

# Newsletter



**GROTTO BAY PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE**

December 2021 Newsletter

Letter From The Chair

Dear Members and Residents

I am a participant in a social media forum where members and residents of community schemes in South Africa can ask for advice. The experiences posted by participants sometimes read like horror stories. Inevitably someone pipes up "community scheme living is not for the faint-hearted". If that group is anything to go by, no-one should ever buy a property in a community scheme!

Once over the shock of "how on earth can people behave this way", I always feel a sense of relief, gratitude, and pride to be living in Grotto Bay. Our experiences here are in such stark contrast to what people are experiencing elsewhere, and I think it is remarkable.

Some of the credit must surely go to our environment – we live in one of the most tranquil places so close to a city, with the ocean on one side, and a nature reserve on the other. Free-roaming wildlife shifts something in your soul when you spot them. Walking to the beach or on the hiking trails allows you to leave your troubles behind for a while. Helping a bokkie stuck in the fence or removing a snake out of a house back to the bush creates feelings of amazement and wonder.

But I think it really is all about our people. A community is always made by the attitude of those in it, and we have amazing owners and residents who are kind, tolerant, polite, respectful, and always willing to lend a helping hand within minutes of being asked. We encourage and support each other in times of need. We celebrate the successes of our fellow members, and residents, even if we don't know them personally. Lastly, but definitely not least, we pay our levies.

As this year draws to a close, I would like to thank everyone who has actively been involved in making Grotto Bay the great place that it is today and hope you will continue the journey with us in the years to come. Communities must evolve, as those who live in it change but with people like ours, what Grotto feels like in the future, can only be better than today.

I would like to thank Roy, our estate manager, for being the hardworking man that he is, and for being the golden thread between the board and the members. It wasn't long after Roy's appointment that it was evident that Roy has a way with dealing with people, and that a lot of the "small stuff" is resolved quickly and amicably. Roy, we definitely made the right choice!

I would like to thank the members of the board for every hour spent trying to make Grotto a better place for everyone. We are a team with very diverse opinions (much like the rest of the community) but it only adds to our strength. With such a big change in the make-up of the board, it has taken some time to find our rhythm, but thank you for sticking with us throughout.

To our managing agents – Lucinda and Riana. Thank you for always being willing to help. Even if it is late on a Sunday night and votes must be counted...Thank you for sticking with Grotto over so many years – we will miss you!

I wish everyone a wonderful Festive Season. I hope we all get some time to rest and celebrate with our loved ones. I look forward to tackling whatever 2022 might bring with these amazing people.

Festive greetings  
Marisa

## Some Housekeeping

There are a lot of cigarette butts lying around along the paths on the greenbelts, don't flick your cigarette butt! Remember that it is FIRE SEASON, and that smoking is not allowed while walking in the estate. Please inform your guests of this rule.

Check the Fire Hazard Board at the gate before making fires in fire pits and open braais, particularly in windy conditions.

### DANGER RATINGS CHART

	<b>Red</b> 76 > : Extreme
	<b>Orange</b> 61 - 75 : High
	<b>Yellow</b> 46 - 60 : Moderate
	<b>Green</b> 21 - 45 : Low
	<b>Blue</b> 0 - 20 : Insignificant



Please make sure that you pick up after you dog.



## Birds of Prey

We have had success with our Owl and should we say, Kestrel boxes this year, with several broods being successfully hatched. It would be wonderful to see these boxes in every close to encourage breeding and, in turn helping us with the rodent problem.



**Please do not use poison to control rodents unfortunately, it will control our birds too.**

## Why are our seals dying?

South African officials are investigating an alarming rise in seal deaths along the West Coast near Cape Town, with malnutrition one potential cause. James-Brent Styan, spokesman for the Western Cape Province's environment department, said seal deaths at this time of year were normal, but not to this extent.



If you see a seal that is bleeding or having convulsions, please contact the SPCA's Wildlife Unit on 021 700 4140 (office hours) or 083 326 1604 (after hours).

Do not pour water on seals on the beach – they will not dry out. All this does is cause unnecessary stress for these animals. Do not touch them and keep your children and dogs away. Seals have a terrific bite.

## Poachers



Sadly, poacher activity has increased in the last few months. Please be on the lookout and report to security if you suspect any activity. Do NOT approach them yourself.

Join us in thanking our security and patrol teams for the incredible sacrifice they make in keeping us safe. Please consider joining the security and patrol teams, they could really do with some help. Contact the estate manager for more details.

## CREW and the iNaturalist App - Connect with Nature!

The Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers (CREW) programme is a citizen science initiative that involves members of the South African public in the surveying, monitoring and conservation of plants. Founded in 2003, as a collaboration between the SANBI and the Botanical Society of South Africa, CREW operates in priority parts of the South African landscape.



With the help of passionate citizen scientists who make valuable contributions to the field of botanical research across South Africa, the CREW programme is able to survey and document the occurrence of plant taxa/species of conservation concern (ToCC) and identify which endemic plants require conservation.

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### How does CREW operate?

- CREW works with groups of volunteers who are capacitated to look for threatened plants in the field, with the aid of field identification sheets.
- Volunteers systematically survey sites with natural vegetation, and in the process identify the properties with natural vegetation in the best condition and with the highest concentration of endemic species.
- Data collected by CREW volunteers is used to update information of threatened plants for Red Listing and land-use planning.
- CREW provides general plant identification courses as well as field training.
- CREW groups work closely with local land use decision-makers, landowners, and government conservation extension staff to create awareness of the important plant species found on their land and are able to catalyse deals to conserve area.

