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www.fgnr.co.za



admin@fgnr.co.za



faerie.glen.nature.reserve



Jaco 071 140 4412



PO Box 915-1496



Louise 072 275 0614

Faerie Glen, 0043



Fax 086 657 8440

Summer Newsletter 2018



A dramatic sunrise in FGNR photographed just before autumn by Tienie Cronjé.

As the end of summer draws near with, some trees flashing the odd autumn leaf, we can also expect the last of the season's rain to fall. Pretoria and the rest of Gauteng are situated within South Africa's summer rainfall region, while the Western Cape receives rainfall in winter. Cape Town is experiencing the worst drought the city has ever had to deal with and is in desperate need of good winter rain to prevent Day Zero – when the city's demand for water outstrips supply. While all eyes are on Cape Town, other provinces (particularly the Eastern Cape) are also experiencing similar conditions. The drought has now been declared a national disaster by government.

Pretorians should check their own water use, as the water utility, Rand Water, has already started to impose water supply limits on municipalities from the end of January. This follows a notification by Rand Water that the abstraction of water from the Vaal Dam surpassed the limit established by the Department of Water and Sanitation.

Somer Nuusbrief 2018



'n Vetgevrete rooibokrammetjie in FGNR. Hy is Stompie gedoop vanweë sy een horing wat gedeeltelik afgebreek is. Dit het waarskynlik gebeur tydens 'n twis met 'n ander rammetjie.

City of Tshwane's (CoT) Utility Services MMC, Darryl Moss, also stated that Rand Water has set a limit on its water supply to the city for the next ten years. Given the expansion rate of metropolitan areas in CoT, this restriction places added pressure on this limited resource and calls for much better planning and, above all, water saving measures.

Environmental scientists warn South Africans that demand for water is increasing due to population and development growth. At the same time the evaporative demand of the atmosphere is also increasing. This, coupled with the destruction of wetlands, unchecked groundwater abstraction and water pollution, is fostering a time bomb, that, if ignored can have catastrophic consequences for humans and the environment. It is the responsibility of all of us to protect and save water and to inspire others to do the same.

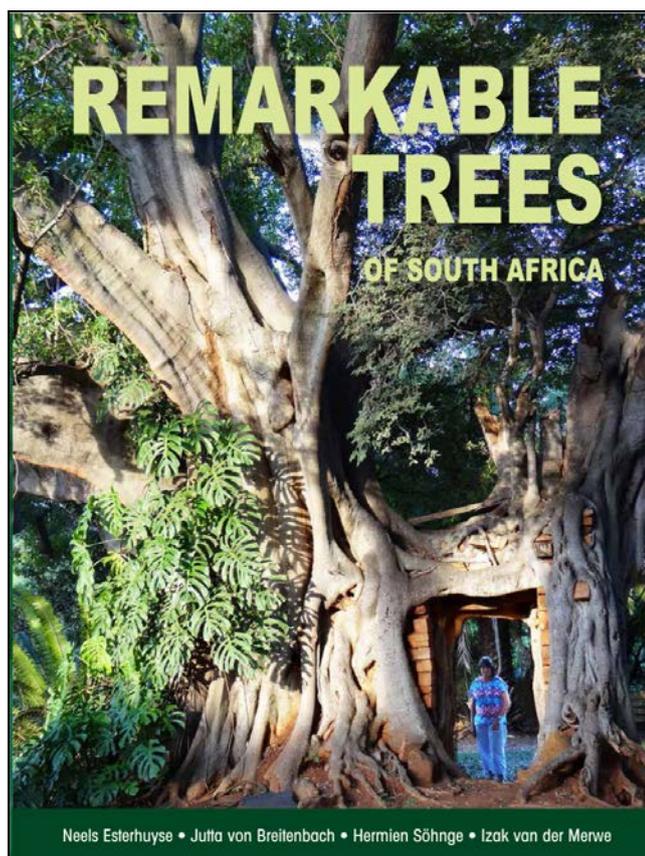


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Suid-Afrikaners is nie altyd bewus van die ryk natuurerfenis waaroor ons beskik nie. Tydens die VFGNR se algemene jaarvergadering op 8 November 2017, het Izak van der Merwe, as gasspreker, 'n visuele voorlegging gedoen van 'n boek wat handel oor Suid-Afrika se boomerfenis. Hy is mede-outeur van *Remarkable Trees of South Africa*. Hierdie boek bevat baie interessante inligting. Dit bied 'n oorsig oor die bosbougeskiedenis, lys en beskryf van die grootste bome (beide inheems en uitheems) en dek ook 'n handvol plantfamilies waaraan hierdie kenmerkende en geskiedkundige bome van Suid-Afrika behoort. Beslis 'n boek om aan te beveel aan enigeen wat 'n belangstelling in plante, geskiedenis of beide het. Vir die wat visueel ingestel is, is daar meer as 200 kleurfoto's ingesluit.

Izak is al vir baie jare betrokke by die VFGNR om die arboretum te bevorder. Hy is 'n lid van die Dendrologiese Vereniging waar hy verantwoordelik is vir die Groot Boom register, terwyl hy in sy kapasiteit by die Departement van Bosbou en Vissery die koördineerder is van die Groot Boom Projek.



Die voorblad van *Remarkable Trees of South Africa*, uitgegee deur Briza uitgewers in 2016 in hardeband.
ISBN: 978-1-920217-66-2. Besoek die webwerf www.briza.co.za vir meer inligting.

As members of VFGNR would know by now, combating the highly invasive pompom weed (*Campuloclinium macrocephalum*) during the summer months is critical. Pompom weed is an ornamental herb belonging to the Asteraceae (Daisy) family. It is declared as a category 1b invasive weed by the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEMBA) (Act no. 10 of 2004). This means that propagation is prohibited by law and landowners must take action to eradicate and control the weed. It remains a mystery as to how and when this long-stemmed plant with pink inflorescences made its way to South Africa. It originates from South and Central America, occurring naturally in Argentina in the south, to Costa Rica, Honduras and Mexico in Central America. It was first recorded in South Africa as becoming naturalised in the vicinity of Durban in 1972 and two years later it was spotted at the Fountains Valley in Pretoria, from where it expanded to other areas in Pretoria. From 2000 onwards, pompom weed invasions have exploded in Pretoria, with the Rietvlei Nature Reserve exhibiting one of the densest infestations.

Apart from being an irritant leading to hay fever and eczema, pompom weed is also unpalatable for game and livestock and can drastically diminish the grazing capacity of an area of veld. It therefore has dire consequences for both conservation and farming alike. The Agricultural Research Council's Plant Protection Research Institute has done substantial research on bio-control agents. Leaf-feeding thrips (*Liothrips tractabilis* from Argentina) has been released in Rietvlei and other areas in recent years, but the effectiveness of these insects will only become known in years to come.



After spending winter in a dormant state underground, leaves are the first part of the plant that can be observed as it emerges in late spring and early summer.

These thrips were also released in a small area in the FGNR during the summer of 2014, but eventually succumbed, presumably to predation and due to cold conditions which persist throughout the winter months. The FFGNR have opted to combat the pompom weed chemically, and have been doing so since February 2014. It is imperative not to skip a season of chemical treatment, to prevent setback where pompom weeds drop seed, establishing a whole new generation in the following season. We have made significant progress since 2014, with only a few pink pompom flower heads observed during the 2017/2018 summer. We extend our gratitude to Edwin and Vincent van de Wiel, who have hunted down the emerging pompom leaves throughout the reserve on a weekly basis, keeping this pink enemy in check.

Somer is sinoniem met groei en dit blyk 'n kompetisie te wees vir indringerplante. *Lantana camara* is ook hoog op die agenda vir die FFGNR en maandeliks word 'n 'hack', of uitroeiessie, gehou saam met lede, mense van die publiek en enige instansie wat wil hand bysit. Diegene wat kom help moet seker maak dat hulle handskoene aantrek, omdat die takke van uitheemse lantana oortrek is met skerp stekels. Hierdie stekels is nie ware dorings nie, deurdadig dit morfologies deel uitmaak van die plant se bas, soortgelyk aan rose.

