



REDFORD CONSERVANCY

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News from Redford Conservancy : November 2012

Bushpig Steeplechase in The Craggs

We have often had signs of bushpig on our farm, but never a sighting. That changed dramatically in August 2012. Late one evening we let our dogs out for their last jaunt around the garden, and were alerted to a bushpig in the shed. On investigating carefully, all we could see was its back, as it was firmly tucked into a pile of gardening supplies, apparently sleeping. Not wanting to have it in there, we got it woken up and it hurtled out at speed, breaching the corrugated sheet wall of the shed as it went.

The next night it was back, and the one after. On the third day it stayed in the shed, and it was evidently lethargic and unwell. It now had its head turned towards us, with eyes, ears and snout partially visible, and unconcerned about the people around. It simply watched as we moved around and I even got up close enough to take some photographs. Later in the day our senior worker told me that it had a wire snare around its snout, buried deep in a skin groove and not visible till the pig turned its head to reveal the twist in the copper wire. I placed a call to Tenikwa Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre to ask for advice, and was able to speak to Jared, who promptly packed up his kit and came to help.



The initial plan was to net the bushpig and have it taken to Tenikwa. Despite their best efforts, four strong men could not budge it from its spot - we had clearly underestimated its size, having not seen it all, and it sat tight! The next best plan was to cut the snare, so the pig was gripped firmly and the wire was snipped. After that there was a further

attempt to net it, but there was a sudden burst of energy from the previously “calm” pig when one of the men got behind it. Squealing vociferously, it took off like a rocket on a circuit of the shed, Jared in hot pursuit with the net.

Suddenly the bushpig turned and saw Jared, changed direction and instead went after him, still squealing. Jared hurdled various obstacles in quick succession, the pig nipping at his legs, till it saw the break and once again went out through the wall of the shed.

We thought we had seen the last of the bushpig, but it was back again the same night, rooting in the arum lilies that it must have spent much time salivating over while it couldn't eat normally. It clearly did not harbour a grudge!

We commended Jared on his Olympian efforts - he went off back to Tenikwa with a story to tell, though unfortunately there was no record of his steeplechase as the speed at which it happened precluded any photos of the action! We were very grateful for the help that we had from Tenikwa - it is so reassuring to have them close to us, and so willing to help when it concerns an injured or threatened animal. Snares are such a cruel torture, an unforgiveably cruel way to try to catch a creature - we were very happy to have been able to help to give this piggy back its life. Or so we thought, as the story didn't end there.....



Within a couple of days we were aware that the bushpig had not left us for good. It was back in the shed, under the same pile of sacking that it previously had annexed, and pretty much immobile during the working day. We monitored it for two or three days, and then called Jared up again at Tenikwa, as it appeared to be really unwell. This time the full team came out to help - Magdalena, the vet, Jared and Kim. They brought a full medical kit and a large cage with a trapdoor. Magdalena took charge and in a short time had Kim holding an ether-soaked dressing to the snout of the pig to sedate it while she assessed it. After determining that it was in poor condition and definitely in need of help, everyone lent a hand and with some difficulty, as in its sedated state the bushpig was awkward and heavy to manoeuvre, heaved the pig into the cage.

It woke up during the process, and there was much squealing and cage-banging while the crew lifted the cage onto a trolley and got it out to the van. We were left with no uncertainty about how dangerous any attack on one of us could have been. Magdalena was pessimistic about the health of the bushpig - she said it was old and emaciated, its malnourishment clearly dating from well before it was caught in the snare. She was unsure what could be done for it, but was going to check it out carefully back at Tenikwa.

We subsequently heard that despite intensive treatment for a couple of days, the bushpig developed organ failure and did not survive. We were saddened by that, but glad that it had been looked after at the end of its life. On reflection it appeared that it may have been captive and partly domesticated earlier in its life, as it was a castrated male, and its condition may well have been due to an inability to forage for itself after a sudden release back to the wild. This could also explain why it took up residence in our shed; a totally unlikely thing for a truly wild bushpig to do.



It was a sad end to the story, but we are gladdened to have got to know members of the very special team that works at Tenikwa in service of our wildlife. Thank you to all of you - your dedication is enormously appreciated.

Sharon and Neil van Hees

Tale of an Eagle Owl Rescue in the Crag

On a Wednesday in October, after a long-damp-grey-misery spell of weather in our otherwise beautiful and perfect Crag, I decided to head out with my dogs for an evening walk down to Whisky Creek. The evening was wonderful, the air, champagne and when I got to the river I couldn't resist going just a little further, even though the sun was setting. I was full of spring energy and before I could think twice I was up on top of the ridge on the far side! Then, as the evening was spectacular I just had to continue on heading along the edge of the Whisky Creek reserve towards the mountains (by then I was growling to myself about getting benighted and breaking my neck, but I took no notice...!) The fynbos was magnificent and I was happily at my usual occupation (pulling wattles as I stride along) when I noticed something that looked like rubbish hanging from the barbed wire fence running along the edge of the reserve. I hesitated, then stopped dead, and stared at the rubbish. I wondered slowly and stupidly about it looking just like a bunch of large feathers hanging there!



Then, shockingly, the 'rubbish' suddenly turned brilliant yellow eyes on me, and clacked its beak and hissed! I was thunderstruck! I was staring into the eyes of an Eagle Owl hanging from its shoulder, impaled on the barbs of the fence.

She had probably been there for days. Oh! My! Gosh! What to do? Of course I had no phone on me and certainly no wire cutters! I thought of taking off my T shirt to throw over her head, but what if I couldn't get her off the wire... and what if she needed treatment? And I couldn't carry her back; home was miles away across the river! What to do!? My second thought: Mandy! Tenikwa! Help!

I galloped several kilometres as fast as I could (well trotted breathlessly to be honest!) to the nearest neighbours who, thank goodness, were up and ready for an emergency and quickly called 911 (i.e. Tenikwa!)? Mandy, having taken the call, without stopping to finish her tea, leapt into her bakkie and set off, all sirens blazing, doing a death defying high speed drive to the scene!

Once there, Mandy was all calm efficiency. After getting a towel over the owl's head to stop it tearing our loving hands to shreds, and getting someone to hang on to its fierce talons, she slowly tried to separate the poor bird from the barbs impaling it. It was thoroughly stuck and eventually wire cutters were the only thing for it! At last the bird was free and Mandy whisked her back to the wildlife hospital at Tenikwa to get her wounds seen to and get her re-hydrated.

After the rescue I felt thrilled and elated! I felt so honoured to have been able to assist a magnificent and endangered owl back to life and freedom, and to save it from such a horrible slow death. Thank you Tenikwa!

Needless to say I was benighted on my way back home and eventually arrived scratched, and dishevelled from pushing my way through thorns, but I felt no pain! My heart was light as a feather and there were fireflies dancing in the dark of the forest all the way. And frogs and cicadas were serenading me....ok, ok, I will shut up now...!

One last word, my dogs were very unimpressed about being late for their dinner and grumbled firmly at me that they could have dealt with that owl in no time, given half a chance...!!

Written by Jane Luck.

CONSERVANCY EVENTS : REPORT BACK 2012

Redford Conservancy events this year focused on promoting the establishment of corridors of indigenous vegetation through the conservancy area to allow for the migration of plants and wildlife from the mountainous areas through to the Whisky Creek Nature Reserve and beyond to the coast.

The increase in human development (agriculture and housing) in the Craggs has meant the disappearance of much of the original fynbos and indigenous forest. Indigenous vegetation is steadily being ploughed up and replaced by grape vines and pasture land. This means that our wildlife is rapidly losing its traditional habitat and food sources. Also, fencing of properties is forcing wildlife onto the streets (literally!) As fences go up dividing the properties, the bush buck and other creatures increasingly have to use road verges to find food.

We have focused our events on trying to alert landowners to the migratory needs of wildlife in the hope of encouraging them to set aside unfenced passages on their properties for the free movement of wildlife, and to replant indigenous vegetation in areas where it has been lost. The hope is to prevent the wildlife disappearing from the Craggs area forever.

Sanparks provided us with maps of the Craggs showing the areas of critically endangered biodiversity. We have encouraged landowners to notice where their property is placed on these maps and to give some thought as to how they can preserve these areas thereby contributing to the movement of wildlife over parts of their property. One of our events was aimed at showing how some landowners are reclaiming their river systems as indigenous corridor for wildlife by keeping alien plants out and promoting the planting and re-growth of indigenous species.

Another of our events involved a hike to the top of the Craggs above Kurland, from which vantage point it is possible to look down on the Redford area as a whole. The devastating effect of the unchecked invasion of alien trees such as Wattles, Blackwoods, Gums and Pines was clearly visible. These invader trees, along with agriculture and fencing, are a huge threat to biodiversity. The loss of biodiversity in turn sounds the death knell for wildlife in the conservancy area.

Many people move to the Craggs because they love wildlife and enjoy the clean rural atmosphere. They often don't realise they are contributing to the loss of wildlife by developing and fencing their properties in non 'wildlife friendly' ways. The Conservancy is committed to trying to increase awareness of more 'wildlife friendly' means of developing properties so that the wildlife, that still graces our lovely area, can have a place in the Craggs in times to come.

