SPRING NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2019

SPRING IS IN THE AIR

The Waterberg experience spring in a very different way than most of the other areas.

Where blossoms are in bloom in most places, the Waterberg always seems to hold on to the last convulsions of winter.

Everything seems a bit dryer, a bit dustier and a bit more depressing than winter.

Spring in the Waterberg does not represent new beginnings, but rather hope for what might be.

- Hope for abundance of grazing
- Hope for leaf covered trees that create lovely cool shade.
- Hope for plenty of fresh water.
- Hope for healthy offspring from our animals

Here's to spring on Ditholo.

May the hope that we experience here overflow in our own lives.

RED BUSH WILLOW

Combretum apiculatum Sond. subsp. *apiculatum*

Family: Combretaceae

Common names: Red bush willow (Eng.); rooiboswilg (Afr.); umbondwe (Zulu); imbondvo (Swazi); mohwidiri (Tswana); mohwelere (Sepedi); muvuvha (Tshivenda); ndhuva (Tsonga)
SA Tree No: 532

Description: This is a single- or multi-stemmed, small tree 3-10 m high, with a short, often curved trunk, and a spreading, irregular canopy. The long, slender branches hang low down, giving the tree a willow-like appearance. It grows in higher rainfall regions. The bark on the main stem is grey to dark grey or brownish grey and smooth becoming scaly and rough with age.

The simple leaves have sharp, twisted tips, hence the specific epithet; they are shiny yellow-green in colour, alternate, opposite or in whorls of three at the nodes, with blades narrowly to broadly elliptic, oblong or broadly obovate. The base is roundish in outline. Young leaves are sticky.

Flowers occur in axils on new shoots, 3-4 on each shoot. Petals are yellow to creamy green and strongly scented. It flowers in spring and summer, from September to February. The fruit is four-winged, 20-30 x 15-25 mm, almost round to ovoid, with wings up to 7 mm wide, glutinous when young, yellowish-green, often tinged with red. It has a single seed in the centre. It fruits in late summer to autumn, from January to May. Fruits often stay on the tree until the next flowers appear in August.

Conservation Status: It is listed in the 2009 Red Data Listing (Raimondo *et al.* 2009) but has no threat status.

Ecology: The red bush willow is a valuable fodder tree for browsing animals; mature green leaves are eaten by kudu, bushbuck, eland, giraffe and elephant. Cattle like the leaves when they are about to fall or have fallen, especially when they are least nutritious. It is considered as an indicator of mixed veld, good for spring- and summer grazing by most farmers but needs careful management. Its fruits pose a threat to livestock, especially the seeds which are poisonous but eaten by Brown-headed Parrots. The sweetly scented flowers are visited by bees and ants.

Uses: The wood is very hard, making it resistant to both borers and termites; it provides useful fencing poles, mine props and wheel spokes, and makes good furniture, but as the pieces are not large, they can only be used to make small items. It also makes good firewood and charcoal. The bark is used for tanning leather. Medicinally, a decoction of the leaves has been used as a steam bath and as an enema to relieve stomach disorders. As treatment for conjunctivitis, an ash from the burnt stem is mixed with white clay and water and the resulting paste is spread over the face.

References:

Coates Palgrave, M. 2002. Keith Coates Palgrave Trees of southern Africa, edn 3. Struik, Cape Town / Grant, R. & Thomas, V. 1999. Sappi tree spotting. Tree identification made easy, KwaZulu-Natal coast and Midlands. Jacana, Johannesburg /Palmer, E. & Pitman, N. 1972. Trees of southern Africa. Balkema, Cape Town.

Van Wyk, B. (A.E.) & Van Wyk, P. 1997. Field guide to trees of southern Africa. Struik, Cape Town /Van Wyk, B.-E. & Gericke, N. 2000. People's plants. A guide to useful plants of southern Africa. Briza Publications, Pretoria.

Thabo Masupa & Esther Rampho /Pretoria National Herbarium /January 2011

(Website: http://pza.sanbi.org/combretum-apiculatum-subsp-apiculatum)

ROAD UPGRADE

We are happy to report, that the damage to our roads that was caused by the late rains in the beginning of the year are now fixed.