'n Kombinasie van chemiese en meganiese metodes word gevolg. Die VFGNR se 'boom-poppers' word elke keer ingespan as deel van die meganiese proses. Deur middel van hefboomkrag kan die struik met wortel en tak uitgetrek word. Chemiese beheer word toegepas waar dit te klipperig is of wanneer stamme te dik is vir die meganiese toestel.



Edwin and Vincent van de Wiel and Hans Liedberg (members of FFGNR), with Prof. Geldenhuys and some of his students during the hack on 11 November 2017.



This group of eager teenagers from Woodhill College assisted the FFGNR on the very first hack of the year on 20 January. They were joined by a few girls from the Hatfield Christian Church. Cathy Marneweck (Life Science teacher at Woodhill College) next to Vincent van de Wiel (right), were in charge of the hacking herd. Jenny Bester (middle), the FFGNR's cat's claw matron, also taught a group of pupils about the cat's claw creeper and control methods for it.



Tanya Hibbert and her sons, Josh and Jordan, joined the hack on Sunday 18 February. You are never too young or too old to join one of our hacks!

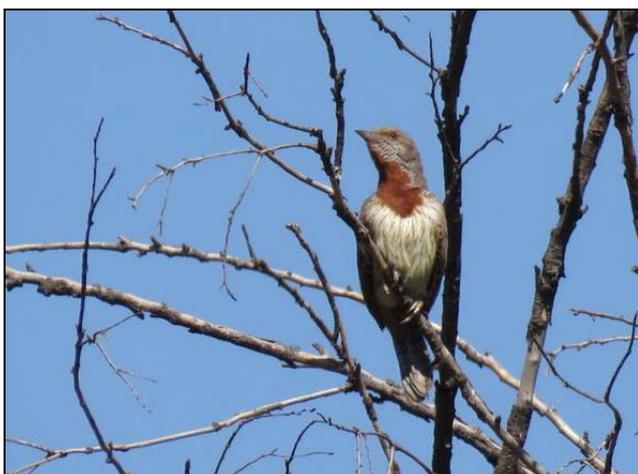
On a more recreational note, the FFGNR hosted a bird walk with bird guide Philip Calinikos from BirdLife Northern Gauteng on Saturday 13 January. A big group of bird enthusiasts arrived to see which species were out and about on this warm summer morning. A total of 65 bird species were recorded during the course of the morning, with one of the more curious sightings a leucistic Dark-capped Bulbul. This white specimen was easily spotted hopping among the branches of *Searsia pyroides* (Common wild currant / Gewone taaibos), attracted to the ripe fruit. This versatile shrub or small tree is an excellent garden subject, especially for attracting birds to the domestic garden.



Birders were armed with cameras and binoculars to better spot their subjects.



This rare sighting of a leucistic Dark-capped Bulbul (Swartoogtiptol) was photographed by, young bird enthusiast, Jandré Verster.



A Red-throated Wryneck (Draaihals) was seen sitting in one of the ring-barked invasive *Ulmus parvifolia* (Chinese elm) trees next to the river, also photographed by Jandré Verster. Bare branches of dead trees make for excellent bird perches.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Invasive plant species identification walk

When: Saturday 7 April at 08:00

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

Bring along: Hat, water, notepad.

Cost: FREE for all (excluding entrance fee for non-members).

Scorpion walk

When: Saturday 21 April at 09:30

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

Bring along: Hat, water, comfortable shoes.

Cost: FFGNR members –FREE

Non-members – R50.00

Invasive plant hacks

When: • Sunday 15 April at 07:30

• Saturday 19 May at 08:00

• Sunday 17 June at 08:00

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

Bring along: Pruning loppers, hand-saw, gloves, hat, working shoes, water.

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

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