



## Newsletter: January 2013

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# EDUCATION PROJECT GETS UNDERWAY

Modderfontein Conservation Society has embarked on a project which sees it working with Heritage Christian College in its environmental awareness programme during the first term this year.

"We have alien plant removal activities lined up for the children from Grade 4 upwards - in the Reserve," says co-ordinator Sally Hogan. "We have some volunteers who are helping out, but if anyone else would like to get involved, they can contact me on 011 608 3089 or 082 291 8084. This would be an ideal project for a retired teacher."

A portion of land in the Reserve has been set aside for the children from the College to tend to, under the supervision of Reserve Manager Luke Strugnell. "The idea is that the children should take ownership of this patch, remove alien vegetation, study the growth and development of new vegetation and, perhaps plant indigenous shrubs and trees," explains Sally.

Meanwhile, Grades 1 -3 (Foundation Phase) will enjoy a nature walk in the Reserve for their outing. "The plan is to take the children for a walk along the river and talk about what we see there," continues Sally. "This can include items such as waterfalls, why the gum trees are there, aloe in the rocks, plough breakers, alien vegetation, any birds that aren't scared away and maybe include some of the heritage stuff like the testing facilities at the near range."

After the walk the children will gather for a picnic at Fish Eagle Dam and be asked to draw a picture and maybe write a sentence about something they saw.



*While walking one Tuesday morning, we came across two cheerful lads planting a grove of trees close to Blue Crane Dam. It was very hot work but Mattheus Moropane and Shibambo Africa did not let that phase them at all.*

*Photo by Peter Olive.*

## Vacancies still exist for Honorary Reserve Rangers

**MCS members can volunteer a little of their time to act as Honorary Rangers in the Modderfontein Reserve and receive free entry to the Reserve for their work.**

This involves patrolling the Reserve for a day or two in a month, depending on the number of people who volunteer. An early start is needed to collect a two-way radio from the security office at the Pineland Office Park and ensure that the gate is being manned.

Rangers will also be required to patrol the area and make sure that visitors are abiding by the rules which are posted at the entry gate and parking areas. They should also alert the EWT of any untoward activity taking place or incidences of accident, illness or emergencies of any type.

To help you carry out these duties, rangers are equipped with a two-way radio and a magnetic sign for the door of your vehicle indicating Honorary Ranger status and authority.

Anyone living close to the Reserve need not stay there all day, but should return from time to time to ensure all is OK, and to lock down the Reserve at the end of the day.

For your services you will be given a Modderfontein Reserve shirt and free access to the Reserve at all times. Luke Strugnell is coordinating this effort and allocation of duty days depends on how much help we can rely on. If this interests you, please contact: Ellen van Dongen on 082 813 9611 or drop her an e-mail on [Ellen.vandongen@aelms.com](mailto:Ellen.vandongen@aelms.com)

## Changes to your 2013 programme

Due to some of our Saturday walks being set for the first Saturday of the month, we have revised the programme a bit to try and be consistent with the walks on the second Saturday each month. This also puts a two week gap between the Sunday and Saturday walks as well as ensuring that there is no clash with first Saturday bird walks.

Please see the revised programme in this newsletter and amend your diaries accordingly.

## WHITE-FACED OWL RELEASED IN THE RESERVE

A White-faced owl which was injured in Linbro Park was rescued and rehabilitated by FreeMe and released into the Modderfontein Reserve late last year, reports the *Bedfordview & Edenvale News*.

"Being present at the release was a really exciting experience for me," says Sally Hogan.

"I received a call from FreeMe asking whether I would allow them to release the owl in the Reserve as it is the closest conservation area to Linbro Park and is considered a safe area for the owl," says Reserve Manager Luke Strugnell.

White-faced owls have been seen from time to time in the Lakeside Village area of Modderfontein so it is hoped that the newcomer will find nearby companionship.

