

2018/19 Annual Report



Who we are



Renosterveld: One of the most threatened habitats on Earth, Renosterveld is highly fragmented with fewer than 50 fragments being over 100 hectares (ha) in size. Almost all Renosterveld remnants occur on privately-owned land, creating an additional challenge for conservation. All these factors, coupled with the large range of endemic and threatened plants and animals inhabiting this bio-hotspot, make this unique 'rhino veld' one of the most threatened habitats on Earth and putting it in urgent need of conservation attention.

The Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust (ORCT) is a Non-Profit Organisation dedicated to addressing the plight of Renosterveld. Through creating partnerships with landowners in this severely transformed landscape, we aim to save Renosterveld from an otherwise inevitable extinction.

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Vision

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

Letters from leadership

Message from the Chairperson

Have you been keeping up to date on the research on biodiversity recently? Or more accurately – the loss of biodiversity? It has made news globally: one million species at risk of extinction. And half a million of these are pollinators. The message we're being told is that we are facing a catastrophe, one that affects humans as much as it does our animal kingdom.

As a farmer and a landowner, why do I care – and worry – so much about these findings?

The United Nations report notes that we, as humans, have altered 75% of Earth's land surface. That's also true in the Overberg; and more specifically, on my own farm.

I can pretend that all is well; and continue to farm the way we used to in the past. I can say, as many farmers do, that profit is all that matters. And I can use more and more portions of my farm, as improving technology allows me to reach into my natural landscapes. Or I can say: no more.

I choose the latter.

Humans across Mother Earth are changing natural systems that have existed over millennia. Farmers in the Overberg, like me, are not exempt from the cause; nor are we exempt from the solution.

That's why I have chosen to protect my natural Renosterveld landscapes. And I'm not alone. Many farmers are joining me, and voluntarily adding their voices to protect biodiversity (including the animals and the habitats they live in). They, too, are saying: no more.

Our next step? To showcase to our peers that profit above all else, at the cost of biodiversity, is not smart. It's not smart for our future. And it's not smart for our children's future. Losing our natural world impacts on all of us: as farmers in the Overberg, and as humans on Mother Earth. We must act now. I know that protecting biodiversity is as much my responsibility, if my children are to experience and enjoy the natural world I have been privileged to grow up in.

Dirk van Papendorp

Letter from the Director

The great scientist and explorer, Alexander von Humboldt, warned 200 years ago of the impact we were having on our natural environment, noting that *the effects of the human species' intervention were already incalculable*. Of course, few could comprehend at the time the concept that the earth's resources are in fact finite. When Aldo Leopold published his landmark book, *A Sand County Almanac*, 60 years ago, the severity of climate change, the extensiveness of virgin land transformation and the number of extinct and endangered species were nowhere near today's record highs. Leopold saw with great clarity the impacts that man was having on the planet, yet his warning, too, fell on deaf ears.

Closer to home, in the 1980's, a scientist called Margaret Jarmin, working for the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), undertook the first mapping of priority areas in the Cape Floristic Region (CFR), including several Renosterveld areas (like our Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve). During this time, ecologists were starting to realise that Renosterveld was unique, but fast-disappearing and that something needed to be done.

Two impressive laws were introduced in South Africa in the late 80s/90s which forbid the ploughing of virgin land without a permit. Still nothing changed. In 2003, the South African Biodiversity Institute undertook an extensive mapping and ground-truthing of the CFR's lowlands,

which included conservation targets in these crucial areas. Again, a plan with very little implementation.

The ORCT was established in 2012, for the sole purpose of bringing this grand plan to fruition. Since then, we have developed wonderful relationships with champion farmers in the Overberg. And we have made incredibly positive inroads. But there's still bad news: we have seen absolutely no decline in the amount of virgin land that has been ploughed over the last 10 years. Laws remain disregarded and poorly enforced. This is the reality of Renosterveld conservation.

