Braamfontein Spruit Trust is a voluntary body created in Sandton in 1981 to supplement the work done by adjoining Municipalities in the creation of the Coordinating Committee for Community Open Spaces (COCOS).

Priorities are development of public recreational facilities on the rivers and ridges of the Witwatersrand. We promote public participation to conserve, preserve, protect and enjoy open spaces, co-ordinate activities, trails, talks, environmental education, schools environmental projects, competitions and Eco-tourism.

Income is from membership and fundraising.

TRUSTEE: DR. IAN PLAYER

Who we are
A Voluntary group looking at conservation of urban catchments

Mission
To inform, communicate, network, educate and seek cooperation between stakeholders in order to ensure sustainable river systems north of the Witwatersrand Watershed

Vision
The spruit is a clean, safe environment, attracting visitors from all communities

Action focused on
Securing the conservation integrity one of the largest open stretches of river in Gauteng

What we do
- Support residents and authority initiatives to conserve specific areas of the rivers
- Showing people their backyards
- Advise on existing projects
- Raise awareness of the historical, archaeological, geological, ecological and social issues in the catchment area
- Raise public awareness of problems and solutions
- Ensuring public involvement and participation in the area

Where we do it
Rivers and catchments north of the watershed

Negatives - Problems
- Erosion
- Pollution
- Poor development planning
- Vagrants
- Alien Vegetation
- Access
- River crossings
- Alienation of Public right of way
- Safety
- Crime

Positives - Utilisation
- Migratory passage for birds and small mammals
- Youth groups
- Corporate events
- Commuters
- Church Groups
- Hikers / Walkers
- Cyclists
- Runners
- Environmental education

BRAAMFONTEIN SPRUIT TRAIL - Where is it?

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, to worship, play sport and enjoy picnics and braais.

At least 14 streams rise in the ridges of the Witwatersrand, but over the decades many of these waterways have become choked by the detritus of urban sprawl. In recent years, however, the rivers have been upgraded and renewed by local authorities, providing the citizens of Johannesburg, Sandton, Randburg and Alexandra with much-needed recreational space. The Braamfontein Spruit, a 25-km-long river course 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 to be seen along the trail – there are more than 200 species of 
birds, as well as frogs, snakes, lizards, tortoises, and mammals such as water mongooses and meerkats. 
Among the other attractions of the walks are the interesting archaeological and historical features, including 
some iron-smelting works in Melville, farmhouse ruins, historical mansions and stone weirs. 
Melville Koppies Nature Reserve, an unspoilt sanctuary that’s open only a few days of the year, is well worth a 
visit if you are keen on indigenous flora and archaeology. Other wide-open spaces along the way include 
Emmarentia Dam, the Johannesburg Botanic Gardens and the Florence Bloom Bird Sanctuary, home to over 180 
species of birds. 
The Sandton section of 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. 
The trail starts at Westdene and Houghton, and stretches to the boundaries of Sandton and Randburg in the 
north. You can join the trail at any point. 

Details: Parking, fresh water and picnic spots at many places along the trail. 
Further information: The Braamfontein Spruit Trust. Tel: 011 782 5473 (Val) / 011 787 8160 (Mary) 
A map appears on our web site www.footprint.co.za/bst.htm

Thinking of our Logo! Year of the Frog

In South Africa 110 species have been identified and three quarters of the 110 occur in wetlands. From many 
parts of the world there are reports of a drop in frog numbers as well as in South Africa. In most cases the 
decline is as a result of loss of habitat and degradation of the environment. 
The Year of 2007-2008 rainy seasons was fantastic and well appreciated by all even by our frogs and toads. 
You could find them in homes, gardens, pools, dams, pans, wetlands, marshes, grasslands everywhere
In South Africa the main threats are:
Habitat Loss:
The main threats are urban and agriculture development. Some species have highly specialised requirements 
and can not tolerate changes to their habitats. Most frogs are dependant on wetlands.They require water to 
breed in. The drainage and filling in of wetlands result in the drop of frog species. 
Pollution:
Most frogs breed in water and spend a lot of time in the water. They are well suited to live in wate, their skins are 
permeable which makes them vulnerable to any pollutants, fertilisers, pesticides and gases that are dissolved in 
water. The pollution of the water can result in abnormalities or death. Frogs are indicators of the health of an 
ecosystem and can provide early warning of threats to other species. 
Alien species:
Alien species such as trout and bass feed on frog eggs and tadpoles. Alien vegetation is planted to dry out 
wetlands, which is an important home of frogs.

What can we do?
• To become involved in awareness and protection of frog programmes. 
• To declare areas of land to conservancies. 
• Avoid the use of poisons and pesticides. 
• Build a pond to attract frogs- then protect them. 
• Do not move them from homes. 
• Rescue frogs from dangerous places, such as Roads, developments, poisonous areas. – Contact 
Conservancy Chairman’s for the removal of frogs.

