



C/O The Chairman
14 Edgecliffe Park
14 Bartle Road
GILLITS
3610

<http://durbanramblers.co.za>
info@durbanramblers.co.za

Banking Details:
Nedbank Musgrave
Account No 1138655228
Branch Code 1301 2600

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE DURBAN RAMBLERS HIKING CLUB

2ND QUARTER: APRIL TO JUNE: 2018

CHAIRMAN'S RAMBLINGS

Back in the saddle, and I thank the members present at the AGM for landing me in this position. However with remaining committee members and the newly elected members on the committee of 2018, I am certain that the task ahead will be both enjoyable and rewarding. I thank the outgoing chairman and committee members for their dedication in the success of the club.

Our AGM on the 17th of February was attended by 35 members with 12 apologies. The meeting was preceded by a snake demonstration. This was a very interesting talk (from a distance) about habitat and habit. Showing a Black Mamba (a young specimen) and a Puff adder disappearing under the light-box had many members making sure of being far away from any "striking distance"! The AGM followed, and the business of the club was dealt with, and new committee members were elected. The floating trophy, which I received, was greatly appreciated. With that all done, the braai fires lit, a relaxing afternoon under the tree with lots of chitter chatter began.

The first meeting of the newly sworn in committee was held on the 24th February, and the enthusiasm shown was great. Not too many issues have to be resolved, thanks to the outgoing committee members.

At this time of the year we regularly want to know who has not paid their membership fees, and how we can trace hikers who LOVE hiking but who are lethargic contributors. Please members pay the fees.

A new year of hiking has begun with some new faces in leadership, many of whom have been there before. However, this does not mean complacency. We still want to hear from members with new ideas re possible new hikes, new ideas and new hike leaders.

Hiking is fun, keep it that way.

Regards

Werner

EDITOR'S NOTE

With a number of new committee members this is an interesting quarter to come. Let's see what changes occur in hiking schedules and other new opportunities that await us. Do note that we now have hikes planned for the public holidays.

Some interesting long walks have taken place in the last few months, some of them are written up below.

Regards, Ilona

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chairman	Werner Vanslebrouck	084 206 7836	031 767 2969	werner.v@iafrica.com
Secretary	Coleen Seath	082 735 7659		coleensea@gmail.com
Treasurer / Members' Database	Tina Regnard	083 289 6276	031 207 5005	regnardt@gmail.com
Sunday Hike Organiser	Jill Dunstone	084 780 0818		jillyd@telkomsa.net
Saturday Hike Organiser	Ann Olds	083 666 5630	031 767 1027	annolds2@gmail.com
Weekend Organiser	Biff Maggs	082 609 9684		Biffmaggs101@gmail.com
Publicity	Ana Barbosa	082 496 2320	031 462 6492	durbanramblers.publicity@gmail.com
Ordinary Member	Jenny Rooks	084 952 0622	031 303 5828	jen0212sa@gmail.com
Magazine	Ilona Lamprecht	076 912 9829		ilona.tangodreams@gmail.com
Website Organiser	Abdullah Dada	084 478 6779	031 269 1921	dada@greenit.co.za

MEMBER NEWS

NEW MEMBERS:

We have the following new members:

Couples:

- Dee Smale (Tony Ball upgraded his single membership to that of a couple to add her)
- Kevin Bruorton (Alice Gilbey upgraded her single membership to that of a couple to add him)
- Malcolm and Lyn Hopkins
- Linda and Arvin Govender

Single memberships:

- David Horrocks
- Jaqui Barnard

INFORMATION

MAGAZINE:

Don't forget to send us any personal, email and/or postal address changes to ensure the magazine reaches you.

Note: If you have been receiving the magazine by post and now want the speedier email version, advise the secretary, Coleen, and send us your email address. This helps reduce the posting costs and possible delays with getting the magazine to you.

If anyone has interesting hiking or member news to share, please let me (Ilona) know so I can include it in the next magazine.

WEBSITE:

The website (www.durbanramblers.co.za) as well as the *Durban Ramblers Hiking Club* Facebook page may be viewed for information regarding the club, hikes, etc. Should you wish to contribute photos to the Facebook page please send your contributions to Ana our Publicity person. You may also ask Ana to remove photos you would rather not be there.

MONEY MATTERS

SUBS FOR 2018:

According to our Constitution, subs are due after the close of the AGM. Members have until the end of April to pay their subs. Thereafter he/she shall cease to be a member.

- Single Member R100
- Family R150 (excluding children 18 years or older)

- **Joining Fee has been increased to R50,**
- New members joining after 1st July 2018 will only pay half the annual subs.
- For past members wishing to rejoin Durban Ramblers after being absent for a year or more, a new membership application form needs to be submitted and the joining fee, in addition to the annual subs, is to be paid.

The Membership Form, which can be downloaded from our website, is to be completed in full: Hike Names, Dates and Signatures of Hike Leaders, before handing or emailing them to the Secretary along with your proof of payment. If you have completed three hikes and want to continue hiking with us, please do so as a member of our wonderful group.

Please pay by EFT directly into the new bank account – include your full name as reference.

Note the new banking details: Nedbank, Account number 113 8655 228, Branch Code 13 01 26 00

Cheques and cash both attract big bank charges, so to help reduce our banking fees, kindly endeavour to make EFT deposits.

HIKE DONATIONS:

On some of the hikes hikers are asked for donations and in some cases the club makes donations on behalf of the members. Here is a breakdown of recent donations made.

