

VOGELGAT NATURE RESERVE

NEWS - August 2011



News from the Bridge

With the installation of sensor camera traps unusual sightings have been documented. Of most excitement were the two honey badgers strutting their stout figures.

Winter is always a busy season maintaining the infrastructure before the main summer period; bridges, huts, alien clearing and paths



Leopard Research

In collaboration with the Landmark Foundation, Vogelgat has entered a research agreement whereby Vogelgat will assist in the collection of data from sensor camera traps in the Kleinriverberg Mountains. Exciting news is that a leopard that was killing sheep in the Hemel n Aarde was trapped, darted, measured, collared with a GPS cellular device and released. It was a 1st for this area. In monitoring this top predator, useful information will be gathered of its range.

In the journal *Science*, concludes that the decline of large predators and herbivores in all regions of the world is causing substantial changes to Earth's terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems. The research details:

- The reduction of lions and leopards from areas of sub-Saharan Africa caused the baboon population to swell. This unexpectedly increased transmission of intestinal parasites from baboons to humans as the primates were forced to forage closer to human settlements.
- The local extinction of wolves in Yellowstone National Park led to over-browsing of aspen and willows by elk, and restoration of wolves has allowed the vegetation to recover.
- Industrial whaling in the 20th century resulted in the loss of large numbers of plankton-consuming great whales, which are now known to sequester carbon into the deep sea through deposition of feces. The result has been the transfer of approximately 105 million tons of

carbon into the atmosphere that would have been absorbed by whales, contributing to climate change.

The study's findings have profound implications for conservation. "To the extent that conservation aims toward restoring functional ecosystems, the reestablishment of large animals and their ecological effects is fundamental," Estes said. "This has huge implications for the scale at which conservation can be done. You can't restore large apex consumers on an acre of land. These animals roam over large areas, so it's going to require large-scale approaches."

The aim is to help conserve the home ranges of leopards in the Cape mountain and coastal belt. In this way reducing the risks of genetic isolation and in doing so conserve the biodiversity that is connected to these animals. Landmark is setting up 60 camera sites in the Overberg and wishes to engage with willing partners.

Please do support this exciting scientific initiative. Contact Dr Bool Smuts – Director Landmark Foundation on 083 324 3344, Jeannine McMannus Phd researcher on 083 661 1106 or Giorgio on 082 864 5297.



Research

UCT has continued their research on *Erica coccinea*, which has two forms; a re-seeder and a re-sprouter. They grow close to one another but do have flowers of different colours: re-seeders being yellow and the re-sprouters being red in form.

Vogelgat is assisting the finding out what pollinates *Erica lanuginosa*. This has been an interesting quest as the inflorescence is tight. It was first thought it might be pollinated by mice, which proved negative. It has had us puzzled. The search continues. Research in the pollinator of our own Pride of Hermanus; *Erica aristata* revealed an elusive long-tongue fly with a proboscis of 25mm!!

Marina Sweikert, a German conservation student spent a month here to view the different aspects of nature conservation close at hand. Marina will start University in Germany in October in the Environmental Science field. Good luck Marina!!



Buyse huis

Is officially opened!! This “truly African” themed self-catering cottage amongst the fynbos, 5mins from Base Camp. Offers a queen bed in its separate bedroom and a sleeper couch in the lounge come dining room. A romantic fireplace cuddles you in the dining room. The stoep giving you breath-taking views of Walker Bay. Come and enjoy this tranquil place. At R400 a night, bedding included.



Tampering with earth’s breath.

Watch this short clip on the implications of Fracking in the Karoo.

<http://www.liveeco.co.za/?m=7&idkey=1812>



Beware Killer vegetables!

Tomato and potatoes have recently been found to be carnivorous.

But unlike the Venus Flytrap, they have no means of digesting their victims. Instead, they catch small insects in sticky hairs on their stems, wait for them to fall to the ground dead, and absorb the nutrients via their root system.

ANNUAL PERMIT FEES

Vogelgat Nature Reserve	R1500.00
Maanschynkop N R	R230.00 Optional
Buyse Huis	R400.00 per night for the whole cottage
Leopard Camp	R50.00 per person per night

Banking: Vogelgat Nature Reserve

Bank: Standard Bank Branch: Hermanus

Branch code: 050312 Acc No: 082268053

Closing date: 31st October 2011

NNB!! you need to bring your permit booklet to be stamped at office during weekends only.

Electronic communication

Please make every effort to give us your email address as we are communicating via electronic means from now in an endeavour to make our small mark in conserving trees.

Cork it!

The real threat to the birds, they write, is “growing competition between cork stoppers and synthetic bottle stoppers.” Wine experts say plastic corks and screw tops now seal up to 30 percent of the world’s wine bottles—that means bottlers aren’t buying billions of real corks. “This may result in its replacement by other types of land cover, much less valuable for birds and for other components of biodiversity.” Worldwide, other researchers estimate up to 2.2 million hectares of cork forests could be at risk, with nearly one-third of the total in Portugal and one-fifth in Spain.

Counting the costs



A ban on a veterinary drug that has caused devastating vulture die-offs in South Asia is beginning to produce benefits, a new survey concludes. But vulture populations in India and neighboring nations will continue to decline without greater efforts to banish the compound from the birds’ food supply.

Since the 1990s, the region’s once robust vulture populations have plummeted by up to 99.9%. The culprit, studies showed, was an anti-inflammatory drug called diclofenac that farmers commonly gave to cattle and buffalo to ease pain and swelling. The birds die of kidney failure after eating the carcasses.

In Your Private Hands

Did you know that up to 80% of land with high value biodiversity lies in private hands. That is why it is up to individual landowners to ensure that they create management plans to conserve their heritage.

16th December - Bring n Brunch – All members invited to come along at 11h00. Relax and meet some other hiking companions.