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MONTHLY NEWS BULLETIN

Any comments and / or suggestions and / or recommendations would be most welcome

CURRENT PROJECTS:

EDUCATIONAL GARDENS AT IMPITHI BEACH KIOSK:

A project to upgrade the Kiosk garden facilities by planting educational indigenous gardens and to reinstate the dune and forest to their natural state is in the process of starting.

An environmental management plan and a schematic plan for the educational gardens have been drawn up by external consultants partially funded by Pennington Conservancy. The clearing of Invasive Alien Plants has just started and the paving of the areas around the braais and picnic tables should start within a few weeks. More details will be communicated to our members when funding /sponsorship and Umdoni Municipality involvement issues have been finalised.

MAKAMATI TRAIL:

We reported last month that the contractors had finished maintenance on the culverts in Minerva Road. However, when clearing IAPs next to the road a collapsed small culvert was found. This has been repaired, but a small section of the road needs attention and the last of the remaining rubble and site "office" needs to be removed. Senzo has not reported any game sightings this month probably due to the noisy holiday visitors. One of the trail signs in Minerva Road was pulled out of the ground despite having a cross piece fixed by an 8mm coach bolt on the base of the vertical pole. The sign was found 2 days later 1 km away in Rahle Road and re-erected. The IAPs are re-growing, but are easy to pull out, the ground being soft after the rain. The isoglossa that died off during the winter is now starting to re-grow providing food for the small buck.

NKOMBA BIRD SANCTUARY:

Firstly, the not so good news:

Several issues need to be followed up both at the upper (Dolphin Drive) area as well as the beach end and these all require input from authorities, both local and provincial, which has not been forthcoming. A view across the floodplain is alarming with growth of many undesirables and Balloon Vine coming into flower – this area currently does not fall within the Conservancy's ambit and we have no answers as to why the legal requirement for alien weed control is not being followed up. There is no further news on the repair to the wall along Dolphin Drive, however this does lead on to the better news –

Ugu is, at last, rerouting the temporary water line (necessitated by the bridge repair) to its permanent trench and David has pointed out to the diggers the trees which must be avoided and so far so good. There are no signs of Telkom who also need to remove the temporary lines from the swamp forest so that the area can be tidied up and left to its own devices, with control of aliens only from our side. We then hope to have a walk into this section so one can admire its magnificence. Use of Nkomba as a dumping site by some residents of Dolphin Drive has come to an end and everything has been removed, unfortunately leaving large open areas and growth of several species of plants which are on the list of potential invaders, also known as 'emerging weeds'. Monitoring will be required for quite some time and planting in this area is underway. We now have a good idea of the extent of "our" forest in this area to the north of the Fig Tree, as well as its condition - it has great potential and a path is planned with signage and perhaps a bench along the way, in due course.

RECYCLING:

Progress has been made with Phase 1 and in the second week in February Robynne Harty of *Recycling on the Move* will start collection from the major generators of waste in the area such as restaurants, golf clubs and shopping centres, and hopefully the Umdoni Retirement Village. We will launch this initiative officially in March and then start with Phase 2, which involves individual households.

UMDONI FOREST:

Although we have had good rains there are still dams that are not 100% full. With the wet soil and windy conditions we do have trees uprooting but this is to be expected and considered normal.

A partially decomposed bushbuck was discovered in the forest but we were unable to determine the cause of death.

Michael and his team are still going about their daily tasks of keeping the forest in good order.

WEBSITE NEWS:

Don't forget to view our website to get updates on our walks and talks, download news bulletins and learn more about Alien Invasive Plants.

We will be in touch very shortly inviting you to join our 'blog'.

www.penningtonconservancy.org.za

EDUCATION / AWARENESS:

Our education / awareness programmes are scheduled to re-commence during February.

20/02: Beach Geology at 09h30 at Umdoni Point. Speaker: Paddy Norman WESSA-KZN & Southport Geological and Natural History Society (SGNHS). This is an earlier than usual start, but we are beholden to the tides.

20/03: Living with Spiders at 11h30 at the Environmental Centre, Umdoni Forest. Speaker: Clive Quickelberge

IMPITHI BEACH KIOSK:

We had a very busy holiday season and with the dedicated help of our staff and volunteers, all went well. In January things returned to normal and it was time to focus on new challenges for 2011. We have resumed our popular Sunday lunches and Friday curry evenings. Even though it is still early in the New Year, bookings have shown that our local customers are still our backbone. The Kiosk is always hugely popular for group bookings and we served a few special lunches during January.

IMPITHI RANGERS (KIDS' CLUB):

The 1st meeting of the year took place on Friday 04/02. We will be meeting on the 1st and 3rd Friday of the month (excluding school holidays). We are looking for a team leader. We have extremely able and very keen volunteers' who are very involved in ensuring the activities are exciting, informative and interesting for the Impithi Rangers, but someone is needed to communicate with the community, encourage parents to bring their children along and plan activities - **We need you....**

AREA OPPOSITE THE PENNINGTON SUPERETTE:

The litter on the margins of the site left by the New Years day visitors was cleared by Municipal workers. The litter taken further in was cleaned up by Senzo. The weekly cutting of the bamboo appears to be weakening the root stock as the maximum diameter of bamboo being cut has decreased from 30mm in November to 15mm at the end of January. There has been significant re-growth in the cleared areas including the yellow flowered Senecio; various species, wild banana (*Strelitzia Nicholai*) and various trees; identity unknown.