



Dargle Conservancy Annual General Meeting 2017

Report from the Chair prepared by Nikki Brighton

Dargle Trashion Show

50 learners gathered for the Glam Green Occasion of the Season. There were coffee cup ball gowns and feed bag suits, plastic packet shorts, and dog food frocks. Girls and boys strutted their stuff down the ramp, created from farmyard fencing and bunting made from discarded magazines, on the lawn of Lion's River Club, with the Dargle Country Market as backdrop. Thenjiwe Ngcobo, Principal of Corrie Lynn Primary loved the morning. "Sharing ideas and skills encourages us all because everyone does things differently." Principal of Misty Meadows, Cassie Janisch: "I think the effort made by all the participants was fantastic! We are already looking forward to next year." Maureen Mabizela, Principal of Dargle Primary "There was such excitement at school on Monday with everyone sharing their stories. Thank you for inviting us to take part."

Prizes were sponsored by Eyakho Green – who give new life to waste, turning advertising banners into bags and shoes and satchels, Meriel Mitchell and Dargle Conservancy. Iona and Lucinda Bate provided popcorn and oranges and Louis Bolton and Lynne Garbutt took fabulous photos. "The children are wonderful - so confident and creative yet not for a moment holding high opinions of themselves. I wonder if they have any notion of how good they are? To see their designs and talents is to be inspired." Andrea Abbott.

Read: <https://darglelocaliving.wordpress.com/2016/06/10/trashionistas-unite-to-save-the-planet/>

Dargle Rivers

- Umngeni River

Dargle Conservancy awarded Andrew Fowler of the Natal Fly Fishing Club, honorary life membership of the Conservancy for the incredible job he has done to protect our water resources through his #BRU – Blue Ribbon uMngeni initiative. "As fly-fishermen, our interest in clearing is driven by a desire for a river which is less prone to siltation, more diverse in aquatic and terrestrial insect population, and is therefore more suited to healthy fish populations. We desire well grassed banks devoid of invasive species that shade and denude, and better water flows."

Water does not come from a tap – it comes from the hills and wetlands – the ‘water factories’ – of the Midlands. Much of the original grassland riparian zone is degraded – most often with invasive plants like wattle, bramble and bamboo, which transform the natural landscape and overrun the original biodiversity leading to reduced water quality. The result of NFFC efforts is improved water for 6 million downstream users.

Read: <https://darglelocaliving.wordpress.com/2017/05/07/blue-ribbon-umnengi/>

- Dargle River

Dargle Conservancy continues to fund follow up on the riparian zone clearing of the Dargle River banks near the road bridge on Benn Meadhon. The team, led by Alfred Zuma, are passionate about rivers and go way beyond the call of duty. This year’s activities included clearing logjams created by careless tree felling facilitated by Working for Water. The difference in just three years ago is astonishing. Dargle Conservancy acknowledged Alfred Zuma’s efforts with a Dassie Certificate.

- Herbicide for Riverside Landowners

Through our partnership with DUCT, landowners who are engaged in invasive clearing programmes that help secure water resources are allocated herbicides facilitated by Pauline Holden.

- Dargle Rivers Project

This has not been successful in raising funds through the SMS line advertised on tables in local restaurants. More effort needs to be put into promoting it and ensuring the message is clearer. The QR code leads interested people to the webpage about the project, but we think most people believe it is Zapper and will cost them money. See:

<http://dargleconservancy.org.za/development/rivers.php>

A partnership with Spekboom Cycle Tours will raise much awareness and some funds toward the Rivers Project when it traverses Dargle later in 2017.

Dargle Game Count Weekend

After many years, this event was resurrected in late June.

On Saturday morning, Neville van Lelyveld pointed out the three types of poaching that occur in our area Subsistence, Commercial and Syndicate and explained the differences. Brian Jones of SA CAN updated us on their work with anti-poaching and gave everyone who attended a free three month trial of SA CAN services.

Between 5pm and 7pm, Dargle, Lidgetton and Lion’s River residents wrapped up warmly and headed onto their properties to see who shares it. Afterwards, many people came down to the Lions River Club where EKZMW Honorary Officers, Alan Jack and Caroline Leslie were collating all the sightings and Jeremy Barlow was serving scrummy soup and sherry. 23 properties participated. Reedbuck, Bushbuck, Oriibi, Duiker were the main sightings, with most people concluding that numbers were lower than usual. Some lucky observers spotted a mongoose, samango monkeys, a serval and a genet. Only 5 jackal, 4 porcupine, 2 rabbits and 11 bushpig were seen.

