

OUTENIQUA CONSERVANCY FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at Dana Bay Conservancy, on Saturday 15 March 2008 at 09h30

1. WELCOME

Allisdair opened the meeting at 09h45 and welcomed everyone to Dana Bay Conservancy. In the interests of conservation, we thank you for your time today, and for making the trip.

2. ARRANGEMENTS FOR THIS MEETING

The meeting was started after a cup of tea / coffee and snack. Thanks to Dana Bay Conservancy for hosting us and organising this. It is anticipated that the meeting will be finished before 13h00.

3. PRESENT AND APOLOGIES

The attendance register was passed around. Please see list of attendees at the rear. Allisdair welcomed the representatives from Great Brak River Conservancy in particular, after a long absence from these meetings.

Apologies were received from:

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| Vivien Harpur (Herold Conservancy) | Natalie baker (CapeNature) |
| Andrew Brown (Garden Route Initiative) | Joan Berning (Indalo Conservancy) |
| Bob Strain (Phantom Pass Conservancy) | Andy Maclaurin (Phantom Pass Conservancy) |
| Bill Turner (Kaaimans Corridor Conservancy) | Ronnie Board (Kaaimans Corridor Conservancy) |
| Maj-Lis Zopes (Touw River Conservancy) | Ena McIntyre (Constantia Kloof Conservancy) |
| Pru Bolus (Redford Conservancy) | Anthony Wise (Great Brak River Conservancy) |

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING (20 October 2007 – Nature's Valley Conservancy)

The minutes were briefly gone through, no changes were made. The minutes were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting.

Matters arising from the previous minutes

Previous point 4: Visit to New Plant Nursery

The Conservancy visit to New Plant Nursery took place on 20 November 2007. Conservancy members enjoyed the visit and found benefit therein, it was an enjoyable learning experience. Positive results have come from this interaction.

Previous point 5.3: Conservancy maps

Conservancies have received their maps which were produced and supplied by the Garden Route Initiative (GRI) office. Sue Swain mentioned that if a conservancy needs a new map because of a boundary change, a new map can be produced. In this event, conservancies are asked to get the new boundary delineation to Justine and she will facilitate the production of the map with the GRI.

Previous point 5.4 Compilation of Conservancy guidelines

Conservancies are reminded that Martine Mouton of the Nature's Valley Conservancy offered assistance and guidance in the compilation of conservancy management plans. Please keep this in mind. Martine's contact details: nvtrust@worldonline.co.za / Tel. 044 531 6820 / Cell 082 329 1229.

The meeting requested contact details for all conservancies, the most up to date list which Justine has is attached to the minutes. If there are any corrections which need to be made, please inform Justine.

5. NEW MATTERS

5.1 St. Blaize Trail upgrade project – Wayne Meyer

The St. Blaize Trail is a hiking trail running from the Mossel Bay Point, to Dana Bay, mostly along the cliff tops. Sponsorship for this project was obtained from the Garden Route Casino Community Trust. The first phase of the project will run for 4-5months in duration. The main tasks involved in the upgrade are the eradication of alien vegetation and trail maintenance and stabilization. Two local contractors have been developed to do the work, and they are making use of labor from the local communities. There is a direct benefit to the contractors and the staff, as well as the fact that much of the equipment purchased for this project will become the property of the contractors. The Mossel Bay Municipality have also contributed to the upgrading of the trail by placing railings at the start of the route, and Mossel Bay Tourism have upgraded the information signage in the Cave at the Point. The value of this project is R300 000.

Wayne showed 12 slides of the work which is being done and gave some interesting feedback on how the work is being done, and supervised by himself and Mike Keet. There were lots of questions for Wayne following his presentation. Tonia thanked Wayne for his involvement in the project and his enthusiasm for it. Allisdair mentioned that this is a great example of a partnership which is really working and thanked Wayne and Mike Keet for their hard work and guidance. Some of the discussion revolved around the use of a 'chipper' for getting rid of alien vegetation once it had been cut. There are lots of problems associated with this machinery and Allisdair suggested that if a chipper is needed within the Mossel Bay municipal area, that the conservancies could assist one another to compile a motivation to the Municipality to request the use of such a machine for environmental projects in conservancy areas. Flip du Plessis told the meeting about the chipper which the Municipality is to use at the dump for the chipping of organic material. This will be resold to the public as compost. The meeting showed support for this initiative.

