



CITY OF CAPE TOWN  
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA  
STAD KAAPSTAD

SPATIAL PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT  
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

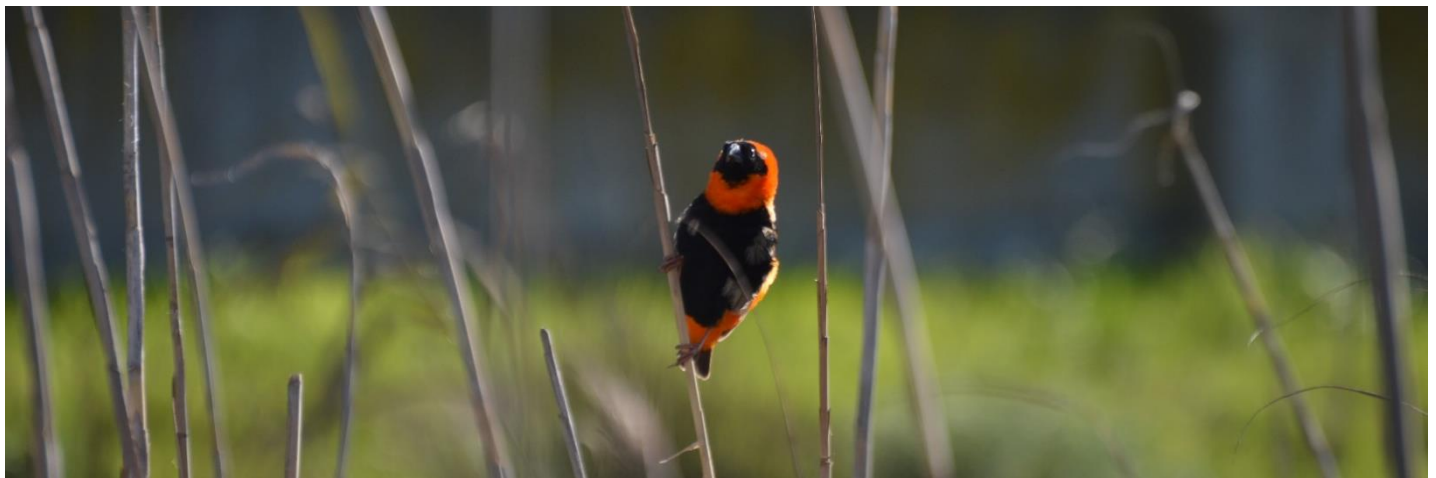
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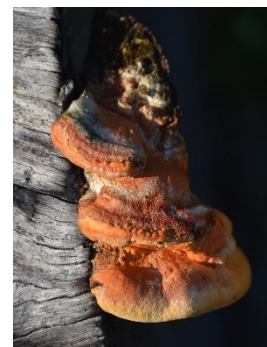
# CONSERVATION WISE

*Conserving Biodiversity for Future Generations*

## JANUARY – JUNE 2020 REPORT OF THE MILNERTON RACECOURSE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Above: A Southern Red Bishop (*Euplectes orix*) seen on a branch in the Northern Section by the Wetland.



From left to right: Orange-banded Protea (*Capys alphaeus*), Cape Dwarf Chameleon (*Bradypodion pumilum*), Southern Masked Weaver (*Ploceus velatus*), unidentified fungus, *Wurmbea stricta*

Funded by the **Royal Ascot Master Property Owners' Association** (RAMPOA) in partnership with the **City of Cape Town** and the **Cape Town Environmental Education Trust** (CTEET).



## Cape Town Environmental Education Trust

### “CHANGING LIVES THROUGH NATURE”

**Aim: “Supporting the preservation of Cape Town’s unique and biodiverse natural heritage through education, training and conservation initiatives.”**

The Cape Town Environmental Education Trust (CTEET) was founded in 2001 as a Not-For-Profit, public benefits organisation. The trust was founded for the purpose of providing underprivileged children from the Cape Flats with the opportunity to experience and learn about nature.

CTEET is an organisation which prides itself in developing individuals by equipping them with knowledge and the skill sets that will assist them in establishing themselves within the Conservation sector, making a difference within their livelihoods and their communities.

The Nature Care Fund is an initiative that was founded in 2007 for the purpose of providing management expertise to the City of Cape Town’s Biodiversity Management Branch. The initiative assists in the conservation of numerous important conservation sites that make up the Biodiversity Network:

- Milnerton Racecourse Section, Table Bay Nature Reserve
- Zoarvlei Section, Table Bay Nature Reserve
- Atlantic Beach Conservation Area
- Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area
- Princess Vlei
- Muizenberg East Biodiversity Cluster
- Alien Invasive Programme

Through this initiative, numerous individuals were given the opportunity to establish themselves within the Conservation sector, to develop themselves into better skilled ambassadors of nature. As with all Site Managers that have been previously appointed at the Milnerton Racecourse Section, they had the opportunity to learn about managing areas of conservation importance, facing the challenges that come with management head on and developing themselves in order to be able to take the next step into their careers.

