

### **New Zebra Trail for Hikers and Cyclists**

The new Zebra Trail has been completed. The trail links the northern section of the estate to the Aardvark and Lion trails through the wilderness area. This obviously allows for multiple variations on the existing trails, allowing better utilisation of the estate for the adventurous residents. The concrete marking blocks have a zebra hoof print which is painted red, distinguishing it from the Aardvark and Lion trails which are marked in yellow. The trail is accessible to both hikers and cyclists. We will also be marking some of the interesting trees along the trail, to allow for a more educational experience as well. The parking area is situated near the water storage tanks, but this does not necessarily have to be the starting point. The map indicating the Zebra trail has been uploaded on the Raptor's View website. <http://raptorsview.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/RV-Map-Nov-2019.pdf>

### **Drinking Water**

The current state of the drinking water from Maruleng Municipality is still unknown. We advise that residents continue to boil their drinking water as a safety precaution.

### **Roads Tender**

Five tenders were received for the upgrading of portions of the Raptor's View road network. We envisage upgrading 2.4 km of the main access road, which has now deteriorated dramatically. The tenders will be evaluated by the Board and a successful tenderer will be appointed. Work is expected to commence on 13 January 2020 at the latest.

### **Building on Raptor's View**

There is currently only one new house being built on Raptor's View, with four having renovations or additions done. Two new houses were completed during October, and two sites had hand-overs done following renovations and additions.

If you are wanting to have alterations or additions done to your home, as a precaution, please check what the requirements are in terms of the Homeowners and Architectural rules, or contact the office for more detail or if you wish to discuss your plans.

### **Fire Hazard**

Due to the dry conditions currently being experienced, there is a risk of runaway fires. The prevailing wind (hopefully bringing the much needed rain) also increases the risk of runaway fires.

Please take care when lighting fires, and only do so in favourable conditions and in areas specifically designed for this purpose for all our safety.

We also request that any information regarding a possible veld fire be passed onto management as soon as possible, even if it just the smell of smoke, so that it can be thoroughly investigated and appropriate action taken. Please include children, your visitors and domestic workers in this appeal.

## Staff Changes

Tinus Koen will be leaving Raptor's View at the end of November to advance his career. Tinus has been the Assistant Estate Manager since April 2015 and his "always ready to assist" homeowners and staff attitude will be sorely missed. He will, however, still be in the Hoedspruit area as he will be managing the Blyde Wildlife Estate. We wish Tinus and his family all the best with his new project. A collection is being done for a farewell gift for Tinus. If you wish to contribute to his gift, cash can be left with Wilna at the office or your contribution can be debited to your account.

We are pleased to announce that Gordon Breetzke has been appointed as the new Assistant Estate Manager. Gordon will be reporting for duty on 1 January 2020, but will be spending a week on the estate prior to Tinus leaving, as orientation.

## Estate Staff Available to Assist Homeowners with Private Work

Our estate staff are able to assist with small tasks around your home, if required. Please contact Wilna at the office (015 793 0267) who will assist with the tariffs and labour rates for the various jobs. Using our estate staff should be cost effective to you and generates revenue for RVHOA.

## Baboon Patrol

As was reported in the September newsletter, the staff members who were doing the baboon patrols have been withdrawn. Fortunately, only one incident was reported of minor damage to a property by baboons. If you notice baboons causing damage to any property, please contact management as soon as possible so that the necessary steps can be taken.

## Marula Trees

Residents may have noticed that several Marula trees (*Sclerocarya birrea*) have been removed along our fence lines. These were infested with the polyphagous shot hole borer beetle (PSHB). Hailing from Southeast Asia, this pest was officially discovered in SA in 2017, in the Pietermaritzburg Botanical Gardens. PSHB is an ambrosia beetle, about 2mm long, which makes tunnels in the wood of trees. The female beetles infest trees with a fungus - they feed on this fungus, not the wood, and it is this fungus that kills the trees in the end. Scientists are doing experiments to find out how to prevent PSHB infection and how to get rid of it, but there are unfortunately no positive scientific results as yet.

A permit was obtained from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries for the cutting of the infected trees, as the Marula is a protected tree species, and permission is required to prune or cut them. Several of these trees were over-hanging our fence line, and so posed an additional threat of damage to the fences in the event of dead branches breaking. The wood of the infected trees was burnt in order to prevent further spread of the beetle. Please advise the office if you see any other signs of this infestation on the estate.



Damage by the shot hole borer beetle

### Veld Monitoring Sites

Following the Eco sub-committee meeting in September, several veld monitoring sites have been established on the north-western section (near the Zebra Trail) of the estate. The plots have been treated in various ways, including horse manure, ripping the soil, re-seeding with grass seed and brush packing, as well as a combination of the various methods. Half of each monitoring plot has been fenced off to prevent access by the bulk grazers, in order to facilitate monitoring of grazed versus un-grazed growth. Control plots have also been established where no intervention will take place. The regular monitoring will enable management to make informed decisions regarding which management practices are most effective in veld rehabilitation on the estate.



Horse manure spread on the monitoring sites

### Feeding of Game by Management

Management are continuing to put out lucerne and grass for the game. This is done twice a week at ten stations. Lick blocks have also been placed at three sites. Blocks are formulated with vitamins and minerals which supplement important trace minerals. The animals are generally in a good condition despite the drought. We will continue feeding throughout spring and into summer, depending on the rainfall patterns and we will monitor the condition of the animals on an ongoing basis.

## **Game capture**

To date we have managed to capture the following animals from Raptor's View for translocation to other farms.

Burchell's Zebra: 10

Giraffe: 11

Kudu: 10

Waterbuck: 10

Impala: 33

Only one giraffe was caught during October. The removal of Nyala is still on the cards for November as we were previously unable to get a farm or reserve in our area to relocate them to. The animals will be darted, as Nature Conservation does not permit the mass capture of animals from November to February.

## **Injured Female Wild Dog**

The wild dogs have been on Raptor's View for most of the month, with occasional visits to neighbouring Khaya Ndlovu. One of the two females has a rather nasty cut on her neck from a snare, and so far efforts to have her darted have been unsuccessful. We are in regular contact with Grant Beverley from the Endangered Wildlife Trust, informing him of their movements within Raptor's View. Our information is based on sightings by our residents, either physical or recorded on camera traps. If you do see the wild dogs, please report it immediately to the manager on duty (071 675 2525) so that the necessary treatment can be carried out on the injured female. Thank you to residents who have already reported sightings.

## **New Schedule of Fines**

The Board has approved the new schedule of fines. A copy can be obtained from the office. The fines have been increased in an attempt to deter would-be wrong doers. Fortunately, the majority who abide by the rules will not be affected.

## **Security Screening of Residents' Staff for Domestic Workers and Gardeners**

Many of the domestic workers and gardeners have not been screened and had SAPS clearance done for many years, some as long as 12 years ago.

If anyone employs a domestic worker or gardener who has not been screened since October 2017 please contact Wilna in the office (015 793 0267) and she will outline the process to be followed.

## **Security Checks at Houses while not in Residence**

Our appointed security company, Canyon Risk Solutions, are available to conduct random security checks on your house whilst you are away. Please contact the office should you wish to make use of this service. Information which is required includes date of departure and return, which vehicles will remain at your house, details of domestic staff that will be working as well as a contact person in the event of a problem. There is a cost of R35 per visit applicable. We recommend that residents have a silent alarm installed in their house for early detection of unauthorised entry.