Under the watchful eyes of Andre Becker, a local contractor, we were able to repair more roads than originally anticipated. In areas that were marshy, the road was build up to prevent vehicles from getting stuck in wet conditions.

A "DAM" GOOD JOB

Over the last couple of years one of our dams were taken over by water lilies. The problem grew to the extent that it was impossible to fish in the dam anymore.

A huge effort was undertaken by Dawid and his team to rectify the problem. They had to empty the dam into the hippo dam just enough to not harm the fish. Then they had to take out most of the plants by hand and give the remainder of the plants enough exposure to sunlight before spraying it with a chemical that were not harmful to the fish.

The dam is now almost back to its original water level.

Happy fishing.

WILDLIFE'S HEALTHY TICK BURDENS

Parasites play an important part in natural ecosystems, and wildlife can bear their tick burdens and still stay healthy – if humans stop interfering. So says Professor Ivan Horak of the University of Pretoria's Onderstepoort campus.

Parasite control in wildlife has long been a contentious issue among farmers, nature conservationists and animal health professionals. But according to Professor Ivan Horak of the University of Pretoria's Onderstepoort campus, it's an issue overbearing humans have created for themselves.

Horak suggests that a better understanding and appreciation of the role of parasites will improve the management of wildlife. Simply put, Horak claims there's no need to control parasites in wildlife. He gave a number of examples illustrating what humans are doing wrong.

FORGET TRADITIONAL REMEDIES

Horak finds typical remedies for wildlife ticks ineffective. "Aloes don't work. Some 60% of the ticks may be gone, but by then your animals have lost 30% of their weight and have diarrhoea like you can't believe," says Horak. "It doesn't work." "Fire doesn't work.

We've done a number of experiments with fire at various burning intervals and at various places. Sometimes you get a reduction of 50%. Other times, after the fire removes the top grass, you've exposed the eggs to the heat and you end up with more ticks than you started with."

Healthy tick burdens

Horak explains that it's normal for healthy wild animals to harbour thousands of parasites, be infected by a range of parasite species, or both. "For instance, the normal tick load for a buffalo is 50 000 ticks and they can have up to two million worms. Healthy blue wildebeest in the Kruger National Park can harbour nearly 35 parasite species including 18 worm species, three lice species, seven tick species and any number of mite species." Within a species, the different sexes can harbour different amounts of parasites. Horak used the example of male and female kudu, examined in pairs over a two year period, and male and female nyala, examined in pairs over 18 months. "With the kudu we noticed the males had 10 times as many heartwater ticks as the females, and five times more brown ear ticks.

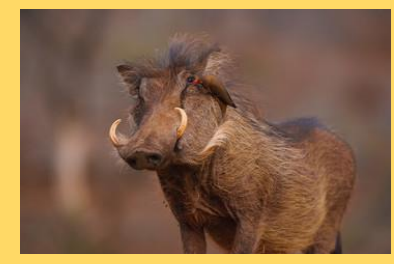
"The nyalas are too small to carry large numbers of parasites, so neither the males nor the females had many," says Horak. "But the males had three times as many blue ticks as the females. In the case of the brown ear tick, it's absolutely amazing that male animals, in a test group of 24, had an average of 345 ticks, while on average the females had seven. The reason? One of them is that nyalas have the greatest degree of sexual dimorphism in any antelope species. The males look completely different from the females and there is a huge difference in weight – ticks go for bigger animals."

It was found the male nyalas could carry 1 000 ticks in their ears at a time while females carry up to 300 ticks. "If we look at impala males examined near the Crocodile Bridge in the Kruger National Park," says Horak, "the males had a total of 1 400 ticks in January, 2 000 in February, 1 400 in March and 7 000 in April. But in May they had 22 000 – here we have a problem. The males are mating, they're chasing all the other males around, they have no time to feed, no time to groom and they're running after females all the time, so their immune systems are badly compromised. The result is this huge tick burden on the males. After this period the tick numbers drop."

