



Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust

*Trading as* Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust



Annual Report 2016-17

NPO # 124-296

Dedicated to saving Critically Endangered Renosterveld ecosystems in the Overberg from extinction

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### OUR VISION

To secure the long-term conservation and management of remaining lowland vegetation through active partnerships thereby improving the overall quality of farms, sustainable livelihoods and landscapes in the Overberg.

### OUR OBJECTIVES

- \* Secure the largest and most intact remnants of Renosterveld for conservation in perpetuity through a combination of land purchase and Conservation Easements.
- \* Link critical fragments through the restoration and formal conservation of corridors (emphasising watercourses).
- \* Spread awareness amongst landowners in a way that affects changing attitudes and management.
- \* Coordinate and partake in collaborative research on Renosterveld ecology and management.

### RENOSTERVELD FACTS

- \* Renosterveld is the richest bulb (geophyte) habitat in the world.
- \* It is one of the most threatened habitats on Earth.
- \* 95% of Overberg renosterveld has been ploughed for agriculture.
- \* Transformation is irreversible.





## Board of Trustees



DIRK VAN PAPENDORP

Chairperson of the Board. Overberg farmer.



LESLEY RICHARDSON

Vice-Chair of the Board. CEO, Flower Valley Conservation Trust.



PROF MUTHAMA MUASYA

Board member. Head of Department Biological Sciences, UCT.



SEAN PRIVETT

Board member. Botanist and eco-tourism business owner.



ALAN JEFTHA

Board member. Law practitioner and Overberg farmer.

## Special advisors to the Board



PROF CHARLES STIRTON

Botanist, legume expert, UK.



DR ROB BRETT

Africa Programme, Fauna & Flora International, UK.



CHRIS MARTENS

Experienced conservation manager, MD of Fynbos Trust.

## Staff



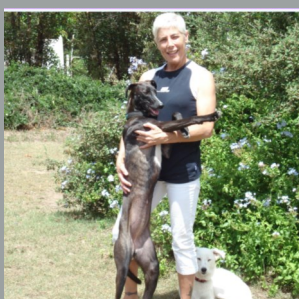
DR ODETTE CURTIS

Director of the ORCT. Ecologist and conservation manager.



KEIR LYNCH

Manager of Watercourse Restoration Project, easements & ecologist.



SHARON KING

PA to Director.



JANNIE GROENEWALD

Haarwegskloof Manager & ecologist.



Sadly we still see the expansion of farmland into virgin renosterveld areas. As we make our plight known, more and more farmers start cooperating, but a few individuals still don't see the bigger picture. The new land that is brought into production in this way costs a fortune to 'create' and sadly doesn't deliver the yield as projected - with the precious renosterveld lost forever! We have not lost faith in our farming community to help us with this endeavour. The scheduled signing of another two - four conservation easements in 2017 is proof that our farmers are responding to the call of duty.



## NOTE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON, DIRK VAN PAPENDORP

Reading newspapers, watching TV and following social media over the last six months, nobody would disagree that our country is in turmoil. A country and its people can only grow if given the right environment (in every sense of the word) in which to function.

Thirty-odd years ago, the vision for SA was to create a long-term environment for the country to grow and prosper. For too long the emphasis was on how we could exploit what our beautiful country has to offer, with no regard for the effects it would have on the population in the long-run. Nowadays everything from mining, rapid urbanisation, industrial development and even agriculture puts stress on our feeble resources. The careless exploitation of our resources will bring an end to the era of growth and prosperity, should we neglect to plan and manage effectively into the future.

The latest scare after last year's drought in the Northern provinces is the low rainfall in the Western Cape since the start of 2017. A dwindling water supply reminds us once again about the fragility of our water resources. We are doing our part to protect the quality and sustainability of our fragile renosterveld water resources, through our innovative Watercourse Restoration Project. As we spread the project's footprint, far more awareness is also created within the farming community of the Overberg.

