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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:

We are very involved in the planning stage, which we hope will come to an end by December (this year!). It's complicated by the fact that the land is owned by the Municipality and is a very sensitive coastal ecosystem. So, to get the area upgraded requires proper environmental plans being done and approved by the Environment Manager: Umdoni, and measurements and quotes being completed. This means many role players and much discussion. We're hoping the final plan will work towards restoring dune forest in KZN, a critically endangered natural forest type, and include an educational garden with plants to attract butterflies, birds and mammals, plus a gently sloping path with a handrail from the Kiosk level down to the deck. The Conservancy will implement affordable aspects of the plan in a phased approach.

MAKAMATI TRAIL:

The cleaning of the Trail began in April and is ongoing. The project involves the removal of illegally dumped household rubbish and invasive alien plants (IAP) as defined by WESSA-KZN. Both these activities will be ongoing as household rubbish is still being collected - \pm 2 bags per week plus 1 bag general litter – bottles, paper, etc. allowing IAPs to continue germinating. Due to winter and drought conditions, access to the bush has been relatively easy enabling alien trees to be dealt with - the large trees are ring barked and the small ones uprooted. Signs have been erected to show where the Trail is and further directional signs are being made. We are currently removing Brazilian Pepper trees (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) on the north side of the stream between Adrienne and Marion Avenues. The trees were initially ring barked in August but continued to grow so they are being dug out. 12 medium sized trees have been removed and the last 2 will be dug out next week. The plan is to replant with pioneer and a few climax species of endemic trees, the understory will be partially replanted with some of the more decorative (pretty flowers) endemic species. The plants will be moved from the existing stock or donated by Conservancy members.

NKOMBA BIRD SANCTUARY:

This potentially beautiful little green haven is starting to look lovely again, after some rain and a lot of hard work there. Pennington Conservancy's project leader is Carolyn Schwegman and David Duma is employed to work there weekdays, clearing Invasive Alien Plants, rubbish, and rubble and planting appropriate alternative vegetation. Progress is being made in the area in front of the houses on Dolphin Drive, hoping for that to return to natural forest. We are liaising with the Municipality to assist with the repair to the entrance wall. There is spoor of Bushbuck and Impithi to be seen so if you take dogs there please ensure they do not harass the animals and please remove poops to make it user friendly for all.

RECYCLING:

We have a very keen Team Recycling, headed by Shirley Crocket. Recycling is a complex topic with many possibilities and pitfalls. The Recycling businesses operate on very small margins and the fact that we are situated at some distance from a major city makes it more difficult for any recycled material to be collected. So we are putting together a 3 phase model. Phase 1 will involve the major generators of waste in the area such as Umdoni Retirement Village, Restaurants and Golf Clubs and Shopping Centres, phase 2 will involve ordinary households and phase 3 will include the creation of craft items from recycled materials. Watch this space for further news.

UMDONI FOREST:

All will be aware that Clive Quickelberge, although recovering very well, has been ill and we therefore do not have a report.

WEBSITE NEWS:

Our latest addition to the website is our blog. Unfortunately we are all blog virgins, so we are still in the experimental stages. Please note that any opinions on the blog are personal and do not reflect the opinions of the Conservancy unless stated. Our IAP series and future news bulletins which are e-mailed to you will be sent with the website link so you will know where to find them should you delete your e-mail. Should you have any photographs that have been taken in Pennington please send them to us and we will do our best to post them in our photo gallery.

EDUCATION / AWARENESS:

October: Pat McKrill enthralled us with a talk on snakes and frogs. He had a female Olive House snake and two very common Brown House snakes with him. We released the smaller male into the wetland in Nkomba and he will feed on geckoes and lizards initially, gravitating as he grows, to rats and mice.

November: Wendy White kept us riveted with a presentation on the life and habits of bats found predominantly on the KZN South Coast. Unfortunately the weather did not allow Wendy to put up bat nets giving us the opportunity to see these mammals "up close". However, she has promised to return. Should you need any help with bats that you believe are problematic, contact BATS KZN on 082 445 0585.

These talks were most informative and extremely interesting and it makes a tremendous difference having some understanding of the creatures with which we share our planet.

IMPITHI BEACH KIOSK:

'The Kiosk' continues to add meaning to the Pennington environment. For Alan, Gail and Dee it means careful organisation and administration, to Heinz, Moira and the kitchen staff, it means quality catering, for the volunteers it means getting involved and helping to make a difference. Most importantly, for all of us in Pennington, it not only continues to be a venue where we can come for a time to replenish body and spirit, it is also a symbol of how we can be positive about our own environment.

In other words, 'The Kiosk' is doing just **FINE**.

IMPITHI RANGERS (KIDS' CLUB):

Started during September 2010 encouraging children between the ages of 5 and 12 years (not strictly adhered to) to become involved in the environment. Gail Cooper, Liz Edmunds and Tanya Correia plan, organise and are very involved in the activities. To date these have been: A beach clean-up, recycling awareness, flora and fauna in Makamati, tree identification in Umdoni Forest, creating get well cards for Clive and much more. The Club has grown from 6 children to 18. The only entrance fee for every activity is a bag of cleaned recyclable items. Children are issued with 'passports' in which attendance and achievements are recorded. All children are welcome – the only requirement is that they are resident in Pennington or have grand-parents resident in Pennington.

AREA OPPOSITE THE PENNINGTON SUPERETTE:

Work began at the end of June 2010 to clear accumulated litter and Invasive Alien Plants from Plot 424 on the north corner of Pennington Drive and the R 102. This is a joint Conservancy, Umdoni Municipality and Pennington Ratepayers Association project. Casual labour was employed to clear the plot of litter. After unsuccessful attempts by the Municipality to dig up the large stands of bamboo and Spanish reed using a backhoe, Ferncliffe Nursery were contracted by the Conservancy to cut the bamboo using chainsaws. Some of the bamboo was 100mm diameter.

The Spanish reed was cut manually using casual and Conservancy labour (Senzo Tukela). After many phone calls, the municipality finally began removing the cuttings. It took +/- 25 skips in total. This phase of the clean up was finished by the middle of August. Removal of the IAPs is being carried out by Senzo. In addition to the bamboo and Spanish reed, the usual suspects are Syringa, Guava, Chromolaena and American bramble. The spoor of impithi, bushbuck and porcupine and a bush pig wallow have been found. Removing litter is ongoing and re-growth of the bamboo is being cut regularly. After the start of the rain, the large diameter bamboo is growing at the rate of a meter a week! It is cut every 10 days just before the leaves open so weakening the root stock. There are no recommended herbicides for bamboo and plot 424 is a wetland so spraying is not an option.