

News Bulletin

13 February 2018



RAPTOR'S
View

Home Owners Association

ESTATE NEWS

2018 has started with a bang! The estate has tackled various major projects over the last two years. We have worked on our electrical grid, built a bulk water storage facility, acquired a base for the home owners association office, reduced bad debt extensively, commenced with the Telkom fibre project, adopted the improved architectural rules, achieved the transfer of the common property into RVHOA's name - after many tortuous years of seemingly little progress - and found time to have a few social events like the river braai and tank wetting celebration.

Our focus this year is on taking the estate forward with the consolidation of all current projects, bringing them to final completion and maintenance of the estate and its infrastructure. This includes roads, fences and the improvement of security - particularly on the boundaries covering perimeter fences and the contractors gate.

We look forward to maintaining the status of the estate as one of the top residential wildlife estates in South Africa.

This is a long newsletter as it encompasses December and January news including important drought management issues. Please do take the time to read this newsletter.

House Circuit Breakers

During December the estate management had numerous call outs for main circuit breakers tripping. As per the electrical reticulation project, members agreed that they would manage their energy requirements, and that the association would not be prescriptive of how this would be done. Energy efficient appliances, gas cooking hobs etc. were recommended. Some households are still not managing their energy requirements, and as a result impact on estate resources.

Residents will now be charged a callout fee of R400 for estate staff to reset any circuit breakers after hours, and R300 for office hours call outs.

If you need help in how to manage your electrical requirements effectively please contact Byron who will put you in touch with companies that can do an energy audit on your home and make recommendations.

Telkom Update

This project has finally commenced! The telecommunications room is expected to be completed by mid-February, the subcontractor, *Grandselect*, have already pulled 3km of fiber into existing sleeves and into some new trenches. Expected project time lines are +/- 8 months.

Telkom will host a resident's information session closer to the end of the project. At this meeting they will facilitate subscriptions to services.

We will be sending out a separate update with the finer details of how the project roll out will work and information and requirements for the connections to the houses in due course.

Maruleng Rates Investigation Update

A small team of RV residents have looked into the Maruleng rates increases, please see the attached file for their results.

Malaria Indoor Spray

It was hoped that this project would commence in January but the Malaria Eradication Committee are facing a funding challenge. It was hoped that the spraying could be offered free of charge (i.e. covered by funds raised through government and NGO initiatives), but unfortunately this cannot be done for the first spraying as the expected spike in malaria cases occur sooner than funding can be obtained.

As a result the following action to prevent malaria cases on the estate is suggested:

- o Three professional companies be used to do indoor residual spraying only.
- o K-Otrine to be used for spraying as it is target specific and does not have secondary effects on other creatures
- o The houses to be sprayed are to be billed at a reduced rate of R550, these special rates are agreed by the professional companies.
- o The billing of individual homes will be done by the malaria eradication committee and not by RVHOA

Should you still be interested in this program, please notify Wilna by email info@raptorsviewhoa.co.za

Recycling, the what and how

We have received numerous questions about the recycling and waste, especially from our newer residents.

Waste is collected on a weekly basis every Thursday between 7:00 and 15:00.

The plastic bag protocol is:

- Black or the strong gray bags are used for non-recyclable (wet & organic matter) waste.
- Colored bags (red, green, white, etc.) are used for recyclable waste.

Items for recycling include:

cardboard (thick packing boxes, thin foodstuff boxes)

paper (newspaper, wrapping paper, computer paper)

tins (beer & drinks cans, tinned food cans)

glass bottles & jars

all plastics

hard plastic (plastic pipes, plastic chairs, cleaning/detergent plastic bottles, shampoo & deodorant bottles)

soft plastics (carrier bags, shrink wrap, bubble wrap)

scrap metal

tin foil

polystyrene (vegetable & fruit punnets)

Items NOT for recycling include:

wet waste (foodstuffs, disposable nappies)

wood

material

silicone

batteries

light bulbs & fluorescent tubes

printer cartridges

electronics

screws & nails (unless in a glass jar)

There is a recycling drop off point at Pick 'n Pay (between the supermarket and bottle store) where light bulbs & fluorescent tubes, batteries and printer cartridges can be disposed of; and Lowveld Power Tools (Moose/Panther streets – next to Splinters) kindly take defunct electronic items.