5.2 Garden Route Initiative (GRI) update – Sue Swain

Fine-scale vegetation maps are being compiled for the GRI planning domain. This work is being done by Jan Vlok. Alien vegetation mapping is also underway, and both plans should be complete and available by May 2008. These will be useful in the identification of priority areas for a wide variety of users.

Sue works mostly on conservation stewardship related activities with private landowners. She has had a lot of success in dealing with private landowners in the priority corridors where she has started working. The Garden Route Initiative facilitated a study to identify the most important ecological corridors, and 34 such areas were identified. These will be looked at in terms of achieving viable corridors for the facilitation of ecological processes, especially important in these times of accelerated global warming. The GRI has World Bank funding until mid to end 2009. SANParks has been mandated to increase the conserved land from 6-8% and so are looking at more relaxed conservation options for contractual national parks than what the current contractual options allow for. SANParks look as though they will be continuing with their Stewardship commitment with the inclusion of this function into the permanent staff complement of the organization.

A question was asked as to the separation between the Gouritz initiative and Garden Route Initiative areas. Allisdair explained that these two landscape-scale conservation initiatives have been created to provide impetus to achieve conservation in the landscape. The people implementing these from the conservation bodies perspective are the people on the ground, Barend, Justine and Natalie in the case of CapeNature in the Garden Route Business Unit. Conservancy members needn't be concerned as to which of the two initiatives they fit into geographically.

5.3 Western Cape Crane Conservation Project – Bronwyn Botha

Bronwyn is the Project Coordinator: Western Cape Crane Conservation Project for the South African Crane Working Group. She is the only Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) field worker based in the Western Cape (Hermanus). Her contact details: Tel: 082 3200 911; Email: bronwynb@ewt.org.za ; Website: www.ewt.org.za She mentioned that the habitat north of the Outeniqua mountains is suitable for blue cranes, and we can expect more birds to move into this area.

Bronwyn also works with Eskom regarding bird electrocutions and collisions with powerlines. Should a conservancy member find a bird which has died as a result of a powerline collision or electrocution, photograph the carcass if possible and record detailed information on the site including exact location etc. Bronwyn can make a trip to the Garden Route if there are a few investigations to be done. The poisoning of blue cranes can also be reported to Bronwyn and she will investigate. During the next crane breeding season Bronwyn will visit the Garden Route to ring crane chicks. She showed the meeting examples of colour rings used on the legs and asked that sightings of birds

with colour rings be reported to her. The rings will be on both legs and are read from the top of the leg down. Example: left leg: blue on top of green on top of red; right leg: yellow on top of orange. If you can get the ring number from the metal ring, this is also very useful information. If you would like feedback on the ring information please request this at the time that you report it. If a dead crane is found and it has a metal ring, please collect the ring. Bronwyn would also like to hear about the location of breeding blue crane pairs, nests and chicks, she is keen to be of assistance, please make use of her contact details. Tonia mentioned that birds are being injured and killed at the Eskom Stacks. There are statistics and records on this. Dr. De Graaf from Hartenbosheuwels has seen to many of the injured birds. Tonia will get contact details to Bronwyn regarding this information.

Allisdair thanked Bronwyn for her contribution. We can all contribute to crane conservation. Barend will find out if there are gaps in terms of the Co-ordinated Avifaunal Road count routes. It is possible that routes going through other habitats need to be looked for if the cranes are moving into this area.

5.4 November 2007 flood: foam in sea – Justine Sharples

Justine reported that she had received an interesting explanation as to the cause of the vast quantities of foam which had been present on the Garden Route beaches during the November 2007 flood event. The explanation as received from a resident of Victoria Bay based on advice from an aquatic specialist revolved around a mixing of marine algae and the water in the flooded rivers causing a reaction which resulted in the unusually large quantities of foam. Since the meeting, Justine has since heard from the Victoria Bay resident who has since found out that there are more, conflicting explanations for the phenomenon and so a clear answer is not apparent at this stage. We will provide the most accurate explanation once we have it.

