



Newsletter: November/December 2016

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EUCALYPT PEST RESEARCH

For members of the Society who want to know more about the pest attacking the eucalypts in the Reserve, a look into the internet has revealed two articles relating to this topic.

An article in the International Journal of Pest Management in September 2012 drew attention to the problem.

The article by Ryan L. Nadel and Ann E. Noack of the Institute for Commercial Forestry Research and the Faculty of Biological Sciences at the University of Sydney, Australia respectively, addresses *Thaumastocoris peregrines* which they classify as a serious insect pest of Southern African and South American Eucalyptus plantations.

"Native to Australia, *T. peregrinus* was initially discovered infesting street, garden and amenity eucalypts in Sydney. With a host range of over 30 Eucalyptus species and hybrids this pest became established concurrently in both South Africa and Argentina, and has since spread at an extraordinary rate to neighbouring countries.

"In its native range *T. peregrinus* is distributed across several climatic regions in Australia. Basic biological data have been obtained on *T. peregrinus* although progress has been limited by culturing difficulties in the laboratory. Monitoring of *T. peregrinus* populations has been conducted at the individual tree, tree stand and regional levels to understand the population dynamics of the pest.

"Chemical control is effective in controlling *T. peregrinus* in an urban setting, however, biological control using *Cleruchoides noackae* is presently the main focus of control efforts at the international level. (Continued on page 2)



YEAR END WALK AND BRAAI AT FISH EAGLE DAM

Following the success of last year's walk and braai, your committee looks forward to seeing lots of you at the lapa at Fish Eagle Dam this year. Some upgrades at the Old Magazine made it necessary to change the venue.

It is suggested that you bring along gas or other camping-style light for your individual use and, as in the past, you'll need to bring everything else you need – food, drinks, cutlery, crockery and perhaps something to sit on more comfortable than the benches at the lapa.

There will be a communal braai fire which will be lit at about 18:00 and, for those who can get there early, the traditional pre-braai walk will begin from the lapa at 16:00.

To get the Reserve: Access to the Modderfontein Reserve is now via Centenary Way so, instead of driving under the Gautrain Line in Ardeer Road, turn left into Centenary Way. Take the second turn to the right into Maxwell Drive, pass under the Gautrain line and look out for the entrance road to the Reserve on the left.

The Modderfontein
Conservation
Society Committee
wishes all members
a wonderful,
blessed Christmas
and a safe and
healthy 2016



EUCALYPT PEST RESEARCH *(Continued from page 1)*

“Three new species of *Thaumastocoris* have been identified as potential pests, based on their geographical distribution and host range. Research into further understanding the biology of *T. peregrinus* and identifying other potential biological control agents is crucial for the management of present and future *Thaumastocoris* infestations.”

Also found on the internet are these observations by Eston K. Mutitu of the Department of Zoology and Entomology, Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI), University of Pretoria,

“Global trade, together with the widespread planting of common non-native tree species, has resulted in an increased diversity of insect pests relevant to plantation forestry. Among these, the Australian bug *Thaumastocoris peregrinus* is a serious and widespread pest of *Eucalyptus* species and commercially propagated hybrid clones.

“This insect is commonly referred to as the winter bronze bug because of the characteristic reddening and yellowing of the canopy foliage followed by bronzing and drying of leaves. These symptoms are a result of sap-sucking and puncturing of the leaves and twigs, which leads to chlorosis and eventual reduction in tree growth and yield.

“The insect has been recorded on various species of the family Myrtaceae, including 13 species of the genus *Eucalyptus* and one species of the genus *Corymbia* first recorded outside its native range in South Africa in 2003. By 2009, it had spread northwards as far as Kenya. In South America, the insect has also spread rapidly since its detection in Argentina in 2005, in Uruguay and Brazil in 2008, and Chile in 2006.

“In 2011, *T. peregrinus* was detected in Italy, marking the first report of a Thaumastocoridae species in Europe. In March 2012, *T. peregrinus* was reported on *Eucalyptus nicholii* in New Zealand. *T. peregrinus* is a relatively new pest of *Eucalyptus* in plantations and, therefore, management options are still being developed.

“Certain pesticides are effective on a small scale, but their use is neither economically viable nor ecologically acceptable as a long-term management strategy.”



Eucalypts at Fish Eagle Dam Photo: Robbie Vermont

YOUR COMMITTEE

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2016 CALENDAR NOW ON SALE

The MCS launched its 2016 wall calendar at our November evening meeting.

The calendar is the same size and format as last year and has just a single full-colour illustration of a tranquil scene at Fish Eagle Dam in the Modderfontein Reserve. Below that are 12 one-month-to-view A4 sheets with dates and space alongside each date for notes. The photograph was taken by Keith Martin early one morning when he was on Honorary Ranger duty.

The enlarged panels for notes are user friendly and we expect to be sold out again. The print is in a dark brown, signifying an earthy touch, according to designer Lucia Cowan.

Due to the generous sponsorship of AEL Mining Services and the Greater Modderfontein Property Umbrella Association, we have been able to maintain the price of R25.00. These calendars are a real bargain and will make great Christmas gifts.

The calendars are on sale at the Modderfontein Post Office in Queen Street; phone 011 608 2551 or from a committee member.



Vice Chairman Sally Hogan shows off an example of the 2016 calendar in the Reserve.

VISITING GRAVES AT SIZWE HOSPITAL

Twenty members and friends of the Modderfontein Conservation Society visited grave sites at the former Rietfontein Lazaretto – now Sizwe Hospital – last month as guests of historian Naomi Dinur.

The hospital was built on the farm Rietfontein in 1895 to care for patients with serious infectious diseases, notably bubonic plague, smallpox and anthrax. Many died there from these dreadful ailments and were buried on the site. Naomi estimates that there are about 6 000 graves there.

