NATURSES VALLEY NEWS

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Editors: Paul and Leana Erens, Doug Blaine, James Martin

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1. MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORS

Our mid-year Newsletter provides an update on the activities of the NVRA and other members of the community in their efforts to maintain Nature's Valley as a special place. It is hoped that those who are not able to visit the Valley regularly, will gain a meaningful insight into the current state of environmental and Municipal issues.

Following the municipal elections in August last year there have been a few upheavals in the Bitou Municipality. The ANC and DA obtained seven council seats each with a single seat won by the AUF who effectively became kingmaker. The latter candidate initially sided with the ANC but after about six months became discontented with the way things were going so he and his party switched their support to the DA who now control the Council.

December, Easter and July Holidays

As usual the Valley filled up with visitors and owners over the December and Easter periods and even in July. The weather at Easter and in July was good but cool. Once more the NV Trust ran holiday programs for our young visitors in December and at Easter. The programs, which raises environmental awareness in an entertaining and activity-intense way were well-attended. Interestingly, more and more people appear to be visiting Natures Valley in July with a lot of running, cycling and hiking in the cooler weather.

Again, our thanks to The Nature’s Valley Trust, ADT, SANParks, Bitou Municipality and workers from nearby communities throughout the year who helped achieve relatively trouble-free holiday periods.

2. VALLEY PEOPLE

In Memoriam

We regretfully have to announce the passing away of Diana Woode early in the year. Our sympathy to her husband Barry, his daughter Shelley and grandchildren.

Dr Rene Le Roex, a past Chairman of the NVRA passed away last month. This was preceded by the death of his wife, Joyce, in May. Sympathy also to his family.

Mrs. Janette Braatvedt passed away in June 2016. Our sympathy to her husband Ian.

As announced last year memorial benches can no longer be installed on the beach dunes but can be placed in either the Phyl Martin Park, the Fynbos Reserve or the lagoon edge, please contact the NVRA for guidance on the process.

Newcomers and Permanent Residents

We welcome new owners and permanent residents to the Valley. New owners are Koba Bellingan and her daughter Andrea Lubbe, erf 142, Dup and Reana Venter, erf 374, Paul Le Roux, erf 186, Rual and Marieke Bornman, erf 187, Deon and Monica Neethling, erf 307, Justin and Tanya Mudge, erf 290, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Schuiling, erf 424, Johan and Christa Hattingh, erf 449, Peter Streicher, erf 12, and Shaun and Brenda Reed, erf 81.

Charles and Anne Breen became permanent residents last September until completion of their Knysna residence, but they intend to divide their time between there and the Valley. Julian and Zirkia Muller and Pieter and Rentia Rademan have also become permanent residents.

Departures of Permanent Residents.

The following residents have left the Valley:

Roger and Maaike Murphy, Yvonne Bath, Ina Watt, Irmgard Falletisch and Iris Shires.

We wish them well in the new places they've moved to and a happy future.

This list may not be complete so we apologize to anyone who may have been overlooked. newcomers, please visit the NVRA and NVT offices to introduce yourselves, and take advantage of the wealth of information these offices can provide. Everything you need to know about living in the Valley is there: baboon and dog management, environment and conservation, hiking trails, waste management, sewage services, Whatsapp groups, including NV Security, Baboon Watch and Social and essential NVRA, NVT and Bitou contact details. We also need to capture your full details for our database to ensure that you are kept up to date on all ratepayer issues.
Social
The NV offers a wide variety of activities that residents can take part in. The NVRA office can provide the names of the various co-coordinators if you would like to participate. Visitors are welcome to join most of these activities on a temporary basis. They include bird-watching, bible-study, bridge, art classes and a stretch group.
The NG Church Hall remains the venue for most of the social functions in the Valley, and we are grateful for the generous use of this facility. Events such as the NVRA AGM, exercise classes, art exhibitions, lectures on various subjects and the annual permanent residents function and of course church services usually take place here.

