



# MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB

## Fixture List: January - March 2013

### CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Dear Members

Welcome to MBC's 2013. We have a new committee to steer the club. Unfortunately, we have also seen several dear and valued committee members step down. These are: Eddie von Barga, 2012 Chairman, Jovita da Silva, after years of tireless admin service to the club, Barry Stapleton, for his service on the social committee, and Bobby Stanton, with regards his contribution to producing the fixture lists and club magazine (as much as he tried to resign from the committee, he remains with us as Treasurer). To you all, it is with fondest thanks that we see you hang up your committee boots, you have done our club so well, and every one of us have benefitted from your voluntary contribution, which I have learned is a very great one, involving hours and hours of work.

The new 2013 committee has big boots to fill. Our new committee is as follows: Chairman is Karen Miller, vice Chairman is John McGovern, Bobby Stanton as Treasurer, Jill Etchells as Secretary. Marketing portfolio to Heidi Cox, doing the fixture list and magazine is Alan Etchells, Lisa Smith continues with the social aspects, and Chris Cox to help as well.

We have exciting new club events planned, in addition to our regular hikes as per our fixture lists. Ideas are for a club cook-off: where the best hiking food (prepared as if in a cave), will be judged by fellow hikers! Kiddie friendly day hikes for educational and experiential purposes, visits to local Bird Sanctuaries, Animal Rescue Programmes and places of Botanical interest. As the club is self funded, we would like to host fund-raising family days at e.g. Shongweni Dam, Kloof Gorge etc, in addition to a trail- running and cycling event. We also have regular Beach and River walks now. The new committee also has promotional aspirations to reach new members and get our name out there. Our club is decades old, we have experienced leaders and members with so much accumulated information, only too glad to share. We are indeed among the fore-runners of outdoor clubs in KZN. We are respected at Ezemvelo Wildlife to protect and conserve while we enjoy and reap the benefits of our natural heritage.

Let's make 2013 our biggest and best year yet, and come together as the hiking community that YOU have signed up for. There is something for everyone to enjoy. Join us, enjoy us, and be one of us!

Happy hiking.

Karen  
Chairman: Mountain Backpackers Club

## MOUNTAIN BACKPACKERS CLUB COMMITTEE

Chairman:	Karen Miller	082 7423266
Vice Chairman:	John McGovern	082 6595111
Treasurer:	Bobby Stanton	031 4655535
Fixture List / Magazine:	Alan Etchells	082 3984103
Membership / Subscriptions:	Jill Etchells	
Marketing	Heidi Cox	082 7064283
Committee member	Chris Cox	
Socials Committee	Lisa Guastella	082 8604043

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### THE CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS TO THE CLUB

Ajaykumar Mandalia & Family  
Desmond Ras & Family  
Jerome Schofield & Family  
Sue Maclennan & Family  
Tammy Thornhill

#### Grading of hikes

1. Very easy trip
2. Easy trip
3. Moderate trip - physical fitness advisable
4. Strenuous trip - **physical fitness essential**
5. **Very strenuous** trip requiring a high degree of fitness

Please take particular note of **distance and height** as well as the **grading of the backpacking trip** you intend doing and ensure that your level of fitness is adequate.

#### **Membership fees are due on 1 January 2013.**

Please note fees have been increased to R160 for Singles and R200 for family memberships. Please pay promptly.

The Club's banking details are:

FNB Westville, Branch code 223526

Account name: Mountain Backpackers Club

Account number: 507 8000 7264

Please use your name and/or membership number as a reference.

EMAIL and FAX NUMBER FOR MEMBERSHIP ONLY:

[membership@mountainbackpackers.co.za](mailto:membership@mountainbackpackers.co.za)

