

# botfriends newsletter oct 18



Botfriends has been reinvigorated and is ready to refocus on reviving the tasks it is mandated to do by its members. Here is the updated Mission and Vision:

## **Mission and vision of Botfriends**

The mission of Botfriends is the conservation of the Bot River Estuary and Environs by stimulating interest in the environment and in environmental affairs by co-operating with other associations and working with local authorities. Conservation includes estuary management, environmental aspects of development, alien clearing - especially as regards water management and fire protection - and management by monitoring the application of existing environmental laws.

Botfriends vision is to achieve a clean, healthy, alien-free environment by working in harmony with nature and supplying maximum services to the people who live in and visit the environs of the Bot River Estuary.

## **NEW COMMITTEE 2018-19**

There is a new committee, elected on 15 September, and we thought we'd tell you a bit about ourselves.

### **The chairperson: Michael Austin**

I am the owner of Greenheart Projects, a project management company, and have an M Sc in Agriculture from Natal University. I have also completed a Landscaping Course, a Project Management course and a number of online overseas university courses on climate change, risk management and environmental issues. I was initially a farm manager in KZN and then lectured in Agronomy at Fort Hare before starting my own building firm in Cape Town, which I ran for 28 years. In Fisherhaven I became involved in environmental issues and wrote a seminal paper on the renewal of the Paddavlei in Hawston. I serve on the Paddavlei Ecosystem Group (PEG) as the Environmental

Control and Research Officer and sit on the Ward 8 Committee and on BREF. I built our own energy-efficient house in Fisherhaven two years ago.

### **The vice-chairperson: Alan Woolnough**

My interest in the environment comes from my belief that God knows best and we should leave nature in His hands. As the construction industry causes more damage to our planet than anything else, I completed a Masters degree in Sustainable and Organic Architecture, which opened my eyes to how short-sighted we are when developing land for human habitation. In architecture, we must remember that our land was here thousands of years before we were and will be here thousands of years after we have gone, so we have no right to do anything that harms it.

### **The secretary: Renee Austin**

I graduated with a BA and teachers' diploma at UCT and later completed a B Ed degree at Rhodes, a BA Hons in English Literature at Fort Hare and an M Phil (Lang Ed) with distinction, back at UCT. I taught English then lectured at training colleges in Fort Beaufort, Khayelitsha and Kuils River and at Headstart Bridging College in Salt River where I was Principal and MD for 14 years. I worked with my husband in his building firm for a further 11 years. Apart from this, I do proofreading and language editing, materials development and course writing. I have two grown children and one gorgeous grandson. I enjoy cooking, catering, reading, film and painting watercolours.

**Have you completed a 2018/19 membership form? If not, email [botvlei@gmail.com](mailto:botvlei@gmail.com) and we will send you one. We desperately need more members – if you need a membership form for someone to fill in, contact us and we will organise to send you one. We are also interested in enrolling the farmers and other estate owners in the area, so if you can help in this regard, please do so. Area: from Hoek Van Die Berg to Bot River and to Rooisand. Many thanks.**

### **The treasurer: Frans Theunissen**

I was happy to be co-opted and see my position as one of a transition type until a treasurer is found. My concern is that there be a smooth handover to the new committee and that all structures are in place. Also please remember that our scope is quite wide and encompasses the Bot Estuary and the immediate areas around the estuary. Our areas of interest do overlap with other organisations in this area, but remember that our aim is more than hacking in Fisherhaven. I have been associated with Botfriends for a very long time and think that it is time to stand back and let others do the running now. I am happy that Michael and others are stepping into the breach and wish them all of the best! I do believe that Botfriends have a very important role to play and wish the new committee all of the best.

Additional members: Jonathan Robinson, Margie Beachey and Bruce Bayer (consulting member) – more about them next time!

### **Developments: Lake Marina Yacht Club in Fisherhaven**

The OSM have stated in the recent public meeting that the Yacht Club will not continue as it is and that a tender document is being prepared for a hotel-type development with R50 million + budget. The area being considered is the fenced area of the Yacht Club, extending to Riverside drive along the length of the Yacht Club.

This area has already been almost destroyed from an environmental aspect. The estuary is at present getting polluted from the Yacht Club area. The area of the slipway and picnic area has little environmental significance and could well be included in the development.

The areas west of the Caravan Park and east of the picnic area, which covers more than half of Erf 775 has reasonable fynbos growth. Both these areas have had considerable damage in the past, but the fynbos is recovering and both areas have been cleared by private individuals in the recent past. Erf 775 has never been legally differentiated from the original erf covering the whole of the Fisherhaven township area. It therefore has no legal protection status at all. In theory, parts of it are covered by laws which govern the coastal area, but there has even been debate about whether these apply to the estuary's immediate environs.

There is, therefore, a need to delineate these areas correctly and request that these areas be considered as legally protected areas and managed accordingly. This needs to be done before development begins on the Caravan Park section. The past history within Ward 8 is that, without this legal protection, the EIA recommendations get ignored. In addition, when fynbos or wetlands get destroyed by non-implementation of the recommendations, the responsible policing sections claim that such fynbos or wetlands did not exist or were destroyed beforehand.

Access has been closed off to the general public along the coast line of the estuary in the Caravan Park section to below the high water mark. Also, the existing club house has been subject to flooding from the rise of the estuary waters. Public access should be re-established in the planning stage of the development and enforced during and after development. Given that this access has been removed at times historically, the rules as concerns the setback from the high water mark can be relaxed, to at least provide some pedestrian access along the water's edge.

### **BOTFRIENDS, ENSURE THAT YOUR ENVIRONMENT IS PROTECTED WITH REGARD TO THIS DEVELOPMENT!**

Michael Austin

### **Opinion**

*Once upon a time the inland lagoon at Betty's Bay was a child's water paradise and playground. In 1971, my children swam way into the middle and had an absolute ball. The Bot Estuary, by all accounts, was just as idyllic, if not more so, with many people using the water and even with monitors to ensure safety and responsibility. What happened? Even four years ago one might have seen someone swimming off the Afdaks.*

*Now, if you do see someone venturing into the shallow waters at the edge, you ask if they know what they are doing. Environmental degradation and deterioration? Can a recovery be staged? Not when scientists ask the question, "Should we interfere?" to which they cannot give an unequivocal and positive answer. Yet there is ongoing talk about management that comes down to doing nothing but maintaining the estuary in a perpetual state of boom and bust. Uncertainty. Who knows what to expect, least of all the flora and fauna that need to know.*

Bruce Bayer

**Do you have an opinion on environmental issues in our area, or a query we might be able to respond to? Email us at [botvlei@gmail.com](mailto:botvlei@gmail.com).**

**If you require any of the following, email the secretary at [botvlei@gmail.com](mailto:botvlei@gmail.com):**

- **a copy of the Botfriends Constitution**
- **a map of the area which Botfriends covers**
- **our response to the fire proposals made by the municipality**
- **the Paddavlei Report**
- **a pamphlet on invasive species.**

Editor: R Austin