DONATIONS MADE ON HIKES - 1ST QUARTER 2018					
Date	DRHC	Hikers (Wed)	Hikers (Sat)	Hikers (Sun)	Hike
Wednesday, December 20, 2017		420			Iphithi Nature Reserve
Saturday, January 13, 2018			840		Roosfontein Nature Reserve
Saturday, February 03, 2018			300		Keep Hillcrest Beautiful Ass.
Saturday, February 10, 2018			580		Virginia Nature Reserve
Saturday, March 10, 2018			540		Springside Nature Reserve
Sunday, March 11, 2018				140	Ezemvelo Krantzkloof (50%)
Sunday, March 11, 2018				140	Everton Conservancy (50%)
Total	R 0	R 420	R 2,260	R 280	R 2,960.00

RHINO CARD

As the entrance fees for the Ezemvelo parks such as Krantz Kloof Gorge and Stainbank Nature Reserve go up again, now at R30 to R40 pp, it might be worth your while to look into getting a Rhino card which gives you entry into these venues. Your basic Rhino Card costs you R250 per person (under 60 yrs of age) or R230 per person (over 60 yrs of age) for a year's membership. There is no juvenile rate. There is also only one loyalty card, the Rhino Card. See <http://www.kznwildlife.com/travel-information/loyalty-club/rhino-card.html> for more information and to download the application form.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

EMERGENCY CONTACTS:

While hiking and rambling is usually all good fun we should also be aware that sometimes something can go amiss and we might find ourselves in a stressful situation. There is an emergency app you can download to your mobile phone from www.mysos.co.za which will provide you with all the emergency numbers in the area where you need it.

PERSONAL EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

Please have your emergency contact number(s) under ICE (In Case of Emergency) in your cell phone and on the new cards issued, or a label of some sort attached to your daypack. Details should consist of your name, ID number, name of medical aid and membership number (your medical aid card should be with you too) and the name/number(s) of someone to contact. Emergency personnel will look for your ICE details. Hospitals will not send an ambulance/paramedics if your medical aid details are not available. Please carry these important details with you on each hike.

FIXTURES

WEEKENDS AWAY: *Organised by Marie Gurr and Biff Maggs*



ORIBI GORGE 9th FEBRUARY 2018 Weekend report by Crista Gadd

On Friday 9 Feb 2018 14 Ramblers converged on Oribi Gorge Nature Reserve for a weekend of fun and rambling. In spite of some detours all arrived safely. Quite a few drivers are expecting photographs of their vehicles in the mail thanks to an unexpected 60 km/h zone.

The early arrivals went on a short walkabout to look at routes for Saturday and Sunday. Late afternoon was spent socialising, meditating in the peaceful surroundings or botanising and enjoying the perfect light for photography.

For newcomers the camp was a pleasant surprise with 2 chalets that can accommodate up to 8 people and six 2 bed huts, all with shower and toilet, bedding, crockery and cutlery.

On Saturday morning we set off on the Mziki Trail that starts just below the rest camp and takes one up to the top of the cliffs with spectacular views over the gorge. We made our way along the grasslands with beautiful wild flowers, but sadly no animals. A steep descent took us back to the car park, where we had left two cars (thanks to Rob for this brilliant idea). Here we had a welcome breather and water break and some decided to rather not tackle the trail to Hoopoe Falls.



The Hoopoe Falls Hike is described as follows on the website:



‘This is an easy route which follows the river from the main picnic site in the gorge. You will be flanked by the towering sandstone cliffs of the gorge as you follow the river for about 1.5 hours when you will join the trail running alongside the Mbalala Stream to the Hoopoe Falls. 7 km, 4 hours, return on same route.’

Well, beautiful it was and the towering sandstone cliffs true, but easy? Shall we blame the legs already a bit tired from Mziki or the sweltering heat and humidity or both? We huffed and puffed and took numerous pit stops to try and cool down, but made it and were rewarded with a shower under the waterfall and a nice long lunch break. All so worth the effort. Back at the picnic spot that waiting vehicle was a lovely sight. (Another thank you to Rob!)

Sunday morning dawned grey with a slight on-off drizzle and some needed very little encouragement to hit the road home. Five remained and did the short Nkonka Trail. Not as well marked and maintained as the rest, but still a lovely little hike. We went to Oribi Gorge Hotel for coffee, which turned into a very nice lunch and went our separate ways from there.

Thanks Marie for organising this lovely trip.

Hints for people planning to visit the camp:

- Follow the directions on the booking form to avoid detours
- Beware of unexpected speed limit changes

UPCOMING WEEKENDS AWAY:

Easter weekend at Lotheni:

LOTHENI already booked for Easter 2018 – 29th March. All places booked. You can try on your own directly with Parks Board for cancellations.

MAY 2018 CUMBERLAND

Provisional Booking made for May Friday 18th to Sunday 20th.

Camping available R80.00 pppn plus R20 entrance

- No Power, ablutions have solar powered LED battery lights and gas geyser
- Gas Fridge/Freezer may be hired.

Rooms with communal bathroom – own towels – R210 pppn

6 beds available in 3 rooms

Communal kitchen and lounge. Big verandah with Braai

Self catering cottage with 2 double rooms – own towels – R260 pppn.

The two rooms share a bathroom. Deck with a view.

Small kitchenette, but access to communal kitchen and lounge

Dorms are also available. There are bunk beds, only fitted sheet supplied, own bedding, R150 pppn. Use the self-catering kitchen with the rest of the group.