We choose to focus on the many successes we see every year. And we believe we will be celebrating many more in years to come. However, if it weren't for the work that the ORCT is doing, and the incredible landowners who understand the need to reconcile with nature, there would still be zero Renosterveld safe from the plough. We need to do more. We need to grow into an organisation that is 100% sustainable. Without this certainty, our Renosterveld ecosystems and the species that depend on them will join the Dodo, the Bloubok, and the Passenger Pigeon on the extinction list. We cannot allow this to happen on our watch.

Dr Odette Curtis-Scott

Crassula muscosa

Like the resource it seeks to protect, wildlife conservation must be dynamic, changing as conditions change, seeking always to become more effective.

~ Rachel Carson





The Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust consists of a small team of passionate and highly qualified people.

The ORCT team

Board of Trustees

Dirk van Papendorp, Chair of the Board of Trustees:

Dirk holds a BSc (1986) and Honours (1989) degree in Agriculture. He is a commercial farmer in the Heidelberg region (eastern Overberg) and owns two adjacent farms: Voorstekop and Uitvlugt. Voorstekop (his family farm) was awarded the National Veld Trust Award. Dirk has registered all the Renosterveld and Fynbos habitats on his farm as a Nature Reserve (Voorstekop Eco-Reserve).

Lesley Richardson, Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees:

Lesley has a BSc in Dietetics (1975, University of KZN), an Honours in Community Health (1984, UCT) and an MSc in Epidemiology (1990, Univ Stellenbosch). She first worked in community health and nutrition. In 1992 she moved into conservation, joining CapeNature and then WWF. In 2003 she joined Flower Valley Conservation Trust as the Executive Director and headed up the Trust for 16 years.

Sean Privett: Sean has an MSc in Botany (UCT), is Director of the Grootbos Foundation, Founder and Chair of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy and a Trustee of the Flower Valley Conservation Trust. Sean has 20 years of experience working in practical conservation implementation. He is also an eco-tourism operator; a botanical and conservation consultant; and a Fynbos restoration specialist.

Prof Muthama Muasya: Muthama holds a BSc in Botany & Zoology (Moi University, 1992), an M.Phil. in Plant Taxonomy (Moi University, 1993) and a PhD in Systematics (University of Reading, 1998). He has extensive postdoctoral experience in England (Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew), USA (Rutgers University) and Belgium (KU Leuven). He is an NRF-rated researcher and has published over 100 scientific outputs. He is currently the Head of the Biological Sciences Department at UCT.

Christina Stewart: Christina and her husband, Billy, farm on a 4th generation family grain and sheep farm in the Overberg, where Christina grew up and learned to know and love various Renosterveld plants and animals. Christina graduated with a BA degree in Social Sciences from the University of Stellenbosch in 2001 and worked in a corporate environment before taking care of her children, and serving as the Director of her farming enterprise.

ORCT staff

Dr Odette Curtis-Scott, Director:

Odette holds a BTech in Nature Conservation (CPUT), an MSc in Zoology (2005, UCT) and a PhD (2013, UCT) in Botany. She managed the Black Harrier & Black Sparrowhawk Projects from 2000-2006 at UCT; and was contracted by CapeNature's Stewardship Programme from 2007-2011; and initiated research on Renosterveld management from 2007-2012. Odette has discovered several new plant species in Renosterveld, two of which have been named after her. She established the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust in 2012.

Sharon King, Office Manager:

Sharon has worked as an Executive PA for many years in both the legal and corporate fields. She is passionate about animals and is involved in animal rescue, in particular Greyhound rescue. She has been with the ORCT since 2016.

Keir Lynch, Ecological Programme Coordinator:

Keir has a B-Tech in Nature Conservation, and brings significant experience to the Trust, formerly working with CapeNature as their Stewardship Extension Officer. Keir was involved in implementation of CapeNature's Protected Area Expansion Strategy, which included assessments of critical biodiversity areas and proclamation of Nature Reserves. Prior to this, he worked in wildlife management at Sanbona Wildlife and Shamwari Game Reserves.

Jannie Groenewald, Haarwegskloof Ecologist:

As part of his MSc in Conservation Ecology at the University of Stellenbosch, Jannie looked at the biodiversity and ecology of the *Critically Endangered* Rùens Silcrete Renosterveld in the Buffeljagsrivier area near Swellendam. If Jannie is not in the field identifying any living Renosterveld organism, you can find him at home with his Aloe collection of more than 230 different types.



