



MONTHLY MAGAZINE & DIARY

DURBAN NATURALISTS CLUB

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JUNE, 1966 - FIXTURES

- Sunday 5th Umlaas Falls Hike with Robert Booker leading. Lorry leaves market place at 8.30 a.m. Members 50c, Visitors 55c.
- Tuesday 14th Executive Committee Meeting at Margaret Moore's home, 37 Venice road, at 8.00 p.m.
- Wednesday 15th Photographic Meeting at Joan and Det Sewell's home, 8 J.H. White road, Pinetown, at 8.00 p.m. The subject is "Camp Life". See page 12.
- Sunday 19th Clivia Gorge Hike with Mike Wigley leading. This is a combined hike with the Pietermaritzburg members. Lorry leaves market place at 8.00 a.m. Members 45c, Visitors 55c.

JULY

- Sunday 3rd Shongweni Falls Hike with Lindy leading. Lorry leaves market place at 8.30 a.m. Members 45c, Visitors 50c.

i.e. Please remember to bring your name tags on all hikes.

BLACK ROCK RIKE

We reached Molweni store, which is in the Hillcrest area, at 10.15 after a bone-shaking ride through some scenic country, and without much ado, set off in the direction of the Umgeni valley. The road to start with, obviously used by vehicles, is covered by six inches of fine dust; and this churned up by 27 pairs of shoes seemed to rise to nose level and stop. After a short while we were on a narrow foot path and as the party strung out the dust settled and the scenery became visible.

This spot is typical of the country inland from Durban. Mud and thatch native huts are scattered among the sparse bush and grassland. Winter is approaching and one can see grass fires almost any day now. The little springs and water holes have begun to dry up and the native women have to go now to fetch water. The crops that should have matured will never do so and cattle and goats graze undisturbed among the meagre gardens. As for the natives, whose absence from their homes is conspicuous, they'll very likely be off in the bush brewing large drums of shiriyane while the huts are left in care of a few piccanins and a half starved dog or two.

The vegetation here is chiefly grassland with clumps of bush dotted around at intervals. Whilst sycamore trees seemed predominant, I also noticed murula, umdoni, mimosa and flat crown with the inevitable lantana growing under them.

Way off in the hazy blue distance to the west, we had a view of Table Mountain dominating the surrounding country, and the silver snaking ribbon which is the Umgeni River scintillating in the sun on its way down from the highlands to meet us.

A cool breeze met us as the path began to descend into the valley and the open veld gave way to bush where we heard black collared barbets uttering their queer throaty call and red billed hoopoes their hysterical cacophony (the natives comically call them hleka abafazi or laughing women), and most of us will recall seeing the iridescent flash of blue starlings along the trail.

Now the path became really steep as it wound in and out of bushy gulleys and the loose gravel caused a good deal of slipping and sliding.

As we approached the confluence of the Umgeni and Molweni Rivers, we could see the banana trail coming down from Wyebank on the opposite hill and closer at hand a few natives washed clothes at a stream. It was pleasant to feel the cool water and the crunch of clean river sand on our naked feet as we crossed the Umgeni River.

On the last lap to the lunch spot we passed the home of an industrious native. An unusual sight it is to see paw-paw, banana, lemon, peach and casava trees all growing round one hut.

Black Rock is a rather picturesque spot, with its sheets of black volcanic lava spread across the valley which is dominated on the north by high cliffs.

In no time at all Old Faithful was scooping water from the river and coaxing up a fire while lunch packets were hastily withdrawn and various types of liquid refreshment indulged in.

Having had lunch, we naturally looked around for something to do, and at 1 p.m. sharp comes a water fight mit mugs of dirty water und frogs!

eggs! The situation could have developed into a major engagement but our attention was averted from the battle to a few wild duck who gave us a thrilling display of aerobatics as they zoomed past us several times and a hamerkop, not wanting to be outdone, tried to gool a physical in midair but finished up doing something which seemed to be a cross between cartwheels and handstands.

All too soon it was time to leave and as we trudged up the hill we passed through plantations of strange looking trees, and since some of us wondered what they were, I asked one of the Tamil Indians who live in the area. The tree produces a long bean-like pod. This they call drum-stick and is high in protein and is used as the base for which I was assured is a delicious morsel. The bean is chopped into short sections and braised with onions, curry and meat. The flowers of this tree are fried with eggs.

As a tea room loomed into view, the powerful and pungent odour of daga assailed my olfactory nerves, but who cared anyway; there were cold drinks in that shop.

Whilst waiting for the thirsty ones, I spoke to the truck driver about the temple across the road from the shop. This it seems, is a shrine of the Tamil people who have numerous gods, the chief one being Krishna. They regard the cow and the monkey as sacred and perform the strange rite of firewalking.

Homeward bound, the lorry lurched around the corner and as the evening breeze licked at us, we pulled our warm clothes on and the temple gradually merged into the gathering dusk.

Glenn Wessels.

SPORTA BRAAI

Had I studied the knowing look in Vic's eye as he blithely handed over the Chairmanship of the Entertainments Committee, I might not so easily have fallen into the trap for unsuspecting suckers to take on the job. "It has its ups and downs, its triumphs and disappointments" he said. Too true, too true! The Sporta Braai was rather more of the latter than the former.

It was hailed as a stupendous brainwave when a boat and ski's were offered for our use. Enthusiasm ran high, hours were spent on phone calls, notices were designed (which included some really poetic verse), printed, and posted (all 120 of them). Then it was decided that a check had better be made on the spot we had in mind. What was our consternation to find that on that spot stood a mass of heavy machinery - part of the new giant harbour works! After several more phone calls, we learnt that the place for boating was now Farewell Island, but nobody, not even the noble S.A. Police Force stationed overlooking the island, could tell us how to get there.

Feeling like the early explorers, Roger and I discovered a trail through the cinders and sand which led to various sailing clubs on Farewell Island. Our next problem was to get permission to picnic there. Panic reigned when on Wednesday we heard we could not use the island. However, using all my feminine charm, I managed to obtain permission from the Harbour Engineer who passed on instructions to the Port Captain, who passed on instructions to the Harbour Police, who passed on instructions to the tugs, that the Ramblers were to be having a braaivleis and that they were not to send the entire Force to put out the fire!! Incidentally we also had permission from the Island Sailing Club to use their property.

The stage was set, the day dawned bright and sunny. Judging from the number of phone calls I had had, I expected at least fifty people, so catered accordingly. What was our disappointment to find barely thirty waiting at the market place.

We set off in convoy for the Island. We arrived at about 3.30 p.m. and spread out our things under the trees at the water's edge. As the others began a game of baseball, I anxiously scanned the water for the boat. I knew that the owner had not had his lorry delivered to him on the Friday as promised, but other arrangements had been made to tow the boat in to town. We waited in vain until about 4.30 p.m. when a very sad and disappointed boat-owner arrived to tell us the sad news that the hitch on the hired lorry did not fit, so a clamp had been made which had broken while turning a corner, and the boat had crashed into a hedge causing considerable damage. No skiing for us that day!

Some could not take this disappointment and left. Those remaining enjoyed tug-of-war and more baseball and cricket until it was too dark to see. At least we could not have wished for pleasanter weather that evening.

The fire burning and the lamps twinkling made quite a picture as the warblers cooked their meat over the flames (not the best way to broil meat, but still). Dick's stack a-la-spade was definitely the tastiest.

The original plan was to have music and dancing under the stars on the tarpulir specially hired for the purpose, but another disappointment - the record player was taken away in one of the cars that left early, so instead we were subjected to the tale of the pink elephant who liked fruit cake!

Just then a cry for help sounded. Kevin had taken the wrong route and was stuck in the sand! A large rescue party left to go to his assistance. As he was well and truly stuck, the car had to be lifted and turned by our strong healthy hikers.

We returned to the Braai, but a while later we were chased away by a shower of rain. The party proceeded to the Blue Lagoon where some had coffee and others sickly-pink milkshakes. By this time the weather had cleared so the party ended with a jaunt along the beach.

To those who came, I hope you enjoyed it despite the disappointments; to those who did not, we hope to see you next time. We are trying our best to put some life and zip into the Hamblers' Club, so we need your support. It would be appreciated if you could phone to let me know whether you are coming to the socials (Phone 881357).

As a result of over-catering at the Sports Braai, my flatmates and I were eating tomatoes, breadrolls and peanuts for weeks! Please save us from that fate next time!

Marlene.

MACINTOSH CASCADES HIKE

Eighteen of us left the Market Place at about 8.45 a.m. (notice the early start) on a perfect morning. Little did I know that this would turn out to be the craziest hike of the year. As I am writing this, there is still no news of the four hikers who lost themselves en route to the Cascades.

Anyway, to start at the beginning, the night before brought thunder-showers, but it was a glorious morning, and everything looked clean and fresh. The truck soon began to fill up with Ramblers climbing in at Musgrave Road and Chelmsford Road.

When we arrived at Pinetown our contingent must have numbered about thirty or more. We were then joined by three school boys who enjoyed themselves immensely. Also I forgot to mention we saw two well remembered faces who had returned from places afar, i.e. Jean Carter and Myrtle Ryan.

There was quite a long wait at Haidoo's Supermarket. I think the Ramblers were stocking up with sweets, etc. as the price was due to go up the next day.

We soon reached the disembarking point, where there was a stiff climb ahead of us, and we all went at a cracking pace, much to my dismay. We clambered over or crawled under numerous barbed wire fences (which left their marks on certain parts of one's anatomy).

We eventually arrived at a large shady tree where a rest was called for. Now, this is where I believe the trouble started. We were all together at this stage, I am sure. Lindy, our leader, suggested that we move on again and said that the others could rest there longer if they liked. We eventually arrived at MacIntosh Cascades where Lindy soon got the fire going and piping hot coffee was ready within next to no time. It was only later in the day that we realised Roger, Jean, Rosemary, and her cousin, Moira, had still not reached the Cascades.

After lunch Moira, Rob, Doug, Frank, one of the youngsters and myself set off to look at the falls and we found that new paths had recently been made down to the bottom of the falls. When we arrived back at the picnic spot, we heard that a search was in progress for the missing foursome. (The three girls and Roger, where were they?) Searchers came back later without discovering them along the route we had come.

Two of the Ramblers slipped on a wet boulder and received a ducking; also a hat was retrieved dripping wet.

At about 3 p.m. it was decided that we head for home, arriving at St. Helier's Tea Room for cool drinks. We were still on the lookout for the lost ones and on the way back we were joined by Vic Fortmann, who had left his car at the roadside. It seems anything can happen when you go on a hike. We lose four and gain one.

"STOP PRESS"

News has just been received that Neil in his Alfa Romeo found the missing foursome walking along the road just before Pinetown. A further news item is that they were lost in a densely wooded forest of eucalyptus trees.

"Hansel & Gretel"

MILK MARATHON

This year the Milk Marathon will be held on the 26th June, starting at King's Park. Entries must be in by Thursday 16th June. Come on everyone - let's show them what the Ramblers can do. Phone 351304 for further particulars.

SEPTENTRIONS' CLUB SR.APRIL PHOTOGRAPHIC MEETING

Fred and Barbara Clark's flat was the venue for the Photographic meeting which was attended by 21 members and their friends on Wednesday, April 20th.

The position of Secretary was filled by Heather Odgers, and Rob Philp was appointed a Judge - thus completing the total number of five Judges required. »

Mac Rand suggested that all slides entered in monthly competitions should be titled for distinguishable purposes. This suggestion, however, was not favourably considered by the Meeting.

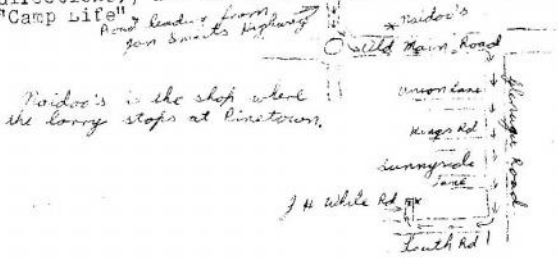
Forty slides were entered for the monthly competition, the subject being "General". Once again Charles Smeda carried off the evening's honours with his slide of the Europa Bridge, near Innsbruck (68.3%), whilst Mike Wiles filled second berth again, his slide of the Berlin Falls gaining 67.6% and thus just pipping at the post another slide of Charles Smeda's of a village scene at Westendorf, Austria (67.3%).

Please note that only persons who are actually members of the Ramblers' Club are eligible to enter slides in the monthly competitions. Therefore if members bring friends along to the monthly meetings those non-members are not permitted to participate in the competition, but may have their slides projected afterwards if they wish. »

After the April competition Vic Cudera showed slides of his recent Berg trip from "National" to "Cathedral", and amongst these some "rear" views of Mike Woods were seen! Garry Rabie had some slides which he was anxious to see projected and through

Vic showed slides of the Shombe Festival, and some he had taken on visits to the Port St. John's area, and to Bushman's Nek, whilst his wife Joan, prepared a delicious tea which everyone enjoyed. Vic was later persuaded to show slides which he had taken in the Willem Pretorius Game Reserve and in Kimberley.

The next Photographic Meeting will take place on Wednesday, June 15th, at Joan and Det Sewell's home, 8 J.N. White Road, Finetown (see map for directions), and the competition subject will be "Camp Life".

