



We hope that you have all recovered from a wonderful Christmas and wish all members a HAPPY AND HEALTHY 2007.

What 2007 holds for the conservation park will be uppermost on the minds of many members. Our Chairman, Ellen van Dongen, has the latest news on

Forthcoming changes in the Park

"As we all get into the holiday spirit and take time to spend with our precious families we need to reflect on the year that has gone.

Everyone that I have spoken to is aghast with the speed at which 2006 came and went. I hope this is not just a symptom of age! For the Society it has been an exceptionally busy year with the greatest achievement being in obtaining a clearer definition of the Park's boundaries. During October another meeting was held with AECI to address some of the issues around the "pegged-out" boundary which in some places did not reflect the boundary as had been agreed in previous discussions with AECI.

The areas where the "pegged" boundary needed to be changed were along the Dam 3 road where the boundary needed to be moved a minimum of 5 metres to the Linbro Park side of the road edge. The other area that needed to changes was to include the stone bridge over the Modderfontein Spruit at the head of Dam 3 into the Park. At the meeting AECI requested that the boundary along the south eastern side of Dam 5 be reduced by 50 metres and that the boundary in the magazine area closest to Dam 3 be "rounded off" and that the top corner closest to Chlookop is

straightened. The Committee requested that these changes be shown on a map in comparison to the previously discussed boundary. The Committee has considered these requests and still has to make comment to AECI on their acceptability.

Frequent visitors to the Park will have noticed increased activity that is not due to Society or Isidleke activities. These are due to the construction of the Gautrain that will commence in 2007 in Modderfontein. Earth works have already started on the maintenance yard on the Mia property. This will present a major challenge to the Society and its members in order to protect the faunal assets of the Park.

So, I envisage that 2007 will again bring some exciting times to the Park and the Committee will be seeking your support in protecting and securing this special natural heritage in the light of development.

I wish you all a happy and peaceful holiday and everything of the best for 2007."

ELLEN VAN DONGEN
CHAIRMAN

Moving moment at Dam 3

Saturday 30 September 2006 was a day that will live with me forever. It was the day we acceded to one of Bill Logeman's last wishes and spread his ashes on the waters of Dam 3.

I had been asked by Barbara Hanran, Bill's daughter to arrange access to the Conservation Park for her to carry out Bill's request. We met at the gate as arranged in the mid-morning and made our way to the dam. Barbara had brought just three people along who would share the moment with her.

Soon after stopping at the dam, Barbara produced a beautifully made wooden box and a small posy of flowers. As I admired the lovingly crafted dovetail joints at the corners, Barbara explained that her father had made it.



Barbara scatters Bill's ashes

Her friend George read the passage from Ecclesiastes which Judy Collins had popularised through her song *Turn! Turn! Turn!* He followed that with a moving poem and Barbara began to spread the ashes on the water. At that very moment the Fish Eagle called loud and clear and circled round the dam giving several more calls as it soared up into the heavens.

Believe me, there was not a dry eye in the house for this was probably the most moving moment that any of us had ever experienced.

Bill worked and lived in Modderfontein for many years, he was a foundation member of the Conservation Society and was Vic Sharpe's companion when Vic fell ill and died while travelling through Egypt. I had known Bill over many years as one of nature's gentlemen and believe it was appropriate that he wanted to remain here at Modder.

Thanks Barbara for allowing me to share this day.

Robbie Vermont

Member's Photo Evening

If you refer to the programme for 2007 you will see that on 15 March, following the AGM, a nature 'slide show' has been planned.

This is not a competition or exhibition but an opportunity to share your wildlife and nature experiences that you were able to capture on slide film or digitally with your fellow members. In other words, don't be too shy, or modest, to submit your pics, it's your love of nature we want to see (and it's a chance for MCS to show off the newly acquired multimedia projector).

Subject matter can be of flora, fauna or scenic. Pics of Modderfontein, particularly old days, would be a bonus. I suggest that we exclude pets unless you have a domesticated grizzly bear or anaconda!

Kindly submit your pics to any committee member by 22 February – NB: THAT'S NOT FAR OFF.

Slides: Please ensure your name is on each mount.

Prints: Unfortunately we cannot accommodate prints. However, if you have old photos of Modderfontein please let me borrow them and I will reproduce them digitally.

Digital: For those able to manipulate images please note that the maximum size for landscape format is 1024 X 768 pixels and 768 pixels maximum height for portrait. Alternatively, let me have your images and I will set them up for you (without altering the originals).

All digital images should be on CD, DVD, memory stick, flash card or similar device or send by e-mail, by arrangement, to dave.gordon@sasol.com

Should you have any questions or concerns please let me know.

The only mistake you can make is to not share!

Dave Gordon (083 625 6778)

Perhaps when we think of looking for wildlife we tend to only consider places like Kruger Park and our own conservation area. We forget that in South Africa we are blessed by nature on our own doorstep; sometimes literally. It's a bit like when bird watching with Clive Hopcroft he reminds us to remember to 'look up' from time to time! Pam and Robbie Vermont submitted:

The Calling Card

"Since moving into Thornhill Manor, we've been aware that a mongoose left a "calling card" during the night from time to time. We presumed it was a mongoose as we had seen one in the garden one afternoon. However, the other morning, we found a dropping just near the rain gauge. We did not pick it up, but allowed it to dry in the hot sun for a couple of days and then dissected it.

This mongoose does not chew its food as there was one large pebble, as well as a few smaller ones in its package, presumably ingested to break down its other food intake. We also found segments of a millipede, wings and other evidence of several different beetles, some hair that looked human, some fur (probably its own), an undigested leaf, a large piece of bark and plenty of grass.

Altogether, it was an interesting exercise and we're looking forward to opening up a large owl pellet we recently acquired."

Thanks Pam & Robbie – Ed

The first of December brought the beginning of the festive season and with it the annual MCS Braai. This year was no exception and was well attended. The rain stayed away until we were on our way home while the thunder and lightening stayed away altogether.



The braai meisters were hard at work egged on by calls of "Is that meat not ready yet" from the ravenous wives, partners, spouses, guests and offspring.

MCS Calendars

Have you got your Modderfontein Conservation Society 2007 calendars yet? Don't miss out.

The photographs by John Coumbias of the Edenvale Photographic Club and Dave Gordon of the same club as well as this society are of birds to be found in the Modderfontein Conservation Park.

Calendars are available from Robbie Vermont or Barry Coppin and from the Modderfontein Post Office.

Bring along an extra R20 (per copy) to the next speaker meeting and buy yours then.

More Conservation Park News

The twice monthly walks in the park continue to be well supported and popular. Many people are still amazed at finding this little bit of heaven so close to southern Africa's major city and the attendant roads, suburbs and developments.

Now and again the walks reveal some real gems. Some time ago Peter Wyche and I came across a hartebeest that had just given birth and the foal was still wet and stumbling on shaky legs. That's the stuff that goose-bumps are made of!

More recently walkers came across our resident Blue Cranes, which is a thrill in itself, but this time mum and dad were accompanied by Bluey junior! Member and photographer Pat Ayling was on hand with his camera and captured the happy trio.



NB: Don't forget to come to the speaker meeting on 19 April when Pat will reward us with his "Birds of Brazil and Chile" presentation.

I was privileged to have a look at some of Pat's photographs and look forward eagerly to his talk.

Dave Gordon (Ed)

If a parsley farmer is sued can they garnish his wages?

Living Monuments

One of the first buildings to be completed at Modderfontein, this house was home to the original manager, Franz Hoenig. It served as the Factory



Franz Hoenig Haus

Manager's house from 1897 to 1949 when it was converted into staff flats. This was an unsuccessful venture and the building fell into a bad state of repair. It narrowly escaped demolition in 1964 its historical significance was recognised and it was restored.

The restoration of the house, after years of neglect, emphasised the importance that was placed on Modderfontein's heritage at that time. Although it was not possible to retain the original "broekie lace" external woodwork the architect Mr G Moerdyk sensitively handled concrete replacements in 1932. The roof of the building also reflects its Germanic origins.

Most early houses built at Modderfontein had cellars. The supply of food was irregular, especially in the winter months and various foodstuffs such as meat, eggs, butter, fruit and vegetables were stored in cellars – the coolest part of the house.

Franz Hoenig Haus still uses its cellar which now houses a pub named "Dirty Dick's". It is uncertain whether it is named after the public house of that name in London, Dick Dent who assisted in the restoration of the house or Dick Groves who was Factory Manager at the time of restoration.



Inside Franz Hoenig Haus



Text by Robbie Vermont
Photographs by Dave Gordon

Why do they lock petrol station toilets? Are they afraid someone might clean them?

or

If a turtle doesn't have a shell is he homeless or naked?

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