

MINUTES

eThekwini Biodiversity Forum

22 November 2012

9h00 – 12h00

Paradise Valley Nature Reserve



PRESENT

Arnia van Vuuren	AV	Jeanne Tarrant	JT	Nomfundo Mshengu	NM
Alice Thompson	AT	Jo Boule	JB	Nosipho Ndzimbomvu	ND
Angie Wilken	AW	John Hink	JH	Rashieda Davids	RD
Bart Fokkens	BF	Jenni Bell	JB	Richard Boon	RB
Basheshile Thusi	BT	Katherine Terblanche	KT	Robert Jamieson	RJ
Bheka Nxele	BN	Kerina Singh	KS	Roger Uys	RU
Cameron McLean	CM	Khanyi Celiwe	KC	Shannon Farnsworth	SF
Chris Metherell	CM	Khumbu Luthuli	KL	Rodney Bartholomew	RB
Christine Bubb	CB	Lesley Frescura	LF	Siyabonga Mbukutbhe	SM
Clive Walker	CW	Leigh Richards	LR	Suvarna Parbhoo	SP
Crystelle Wilson	CW	Lettie Coskey	LC	Tamara Gqamane	TG
Di Dold	DD	Lyle Ground	LG	Teddy Govender	TG
Di Higginson Keith	DH	Lilian Develing	LD	Terry Stewart	TS
Jabu Sithole	JS	Marion Spence	MS	Thami Kunene	TK
Jabulani Khoza	JK	Mark Liptrot	ML	Tony Wint	TW
Jean Lindsay	JL	Menri Nxumalo	MN	Trafford Petterson	TP
Jean Rodel	JR	Natasha Govender	NG	T.N Moslweli	TM
Jean Senogles	JS	Nick Liebenberg	NL	Wade Holland	WH

APOLOGIES

Adrian J. Armstrong, Barry Lang, Cllr Gillian Noyce, Cllr B Prinsloo, Cllr Geoff D A Pullan, Corrine Winson, Duane Constance, Ed Granger, Guy Redman, Janet Gates, Johan Vermeulen, Karl Westphal, Kate Richardson, Kirstin Williams, Lynne Thompson, Richard Lundie, Vuyi Radebe

1.	WELCOME & INTRODUCTION	ACTION
1.1	NG welcomed all and facilitated introductions.	
2	PRESENTATION – Custodians of Rare & Endangered Wild plants (CREW): Volunteer amateur botanists making significant contributions to the conservation of threatened plants - Suvarna Parbhoo	
2.1	SP provided information on the CREW programme, noting that it has been operating since 2003, with operations commencing in KwaZulu-Natal in 2007. CREW have established 22 volunteer groups across the country to assist with monitoring and conserving rare and threatened plants, providing critical data required for updating Red List Assessments, contributing to identifying conservation priority areas, assisting Biodiversity Stewardship programmes, making significant new plant discoveries and submitting important distribution records and specimens to several South African herbaria. CREW data informs the plant Red List and is the only project of its kind globally. The CREW programme's citizen amateur	

