

JANUARY 2009

Official  
Newsletter of the  
Klipriviersberg  
Nature Reserve  
Association

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## “THE GOOD GUYS” SCORE A MAJOR VICTORY

The Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve Association recently received confirmation that the multi-fuel pipeline, that is to be constructed between Durban and Johannesburg, would no longer impact negatively on the nature reserve. This announcement heralded a massive victory for the KNRA after several years prolonged negotiations.

The saga started at the beginning of 2005 when Petronet SA announced that it planned to construct a multi-fuel pipeline between Durban and Johannesburg. According to the motivation that was published, the existing pipeline was no longer coping with the demand for fuel on the Witwatersrand and there was also concern expressed over its age.

In retrospect, the construction of the new pipeline was to be welcomed as it would contribute positively to the economy of South Africa's economic hub. However, a study of the planned route indicated that the pipeline would have a very serious impact on the nature reserve. Indications were that after leaving the Alberton fuel depot, it would follow a course along Swartkoppies Road to Kliprivier Drive, then cut diagonally through Rispark to Impala Road where it would enter the KNR near the Impala Road gate. The plans indicated that the pipeline would traverse the reserve in a westerly direction and exit at the north west corner. After exiting the reserve it would then proceed to the Langlaagte fuel depot, via NASREC.

The documents that were published also indicated that environmental management would be a priority and damage to the eco-system was calculated to be minimal. However, past experience has shown that where the environment is involved, specialised planning and the end results are invariably poles apart. This is borne out by the fact that there are several areas in the KNR where 'construction scars' are still visible 10-15 years after construction was completed. Many of these areas were "professionally rehabilitated" as part of the contract. Furthermore, it is a well documented fact that disturbed natural areas could take anything up to 30 years to completely recover, regardless of how well they are rehabilitated.

Also a cause for concern was, that while the initial motivation clearly indicated that a limited area on each side of the pipeline would be disturbed, past experience has shown that these limits inevitably fall away the moment heavy vehicles, workmen, trench digging machines and possible blasting are introduced into the equation. Clearly the extent of the damage to the nature reserve was going to be massive.

As is usually the case in these instances, the

KNRA found itself as the lone voice in objecting to the construction of the pipeline. Having had our objections duly noted, we were eventually invited to participate in the various public meetings that had been planned by the consultants. At one of these meetings, it was made clear that the planned route was the most economical and that any change in direction was out of the question. Another matter for concern was that the authorities, JCP included, appeared to be totally unaware of Petronet's intention to practically destroy large areas of the KNR.

Given the circumstances the Exco decided to approach Bohlweki Environment, who were the appointed consultants for the project. We felt that we had to express our concerns in a one-on-one meeting, rather than a public forum.

Bohlweki agreed to meet with us and in late 2005 the Exco met with three representative of the company. We were perhaps fortunate because the three people, who attended the meeting on behalf of the consultants, were as concerned about the damage to the nature reserve as we were. It was encouraging to have like minded people at the coal face and after discussing our alternative suggestions with them, they agreed to do what they could to influence our suggested changes.

The alternative route that the Exco suggested was along Swartkoppies Road to the old Vereeniging Road and then north along the old Vereeniging Road to the point where it would have originally exited the reserve in Alan Manor.

In late 2005 we attended another meeting in Midrand at which the final directional plans for the pipeline were presented. To our surprise and delight these plans indicated that the KNRA suggestions had been accepted. While this was good news there was, however, one factor that still caused concern. According to the new plan the pipeline would follow the old Vereeniging Road in a northerly direction until it reached a point ahead of the buildings that bordered the road. It would then enter the reserve and cut through the north western edge exiting in Constanca Road.

Without being too pedantic, we drew the consultants attention to the fact that the area that they were going to utilise was not only difficult to access but consisted of solid rock. Undeterred by these facts they were adamant that this was the final route that the pipeline would take. However, due to the directional change a further series of public meetings with concerned resident and business owners in the area became necessary. Fortunately the KNRA was still regarded as an interested and affected party and we were once again invited

*continued on last page*

# Editor's Comment

This column, which is totally independent and reflects my personal views and not necessarily those of the KNRA or the Exco, earned me a slap on the wrists, after my comments in the July issue. In actual fact what probably saved me from getting a "fat klap along side the earhole" was the few faithful who wrote in and said how much they enjoyed reading the newsletter (They were not my family members!) Thanks guys, apart from probably saving my hearing, I appreciate the feed back.

