

More than half SA's frog species are in the Cape. And, of the 62 different frogs, 29 are endemic to the Cape and found nowhere else on earth. One of these is the Cape or Giant Rain Frog (*Breviceps gibbosus*) aka blassop or blaasoppie. With a penchant for shrubby vegetation, pastureland, rural gardens and urban areas, it's threatened by habitat loss and thus classified 'vulnerable'.

On rainy nights, the familiar call of these nocturnally noisy creatures blends soothingly with the wind and rain. Sadly, they're disappearing from urban areas. Suburban gardens superimposed on their habitat locks them into tiny islands of walls and foundations, tarmac and cars. Or they have unfortunate encounters with a garden spade.

These frogs aren't aquatic or even amphibian. They spend their life on land, particularly sandy areas. During the wet winters they'll roam the undergrowth, feasting on snails and insects, or burrow in the soft earth. In the hot dry summers they'll burrow deeper into the ground for shelter, or aestivate under rocks.

When moistened, they ribbit loudly. A good garden watering can sometimes start them chorusing. Yet they are frustratingly hard to find, since the noise

Music of the night



Giant Rain Frog



Sand Rain Frog

is non-directional and ceases abruptly when coming too close.

The frog itself is no beauty. Squat, with a baggy body covered in mottled, clammy, rough grey skin. No discernible neck. It almost looks like an overcooked potato with stubby legs. The legs don't even lift the body off the ground. Beady eyes glare from under the frowning forehead. Small enough to fit into the hand, the frog is 4.5 cm long. Males are only a fifth the size of the females.

Its first defence mechanism, as the name 'blaasoppie' suggests, is to inflate itself. Not officially toxic, the Cape Rain Frog is

definitely unpalatable. When a cat once tried preying on one, the poor feline spent the next hour drooling with her mouth open.

Judging from the mating calls, a lot of froggy sex takes place. Males ribbit from the undergrowth. Too small to grab his mate when she answers his call, he glues himself to her with a sticky substance from his belly. The female digs a burrow, laying eggs in a pool of slime. These eggs mature rapidly into froglets - there's no tadpole stage.

Frogs consume vast insect quantities and contribute considerably to pest control.



Wise gardening

Keep gardens flourishing in the heat and wind this summer. Nursery/landscape design manager Benjamin Stone-Francisco provides useful hints. Four words apply: feed, prune, compost and water.

Lawns should be fed and watered well. Some top soil also will help recovery. Water early morning to prevent fungal diseases. Mow once a week in the cool part of the afternoon. Periodically, switch your mowing direction to protect against uneven growth and lawn ridge formation. Raise mowing blades higher to allow grass blades to grow longer, protecting the roots from intense summer heat and relentless wind.

Remove faded flower heads from perennials, but save the fleshy seeds and

plant them on the soil surface of a small container to get new plants. It's also a good time to take perennial soft-wood cuttings. Stick them into a moist, sandy medium for shoot development.

Shrubs and trees should be pruned lightly, watered once a week and heavily mulched with compost. Plant annuals, preferably water-wise ones, late-afternoon to give them chance to revive before morning.

When leaving on holiday, move patio plants in line with the irrigation system, or cover the container's soil surface with mulch and set in the shade. This also works for indoor plants. Slow-release water spikes are available at garden shops for non-movable indoor plants.

Dear oh dear, what to do with the kids? To make sure you retain your sanity over the holidays and your children have some summer fun off the estate, we've compiled a few super ideas.

The Waterfront Craft Market from 9h30 to 6h00 – 021 4182850

Indoor rock climbing, Cityrock, cnr Collingwood & Anson Rds, Observatory – 021 4471326

Salsa dance classes, Fiesta Tapas Café, Cape Quarter, Green Point

Three Wise Men, a comedy, Baxter Theatre until 10 January 2009
Starbrite, a local musical, Baxter Theatre from 3 – 13 December

Footsteps, singing, laughing & dancing, Theatre at the Pavilion, cnr Portswood & Beach Rds, V&A

Evita se Perron, Darling – see www.evita.co.za

Die Hoenderhok, Langverwacht Wine Farm – enjoy shows and a homemade meal, 021 9064636

