

Newsletter

Editor – Iona Everett

May 2016

Chairman's Chat

*By the editor on behalf of EJ (Robby) Robertson
NCOA Chairman 2016*

As some of you may know, two of our committee members, Julie Gosling and Laurel Robertson, have had serious health issues recently. Julie had a triple heart bypass surgery, while Laurel has been in and out of hospital ICU due to a descending aorta dissection. Laurel is not out of the woods yet, but is at home and making a slow recovery (an operation was considered too a risky solution). As you may appreciate this has been a concerning few weeks for both the Gosling & Robertson families and our thoughts are with them at this time.

At the 2014 AGM it was decided that certain changes would be made to the NCOA Constitution during 2015. This was done, but at the AGM in December 2015 it was proposed that the changes not be passed at that meeting, but that Richard Moultrie would look at them as he indicated the matter was not as simple as it appeared. Discussions are underway in this regard.

Wendy & Robby had a meeting with the Knysna Municipality on April 5, at which the Noetzie road was discussed. The poor state of the road is partly due to construction work being carried out and this is likely to continue for the next few years. The Knysna Integrated Spatial Development Framework draft has been released for public comment. (See the Conservancy Report below). The Committee will look at this and let the Noetzie people know. The same applies to the Coastal Management Plan. Discussions also centred around beach access, the state of the public toilets and signage.

Beach Baboons

Melanie Gosling

Nature is dynamic and one of the pleasures of coming to Knoetzie over many decades is witnessing some of these natural changes.



One that intrigues me is the changing foraging behaviour of baboons. As a child and a young adult I don't remember seeing baboons on the beach at all. They were usually up the river or moving through the pine plantations that used to cover the hills above Knoetzie before the Pezula development was established. Now, decades later, baboons on the beach seem to be a daily occurrence - at least it has been during my stay here from March to mid-May. Perhaps it has to do with being here out of season, when there are fewer people around, and the baboons feel safer. Perhaps it has to do with a loss of former foraging habitat to development.

My sister Julie and I have been walking on the beach often in the last two months - part of her post-triple heart bypass exercise regime that the surgeon requires. We do 10 lengths, which gives us plenty of time to watch the antics of beach baboons.



On the morning of the new moon spring tide on May 6 they were there again. Some of them were on the sand, some below Lindsay's Castle, and some on the Oyster Rocks, taking advantage of the exposed mussels during the spring low tide.

"It looks so weird seeing their furry heads sticking up between the rocks," Julie remarked.

They do look incongruous, a group of hairy beasts sitting on the rocks with the waves swirling around them. We are so conditioned to seeing them in the bush or in mountains, jumping from krantzes or swinging through trees.

Most of the group seemed to be quite unfazed by our walking by and went on eating their seafood brunch with no more than a glance in our direction. There was one youngster, however, that appeared to think we might not be as trustworthy as his troop-mates might think, and scampered off at speed, holding his booty of mussels tightly against his chest. When he felt he was sufficiently high enough to be out of the reach of any humans who might want a share of his mussels, he began eating them, glancing down at us in a kind of "I-am-king-of-the-castle" way.

According to the SA National Biodiversity Institute (Sanbi), baboons are known to eat seafood. They are "opportunistic omnivores" and feed on a wide range of foods, changing their diet according to what is available -rather like humans. Although Sanbi says baboons prefer feeding on bulbs, shoots, roots, seeds and fruit, their diet also includes invertebrates, small vertebrates and "seashore life".

"Fungi and lichens are eaten when they are available and they will also feed on refuse from human settlements," it said.

Residents know all about this – and the consequences of leaving rubbish bags unsecured or windows open in the presence of these opportunistic omnivores.

Some mornings we go down to the beach to find only their footprints on the sand. They have been and gone. Other mornings we find the whole troop on the beach, quite often sitting on the eastern side of the river outflow, playing, grooming each other, foraging along the edge of the forest, or just sitting in the autumn sunshine, arms resting on bent knees in that very human-like pose.



One day as we neared the end of the Old Wagon Road we heard the sounds of a battle royal coming from the direction of Montrose Castle. As we got closer we saw baboons all over the "battlements", bouncing around very excitedly, all eyes focused in the direction of the noise coming from below.



"It sounds like a big fight," Julie said.

Whatever was happening was out of sight, so we went on down to the beach. As we were walking along the river outflow, two baboons exploded from bushes at the end of the Old Wagon Road, and shot across the river, spray flying. They were both quite big - males we assumed - and one was very definitely seeing off the other. The pursuer chased the other baboon all the way to the rocks

on the eastern side, shouting his angry bark as he ran. The fleeing baboon threw anxious glances over his shoulder as he barreled across the sand. The rest of the troop were chattering spectators bouncing around on top of Montrose Castle.

