

ToadNUTs CV



For the past 13 years, since 2007, ToadNUTs has successfully rescued and recorded thousands of toads in the south peninsula, and advocated for their conservation. We have trained and mentored over 100 volunteers over 13 breeding seasons, run many education and awareness programmes and participated in strategic planning processes. In 2016 Alison Faraday was invited to talk at the International Road Ecology Conference in France (IENE). ToadNUTs was the only volunteer group represented from around the world. We have contributed to many workshops, television programmes, radio shows and newspaper articles.

The Toad NUTS Journey

2007 – Present: ToadNUTs Volunteer Group (Noordhoek’s Unpaid Toad Savers)

- In 2007 Suzie J’kul and Alison Faraday became aware that hundreds of western leopard toads (*Sclerophrys pantherinus*) were being killed on the roads of our suburb, Noordhoek, Cape Town. They started organising road patrols with a few volunteers to rescue toads off the roads. The initial focus was on Silvermine Rd where the observed deaths recorded were up to 23% of all observations (data can be supplied).
- At the end of 2008 when the toadlets emerged and were drowning in swimming pools, Suzie J’Kul invented and tested the ‘Toadsaver’ which is a device that is installed into swimming pools to allow toads to exit safely, saving thousands of toadlets and adult toads.



Figure 1: Toad Saver in action

- In 2008, Toad NUTS was formed with a core of 26 volunteers. Toad NUTS was asked to participate in a stakeholder workshop from which the Western Leopard Toad Conservation Committee (WLT-CC) emerged. Toad NUTS is an active participant of this committee on which the following organisations are represented: South African National Parks, Cape Nature, City of Cape Town, South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), Volunteer groups.

Toad NUTS Biography:

Founded: 2007

Founders:

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Affiliations: Noordhoek Environmental Action Group (NEAG); Kommetjie Education and Awareness Group (KEAG); Sun Valley Eco Watch; Western Leopard Toad Conservation Committee (WLT-CC); Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT); San Parks Jnr Honourary Rangers, Jane Goodall’s Roots & Shoots.

WLT Facebook pages;

The Endangered Western Leopard Toad; ToadNUTS

- The formalised process of data collection, management and reporting was formulated by ourselves with the assistance of SANBI. (All data available for examination)
- In 2009, Toad NUTS launched our website: www.toadnuts.co.za including several 'how to save toads' video clips on the website and YouTube. (Website now replaced with a Facebook page)
- In March 2009, Suzie J'Kul completed the documentary; "ToadNUTs Diaries – the trek of the toads" which is a DVD for sale at cost price for educational purposes.
- In 2009, Toad NUTS appeared on Carte Blanche with Derek Watts and on 50/50 with Braam Malherbe where we showed the plight of the western leopard toad.
- In 2010 Toad NUTS worked with Louis Leibenburg with the program Cybertracker. This formed the basis of our eventual Toad App on android device. (App replaced by iNaturalist)
- In 2010, the WLT-CC deemed our approach successful and requested that ToadNUTs roll out our approach towards toad conservation to 5 additional areas on the south peninsula. A major recruitment drive was run in local newspapers and an additional 40 volunteers with area co-ordinators were added to the Toad NUTS family. These new groups were called SPOTS. The new areas patrolled were Sun Valley, Fish Hoek, Clovelly, Kommetjie and Glencairn.
- Our additional patrols showed that the numbers of toads in these new areas were at a critically low level. Specifically in Glencairn it was established that no measurable population existed, and in Kommetjie only a handful of toads were found.
- In 2011 the late Wally Petersen from Kommetjie led a project to rehabilitate an old wetland with the purpose of encouraging new breeding of leopard toads in that area. This was as a direct result of the ToadNUTs assessment of the leopard toad populations in this area. Skilpadsvlei has been a success with large numbers of western leopard toad and other amphibians breeding there since 2013.
- In 2012, Toad NUTS created a youth group called Toad NUTS Kids which were part of Jane Goodall's Roots and Shoots initiative. They played music for Jane Goodall when she visited Cape Town.

Sclerophrys pantherinus are endemic toads that live in coastal areas in the Western Cape. They conduct an annual breeding migration to low-lying ponds during July – September. All known breeding ponds are now within suburban development and hundreds of toads are killed by motorists during the migration. ToadNUTs was formed using residents as volunteers to counter this problem.



- Toad NUTS Kids have done annual beach, wetland and neighbourhood cleanups from 2012 – 2017 as well as performed music for the elderly.
- Toad NUTS Kids have been actively saving toadlets each November every year.
- In 2012, we realised that road patrols during the western leopard toad migration were not enough to reduce road mortality on busy roads in Noordhoek.* After reviewing many international case studies demonstrating the effectiveness of amphibian barriers, and after discussing their design with several scientists, we concluded that a barrier along both sides of Noordhoek Main Road south would be a practical and cost-effective way to proceed. Alison designed a cost-effective, wind-resistant and practical barrier. This design was later used by the Endangered Wildlife Trust as part of their road ecology project in Mapungubwe. * It should be noted that Noordhoek has the highest roadkill numbers of all suburbs actively patrolled as part of the Western Leopard Toad Conservation Committee monitoring programme.
- In 2013, permission was granted by five City departments to erect a shade cloth barrier alongside a 900m stretch of busy road. This was erected during the 2013 breeding season and was patrolled twice nightly by

volunteers to carry toads safely across the road towards the breeding grounds. The barrier significantly reduced roadkill (zero roadkill once the barrier was installed) and was removed after 52 days, once the main part of the toad breeding migration was over. This was the first barrier of its kind IN South Africa.

- This barrier was erected over the migration period every year since 2013 and initially had encouraging results. From 2015 the numbers of toads found at the barrier dropped steadily for unknown reasons. As a result the final year of the barrier was in 2017.
- In 2013, Toad NUTS kids performed music in their first Green Concert to raise funds for porcupine posters at the Living Art Farm.
- In 2014, work began on the Toad NUTS Android App. The work was donated by Datasmith in Cape Town. In addition, Toad NUTS Kids held their second Green Concert at Monkey Valley to raise funds for the barrier.
- In the same year Table Mountain Fund (WWF) awarded Toad NUTS funding to experiment using storm water tunnels as part of a barrier and tunnel system.
- In June 2015 Toad NUTS kids performed their third annual Green Concert at Monkey Valley to raise funds for Toad NUTS volunteer material.
- In 2015, Toad NUTS App was piloted and was used successfully throughout the 2015 and 2016 season.
- In 2016 Toad NUTS once again experimented with the storm water tunnels to establish if toads will walk through the tunnels towards the breeding ponds. Results were inconclusive.
- In June 2016 Toad NUTS Kids performed their fourth annual Green Concert at Café Roux raising funds for TOADSAVER materials.
- By November 2016 ToadNUTs had installed over 50 'Toadsavers' free of charge in swimming pools in the dispersal zone of breeding ponds. Toad NUTS continue to install toadsavers as an annual project.
- In September 2016 Alison gave a presentation to the IENE International Road Ecology Conference in Lyon, France. The presentation was entitled: "Using volunteer-based data to determine the effect of vehicular traffic on the endangered western leopard toad (*Sclerophrys pantherina*) in Noordhoek Cape Town." This resulted in strong international alliances.
- In June 2017 Toad NUTS kids performed their fourth annual Green Concert at Nassau Theatre in Claremont raising funds for Toad NUTS to help pay for any representation Toad NUTS might need to secure the safety of the Devilliers farm breeding migration paths, buffer zone and breeding ponds.
- From 2007 to 2017, Toad NUTS have gone door to door to educate home owners as to how to share their property with the western leopard toad successfully.
- From 2007 – present, Toad NUTS have raised money for and sold car bumper stickers in an effort to educate the public about biodiversity. Our educational and awareness work continues.
- Since 2017 ToadNUTs has become increasingly involved in environmental activism due to pressure to develop local toad habitat. This has involved hundreds of hours of objections, documentation writing and reading, participation in meetings and hosting public participation meetings. The data collected over 13 years of toad observations has proved essential to defending the green spaces in the Noorhdoek Valley.



NATURE OF THE TOAD NUTS WORK:

We started as a group of local residents keen to make a difference, and over the 13 years during which we have been in operation, Toad NUTS has grown into a leading contributor towards the conservation of the western leopard toad and other amphibian species in Cape Town.

It is important to also note that the western leopard toad is a flagship species which is a representation of biodiversity.

Our work falls into the following areas:

1. Management of Volunteers:

- Recruit, train and equip volunteers annually.
- Provide volunteers with educational conservation experiences as a motivational technique.
- Feedback to volunteers on the season's data.
- Schedule road patrols during the season and assist volunteers directly during patrols.



2. Management of Data:

- Oversee the collection of data
- Data has been collected and recorded since ToadNUTs first patrolled in 2007 but has improved each year in terms of the details collected, and the accuracy thereof. The data collected has been used to identify the road hot spots and the period and times when the toads are likely to migrate, so that steps can be taken to be able to save more toads in future.
- The name of the person who picked up each toad has also been recorded, and now exceeds 100 volunteers. Photographs of the toads have been taken in most cases and retained for future scientific studies.
- We have also recorded the gender of the toad and whether adult or juvenile and if found in amplexus. This is for scientific purposes.
- Care has been taken to ensure the statistics recorded are accurate and complete. New patrollers are trained in this.
- The data collected is then summarised and compared from one year to the next, to assist in planning for the next migration.

3. Education:

- Speak at schools and other institutions to increase awareness.
- Assist learners to complete projects on request. Learners are at senior school and at graduate level.
- Conduct frog walks with families.
- Assist annually with the South African National Parks Junior Ranger programme.



- Write articles for publication in local newspapers.
- Contribute to papers written by the Endangered Wildlife Trust for a range of publications.
- In 2009, Toad NUTS was featured on M-Net's Carte Blanche TV show.
- Toad NUTS has appeared twice on local conservation show 50/50
- Alison and Suzie have been interviewed by Cape Talk Radio and SAFM several times
- We ran a daily 'Toad Traffic Report' on Cape Talk for the winter of 2011
- Articles about our work have appeared in national newspaper the Sunday Times, as well as the Cape Argus and local newspapers.

4. Advocacy:

- Represent the needs of leopard toads in the following contexts: Road development proposals, housing developments and any development within the buffer zone of the western leopard toad.
- Meet with housing estate managers to suggest changes to gardening plans etc to suit the needs of the leopard toads.
- Liaison between community groups and City

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5. Community Work:

- A Green Concert is held annually which builds a strong base of support for the work by Toad NUTS.
- Participation in a range of community events such as the Noordhoek Fair and Mzansi carnival.
- Support Toad NUTS Kids in their efforts to work for their environment, animals and community.