Very important: waste that is loose in the bins will not be collected (i.e., not in a bag)
Cardboard boxes are collected at the houses on waste days. If there are too many (moving boxes) they will be collected on Friday's.

Once at the waste yard the recycle bags are sorted according to plastics, cardboard, glass etc. and collected by a local recycling company.

The municipality collects Raptors View's non-recyclables.



The RV waste yard and recycling cages (at the contractor's gate)

Telephone Books

We have about 264 new Telkom telephone directories available for residents at the HOA office. Please do collect a copy when next passing the office.

Entry Procedures

Each of our gates has different entry procedures. The main gates are geared for visitors and residents, and the contractor's gate is geared for service providers and contractors. Please ensure your contractors and service providers use the correct gate for security reasons.

SANBS Blood Drive

Southern Cross Schools held a blood drive on 18 January and the following feedback was received from the headmaster:

“Thank you so much to all the members of our Hoedspruit community who came to donate blood yesterday. We are very pleased to inform you all that the target of 27 units was reached and surpassed. A total of well over 30 units of blood was collected. The next blood drive at Southern Cross will be on Thursday 15 March. We look forward to seeing you all again then.”

WILDLIFE & ECOLOGY NEWS

Ecological Report

Attached is the latest ecological report from the Animal Production Institute.

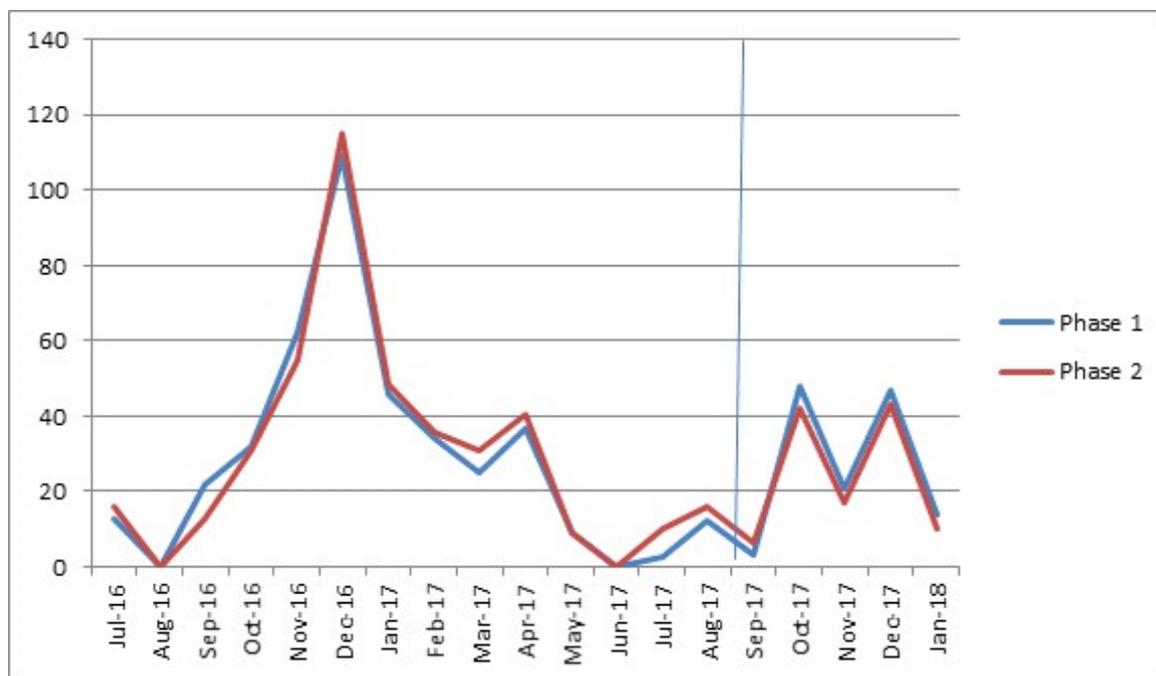
A veld monitoring program has been running for several years - set up under Dr Mike Peel - and forms the basis for the ecological report. Dr Peel is a well-respected specialist in this area and his work includes biomass studies, game counts and recommendations for a large percentage of reserves in this area and has done for many years, he is also a consultant to Kruger National Park.

A point that can be highlighted is that we are, without doubt, in a drought cycle. Active management of animal populations are and will be required and as such the supplementary feeding program will be continued for as long as is necessary.

The Drought & Related Issues

We are now into our third year of drought, and it seems the promised rains are not forthcoming, and for some of our palatable grass species any further rains will be too late as growing season is almost over.

RV rainfall from July 2016 is as follows:



How will this impact on our closed system this coming winter?

The one thing we know is that we will be feeding during the coming winter and spring seasons and, if we look at current weather patterns, may even be feeding into next summer.

How can residents help and assist in ensuring minimal damage to our environment (fauna and flora), during this very sensitive eco stage of the current drought?

By removing only invasive alien species, and not any indigenous species on your property, particularly if situated on a river or drainage line.

*Do not remove anything indigenous even though you may consider it as invasive, plants such as (*Grewia flava*) raisin bush play a huge role in a drought situation, it seems many have an inexplicable dislike for this species, yet it has a very important function especially during drought times. Antelope, such as kudu, steenbok and grey duiker love feeding on the velvet raisin, as do mousebirds, Grey go-away-bird, Helmeted guineafowl, francolins and korhaan, even monkeys and baboons.*

We as humans need to remember that nature designed everything with a purpose and reason, which is not always immediately apparent to us, so please, *if it is indigenous - leave it be.*

Besides stopping erosion (wind and water), and assisting with feeding as above, it is also a canopy for certain grasses and also for the animals to protect them from the unrelenting heat. You will have noticed that the tree canopies were slow in forming this summer and when they did eventually arrive, were not as lush as last year, the canopies are very sparse for this time of the year, this is a solid indication that the underground water tables are dropping. No decent rain for two years now, this is what starts to happen; the trees go into stress and self-preservation mode. More than likely we will lose some trees this winter due to this. This will ultimately also affect our browser populations.



You will all remember the large numbers of Red-billed Quelea (in some instances massive flocks) last year, these birds are part of the fertilization process of grass seeds, and do not eat and destroy our grass seeds as is commonly believed by many. The large flocks effectively distribute fertilized grass seeds on to our soil, but unfortunately with the very low and intermittent rainfall these seeds could not fully come into their own. In fact, none of our grasses managed to grow above 20cm on average before dying off again, so not getting the chance to grow to the inflorescence stage to form any seeds - really bad news for the next growing season.

The above is all the more reason why we need to reduce any form of over-activity on the estate as a whole, and it is for this reason that we must strictly limit the feeding of animals to the feeding stations set out by Byron and his team in order to minimize the damage to an already very fragile eco- system.

We have been stocking our feeding stations through most of this summer will continue to do so until conditions are favorable again.

As much as some residents like to feed animals for self-seeking pleasure, and to ensure the animals are around their homes all the time, this practice - particularly at this time - will have an exceptionally negative impact on our ecosystem, as the home feeders are now creating larger over utilized and trampled areas, which the longer the drought continues, will make natural rehabilitation of those areas impossible.

Unfortunately home feeders think they are helping the animals, but actually they are not! Case in point was an Nyala that died last year from eating the wrong food. Most of the animals have animal specific diets, and just feeding boskos, is far from ideal. After the hyena opened up the carcass we could see that this Nyala bull died unnecessarily due to the corn in its diet.



