



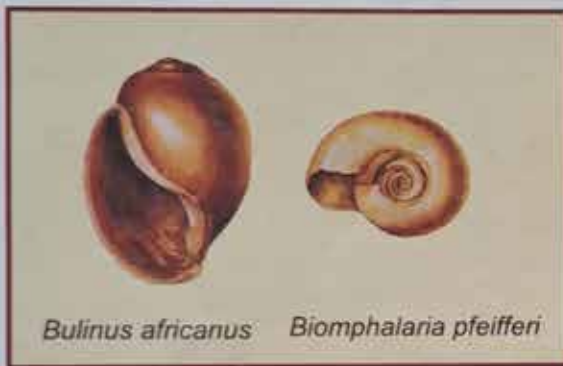
Envira

Newsletter of the Focus Area of Environmental Science and Management

North-West University

Nasionale Varswaterslakversameling

deur Prof KN de Kock



Bulinus africanus *Biomphalaria pfeifferi*

Dit is minder algemeen bekend dat een van die mees omvattende en volledig-gedokumenteerde versamelings van varswaterdiere, naamlik die Nasionale Varswaterslakversameling by die Skool van Omgewingswetenskappe en Ontwikkeling in die JS van der Merweggebou gehuisves word. As tussengashere van helmintparasiete wat onder andere bilharzia en fascioliose (lewerbot) kan veroorsaak, speel varswaterslakke 'n belangrike rol in die gesondheid van mens en dier. Die gebrek aan inligting oor die geografiese verspreiding van die tussengasheerslakke wat hierdie siektes dra, het in die vroeë vyftigerjare van die vorige eeu aanleiding gegee tot die ontstaan van die Slaknavorsingseenheid by die voormalige PU vir CHO met prof. JA van Eeden as direkteur. Die Slaknavorsingseenheid is aanvanklik deur die WNNR en later deur die SAMNR befonds.

Uitgebreide slakopnames is in samewerking met staats- en plaaslike-gesondheidsowerhede onderneem. Omdat die identiteit van die meeste slakke wat gedurende daardie tyd versamel is onseker was, is verskeie taksonomiese studies gedoen. Hierdie aktiwiteite het in 1980 tot die dokumentering van die medies- en veeartsenykundig-belangrike varswaterslakke in 'n atlas gelei.

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Alhoewel die Slaknavorsingseenheid met die affrede van prof. JA van Eeden in 1986 ontbind is en aktiwiteite as gevolg van verplasing van personeel grootliks afgeskaal is, word die inligting steeds versamel en in 'n gerekenariseerde databank opgeneem. Tans is ongeveer 40 000 versamelings in die databasis vervat wat deur ongeveer 60 000 flessies gepreserveerde materiaal in die versameling verteenwoordig word.

Aktiwiteite wentel hoofsaaklik om drie aspekte nl. epidemiologiese ondersoeke in die bilharzia endemiese gebiede van die Limpopo Provinsie, ontginning van die magdom inligting in die databasis en *ad hoc* projekte om die bilharzia-risiko en slakdiversiteit van sekere gebiede te evalueer. Nagraadse studente betrek by epidemiologiese ondersoeke en ontvang opleiding in internasionaal-erkende tegnieke wat grootliks bydra om die lyding te verlig en lewenskwaliteit van inwoners in geïdentifiseerde informele woonbuurtes te verbeter. Data vir die verwerking van M-grade word terselfdertyd ook ingewin. Resultate van hierdie ondersoeke word op gereelde grondslag in internasionaal-erkende joernale gepubliseer. Data in die databasis vervat, word ook deur navorsingsartikels in geakkrediteerde joernale gepubliseer en sodoende wyer bekendgestel. Omdat staatsgekoördineerde epidemiologiese ondersoeke sedert 1986 nie meer onderneem word nie, is die presiese omvang van verspreiding van die parasiete en tussengasheerslakke tans onbekend en kom daar van tyd tot tyd versoeke om die bilharzia-risiko in geselekteerde gebiede te evalueer. 'n Waaksame oog word ook gehou oor die vordering wat eksotiese indringer-varswaterslakspesies in die Nasionale Krugerwildtuin maak. Die omvang van 'n uitbraak van urinêre bilharzia in die Rustenburg distrik in die Noordwes Provinsie, wat nie as 'n hoë risikogebied vir bilharzia beskou word nie, is ook onlangs op versoek, geëvalueer.



Prof. Kenné de Kock en Mev M Bornman by 'n gedeelte van die slak-versameling

Prof. Kenné de Kock, dr. Corrie Wolmarans en hulle bekwame nagraadse studente is verantwoordelik vir baanbrekerswerk op veral bilharzia-slakke in die Noordwes Provinsie.

THE WORLD CONSERVATION UNION (IUCN) ACADEMY OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAW: 2ND COLLOQUIUM HELD IN NAIROBI, KENYA

by Jan-Albert Wessels

It is every boy's dream to someday roam the plains of Kenya in a robust and dirty Land Cruiser, searching for the king of the jungle in his own realm. This dream became reality on the 7th of October 2004 when I was fortunate enough to have my paper accepted for one of the prestige international colloquiums on Land use and Environmental Law.

I received the invitation to the IUCN conference through a colleague in the Faculty of Law early in 2005, immediately wrote and sent the abstract to Professor Charles Okidi, the organiser of the colloquium, at the University of Nairobi. It was accepted (!) and the planning began. As one can expect, the year filled up with numerous tasks and projects and I nearly had to cancel the arrangements for the trip. Luckily, with the help and guidance of the staff of the Centre for Environmental Management, I managed to finish the article on "Environmental By-laws, The Missing Link of Integrated Environmental Management", arrange the necessary funding and on the 3rd of October 2004 booked into the Grand Regent Hotel in Nairobi.

The hotel, the venue for the colloquium, was out of this world. In the hotel court, for example, a massive eleven storey artwork of a beaded Masaai ear overlooked a grand Beuseldorff piano and a copper embroidered dining area.



The Grand Regent Hotel and the Masaai artwork.

Another form of artwork was roaming the corridors of the hotel and one could easily identify this brightly dressed posse of relaxed South Africans among the overdressed law professors from all over the world. As always we could be found at the watering hole like a happy family of happy hippo's enjoying numerous ice cold Tuskers. It wasn't long before the rest of the colloquium mimicked the highly evolved African creatures and adapted to the art of reviving themselves at the watering hole.

The colloquium kicked off on the 4th of October 2004, United Nation's World Habitat day, with messages from distinguished speakers such as the United Nations' Secretary-General, H.E. Kofi Annan and the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, Dr. Anna Kajumulo Tabajjuka. The Colloquium also featured distinguished lectures, synthesizing the field of environmental law. The honorary lecturer was Prof. Dr. Akio Morishima of Japan, founder of the environmental law programs of Sophia University, laureate of the Elizabeth Haub Prize in Environmental Law. As one may derive, a lot of honour was bestowed and it was my honour to be one of the very few environmental managers in the bouquet of environmental lawyers and law professors.

After the world showed off their big guns it was South Africa's turn. We went in blazing with Prof. Michael Kidd and his four P's in environmental impact assessment (EIA), Ed Couzens with his very interesting paper on "Is Conservation a Viable in

Land Usage? Issues Surrounding the Sale of Ivory by Southern African Countries in 2004, Prof. Willemien du Plessis with her vast knowledge on EIA Legislation and the Importance of Transboundary Application in South Africa, followed Louis Kotze who, as usual, gave a distinguishing performance. After the dust settled it was my turn and



The South African team in Kenya (from the left): Louis Kotze (North-West University), Jan-Albert Wessels (North-West University), Sandy Patterson (University of Cape Town), Prof. Ed Couzens (University of Kwazulu Natal), Prof. Michael Kidd (University of Kwazulu Natal), Unknown (Rhodes University), Prof. Willemien du Plessis (North-West University).

in a mere eight minutes expressed my views and experiences learned in developing environmental by-laws. Now you may ask whether all the preparations made and the money spent was worth the eight minutes blaze of glory? Yes, it certainly was. The colloquium's plenary and panel sessions alone consisted of:

I. Papers on *NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION*:

- Panel -Legal Measures for Integrating Environmental and Social Factors in Spatial Development Planning
- Panel: Legal Issues On Averting Land Degradation
- Panel: Natural Resource Management
- Panel: Biodiversity Issues in Land Use and Environmental Law

II. Papers on *HUMAN SETTLEMENTS*

Panel Legal Avenues Toward Building Sustainable Human Settlements

- Panel: Water Resources for Human Settlements
- Panel: Local Authorities and the Management of Land Resources
- Panel - Agenda 21 and Cross-Sectoral Challenges for Human Settlements
- Panel: Law Reform for Sustainable Land Use Management
- Panel Environmental and Land Use Issues in Access to Justice

Apart from acquiring all these information, I've had the opportunity to meet dozens of interesting people (most of them Professors though), share my thoughts and ideas, discuss theories on international environmental law development and had the chance to experience the strange

There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a person.

Winston Churchill



The Horses of the Namib

by Telane Greyling

Introduction

The small population of feral horses living near Garub in the south of the Namib Naukluft Park has captured the imagination of people for the longest time. The origin of these horses has been the subject of many discussions and manuscripts.

People's fascination with horses could well be the subject of intense psycho-analysis. Horses stir in us a yearning for freedom, space, agility and power that modern humans have shunned in their desire for industrialized development. More specifically, is not the freedom and space that these horses enjoy in the Namib that we desire so much?

People bring emotion into the equation and speak passionately about how the feral horses challenge the elements to survive in a most unfriendly environment. In reality, the feral horses are part of and thrive in their semi-desert environment. This is their new natural environment, more so than the feeding boxes and stables of the urban areas. Let's distinguish between 'normal' in the eye of a human and truly 'natural' when speaking of the Namib's horses.

History

Theories of the origin of the Namib's horses abound. The more romantic of the theories tells of a ship carrying thoroughbred horses that ran aground south of Lüderitz, and that these horses made their way through the desert to Garub. Another favorite anecdote is that the wife of Baron von Wolf who built the castle at Duwisib, opened the farm gates and set free his nearly 300 horses who ran off into the desert - also to Garub.

Realistically though, one should consider the nature of horses, i.e. that they are not essentially a migratory species and tend to stay in the area they know as long as there is food and water, and will only emigrate to neighboring areas as result of population pressure or food and water scarcity. Therefore the most likely origin of the Garub horses is from horses that were lost in the vicinity of Garub and Aus, which leaves us looking at the people moving through or colonizing that area in the beginning of the 1900's. This would include Nama herders, transporters, German farmers, German Schutztruppe and Allied forces.

Considering that it must have been a reasonable number of horses being lost in a short time to be able to start a viable population, the First World War activities between Aus and Garub seems to be the most likely major contribution to the population of feral horses to establish.

A recent discovery in the archives could shed some light on the origin of these horses. At the time of the First World War a force of 10 000 Union soldiers with 6 000 horses were stationed at Garub for five weeks. A German aircraft dispatched bombs and grenades into a herd of 1 700 horses in that vicinity. It is believed that a number of these horses

were not re-captured and formed the core of what we today refer to as the Namib's feral horses. Important to note is that over the past 90 years other horses from farmers, lost Schutztruppen horses, miners, indigenous traders and settlers could have joined their ranks.

Also, it was discovered in the archives that the horses of Baron von Wolf were still living at Duwisib in the late 1930s. Oral history records that feral horses were already roaming in the Aus area in the mid 20s.

For the first 70-80 years of their existence the horses lived predominantly in the Sperrgebiet II (Diamond area), which made them reasonably inaccessible to hunters and horse capturers - a saving grace for these horses. They also survived as a result of the goodwill of a few key people who ensured that there was water at Garub. A threat to their existence however arose in 1986 when the Sperrgebiet II (Diamond area) was handed over to the 'transitional government' to form part of the Namib Naukluft Park. A few purists were of the opinion that the horses did not belong in the National Park and would deny them access to what had become their natural habitat. It was a fairly controversial issue and strong opposition from the public, media and non-purists in the ministry led to the matter being laid to rest for a few years.

Current research and findings

A study of the behavioural ecology and population dynamics of the horses has been in place since December 1993. This provided some answers on how the horses live in a desert environment.

