

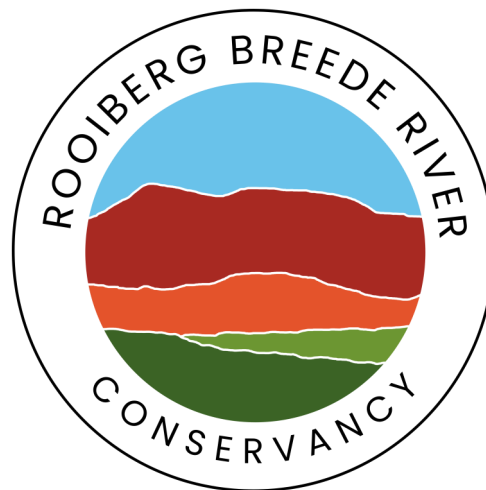
The *Astroloba* Rubric

From the Conservancy Office

January to March 2025 have been exceptionally busy at the Conservancy Office, so much so that the publication of our March edition of the *Astroloba* Rubric has been delayed! However, we are pleased with the developments during that time. Not only did we appoint a new conservation assistant to help support our landowner members with extension work and drive the Conservancy's new environmental education programme, we also conducted a very productive AGM and the Management Committee met, received news from LandCare about alien invasive plant clearing funding, hosted a information days on bird citizen science and snake awareness, and made arrangements for our first landowner event on the Conservancy's Best Environmental Practice system. Botanist Steven Molteno continued his extensive plant survey, and we are building our research partnership with Stellenbosch University. A wonderful new corporate sponsorship deal has been conclude thanks to the efforts of our Chairperson. Things are starting to fall into place on our journey in becoming a legitimate, landowner-driven environmental management institution.

Conservation greetings

Jacques



In this issue: Reflecting on Conservation Achievements: Annual General Meeting 2025 | Appointment of Intern Conservation Assistant, Thalia Joubert | Conservancy Best Environmental Practice System | Conservancy Environmental Education Programme | Media, location and SnapScan information

AGM 2025: Reflecting on Conservation Achievements

By Yolanda van Biljon

The Rooiberg Breede River Conservancy held its much-anticipated Annual General Meeting on Thursday, 6 March 2025, amidst the scenic surroundings of Tierhoek Organic Farm in the Langeberg. The gathering served as a platform for members, stakeholders, and conservation partners to celebrate milestones and discuss strategies for the future.

Conservation Efforts and Vision

Under the guidance of Conservancy Manager Jacques Smit, the organisation reiterated its dedication to strengthening governance and ensuring financial sustainability. With these goals, the Conservancy seeks to build its capacity to meet its conservation objectives, safeguarding the rich biodiversity of the Rooiberg and Breede River regions. Focused initiatives include promoting sustainable land use, combating soil erosion, eliminating invasive species, and fostering tourism.

Highlights from the AGM

A warm welcome was extended to Thalia Joubert, who joins as the new conservation assistant. Funded by the Table Mountain Fund for three years, Thalia brings her expertise as a BSc graduate in Conservation Ecology from Stellenbosch University and her ongoing Advanced Diploma studies at Stadio. She will focus on operations, out-

reach, and environmental education for local farm schools.

Chairperson Adrian Robinson shared exciting news of a partnership with Rooiberg Winery, which will contribute R3 per bottle from its Game Reserve Range to the Conservancy. This initiative aims to support conservation efforts while also boosting wine sales.

More than just an annual meeting, the AGM provided a valuable opportunity for connection and collaboration. Attendees—both long-standing members and newcomers—exchanged ideas, strengthened partnerships, and renewed their commitment to conservation. The event highlighted the importance of every individual's contribution to the Conservancy's mission.



Chairperson, Adrian Robinson (top centre) welcoming all

Announcement: Appointment of Intern Conservation Assistant Thalia Joubert

Recall from a previous edition that we announced our successful funding application to [The Table Mountain Fund](#). The [Rooiberg Breede River Conservancy](#) will, over the next three years, invest these funds, totaling R727 489 towards 1) employing and developing a young conservation professional, 2) developing and implementing a management plan and voluntary compliance system for the Conservancy and its member landowners, and 3) revamping the Conservancy's outward facing corporate identity and media to enhance its legitimacy and professionalism. Our “young conservation professional” has finally joined our team. We welcome Thalia Joubert and wish her well in this role. We will let her introduce herself in her own words:

As the new member of the Rooiberg Breede River Conservancy I am excited to take part in the educational sector of conservation and sustainable agriculture as there is a saying ‘bend the tree while it is young.’ Therefore, I decided to sign up for an Advanced Diploma in Technical and Vocational Teaching at Stadio Higher Education which will help me with my teaching methods and style. My background includes completing my BSc Conservation Ecology and Entomology at Stellenbosch University in 2023.

What the role as a Conservation Assistant means to me: being able to move between landowners, assisting in matters that concern both the Conservancy and local community members, and taking the time to discuss how landowner goals and conservancy objectives can align. My aim is to help create a thriving environment where sustainable crop management practices coexist with nature, ensuring resources are used responsibly and can continue to support both agriculture and the ecosystem, extending their expiry date.

Furthermore, I am passionate about becoming actively involved in expanding the nursery, both in size on the property and its popularity in the people’s minds and hearts. Since the seeds are locally harvested and grown, they are better adapted to the local environmental conditions.

In 10 years, I see myself driving around the country in my bakkie, visiting farmers and schools to present workshops on environmental topics. I would begin by raising awareness about biodiversity and teaching how to care for the resources we have. I believe soil restoration and care and nutrient management will be key areas of where I can offer consultation to landowners.

Personally, I am excited to expand my knowledge about the birdlife and getting to know the areas by running and hiking trails. I just want to end off by saying thank you to the members of the RBR Conservancy to give me space to grow in.



Manager Comment: Thalia will be leading our environmental education programme—read more about that in this issue! She will also be trained in providing extension services to landowners, and in various other conservation tasks over the coming months. Please welcome her and support her learning journey! If you have a specific task you believe Thalia can help with, please contact the Conservancy Manager.

Progress report: Conservancy Best Environmental Practice System

An initial interactive landowner day has been held! On 03 April 2025, we were joined by Deren Coetzer and Sarah Hulley of Conservation Outcomes. 24 people were present, including the facilitators, Landowner and Satellite Members, RBRC staff, and observers from Bottellary Hills Renosterveld Conservancy, CapeNature and Stellenbosch University Business School. An impressive 14 landowner properties were represented!

What are our next steps?

1. Look out for an invitation to complete our survey on your needs and expectations for this project
2. If you are uncomfortable with an electronic survey format, we will assist you with a hard copy or in-person survey instead!
3. The Conservancy Committee may decide to create a subcommittee dedicated to this Best Environmental Practice System, so consider making yourself available for a subcommittee role.
4. The Conservancy Manager will co-ordinate with Conservation Outcomes on a draft Environmental Practice Guidelines document based on landowner input, which will eventually be distributed for comment.
5. The Conservancy Manager, and in future the Conservation Assistant, will be available to answer your questions about this system.



Attention, Landowner and Satellite members!

Save the Date: 03 April 2025

Interactive workshop:
Best Environmental Practice

Please join us and have your say in a pragmatic but effective management tool for the Conservancy and you as landowners.

Generously made possible by the
Table Mountain Fund, Facilitated by Conservation Outcomes




CONSERVATION
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Thank you to all the champion Conservancy members who took time out of their busy schedules to attend this event! Your contribution is crucial to the success of this initiative!

Venue generously provided by:



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By Thalia Joubert

I'm excited to share that our first conservation lesson kicked off on Tuesday, March 25th! We started strong with the topic "Why is water important?" The children of Vinkrivier Primary School were eager to participate in the activities, making it a fantastic start to our programme.

We are also hoping to collaborate with other schools in the district in future, including Nuy Stasie Primary, Huguenoot VGK Primary School, and Eilandia NGK Primary School.

Each month, we'll focus on a different conservation concern, bringing awareness and hands-on learning to the students. To increase our impact, we're inviting other organisations, such as the Cape Leopard Trust and CapeNature, to help us address issues like snaring and wildlife conservation.

Our planned timeline may still change as we adapt to the needs of both the students and the Conservancy. We're looking forward to the new term, April, May, and June, with each topic carefully chosen based on conversations with community members and what will be most valuable for the students.

Thank you, Eva and Terence Winberg, Conservancy Committee Education Portfolio members, as well as Veronica van Rensburg who is contributing to this RBRC Education programme alongside the Winbergs. In the coming months, we will need additional support which may include organising excursions, gardening tools, providing compost and seeds, or granting us permission to walk on your property or installing an owl nest box on your property.

Manager comment: thank you to Thalia and the Environmental Education Subcommittee! This is a great example of what we can achieve when our landowner members become actively involved!



Snake removal expert, Gerrie Heyns presenting a snake awareness talk and live snake demonstration at Vinkrivier Primary—check out "Snake Lives Matter" on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/323317008000673/>)



Thalia Joubert presenting her first environmental education lesson on the water cycle to grade 4 learners at Vinkrivier Primary

Rooiberg Breede River Conservancy

Scan this QR Code to find our media!

Visit us or get in touch!

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Snap here to pay



Did you know?

The Conservancy now has its own SnapScan account which allows for convenient app-based and online card payments. Enquire with the Manager or Administrative Assistant if you would like to place this code at your accommodation facilities or other business to help raise funds for the Conservancy.