



HELDERBERG FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

UPDATE FROM MANAGEMENT

The last four months has been especially busy on the nature reserve as we co-ordinated the assumption of work duties under the required Covid-19 regulations as well as the reopening of the nature reserve to the public.

With a large chunk of the year having been forfeited and no activity taking place at all there has been an urgency to get projects started and catch up on lost time in terms of annual operational tasks that keep the nature serve functioning.

Fortunately, the reserve has been recipient to the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and welcomed a team of 10 eager hands to assist us on the nature reserve until June 2021. Added to this the Invasive Clearing teams have arrived in full force and have been making quick work in some areas that need a lot attention.

With the reserve back open, it has been fantastic to see visitors enjoying the area again. The lockdown period was a

frustrating time for many and the sigh of relief as regulations have begun to ease and allow the public to move more freely has been welcomed. The reserve has seen a considerable increase in visitor numbers especially as the public have rekindled their desire to be out in nature. The popularity of the reserve is welcomed however reserve management urge the public and encourage Friend's Members to adhere to reserve regulations and pass these expectations on to first time visitors to this beautiful area.

Currently the reserve is back to its full working potential, only the Environmental Education Centre remains quiet as schools are expected to focus on catching up time lost on the curriculum. This pause in activity has allowed an opportunity to focus on the needs for the new Multi-purpose centre that is currently being built.

The construction of the new centre is going well. It is very interesting to see the rammed earth walls as well as tyres and Eco

bricks being utilized as part of the construction of the building.

As we enter the Spring and Summer period we expect visitor number to continue to rise and there is still lots of work to be done before the reserve is ready to bid 2020 farewell. Field Rangers have been focusing on much needed trail maintenance within the reserve and will continue to do so for the rest of the year. The maintenance of fire breaks along all of the reserve boundaries still require maintenance and will become the main priority as the weather improves and veld begins to dry out.

As we wind down to the end of what has been an incredible challenging year, we urge our visitors to remain vigilant of the coronavirus and continue to exercise caution and the necessary safety regulations when they visit the Helderberg. Wishing you a pleasant summer.

Hayley-May Wittridge - Biodiversity Area Co-ordinator

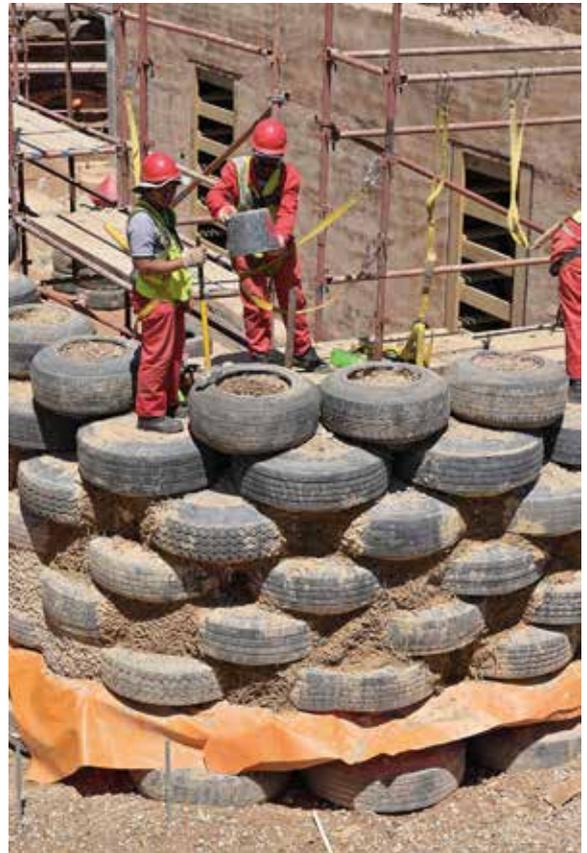




Extremely high visitors number experienced in the first few weeks of opening.



Expanded public works programme has employed ten staff members to assist with field tasks.



