

Welcome to Rooiels

Some information to introduce you to the special quirks and wonders of life here



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We hope that you will enjoy living here as much as we all do. We have all bought into Rooiels because it is wild, natural, part of a biosphere reserve and we appreciate that this lifestyle is deserving of being protected.



1. General information

2.

Organisations

Rooiels has a number of organisations which you are welcome to join. These include [RERA](#) the Rooiels Ratepayers Association, [REC](#) the Rooiels Conservancy, the Rooiels Boatclub and [RESA](#) the Rooiels Security Association which incorporates a block watch and a disaster management initiative REDI. These voluntary organisations represent us at local government, support our love of nature and help to secure us.

Keep in touch

Keep in touch with village social and security WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages: Rooiels Gemeenskap and Rooiels Wildlife, as well as a Website (www.rooiels.weebly.com). Share your nature experiences: see [Rooiels Field Notes](#) and the Facebook pages.

Fynbos is the generic term used to describe the group of plant families growing naturally in our area. These include proteas, ericas, restios, bulbs, pelargoniums, daisies and many other species. They are adapted to the wind and the acidic and nutrient-poor soil of the area. See website for a colour coded Rooiels wild flower guide. **The areas along our roads need to remain natural and wild.** They are very important as fynbos seed banks and also as food and habitat for our animals and insects. These road reserves are municipal land and enhance the natural ambience of Rooiels. They are essential to the aesthetic and heritage value of the area and enhance property values.

Invasive alien vegetation takes its toll on our indigenous fynbos and eventually “crowds it out”. These alien plants also create a serious fire hazard.

The most common problem plants are rooikrans (*Acacia cyclops*) and fountain grasses (*Pennisetum setaceum*) which are both declared pests and should be removed wherever they are found.

Rooiels has a local **Hack** group that spends the first Saturday morning of each month cutting down alien vegetation in the village. It is a great place to meet people and we really welcome you to join.

Gardening in Rooiels requires patience and persistence! Our soils, wind and sea air make it tough. You are encouraged to grow water-wise gardens or to just landscape the natural fynbos around your home. Please **avoid growing invasive alien plants** – those that spread and endanger the fynbos. Try to avoid planting hybrids which do not contribute to our natural biodiversity.



Birding in Rooiels includes sightings of the Cape Rockjumper which is endemic to the Cape mountain fynbos. We also have several pairs of breeding Black Oystercatchers and in some years Verreaux's (Black) Eagles nest on Klein Hangklip. On the website there is a Rooiels list of "All Time Sightings" compiled by Alison Ayre and Helen Jones.



© Liz Potgieter

Marine animals include a seal colony year round out on the point at Roman Rocks across from the nature reserve. Southern Right whales can often be seen in winter and spring. Bryde's and Humpback whales, seals and dolphins are seen throughout the year. Rooiels is popular for kreef/ crayfishing (West coast rock lobsters). Please note that there is a limited season and permits are required. **Angling** is also popular. Mussels can be collected from the rocks all year and permits are available from any post office. Please report any poachers you see but you should not try and apprehend yourself.



Baboons

Go to the website for information on baboon protecting your home and reducing conflict.



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We are part of a biosphere reserve and hence beholden to interact empathetically with our natural environment and its residents.

Single males, family groups, or the troop of around 24 can be seen moving around the village. Watching them is fascinating - especially the youngsters frolicking around or the babies clinging to their mothers' bellies and riding on their mother's backs. But they can be a nuisance and given the slightest opportunity they will enter homes in search of food. Most homeowners have experienced invasions and know they can leave an awful mess!

See the separate page on baboons and baboon-proofing your home.

Other Animals



Rooiels has some seldom-seen animals including otters, honey badgers and leopards. The community supports cameras so that we can get a glimpse of their lives - see the Leopard Blog, the Otter and Other Animals blogs on the website and shared on WhatsApp. There are many other animals which we only rarely glimpse including rooikat (caracal), genet and klipspringer. Then there are those we see more often including mongoose, tortoise, dassies and baboons.



Light Pollution

Because Rooiels is so “close to nature” we want to avoid light pollution. With no street lights and relatively few homes, the village is peaceful at night and the stars shine brightly. There is a draft municipal bylaw which limits external lights and property owners are asked to comply with the spirit as well as the letter of this bylaw. Reduce your light footprint by installing downward tilted sensor lights for security and closing curtains or blinds after dark - particularly in the upper level of double story homes.