Their main adaptation being to change their behaviour according to prevailing environmental conditions. During dry periods with less food available the horses increase their time spent grazing and decrease time spent on playing and comfort behaviour, thus reducing energy output. They also tolerate dehydration to a large extent stretching the time between drinking intervals to the extreme.

There is strong negative correlation between their drinking frequency and the prevailing temperature. For example they drink on average every 30 hours in summer and every 72 hours in winter. During wet periods with abundant and higher quality food available, the horses spend less time grazing and most of them drink water every day regardless of temperature. They then spend several hours resting and playing around the water troughs.

The phenomenon of coprophagy (eating manure) exhibited by the horses is not unnatural and also not a result of starvation,

continues on page 4

from page 3



starvation, coprophagy is exhibited by most horses in feral and domestic conditions if they are allowed access to dry manure.

Population size

It is believed that the population reached approximately 250 strong in the 70s and 80s. When the draught of 1991-2 caused some mortalities the decision to capture and sell some of the horses was approved and 104 horses were removed in June 1992. The remaining population was also supplemented with lucerne for a few months until it rained again.

The population size since 1993 has fluctuated from 110 in 1993 to 149 in 1997, and then it decreased to 89 in 1999 and increased again to 135 horses at present. During this time it appeared as if the removal or addition of a number of horses in a short time either naturally or artificially has a major influence on the social stability of the population.

The future ...

The horses are still an exotic specie in a National Park and therefore further research underway is focused on the environmental impact of the horses on their habitat. For this particular research study surveys of insects, small mammals and reptiles are being undertaken in the horses' area compared to a control area. This, together with data on the other mammals, vegetation, population dynamics, history and input from several experienced people, will be used to develop management strategies for the horses' future.

Why the need to manage the feral horse population?

Renewed interest in the horses, especially since opinions are changing about their value for the country, dictates that there is a need and interest to preserve the population, as they are, with the least interference possible.

Of late they are becoming a stronger drawing card for tourism.

The horses are a true symbol of freedom and space the catch phrase for drawing tourists to Namibia.

The next time we see the wild horses; let's not comment on their supposed suffering. Let us rather acknowledge their slight physique as part of their normal cycle.



Mutual grooming

STADS- EN STREEKBEPLANNING HOU 'N STRATEGIESE WERKSWINKEL!

deur Dr Ernst Drewes

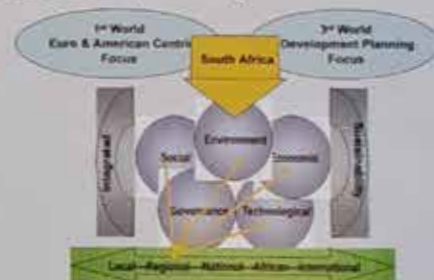
In die nuwe wêreld van globalisasie en snel veranderinge noodsaak kompetisie dat die meeste dissiplines binne universiteite steeds stewig geanker moet wees in hul klassieke vertrekpunte, maar terselfdertyd in lyn moet wees met die nuutste uitvindings, wetenskaplike metodes en tegnologie.

Vir hierdie rede het die vakgroep Stads- en Streekbeplanning die jaar op 'n strategiese noot afgeskop deur 'n werkswinkel te hou waar onder meer hul visie en missie vir die langtermyn onder die loep geneem is. Die strategiese werkswinkel is op 25 en 26 Januarie 2005 te Oudrift Riverside Lodge buite Potchefstroom gehou. 'n Eksterne fasiliteerder, Andrew Barker, van Johannesburg, self 'n professionele stads- en streekbeplanner vir die afgelope X jaar, is aangestel om die werksessies te lei.

Die geleentheid is deur die vier permanente personeel van die vakgroep (Prof Manie Geyer, Prof Calie Schoeman, Dr Ernst Drewes en Karen Puren bygewoon) asook die direkteure van onderskeidelik die Skool vir Omgewingswetenskappe en Ontwikkeling, Prof Huib van Hamburg, en Fokusarea: Omgewingswetenskappe en bestuur, Prof Gerhard du Toit bygewoon. Ander rolspelers soos die openbare sektor, privaatsektor en leerders is voor die strategiese werkswinkel die geleentheid gegun om hul insette te lewer.

'n Nuwe beplanningsfilosofie (diagrammaties uitgebeeld in die onderstaande figuur) is ontwikkel, waarna strategiese besin is oor hoe die vakgroep nie net binne die Suid Afrikaanse konteks 'n staanplek kan vind nie, maar ook op internasionale front.

Figuur 1: Hersiende beplanningsfilosofie



Die klemverskuiwing sluit ook onder meer in dat daar weer soos in die verlede sterk op die streekbeplanningselement in die vakgroep gefokus sal word, aangesien dit reeds die afgelope 40 jaar aan die vakgroep buitengewone bekendheid op nasionaal, sowel as internasionale front verleen het.

Die model wat as vertrekpunt ontwikkel is, is verder uitgebrei deur die daarstelling van 'n toekomsatriks wat deel uitmaak van die implementeringsplan oor hoe om te beweeg na die verwagte toekomstige scenario waar die vakgroep as leier op die gebied van geïntegreerde volhoubaarheidbeplanning erken sal kan word.

'n Funktionele Numeriese Evalueringsatriks is hieruit saamgestel waarin doelstellings geprioritiseer is deur middel van die toevoeging van numeriese waardes aan elk van die fundamentele funksies nodig om die verwagte toekomstige eindpunt te bereik. Hierdeur kon daar grafies illustreer word watter doelstellings as primêr en watter as sekondêr gestel kan word oppad na die bereiking van die langtermyn visie van die vakgroep. Benewens die akademiese en toepassingswaarde wat tydens so 'n werkswinkel na vore kom, word die sagter kwessies soos kommunikasie en spanbou ook aangespreek wat nie anders kan as om so onderneming op die pad na sukses te plaas nie.



Prestasiegeleentheid 2005

*Erkenning vir
harde en
volgehoue
arbeid*

Voor (vlnr): Tarina Jordaan; Selna Cornelius; Claudine Nieuwoudt, Maryn Prinsloo, Anja Franken; Carina Smit; Tania Janson; Zaakirah Jeeva
Middel (vlnr): Gas; Juaneé Pekelharing; Mariske van Aswegen; Me Christa du Preez (borg); Me Marié Swanepoel (borg); Prof Pieter Theron; Michelle Herbert; Laura Quinn; Misha de Beer; Me Frandri Janse van Vuuren; GP Kriel; Dr Ernst Drewes; Prof Huib van Hamburg
Agter (vlnr): Dr André Esterhuizen; Mnr Trevor Padayachee (borg); Pieter Smit, Prof Kobus van der Walt; Prof Leon van Rensburg (borg); Mnr Koos Viviers; Mnr Kosie Dreyer (borg); Mnr Tjaart Benadé (borg); Mnr Simon du Plooy (borg)

Die vyfde, jaarlikse Prestasiegeleentheid wat deur die Fakulteit Natuurwetenskappe aangebied word, het vanjaar op 25 Februarie in die Banketsale plaasgevind. Tydens hierdie prestige geleentheid het die beste presteerders vir 2004 in elke vak 'n geldprys, 'n sertifikaat en 'n skildjie ontvang. Elke pryswenner kon drie gaste saambring om die sukses van die vorige jaar saam met hom/haar te vier. Nadat die formaliteite afgehandel is, het die gaste na hartelus aan dineekos en goeie wyn gesmul en kon ouers en studente saam met dosente, direkteure, borge en die dekaan skouers skuur.

Tydens hierdie jaarlikse gebeurtenis spog al die Skole in die Fakulteit Natuurwetenskappe met die besondere studente in hulle onderskeie vakgebiede. Die Skool vir Omgewingswetenskappe en Ontwikkeling is die grootste Skool in die Fakulteit en het daarom 'n skare pryswenners en gepaardgaande borge wat na die podium genooi word. In ons Skool word pryse toegeken aan die beste presteerder in die tweede en derde jaar en die beste junior M-student in elkeen van die vyf strome word aangewys. Stads- en Streeksbeplanning is die enigste uitsondering waar die beste presteerder in elke jaargroep, eerstejaar ingesluit, aangewys word. Daar is borge uit die industrie sowel as die akademie wat die studente ondersteun.

Die lys van pryswenners vir beste prestasie gedurende 2004, is in die meegaande tabel opgesom:

| Vakgroep | Jaar | Naam |
|--|------|---------------------|
| Dierkunde | 2e | Anja Franken |
| | 3e | Claudine Nieuwoudt |
| Geografie | 2e | Selna Cornelius |
| | 3e | GP Kriel |
| Mikrobiologie | 2e | Carina Smit |
| | 3e | Maryn Prinsloo |
| Plantkunde | 2e | Pieter Smit |
| | 3e | Maryn Prinsloo |
| Stads- en Streeksbeplanning | 1e | Zaakirah Jeeva |
| | 2e | Tarina Jordaan |
| | 3e | Mariske van Aswegen |
| | 4e | Juaneé Pekelharing |
| Nagraads | | |
| Omgewingsanalise en-bestuur | | Tania Janson |
| Ekologiese remediëring en volhoubare benutting | | Misha de Beer |
| Biodiversiteit en bewaringsbiologie | | Michelle Herbert |
| Waterwetenskappe | | Laura Quinn |
| Plantbeskerming | | Liezel Els |

Maryn Prinsloo was die beste presteerder in twee vakgebiede terwyl Claudine Nieuwoudt en Tarina Jordaan vir die tweede agtereenvolgende jaar die beste presteerder in hulle vakgroepe was. Mariske van Aswegen en Laura Quinn is as die beste presteerders vir die derde agtereenvolgende jaar aangewys en Juneé Pekelharing het hierdie prestasie al vier keer herhaal!

Familie en vriende van die studente het vanuit die uithoeke van die land na die geleentheid opgetrek. Beide GP Kriel en Tania Janson se familie het van so ver as Oos-Londen gekom en Anja Franken is self 'n boorling van Botswana. Liezel Els kon nie die geleentheid bywoon nie sy was op wittebrood en het haar ouers die prys namens haar ontvang.

Baie geluk aan elkeen van hierdie pryswenners- en aan elke ander medestudent wat buitendien sy/haar beste lewer ongeag of die prys syne/hare word.

Still moving after all of these years

by Peter Mortimer



Euphorbia pulvinata



Nymphaea



Nymphaea flower



Aloe peglarae

It is almost two years since the renovation process started in the botanical garden. The clean up continued and much of the garden has been landscaped. We are however still nowhere near seeing a glimpse of the finish to this project. The question remains, however, whether a garden is ever completely finished.

While renovating, we also try to keep the garden well maintained. To ensure this, weeds have been declared public enemy number one and are continuously eradicated. The rainfall during the latter part of this summer made the weeds go berserk. Despite this though, we have been able to keep the garden fairly neat and tidy, partly also because a third worker was employed. Prof Huib van Hamburg is to thank for making this possible and the task more attainable by generously agreeing to bridge the funds gap.

The area below the tunnels and the large pond towards the main gate on Calderbankstreet, currently receives the most attention. The rockery is the only new development north of this area and those who have seen it would agree that it is an added asset to the garden. In the area that previously was the herb garden, the existing brick towers was knocked down and used in the new rockery.

Throughout the winter of 2004 lots of hard labour went into building stonewalls in the rockery. It was however not until spring, once the weather warmed up and the risk of frost had passed, that the succulent collection was relocated. The rockery is by no means complete and a lot of smaller succulent ground covers and perennials will be planted between the bigger aloes and other larger succulents in order to fill up the newly build raised flowerbeds. This we will do as plants and funds come available. Some chances have been taken with some of the planting regarding frost tolerance but hope that the research we have done together with global warming will see us through this winter until the plants have established themselves.

In the rest of the garden a wide variety of new plants was introduced. Again, we are experimenting with new species that we hope will stand up to Potch frost. No longer do I wonder whether a plant is evergreen or not; rather whether it will shoot in the following spring again. Our climate puts a very real limit on the range of indigenous plants that can grow here but I continue to persevere and select plants that occur around us as well as in other cold and even colder places in South Africa. It would of course be very nice to find a few more shrubs or small trees that will acclimatize here. In this regard we will be trying out a number of species and hopefully will be able to give a favorable report back when next featured in ENVIRA.

A guideline that has been used in plant selection was to collect other species of plant genres that occur locally. I therefore have become an avid collector of the genres *Kniphofia* and *Eucomis*. With only one genus outstanding, the whole of *Eucomis* has been collected and our *Kniphofia* collection is more than halfway. The collection of a variety of grasses and *Eulophia* orchids are goals for the near future. These are terrestrial orchids that occur locally in the grasslands. With this guideline there are an almost limitless number of plants that can be introduced in the garden.

Possibly the most enjoyable part of my job is meeting interesting and interested people who have been to visit the garden since my appointment as curator. Many are very encouraging and generous about the work being done and their support is deeply appreciated. There are no nicer people than plant freaks!

What is our next project?

Due to a generous donation by Prof. Leon van Rensburg a number of information boards will soon appear in the garden. These are intended to accompany a number of theme gardens, which have been started on. The rockery has already been developed to a large extent and others are in the pipeline and due to be done next summer, including a gymnosperm garden, incorporating indigenous gymnosperms as well as some interesting exotics like Ginkgo biloba (the Maidenhair tree) and a Useful Plants Garden that is intended to portray the alleged medicinal and other uses of indigenous plants.

Another exciting development has been the creation of a society, The Friends of the Botanical garden. Until now the garden has been closed on weekends but with the help of these intrepid young volunteers it will be open on Sunday afternoons between 13h00 17H00. Most Sunday afternoons between 20 and 30 people visit the garden and hopefully, with time and advertisement (such as this) the response will grow and it will once more be an integral part of the life of the university and the city as a whole.

So please come and visit us between the weeds. You won't know what might be happening in the garden... maybe the bears have come for a picnic.

Some Laws of Life

1. The two most common elements in the universe are hydrogen and stupidity.
2. If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.
3. A truly wise man never plays leapfrog with a unicorn.
4. It has recently been discovered that research causes cancer in rats.
5. Always remember to pillage BEFORE you burn.
6. The trouble with doing something right the first time is that nobody appreciates how difficult it was.
7. The average woman would rather have beauty than brains, because the average man can see better than he can think.
8. Vital papers will demonstrate their vitality by moving from where you left them to where you can't find them.
9. Law of Probability Dispersal: Whatever it is that hits the fan will not be evenly distributed.



Aloe fosterii



Pelargonium quercifolia



Crocosmia aurea



From the left: The Land Cruiser, Jan-Albert Wessels and Albie Venter

and wonderful sounds of African music in a pub called Simmers with new and old friends, but that is a different story...

Another amazing experience worth noting was the study excursion. We had a glorious day's drive through the Nairobi National Park followed by a lecture on the nitty-gritty of the settlement of land use disputes through the use of a wildlife conservation "leasing" initiative to accommodate both migration of wildlife, pastoral herds, while respecting traditional community rights and buffering land development sprawl stimulated by economic development incentives, covering 8,600 acres adjacent to Nairobi National Park. As one can imagine, it was a highly stimulating and exciting lecture.

After three days of conferencing, networking and sipping Tuskers in a very expensive hotel, I decided to leave the hooting and looting of Nairobi to realise my boyhood dream. The following day I was sitting in a Land Cruiser, on the border of the Masaai Mara, next to an old friend of mine (who runs a very exclusive tented camp in the area) passing the little Masaai villages and feeling very much at home in the spectacular country.

OMGEWINGSWETENSKAPDOSENTE PAS WETENSKAP IN PRAKTYK TOE

deur Dr Luke Sandham en Prof Pieter Theron

Vier dosente van die Skool vir Omgewingswetenskappe en -Ontwikkeling is nie net predikers van die volhoubaarheidsteorie nie, maar ook bereid om dit daagliks toe te pas deur met bromponies werk toe te ry. Hierdie bromponies, ook soms "scooters" genoem, is nie maar sommer enige scooter nie maar die ikoniese Vespa - die vader en moeder van alle scooters.



V.l.n.r: Dr Corrie Wolmarans, Prof Pieter Theron, Dr Luke Sandham en Louis du Preez op hul Vespas.



Spoggerig! Die manne se Vespas trots voor die JS vd Merwegebou.

Deur so 'n hoë mate van omgewingsverantwoordelik aan die dag te lê, slaag hierdie groepie dosente daarin om brandstof te bespaar en vinniger en geriefliker deur die verkeer te beweeg. Meer nog, hulle verlaag daardeur die hoeveelheid koolstof wat vrygestel word en lewer dus 'n bydrae tot die verlaging van kweekhuysgasse en die stryd teen globale verwarming. Die verlaging in verkeersdruk is dalk nie so voor-die-hand-liggend nie, maar neem 'n oomblik om die spoorafdruk van Vespa met die van 'n motor te vergelyk. Die ruimte wat een motor opneem beslaan genoeg spasie vir vier Vespas, en by groter motors, tot ses Vespas. Indien meer mense dus hierdie tipe omgewingsrentmeesterskap aan die dag lê, behoort minder verkeersknoppe plaas te vind en dit bied boonop 'n werkbare oplossing vir die tekort aan parking.

Dit moet darem ook vermeld word dat daar 'n sterk streep hedonistiese genot daarin lê om met 'n Vespa te ry, veral omdat dit deesdae "cool" is om daarop gesien te word. Trouens, Prof Theron berig dat sy Vespa in aanvraag is by die neem van troufoto's!

Die Vespa word in die Piaggio-fabriek in Italië vervaardig. Die fabriek (waar vliegtuie vervaardig is) het na die tweede wêreldoorlog in puin gelê en Enrico Piaggio, die seun van die Piaggio-stigter Rinaldo Piaggio, het besluit om lugvaart vaarwel te roep en aandag te skenk aan die ernstige behoefte in Italië vir 'n moderne en bekostigbare vervoermiddel. Sy gedagte was om 'n voertuig vir die massas te ontwerp sodat die land weer kon begin funksioneer.

Die taak om 'n eenvoudige, robuuste en bekostigbare voertuig te ontwerp, is toevertrou aan 'n lugvaarkundige ingenieur, ene Corradino D'Ascanio, wat onder andere verantwoordelik was vir die ontwerp en konstruksie van die eerste moderne helikopter. Sy opdrag was eenvoudig: Ontwerp 'n voertuig wat maklik deur 'n man of vrou bestuur kan word, een passasier kan dra, en - baie belangrik veral vir dames - die bestuurder se klere moet nie vuil word nie.

D'Ascanio, wat nie motorfietse kon verdra nie, het met 'n rewolusionêre voertuig vorendag gekom: 'n raam met ratwisseling op die handvatsels, die motor op die agterwiel en voorvurke soos 'n vliegtuig wat wielomruiling verspot maklik maak. So verskyn die Vespa in 1946 op die toneel.

Die eerste 15 Vespas wat verskyn het, het beskik oor 'n 98cc tweeslagenjin wat 3.5 pk gelewer het teen 4,500 rpm, dit kon 'n spoed van 60 km per uur haal en het met 3 ratte gespog. Die naam Vespa, wat perdeby beteken, is tweeledig. Enersyds omdat dit soos 'n perdeby orals rond soem, en andersyds omdat die dun middeltjie wat die voorste en agterste helftes verbind, visueel aan 'n perdeby herinner.

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Sedertien, oor 'n tydperk van byna 60 jaar, het die Vespa 'n toonbeeld van styl en elegansie gebly en in wese net so bly voortbestaan terwyl dit van krag tot krag gegaan het. Meer as 16 miljoen eenhede is reeds vervaardig. Die maatskappy het die tydsges raak gelees en deur tred te hou met nuwe ontwikkelings is die Vespa steeds 'n leier in die bromponie-bedryf.

Heelwat staaltjies oor ander lede van die Skool se ervarings met Vespas is bekend, soos Prof Kenné de Kock wat jare lank 'n Vespa gery het en die waardige Prof Don Loots wat in sy jonger dae (toe hy ietwat van 'n jaagduivel was) etlike kere met moeder Aarde kennis gemaak het. Prof Theron ry tans met sy derde Vespa en huldig die standpunt dat daar twee soorte Vespa eienaars is nl. die wat al geval het en die wat nog moet val.

Vespa elke rit 'n meesterstuk!

L.W. Geen kommissie is vir hierdie artikel belooft of ontvang nie!



Enrico Piaggio omring deur Vespas