



Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust

15th Newsletter, March/April 2018

Update on the Easement Programme: Renosterveld secured in perpetuity!

Renosterveld is one of the most fragmented and endangered ecosystems in the world. Securing Renosterveld in perpetuity through the Conservation Easement Programme has to be targeted in a manner that will achieve the greatest benefits for the ecosystems and the ecological processes across the landscape. Great progress has been made in the Western and Central Rûens ecosystems.

Western Rûens Easement Cluster: Hawston View Conservation Easement with Tertius Maree, Botrivier

Hawston View comprises 306 hectares of spectacular habitat and incorporates numerous threatened botanical species such as *Babiana purpurea* (Endangered), *Aloe brevifolia depressa* (Endangered), *Drosanthemum flavum* (Endangered), *Moraea comptonii* (Endangered) and *Sparaxis fragrans* (Endangered). The conservation easement forms a core component of the landscape conservation plan in the Western Rûens Easement Cluster, bordering on the Klipfontein Conservation Easement secured by WWF and the ORCT with MG Lötter.



Babiana purpurea



Aloe brevifolia depressa



Drosanthemum flavum



Moraea comptonii

Central Rûens Easement Cluster: Dasberg Farming Conservation Easement with Schalk Viljoen

Situated south of the N2 in the Riviersonderend region, the Dasberg Farming Conservation Easement is located in the northern extent of the proposed Central Rûens Easement Cluster. Numerous Species of Conservation Concern have been recorded during biodiversity surveys on the property such as *Aspalathus rosea* (Endangered), Black Harrier (Endangered), Agulhas Long-billed Lark, Secretarybird, Denham's Bustard, Blue Crane and phenomenal records of Honey Badger and Aardwolf. The Conservation Easement commits 213 hectares in perpetuity as a Renosterveld Reserve within the central region of the Rûens Renosterveld Ecosystems.



Update on the Watercourse Restoration Project



One of the best management tools to 'restore' Renosterveld to its full potential from a biodiversity perspective is to utilise fire as a management tool when the veld age of the vegetation in a fragment has reached a moribund state (where it typically lacks vigour) due to the high woody component of the vegetation. Though fire has a huge impact on species within an ecosystem it is critical to include it within the management of natural systems in the Western Cape Province where the Cape Floristic Region has evolved with fire as an ecosystem driver.

Planning is critical to ensure that a mosaic of veld age is maintained with fragments in the ecosystem to provide habitat refuge to the variety of mammals, birds, insects and amphibians that utilise the fragments within the landscape. Also, it is important to burn within the late summer period as the ecosystem would have historically burnt at this time at the end of the long dry summer. Also, the bulbs are dormant below the soil surface and are protected from the flames. As ecological burns must take place in the fire season there is a risk from a safety perspective and the ORCT assists landowners to ensure that firebreak preparation and weather conditions are taken into consideration when implementing a burn to minimise risk to infrastructure while still achieving the desired ecological objective. Partnerships with the Greater Overberg Fire Protection Association and the Overberg District Municipality to ensure that we implement ecological burns to best conserve our critically endangered ecosystems.

An ecological burn has been implemented in the 2018 fire season at the Kinko Conservation Area in the Breede River Cluster. Fragments that were prioritised in the Integrated Management Plan were burnt in a mosaic pattern that will see all remnants burnt on the property over a six year period. This was the first burn on site in more than 30 years and we will the following fragments in two to three years. A fantastic operation that included local farmers, WESCO Vegetation Management Services and the ORCT ensured that the burn went off successfully. Fragments will now be fenced to allow for grazing exclusion over the next two years and alien vegetation that may germinate will be prioritised for clearing. Of great excitement will be the spring botanical surveys conducted by Dr Odette Curtis-Scott and Jannie Groenewald that will assuredly add to the Kinko Conservation Area botanical species list with all the botanical gems that will respond to the ecologically required disturbance!



Excerpt from our ORCT Blog by Zoe Poulsen

Our Postgraduate Students

One of the key aims at the heart of the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust has always been the pursuit of greater knowledge of this Critically Endangered, little known and highly misunderstood vegetation type. To this end a growing number of postgraduate students from multiple institutions have built highly successful research collaborations with the ORCT, using the purpose-built research centre at Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve as a base for their fieldwork. [Read more](#)



Feeding back to Farmers: The ORCT's 'Farmer Reports' as a tool for effective Renosterveld conservation

The Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust works closely with farmers across the Overberg to help them best manage their veld in line with implementing effective conservation. [Find out more](#)

Floral variation in *Nerine humilis*: A pollinator explanation.

Article by Ethan Newman. I have always been fascinated by the amount of floral variation we see in the winter growing geophytes of the Cape. What is even more striking is the amount of floral variation within a species. [Read more](#)



Come for the day, or spend a night or three in our Renosterveld Reserve. Take leisurely walks, or just relax in this historic area.

There are a number of reasons to visit: the plant life (our reserve has over 500 plant species), the rich bird life (over 80 birds), and of course the mammals, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates that occur here. During May to June, stay two nights get one night free.

Visit www.overbergrenosterveld.org.za/accommodation for more info or email Sharon on bookings@overbergrenosterveld.org.za.



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