



Newsletter June 2011

Dear Bush-lovers

My apologies for the big gap between the previous newsletter and this latest offering.

And it is not the usual format either, because this issue is all about the Timbavati Foundation.

I really do believe that the Foundation is an extremely valuable asset for the reserve and its future. So it needs all the support the members can muster to ensure the continued existence of the reserve.

I think we owe the people who have put their shoulder to the wheel in setting up the Foundation a huge thank you.

We live in uncertain times, and with land being such a hot potato politically we need to make damn sure that we are politically and socially relevant. By engaging with the neighbouring communities we have started a process that hopefully will gather momentum and strength. Ultimately we want to be sure that this priceless reserve's future is secure.

It's up to us to make this happen.

This newsletter updates the considerable progress the Foundation has made.

One final word - the Foundation needs your support, either financially or through the donation of equipment or skills that you may want to provide.

Should you wish to comment please contact me at avoca@netactive.co.za or on 079 496 9614.

Cheers

Willie

The Foundation's new logo sees the light of day



An evocative umbrella thorn tree in silhouette with a modern looking typeface is the new logo that the Timbavati Foundation will face the world out there with.

Annual gardening competition winners visit the KNP

As part of the environmental education curriculum which includes biodiversity, permaculture gardens, water conservation, erosion monitoring, recycling and conservation, the participating schools are also assessed at the end of each year on the success of their school vegetable gardens.

The winning school as well as the runners up each receive a prize consisting of a field trip for the learners. In December 2010, 16 learners and 2 teachers from Puledi and Maakere High Schools joined the Bush School Environmental Educators on a 3 day field trip to the KNP.

The Timbavati provided food and transport and the KNP laid on free accommodation at Pretoriuskop as well as free entry into the park.

During their stay the learners underwent interactive educational sessions given by Mr Solly Mgiba and colleagues.

Apart from game drives and a visit to the museum at Skukuza the learners and their teachers learnt a lot about nature and conservation.

For the bush school as well as the learners and their teachers this was a happy ending to a year of dedicated work.



Revamping of the Bush School camp

Up till now the Bush School has been maintained, at his own cost, by Charles de Villiers.

Now that the Foundation has taken over it was decided that certain changes to the infrastructure needed to take place.

Numerous sections of the school have been changed and upgraded.

The kitchen has been closed off to stop monkeys from entering. It has also been equipped with a new solar powered fridge and freezer and new stoves will follow.

The dining area has been re-thatched and the classroom roof replaced with new corrugated iron. All the wooden shower screens have been oiled.



Electricity through solar power

An extensive solar power system has been installed at the school which enables proper lighting in the toilets and showers. A great advantage of the new solar power system is that the laptop and projector, kindly donated by Paul Levey, can be used to great effect particularly in the evening sessions.



Game drive vehicle

The Bush School now has an as "good as new" game drive vehicle. Far safer than its predecessor, with its loose seats, the new vehicle allows the facilitators to travel to both primary and high schools in safety and without time constraints. This has enabled the expansion of the environmental education (EE) programme to more schools.



An appeal to the members - from Tim Hancock

I wonder if I could appeal to all of you – your children, your grandchildren to search your shelves, or your book stores, for any environmental books – birds, trees, grasses, mammals, reptiles, insects etc. that we could donate to the Bush School – they have absolutely none. I have managed to buy a lot from WESSA – but if you could access any in Shangaan, Zulu or Sotho that would be great. The Bush school needs exam pads, drawing books, pencils, pens, sharpeners, rulers, coloring pencils, puzzles with environmental themes – anything like that. Also plastic flower pots, bags, garden tools, new hoses, unused sprinkler heads – well – you name it! Perhaps you could also search your camps for spare tanks, and fencing for the school vegetable gardens – or bring a Gift Voucher for the local co-op? For the Bush school's needs please view the current wish list below. New equipment would be ideal since the school

already has old things, which needs to be replaced. New items will also ensure that we have uniformity at the school e.g. blankets, mattress covers and chairs.

Wish list:

- Binding machine
 - Reference books
 - Mattress covers
 - Blankets
 - Camera
 - Computer speakers
 - Food containers
 - Gas stove x 2
 - Vegetable garden irrigation
 - Outside chairs
 - Printer
 - Vehicle radio
 - White board
 - Roll down screen
 - New first aid kit
 - Book case with doors
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Expanding the primary school programme

Two more primary schools have been added to the list bringing the total of schools to six. This means that the EE programme is being taught to all the primary schools that are closest to the southern boundary of the reserve. In the process many of the schools where TPNR staff as well as camp and lodge staff live are being covered.



700 children per week are exposed to the EE programme. This makes the children aware of their environment, conservation, anti-littering and serves as curriculum augmentation in the natural sciences.

Expanding our high school programme



We now visit high schools during the same week as their learners visit the bush school.

The EE programme concentrating on the most important principles with the grade 11 learners is being taught, ensuring that we reach as wide an audience as possible.

Teacher training in environmental education

The Foundation sponsored an EE course for six primary school teachers during May at the SA Wildlife College close to Orpen.

These teachers will now take over the function of EE facilitators at their respective primary schools and the Foundation staff will play a supporting role only. This will enable the Foundation to move on to more schools and establish the same system for other primary schools in the area.

There are 42 schools and the target is to engage with all of them and assist them in establishing EE programmes over the next 10 years.



Establishing an indigenous tree nursery at schools

Learners at the bush school are now also being taught how to germinate indigenous tree seeds to the transplant stage. Then they can be transplanted in their school grounds and homes in their respective communities. Each learner receives a seed and plant bag and is set the task of germinating the seed and tending the seedling to the end of the year. This has been included in the judging of the best school in the garden and recycling projects.

This project was developed with the assistance of Sucha Blatherwick, who taught the bush school facilitators the process of germination and tending the seedling. It is hoped that Sucha will teach the youngsters at primary schools to do the same for their school grounds.

Projects for the year ahead

Vegetable gardens

A process has been set up to identify schools where special netted gardens will be erected in order to produce vegetables for the feeding schemes running at the schools.

Numerous schools have been visited and the Foundation are looking for those that not only have water but show a willingness to make a success of such an investment.

So far it would seem that many of the schools are hungry for such an opportunity - to prove that they can look after themselves.



Providing Enviro loos

Sadly, numerous schools do not have proper ablution facilities - in fact some have none.

Installing Enviro loos (dry toilet systems) is planned and will add greatly to a hygienic environment within school grounds. Each Enviro Loo costs R4500. If we can get 10 members to sponsor a toilet we can make a big difference to the lives of many kids at school.



Building of kitchen facilities

Most schools form part of the govt feeding scheme. Which means learners get one meal per day at school and this alleviates malnutrition problems and helps enhance the learning environment.

Unfortunately many of the schools have no adequate kitchen facilities and food is often prepared on open wood fires which aggravates deforestation problems in the area.



We are looking at the feasibility of providing proper kitchen facilities which can provide hygienic meals at lower cost - gas is far cheaper than the wood the schools currently buy - as well as being more environmentally friendly.

Projects for the year ahead ctd

Water provision at schools

There is a desperate need for water at many of the schools in the area.

Learners have to transport water to school for drinking as well as for vegetable gardens. This makes it extremely difficult to maintain these gardens and consequently impacts on the school feeding scheme.

Plans are afoot to look at various forms of water collection - gutters and accumulation tanks as well as the provision of boreholes.



Thanks

Thanks very much to all those people who assisted me in compiling this newsletter.