Please book with Biff before 15th April 2018 and pay by 30th April into the Ramblers Account.

Account number on front of mag.

Clearly state with booking NAME and venue. Please do not deposit cash or cheques. Cash can be paid to Biff or Tina.

Biff Maggs – Weekend organiser biffmaggs101@gmail.com or 082 609 9684 – uses WhatsApp.

WEDNESDAY MORNING HIKES: Organised by Coleen Seath.

Please check details of the Wednesday Hikes with Colin Turner on 031 708 3517 or Coleen Seath on 031 202 2279 / 082 735 7659 (who will co-ordinate with leaders.) You can also find out about the Wednesday hikes on the our Facebook page posted there a few days before.

SATURDAY HIKES (AFTERNOON): Organised by Ann Olds.

- Please get to starting point by 13.45 or 13.15 on occasion (please check schedule below) in order for the hike to begin on time.
- For directions to the starting point, please PHONE the organiser between 12.00 and 12.:45 on the day of the hike, don't SMS.
- Children are welcome but check suitability of the hike with the leader.
- Please bring at least 1 litre of water, a snack for half time and a hat. It is recommended that hikers carry their own water.
- There is no need to tell the leader you will be hiking.



SUNDAY HIKES (FULL DAY): Organised by Jill Dunstone.

- Please be aware that a certain level of fitness is required to do Sunday hikes. If you don't exercise regularly, or aren't an experienced walker please complete three Ramblers' Saturday afternoon hikes before joining the longer Sunday hikes.
- **Always** phone the hike leader the day before at the latest, to confirm details and let him/her know to expect you on the hike. Be mindful that the leader also is preparing for the hike on the Sunday morning.
- Please note that the meeting point and or time in the programme might change, or the hike route might change, or it might be raining and the hike cancelled therefore **you must phone the leader** or you might find yourself left out and left behind
- Please try to get to the meeting places at least 10 minutes earlier to help with arranging lifts.
- Bring the correct amount of money as change may not be available.
- It is advisable to bring at least 2 litres of water, mid-morning snack, lunch and a hat. It is recommended that hikers carry their own water
- Keep Rehidrat in your pack in case of dehydration in the hot months.
- Use tick spray.

Hikes are described as being Easy, Moderate or Strenuous and are graded from 1 to 5, as follows:

1. A flat even walk
2. A hike without big and steep inclines
3. A hike with some steep inclines - Fitness recommended
4. A hike with steep inclines and rock scrambling - Fitness essential
5. A hike with many inclines and rock scrambling - Fitness very essential

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY HIKING PROGRAMME 2ND QUARTER 2018 PLUS PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

check on Facebook for changes

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF HIKE	LEADER	GRADE
Sun 1 April	EASTER SUNDAY – no hike scheduled		
Sat 7 April	MacKintosh Falls, return through Giba Conservancy.	Werner	
	Park at NU Driving Range (from M13, off ramp 31/Shongweni Rd, left to NU.) 13.45, R20.00 to Giba Conservancy and R5.00 per car. Through farmland to top of Falls, steep path down to bottom and up and over a few hills into Giba Gorge toward St Hillier. Exhilarating.	084 206 7836	4 - strenuous, vertigo warning Long.
Sun 8 April	Kloof Ramble	Jenny	
	Postponed from last quarter. An easy scenic walk incorporating Memorial Park and stunning views of the Gorge from Uve road. This will be a morning walk with two snack stops. Refreshments at Tina's after the hike. Meet in the parking area of Tina's Hotel in Kloof to start walking at 08.00	084 952 0622	2 - moderate 16 km
Sat 14 April	Paradise Valley Nature Reserve.	Ismail	
	10 Oxford Rd, Pinetown. Park in Oxford Rd (car guard) and meet inside Reserve by 13.45. Entrance R20. Good beginners hike through indigenous forests, bridges over river, view of cascades.		2 - easy - moderate. 6 km
Sun 15 April	Palmiet Nature Reserve	Margie	
	Walk through suburbia into the nature reserve via the old quarry. Magnificent rock faces, beautiful deep pools and lovely bird life. Meet at Waxy's / Westville Hotel at 07.30. Drinks at Waxy's after the hike.	073 437 6915	2-3 ± 15 km

