

FRIENDS OF DIE OOG

Seventh Annual General Meeting

15 October 2009

Chairman's Report

This is the 7th AGM of the Friends and the first not held at Die Oog. Lindy and Mike Luger in whose house we held the last three AGM's emigrated to Australia last November and we must thank the 1st Bergvliet Scouts and the Seonee Cub pack for making this excellent venue available.

This time last year I was filled with gloom and despondency as we did not have sufficient funds to employ a gardener and to maintain the activities of the Friends beyond the end of 2008. Thanks to the very generous donations by many Friends and to the initiative and enterprise of Poll and Malcolm Pearce in producing and selling notelets of Die Oog, the funds of the Friends are now relatively healthy. The sale of notelets together with the funds raised by the Grade 4 boys of WetPups and the girls of Herschel together with the Seonee cub pack amounted to R8,755.60. Our sincere thanks go to Poll and Malcolm and to all those who generously responded to my appeal. We have been able to continue to employ a gardener Sibu Mandala and to fulfil the mission of the Friends to maintain Die Oog Nature Reserve as a place of natural beauty and recreation and to conserve the flora, fauna and bird life of Die Oog.

Maintenance Simply keeping Die Oog clean, cutting back the overgrowth and coping with the weeds is a major job as every gardener knows. The Parks Department are very helpful in mowing, and removing rubbish whenever we ask but cannot undertake the care that Die Oog requires. Our gardener Sibu who works one day a week is fully employed in simply maintaining Die Oog.

Aquatic Weeds The current overgrowth of aquatic weeds is of major concern. The weeds include hornwort (ceratophyllum), duckweed (Lemna), and more recently Commelina and Persicaria. The weeds are of great benefit to Leopard Toads, ducks and also the fish that it is hoped to introduce in due course and there is no ideal solution. We were very fortunate however in that teams from Working for Wetlands responded to our appeals and removed the fast growing Commelina that threatened to cover the whole of Die Oog. It is hoped the Parks Department will remove some of the worst of the overgrowth early in the New Year when all the new Leopard toadlets have left.

Biodiversity and Fynbos Areas The silver trees and ericas planted by the parents of Lindy and Mike Luger, Debbie Schafer and Brian Gripper on Die Oog Arbor Day on 15 April are doing well. The Fynbos area however has suffered from the guinea fowl that scratch up all the plants. We would like to get them removed and Nature Conservation Corporation can get a permit to trap and remove them but require R8,000 which is beyond our resources

Western Leopard Toads The toads were late in arriving and the numbers appear to be less than in past years. The Friends put up posters on all the roads leading to Die Oog to try and reduce the number killed on the roads. A Leopard Toad Awareness campaign was launched by Mark Day of the Department of Nature Conservation and we can only hope that it will be successful. The next four months when the tadpoles develop and the toadlets leave Die Oog will be critical.

Fish There are no fish in Die Oog. Colin Hancox with Sean Marr from UCT bravely put on waders and seine netted Die Oog but only caught one platana frog. Some indigenous galaxia have now been placed in a tank containing water from Die Oog to make sure that the water is suitable for the fish before making another attempt to introduce the galaxia into the dam. The tank is in Colin's house and the galaxia are doing well. We are now waiting for them to breed

Bird Life. The reed cormorants that started nesting three years ago have taken over the island and much of the bamboo is dying. The numbers of cattle egrets and sacred ibis roosting on the island have decreased in recent months possibly due to the reduction in roosting sites. Three pairs of redknobbed coot have built their floating nests and successfully raised offspring. The pair of

yellowbilled ducks has had two broods of up to seven ducklings but only one has survived. The Cape Weavers continue to frantically build their beautiful nests and the increasing numbers of Egyptian Geese continue to squabble for territory

Dam Wall A section of the dam wall that was crumbling has been repaired by the Parks Department with a grant of R50,000 from the Protea SubCouncil to the Friends of Die Oog. The weir had to be opened to lower the water level to enable the work to be completed but the dam has now refilled with the heavy rains. The Friends have applied to the SubCouncil for a further grant of R20,000 for the repair of another section of the wall nearer to Farmsedge that is also crumbling and the result of the application is awaited.

Die Oog has been overflowing for many months and the Wetland is flourishing with the biggest and most beautiful arum lilies. We are once again tremendously indebted to Virgil Jacobs of Working for Wetlands and to the teams from Jenny Landscaping who keep it in such good order

Educational Activities A new and very successful venture in the past year has been the visits by Grade 4 boys from Western Province and girls from Herschel Primary respectively, arranged by Poll Pearce. Each child has to find and identify a variety of birds and flowers, complete a worksheet and make a sketch of something they have seen. The enthusiasm of the children was heart warming. We hope to repeat the visits in the coming year and to extend the visits to from the local schools in Bergvliet and Meadowridge. The Friends also welcomed visits by several garden clubs during the year and by members of the Simon van der Stel Foundation

The Website setup by Colin Hancox last year has been most successful and is regularly updated by Colin. The page on Western Leopard Toads with the clip of the male toad roaring and almost bursting himself in the effort has been particularly popular. The site averages 80 hits per month.

Notelets The notelets of photographs of birds, flowers and views of Die Oog taken by Malcolm Pearce have been outstandingly successful. They are sold in packs of 8 at R50 per pack of which approximately R25 goes to the Friends. Without these funds the Friends would have been unable to continue its activities and we are deeply indebted to Malcolm and Poll. Three new, better and brighter set of notelets are on sale and make excellent and inexpensive thank you and Xmas cards

The Committee of the Friends of Die Oog meets monthly and I must once again express my appreciation and thanks to each and everyone for their unfailing efforts and support. Malcolm Pearce and more recently Rosemary Morris have accepted co-option to the Committee and Rosemary has agreed to take over as Treasurer after the AGM. Brian Gripper who is currently Vice-Chairman and who started the Die Oog Project over 20 years ago has indicated that he will not be offering himself for re-election to the Committee. He has however said he will continue to assist the Friends in anyway he can. The Committee have decided that the gate to Die Oog, that Brian designed and paid for, will be known as the "Gripper Gate" It will stand as a lasting tribute to the major contribution he has made to the Die Oog. Alwyn Lubbe who with Brian Gripper formed the original Die Oog project has also recently said he will not be standing for re election at the AGM. Alwyn has been a member of the Committee and Senior Warden for the last 7 years and with his knowledge as an architect and contacts with the City of Cape Town has also made a truly major contribution to the maintenance and improvement of Die Oog. The thanks and appreciation of the Friends will be paid to Brian and Alwyn at the end of the AGM by their personal friend Dick Vergunst who has lived in Midwood Avenue immediately opposite to Die Oog for over 40 years

Status and Domicilium of the Friends of Die Oog The reply from the Department of 'Social Development in Pretoria to the application by the Friends for registration as a Non Profit Organisation is still awaited. It has however been decided to change the official domicilium of the Friends from No 3 to No 19 Farmsedge, the residence of Poll and Malcolm Pearce. I moved from 3 Farmsedge to 13 Burswood in Bergvliet Road on 24 June this year. I still remain fully committed to the Friends of Die Oog but it was felt that it would be better if the official address of the Friends is closer to Die Oog. I must thank Poll and Malcolm, for taking on this duty and responsibility. We as always live in a time of change and it is my hope that the Friends of Die Oog will continue to adapt and to fulfil its mission of preserving and improving Die Oog for many generations to come.