

# KORSMAN CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER September 2016

Dear Members,

**Ecological Burn** Our biggest annual work event was well supported. The burn was successfully conducted on 25 August after months of planning and preparation. Volunteers turned out, and residents and members donated their staff's time to assist. We still plan to burn the section opposite Kilfenora in September. The main grassland conservation areas will have been burnt and we will continue burning sections annually in rotation.

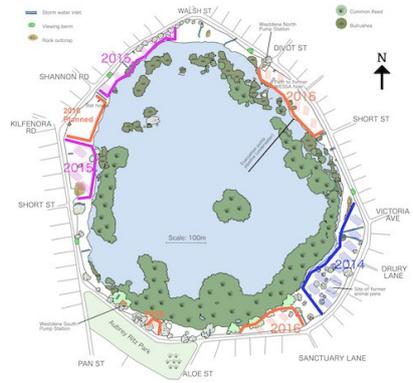
We cleared fire breaks to protect the trees, reeds, and even a Blacksmith Lapwing's nest which we discovered on the morning of the burn.



Birds flock to the burnt area afterwards. This Black-headed Heron is searching for crispy insects.



Volunteer Hendro Swanepoel (16) of Lakewest helped the Fire Dept with their hoses.



Rotational burning plan

**Restoration of thatched sign board roof** – donated by John McGinn of [All About Roofing](#). I approached John while he was parked at the fence admiring Korsman, and asked if he would donate a new roof to the dilapidated thatch sign. His arm didn't need much twisting, so the old sign board has got a new lease on life and now displays a map of the sanctuary.



In need of TLC



Claire Reynolds and Werner van Goethem admire the new sign during the July CWAC

## Two releases: one out, one in Speke's Hingeback Tortoise



I found a tortoise in long grass near the fence which had obviously been thrown over. I thought it had a cracked shell, but later identified it as a Speke's Hingeback tortoise. The shell is hinged so it can pull closed under attack and protect the back legs. This species is only found in northern SA and into Zimbabwe, so it was possibly picked up there by someone who travelled through the region.

The happy ending is that it went to [SaveMe reptile rescue](#) centre who arranged to release it on a game farm near Thabazimbi – in its natural range.

L: Hinge clearly visible in shell.

Grey-headed Gulls Another happy ending, for four juveniles which had been rescued as chicks from stone-throwing boys. They were raised by Michelle Watson, a rehabilitation volunteer for [Friends of Free Wildlife](#) (that has risen from the ashes of the sadly defunct FreeMe).

While they were being raised, the chicks were not exposed to humans so that they would identify as gulls when meeting a wild flock.

Michelle searched the East Rand for a suitable release site and was despairing of finding a safe and clean pan – until she came to Korsman.

It took only a few minutes for wild gulls to be interested in the squawks coming from the box, and when the young gulls were set free they immediately took flight (flying for the first time) and joined the flock. Very soon, we could not tell which ones were the released birds.

Michelle will compile a video of their rehabilitation and release which I will share with you.



Size difference between Greater and Lesser flamingos

**Lesser Flamingo Movements** We have recently been blessed by a flock of Lesser Flamingos at Korsman. This fascinating report about their movements comes from the Endangered Wildlife Trust:

On the 10th of June 2016 the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) recorded some extraordinary movements by a Lesser Flamingo (*Phoeniconaias minor*) recently fitted with a GPS/GSM satellite transmitter. This individual covered a staggering distance of 1,069 km in one single flight over 16 hours, crossing the Indian Ocean from Mozambique to Madagascar.

Flamingo no. 27 (a small female) had been satellite tagged at Delareyville in the North West Province as part of the Eskom/EWT partnership's efforts to track flamingo movements to develop measures to protect them from collisions with power lines. When Flamingo no. 27 crossed the border into Mozambique, she didn't stop there and instead she proceeded at 7pm on Saturday the 10<sup>th</sup> of June to cross the Mozambique coast at Maxixe. She finally reached the western shores of Madagascar near Morombe at noon the following day.

The recording of these extraordinary movements by Flamingo no. 27 is a breakthrough for the project and flamingo science in Africa, as to our knowledge, this is the first time that a Lesser Flamingo has been tracked flying between mainland Africa and Madagascar. All of the long range movements (>100 km) recorded by each of the six tagged flamingos have been at night, specifically between 6pm and 2am, confirming the theory that they are night fliers and thus susceptible to nocturnal powerline collisions.

**National Association of Conservancies/Stewardship Informal Meeting** I attended this biennial event of our parent body in South Africa. We heard interesting talks by speakers who may also be valuable contacts for Korsman.

- The chairman of WESSA, Dr Richard Lewis, opened the day with ideas on using social media to interest the younger generation in conservation. I hope our Youtube videos will make a difference.
- Frog expert Vincent Carruthers fascinated us with frog facts – did you know that they hear through their feet? He told us that we don't have to catch or see frogs to identify them, just record their calls.
- Jonathan Leeming, venomous creatures expert, said that spiders are unfairly maligned because many supposed spider bites are infections by a bacteria called MRSA.
- Rod Genricks explained how water remediation can be done using Eco-Tabs, which oxygenate waste water and break down grease and sludge. This would be a cheap and environmentally friendly way of improving the performance of the sewerage pump stations around Korsman. We hope to work with him and Rotary in on a project in future.



Chairperson Jane with L-R: Vincent Carruthers, Dr Richard Lewis (WESSA chairman), Ivan Parkes (chairman of Gauteng Conservancy Association) and John Wesson (chairman of NACSSA.)

**Have you seen** Yellow Flag iris in your water garden?

*Iris pseudacorus* is an extremely dangerous invasive species (category 1a – the most serious). It spreads by both seeds and rhizomes. If you find it, dig up the rhizome completely and dispose in a landfill (the rubbish) not a compost heap.

Some stands were found in Korsman last year and are being removed and monitored. SANBI is tracking its spread, so advise me if you find any in your garden and I will assist by reporting.



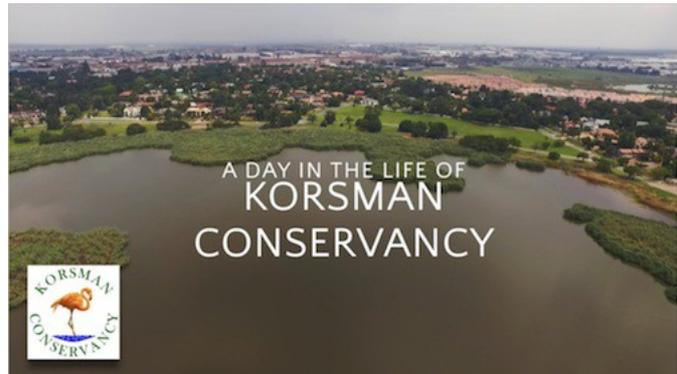
**Winter CWAC and video** On 23 July we counted 444 birds over 22 specific waterbird species. During the count we had a fascinating sighting of the Black-shouldered Kite eating its prey.

I filmed it for our newest video, a collection of entertaining clips of birds going about daily life at Korsman. It includes drone footage that was filmed in January.

The video is 4 ½ minutes long on YouTube

<https://youtu.be/VWWkgv75ja8>  
(click to open the link.)

This is now our 'showcase' video, and embedded on the front page of our website.



Lee Thain captured the BSK with its prey – a vlei rat at its feet – in this stunning photo on another day.

