

IT'S BEEN A VERY VERY BUSY YEAR

As a general rule Annual General Meetings are viewed as a mere dictate of a Constitution, a sort of "go through the motions event." Listen to a bunch of reports and elect some people to run the Association for the next year. In the case of the KNRA, maybe they will have interesting speaker, then a cup of tea, a brief chat and that's it for another year.

However cynically one may approach AGM's or meetings in general, we must never forget the tremendous work that a handful of people are doing in dealing with the very real issues that relate to the nature reserve. Equally the Exco must recognise the fact that there are a multitude of factors that make people reluctant to leave their homes at night. So, as a different approach, this year we decided to tell our members upfront how your Exco has handled the variety of issues involved the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve.

Before we even consider some of the issues that we handle on a daily basis there is a very real need to take a long hard look at the future of the Executive Committee. Fundamentally there is nothing wrong with the Exco and the manner in which it conducts the business of the KNRA. In fact they have done a remarkably good job this year, considering that there are only six members serving on Committee.

While numbers are unimportant in the context of what has been achieved, the real danger lies in the fact that the "bulk " of the Exco members fall into the category of "senior citizens." It may be argued that age is no reflection on capability but it would be a mistake to ignore the situation.

If we are to expect any form of continuity in the future, we really need to attract younger people onto the committee. By doing this we will ensure that, within a year or two, they will be ready to take over. In reality all we need is two or three people, with the necessary commitment to preserving open spaces and the KNR in particular – and who are under "that age."

As committees go this one is well structured. We have the Executive Committee that meets once every month to attend to business matters in terms of the KNRA Constitution. This meeting is compulsory for those members that are office bearers. Then there is the Management Committee that meets once a month for the purpose of attending to the practical side of the nature reserve.

Each member of the committee is given a portfolio: Members, working groups, publicity, guiding, education, to name a few. The Portfolio manager is totally responsible for developing and implementing the strategies that were decided on in conjunction with the committee. They may appoint their own working group that convenes whenever the necessity arises. This format has many advantages because if you are not a committee person you can be still become actively involved in the nature reserve.

The protection of open spaces and in particular the KNR is a KNRA priority. During the past year we submitted objections to various authorities relating to: A proposed cluster development adjoining the reserve in Impala Road, the proposed sale and development of the Rietvlei Zoo Farm,

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Nature Reserve
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www.knra.co.za

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2007/2008 Annual General Meeting will take place:

Thursday, 7 August 2008

at the Klipriviersberg Recreation Centre, Peggy Vera Road, Kibler Park, JHB
19H00 for 19h30

GUEST SPEAKER:

As an exciting start to our AGM, - we will have the privilege to listen to Di Beaton (Executive Officer of Delta Environmental Centre). She will ask the question "Have you got an ecological Handprint?"

...Well have you?

Come along and find out.

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the pending re-zoning of houses near Silent Pool that will, if granted, enable the owner to erect townhouses, the proposed development of the farm Olifantsfontein in Kibler Park once again for "housing" development and the sale of a piece of ground adjoining the reserve in Colworth Avenue, Mondeor.

Apart from opposing development around the reserve there are numerous other aspects that also need attention. During the year the Exco also submitted strong objections to: Certain aspects of the KNR development plan. The SAPS communication mast, our lawyers are still trying to evoke a response from the authorities regarding certain questions that were asked. We are continually monitoring the progress of the multi-product fuel pipeline that will run along the western border of the reserve. We also have reservations regarding the new entrance precinct. Furthermore, we are continually working on the acquisition of certain undeveloped properties bordering the reserve. We are investigating various avenues for securing finance that will enable the KNRA to buy the land in question. Following expert advice we persuaded Johannesburg Road Agency not to proceed with extensive erosion control in the Bloubosspruit. As an alternative we have suggested the development of a wetland area that will slow down the water flow in the spruit.

We also managed to raised sufficient funds, via sponsors and donations, to enable us to replace the solar panels that powered the borehole. The concrete palisade fencing around the motor and tank was donated and all the electrical work was done free of charge. The solar panels were stolen over two years ago.

Other activities include regular clean-up campaigns, snare hunts, guided walks, guide training and special functions, we will shortly be embarking on a carrying capacity project. This year alone attendance at our fortnightly walks have risen from a mere 10-15 people last year to an average of 30-40 per walk this year. Our specialised walks such as bird walks, moonlight walks and sunrise walks are very popular. We believe that intelligent and regular publicity have contributed greatly to the success of these events.

The AGM takes place on Thursday, August 7 at the Klipriviersberg Recreation Centre, 19h00 for 19h30. Please think carefully about the future of this Jewel of the South.

More people using the reserve

In recent years many open spaces have disappeared under bricks and mortar, simply because they were under utilised. This, coupled with the view of officialdom that all open land must be "self sustainable" makes land that is owned by the authorities, a candidate for disposal or development. The cornerstone of the KNR Development Plan



was to make the reserve financially viable. While the concept is acceptable in principle, care should be taken to avoid outright commercialisation.