*Photograph by Sally Hogan*



## YOUR COMMITTEE

Name	Portfolio	Home phone	Cell phone	Office phone	E-mail
Ellen van Dongen	Chairman	011-462-3067	082-813-9611	011-606-0843	Ellen.VanDongen@aelms.com
Pat van Nierop	Vice Chairman	011-882-4392	083-326-6838		pat.nierop@mweb.co.za
John Clark	Tuesday walks	011-454-1801	082-509-9856		
Norman Doak	Community liaison	011-608-2537	082-447-9293		normandoak@telkomsa.net
Robbie Vermont	Membership	011-608-2693	082-800-3704		robbiev@netactive.co.za
Patricia Llewellyn	Treasurer	011-882-4114	082-497-9241		tricial@mweb.co.za
Keith Martin	Heritage	011-608-2864	082-450-4003		keith2864@gmail.com
Janet Brodrick	Speaker liaison	011-453-3910	072-679-6461		janbrod@iburst.co.za
Peter Ewen	Reserve development	011-608-4043	076-377-3263		petemar@gam.co.za
Daryl Fuchs	Technology		083 395 0778		cyclotron@freestateprojects.org
Carol Sherwood	Special Projects	011-443-4114	082-906-5794		csherwood@telkomsa.net
Rajen Reddy	Special Projects		071-686-0631	011-709-8726	rreddy@bme.co.za
Sally Hogan	Special Projects	011-608-3089	082-291-8084		shogan@global.co.za

### TELL US ABOUT IT

If you've changed your phone number or address please remember to tell Membership Secretary Robbie Vermont about it. We'd like to stay in touch but cannot unless we know where you are. Also, if your membership status changes, please let us know

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**"CONSERVATION  
IN ACTION"**

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

<b>MODDERFONTEIN CONSERVATION SOCIETY</b>	
<b>Programme of events: 2013</b> (Updated 22.01.2013)	
January	Saturday 5 07:00 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 17 19:30 "Beautiful Butterflies" – talk by Steve Woodhall
	Sunday 27 07:00 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:00 Walk in the Reserve with John Clark 082-509-9856
	<b>Contact: Norman Doak (h) 011 608 2537 (c) 082 447 9293</b>
February	Saturday 2 07:00 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 21 19:30 "Lowtech and Simple Food" – talk by Tony Lopes
	Sunday 24 07:00 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:00 Walk in the Reserve with John Clark 082-509-9856
	<b>Contact: Carol Sherwood (h) 011 443 4114 (c) 082 906 5794</b>
March	Saturday 9 07:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 14 19:30 AGM and "Clicking on Nature" photos by Dave Gordon*
	Sunday 24 07:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:00 Walk in the Reserve with John Clark 082 509 9856
	<b>Contact: Janet Brodrick (h)011 453 3910 (c) 072 679 6461</b>
April	Saturday 13 07:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 18 19:30 Cynthia Chigangaidze of EWT talks on Cranes
	Sunday 28 07:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:00 Walk in the Reserve with John Clark 082 509 9856
	<b>Contact: Rajen Reddy (c) 071 686 0631 (o) 011 709 8726</b>
May	Saturday 11 08:00 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 23 19:30 Lorraine Doyle of Africa Nature Training talks on conservation training, astronomy and botany
	Sunday 26 08:00 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:30 Walk in the Reserve with John Clark 082-509-9856
	<b>Contact: John Clark (h) 011 454 1801 (c) 082 509 9856</b>
June	Saturday 8 08:00 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 20 19:30 Clive Hopcroft speaks on "Bird Intelligence". Don't miss it.
	Sunday 23 08:00 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:30 Walk in the Reserve with John Clark 082-509-9856
	<b>Contact: Ellen van Dongen (h) 011 462 3067 (c) 082 813 9611</b>
July	Saturday 13 08:00 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 18 19:30 Pam's Annual Quiz
	Sunday 28 08:00 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:30 Walk in the Reserve with John Clark 082 509 9856
	<b>Contact: Pam &amp; Robbie Vermont (h) 011 608 2693 (c) 082 800 3704</b>

