



# Badger Bulletin

Newsletter of the beekeeper-badger extension program



September 2003

Newsletter 3

## The Honey Badger Friendly Initiative



### A Story with a happy ending...



Badger cub, caught in cage trap set for caracal

The Badger Friendly Initiative aims to minimize the conflict between badgers and commercial beekeepers in S.A, and provide positive incentives for 'badger- friendly' beekeeping.

This initiative arose as a result of a survey completed by K.S. Begg in 2000 and is a joint initiative by the beekeeping associations, the South African Bee Industry Executive, Nature Conservation and various NGO's.

### Western Cape Fruit Growers drawn into Badger/ Beekeeper Project

Beekeepers play a vital role in the South African economy, not only for the honey they produce, but also for the important role honeybees play in the pollination of orchards. Most beekeepers that have signed the 'badger-friendly' declaration to date are honey producers. We would however like to see all beekeepers (also those involved in pollination services) come on board.

Western Cape fruit growers can play an important role in the conservation of the badger, by only dealing with registered and accredited beekeepers. The badger / beekeeper extension program has recently been extended to inform Western Cape fruit growers of this project. Although it can be argued that pollination usually takes place in areas where no honey badgers occur, we have to keep in mind that these bees could be kept in 'badger-risk' areas for the rest of the year.

Most fruit growers are already subject to overseas standards (e.g. Euregap) and therefore welcome the registration and 'badger- friendly' accreditation of beekeepers, and, those already talked to, have given their full support to this initiative.



Bees used for pollination of plum trees

A few months ago I received a phonecall from Mr. Van Deventer of Cape Nature Conservation, to inform me of a honey badger caught in a cagetrap (set for caracal) along the West Coast.

I transported the badger to Piketberg where Dr. Andre van der Merwe and Dr. Viljoen immobilized the badger, administered a drip and took all the necessary genetic samples.

We discovered that this was a male cub, not more than 8 months old and therefore still very dependant on his mother. Translocation of this badger would therefore only lead to a slow death from starvation.

While still at the vet I received the news that another badger was caught in the same area. Seeing that badgers are solitary animals with exceptionally large homeranges, it was very likely that this was the mother of our badger. After negotiations with the landowner (and a trip of over 200 km's for the baby in the back of my vehicle), it was agreed to release them together in the area they were caught.

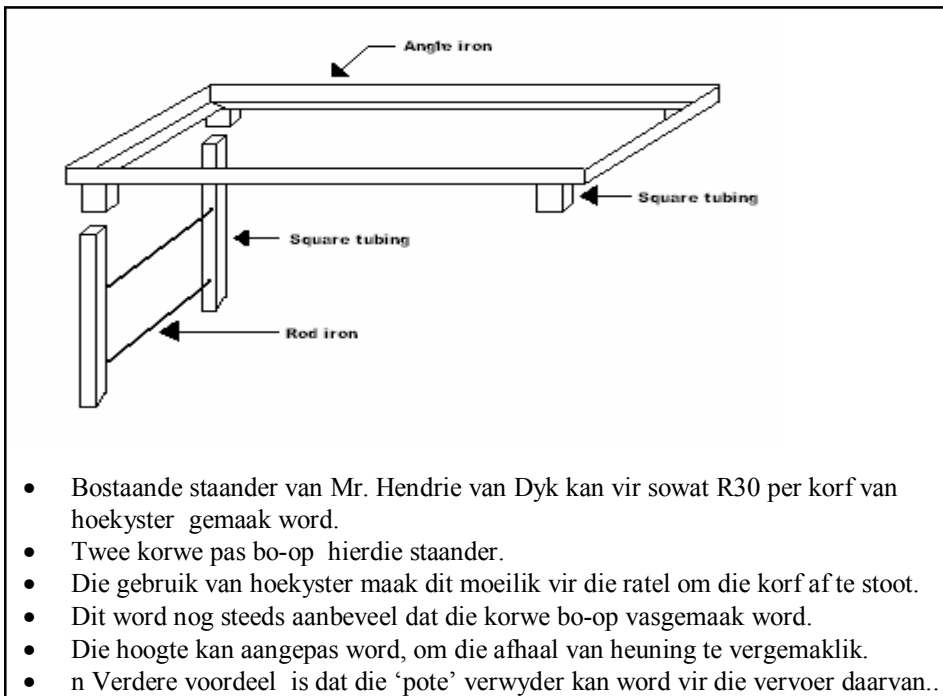
Great was our joy when mum and son trotted off together none the worse for wear.



