

## ***BRAAMFONTEIN SPRUIT TRAIL***

Crisscrossing the Metropolitan area like a great green web, The Braamfontein Spruit Trail follows rocky ridges and willow-fringed rivers, passing dams, waterfalls and golf courses, and going through bird sanctuaries, botanical gardens and nature reserves. This is where the people of Johannesburg come to relax, to ramble along the river banks, ride bicycles, jog, walk their dogs, watch birds, worship, play sport and enjoy picnics and braais.

At least 14 streams rise in the ridges of the Witwatersrand, but over decades these waterways have been choked by the deritus of urban sprawl. In recent years, however, the rivers have been upgraded and renewed by local authorities, providing the citizens of Johannesburg and surrounds with much needed recreational space.

The Braamfontein Spruit, a 25-km-long rivercourse with several tributaries, rises in Hillbrow and meanders north, flowing into the Jukskei river and eventually joining the mighty Limpopo. A wide variety of indigenous fauna and flora is th be seen along the trail - there are more than 200 species of birds, as well as frogs, snakes, lizards, fish and mammals such as water mongooses and meerkats.

Among the other attractions of the walks are the interesting archaeological and historical features, including iron - smelting furnaces , iron age sites, old farmhouse ruins, historical mansions and stone weirs.

Wide open spaces along the route are Emmarentia Dam, the Johannesburg Botanical Gardens, Delta Park and the Florence Bloom Bird Sanctuary, home to over 180 species of birds. The trail meanders along wide, shady banks, past pools and boulders, finally meeting up with the Sandspruit, a tributary which has its own 12-km trail starting in the Wilds in Houghton and passing through the Melrose bird Sanctuary before joining with the Braamfontein Spruit in Paulshof,

## ***WHY THE BRAAMFONTEIN SPRUIT ?***

When the idea for an Urban Conservancy was born, the question WHERE was the first consideration.

The Witwatersrand is criss-crossed by little rivers, which one to choose?  
The Braamfontein Spruit Trust covers all rivers and ridges in the Greater Johannesburg .

With the advent of the WSSD in September 2002, a quick, viable decision had to be made.

Where could the most financially possible river conservancy be situated?

Was there accessibility from major highways and nearby public transport ?

Were there suitable reasonably established trails?

Was there good bird watching, trees, flowers and grasses?

How bad was the litter and pollution of the river?

Were there picnic spots, water, toilets, emergency services, security?

If not, could these be easily provided.?

Where would the residential and other (financial?) support be best?

Could the choice be made in an area that would provide a model conservancy in time for the WSSD ?

Would delegates to the Summit be easily able to visit the conservancy?

Would this lead to funding for other conservancies?

Would the Local Authorities support the idea?

We decided on the Braamfontein Spruit as our model conservancy, because it appeared to be the best option. We would learn from our experience of problem solving and be in a strong position to launch the next conservancies , hopefully early in 2003, in Bosmont and Alexandra. These areas will be far more difficult as they are badly neglected. Once our first conservancy is operating smoothly, we will be able to assist interested groups in setting up others.

### **Conservancy Report to B.S.TRUST. A.G.M.**

A meeting was convened by the BST at Delta Env. Centre on the 24<sup>th</sup> April, in order to discuss a possible conservancy along the Spruit System. **Mr. James Williams** from **DACEL** addressed the meeting explaining the structure, benefits to the users and the environment, and ways of approaching the establishment of the conservancy. A guide Constitution was provided by **Mr. Williams**. A steering committee was proposed. Members of the audience, mainly environmental groups, **chose to leave the steering committee in the hands of the BOM of the Trust**, co-opting anyone present who felt that they would like to serve on the interim committee. **Georgina Isaacs, in her personal capacity, and Kobus Theunissen from City parks were appointed.** This first meeting was widely publicised to interested parties, comments were asked for, which were duly received.

Subsequently, a constitution was drawn up, based on the **DACEL** example, circulated to all, and comments were received.

The second meeting took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> July, which was attended by **Residents Associations** who will play an essential part in the establishment and maintenance of the conservancy. **Mr. Peter Mills of DACEL** addressed this meeting. A show of hands unanimously approved their involvement in and establishment of such a Conservancy, which covers the spruits and open areas from the sources of the Braamfontein, Westdene and Montgomery Spruits to Leeuwkop Prison.

It is hoped that our efforts will be successful in time for tourists to visit our **URBAN LINEAR PARK** during the World Summit in September next year.

