



JUNE 2010

KOBIO

KOBIO NEWS

Welcome to the June edition of the KOBIO Newsletter. We hope that you will enjoy reading it. We would appreciate your feedback and also articles of interest for future Newsletters.

BOTFRIENDS

The BOTFRIENDS was formed by concerned residents on the shores of the Bot estuary in 1996. Through hard work and endless dedication to the Bot river estuary, the Botfriends were able to elevate the environmental standards of the estuary and its associated wetlands.

Products of these endeavours are: Numerous inputs towards township developments on the estuary shores and the scientific management of the estuary, together with Cape Nature. A newly established organisation (Bot River Estuary Forum, BREF) in terms of the Integrated Coastal Management Act requires organisations such as Botfriends to take part in the future management of the estuary. It is for this reason that Botfriends wish to invite everybody to join and be part of this exciting phase of the Bot river estuary with so much to enjoy.

You are invited to the Botfriends Annual General Meeting on Saturday 5 June 2010 at 3 pm (registration at 2 pm) at the Lake Marina Yacht and Boat Club, Fisherhaven. We are pleased to have Dr. Phoebe Barnard as a guest speaker. She is a senior scientific specialist, attached to the National Biodiversity Institute. Dr. Barnard will address us after the AGM on the subject of climate change: It is real and how is it changing the environment that we are living in? How will climate change affect our beloved Bot river estuary? You are most welcome to attend!

Neil Fairall

KOBIO Outings

Saturday, 17 April members joined Richard Starke and Mike Tannett for a coastal walk from Sea Farm to Silver Sands (read more in the Newsletter). On Saturday, 22 May 2010, Richard Starke accompanied a group of about seven hikers starting in the Harold Porter Garden around Leopard's Kloof, along the Zig Zag trail and over into Oudebos. More on this hike in our next Newsletter.

Upcoming Outings

- Horses, birds and frogs – as soon as we have had rain and the lagoon rises
- Kogelberg Nature Reserve 4x4 (New route) – August/September
- Fireflies at the Harold Porter Garden – towards the end of the year

KOBIO will be hosting a stall at the Biodiversity Festival in the Harold Porter Garden over the period 28/29 May. Entrance will be free on those days. The long awaited launch of the Rooisand Nature Reserve facilities takes place on Friday, 28 May 2010. More news about this festival and the launch in our next Newsletter.

KOBIO COASTAL WALK FROM SEA FARM TO SILVER SANDS

On Saturday, 17 April 10 members of the community joined Richard Starke, Mike Tannett and Edward Molteno, Chairman of KOBIO, for a walk along the coast from Sea Farm to Silver Sands.

It was a perfect day with very little wind, partly cloudy skies with the sun peeping out every now and then. On arriving at the boom at Sea Farm we were welcomed by a troop of baboons all looking very nervous but wise, which made us all wonder whether they knew something about the walk that we did not.

As we set off down the path running next to the Sea Farm boundary fence we were met by a field of yellow *othonna quinqueidentata* swaying in the slight breeze. We slowly made our way along the path with Richard stopping us regularly to either point out something of interest or just to let us take in the beautiful scenery. Everything was so peaceful and Richard was heard to say “*Look at this! You can't photograph it, but you can feel it!*” Further along the path Mike pointed out otter prints and an otter's nest. We saw a large number of birds and once again on rounding a corner came across a field of *haemanthus coccineus* (April fool's plant/blood flower/poeier kwassie).

Mike Tannett stopped us at a regular 'Poachers' Pocket' and explained the strategy in apprehending them. One does not realize or appreciate the work Mike and others of Seawatch put into looking after our sea life. As we came down onto Silver Sands beach we found a 'fisherman's lamp with light sticks'. Poachers use a large empty Coke bottle in which they place the 'light sticks' and then add water. The bottle is then turned upside down and tied with rope to the illegal catch, thus allowing them to find the catches in the dark. Mike said that these 'fisherman's lamps' were legal in the right hands and on the right boats.

The walk lasted 3 hours over 10kms of easy terrain and I think that everyone will agree that it was a wonderful and very interesting morning. Thank you Richard and Mike for sharing childhood stories with us and for giving up your Saturday morning to improve our knowledge of our beautiful coast line. We are really blessed to live in such a beautiful part of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve.

Liz Fick

Mike Tannett an Everyday Hero

Recently Mike Tannett was recognised by Impact a WWF Sanlam Living Waters Partnership as an Everyday Hero.

Mike came to South Africa from London in 1949. At a very young age Mike developed his love for the sea and the life therein. It was this love for the marine environment and the need to make a contribution towards the protection thereof that encouraged Mike to join Seawatch. He has since become an invaluable member of this organisation, operating from Rooi Els to Kleinmond, which concentrates on protecting the coast and its inshore marine resources from over-exploitation.

Mike and other members of Seawatch have made important contributions towards the prevention and control of poaching activities and the strengthening of marine conservation.

Some of these contributions include the conduction of regular coastal patrols, monitoring poaching activities, promoting marine awareness amongst schools and relevant groups and the rehabilitating and protecting of hundreds of seabirds including penguins and the African black oystercatchers.

Mike has gained enormous experience and expertise in various fields over the years. Being in the forefront in the fight against poaching activities comes with a lot of risks, the greatest being intimidation and personal injury to Mike and his family. It is this self-sacrifice, strong commitment and passion towards the protection of our marine resources that make Mike an Everyday Hero.

Well done Mike, we are so fortunate to have someone like you as part of the Hangklip-Kleinmond community.

Liz Fick

KOBIO is going green!

Please could you supply us with your email address so that we can send you the newsletter electronically instead of printing and posting. This will not only save costs but will also save our trees!

Please send an email to Liz on djick@mweb.co.za.

The following statistics have been provided by the Hangklip-Kleinmond Tourism Bureau.

APRIL 2010

Visitors to the office:

Total International	60	10.20%
Total Local	528	89.80%
Total Guests:	588	100.00%

VISITORS APRIL 2010	2010	2009	DIFF	% DIFF
ACCOMMODATION	42	89	-47	-53%
HPNBG	5272	6217	-945	-15%
KOGELBERG NR	550	419	131	-31%

I have had the pleasure of reading through KOBIO Newsletters going back many years and thought that many of our newer members would find some of the articles very interesting. Therefore I have decided to reprint some of them in forthcoming newsletters. Happy reading!

THE LOERGAT

We would like to thank Dr. Peter Joubert for consenting to our republishing the following article which appeared in the KOBIO News in 1996.

If you are in the right place at the right time in Betty's Bay, an amazing spectacle will unfold before your eyes. It must be night-time and if storm winds hurry the clouds across the sky, the drama is enhanced. You must be somewhere in the 2 to 3 km² of land below the Harold Porter Garden. You must be looking up at the mountain to the north-east. It must be late autumn, winter or early spring. There must be a nearly full moon. The phenomenon will only happen about twice in three years.

If you get it all together, the mountain above Sunny Seas will loom purple-black against a sky palely silvering with the moon about to rise. Suddenly, well below the crest, a brilliant light will flash on and shine with a steady intensity. Is this a stranded climber signaling for help? No, it is the moon shining through a tall cleft in the rocky crest. For five minutes the light will dazzle you, then slowly the moon will rise above the skyline in all her glory, but you will continue to stare in awe and wonder as if your eyes had deceived you. Be reassured you were not dreaming. Treasure the memory.

Once you know where to look you can see the cleft in daytime with the help of a pair of binoculars. It is about ten metres deep, about two metres wide and extends right through the mountain crest. On cloudy days brightly lit clouds also shine through the peephole just to reassure that it is still there.

If you decide to go up to see the cleft yourself, fear not that reality might diminish the mystery. Set off early some clear winter morning, starting from the eastern end of Betty's Bay just where the road bends north towards Elephant Rock and start up the steep gully. This boulder-strewn slope rises remorselessly upwards, steepening as it goes. The climb is pleasant at first. Your back will be warmed by the rising sun, welcome in the coolness of the morning. As the slope and the sun begin to bite, the sweat will bake on your back and no cooling breeze will blow in the gully. Pain and suffering must be endured for hours. And worse, the steepest upper slopes are carpeted with small,

loose stones causing the unsteady, exhausted foot to slip down twenty centimeters for every forty gained in height. You will have to climb on all fours like a baboon.

At the top of the gully you will be dismayed to realize that the climb is but begun. Before you stretch seemingly endless boulder-dotted slopes of mountain fynbos. You are only about 300m up. You still have more than 300m to climb. At least a blaaskans is permitted and the rewards for your intense efforts will begin to show. Above, to your left, is the western promontory of Sunny Seas mountain, marked by a startlingly white beacon; to the right lies the beautiful vista of the Palmiet estuary with the Kleinmond mountain reserve climbing in steps to the summit of the imposing Perdeberg; to the east lies Sandown Bay leading your eyes to the Bot River lagoon and Hermanus mountains beyond – Maanskynkop looming through the morning haze and the heavy massif of Babilonstoring further north.