While the visitors saw relatively few of the graves on the site, they were fascinated and intrigued by them. “Many of the metal grave markers have disappeared, as scrap metal perhaps,” comments Janet Brodrick who organised the outing. “One gravestone, for instance, remembers a Mr Mlangeni: is it wrong to speculate that there might be a connection to Andrew Mlangeni, a struggle hero?”



Headstone at grave of Elzami Mlangeni

Photo: John Cruickshank

Another grave, at the hospital itself, commemorates Nurse Emily Blake who died aged just 27. “While tending to a sick child, she hugged and comforted him with a kiss,” relates Naomi. Soon after, Nurse Emily paid the ultimate price for her compassion when she died of bubonic plague.”

Originally, Rietfontein Hospital stood alone in a remote location, a full-day’s cart-ride from the centre of Johannesburg, established that far away as a safety measure against the smallpox epidemic sweeping the town. Now, the area is scheduled for development as Sunningdale and Janet speculates on the possibility of a horror scenario with construction releasing millions of anthrax spores. “An epidemic?” she asks. “We are told this is a possibility.”

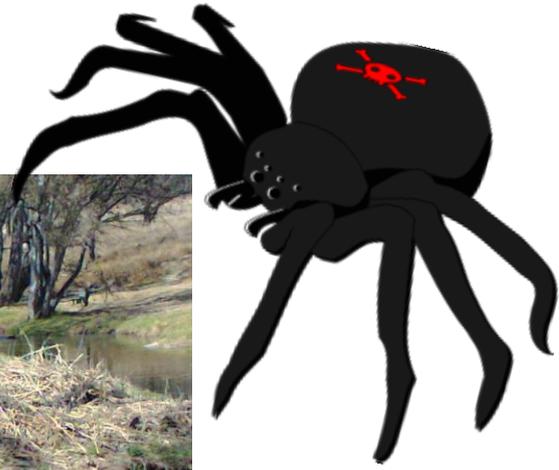
MODDERFONTEIN CONSERVATION SOCIETY	
Programme of events: 2016 (Updated: 16.11.2015)	
January	Saturday 09 08:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 21 19:30 Peter Grube talk: Coin Conservation – a light-hearted look at a coin collection
	Sunday 31 08:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:00 Walk in the Reserve with Janet Brodrick - 072 679 6461
	Contact: Norman Doak (h) 011 608 2537 (c) 082 447 9293
February	Saturday 13 08:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 18 19:30 John Cruickshank talk on the Sizwe Graves
	Sunday 28 08:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:00 Walk in the Reserve with Janet Brodrick - 072 679 6461
	Contact: Carol Sherwood (h) 011 443 4114 (c) 082 906 5794
March	Saturday 12 08:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 17 19:30 AGM – speaker to be advised
	Sunday 27 08:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:00 Walk in the Reserve with Janet Brodrick - 072 679 6461
	Contact: Janet Brodrick (h) 011 616-2872 (c) 072 679 6461
April	Saturday 09 08:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 21 19:30 Peter Webb talk: “How to turn your camera into a scientific tool”. He will talk about Butterflies ,Spiders and the Virtual museums.
	Sunday 24 08:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:00 Walk in the Reserve with Janet Brodrick - 072 679 6461
	Contact: Peter Olive (h) 011 608 2799 (c) 083 461 6221
May	Saturday 14 08:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Thursday 19 19:30 - speaker to be advised
	Sunday 29 08:30 Walk in the Reserve
	Tuesdays: all 08:30 Walk in the Reserve with Janet Brodrick - 072 679 6461
	Contact: Jenny Gough (h) 011 452 2201 (c) 082 685 0959

SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

Notes:

- **Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday walks** leave from Fish Eagle Dam in the Reserve promptly at the advertised times.
- **Bird Walks** are held on the first Saturday of the 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 Keith.(082 450 4003) or Robbie (082 800 3704).
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 R30 for evening talks; members pay R10 for evening talks.
Conservation fee to enter Reserve – R30/adult and R15/child or pensioner.

Visit www.modderconserve.org



Keith Williams with Astri Leroy

Spider Club hunt a big success

A visit to the Modderfontein Reserve in mid-September by the Spider Club of Southern Africa proved to be a great success with several members of your Society joining in the spider hunt and learning

something about the little critters. Some who approached the outing with a bit of trepidation eventually had to admit that spiders can be cute and actually quite pretty.

The outing was led by Spider Club Chair, Astri Leroy who displayed infinite patience finding subjects and then discussing and describing them.

The Spider Club is a non-profit environmental interest group providing a fun, responsible, social learning experience, centred on spiders, their relatives and nature in general. Their aim is to encourage and develop an interest in arachnids, including spiders, scorpions and others, and to promote this interest and the study of these animals by all suitable means.

Field outings, day visits, arachnid surveys and demonstrations, workshops and exhibits are arranged for members and for the public.

See the club's web page at www.spiderclub.co.za .



Ann Raats in intense debate with a visitor on the spider hunt

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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Visit: www.ewt.org.za or phone 011 372 3600

"CONSERVATION IN ACTION"

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

Missing you

John Clark wishes all his friends in the MCS well. You and Modder are all he misses being away from Jozi.

Last word

This Red-throated wryneck pictured by Bill Blake has built its nest in a hole in a tree in Bill's garden at Thornhill Manor in Modderfontein.

Whereas these birds were once relatively rare in the area, they are becoming more and more confiding and increasing in population. They are seen regularly in Thornhill Manor gardens but do not seem to respond to food offered by residents of the village. They are, however, often seen clearing ants from the paved areas.

