



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

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Summer Newsletter 2016

South Africa is experiencing the worst drought in more than a century, according to the South African Weather Service, and it may even be the worst yet on record. Extreme maximum temperatures have been measured over the whole of South Africa, with a record scorching 53 degrees Celsius measured in Swartruggens in North West province. One of the most affected areas, also an important agricultural zone, is the Free State, where vast areas resemble desert landscapes. Large numbers of cattle and other livestock have succumbed to the drought throughout the country and neighbouring Swaziland, including a substantial number of wildlife.

Pretoria has seen temperatures soar to the low 40s and the effects of the drought are evident in the Faerie Glen Nature Reserve (FGNR). Although superficially everything seems very green with lush trees, the grass has hardly grown this season. The wildlife in the reserve has not had very good grazing and it is with great sadness that we have to report the death of one of the five zebras at the end of November. After consulting with wildlife experts, it was established that it was not due to a lack of food. However, due to the low quality of available food the zebra may have resorted to eating foreign substances. There is strong suspicion that the animal could have ingested plastic. An autopsy was not done, so the cause of its death is not officially known.

We urge visitors to the reserve to refrain from leaving behind any rubbish in the veld. If you encounter any plastic along a walking route, please pick it up and dispose of it in the nearest bin. Bins are provided throughout the reserve. Please also don't drop any cigarette butts on the ground, as they cannot decompose and contain large amounts of harmful chemicals.

Somer Nuusbrief 2016

Ten spyte van die droogte, is dit verstommend hoe die fynste veldplantjies dit steeds regkry om te blom. In November 2015, het Antoinette Eysell-Knox en Alan Short 'n grasveld-uitstappie begelei. Die grasveld-bloom is besonders, omdat dit so oud is en so ryk is aan plantdiversiteit. Dit is ook 'n baie sensitiewe stelsel, aangesien destruktiewe aktiwiteite soos om te ploeg, die grond so erg versteur dat die veld nooit weer kan terugkeer na sy voormalige toestand nie. Tekens hiervan is duidelik in die Faerie Glen Natuurreservaat (FGNR), omdat dit vroeër 'n plaas met landerye was. In hierdie versteurde areas kom heelwat van die grasspesie *Hyparrhenia* voor, wat bekend staan as dekgras.

In die onversteurde areas waar daar nie geploeg was nie is daar 'n magdom klein veldplantjies en ondergrondse bome, ook bekend as ploegbrekers. Dit word gereken dat hulle duisende jare oud kan word. In areas waar daar geploeg was keer hierdie bome nooit weer terug nie.



The zebras grazing together before the unfortunate death of one, possibly through ingesting plastic.



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and Environment Society of
South Africa and Adopt
Moreletaspruit Forum





Alan Short wys die blare van 'n ondergrondse boom (*Elephantorrhiza elephantina*) uit.



Die geel *Hibiscus aethiopicus* het pragtig gebloem tydens die grasveld-uitstappie.

As discussed in the Spring Newsletter, South Africa is an arid country and statistically the 30th most water stressed country in the world. Furthermore, rainfall is distributed unevenly, with the eastern half of the country receiving more rain than the western half. Rainfall is precarious, meaning that areas are devoid of rain for months on end, while rainfall events can be heavy and destructive, yet is short-lived. Because of this, many dams were constructed to hold back water. This is also the water that everyone has to share and of which, disconcertingly, 98 % is already accounted for. Therefore, in a country with a population growing exponentially, expanding industries with hungry water appetites and an agricultural sector, it must be understood that the available amount of water cannot increase. The above-mentioned sectors are also the biggest polluters of our water sources, further decreasing the amount of usable water. We must make lifestyle changes in order to cope with a future where water will not be as expendable as before.

Herewith a few ideas of things that you can do in your home environment that will help to reduce the stress on our water sources:

Rain-water harvesting is one way of saving water that also benefits your garden, as it contains no chlorine. More importantly, it cuts out the unnecessary watering of your garden with 'expensive water' that had to travel from a different catchment and had to undergo expensive treatment to make it potable, only to be used on plants. Furthermore, by diverting water from your home that would have been channelled into a storm water system, it relieves the burden on the storm water infrastructure as well as the nearest watercourse, which is the set destination of all storm water.

Grey water harvesting is the way of the future. Apart from dishwashing water, other household water is perfectly suitable for watering the garden. You save money by re-using this water, as you don't need to use extra water to irrigate the garden. It also reduces the amount of water going to the sewage plant, which can't deal with the current capacity, often causing raw sewage to spill into dams and rivers.

Take careful note of what is inside your washing detergent. Detergents are often loaded with phosphates, which contributes to the eutrophication of dams and rivers, causing toxic algal blooms and the death of aquatic life. The Hartbeespoort Dam is a good example of this type of pollution. Unilever has reduced and finally done away with adding phosphates to their washing detergents. There is also a locally invented Biowashball on the market, which does not use any soap or detergent and only needs replacing every three years.

Clearing out alien invasive and water-hungry plants that are not suitable for your garden is of utmost importance. Category 1 plants have to be removed by law, while category 2 plants are prohibited without a permit. It's not compulsory to remove mature category 3 plants, but new seedlings and young specimens must be removed. Category 2 and 3 are completely prohibited in riparian zones and nature areas. Visit www.invasives.org.za to see the list of invasive plants and other invasive species. South Africa has an amazing range of indigenous plants, visit <http://pza.sanbi.org> or www.plantzafrica.com for more information. Always try to plant trees and plants that naturally occur in your area, as they are better adapted.

Die Vriende van die Faerie Glen Natuurreservaat (VFGNR) het vroeg in November weer begin om die pompoms (*Campuloclinium macrocephalum*) te bestry. Dit sal die derde opeenvolgende seisoen wees wat die VFGNR werk om die pompoms uit te roei. Pompoms groei baie aggressief in die somer en die vensterperiode om aan hulle te werk is kort: voor die pienk blomme verbruin en die wind die droë sade oor groot afstande versprei. Die erge droogte het egter veroorsaak dat die pompoms eers in Januarie begin kop uitsteek het, na die goeie reën wat die tweede week van Januarie gearriveer het. Pompoms is baie gehard en kan droogte en vuur weerstaan, deurdat hulle sterk ondergrondse risome het wat water en nutriënte stoor.



Simon sprays young pompoms leaves in the floodplain, before they can develop long stems bearing the inflorescences.

’n Brokkie goeie nuus is dat die voël-uitkyk uiteindelik ’n dakkie gekry het. Ons bedank graag vir Johan en sy span van Tshwane Natuurbewaring hiervoor.



The bird-hide with its new roof, that offers some protection from the sun and will make people on the deck less visible.

Apart from working on pompom weed, the Friends of the Faerie Glen Nature Reserve (FFGNR) have also been very busy combating *Lantana camara*. While the pompoms are predominantly seen in the grasslands, *Lantana* is found mostly on the ridge in the reserve, where it competes aggressively with indigenous vegetation. The drought has somewhat subdued the growth of the *Lantana* and has even kept it from flowering properly.



Dead stacks of *Lantana camara* on the western side of the ridge that the FFGNR removed during the last couple of months.

We plead with visitors to the reserve and members of the FFGNR to please help us with our campaign to combat invasive plants in the FGNR. Help us to protect and rehabilitate this ecological and recreational jewel for future generations.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

MiniSass river monitoring:

When: Saturday 19 March at 08:00.

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

Bring along: Hat, magnifying glass (not compulsory), children with good eyesight.

Invasive plant hacks and clean-ups:

When: • Sunday 7 February at 07:30

• Saturday 20 February at 07:30

• Saturday 9 April at 08:00

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.**

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