



Waterberg Nature Conservancy Newsletter

Occasionally issued news of interest to WNC members and others in the Waterberg

Number 9, January 2010

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Newsletter items by John Miller unless otherwise attributed.

Next WNC Meeting

Date: Thursday, 25 February 2010

Venue: Farmers Hall, Vaalwater

Time: 2:30 pm

**Guest Speaker: Sibusiso Vilane
Mountain Climber and Explorer**

This is a unique opportunity and an honour to hear from South Africa's renowned mountaineer.

In anticipation of widespread interest, the public is also invited at a nominal fee of R30.

It is important that Conservancy members and the general public RSVP to Heidi Carlton as soon as possible, but no later than 23 February. (contact details at left).

Sibusiso Vilane began his working career as a game ranger in Swaziland in the early 1990s. He started climbing in 1996, first to peaks in the Drakensberg. In 1999, he reached the summit of Kilimanjaro and went on to the Himalayas in 2002, successfully climbing several peaks over 6,000 metres high. In 2003, Sibul returned to the Himalayas in his quest to be the first black African to summit earth's highest and most fearsome mountain, Everest. He successfully reached the peak in May 2003.

In 2005, Sibul again climbed to the top of Everest, this time accessing the peak from the North Ridge, the more difficult side. This achievement meant that he is the first black African to climb the world's highest peak twice and by two different routes.

Sibul is one of six South Africans to become a member of the Seven Summits Club, having climbed the highest peak on each of the seven continents.

In January 2008, Sibul and his partner became the first South Africans to walk to the South Pole completely unassisted.

Sibul is currently here in the Waterberg, helping Welgevonden implement a volunteer research programme. He is also working with the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Rural Eco-Warrior programme based in Vaalwater.

He will be telling us stories about his trek to the South Pole, with some Himalaya excitement as well.

Please join us for what will be a most interesting and inspiring presentation.

Also on the agenda, briefings from:

**Rupert Baber, Chairman of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve
about the Waterberg Meander
and**

**Tele Maphoto, Regional Land Claims Commissioner for Limpopo
about the status of land claims in the Waterberg**

Cash Bar and Light Supper at Very Reasonable Prices

**RSVP to Heidi Carlton by Tuesday 23 February 2010
(contact details at left)**

Losses to the Waterberg

Very sadly, two members of the Conservancy have passed away recently. Laurie Wright and Arthur Zeederberg will be terribly missed by their families and the many who knew and admired them. We offer our deepest sympathies to their families.

Laurie Wright

Laurie Wright, strong supporter of the Waterberg Nature Conservancy, died in Johannesburg on 5 December 2009 at age 69. Laurie was deeply engaged in the early days of South Africa's conservation movement, working with Ian Player and his Wilderness Leadership School in the 1970s and with Clive Walker in the 1980s and 1990s on the creation of the Field Guide Association of South Africa (FGASA).

In recent years, Laurie pursued his passion in the Waterberg, first by simply contributing his energy and talent to a friend's farm, Sterkfontein, now a part of Welgevonden. Since 1999, with other families, Laurie was a part owner of Tilodi Game Farm, a 1,370 hectare farm that includes the iconic Perdekop on the southern escarpment of the Waterberg.

Laurie Wright, a most gentle and modest man, embodied the qualities of leadership, service and community involvement. He was passionate about his family, his community and, fortunately for the country, nature conservation. His name may not be well known in today's South African conservation circles, but that very community continues to benefit from his enduring legacy.

Laurie is survived by his wife, the former Genie Braun; their children Cathryn and her husband Clayton, Michael and his wife Luci, and Alison and her husband Glenn; their grandchildren Robyn, Benjamin, Connor, Carrie, Dean, and Andrea; and his brother Andrew and sister Ingrid.

Arthur Zeederberg

Arthur Harvey Zeederberg, highly respected and long time resident of Vaalwater, died on 12 January 2010 after a long and brave struggle with a respiratory condition. He was 68.

The son of Harvey and Kay (Farrant) Zeederberg, Arthur was a proud descendent of important South African pioneers on both sides of his family. On his mother's side, he was the grandson of John and Rhoda Farrant, farmers who settled in the Waterberg at the turn of the last century and ultimately established J Farrant & Co. on the land that is now the Zeederbergs Centre in Vaalwater. On his father's side, Arthur was a descendent of Christiaan (Doel) Zeederberg, one of the three brothers whose famous transport business by horse-drawn stage coach in the 1890s opened up the Northern Transvaal and Rhodesia to the rest of the country.

Born in Johannesburg on 14 April 1941, Arthur went to Lord Milner Preparatory School in Settlers for several years. In 1959, he graduated from Pretoria Boys High School, where he was Head Boy at his boarding house and School Prefect. An active sportsman, Arthur played rugby at school, at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, and on the junior Natal team.

After a short period in the SA Police and other jobs in Johannesburg, Arthur joined his mother and stepfather Alex Furman in Vaalwater in 1966 in the family business that his grandfather had started – J Farrant & Co. Arthur was a founder member of the Spar organization in South Africa and by 1967, J Farrant & Co was converted to a Spar supermarket.

In 1970, Arthur married Shelley Black from Swaziland. The older family home and outbuildings were converted to a B&B and Backpackers by their daughter Ashleigh, and by 1989, their son James joined Arthur and Shelley to manage the Spar. Arthur and Shelley ultimately expanded their business to the Zeederbergs Centre that is so well known today.

With the growth and success of the Zeederbergs Centre, Arthur and Shelley were at the forefront of Vaalwater's modern day development. Arthur was an early and active supporter of the Farmers Hall Association.

Arthur had a great interest in the natural world. He was a passionate and extremely knowledgeable birder. His bird egg collection, started as a schoolboy, earned him the respectful title of *Ramae* (Egg Man or Man of the Egg) from the local population. Arthur loved to fish in any waters, at any time, for any fish. He was a staunch supporter of the Waterberg Nature Conservancy in its early days and of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve since its inception.

Whether answering to the name of Zeeds, Zeedy, or Arthur, to any Waterberg friend or traveler who spotted him around the Zeederbergs Centre in Vaalwater, he was always ready with good humour and conversation. A most sociable man, he will be missed by his wide circle of many, many friends. He will be remembered as a wonderful gentleman, a devoted family man, and for his contribution to the development of his beloved Waterberg.

Arthur is survived by Shelley, their son James, their daughter Ashleigh and her husband Brent; grandsons Jarryd and Troy; and Arthur's sisters Joy, Janice, and Susan.

A memorial service will be held at the Zeederberg home behind the Spar on Wednesday 3 February at 10:30am.

Executive Committee

At November's AGM meeting, two additional members were elected to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee met on 15 January 2010 and re-elected John Miller as Chairman and Kelly Abram as Vice-Chairman. For 2010 and 2011, here is your Executive Committee:

John Miller (Equus Reserve), Chairman
Kelly Abram (Leopard Creek Reserve), Vice Chairman
Conway Volek (Nkonka Bush Lodge)
Andrew Parker (Welgevonden Private Game Reserve)
Richard Wadley (Moletadikgwa Wildlife Sanctuary)
Franz Rolinck (Khutso Foundation)
Peggy Parham
Colin Palframan (Lagnaha Farm)
Rachel Poole (Moonriver Bush Bungalows)
Ken Cowie

Eskom in the Waterberg: The View from LEAF

It is well known that Eskom plans massive coal based development in the Waterberg region. Although Eskom has named the expansion projects the Waterberg developments, the coal fields are situated to the west and north of the Waterberg Mountains as we know them.

