

BUSHLIFE

NEWS FROM THE WILDERNESS TRUST OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

1999 NUMBER 1.

WELCOME

Welcome to our revitalized "Bushlife" - the voice of the Wilderness Trust of Southern Africa that incorporates the Lapalala Wilderness School.

It has been sometime since we have published news from the Waterberg and there is much to tell!

AN ADDITIONAL STRING TO OUR BOW

The Waterberg Environmental Centre at Melkrievier is up and running and is being used very successfully by the environmental school as part of the learning experience for the children. It really brings the history of the Rhino species alive and gives an insight into these beautiful animals and why they must be conserved. The added cultural aspect of the Museum takes us back to our roots and provides a window on the rich history of the people who lived in the area many years ago.

The centre is managed by the Wilderness Trust and a special thank you must go to all those who assisted in restoration - particularly Mr. John Young who was the initial project manager and instrumental in getting the Centre off the ground so to speak.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

A cliché perhaps but very true - our children are the future.

If they are not given the opportunity to experience and learn about nature what hope do we have for future generations.

We must acknowledge the foresight of those companies who believe in investing in our future. Those organisations that sponsor the children of their employees to come to the Lapalala Wilderness School are ultimately contributing towards a better world for us all.

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Spreading the Word

Lapalala has really been going "international" during the past months.

Whilst the African continent was well represented during 1998 we also had our share of countries sending their young ambassadors from across the waters.

Four South African students, (sponsored by the Wilderness Trust) joined ten students from the United Kingdom (sponsored by Two Hand Productions U.K.) on a six day awareness trail.

There was a school from Tanzania - the International American School of Tanzania who were at Lapalala in February, and who came out again in November. Both the pupils and the teachers got great benefit from their time with us and hopefully they have spread the conservation message since getting home.

Not to be outdone, Botswana was represented 3 times during 1998 - Livingstone House came in March, Northside Primary in May and Marula Primary in June.

It is very heartening to see that awareness of and interest in matters environmental is spreading across borders and continents. It is a message that must reach as many people as possible right across the globe.

During March the United College of South East Asia sent 10 of their students across for a 5 day environmental experience. To see these pupils out in the bush is really something special. What we take for granted every day of our lives i.e. green grass, fresh air, rivers that you can drink out of, wilderness areas that we can visit at the drop of a hat - they gaze at in wonderment.

CATHAY PACIFIC

Every July sees the arrival of ± 30 students from the Pacific Rim countries. These young representatives are sponsored by Cathay Pacific Airways, and together with ± 12 South African children spend 7 days at Lapalala, not just learning about the environment but also about each other. It is a time of realisation and awakening for a lot of these students when they discover the differences in cultures, foods, values and attitudes amongst the various nationalities.

In 1998 we hosted students from 9 countries - Hong Kong, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, Philippines and India. It was a very special time for all concerned and there were the usual buckets of tears when it came to saying farewell at Johannesburg International Airport.



A very colourful "Wedding" role play evening.

The Lapalala Wilderness School, under the auspices of the Wilderness Trust, has today become recognised internationally for its work amongst students and teachers who come from as far afield as Asia, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom and of course South Africa.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Alpha Limited send a group every year and in the words of Peter Buchner (ex Alpha).

"Alpha became involved with the Lapalala Wilderness School when re-evaluating its corporate social expenditure particularly as it related to donations. The Company at that stage had a core value of being a caring organisation of integrity that reflected the stance of the family of like-minded management and employees who, in the main, shared a concern for the environment.

The then deputy managing director suggested that the company consider education as a pro-active means of ensuring sustainable environmental development as opposed to direct donations, which, although of value, were not targeted and not always of reciprocal benefit to the company. Lapalala school was called in and a cost effective programme targetted at educating children of employees at every level was born. The objective was successfully achieved with the guidance and co-operation of the Lapalala staff."

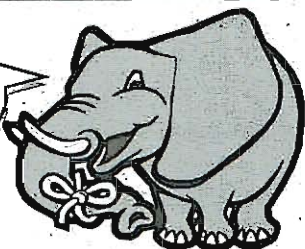
Peter is no longer with the Alpha group but Alphas' commitment to the all round education of the employees' children still goes on.

