



NEWSLETTER August 2020

OUR VISION | To be a highly effective and well-supported champion of the environment.
OUR MISSION | To implement high impact environmental and conservation projects which promote public participation in caring for the Earth.

Dear Friends of the Environment,

enjoy another mixed bag of environmental news and articles.

If any of our readers have signed up recently with iNaturalist we would love to hear from you.

Tell us of your highlights!

iNaturalist continues to grow...



iNaturalist.org is a place where you can record and share your observations of plants and animals! Make observations, keep track of your life list, and explore what others are seeing in your own backyard or on the other side of the world.



<https://www.facebook.com/inaturalist>

Great Southern Bioblitz 2020

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/great-southern-bioblitz-2020>

You may have missed out on the City Nature Challenge in March (during full lockdown) - or maybe the Challenge tickled your hunter's instincts....?

But the good news is that **September offers another opportunity of showing the world how much biodiversity is to be found in South Africa.**

How many wild animals and plants live in your area? Are there any threatened species?

Help scientists by documenting the wildlife in your area from **the 25 - 28 September 2020 anywhere in the Southern Hemisphere.**

Sign up on iNaturalist and start photographing and posting your observations. All it takes is a little dedication and the learning curve goes up, up and away!

<https://www.inaturalist.org>





[Karoo farmers take to the sky in efforts to curb invasive alien plants and increase water supply](#) - 10 July 2020

“During the past four decades, the southern and northern slopes, as well as the mountain tops of the Outeniqua Mountains have fallen prey to the aggressive spread of invasive alien plants, in particular wattle and pine trees,” says Cobus Meiring of the Southern Cape Landowners Initiative (SCLI).

Mountain catchments, feeder streams, wetlands, fountains and underground water resources have dwindled significantly and alarmingly as a direct result of invasive alien trees claiming staggering volumes of water. Not only the farmers are feeling the effect of reduced water sources available to them to farm sustainably. Downstream water users in the Kammanassie and Olifants River systems, as well as the river systems supplying towns such as Oudtshoorn and Calitzdorp, have either run dry completely or are drastically underperforming.

“Because of the costs related to the control and eradication of immensely dense stands of invasive alien plants and trees, farmers simply do not have the resources to eradicate and curb the spread of invasive alien plants,” says Meiring.

“However, the 2018 Outeniqua wildfire disaster, that destroyed close to 100 000 hectares of vegetation, provided landowners along the mountains a small window of opportunity to make inroads into the control of invasive alien plants on a large scale.”

According to a local Kammanassie farmer, Morné Jonker of the farm Ezeljacht, the best chance of success in addressing invasive alien plants on a large scale is to prevent regrowth after a fire such as what they experienced in 2018.



“The wildfire was intensely hot, destroyed the large stands of trees and stimulated new growth from the decades-old wattle seed bank, with literally in the hundreds of seedlings per square metre now growing out of the fertile ground.”

He says almost 500 hectares of mostly mountain and riverine land in their area are now experiencing regrowth of wattle and pine carpeting the landscape. Jonker estimates that more than 90% of the area is invaded by severe wattle regrowth.

Drone technology to curb invasive alien plants

“Our best chance of preventing these trees from reaching maturity is by the application of a suitable herbicide by means of an aerial spray, making use of drone technology,” says Jonker.

“Given the cost of labour and herbicide, the repeated application of herbicide required to suppress fast-growing invasive alien plants is extremely costly, compounded by unforgiving terrain and climatic conditions that are seldom conducive for herbicide application.”



Says Jonker, “The availability of specialised drone technology, adapted for carrying sufficient payload of herbicide to spray over dense stands of wattle along severely affected areas is our saving grace”.

“Not only is drone technology extremely affordable to us, given the scale of the problem and the difficulty of the terrain along steep mountain slopes and inaccessible riverine areas, but it is extremely effective and accurate in application.”

Southern Cape farmers, both on the dry and wet side of the Outeniqua Mountains are collaborating with SCLI in a collective effort to rehabilitate regional river systems in order to establish biodiversity conservation corridors.

Farmers in the Klein Karoo are making use of drone technology in efforts to curb the spread of invasive alien plants. (Photo Credits: Cobus Meiring, SCLI)

** The Southern Cape Landowners Initiative (SCLI) is a public platform and think tank for landowners and land managers with an interest in invasive alien plant management, water stewardship and land management. SCLI is supported by the Table Mountain Fund (TMF), a subsidiary of WWF SA.

WEBSITE: <http://www.scli.org.za>

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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For those of you with a botanical bent this was **forwarded by the Botanical Society Garden Route Branch**



<https://www.facebook.com/GardenRouteBotSoc>

A superb article which highlights pressing issues facing the survival and preservation of Fynbos. Even in Cape Town, brimming with botanists and experienced restoration ecologists, it is a mission to achieve. There is no doubt that each and every person's contribution matters. The Garden Route is no different in its issues and dilemmas when it comes to its spectacular vegetation and precious eco-systems.

