



K N R A

Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve Association



Caring for Biodiversity for Future Generations



The Last Frost Files

NEWSLETTER AUG 2025

Winter Reflections from the Reserve

As we pass the midpoint of winter, there's a sense of anticipation in the air – the promise of spring and the warmth of summer edging closer with each passing week. This year, winter has been relatively gentle, with only the occasional cold snap reminding us of the season's bite.

While the landscape takes on a quieter, more subdued tone during these colder months, the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve remains a hive of quiet activity. The early mornings may be crisp, but that hasn't deterred our many intrepid walkers, hikers, and nature enthusiasts. Wrapped in layers and fueled by a love for the outdoors, they continue to explore the trails, enjoying the serene beauty and unique wildlife sightings that winter brings.

One of the highlights during this season is our **Monthly Nature Walk**, held on the **second Sunday of every month**. These guided walks, led by experienced and passionate nature guides, offer a fantastic opportunity to learn more about the flora, fauna, and natural history of the reserve. From fascinating birdlife to the hidden life of winter plants, there's always something new to discover – even in the quietest season.

The walks are **free of charge** and open to all ages and fitness levels, making them a wonderful family-friendly outing or a chance for individuals to reconnect with nature. If you'd like to join us, keep an eye on our **social media pages** for upcoming dates and details.

WINTER WHISPERS

*Photo credits
Tanya Nortje*



<https://klipriviersberg.org.za>

Spotlight on Species in the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve

Each season brings new life and fascinating activity to the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve. This winter, we shine a spotlight on three species—mammal, insect, and tree—that quietly enrich our biodiversity.

Mammal: Black-backed Jackal



**BLACK
BACKED
JACKAL**

Canis mesomelas

*Photo credit
Freestock from
Shutterstock*

Though rarely spotted by visitors due to their mainly nocturnal habits, Black-backed Jackals definitely leave their mark in the reserve. Their presence is confirmed through signs like scat and their eerie, haunting calls echoing through the night. Widespread across sub-Saharan Africa, the Black-backed Jackal is a resilient and adaptable member of the canid family. As a generalist, it thrives in a wide range of habitats and makes the most of every opportunity to survive and feed.

Communication

Their distinctive, wailing calls are unmistakable and often set off a chorus, first from their family group, then answered by neighbouring jackals. These vocalisations are most frequent at dawn and dusk, peaking in winter—coinciding with the breeding season.

Diet

Black-backed Jackals are true omnivores. Their highly varied diet includes fruit, berries, insects, reptiles, ground-dwelling birds, and even grass. They hunt smaller prey with a pouncing technique and work cooperatively in groups to tackle larger or weakened animals. When food is abundant, they stash leftovers for later—demonstrating remarkable foresight.

Family Life

Monogamous by nature, jackal pairs often mate for life. Young from a previous litter may remain with their parents to assist in raising the new pups, learning vital survival and caregiving skills along the way.

Insect: Elegant Grasshopper



**ELEGANT
GRASS-
HOPPER**

*Zonocerus
elegans*

*Photo credit
Freestock from
Shutterstock*

One of the more eye-catching residents of the reserve, the Elegant Grasshopper lives up to its name with its vivid colouring. But its beauty is also a warning: these grasshoppers are toxic, foul-tasting, and smell unpleasant to potential predators.

Their bright colours serve as a natural deterrent, allowing them to avoid being eaten—and as a result, most have lost their ability to fly. Adult Elegant Grasshoppers grow to about 4–5 cm in length.

Breeding & Life Cycle

They breed once a year, typically in late summer or early autumn. Females lay their eggs a few weeks after mating. These eggs lie dormant through the dry season and hatch with the arrival of the first rains, around six months later. The young nymphs mature within two and a half months.

Tree: Karee



KAREE

Sersia lancea

*Photo credit
Random Harvest
Nursery*

The Karee tree is a familiar sight across the reserve, also often found lining pavements and in local gardens as well.

An evergreen and hardy species, the Karee is both frost-tolerant and drought-resistant, growing up to 8 metres tall. In spring, female trees bear small yellow-green fruits that attract birds in large numbers, adding to the tree's ecological value.

Historically, Karee wood was highly valued—used for fence posts, wagon parts, and tool handles. The bark, twigs, and leaves contain tannins, traditionally used in leather tanning.

Meyers Farm Verreaux's Eagles Season Update

Keep an eye out for these fascinating species as you explore the reserve—each plays a valuable role in the ecosystem and tells a story of resilience, adaptability, and interconnectedness in nature



First chick hatched 11 June

MEYERS FARM EAGLE

Photo credit Nestcam courtesy Craig Nattrass

Second clutch laid 17–22 July



Many regular visitors to the reserve will be familiar with the local pair of Verreaux's Eagles that nest on Meyers Farm and are often seen soaring above the area in search of their preferred prey, the dassie.

Earlier this year, in January, their nest on the farm was relocated. It was encouraging to see the pair accept the new site, landing on the nest on 22 February. Thanks to a camera system installed and maintained by Craig Nattrass of the Witwatersrand Bird Club, their activity could be monitored in real time for research purposes.

Over the following weeks, the eagles began refurbishing the nest in preparation for the breeding season. The first egg was laid on 27 April (Freedom Day), and a second followed on 3 May. The pair shared incubation duties, and on 11 June, the first chick hatched. Unfortunately, the chick died a few days later. Footage showed that the male had brought several dassies to the nest the night before. It appears the chick may have been under one of the carcasses and was unable to be brooded properly, possibly leading to its death from exposure.

