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ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22
FERNCLIFFE FOREST WILDING



This year, the first in Ferncliffe forest wilding's existence, was all about preparing the ground and sowing seeds – yet we experienced quite astonishing growth too. The organisation was inaugurated in January 20, 2021, and by 1 March the co-founders had transferred from Cape Town to Pietermaritzburg to begin work on the ground.

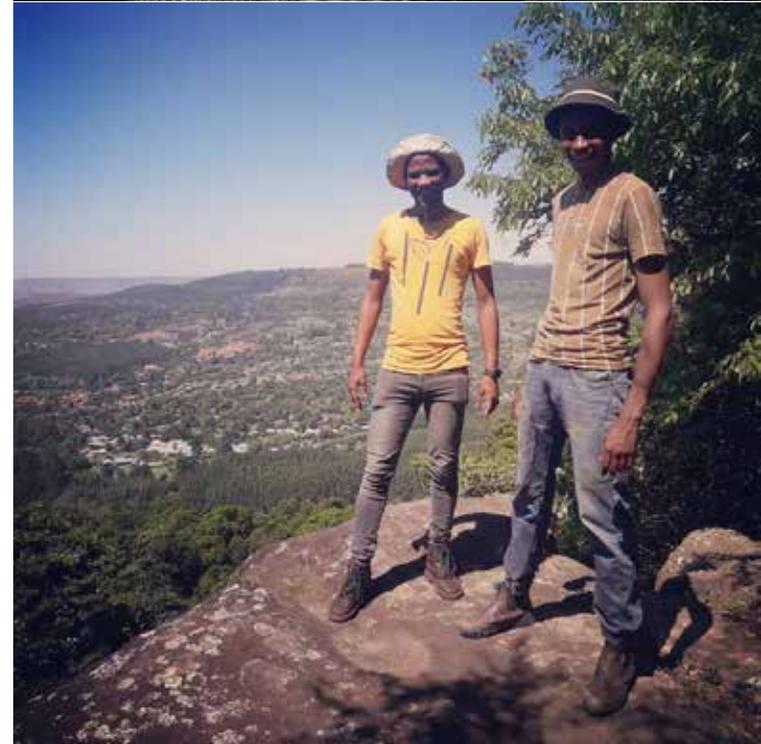
While still in Cape Town, efforts had been made to find and talk to stakeholders working in Ferncliffe, the incredibly biodiverse mistbelt forest remnant on a northern ridge of Pietermaritzburg. All, including the landowner, the Msunduzi Municipality were welcoming — the municipality in particular was very supportive of the undertaking. Thank you!

Two key aims on arrival included:

Identifying pilot sites in which to begin invasive species clearing work. Three areas close to the Ferncliffe forest wilding's base were chosen to minimise the need for extra transport and logistics. Each is very different in terms of the composition of invasive species.

To get a website up and running that would not only convey the beauty of the forest and its intrinsic value, but would provide a portal through which donors from all over the world could donate trees or support the project in other ways. We believe our 'product' offering here, of beautiful certificates and very personalised feedback, as well as the opportunity to choose an individual tree, is unusual and engaging. The site needed to be technologically complex to achieve this, and the web designer Stiaan Smit is to be thanked!

We also began engaging with other conservation organisations and botanists in order to understand the richness of species here and how best to begin work. Two 'Forest Guardians', both post-graduate students, joined up and worked very



hard physically, while doing a little extra mentoring and data collection. We were also incredibly lucky to be able to partner with another conservation organisation and two private Trusts to employ a team of 10 young people as part of the presidential job creation programme Amanzi ethu Nobuntu (Our Water, Our People). They spent some of their six-month contract at Ferncliffe.

A process for the reserve to be gazetted as a Protected Environment has been initiated. Stakeholders have agreed to form a management association in order to partner with the municipality around the upkeep of the reserve should it be gazetted. More funding is required to complete the process, but it's well underway.

Of course, it has also been an incredibly challenging first year. Covid-19 continued to derail international travel, a market we'd initially planned to target. And the July riots created yet more uncertainty in a country where inequality and need stare everyone in the face. The NPC has not yet paid the co-founders any wages, which is unsustainable. To grow, Ferncliffe forest wilding must also be able to provide Forest Guardians with more work opportunities and cover administrative and compliance costs around salaries, health & safety insurance & unemployment insurance.

