



## **Chairman's Report**

**For the year ending 31 March 2016**

### **2016 AGM**

My opening remarks in this year's report are a carbon copy of last year's report! In essence it has been another very busy year and I am still cautious that being busy does not necessarily mean we are effective.

I would like to cover the administrative aspects first.

On the financial side I would like to thank Cynthia and her team for doing our books on a pro-bono basis. We are extremely fortunate to have such superb service and it is sincerely appreciated. We have discussed the financial statements so I do not propose to repeat anything in my report other than to record that we are still financially sound although our reserves have been depleted and we need to rebuild them in the coming months.

On the membership side I did report last year that we would put some effort into recruiting members but we have not done so. We have just not had the time or volunteer resources to embark on a recruitment campaign. Traditionally we kept on our books members who had not paid for sometime in the hope that they would eventually renew – we still do that to a large extent but we have taken a more sober and realistic view in terms of reporting member numbers and we apply a strict criteria i.e. "paid up" or "not paid up" as at 31 March.

Given that we are one of the most active conservancies in KZN then the numbers are disappointing! At this stage it is not possible to commit to a recruitment campaign but we will soon have an on-line a simpler membership facility so hopefully that will help.

<b>Kloof Conservancy Membership Status (as at end March)</b>				
	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>
Paid-up Members	231	216	226	222
Small Business	5	6	4	3
Corporate	17	17	17	17
Honorary	11	11	11	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>253</b>

Moving on to our environmental role:

All our efforts as a conservancy are driven by our motto

**“Protecting nature. Inspiring change”**

and whilst we try hard to do justice to this we do need to recognise that as a volunteer organisation we do have limitations.

The “densification” of Kloof continues as can be evidenced by the significant building developments along Old Main Road and Pioneer Road. I suspect that in the context of a growing city it is most probably best to densify in areas that are “environmentally compromised” rather than spreading and infringing on relatively high biodiversity areas. Also in this context we therefore look to D’MOSS as our guide in focusing our attention in the high biodiversity areas and that is where we should focus and where we should be vigilant.

Unfortunately, we do not have the resources and wherewithal to monitor and comment on new developments so this remains a serious weakness in our watchdog role. Our ability to monitor and follow-up on environmental crimes such as illegal dumping and indigenous habitat destruction is also weak and unlikely to change much in the foreseeable future.

So we have continued more or less in the same manner as last year and our focus has been and continues to be one of raising environmental awareness and educating the public through a number of initiatives where we provide support as well some hands on projects which give effect to our commitment to protect the biodiversity of this special place we live in.

I do not propose to go through all our activities – I will attach a list of all our initiatives as an appendix to my report which will be on our website after this AGM. What I would like to do is to talk you through some of the typical activities we do on a monthly basis so that you get a sense of not only the level and type of activities but also the impact that they may have. Remember that whilst I highlight an individual activity as it happened you should also bear in mind the amount of work that takes place behind the scenes to make the activity happen!

## Let's start with **MAY 2015**

Highlight of each year has been and remains our Indigenous Open Gardens event. It has its ups and downs and to be frank maybe 2015 was a down certainly in terms of visitor numbers and income. Nevertheless, it a massive effort, over 80 volunteers over the weekend, 1250 visitors and it raised R44000 for our projects. Apart from the organisational and financial aspects the event remains an important educational effort and Elsa Pooley has repeatedly stated this and appealed to us to continue with the event. This years event is back to a more traditional format and hopefully we will see a pick-up in the number of visitors.

Our verges project ran for the entire 2015 and cost us R4000pm. We had a major project to remove Sisal from street verges in co-operation with Parks department. The project ran well and we have removed almost all sisal plant from public spaces in Kloof! The project also gave us high visibility and interaction with residents – not always positive!

## **JUNE 2015**

This slide shows our ongoing constructive relationship with the Durban Natural Science Museum when they “borrowed” our mascot, Rubi-D for their Kwa-nunu Exhibition at the museum. We are the only conservancy that gets a free advertisement in their annual Thola Magazine. I hope to find more ways of co-operating with them in the coming year.

We also continue our partnership with a number of schools as part of a broad focus on education. So in June we hosted a guided walk through Krantzkloof Nature Reserve for the “leadership group” at Tholulwazi Secondary School in co-operation with the Philangethemba Trust.

## **JULY 2015**

Our Back-to-Nature events are targeted at families with primary school children, again as part of our focus on education. This was a day with snakes – and they took a walk in the reserve and found one! Thanks to Mieke who has picked up the ball in running this particular day and also for running the highly successful “Back-to-Nature holiday programmes”

Our guiding project in partnership with the Wilderness Leadership School started in July. The aim here was to bring in some younger people and to be frank to bring in some black people into the organisation and into our programmes which will include expanding the guided walks in the reserve. Still being frank the programme has not gone to plan. One candidate dropped out and we still have not qualified any of the guides although one of them is almost there!

