

VIEWS & NEWS



Witnessing the spectacle of migration on our doorsteps



Barn Swallows collecting in their hundreds and thousands on wires and rooftops in the Ambers over the past few weeks is a phenomenon that occurs in several places across the country at this time of the year.

The birds were gathering prior to their departure for Europe where they will be breeding during the northern summer months. Of about 90 species of swallows worldwide, Barn Swallows are the most abundant and have the widest distribution range. They have breeding grounds across North America and Eurasia. In the non-breeding season, the populations move to South Africa, South America and southern Asia. Estimates put the number of birds migrating from Europe to Africa annually at between 22-44 million.

It was exciting to be part of the migration spectacle, seeing them strung tightly together like beads on the wires, before exploding in a chattering mass to fill the sky while feeding on beetles and bugs and then settling to rest again.

Tourists flock to Tanzania to watch the wildebeest migration in the Serengeti every year between January and March. In the Ambers, residents are able to experience the migration of Barn Swallows from the comfort of their own homes.

See page 7 for more information on swallows

Crystelle Wilson

TOP: Barn Swallows gathering on overhead wires at dawn and dusk and flying off from a rooftop where they have been resting and preening.

ABOVE LEFT: An adult Barn Swallow

Pictures: Crystelle Wilson

SOME NOTABLE MIGRATIONS:

Wildebeest and flamingos in Africa, fruit bats in Zambia, monarch butterflies between California and Mexico, humpback and gray whales, salmon, elephants in Mali and Sri Lanka.

GREATER AMBERS IN-HOUSE FACILITATION TEAM (The team that lives here)

Christine Francis	5491	Gwyn Sprake	5708
Tish McDonald	5031	Ron Wilmans	5399
Gill Siedle	5355	Marlene Wilton	7009
Ed Frank	6607		

Sales for our greater benefit

UPDATE FROM THE AMBER LAKES CHAIR

March and April in this part of the world are always lovely months, particularly the late in the day as the afternoon changes into evening. With autumn coolness already setting in, I see many more folk enjoying walking and soaking in the beauty around us.

Even more confirmation that summer is ending comes from the congregating of so many Barn (European) Swallows around the Ambers before leaving us for northern locations. Some other migratory birds have already left.

The past months have been a busy time for your trustees and management team (Alan, Jade and Greg) as they prepared budgets for 2022. Our budgets are particularly complex because we share certain costs of maintaining shared facilities and infrastructure. That means the inter-relationship of all four Bodies Corporate in budget preparation becomes quite tricky. The difficulties have been masterfully handled by the finance experts under the leadership of our finance manager, Greg Dimmick.

Forecasts of better times for Howick under the leadership of the new mayor have already proved accurate. The pro-activemayor, Chris Pappas, and his team, see Howick as a community, with the municipality playing the role of a reliable service provider. He has initiated a "Mayoral Khulumanathi/Talk to us Programme" that will meet regularly. The four Amber chairs will be included in these meetings, with our focus being Ward 5. Suggestions of improvements for Howick, raised during these meetings, are recorded and will help in planning the municipal budget. Follow up meetings will monitor progress. A first meeting, with the mayor in the chair, has already been held and it was very positive.

The current Covid-19 level has given us the opportunity to cautiously open up craft and dance clubs, movies in the auditorium and all sporting facilities, and it is good to see many taking advantage of this. Queen's song, with Freddie Mercury, "I wanna break free" had become our daily chant but now we can really do so. However, Covid-19 is NOT a thing of the past, so please still take every precaution.

On a more sombre note, the war on the Ukraine is affecting the globe in many ways, including a horrendous increase predicted for South Africa's petrol price. It will mean we all will have to tighten our belts and it will certainly have a very negative effect on our cost of living. The proverbial silver lining for this cloud could be that we walk a lot more, perhaps to the office, library and post boxes, even the shops across the road, and benefit by losing our midriffs and love handles.

Despite living in these exceptional times, with all their difficulties, we can still all strive to be positive by counting our blessings each day. There are so many people in a far worse position than we are.

So, enjoy each day we are given to spend in our incredible estates. What a very special place this is!

