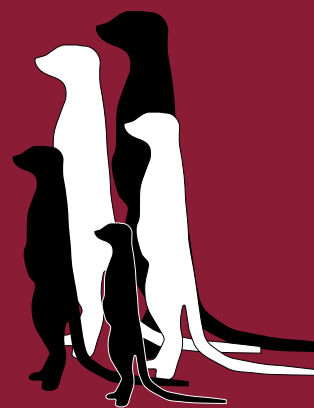




UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

The Meerkat

Official newsletter of the OPVSC



For the students, by the students

Issue 3 : Winter 2018

Beginners' Weekend 2018

On Friday, 27 April, the Onderstepoort Climbing Club (OPCC) set out to Waterval Boven for its annual Beginners' Weekend. It was an action-packed weekend filled with climbing, cycling, trail running and great campfire conversations.

Let me provide some background on our Beginners' Weekend. Every year, OPCC takes all the new climbers to Waterval Boven in Mpumalanga to climb real rock. Boven is one of the best climbing spots in South Africa (not to mention the beautiful landscape). Climbers from all over the globe come to test their skills on our crags. We usually camp at Tranquilitas Adventure Farm, which is not only on the verge of the crag, but also has numerous trail running and mountain bike routes. It is every adrenaline junkie's dream destination!

We arrived early on the Friday morning to ensure we find nice spots to pitch our tents (it was, after all, a long weekend). After everything was unloaded and we had set up camp, we wasted no time and immediately set to climbing. As they say: "The mountains are calling."

Because of the wide range of route difficulty-levels, Boven is the ideal place to

show new climbers the ropes, literally and figuratively! Being a beginner is not just about learning how to climb, but also about being challenged and improving on new and more difficult routes. We spent the majority of our days down at the crag climbing, but we didn't limit ourselves to climbing during daylight. As is tradition, we worked in a night-climbing session on the Saturday evening. There's nothing like climbing in the dark with only a flashlight and limited vision to get one's adrenaline pumping.

After a whole day of climbing, what better way to end it than with a braai? While sitting around the campfire every evening we exchanged stories and experiences over coffee and rusks.

Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end, and as the Monday rolled around, we packed up camp and headed back to OP (but only after we had fit in a morning climb). Luckily everyone arrived back safely,

but I would not necessarily say in one piece. We returned with bruised legs, scratched arms and muscles aching with every slight movement – but with smiles not even F10 could wipe off.

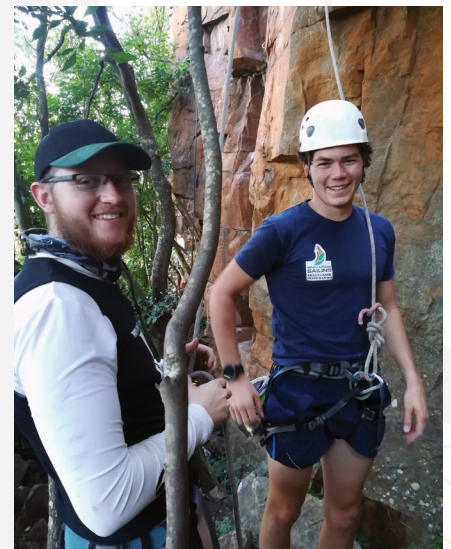
Alexandra Graham



Members of the OPCC will not let an opportunity to climb pass them by.



The OPCC at Waterval Boven in Mpumalanga for the Beginners' Weekend.



Beginners got the chance to climb real rock.

Message from the Chairperson



Riaan Crafford
Chairperson of the OPVSC

The exam hurricane has come and gone, the fifth-years are moving into clinics with optimistic anxiousness and the final-years are awaiting their final vacation. The rest of us enjoy a short reprieve and take an exasperated breath before the final exams come.

Every year seems more cynical than the last, and problems seem to pile up without clear and final resolution. Anxiety and stress seem to be part of the day as much as sleeping and eating. Dreams are hopeful and hope is scarce.

Why do we continue?

I am sure most of us have experienced these times when hope and motivation run scarce. How do you pick yourself up when you just can't seem to raise your mark? When you walk down the corridor and you don't seem to feel comfortable

in your own skin? When the old ghosts of depression seem to hold you back?

I think most importantly, start with a resolute smile. Prove to yourself that even though life got you down, you can have the audacity to smile in the face of strife. Reach out to friends, family and other support structures like the OPVSC, HC and the OP psychologist. Celebrate the small things in life even though it is just surviving the day.

I don't think there are simple answers, but I do believe that there are simple tasks that can help us get to the answers.

So, if you are a final-year with exhaustion sinking into your bones, or a nurse with equal exhaustion and no recognition, or a NewV that just hasn't adapted to OP yet – know that there are people there to help you.

On that note, feel free to come to me or any of the OPVSC or HC if you need help.

I hope to see your resolute smiles.

Riaan Crafford
Chairperson of OPVSC

I want to be a vet weekend

Over the weekend of 13 to 15 April, the OPVSC hosted over 100 high-school learners from across the country for the annual “I-want-to-be-a-vet” weekend. Even though we thought we were prepared, nothing could have prepared us for all the “eager beavers” ready to get their hands on any animal – well, mostly, except for the horses.

On the Friday, we spent most of the day collecting our learners, trying to distinguish between lost high-school learners roaming around campus and vet students - some of whom were mistaken for high-school learners!

The Saturday saw all our high-school learners, geared in greens and gumboots, ready to take on the tasks ahead. We rotated the learners in smaller groups between a cattle station, the skills lab, dissection hall, sheep, pathology and an ethics station. At the cattle and sheep stations, learners were taught about general body language and basic methods of restraint for the different animals. In pathology, senior lecturer, Prof Neil Duncan, greeted the learners with a warm smile (whilst sharpening some knives). In the dissection hall and skills lab, we showed the learners around, giving them an idea of what they will have to do one day, should they make that life-altering decision of studying veterinary science. At the ethics station, the learners were divided into groups for discussion, where they were given cases challenging their concepts of ethics and professionalism.



The team of volunteers for the “I-want-to-be-a-vet” weekend.

The day ended off with a relaxing braai and social, which saw everyone coming together to discuss the day's events and make friends!

Many of us entered this Faculty not knowing about the 'I-want-to-be-a-vet' weekend, and we didn't expect many students to be available during this time. However, the amazing support that came through from our team of volunteers and VetSCO members was overwhelming. Although the weekend did not go exactly according to plan, the volunteers were always available and enthusiastic. Guys, this weekend would not have gone through the way it did without you! You left a lasting impression on us, as well as our future colleagues. We hope the weekend was just as worth while for you as it was for us!

It is these young adults that we need to work with – the minds that will still be on their way to the Faculty that we need to target – in order to shape the future of Onderstepoort. I would highly encourage everyone to volunteer in the years to come (if your academic schedule allows for it). To reach even one mind, one child – motivating just one individual to make a change and adopt an improved mindset – is doing more than your bit! Although the academic sphere is our priority as students, life stretches so much further than the walls of our classrooms. Make a difference where it counts!

We'd also like to thank the Hill's team for their generous contribution towards the initiative. Thank you for being part of the change!

"We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own," Cesar Chavez.

Nabeelah Rajah on behalf of the OPVSC



A volunteer demonstrating how to intubate a canine correctly on a skills lab model.



I want to be a vet weekend high-school learners being shown around the skills lab.

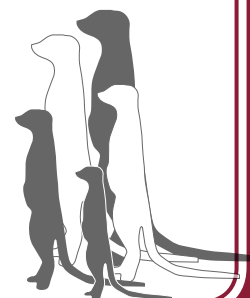
Meet our lecturers

The Meerkat will be introducing our lecturers to you by conducting short interviews with them. In this edition, we feature Prof Leith Meyer, the Director: Centre for Veterinary Wildlife Studies, and Dr Christine Steyn of the Department of Anatomy and Physiology.

Click on the links below to watch the interviews:

<http://bit.ly/2KXaonC> - Prof Leith Meyer

<http://bit.ly/2OBmIBN> - Dr Christine Steyn





Making strides towards improving lives

Epipremnum Aureum. Money Plant. Devil's Ivy. Golden Pothos. Call it what you will, this plant has taken us one step closer to improving the lives of students and staff alike. This easy-to-grow houseplant detoxifies the air within the Anatomy Building and brings life to an otherwise dead atmosphere.

Professor Martina Crole, an associate professor in the Department of Anatomy and Physiology, had the idea after learning about the plant's benefits from an inventor and then conducting her own extensive research. She approached various members of Faculty until word got through to Mr Mabona from the Campus Services Division of the Department of Facilities Management. Mr Mabona supported the initiative and motivated for a budget from the University. Funding for the project was subsequently approved and a plant care company was brought in for the installation of the plants in the Anatomy Building.

The Anatomy Building houses two dissection halls used primarily by students and staff to practice dissections and teach comparative anatomy. The animal cadavers used by the students are soaked in formaldehyde for their preservation before dissection. While this allows for perfect teaching and learning conditions, formaldehyde is rather dangerous. It can irritate the airways and cause sore throats, coughing and nosebleeds. It is also a known carcinogen. However, in an environment with temperatures higher than 20°C, as is the case in the dissection halls, formaldehyde vapourises and remains present in the air. This is where

Epipremnum Aureum works its magic. In addition to removing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen into the air (which in itself is beneficial in a closed room) the green, glossy, heart-shaped leaves remove the vapourised formaldehyde from the air for use in their unique metabolic pathways where the enzyme glutathione-dependent formaldehyde dehydrogenase (FALDH) plays a major role. The result is a natural air purifier that lowers the level of formaldehyde exposure that anatomy students and staff are subjected to. Each dissection hall has been fitted with 10–20 of these plants, and there are tentative plans to equip students with their own miniature versions in the form of Gasteria plants, which have a similar function.

The effects of these plants do not stop there, however. Prof Crole mentioned during an interview that “they bring life into the dissection halls and have a psychological effect.” This is in line with what recent studies have shown, namely that the presence of plants in an indoor environment can result in higher levels of comfort and satisfaction for humans. A few students have also mentioned that they are impressed with the initiative and say that it reminds them that “the outside world exists during those long study hours”,

which we all know a little too well.

The next time you enter one of the dissection halls, take a little time to stop and notice these unique plants. Not only can we look forward to cleaner, healthier air, but we all could do with the good luck that this plant is purported to bring. That's what I call a win-win situation!

Aaminah Vahed



An afternoon full of adventure with our Beagles

On the afternoon of 12 April students, accompanied by their beagle companions, set off to complete a dynamic obstacle course. The beagles showed off their prowess by completing seven agility type obstacles, which included jumps, tunnel runs and see-saws. The beagles were not the only ones challenged in this course, as their walkers had to complete several obstacles themselves. Surprisingly, hoola-hooping seemed to be the most challenging obstacle. Other tasks included answering questions about beagles and doing their best imitation of a dog who just found out that all the treats are finished.

This event was hosted with the aim of raising funds and awareness for the SA Guide Dog Association (GDA). An added bonus was that our beagles had an enriching afternoon of new and exciting activities, along with much-needed exercise. It was clear to all that the beagles and the students thoroughly enjoyed the experience, despite the exhaustion that followed.

Complete Pet Foods, Vet Hyper and Ricky Litchfield sponsored some fantastic prizes for the most enthusiastic student and beagle, the best fail at an activity, the funniest run and many more exciting categories. Prizes were also sponsored for the solo run, where the braver souls competed in a 5km run around campus and the OP residence. The 1st and 2nd place for both males and females received these prizes.