Jewel Beetle

Delosperma



Signing the Ongegund Easement: left to right: Carla Wood (TMF), MG Lötter, Odette Curtis-Scott, Philip van Niekerk (owner) & Keir Lynch

ORCT 2018/19 highlights:

- 769 ha of Renosterveld signed into easements during the year.
- 1,345 ha in total now signed into conservation easements (since 2017).
- 3 new hero farmers add their voices to Renosterveld conservation.
- MOUs cover an area of 2,900 hectares of critically endangered ecosystems.
- 4 ecological burns undertaken, covering 250 hectares.
- Funding secured from WWF to protect Renosterveld habitats in the Overberg Wheat-belt through the ORCT's easement programme.
- The Field Guide to Overberg Renosterveld submitted to the publisher, Struik. Final publication is due in 2020. (This will be the most comprehensive Renosterveld guide to date).
- Our WWF-funded watercourse restoration project wrapped up with more than 1,000 ha impacted by management interventions, including ecological burns, alien clearing, grazing exclusion and soil erosion.
- Media publications including SABC and Landbouweekblad feature our Renosterveld conservation work.

Easements

Working towards sustainable and living landscapes

Most of the remaining Renosterveld is found on private land. That's why it's vital for the ORCT to work closely with these landowners, to encourage them to protect their natural landscapes.

We achieve this through conservation easements (also known as a conservation servitude model).

Why? Because landowners are busy. They need a conservation model that makes sense to them. And easements provide that: landowners sign voluntary title deed restrictions, which ensures their farm (or a portion of their farm) is committed to conservation for the long term. And in return, we assist with a substantial proportion of the initial management costs and interventions.

In the past financial year, three farmers with large tracts of Renosterveld signed these conservation easements. In total, by the end of February 2019, just short of 1,400 hectares of Renosterveld were included in our easement programme. In other words, these landscapes will now be protected in perpetuity – even if the landowner sells his property.

Two of these properties are located in the Western Rûens Shale Renosterveld. This vegetation is Critically Endangered, and according to CapeNature, only around 8,000 hectares remain (from 12,000 hectares in 2012). What's more, these properties are close to the Klipfontein Conservation Easement (owned by



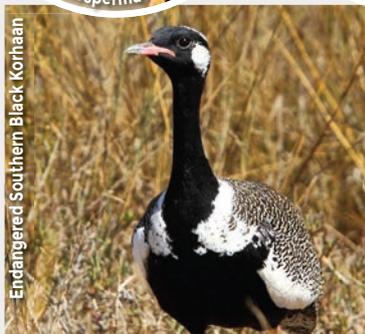
Omithogalum dubium



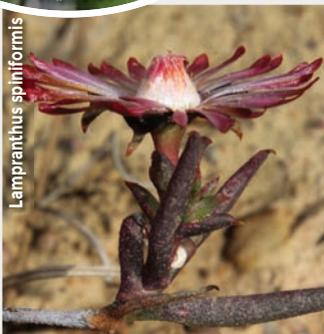
Robertson Dwarf Chameleon



Bee fly pollinating a *Delosperma*



Endangered Southern Black Korhaan



Lampranthus spiniformis



Baboon Spider



Trichodidema occidentale



farmer MG Lötter) – the first easement secured by WWF and the ORCT in 2017. As we grow the number of easement sites in this Western Rûens Shale Cluster, we can secure corridors of Renosterveld, allowing for the movement of wildlife through these connected (or semi-connected) pockets of veld.

Meet our new farming champions

Farmer Philip van Niekerk of the farm, Ongegund, signed a conservation easement on his 427 hectares of lowland Fynbos and Renosterveld near the town of Botriver (in the Western Rûens Shale Cluster). That means 367 hectares of Endangered Greyton Shale Fynbos is conserved; as well as 30 hectares of Critically Endangered Western Rûens Shale Renosterveld. Through the easements, Philip's National Freshwater Ecosystem Priority Area also enjoys conservation status.