The Milnerton Racecourse Section started with and has had a succession of passionate and motivated Site Managers:

- January 2014 – March 2017: Landi Louw
- March 2017 – August 2018: Kyran Wright
- August 2018 – January 2020: Hester Pentz



**Figure 1** 2014 - 2017 Site Manager: Landi Louw



**Figure 2** 2017 - 2018 Site Manager: Kyran Wright



**Figure 3** 2018 - 2020 Site Manager: Hester Pentz

## New Manager on Site

Hailing from Klerksdorp in the North West, as of 23 March 2020, Milnerton Racecourse has a truly passionate, conservation-savvy, experienced and outdoorsy, newly appointed Site Manager - **Ntombikayise Leago Lolwane**.

**Ntombi** - being the youngest of her siblings and coming from a family that was not familiar with love for all things animals – She was one to go against the grain and continuously brought home chickens, dogs, cats, hamsters and fish (just to name a few!). From early on Ntombi knew her chosen career path would involve the outdoors, animals and plants, however, she was left indecisive after high school and embarked on a 2-year gap year. During this time, Ntombi volunteered at her local nature reserve *Faan Meintjies* and at the *Kruger National Park*, where she decided that working with wildlife was wholeheartedly what she wanted to be doing. Ntombi ambitiously left the confinements of her home city, Klerksdorp, and came to Cape Town in 2014 to pursue her studies at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

Three years later, having been awarded the most committed student of the year by the City of Cape Town and best Resource Management student at *CPUT*, Ntombikayise completed her Diploma Nature Conservation in 2017 and went further to pursue her BTech Nature Conservation, which she completed with 4 Distinctions in 2019. Besides her BTech, which has made her very knowledgeable, Ntombi has a wide range of experience working at Nature Reserves such as Steenbras, Edith Stephens, Koeberg Nature Reserve, and working as a Penguin Ranger in Simon's Town which has equipped her for this current position. Ntombi's many experiences have continuously improved her people skills, knowledge of conservation, further reinforced her love for being out in the field and her personality has always been one of educating others (including colleagues and the general public) in the field of conservation.

With that being said, her current position as the Site Manager of Table Bay Nature Reserve – Milnerton Racecourse has not been without its fair share of challenges as Ntombi was appointed merely a few days before the National Lockdown begun on 27 March 2020 and had to overcome moving into a new place, having no access to resources, fellow colleagues and having no prior knowledge of the area. *"I appreciated the challenge, it was a learning curve and allowed me to become familiar with the site and the site's challenges on my own terms"*, Ntombikayise stated when questioned how she overcame those challenges.

Her passion, resilience, skills and biggest motivation, her mother, has been the reason for her many successes. All the support she has received over the years, from her mother and lecturers is very reminiscent of her background and where she came from and makes being away from home all that easier. With a lot of first experiences to look forward to, such as the Milnerton Racecourse Ecological Burn in 2021, Grysbok drone counts, and so much more, Ntombi is full of excitement for this new venture.



Figure 4 Current Site Manager: Ntombikayise Leago Lolwane



## Start of the National Lockdown

The National Lockdown started on 27 March 2020, which put a stop to all operational activities that were planned to take place on Site and begun the closing of the Reserve. Due to restricted movements and the closing of the Reserve, no monitoring activities took place during the duration of the first level of the National Lockdown, thus a gap in monitoring data.

Activity gradually started to commence from 11 May 2020, when the Site Manager was granted a travelling/work permit. There were many challenges involved as staff on site to assist with operational activities were limited to just the Site Manager at a time. Because of this limitation, activities carried out on the Reserve were limited to admin, site patrols, litter pick-ups, wetland and dam water level monitoring and fixed-point photography of vegetation structures. Maintenance activities were also limited, for one, the rain gauge was broken and needed to be replaced, this could not happen as stores had a limitation on what they could sell to consumers and due to this, sufficient rainfall data was lost.

**We would like to appeal to members of the public, to please provide monthly rainfall data that you may have captured during this time period and going forward into the future for comparison reasons.**

Table 1 Below is a table showing the rainfall data for Milnerton Racecourse Nature Reserve.

Rainfall Data (mm)													
Year	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTALS
2007	0.0	28.0	20.0	65.0	61.5	111.0	106.0	102.0	18.0	20.0	34.0	24.0	589.5
2008	3.0	12.0	7.0	18.0	54.0	107.0	175.0	87.0	160.0	15.0	60.5	5.0	703.5
2009	3.0	8.0	0.0	44.0	166.0	81.0	96.5	80.0	67.0	45.5	82.0	9.0	682
2010	2.5	5.0	8.5	7.0	121.0	100.5	62.0	60.5	14.5	30.5	36.5	10.5	459
2011	13.0	5.5	5.5	30.0	47.0	55.0	70.0	101.0	42.0	20.0	31.0	32.5	452.5
2012	5.8	2.5	18.0	78.0	61.0	81.5	111.5	100.0	60.0	36.0	15.5	3.0	572.75
2013	7.5	41.0	26.5	48.5	41.5	148.0	74.0	232.0	64.0	3.0	89.0	2.5	777.5
2014	24.5	4.9	50.0	33.0	65.4	167.5	81.9	85.0	18.0	6.0	22.0	5.0	563.2
2015	20.0	5.5	2.0	7.0	29.5	94.0	86.0	38.0	20.5	4.0	27.0	21.5	355
2016	10.0	5.5	44.5	35.0	25.7	81.0	111.5	61.0	30.0	13.0	4.0	18.0	439.2
2017	6.3	0.0	12.6	25.3	9.2	77.0	52.0	62.5	14.0	14.0	38.0	1.0	311.9
2018	7.0	5.5	6.2	70.0	47.5	114.0	74.0	80.0	54.6	9.5	5.9	13.9	488.7
2019	7.6	6.5	24.0	19.2	34.1	50.1	75.5	30.1	17.0	72.0	3.0	4.0	343.1
2020	-	-	-	-	26	63							
<b>Average</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>62.0</b>	<b>95.0</b>	<b>90.5</b>	<b>91.7</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>34.5</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>559.4</b>
<b>short</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>-34.5</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>-19.0</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>11.7</b>					<b>70.7</b>

However, that period was not time lost, as the opportunity for better planning became available and with the ease of the National Lockdown regulations over the period of June 2020, staff gradually returned to work and operations gradually came into place.

With staff returning to work, strict Covid-19 regulations were put in place and were to be followed:

- Social distancing to be maintained, staff to keep at least a 1.5m distance from each other where possible.
- Wear a cloth mask at all times.
- Wash/sanitize hands often.
- Sanitize tools before and after use.
- Sanitize work vehicles before and after use.
- Stay at home if feeling unwell.

We have been fortunate enough that we have had no Covid-19 infections since work commenced and staff returned to work. The regulations put in place have been followed religiously, making the continuation of protecting the biodiversity of Milnerton Racecourse possible.

## Restoring the Critically Endangered Fynbos

**Treated indigenous Fynbos seeds** were sown into the restoration site as part of reaching the long term restoration goals, being, regaining and restoring the natural structure and function of the site, to promote floral diversity and re-introduce locally extirpated species. The 2.79Ha piece of land that is now known as the restoration site was donated to the Nature Reserve in 2017 and has ever since been restored actively in order to incorporate it into the Nature Reserve. Three species of seed were sown, *Leucadendron salignum*, *Orphium frutescens* and *Protea scolymocephala*, which were originally collected from Rivergate and Milnerton Racecourse, then treated at the Westlake Conservation Area.



Figure 5 Staff sowing the treated seeds.



Figure 6 Staff covering sown seeds with topsoil in the restoration site.

## Maintaining biodiversity through fire

**Objectives for planning an ecological burn are:**

- Removal of ageing vegetation/ insect infestation
- Stimulating the germination of soil-stored seeds
- To preserve a Critically Endangered veld type - Cape Flats Sand Fynbos
- Prevent local extinction of plant species (maintain biodiversity)
- Create a mosaic of different vegetation ages within the Reserve.

A prescribed ecological burn was planned to take place on one day in the time between February to April 2020. The size of the block that was to be burnt is approximately 3 hectares, as show in the map below.



Block highlighted in red is the area being requested to be burned.

Figure 7 Block that was planned to be burnt in period between February and April 2020.

**Do not despair**, the ecological burn will still take place, on one day in the time between February to April 2021. During this period, management block MRC004 will be burnt, a size of approximately 6.76Ha, as shown in the map below.



Figure 8 Block that is planned to be burnt in period between February and April 2021.



This prescribed ecological burn did not take place because there was a delay in the receiving of the burn permit and because of this, the burn window period was missed.

The block highlighted as shown above will be burnt because the vegetation has become senescent and there is no new growth. Fynbos has a fire frequency of 10-12 years, and the block highlighted has reached the 12-year mark.

Following below is a series of images from an ecological burn that was conducted on 12 April 2018.





## Our beloved cats and dogs...

**It is understood**, the love pet owners have for their cats and dogs, but please, be aware of the impacts caused on birds and other local wildlife.

The instinctive hunting and killing behaviour of cats who are usually allowed to roam freely and unsupervised accounts for the death of many birds, lizards, mice and other small local wildlife each year. Often the small wildlife species don't die immediately, they suffer severe wounds and struggle to survive.

Cats on Reserves lead to an imbalance in predator-prey ratios, with local wildlife having to contend with both natural and human pressures.

Dogs on Reserves may harass, chase and/or even attack wildlife.

Responsible pet owners, who care about the welfare of wildlife, can reduce the impacts of domestic predation by keeping dogs out of the Reserve, as they are not allowed into the Reserve, keeping cats indoors, especially at night and in the early hours of the morning. Two small bells can also be placed on the cat's collar, which aids wildlife in detecting the cat's movements when it is hunting them. In addition, developers are requested to add extra bars in the fencing bordering the Reserve to assist in keeping cats out of the Reserve.



**Figure 9** A Ginger cat seen in the Southern section of the Reserve.



**Figure 10** Dog print seen in the North Section of the Reserve.



**Figure 11** Dog prints seen in the North Section of the Reserve.