An article published on the 8th September 2007 “initiative comes at a bleak time for the world’s amphibians as a 
third already face extinction. In the paper it was mentioned that 2008 was declared as the Year of the Frog.
The Gauteng Conservancy Association and several other environmental organizations also raised their concern 
over the fate of amphibians and have decided to declare 1st March 2008 to 1st March 2009 as the Year of the 
Frog. 
We would like everyone that is interested to help with a frog identification Census. Copy of a form is included. 
The following people can be contacted for more information or queries regarding frogs.

Anne Mearns - Cell 073 210 3340  a.mearns@mtnloaded.co.za
P.O.Box 13562 Northmead 1511. Benoni Gauteng.

Gail McArcher – Cell 083 983 7428  gail@medi.co.za  Kevin Mearns – 082 337 0074 mearnkf@unisa.co.za
Michael Mearns – 083 289 4832 michael_mearns@yahoo.com  Martie Mearns - mearnma@unisa.co.za
Frog Count, Census and Survey Form  From ------------ 2008  to 1st March 2009.

Name of person involved: ................................................................. Address: ...........................................................

Cell no: ................................................................. Phone No: .................................................................

Other contact details (eg email): .................................................................

Town: ................................................................. Province: .................................................................

Are there any other people involved:  yes/no

Describe type of Area:  / wetlands/pan/marsh/spruit/river/grassland etc

Date of sighting: ................................................................. Type of count: .................................................................

Day  Month  Year  on foot  ..........  by boat  ............

Weather Conditions: ................................................................. Condition of area: .................................................................

Good: .....................  Is area natural? .................................................................

Bad: .....................  Lots of water .................................................................

Poor: .....................  Little water .................................................................

Ideal: .....................  Is it raining? .................................................................

Moderate: .....................  Dry weather .................................................................

More information

Are frogs hibernating? ................................................................. Are frogs breeding? .................................................................

How many adults? .....................  Can you see eggs? ................. or froglets? .................

What negative issues?

Pollution: .................................................................  Are there signs of development? .................

Disturbance of the area: ................................................................. Are there signs of fill-ins? .................

Please return this form to Anne Mearns: a.mearns@mtnloaded.co.za or PO Box 13562, Northmead 1511.

c.c. Val Kleyn @bst.co.za

We have been walking!

Our first walk in January was unfortunately cancelled owing to a heavy storm making walking impossible. 

Anyway I guess it was good for the frogs!

Our next walk in February to Kloofendal was a wonderful day as Kalpana Rangan reports:

Once again we had to get up early in the morning to get ready for our monthly BST walk. This time we were going to Kloofendal Nature Reserve a 150 ha park known to support an impressive range of indigenous vegetation and birdlife. Also it was historically important as it was here that Fred Struben discovered the first payable gold on the Witwaterstand in 1884.
I had never gone there before, so I was excited about visiting the place. After equipping ourselves with our backpack, sticks and water bottles, we started our drive from Rosebank to the Reserve. The moment we drove down the entrance of the park, I knew I was going to enjoy this walk. So peaceful and quiet, so green and welcoming was the reserve. As we parked the car, we looked around to find our BST walkers ready to walk for the day! It was a bright day. We walked towards the open area adjacent to the amphitheatre. With the hills forming a backdrop, the amphitheatre looked regal. I could imagine myself sitting in the open hall and listening to a mesmerizing music group!

We started our upward climb on the well-laid out paths of the reserve. Climbing up, we observed wild Protea trees all around, looking their best with blooming red flowers. We could also spot other flowers like Morning Glory and plants like the local eucalyptus. And far away we saw a pair of eagles beautifully perched on a rock. Peeping through the binoculars, we noticed the white marks on their back.

It was a steep climb. Many of us longed to sit down for a while to get our breath back! The view from this height was stunning. We could see a part of Roodepoort and also the amphitheatre with fig trees and colourful flowers around them. Walking further we brushed past weeds and spotted a guinea fowl disappearing behind a bush!

Were there any more animals around? We couldn't spot anymore. Perhaps, our noise kept them away! The downward climb was faster but more difficult as we had to be cautious of slipping down! The sun was high and we were sweating after the long walk. Wiping our brows we quenched our thirst with water and cool drinks. As we touched down and neared the amphitheatre, it was time to pose for the group photo! With our stomachs rumbling with hunger, we headed to our car to drive down home. Our friends stayed back to enjoy a picnic. It was a day well spent. We surely deserved a hearty meal!

Our next walk as told by Colm Burns:

**Johannesburg Zoo Trot – Sunday March 9th 2008**

It was a lovely crisp autumn morning when our walking group of 16 met in the car park of the Zoo at 7h00, to join this monthly walk organised by the Zoo. It was ideal weather for a walk and the choice was either a distance of 5km or 10km. (If you complete 3 consecutive walks you receive a medal).

This walk was different from our normal hikes as we managed to see all the animals. We don’t normally see black bears or elephants when we walk such places as the Melville Koppies. There was a good crowd of walkers taking part in this event — well over 100 — and plenty of runners which made us sweat just to see them haring around the course.

