

**Melville Koppies Management Committee (MKMC)**  
**Chairman's report for the year ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

The past year has been a continuation of activities of previous years, as required in the Melville Koppies Environmental Management Plan.

**Conservation**

Removing alien vegetation and controlling potentially invasive indigenous plants has fully occupied the Conservation Team of three full-time workers, Clement Ndlovu, Lucky Mdluli, Best Ndlovu, and one part-time worker, Joseph Kasonga, all supervised by Wendy Carstens. Regular volunteers Peter Johnson, Ozma Mcithwa, Michillay Brown and Monana Dliwayo have assisted. Hot weather and copious rain early in 2014 (496mm Jan to March) resulted in an explosion of dormant weed seeds. George Hofmeyr took 500 bags weeds with seeds to the dumps and a Melville resident sponsored a further removal of two 4-ton truck loads of weeds. Litter is a continual problem on Melville Koppies West. Controlled fires were done on Melville Koppies Central and East, but, as usual, uncontrolled fires burnt most of Melville Koppies West. Paths are generally in good condition except for the well-used ones on MK West. Tony Nunes has maintained structures, tools and small breaks in the fences.

**Publicity**

Most of the publicity of Melville Koppies over the past year has been very positive. Lis Jones' diary updates feature regularly in various publications. Wendy Carstens has feature articles (edited by Lis Jones) in magazines, websites, and she does interviews on TV and Radio and regularly updates the Facebook page. Melville Koppies has an excellent website set up by Norman Baines and now updated by Barbara Shaw. Cynthia Rose publicises MK on twitter and hedzup. The latest power point CD on 'Joburg from Melville Koppies' completes the set of nine CDs about Melville Koppies by Wendy Carstens.

**Education and recreation**

On Sunday guided tours and booked group tours, the team of volunteer guides has introduced many adults and children to the natural and cultural heritage of the Koppies. The monthly Cross-Koppie hikes are proving very popular. Unfortunately the monthly walk with socialised dogs on MK West is generally not well attended. (Refer to the addendum below for guide and hike leaders).

More committed guides need to be trained to maintain this very valuable facet of managing Melville Koppies.

**Number of recorded paying visitors** (excluding guides and hike leaders on duty) were:

- Sunday guided tours (three times a month) 467,
- Group tours 2223,
- Cross-Koppie hikes (once a month) 389,
- Walks with socialised dogs on MK West (once a month) 85.
- Total = 3159 recorded paying visitors

This number does not reflect other users, i.e. walkers and worshippers on MK East and MK West, David Dickinson's Sunday afternoon MK West group walks or George Hofmeyr's MK East weekday group walks.

## **Research**

A team from SANBI (South African National Botanical Institute) collected specimens from Melville Koppies for the Millennium Seed Bank project. Two men from the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and development came to check up if Melville Koppies still existed. Dr Neville Pillay from the University of the Witwatersrand and two post-graduate students did research on temperatures in the northern grasslands. In March, Dr Noel van Rooyen did field-work for a JCPZ-sponsored environmental survey of Melville Koppies. The report will be ready after June.

## **Security**

Loot from Smash and Grab incidents in Beyers Naude Drive is found regularly on MK West. There have been incidents robberies of houses adjacent to the Koppies. Two armed robbers have been causing problems on MK West since May. Patrols, organised by the MK West Sub-Committee, of volunteers, JMPD and Sophiatown police have not succeeded in catching the robbers yet. The access point to MK Central under the Beyers Naude Bridge has been closed several times by Tony Nunes but flooding and vandalism has wrecked these substantial structures.

## **Finance**

Income from guided tours and hikes does not cover expenditure. The shortfall is made up by private donations, sales of Melville Koppies CDs, income from MyPlanet members and an amazing nearly R40 000 from peoples' donations of unwanted goods to Junkie Charity Shop. 82% of expenditure is spent on conservation labour of Melville Koppies. Other costs are minimal thanks to the contribution of volunteers in time, expertise, petrol, own computers and cars, telephones, stationery, etc. Thank you to Vaughan Russell who does the annual accounts for Melville Koppies.

## **Melville Koppies West Sub-Committee**

This was formed in April to assist the MKMC with MK West. To date three meetings have been held, with initial action focussing on security, necessitated by the two armed robbers operating on MK West since May. The sub-committee is a very welcome initiative by Westdene and other residents.

## **African Independent Churches**

David Hirsch continues to focus on MK West, arranging bi-monthly meetings of the church leaders, and work parties and patrols of MK West by church members. Barbara Shaw is assisting with encouraging church members to care for the Koppies.

## **Joburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ)**

JCPZ has continued to supply one 24-hour security guard for the archaeological site at MK Central. JCPZ rangers do occasional patrols of MK West as requested by the MKMC. A JCPZ contractor has cut firebreaks and the grass on paths. Three workers from the Extended Public Works Empowerment Programme (EPWP) have worked with the Melville Koppies Team from March to June. This was co-ordinated by JCPZ. JCPZ commissioned an environmental survey of Klipriviersberg, Kloofendal, Melville Koppies, Rietfontein, Norscott Koppies and Lonehill by Dr Noel van Rooyen. The brief was ultimately to report on the reserves' vegetation and their browsing and grazing capacity.

JCPZ has not done the promised signage for MK West. Missing fencing needs to be replaced and all the fencing needs painting.

### **Committee**

This has been rather a fluctuating year for membership. Lis Jones and Barbara Shaw both resigned from the committee but very fortunately have continued to do the valuable work they were doing previously. Ivan Ginsberg resigned after a brief membership. Alison Wilson was co-opted onto the committee.

Committee members were: Wendy Carstens (chairman), George Hofmeyr (vice chairman), Tony Nunes, Cynthia Rose, Alison Wilson, David Hirsch, Lucky Mdluli, Clement Ndlovu, Vaughan Russell, Cannan Khumalo. Emmarentia Representative: John Cartwright, Ward Councillor: Pat Richards, Bankenveld Botanical Society representative: Bernice Aspoas, MK West Sub-Committee representative: Barbara Shaw.

### **Conclusion**

Melville Koppies is looking good. Guides and hike leaders have added value to all the visits. Income covered expenditure. Administrative tasks are up-to-date. The newly formed MK West Sub-committee is a welcome initiative to assist in caring for this very large, often problematic section of the Koppies. A sincere thank you to committee members, guides and hike leaders for your time, commitment, financial help and expertise in looking after the wonderful resource that we have in Melville Koppies. Finally, thank you to my husband, David, for his continual support, commitment and valuable advice.

*Wendy Carstens* (Chairman)

### **Addendum: Guides and hike leaders (\*Sunday guides)**

\*Carstens David

\*Carstens Wendy

Dickinson David

\*Gair Donald

Ginsberg Ivan

Hompes Maggie

Hugo Jackie

Mbere Nomsa

Mdluli Lucky

\*Nunes Tony

Ndlovu Clement

Paton Anthony

\*Rose Cynthia

\*Tuckey Caroline

\*Wilson Alison

