Rietvlei Nature Reserve

**HISTORY**

The Rietvlei Nature Reserve developed out of the Rietvlei water scheme. The reserve is primarily responsible for the conservation of the Rietvlei Dam catchment area and the accumulation and distribution of drinking water. The Rietvlei Dam was built during the Great Depression and completed in 1934. It lies on the Six Mile Spruit and is supported by the Marais Dam which serves as a sludge dam for this larger dam.

The dam wall as well as all the other brickwork was done entirely by hand. During those difficult years of the depression, workers were only too happy to work for four shillings per month. All the soil was carted away by mule carts, evidence of which are the numerous horseshoes still found on the koppie across from the yacht club. During a two year programme started in 1988 the dam wall was raised and other improvements were made. The dam has a surface area of 204.13 ha and a storing capacity of 12.024 million m³ when full.

An additional supply of water comes from four natural springs within the Reserve, a spring on the adjacent private property and from five boreholes on the dolomite areas in the reserve. Today the Rietvlei Nature Reserve provides 15% of Tshwane’s water requirements, estimated at 41 million litres of water per day.

City Council of Pretoria acquired the farm (Rietvallei) in 1929. The Rietvlei Nature Reserve is currently owned and operated by the City of Tshwane and situated south east of Tshwane, in the Gauteng Province of South Africa.

At 1 525 metres above sea level, the reserve covers a surface area of approximately 4 000 ha or 40 km². The capacity of the reserve to support 1500 to 2000 head of game is well reflected in the extensive herds of locally indigenous antelope (Black Wildebees and Blesbok).

Among the historical sights in the Reserve is an old homestead dating back to the early 1900’s, a stone rampart built by British forces during the second occupation of Pretoria and three groups of graves on which some of the epitaphs are still legible.

Three types of recreational sport are exercised at the Rietvlei Dam including yachting, canoeing and angling. The yacht club is located northwest of the Rietvlei Dam and the angling area is on the northern and western shores. Motorboats are not allowed as the noise disturbs anglers, birds and game and also poses an oil pollution threat to drinking water.

Sound nature conservation principles are adhered to in the management of the reserve. Roads in the reserve have a multi-purpose function. They are used by visitors to view game and by management to patrol the reserve, carry out maintenance and prepare firebreaks. The boundary fence patrol road or firebreak is 35 km long. Altogether there are 91 km of roads in the reserve.

The veld management program includes an annual burning program which creates a rotational grazing system. It is also necessary to provide additional salt and minerallicks in winter to further ensure the movement of game within the available space of the reserve.

The Reserve has a typical Highveld climate, receives an annual average of 724 mm rain during summer and has dry winters with regular frost at night. The local vegetation type can be described as the central variation of Bankenveld, creating open grassland on gently undulating hills. Peat wetlands such as the one in the reserve are rare features in the Southern African landscape. Indigenous trees occur in small groups. In areas where trees do not grow, shale formations are conspicuous.

As a result of previous farming activities, which disturbed the soil, several exotic plants occur in the reserve. Invader trees such as the black wattle (Acacia mearnsii) represent a serious threat. These trees, imported from Australia, have no resident natural enemies on the reserve which allows them to spread aggressively.

The most important geological formation is lava, which extends in a broad band from north to south through the reserve. This gives rise to heavy red loam soil suitable for good grazing. Belts of shale and quartzite run on either side of the andesitic lava, which give rise to grey loamy soil. The eastern part of the reserve consists of dolomite covered by shale and chert.

Apart from 73 grass species occurring on the reserve there are also more than 500 herb and forb species. In a good year an average of 2 000 kg of grass and 1 300 kg of other herbaceous plant material (dry weight) is produced per hectare.

Visit our web site:
FACILITIES

ANGLING/CAMPING/CHALETS
Times of admission: 05:30 to 19:00 every day of the week.
Entrance gate on Nellmapius (Dam) road.
Toilet and braai facilities are available.
Overnight facilities include camping and self catering chalets.
Fish caught in the dam include: catfish, yellow fish, carp and tilapia.
No canoes or baitboats are allowed.
For enquiries call (012) 358 1819
Mountain bike trails: 6 and 7 Km trails

THE NATURE RESERVE
The reserve entrance is situated via the Olifantsfontein road. Game may
be viewed on 30km of tarred road and 10km of dirt roads. Bird hides, toilets and
braai facilities are provided along these roads. Overnight facilities are
available to visitors with bookings for horse trails and hiking trails

THE YACHT CLUB
Access for club members only.
Please call (012) 345 3576 for more information.

LAPA
Availability and times will vary according to bookings. All bookings must be
made two weeks in advance at tel (012) 345 2274 at the Rietvlei Nature Reserve. Access is from the Olifantsfontein Road (M57). The lapa can accommodate between 30 and 200 people. There are attendant at the entrance gate and at the lapa itself who will stack fires. Firewood is supplied and power points, an icemachine, stove, walk-in refrigerator, cushions and toilet facilities are also available.

GAME VIEWING TOURS
Game viewing tours lasting two hours may be booked in advance.
Visitors must provide their own bus/kombi while a qualified guide
accompanies the group.

HIKING
The Reserve also offers guided overnight hiking trails. Please book trails
two weeks in advance. Facilities include two overnight rondavels with beds and
mattresses, hot and cold water, basic cooking utensils and firewood.
The route covers a distance of 21kms across a 4000ha terrain supporting some 1500 head of game. There are several historical sites to see on the route. Daily hiking trails are also available.

HORSE RIDES
Day rides and overnight rides are available. Day rides last approximately
four hours and overnight rides 3 days. It is possible to book alternative
times in advance. Guides accompany riders and each rider is provided with their own horse, saddle and saddle bags. The route covers a distance of 36kms.

NIGHT OR DAY GAME DRIVES
Game drives cater for groups of 10 - 12 or 18 - 20 people. Firewood and blankets are supplied. Game is tracked from open gameviewing vehicles by spotlights. Visitors must supply their own food for a braai at the Fish Eagle Lapa.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND LECTURE ROOM
Nature conservation officials offer educational programmes to school children and other interest groups.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Gate times: Summer (September - April) 05:30 - 19:00
Winter (May - August) 07:00 - 18:00

Entrance to the nature reserve will only be allowed until 1 hour before
closing time.

Guides must be booked two weeks in advance.
Bookings are only necessary for the overnight facilities, tractor and
game drives, horse trails and guides.

Please note that our facilities are nature oriented, and no parties and
functions are allowed.

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Visit our website: