



CREW News

Volume 2 • November 2006



News from the CREW

Welcome to the second CREW newsletter. There has been much activity with the project since the last newsletter we wrote in December 2006. We are striving to produce 2 newsletters a year so, despite being November already, this newsletter will only focus on CREW activities up to August 2006 and will not include the exciting spring finds that most of you have been making, these will come out in our next edition. Thanks to all of you who took the trouble to write your articles, your work is a great inspiration to the new CREW groups being formed in different parts of the country.

Since the last newsletter was released I have moved to Pretoria and have now settled into my new home and work environment. I have recently found a Northern regions CREW co-ordinator to work with me, her name is Suvarna Parbhoo: she has written all about herself below. Suvarna has brought lots of order to the CREW team and her cheerful smile is keeping us all in high spirits.

We are making progress getting CREW working up North.



CREW fieldtrip in Pondoland with the Thursday Group.

Most of our focus this year has been to get the project going in KwaZulu-Natal. We have made contact with a range of different conservation agencies and potential volunteers. Everyone is very excited about CREW and extremely committed to making the project work in KZN. SANBI is signing an agreement with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife (the old Natal Parksboard) to have a CREW co-ordinator based at their scientific headquarters in Pietermaritzburg. This KZN CREW co-ordinator will work closely with KZN Wildlife's emerging stewardship programme to help identify priority sites for stewardship as well as with their plant ecologist and threatened

plant recovery team to monitor the threatened plants of the province. This is an exciting step for CREW as it is the first time that we will be working in such a close partnership with a conservation agency. We have already started to work in three areas in KZN; firstly Pondoland where we have had some very exciting field trips in the Umtamvuna and Oribi Gorge areas. Here we have been exploring amazing grassland and Pondoland forest patches between commercial forestry areas. The group we are working with in Pondoland, the Thursday Group, have been in existence since 1957! It is not surprising that they have an incredible knowledge of the Pondoland

flora, especially considering that the group leader is the well known amateur botanist, Tony Abott. Our second new group is based in Durban. It is an informal group led by David Styles, a highly talented young amateur botanist. David and his group spend much of their time exploring the coastal scarp systems around Durban. Although these areas are often within an hour's drive of the Durban city centre they often fall within tribal areas that have been very poorly botanised in the past. David and his team have found a handful of new species over the past 2 years right on Durban's doorstep! This Durban group is ideally suited to CREW work and they are hoping that with CREW support they can start doing fieldtrips slightly further afield. Our third group will be based in the area between Grey Town and Maritzburg and will be lead by Sue Swan and Isabel Johnson, both of whom attended our annual CREW workshop in March this year. We already have

a number of volunteers who want to do CREW work in the area. Now that the summer rainfall season has started we will be doing monthly field trips in the KZN Midlands area.

CREW has also started a group based in Hogsback in the Eastern Cape. This group is working to conserve a number of municipal grassland patches around the town that are under major threat from Wattle invasion. Suvarna and I have recently been recruiting volunteers in Gauteng and hope to do our first fieldtrip with them soon.

So things are hotting up here in the North, we have a huge amount of catch-up work to do and I truly hope that soon our CREW volunteers will be doing similarly amazing work as that which all of you down in the Cape have been doing for the past 3 years.

Tilla Raimondo
National CREW
Project Manager



Dorothy one of the volunteers from the Thursday group with *Lydenburgia abbottii* a rare endemic Pondoland tree.



The Hogsback CREW group sampling a grassland fragment



New face for CREW

Suvarna Parbhoo

I have been appointed on a 1-year contract as of August as the Northern Regions Co-Ordinator for CREW. My key tasks are to implement the CREW programme by providing support to volunteer groups in the Northern Regions, providing administrative support to the project and to co-ordinate inputting of data collected into the threatened species locality database.

I am from the sunny city of Durban and have obtained a B.Sc Microbial Biotechnology degree, majoring in Botany and Microbiology, from the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Before joining CREW I worked at the Kwa-Zulu Natal Herbarium as a data typist for the Threatened Species Project.

Being passionate about the conservation of our environment, I am excited about my new endeavor. I eagerly await to experience fieldtrips and to meet new volunteers for the Northern Region.



Suvarna Parbhoo, the New CREW Northern Regions Co-ordinator.

News from the Cape Town CREW headquarters

CREW is really moving into exciting times. The CREW family has grown very rapidly over the past year and we have managed to get some incredibly keen "new additions" to the family. We have started working very closely with the Bredasdorp, Stilbaai, George, Mamre and Kamieskroon groups.

The most exciting news is our discovery of a potentially new species! In May 2006 we visited the Reins Nature Reserve near Stilbay to see the Critically Endangered *Lobostemon bellidiformis* and stumbled upon a Jurassic looking *Cullumia* sp, occupying an area of about 20m². A specimen was sent to Jan Vlok, botanist extraordinaire, who identified it as a potentially new species. The specimens and photos have been sent to a specialist taxonomist working on the *Cullumia* genus.

CREW has made its mark on the conservation community; this was quite evident at the recent Fynbos Forum. The CREW is not only renowned for finding threatened plant populations in the field but we might even have a shot at making it big in Hollywood! We were requested to do our infamous CREW superheroes play where we depict a bunch of oddball superhero characters out to save the charismatic and highly threatened *Brunsvigia litoralis*. The play was a huge success and we were assured that we would never hear the end of the superhero wise cracks. The positive side is that we will



CREW workshop fieldtrip to Plaatjieskraal, Swellendam.



The bright yellow flower of *Cullumia* sp nov.

probably be remembered at Fynbos Forum as long as we attend the conference.

Tilla received a special award for her talk on the new red list that made everyone aware of just how special and threatened our flora is. More than half the threatened plants in South Africa are found in the CFR and the threats to these species are still continuing. Nevertheless, there is still hope for our threatened species owing to the amazing contributions our volunteers are making. They are constantly monitoring the status. They are constantly monitoring the status of these species, ensuring that conservation information can be updated.

The CREW team led a Fynbos



The multistemmed sprawling habit of *Cullumia* sp nov.

Forum field trip to Romansrivier and Grootvlei, two of the priority farms identified in the Upper Breede River Valley. About 75 participants joined us to have a look at some of the threatened plants recorded from those farms. The field trip gave us an opportunity to showcase the work done as part of the Tulbagh Renosterveld Project and to prove to the landowners that they had something special on their farms.

We have had an extremely busy and exciting fieldtrip season thus far.. For more information on our exciting discoveries you will have to wait for the February issue!

Happy botanising and see you soon!

Ismail

CFR CREW Manager

CREW Plant Identification Courses

Over the years the contributions made by CREW volunteers have become increasingly significant in conservation circles. It is remarkable how much these dedicated plant-lovers have taught themselves about plant identification in such a short period of time. CREW's assistance in building their capacity in this regard has proved to be most useful in providing fundamental knowledge and skills. Since CREW commenced in 2003, volunteers have been given the opportunity to attend plant identification courses focussing on certain plant groups, particularly those groups containing many rare and/ or endangered species. Courses that have been held over the years include those on Asteraceae (presented by John Manning), Iridaceae (John Manning), Rutaceae (Terry Trinder-Smith), Amaryllidaceae (Dee Snijman), Aizoaceae (Cornelia Klak), Fabaceae (Annelise Schutte-Vlok & Chris Cupido), Rafnia (Gael Campbell-Young), Ericaceae (Ross Turner), Restionaceae (Els Dorrat), and Proteaceae (Tony Rebelo).

In August and September this year CREW hosted an Oxalis and Restio ID course respectively. The Oxalis identification course was a great success. Kenneth Oberlander, a Ph.D candidate undertaking a DNA-based phylogenetic reconstruction of Oxalis in Southern Africa, presented the course. The course was held at Stellenbosch University, where Kenneth's study is based. He gave a presentation on the (large!) genus and provided notes with an overview and basic key to some of the



The lab component of the Oxalis ID course with Kenneth Oberlander.



Restio ID course at Kirstenbosch with Els Dorrat



The field component of the Oxalis ID course with Kenneth Oberlander in.

species. The theory was followed by a practical session in the anatomy lab. Here we dissected live material while Kenneth guided our dissection to ensure we concentrated on looking at the diagnostic characters of the species. We then strolled across to the J.S. Marais Park where we observed a few species in situ. All in all, Kenneth presented an outstanding course and all those attending went away far more knowledgeable on Oxalis and, even more importantly, developed their own skills to be able to identify some plants to species level. Our Restio ID course was

presented by Els Dorrat, who is not only a restio fundi but also a trained teacher! Having been unsatisfied with the course she presented last year, she was thrilled to be given the opportunity to give another, more thorough version of the course. Being an experienced teacher, Els knows the value of greater individual attention and so, what was intended to be one course, was divided into three! Two of the courses were held at Kirstenbosch. Here Els gave a presentation on Restionaceae and the learners then dissected live specimens. These specimens were numbered and we identified them to genus



