



ROOIELS CONSERVANCY
Chairperson's report- December 2021
VERONICA JACOBS

The current Rooiels Conservancy (REC) committee had its first meeting on the 14th of May 2021 after a delayed AGM because of Covid. This left the Committee with 7-8 months to achieve the goals it set out to do in 2021.

Work was thus divided into portfolios with the option to appoint task teams, drawing on the expertise in the village to assist us in accomplishing set tasks. We want to thank all Rooielsers who came forward to help with the various tasks. See reports below.

REC Committee Portfolios 2021:

- *Veronica Jacobs-Chairperson (Eco-Corridor/Centre, Governance, Breeze, Awareness)*
- *Fiona Christelis-Vice-Chairperson (Hack, Gardens, Nature Reserve, Koppie, Verges)*
- *Ivan Becker-Treasurer (Wildlife, Baboon Indaba)*
- *Leigh Elves- Secretariat (Maintenance, Walkways, Signs, Roads)*
- *Hilgard Muller (Municipal Matters, Zoning, KBRC)*
- *Wolfgang Steinbach (Estuary, Dune Rehab, Coastline Management, Cameras, Year programme, Meetings logistics)*

1. Eco-Corridor/Centre, Governance, Breeze, Awareness

Veronica Jacobs-Chairperson

1.1 Eco-Corridor Task Team

Veronica, Hilgard and Leigh, with specialist input from Tim Attwell, BOTSOC, Ruida Pool-Stanvliet and Steve Gildenhuys (CapeNature).

CapeNature accepted the proposal presented by Tim Attwell of BOTSOC to establish an **Eco-Corridor** which will connect the Kogelberg Nature Reserve with the coastline at Rooiels in 2020. It was furthermore proposed by CapeNature that the corridor could function and be managed as a private contract Nature Reserve as part of CapeNature's *Protected Area Expansion and Stewardship* programme. To achieve this status, an independent Trust would have to be registered to partner with CapeNature.

The Eco-Corridor initiative has now moved into the next phase of finding investors/ partners to procure property in the corridor, partnering with existing property owners and to develop a sustainable business plan. Discussions have taken place with a prospective buyer of a number of the properties in the corridor currently still in the market. The outlook is positive as the investor has brought in valuers and has indicated that a decision will be made in the very near future. This is good news for Rooiels as it is a firm step towards preserving biodiversity in the most pristine part of our area- the river valley, the estuary and the wetlands towards Pringle Bay. Interaction between CapeNature and existing property owners in the Corridor has also happened to ensure that property

owners in the Corridor buy into the concept of living in an Eco-Corridor. MOU's will be drawn with the owners through the proposed Trust and with input from CapeNature.

The two main stakeholders and role players in this initiative are CapeNature and the Overstrand Municipality. Both these entities have indicated their interest in and endorsement for establishing an Eco-Centre which would act as a research hub for the Biosphere as well as an information centre to create awareness, offer relevant training opportunities and in general be a centre for promoting the biodiversity and conservation of the natural environment. Such a centre would be located on one of the properties which are part of the Eco-Corridor. This in line with similar Eco-Corridor models elsewhere in the world as education and training are vital to the conservation of biodiversity. Integration of local communities in and around Eco-Corridors to be part of conservation initiatives is a further aspect that is important to ensure ownership of these corridors and promote a nurturing ethos. There is increasing talk of a number of Eco-Corridors in the Biosphere to protect biodiversity and ensure that sustainable development take place as envisaged by the UNESCO MAB programme.



1.2 Governance

The revising of the Constitution was the main activity with regard to governance for these past months. Izak Smit did a lot of work researching typical Conservancy Constitutions. A rationale for revision of the current constitution, and a draft revised Constitution have been circulated for discussion at the Annual General Meeting.

An advisory panel of experts in conservation, biodiversity and biospheres has been established. It was highly useful for the REC team to consult with these experts during these past months to ensure that decisions taken are passed on sound scientific advice.

