



Monitoring, Maintenance and Management Objectives for 2011

- ✂ Monthly bird counts, water level monitoring, vegetation monitoring, litter cleanups and infrastructure maintenance.
- ✂ Bimonthly path maintenance and alien clearing.
- ✂ 2012 burn preparation including eradication of Kikuyu within the fire break of the northern area and rehabilitating this area using Sour Fig (*Carpobrotus edulis*), a fire deterrent succulent.
- ✂ Introduction of two male Grysbok
- ✂ Rehabilitation of laterite track within the northern area
- ✂ Cape Hare population census
- ✂ Fish survey
- ✂ Amphibian survey

Food for Thought

“We never know the worth of water until the well is dry” - Thomas Fuller, English Historian.

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need, but not every man’s greed” - Mohandas Gandhi, Indian leader.

“In the end we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught” - Baba Dioum, Senegalese poet and environmentalist.

“A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in” - Greek proverb.

“Only after the last tree has been cut down...the last river has been poisoned...the last fish caught, only then will you find that money can’t be eaten” - Chief Seattle, Native American leader.

“Nature does not hurry yet everything is accomplished” - Lao Tzu, Chinese philosopher.



Experience the Milnerton Racecourse Nature Reserve

What you can do to be Eco-Wise

Water Wise

- ✂ Shower rather than bath
- ✂ Empty dishes water into garden
- ✂ Don’t let taps run
- ✂ Collect rain water
- ✂ Water garden at dawn/dusk
- ✂ No chemicals in drain
- ✂ Put a brick in your cistern / use a dual flush toilet

Energy Wise

- ✂ Turn lights off
- ✂ No TV on standby
- ✂ Fridge door closed
- ✂ Boil only what you need
- ✂ Flask for hot water
- ✂ Warm clothes, no heater
- ✂ Switch off the geezer
- ✂ Cycle, walk or public transport
- ✂ Use energy saving light bulbs
- ✂ Insulate your home incl. hot water pipes
- ✂ Complete Eskom’s online residential audit

Recycle

- ✂ Glass, cans, cardboard and paper
- ✂ Cooldrinks in recyclable containers
- ✂ Write both sides of paper
- ✂ Compost vegetable off cuts
- ✂ Mend old toys for others to play with

Pollution

- ✂ Never litter
- ✂ Shop with own bag
- ✂ Re-use plastic bags
- ✂ Pick up litter
- ✂ Use rechargeable batteries
- ✂ Minimise cling wrap and foil
- ✂ Loud music is noise pollution

Garden

- ✂ Plant locally indigenous species, especially trees
- ✂ Remove alien species
- ✂ Mulch reduces evaporation
- ✂ Ground cover keeps the soil damp
- ✂ Small ponds attract wildlife
- ✂ Establish a vegetable garden
- ✂ Grow your own seedlings or cuttings
- ✂ Get a worm bin to create your own compost
- ✂ Put up an owl and/or bat box

In Nature

- ✂ Don’t pick or collect flowers or plants
- ✂ Walk or cycle
- ✂ Pick up litter
- ✂ Stick to foot paths
- ✂ Don’t buy natural products (shells, quills)
- ✂ Fit a bell to your cats collar
- ✂ Pull out alien plants



CONSERVATION WISE

Conserving Biodiversity for Future Generations

MILNERTON RACECOURSE NATURE RESERVE ANNUAL REVIEW

January - December 2010



What is the Milnerton Racecourse Nature Reserve (MRNR)

The MRNR is the area that was, and still is to some degree the centre of the Gold Circle horse track within Milnerton. The area is approximately 19ha in size and is separated into a northern and southern area.

The MRNR is recognised as being of exceptionally high conservation value due to the number of Red Data (endangered) plant species and its high biodiversity. It is one of the City’s core botanical areas and has been included in the Biodiversity Network.

The City owned land is managed by the Royal Ascot Environmental Management Committee (EMC). This committee is constituted by representatives from local interest groups, home owners/residents associations, the City of Cape Town, the Royal Ascot Master Property Owners Association, Gold Circle and conservation / environmental consultants. On-the-ground management and facilities are coordinated by the Environmental Conservation Managers, Planning in Balance, appointed by the EMC.

New Site Conservation Officer for MRNR

On the 4th January 2010, Simone Greveling was appointed by the EMC as the Site Conservation Officer for Milnerton Racecourse Nature Reserve. She says that the MRNR is one of those special sites within the Cape Peninsula, unknown to most but bursting with opportunity. It’s a little piece of nature tucked away for young and old to enjoy. The diversity at this site is amazing and she states that every time she visits the site there is always something new to discover.