Cape Town's Critically Endangered Cape Flats Sand Fynbos

The struggle to save species in the world's most biodiverse city. An expedition led by iLCP Emerging League photographer, Morgan Trimble.

Expeditions iLCP March 6, 2020 Extracts:

"This incredible display of threatened plants is growing, not in a pristine nature reserve, but between a parking lot, a busy street, and a jogging path through Tokai Park in Cape Town. Until recently, this land had been a timber plantation but is now one of city's most important conservation sites. The small section Rebelo took me through is a showpiece for restoration.

"We named it the Trail of Extinction," explained Rebelo, who works at the South African National Biodiversity Institute. "But that wasn't quite the right message, so we changed it to the Restoration Trail." As we reached the end of the short path, he showed me the finale—Erica verticillata—extinct in the wild since the 1950s. It was thought lost forever, but, miraculously, horticulturalists rediscovered it growing in Vienna from stock collected in the 1700s as well as in a few South African botanical collections. "

"Plant blindness is a real issue," botany PhD student Zoe Poulsen told me of the ease with which people overlook plants. "A lot of these things are rarer than the giant panda and no one's talking much about them." A recent study found that 37 plants have gone extinct in the Cape Town region since 1900, a tally of destruction only surpassed in the Hawaiian Islands. "

Full article – well worth the read:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c8591e4bd6f04e229d8293c07e675fb4>



GREAT HONOUR FOR RETIRED LOCAL PROF

Well-known George academic Prof Raymond Auerbach has been appointed to the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) from 1 July.

The ARC recently brought out a new five-year strategic plan, to be managed under nine programmes emphasising sustainable use of resources, and also a vision for agriculture in 2050.

Under the leadership of the new ARC chair, Joyene Isaacs (former head of Western Cape Agriculture Department), the new council will work to help South Africa produce healthy food while conserving soil and protecting natural resources.



Auerbach (66) recently retired as professor of soil science and plant production at the Nelson Mandela University George Campus, but his knowledge of agro-ecology will still be available to the broader community of South Africa. His appointment comes at a time when the world and agriculture faces huge challenges. He told George Herald that Covid-19 changes everything. Six months from now there will be many hungry people around the world and focus will shift to food security, as well as agro-ecology because of climate change and health crises, as he has warned for 52 years.

He has written five books, farmed organically for 20 years and trained organic farmers for 20 years. He is on the boards of the SA Organic Sector Organisation (SAOSO), and on several scientific reference groups in Africa and Europe.

He believes that people do not always understand the importance of soil in sustaining biodiversity.

While farming is becoming more productive in tons of food per hectare, **the quality of food (nutrient density) has gone down, as conventional agriculture uses many chemicals.** About 15% of various minerals and proteins in vegetables and grains have been lost over the past 70 years. That is **one of the reasons for the obesity pandemic and increases in diseases such as diabetes.**

His message is that people should start taking soil health more seriously and focus more on sustainable food systems. "We have to get life back into the soil again to sustain ecosystems and human health; **industrial agriculture is killing the soil. We have to get the soil biology right.**"

"Oupa and ouma's" traditional holistic organic agriculture ideas are embodied in the philosophy of African pioneers such as Jan Smuts and Robert Mazibuko; these should be combined with cutting edge research and technology to bring about sustainable food systems; biotechnology and integrated pest management have an important role to play.

People can feed themselves by starting their own small vegetable gardens at their homes; smallholders can add value to crops to increase incomes.

South African agriculture should become a leader in sustainable production, but research is needed on soil biology to improve soil, crop and animal health. This will have a positive impact on human health.

Source: <https://www.georgeherald.com/News/Article/General/great-honour-for-retired-local-prof-202007150110>



2020 International Coastal Cleanup – 19 September 2020



We are working at making this year's International Coastal Cleanup possible. This year's Clean-Up & Recycle SA Week is scheduled to take place from 14-19 September 2020, culminating in National Recycling Day on Friday, 18 September and the **International Coastal Clean-Up Day** on Saturday, 19 September 2020 and the **Let's Do It World Clean-up Day**, 19 September.

"We are waiting to see what changes will have to be done due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will of course communicate this with you. In the meantime,

most of the registrations that we have received so far has indicated that the teams will be much smaller as in the past years. We can just hope that restrictions will allow more people to take part.

We have been finding copious amounts of the latex material as attached on beaches from Cape Point to Churchhaven so far. Have you seen any of the material? Mixed amongst them is the protection caps for syringes and so far we have not found any needles or packaging telling us more of the source. If you find any of the material or more important, packaging associated with the latex material we would love to hear from you.

I am also proud of the poster we have developed so far for this year's International Coastal Cleanup as seen below my signature.

I will send this later when the powers to be have had their time with it."

Please pass this message on to anyone you think would make this clean up even bigger than past clean-ups.

