

BRENTON BLUE NEWS – JULY 2006

Proclamation of the Reserve

The Brenton Blue Butterfly Reserve (BBBR) was proclaimed as a Special Nature Reserve by the national government in July 2005, and falls under the control of CapeNature.

The Brenton Blue Trust (BBT)

The BBT was established by private individuals and NGO's in 1994, with the principal aim of conserving the Brenton Blue butterfly. Now that the BBT has achieved its primary objective of having the habitat at Brenton-on-Sea declared as a nature reserve, it is now applying its funds towards management of the BBBR and research into the butterfly. Amongst the BBT's longer-term goals are to establish other breeding colonies of the Brenton Blue at suitable sites, such as Nature's Valley.



Brenton blue female

Management of the BBBR

Management actions at the BBBR are decided upon by a Management Committee, whose members are:

Allisdair MacDonald	CapeNature, George
Matthew Prophet	CapeNature, Goukamma
Johan Huisamen	CapeNature, Groenvlei
Ernest Pringle	Lepidopterists' Society of Africa (LepSoc)
Lorna Watt	Wildlife and Environment Society of SA (WESSA)
Dave Edge	Endangered Wildlife Trust and LepSoc
Brian Young	Local residents' representative

Research into the Ecology of the Brenton Blue

Reserve management has been informed by a research programme, which was conducted between 2000 and the present under the leadership of Dave Edge. The findings of this research were the subject of a PhD thesis, which was accepted by North West University in 2006. Dave received his doctorate in May 2006 for this work.

The principal management technique discovered during the research and used at the reserve is the cutting and maintenance of paths to simulate herbivore activities. These paths through the reserve are not intended for human access, except under close supervision, because it is along these



***Indigofera erecta*, food plant of the Brenton Blue**

paths that the food plant of the Brenton Blue grows, a small legume with pink flowers whose scientific name is *Indigofera erecta*. It is a delicate plant and can easily be damaged by trampling.

The population of the butterfly has remained stable now for four years and fluctuates between 120 and 150 adults per brood (there are two main broods per year – in November and in February).

Protection of the Brenton Blue

The public is only allowed access into the BBBR with the permission of CapeNature. Disturbance or collection of the butterflies is strictly prohibited, and any such activities should be immediately reported to CapeNature at 044 3830042 or to Dave Edge at 044 3810014.

Re-introduction of the Brenton Blue to Nature's Valley

A further research programme is being conducted by CapeNature and LepSoc, with the co-operation of the Nature's Valley Trust, with the intention of re-introducing the Brenton Blue to Nature's Valley. The butterfly used to exist there, but died out in the early 1970's for reasons not entirely clear, but which probably included destruction of some of its habitat for housing developments, and transformation (overgrowth) of the remaining habitat through lack of fires and reduction of grazing and browsing animal activities.

Part of the Brenton Blue's original habitat at Nature's Valley is conserved in a Fynbos Reserve (NVFR), and over the past few years this habitat has been restored to what we think is close to its original condition. Re-introduction of the Brenton Blue began in November last year and February this year, by relocation of eggs and caterpillars to the NVFR. The results of this experiment will be known in November this year, when hopefully some adult Brenton Blues will emerge at the NVFR.



Nature's Valley Fynbos Reserve

Control of alien vegetation

The management committee actively controls alien vegetation in the reserve. The most pernicious alien plant is Kikuyu (*Pennisetum clandestinum*), which grows on the road verges and in gardens bordering the reserve. A decision has been taken to completely eradicate the Kikuyu grass on the road verges along Fynbosoord at the bottom and W K Grobler Drive at the top. It will be replaced with non-invasive grass species such as Kweek (*Cynodon dactylon*) or Coastal Buffalo Grass (*Stenotaphrum secundatum*). Owners of properties bordering on the reserve are asked to plant these grasses rather than Kikuyu, and to replace Kikuyu with these species wherever possible.

25 July 2006