



Botanical Society of South Africa KwaZulu-Natal Coastal Branch

NEWSLETTER Autumn 2015

Large Spotted Genet Talk

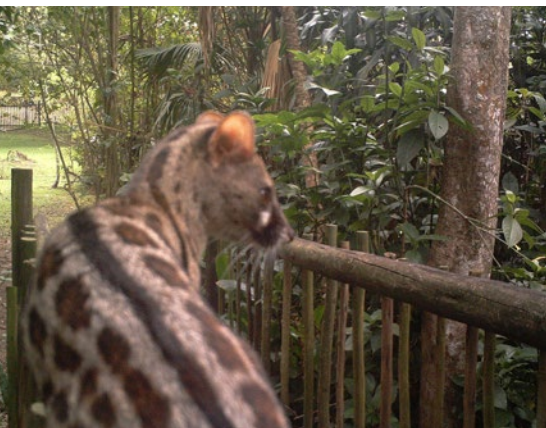
A REPORT BACK – By Sandra Dell

At our January talk, UKZN doctoral student Craig Widdows spoke about his fascinating research on the ecology of Large Spotted Genets within an urban landscape, and what factors facilitate their ability to live in an urban environment. The behaviours and territorial range of some of these shy animals were established through webcams and GPS collars. The study concentrated on Kloof and Hillcrest at first, but then spread to the rest of Durban and districts. Some animals were found to have adapted their natural breeding and waking times to suit their environment.

Craig found that a number had taken to living in the roofs of urban dwellings which they kept clean of cockroaches and rodents. A large amount of pollution such as plastic and elastic bands was found in the scats of urban genets, suggesting that the animals target waste bins and human refuse. Householders can help by keeping refuse in bins with lids or inside outbuildings/garages. Genets have also been recorded feeding on pet food left out for pets at night. Some people had started feeding them, but this was to be discouraged as it was detrimental to the animals' safety and independence. Dogs and vehicular traffic were two of the urban hazards faced.

If you encounter genets in your property, please contact Craig, as it would aid in his research: email craigw@hotmail.co.za. The branch donated R1 500 from the talk proceeds towards the cost of a GPS collar for one of the genets. Kloof Conservancy has also supported the research.

Below: Recorded in a property in Kloof, this image displays the urban genets adaptability as they are strictly nocturnal carnivores. However, in urban areas, they have been recorded in the daylight hours. All Genet photos by Craig Widdows



Top: Craig Widdows and Chairman, Janet Longman. Photo by Di Higginson Keath.

Right: The baby Genet was recorded by a resident in Kloof, having found its way into a chicken coop. Genets have a bad reputation among poultry farmers as they can cause huge financial losses due to the killing of the fowl.

Below: this image was recorded in the Kosi Bay area at a campsite. The Genet came up close to get to some food scraps. Many people feed these animals and so they can become habituated to humans and human dwellings.





Children's outing to New Germany Nature Reserve

Jabulani Memela led an enjoyable outing for children and their grandparents and aunts through New Germany Nature Reserve in January. The Reserve's Nic Liebenberg taught them about snakes and released a rescued snake into the reserve.

Top left: Admiring the snakes; Centre left: Learning from Jabulani.

Photos by Janet Longman



Umbogavango outing

By Lydia Petre

On Sunday 8 February a small group of BotSoc members and others joined Dick Dyson (caretaker of Umbogavango) for a walk through the Reserve's wetlands and coastal indigenous bush. The day was very hot, but it was cool enough in the forest where we saw a variety of trees, plants and strange fungi. Some trees seen were: *Bridelia micrantha*, *Tabernaemontana ventricosa*, *Millettia grandis*, *Ficus* spp., *Protorhus longifolia*, *Deinbollia oblongifolia*, *Carissa macrocarpa* and *Psychotria capensis*.