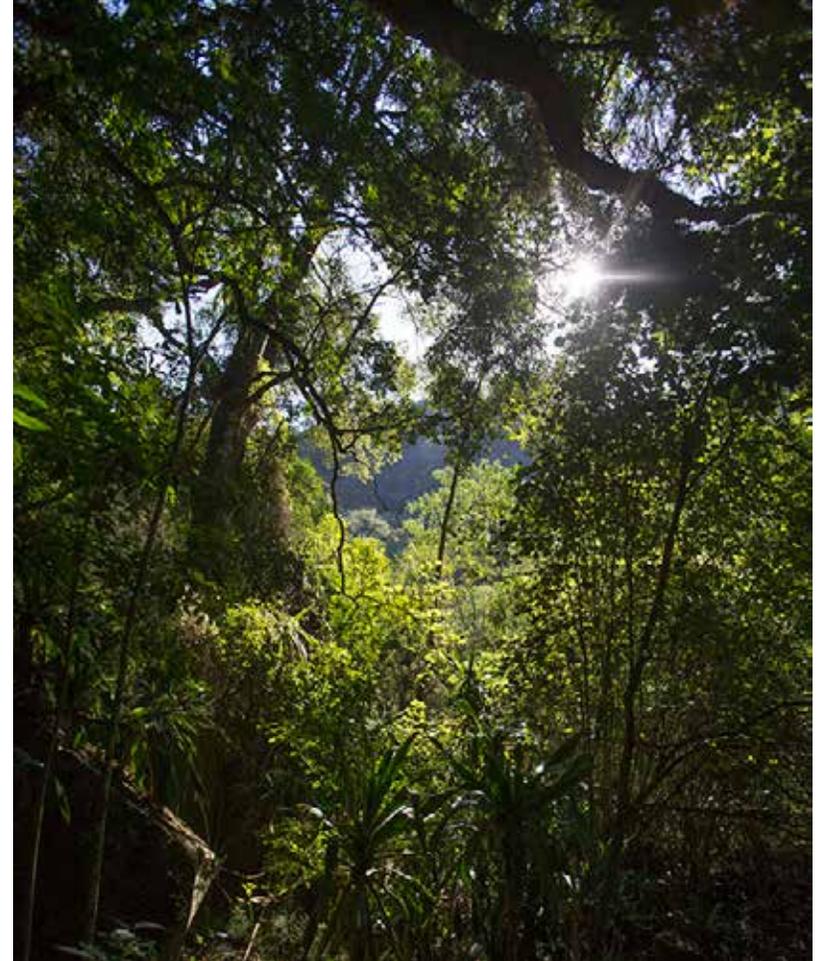
But having achieved this much in so little time, we are quite sure that Ferncliffe forest wilding will grow as lush and strong as the primary forest that has survived against the odds for so long!

Connor Cullinan & Janine Stephen

C. Cullinan



Co-founders



MEET FERNCLIFFE

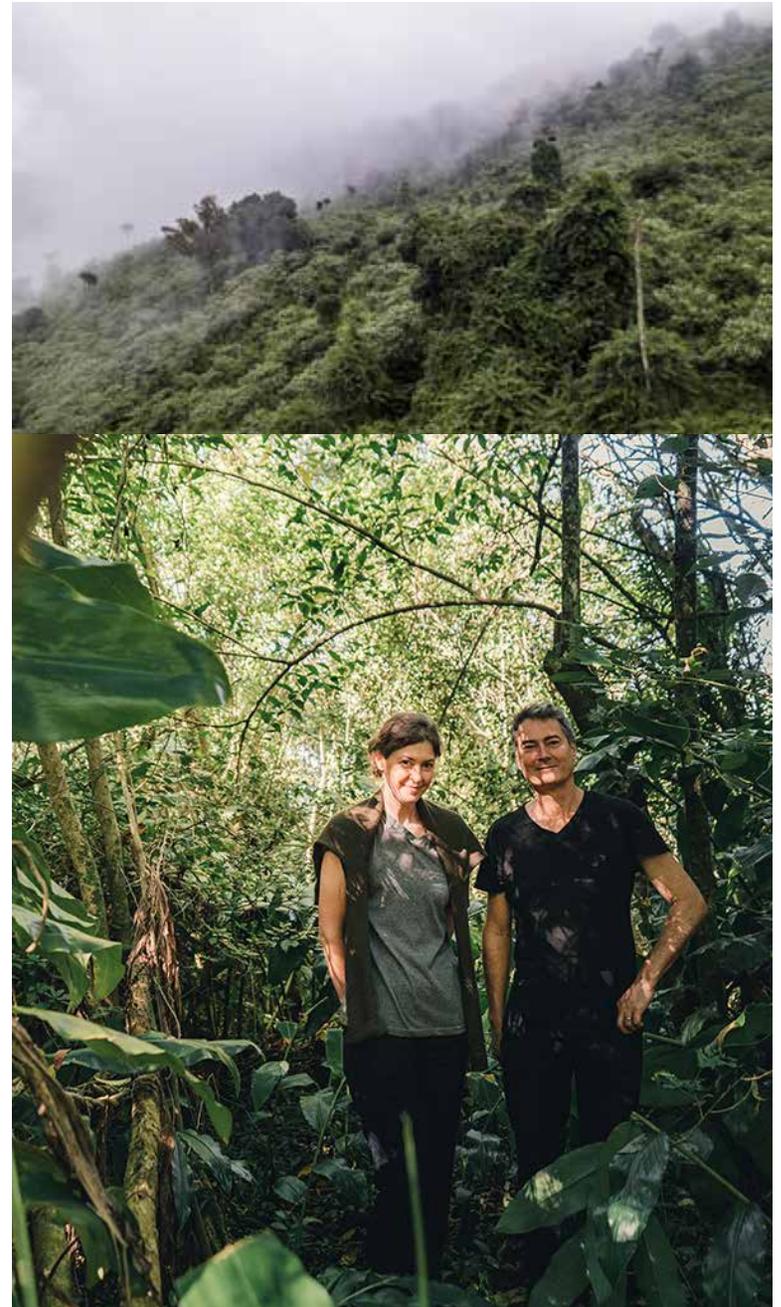
It's an evocative strip of endangered mistbelt forest on the edge of a city in South Africa, in the middle of a biodiversity hotspot with the highest tree diversity of any temperate forest in the world.

It has nearly 70 species of ferns (more than the British Isles). The most powerful eagle in Africa whips through its forest in search of Vervet monkey prey. It has large mammals like Bushpig, and unusual regional endemics, such as cannibal snails, and its habitat and biodiversity score top of the class in the "irreplaceable" category. Yet without help, it will disappear like the mists that shroud it.

MEET FERNCLIFFE FOREST WILDING

It's an innovative rewilding and biodiversity restoration not-for-profit run by creative entrepreneurs. It's based a step away from the forest, so is perfectly positioned to make a difference. On 4 February 2022, it officially turned six months old. But it had already erected shadehouses, collected seed, linked up with other conservation bodies and authorities, contributed to moves to have the forest gazetted as a protected environment, planted 60 indigenous trees, and provided work opportunities in a city where jobs are in demand. We are committed to best practice, science, careful monitoring and transparency.

Rewilding Ferncliffe, a physical place of great beauty, is a symbol of what needs to be done across the globe: to take action in hyper-local, careful ways to contribute to a healthier society (and planet). We need forests and forests need trees. We make sure more grow.



OUR WORK

PROJECT GOALS

- 10,000 trees planted in our lifetimes
- 630 hectares restored, with partners
- 2,500 trees grown by end 2025

