

From the Chair



Winter has certainly come with a vengeance this year and it is now supposed to be the coldest winter in 70 years since accurate records began in KwaZulu-Natal.

Our rehabilitation programme is progressing well along the slopes below the Winston Park side of the gorge. You will have seen our team doing sterling work here over the last few months. We have also planted indigenous trees from our nursery up the stream from St Heliers Road towards Eagle Rock Estate. We would encourage residents to contribute indigenous trees and plant them in our designated areas to help re-establish the forests, whether it be to celebrate a marriage, birthday or in remembrance of a loved one that has passed away. We had a wonderful sighting of a Serval cat from a Winston Park resident in their back yard last month. We hope this is not a once off event and that these beautiful predators will be able to establish themselves permanently in the gorge without being targeted by poachers. The crowned eagle pair are also back at their nest and we are hoping they will be having more chicks again in the spring.

- Chris Morrissey -

Key Milestones

July - August 2011

- Initial alien plant clearing of Mamba Hill complete
- 30 % of alien plants cleared in Giba Seep
- Trees painted in forest adjacent N3 and Kirkman Falls
- New section of Ndabushe trail cleared

Poaching in Giba

Since the inception of the GGEP, a number of illegal hunting activities have been witnessed. All of these relate to some form of trap being set to catch unsuspecting small game animals.

Traps found to date include more than 50 metal wire snares and one gin trap. These activities are illegal and are no doubt playing a significant role in diminishing the number of mammals that frequent the gorge.

Animals that have been caught by these traps include a porcupine witnessed during July of this year and an otter found in the wetland above St Helier dam.

Other mammals that are likely to fall prey to this form of hunting include Blue and Common duikers, Bushbuck, Bush pig, Caracal and Jackal, all of which have been recorded in the area. So what are we doing about this?

All areas of the GGEP are patrolled regularly and any suspected activity is followed up on. In order to ensure a successful prosecution, it is essential that we catch these perpetrators with some form of evidence that links them to the crime.



Snares and a wire cage, laid by poachers to trap animals in their murderous coils, are shown by head ranger Thuthuka Majola. They serve as a grim reminder of the ever-present threat to Giba's wildlife.

We call on all landowners to report any suspicious activity to our Conservation Manager, Thuthuka Majola on 083 6212240.

If we get on top of this problem, there is a good chance that mammal numbers will increase in the area.



Decapitated remains of snared porcupine

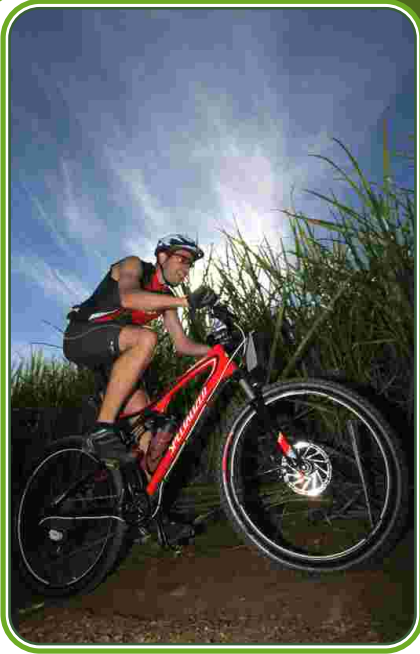


Gin trap found in Giba

Are your Contact Details up to date?

In order for us to keep our GGEP contact database up to date and communicate with you more effectively, please let us know when any of your contact details change.

Please email your updated contact details to McinnesA@durban.gov.za



One of the many competitors who enjoyed the scenic beauty of Giba Gorge.

Mountain bike race through Giba grows in popularity

Giba Gorge provided a pristine natural backdrop for the second Compendium Cycle Lab MTB Derby, on Saturday 28 May, attracting 1 109 competitors.

"It was great to see so many mountain bike riders enjoying the natural beauty that Giba has to offer," said GEEP chairman, Chris Morrissey. "Hopefully many of these competitors will come back with their families and friends over weekends and enjoy some of the scenic Giba walking trails at a more leisurely pace!"

The Durban Shongweni Club was the start and finish venue for the event with the 40km

route winding up to Summerveld, past the Gold Circle training track, before dropping down into Giba Gorge Cycle Park and making its way through the Giba Gorge Environmental Precinct and back to the Shongweni Club.

The race sponsors were again able to make a nice contribution to the Jes Foord Foundation with a portion of each entry going towards this worthy cause.

The race organisers thanked all the Giba Gorge land owners and the Giba Gorge Environmental Precinct for allowing this event to take place through this magnificent part of the upper highway area.

First Yellow-billed Kites signal Spring

Most Giba residents would have noticed the tropical migrants that are on the move, coming back to the warmer South African climate to begin their breeding cycle.

We saw the first Yellow-billed Kite on my daughter Sarah's birthday, 22 July - a bit earlier this year than usual. The days are getting longer and the Yellow Masked Weavers will soon be working tirelessly to impress their females with their nest-building prowess. The Yellow-billed Kites, too, will be fixing up last year's nests or constructing new ones.

Giba garden birdbath regulars will include some of the less common birds such as the Malachite Kingfisher, the Woodpecker, Hoopoe, Finches and Red-breasted Robin. On a clear night we frequently hear the evocative call of the Fiery-necked Nightjar, who pays tribute to the star-spangled southern sky.

Giba residents are indeed blessed with the wide variety of bird life to be found in their gardens. Those residents who live on the Winston Park side of Giba always look to the magnificent avenue of plane trees along Jan Smuts Avenue for the first telltale signs of Spring, as the first bright green leaves sprout forth. Spring is here – enjoy the delights!

A surprise visitor!

A Giba property owner who lives at the end of Mountbatten Place, Winston Park was delighted to see a serval cat standing near to their swimming pool in the fading late afternoon light...

"I managed to take a few pics, although not very clear as the flash kept picking up its beautiful eyes and not much else", said Jan McGlashan.

"It was a wonderful experience, although I must say I was quite relieved that my own kitty was safely inside!" said Jan. This one had what appeared to be a radio collar around its neck. Enquires with local researchers at the



Who wouldn't feel privileged to see a Serval cat in their garden?

University of KwaZulu-Natal has not yielded any details of this local sighting, or for that matter anyone doing serval cat research that would require a radio collar in the Giba environment.

The serval is much larger than the domestic cat, mainly nocturnal and solitary. It is long legged, the hind legs longer than the front legs. The neck is long and its head small, with large, very erect ears.

The serval's coat is yellowish-tan, with black spots, bands and stripes. The tail is ringed with black, and the under parts of the body are white or light tan.

Should Giba residents be fortunate to have any further sightings of this shy nocturnal cat please inform the Giba Gorge manager, Thuthuka Majola on 079 391 1866.



The distinctive silhouette of a Yellow Billed Kite so often seen by Giba residents.
Photo credit: David Allan