

FROK JULY 2018 NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends of Kloofendal

Well, here we are, July 2018, midwinter, the days are slowly getting longer, as the shortest day was 21st June, yeah!

HIGHLIGHTS RECENT EVENTS & FORTHCOMING FROK EVENTS JULY & AUGUST 2018

Star Gazing Saturday 16th June – 17 telescopes, planet walk, presentation by Kenny Nevil – the sky was beautifully clear! 187 people attended. Big thank you to Kenny Nevil, the Westrand Astronomy Club, Culembeek NG Church for providing volunteers for the registration table and boerewors rolls & hot beverages much needed in the evening cold!

At present, mid winter, hardly any guided nature walks over the weekend – most organisms, plants and animals are very sensibly dormant.

In spring we will resume our various interesting and fun events such as Nocturnal Creatures, Scorpion walks, Nocturnal Frog evenings, Bats, Birding, Goldmine Tours, Butterfly walks, Grass courses – please see our website www.kloofendalfriends.yolasite.com closer to the time?

SCHOOL GROUPS & STUDENTS

Our guiding team has been busy with school groups over the last few weeks, some fairly big groups of between 90 and 120 learners, where we have divided the group into small groups of between 15 and 20 learners per guide.

On Friday 8th June we had an exceptionally big group, 406 Grade R to grade 3 learners, divided the group into groups of fifteen little learners on a one hour guided walk, using ten guides, each guide had to take three guided groups, one after the other, the teachers organised the learners into groups, and it actually worked well, but the guides do prefer having the children for two hours and only one group per guide per morning.

On 15th February we had a big group, 110 grade 2 learners. Totally unexpectedly the heavens opened, it poured with rain, so our “hands-on” environmental education programme in the field was not possible. We all ran from the busses to the Ecological Centre.

We made a plan, and it worked! After an introductory talk on the Kloofendal Reserve, the teachers were asked to divide the children into six groups. The guides, six of us, each had a station, and the children’s groups moved around, from station to station, where they learnt something of ecological interest – we had a mammal station, insect station, separate butterfly station, a birding station, geology and gold mining station and a reptile and arachnid station. By the end of the morning the rain stopped and the kiddies could get to their busses dry.

The adventure was not quite finished yet as one of the two busses got really badly stuck on nearly flat ground in the muddy track and was eventually rescued by, after inserting branches, planks under the wheels, the bus being pulled out by a twin cab bakkie, assisted by manual pushing – a muddy affair!

Technical note from Steve: The problem was that the rear drive wheels were on two axels on a single bogey and a very small non-planar surface allowed diagonally opposite wheels to spin freely.

Information on FroK’s “hands-on” environmental education programme for schools can be found on the FroK website



UNISA Nature Conservation students – at Reserve Manager Phillip Mkhombo's request, I spent every morning of the last week of June I spent a week with them, taking them into the reserve. In the afternoons they did work on invasive alien plant control and wrote reports on the work done with me. We worked on ecology and ecological management of the reserve, tree and alien invasive plant identification, biological control of alien invasive plants and bird identification.

BUCK AND SNARES

Very depressing last year four buck had to be euthanized by our local vet due to injuries as a result of dogs in the reserve, and one snared buck had to be euthanized by a vet at the Zoo due to trauma, totalling 5 to our knowledge.



This year, a dead female mountain reed buck and new borne buck were found dead on the path of Rocky Ridge Trail on Monday 30th April, by somebody jogging there. He reported it to JCPZ and on FroK cell. As cause of death was unknown, I suggested to JCPZ for a post-mortem to be done, I was worried that the continuing sewage leak in the area where buck graze the Kikuyu grass could be a cause might be poisoning the buck. My request was ignored, we found buck about to be buried by JCPZ workers. Time had passed and apparently post mortems have to be done very soon after death.

A female mountain reedbuck found dead in a snare near the river bed on western side of the reserve on Saturday 5th May.

With the help of a student a camera trap was put out for a week, but unfortunately no footage of poachers or any one visiting the site was recorded.

Report by one of the Snare Control WhatsApp group members:

On Monday 28th May, Jackie Zietsman and Chrystal Lombard, two ladies who do clean ups in Kloofendal twice or three times a week, found another three snares, which they removed.

One more snare found on along the entire Western streambed on Wednesday the 30th June.

Sunday 03 June, Rickus & Martin, two concerned citizens, heard a Buck screaming in distress, and subsequently found, and freed a young Reedbuck caught in a snare, on the hillside, bordering Swift Street. They removed two snares from the area!

Monday the 11th of June, Jackie and Chrystal discovered a tabby cat on the freshly cut firebreak behind the houses on Galena, that had been 'guttet'!

If you would like to help with Snare and fence patrols, please WhatsApp Steve (cell 082-558-3158) to be included in the Snare Patrol WhatsApp group, a very active group which shares what is all happening in and around the reserve.

