



Editor – Iona Everett

Newsletter

February 2015

Chairman's Chat

*by E J (Robby) Robertson
NCOA Chairman 2015*

The NCOA committee for 2015 held its first meeting earlier this month, having been elected at the December 2014 AGM. New to the committee is Carel van Gend who takes over from Marylou Newdigate. Thank you Marylou for your contribution over a number of years, and for looking after the Noetzie Website. A big welcome to Carel who is to take over the website from Marylou.

The committee decided to stay with the 2014 portfolios and responsibilities as follows;

- Chairman: Robby Robertson
- Vice chair & municipal: Julie Gosling
- Treasurer & municipal: Margi Dane
- Secretary: Laurel Robertson
- Newsletter: Iona Everett
- Conservation & Environment: Marina Devine AND Wendy Dewberry
- Website: Carel van Gend

As discussed at the AGM, there are a number of concerns that were previously raised with the Knysna Municipality and which remain unresolved. Members of the NCOA committee will be meeting with Council representatives next month, and we will provide feedback in the next newsletter. On the agenda are matters relating to access to Noetzie, and issues of responsibility for the maintenance of certain municipal assets.

Also on the agenda is vehicular access onto the beach. As you are all aware this has been of particular concern for the beach properties, particularly during emergencies. The importance of this was recently highlighted following the beaching of a whale that had to be disposed of. The present

access, recently re-established by Julie Gosling using sand bags did the trick, but the reality is that this does not offer a longer term solution, and has already been partially damaged by high tide action.

The Knysna Municipality is looking for a longer term solution to this and other problem locations along the coast that have been eroded in recent times. A consultant team has been appointed, an Environmental Impact Assessment process is under way, and your committee has made a submission in response to the request for comments.

We trust it will be a good year for all

Welcome Carel van Gend

I asked Carel to write a short introduction about himself and his association with Noetzie. Here it is!

Ed

By Carel van Gend

My family have been coming to Noetzie since the early 80's. The first few years we stayed in North's cottage on the beach, and then we spent a couple of summer holidays at what was then the Kelly-Patterson house (now the Brown's house).

While staying there one summer, my father (Jan van Gend) heard of a property up the river which was for sale. After some back and forth, and roping in of other family and friends, he bought the stand and was faced with the problem of how to build a house on a steep slope in a forest, with no road access. The problem was solved by the construction company off-loading the building materials at the beach, and floating them across the river on a barge.

The house that was built was indeed a fine house, but as most people will remember, it didn't last that long before a leaky gas fridge caused an explosion and it burnt to the ground. Luckily, we were insured, and we replaced the house with a very similar design (but this time with a new, non-leaky gas fridge!).

I now have a son of my own (the delightful Dan), and Carol-Ann and I are looking forward to many more happy summers at Noetzie, watching him discover what has so enchanted generations before us.

Noetzie Website

Apart from being a source of information relating to Noetzie generally and the adjoining environment, the NCOA posts up-to-date information, reports, important correspondence with Local Authorities etc on the website, so that it becomes a site where owners and other interested parties can obtain details that give insight into decision making and activities relating to Noetzie, which should be of interest to all property owners.

You are encouraged to make use of the site and should you have any comments on the content, we would welcome correspondence by e-mail

The Whale - Part II

Chris Everett

The last Newsletter gave details of the beaching and first burial of the whale. Unfortunately the site was poorly selected - far too close to the sea and in the path of the river's occasional meanderings. So by the time Iona and I arrived at Noetzie on 11 December, the preceding Spring tide and change in the river's path had uncovered large sections and washed three chunks of by now well decomposed whale into the lagoon where it (fortunately) floated. The smell was not pleasant and there was an oily film on the water. Swimming was out of the question.



On Friday 12 December and quite by chance, we met Owen Govender of SAN Parks with some of his crew on the beach – they were wondering how to get the chunks out and how to get a boat down. We assured them that boats and canoes were in plentiful supply and we would assist.



That weekend the wind started blowing the blubber across the lagoon and, fearing it would get into the reeds, the wider Everett Family and Steve Gettliffe took the initiative and with five paddlers and three canoes we towed the bits to the beach where, with the help of Richard Moultrie and several bystanders, we managed to pull the heavy decomposing mass up a little way.

We kept in contact with Owen and on Thursday 18 December he arranged for the Knysna machine to come back to Noetzie. Interestingly, the operator, Luvuku Rafu, told us that he had objected to the original site as being too close to the sea, but was overruled.