Construction of the new Multi-purpose Centre continues, rammed earth walls and the use of Tyres and eco-bricks will show case alternative building options to create a more sustainable building. Photos courtesy of Bruce Sutherland

WALKS SCHEDULE

DAY WALKS:

Sunday 29 November	Fynbos 8am
Sunday 6 December	Medicinal Plants 8am
Sunday 24 January	Indigenous Trees 8am
Sunday 28 February	Disa Gorge 8am

BIRD WALKS:

Wednesday 25 November	6.30am
Sunday 13 December	6.30am
Wednesday 20 January	6.30am
Sunday 21 February	6.30am
Wednesday 10 March	7.00am

Walks last +- 3 hours, day walks meet at the Visitor Centre and Bird walks meet at the gate. The walks are in the lower area of the reserve and therefore not strenuous except the Disa Gorge walks where moderate fitness is required. Wear comfortable shoes, bring a sun hat, snack and water.

SUNSET SUPPER WALKS:

Saturday 5 December	6.30pm
Saturday 23 January	6.30pm

Participants meet at the Visitor Centre, walk lasts +- 4hours. A moderate level of fitness is required. Bring your own picnic and hand torch.

NIGHT WALKS:

Saturday 14 November	New Moon/Firefly 8pm
Saturday 28 November	Full Moon 8pm
Saturday 12 December	New Moon 8pm
Saturday 16 January	New Moon 8pm
Saturday 30 January	Full Moon 8pm
Saturday 13 February	New Moon 8pm
Saturday 27 February	Full Moon 8pm
Saturday 13 March	New Moon 7pm
Saturday 27 March	Full Moon 7pm

Walks last approximately around 2-3 hours. Wear comfortable shoes, bring a jacket, water and a hand torch.

Leaders ...

Andreas Groenewald will lead all the walks apart from the bird walks which are led by Jill Mortimer.

Members: R50 per adult – R25 per scholar

Non-members R80 per adult - R40 per scholar

For more information and bookings send an email to the Friends: info@helderbergnaturereserve.co.za. Booking for a Walk closes at 12 noon on the Friday before. **Please note that bookings are made via email and EFT.** Once we have received your proof of payment and sent you our confirmation email, your booking will be guaranteed. Please provide your confirmation email to security on the day to avoid paying entrance fees. Should a Walk have to be cancelled for any reason (e.g. inclement weather), you will be advised via a text message or phone call. We do not do refunds so please send us an email if you would like to exchange your booking for another walk.

PLEASE NOTE: Covid rules and regulations apply, masks to be worn at all times.





ECO-SCHOOLS

Lockdown has taken its toll!

The Eco-Schools in the Helderberg node have struggled to find time in their busy school schedule to engage and complete the Eco-Schools programme in the few months left of this school year.

Notwithstanding, we would like to congratulate the schools that have managed to uphold the Eco-school's principles and maintain their eco-projects and assignments. Beaumont and Mondeor must be applauded for their dedication to conservation and the environment. Excellent eco-projects are being upgraded



Learners planting a fruit tree.

and sustained with the goal to take the eco-message forward. Since joining the Eco-Schools programme 12-13 years ago, the schools have gone from strength to strength and the evidence is clear when visiting the schools. Skills are being taught that will encourage young people to become responsible young adults that care and love their environment and all creatures wild and wonderful.

Beaumont has designed 3 new eco-gardens; a fynbos garden, a fruit tree garden and a massive eco-garden to attract pollinators – strategically placed next to the fruit garden. An eco-well made from eco-bricks is the focal point in the garden and beautifully designed pathways lead one through the space. Mondeor Eco-School, once a beer factory, has planted hundreds of trees and sources recycled materials for building and improving their environment. “We have 'eco' in our hearts”, said one teacher on a visit to the school.

After many years of running the Eco-Schools programme from the Helderberg Nature Reserve, the eco-office had to move and is

currently looking for suitable accommodation from which to continue managing and serving the Eco-Schools. Thank you Esmay for the packing/ transportation of the office contents.

My heartfelt thank you to the City of Cape Town and the Reserve management for the kind use of their office – it is much appreciated and I hope the close partnerships will continue – thank you Haley-May, Owen and Roy.

- Freya Brett

Please contact Freya Brett (node coordinator) on 082 708 1016.



Learners decorating the eco-well.

HACKING IN A SPRUNG SPRING



Marianne Parker and Gavin Hardres Williams attend to a black wattle and an acacia.

UPCOMING HACKS

For notice of upcoming hacks please contact:

James Silberbauer
jamessil@telkomsa.net
078 306 1660



David Sayer removing an acacia elata.