5.5 Workshop re fundraising, membership and media / newsletters – Discussion

There are some issues which many conservancies seem to battle with, while others do these well. How to obtain membership, secure funding for conservancy projects, and making use of the local media / newsletters to communicate with members and the public are issues which virtually all conservancies contend with. It was suggested that a workshop be facilitated whereby conservancies can share information with one another on these topics (and others) in detail, and exchange ideas. The main purpose of the workshop being to spend quality time on these topics so that there is real benefit in the exercise. The meeting agreed that this would be valuable, and maybe even to add another topic or two to those already identified.

It was decided that this workshop will be held before the next meeting. Justine will send out an email to all conservancies to ask for ideas, dates, additional topics etc. If you have advice to share please become involved in this workshop and if you feel that you can benefit by learning from the advice provided, please become involved too. The workshop will be hosted somewhere in the George area in order to be central.

5.6 Feedback from Conservancies – All conservancies

5.6.1 Sedgefield Island Conservancy – Tony Hunter

Tony showed the meeting a quick version of his Chairman's Report, (a PowerPoint presentation), from the last AGM. The conservancy has been busy with a lot of different tasks. One of the tasks completed was the compilation of the Management Plan. They received input from Tony Cain who helped them to understand the geographical history of the Island. His cell phone number is as follows: 083 3040175. The conservancy has done a lot to build partnerships with various organisations and bodies involved in the area of the conservancy. Flip recommended that they work with the Ward Committee for their area since the council does not recognise all of the Rate-payers Associations. On the whole the conservancy has enjoyed a lot of success with many projects on the go, fundraising and membership drives, work parties and establishing gardens, dealing with difficult issues such as colonial nesting birds and planning and clearing on the river banks etc. The conservancy effectively creates awareness by using the local newspaper which carries conservancy news, using notice boards at markets and chalk boards at the entrances to the conservancy. The conservancy has been very busy and has achieved a lot.

5.6.2 Great Brak River Conservancy – Aussie Eybers

There has been a lot of internal politics in Great Brak River over the last 2 years. This has side-tracked the conservancy and its effectivity considerably. On 4 March 2008, the overdue AGM was held and a new committee

elected. There are lots of new people in the area who are keen to see the conservancy succeed, they have ideas and look forward to meeting in order to get going. Allisdair wished them luck in maintaining the positive apolitical impetus which they now have. In answer to a question from Fred, Aussie said that the conservancy committee is not driven with agendas other than looking after the natural environment and taking on projects relating strictly to the environment.

5.6.3 Dana Bay Conservancy – Ilona Birch

Ilona started her PowerPoint Presentation with some of the issues which the conservancy is facing, such as speeding motorists; large vessels offshore discarding flotsam which arrives on and pollutes the beaches; landowners encroaching into public open spaces and snaring and hunting in the green-belts. Good use is made of the local media to make people aware of the problems and the proactive searching for snares helps. Barend explained about a situation when CapeNature and the Justice Department went to Dana Bay Conservancy to investigate an alleged poaching incident. It is very difficult to prosecute in these cases and hard evidence is needed. Tonia mentioned the value of conservancies becoming involved in Environmental Liaison Committees where new developments are taking place. She has experience where penalty systems have been put into place and fines can be imposed.

Dana Bay is preparing for their “Fundependence Day” on 31 May 2008 which will coincide with the Conservancy’s 10-year celebrations. This is to take place on the beach and residents are invited to join in the fun on the day.

The conservancy is always looking for ways to improve signage and to improve litter management. They are appealing to the public on this. Alien vegetation management is being looked at, and a sponsor sought for publishing the conservancy newsletter, and the Mossel Bay Advertiser and Great Brak Post are used for conservancy news articles. Conservancy membership plaques are being handed out. The oystercatcher monitoring project is continuing under the guidance of Leon Smit, in partnership with CapeNature. The conservancy will be looking for rare flora species come flowering season.

Ilona relayed a story of catching a cormorant with a fish-hook and sinker stuck in it. The bird was seen to by Carol Walton at SAPREC (Seabird and Penguin Rehabilitation Centre, located in Mossdustria). The SAPREC contact number (Carol) is 082 364 3382.

5.6.4 Fransmanshoek Conservancy – Wayne Meyer

Wayne told the meeting that the conservancy has enjoyed receiving funding from WESSA for restoration on the peninsula and pathway maintenance. The Eden District Municipality is the custodian of the land, and they have recently provided funding for new pathways and the re-vamping of the ablutions. The conservancy has a digital herbarium which is being worked on and expanded regularly. This can be viewed on the website: www.fransmanshoek.co.za Vodacom has been approached for funding and they await a response.

5.6.5 Boggomsbaai Conservancy – Wayne Meyer and Fred Orban

A 3-phase dune rehabilitation project is planned for the dunes in front of coastal properties at Boggomsbaai. A lot of noise has been created by the conservancy about certain cases where private landowners are trying to extend their gardens onto the state land on the sea-side of their properties. The Boggomsbaai Ratepayers Association widened an access path to the beach across state land without the necessary permission and this has caused the relationship between this body and the conservancy to sour somewhat. Fred added that the Ratepayers Association has undermined the good work which has been done by the conservancy over the years. The conservancy is taking a strong stand in that it is standing up for the natural environment and has purely conservation interests. Long-term the conservancy is pushing for the establishment of a Marine Protected Area from Pinnacle Point to the Gouritz River and it is hoped that Marine and Coastal management will be able to pay attention to this within the next few months.

5.6.6 Noetzie Conservancy – Julie Gosling

The conservancy has been obtaining expert advice on various issues pertaining to developments within the area. A developer in the area has been trying to make life difficult by threatening the conservancy with legal action. A project was started by Wendy some years ago to assist the community living at the intersection of the Noetzie Road and the N2, to keep their area clean. This has been a great success and they plan to start a recycling project in this area. Julie told the meeting of a group of people who were confronted with bags full of poached marine organisms including

aliekreulel and limpets. The people were confronted, the organisms released and the matter reported to the authorities. A warning was placed into the Action Ads to say that the intention was to sell this produce to a local Knysna Restaurant, that this is illegal and will be followed up in the media. Following the poaching of 'rooiwortel' from the conservancy area, it has been decided to start a nursery to propagate the species so that mother-stock can be supplied to the local traditional healers so that they can grow their own sustainable stocks without harming wild natural populations. The conservancy is looking for an indigenous butterfly, the Knysna Skollie, after having been advised by lepidopterist Dave Edge that the habitat is suitable in the area.

The meeting expressed interest in visiting the medicinal plant garden at Witfontein, Outeniqua Nature Reserve, just outside George. Justine will arrange this visit and communicate with the conservancies via email regarding this.

5.6.7 Redford Conservancy – Colleen Noble

This is a large conservancy with diverse land-uses from polo fields and nurseries to guest-houses. Alien vegetation on the Redford Road verges has been cleared and a project about to be launched for the clearing of aliens from the secondary roads. Assistance received from CapeNature with the mapping and density determination of the aliens and herbicide has been supplied. Wattles from road verges is going to be used to construct garbage collection points. The Birds in Reserves Project (BIRP) is going well and newsletters compiled and sent to members. A monthly article on the history of the area is placed into the Craggs Times, and the conservancy wants to conduct a survey of all of the historical buildings in the area. The conservancy actively networks with organizations involved in the area. Colleen mentioned that she has noticed that the national Road verges are not as clear of alien vegetation as they used to be and that it looks like this is not being maintained. The advice to Colleen is to speak to the National Roads Agency. The conservancy can also become active in the South Cape Weeds forum which is chaired by the National Department of Agriculture. Wollie Alheit is the contact person, Tel: 021 948 9278. Colleen also mentioned that a conservancy member is manufacturing and selling a 'wattle popper' which is ideal for smaller wattles. Please contact her if you would like to get hold of one.

5.6.8 Southern Craggs Conservancy – Mike Kemp

Mike mentioned that there are some landowners within the conservancy who have been doing good conservation work on their own properties, and mentioned a few examples. Following the first alien vegetation clearing project done on the conservancy in partnership with CapeNature, a stream has started running on Mike's property, this was not previously the case. Pam Booth and the Eden to Addo Initiative have introduced the Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers (CREW) to the Conservancy and have found special plants. Through this process they have also had the opportunity to learn a lot more about the special lowland vegetation type in their area. This information and the finding of these rare plant species has made landowners very proud of their area. Within the next few months conservancy members hope to find a *Disa* sp. Known to occur in the area, last recorded a long time ago. A second alien vegetation clearing project done in partnership with CapeNature is nearing completion.

