



FRIENDS OF PILANESBERG

Non-Profit Organization Fund Raising Number: 006-421 NPS

SEDIBA

February-September 2018

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Letter from the Editor

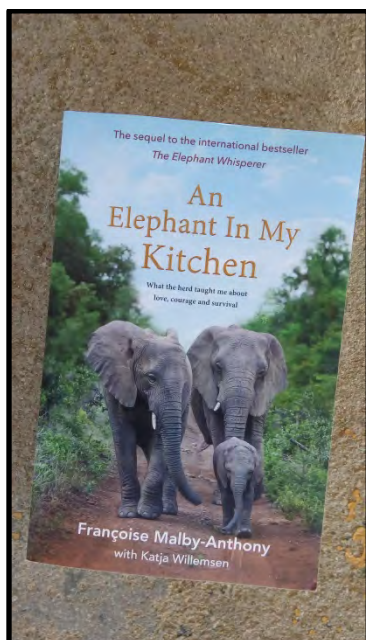
March- August 2018

Kerry-Anne Hare

Dear Friends

Well, it most certainly has been a busy few months. We have been extremely lucky to have huge turnouts at the work parties even through Winter, which simply means we are able to accomplish so much more in the park.

I recently had the privilege of meeting Françoise Malby-Anthony, wife of the late author Lawrence Anthony. I'm sure many of you know "The Elephant Whisperer," the story of how a special herd of elephants came to live on their game farm, Thula Thula. Françoise has decided to write her version of events and the sequel in "An elephant in my kitchen" and it is fascinating to hear some of her anecdotes. One of the things she said that touched my heart was that she views all the animals on the farm as an extension of her family. I suppose that is how we all feel about our beloved park. We all mourn the loss of a special rhino and celebrate the rains and the birth of new babies.





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Over the weekend of the September work party, we were all aware of a fire that was burning in the wilderness area of the park. The fire was being attended to and many of us packed up on the Sunday morning and drove back to town. Sadly, the wind came up and the fire got out of control, burning 18 000ha and taking with it our special Mankwe Hide.

FOPS conducted a special work party the following weekend. We really appreciate the effort that many of the members made to be there, especially seeing that they'd had the expense of the fuel the previous weekend. Our tasks were to repair the fence around the Mankwe toilets/parking lot so that the public at least had some protection when using the restrooms, and to pick up thousands of nuts, screws, bolts, bits of chicken mesh etc. that were now lying in the veld, posing a hazard to the wildlife. The team managed to finish the job in one morning. I think we can all be proud.

We await news of what the situation is with the Parks Board insurance, but hope that we are able to play a role in the rebuild of Mankwe Hide.

I look forward to seeing you all at the AGM.

Warm regards

Kerry-Anne



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Special Project Weekend Reports- Pilanesberg

March 2018

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

We had another amazing turnout with 38 people attending and only 1 cancellation. This was good news as the parks board had asked me to concentrate on clearing direction cairns.

This was our major project for the weekend.

3 teams went out to do road clearing and direction cairns. The roads cleared were Tshwene Drive, Kubu Drive, Kgabo Drive, Thutlwa and Moloto Drive. A sterling effort was made, with 22 direction cairns done. We also cleared Lenong view point, so that you can now see the view, and we cleared Lengau lookout point too.

Moloto Picnic Area: The guys managed to erect another 2 shade gazebos- a fantastic effort. They ran out of nails with about half of the last roof to finish. This was heavy, hot work and everyone was exhausted when they were finished.

Rathlogo car park: This team needed to clear the fire break properly which they did. It looks very neat and tidy, and is safe from fires we hope.

Lastly, the Iron Age Site: It was the same story as usual- the team cleaned up and sprayed. The kraals needed some attention, but we'll continue next time.

All in all it was a very successful work party.

Well until next time go safe and see you next month.

Regards,

Paddy



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April 2018

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

We had a fair sized work party with 26 members attending. Unfortunately, we had 6 cancellations. We still had enough people to do the jobs at hand. There were 2 visitors, namely Ricardo Del Mei and Jody Smith. Hope to see you again soon. Then, Morag Glunz came up to join us in planting a tree in memory of her husband Hans Glunz.

The main project just for a change was to clean up our own back yard. 9 people stayed in camp to make it neat and tidy. The fire breaks also needed to be cleared, which they managed. These guys worked their butts off. They certainly did a very good makeover of the camp.

Iron Age site: A lot of spraying and weeding went on in the Kraals and a bit more clearing. It looks a lot neater now.

Moloto Picnic Site: 3 guys went up there after the tree planting and put the last bit of roofing on the last gazebo.

