

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020

It is always important to remind ourselves of what the Kromme Enviro-Trust stands for and what our role is in the community. Our slogan sums it up – 'Preserve. Protect. Promote'. We aim to preserve what is valuable to the environment, protect what is vulnerable in the environment, and promote environmental values through teaching others – particularly children – about the valuable and vulnerable elements of our environment.

2019 was a year in which we reached many targets and goals, including some which had taken years to achieve. That does not mean that we can relax now, however. There is still so much to do and we have many exciting plans and ideas for the year ahead. But before we discuss those, let's review what has been done in the past year.

Nature Reserves & Protected Areas: the Greater Kromme Stewardship

One of the most important initiatives we are involved in is the Greater Kromme Stewardship (GKS) association. We are a founder member of this initiative, which involves the local wind farms and is funded by their contributions. As part of their responsibility to the affected environment, they are contributing to the establishment of new nature reserves and protected areas in this district. The project has been operating since 2015 and employs two people full-time – a biodiversity facilitator, Wentzel Coetzer, and an assistant. It has achieved remarkable success, having assessed 32 sites, of which four have been declared as nature reserves, two are on the verge of declaration, and two are awaiting final go-ahead from the landowners. These sites measure over 1500 hectares, and this is just the beginning. State and municipal land, accounting for nearly 1000 hectares more, is being actively guided through the process of declaration, which is a long drawn-out and complex process. We are extremely proud of our involvement in this project, which has been described by an independent assessor as having secured more priority land for conservation in the Kouga area than any other initiative in the last fifty years.

Our Ocean Museum and Bruce's Ocean Café

Another project that we are proud of is our natural history museum and coffee shop, a project that has taken us years of serious and dedicated effort. The Heritage Centre is a little gem of a building than has been the heart of the Enviro-Trust ever since we converted the old NSRI boathouse into a museum in mid-1998. The greatest challenge was always manning the museum so that it could be open to the public, and we eventually realised that accessibility to the museum could best be achieved through incorporating a coffee shop or restaurant.

It was 2015 when we first outlined the vision of a combined museum/café to the municipality, who own the Heritage Centre building: at that stage the municipality was ANC-run. Municipal elections in 2016 saw the DA elected, and we had to start the negotiation process over: however, we were granted a licence to operate a small tuckshop in the centre

during the 2016 holiday season, with the help and support of Woodlands Dairy, to whom we are extremely grateful. We continued to work through the regulatory channels over the next two years, at the same time looking for a partner to operate the coffee shop. When Nikki Bendeman came forward it was the beginning of a very happy partnership, which kicked off with another temporary licence to operate during the 2018 holiday season. This was a great success, and we were delighted when we finally sat down with the municipality to sign our 10 year 11 month lease on the building and were able to make the necessary alterations to create the museum and coffee shop you see today.

Truus Hedding has responsibility for the ocean-themed museum exhibits, which are designed to be self-explanatory. She says the word Museum is derived from the Greek word Mouseion, a term that can be translated as “the seat of the Muses”. In Greek times the Muses were understood to inspire us in the areas of Arts and Sciences. Mouseions were places where interested people met to interact, share and further their knowledge and use this knowledge to further enhance their “Umwelts” or environments. We see the role of our museum as that of the mouseions of Greek times - a meeting place where displays inform and inspire ideas to enhance our environment. We envisage that displays will be adjusted and/or added to on a regular basis to introduce new topics and to encourage new discussions. The Kromme Enviro-Trust encourages participation in this and invites community members to come forward to contribute photos, videos, knowledge, history and anything else relevant.

Walkway: Granny’s Pool to Main Beach

We have been working for nearly three years to raise funds for a walkway to connect Granny’s Pool to Main Beach, which would provide a link between the Two Harbours Walk and Main Beach. The first expense was the environmental assessment process, and after extensive research the EIA was nearing completion and entering a final public participation process. A group of residents whose properties adjoin the proposed walkway put forward submissions stating that the dune beneath their properties was subsiding and that they believed construction of the walkway would create further instability. They stated that if the walkway proceeded, they would “have no option but to hold all individuals and associations legally liable for any damages etc which may occur over time”. Since the dune is, as they acknowledge, subsiding in any case, damages will occur over time whether or not a walkway is constructed. In fact, as there is regular foot traffic across the face of the dune, a walkway could relieve the surface of much of the current pressure.

