

FROM THE AITG CHAIRMAN

The Alien Invader Task Group (AITG) continued with many activities during the past year that aim at:

- I. making all Honorary Rangers and the South African public at large, aware of the scale of the threat of alien invaders pose to our national parks,
- II. educating people in general about the major threats in different areas/regions,
- III. organising work parties to help national parks cope with their tasks, and,
- IV. raising funds to finance specific projects/activities.

The publication "Prickly Pear" (PP) continues to expand in its target audience and reaches numbers approaching 1000 every second month. The name of the editor, Linda Spangenberg, has become well known in environmental circles both locally and internationally for her sterling work which she does efficiently and conscientiously every year! To her and the authors of all articles, thanks for the continuing work - we continue to be amazed at the effects that the PP has achieved and also the geographical area that this publication reaches! To all

Honorary Ranger's (HR's), please keep the articles flowing to Linda so that a wide coverage of the alien invader problem and control efforts can keep growing to achieve our awareness and educational goals. The more people that are informed - the more it will help us tackle the problem!

We continued to receive amazing support from the "People for Wildlife" environmental NGO, especially the West Rand group, at work parties. HR's were informed of the R35 000 worth of effort that was put into clearing large alien invader trees from the Skukuza Staff Village during 2005 by this group. Thanks again to Stuart Battman and his group!

Public displays continued at the Johannesburg Zoo and Benoni Lakeside Mall during the year. At the latter venue, East Rand Junior HR Trainees supplied the willing helpers to mount the display for a week. Thanks to them and to Bill Viljoen for additional display boards and printed photos which boosted our display to a very pleasing one! Thanks also to volunteers who helped at the zoo display.

Siemens South Africa, in an upgrading exercise, offered many used computers to the AITG, c/o JP Meijer, for the AITG to use and to make available to HR regions,

national projects and SANParks. A big thank you to Siemens for this generous gift and to JP Meijer for organising it. At the last HR Chairman's meeting, I made the announcement that any HR group which would like to request one of these donated computers, simply needs to contact the AITG with such a request!

The AITG programme of events for 2006 will be circulated soon to inform all HR's of how you can get involved and show your support.

C N Webber

A.I.T.G COMMITTEE

Clive Webber – Chairman / Education

Llewellyn Foxcroft – SANP Liaison, Programme Manager, Invasion ecology and River research.

Wayne Lotter - Scientific Advisor (Alien Plant Control Manager – Sappi Forests)

Hercules Swart – Secretary

Linda Spangenberg – Communication

JP Meijer – Information Technology

Eddie Cassani - Fundraising

More information Should you require more informations, or have any questions please contact:

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Prickly Pear

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LLEWELLYN'S PRICKLY CORNER

Since we started writing articles for the prickly pear in May 1999, we have tried to cover a range of topics, bringing you interesting and diverse issues to read.

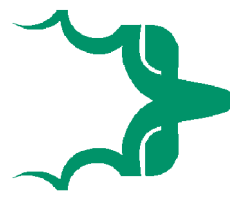
We have looked at general management issues, a range of Kruger National Park specific issues and a number of other topics (such as conference attendances). To start the New Year we decided to introduce a new range of topics for 2006: the different SANParks regions or clusters.

We will move around the country focussing on a particular area or region, then invite articles from various SANParks staff and honorary rangers on any projects, include "questions and answers" for the particular region and tie the alien plant of the issue to the area.

We hope to be able to include more from around the country and bringing in a range of diverse habitats and projects to the newsletter. So take out those pencils and start letting us know about your projects and area.

Llewellyn C. Foxcroft

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South African
National Parks
Honorary Rangers
AITG