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF HIKE	LEADER	GRADE
Sat 21 April	Umhlanga Promenade, Hawaan Forest and Beach.	Ilona	
	Park at Durban View Park parking lot (Marine Dr, and Durban View Rd.) 13.45. Hike along the prestigious Umhlanga promenade, through indigenous Hawaan coastal forest, and out onto the beach to Lagoon and return to car park. Drinks afterwards enjoying the sea breeze.	076 912 9829	1 - easy ± 9 km
Sun 22 April	Holla Trails – Umhlali	Jon	
	Go north for a tranquil walk through the rolling hills inland from Ballito. Cane, coastal forest and grassland. Meet at Collisheen Estate, 1 Esenembi Road, (R102) Compensation Station. Umhlali for an 08.30 start. Entry fee R30. Stay for drinks afterwards.	082 459 1522	2-3 - moderate 15 km
Fri 27 April	Iphithi Nature Reserve and surrounds. 09.00.	Ann	
	Park at Iphithi Nature Reserve, Edward Dr. Gillitts. From M13 exit 24, right over Everton Bridge, 1st left, right into Old Station Rd, 2 nd left into Edward. Gate open by 08.30. R20.00 to Conservancy. Hike a few loops through this reclaimed wet-land, step it out in neighbouring suburbs, and return to Reserve for BYO braai lunch.	083 666 5630	1 - Easy ± 8 km.
Sat 28 April	Clifton Tower Circuit	Werner	
	Meet at 13.45 from Mushroom Farm. Exit 33 from M13, left into Kassier Rd left onto MR599 (Shongweni Dam sign) Hike through cane fields and uphill to Clifton Tower. Views to city, coast and surrounds. A few steep hills. Well-deserved drinks at Shongweni Club after hike.	084 206 7836	3 - strenuous 9 km
Sun 29 April	Monteseel	Philip	
	Walk down into the Valley of 1000 Hills, up to Monteseel and then back again on a circular route. Meet at the Intaba View Restaurant on Old Main Road, Drummond for an 07.30 start. Drinks at the restaurant afterwards.	082 417 0204	4 - moderate 14 km
Tue 1 May	Alverstone Wildlife Park.	Werner	
	Exit 33 from M13, right over M13 into Kassier Rd, left opposite Hillcrest Hospital (Busamed) into Alverstone Rd (D435). Meet at 08.45, hike at 09.00 over grassland, game viewing, down to dam in the valley, through riverine forest. Some challenges with Werner! BYO braai in Boma. R20.00 to Conservancy.	084 206 7836	3 - moderate 8 km
Sat 5 May	Tanglewood from Kloof Country Club.	Sue	
	Park at Kloof Country Club (towards back of car park) 13.45. Exit 24 from M13, sign posted. R20.00 to Tanglewood. Hike through Kloof to Tanglewood Nature Reserve. We will be guided through the animal sanctuary, indigenous bush, under a waterfall. Steep in places. Drinks afterwards at the Club	079 9800 488	3 - moderate to long 11 km
Sun 6 May	Old Baldy, Valley 1000 Hills	Adullah	
	Scenic hike through the iSithumba Village and along the Umgeni River, followed by a steep scramble up Old Baldy (400 m altitude gain) to some magnificent views of the Valley. There is one tricky chimney section; you need to be fit and agile. Meet Maytime Spar at 08.00 to drive in convoy to the start (about 28 km via Botha's Hill). This is a Green Corridor initiative – R40 per person	084 478 6779	4 - steep, strenuous Vertigo warning 10 km

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF HIKE	LEADER	GRADE
Sat 12 May	Hill and Dale.	Jenny	
	From M3 take Exit 43 (Hammarisdale), turn left towards Hammarisdale, right at Hill and Dale sign. Meet in road at 13.45, then drive together to parking spot. Hike through cane fields and grassland. Views far and wide.	084 952 0622	3 - moderate 8 km.
Sun 13 May	Virginia Walkabout or Danville Dawdle	John van Zyl	
	Meet and park at Danville Park Girl's High School at 21 Middlebrook Avenue, Durban North. John will set off at 08.00 on a circular ramble, mixing street walking with Danville Park and other green areas, with wonderful views of the sea	083 799 8382	2 ± 15 km
Sat 19 May	Westville Conservancy Trail	Ann	
	Park at Westville Swimming pool, St James Ave. 13.45. R20 for the Conservancy. Hike along newly cleared bike trails, through a tunnel, along the river banks, and across some grassland.	083 666 5630	2 - easy 7 km
Sun 20 May	Kloof Gorge- combined Midlands Hike.	Margret K	
	Meet in the main picnic site for an 08.00 start. Up to the beacon, down to Sauros Pools and back along the river. R30 entry fee. (Regular hikers should consider buying a Rhino Card to cover the Emzemvelo entry fees)	083 783 7852	3 12 km
Sat 26 May	Casino to Bird Park, Durban.	Biff	
	Park at the Casino or at Battery Beach and meet on Promenade in front of Wimpy at 13.45. Walk along the Promenade to Umgeni River, over the bridge and up-stream to the Bird Park. Drinks and supper options abound.	082 609 9684	1 - easy, 7 km
Sun 27 May	Bux Farm, Shongweni	Margie	
	Meet at Assagay Garage at 07.30 to drive in convoy to parking area. Hike up and down over grasslands and through the quarry towards Peacevale. Drinks afterwards at Summerveld Lodge.	073 437 6915	3 16 km
Sat 2 June	Nkutu picnic site – Red Trail to 2 waterfalls.	Ann	
	Waterfall end of Krantzklouf Nature Reserve: Kloof Falls Rd from Kloof, past main picnic site. Road becomes Bridle Rd. Continue to 3-way stop in Waterfall, turn right into King George, over speed bumps, road becomes Valley Rd. In the dip Nkutu picnic site on right. Meet 13.45. R30 entrance. Hike across the river, steep paths down to each waterfall, and some boulder clambering. BYO sundowners in the Reserve.	083 666 5630	4 - strenuous, 6 km.
Sun 3 June	To be advised		
Sat 9 June	Palmiet Nature Reserve, Westville.	Werner	
	(Off Old New Germany Rd, Westville.) Meet 13.45. R20 to the Conservancy. River crossings, grassland and indigenous bush, snack at the cascades. Drinks at Waxy O'Connor afterwards.	084 206 7836	3 - moderate, Vertigo.
Sun 10 June	COMRADES MARATHON DAY Stainbank Nature Reserve, Yellowwood Park	Stella	
	Follow a variety of paths meandering across this popular reserve. Always some game to be seen – usually ticks as well to use insecticide! Finish around lunchtime. Meet inside the reserve gate at 08.00. Entrance fee R40.	078 319 8979	2 10 km
Sat 16 June	Krantzklouf Nature Reserve: the Beacon Trail.	Abdullah	
	Meet in the main picnic site in Kloof Falls Rd, Kloof, at 13.45. R30.00 entrance. Enjoy wonderful views of Kloof Gorge, and east to the ocean and city. A few challenging steep parts on the route. Drinks at The Nature Cafe afterwards.	084 478 6779	3 - moderate, but vertigo 7 km.

