



NEWSLETTER

The "Greater Kyalami Conservancy"

April 2014



GEKCO AGM

Please join us at the GEKCO AGM on 15 March to speak to the GEKCO committee and hear about the projects of the past year and what is planned for 2014. If you have a passion for the environment come and find out how to get involved!



GEKCO WEBSITE

The website had a major revamp last year and is updated regularly with GEKCO news, sightings and current development applications and contact information. If you have any suggestions for the website please send to info@gekco.co.za as we strive to provide useful, up to date information.

Biodiversity Project - Species List

GEKCO has been compiling your wildlife sightings and has added a couple of new species to the list of species found in the conservancy. We are also getting great photos of wildlife on the camera trap confirming Black-Backed Jackal with pups, Slender Mongoose, Scrub Hare, Guinea fowl, Porcupine and a Large Spotted Genet.

Please email your sightings to biodiversity@gekco.co.za or post them on the GEKCO Facebook site. We've recently had great photos of a Spotted Eagle Owl, Slender Mongoose and pups, and a very pregnant Flap Necked Chameleon ... it is always exciting to see what lives here!

The species list is an ongoing project with plant species, reptiles, insects and butterflies that need to be identified. If you would like to help with this in any way, please contact Tyrone at biodiversity@gekco.co.za. The species list can be downloaded on the GEKCO website.



Grass Owls

50/50 was again filming in the conservancy and we can expect to see this footage soon on a programme dedicated to African Grass Owls.

GEKCO would like to draft a plan to maintain habitat and hunting grounds for the endangered African Grass Owl as well as Marsh Owls, Barn Owls and spotted Eagle Owls found in the conservancy. If you think you have suitable habitat – or would like to find out if you can assist in this please contact us.

UPDATE ON LOCAL ISSUES AND EVENTS

Green Scorpions - GEKCO has reported a number of environmental transgressions over the past few months on Riversands Farm, Kleve AH, and Sun Valley. If you have a wetland on your property, please ensure you know the legislation - wetlands are protected by law and stiff penalties can result if illegal damage occurs.

Poaching - It appears that poaching is on the increase again, with reports of poaching in the Riversands area. Please check your property for snares and educate staff on the importance of looking after our wildlife. If any hunters are spotted in the area, please phone Mandy Collins on **072 361-3148**.

Human Rights Day in Diepsloot - Bontle ke Tihago and WASSUP, two environmental groups in Diepsloot organised an environmental awareness day around recycling, water conservation and sanitation in line with the constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment. GEKCO participated in the clean up and awareness campaign. All agreed the day was a success and look forward to future collaborations.

Shumbashaba Officials Visit - Gekco and Shumbashaba invited officials from the City and Province to experience Shumbashaba's programmes with the Diepsloot community. All had an opportunity to interact with the horses and got a feel for what equestrian therapy entails. Teachers from Diepsloot have driven out to find Shumbashaba when they saw improved behaviour and concentration in their students, and students and teachers were on hand to give testimonials. The enthusiasm of participants was tangible and Shumbashaba's successful approach is a clear example of the benefit of the Kyalami area to the City of Joburg.



DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS UPDATE

Legal Action on Riversands

The newly formed Responsible Development Forum will be applying for a legal review of the decisions on the Riversands development. GEKCO is partnering with Saddlebrook Estate, Dainfern Residents Association and the Kyalami Green Neighbourhood and will be appealing for financial assistance to cover the legal costs. For further information please contact chair@gekco.co.za

K56 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

Margie Donde has collected signatures and now has over 2000 signed petitions against the K56. This was handed over to the consultants compiling the Draft EIA with a map showing bridle trails through the area. Horse riders use the roads in Glenferness and the map clearly showed that building the K56 would cut Glenferness off from the rest of Kyalami.

Meeting with Development Planning

The Green Neighbourhood project was presented to directors of Development Planning in February. The department understood the need to maintain Kyalami as an equestrian area and open space as they recognise this area is unique and an asset to the City of Joburg. All of the work being done to raise awareness through petitions, photos, maps and studies is helping to get the message across – so thank you to everyone for the time you have spent in writing objections, taking photographs and attending public meetings.

Green Rates Tarrif

The City of Joburg is considering a 'green' tariff for conservation areas and developments that follow green practices. It is still early stages, but the conversation is happening and GEKCO, together with Andrew Barker and the Glen Austin Conservancy are promoting a reduced rate for conservancies. We will send more information when it is available.