Identifying restios in the field at Silvermine with the Hoerikwaggo Table Mountain guides

to the best of our abilities using a key and dissection microscope where necessary. Our identification skills were truly put to the test by our 'friends' the Cape Reeds and we were kept on our toes with a few trick tasks — Els decided to have some fun by mixing in a few grasses and sedges in the list of 'restios' to ID! After the indoor session, a walk through the restio section of the garden helped our newfound knowledge hit home.

The third course was slightly different—Els changed the scope of her course to teach the Hoerikwaggo (Table Mountain National Park) guides about restios in a global context as well as their history and ecological importance, with less of a focus on identification to genus level. The course was held at the Silvermine Environmental Education Centre. The guides asked relevant questions and Els provided them with information and skills to further develop their capacity as guides and educators. The field session was a priority for this course and here the guides were shown the difference between male and female plants and were amazed to see the bright



Running through the basics of CREW data collection with the new Mamre CREW group.

pink and yellow displays of (what were considered to be dull and brown) restios in flower.

Our heads have been filled with information on Oxalis and Restios but when it comes to plant knowledge and brain space it's like pudding and a full stomach—there's always space for more... Coming up on the CREW agenda is a Sedge ID course with Dr Muthama Muasya as well as a Lobostemon ID course with Dr Matt Buys. We look forward to hosting these courses and hope to learn more about these two plant groups, especially considering both of them include many threatened species.

Caitlin von Witt
CFR CREW Co-ordinator

Caledon Wildflower Society

**Ismail Ebrahim and
Adriaan Hanekom**



The Caledon Wildflower Society, CREW's Caledon group and Ismail.

We finally completed the sampling of the Meentgrond pieces in Caledon. This information will be extremely useful when we are motivating to the municipality to conserve these critical fragments. The most interesting and valuable of the meentgrond pieces is Shaws Pass Uitspan. This fragment is about 60 ha in size and has over 20 threatened plants occurring on this site. The flagship species for this site is *Erica jasminiflora*, which is known from only 5 plants growing at this site.

In July we put on our veldskoene, grabbed the GPS and headed off to find *Pauridia longituba*. This species occurs in the Vredenburg/Saldanha area but there was one herbarium record from a farm named Mierkraal in the Caledon area. Peter Goldblatt collected this specimen in 1980 and it was the only record for this species outside the Vredenburg area. The plants typically grow in the

cracks and crevices in the granite boulders. The plant is about 10cm high with dark green linear leaves and little tubular white flowers. We were very interested to see whether this species did occur in the Caledon area. We checked the map and found the location of Mierkraal farm. As good model CREW volunteers we went to the farmhouse to get permission from the farmer and his wife happily directed us to their "speciale klipbanke". This sounded really promising. The site she showed us was really interesting. It was a shale outcrop along a stream running through the farm. The most striking feature was the hundreds of *Nerine humilis* on the shale outcrops. Unfortunately after an exhaustive search of the shale outcrops we could not find any *Pauridia longituba*. The farmer arrived with much curiosity and directed us to more "uitvalgrond" (land farmers can't plough because their tractors are not big enough) on his farm. We got to the site and it turned out to be an even more interesting shale formation. These outcrops looked like someone had run over them with a gigantic metal rake. Apart from having this fascinating geological structure we found some interesting species too. *Trichodiadema fergusoniae* and *Cymbopappus adenosolens* were among the species found at the site.



The unfortunate site of pigs grazing at endangered plant haven, Shaw's Pass, July 2006.



Cymbopappus adenosolens an endemic plant to Overberg Renosterveld in the daisy family, *Asteraceae*.



Interesting geological formations at the important fragment on Mierkraal farm.

On our way back we spoke to the farmer and hopefully he will fence off the area and keep his sheep off the site.

Darling Wildflower Group

As I write this there is a thick mist blanketing the valley up to Darling and it is very wet outside after 18mm of rain over the weekend.

Outings have been few as I spent the whole of June on a wonderful holiday in Namibia where I spent a few days botanising in the south near Luderitz after the rains that fell there up to May. How about a Crew trip there sometime?