A brilliant surprise for the students was the short demonstration hosted by some puppy raising volunteers from the GDA just prior to the start of the obstacle course. The Puppy Raising Scheme was developed to provide the GDA with dogs who are well prepared for both advanced training and their future work as guide, service and autism support dogs. The pups are placed with their highly valued puppy raising families at around seven weeks of age, where they are treated as part of the family for the first 12 months of their busy lives. Throughout this period, the puppy raiser is responsible for the care of the puppy, as well as for socialising them. It is vital that the dogs are exposed to as wide a range of experiences, places, people and animals as possible on a repeated basis.

It was precisely for this scheme that funds were raised. A raffle was also running for the same purpose. The winner, who received a R2 000 Takealot voucher, was announced on 16 May. A total amount of R8 000 was raised and donated to the GDA.



The Beagle Interest Group would like to thank every single person who participated in the fun run, bought a raffle ticket or helped in any way to make this project such a great success. We are also greatly appreciative of the sponsors Complete Pet Foods, Vet Hyper and Ricky Litchfield for their contributions towards the fun run. We highly recommend all students visit the GDA's website at <http://www.guidedog.org.za/> for more information on how to help this amazing non-profit organisation.



A GDA labrador at the event.

Elisna Bosch

Onderstepoort Aquatics Club (OPAC) is making waves

Studying veterinary science is not just a career choice, it is a calling. As students, not only do we have the honour and the privilege to interact with a wide array of dogs, cats, cows, sheep, horses and other animals on campus – which, let's be honest, is far more fun than interacting with humans – but we also learn about how, why and when they function. Life doesn't get any better than that, right? As it turns out, it does. There's a whole new world of aquatic veterinary medicine out there waiting to be discovered. That discovery, excitement and realisation led us to form the Onderstepoort Aquatics Club (OPAC).

The aim of the society is to show students that the field of veterinary science is broad and that there are many opportunities that lie ahead – even within the world of aquatic animals. Our goal is to expose students to another side of veterinary medicine and to give them the opportunity to meet and form connections with people in this field.

We started the year off with a bang! Over one hundred students interested in aquatic veterinary medicine joined our newly established society. Everyone was curious to see what we had planned for the coming year. Now we are a fully-fledged, registered club at the University of Pretoria, and we are inspired to keep it going.

To maintain the high standard that we had established off the bat, we brainstormed innovative ideas and events for the year to keep our members connected, to share information, and to raise funds. We were able to organise documentary screening nights, host knowledgeable guest speakers, hold bake sales and even undertake a community service project.

Our first guest speaker was Dr Gillian Taylor. She is currently doing her MSc in aquatic veterinary medicine, and is focusing on the presence and potential impact of selected pathogens of economic concern within the Tilapia producing regions of South Africa. Dr Taylor opened our minds to an entire new world of various job opportunities available to us in the field of aquatic veterinary medicine.

Our very own Prof Jan Myburgh from the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Onderstepoort took on the brave task of monitoring our activities as our Faculty Advisor. He also gave an insightful lecture regarding crocodiles and the industry of crocodile farming.

The highlight of the year was meeting Dr David Scarfe, from the World Aquatic

Veterinary Medicine Association (WAVMA), who helped us to establish our club. We had an informal pizza evening where Dr Scarfe inspired us with his journey through life, which also coincidentally began in South Africa.

The last guest speaker for 2017 was Prof Nico de Bruyn from the Marine Mammal Research Programme. He enlightened us on the beauty and colourful history of Marion Island. He also spoke of the work being done to monitor the health of the ocean and the aquatic wildlife that inhabit the island.

We joined hand-in-hand with members of other societies to take part in a litter clean-up in an area surrounding the Apies river, which runs adjacent to the Campus grounds.