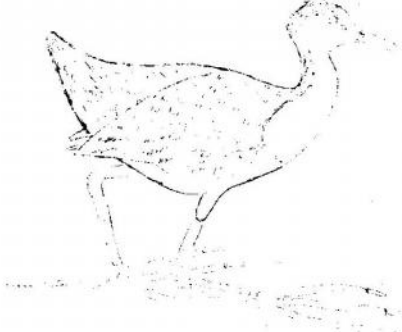


NATURE CORNER

The Jacanas (Lily Trotters), only two species of which occur in Africa, are quite remarkable birds. Their long toes and claws are so distinct that one can quite easily tell them apart from any other family of birds. These long toes enable them to run across floating vegetation and water leaves in quiet stretches of water. They feed on the seeds of water plants and grasses, and also on insects. Lily Trotters breed in Natal and northwards through Africa. They do not build

a nest but use a pile of vegetation which is floating on the water. Sometimes they lay their eggs on the leaf of a water lily. The eggs (up to four) are long and pointed at both ends, light brown and heavily marked with scrolls, blotches and crosslines of dark and lighter brown, and are extremely glossy.

The African Jacana (*Actophilornis Africanus*) is the more common of the two here in Natal and can be seen on a number of our hikes.



It is a brightly coloured bird; its body is rich chestnut-maroon in colour; throat white shading down to yellow; the top of head and back of neck, black, and above the bill there is a blue shield.

A few years ago while canoeing on Cromer Dam in the North Eastern Transvaal, I came across a pair of African Jacanas with their young. I was puzzled as to how the young got from one group of lily leaves to the next, as they did not appear to

be able to fly. At first I thought that they must be swimming across as the parent birds are strong swimmers. What gave me this impression was that every time they moved from one leaf to the next, the parent would sit on the leaf with the young bird and then slip into the water, swim the distance to the next leaf and then climb on to it. All this time I could not see the young bird, but each time the parent bird left the new leaf, sure enough, the young one would be there. I wanted to see the little one swim so I gently eased my canoe closer. I was only about five feet away when the parent bird came to fetch its young, but this time the parent did not swim, but made a quick hop to the next leaf. Now I was puzzled because the young bird had also gone. It took me some time to spot what was happening. The parent bird would sit down on the leaf and the young one would climb up under its wing, where it was held while the parent bird either swam or hopped to the next leaf. Both parents carried their young like this and they only carried one at a time.

Hike.

EDITORIAL

Another month has gone by and here I am again. This month a new corner (Nature Corner) has been started, which I hope will prove of interest to everyone. I am sure there are many of you who have observed some interesting things about nature, so please let me have your contributions and so make this corner more varied and informative.

In this issue an application form for "The Wild Life Protection and Conservation Society of South Africa" is enclosed. The Natal branch is very active, having numerous film shows and field

days. The next film show will be on Monday, the 6th June, at Westville Boys' High School Hall at 7.45 p.m. Admission is free but a collection will be taken after the show. Everyone is welcome.

We welcome three new members in our midst, and wish them happy hiking days.

Mr. Neil Longworth
Mr. Mike Coward
Miss Judy Pring.

This month we are sorry to have to say goodbye to Brian Harding, who has resigned.

Our congratulations go to our Secretary, Diane Harbour, and Keith Quayle who announced their engagement last month, and also to Viv Penner on the birth of another grandson. Best wishes to Mike Woods and Gillian Faulds who will be getting married on the 4th June.

Our sympathies go to Both and Coral Echersley whose father died last month.

Best of luck to Maureen Hollard who is unofficially competing in the Comrades' Marathon.

We welcome back Myrtle Ryan and Pat O'Le from their trip to South America, and look forward to hearing all about it. Doreen and M. Poir have just left for overseas and we wish them a happy holiday.

It is now June and yet there are still a number of people who have not paid their subs, so please let the Treasurer have them.

The free hike for the best article last month goes to "2240". (Hope this is not your actual weight.) Thanks to all who have sent

contributions this month. It would be a great help if articles could be sent in as soon after the event as possible or not later than the 15th of each month.

THE WILD LIFE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION
SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA.

This society is the only independent body in the Republic engaged in furthering the preservation of all forms of the country's indigenous fauna and flora. With a total membership of some 5,000, and through its branches in the Western Province, the Eastern Province, Border, Natal and the Orange Free State, it maintains a close and continuous watch on all current developments throughout the country in so far as they affect the conservation of our natural heritage.

Much of our wild life is rapidly disappearing - mammals and birds are being wantonly shot or snared, trees are being unnecessarily cut or burnt down, flowers are being thoughtlessly picked, and even our reptiles and insects, that play a valuable part in preserving nature, are ignorantly destroyed. The continued existence of wild life sanctuaries is frequently threatened. Opposition, too, is forever facing the establishment of new game and nature reserves.

Vital action is needed if all these practices are to be halted, and it is the duty of everyone who has the good of the country at heart, to assist in fighting for the preservation of our wonderful and unique wild life. Only when every right-thinking South African has realised his responsibility, and helped to swell the voice of conservation until its demands cannot be refused, will the future of our wild life be fully assured.