We saw lions, bears, elephants, impala, ostrich, crocodiles etc and plenty of bird life and all commented on how the zoo looked in excellent shape.

After the walk we had a lovely picnic and sat around chatting and enjoying the company of friends.

It was gratifying that we had a few new walkers who joined us which hopefully will mean some new members for our future walks.

Altogether we all had a very enjoyable day in an interesting setting.

**Why not come to the next walks!**

**Sunday 20th April**  Jan Smuts House Irene  
**Sunday 18th May**  Emmarentia Botanical Gardens to Delta Park  
**Sunday 29th June**  Klipriversberg Nature Reserve  
**Sunday 27th July**  Groenkloof Nature Reserve

Details: Colm 011 616 6934, Margaret 011 614 3391 A/H, Mary 011 643 5374

**And now for something completely different!**

One of our BST walkers is Kalpana Rangan, who with her husband is on a contract here from India. They are enthusiastic walkers but also uphold their traditions as the next report shows.

**Decorating the Dolls**  Kalpana Rangan

Navratri are nine auspicious days that fall in the Hindu month of ‘Ashwin’ usually occurring in October. In Northern and Southern India the festival is celebrated in remembrance of the mythological hero ‘Ram’ vanquishing the evil ‘Ravana.’ In Western and Eastern India, it is celebrated to commemorate the victory of Goddess Durga over the demon ‘Mahishasura.’ A colourful festival, it is celebrated with lights, dances and dolls!
This year 'Navratri' started on Friday, October 12 and as a South Indian Brahmin it was customary for me to usher in the festival with a doll exhibition!

I arranged my colourful dolls on five large steps made out of tables and stools! Since gods and goddesses have to be given preference over human or animal figures, I allotted three out of the five steps for them. On the first or the top step, I displayed 'Dasavatara' or ten forms that god appeared in since the beginning of the universe.

In the next broad step, I had decorated the dolls of Lord Krishna, Lord Ganesha or the elephant headed god, Lord Vishnu, the preserver, Lord Shiva the destroyer and Saraswati, the goddess of learning. The last step too had the devotees of gods displayed in cute clay rotating images!

I tried to show my creativity in the two steps in between. On the third step, I kept the curios we had collected on our tour of Central Europe. And on the fourth step, I showed a glimpse of our own Africa! From the malakite African map to the big five in the jungle. I tried to showcase the best of Africa!

I had called all my friends to view my dolls and take 'haldi' (turmeric paste) ‘kumkum’ (red powder applied on the forehead) with the blessings of the gods! And what a response I got. On all the nine days and even on the tenth day or Dussera, I had my guests coming over to see my doll exhibition! Navratri is meant to be a ladies festival. My Indian friends came wearing the traditional saree or salwar kameez. I had the opportunity to wear my best silk sarees and traditional jewellery!

The most enthusiastic response I got was from my friends from the Braamfontein Spruit Trust. They were both curious and excited and brought their friends too to observe the interesting display of dolls! My dear friends from 'BST' were all the more excited when I offered them haldi kumkum. Standing in front of the doll decoration with vermilion applied on their forehead and fruit offered on a plate, they happily followed the traditional Indian custom to get blessed by the gods!

On the tenth day called 'Dussera' or Vijaya Dashami (Victorious tenth day) it was time to bid goodbye to the dolls. With a heavy heart I wrapped them carefully and packed them into boxes until next year!

Back to business!

Tim Hartwright has recently walked the Braamfontein Spruit Trail from the Field & Study Centre to the confluence of the spruit towards Paulshof. He reports finding construction work by cyclists such as ramps. He is concerned about the presence of such structures regarding the dangers to other users in particular children and if council has really approved them as the cyclists claim. “In fact I think these constructions are very dangerous - should they be allowed in a public open space? If so will the council accept liability for any injury or death cause by the use of this equipment?”

He also noted that pollution is a problem with plenty of plastic bags caught along the river banks, but considering this years rainfall it is probably no worse than any other year. There are some places that are obviously been used as a shabeen. Under the N1 highway there is some rubbish that needs to be removed. The council was busy with the cutting of grass (on Sunday) in places along the spruit. Generally the spruit looks in better condition than he has seen it on previous visits and City Parks should be commended for their endeavours.

On a positive note he commends the increased use of the spruit by walkers and runners.

The BST Board of Management is taking the matter up with City Parks.

Mary Kolb is happy to report that the main dam in the Florence Bloom Bird Sanctuary at Delta Park is now almost clear of hyacinth. The eradication of the hyacinth was being dealt with by Wits University and many regular users of the park were becoming despondent at the time it was taking. Let’s hope they can remove the last of this dreadful weed and hope it stays clear!!

A final word!

A special mention to Margaret for her efforts in fund raising, the last being the sale of tickets for the King & I at the Civic Theatre in February.

Please find your invoices for membership 2008/2009 attached and thanks for your patronage in the past!

Until next time..................

..Mary Kolb
Membership Secretary