END FEBRUARY 2022

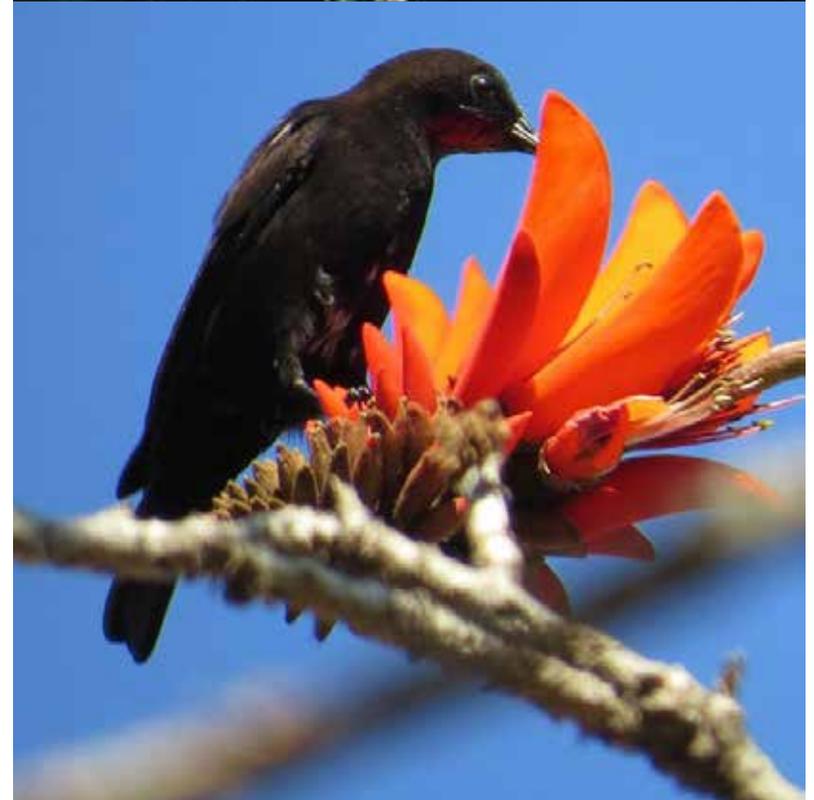
- 80 trees planted
- 41 work days created (excluding over 100 for the Amanzi ethu Nobuntu team)
- Three pilot project sites
- Initial invasive clearing on 2 hectares of land

THE PLACE

Thickly forested in places, Ferncliffe is home to special birds from White-starred Robin to Red-backed Mannikin, as well as the Red Listed African Crowned Eagle. Bushpig, Bushbuck, Cane Rats, Genet and Porcupine frequent the fringes, as well as forest. Mammals that have become scarcer or absent as alien scrub has replaced grassland and indigenous forest include hares, Rock Hyrax and Blue Duiker. Amphibians, various snakes and invertebrates abound.

THE PROBLEM

Invasive vegetation is threatening the forest's survival. It chokes waterways and takes up vast quantities of ground water, drying streams and altering the entire ecosystem. Ferncliffe, with its diversity of soils and altitudes, is a haven for these opportunistic plants to establish and spread.



OUR VISION

- To see the mistbelt forest remnants and rare grasslands here recover, free of invasive vegetation that is killing the forest;
- To protect and bolster biodiversity in an endangered forest biome that could support more key species;
- To extend and connect this biome to other fragments;
- To promote a treasured green space for the city, much like Table Mountain in Cape Town.



ACHIEVEMENTS

- Good feedback as to the communications materials and quality of certificates, with returning donors.
- We registered with international tree-planting organisation Plant-for-the-Planet (based in Berlin), and were featured on their blog;
- We became an early adopter of the new data-collecting and transparency-promoting monitoring site Restor.eco and were included in their founding network;
- Ferncliffe forest wilding was featured in about eight print and online articles in the local and national press;
- A small nursery is already up and running;
- We planted 80 indigenous trees and over 90% have survived;
- We started connecting with community groups such as the local BirdLife clubs and Ramblers.
- As indicated above, we've linked up with four other organisations in a process supported by the Municipality to have the municipal nature reserve in which Ferncliffe is found formally protected;
- We received high-end PR exposure to some of South Africa's top creative and luxury brands, including Babylonstoren and the Design Indaba, thanks to goodwill from a PR agency;
- The group "Snare Aware" showed us how to conduct a snare sweep to counter this poaching scourge.
- We tapped into the enormous goodwill and enthusiasm South Africans have for restoration projects: Our accounting, PR, Website Design and tree buying costs have all been discounted, often without us having to request this.
- We found a locally based bamboo expert to help us contain and remove the running bamboo that has overtaken nearly 3 hectares.
- Social media followers have been inching up and we hope will grow significantly in the next 12 months.



© Connor Cullinan and Jantine Stepien in Ferncliffe. (Photo: Dore Southwood)

FINANCIAL POSITION

We exceeded expectations in terms of income for the first financial year.

