

HERBS

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

HAPPY 50TH BIRTHDAY TO THE HERMANUS BOTANICAL SOCIETY!

Fifty years ago, on March 8, 1960, a General Meeting of the Horticultural Society was held in the Astoria Hotel in the Main Road of old Hermanus. It was there that members voted to change the name of the society to the Hermanus Botanical Society – with attendant assets all of 58 pounds three shilling and eightpence.

Eric Jones was in the chair at that meeting but a week later Ken Benyon became the first chairman of the 'new' society. The idea behind the society was for it to devote most of its time and effort towards helping in the newly-proclaimed Fernkloof Reserve. But since Fernkloof was under the direct control of the Municipality, the chairman wanted the society to have a special project of its own as well. Eric Jones suggested that paths be installed along the cliffs as close to the sea as possible so that residents and tourists could enjoy the unique, natural beauty of the area.



Ion Williams (left), pictured with Geraldine Gardiner, later awarded a Ph.D. for his botanical work on the *Leucadendron* genus and made a Freeman of Hermanus before his death in 2001, was the pathfinder *extraordinaire* both in the reserve and on the coast.

In 1962 the society paid for the entrance gates to the reserve, which were to be part of a complex comprising offices, toilets etc. But it was only in the late 70s that a curator's office was completed followed by the main hall in 1980.

The Visitors' Centre was opened in 1972 and plans for Galpin Hut submitted in 1974. The 80s saw the Hermanus Herbarium reach international status.

After nearly two decades of flowershow venues at Birkenhead, Bay View and Marine hotels and in the library and parish halls, in 1981 the show came home to stay in the new Fernkloof hall. A profit of R1170.51 was made.

A little more than a decade later, including the show proceeds from a flourishing indigenous plant nursery run by the society, the profits skyrocketed to forty thousand rand, and, into the next century hit the hundred thousand rand mark. Conservation projects benefited from the show proceeds, producing the Fernkloof Tree Trail, Walks on Wheels and the restoration of the Fernkloof botanical gardens, and three years of contribution to a coordinator for the Ecoschools programme.



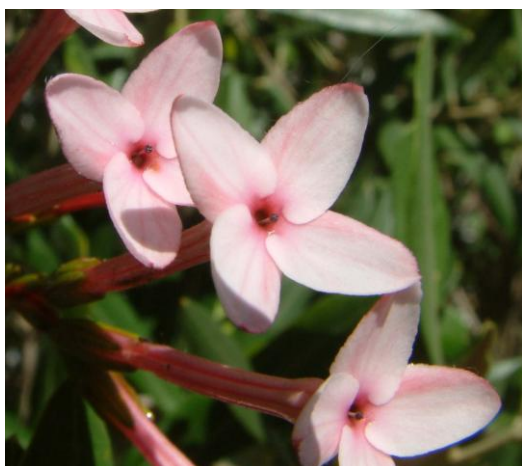
Visitors Centre 1972

Geraldine Gardiner

A RARE FIND!

When Botsoc member Anthony van Hoogstraten (Hoogie) decided to buy a farm in the Hemel en Aarde Valley, little did he know what a stir he would shortly be causing in botanical circles.

Portion of the farm Diepgat, which adjoins the Maanskynekop Reserve and covering a part of the northern slope of the Klein River mountains, caught his eye because of the conservation potential of this particular slope. The fact that the land was covered with hakea and other alien invasive plants did not daunt him. Hacker *par excellence*, Hoogie got his team together with loppers and chain saws. The next few months saw the invaders tumble. 1.2 million hakea later, he was now in a position to tackle the overgrown river valleys, releasing precious water which will eventually flow into the Klein River lagoon. The Hartebees River flows through his land, forming part of the boundary and later becomes the Klein.



But the find which caused the excitement: On a foothill below the steep northern slopes, just beyond where an unsuccessful attempt to grow wheat 25 years ago has left a permanent mess of slangbos and kooigoed, is a low hill which miraculously escaped the plough. A light infestation of hakea was cleared, revealing a field of delicate pink ericas.

Unaware of the stir he was about to cause, Hoogie brought a small piece of the plant in to the Herbarium at Fernkloof for identification. We couldn't believe our eyes! For here was undoubtedly the find of the decade – a specimen of *Erica jasminiflora* – known only from a tiny population at Shaw's Pass, at present down to only two plants. When questioned, Hoogie said that there were "quite a lot" of plants in the colony.



Word went out immediately to Erica experts Ted Oliver and Ross Turner, as well as to CREW (Custodians of Rare and Endangered Plants) at Kirstenbosch and visits were arranged to see the plants. A few Botsoc members were privileged to accompany them and were astounded to find that the "quite a lot" of plants was, according to their estimate, a couple of thousand! Botsoc members, Jim Sweet with GPS in hand, and Christine Wakfer (photo left) went out in inclement weather to record the find.