Commercial Union have introduced this to their employees, reasoning behind it being "that it is wonderful to be able to afford these children the chance of a lifetime to get out in the wild and experience the bush first hand." ...says Sue Thompson from Commercial Union - we hope to see Commercial Union expanding on this.

The Ipelegeng Youth Leadership group attended a four day course. This was sponsored through the generosity of Gencor/Anglo American and de Beers Group Chairman's Fund.

WAS IT NOT CHIEF SEATTLE WHO SAID"WE DO NOT INHERIT THE EARTH FROM OUR FOREFATHERS, WE BORROW IT FROM OUR CHILDREN"

Remember the 3 R's Recycle, Re-use and Reduce.



REPORT ON THE SA BREWERIES PIETERSBURG BRANCH, SPONSORED TRAIL

LAPALALA WILDERNESS SCHOOL: 4 - 7 DECEMBER 1998

S.A. Breweries in Pietersburg sent 40 children on a 4 day course during December and a lot of fun was had by all of those who attended. The children were drawn from employees, family friends and different schools in Pietersburg.

In the words of the trails officer ...

The participants were learners from various schools from various communities in Pietersburg and the children of employees, and family of employees, from SA Breweries, Pietersburg. The average age was 14-15 years old.

It was a very worthwhile and successful trail. The children from the schools were selected because of their interest in the environment and leadership potential. The participants were very co-operative, helpful and what impressed us most, was the fact that they deliberately used the opportunity to interact with the other cultures and children from the other schools. As a group they made the most of the opportunity.

Asked what the trail meant to them, the answer came unanimously: "We have made new wonderful friends and we will cherish these friendships. Together we will attempt to improve the environment in Pietersburg." The general feeling was that personal growth had taken place and that they are very grateful for the opportunity that was given to them by SA Breweries.

The feedback about the programme was also very positive. They enjoyed the programme and would not like to change anything. Most of them would like to return to Lapalala Wilderness School.

The Teachers, who accompanied their learners, were very grateful for the opportunity given to their pupils. They were impressed with the programme and indicated that they would like to bring their classes to Lapalala Wilderness School for enrichment courses.

The trail was very successful and we as Education Officers are very grateful that Mr Mich Makeng made this experience possible. We are aware that Mr Makeng must have a very busy schedule, and therefore appreciated it very much that he made the effort to come all the way to Lapalala to spend the morning with the children.

Tumelo Moloko's dedication and enthusiasm towards this project is very encouraging and her very wise words to the children were appreciated. We need to say thank you to her for coming all the way from Johannesburg on her own even though she was not feeling well.

In conclusion we would like to thank SA Breweries for once again supporting Environmental Education and the personal development of the youth of South Africa.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO ?

Although there are many schools who pass through the Lapalala School - there are twice as many who would relish the opportunity but just cannot afford it. It is these schools who need the assistance of the business world or other willing, caring sponsors.

The objective of the Wilderness Trust of Southern Africa is "to educate young people of all races in the awareness of conservation of our natural resources and total environment". The guidance and interpretation in the field is structured around this core philosophy. Our officers are trained to impart an all round knowledge of matters environmental and in conjunction with the teaching staff of the visiting schools we tailor the balance of the course to suit specific needs. Uppermost at all times the conservation message comes through

In addition to the conservation ethic, the centre concentrates on "people building" and the participants are involved in various "life skills" programmes that help to increase self-confidence and personal esteem.

1998 saw a number of underprivileged schools badly needing funding to attend our courses. Unfortunately this funding was not forthcoming, and in keeping with our core objective the Wilderness Trust sponsored some of these schools either partially or 100% - they were:

- Pietersburg Place of Safety
- Kingsway Centre of Concern
- Kuo Ting Chinese school
- Vaalwater School
- Rose Act from Alexander Township in Johannesburg
- Heritage Academy from Pietermaritzburg.

