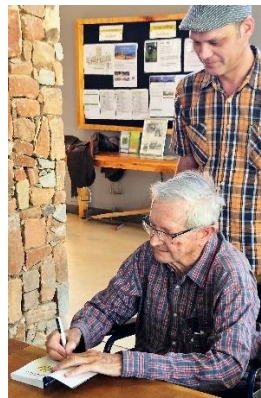
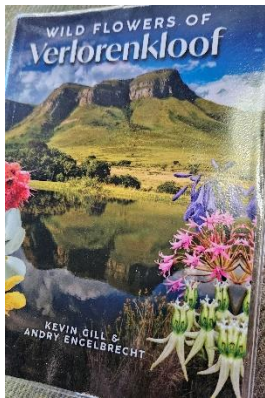


## Launch of the Wildflowers of Verlorenkloof Pocket Guide – 8 February 2025.



The much anticipated launch event for the Wildflowers of Verlorenkloof Pocket Guide on Saturday 9 February, was an auspicious occasion and very special on many levels. Verlorenkloof was in full, glorious bloom as Mother Nature properly fluffed out her tail feathers after some beautiful, much needed rains over the past few months. Wildflowers of Verlorenkloof has been a labour of love by authors Kevin Gill and Andry Engelbrecht and Heidi Johnson, one of the founders of Verlorenkloof. From all over the Lowveld, Gauteng and locally, people joined us for some short talks and a beautiful Summer Salad Lunch. An array of botanical books were on display, artist Gill Condy painted and spoke about the process of botanical illustration and authors Kevin Gill and Andry Engelbrecht were more than happy to sign numerous books.

Two very informative early morning walk were led by the inimitable Frans Krige and the group encountered many examples of the beautiful fauna featured in the book..

We are so grateful to everyone who attended, to those who have walked the road to this publication with us, to the support and friendships established along the way and to the affirmation of a shared love and commitment to be custodians of this wonderful place with all its layers.



## **Verlorenkloof flower walks, 8 and 9 February 2025.**

### **By Frans Krige**

Never before was there so much excitement and anticipation to be part of a group of Botanists, enthusiasts and guests to explore the Flora of Verlorenkloof with a brand new Verlorenkloof Wild Flower field guide in the pocket.

On Saturday morning 7.30 am a group of 30 explorers set off on foot on a guided tour of Verlorenkloof to explore the rich flora of this beautiful place. There were quite a few distinguished and seasoned Botanists amongst the group and everyone was quick to point out interesting flowering species of their particular interest. Whenever there was uncertainty, their collective knowledge and with the help of the new wildflower guide of Messers. Gill and Engelbrecht, Elsa Pooley's Guide and the Orchid Field guide of Bennie Buitebier along with Heidi Johnson, a correct identification could be made.

I had the privilege to lead this group and it was easy to follow the freshly cut paths that meandered through grassland patches, seepage wetlands and riparian forest.

The plan was to cover as much as possible different habitats, and then after a break at the picnic site along the Crocodile River, walk back to the Restaurant to be in time for the official launch of the new Wildflowers of Verlorenkloof Pocket Guide.





Flowers such as the wetland *Chironia palustris* were abundant , the Velvet bean *Psuedarthia hookeri* and Wild Sweat pea, *Vigna spp.* and the flowers of the wild bush pumpkin, *Coccinia mackenni* were very interesting. The dispersal of the seed of the Tolbos , *Brunsvigia radilosa* with the help of the wind was explained. These beautifully extravegant flowers were in abundance on the day.

Two species of terrestrial orchids were spotted along the path. *Satyrium parviflorum* a plant with large almost succulent leaves was in flower. It produces small, green orchids that does not open properly and only allows the small pollinator, to enter the round opening for pollination. The other orchid *Habenaria epipactidae*'s flower resembles the head of an elephant, complete with big ears, tusks and trunk. I was left wondering what insect is attracted by that image?



An array of spectacular bird species made the walk more exiting . A large Fish Eagle perched on a tree next to a fishing dam, a tiny, colourful Malachite Kingfisher and a Small Bee-eater in the grass gave us a glimpse of their beauty. The call of Purple Crested Louries occasionally broke the silence.

Medicinal plants such as the Pine apple plant, *Eucomis autumnalis*, and the Wild rhubarb, *Gunnera purpensa*, were found and discussed. All along the paths the stunning yellow flowers of *Eriosema cordatum* were visible.

The pretty white flowers and green hairy fruit of the *Gomphocarpus fruticosus* and its common name, old man's balls caused a stir and prompted one gentleman to step forward, have a look and declare, "Then, I am not an old man!".

On Sunday morning, a group of nine under the guidance of Frans Krige and Dave Berger set off again to explore the wonders of a typical rainforest. Interesting plants such as tiny ground orchids, *Stenoglottis fimbriata* *Nervilia spp* and *Liparis bowkeri*, were noticed. Unfortunately most had already flowered but they were nevertheless interesting.

A few interesting trees with fruit were found and admired. The African thistle and the Babydoll protea, *Dicoma anomela* both indigenous thistles were compared with the Scottish thistle. A pretty Wild chrysanthium, *Dianthus mooiensis* and one of the smallest Aloes in the world, the *Aloe minima*, were found in the grassland patches.

Memories of friendly people and the wonders of the plant kingdom has inspired us to meet again soon