Warthog (both parents and cute piglets) eat very well at the feeding stations - as do the other animal, so **“Please desist from feeding the wildlife!”**

Putting out salt licks and/or molasses blocks creates a whole set of other issues:

Dangers of Salt Licks - what happens is that the potassium spikes during cool, wet conditions and especially after long droughts.

Potassium promotes the overgrowth of:

saprotrophic (microorganisms that normally grow on dead matter)

commensal (organisms that live together but don't harm each other)

and pathogenic (microbes that cause disease) microorganisms in the plant itself.

These diseased plants then often produce and become the source of pathogenic bacteria (such as botulism) and also fungi which as we all know, our animals are extremely sensitive to. After eating them, the animals can face an overgrowth of these microorganisms, which rapidly grow and produce toxic by-products like ammonia.

Excess ammonia is deadly - especially to fetuses and the immune system. Early and mid-term fetuses may abort, while near term may suffer premature birth and/or septic weak births. We have natural sodic planes (the extremely white areas) on Raptor's and the animals will naturally lick these soils hence there is no need for salt licks on the estate.

The use of bokblokke / molasses blocks has to be very carefully monitored by someone who knows what they are doing, as the overuse could cause major health issues to the very animals it is supposed to help. So please desist from this, it really is *not* helping the animals. They have very specific applications, as recent studies have shown, and need to be used only in certain circumstances and also needs to be regularly and carefully monitored or this could cause the animals more harm than good.

For all of the above reasons PLEASE! We ask that NO ADDITIONAL FEEDING be put out at houses.

This includes:

- CORN
- SALT LICKS
- MOLASSES
- any GRASS BALES
- or PELLETS of any kind

Baboons

As many may be aware HWE is having extensive baboon issues, with major destruction to homes there, these issues initially stem from humans putting food out for the cute porcupine, bushbaby, genet, warthog, civet, boskos pellets for the antelope and fruit for birds at their homes. The residents are now calling for these animals to be destroyed, *the hand or home fed wild animals death warrant is signed by the feeders.*



Primates being fed become dangerous and prone to cause damage in their quest for food.

They are under more pressure during drought times and if they find a food source (your home) they will break in and become a nuisance, therefore let nature deal with them, do not feed them. The troops are currently large, and need to be reduced naturally, furthermore the destruction to our bird populations by the primates is becoming increasingly evident, so please remember interfering has a domino effect on other species too. Feeding will also prevent them from migrating naturally to other sectors. Remember that the primates we have here are all omnivores and thus have a much wider food source than herbivores.

We urge all living on the estate please to make sure your windows and doors are closed and latched properly when you leave your house. Baboons know how to open doors! Leave no visible fruit or other food in your homes as this will only encourage the baboon break-in effort.

Some good news is that the Marula fruit is coming into season and the thorn trees are flowering at the moment which should keep the baboons busy for now.

The baboon patrol will be utilised whenever necessary

Basically all of the above interfere with the fauna and flora management of this closed system, and really ultimately it is the animals that suffer. Yes, we are going to lose animals during the next winter season, this is normal and inevitable and happens all the time even in open systems, this is a natural way of removing the oldest and weakest from the gene pool.

Sable Project

This project is currently on hold until environmental conditions are more favorable to give the project the best chance of success on the estate.

Our current Water Situation

The whole world is aware of the drought in the cape, and that Cape Town may be the first major city in the world to run out of drinking water in their taps.