The Advisory Panel includes, but is not limited to the following experts:

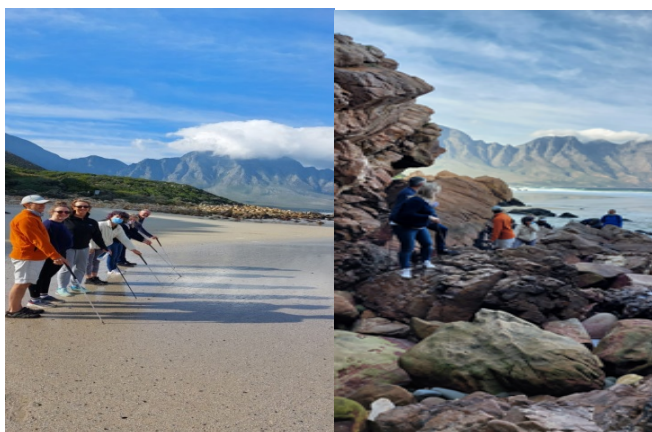
- Mr. Steve Gildenhuys, CapeNature Conservation Manager: Off Reserve, Central Landscape | Conservation Operations
- Dr. Ruida Pool Stanvliet, Ecologist Flora | Biodiversity Intelligence
- Dr. Ernst Thompson Jnr., Nutritional Physiology, Aquaculture
- Rev. Tim Attwell, Chairperson of the Kogelberg Branch of the Botanical Society of South Africa, author of the well-known book *Your Place in the Kogelberg*, seasoned field guide in the Kogelberg.
- Mr. Mike du Toit, Chairperson of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve Company, Conservationist, Elgin Commercial Farmer, Secretary of the Grabouw Development Agency, an initiative supported by WESGRO and the Brenthurst Foundation to promote sustainable development and biodiversity conservation in that part of the Biosphere.
- Ms. Liesl de Villiers, Senior Environmental Manager, Overstrand Municipality
- Mr. Tarron Dry, Biodiversity Conservation Manager, Overstrand Municipality
- Ms. Tamzyn Zweig, Environmental officer, Overstrand Municipality
- Ms. Jocelyn Mormile, Bachelor of Science in Animal Behaviour (Rutgers University, USA)

Master of Science in Primate Conservation (Oxford Brookes University, UK) – thesis on human-baboon interface in Knysna, SA, Doctor of Philosophy in Conservation Biology candidate (University of Cape Town, SA) – thesis on human-baboon interface in Rooiels, SA
 Licensed Veterinary Nurse (USA) – domestic animals, wildlife and expertise in baboons specifically, Project Manager for NCC Environmental Services, the service provider for the City of Cape Town's Urban Baboon Programme

- Dr. Achim Halpaap, has more than thirty years of leadership experience in international environment and sustainable development research, policy analysis and programme management in public, academic, private-sector, and non-governmental organizations. He currently serves as a Special Advisor for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and holds an appointment as Senior Honorary Lecturer at the University of Cape Town. His areas of expertise include green and circular economy, chemicals and waste management, environmental governance, capacity development, and sustainability. He had previous appointments as Head of the Chemicals and Health Branch of UNEP, Associate Director of Training and Head of Environment Unit at UNITAR, and Project Director, Yale Center for Environmental Policy. Before joining the UN, Achim led the Chemicals and Waste Management Policy Section in the Environmental Policy Directorate of the Bayer Corporation. Achim had research appointments at the University of Cape Town (South Africa) from 2001- 2005 and at Yale University (US) from 2006-2007. He holds an academic degrees from Yale University (Ph.D.), the University of Oregon (M.A.), and the University of Bonn (B.Sc.).

1.3 Awareness and educational projects

During the past six months REC took note of international initiatives and campaigns with regard to environmental management and conservation. Thus **International Biodiversity** day saw a group of enthusiastic Rooielsers taking up their walking sticks or the walking sticks donated by Wolf and Karin for a hike around our coastline. Wolf, with the help of Ernst Snr, showed us highlights which illustrate the wonderful biodiversity of our environment. Kevin Phillips, a great support when it comes to REC work assists Wolf with many administrative tasks, graphics for signs etc, as well as organising the photographic competition. His boerie rolls at the International Coastal Clean-up were delicious!



