

BAYNESFIELD HIKE

A fantastic group of 29 hikers – mostly from Durban Ramblers with a handful of us MHC'ers (this hike having been 'borrowed' off their fixture list) – met at the Baynesfield Estate at around 8:30 am. After some introductions amongst ourselves and the welcoming of a hiker Peter from the UK, the leader Jon Stevens gave us a brief rundown of the planned hike and off we set.



We were very grateful that the weather at this stage was still somewhat cool as we had been forewarned that it would be a long hot day of hiking.



The walk initially perambulates the rather thirsty looking dam with the pleasure of magnificent views of the opposing hills where little (from our perspective anyway) trees had been planted all neatly in rows.



We then had the awe of watching hundreds of ducks, geese and other water birds take flight in waves, clearly deeming us to near their watering hole.



Not too much further on, the path having just turned away from the dam, we spotted a couple buck bounding away up the hill where we were to follow and an expertly camouflaged chameleon on the path, lucky to have escaped with his life as a number of heavy footed hikers had already trampled past.

After some snapshots and the chameleon deciding Peter's bright blue shoe wasn't in his colour range, we meandered up the hill to a clearing where we stopped for a short breather and to quench our thirst.

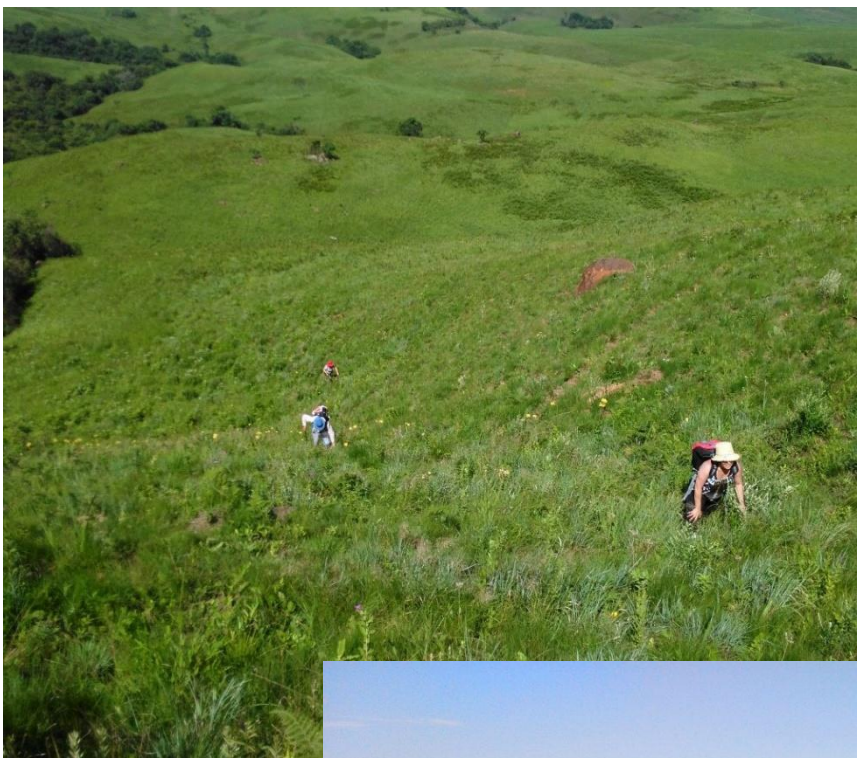


From there we headed along a dirt road through a forested area turning back onto a footpath a few hundred metres down, following this path for a while before turning onto another footpath heading towards the hills in the distance. Our grumbling tummies sought out a little shaded nook for tea and a welcomed 15 minute rest. Only after tea did some of us wish that we'd carried on a little further before stopping as we realised we now had to carry our full bellies and lazy legs up a very steep hill.





We continued on for some kilometres, chatting and laughing and occasionally cursing the heat which was by now well upon us, until we came upon a gentle stream which was to be our lunch stop. Jon gave us ample time to eat and rest and dip our sweaty toes in the icy water.



Eventually we had to pack up and set off again, though it was quickly realised that the path Jon was hoping to take was well overgrown and impenetrable. A quick vote and it was decided to head straight up the mountain and follow the ridge where the forest subsided before dropping back down to the path. At this stage two Ramblers decided this was not for them and they headed back from whence they'd come. For the rest of us, it was a long, hot, struggle up the mountain with no shade and some of our water stocks running dangerously low.

There was nothing pleasant about this climb, which also required a few 'stop, drop and roll's under barbed wire fences, and more than three hikers looked on the brink of collapse. The group spread out as the fitter climbed faster and the balance took it one step at a time, Jon ensuring all were ok and accounted for once finally reaching the peak.



Thankfully a cool breeze blew and water was shared with those who had run out.



From this vantage point we could see where our cars were parked and the path that was to lead us there. A bunch of us grouped together for a quick half-the-group photo and then with much jubilation started downhill, making our way back past a forest (a shortcut through for some), a field of hungry cows (we assumed they were baying for their dinner it now being close on 5pm) a harvested crop of mielies , a hedge of brambleberries harvested by us hikers, across the bridge... and we were home.



Phew. It was a looooooong day, but thoroughly enjoyed by most, if not all. Thanks again to Jon Stevens and Durban Ramblers for letting us join you on this one!

