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WELCOME TO OUR SECOND NEWSLETTER OF 2009!

We hope that you are surviving the challenges of the present economic time and can still bear a thought for what is happening in the environment and particularly in and around the **Braamfontein Spruit**.

It is encouraging to see that our parks and open spaces are generally looking good with regular grass cutting and some improvement in facilities. Indeed we have recently received a copy of a communication from City Parks Oscar Oliphant stating that they wish to bring our parks up to "World Class Standard" and are inviting assistance from the ward councillors. Let's hope that council carries out these plans!!

DELTA PARK

In a recent interview with Geoff Lockwood resident ornithologist at Delta we learnt..

Sadly, at present there are no resident owls. There was a breeding pair with two chicks but the female disappeared already in September. In February one of the chicks was found dead and on examination appeared to have been killed by a dog. Geoff thinks that over familiarity may have led the chicks to not realise the dangers from dogs. The other chick disappeared for reasons unknown. The ring of the male was given to Geoff indicating that it was also deceased but not having seen the carcass he does not know the cause of death.

Another pair of owls were seen and heard in the vicinity of the Delta Centre in March but have so far not settled.

Please be reminded that owls often fall foul to poisoning from rat poison. If you do need to use something against vermin the most suitable product is RACUMIN.

On a more positive note there have been some good sightings of birds recently. Ovambo Sparrow Hawk, Black Sparrow Hawk, Gymnogene and Lanner falcon. A Giant kingfisher was seen on the main dam. The dam itself is still relatively free of hyacinth with the Wits project continuing. Thanks to protocols from Cap security there seem to be no vagrants in the open park areas but there are still some problems in the sanctuary.

You may have heard that Geoff was recently bitten by a boomslang and we are happy to report that he has made a full recovery

BST walks in 2009

January The first walk of the year was on the **Sandspruit**, a repeat of last year's January walk which had to be abandoned owing to heavy rain. We met at Rick and Judith' house on Kelvin Drive in Morningside Manor. Rick and Judith is an enthusiastic couple conducting walks, northwards or southwards along the spruit from their home. Rick walks with a rucksack holding a large black plastic bag into which refuse can be deposited. We took the walk northwards towards 12th Avenue on this day. The start of the walk is fenced off requiring a key to enter onto the spruit. Rick and other residents have keys. At other points along the walk one would be able to reach the spruit from the road.

As we walked the grass was quite long and still wet from recent rains and in some parts Rick had to clear the path ahead of us. However this was all part of the fun and enhanced the wild feeling of the area in spite of being in the heart of Morningside /Gallo Manor. There was a fair amount of litter but the general state of the spruit was better than in the past with fewer plastic bags in evidence.

The return route is along the same side of the river owing to the overgrowth on the opposite bank. Rick said he is hoping to make part of the walk possible on the other side of the river in the future. Altogether it was an enjoyable walk and a good start to the walking year. Should you wish to do this walk at another time **Rick or Judith can be contacted on 011 802 2685**.

February We all had a lovely day out at the historic **Modderfontein Heritage site**. Our guide for the day was Keith Martin who does much to maintain the history of Modderfontein.

While Modderfontein might not be the sexiest name in the world, its rich and captivating history ensures it wins the talent section in the suburban beauty pageant. Modderfontein's history is linked to the development of Johannesburg as Africa's powerhouse. In fact, without Modderfontein there wouldn't even be a modern-day Jo'burg!

The village was established in 1894; its founding as the world's largest dynamite facility allowed the dormant gold fields of the Witwatersrand to be fully exploited, ironically giving rise to Johannesburg, which ultimately surrounded it. The factory was established 'in answer to the urgent need of the gold-mining industry for explosives to mine below ground. A powerful Johannesburg-based German dynamite concessionaire, Eduard Lippert, was originally granted the right to manufacture and sell dynamite. At first he imported the dynamite but after protests from the mining industry over his monopoly and high prices, the government took over the production of dynamite, building the Modderfontein Dynamite Company. It had to be located far away – a full day's wagon ride – from the hub of activity and people, for fear of explosions.' The new Modderfontein factory was built and established by immigrants from no less than 17 countries, with the largest communities building their own villages around the factory, naming them after their countries of origin: Italy, Holland, Hamburg and Berea. Johannesburg's dynamic Italian community has its roots in Modderfontein....The factory was officially opened by President Paul Kruger in 1896. As Modderfontein's historic developer, African Explosives & Chemical Industries (AECI), diversified, it established a

