



NOETZIE CONSERVANCY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

Spring 2008

Chairman's Chat

Carl Metelerkamp

There have been regular and very well attended committee meetings this year and I must thank all committee members for their commitment to the NCOA during 2008. Committee members have had meetings with the executive mayor and officials during the year and we are engaging the Knysna Municipality about the possible inclusion of Noetzie within the Urban Edge. The Environmental Liaison Committee for the proposed green waste management site has yet to be established and the NCOA after an absence will once again be attending the Pezula Environmental Liaison Committee meetings.

This year the NCOA has received a number of requests from the public and property owners for consent to host commercial functions and large weddings at Noetzie, which in our view places the conservancy under unnecessary pressure. Due to the sensitive natural environment at Noetzie and the feasibility of access to the beach and properties by contractors and large groups of people, we are not in favour of these activities and urge all property owners to please respect the regulations of the Town Planning Scheme.

The planning of the construction of a Boardwalk from the car park to the beach by Pezula is progressing slowly and it looks as if construction may only commence sometime during the first half of 2009. The NCOA has requested that the width of the Boardwalk be extended and the Knysna Municipality also has some issues that need to be addressed. The general public will therefore unfortunately have to deal with the current challenge of pedestrian access to Noetzie for yet another holiday season.

We have been informed that DEADP has asked Pezula's consultants to make substantial changes to their proposed development around the car park and also to obtain comment from a number of important stakeholders. The revised development plan will have to involve all registered, interested and affected parties. The NCOA will continue to engage the relevant authorities as this process continues to follow its due course.

The upcoming 2008 AGM is on the 30th of December and we look forward to seeing you all there. Come and join the debate on how we can all work together to promote sustainable use and conservation at Noetzie for the years to come.

chairman@noetzie.co.za



LIGHT ON THE SEA

Wendy Dewberry

Those who have seen phosphorescence on the sea at Noetzie will know what a spectacular sight it is as the waves roll in lit with a greenish glow. We couldn't have asked for a better display of this phenomenon than on the 15th November while sipping spots on the Wynne-Jones' stoep. Out of interest I searched the web and found this interesting information

It turns out that the seas contain an abundance of living forms that are bioluminescent, that is, capable of emitting light. Just like fireflies on land, certain fish, squid, and jellyfish are bioluminescent. The bioluminescence seen in the crashing surf is due to microscopic algae called dinoflagellates, the same organisms that are responsible for the poisonous red tides. There can be as many as several million cells of these organisms in one teaspoonful, which explain why the light can be so intense. Here light is probably used as an alarm to ward off predators. The dinoflagellates advertise their presence, thus announcing that they be best avoided. But why is the light brightest when the water surface is disturbed? The reason is that bioluminescence requires oxygen, a chemical abundant in air but relatively poorly soluble in water. Thus, the crashing of waves results in the mixing of air with water, which temporarily increases the oxygen concentration.

Much of the bioluminescence at sea is a microbial phenomenon. Dinoflagellates are microbes, and so are bioluminescent bacteria that inhabit certain organs of fish and squid. These animals have specialized organs that carry large numbers of these bacteria. In these organs, the bacteria are packed so tightly that it's wall-to-wall bacteria. In addition, free-living bioluminescent bacteria can also be present, sometimes in such enormous numbers that they literally light up huge areas of the ocean, as big as the state of Connecticut. These "milky seas" have been described by countless mariners and, with modern tools, can be detected from space.

Scientists know a great deal about the chemistry of light emission by living things. All bioluminescent organisms have an enzyme called luciferase that acts with oxygen to change a compound known as luciferin (who says scientists don't have a sense of humour), a process that results in light emission. There is no heat loss, so this process is far more efficient than the light made in a light bulb.

Microbes, small as they are, are responsible for stunning natural phenomena, sometimes on a grand scale. In providing nutrients, such as utilizable nitrogen, the activities of microbial are essential for life on Earth to proceed. Most of these activities are not seen with the naked eye, but some are readily visible as well as dazzling.

CAN THE NOETZIE CONSERVANCY REALLY CONSERVE?

Tim Everett

We have had the enormous privilege to be able to spend the last six months having a sabbatical at Noetzie. In doing so, we have watched the changing seasons with its many variations to the shape of the beach, number of exposed rocks, condition of the river and the changing fauna and flora.

But I have also witnessed things that are a direct result of the interference, lack of care, thoughtlessness and overpopulation of mankind:-

- We have seen bushbuck wandering out of the bush onto the road between the two sets of the Pezula fences and then when disturbed, ramming their frightened bodies against the fence trying to get through the fence.
- We have seen five or six Cape Gulls with damaged legs, either with a foot missing or else limping badly as a result of getting entwined in fishing line - many in flight still trailing fishing line from a foot.



We have watched ringed Oyster Catchers limping – is this a result of the aluminium ring attached to the leg when still a chick? Does the benefit of research in ringing birds outweigh the possible loss of these birds through negligence?

Through my interest in photography, I have also realized that even Swift Terns have been ringed. (In July, we estimated that there were as many as 350 -400 Swift Terns on the beach for several days.)





We were excited to see a clutch of 3 White Fronted Plover eggs on the beach and watched in fascination her display of “wounded bird” when we got too close. But two days later, after an influx of people to the beach on a warm Sunday, the eggs were gone!

- In the middle of winter we had fleeting sightings of the Cape Clawless Otter, followed by a wonderful encounter by our niece Cailin who took a short clip with her digital camera of an inquisitive otter swimming around her canoe. But sadly since the weather has improved and the number of Pezula canoes, plus very noisy occupants has increased, we have had no sightings of our shy friend
- We have seen several cases of people driving on the beach, well below the high water mark.

So the question really is, can we as a community really do anything more than enjoy the sand, sea, forest and lagoon and then go home at the end of the Festive Season saying that we live and holiday in a conservancy?



This picture of a Rooikat was taken on the hill above Noetzie by Jessica Hayes

WIRE VERSUS WILDLIFE

Julie Gosling

A newly erected electric fence could have been the reason that a male Bush Buck wandered off it's normal route and found itself trapped between the corridor of wire along the Noetzie road. The buck was injured when, in a desperate attempt to escape, it repeatedly flung itself at the fence leaving smears of blood and fur on the wire. With the assistance of Pezula Environmental Manager, Jessica Hayes, and her colleague, Camen, the terrified animal was eventually herded to the safety of the unfenced Noetzie Conservancy.

The recently erected fence has been spanned across what, according to the Updated Pezula Environmental Management Plan (EMP), should remain as an open space corridor with no fencing to act as natural "paths" for wildlife movement. The matter was brought to the attention of the Knysna Municipality, SANparks, Capenature and the Pezula Environmental Liaison Committee (PELC). Peter Rimbault of Pezula responded by saying that the fence had been put in situ for security reasons and that "an animal underpass is in place for faunal movement" It is quite evident from the photograph of the so called animal underpass, that it is not at all animal friendly and is merely a water filled subway.



On consultation with the Municipality and SANparks it was decided that, to prevent further injuries to buck, cattle grids be installed across the Noetzie road on either side of the Pezula Estate. This would treat the symptom but not the cause - which is why, after three years of non attendance, the committee has taken the decision to, once again, have an NCOA representative on the PELC to monitor the implementation of the EMP and to ensure that the conditions of the Record of Decision (ROD) are upheld.



ALAN HENDERSON

Melanie Gosling

THERE is something special about the first dive into the breakers, the first early morning swim on the first day of the holidays at Noetzie. Coming up I would always turn around to scan the beach, the hills and the sky – everything still in its place and achingly beautiful, a year later. And there in the arches of The Castle would be Alan Henderson, arm resting on the doorjamb, surveying the beach. I'd raise my hand and wave, happy that another Noetzie feature was safe in its place.



I can't remember a time at Noetzie without Alan being there. He was part of my childhood and my adulthood, his parents and my grandparents were friends back in the 1930s. He was one of those Noetzie institutions. I was saddened by his death on September 21st this year, at the age of 82, and feel as if a piece of old Noetzie has gone forever.

Alan was born in Pretoria to Herbert Stephen Henderson, VC, and Helen Joan Davidson, MBE, who married in 1924. Alan grew up in Zimbabwe – or Southern Rhodesia as it was then – which his father had made his home in 1895. Alan, and his brother Ian, grew up on Cleveland and Doddieburn ranches in Zimbabwe which were established by his father. He went to Rhodes Estate Preparatory School and Plumtree School, and when his father died when he was only 16, Alan ran the cattle ranches with his mother, as well as the Prince Olaf gold mine on Cleveland.

When we used to visit The Castle as children, I remember the feel of walking barefoot over the zebra and antelope skins on the floor, and being intrigued by these strange “carpets” and other life of the Hendersons that they represented. Alan loved the bush and he was active in establishing the first commercial game ranch in Zimbabwe. He was a hunter and the first chairman of the Hunters' Association. Alan, with his brother Ian, established one of the first hunting and photographic safaris in Botswana and Zimbabwe. He was a born raconteur and had many bush tales, and we never tired of hearing them. I remember his telling us about helping the wildlife department with their elephant culls, or the time a lion took one of the trackers in Botswana. He was obviously a good and highly experienced hunter, but never made a big deal of it.

My grandfather, John Rex Metelerkamp, introduced Alan's parents – “old Mr and Mrs Hendie”, as my mother always called them – to Noetzie around 1930. At that stage the Hendersons used to live on Doddieburn Ranch, about half way between Bulawayo and Beit Bridge, and made the annual trek down to Cape Town to visit Alan's maternal grandmother for the summer holidays. They visited Knysna, stayed at the old Beach Hotel at The Heads and, in Alan's words: “It was during these holidays that my parents met and became friendly with the local Knynarions – the Thesens, Parks, Cuthberts, Frasers and Metelerkamps. Rex Metelerkamp introduced us to Noetzie. My parents fell in love with the beautiful bay.”

They bought one of the old Millwood wood and iron cottages, known as the Yellow Cottage, which was on the site where The Castle is now. When Alan's father built The Castle, this cottage was moved to the site of the Knarr's house, where it was when we were children.

In 2006, Alan wrote about some of his early memories of Noetzie, and the wonderful time he and Ian had had as children, and the hi-jinx they got up to – like filling a soda fountain bomb with gelignite, fitting a fuse and then playing “destroyer depth charging submarines” up the river. They threw their homemade bomb into a pool and “there was a deep explosion, an upsurge of water and dozens of harder on the surface. We took fright and never tried it again,” he wrote.

Alan was a keen fisherman and yachtsman, and the family spent many days sailing at Knysna Yacht Club in their clinker built red wing called “Noetzie”. He was one of the longest standing members of Knysna Yacht Club.

But most of their summer holiday was spent at Noetzie: “I remember how we used to go surfing on old yellowwood surfboards, boating on the river, collecting oysters, mussels, pericale and periwinkles, just as the strandlopers did in the past. . . These days there are no longer any in the pools, they are completely barren,” Alan wrote. When I first knew Alan, he was married to Paddy, and we used to play with their two daughters Shuna and Tamara, who came down from Zim year after year. Then he married Barbara, and they had a son, Ian - “little Ian” as he became known, to distinguish him from his uncle.

In 1969 Alan married Pat, who had five children of her own: Tony, Terry, Sharon, Cathy and Lynn. The Castle seemed to bulge during summer holidays with all the kids and step kids over Christmas and New Year. Alan and Pat become synonymous with the Noetzie New Year’s party. Alan wrote: “One of my pleasant memories is of Pat having open house on New Year’s Eve when all of Noetzie got together at our castle. They would bring their own braai meat and drinks. Pat supplied the salads and puddings. The dining room was turned into a dance floor where we danced and welcomed in the New Year.”

Alan and Pat were enormously hospitable, and we had many, many a happy lunch and dinner with them. Many of us celebrated the turn of the century at The Castle, and I remember the wonderful feeling of continuity I felt, thinking of the many generations of Noetzie-goers past and present.

Alan’s father first built the Little Castle, on the western end of the beach, then Pezula – the greyish building high on the hill (not to be confused with the modern housing development above Noetzie of the same name) and then The Castle. Later Ian Henderson built Montrose, nearer the river. Yet it appears Alan was not a great fan of the castles, as he wrote in 2006: “I always felt that the only castle that fitted into Noetzie was our little one in the corner. . . I suppose one cannot stop progress, but castles are a bit much. I hate to think what Noetzie will look like in the future.” Alan sold The Castle a few years ago, and he and Pat moved to Hunter’s Home in Knysna, where Pat still lives.