VISITOR CENTRE

No one was happier than our volunteers when the Visitor Centre re-opened after months of lockdown. It has been great to welcome our renewing members over the past few weeks, even though we have not immediately recognised you behind the masks! As you have been aware there was a need to manage an online application/renewal system during the lockdown, which had caused a considerable backlog in the issuing of membership cards. Our thanks go to Barbara O'Halloran who manages our database. She worked long hours at home which was not ideal for either herself or the members who we thank for their patience and understanding during this period. Yvonne Hutchins, a Visitor Centre volunteer for 16years has decided to retire and we thank her for her loyalty to the Friends and their activities over so many years. She has seen the centre through many changes & improvements and has been an invaluable mentor/advisor to the

volunteer team. Living as she does just own the road we hope she will regularly pop in to see us. The gift shop is well stocked for the season and although the 'tourist trade' may be quieter this year we appreciate the ongoing support we receive from our members.
- Fay Rolando



IMPORTANT NOTES:

Helderberg Nature Reserve has a no-bin policy. Waste bins are not provided in the protected area. Visitors are requested to please take their waste home with them. Leaving picnic waste in the reserve results in opportunistic animals such as crows, mongoose and genets to becoming dependent on unnatural food sources which is unhealthy for them but also results in these animals becoming problematic to manage. Litter is unsightly and harmful to the environment.
Please help us to keep the Helderberg clean.

SELF GUIDED HIKES

The reserve is open, and we encourage you to arrange outings in the reserve with friends, one of the safest and most beautiful reserves to hike within the greater Cape Town metropolitan area. Many hiking routes are listed under Trail Info, Events on the HNR website.

<https://helderbergnaturereserve.co.za/the-reserve/walking-trails/>

We recommend the following safety precautions:

Take your mobile phone with you (All hiking routes, except the long trail extension to the Dome, are within cell phone range).

Ensure you have the City emergency number, as per the trail map (021 480 7700) and the central 24/7 emergency number 021 937 0300.

Take a trail map with you – download from the HNR website (see trail info) or obtain from the Information Centre.

Carry at least 2 litres of water, especially in summer, as no water is available except in Disa Gorge.

Strong boots are recommended for hikes beyond Disa Gorge.

When hiking West Peak, hike the circuit anti-clockwise from Disa Gorge – it is not safe to descend Porcupine Ridge to the gorge.

Hike with at least one other person. NEVER ALONE.

We do not recommend hiking to the Dome without a very experienced and strong hiker to lead your group.

Take note of the reserve closing time (it varies during the year).

Get your boots out and enjoy the reserve!! - Don Reid

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The new norm: After a long absence from meeting face to face, around a board room table, the People and Conservation officers decided on an outdoor meeting in the picnic area.

Our main purpose was to discuss and brainstorm new ideas for EE. We've also shared all our ZOOM's ,Webinar, TEAMS and online meeting ideas and information. This would then assist us in the way forward for Conservation education.

It was great to see all the familiar Environmental education crazy faces from various Environmental Education centres from the different reserves behind masks.

I even had the opportunity to do a site visit with the group showing off our new Multipurpose Centre. - **Esmay Josephs**



MAKE OUR MOUNTAIN MORE INCLUSIVE WITH PHOTO COMPETITIONS

I am confident that all of you know that we have a photo club in the Helderberg nature reserve, what you may not be aware of, is that we have a Whatsapp group of the members of the club. We use this group to publish pictures, share concepts and answer any question that we might have, benefiting all members on the combined wisdom of the group.

Taking note of the nature of questions asked on the group, I discovered an exciting fact; when I created the group, my intention was for the more novice photographers to ask questions about photography. What happened was very different; 70% of the questions were about the name of the species featured on the pictures.

This was an unforeseen use of the group, that takes me to my next point; the pictures on the group are extraordinary, on the other hand, I learned so many species of flora and fauna, that I understand our mountain better, joining beauty and conservation.

The photo club and friends intend to make this beautiful knowledge more accessible, by creating photo competitions that are open to pictures taken in the nature reserve, that the general public can vote. Our website will be the platform for polling, letting everyone know the wonders of our mountain. We will inform all of you when to submit your pictures and when to vote on the competitions. - **Nuno de Sousa**



Join
the helderberg
nature reserve
photo club

send details to join:
hnr_photoclub@icloud.com

scan me to join:

Helderberg Nature Reserve
photo club

NEXT ISSUE WIL BE PUBLISHED MARCH 2021

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