



Friends of the Liesbeek River

Creating an awareness of the river, to rehabilitate, enhance and conserve it and its environs.

Autumn 2012 <http://fol.org.za> Visit the website...there is so much more to see there!



LETTER FROM THE COMMITTEE

Dear Friends,

The year is flying by and much has happened on the river as you will see on these pages.

We were fortunate to be sponsored again this year by ABAX, who have also assisted us in the purchase of a bakkie for use on the river by the LMP team. As our LMP manager Jason Mingo had been using his own vehicle to transport the team and tools up and down the river, this has made a big difference.

SAB also continued their support and we are waiting for the new Wendy House, giving the team a place to have meetings and for Jason to use as an office. SAB also donated us the proceeds of the sale of Nessie beer and the Newlands Fun Run held on the 17th March.

Thanks to all our supporters and the volunteers who help on the river. Replanting of cleared banks is going to commence as soon as the rain starts.

We are having our first planting work party on Saturday 5th May, and will send out details closer to the date. All are welcome.

Members are welcome at our committee meetings and any member who is able to help out on the committee would be appreciated.

Ongoing problems with developers encroaching on the river requires vigilance and engagement – members and interested persons are asked to be our eyes and ears on the ground!

*Warm regards,
The Committee*

Kadar Asmal River Cleaning Project kicks off

The Kadar Asmal River Cleaning Project was initiated by the Mayor of Cape Town last year. The aim of the project is to begin the process of cleaning rivers in and around the City of Cape Town, and in doing so it will create an estimated 400 jobs for a two year period.



Liesbeek Lake and the lower reaches of the Liesbeek have been thoroughly cleaned by Kadar Asmal workers, City Parks and our LMP Team.

The Kadar Asmal River Cleaning Project workers joined the Liesbeek Maintenance Team in the middle of February. After a slow start in terms of the number of people joining the team, we eventually had a contingent of 15 people working along the river supervised by the Liesbeek team members. This considerable increase in our work force has meant we have been able to make good progress in clearing areas of alien vegetation and general maintenance along the river trail. One of these areas includes the banks next to Valkenberg Hospital Estate, just before the N2. This area has been completely cleared of *Canna indica* and other various exotic plants, the result being a desolate and barren looking landscape. However, thanks to the combined efforts of Ntobeko and Jason from our Liesbeek team we have been able to arrange the re-vegetation of the area through Cape Nature. Many of the areas we are busy clearing at the moment will be re-planted late in April, with indigenous flora generously donated by Kirstenbosch National Garden as well as Stark Ayres Garden Centre and trees donated by SANParks tree Nursery in Newlands.



One of the residents, Nick Laird, from Observatory, helped the team by offering his skills with a chainsaw. This enabled us to cut down the lower hanging branches of many of the trees, increasing the visibility along the river.



Be on the lookout for our Liesbeek team members who are wearing these new safety vests to increase the visibility of where and who our team members are.



Thank you Tuffy! Refuse bags are regularly donated and one day's work on the river a week is sponsored by the company.



Download WESSA's latest WESSA at Work newsletter at

<http://wessa.org.za/uploads/images/waw/WESSA%20at%20Work%20-%20Feb%202012.pdf>

WESSA has over 50 active Friends Groups throughout South Africa. These are groups of volunteers that band together to conserve, rehabilitate and protect a natural area or space of special interest, and are guided by the mission statement, policies and position statements of WESSA.

For more information on getting involved in or establishing a Friends Group, please contact Nina on 033 330 3931 or e-mail wessamembers@wessa.co.za

WESSA are also on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/WildlifeandEnvironmentSocietyofSA>

GOING BATTY

Being a resident on the banks of the Liesbeek, I can report that balmy evenings bring out welcome night-time visitors: Bats!

Bats are one of the few animal types to have evolved flight (and the only mammal at that). It has been such a successful strategy that bats are the second most diverse group of mammals on the planet (after rodents) with over 1000 species. Oh, and there are NO bats in Southern Africa which consume blood.



My first (as yet unsuccessful) Bat Box purchased from bat legend, Nigel Fernsby, ex-chairman of the Gauteng Bat Interest Group, GNoRBIG (check their very informative website) You can consider your accommodation unsuccessful if it remains unoccupied after a full year (all four seasons). Inspect it only fortnightly as too much disturbance could chase away the very thing you're trying to attract! Mine seems not to get enough afternoon sun, so I'll have to move it to a better location ... we'll see.

Bat boxes are very easy to make – just Google 'bat box design/plans' and be sure to also visit www.batcon.org (the website for Bat Conservation International – who have declared 2011-2012 the 'Year of the Bat') for additional advice before you build or install your masterpiece.

Not handy enough? No problem, you can also purchase a bat box from various places including Eagle Encounters (the Raptor Centre at Spier Wine Estate). Sandy at WESSA's offices in Westlake can assist you too.



An Egyptian fruit bat *Rousettus aegyptiacus*

<http://www.zandvleitrust.org.za/art-bats.html>
www.capebat.co.za
<http://contra.biology.und.ac.za/big/dbig.htm>
<http://www.batcon.org/>

Bats are called 'Chiroptera' by scientists, which means 'hand-wing' and describes the way their wings are formed by gossamer-thin membrane stretched between their elongated fingers. Generally speaking there are two main groups of bats: Megachiroptera and Microchiroptera. The megachiroptera (as one might imagine) are larger. They feed mainly on fruit, nectar and pollen and most do not use echolocation to navigate but rather have an excellent sense of smell – which is why some species are known as 'Flying Foxes' (their elongated snouts resembling canine features). Microchiroptera are the small, agile, echolocating, insect-eating champions of the night. It is estimated that the 300,000 bats living in Guano Cave at De Hoop Nature Reserve consume over 100 tons of insects every year (what an enormous help to the farmers in that area!). It is worth noting that food is not a limiting factor for bat colonisation, but suitable roosting sites are. This explains why bats sometimes take up residence inside roofs making a pest of themselves. But it also implies that one can attract these marvels into your garden by designing and installing a suitable bat box. Just think how these tiny mouths will help rid your space of annoying insects, while you sleep!

I get both kinds visiting my garden (although my Microchiroptera bat box has not been successful in luring them to stay around – you never know with wild animals). The smaller bats are difficult to watch since they fly very fast and erratically as they turn and swoop after prey insects. The large 'Fruit Bats', on the other hand, are great fun to behold as they glide silently into my female Yellowwood tree to grab a fruit, then drop back out to find a place to eat it. On a warm night with all the house lights turned off, one can stand below the tree and revel in the bat rush-hour traffic immediately above one's head. Many forest tree species depend on bats for their dispersal, but in urban areas these bats look at our house eaves as convenient places to hang and eat. The problem is that on arriving or departing, they often leave a 'gift' of processed fruit which can stain walls. Some people find this a nuisance, which I understand; although I consider it a badge of honour – how many households can list bats in their inventory of animal life?! It is easy enough to overcome: Place motion-sensor lights on affected walls (shining down from above or up from below). The sudden light as these turn on will discourage the creatures of the night from dining there. I wait until winter and hire a high-pressure hose for a day and give the walls a good wash ... then wait in anticipation for the next season. Fruit Bats are less easy to attract to roost as they prefer large caves or trees, unlike their smaller, crevice-dwelling cousins. If you do want them around, stock your garden with female 'Real Yellowwoods' (*Podocarpus latifolius*) or Bladder-Nut (*Diospyros whyteana*). There are other fruiting forest trees which probably work, but I can guarantee the above from experience. A note: Rather avoid 'Outeniqua' or 'False Yellowwood' (*Podocarpus falcatus*) as this is proving to be somewhat invasive on the Peninsula.

Enjoy your bats and let us have any pictures of your attempts at bat boxes (successful or otherwise).

Fynbosphil

Attack of the Aliens:

This edition's evil alien is the Cotoneaster or *Cotoneaster pannosus*. This City of Cape Town's Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) team are on the lookout for these plants as one of the four worst potential newly established weeds in the Cape (check my previous three articles for the others). It has been noted of late that some species of plant (which in some cases have been planted deliberately and without incident for many years) have suddenly acquired the ability to spread and become invading weeds. The case of Lupins in New Zealand is an example of how this can happen:

Lupins were long planted as a food crop for sheep and cattle and for years did not present a problem (in fact they could only grow from imported seed). Recently, however, an insect has found its way to the island which, although not truly an invader itself, has suddenly allowed the Lupins to be pollinated, thus produce seed. Over 2-3 years Lupins in New Zealand became a major weed and serious environmental problem with the result that their control has affected the farmers who relied on the 'sterile' form for years as a feed stock.

So it is with Cotoneaster (and others like Tree of Heaven) which are suddenly able to produce viable seed and, without any local competition or predation of seeds and seedlings, are able to reproduce in huge numbers. Cotoneaster has the added problem of producing a fruit (which much of the local fynbos plants lack due to the poor soils in which they grow). So fruit-eating birds are suddenly faced with an extra bonanza (and in the process spread the seeds far and wide!).

Cotoneaster is an attractive shrub which can be mistaken for the *Pyracantha* group, except that it lacks thorns. Its dull-green, oval-shaped leaves are whitish and hairy on their undersides. Drooping branches produce groups of 5-petaled, white flowers, followed by clusters of vibrant red berries in summer. Despite its attractiveness, this plant is a serious threat to the extraordinarily diverse local fynbos and must be removed immediately. Contact the EDRR if this plant is growing on your property, or even if you notice it on the roadside on your way to work (or even in a neighbour's property). If these newly established invaders can be 'nipped-in-the-bud' now, we can avoid the kind of extreme environmental damage (and huge ongoing costs) presented by some of the more long-term established weeds, notably Hakea and the Australian acacias.

The plant should be dug up by the roots which should then be exposed to the sun for a few hours. Any fruit must be removed, double-bagged and thrown away before the plant is shredded or disposed of, in order to avoid spreading the unwanted seed any further. Replace the shrub with the local *Psycotria capensis* in the shade, or *Crysanthemoides monilifera* in full sun; both of which will reward you and the birds with fruit.

FynbosPhil

If you see this plant contact EDRR
Ms Taryn Rossenrode or Louise Stafford

Tel: +27 (0)21 712 1944 /1434
Fax: +27 (0)21 712 9277

E-mail: EDRR@capetown.gov.za



Research Projects on the Liesbeek

FOL members will be pleased to know that as in previous years, several students are busy with research projects on the Liesbeek. It would be wonderful if members could give some time to interact with students and participate in data collection. Please let us know if you are interested in assisting in research projects or have a specific field of interest.

Chasmanthea bulbs in bloom:

During the hot summer months in the Cape not many of the native plants are known to flower. However, if you have taken a stroll down any of the paths along the Liesbeek River you might have noticed a plant showing off its orange flowers.

This plant is called *Chasmanthe aethiopica*, also known as the cobra lily. These lilies are pollinated by sunbirds, more specifically the Lesser Double-collared Sunbird. The flowers secrete large quantities of nectar which is highly sought after by the sunbirds.

The fruits which develop after pollination split open at maturity, exposing brightly orange coloured seeds which attract the likes of red-winged starlings, which happily eat the seeds covered in a watery and sweet fleshy coat, and thus aid with seed dispersal.



Chasmanthe aethiopica – photo taken close to Arbor Rd bridge.



A pair of waxbills, a male on the left and female on the right. (Image source: carolinabirds.org)

Reports of swee waxbills drinking along the river:

A number of swee waxbills have been sighted along the river at the Boschenheuvel Arboretum in Bishops court.

This bird is typically found in open forest habitats and in uplands and dry shrubland in mountainous areas. The diet of this species bird is varied, eating insects such as butterflies, bees, wasps as well as different types of seeds.

An interesting fact about these small birds is that they are monogamous – meaning they mate with one partner for life



Earth hour is at 20h30 on Saturday 31st March.

Switch off your lights and do something for the Earth's wellbeing.

News from the Liesbeek Maintenance Project Manager

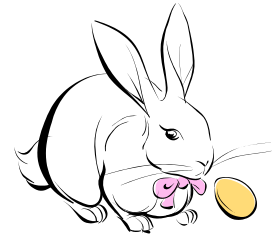


HOW CAN YOU HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE ALONG THE RIVER:

If you are wondering how you can further support the Liesbeek team working on the river and would like to play a part in leaving a lasting legacy along the river, then here are some ideas for you:

- As we move further into Autumn the Liesbeek team is busy preparing itself for planting and so if you have any extra compost or mulch, this would go along way to making sure the plants planted having a good chance of fighting of alien invaders and seeing out the hot and dry summer.
- Alternatively, if you have any indigenous plants in your garden you wish to remove and get rid of, don't let it go to the dump. Simply contact our manager, Jason, and we will organise our team to come and remove the plant for you to be planted along the river.
- Perhaps you have a new idea on how to tackle one of the many problems along the river? If you do, feel free to contact Jason at jason@fol.org.za, he is more than happy to receive suggestions from our members and even meet you along the river to discuss any problems.

Jason can be contacted on 0846618264 for information, comments or queries. Thank you ABAX for sponsoring the LMP manager.



Wondering what to give for Easter? Why not donate to the Liesbeek Maintenance Project? A donation of R500 will employ the hardworking team for one day on the river, creating jobs and keeping the river clean and safe, but any amount donated will make difference!



Our banking details are:
Friends of the Liesbeek
Nedbank, Pinelands
Branch No: 104709
Account No: 2220015645

Please specify that you are donating to the Liesbeek Maintenance Project and your name for reference.

The City of Cape Town has a unit working with the people who are living in the public open spaces of our city and can be contacted at the Displaced Persons Unit (DPU) Wayne Aldridge 0219001755; Social Development Chantal Adams 0214001401 chantal.adams@capetown.gov.za or 0842432448; Field Workers Frederik Levendal 0217995149; U-Turn Sam Vos 0216746119 www.homeless.org.za; By-Law Enforcement Metro 24-hr number 0215961999.

Girl Power Cleans the River:

On the 26th of February, girls from Rustenberg Girl's High School and a few from Herschel Girl's High joined together to clean the lower section of the Liesbeek River, next to Valkenberg Wetlands.

The weather played its part, and the girls' enthusiasm saw them collect just on 20 bags of rubbish in and along this section of the river. This high volume of rubbish was found because of the clearing of a number of alien plants in that area thanks to our partnership with the Kadar Asmal River Project.

A big thank you must go to the girls who participated in the clean up that weekend and we look forward to working on more activities with you in the future.



EVENTS AND NOTICES

The following are holidays and environmental dates. Please help us to organize events on these dates. Any suggestions or help would be greatly appreciated.

- 2nd February World Wetlands Day
- 22nd March World Water Day
- 31st March Earth Hour 20h30
- 6th April Good Friday
- 9th April Family Day
- 27th April Freedom Day/Arbor Day
- 1st May Worker's Day
- 5th May 350.org's Climate Impacts Day
- **5th May FOL Work Party**
- 16th June Youth Day
- 20th -22nd June Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
- 3 May International Migratory Bird Day
- 22 May World Biodiversity Day
- 18th May Bike-to-Work Day
- 5th June World Environment Day
- 8th June World Oceans Day
- 12th August International Youth Day
- 22nd September Car Free Day
- 30th September World Rivers Day
- 1st October World Habitat Day

RIVER RUNNER

On Saturday 17th March, 2012 many enthusiastic runners participated in a Fun Run organised by SAB Newlands. Friends of the Liesbeek committee members Phil McLean, Di Mellon and swift as a hare Liesbeek Maintenance Team Leader Ntobeko Dyani participated. Ntobeko came 7th!!



Well done to all and thank you to SAB for the R10 000 cheque handed over to the Friends of the Liesbeek after the event.



Jason Mingo, Liesbeek Maintenance Project Manager speaks to an attentive group from Adopt-a-River on International Action Day for Rivers at Liesbeek Lake. The event was organized by the Environmental Monitoring Group who arranged for transport for the large group.

ADOPT-A-RIVER

March 14 is the International Day of Action For Rivers and Against Dams. Every year, thousands of people around the world lift their voices to celebrate the world's rivers and those who struggle to protect them. The International Day of Action For Rivers is a day to celebrate victories such as dam removal and river restoration. It is a day to take to the streets, demonstrate and demand improvements in the policies and practices of decision makers. It is a day to educate one another about the threats facing our rivers, and learn about better water and energy solutions. Above all, it is a day to unite – by acting together, we demonstrate that these issues are not merely local, but global in scope.

What did you do for your river on March 14?

<http://www.internationalrivers.org/day-of-action>



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Look for us on Facebook!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/friendsoftheliesbeek/>

Membership and donations

Due in January every year:

- Individual R30
- Family R50
- Corporate R150

We also welcome:

- Donations to the Liesbeek Maintenance Project

Please deposit into our bank account directly. New members must enter contact details: address, e-mail and telephone numbers on the membership form available on our website, and send it to secretary@fol.org.za or to our postal address, along with a copy of the deposit slip, including reference details (Initials & surnames). Receipts and newsletters will only be posted on request. Newsletters are sent by email.

Friends of the Liesbeek is a registered NPO Public Benefit Organisation ref no 93000280 Non-profit Organisation ref no 56-033

Our banking details are:
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Account No: 2220015645

CONTACT PERSONS AND NUMBERS

- **Liesbeek Maintenance Project:** River Project Manager Office 021 6715385 or Jason 0846618264; info@fol.org.za or secretary@fol.org.za; Ntobeko 0710419424.
- **Water Pollution:** Brian February (Bishopscourt to N2 Mowbray) 0216841077/0834688243
Johan Marthinus (N2 to Table Bay) 0842995595
- **Displaced Peoples Unit:** Wayne.Aldridge@capetown.gov.za
- **Environmental Standby & Emergency (24/7):** 0834 99 1717
- **Environmental Law Enforcement:** David Morris or Vaughan Thompson 0217130510
- **Centre for Environmental Rights:** 021 4471647
- **CITY CALL CENTRE City Complaints, repairs etc:** contactUS@capetown.gov.za 0860 103089, SMS 31373
160 characters maximum. Get a reference tracking number.
- **ROADS & STORMWATER** (Potholes, flooded roads and chemical or other spills) Telephone: 0860 103054
Postal address: PO Box X1694, Cape Town, 8000 E-mail: watertoc@capetown.gov.za
- **WATER & SANITATION** (Emergencies such as leaks, burst pipes, sewer defects/blockages and complaints e.g. low water pressure and water wastage) Telephone (Account & consumption) queries: 0860 103 089
Fax: 021 957 4726 E-mail: watertoc@capetown.gov.za Website: www.capetown.gov.za/en/water
- **SOLID WASTE** (Illegal dumping, wheelie bins, cleansing, extra cleaning) Postal address: PO Box 298, Cape Town, 8000 Telephone: 0860 103089 Fax: 0860 103090/021 4004302 E-mail: wastewise@capetown.gov.za
Website: www.capetown.gov.za/en/solidwaste
- **CITY PARKS:** www.capetown.gov.za/en/Parks
- **BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT BRANCH:** www.capetown.gov.za/biodiversitymanagement
- **ENVIROWORKS:** Biannual newsletter. Environmental Resource Management Department, City of Cape Town, 44 Wale Street, Cape Town 8001 PO Box 16548, Vlaeberg 8018 • Tel: 021 4872284 • Fax: 021 4872255 •
E-mail: enviroworks@capetown.gov.za, Website: www.capetown.gov.za/environment

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