The number of students doing research on renosterveld is growing: Additional proof that our vision of creating a hub for them at our Haarwegskloof Reserve is bearing fruit. A big thank you to our special advisors and research contributors for sensitizing students to this important work. Likewise, the growth in occupation rates at our guest house is very promising and this endeavour continues to carry our message abroad.

In conclusion I want to thank our board, funders, contributors and personnel for the enthusiasm in which they carried our message. A special word of thanks to our director who put in a lot effort and all her time to make this a successful venture!

We look forward to sharing another year of crucial renosterveld conservation with you.



## WATERCOURSE RESTORATION PROGRAMME

### PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAMME

This programme is a first step towards recognizing the importance of watercourses in the Overberg wheat-belt, as these are the lifeblood of this landscape and are often all that remain in a severely man-altered environment. These renosterveld watercourses often function as crucial corridors, linking renosterveld remnants to one another. This programme focuses on building relationships with landowners, based on assistance with watercourse restoration in exchange for varying levels of commitments by landowners to maintain our investment in their ecological infrastructure.



### BACKGROUND

The ORCT is focused on conserving renosterveld remnants, through working with landowners across the Overberg Rûens. However, with so little renosterveld remaining, securing only isolated islands of remnant Renosterveld is not likely to ensure that ecosystem functioning and integrity is maintained across this severely transformed landscape. Watercourses (perennial or annual streams, rivers and seepage areas) are the obvious linkages or 'corridors' between these remnants and may be considered the 'life blood' of this region.

Unlike transformed virgin renosterveld, degraded watercourses have high restoration potential, making these streams and rivers an obvious target for achieving primary conservation objectives in this area. The integrity of these watercourses, which are in fact ecological corridors, is essential for soil health, water quality and the movement of pollinators and other wildlife.

### SOLUTIONS

Currently, many watercourses in the wheat-belt are poorly managed; with erosion, salinization and invasive alien weeds being some of the most notable effects of mis-management. As a result, landowners are asking the OLCT for advice and assistance with practical management: we believe that by assisting these farmers through providing expertise and hands-on management, we can pave the way for furthering changing attitudes towards ecosystem management in this very fragile system. These partnerships will also assist with negotiations for conservation easements.



Highlighted projects



## WATERCOURSE RESTORATION PROGRAMME

### RESTORATION HIGHLIGHTS

#### Hansjiesrivier cluster:

- Woody aliens cleared at headwaters on Fairfield.
- Gully erosion control interventions, including gabions and silt trapping, at Houtkloof. And fencing of drainage system previously used for agriculture for active restoration interventions.

#### Ouka (Freek Botha) River:

- Sheet erosion control interventions including silt trapping and chippings at Uitvlugt.

#### Sout Rivier:

- Erosion control on riverbanks and grazing exclusion with electric fencing at Kykoedie. Assistance with controlled burn in large fragment at same site; fencing infrastructure sourced and erected after the controlled burn to manage livestock grazing
- Initiation of the development of a cycle trail linking Haarwegskloof to Koleskloof with surrounding farmers. ORCT will assist with alien clearing and signage along the cycle route.



### THE WAY FORWARD

The success of this 'pilot' project suggests that we need to make this initiative a permanent project within the ORCT. With the remaining year's worth of funding, we will grow the restoration initiatives in these and other clusters, through encouraging and negotiating with landowners to work together towards a shared management plan, in order to maintain the long-term success of the interventions already undertaken within the scope of this work. We will also be seeking funds to extend the impact of this important work.



Highlighted projects



## EASEMENT PROGRAMME

### PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAMME

The Conservation Easement Programme enables a legal process for long-term conservation commitments by landowners in a way that avoids lengthy and expensive options available within government which are unavailable to, or unsuitable for, renosterveld landowners. The incentive is assistance with management, in terms of both planning and financial aid towards implementing.