Norman Freeman 6843

LIBRARY NEWS

New to our shelves is a book by Klaus Schwab called **The Fourth Industrial Revolution**, which is an interesting business review looking at the future of society. It explores the impact that modern technology has had and will have on the world. The latest Elizabeth George novel, **Something to Hide**, published recently, is also a new addition, as are John le Carre's **Silverview**, and **Snow Country** by Sebastian Faulks. The library has also bought the latest Ken Follett, **Never**, a contemporary account of a possible scenario played out in Chad with involvement of the superpowers of China and the United States in a plot that is chillingly plausible.

We are grateful for the continuous donations of both fiction and non-fiction. Special thanks to Bets Richardson for donating book club books in excellent condition. In December there were 53 fiction titles added to the collection, 55 in January and 24 in February. The statistics are not in yet for March, but the additional titles should be significant.

The DVD collection now occupies additional shelves. The recently introduced box sets are numbered from 2000 and we now have just under one hundred of these, which are proving to be very popular. We continue to weed out any unpopular DVDs and any in poor condition. Besides the box sets, 58 DVDs were added this year.

Someone has donated a magnifying reader to the library. We have put this machine on a table in the non-fiction section. When switched on it enlarges any sized print and displays it on a screen. It appears that this device could help those with impaired vision. We hope that those residents with reading difficulty can make use of it.

Rowena and Norma



Harcourts Ambers
"The difference between ordinary & extra ordinary is the little bit extra."

Debbie Gurney
082 557 0107

Tracy Williams
072 204 8194

Tiffany Hancock
074 444 9694

Yard 41, Karkloof Road T: (033) 330 3436
amberproperty.co.za Professional. Legal. Best



Call me for all your
Amber property needs.

Sharon Davies 082 579 2637
sharon.davies@tysonprop.co.za
Official Amber Sales Representative

INCORPORATING
AMBER PROPERTIES

TYSON
PROPERTIES

Howick, Lets talk. 033 330 8101 tysonprop.co.za

AMBERS STAFF NEWS

Hard work pays off

We congratulate Nkosinathi (Nathi) Mhlongo on two recent milestones in his life.

Nathi's first son, Nkazimulo, was born in February. We wish the family well.

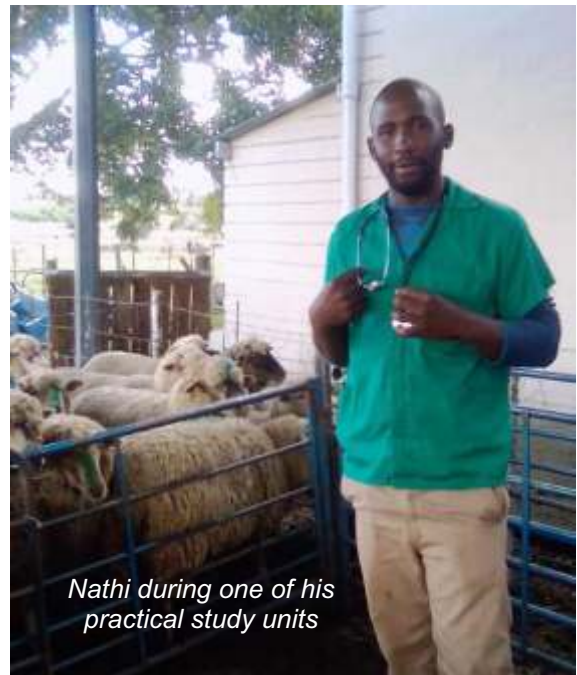
Secondly, he has received news that he has successfully completed his National Diploma in Animal Health for which he has studied part-time through UNISA.

Nathi began this diploma in 2011. Since then he has passed 24 study units, four of these with distinction. This is an exacting course which includes practical elements. He had to do all these courses part-time and the practical work was done during his periods of leave. This has been a long haul and he can be truly proud of his achievement.

So now, just when Nathi thinks he can take some time off and get some early nights, his study-time will be replaced by baby-time!

Nathi's graduation will be held in May this year. Well done Nathi. We salute you.

Meyrick Bowker



Nathi during one of his practical study units

ART EXHIBITION



Open house raises funds

Over the first weekend of March, Brenda Johnstone held an art exhibition by invitation in her home at Amber Valley.