In conjunction with the SAN Parks people on site, we settled on a new site high up and as close to the bush-line on the Sinclair side of the beach as possible and here a large hole was dug. All the exposed pieces were dumped here and after getting the digger well bogged down in the sand next to the lagoon, from which he extricated himself with great skill, the operator managed to remove the chunks that had been floating and they were also removed and re-buried.

Noetzie owes a vote of thanks to Owen, and the crew who came down to the beach.

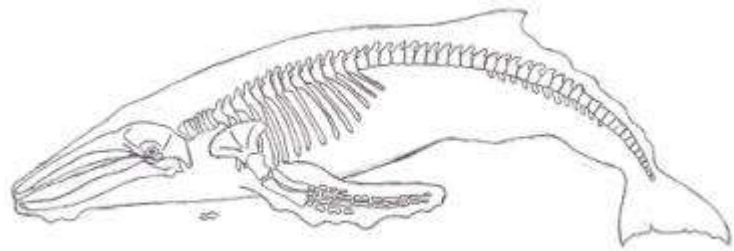




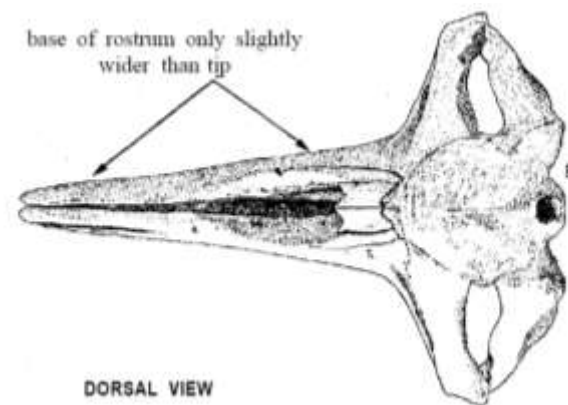
L to R - David Jornett and Zuko Zakhe of SANParks and Luvuku Rafu – Operator

The remaining question to be settled is what exactly is the large bone in front of the Gosling house? Theories abound – pelvis, shoulder or skull - and after some research I can confidently state that it is the skull, unfortunately upside down at present.

Humpback Whales are rorquals (family Balaenopteridae) and here's a diagram of a hump-back whale skeleton. As is quite clear whales do not have a pelvis at all, and the shoulder blade (scapula) doesn't have anything analogous to our collar bone. So it can only be the skull.



What tends to confuse us, is that both jaws, the lower, or mandible and the upper jaw, known as the beak or rostrum are now missing. The rostrum is comparatively fragile and has clearly been broken off during dismembering the whale. One can see broken edges on the skull and the point where the spine was attached is also clear – at present facing towards the sea.

