



Newsletter No. 3, November 2013

A word from Leon

With the summer season in full swing, I am busy with the second round of fish surveys at state dams and Provincial Nature Reserves in the Free State. During the 2012/2013 summer season, fish surveys were done at Allemanskraal, Bloemhof, Erfenis, Gariep, Groothoek, Kalkfontein, Knellpoort, Koppies, Krugersdrift, Rustfontein, Sterkfontein and Welbedacht Dams, all situated within the borders or in close proximity of Provincial Nature Reserves in the Free State.

During these surveys, nearly 11 000 fish weighing 4 tons were caught and you will therefore understand why you only now receive the next OVRYCMA newsletter as it took weeks and months to process all the data that was collected and to compile reports for reserve management on the fish populations at state dams. For the 2013/2014 summer season, I will be including 10 more state dams in my surveys, amongst them the Vaal Dam where according to reports from anglers, alien and invasive grass carp numbers have skyrocketed.

Final results of the 2012/2013 summer fish surveys have shown that at a number of dams, smallmouth and largemouth yellowfish occur in large numbers, notably in Erfenis, Koppies, Gariep, Kalkfontein and Sterkfontein Dam. At Erfenis and Koppies Dam, the two yellowfish fish species' populations were represented by all size classes which indicate that the two species are breeding successfully in the two dams and rivers and tributaries flowing into the dams.

What is a bit worrying is that the smallmouth yellowfish population at Sterkfontein Dam, which is viewed as the best fly fishing venue for smallmouth yellowfish in the world, consists mostly of adult fish and very few individuals smaller than 30cm were sampled. This result confirm that of previous research done on the fish populations at Sterkfontein Dam that indicated that all the fish species in Sterkfontein Dam has a very low recruitment and that all fish populations' structures consist mostly of large, adult fish. The rapid increase in the number of largemouth black bass in Sterkfontein Dam is a matter of great concern and this aggressive predatory alien and invasive species might have a further detrimental effect on the recruitment of all indigenous fish species. Due to this, a research project will be initiated in the near future to investigate this further and to determine what can be done to address this problem.

Die toekoms en voortbestaan van die Oranje Vaalrivier Geelvisbewarings en Bestuursvereniging (OVGBBV)

In die Maart 2013 nuusbrieff is 'n dringende versoek tot al die lede en belangstellendes gerig om meer by die OVGBBV betrokke te raak. Daar was 'n dringende versoek vir lede om area koördineerders te word maar ten spyte van die versoek en vele eposse wat uitgestuur is, was daar geen reaksie nie.

Die afgelope twee bestuursvergaderings van die OVGBBV was baie swak ondersteun en baie min lede het dit bygewoon – soms net vyf lede. Wat baie kommerwekkend is, is die gebrek aan ondersteuning en toewyding van die naburige Provinsies vir die OVGBBV as gevolg van verskeie logistieke en administratiewe probleme. Die Oranje en Vaalriviersisteme vloei nie net deur die Vrystaat nie, maar vyf Provinsies en dit is amper nutteloos om bewarings- en bestuursriglyne vir die twee Oranje Vaalrivier geelvisspesies te beplan en op te stel as die ander vyf Provinsies nie betrokke is of dit ondersteun nie.

Verskeie gesprekke is al met belanghebbendes gehou om met 'n strategie vorendag te kom en om te besin of die OVGBBV nog enigsins 'n doel het en om te bepaal hoekom daar baie min tot geen ondersteuning meer van lede is nie.

As 'n laaste poging versoek ek dus alle OVGBBV lede, belangstellendes en belanghebbendes in die geelvis vliegengel bedryf om aan my te skryf met moontlike voorstelle en wat gedoen kan word om mense weer betrokke te kry, en hoe en op watter manier die OVGBBV bestuur moet word.

Ek sal enige kommentaar, insette en voorstelle baie waardeer!

The 2014 Yellowfish Working Group Conference

The future of the National Yellowfish Working Group (YWG) is also in jeopardy, mostly due to the same reasons effecting OVRycma. The 2012 and 2013 YWG Conferences was poorly attended and during the 2013 annual conference of the Southern African Society of Aquatic Scientists (SASAQS) which was held at Arniston in the Western Cape, a number of informal discussions were held to plan a way forward for this national group.

The 2014 SASAQS conference will be held in the Free State and as I am on the local organising committee for the 2014 conference, and also because many SASAQS members, notably fish scientists, is also YWG members, I made a recommendation that the 2014 YWG conference be held during or before the 2014 SASAQS conference.

The ball is now on the roll, and I am glad to report that the 2014 YWG conference will be held on Sunday, 22 June 2014 at the Black Mountain Leisure and Conference Centre near Thaba Nchu in the Free State. The 2014 SASAQS Conference will start directly after the YWG conference. It is hoped that many members will attend the YWG conference as a way forward for this national group will also be discussed. For more information and if you are interested to attend the 2014 YWG Conference, you are welcome to contact me at barkhl@dteea.fs.gov.za.