Numerous oil on canvas portraits and paintings were on display plus embroidery needle paintings, in particular one of the Howick Falls that took over 3000 hours to complete and which won the trophy for "Best on Show" at the Royal Agricultural Show, Pietermaritzburg. There were also cross stitch Japanese pictures and bronze sculptures. Nothing was for sale.

The exhibition was in aid of the SPCA which benefitted by R7110, generously donated by over 200 visitors.

*LEFT ABOVE: Stewart and Brenda Johnstone
Picture: Crystelle Wilson*



*LEFT: Faithful old Bracken, the Border Collie,
with adorable young Lucy who came
to the Johnstones from the SPCA
18 months ago.*



ButlinHearing
WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF SOUND

Claire: 033 330 3966
Hearing Aid Fittings
Home Visits to Ambers - **Free**
Hearing Screening and Trials - **Free**



AMBERS RESIDENT
SPECIALIST AGENT

**ROSEMARY
WAKELIN**

PROPERTY PRACTITIONER
082 806 4225
033 001 0327/8

R&R
Real Estate

This is what happens to material sent for recycling

On Wednesday 9 March 2022 a group of about 40 members of the Natural Resources Club braved the rain to pay a visit to Imagine IF at their recycling depot near the entrance to Midmar Dam.

Imagine IF, formerly known as Wildlands, is the company that collects all our recyclable material every alternate week from the Ambers. The group went to see what happens to the material collected by Imagine IF.

When the material arrives at the depot it is sorted into all the different types i.e. plastic (various types), cans, cardboard and paper, glass, etc. The sorted material is then baled and shipped off to companies that use the waste to manufacture new products. For example polystyrene is used to manufacture ceiling cornices and picture frames; certain plastics combined with glass and bitumen are used to manufacture building blocks, pavers and kerb stones.

The following photos show some aspects of our visit to the recycling depot on a wet and rainy day.

Deryck Day



Use G R L plus 2 letters of your choice
and make 4 words with the same 5 letters

KATE-MARIE
HEARING SOLUTIONS

For all your **HEARING HEALTHCARE** requirements:

- Hearing Tests
- Hearing Aids Fittings
- Hearing Aid Repairs & Services
- Medical Aid Rates

KATE-MARIE BUTLIN
B.Sc. (Hons) in Audiology

HOWICK: Howick Health Centre, 93 Main Street
HILTON: Hilton Health Medical Centre
PHIL: Hayfields Mall Pharmacy

AT AMBER VALLEY !!

082 067 7698 | www.katemariehearingsolutions.co.za

Kate-Marie Butlin will be back **at Amber Valley**, once a month, to attend to all your hearing health care requirements! Prior to the nationwide lockdown, Kate-Marie offered her services to The Greater Ambers residents, on-site at Amber Valley inside the Care Centre Clinic. Unfortunately this service had to be put on hold during the lockdown period; however, we are pleased to inform the residents that Kate-Marie will be returning to the Care Centre Clinic on a monthly basis from April 2022.

Kate-Marie is a qualified Hearing Aid Acoustician who has her own private practice, Kate-Marie Hearing Solutions, based in Howick and she has 12 years of experience working in the hearing healthcare industry.

Kate-Marie will be offering the following services to the residents of the Greater Ambers:

- **Hearing tests**
- **FREE trial period with hearing devices**
- **Hearing aid batteries and accessories**
- **Telephone amplifiers**
- **Hearing aid adjustments, services and repairs**
- **Treatment and rehabilitation options for hearing loss**
- **Custom noise protection plugs**
- **Custom swim plugs**

Kate-Marie will be at Amber Valley on the 2nd Wednesday of every month

To book an appointment to see Kate-Marie at Amber Valley, please contact **Gaynor at the Care Centre**



*Dave Wharton and Judy Magnussen
with managers of Imagine IF, Yasna and Nolu
Photos: Jenny Kilshaw and Deryck Day*



Nolu explaining the work done at the recycling depot



*Recently arrived waste at the Midmar depot (above)
waiting to be sorted by the ladies (below)*

to page 5





Ladies sorting different types of plastic materials.



Yasna talking about plastic building blocks (above) and plastic paving blocks and kerbstones (below).



