



Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust

13th Newsletter, July 2017

... with a special offer on accommodation at Haarwegskloof!



Another Easement signed: Kykoedie Conservation Easement

Our first independent easement has been signed! We have been working with Joshua Human of Kykoedie farm for the last four years and he has, from the beginning, been committed to signing an easement with the ORCT. With the help of WWF's legal team, the legal blueprint for easements was developed, and after the signing up of Klipfontein with WWF, we are now able to pursue all the easements we have had 'waiting in the pipeline'. Kykoedie will be the first of many.

Kykoedie comprises over 200 ha of renosterveld remnants and watercourses and has also been a test site for experimental watercourse restoration work being implemented under our *WWF-Nedbank Green Trust* -funded Watercourse Restoration Project. Keir Lynch is the Project Manager on this exciting initiative and has put together the management plan which will guide this agreement. This plan also identifies where important ecological interventions need to take place and where the ORCT can assist, with the funding received from the Green Trust.

What is a Conservation Easement?

An Easement is a Conservation Servitude put over the land and signed in favour of a recognised entity (in this case, the ORCT). It is attached to a title deed restriction in perpetuity and is governed by a management plan, which is developed through the partnership.



Thus far, we have assisted Joshua with implementing a prescribed ecological burn (March 2017) and we have provided the fencing to ensure that the burnt area will be protected from livestock grazing. Under Keir's guidance, we have also fenced parts of the Sout River off from livestock (using temporary electric fencing) to give the river banks a chance to restore themselves. Some of these fenced-off areas have been seeded with a selection of indigenous species in order for us to compare the merits of active vs. passive restoration of these important watercourses.

Watch this space for post-burn spring flowers, which are sure to be spectacular!



A big thank you to Joshua and Stefanie Human for providing the snacks and beautiful setting for the signing. Thanks also to Dirk Uys Attorneys for drawing up the legal documents.

And to WWF-Nedbank Green Trust and FFI for financial support on this easement .



Our five-year AGM

Bringing partners and friends together

We hosted our 2017 Annual General Meeting (in July in Napier) - bringing together landowners, donors, government partners and other non-governmental organisations. And we took a moment to see what has been achieved during the last five years (since we started), and where we're aiming to move to. Thanks to our committed landowners, nearly 2000 hectares of renosterveld patches are being managed more effectively—but we still have a long road to travel.



ORCT Chairperson, Dirk van Papendorp, opened the meeting. Presentations on the work of the ORCT were given by Jannie Groenewald (HWK manager), Keir Lynch (Watercourse Restoration Project manager) and Odette Curtis (Director). We also invited Stephen Cousins of Swartland Botanics, to share his work on Swartland renosterveld with us.

Much of our conservation work has taken place along watercourses in the Overberg: Watercourses link renosterveld patches to each other. What's more, we've found these areas are home to an amazing diversity of mammals, insects and reptiles - giving life to these agricultural landscapes. But despite the conservation work taking place, questions were raised during the AGM - in particular relating to the potentially significant decline in pollinators.

We're increasingly finding that specific pollinators are disappearing: The Long-Tongued Fly, for example, pollinates long-tubed species such as *Pelargonium dipetalum* and forms of *Nerine humilis* with unusually long reproductive parts. However, anecdotal evidence shows that flowers of the latter species are not being pollinated as the pollinator may have become extinct locally. This sends alarm bells as to the health and ecological viability of remaining renosterveld remnants.

On the upside, **we've found a number of renosterveld species in our area, many of which were believed to be extinct:** *Chasmanthe bicolor* was thought to be extinct in the wild, but has been found on Haarwegskloof. We've also discovered several healthy viable populations of the Endangered *Gladiolus vandermerwei* and *Moraea debilis*: potentially allowing for them to drop a category on the Red Data List.

The ORCT is not only about plants. We're working to protect entire renosterveld habitats and ecosystems: So we were thrilled when Jannie found *Copris sexdentatus* (a small dung beetle that looks like a rhino beetle), on Haarwegskloof. This beetle has not been seen in 60 years. But, did you know, many of the invertebrates that live in the renosterveld are also threatened? Many beetles are illegally caught and sold on the black-market.



Copris sexdentatus



Ichnestoma cuspidata



Macynia labiata or new species



Vegetia cf. grimmia



ORCT team

We're so grateful to all our **partners and friends** who share our work to protect the last remaining renosterveld patches. We have a lot of work ahead of us. (There are over 30 000 renosterveld patches remaining in the Overberg, fewer than 50 are over 100 ha in size). We're looking forward to supporting more landowners with protecting them.



SPECIAL!

Haarwegskloof



Renosterveld Reserve and Accommodation

A unique 500 ha Renosterveld Reserve, located north of De Hoop Nature Reserve in the Overberg, just 40 km from both Swellendam and Bredasdorp. We offer self-catering accommodation in a farm-style house, as well as bunkbed-style accommodation for a smaller budget at our Research Centre.

**SPRING
SPECIAL: stay 2
nights, get a
3rd one free!**

Email: bookings@overbergrenosterveld.org.za

Managed by the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust

www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za/accommodation

* offer valid until 31 October 2017



Time for spring flowers in the Overberg—don't miss it!

Once a year, this 'Cinderella' renosterveld landscape transforms into a botanical wonderland. This spring bloom peaks from early August to early October and is always over far too quickly. Make sure you don't regret missing it this season (the flowering, thus far, appears to be largely unaffected by the drought) - get out there, visit your local remnants, come and visit Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve, or make use of the guesthouses provided by some of our champion landowners and explore the various types of renosterveld found in our region (visit <http://overbergrenosterveld.org.za/renosterveld-farmers/> to see available guesthouses).



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS

