



Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust END-OF-YEAR (14th) Newsletter, December 2017



THE ORCT IS SEEKING ADDITIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

Over the last 5½ years, the ORCT has grown to include a staff contingent of five! Naturally, as with every Conservation Non-Profit Organisation, we run risks regarding sustainability. As we commit to more conservation agreements with landowners and substantially increase our footprint in the Overberg Renosterveld landscape, the sustainability issue becomes even more pertinent. To this end, we are looking for 2-3 additional Board members to support and guide our organisation. Particularly, we are looking for well-connected individuals who share our passion for Renosterveld Conservation to help us with fundraising within corporate and philanthropic circles. Please contact our Director, Dr Odette Curtis-Scott (info@overbergrenosterveld.org.za) if you would like to discuss joining our team.



ORCT team

SELF-GUIDED BOTANICAL TRAIL AT HAARWEGSKLOOF NOW OPEN FOR VISITORS

The Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust is now launching a new interpreted walking trail on the Haarwegskloof Reserve for those visitors who wish to learn more about the unique biodiversity conserved here. The trail showcases the unique biodiversity and flora of the quartz patches of the eastern Rûens, home to several species new to science discovered and described by members of the ORCT. Visitors are rewarded by expansive views across the largest remaining area of Overberg Renosterveld in the world. The trail offers an easy walk taking about two hours to complete. See <https://overbergrenosterveld.org.za/new-quartz-patch-interpretive-walking-trail/> for the full story by Zoë Poulsen.



ANOTHER NEW SPECIES DISCOVERED BY THE ORCT: LACHENALIA BARBERAE

Lachenalia barbarae, with its beautiful and delicate looking pink flowers, was initially discovered by Dr Odette Curtis, Founder and Director of the ORCT, who collected and mounted a late stage flowering specimen during her PhD research. It was later found again by our Reserve Manager Jannie Groenewald who realised that the plant was likely to be a new species. This was confirmed a year later from a type collection in the Kirstenbosch Nursery by Graham Duncan and then illustrated by botanical artist Vicki Thomas. The paper describing the species has now been published in the journal 'Phytotaxa'. *Lachenalia barbarae* was named in honour of Barbara Taylor, mother of prominent ORCT donor Oren Taylor. Oren is one of the Trust's most loyal supporters in its vital work of conserving the Critically Endangered Renosterveld of the Overberg to date. In 2012 he purchased the naming rights at auction of a new Renosterveld *Hesperantha* species discovered. This species was named *Hesperantha kiaratayloriae* after Oren's daughter. See <https://overbergrenosterveld.org.za/new-species-overberg-renosterveld/> for the full blog by Zoë Poulsen.

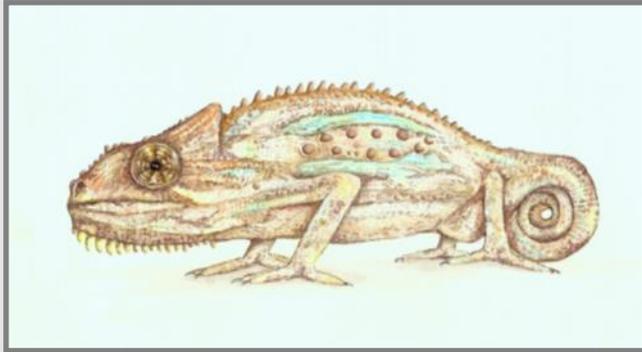


TWO BEAUTIFUL ARTWORKS BY ALOUISE LYNCH FOR 'AUCTION' — BEST OFFER WINS!

What better way to spoil a loved one than to buy them a beautiful painting? These two stunning pieces, both created from images taken by the ORCT in Renosterveld, are available to the 'best bid' - either separately or together. Proceeds will be used towards priority management interventions at our Renosterveld Reserve, Haarwegskloof.

Please email Sharon if you are interested in making an offer: admin@overbergrenosterveld.org.za

Starting bid: R2000 each. Dimensions with pas-pa-tout: 40 X 28 cm.



Ride for Renosterveld at the Cape Town Cycle Tour

Cycle Tour entries are already closed, but you can register for a charity and guarantee your place!!!

