

Mountain Club of South Africa KwaZulu-Natal Section

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NEWSLETTER

April/May/June 2009

Club News

The Club AGM was held on Saturday 21st March at the Assagay Hotel, Shongweni, and was well attended. Thanks to all who came, especially those who had travelled a fair distance to be there. A very convivial post-AGM get-together was held on the hotel balcony, where the new incoming President was last seen introducing the delights of beer to a certain (very young) infant – before disappearing westwards with intentions on the morrow, to climb the Sentinel - wearing long baggy shorts et al, to emulate the first ascent of the Sentinel by the Angus-Leppans – more about that later!

Andy Wood has taken over from Scott Sinclair as President, with Fred Rodwell remaining as Treasurer and Anne Rodwell as the Secretary. Thanks are due to Scott and Hannelie, and other outgoing members of the Committee, who have done a great job in their various capacities. (The Committee Contacts List at the end of the Newsletter has been updated, with the new members' names & contact details).

Great plans are afoot for this year's July Camp, which will be held from the 4 – 18 July 2009 at Giants' Castle, in conjunction with the International Youth Meet, which will run from the 11 – 18 July. It promises to be a very interesting camp!

Carl Fatti has moved to Cape Town – our loss and the Cape's gain! We are very sorry to lose you from our section, and hope that we will see you at the Drakensberg again in the near future, yodels and all.....Thank you for all you have done for the club, your leadership and mountaineering expertise were invaluable.

Mention must be made of Beth McLeod's ascent of Mount Kenya in December, along with Gavin Raubenheimer as guide. The expedition went well with perfect climbing and trekking conditions for all 9 days of the trip. After crossing the Lewis Glacier, the roped climbing started at 6am. By 3pm they were on the summit. After spending a night in the Howell hut on top of the peak, they did the 13 abseils down the next day. Beth made the climb as a fund-raising effort for the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation.

Some of the Mountain Club members may have heard of the recent death of Dr. Steve Piper, a well-known ornithologist who, in his

retirement, was conducting birding tours in the Berg. I believe he was assisted at one time by various MCSA members, in the ringing of vultures.

Editor

Hiking News

HIKE TO GXALINGENWA, 14/15 MARCH, 2009 *by Iona Stewart*

The weather forecast was for rain - and that is just what it did! Sixteen and a half of us (Saskia's 7 year old daughter was the half) left Cobham at 09:30 and headed for Emerald stream and up. It was cloudy and very humid, but pleasant. Underberg had had over 50 mm rain the previous evening so we expected the rivers to be full, which they were. At the first crossing it was 'boots off'. Even so, the current was so strong it knocked Jane off her feet and she went a-floating. She fortunately recovered quite quickly and James was there to assist her.

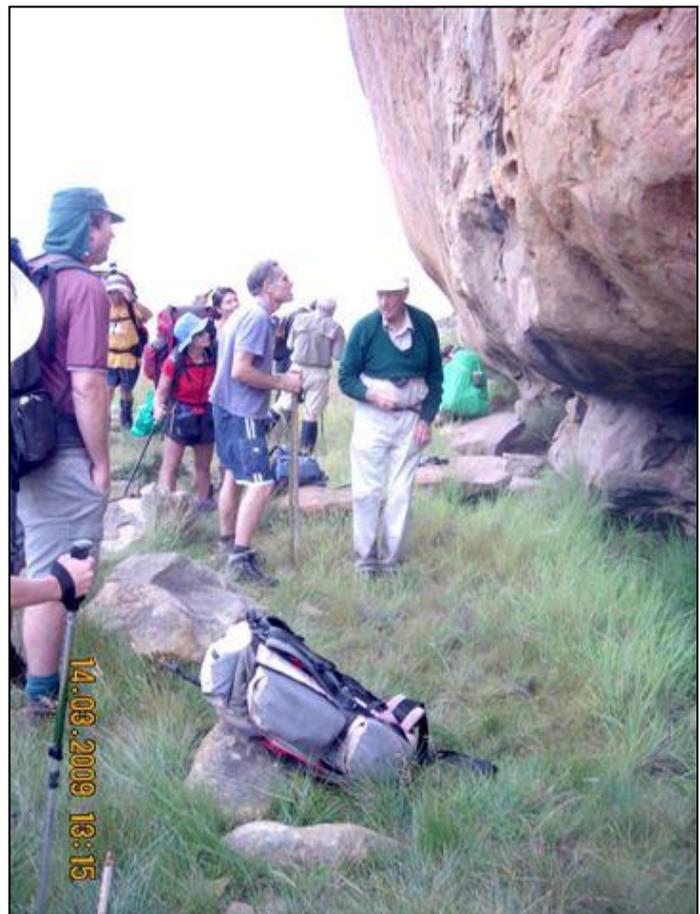
We hiked on upwards; two walkers from the group stopped for a swim in the swollen Emerald Stream and then we climbed over the lip onto the Pinnacle Rock plateau. Elaine was in front, and as she went round the cairn there, she spotted a large puffadder, draped over the cairn, brilliant in his new skin, having just shed the old one. Though he didn't stretch himself out so that we could guess his length, at least he obliged us by staying there while we took photos, umm'ed and ahh'ed over his very being, and exchanged toxic snake tales.

