NATURE'S VALLEY

CONSERVANCY / ULONDOLOZO / BEWAREA



Living in harmony with nature

A dynamic, proactive community that consciously strives to limit the impact urbanisation has on nature and to conserve and promote Nature's Valley as an extension of the Garden Route National Park in the interest of wildlife, homeowners, visitors and future generations

Nature's Valley Ratepayers' Association Belastingbetalersvereniging

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South African NATIONAL PARKS

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By way of background

Many years ago, Charles Darwin observed: "It is the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) that those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed."

Today, it is common practice for landowners who have a keen interest in preserving the inherent integrity of their properties to enter into a voluntary agreement with neighboring owners to manage their natural resources cooperatively in a manner that is as environmentally sustainable as possible.

Entering into such an agreement results in the establishment of a formal structure called a "conservancy" that is registered as such with the relevant provincial conservation authority, CapeNature.

A registered conservancy carries far more weight than that of individual owners since it represents the unified voice of a community who, jointly, expressed their willingness to participate in and to contribute towards conserving that which they hold dear.

All along the Garden Route, several conservancies have been in existence for many years (e.g. the Southern Crags Conservancy, the Noetzie Conservancy, the Sedgefield Island Conservancy and the Groot Brak Conservancy, to mention but a few).

Each enjoy representation on the Garden Route Conservancy Forum, a forum that affords many an opportunity to benefit from the support offered by the experts (i.e. CapeNature) and to learn from one another.

The Nature's Valley scenario

Undeniably, the demand for property in and around the valley is on the increase and development is inevitable.

Those who have come to cherish Nature's Valley as a unique "interface" between man and nature will understand that ever-increasing man-made pressures are bound to disrupt the village's delicate balance if left unchecked.

Yes, the higher the population, the more the pollutants. That is a given.

What is of greatest concern here are those "hidden" impacts heightened human activity is bound to have on those creatures with which we up to now have co-existed in relative harmony.

Consider for a moment the impact the noise and glaring lights will have on those creatures that hunt at night.

Then consider the threat posed by formal, fenced-in gardens that not only prevent wildlife from utilizing their natural corridors but may well herald the introduction of alien plant species that could pose a threat to sustaining the smaller creatures that attract birds, lizards and frogs.

Clearly, the nature in Nature's Valley is at risk of being compromised.

Objectives

The primary objective here is to create a unique urban area that is an ecologically functional component of the Garden Route National Park where precedence is afforded to the protection and management of natural and open spaces in particular and where those in support agree to mitigate the impact human activity, in general, has on nature to the best of their ability.

Accomplishing the above is dependent on establishing a dynamic, conservation-oriented community comprised of proactive members who, individually and collectively, contribute to sustaining healthy, resilient ecosystems.

Outcomes & expectations

The resultant outcomes are that those who deeply appreciate the village's unique sense of place will be in a far better position to voice their objections to inappropriate developments and practices.

It also goes without saying that a united effort to preserve the very nature of Nature's Valley will go a long way towards conserving not only existing open spaces but also the corridors that run through our backyards and the refuges our gardens offer.

- First and foremost, the expectation is that those who choose to support the conservancy should do their utmost to get to grips with the guidelines for green living as proposed in this booklet. They should also encourage their guests, tenants and neighbors to follow suit.
- Secondly, they must be open to embracing a culture where knowledge is reely exchanged between like-minded individuals and neighboring communities.
- Thirdly, they must be willing to offer their full support to authorities such as SANParks, CapeNature, the Bitou Municipality and the NVRA/SRA whenever and where ever cooperation s required.
- And, finally, they must agree to always be mindful of the rights afforded to individual landowners.



Pledge your support today!

At this point it would be prudent to point out that individual landowners' decision to support the conservancy is purely *voluntary* and signing up *costs nothing*.

Of course, as a non-profit organization, the NVT always welcome annual donations to help fund our projects, but that is entirely up to you.

Should you choose to sign up, your membership will entitle you to:

- Regular updates delivered via a medium of your choice
- A conservancy plaque to showcase your support
- Invites to members-only events
- Access to members-only consultations with the experts

Of particular value is that on signing up, we will assist you to conduct a conservation-oriented, best-practice compliance audit of your property.

The outcome of this audit will point out where you need to make the odd adjustment to ensure that you, and those who visit or reside on your property, are truly doing their utmost to adhere to the guidelines for green living.

What's more, members have the option to become actively involved in any of the conservancy's ongoing projects such the monitoring of bushbuck, the expansion of natural corridors and the eradication of invasive alien species.

Of course, one and all are welcome to join our botanical identification excursions and to partake in open-garden days.

The long and the short of the matter is that, as a member, you will have the opportunity to become actively involved in the actual management of Nature's Valley's natural environment.

To join, call the urban conservancy manager on +27 (0) 44 531 6820 or send an e-mail to info@nvt.org.za. Alternatively, simply pop in at NVT's offices to discuss the matter over a cup of coffee.

Should you be interested in offering financial support for our efforts in general or any project in particular, please discuss the matter in person with Giorgio. Note, too, that the NVT welcomes any form of assistance (be it skills or expertise), so please do not hesitate to talk to us.



Getting to grips with green living



The guidelines to follow are intended to help landowners, residents and visitors make informed, environmentally sustainable choices in the interest of minimizing the impact human activity has on that which attracted them to Nature's Valley in the first place: The tranquil co-existence of man and nature.

If the valley is to be preserved as an extension of the Garden Route National Park for generations to come, all who reside here (be it on a permanent or temporary basis) must be mindful of its unique sense of place.

Thus, before we go into the details of how one can come to grips with green living, let's talk about context:

- Nature's Valley falls within the Cape Floral Region, a region that covers a mere 7% of South Africa's landmass but is home to some nine-thousand plant species of which 69% occur nowhere else in the world. Of those, 20% are threatened.

- On top of that, the village is nestled in a southern Afrotemperate forest – forests that are so rare that even when they are all stringed together, they will cover less than 0.25% of southern Africa's surface area.

In short, we are dealing with two rare biomes here: A floristic kingdom on the one hand and the smallest biome on the subcontinent on the other.

It goes without saying that both biomes are populated by an array of rare insects, birds and mammals (large and small) whose job it is to not only disperse seeds but also to maintain the crucial processes that are essential to keep propagation going.

Thus, if Nature's Valley's unique sense of place is to be preserved, it is incumbent on all of us to do our utmost to not introduce alien invasive plants and to not endanger or encumber the comings and goings of those creatures that are essential to sustaining the valley's delicate ecosystems.

With this backdrop in mind, let's talk about getting to grips with green living from the bottom up.

GENERAL/OVERARCHING QR CODES

NVT

NVRA

NVT Resources

NVRA Building Regulations

Designing homes that jell rather than glare

In the interest of preserving Nature's Valley's unique sense of place, it is important that dwellings should be designed and built in a manner that blends into the natural environment rather than stand out in glaring contrast.

In other words, a more nuanced approach should be followed where dwellings are designed to reflect the qualities of the surrounding landscape.

Nevertheless, as much as homes should be designed to "accommodate" nature, it is just as important that they should cater for the needs of those who occupy them.

Establishing and maintaining that precarious balance between what is good for nature and what humans want can, at times, be rather challenging.

In the long run, though, do keep in mind that by building a home that speaks of a strong connectedness with nature is bound to create a lot of precious memories and to forge an emotional bond with Nature's Valley that will, hopefully, motivate generation after generation to keep advocating for the preservation of that which we hold dear.

Do also take note that apart from complying with the building regulations issued by the Bitou Municipality, before the building of a new home or the renovation and/or extension of an existing one can commence, the necessary permits must be obtained.

This is because the residential area in Nature's Valley falls within a proclaimed Sensitive Coastal Area where it is against the law to even cut down any vegetation unless prior permission has been granted.

The relevant building regulations and applicable legislation are available on the NVRA website, and the requisite forms to apply for permits are available at the NVT's offices.

naturesvalleytrust.co.za



Shaping your home's footprint with care

Given the context and the need to retain Nature's Valley's unique sense of place, some aspects are worthy of serious consideration when planning to build a new dwelling or to expand/renovate an existing one.

TO FENCE OR NOT TO FENCE?

If the valley's delicate ecosystems are to be sustained, residential properties should be regarded as an extension of the national park where "creatures" are, preferably, afforded right of way.

All too often wildlife, accustomed to following their natural corridors, end up as "road kill" or die a horrible death simply because they encountered a "creature-unfriendly" barrier that hindered their comings and goings.

It goes without saying that owners are entitled to demarcate their properties. Likewise, they have every right to protect their loved ones and properties against unwanted intruders.

Nevertheless, please think twice before fencing your property: Is it really necessary, and if so, why? Is it because you want to keep something in or something out? Or is it because you simply want to set personal boundaries?

If fencing is unavoidable, consider the following aesthetically pleasing, environmentally friendly options:

DEMARCATION

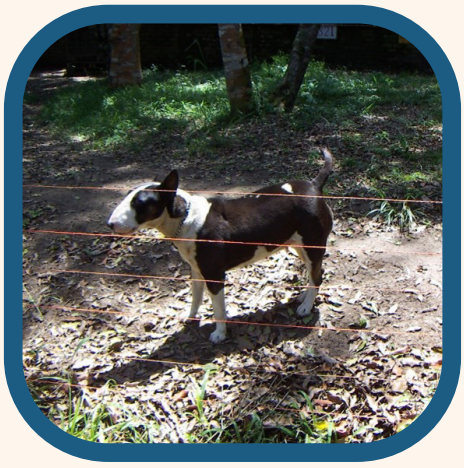
- Plant suitable indigenous vegetation to create a hedge - Use logs/stones to indicate boundaries or - String rope between a couple of poles

KEEPING THINGS IN

- To create a safe space for kids (or pets), consider fencing only a portion of your erf

KEEPING THINGS OUT

- If the true intention is to guard against intrusions that might jeopardize the safety of your loved ones, please refrain from creating a death trap for mammals by using inappropriate materials such as wire mesh or barbed wire - Consider erecting a lattice or reed fence instead, or even making use of split poles - Do note too that, for obvious reasons, erecting an electrified, chain-linked barrier should not be considered as an alternative at all.







LIGHTING UP, OR TONING DOWN?

Another aspect that deserves serious consideration when designing your home is lighting. Since both plants and animals depend on earth's night-and-day cycles, the softer the outdoor lighting, the better.

Light fragments habitats, and many animals will avoid feeding in or even passing through illuminated areas because doing so will expose them to predators.

Sadly, the exact opposite is true for creatures such as insects, moths and frogs who are attracted to light sources, which inevitably leads to their demise.

The solution is simple: Install wildlife-friendly lighting and be sure to close the curtains and blinds when indoor lights are on.

With regards to outdoor lighting, please do your utmost to adhere to the following principles:

- Limit external lighting to the absolute minimum.
- When not in use, turn external lights off and do not install motion-activated sensors since they are bound to be trigged by nocturnal animals.
- Any outdoor lighting should be installed as close to the ground as possible, angled downwards and shielded from direct view.
- Install bulbs that give off a warm glow (amber, orange or red) with a colour temperature not exceeding 3 000 K, an incandescence below 25 or 4 LED watts, and a wavelength of 560 m or longer.







COPING WITH A VOLATILE WATER SITUATION

Nature's Valley has a single source of water: the Groot River. Water extracted from the river is purified by adding ozone (i.e. enriched oxygen) only. No chemicals are added.

For most of the year, the purification plant run at 10% capacity, but has to cope with a 100% demand during the holiday season. Thus, should there be an operational glitch, Nature's Valley might be left high and dry at a critical time for however long it takes to fix the problem.

Of course, we should use water sparingly year-round, but it is advisable to take a couple of precautionary measures and to make sure that everyone in the household understands that water is precious.

INSTALL A RAINWATER TANK

- Putting up a tank to catch rainwater will, at a minimum, give you the assurance that your household will have access to a source of potable water, no matter what.
- Contract a qualified plumber who can certify that the base and holding tank, as well as the piping, taps and pump (if required) comply with municipal specifications.

DEVISE A SYSTEM TO CAPTURE GREY WATER FOR RE-USE

- Even though water used for personal hygiene or to wash clothes (so-called grey water) is not fit for human consumption, it can come in quite handy when one wants to wash the car or hose down an external wall or the paving.
- Provided the household refrains from using harmful chemicals, it can even be used to irrigate the garden.
- Typically, a grey-water holding tank will be fitted with a pump to keep the water from stagnating.
- As with rainwater tanks, be sure to consult a certified installer who will be able to advise you on how best to collect and utilize grey water.



SAVE WATER AND ENERGY BY FITTING THE RIGHT CONTRAPTIONS

- By simply installing mixer-taps in combination with a flow reducer, water and energy consumption can be reduced by as much as 50%.
- Also be sure to consider the advantages of installing dual-flush toilets.
- If the latter is not possible, between 2.5 and 3.5 liters per flush can be saved by making use of a so-called Hippo bag to keep the in- and outflow from the toilet's cistern in check.

AVOID SPILLS & CONTAMINATION AT ALL COST

In South Africa, only a handful of rivers' ecosystems can be regarded as near pristine. The Groot River is one of them. In Nature's Valley, maintaining the river's ecological status is crucial for obvious reasons.

Should sewerage "accidentally" spill into the lagoon or leak into the groundwater, the health of those who are dependent on the river as a source of potable water will be seriously jeopardized.

Likewise, the accumulative effect of flushing any form of chemicals (be they pesticides, herbicides or common household cleaning agents) that are not environmentally-friendly down the drain can result in the river being contaminated to a point where the survival of fish species such as white steenbras, white stumpnose and leervis will be severely compromised.

Let's also not forget that the lagoon is a critical migration destination for a spectacular array of water birds. Clearly, tragedies such as sewage spills and chemical contamination should be avoided at all cost.



Waterwise

WWF
Waterwise

CHOOSE AND MANAGE SEPTIC/CONSERVANCY TANKS WITH CARE

- This is one instance where size does actually matter. Be sure to install a tank that is large enough to cater for your household when at full capacity.
- Always keep an eye on the level of your conservancy tank, especially during the holiday season.
- Remember that "honey suckers" must be booked and paid for 48 hours in advance. Thus, be sure to book yours well in advance so as to prevent any spills, leave alone the extremely unpleasant experience most home owners [and their house guests] would rather avoid at all cost.
- Be sure to only use environmentally-friendly products to maintain your tank in a good condition.
- Also, regularly call on a professional to make sure your tank is still safe and sound. Failing to do so could cost you dearly.

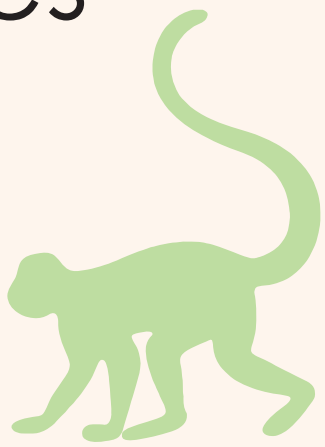
Need help shaping your home's footprint?

For your convenience, to follow are a couple of handy links to sources you might find informative and helpful.

Of course, you are more than welcome to visit NVT's office for advice and assistance at any time. Alternatively, call the urban conservancy manager on +27 (0) 44 531 6820 or send an e-mail to info@nvt.org.za.



Adopt best practices to keep the "not-so-welcome" at bay



As much as homes should be designed to not encumber the comings and goings of wildlife, be sure to take the necessary precautions to not turn yours into a convenient "take-out" for so-called problem animals.

Unfortunately, the likes of baboons and monkeys – even bushbuck and bushpig – have discovered that "human activity" often holds the promise of easily accessible food sources.

Consequently, many run the risk of becoming entirely dependent on scavenging rubbish bins and raiding homes in search of food as opposed to fulfilling an all-important role in nature where their foraging habits are essential to keep ecosystems going.

Sadly, too, human diets are extremely detrimental to wildlife's health and are known to cause hair loss and dental decay as well as weight and cholesterol problems.

Coming into urban areas also increases the risk of an animal being run over, falling prey to dogs or being shot at.

On top of that, even though baboons are not usually aggressive, a cornered or threatened baboon can become extremely dangerous and pose a threat to small children and pets in particular. Thus, going all out to discourage scavengers is definitely in everyone's best interest.



STICK TO WASTE MANAGEMENT RULES AND REGULATIONS: THEY ARE THERE FOR A REASON

SECURE WET WASTE

- Household waste that cannot be recycled or reused must be disposed of in baboon-proof bins.
- All refuse bags must go into the bin and under no circumstances be left on top of or next to the bin, not even on waste collection day.
- If need be, acquire a second bin or make use of the waste transfer station to dispose of excess bags.

KEEP WASTE DESTINED FOR LANDFILL SITES TO THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM

- Dispose of recyclables such as glass, cardboard, paper, plastics and tins by dropping them off at the recycling facility.
- If you plan on composting organic waste, best option would be to do so with the assistance of a valley-based organisation called The Cyclical Collective so as to prevent attracting wild animals to your compost heap at home.
- Bulky items, garden waste, e-waste and animal carcases should be disposed of at the Kwanokuthula transfer station.

LAY DOWN THE LAW AT HOME

- Make sure that everyone in your household (be they family, friends, visitors or tenants) are aware of and adhere to the rules and regulations pertaining to waste and problem-animal management.

The does and don'ts

- All refuse bags must go into the baboon-proof bin.
- Bags that don't fit into the bin must be dropped off at the transfer station.
- Never leave food on display anywhere, especially not on windowsills.
- Make doubly sure that all windows have been closed and all doors locked before going out.









FOLLOWING AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY APPROACH TO GETTING RID OF THE "UNWANTED"

Inadvertently, living so close to nature will result in encountering the odd rodent and a couple of insects that have one trait in common: They all tend to become rather bothersome.

Unfortunately, most products commonly available on the market that were originally intended to get rid of a single "unwanted" guest exclusively end up killing all that follow in the culprit's wake.

All too often, the harmless suffer because they merely ingested something turned poisonous as a result of humans' inconsiderate approach to getting rid of household pests and plagues.

Even those creatures that frequent rivers and ponds are no longer safe because the hazardous chemicals humans use to clean their homes and to maintain their gardens seeped into the groundwater – water that will inevitably end up in the ocean.

Yes, of course, all of us want to keep our homes spotless and pest free and yearn for a luscious, weed-free garden where we can relax to our heart's content. But since we opted to "move in" with nature, we'd better be considerate of our "host".

FOR STARTERS, AVOID INADVERTENTLY POISONING OR CONTAMINATING YOUR HOST'S MAIN COURSE

- Be sure to check the labels of all pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers, as well as household cleaning agents, carefully: Unless that label clearly states that the product is organic and/or eco-friendly, steer well clear and rather hunt for a suitable alternative. By the way, organic/bio-friendly products are readily available just about everywhere. If you battle to find the one that would suit your needs, consider placing an order via the web.
- Should you end up in a situation where the last resort to get rid of rodents is poison, be sure to choose a product that claims to be "less toxic to pets" and "nearly non-toxic to birds".

FOR SECONDS, CONSIDER INVITING NATURE'S NATURAL "EXTERMINATORS" TO JOIN THE PARTY

- Extend an open invitation to owls and bats by installing a couple of suitable nesting boxes on your property. You will be astounded at how efficiently and effectively these guys go about their business: A single Cape serotine bat, for example, consumes around two thousand mosquitoes per night. By inviting the bat's "extended family" to move in, you can theoretically get rid of thousands and thousands of mosquitoes without ever having to lift a finger.
- Along a similar vein, a thoughtfully planned indigenous garden will develop its own balance over time, thereby lessening the need to rely on herbicides and fertilizers to do their thing. Until your garden reaches that point, be sure to use only environmentally-friendly herbicides and organic compost.

Need help safeguarding your home against less desirable intruders and entrenching proper waste management practices?

For your convenience, to follow are a couple of handy links to sources you might find informative and helpful.

Of course, you are more than welcome to visit NVT's office for advice and assistance at any time. Alternatively, call the urban conservancy manager on +27 (0) 44 531 6820 or send an e-mail to info@nvt.org.za.

Eco-Solutions





Who to turn to for indigenous inspiration

The obvious answer would be "Nature, of course", but choosing between the incredible array of indigenous fynbos and trees that would suit your lifestyle and objectives best could prove to be quite a
daunting task.

Consider for a moment the extent to which you are prepared to share your outdoor space with nature: Would you be comfortable with foraging animals coming right up to your doorstep, or would you rather keep them at arm's length for the sake of your kids' and pets' safety? How upset would you be if greedy bushpig time and time again dig up the bulbs you've nursed for so long, or if a marauding baboon troop finds the fruit-bearing shrubs in your garden totally irresistible?

The best advice would be to call in the help of an expert before so much as turning the first sod on your property. Pay a visit to the nursery at the Phil Martin Park, have a chat with a NVRA representative or pop in at the NVT's offices.

You will find that all who take the preservation of Nature's Valley as a natural extension of the Garden Route National Park seriously will gladly offer assistance when and wherever they can.

Irrespective of how you go about planning your garden, always remember that alien plants should never, ever be introduced to the valley.

Growing indigenous

Plants to attract birds

Coastal gardening

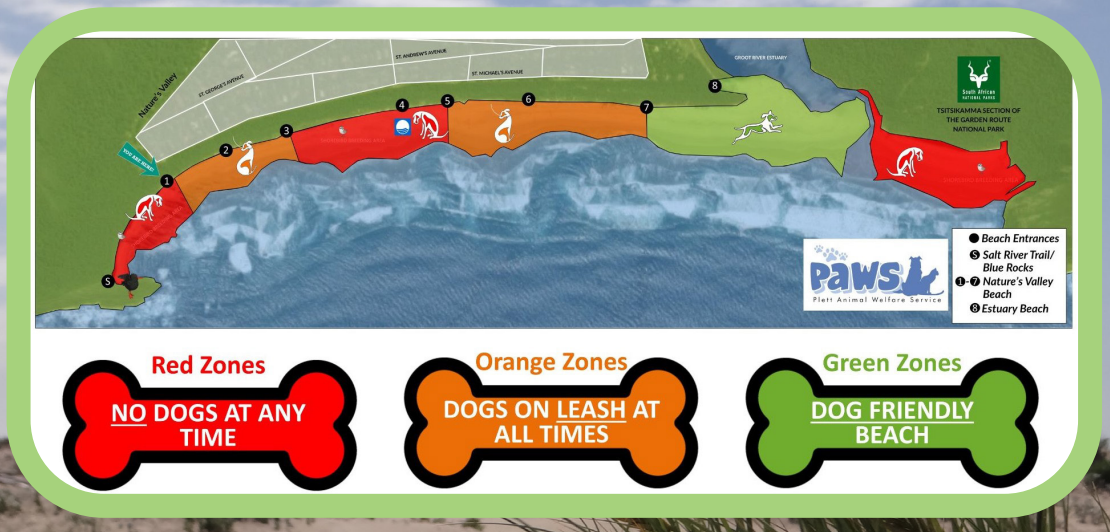
Creative gardening

Be a responsible pet owner

Dogs and cats are perceived as predators by wildlife, so the mere presence of that ball of fur peacefully catching a nap on your lap or the drooling bundle of energy begging to play "catch" can seriously disturb and even displace the creatures out there in the wild.

MINIMIZING THE HARM DOGS CAN CAUSE

- To begin with, fence off a small portion of your property to prevent your dog from wandering off.
- Always keep your dog on a leash when out and about.
- Adhere to the dog-walking zones on the beach.
- When off the leash in the green, dog-friendly zone, don't allow your dog to chase birds or to harass wildlife.
- The Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park is a no-go area for dogs, including the Salt River and the Groot River mouth.
- Always pick up after your dog, no matter where. Dog-poop bags and bins are provided at the entrance to all natural spaces in Nature's Valley.



MINIMIZING THE HARM CATS CAN CAUSE

- Feral cats, in particular, pose a serious invasive threat to wildlife since they kill birds, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.
- For that reason, domestic cats should be kept indoors and prevented from sneaking out.
- Fit your cat with a colourful bib or collar to make it more visible to wildlife on the odd occasion when it does slip out.
- Put your cat on a grain-free diet that is high in protein to keep its cravings in check.
- Invest in a couple of fun toys as a cure for boredom and be sure to engage your cat in playtime every day.
- Cat poop can spread diseases and parasites, so be sure to dispose of your cats' "business" in a responsible manner.

Need advice on how to minimize your pet's impact?

For your convenience, to follow are a couple of handy links to sources you might find informative and helpful.

Of course, you are more than welcome to visit NVT's office for advice and assistance at any time. Alternatively, call the urban conservancy manager on +27 (0) 44 531 6820 or send an e-mail to info@nvt.org.za.

Cat bib