Peter & Colleen Simmonds of the farm, Swaynekloof, included their 130 hectares of Renosterveld in their easement. This veld houses a number of endemic and rare species, including *Babiana purpurea*, *Freylinia helmei*, *Drosanthemum flavum* and others.

In the Central Rûens Renosterveld (also Critically Endangered), **farmer Schalk Viljoen of the farm, Dasberg**, committed all 212 hectares of his Renosterveld to conservation in perpetuity. This signing was vital, as it serves as our anchor in the Central Rûens Renosterveld Cluster – the largest remaining area of this vegetation in the world (it's found just south of the town of Rivieronderend). His landscapes include the Endangered *Diosma fallax*, and birds such as the Black Harrier and the Agulhas Long-billed Lark.

These three farmers join those landowners who first committed their properties to conservation easements in the previous financial year. These include MG Lötter of the farm Klipfontein (MG signed the first easement with WWF, with the ORCT managing the easement), and Joshua Human of Kykoedie Farm (this was the first easement to be signed with the ORCT).

Our support to farmers

In exchange for signing the easements, farmers receive support from the ORCT. We develop an in-depth Integrated Management Plan for each property. This plan recommends certain management actions to improve the condition of the veld. The ORCT then provides resources and capacity for many of these interventions.

For example, we support ecological burns to restore Renosterveld biodiversity. During the last financial year, we undertook four such burns in the Renosterveld: At Dasberg, Swaynekloof, Kinko farm and Hawston View. In total, we burnt six fragments, totalling around 250 hectares.

We then undertake post-burn monitoring. We provide invasive alien clearing support where possible. Through camera traps, we monitor wildlife movement through the Renosterveld. We assess and map soil erosion, and working together, we seek solutions. Regular Renosterveld surveys allow us to collect key data on endangered species, and to communicate that information to relevant partners where agreed to by the landowner. And where possible, we cover the costs of management interventions (through funding support from our donors).

Where easements aren't signed, some farmers opt to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the ORCT. This allows us to support the farmers through a five-year management plan. Currently our MOUs cover an area of 2,900 hectares of critically endangered ecosystems.

Thank you to our donors

Our easement programme is funded by the Table Mountain Fund, an associated Trust of WWF-SA. Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust contributed towards oversight of the projects and some of the ecological burns.



Babiana purpurea



Painted Lady butterfly on *Relhannia garmotii*

Supporting easements to protect threatened birds

We are proud to work closely with WWF, to protect critically endangered landscapes in the Overberg.

In the past financial year, WWF once again added their support to this work: by providing funding to support our conservation easement programme. With WWF funds, we are able to expand the easement programme. Their support also allows us to assist new and existing easement sites with management interventions, like invasive alien clearing support.

This project targets the largest, connected remnants of Renosterveld in the Overberg Wheat-belt Important Bird & Biodiversity Area. And therefore also the rare and threatened bird species that occur here, such as the Endangered Black Harrier and Endangered Southern Black Korhaan.



Endangered Black Harrier by Louis Oorenewald



Peter Simmonds of Swaynekloof



Schalk Viljoen of Dasberg



Watercourse Restoration:

Connecting Renosterveld patches through rivers

How do we connect two Renosterveld patches that are kilometres apart? For the past three years, through a project funded by WWF, the ORCT has explored using watercourses to link Renosterveld patches.

These watercourses are often small, non-perennial rivers and streams that you'll find across the Overberg. They're vital to wildlife, as they provide the shelter for mammals and birds to move across this severely transformed landscape and sometimes, between these natural pockets of Renosterveld.

special attention: The *Polhillia brevicalyx* is a Critically Endangered species found only in a few small patches close to the Ouka River. We implemented some strategies to reduce sheet erosion here, erected fencing to limit grazing in these areas, and collected seed from the *Polhillia* for the Millenium Seed Bank (a project based at Kew Gardens, UK, which collects seeds of threatened species as a type of insurance policy so that these plants can be propagated in future should it be necessary to do so).