**N.B. SEE NOTES ON PAGE 4**

#### Notes:

- **Saturday and Sunday walks** leave from the Nature Reserve gates in Ardeer Road promptly at the advertised times.
- **Tuesday walkers** meet in the Pinelands Office Park parking area opposite the gates to the Reserve.
- **Bird Walks** are held on the first Saturday of every month.  
For times and info: Pat Ayling on 082 465 3683 or Pat van Nierop on 083 326 6838.
- **Heritage Day walks – bookings essential.** Call Robbie or Keith. Cost R30.00 per person
- **FOR ALL WALKS, BE THERE AT LEAST 15 MINUTES BEFOREHAND**
- **Evening meetings** take place in the Modderfontein Town Hall at 1 Casino Road.
- **Charges:** Visitors pay R10 for walks and R20 for evening talks; members pay R10 for evening talks. Conservation fee to enter Reserve – R30/adult and R15/child or pensioner.

## MODDER'S DISAPPEARING ORCHIDS

By Ken England

Like migratory birds, Modder's orchids come and go, but they are nowhere near as predictable. You know the swallows, swifts and bee-eaters will leave in March and return in September but the orchids will appear intermittently. Is this due to prevailing temperatures? Do they need a long rest from time to time?

One of the orchids in the Reserve - *eulophia ovalis subsp. ovalis* (white) was first noticed on 10 November 2009 near the path to Crab Crossing. It was a single example of the species. As it was so conveniently sited we have looked out for it every year but in 2010 and 2011 it failed to appear.

Happily last year it flowered again producing two flowers. Again, why do orchids behave like this?

We have another example within the boundaries of the Reserve. *Eulophia ovalis subsp. bainsii* (yellow) appears from time to time on The Koppie. This was first seen on 6 January 2009 in two areas of many blooms. As visits to the koppie are relatively infrequent we may have missed them but they have rarely been seen since.

Outside the official boundaries of the reserve in what may be called the 'Railway Field', alongside the Gautrain line, we have another example: *Habenaria epipactidea* first noticed on 10 February 2009 in large numbers. On 22 February 2011 only four could be found. As we recorded their co-ordinates on John Cruickshank's GPS, we know we have not been wandering around in the dark, so to speak.

Our final remaining recorded orchid is also in the railway field and flowers regularly every spring among the rocks *Eulophia clavicornis*. Unfortunately the last two species will be lost when the new road is built. As was the beautiful, rare *Eulophia welwitschii* which was lost beneath the Gautrain development.

If any botanist can explain why this happens it would be much appreciated.



Above: Beautiful *Eulophia welwitschii*, buried beneath the Gautrain. Photo by Ken England

### AGM date brought forward

Due to March 21 being Human Rights Day, your Society's annual general meeting has been moved forward to the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month.

Diarise this date to come along for an update on the Society's activities by Chairman Ellen van Dongen. Dave Gordon, member of the MCS and Vice Chairman of the Edenvale Photographic Club will show some of his stunning photos when he 'Clicks on Nature'.

Think about giving some time to your Society by getting more involved as a member of the MCS committee. Watch out for the official notice of the AGM which will be accompanied by a committee nomination form and subscription reminder (due on 1 March).

### LOWTECH & SIMPLE FOOD TALK

Tony Lopes, an electrical engineer, who left the high-tech world to pursue a simpler life, will be the guest speaker at the February evening meeting to be held in the Town Hall on Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Tony will talk about building solar geysers, solar ovens, and wood gas stoves using recycled/simple materials and how he converted his bakkie to run on waste vegetable oil

He will also talk about his community food gardens and his experiences on going back to basics with food.

"I enjoyed tinkering with electronics during my school days and then went on to study electrical engineering," says Tony. "I took up a career in construction project management in the industrial sector, which lasted 16 years."

Inspired by Einstein's quote: "It is every person's obligation to put back into the earth at least what they took out.", Tony changed careers and now pursues a passion for food gardens and low tech sustainable technologies. "I think that we have complicated our lives too much and I prefer simplicity. I just want to have some fun and share with you what I have learned."

See [www.lowtech.co.za](http://www.lowtech.co.za) for more.