The victor, satisfied when the other baboon had scrambled away up the rocks, strutted back to the troop looking pleased with himself – his body language so much like the winners of barroom brawls one sees in movies. One half expected to see him dust off his hands.

That primate's victory may not be long-lived. According to Sanbi, adult males form a hierarchy of dominance established and maintained by fighting and aggression, but the hierarchy is unstable, lasting between six and 12 months. This is because young males tend to emigrate between troops, so high-ranking males frequently lose their status to younger immigrants.

There is no way of knowing whether the interaction we saw was a local male winning a battle to keep his status, or a local male losing his status to a young "blow-in" from elsewhere.

What has also been something of an eye-opener is the interaction of people and baboons on the beach. We saw one young mother, with a toddler in her arms, walk right up to the troop that was feeding around the Oyster Rocks. We knew she was from Europe and had probably never seen a baboon, so went to warn her not to get too close as these animals were wild. Before we got there she started walking backwards rather fast - with a big male baboon walking very purposely towards her. Turns out the woman had walked right up to the troop with her toddler munching on half a ciabatta bread, dropping high-energy tidbits all around the baboons. No wonder the big male was advancing. That ciabatta probably contained more calories than a full day's foraging.



On another day as Julie and I reached the eastern end of the beach in one of our "laps", we saw a man hurling rocks at two baboons sitting higher up the rocks in Sinclair Nature Reserve. They scampered away and the man advanced, picking up more rocks to hurl at the baboons. When we reached him we explained that it was an offence to harm baboons and that he was a nature reserve. He stopped for a moment, with his back to us, then bent down and picked up another rock and threw it. This was not some youngster at the pulling-wings-off-flies stage, but an adult who had come to the beach with his family, and had been sitting at the river a little earlier with what I imagine was his wife and two children. He had walked half way across the beach to throw stones at baboons way off on the rocks. What makes people do that?

We have also seen some amusing incidents. One male baboon had been walking after a female on the wet sand, trying unsuccessfully to mount her several times. Eventually he had her in his grip and was pumping away. We all know how deceptive those Knoetzie waves can be, and how a knee-high wave can pack enough power to make you stumble if you are caught unawares. That's what happened to this couple, and there was a flurry of wet fur as the wave hit them and they scampered away.

News from NCOA Treasurer

Margi Dane

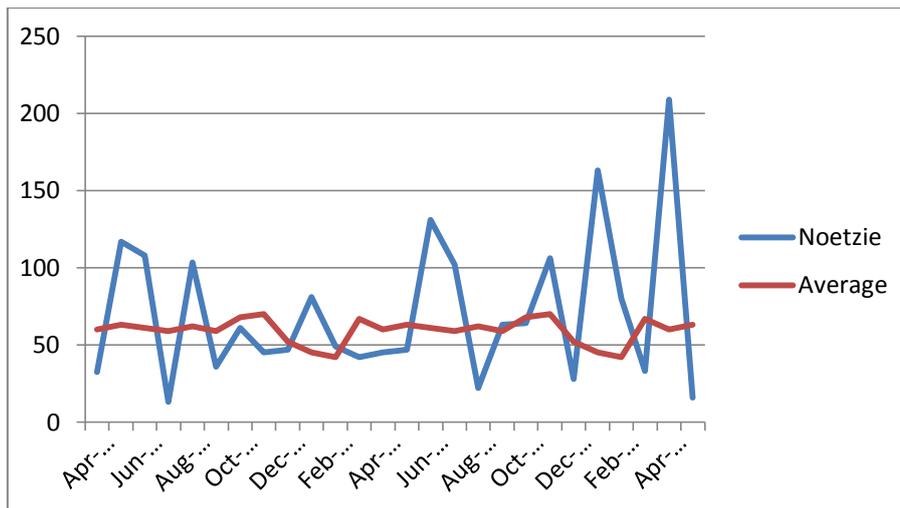
Last year we were extremely successful in collecting over 90% of NCOA subs. Regrettably, so far the owners of 18 out of 50 erven are still outstanding in paying subs. A big thank you to all paid up members.

To the others, a friendly reminder to please pay subs as soon as possible. It is possible that some of you are still using the old account number which has now been discontinued. If so, your money would have been returned to you. Your NCOA accounts will reflect the current bank details. Please check as reminders have been sent to you.

Unpaid members forgo benefits of membership for the period of non-payment, such as cover with the South Cape Fire Protection Association. It is therefore prudent to be paid up asap, apart from it being a constitutional requirement.

Note that from November 2016, subs will increase to R600 per member.

Rainfall Graph



Municipal elections

For the 2016 municipal elections, Noetzie will no longer be included in Ward 11, but will now fall into Ward 9 along with Pezula, Sparrebosch, The Heads, Hunter's Home, Rexford, Leisure Isle and Thesen Island. The ward councillor presently representing Noetzie is Mark Willemse (DA), who was recently elected following the resignation of Michelle Wasserman.

Peeps into the Past

by Chris Everett

War time in Noetzie

The Second World War, from 1939 to 1945, brought a different kind of visitor to Noetzie – recuperating airmen and then children. The Henderson Family made the old Pezula Castle available initially to the Royal Air Force for airmen who had been shot down, wounded or suffered what these days is called post-traumatic stress and then to the Fairbridge Scheme for children from Rhodesia who were in need of a sea-side holiday.

Mrs Shepherd, the sister of Mrs Hennie Barnard, wife of the local butcher; who originally ran the Heads Tea Room for Jack Duthie, was paid by the Henderson family to act as house-keeper and she continued to run Pezula after the war for a number of years for her own account as a boarding house. There can surely be no better place to recover your health than overlooking Noetzie Beach and River, but reports indicate that it was not an unqualified success – the airmen found it too quiet and the nearest pub was Frasers Royal Hotel in Knysna.

An intriguing relic of the war is this little concrete memorial on the rocks on the right bank of the lagoon. It is barely 250 mm x 300 mm in size. As children we used to jump from the rocks, but they are now rather overgrown. I wonder how many of my readers have ever seen it or would be able to find it. In the concrete is the following inscription:

R.A.F.
A TRIBUTE
TO
THE BUILDING
GENIUS
OF
LAC PAWLEY
LAC JOHNSON
10/11/1941



Next to the main inscription are some initials – possibly BEL and CBBM and the name may be Fawley or even Rawley. Despite various attempts, I have been unable to establish the identity of these two Leading Air Craftsmen or what they built. It would be wonderful if someone somewhere could identify the people concerned.

There is also a story that on a large yellow-wood tree above the lily pond the names of a number of these recovering warriors have been carved, but I have never been able to find it. There's another challenge for the younger generations.

Website News

Carel van Gend

The Noetzie website (www.noetzie.co.za) is a resource for visitors and regulars, and provides current news, information about and a brief history of Noetzie, a photo gallery, and news of the outdoor classroom. There is a page on the site where public documents relating to the Noetzie Conservancy can be accessed, as well as archived copies of this newsletter. There's also a protected part of the site, which contains minutes of the AGMs and committee meetings.

Behind the scenes, we're trying out a new document storage system: rather than using the website as the primary store of NCOA documents, we're using a shared Google Drive. This simplifies document search and categorization, and should provide a more secure long-term storage option for our documents. Relevant documents will still be uploaded to the website (to the public or protected areas as appropriate) and be accessible in the same way as before. Queries or suggestions regarding the website can be sent to me at carelvg@gmail.com.

Conservancy Report

Wendy Dewberry
NCOA Environment representative

Once again we have three NMMU students doing their small research assignments at Noetzie, courtesy of sponsorship and accommodation from Aubrey and Liz Wynne-Jones and assigned by Bianca Currie, lecturer and researcher at the School of Natural Resource Management at the George campus. Last year we were presented with a final marked submission on the fish populations in the Noetzie River. This year we have three studies beginning which include research into the effectiveness of the wildlife "corridor" under the Noetzie road from one side of Pezula to the other (situated just below the natural spring in the Noetzie road – that always-wet patch about 1 km up.). The other two studies will be on the frog populations in the lagoon and the disturbance factors to birds specific to development at Noetzie.

The Noetzie cameras have been exciting this year as the leopard has been a frequent feature.



Sadly I have had to shrink the range of the cameras because there is increased presence of poachers and their dogs up river and not only did a camera go missing, but I feel too vulnerable to go far up river alone. These photos of the poachers is from one of the Noetzie camera traps.



In this regard I met with SANParks's Knysna Area Manager Johan de Klerk and Senior Section Ranger Owen Govender last week who have intimated that they will prioritise Noetzie. There have been a few incidents that have led us to believe that poaching and crime is escalating, and so this prioritisation will be welcome.

One of the more benign, but nevertheless irritating incidents has been the ongoing presence of Lester Philander who has previously been banned from Noetzie over the years by the SAPS. This has not deterred him, and to boot, he was caught red-handed with stolen items from Montrose castle by Allsound, but after being delivered to the police station he was let free after he explained to the police that he had taken the free-standing electric light and microwave oven to the beach with him, his own property. I'm sharing this sadly true tale with you to add some light relief to this seemingly hopeless situation. After the Easter week-end we found some of his "Donations sheets" which I add here for your perusal showing the amounts which he collects from the tourists on the strip just before the stairs to the beach.

He hides in the bushes and so can never be caught. With him comes the suspected collaboration of parking attendants and boom guards who have also been illegally operating parking fees and access fees to beach driving, and of course the safe passages for poaching booty.

With permission from Anthony Evans the Pezula Private Estate Manager, Julie employed Pieter Coetzee, a former forester and employee of PPE, to clear the dense vegetation around the car park area and garage at the boom for increased visibility. We also had the broken waste-away refuse bins in the car-park replaced by Knysna Municipality.

The Knysna Integrated Spatial Development Framework (ISDF) draft is available here <http://www.knysna.gov.za/information-centre/integrated-strategic-development-framework-isdf/>.

If you would like a copy on a stick I have them on my PC and I will willingly copy them for you. The salient issue for Noetzie is whether we have been placed inside or outside the urban edge, as this would dictate much of future "urban development" parameters. I met with Knysna Municipality's

Town Planner, Marike Vreken who is part of the ISDF spatial process and she asked for the Council resolution documents that Noetzie was outside the urban edge, which I duly sent.

Your NCOA committee will keep a close eye on these developments.

Pezula Matters

On 30 March 2016, a High Court application was launched in the South Gauteng division of the High Court in terms of the company that owns 100 percent of the shares in Pezula Hotel and Spa Pty (Ltd) is applying for an order in terms of which the Pezula Hotel and Spa is to be placed under supervision and business rescue proceedings in terms of the Company Act.

This application was launched after an application for liquidation was brought in the Western Cape High Court by various applicants who own suites in the resort in 2015. On 15 December, 2015, the liquidation application was postponed to afford the parties opportunity to file supplementary affidavits and furnish additional information to the Court. The application for business rescue will suspend liquidation proceedings and afford the Court the opportunity to appoint a business rescue practitioner to explore options to turn the business around.

The Cape Grey Mongoose

Iona Everett

Dashing across the grass, scratching amongst leaf litter searching for grubs, or sauntering along the private track, the mongoose is probably one of the more visible small mammals found living in Noetzie. On our recent trip to Noetzie we frequently saw two of them on the grass near the harbour while we sat on our stoep. They are very skittish and shy little animals, but are active throughout the day, which makes sightings of them easier. Although they have short legs, they can run very fast for their size!

Genus/species - *Galerella pulverulenta*



Description

The species was originally described from the Cape of Good Hope by Wagner in 1839 and throughout their range in the South Africa, they give the impression at a distance of being overall dark grey. At close quarters, however, the coat is seen to be grizzled white or buffy and black. The

colour of the underparts is similar to the upper. However there is less grizzling, especially on the upper chest and belly. The ears, which are typically viverrid in shape, are closely pressed to the sides of the head and are partly covered in front by a band of longer hair which arises from the side of the head. The muzzle is pointed. Total body length is approximately 64 cm, the males with tails about 85% of the length of the head and body, in the females 90%. The average total length of their skulls is 70 mm in males, 67 mm in females.

Distribution

The Cape Grey Mongoose occurs widely in the North-western, Western, South-western, Southern and Eastern parts of the Cape Province.

Habitat

They have a wide habitat tolerance and the Southern African subspecies is found in areas of forest as well as in open country and fynbos and they occur from sea level along the South-western coast of the Cape to 1,900 m in Natal.

Habits

They are a diurnal species, active from shortly after sunrise until about sunset. Their activities usually slacken off during the heat of the day and recommence late in the afternoon. Normally solitary, they may occasionally occur in pairs and the lack of observations of females moving with young may be due to the fact that the young are weaned in the breeding holes and eventually leave these only at a stage when they are capable of looking after themselves. Predominantly terrestrial, they will climb trees, either of their own volition, when hunting, or under stress, but they are in no sense arboreal. They move quickly on their short legs, pausing to sniff here and there or to scratch in debris in search of insects, which form their principal food. Wherever there is insufficient vegetational cover to provide shelter at night, they make use of holes in the ground, the shelter of piles of rocks, holes in termitaria or holes and crannies in outcrops. They will live in close association with man, using the shelter of holes under the floors of outbuildings, stone walls, or any other substantial cover available. They will even penetrate into the peri-urban areas of cities and settle there.



The claws of the front feet are not particularly well developed, so that they are poor diggers and, while they may adjust existing holes to their own requirements, they do not dig their own burrows, relying either on holes dug by other species or on natural shelters. Like other small carnivores they are prone to move along existing tracks and paths and are frequently observed crossing roads. Unlike their near-relative the Slender Mongoose, they do not, when diving for cover as they cross roads, cock their tails in the air but hold these close to the ground as they move.

Diet

Insects are rated high in their diet, including grasshoppers and locusts, and among vertebrate prey, rats and mice, reptiles and ground birds, their eggs and young. In captivity, they would kill and eat puff-adders, always eating the head first, and after eating their fill, would return later to eat the remainder. The mongoose, while to some extent resistant to the venom of this species of snake, would, nevertheless die from a dose capable of killing a cat. The Cape Grey Mongoose is predominantly insectivorous with murids (rodents), carrion and birds also ranking high in their diet.



Insects caught on the ground are held down with the front feet, then taken directly in the mouth. Larger prey such as mice are stalked, the mongoose crouching down and watching for a favourable moment before dashing out to secure them, biting at any available part of the prey's body and worrying it before delivering the killing bite on the head. Small mice are chewed in the side of the mouth allowing for the maximum cutting ability of the carnassial teeth, which are sharp pairs of pre-molars. Food is thoroughly masticated, making anything but broad identification of the remains difficult.

Reproduction

In their dens they give birth to litters, each of one to three young, from August to December. Nothing is known about sexual maturity or gestation period, nor of mating habits.



Tracks

Although the Cape Grey Mongoose has five toes, each with a sharp claw, their tracks generally only reveal four toes. Also of interest is that the tracks from the back foot overlap the front foot.

Community News

Henry Loubser

Chris Everett

One of Noetzie's great characters – Henry Loubser - died in January this year, shortly after celebrating his 80th Birthday with many family present, including Madeleine, Sasha's mother on her first visit to Noetzie for over a quarter of a century.

Henry's first experiences of Noetzie were in the late 50's and early 60's when he spent holidays in Plettenberg Bay and Keurbooms River with Don Lindsay. They came to Noetzie for a party with Ian Henderson in 1959 and Henry recalled that he brought a young girl who had to be back early. Having arrived early at the Castle, he found when he wanted to leave that he was entirely parked in by cars all the way up the road from the Castle and only got her home the following day at 11 am with "unfortunate consequences".

Henry bought his stand in 1974 and the wooden cottage was built in 1976, he also bought a stand in Pezula Private Estate in 2006 and built a house there in 2008.

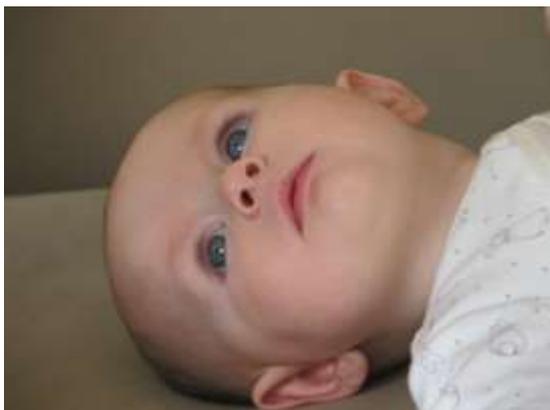
Henry has been involved in Noetzie's Community affairs, including being one of the first Town Councillors and a generous supporter of the Noetzie Home Services Association and its staff.

Henry was a great Noetzie "original". His first wife was Judy and then he married Madeleine from Sweden, the mother of Sasha. Later he and Petra married and were together for many years.



Henry was energetic, lovable, noisy and always fun, with an inexhaustible fund of more or less improbable stories. He will be sorely missed and condolences go out to Petra and his whole family.

Payton Lyla Jones



Congratulations to proud parents Tasha (nee Nicolson) and Ty Jones on the birth of their daughter Payton on 1st December 2015

Julie's Road to Recovery

So many kind Knoetzie friends have phoned, e-mailed and sent good wishes to Julie Gosling after her triple heart bypass. As many know, Julie, Vice-chairperson of the NCOA and Municipal liaison Committee member, had a transient ischaemic attack on March 1 – also known a “mini stroke” – which came with no warning symptoms at all. Fortunately the effects are not permanent, but the incident led to her having various medical tests over the next few weeks, including an angiogram, which showed that she needed an emergency triple heart bypass. She had bypass surgery at the Bay View Hospital in Mossel Bay on March 31. The operation was successful and Julie is on the road to recovery, walking on Knoetzie beach almost every day to complete 5 km a day that the surgeon requires. Julie has not been up to visits in her post-operative time, but would like to thank you all for your kind words and support.



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.