and butterflies.

Take our Plant List with you into the Reserve for all your flora identification needs: [FLORA LIST](#)

ESSENTIAL BEES:



While all pollinators (including birds, butterflies, mice, beetles, moths and ants) are essential to life on this planet, here is a golden opportunity to appreciate the bee pollinators. A couple weeks back we were thrilled to receive stunning photos of honey bees busy in Steenbok from Penny Foyn.

There are so many species in the Cape Floristic Region that rely heavily on bees for fertilization and propagation: proteas, ericas and aloes, to mention a few. Also reliant on these small but essential creatures are the food crops of fruits and nuts, like apples, hard pitted fruits and macadamias. And so we see how the biodiversity and sustainability of our food sources are intimately linked to bees and their well-being.

The honey bee species found in the Cape is *Apis mellifera capensis* as depicted here in Penny's photos. The other species found in South Africa is *Apis mellifera scutellata*, which occurs in the northern parts of the country. Only 14 countries in the world have more than one species of true honey bee, highlighting the incredible biodiversity we are privileged to enjoy here in South Africa.

If a honey bee hive removal is needed, it is best to contact a conservationist bee keeper who will ensure the well-being of the colony.

Steenbok suggests Grant Liversey, who can be contacted here: 0828962346

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT TREE:



The Reserve has a wonderful selection of suitable trees that thrive in the Knysna area. Making the right decision about what tree to choose for your garden or donating a tree can be quite daunting. The Steenbok team has just made this task easier for you. Over the years we have observed which trees thrive and which don't.

Visit our website to download a list of beautiful trees that you can choose from to enhance your gardens and, at the same time, improve the natural indigenous biodiversity including interesting facts about the trees and the fauna that is supported by these magnificent ecosystems.

[LINK](#) to trees found in Steenbok Nature Reserve

[LINK](#) to suggested Memorial Trees

GO COMPOSTABLE! THE IMPACT OF PLASTIC ON CLIMATE CHANGE:

We're trying to make some changes to reduce our single use plastics in the Reserve, but we need your help!

From the extraction of fossil fuels, to plastic refining and manufacture, to waste management, to microplastic that pervades our landscapes and waters, the impact of plastic on our health and world is undeniable.

The plastic life cycle contributes significantly to the emissions of greenhouse gasses at each stage, impacting the warming of the oceans and planet. According to the [2019 report](#) from the Center for International Environmental Law, the production and incineration of plastic in 2030 is estimated to produce more than 1340 million metric tons of greenhouse gases - equal to the emissions from 295 five-hundred megawatt coal power plants firing at full capacity.

So what do we do? We reduce, reuse and recycle wherever we can. Use the [General Store](#) at the Foundation for refilling. If you own a doggo, choose to use certified compostable dog poo bags instead of single use or degradable bags containing microplastic.



All small things add up to make a big difference!

Thank you in advance, future-minded people, let's keep educating ourselves and others so that our collective impact grows.

WHAT TO DO THIS WINTER:

PLEDGE NATURE RESERVE; THE GREENHEART OF KNYSNA: Open again!



Pledge Nature Reserve is once again open for visitors! We are so pleased that our sister Nature Reserve is back!

Please see their detailed Facebook post about how you can find the entrance now that the Milkwood Square Shopping Center development is complete:

[Pledge Nature Reserve, Where to park and how to find us again](#)



The Knysna Oyster Festival dates are confirmed for the 3rd - 12th of July 2026.

Here are some really incredible nature-centered events you can look forward to:

Fossil Footprints walk in the Goukama Conservancy on the 4th of July, 10:30am: [LINK](#)



The KAWS Bark Run/Walk around Leisure Island on the 5th of July, 11am - 3pm: [LINK](#)



Explore the Rock Pools at The Heads at low tide on the 6th of July, 11am: [LINK](#)



The Fabulous Fynbos hike in the Goukama Nature Reserve on the 8th July, 9am: [LINK](#)