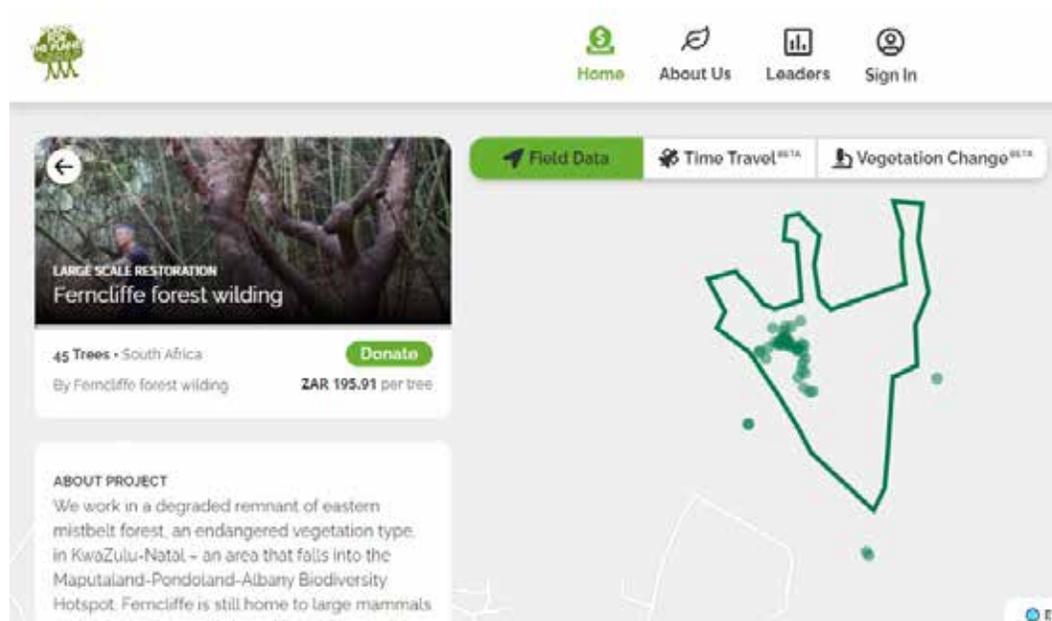
Donations for the year to end February 2022: R94,208
(This excludes approximately R2,600 raised through Plant-for-the-Planet.)

The NGO has no debt aside from zero-interest loans provided by the co-founders.

Our support has thus far mostly come from individuals.

Funding requests, both local and international, are a key focus for the next financial year as donations through the website alone are unlikely to allow for growth in the near future. The co-founders have not yet been remunerated and this will have to change.

The majority of monies donated have gone to restoration expenses, with the remainder to accounting and web design services, and some printing and packaging. Restoration expenses include casual labour, trees, nursery costs, potting medium and bags, tools, PPE, and herbicide. Initial website design costs were covered by loans from the founders.



Ferncliffe NPC

(Registration Number 2021/337672/08)

Financial Statements for the 14 month period ended 28 February 2022

Detailed Income Statement

Figures in R	Notes	14 month period ended 28 February 2022
Revenue	7	
Donations received		92,110
Sale of goods		2,099
		94,209
Distribution costs	8	
Delivery expenses		(129)
Administrative expenses	9	
Accounting fees		(8,062)
Bank charges		(3,286)
Subscriptions		(11,258)
Telecommunication		(1,134)
		(23,740)
Other expenses	10	
Advertising		(3,576)
Office expense		(1,998)
Printing and stationery		(2,693)
Restoration expenses		(42,124)
Training		(500)
Website expense		(64,019)
		(114,910)
Deficit from operating activities		(44,570)
Deficit for the period		(44,570)

THE TEAM

ON THE BOARD

Brandon McGugan
Sarah-Jane Birch
Connor Cullinan

CO-FOUNDERS

Connor Cullinan
Janine Stephen

FOREST GUARDIANS 2021/22 (Freelance)

Vusumuzi Mlangi
Siyabonga Sangweni

THANK YOU

Msunduzi Municipality
Indevaldi Accounting Services
The Cullinan siblings
Vanessa Stephen
Stiaan Smit, Atlas
Melanie van Zyl
David Southwood

Ferncliffe NPC is a registered South African non-profit company.
Registration Number 255-924 NPO. PBO Number 930072645.

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