



KARL KÖHLER RECOGNISED WITH HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP

A simple ceremony at the lapa alongside Fish Eagle Dam in the Nature Reserve on 26 May came as something of a surprise for Karl Köhler.

The function was arranged by Keith Martin to enable Chairman Ellen van Dongen to award Karl Honorary Life Membership of the Modderfontein Conservation Society.

As Karl is not even a member of the Society, the award came as a particular surprise. However, your committee decided to honour Karl for his support over the years and his willingness to share his encyclopaedic knowledge of Modder with us at all times.

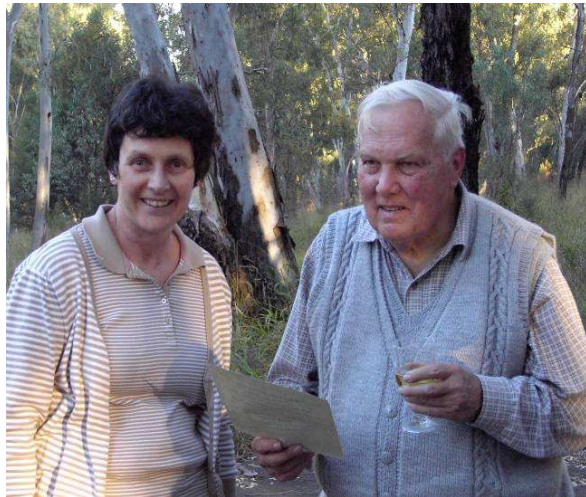
An article in AECI's internal newspaper *Reporter* in July 1969 sets the scene: "Karl's efforts in assisting both the museum and Modderfontein Dramatic Society (Mod-Dram) productions are the result of a very real interest in Modderfontein. This stems from his long association with the company. His grandfather was the first Köhler to work at Modder – he was one of the original team who started the factory as we know it today. He arrived in South Africa in 1897 from Cologne in Germany.

"Karl's father worked for Modderfontein all his life – starting as a Policeman in the Compound in 1926, and finally retiring as a Foreman, Roads and Drainage, Civil Section, Engineering Services Department, in 1966."

Karl featured in that issue of the newspaper under the headline: **Amateur artist makes good** when he designed and illustrated a magnificent programme for the Mod-Dram production, *Olde Tyme Variety*. The article began: "An arty-crafty type, Karl Köhler of European Wages Department at Modderfontein does not look it. He is quiet, unassuming and dresses ultra-conservatively ..."

Today, Karl is no different. He is happy to take a back seat and lend his support wherever it is needed. Most recently, he has contributed substantially to the Heritage Impact Assessment commissioned by Heartland and compiled by Heritage Architect Rocco Bosman. Karl was lured to Modder with the carrot being a trip around the Nature Reserve with Rocco in Norman Doak's 4 X 4. It was only after the drive-about that the presentation of the certificate took place much to Karl's amazement and delight.

Karl is the third Honorary Life Member of the Society. The others are Ken England and the late Pat Wark.



Chairman Ellen van Dongen presents Karl with his Honorary Life Membership certificate



Committee member Norman Doak scans a document with Heritage Architect Rocco Bosman



SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Subs were due at the end of February but some folk seem to have overlooked this. Please renew before 15 July. We'd hate to lose you.

MODDERFONTEIN DAMS GIVEN REAL NAMES

Modderfontein dams with the unimaginative names of One, Two, Three, Four and Five have been given new names.

Chairman of the Modderfontein Conservation Society (MCS), Ellen van Dongen made this announcement at the Society's recent annual general meeting.

The MCS, in conjunction with Heartland Properties, made the decision to give several of the dams more inspiring names to better reflect the nature of the area.

As a result, Dam One, in front of the village shops and library has been called Flamingo Dam to recall the times when these birds visited Modderfontein regularly and Dams Three, Four and Five in the Nature Reserve have been named Fish Eagle Dam, Grebe Dam and Blue Crane Dam respectively for similar reasons.

The naming of the dams comes about as a result of a recent meeting of the Nature Reserve Development Steering Committee.

SWIFT ACTION!



When Pat van Nierop saw a Little Swift on her doorstep, she took swift action to grab her camera and get the picture in double quick time.

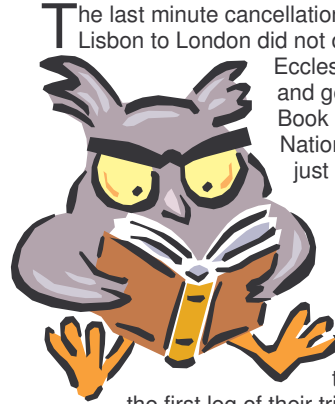
"I've heard of storks bringing babies to the house but this is ridiculous," says Pat. "I opened my kitchen door to find this young 'Little Swift' clutching the bottom kick-guard on the outside of the door. Amazingly, it just stayed there as I moved the door, with tail feathers just missing the kitchen floor tiles.

"When I gently picked him/her up it stayed a while in my hand then flew off gracefully. Thank goodness the dogs didn't investigate further. I just hope its parents were able to locate it as it clearly needed further instruction!"

Being at floor level, Pat had to emulate a contortionist to take the shot but even then was unable to get a better angle. "A bit like macro flower photography," she says.

LISBON TO LONDON DASH

The last minute cancellation of their flight from Lisbon to London did not deter Tracy and Allan Eccles from 'making a plan' and getting to the London Book Fair for a meeting with National Geographic with just one hour to spare. The authors of *Pot Plant Owl* spoke at the April evening meeting of the Society and were scheduled to leave for Lisbon at 06:00 the next morning on the first leg of their trip to the Book Fair where they were to promote their book on this respected international platform.



All was on-track when they arrived in Lisbon but the volcanic ash cloud enveloping the UK caused their onward flight to be cancelled shortly before take-off. "There we were, stuck in Lisbon and there was absolutely no public transport available to get us out of the city," says Tracy. "Even the ferries leaving the city were not taking foot passengers. We were desperate."

'n Boer maak 'n plan

And desperation can lead to innovation. The couple somehow came to an arrangement with six other people to share a taxi from Lisbon to Paris from where they hoped to find transport over the English Channel. The taxi journey was an adventure in itself – 26 uncomfortable hours across three countries. "We were nearing exhaustion," admits Tracy. "We were also becoming a bit despondent about the whole mission."

However, it was a firm and unfailing belief in their book that provided the additional stimulus that forced them on to the final leg of their journey. Somehow they managed to acquire a booking on the Eurostar from the main Paris terminus at Gare du Nord to the London terminal in St Pancras where a frantic taxi trip through heavy London traffic to the Book Fair saw them arrive just in time for their National Geographic meeting.

"We were disheveled and unwashed, exhausted and totally stressed but somehow the adrenalin kept pumping and we saw the day out, managing to remain outwardly cool," says Tracy. "It was an adventure I'd not like to repeat in a hurry."

Tracy and Allan's book tells how the couple were able to watch, document and photograph a Spotted Eagle Owl couple at close quarters, right through the mating season, from October to December when the owls decided to nest in a pot plant on the balcony of their house in Johannesburg.

(Continued on page 3)

KEN'S PHOTO GALLERY

When Ken England walks on Tuesdays, he's seldom without a camera. These shots record some work and wonders found in Modderfontein



The bottom of a broken tea cup found in the Modder Spruit. Is any member into porcelain, and if so, does this mark mean anything to you?

Anyone for mushrooms?



If you enjoy eating fungi, you'll probably know that this one is a definite no-no. This is a Fly Agaric or Amanite muscaria and according to Vincent Carruthers, can grow up to 200 mm in diameter. It's found singly or in groups in shady spots. The cap has white wharts, sticky when young. Stem is white to yellowish and broader at the base. It is widespread and usually found in summer and autumn under pine or oak trees. This was photographed by Ken England in the Nature Reserve during autumn.



This beautifully atmospheric photograph shows a group of Tuesday walkers setting out on a wet and misty morning.



Phillipp Rossol and John D'Aquino show that Tuesday walks can be a lot of fun.

Lisbon to London dash *(Continued from page 2)*

They took full advantage and made a clear and concise record of the procedure and took hundreds of amazing photographs, many of which have appeared in *Pot Plant Owl*, a beautifully produced coffee table book which Allan describes as: "A feel-good, uplifting 124 page hard cover book. The book contains over 100 unique colour photographs and a full account of Spotted Eagle Owls from eggs to fully-fledged chicks leaving the nest."

Allan and Tracy sold several copies of the book at our meeting which they happily signed. Visit their web page at <http://www.potplantowl.co.za/book.html> to learn more.

WONDERFUL WETLANDS

In a motivational and passionate talk last month, Garth Barnes, Environmental Co-ordinator: Northern Areas Region for the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) spoke about the importance of wetlands.

As an introduction to his talk Garth played an e-opening presentation. The slide show was prepared in the USA for an international audience and hammered out some hard-hitting facts about the importance of water and how the human race abuses this most precious resource.



View of the John Voelcker Dam in the Nature Reserve

One startling fact revealed was that we will run out of water before we run out of oil and when that happens, we'll run out of food and then out of time.

Sixty percent of the human body comprises water and, of this, the brain is 70 percent water and the blood 80 percent. With this infiltration of H₂O, it's no wonder we should be concerned about the state and quantity of Earth's water resources.

