



FRIENDS OF PILANESBERG

SEDIBA

Non-Profit Organization Fund Raising Number: 006-421 NPS

Letter from Editor

July 2026

Lauren Gunn

Dear Friends,

It has been a busy year in the park for the Green Army despite and even with the increased financial strains placed on us South Africans with the rising costs of Petrol, electricity, food, etc. we have had great attendance at all our work parties. It is an amazing to know that we have such wonderful dedicated individuals as part of the FOPS family and appreciate you all.

Six Month recap:

Every work party kicks off on Friday when everyone arrives at Potokwane Camp. Before we head out into the Park, we spend some time giving the camp a bit of TLC – sweeping the communal areas, cleaning the bathrooms, cutting the grass and generally getting everything looking neat and ready for the weekend. Throughout the year we also maintain the firebreaks, tents, water tower, tool sheds and other camp facilities.

Road and direction cairn clearing is something we tackle every month. It's a constant job, but one that's essential and always appreciated. We also cleared the low-level water bridges on Tilodi Loop, removing the build-up of mud, grass and other debris that had accumulated over time.

***Makorwane Dam Hide** received plenty of attention, with fence repairs completed, the walkway and parking area cleared of overgrown vegetation, firebreaks cut and a thorough clean-up around the hide. We've also started replacing the shelving inside the hide.*

*At **Lenong Hide**, the broken bench was repaired, a damaged roof sheet replaced, and the surrounding area cleaned up. Firebreaks were cut around both the hide and the nearby repeater stations.*

*Unfortunately, **Ruighoek Hide** is still a waiting game. The water levels remain too high for us to continue with the rebuild, but while we wait for them to drop, we've created a lookout point so visitors can still enjoy the beautiful views over the dam. We also carried out some fence repairs around the parking area.*

*At **Mankwe Hide**, we cleaned the parking area, repaired sections of fencing, cleared vegetation from the walkway, cut a firebreak and removed a tree that had fallen against the water tanks.*

***Rathlogo Hide** received a general clean-up of the parking area and walkway, along with a freshly cut firebreak.*

*At **Malatse Hide**, the parking area, walkway and hide surrounds were cleaned, and another firebreak was completed.*

***Bathlako Hide** saw fence repairs, a clean-up of the parking area, walkway and hide surrounds, and a new firebreak. One exciting addition is a brand-new picnic table positioned by the viewing window, giving visitors a comfortable spot to enjoy a meal while taking in the scenery.*

*Over at **Moloto Picnic Site**, every table and bench was sanded and repainted, while the roof covering and support poles received a fresh protective treatment.*



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New signage poles were also installed at the Pilanesberg Centre for the disabled parking bays.

*The team continued clearing vegetation along **Lenong Road**, and we're pleased to say that repairs to the paved section have now been completed along the entire stretch. 😊*

*One of the biggest projects was tackling the **Geological Sites** throughout the Park. Together with the HO team, we cleared each site and refreshed all the signage. The sites are looking fantastic, and if you'd like to learn more about them, we've updated the information on our website. A downloadable pamphlet is also available. <https://www.friendsofpilanesberg.com/about-1>*

*At **Manyane**, a major project came to completion with the installation of built-in braais at all three tents. Led by Corrie, the finished braais look fantastic and will be a wonderful addition for visitors. Alongside this, we continue with the regular maintenance and cleaning of the tents.*

Working together with Steve and the Parks Board, we also repaired the radio mast at headquarters. Pieter has continued doing what he does best, helping to keep many of the Park's toilets operational by repairing them whenever needed.

Looking back, it's been an incredibly busy and productive period. Our efforts certainly haven't gone unnoticed by either the Parks Board or visitors to the Park. We often hear comments like, "We saw you everywhere in the Park!" and that's always rewarding to hear.

As always, it's a privilege to work alongside the Park's management and staff. Together we're able to make a real difference, and we're grateful to be part of that journey.

Warm regards,

Lauren

Please note: A large number of annual renewal fees are currently due, and reminder notices have been sent out. These emails may have been delivered to your Junk or Spam folder. If you believe your membership may be due for renewal, please check those folders and take the necessary action.

Additionally – it is fire season, a reminder that open fires at the picnic areas are not allowed, should you spot any fires in the park, please report at the gates or at the Pilanesberg Centre.

Our AGM will be held this year on the 21st of November, more details will be shared closer to the time. Please Save the Date.