Ice skating - GrandWest

The Magic Company, GrandWest – complete with carousel rides, bumper

What's up?



cars, fun fair & arcade games
Appletiser Summer Sunset Concerts, Kirstenbosch Gardens - Sundays 17h30-18h30

Cape Minstrels Carnival, Cape Town - 1, 2, 6 & 13 January

Strawberry Festival, Somerset West – 021 8511530

Sunsetter Music Festival, V&A Outdoor Amphitheatre - 22-30 December, 021 4182369

Obs Festival - Community Craft Market, 021 4476403

Oude Libertas Summer Concerts - traditional summer entertainment in the winelands, 021 8087473

Air Show Stellenbosch (R44) - 15-16 December

Le Picnique, Boschendal – 021 8704274

Cheetah sanctuary at Spier – 021 8091190
Strandloper – a veritable seafood extravaganza on Langebaan beach, 022 7722490.

Tobogganing, 021 9494439

Camel rides at Kommetjie

Penguin-watching at Boulders Beach

Then there are walks and picnics along the Table Mountain National Park pipetrack or in shady Newlands or Cecilia Forest, a braai at Rhodes Memorial under the pine trees, a day wandering through spectacular Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, mountain biking at Silvermine, followed by a pizza at the Red Herring in Noordhoek. And don't forget lazy days at the many city beaches.

This should fill your holiday calendar big time.



Spotlight on Flip Thuissen

Most liked about the estate: The most beautiful fauna & flora

Favourite actors: Oubaas & Charmaine of 7de Laan

Philosophy of life: Respect for all

Hope for the future: A comfortable life for my children & grandchildren

Favourite reading: I can't read but would like to read the Bible

Favourite colour: Green

Best TV programme: 7de Laan

Favourite food/drink: Lamb stew & Coke

Best time of day: 16h30

Favourite music: Gospel

Favourite holiday:

Oudtshoorn

Favourite sport (spectator):

Rugby



Biggest extravagance: Visited Boesmanland in Langebaan

Car: Valiant

Pets: Domesticated chickens

Miscellaneous dislikes: Dishonest & disrespectful people

Married: Kathy (40 yrs)

Children: Jane

Hobbies: Gardening

Position: Nursery assistant

Date of birth: 1944, Durbanville

Career: Labourer

Education: Self-educated

Personal best achievement:

40 years of marriage

Professional best achievement:

Participating in the Atlantis road infrastructure

Aspirations for the estate: Becoming a Garden of Eden

Person with biggest influence on your life: My wife & grandchildren

Person you would most like to meet: Nelson Mandela

Biggest ever opportunity: Starting my own farm

No to illegal parking



"It's the same thing every year....some idiot parks illegally on the golf course!"

Of Cats and Rats

As in our democratic society, Atlantic Beach residents exercise the choice of owning pets and then indeed, which type of pets. There are cat lovers and unfortunately, cat haters. Cat owners have the responsibility to ensure that their cats are collared with bells to protect bird life and that they don't cause a neighbourhood nuisance. By the same token, cat haters should respect both cats as animals and cat lovers' choice of pet.

Of greater concern is that some residents have taken to poisoning rodents, which in turn has led to secondary poisoning of cats. Such cruel, and illegal, action has caused the death of a beloved Burmese cat belonging to two estate residents.

Being in a nature conservation area, absolutely no pesticides or rodenticides may be used on the estate. Rodenticides also kill non-target animals, reduce the natural rodent predator population and can endanger human health as toxic substances are released into the environment. The widespread use and misuse of rodenticides have caused rodent populations to develop resistance to first generation rodenticides such as Warfarin. Thus, more toxic second and

third generation rodenticides have been introduced. Many rodenticide manufacturers advertise that the rodent dies a number of days after eating the poison. This means it's further away from your property and other rodents aren't put off from consuming the bait at a nearby body.



This delay between consumption and death leads to the awful secondary poisoning problem. Secondary poisoning occurs when non-target species are affected after consuming poisoned rodents. Natural rodent predators, such as owls, hawks, snakes and domestic pets are at risk of secondary poisoning.