By now the forecasted rain was upon us so we hastened to

the bushman painting rock at Pinnacles, where we could take shelter, and Bill Small pointed out and explained some interesting facts to us about the paintings. While we sat there, a large herd of eland ran past, which was a delight to see.

After lunch, we said goodbye to our three and a half day trippers, they being Saskia, Rob Osbourne, Bill Small and Lela.

The rest of us donned our wet weather gear and continued on to the Gxalingenwa Cave, arriving at about 15h30. The thirteen of us managed



Bill Small showing Bushman paintings to the hiking group.

to find sleeping places, though most of us spent the night crawling back up the slopes we were lying on. No matter, no one was unduly uncomfortable! Despite all the rain and the rivulet running through the cave, we had a pleasant evening, getting to sleep at about 20h30.

We awoke to the promise of a good sunny day. From the cave we retraced our steps to Pinnacle Rock and then turned northward and down in to the Gxalingenwa River valley. In the distance we saw a mountain reedbuck running off, and could hear baboons barking nearby. We had a swim in the river and then some more hiking until we met the Giant's Cup Hiking Trail and then another swim for some in the Ngenwa pool, while the rest served as 'pack guards'. The countryside was looking beautiful and lush and green, and there was water oozing out of everywhere as a result of all the rain this season. We arrived back at the cars at about 15:30, fairly tired, hot, sweaty, and all that, but I think happy and content with the weekend's excursion.

I was disappointed that my messages to Charl Brummer, the warden at Cobham, to leave out herbicide for us to kill bramble, never reached him. Even though three of us were armed with sprayguns and very willing to do the necessary, we had no herbicide for the job. It will soon be too late for this season, but we will try again in the Spring.

Those who were on the trip were: Margaret Brown, her friend Dot, Bugs Sprouse, James Voortman, Andre Bouer, Elaine & Tish (from Backpackers), Felicity Kromhout, Ria Donelli, Dave & Tish Lea, Jane Dickinson and myself as leader.

Rock Climbing

The Great Winter Thrash at White Umfolozi ("GWT")

Due to the 16th June falling on a Tuesday this year, the club's most popular meet of the year is being moved forward to the long weekend of **1st, 2nd and 3rd of May 2009**. White Umfolozi is a great place to relax on the beach (sandy river bank), for kids to swim or paddle in the river, and to go walking down river, or to bird watch, to enjoy the very pleasant rustic campsite and above all, to enjoy excellent climbing at all grades from very easy to very hard, bolted or trad. And if feeling lazy, you can just chill out with a beer and make disparaging remarks about other climbers' abilities.....

Winter is nice and cool so you can climb on the sunny side of the river. You can sleep outside under the stars on the wooden deck in the stable winter weather; or bring a tent. Bring a jerrycan of safe drinking water. Don't forget the BEER for the very festive braais in the evenings (please bring charcoal or firewood).

Several new bolted routes have been opened recently, very close to the campsite on the South bank, grades 15 to 21. As usual Gavin Peckham will be there with a car-boot full of **route guides for sale**.

See you there.....

Anthony van Tonder

Tel 082 8920935

White Umfolozi News

by Gavin Peckham

South Bank: Hopefully by the time you read this, the club will, per kind favour of Mr Gerhard Greef, have secured a servitude to the crags on the south bank of the Umfolozi River. This will guarantee our access to this superb venue in perpetuity. After the devastating arson at this magnificent venue, many a lesser mortal would have thrown in the towel, but Mr Greef is in the process of rebuilding. The sundecks have already been rebuilt. The new rondavels are up to roof level and will soon be ready for occupation. Gerhard, we salute you for your perseverance and for your ongoing contributions to the climbing community.

North Bank: Sadly, climbing on the north bank is still totally out of bounds. The new owner has indicated that he will allow climbing as and when an appropriate indemnity agreement is in place. As yet no progress has been made in this regard. With the winter climbing season rapidly approaching we desperately hope that an agreement can be reached, sooner rather than later.

Morgan Bay

by Anthony van Tonder

Gavin Peckham, Bruce Sobey, Bruce Tomalin (& family) and myself (& family) went to Double Mouth near Morgan Bay for a week in early January. We had only occasional rain and managed to get quite a lot of climbing done.

Also did some pre - Dusi training, paddling on the lagoon. It wasn't enough Dusi training to beat Western King though, who out-trained me. I was only 29 seconds behind him in the previous Dusi singles race 2 years ago but never caught sight of him this year!

Bruce Tomalin climbing 'Day Tripper'
(Grade 15) *A van Tonder*



Mountaineering

50th Anniversary climb of the Angus-Leppan Route on Sentinel

The *Gendarme* or *North Face Route* on the Sentinel was first climbed by Peter and Pam Angus-Leppan on the 17th of February 1959. This route, which is now usually called the 'The Angus-Leppan Route' is by far the most popular technical route in the Berg. Five Club members set off on the 22nd of March 2009, to celebrate the anniversary of the first ascent of this great route. To add to the day, they climbed in period dress coupled with the gear and roping techniques used in those days, and a whole lot of fun and humour. Pam Angus-Leppan is living in Australia and is a well-known academic in the Economics faculty of the University of New South Wales. Her husband, Peter, passed away a few years ago.

Official Report

by Gavin Raubenheimer

The day started in the Sentinel car park office, with rusks and cups of rich tea brewed by our old friend Mr C de Carvalho, a visiting Moroccan climber from the province of Portugal. The party of five set off shortly after 7am and consisted of The chief Toger, the recently elected President of the Club, his senior wife, Miss H Morris, Mr de Carvalho (photographer) and the young Mr C McCoy, an apprentice kitchen staff member.

The short but gripping pitch in the gully was soon bravely lead by Miss Morris and then the party scrambled up to the neck between the *Gendarme* and the main, towering ramparts of the peak itself. The President, with his pipe firmly grasped in his teeth, then set off up the first proper climbing section, bringing the party to a high and exposed grassy platform.

The pitch after this consisted of a short Dassie traverse on suspect rock and grass, which McCoy lead in fine style. Next was the senior wife's pitch, which went by with a little whimpering and much advice from the Chief Toger.



This brought the party to a small and exposed stance with a traverse to the right. The Toger moved off along the obvious slab and was rewarded with small positive hand grips and good friction for the feet, then up to a good belay from a block of Berg basalt which formed a sound belay. The 5th pitch saw the President back on the sharp end, and enjoying a good ruff shagg in his bole. He bravely brought the entire group to below the final test before summit. This consisted of a short overhanging cubby, devoid of grips for the feet or hands. It was only with great encouragement from the party below that the Toger eventually pulled through the loose flakes and grass onto the final ledge.

After a hearty meal and hot tea, the group descended the magnificent peak. The descent incorporated much scrambling and one exhilarating abseil. On the abseil, the Moroccan visitor refused to wrap the rope around his thigh and shoulder and instead, used a new-fangled knot called a Munter Hitch. This, the group felt to be most un-sporting and Mr de Carvalho was fined several beers for his lack of ethics and safety.

Rescue News

by Gavin Raubenheimer



The picture above is of Hannelie Morris - the patient "patient", being lowered off Sentinel Peak with David Doull as "Tail-end-Charlie".

On the 18th of December 2008, KZ-N Wildlife personnel from Royal Natal National Park, reported an overdue hiking party who were hiking from Sentinel Peak to Cathedral Peak. One MCSA Rescue Organiser who was in the Monk's Cowl area at the time, then flew from Dragon Peaks in a private helicopter and soon located the party near Xeni Cave area. The hikers had apparently been delayed by inclement weather.

There were no less than 7 other alerts during the festive season, none of which ended in operations by the Club.

A helicopter rescue practice took place at Cato Ridge on the 1st of March, in which 7 members took part.

On the 8th and 9th of March, the Rescue Team was in attendance at the Rory Lowther Memorial Challenge at Swinburne. There was one minor case of a suspected broken ankle attended to.

On Sunday the 22nd of March, a rescue call was received directly by the Rescue Convenor, regarding a male hiker who had sustained a cut on the head, also concussion. The incident occurred in Bannerman's Pass, when the hiker, who had pulled on a rock that subsequently gave way, causing him to tumble backwards, hitting his head on another rock. He continued up the pass to Bannerman's Cave, where he fell ill. He was airlifted out to Grey's Hospital by a rescue team from the MCSA and EMRS and an Oryx helicopter from 15 Squadron. The patient has since made a full recovery.

RESCUE PRACTICES - 2009

Contact Gavin Raubenheimer: 082 9905876 +27 (0)33 3433168

There are no cliff rescue practices shown on the present Meet Sheet, but helicopter practices are shown. The following dates are now set for **cliff and helicopter** practices:

April 2-4 Himeville heli (Gavin RO) (If no heli practice there will be a cliff practice on the 4th)

May 17 Kloof Falls - cliff practice (Bruce ARO)

June 18-20 Himeville - heli prac (Steve RO) (If no heli prac there will be a cliff practice on the 20th)

Forthcoming Meets

The Meets for the months April/May/June/July are shown on the last page of the newsletter.

Please check with the Meet Leaders if you want to attend a meet, as changes can, and do, occur.

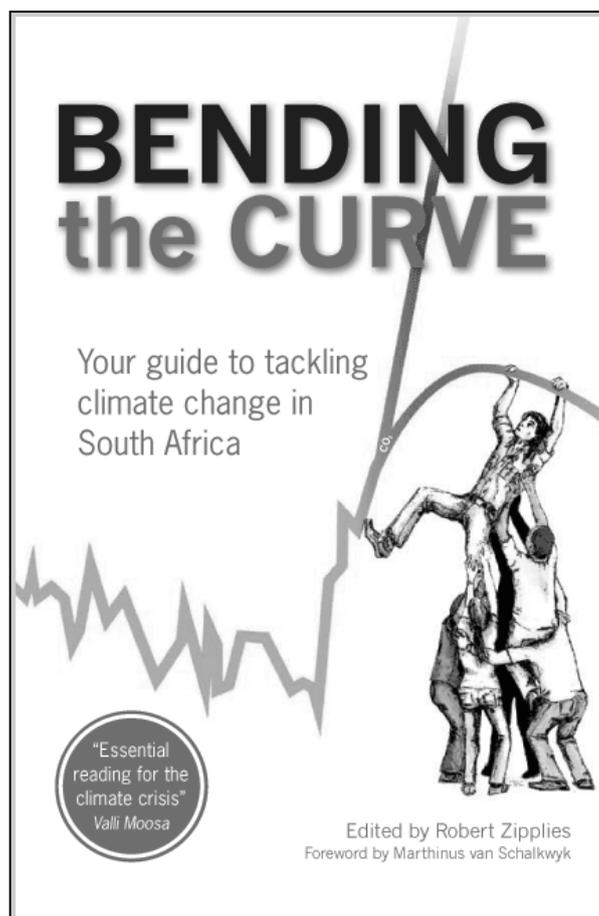
Watch your Inbox for news of forthcoming Slide Shows and Socials!

Note: The Meet which Hannelie Morris was to have led on the weekend of 10 – 13 April (Easter weekend) has been cancelled, owing to her having other commitments.

Bending the Curve – your guide to tackling climate change in South Africa

The book was born out of a need for South Africans to have access to better information about how specific sectors of society can contribute to tackling climate change.

Bending the Curve is not just another book about the climate crisis, but a guide - co-authored by 24 experts - that will help you move from deliberation to action. Whether you are a parent or policy developer, or work for a corporate or civil society organisation, you will find a wealth of practical ideas for making changes at work and in your personal life that will improve the lives of everyone and help to tackle this scourge. There is no time to lose. We all need to get started now.



This book is published by Africa Geographic, and is available from the Cape Town section of the MCSA –(cost approx. R175)
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I dream my feet upon the starry ways;
My heart rests in the hill,
I may not grudge the little left undone;
I hold the heights, I keep the dreams I won.

Geoffrey Winthrop Young

Ice Climbing with a Difference.....

The four large gray silos tower above the Iowa plains, monuments to the Farm Belt sitting unused on a 160-acre farm just outside Cedar Falls. But on one side of the steel tubes, a bright thick sheet of ice runs nearly all the way up the 70-foot tall silo, where it's been slowly freezing for nearly three days.



The silos, once used to feed cattle, have found a new life as an unorthodox training facility for an ice-climbing class taught by the University of Northern Iowa.

Climbing enthusiasts living in the vertically challenged Great Plains don't have a lot of options for practicing their sport. But Don Briggs, an instructor at the university, has found a way to rise above the problem.

Using three water hydrants and hoses up to 300 feet long, Briggs began freezing layers of ice on a friend's silo to practice ice climbing in the winter of 2000. Nine years later he's still at it, expanding his activities to three adjacent silos, an annual climbing competition with national sponsorship and a for-credit class at the university.

The process Briggs uses to

create the ice hasn't changed much in seven years. A long hose is run up the side of each silo, with a showerhead-like attachment on the end.

Briggs says he and his crew have gotten the ice as thick as 6 to 8 feet in places, and it takes about three days of round-the-clock spraying to create a surface that's safe enough to climb.

Climbs on the silos are free because under state law, organizers of an event cannot be held liable for injuries as long as they're not charging a fee. Each participant is still asked to sign a waiver, but Briggs says so far there haven't been any serious climbing-related injuries.

Other groups have created icefalls in natural terrain in Colorado and Utah, and on man-made structures in Russia.

Participants in the past have included Gadd, the X Games Ice Climbing champion in 1998 and 1999 and winner of the 2000 Ice World Cup.

(Extract from Mountain Climbing news website)

IFT photo by Gene Lucht

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