Assorted flowers from a typical spring display in Darling.

We have been lucky to welcome a new member to our group. Jo Giliomee has been appointed as the conservation officer for the farms Burghers Post and Cloof and will monitor those areas for us. We have planned an outing there as soon as the weather dries off a bit.

After our meeting at Mamre we hope to assist Sophie and Mara and their group to start monitoring in their veld. Unfortunately they face huge challenges with illegal picking of their proteas and the removal of bulbous plants.

Happy monitoring to all our fellow CREW members!

Helene Preston



Our CREW darling group in the field with Sophie and Mara from Mamre

Friends of the Tygerberg



From January to June the FOT CREW group only had two official field trips, both of which were rained out! We did however manage to go to the wine estate Meerendal, followed by a quick stop at Uitkamp Wetlands on a later date. On the Meerendal outing we did not find any specials, probably because we were a bit early in the season. Some *Babianas* were spotted on our way out, but we have not had confirmation yet that they were indeed *Babiana odorata*. At Uitkamp the *Cephalophyllum parviflorum* were flowering profusely and it was good to see that the population still seems healthy around the dolomite outcrops.

We are also happy to see that our little CREW group is growing with a few more regular members coming on field trips and attending our monthly meetings, where we share photographs and knowledge of plants from our area.



Lobostemon capitatus, a species listed as vulnerable on the upcoming red list, resprouting well after a fire at De Grendal farm in the Tygerberg.

The day that Bruce McKenzie's hat fell off

"The Outramps in the George region would like the freedom to range across the Outeniquas, Swartberg, Rooiberg, Kaminassie and eastern side of the Langeberg." As I said this at the CREW workshop in March, a startled Bruce clutched for his hat. The reason for his surprise was of course the vastness of the area.

Circumstances have conspired against us. Shortage of time, some hiking trips in Turkey, Crete and Tuscany and the alarming increase in the price of petrol have kept us in our beloved Outeniquas.

An Outramps diary

1/04/06

Thursday morning early, the reconstituted Outramps met at the Botanical Gardens at 7.30 for the long hike to Tierkop. Our search was for the rare and endangered *Gladiolus sempervirens*. With us were three young trainee reserve managers from Witfontein and a young volunteer from Scotland who has just finished university. A moderate to fresh bergwind was blowing, making the conditions pretty difficult. Along the contour path with its magnificent views from Kynsna to Mossel Bay, there were little patches of shade with streams to fill up with water and wet all our clothes. It was on this stretch that we found *Gladiolus sempervirens*, but not in flower. A scary moment was a close encounter with a very large and very angry puffadder. His loud hiss of fury had us levitating backwards.

09/04/06

We tramped the whole of Protea Hill yesterday to find *Gladiolus roseovenosus*. In between a freezing wind and a few rain squalls, the troops soldiered on. Despite Jan's detailed map, we could not find it. Just as we were giving up, Russell's brilliant eyes spotted 1 plant. It was just about over and looked pretty nearly dead. An outsider would have wondered what this miserable, half-dead plant had done to cause such excitement.

14/04/06

We headed to the western head of Paardepoort in the Longkloof to see our original colony of *Mimetes chrysanthus* in flower. We parked "The Buchu Bus" and looked up at our objective. Di's description of an easy morning's scramble faded into oblivion. It was 1003m high and at times so steep that you had to use your hands. We moved slowly up a dry and arid slope with very little to excite us. At the top of a particularly steep hump, we arrived at a narrow ridge leading up to the summit. Dry, arid and burnt on the one side, we were awestruck by the south-facing slope on the other. The beautiful "Golden Pagoda" was in full and glorious



The reconstituted Outramps getting ready for a CREW trip



Di with the very rare *Mimetes chrysthanus* in April 2006

ted a tiny orchid , which turned out to be the very rare *Disa arida*.

bloom with all sorts of other Proteaceae surrounding it. Some of the party also saw *Paranomus dregei* for the first time and Rusell spotted-

19/04/06

We are off to look for *Erica brachycentra* at the entrance to the Attaquaskloof 4x4 trail on the northern side of Robinson Pass. It has been seen there and the Outramps collected it on the Engelseberg Circuit in late March 98.

After a long search, we had pretty well given up. Just below the gate there is a path that heads off across the river to the Lookout. We decided to explore it. A couple of 100 metres down we saw the colony. There are at least 200 plants through the whole range of sizes. A "High 5" for Koos, the ranger who was with us, was the order of the day.

