



## In this issue

- Introduction
- Autumn fishing
- River programme
- Firewood
- Firebreaks and patch burns



## Introduction

Autumn really is a great time to be at Finsbury. The days are cool and the nights aren't freezing. April was a very busy month and over the Easter weekend a total of 19 houses were occupied. To our knowledge this is the highest number of houses to be occupied over a weekend, on par with a long weekend last year.

Egg stripping and fertilising in the hatchery commenced in late April and the first eggs hatched after an incubation period of three weeks. The fry have already finished their yolk sacks and we are now feeding them crushed pellets. So far it is only the rainbow trout eggs that have hatched, there is a small batch of brown eggs still incubating. Brown trout eggs always mature at a later stage than rainbows.

The fishing during Autumn was superb and some great catches were made. Our programme of enhancing the fishing opportunities along the rivers has started in earnest and we have already received some valuable feedback from members regarding the work accomplished to date.

A new source of firewood for the Estate has been secured and proves to be a very good quality wood. Most of the firebreaks were burnt as well as some patch mosaic burns in preparation for the fire season ahead.

A number of units have expressed interest in getting internet connectivity at their houses. A plan is underway to make this possible. Unfortunately, the solution will not be able to work for all the houses. It is a point to point solution and so only the houses that have direct line of site to the mountain where the relay tower will be sited may potentially have connectivity. I will be in touch with the unit chairman of the houses that do have line of site.

The smoked trout that we sell in the office is proving to be a hit with members and their guests. If anyone has a cooking method or recipe that they would like to share please send it to us and we will make it available to everyone.

Look forward to seeing you here.

Donald MacCrimmon

## Fishing

We received some really positive feedback from members and their guests over the last three months. A number of trophy fish were caught. Two fish over 4kg were caught in K9 as well as several 3kg fish.

Spawning in the rivers always starts a little later than in the hatchery and so it was only at the beginning of May that we started to observe fish spawning in the rivers. Fish can be picky and go off the bite during this time, but site fishing becomes very exciting as one has to carefully approach the riffles and shallow water where the fish are lying. A badly placed fly and sloppy casting will spook these fish easily, and so it is challenging, but very rewarding.

The photo below is of the trout that weighed 4,1kg and was caught by Dave De Vos, a guest staying at The Crofts. The bottom photo is of Randal Brereton, a guest at Finsbury House, holding a beautiful rainbow.



## River programme

Work on the rivers since the flood has comprised of fixing bridges, selective bush clearing and rock packing. The team started at the bottom of the Spekboom river. Selectively clearing trees, as well as pruning them, will enhance the fishing opportunities but also help to stabilise the river banks. Bushes and trees tend to block out light and suppresses grass growth. A dense carpet of grass is the best soil erosion prevention. Of course we do not want the banks of the river to look like a fairway on a golf course and will try and make it look as natural as possible.

Temporary bridges were placed at most crossing points on the rivers shortly after the flood. Starting from the bottom of the Spekboom, we have started putting in permanent bridges. The suspension bridge at SPK6 was washed away, which was actually a nuisance to fisherfolk, and a far less obtrusive bridge placed slightly downstream from the position of the old bridge. The new bridges only have latte as steps and will be anchored on one side to allow them to swing across the river in a spate but not flow away.

Repacking the rocks at the loosely packed rock weirs has also started from the bottom of the Spekboom pools and we have finished SPK1, SPK2 and SPK5. The team have left the Spekboom for now and are currently working at W6 crossing, which is a vehicle crossing as well.





## Firewood

A large portion of our time in Autumn is spent harvesting and preparing firewood for the upcoming winter.

Having exhausted the majority of the firewood tree species on the Estate we have turned our chainsaws to further afield. With permission from Annette Rossouw we are now harvesting gum trees at the old gum plantation that is next to the road after the first gate.

This is a better-quality firewood than pine, once it has dried out. Members who have tried it so far have found that it takes a while to get going, but once sufficient heat has built up it burns really well and produces very hot coals that you can braai over as well.



## Firebreaks and patch mosaic burns

This autumn, we burnt three patch mosaic burns. One in the Majubane, one on the northern slopes of the Kliprots valley below Goudkoppies and one on the northern slope of the Steenkamps valley, which extended around the mountain below Mount Prospect to the slope south of K9. All three burns were planned and executed to perfection by Jimmy, with the aid of the field team. All three patches have already greened over, are looking beautiful and attracting lots of wildlife. As we go into the fire season, we can't rest but the risk is much reduced with these three burns.

All houses had firebreaks cut around them and the traditional firebreaks between our neighbours, Highland Run and Troutkloof, were burnt.

At the time of writing our firefighting team were having a refresher training course in fire suppression and fighting. The course was held through our fire protection association and involved both theory and practical sessions. All our firefighting equipment is serviced and ready for the season ahead.

