



Adopt Moreletaspruit Forum

Newsletter 30, May 2025

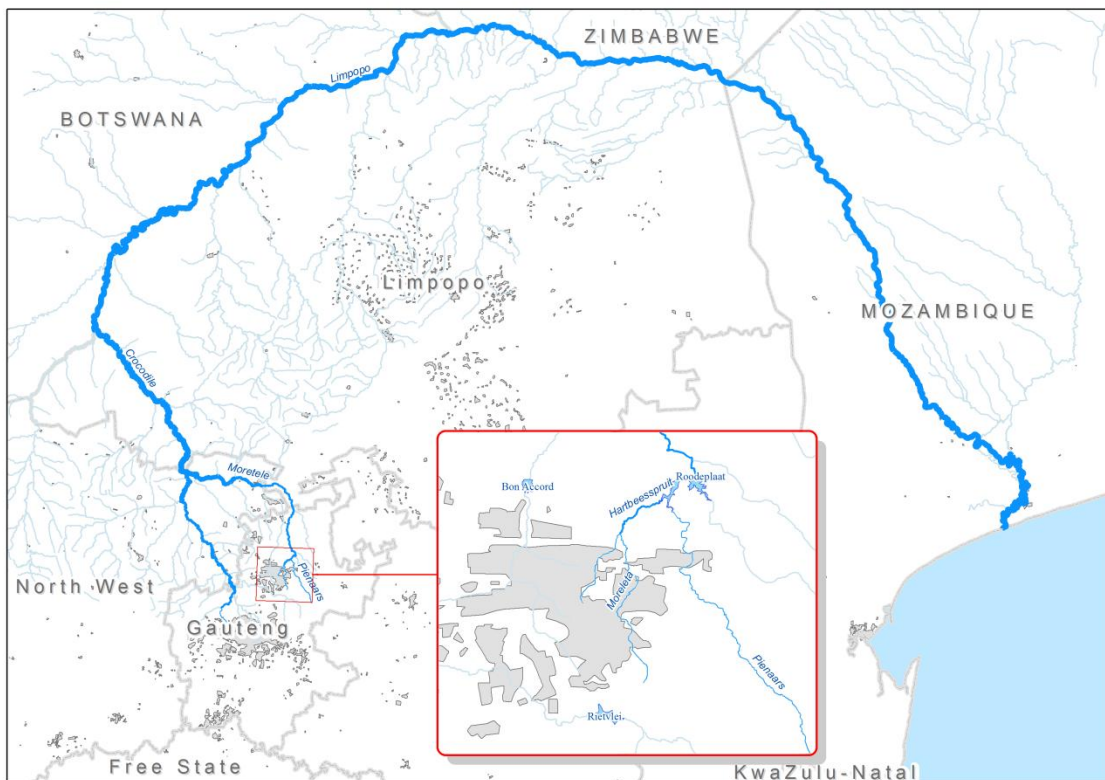
Over the last few years we have had many new members joining the Forum so I thought I would repeat some of the interesting articles from old newsletters sent out in the early days of the Forum which was established in 2012. The first two articles are repeats.

The course of the river

Have you ever wondered where the water in the Moreletaspruit comes from and where it goes to? The answer is that it rises in Moreleta Kloof in the south east of Pretoria. The water comes from the Malmani Dolomite found there. The Moreletaspruit is fed by many tributaries such as the Rademeyer, Philadelphia, Constantia, Garsfontein, Wolwe and Waterkloof Spruits and then joins the Hartbeesspruit which flows through Colbyn. Below is a map supplied by Mike Silberbauer which shows the long curving path a drop of water would follow. The shaded areas are towns and villages. The name of the river changes along its course as follows:

0 – 23 km Moreleta; 23 – 31 km Hartbees; 31 – 137 km Pienaars; 137 – 168 km Moretele; 168 – 215 km Pienaars; 215 – 393 km Crocodile; 393 – 1734 km Limpopo which eventually flows into the Indian Ocean near Xai-Xai in Mozambique.

