



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

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### Spring Newsletter 2017

The Faerie Glen Nature Reserve (FGNR) as well as Gauteng and the summer rainfall regions of the country have been blessed with good spring and early summer rain. The Western Cape on the other hand, is still in the grip of the drought, and might run out of water before its next rainfall season in autumn 2018. Of even greater concern is the fact that South Africa suffers water losses of R7 billion annually, due to crumbling infrastructure and pollution of water sources.

According to water scientist Dr. Anthony Turton, the Vaal system is under great pressure due to high salinity levels. The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) has known this since 2008 when an internal study was done. Two things needed to be done urgently, which have still not been addressed: the implementation of the acid-mine drainage projects and the upgrading of all the sewage works. Furthermore, the second phase of the Lesotho Highlands Water project has been delayed and it can be expected that Gauteng will remain water constrained until at least 2025. Gauteng, which is the smallest province, provides 65% of the national economy and almost 50% of the population.

The City of Tshwane (CoT) is a rapidly expanding metropolitan region with most of the growth and expansions taking place in the east. All of this development is placing additional stress on the existing water and sanitation infrastructure. Sewage in the Moreletaspruit is a constant dilemma. However, everyone can contribute to address this problem, by reporting sewage leaks and open manholes and making sure that no rain water on their property is directed into the sewerage system. Reports can be made to CoT Customer Care: (012) 358-9999; [customercare@tshwane.gov.za](mailto:customercare@tshwane.gov.za).



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



### Lente Nuusbrief 2017



Rooibokrammetjies voor 'n gordyn van bosverdigting.

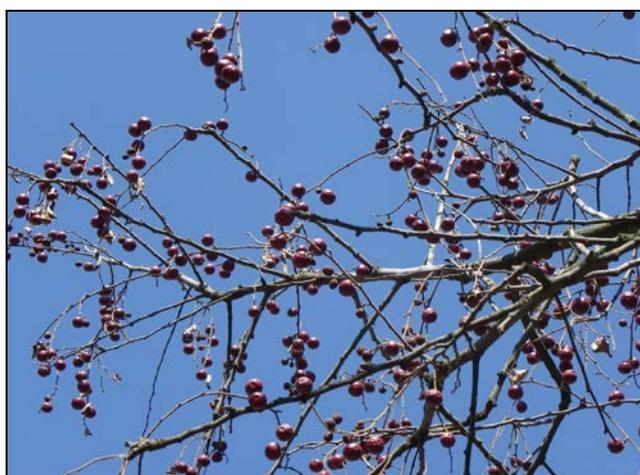
Met die vroeë lentereën wat neergedaal het op die laaste dag van September, is enige planne van CoT Natuurbewaring om blokbrande toe te pas in die FGNR geblus. Nog reën het gevolg vroeg in Oktober en die landskap het vergroen binne 'n kort tydperk.

Vuur speel 'n belangrike rol in die bestuur van die reservaat se ekosisteem. Een van die hoof funksies is om bosverdigting te bekamp, maar ook om te keer dat te veel biomassa opbou wat kan veroorsaak dat 'n ongeluksvuur baie brandstof het. Natuurlik is daar sekere plantspesies wat baie afhanklik is van vuur vir hulle voortbestaan, soos meerjarige blomplante met ondergrondse wortelstokke, knolle en risome, asook grasse wat gestimuleer word deur vuur. Spesies kan selfs verlore gaan indien vuur te lank afwesig is en bosverdigting begin oorneem. Meer as tagtig persent van die spesies, wat aan die grasveld-bloom sy hoë diversiteit verleen, is nie grasse nie. Die FGNR gaan erg gebuk onder bosverdigting en groot dele van die reservaat is in baie jare nie gebrand nie. Die reservaat se weidingskapasiteit neem ook af as gevolg hiervan.

On Saturday 2 September, the FFGNR and the Dendrological Society continued their tradition of planting a tree for Arbour Day. Only trees that occur naturally in the region are planted and only in the disturbed areas of the reserve, which are the entrance area and the arboretum situated in the picnic area. These areas were originally ploughed by farmers, which classifies it as having a low ecological sensitivity due to loss of species diversity. The 2017 tree of the year is *Ziziphus mucronata* (Buffalo-thorn/ Blinkblaar-wag-'n-bietjie). We thank Danie van Eeden from Wild Route Nursery in Zwavelpoort (Saints Street, Plot 92) for sponsoring the tree. Visit his website for more info: [www.wildroute.co.za](http://www.wildroute.co.za).



Theunis Morgenthal from the Dendrological Society in action preparing the hole for the tree.



The large red fruits of the Buffalo thorn hanging from the bare branches of the tree in winter and spring.

The Buffalo thorn occurs naturally in the FGNR and is quite abundant. The largest specimens in the FGNR grow in the flat woodlands where their roots have access to groundwater. The closely related underground tree *Ziziphus zeyheriana* also occurs in the area, bearing the same sized fruits as its bigger relative.



*Ziziphus zeyheriana* (Dwarf buffalo-thorn/Dwerg-blinkblaar-wag-'n-bietjie) looks identical to its larger relative, apart from only the leaves being visible above ground.

The Afrikaans common name is quite descriptive and hikers would know that getting hooked on a small branch can hold you up for a while. One also has to be careful not to slip on the fallen fruits as they are like a layer of marbles lying in the pathways. The Buffalo thorn, however, is a tree with a multitude of uses, namely: its bark, seeds and roots have traditional medicinal uses for the treatment of pain, respiratory problems, infections, snake bites, diarrhoea, rheumatism and even measles. During the Great Trek the seeds were roasted and grinded and used as a substitute for coffee. In Zimbabwe the fruits are used to make an alcoholic beverage or *mampoer*, called 'kachaso'. The young leaves of the tree can also be cooked and eaten as spinach. Furthermore, the tree is a valuable source of nectar for honey bees, while the wood is durable and termite resistant and also makes good firewood and charcoal. Due to the high level of tannin in the bark, it is also suitable for colouring and tanning.

Op Saterdag 4 November was die FFGNR weer geëerd om begelei te word deur botanis Petro Lemmer vir die jaarlikse veldblomuitstappie. Oor die sestig spesies is waargeneem tydens die kort stappie, wat net 'n klein area gedek het oos van die piekniekarea en arboretum en 'n gedeelte van die vloedvlakte.

Die grasveld-bioom is besonder ryk aan plantdiversiteit, asook voël- en reptielspesies. Hierdie bioom is egter klein in vergelyking met die ander biome van suidelike Afrika en die res van die kontinent en is onder geweldige druk van versteuring deur mynbou, landbou, bosbou, asook stedelike ontwikkeling. Sesitig persent daarvan is

reeds vernietig en slegs twee persent word formeel beskerm in reservate. Indringerplante, bosverdigting, te kort aan vuur, asook die stroping van medisinale plante uit die veld is die grootste probleme in bewaringsareas.



Petro Lemmer (links) besig om die familieuitleg van die planteryk te verduidelik.



*Sphenostylis angustifolia* (Wilde-ertjie/Wild sweetpea) is 'n meerjarige struik met 'n houtagtige ondergrondse wortelstok.

The FFGNR work very hard to rid the FGNR of alien invasive species threatening the reserve's biodiversity. Every month there is a plant hack, which mainly targets the Category 1b *Lantana camara* on the ridge, where dense stands have established over many years. It is uncertain how old the infestation is, but it is likely to be older than fifty years. Once used in wedding bouquets, it was such a popular shrub that horticulturists tampered with the plant's genes to produce a variety of colours, ranging from red and orange to yellow and pink. Due to this genetic manipulation, bio-control (the natural enemy from the plant's country of origin in tropical America) is ineffective, as the organisms are host-specific and not interested in the modified species.

Hacks were held on 13 August, 9 September, 15 October and 11 November. We thank those who assisted. Special thanks go to member Francois Neethling, who is blind, but did a superb job of popping Lantana with the FFGNR's tree-poppers.



Francois Neethling (right) and Mark Pretorius with the octopus-like Lantana he popped with the tree-popper.



Edwin van de Wiel, cutting down and chopping an invasive Chinese elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*).

Of course the main heavy lifting is done by Edwin and Vincent van de Wiel, who are in charge of the FFGNR's chainsaw. Visitors to the reserve might have noticed the 'gaps' next to the river where they have cut down mainly *Ulmus parvifolia* (Chinese elm/Chinese iep) and *Gleditsia triacanthos* (Honey locust/Soetpeulboom). When the chainsaw is resting, they can be seen with the tree-poppers on Wednesday and Friday mornings. Anyone is welcome to join them during the holiday season if they would like to get some healthy constructive exercise. The pompom-season (*Campuloclinium macrocephalum*) has also arrived and Simon Skosana (partially sponsored by Tony & Beverley Moore) has been hunting the first sprouts. It is important to try and spray the pompom before the flower-heads form.