The reason for the 'slap' was my perceived ongoing criticism of JCP, the guys at the top viewed it as "counter productive" and there was a hint of a suggestion that I had an issue with JCP. This is not strictly true because I firmly believe that within the framework of their core competency, JCP is probably the best Parks Department in the country.

A visit to our local park showed that it was in immaculate condition, the grass was trimmed, the flower beds were well tended, colourful and even the swings and roundabouts were in working order plus there were benches and tables available for people who wanted to picnic.

Keeping pavements in any semblance of order must be a heck of a job and I do not envy anyone having to ensure that they are properly maintained. However, in spite of the many difficulties that JCP must face in maintaining pavements, the ones in Mulbarton and adjoining suburbs always look pretty good.

I must admit to not having visited to a cemetery for a long time but the people that I have spoken to and who have, say that they were in a pristine condition.

Arguably, the entrances to Glenvista and Mulbarton are the best in Johannesburg. The developed areas are colourful and well maintained. The entrance to Glenvista even boasts a fountain while the entrance to Mulbarton has a magnificent display of roses.

Over the past few years, JCP have done a superb job of planting trees and generally improving the environment in previously disadvantaged areas. This is obviously a long term project but given the number of trees that they have planted the future outlook for forestation of these areas is very positive.

So far, the plusses far outweigh the minuses.

However, and there has to be a 'however,' I believe that when it comes to nature reserves JCP is way out of it's depth. My opinion is based on the fact that managing a reserve the size of the KNR, with its diverse eco-system, requires some very special and focussed management skills. And while JCP, by virtue of the people that they employ in their Conservation Department, has the necessary skills, their effectiveness is negated by the system under which they operate. Their problem is not a lack of knowledge or the will to get things done. It's a matter of having to compete for a slice of the cake, in an organisation where conservation, per se, is not a priority. To an extent, this is probably understandable because the requirements for services by the general public far outweigh those of the conservation lobby.

In my view the perceived problem could be solved by establishing a "Nature Reserves Division" within the framework of the Jhb. Metro, Environmental Department. While the JMED is currently oriented more towards environmental legislation, they are nevertheless not 'hogtied' by the multitude of diverse demands that are made on JCP's manpower, budget and resources.

This division could have its own budget and its management could be empowered to make quick decisions, where necessary, without having to refer to the "system." Plus the infra-structure is already in place via the existing JCP Conservation Department.

Under a focussed system of this nature, I am convinced that the eleven nature reserves in the Jhb Metro would soon see the benefit. JCP could concentrate on the things they do best and open spaces in this great city would have a much better chance of still being around for our future generations.

## 2008/2009 KNRA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A feature of the new KNRA Executive Committee that was elected at the 2007/2008 Annual General Meeting, is the inclusion of three young and enthusiastic new members.

Their presence on the Committee will hopefully stimulate some fresh thinking and their input will undoubtedly have a positive spin-off for the Association.

### The Committee for 2008/2009 is:

Chairperson: *Clem Kourie*,

Vice-Chairperson: *Philip Tarboton*

Treasurer: *Tony Ferguson*

Secretary: *Noel Thornton*

Members:

*Christine Loukasis, Thavarani Pillay, Samanta Stelli and Lloyd Grobler*

In accordance with the requirements of the Business Plan, portfolios have been allocated as follows:

Membership: *Thavarani Pillay and Christine Loukakis*

Guiding: *Tony Ferguson and Noel Thornton*

Management and Maintenance: *Clem Kourie and Noel Thornton*

Publicity and Public Relations: *Philip Tarboton and Noel Thornton*

Legal and Liaison with other parties: *Clem Kourie*

Land Matters: *Clem Kourie and Mark Forbes*

Fund Raising: *Christine Loukakis*

Environmental Management: *Vacant*

Working Groups: *Philip Tarboton and Lloyd Grobler*

Education: *Samanta Stelli*

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[clemkourie@gmail.com](mailto:clemkourie@gmail.com)**