An informal meeting followed by a braai was held for permanent residents at the hall on 15 June 2017. Items briefly discussed amongst others were the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), the new Superintendent, report back from the new ward representative Francois Kruger, the Fidelity-ADT agreement, new proposed dog rules soon to be introduced by Bitou, alien vegetation, IDP budgets for water and sewage and progress with speedhumps. Geoff Mcilleron gave some meaningful comments on the potential of fires occurring in around Natures Valley and precautions which need to be taken. Kellyn Whitehead of the NV Trust closed with a short resume on their activities.

3. ADMIN & FINANCES
We have had a new office manager, Annamarie Kovacik, since July last year, who can help you with Valley information in general. Office hours are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 to 12:00 with longer hours during the Easter and December holidays.
We are pleased to report that in the financial year to 30 June 2017, approximately 50% of all property owners contributed to the NVRA. We sincerely thank those who support us as the more who do the better we can do our job. If you have not yet contributed any further contributions would be most welcome. We also thank those who continue to make special contributions toward legal expenses which go toward maintaining the integrity of the Nature’s Valley urban environment.
The audited financial statements for 2016/17 financial year ending 30 June, will be presented at the AGM in December. As proposed and accepted at the AGM in Dec 2016, the suggested contribution for the 2017/18 Financial Year is R850 but, as always, any amount is welcome as it indicates your support for the NVRA. Please note that the new financial year starts on the 1 July 2017, and therefore 2017/18 contributions are now due.
Your contribution will be greatly appreciated and the NVRA banking details are as follows: NVRA, Standard Bank, Plettenberg Bay, Branch 05 07 14 Acc. No: 082 60 9217
When making a payment please use your name and Erf no as reference.

4. MUNICIPAL MATTERS
General
The NVRA’s relationship with the municipality has not been as good as the previous year due to the political upheavals although contact with people on the ground is still excellent especially with the new Superintendent in place. One good thing which has changed since the election is that the municipality has reverted to a system whereby ward representatives are appointed for each area with the result that we now have Francois Kruger as Ward Representative for Natures Valley, who has established a good working relationship with our Ward Councillor, Jessica Kamkam, who is now also Deputy Mayor of Bitou. As a community, we should see benefits arising from this closer relationship over the next few years.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
The MOU between the NVRA and the Bitou Municipality has yet to be signed, the delay being caused by the recent political changes and absence of a Municipal manager for a considerable period after the elections. The previous council viewed this arrangement as an opportunity to ensure better service delivery, while cutting the cost of manpower travelling to and from Plett to provide such service. We hope that with the re-instated DP council this will not have changed. It is a very high priority for us to close this important agreement. However, despite all the upheavals, a new Superintendent for Natures Valley and Covie, Mr Marco Barnardo, was appointed. A superintendent post is considerably higher and is more hands-on than the previous CLO post which it replaced. Although the two assistant posts which were to have been created under him are still pending he has had two temporary assistants working under him for the past year and these three people have done sterling work tidying up the Valley in general, cleaning drainage
channels and so on. We are pleased that the appointment of a Superintendent which is a critical first phase of the planned MOU has produced meaningful results and we are grateful to Marco and his team for their commitment.

On the left the new Superintendent, Marco Barnardo, with his assistants Marvin(left) and Michael(right)

Municipal IDP Budget
The Bitou IDP (Integrated Development Plan) Budget for the 2017/18 financial year was approved recently and allocations in the budget for NV are as follows:

**Water Reservoir and Pipeline upgrade:**
- 2017/18 – R 1 000 000;
- 2018/19 – R 2 000 000;
- 2019/20 – R 5 000 000

**New sewage system:**
- 2017/18 – R 1 000 000;
- 2018/19 – R 3 000 000;
- 2019/20 – R 5 000 000

The budgets show a considerable increase over last year's allocations for these items.

Sewage
The weather over the past 6 months has been extremely dry and again there have been no significant problems with sewage.

All municipal rates will be increased from 1 July 2017, including the "Honeysucker" service. The new rates (vat incl.) for the "Honeysucker" service will be:

- Per load or part thereof:
  - R 493.62 during normal working hours: Mon to Thurs, 07h30 – 16h30 and Fri 07h30 – 13h30
  - R 741.00 outside of normal working hours: Friday after 13h30 and Saturday
  - R 987.24 on Sundays and public holidays.