Leisure Kitchens



## Innoverende Idees vir Korf Beskerming



- Bostaande staander van Mr. Hendrie van Dyk kan vir sowat R30 per korf van hoekyster gemaak word.
- Twee korwe pas bo-op hierdie staander.
- Die gebruik van hoekyster maak dit moeilik vir die ratel om die korf af te stoot.
- Dit word nog steeds aanbeveel dat die korwe bo-op vasmgemaak word.
- Die hoogte kan aangepas word, om die afhaal van heuning te vergemaklik.
- n Verdere voordeel is dat die 'pote' verwyder kan word vir die vervoer daarvan..

### To raise or not to raise

Some beekeepers are concerned about raising hives onto stands. They argue that when elevated above surrounding vegetation, the Western Cape's prevailing winds (particularly along the coastal lowlands) lower the temperature inside hives and this decreases honey production.

Opinions vary but Hepburn & Radloff (1998) drew attention to the rule of thumb that 'the higher the hive, the higher the occupation rate', suggesting that bees may indeed prefer being off the ground. Many beekeepers mentioned that bees do not like damp conditions and preferred being off the ground. The fact remains that many beekeepers successfully keep their hives on stands, and that any small decrease in production is far out weighed by substantial losses incurred by badgers should hives remain on the ground.

### 'Revised' Badger Friendly Label : An alternative for commercial beekeepers and processors.

Larger commercial beekeepers that prefer to incorporate the 'badger-friendly' label onto their existing brand label, can now apply to use this revised label by paying a yearly levy to SABIO (contact Dr. Adriaan Du Toit/0128081762 for the application forms)



Onderstaande korfstaander is eintlik ontwerp om vandalisme hok te slaan, maar sal ook beskerming teen ratelskade bied. Vir meer inligting oor presies hoe om die staander te maak kan u Niel Brink skakel by 0233133707

### Ratel -vriendelike Akkreditasie werk as volg

- Die S.A. Bye Industrie Organisasie (SABIO) in same werking met bewarings-organisasies het n gedragskode vir byeboere opgestel.
- Byeboere, verskaffers en verspreiders kan nou n publieke verklaring onderteken, waarin hul verklaar dat hul byeboerdery omgewings-vriendelik, asook wetgehoorsaam is.
- Byeboere wat die verklaring geteken het, word toegelaat om die nasionaal erkende 'ratel-vriendelike' plakkers op hul produkte te gebruik.
- Ratel-vriendelike akkreditasie is onderworpe aan gereelde oudits deur onafhanklike veldwerkers. Hierdie oudits word tans deur die Bedreigde Natuurluwe Vereniging uitgevoer. Behalwe die 3.5 sent per plakker, is daar geen koste verbonde aan akkreditasie nie.
- Vir meer inligting, asook om die nodige dokumentasie te bekom, kontak Joan Isham (kontakbesonderhede op bl. 4)



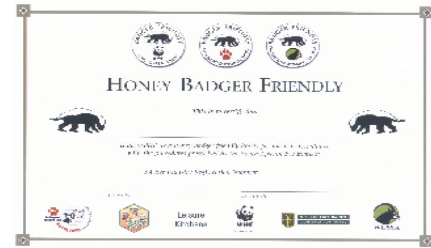
**Well-done West Coast Honorary Rangers**

Jenny Lodge

For a week in May, the West Coast Region of the SANParks Honorary Rangers manned an Earth Buddies exhibit at the Wynberg Centre for Conservation Education, where they introduced 800 students per morning to the West Coast National Park.

Included in the display was awareness about the honey badger and the difficult times that they are experiencing. The learners, most of whom had never seen one before, were able to see and touch a stuffed badger. Expressions of delight and surprise were counterbalanced by astonishment that the animal does not smell, as would a skunk!

Many of the children revisited the exhibit before leaving to go home, making one realize just how thirsty they are for knowledge of our environment.



**Ratel-Vriendelike Sertifikaat: Uitreikingsprosedure**

Die sertifikaat word slegs uitgereik aan geakkrediteerde persone (het dus reeds verklaring geteken), waarvan die oudit resultaat positief is:

D. w.s. daar is bevind dat hul doeltreffende beskerming teen die ratel gebruik (waar korwe wel in risiko areas aangehou word) en dat al hul sekondere verskaffers van bye produkte ook reeds die verklaring onderteken het.

Hierdie sertifikaat is geldig vir een jaar vanaf uitreiking.

**WESSA’s Assistance in the Badger Friendly Initiative**

A big thank you to Freya Brett (chairlady) and all the other members of the Hottentots Holland Branch of the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa for assisting in the public awareness campaign.

For the months of June/July they included the honey badger as part of a display on the threatened species of our unique biodiversity.

During the June holidays they ran a program (theme conservation) for learners of all schools in the Helderberg area. As part of the lesson on the importance of biodiversity, they involved learners in an activity on the honey badger. This activity carried over the message, that there are positive ways (other than killing) of dealing with ‘problem’ animals. The pupils also learnt that each of them can contribute to the conservation of the badger, by only buying bee products displaying the nationally recognized ‘badger-friendly’ labels.

WESSA has been of immense help with the whole initiative and has always been available when assistance was needed. I look forward to more “friends groups” getting involved in the conservation of the honey badger.



Drawing of badgers and hive on stand by learners visiting the Helderberg Nature

**Beleid bied beskerming vir ratel**

Engela Duvenage

Die oorhoofse doelwit van Kaapse Natuurbewaring se Ratelbeleid is om die oorlewing van hierdie bedriegde dier in sy natuurlike verspreidingsgebied in die Wes-Kaap te verseker. So verduidelik Hannes Stadler, programbestuurder: natuurlewebestuur van Kaapse Natuurbewaring (KNB).

“Ons glo dat die antwoord vir sy oorlewing in gesamentlike en gesonde ekologiese bestuur in die Wes-Kaap le,” se Stadler. “Ons weet reeds dat die konflik tussen byeboere en ratels verbeter kan word, veral as doelgerigte bestuursaksies op privateiendom gebruik word.”

Omdat min ratels binne bewaringsgebiede voorkom, le die verantwoordelikheid swaar op grondeienaars om hul deel te doen vir die beskerming van die tawwe wit-en-swart diertjie.

Die ratelbeleid is gebaseer op wetgewing wat in die Natuurbewaringsordonnansie 19 van 1974 opgeneem is. Hiervolgens word hulle beskryf as beskermde wilde diere. Die Rooi Data-lys vir soogdiere lys hulle as kwesbaar, terwyl CITES 1 hulle lys as bedreigd. n Permit is nodig om ratels in gevangenskap aan te hou, lewende diere te vervoer, of in of uit te voer.

n Permit om n ratel te jag (of te vang) word slegs ingevolge Artikel 18 (1) (d) uitgeriek deur KNB as daar voldoende bewyse is dat daar geen ander oplossing is wat keer dat die dier skade aanrig nie.

Die ordonnansie bepaal verder dat die eiendomsreg van die karkas van enige ratel wat doodgemaak word ingevolge n permit by KNB berus. n Ratelkarkas of vel mag ook nie sonder n permit verkoop word nie.