We also had an extensive campaign during Plastics-Free month with a major clean-up of the first parking beyond the bridge and the fynbos surrounding it. We also cleaned down to the Estuary and along the beach. Rooielsers were encouraged to keep on cleaning by REC making plastic bags available at the village shop and carting away all the bags filled by our community. This initiative is ongoing. REC has carted away more than 100 filled bags of rubbish. Each bag deposited at the village shop earned a cooldrink and chips, donated by Wimpie, for a children's shelter in Kleinmond.



Another campaign was run on International Coastal Clean-up day.



The **REC/RERA information pack** has been updated. A donation of printed envelopes in which current information brochures are inserted will make it easy to achieve flexibility by adding or removing brochures in line with information needs of new residents for whom these packs are meant.

REC contributed to the **Breeze** through reporting and facilitating the publication of articles pertinent to the conservation topics that is of interest to the community.

2. Hack, Gardens, Nature Reserve, Koppie, Verges

Fiona Christelis-Vice-Chairperson

2.1 Rooiels Nature Reserve and Koppie

Maintenance of the Rooiels Nature Reserve and Koppie was done mainly by Dine Van Zyl and Graham McClelland, with the input of dedicated amateur fynbos specialists in the persons of Gilbert and his team who were trained by Dine and now Fiona. This team of fynbos gardeners have become household names as they also bring their expertise gained to many households in Rooiels. They cleared the reserve of alien plants and dead foliage. Firewise principles were applied. Drainage channels were opened to allow the free flow of water into the reserve, enriching the natural wetland areas of the reserve. Dine and Graham are busy with documenting the fauna and flora in the reserve and the smallholdings. This is an ongoing project in partnership with CapeNature, OM, SANBI and owners of smallholding properties. All data is recorded on the iNaturalist database. Dine and

Graham's work was also part of the BioBlitz in the Overstrand. Graham developed a state of the art database which has left researchers from CapeNature astonished and delighted.

Management of the RNR and Koppie, although a municipal task, was granted to RERA in the form of a co-management contract which will be reviewed on an annual basis. REC assists RERA with regard to maintenance, conservation and specialist input regarding fauna and flora in these areas.

Parts of the wooden walkway in the reserve have been repaired. This was done by Mornay Viljoen, a Rooiels resident.



The signage to the reserve has been replaced. Mornay carved the signs by hand. The CapeNature warning signs were updated to an all-weather brushed aluminium finish. Fiona was really buzzing around the Reserve like one of those delightful bumble bees that are part of the rich biodiversity of the Reserve. Our partners at CapeNature, Botsoc and OM are regularly consulted with regard to the management of the Reserve. The question of a controlled burn being overdue for the reserve have been raised many times, however, it remains a very sensitive issue as experts disagree about the why, how and when and are looking for alternative ways to rejuvenate fynbos reserves. In Kirstenbosch SANBI is experimenting by steaming the ground to encourage propagation. However, Fiona's consultation with experts at SANBI indicate that they are advising a controlled burn staggered over a period of time to give all animals and insects the opportunity to move out of the way of the fire.

BEFORE



AFTER



The Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve (KBR) sign at the entrance to the village looked very tatty and the text was almost illegible. We got permission from KBR, through Hilgard, to spruce up the sign so we changed the photographs to Rooiels specific photographs using some of the winning entries of the Rooiels photographic competition. We could not change the text however as that is the original KBR text which refers to the MAB programme of UNESCO.

We are trying to avoid too many signs in the Village which can lead to *Information Overload* and *Poster Pollution*, so we have been very selective about signage.

BEFORE



AFTER



2.2 Village Gardens

The Village Gardens were managed by Dine Van Zyl at the beginning of the year. Due to other commitments maintenance of the gardens became part of Fiona's responsibilities. The irrigation systems in two of the gardens needed to be replaced due to burst water pipes. Unfortunately, the vegetation was destroyed. This has been replaced with new indigenous plants. The gardens delighted many residents and visitors alike with their spring blooms. Unfortunately some of the plants have disappeared... and have probably walked away with some of the feet admiring them!