Payments must be made prior to booking the service.

Banking details for EFT's:
Name: Bitou Municipality; Bank: Nedbank; Account No: 108 9913 974; Branch Code: 198765

Please check your tanks regularly to ensure that you have sufficient time to schedule removals during normal working hours and avoid the extra costs. Three days lead time should be allowed for.

Future Developments on Sewage
The IDP Budget allocation for the sewage works would initially involve the review and updating of the EIA which was carried out some 8 years ago. The full allocation for three consecutive years is given above. The Municipality has indicated that the long-term approach to sewage management would focus on a solution to the problem areas in Lagoon Drive and Forest Drive only. This is along the lines of the previously recommended solution, which has been sitting on the shelf for many years. However, with new technologies being developed, the recommendations arising from the updated EIA could be different.

The Engineers commenced work on the revised EIA in August last year. No document has been issued for comment as yet.

The agreement in place with the municipality to allow the installation or retention of septic tanks rather than converting to conservancy tanks is being applied successfully, although a by-law is still to be put in place to permit this option. The NVRA will continue to liaise with the Municipality to formalise the process. In terms of this agreement owners should please to note that the plan approval process for any building plan submitted for a property where there is an existing septic tank system, or where the installation of a new septic tank is proposed, requires that a percolation test be conducted to establish whether the site is suited to a septic tank and soak-away. The NVRA office can supply you with contact numbers of two certified companies who can carry out percolation tests and we are trying
to identify at least one more. This process, while helping to prevent the proliferation of conservancy tanks, is also helping to weed out existing septic tanks in areas where they don’t function satisfactorily and potentially result in pollution problems. The long-term outcome will be a sustainable combination of the two systems. The NVRA encourages the installation of septic tanks in the sandy areas as it means less dependency on the "Honeysucker" service. A properly installed septic tank will reduce the owner's costs in the long term, particularly in homes which are occupied for extended periods. Should any owner have queries or require more information in this respect, please contact the NVRA office.

**Electrical**
Currently there is no longer major infrastructural work other than the replacement of one transformer mini-sub which, according to the Bitou Electrical Engineer, is not correctly equipped to function as part of the recently completed ring-main system. However, voltage fluctuations continue to affect some homeowners, but it seems that these are a result of problems on the high voltage incoming line (Eskom) rather than the low voltage reticulation within the Valley which is the Municipality’s responsibility. Enquiries are being made to identify and resolve this annoying issue. This year there was one power shut due to stolen power lines and at least two as a result of fire-damage to equipment. We are grateful to Eskom for their rapid response in repairing the damage.

**Water supply**
The preliminary EIA report relating to the installation of a new reservoir was issued for comment by interested and affected parties earlier this year. The report sets out options considered and the recommendations arising from the study. Obviously, the installation of a new and larger reservoir and the installation of new pipelines will have a significant impact on the immediate environment. The NVRA and NVT together with other stake holders submitted comments. A revised version has since been issued and comments are due by 28 July. From NV’s point of view the upgrade is essential. The most suitable option from an environmental point of view is unlikely to be the most cost-effective option and this could obviously result in some hold-ups in the process. As stated above a total of R 8 million has been allocated to the project.

As a result of the severe drought frequent blocking of the estuary mouth occurred resulting in very high-water levels. With the inflow of seawater into the estuary at high tide the fresh water supply to the reservoir was contaminated with seawater. A similar occurrence last took place about 15 years ago.
We want to propose that a weir about half to one meter above the present level of the pond from which water is drawn be constructed at the same time as the larger reservoir. Unfortunately, this will require an additional EIS before this can happen.