### WHAT IS AN EASEMENT?

A Conservation Easement is an agreement between a landowner and a legal entity, such as an NGO. The agreement centres on the long-term conservation of a designated piece of land and is accompanied by a management plan and a map defining the 'conservation' vs. 'production' areas. The easement 'runs with the land,' meaning that it is applicable to both present and future owners of the land. It is thus attached to the Title Deed of the property. The ORCT is using the American Easement model as a blueprint for conservation agreements with Overberg farmers.



*Right to left: Keir Lynch & Odette Curtis (ORCT), MG Lotter (landowner), Jan Coetzee (WWF)*

### FIRST EASEMENT SIGNED: HISTORY IS MADE

On the 8th of February 2017, the ORCT celebrated a milestone with our partners in the signing of the first Conservation Easement, signed between WWF-SA and MG Lötter of Klipfontein farm, Caledon. The ORCT initiated and negotiated the easement, while WWF's legal team perfected the legal documentation. The ORCT will manage the Conservation Area with the landowner. The first of its kind, this innovative approach has enabled the protection of 370 ha of Western Rûens Shale Renosterveld in perpetuity. In return, WWF-SA has made a substantial financial contribution towards the fencing required to enclose the Conservation Area and enable live-stock management. We thank MG for taking this step with us and look forward to many more similar partnerships in future...

### MORE TO FOLLOW

Now that we have the long-awaited legal blueprint for easements we are negotiating with several landowners for additional agreements in strategically-selected priority areas within the Overberg's renosterveld remnants. We have received funding from the Table Mountain Fund (TMF-WWF) to target priority sites in Western and Central Rûens Shale Renosterveld, and from the WWF-Nedbank Green Trust to target priority watercourses - all for easements.

Highlighted projects





## BIOBLITZES & FIELD SURVEYS

### PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAMME

Every year we conduct extensive field surveys on renosterveld patches. We use the data and photographs to generate inventories of all the biodiversity recorded at each respective site. We then report back to landowners with our findings. These report-backs have a profound impact on farmers and are often responsible for sowing the first seeds of change.

*One cannot love what one does not know...*

Yellow Mongoose



Oscillated thick-tailed Gecko



Secretarybird



Highlighted projects



Sundevall's Shovel-snout

### EXCITING FINDS IN THE FIELD

Renosterveld is full of surprises and these are not limited to plants! Over the last two seasons, we have found: two indigenous fish species - the Cape Kurper and Burchell's Redfin in the Hansjies River near Napier. It was previously thought that Redfins do not occur in the wheat-belt at all! We have also been involved with the discovery of at least another two new plant species: a *Lachenalia* and a *Notobubon* (the latter has also resulted in a name swap between this and a previously-known species). A scarce snake, the Sundevall's Shovel-snout, was also found on our surveys.



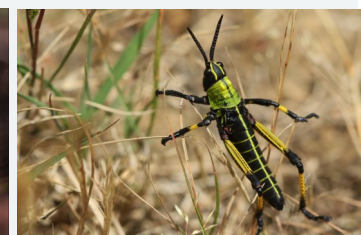
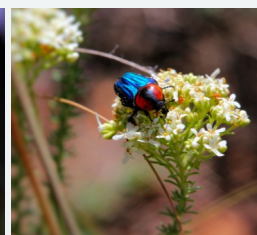
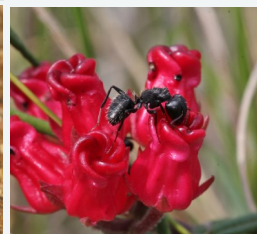
Burchell's Redfin



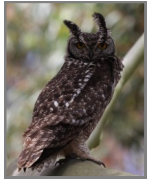
*Lachenalia* sp. nov.



