

HERBS

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This pictorial newsletter gives you the latest Hermanus Botanical Society news and views on the fynbos scene. It also appears on our website www.fernkloof.com

Report from the Chair: Flower & Eco Fair 2011



The United Nations provided the inspiration for the display at this year's Flower & Eco Fair, with its declaration of 2011 as the International Year of Forests. The display represented a forested ravine surrounded by fynbos-covered slopes. Central to the spectacular display was a collection of magnificent large trees, which could be (and were!) bought from the Fair at very reasonable prices. The display was complemented by a wonderful selection of specimens, beautifully presented.

Nature's magnificence on show in the hall is the culmination of many days of work by many tireless volunteers. Teams of specimen pickers scour the area for choice specimens from the Monday before the show opens. These have to be sorted, named and shown to their best advantage. Work on the floral display starts well before that, with the main building work starting a week before the show opens. Under all the plants is

a "scaffolding" that is often quite a challenge to set up. This structure then has to be covered with the plants and flowers – all of which have to be sourced, sorted, put in place and kept looking beautiful during the days of arranging as well as the days of the show. And then it all needs to be dismantled, cleared away and cleaned up....

Apart from the "visible results" work, there is also all the essential "administrative" work which includes arranging and manning the gate, security, transport, publicity, cleaning and controlling the finances. Is it all worth it? A long-term resident said after the Fair "I have lived here for decades and always knew the fynbos is special, but until this show, never realised quite how beautiful it is – thank you". So I guess the answer is "Yes!"

On the financial side, we made a profit of some R50 000. This was made up from entrance fees, the sale of raffle tickets and the sale of flowers and plants. Had we been able to provide the food served at the Fair ourselves, profits would have been considerably higher. However, for the second year running, the Bowling Club had to step in and help by providing the food as no-one could be found from our members who were prepared to shoulder this. The bowlers did a wonderful job, but naturally took the lion's share of the profits themselves. So if anyone is prepared to arrange the catering for the next Fair, this would really be very deeply appreciated – and make a major contribution to Botsoc's funds.

Our heartfelt thanks go to all the workers who made this year's Flower & Eco Fair possible. It is impossible to name everyone who was involved, but each person did invaluable work and - most importantly - all with a smile (and some even with a song). Thank you all.

Pat Miller

THIS IS THE RED DOT DISA THAT NEARLY GOT AWAY!

Show special of this year's Flower and Eco Fair was a robust purple-spotted disa – which nearly faded into anonymity in the orchid corner of the specimen display. It was only when Amida Johns, co-author of *Stellenbosch to Hermanus Wild Flower Guide 5*, queried the blue disa tag it had been given that the correct name came up: *Disa hallackii*; Red List status Endangered and last seen in the Grootbos area in 2002.

Excitement reigned! The finder of this elusive orchid was Dr. Vic Hamilton-Attwell, who was exploring Vermont's vacant stands at the time of the show for the red fleshy parasite *Hyobanche sanguinea* and its accompanying pollinator. He was successful in his first quest where alien vegetation had been carefully cleared, but not a pollinator turned up to sample these enticing looking plants.



Vic with his 'discovery'



Disa hallackii

Then a satyrium-like plant surfaced and was carefully monitored. It produced a flower just after the show opened and Vic brought it in as *Disa cornuta* until it was renamed and given a large red dot to indicate a threatened species.

The good news is that in the 25m by 20m 'discovery' area, 14 plants have been found over several weeks. Nationwide it is estimated that less than 500 individual plants exist of this, one of the most threatened of South African orchids, as it is a lowland species that has lost most historical sites to urban expansion and crop cultivation. Decline in the remnant fragments where it persists is ongoing because of invasion of alien plants and clearing of road verges. So the question remains. What will become of our welcome visiting orchid on its Vermont piece of land? The owners are fynbos lovers so the chances are good that they will be afforded the protection they so badly need.

Geraldine Gardiner

Photos: Vic Hamilton-Attwell, Ronnie Hazell



Thank you for your photos

A special thank you to all members who responded to the request to send in their photos for the Fernkloof Garden's story board which is in the process of being assembled. Unfortunately, even though we would have liked to, we cannot use them all!

Be on the look-out for the new board, it should be up in the garden in the next few weeks.

Photographic contribution from Margaret Stanway

WHAT'S FLOWERING IN FERNKLOOF?



Orphium frutescens



Heterolepis aliena

The glossy pink flowers of the aptly named 'Sea rose' *Orphium frutescens* are flowering on the lower lying sandy areas of Fernkloof. The twisted anthers release their pollen from pores at their tips, when vibrated or buzzed by bees (known as buzz pollination). The Orphiums belong to the Gentianaceae family. Named after Orphius, the miraculous lute player who married Eurydice.

The 'Rotsgousblom' or 'Rock daisy', *Heterolepis aliena* flowers cheerfully and conspicuously on the rocky slopes and crevices of mountains from September to January. The plants have cobwebby branches and needle-like leaves.



Mentha aquatica



Pseudoselago serrata

Mentha aquatica or 'Water mint' belongs to the family of mint and sages, Lamiaceae. Plants can be seen flowering in the shallow moist sand at the entrance to the lagoon. *Mentha* is the Latin for mint and refers to the nymph Minthe, mistress of Pluto, who was turned into mint by the jealous Proserpine!

The powder-puff blue flowers of *Pseudoselago serrata* 'Blouaarbossie' always tempt one to scramble up higher to admire their beauty when they are spotted on the mountain peaks and slopes! Members of the large Scrophulariaceae family.

Sandy Jenkin

Exciting find by Belle's botanical group

Belle's botanical study group visited a property near Pearly Beach in late October and came across what they presumed was a bright pink flowered *Lampranthus*, growing on sand at the base of a limestone hill.

Lee Burman was curious, and contacted Cornelia Klak of the Bolus Herbarium at the University of Cape Town, who identified the plant as *Lampranthus tenuifolius*, 'and very rare too!'

According to the Red List the plant is described as - "Critically Endangered with 80% of the known population on the Cape Flats and Peninsula now extinct. Recent surveys located 4 locations between the Peninsula and Struisbaai, two of them now lost to development since 2002. Two small fragmented subpopulations now remain, one at Cape Point and the other near Struisbaai."

The discovery of this third sub-population is exciting news indeed.

Photo: Christine Wakfer



A 'congregation of caterpillars'



Photo: Di Parker



Photo: Christine Wakfer

Early October at the Visitors' Centre - and you may have been intrigued by a large congregation of caterpillars on the trunk of a Keurboom tree (*Virgilia*). Di Parker, on duty at the Centre on the Sunday morning certainly was.

Denise Schemel, from the Overstrand Conservation Forum, provided the following information about these gregarious creatures.

'The caterpillars (larvae) are from the Cape lappet moth (*Eutricha capensis*) belonging to the Lasiocampidae family. The larvae aggregate, a 'safety in numbers' strategy, on tree trunks and branches during the day, and feed on leaves only during the night. The hairs can cause irritation to the skin so people are better off not handling them!

The Cape lappet moth is large, with a wingspan of about 70mm, a pale reddish-brown in colour with 3 wavy white lines on each wing. They are found only along SA's western, south and eastern coasts. The adult moths emerge in early summer, but since we are currently experiencing a cold summer, they might take longer to pupate.'

Ref: Picker, Griffiths and Weaving's *Field guide to Insects of Southern Africa* (page 346).

DAISY DATA

Springtime daisies have dropped their seed already towards next year's display.

But have you given much thought as to how these friendly flowers got their botanical names?

Cape Odyssey's Indigenous Corner has put these facts together:

Osteospermum, purple, white and yellow, comes from *ostean* Greek for bone and *spermum* Latin for seed, describing the hard seeds;

Dimorphotheca, the Namaqualand daisy, is Greek for two-shaped-fruit;

Arctotis strangely means ear of the bear, from the Greek *arktos* and *otis*;

Senecio (which sports 300 species in southern Africa) means old man and refers to the hairy pappus greyish-white in colour.

Theodore of Gaza (1398-1478) translated certain botanical works from Greek into Latin and was honoured with genus *Gazania* being named after him.



Senecio hastifolius, Photo: Jane Crawford

Farewell to Anne Bean (with members of Board, in the pink, centre)



Grant Forbes, Manager of Fernkloof, reports that longstanding member and friend of Fernkloof Nature Reserve, Anne Bean, recently retired from the Fernkloof Advisory Board. She served the Board diligently for 32 years.

At the last Board meeting of 2011 Anne was thanked for her invaluable contribution towards conservation of the Reserve. She also recently received the Mayor's Medal from the City of Cape Town Council. **Photo: Geraldine Gardiner**

Are there Fairies in the Forest?

There is much excitement in Hermanus with the news that a flit of fairies has been spotted in Piet se Bos milkwood forest down near Grotto Beach!

Professor Carbon Footprint (better known as 'Frank the Woodvine') was doing field studies to see how all the little forest creatures live together in harmony when he thought he saw a winged creature flitting from tree to tree!

Prof. Footprint and Piet the Piper invite all the children (their parents and grandparents too) to come and help spot the fairies in the forest. It would be less frightening for the fairies if children come in fancy dress! To help them the forest will be lit by 100's of candles.

While following the fairy trail the Prof. will tell of the ancient milkwoods in the forest.

Venue: Piet se Bos

Date & Time: Saturday 17th December: 18h30 to 21h30

Bring: Picnic basket with food and drink, table, chairs (braai fires provided)

This sustainability awareness event is sponsored by the National Lottery, and brought to you by Whale Coast Conservation, Cliff Path Management, and Fernkloof Nature Reserve

HAVE YOU HEARD?



- A very special erica was picked by Thys de Villiers on his farm Boskloof and brought in as a specimen for the September show. It was the very striking and rare *Erica shannonea*. For many years this Erica had not been recorded in herbaria and records showed that it was last collected at the end of the 19thC. Several populations have now been discovered in the mountains between Stanford and Bredasdorp and further south in the range between Bredasdorp and Napier. Umbels of 8-10 flowers are borne at the tips of the branches, and the anthers have a 'double chin'. It is named after the Countess of Shannon, a patron of botany in the 18thC.

- In the first ten days of November alone, appreciative visitors from 15 other countries signed the Fernkloof Visitors' Book: from Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the USA. Going a little further back to early spring, can be added Argentina, France, Ireland, Israel, Namibia, Portugal, the United Arab Emirates, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Safe to say, Fernkloof is on the World map.

- SANBI has relaunched its new, improved, more user-friendly website. It is jampacked with information, including detailed plant lists, news from botanic gardens in SA, active research programmes and data on bird, butterfly and protea atlas projects. The Red List of SA plants, version 2011, is now on-line with 3 283 new photos, 79 newly described species, and they are delighted to report the rediscovery of 13 species previously listed as Critically Endangered (Possibly Extinct). Go to: www.sanbi.org

- Frank Tennick, well known Hermanus geologist who gave an interesting talk to us recently, has donated a large map to Fernkloof. It is a compilation of the six sheets, at a scale of 1:10 000 covering Fernkloof, Vogelgat and Maanschynkop Nature Reserves. The black and white air photos show the contours and hiking trails (with the help of a magnifying glass!) Frank will put the geology of the area on to a separate map at a scale of 1:20 000, a much smaller size.

- A question from the floor after Frank's presentation, as to why no fossils are found in Fernkloof, elicited a response from a member "of course there are fossils in Fernkloof – I am one!" He/she remains nameless (but uses the *nom de plume* of Prof. Carbon Footprint)

Botstap News

Botstap continue to offer varied and invigorating walks and away outings. Johan Schwartz reports that in August members stayed at Ganzekraal on the West Coast and walked Leeukop. In October they travelled to Montagu Springs and walked the Keisie River from Avalon Springs to Montagu also enjoying a tractor ride up the Arangies Mountain. Their final outing of the year was to Grootbos near Stanford to walk the Melkhout route.

Diary dates for the first quarter of 2012

20-22 February : Silvermine Nature Reserve, Constantia

16-19 April : Cederberg

Please contact Johan for further information : 028 314 0833 or 082 890 8261

Jackal buzzard chicks in Fernkloof

Herman de Wet reports that in September whilst watching a Jackal buzzard glide and swoop across the Fernkloof Mountains, he noticed it come to land on the side of the rocky cliffs above Hermanus Heights. With his telescope aimed at the spot he located a buzzard nest on a ledge with one chick visible. Two days later another chick head appeared!

During the following weeks Herman was able to observe the chicks being fed up to four times a day by their parents and enjoyed seeing them perform wing exercises as they prepared for their first flight. In the first week of November he was delighted to see first one chick, followed a few days later by the other, leave their home. Herman has spent many hours climbing the mountain above the Heights and on 10th October was able to get close enough to be able to take this wonderful photo of the two chicks in their nest. He made use of the telephoto lens on his Canon SX 1 IS camera.



With thanks to Herman de Wet

DATES TO DIARISE

10th December 09h00 – 12h00

Kids Fun Walk and Art Competition at Fernkloof
(Phone Grant Forbes 076 591 9420)

17th December 18h00

'Fairy Hunt' with Professor Carbon Footprint, and Picnic at Piet se Bos

23rd December

Leopard talk and Picnic at Fernkloof

18h00 : Picnic

19h30 : Dr. Bool Smuts on *Leopards of the Cape* with the latest information on the GPS collared leopard in the Hemel en Aarde Valley
Fernkloof Hall

13th January

Botanical Society Annual General Meeting

02nd March

Botanical Society Braai at Fernkloof

We welcome any contributions to, or feedback on the newsletter.

Photographic contributions with thanks : Vic Hamilton-Attwell, Jane Crawford, Herman de Wet, Geraldine Gardiner, Ronnie Hazell, Sandy Jenkin, Di Parker, Pat Miller, Margaret Stanway, Christine Wakfer

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