10/06/06

We had a marvellous time in Campherskloof yesterday. There is still a lot of water around and the veld is looking good. The resprouters are doing their thing and it is easy to see why they are better survivors than the reseederers.

We stationed 6 people amongst the Disas and sat still for about 30 minutes. 1 bee visited a flower and seen in the area were miggies, flies and ants. A huge amount of seed has been produced by the plants. Also there are lots and lots of plants that have not yet flowered. Have they ignored the false signals and will they flower at the normal time in late Spring/Summer? Also flowering vigorously are *Bobartia* and *Tritoniopsis ramosa*. Higher up the slope about 30meters from the top of the ridge, *Protea tenax* is in fine form. Three plants were found and the new growth is about 30cms long. Soon we will go to Doringrivier and see how they are doing on the little plateau before the steep downhill.

16/06/06

It was a glorious day and Doringrivier was as beautiful as ever. The veld regeneration is wonderful, about 3 years post-fire. Lots and lots of Ericas were in flower. They included *Erica solandra*, *E. discolor*, *E. hebecalyx*, *E. copiosa*, *E. imbricata* in bud, *E. glomiflora*, *E. uberiflora*, *E. cubica*, *E. seriphiifolia*, *E. sessiliflora*, *E. glandulosa* and a few *E. densifolia*. And then the surprise of the day — *E. brachycentra* spotted by Thys at our breakfast spot. We have never seen it in this locality before. We looked for young plants of *Aulax cancellata* where the path crosses the river on the circular route to the ridge, but didn't find any. Further down the road we saw lots of *Leucadendron olens* and *L. ericaefolia*.

26/06/06

The day was cold but clear. We parked the Buchu Bus at the top and went off east down the track. We found *Acmadenia tetragona* and *Acmadenia gracilis*, which we have found here



Ismail presenting a workshop to new CREW recruits in the Southern Cape.



before. There was no *Acmadenia rupicola* to be found. We then moved the combi and walked to the fire lookout where we found 1 single *A.tetragona*. As a last effort we started down the Attaquaskloof trail and hunted around some of the north-facing rocky outcrops. Veronica was the first to spot it amidst great excitement. Bill is now putting the coordinates on a map via Oziexplorer. It certainly makes life a lot easier.

22/07/06

We attended a workshop for new CREW groups organised by Ismail. It was very rewarding and was rounded off by a short field trip on Dune Molerat to practise site sheets.

25/07/06

On Wednesday we made a quick sortie up to Tierkop to plot *Leucospemum glabrum*, *Erica aneimensa* and *Erica lehmannii*. *Erica lehmannii* is a pig to find with the naked eye, as it closely resembles *Erica triceps* which is in full and riotous bloom. We were gratified by finding a few new localities for this rare Erica.

28/07/06

We collected a number of young firefighters and Vatzwa from Witfontein and set off for the Western head of Perdepoort and *Mimetes chrysanthus* in the Langkloof. Armed with bow saws, pangas and a variety of secateurs and loppers we toiled up the 1000m high mountain to attack the Hakea which is threatening our precious Golden Pagoda. Between us, not sure we must have felled about 200 *Hakeas*, which will make a significant difference to the well-being of the plants on the southern slopes. It was a cool but sunny day and the slopes were yellow and blue with *Lobostemons* and *Othonnas*. It was very different to the extremely dry conditions we encountered in April, which is when *Chrysanthus* flowers. Alarmingly, there was a lot of dieback of the Proteaceae, obviously due to the drought which preceded these rains. Thanks to Jenny for a well-organised hike.

TOO MANY PLANTS–TOO LITTLE TIME but what a marvellous time we are having. Thank you CREW!

Harmony Flats Working Group Taking CREW to the Northern Cape

In June this year the Harmony Flats Working Group (HFWG) took a journey of discovery to the Northern Cape to experience the vast open space of the Bokkeveld Plateau and Kamiesberg mountain range.