However, after lengthy consideration and discussion, we concluded that we could not justify spending donated funds on legal expenses, in the likely eventuality of subsidence-caused property damage. Reluctantly, we withdrew our application for environmental authorisation. We advised the property owners accordingly, and also put it to them that we would be happy to reinstate the project if they come to recognise that a walkway could in fact be advantageous for dune stability.

Preservation of Botanical Value, Erf 554

A small remnant of a once-extensive area of rich botanical interest still exists on Erf 554 St Francis Bay. It represents a fraction of the erf, which is to be sub-divided in accordance with the usage which has taken place over a number of years. Our area of interest adjoins the bowls club grounds and has been used for overflow parking when the Spar parking areas are full. At least 25 different plant species are found in this small patch, including the protected *Brunsvigia gregaria* and the wild orchid, *Satyrium princeps*.

With encouragement and support from the Ward Counsellor, Ben Rheeder, we have put forward a proposal to the municipality for a mini community garden to be created, staked out with posts and chains, accessible to pedestrians but not vehicles. We have committed that the Enviro-Trust will take responsibility for its upkeep and maintenance, and asked that this be included in the Spatial Development Framework currently being developed. At this stage we have had no feedback from the planning department but we will pursue the proposal in the coming weeks.

Eco Kids

Another source of pride is our Eco Kids initiative, an environmental awareness and education programme for children. Geanné Darke manages this programme and her involvement stretches back ten years. Warren Manser and, lately, Truus Hedding complete the team, which designs and implements a monthly ecological outing for children between the ages of 4 and 12.

Themes which were explored in 2019 include, for example, bird recognition, the action of wind and waves, and plastic pollution – the latter being addressed through the creation of ‘Eco Bricks’ with PET bottles stuffed with plastic bags. Environmental awareness and knowledge is strongly evident in the attitudes of the children attending this programme, from rejecting plastic straws to collecting litter. This is our major initiative to *promote* environmental sensitivity, as stated in our slogan.

Coastal Clean Up

We participate in the annual International Coastal Clean-up (ICC), which was started by the Ocean Conservancy in 1986 to engage volunteers in collecting marine debris from the world's waterways. During the clean-up, volunteers act as "citizen scientists," tallying the items they find on data cards. We have been part of this initiative for five years, providing a rallying point for the community to participate in the drive. Our area covers the coast from Jeffreys Bay to Oyster Bay and we generally set up the collection point in Cape St Francis, as the Wild Side is a prime focus area. Rotary partnered us in the event in 2019, providing a food stall to keep participants going.

The 2019 event was very well supported. We welcomed 46 groups of people, averaging three per group, and collected 72 bags of litter amounting to almost a tonne in weight. The items found ranged from plastic straws to earbuds, cigarette butts to toothbrushes, flip-flops to light bulbs – but the biggest threat, on land or sea, is fishing line, which is not only lethal to marine and bird life, but takes 600 years to decompose. However, it does seem that there has been a decrease in litter on the coast, and we believe that this is due to more regular beach clean-ups, either by individuals with a sense of social responsibility or through community initiatives such as this one.

We are happy to announce that we are introducing an inland clean-up in 2020, focusing on St Francis Drive. On Saturday 15th February, at 9:30 a.m. (after parkrun) we will meet at the grassy patch at the south end of St Francis Drive, close to Otters Landing. Bags will be provided – we look forward to seeing everyone there.

The Community Garden

Once again, year in and year out, Dusty and Ed Elton put hours into the garden and we really appreciate this. Dusty has even commissioned a new and very attractive sign for the garden, and we are sure everyone in the village joins us in thanking him. Dr James Potts and his wife Glynn also put in a huge effort and we thank them for everything they do. Finally there is the Links team who we thank for cutting, trimming and keeping the grass neat.

Regardless of the drought the garden has been kept in pristine condition, a really incredible effort. This is a great asset for our community.

Two Harbours Walk

The Two Harbours Walk is maintained by the Enviro-Trust and Ken McGregor and Alex Gotte are responsible for co-ordinating this and motivating the team who work on it.

They report that the biggest challenge is ongoing maintenance. The volunteer group started by Steve Knightly Smith has faded away as Steve has relocated to Plettenberg Bay. Our thanks to Steve and his group for the work done.

Improvements made during the past year were that new signage was installed at the main access points to the walk, with the exception of the Port side and the access point 130m from the Port (where the staircase also needs to be replaced¹). Additionally, information signs, 26 in total, were installed along the length of the walk. Our thanks go to Caryl Logie for assisting with the information on the signage.

¹ Hilton Thorpe advised that this staircase had in fact been installed by the municipality and was their responsibility.

Improvements planned for 2020 include staircase replacement at the 130m and 650m points and restoration of the pathway section either side of the high point at the 1000m point, where the remaining pole retaining wall is collapsing.

Bush cuttings are being dumped on the northeast side of the walkway by residents living along Tom Brown Boulevard. At our request one resident (Peter Maskew), had cuttings removed to Frank Dabrowski's pile at the sewerage pump station at the lower end of the Romazini Rd valley, and we urge others to do likewise. We will follow up with Kouga Municipality for the removal of these bush cuttings.

A new development is that the local Cycle Club has requested permission to use part of the walk from the Harbour Rd access point, exiting approximately 300m along at the Carlos de Wolpe parking area. The Cycle Club will widen the path to ensure safe passage for walkers and maintain the bush clearing along this section.

Animal Rescues

We have once again been involved in many rescues during the past year. It was an interesting year and involved more than the usual variety for us. For example, there were a significant number of turtles washed up, needing to be taken to Bayworld to recuperate from their exposure to the cold water on-shore before being released back into the warmer off-shore current. We have a close relationship with Bayworld and work well with them, which is of enormous help when we encounter situations such as the concerning numbers of fatalities of seals and puffer fish seen in the past year. Other species needing assistance were a Black-headed Heron, several cormorants and penguins, and a Common Duiker. Finally, a litter of puppies being sold on the street was confiscated.

Wildlife Sanctuary - 2020

The regular need for assistance with wildlife has led to us conceiving a project for a rescue centre. It is still in the early planning stage, but the proposal is that funds raised during the year should go towards this new project. The concept, in partnership with our local vet Dr Nerine Botha, envisages a short-term rescue centre, where wildlife can recover from trauma and be released as soon as they are stable. No creatures will be kept permanently.

Species that could be admitted are Owls, Duikers, Otters, Birds, Mongoose, Porcupines and Badgers, just to name a few. A possible location has been identified, on one of the local nature reserves, currently in the process of proclamation thanks to the GKS project.

Joint Projects with Rotary: Talhado, Sea Vista Residents

In conjunction with Rotary, we introduced an Eco Brick drive at Talhado. There are three classes, who were shown how to construct an Eco Brick and given targets of 10 or 12 per class depending on age. The incentive was a party for a class who achieved this target. The result was an astounding 80 bricks per class, with one class achieving even more, at 90

bricks. There was only one possible response – a party for the whole school. In addition, the five top individual achievers were presented with bicycles.

A second joint project involved a food gardening initiative in Sea Vista. Some residents have created a vegetable garden and Rotary, with the Enviro-Trust, challenged them to create ten Eco Bricks for a packet of seed. The result was over 50 Eco Bricks.

Between both projects about 350 Eco Bricks were made, equating to roughly 350 kg of plastic being removed from the streets of Sea Vista. A highly rewarding initiative.

Fund Raising

We raise funds through three main channels: our annual golf day, sales of books, and proceeds from the coffee shop. We urge our members, and indeed everyone, to support these activities to help us with our environmental responsibilities.

Our next golf day will be held on World Environment Day, 5th June 2020, on the Links. It will be played in the afternoon, on the full course, as a regular golf day. Save the date!

Our treasure hunt and enviro-quiz will be scheduled for appropriate dates during the year and we will advertise them well in advance.

Sales of books – *The Monument Around Us*, *Our Coastal Treasure*, and *A Taste of St Francis* – happen at the monthly market, at Bruce's Ocean Café, and at Quaysyde. Proceeds from book sales have enabled us to carry out some significant projects, such as the alterations to the Heritage Centre, and we are grateful to the Hulett family for their commitment to the welfare of the community and the environment.

Finally, Bruce's Ocean Café has so far been more of an investment than an income producer, but its popularity has been well demonstrated over the past year and it provides a wonderful home base for the Kromme Enviro-Trust.

Conclusion

We look forward to another busy and rewarding year in 2020 and we thank our members for their ongoing support.