



KORSMAN CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2025

Since December, the water level has almost doubled from 1.1m at the deepest part of the pan, to 2.1m. The Pan now exceeds the fence in places and is too deep to carry out work such as carp netting and controlling wetland weeds.

The silver lining is that birds are closer to the fence, giving us a chance to see secretive species such as the Purple Heron and African Swamphen.

The hide is presently only accessible to intrepid wading members and waterbirds, such as this large group of White-faced ducks.



Water pumping will start as soon as some technical problems in the pump station have been resolved.

Methane: Not just from 'Cow Farts'

Wetlands store carbon, but they are a major source of greenhouse gases from decomposing plant matter. As part of their climate change studies, Professor Chris Curtis and students from the University of Johannesburg are collecting methane and nitrous oxide gases with special floating chambers. There will be further studies during the year.



Hyacinth Hunting

Water hyacinth is considered the world's worst aquatic weed. As the Benoni lakes are covered in the plant, it was just a matter of time before waterbirds carried the seeds into Korsman. I found the first infestation in March of three small populations, which I removed by collecting out of the water and laying them out to dry.



Neochetina bruchi,
a biocontrol weevil

The plants had insect damage. I inspected the plants and discovered tiny weevils. This species was released years ago for biocontrol in South Africa. Amazingly, the weevils had flown to Korsman and discovered the few hyacinth plants lurking amongst other vegetation. The weevils are not enough to control water hyacinth on their own; it needs an integrated approach including other biocontrol agents.



From now on, we will do regular canoe inspections. Volunteers paddled out a couple of weeks after I first discovered the plants. So far, Korsman remains hyacinth-free.

National Conservancy and Stewardship Association Conference, 1 March

I attended the NACSSA conference to keep up to date with the latest developments in conservation, and was proud that Korsman got a special mention as a flagship Conservancy.



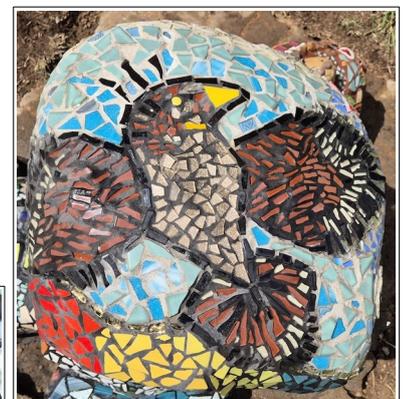
Right: Liamé van der Westhuizen of the Agricultural Research Council shows the difference between two pompom weeds – the left hand one is stunted from biocontrol thrips, and the right hand one shows how tall uncontrolled plants can get. For now, we manage pompom at Korsman by digging it out, but the threat is increasing as more and more seeds blow in from the massive, uncontrolled infestation at O. R. Tambo airport.

Mosaic Meaning

While working on our latest mosaic, every second passer-by asked "What is it going to BE?" We can now reveal it depicts events at Korsman: The Long-crested eagle; ladies walking and talking along the pathway; carp netting and a memorial to our tortoise Grandpoo which died in mysterious circumstances after last year's Neon Walk. See if you can find them all on the stone!



Built over a massive chunk of fence post rubble and broken kerb stones



The Spur-winged Gosling Saga...

which took place over several days. Although this was outside of the Conservancy limits, we got involved through some of our members living at Champs du Lac in Sunny Rd.

A Spur-winged Goose mother and her 13 newly hatched goslings had wandered into the complex. The goslings got scattered, landing up in different gardens and wandering inside houses. The mother came and went over a few days but we could not catch her.



Through a series of events involving more members and community Whatsapp groups, we discovered that there had been four goslings at a house in Sunny Rd. The mother had found them and taken them to the Lakefield Manor wetland. We collected the two remaining goslings and took them into Lakefield Manor, looking for the family.



The tallest member of our group, Tim Homan, quickly spotted the geese in long grass. Natalie Morris sped over with the cage to release the two chicks. They quickly joined their chirping siblings as if nothing had happened. Six chicks made it this far, but a later update from Tim was that only four appeared to remain.

This is the first record of Spur-winged geese breeding in this area.



Spur-winged geese are the largest waterfowl in the region and come to Korsman in autumn to moult.

The 'spur' of the name is a sharp protrusion from the forward edge of the wing and is used primarily for defence and territorial aggression.

Photo by Eugene Liebenberg.



The Kite Kids

We were alerted to a Black-winged Kite nest in a garden on The Drive. Although the nest was over the road from Korsman, the parents caught all the prey inside the Sanctuary and the three chicks fledged to here. Photos by Cathy Price.



The pair of Black-winged Kites mating, 30 January.



A parent delivering a vlei rat, 26 April. According to Roberts, the male catches the prey, and the female feeds the chicks. Black-winged Kites time their breeding for the end of the rains, when rodents are most available.



After the three chicks fledged fully, they spent a few days in Korsman, before moving on. The parent is the bird on the lowest branch. 14 May.



Butterfly bonanza

This autumn was spectacular for butterflies, and two new species were recorded at Korsman.



Natal Acraea



Spotted Toker



Zebra White



Common Diadem

If the butterfly above is a Common Diadem, and below right is an African Monarch, then what is the butterfly below left? Another African Monarch? Wrong! It's also a Common Diadem!

The black butterfly with white spots is a male and the other one is the female. She mimics the poisonous African Monarch. While a caterpillar, the Monarch feeds on the toxic shrub Milkweed (*Gomphocarpus fruticosus*), common in Korsman, so birds give it (and the female Diadem) a wide berth.



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African Monarch