



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA
STAD KAAPSTAD

ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & SPATIAL PLANNING
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Landi Louw
Site Manager

T: 021 444 0315 E: landi.louw@capetown.gov.za

CONSERVATION WISE

Conserving Biodiversity for Future Generations

QUARTERLY REPORT OF THE MILNERTON RACECOURSE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

APRIL – JUNE 2015



Photos left to right: Karoo prinia, Cape Teal, Lanner Falcon (Photo: Harvey Downes).



Funded by the **Royal Ascot Master Property Owners' Association** (RAMPOA) in partnership with the City of Cape Town and the Cape Town Environmental Education Trust (CTEET).



Cape Grysbok Management

The **Cape Grysbok swap** between Milnerton Racecourse and the Atlantic Beach Golf Estate in Melkbos took place on 13 and 14 April. The Table Bay Nature Reserve and CTEET staff as well as about 30 students, learners and volunteers assisted with the programme. The team successfully captured one female and one male from Milnerton Racecourse as well as two males from the Atlantic Beach Estate in Melkbos.

The animals were swapped between the two sites and all of them were micro-chipped by the City's veterinarian for future identification during management interventions such as these. The aim of the project was to control population numbers at Milnerton Racecourse and to ensure the genetic diversity in the populations at both sites. Milnerton Racecourse is the first City nature reserve section where a Cape grysbok genetic exchange project was successfully executed.

Photographs of the Cape Grysbok project can be seen below:



Nocturnal Fauna Survey

A **nocturnal fauna survey** was done by the Site Manager and one CPUT student, in both the Northern and Southern Areas of Milnerton Racecourse, on the evening of 7 May. A Cape dwarf chameleon, with a length of only 2 cm from the nose to the tip of the tail, was found during the survey (**photo right**). According to literature, juvenile Cape dwarf chameleons are approximately 2 cm long while adults can grow up to 17 cm. The world's smallest known chameleon species, in Madagascar, grows only to about 1.5 cm as adults.



Bugs Bunny

A European house rabbit was seen by the Site Manager in the Southern Area on 25 June. The rabbit ran from the Southern Area of the reserve into Sandown Crescent. European rabbits can become ecological pests as they are highly adaptable and can reproduce quickly. They are able to feed off indigenous rare plants. If left uncontrolled, they can degrade areas by displacing indigenous animals by competing with them for food resources. A small non-lethal trap cage was installed in the Southern Area to try and catch the rabbit. If it is caught it will either be returned to its owner or put up for adoption at the SPCA.

Dog Attack Leads to Loss of Cape Grysbok

A dead male Cape Grysbok was reported to the Site Manager on 25 May. Birkdale Village resident, Mr Greg Packham, found the animal stuck in a pallisade fence in the Northern Area of Milnerton Racecourse. Mr Packham removed the Grysbok by cutting one of the pallisade fence poles between which it was stuck. The animal then died shortly after. The rump of the Cape Grysbok was covered in blood.

The Site Manager took the carcass to the Table View Animal Hospital for a post-mortem. The vet determined that the bite marks were that of a domestic dog. The Cape Grysbok was scanned for a microchip but none was found. This indicates that this individual was not one of the males which were relocated from Atlantic Beach Estate during April 2015.

The Site Manager, on behalf of the Environmental Management Committee of Royal Ascot would like to thank Mr Packham for his attempts to rescue the Cape Grysbok. The Committee also requests, as per the OEMP of Royal Ascot and the City of Cape Town Animal By-Law of 2010, that dog owners keep their dogs on leashes at all times and that dogs are under no circumstances allowed into the Nature Reserve. Dogs are not allowed within the horse training facility. Transgress will be liable to a fine. People can report dogs within the Nature Reserve to the Site Manager's radio at 0219574725 ext. 2413133. A photograph and the time and date of the incident can also be sent to the Site Manager at landi.louw@capetown.gov.za.



Photos left: The dead male Cape Grysbok that was removed from the pallisade fence in the Northern Area of Milnerton Racecourse.

Fungi – Mushrooms

A variety of mushroom species were noted in the Northern and Southern Areas of Milnerton Racecourse during the month of June. These species have not been identified yet and are currently awaiting identification on the iSpot network at www.ispot.org.za. In 1991, research estimated that there are 1.5 million fungi species on earth. At the time, only 70 000 species have been described.

It is important to remember that all mushrooms are fungi, but that not all fungi are mushrooms. Depending on their method of feeding, mushrooms can be divided into 4 categories, namely: saprotrophic, mycorrhizal, parasitic and endophytic. Saprotrophic mushrooms are decomposers and grow on decay. Mycorrhizal mushrooms grow on plants and form a symbiotic relationship with them. Parasitic mushrooms also grow on plants but in this case the relationship only benefits the mushroom. Endophytes form a mysterious symbiotic relationship with plants by invading the host tissue, but unlike parasitic mushrooms, the host plant remains healthy and seems to benefit from the invasion.



“Raindrops ain’t fallin’ on our heads”

Rainfall records and water levels measured during 2015 at Milnerton Racecourse have been exceptionally low so far.

Table 1: A - The accumulative rainfall in mm for the past 6 years; B - The water levels of Wetland 1 in cm for the past 6 years; C - The water levels of Wetland 2 in cm for the past 6 years.

Table 1:

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
A: June	245	156	247	313	345	158
B: June	70	14	26	56	45	4
C: June	71.8	43	61	67.5	48	21

Volunteers

Volunteers did much fieldwork and research at Milnerton Racecourse during the past quarter. The majority of volunteers at Milnerton Racecourse are students from academic institutions, which require that they complete certain practical components of their training.

The volunteers are supervised by the Site Manager and include students from the University of South Africa (UNISA), the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and Camps Bay High School. Fieldwork done by volunteers includes invasive vegetation clearing, litter clean-ups, path maintenance as well as grysbok captures and relocation. Monitoring activities include fixed-point photography and measuring of water levels in wetlands.

On 25 June volunteers collected data for a research project on vegetation communities. The project evaluated minimum required plot sizes as well as frequency, density and canopy cover of plant species. This was done in both the Northern and Southern Areas of Milnerton Racecourse, where ecological burns were conducted during 2012 (Northern Area) and 2008 (Southern Area) respectively. The students will compare the data collected at the two sites.

For those who want to know more about working as a volunteer at the nature reserve, send an email to the Site Manager at landi.louw@capetown.gov.za.



The volunteers and Site Manager from left to right, Olivia Stevens (UNISA); Tania Morkel (UNISA); Landi Louw; Jack Nortje' (CPUT); Deneesha Moodley (Camps Bay High) and Sangesake Speelman (CPUT).



CPUT volunteers taking a “selfie” at the entrance of Milnerton Racecourse. They are from left to right, Sangesakhe Speelman; Tayla Hadwen and Julia Hollander.

Upcoming events

The Milnerton Racecourse Annual Springwalks will be held from 15-20 September 2015. Secure a spot and book now to experience a guided walk through the unique and globally significant fynbos in the reserve.

A total of 212 rare plant types have been recorded in the area so far. During the walk visitors will be exposed to the Southern Area of the reserve, which is normally closed off to the public. Please make bookings in advance by contacting the Site Manager at landi.louw@capetown.gov.za.

Photos right: Some of the beautiful scenery that can be seen during spring at Milnerton Racecourse.