The purpose of the trip was for the HFWG to share lessons and experiences with the Nieuwoudtville CREW group and contribute to the annual Nieuwoudtville Winter school. Jan, Julian, Joan, Joannie and Elizabeth were

the lucky representatives of the HFWG. They started off by giving a presentation showcasing the biodiversity of the Harmony Flats Nature Reserve and highlighted some of the challenges of conserving small conservation areas in a transformed urban landscape. Oom

Jan even got the opportunity to brush up on his musical



skills by playing the guitar for one of the activities. Bettina also organised two workshops for the group to assist them in developing a vision and way forward for the NPO that the HFWG is in the process of establishing. After all the hard work we took some time to explore the Nieuwoudtville area and see some of the popular tourist attractions. We visited the Nieuwoudtville waterfall, Kokerboom forest and the Nieuwoudtville Flower Reserve.



Harmony Flats Working Group on their home turf, the Harmony Flats Nature Reserve in Gordons-Bay, Strand



Representatives of the HFWG at the Kokerboom forest near Nieuwoudtville

After spending 3 days in Nieuwoudtville we said our good-byes and left for Kamieskroon. This was the CREW's maiden trip to the Namaqualand region and we were all very excited. We met Annelise le Roux from the Succulent Karoo Knowledge Centre based in Kamieskroon and she took us to visit two communities in the Kamiesberg namely Spoegrivier and Nourivier. CREW is planning to set up a node in the Succulent Karoo and this trip was our first step to creating awareness about CREW and the special plants in the Kamiesberg. We decided that the HFWG should talk about what CREW is and how they have been involved. This was an amazing process as the HFWG spoke passionately about CREW and convinced the Spoegrivier and Nourivier communities that conserving their environment is critical.



En route to Spoegrivier for more lesson sharing with local community members.

Thanks to the HFWG for being part of this amazing experience and catalysing CREW's involvement in the Succulent Karoo.

Ismail Ebrahim and Jan Geldenhuys



Oom Jan Geldenhuys of the HFWG looking out towards Kamieskroon.

News from Nieuwoudtville's CREW group



Monitoring in paradise...

This year, after the best rains in at least a decade, the bulbs and annuals in Nieuwoudtville suddenly burst into flower. The challenge is not how to find special populations, but where to start... and how to best use the limited time of the flowering period of most species.

Drunk on air laden with pollen, we have been monitoring in the wild flower reserve, on farms and on municipal land in town to update our map of rare and special plants in the area. It has been a feast of colours and scent and some of the rare species are already out in mass display!

After having recovered from the exciting winter school, we are now working with scientists and have already encouraged a few to give talks for the local community about their special interests. The partnerships have been fruitful, and we are currently doing a pollination study of *Androcymbium pulchrum* with the Botany department of UCT. Stimulating to explore and learn, and a privilege to do observations of special pollinators in the midday sun amongst the flowers!

Bettina Koelle

The Nieuwoudtville Winter School is becoming famous.....

Nieuwoudtville Eco Club is a project so close to my heart

The Nieuwoudtville Biodiversity Group is a project that developed with the aim to connect diverse people. Scholars, scientists, farmers, workers and local people like you and me. So that we can work together and exchange knowledge with each other. The Eco Club has become a place where both children and adults feel safe and happy.

The Nieuwoudtville Biodiversity facilitators are very enthusiastic about the work that we do. Our aim is to share knowledge with the community and we strive to look after



Androcymbium pulchrum, a species of which UCT scientists have been studying the pollination biology of this species and we've accompanied them on trips looking for pollinators.



The joys of discovering hidden geophytes that grow flat on the ground.



Nieuwoudtville Eco Club in the Nieuwoudtville Wildflower Reserve.

our environment. It is our honour to plan activities and do them with the children. Every day is a challenge and we are very positive about the way ahead.

The winter school was held in Nieuwoudtville from the 26 – 29 July 2006 for the third year in a row and was a big success. There was a lot of local interest from both children and adults. Many activities were planned and a lot of knowledge was exchanged by participants and those who were facilitating the activities that were presented: These were as follows:

- a. Fieldtrip to the Nieuwoudtville Waterfall
- b. Movie of the day: Winged Migration
- c. Fieldtrip to the flower reserve
- d. Rock Art presentation
- e. Rock Art fieldtrip to Pappuilsfontein
- f. Crew activities: Monitoring in the flower reserve
- g. Star gazing: The Astor Tour
- h. Costing and pricing Course
- i. The CREW resource game

For the first time we had guests at the winter school: the Vredendal Eco Club and the Crew group from Harmony Flats joined us. Thank you for coming and visiting Nieuwoudtville's hidden treasures. The star gazing was one of the most exciting activities at the winter school. Participants learnt a lot about different planets and they enjoyed themselves. One of the challenges was to find the southern cross. We looked at the stars and moons with the telescope and it was very exciting and wonderful.

