

FoZR Newsletter

FoZR is an apolitical, community-based, non-profit organisation that aims to assist the nature reserve authorities to protect the much-threatened flora and fauna that make this corner of the Cape Flats their home.



Upcoming Events

TBC Check the website (www.zeekoevlei.co.za) and the Friends of Zeekoevlei & Rondevlei Facebook page for details on the next event in June!



Photo: Drawn-down Rondevlei

Want to become a FoZR Member?

Visit the website: www.zeekoevlei.co.za or follow the link below:

<http://www.zeekoevlei.co.za/fozr-membership-form/>



Rondevlei Draw-down Walk

On Saturday, 20 May 2017 a crowd gathered at the Rondevlei Section of False Bay Nature Reserve to participate in an informative walk on the drawn-down Rondevlei.

Accompanying the Friends on the walk was a number of local community members, as well as community groups travelling from as far as Franschoek! A host of young and old alike spent the morning being enlightened by the ever-knowledgeable Dalton Gibbs, Area Manager for the City reserves in the South.

Dalton led the group out onto Rondevlei, stopping every so often to explain the dynamics of the valuable ecosystem, while weaving in copious amounts of relevant historical information about the area itself. The group had the opportunity to walk through the reeds on one of the large, famous hippo pathways (some wide enough to drive a small vehicle through!).

One of the interesting topics discussed along the walk was the geology of the area and the soil profile of Rondevlei. Dalton also gave the group an interesting talk on the invasive grass (*Paspalum vaginatum*) from Argentina that the hippo were brought in to control. Along the way the group saw a chameleon, otter scat, porcupine scat and quills, as well as hippo tracks.



The group then headed out onto the Erica Field, where Dalton discussed various plant species such as the Rondevlei Spiderhead (*Serruria aemula foeniculacea*), the Cape Flats Erica (*Erica verticillata*), and the Cape Flats Cone Bush (*Leucadendron levisanus*).

After the walk, the group had the opportunity to relax in the tearoom, enjoying refreshments along with some delicious chocolate crunchies and apple doughnuts, supplied by Colleen McDowell and Dalton Gibbs.

Many thanks to Dalton for leading the walk and for once again sharing his knowledge with the group.



Rondevlei Ecological Burn

The False Bay Nature Reserve Team undertook an ecological burn at the Rondevlei Section on Tuesday, 23 May 2017.

The burn was prescribed in order to control the growth of reeds (*Typha capensis*). Although this species is not an alien invasive plant, and plays a vital role in purifying the polluted city water that flows into wetlands, the influx of nutrients entering wetlands causes a rapid increase in reed growth. The burn reduces the nutrient loading in the reed beds, particularly of material that has been cut. This in turn also reduces the *Typha* seeds (the fluff) that is produced by the plant in autumn.

The burn was successfully conducted with near perfect weather conditions. The reeds were cut and burnt a year ago – showing just how quickly they have grown!



Photo: (C. Williams, 2017)



Photo: Rondevlei burn from tearoom (D. Gibbs, 2017)

Leonotis leonurus

Wild dagga



Leonotis leonurus, also known as lion's tail and wild dagga, is a plant species in the Lamiaceae (mint) family, and a firm favourite in South African gardens for its colourful flower display and its ability to attract nectar-feeding sunbirds.

This plant is a perennial, fast-growing, tough shrub native to South Africa and southern Africa and can be seen flowering at Rondevlei during the autumn months.

Despite its common name (wild dagga) and being known for its medicinal and mild psychoactive properties (due to the chemical property leonurine), it is in no way related to Cannabis.

Nectivorous birds primarily pollinate *Leonotis leonurus*, due to the sweet nectar produced and the flower presentation and structure supporting this pollination mechanism. The curved beak of sunbirds used for feeding from the tubular flowers, has been a contributing factor to the brilliant orange-red colour tubular shape of these flowers.



References:

Turner, S. (2001). *Leonotis leonurus*. [online] Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden. Available at: <https://pza.sanbi.org/leonotis-leonurus.htm> [Accessed 21 May. 2017].

Butterflies of the Cape Peninsula

The Dark Opal – *Chrysoritis nigricans nigricans*

Chrysoritis nigricans nigricans, the dark opal, is a butterfly of the Lycaenidae family found only in South Africa. Once known from several localities along the Table Mountain range, but has now most likely completely disappeared from the area. The butterfly has not been seen for years, or very rarely so, in or near the Peninsula. This butterfly has a wingspan of 22-33mm for males and 23-38mm for females, with a flight period from September – April, peaking in October/November and March. The larvae feed on a number of *Thesium* species, such as *Osteospermum*.

Lepidopterists realised that the existence of the dark opal was threatened many years ago and in 1976 it was placed on the protected list of the Cape Province, together with the now probably extinct Lion's Head copper. However nothing was ever done to protect any of the habitats of these two species. Successive fires that killed the mature butterflies, their brood and their food plants in their special habitats have adversely affected the survival of this truly magnificent butterfly.

Lets hope the same doesn't happen to the critically endangered *Kedestes barberae bunta*, currently only found in False Bay Nature Reserve.



Set of *Chrysoritis nigricans zwartbergae* (Photo: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chrysoritis_nigricans_zwartbergae,_stel.jpg)

References:

Claassens, A.J.M. (2006). Fire and butterflies on Table Mountain. *Veld & Flora*, [online] pp.92-93. Available at: http://pza.sanbi.org/sites/default/files/info_library/fire_butterflies_tablemountain.pdf [Accessed 21 Apr. 2017].

Woodhall, Steve (2005). *Field Guide to Butterflies of South Africa*. Cape Town, South Africa: Struik. ISBN 978-1-86872-724-7.

False Bay Nature Reserve Birdathon

BirdLife South Africa, the **Cape Bird Club** and the **City of Cape Town** hosted their fifth annual False Bay Nature Reserve Birdathon on Saturday, 6 May 2017 on the eastern shore of Zeekoevlei and the Strandfontein Section of the reserve. The event is designed for individuals from all backgrounds and of all ages. Kicking off the day participants are invited to partake in a Fun Walk, starting on the eastern shore of Zeekoevlei and then heading into the Strandfontein Section. This affords community members the opportunity to enjoy and experience the nature reserve right on their doorstep. The walk consists of three educational routes, where Environmental Education stands are set up along the way, providing information on biodiversity at False Bay Nature Reserve, as well as questionnaires that could be filled in to enter a lucky draw prize.

Despite a cold and windy morning, the event welcomed around 800 participants, including a number of pre-registered schools, automatically entering them into a lucky draw prize giving them a chance to win a camp with CTEET, or an outing to the Two Oceans Aquarium. The two lucky schools that won were Perivale Primary School and Levana Primary School. After a refreshing walk participants could enjoy the festival component of the event, where a number of fun, and interesting exhibitors were present, including the ever-popular Eagle Encounters, and the Cape Reptile Association. The Melomed Hospital Group was a key sponsor again this year, along with the company Aquelle who sponsored bottled water for the event. A number of food vendors from the local community were also present to sell food – of which almost every one sold out! Members of the Cape Bird Club, the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB), Bird Life South Africa and staff of False Bay Nature Reserve all prepared fun interactive exhibits for the younger children to get involved in, while a school band kept the festival-feel alive.



FoZR Committee

Chair – Dee Cranswick

Treasurer – Tracy Gibbs

Secretary – Nicky Stock

Fundraising – Tom Schwerdtfeger

Activities – Neil Major

Reserve Liaison – Liz Day

New to FoZR: Colleen McDowell



Critically endangered
Kedestes barberae bunta,
currently only found in the
False Bay Nature Reserve.
(Image: Ismat Adams)

Contacts

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