In front; the slope! But the going is better; the steepness has eased off and now. Continue your climb just inland of the crest ridge and as you rise, the wonderful expanse of the lower Palmiet valley opens up, with the Groenberge beyond. Platberg looms massively to the north-west and the Dwarsberge peep around Platberg's shoulder, but much further away.

Your ascent should now approach the crest. At one vertiginous spot the cliffs drop away vertically to Sunny Seas. You have to resist the gut-wrenching urge to take the final step and also the cowardly need to approach the edge on your belly. To your right the cliffs rise vertically to the summit cairn and you look past the wall to Jock's Bay and the mouth of the Disa River, the colours bright and clear. The sea is lemon-yellow-green over sand, blueing into deeper water, and is streaked with the rich brown of kelp. The multicoloured roofs of the settlement add colour relief to the drab olive of the coastal fynbos.

A little more effort will bring the achievement of the summit cairn. At 653m it is the fifth highest peak in our area. Now the world is spread before you. Westwards across the Disa valley, rises the Voorberg, third highest at 859m. Further north is the brooding mass of the Platberg (905m) and between the two; Spitskop impales the sky and beyond lie the purple-dark Blousteenberge. Over the knuckle of the Palmiet river, the Dwarsrivier leads your eye to the highest peak, the Kogelberg, all of 1 268m high. It is also the highest coastal peak on the whole African continent! Further north, the Steenbras mountains glimmer through the haze and the Franschoek-Villiersdorp mountains shimmer beyond the Grabouw valley. To their right the Riviersonderend ridge ranges into the eastern distance. Below lies the Palmiet river valley, Oudebos, and its protecting hills. With little effort you can imagine being the only human being on earth. What a soul-restoring vision and calming quietude separate you from the bustle of modern life.

A brief downhill inauspicious approach will bring you to your goal – an unimpressive crack in the rock, dark and forbidding. You will enter with misgiving. It is but a metre or two wide, the walls gently undulating so that they converge above you, ten metres up, blocking out the sky. But stop! The ground falls away below your feet and there you will just have to sit down and the small sloping platform, stunned by the glorious vista framed in the rock cleft. Before you lies Betty's Bay. The view sweeps from Jock's Bay across Long Beach, Stony Point and Silver Sands, across Doringbaai and Sea Farm, across Maasbaai and the Hangklip peninsula and Maanskynbaai beyond. Hangklip and Blesberg almost obscure Cape Point beyond the wide mouth of False Bay. On the coastal plain huddle the Lilliputian houses of the settlement and the three lakes brood blackly despite the brilliant sunlight. It will be many minutes before you are able to speak.

We call this unique place the **Loergat**. The peep it gives you of Betty's Bay from above, and rarely of the moon from below, deserves recognition. The mountain above Sunny Seas is sometimes called Elephant Rock Mountain, but this name seems more appropriate to the region facing the Palmiet River; so we now always refer to this mountain as the **Loergatberg**.

World Conservation Strategy

1. We should practice only the sustainable use of natural products.
2. We should not interfere with the basic processes of the earth, sky or sea, by pollution or trying to bring about radical changes.
3. We should preserve the diversity of life – we depend on it for our food and know so little about it that we do not know what we are losing. We have no moral right to destroy organisms which may mean our continued survival.

Richard Attenborough

Birds of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve

Rob Martin & Jessie Walton

The Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve covers more than 100 000 hectares of both marine and terrestrial ecosystems and extends from below sea level to the mountain tops, the highest point being the Kogelberg Peak (1268 metres). Vast tracts of fynbos, major wetland systems, five towns and various settlements, agricultural lands, commercial forestry plantations and recreational resorts lie within the reserve. The Kogelberg Mountains and adjoining coastal lowlands are regarded as the heart of the Cape Floral Kingdom, home to 1650 plant species. These mountains, which make up most of the core of the reserve, cover some 30 000 hectares. To the east and north lie the Houwhoek and Groenlandberg mountain core zones. Together they encircle the largest town in the reserve, Grabouw, and the orchards and vineyards of the Elgin basin. [The above information was extracted from *Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve: Heart of the Cape Flora* by Amida & Mark Johns. Struik, 2001]

The reserve supports all seven bird species that are endemic to fynbos: Hottentot Buttonquail, Cape Rockjumper, Victorin's Warbler, Cape Sugarbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Cape Siskin and Protea Seedeater. Two of these, the Cape Sugarbird and the Protea Seedeater require mature fynbos for breeding, and have greatly declined in numbers in recent years possibly as a result of the veld being too frequently burnt.

Several species, while not exclusively confined to fynbos, are most often seen in mountainous parts of the reserve. These include Verreaux's Eagle, Grey-winged Francolin, Ground Woodpecker, Cape Grassbird, Cape Rock-Thrush, Sentinel Rock-Thrush, Neddicky and Cape Bunting.

The reed-beds on the fringes of the estuaries support an interesting array of birds such as Little Bittern, Purple Heron, African Marsh-Harrier, African Rail, Baillon's Crake, Black Crake, African Purple Swamphen, Greater Painted-Snipe, African Snipe, African Reed-Warbler, Lesser Swamp-Warbler and Little Rush-Warbler. The mud-flats of the estuaries attract migratory waders including Terek Sandpiper, Common Greenshank and Common Whimbrel. The open water sometimes holds Great White Pelican, Greater Flamingo, Lesser Flamingo, African Spoonbill, White-backed Duck, Red-billed Teal and Spur-winged Goose amongst many others.

A fascinating aspect of the bird-life is the presence of three species of flufftails: Red-chested, Buff-spotted and Striped. They all frequent dense, almost impenetrable, vegetation and seldom venture into the open thus making their status difficult to assess. The Buff-spotted Flufftail occurs in at least four homestead gardens in the Elgin basin, its distinctive call drawing attention to its presence.

Raptors are well-represented with no less than 22 species having been recorded. A pair of Martial Eagles breeds in the reserve and occasionally wanders over the villages of Grabouw and Gordon's Bay. African Fish-Eagles breed both on the coast and in the Elgin basin. Black Harriers are another threatened species, their numbers fluctuating from year to year. Forest Buzzards are common breeding residents concentrated in the alien pine plantations around Grabouw. Other raptors of this artificial habitat include Rufous-chested Sparrowhawks and Black Sparrowhawks. Yellow-billed Kites breed in the Grabouw area and their numbers may be augmented in summer by non-breeding migrants but this is yet to be established. Peregrine and Lanner Falcons and Rock Kestrels breed on the coastal cliffs.

The Cape Eagle-Owl, a difficult bird to find, has most often been recorded as a road-casualty along the main coastal road (Route 44) between Gordon's Bay and Kleinmond. Pairs have bred successfully at Cape Hangklip and Rooiels and it is almost certainly more common than the records suggest. The African Wood-Owl is known from alien woodland near Grabouw but, as with all night birds, it is probably under-recorded. The Fiery-necked Nightjar, the common nightjar of the reserve, would also be largely overlooked but for its very distinctive and far-carrying call. There are single records, both road-casualties, of European Nightjar and Freckled Nightjar, scarce birds in the Western Cape.

A vulnerable species is the African Black Oystercatcher which breeds in summer on the beaches where it is subjected to much human interference. African Penguins, their numbers decimated in recent times by oil-spills, breed at Stony Point, one of only two known breeding colonies on the mainland. Bank Cormorants have decreased in numbers and must also be considered to be vulnerable.

Summer visitors from the Northern Hemisphere include White Stork, Osprey, European Honey-Buzzard, Common Swift, Common House-Martin, Eurasian Golden Oriole, Marsh Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher, Willow Warbler and, rarely, the Garden Warbler. The Icterine Warbler has been reported in the past.

Species that have greatly increased in numbers in recent years include Fork-tailed Drongo and Southern Grey-headed Sparrow. The Red-billed Quelea, recorded only on a few occasions in the reserve so far, is showing signs of invading the Western Cape and more records from the reserve can be expected. Another recent arrival is the Tambourine Dove and it will be interesting to see if this species establishes a breeding population within the reserve. There are several sightings of African Grass-Owl from near the Bot River estuary and perhaps this unobtrusive species is more common than these records suggest.

The removal of apple orchards on some farms in the Elgin basin has resulted in more grassy fields. Several species, formerly uncommon in the area, have moved into this more open habitat. These include Common Quail, African Pipit and Zitting Cisticola.

There are a number of species that just manage to survive in the reserve although there is little suitable habitat for them. Cape Clapper Larks are found at a few localities but are difficult to locate. Long-billed Crombecs occur in the coastal strip between Kleinmond and Bot River. The Karoo Scrub-Robin just enters the reserve on the northern slopes of Sir Lowry's Pass. Yellow Canaries used to occur regularly in Rooiels and Betty's Bay but housing developments have all but destroyed the last vestiges of their favoured habitat and they are now largely confined to the fringes of the Bot River estuary. There is a small breeding colony of Horus Swifts near the Bot River estuary.

Species that have been reported from just outside the reserve and that are likely to be added to the list include Gabar Goshawk and Lemon Dove.

Lists detailing the status of all bird species recorded in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve and their occurrence there on a monthly basis are also available.

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