**Roads**
Repairs to potholes and edges have been done satisfactorily over the past year as well as a complete resurfacing of Lagoon Drive. The NVRA will continue to motivate for the construction of continuous concrete road edging as this is the only long-term solution to prevent the deterioration of road edges caused by cars passing.
Unfortunately, the unusually high lagoon water levels, which persisted for some time recently have resulted in significant damage to the brick-paved section of road in front of the syndicate. Fortunately, Marco and his assistants were quick in repairing this damage.
With the considerable amount of building work being done in the Valley, large construction vehicles and delivery trucks are common and speeding is of concern. The NVRA has made a formal submission to the Municipality for ten additional speed bumps, as well as the repair of the existing humps. The new humps are considered a capital expenditure item and have once more not been included in the current budget. In order to assist with speeding up the process two owners have generously offered to contribute R 45 000 toward speed humps and we are currently involved in negotiations with contractors and suppliers to clearly establish the cost to bearing in mind they must conform to Bitou Municipality’s specifications regarding design and their position. Any further contributions to this project would be much appreciated.

**Storm water**
The storm water system was given some much-needed maintenance last year and this year. Also, Marco and his assistants have done a thorough job of cleaning the various drain grates and open water channels but the system has
not been tested as there has been little or no heavy rain since the task was initiated. However, the occurrence of localized flooding is unlikely to have been totally prevented as there are low lying areas which drain very slowly, particularly if the lagoon level is high.

**Bitou Waste Management and NV Waste Transfer Site (WTS)**

As mentioned last year Bitou’s proposal to establish six drop-off and waste processing sites has seen some progress in that the relevant licences have been granted for three of the sites. These sites are at Kurland, Old Nick (in Plett) and at the Reservoir site (Robberg Rd). Bitou’s budget does not allow them to construct all three sites in one year so they have decided to develop the Old Nick site first, followed by the Kurland site in 2018/19 financial year. The Kurland site, which will be very convenient for NV owners, will be specifically for garden waste.

All municipalities in the Eden District, which includes Bitou, Knysna, George, Mossel Bay and Oudtshoorn, are faced with an immediate crisis as the current landfill site at PetroSA in Mossel Bay was partially closed from the end of last year. The site remains in operation for domestic waste only, until a new Regional facility alongside PetroSA can be established. It is hoped that the new site will be up and running by mid-2018.

The NV WTS is receiving improved routine attention from the municipality and the new Superintendent and his two assistants. For the first time in many years we have been able to keep the WTS perfectly clean over the holiday periods in December and Easter. The improved maintenance and general cleanliness of the site has resulted in less illegal and indiscriminate dumping, which has been gratifying. However, there are, unfortunately, still property owners and gardening contractors in NV who ignore the “No Dumping” signs at the WTS and others who leave bags of household waste in the street on departure. These bags will always be ripped apart by baboons, seagulls and crows long before they get collected so, we once more appeal to owners and tenants to please place their garbage bags inside the building at the WTS before leaving.

The “baboon-proof” boxes or cages outside some residences are a problem as many are not truly baboon-proof because baboons as well as birds manage to damage plastic bags inside them pulling the contents through the gaps and leaving a mess in the street. Baboons have even managed to open a few of these containers. The preferred method of putting out rubbish is in wheelie bins so please ask the Superintendent for a bin if you don’t yet have one. These bins should also be protected with a suitable catch or bungee-cord when placed in the street on collection days which are Fridays out of season and also Tuesdays over the December holiday period.

**Recycling**

The recycling facilities at the WTS are being well-utilized and the bins are emptied on a routine basis. Unfortunately, there are still people who are too lazy to place recyclables in the bins and prefer to dump cardboard boxes and the like alongside them making extra work for Marco and his team so we once more appeal for your cooperation in this regard.

The new waste disposal facility west of Kwanokathula on the N2 now accepts any household garbage and recyclables including old equipment such as old surfboards, boats, washing machines, fridges and computers.

**Garden Waste**

There are at least two garden service contractors who, for a small fee, will either chip your offcuts or remove the chips as well as other organic material to the compost farm on the N2. However, this excludes sword-fern and a few other non-destructible types of vegetation which must be taken to the Plett dump. For contact numbers please ask at the NVRA office.