Road Clearing and Alien vegetation: There was a Pigeon Wood tree on Tau link which we cut down and poisoned. We cleared 3 direction cairns along the way and found 4 Lantana bushes which we cut and poisoned along Tlou drive. Another great work party all round.

I look forward to seeing you all next month.

Go well.

Regards,

Paddy



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May 2018

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

For this time of year, we had a pretty good turnout of 25 people which included 3 non-residents.

Most of the projects involved road clearing, with the Iron Age Site being the exception.

The Iron Age Site: As usual, there was the ongoing cutting back and spraying. We concentrated on clearing the kraals- although they had been sprayed there was still a lot of regrowth. This made the place look a bit tatty, so it was cleaned up. It looks a lot better.

Road clearing: 3 teams went out. The routes taken were Dithabaneng from Bosele to Korwe, Kgama drive to Ntshwe and Nkakane down to Tshepe.

Each route had direction cairns and geological sites along the way. The guys concentrated on trees growing across the road, but were also on the look out for alien vegetation. We came across Lantana and Queen of the Night. Thank goodness the alien species are becoming fewer. The time consumers were trees that the elephants had pushed over into the road. After all this, everybody was a bit tired. Thank goodness it was not too hot, so it was bearable. We got a lot done, well done to all.

Well until next time, be safe and hope to see you next month.

Regards,

Paddy



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June 2018

PaddyCoombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

Another great weekend was had by all. 26 people attended with 5 non-residents. Again, we got a lot of work done.

There were 4 projects- we had 2 road clearing groups, 1 Moloto Picnic Site team and then the Iron Age site team. Don't forget the Iron Age site...

Let us start off with the Iron Age site: There was a bit of a change- to start with, we needed to repair the fence- I think an animal ran into it. They bent it a bit and broke 2 standards. The team then cleared around the outside of the fence, to make sure there were no more breaks in it. After this we tried the energizer, but to no avail. There seems to be a problem with the regulator. We are working on it.

Moloto Picnic Site: Roland is trying to make the path from the gate to the toilets more wheelchair friendly, so he and the team are putting down slabs of concrete, to make it easier to negotiate the walk way. They got 1 slab down and started preparing the rest. We are just waiting for Parks Board to bring the sand and stone needed- we have the cement.

We did more road clearing: One team went along Tshepe and another along Tshukudu e Ntsho.

On Tshukudu we cleared out the 2 viewpoints overlooking the dam, and cleaned up both causeways up-river. This was very time consuming, but very rewarding once we could see the results. We stopped when we heard Mavuso who was in musth heading our way. It was time to stop anyway.

Well until next time go well and hope to see you next month.

Regards,

Paddy



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July 2018

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

You guys have again shocked me to the core! I could not believe it when the final count came in. There were 44 of you nut jobs at camp. Almost unbelievable, but what a great work party. There were 7 non-residents, which was good as there was not that much pressure on the camp. There were also 5 new people.

Nikki Bowles and Simone, Lexi Bray, Schalk and Jani Kotze, Mac Mcmenamin and Lucas Petroit. Welcome to you guys, hope to see you again soon.

The weather was actually very pleasant, especially while working. There were 5 details and with all these people we got a lot done.

Most of the details were road clearing, which is an ongoing evil which must be tackled.

3 Teams went out along different routes and tackled encroachment and where necessary "G" sites and direction cairns.

Team 1 went along Tshukudu e Ntsho to finish what was started last work party and cleared a lookout at Tlou dams.

Team 2 did Potokwane loop down to Tilodi drive and over the dam wall and continued up to Tshwene drive.

Team 3 went along Dithabaneng doing Phiri Loop, Korwe drive and down to Kgabo.

Moloto picnic site: The team painted tables, finished off the gazebos and laid more concrete slabs for the walkway to the toilets. The site is looking really good.

Iron Age Site. A big group went there and got a lot of clearing done. It's also looking good, until the rains start again anyway.



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Iron Age Team. Thanks to Lauren Gunn for the lovely photographs.



Before they started...

