



FRIENDS OF FAERIE GLEN NATURE RESERVE (FFGNR) VRIENDE VAN FAERIE GLEN NATUURRESERVAAT (VFGNR)

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Spring Newsletter 2015

The Faerie Glen Nature Reserve (FGNR) along with the rest of South Africa, has experienced the hottest winter in 80 years. This is due to a "super" El Niño developing over the Pacific Ocean and some say this summer could be the hottest on record worldwide. The South African Weather Service has warned that, apart from the extreme temperatures, South Africans can expect drought conditions over the whole country. Some provinces have already started experiencing water shortages, including KwaZulu-Natal, North-West, Limpopo and the Free State.

Recently, large parts of Pretoria East were left with little or no water for almost a week, mainly due to the heat-wave experienced in Gauteng. Residents were asked to use water sparingly and not to water their gardens during the heat of the day. Suburban residents often forget that South Africa is a semi-arid country with an average rainfall of only around 450 mm per annum, which is only half of the global average. Therefore we cannot afford to waste a drop of water.



The zebras were spotted by Martinus Cronjé, in the early morning before the day started heating up.

Lente Nuusbrief 2015

Die tekort aan water blyk ook nie die enigste probleem te wees in die oostelike voorstede nie; rioolstortings is ook besig om teen 'n kommerwekkende trant toe te neem. Gedurende September was daar 'n massiewe hoeveelheid riool wat die FGNR deur 'n stormwaterkanaal binnegedring het. Die munisipaliteit kon nie die blokkasie wat veroorsaak het dat 'n munisipale mangat oorloop, regstel nie. Die probleem is weke later eers opgelos, deurdat inwoners 'n privaat loodgieter aangestel en vir sy dienste betaal het, ten spyte daarvan dat dit die verantwoordelikheid van die munisipaliteit is.

Die Moreletaspruit gaan alreeds gebuk onder die stres van allerlei vorme van besoedeling en hierdie addisionele lading van riool hou uiters nadelige gevolge vir natuurlewe in. Die lang stringe groen alge is duidelik sigbaar vanaf die houtbrug wat 'n aanduiding is van die hoë nutriënt lading in die water as gevolg van riool en wasgoedseep wat baie fosfate bevat.



Die groot hoeveelheid riool kan hier gesien word waar dit in 'n stormwaterkanaal by FGNR invloei.



Proudly affiliated to the Wildlife
and Environment Society of
South Africa and Adopt
Moreletaspruit Forum



To understand the complexity of our water problem, we need to take one step back and look at the bigger picture. Most people living in cities across the world receive water from a water utility (in our case Rand Water, which services the greater part of Gauteng and beyond). Most of the world's big cities have large rivers running through them, but South Africa is an exception to this rule.

Johannesburg and Pretoria started out in their developing years relying mostly on underground water. Of course, in time, the population growth and industries' needs exceeded the amount of water that was available locally. In fact, since the 1980s water was imported via the Tugela-Vaal Water Scheme 450 km away in KwaZulu-Natal. When this supply became insufficient, a greater scheme was initiated to obtain water from the Katse Dam in the Lesotho Highlands, which is even further away.

Now a new problem has surfaced in the form of a lack of potable water, which is essential for agriculture and industry. A second phase is underway to import even more clean water from the Lesotho Highlands, in essence to dilute the polluted water of the Vaal system that is in dire straits due to Acid Mine Drainage, other industrial effluent and raw sewage. Therefore, massively extensive and expensive infrastructure is needed to transfer water, in order to sustain the smallest province in the country that houses the country's economy and half of the country's population. This is a high-maintenance operation that cannot afford malfunction. Unfortunately the situation is becoming more dysfunctional, as sewage leaks are a common occurrence along with the enormous waste of clean water due to leaking pipes and pressure bursts.

Sadly, most people think all is well, until their taps run dry. People need to realise that water does not come from a tap, but from an intricate natural water capturing system known as a catchment, confined by a surrounding water shed (not to be confused with the 'water shedding' we are soon to face!). While the catchment is the surface collection area, within it there are natural systems, such as wetlands, that provide valuable ecosystem services. These ecosystem services can be described as natural infrastructure that filter water and slow down the speed of flowing water during high rainfall events. Because of the functions these natural systems provide, less money is needed for treatment to make the water potable for end users.

Unfortunately the true value of these ecosystems is not formally recognised as benefitting, not only wildlife, but also humanity. If we take care and invest in our own local watersheds, we will have better water security at a lower cost.

People living in the eastern and northern suburbs of Pretoria are within the Moreleta-Hartbeesspruit Catchment (to see the map, visit www.riv.co.za/ms). Our small local catchment forms part and flows into the greater Crocodile River (Crocodile West Catchment), which runs through Limpopo (greater Limpopo Catchment) all the way to Xai-Xai in Mozambique where it exits into the Indian Ocean. As residents, we need to start taking better care of our catchment, as our actions directly affect water quality. Every drop of oil hitting the pavement and every cigarette butt making its way down the storm water system goes directly into the nearest stream. Every manhole overflowing with sewage and even fertiliser and pesticides used on sidewalk lawns will also make its way into our water (dog poo as well). Recent MiniSASS (Stream Assessment Scoring System) tests done along various points of the Moreletaspruit, have shown that the river is in a seriously modified and poor condition. As residents of the Moreleta-Hartbeesspruit Catchment, we must realise the impact of our choices and should not allow the Moreleta or Hartbees or any of their tributaries to become an open sewer or nutrient-rich cesspool of rubbish.



Wildlife depends on the Moreletaspruit for survival. This Black Sparrowhawk, photographed by Martinus Cronjé, managed to catch a fish from the river. The threat of human encroachment can be seen on the horizon.

Behalwe vir die voorkoming van besoedeling in die Moreletaspruit, is daar ook ander faktore wat die spruit se gesondheid beïnvloed, soos die groot verskeidenheid indringerplante op die oevers van

riviere en spruite. Indringerplante neem baie water op, druk inheemse diversiteit uit en kan lei tot die verandering van 'n ekosisteme. Die Vriende van die Faerie Glen Natuurreservaat (VFGNR) stel dit as ons hoofdoel om die reservaat skoon te maak van indringerplante. Hierdie is 'n massiewe taak, wat slegs vermag kan word indien dit aangepak en uitgevoer word as 'n spanpoging. Ons doen 'n beroep op lede en besoekers aan die reservaat om ons asseblief by te staan met die taak.

Op 29 Augustus het Piet en Rienie weer die Vriende ondersteun om 'n gedeelte van 'n koppie skoon te maak van *Latana camara* en die Pêrelakasia (*Acacia podalyriifolia*). Digte infestasies van beide indringers kom in hierdie area voor en slegs enkele inheemse spesies het staande gebly na jare se verdrinking. Opvolgwerk in hierdie area is baie belangrik.



Piet en Rienie saam met die span wat hulle en die VFGNR befonds het om aan die koppie in die agtergrond te werk.

Apart from working hard to combat invasive alien plants in the FGNR, educational walks are also organised. On 22 August, geology professor Adam Bumby from the University of Pretoria conducted a geology walk in FGNR. His vast knowledge on the world's geological history is remarkable. Those who attended the walk were taken far back to a time when the Earth was inhospitable to human and animal life. The Bronberg Ridge inside the reserve is one of the oldest landscapes on Earth (over 2 billion years). We should respect and take care of this natural heritage, not only for ourselves but for future generations of humans and wildlife. We urge visitors to keep to the pathways to prevent erosion of the quartzite ridge and not to move the rocks on the ridge. Please tread as lightly as possible.



Professor Adam Bumby had everyone spellbound with all the fascinating information on the reserve's geology.

Op Saterdag 5 September het die VFGNR, in samewerking met die Dendrologiese Vereniging, weer die tradisie voortgesit deur 'n boom te plant vir boomplantweek. Vanjaar het ons een van die bome van die jaar, naamlik 'n *Heteromorpha arborescens* (Wildepietersieliebos / Parsley tree) geplant. Dit is 'n klein tot mediumgrootte bladwisselende boompie en kom natuurlik voor in FGNR. Die bas is interessant deurdat dit blink en glad is en op 'n horisontale wyse afskilfer. Wanneer die blare gekneus word ruik dit soos pietersielie. Die blare, wortels en die rook van die brandende hout word tradisioneel vir medisinale doeleindes aangewend.

Nadat die boompie op 'n baie nat en koue Saterdag geplant was, het Izak van der Merwe van die Dendrologiese Vereniging 'n kort uitstappie behartig waar ons 'n paar boomplaatjies opgesit het, onder andere die ikoniese Groot Vaderlandswilg aan die oostelike kant van die reservaat.



Vincent and Owen doing their part during the traditional tree planting ceremony.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Grassland walk with Antoinette Eyssell-Knox:

When: Saturday 14 November at 07:00.

Where: Meet on the lawn in front of the entrance building.

Bring along: Hat, comfortable shoes, water.

Cost: FFGNR members FREE

R50.00 for non-members

Invasive Lantana hacks:

When: • Sunday 8 November at 07:30

• Saturday 21 November at 07:30

• Sunday 6 December at 07:30

Where: Meet on the lawn in front of the entrance building.

Bring along: Lopper/pruning shears, hand-saw, gloves, hat, working shoes, water.

*Please e-mail or sms if you plan on helping.

We would like to thank **Jetline Printers**, located in Glenwood Avenue, Faerie Glen, for sponsoring the printing of this newsletter and our posters.

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