



# *Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust*



*Annual Report 2017-18*

*NPO # 124-296*

*Dedicated to saving Critically Endangered Renosterveld ecosystems from extinction*



# TABLE OF CONTENT



Item	Page
ORCT Vision & Objectives	1
Our team	2
Note from our Chairperson	3
ORCT Conservation Strategy	4
Watercourse Restoration	5
Conservation Easements	7
Haarwegskloof highlights	8
Note from our Director	9
A new Board Member	9
Financial Statements 2017/18	10



## 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.
- \* One of the most threatened habitats on Earth.
- \* 95% of Overberg Renosterveld has been ploughed for agriculture.
- \* Transformation is irreversible.



# OUR TEAM



## Board of Trustees



**DIRK VAN PAPERDORP**

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.



**CHRISTINA STEWART**

Board member. Director of family farm, degree in Social Science.

## 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-SCOTT**

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 Resident Ecologist.



## NOTE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON, DIRK VAN PAPENDORP



I want to thank our dedicated staff for all the hard work and effort they put into making a success out of every project we as a Trust take on. A special word of thanks goes to our Director. Not only did she head up and fundraise for all these initiatives, but we as a board would also like to congratulate her on the addition of a family member earlier this year. We hope that the joy of this little girl in their lives will fulfill all their wildest wishes.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank my fellow board members for their commitment and support throughout the year. To Alan Jeftha who left us during the year: Thank you for your loyal support since the inception of the Trust—we wish you well and sincerely look forward to your continued support of our work in the future. To our new board member, Christina Stewart: We extend our warmest welcome and look forward to your contribution in moving this Trust to new heights.

Lastly, thanks to our Creator for appointing us as custodians to guard over the incredible life on this planet. May we always be humble and give our best to conserve.

While drafting this Report I stumbled across a quote from Archie Carr that I had used in one of my previous reports. I want to start by stressing this again: *“For most of the wild things on Earth, the future just depends upon the conscience of mankind.”*

Reading a book by Jeff Koinange, journalist for CNN in Africa for several years, I realized again what a wonderful continent we are living on. All the diversity and natural richness we have is seldom found anywhere else on the globe. We are living in the true Eden of the world! The spirit of conservation that existed on the continent over the years is also truly amazing, as can be seen in the amount of wild reserves, national parks, trans-frontier parks, etc. However, sadly the feeling on the continent is that these efforts and achievements are not necessarily being safe-guarded. Somehow what gets built up over decades can still suddenly get torn down by regime changes, uncontrolled poaching or climatic disasters, putting the longevity of conservation efforts at risk.

This is also true for our South Africa as a country. The fragility of our water resources in the Western Cape, the lack of interventions towards the pollution of our river systems in the Northern provinces, the threat of mining on our National Parks and the continued degradation and removal of virgin land in agricultural landscapes are just a few of the challenges we face.

We preserve, conserve and nurture on the one hand, but structures that were put in place to stabilize these efforts sadly fail. It is as if the citizens of our beautiful country don't want to grasp the challenge of conservation and nurture it into perpetuity. Referring to my quote: the future just depends on the conscience of mankind!

The Renosterveld Trust and its efforts over the past year again demonstrate that we are resilient enough to bring about constant change. Although small, we are up there with the best. I want to highlight just a few of our recent achievements:

- The signing of the Conservation Easement at Kykoedie with Joshua Human, with several more easements waiting in line.
- The popularity of our Haarwegskloof Research Centre as a guest-house which acquaints people with our work, and also acts as a stepping stone for students to engage in Renosterveld research.
- The successful Watercourse Restoration Project which has also given rise to some crucial research and useful data. Although the current drought conditions in the Overberg have made this project challenging, we have nevertheless managed to impact hundreds of hectares of Renosterveld with some significant interventions.
- The discovery of more new plant species.