Garth emphasised that there IS a water crisis and that the world's population has only one percent of the world's water to draw on to sustain life as we know it. He also pointed out that South Africa's average rainfall is just half that of the world's average so we need to conserve the little we have even more.

As chairman of the Gauteng Wetlands Forum, he underlined the work the forum is doing to ensure the protection and wise management of South Africa's water resources.

Largely, this is done by the country's wetlands," he says. "Our wetlands are like human kidneys. They manage water by purifying it, storing it and ensuring supplies in drought conditions, preventing floods, recharging ground water, controlling erosion and providing natural resources for improving livelihoods. They also harbour a rich biodiversity and provide havens for eco-tourism.

"Despite this, we have lost about 55% of our wetlands due to poor land management. This loss includes seeps, marshes, lakes, estuaries and floodplains."

The Gauteng Wetlands Forum runs a two day course on getting to know wetlands. Part of it is theory and part is getting wet and muddy exploring the wonderful biodiversity to be found in a few of Johannesburg's 800 wetlands. Anyone wanting more information can contact Garth at: gbarnes@wessanorth.co.za.

Which grass is it?



Another useful reference book has been donated to the Society by a member. *Guide to the Grasses of Southern Africa* by Frits van Oudtshoorn has been given to the Society's embryo library by Umberto Sinatra.

Frits presented a very informed and fascinating talk on grasses of the Highveld to the Society in March 2004 and followed this up with a field trip around the Nature Reserve. His knowledge and passion for his subject made a big impression on those who attended.

Welcome new Committee members

At the AGM, most of your committee indicated that they were happy to serve another term. However, we said "thanks and farewell" to Brenda Bromfield and at the same time welcomed four new folk to the ranks: Stephen Burrow, Sally Hogan, Rajen Reddy and Carol Sherwood.

It's believed that new blood on the committee will bring greater enthusiasm and new ideas to the Society.

VISIT THE SOCIETY'S WEB PAGE AT:

www.modderconserve.org
It's still under construction, but looking better all the time

Contributions are welcome. Please send to Robbie at the fax number or e-mail address in the committee list.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Modderfontein Conservation Society.

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Tel: (011) 606 2521

E-mail topturf@topturf.co.za

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MODDERFONTEIN CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Programme of events: 2010

June	Saturday 12 08:00 Walk in the Nature Reserve
	Thursday 17 19:30 Speaker: Karin Spottiswoode talks on Kloofendal, the jewel of the west.
	Sunday 27 08:00 Walk in the Nature Reserve
	Tuesdays: 08:30 Walk in the Nature Reserve with John Clark 082-509-9856
	Contact Patricia Llewellyn (H)011 882 4114 or 082 497 9241
July	Saturday 10 08:00 Walk in the Nature Reserve
	Thursday 15 19:30 Pam's annual quiz
	Sunday 25 08:00 Walk in the Nature Reserve
	Tuesdays: 08:30 Walk in the Nature Reserve with John Clark 082-509-9856
	Contact: Pam & Robbie Vermont (H)011 608 2693 or 082 800 3704
August	Saturday 14 08:00 Walk in the Nature Reserve
	Thursday 19 19:30 Vic Oliver talk on the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve
	Sunday 29 08:00 Walk in the Nature Reserve
	Tuesdays: 08:30 Walk in the Nature Reserve with John Clark 082-509-9856
	Contact: tba
September	Saturday 11 07:30 Walk in the Nature Reserve
	Thursday 16 19:30 Peter Greaves returns to talk on Birding in Ghana
	Friday 24 08:00 Heritage Walk: Robbie 082 800 3704
	Sunday 26 07:30 Walk in the Nature Reserve
	Tuesdays: 08:00 Walk in the Nature Reserve with John Clark 082-509-9856
	Contact: Norman Doak (H)011 608 2537 or 082 447 9293

Your committee

Name	Portfolio	Home phone	Cell phone	Office phone
Ellen van Dongen	Chairman	011-462-3067	082-813-9611	011-606-0843
Pat van Nierop	Vice Chair	011-882-4392	083-326-6838	
John Clark	Tuesday walks	011-454-1801	082-509-9856	
Norman Doak	Community liaison	011-608-2537	082-447-9293	
Robbie Vermont	Membership	011-608-2693	082-800-3704	
Patricia Llewellyn	Treasurer	011-882-4114	082-497-9241	
Keith Martin	Heritage	011-608-2864	082-450-4003	
Janet Brodrick	Speaker liaison	011-453-3910	072-679-6461	
Peter Ewen	Reserve development	011-608-4043	076-377-3263	
Daryl Fuchs	Technology		083 395 0778	
Carol Sherwood		011-443-4114	082-906-5794	
Rajen Reddy			071-686-0631	011-709-8726
Stephen Burrow		011-608-1134	082-444-5467	501-2000
Sally Hogan		011-608-3089	082-291-8084	