A small group joined Neville and Hayley van Lelyveld on a 2 hour night walk on the Sinclair farm.

On Sunday morning, Katie Robinson hosted a Track, Scat and Snare walk on Lemonwood.

Read: <https://darglelocaliving.wordpress.com/2016/07/16/dargle-by-numbers/>

Education

- Midlands Meander Education Project

Annual grant for MMEP to support meaningful environmental education in three local schools. This included forest field trips for groups of Grade 7 learners to investigate the structure of the forest by physically measuring the heights of plants along a transect, and to measure the biodiversity of invertebrate life using a 50x50cm quadrant. "It's fantastic to see the theory covered in class about forests in 'real life' – the children eagerly identified all the different layers of the forest, and hopefully will enjoy seeing their data turn into the same picture when we put it onto a graph."

- Impendle Sustainable Schools Programme

In early 2016, Dargle Conservancy adopted this project, to support the work of Zandile Sikhakane at five schools in Impendle. Dargle Conservancy provides administrative, report writing and networking support.

Zandile's lessons include using waste to create water and energy saving devices like solar cookers, rocket stoves and tippy taps. TiAppy Tap is an ingenious device for water saving, hygienic hand washing, made with a discarded plastic maas bottle, some string and a few pieces of invasive wattle. Small holes are made in the lid of the bottle with a nail and it is hung by the handle to a branch suspended between two v-shaped stakes. String is tied around the neck of the bottle and attached to a branch below. When someone puts their foot on the branch, it tips the bottle toward them and some water is released into their cupped hands. A simple clever idea that is ideal for gardens, farms and settlements without access to much water. Sunshine Seedlings sponsored seedlings for the food gardens Zandile has created in the schools. Dargle Conservancy acknowledged Zandile's dedication to environmental education in challenging circumstances by presenting her with a Dassie Certificate.

- Hike on Inhlosane

Gugu Zuma and Ashley Crookes lead 12 young members of the Dargle Nxamalala Enviro Club, DC members and visitors to Inhlosane peak on a cold Spring Day. This annual event is much enjoyed by our community.

- Kilgobbin Forest Walks

Barend Booysen's monthly walks in the forest, and grassland beside it, are as popular as ever.

- Membership Programme

Talks by Barry Lewis on South African Wood, Kevin Zunckel introduced the film Wild Ways, Jasper Finkeldy shared his research on Fracking Activism. All Conservancy functions are now held in The Cairn of Old Kilgobbin Farm, sponsored by Carl Bronner with catering by The Farmers Daughter. Walks to Mpophoma Falls on Ubunye Farm, along the uMngeni River on Brigadoon and the Lion's River on Woodcroft Farm were very well attended.

We publicise all events arranged by neighbouring conservancies, rather than duplicating them.

- Gardeners Tour

Gardeners from Engonjeni village in Lions River and Nxamalala village in Dargle enjoyed an inspiring and informative excursion to the Mpophomeni Food Garden of Ntombenhle Mtambo.

- Fracking

Dargle Conservancy continues to support the Frack Free SA campaign with mailing list service provider and administration. DC comments on all applications for extraction and keeps members updated on developments. Frack Free Dargle correx boards are available to members at R50.00 each.

Wildlife Sightings

While contributions wane occasionally and the compilation of the sightings is a big task, the feedback we receive from viewers encourages us to continue. They form a useful record and may be of real value in future to researchers monitoring the effects of climate change on wildlife. Sightings are now posted on our website, where we have control of their future. With changes on MCF website we are concerned that all our past links may no longer be fully functional.

Our trail cameras continue to record interesting, unusual and seldom seen behaviour of elusive wildlife.

We continue a monthly donation to Free Me to support their efforts to assist our wildlife.

At the AGM, we award prizes to contributors in the following categories: Best Photo – Evert van Bremem; Most consistent contributor – Sandra Merrick; Best camera trap capture – Josh Field; Most unusual sighting – Rose Downard.

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.

Dargle Local Living

Dargle Trade – a barter/share/swop market takes place once a month. Strengthening community and sharing excess produce. Participation is constantly growing - building resilience in the area and affirming our belief that food is a conservation issue.

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

Finances

Income R59 478

Expenditure R67 070 (including R10 000 to MCF – originally allocated for Nature Reserve expenses)