March 2016
Dear Hamerkop Beneficiaries,

Our first Hamerkop newsletter this year 2016

(i) Rain

Steve and I were there on 10th March. What a rain we had, just fantastic!

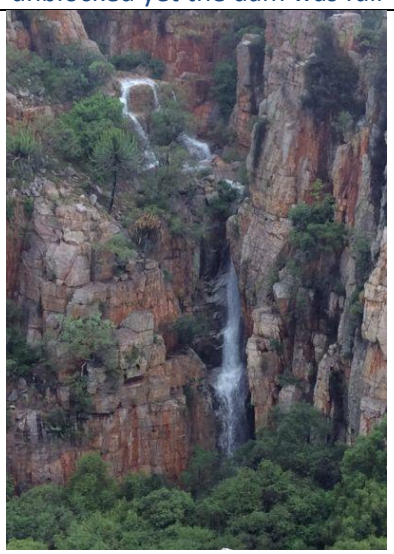
Rain was pelting down, I was scared getting my iPad wet

Water pouring down the roof

Straight after the rain stopped

Pool/ dam after rain – the outlet was actually unblocked yet the dam was full

Hamerkop, so fresh, so new!



Temporary waterfall – didn't last long

(ii) Subs

Andre Dalais, our Hamerkop treasurer, expressed concern that some beneficiaries have not paid their subs for this year yet. The subs were due end of January. Thank you to those beneficiaries who have paid. Those who have not, please do so as soon as possible? Thanks.

(iii) Domestic matters

Our Hamerkop house was, as usual, sparkling clean. On speaking to Reginah, she seemed happy with everything, but did express the need for a new mop and new broom. I asked her if she wanted to come with us to Karani hardware store to choose what she needed, but she entrusted this responsibility to me. She did seem very satisfied with what we bought for her later that day.

The kitchen is so well stocked now, thank you to all involved!

Hook for mosquito net in the main bedroom (my suggestion) has been installed by Jad Ball – thanks very much, Jad!

(iv) General maintenance

In the previous newsletter we didn't mention all the work done in and around the house by Noel Modes and his wife Barbara, 31 tasks were completed in their one week stay at Hamerkop in October last year, so a big thanks must go to them!

Oliver Barker, maintenance portfolio, is concerned with the stability of the stand on which the water tank is standing, and also the fact that the tank is made of asbestos.

He suggested moving the tank uphill near to Cillier's fence where it does not need the high scaffolding, and he also proposed Hamerkop to invest in another tank not made of asbestos. Safety of an asbestos tank was not agreed upon at the Hamerkop Management Committee meeting on 15th March, but moving the tank uphill seemed a sensible plan. No decisions were taken other than getting a quote as to the cost of this project. Please, when at Hamerkop, do look at the tank, give us your input? Thanks for your offer of suggestions, Jad, please do send them to the Management Committee?

A level-detecting "on-off switch" for the pump has been on the to-do list for years. It would switch the pump on when needed and stop the wasteful overflow when the when the tank is full. Anybody willing to run with this project, please contact Steve at cell 082-558-3158?

(v) Safety

My suggestion in order to avoid anyone being locked in the house when security gates are locked, is to have a security gate key on a hook next to each security gate on the inside of the house (out of reach from the outside!), attached to the hook on which it is designated to hang, tied onto the hook with a short piece of string, so that nobody mistakenly walks off with it – Jad Ball has done it, great, thanks Jad!

(vi) Firebreaks

We hope to arrange firebreaks to be done with neighbours soon. Please be tolerant if the fire break activities need to happen during your week? You will be informed prior to the firebreak activities if it falls in your week.

(vii) Feedback from Regina & Joseph on various Hamerkop issues (my portfolio)

<u>Water supply to their cottage</u>

Joseph asked us to buy good quality piping, connectors, jubilee clamps in order to replace his temporary waterline to their cottage – this temporary waterline consisted of green hosepipe connected to the tank outlet one side, and their water inlet into the cottage on the other side. We returned with the goods early afternoon, both Joseph and Regina set to work with pick-axe and spade digging a trench, with their little son, Dakalo, happily looking on ☺. Later that afternoon it poured with rain. Next morning when I came to weed near their cottage, I was so surprised to see that the work had all been done, the pipe neatly buried under the road and connections all completed.

Old green hosepipe, disconnected, on left. Bottom right the new pipe connected to water-inlet into cottage. Upper right pipe is the outlet of drain water into forest	Black pipe buried under the road. Special protection above the pipe to make sure that cars won't damage it

Afdak stuff at back of Joseph and Reginah's cottage – planks, fencing, bits and pieces.

Reginah said that her cousin may be able to use it and remove it all, which I encouraged. Hope it happens!

Bits of litter around cottage

I suggested that it would be really nice if the litter (monkeys' doing) could be removed, "team work" with Dakalo, and later I saw the team in action.

Dead wood around Regina & Joseph's cottage is a fire hazard.

I am grateful to report that wood has been moved away from the cottage, making it more safe from fire, not sure if it has been moved away far enough from the cottage though.

General

Road –High middle-mannetjie has been cut, making the road easier to drive on, no more rocks hidden under long grass!

(viii) Conservation/ alien invasives problem plant eradication (my portfolio – any input welcome).
I would like to invite beneficiaries in residence to do some weeding, if and when in the mood to do so – this would of course be beneficial to Hamerkop and much appreciated!

Hildegard Klein and Ottilie Neser's booklet "A field guide to the invasive plants of the Magaliesberg", MCSA Magaliesberg Section illustrates and describes the more common declared alien invasive plants occurring in the Magaliesberg. It also has pictures and descriptions of similar looking, harmless, indigenous plants which could be confused with the "baddies". In sensible "mountaineering" ways the booklet describes how to dispose of the invasive plants. We placed a copy of the booklet on Paul Venter's new bookshelf in the lounge

I am in the process of compiling a booklet on problem invasive plants in Hamerkop (drawn up on the booklet I have put together on the invasive problem plants in the Kloofendal Nature Reserve), those ones that occur in addition to the ones listed in Hildegard & Otti's booklet.

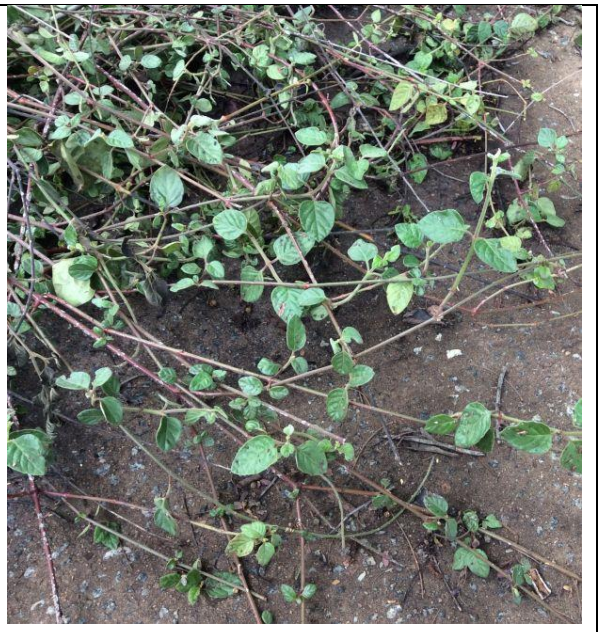
My booklet will include dried specimen of some of the problem invasive plants, which will make identification of these plants easier. It will be similar (but far smaller) to the one I drew up with Paul Venter's help, on trees in Hamerkop, many years ago (super that that booklet is still being used for tree ID!) I will include a brief description of the smell and "feel" (thorny, sticky, stems being square or rounded etc) of these plants, which would also aid in identification.
In our newsletters, I would like to advise on which problem invasive plants are flowering at that time, making them easier to recognise, in order to pull them out. These flowering plants, if possible, need to be decapitated before they produce seeds!

We have Crofton weed (Mexican Devil weed/ *Ageratina adenophora*) (category 1b declared alien invader) in both Rotsboom and Hamerkop kloofs, flowering has finished but they are still easy to recognise by the distinctive shape of their leaves , the fact that they grow in or near water, the unpleasant smell they exude when you break their branches or leaves. The stems are reddish as can be seen from the adjacent photographs.
To remove do the following:-
If there are flowers or seeds, cut off them off carefully and put them into a black plastic bag, close this tightly. Leave this in the sun to rot.
The roots must be dug out completely. They break off very easily and then regenerate. The plants can be placed away from the water and left to die.

Leaf triangular, margin towards apex serrated. Margin smooth at base of leaf

Easier to work as a "pulling team". George Dehlen and Karin at work.

Cyathula cylindrica var. *cylindrica* - sorry, no common name as far as I know, but easily referred to as a bur weed, as it has most troublesome burs that cling to clothing, in particular T-shirts, jerseys, socks, it clings to animal fur, dassies in Kloofendal Reserve were covered with the seeds, which is a very efficient way of seed dispersal.
There are lots of Cyathulas around Reginah's house, also next to the main drive way at the entrance to her cottage. Cyathula loves to establish itself under and amongst piles of branches. The infestation extends to behind the cement dam. There were also Cyathulas at the back of our main house but Steve took them out while we were there.
The Cyathulas need to be pulled and dug out before they seed, so the time is now, in particular after rain as they are easier to come out. Recognising the plant, which is forb (no woody stems) when not in flower is therefore important. The stems are reddish, the leaves have wavy margins, are roundish and have a blunt to sharpish tip. The young leaves have distinct central and lateral veins. They are rambling bushes, spreading out amongst branches lying on the ground, get up to about 50cm high – may be higher. They break quite easily at the base of the plant, leaving a thick taproot behind, so they actually do need to be dug out. Please also remove old burs around the base of the plant?
We purchased a weeding fork, also secateurs (to cut of branches intertwined in stashed tree branches). There is lots of indigenous vegetation ready to move in where the Cyathula has been taken out.
I will leave dried specimen for ID purposes at Hamerkop when we are there again next time.



I did quite a lot of work on digging the Cuathulas outwhile we were there (early March) – as much as the rain allowed me to do. Reginah, at her own initiative, said that she would also take them out.

She will be able to show interested beneficiaries what the Cyathula looks like.

Cyathula cylindrical var. cylindrical - in seed, lots of burs. Once in this stage, it is too late to take out. Note the wavy leaf margins and red stems, good ID features.	 Van Wyk, J. Imaged list of Wild Flowers of Kloofendal Nature Reserve. 2015

Cyathula uncinata Another bur weed, less common but as troublesome and invasive, is *Cyathula uncinata*, also occurs behind Reginah's cottage, please also pull and dig out when you see it, it is quite difficult to identify when not in seed. Leaves are soft and furry, come off opposite from stem, burs are easy to identify, they are round, can be almost as big as a ping pong ball	 Van Wyk, J. Imaged list of Wild Flowers of Kloofendal Nature Reserve. 2015

Both these bur weeds are not in the legislated NEMBA National listed invasive species booklet, I guess that on a national level, there are just so many other more important troublesome species that are of agricultural importance.

One that is listed, also found on our drive way near Reginah's cottage, and quite a mission to dig out, is Silverleaf bitter apple (*338. Solanum elaeagnifolium*) (page 264 in van Wyk & Malan's book "Field Guide to the Wild Flowers of the Witwatersrand & Pretoria region", which looks innocuous, but is actually pretty invasive, often seen growing on overgrazed veld, where it takes over from the grasses. Gail's non favourite Potato creeper (341. *Solanum seaforthianum*) (also in van Wyk & Malan's book, page 264) is also listed. There used to be some growing behind Reginah's cottage, we did work on them in the past.
The various listed invasives we have in Hamerkop – very few when compared to the Kloofendal Nature Reserve – such as Pampas grass, Seringa, Bugweed, Jacaranda – could be addressed in our winter months. Any knowledgeable, able volunteers?

Our forbs need attention before they seed. I am not aware that we have pompom in Hamerkop, but if we do, please sort them out (decapitate, remove flowers, pull & dig out the plants)?

(ix) To do list, please?

Cutting of the tall grasses bending over the dam wall needs to be done. The dam wall is becoming obscured.

Lantana next to drive way at main entrance into Hamerkop needs "follow-up" treatment – dig out if possible - according to Bromilow, C. ("Problem plants & weeds of South Africa") digging out is "laborious", but let's do it? - or "chopping dense bush & painting with herbicide is effective"

(x) "Done" list

Gas bottle for gas cooker in kitchen has been filled up – thanks, Steve!

(xi) Hamerkop noticeboard

Jonathan Leeming, professional scorpion, spider and snake fundi, author of “Scorpions of Southern Africa”, “Scorpions of Sabi Sands” “Medically important Spiders”, “First Aid Guide to Spider Bites & Scorpion Stings” and more - has donated some useful posters to Hamerkop which I have put onto the noticeboard. All other notices on the board are all still on there too, not to worry ☺. Big thanks must go to Jonathan for the donation of the up-to-date informative posters on snakebite, scorpion stings and spider bites.

(xii) Bushbabies & genets –any sightings of them recently? Any other interesting sightings?

(xiii) Donations – totally optional, just an idea

Toys and childrens’ books for Regina’s children: Dakalo (1 ½ years old little boy) & Olerato (8 year old little girl). The donations don’t have to be new. I think that Dakalo would enjoy a toy truck ☺!

(xiv) Thank you

Merv Prior, during their week end of last year, did various maintenance work, such as cutting vegetation across the dam wall, it was very dense there, opening up pathway into the kloof, other things I have forgotten. Please do write your contributions to Hamerkop in the Hamerkop book? Work done in Hamerkop should be noted so that we can give due appreciation, please?

(xv) Contributions to Hamerkop Newsletter

Please submit anything of interest for our newsletter, website (Steve Spotty), Facebook (still to be organised), write in the Hamerkop book?

Kind regards,
The “Hamerkop Newsletter Team” (Karin Spottiswoode, with input from Claudine Bennett)