Rooiels night sky.

© Steven Mullins

Fire

Rooiels is an extremely high fire risk area. It is illegal to make a fire anywhere in Rooiels other than in fireplaces and braais on your own property. Even braais are prohibited when there is wind. Do not throw **any** old braai or fire coals or cigarette butts into the fynbos.



Keep Rooiels and our beaches clean

We need to work together to clean up the environment. As you go for a walk please keep your eye out for litter, pick it up and put it in the bins. There are no municipal workers to do it here. We love to feel that we live in unspoilt natural surroundings but there is only us to keep it that way! Protect the sand dunes by keeping to pathways.

Pets

Please take care of your dog mess – use a stick to scoop it deep into the bushes and ensure that your dog is under control and does not chase wildlife or frighten pedestrians. Municipal bylaws restrict dogs on swimming beaches between 0800 and 1800 during the holiday season and require **dogs to be on leashes** at all times. Ensure your cat does not hunt birds, lizards, shrews etc.

Building

Try to **limit the impact on the fynbos**, save special plants by removing before building, and minimise the use of fences and walls which restrict wildlife movement and reduce the aesthetic value of the village. In addition to the National Building Regulations and restrictions of your title deeds, there are certain local requirements. If the plot falls within a natural wetland or is within 100 meters of the sea high water mark, additional restrictions may apply. Find **useful tips and guidelines** on the REC page of the website.

Architects and builders are encouraged to tap into the experience of longstanding residents on how to protect their homes from baboon visits. Doing this timeously will avoid expensive revisions later.

Eskom supplies our electricity and all homes have "pay-as-you-go" meters. Units can be bought at the Village shop or online. **Water** is supplied from a dam on the Buffels River with the quality controlled and monitored by the municipality. Water restrictions are sometimes imposed in summer.

Domestic waste should be placed in refuse bags that in turn must be placed in your own baboon-proof bins. Collection takes place on Mondays. Please do not use the communal bins which are for litter from day visitors and are vulnerable to baboons. Alternatively take it home or to the Kleinmond waste station. All garden cuttings must be taken to the "green" dump between Pringle Bay and Betty's Bay.



Example of a non-baboon proof bin after it was raided.

Security

RESA was established to address security within the village and achieved great success with an almost zero rate of crime for many years, in strong contrast to our neighbouring communities. You are strongly encouraged to join this association.

Wind



Part of the charm of Rooiels is the natural elements of which wind is foremost. Appointing local architects and again tapping into local knowledge would be very helpful when planning a new home.

3. Supporting biodiversity in Rooiels



The world has recognised the urgency of preserving biodiversity and reclaiming areas for locally indigenous plant species that will encourage the sustainability of local insect and animal populations and strengthen the ecosystem.

Having initially focussed on large areas and mammal reintroduction, rewilding has now become the goal of many urban and peri-urban areas globally. These efforts go right down to encouraging people to retain part of their gardens to remain wild and for the street verges to be allowed to revert to natural vegetation.

“Rewilding is about adding nature everywhere, not just in parks, by using nature-based solutions or green infrastructure at the edges of our streets, in leftover spaces and on and within our buildings.”

The villages of the Hangklip area fall in the critical southern coastal transition zone of the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve. The urban development in this zone is taking place in extremely sensitive vegetation types and poses a significant threat to biodiversity. To date, no large-scale agriculture or industry occurs in Rooiels and its immediate area and so the natural fynbos surrounding the village is considered pristine. However, we are surrounded by ecosystems whose status are considered both Critical and/or Endangered.

Rooiels provides an example of a village which is already a living example of what can be achieved by a community aspiring to live in greater harmony with nature and retain the “wild” and unspoilt sense of place of the village. The Rooiels Vision has been the social contract/norm among residents for many years and is framed around mitigating human impacts on nature and giving nature the place of honour in Rooiels.

The RECOZ (Rooiels Conservation Overlay Zone) was adopted by the village in a fully inclusive process and deals with issues like preserving the road reserves, plot clearing, speed calming and waste management as well as issues including outside lighting, types of fencing, introduction of alien plants etc. This RECOZ has been submitted to the Municipality for implementation.