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF HIKE	LEADER	GRADE
Sun 17 June	Thornyridge, Cato Ridge	Jon	
	Hike through African thornveld, wetlands and some interesting urban areas (is the famous Chinese shop still there?). Meet at Cato Ridge turnoff (exit 53) at 08.20. Petrol sharing from Durban – R40. BYO for afterwards	082 459 1522	2-3 15 km
Sat 23 June	Summerveld – Shongweni Circuit	Jon	
	M13, exit 33, left and first right into Cliffdale, left into Hawkstone, right into Summerhill Rd, park at Summerveld Lodge at 13.45. Trail along “horse country roads” and through grassland. Drinks at Lodge afterwards.	082 459 1522	2 - easy 8 km
Sun 24 June	Mzinyati Falls, Inanda	Philip	
	A Durban Green Corridor hike. Park at the Green Hub in Inanda to start at 09.00. An interesting walk through lower Inanda to the Falls, down into the Gorge and a circular route back. Meeting places to be advised in Durban / Hillcrest to be advised. R40 for the guide.	082 417 0204	2 - moderate Vertigo warning 12 km
Sat 30 June	Stainbank Nature Reserve.	Steve	
	Coedmore Rd, Yellowwood Park. 13.30 as entry process is slow. R40.00. Hike through pleasant grassland, bush, a few river crossings, game. Steve knows this reserve inside-out and will surprise us. BYO sundowners.	083 956 1556	3 - Moderate 8 km
Sun 1 July	Clansthal Conservancy, near Scottburgh.	Anne	
	New hike, details to follow on the Durban Ramblers website and Facebook page and in next magazine.	079 850 0206	

ANNUAL GENERAL MAYHEM- um - MEETING

Was held on the 17th of February at Palmiet Nature Reserve.

Well before the meeting we had a wonderful presentation from Nick Evans of KwaZulu-Natal Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, this time with a slide show showing us where he has found snakes in peoples yards and houses. He also introduced us to some of his newer snakes. I suddenly found myself at the back of the hall when the puffadder got a bit, um, testy. I am not sure if anyone saw the report in a recent Highway Mail of a large python Nick rescued. You can read about it here: <https://highwaymail.co.za/286371/massive-three-metre-python-rescued-from-inanda/>.



We had a good turnout for the meeting itself, about 50 members. Outgoing Chairman Philip Collyer welcomed everyone, and went through the minutes of the previous year’s AGM. Werner was named man of the year for 2017. There was consensus on the new committee members, Werner Vanslebrouck has agreed to be chairman once again, with Coleen Seath taking over as secretary. Jill Dunstone, Ann Olds and Biff Maggs take on the roles of Sunday, Saturday and Weekend organisers respectively.

The mayhem part of the meeting came about when it was opened up to the members to vote on whether it should be allowed that members carry fire arms. After much debate the vote was ‘no’, members should not carry fire arms on hikes. The Rules and Regulations will be amended accordingly.

As has become a regular occurrence at these AGMs a social braai was held after the meeting under the trees.

OTHER RAMBLERS ACTIVITIES

Wildflower walking group.

In October of last year, a number of us (initiated by Rose Dix) decided to form a walking group with the intention of finding and identifying wildflowers within our local areas. This was born probably out of fear that very soon we would be kicked out of our Weds Hikes as we are forever spotting and stopping to photograph a particular flower - now we can walk right past - knowing that within a day or two we can come back and view to our hearts content!

Our first outing was to the Watsonia Grasslands in the Krantzklouf Nature Reserve – a relatively short walk from the



Picnic Area – once up there it really is a beautiful spot overlooking the gorge with a wealth of flowers. Since then we have been to the two grasslands at the end of Winston Park as well as New Germany Nature Reserve and Springside Nature Reserve. Rose, Ann Olds and Alan Karssing are our experts and Ana Barbosa's focus is on the insects so we have a really fun time!

The intrepid Wildflower Girls (+ Alan) before our first venture to Watsonia Grasslands.

If anyone is keen to join us, please contact me, Diana on 083 468 6941.

MEMBERS' STORIES

Creating a new trail.

A group of us from Durban Ramblers and some other brave souls have just completed the pioneering Abbot Pfanner Trappist Trail. I talked to Anna Kapp, who has done a number of Camino pilgrimages in Spain, about what it was like to be a part of the team that found and explored the routes during the reces.



At the beginning of November last year, Anna was asked if she wanted to be a part of the recce group for the Abbot Pfanner Trappist Trail, without hesitation she said "Yes." In the middle of the same month they did the first expedition to look for routes to go from one Trappist monastery to the next.

Anna, Jon, Jenny and Trevor were drove from Mariathal through the forest roads to Kings Grant, which used to be a monastery but is now privately owned. This was in fact the last day of the trail in reverse. They also worked in teams of two, each team walking a different route. Jon would find a route using Google Maps and would follow in a vehicle while Jenny mapped the walk on her tablet.

In January they did the second recce, Jon and Anna made up one team and Jenny and Trevor were another team. These teams split up doing reces from Centocow and Myddelton Farm and Kings Grant. Syl and Fynn formed the back-up team.