Long-term, the use of rodenticides makes the rodent problem worse. Because of food-chain population dynamics, taking away one predator has a greater effect than taking away one rodent as there are

fewer predators in the chain. Hawks, owls and snakes eat at least one rodent a day, that's about 500+ a year. One female rat can have around 50-100 young a year.

So, by killing ONE predator through secondary poisoning, there may be a potential 7 500-20 000 extra rats each year and they'll breed too...

Prevention is more effective than poisoning: *Reduce available food* – as scavengers, rodents will come and eat



food that's available freely. Secure rubbish bins, cover up compost and don't leave pet food out at night. Also, don't feed garden birds. *Destroy potential homes* – take away shelters, remove waste, stack wood above the ground and away from walls, block holes into buildings and keep gardens tidy. *Preserve natural predators* – if hawks, owls and snakes aren't interfered with, they'll help control rodent populations in the long term. *Traps* – there are spring traps, live traps and glue boards. Once caught, dispose of rodents properly.

Who let the kids out?

Vandalism is a major problem in many areas and adversely affects the community in numerous ways. Having to repair damaged property is expensive and time-consuming, plus it causes negative feelings among community members. Often, vandalism acts precede more serious criminal behaviour, such as gang activity and hate crimes.

We've had serious vandalism acts by children on the estate. Apart from the maddening graffiti spraypainting, estate signboards have been



ripped out of the concrete. Parents should at all times be aware of what their children are doing. Help prevent children from participating in vandalism

by addressing contributing factors such as anger, envy, peer pressure, ignorance and opportunistic bravado. Thus, you'll enable your kids to

become better decision makers. Encourage them to accept responsibility for their actions, respecting themselves and others. All vandalism is wrong, because it implies damage to someone else's property.

As has been the case recently, legal steps will be taken against vandals and parents have to pay for the damage.

Ghoulies & ghosties

*From ghoulies and ghosties
And long-legged beasties
And things that go bump in the night.
Good Lord, 'tis Halloween!*

Well, the estate certainly had a monstrous night on 31 October – what with 400 little beasts and spectres doing the rounds to 80 homes for tricks or treats. The outfits were outrageous and the judges had a bewitching task to choose winners. But best of all, everyone had a hauntingly good time.



Pay up

Don't even consider defaulting on levy payments in this time of financial woes. It's simply false economy. Levies are due in advance on the first business day of the month by debit order. All 30-day overdue debts are handed over for legal collection and then defaulters are liable for the legal costs as well. So, pay up please.

Remember, increased penalty levies for non-construction and late completion will be effective 1 July 2009.



You're worth it

Woofs and purrs to the Canine Carnival and Purrr-fect Feline day sponsors: you've made our day! Thanks to: Weskus Dierekliniek; Tableview Vetshop; Sunset Beach Veterinary Clinic; Vet Select Sea Side Village Big Bay; Parklands Junction Vet Shop; The Grooming Pad; Western Province Rottweiler Club; Charmaine at Animal Healing; Blue Mountain Kennels; Pet-i-Ket; Pet ID Tags; Toy Market & Baby Scene; Promanage; Spoilt Paws; Frontline; Eukanuba, Iams and Royal Canin.



Making HEADway

Stephanie Craig, daughter of Atlantic Beach residents John and Tracy Craig, has been elected head prefect at Parklands College. Associate principal Stephen Le Feuvre described her as an incredible organiser. "She has shone in a number of leadership positions and the hallmark of her leadership has been attention to detail." The ABHOA is proud of Stephanie's latest achievement.

To do

To ensure no nasty surprises when you return from holiday, remember to:

- make sure your animals are booked into a reputable kennel, or contract a reliable housesitter
- lock all doors and windows
- arrange with a neighbour to open up for your pool cleaning and/or garden service
- set your alarm
- set your irrigation system
- switch on automatic timer interior lights
- ask a neighbour to wheel in your rubbish bin



Party etiquette

The headline might be misleading, because it's not merely neighbourhood party etiquette that applies, but estate rules. Please keep the noise levels within acceptable limits and implore guests not to park illegally. If you abide by these essential rules, boogie it up all you want. Enjoy.