



Dargle Conservancy AGM 2018  
Chairman's Report – Ashley Crookes

### River Projects

- Umgeni River – Honorary member, Andrew Fowler, along with members of the Natal Fly Fishers Club continued to work on parts of the Umgeni river, and have managed to clear significant amounts of alien invasive plants and logs which blocked areas.
- Dargle Rivers Project – A recent partnership with Julia Colvin and “Spekboom Cycle Tours” has helped to raise awareness of the need to keep the Dargle river clear of alien invasive plants and she has dedicated 10% of all the funds received from her tours through the Dargle area, which will go towards the Dargle River Project and will continue to allow Alfred Zuma and his team to clear and maintain the river for the foreseeable future.
- Herbicide for Riverside Landowners – We continued to receive herbicides from DUCT during 2017 which Pauline Holden willingly distributed to keen members. Unfortunately Doug who used to work there has since retired, and we haven't managed to obtain anymore since then, so if anyone has a contact who is willing to obtain herbicides for members who are actively clearing their properties of alien invasive's would be a big help.

### Education

- Hike up Inhlosane - Ashley Crookes lead a group of DC members and visitors to Inhlosane peak on a warm Spring Day in November. This annual event is much enjoyed by our community. We usually meet at Everglades Hotel parking lot, although with the current situation there (construction/non construction and locked gates), we have decided to rather move to Mount Park Guest Farm or Old Furth Estate and start the hikes from there for the foreseeable future.
- Kilgobbin Forest Walks - Barend Booyesen's monthly walks in the forest and grasslands beside it, continue to be popular with folks needing to get out to the countryside for a walk in the fresh air. Nikki Brighton has done a great job on Facebook and has scheduled all the walks for the year to be displayed so our members and friends will be reminded about it.

On a sad note, the community lost a very valuable conservationist this year: Nkanyiso Ndlela. Courtesy Nikki Brighton: “After finishing school, Nkanyiso volunteered at WESSA in Howick and began his journey to becoming a well-liked and much respected figure in local conservation – most recently being appointed as Education Manager at the KZN Crane Foundation (KZNCF) until his death in mid-March 2018. With Pat Hofman, he helped develop teaching and learning materials, including the popular Windows on our World: Wetland picture building game. Nikki Brighton, ex-Midlands Meander Education Project (MMEP), remembers being struck by his positive energy and attitude when she met

him at a workshop in Mpophomeni. “He immediately offered his services to our cause and was happy to start off as a volunteer. He helped facilitate the Mpophomeni Enviro Club and soon became an integral part of the MMEP team. Throughout his career he was always happy to help others, volunteer his time and knowledge, knowing that doing this often lead to new opportunities.”

- Membership Program – We would like to sincerely thank Carlene Bronner and her staff for once again allowing the Dargle Conservancy to make use of the Cairn of Old Kilgobbin over the past year. They also sponsored us with teas, eats and some meals. Tanglewood Boutique Hotel has now also reopened, so we would like to also include Jenny Walsh and her team in our monthly activities and events, hence why the AGM was placed there this year.
- We had various speakers over the past year coming to inform, educate and entertain us. Samson Phakathi came to do an anti-poaching talk for our isiZulu community, as it important to try and include everyone, no matter their language or backgrounds, in our activities. Neville & Hayley van Lelyveld then did a great job in getting the anti-poaching symposium organized in February, which was well attended by honorary officers and individuals from mostly outside of the Dargle. I had one local resident write to me and express her extreme disgust that the Dargle Conservancy had asked the KZN Hunters to come and do a presentation for us. My response was that all of us, it doesn't matter who, need to protect and conserve our wildlife. The KZN Hunting and Conservation Association had actually approached DC to do this symposium, and they brought in some really amazing speakers such as Brian Jones from SACAN who explained how technology and their cellphone “app” was helping in a large number of ways to not only report poaching incidents but will be used to help protect us in various ways in the future as well. It was an extremely interesting day, and Neville informed me later that 1 of the attendees who lives in Margate was instrumental in reporting on a poaching group near his area, and apparently 16 men with 60 dogs were arrested with some wildlife in their possession. I look forward to more members and residents coming to take part in the activities which we all work so hard to organize, instead of sending complaints and/or not attending rather come and speak to us face to face so that we can make the conservancy a great organization to belong to!