	<p>botanists have made important contributions to botany by showcasing their new discoveries and undertaking collaborative projects with taxonomists. Since its inception, the CREW programme has discovered 15 new species, rediscovered 13 species and collected population data on 825 species of conservation concern. CREW contributes to reporting on the state of biodiversity nationally (SANBI's mandate) and internationally (Convention on Biological Diversity); informs indicators for the Millennium Development Goals and feeds data into South Africa's Protected Areas Expansion Strategy. The programme also hosts plant conservation events at universities and specialist courses.</p>	
2.2	<p>SP noted the reasons for the existence of CREW programme, including that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Africa has 2577 plant species that are threatened with extinction. • South Africa has more species of plants that have gone extinct than any other country in the world. • One in every four plants in South Africa is of conservation concern. • For most of these species, there is no recent information about how the populations are doing in the wild. • Many of the interesting botanical finds over the past 20 years have been by amateurs who had a passion for searching for interesting plant species. • South Africa has a very active network of civil society interested in conserving plants, thanks to the Botanical Society. <p>Progress made by CREW in KZN includes recording of 236 species of conservation concern (of the 470 in KZN); sampling 175 sites since 2007; surveying 447 plant populations and the discovery of 14 new species by Tony Abbott.</p> <p>With regard to Environmental Assessment Processes, CREW contributes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform land-use decision making as a result of specialist inputs. • EIA practitioners are required to report the presence of species of conservation concern. • SANBI provides land use decision making authorities with data indicating where threatened species occur. • Records of decision will aim to mitigate the loss of habitat/individuals of threatened species. 	
2.3	<p>SP noted that CREW conducts the <i>Bioblitz</i>, an event to record and identify as many species as possible within a particular area on a particular day, involving local community members, and scientists upload observations onto iSpot using the relevant BioBlitz tag.</p> <p>SP informed attendees about <i>iSpot</i> (www.ispot.org.za), a unique website which creates a space for anyone and everyone, whether scientist or layman, to share whatever they have observed in nature with others and in this process learn more about wildlife and have the opportunity to increase their identification skills and become experts themselves in any plant or animal group they are interested in.</p> <p>For more information on CREW, please contact Suvarna Parbhoo at s.parbhoo@sanbi.org.za.</p>	
2.4	<p>LF queried whether CREW interacts with the Avian Demography Unit (ADU), which also has a virtual unit. SP responded that the ADU's virtual site is more scientific with identification of species by specialists, whereas iSpot is for everyone.</p>	
2.5	<p>JL noted that anyone interested in joining the Highway CREW volunteer group should contact her (lindsayjd@mweb.co.za). JL queried whether the Red List data contributed to the IUCN lists. SP responded positively and noted that all Red List plants are listed on the website.</p>	

3	PRESENTATION - Giba Gorge Environmental Precinct: A Pilot Environmental Special Rating Area - Lyle Ground	
3.1	<p>LG noted that the Giba Gorge Environmental Precinct project is a collaboration between private landowners and the eThekweni Municipality to manage a common area (Giba Gorge) comprising scarp forest and Endangered KwaZulu-Natal Sandstone Sourveld grassland for conservation. The aim is to build an effective tool to contribute toward the management of the Municipality's biodiversity assets. Giba Gorge Environmental Precinct (GGEP) was established in July 2009 after being endorsed as a Special Rating Area (SRA) by the eThekweni Municipality. The Municipal Property Rates Act (2004) makes provision for the formation of SRAs for the supply of 'top-up' services to an area. The GGEP is the first to utilise this legislative tool for environmental management purposes. Spearheaded by proactive members of the Giba community and eThekweni Municipality's Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department (EPCPD), this Pilot Project aims to develop an effective partnership between citizens and local government to manage a common natural resource. Funds for management activities are raised from private landowners (through an additional levy on their rates) and the municipality, which owns a significant portion of the land in the gorge. In addition to ongoing contributions from the municipality to manage its land, the municipality has agreed to provide co-management funds to help alleviate some of the financial burden on private landowners during the first five years of operations.</p> <p>The Giba Committee and EPCPD are currently investigating alternative funding models which will replace the municipal co-management funds. A working committee, comprising mostly Giba landowners and an EPCPD staff member, together with four conservation management staff, oversee and implement management operations in the precinct. A management plan has been drafted which highlights various implementation programmes that form the central basis towards which management staff direct their efforts. These include (a) alien invasive eradication programme, (b) fire management programme, (c) field ranger patrol programme, (d) trails and amenities programme, (e) pollution monitoring programme, and (f) communication programme. To date the GGEP SRA has resulted in the effective management of 241 ha of key municipal environmental assets.</p>	
3.2	<p>It was queried whether the SRA is not a rehash of the Urban Improvement Precinct (UIP). LG responded that the SRA is different in that it is being moulded to be used for environmental improvement / conservation. RB added that community involvement is very different with an SRA and skills of municipal staff can be drawn on to assist with management. RB further added that the SRA is aligned with the eThekweni Municipality Systematic Conservation Plan and when reflecting back five years, there has been a complete turnaround and a dramatic improvement with the way in which conservation areas have expanded.</p>	
4	Celebration of Green Champions	
4.1	<p>RD noted that there are many individuals and organisations that are doing brilliant work towards biodiversity conservation in the eThekweni Municipal Area, often unacknowledged and against all odds. In many cases, this work is being done with limited or no funding, and often powered only by good will, determination and a passion for the environment. RD added that eThekweni Municipality Mayoral Awards provides an opportunity to show appreciation to these people, and while there have been many worthy nominees, not all of them can win the award. There are also many others who get left unacknowledged altogether. Thus, the idea to use the Biodiversity Forum as a platform to acknowledge individuals or organisations doing great work for biodiversity in the eThekweni Municipal Area was born. RD invited any willing attendees to stand up in a show of appreciation to give these people a special mention.</p>	

4.2	<p>The following people were mentioned:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lynne Thompson (Stop the Spread) – It is with regret that we have to inform forum members that Lynne Thompson passed away on 29 November 2012 after losing her battle with pancreatic cancer. Lynne was known for her dedication to stem the tide against invasive alien plants and creating awareness of the impacts resulting from invasive alien plants. She served as manager of WESSA’s Stop the Spread campaign in the KZN Region. 2. Paolo Candotti and Kloof Conservancy 3. Cllr Jean Lindsay - KZN Conservancies Association, New Germany KwaMahlangu and Clermont Conservancies 4. Angie Wilken and committee - Barn Swallow site in Mount Moreland, the only Important Bird Area in KwaZulu-Natal. 5. Rob Jamieson –Westville Conservancy 6. Andrea Abott - Everton Conservancy 7. Di Dold 8. Lesley Frescura and Arnia van Vuuren - Birdlife Port Natal 9. Richmond Mariannahill Conservancy and Mark Liptrot (Chair) 10. Di Higginson Keith –Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa 11. Jenny Loughlin – Invasive alien plant control on Kassier Road 12. Bart Fokkens – Duzi Umgeni Conservation Trust (DUCT) 13. All Conservancies in eThekweni Municipality 14. Natural Resources Division – Conservancies Open Day. 15. Westville Veterinary – Planting indigenous plants on the open space in proximity to the vet. 16. Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department. 	
4.3	RD thanked all for their heartfelt and very inspirational contributions and noted that all mentions will be passed on for consideration in the next Mayoral Awards.	
5	Updates from Natural Resources Division (NRD)	
5.1	TS noted apologies from VR and offered to provide brief updates from NRD in her absence. TS reported that the Animal Control Policy is still a work in progress and is being aligned to legislation. He further reported that a second round of talks was hosted on monkeys in the urban environment.	
5.2	It was queried whether a Monkey Management Plan was in place and available to use. TS responded that no such document is available as yet, but that VR is currently liaising with tertiary institutions to conduct a survey of monkeys. RU responded that Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (EKZNW) have resources on living with monkeys available for use by the public.	
5.3	LF noted that an article in the press indicated that activities at ACSA are killing Barn Swallows. LS confirmed that this is not the case and has unfairly affected people’s perceptions.	
5.4	BF queried whether any plans were in pace to deal with the Rose-ringed Parakeet. TS responded that no plans were in place, but this would be dealt with under the Animal Control Policy. RB noted that a PhD student is currently monitoring Rose-ringed Parakeets. TS added that detailed information is required, including distribution maps, roosting sites etc. RU mentioned that the public should get involved in making observations/collecting data as there are not enough people on the ground. LF noted Bird Atlas results of the ADU could also be used.	

6	Updates from Natural Science Museum (NSM)	
6.1	<p>LR noted that she is a Mammalogist at NSM and is currently embarking on a project to conduct surveys of small mammals in KZN, including shrews, rodents and bats. The results of the survey will serve to update the Book of Small Mammals, which is more than a decade old and only contains 103 species. LR invited attendees to participate in the survey by nominating areas to be surveyed or contacting her for a site visit (Leigh Richards, Email: Richardsl@durban.gov.za, Tel: 031 322 4215/0).</p> <p>LR provided the following updates from the NSM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 November 2012: NSM Seminar series by Leigh Richards "Small mammals of KwaZulu-Natal" • 10 Dec - 14 Dec 2012: Holiday programme (City Hall) • 18 Dec - 20 Dec 2012: Holiday programme (KwaMashu) • 21 December 2012: Sleepover (City Hall: cost R120 , R100 for NSM Friends members) • Thola magazine won best publication award (Electronic version of Thola attached) • NSM opened temporary displays in September that are located at libraries. Current display is on Rhinos. 	
7	Updates from Environmental Planning and Climate Protection Department	
7.1	<p>NG reported that the State of Biodiversity Report was being compiled and will be completed by the end of December 2012. NG will circulate copies once available.</p>	
7.2	<p>RB provided an update on the appeals process with respect to the inclusion of D'MOSS into the Town Planning Schemes, where appellants are challenging the constitutional right of Local Government to undertake environmental work. The city is opposing the appeal and is being supported by the City of Cape Town and the national Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA). A court hearing was held on 14 November 2012. As previously mentioned, in doing research the eThekweni legal team discovered that the split zoning process failed for technical reasons, whereby the split zoning was advertised before final council decision was obtained. Officials of EPCPD intend to implement the rezoning process again, but will wait for the Courts decision.</p>	
7.3	<p>RD noted that the rescinding of the conservation has implications for holders of Environmental Rates Certificates (ERCs). She noted that ERCs are awarded when a property satisfies three requirements; 1) the land is considered environmentally sensitive; 2) the land is zoned for conservation; and 3) the landowner is managing the land according to an approved environmental management plan. The EPCPD has offered to reinstate the conservation zones on behalf of those landowners that have been affected by the rescinding, in order for their ERCs to be maintained.</p>	
7.4	<p>RD also reported on the establishment of the Monteseel Joint Management Initiative, where EPDPC, NRD and the Monteseel Conservancy will work together to manage a scarp forest and grassland in the Monteseel area. The area is also home to <i>Encephalartos natalensis</i> (Natal cycad) that has been declared a National Scientific Monument and which is the type specimen by which all <i>Encephalartos natalensis</i> have been scientifically described.</p>	

7.5	On behalf of Sean O'Donoghue, RD reported on the UKZN Sandstone Sourveld Research Programme, a year old research collaboration between the University of KwaZulu-Natal and eThekweni Municipality. The Programme focuses on environmental management, specifically biodiversity conservation within KZN Sandstone Sourveld, in the face of global changes that include the impacts of a changing climate. UKZN Researchers are carrying out a wide range of studies within KZN Sandstone Sourveld, including research into invertebrate genetic diversity using novel techniques like DNA bar-coding; investigating the impacts of development pressure; how neighbouring communities can sustainability benefit from these grasslands in terms of the ecosystem services they provide; their economic value and attempting to understand how the ecology will be impacted by climate change. A flagship project involves the tracking of crowned eagles (<i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>) to better understand their survival rates within an urban metro, their foraging behaviour and the value of the Durban Municipal Open Space System (D'MOSS). This also includes an analysis of prey items taken to nests, and is likely to result in a live webcam being used to publicise the programme.	
7.6	BN reported that the EPCPD employed the Working on Fire (WoF) team to safeguard ecosystem services by eradicating invasive alien plants, using chemical and biological control and also to implement fire management. They are currently based at the New Germany Nature Reserve and an additional base is being considered. A team of four WoF staff has also been subcontracted to assist with work at the Giba Gorge Environmental Precinct and eventually the team will grow to 11 staff. These staff will be under the management of Thuthuka Majola, the reserve manager at Giba Gorge. WoF will supply staff with equipment and training. EPCPD will also assign WoF to assist with invasive alien clearing and fire management as part of the Monteseel Joint Management Initiative.	
7.7	BN also reported that EPCPD is utilising fixed point photography to evaluate the impacts of fire on KZN Sandstone Sourveld grassland, which Prof Mark Trollop will be assisting with.	
7.8	KT reported that the EPCPD is revising the <i>Beautiful but Dangerous</i> invasive alien plant posters. A workshop was held on 26 October 2012 to brainstorm ideas for the revision of the posters. In addition to hard copies, the posters will also be made available in electronic format and will be interactive, allowing the user to select the species they wish to include for printing. Diagnostic details of species will be included. KT invited anyone with good photos of invasive alien plants to contact her via email (Kathryn Terblanche, Email: Kathryn.Terblanche@durban.gov.za). KT added that EPCPD is looking at including Quick Response (QR) Codes on posters, a type of barcode that users can scan using their smartphones to link to the invasive alien poster website.	
7.9	JL suggested that the electronic version of the poster be made available on CD.	
7.10	RU suggested that details on the levels of threat posed by various invasive species to biodiversity be included on the posters.	
7.11	JT queried when the posters will be available. KT responded that members will be updated on the progress soon.	
7.12	RJ queried whether information on the best methods of eradication will be included on the posters. KT responded that icons will be included in this regard.	
8	General	
8.1	JT noted that on 1 December 2012, the first national South African Frog Awareness Day will be held. Ten awareness raising events will take place around the country. JT will give a talk at uShaka Marine World, NPC Seaworld Education Centre, at 11am on the plight and significance of frogs followed by a visit to the frogs on display at the "Dangerous Creatures" exhibit. For more information please contact: Dr Jeanne Tarrant, Manager: EWT-Threatened Amphibian Programme, Email: jeannet@ewt.org.za, Cell: 083 254 9563.	

8.2	JR noted that any correspondence regarding the Stop the Spread Campaign may be directed to her (<i>Jean Rodel, Email: stopthespread@wessa.org.za</i>).	
8.3	LF mentioned that the Birdlife Port Natal calendar was on sale at R90 each.	
8.4	JK reported that NRD, with the assistance of EKZNW, arrested a man that was harvesting Arum lilies. Unfortunately, it was later found that the case was thrown out from the Hillcrest Police Station. JK is however taking the matter further. JK noted that anyone wishing to report similar incidents may contact him. (<i>Jabulani Khoza, Cell: 084 501 5045</i>). Alternatively, contact the <i>NRD switchboard at 031 266 6702</i> to be redirected to the relevant person.	
8.5	TP advised that it is extremely important not to leave the police station without a case number. Once a case number is obtained, it should be provided to Trafford Petterson, EPCPD Enforcement Officer (<i>Trafford Petterson, Cell: 071 850 7242</i>) or Johan Vermeulen, District Manager for issues outside of Protected Areas (<i>Johan Vermeulen, Cell: 082 931 8335</i>) who will then contact the dedicated case officer. Without the case number, the case will get lost. JK responded that they spent three hours at the Police Station. Normally, they are told that the case number will be provided the following day.	
8.9	AT of Earthlife Africa previously provided information about the proposed harbour expansion, back-of-port and dug-out-port plans. She noted that the plans would have serious impacts on the Durban Bay sandbank, which is the only marine dominated sand bank in KZN, an important fish nursery and 62 endangered birds frequent the area. Earthlife Africa is opposed to the proposal and in terms of the Bonn Convention; South Africa is bound to protect this habitat. The area is at a critical tipping point. AT queried whether the EPCPD had commented on the Local Area Plan (LAP). CM responded that EPCPD has commented on both the dug-out port and LAP and will finalise the comment on the berth in the next few weeks. It was requested that these issues be included on the Agenda for the next forum.	RD
9	Meeting closure	
9.1	NG thanked all for attending and mentioned that the dates for the 2013 Biodiversity Forums will be circulated early 2013.	