PATROLLING IN KLOOFENDAL

As entrance into reserve main gate has been seen left open in the evenings (the gate should be closed at 6pm), some squatters were found last week, snares have become a problem, dogs are still seen in the reserve causing a threat to our buck, soccer and cricket played by adults on the amphitheatre lawn – not allowed – the lawn is not a designated sports facility – two patrol units are now active.

<p>1. JCPZ has 4 patrollers on duty every day.</p> <p>Please put the contact numbers on your cell? If somebody sees something suspicious, or sees vandalism, please contact the patrollers?</p>	<p>TO CALL KLOOFENDAL NATURE RESERVE PATROL TEAM</p> <p>CALL THEM ON KHATHU 0711070998 MATHEW 0785681282</p> <p>ALTERNATIVELY 0117609143 PHILLIP 0712203696</p>
<p>2. Cognisant Security who are employed by the City of Johannesburg Council to look after Kloofendal facilities, previously had 1 security guard at the main entrance for access control, and one sitting in the parking lot, checking on the cars. Now there are two at the main entrance, two in the parking lot, two in the reserve and one extra one at the main entrance – this is as from today!</p>	
<p>3. Despite their frequent presence, Beagle Watch is not employed by the City Council to patrol Kloofendal Nature Reserve</p>	

ECOLOGICAL CENTRE GETS FACE-LIFT!

		
<p>Broken steps – hazardous for many years!</p>	<p>New tiling on veranda and steps</p>	<p>Tilers hard at work!</p>

The above improvements to the Ecological Centre was made possible by Roodepoort Central's generous donation of R10, 000, the work is done under supervision of Austin Daly, Rotarian who has done various projects in Kloofendal, such as the Planet Walk and the manufacture and installation of the noticeboard outside the main Kloofendal gate. FroK is paying for the remaining +/- R14 000 towards this tiling project.

REPAIR OF BLINDS



Moegamat repairing the blinds – June 2018



Properly functioning blinds at last!

This blind-repair project was organised and sponsored by FroK



Insect display by Aidan Henry – accompanied by a comprehensive illustrated booklet of each insect mounted – not in this photograph



Fungi display by Lindy Slater
Illustrated booklet on the fungi still to be compiled

4 display cabinets donated to FroK by Astri Leroy

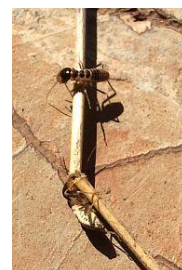
The pictures below were taken at a previous big infestation of harvester termites in in January this year.



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

We were advised to deal with them as they were eating the EcoCentre roof. Diatomaceous earth and harvester termite bait did help, but unfortunately did not kill them off. This month they have come out in force, actively harvesting grass and thatch, so we are back filling the exits to their tunnels with bait, which they take underground

into the extensive nests. I was worried about birds eating poisoned termites but there seems to be no problem there.

BIODIVERSITY

Our concerns as described in the January 2018 newsletter still stand.

The firebreaks to protect houses adjacent to the reserve from being burnt in case there is a fire in Kloofendal, are on the go at present by a big EPWP team managed by JCPZ. Some fire breaks stop fires in the reserve from spreading all over the reserve

WINTER FIREBREAKS CONTAINS THE SPREAD OF FIRE IN JOBURG

Please see JCPZ's [media statement](#) on fire breaks, entitled "WINTER FIREBREAKS CONTAINS THE SPREAD OF FIRE IN JOBURG

"Ensuring that JCPZ fire-proofs high risk open spaces such as city's nature reserves have far reaching benefits and is an essential biodiversity management tool to:"

Firebreaks on their own are not an "essential biodiversity management tool".

Firebreaks are strips of land where vegetation is slashed on either side and vegetation between the slashed strips is burnt. Firebreaks are mainly successfully being managed by JCPZ around the periphery of the reserve to protect neighbouring houses from being burnt in case of a fire inside the reserve. In these burnt strips of vegetation, new grasses grow as the old dead grass leaves have been removed by burning – after burning, the grass plants are still alive, burning stimulates new growth. It is amongst the grasses, not the trees, that there is a wealth of biodiversity of grasses, herbs, shrubs, wild flowers in the natural Highveld biome (Roodepoort Reef Mountain Bushveld biome in the case of Kloofendal) with all the insects and other organisms they attract.

Fire breaks, as compared to the whole reserve, constitute just small areas of land where fire is applied and managed.

It is controlled block burning, as recommended in the [van Rooyen management report 2014](#), that has been lacking in management of the JCPZ managed nature reserves in Johannesburg, that has caused serious bush encroachment (thickets) where the grasses have been suffocated by the accumulated dead grass vegetation over the years, and been replaced by bush, which is changing the whole ecology of the natural Highveld in JCPZ managed nature reserves. Kloofendal is good example where in many places bush has replaced the grassland with all its biodiversity.

Before people's involvement, the veld would be set alight and burn every few years as a result of lightning, as part of our summer storms. This burn rate increased in Southern Africa when humans developed and used the skills to start fires. This made space for new grasses and other plants to spring up, providing food for the indigenous animals.

"Influence the quality and quantity for foraging;"

The firebreaks create only some grasses for the various Highveld grazing animals, but certainly not enough!



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 😊




Roodepoort Reef Mountain Bushveld consists predominantly of grassland, which is no longer the case in Kloofendal

"The benefits where a fire is applied correctly can have many positive outcomes"

We are grateful to JCPZ for doing the yearly firebreaks, but these should be succeeded by block burning in Kloofendal and other JCPZ managed nature reserves to try and reduce the ongoing bush encroachment. 12 areas in Kloofendal have been advised in the van Rooyen report 2014 to be block burnt! We are not aware of this having been done.

From the [media statement](#): “Residents may contact Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo on 083 981 0272 to discuss the JCPZs Burn Plan”. We did indeed follow up and we were not given a burn plan. We did indeed follow up with JCPZ's Conservation Manager, Bishop Ngobeli). We were asked to talk to Phillip Mkhombo, the on-site manager. Phillip, that would be nice, but no, this should be driven from the higher than you in the City of Johannesburg. It was a year ago that your bosses showed extreme reluctance to do proper block burns. Andrew Hankey of the WSNBG assisted with explanations on-site and left the Reserve with a sense of depression from their lack of support. Thank you for the small block burn that you did do last year. Was it done under the best conditions? How have you assessed its effectiveness?

INVASIVE PROBLEM PLANT CONTROL

 <p>Kenneth Slabbert & Doreen Wood</p>	<p>May 2018</p> <p>Productive work being done on “Ronde klits/ Burrweed” <i>Cyathula uncinulata</i></p> 	 <p>Karin & Kenneth</p>
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Our last monthly hack was on Saturday 14TH July, 9-11am. The small team worked on the numerous Jerusalem Cherries on the Dassie Trail above the dam. Next hacking will be first Saturday of the month, 4th August, 9-11am. For information please phone Kenneth Slabbert on 079-922-9393?

WATER USAGE

Leaking taps in the ablution block are frequently a problem. It does get reported to JCPZ, who seem to struggle on occasion to find the time to attend to it. Anyone with skills on replacing washers, please offer your services?

Sewerage leaks in Kloofendal are a frequent problem. In December 2017 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.

This same leak reopened in May this year and ran for at least three weeks before it was repaired. It seems that there is a problem of Joburg Water arriving at the Kloofendal's main gate, in search for someone to show the locality of the leak. On not finding any help in Kloofendal, they leave with the job not done, so it was pure luck, that our FroK guides had just finished with a school group on Tuesday 5th June, I was last to leave, and on driving out, I noticed a truck with tanker on the back, driving in. So I reversed the car, found the truck driver having spoken to the security guard in the parking lot, on his way back to the truck. I asked if they had come for the sewage leak, the one that had been flowing for weeks.



Answer being yes, but they did not know where to go. They then drove behind me all the way round the reserve to Swift street. I happened to have the Swift street gate padlock key with me – my key bunch includes many useful keys! The gate could only open minimally as the metal at the top of the gate was bent, obstructing the gate to open. Also the grass had grown thickly over the running rails– obviously this gate has not been used for many months! Anyway, the two workers and I are all fairly thin and we literally squeezed through the restricted entrance. I showed them the leak, and the men promised that they would fix the obstruction that afternoon, which they did!!

The sewage stream on the path quite a way further down at last stopped running, but of course the sewage does need to be cleared once it is properly dry and easier to manage.

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. Please feel free also to join the snare WhatsApp group and post a Google Map pin.

THANK YOU CITY PARKS

For cleanliness of the amphitheatre ablution blocks. It is so good that toilet roll metal holders have been installed in each toilet, which allows two toilet rolls to be inserted in them, securely inside the container to ensure that they are not removed. However, they do seem to be emptied quite quickly! For school groups it has become necessary for FroK to supply toilet paper

WETLAND DRYING OUT

Still happening, has not been addressed ☹️

LAUNCH OF 2018 KLOOFENDAL WILD FLOWER BOOKLET & ONE WORLD BOOK

Good news! Dr Jan van Wyk has finished the updates of the booklet, so now we need to get quotes from printers and print 100 or 200 copies!

The launch date for the 2018 edition of Imaged list of Wild Flowers of Kloofendal Nature Reserve booklet has been scheduled for Saturday 6th October 2018 at the same time as the launch of Jonathan Leeming's new book "One world", a book showing how us people together can make a difference in reducing our destructive impact on our world.

The initial quotes for printing have been very expensive, so we will probably not be ready in time. More information in the next newsletter.

Kind regards,

Karin Spottiswoode, with input from Steve.

Committee member of Friends of Kloofendal

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