Mr “X” was a project the committee felt strongly that we should support. This man is a local, and was caught poaching with his dogs. His excuse was that he was desperate and had no food to feed himself or his animals. DC decided that we should try sponsor him, in such a way that he could eventually be able to look after himself, that this wasn't just a hand out. Seeds and plants were given so he could start a vegetable garden, fencing was donated as well as dog food for his animals. He has been extremely grateful for the help, though still would like to have a full time job, so that he can afford other amenities. We continue to ask members and residents to consider helping him out.

We also had Jon Bates and Daniel Dolpire come and speak about Cranes of South Africa. Barend Booyesen then approached us to do a “History on the Dargle” talk which was so well supported we eventually had to turn people away as we ran out of seats! We have discussed getting him in again sometime in the future to do another talk for all those who lost out.

- Dargle Trashion Show – Since it's inception by Gugu Zuma and Nikki Brighton, the “Dargle Trashion Show” has been very well supported, and has since been moved to a larger venue to be able to accommodate all the crowds who come from all over to see it and take part. The Howick Agricultural Hall had 120 learners display their spectacular outfits in June 2017. Everyone was impressed at the creativity of the learners, as each one was unique and made use of a variety of materials – coldrink cans, livestock feed bags, old CDs, newspapers and juice boxes. The Dargle Conservancy shall

continue to support this worthwhile event, even though it has now moved farther away from us. It takes place this year on 9 June 2018.

- Fracking Dargle Conservancy continues to support the Frack Free SA campaign with mailing list service provider and administration. Brenda Grant of DC comments on all applications for extraction and keeps members updated on developments.
- Wildlife Sightings/Dargle Diaries – The Dargle Diaries continues to be well received by our members and friends both at home and abroad. It has been through a few changes over the past year, starting off being sent out as an email newsletter, then being uploaded to the website as it was thought this would allow the records to stay around for longer but proved much too big a task to do each month and was eventually moved back to the email newsletter format.

The two trail cameras continue to record interesting and unusual behaviour of elusive wildlife. We also continue the monthly donation to Free Me to support their efforts in assisting our wildlife. At the AGM, we award prizes to contributors in the following categories: Best Photo (Barry Downard) for his owl image - prize is il Postino Voucher; Sandra Merrick for Most Important for Conservation – the cranes series and in particular the ringed Wattled Crane - prize is Eat at Andrews Voucher. Christeen Grant for Most Spectacular Collection – her photos are exceptional and she shares such interesting things -prize is The Farmers Daughter Voucher.

Social media is the most efficient way to share Dargle happenings and our followers continue to increase. Instagram and Facebook – dargle.kzn

We coordinated the Annual Cape Parrot Count for the area as we have done for many years.

- Mail System - DC have also decided to move the mailing system over from YMLP to MailChimp, as we decided the platform was much better, and MailChimp doesn't cost the Dargle Conservancy anything to run either, hence freeing up thousands of rands each year which can rather be spent on more important environmental and educational projects.

- Dargle Local Living/Dargle Trade – the barter/share/swop market continues to take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month and strengthens community and sharing of excess produce. Participation continues to grow. Read more at:

<https://midlandsmosaic.wordpress.com/2017/03/29/midlands-barter-markets/>

Committee for 2017:

Committee members: Ashley Crookes (Chairman), Lynne Garbutt (Treasurer), Jenny Goddard (Secretary), Brenda Grant (Development), Gugu Zuma (Education). Additional Members - Robin Barnsley (Agriculture Liaison) Pauline Holden, Nikki Brighton (Dargle Diaries and social media), Paul Van Uytrecht (Webmaster).

Resignation of Lynne Garbutt – Lynne joined the Dargle Conservancy committee at the end of 2016. She took over the position of Treasurer from Robin Barnsley, and has done an amazing job over the past couple of years. Unfortunately due to her increased workload, she has had to resign as Treasurer. We wish her all the best and look forward to a new treasurer stepping up and joining the Conservancy soon.

Nikki Brighton stepped down as chairperson in 2017 after many years of service. She moved to Howick, yet continued to play an active part in the conservancy committee, welcoming new members, helping to maintain the Dargle Facebook page, putting together the Dargle Diaries each month along with the help of her partner Paul who has continued to maintain the Dargle Conservancy website. Nikki has expressed her desire to now depart from the committee, as she would prefer to focus her energies closer to home in Howick. Paul has also informed us that he would like to step down as the webmaster for the Dargle conservancy website, so we would really appreciate anyone with web development skills who would be willing to takeover from him.

- Finances

Income R43 196

Expenditure R30705