



CONSERVATION

Simonsberg Environmental Education Centre opens to public

ABOVE:

The Greater Simonsberg Conservancy is home to more than 60 bird species, 120 indigenous plants, at least 24 geophytic plant species (bulbs), a wide variety of trees and larger shrubs, a range of reptiles, including tortoises, lizards, chameleons (pictured above) and snakes, and mammals such as vlei rats, striped mice, duikers, dassies and porcupines.

COURTESY OF THE GREATER SIMONSBURG CONSERVANCY

To underscore their ongoing commitment to conservation, the 28 wine farmers who comprise the Greater Simonsberg Conservancy have opened the Simonsberg Environmental Education Centre at Delvera in Stellenbosch.

A non-profit organisation that assists private landowners in the area surrounding Simonsberg, the conservancy wants the centre to formalise public access to the conservancy.

“Our aim is to open the facility to the community, sharing the resources with pre-existing projects and agencies,” said Nora Sperling-Thiel, one of the Greater Simonsberg Conservancy’s founding members and co-proprietor of Delheim wine farm.

TRAINING

Apart from serving as a base for co-ordination and management of the conservancy, the new facility will be used as a venue to run courses in “anything from indigenous plant propagation to owl-box building for children, skills for fire fighting and

anything in-between,” said Sperling-Thiel.

The conservancy was established by private landowners in 2004, under Cape Nature’s Stewardship Programme.

EXPANDING

The five founding wine farms – Delheim, Elsenburg, East Hill, Le Bonheur and Warwick – are located around Klapmutskop.

In 2009, a full-time conservation officer was employed to manage the conservancy. And it has since expanded into the farmlands surrounding Simonsberg.

The Greater Simonsberg Conservancy covers more than 5 000ha with approximately 32% of the total area set aside for conservation.

All members are actively involved in conservation initiatives on their wine farms. – *Denene Erasmus*

• *The Simonsberg Environmental Education Centre will initially be open by appointment only. For bookings and further information contact Georgina Thomas on 079 276 3638, or at conservancy@delvera.co.za.*