Plastic bottle tops for shredding before being baled and sent to a Durban company.



Articles that should not have been sent to Imagine IF for recycling!



Bottles being broken up and baled.

*"If it can't be reduced, reused, repaired, rebuilt, refurbished, refinished, resold, recycled, or composted, then it should be restricted, redesigned or removed from production."
— Pete Seeger, Folk Singer & Social Activist*

Hi-Q
THE 1 YOU CAN TRUST

GREAT DEALS now in Howick

Trading Hours:
Weekdays 08h00 - 17h00
Saturdays 08h00 - 13h00

f hiqsouthafrica
www.hiq.co.za

37 Main Street, Howick 3290
033 3302151 / 3515 - hiqhowick@telkomsa.net

FREE Tyre Service

THE MORE WE CARE
the more beautiful life becomes

Nightingales

HOME-BASED CARING SERVICES

Tel: 033 330 4313
Email: nightingales@telkomsa.net
Mark 082 301 4270
Lorraine 072 602 7505
www.nightingaleshomecare.co.za f

**LET US CARE FOR YOUR LOVED ONE IN
THE COMFORT OF THEIR OWN HOME**

OUT AND ABOUT

Climbing Mount Gilboa

We are lucky to have such a choice of places where we can walk with our dogs – lots of short easy walks in the forest, but also a choice of longer, more challenging, hikes in other areas. One that I have long wanted to do was to climb Mount Gilboa.

Paul had been rather reluctant about this idea but last year suggested as a special Mother's Day treat we should do just that, or at least give it a try! Whilst perhaps not being every mother's ideal way of spending this day, I was more than happy.



The views from the top and Paul Scher finding the quickest way down

Pictures: Di Scher



Treat yourself to a
FACIAL of your choice
& receive a FREE set of
Gel Overlays for your Toes

063 369 1591

SHOP 8 St John's Lifestyle Centre



Also in Hilton!



OPEN MON TO FRI & SAT A.M.

www.thebeautyinstitute.co.za

Bright and early that Sunday morning we

drove to Bush Willow to start our hike. After unloading Chloe, backpacks, Paul's walking stick (which disappeared in the jaws of a boisterous Staffie), we went off in search of the honesty box where we could leave our entrance fee. Eventually we found it above the driers in the laundry room – where else? A young boy had managed to retrieve Paul's stick so we were good to go.

Finding what we hoped was the start of the trail which, after the previous night's storm, was incredibly wet and slippery, we set off with great enthusiasm. We had hiked through this beautiful indigenous forest a few years ago to a waterfall at the top, so there were a few landmarks we knew to look for, such as a turn off to the Shawcross farm and a whole lot of clivias. We found neither, nor did we reach the waterfall from where we knew there was a path to Mount Gilboa.

The trail disappeared numerous times and, having learned the hard way, each time we went back to the spot where we'd last seen it and somehow managed to find something that resembled a trail. However, after 4.5 km of hard slippery climbing, we decided this was crazy and were on the verge of giving up when suddenly we emerged on the top of a plateau where we saw, miraculously, a cairn and a trail. Wonderful! And there, in the distance, Mount Gilboa.

Not being sure we would reach the top of Mount Gilboa in time to get back down safely, we nevertheless gave ourselves over to enjoying the beauty of the views from the plateau. The 360 degree view included the Drakensberg mountains, right to the rolling hills, dams, farmlands and forests of the midlands. It was breathtaking.

And, yes, we did manage to walk the length of the plateau and finally up the hillside of Mount Gilboa where we enjoyed our lunch. Walking back across the plateau we had the joy of the beauty surrounding us plus the pleasure in knowing that we had achieved our aim. Add to this the relief when we found the cairn again pointing us in the right direction to the forest. Then began the slippery, sliding trail back. Staying upright was nigh-on impossible and, on looking behind, the sight of Paul on his bum became more and more frequent. So it was with much relief and a huge sense of achievement that we reached the caravan park again. A Mother's Day when we couldn't be with any of our children was thus truly perfect.

Di Scher



Telling our summer visitors apart



The Greater Striped Swallow (left) is larger in size and more finely streaked below than the Lesser Striped Swallow (right). The rump is pale rufous and the ear coverts pale whitish. The Lesser Striped Swallow has a richer rufous rump and ear coverts and is heavily streaked.