Jon and Anna picked up the local guide, Mdu, at Reichenau mission and started hiking with him from Home Bru station and on to Ashtonvale. He had valuable knowledge of the Sani to Sea bike route. Jenny also did some other route finding while she was on holiday at Sani Pass at the end of December.

I asked Anna what it was like for her to have now done the whole walk, she said it was a great challenge, it was new, a great experience. Scenic, beautiful, challenging and rewarding. She is so grateful to be part of establishing this pilgrimage.

I could give a detailed account of this wonderful adventure, however there were enough of us on the walk who would love to talk about their experiences, so do ask your fellow hikers what it was all about.

For more information on the trail and next planned pilgrimage go to <https://www.amawalkerscamino.com/abbot-pfanner-trappist-trail.html>.

There was some press coverage as well: <https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/the-independent-on-saturday/20180310/281870118953157>

Camino Aragones: a pilgrimage from Lourdes to Puente la Reina - By Jenny Aitchison

There were nine in our party of pilgrims who walked from Lourdes in France to Puente la Reina in Spain between 28 May and 11 June last year. Apart from a Canadian pilgrim, we were all from South Africa, two from Mpumalanga and the rest of us from KwaZulu-Natal. Jenny Rooks of amaWalkers was our leader and although most of us had never met before, we clicked straight away, partly due to Jenny's skills and partly to the socially lubricating powers of alcohol. From diverse backgrounds and levels of fitness, we had our main meal together every night and usually stopped together during the day for coffee or beers and for the Aitchisons, the magic potion: Coca Cola. As the straggler in the party of fit and focused striders, I was never short of company and encouragement while bringing up the rear. We were a very cohesive group.

Our route went from the green river valleys and gorges of France, over the Pyrenees via the Somport Pass into the drier parts of Aragon and Navarre in Spain. We had heat (for example, on our first day), we had rain and we had every gradient and type of walking surface imaginable, the most challenging of which were the narrow, rocky paths on steep slopes in the French Pyrenees, a fall from which would have landed one in a cold and fast-flowing river far below and probably ultimately in hospital – or worse. It was good to have had some practice in and around Krantzklouf.



Our accommodation had all been pre-arranged by amaWalkers, as had our daily luggage transfers, leaving us free to walk with a daypack stocked only with water, snacks and rain gear. All we had to do every day was to make sure we stayed on the route (thank you, Jenny for your navigating skills) and beat the threat of heat or rain to reach our destination which could be anything from 15 to 26 (or more!) kilometres away from our start. And we could enjoy the spectacular scenery as we walked through valleys that became narrower and steeper as they approached the Somport Pass, passing through farmlands and small towns where buildings looked as if they had been established centuries before and were perfectly adapted to the climate with chimneys, pitched roofs and wooden shutters, often

painted in a soft lavender, that could be closed during winter. Although it was summer, there was still snow on the higher peaks and woodpiles were already in evidence.

Our first stop in Spain was Canfranc de Estación, famous for the impressive station that featured in the movie Doctor Zhivago but now no longer the main rail route between France and Spain. Leaving there for Jaca and the next day for Santa Cruz de las Serós, we had rain – not too hard but unrelenting so in my case, more attention was paid to the surface on which we walked and the increasingly troublesome blisters than to the scenery.

We saw very few other pilgrims and very few people at all. Exceptions were in Lourdes where many of us took part in the candlelit procession that takes place every evening and which is attended by thousands of pilgrims, those at the weekly market in Bedous which was well attended and where pilgrims were given free churros and finally those in Puente la Reina and the crowds in Pamplona to which we bussed to end our pilgrimage.

Highlights: apart from the company and the superb scenery, mine were the two business-like Pyrenean mountain dogs guarding their flock of sheep and barking at anyone who overstepped the invisible mark; being handed ripe cherries just picked off a laden tree by a householder; a visit to the ruins of the oldest of the two monasteries of San Juan de la Pena, tucked under cliffs with beautiful carvings of Biblical stories; the octagonal chapel at Eunate and many other churches and cathedrals; hearing the singing of the monks at the monastery of Leyre; seeing the Pyrennees spread out on our right as we walked through Aragon; our stay in the albergue in one of the hilltop towns of Aragon and our meal there with other pilgrims; John's birthday dinner in Canfranc de Estación. The list could go on... It was a memorable hike and a wonderful experience all round.



EVENTS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2018

Elsa and Annemarie have this event planned for the year so far, watch this space for what else they come up with.



MOUNTAIN OF THE STAR WALKING TRAIL
2018 and a new year.
There is an unfamiliar landscape out there somewhere waiting to be explored.
Annemarie le Roux and Elsa Davids invite you to join us as we walk sole to soul along the Mountain of the star Trail which threads its way from the Klein Karoo to the coastline, via Outeniqua Mountains, Langkloof, along Duiwelskop wagon route to Wilderness. (Western Cape, South Africa)
The route is fully slack packed and catered, all that is required is to show up and draw on the experience of easy going companionship and a whole lot more.

Date September 22 to 29 2018

For further information please contact Elsa at riverwoman@telkomsa.net or Mobile 0728777798

Spekboom Tours

I had heard from Rose how much she enjoyed the inaugural hike with Julia and Spekboom Tours through the Dargle district, I asked Julia for more information and she provided me with this report from Alison Chadwick.

