

MARABOU TROUT SYNDICATE: OWNERSHIP AND STRUCTURE

Marabou Trout Syndicate comprises a ±500 hectare farm situated eight kilometres outside Lydenburg/Mashishing on the Mpumalanga escarpment. The farm straddles a gorge through which flows the Sterkspruit river, running from the adjoining Sterkspruit Nature reserve into the Lydenburg Town Dam. There is only one other farm between Marabou and the Lydenburg Town Dam. The district gravel road that provides access to the farm ends at the adjacent nature reserve and this contributes to the general safety and exclusiveness of the farm. Fishing is provided by numerous natural pools and runs spreading across ±2 km of "freestone"-type river. The Sterkspruit river is one of the strongest flowing perennial rivers on the escarpment. Natural breeding of trout is supplemented by trickle stocking of quality fish reared on the farm. The possibility of catching a trophy trout is within reach of the persevering fly fisherman. The current record stands at 4.44kg (9lb 12oz).

ACCOMMODATION

One luxurious lodge provides exclusive accommodation for the member and guests in residence. The spacious thatched lodge has four en-suite bedrooms and a loft/TV room with two beds (for children), so can accommodate eight adults, with possible overflow to ten. The lounge, dining room and kitchen are fully fitted and very comfortable. The bar (part of the main lounge) is well stocked with standard beers, wines and spirits as well as mixers. Most visitors take their own alcoholic beverages and rely on the bar for "emergencies". Two resident maids are employed to clean and do housework, and are capable of a range of cooking duties.

OWNERSHIP

The ownership structure is via a registered Pty Ltd company of which there are sixteen shares. Shares are either held personally or in family trusts, and sometimes by more than one owner. However in all instances there is one primary "member" recognised by the company as holding the vote allocated to that share. The cost of a share is negotiated between buyer and seller, with existing shareholders having first right of purchase. Ownership is stable and the most recently sold share realised ZAR275,000 (±USD17,745). There is a board of directors, all of whom are shareholders, except for the farm manager, Paul van Vuuren, who is the Managing Director. The board meets at least once a year, and more often if required. The directors have maintained a healthy and constructive relationship with the MD. The property is managed by the MD/farm manager, who lives with his wife and family in a separate home away from the lodge. Paul manages the farm including the trout production facility. Paul has been involved with the management of the farm since 1994. Paul is in close contact with the local trout fishing and conservation communities, and is himself well informed on all matters relating to nature in the area and is also an avid fly fisherman. Apart from the paths to the fishing spots along the river, there are two developed walking trails on the farm and visitors may enjoy the varied flora and extensive bird life from different perspectives. The current birding list stands at 188 species. The annual cost of maintaining and developing the farm is presently around ZAR75,000 (±USD4,595) per share (VAT included), which is payable in six instalments. The Annual General Meeting, held annually on the first Tuesday in December, is used to plan for the year ahead in terms of development and maintenance priorities as well as allocation of weeks. There are presently no land claims held over Marabou.

TROUT PRODUCTION FACILITY

Marabou trout hatchery produces trout for the live stocking and processing markets. The pristine Sterkspruit river feeds 7 raceways as well as the hatchery and fingerling ponds. This facility also enables Marabou to trickle-stock its own river with the highest quality fish ensuring excellent fishing all year round. Being the first fish farming operation on the river ensures Marabou's bio-security. Eyed ova is sourced from only certified disease-free hatcheries.

STAYING AT MARABOU

Each share is entitled to stay at Marabou for three six night periods per annum. Stays may commence from a Wednesday late afternoon, but must end on the following Tuesday morning, i.e., no residence on Tuesday nights.

The weekends allocated to a share are decided at the AGM. The year is divided into three four month trimesters (May-August, September-December, and January-April), and each share must take a week in each semester. The order of selection of the first week per share is assigned by lottery, and then the order reversed for the selection of the second week per share. The third week is assigned by shareholders having to meet the "one week per trimester" requirement. Clashes of two or more shareholders wanting the same weekend are resolved by lottery.

The allocation of fish is 16 per week. Most members leave their fish at the lodge to be cold smoked and kept for their next visit.

The maids have to be tipped according to a fixed schedule.

LOCATION AND ACCESS

Johannesburg to Marabou is approximately 340 km, and takes 3.5 to 4 hours driving to get there. The last eight kilometres from Lydenburg/Mashishing is a regional dirt road which is suitable for ordinary sedan cars. Four-by-four vehicles are better suited to the few farm roads, two of which are for access to the nature walks, i.e. to shorten the walks by about a kilometre each. The farm is situated en-route to the Kruger National Park and other Lowveld attractions.

Lydenburg is well served by a modern Checkers, Pick 'n Pay and Spar (but not Woolworths) and it is unnecessary to take loads of standard groceries. There is a very scenic and generally well maintained nine-hole golf course in town.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Marabou Trout Syndicate (Pty) Ltd

P.O. Box 800, Lydenburg 1120, Portion 34 & 36, Sterkspruit 33JT, Lydenburg, Mpumalanga, South Africa.

marabou@icon.co.za. www.maraboulodge.co.za

25° 8'39.02"S 30°31'43.72"E

Paul Le Sueur (Chairperson)
email: plesueur@polka.co.za
Phone: 082 444 2805

Paul van Vuuren (Managing Director)
email: marabou@icon.co.za
Phone: 082 323 4405

Matthew Jarvis (Director)
email: matthew.jarvis@vox.co.za
Phone: 082 442 2919

Tammy Glanville (Director)
email: tammy@glanville.co.za
Phone: 083 600 8660