



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

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Spring Newsletter 2016

As winter came to an end at the start of spring, temperatures were almost identical to those experienced a year ago. However, this year the soil moisture content was much lower and could clearly be seen from the appearance of vegetation in the Faerie Glen Nature Reserve (FGNR) and surrounding environment. The landscape was literally bone dry, which, coupled with other factors such as windy conditions, increased the risk of veld fires.

On the morning of Thursday 6 October, a fire broke out next to the palisade fence in January Masilela Avenue, possibly caused by a pedestrian's discarded cigarette butt. The fire quickly worked its way up the western side of the *koppie* onto the crest and descended down the northern slope. Assisted by strong winds, the fire was still raging into the afternoon and evening. The fire brigade was on the scene to monitor the fire and ensure that it didn't endanger neighbouring properties. The next day the fire flared up again, presumably due to strong winds igniting smouldering vegetation.



The veld fire raging on the northern slope of the Bronberg Ridge on the evening of 6 October, seen from the Gift Acres Estate bordering the reserve.

Lente Nuusbrief 2016

As devastating as the damage may seem, the ancient landscape of the FGNR is adapted to fire and needs occasional fires to maintain an ecological balance between grassy and woody vegetation. Many species thrive after a fire event, such as the monkey's tails seen in the picture below.

While the vegetation in the FGNR has been getting by on only rain, Pretorians have been abusing water at a staggering rate to irrigate their gardens. This is evident in the fact that water pressure drops and reservoirs run low every time a heat wave strikes. Unfortunately, it seems that the majority of residents in, not only Pretoria, but also Gauteng, are turning a blind eye to the critical state of the country's water reserves. It is also concerning that massive amounts of clean potable water are lost due to burst pipes and overflows from reservoirs with defective valves. Water from a leak, suspected to be from the reservoir adjacent to the FGNR, has been flowing non-stop for nearly three years, despite numerous reports to the municipality.



Xerophyta retinervis (monkey's tail / bobbejaanstert) have burst into flower after the fire a few weeks earlier and the arrival of much needed rain.



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South Africa and Adopt
Moreletaspruit Forum



The Vaal River system, which supplies Gauteng with most of its water, currently only has an average dam level of 26%, compared to around 70% a year ago. There are 14 dams supplying the system and if significant rainfall does not occur within these catchments, there is a real possibility that the Vaal Dam could run out of water. The only remaining security lies in the Sterkfontein Dam near Harrismith, which is 91% full. This dam is part of the Tugela-Vaal Water Project and the Drakensberg Pumped Storage Scheme. Water has been released from this dam into the Vaal River System on Monday 7 November.

Rand Water, Gauteng's main water supplier, has implemented water saving measures by cutting water supply to municipalities by 15%. Water users need to cut back on their water consumption, otherwise reservoirs will run dry as experienced in the western parts of Pretoria two weeks ago. The mayor has also warned residents that, should they not abide by the water restrictions, water shedding will have to be implemented and/or hefty fines of up to R20 000.00 imposed on water wasters.

Waterkwaliteit is ook 'n groot probleem in die Moreletaspruit se opvangsgebied. Minder water beteken dat besoedeling in waterbronne meer gekonsentreerd is. Die oorgrote meerderheid van hierdie besoedeling is afkomstig vanaf stormwaterstelsels. So 'n insident het onlangs die voorblaai van plaaslike koerante gehaal toe diesel vanuit 'n kragopwekker by die Menlyn Park-winkelsentrum op 28 Augustus gestort het. 'n Meganiese fout het daartoe gelei dat massiewe hoeveelhede diesel in die stormwaterstelsel geloop het. Die diesel het reguit in die Newlandsspruit ingeloo, vanwaar dit kort voor die Lynnwoodbrug in die Moreletaspruit gevloei het.

African Horizon Technologies, 'n maatskappy wat spesialiseer in die skoonmaak van oliebesoedeling, is aangestel om die diesel uit die spruit te verwyder en te keer dat dit verder stroom-af beland. Hierdie skoonmaakproses het vir meer as 'n maand geduur. Ongelukkig het die ekologie van die spruit baie skade gely. 'n MiniSASS (Stream Assessment Scoring System) assessering is uitgevoer in die geaffekteerde deel van die spruit deur die Neem Moreletaspruit Aan Forum. Die resultate was skokwekkend. Alhoewel die telling nooit goed is nie, is dit die swakste toestand waarin die Forum die spruit nog gevind het. Byna al die ongewerwede organismes in die monster was afwesig of dood.



Werkers van die African Horizon Technologies skoonmaakmaatskappy, besig om diesel uit die Moreletaspruit te skep tydens die skoonmaakoperasie.

Another factor that negatively affects the ecology and water security of our rivers and their tributaries is the presence and encroachment of invasive alien vegetation on river banks. There are many different invasive plant species in the FFGNR's riparian area, one of them being the Chinese elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*). Originally planted as street trees, these trees have now become invasive. The FFGNR have recently acquired a chain-saw to tackle some of these trees that are too large for the tree-popper.