## **AUGUST 2015**

August is a busy month!

Our M13 Project has been running for 13 years! Thanks to Hugh McGibbon who has taken over this project. In April last year we changed our contractor and appointed Msenge Landscapes to manage the vegetation as a result of which we have seen a significant improvement but it still remains a big challenge to eradicate invasive species on this road!

On 5<sup>th</sup> August we officially opened the History of Kloof display at Glenholme. This was a joint venture with the Highway Heritage Society and WESSA Highway Branch. It is a unique display for our area and was set-up with minimal cost. I hope that this is the beginning of a process to “protect” our heritage.

Our 3 Falls Trail run is now well established in the KZN trail running calendar and is very popular. We have support team of about 60 people that make it happen. Last year it brought in R53 300 and the funds have been used to upgrade the conference centre. An interesting involvement in the 3 Falls event is that of the SANParks Honorary Rangers. It started with one or two getting involved in 2013 and they want a full team to be involved this year!

Also in a number of us participated in the first of a series of interactions with eThekweni municipality who are now part of the Rockefeller Foundations 100 Resilient Cities programme. Our constructive interactions with the municipality are increasing and this bodes well for the future – I will discuss this more comprehensively when I look at the bigger picture later in my presentation.

### **SEPTEMBER 2015**

Our Bioguide system is working very well in Krantzkloof with regular usage by visitors. In September we extended it to Memorial Park where we added 15 species plates.

Also in September the agreement with Ezemvelo over the Interpretative Centre was eventually finalised. As you can see we have upgraded the facility at a total cost of approximately R300 000. Now that the upgrade is complete we can start marketing it as the Krantzkloof Conference Centre – I am optimistic that the venture will pay off and we will generate income for the reserve which will be over and above the annual fee we have to pay to Ezemvelo. A number of our members supported us by doing significant work at no charge, notably David Malcomess, Caron Mitchell and Mark Liptrot. There were other donors as well so the total value of donations is estimated at R100 000.

### **OCTOBER 2015**

Towards the end of the school year we offer the high schools in our Molweni River Health Project R500 book voucher prizes for the top Life Science student in either Grade 11 or 12. The prizes are still funded from the R10000 award we received in 2014 for this project from the Mayor’s Award for Excellence – Biodiversity category.

We have continued throughout the year to support as best we can the Kwa-Ximba Conservancy as part of our outreach programme. The slide shows a participant in the challenging Kwa-Ximba Trail Run which we organise and which is supported by many of our members. The Kwa-Ximba Conservancy is moving slowly but steadily on its Stewardship programme with eThekweni Municipality and we support this whenever possible.

### **NOVEMBER 2015**

The beautiful orchid in this slide is a rare *Eulophia cucculata* and in eThekweni it is only found at the Msinsi CCA and one other site on the north coast. A small team of us works one Saturday per month and even if I say so I think we have done a great job of rehabilitating this amazing grassland – the variety flowers in this small 8,5ha patch is quite incredible and I am pleased to report that the land is about to be transferred from the Department of Public Works to eThekweni Municipality after which it will be declared a conservation area and therefore will get formal protection. I would like to take

this opportunity to thank Paul van den Heuvel and Stuart Bradbury for their financial contribution and to my fellow hackers Bruce Crouch and more recently Barry Lang for all the hard physical work!

In December I attended the appeal hearing in Bloemfontein on our well-known case against the government of South Africa on the issue of invasive species legislation. You should all be familiar with the case so I do not wish to dwell on it here other than to confirm what I have said before and that is that it was an important case and we played our part as a civil society organisation in holding the state to account on their responsibilities. We decided not to take the issue further after the appeal hearing and I need to place on record the conservancy's sincere appreciation to the efforts of the legal team, Advocate Michael Smithers, Advocate Andreas Coutsoydis and Janice Tooley and her team at Shepstone and Willey.

### **DECEMBER 2015**

I will explain later that Kloof Conservancy is increasingly leading the way in co-ordinating and driving a major effort to co-ordinate the efforts of all conservancies in eThekweni through the eThekweni Conservancies Forum. We have a number of our members involved – Mieke van Tienhoven, Hugh McGibbon and Mark Liptrot – all were involved in a pilot project on the Aller River in New Germany. This formed the basis for a R1,2m funding proposal to the United Nations Development Fund which the team worked on for the whole of December and early January! Unfortunately we were not successful with that proposal.

Our e-newsletter started with the November edition in November 2011 so the December 2015 edition was the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> year of publication. Hopefully it helps to keep you informed and provides interesting information!

### **JANUARY 2016**

January saw the start of construction on the conference centre – I have already covered the background to this but I hope that you approve of the finished product.

The Leopard's Echo is our biannual e-magazine. Whilst our e-newsletter is intentionally "chatty", The Leopard's Echo is a more serious publication with in-depth articles by some great authors covering issues on local relevance. I know that it is circulated well beyond our membership base so I hope that it is seen as making a useful contribution to spreading information on our biodiversity. The January 2016 edition was our first full electronic on-line edition. I would like to thank the authors (too many to mention!) and our graphic layout experts Danielle Olivier who did the July 2015 edition and Jo Sobey for a fantastic job on converting us to the on-line edition

### **FEBRUARY 2016**

Our Frog evenings are always popular and this February we pleased to be allowed to use Tanglewood Farm for the event. We had a good turnout of humans but the frogs were not as co-operative! We donated the funds raised to EWT.

February also ushered in the start of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the award winning Molweni River Health Schools Project. This is a great educational project and I am sure the data collected will eventually be put to good use in the context of the bigger focus on rivers.

Our Facebook page reached the 2000 followers mark in February this year – considering that we only have 220 paid-up members that is quite something! Many of the “followers” are spread far and wide across the globe but I do know that the local base is very strong so this is a good vehicle to communicate and inform the public about what we do and about our biodiversity.

### **MARCH 2016**

Our commitment to education took a leap of faith when we decided to sponsor 6 presentations of the I AM ballet production from The Playhouse Company. The ballet focusing on our water shortage was presented at Winston Park, Kloof Junior Primary, Bazamille Primary and Tholulwazi Secondary. It was well received!

Also in March you may have noted the first in a new series of monthly articles which I have agreed to write for the Hillcrest Fever. These are aimed at promoting the Krantzkloof Nature Reserve

After a number of persistent prodding's at AGM's by David Cairns we eventually took the initiative and launched the Kloof Conservancy Charitable Trust. This trust is independent of the Kloof Conservancy but its sole aim is to build up a capital base from which the conservancies projects can be funded from earning on the capital. It is a long term project and we hope to have your support either through direct donations or through bequeaths in wills. I would like to thank David for having the foresight to do this and for being so persistent. I would also like thank Sue Cairns, Phillida Ellis and Garth Williamson for agreeing to serve as trustees – this is an exciting development for us and it is something which when functional will be of enormous benefit to the conservancy's future viability.

### **APRIL 2016**

Our annual butterfly day took place at Tanglewood and a big thank you to Steve Woodhall and his LEPSOC team for partnering with us in what turned out to be a very good day and unlike the frog day the butterflies were out in force!

You may be aware that in late 2015 we were awarded a small grant by the Botanical Education Trust for a project to educate 7 schools on the threat of invasive alien plants. Firstly it is very satisfying that we are able to attract funding and secondly it is a great project. We are also going to add an art competition to this which will be sponsored by WESSA Highway branch. This project is essentially an extension of our invasive training programme which took on a new lease of life when Mieke took it over in early 2015. In the year ending March Mieke ran 7 courses and trained 129 people and also contributed R1484 to the kitty which is fantastic so a big thank you to Mieke for that.

We continuously update our website and I would like to take the opportunity to thank Roger Crossley of SOS Web Services for hosting all our electronic channels on a pro bono basis – it would be a significant cost if we had to pay for it. Also thanks to Jared Crossly for doing all the maintenance work, fixing, setting-up of our channels – we keep him busy. Interestingly Jared has been living in the UK for the past year but thanks to the way the internet works he has done all the work for us from the UK! The website home-page has just been updated and we can now recruit members directly as well as make donations to the charitable trust.

## THE BIGGER PICTURE

That quick review of some of our activities gives you a snap-shot of what we have been doing for the past twelve months but it is important that we see all we do, large and small as part of a bigger picture. Earlier I mentioned our involvement in the eThekweni Conservancies Forum and the Kloof Conservancy is a major driver in this initiative with a number of our members involved in ECF activities. As the chairman of the forum I also sit on the Conservation Committee of Conservation KZN (formerly the KZN Conservancies Association). Sometimes the lines become a bit blurred between what we do as Kloof Conservancy and what we do as part of the forum but ultimately it is all done in the name of conservation. It is most encouraging to see that we are building up momentum as a credible organisation both as Kloof Conservancy and as the ECF and CKZN. Within our context this is demonstrated by:

- Being awarded the Mayors Award in 2014 for the Molweni River Health Schools Project
- Successfully obtaining the Botanical Education Trust grant
- Being approached by eThekweni Municipality to participate in their 100 Resilient Cities programme
- Being approached by eThekweni Municipality to submit a special funding application for a conservancies forum river project and most recently
- Being approached by our old sparring partner the Department of Environmental Affairs to co-operate on an invasive alien species advocacy programme – planned for end July!