086 612 3657

### January 2013

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
6	<b>Byrne Area:</b> Combined MBC /Ramblers /Midlands Hiking Clubs: Day hike from Minerva Heights farmhouse through grasslands and indigenous forest. Donations to farmer - R10pp. Meet leader at Byrne Church (adjacent to turn off to Oaks Hotel) at 08h00	12 km	Dave Tighe	031 4649033 076 0280708	2
13	<b>Stainbank Nature Reserve</b> - Yellowwood Park: Two hour hike through Nature Reserve. See Impala and Zebra. Contact Arthur for time to meet at main gate.		Arthur Bester	083 482 3590	2
13	<b>Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve</b> - near Howick - Lovely local day hike in a beautiful area - great views & chance to see plenty of game & bird life. Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. R20 entrance fee.	12-15 km	Keith Ashton	033 239-5023 082 846-6179 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2
12-13	<b>Marble Baths Cave</b> (Injasuti area). Great place for an afternoon swim and for first time hikers. Return via Grindstone Cave for some views.	16 km 400 m	Grant Wilkinson	081 3725611	3
19	<b>African Fish Eagle Trail</b> along the Umgeni River. Meet at the Green Hub 08h00 to leave 08h15, R20 per person for the guide, bring some cash for coffee at the SPCA.	12 km	Heidi Cox	082 7064283 heidi.dinan@gmail.com	2
19	<b>Kloof Gorge Day Hike.</b> Leaving at noon from the picnic site carpark. Small entrance fee. Bring sun protection, hat, water, snacks and a rain jacket. Moderate fitness required. Not suitable for children. Confirm with John beforehand :	4-5 hrs	John McGovern Karen Miller (please contact to confirm hike)	John 082 6595111 Karen 082 7423266	2
19-20	<b>Wonder Valley Cave</b> (Injasuti area) via Van Heyningens Pass. Suitable for first-time backpackers unsure of their fitness.	16 km 470 m	Farouk Omarjee	031 5776336 (between 18:30 & 20:30) 083 4190196 FaroukO@telkomsa.net	3
26-27	<b>Giant's Hut.</b> From Giants main camp via Oribi Ridge , past old vulture hide to burnt out Giant's Hut. Return via middle Ridge. This hike has not been done for many years. Great views of Giant's Castle. Tents needed as the hut is burnt out - may be fixed in May 2013. Combined Midlands Hiking Club and MBC hike. Last bookings 22nd January 2013.	25 km 600m	Dave Sclanders	<a href="mailto:bergfree@absamail.co.za">bergfree@absamail.co.za</a> email bookings only	3
26-27	Climb <b>Redi Peak</b> from Loteni camp. The first of John and Christine's 13 Highs of 2013 (see below). Fitness required.	30 km 3309 m (Redi top)	Christine Bro John Pickup	Christine 082 7826025 John 072 1512031	5

### February 2013

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
2-3	Trail run/Hike from Injasuti campsite. Lots of option for lots of fun.		Grant Wilkinson	081 3725611	
9	<b>Giba Gorge</b> - Combined MBC/ Ramblers/ Midlands Hiking Clubs. Hike on well maintained tracks to McIntosh & Kirklands waterfalls, visit Umhlatuzana Shelters. This hike starts at Giba Gorge	12 km	Dave Tighe	031 4649033 076 0280708	2

	Cycle track parking area at 08h00. Entrance R10pp.				
9-10	<b>Mzimkhulwana Hut</b> (Cobham area) Backpacking to & overnight in the hut - Part of the Giant's Cup Trail - Hut has bunk beds with mattresses - flush toilets & showers (cold water) - relatively easy hike for first time backpackers - lovely area - chance to explore other areas from the hut - Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Please book early to secure your place.	10-15 km each day	Keith Ashton	033 239-5023 082 846-6179 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	3
9-10	<b>Zulu Cave</b> (Monk's Cowl area) via the Sphinx Trail.	28 km 950 m	Farouk Omarjee	031 5776336 (between 18:30 & 20:30) 083 4190196 FaroukO@telkomsa.net	3
16	<b>Kloof Gorge Day Hike.</b> Leaving at noon from the picnic site carpark. Small entrance fee. Bring sun protection, hat, water, snacks and a rain jacket. Moderate fitness required. Not suitable for children. Confirm with John beforehand :	4-5 hrs	John McGovern Karen Miller (please contact to confirm hike)	John 082 6595111 Karen 082 7423266	2
23-24	<b>Kamberg</b> - Hike to Sinclairs Cave. Circular hike. Great views of the Southern Berg, and rock art. Good hike for 1st time hikers. Cave only has space for 7 people, late bookers may have to bring tents. Opportunity to explore other caves in the afternoon. Combined Midlands Hiking Club and MBC hike. Last bookings 19 February.	24 km 500 m	Dave Sclanders	<a href="mailto:bergfree@absamail.co.za">bergfree@absamail.co.za</a> email bookings only	3
23-24	Climb <b>Cathedral Peak</b> from the Cathedral Peak Hotel. The second of John and Christine's 13 Highs of 2013 (see below). Fitness required.	20 km 3304 m (Cathedral top)	Christine Bro John Pickup	Christine 082 7826025 John 072 1512031	5

### March 2013

Date	Description	Distance Height	Leader	Contact	Grade
10	<b>Enon Forest Station</b> (Byrne Area) Combined MBC/Ramblers/Midlands Hiking Clubs - Hike through plantation, indigenous forest and grasslands. Meet at the BP Service Station in Shepstone Road, Richmond at 08h00.	12 km	Dave Tighe	031 4649033 076 0280708	2
16	<b>Kloof Gorge Day Hike.</b> Leaving at noon from the picnic site carpark. Small entrance fee. Bring sun protection, hat, water, snacks and a rain jacket. Moderate fitness required. Not suitable for children. Confirm with John beforehand :	4-5 hrs	John McGovern Karen Miller (please contact to confirm hike)	John 082 6595111 Karen 082 7423266	2
16-17	<b>Highmoor</b> - Hike to Aasvoelkranz cave, 4 km, then day packs to Mount Lebanon on Saturday. Sunday to Caracal Cave and Fulton's Rock. Good for 1st time hikers. Limited cave space, book early to secure your place. Combined Midlands Hiking Club and MBC hike. Last bookings 12 March.	20 km 300 m	Dave Sclanders	<a href="mailto:bergfree@absamail.co.za">bergfree@absamail.co.za</a> email bookings only	3
21-24	<b>Drakensberg Gardens</b> - (3 nights inc public hol) Cottage weekend - Fully equipped and very comfortable - Beautiful Area in the heart of the mountains - Max 10 members. Day hikes from cottage or simply	12-15 km each day	Keith Ashton	033 239-5023 082 846-6179 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za	2-3

	unwind on the property (10 acres). DSTV for news & sport etc - Hot baths & showers - Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Please book early to secure your place.				
24	Beach walk <b>Umdloti to Umhlanga</b> and back on sand. Lunch at the Bush Tavern. Book for walk and lunch in advance.	12.5 km	Heidi Cox	082 7064283 heidi.dinan@gmail.com	2
23-24	Tenting trip to <b>Hidden Valley</b> (Garden Castle area). Great for first time hikers unsure of their fitness.	16 km 100 m	Farouk Omarjee	031 5776336 (between 18:30 & 20:30) 083 4190196 FaroukO@telkomsa.net	3
23-24	<b>Umzimkulwana Hut</b> via the Giant's Cup Trail (Cobham area). Ideal for first time hikers unsure of their fitness.	20 km 300 m	Clive Powell	031 5646169 (after 7pm)	3
23-24	Exploration in the <b>Loteni area</b> . Route still to be decided.		Grant Wilkinson	081 3725611	4-5
29-31	<b>Grand Traverse resupply</b> via Bannerman's Pass. Do your bit for those masochists on the GT via this annual tradition. Fitness required.	26 km 1480 m	Peter Hilder	082 5589814	4-5
30-31	<b>Mont-Aux-Sources</b> from Sentinel car park. The third of John and Christine's 13 Highs of 2013 (see below). Fitness required.	20 km 3282 m top	Christine Bro John Pickup	Christine 082 7826025 John 072 1512031	5
23 Mar – 5 Apr	<b>Grand Traverse of the Drakensberg</b> Sentinel car park to Sehlabathebe Lodge	230km >10000m	Dave Gay	031 7654246 (18h00 to 20h00 Mon-Thurs only) cougar1@telkomsa.net	5

### Advance Notices

Date	Description
Sat-Mon 15-17 June	<p><b>Bushman's Nek</b> - Short (one km) backpacking to Bushman's Nek Hut for a two-night stay - public holiday on Mon. Beautiful day hikes from this base to see waterfalls, bushmen's paintings, caves and lovely pools for swimming. Hut has lockable rooms with bunk beds &amp; mattresses, flush toilets and showers (only cold water but no problem) - Option to also stay 3 nights - i.e. inc Fri - Combined hike with Midlands Hiking Club. Please book early to secure place. Grade 2-3.</p> <p>Keith Ashton 033 239-5023 082 846-6179 keimarg@iuncapped.co.za</p>

### Achieve 13 Highs with Christine Bro and John Pickup in 2013

#### Put this in your diary

(Contact Christine on 082 7826025, [christinebro3@gmail.com](mailto:christinebro3@gmail.com) and John on 072 1512031, [johnpickup9@gmail.com](mailto:johnpickup9@gmail.com))

Date - 2013	Venue	Goal	Height (m)	Distance (km)	Tents
26/27 Jan	Loteni	Redi Peak	3309	30	Yes
23/24 Feb	Cathedral	Cathedral Peak	3304	20	No
30/31 Mar	Sentinel car park	Mont-Aux-Sources	3282	20	Yes
25/26 May	Cathedral	Cleft peak	3277	34	Yes
29/30 Jun	Giant's Castle	Giant's Castle	3314	32	Yes
27/28 July	Monk's Cowl	Champagne Castle	3246	40	No
30/31 Aug	Bushman's Nek	Devil's Knuckles	3050	30	No
28/29 Sep	Monk's Cowl	Intunja	2408	30	No

25/26/27 Oct	Garden Castle	Rhino / Mashai / Walkers Peaks	3056/3309/3306	42	Yes
24/25 Nov	Sani Top	Thabana Ntlenyana	3482	24	No (passport required)
8/9 Dec	Monk's Cowl	Sterkhorn	2973	17	Yes

**Note: It is the prerogative of a hike leader to accept or reject members or other applicants from participating in his or her hike, after questioning the applicant on their fitness and experience. It is a privilege not a right to participate in a hike. Day hikers are requested to phone the leader beforehand to confirm their attendance and that the hike is still on schedule.**

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Here is an article on hiking boots by Dr John McGovern.

**HIKING BOOTS: how to choose the right boots for the job**

Important features to consider when selecting boots:

**Consider your options of: synthetic or leather, the degree of rigidity of the sole, the degree of waterproofing & the height of the ankle cuff.**

**Synthetic boots** tend to be lighter in weight than leather, but not as long lasting when used regularly over rough terrain.

**Leather** needs more post-hike care.

**Synthetic** boots tend to look more stylish.

Less seams in *leather* boots means better waterproofing.

**Warning: NEVER EVER EVER dry wet *leather* boots in front of a heater or in sunlight.**

**Sole rigidity:** Boots can be divided into 4 categories.

***Walking boots.***

These are lightweight, have flexible soles & are very comfortable when walking on paths or grass. On rough rocky surfaces the sole may flex excessively especially with a heavy load & results in foot pain & fatigue & possible stress fractures. Probably the best choice for day hikes.

***B1 boots (3 - 4 season)***

The soles are more rigid than walking boots but still flexible enough for hiking. Suitable for rough rocky surfaces & scrambling. OK for use in snow with C1 crampons (flexible). Probably the best choice for all-round hiking especially on overnight or extended load-carrying hikes.

***B2 boots (4 season)***

Precurved sole with reduced flexibility. Suitable for rocky areas & snow. C2 compatible crampons (hinged).

***B3 boots***

For ice climbers only. Flat, totally rigid sole. C3 crampon compatibility, (Very rigid)

The B type boots are usually only available in the more specialised climbing & hiking shops of which there is at least one of each in both Durban & Pmb.

In summary, the heavier the load & the rougher the terrain, the taller the ankle cuff & the firmer the sole should be.

Italian boot makers are generally recognised as being the most skillful, followed by the Germans.

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**Weekend at Mhlopeni Nature Reserve**  
**by**  
**Heidi Cox and Lisa Smith**

On the weekend of the 27th and 28th of October, Heidi Cox booked a new venue for a MBC weekend, Mhlopeni Nature Reserve near Muden. It's a home from home for Heidi and this little-known nature reserve has a rustic charm and beautiful walks not to be missed!

On Saturday morning, Lisa and Alan Smith arrived close behind Heidi and Chris, and went straight through to the camp to set up. The accommodation consists of a rustic hut set in the bush, which can accommodate 10 people and there are also camping options (see [www.mhlopeni.co.za](http://www.mhlopeni.co.za)). In the meantime, after dropping off the paraphernalia to set up camp, Heidi headed back to a spot with good cell phone reception to watch out for Marie von Barga who had decided (unintentionally) to take the scenic route through the Midlands via Mooi River. Marie looked rather relieved to have a familiar face guide her over the bumpy dirt road (in her "4X4" Polo) after her ordeal! However, she'll never live it down that she arrived after the Smiths!

Once settled, we made a brief stop in to say "hi" to the managers, Joy and Richard Alcock, and headed out for a walk from the camp up to the waterfall, and along the top of the cliffs opposite the farm house, above the Mhlopeni River. The terrain is fairly tough and thorny, but full of birds and interesting flora, with a plethora of aloes. Certainly worth a visit during flowering season, when the valley is aflame with orange, red and yellow. There is plenty of evidence by sight and sound of game activity, but they're not often posing for us to spot. However, we were lucky to see some impala in the valley below on our descent.

We decided that a minor walkabout was the order of the day on Saturday, as we wanted to go and watch the Sharks win the Currie Cup! On our return to camp, Richard had managed to sort out our wood (it was a bit soggy from the ongoing rain, and difficult to light) and get the donkey fired up, so it was showers all round before we bailed into Heidi and Chris' bakkie and wound our way to Ivala Lodge near Muden. Here we met their hand-reared young male kudu, who enjoyed a fuss from Marie's son, Ryan, before we moved on to the serious business of the game. Unfortunately in spite of us watching, a win apparently wasn't on the cards, so we muttered and returned to Mhlopeni. At least a couple of weeks later, I had the opportunity to poke Beast in the ribs whilst checking in at Cape Town Airport to remind him he'd best bring the cup back to Durban next year!

Just to be original, we set up for a braai on Saturday night. There was a tad too much cloud cover for the night walk, in spite of the full moon, so we lit the paraffin lamps and fire, chilled and headed off for an early night so we could get going at 7 for our walk the next day.

Andrew Alcock arrived in camp bright and early on Sunday morning to take us on a great trek to the top plains of the reserve where the zebras and oribi normally hang out. Unfortunately they were not to be seen on this day, but at least there was plenty of evidence of their existence. We did however spot a blue crane and many other birds, great and small, along the way, and wonderful views of the bushveld. We passed a good number of very active warthog holes, and if the rustle in the bushes were to be believed, said active warthog. The weather was kind, rain is rarely a worry when hiking at Mhlopeni (only that they could use more...), but the heat can be, luckily it was kind on both counts.

After a snack and refreshment, we all slowly gathered ourselves together and negotiated the dirt road back to civilisation. So it was, that after a mellow and relaxing weekend in the bush, that we returned refreshed to face our week in the city! We're hoping to organise a return trip during aloe flowering season next year (around July), so keep a look-out for this in the hiking fixtures later in the year.

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**Eden to Addo Corridor Initiative**  
**by**  
**Pam Osborn**

“How can you explain that you need to know that the trees are still there, and the hills and the sky?  
Everyone knows they are.

How can you say it is time your pulse responded to another rhythm, the rhythm of the day and the season instead of the hour and the minute?

No, you cannot explain. So you walk . . .” - Anonymous

Seventeen of us intrepid hikers have just completed the Eden to Addo annual pilgrimage, a distance far in excess of 450 kilometres in three weeks, traversing eight mountain ranges extending from the Outeniqua and including the Langkloof, Tsitsikamma, Suurmans, Kouga, Baviaanskloof, Groot Winterhoek and Klein Winterhoek Mountains in the Western and Eastern Cape. Our task – to contribute towards an Initiative that aims to link three Mega Reserves, the Garden Route National Park, Baviaanskloof Mega Reserve and the Addo Elephant National Park - by means of biodiverse tracts of private land, a Corridor, and thereby restoring some of the ancient paths for not only mammals but also plants, insects and birds. They, too, need to move as climate changes and have the opportunity to guard against in-breeding and extinction. Corridors are a proven mitigating factor against species loss.

It was no mean feat to walk in excess of 450 kilometres, it was gruelling at times, but we were enveloped by mossy forests, fynbos flowers, spekboom thickets, nama karoo grasslands and semi desert. We feasted on endless wide open spaces and wondered at strange succulants. Our passage was unique since nowhere else in the world will you walk this distance and pass through five distinct ecological communities or biomes. Our “bush-whacking” route (we seldom walked on 4x4 tracks and never on roads) included some of the most attractive coastal, forest and mountain scenery in the country, although it’s by no means pristine (except in the Kouga and Baviaanskloof Mountains). For centuries humankind has exploited – and damaged – nature’s bounty and today the region’s national and provincial parks protect the best of what’s left, including several enigmatic creatures. Bird life is prolific and we recorded over 250 species including the Knysna Turaco which we sighted on our first morning zipping through clearings in the Knysna forest as well as the normally elusive Narina Trogon. We heard and sighted the African Fish Eagle daily as well as the Blue Crane, Barn Owl, Spotted Eagle Owl and Fierynecked Nightjar. Leopards roam freely in this region and we saw evidence of this every day either with fresh tracks or scratch markings on the base of mature trees. We slept in tents using head torches, made wood fires with which to cook our food, warm river water in buckets (for our nightly FFF routine) and to keep us warm when we sat around the fire after supper. With an astronomer in our midst, we soon learned a great deal about our night sky. We also tracked nocturnal animals such as the Aardvark that claws open ant and termite nests and licks out insects. They sleep by day in one of several large, self-dug burrows which are often taken over by warthogs. We followed the rapid call “HU-hu, HU\_hu-hu, hu-hu of the male and the higher-pitched “Hoo” of the female Wood Owl when we were in evergreen and riverine forest and mature woodland. The eerie screech of the Barn Owl often led us to ruined buildings, large hollow trees and caves.

We experienced a night to remember when camping in the shadow of the Cock’s Comb (1759 metres) in the Groot Winterhoek Mountains. I have never heard, felt or seen a storm of this calibre. I wondered if the earth’s axis might be shifted so strong was the wind and forceful the rain. Of course, our tents collapsed upon us at 2am and we all sat huddled in a heap for a solid hour until it passed. Naturally, everything was wet and it was freezing cold.

But, worse than this experience were the ‘jumping cacti’ (alien vegetation, of course). If you didn’t watch your step carefully, these lifelike monsters grabbed at your legs, gathering what covering you might have and piercing your skin with their hairs and thorns. So, if you needed to exit your tent during the night, you put on your socks, boots and knee-high gaiters else you would be sure to be zapped. Either way, you were awake for hours and so was your tent partner.

It was a truly wonderful experience and I took over 1200 digital photos with my Canon. The flowers were amazing, particularly the many varieties of proteas, especially the King Protea, Protea



cynaroides – South Africa's national flower, the largest of the protea family and part of this floral kingdom – a major global biodiversity hotspot as well as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Eden to Addo – to hike, to serve – has been inscribed in the hearts and minds of all in our team. We have a dream that perhaps one day the secretive Garden of Eden elephant/s may once again connect with their kin in the Addo Elephant National Park. We have walked on paths where thousands of elephants once trod just 200 years ago. Man has destroyed large herds of not only elephants, but also buffalo, eland, zebra, the Cape lion and more in this special area and still continues to do so by slaughtering the leopard, jackal, black eagle and others.

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**Toprock Hike...review from the Ramblers Club**  
**by**  
**Tanya Hall**

Thirty-two enthusiastic hikers gathered at the fascinating and hospitable Toprock Crystal, Mineral & Fossil Museum Shop (See their website. Well worth a visit) delighted to have sunshine and blue skies. They didn't realise the lethal heat of 37 degrees would see some of them being "rescued" out of "The Ranch" by a very helpful and kind "local", Ken, who had been photographing a huge python and happened to be passing by. Unfortunately this was not witnessed by us as it would have added to our Out Of Africa adventure!

Mudslides, clambering and groping our way in and out of the mossy, overgrown yet picturesque, ravine along with bush-wacking to find/make a path through part of the Conservancy which finally brought us out of the lush undergrowth was all part of the fun. (Not sure if everyone would agree!) We then upped the pace through a private property with aviaries, onto the gravel road and into The Ranch. Here we hiked an 11km round trip to our gorgeous viewpoint and lunch spot overlooking the Msunduzi River and Table Mountain. Pity only some of us had brief sightings of Impala and Nyala.

Once we got back to the road drivers were arranged to shuttle hikers back to Toprock in the blistering heat to enjoy their much needed beverages!

Thanks to all the hikers for their support of the Lower Mpishini Conservancy and their patience/understanding re our loss of the trail in places. This was truly a Ramblers and Mountain Backpackers combined hike with a great vibe and crowd. I trust nobody was too badly bruised, stiff or scratched from this challenging 15,5kms.