THE SAMANGO TRAIL, DARGLE – by Alison Chadwick - edited by Ilona Lamprecht

Having just completed the 5 day Giant's Cup Trail whereby you carry all you need on your back for 5 days I was looking for something not so strenuous so when the Dargle Samango Slackpack Hike popped up on my Facebook feed I was intrigued to learn more. It didn't take me long to contact Julia and book my spot on the hike,

I was delighted to find out later that Rose who I'd met on a few Ramblers hikes was also doing The Samango Trail so we made plans to travel together from Durban. Rose is 80 years old and an inspiration, I look forward to doing many more hikes with her.

We left Durban at 2h30pm, took a nice easy drive to Dargle and checked into the beautiful Lemonwood Cottages <http://www.lemonwood.co.za/>. The story goes that Katie and Adam Robinson visited South Africa 14 years ago on a holiday from the UK, visiting the Kruger National Park and the seaside town of Ballito, Katie saw an advert in a free property magazine about this property in Dargle which was for sale, they took a drive, fell in love with it, returned to the UK, sold up and arrived back in Dargle 3 months later. Once you visit Lemonwood you'll understand how easy it is to fall in love with the property, imagine a beautiful home with an enchanting forest on your doorstep.

By 6pm on the Friday all eleven of us intrepid hikers had arrived and were settled in on the patio overlooking the Inhlosane Mountain, we were spoilt with a spread of cheese, biscuits, pickles and wine whilst we chatted and got to know everyone. Julia and her partner Jonathan treated us to a lovely home cooked dinner with a choice of either a vegetarian or lamb tagine followed by a fruit crumble for dessert.

On Saturday we woke up to the most spectacular red sky. Katie prepared breakfast for us, which included her own lemonade which is delicious, we all had a spare bottle to fill up with lemonade for the hike.

I just loved all the little touches, we all got a lunch packed in a brown paper bag with our names written on the outside. This slackpacking thing is magic! Everything just happens, you don't even have to think!

At 8am our group the youngest being 46 and the oldest 83 posed for an official start photo and off we set through the Kilgobbin forest. What an enchanting forest, the paths had been neatly cleared for us, we took care to look out for spider webs and did our utmost to duck beneath them or gently remove them to the side of the path. It was a privilege to share this hike with a group of knowledgeable folk – we had what I'd term a professional birder in our party, he was able to identify every bird we saw, and between Geoff the birder and Rose they knew the names of every beautiful flower and towering tree. Our goal was to mark off 100 birds in the 3 days. I think we got close to 60.

We followed old logging trails and passed through private properties, I am so impressed with Julia, this being her inaugural Samango Trail and she certainly has done a lot of ground work with the locals getting permission to transgress their properties and linking the trail all together, not an easy feat.

We walked through the Old Kilgobbin Farm, though a paddock of the most magnificent Dutch Friesian horses which are used in workshops for children and corporates. To read more about Horse Play visit their web site at <http://horseplay.co.za/>. If you read this article which appeared in the Wildside Magazine it will give you a better understanding of what happens at Horse Play – an amazing connection with humans and horses. <http://horseplay.co.za/uploads/Horse%20Play%20article%20for%20Wildside.pdf>

We'd been going for a good couple of hours and we'd just stopped to admire in awe the oldest Lemonwood Tree in South Africa said to be 2,000 years old when we came across a clearing which looked like an area which can be used for a boma – little did we know but Julia had arranged for Karin Saks also known as the Baboon Woman to meet us here and share her knowledge with us about the research she is doing on the Samango monkeys in the area. Just listening to Karin speak you realise what special people we have in this world who dedicate their lives to researching animals. To read more about the is project please visit <https://samangomonkey.wordpress.com> or email Karin on samangomonkeymidlands@gmail.com, you could also read this one written by the Huffington Post puts into perspective the work she is doing with primates https://www.huffingtonpost.com/maggie-sergio/baboon-woman-the-story-of_b_1475362.html

After the most interesting talk and the most delicious chocolate brownies we set off again through the mist-belt forests, we were fortunate to see a few Samango monkeys in the distance. Once out the forest we were greeted with the most panoramic views of the Dargle Valley, Lidgetton Valley and the Drakensberg mountains – a great place to stop for our lunch. Our packed lunch was a roll with salad, sundried tomatoes, avocado and either cheese or bacon, some trail mix (nuts and dried fruit) and an apple.

We could see the rain moving in but our determined bunch of hikers made the decision to keep going and not take the short cut back to Lemonwood Cottages. We pressed on, poncho's and rain jackets came on – the rain did pelt down rather hard but luckily it was very warm – we did however all end up with wet boots. At this point my waterproof socks were the topic of conversation!

We arrived back at Lemonwood Cottages after a circular 14 km trail to a nice cup of tea. Tonight Katie made us a delicious fragrant green curry with a choice of chicken or vegetable, rice noodles and for dessert we had the best home-made lemon curd ice-cream and biscuits. Loving this thing called slackpacking.

On Sunday we woke up to a misty morning, we had lovely fresh fruit salad, organic yoghurts, cereal, preserves and freshly baked muffins for breakfast.

We set off at 8am taking a different newly cut trail through the forest, it was a tough 2.5 km climb up and out the forest. At about 1h30pm we arrived at Lythwood Lodge a beautiful venue <http://lythwood.com/> – two tables were beautifully set up for us with white table cloths under the old oak trees. We were all treated to a toasted sandwich, salad and chips. After lunch we had another 4 km to go before we reached Blesberg Farm. You can't help but envy the farming lifestyle, lovely green pastures, healthy looking cattle, stunning farmhouse, friendly farm dogs, shimmering damsoh the life! Today we walked 20 km. On arrival at Blesberg Farm we gathered again to a spread of cheeses, biscuits and wine.