5.6.9 Constantia Kloof Conservancy – Yvonne Barnard

Constantia Kloof is a new conservancy, established in August 2007. The conservancy has been busy with a variety of projects and tasks. Members have been supplied with membership plaques for gardens / gates. A tree identification excursion was done and will be done again. Yvonne has been busy compiling a digital database of flowering plants of the area, an exciting and ongoing project. Through this, it is possible that a rare orchid has been discovered in the area, and she awaits confirmation of this. The shooting of a bushpig boar in the conservancy caused outrage amongst some of the members. Yvonne dealt with this in as positive and tactful a manner as possible in the conservancy newsletter and it is hoped that all residents will take cognizance of their responsibility relating to wildlife in the area.

5.6.10 Hartenbosheuwels Conservancy – Tonia Schonken

The conservancy has changed quite a lot over the years, with many of the vacant properties now having been developed. The conservancy consists largely of a small group of residents and Tonia deals a lot with education and queries pertaining to various issues. She is able to help to get issues resolved through her well-developed contacts built up over the years. The Sonskynvallei teams are taking responsibility for the greening / garden projects at the Heuwels. Through involvement with the Mossel Bay Environmental partnership (MEP), Tonia is involved with the

Tweekuilen Dune Rehabilitation Project, the Water Forum and a variety of development Environmental Liaison Committee meetings and inputs into the environmental impact assessment process. At the next meeting Tonia will give feedback on the Tweekuilen project. This project has allowed for the development of the contractor and we are reminded that a lot of what is taught to the contracting teams is knowledge which is taken back to the community. Tonia has been assisting Dana Bay Conservancy with various issues, and extended an invitation to the Great Brak River Conservancy to approach her for assistance if they would like. There is a lot of involvement with bird counts and the various bird conservation initiatives.

6. DATE AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Date: Saturday 25 October 2008

Time: 09h30

Venue: Somewhere near George so that it is more central, venue to be announced closer to the time.

7. CLOSE AND THANKS

Allisdair closed the meeting just after 13h30 and thanked Ilona and Dana Bay Conservancy for hosting the meeting and the members for their involvement and positive contribution to conservation in the landscape.

Attendance register

| NAME | CONSERVANCY / ORGANISATION | EMAIL ADDRESS |
|---------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Santie den Boestert | Noetzie Conservancy Owners Association | denboestert@telkomsa.net |
| Julie Gosling | Noetzie Conservancy Owners Association | knoetzie@mweb.co.za |
| Wendy Dewberry | Noetzie Conservancy Owners Association | whistle@agnet.co.za |
| Tonia Schonken | Hartenbosheuvels Conservancy | tonia@absamail.co.za |
| Sue Swain | Garden Route Initiative | susans@sanparks.org |
| Wayne Meyer | Fransmanshoek Conservancy | Waynemeyer7@yahoo.co.uk |
| Mary Hunter | Sedgefield Island Conservancy | tonymary@mweb.co.za |
| Tony Hunter | Sedgefield Island Conservancy | tonymary@mweb.co.za |
| Yvonne Barnard | Constantia Kloof Conservancy | ybarnard@worldonline.co.za |
| Mariana Stadler | Great Brak River Conservancy | humidx@telkomsa.net |
| Aussie Eybers | Great Brak River Conservancy | aussie@eybers.co.za |
| Ilona Birch | Dana Bay Conservancy | bircha@absamail.co.za |
| Mike Kemp | Southern Craggs Conservancy | mike3g@vodamail.co.za |
| Colleen Noble | Redford Conservancy | noble@pix.co.za |
| Fred Orban | Boggomsbaai Conservancy | fjorban@mweb.co.za |
| Leon Smit | Dana Bay Conservancy | leonsmit@telkomsa.net |
| Bronwyn Botha | South African Crane Group | bronwynb@ewt.org.za |
| Flip du Plessis | Dana Bay Conservancy | P.O. Box 10597, Dana Bay, 6510 |
| Barend le Roux | Garden Route Conservation Services | bleroux@capenature.co.za |
| Allisdair MacDonald | Garden Route Business Unit Manager | amacdona@pgwc.gov.za |
| Justine Sharples | Garden Route Conservation Services | jsharples@capenature.co.za |