2.3 Wheelchair Walkway

A wheelchair walkway has been constructed on an existing path entering the Nature Reserve from Rocklands Road. This is a Ward specific project approved by the Overstrand Municipality and discussed by members of RERA at the RERA AGM 2020 as well as the open meeting held in June

2021. Part of the materials needed were supplied by the municipality, the remainder was funded by RERA. Construction of the walkway was done by Leigh Elves, a RERA/REC committee member and a Rooiels resident. He was ably assisted by his two sons, Mike Christelis, Vice-Chair of RERA and some workers. The walkway covers a very short distance of the total area of pathways in the reserve. Many residents have hailed this initiative as being overdue!

This walkway will make the reserve accessible to all those who are physically challenged and have not had any access thus far to this spectacular space. A viewing space where the wheelchair bound Rooielsers, moms with prams and visitors can stop and enjoy the spectacular view of the coastline and the ocean has been created. This space also serves as a turn-around point for wheelchairs and prams.

The wheelchair walkway is an indication that Rooiels is inclusive and open to sharing its beauty with all people who stay in or visit our village. It is the firm belief of the REC EXCO that the more people are made aware of our environment in a joyful manner, the more we will make people aware of nurturing and conserving this beauty.



2.4 Monthly Hack

A longstanding tradition in Rooiels is the monthly hack. This takes place on the first Saturday of the month. Participants meet at the “hack room” where they start their morning with coffee and condensed milk generously supplied by Wolfgang and Karin Steinbach. Hacking is open to young and old and tasks are allocated according to inclination and ability. Hackers are shown how to use a chainsaw, loppers, saws, and poppers. Once the alien has been removed the stump is painted with poison which is coloured blue.

During this year we have successfully removed aliens from numerous plots in Rooiels. Areas alongside the river have also been cleared of alien vegetation. Alien species removed were primarily Rooikrans. A large area of invasive reeds that were blocking the gulley to the river was collectively removed by the R44 road maintenance staff and our hardworking assistant, Gilbert.

On a plot along the R44 many highly invasive Hakea bushes were removed. Labour and time were generously sponsored by Ernst Thompson, a Rooiels resident.



3. Wildlife, Baboon Indaba

Ivan Becker, Treasurer

During 2020 REC was approached to organise a so-called Baboon Indaba. Due to Covid this could only happen in November 2021. REC appointed a task team, Baboon Coexistence (BABCO) under the leadership of Achim Halpaap and Kay Leresche. The BABCO team consisted of volunteers from the community and three REC members, Ivan, Hilgard and Wolf. The team did valuable research which included a survey to gain opinions and comments from Rooiels residents. Response to the survey was very good at 163 responses. This research culminated in the Indaba, which yielded a discussion document as well as a proposal for further research.

3.1 Achim Halpaap:

Outcomes Executive Summary- Baboon Indaba

- A survey administered by the Rooiels Baboon Coexistence Task Team established by RERA/REC in July 2021 revealed that the majority of respondents support coexistence with baboons in Rooiels. The results of the survey are on the Website. 163 separate households who reside or own in Rooiels completed the survey. As in the past, some residents consider baboons to be a problem.
- Given the wealth of written comments provided in the Survey, a more in-depth analysis of results could be valuable. The Survey also revealed that more than 50 Rooiels residents are willing to volunteer to support further action to strengthen coexistence.
- The Indaba confirmed the importance of the 9 action topics proposed in the background discussion document prepared by the Rooiels Baboon Coexistence Task Team. Valuable suggestions were provided at the Indaba on each topic. The suggestions will be integrated in the final version of the document to be available in January 2022.
- The work and existing activities of the REC/RERA committees to support coexistence with baboons were appreciated. This includes waste management activities, support of the CBD area during the holiday period, and putting together an information package for newcomers.
- Further action campaigns are, however needed to address challenges of coexisting with baboons in Rooiels. The new REC and RERA committees to be elected in December 2021 are encouraged to review the action items featured in the final discussion document and put in place actions on selected priority topics through broad participation of Rooielsers.

3.2 Ivan: Baboon Indaba

Action items following the Baboon Indaba:

- REC has employed 2 x "spotters" to keep the baboons away from the CBD during busy times i.e. 15th Dec - 15th Jan on Fri/Sat/Sun. They will be wearing reflective vests. There will be one spotter on duty at a time. During this period Gavin has enlisted several volunteers who will assist in the CBD should the baboons become unruly.
- Business owners have been advised to contact Gavin or Anuta for emergencies in the CBD
- Signage in CBD will be upgraded
- The Baboon brochure in the Information pack will be upgraded following the outcomes of the Baboon Indaba.