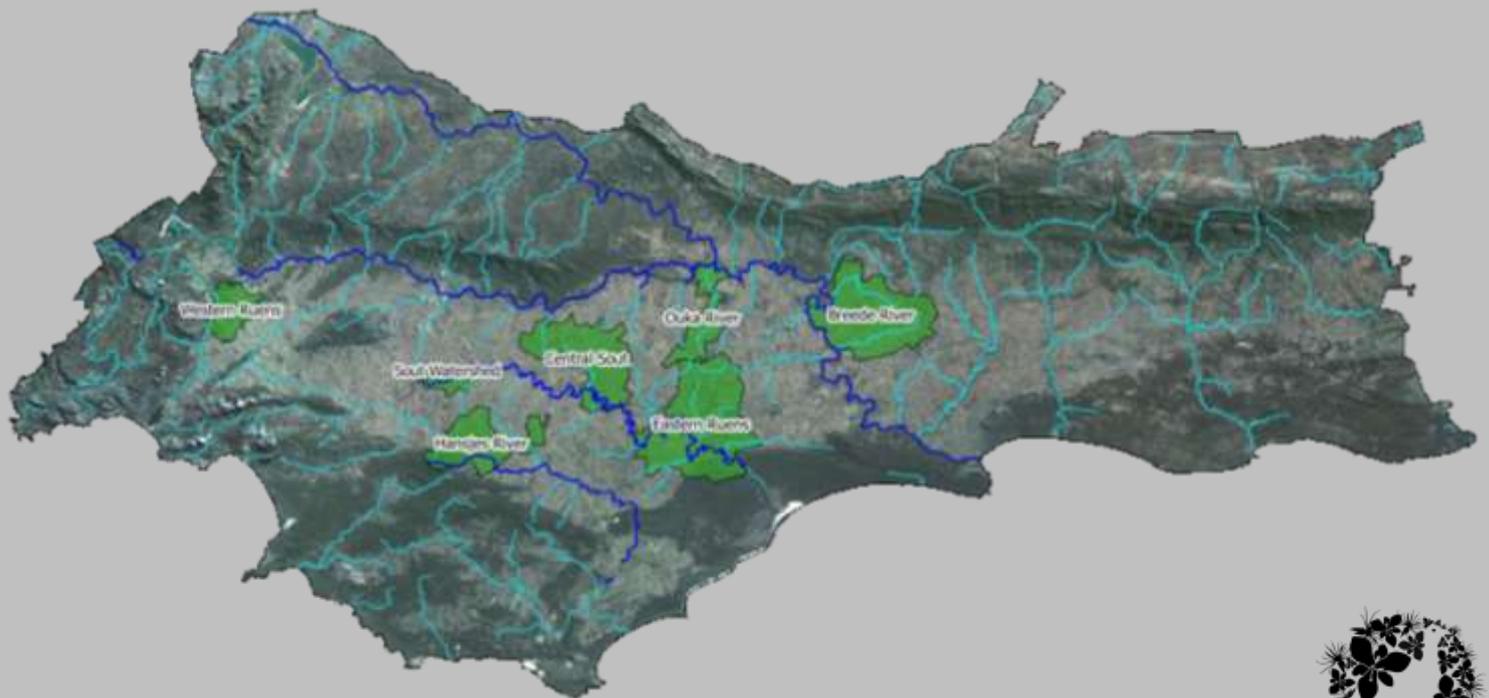
## OUR CONSERVATION STRATEGY



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. The clusters are being 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 and watercourses across the four different types of Renoster-veld in the Overberg.

The map below shows the layout of the priority clusters.



# 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.



## RESTORATION HIGHLIGHTS

### Alien-clearing in watercourses

Invasive Alien Plants remain one of the greatest threats to the structure and function of ecosystems in the Western Cape Province. As the watercourses and rivers that occur within the Overberg



Rûens Renosterveld provide the corridor link between the larger remnant fragments, it is critical to ensure that ecological process can continue in these systems without the stress of Invasive Alien Plants. The Watercourse Restoration Project has focused on the clearing of alien vegetation of the past two years and has prioritised clearing in the Hansjes River Cluster as it contains some of the most widespread and highest densities of aliens within the Conservation Clusters of the ORCT. To date approximately 700 hectares of Renosterveld fragments and watercourses have been cleared of scattered densities of invasive alien plants. This project has provided important benefits in the form of ecological restoration and in job creation for local alien clearing teams.