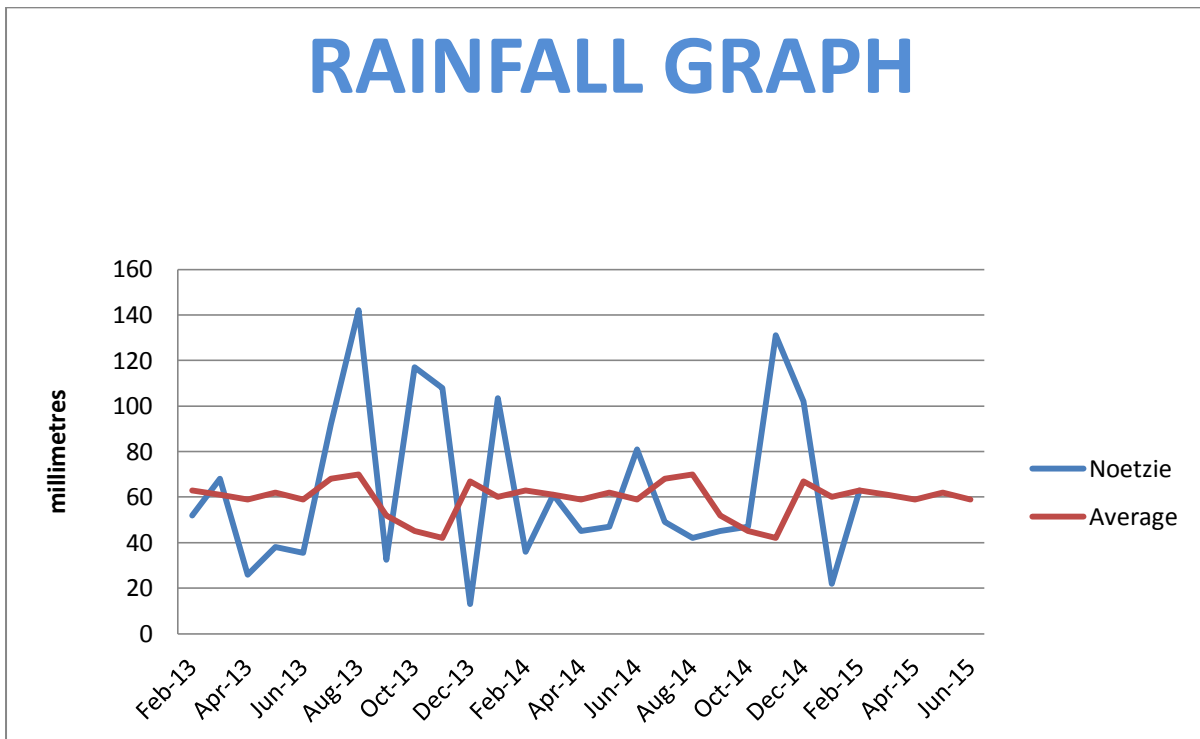


Compare this now with the photos and imagine the rostrum broken away in the lower left photo, which I have rotated to approximately the same orientation. Below are a few more pictures to convince you.





I think it would be good to turn it over and perhaps put up a small sign giving the story – it is likely to be there for some years.



Noetzie Conservancy Report

by Wendy Dewberry



Pic by Marylou Botha

Blue Helichrysum along the Noetzie Road – February 2015

In February 2015 we noticed that Imphepho - *Helichrysum petiolare* – is being sprayed blue in the Pine Plantations along the Noetzie Road. Christiaan Smit, the Plantation manager at Kruisfontein offered to explain as well as offer his open door to all of us. The meeting on Monday 9 Feb was full of information.

Plantations are not entirely wonderful, environmentally speaking. However, not having plantations means ecological disaster as natural forests are denuded for their bounty. We use wood for everything, from building and furnishings to floorings and structures to fuel for burning. Production areas should not be viewed as wild or conservancy areas but more like designated “factory” areas. Christiaan mentioned a few of the mitigation measures that control the impact of plantations on the environment. Of course, National Laws guide and control activities and these include Cara, the National Water Act, Fire Act – actually the list is contained in a thick tome with thud value. They also have regular internal and external audits to ensure that they comply. The FSC audit is just one of the external audits that takes place : <http://www.capepine.co.za/forests/fsc>

I asked if Cape Pine was obligated to maintain a certain percentage of their land as Conservancy. He explained that within areas there may be sections that have Conservation value and protected status but history has largely dictated the status quo. Pre 1994 the Department of Forestry managed all state forest land including the indigenous forests. SAFCOL, which was a para-statal, owned and managed the commercial forestry areas. All major indigenous forests are now under SANParks’ jurisdiction. In 2002 the production plantation areas were separated from those under the care of SANParks. MTO was a fully commercial and private entity which leased the commercial plantation

areas from the government. In 2011 it became Cape Pine which currently manages production areas of plantations, which they do with precision. The database is as specific as measuring and monitoring each block or polygon, each tree, each weed and occurrence over time. Alien vegetation is mapped and dealt with.

When there is a body of water on the land that is to be planted, the water table and indicators of wetness are assessed. Indicator plant species show the level of the existing water table. Soil samples are augered and signs of mottling in the soil sample will indicate fluctuations of the water table. At 50 cm above the highest fluctuation, denoted by striations in the soil sample, positions are marked out on the ground and saplings are then planted 20 m above that. This is the evidently safe distance where herbicides will not affect water.

In terms of planting espacements, 2,7m x 2,7m will yield 1372 trees per ha. Because at this proximity the roots will begin to compete with each other relatively early, these trees will be slender and good for telephone poles. Planting at 3,5m x 3,5 m will yield 816 trees per ha which will, if the weeds are kept from competing with the roots of the pines, be good for saw timber. The halfway espacement of 3,0m x 3,0 m will yield 1111 trees per ha. These trees yield both thin poles and saw logs. This is because at approximately 8 and 12 years, there is the possibility of thinning out the trees in order to reduce root competition to allow the remaining roots to spread. Thinning provides yield for the company in the form of sawlogs and bigger poles. For more information, have a look on their website: <http://www.capepine.co.za>

The time-line for management of plantations is roughly as follows –

- The trees are planted and for 3 years the areas between them are kept weed free using, amongst others, herbicides such as Glyphosates (see attached). At regular intervals the areas are weeded and the trees pruned. The reason for the regular weeding is to prevent the spreading of exotics and also to manage fuel load build up.
- From 12 years until the trees are harvested at around 25 to 30 years, the areas are kept clear of fuel load to lessen the chance of fire and minimize the intensity of fire.
- Triclopyr (see attached) is used on woody stemmed fuel loads such as Impephu (*Helichrysum petiolare*) as part of fire management specifications. This is what we now see on the Impephu in the pine plantations along the Noetzie Road.

Wikipedia

Glyphosate (ROUND UP) adsorbs strongly to soil and is not expected to move vertically below the six-inch soil layer; residues are expected to be immobile in soil. Glyphosate is readily degraded by soil microbes to aminomethylphosphonic acid (AMPA) and carbon dioxide. Glyphosate and AMPA are not likely to move to ground water due to their strong adsorptive characteristics. However, it does have the potential to contaminate surface waters due to its aquatic use patterns and through erosion, as it adsorbs to soil particles suspended in runoff. If it reaches surface water, it would not be broken down readily by water or sunlight.

The half-life of glyphosate in soil ranges between 2 and 197 days; a typical field half-life of 47 days has been suggested. Soil and climate conditions affect its persistence in soil. The median half-life of glyphosate in water varies from a few to 91 days. According to the National Pesticide Information Center fact sheet, it is not included in compounds tested for by the Food and Drug Administration's Pesticide Residue Monitoring Program, nor in the United States Department of Agriculture's Pesticide Data Program. However, a field test showed that lettuce, carrots, and barley contained glyphosate residues up to one year after the soil was treated with it at 4.15 kg per ha.

Use

Glyphosate is effective in killing a wide variety of plants, including grasses and broadleaf and woody plants. By volume, it is one of the most widely used herbicides. It is commonly used for agriculture, horticulture, viticulture, and silviculture purposes, as well as garden maintenance (including home

use. In many cities, it is sprayed along the sidewalks and streets, as well as crevices in between pavement where weeds often grow. However, up to 24% of glyphosate applied to hard surfaces can be run off by water. Glyphosate contamination of surface water is highly attributed to urban use. It is also used to clear railroad tracks and get rid of unwanted aquatic vegetation. In addition to its use as a herbicide, glyphosate is also used for crop desiccation (siccation) to increase the harvest yield and, as a result of desiccation, to increase sucrose concentration in sugarcane before harvest.

Triclopyr (GARLON) (3,5,6-Trichloro-2-pyridinyloxyacetic acid) is a systemic, foliar herbicide in the pyridine group. It is used to control broadleaf weeds while leaving grasses and conifers unaffected. Triclopyr is effective on woody plants and is used for brush control in rights of way and defoliation of wooded areas.

Water testing

by Iona Everett

As many of you are aware it came to the Committee's notice at the end of October last year that there had been a sewage spill into the Noetzie River. The Springfield area near Brackenhill Falls had had its electricity cables stolen and thus the electricity cut. Knysna did not immediately put any mitigation measures in place for the sewage pump. Over a period of approximately three weeks this resulted in a substantial leak of raw sewage into the Noetzie River.

Immediately e-coli tests were taken in the Noetzie River. The results came back as raised but still within the acceptable range for recreational use. Concerns were then raised again about the possibility of contamination from the riverside properties when they were all in use over Christmas. I am happy to report that we did a second test in mid January, and the results were all well below half the count acceptable for full contact in the DWAF guidelines.

Humpback Whales

By Iona Everett

After the beaching of the Humpback Whale on Noetzie beach and all the interest shown, I decided to make the Humpback Whales my animal for this newsletter and I got rather carried away.

Humpback Whales are well known for breaching and their complex songs. The name describes the motion it makes as it arches its back out of the water in preparation for a dive. Its name "Megaptera novaeangliae" is from the Greek "mega" meaning great and "pteron," a wing, which is apt because of its huge wing-like flippers.



Class:	Mammalia	Order:	Cetacea
Suborder:	Mysteceti (as are all baleen whales, which means “moustached” in Greek.)		
Family:	Balaenopteridae	Genus:	Megaptera
Species:	Novaeangliae	Cruising speed:	4knots, (8 km/hr)
Blow:	Pear-shaped and upright, about 3 m high		

Size:

Humpbacks are huge! Adult males measure 12 - 15 m and adult females slightly more. This is about the width of an Olympic swimming pool with eight lanes! They weigh 25 to 40 tons. Their flippers are very long - between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the length of their body, and have large knobs on the leading edge. The flukes (tail), can be 5.5 m wide and are serrated and pointed at the tips. At least 3 different species of barnacles are commonly found on both the flippers and the body of the Humpback Whales.

Description:

Being a Rorqual or whale in the family Balaenopteridae, they have head to tail grooves on the throat, and about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way back on the body is an irregularly shaped dorsal (top) fin. The head of a Humpback Whale is broad and rounded when viewed from above, but slim in profile. The body is quite round, but slender where the body joins the tail. The top of the head and lower jaw have rounded, bump-like knobs, each containing at least one stiff hair. The purpose of these hairs is not known, though they may allow the whale to detect movement in nearby waters. The body is black on the dorsal (upper) side, and mottled black and white on the ventral (under) side. This colour pattern extends to the flukes. When the Humpback Whale "sounds" (goes into a long or deep dive) it usually throws its flukes upward, exposing the black and white patterned underside. This pattern is distinctive to each whale. The flippers range from all white to all black dorsally, but are usually white underneath.



Habitat

The habitat of Humpback Whales covers polar to tropical waters, including the waters of the Arctic, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans, as well as the waters surrounding Antarctica and the Bering Strait. During migration, they are found in coastal and deep oceanic waters. Humpbacks are divided into several populations, which are for the most part isolated. There are seven populations in the southern hemisphere, two in the North Atlantic Ocean and two in the North Pacific. Humpback Whales follow a regular migration route, summering in temperate and polar waters for feeding, and wintering in tropical waters for mating and calving. As the second most commonly seen whale along the South African coast, Humpback Whales migrate northward from the Antarctic through South African waters on their way to the tropical waters off Mozambique, southern Madagascar and Angola as early as April and May. Their numbers peak during June and July, which are the best viewing months. The best places to view Humpback Whales are from coastal headlands. They have incredible powers of endurance, travelling over 5,000 km during each seasonal migration with almost no rest along the way.



Feeding

Humpbacks feed by circling around schools of fish or krill and making a cylindrical net of bubbles. They then lunge into the concentrated cloud of prey with mouths wide open. They feed mostly on krill, small shrimp-like crustaceans, and various kinds of small fish. Each whale eats up to 1.5 tons of food a day. As a baleen whale, it has a series of 270 to 400 fringed overlapping plates hanging from each side of the upper jaw, where teeth might otherwise be located. These plates consist of a fingernail-like material called keratin that frays out into fine hairs on the ends inside the mouth near the tongue. During feeding, large volumes of water and food can be taken into the mouth because the pleated grooves in the throat expand. As the mouth closes, water is expelled through the baleen plates, which trap the food on the inside near the tongue to be swallowed.



Behaviour

Humpback Whales are active, acrobatic whales. They can throw themselves completely out of the water (breaching), and swim on their backs with both flippers in the air. They also engage in "tail lobbing" (raising their huge flukes)



out of the water and then slapping it on the surface) and "flipper slapping" (using their flippers to slap the water). It is possible that these behaviours are important in communication between Humpbacks.

Perhaps the most interesting behaviour of Humpback Whales is their "singing" which can be heard up to 35 km away. They sing long, complex songs and the songs of each of population are unique. A typical song lasts for 10 - 20 minutes, is repeated continuously for hours at a time, and changes gradually from year to year. Singing whales are males, and the songs may be a part of mating behaviour. Researchers still are not sure exactly how humpbacks produce their sounds. They don't have vocal chords, so they probably sing by circulating air through the tubes and chambers of their respiratory system--but no air escapes during the concerts and their mouths don't move.

Reproduction

Humpback Whale's breeding occurs mostly in the winter to early spring while near the surface and in warm, tropical waters. They reach sexual maturity at 6 - 10 years of age or when males reach the length of about 11.5 m and females reach 12 m. Each female typically bears a calf every 2 - 3 years and the gestation period is 12 months.

A Humpback Whale's calf is between 3 and 4.5 m long at birth, and weighs up to 1 ton. It nurses frequently on the mother's rich milk, which has a 45% to 60% fat content. Newborn Humpbacks consume about 45 kg of their mother's milk each day for a period of five to seven months, until they are weaned to solid food.

Finally

We hope the information contained in this Newsletter and the others sent out during the year is of interest and value to all homeowners, particularly those who only visit for short periods of the year. We believe that progress is being made on a number of fronts in our efforts to improve service delivery, enhance the quality of the urban environment and help uphold the value of owner's investment in Noetzie. We would like to thank all those who support the NCOA and its activities.

Particular thanks are due to the committed homeowners who volunteer their time and efforts to assist in various ways, all helping to make Noetzie a special place and a destination worth looking forward to when holidays come around.

The Committee of the NCOA would like to thank their families whose support is enormous and without whom the NCOA would be unable to function to the benefit of all owners.