As you can see our river is part of a huge system, the Crocodile West Catchment, and our activities can have an impact on many downstream users.



Map showing path of a drop water from the Moreletaspruit to the Indian Ocean



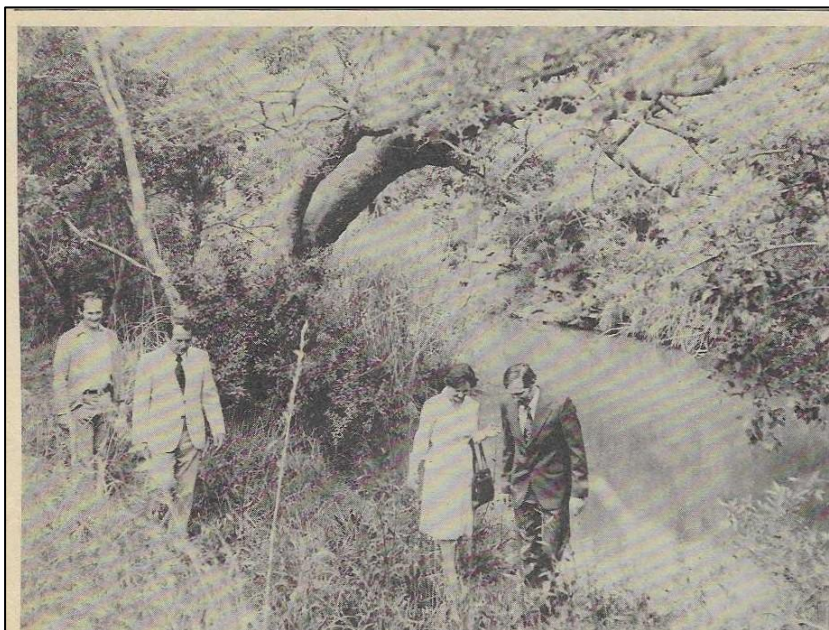
Origin of the name 'Moreleta'

The name is a corruption of "Moretele", the original name of the river, from the Tswana name *moreeko*, *morethlwa*, *moretlwa* or the Pedi name *morethlwa*, *meretlua* for the shrub or small tree, **Grewia flava** (*brandy bush*, *raisin tree*, *brandewynbos*, *rosyntjebos*). The abundant fruits were eaten raw or made into a porridge. The stamped fruit mixed with locusts was a Tswana delicacy but best of all, a potent alcoholic brew was made from the berries, which made it important enough to name a river after it.

Interestingly, when the nature trail was being developed along the river in the 1970's, there was a tongue in cheek suggestion in "Sciendaba" of October 1977 to call it "The Brandybush River Trail" (see cutting below).

There are several versions of the story that a

young man of the Erasmus family, owners of the farm 'Garstfontein', admired a beautiful girl named Letta and would ride past her house each morning as she sat combing her long hair at her window or washing her clothes in the river and raise his hat and call out "Môre Letta!" Another version of this story is that travelers would call "Môre Letta!" to a Letta living in the Pioneers' House. Though these stories are romantic, they are just stories.



Councillor Johan Greyvenstein, Mayor of Pretoria, and his wife Kitty on the opening hike along the Brandybush River Trail. Following are Councillor Eric Churr and Mr Mark Theron, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation of the Pretoria City Council.

Hike along the Brandybush River

THE FIRST two kilometres of a hike trail along the banks of the Moreleta spruit was officially opened by the Mayor of Pretoria last Saturday. This little river, the only one in Pretoria not yet forced into a concrete straight-jacket by urban growth, wends its quiet way through Lynnwood Manor, Murrayfield, Meyerspark and Silverton.

VERENIGING VIR DIE BEWARING VAN DIE MORELETASPRUIT (VBM) / THE SOCIETY FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE MORELETA RIVER (SCMR)

Last year I was given a box of minutes of meetings, articles and cuttings relating to the VBM by Willem Bam whose father, Dr W Bam, had been the secretary of the VBM which was active from 1972 to 1994. It made for interesting reading as I had not known about them. Their aims were to conserve the river in its natural state (and not to allow it to be made into a concreted canal); to conserve the

biodiversity; to raise awareness of the importance of this very special nature area and to prevent pollution. The chairman was Prof. Carel Boshoff and the vice-chairman was Piet Muller. The Suiderkruis Voortrekker-kommando was closely involved and the Voortrekkers did much of the physical work to remove alien vegetation and clean up litter.

Mark Theron of the Parks Department of the then Pretoria City Council later joined the committee and worked with them on their projects. The first project was looking after the Meyerspark Bird Sanctuary. They then encouraged the establishment of the Moreleta Wandelpad or Nature Trail. They organised quarterly hikes along this trail from its start at the Constantiaspruit in Garsfontein to the Pioneers' House with talks by interesting speakers.

The Adopt Moreletaspruit Forum Annual Guided Hike along the river

The Moreleta Nature Trail was very popular for years but in the 1990's there was an increase in crime and dumping and sections had to be fenced off. Our Forum now organises an annual guided hike from Moreleta Kloof Nature Reserve to the Pioneers' House. This year it is planned for September. Below are some photos of last year's hike in May.



Above: The start at Moreleta Kloof; Serene Valley; under Lynnwood Rd bridge; a rest at Murrayfield tennis courts, in Meyerspark; arriving at the Pioneers' House.

Garsfontein Road Upgrade

The upgrade is sorely needed on this very busy road. We are keeping an eye on the construction work as the road is being widened where it crosses the start of the Constantiaspruit and also the Moreletaspruit near the intersection of Rubenstein Drive. A large amount of excavation has been done in the Constantiaspruit with heavy machinery.



Left: end February, a slab laid in river bed of the Constantiaspruit; Right: three weeks later a large excavation to the left of the slab, apparently for storm water drains and reinforcing steel laid on slab while the cables crossing the river are being cut out of their concrete casing.



Early May: Tunnels have been laid on the concrete slab and a second slab has been laid to the left of the tunnels. A guard watches over the cables and pipes crossing the river.



New tunnels will be joined to old ones and the storm water pipe. Heavy machinery has severely modified the river bed

Adopt Moreletaspruit Forum World Wetlands Day Event at Mhangele wetland

Sixty learners from Eastside School, Glenstantia Primary and Laerskool Constantiapark learnt all about the importance of wetlands and how they function. We were assisted by Adelene Marais of Nature Conservation with a nature-based treasure hunt; Dr Piet-Louis Grundling of the DFFE and Renée Grundling who taught them to make models of wetlands; Dr Althea Grundling and Dr Jason le Roux of the ARC who took them on a walk through the wetland and showed them the plants and animals; and Noloyiso Mbiza, Tebogo Mashiane and colleagues from DWS who showed how to assess river health with MiniSASS testing.



Left: Piet-Louis Grundling explaining the importance of wetlands. Right: Making models



Jason le Roux and Althea Grundling told about wetland soils, plants and animals and took the learners on a walk through the wetland.



Putting together the puzzle pieces found on the treasure hunt to identify a wetland animal. Identifying invertebrates in the miniSASS tray.



The children ran a race, their best runners in thick grass and some on mowed section – this showed how wetland vegetation slows the flow of water – even the best runners did not win.

News from WESSA Friends Groups



Friends of Colbyn Valley held a big World Wetlands Day event in February with 80 children participating. They were assisted by various stakeholders. The children walked through wetlands, made wetland models, did MiniSASS testing, watched bird ringing and had a quiz. Left: watching bird ringers.

Friends of Skuilkrans took members on a hike from the koppie along the Moreletaspruit to the Pioneers House

Friends of Faerie Glen organised very interesting walks including a Grass Identification Walk (right), a Tree Walk and a Bird Walk as well as their regular hacks.



Left: **Friends of Moreleta Kloof's** Hacking Group which meets every Wednesday. They also have regular Saturday hacks each month.

Friends of Serene Valley concentrated on removing Red sunflowers.

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Facebook Group – Adopt-a-River Moreleta