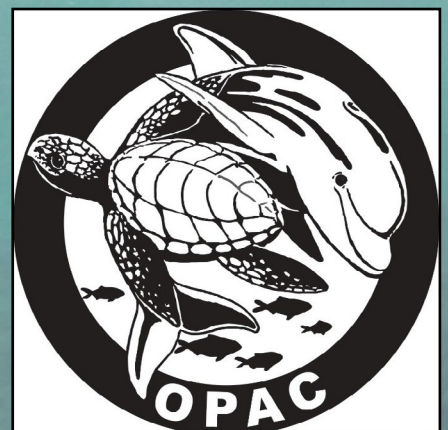
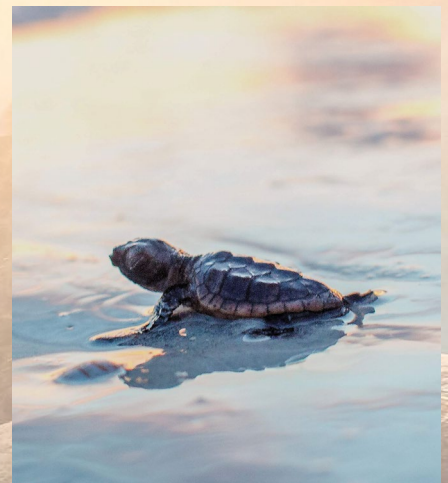
Finally, we also contacted several aquatic animal-centered organisations in South Africa to arrange prospective vacation work opportunities for our members. In the July holidays, we arranged for two members to work with the veterinarians at uShaka Marine World in Durban. They had an unforgettable first-hand experience of the inner workings of a world-class aquarium.

To this end, we hope for an even more successful second half of 2018 and look forward to seeing all of you at the next event!

Check out our Facebook page, OPAC, for updates on our latest activities and upcoming events.

A big shout out to all who have been involved in making our inaugural year in 2017 a rip roaring success. Here's to longevity and building a better future for all – big and small.

*Written by Aaminah Vahed
Edited by Varushka Naidoo*



Important Dates

January

1 New Year's Day

February

28 Purim Jewish

March

1 Purim Jewish
 25 Palm Sunday Christian
 29 Maunday Thursday Christian
 30 Good Friday Christian
 30 Pesach Jewish
 31 Pesach Jewish

April

1 Easter Sunday Christian
 2 Easter Monday Christian
 5 Pesach Jewish
 6 Pesach Jewish
 7 Pesach Jewish
 10 Wellness week
 11 Wellness week
 12 Wellness week
 13 Wellness week
 Laylatul Meeraj (Eve)
 "I-want-to-be-a-vet weekend"

May

1 Laylatul Baraat (Eve) Islamic
 10 Ascension Day Christian
 17 Ramadaan Islamic
 19 Shavuot Jewish
 20 Shavuot Jewish

June

14 Eid-ul-Fitr Islamic

July

21 Tish'a B'Av Jewish
 22 Tish'a B'Av Jewish

August

21 Youmi Arafah Islamic
 22 Eid-ul-Adgha Islamic

September

9 Rosh Hashanah Jewish
 10 Rosh Hashanah Jewish
 11 1st Muharram Jewish
 18 Yom Kippur Jewish
 19 Yom Kippur Jewish
 20 10th Muharram Jewish
 24 Sukkot Jewish
 25 Sukkot Jewish
 30 Shmini Atzeret Jewish

October

1 Shmini Atzeret Jewish
 Simchat Torah Jewish
 2 Simchat Torah Jewish

November

December

2 Hanukkah Jewish
 3 Hanukkah Jewish
 4 Hanukkah Jewish
 5 Hanukkah Jewish
 6 Hanukkah Jewish
 7 Hanukkah Jewish
 8 Hanukkah Jewish
 9 Hanukkah Jewish
 10 Hanukkah Jewish
 24 Christmas Eve Christian
 25 Christmas Christian