The diagnostic features of Barn Swallow (left) are the chestnut-rufous throat and forehead, blue-black breast band, and deeply forked tail which also shows white windows when spread in flight. White-throated Swallow (right) has a blue-black breast band and the white throat is distinctive. The rufous on the forecrown is limited to the area in front of the eyes.

Pictures: Crystelle Wilson

Four species of swallows appear on the bird list for the Greater Ambers. These are Barn Swallow, White-throated Swallow and Greater and Lesser Striped Swallow.

Barn Swallows are non-breeding summer migrants from Eurasia, arriving in October-November and departing between February and May. They spend their time feeding over moist grasslands. Towards the end of the season they collect in large numbers on telephone wires, trees or reed beds.

The other three species are intra-african migrants, two of which breed in the Ambers. There are two known nest sites of White-throated Swallows, one in the bird hide at Robin Dam and another over the entrance to the Ambers Auditorium. It is cup shaped and built with mud pellets and lined with fine grass, rootlets and feathers.

Greater Striped Swallows build their nests under the eaves of verandas, plastering a bowl of mud pellets on the underside of the roof to which they add a tubular mud tunnel 70-230 mm long.

There are no records of Lesser Striped Swallows breeding in the Ambers, although they do breed as close as in Pietermartizburg.

Crystelle Wilson

Source: Roberts Birds of Southern Africa



IMMORTALITY VS REALITY



I read a comment made by a wildlife rehabilitator that went something along these lines: "rehabilitation does not guarantee immortality" and while this may be a bit obvious, I know exactly what he meant.

Often wildlife rehabilitators are expected to be miracle workers. They are expected to hand-raise young animals that would have had a far better chance of survival with their own mothers, heal deathly ill patients, and fix irreparably broken bones. More than this, somehow the animals they have managed to rehabilitate and return to the wild are expected to have better chances of survival than their wild counterparts.

The truth is quite different. Rehabilitation is working with animals that have already failed to survive; that would otherwise have died without intervention. It is simply giving them a second chance, not a guarantee, of surviving.

So, why bother then? Because of the damage our species does. Rehabilitation is not about population control; it is about damage control.

Tammy Caine, www.freemewildlife.org

S C R A B B L E

ANSWER:

G R L plus E A: LARGE, LAGER, REGAL, GLARE

Halfway Toyota Howick
 49 Main Street, Howick
www.halfwaytoyota.com
 P.O.Box 1274
Halfway
 Tel: 033 330 2175
 SALES AND SERVICE
 NEW AND USED VEHICLES

Finely Fixed
 Garry Barlow
 Cell: 082 627 3339
finelyfixed@iuncapped.co.za
 Repairing and Perfecting
 Sticking doors -
 Tiling - Painting
 Paving -
 Cupboards and
 much more...

At the 60th high school reunion

He was a widower and she a widow. They had known each other for many years, being high school classmates and having attended class reunions in the past without fail.

This 60th anniversary of their class, the widower and the widow made a foursome with two other singles. They had a wonderful evening, their spirits high with the widower throwing admiring glances across the table and the widow smiling coyly back at him.

Finally, he picked up courage and blurted out, "Will you marry me?"

After about six seconds of careful consideration, she answered, "Yes . . . yes, I will!"

The evening ended on a happy note for the widower. But the next morning he was troubled. Did she say yes? Or did she say no? He couldn't remember. Try as he would, he just could not recall. He went over the conversation of the previous evening, but his mind was blank. He remembered asking the question but for the life of him he could not recall her response. So with fear and trepidation, he picked up the phone and called her.

First, he explained that he couldn't remember as well as he used to. Then he reviewed the past evening. As he gained a little more courage he then inquired of her, "When I asked if you would marry me, did you say yes or did you say no?"

"Why you silly man, I said Yes. Yes I will! And I meant it with all my heart."

The widower was delighted. He felt his heart skip a beat.

Then she continued, "And I am so glad you called because I couldn't remember who asked me!"



Contributions for *Amber Views & News* are most welcome.

Send by email to crystelle.wilson@gmail.com
 or WhatsApp 082 723 5158 by the 20th of each month.