The second egg failed to hatch and was later removed to encourage the chance of a second clutch. When opened, it was found to contain a half-developed embryo.

Despite this setback, the pair has laid a second clutch. The first egg was laid on 17 July, followed by a second on 22 July. If successful, hatching should occur around the end of August or early September.

We'll continue to monitor the nest and hope for a positive outcome this time.

Snare Sweeps: Combating a Persistent Threat



SNARE SWEEPS

Photo Credit: Trevor Hulleman

Over the past few weeks, the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve Association (KNRA) has carried out several snare sweeps within the reserve and surrounding areas. Sadly, snaring remains an ongoing threat to our wildlife.

We extend our sincere thanks to all the dedicated volunteers who participated in these vital efforts. Your time and commitment are deeply appreciated.

While the challenge is far from over, we remain hopeful that, together with continued daily patrols by Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ), our collective actions will help reduce this cruel and widespread practice that endangers wildlife across the country. Let's continue working together to protect the natural heritage we all treasure.



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EVERY SWIPE COUNTS

Fire Season in the Reserve: A Natural Force With Benefits and Risks



Photo Credit: Free Shutterstock Image

FIRE SEASON

Photo credit Tanya Nortje

As winter deepens and the reserve becomes increasingly dry, fire becomes a real concern. But did you know that not all fires are harmful to nature? In fact, fire plays a crucial role in the ecological health of many natural areas — when used responsibly. There is a common misconception that all veld fires are destructive. While uncontrolled fires can indeed be devastating, well-managed burns are an essential tool in conservation and land management, especially in fire-prone ecosystems like the grasslands and savannas of South Africa.

Benefits of Controlled Fires in Veld Management

Clearing Dead and Moribund Vegetation

Fires remove old, unproductive plant material, making way for new growth. This improves nutrient cycling and promotes more palatable grazing for herbivores.

Controlling Bush Encroachment

In grassland ecosystems, woody plant species can invade and outcompete grasses, reducing biodiversity. Controlled burns help to regulate this encroachment, maintaining the delicate balance between grassland and woodland.

Stimulating New Growth

Some plant species are fire-adapted and rely on periodic burning to flower or germinate. After a burn, new, nutrient-rich grasses often grow rapidly, providing better grazing for animals

Risks of Uncontrolled or Poorly Timed Fires

Damage to Native Vegetation

Uncontrolled or too-frequent fires can destroy plant roots, kill young

trees, and reduce the survival of sensitive species.

Soil Degradation and Erosion

Fires that burn too hot or are followed by heavy rains can lead to loss of topsoil, reduced fertility, and increased runoff.

Threats to Wildlife

Fast-moving fires can harm or displace animals, particularly slower or burrowing species that cannot escape in time. Nesting birds and reptiles are especially vulnerable during the breeding season.

Loss of Biodiversity

Some plants and animals rely on fire-free periods to thrive. Too many fires can eliminate fire-sensitive species, reducing overall diversity.

Human and Financial Risks

Runaway fires threaten nearby homes, infrastructure, and can be costly to contain.



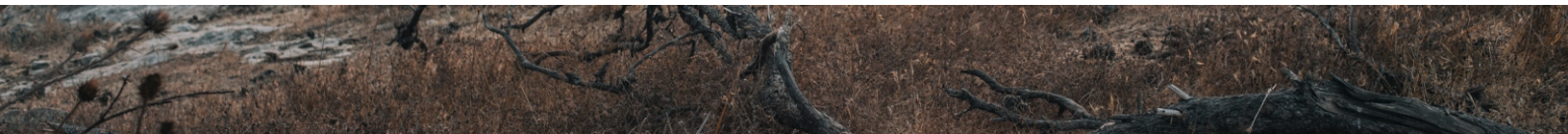
Fire Breaks: A Line of Defence

Recognising the importance of fire preparedness, Tumi Shoba, the Reserve Manager, and her dedicated team from Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ), have been hard at work over the past few weeks establishing firebreaks throughout the reserve. With the landscape tinder-dry at this time of year, these firebreaks are a vital measure to prevent and contain runaway fires that can be sparked by lightning, arson, or accidental causes. These cleared strips of land act as barriers, helping to limit the spread of flames and allow quicker response from firefighting teams.

How You Can Help During Fire Season

- Avoid lighting any fires in or near the reserve.
- Report any signs of smoke or fire immediately.
- Do not smoke in the Reserve

Fire is both a threat and a tool in veld management. With proper planning and awareness, it can help maintain the natural beauty and ecological health of Klipriviersberg for generations to come.





Contact Numbers

Johannesburg City Parks/Zoo:
General inquiries: 011 943 3578
Animals in distress:
011 943 3578 or 079 7914368 (after hours)
JCPZ Head Office: 011 712 6600

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Snares/alien Species

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Events

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Fund Raising

fundraisingdonations@klipriviersberg.org.za



"Friends of the Jewel of the South"

NATURE RESERVE HOURS AND INFORMATION

Monday – Sunday 6:00am to 6:00pm

Contact: 011943 3578 /084 804 4073

Helpful links: <http://www.footprint.co.za>

Get Involved

- Support "My School"
- Scout groups welcome
- Schools group programs
- Companies to join our projects
- Become an active member

Donate

NPO No: 032 638 PEO No: 93006602

Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve

Standard Bank Southdale : 006405

Account number : 201047284

"Time spent amongst trees is never wasted time."

~Katrina Mayer

<https://klipriviersberg.org.za>