Thanks to all the visitors for having joined us in Nieuwoudtville. It was wonderful to have you guys here and to be part of the winter school.

It is this diversity that makes the winter school a success. Hope to see you at the summer school - it will be great to have you here again. To all the guest and participants and CREW: Many thanks!

Donna Kotze



Visiting SANBI during CAPE conference and Ismail teaching the biodiversity facilitators how to use a herbarium during their visit to SANBI for the CAPE Conference



Bulbinella latifolia var. *doleritica* in flower for the first time in 12 years in the Nieuwoudtville Flower Reserve.

SWELLENDAM CREW HIGHLIGHTS

Our herbarium has grown to become a useful reference library. The samples pressed and labelled by CREW have helped enormously with identification of our own specimens and for us to start to identify plants in the field more easily.

It has been rewarding to have three outings with the rangers in Bontebok National Park. This is an interesting project but does require that we fit in with SANBI regulations.

We found a large population of *Erica filamentosa* that was on our endangered list. We have not found *Haworthia heidelbergensis* yet – the search continues. It was exciting to find *Cyrtanthus leptosiphon* near Rietjiesbos. We hope that it will survive the apparent disappearance of its main pollinator.

Farmers have been given their booklets of “special” plant photographs and pressed specimens from Caitlin. Our new approach in view of shortage of funds for financial reward for conservation is: People will only conserve that which they know and love.” Slowly but surely more people in Swellendam are becoming aware of CREW's existence.

The Garden club asked for a talk at their last meeting and there were some really interested people. The main concern was fear of getting to know the Latin names for plants! There

have been two more requests for farm surveys, one on the Breede river across from Bontebok Park and the other near McGregor.

As usual the six weekly visit from Ismail and Caitlin is looked forward to and much appreciated.

This poem came to mind one day out in the veld in January:

*There was a time in summer
when surely nothing could
survive*

*But juicy fruits were present
on the sour figs*

*And the dark green foliage of
Rhus rosmarinifolius*

*Shone darkly between the grey
leaves of Koeigoed.*

*The strong scents of buchus
stilled the mind*

*And the earth moved with the
potential growth of plants*

*With carefully stored under-
ground supplies.*

*It is hardly possible to contain
the excitement of the next visit*

*What will be blooming? What will
be there next time we call!*

Flora Cameron



Aspalathus incompta a vulnerable endemic to the Ruens Renosterveld around Swellendam.



Erica filamentosa one of the threatened plants we found in the Bontebok National Park.



Trichodiadema fergusoniae one of the Overberg's special rare vygies.

News from St Francis

We loved the visit from CREW in June and the talks Ismail gave- also discussing our plans for the year ahead.

The children benefited greatly from the visit, especially the 'extinction' games they played. CREW has treated them to many environmental activities and a group of about fifteen children attended a weekend camp (both educational and fun!) in December last year.

Our Papiessfontein work carries on. Tilla, Caitlin and Richard Cowling accompanied us to survey the burnt area in Papiessfontein in January. Unfortunately our 'new species' of *Tulbaghia* that came up after the extensive hot fires turned out to be a form of *T. alliacea*. And we're waiting in suspense for the outcome of the *Jamesbrittenia tenuifolia* myth. Perhaps one of our latest specimens will turn out to be the special *J. tenuifolia* as opposed to the common and widespread *J. foliolosa*.

Johann Prosezky has done some wonderful work saving a population of *Brunsvigia litoralis* from a site to be developed. He intends to write an article for Veld and Flora so I won't go into too much detail here but watch out for the exciting update in V&F! Johann has been a REAL custodian of rare and endangered wildflowers.

It's been a productive year so far but, according to the CREW calendar, the fun (and hard work) is only beginning now!



Ismail Ebrahim, running an environmental education activity with the St Francis eco-club in June.



The St Francis eco-club in action in the St Francis community garden.

CREW at Kenilworth Racecourse

The January 2006 BotSoc volunteers newsletter called for volunteers to meet monthly to help conserve the Racecourse area. We are pleased to report that a group of 12 volunteers has been formed and have already got down to work.

Kenilworth Racecourse Interest Group

(That is our provisional name –at least KRIG is a pronounceable acronym!). The group really started with a talk to the volunteers last year by Ross Turner, with loads of wonderful slides especially of the centre of the racecourse, inside the racetrack. Volunteers who were enthusiastic about doing something were shown around by Ross in February this year, and as soon as the Garden Fair was out of the way we started meeting on the second Monday of each month.