## WATERCOURSE RESTORATION CONTINUED

### Redfin in the Renosterveld MSc Project

During the course of the Watercourse Restoration Project the occurrence of the Critically Endangered Heuningnes Redfin was discovered in the Hansjes River Cluster. This led to a MSc being registered (by Keir Lynch) with the University of Cape Town titled "Redfin in the Renosterveld". Surveys to determine the distribution of the native and non-native freshwater fishes has shown that the last remaining refuge for the Heuningnes Redfin north of the Soetmuisberg Mountains is limited to the Hansjes River and as such the increased flow and improvement in habitat conditions will also have a positive impact on the enigmatic fish species.



### Ecological burns for restoring biodiversity

One of the best management tools to 'restore' Renosterveld to its full potential from a biodiversity perspective is to utilise fire when the veld age of the vegetation in a fragment has reached a homogeneous state (where it typically lacks vigour). Planning is critical to ensure that a mosaic of veld age is maintained with fragments in the ecosystem to provide habitat refuge to the variety of mammals, birds, insects and amphibians that utilise the fragments within the landscape. Also, it is important to burn within the late summer period as the ecosystem would have historically burnt at this time at the end of the long dry summer, just prior to the onset of winter rains. Also, most bulbs are dormant below the soil surface and are protected from the flames. As ecological burns must take place in the fire season there is a risk from a safety perspective: Thus the ORCT assists partnered landowners with firebreak preparation, permit applications and planning in order to minimise risk to infrastructure while still achieving the desired ecological objective. Partnerships with the Greater Overberg Fire Protection Association and the Overberg District Municipality ensure that we implement ecological burns in a way that results in the most desirable outcomes for our Renosterveld ecosystems.

Two ecological burns were implemented over the last year: one in autumn 2017 and a second in autumn 2018. The first took place at Kykoedie Renosterveld Reserve (also now an Easement) and the second on the Kinko Conservation Area in the Breede River Cluster. Fragments that were prioritised as part of a mosaic burn pattern as per the Integrated Management Plans developed by the ORCT in partnership with the landowners. These two operations were a success because of the collective efforts from local farmers, WESCO Vegetation Management Services and the ORCT, assuring that the burns were carried out smoothly. Fragments were subsequently fenced to allow for grazing exclusion over the next two years and alien vegetation that may germinate will be prioritised for clearing. The burns and subsequent fencing were carried out with funding from the WWF-Nedbank Green Trust.



# 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.



## ANOTHER MILESTONE: SECOND EASEMENT SIGNED & SEVERAL MORE IN THE PIPELINE

On the 14th July 2017, the ORCT signed an Easement with Joshua Human, owner of Kykoedie farm, between Bredasdorp and Riviersonderend. This was the first easement signed by the ORCT exclusively and commits another 206 ha (15% of the property) of Renosterveld and watercourses to conservation in perpetuity. Subsequent to this signing, the ORCT has subsidised the cost of an ecological burn and a fence for the Kykoedie Renosterveld Reserve, with funding provided by the WWF-Nedbank Green Trust.

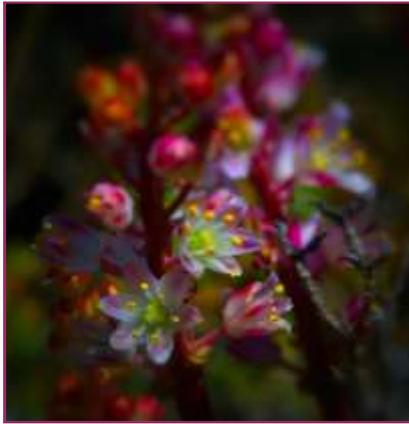
The ORCT currently has additional sites totalling ±900 additional hectares undertaking the legal process for signing easements, with several more under negotiation. We are very excited about this programme and the opportunities it is unlocking for future safe-guarding of our beautiful Renosterveld.