Jane Luck

EK SKRIK VIR NIKS

Ek is n groot bobbejiaan
Ek kom en ek gaan
Ek skrik vir niks!

Ek klim in die bome
En Nature's Valley strome
Ek skrik vir niks!

Maar gee my bietjie kos
Dan kom ek uit die bos
Ek skrik vir niks!

As ons niks het in ons pense
Dan kom ons na jou spense
Ons skrik vir niks!

Ons klouter op jul huise
En gaan in jul kombuise
Ons skrik vir niks!

Ons maak jul vensters oop
Daar is niks wat ons laat loop
Ons skrik vir niks!

Dan gaan ons na die woude
Waar ons spog met ons mooi boude
Ons skrik vir niks!



(With apologies to Kaz, Nature's Valley residents, and all who deal with the problem of interaction between man and baboons)

Colleen Noble

News from the 2012 Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Redford Conservancy was held on the 24th October 2012. It was preceded by a lovely bird walk guided by Gareth Robbins, who also gave a fine presentation on "Birding in the Plettenberg Bay area" after the formalities of the meeting. The following points of interest are detailed for the Newsletter. The full minutes of the AGM are available on request.

Committee for 2013

Colleen Noble – chairman (redfordhouse@mweb.co.za)

Denise Palframan – treasurer

Pru Bolus

Richard Bolus – greening and community

Jane Luck – events

David Collett – newsletter and environmental meetings

Sharon van Hees – secretary (mazoe5@mweb.co.za)

Inez Jamieson – events and support

Community

The Conservancy registered as IAPs, and maintains a watchful eye on the progress of the following-

- The Bitou Waste Management proposals
- The Jukani relocation project
- The Small Boat Harbour proposals
- The proposed new Bitou Eskom substation

Heritage

The historical barn on Sweetwaters Farm is just about completely renovated, and the foundations of the old mill have been discovered. The Barn is to be used as the venue for a local art exhibition in December (more details elsewhere in this newsletter).

Website

The website for the Redford Conservancy is up and running through www.showmeplett.co.za

Garbage and Recycling

Information signs are to be made and erected in the New Year at the Redford Road intersection garbage pickup points, to encourage good citizen behaviour in respect of rubbish collection. Garbage separation for recycling purposes is encouraged, and information on recycling initiatives can be obtained from Sharon van Hees (tel. 044-5348142 / 083-4097556).

Annual subscriptions

Questions have been asked periodically about what is done with the fees that are paid by members, and why there is so little outflow from the Conservancy bank account. Here is the answer:

The Conservancy has over the last years been building up an emergency small bank reserve, for the event that there is a local conservation crisis that needs urgent support. This fund has now built up to approximately R13 000, but ideally it should hold between R15 000 and R20 000, to be a realistic crisis cushion. It has been possible to build this reserve through the generosity of members of the Conservancy, who ask for no remuneration or recognition for "jobs" done for the Conservancy, such as the following:

- Regular clearing of alien vegetation from the Redford Road verges, and other verges
- Monthly attendance of meetings and environmental forums
- Sending out of information and newsletters and the submission of articles of interest to the local press, printing and distribution of flyers
- The support and subsidisation of local and community environmental initiatives
- The arrangement of eco-excursions and events of conservational interest

After some discussion in committee, and later at the AGM, it has been decided that the annual membership fees for 2013 will be reduced by more than 50% on a trial basis. This is being done in order to encourage membership of the Conservancy, and make it less of a burden on already stretched budgets. This reduction is to be counterbalanced by making stronger suggestions for recommended donations at events that are organized by the Conservancy, i.e. hikes, picnics, etc., where visitors are also welcomed. In the last few months there have been calls on our funds for local community initiatives, and the committee has considered some of these favourably. With a boost in membership numbers and income, we can continue to do so.

To our loyal members – thank you for your continued support!
To those on our mailing list who are not members (yet!), or have been members before –
Please consider (re)joining us formally!

Membership fees for 2013

R50.00 per adult or R100.00 per household

Banking details – Standard Bank – Plettenberg Bay

Branch code: 050714

Account Name: Redford Conservancy

Account number: 384769470

Please use your name as the reference.

Email the proof of payment to redfordhouse@mweb.co.za or fax to 044-534 8188

Art exhibition at Sweetwaters Barn

Sweetwaters Barn opens its doors in December to host the Fine Art Signatures Exhibition 2012, which will run from the 20th to the 23rd December 2012 and will feature an array of artists from the Eastern and Western Cape.

The exhibition will display a range of top quality fine art paintings of all genres, ceramic art, sculpture and quilt making. Painting and quilting demonstrations will form part of the event. Hosting the exhibition will be Tertius van Huyssteen, Lizette van Huyssteen and Llise Dodd and invited artists are Karina Behr, Myfanwy Bekker, Nicky Stewart, David Thorpe, Malcolm Solomon, Guy Thesen, Bruce Dell, Jonathan Davies and Terry Zoeller.

The opening of the exhibition will take place at 5:30pm on Thursday the 20th of December and the keynote speaker will be Dr Clive Noble from Redford Guest House. Dr Noble is a world-renowned sports injury surgeon who has been the South African Olympic team doctor. Bramon Wine Estate, which operates in the Craggs area, will be offering guests samplings of their wines, while a coffee shop will serve coffee/tea, snacks and preserves.

The idea of doing an exhibition was sparked after artist Tertius van Huyssteen did a series of paintings of the old barn at Sweetwaters Farm. His inspiration for doing the paintings was to capture the actual work-in-progress renovation process of the barn. The barn was part of the original Redford Farm, which in turn comes with a very long and interesting history in itself.

Entrance to the exhibition is free and guests will be able to view and purchase top class artwork at reasonable prices.

Sweetwaters Farm is located just off the Redford Road at the Craggs.

For more information contact:

Tertius van Huyssteen E-mail: yeahlo@iafrica.com Cell: 082 369 9755

Restoration of the historical barn on Sweetwaters Farm

Well before the time I arrived to live permanently in The Craggs in 2008, I had heard about the old barn on Sweetwaters Farm. Constructed anywhere between 100 and 150 years previously, the local story claimed that its framework was constructed from Yellowwood. Being endeared to old buildings with the charm and atmosphere of our forefathers' history, coupled with my particular love of old wood and having once renovated our own pre-war first home, I always displayed a mild interest in its existence. I was not well acquainted with the owners at the time of Sweetwaters Farm and, in any event, the old building was always locked and chained as though no-one had set foot in it for decades. Its faded and peeling green corrugated exterior with characterful roofline, somewhat concaved in profile, hinted at its vintage. Sweetwaters Farm itself is in fact the original location of the mid-1800's farmstead of Redford which burnt down sometime in the 1950's.

I had no idea at that stage that I might one day be privileged to play a role in the restoration of the old barn. But indeed it came to pass that my neighbour and friend, Kobus van Huyssteen, became the new owner of Sweetwaters Farm in early 2011. In April of that year I saw the inside of the barn for the first time. Packed to the rafters with discarded objects of all sorts, both old and not so old, layered in many decades of grimy dust, crumbling clay plaster and mortar between the stone masonry, evidence of woodworm and water decay.....It was hard to establish, even seriously doubtful whether most of the poles and other profiles of timber used in the construction were yellowwood at all; and if so, how much of it could be saved. I visited the barn with Kobus on his monthly visits a few times more, and the idea of turning my hand to helping with its restoration became an unavoidable and exciting reality.

So in July 2011, with the significant help of a part-time worker, the project began. As we cleaned and sanded it, most of the woodwork was revealed to be not only yellowwood, but also what are believed to be entire ironwood tree trunks fashioned into pillars that support yellowwood tree trunk rafters. Stable-type and loft doors as well as a yellowwood loft floor were all stripped out, cleaned, treated for termite and replaced. Windows that were too decayed to restore were replaced with facsimile windows custom-made of old yellowwood that was acquired for the purpose. In fact we were lucky enough to obtain a supply of old yellowwood sufficient to replace virtually all of the structural wood that was beyond restoration. The barn is constructed on a compacted koffiekliip foundation; the stone walls are half a metre thick, up to a height of one metre or so; above that is timber framed with corrugated iron. We acquired additional corrugated iron of the same vintage and profile from demolitions in Cape Town. These were used to replace decayed or missing sections, and to complete the barn doors. Alongside the barn is an additional stone construction believed to have been a pigpen or similar small animal shelter. Additional stone masonry was necessary here, and it was also reroofed using antique corrugated iron.

Newspaper cladding was used as a dust seal on the planked yellowwood loft ceiling at a later stage in the barn's history. Articles from The Star dating back to 1942–1948 were still readable and some of those that were in better condition have been decoupage onto the yellowwood ceilings.

People with a history in The Craggs going back as far as the 1950's recall the colour of the barn to have been bright red (evidenced under the green during the restoration), and there is a photograph on record from the 1970's when this was still the case. The colour of the barn has now been changed back from green to red; although in fact it appeared that the very first layer of paint was evidently black!

The photograph below shows the barn as it is today.

Neil van Hees

