



## Adopt Moreletaspruit/ Neem Moreletaspruit Aan

### Newsletter/Nuusbrief 16, October/Oktober 2015

#### The Adopt Moreletaspruit Forum held its first Evening of Free Talks

The talks on 17 September were well attended and there will be more in future.



As September is Arbour Month, **Izak van der Merwe**, of the Dendrological Society of South Africa and the “Champion Trees of South Africa” project, spoke on the **Unique Tree Habitats in the Faerie Glen and Moreletakloof Nature Reserves** which are joined by a corridor along the Moreletaspruit.

There are different zones in **Faerie Glen**: Gold Reef Mountain Bushveld and Rand Highveld Grassland, and Izak explained how the underlying geology determines the zones and which trees are found in each habitat. There are more than 50

indigenous species in the reserve, some rare such as the *Maerua caffra* Common bush-cherry/Witbos, the *Pittosporum viridiflorum* Cheesewood/Kasuur and the *Canthium mundianum* Rock Alder/Klipels; and some more common such as the Buffalo Thorn and Guarri. The photo above left shows the *Ochna pulchra* Peeling Plane/Lekkerbreek with its red, early spring foliage.

On the densely wooded southern slope there is one centuries-old *Combretum erythrophyllum*/ River bushwillow/ Vaderlandswilg (photo right) which is forming daughter trees and whose age has yet to be determined. Izak also described how a closed woodland area had formed where disturbance from farming had occurred and why it is important to manage the area for diversity and protect some of the grassland along the river. There is also a small Natural Forest area containing *Kiggelaria africana*/ Wild peach/Wildeperske and *Heteromorpha arborescens*/ Parsley tree/Wildepietersieliebos. The Parsley tree is the “Rare” Tree of



the Year for 2015 and it grows in both Faerie Glen and Moreletakloof Nature Reserves.

In **Moreletakloof** there is a unique and rare “island” of Natural Forest (photo left) containing more than 50 indigenous species, surrounded by grassland. Among the special trees are two very large *Heteropyxis natalensis*/Lavender tree/Laventelboom and also the *Olinia emarginata*/Mountain hard pear/Berghardepeer.

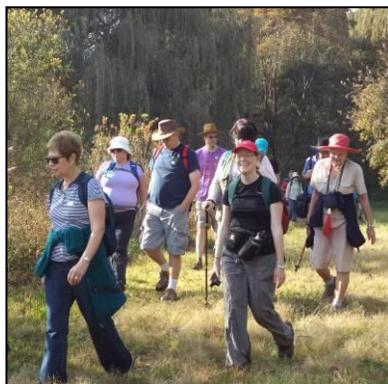


**Leanne Zdyb Coetzee**, microbiologist, natural scientist and water specialist, gave the second talk and managed to make the subject of **Emerging Contaminants in Water** which is a very hot and important topic at the moment, more understandable to the non-scientists among us. EC's (Emerging Contaminants) are any synthetic or naturally occurring chemicals not commonly monitored which cause adverse ecological effects. There are three main groups: POP's (Persistent Organic Pollutants), PPCP's (Pharmaceutical and Personal Care Products) and EDC's (Endocrine Disrupting Compounds). The Stockholm Convention on POP's banned the "dirty dozen", the best known of which is DDT, and later listed further chemicals. Not all countries have signed the agreement though and South Africa still uses DDT to combat malaria. POP's, mostly man-made pesticides, solvents, pharmaceuticals and industrial chemicals, do not degrade and they accumulate in the fatty tissues of humans and animals. They are also dispersed for long distances by wind and have been found in the pristine Arctic. PPCP's, which are prescription and other drugs, those "wonderful" body and hair care products, anti-bacterial soaps and cleaning agents, go down our drains and into the sewers. The sewage treatment works are not able to remove all of them and some go back into rivers, the sea and our drinking water. Many of the EC's are endocrine disruptors and cause changes in fish, frogs and other aquatic animals as well as low sperm counts, foetal growth defects and other reproductive health issues in humans and animals. However, all is not gloom and doom. It can be turned around if we all play our part. The American Bald Eagle, which was almost extinct because DDT interfered with calcium use and caused thinning of the egg shells so that the shells broke when the parents sat on them, increased in numbers once DDT was banned. Also in the USA, the high levels of lead in human blood, which causes mental retardation in children, decreased once leaded gasoline was phased out.

**What can we do?** Be aware. Buy food and cleaning products that are organic or as natural as possible. Only take drugs when truly necessary. Take unused medicines to a pharmacy to be properly disposed of and recycle old electronic devices and plastics responsibly. If environmental consciousness becomes a significant factor in the public's choice of which brands to buy, the manufacturers and agri-business will take note.

Have a look at this film on **Plastic microbeads**: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAilGd\\_JqZc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAilGd_JqZc)

### **Some photos from the Guided Hike along the Moreletaspruit in May**



Left: Helene Gertenbach and Louise Kritzinger who organised the hike so well.

Centre: Coming through Serene Valley. Right: As the happy hikers relaxed with some refreshments at the end point, Louise handed out rather artistic certificates.



### **Leerder ontvang Silwer Toekenning by Noord Gauteng Wetenskap Ekspo in Augustus 2015**

Lizette van Wyk, 'n graad 9 leerling van Hoërskool Garsfontein het 'n miniSASS oggend wat aangebied was deur Vriende van Serene Valley in April bygewoon. Die praktiese ondervinding en kennis wat sy daar opgedoen het, het sy gebruik vir 'n skool wetenskapprojek. Haar projek is een van 23 gekies om haar skool te verteenwoordig by die Ekspo, maar dit was die enigste een in die afdeling Omgewingswetenskappe – Watergesondheid. Lizette sê baie besoekers aan die Ekspo het daarin belanggestel om te weet hoe water besoedel word. Ons hoop dat nog studente en leerders ons riviere en natuurbewaringsgebiede sal gebruik vir studies in die omgewingswetenskappe wat uiters

belangrik is!

### **Victory for environmentalists**

The Supreme Court of Appeal Judgement in the case between Arcelor Mittal and the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance in late November 2014 was a victory for environmentalists. The court found against AM which did not want to supply information to the VEJA regarding the dumping of hazardous waste in the Vaal Disposal Site. The judgement emphasised the vital participation of public interest groups in the protection and preservation of the environment. In future, companies and other instances will have to supply information requested in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act.

### **Repairs to Old Mainline Sewer along the Moreletaspruit**

Sewer leaks along the river have been a major concern in recent years. The good news is that during the winter the CoT hired a contractor to carry out repairs to the old mainline sewer all along the river. They blocked off sections of the sewer, pumped the upstream sewage (photo right) across the river and into the new MOS sewer. They then inspected the old sewer with CCTV cameras and repaired the cracks and damage. The manholes were also checked and repaired.



**Vriendegroepe:** **Vriende van Faerie Glen NR** het 'n geologie uitstappie en 'n boomplantdag uitstappie gehou. **Vriende van Moreletakloof NR** het 'n stap en rol uitdaging vir persone in rolstoele en die blindes aangebied, asook 'n voëlringssessie. **Vriende van Brookside Meander** het 'n gesinspretdag en 'n skoonmaakdag gehou.

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**Facebook Group – Adopt-a-River Moreleta**

**The Facilitation Team/Die Fasiliteringspan**