

## FROK JANUARY 2018 NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends of Kloofendal

Well, here we are, 2018! Wishing for rain right throughout our country, we are grateful for the rain we did have, Kloofendal is looking beautiful!

## FORTHCOMING FROK EVENTS, JANUARY, FEBRUARY & MARCH 2018

Please support them while we are still able to have them?

### JANUARY

This **Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> January**, 18h30 – 20h30 **Nocturnal Scorpion Walk** with Jonathan Leeming. Bookings on [Quicket](#). Information on FroK cell 079-693-5608

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January**, 9-16h00. **Scorpion & Spider Course** with Jonathan Leeming [info@jonathan.com](mailto:info@jonathan.com), cell 082-338-4381

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January**, **Grasses Course** with Karin Spottiswoode, 9-12am, POSTPONED TO SUNDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 9-12AM. Bookings by FroK cell 079-693-5608

### FEBRUARY

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February**, 08h00 – 10h00. **Invasive Alien Plant Control** with Kenneth Slabbert

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February**, **Frog evening** with Warren Schmidt Bookings on [Quicket](#).

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> February**, 14h00 – 16h00 **Goldmine Tour** with Rod Kruger, bookings by FroK cell 079-693-5608

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February** 09h00 - 11h00 **Creepy crawly walk** Jonathan Leeming. Bookings on Quicket.

**Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> February** 09h00 – 11h00 **Fruit and tea walk** Karin Spottiswoode

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February** 18h00 - 20h00 **Frog evening** with Warren Schmidt Booking on [Quicket](#)

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> February** 07h00 – 09h00 **Birding** R70/R60/R50 with Grant Egen

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February** 18h00 - 20h00 **Reptile & Frogs course for children** Enquire & booking - Warren Schmidt

### MARCH 2018

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> March** 09h00 - 11h00 **Creepy crawly walk** Jonathan Leeming Bookings on [Quicket](#)

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> March** 14h00 - 16h00 **Gold mine tour** Rod Kruger

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> March** 18h00 - 20h00 **Nocturnal creatures** Grant Egen

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March** 07h00 – 09h00 **Birding** Grant Egen

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> March** 09h00 – 11h00 **Butterflies** Grant Egen

**More details on events for [January](#), [February](#) and [March](#) 2018?**

## BIODIVERSITY

We celebrate the biodiversity of plants and animals that still exist in Kloofendal, but over the last 15 years that I have been taking guided nature walks I have noticed a worrying decline in insects both on land and in the water, spiders, millipedes, centipedes, scorpions! Our butterfly guide, Grant Egen, also has expressed concern in how few butterflies he now finds on his butterfly walks. Insects, millipedes, centipedes are all food for bigger creatures such as birds, lizards, frogs, so it is no surprise that also in our frog evenings, the number of frogs we find has gone down, also our snakes. What is happening to our reserve?

Factors in Kloofendal that could be contributing to reducing the variety of small animals:

- Bush encroachment (more [below](#));
- Increased use of security lights shining into the Reserve from adjacent properties (e.g. Ponders end on west side of the reserve);
- Storm water damage to the river system caused by increased amount of paving in the suburbia upstream of the reserve;
- Overcutting of the lawn in the amphitheatre area (more [below](#));
- Equally low cutting of grassy areas near the entrance gate and along the entrance road. Could this be due to obsessive fear of snakes?
- Elimination of the [edge effect](#) between the lawns and the forested areas in the amphitheatre area;
- Removal of dead wood from the amphitheatre area;
- Sewage leaks, particularly those that have taken many days to be [cleared](#);
- [Wetland drying out](#) through siltation and stream deepening (trenching) of water flowing through wetland; and
- Steady increase in invasive alien plants.

We have brought most of these concerns to the attention of JCPZ (Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo), but with minimal response.

### Bush encroachment

Bush encroachment could be the biggest reason for the perceived serious decline of the smaller creatures in Kloofendal, over many years, where the grassland is being replaced by bush, as proposed by experts such as Prof Braam van Wyk and Andrew Hankey, Specialist Horticulturist at the. Walter Sisulu Botanical gardens.