A rather unexpected outcome

Water quality monitoring proved vital during the course of this project. It helped us better understand how some agricultural activities may be affecting the watercourses during runoff. But more surprisingly, this project led to the discovery of small indigenous fish called the Heuningnes Redfin Minnow in Renosterveld watercourses. They were previously not known to be living in these river systems.

The ORCT has now partnered with the Fresh Water Research Centre, CapeNature and the Nuwejaars Wetlands Special Management Area to see how these fish survive here. And ORCT Project Coordinator, Keir Lynch, will complete his MSc study into these Critically Endangered fishes.

Spreading the message

It's vital for the ORCT to raise awareness around the plight of Renosterveld, and to encourage farmers to become increasingly involved in protecting these Renosterveld ecosystems, including the watercourses. So we partnered with Landbouweekblad (a South African agricultural magazine) and the University of Cape Town, to host three farmers' days during the year. These days were well attended by farmers and others involved in the agricultural sector. We also hosted a media event, organised by WWF. Following the event, the ORCT was featured in various publications and broadcasters, including the SABC.

The watercourse restoration project was funded by the **WWF Nedbank Green Trust**.

In the last financial year (the project concluded in October 2018), the ORCT team focussed on restoring river systems in the Hansies, Sout, Ouka, Dipka and the Doring Rivers in the Overberg. Following the removal of invasive alien plants in previous years, follow up clearing was undertaken. We also rehabilitated

gully erosion systems. This included re-sloping head cuts, stabilising gabions, surfacing soil blankets and erecting drift fences to direct flow and minimise runoff into these gullies.

What our cameras and surveys found

Ongoing camera trap surveys were conducted in 2018. We had many exciting sightings, like the Cape Grysbok, Aardwolf and a range of other mammals. But some sightings highlighted threats to Renosterveld, including the high number of feral pigs recorded in some areas near the Breede River.

Post-fire botanical surveys showcased a number of endemic and threatened Renosterveld species. One species required



Sout River through Renosterveld



Diosma fallax

When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.
~ John Muir



Flamingoes



Clicking Stream Frog



Cross-marked Grass Snake



Cherry Spor Moth laying eggs

Students and farmers
on a field day



Monkey moth caterpillar



Button Spider

Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve:

A research base

For the ORCT, the pursuit of a greater understanding of Renosterveld ecology is vital. That's why we provide a research base to a number of postgraduate students from multiple institutions. These students make use of the purpose-built research centre at the Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve as the base for their fieldwork. The reserve not only plays host to students, but also serves as a venue for nature courses and others looking to experience Renosterveld in the largest connected Renosterveld patch left globally.

Here are our students:

Masters student, **Dylan Jacklin**, from the Stellenbosch University is looking at 'The potential use of plant species within Critically Endangered Renosterveld vegetation for the phytoremediation of glyphosate and fertilisers to conserve South African freshwater systems'.

Sachin Doarsamy is a Masters student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. He is interested in phylogenetic relationships between South African *Wurmbea* species. Limited information is known about the pollination and breeding system of this species. Sachin is aiming to unlock this mystery by analysing scent chemistry and reproductive ability in this genus.

Brian du Preez at the University of Cape Town (UCT) undertook a systematic revision of the genus, *Polhillia*, for his MSc. This genus is threatened with extinction owing to habitat loss and climate change.

Luke Gallant is doing his Masters research on characterising native palatable legume and non-legume species in Overberg Renosterveld vegetation. He is based at the University of the Western Cape. This research aims to inform decision making on assessing grazing potential for livestock with a view to potentially growing these species for pasture in future.

Abigail Widigger undertook her Masters research at UCT on small mammal diversity in patches of Overberg Renosterveld vegetation of differing size. This important research helped to shed

light on the effects of fragmentation of Overberg Renosterveld through transformation of veld for agriculture on small mammal populations.

Daniel A. Zhigila is undertaking his PhD at UCT. He is working on "Molecular phylogeny and climate change responsiveness of *Thesium* L. (Thesiaceae)". His goal is to use *Thesium* as a case study for the Overberg flora, to develop a robust and well-resolved phylogenetic hypothesis for *Thesium*.