Hats off to Hoogie and his conservation efforts. Here is one endangered species that has a secure future in his hands. Who knows what else we might find there?

Lee Burman

HAVE YOU VISITED OUR WEBSITE?



Fernkloof Nature Reserve

Family -Proteaceae

Scientific name - *Mimetes cucullatus*

Common name - Rooi Stompie, Common pagoda



At the beginning of 2001 after receiving a brand new digital camera I decided to take pictures of all the flowers that we picked for the kiosk display every week. We were very lucky to make contact with Herman Steyn who, having the same idea, had started to build a website for the Fernkloof Reserve flowers. After working together Herman very generously donated his expanding website to Hermanus Botanical Society.

We now have Herman as our Webmaster, who helps us with the technical problems and a small committee of members who work together to take the photos and download them to the website adding the descriptions, articles of interest and answering the many queries that now come through from all over the world.

Interest in the site has extended from travel agents in Japan wanting to know about the cost to enter the Reserve, to an author in Australia asking to use our photos for seminar presentations. Queries from many enthusiastic amateurs and compliments from a professor of botany are amongst the accolades we have so far received.

We have photographed 769 plants out of a total of 1441 on the Fernkloof list.

It may interest members to know that over the last year Fernkloof Website has had 27,306 "visits" and visitors downloaded 27 gigabytes of data which is not too bad for a small website! The total size of the website is 200 megabytes.

I think we can say that fernkloof.com has certainly put Fernkloof Nature Reserve into the international botanical arena and this should make all Hermanus Botanical Society members proud.

Hermanus Botanical Society welcomes YOUR interest and suggestions. Send any messages to "www.fernkloof.com".

Christine Wakfer

GARDENING FOR BIRDS

Many of us have bird feeders in our gardens, or perhaps we merely sprinkle some seed for the birds, or some cheese and we derive much pleasure from this. But are we really doing the birds a favour? A recent article in the magazine *Africa Birds and Birding* queries this. In an article by Charles and Julia Botha, authors of **Bring Nature Back to your Garden** they express concern that feeding may create a population level that can't be sustained by the natural food available in the area. It may also result in an unnatural increase in populations of certain favoured species such as doves.

So it was most appropriate that the Hermanus Bird Club was recently treated to an extremely well-presented talk by Mariana Delpont of the Tygerberg Bird Club on **Gardening for Birds**. The principles she set out are easily followed by all of us when designing our indigenous gardens and will give the added benefit of attracting at least as many birds as the artificial feeds – and will offer them more variety and added nutrition to boot.

Mariana suggests we should try to create at least four different kinds of habitat in our gardens which will attract the birds there naturally. The following will be most effective:

An open area with lawn (Buffalo please, not Kikuyu) or low ground covers will attract birds such as Cape Wagtail, Spotted Thicknee, Crowned Lapwing and Cape Spurfowl.

A densely vegetated area where disturbance is minimal and dead leaves are allowed to accumulate, is ideal for Olive Thrush, Cape Robin-Chat, Southern Boubou and perhaps even an occasional Burchell's Coucal.



C. monilifera



Nylandtia spinosa



Ochna serrulata

Plants such as Bietou (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*), Tortoise Berry (*Nylandtia spinosa*) or Carnival Bush (*Ochna serrulata*) will attract fruit-eating birds while others such as the Ribbon Bush (*Hypoestes aristata*), Barleria and Agathosma (Buchu) species will attract insects and butterflies, thus providing food for insect eating species such as Cape White-eyes, Fiscal Flycatcher, Southern Boubou and many more. Wild Rosemary will provide nesting material and I have found that in my garden the Olive Thrushes love to line their nests with moss.



Tall trees such as Cape Ash, Boekenhout and Wild Peach (*Kiggelaria africana*), - photo at left, will provide nesting sites and some are host to caterpillar species which will provide food for Cuckoos, Paradise Flycatchers, Cape Batis, Bar-throated Apalis and many others.

A water feature, even if only a birdbath, will be greatly appreciated by many birds. Make sure it is not too deep and is close to a hedge or shrubs for shelter.

Sunbirds are amongst the easiest to attract by providing the correct food plants which will do them much more good than those dreadful bottles filled with coloured sugar water.

Try Cape Honeysuckle (*Tecomaria capensis*), Kruidjie-roer-my-nie (*Melianthus major*), any tubular Erica species and many Aloe, Protea and Pincushion species.