*There is a feature at the end of this letter on invasive species in the park to look out for was that compiled by Bruce, thanks so much for your input, I appreciate 😊. Please feel free to print it out and keep it with you for reference. **Should you note any of these in the park while not with a Work Party Leader & Rifleman, please do not get out your vehicle to attempt to remove them, obviously for your safety, but also some of these require special removal procedures to prevent the spread. Kindly share the location, including GPS co-ordinates if possible with one of the committee members as soon as possible.***



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The Green Army in action



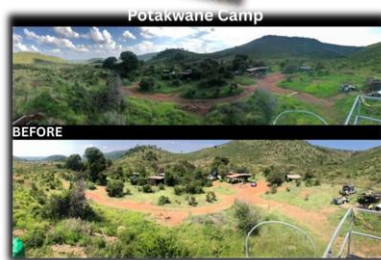


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Work done & Team Photos





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The Green Army having well deserved down time



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Notes:

Again - I have used a lot of pictures in this newsletter – thanks to everyone who contributed either via WhatsApp or allowing me to “steal” from Facebook!

We do welcome input from any members who have a feature, a story or interesting information to add. Please send any submissions to fopsnews@gmail.com for consideration.



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INVASIVE PLANTS and TREES seen in PILANESBERG

PRIDE OF INDIA



This is a deciduous tree with pink or purple flowers. The trees you see flower mid to late summer (December through April). The trees in Pilanesberg should be quite small as they are removed by Friends of Pilanesberg; however, from time to time there are young trees which need to be removed. This tree is removed by cutting it down at the base of the tree and then applying poison to the stems of the tree. All stems and branches need to be removed to prevent them from rooting and growing again.

QUEEN OF THE NIGHT



This is a cactus which is declared Category 1b invasive alien weed. Originally from South America, it poses a severe threat to the savanna bushveld by forming dense thickets that outcompete native plants, preventing animals from finding shade, and restricts wildlife movement. This cactus is sometimes difficult to identify as they can be confused with the Euphorbia tree. Many tree-like Euphorbias (like the Naboom) grow a rigid, thick central trunk with candelabra-like branches. Queen of the Night generally grows as a vining,

sprawling, leaf-like plant or a tall, columnar cactus. This is a very difficult plant to remove and needs to be done carefully. The fleshy part of the plant is cut with a machete or holes drilled into the stem. The only poison that kills this plant is made from cochineal bugs which is toxic to this plant. The poison is then inserted into the cuts or holes made in the plant. It takes a while for the plant to die, but over time it turns yellow and eventually dies. Please check for any small plants growing around the large plant and do the same with these. Any parts of the plant that are cut off or break off and are laying on the ground will root and grow again, so be sure that the plant is not chopped down and pieces left lying around.



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LANTANA



Lantana is one of the worst weeds in the world, a category 1b species in South Africa in terms of the Alien and Invasive Species Regulations. Lantana is identified rather easily as it establishes under trees where it out-competes indigenous plants and forms impenetrable, prickly thickets. Look out of long-stemmed thorny spikes with pinkish flowers. Lantana is best removed by pulling the plants out and burning the removed plants. Removal of Lantana is back breaking work, but needs to be done. If the plant is well established it makes a strong root system underground which makes pulling it out near impossible. In this case, the stems are cut and poison applied to the stems to prevent it from shooting further.



JACARANDA TREE



Although Jacaranda trees are very beautiful when in flower, and are prevalent in our cities, they remain an alien plant in South Africa. Jacaranda are a fast-growing flowering tree native to South-Central South America.

The tree consumes large amounts of water and out-competes indigenous vegetation. It is now considered illegal to plant Jacaranda trees in South Africa.

The tree is easily identified by its bark, fern-like leaves and flat woody like seed pods - and when in flower by its purple trumpet shaped flowers.

When the trees are identified in the park, a team goes in and cuts the tree down and poisons the stem. The remaining trunk and branches are cut-up into small pieces and removed if possible, or left in the veld. Jacaranda do not readily root again after being cut down.





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POMPOM Weed



Pompom weed is fast becoming one of the worst invader species in Pilanesberg. It is an invasive herb from South America which poses a severe threat to our grassland biodiversity. It displaces native species, reducing both biological diversity and the carrying capacity of veld and wetlands. The plant has tuberous roots that allow it to survive frost, drought, and fire. It is unpalatable to livestock and game. The weed is also suspected to be allelopathic, meaning it can release chemicals that inhibit the growth of surrounding plants.



Lookout for the pompom like flowers purple flowers at the top of the plant between October and May. These plants occur in large groups covering a wide area specifically in grasslands, open savannas, and wetlands. They also favour disturbed soil such a roadsides and abandoned fields. The plant prefers full sun so it is rather easy to see and identify.

Control requires the careful cutting off the flower heads and placing these with care into a plastic or paper bag. This must be done with care as the flowering heads are essentially a clump of seeds and easily fall to the ground where the re-germinate.

Lately a bio-poisen has been used with success in the control of this invader.

In all cases, please report the place where you have observed the invader plants. If possible, report a GPS location as well as a direction from the point of observation and estimated distance to the plant(s) or tree(s).

FOPS are committed to assist the management of Pilanesberg to eradicate and help prevent the spread of these invader plants.