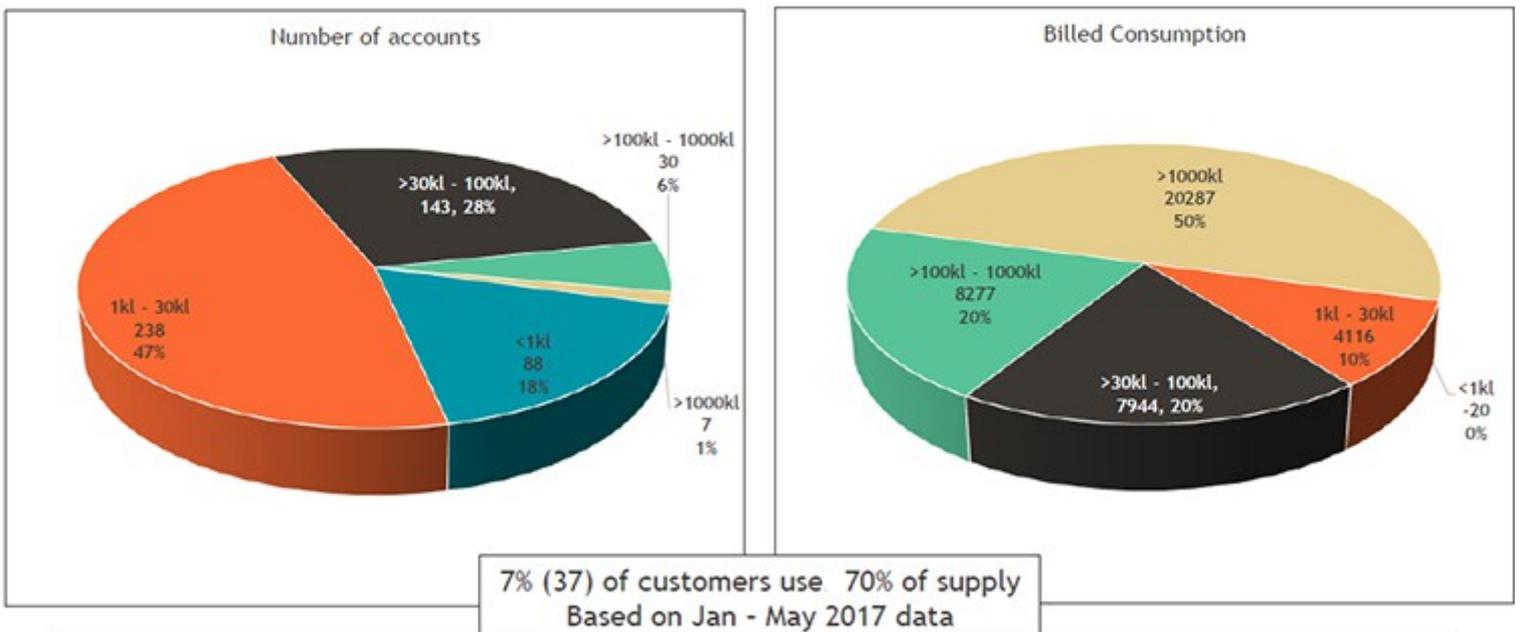
Not many people are aware of our own situation on Hoedspruit.

RV management attended a presentation by Award as to the current situation of Maruleng municipality with relation to water within its municipal area.

Some highlights worth mentioning are:

- o Hoedspruit is a semi-arid area, yet many of the gardens in town looks like a tropical oasis.
- o The Blyde Dam is currently only at 64.48% capacity, versus 101.5% capacity this time last year.
- o For various reasons, almost 50% of the water in Hoedspruit's reticulation is not billed and deemed a loss.
- o Hoedspruit's daily water consumption per person per day is almost 3 times that of the national daily consumption per person .

Maruleng Billing Analysis...



The point that we are making is that each of us should be aware that water is a scarce commodity in Hoedspruit. We are in a drought and if we do not use water sparingly, we will be heading the same way as Cape Town.

You as an individual can do the following to have a positive impact:

- o Report visible leaks
- o Use water sparingly
- o implement water wise practices – grey water use
- o fix household leaks, xeriscape gardening
- o Work with the municipality to mitigate risks
- o Consider shutting off your main supply when away for extended periods of time

RVHOA will be replacing our own bulk water meter, and compare estate consumption to determine internal losses accurately. We will also have a look at our own gate and office gardens to make them more water wise.