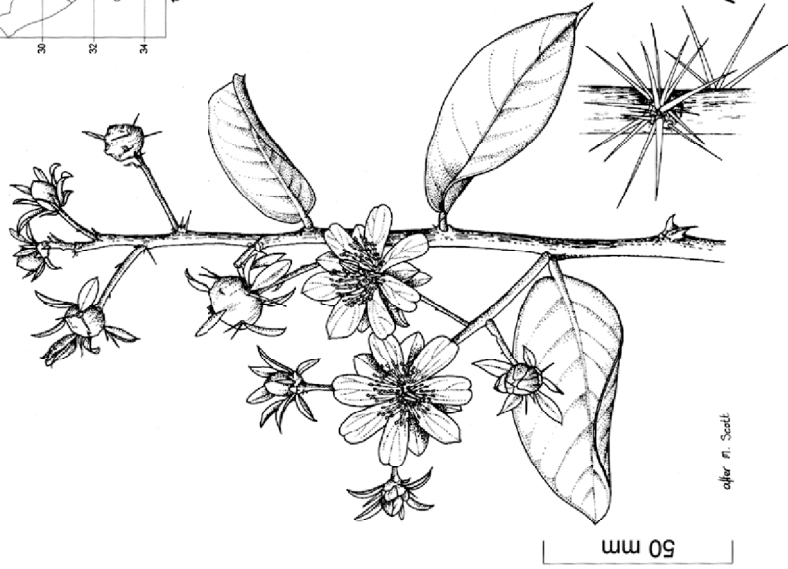
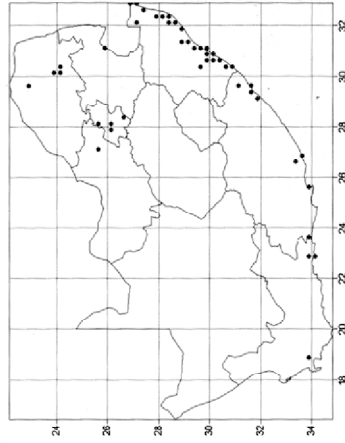
A PRICKLY ALIEN

LESLEY HENDERSON, 2001 ALIEN WEEDS AND INVASIVE PLANTS – A complete guide to declared weeds and invaders in South Africa.

Pereskia aculeata Mill.

pereskia, Barbados gooseberry
pereskia, Barbadosfakelbessie

Family Cactaceae



Description: Spiny, shrubby to clambering vine with long, whip-like branches, 2–10 m or higher, resembling *Bougainvillea*; young stems and leaves semi-succulent with pairs of short, hooked spines in the leaf axils; older stems woody with clusters of hard, straight spines (A) 30–40 mm long. **Leaves:** Bright green, glossy. **Flowers:** White, cream or yellowish, lemon-scented, March–July. **Fruits:** Green turning yellow, succulent berries, about 20 mm across, encircled by a whorl of deciduous leaf-like scales. **Cultivated for:** Ornament, security hedging. **Invasives:** Forest margins and gaps, plantations. **Origin:** West Indies & S America (Brazil & Argentina); probably naturalised in Florida and Mexico. **Invasive status:** Transformer. **Declared Weed. Herbicide registration. Biocontrol:** Natural enemies released.

SANPARKS WORKING FOR WATER

with funding from DEAT, and has made a significant contribution to alien clearing along the Garden Route area of the Southern Cape.

Most of the alien plant eradication is conducted using mechanical and chemical methods but the use of biological control, especially on the water-borne invasive species, is an alternative that is used in the projects.

There has been a concerted effort in the last financial year to promote the use of biological control as a longer term alternative for alien plant control. Various biocontrol agent release sites have been established within SANParks and are being monitored. Relatively little is known about biological control and the production of hand books as well as the initiation of training was started within the National Parks this year. This programme will be expanded in the new financial year.

The ISCU boasts a total of 60 employees in SANParks and plays a major role in maintaining the ecological integrity of our National Parks. The importance of alien plant eradication is becoming well known, with this now being a key performance area and a job deliverable for most Park managers and senior managers within SANParks.

Bonny Schwegmann
WFW Groenkloof



South African
NATIONAL PARKS

Patron in Chief
President Nelson Mandela

The SANParks Invasive Species Clearing Unit (ISCU) currently operates in fourteen of the South African National Parks.

The ISCU was established three years ago to ensure co-ordination and implementation of various ecological projects within SANParks. The name of the Unit is, in itself misleading, as the projects it implements range from alien plant clearing to wetlands rehabilitation, to coastal care and rehabilitation.

A total budget of R45 million has been received for the current financial year to fund these projects. As one of the primary goals of this funding is Poverty Relief, the majority of this money goes into the pockets of historically disadvantaged individuals and aims to develop independent contractors as well as support Black Economic Empowerment.

The DEAT (SANBI – South African National Botanical Institute) funded Wetlands programme was started four years ago in Kruger National Park and has continued to grow from strength to strength. This programme now operates in 4 different National Parks – Golden Gate, Agulhas, Mountain Zebra and Kruger National Park.

The Coast Care programme is now five years old and is also funded by DEAT. Seven projects exist across the country in the following Parks: Knysna, Wilderness, Tsitsikamma, Agulhas, West Coast, Namaqua and Woody Cape. A boardwalk across a wetland in Kruger National Park at the Skukuza nursery is currently being constructed as part of an education and awareness programme. This will be completed by mid March 2006.

The biggest and most established of the projects is the alien clearing programme which is synonymous with "Working for Water" and is funded through the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAf). This budget is now supplemented