The main tasks have been clearing rubbish and removing Port Jackson. Many of the seedlings were young enough to be pulled out but there are stands of fairly mature plants waiting to be hacked. This is the first time that I have been involved in hacking. It is a fascinating activity—every alien has its Achilles heel, and the Port Jackson is susceptible to loppers applied a few centimetres below ground level. After a morning's work by us hackers, the stand we had tackled was reduced to horizontal piles. You could really see where you had been. We tried not to think about the work done as a percentage of work to do!

Thanks to the CREW brigade who supervise the efforts, and to Margaret Kahle who makes sure we get to the right place at the right time.

Ruth Smart.

Kenilworth Racecourse Enthusiasts

CREW was delighted at BotSoc volunteers' enthusiastic response to their call for the formation of an interest group to help conserve the unique and precious natural area within the Kenilworth Racecourse. This approximately 42 ha remnant comprises one of the last examples of sand plain fynbos remaining on the Cape Peninsula and Cape Flats and amazingly has remained undisturbed for well over 100 years. However, sadly in many sections, it is to varying degrees infested by aliens and garden escapees and littered by decades of rubbish dumped by both humans and our old friend the South Easter.

In April our group of 12 vols plus Ismail Ebrahim and Caitlin von Witt from CREW and Wendy Paisley from BotSoc/



Hacking is hard work!



The KRIG ready to transport rubbish collected to the dump



CREW armed with hessian bags, loppers and sturdy gloves launched our first attack. Ten full bags of rubbish plus huge bits of metal, wire etc. were collected as well as large heaps of aliens dug up.

In May the effort was concentrated only on uprooting Port Jackson saplings – and what an impressive area was cleared!! Congratulations to all! I think we all agreed that besides having had our week's exercise we all had a great deal of fun.

We meet every second Monday morning of the month and if you would like to join the happy group please contact Tessa (021-671 5468). The more the merrier, and the better for ensuring the survival of our unique biosphere.

Margaret Kahle.



Margaret Kahle—the leader of the Kenilworth team!



Chatting to the racecourse manager



Tea break next to loot collected

Still Bay

Still Bay may make the news with its river sewerage, child pornography, and racist attacks, BUT Still Bay's best-kept secret is its rare & endangered, mostly endemic Limestone Fynbos. The mission of Still Bay CREW is to put Still Bay on the map for its plant "pornography" instead.

Ismail & Caitlin's wintry introduction to this area from 22-24 May taught us that the brown blombos in the Pauline Bohnen municipal Nature Reserve and on a private farm "Under Milkwood", is in fact a CREW special, the "yellow" *Metalsia luteola*. Here they saw that *Stoebe muirii*, *Dedera steyniae*, *Agathosma eriantha*, *Erica calcicola* grow like weeds; also stands of *Otholobium fruticans* in Geelkrans Cape Nature Reserve and an *Aspalathus arenaria* at Klipfontein Private Reserve. In the Albertinia area with Tilla and Annelise Vlok, we saw firsts, namely *Erica baueri* ssp. *baueri*, *Euchaetis albertiniana*, *Amphithalea ericoides*, *Lobostemon belliformis* and a new giant species of *Cul-lumia*.

Motivated by CREW's visit, Still Bay CREW made their first field trip to Koensrust Private Nature Reserve (Blombos Bewarea) near the Duiwenhoks on 24 June. We found *Otholobium fruticans*, *Metalsia luteola*, *Agathosma eriantha*, the scarce yellow *Jordaniella maritima*, and some interesting new *Ericas*. Jean du Plessis of Cape Nature initiated exclusion zones in recently burnt areas of this well-managed 4,000 ha of botanists' paradise. Ismail's visit to Koensrust on 25 July further inspired the Stilbaai Natuurtuin Werkers



Still Bay and Albertinia CREW volunteers in the field near Albertinia



Tilla inspecting *Lobostemon bellidiformis*, sad to miss it displaying its spectacular red flowers

to monitor for CREW whilst pulling "rooikrans" in the reserves. WATCH THIS SPACE!

Janet Naude

Erica baueri subsp. *baueri* (right), a highly endangered plant that grows only around Albertinia. CREW found a new population, the largest one known to occur in the wild.

