



FRIENDS OF MORELETASPRUIT – SERENE VALLEY

(Hans Strijdom to Serene Streets) Website: www.serenevalley.org.za

NEWSLETTER – MAY 2012

Dear Members, Donors and Neighbours,

There will be a lot going on in Serene Valley in the next few months – the Moreletaspruit side will be closed to the public during the construction of the Moreleta Outfall Sewer. The Lola Ave gate to the Constantiaspruit side will still be open but please stay away from the construction site! We try to have interesting experts to lead our walks and the next two events are no exception.

Our first event will be a **Land Art Morning on Saturday 9 June** to celebrate **World Environment Day**. It will be led by Andrée Bonthuys, a land artist from the Cape who has led Land Art workshops on beaches and in the countryside and she is flying up for the event so I'm sure it will be very special and inspire us to appreciate and interact with our environment in a new way. She says:

“No prior experience is needed, but do bring along perception and observation and a camera if possible. (It will be an opportunity for exciting photography.)

Nature will be the canvas and our hands the tools, using only what is present - rocks, soil, leaves, sticks, reflective water, the landscape.

Our creations will remain where we have made them, to change and erode under natural conditions, leaving any photos taken as the only permanent record.”

Meet at the Lola Ave gate at 09:30. We will work for about an hour and a half and then we'll have coffee and muffins. There is no charge and all are welcome.

On **Mandela Day** we are all asked to give 67 minutes of our time. For the last two years we have done clean-ups and I would very much like you to join me in cleaning the Constantia Spruit this year. We will do it on **Saturday 14 July** as the actual birthday, 18 July, is during the week. **Meet at the Lola Ave gate at 11:00** and bring black bags, gloves and sensible shoes if possible.

The next event will be **Biomonitoring using the miniSASS method** (South African Scoring System) **on Saturday 21 July**. It will be led by Colleen Todd, an aquatic ecologist specializing in macroinvertebrates. She will show us how and where to take samples and then how to identify the small insects and creatures in the sample of water and to give them a score. This will indicate the quality of the water depending on how many macroinvertebrates we find and how sensitive they are to pollution. The data obtained will go towards the **State of the River Report** being compiled by **Adopt Moreletaspruit**.

It should be really interesting and all are welcome. There is no charge. **Meet at the Lola Ave gate at 09:30** and we'll work for about an hour.

Report back on the Insect Walk in April: Our Insect Walk was very popular and I think the children especially enjoyed catching insects in a net, putting them into bottles to be admired and identified and then letting them go. During the walk the working of the insect trap was explained. All the insects caught during March and April have been sent to the Agricultural Research Council to be identified and the findings will form part of the data we are collecting about the river.

An interested visitor from the UK filmed the setting up of the trap in March and has put it on YouTube – <http://youtu.be/QsA6W0u6V18> - have a look.

Construction of the Moreletaspruit Outfall Sewer through Serene Valley

The construction work on the sewer has been slowly moving south along the river. It will start on our side of Serene St at the end of May and it will take about four months to complete the work as far as Godfrey St. During that time **the green area next to the Moreletaspruit will be regarded as a construction site and will be closed to the public.** The gates at Gilda St and Kentia St will be locked by the contractor and the bridge will not be open to people walking to work or to school. Notices will be put up to this effect about two weeks before the closure. **Please spread this information to everyone who uses the bridge.**

The construction workers will use the motor gate on the corner of Mias and Coley Sts as an entrance for machinery and workers. There will be about 12 workers on site at a time during the day. They will have portable toilets and bring in their food. No fires and cooking will take place. At night there will be security guards patrolling.

The footprint of the work area will be from 25m wide in the open spaces to 10m wide in the narrow space between the river and the complexes on the Godfrey St end. The depth of the ditch itself will be 2.8 m at the deepest parts. The work area will be fenced with diamond mesh and shade netting to minimize noise and there may be blasting if rock is encountered. The work will be done in sections of 25 metres at a time. The top soil will be piled separately and no piles of soil will be higher than two metres. Once a section of pipe has been laid, the soil will be replaced and compacted in layers and the top soil will be laid back on top. Afterwards the contractor will plant grass seeds and replace any trees which may have had to be removed.

The laying of the pipe will progress under Godfrey St and Hans Strijdom Drive and meet up with an existing sewer about halfway between Hans Strijdom Drive and Garsfontein Roads. The Community Liaison Officer for the project is Christo van den Heever and any questions regarding the construction can be addressed to him on 074 102 7350. Any concerns regarding environmental non-compliance can be reported to Nature Conservation on 012 358 1510 or to me.

This will be quite a disruption for Serene Valley but hopefully it will mean the existing sewer will no longer leak after every big rain storm.

Owls

One Saturday morning in April I heard a mighty racket going on outside and when I investigated I saw my Liquidamber tree practically alive with Arrow-marked Babblers, Grey Go-away-birds and

Dark-capped Bulbuls flying excitedly from twig to twig and making as loud a noise as possible. The object of their excitement was a Spotted Eagle-Owl sitting on a branch and it just blinked one eye and otherwise took no notice even though some of the birds flew right across its face and eventually the small birds gave up and left. The owl stayed in the same position all day, just occasionally opening and closing its eyes or turning its head when neighbours came to admire it. In the afternoon the other birds held a very noisy meeting in another tree led by the babblers and go-away birds and after about half an hour they came back, minus the go-away birds, but reinforced by thrushes and large numbers of very small birds and mobbed the owl again but again it ignored them. Then at dusk it gently flew the short distance to my garage roof, looked around for about five minutes and then flew silently like a stealth bomber through the trees towards the river. It was such a special day!

Serene Valley has been given two of the **owl boxes** donated to Adopt Moreletaspruit, one for eagle owls and one for barn owls. When we have decided on the best sites we will call for volunteers to help put them up.

Bushbabies and other small animals

There have been more and more reports of people having seen or heard bushbabies, otters, genets, mongooses and cane rats which is very pleasing.

Bushbabies have been killed or injured by electric fencing. If you disconnect the top strand from the power, your property will still be protected but so will the bushbabies. If you should find an injured or abandoned baby, take it to a vet such as Faerie Glen Vet in Alsatian St who will know what to do. Preferably don't feed before getting to the vet but if you have to, don't ever give cows' milk which will prove fatal. However they can have a little yoghurt or ripe fruit.

Membership Fees and Cards: The membership fees for 2012 are R200 per family and the cards which are valid until the end of February 2013 give two adults and two children two free visits per reserve to Rietvlei, Groenkloof, Wonderboom and Faerie Glen Nature Reserves and Rooihuiskraal Resort.

Payments should be made to: Friends of Moreletaspruit – Hans Strijdom to Serene Sts; Bank: ABSA; Branch: Woodlands; Branch code: 336445; Account No: 4059 507 574. Please email me the proof of payment, your name, physical address, email address and telephone/cell number so that I can deliver your card to you, or phone me on 082 772 2498 and I will collect the membership fee.

I hope many of you will come and enjoy the winter sunshine for the Land Art Morning on 9 June - it will be a new experience for most of us!

Regards,

Carol Martin

Chairman, Friends of Serene Valley

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