

VOGELGAT NATURE RESERVE

NEWS - August 2012

News from the Bridge

From Sue – Saturdays and Sundays are full of the unexpected these days. In a plastic screw top bottle complete with air holes punctured in the lid are a couple of *Erica lanuginosa* flowers. As I sit down to download the next weeks weather, Giorgio tells me he's found a snout beetle on this flower. After carefully looking I see nothing until eventually a creature with a body hardly bigger than a pin head is pointed out. Then when I went to put my lunch box away in the fridge I found a container labeled "Research for UCT", only to find mouse poo inside! These I learnt were from different rodents that have been photographed on the *Erica* flowers. By capturing them and collecting their scats one can by examination see if there are pollen grains in their stools. Finally I go to the student room only to be greeted by a mouse in a terrarium!! Very happy little chap, with a clean ashtray full of water and an egg box full of tissue paper as a bed. He was under observation to see if after *Erica lanuginosa*

branches were placed in the terrarium, would he be interested in its nectar?..No luck! He was released back at the exact spot he was caught. So it is back to the field for Giorgio and his MSc.

We have been visited by a host of Professors, students from a number of Universities namely University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University as well as The LandMark Foundation researchers covering the

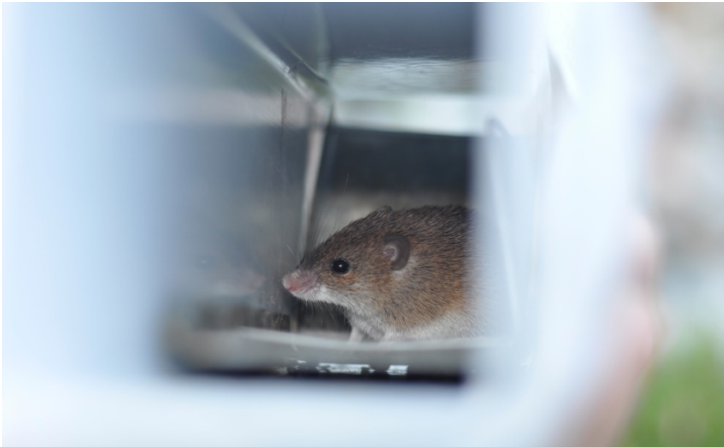


Figure 1: *Acomys spinosissimus* caught in a sherman gutter trap

progress of regional leopards.

SANBi launches iSpot

iSpot is an online biodiversity application where all citizens, from taxonomists to the domestic gardener, can participate in biodiversity recording, monitoring and identification. Says Carmel Mbizvo, Head of Biodiversity Research and Knowledge Management, SANBI, "It is vital for us to include all citizens within the science of nature and to democratise biodiversity," iSpot forms part of a suite of initiatives involving citizens in biodiversity science. iSpot is unique in that it encompasses all biodiversity and other iSpot users identify and verify observations. <http://www.ispot.org.za/>

Overnight before you hike



Figure 2- having sundowners at "The White House"

Many of our members lead hectic lives in the Mother City and when it comes to wanting to hike, they cannot get out of town early enough to spend more quality time in the fynbos. Well now you can! Leave after work on a Friday and book into either **The White House** or Buys se Huis at Vogelgat. The White house sleeps two adults comfortably, with a sleeper couch for any juniors. We have revamped the "House" to include en suite shower toilet as well as a self catering kitchen..only for R300 per night inclusive of bedding! If you require more accommodation book into **Buys se Huis**, this self catering cottage sleeps 2 adults and two children (on a sleeper couch). The sweeping views of Walker Bay and the peacefulness tucked away from prying eyes is priceless...talk to our members who have shared this experience. Only R400 for the cottage per night, inclusive of bedding. One could also utilise these premises if you have friends visiting from out of town as extra accommodation.