John Kieser,

Sustainability Manager, **South Africa** - International Coastal Cleanup Coordinator

2019 National Clean-up Report released (Just google [2019 National Clean-up Report](#)) :

<http://cleanupandrecycle.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2019-RSA-International-Coastal-Cleanup-Report.pdf>

Visit <https://www.plasticsinfo.co.za> to read more on plastics and the environment.

SA Initiative to **End Plastic Waste in the Environment**: <https://www.plasticsinfo.co.za/s-a-alliance-to-end-plastic-waste-in-the-environment>

Plastics | SA has been mandated to ensure a vibrant and sustainable plastics industry in South Africa. The plastics sector is uniquely placed to meet the needs of **a sustainable society and to deliver solutions** to many challenges such as climate change, water scarcity, resource usage and energy recovery. <https://www.plasticsinfo.co.za/sustainability>





The Garden Route Environmental Forum (GREF) and the Southern Cape Landowners Forum (SCLI) have been busy with numerous interesting articles recently.

The article “ COVID-19 forces the Southern Cape to shift gear – the rebuild will offer new opportunities to increase climate-change readiness “ is attached to the Newsletter as a separate PDF and there follows an extract of the latest article. Keep tabs on their interesting news on their website <https://www.scli.org.za>

Keurbooms River the focus of a new working group - 27 July 2020

The Keurbooms River Ecological Infrastructure Investment (EII) Working Group, comprising local and provincial stakeholders, environmental managers and conservation experts, was recently formed to ensure long-term water security and implement a systematic programme for the removal of invasive alien plants.

The Keurbooms River system delivers vital services to those dependent on this source of fresh water and the entire ecological value chain it supports.

Says Cobus Meiring of the Garden Route Environmental Forum (GREF): “The Keurbooms River, with its headwaters in the Langkloof north of the Outeniqua Mountains, and its large estuary and outlet into the Indian Ocean, is of great importance to the Garden Route and the communities it supports.”



“Winding its way through some of the most scenic places along the Garden Route towards its spectacular estuary, the Keurbooms River has a significant function in the Garden Route ecology and is a natural infrastructure asset supplying most of the raw water demand for the Bitou Municipality,” says Meiring.

In 2010 the Keurbooms river essentially ran dry with flow measuring less than the ecological reserve of 300 litres/second and Bitou Municipality was declared a disaster. Special permission from the Department of Water Affairs was granted so that pumping for domestic supply could continue uninterrupted. What followed was a series of water augmentation projects including a controversial desalination plant at the mouth of the Piesang River. With the Keurbooms catchment able to yield an additional 1773m³ per condensed hectare of invasive plants removed (Blignaut, Marais, Nel et al 2008), care of the catchment and a systematic programme for the removal of invasive is key for long-term water security.



Full article : <https://www.scli.org.za/news>



If you, or anyone you know, works from home and is concerned about the importance of Animal Rights, here is the perfect job opportunity.

To understand the ground-breaking work done in South Africa by Humane Education Trust and Animal Voice for Animal Rights visit:

<https://www.animalvoice.org/humane-education-home> and <https://www.animalvoice.org/>

Position: Sales Person to promote online resources and courses related to Humane Education

Job description: Marketing, Networking (on a national, provincial or local basis)

Services to be marketed:

- Curriculum-aligned LTSM (Learning and Teaching Support Material) resources and online

Lesson Plans: Grades R – 12

- Endorsed online CPD (Continued Professional Development) courses for professionals

Suitable candidates will:

- have sales experience
- enjoy marketing
- be in a position to work from home with own computer and telephone/cell phone
- have a concern for the well-being of planet, people and animals
- understand that education is essential for the future of planet, people and animals

Please email info@caringclassrooms.co.za or admin@animalvoiceacademy.org

With a brief CV and contact details. Potential candidates will be interviewed online.

State of South Africa's Bird Report

BirdLife South Africa has recently published the first State of South Africa's Birds Report, the first of its kind for the region. This exceptionally important publication draws on national survey and monitoring data to provide a detailed and authoritative insight into the status of birds and biodiversity within the country. Amongst all taxa, birds are ideal subjects to measure environmental change. Apart from being much more highly visible than small mammals and reptiles, bird taxa are appropriate indicators of ecosystem health, comparatively popular, and well-studied. In addition, the availability of significant long-term datasets in South Africa has made birds a good choice as the basis for a biodiversity early-warning system for environmental change impacts. The report is set out in the format of State, Pressure and Response and provides a summarised snapshot of where, why and how members of this exceptionally important group are declining, and gives shape and force to initiatives by a range of conservation stakeholders aimed at eliminating anthropogenic influences. It will be essential in the shaping of governmental policy relating to species protection, reserve establishment and implementing measures to halt the threats to birds and their habitats.



For more information, please contact Robin Colyn at robin.colyn@birdlife.org.za

Source :

<https://www.birdlife.org.za/media-and-resources/state-of-south-africas-bird-report>



Regards, Christine Ridge-Schnafer

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