ANNUAL REPORT

2021/22

OVERBERG RENOSTERVELD CONSERVATION TRUST

EST 2012

10 YEARS

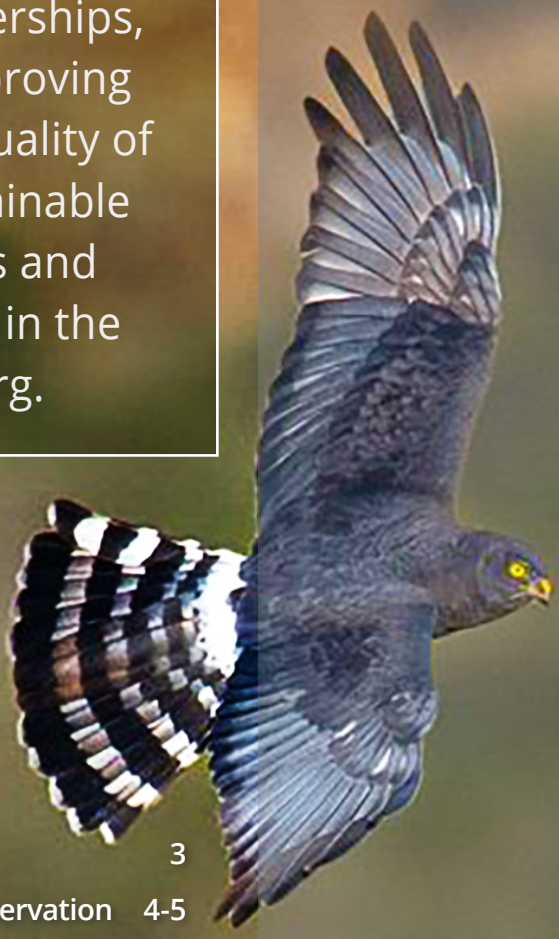
...of conserving

Renosterveld

Black Harrier by Chris van Rooyen

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.



Contents

Letters from leadership	3
The ORCT's timeline: Moments that matter in 10 years of conservation	4-5
Renosterveld: So much more than the eye can see	6-7
Partnering with farmers for a "better farm"	8-9
Haarwegskloof: Revealing her secrets as the reserve transforms	10-11
Ten years of research: Improving knowledge to conserve better	12-13
Joining our 10-year journey: Our incredible donors and partners	14-15
Financial report 2021/22	16
Staff and trustees	18
Help us leave a living world	19
Contact us	20

Letters from leadership

Message from the Chairperson

When I think of the word 'milestone', it tells me two things. It indicates a distance travelled. And it speaks of a direction taken. For the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust, we can see just how far we've come over the past 10 years. But more importantly I enjoy seeing the direction we've given to Renosterveld conservation in the Overberg.

The ORCT no longer knocks at the backdoor. We're front of mind in conservation. We've truly put Renosterveld on the map. And trust with our key stakeholders, especially landowners, has flourished as a result. I often wonder who else would have taken on this role were it not for our Trust.

That's why I'm most proud of our growing conservation easement programme, where we have given our donors true bang for their buck. I'm also proud of the research we've facilitated over the 10 years. We've built incredible connections with universities and students around the world, based around our Haarwegskloof Research Centre.

We're celebrating these milestones thanks to the wonderful drive of our Director Odette Curtis-Scott. She has truly built up this organisation from just one person, into a reputable Trust with a team to support her. I'm grateful to her for her dedication, and more notably, her persistence. And thank you also to our Board of Trustees. This team selflessly gives their time to the ORCT. They are central to our achievements: to both the distance we've travelled, and to the direction we've taken. Thank you! We don't know what the future holds yet, but be sure that the Trust and our remarkable enthusiasm will be there for generations to come!

Dirk van Papendorp


Brunsvigia josephinae

Message from the Director

This year, we are not just reviewing the last financial year; but we are also celebrating a major milestone – our 10-year anniversary. In this report, you will read all about our proudest moments, which we have also captured in a short film (see the links below). Our video ends with a quote from my favourite Netflix series, the Blacklist, from Crime Lord Raymond Reddington: "Someday, the creatures on that programme will be akin to unicorns and griffins. A fairy-tale bestiary written in past tense. And no one is lifting a finger to stop it. Why not us?"

This certainly touches a nerve for those working at the coalface of conservation. It's not only rhinos that are likely to become fictional creatures to our children's children. Less charismatic but equally important are habitats and the tiny creatures that rely on them that are also in extreme danger.

Fragmented ecosystems across the globe are under pressure. Without major interventions, such as active conservation and restoration, they won't be resilient to cope with the additional impacts of climate change and further degradation. We do not have time to waste, or more hectares to lose. And we cannot afford to not be restoring degraded habitats. The ORCT is committed to continuing this mission for Renosterveld. And while we have come far, we are fully aware that this journey has only just begun.

It is our collective Duty of Care to ensure that our grandchildren can experience the wonders of nature. The ORCT is living proof that a little can go a long way: big things can happen with limited resources managed by small teams working with purpose. Yes, there is still much to do, and we value the support from our donor community. Indeed, the Renosterveld's bees and bugs and bulbs are indebted to them. There are no words to describe the levels of kindness and generosity from our relatively small circle of donors who have supported us over the last decade. I can only hope that our conservation achievements speak to our gratitude.

As for the landowners with whom we work, my heartfelt thank you goes out to them. They have made a brave stand for conservation in their communities. These champions deserve the highest respect and gratitude. Their choices give us hope.

Here's to many more decades of protecting our precious Renosterveld and all the life that this amazing ecosystem harbours. Let us ensure that it never becomes a thing of fairytales past.

Watch our video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIxx80EwkXghttps

Click here

Dr Odette Curtis-Scott

Message from the Conservation Manager

It's an honour to be working with the ORCT at a time such as this. Being part of a small team working to save Renosterveld and to partner with landowners at such a critical moment in our history is so exciting. Renosterveld is part of our Overberg heritage. And more landowners are realising this. They're seeing that they are the stewards and custodians of the remaining and dwindling five percent of Overberg Shale Renosterveld left on Earth.

That's why we cannot successfully make conservation gains without these partnerships – not only with the landowners but also with our funders and partners. The landowners we work with have taken bold steps to conserve nearly 4 000 ha of Renosterveld in perpetuity. And that didn't happen overnight.

In fact, it all started 10 years ago, from the moment the ORCT was established for the conservation of lowland habitats, especially Overberg Rûens Renosterveld. Now we can celebrate all that has been achieved to date and can only deeply thank everyone who has played a part in that journey. It's wonderful to see that, just as one individual took on an impossible task 10 years ago, so many more are taking on the responsibility of protecting Renosterveld today.

