



# **KZN CRANE FOUNDATION Newsletter 4/2025**

## **"The Little Things" in Conservation & Biodiversity**

The Bill Barnes Crane and Oribi Reserve wraps around the eastern sides of the village of Nottingham Road. Along the R103, a large wetland forms the reserve's western boundary, effectively filtering and cleaning up much of the pollution runoff from the village. This wetland converges with waters from another wetland, some 40 hectares in extent, running through the central portions of the Bill Barnes.

The vast majority of the 462-hectare reserve comprises grasslands covering the rolling hills, which are seen mostly for some five kilometres along the P147 district road between Nottingham Road and the N3 Highway.

To the casual viewer, the reserve comprises just grass and reeds. Yes, indeed, one could be forgiven for getting that impression. However, the Bill Barnes is rich in biodiversity, teeming with life that one does not see from afar. Yes, there are Reedbuck, Oribi and Duiker. One sees birds of prey and various larger grassland and wetland avian species. But, unless one is actually in the reserve, walking and looking at the little things, one would miss observing the abundant diversity that the grasslands and wetlands are home to.

One large species that a passing observer would notice is cattle grazing sections of the reserve from time to time. In a highland grassland reserve such as this, cattle are used as a grassland management tool to replace the abundant herds of wildlife that roamed before human settlement and commercial farming. Like the Wildebeests and Zebras, cattle turn grass

into dung, providing soil fertility and nutrition via dung beetles, earthworms, insects and grass seeds. Multiple species of birds flourish in the abundant cover and nutrition.

The Bill Barnes controlled burning of grassland sections, along with cattle, is another essential tool for veld management. The three-year cycle is a rotation of 1) burning, followed by heavy grazing of the fresh regrowth, 2) light grazing, and 3) resting. Close inspection of grasses and reeds on the reserve reveals multiple varieties. There are also indigenous flowers, some minute in size, herbs, bulbs, and forbs, annual, biennial, or perennial. Local farmer, the late Lal Greene, photographed over 500 here, in the Midlands, and in the foothills of the Drakensberg. Millions of insects interact to pollinate plants, distribute seeds, and provide nutrition for birds, reptiles, and other insects.



The quarry rehabilitation within the reserve is a wonderful exhibit of nature's ability to heal and restore. Within 18 months of planting indigenous shrubs and trees in the quarry, we see caterpillars, bees, scorpions, butterflies, chameleons, nesting and foraging birds. We encourage our members and visitors to walk the trails on the Bill Barnes and take time to see the little things. These fundamental biodiversity enablers knit together our delicate and complex natural world.

And all of our readers, whether we are farmers, students, or urbanites, when the butterfly flits across the lawn, let's not forget that biodiversity in conservation starts at home, with all of us.

"For the beauty of our earth

For the beauty of the skies

For the love which from our birth

Over and around us lies"

Dedicated to Lal Greene and Bill Barnes. These men inspired the formation of the Bill Barnes Nature Reserve and other conservancies in the KZN Midlands.

Written by Jon Bates.



Photo by John Pitout

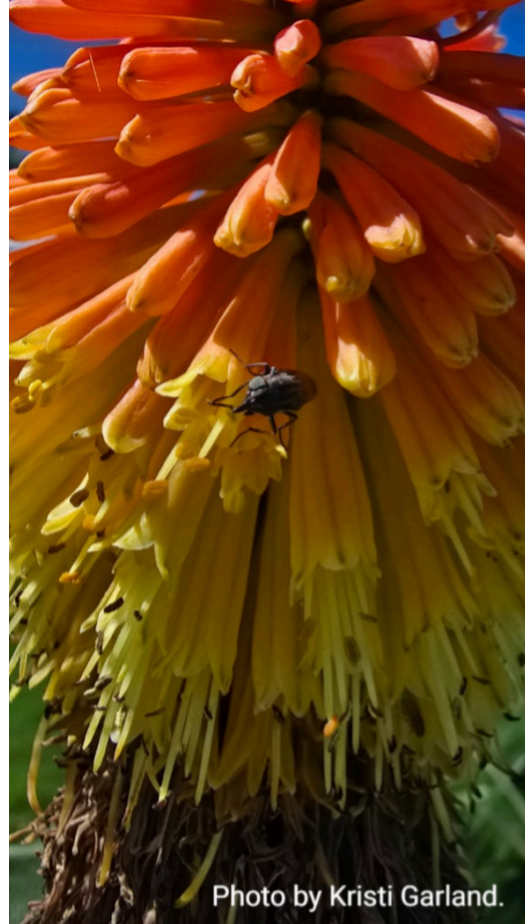


Photo by Kristi Garland.

## Stay active this winter!

**NOTTINGHAM ROAD**

**COMMUNITY - CONSERVATION - CONDITIONING**

---



**SOCIAL RUNNING CLUB**  
**THURSDAYS**  
**@ 06:30am**

Start in front of Miche Bakery, and run ~5km through the Bill Barnes Crane and Oribi Reserve, before heading back to Miche Bakery for an early morning coffee.

**How to join:**

1. Sign an Indemnity Form for the reserve. (NO INDEMNITY = NO RUN)
2. R20 cash donation for the reserve - UNLESS you are already a member in which case it is free.
3. Meet at Miche Bakery at 6:15am on Thursday mornings.
4. Join for a coffee afterwards if you have the time!

**ALL FITNESS LEVELS WELCOME**



THE CRANE FOUNDATION

# ECO TRAIL

**OPEN TO RUNNERS & WALKERS**

**EVERY SATURDAY**  
**7:30 - 11:00**

INDEMNITY FORMS TO BE SIGNED AT EARTH ROUTE MARKET. A STICKER WILL BE GIVEN AND CHECKED WITH THE GUARD AT THE GATE.

DONATIONS WELCOME VIA THE QR CODE WHEN SIGNING IN.




Have you seen the mowing happening in the camp near the Midlands Community College? The KZNCF follows grassland management plans developed by the advisory committee (representatives from; KZN Dept. of Agric, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and Conservation Outcomes). The camp has been in a 'rest cycle' for the season. The plant energy has now moved to the roots due to the onset of winter. We can now mow to remove the fuel load. The mowed grass is baled and used as fodder for the cattle during winter.

If you would like to join our membership or find out more about what we do at the KZNCF, follow the link: <https://kzncranefoundation.org.za/get-involved/become-a-memb...> or contact Sue on [admin@kzncranefoundation.org.za](mailto:admin@kzncranefoundation.org.za)



**Kwazulu-Natal Crane Foundation (KZNCF)** P.O. Box 35, Nottingham Road 3280 • 065 738 5818 NPO #002-553  
• PBO 18/11/13459 • Vat Number 419 013 9115  
**Committee:** James Berning (Chairman), John Pitout (Deputy), Jon Bates, Chris Brown, Antonia Mkhabela, Janet Snow, Rebecca Wakeford, Craig Elstob, Brent Coverdale, John Huson



**KZN Crane Foundation**  
PO Box 35, Nottingham Road  
South Africa



You received this email because you signed up on our website or made a purchase from us.

[Unsubscribe](#)