The KNRA, have over the years, suggested various methods of generating income from the reserve. However, in the end of the day maximum utilisation is the answer and this means attracting as many people to the reserve as possible. In order to achieve this the reserve must offer something tangible.

A little over a year ago the KNRA launched its own website (www.knra.co.za). While it is difficult to measure the total effect of the site a pretty accurate assessment can be drawn from the fact that our fortnightly walks are attracting between 30-40 people. We held a special Freedom Day walk that attracted 135 people. Our bird walks, 35-30 people, are booked out well before the time and Greet the Sun walks have exceeded all expectations. The next areas to be addressed are the Moonlight walks and Midweek guided walks.

Apart from the walks organised by the KNRA, there are numerous people who use the reserve independently. We are continually receiving requests from school and church groups for guide walks. More to the point while all these activities are not generating mountains of income, the KNR is giving the people who use the facility a way to enjoy nature at its best.

KNRA bird list continues to grow

Birding in the KNR has attracted a great deal of interest in the past year. When Philip Tarboton and John Heywood initially offered to do an audit of the bird species in the reserve, our existing list was just under one hundred. The latest count has shown a marked increase and our bird list now exceeds 175 species. According to Philip Tarboton the main reason why there is an increase in sightings, is due to the very popular bird walks each month and also to the increased number of people actually looking for different species.

A recent sighting that created great excitement was that of a Secretarybird. The bird was seen near the pipeline and from all reports it spent quite a long time in the area. According to Philip, this is the third time in the last three years that the Secretarybird has been spotted.

During June and July three new birds for the reserve were identified -

Black Sparrowhawk, White-fronted Bee-eater and a Striped Pipit. The Verreaux's Eagles have been spending a lot of time hunting in the reserve, and whether they are resident in the area is not certain. But it is just so amazing to see these majestic birds with their 2.5 m wingspans flying overhead.

If you want to join the bird walks they are held on the third Saturday of the month. Early booking is essential. Contact Philip on: 082 828 5959.



Editor's Comment

The need for closer communication and co-operation between the KNRA and JCP was recently highlighted after members of the Exco 'illegally' released some small animals into the reserve. Normally JCP do not react to anything that the KNRA does in the reserve, however, on this occasion reaction was swift and to the point. We were accused of breaking the law, threatened with legal action and for a moment our fate hung by a thread. In my opinion if ever there was a classic case of over-reaction this was it!

It was not as though we had attempted to introduce a crocodile into the Bloubossspruit! In fact the animals in question were a couple of barn owls, some hedgehogs, brown house snakes and a young rinkals, all of which are found in the reserve. The trouble is that we are too upfront in our efforts to keep our members informed about what is happening in the reserve. If we weren't, JCP would have been saved their "tizzy" as they, like everyone else, would have been blissfully unaware of our actions.

A worrying factor is that JCP chose to latch onto a situation that was completely innocuous. It was almost as though we had 'finally' transgressed and at last they had found the stick with which to beat us. I find this an odd reaction given all the good things that the KNRA has done in the KNR over the past 25 years. I wonder when they will get to realise that we are not the enemy and that whatever we do or say is only in the best interests of the nature reserve and the people who use it.

Sure, we do sometimes appear to be pedantic in our approach about various aspects of the area but if we weren't who else would be? Consider our involvement in getting the petroleum pipeline that was scheduled to enter at Impala Road cut through the reserve and exit the reserve in Alan Manor moved. We spent a great deal of time and effort in negotiating an agreement that saw the pipeline following a route that will have minimal impact on the reserve.

Then there is our involvement in the proposed communication mast that may yet still disfigure the beacon area. Who took legal action against the authorities? For the record JCP did not even object to the project at the outset. What about the ongoing saga of acquiring or swapping land adjoining the reserve that is consistently ignored by JCP. Hey, and these are just two instances. And yet we were labeled the bad guys because we objected to certain aspects of their development programme for the KNR.

We have accepted culpability for illegally releasing animals into the nature reserve and we have made our apology. Hopefully this 'occurrence' will be the catalyst that heralds greater co-operation between two important bodies who both have so much to offer for the good of the KNR. So where do we go from here? I am told that at least one official at JCP has recognised the potential for a positive outcome to the unfortunate situation that occurred. He has proposed that the two organisations meet on a regular basis in order to handle future problems, one-on-one. This should have happened years ago!

The good news is that I recently received a copy of the minutes of the first meeting. They were positive and there appears to be a genuine desire on the part of JCP to narrow the communication gap.

Annual Sponsorship Appeal

Our appeal for sponsorship is a little late this year. The Association relies heavily on sponsors to fund its operating expenses and its activities and is grateful for all donations received. Funds are not used to pay salaries, wages or honoraria as all work is done on a voluntary basis.

The Association is registered with the South African Revenue Services as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) and as such, is entitled to issue tax receipts to its sponsors. These receipts allow sponsors / donors to deduct donations made to the Association from their taxable income. You could thus save up to 40% of your donation by way of reducing your tax. Tax receipts are however only issued to individuals who donate R200 or more and to corporate bodies who donate R500 or more.

Recognition is given to sponsors by way of issuing them with a tax receipt and by publishing their names on the KNRA web site.

Please deposit your contribution directly into the bank account of the Association, details of which are:

Bank: Standard Bank of SA Ltd.

Branch Code: 006405

Account Name: Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve Association

Account Number: 201047284

Please quote as a reference your initials and surname. A copy of the deposit slip together with your telephone number and postal address should be faxed to 086 6523364 so that the tax receipt can be mailed to you. This will be done after the end of February 2009 so that the donation can be claimed off your 2009 taxable income.

Sending the KNR Newsletters via e-mail makes economic sense. If you have an address that you have not given to us please send it to:

clmk@cybertrade.co.za

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

**EDITOR: NOEL THORNTON
(011) 682-1494**

VOLUNTEERS WANTED URGENTLY!!

The KNRA is always in need of extra hands to help with the multitude of tasks in which we are involved. While most positions that are available can be filled as and when we find the right person, there is however, one voluntary position that we need to fill as a matter of urgency. The position that needs to be filled is that of Secretary on the Executive Committee. Before any potential taker rejects the job on the basis of mountains of secretarial work let us make it clear that the title is bigger than the job.

Requirements for the job are, that the incumbent will have to attend three meetings a months in order to record minutes. Two of the meetings will be in the evening and one in the

afternoon. The minutes of the meeting will need to be typed and circulated via e-mail. And that is it! So if anyone out there is available, has the time and would like to help us please call Clem on 082 458 2816.

We need more guides, training will be provided. We will also shortly be implementing a Junior Guide training course. A further request for volunteers is that if we are able to establish the nesting place of the Black Eagles, they would have to be monitored on a regular basis. If anyone is interested in joining this project, once it gets underway, please contact Philip on 082 828 5959.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR CARRYING CAPACITY PROJECT

One of our shortcomings is our lack of knowledge regarding the carrying capacity of the veld in the KNR. At what point do we say to JCP that there are too many animals in the reserve and that the veld is suffering as a result. Developing this information is becoming a necessity and that will require a well directed survey of the veld.

Michelle Nelson, one of our very enthusiastic members, who just happens to be studying for a diploma in environmental management, has offered to do a study on the carrying capacity of the veld in the KNR.

This is an exciting undertaking and Michelle

will require the help of a number of volunteers. The work will involve measuring areas of the veld, identifying the grass growing in the area and then with the help of a piece of mechanical equipment called a Disc Pasture Meter, she will be able to assess the carrying capacity of that particular piece of veld.

This is an ideal opportunity for old an young to help with a very important survey and at the same time enjoy some time in the open air. If you are interested and have the time call Michelle's home telephone number is 011 943-2219. Her cell number is 082 4482453.

WAR WATCHES OVER THE KNR

One of the concerns that arose when the KNRA replaced the solar panels that supply power to the pump at the borehole, was the possibility that they would suffer the same fate as the panels that were stolen two years ago. While the area around the pump motor was reasonably secure, thanks to the donation of palisade fencing and a substantial gate that JCP manufactured, there was nevertheless a possibility that these precautions would not be enough. What we

actually needed was an alarm system of some sort.

Fortunately in life there is always a friend of a friend who is prepared to help. In this instance, Greg Martin of KNRA Mounted Rangers, asked Philip Klaasen of Walkerville Armed Response, better known as WAR, for the best method of securing the area. Klaasen not only gave us some solid advice regarding an alarm, he also gave us a transmitter and a free armed response service.

Apart from everything else WAR's staff will utilise Greg's horses to do mounted patrols in the reserve. All that we can say is a huge 'thank you' to Philip Klaasen and WAR Security.

BITS AND PIECES

About 3 years ago the KNRA planted a number of Kiepersol tree seeds that had been harvested in the Klipriviersberg. These trees are now ready for transplanting into the ground and the KNRA is selling them for between R100-R140 each depending on the size of the tree. Further details contact Tony 082 454 6114,

Walkers in the reserve will have noticed the smart new trail markers that the KNRA have erected. These markers will give clearer demarcation to the trails and the various colours will be shown on the next KNRA brochure that is currently being prepared.

Walkers will also have noticed the new brick toilet that has been erected by JCP at Silent Pool. The original wooden structure was vandalised by a couple of men who used the wood for a fire. We are hoping to reassess the positioning of the other toilets in the reserve in order to make them less conspicuous and user friendly.

The hole in the sewage pipe has finally been repaired and we must compliment Jo'burg Water on the excellent restoration job that they did on the surrounding area, once the job was completed.