



The mission of the Dargle Conservancy in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands is actively to conserve the natural beauty and biodiversity of the Dargle area for the benefit of present and future generations, by stimulating interest and awareness of conservation issues within the community as a whole, through education and community involvement.

Chairmans Report 2023

Dargle Conservancy Achievements over the past year:

New auditors were appointed this year (Robo Chartered Accountants). Their fees are more reasonable and final accounts were ready far quicker than in the past. The new trail cameras are almost fully paid for and we continue to rent them out on a monthly basis to members at R200pm and non-members for R300pm.

The existing committee members were each given uniforms (button up shirts and jackets with the DC logo on) as a one-off expense. The branded shirts & jackets have received positive feedback from members and the committee are encouraged to wear them to each and every meeting as well as events to help strengthen the brand and awareness in the community of our organisation.

The Total Bank Balance as at end 28/02/2023 is R69 658.20 (R15 898,83 current account; R53 759,37 money market account).

Conservancies KZN held their AGM at Hebron Haven Hotel last year, and it prompted the Midlands conservancies to form a much-needed communication platform for the purposes of sharing ideas & experiences, capitalising on collective thoughts. This proved to be mutually beneficial. At the CKZN AGM two members from Midlands conservancies were coopted on to the Executive Committee of CKZN: Kevin Barnsley (Dargle Conservancy) and Jacqui van der Westhuizen (Karkloof Conservancy). Members are reminded that conservancies do not hold any legal powers, but rather represent the collective mindset of its members & the community to look after the biodiversity in the area. We are still largely dependent on organisations such as Ezemvelo.

The Litter Clean-up project, in conjunction with Midlands Conservancies wasn't well supported in the Dargle, it will be repeated again next year.

Road signage, paid for by the Dargle Conservancy together with an initial donation of R1900 from Tastebuds Farm Stall and wooden poles sponsored by Dargle Poles, was erected on both sides of the Dargle & uMngeni Rivers. This is actually the job of the Dept of Transport, but the community has given up waiting for them to do meaningful projects like this. DC has committed to keeping the areas around the new signs brush cut, clean and free of litter. The intention in the coming months is to add

signage noting the sponsor which is the Dargle Conservancy.

Alien Invasive Plant clearing continued on the P130, P132 and P134 district roads with excellent results. DC donated R14 000 to the Uplands River Conservation run by Andrew Fowler (in conjunction with the WWF/Pepsico project), which enabled the completion of important work that they are doing in the uMngeni Catchment area. Mr Fowler continues to provide important feedback to the DC committee regarding the removal of AIP's and work on rivers to improve the flow of water for all users downstream. The local community members working for the Amanzi Ethu Nobunto team were also hired to remove AIP's in various parts of the Dargle throughout the year.

ACTIVITIES :

Monthly Walks (first Thursday each month) through the Kilgobbin Forest with Nikki Brighton raised R3000 in donations.

DC had a 12km guided trail walk to "Treasure the Dargle" which was conducted by Juia Invernizzi of Spekboom Tours and we would like to thank the Bronner, Booyesen, Barlow & Robinson families for allowing us to walk through their amazing properties. R3000 was raised.

DC celebrated Arbor Week by highlighting an indigenous tree every day for a week via social media platforms.

We held a guided bird walk with Shane Bennitt, a Poort Stream walk with Andrew Fowler of Upland River Conservation, well attended talks on various other topics, and also included a snake education programme in the 4 local primary schools conducted by snake expert, Pat McKrill.

Hiring of our Trail Cameras has been popular, with fantastic sightings being recorded. Video & photographic footage of wildlife sightings in the area is then posted to our social media channels (Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram).

The Dargle Conservancy would like to thank honorary member Barry Downard for continuing with the designing of the amazing marketing posters for our monthly events.

The DC Committee Members held 4 meetings throughout the year as required by our constitution during the months of :

February, May, August and November.

Hebron Haven Hotel continued to host our monthly events and thanks is given to their team. Post Postino, the usual venue of the committee meetings, will be sadly missed as they closed their doors during the year. Merrill and Giles King continue to donate funds each month to DC which is used to pay for meals and drinks for the quarterly committee meetings. St Ives Boma has been used this year.

9 new families/groups signed up as DC members this year.

2022-2023 Committee Volunteers:

Ashley Crookes (Chairman)
Kevin Barnsley (Vice-Chair, Projects & Development)
Lynne Garbutt (Treasurer)
Jenny Goddard (Secretary) – Retiring (after 7+ years!)
Gugu Zuma (Education) – Resigned
Gilly Robartes – Wildlife Cameras
Stephen Lourens – Volunteer
Michael Goddard – Volunteer – Retiring

Elected Committee Volunteers for 2023-2024:

Ashley Crookes (Chairman)
Kevin Barnsley (Vice-Chair, Projects & Development)
Lynne Garbutt (Treasurer)
Belinda Charlton (Secretary – Newest Volunteer)
Gilly Robartes – Wildlife Cameras
Stephen Lourens – Volunteer

Matters to discuss at the AGM:

DC Constitution Quorum – 40% of members required for AGM to take place and votes to be included – Are we able to reduce that? May need to bring up at the next AGM.

Also a proposal that membership will apply to direct family members of the main member (clause B). Note as a matter of interest that Hon Members do not have voting rights? We should rather honour certain people as Life members - no subs, but can vote (clauses 3.11 & 3.12).

Clause 2.2.3 mentions “formation & maintenance” of Dargle Nature Reserve - remove “formation”?

This year the Dargle Conservancy celebrated it’s 20th Year Celebration and we would like to thank our 74 official members for their continued support!

Ashley Crookes
Chairman