**Protect our reserve!  
Please report anything that you may consider illegal to:  
Greg 082 6450248**

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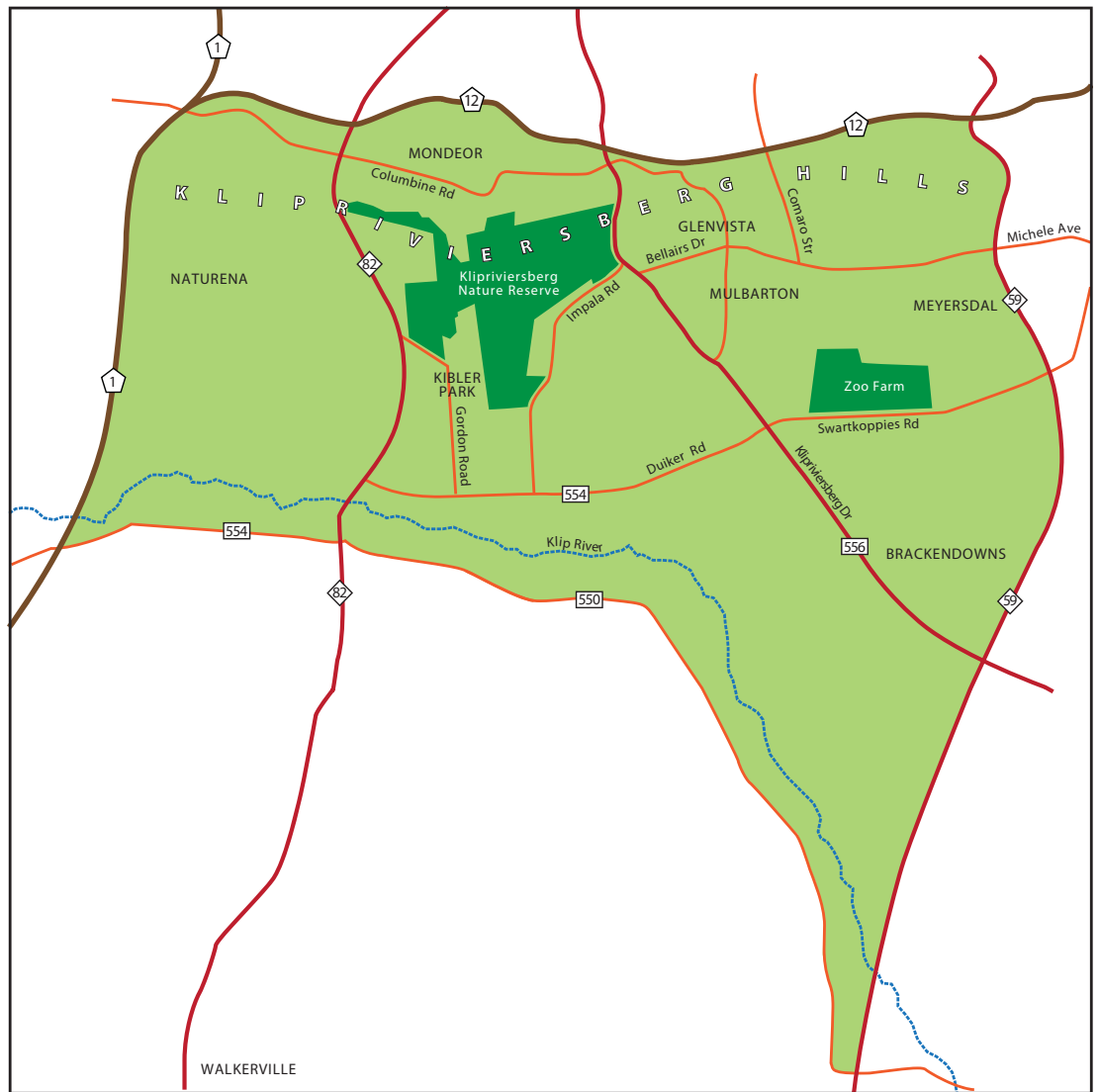
# KLIPRIVIERSBERG CONSERVANCY A REALITY

The Gauteng Conservancy Association recently granted the Klipriviersberg Conservancy an interim registration number and once their Constitution has been approved by Jhb. Metro, the conservancy will become a recognised entity. The establishment of a conservancy in the south of Johannesburg, apart from being unique, will offer many advantages for the development of a tourism, recreational, educational and cultural hub.

The concept of a conservancy in the south has been around for some time and all it really needed was for someone to "grab the ball and run with it." Early in 2008 environmentalist, Andrew Barker invited the KNRA to attend an inaugural meeting of the proposed Klipriviersberg Conservancy and since then creating an effective body has moved into top gear. Now that the concept has developed shape and form, try to imagine a conservation area stretching over approximately 150 square kilometers. The proposed conservancy lies between the N12 highway (the Southern Bypass) in the north, the R59 highway to the east (the Vereeniging highway), the R550 and R554 south of the Klip River and the N1 highway in the west (Vanderbijlpark highway).

According to Clem Kourie one of main drivers of the concept: "The proposed area that the Conservancy will cover includes rural areas of land much of which is pristine, unspoiled and environmentally non-transformed. It also covers residential and business and other urban areas. The 680 hectare Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve, the largest proclaimed nature reserve in Johannesburg, lies at the centre of the proposed area."

Clem continued: "The area has considerable tourism,



recreational, cultural, educational and development potential, but needs proper and careful environmental management and protection from untoward development. Encouraging residents to participate and landowners to register their properties as part of the conservancy would go a long way towards managing and retaining the natural beauty of the area and would have considerable other positive spin-offs, such as the promotion of tourism and recreational facilities in the area."

The success of this venture depends largely upon the number of people who are prepared to get involved. The interim Constitution provides for a variety of membership: Ex Officio Members that include Johannesburg, Erkruthuleni and Midvaal Municipalities and the Gauteng Conservation Association. Land owners who own or use 500 hectares and landowners who own or use 5 and 500 hectares within the boundary of the conservancy. Residents in established residential townships and agricultural holdings also within the boundary of the conservancy, businesses, educational institutions, sports and recreational organisations.

Based on the premise that there is strength in numbers the organisers are urging as many people as possible to become members of the

organisation. This will enable a cross section of people to help develop a multi-faceted management plan. Clem Kourie: "The management plan for land will centre on biodiversity and management of land in a sustainable environmentally friendly manner, whereas residents will probably focus on sustainable urban living and reducing their environmental footprint. Businesses, schools and sports bodies also have an important role to play in developing the broad based management plan."

Insofar as membership is concerned the focus will be on people rather than financial gain and on that basis membership of the conservancy will be free. Funds will be generated through donations and sponsorships.

Become a member of the Klipriviersberg Conservancy by e-mailing your name, postal address telephone number(s) and e-mail address to: [clemkourie@gmail.com](mailto:clemkourie@gmail.com)

Should you need any further information contact:

Andrew Barker on Cell 083 2744434. E-mail: [abarker@icon.co.za](mailto:abarker@icon.co.za) or

Clem Kourie on Cell 082 4582816. E-mail: [clemkourie@gmail.com](mailto:clemkourie@gmail.com)

# Meredale Primary School's "Nature And Green" project benefits KNRA

In a show of support for conservation the learners at Meredale Primary School donated more than R7500.00 to the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve Association. The money was collected during a "Nature and Green" project that involved learners at the school in various environmental projects, as well as collecting money.

Sue Thiel, a teacher at the school and a very active member of the KNRA, told us that Graham Murray, Headmaster of Meredale Primary School, Beryl Steuart and Ester Denham both teachers at the school, decided to do a charity drive. They chose the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve Association as the beneficiary, knowing that whatever money was collected would be spent in the interests of conservation. Also the theme of the drive would encourage a greater awareness of the environment among their learners.

The scheme that they devised was to ask the learners at the school and whoever else may have been interested, to donate any 'brown money' to the charity drive. According to the organisers, 'brown money' included all coins and the odd R20.00 note. Learners were also asked to decorate envelopes and cold drink cans in order to effectively illustrate the theme of the drive. However, by far the most outstanding achievement of the project by the children was that the drive only ran for the last two weeks of the third term in 2008. After many hours of sorting, counting and

bagging the coins, over R7500.00 of them, the money was donated to the Association.

In anyone's language this was an incredible achievement and the KNRA certainly appreciates the gesture. Meredale Primary School are to be congratulated on their efforts. The Association will certainly ensure that the money collected will be put to good use.

Originally the school requested that the money should be used towards re-constructing the bridge on the southern side of the reserve. While the KNRA was more than prepared to donate the money towards the re-construction of the bridge, the total amount collected was obviously way short of the actual cost of re-construction.

To add to the confusion, the people that we spoke to at JCP, indicated that a new bridge was not in their immediate plans. So we were taken aback when it was announced that contractors had begun constructing a new bridge in the reserve. The KNRA is currently negotiating with JCP regarding the proposed financial contribution. Whatever the outcome Meredale Primary will be recognised when the bridge is officially opened in January.

May we once again express our thanks and sincere appreciation for the generous donation.

## **BITS AND PIECES**

Totally out of the blue we were told, by JCP, that a contractor would be erecting a new bridge close to the site of the one that was washed away in 2006. The new bridge was completed in mid-December and is a very solid structure. During construction the workers unearthed some bones that appeared to be the hip and calf bones of a mammal, way too big to be human. The bones had obviously been in the ground for many years because they were in a state of calcification. Greg Martin took them to vet who confirmed that they were from a very large animal probably an ox, although he could not be certain. The next step is to have them examined by an archeologist to see if they can be identified and aged.

The recently published KNRA brochure eclipses anything that we have attempted in the past. Professionally designed by Philip Tarboton, it gives a spectacular view of the nature reserve on the front cover, a brief resume about the various facets of the reserve on pages two and three. Spread across the next three pages is a map of the reserve together with a colour coded map of all the trails in the reserve. It also gives an indication of how to calculate the length of the trails. Colourful, concise and informative it was printed by Ince, one of the countries leading printers. We were fortunate that Exco member Thavarani Naidoo worked for Ince and was able to get them to sponsor the production. The intention is to produce a less elaborate version, that will be available free at our walks while the colour version will be on sale at R5,00 per copy.

As a general rule the Exco considered twenty people at our fortnightly guide walks as being a very good turn-out. In recent months this number has escalated beyond all expectation. At first walk in December we had 75 people and the second walk we had 93 people. This is incredibly good news. Most of the visitors say that they heard about the walks from friends and the KNRA web site is undoubtedly also making a valuable contribution towards the number of visitors. While the numbers are incredible, they nevertheless highlight the necessity to recruit and train more guides. On average we like to limit the number of walkers per guide to around 15 which means we are going to run short of guides if the trend continues. So, once again, we appeal to our members to offer their services as guides. Full training is offered – Contact Tony on 082 4546114, if you are interested

During 2008 the committee started offering specialised walks in the reserve. Bird identification walks and sunrise walks have proved so popular that, upfront booking is a prerequisite.

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*continued from page 1*

to attend these meetings. This gave the KNRA representative the opportunity to, once again, push for the pipeline to continue in a northerly direction up old Vereeniging Road as opposed to entering the nature reserve.

Once again Bohlweki accepted our suggestion but it had to be referred to Petronet for verification. To our surprise and delight early in 2008 we were advised that our suggestion had been accepted and that the pipeline would not impinge on the nature reserve at all.

This was great news for the KNRA

and the nature reserve, sensibility and concern for the environment had prevailed and our efforts had been well rewarded. Over the years we have dealt with many consultants most of whom have been self-serving, so it was a pleasure to be associated with Bohlweki Environment, they were highly professional in their approach to the project and our concerns. We appreciated their amenable approach to suggestions, they displayed a solid understanding of our concerns, they were environmentally concerned and generally good guys too!