



NOETZIE CONSERVANCY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

*Editor – Iona Everett*

**Newsletter**

**November 2014**

## Chairman's Chat

*by E J (Robby) Robertson  
NCOA Chairman 2014*

There are two matters I would like to pass comment on at this time. The first relates to the Noetzie road and matters of personal safety and road condition. The second concerns attention given to the maintenance of certain other public assets.

The Noetzie road has always been an issue, and generally reaches its worst condition when we're all at Noetzie. In all fairness, the District Municipality did attend to the road in a fairly regular manner, and still do in respect of that portion for which they (and the Province) are still responsible. As matters now stand, the first 500 m of the Noetzie road from the N2 is now the responsibility of the Knysna Municipality, as is the final portion from the commencement of the Pezula development to the beach. Julie Gosling and I recently met with officials of the Knysna Municipality and it was disturbing to learn that the total budget for roads maintenance amounts to some R1.7M to be shared between the wards. Further, there are no plans under consideration that would lead to an improvement of the N2 / Noetzie road intersection, or of those portions of the road that are Knysna Municipal assets. The recent incidents at this intersection raise concerns relating to personal safety of Noetzie residents and visitors, and while it is possible to gain access via the Rexford to Knysna road (via the Pezula Estate), permission is only given in emergency situations.

The second point I would like to touch base with is the maintenance of other public assets, and in particular, the maintenance of the public toilets, steps leading thereto, access to the beach from the Wagon Road, and public footpath maintenance. Technically, these and the river boardwalk are public assets, and as such should be maintained by the Knysna Municipality. I believe they are aware of this, but as is the situation with road maintenance, there is little prospect of much attention being given to maintaining to an acceptable standard. As a consequence, Noetzie property owners have on

occasions taken it on themselves to do some of the maintenance. That's great, but I am a little concerned about public liability issues, and the prospect of this involvement backfiring.

While your committee will increasingly apply its collective mind to these matters, it would be useful to hear comment on this through the newsletter, and when we meet at the Annual General Meeting in December.

## Walk to Bat Cave

*by Marina Devine*

In early October we went to stay at Noetzie. On one of the windy days Jess, James and I took a walk to Bat Cave. For those of you who don't know, it is a  $\pm$  2 hr walk to the west of Noetzie beach along the coast. You will know when you get there because you actually can't go any further without some major rock climbing.



### Bat Cave

It was a beautiful afternoon; there were many flowering plants and active insects. After shelly beach, as you walk up to what we call Dragon Cave, there were a whole lot of Geeljenks (*Ornithogalum dubium*, chinchinchee family) flowering - a beautiful little bright yellow flower. *Ericas Discolor*, *Dipogon lignosus* (bosklimop) and the sour figs were also flowering.

### Geeljenk



The rock pools were alive with Cape Urchins of all colours. Because it was a sunny afternoon a lot of them had put empty shells and little stones on top of themselves to protect them from the sun. We also saw plenty of blue bottles and By-the-Wind-sailors which had been blown onto shore by the south easterly wind. We were lucky enough to see an octopus in one of the pools but as usual once it had seen us it darted under a rock and wouldn't reappear!

We came across two dead seals that had been washed up onto the rocks. There was also a dead bush buck in the rock pools at Shelly Beach which was pretty strange; I could not tell why it had died.

On the return trip James was leading the way when he suddenly jumped sideways and yelled, "Snake"! In the path in front of him lay a snake that looked dead, it was curled around with its head upside down, and then it suddenly became very alive and slithered away. It had black and yellow

rings on it and its head was black. We were unsure what it was until we got home and identified it - a Rinkhals, which is one of the most poisonous snakes in the area.



**Southern Rock Agama**

I then started thinking about what I would do if one of us got bitten by a snake on a remote walk like this. The main problem is that if you are bitten by a snake you need to stay still and get medical help ASAP. If you are in the middle of nowhere and there is no cell phone reception this is difficult. I would think that the best option would be for one person to run ahead to phone the NSRI in Knysna (082 990 5956) and they would be able to help you carry the person out, so keep this number handy if you are at Noetzie!

**View looking east from Bat Cave**



## **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. It thus becomes a site where owners and other interested parties can obtain information which gives an 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 address is <http://www.noetzie.co.za>.



# Noetzie birds

*by Donald Fabian  
28th October*

There seem to us to be far fewer birds at Noetzie on our last visits than there used to be. Not only am I recording fewer species, but also fewer birds of common species. So far we have been here for four days at the end of October and I have not yet seen or heard a Cape batis, whereas their call was so familiar as they came along the forest below us every day with a bird party, usually a few white-eyes, a dusky flycatcher or two and a bar-throated apalis. We have heard the olive thrush just once and the Cape robin is also scarce. No blue-mantled flycatcher has put in an appearance and it is a long time since I saw forest canaries and terrestrial bulbuls around our house. Despite this apparent lack of birds, we have recorded 40 species in the four days we have been here. Most of the usual ones are here and its being October, some of the migrants have arrived. An emerald cuckoo has been heard, but only one, and the red-chested cuckoo also. I have seen one barn swallow but no swifts yet. Paradise flycatchers do not appear to be here. Of the more unusual species for Noetzie there was a pair of crowned eagles circling over the river this morning and a grey heron has taken up residence. We have seen just one giant kingfisher and no other kingfishers. The river has very few mullet in it and so there are almost no cormorants and no darters. A black duck has three ducklings and I have seen a lone yellowbill. An immature fish eagle made a half-hearted attack on a dabchick, something I have not seen before.

We were also here for a week in July and it was then that I saw two new species for my Noetzie records. There was a pair of fiscal flycatchers in the lagoon corner on 5th July, a common enough bird, but not at Noetzie to my knowledge. Then on 8th July I saw a fairy flycatcher along the track above Tim Everett's house. This bird migrates between higher and lower altitudes and I am familiar with it from the times I lived in Johannesburg when it was a regular seasonal visitor to our garden, but according to the bird atlas it is not often recorded here at the coast. It is such an attractive little bird it is a pity it is so rarely seen.

One last item of interest is that we heard a chorister robin do a beautiful rendering of the call of the emerald cuckoo, before continuing with its more usual song. It very nearly had us fooled and makes one realise how careful one must be in identifying bird calls in chorister robin territory.



# Municipal Matters

*by Julie Gosling*

## **Municipal Manager Resigns**

On September 22nd Lauren Waring, Knysna's Municipal Manager resigned. Her term will come to an end on 28th November 2014. According to the mayor, Waring cited personal reasons for the resignation "In the light of the unfortunate and tragic incidents she experienced over the last year, I understand her decision. She is, as am I, a mother and I know a strong support system at home is essential for this type of extremely taxing position. Twelve-hour days and work over weekends are often required. In addition to health problems she experienced towards the end of last year, she lost her support system in the car accident just before Christmas last year, and had to deal with her own injuries as well." Lauren's husband and mother tragically died in the accident.

I will most certainly miss Lauren who has always been very willing to give audience both in her previous position as director of Planning and Development and as Municipal Manager.

## **Road Maintenance Budget 2014/2015**

Brace yourselves for a bumpy ride. The Technical Services Directorate of the Knysna Municipality tabled a report recently outlining the road maintenance strategy for the Greater Knysna area. Ward 3 has been allocated only 2% (R39,800) of the total R1,990,000 for maintenance of gravel roads over the next 12 months. Earlier this year, because of budget constraints, the municipality adopted a road hierarchy system, allocating funds to the most important and most used areas to create the biggest benefit to residents.

The Executive Mayor says that Council is in agreement with the approach currently being taken by the municipality but added "I have asked the Speaker to convene a very urgent meeting of all Councillors to discuss the on-going deficit relating to our infrastructure. At this meeting some hard facts will need to be brought home and far-reaching decisions must be made. Knysna is not a wealthy town and, as with all coastal towns, will continue to feel the effect of the economic downturn for a number of years still. It simply cannot be business as usual."

The Noetzie road is in a fair condition at the moment and is probably among some of the best maintained roads in Ward 3. There has been very little building on Pezula Private Estate over the last year, so the road has not been subjected to the usual heavy construction vehicles that barrel along at a rate of knots displacing the road surface.

Please drive slowly through the Hlalane. Speeding causes dust and puts the pedestrians and animals in danger

# Noetzie Conservancy Report

*by Wendy Dewberry*

## Conservancy meeting

On 25 October this year, the 33rd Cape Nature Conservancy Forum meeting was hosted by Noetzie at Wendy and Julie's home. The meetings are held once or twice per year and each in a different location with the aim of having hosts from Storms River across the jurisdiction area to Brakrivier. This meeting focussed on report-back from the various conservancies and it is heartening to see how many people are committed to caring for their little spot of environment heaven. By far the most salient problem has and always will be alien vegetation control. A great deal of money, time and effort goes into this.



Another quarterly meeting represented by Noetzie is the WEEDS forum, held on 31 October at Fancourt. It is a specific group dedicated to the control of alien vegetation. The sharing of information has proved to be a valuable activity - new laws, new threats and education drives to alert the public are discussed, empowering our collective endeavours and ignite us to return to our own precincts to wage war on the invasive plants.

On Monday 27th October, Noetzie residents were alerted to the possibility of a raw sewage leak into the Noetzie river up in the Brackenhill area; specifically, we learned later it was the Springveld residential area. There are two stories and I shall offer them both to you – feel free to decide for yourself which one you would prefer. Apparently, according to the Knysna Municipality, there was copper theft in that area three weeks prior, which resulted in the sewage pump stopping, resulting in the overflow of the holding tanks once they had reached capacity. The other story comes from an unnamed person who discovered that the electricity to the area had been cut off, as long ago as 4 months, for non- payment of arrears. This person became increasingly agitated about the state of things and finally alerted someone to investigate. This person phoned us. We called SANParks and the municipality who immediately went to investigate. The report by them below explains the situation.

## Record of Fieldtrip to Springfield to investigate sewerage pollution

Date: 27 October 2014

Present: Maretha Alant (SANParks), Nico Oosthuizen (SANParks), Joclyn Fearon (Knysna Municipality)

### Background

The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) have written a letter to the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) regarding the sewage pollution situation as it could be a non-compliance in terms of Section 19 of the National Water Act, (Act 36 of 1998).

Work is currently in progress to insert new cables after the cable theft that caused the problem in the first place.

### Objective of fieldtrip:

1. To investigate a complaint received from the Noetzie Conservancy about sewage flowing into Bracken Hill Falls with potential to pollute the Noetzie River.
2. To recommend mitigation measures to reduce pollution while the electric line is being inserted.

### Area where water pollution is occurring

Sewage is flowing in the stream from Springfield and polluting various wetlands and small streams. It is likely that the Brackenhill Falls have also been affected and polluted water is entering the Harkerville Section of the Garden Route National Park.



That day, Monday 27 October, the NCOA went upriver to take water samples for e.coli testing at the George laboratory. While they were higher than usual, the e.coli levels did not reflect any danger. See them here:

MICROBIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS		STREAM	RAPIDS	DWA WATER QUALITY GUIDELINE VOL 7 AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS		
				TARGET WATER QUALITY RANGE	Chronic Effect Value	Acute Effect Value
				Water Quality Guidelines (DWAF)		
				Full Contact	Intermediate Contact	
Total Coliforms (count/100 ml)	387	326				
E. Coli (count/100 ml)	26	34	130	1000		

GEORGE MUNICIPALITY LABORATORY SERVICE  
**CERTIFICATE OF ANALYSIS**  
 27-Oct-14  
 NOETZIE CONSERVANCY (WENDY DEWBERRY) REF: P47:27/10/14  
 Prepared by: *[Signature]*  
 Reviewed by: *[Signature]*  
 CH. BREDEKAMP

## Whale

On Saturday 1 November a very decomposed humpback whale carcass washed up on Noetzie beach in front of Neil and Norma Metelerkamp's house. Over the following few days it washed across the beach and currently lies just past the mouth of the river. It has been fascinating to observe. The way the tail moved with the oncoming and outgoing waves propelled it forward was interesting. I took video footage and speeded it up 1000 times. Observing which birds came to feed, and watching it change colour was also great to see. The promise of a rotten December, however, made the authorities feel compelled to do something.



I met Owen Govender (Snr. Section Ranger) and Mark Phillips of SANParks on the beach and we discussed possibilities for the whale carcass. Three were mentioned. 1. Cut it up and cart it away. 2. Cut it up and take the bits around to the next bay, out of the public's view to let it rot in natural peace. 3. Leave it to decompose. This reason for possibility is that because of the advanced stage of



decomposition, it would possibly wash to the Eastern corner of the beach and get covered with sand over time. This option would allow the process to be studied and observed as an educational experience. That was on Wednesday 5th November.



After plenty of municipal and SANParks visits to the beach later, on Thursday and Friday the news was that the whale was to be cut up and carted away, however it was finally buried by SANParks on 12 November 2014. A huge hole was dug on the Sinclair side of the beach and a front-end loader was used to break up the whale into sizable bits and push these into the hole. After each load, lime was added.



# Peeps into the Past

Chris Everett tells me that he has various items of interest that did not make it into the Noetzie History and he has offered to provide an occasional Peep into the Past. Here's the next one – Ed.

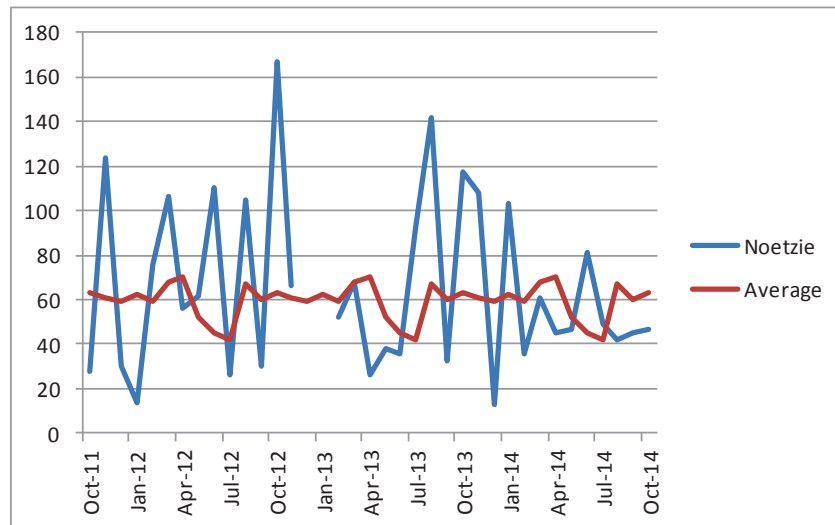
*by Chris Everett*

No story this time, but a couple of photographic reminders of transport to Noetzie in previous times – not really so long ago, as I can still remember an ox-waggon on the beach and coming face to face with an ox wandering along the path to the river.

This is of course why Noetzie's only Municipal Street is called Old Waggon Road and here I must confess to a strong preference for the original British spelling rather than wagon which is regrettably superseding it.



# Rainfall Graph



## Safety and Security at Noetzie

With the continued low employment rate in Knysna and surrounding area it makes sense to look at safety issues in Noetzie before any incidents occur. In order to improve the allocation of SAPS resources to the Knysna area it is important that every case of criminal activity is reported to the police, no matter how small and possibly inconvenient it may be. The number of policemen allocated is dependent on the amount of crime which is occurring in the area and this is based on the number of cases opened.

BUT safety isn't only about anti criminal activities, it also means keeping your wits about you and being prepared for your holiday in all ways. Here are some hints:-

### In the Home:

- Be well prepared, and have a well equipped first aid box.
- Make sure your gas installations are safe and in good working order.
- Have a fire extinguisher in good working order, near sources of heat and flames especially in houses where wood is the main construction material.

### Outdoors:

- Protect yourself from the midday sun.
- Tell others when to expect your return from a walk, or paddle, and where you plan to go.
- Be careful of the rip tides and dangerous currents in the sea, and swim with someone (if there are no lifeguards). Keep an eye on the children in the water at all times - even if there are lifeguards on duty.

REMEMBER to be aware of wildlife and not to feed baboons or monkeys however cute they look. Don't drop your guard. We haven't had a problem for some time but that will only last as long as the Baboons and monkeys never associate the houses at Noetzie with food. Please keep food out of

sight, lock up when you leave the house closing all windows and doors unless they are properly Baboon proof. Also think that even fruit, seeds and sugar water put out for the birds should be regarded as food for the baboons and will attract them to your property. Don't drop your guard. If they haven't bothered you for a while assume it is because of your good behaviour.

Emergency numbers are all in the GEM document delivered to in each home earlier this year (The Noetzie Conservancy Guidelines for Environmental Management known as the GEM). We hope this is in a prominent place in your Noetzie home. It contains useful phone numbers and short comments on many of the items that affect Noetzie Property Owners. Please also bring it to the attention of anyone staying at your house. Any ideas for inclusion into the next version will be gratefully received.

# Porcupine

*Hystrix africaeaustralis*

*by Iona Everett*

I will never forget driving back into our back yard at Noetzie at about 11 pm one night and watching a family of porcupine rooting in the leaf litter under the tree. There was what I assume to be a mother and three youngsters. It is moments such as these that make Noetzie such a special place to stay.



Porcupines are rodents. They live in America, Africa, Europe and Asia. Of all porcupine species, only one (Philippine Porcupine) is listed as vulnerable. That means that it can become endangered in the near future. All porcupine species are similar at the first glance. They can live in deserts, grasslands or forests. Porcupines are nocturnal animals meaning that they sleep during the day and become active in the evening.

African Porcupines are the largest rodent in our region. They are also long-lived for rodents, surviving for 12 to 15 years in the wild.

They can live solitary life (left on their own) or in the small groups of up to 6 members. Both the male and female African Porcupines weigh from 18 to 30 kg and are about 0.6 m long and have long sharp spines, up to 50 cm long, which cover its whole back and can be raised by muscles under the skin. When cornered, these porcupines can be aggressive, running sideways or backwards to embed their sharp quills in an attacker.



Contrary to myth, they cannot throw their quills, but they may become dislodged when they shake their hollow rattling quills. Lost quills however grow back rapidly. Another defensive behaviour is to hide in their holes facing in and erect their spines so that they cannot be dislodged. They have a brown to black coat and paler-coloured spines. The difference between quills and spines is largely one of length and thickness, with spines up to 50 cm long and quills up to 30 cm long.

The Porcupine has 5 toes on the front feet, the first toe being reduced to a small stump without a claw. Other toes have well developed claws while the 5 toes on the hind-feet each have a claw.

African porcupines are mostly vegetarian, using their strong digging claws to get roots, tubers, and bulbs. They are also fond of fallen fruits and will sometimes gnaw on bark. They use their strong feet and curved claws to climb the tree. They are excellent climbers.



One to three young are born anytime during the year, after a gestation period of about 3 months. Babies are called porcupettes and they are born with soft quills. Soft quills will harden in the first few hours. Both parents take care of their babies. Young porcupine will leave its parents after couple of months and begin solitary life.

I would like to hear of any Noetzie encounters with porcupine.

## Community News

One of the great characters of Noetzie, Don Lindsay, died in early September this year. He was educated at St John's College in Johannesburg – one of 6 Old Johannians to own property at Noetzie and was the son of the Lindsay of Lindsay Saker Motors. Don started building at Noetzie in 1965 – the first phase being just two simple rondavels joined by a central section. Through the years the Castle grew to its present eccentric style.

Noetzie has lost one of its own and we extend our sympathy to Valma, Camilla, Russell and family.



## 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.

We would also appeal to the community to give Ezekiel and Xolile a small Christmas gift this year. Ezekiel gets a weekly salary from Julie Gosling to keep the Noetzie road clean. You may have seen him and his wheelbarrow on the Noetzie road. Xolile mans the parking area and the boom and relies on money for odd jobs and tips from the public. We are sure they would both appreciate any small gifts from the Noetzie community. Thank you.