NATURAL RESISTANCE

Horak points out that we do have naturally tick-resistant animals. "In the Kruger National Park we examined a number of animals, including mountain zebras, which averaged 3 000 ticks, kudus averaging 4 000 ticks, and impalas averaging 4 200. Now, for an animal the size of an impala that's an exorbitant amount of ticks – as we've said, the larger the host the more ticks it will carry. An impala is one third or one quarter the size of a kudu and look at the number of ticks it carries."

The difference, according to Horak, is that an impala has a grooming apparatus: its lower jaw is loose, and it uses it to groom itself. While it's possible that in this particular case the grooming apparatus wasn't working, it could also be that impalas don't develop an immunity to ticks because they rely on their grooming apparatus instead.



THE ROLE OF PARASITES

Horak says that as soon as an animal's immune system becomes compromised, either through injury or old age, that animal will be overrun with external and probably internal parasites. Such an animal should be removed, either by predators or human intervention. "Parasites have a very important role in large ecosystems where large animals, before they are 18 months old, develop heavy tick, worm or lice burdens," says Horak.

"Those that are weaker or don't develop a proper immune response are made even weaker by the parasites, and are then taken out by predators before they can contribute to the gene pool." This is what is happening in large ecosystems like the Kruger National Park and other big parks. "Diseased or injured animals become heavily infected, resulting in rapid removal by predators. Between parasites and predators the population is being screened for fitness all the time. So, a constant low-level of parasites is keeping weak youngsters out of the gene pool. The predators, which really aren't very noble animals, take out the weakest link," he says.

If you have any questions on the matter please feel free to contact Pieter Engelbrecht on 0724501502

METER MATE PREPAID ELECTRICITY

In April we announced that the HOA was on a seasonal rate structure with Eskom. This meant that summer rates would apply from September to May and winter rates would apply in June, July and August.

After Eskom's 13.87% increase on 1 April 2019, a fixed monthly charge of R94.61 was introduced to the first purchase of every month. The energy charges per unit is currently R1.69 during the summer months and R2.15 during the winter months. We are still actively involved with Meter Mate to determine the most accurate rates and charges. It was discovered that the purchase rate upon activation in April was indeed incorrect. Affected transactions were identified and members will soon be receiving credit vouchers and more details.

Should you encounter any problems with your meter, please contact us as soon as possible. We have units available for replacement. The HOA can unfortunately not give permission for any electricity connection without a meter.

POACHING ON DITHOLO

Being on the border between the Northern province and Limpopo, we are close to informal settlements on two sides of our fence line. For this reason, poaching remains one of our biggest challenges.

The method that the poachers use is predominantly snaring the animals. For this reason, we have a team from our anti-poaching unit, coming in twice a week to remove snares. Our team that remains on the property inspects the fence twice a day to check for damage or possible intrusions.

This method is mildly successful in the decrease in snares found in the veldt. We will also reach out to the community leaders the closest to us to assist in managing the problem.

GIANT ANT LION

Have you ever wondered what makes those conical holes in sandy soils? The answer is an Ant Lion – a very strange and rarely seen, but fascinating creature.

Ant Lions belong to the family Myrmeleontidae, which consists of about 2 000 species which occur worldwide in sandy, dry areas.

Ant Lions undergo a full metamorphosis, (adult-egg-larvaepupae-adult) from an adult, which is called a Lace Wing and may have a wingspan of up to 120mm and in a way, resembles a dragon fly. The adult, depending on the species, may feed on nectar, pollen or may predate on small arthropods. It is active mostly during nighttime. The adult female lays its eggs in dry sand where they hatch when conditions are favourable. The newly hatched larvae are now called Ant Lions which by no means resemble the delicate "fairy like" adult. It has now become a miniature monster, like something out of a sci-fi horror movie.

Its elongated head with fierce protruding jaws and globular body is designed to capture ants and small arthropods in a pit-like trap which is superbly designed and built to resemble a cone in the sand. The sides of the cone-like structure being masterly engineered to the "critical angle of response", the latter being a term which civil engineers are familiar with, which results in any small arthropod falling into the cone being unable to climb out due to the sand "avalanching" it to the bottom of the funnel where the protruding jaws of death awaits it. In the event of the prey being able to ascend the sliding sand mass the Ant Lion will vigorously toss its head backwards flicking sand onto the side of the cone and causing more of an "avalanche". Once the prey is secured in the Ant Lions mandibles, it is injected with venom which immobilises it and also acts to digest the internal organs of the prey to a soup which is then sucked out of the exoskeleton by means of a slit like mouth situated between the base of the mandibles. Once the prey is "sucked dry", the exoskeleton is tossed out of the pit.

An interesting fact is that Ant Lion larvae lack an anus and that all metabolic fluid is stored and eventually excreted as maconium once it nears its pupae stage. Another interesting fact is that the larval stage may endure 1 to 3 years! After the larval stage the Ant Lion constructs a globular cocoon from sand stuck together with fine silk spun from a spinneret at the posterior end of the larvae. After two months an adult emerges which is able to fly after 20 minutes when its wings are fully opened and filled with blood, its sole purpose being to find a mate.
Jan van Niekerk

(BSc, Botany, Zoology and Wildlife Management, Stellenbosch)

SERVICES

We would like to remind you that the Estate's staff will be more than happy to assist you with any of the following. :

- General Maintenance R80 (Include first hour, additional hours will be charged at R60 per hour)
- Additional Bush Clearance R450

  (The HOA will do one Bush Clearance once a year as part of fire prevention. It will consist of 20 meter perimeter clearance around houses as required by the insurance)
- Grass Cutting R300

  (Immediate area around the house and lapa.)

Please email your request to gerda@wbpm.co.za. or Contact Dawid (083 432 5542).

NEED ASSISTANCE DURING YOUR STAY?

Vodacom: 064 838 6916 (voice calls only)
MTN: 078 171 2210 (voice calls and WhatsApp messages).

The Guest Relations Officer at the entrance gate will attend to the phone during the day and contact the correct person to attend to your request. After hours the phone will be attended to by the designated staff member on duty.
The Guest Relations Officer is on duty from 6 am to 6pm. Please arrange alternative arrival and departure times in advance.

ACCOUNT PAYMENTS

Paying your levy or your services invoice on time enables the HOA to meet its financial obligations. Delayed payment puts a lot of stress on the cash flow and a restriction on moving forward on any planned and budgeted maintenance upgrades.
In light of the above, I would like to bring to your attention:

- Levies are payable in advance and therefore invoiced on the 20th day of each month.
- The levy invoice is payable within 15 days of the date of invoice
- Any services invoice is payable upon presentation of the invoice.

An urgent request goes out to all owners with outstanding balances.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
10 OCTOBER 2019

Notice of the 11th Annual General Meeting to be held on 10 October 2019, at
Client suite 7 & 8, Absa Towers North, Absa Sandton Campus, 15 Alice Lane, Sandton **was sent out on 10 September 2019**

Please take note of the following important information:

- Members are entitled to attend or vote at the Annual General Meeting and are entitled to appoint a proxy to attend, speak and vote in their stead. The person so appointed needs to be a member of the Company.
- Members who are unable to attend the Annual General Meeting but wish to be represented must complete the proxy form enclosed.
- To be effective, proxy forms should be emailed to Gerda Barnard at gerda@wbpm.co.za at least 24 hours before the start of the meeting or handed to the Chairman at the meeting on Thursday, 10 October 2019.
- Meeting attendees will be required to provide satisfactory identification before being allowed to participate in the meeting.
- By order of the Board of Ditholo Wildlife Estate Homeowner's Association NPC, members with overdue accounts will not be allowed to vote. Payment terms and conditions are clearly indicated on all invoices and the current Articles of Association.

It is our urgent request to all members to make sure that they confirm attendance or submit a proxy for the upcoming meeting as soon as possible.