4. Building in Rooiels

Building is not the same everywhere. We need to be aware that we are building in a conservancy within the boundaries of a biosphere reserve. Please refer to the article on the Rooiels website (www.rooiels.org) for tips on building in an ecologically sensitive area. This article also includes local tips for baboon-proofing your home. By reading this before commencing building, you could save yourself much heartache and expense later.



Contents:

- 1 Summary: Regulations and Guidelines applicable to owners and builders in ecologically sensitive areas. Full document available on the Rooiels website
 - Environmental protection
Please do not clear the entire plot of vegetation. Protect what you can of the indigenous fynbos which is increasingly under threat. Please protect the road reserves.
 - Excavation and demolition and building stockpiles
Building materials may not be stockpiled on the road verge.
 - Waste and pollution control and water management
No chemicals, including cement, may run off into the surrounding area. Please keep all refuse in scavenger-proof containers.
- 2 Some recommendations of our own
 - Baboon-proofing your home; protecting from prevailing winds; optimising the sun
The tips included in the full document on the website were contributed by Rooielsers

with years of experience and well worth implementing. You will only regret not having done so....

- Living sustainably

Consider installing water tank/s. Baboon-proof bins are compulsory according to the waste by-law of the Municipality. Do remember to recycle.

- Preventing unnecessary damage to plot and rehabilitation

Refer Environmental protection above. When rehabilitating, please consult the Rooiels website for a comprehensive list of Rooiels indigenous plants.

- Fencing of properties

Fencing, or worse, walling entire properties detracts from the rural, natural ambience of Rooiels. Please erect a small fenced encampment for your dogs which does not reach to the erf boundary, allowing indigenous fauna to move across your property without obstacles.

- Potential light pollution

Light pollution by-laws will soon be in place which forbid, amongst others, unshielded outside lights and light spillage outside of your property. Protect our dark starry night skies by placing lights sensitively and only switch on when you need them and once you have drawn the curtains or dropped the blinds.

- Plot clearing instruction from municipality

Empty plots are required to be cleared of excess plant growth before transfer can take place. Please contact the Rooiels Conservancy if you receive such a notification. They can help you to avoid unnecessary destruction of your beautiful fynbos and still comply with municipal requirements.



5. Invasive alien plants of Rooiels and The Hack

Rooiels has a tradition of working hard to ensure that Rooiels remains natural. To do this we need to ensure that most of Rooiels retains its indigenous fynbos – as a source of seeds and as a habitat for all the insects, birds and other animals that call Rooiels home.

Invasive alien plants are a major threat to the fynbos. Originally introduced as plants to contain sand dunes or as ornamental garden plants, these alien invasive plants have replaced the fynbos in many areas in the Overstrand. They are a threat not only to biodiversity and our natural landscape, they are also highly flammable and they choke wetlands and seriously affect catchment areas in the Western Cape. Alien invasive plants have been a major factor in fires in our area in recent years. Some of the most widespread and problematic species are: *Acacia cyclops* (rooikrans), *Acacia saligna* (Port Jackson willow/wattle), the poisonous *Myporum* (manatoka), Black Wattle, various pine species and certain grass species. In the wetlands bottle brush plants (*Callistemon*) are almost impossible to eradicate.

Rooielsers gather on the first Saturday of every month to work together on removing these plants, especially the rooikrans. The Hack is a tradition that goes back decades and has been responsible for clearing almost all of the rooikrans in the village – the most problematic of the alien invasive plants here. A report on the Estuary in 1981 indicates that more than 90% of the area surveyed had been invaded by rooikrans. Today there are only a few stands of these trees, but they keep reappearing across the village. After a fire the seeds sprout again after being dormant for decades, so we can expect our grandchildren to still be “hacking”.

We urge all Rooielsers to join the Hack at 08h00 (summer) or 08h30 (winter) on the first Saturday of every month. It is good exercise and a way of protecting our heritage. After the Hack, tea and eats are served. So, it is also a social gathering where you also get to meet and catch up with fellow Rooielsers. Please, would ALL, old and young, join us. There are different tasks for all ages.

Contact the Hack Convenor at rec.chair@rooiels.org.za



Port Jackson

6. Living with baboons in Rooiels



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Baboons are not naturally aggressive towards humans or their pets. They are essentially focussed on your food. For the sake of the baboons and your sanity, remove all food opportunities.