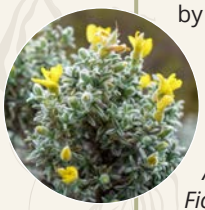
Let's continue to take hands and put action to Sir David Attenborough's words: "The natural world is far from unlimited. It is finite. It needs protecting."

Grant Forbes

The ORCT's timeline: Moments that

2012

- The Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust is established by Dr Odette Curtis-Scott.
- The ORCT team discovers a number of new Renosterveld species, including *Polhilia curtisiae, Otholobium curtisiae, Aspalathus microlithica* and *Ficinia overbergensis*. A *Hesperantha* species is discovered by Odette and the naming rights auctioned by FFI-UK: the bid is won by Oren Taylor, who chooses to name the pretty pink Irid *Hesperantha kiaratayloriae*, after his daughter, Kiara. This, along with a donation from Fauna and Flora International, is the foundational funding for the ORCT's first year in existence.

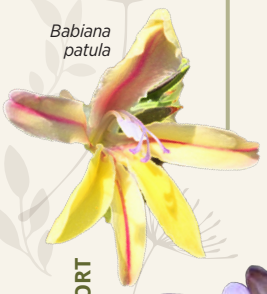


Critically Endangered *Polhillia curtisiae*

Critically Endangered *Hesperantha kiaratayloriae*

2013

- The Mazda Wildlife Fund provides a brand new double cab bakkie to the ORCT, as the Fund's first major contribution towards a plant-focused project.
- WWF South Africa purchases the first piece of Renosterveld in the Overberg, known as the farm Haarwegskloof, and hands it over to the ORCT to manage. It comprises 500 ha of Eastern Rûens Shale Renosterveld, just north of the De Hoop Nature Reserve.



Babiana patula

Pelargonium pilosellifolium

Ixia flexuosa

Acmadenia sp.

2014

- Following a crowdfunding campaign, the old homestead at Haarwegskloof is converted into the first-ever Renosterveld Research Centre. This centre is to become the home of Renosterveld research, serving as the base for many post-grad students to study this landscape.
- Our Director, Odette Curtis-Scott, is awarded with two conservation awards, including the Botanical Society of South Africa Flora Conservation Medal, followed by the Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE) Fynbos Conservation Award.

Notobubon striatum

2015

- A three-year watercourse restoration project, funded by the WWF Nedbank Green Trust, is launched in order to start restoring those watercourses that connect Renosterveld patches together.
- The self-catering guest accommodation, the Old Dairy Guesthouse, is launched on the Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve, after we converted an old barn adjacent to the research centre.

Commelina africana

Agulhas Long-billed Lark

Cape Girdled Lizard

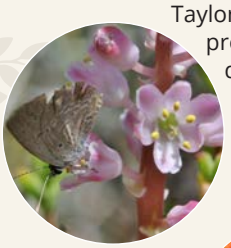
2016

- The ORCT team assists with the discovery of another species new to science in the Renosterveld, the liquorice-scented *Notobubon striatum*.
- The first conservation easement in Renosterveld is signed. Farmer MG Lötter signs the easement with WWF South Africa, with the ORCT managing the easement. This sees the official launch of the ORCT's Conservation Easement Programme, through which the ORCT partners with landowners to protect Renosterveld in perpetuity through conservation servitudes registered on title deed restrictions.

Rhombic Egg-eater

2017

- The second conservation easement is signed. Farmer Joshua Human of Kykoedie makes this ultimate commitment to protect Renosterveld.
- Another new species of Renosterveld is discovered by the ORCT: *Lachenalia barbarae,* named in honour of Barbara Taylor, mother of prominent ORCT donor Oren Taylor.



Critically Endangered *Lachenalia barbarae*

Endangered *Drosanthemum lavisii*

Ocellated Thick-toed Gecko

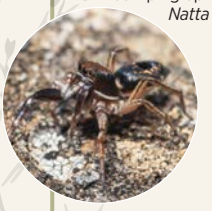
White rumped Swift

matter in 10 years of conservation

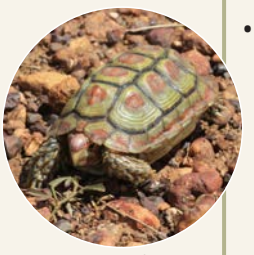
Cape Vulture

2018

- Schalk Viljoen of Dasberg and Peter and Colleen Simmonds of Swaynekloof sign conservation easements
- While undertaking the Watercourse Restoration Project, the ORCT team discovers the Endangered Heuningnes redfin *(Pseudobarbus* sp. *nov. heuningnes)* in a tributary of the Kars River, a most unexpected discovery.



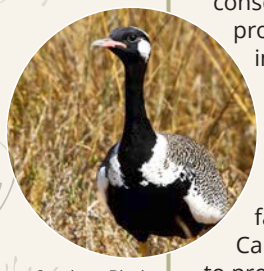
Jumping Spider, *Natta* sp.



Parrot-beaked Tortoise / Padloper

2019

- Philip van Niekerk of Ongegund signs a conservation easement with the ORCT, bringing the total hectarage in the programme to 1 500.
- The ORCT is supported by WWF South Africa, through the commitment of three-years of funding towards habitat conservation (through easements) to protect threatened birds that occur in the Overberg Wheat-belt, with a focus on Black Harrier and Southern Black Korhaan.
- Farmer Nico Neethling signs a conservation easement on his farm Keykas. Shortly afterwards, the Cape Agulhas Municipality also signs to protect a number of commonage sites around Klipdale and Napier.
- The ORCT starts the world's first Renosterveld Herbarium, situated on the Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve.



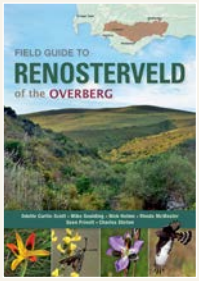
Southern Black Korhaan

African Spoonbill

Black Harrier nestlings and adult

2020

- Director Dr Odette Curtis-Scott attends the World Biodiversity Forum held at Davos in Switzerland, where she gives a keynote address.



- After five years of collaborative effort, the first Renosterveld field guide is launched. Titled the *Field Guide to Renosterveld of the Overberg*, its authors are Odette Curtis-Scott, Mike Goulding, Nick Helme, Rhoda McMaster, Sean Privett and Charles Stirton.
- Hennie Eksteen becomes the eighth farmer to sign a conservation easement (for two large easements on Napkysmond and Melkhoutebosch), followed by the Streicher family on the farm Uitvlucht. Before the year ends, Sijnn Wines, Neethling Dippenaar, Thys Swart and Rossouw Swart all sign – bringing the total hectarage in the programme to 3 500.

2021

- A new *Drosanthemum* species is discovered almost at the same time at two different sites: by the ORCT's Odette Curtis-Scott in the Overberg and by Dr Peter Bruyns at Riversdale. It's called *Drosanthemum overbergense*.