Edwin cutting down a Chinese elm with the FFGNR's new chainsaw, assisted by Charles (left).

In addition to the work done by Simon three days of the week, partially sponsored by members Tony and Beverley Moore, new members Tilana and Stefan de Meillon are providing the service of their gardener to the FFGNR three hours every week. Charles works under the guidance of Edwin and Vincent van de Wiel, the tree-popper veterans of FFGNR. They have recently started to work on the dense stand of Chinese elms next to the river crossing on the western side of the reserve.

Simon se fokus was grootliks op die uitroei van die kateklouranker (*Dolichandra unguis-cati*) wat stelselmatig besig is om die reservaat se inheemse woud te versmoor. Ons bedank ook vir Magdaleen, Engela en Jenny vir hulle bystand met hierdie langtermyn projek.

Heelwat makseringbome (*Melia azedarach*) is ook gedurende September en Oktober deur Simon geringbas tydens hul blomtyd. Die maksering kom oorspronklik van Indië en is vermoedelik ingevoer as 'n dekoratiewe boom wat steeds in strate en tuine gesien word. Hierdie boom is alreeds in 1894 in KwaZulu-Natal aangemeld as 'n indringer. Die oranje-geel vrugte is baie giftig en menslike sterftes is al aangeteken as gevolg van inname van die bessies. Indien jy so boom in jou tuin het, is dit 'n goeie idee om daarvan ontslae te raak, want dit is juis die sade afkomstig van die woongebiede rondom Faerie Glen Natuurreservaat (FGNR) wat opkom in die reservaat. Enige opslagboompies in tuine moet volgens wet vernietig word.



Simon standing next to a large specimen of *Melia azedarach* (syringa) after ringbarking and poisoning it.



Remnants of destroyed *Lantana camara* seen in a section cleared by members of the FFGNR.

Regular invasive alien hacks were also conducted by members of the FFGNR on 20 August, 10 September and 9 October. Category 1 invader *Lantana camara* was once again the target. Thanks to the support from members attending these hacks, almost a hectare of a dense *Lantana* stand on the ridge has been eradicated over a two year period.

Die afkap en uittrek van bome is nie die enigste take wat verrig word deur die Vriende van die Faerie Glen Natuurreservaat (VFGNR) nie. Op Saterdag 3 September het die VFGNR en die Dendrologiese Vereniging weereens 'n inheemse boom in die arboretum geplant om boomplantdag te vier. Hierdie jaar het ons 'n *Ziziphus mucronata* (blinkblaar-wag-'n-bietjie/buffalo-thorn) geplant. Hierdie mediumgrootte boom kom natuurlik in die FGNR voor en is gewild vir tradisionele medisyne en rituele. 'n Mens sien dikwels dat hierdie bome vir hul bas gestroop word. Indien te veel bas geoes word, kan dit veroorsaak dat die boom doodgaan.

Hierdie jaar se boom is spesiaal opgedra aan Jutta von Breitenbach, wat op 11 Augustus op 85-jarige ouderdom oorlede is. Jutta en haar man, Fried, was die stigterslede van die Dendrologiese Vereniging wat in 1980 tot stand gekom het om bewusmaking te kweek en die bewaring van inheemse bome te bevorder. Te danke aan al die werk wat hulle ingeploeg het, het die vereniging gegroei en is daar landswyd takke vandag. Die vereniging se lede bestaan uit beide leke en akademië vanuit verskillende oorde. Dendrologie is inderdaad vir almal. Vir meer inligting oor die Dendrologiese Vereniging, besoek gerus hul Facebook-blad by <https://www.facebook.com/DendroSA>



Die entoesiastiese groep lede van die VFGNR en die Dendrologiese Vereniging onder leiding van Izak van der Merwe (met pienk gieter) by Jutta se boomplaatjie. 'n Plaatjie sal later opgesit word as die boom groter is.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 19 October at the NG Church in Glenwood Avenue. The meeting was well attended and those present at the meeting were treated to a fascinating talk and presentation by Carol Martin of the Adopt Moreletaspruit Forum on the history of the Moreletaspruit. Amendments to the constitution were accepted by members present and proxies received by non-attendees. Two more people also volunteered to act on the committee. We welcome Peter Teurlings and Estelle Swart.



After a very dry winter and even drier spring, the rain finally arrived in mid-October. It seems that the game in the FGNR decided to arrange their own AGM one morning among the new green foliage.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Grassland walk with botanist Petro Lemmer:

When: Saturday 12 November at 07:00

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

Bring along: Hat, comfortable shoes, water.

10x magnifying glass (not compulsory)

Field guide books (not compulsory) by

Van Wyk & Malan / E. Pooley / K. Gill

Cost: FFGNR members –FREE

Non-members – R50.00

Invasive plant hacks:

When: • Sunday 27 November at 07:30

• Saturday 10 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.**

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