Simone believes that, “Conservation is the way of the future and anyone can make a difference, you just got to get out there and let your voice be heard”.

Ecological Burn at MRNR

On the 9th March the 2nd controlled burn was undertaken at the MRNR. 4.2ha was burnt in the southern most portion. The fire was cooler than the 2008 burn, aided by the North Westerly winds on the day. The burn commenced at 12h30 due to weather constraints and continued for approximately 40mins. The burn went off without a hitch and was a resounding success.



Fire is required to remove old plant material and stimulate new growth. This ensures that the Cape Flats Sand Fynbos is kept healthy and productive.

This renewed growth results in more available, choices, food sources for fauna within the MRNR keeping it healthy by reducing pressure on limited resources. Controlled burns also reduce available fuel loads lowering the risk of an uncontrolled fire becoming unmanageable and damaging property.



Burns are a vital driving force in the fynbos biome, which has adapted to fire and relying on it to remain healthy. Many of these species require fire stimulation of seeds and cones to allow for seed dispersal and germination. So over time without fire several species may be lost from the area.





Grysbok Drive Count and Translocation

In 2008 the Grysbok population in the reserve neared 34, the highest population density of this species ever recorded. As this number exceeds the carrying capacity of the reserve, intensive management intervention was required as no natural predators are found in the reserve. Five game capture and relocation operations were executed over the last two years to restore a more natural balance between fauna and flora. While a poor substitute to natural predators, capture operations do to some degree mimic the effects of predation.

On the 18 February a drive count was undertaken within the southern and northern areas of the MRNR. In total four females, two males and one juvenile Grysbok were counted during the survey.

On the 3 June 2010 Conservation staff from Giraffe House, Century City, City of Cape Town and Planning in Balance executed a successful capture and relocation of two Cape Grysbok, from the Milnerton Racecourse Nature Reserve to Intaka Island, Century City. Alan Liebenberg, the Environmental Manager of Century City, announced the reintroduction of the species a resounding success. As the female is pregnant a healthy population of 3 is now present.



Releasing the female Grysbok at Intaka Island

CREW visit the MRNR

Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers (CREW) visited MRNR on the 8th October. The group comprised of 8 enthusiastic women who volunteer their time in finding rare and endangered flora species in the Peninsula.

Both areas were surveyed and 89 species of the total 232 were identified, 11 being red data. Vegetation monitoring assists decision making around management activities such as burning, vegetation clearing and rehabilitation.



CREW monitoring day

Home of Hope Environmental Education Programme

On the 10th and 11th of June the MRNR had their first Environmental Education Programme with the Home of Hope. The aim of the program was to provide young children from disadvantaged backgrounds with some environmental information while coming "up close and personal" with nature, a unique experience for some of these children.

They first listened to a talk, then enjoyed a walk around the Reserve. This helped the children, aged between 6 and 18 years old, to understand wetlands and the importance they play in our lives.

The two-day program included creative experiments with recyclable materials resulting in some very unique works of art. The message about how we should each live more sustainably obviously went straight home, as the children have decided to start a recycling project at the centre.



Home of Hope children

Fauna Monitoring Survey

A fauna survey was executed for a period of 10 days utilising a 3 trap-array trapping system. This system is ideal for small areas as it targets a variety of small fauna including small mammals, reptiles and insects using a humane pitfall, sherman and mesh traps. The traps are checked every morning and evening and species identified and measured. The survey proved to be very, successful adding new species to the Nature Reserves species list which included 7 insects, 2 reptiles and two mammals the Pigmy Mouse (*Mus minutoides*) and Forest Shrew (*Myosorex varius*).



Stripped Field Mouse Juvenile Mole Snake Forest Shrew

Milnerton Mongoose

A population of three Water Mongoose (*Atilax paludinosus*) have been sighted at MRNR, a first for the Nature Reserve. Scat has been found on the northern and southern areas of the MRNR.



Birding at MRNR

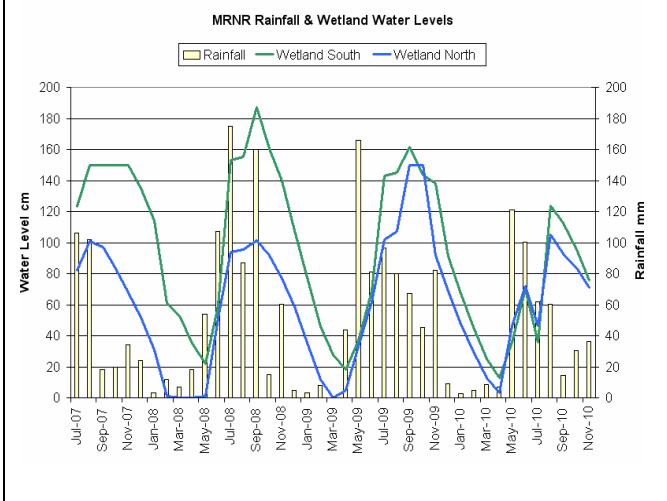
Take an hour out of your day to enjoy a slow walk through the northern area of the MRNR. If you are patient you will easily identify 20-30 of the ±70 species depending upon the season. Summer is the best time to observe the migrant species. On the water you can observe Red-Knobbed Coot, Common Moorhen, Little Grebe and usually Yellow-Billed Duck. Depending upon the level of the water you could add Cape Wagtail, Blacksmith Lapwing and the beautiful Three-Banded plover.

A surprising number of birds fly overhead, e.g. White-rumped, Little, Alpine and Black Swift, Rock and Brown Throated Martin and in summer Greater Striped, Barn, Whitethroated and Pearl Breasted Swallows. Rock Kestrels are seen regularly as well as Yellow Billed Kite, Black Sparrowhawk and Peregrine Falcon. Surprising birds are Grey Winged Francolin and Orange Throated Longclaw.

MRNR has a variety of habitats from wetlands to shrublands and grasslands and therefore provides a niche for a variety of different bird species.

Wetlands

Due to climate change hot areas of the world are get hotter, and cold cooler. This means less rainfall and therefore less water. The data below is compiled from MRNR rainfall and wetland level monitoring for the past four years. Climate change is happening, decrease your Carbon Foot Print.



Proclamation as a Nature Reserve

The draft of the Integrated Management Plan for the Milnerton Racecourse Nature Reserve was compiled and submitted to Senior Management of the City of Cape Town Biodiversity Management department in December 2010. The public will be given the opportunity to give comment in February of 2011. After the approval the Conservation Area will be able to gain its Nature Reserve status.

Alien Invasion

The invasion of alien and exotic plants is one of the main biodiversity challenges of any Reserve. These species utilise vast amounts of water, have larger seed banks, establish readily, adapt and spread quickly and therefore out compete the indigenous vegetation. In most cases if clearing is not done these species will dominate.

This year regular clearing of Port Jackson (*Acacia saligna*) and Rooikraans (*Acacia cyclops*) within MRNR have proven to be very successful in controlling the spread of these category one aliens. However, other non-indigenous species persists within the Reserve including Kikuyu, Vicia, Paspalum grass and other emergent species have also invaded. With constant monitoring and follow ups over time these detrimental species can be controlled and hopefully eradicated.

Night Drive

On the 24th November the first night drive was undertaken within the southern area of MRNR, the aim being to determine if Cape Hare (*Lepus capensis*) were still present within the reserve. During the drive one Cape Hare was spotted within the burn area as well as approximately 8 Grysbok. It was discovered that the wetland within the southern area is a roosting ground for Yellow Billed Duck (*Anas undulate*) and Cape Teal (*Anas capensis*). More surveys like these will be undertaken in the future to determine the population of Cape Hare and if management intervention is required.

No Domestic Animals within the MRNR

Domestic animals have an impact on natural areas and as MRNR is small, closed and isolated the impact by domestic animals is magnified. Impacts are:

- ✗ Disturbance of nesting areas and breeding patterns of birds and small mammals;
- ✗ Increasing mortality rates;
- ✗ Smaller animals can be chased from the conservation areas into road ways and gardens;
- ✗ Domestic animals displace existing natural predators, that may lead to over-predation of small animals in the conservation area;
- ✗ Increased stress on animals occurring in natural areas can lead to greater susceptibility to pathogens and parasites present in such areas that otherwise would be of little consequence;
- ✗ Increased possibility of introducing new pathogens and parasites into Reserves;
- ✗ Migrant bird species that would normally utilize the area can be discouraged.

Please remember that as per the framework of the MRNR Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) and the Environmental Management System (EMS) cats and dogs may not enter the MRNR.

