



Mountain Club of South Africa KwaZulu-Natal Section

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NEWSLETTER

July/Aug/Sept 2010

Quote: 'No fear dwells there, but lasting peace sublime,
Enriching down all the lengths of time'.

from Brian Godbold's poem 'Drakensberg'

Membership

The following have applied for membership in the Club: Mirjana Povic, Fiona Mitchell (returning member) and Eryn Mitchell-Glenny.

We welcome three new members to the Club: Jeremy Eb, also Allen and Liza Petrie. May you enjoy your years with the Club!

Club News

As I type this, plans are well in hand for the Mountain Club July Camp at Crystal Waters, in the Southern Berg. Once again, there will be several campers coming from the Cape, Gauteng and from various parts of Natal. Our very good wishes go to Rikki and her 'crew' for a wonderful 90th Anniversary camp, and fair skies and good weather!

MCSA Annual Dinner in Bloemfontein on 15 May 2010

by Hannelie Morris

Thea Groenewegen, myself and Rikki Abbott decided to attend the Annual Dinner in Bloemfontein and the three of us set off on the Saturday morning. We soon realised that the way to Bloemfontein was a bit further than we thought it was..... but time flies when you're having fun and I have to admit that my throat was quite sore from all the talking at the end of the weekend!!!

We arrived in Bloemfontein in time for a shower and a cup of tea – Free State MCSA members had organised for us to be accommodated for the weekend. The dinner itself was a treat – a lovely hall, with fires to keep us warm; we had gorgeous food and the speakers, Mynhardt and Riana van der Merwe, were very inspirational.

But I think the best part of the weekend was the bonding between the sections – Free State, Amajuba, and KZ-N. We go to many of the same places, why aren't we sharing meets? So, we hope to change that. With the Amajuba section we are going back to Kranskop for the first time in almost 10 years (27 - 29 August). And I have specially invited both Freestate and Amajuba to join us at the Sentinel Centenary (4 – 5 September).

Reflections by Hannelie: Sitting at the Cencom meeting in Cape Town, I was thinking to myself – the President of the KZ-N Section of the Mountain Club of South Africa? No way! In my mind I'm still a little girl, taking off my shoes to scramble up a rock-koppie, and look at the view...

I remember joining the KZ-N MCSA when I arrived in Pietermaritzburg – the main reason was to get a legal copy of the key for the Bouldering Wall at the University. I agreed to stand for the Committee just because it was the day of the AGM and I thought that there really was no one else to do it. And then when the 2010 AGM was getting closer, I had a discussion with one of the ex-presidents: *"Don't do it because you think there is no one else – there will be someone else. Do it, because you want to do it."*

So yes, I chose to stand for President. And it did not take long to realise that I had a very narrow view of what I had signed up for. But I am lucky to have the most amazing team on board; on the Committee, as well as ex-presidents, and many other MCSA members willing to help in whichever way they can!

Thanks very much for all the help and encouragement thus far!

Hiking News

Hike to Whyte's Cave, May 15/16 2010 *by Margaret Brown*

I had the privilege of taking four people on their first trip to Whyte's Cave in the southern berg, between Garden Castle and Bushman's Nek. They were Anthony van Tonder, and Andrew, Felicia and Serina from Canada. We set off in mist and intermittent rain. As we trudged up and up, it became colder and at lunchtime in Painter's Cave, it was 6°C - so we didn't hang around!

White Horse Cave proved interesting to visit, and half-an-hour later we were in Whyte's Cave. Later it stormed and we hoped it would clear. We all had very wet feet and enjoyed our hot tea and crunchies and got into warm clothes.

During the night the stars came out and the morning dawned beautifully clear and sunny. Everyone marvelled at the wonderful views, as on Saturday we had seen nothing but mist (and one baboon). Above White Horse Cave, we were lucky to see a bearded vulture.

After lunch at Langalibalele Cave, we made our way back to our cars.

WARNING TO HIKERS in the Southern Berg, sent by Tod Collins

Hikers visiting the escarpment to climb The Rhino, or traversing the berg past the Mashai Pass, please be warned that a gang of local herdsmen have become very demanding and aggressive.

Until the situation can be sorted out via the chiefs and/or local police (not that they are exactly "local"), it's a good idea to avoid the area or be prepared with the usual cigarettes and cans of Mace for self-defence.

Climbing News

Climbing Mount Hood, Oregon

by Kerri Bridges

On the 20 March 2010, a gap in academic responsibilities and good weather, meant that a summit of Mount Hood could be undertaken. The mountain has an elevation of approximately 3,426m and is the highest peak in the state of Oregon. Its proximity to the city of Portland means that it is also the second most climbed mountain in the world, with Mount Fuji in Japan taking first place. Heck, Mount Hood has two ski resorts on its volcanic slopes so this shouldn't be any big surprise. You can actually buy a ride in a snowcat up to the top of the ski slopes and start your climb at an elevation of about 2,900m, for \$150.



Left to right: a) The group coming up to the Hogsback with Mount Jefferson in the distance. b) Down-climbing from the summit to the Hogsback, visible in the centre. The one fumarole is seen below the Hogsback.

The group was made up of either alumni or current graduate students at Oregon State University, including one PhD. in ice core analysis (a very good guy to have around when avalanches are a possibility). We started climbing the mountain from the parking lot of the Timberline ski resort at 2:30am. The snow was packed enough that we could walk in just boots, but the majority of the group were skinning up on their touring skis until it became too steep, at which point we all put on crampons. At dawn we were just approaching a rock feature called the Hogsback and once we got to the ridge, we roped up for the steeper portion of the climb. When passing the Hogsback, it became apparent that Mount Hood is only dormant and not extinct, as two fumaroles visible on either side of the ridge were actively emitting sulfur gases. We climbed up the steeper packed snow portion with crampons and ice axes and summited at 9:30am. I was told that the average summit time was between 6-8hours so we had made good time. Beers were enjoyed on the summit with the expanse of Oregon below us, before making a careful

descent. At this point it was made clear why we started climbing predawn because small chunks of ice were raining down on us from the warmth of the sun. After down-climbing back to the Hogsback, the skiers took off downhill while I and the other walker on the trip slid down on the snow shovels. This technique will be perfected in the near future as the shovels work well on packed snow but anything else requires walking. We got back to the parking lot at about 2pm.

Bannerman's Rib (1-2 May 2010)

by Hannelie Morris



After changing minds about where we were going a million times, James Voortman, Gordon Jenkins, Tony van Tonder and I eventually decided to go up Bannerman's Pass - James had forgotten his sunglasses up there, the weekend before. After consulting Gavin Peckham, it was decided to give *Bannerman's Rib* a bash - graded F2 and supposedly exceptionally good climbing.

Signing in at Giant's Castle Saturday morning, we bumped into Christine - Ezemvelo wouldn't let her hike overnight on her own, so we invited her along! The 5 of us made good time to have lunch at Bannerman's hut and we stayed the night at Sparerib Cave.

The morning dawned with clouds below us - a magical sunrise and 3 cups of tea later, Tony and I made our way to Bannerman's Rib. We never found the approach pitch to the start of the route, but, after leading a pitch each, we were on top of the 3rd pitch according to the route description. Tony did an amazing overhanging traverse, holding on to apparently nothing - which I then had to second!!

I was lucky to get the best pitch of the route. The route guide describes it as a 5 meter jam crack - I laybacked and crimped up, but loved every moment! From there I stood up bravely for a second to walk

over the knife-edge ridge and then sat down again, bum-crawling my way across.

We added another 2 scrambling pitches at the end of the route – not really sure where or how we were supposed to just walk off? But I think the route finding / adapting is all part of the fun of Berg climbing!

More Climbing News

On the 27th of March 2010, Robert Sprouse (aka Bugs), conducted some much-needed maintenance at the Uvongo crag (near Margate, KZN). He added two stainless steel chains at the top and an additional bolt at the mid-way point of *Dustine* line (19), then at the left end of the crag, and at the middle line, *Shark bit* (21). Bugs added a new bolt lower to the ground and new chains at the top.

In a month or two Bugs will return and add stainless steel chains and an extra bolt to the 27 (*Bugs, Birds and the Beer*). The two other climbs to the left are currently safe and need no maintenance. The other 27 (*Hangdog*) seemed a bit suspect, but after climbing it, Bugs is satisfied with its condition.

Uvongo has only one of South Africa's beach crags and makes for a great day's climb, particularly because there is an ocean in which to cool off afterwards. We are thankful for the time and effort Bugs has put in for developing and maintaining this fantastic climbing venue.

Some news from White Umfolozi *by Gavin Peckham*

The winter climbing season is in full swing at the Umfolozi. The river is low and clear and the mild winter weather is superb. Our old friend Mkhize and a young assistant have been installed in an adjacent tent to guarantee the security of the campsite whilst you are climbing - the old chap likes "Boxer" tobacco if you wish to indulge him.

We owe Mr Greef a great debt of gratitude for rebuilding this delightful camp after it was wantonly destroyed by vandals. The guest book shows an amazing number of overseas climbers who are now visiting the Umfolozi - doubtless attracted by the information on our Web pages. The venue is also being visited by an increasing number of 'Vaalies' who are finding it an excellent place to escape from the rat race. The implications of all this are that if you plan to go climbing there, you will be taking a chance unless you contact Mr Greef and book well in advance. See you there!

Rescue News

by Gavin Raubenheimer

On the 23rd of March a severely ill teenager was airlifted by SAPS Airwing Squirrel off the escarpment near the Little Saddle. One MCSA rescue

organiser and an EMRS paramedic were in attendance. The patient was later diagnosed with altitude sickness.

On the 4th of April a 49-year old female fell about 20 metres while descending Cowl Fork area. Her companion walked down some way and

then phoned for assistance on his cell phone. An SAAF Oryx was dispatched with 2 MCSA members and an EMRS paramedic on board. This mission was aborted when the aircraft ran into bad weather over the Midlands. The following morning the weather was still bad over the Midlands, so two other MCSA members extracted the patient by means of a private aircraft. Some rope work was used in getting to and from the patient.

On the 16th of April the MCSA rescue convenor was bitten by a Puff Adder while hiking just above Sherman's Cave. He was airlifted by private helicopter to hospital in Ladysmith.

On the 27th of April a call for assistance was received, to rescue a 57-year old male with an injured ankle from the bottom of Leslie's Pass. The following morning a SAPS Airwing Squirrel helicopter, one MCSA Rescue Organiser and an EMRS paramedic flew to the scene. They then found the patient was actually about halfway up the pass and in a very narrow gully. They were unable to land or use a hoist at this altitude, due to lack of enough power of this particular aircraft. The team then landed at Giant's Castle and requested an Air Force Oryx helicopter be sent. This was dispatched with two extra MCSA members, which in turn fetched the rest of the team at Giant's Castle and then extracted the patient, using the aircraft hoist.

On the 30th of April 2010 the rescue team was put on Standby to rescue a suspected smuggler who had been shot on the Ntonjelana Pass. He was later airlifted out by SAPS Airwing and there was no further MCSA involvement.

On the 6th and 7th of May, a combined rescue training session was held at Himeville with the SA Air Force, EMRS and Sani Search Volunteers. The Air Force provided two August A109s and one Oryx. The group were based out of Himeville airfield and the training included helicopter trooping and hoisting with the winch during the day; also night operations. On the second day the entire group were airlifted to the sandstone cliffs above Cobham where a stretcher hoist and lower training session was held.

The Club also gave training to Ezemvelo camp managers and receptionists from the northern and central Berg. This was a morning session at Didima Camp, where the basics of what to do in the event of a mountain emergency were explained. This included who to contact, what numbers to phone and who was in charge of rescues.

A further day was spent at Didima Camp where some basic rope rescue skills were shown to the Officers-in-charge from the northern Berg

region. A stretcher lower and "snake" lower were performed on the side of Tryme Hill.

