



FRIENDS OF PILANESBERG

Non-Profit Organization Fund Raising Number: 006-421 NPS

SEDIBA

January to August 2020

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Letter from Editor

January to August 2020

Lauren Gunn

Dear friends

January, February, March, Lockdown..... August.

What a confusing year this one has been. We have been in lockdown for 5 months already and it still continues, from level 5 to 4 to 3, then 3 point something and now level 2. We could not drink or smoke, then we could smoke, but actually we couldn't, then you can drink again, for a very small period of time and then you could not, and now you can again. Schools were opened, then they were closed, now they are open again.... it has been a roller coaster ride to say the least. Through all of this, my biggest question has been "When can we travel Inter-provincially again?" Being Gauteng based this, for me, and, I am sure most of the FOPS members, has been the MOST pressing question over the past 5 months!

Thank goodness we now are allowed to travel to the North West and our precious Soul Awakening happy place that is the Pilanesberg! And, as a committee, we wasted no time! The first weekend after borders opened we were in the park getting the camp ready for the next work-party and traversing the park to see what work needs to be done.

We are pleased to announce that we are ready! The camp has been cleaned, sanitiser is located in all the necessary places and a fire break has been cut, this I think was the MOST important task based on all the fires we have had recently in the park.

This newsletter covers the first 3 work parties of 2020, including the much anticipated Batlhako Hide re-opening. As I was unable to make any of the work parties earlier this year, I was very excited to see this hide completed. On the committee weekend I had the privilege of spending some time there, the birdlife does not disappoint! There were kingfishers, a number of hammerkops, herons and many more! As well as a stunning fish eagle catching a fish right next to our lookout point! It was brilliant. Definitely a must when you are next in the park.

News from the park – In case you have missed anything....

All the Rhinos in the park were de-horned during the lockdown 😞. This has been done to, hopefully, reduce the number of poachings in the park. Sad, that we have to resort to these measures to protect our wildlife, however, rather an alive Rhino than a poached one! Hopefully it works, so far it seems to have - the number of Rhinos poached in the Pilanesberg this year is down!



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There have been a number of fires that have raged through the park in July and August. No major injuries to the larger animals that we are aware of, although we know that the smaller animals, insects and snakes generally get caught in these fires with no escape! We saw a very singed Zebra when we were on the committee work party, the poor guy had no mane to speak of and the beautiful eye lashes you normally see on Zebras were gone 😞! He was alive and seemed to be doing well though.

There was a block burn that was done in the Iron Age site and nearly all of the sickle bush "hedge" that we have accumulated over the years is gone! Woo Hoo! Thank you PWT, one major fire hazard done away with. We just have to find a way to remove whatever we cut back going forward as we do not want to build this "hedge" up again!

*We are pausing our feature of the invasive species we are tackling in the park, and have decided to feature a "Botanical Gem of the park" each quarter. This "quarter" we will be doing a comparison between the Lantana Rugosa the one we love and the Invasive Lantana Camara. As I am not a plant expert, I searched the internet for information on the differences between the two species and have put a table together which will clear up the differences, this is at the end of this newsletter. It took a while and the thesaurus was definitely my friend this week, I know most of you would probably know, but.... "a plant having **antorse** hairs on the stem" actually means that "the plant has hairs on the stem that are bent or curved forward or upward"! Speak English please, laymen like me just need simple words!*

I know this lockdown has been hard on many of us, each in our own unique way! I hope that you are all keeping well and staying safe! Looking forward to seeing the FOPS family again soon!

Warm regards,

Lauren



Poor Dude!



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Notes:

Again - I have used a lot of pictures in this newsletter – thanks to everyone who contributed either via WhatsApp or allowing me to “steal” from Facebook!

We do welcome input from any members who have a feature, a story or interesting information to add. Please send any submissions to fopsnews@gmail.com for consideration.



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January 2020

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

A good turnout for January, 36 People. Four people cancelled and five non-residents of which we had five new members. The weather was good all weekend!

We had four teams in total working on Saturday.

