

Vogelgat Nature Reserve

News 2014

From the Bridge

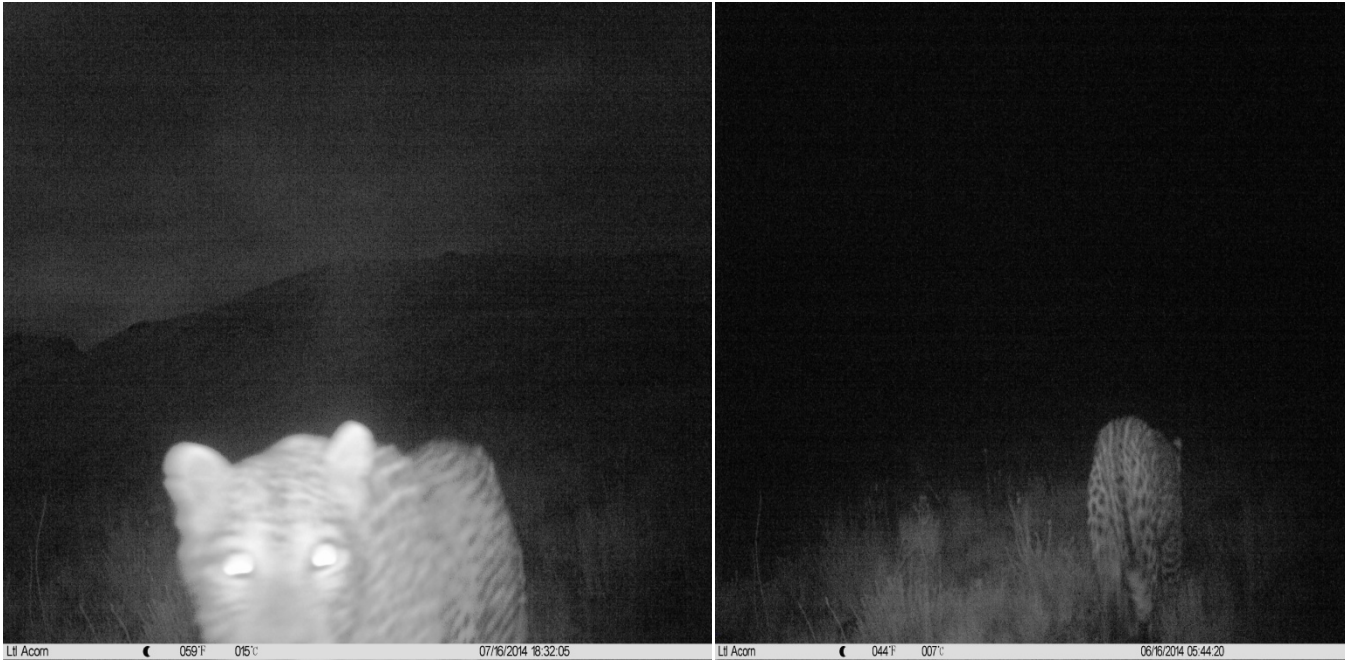
2014 started with a second flood that hit us on the 6th of January, but our rugged bridges were not broken nor washed away...just the kloof was an “adventure” to negotiate! A huge thank you to all our members that contributed to repairs after this flood – we were able to erect everything in 3 weeks! Our new Sip Lodge has been well patronised, with many of our members commenting on its spaciousness, quality of finishes and comfort. After battling with three major storms it was decided rather to maintain the old pool at Sip to the elements and build a new “Swedish plunge pool” which has become such a hit! Whilst lounging in the tannin streaked water you can gaze upon the green valley below. Yes Vogelgat has recovered well after the fire of 18 months ago. This was largely to the good rains we have received.



The afternoon's sun's rays splashing on the new plunge pool. Inviting..... relax and to cool off.

New Leopard Sightings

Vogelgat recently purchased their own camera trap and were pleasantly surprised to capture images of leopard. What amazed us was that on exactly the same day, a month later the leopard triggered the camera again. We assume that it may be a male leopard patrolling his territory.



Ghost frogs – *Heleophyryne* species.

Heleophyryne purchelli is found in the Overberg Mountains as seen in the image below.

These frogs are so named, as they are seldom seen. This is because their head and body are depressed and they can therefore conceal themselves. They too have wonderful cryptic markings which aids in their concealment. They have adapted to frequent swiftly flowing, permanent streams in mountains. Well developed T-shaped adhesive pads on their feet enable them to move over slippery rocks.

Tadpoles have 16 rows of horny teeth to feed on algae-covered rocks. Large sucktorial mouths allow tadpoles to emerge from the water to feed on algae on smooth surfaces. They can even climb waterfalls in this manner! The tadpole stage lasts more than a year.

Prior to mating both the male and female extend their forelimbs and engage in mutual head-rubbing and body parts. This behaviour is thought to be important in specific male and female recognition.

For those readers who follow ghost stories, why not put on your hiking boots and explore the mysterious fynbos mountains? At this moment you can also hear the rare Drewe's Moss Frog – *Artholeptella drewesii* – only occurring in Vogelgat, Fernkloof and Maanschynkop Nature Reserves and Babylonstoring mountains.



Cape Ghost frog



Drewe's Moss Frog

If you are curious about the unusual calls whilst you are hiking. Bring along a disc or flash drive and I can download frog calls for you.....even onto your phone for easy access.

Flower splendour

Vogelgat was ablaze with floral beauties carpeting the mountains. Just on one hike one could view 18 different orchids! After an absence of 23 years on Table Mountain *Satyrium foliosum* was found by Pat Morrison in Vogelgat. This species has never been recorded on the Klein River Mountains! Unfortunately most of these species will only arise after another fire...but keep your eyes peeled, you may be surprised.



Plans for 2015

Beacon Hut has awesome views of the Vogelgat kloof. We are thinking of revamping its layout to increase sunlight entering the hut as well to enhance the views whilst relaxing in the hut.

We have been busy too trying to get a little water from the kloof to Base Camp via the old pipeline for the requirements of the office and warden's house, but we also plan to install a plunge pool at the visitor's area. This will be a welcome addition after climbing "The Crunch" on a hot summer's day! What this space!!

Bring n Braai

Do not forget the members Brunch at Vogelgat on the 16th of December at 11h00.

Cape clawless otter

On two different occasions these secretive animals have been seen along the Vogelgat kloof in the early hours of the day.



Cape clawless otter



Water mongoose

They both have territorial latrines which can be seen close to the water's edge as crushed crab pieces. The powerful jaws of the otter crushes the carapace of crabs and therefore if you see crab pinchers and carapaces, you know there is a water mongoose in the area, whereas the otter's scat all the material is crushed.

Medicinal plants



Agathosma betulina – Bergboegoe (Round-leaf buchu). Used as a general health tonic, mild urinary antiseptic, antispasmodic, liniment, cough remedy, cold and flu remedy, cholera, rheumatism, gout, bruises and stomach ailments. The San lubricated their bodies with fat to keep their skin soft and moist in the desert conditions. This also served as an antibacterial and antifungal protectant. It also acted as an insect repellent and deodorant. Buchu oil sells for around 700 Euro/kg and its seeds for R20 000/kg! Buchu is harvested by hand and has therefore become important for job creation and sustainable income generation in South Africa.

Please remember to pay your annual fees they are due now.

Vogelgat Nature Reserve R1 900.00 Maanschynkop R250.00. A total of R2 150 for both reserves.

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