Drosanthemum overbergense

- A study undertaken by Glenn Moncrieff of the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) finds that 478 hectares of Renosterveld were unlawfully ploughed in the Overberg between 2016 and 2020.

Freylinia helmei

- Several new easements are signed: the Vogelrivier easement is signed with the Fynbos Trust, followed by three adjacent sites: Hartebeesterivier (Nelis Swart), a second Hartebeesterivier (Adriaan Steyn) and Kinko, owned by Dirkie and Johan van As. A total of 6 500 hectares of natural habitat, including 4 050 hectares of Critically Endangered Renosterveld are now in the programme.
- The SAEON Fynbos Node launches the first Global Overberg Renosterveld Watch application, which uses remote sensing to detect changes in the landscape, in order to address the threat of unlawful ploughing.

Endangered *Moraea comptonii*

- The ORCT teams up with Dr Rob Simmons of the University of Cape Town to place satellite tags on Black Harriers to better understand how they move and forage, particularly in relation to nearby windfarms which threaten the species significantly.

2022

- The ORCT launches the mural and 'parabolic' wall on Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve, in honour of Renosterveld custodians lost, overlooking the largest stretch of connected Renosterveld left on Earth.
- **The ORCT turns 10 years old!**

Biodiversity of Renosterveld: So much

"The approach to conservation taken by the ORCT is one which is towards conserving the ecosystem, as opposed to approaches that look at a particular species, like the rhino." ~ Prof Muthama Muasya of the University of Cape Town

Renosterveld is the richest bulb habitat on earth. But it's also so much more than that. It's home to incredible biodiversity, where pockets of life still continue to buzz and move about, surrounded by the contrastingly quiet sea of transformed landscapes of monoculture.

These fragments of Renosterveld exist in many cases simply because farming technology hasn't yet advanced enough to remove them, because they are too rocky or steep. The other 95% of what used to be Lowland Renosterveld has not been so lucky, with the plough converting these into farmlands, mostly for crop farming. That makes Renosterveld one of the most threatened habitats on Earth.

Over the past 10 years, the ORCT team has spent considerable time surveying and monitoring those patches of Renosterveld that remain. That's how we came to encounter such a diversity of species that call Renosterveld home. And how we realised that when we lose just a tiny fragment, we lose so much more than simply the plants.

Southern Rock Agama

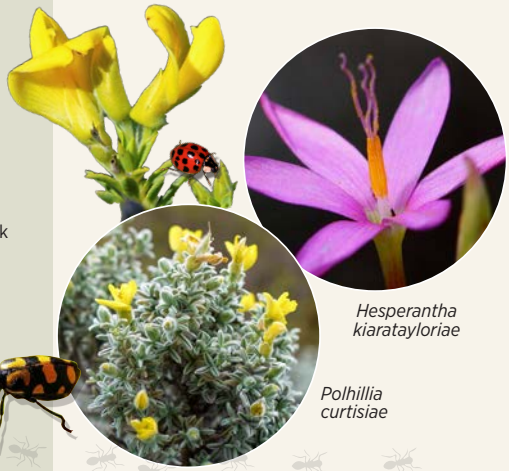
How it all started...

In fact, the ORCT's journey started off not with the plants, but with a majestic bird of prey that breeds and forages in this landscape: the Black Harrier. ORCT Director Odette Curtis-Scott says, "My interest in the natural world really started with a deep love for birds of prey: for some reason, I was drawn to them at a very young age, although I only got to know them in my early studies. Raptors took me to Black Harriers and these brought me into the Renosterveld, to life-in-miniature, where the true diversity of the gems here can only truly be appreciated at ground-level."

Endangered Black Harrier by Louis Groenewald

It was while taking a closer look at the Black Harrier's home, that Odette realised how desperately Renosterveld needed attention. So much so that as the ORCT launched in 2012, Odette had already discovered a few species new to science. For example, a new *Hesperantha* species was discovered on a patch of quartz Renosterveld, and named *Hesperantha kiaratayloriae*. Another species was discovered on our own Haarwegskloof. It was later named *Polhilia curtisiae*. All in all, 10 new species have been discovered by the ORCT team.

Liparia striata



Hesperantha kiaratayloriae

Polhillia curtisiae

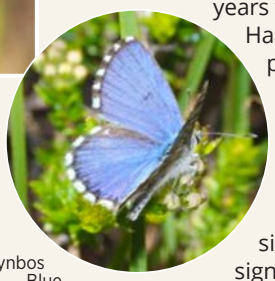
The importance of pollinators

Odette says, "While studying the plants, we became more aware of the array of pollinators in the system, but also the fact that several might in fact be missing. Without these pollinators (which are not limited to insects, but also include birds and small mammals), the ecosystem will cease to function."

The ORCT started working closely with tertiary institutions and researchers to encourage studies on pollinators. For example, researchers only recently discovered that some of the pretty *Nerine humilis* plants with exceptionally long filaments and styles are pollinated by a large grey fly with a 5cm long proboscis (essentially a nose). This fly, called the *Prosoeca longipennis*, uses its long proboscis to sip the long-style flowers, in turn pollinating the plant. Worryingly, this special fly is rarely seen in Renosterveld and there are some years when the Nerines at Haarwegskloof are not pollinated.

Nerine humilis

Needle-nose Fly



Fynbos Blue, *Tarucus thespis*

Other studies have also shown that fragments of Renosterveld that are isolated are just as significant, if not more significant for pollinators than fully connected mainland sites. Pollinators rely heavily on these small patches for food – showing the importance of protecting even these disconnected fragments.

The ongoing research into pollination biology also highlighted the incredible threats to this ecosystem. Odette says, "Many specialist pollinators may already be lost from this farmed landscape due to ploughing and agricultural chemicals. Some could even have been lost before they were known to science. But we do know that should more pollinators be lost from the landscape, then Renosterveld would fast approach the "living dead", circling the drain with no hope for long-term survival. That's why our focus on facilitating and enabling pollination research remains vital."

Bee Fly

Endangered *Moraea elegans*

more than the eye can see

The world of spiders: Undoing the bad press

More recently, the Trust has been enraptured by a bizarre new world – the world of spiders. Many of these spider species are also dependent on this habitat for survival. Odette says, "My interest in spiders was inspired by our bioblitzes where we found the most beautiful creatures. I now hope to inspire others to start paying these critters more attention. They don't deserve the bad press they unfortunately receive."

Already the Trust and our bioblitzing friends, including Cliff and Suretha Dorse and the Spider Club of South Africa members have made a series of interesting finds, including as yet undescribed species.


Baboon Spider, *Harpactira cafreriana*


Orange Lungless Spider, *Caponia* sp.


Latrodectus cf. indistinctus Black Button


Vidole cf. capensis


Flattie, *Selenops* sp.

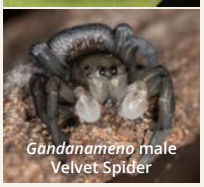

cf. Zoropsidae


Strawberrry *Theridid, cf. Ruborridion*


Orb Weaver, *Argiope* sp.


Box Kite Spider, *Isoxya cicatricosa*


Salticidae Jumping Spider


Gandanameno male Velvet Spider


Scytodes Spitting Spider


Oxytate Crab Spider


Long-legged Mite


Bee Fly, *Bombyliidae*


Reddish-grey Musk Shrew, *Crocidura cyanea*


Rhino Beetle, *Scarabaeidae*


Fly pollinating *Colchicum variabilis*


Bulbinella sp.


Endangered *Babiana purpurea*

Coming full circle

In 2020, the ORCT came all the way back to our roots – with a new study aiming to find out more about the foraging and breeding habits of Black Harriers in Renosterveld. It has become clear that Overberg Renosterveld provides some of the most important Black Harrier breeding grounds within the species' very limited range, with loose colonies of harriers being found at Haarwegskloof and other nearby crucial sites.

With fewer than 1 300 mature individuals still remaining, this Endangered species is in trouble. Modelling suggests that they could become extinct in 75 to 100 years and that they are currently declining at a rate of 2.3% per annum. Key threats include loss of habitat, such as Renosterveld and Fynbos, as well as agricultural-related fatalities and collisions with wind turbines.

The ORCT is now working with the University of Cape Town's Dr Rob Simmons to learn more about how they use the landscape. Six birds have been tagged with satellite trackers, which track all their movements. The Trust is planning to tag additional individuals in the next year and hopes to bring the total of tagged birds within the area to at least 10 birds.

"It feels wonderful coming full circle back to one of my first loves," says Odette. "But this also highlights the plight of the Black Harrier. It's one of southern Africa's most threatened raptors. We need to find out more about how this species moves about, in order to better predict and mitigate for future threats."


Black Harrier by Chris van Rooyen

Avoiding a "dead zone"

The past 10 years have shown us the incredible diversity that Renosterveld still contains. Odette says:

"That's despite the threat imposed on this ecosystem. It's a wonderful reminder of why we do what we do as the ORCT. Without these remnants, the Wheat-belt would be a dead zone – devoid of biological diversity and processes that keep our landscapes alive."

She says, "We cannot let that happen while we are its custodians."

Partnering with farmers for a

More and more farmers in the Overberg are experiencing the hubbub of life that exists in their Renosterveld patches. They understand that these patches are vibrant pockets of action – where birds, bugs, pollinators and small mammals bring life to a landscape. And they see that this wildlife needs those natural Renosterveld fragments to survive.

At the same time, farmers would like to remain intricately involved in every aspect of their farm. That includes any conservation activities. Hennie Eksteen, a farmer on the lower Breede River, says that farmers will conserve on their properties – as long as they can work closely with those helping to conserve: "It doesn't help you make enemies with the farmers."

Instead he says it's all about partnerships: "I saw that the ORCT wanted to enter in a relationship with farmers." Hennie became the eighth landowner to sign a conservation easement with the Trust in 2020, committing over 800 ha of Renosterveld to conservation in perpetuity.

Easement model: Two years to develop

But developing this model – a model that focuses on partnerships between the farmer and the ORCT – did not take place overnight. In fact, it took two years for the conservation easement model to evolve from an idea, to first being used in Renosterveld.

The model was designed by WWF South Africa working with partners such as the ORCT. It had to be based on a little give and take. Farmers sign title deed restrictions (in the form of a conservation servitude in favour of the ORCT) on their natural land for conservation in perpetuity. The ORCT in exchange works closely with the farmers to provide guidance on how to manage the natural land to protect the ecosystem, through the development of an Integrated Management Plan. The ORCT then provides assistance with implementing priority management interventions identified on the Management Plan (including, for example, management burns, clearing of invasive alien vegetation, assistance with fencing to manage livestock grazing, erosion control measures, and any other actions required on the property). This means that substantial funds are spent on assisting committed landowners and this is what motivates additional farmers to sign up and get involved.

In 2016, when the first conservation easement in Renosterveld was signed by farmer MG Lötter outside Caledon, there was great interest to see whether this blueprint worked.

Eastern Rûens Shale Renosterveld

Central Rûens Shale Renosterveld

Western Rûens Shale Renosterveld

Signing an easement is "worth it"

Now, six years later, MG says, "There is an enormous difference, a change over the years, since the ORCT climbed in to come and assist me. They are still teaching me new things today."

He adds, "I want to encourage landowners with Renosterveld to join the Easement Programme. I know this is a sensitive topic to discuss, partially 'handing over' a piece of your farm to someone else, but I can guarantee you it's worth it. There is no fine print that negatively impacts me or the ORCT. And at the end of the day you will have a better farm compared to what you currently have."

The ORCT's Conservation Manager, Grant Forbes, agrees that the model is successful because it's about a close working relationship. "That's what makes the Conservation Easement Programme so special – it's that we're conserving in partnership with landowners," he says.

“better farm”

What happened in 2021?

In the past year, the programme continued to grow, as more landowners saw the benefits of signing an easement with their peers. In fact, by February 2022, we had signed 20 conservation easements in total, covering 6 500 hectares of natural habitat, of which 4 050 hectares are Critically Endangered Renosterveld.

Our 2021 champions include:

The Fynbos Trust, Vogelrivier Conservation Easement

By signing this conservation easement, the ORCT took one step closer to realising a conservation dream: to protect and restore the entire length of the Soutrivier (Salt River) in the Overberg. This easement is important given that it includes the first part of the De Hoop Vlei, a declared Ramsar site, while also providing a crucial corridor between the vlei and the largest, most connected stretches of Eastern Rûens Shale Renosterveld. This property was bought by the Fynbos Trust in 2016 for conservation purposes.

Vogelrivier easement site

Nelis Swart, Hartebeesterivier Conservation Easement

This easement adjoins those signed by Adriaan Steyn and the Van As Brothers, ensuring that they can be managed at a landscape level, supporting biodiversity across farm borders. What’s more, it connects up with three previously signed easement sites – connecting corridors together over more than 10kms. Owner and farmer Nelis Swart says that signing with the ORCT was a “no-brainer”, in particular to protect the smaller plants and animals that are so often ignored.

Adriaan Steyn, Hartebeesterivier Conservation Easement

With Endangered Eastern Rûens Shale Renosterveld and Critically Endangered Rûens Silcrete Renosterveld, Adriaan Steyn chose to join our Conservation Easement Programme to protect his natural landscapes for his children. Adriaan also highlighted the value of partnerships at the signing, saying, “The Trust provides us with a vehicle that we can use in order to receive help, so that we can conserve Renosterveld in the right manner.”

Van As Broers, Kinko Conservation Easement

The Kinko easement site, along with the two Hartebeesterivier sites, form part of the cluster that is recognised as an Important Climate Corridor by the Table Mountain Fund, while also providing a home to Critically Endangered Renosterveld. Farmer Johan van As says, “It’s good to protect and maintain the original plant life and animals that have occurred in a region for many years and to ensure that my descendants can experience it the way I have.”

ORCT’s Grant Forbes and Chris Martens signing the Vogelrivier easement

From left: Nelis Swart, Grant Forbes, Adriaan Steyn, Odette Curtis-Scott and Dirk and Johan van As

Our dream for the next 10 years

According to ORCT Director, Odette Curtis-Scott, the Conservation Easement Programme is all about taking a landscape-level approach to conservation, so that farmers conserve across farm boundaries. She says, “I’d love to see landowners looking at the bigger picture, looking at their farm as part of a bigger landscape where everything you do impacts everything else.”

She adds, “The changes that we’ve seen in attitudes just because we’ve shared with landowners what they have, has been phenomenal. Now my dream is to see our conservation easement signage across the Overberg, on every farm that has Renosterveld.”

Our farming champions: Ten years of building partnerships

2016	• MG Lötter, Klipfontein Conservation Easement
2017	• Joshua Human, Kykoedie Conservation Easement
2018	• Schalk Viljoen, Dasberg Farming Conservation Easement • Peter & Colleen Simmonds, Swaynekloof Conservation Easement
2019	• Philip van Niekerk, Ongegund Conservation Easement • Nico Neethling, Keykas Conservation Easement • Cape Agulhas Municipality, Cameron McMaster Conservation Easement
2020	• Hennie Eksteen, Melk Houte Bosch & Napkysmond Conservation Easements • Streicher Family, Uitvlucht Conservation Easement • Sijnn Wines, Sijnn Wines Renosterveld Conservation Easement • Neethling Dippenaar, Diptka Conservation Easement • Thys Swart, Koloniesplaas & Kleindam Conservation Easement • Rossouw Swart, Koesani & Kleindam Conservation Easement
2021	• Fynbos Trust, Vogelrivier Conservation Easement • Nelis Swart, Hartebeesterivier Conservation Easement • Adriaan Steyn, Hartebeesterivier Conservation Easement • Dirkie & Johan Van As, Kinko Conservation Easement

Haarwegskloof: Revealing her secrets

The Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve has continuously revealed her many secrets to us since we started managing the property nine years ago. In return, the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust has lovingly invested in the property, to ensure more and more people can access and enjoy the largest connected stretch of Renosterveld left on Earth.

The incredible biodiversity value of this reserve can't be overstated. From the viewpoint on the property, there are hills and valleys covered in this Endangered vegetation almost as far as the eye can see.

WWF South Africa realised the importance of this property in the face of continued loss of Renosterveld to agricultural expansion, and bought it in 2013. They entrusted the management to the ORCT. Since that time, we transformed the old farmhouse into our research centre, and converted an old dairy into a guesthouse. With these facilities in place, the Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve, which includes more than 500 hectares of Renosterveld, has become a hub of activity for researchers discovering more about this under-researched ecosystem. It's the only place on Earth where researchers can come together to collaborate to better understand Renosterveld.

This centre is also the home of the only Renosterveld herbarium in the world. Under the keen eye of ORCT Herbarium Curator Petra Broddle, the herbarium has grown to house around 500 Renosterveld species, with around 700 specimens collected from the veld. Data collected through the herbarium feeds into conservation strategies, to ensure areas where threatened species occur are protected. It's also the first step to identifying species that are new to science.

By the end of 2021, a Renosterveld diorama was erected at the lookout point on the Haarwegskloof Reserve. This mural was created by artist Nastasha Minyon Sale and funded by the Jana Stirton Tribute Fund. This fund was set up by the ORCT's Special Advisor, Prof Charles Stirton, in memory of his late wife, Jana, who passed away in 2015. Jana loved this lookout point as a place to contemplate the stillness and beauty of Renosterveld. A Wild Olive, donated by the parents of Stephen Cousins, was also planted at the site, in memory of this Renosterveld champion. Stephen tragically died in a car accident in 2018.

A centre for learning on Haarwegskloof

But that wasn't the end of the transformation of the Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve. In 2019, the Trust launched a crowdfunding campaign to convert an old shed into a learning space for children and adults to learn more about nature.

During the past financial year, after delays caused by the Covid pandemic, building kicked off in earnest. And by early 2022, The Shed Learning Centre was completed. The space now includes a kitchen area to cook and serve meals, and a large learning area for creative work sessions. The Shed will be officially launched in 2022.

A cottage was also built for a live-in intern, and Nande Notyalwa was contracted as the first ORCT intern: her cheerful smile is the new face that welcomes guests to the reserve.

For Director Odette Curtis-Scott, these changes on the Haarwegskloof Reserve form part of the bigger vision of the Trust. "It has been a dream of ours to instill environmental awareness among the youth and with many adults who are keen to learn more. That's why we're so proud to have this new learning space. We know that the only way to ensure Renosterveld and the rest of our threatened natural world is protected by future generations is through education. And here we can really show people the value of this natural world."

Herald Snake

Humpback Fly

HWK research centre

Cape Grysbok

Silver-spotted Bladder Grasshopper

Secrets revealed: What we've learnt about this ecosystem

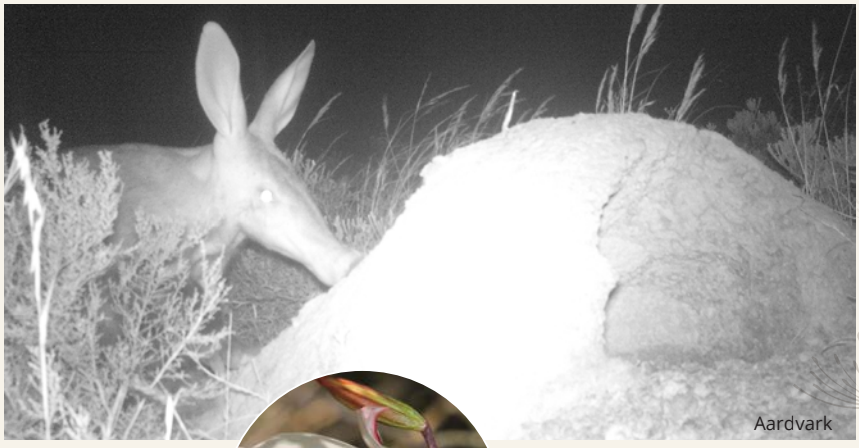
Nature has also responded to the conservation measures implemented on the reserve. And over the years, we've learnt more about not only the wonderful plant species, but also the wildlife that uses this habitat.

Monitoring in 2014 already showed us that Haarwegskloof is an important breeding site for the Endangered Black Harrier, the Vulnerable Southern Black Korhaan and Vulnerable Denham's Bustard. And camera traps captured the incredibly elusive Aardwolf and Aardvark on the reserve. We were particularly excited about Aardvark, as there is so little habitat left and thus few termites available in the Wheat-belt.

Smaller mammals such as the Namaqua Rock Mouse and Cape Rock Elephant Shrew were also found here. And a range of amphibians and reptiles were recorded, including the Rain Frog, Cross-marked Whip Snake and the Klein Karoo Dwarf Chameleon.

Later the focus moved to the pollinators and their close relationship with Renosterveld plants. Here we encountered the Jewel Beetle, the Needle-nose Fly and the various Hover Flies and Bee Flies that pollinate Renosterveld species such as *Haworthias*, various vygies and several bulbs.

And more recently we've had a sneak peek into the world of spiders on Haarwegskloof, and the wealth of species that hide in this habitat. Recognising the important role that these spiders play, from the colossal Baboon spiders *(Harpactira atra* and *H. cafreriana)* to the endearing Velvet spiders *(Eresidae)* or the tiny, inquisitive Jumping Spiders *(Salticidae)*, has become a new focus area for the Trust.


Aardvark


Needle-nose Fly pollinating *Hesperantha muirii*


Karoo Korhaan


Denham's Bustard


Klein Karoo Dwarf Chameleon


Larinia cf. chloris


Jewel Beetle

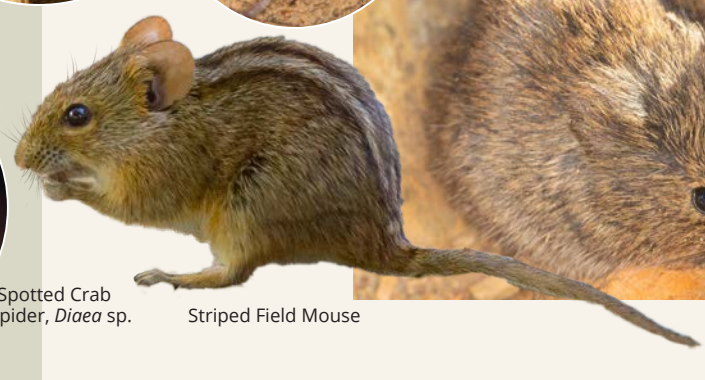

Pygmy Mouse

Cape Rock Elephant Shrew

Gea sp.

Jumping Spider, *Theyene inflata*


Spotted Crab Spider, *Diaea* sp.


Striped Field Mouse

Karoo Bush Rat

Ten years of research: Improving

Lowland Renosterveld is one of the most under-studied ecosystems in South Africa. There is much to learn, not only about the species that make up Renosterveld, but also how they interact and how to manage it optimally. In recent years, focus has also turned to the ecological processes provided by Renosterveld, which has also been overlooked in past decades. We need to understand at what point a habitat type is functionally extinct. Studies to better understand pollination webs, requirements, deficits and other measures of ecosystem functioning help to answer these questions.

Since the launch of the ORCT, we have focused on Renosterveld research – either directly or indirectly. Since the Renosterveld Research Centre on the Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve opened in 2014, the ORCT has attracted a number of collaborative researchers and students. Looking ahead we aim to continue to grow the research capacity in the Overberg's Renosterveld by teaming up with tertiary institutions and researchers.

Here's a brief synopsis of some of the visiting students to date:

Masters students

Tabitha Coetzee (Nelson Mandela University with Dr Tineke Kraaij; Cape Peninsula of Technology (CPUT) with Prof Sjirk Geerts and the ORCT with Dr Odette Curtis-Scott) *Thesis title:* 'Effects of landscape fragmentation on pollination systems in the Eastern Rûens Shale Renosterveld of the Overberg region.'

Simone Maier & Sina Hauber (CPUT with Prof Sjirk Geerts, Germany) *Thesis title:* 'Effects of habitat fragmentation on selected plant species and their pollination in Renosterveld, Overberg.'

Sachin Doarsamy (University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) with Prof Steve Johnson and Dr Bennie Bytebier) *Thesis title:* 'Phylogenetic analysis of the genus *Wurmbea* in South Africa and chemistry of the floral compounds.'

Abigail Widdiger (University of Cape Town (UCT) with Pippin Anderson) *Thesis title:* 'Understanding Renosterveld ecosystem function: the role of small mammals to inform ecological restoration.'

Luke Gallant (UCT with Dr Samson Chimphango) *Thesis title:* 'Characterizing native palatable legume and non-legume species in the rangelands of the Overberg Renosterveld.'

Brian du Preez (UCT with Prof Muthama Muasya) *Thesis title:* '*Polhillia* on the brink: Systematic revision, ecophysiology and conservation assessment of a highly threatened Cape legume genus.'

Dylan Jacklin (University of Stellenbosch (SUN) with Jan de Waal) *Thesis title:* 'The potential use of plant species within Critically Endangered Renosterveld vegetation for the phytoremediation of glyphosate and fertilisers to conserve South African freshwater systems.'

PhD students

Jan de Waal (SUN) *Thesis title:* 'Renosterveld Buffers in Remediation of Agricultural Pollutants.'

Evan Eifler (University of Wisconsin-Madison with Prof Henry Allan Gleason and Dr Tom Givnish) *Thesis title:* '*Geissorhiza*: an evolutionary case study in the Cape Floristic Region.'

Oliver Cowan (UCT with Pippin Anderson) *Thesis title:* 'Functional ecology of the Critically Endangered Rûens Shale Renosterveld of the Overberg with a view towards future restoration and management interventions.'

Daniel Zhigila (UCT with Prof Muthama Muasya and Anthony Verboom) *Thesis title:* 'Molecular phylogeny and climate change responsiveness of *Thesium* L. (Thesiaceae).'

Ethan Newman (UKZN with Prof Steve Johnson) *Thesis title:* 'The convergence and divergence of floral traits are driven by the heterogeneity of pollinator and plant communities.'

Zoë Poulsen (UCT with Samson Chimphango, Timm Hoffman, Pippin Anderson and Muthama Muasya) *Thesis title:* 'Conserving living landscapes and sustaining rural livelihoods: Investigating impacts of livestock grazing and assessing rangel and restoration potential in Critically Endangered Overberg Renosterveld.'

Looking ahead: Our research plans

There's still so much that urgently needs to be researched in Renosterveld. The ORCT, with years of experience working in this landscape, has compiled a set of research themes that will contribute to conservation. We seek to engage with universities to collectively fund raise to support MSc and PhD studies on these topics.

1. Biodiversity and threatened species:
Examples include: diversity of invertebrates, plants, birds, mammals and other taxa at different scales (alpha, beta, gamma diversity), within different veld management practices, etc.; habitat use by threatened species, in particular the Black Harrier and Southern Black Korhaan.


Black Harrier by Chris van Rooyen

2. Landscape ecology, extinction debt and pollination:
Examples include: understanding pollination webs; investigating evidence for the existence of extinction debts; implications for conservation planning and management of fragmented systems at the landscape level.


Brunsvigia josephinae

3. Habitat management, land use and restoration:
Examples include: impacts of fire and grazing management on Renosterveld; investigating alternative uses for old lands through partial restoration or planting of indigenous fodder plants (for adding grazing value to farms and creating corridors between fragments); using holistic management as a restoration tool; restoration of degraded virgin land; restoration of watercourses (water management and the establishment of corridors).


Bee pollinating *Drosanthemum* sp.

4. Watercourses in Renosterveld: Ecological functioning, their role as corridors and restoration
Examples include: quantifying the impacts of farming-related chemical (fertilizer and pesticides) runoff from surrounding production lands into watercourses and the extent to which buffers (of varying widths) are able to protect these watercourses from these impacts.

Post-graduate students looking for project ideas are welcome to contact the ORCT for more information.
Email: info@overbergrenosterveld.org.za

Joining our 10-year journey: Our

Since 2012, the ORCT has enjoyed support from many amazing donors, including corporates, Trusts, other Non-Profit Organisations and several individuals. Without these donors who have been part of this decade-long journey, we would never have achieved all we have.

We are proud to say that we have successfully managed, with clean audits, more than R20-million over the past decade, in the name of Renosterveld conservation.

For 10 years of incredible support, we would like to thank all our donors.

2012:
- Fauna & Flora International, UK

2013:
- Fauna & Flora International, UK
- Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
- Mazda Wildlife Fund
- Oren Taylor
- Stanford Bird Club

2014:
- Allan Gray
- Oren Taylor
- Mazda/Ford Wildlife Foundation
- Philanthropic donors
- Everyone who contributed to our Haarwegskloof Research Centre crowdfunding campaign

2015
- Fauna & Flora International, UK
- WWF South Africa
- SAB Miller
- Overberg Crane Group
- BirdLife South Africa
- Dee Snijman
- David Roby
- Marianne Soine
- Peter Krcmar
- Stanford Bird Club
- WWF Nedbank Green Trust
- Philanthropic donors

2016:
- Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
- Mapula Trust
- Mike Goulding
- Oren Taylor
- The Table Mountain Fund
- Philanthropic donors
- WWF Nedbank Green Trust

2017:
- Mapula Trust
- Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
- WWF Nedbank Green Trust
- Philanthropic donors

2018:
- Mapula Trust
- Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
- Ford Wildlife Foundation
- Charles Stirton
- Marianne Soine
- WWF South Africa
- Philanthropic donors

2019:
- BTE Renewables
- Everyone who contributed to our Haarwegskloof Learning Centre crowdfunding campaign
- Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
- John Anderson
- Mapula Trust
- Marianne Soine
- Philanthropic donors

2020:
- Mapula Trust
- Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
- Marianne Soine
- Philanthropic donors

2021:
- BTE Renewables
- Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
- Mapula Trust
- Marianne Soine
- Tygerberg Bird Club
- National Lotteries Commission
- Fauna & Flora International, UK
- Philanthropic donors

2022:
- BTE Renewables
- Mapula Trust
- Hans Hoheisen
- Ford Wildlife Foundation
- Fynbos Trust


Common Quail by Cliff Dorse


Gladiolus maculatus


Alpine Swift by Cliff Dorse


Tritonia deusta


Striped Field Mouse


Thick-tailed Scorpion, *Parabuthus* sp.

incredible donors & partners

Mapula Trust

HANS HOHEISEN charitable trust
MANAGED BY NEDBANK PRIVATE WEALTH

Ford WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

WWF

FAUNA & FLORA INTERNATIONAL

BirdLife SOUTH AFRICA
Giving Conservation Wings

WWF NEDBANK GREEN TRUST

OVERBERG CRANE GROUP

TABLE MOUNTAIN FUND
funding fynbos

Stanford BirdClub

bte renewables

CapeNature

TYGERBERG BIRD CLUB
TYGERBERG VOELKLUB

BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA

C·R·E·W
CUSTODIANS OF RARE & ENDANGERED WILDFLOWERS

University of Cape Town
iYunivesithi yaseKapa
Universiteit van Kaapstad

GREATER OVERBERG
FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

SIJNN

abi
IMPROVE LANDSCAPES
CONNECT COMMUNITIES

ENVIRO AWARENESS
INVESTIGATION
WILDFIRE SERVICES
EST 2007

NLC
NATIONAL LOTTERIES COMMISSION
LOTTO FUNDED

NUWEJAARS Wetlands SMA

Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Special Projects

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

Fynbos Trust
Landscape Scale Conservation
INNOVATION & SUPPORT

BirdLife South Africa
BIRDLIFE Overberg
south africa

loveGREEN COMMUNICATIONS

WalkerBay BIRD FAIR

Landcare

iNaturalist

Grauwe Kiekendief
Kenniscentrum Akkervogels

SA WINGSHOOTERS
Since 1983

Financial report ~ as at 28 February 2022

The accompanying summary financial statements, which comprise the summary statement of comprehensive income and statement of financial position for the year ended 28 February 2022, 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 2022 by management and appear consistent.

HJ Nel

BVA Overberg Incorporated
Registered Auditors

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 28 FEBRUARY 2022

FIGURES IN RAND	2022	2021
ASSETS	R	R
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant and equipment	886 264	312 639
Current Assets		
Trade and other receivables	3 509	3 370
Other financial assets	1 330 893	1 416 323
Cash and cash equivalents	413 794	592 451
TOTAL ASSETS	**2 634 460**	**2 324 783**
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity		
Capital	1 691 003	1 367 477
Non-Current Liabilities		
Deferred income	911 097	930 017
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	32 360	27 289
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	**2 634 460**	**2 324 783**

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 28 FEBRUARY 2022

	2022	2021
Total income	5 127 239	4 312 808
Total expenditure	4 803 713	3 953 854
	323 526	358 954
Accumulated funds at beginning of the year	1 367 477	1 008 523
Deferred income	-	-
ACCUMULATED FUNDS TRANSFERRED TO NEXT YEAR	**1 691 003**	**1 367 477**

"The destruction of the Earth's environment is the human rights challenge of our time."