*Notobubon striatum*







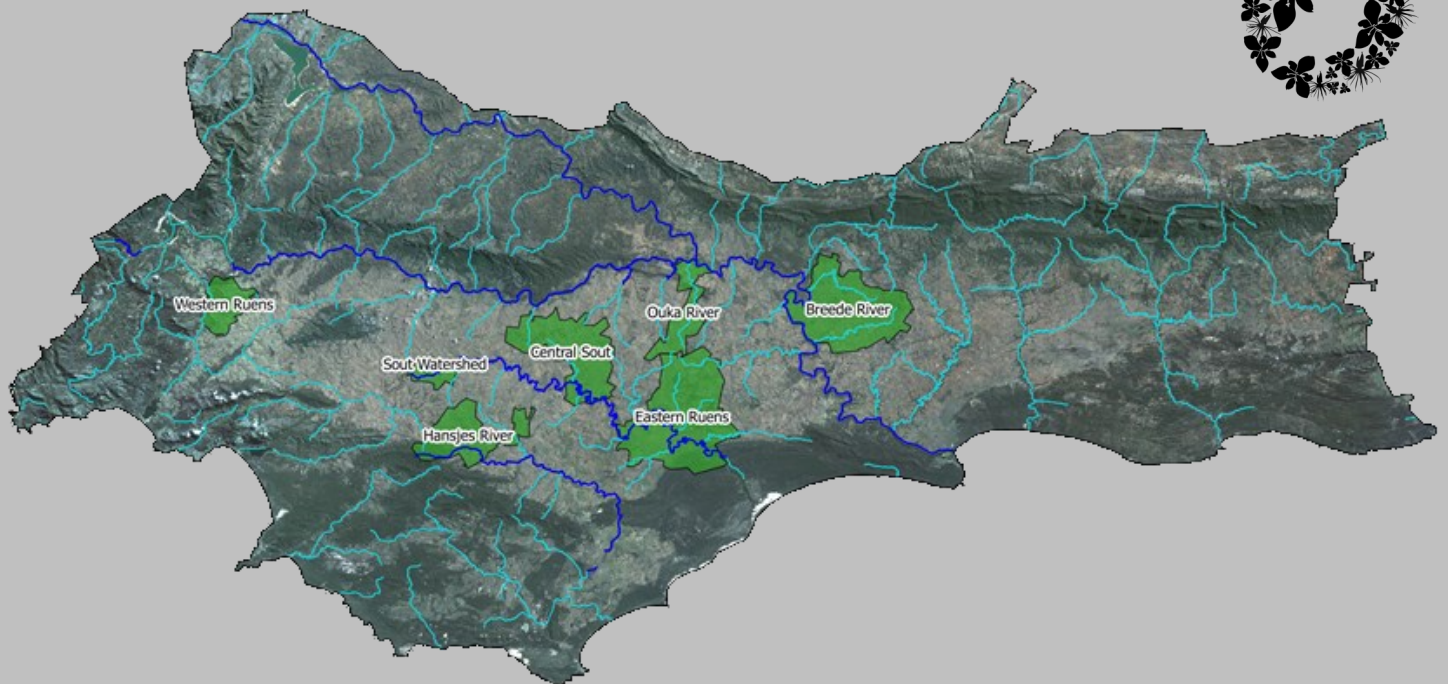
## OUR CONSERVATION STRATEGY

In a landscape where fragmentation is severe and where all remnant vegetation is found on private-land, strategy is of the utmost importance.

To this end, we have completed a five-year Conservation Strategy to share with donors and partners. In this document, we highlight the priority 'clusters' where we will be focusing our efforts over the next five years. These clusters are targeted through various projects, including the Watercourse Restoration Project, the Easement Project, or a combination of both. This strategic approach enables us to continue targeting the largest, most intact or ecologically significant remnants, corridors and watercourses across the four different types of renosterveld in the Overberg. This map shows the layout of the priority clusters.



Haarwegskloof sunset by Wessel Wessels



Priority clusters identified in our five-year Conservation Strategy

## NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR, DR ODETTE CURTIS

The time of writing this part of the annual report is always one for reflection—a time to focus on the gains and not the losses. The past year has been full of gains and again, I am incredibly proud of our growing team of passionate and dedicated staff, who keep flying the flag high for renosterveld conservation.

The watercourse project has seen several successes—mostly with respect to the landowners that have become involved with renosterveld conservation as a result of the management-related incentives we were able to offer them. Likewise, the early stages of the Easement Programme have proven to be a success—clearly being able to offer a landowner an incentive upfront is crucial to negotiations within a programme of this nature.

We are committed to growing our conservation footprint and to making sure that it is a permanent one. We have so much more work to do and a long road ahead—but with your continued support, we can do it.



## SUPPORTING THE ORCT: A PLEDGE FOR YOUR SUPPORT

While we have been fortunate to receive sufficient funds to cover our operational costs and projects over the last five years, no NGO is ever 'safe' without an established Capital Fund. Without this 'fall-back', we will never be freed of the burden of constantly needing to raise funds.

Understandably, many donors are keen to support specific projects and not 'operational costs' *per se*. The irony is that these operational costs, which include salaries, fuel and communication, are the very things that keep an NPO afloat. Without our diverse and dedicated staff, we would not be able to undertake the work we are doing, or to realise our goals, as outlined in our Conservation Strategy (page 8).

We urge you to consider supporting the ORCT in a long-term and meaningful way and assist us with building up our long-term sustainability—without our continued work, there will be no future for Overberg renosterveld.

There are several ways in which you can assist:

- Make a once-off or recurring donation, or join our Golden Circle of businesses and philanthropic donors.
- Consider leaving a legacy through a bequest, or set up a Tribute Fund for a lost loved-one.
- Request a list of specific projects which need funding and consider supporting one of these.

Please visit [www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za/support/](http://www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za/support/)





# 2016/17 FINANCIAL REPORT

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust, which comprise the statement of financial position as at 28 February 2017, and the statement of income and retained earnings, and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and the notes, comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information.

## Trustees responsibility for the financial statements

The Trust's trustees are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities, and requirements of the Trust Deed, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatements, whether due to fraud or error.

## Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing. Those standards require that we comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

## Qualification

In common with similar organisations, it is not feasible for the organisation to institute accounting controls over cash donations prior to initial entry of the collections in the accounting records. Accordingly, it was impractical for us to extend our examination beyond the receipts actually recorded

## Qualified Opinion

In our opinion, except for the effect of such adjustment, if any, as might have been determined necessary had we been able to satisfy ourselves as to the completeness of cash donations, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Overberg Lowlands Conservation Trust as at 28 February 2017, and of its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards for Small and Medium-sized entities.

### STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AT 28 FEBRUARY 2017	2017	2016
ASSETS		
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant & equipment	488 205	171 248
CURRENT ASSETS		
Trade and other receivables	2 747	2 500
Other financial assets	929 900	514 292
Cash and cash equivalents	28 665	382 984
Deposits		
TOTAL ASSETS	1 449 517	1 071 024
TOTAL EQUITY & LIABILITIES	1 449 517	1 071 024
CAPITAL		
Retained income	1 443 817	1 061 358
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	5 700	9 666
TOTAL CAPITAL & LIABILITIES	1 449 517	1 071 024

  
Boshoff-Visser Bredasdrorp Inc.



## THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS



## CONTACT US

### Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust

[www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za](http://www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za)

Director: [info@overbergrenosterveld.org.za](mailto:info@overbergrenosterveld.org.za)

Bookings for Haarwegskloof Reserve & Guesthouse:

[bookings@overbergrenosterveld.org.za](mailto:bookings@overbergrenosterveld.org.za)

We are a registered Non-Profit Organisation (NPO 124-296) and are able to issue 18A tax Certificates in SA.



## 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.

[www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za/accommodation](http://www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za/accommodation)

Email: [bookings@overbergrenosterveld.org.za](mailto:bookings@overbergrenosterveld.org.za)

Managed by the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust