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**African Fish Eagle Trail – Umgeni River, Durban Sun 25 November 2012**  
**by**  
**Heidi Cox**

In an attempt to expand our selection of day walks within our city limits, Heidi and Chris Cox put the African Fish Eagle Trail on the 2012 last quarter's MBC fixture list.

As this was unexplored territory for MBC, we decided to do a recce on our mountain bikes on the Saturday morning to check it out, a good move, as it resulted in the exclusion of the southern part of the trail on this excursion. We also discovered that the SPCA is closed on Sundays, so my plan to stop there for coffee en route was temporarily scuppered – but with prior arrangement for future walks, this can be an option.

After threats of extreme weather sweeping through the area that were due to put paid to our plans, Sunday dawned with strong winds, overcast - but no wet stuff - so we grabbed out bags and boots and shot off to the Umgeni estuary before the weather gods noticed their oversight. We met up with

our only taker, Cheryl Sol, at the windswept Green Hub where Sipiwe explained the features of the building and their involvement in various environmental projects in the Green Corridor along the Umgeni River.

Then we got down to business and set off under the guidance of Thami. Our first stop was the Beachwood Mangroves, on the north bank of the Umgeni estuary, where Thami explained the differences between the red, white and black mangrove trees, their root systems and the various flora and fauna that live amongst them. Unfortunately most fauna was having a lie-in with Milo and DVDs thanks to the weather, but a few red crabs crept out to observe these visitors.

The balance of the walk was along the north bank of the Umgeni River, there was quite a lot of evidence of undesirable human activity, which was regrettable, but one mustn't detract from the fact that we were witness to a wonderful range of birdlife, including sea birds galore, Pelicans, Grey Herons, many busy Red Bishops in the reeds, a vocal Burchel's Coucal, Pied Kingfisher, many of the usual suspects, the special treat of Osprey atop a Norfolk pine above the Windsor Park golf course, as well as a majestic African Fish Eagle and juvenile nearer the N2 bridge.

We had the pleasure of meeting a very enthusiastic team who are keen but need support to reclaim this very special area we are lucky enough to have on our doorstep. The more positive, responsible people use and appreciate this area, as well as others around our city, the better it will become. This trail will definitely be offered by us on future fixture lists, they have also reduced the charge, so come along and see what you think.

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## HambaNathi

### “Walk with us” Guided Wild Coast Hikes

HambaNathi offers guided hikes along the Wild coast, South Africa’s most beautiful, wildest and most exciting stretch of coast. Camp on unspoilt beaches, swim in magical rock pools, see an abundance of marine and coastal life. All hikes are fully catered. Transport and last night’s accommodation in Mbotyi are arranged. Visit our Website at <http://www.wildcoasthikes.co.za> or phone 031 202 9994.

### Southern Secrets Hiking and Backpacking

Discover some of the exquisite secrets of the Drakensberg Mountains and Lesotho, including visits to rock art sites, with a fully qualified and registered Mountain Guide (KZN0904) and Nature Guide (KZN1025). Single or multi-day trips.

Contact Philip or Christeen Grant 033 9971817 cell 0824179163/2 email [pgrant@yebo.co.za](mailto:pgrant@yebo.co.za) or visit [www.southernsecrets.co.za](http://www.southernsecrets.co.za)

### Berg Free Adventures

David Sclanders runs single and multi day guided trips into the Berg, visiting rock-art sites, sleeping in tents, caves and mountain huts. He is a member of the South African Mountain Guide Association registered as a guide with the Department of Tourism, Registration Number KZN0050. He can be contacted on telephone or fax **033 239 5013**, Cell **082 443 4287** or visit [www.bergfree.co.za](http://www.bergfree.co.za).

## NAVIGATION TRAINING WORKBOOK

**NAVIGATION Anyplace Wild – by Andrew Friedemann** This very practical workbook has tasks to complete in it, & is aimed at anyone who travels in the outdoors and needs to navigate. Although written primarily for walkers, it will work for anyone including horse riding, cycling, military teams etc. It has been fully revised and updated to be applicable anywhere in the world, so no matter where you are it will work for you.

