

NEWS FROM THE JHA BOARD – MAY 2018

Security cameras

We are making progress with the appointment of a local service provider, and with addressing the effects of the owl houses on the camera images. It is unlikely that there will be a need for a special general meeting to decide on the possible next phases of the installation before the September annual general meeting, but the Board hopes to bring the matter forward before the end of the year.

The estate experienced no external threat to its security since January 2017.

Open forum on 31 March 2018

Approximately 30 homeowners attended the discussion on 31 March. The Board thanks everybody who turned up and participated, and our consensus is that the meeting achieved its intended purposes. The list of topics discussed included communication with homeowners, marketing Jakkalsfontein, voting on the number of horses, cell phone reception, hardening the footpath surface to the new viewing platform, beach clean-up, letting in homeowners at the gate, fire marshals, revision of the current Design Manual, outside lights burning the whole night, dogs barking and being off the leash, levies, external contractors on road works, speeding and driving habits, and the accounting system currently in use.

Beach clean-up

September the 15th is International Beach Cleanup day. The plan is to arrange some activities on that day to show solidarity with the sentiment behind the event.

Letting in homeowners at the gate

The minutes of the SGM of 17 December 2017 reflect a discussion to the effect that homeowners should open the gate with their remotes themselves. This was not a formal decision by the JHA AGM, and was not minuted as such. Nevertheless, in the absence of evidence that there was opposition to the discussion, the Board and its Management had to take this as the will of the meeting.

At the recent informal discussion (31 March), the same situation prevailed: it was not a formal meeting; no decisions could be taken; but homeowners could express their thoughts about any matter. At this meeting, there was a reminder about the discussion on 17 December last year, and no-one spoke against it. Again, the Board felt that it had little choice but to act upon this, as it was as close as one could get of the opinion of the homeowners, in the absence of a formal vote.

We are aware that there is unhappiness about this among homeowners, but the Board is in a difficult position. Until a formal proposal is voted upon at an AGM the Board can only interpret this position as the wishes of the majority.

Controlled block burn

The recent burn on the northern side of the entrance road left that part of the reserve looking bare and rather desolate. Controlled burns are unfortunately an important conservation management tool, and the JHA as owner of a promulgated nature reserve is legally obliged to follow sound conservation practices. Periodic controlled burns are an integral part of this. The recently burnt areas have not experienced a controlled burn since the development of Jakkalsfontein commenced and the nature reserve was promulgated in 1990, a period of more than 28 years.

In addition, there is a risk of infrastructural damage/ loss in the farmyard and the staff housing areas in the event of a fire, which we think this burn has reduced substantially. A positive side effect could be that the reduced vegetation cover near the overhead electricity cables may also act as a deterrent to cable theft.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that the recent burn left the area in an unattractive state. Fortunately, the recent rains came at an opportune time, and we trust that the vegetation will react quickly to improve the state of affairs.

Community Schemes Ombud Service

We are now part of this Service (a legal requirement) and pay monthly membership fees. The Act serves to regulate the conduct of all parties in such schemes, and one of its major functions will be to adjudicate in intractable disputes. The Board intends to make use of this mechanism in future disputes with homeowners.

Research at Jakkalsfontein

Not many people are aware of the conservation research that is done at Jakkalsfontein. Most of the work is carried out by the University of Cape Town's Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology. The best known of these studies were those involving the black harrier, and papers have been published in *Bird Conservation International* (Black Harrier *Circus maurus* of the Fynbos biome, South Africa: a threatened specialist or an adaptable survivor?), and *Nature Conservation* (Does timing of breeding matter less where the grass is greener? Seasonal declines in breeding performance differ between regions in an endangered endemic raptor). If your entertainment tastes are a little less academic, have a look at the video **The Secret Life of the Circler**, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAGRh-AiJ8I>. It discusses the work of Rob Simmons, a frequent visitor to Jakkalsfontein.

But the work on the black harrier is not all that happens here. In 1998 the *African Journal of Ecology* published “Habitat fragmentation limits the distribution of Cape francolin, *Francolinus capensis*, on deciduous fruit farms in South Africa”, and in 2016 the *Journal of Human Evolution* published “Marine and terrestrial foods as a source of brain-selective nutrients for early modern humans in the southwestern Cape, South Africa”, with field work done on the reserve. In all these studies, the contributions of people like Danie Pretorius and Steyn Marais are acknowledged.

Finally, although not done at Jakkalsfontein, a recent doctoral study completed at the University of Stellenbosch included archival data about the estate: “Non-metropolitan gated developments in the Western Cape: patterns, processes and purpose”.