

BETTY'S BAY CONSERVANCY

26 MARCH 2022: MEMBERS TEA AND WETLANDS WALK

On Saturday 26 March the Betty's Bay Conservancy (BBC) launched its '4th Saturday of the Month' events programme with a 'Meet and Greet' members' tea at Crassula Hall followed by an 'Introduction to Wetlands' walk.

It was a wonderful opportunity for members to meet one another and to hear about the BBC and its three current Focus Groups, namely the Habitat Conservation, the Wetlands/Biomapping and the Waste/ Recycling groups, and their current and future projects. The first phase of the new BBC website, bettysbayconservancy.co.za, recently went live and this, together with the planned BIOSPHERE LIVING booklet, will provide a resource to encourage current and prospective residents to build and live in a biosphere-friendly manner.

After the info session, there was lively discussion and networking as members enjoyed tea and the delicious spread of the 'bring and share' eats.

The Wetlands and Biomapping group outlined the BBC Biomapping project. Coordinator Liezel Bohdanowicz gave members a map that she had created of the wetlands near Crassula as a guide for the walk. Tim Attwell and Jan Briers led the walk, pointing out the vegetation on the open space on the south side of Crassula Hall which was cleared of alien vegetation by the Betty's Bay hacking group last year. They agreed that this erf is long overdue for a controlled burn or cutting back of some larger plants as the fynbos is very dense and tall resulting in new growth being retarded. The removal of the alien vegetation last year has drastically reduced the risk of this erf posing a fire hazard.

At erf 4207, which is a large open erf designated as a nature reserve, they explained the difference between the sedges and restios growing there. Erf 4206 is another large erf next to erf 4207 and is designated as a Public Works Community facility. Both erven are rich in fynbos species and the group wholeheartedly agreed that the area should be protected. The two erven should be combined and footpaths could be created through them so that the rich biodiversity can be enjoyed and a wildlife corridor provided.

The seasonal wetland on erf 4206 is full of restios and is home to a variety of frog species including the critically endangered Micro Frog which is endemic to the Western Cape. It has a single population on the Cape Flats and a few small populations on the eastern side of False Bay between Betty's Bay and Cape Agulhas, with a total distribution of just seven square km. It is the smallest frog in southern Africa, measuring between 12 and 16mm. Conservation of this frog for prosperity, along with other endangered frogs such as the Cape Platanna and the Western Leopard Toad, is one of the reasons why these two erven should be fiercely protected from indiscriminate development, wetland drainage and alien vegetation.

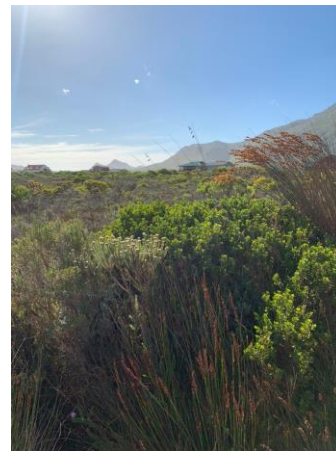
Close to Crassula Hall, there was sharp contrast between erf 4032, private property zoned for local business, and the one cleared by the Betty's Bay hackers. Hakea, Port Jackson and Australian myrtle abound, strangling the indigenous vegetation, providing poor habitat for the local fauna and creating a fire hazard.

Looking over the empty plots in Hibiscus Road, Liezel pointed out the clear demarcation between the bulrush vegetation on the one side and the field of restios alongside it.

Retired geologist, Dave Mourant, treated the walkers to an informal lesson on the geological origins of the Overberg and the coastal plain we live on, adding to the awe they experienced of the grandeur of our very precious place under the South African sun.

A much-enlightened group returned to Crassula Hall via a shortcut through the fynbos, cleared of aliens and brightly displaying a variety of colourful ericas.

This well-organised, informative and inspiring event held by the Betty's Bay Conservancy engendered much interest in and enthusiasm for the work being done by the group. Should you wish to join this committed and vibrant group determined to protect our unique biosphere, email bettysbayconservancy@gmail.com



Photos: Gill Cullinan



Wetlands/Biomapping Group: Liezel Bohdanowicz, Tim Attwell and Jan Briers

Photo: Sandy Immelmann

By Carol Clark and Viv van der Heyden