Rooielsers putting their heads together at Baboon Indaba

Ivan has been a longstanding member of the REC and RERA committees. He has protected, managed and taken care of member's contributions, donations and the bank accounts of both organisations with commitment, care and utmost responsibility!

We treasure you Mr. Treasurer!

4. Maintenance, Walkways, Signs, Roads

Leigh Elves- Secretariat

4.1 Maintenance – tasks completed to date include the repair and ongoing maintenance of municipal bins.



8 Municipal wheelie bins were fitted with baboon-proof locking systems and municipal signs fitted to the bins. 12 Municipal bins were fixed and marked.

4.2 The pathway at the first R44 parking (access to Rooiels beach) was severely eroded and necessitated the building of a stairway.



Eroded pathways on the dunes leads to wooden steps on only one pathway.

Wolf and his crew cleaned up around the first parking area. The dunes below the parking area were extremely dirty. Dozens of bags of dirty nappies, toilet paper and other unmentionables were removed from the bushes. Plastic containers, takeaway bags etc. discarded by groups of picnickers at the parking area get blown by the wind onto our beach and into the Estuary area. Wolf found various pathways down the dunes to the beach and Estuary area. All of these were severely eroded having never been maintained. The team closed up all except one left for people to use to walk

down to the beach using the stairway installed by Leigh which is safe and keeps people on the path on off the dunes.

4.3 **Eco-Corridor** – several meetings were attended and research of available land compiled and discussed with interested parties. Look forward to any further discussions/ meetings on this very important project.

4.4 **Secretariat** – all for REC meetings minuted, presented, corrected and accepted. A hard copy filing system is in place plus electronic folders for digital minutes. Baboon Indaba documents have been collected and filed. There is quite a stash of old Breezes pre 2018 as well as archival materials that should be stored in a safe place.

5. **Municipal Matters (Environmental Management), Zoning (Environmental Impact), Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve Company (KBRC)**
Hilgard Muller

5.1 Municipal Matters (Environmental Management)

Hilgard attended all the Ward 10 meetings scheduled this year. At the meeting he represents RERA and REC as well as KBRC of which organization he is the Vice-Chair.

Hilgard works closely with the Department of Environmental Services of Overstrand Municipality and has had staff members of the department in Rooiels a number of times this year to query environmental challenges and concerns. In line with the mantra of making the circle bigger Hilgard goes to a lot of trouble working with new residents to ensure that they understand the environment they have bought into. Hilgard and Wolf were the first persons who welcomed the new owners of the river property and informing them about the implications of buying into a Biosphere Reserve and living very close to the Core Zone of the Biosphere, as well as the Kogelberg Nature Reserve and a World Heritage Site. It again became apparent that estate agents are really not informing prospective buyers about the agony and ecstasy of buying a property in Rooiels.

5.2 Zoning (Environmental impact)

REC put in comments and opinions on a number of re-zoning applications. In line with the motion accepted at the RERA AGM all new re-zoning applications were put out to the community for comment and REC accepted the outcome. However, in all instances REC did not neglect to point out the responsibility and implication of being part of the Biosphere as well as respecting the newly gazetted OM EMOZ and HPOZ Overlays.

6 **Estuary, Dune Stabilisation, Coastline Management, Cameras, Year programme, Meetings logistics**
Wolfgang Steinbach

6.1 **Rooiels Estuary:** The Estuary was cleaned twice by the Overstrand Municipality during the period of April to December. REC hired a worker who cleaned the Estuary five times in this period of 6 months. REC also organised a community campaign which saw community members clean around the Estuary three times.

Contracted kelp collectors operated three times during the past six months around the Estuary, Ottersgat and in the dunes of our beaches. Illegal kelp collection was spotted by an alert

community member who reported it to Hilgard and Veronica. Hilgard alerted the authorities. The kelp poacher was not seen again in Rooiels.

6.2 Dune Stabilisation and Coastline Management:

With the help of a paid worker, when needed, and a few Rooielsers the blowholes on our front dunes were filled up with kelp from the sea and cuttings from our Rooiels hacks. A job well done but it will be an ongoing task.