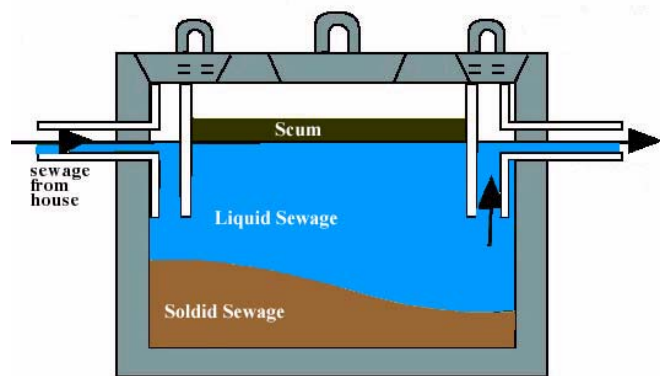
I will miss Alan. I remember when my mother died, Alan’s daughter, Shuna, wrote to me: “Beryl was so much part of Noetzie, that I am sure her spirit will always be there.” I feel the same way about Alan. There are strangers in The Castle now, and we’ll never again see Alan standing there in the early morning, looking out across the beach. But like all those who loved Noetzie and are gone, their spirits will always be there.

HOW "GREEN" IS YOUR SEPTIC TANK?

Septic tank care is crucial to maintain a healthy septic system. We urge all Noetzie residents to ensure that their septic tanks and soakaways are functioning properly and are given a treatment boost at the beginning of and during the holidays.

There are many excellent products on the market, there is a liquid form of 'sewage waste degrader' called *Probac* which can be poured directly into the septic tank or placed down the closest lavatory. This process should be repeated frequently. Other tried and tested products are *Sani -Tree* and *Breakdown* which are available from hardware stores and most Farmers Co-Op's.

A septic tank is basically a vessel buried underground, the purpose of which is the collection, storage and to some limited extent, treatment of sewage. Untreated wastewater flows into the septic tank where the solids separate from the liquids. Some solids, such as soap scum or fat, will float to the top of the tank to form a scum layer. Heavier solids sink to the bottom of the tank as sludge.



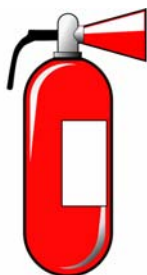
Self forming bacteria in the tank help the system "digest" these solids or sludge by a natural process of anaerobic decomposition. The remaining liquid flows out of the tank to percolate into the soil (soakaway) and is eventually taken up by root systems of plants.

Please be aware that the effluent that flows out of the septic tank still contains about 70% of polluted matter - the percolation stage is, therefore, *absolutely crucial* to prevent rivers and groundwater from becoming contaminated with harmful pathogens like E-coli, Shigella or Vibrio Cholera.

Excess scum, formed by oils and soaps etc, flows into the soakaway system affecting the absorption capacity of the soil. A very good and easy way of preventing oils and greases and unwanted "stuff" from entering your septic tank is to place a stocking over your kitchen and bathroom drain pipes. You will be amazed at how quickly the stocking becomes a bloated waterproof bladder - coated with grease and grime.

To prevent the destruction of the "little gogga's" that make our septic tanks work, please use detergents and disinfectants sparingly and make sure that coarse substances such as coffee grounds and cigarette butts are not put into your systems.

Fire extinguishers



The NCOA recommends that all property owners have a working fire extinguisher on their properties.

Fire extinguishers can be purchased from most hardware stores and should be inspected by you on a quarterly basis and by an accredited inspector on an annual basis.

The NCOA has joined the Fire Protection Association of the Southern Cape

RECYCLING

The Knysna Municipality is urging all residents to make an effort to sort their domestic waste and place all recyclable material into Green Bags for collection.

Material Suitable for Recycling

- Paper
- Plastic
- Cardboard
- Glass
- Cans

Please rinse all containers

Not Suitable for Recycling

- Any wet or soiled paper
 - Safety and laminated glass
 - Light bulbs
 - Carbon paper and chemically treated paper (fax)
 - Food and sweet wrappings
 - Wax paper
 - Milk/juice cartons
 - Poly or plastic coated glossy paper
 - Tinfoil, clingwrap, cellophane and polystyrene.
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NCOA 2008 Membership Fees

Membership fees for 2008 are R200.00 per member.
Please pay your contributions into the following bank account

Account Name: Noetzie Conservancy Owners Association
Bank: Standard Bank
Account: 00 189 849 3
Branch: Sandton 019205

Please could note you name and/or erf number when making payment

Donations to the NCOA are also most welcome

accounts@noetzie.co.za