Above all, don't use pesticides or herbicides in your garden. The beauty of gardening for birds is that it is self-sustaining. The birds will eat most of the insects. Any that they find distasteful can be hand-picked for disposal. Or quite often soapy water is all that is needed.

Mariana has kindly sent us a list of the most desirable plants for attracting birds to your garden and if you would like a copy please E-mail Christa at botsochermanus@telkomsa.net. Many of the plants mentioned are available at our nursery at Fernkloof so we hope that you will all be dashing off to Fernkloof to stock up with suitable plants. Happy birding in your garden!

Lee Burman

WHAT'S FLOWERING

- *Gladiolus carmineus* (Cliff Lily) with its showy deep-pink flowers and sweet scent is making its appearance along the cliff paths, where it manages to thrive despite the harsh conditions of wind and salt spray. Its status is described as 'rare' in the Red Data list.
- *Tritoniopsis triticea* (Rooibergpypie) up to 90cm tall, can be seen sporting its bright orange flowers on the mountain slopes. There is a wonderful display of them at the Klipspringer rocks. Both the above are members of the IRIDACEAE family.
- *Amaryllis belladonna* (March lily) of the AMARYLLIDACEAE family, can be found growing in sandy areas. The narcissus-scented flowers are borne on leafless stems. This species has proven so popular that it has become naturalized in Mediterranean climates throughout the world.



Gladiolus carmineus



Tritoniopsis triticea



A. belladonna



This photo of a colony of *Brunsvigia orientalis* plants was taken in February on a plot of residential land bordering 8th Ave and 8th Streets in Voëlklip.

They must be one of the last stands of *Brunsvigia* in the Hermanus area.

It would be of interest to know if any Botsoc members can report seeing the plants elsewhere in Hermanus. Please e-mail the Botsoc office and let us know.

HAVE YOU HEARD

- Seen on the sandy burnt slopes above Hermanus Heights, at the start of the third after-fire year, a host of baby Erica plants, some of them flowering bravely ie. *Erica rhopalantha* and *Erica longiaristata*
- A mid-January ramble through the fynbos around the parking area on Rotary Way produced a remarkable collection of 20 different families for that weeks display at the Visitors' Centre
- Now is the time to look out for the bright red 'Paint-brush' flowers of *Haemanthus coccineus* flowering along the cliff path in Voëlklip



- A Berg adder coiled on top of an aspalathus shrublet caused much excitement and consternation to Belle's Wednesday botanists on the mountain above Hermanus Heights
- Congratulations to two sets of members, the Woodvines and the Iveys, who are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversaries, and added congratulations to Frank Woodvine on his 80th birthday!
- Congratulations to Willemien Swanepoel, our Greater Hermanus Environmental Officer, on her engagement to Johan Burger, the acting project leader of the Greater Cederberg Biodiversity Corridor

A 'good news' message sent to Grant Forbes

"On the 14th January a group of 15 walkers from the Kleinmond Hiking Group spent a wonderful day in Fernkloof. We followed the pipetrack past the dams and onto the contour path behind Voëlklip. We ascended via the zig-zag up into the mountains where we stopped for lunch overlooking the Hemel-en-aarde Valley. We returned to the Visitors' Centre via Kanonkop and Klipspringer.

In spite of the gloom of the recent attacks in Fernkloof, we felt safe, encountered no problems and had an unforgettable day, surrounded by beautiful fynbos, glorious vistas and mountains. We would like to compliment you on the good condition of the paths and your efforts in making us feel welcome.

Our group has often walked in Fernkloof and we plan to return! Thankyou." **Yvonne Olivier**

For a copy of Pat Millers Report at the February AGM please contact the Botanical Society on their e-mail address or phone the Botsoc office at 028 313 0819.

Computer gremlin in December Herbs No. 94

In the Hoy's Koppie article, the *Watsonia* sp. photo should have been named *Gladiolus carneus* and the photo of the *Gladiolus carneus* should have been *Watsonia* sp!

DATES TO DIARISE

11th March

This 'Introduction to Fynbos' course is full

For information on future courses contact Christa via Botsoc e-mail or phone the Botsoc office at 028 313 0819

19th March, Friday at 19h00 in the Fernkloof Hall

Odette Curtis, a young dynamic environmental consultant, and manager of Renosterveld Conservation, will speak on 'The Renosterveld'

25th to 28th March

Kirstenbosch 2010 Biodiversity Expo.

The Hermanus Botanical Society, the Overstrand Conservation Forum and the Overstrand Municipality will be combining to present an exhibit on Fernkloof

30th September to 3rd October

Flower and Eco Fair

We welcome any contributions to/feedback on the newsletter.

Please contact the editor Sandy Jenkin at : ***botsochermanus@telkomsa.net***

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