There was also a rare sighting of a collapsed ant heap made into a perfect circle, we guessed, by a mongoose taking a dust bath; unfortunately we didn't catch him in the act. Two young visitors of 8 and 10 years old were very interested and managed the whole walk very well!

Two old ammunition dump bunkers, built by the British during the War, have been turned into owl houses and bat roosts. Unfortunately, a big storm on the previous Friday had made them slippery with mud, so we were unable to go inside. The bird hides offered



Top right: Star Stinkhorn fungus, Aseroe rubra. Confusion surrounds the occurrence of this Australian species in South Africa; Above: Attendees on the day.

Bottom left: Umbogavango industrial background. Photos by Lydia Petre

us sights of the resident waterbirds. Umbogavango is situated within the Umbogintwini industrial centre, and was established in 1989 by companies operating in the area, the majority of which are chemical companies. The established dams act as stormwater and effluent spill catchment areas in case of accidents, and help to prevent pollution. Strict controls are in place to prevent any spills into surrounding rivers. The old slimes dams were converted into grassland which help to stop the chemicals leaching into the groundwater. A WESSA training centre was also started to teach appreciation of the environment in underprivileged schools in the area. Umbogavango was declared a reserve in 1991.

There are more than 200 species of birds, 100+ species of trees, and also mongoose, otter, genet and duiker. What a lovely place in the middle of chemical industry - it shows what can be done with a bit of commitment to nature!





Above: Course attendees. Photo by Chris Galliers

EIA workshop report back

By Mbali Mkhize and Suvarna Parbhoo - CREW programme

BotSoc Head Office partnered with WESSA in organizing the much anticipated Understanding Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) course for the BotSoc KZN coastal and inland branches. The 2-day course, presented by Chris Galliers from WESSA, was attended by 18 delegates representing different organizations.

The EIA process is aimed at achieving sustainable development by assessing the potential impact of all forms of land transformation on our environment. In theory, EIA reflects the democratic, constitutional rights of South African citizens, but in practice, meaningful public participation in the process is limited, and its increasingly complex nature is disempowering to civil society. We were fortunate to have had 2 guest speakers join the course on the second day.

The first environmental attorney Andrew Muir presented an overview of South Africa's Environmental legislature and its regulations. He also gave examples of sustainable development principles. The second, president of the International Association for Impact Assessment- South Africa (IAIA-SA) Sue George, shared insights into the new EIA regulations that have come into effect as of December 2014. We were given a chance to interact and unpack topics within the various EIA processes. The group discussions and feedback were thought provoking yet brought much clarity on the process.

The course participants have gained an appreciation of the role and value of Environmental Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment, and Environmental Impact Assessment in assisting South Africa to meet its strategic objectives. Having learned how to critically review and comment on scoping, EIA reports and Environmental Management Plans, we are now equipped to exercise our environmental rights by partaking in the public participation process happening in our surroundings.

Thank you for donations received in fond memory of the late Prof. Patricia Berjak.

National Invasive Species
Hotline: 0800 205 005

Pictorial Report back on late 2014 Walks

by Lindsay Bowker



1. *Disa crassicornis* - Kilgobbin Forest walk.
2. *Protea welwitschii*, a multi-stemmed shrub (0.5 - 1.5m), found in rocky grassland. Winston Park Grassland walk.
3. Stunning views across Winston Park Grassland.
4. *Cyperus sphaerocephalus* - Winston Park Grassland walk.
5. Map showing extensive walks around Palmiet Nature Reserve.
6. Palmiet Nature Reserve in Westville.



Botanical Education Trust Donation

Although the Briardene Youth Centre was unsuccessful with their application for funding, the Botanical Education Trust, with the help of the Flora & Fauna Publications Trust, donated to them books to the value of about R1 500-00. Seen in the image right, are German volunteer Jakob Meiffert, Charles Botha, Chair of the Botanical Education Trust and Lebohang Maicane.