**New Dog Rules**

The Bitou Municipality took a decision to change the existing dog by-laws to accommodate the Blue Flag Beaches, people who want to walk their dogs on beaches with or without leashes and people who prefer beaches where no dogs are permitted. Mark Brown of the NV Trust was asked to propose solutions for Plettenberg bay, Keurboomstrand and Natures Valley. A scheme for Natures valley was proposed and later modified at the request of the NVRA which Mark then submitted to the Council. The final decision by Bitou will be announced before the end of the year and we will publish the new rules in our December Newsletter.
5. BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Building Activities
There has been considerable building activity over the past 6 months as well as sales of a number of properties, some of which had been on the market for a while. This indicates a willingness to invest in NV as a family holiday destination and, in many instances, an attractive option for retirement. We hope that the confidence shown by existing home owners and new investors alike is influenced by the obvious result of the efforts of organizations such as the NVRA and the NVT to maintain the integrity, security and general appeal of NV.

Eight building plans all for alterations were submitted for scrutiny by the NVRA in the 12-month period from July 2016 to end June 2017. About six erven still have building projects in progress.

Building Contractor Etiquette
As mentioned last year there is a tendency of certain contractors to spread their activities outside the property on which they are working and even onto the pavements of adjoining properties. This issue will be taken further to ensure that controls relating to building activities are more strictly applied in the future and the superintendent of NV has been asked to assist in ensuring that the by-laws are adhered to.

NV Local Spatial Development Framework (NV LSDF)
As reported in the Dec 2016 Chairman’s Report there has been progress towards finalizing this important document. The town planning official at Bitou Municipality reviewed the majority of comments but unfortunately missed one or two important inputs which require further careful consideration. The finalization of the NV LSDF was then put on hold while the Bitou SDF was updated earlier this year. A recent discussion with Town Planning indicates that staff shortages are now delaying progress. However, a commitment has been made to ensuring that the NV LSDF will be finalized and approved by Council to form part of the Bitou SDF which gets reviewed and adjusted during the 2019 Financial Year. All we can do is keep the pressure on to get this process completed and assist in moving it forward, where we can.

Erf 130 Legal Proceedings
The revised NVRA Settlement Agreement proposals were submitted to the respondents in May 2017. A response was received from the legal representative for the owners of Erf 130 later the same month. This document is being reviewed by the NVRA Legal team. Responses to the NVRA’s latest Settlement is still awaited from Bitou’s legal representatives and the Western Cape Government representatives.

An appeal to all owners for financial assistance with our legal costs was sent out in May 2017. A gratifying response was received and we thank those who have made a special contribution to assist in achieving success with this vitally important application.

6. SAFETY AND SECURITY

General
We are pleased to advise that, except for some relatively minor incidents of opportunistic crime, NV has remained free of serious incidents over the past 12 months. There have been numerous cases of more serious break-ins and assaults in adjoining communities, which are a constant reminder that we need to avoid becoming an easy target. We believe that ADT’s presence 24/7 is an effective deterrent to all but well-organized criminals.

Fidelity-ADT Service
ADT was taken over by Fidelity recently and is now known as Fidelity-ADT.
In the past year a Fidelity-ADT hut was erected at the entrance to Natures Valley and arrangements have been finalised with Bitou Municipality to provide power to the hut. When the hut has been electrified it will become the centre of operations for ADT in NV and the caravan will be removed from Phyl Martin Park.

We are also pleased to confirm that a formal Service Level Agreement has been signed with Fidelity-ADT in which their agreed duties and procedures for NV are clearly spelled out. The wording of the agreement can be seen on our website.
**Erf Numbers**

Once again, we appeal to owners to make their erf number clearly visible outside their properties to save valuable time in the event of an emergency.

**Baboons (By Brittany Arendse, NVT)**

The Whatsapp system continues to prove it's worth in advising residents of the presence of baboons and is providing a meaningful source of data for the statistics kept by NVT. There are still a surprising number of house invasions and successful invasions are, likely, what keep the baboons interested in visiting the Valley so regularly.

