

Gowrie Farm

NOTTINGHAM ROAD

From the Pastures & Fairways of Gowrie Farm

Gowrie Farm: Insights into the Gowrie Farm environment

Gowrie Farm is a prestigious golfing and fly-fishing estate, set on 360ha in Nottingham Road at the heart of the KZN Midlands. Established on what was once farming land, and retaining an element of this agricultural aspect (farmer Jub Greene continues to live in the family homestead on the farm, and rears his heifers here), the vision behind Gowrie Farm is the creation of a residential estate where human lifestyle and architecture are in harmony with the particular environment of the area. House sites have been carefully positioned to protect the vistas of the rolling countryside, and attention has been paid to restoring certain areas of the estate, for example, the rehabilitation and/or protection of the indigenous grasslands and wetlands.

During the initial phase of the development, Dave Cook was Environmental Officer for Gowrie Farm, and continues to consult on environmental matters. He says, 'Perhaps the most important natural resource aside from the four wetland systems that drain Gowrie Farm, is the grassland that covers the backdrop of hills to the north of the property. In terms of the Environmental Management Plan for Gowrie, this area is set aside as a reserved zone, which means that no building development is permitted. It is an area that is botanically very representative of the flowering plant life of the region's grasslands as well as habitat for many small mammals and antelope. Common

Reedbuck have adapted well to a mix of agricultural and natural pasture in the Midlands and Gowrie is no exception. This species tends to lie up during the day and descend from the Gowrie hills to feed on the nutritious rye grass pastures at night - a common pattern all over local farms. Oribi antelope, an endangered species, are of course less easily catered for and while capable of making use of agricultural pastures for some of their needs, tend to rely on good quality natural veld and well protected boundary fences for survival. On Gowrie the farm component of the estate has use of the hilly grassland areas during summer, a practice that renders rank grass growth to the ideal short grass regimes that Oribi prefer. So here is a case of agriculture and wildlife conservation acting in a complementary way for sustainable management of natural resources to the benefit of the society as a whole. A walk along these hills makes for a very pleasurable experience - one which may in time even match the recreational value of the adjacent golf course and trout-fishing in the lives of the residents.'

Andrew James of The Indigenous Nursery in Pietermaritzburg is also very involved with the environmental features of the Gowrie estate. One of his recent tasks was to create an authentic look for a flow of water that suddenly spouted on the estate. 'The stream didn't exist until a borehole was dug to serve Gowrie,' he explains. 'By chance it struck an artesian well,

which seldom happens. The effect was to send up a constant stream of clear water, which made its way down the seventh fairway towards the clubhouse dam.'

Andrew and his team dug a channel for the new stream alongside the fairway, and created a realistic landscape for the waterway using rocks and appropriate plants. 'The area to the left of the stream, along with several other sections of the golf course, was planted with plugs of highland sourveld grasses such as Rooigras, Natal Red Top, and Wild Oat Grass, to fit in with the area's natural grasslands,' he says. 'In spring, large numbers of bulbs will be added to lend biodiversity and colour. The next task is to plant copses of Ouhout, Sagewood and Nana-berry, which are cold-hardy pioneer shrubs. These will provide a framework of natural-looking bush clumps for the golf course. In certain areas these shrubs will be augmented with other cold-



PHOTO: ALAN BENNEWITH

hardy local hardwood species such as Real Yellowwood, Wild Peach, White Stinkwood, and Mountain Hard Pear. Another task is the rehabilitation of the footprints of the two new reservoirs alongside the road to Mount West. This will be done using sods of veld grass. One site's rehabilitation is nearing completion, and the second one will be undertaken in spring.'



ABOVE: The oribi antelope.

PHOTO: JUSTIN WALDMAN

Gowrie Farm: Trout stocks



PHOTO: STEPHEN PRYKE

In addition to the golfing element of the Gowrie Farm estate, residents have the use of the four dams on the property for fly-fishing. Well-known freshwater fisheries expert Ricky Pott was called in to investigate the trout-fishing resources on Gowrie, and his studies recommended stocking the dams with 4000 fingerlings (young trout) to fill the perceived "generational gap" in the trout population in these dams, where a small number of very large fish currently dominate. The stocking exercise

was carried out in the summer months, and while a certain number of the smaller fish would have become 'lunch' for the larger fish, there is no doubt that the survivors will over time bring balance, and an improved fishing experience to the dams. A trout-fishing club has been formed under the auspices of the Homeowners Association, and proper regulations put in place to ensure that all trout anglers contribute to the overall success of the aquatic resources of Gowrie Farm.

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Gowrie Farm
SYNDICATED GOLF LODGES

Agents for Gowrie Farm

Peter Greene and Rob Dickson of Meander Real Estates are the Midlands agents for Gowrie and Gowrie Farm. Their main sales office is located inside the Junction, adjacent to Gowrie. They can be contacted for sales queries and brochures, and are also the best people to ask about site placements, the Gowrie architectural code etc.

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