Zoë Poulsen is a Doctoral student in the Department of Biological Sciences at UCT undertaking conservation-focused research into restoration and rangeland ecology of Overberg Renosterveld. The project examines the impact of grazing on Overberg Renosterveld vegetation from a variety of different perspectives.

Oliver Cowan undertook his PhD research at UCT on investigating functional ecology in Overberg Renosterveld with a view to informing future management and restoration interventions. Oliver's research encompassed a variety of different topics within this field, including building knowledge of the under explored world of pollinators in Overberg Renosterveld.

Ethan Newman's research interests lie in the mechanisms that give rise to the immense diversity of flowering plants. In particular, his PhD (University of Kwa-Zulu Natal) investigated the role of pollinator shifts as drivers of floral variation in a long proboscis fly pollination system. One of the most important findings from this research shows that different forms of *Nerine humilis* with different style lengths are locally adapted to the morphology of their local pollinators.

Evan Eifler is a Doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the USA undertaking his research on the ecology and evolution of *Geissorhiza* (Iridaceae). He will be building a family tree for the genus using DNA markers to reveal the drivers of speciation that have generated this beautiful botanical radiation.



Milkweed Grasshopper

Financial report ~ as at February 2019

The accompanying summary financial statements, which comprise the summary statement of comprehensive income and statement of financial position for the year ended 28 February 2019, were derived from the audited annual financial statements of the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust for the year then ended.

Management’s Responsibility for the Summary Annual Financial Statements:

Management is responsible for the preparation of the summary of the audited annual financial statements.

Auditors’ Response:

We have been requested to judge whether the summary financial statements are consistent with the audited annual financial statements.

The summary financial statements were derived from the audited annual financial statements of the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust for the year ended 28 February 2019 by management and appear consistent.

Hd Nel

BVSA Overberg Incorporated
Registered Auditors

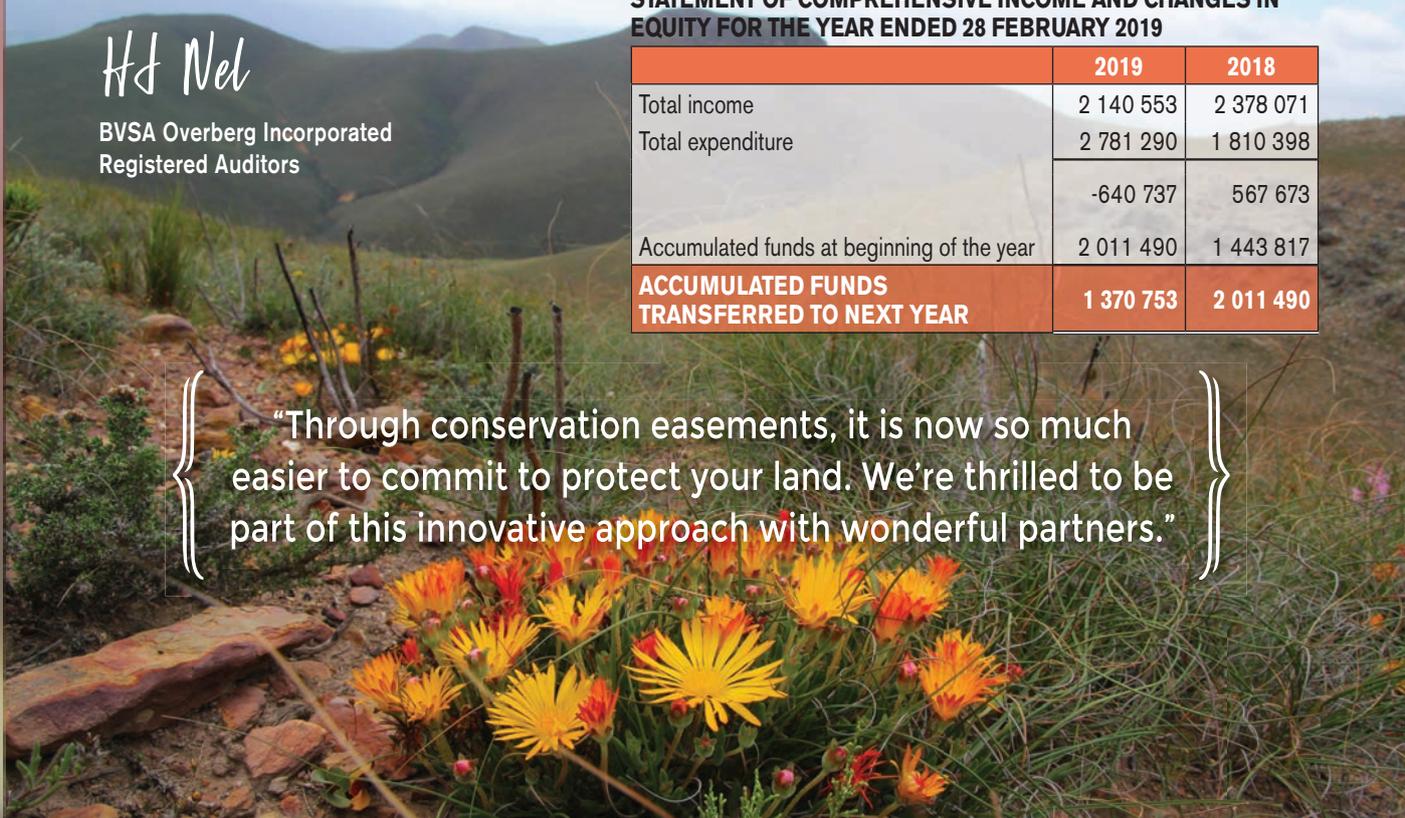
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 28 FEBRUARY 2019