Most Rooielsers love living in wild nature and sharing our world with the baboons, but we do need to take precautions and we need to avoid feeding them, intentionally or accidentally, so we can keep living with them. The onus is on us to protect our properties against these very adaptable, intelligent wild animals.

Baboons are not predators. Those big teeth are for protection, not hunting. They do not want to fight and have never bitten a person in Rooiels despite many years of close association. What may seem aggressive is actually fear:

- The fear grimace (when they pull their lips back from their teeth)
- Running with their tails straight up
- High-pitched screams and frantic movements
- Defecating or urinating

How to react when confronted with baboons:

- If carrying food, even in a bag, drop the food and step back. They will lose all interest in you.
- Children should not eat in the streets or outside the shop. A baboon will attempt to take the food from them, giving them a fright.
- When they enter your house, don't give them a fright – they could leave you with a mess.
- Don't block their exit, calmly insist they take what they have grabbed and leave.
- Whatever you do, don't panic.

How to reduce access:

- Keep your car doors locked. They can open doors from the outside, but not from the inside!
- Install shutters, trellidoors and burglar bars with maximum 7 cm gaps
- Install stoppers on sliding doors so that they can't lift them off the rail
- Ensure your baboon proof bin is secured well in the ground and fitted with clips
- Vegetables and fruit must be grown in a greenhouse
- Use an electronic device if you have a pet flap
- Secure gutters to minimise damage caused by baboons swinging from them
- Do NOT fence the entire property and electrify that fencing. This is not really successful and impacts negatively on all the other wildlife, apart from detracting from the sense of place.

Go to [What to do around baboons](#) and [Protecting your Home](#) on the website for tips and more information.

A comprehensive survey conducted in 2021 indicated that the vast majority of Rooielsers like having the baboons in the village: 163 respondents participated (this was a pleasingly high number). Only 10% of them indicated that they disliked baboons. We can be justifiably proud of our reputation as the only residential area in the country where people and baboons coexist.



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7. Firewise in Rooiels

Rooiels is a high risk area for fires. We have hot, dry and very windy summers and alien plants in the area accelerate fires. We need to be very vigilant.

Fires in the fynbos are a part of the natural cycle, but they should only take place every 10 to 15 or even 20 years, depending on the area. More frequent fires negatively affect the fynbos and disrupt reseeding. Fires in the area are very dangerous to our homes. Rooiels is prone to gusting winds at gale force which make fires almost impossible to control. There is no controlling its path or where it destroys. Bolts of fire leap across major highways and land on roofs, setting the houses alight and it all happens in a very short time. It is essential to avoid fires starting and to report them as soon as possible.

Help to avoid fires in Rooiels

In addition to national legislation relating to fire prevent, please:

- 1 DO NOT place any old coals from fireplaces or braais (no matter how dead they seem) in the fynbos around you. This is a major cause of fires.
- 2 DO NOT braai over an open fire on a day with wind. It is illegal to have an open fire in the wind.
- 3 DO NOT burn your garden waste. It is illegal to do so without a permit.
- 4 DO NOT throw cigarette butts out – the possible cause of the March 2017 fire.

Report fires immediately and take steps to extinguish it if safe to do so.

Property protection measures

- 1 Remove alien trees from your garden, especially pines and rooikrans.
- 2 Ensure that you have no gaps in the eaves of your roof. Flying embers that get in under the roof are the most likely cause of houses burning down.
- 3 Keep dead wood under control and remove from your property.
- 4 Avoid trees touching your house and especially under or touching wooden balconies.
- 5 See Rooiels website for a list of firewise plants.
- 6 Keep your gutters clear of leaves and debris.
- 7 In the event of a fire, if there is time before evacuating, close all windows and doors, switch off electrics, remove curtains, water the roof and area immediately around your house.

Aliens and fire – from the Fynbos Fire Fuel Handbook 2015

Acacia Saligna (Port Jackson) invasion increased the total live biomass about 3.3 fold over proteoid fynbos in a study covered in this handbook.

Pinus pinaster and *Acacia longifolia* (wattle) increased the fuel load up to 9 fold. Both pines and wattle are spreading in this direction from Pringle Bay.