The Cape Town Cycle Tour takes place on Sunday 11 March 2018. We only have space for 15 riders to support the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust. Your entry costs R2000 – which includes your entry to the race (we paid R800/entry) and this stunning ORCT branded cycling shirt. Enter as a group with friends or as an individual.

Here's some Cycle Tour info:

If you Ride-For-Renosterveld, you will still be able to start at your allocated time, if you are a seeded rider.

You will have to buy a RaceTec timing chip if you don't have one, but you don't have to buy Cycle Tour merchandise.

Please don't pay the Cycle Tour – as we have already taken care of this. You pay the ORCT, and we take care of your entry.

For more information, visit: <http://www.capetowncycletour.com>. We're on their Pedal for a Purpose page. Or chat to Sharon to secure your spot: Email: admin@overbergrenosterveld.org.za or phone: 082 762 2787.



SPRING HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIELD... (excerpt from Blog by Zoë Poulsen)

Despite the ongoing drought spring was as rewarding a time as ever with many fascinating discoveries made. Here are some of the ORCT's spring highlights from the team's fieldwork this season.

Several new populations of ***Chasmanthe bicolor* (Vulnerable)** were discovered. This spectacular geophyte is here being pollinated by a Lesser Double Collared Sunbird. *Chasmanthe bicolor* is a member of the Iridaceae family. It is also known as the Two Colour Chasmanthe or Suurkanol or Suurkanolpypie in Afrikaans. *Chasmanthe bicolor* grows in sheltered ravines and open woodland adjacent to watercourses. It is distributed from McGregor to Swellendam although its full geographic range is not well known. It is known from around ten sites and has lost considerable habitat due to transformation for agriculture.



***Aspalathus rosea* (Endangered)** is a member of the Fabaceae or Pea family. This plant comes from the same genus as that used to make Rooibos tea. It is distributed from Botrivier to Elim where it grows in Elim Ferricrete Fynbos, Western and Central Rûens Shale Renosterveld. This species is known from just seven sites at present with ongoing habitat loss due to transformation for agriculture a significant threat. It is also threatened by alien plant invasion. 50% of its former habitat has been lost over the last 45 years making it imperative that its remaining habitat is effectively conserved in perpetuity.



Here seen is ***Moraea comptonii* (Endangered)** growing in Western Rûens Shale Renosterveld. This scene is one of the Renosterveld conservation success stories of this spring season. This site was previously heavily grazed by sheep and has recently been fenced with support from the ORCT to allow livestock grazing to be more effectively managed. Renosterveld biodiversity has significantly improved since the fence went up with one of the highlights being en mass displays of this Endangered species which is only known from around six different sites. This photo shows the two different colour forms (orange and yellow) of this species.



The beautiful ***Moraea melanops* (Endangered)** is a member of the Iridaceae family. According to the Red List of South African Plants it is known from just three sites and is listed as Endangered. It grows on clay slopes in Renosterveld and is distributed from Caledon to Bredasdorp. This season the ORCT discovered several new populations of this species.



Here we get up close and personal with a fly pollinating the buchu ***Diosma fallax* (Endangered)**. Pollinator observations are an important part of the ORCT's spring biodiversity surveys and this is also an important focus for several of the postgraduate students undertaking research in collaboration with the ORCT. We still know relatively little about pollination systems within Overberg Renosterveld, in particular the impact of transformation and fragmentation of this imperilled ecosystem upon the survival of specialist pollinators and their ability to move between Renosterveld patches in the agricultural landscapes of the Overberg. The Trust and its collaborating students are working hard to better understand this critical component of Overberg Renosterveld ecology to help best direct conservation action. *Diosma fallax* is listed as Endangered, with only a couple of small populations around Bontebok National Park. However, this year, the ORCT found a previously unknown population of this species south of Riviersonderend – expanding the known range of the species substantially.



Often to best appreciate Renosterveld one has to get down on hands and knees to take a closer look at the often tiny plant species when in flower. The small ***Moraea tricolor* (Endangered)** is no exception. It has a variety of different colour forms from yellow to pink and occurs from Citrusdal to Caledon on sandy or clay flats in Fynbos and Renosterveld vegetation. It is only known from around 12 sites as a result of habitat loss through urbanisation and transformation for agriculture.



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS