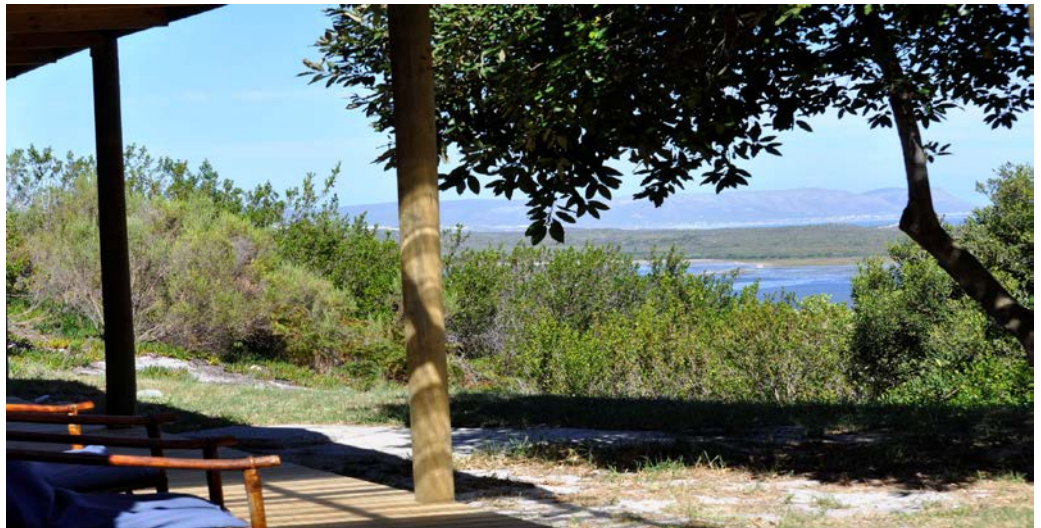


Figure 3: Buys se Huis- Spectacular secluded views



Emperors, Nomads, Hawkers, Widows, Gliders and Cruisers

Something that Emperors, Nomads, Hawkers, Widows, Gliders and Cruisers have in common is that they are all common names for South African dragonflies.

This diversity recorded so far our nine national gardens combined is greater than many

country dragonfly totals, including Great Britain (with 56), and is roughly equivalent to dragonfly diversity recorded in some entire countries such as Sweden, Serbia, Niger and Somalia.

Dragonflies are among the oldest and most primitive of the world's insects, dating back some 300 million years ago, before dinosaurs and flowering plants. They are an important component of the biodiversity of our country and are visible to visitors to the gardens. South Africa's largest dragonfly is the Black Emperor (*Anax tristis*) with a wingspan reaching 130 mm.

"These charismatic insects serve not only as good indicators of environmental health and ecological integrity, but also act as flagship species for other aquatic invertebrates in the biodiversity debate. This user-friendly publication, which is essentially a checklist of South Africa's most common dragonflies and damselflies, provides us with the opportunity to showcase these important insects, the valuable role they play in the environment, and the threats several of them face through habitat transformation, particularly shading of natural habitats by invasive alien trees growing along river and stream banks. The good news is that research conducted by staff attached to the Stellenbosch University has shown that this threat can be reversed by removal of these trees from river banks.

The checklist will be available for sale to the public at the National Botanical Gardens and through SANBI's online bookshop at: www.sanbi.org.
Download .pdf version of [SANBI Biodiversity Series 21](#).

Improvements to overnight huts

Mosselnook, Sip and Leopard camp have all been “decked out”; small but convenient decks allow our members to be elevated off the moist and unlevel ground. All the huts have also received new and strong chairs. Mosselnook also has a canopy made of latte to ward off the summers rays, so much so are the improvements that we have had couples been proposed in the special places!

Fire and fynbos

Our reserve had a fire 13 years ago and the fire cycle is around 15 years. Vogelgat is in communications with Cape Nature and the Overstrand Fire Department over when we should initiate a veld fire.

Members Communication

Vogelgat has a lively Facebook page, please do visit it. Liza Botha of Webwits has kindly revamped our www.vogelgat.co.za webpage. All sorts of interesting information can be viewed there.

We have also revamped our Permit booklet as we had to incorporate our new northern boundary and therefore decided to upgrade our maps.

Giorgio the warden can also be contacted via Black Berry messenger; his BB Pin is 270dd485 it's free!

ANNUAL PERMIT FEES

Vogelgat Nature Reserve	R1650.00
Maanschynkop N R	R250.00 Optional
Buys se Huis	R400.00 per night for the whole cottage, Sleeps 4
The White House	R300.00 per night for whole cottage, sleeps 2 +
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 2012

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

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