Currently, Matimba power station (3,600 megawatts or MW) is the only coal fired power station in the Waterberg area. Eskom's long term strategic plan is to build more coal fired stations in the area. The construction of Medupi (4,800 MW) is currently underway. There have been a number of reports in the press about the problems of Medupi such as the huge budget over-runs (from R100 billion to R150 billion), the lack of adequate water and the failure to implement adequate air quality emissions equipment (in this case Flue Gas Desulphurisation or FGD). The EIA is also underway for the construction of two further coal fired stations – Coal 3 and 4 (5,400 MW each). To give one an idea of scale, Eskom's total installed capacity in South Africa is approximately 40,000 MW so the introduction of Medupi, Coal 3 and 4 at 15,600 MW represents development on a par with the Witbank area in Mpumalanga.

So what has this to do with the Waterberg, since the developments will be located closer to Lephalale? Eskom's developments are the first in a series of developments. Sasol plans to build a coal to liquids (CTL) plant in the area on a similar scale to Secunda to be called Mafuta. Mafuta is still in the planning stages and the EIA has not commenced. Eskom also plans to support a number of smaller independent coal fired power producers (CPPs) in the area. The size and nature of the developments have the potential to dramatically transform the entire Western Limpopo (including the Waterberg) – bigger roads, more traffic, increased population, air and water pollution, water shortages, etc. The infrastructure necessary to support such projects is massive.

Water is a critical factor and it seems the construction of Medupi is forging ahead notwithstanding that there is not enough water. Eskom's plan (being undertaken by the Department of Water and Environmental Affairs, DWEA) is, in the short term, to draw down on the Mokolo Dam in excess of its sustainable yield (putting serious strain on the Mokolo Dam, downstream users and aquatic ecology). In the long term, a weir will be built at Vlieepoort near Thabazimbi on the Crocodile River. Approximately 500 million litres of water per day will then be transferred via a pipeline to the power stations. There are serious doubts as to the veracity of this scheme (called the Marico Crocodile Water Augmentation Project or MCWAP) and a private firm of hydrogeologists has been contracted by landowners in the area to give an independent opinion on the scheme.

Other infrastructure projects are further advanced. The strengthening and upgrading of the transmission lines necessary to convey such large amounts of electricity to other parts of the country has been ongoing for several years. Three new 400 kilovolt (kv) lines are already approved by DWEA and will run next to existing lines near Thabazimbi. The EIA for 7x765 kv lines is nearing completion. These lines will also follow existing corridors near Thabazimbi and some linking lines will traverse the northern parts of the Waterberg.

Air pollution is a huge concern. Studies have already been done by the CSIR indicating that air particulates from Matimba are already impacting in the Waterberg, noticeably on water quality in streams. The air emissions issue is further complicated due to budget and water constraints with the result that there is no immediate plan to install adequate air emissions equipment at Medupi. Not to mention climate change!

It is public knowledge that Eskom is facing huge financing issues for all its new developments. To this end the World Bank is considering a large project finance facility (\$3.75 billion) for Medupi. Representatives of the Limpopo Environmental Action Forum (LEAF) were invited by the World Bank to a meeting on 10 December 2009 to discuss Medupi environmental issues. The World Bank proposal is that the additional Equator Principles

(World Bank environmental guidelines) would not be necessary in South Africa due to South Africa's progressive environmental laws. On the question of how the World Bank could be supporting such projects in the face of climate change, the World Bank representatives pointed to the fact that a small percentage of the finance would go to carbon offsets in the form of renewable energy projects. On the most critical issue – water – the World Bank response was “Water Affairs is sorting that out”. Comments on the World Bank strategy regarding the environmental aspects of the Medupi financing (and particularly the reliance on South African environmental law) were invited by 15 January 2010.

Pieter Lamprecht, Chairman, Limpopo Environmental Action Forum (LEAF)

Cheetahs in the Waterberg

Richard Wadley writes: On 3 January, Lyn and I were out on a game drive when Lyn spotted a leopard sitting under a bush. We drove closer, photographing it as we did so (in case it disappeared). When we got close enough to see its details, however, we realised that this was not a leopard at all, but a cheetah. We then sat astonished – because I for one have not heard of a cheetah sighting in this area before – and watched it for half an hour or so until darkness fell and the animal – an adult male – lay down in the grass.

The next morning, I took my two Staffies for their usual early morning run, with me on a bike. Less than a kilometre from the house – and about 3km from where we'd seen the cheetah the previous evening – I suddenly saw the cheetah trotting across the grassy plain, making a beeline for the younger of our dogs, who was running out in front. I immediately began shouting at the top of my voice and accelerated to try and intercept the cheetah before it reached the dog. Fortunately, the dog stopped at the sound of my voice, although the cheetah ignored me; it and I arrived at the dog almost simultaneously. The cheetah then became aware of the presence of this purple-faced, obese, bellowing human and doubled back, while the pooch decided to run off across the plain, more or less in the direction of home (the other, older dog, who is very canny, had in the meanwhile turned tail and headed at a trot for the house).

The sight of the dog running across the plain was too much for the cheetah, who came in for a second attack; and once more, was confronted by an even more purple-faced, now hoarse (but arguably slimmer) humanoid apparition-- made worse by the fact that I was now having to dodge aardvark/warthog burrows during my Lance Armstrong-like sprint to cut it off.

This time, as the cheetah (fortunately) again turned away, I carried on pursuing it until we'd put a few hundred metres between it and the dogs. Then, I rejoined the dogs and persuaded them to accompany me homeward.

At that moment, Lyn, having heard my various shouts from the house and assuming that her stupid old spouse had fallen off his bike and broken a leg or something, came hurtling around the corner in her bakkie, with the result that we who had just escaped being a cheetah's breakfast almost became a multiple roadkill instead! Fortunately, she had thought to grab a camera on her way (no first aid kit or medicinal brandy, note), so we loaded the dogs into the bakkie and went back onto the plain to look for the cause of all the excitement. Within minutes, we found the cheetah, sitting serenely on a termite mound, surveying a plain filled with all manner of delectable dishes. You could almost hear him: "Eeny, Meeny, Miney, Mo ...".

We went out again later in the day and subsequently, but have had no further sightings or seen any spoor (but it has been raining a bit too).

Let me take this opportunity to ask Conservancy members about your experiences with cheetah:

How often have you seen cheetah?

Are they commonly around the area?

What do you know about their behaviour, prey, territorial range, etc.?

Does “my” cheetah's behaviour sound rational in your experience?

Richard Wadley.

Here are some responses to Richard's questions. Let us hear from more of you with cheetah experiences. Also, we'd like to hear from you about any of your exciting and/or rare game encounters in the Waterberg.

Andrew Parker (Welgevonden) writes: We have several cheetah on Welgevonden and there are records of quite a few free-roaming cheetah in the area – in fact the free-roaming population comprises the largest component of the remaining cheetah population in SA. We recently hosted a workshop organised by the EWT to formulate a strategy for the management of the broader cheetah population in the Vaalwater area as a metapopulation. I'm sure there is a lot more cheetah activity on farms than people are aware of.

Kelly Abram (Leopard Creek Reserve) writes: When I first moved to this area, I attended a talk by Kelly Wilson who was with De Wildt and was carrying out a research project on cheetah in the Waterberg and surrounding area. Her findings were that the population of cheetah was quite high and they seemed to be doing very well, having even learned to hunt more efficiently using fences to chase game into. She was surveying the population using a microlight, as she reported it is rare to see the cheetah from the ground.

I have also heard of cheetah being in the northern part of the Waterberg area from neighbours and friends. From what I have heard, they seem to be roamers who don't stay too long in one location.

Clive Walker says: There are certainly cheetah on Lapalala. They should not be seen as a threat to walkers, cyclists, etc., although very small children on their own could be vulnerable.

A Pretty Good Weather Website

Here's a website that provides more localized weather than any other site I've seen. Make your way to www.yr.no and you'll find yourself in a Norwegian website whose search function will be familiar. If you enter Vaalwater, you'll find several in Limpopo. Though each shows a different altitude, they all show the same coordinates in a category called "railway station". I am in communication with the website people about that problem. Nevertheless, at any of the Vaalwater entries, you get a pretty accurate weather forecast picture. The page shows changes hour by hour for three days. I know it can't possibly be accurate for my farm, but so far, when the graphic shows cloudy at 8 am, and then raining at 9 am, that's pretty close to what's happening.

Waterberg Meander: Next Issue, Volume II

If you look closely at the Waterberg Meander brochure, published recently by the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, you'll see that the meander covers sites and projects to the east and north of Vaalwater. The next issue will present a route on the west side of Vaalwater, both north and south, including for instance Marakele National Park and Mokolo Dam. I will be doing some of the research for the Sites of Interest and Community-Linked Projects, and would appreciate any suggestions of such sites and projects.

John Miller, 014 721 0063.

Plans for the R33: Modimolle to Vaalwater

The Limpopo Department of Roads and Transport has announced a tender for improvement to the R33 between Vaalwater and Modimolle. The first 14km of the road coming from Modimolle towards Vaalwater was widened and resurfaced over the last couple of years. This new tender will carry on from that 14km point for another 10km. The Department's schedule shows an eight month construction period from 11 February to 11 October, 2010.

THETA: 2010 Learner Programme

THETA – the SETA for the tourism and hospitality industry – has announced its learner programme for 2010. Details are posted on its website www.theta.org.za. From the looks of the website, the programme appears to be intended for large employers. Small employers will find it appealing only if they participated previously.

Contracts between employers, learners and THETA are for 12 months. THETA will pay learners and provide additional training. There is no obligation on an employer to employ the learner at the end of the 12 months. In line with Government's commitment to focus on rural development, THETA is very anxious to secure the participation of rural employers in the project.

This is an opportunity for young people from the Waterberg to obtain both work experience and occupational training at virtually no cost to employers and for employers to contribute to reducing the skills shortage and give hope to young work seekers.

I encourage members of the Waterberg Nature Conservancy, particularly large employers, to give serious consideration to participating in the programme. If you decide to participate, please let us know so that we can get an assessment of participation and the training needs that will have to be met. Applications to participate must be submitted 19 February.

Sam van Coller, dvancoller@telkomsa.net, 083 267 5043.

**Wait, there's more in this Newsletter.
Learn a little about some of our members.**

Scroll on to Members Profile

Company	Contact	Contact Numbers	Email	Web Address	Brief Description
Ant's Nest and Ant's Hill Bush homes	Tessa and Ant Baber	014 755 4296 / 014 755 3584 / 083 287 2885	reservations@waterberg.net	www.waterberg.net and www.ridingsouthafrica.com	Ant's Nest and Ant's Hill are private bush homes in the magnificent malaria-free Waterberg. Enjoy fabulous horse riding safaris, guided bush walks or game drives on our privately owned property. Suitable for families, riders, honeymooners or just good friends travelling together
Driehoek Feeds / Voere	Janneman van der Merwe Karel van Vuuren Hanlee van der Walt	014 755 4370 014 755 4211 083 273 2743	Janneman@driehoek.co.za and info@driehoek.co.za	www.driehoekfeeds.co.za and www.equusfeeds.co.za	With over 20 years experience in milling, Driehoek Feeds manufactures a wide range of products. With a committed team of expert nutritionists, Driehoek Feeds has become a leader in the highly specialised Game Feeding industry. Driehoek has also recently launched the new Equus Range of horse feeds which compare to the highest international standards. For Cattle, Game, Poultry and other farm feeds, Driehoek combines research and science with value for money in every bag!
Jobedi Game Reserve 	Sharin	014 755 3993 / 086 612 9937 / 073 280 8670	game@jobedi.co.za	www.jobedi.co.za	Tucked away deep in the Waterberg Mountains is a private retreat. A purposely well kept secret set in a vast landscape of rocky terrain blessed with lush vegetation and scenic vistas of breathtaking beauty which lends itself to an abundance of peace and tranquillity. We offer self catering units and camping and are the only reserve in the area offering self drive game drives.
Kgama Eco-Ranch (Pty) Ltd 	Steven Klagsbrun	012 362 2280 (office) 012 362 5982 (fax) 083 450 7510	steven@kdv.co.za		Conservation – Fauna and Flora – Ecological enhancement. Selected hunting opportunities.
Kololo Game Reserve 	Elize Oosthuizen	014 721 0920 / 014 721 0080 / 014 721 9910	admin@kololo.co.za	www.kololo.co.za	Kololo Game Reserve is situated in the heart of the Waterberg biosphere: A malaria-free area, home to a large variety of game makes Kololo a perfect safari destination. Visit neighbouring reserves and view the Big 5 - lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo, or enjoy a sneak preview over the fence, from the comfort of your chalet at Kololo.
Kwalata Wilderness CC 	Reinhard Heuser	014 755 4104 / 014 755 4249 / 082 414 5622	reinhard@kwalata.com ; caroline@kwalata.com ; office@kwalata.com ; werner@kwalata.com	www.kwalata.com	Our company's main activity is hunting. Kwalata consists of 13 000ha. Kwalata boasts 4 of the Big 5 and numerous plains game species and birds.
Where the real Africa begins!					

Company	Contact	Contact Numbers	Email	Web Address	Brief Description
<p>Lapalala Wilderness</p> 	<p>Roger Collinson (General Manager) Wild Revolution; Jessica Babich / Patrick Bonior (PR)</p>	<p>(014) 755-4071 (Lapalala Main Office) 084 404-7800 (Wild Revolution)</p>	<p>roger@lapalala.com info@wildrevolution.co.za</p>	<p>www.lapalala.com</p>	<p>A private reserve that is dedicated to conservation, ecotourism, community upliftment and environmental education</p>
<p>Mokabi Lodge, Moletadikgwa Wildlife Sanctuary</p> 	<p>Lyn and Richard Wadley</p>	<p>014 755 3506 083 609 1425 083 609 1464</p>	<p>yeldaw@mweb.co.za</p>	<p>www.mokabilodge.com</p>	<p>A luxury stone and thatch self-catering lodge set in secluded woodland affords guests a comfortable and tranquil experience in the magnificent Waterberg. Numerous clearly marked and annotated walking trails and mountain bike routes on the private game reserve enable visitors to enjoy the diversity of plant, bird and animal life offered by the unique environment of the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve</p>
<p>M`solosolo Safari</p>  <p>Relax in the heart of the Waterberg biosphere, private but luxury!!!!!!</p>	<p>Dr. Volker and Marita Neemann</p>	<p>014 755 4106 / 083 450 6535</p>	<p>office@msolosolo.com</p>	<p>www.msolosolo.com</p>	<p>Nestled deep in the Waterberg, you enter a quiet, malaria- and crime-free paradise. German hosts have been successfully involved in the hunting and lodging business for over 12 years. Activities include hunting trips with a professional hunter, guided visits to bushman paintings, horse riding, clay shooting, pistol shooting exercises, bird watching or game drives in an open 4x4 vehicle. We gladly organize elephant back rides, visits to the white lion park or a personal touch with rhinos. Longer trips to the Kruger National or Pilanesberg Park sightseeing or tours to God's window or Tzaneen can also be organized.</p>
<p>Nkonka Bush Lodge, Nkonka African Safaris and Idube Safari Lodge</p> 	<p>Conway and Becky Volek</p>	<p>082 824 1750, 082 570 8494, 014 755 4170</p>	<p>conway@nkonka.co.za</p>	<p>www.nkonkabushlodge.co.za www.nkonka.co.za</p>	<p>Under the shade of the bushveld, broad leaved trees, the 4 star Nkonka Bush Lodge provides guests with an escape to enjoy the true beauty of nature surrounding them. In the small, intimate nature of the camp on a fully or self catered basis. Informative game drives or walks with our experienced guides, mountain biking and trips to surrounding attractions can all be enjoyed during your tranquil bushveld getaway. There is also the option of a self catered rustic bush camp which is exclusive to one party at a time.</p>

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you are able to enjoy the beautiful Water
in the manner you prefer.