~ Desmond Tutu

African Pipit

ORCT Staff and Trustees

Dr Odette Curtis-Scott, Director

Odette holds a PhD (2013) in Botany and an MSc Zoology (2005), both from the University of Cape Town (UCT), preceded by a B-Tech in Nature Conservation from Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). She managed the Black Harrier and Black Sparrowhawk Projects at UCT (including a stint at the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania, USA), before working for CapeNature, promoting their Stewardship Programme. At this time, she initiated Renosterveld research, which led to her establishing the ORCT in 2012. She also serves on the board of the Breede-Gouritz Catchment Management Agency. She is passionate about the natural world and about sharing the wonders of Renosterveld with landowners to inspire change within this threatened ecosystem. She co-authored the *Field Guide to Renosterveld of the Overberg*, the first guide to Renosterveld ever published.

Grant Forbes, Conservation Manager

Grant spent much of his early conservation years working in the Cape Floral Kingdom. He completed a B-Tech: Nature Conservation from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in 2009. Grant honed his skills working for the Overstrand Municipality, Flower Valley Conservation Trust and as Reserve Manager at Fernkloof Nature Reserve in Hermanus. In 2012, he joined CapeNature as a Nature Conservator. In order to grow further, he travelled to Jordan in the Middle East, for an aquaponics project which sought to develop alternative farming methods for desert areas. In 2020, Grant chose to return to South Africa, to join the ORCT as Extension Officer.

Sharon King, Office Manager

Sharon has worked as an Executive PA for many years in both the legal field and corporate world. She also ran her own cake-making/decorating business from home for a number of years, based in the town of Napier, in the Overberg. She is passionate about animals and is involved in animal rescue, in particular Greyhound rescue, adopting many Greyhounds that have been seriously injured during illegal practices. Sharon plays a critical role in the management of the ORCT's human resources, finance and administration.

Nande Notyalwa, Intern

Nande joined the ORCT team in the beginning of 2022, as the new face ready to welcome you when you visit our Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve. Nande completed an Honours in Botany from the Nelson Mandela University in Gqeberha, although she first studied law for a year, before realising this was not the career for her. As an intern at the ORCT, she's not only introducing researchers and visitors to Renosterveld on Haarwegskloof. She's also working closely with Director Odette Curtis-Scott and Conservation Manager Grant Forbes in the day-to-day conservation work, learning all she can about conservation while at the same time teaching others about nature.

ORCT Board of Trustees:

Dirk van Papendorp, Chair of the Board

Dirk holds a BSc (1986) and Honours (1989) degree in Agriculture. He is a successful commercial farmer in the Heidelberg region in the Overberg, and owns two adjacent farms: Voorstekop and Uitvlugt. Voorstekop was awarded the National Veld Trust Award, thanks to his care of the farm. He has registered the Renosterveld and Lowland Fynbos habitats on his farm as a Nature Reserve with CapeNature.

Lesley Richardson, Vice-Chair

Lesley has a BSc in Dietetics (1975, University of KZN), an Honours in Community Health (1984, UCT) and an MSc in Epidemiology (1990, University of Stellenbosch). She first worked in the field of community health and nutrition for 15 years. In 1992 she moved into the conservation sector, working for WWF South Africa. She joined Flower Valley Conservation Trust as Executive Director in 2003, and finally retired from the Trust in 2020. She currently serves as Coordinator for the Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative.

Sean Privett

Sean (MSc Botany, UCT) is a botanist, Director of the Grootbos Foundation and founder and Chair of the Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy. Sean runs the Green Futures Horticulture and Life Skills College, as well as Growing the Future sustainable agriculture projects at Grootbos Nature Reserve. He has written the definitive guide to the flora of the Walker Bay region, and is co-author on the *Field Guide to Renosterveld of the Overberg*.

Prof Muthama Muasya

Prof Muthama Muasya holds a BSc in Botany & Zoology (Moi University, 1992), an MPhil 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) as well as research experience at the National Museums of Kenya. Since 2006 he has held an academic position at UCT, and has published over 100 scientific outputs.

Christina Stewart

Christina was born and bred in the Overberg and has lived here most of her life. She and her husband, Billy, farm on a fourth generation family grain and sheep farm where she grew up. Here she 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 giving birth to her twins. She is also the Director of their farming enterprise.

Help us leave a living world

Our bequest programme

Our generation has one crucial obligation: to leave behind a healthy, living planet on which all living things can thrive. And yet here in the Overberg, this ecosystem, known as Renosterveld, teeters on the edge of extinction: Without our efforts to halt this otherwise inevitable loss, we will lose an entire ecosystem – including hundreds of beautiful species!

You can help us prevent the tragic extinction of Renosterveld, by leaving a bequest (legacy) in support of Renosterveld conservation.

As a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO), we are dedicated to halting the extinction spiral through proactive conservation work.

How will your bequest be used?

- We will secure more Renosterveld hectares: for conservation in perpetuity.
- We will restore and rehabilitate Renosterveld remnants: to ensure their long-term survival and viability.
- We will educate people about the importance of preserving our natural environment: from landowners and people who work on the land to local school children, teachers and conservation scholars.
- We will undertake crucial research: to enable a deeper understanding of these ecosystems, so that we can manage them more effectively, thus securing for future generations a fantastically rich and unique area of South Africa.

Bequests to the ORCT are exempt from estate duty, as we are a registered NPO. This bequest could also help reduce your estate tax bill.

Find out more – contact ORCT Director Odette Curtis-Scott.
Email: odette@overbergrenosterveld.org.za or
Tel: +27 (0)83 551 3341

Support conservation by doing the thing you love most

What do you love doing? Running or cycling? Hosting or joining quiz nights? Bringing friends together? Now you can do what you love – all in the name of Renosterveld.

We're inviting you to get involved in Renosterveld conservation, to help us stop the extinction spiral. You choose the activity you most enjoy and raise funds while doing it. You could run or cycle 10kms (for our 10th birthday), host a dinner or auction, or have a quiz evening to raise funds.

Please let us know what you're up to, and we'll support you in any way we can. And if you're keen, we can let the world know what you're doing to help us.

Please get in touch with us to chat about ideas and events.
Email: odette@overbergrenosterveld.org.za or
Tel: +27 (0)83 551 3341


March Bluetail Dragonflies


Black Harriers


Box Kite Spider


Harlequin Snake


Carpenter Bee on Endangered *Mesembryanthemum napierense*


Endangered *Gibbaeum hartmannianum*

Contact us

Trust Director: Dr Odette Curtis-Scott
Phone: + 27 (0) 83 551 3341
Email: info@overbergrenosterveld.org.za
ORCT Postal Address: P.O. Box 27, Napier, 7270


Carpenter Bee on *Polhillia* sp.


Ring-bum Millipede Muncher


Verreaux's Eagle


Blue Bottle Fly on *Erica venustiflora*


Endangered *Babiana purpurea*


Spotted Eagle Owl


Cape Legless Skink


Geoffroy's Horseshoe Bat