

## Annual Report for Friends of Melville Koppies

July 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2018

This has been another eventful year with positives outweighing negatives.

### Conservation

Nature reserves have to be maintained if they are to remain nature reserves and not just degraded weed-infested stretches of veld.

Melville Koppies Central and East are in prime condition thanks to the work of the full-time Conservation Team, employed and supervised by Wendy Carstens from the Melville Koppies Management Committee (MKMC) and Tam Scheidegger. Team members are Clement Ndlovu, Lucky Mduli and Best Ndlovu. Joseph Kasonga works one day a week. JCPZ funded three EPWP workers for seven months.

Conservation duties include removing alien plants and controlling potential indigenous invading species. Heike Hofmeyr's rain stats recorded good rains for several years, which resulted in the continuous lush growth of weeds. Weeds with seeds are bagged and taken to a garden refuse site. Thanks to George Hofmeyr for helping with this huge task.

Fire is an essential part of grassveld management to remove moribund material, control bush encroachment and to encourage biodiversity.

In Melville Koppies Central, forested areas were cleared of much dead material to reduce the fire load. Controlled burns reduced the fire load in the southern and part of the western section.

Most of Melville Koppies West burnt yet again this year due to uncontrolled fires. This section burns too often as it is difficult to control.

Planned burns on Melville Koppies East were to be completed during July.

### Maintenance

#### Fencing

Thanks to Jane Eagle, Deputy Director Environment and Infrastructure Department of the City of Joburg, for getting the funding for the *clearvu* fencing along Beyers Naude Drive and between Melville Koppies West and West Park Cemetery. Unfortunately, the three division that were smashed in June have not been replaced yet. Joburg Roads Agency has promised barriers along the pavement of the speed-track of Beyers Naude but nothing has been done as yet. Extra traffic calming measures have not been installed.

Thanks to Tony Nunes and his son Neilen for ensuring that missing fence slats of Melville Koppies Central and East are replaced,

The Nunes' heavy-duty security grid at the tunnel entrance under Beyers Naude was swept away in a 37mm flash flood. In view of the possibility of future heavy rains of this kind due to global warming, the grid will probably not be replaced, even though the open tunnel entrance does compromise the security of Melville Koppies Central.

### General maintenance

The Nunes also ensure that toilets work and the existing buildings are kept in good condition.

Distasteful graffiti on Melville Koppies East was painted over three times.

### Publicity

Photos taken on tours and hikes are regularly posted on melvillekoppies Facebook. Lis Jones sends weekly event information and photos to many free media contacts. The monthly newsletter is sent to the 3 000 database. Ornico Media Services sends us copies of every print and online publication that features Melville Koppies – and there are many. This free service to us is a wonderful record of our publicity efforts.

Barbara Shaw simplified the calendar/map on our excellent website for quicker and easier information ([www.mk.org.za](http://www.mk.org.za)).

### Recorded number of visitors on events on Melville Koppies Central

	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>% increase/(decrease)</b>
<b>Sunday guided tours</b>	508	546	(7%)
<b>Sunday group hikes</b>	1085	765	42%
<b>Booked groups</b>	2067	1731	19%
<b>totals</b>	<b>3660</b>	<b>3042</b>	<b>20%</b>

Booked groups include schools, universities and special interest groups.

See addendum for details. Note: Private schools are more regular visitors perhaps because they do not have to deal with the bureaucratic red tape that government schools have to comply with, which often takes three months to approve a tour. Finance, especially the cost of transport, is also a limiting factor.

### Volunteer Guides and hike leaders

Guides on the twice-a-month three-hour **Sunday guided tours** play a huge role in educating the public to the incredible natural and cultural heritage of the Koppies. The school guides introduce pupils to new experiences and enrich what they have learnt in the classroom. Guides hosting university groups and special interest groups also learn a lot from these visitors.

Volunteer hike leaders, led by Pieter Burger, have accompanied groups on the three-hour 9km **Sunday guided hikes**, held twice every month for the public. Help is always needed to assist with people who overestimate their ability and need to be escorted off, or put in a slower group depending on numbers and helpers.

(See addendum for guides and hike leaders.)

### **Melville Koppies West**

Tony Lelliott leads walking groups on Melville Koppies West on the first Saturday of every month.

The number of church groups has decreased because of the ongoing security issues here. Unfortunately some very noisy worshippers have moved to Melville Koppies East and are causing noise and environmental problems. The MKMC is trying to assist residents with this issue.

### **Melville Koppies East**

George and Heike Hofmeyr lead a social walking group every weekday afternoon on Melville Koppies East. The East is well-used by the community and is a favourite walking adventure for many socialised dogs and their owners/dog walkers.

### **Research and field work**

Melville Koppies Central is regularly used for research and fieldwork by both The University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Johannesburg because of its archaeology, geology, history, biodiversity, beauty and pristine condition. This year the Koppies have been used for studies on management, veld conservation, field work, tree identification, burning, chameleons, springtails, soap plants and architectural inspiration. Dr Tony Rebelo SANBI (South African National Biodiversity Institute) research scientist, used Melville Koppies as a site on his new iNaturalist app.

Members of the Witwatersrand Bird Club continue to ring at Melville Koppies every month. Our birding records date back to 1972 when John Bunning started ringing and continued ringing every week for 25 years.

### **Security**

This will continue to be a problem as long as crime persists in the neighbouring suburbs. SAPS, JMPD and JCPZ Rangers do not take proactive measures such as regular patrols. They tend to help when there are problems only after repeated emails.

As a precaution, Beagle security is employed to accompany all the Sunday groups, assisted by Siyathokoza Mkhwananazi - total R800 per session. Siya was appointed by JCPZ as an EPWP (extended public works programme) security helper from February 2015 when we had issues. His contract was terminated in February 2018. The MKMC now funds Siya. The

Conservation Team and the two JCPZ appointed 'Will to Win' security guards act as security for mid-week groups.

## Finances

<b>Operating Income</b>	<b>2018 R</b>	<b>2017 R</b>
Booked groups	67,517	49,785
Sunday tours	26,336	25,774
Sunday hikes	59,730	33,880
MK West income	2,430	2,520
Sales	3,040	4,985
Junkie	26,000	20,200
MySchool	21,214	15,653
Private donations	60,910	54,400
<b>Totals</b>	<b>267,177</b>	<b>207,197</b>
<b>Profit/loss</b>	<b>20,235</b>	<b>-(16,945)</b>

<b>Expenses</b>	<b>2018 R</b>	<b>2017 R</b>
Bank charges	1,387	91
Catering	-	129
Insurance	5,250	5,250
Labour	199,285	183,500
Maintenance, repairs and consumables	3,525	4,152
Printing and stationery	2,241	1,810
Security	34,185	28,412
Website	1,068	1,068
<b>Totals</b>	<b>246,942</b>	<b>224,412</b>

**Note: Operating income increased by 29% against expense increase of 10%**

**Sadly Nedbank now charges us full banking fees despite many phone calls.**

**The expenses do not reflect the cost contribution of volunteers** who use their own transport, fuel, computers, printers, stationery, reference books, cameras and telephones. Volunteers receive no remuneration for the many, many hours they spend on all aspects of managing Melville Koppies. In a commercial enterprise, the operating expenses would be significantly higher

**We covered basic expenses reflected in the table above, due to:**

the 20% increase of visitors and their donations on organised events, private donations, sales of CDs and flashdisks about Melville Koppies, benefactors' donations of unwanted goods to Michelle de Villiers' JUNKIE Charity shop, MySchool contributions (increased thanks to Taryn Hinton's promotions), Melville Koppies West income from the monthly walk, and from January 2018, the increase in organised Sunday event donations from R50pp to R60pp for adults and R30pp to R40pp for children. School groups were increased from R30pp to R35pp

An unexpected surprise large contribution was from donations in lieu of gifts for Theresa Gibbon's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**Thank you to Vaughan Russell for auditing the accounts.**

(See addendum for 2017/8 donors)

**Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ)**

JCPZ funds two day/night guards for Melville Koppies Central. The current company is 'Will to Win'.

Grass cutters keep the paths in trim and the perimeters cut.

Sandra Viljoen of the Johannesburg Botanical Gardens organised the replacement of two vehicle-damaged divisions of palisade fencing of Beyers Naude Drive on Melville Koppies Central.

The wooden bridge over the Westdene Spruit, vandalised in August 2017, has not been repaired.

Over 100 palisade fence slats that were stolen from the Judith Road fence were replaced two years ago with unpainted slats. These slats are now a rusty eyesore.

The EPWP (Extended Public Works Programme) workers were suddenly dismissed on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

The proposed transfer of State and Gauteng Education land to the CoJ, for transfer to the Jewish Cemetery for expansion, seems to have fallen into a black hole. Security on Melville Koppies West would be improved if these totally neglected areas were transferred and the open boundaries hardened up.

**Conclusion**

It takes the joint effort of a community to care for something as special as Melville Koppies. Some people can give more time, expertise or cash than others, but every little bit helps and is appreciated. Thank you to the committee, guides, hike leaders, conservation workers and

donors, (and especially my husband David Carstens), for their help and support over the past year.

### **Wendy Carstens**

Chairman of the Melville Koppies Management Committee

25<sup>th</sup> August 2018

(If I have inadvertently not acknowledged someone in the report and addenda, please accept my apologies and notify me on [fomk@mk.org.za](mailto:fomk@mk.org.za))

### **Acronyms**

CoJ: City of Joburg

EPWP: Extended Public works Programme

JCPZ: Johannesburg City parks and Zoo

JMPD: Joburg Metro Police Department

MKMC: Melville Koppies Management Committee, the operating arm of Friends of Melville Koppies

SAPS: South African Police Service

### **Addenda**

#### **2017/8 volunteer guides**

Wendy Carstens, David Carstens, Jenny Grice, Maggie Hompes, Jackie Hugo, Tam Scheidegger, Arjen van Zwieten, Anthony Paton and Ivan Ginsberg.

#### **2017/8 volunteer hike leaders**

Pieter Burger, Wendy Carstens, David Carstens, Jenny Grice, Tam Scheidegger, Amelia Scheidegger, Alison Wilson, Tony Nunes, Siphokazi Timakwe, Musarrat Safi, Erica Elk, Declan Gibbon, Theresa Gibbon, Gabriel Gibbon, Gio Rech, Luna Rech, Amanda Forsythe

#### **2017/8 donors**

G. Godsell, T. Gibbon's friends, M. Hester, A. Jones, B. Aspoas, L. Maree and C. Hill, G. Nienaber, P. Hanrahan, A. du Plessis, C (Chrissie) Carey, C (Carl Carey), W. Dregerland, C. Campher, D. Carstens, Leonura, vd heever, V&N Pope, G. Hanna, anonymous friends

#### **School groups**

Holy Rosary , St Stithians X 2, St Francis X 2, Sandown High , Michaelmount X 3, Helpmekaar Hoerskool , Parkview Junior , Jan Celliers , Abbott's College, Pridwin, Kairos School of Inquiry, Hope Fountain Combined School, Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, British International School, Parkview Pre-primary School (their 16<sup>th</sup> annual consecutive visit)

### **University groups**

Wits 1<sup>st</sup> year geology, UJ rodent trapping, Wits 3<sup>rd</sup> year ecology (veld burning), Wits 3<sup>rd</sup> year architecture, UJ chameleon project, UJ 3<sup>rd</sup> year ecology, Wits 3<sup>rd</sup> year ecology (biodiversity monitoring), UNISA Environmental Management lecturers, UJ 'soap plant' research group, UJ springtail research group, Wits Tree ID field work, Wits flower ID field work, individuals doing research on Management of Melville Koppies.

### **Special interest groups**

Artists group, monthly bird ringing, interns, Elderly Experts, Cape Union Mart testing equipment, Horticultural Society, Tree App tour, Ecology tour, U3A hikers, Tumelo's hiking group, Catholic club hikers, Anglican club walk, Hillcrest Brownies, Deaf walking group.