The Rooiels hackers hacked three times on both sides of the Estuary.

The R44 maintenance team was also hugely helpful in helping us not only to clean at the first parking on a regular basis, but they kept all the road drainages around the estuary clean. REC and RERA showed appreciation by supplying breakfast or lunch every 3 months. Thanks Wolf and Karin.

The area on the other side of the parking was also cleared and cleaned, 55 bags of rubbish was taken away by REC and the R44 maintenance team. Again Wolf took the lead.

CapeNature was approached re the fact that people enter the Biosphere and the Kogelberg Reserve without a permit. With their help a signboard was erected to deter people walking over the mountain into the Reserve.

6.3 Field Camera Project:

REC owns and maintains seven cameras in and round Rooiels. Two of these are broken and should be replaced in the new financial year. REC also owns a drone.

Working with the Conservancies of Pringle and Betty's Bay, every six to seven weeks the cameras are serviced. We would like to thank Willie and Denise Boltman, who very generously sponsored the batteries for the cameras. These are very expensive and have to be replaced every six weeks.

Rooielsers are invited to accompany us to camera sites so they can experience this wonderful experience with us.

Photos captured by the cameras are shared with the Rooielsers on social media, the Boland Cape Leopard Trust as well as CapeNature.

At the end of 2020 up to March 2021 the Rooiels cave was part of a survey done by the Boland Cape Leopard Trust in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve. For more info on the survey please get your 2021 Breeze.



6.4 REC Membership signs

Thanks to a donation by Ben de Klerk, the REC membership signs are now available at the Village Shop at a R50 each. This is a great opportunity to market the Conservancy and to encourage others to join. Wolf facilitated this initiative.



6.5 Maintenance of the paths in the Village:

The maintenance of pathways in Rooiels and down to the beach is an ongoing task, especially after the rainy season. By doing regular inspections all the paths, and repairing where necessary safety standards are maintained and pedestrians can enjoy a safe and relaxing hike around the village and coastline. Rope ladders were also fixed.

6.6 Roadkills on the R44:

Roadkills on the R44, specially the section through Rooiels , were discussed in several forums.

Speeding on the R44 remains a huge problem. The collection and recording of data on roadkills are important to inform authorities of the severity of the problem, especially now that the R44 is on the list for upgrading in 2023.

Research shows that the freshwater supply to animals is cut off by the R44. This leads to animals crossing the road to get to fresh water. Coupled with the increasing traffic on the road and speeding motorists, roadkills are becoming an increasing sight.

For REC all animal lives matter.

6.7 Otter statue:

As promised at the REC AGM in April, the otter statue was removed from the Estuary and erected on private property. REC had numerous calls and messages of dismay when the otter disappeared from the rock, but its new position in the village centre at Gossip Corner seem to have found favour with a number of people. Thanks to Johan for allowing us to use his property.



ODE TO A LOST OTTER

ODE AAN 'N VERDWAALDE OTTER

This rock where I now stand, is grand... but it is
not my rock

My rock stands between river and sea, home to
brothers and sisters who I represent and promote

Home to flashing fish and darting birds

Home, where happy children splash and swim

All part of a biodiverse universe...

Sadly, I am standing here away from the
environment that I tried to promote

Dis jammer, dalk 'n verlore geleentheid?

Maar dis hoe dit is in hierdie pragtige klein

stukkies van paradys. Dis my weg, of geen weg. Waar is die goue middeweg?



6.8 Mr. REC

Wolf's organisational skills are legendary. In the committee he has become known as Mr. Logistics. He is the spirit and enthusiasm of the holiday programme. He has shown many residents and visitors the beauty of Rooiels and its environs. This, while pushing conservation and biodiversity.

Wolf can very easily be given the title of Mr. REC. He is everywhere... his passion for Rooiels, its people and the environment will endure...his energy is endless.

REC is not only losing a full committee, REC is losing two of its great personalities... We salute Ivan and Wolf. Thanks for many years of service....we will miss your coffee and good-natured teasing!



Last word from Wolf:

I took this photo this morning - I was so amazed and proud of how clean our RE beach is! I could not even fill one black bag of rubbish! Well done