



Minutes of the Melville Koppies Management Committee AGM held on the 27 September 2025 at the Lecture Hut at 14h00

1. Present: See Attendance Register

2. Apologies: Aubrey Moloto (a new committee member) who is responsible for Snaps on Seventh; Tony Lelliot – away, Marne Marais – away, Siphelele Mbangata – away, Nicolene Jonker (Ward 88 Councillor); a Wits master's student who is testing the quality of the spruit water and doing research on micro-invertebrates in river systems.

All present were welcomed to the AGM including permanent conservation workers Lucky Mdluli and Clement Nkomazana.

3. Minutes of the 24 August 2024 AGM (Jenny Grice)

Jenny Grice (acting chairperson) read out the minutes of the 2024 AGM, highlighting certain points.

Moved: John Cartwright

Seconded: Tam Scheidegger

4. Annual report (outgoing chairperson, Wendy Carstens)

Wendy took people through her report. Key points she made:

- Efforts were made to save the protea trees which had been attacked by insects, but it has been decided to let nature take its course.
- Danny Nunes's Creass team has been working with the Friends of Melville Koppies for two years now. The Melville Security Initiative funds the Beagle security guards who help protect visitors on Sundays, which has saved a great deal of money.
- Elsje Bonthuys's weeders continue to weed up a storm.
- MK West parties continue to clear the ridge of alien plants.
- Neo Phashe of the Northcliff/Melville Times continues to publish lovely articles on the koppies.
- Visitor numbers remain below those recorded before Covid.
- Melville Koppies continues to be run as a successful joint venture with City Parks
- An explosion of pom pom weeds, which are being put on a database
- Old carpets were laid on paths to avoid erosion
- 'Shark' banners were produced to help with publicity at the reception
- Bird ringing continues to record fascinating sightings

- ‘Kuns oppie Koppies’ event to be held soon
- More guides were getting involved, including two 14-year-olds.
- A new trail was opened after the conservation team had successfully created it;
- A new outsourced company, Vast Security started on 1 August 2024. Initially they came with guards but after a lot of outcry, the dogs were removed
- Continued theft of palisade fence slats; MK has replaced many with community funding and City Parks has done others but no sooner are they replaced than they are stolen again. Clearvu fencing might be a welcome solution.
- Thanks to the numerous helpers involved, including: bird ringers, guides on the western koppies, donors, Craig Natrass, and Floyd Nyai and Siphelele Mbangata who organised a team to clean the spruit.
- MK has lost a lot of valued volunteers in the last year: Bernice Aspoas – a specialist entomologist; Vaughan Russell – MK treasurer; David Carstens – volunteer guide; Tony Nunes – committee member and maintenance expert

5. Thanks to outgoing chairperson, Wendy Carstens

Jenny Grice officially thanked Wendy Carstens who stepped down earlier in 2025 after serving as chairperson since 2001 - but had been active on the Koppies Committee even before then. A host of people have had to step in to do the work that Wendy alone used to carry out.

6. Eulogy to David Carstens

Elsje Bonthuys then gave a eulogy for David Carstens, who died in July. David was a friend, a kind man, was amazingly fit and extremely knowledgeable. He loved the koppies, his wife and children, but mainly koeksusters, she said.

7. Financial Report

Alison Wilson, the Treasurer presented a summary of the finances:

Because the organisation is not for profit, an audited set of financial results are not required; an opinion merely has to be given.

The Friends of Melville Koppies has an investment account which contains money for a rainy day.

Ninety-three percent of expenses are for paying the 3 full-time conservation workers and 1 who works 1 day a week; thanks to the support of Creass, maintenance costs are low.

The organisation's tax-exempt status has expired, but attempts are being made to reinstate the exemption.

8. Election of office bearers

Councillor Hendrik Bodenstein then oversaw the election of office bearers, who were unanimously approved. They are:

Jenny Grice – chairperson

Wendy Carstens

Alison Wilson - treasurer

Tam Schedegger

Sarah Charlton

Barbara Shaw

Elsje Bonthuys

MA Farquharson

Danyle Nunes

Tony Lelliot

Marne Marais

Aubrey Moloto

9. Guest speaker

Sarah Charlton introduced the guest speaker for the event, Anthony Paton, who has a BA in Fine Arts, a diploma in game ranging, and freelances as an expert bird guide.

Anthony spoke of his many hours on the koppies and the host of astonishing talent which has been involved in the reserve, including Revil Mason, Richard Hall, Jake Mulvaney, and committee member Tony Lelliot who has surveyed the birds of the Himalayas and has a doctorate in astronomy. Anthony talked, with many birder in-jokes, about working on the Second Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2) and the migration of rural bird species into the city. Data shows there has been a steady change in the incidence of various birds in the pentad - or block in the Sabap survey - which encompasses the Melville Koppies. Hadedas remain the most common bird in this area, but things like the alien Indian mynah are steadily increasing in numbers. A Klaas's cuckoo has been spotted being chased by a Diederick's cuckoo, and a Western Barn Owl has been photographed on the koppies.

With the end of Anthony's speech, the AGM came to a close.