



# HELDERBERG FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

## UPDATE FROM MANAGEMENT

This last Quarter has been jammed packed with background happenings on the nature reserve.

The most obvious changes are the continuous advancements on the new environmental centre which is currently under construction. The main roof is now on and most of the internal walls are nearing completion. Electricity and fibre cables were also laid in this quarter, and while they created a minor disruption in the reserve, they are welcome additions to our infrastructure. This building is a labour of love, as many of the building techniques require hands only to complete the tasks as machines cannot be used to achieve the work required. Interestingly over 6000 eco-bricks are being used in this building and many of these come from people who visit and use this nature reserve regularly. If you have delivered an eco-brick to the reserve, you can know that the effort you placed into jamming that bottle full with plastics is safely tucked into a wall somewhere in that centre. Your effort has been captured and your contribution appreciated. Due to some delays in the provision of materials in the industrial sector

our completion date has been pushed out to September. It won't be too much longer before we will all be able to experience and enjoy this new facility.

Out of the public view staff have been in the process of sorting existing assets, streamlining the conservation office space and preparing for the needs the new centre will bring. A focus on the development of interpretation and exhibition pieces that will enhance the visitor experience is underway and the construction of new curriculum based education programmes that are enhanced by the natural wonders available at Helderberg are in the pipelines. Out in the reserve there has been a focus on sorting the deteriorating road and path network. Years of good use, trampling and erosion are taking their toll and there is a lot of work to do. In July we will also start working on the trails on the upper sections of the mountain. Woody's Walk, Porcupine buttress and the trails to West Peak and the Dome do not fall within the nature reserve boundary. These popular trails have become badly degraded and are a safety risk to users. With the help from the Friend's of Helderberg, reserve management will assist two appointed Trails Rangers to start

working on these areas. Activities commence in July. Behind the scenes negotiations with various stakeholders regarding the inclusion of this area into the Helderberg Nature Reserve Management continues.

30th of June marks the end of the 2020/2021 Financial Year for the City of Cape Town. This is also the time we say good-bye to the 12 EPWP staff that have spent the last 12 months working on the reserve.

We extend thanks to each and every temporary staff member for their service and the time they spent assisting with the various daily tasks required to keep the nature reserve operational. We wish them all the very best as they further their experiences and develop in the working sector.

As we muddle through winter and the variations of lockdown, we are thankful that the reserve is able to remain open for everyone to enjoy.

Take the time to disengage for from the daily stresses and step into nature.

See you there soon.

Hayley-May Wittridge - Biodiversity Coordinator



*Advancements on the new environmental centre.*



## MEET THE STAFF



### **Chwayita Mthwa**

You have probably already met this face at the Helderberg Nature Reserve Main gate.

Chwayita Mthwa was appointed as a Visitor Control Officer in 2019 has become a familiar face with regular members who pass the gate on their daily walks and exercise.

Chwayita started her Biodiveristy career in 2017 as an intern at the Kenilworth Race Course, which preserves one of the last populations of the micro frog in the City. After that she moved over to the Atlantic Beach area as a Field Ranger before joining the Helderberg team.

When Chwayita is not at the main gate she enjoys interactions in the environmental education sector and loves to spend time with the field teams getting up close and personal with nature.

Chwayita recently accepted the challenge of summiting the Dome, which she says was challenging but definitely worth the adventure. Her message to hikers is to “never underestimate the Helderberg mountain. Always plan your hiking adventure with enough time, never go alone and be well prepared before you go”

### **CITY NATURE CHALLENGE 2021**

This year this competition took place worldwide between 30 April and 3 May. Capetonians once again rose to the challenge and took the opportunity to explore their natural surroundings and showcase the biodiversity of their various areas. The City of Cape Town was declared the official winner in two categories this year. The number of Cape Town and surrounding residents who participated increased to 1315 and made it possible for the City to make the most observations and identify the most species in this annual global challenge. Together Cape Town participants were able to record 71,142 observations and 4,766 species across the city. Runner-up in the two categories was Hong Kong with 29,781 observations and 4,179 species. Congratulations go to one of our own FHNR members – Helen Pickering – who observed the most species during the challenge with an outstanding 530 species.



**Well done Helen!**



## INFORMATION CENTRE

Since the beginning of the Friends new membership year, we have to date about 3700 new or renewed members on our database. Many of these are young members with families who are realising the benefits there are to being out in nature with their families.

Our new online membership system has had a few glitches and we thank members for their patience as these are resolved – technology does not always seem to cooperate as we would like it to. The new online system can be accessed on our website <http://www.helderbergnaturereserve.co.za> for joining/renewing membership of the Friends. Membership can also still be handled at the Information Centre which is open daily from 10am to 4pm. The new system now requires that the ID numbers of children be recorded – this enables the online system to allocate the correct fee for the child – either under 4 when no card is required or over 18 when a separate membership is required

and whether over 60 and entitled to the senior membership rate.

Elaine Harcombe is the new face in the office and we welcome her to the Information Centre team. While we still have our regular team of volunteers in the centre, we would welcome some new 'blood', particularly anyone who is available to work on the weekends. This could be for a morning or afternoon shift, not necessarily the full day. Please contact the office if you think that you may be able to help us in this regard.

With the restrictions of overseas travel (and therefore tourist trade) the gift shop has seen a slump in sales. Please remember to pop in should be you be looking for well priced gifts or maybe even treat yourself. What about a new teatowel with buzzy bees, penguins or proteas to brighten your kitchen! We look forward to seeing you.

- Fay Rolando.

## GENERAL NEWS

### The committee for 2021/22 is as follows:

Penny Clifton-Smith – Chairman  
 Peter Blaine - Deputy Chairman  
 Alistair Munday - Treasurer  
 Muriel Rowcroft - Secretary  
 Fay Rolando - Margie Humphris  
 Anrike Theron - Miona Janeke  
 James Silberbauer - Alistair Hill  
 Peter Gordon - Adriaan Roux  
 Freya Brett – ex officio representing Wessa and Somerset West Bird Club  
 Hayley-May Wittridge – ex officio Biodiversity Area Co-ordinator

**In order to comply with POPIA ( Protection of Personal Information Act, 4 of 2013)**, which came into effect on 1 July 2021, The Friends of the Helderberg Nature Reserve would like to assure you that your personal information remain secure and confidential and will only be used to communicate FHNR related information, newsletters and activities with you. In this regard please let us know if you would like to be removed from our mailing list.

**All the Early Riser Keys for this year have been sold**, leaving a number of disappointed members. Should any keyholder no longer use their key would you please return it so that another member may have the benefit of it.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE:

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.**

## WALKS SCHEDULE

### DAY WALKS

Aug 28 – Bird Walk – 07h30  
 Sept 19 - Fynbos - 08h00  
 Sept 23 – Bird Walk – 07h00  
 Oct 14 – Bird Walk – 06h30  
 Oct 24 - Indigenous Trees – 08h00  
 Nov 18 – Bird Walk – 06h30  
 Nov 28 - Medicinal – 08h00

Walks last 2 - 3 hours. Day walks meet at the Information Centre and bird walks meet at the gate. The walks are in the lower area of the reserve and therefore not strenuous. Wear comfortable shoes, bring a sun hat, snack and water.

**\* Bookings open from 15 th August**

#### 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](mailto:info@helderbergnaturereserve.co.za). Bookings for a weekend walk close on Thursday prior to the walk and bookings for a Thursday walk close on Tuesday prior to the walk. **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

## ECO-SCHOOL AWARDS

It has been a difficult 18 months for the Eco-Schools. Lockdown, an interrupted academic year and an increase in registration fees have all taken their toll on the Eco-Schools Programme. Eco-projects could not be completed and the long-awaited Award Ceremony for 2019/20 was cancelled – which was a great disappointment as schools want to be awarded for their commitment towards improving their environment and spreading the conservation message.

Notwithstanding all these challenges 10 schools completed their programmes and were awarded certificates and eco-trophies. These only arrived for schools to collect from the node coordinator in 2021.



Recycling

Mondeor Eco-School, Sir Lowry's Pass and Beaumont Primary Schools received awards for reaching the pinnacle of Environmental teaching – they have flown the Eco-Flag proudly for more than 12 years and have become a wonderful example and encouragement for other schools.