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From CREW: *We will with great pleasure record the plant species that we find and share this with you. All our observations are generally on the iNaturalist citizen science platform. Please encourage residents to also share their observations on this platform. It is a great tool to help generate community spirit etc.*

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One of the world's most popular nature apps, iNaturalist helps you identify the plants and animals around you. Get connected with a community of over a million scientists and naturalists who can help you learn more about nature! What's more, by recording and sharing your observations, you'll create research quality data for scientists working to better understand and protect nature. iNaturalist is a joint initiative by the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society.

That's the vision behind iNaturalist. So, if you like recording your findings from the outdoors, or if you just like learning about life, join us! Can also be downloaded from the iStore for Apple or the Play Store for android.

# Bees

The 4 beehives in the reserve all have bees in them. It's wonderful to be able to give them a home and in turn, they pollenate our fynbos. This project may be extended to different sites in the reserve.

## Did you know?

- Bees have 5 eyes
- Male bees in the hive are called drones
- Bees fly at about 30 km/h
- Female bees in the hive (except the queen) are called worker bees
- Number of eggs laid by queen: 2,000 per day is the maximum
- Losing its stinger will cause a bee to die
- Bees have been here about 30 million years!
- Bees carry pollen on their hind legs in a pollen basket or corbicula
- An average beehive can hold around 50,000 bees
- Foragers must collect nectar from about 2 million flowers to make 500g of honey
- The average forager makes about one twelfth of a teaspoon of honey in her lifetime
- The principal form of communication among honeybees is through chemicals called pheromones



## Bucking the trend: the African Black Oystercatcher as a recent conservation success story!

The African Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus moquini*) is a charismatic, southern African near-endemic, wader species, that is often seen as a flagship species for coastal bird conservation, as it was recently down-listed regionally to Least Concern on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

To celebrate this rare conservation success story, BirdLife South Africa named it the 2018 Bird of the Year and ran a year-long programme in collaboration with the Nature's Valley Trust highlighting aspects of the species' biology, current threats, and conservation success. We used data collected by the Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP1 and SABAP2) to examine changes in the species' range and relative abundance, both in the records between the two projects, as well as trends within the SABAP2 sampling period (2008–2017). This case study enabled us to assess whether such metrics can accurately reflect abundance and distributional changes in a species. We found increases in the reported range and the reporting rates between the two Atlas projects, and that the SABAP2 reporting rate was stable. Regionally, across four coastal categories, the reporting rate was lowest in KwaZulu-Natal, though this region also showed an increase in the probability of reporting during the SABAP2 period. While corroborating the recent change in the species' conservation status, we also provide good evidence that the long-term SABAP data can be used successfully to assess population trends and range changes over time.





## Fun Ocean Facts

- Around 97% of all water is in the oceans and they cover around 71% of Earth's surface.
- Pacific Ocean is the biggest one.
- You can find mountains and volcanoes on the bottom of oceans.
- The deepest point in the ocean is the Mariana Trench.
- Oceanic evaporation is the source of most rainfall.
- Ocean temperatures determine climate.
- Earth is the only known planet that has oceans (as far as we know for now).
- The biggest animal in the ocean is the blue whale.
- We have explored less than 5% of the ocean (to date).

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## Nurdle clean-up

A nurdle is a small plastic pellet used to create virtually anything plastic. From plastic bottles to automobile parts, they're widely used in plastic production. They are the raw material for everything that's made of plastic. But even if they're tiny, their damage is giant and immeasurable. Because of their size, it's hard to keep them contained, and they spill into rivers, waterways, and the ocean.

Nurdles come in all sorts of colours, and their size and shape make it very easy for marine life to mistake them for food. Fish, turtles, seabirds, and all kinds of marine animals are eating these pellets. Their stomachs fill with plastic, which their bodies can't handle. The plastic debris adds up in their stomach, so they don't eat, and eventually die of starvation— with a stomach full of plastic.

We were contacted by a lady called Collette who asked for permission to take a team to Long Beach for a Nurdle Clean-up. Of course, we agreed and many bags of nurdles were collected.



# Kid's Corner

Colour in



## Christmas Fun

A Christmas market was held at the CC on the 5th December. Father Christmas and his elves arrived at the delight of the children. Not sure who had the most fun.



## Story Time

### 'Twas the Night Before Christmas

By Clement Clarke Moore

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all  
through the house  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;  
The stockings were hung by the chimney with  
care,  
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be  
there;  
The children were nestled all snug in their  
beds,  
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their  
heads;  
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,  
Had just settled down for a long winter's nap,  
When out on the lawn there arose such a clat-  
ter,  
I sprang from the bed to see what was the  
matter.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.  
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow  
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below,  
When, what to my wondering eyes should  
appear,  
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,  
  
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,  
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.  
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,  
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them  
by name;  
"Now, DASHER! now, DANCER! now, PRANCER  
and VIXEN!  
On, COMET! on CUPID! on, DONNER and  
BLITZEN!  
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!  
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"  
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,  
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to  
the sky,  
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,  
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas  
too.  
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof  
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.  
As I drew in my hand, and was turning around,  
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a  
bound.  
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his  
foot,  
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes  
and soot;  
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,  
And he looked like a peddler just opening his  
pack.

His eyes -- how they twinkled! his dimples  
how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a  
cherry!  
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,  
And the beard of his chin was as white as the  
snow;  
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,  
And the smoke it encircled his head like a  
wreath;  
He had a broad face and a little round belly,  
That shook, when he laughed like a bowlful of  
jelly.  
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,  
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of  
myself;  
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,  
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to  
dread;  
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his  
work,  
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a  
jerk,  
And laying his finger aside of his nose,  
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose;  
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a  
whistle,  
And away they all flew like the down of a this-  
tle.  
But I heard him exclaim, as he drove out of  
sight,  
HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND TO ALL A  
GOOD-NIGHT!