Simon Skosana (right) painting the stump of the felled tree with herbicide to prevent it to coppice.

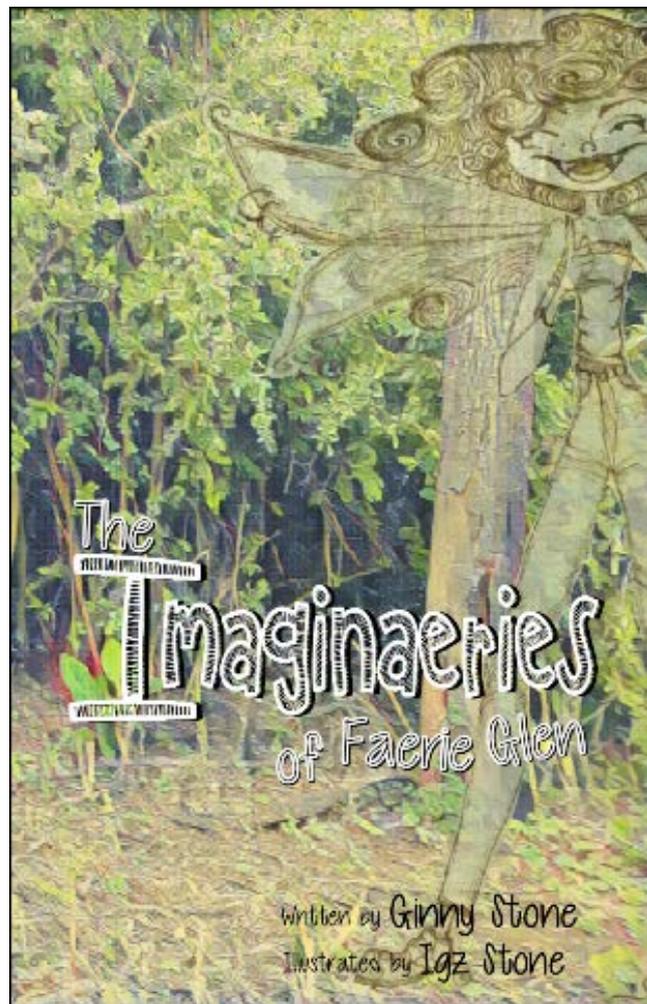
Not only is the reserve's indigenous flora magnificent from an ecological and visual perspective, but it is also magical. The intricacies and ambience in the reserve, formed by its fauna and flora opens up the imagination to those who take a moment to take in their surroundings.

Member and creative writer Ginny Stone decided to write a children's book - a modern-day fairy tale based in our very own glen. Although it is a children's book for ages roughly 9-13 years, adults will enjoy it just as much, for the story is witty and whimsical. Knowing the reserve and the creatures that inhabit it makes the tale even more entertaining. Note that no creature is called by its natural history name and this is part of the amusement. It is a truly South African and local story with reference to some socio-economic aspects, portrayed in hilarious fashion. The invasive plant species in the FGNR also do not go by unnoticed and the other hotly contested 'weed' topic can be read between the lines.

The magical characters are very much mythical, yet some were inspired by real people in the author's life. Ginny's daughter, Igz Stone illustrated some of the characters in the book. For the book launch at the FGNR on 25 November little pins with the illustrated characters were handed out to those purchasing a book along with a free muffin. A portion of the proceeds of the sale of the books will be donated to the FFGNR.

For more information, visit the website: <https://imaginaeries.co.za/> - or contact Ginny Stone 082 564 9301 / [ginz.stone@gmail.com](mailto:ginz.stone@gmail.com).

Also, go to and like the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/imaginaeries/>



The cover of *The Imaginaeries of Faerie Glen* book.

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### Bird walk with Philip Calinikos:

**When:** Saturday 13 January at 06:00

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

**Bring along:** Hat, binoculars, water.

**Cost:** FFGNR members –FREE

Non-members – R50.00

### Invasive plant hacks:

**When:** • Saturday 20 January at 07:30

• Sunday 18 February at 07:30

• Saturday 17 March 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 at Menlyn Maine Central Square, for sponsoring the printing of this newsletter and our posters. To view this newsletter in colour/electronically, please visit our website: [www.fgnr.co.za](http://www.fgnr.co.za).