



# OVERBERG LOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST

## Newsletter 3, April 2014

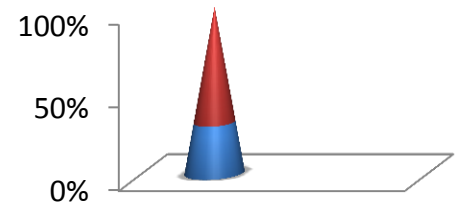
Herewith, the third newsletter of the Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust (OLCT) (Jan-Apr 2014).

Please remember you can also follow us via our website, blog and Facebook pages.

### Funding for our Visitor & Research Centre: great progress, but we still need your help!

In a relatively short space of time, with 20 days still to go in order to reach our target of \$25 000, we have passed the half-way mark! But we still need your help to reach our target, so please consider pledging to this worthy cause ([see www.igg.me/at/renosterveld-centre for more info](http://www.igg.me/at/renosterveld-centre)). You can pledge any amount through this website – the process is very simple – you just go to the website and press CONTRIBUTE NOW. It will then take you through a process whereby you choose the amount you want to donate (they put \$100 as a default, but you just change this). Many people are intimidated by the large figure that we are trying to raise here. But remember, the whole philosophy of crowd-funding is based on the principle that a lot of small donations will add up to a bigger figure. Every bit counts – please do what you can to support us! Note that Indiegogo takes a much larger percentage of the takings if we don't reach our target than if we do. So please donate through this site (if absolutely impossible, contact us to donate directly to the OLCT). Please also note that we are in need of any donations for furniture and kitchen appliances, so let us know if you would like to help with any of those.

**R140 000 (\$13 950) to go.... 19 days remaining**



### OLCT promotional movie launched!

Our promotional, 8-minute movie was launched recently... if you have not already seen it, please go to our website and view it either there, or via YouTube directly. This movie will be used for creating awareness amongst landowners about the importance of renosterveld conservation, as well as for exposing potential donors to our work.

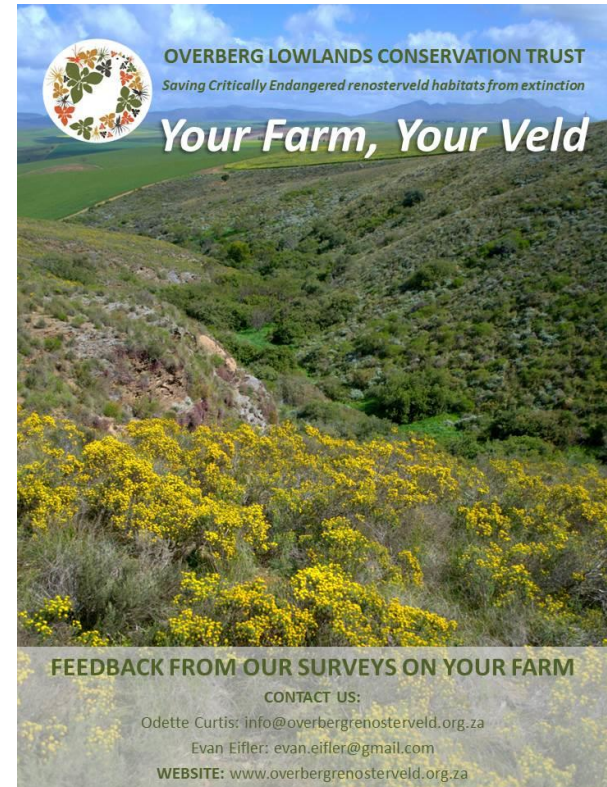
Special thanks to the Stanford Bird Club and Eagle-Eyes Education Initiative (particularly Royd & Lindsay Frith) for contributing towards the costs of this movie. And to Vanessa Stephens of Hydrangea Films, for making a small miracle. ☺





## Update on Evan and iSpot project

Evan Eifler, our self-funded Volunteer from the USA, has made a significant contribution towards our postings on iSpot, where he has posted >100 observations made in 30 different sites in our renosterveld over spring 2013. For those of you who are not yet familiar with this incredible tool, do yourselves a favour, and visit the iSpot site ([www.ispot.org.za](http://www.ispot.org.za))! Anyone can join and you can use it to get your species identified. More and more experts are starting to use the site, which means that you will receive better and better information and timeous ID's. It's really fun and interactive! Evan has played a significant role in getting a database on our renosterveld findings onto iSpot, so that in future, we can extract data from this site and use it for providing area-specific information. Evan has also generated a set of individual report-backs to farmers whose land we surveyed last spring. We hope that these will create a lasting impression of the wealth that we have found in these remnants and be a good reminder to landowners about the importance of responsible and mindful management.



## Exciting beginnings for a new conservation area in the Western Overberg

After giving a presentation to a group of farmers in the Caledon area on the farm De Vlei (on the Villiersdorp Road), we were contacted by a couple of individuals and asked to give input into their veld management. When we went to visit the landowners, we saw that they are farming in the middle of the largest, most contiguous expanse of remaining Western Rûens Shale Renosterveld! We therefore proposed that we invite a larger group to discuss options for a landscape initiative, which would potentially incorporate hundreds of hectares into a conservation scheme for the area. Since then, we have had a group meeting, with over 15 landowners and are exploring ways to make this exciting initiative materialize. Watch this space... exciting things are going to happen here!





## A new addition to our Research Team: Zoë Poulsen

Zoë is one of the first PhD students to build collaboration between the OLCT and the University of Cape Town and we are very excited to have her onboard. Her supervisors at UCT are Dr Sampson Chimpango, Prof Timm Hoffmann and Dr Pippin Anderson. Zoë's work will investigate the impacts of livestock grazing and attempt to develop rangeland restoration techniques for Overberg renosterveld. Ultimately, as with all the research that we encourage in this field, results from this work will be used as the basis for improving our management guidelines for renosterveld. Welcome Zoë – we wish you all the best with your research!



## How far we have come...

April is the anniversary of the Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust and this year, we are two years old. When one is wrapped up in fund-raising for an NGO, as well as carrying out all the operational activities, one does not always see how far one has come. So, I thought this would be an opportune time for us to 'blow our own trumpets' a little and have a look back on what has happened over this relatively short time: We started with a very successful launch (attended by over 100 people); we formalized our partnerships with WWF-SA, Flower Valley Conservation Trust and BirdLife South Africa and sold the naming rights of a new Iris for a substantial amount of money. We discovered a handful of new species; we were joined by our first self-funded volunteer, Evan Eifler; we carried out vegetation surveys over two springs on over 40 sites and found several new populations of threatened species; we started camera-trap surveys; initiated two landscape initiatives (Suurbraak and Caledon) and acquired our first piece of land (with our partners, WWF-SA). We were also awarded a Mazda Wildlife Fund vehicle; received significant funding from the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust, Melozhori Game Reserve and Fauna & Flora International. And, most recently, we launched our first promotional movie (made by Vanessa Stephens of Hydrangea Films) and our first crowd-funding campaign for the establishment of a Visitor and Research Centre. The OLCT is going from strength to strength and we have you, our supporters, to thank for this. With this kind of progress, renosterveld in the Overberg must surely have a bright future ahead, as we continue to work for the preservation of *living landscapes*.



## Some food for thought...

I am currently reading *Rewilding the World* by Caroline Fraser, and thought I would share a quote from the book, to end off this newsletter. Fraser relates the famous story about a night-blooming orchid found only on Madagascar, with an extraordinarily long nectary (i.e. its nectar was found at the base of a very long flower tube). Charles Darwin predicted that this species would have to have an exclusive pollinator in the form of a moth with a nearly foot-long proboscis. No such species was seen until 40 years later, confirming Darwin's prediction, which was based on the intricately woven, delicate and complex nature of our ecosystems. Fraser then goes on to say: *"Nature itself is like that orchid - unique, fragile, locked in a relationship with a transient being on which it is utterly dependent: ourselves. We flew away for a while, thinking we could leave the natural world behind. But our destinies evolved together. We will survive only in a world as complex and bio-diverse and interdependent as the one that created us."*







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**Thank you!**



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