COASTAL DIARY

Attendance at any of our functions is at your own risk and neither the Botanical Society nor this Branch can be held responsible for any injury or loss that may occur. You are required to sign an indemnity form for all outings.

Unless otherwise stated please book for outings through Lindsay Bowker on lindsaybowker@gmail.com / 083 659 5052 and all other events through the office: botsoc-kzn@mweb.co.za / 031 201 5111 / 071 8 693 693

Outing to Durban Country Club

Sat 18 April 16h00 Led by Dave Henry.

Talk: NEMBA explained Individual Responsibility

Mon 20 April 18h00

Durban Botanic Gardens Visitors Centre

Jean Rodel, of WESSA Ecosystem Services Business Unit tells us all we need to know about the new invasive alien plants legislation. A lot has happened lately on this front that you need to know about. Entrance: R35 for members, R45 non-members, R25 students – proceeds to Branch projects.

Kloof Conservancy's Indigenous Open Gardens

Sat & Sun 16 & 17 May 09h00-16h00

Cotswold Downs Estate, Hillcrest

Please see: www.kloofconservancy.org.za

Family outing to Durban Botanic Gardens

Sat 23 May 09h00 Berea

Celebrate International Biodiversity Day with 3 hours of child-centred fun and learning at the Gardens, led by Suvarna Parbhoo. Ages 8-12. Bring refreshments for afterwards. Non-members welcome at R10 per adult or child. For bookings, info: Mbali Mkhize on tel: 031 207 6480 or email: m.mkhize@sanbi.org.za.

Talk: Our Gorgeous Green House Story

Mon 25 May 18h00

Durban Botanic Gardens Visitors Centre

Jane Troughton shares the journey of 'greening' a 1940's house and developing a gentler and kinder way of living. It's a story of energy independence, water harvesting, green design, a roof garden, vertical garden and natural swimming pool. See Jane's blog: <http://gorgeousgreenhouse.wordpress.com/>. Entrance: R35 for members, R45 non-members, R25 students – proceeds to Branch projects.

Outing to Gwahumbe Nursery

Sat 30 May 09h00 Eston

Visit this nursery with its wide range of indigenous plants, especially trees, in the beautiful Gwahumbe Valley. Bring a picnic lunch.

Gorgeous Green House Garden Tours

Sat 6 June 09h00 11h00 14h00 La Lucia

Following Jane's talk on 25 May, is this opportunity to see the Gorgeous Green House in person! Numbers limited. Booking and prepayment essential: R45 for members, R55 for non-members (R25 for children under 12), includes tea and cake. Proceeds to branch projects.

Family outing along Westwood Estate stream trail

Sat 20 June 14h00 Westville

Riverine forest walk in the valley behind Westwood Mall, led by environmental consultant Johan Bodenstien. Book through the office.

Talk: Leopard conservation in South Africa

Mon 29 June 18h00

Durban Botanic Gardens Visitors Centre

With leopards being the most persecuted big cat in the world, special efforts are needed to conserve this species. Panthera's Leopard Program Co-ordinator and Phezulu Safari Park GM Tristan Dickerson, tells us about some innovative solutions. Entrance: R35 for members, R45 non-members, R25 students – proceeds to Branch projects.

Branch AGM

Sun 26 July 15h00

Durban Botanic Gardens Visitors Centre

Guest speaker Prof. Steve Johnson, of UKZN Pmb, will talk on *The sex life of plants*. Steve's new book "*Orchids of South Africa: a field guide*", which he produced with fellow botanist Benny Bytebier and photographer Herbert Staerker, will be available. Please join us afterwards for snacks. All welcome. No charge. RSVP by 19 July.

Contact details of KZN Coastal Branch (www.botsoc-kzn.org.za)

KZN Coastal Branch

Office hours

Chair

Janet Longman

Secretary, membership

Sandra Dell

ELAs

Wally Menne

Plant Fair, Website

Janet Longman

Outings information

Lindsay Bowker

Newsletter

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