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Introduction

The assigned calendar period for autumn has come to an end. Even though winter officially starts on the 1st of June, it has felt like winter for some weeks already. The first frosts have fallen in the valley. The sun is setting just after 5pm and only rising around 7am. Many of the deciduous trees have dropped their leaves or in the process of doing so.

In this newsletter we remember Mack Rogan, a long time member of Finsbury who visited on a very regular basis. On the Friday afternoon that Mack's service was held in Johannesburg, there was a gathering held by members that were present on the estate at the sundowner spot in the Southern Valley. It was clear from how everyone spoke of Mack that he will be remembered as a man who took a close interest in the lives of all the people he encountered. As Jimmy wrote in his latest blog, he will be terribly missed.

Since the summer newsletter there has been a change of ownership at Unit 2 (Rainbow Creek). Bill and Sue Abel sold their share to Duncan and Jess MacLarty, who have two young children, Rose and Matthew. There has also been a share sold at Unit 6 (Kingfisher Lodge). Nick Holtzhausen and Belinda Goosen have bought a share from Cathy Ririe and they have three sons, Thomas, Daniel and Sam.

I'm sure that members will join us in welcoming these two families into our community. May they make many happy memories at Finsbury.

Don, Anne and Rose MacCrimmon

K9

Over the years successive floods have taken their toll on the wall of K9. Each flood eating away at the wall. It had reached a point where it became a danger to people and vehicles. Without intervention, future floods could have broken the dam wall. To retain the integrity of the wall and protect it from future floods, a line of gabion boxes were erected and filled. The void between the eroded wall and the new gabion boxes was then filled with earth and rocks. Lines of kikuyu grass were then planted to grow over the earth to prevent erosion. It was a big project and took the bulk of the field team one month to complete. When the rains come in spring more grass will be planted to ensure there is full coverage over the wall.



Reeds

We have finished our reed-spraying program for the year. The reeds that were sprayed have already started to show signs of dying. Once they have wilted away sufficiently they will be cut and removed. The focus has been on reed beds that pose an encroaching threat to fishing waters. Reed beds that are not in close proximity to good fishing waters are left alone as they provide a valuable service in filtering water and good habitat for birds. A continuity of the spraying program will ensure that we will always have the reeds under control.



Recycling

It has been very encouraging to see the input from some of the members with the recycling initiative. Some units have even bought extra rubbish bins to make separating easier. The separating of glass bottles seems to be more successful than the other items. It would be greatly appreciated if more members could contribute to the recycling program by separating their garbage at their unit and then dropping it off at the recycling depot at central. Inside the depot there are signs allocating areas for each category. Once the depot is full the truck will deliver the goods into town. Garbage can be separated into

- Glass bottles
- Aluminium cans (beer and cool drink cans)
- Plastic
- Paper
- Non-recyclables (food waste, tins etc)



Staff accommodation improvements

For several years now the energy supply at the Majubane gate (Patrick's gate) has been supplied by a simple underpowered solar system. It was recently overhauled and upgraded with a new and very smart system. The components and housing were designed to withstand the conditions in the Kruger National Park. The system now powers adequate indoor and outdoor lighting, charging power for radios, cellphones and torches as well as a TV. It has been a welcome change for Patrick, who says "it is like living in the suburbs now".

As part of our continuous program of upgrading the staff village, which has been mentioned in previous newsletters, we have begun tiling showers. The process involves removing the old stonework that was there and retiling the areas with light coloured tiles. The result is a finish that is more pleasing on the eye but also hygienic and spacious.



Easter weekend activities

In Jimmy's April blog, he wrote of his exciting night out with the two youngsters Joel and Christian. It was a great success, as you may have read or heard, and an activity that we would like to continue to offer. There was such a positive response from members saying what a great idea it was, but it was unfortunate as the dates did not work out for many families that expressed interest. It has been decided to offer this experience on a flexible date basis. If you are coming down then and would like to have a sleep out in the wilds with Jimmy, then book a date.

While Jimmy was leading his intrepid young survivalists down the mountain, a large group of hikers were making their way up the mountain for the traditional Easter hike to Hops Hollow Brewery. It was a beautiful day for such an outing with the sun shining all the way. There were plenty of wildlife sightings along the way and with a cold drink and warm meal at the end of the walk, it was an outing enjoyed by all.

On Easter Sunday an Easter egg hunt was held for the young children. The clues took them all over central and through the hatchery. After a few head scratching moments they found the prize in one of the stinkwood trees in the hatchery.



Hatchery

The addition of a new earth pond has been of huge benefit to the hatchery. It has enabled us to grade the fish on a more regular basis. Grading of the fish due to size allows us to be able to sell off smaller fish more regularly and retain the larger fish for stocking the rivers. April brought on the stripping season, which means a busy time for Simon and John. In between stripping eggs and milt from brood stock and moving fish around, they have to constantly remove dead eggs from the hatching trays. It is vital to remove the dead eggs so that a fungus does not grow over them and spread to the live healthy eggs. The first batches of eggs have already started hatching and the small alevins have been moved into the bath tubs, where they will grow out to be fry before being moved into the steel circular tubs. While they are still alevins they will feed off their yolk sack for about two weeks. Once their yolk sacks are depleted, Simon and John will crush feed pellets into a powder, which the fry will then feed off. This time of year wild spawning behavior can also be observed in the rivers. This fascinating behavior can be observed in shallow waters where there is a clean pebble bed. The hen fish will rub her stomach on the pebbles, which helps her to release the eggs. The cock fish will be in close proximity and will follow suit by releasing his milt over the eggs. Other trout will eat any eggs that have not fallen deep enough into the pebbles. Egg pattern flies this time of year are therefore a very good choice of fly to use.



Off road driving

The grassland environment is a unique and yet sensitive environment. Vehicles driving through the grasslands will leave tracks that stay on the veld for a very long time. Tracks often prompt other drivers to think it is a new place to drive and so a new, unwanted road is created. From time to time the estate vehicles need to drive off road to fulfill a purpose, but once the task is complete the tracks are left to rehabilitate. This is a request to all members to please avoid driving off road.