Any suggestions, or assistance in any way will be welcome.

#### **Organizations represented;**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| BST and Sub Committees                            | Delta Env. Centre and affiliates                      |
| JCNH and affiliates                               | NORFED Environmental committee                        |
| Melville Koppies Management                       | NORFED Affiliates                                     |
| <b>Land Owners(City of JhB) City Parks Agency</b> |   |
| DACEL   | DWAF SAHRA  |
| ESKOM   | Tree Society of S.A.                                  |
| Schools   |   |
| CrocodileMarico Catchment Forum                   | Residents Associations                                |
| Upper Jukskei Eco Monitoring Comp.Forum           |   |
| NORFED Env. Committee                             | Randburg Chamber of Business                          |
| Church Groups                                     | Security Companies Community                          |
| Police Forums                                     | REEA CSIR   |
| Scouts  | Guides  |
| Youth Groups                                      | Botanical Gardens                                     |
| Corporate Business                                | Local Business  |
| Witwatersrand and RAU Universities                | Depts. of : Architecture, Earth Science and Education |
| Alexandra Tourism Association                     | Dept of Environment and Tourism                       |
| User Groups                                       |   |

### **DELTA USERS' COMMITTEE**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Delta Users' committee was formed a few years ago by a small group of people who felt that something had to be done to improve Delta Park and the adjoining river. Shortly after the committee was formed it became a sub-committee of the Braamfontein Spruit Trust which is an entity concerned with the river systems of the Northern Witwatersrand. They have:

- Provided assistance to Delta Environmental Centre in their quest to rehabilitate the Florence Bloom Bird Sanctuary
- Arranged for regular clean-ups along the Spruit
- Try to ensure that the grass is cut regularly and to ensure the removal of vagrants via the support of the River Ranger Stables, a sub-committee of the **BST**
- Conducted walks every third Sunday in the Park and along the Spruit

## **DUCS INVOLVEMENT IN PROMOTING THE RIVER**

We offer the following guided walks :

- Walk no 1 will leave from the Delta Environmental Centre. It will go through the Sensory/Water Wise garden and pass to the east of the three dams. It will then proceed north towards the old Blairgowrie school and east through the poplar grove to the Spruit over the two small wooden bridges. From there it will go along the Spruit to the concrete weir returning to DEC past the Scout camp. The walk will take 1.5 hours and is about 5 kilometres.
- Walk no 2 will leave from the Delta Environmental Centre. It will proceed through the poplar grove east of DEC, along the southern side of the bird sanctuary, along the path between the sanctuary and the Girl Guides camp and down to the river. It will then proceed north along the west bank of the Spruit crossing Conrad Drive and Jan Smuts Avenue to the waterfalls below Old Parktonians. It will return by the same route and proceed along the eastern and southern boundaries of the Scout camp back to DEC. The walk will take about 2 hours and is about 6 kilometres.
- Walk no 3 will leave from Emmarentia Dam. It will proceed in a northerly direction along the west bank of the Spruit to the waterfalls below Old Parktonians. It will return to the Start via the same route The walk is about 8 kilometres and will take about three hours.

**The Braamfontein Spruit Trust Organises further walks from various venues on a monthly basis, as well as various events at the Waterfall and other venues along the route of the proposed iGoli Riverpark Conservancy.**

- The charge for the walks and events will be negotiated
- We will accommodate a maximum of 20 people per walk accompanied by two guides.

**Importantly, we will need volunteers to assist with information on the walks.in regard tto:**

- Birds Grasses Trees Aquatic life Geology Archaeological sites

**as well as the History of :**

- The Braamfontein spruit and its tributaries
- Melville koppies and the Waterfall,
- the Botanic Gardens and Emmarentia Dam,
- Delta Park and the Conservation/Environment Centre,
- History of Craighall/Craighall Park and Rattra's Weir
- Sandton Field and Study Centre
- Search for Gold in the Spruits.

**Other issues which are being addressed include:**

- Pathways for the Disabled and Wheelchairs, Senior Citizens, Walkers and Bikers, Security patrols, ( Police and River Rangers), Emergency vehicles .Firefighters.
- Grass cutting, condition of the veld and soil erosion, Indigenous Flora planting
- Removal of hyacinth from the dams and removing of alien vegetation
- Refreshment sales, Braai and picnic sites and Toilet facilities (ENVIRO LOOS)
- Sign posting and Caretakers and cleaners for these sites