Unfortunately our coffers are not bottomless and funding is desperately needed for the ongoing participation of these schools in environmental education.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

Donations:

The Wilderness Trust of Southern Africa wish to acknowledge the generous donations from the following individuals and corporations:

- Mutual and Federal
- Blue Circle Limited
- Commercial Union
- Lorenzo and Stella Chiappini Fund
- JCI Community Fund
- Northern Province Department of Health and Welfare
- SOS Mamelodi Village
- Anglo American Group Chairman's Fund
- S A Breweries Beer Division
- Ipelegeng Community Centre
- Sentrachem Limited
- The Ruth and Anita Wise Trust
- Stella and Paul Loewenstein Charitable and Educational Trust
- PGSI Management Services
- Gill Sagar
- Rose Act
- Jerry Keating



Our Educational Officers Past and Present

The centre is staffed by 4 permanent officers and when the need arises we call on the services of our temporary officers who, whilst not being employed full time, are always available to lend a hand.

Allow us to introduce you to:

Permanents

Hanneke van der Merwe - Needing no introduction, Hanneke has been running the Lapalala Wilderness School since 1987 and has consistently maintained her dedication, enthusiasm and commitment to the sharing of her knowledge and understanding of conservation and environmental matters.



Oldrich van Schalkwyk - Oldrich has been with us since Sept 1997. He has a Dip. Nature Conservation as well as a B.Tech in Nature Conservation and studied at the Pretoria Technikon. Oldrich started his career with the then Dept. of Nature Conservation

Our most heartfelt thanks go to the following Trustees who, during the year under review (Mar 98 - Apr 98), gave unstintingly of their time in the managing on the affairs of the organisation: Mr. Harry Boots, Mr. Dick Burton, Mrs. Jane Kerr, Mrs. Anna Merz, Mrs. Conita Walker and Mr. John Young. Our appreciation also goes to Mrs. Alida Pistorius who was involved with the running of the Johannesburg office during this time.

A very warm welcome to:

OUR NEW BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Bottom from L to R: Conita Walker, Elizabeth Parker, Janet Farrant, Richard Parker.
Top from L to R: Ken Cowie, Lionel Woodward, Clive H Walker (Chairman)

in Lebowa, he moved on to The Kruger National Park where he served his time in the Interpretive Services Section. The Wildlife and Breeding Research Centre was his next stop - this is an Endangered Wildlife Trust working group.



Tracy Crickmore-Thompson - Tracy studied at the University of Witwatersrand where she obtained her B.Sc. in Zoology and Geography. She also did 2 years of Archeology. Tracy has been with Lapalala since March 1996 and prior to this she worked at the River Bear Lodge in Magaliesberg and did a 3-month stint in the Caprivi Strip managing a safari camp.



And the new "kid" on the block...

Xander Combrink - Xander is from Stellenbosch and has a BA in Human Resource Management. He has decided to turn his attentions to Natural Resource Management and we are very pleased to have him on board.



Xander is still studying for his Nature Conservation Diploma and comes to us in a student capacity.

HOUSE STAFF

In addition to our field staff - we must also pay tribute to the "house" staff without whose help and assistance we could not function as efficiently as we do. They keep things ticking over back at the "ranch" and their willingness and cheery dispositions are appreciated.

(Pic on page 4)



From L to R - William Ramasobana (12 yrs service), Johanna Ramasobana (1 yrs service), Annetjie Tshelane (7 yrs service) and Nellie Maphuting (2 yrs service)

Temporary Officers

Elizabeth Lambert (nee Swart) studied at Saasveld in George and completed her diploma in Nature Conservation at the end of 1995. Liz was a full time officer at Lapalala until Stephen snaffled her away in March last year - luckily we have managed to retain her services on a part time basis.

(pic not available at time of going to press)

Nan Jackson has been helping at the centre for the past 3 years. She completed her diploma in Nature Conservation in 1996 after 6 years of hard swot. Nan decided to "go back to school" after 28 years and is putting her studies to good use at Lapalala. Nan has also taken over editorship of Bushlife.