Blesberg Farm is a working cattle farm in the beautiful Lidgetton Valley, there are several self-catering cottages on the farm <http://www.wheretostay.co.za/blesberg-self-catering-cottage-accommodation-lidgetton-midlands-and-battlefields>

I take my hat off to Julia, after a long day with us Jonathan and Julia still cooked us a vegetarian paneer makhani for dinner followed by the best tiramisu I have ever tasted. Julia I still want that recipe!

I need to mention at this point that Jonathan had kindly collected all our luggage at Lemonwood Cottages and transported it to Blesberg Farm for our 3rd night. Everything just happened in the background, we were definitely in good hands.

On Monday morning we woke to no electricity – not a problem the farm manager quickly got us two big gas bottles and we were able to make our morning fix of coffee. Yet again we were spoilt with another

surprise, Julia had organised for Erica Brown from Sol Food to come through to Blesberg Farm at 6h30am and serve us the most amazing vegetarian breakfast. We had 4 vegans in our party who were also catered for. With no electricity Erica wasn't able to make us the blueberry smoothies but we had a choice of gluten free muffins comprising of mango and passion fruit, banana, rhubarb and ginger - homemade cashew nut butter, freshly pressed juices and a basket of seasonal fruit.

Get onto Erica's mailing list for wonderful recipes, cooking courses and just general good food and ideas <http://www.solfood.co.za/>

After that healthy breakfast we started our walk rounding the Blesberg Farm, we watched two secretary birds flying above us, saw a few Reedbuck prance right across our path. Julia's Dad kindly packed all our luggage into his vehicle and transported our packed picnic lunches and met us along route. Throughout the day and the day before we'd seen this lone tree high up on a hill from every angle and this was our spot for our picnic lunch – 360° of views, absolutely breath-taking. On all 3 days we either saw or crossed the stone wall which was built by the Italian prisoners of war during WW2. I found this article which I found fascinating all about the Italian POW in Pietermaritzburg - <http://natalia.org.za/Files/18/Natalia%20v18%20article%20p70-79%20C.pdf>

Back to our lunch – a vegetarian empanada style puff pastry with seasonal roasted vegetables, fruit, nuts, chocolate brownie and a frozen health juice – oh and wait champagne and orange juice – need I say more?

After lunch we set off back through the forest taking the easiest route down, we did slip and slide a little – we arrived back at Lemonwood Cottages at about 1pm after completing 12 km.

What a wonderful 3 days, friendships made, lots of laughs, batteries recharged and discovering the beautiful area of Dargle. Julia and Jonathan you did a sterling job, the positive feedback speaks for itself. Well done on your inaugural Dargle hike, I have no doubt in my mind that this is the start of something fantastic!

For more information on Spekboom Tours and what's coming up next go to <http://spekboomtours.co.za>.

Established in 2015, we specialise in nature-based, ecologically-minded adventure, slack-packing, and cycle tours utilising exclusive trails through some of the most beautiful parts of South Africa.

We understand that the needs of our customers may be different, for this reason we custom design a range of trekking and cycling tours to suit your every expectation. We take the hassle out of planning your holiday offering a uniquely personal experience providing carefully selected routes off the beaten path...

Namaqua Camino

Dear Durban Ramblers members,

The Namaqua Camino is a brand new 10 day, 240 km hiking trail that meanders through western Namaqualand in the Northern Cape Province. The route starts and ends in the quaint little village of Hondeklipbaai. It is an assisted slack packing hike. Daily stages are between 15 and 28 km. The terrain differs from day to day. From hard gravel roads towards the mountains to sandy tracks along the coast, the Namaqua Camino has it all and more! The dates for the first of two 2018 Caminos have been selected specifically during a time of the year when the weather is generally temperate. Facilities in the overnight camps are basic and rugged. Eco toilets will be available at the overnight camps and along the route. Along the way, you will encounter the Namaqualand people and their unique way of life. After a day's walk, you will pitch your tent under the unpolluted night sky and listen to the absolute silence.

The dates for the 2018 Camino's are:

24 May - 3 June

20 -30 September

Maximum 45 persons per Camino

We have more information on our website and Facebook page or please contact us at the e-mail address or phone number below.

Regards from Namaqualand on behalf of the Namaqua Camino Group,

Elize Kruger

+27 083 6745045 - www.namaquacamino.co.za

Let your soles touch the earth and let the earth touch your soul



CLASSIFIEDS

Sometimes we find out things that could be useful to fellow hikers such as places to buy reasonably priced hiking goods or were to get good service. Please feel free to share your own bits of useful information here.

Sharon is still selling a pair of size 6 **Salomon shoes** worn once, happy to take R1000 for them. Please send her a WhatsApp on 083 775 4826. ==>



For those of you who have been wondering what happened to William who used to own the specialist **sport shoe store** in Glenwood Village, he is still around, just one block down at 332 Che Guevara. Call him on 031 201 5729 to arrange for a consultation and bring your old boots so he can see what kind of boot or shoe would best support you. He might still have some year end specials going on.

Roseanne Dix loves her new purple gaiters. We will see you coming from a distance now Rose!

Gaiters are available in a variety of colours at R85 a pair.

www.trippersports.com

And that is it from me, Ilona, for now. If you have a story you would like to share, please send it to me. Let's have some more adventures and make some more histories in the next few months.