

**Friends of Die Oog**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**27 October 2010**  
**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2009-2010**

The Friends of Die Oog have had a disappointing and difficult year but there is a silver lining. We have been greatly encouraged by the many very generous donations we have received following my last newsletter and by the many kind messages many of the Friends have sent. We have also very recently had the good news that the Friends of Die Oog have at long last been recognised by the Department of Social Development as a Non-profit Organisation and we have been given a registration number. This means amongst other things that we can now issue tax certificates for all donations and that we can apply to the National Lottery for funds. I had been warned that the application would take at least 9 months and as an obstetrician this seemed a normal gestation period. The application has however taken 18 months, enough for two full term pregnancies, but I am glad to say that the Non Profit Registration has been safely delivered.

**Western Leopard Toads** The biggest disappointment of last year was that no Leopard Toadlets emerged in spite of the many toads that migrated to Die Oog last August. An unusually large number of dragonflies were present at the same time and it has been suggested that the Leopard Toad tadpoles were eaten by the larvae of the dragonflies. This August the annual migration of the Leopard Toads took place on schedule and that there are currently a large number of Leopard tadpoles in Die Oog. We hope that they will emerge as new toadlets by the end of the year. The toadlets as well as the adult toads are very vulnerable when they migrate to and from Die Oog and many get killed on the roads. During the migration this year the roads around Die Oog were patrolled every evening by teams of volunteers organised by Michelle Walton and over 400 toads were rescued. The Western Leopard Toads are highly endangered and are also a very sensitive indicator or "flag" (for those who have heard or read Clem Sunter) of the impact of development on our local natural environment.

**Aquatic Weeds** The overgrowth of aquatic weeds that cover Die Oog, Hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*) and Duck Weed (*Lemna gibba*) is of great concern. The Parks Department employed a contractor to clear the weeds at the beginning of this year but during the operation one of the employees was tragically drowned and the work was stopped. Clearing the weeds is a major task and the Parks Department now plan to use the mechanical reed cutter from Zandvlei early next year as soon as the Leopard Toadlets have left Die Oog,

**The Island and Bird Life** In the early part of 2009 up to 1,000 birds, cattle egrets, reed cormorants and sacred ibis roosted on the island each night. During the year reed cormorants started to nest on the island and in the process destroyed much of the vegetation. In November the colony of reed cormorants suddenly left and very few birds have roosted since. The only exceptions were the open billed storks that arrived in January and caused great excitement amongst the birding community, many of whom had not visited Die Oog before.

The island is covered with guano and is the main source of the high nitrogen and phosphorus content of the water in Die Oog that is responsible for the overgrowth of aquatic weeds. In 2011 it is planned to clear the island of guano and alien vegetation and to replant the island with indigenous plants and shrubs. Throughout the year the resident moorhen and redknobbed coots have continued to build nests and have successfully produced several broods. The pair of yellow billed ducks also produced two or three broods of up to 12 ducklings each but all the ducklings were sadly taken by predators

**The Biodiversity, Fynbos and Recreation Areas and the Paths** are maintained by the Friends of Die Oog who employ a gardener for one day a week. The Parks Department previously regularly mowed Die Oog but have agreed not to do so unless requested by the Friends. In the past many colourful indigenous plants have been mowed down and not allowed to flourish and seed

**The Wetland** at Die Oog is one of the success stories of the Friends. Its rehabilitation was entirely due to the efforts and to the grants obtained by the Friends. The wetland is now maintained by Working for Wetlands and we owe a real debt of gratitude to their local manager Virgil Jacobs

**Dam Wall** The Protea SubCouncil have made a grant of R 25,000 for the repair of the dam wall but the work has been postponed until 2011 in order not to interfere with the development of the Leopard Toadlets

**The Gripper Gate** The gate at Die Oog that was donated by Brian Gripper is locked each night by an automatic locking mechanism. The mechanism has had its problems and from time to time members of the Committee have manually locked the gate each night and opened it each morning. Brian recently installed a solar panel and battery on top of a tall pole (provided by the Parks Department) and it worked well. Within a week however the pole was pulled down and all the equipment stolen. The locking mechanism is now supplied with electricity by an underground cable from the house of a Committee member, Patrick Williams who lives next to Die Oog and to whom we are very grateful. We must once again thank Brian Gripper for all his initiative, efforts and indefatigability. Within a week of the solar panel being stolen the locking mechanism was up and locking better than ever.

**The Website [www.dieoog.org.za](http://www.dieoog.org.za)** has been a great success and is one of the main sources of information about Die Oog. Our thanks are due to Colin Hancox, our webmaster and to the Lions Club of Bergvliet who sponsor the site.

**Education Programme** A most successful education programme has been initiated by Pauline and Malcolm Pearce. During the past year 5 groups of Grade 4's from two schools have visited Die Oog. The children complete worksheets with a map and lists of birds, flowers and other environmental features to be found and identified during the morning. In addition the Grade 4's from Wetpups each raised R20 for Die Oog by cleaning cars etc and donated just under R1,000 to the Friends. Poll Pearce and I have also spoken to the cub packs of the 1<sup>st</sup> Bergvliet Scout about the Leopard Toads and the importance of

Die Oog as a nature reserve and we have, without exception, been impressed by the enthusiasm and keenness of all the children

**Status and Responsibility for Die Oog** In terms of a recent “Memorandum of Understanding” between the Departments of Parks and Biodiversity Management (previously Nature Conservation) of the City of Cape Town, Die Oog has been designated a “Conservation Area”. It has been agreed that the “Die Oog Conservation Area” will be managed by the Parks Department with the guidance and technical advice of Biodiversity Management. An Annual Plan of Operation for Die Oog has been drawn up and some responsibilities have been allocated to the Friends of Die Oog. Both Parks and Biodiversity Management are seriously understaffed and the Friends of Die Oog have, de facto, continued to undertake the day-to-day management of Die Oog. A Die Oog Partnership was instituted by the Friends in 2003 and the Committee of the Friends have met quarterly with representatives of Parks and Biodiversity Management ever since. The Partnership has worked well and has now been formally recognised. We must thank Johan Herholdt, Mike Smith and Piet Fisher of Parks and Cassy Sheasby and Suretha Dorse of Biodiversity Management for their continuing close collaboration and their friendship.

With the Departments of Parks and Biodiversity Management the Friends have great plans for the coming year. It is hoped that the aquatic weeds will soon be cleared, the island will be rehabilitated, the bird life will flourish and the Western Leopard Toads will keep coming. The Friends of Die Oog will continue to employ the gardener who is primarily responsible for the maintenance of Die Oog. I must thank all the members of the Committee, who each makes their own special contribution for their untiring efforts and their expertise. I must also thank all the members of the Friends of Die Oog for their continued support and for the many very generous donations without which the Friends could not function. The Friends of Die Oog have an important role and future in their mission to maintain and improve the Die Oog Conservation Area as a place of natural beauty and quiet recreation for future generations.