Beaumont has developed and maintained several amazing gardens with the aim to increase biodiversity and encourage the return of wild life. Their fynbos, waterwise and fairy gardens were visited by several creatures and critters to the delight of the learners – a tortoise, mole, owl and pollinators were seen. Serving the community is part of the school's ethos. The jersey drive, animal fostering project and toys for joy have been ongoing for many years. Beaumont never fails to impress. This year the school is collaborating virtually with 15 schools across the planet using 'Design Thinking' to appreciate National Prides and develop empathy towards Global Sustainable Development Challenges i.e. addressing complex issues such as sustainable energy and climate change.

Newberry House Montesorri School has implemented several

great and innovative Eco-projects. The Eco-Club celebrated National Water Week with a visit to Steenbras Nature Reserve and Catchment area. They learnt about aquifers and deep well-drilling. The group had great fun making basic water purifiers and discussing the water crises of this precious resource. An 'Edible Curriculum' has been introduced with emphasis on a healthy lifestyle and development of food gardens for learners – such a great idea!

Congratulations to the Eco-Schools on receiving their awards despite all the challenges of the past years.

**- Freya Brett**  
**Please contact Freya Brett (node coordinator) on 082 708 1016. helderberg.ecoschools@gmail.com**



Animal fostering.



Fairy garden animals.



## UPDATE ON HEEP

The bus project (HEEP) was started in 2000 as a project of the Somerset West Bird Club. For 20 years it has transported 24,445 learners to educational destinations far and wide - the Helderberg Nature Reserve being a preferred venue. Unfortunately it has now come to a temporary standstill because of Covid restrictions and financial losses. Hopefully these challenges can be met and the Bus Project can start 'running' again. A most sincere thank you to all the sponsors who have helped to enrich the lives of many learners. If you would like to sponsor a bus please contact **Freya Brett on 082 7081016 or email: helderberg.ecoschools@gmail.com**

## CLEARING ALIEN VEGETATION



*Bill Maycock and Gavin Hardres-Williams strip seeds from a felled hakea.*

### UPCOMING HACKS

Upcoming hack dates:

07 Aug 2021	8:00
11 Sep 2021	8:00
09 Oct 2021	8:00

For enquiries, contact:  
**James Silberbauer**  
[jamessil@telkomsa.net](mailto:jamessil@telkomsa.net)  
 078 306 1660



*Marianne Parker about to remove a gum that overshadows a protea.*

## LEGACY BENCH PROJECT

A bench is a place to sit while waiting for someone or just to relax and enjoy the outdoors or to daydream or to remember...

The Helderberg Nature Reserve is in the process of rationalizing, repairing and replacing the many benches scattered throughout the nature reserve. We have recently had many Friend's members enquire as to the possibility of donating a bench to honour and remember someone special in their lives.

The Friends of Helderberg Nature Reserve in partnership with reserve management would like to offer Friends members an opportunity to become involved in the Legacy Bench Project by donating a bench to the Helderberg Nature Reserve.

For more information on the project please email:  
[info@helderbergnaturereserve.co.za](mailto:info@helderbergnaturereserve.co.za).



## OAK CAFÉ CLOSED – NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEAR FUTURE

It is with regret we inform you that the Oak Café has closed it's doors. We would like to thank Mrs Elke DeLuse for the many years of service she has provided to the visitors of the Helderberg Nature Reserve. The Helderberg Nature Reserve will be making the space available to provide a similar service. The City of Cape Town Property Management Department will be running the process. An advertisement regarding the opportunities will be released and any interested businesses may tender if they are interested. Once this process begins the advertisement will be circulated to members.

For additional queries regarding the leasing of this space you can also enquire at

[helderbergnature.reserve@capetown.gov.za](mailto:helderbergnature.reserve@capetown.gov.za)

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

**There have been no activities due to Covid-19 and the lockdown. Thank you for your understanding, Esmay Josephs.**

## HNR PHOTO CLUB

With the beautiful Helderberg Nature Reserve as our base we would love to see all the amazing photos you have taken of the reserve. If you would like to share with us, you can do it a number of ways.

- 1: Post on Instagram and tag us (@helderbergnaturereserve)
- 2: Post on our Facebook page (Friends of Helderberg Nature Reserve)
- 3: Join our whatsapp group and share

If you would like to join our whatsapp group please go to [www.hnrphotoclub.co.za](http://www.hnrphotoclub.co.za) and fill in our membership form and in the message area ask to be added to our whatsapp group. On the group you can also ask photographic questions which the members will gladly answer.

– Alistair Hill



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