FIGURES IN RAND	2019	2018
ASSETS	R	R
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	389 242	378 227
Current Assets		
Trade and other receivables	3 057	2 872
Other financial assets	643 745	1 139 424
Cash and cash equivalents	348 134	497 567
TOTAL ASSETS	1 384 178	2 018 090
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Capital	1 370 753	2 011 490
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	13 425	6 600
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	1 384 178	2 018 090

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 28 FEBRUARY 2019

	2019	2018
Total income	2 140 553	2 378 071
Total expenditure	2 781 290	1 810 398
	-640 737	567 673
Accumulated funds at beginning of the year	2 011 490	1 443 817
ACCUMULATED FUNDS TRANSFERRED TO NEXT YEAR	1 370 753	2 011 490

“Through conservation easements, it is now so much easier to commit to protect your land. We’re thrilled to be part of this innovative approach with wonderful partners.”



Donors & Partners of the ORCT

To our donors and partners who have supported us and worked with us throughout the year – a heartfelt thank you.



Aspalathus rosea



Adromischus maculatus



Bumblebee on *Lobostemon trigonus*



Aizoon glinoides



Moraea barnardii

DONORS

- Table Mountain Fund (an associated Trust of WWF)
- WWF
- WWF Nedbank Green Trust
- Mapula Trust
- Fynbos Trust
- Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
- Ford Wildlife Foundation
- Oren Taylor

PARTNERS

- SA Wingshooters
- CapeNature
- Birdlife South Africa
- Botanical Society
- Overberg Crane Group
- Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers
- Greater Overberg Fire Protection Association
- Sijnn Wines
- Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative
- University of Cape Town
- Flower Valley Conservation Trust
- Fauna & Flora International
- Cape Peninsula University of Technology
- Nelson Mandela University
- Landbouweekblad



Moraea cantharophila



Helichrysum rosun



Levillant's Cisticola



Gethyllis afra

We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors,
we borrow it from our children.

~ Native American Proverb

Contact us

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Hermenia diversistipula



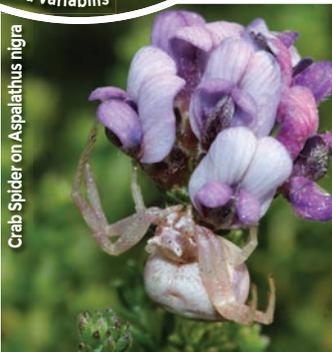
Mintha Widow



Ferraria variabilis



Tulbahlia capensis



Crab Spider on *Aspalathus nigra*



Orbea variegata



Large-billed Lark