As part of my forum work I have tried to quantify the contribution of conservancies to the eThekweni biodiversity effort.

As Kloof Conservancy we contributed just over R2m and conservancies as a whole over R7m so the numbers are quite significant and I think that this type of data helps the authorities to focus their minds and recognise that we are:

- a. Significant contributors to the protection of biodiversity
- b. Significant role-players on environmental issues

## THE YEAR AHEAD

I am very conscious that my personal involvement in the eThekweni Conservancies Forum and Conservation KZN and the momentum that is being generated there could be detrimental to the Kloof Conservancy as we are thin on the ground at the best of times. Nevertheless it is through the collective efforts of conservancies in eThekweni and through a strong Conservation KZN that we will make the biggest impact so it is important that efforts be made to build up these organisations. I just hope we can find the correct balance so as not to neglect our member base and needs here in Kloof.

So for the next 12 months you can expect more of the same with the exception of our involvement in the Aller River Pilot Project Phase 1. I mentioned earlier that we had unsuccessfully applied for funding from the UNDP. As a result of that initiative we were approached by EPCPD to submit a special funding proposal to carry out a pilot project on the Aller River. The full council of eThekweni Municipality has now approved a grant of R600 000 to enable the ECF to run the pilot project. As the ECF is not a legal entity the arrangements are the Kloof Conservancy will be the implementing agent.

This is a major project for us and something we have never done before so it does come with some risks but also with big opportunities. The project is all about getting communities that live along rivers to understand their relationship and impact on the river and to develop community ownership for the health of the river. The pilot project will test the methodology which we then want to apply across all rivers in eThekweni if and when we get more funding.

Our involvement in this project takes us to a very different level of environmental conservation and it is a very exciting opportunity to be an even more meaningful environmental player in the area.

#### THANK YOU'S

I hope that I have not used the word "I" too often tonight! All the activities mentioned require a genuine collective effort, from the many volunteers who help at our various events to those in the exec team who are taking on and running their own projects like Hugh and Mieke. I know that when one thanks people there is always a high risk of forgetting someone so please bear with me – the activities have been many and so have the volunteers. A big thank you to all those who have helped from those collecting money at the gates, manning an activity table, doing facepainting, slaving away in the tuckshop, helping organise the open gardens, standing in the sun and marshalling at the 3 Falls trail run, motivating our new trust, hacking away at invasive species, fighting for us in court or just paying the membership fee as a sign of support – thank you. I do reserve a special thanks to the Exec team – we don't meet formally very often but we are in frequent contact via e-mail or at events. A final big thank-you to Bruce Crouch our vice chairman who prefers to be in the background but who is always willing and eager to assist in anything and everything – thanks Bruce – you do make my task easier!

That wraps up my report for this AGM. Thank you for your attention.

# Kloof Conservancy

## 2015/2016 Project - Activity List

3 Falls Trail Run

Kwa-Ximba Trail Run

Support for the Molweni Trail Run

Alien Busters Project

- Street Verges clearing
- IAP Gardener Courses
- Herbicide distribution/control

Back-to-Nature Series Events

- Butterfly Day
- Reptile Day
- Frog Evening
- Holiday Programme

Enforcement Project

- Legal Process – Court case against the Minister of Environmental Affairs
- Submission of requests for directives

Forest View Primary School Grassland Project

Glenholme Nature Reserve Project

- Support Monthly walks
- History of Kloof Display

Indigenous Open Gardens Show

Krantzkloof Nature Reserve – support and funding of improvements

- Guiding Project (Wilderness Leadership School)
- Kloof Conservancy BioGuide Project
- Krantzkloof Conference Centre

M13 Project

Memorial Park Project

- Ongoing relationship with Parks Dept.
- Installed BioGuide system in park

Molweni River Health Schools Project

Molweni River Community Park Project

Molweni Community Eco-camp Project

Msinsi CCA – Rehabilitation Project

Support for Kwa-Ximba Conservancy

Ronald's Kloof Strea Environmental Project

Uve Stream Environmental Project

Nkonka Stream Environmental Project

Student Support Programme

Environmental Awareness Walks for High School and Community Groups

### **Communication**

Monthly E-newsletter

Bi-annual The Leopard's Echo

Facebook

Indigenous Open Gardens Blog

Instagram

Twitter feed

### **External Activities**

Involvement in eThekwini Conservancies Forum

- Aller River Walk
- Prepared proposal for UNDP – unsuccessful
- Prepared proposal for ARPP Phase 1 for eThekwini Municipality – successful
- Involved in the 100 Resilient Cities Programme

Involvement in Conservation KZN