Close Encounter with a Puff Adder

by Gavin Raubenheimer

Many members know I was bitten by a Puff Adder while out guiding at Cathedral Peak and I have been asked to write up what happened. So here it is...

The incident occurred on Friday the 16th of April at about 12 noon, on the path just above the Sherman's Cave waterfall. My client was walking some distance behind me and we were on our way back from a 2 - day trip. I did not see the reptile till after I felt some pain and turned around and saw it. I had probably stood on it or kicked it.

I was wearing long trousers and ankle gaiters, but the reptile still managed to make two distinct holes in my upper calf, well above the gaiter. The one hole was very deep, while the other went in only about 5mm.

From that point I had to rely on First Aid knowledge of what to do for this type of snake. Puff Adders are cytotoxic (cell destroying) and you have some time before anything too serious should happen, several hours at least. You also need to keep your heart rate down as much as possible, to stop the venom from circulating. It is not advised to try and suck out the poison or to cut the wound open.

So I just lay on my back in the grass with my leg slightly below my heart level and pulled an emergency blanket over me. Within about one minute of the bite, the pain and swelling could be felt spreading into my leg and moving up above my knee. My client arrived and I gave him Steve Cooke's cell number and told him to move about 100m away to where he could get a cell phone signal. He soon had Steve on the line, who then in turn phoned the ranger at Cathedral Peak and got authorisation for a flight-against-repayment from the Emergency Services Fund. Steve then tasked the private helicopter from Cathedral Peak Hotel. About 25 minutes after the bite occurred, the aircraft landed near us and I was carried to the aircraft by the pilot and my client. We took off and went back to the hotel where we refuelled and then routed for La Verna private hospital in Ladysmith.

At the hospital I was first seen by a GP and given a Tetanus injection, put on drip and given various antibiotics and an anti-inflammatory. They then gave me a test dose of anti-venom. I had an allergic reaction to this and it was stopped immediately. My leg had swollen a good deal, but soon stopped getting any bigger. Later that day I was put under the care of an experienced surgeon and kept for 3 days in high-care. Later I was moved to a general ward for a day and was then sent home for bed rest and the use of crutches for about 10 days. Three weeks after the bite I had very little pain or swelling and have now resumed a normal life.

I am not a medical person but can try and give this advice for Puff Adder and Berg Adder bites. Firstly, nothing too serious will happen for several hours or even days. (Puff Adder bites can cause complications later, such as gangrene and kidney failure, which in turn can result in death). The patient must just lie down, stay calm and keep the heart rate down. Get the patient's limb below the level of the heart; some medical people advocate using a light pressure bandage along the entire limb. I, however, did not use one. Then just get medical help to the patient or get transported to medical help by aircraft or by road. The patient needs to get to a doctor with having the least amount of exertion in getting there.

Some don'ts: Do not use a tourniquet of any sort. Do not use any suction device on the wound. Do not cut or press on the wound at all. Do not move about.

Do's: Lie absolutely still. Rather wait for help to arrive, than try to go and get help. Carry a cell phone. Have the Drakensberg mountain rescue number handy (0800 00 5133). Identify the snake. Try and go to a hospital where they deal with the type of snakebite that you have experienced.

Slideshow:

There will be no Slideshow on the first Wednesday (7th) of July, owing to the World Cup Soccer in the Moses Mabhida Stadium nearby, and the fact that Berea Rovers Clubhouse is closed until the end of July.

Therefore the next Slideshow will be on Wednesday 4th August 2010.

Appeal for used/spare Hiking, Climbing or Camping Equipment

For a beginner hiker or climber, purchasing new equipment is very heavy on the pocket! If there are any of you who have used or spare gear which you no longer have need for - which can be utilised for renting out to prospective members, please either bring those items to the monthly slideshow at Berea Rovers (1st Wednesday of the month), or to the Pietermaritzburg slideshow at Crossways Inn, Hilton (last Wednesday of the month). Alternatively, contact Hannelie Morris: 084 4862949 or Iona Stewart: 082 990 3968

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