

TALES FROM THE WILDFLOWER RESERVE

THE FOVS NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2026 EDITION



Friends of Van Stadens

Educate and conserve

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Supervisor's Note

From Siphis Mtengwana



Hi everyone,

As the seasons begin to shift here at the Reserve, we are reminded how much nature is always changing, often in ways that ask us to slow down enough to notice.

Over the past few weeks, our interns have been busy out in the field learning through hands-on conservation work, welcoming visitors, and noticing the small details that make this landscape so special. One of the beautiful things about working in conservation is that no two days are ever the same. Some days are filled with hard physical work, while others offer moments of stillness and reflection. Both are important. Both teach us something.

Thank you for walking this journey alongside us and for being part of a community that values nature, learning, and conservation.

With warmth,
Siphis 🌿



Getting to know Siyamthanda

Siyamthanda "Siya" Ndotshayisa was part of the very first group of Conservation Interns at FOVS. On 1 January 2025, Siya stepped into her role as FOVS Superintendent, becoming the second full-time employee to grow from the Conservation Internship Programme.

Working alongside FOVS Supervisor, Siphis Mtengwana, Siya helps guide FOVS programmes, mentor future interns, nurture partnerships, and care for the Indigenous Nursery.

Those who spend time with Siya quickly see her quiet passion for conservation. Her love for plants shines through in the care she gives the Nursery, and her joy in sharing the stories of trees and the Reserve's biodiversity is truly special.

Siya is our gentle and thoughtful leader. Next time you visit the Reserve, be sure to say hello.

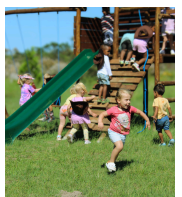
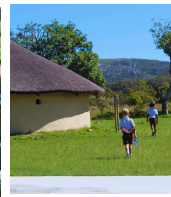
What's Been Happening

Earlier this year the Wildflower Reserve was buzzing with activity as FOVS Conservation Interns welcomed three school visits from Woodridge College & Prep.

The Grade 2 learners joined their annual story-led walk, exploring fynbos, visiting the amaXhosa homestead, and planting seedlings in the nursery. The Mini Weavers and Weavers discovered the Reserve through play at the jungle gym and homestead, while the Grade 5 group explored the forest trail on a guided hike beneath the Van Stadens Bridge.

Together, these visits highlight the Reserve as a living classroom, where meaningful learning happens at every age, guided by nature itself. To book or find out more about our Guided School Walks, visit our website or get in touch:

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Earlier this year, the FOVS Conservation Interns undertook a three-day team-building and learning journey through Tsitsikamma. The trip included guided eco-tourism experiences in Tsitsikamma National Park, a Canopy Tree Tour, a walk across the suspension bridge at Storms River Mouth, and a visit to Bloukrans Bridge.

Experiencing these sites as visitors provided an important shift in perspective, reinforcing conservation not only as protection of natural spaces, but also as the ability to interpret, share, and communicate their value. The lessons gained now feed directly into their work at the Wildflower Reserve, strengthening how they engage with visitors through storytelling and guided experiences.

Blooms to look out for



Protea repens (Sugarbush)



Protea neriifolia
(Narrow-leaf sugarbush)



Leucadendron salignum
(Common Sunshine Conebush)



Kniphofia linearifolia
(Common Marsh Poker)



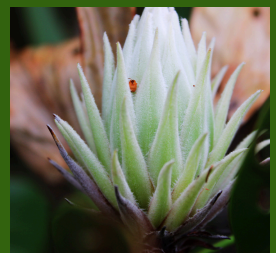
Tarchonanthus camphoratus
(Camphor Tree)



Protea cynaroides
(King Protea)

Across the Wildflower Reserve, these iconic blooms are beginning to unfurl, standing proudly among the winter fynbos. As South Africa's national flower, the King Protea is impossible to overlook.

Its magnificent flower head can grow up to 30 cm wide, framed by layers of striking bracts in shades ranging from soft blush pink to deep crimson.





LAST WORD FROM THE FIELD

The Flower House Shop, launched in 2024 as part of the FOVS Entrepreneur Programme, is managed by Conservation Interns as a practical, hands-on training space. Here, interns gain real experience in small business operations, customer service, stock management, and financial responsibilities, building essential, work-ready skills. It also serves as a living learning environment where interns rotate roles, work as a team, and interact directly with visitors, creating a meaningful link between conservation, eco-tourism, and entrepreneurship.

Importantly, the Flower House Shop also generates a small but growing income stream for FOVS. The intention is to develop this further over time, strengthening the sustainability of the programme and directly supporting conservation learning at the Reserve.

Open on weekends and public holidays, the shop offers refreshments and locally grown Zebra Haworthia (*Haworthiopsis attenuata*) propagated from the Reserve's Indigenous Nursery.

Every purchase contributes to intern development and helps sustain and grow this FOVS initiative. Visitors are warmly invited to stop by, enjoy a refreshment.



Connect with us:

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