Kloofendal Nature Reserve represents the critically endangered ecosystem called the Roodepoort Reef Mountain Bushveld, which consists (consisted) of grassland and bushveld (not forest, as Kloofendal is becoming more and more – no grass under the trees). The van Rooyen report and management plan of the Kloofendal Reserve did recommend 12 areas to be block burnt (controlled burning), in order to stimulate grass growth – old grass suffocates on its own old, dead growth, killing it and then trees move in instead (Bush encroachment). The old dead grass needs to be burnt in order for new grass and all the associated little forbs to flourish, providing food for insects which in turn are food for spiders, other insects, lizards, birds, mammals etc.

Firebreaks are burnt annually by JCPZ to stop fires in the reserve from spreading, in case there are any fires – lightning and arson are two causes.

Block burns, not the same as firebreaks, are demarcated areas selected according to an ecological management plan (see van Rooyen report & management plan on FroK website) that need to be burnt in order to allow the natural veld to be, and stop bush encroachment. Fire due to lightning is a natural phenomenon, needed for natural veld conditions. The two areas that burned in 2017 have had some positive results, but the first fire was of limited benefit as the fire was at night and not hot enough to help control the parasites on the common sugar bush (*Protea caffra*) as happens with fires elsewhere on the West Rand ridges.



New grass sprouted after fire, well utilised by grazing mammals such as mountain reedbuck, scrub hare. Scrub hare dropping in foreground of the picture shows his presence there 😊

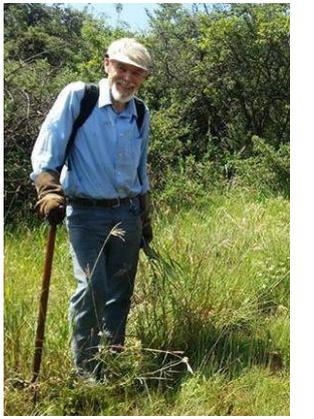
Below are some examples of the biodiversity of wild spring flowers seen in firebreaks which were burnt during winter last year.

 <i>Dimorphotheca spectabilis</i>	 <i>Ocimum obovatum</i>	 <i>Hermania depressa</i>	 <i>Gazania krebsiana</i>
 <i>Gnidia kraussiana</i>	 <i>Pentanisia angustifolia</i>	 <i>Polygala amatymbica</i>	 <i>Graderia subintegra</i>

## TRIBUTE TO JÖRGEN HAMMARSTRÖM

Jörgen Hammarström, member of FroK committee for many years, portfolio invasive alien plant control, very passionate and dedicated to this portfolio, passed away in December 2017.

He managed the monthly eradication of the declared and other problematic invading plants in Kloofendal with his small dedicated team of workers. He did collaborate with JCPZ, did not always agree of their methodology. Besides the monthly hacks, he spent many hours weeding in Kloofendal on his own.

 Jörgen	 Reserve he treasured	 Craig & Steve & black wattle	 Charlie & Kenneth spraying
 Charlie & Eucalypts	 Jörgen & Forget-me-nots	 Karin & Jerusalem Cherries	 Doreen & Reinhard

JCPZ ring-barked and cut Eucalyptus and Pine trees some 15 years ago at the top of the reserve below Swift Street where Jörgen lived. The FroK team led by Jörgen halted the continual regrowth of the Eucalypt. This has led to the dam no longer emptying over winter.

## ALIEN INVASIVE PLANT CONTROL

Kenneth Slabbert has agreed to run the monthly Invasive Hacks, while he is available. The community support in this is much needed, as JCPZ only deals with a few of the over 40 species of declared alien invader plants. We do hope that that JCPZ will take responsibility for controlling the Alien Invading Plants (AIP's) in Kloofendal, as they are currently legally obliged to do!



FroK Hacking team (Steve, Craig, Ella, John, Michelle – photograph by Karin) December 2017, a productive morning, working on Forget-me-nots (*Cynoglossum lanceolatum*).

Less visually dramatic was work that morning on Brazilian verbena (*Verbena brasiliensis*), Black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) and Pom pom (*Campuloclinium macrocephalum*).

Our next monthly hack will be on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 8-10am, meeting at the Kloofendal Ecological Centre. For information please phone me on the FroK cell 079-693-5608?

## LAWN

There is however a great increase in the number of Northern Harvester termites (*Hodotermes mossambicus*) in the amphitheatre lawn – they eat grass. Birds are happy about the presence of these termites, particularly when the flying termites come out! The flying termites are the fertile ones who will mate and start new nests, causing further damage to the lawn depleting the veld of browse for scrub hare and buck which utilise the grass in the amphitheatre area. The heavy infestation of the Northern harvester termites indicates that the lawn is a disturbed area, which it is!



Harvester termite carrying bits of grass to its nest



Amphitheatre lawn being harvested, and stored in termites' underground nests



Thatching grass from roof of Ecological Centre being cut into small pieces to be taken down into harvester termites' nest

Some of the lawn areas have become hard, bare ground, large areas of the lawn are overtaken by the fast spreading weed from Brazil. According to Bromilow (2010), the *Richardia brasiliensis* seldom becomes a problem, but it certainly has become a big problem in the Kloofendal amphitheatre area. It can and has survived the effects of continuous mowing – the grass is struggling to survive continuous low brush cutting over the years. According to Bromilow the *Richardia* is not a competitive weed and is generally susceptible to all types of herbicides, it can also be controlled effectively by cultivation (digging out) but over the years this has not been done ☹!

Some digging out of *Plantago lanceolata*, another, less serious invader, has been done, unfortunately I don't see much difference: there is still a lot of *Plantago* in the amphitheatre "lawn". A simple suggestion of removing *Plantago* flower heads before they seed would help prevent further infestations. Each inflorescence can produce up to 1000 seeds! Bromilow also describes control methods for *Plantago* that have not been followed.

Reference: Bromilow, C. (2010) Problem plants and alien weeds of South Africa, third edition, Briza publications.



Extensive bare parts of the amphitheatre lawn  
September 2017



Lawn of JCPZ manager of Kloofendal who lives next to amphitheatre, September 2017.

This was obviously watered during the winter. Was this against water restrictions, in law or in spirit? Does City Parks pay for water used at Kloofendal?

### Comparison of lawns.

The beautiful green lawn of JCPZ Kloofendal manager shows that amphitheatre lawn could and should be in a better state, should be better managed, even if only a small portion of the amphitheatre lawn is rehabilitated and the rest allowed to return to its natural veld state!



February 2005. Note the healthy grass in the foreground and also the border of tall veld grasses in the left background.



The grass is still being killed by overcutting using brushcutters, January 2018.

## WATER USAGE

Leaking taps and cisterns in the ablution block and taps around the amphitheatre seems to be a continual problem and has been reported to JCPZ. Thanks must be given to Grant Egen who fixed leaking taps in amphitheatre and ablution block as well as leaking toilet and an overflowing toilet on two different occasions in December 2017. All the taps should be checked and new washers installed where necessary. At present many are hard to close due to defunct washers. Each bathroom could benefit from signs to close taps, as taps are often left open – please to close taps but not too tight, as that will destroy washers.

Thanks must given to JCPZ last year for organising for a water tanker to be stationed outside the ablution block at two occasions when water supply had been cut off.

Sewerage leaks in Kloofendal are a frequent problem, in December there was a leak above the Rocky Ridge Trail which ran for two or even three weeks. The leak was reported to Joburg Water and JCPZ by community members, but it took weeks before it ultimately was stopped.

Community members, please take action when you see or smell a leak, report it to JCPZ and Joburg Water (011- 375- 5555), get a reference number, follow up please? To my knowledge there should be action within 48 hours.

## THANK YOU CITY PARKS

Thank you for repairing the bridge near the pedestrian entrance gate near the stage.



September 2017



January 2018

## WETLAND DRYING OUT

The top section of our little wetland is drying out due to a combination of on-going siltation and stream deepening (trenching) of water flowing through wetland by City Parks.

## KLOOFENDAL WILD FLOWER BOOKLET

Our Imaged list of Wild Flowers of Kloofendal Nature Reserve booklet has been sold out for a while now, but the good news is that the author, Dr Jan van Wyk is working on adding more flower species to the booklet, so hopefully the next edition will come out later this year.

## KLOOFENDAL NATURE RESERVE BIRD LIST

Drawn up by Grant Egen and Koos van Dyk some years ago, it is available from our birding guide, Grant Egen , cell 084-731-3344. Also available at our [web site](#).

Kind regards,

Karin Spottiswoode, with input from Steve.

Committee member of Friends of Kloofendal

Cell 079-693-5608, tel 011-674-2980