



# KORSMAN CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

## WINTER 2020

### Controlled Ecological Burn 4 August

Three grass sections were safely and successfully burnt by a record turnout of volunteers and monitored by the Benoni Fire Service.



## Reed burning in July

In experimental reed management, we burnt two isolated reed patches in the dead of winter. The aim was to remove accumulated organic matter, which eventually sediments the pan and to thin out the inside of the patch for waterbird access. As reeds are actually a type of grass, they are not killed but grow again.

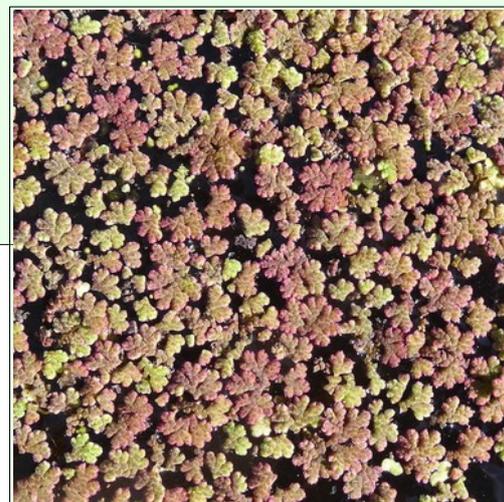


## The Red Weed

Every few years, the highly invasive Red Water Fern (*Azolla filiculoides*) flares up and covers expanses of water with a dense red mat. After a few months, it should magically disappear.

*Azolla* is the subject of South Africa's most successful biological control programme ever. A tiny 2mm weevil (*Stenopelmus rufinusus*) from South America, where *Azolla* also originated from, eats only this plant.

After extensive testing to establish that the weevils would not become invasive themselves, they were bred and released in 1997. The weevils spread spontaneously around the country so although they were never released in Koroana, they found their way here. They will emerge now from their overwintering stage and recommence munching the weeds.



## Co-ordinated WAterbird Count



We conducted an early social-distanced and masked-up winter CWAC to ensure we properly counted the Spur-winged geese, which move on from Korsman during July.

We counted 330 waterbirds over 26 species, including an elusive Purple Heron and some colourful Purple Swamphens.



### Swansong

After seeing our CWAC results with four feral black swans, Gauteng Nature Conservation became alarmed at the increase in local populations. Many countries have declared black swans an invasive species, outside their native Australia. Their grace and beauty is deceptive, as they are aggressive birds that outcompete indigenous waterfowl for food sources.

This species is territorial and spreading rapidly. As we had the highest wild population, Korsman was chosen as a test site for live capture methods. Avian Unit specialists netted them inside a fenced enclosure and the birds will be relocated to Pretoria Zoo.

We understand that their removal by GDARD may be disappointing to those who enjoyed seeing them, and that it might seem that just a few birds won't matter; but the 'big picture' is the threat to the wider environment beyond Korsman.





### Egyptian Arrival

As the swans departed, a family of Egyptian geese arrived. Having plummeted to earth from the nest in the Bainbridge's owl box (well... a fowl box) the parents and their newly hatched goslings requested an escort to their next destination – the water.



### In Memoriam to Dogs

Jeff and Sally Matthee have adopted the bench opposite 10 The Drive as a memorial bench with a difference – for people to remember their beloved dogs who would take walks around the pan.

The memorial plaques will be dog tags attached to the planks. If you would like to remember your dog, please contact Jeff directly by email to arrange a tag for a small cost, which will include a donation to charity.

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When God had made the earth and sky,  
the flowers and the trees,

He then made all the animals and all  
the birds and bees,

And when at last He'd finished not  
one was quite the same

He said "I'll walk this world of mine  
and give each one a name".

And so he travelled far and wide  
and everywhere he went,

a little creature followed him until  
it's strength was spent.

When all were named upon the  
earth and in the sky and sea,

The little creature said "Dear Lord,  
there's not one left for me".

Kindly, the Father said to him "I've  
left you to the end.

I've turned my own name back to  
front and called you Dog, my friend"