The statistics the NVT have gathered since 2015 are graphically displayed below, indicating baboon alerts from residents as well as home invasions. The move from the SMS system to the Whatsapp group has improved reporting rates quite significantly with a much higher but consistent reporting in 2016, ranging between 20 and 50 instances per month, compared to a maximum of 35 baboon alerts per month in 2015. The difference between these years are most probably due to the system rather than actual increase in baboon activity in the Valley.

We can see peaks of invasions during holiday periods (2016-2017), indicating a need to educate non-permanent residents on safe baboon practice to ensure they enjoy their stay here as well as reduce the long-term impact this has on the behaviour of the troop. Continued successful invasions cause a learnt behaviour of associating homes with easy, free food.

The NVT and NVRA are currently working more closely with rental agencies to improve signage that will hopefully educate tenants regarding the threat of baboons and responsible waste management, which is another factor attracting baboons to the Valley, an aspect that can very easily be mitigated. Notwithstanding the fact that there has been a happy reduction in bin-related baboon reports we encourage all owners to adopt baboon proofing for their waste bins or containers.

![Figure 1: Baboon activity](image1.png) ![Figure 2: House Invasions](image2.png)

**Figure 1:** Baboon activity. Figures reported from 2015 to mid-2017

**Figure 2:** House Invasions

(∗) Change from the SMS group to the Whatsapp group mid-November 2015.

Owners are again asked to stop putting out fruit for birds, as this definitely encourages baboons. Seeds also attract baboons but a successful baboon-proof method has been developed for seeds. The NVT can provide information on the simple procedure that should be followed in this respect.
7. ENVIRONMENT

Urban Conservancy (UC)
The Urban Conservancy (previously the NVRA Open Spaces Committee) continues to function under the Chairmanship of Mark Brown (NVT) and is supported financially by the NVRA and through plant sales from the nursery. The main focus of the UC is to maintain the Phyl Martin Park and other open spaces (Fynbos Reserve, The Dell and Padda Puddle. Unfortunately, the driving force behind our alien species eradication campaign, Maaike Murphy, has left the Valley. However, we plan to keep this process going and are planning a new colour brochure on alien species, their eradication and replacement with suitable indigenous plants or trees. Maaike's original brochure on this subject will serve as a useful starting point. We have asked Charles Breen, who owns a property in St Andrews street and is a Botanist and Environmentalist, to assist in bringing out this brochure.

We are still pleased to note that owners are slowly taking down alien trees such as Blackwoods, Flowering Gums, Oaks, Eugenias, Pines and others. These trees were largely planted in the early years of the township when there was little in the way of trees to provide shade or privacy. However, as the Valley has reverted from farmland to indigenous coastal forest, these trees are no longer necessary or desirable.

We once more would like to thank Danie and Engela Muller for their tireless efforts in maintaining the PMP nursery. It was decided at a UC meeting earlier this year that the Superintendent, Marco Barnardo would take over responsibility for maintenance of the PMP. Riaan Roman and Junold Swartz continue to play an invaluable role in assisting to maintain the PMP and help run the nursery. With Marco in place they now report to him and receive instructions from him in the maintenance of the PMP.

We appeal to any residents or potential residents who are interested in becoming actively involved in the Urban Conservancy and especially the PMP to contact the NVRA or NVT office.

Fires
Following the breakout of devastating fires in Knysna and Plettenberg Bay a Fire Sub-committee was formed under the leadership of Dave Owen with Mark Brown, Marco and Geoff Mcilleron as members and at their first meeting it was decided to place this group under the UC mantle. The objective of this committee is to liaise with Bitou and SANParks on emergency planning procedures for NV as well any active steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of fire in NV.

Contractual National Park (CNP)
A meeting with SANParks was held in October 2016, and as a result several issues were resolved.

The lagoon road received some additional aggregate supplied by SANParks to file in pot holes. The road has been graded and is in a better condition than usual mainly due to the drought. There have been some challenges with the opening of the mouth due to drought causing a weak flow of water coming from the Grootrivier.

The Salt River trail remains closed and we still await the outcome of a technical report which was supposedly undertaken by SANParks. The way forward will be raised at the next CNP meeting.

So far there has been no CNP meeting this year due to Victor Cunningham, Section Ranger for the Tsitsikamma National Park, being away and on sick leave for quite a while. However, a meeting is planned for the end of July upon his return to work. We are certainly hoping that many of the issues which have been on hold for some time will now receive attention. Items of concern are the ongoing grading and upgrading of the lagoon approach road (an annual issue) and repairs and maintenance of the public toilet facilities. We are still concerned that the combination of financial constraints and unwillingness to "make a plan" makes even the smallest of tasks seem impossible at the moment. After last year’s October meeting the canoe railings were extended as promised.

An ongoing issue which has been taken up with SANParks is the lack of adequate policing of illegal activities in the National Park areas adjoining NV, particularly dogs in the dunes, across the river mouth and in the forest on the Salt River route. As can be expected, the staffing levels are inadequate to patrol the area at all times and it must be noted that, when called to attend to such issues, the rangers do respond quickly.

The Passes
Repairs to the east and west of the Grootrivier pass were completed at the end of March so that visitors can approach Natures valley from either direction once more. However, since these repairs were completed there have been some
further minor subsidences on both the eastern and western passes which have been brought to the attention of the Western Cape Roads department.

Although Mr Donald Grant, Minister for Public works in the Western Cape, approached his counterpart in the Eastern Cape regarding the possibility of repairs to the Eastern Section of the Blauwkrantz Pass there have as yet been no allocation of funds by them to this end. It is a great pity that this pass has been out of use for ten years as it was always a major tourist attraction to tourists with its beautiful natural forest and lush vegetation.

Rainfall

Unfortunately, very low rainfall over the past few months has led to the forest looking extremely dry. The fynbos on the plateau is even drier and poses a serious fire hazard. The winter had not seriously started at the end of June with beautiful daytime weather. However, what is required is some rain. The rainfall figures for the past 18 months and average for a number of years were provided by Abri Du Toit* at Erf 185 St Georges St.

From these can be seen that there is a marked decrease in rainfall figures over the past two years which is a matter of serious concern. We hope that good rains will follow in the second half of the year.

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We are grateful for rainfall records provided by Yvonne Bath, who has left the Valley, for many years and are thankful to Abri DuToit who keeps dedicated recordings and has agreed to provide these figures in future.

We do long for weather such as that experienced in July 2010 as illustrated by this picture taken from Beach Entrance No.5 toward Formosa Peak covered in snow. (At the time of going to press, Formosa Peak is once again covered in snow and the Valley received about 20mm of rain thanks to a cold front which brought relief over the weekend of 15th-16th of July.)

8. NVRA WEBSITE(www.nvra.co.za)

The NVRA website continues to be updated with important information and documents and we hope that, in time, the site becomes a useful reference archive for future generations as well as a current source of valuable information for owners and visitors alike. The following is list of documentation posted to the site over the past 12 months.

- Conservancy Tank Rates 2017/18 (with effect from 01 July 2017)
- NVRA Chairman’s Report 2016
- The Fidelity-ADT Contract wording
- A list of owners who have contributed to the NVRA

Please take the time to visit the site. If you have any questions about the Valley or the activities of the NVRA you should find your answers there.
9. GENERAL

The NSRI has again issued an advisory on increased shark sightings between Mossel Bay and Nature's Valley. This increase is part of the normal behaviour of sharks at this time of the year. However, it appears to be an increase in their numbers. If it is your intention to swim in the sea, please read the safety guidelines about sharks that are provided by the NSRI on www.searescue.org.za. You are very unlikely to encounter a shark, but if you were in NV for the July holidays you would have seen a few of our forest friends such as bushbuck, baboons and bushpigs and Knysna Turacos (Loeries) which are very regularly seen in the streets and gardens of the Valley.

THANKS

Your time spent reading this newsletter and the support of the NVRA by many of the property owners is much appreciated. Your support by making an annual contribution helps to run the office as well as provide leverage in getting our fair share from the Bitou Municipality.

Kindly circulate this newsletter to family members who may not be on our mailing list so that as many people as possible are kept up to date with news affecting Nature's Valley.

Please also keep us informed of any changes to your personal particulars and contact details.