Miles Holtshausen - Miles studied for his Dip. Nature Conservation at the Pretoria Technikon. Not satisfied with this he went on to the Pretoria University where he completed 4 years of his B.Sc. in Ecology. Miles then served 1 year as a Game Ranger on the Louis Trichardt Air Force Base game reserve - the year in which the Base was awarded the EWT trophy for the best game reserve in the entire Armed Forces. During 1990/91 Miles was a full time officer at the Wilderness school, he has now gone back to studying and is doing his B.Tech in Nature Conservation with the Pretoria Technikon.



Officers Past

Avril van Niekerk - Avril spent 2 years at Lapalala. She was lured away by the Delta Park Environmental Centre and is on

secondment to the Rand Water Board where she is spreading the water conservation message throughout the country.

Kate Groch - Entered the academic teaching profession, was then offered the opportunity of a lifetime which was to accompany Dave Varty and his family on their 12 month sabbatical through Africa. Kate was employed by Dave and Shana to tutor their young children en route. Kate has since returned and is back at her teaching post.

Grant Vrey - Joined an up-market game lodge as a ranger. However, Grant has returned to the fold as a temporary officer.

Maria Pooe - Maria took up a student position with The Wilderness Trust and proved to be a sterling officer. Her cheery disposition lightened our days and the children took to Maria like ducks to water. Maria has left us to complete her studies. Kgotso has popped the question yet again and Maria finally agreed to marry him. We wish them both all the luck in the world.

Zuzette de Beer - Zettie has sadly left us after 2 years. She packed her bags and left for... no not Perth... Melbourne in fact. Zuzette decided to see the world and has embarked on a 12-month adventure starting in Australia and ending who knows where. A very brave move for a very little girl. We have had news of Zettie and she is having a ball...



DROP US A LINE

Unfortunately we are not able to contact all of the schools, teachers, and students who have attended our courses - I am sure that there are many of you who would like to share a special moment you may have had there, something that maybe happened to you, or just a bit of feedback on the projects that you undertook and that you feel may assist others. Please drop Nan a line so that we can include it in our next issue.

Contact details:

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Snail Mail:

P O Box 1037 Randburg 2125

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This edition of Bushlife has been sponsored in part by: Steve Lowery Advertising & Design - (011) 679 3694 K & F Colour cc - (011) 478 0666

WELCOME...

- Mr John Dewar
- Miss Sylvia Gordon
- Mr A G Holmes
- Mr M P H Krett
- Mr B A Christen
- Mr Colin and Gillian Burgess



New Friends of the Wilderness Trust School and we would like to record our thanks and appreciation to each of the 96 Friends for their continued support.

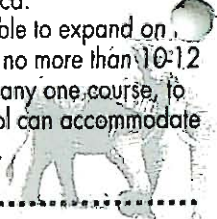
MAZDA SUPPLIES THE WHEELS

Since the inception of The Mazda Wildlife Fund, nearly a decade ago, the Wilderness School has enjoyed the use of transport provided by this Fund. The School presently has the use of a 15-seater Marathon, which has proven to be of great value in the environment programme. A special word of appreciation is extended to the Mazda Wildlife Fund for their generous support.

Word of Thanks

Through the generosity of Dale Parker and his family, owners of Lapalala Wilderness, the Lapalala Wilderness School is privileged to operate in an outstanding area of natural beauty. The School has enjoyed this privilege since 1981 and approximately 40 000 children and teachers have attended courses as a result of this gesture. Without Dale Parker and his family's continued commitment, both moral and financial, the School would cease to exist. This contribution on behalf of the Parker family stands as one of the most significant within the field of environmental education in South Africa.

The School has been able to expand on original concept, when no more than 10-12 students were taken at any one course, to today, where the School can accommodate up to 100 participants.



FRIENDS OF THE WILDERNESS TRUST

Encourage someone you know to become a "Friend" of the Wilderness Trust in order to spread the need for environmental education. All friends receive our newsletter "Bushlife", "Wilderness Sanctuary", a "Friends" sticker, a certificate and special rates at Lapalala Bush Camps and Kolobe Camp.

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