property division, Heartland, tasked with upgrading and redeveloping the 4 200-hectare Modderfontein site. Modderfontein has always been a rather quirky area, mostly due to its history. It was, essentially, little more than a dynamite factory that became a village. It was lovely walking the streets with names of European Cities and the street which had the hospital and doctors offices was called Harley Street.

See our picture of us standing on the corner of Harley Street and Antwerp Street.

Colm Burns



March

We joined TJ De Klerk and Pawel for an energetic walk up onto the Linksfield Ridge starting from Gillooly’s Farm. After traversing the river where with the help of some very gallant gentlemen (yes they still exist!!) we managed to keep our feet mostly dry before we started the ascent up onto the ridge. This is always the worst part of this walk but once achieved is well worth the effort for the spectacular views of Johannesburg, to the south, east and north. As we walked along the ridge we then began to have views to central Johannesburg in the west. The route continues along to a beacon near to Harvey Park and then circles around and along the side of the ridge to finally meet up with the beginning of the trail and the river crossing again. However in spite of any wet feet it is a welcome sight to see the restaurant at Gillooly’s where a cool beer or cold drink awaits!

Future BST walks: Contact Colm on 011 616 6934 or Margaret on 011 6143391 for further details

SUNDAY APRIL 26th 2009	08.00 for 08.15
Venue: BRAAMFONTEIN SPRUIT SANDTON FIELD & STUDY CENTRE	
Directions: From William Nicoll turn into Mattie Avenue, left into Woodland and right into Louise. Meet in the parking area near the Restaurant and walk along the spruit to Riverside Shopping Centre, Bryanston, and back.	

SUNDAY MAY 24th 2009	07.30 for 08.00
Venue: PRIVATE GAME FARM – DAVE AND MARIE HOWCROFT RUST DE WINTER <i>Members only</i>	
A very enjoyable full day out at this lovely Game Farm. Walks vary in length and usually 2-3 separate walks take place, interspersed with a convivial braai.	
Directions: Take N1 from Johannesburg towards Pietersburg. After Pretoria note the Wonderboom exit. Travel a further ± 30kms to Hammanskraal/Boekenhoutskloof off ramp.(Toll charge).Turn right over motorway. Take first turn left to Rust de Winter. Travel a further 29kms to the T-junction. Stop – you will be met there by BST Walk Leaders. We will travel a further 11kms in convoy. Please note: MEET AT T-JUNCTION 07.30 PROMPTLY.	
Overnight accommodation is also available. If you require a booking, please phone Marie – 011 795 1681 or 082m825 1264	
Approximate Admission Fee: Donation of R20 per person requested.	

SUNDAY JUNE 21st 2009	08.30 for 09.00
Venue: FAERIE GLEN NATURE RESERVE, PRETORIA	
Two densely wooded koppies offer a retreat from the suburbs. There are swathes of grassland and wild flowers, overgrown thickets and an ancient mine hole. Best of all, a river runs through it so there are plenty of existing river crossings and an otter pool. There are 3 hiking trails: Hadeda route 3km, Akasia route 2.1km, and Kiepersol 4.8km which we will do.	
Directions: From the N1 towards Pietersburg, take the Atterbury turn off to the east. At Gen. Louis Botha Drive turn left and follow the signs of the Reserve. The Reserve will be on your right hand side.	
Picnic and Toilet facilities: Yes. Bring picnic basket or there is a Restaurant. No dogs.	
Approximate Admission Fee: No fee but donations are gratefully received for upkeep.	

There are other organised walks and hikes held on a regular basis around Johannesburg. See www.wildswalk.co.za or www.footprint.co.za for details. We hope that you will join us on a walk soon!!

One of the founder members James Clarke recently wrote reminiscing about the start of the BST initiative. He said that he ought to write a book on the subject. Let’s hope that he does!

Until next time

Mary Kolb