## HAARWEGSKLOOF GEMS

### SELF-GUIDED TRAIL ON HAARWEGSKLOOF'S QUARTZ PATCH

We have launched 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.



### ANOTHER NEW SPECIES DISCOVERED BY THE ORCT:

#### *LACHENALIA BARBERAE*

*Lachenalia barbarae*, with its beautiful and delicate looking pink flowers, was initially unknowingly 'discovered' by Odette at Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve when she collected and mounted a late-stage flowering specimen during her PhD research. It was later found again by Jannie who realised that the plant could not be keyed-out and was therefore likely to be a new species. A year later, Graham Duncan visited Haarwegskloof and confirmed the species was indeed new. The paper describing the species was 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 2012 he purchased the naming rights at the auctioning of a new *Hesperantha* species, also discovered by the ORCT at Haarwegskloof. This species was named *Hesperantha kiaratayloriae* after Oren's daughter.

The *Lachenalia* has not been found at any other location to date, while the *Hesperantha* is currently only known from two locations. Both species are found on the unique quartz habitats present on the Reserve.



*Hesperantha kiaratayloriae*  
in typical quartz habitat



## NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR, DR ODETTE CURTIS-SCOTT

This has been another fantastic year for the ORCT: we have come closer towards realising our dream: *To secure the largest areas of remaining Renosterveld in the Overberg for conservation in perpetuity through our Conservation Easement Programme.*

By the end of 2018, we will have over 1000 ha of Renosterveld secured in Easements. Not only has this demonstrated how effective our donor funding has been in achieving these difficult targets, but it also speaks volumes as to the relationships we are building with farmers across this landscape. Add to this the Watercourse Restoration projects that we have been undertaking on a different suite of properties and one can see that the ORCT's footprint is successfully expanding throughout the Overberg.

I have my incredible ORCT field team to thank for these achievements: Keir and Jannie have done fantastic work on the ground and have worked tirelessly towards achieving our conservation goals. And Sharon is a rock in our organisation—keeping our books in check and taking care of admin in a way that ensures the ORCT runs smoothly always. Thank you team ORCT and our Board of Trustees for the incredible support, particularly during my maternity leave!



## WELCOME TO A NEW BOARD MEMBER: CHRISTINA STEWART

Although new to the ORCT, Christina is born and bred in the Overberg and has lived here most of her life. Christina and her husband Billy farm on a 4<sup>th</sup> generation family grain and sheep farm where she grew up and learned to know and love various Renosterveld plants and animals.

She graduated with a BA degree in Social Sciences from the University of Stellenbosch in 2001 and worked in a corporate environment as PA to a Managing Director for a few years before twins came their way. Currently, Christina is full time mom to 5 year old James and Christine, as well as being Director of the family's farming enterprise.

Christina is passionate about the protection of the remaining Renosterveld in the Overberg and believes that farming practices should be sustainable: not only in an economic sense, but also with a view to striving to conserve and protect biodiversity. She also believes that the full potential that agri-tourism can play in protecting the Renosterveld as well as in growing the rural economy, has not yet been fully unlocked.





## 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 2015, 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 2018, 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 2018	2017	2018
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Property, plant & equipment	378 227	488 205
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Trade and other receivables	2 872	2 747
Other financial assets	1 139 424	929 900
Cash and cash equivalents	497 567	28 665
Deposits		
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>2 018 090</b>	<b>1 449 517</b>
<b>CAPITAL AND LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>CAPITAL</b>		
Accumulated surplus	2 011 492	1 443 817
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Trade and other payables	6 598	5 700
<b>Total capital and liabilities</b>	<b>2 018 090</b>	<b>1 449 517</b>

BVA Bredasdorp Inc.



## THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS AND PARTNERS



SIJNN



## 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 & Guest-  
house: [bookings@overbergrenosterveld.org.za](mailto:bookings@overbergrenosterveld.org.za)

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



## SUPPORTING THE ORCT: A PLEDGE FOR YOUR SUPPORT

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 and 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/) for more information on how you can help us to save our precious Renosterveld from being lost forever.