Team one was made up of eight people cleaning up seven direction cairns, these were along Tshwene, Tlou and Moloto, hard work but nice cool weather.

Road clearing was the second team of eight people working along Tlou drive and Tlou link, they did a fantastic job!

The usual Iron Age cut back and spray was team three. I think they sprayed everything living or dead 😊. Eleven people, all newbies with a couple from the Lada club.

Lastly was Batlhako hide, this was a hive of activity doing finishing touches, I think it only needs the benches now. Looking beautiful! Well done to all concerned!

Regards.
Paddy.



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February 2020

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

Fifty people attended, with two potentially new people, Marco and Elba. We had eight non-residents and eight cancellations.

Projects included direction cairn clean-ups around Tlou and Moloto. Cutting back at the Iron Age, we did not spray due to the rain. Almost all the work party people were in camp cutting and clearing, etc.

Then Batlhako – a couple of people went up to finish off the hide – which looks amazing!

At 12pm we had the hide opening, it rained.... And no trucks pitched, most people were there in their own cars which actually worked out for the best. We eventually started at about 1:30 pm. The rain stopped for the celebrations and we had a great turnout from the Parks Board, C.P.U and HO's and of course our work party people. About 70 people attended and all in all it was wonderful.

A great weekend all round!

Regards.
Paddy.



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March 2020

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi All

This month we had a total of 59 People, 12 from the Lada Club, 8 Newbies and 4 non-residents. A huge turnout, too many in fact.

Luckily, all the Lada club and the newbies went to the Iron Age site, they did a lot of clearing, including the turnoff to the Iron Age Site.

We sent a team to Manyane to sort out some problems with the electrics. New socket on the DB Board, new adapters at the main plug from outside.

Then four team's road clearing and cutting grass at the direction cairns, plus Lantana, etc.

A new bird poster was put up at Ruighoek.

Luckily this time there were no accidents with the Lada Club 😊

Thanks

Paddy





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August 2020

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

Our first work party since March, wow! A small group, the committee members - only 10 people.

The main reason was for a stock take, but the guys did a lot more than that, raking, sweeping, brush cutting and general clean up. The ablution block was scrubbed, as you can imagine it was very dirty.

The tents at Manyane were also cleaned thoroughly. There is a big problem with the electricity and this will need to be looked into at the next work party.

The electric fence at Potokwane was also reenergised and the Iron Age fence needs more attention, not working yet.

Three new fire extinguishers were put up in camp and all the others have been taken for filling.

The lock on the one shower is broken and will buy and fit a new one at the next work party, we also need to get more tools.

Chainsaws and brush cutters/weed eaters all serviced and back in action.

The gate runner was bent by some hooligan and we will have to straighten this out.

A good weekend all round!

Regards.
Paddy.



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Lantana Comparison

	Lantana Rugosa – The Good One	Lantana Camara – The Invader
General		
	A much-branched shrub up to 2 m tall, or sometimes a woody perennial 45–90 cm tall	Mostly a spreading shrub 0.35–5 m tall, forming dense thickets, or climber to 10, strongly aromatic
Flowers		
	The plant grows small, stalked pink to mauve flowers in almost globe shaped clusters up to 20mm x 20mm from leaf axils.	Flowers in ± flat clustered heads, 2–5 cm in diameter with axis 6–12 mm long, variously coloured, orange, red, pink, mauve, pure yellow or white, often with a yellow or orange centre.
Leaves		
	Leaves usually opposite, ovate-oblong, up to 7 cm long, rounded at the base, with whitish tubercle-based hairs above, becoming rough with age, covered in short stiff hairs beneath. Dark Green	The leaves are simple and opposite along the stem. They have leaf stalks that are 5-30 mm long with a serrated (toothed) margin. The leaves are mostly egg-shaped in outline with broad end at base and are 2-12 x 1.5-7 cm in size. The texture of the leaf is quite rough, however, the underside can be softly hairy. Light Green.
Fruit		
	Drupes 2.5–3.5 mm long, purple or wine-coloured on ripening	Drupes 3–6 mm in diameter, purple-black to black on ripening