



Report for the period 1 January – 31 March 2013



Figure 1: Accidental fire at Kenilworth, Photo by: T Snyders (2013)

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Changing Lives Through Nature

ECOLOGICAL BURNS and WILDFIRES

KRCA management had planned to burn a 15 ha area (Management Blocks 4A1, 4A2 and 4A3) of the reserve during the period March – April 2013.

On 12 February 2013 at approximately 14:00 an accidental fire (Fig. 1) started on the southern boundary fence of Management Block 4A3, which quickly spread into the conservation area as a result of a mild south-easterly wind. The fire was brought under control by 16:00 thanks to the combined efforts of the City of Cape Town Fire Department, Working on Fire (WoF) and the City of Cape Town Biodiversity Management Branch (BMB) crews. Biodiversity Management and Working on Fire staff continued to monitor the site for a week to extinguish flare ups, after which the area was declared safe. Table 1 gives a breakdown of the staff involved at the fire.

Table 1: Staff and hours present at KRCA accidental fire

Staff Designation	Date	Normal working time (hours)	Overtime hours worked	
			Saturdays and Evenings (hours)	Sundays and Public Holidays (hours)
Tuesday 12 February 2013				
James Cooper	2013/02/12	14:30 – 16:00	16:00 – 07:30	
Skye McCool	2013/02/12	14:30 – 16:00	16:00 – 20:00	
Tania Snyders	2013/02/12	14:30 – 16:00	16:00 – 07:30	
Sabelo Memani	2013/02/12	14:30 – 16:00	16:00 – 07:30	
Vaughn Thompson (BMB)	2013/02/12			
Josh Gericke (BMB)	2013/02/12		16:00 – 23:00	
Josh Gready (BMB)	2013/02/12		16:45 – 07:30	
WOF (13 people)	2013/02/12	15:55 – 18:15		
WOF (7 people)	2013/02/12	18:15 – 08:55		
Zandvlei Ranger (BMB)	2013/02/12		16:00 – 18:30	
Wednesday 13 February 2013				
James Cooper	2013/02/13	07:30 – 10:30	18:00 – 07:30	
Skye McCool	2013/02/13		16:00 – 19:30	
Tania Snyders	2013/02/13	07:30 – 10:30		
Sabelo Memani	2013/02/13	07:30 – 09:30		
Vaughn Thompson (BMB)	2013/02/13	10:30 – 16:00	16:00 – 18:00	
David Morris (BMB)	2013/02/13	10:30 – 16:00		
WOF team (6 staff)	2013/02/13	10:30 – 16:00	16:00 – 17:30	
Josh Gready (BMB)	2013/02/13	07:30 – 10:30		
Zurelda le Roux (BMB)	2013/02/13		18:00 – 07:30	
CTEET student	2013/02/13		18:00 – 07:30	
CTEET student	2013/02/13		18:00 – 07:30	
Edith Stephens Nature Reserve student (BMB)	2013/02/13		18:00 – 07:30	
Thursday 14 February 2013				
James Cooper	2013/02/14	07:30 – 16:00		
Tania Snyders	2013/02/14	07:30 – 16:00		
Sabelo Memani	2013/02/14	07:30 – 16:00		
WOF team (7 staff)	2013/02/14	11:00 – 16:00		
Zandvlei Foreman (BMB)	2013/02/14	11:00 – 15:30		
Friday 15 February 2013				
James Cooper	2013/02/14	07:30 – 16:00		
Tania Snyders	2013/02/14	07:30 – 16:00		
Sabelo Memani	2013/02/14	07:30 – 16:00		
WOF team (7 staff)	2013/02/14	11:30 – 16:00		

Monday 18 February 2013

James Cooper

2013/02/18

08:30 – 10:30

The total of 3 ha of KRCA land that burnt (Block A, Fig. 2) was part of the area designated for prescribed ecological burning in 2013, and therefore the accidental fire was not considered detrimental to the veld. It did however further separate the prescribed burn area, leaving KRCA management with four separate blocks (B, C, D and E, Fig. 2) to burn in March – April 2013.



Figure 2: Ecological Burn blocks 2013

KRCA received the burning permit on the 14 March 2013, which allowed for the burning of the four remaining blocks. Due to unfavourable weather conditions and scheduling overlaps with race days and quarantined horses, KRCA management have only obtained permission from the racecourse to burn block C in April, which will consolidate the accidental burn area into one vegetation age.

FLORA MANAGEMENT

Most of the work undertaken during this quarter was in preparation for the prescribed ecological burn.

Due to the veld in the planned burn blocks being more than 100 years old it had become heavily invaded by an indigenous plant species, *Searsia lucida*. The presence of high densities of large old bushes of this species has been detrimental to the veld in previous ecological burns, causing heat scars and out-competing other indigenous species after a fire. KRCA staff spent eleven days clearing *S. lucida* from Management Blocks 4A1, 4A2 and 4A3, using cut-stump treatment of Glyphosate herbicide to kill adult plants.

INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES (IAS) MANAGEMENT

Table 3 gives a breakdown of the IAS clearing that took place during this period.

Table 3: A breakdown of the invasive species management actions undertaken during this period.

Species	Management Blocks	Number of days
<i>Acacia saligna</i> (Port Jackson)	4F, 4B	6
<i>Sesbania punicea</i>	4F	3
<i>Xanthium strumarium</i>	4A1, 4A2, 4A3, 4A4, 4A5, 4A6, 4E1, 4E2	5

NURSERY MANAGEMENT, PLANT PROPAGATION AND SEED COLLECTION

Plants were propagated for the rehabilitation site in front of the Greenfords Estate development. Table 4 gives a breakdown of the species propagated.

Table 4: Plant species and quantity propagated during this period

Species	Number propagated
<i>Pelargonium capitatum</i>	380
<i>Erica verticillata</i>	500
<i>Erica margaritaceae</i>	300

KRCA staff spent two days collecting seed in the form of soil and leaf litter. This seed will be broadcast in the rehabilitation site after the brush piles have been burnt and spread across the site.

FAUNAL MANAGEMENT

The main formal faunal management action that took place this period was a chameleon survey. During the three night survey, the team worked in Management Block 4A2 and located a total of 16 Cape dwarf chameleons (*Bradypodion pumilum*) were located, of which there were seven juveniles and nine adults, with a total of nine males and two females. The accidental fire that occurred resulted in the death of three Cape dwarf chameleons (*Bradypodion pumilum*), three Parrot-beaked tortoises (*Homopus areolatus*), one Marsh terrapin (*Pelomedusa subrufa*), four Cape legless skinks (*Acontias meleagris*) and two Brown water snakes (*Lycodonomorphus rufulus*).

During this quarter three Cape dwarf chameleons (*Bradypodion pumilum*) were trans-located to KRCA from nearby properties, one was at risk of attack by domestic cats and the other two had sustained injuries at their site of origin (one was electrocuted on an electric fence; and the other lost a foot) and were rehabilitated at the SPCA Wildlife Unit.



Figure 3: Juvenile Cape dwarf chameleon (*Bradypodion pumilum*) on a finger tip, Photo by: J Cooper (2013)

Other fauna management for this period included the removal of a bee hive behind the scoreboard, as well as the continued monitoring of the tortoise population at KRCA.

Monthly bird counts have taken place during this period, and will continue to take place throughout the year.

CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE

There were some compliance issues at the J&B Met this year. Electrical wires were run directly along the fence line of Management Block 4A2, creating a fire hazard. Other issues included an incident of grey water being dumped into the conservation area, and a temporary structure next to the scoreboard blocking vehicle access. All these issues were dealt with on the day, and raised in the debriefing.

VISITORS, ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Michael Oak School started a running club this year and due to the lack of space on their school grounds approached KRCA about having the weekly supervised run in the conservation area. This has become a great success with learners enjoying time outdoors in an informal and fun way, and has further developed relations with the school, leading to an increase in education programmes with learners. A four-part programme was run with eight Grade 11 learners from this school, for a total of 5.75 hours over a period of four days (Fig. 4 and 5).

Challenges to the formal education at KRCA this quarter included a lack of follow-through from local schools in terms of booking programmes advertised by KRCA; which resulted in low numbers. The second main challenge continued to be a lack of visitor infrastructure – namely ablution facilities and infrastructure for education programmes during increment or very hot weather.



Figure 4 and 5: Grade 11 learners from Michael Oak School performing plant vegetation surveys (left) and understanding the urban context of the conservation area (right), Photos by: S McCool and S Memani (2013)

Other educational activities and groups during this period included guided walks with ten adults from the Nerina Garden Club and 16 local and international adults, as arranged by Councillor Iversen. In terms of events, KRCA took part in the J&B Met, featuring as usual in the event booklet as well as having a display in the picnic area (Fig. 6 and 7). It was felt that the display was not as well attended as we had hoped, and that this may be due to location or a mismatch between the target audience and the concept of the KRCA display.



Figure 6 and 7: The KRCA display at the J&B Met (left and right), Photos by: J Cooper (2013)

As a part of the chameleon survey that was held in KRCA over three nights in March, a total of 47 adults and children visited the reserve and learnt about conservation at KRCA, the Cape dwarf chameleon (*Bradypodion pumilum*) and other night life in the area. This is an extremely popular event and with limited numbers allowed each night, another will most likely be held in April or May to cater for those members of the public who we were unable to accommodate this time around.



Figure 8 and 9: The Nerina Garden Club visiting KRCA (left) and the intrepid chameleon hunters (right), Photos by: S Memani and J Cooper (2013)

As a result of a media release, an article about the uncontrolled burn at KRCA was published by the Cape Argus on 4 March 2013. Skye McCool was interviewed by Fine Music Radio on 1 March 2013, on chameleons as a part of the Going Green segment. Various updates were made to the website content and the Facebook page continues to be updated almost weekly, the public following of which continues to expand.

FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The erosion control on the road entering the reserve next to the Quarantine Station was completed in January 2013. Soil and mulch was mixed together and placed into the tyres that had been laid in the problem areas. This control method has worked well, but due to a number of heavy fire tender vehicles entering on this road during the February accidental fire, the area has to be revisited, and some adjustments made.

FINANCES AND FUNDRAISING

During this period, a total of R100.00 was raised through a donation and charging for reserve visits. A total of R1131.73 of these funds was used invest in rechargeable batteries, biscuits for a meeting, brush-cutter maintenance, food for staff at the uncontrolled fire and felt.

STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND TRAINING

At the beginning of the year the new CPUT student, Sabelo Memani, started at KRCA; he has already gotten his year off to a fantastic start, having won the best presentation at a recent Research Proposal Presentation day, and as such in October he will attend the Fynbos Forum to present his research on the Micro Frog (*Microbatrachella capensis*). The staff complement was comprised of the Site Manager, People and Conservation Officer, Senior Field Ranger, student and initially two Kadar Asmal contract workers. On 18 February 2013 a new team of eight Kadar Asmal contract workers started at KRCA, bringing that team up to a total of ten.

The only training arranged for this quarter, was that of Skye McCool (People and Conservation Officer) in photography, to improve the standard of photographic material for use in the media.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other general maintenance activities during this period included office and nursery maintenance and cleaning, watering of plants, catching grasshoppers and feeding the toads, organising the store room and path maintenance.

Sabelo Memani, began his research project on the habitat suitability of Youngsfield Military Base and Rondebosch East Common for the reintroduction of the Micro Frog, *Microbatrachella capensis*. His study focuses on the habitat requirements of *M. capensis* at Kenilworth, looking at vegetation structure (Fig. 10) in and around the seasonal wetlands, water chemistry within the wetlands and soil structure in the wetlands.

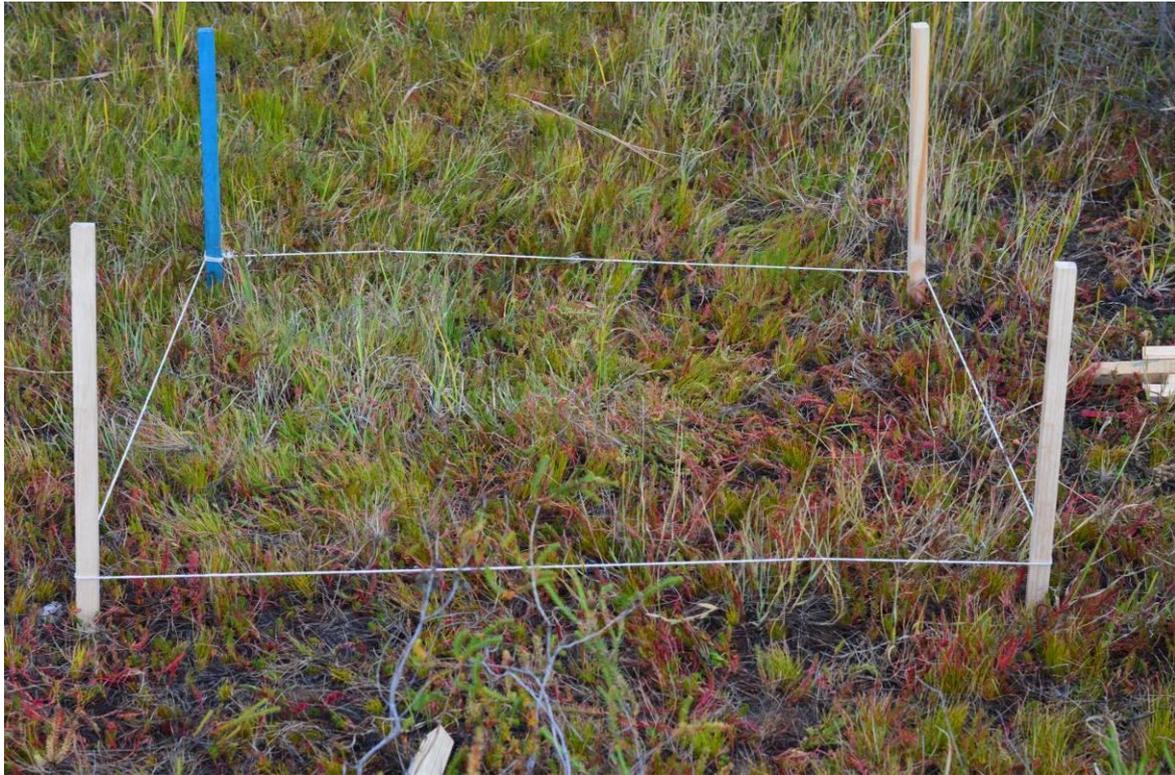


Figure 10: Vegetation monitoring plot in a seasonal wetland, Photo by: S Memani (2013)