“Voordat enige beheermaatreels teen ratels toegepas word, moet die plaaslike natuurbewaringsbeampte n inspeksie doen om te verseker dat n ratel wel die kwaaddoener was,” verduidelik Stadler. “Dan eers sal n permit uitgereik word om beheermaatreels soos vanghokke te mag gebruik. Slagysters kan sleg as n laaste uitweg ingespan word, maar slegs onder streng voorwaardes.”

**Vir meer inligting oor die beleid, kontak Stadler by (022) 9312900.**



### Honey badger or Ratel: *Mellivora capensis*

The honey badger is a tenacious small carnivore that has a reputation for being, pound for pound, Africa's most fearless animal despite its small size. Despite the wealth of fireside stories and folklore that surrounds them, honey badgers are relatively unknown and seldom seen. Recently (1996-1999) a field study by Dr. C. and Mr. K. Begg revealed more in-depth information on this species and dispelled some of the myths.

Here are some of the facts from this research:

**Classification:** The honey badger (*Mellivora capensis*) belongs to the diverse Mustelid family, which includes eight other badger species, otters, weasels and the wolverine.

**Social life:** Honey badgers are solitary carnivores, with the male and female only meeting up to mate before going their separate ways again. Honey badgers do not form pairs and males play no role in rearing the young.

They do not have a fixed den, but constantly move through their home ranges, often sleeping in a different hole each night, or day depending on the season.

Male badgers have extremely large home ranges relative to its size, roaming over areas in excess of 600 square kilometers and this large area might encompass twelve or more females and overlaps extensively with other males.

While males do not defend their home ranges and are therefore not territorial, they will guard a particular female for the short time she is in estrus.

**Breeding :** In South Africa honey badgers do not have a breeding season and cubs are born throughout the year. Females give birth to one (rarely two) cubs after a gestation period of six weeks. The cubs are born naked and blind in a hole prepared by the female and she will typically move the cub to a new den every two to five days, by carrying the cub in her mouth.

The cub develops slowly with its eyes only opening after two months and will emerge from the den and accompany its mother on short foraging bouts at three months of age; by which time it has the adult's black and white coloration. The cub's mantle is usually far lighter than its mother.

**Diet:** Far from only eating honey as their name suggests, honey badgers are generalist carnivores with prey items ranging from insect larvae to springhares and the young of Blackbacked jackal and Cape fox. Their staple diet comprises rodents and snakes including the highly venomous Cape cobra and puffadder.

While honey and bee brood were eaten when available, they were not necessary parts of their diet and there was certainly no evidence of honey badgers castrating their prey!

**To learn more about this interesting creature you can visit our website:**

[www.honeybadger.com](http://www.honeybadger.com)

This project is funded by the Carnivore Conservation Group of the **Endangered Wildlife Trust, Leisure Kitchens, and the Green Trust**, an associated trust of **WWF-SA**, made possible by **Nedbank Green**

**We also thank the following organizations / persons for their ongoing support and assistance in this project:**

WESSA Western Cape  
Western Cape Nature conservation Board  
South African Bee Industry Organization  
West Coast Honorary Rangers  
Dr. Andre van der Merwe en Dr. Viljoen van die Piketberg Diere Hospitaal

**Please remember that it is your ongoing interest and support that keeps this project going. We are deeply grateful for each and everyone that has sent us e-mails, donate funds, our their time!**

### Well-done Leisure Kitchens!

Leisure Kitchens, a leading kitchen manufacturer in the Western Cape, very kindly agreed to sponsor all fuel expenses for this project since May this year.

For more information you can contact  
**Joan Isham Tel/Fax: 0218729806**  
**Cell: 0828770943**  
**or e-mail:**  
**joanisham@bermar.co.za**  
**or visit our website:**  
**www.honeybadger.com**

### The economic value of honey badgers to farmers

As a top predator (in the absence of lion, leopard, hyena) the honey badger plays an important role in maintaining a healthy balance in ecosystems. As generalist carnivores with a wide diet they control the numbers of other species e.g. rodents and venomous snakes. Especially by keeping rodent numbers down they can have a positive effect on veld condition.

Where livestock farmers suffer stock losses from other predators (e.g. caracal and blackbacked jackal) honey badgers can play a positive role in controlling the numbers of these species (their diet includes the young of these species)



Honey Badger eating a scorpion

---

**Environmentally Friendly Beekeepers, including Honey Badger Friendly Accredited**


---

**Western Cape**

AE Allen  
 CPL Barker  
 PMH Blewitt  
 GM Bradford  
 A Brink  
 EW Burger  
 CR Butler  
 C Claassen  
 PJ Cochrane  
 J Coetzee  
 BA Cooper  
 HJ Cronje  
 JJ De Kock  
 JF De la Querra  
 K Dehning  
 A Du Preez  
 FJ Du Toit  
 N Esterhuysen  
 JJ Esterhuysen  
 RW Foster  
 JJ Fourie  
 LA Friebus  
 A Goussard  
 A Grobbelaar  
 A Grunder  
 JJ Hanekom  
 CP Harford  
 AS Hayes  
 MC Haupt  
 JJ Hoffman  
 MMH Hoon  
 DS Hugo  
 HJ Human  
 E Hunter  
 JP Hurter  
 M Kerr  
 HE Kiesling  
 JNJ Koegelenberg  
 F Kotze  
 MN Langehoven  
 PL Lawson  
 LG Lewis  
 HG. Lofty-Eaton  
 J Londt  
 G Laubser  
 PH Loubser  
 Dr J Lourens  
 J Lourens  
 P Murray  
 W Malan  
 IM Moodie  
 PN Mountain  
 JJ Munro  
 AP Naylor

JJ Munro  
 CS Neate  
 R Olivier  
 AJ Pearson  
 RM Poole  
 CAL Runds  
 CF Schmidt  
 JD Smit  
 MAJ Smit  
 JJ Smit  
 OV Smuts  
 W Sullwald  
 HAB Swart  
 G Theron  
 WE Urquhart  
 LJB van Buren  
 J van der Merwe  
 LJ van der Merwe  
 PF van der Walt  
 FJ van der Westhuizen  
 JS van Eck  
 PA van Mieghem  
 PJP van Mieghem  
 AI van Niekerk  
 SD Wedlake

**Retailers**

Woolworth's (Pty)ltd  
 Liza's Farmstall  
 Morningstar Foods

**Free State**

JH Jordaan  
 HA Kingsley  
 CJC Lotter  
 BJ van der Merwe  
 J Verdoes  
 KUT von Delft

**Gauteng Province**

JC Buys  
 CF Calitz  
 JC Charls  
 BG Dawkins  
 MJ de Klerk  
 AP du Toit  
 A Esterhuysen  
 GB Falconer  
 AW Howie  
 JT Hugill  
 C Jackson  
 HS Kelly  
 R Krul  
 M Leitner  
 E Mathieson  
 JP Meiring  
 M Miles  
 K Morgado  
 JS Mostert  
 CS Nash  
 AHJ Olivier  
 CJD Russel  
 S Rust  
 JA Schehle  
 PJ Smit  
 JG Smith  
 H Steenpoorte  
 MW Swanepoel  
 FJ Tite  
 HS van der Merwe  
 TD van der Nest  
 WL van Deventer  
 A van Greunen  
 E van Zyl  
 L Viljoen

**Linpopo Province**

MW Mokumo

**Mpumalanga**

K Armitage  
 AJ Bence  
 GR Beverley  
 VR Bohmer  
 JN Boshoff  
 JS Engela  
 M Lutz  
 PD Mare  
 J Texeira

**KWA-Zulu Natal**

P Jevon  
 GJ Mitchell  
 CA Reid  
 R Seegers  
 W Westbrook

**Northern Cape**

AJ Anthony  
 T Engelbrecht  
 JJ Hendrikse  
 GJ Marais  
 AP Naylor

**North West**

DL du Toit  
 HW du Toit  
 WHJ Knoetze  
 LJ Schmidt  
 A Slabbert

**Retailers**

Patley (Pty)Ltd-(Goldcrest)

---



