



Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust

17th Newsletter, December 2016

Herewith our latest news... Enjoy!



This year has been an incredibly successful one for the ORCT - we have made inroads with new funding and we are starting to see the fruits of this translating into tangible and measurable management interventions which will benefit renosterveld ecosystem health and diversity. The ORCT dream of restoring, protecting and securing renosterveld remnants across the Overberg wheat-belt is starting to come true. We are thrilled to share our latest developments with you. We have also made a little video of our 2016 highlights: <https://youtu.be/hFaB9W69cTs>

UPDATE ON THE WATERCOURSE RESTORATION PROJECT

A bit more than a year into the Watercourse Restoration Project and it has reached the time to put the long hours spent in field into tangible conservation efforts. We have spent time in the field mapping incredible islands of biodiversity, recording the species that make the veld their home and identifying some of the potential threats to the sustainability of the ecosystem processes. Now that the groundwork has been laid it is time to ACT!

Though various projects and management interventions have been identified through the Overberg Wheat-belt Watercourse Clusters, one has to start somewhere, thus projects have been implemented in three clusters to date. The clusters are as follows: The Ouka River Cluster, The Hansjes River Cluster and the Kykoedie Cluster.

Within the Hansjes River Cluster we recorded some Western Cape endemic fish species that were fantastic finds for the area and the cherry on top of the incredible plant and animal diversity already recorded in the area. The Redfin species motivated us to prioritise clearing the catchment and watercourses of the Hansjes River along the mountains to prevent the spread of alien trees such as Eucalyptus, Black Wattle and Rooikrans in the catchment and watercourse. A fantastic local team of enthusiastic clearing staff have already made a huge impact in the area. We hope to continue this work along the banks of the river and ensure the restoration of the critically endangered vegetation and persistence of the natural species.



Update on the Watercourse Restoration Project continued

Soil erosion has also been identified as a management intervention that is required across numerous clusters. On the Ouka River, the combatting of sheet erosion particularly is a priority. The selected site has been affected by overgrazing and trampling and much of the top soil has been lost as a result. In order to ensure that the site could be restored geotextiles were erected to slow water runoff along slopes and minimise the formation of gullies. Hollows were also dug to increase water infiltration into the soil and to enable seed trapping and ultimately re-vegetation with the onset of winter rains in 2017.

Livestock pathways were covered and hollows filled with mulch and the entire perimeter was fenced with electric fencing to allow the site the opportunity to rest from grazing and to rehabilitate. In time we hope to see the site restored and we will continue to combat sheet and gully erosion in the area.



The electric fences have also been used as exclusion fencing along two watercourses in the Kykoedie Cluster. The fencing will allow for the management of livestock within the area and will provide us the opportunity to test various management techniques in the control of alien invasive grass species along these watercourses. The knowledge developed would then be applied to similar situations along the watercourses in the other focal clusters across the wheat-belt.

ORCT NEWS SNIPPETS



Funding received from the Table Mountain Fund (WWF) for Easements

We are thrilled to announce that our funding application to the Table Mountain Fund (TMF-WWF) was successful and that we have secured three years of funding towards our Conservation Easement Programme. These funds will enable us to negotiate agreements with landowners for some of the largest remnants of Western- and Central Rûens Shale Renosterveld remaining, as we will be able to cover the legal costs and some management interventions as an incentive towards such agreements. Watch this space as our Easement Programme finally takes off!



Keir Lynch elected as Chair of the Overberg Crane Group

Our partnership with the Overberg Crane Group (OCG) has been further strengthened by the recent election of the OCG's new Chair: our very own Keir Lynch (Watercourse Restoration Project Manager). The OCG committee was very impressed with the work that Keir has undertaken since we started the partnership. This move was a clear vote of confidence regarding the partnership with the ORCT and the work that Keir is doing—both by the OCG committee and particularly, the out-going Chair, Mick D'Alton, who has been an excellent leader of this group for the past 10 years and will remain on the committee.





ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL BIOBLITZ, OCTOBER 2016

DIPKA-DORING RIVERS, BREEDE RIVER



One of our focal clusters for the Watercourse Restoration Project is the Dipka and Doring River tributaries of the Breede River. We undertook a 'bioblitz' here with a group of our friends and colleagues and discovered some gems—particularly on the reptile front. A huge thank you to Cliff and Suretha Dorse who came to assist the ORCT field team (Keir, Jannie and Odette) with this survey. An important reminder that the incredible diversity in renosterveld extends far beyond the botanical community!



Left to right: Wolf Spider, Hover Fly on Silene, Cape Skink, *Lachenalia nervosa* (Endangered)



Left to right: Sundevall's Shovel Nose Snake, Brown House Snake, Southern Rock Agama, Secretarybird



Left to right: Slug-eater, Red-Lipped Herald Snake, Oscillated Gecko, Dull Copper Butterfly *Aloeides pierus*



Left to right: Clicking Stream Frog, Red-billed Teals, Peregrine Falcon, Large-billed Lark

POST-BURN SPRING FLOWERS AT HAARWEGSKLOOF

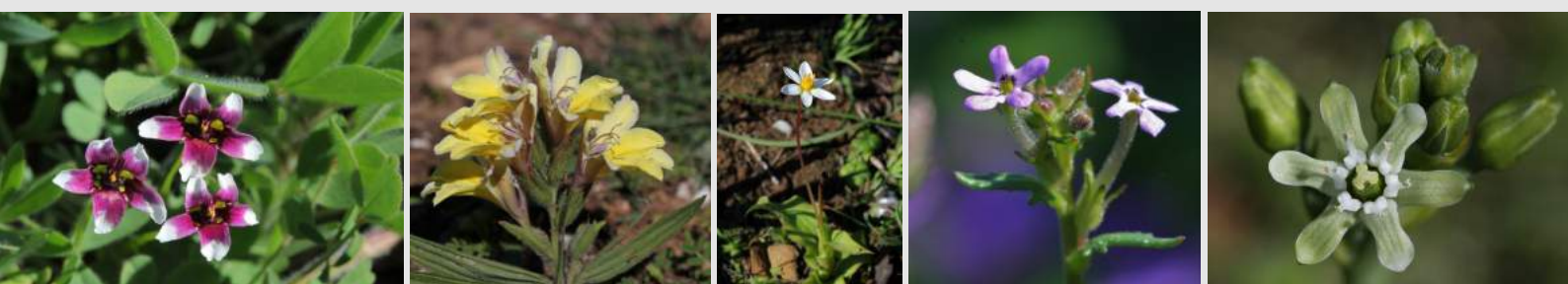


As with most winter-rainfall Fynbos habitats, fire is a critical driver in Renosterveld ecology. Due to the severely fragmented state of this vegetation type, however, natural fire occurrences are rare and so, as managers of this biodiversity hotspot, we sometimes need to intervene. We undertook a small, controlled burn in some very old veld on our Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve in March this year.

The results were spectacular—as is always the case after an autumn burn in Renosterveld. Here are some of the beauties photographed this spring.



Left to right: *Babiana patersoniae*, *Aspalathus quartzicola*, *Cyphia digitata*, *Zygophyllum* sp., *Sebaea exacoides*



Left to right: *Diascia* sp., *Babiana patula*, *Spiloxene ovata*, *Lyperia violaceae*, *Ornithogalum neopatersonia*

LITTLE 5 CHALLENGE



There's no doubt members of the Big Five once roamed our Renosterveld Reserve in the Overberg. Sadly, they became extinct in our area many years ago. But our Reserve still provides a sanctuary for members of the Little Five; three, to be precise.

Take our Little 5 Challenge to see how well you know your Little 5.

Take the challenge here: www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za/little5

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS

