



OVERBERG LOWLANDS CONSERVATION TRUST

Newsletter 4, September 2014

Herewith, the latest newsletter of the Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust (OLCT)
(June-September 2014).

Please remember you can also follow us via our Website, Blog, Twitter and Facebook pages.

First-ever Renosterveld Research & Visitor Centre launched!

After three months of renovations, we completed the changes to the Haarwegskloof homestead and launched our Renosterveld Research & Visitor Centre on the 6th September. The launch was a huge success, with about 100 people attending. The day started off with coffee, scones and much mingling, followed by a few short speeches. Dirk van Papendorp, Chairperson of the OLCT Board, welcomed everyone to the event and talked about how proud he was to be associated with the OLCT and to have witnessed its success develop over time. Odette Curtis, OLCT Director, discussed the significance of the purchase of Haarwegskloof by WWF and the exciting opportunities associated with this purchase and the development of the Centre, in terms of education and ecotourism involving links to De Hoop and other local business (such as Sijnn Wines). Dr Samantha Peterson, WWF-SA, then talked about the importance of the partnership between WWF and the OLCT and how proud she and WWF are to be involved with the collaboration. Zaitoon Rabaney, Executive Manager for the Botanical Society of South Africa, then made a moving speech to the OLCT about how proud she is of where we are and how the OLCT should never feel that they are alone in the conservation battle. Zaitoon then made the announcement that the Society is awarding Odette with the Flora Conservation Medal and called on Prof George Bredenkamp (BotSoc Board Chair) to make a congratulating speech.



After these short and moving speeches, the guests moved to the front of the main house for the ribbon-cutting ceremony, which was undertaken by Odette and Dirk. This was followed by wine tasting of the most exquisite wines from David Trafford's Sijnn wines (Malgas), delicious goats milk cheeses by Domino farm (Napier) and a beautiful lunch of various curries by Dee and Neal Robinson of the Red Windmill (Napier).

Overall, it was a very special day and we would like to thank all those who attended, as well as those who contributed towards making this whole project possible. Please go to <http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=T0uqELGDGGO> to watch the *thank you* video that was played at the launch.

On the Sunday morning after the launch, we went for a delicious wine tasting and lunch at Sijnn Wines on the Breede River at Malgas, where again David Trafford treated us to a selection of his incredible wines. Sijnn Wines are working towards creating a renosterveld conservation area on their farm, with a sign-posted trail. Do pop in here if you are in the area – it is well worth the visit and their wines are in a league of their own!!

We are still looking for the following:

- i) Washing machine
- ii) Vacuum cleaner
- iii) Additional rugs/carpets/runners
- iv) Donations towards upkeep and management (see our Sponsor a Petal campaign)



A sincere thank you to our partners who contributed to the goodie bags received by every guest at the launch!

SIJNN nouvelle
mushrooms



Photographs by Sharon Brink, Heyne Brink & Richard Miller



Visitors to the veld at Haarwegskloof

We shared our special reserve with a few special individuals / groups in early spring and will continue to do so wherever time and capacity allow.

The BotSoc 'A-team', headed up by Pat and Tony Rebelo, spent a day at Haarwegskloof and we were lucky enough to see *Drosanthemum quadratum* (EN) in flower, as well as the beautiful *Protea decurrens* (EN), a ground Protea which is pollinated by rodents. We also enjoyed a full display of *Aspalathus quartzicola* (V), a recently-described creeping legume with tiny pink and white flowers not much bigger than matchstick heads.

If you would like to visit Haarwegskloof, you are welcome to contact us and we will accommodate you wherever we can. We are currently trying to make it possible to have a full-time manager resident at the Centre, but this will take a little time...



Black Harriers breeding at Haarwegskloof

As soon as the launch of the Renosterveld Centre was done, we started working towards creating an inventory of all the wildlife and plant species on the reserve. One of the major highlights so far is that we have found breeding Black Harriers! We found the first nest on the 10th September and it had four eggs in it. These charismatic, and rare and endemic (to SA) birds (with a total population of about 1000 pairs) breed on the ground in a bowl-shaped nest that they make out of sticks and line with grass. They breed in strandveld, mountain fynbos and renosterveld across the Western Cape. Research from Odette's MSc thesis in 2005 showed that they only breed in the largest, most contiguous renosterveld fragments, so it is very fitting that they are breeding at Haarwegskloof. We suspect that there is at least one other breeding pair on the farm... we will keep you posted.

We will be working, once again, with Dr Rob Simmons, who continues to run the Black Harrier which he founded with Odette Curtis and Andrew Jenkins in 2000. You can follow other interesting harrier news on Rob's harrier blog: <http://blackharrierspace.blogspot.com>



Welcome to our new collaborators

We are very excited to announce some new collaborators to the OLCT...

Prof Muthama Muasya, our new board member, UCT

Muthama has been involved with the work of the OLCT peripherally since its inception, through collaborative research with Charles Stirton and Odette. Muthama is a botanical taxonomist (i.e. he works on the classification of plants and the evolutionary relationships between species) and is based at the University of Cape Town, where he specialises in sedges, but also collaborates with other colleagues on legume research. We know Muthama will add significant value to the OLCT as a board member and we are thrilled to welcome him on board!



Luke Gallant, new MSc student (UWC, UCT & ARC)

Luke is undertaking his Masters degree under supervision from both the University of the Western Cape (UWC), University of Cape Town and the Agricultural Research Council. He is exploring how livestock use renosterveld for foraging, with a particular focus on the species they are targeting and the chemical properties of these species. These data will be used for identifying potential species which can be used in longer-term research which tests whether it will be possible to use indigenous species to create artificial pasture for livestock (i.e. to test whether there are alternatives for lucerne).



Dr Louise de Waal, Marketing Consultant for OLCT (from Green Girls in Africa)

Louise has joined us for a contract period of five months, although we hope to grow towards making her a more permanent member of our team with time (and funding, of course). Louise has a PhD in Ecology and is part of an organisation called Green Girls in Africa.

Louise has already taken the OLCT's Facebook page forward in leaps and bounds (we are now on 545 likes!) and has started a campaign for raising funds for the OLCT called *Sponsor a Petal*. Please do consider supporting this campaign, as we really need support to run the Centre and keep people like Louise on board! It only costs R450 to join it...



FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN: SPONSOR A PETAL

We have just launched the Sponsor a Petal campaign, whereby we are looking to raise money for running the Reserve and Renosterveld Centre at Haarwegskloof. Please see the attached leaflet and pick a flower or two (or more!) to 'sponsor'. We really need additional funding for running costs at the Centre and every bit that you contribute will help us with securing this.



Sponsor a Petal is your way of personally helping the OLCT to conserve the *Critically Endangered* Renosterveld ecosystems. Many of the Renosterveld plant species are not only rare and endangered, but also have high levels of endemism. This means that many only occur in very small geographical areas within the Overberg, e.g. a species might be limited to a single quartz outcrop on one particular farm or grow only on north-facing slopes in the Napier area.

We give you the opportunity to sponsor one of these **unique endemic and rare plant species**, some of which have recently been discovered in the Overberg by the Trust.

The cost of sponsoring one of the five rare and endemic Renosterveld plant species is **R450 per year**. In return, we will send you updates with photos on the species every season - spring, summer, autumn and winter. Your name will also be listed on our website, as one of the 'Petal' sponsors. Please see the form attached, or visit our website and find the campaign under 'Get Involved.' <http://overbergrenosterveld.org.za/sponsor-a-petal/>

Exciting beginnings for a new conservation area in the Western Overberg: De Vlei Cluster update

This spring, we are focusing on the Western Rûens Shale Renosterveld in the Botrivier area, where we are working with a group of farmers to create an extensive conservation area to protect the largest remaining, most contiguous stretch of this *Critically Endangered* vegetation type. So far, this spring, we have seen *Moraea comptonii* (a gorgeous bulb with two colour forms: orange with yellow centre or yellow with a green centre (the latter we have yet to find)), listed as *Endangered*. We were also privileged to visit the world's only known population of *Moraea atropunctata* (*Critically Endangered*) in the area – a very special experience.

Working with the farmers here has been a good reminder that there are willing landowners out there, that mind sets can be changed and that there is hope for these landscapes. Thank you MG and co!



Photographs above: left to right: *Babiana purpurea*, *Freylinia helmei*, *Drosera cistiflora*, *Moraea atropunctata*, *Moraea comptonii*.



New website launched

We have a new look! Please visit www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za to see it!

This is still work in progress, but we have moved over to a different system which will enable us to make more regular changes. Thanks to Louise de Waal and Tina Vlok of BerryWeb for all the hard work that they put into this so far!

New book launched: Fynbos Ecology & Management

After several years of hard work, combining chapters authors by several collaborators (including our Director), the Fynbos Ecology and Management Book has been launched!

This fantastic guide to managing your fynbos is a must-have and you can get yourself a copy in English or Afrikaans by visiting Briza Publications on www.briza.com or calling 012 329 3896. The book should also be available at the Kirstenbosch bookshop soon.

EXCITING NEW title from Briza Publications!

FYNBOS – Ecology and Management

Editors: Karen J. Esler, Shirley M. Pierce, Charl de Villiers

ISBN: 978-1-920217-37-2

Also available in Afrikaans

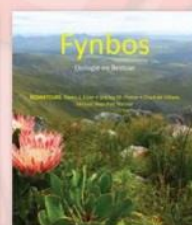
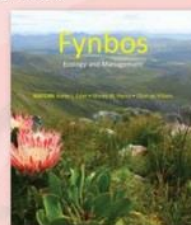
ISBN: 978-1-920217-36-5

FYNBOS – Ekologie en Bestuur

EXTENT: 272 pages

FORMAT: 240 x 210 mm

Soft cover; more than 250 photographs



The fynbos region is one of the most spectacularly diverse places on Earth. This is not an idle statement. When one considers the diversity of insects, freshwater and marine species also associated with the Cape, this hotspot is arguably the hottest of all. It is also confusingly heterogeneous, with a diversity of fine-scale habitats, from wetlands in the lowlands to seeps in the mountains, unique soil, nutrient, aspect and rainfall conditions, all of which combine to sustain and drive this diversity.

This book is a guide that will help people who visit, live, manage or own land in the Fynbos Biome to appreciate and manage its extraordinary natural richness.

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