

Korsman Conservancy Member's Newsletter December 2015

Our work removing invasive weeds continues. There is a marked reduction in spear thistle from last year, and we have already moved on to fleabane so we are ahead in our program – however more weeds may grow after proper rains begin.

Effect of the drought on Korsman

The drought has ironically had benefits for Korsman. The water level has retreated – in historic times, the water level was much lower than in recent years. The lower level has slowed the growth of reeds and bulrushes, a relief as Ekurhuleni has been delayed in reed spraying due to lack of herbicide.

Alien trees dropped leaves, especially willows whose roots had stood in water for years. The indigenous trees have been less affected.

We took the opportunity to walk into the new shallows and place tree branches to serve as artificial bird perches.



Storm water inlets



Ekurhuleni dug out most of the storm water inlets for the first time in years. We installed seven litter fences, but the first intense storm brought down not only loads of trash (ironically, a day after our litter pickup) but also leaves which blocked most of the fences. Our home-made fences appear to be able to withstand normal rainfall, just not torrents – although the fence at Short St can be forgiven for buckling, as that inlet washed down a huge volume of silt and a 25m hosepipe.

Sewerage works: Good news and bad news

The bad news: Extended works on The Drive near Walsh St have devastated the fence. I have asked for a temporary one to be put up. The first open section was closed by member Tracy Boggis, who just happened to have spare a perfect roll of fencing.

The good news: Ekurhuleni installed a new manhole inside the fence at Aubrey Ritz, where there have been ongoing spills for years. These will hopefully lessen now. Ekurhuleni went ahead with the work when they realised that as soon as they did it, I would stop emailing them. (The power of persistence!)

Another promised repair is the cracked sewerage pipe at the Shannon Rd storm water inlet.



Concrete block cleanup

Adolf Hüster kindly donated his men and transport to clear up old concrete blocks leftover from the old fence, opposite Aubrey Ritz park.

Adolf and Ellen also made a temporary repair of the fence at Aloe St, which was broken by an unlicensed youngster who spun a car out of control.

EcoSolutions owl box consultation

Tracy Boggis donated a consultation by EcoSolutions to assess the best spots to install owl boxes.

Raptor expert Nicholas Haw visited (inspecting existing owl box, R). He recommended the best locations for Barn Owl boxes, and suggested installing bat hotels, for which we can invite sponsorship.



Litter pickup

Nine volunteers picked up litter on 15 November. One of the litter-pickers is both our newest member, and our oldest: Oenie Poplak, 90. (Oenie is on the left in the first picture).



Birding Big Day 28 November

Together with the Wits-East Rand Bird Club team we saw 52 species in less than two hours – the Black Swans don't count! The Bird Club team had been birding since early in the morning and were able to add another 14 species at Korsman to their day total.

Photographer's Day 29 November – new record for Korsman



Member Brian Daniel captured shots of a mystery raptor which we believe is a Steppe Buzzard. It is a first record for Korsman and it is exciting that Brian was ready with his camera at the exact time that the bird moved through here.

Youtube video

There is evidence of a Water Mongoose in the Sanctuary but it is rarely seen. Recently, I took a short video of flamingos and saw afterwards I had unknowingly captured a 'critter photobomb'. Link to video (19 sec)

<https://youtu.be/RxunA2ehq3M>