The book is 160 pages in full colour with great pictures from all around the world where we have travelled, our guided trips and training courses – making it a great coffee table book too. It comes with a pull out map on which most of the tasks are completed and the website will have additional free tools available for download and in the near future additional tasks and maps for you to continue practicing skills and gaining knowledge once you have finished the book. Chapter 1 is downloadable for free from the website (*Amb*)

There have been a number of variations of the book over the years with each new one being tweaked after use on courses and from feedback received from people who have used it. Reviews of the book can be seen at [www.navigationskills.com](http://www.navigationskills.com) For all South African orders, please contact Mammoth Outdoor in Cape Town 086 100 0370 or [hello@mammothoutdoor.co.za](mailto:hello@mammothoutdoor.co.za)

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### Discounts For Members

**CAPE UNION MART** offers members 5% discount - **membership cards must be produced.**

**OUTDOOR WAREHOUSE** offers 5% discount when presented with a **valid membership card.**

## BACKPACKING EQUIPMENT

In the past some members have not hiked because they did not have the necessary equipment, particularly winter gear. Our club has a full range of backpacking items, making it unique in KwaZulu-Natal. In addition to the backpacks and tents, there are sleeping bags, rain gear and gas stoves. Comfortable, warm jackets are for hire on club trips by MEMBERS only.

### Hiring Fees

Deposit	Item	Daily Fee
R100	Tent	R20
R100	Backpack	R20
R50	Sleeping Bag + Liner	R10
R50	Gas Stove	R10
R50	Jacket	R10
R25	Mattress	R5
R25	Groundsheet	R5
R25	Poncho	R5

### Example

For a weekend hike, to hire one backpack you will need to put down a R100 cash deposit. You will be charged R20 per day, so the hiring fee will be R40 provided you return the backpack by the end of the Wednesday following the hike. If you return the backpack on the Thursday you will be charged an additional R20. You will therefore be charged a total of R60, which will be taken from the deposit. The balance of R40 will be refunded to you in cash.

All arrangements regarding the hiring of Club equipment are to be made with **Piet Smit (Tel. 031-2662881)** and the items must be collected from / returned to him at **4 Bohmer Place (off Knoll Road, off Blair Atholl Road, Westville)**.

Items must be checked (i.e. count pegs, poles etc.) and cleaned (i.e. wash inner sheet of sleeping bag). Tents, sleeping bags etc. are to be hung out and shaken before returning. If it has rained on the weekend, hang items out to dry as soon as possible after your hike.

## SOCIAL CALENDAR – PLEASE NOTE THE VENUE

### Directions to Sherwood Bowling Club - 860 Jan Smuts Highway

**From Durban** - Take N3 out towards PMB, after Tollgate take the Sherwood off-ramp and turn right under the freeway in to Jan Smuts Highway, up the hill, past Jungle Nursery on the right, turn right under the pedestrian bridge into Tropical Nursery parking, follow the road past trees to the back of the nursery.

**From Westville** - take the M13 towards Durban, past Westwood Shopping centre, through 45<sup>th</sup> Cutting traffic lights, down Jan Smuts Highway, turn left under the pedestrian bridge (in front of Naked Ladies) in to Tropical Nursery parking, follow the road past trees to the back of nursery.

**From PMB**, from Hillcrest take the N3 past the Pavilion and four-level interchange, take the Sherwood glide-off, keep left in to Jan Smuts Highway, past Jungle Nursery on right, turn right under pedestrian bridge in to the parking of Tropical Nursery, follow road to the back of Tropical Nursery.

<b>SOCIAL CALENDAR</b>	
<b>MBC Socials take place every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month at the Sherwood Bowling Club, 7:30 for 8:00pm Wors rolls or Hot Dogs are sold at the venue for R15 each.</b>	
<b>DATE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
24 Jan	<b>Paul Fey</b>
14 Feb	<b>Eddie von Barga</b> n tells us about his dramatic <b>Tsitsikamma Trail Adventure</b> , including a mountain rescue due to a broken leg and an urgent late trip to a hospital to treat an unexpected allergy.
28 Feb	<b>Christine Bro</b> : Ethiopia presentation
14 Mar	<b>Karen Miller</b> : A summer roadtrip from Durban to Luderitz in Namibia. Passing through Kimberley and the quaint towns of the Northern Cape, into the Green Kalahari, through the abandoned diamond towns to blustery, and hellishly-scenic Luderitz, and back home via the Fish River Canyon.
28 Mar	No presentation. Too close to the long weekend.