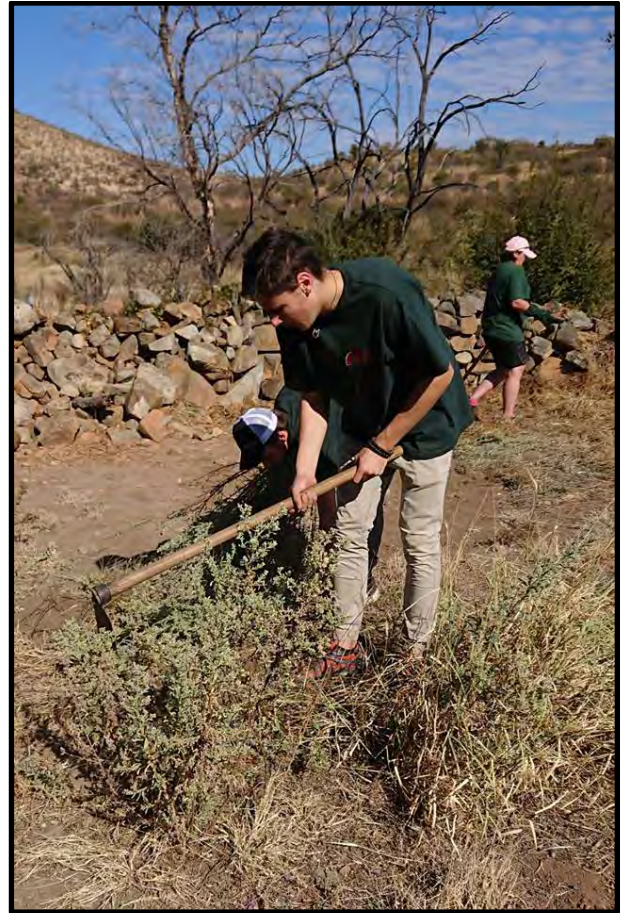


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Hours of hard work!



Rewarding results!

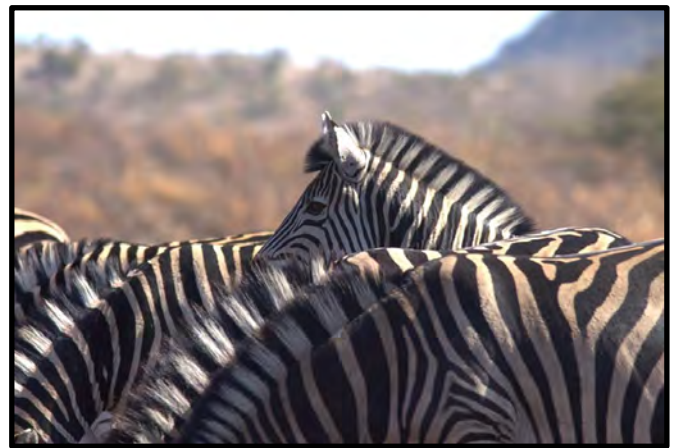
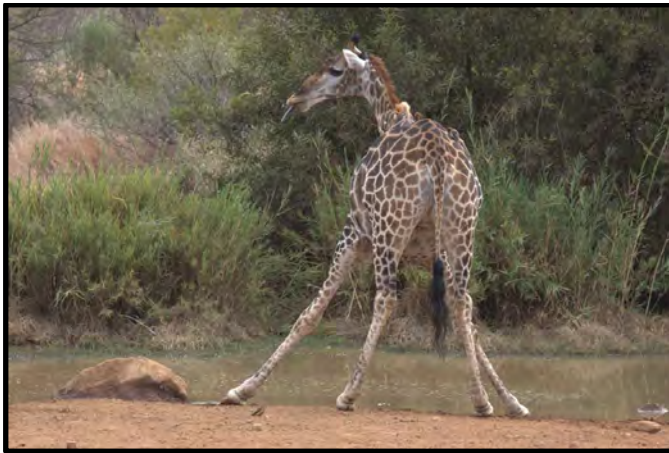


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Animal rewards



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Well, it was an amazing work party with amazing people, well done.

Regards,

Paddy



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August 2018

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

This time 41 of you guys pitched up. Well done!

We had 3 cancellations, but also 2 new guys, a great turnout. With all these people we managed to get a lot done.

There were 6 projects altogether.

First and foremost, Moloto picnic site:

Roland wanted to try and get it finished so 11 people landed up there. The guys went up there and almost finished. All Gazebos are up and 3 more concrete slabs thrown on the walkway. This was long, hot work, so the guys were bushed when they came back. Good job guys.

Iron Age Site: Trevor and his merry gang got stuck in again and did their thing. Tedious work but we are getting there.

Rathlogo: We needed to do a proper fire break around the fence. They almost completed it and Peter and Zika offered to go out on Sunday to complete the job they had almost finished. This they duly did, well done and thank you. They also replaced a number of poles in the fence.

2 road clearing teams went out. Letsha was the one and Tilodi was the other one. They both needed a really good haircut, which they got.

Lastly, a team went out to Tamboti shooting range.

The main reason was that Enviro-loo came out to repair elephant damage to the toilets' ventilation chimneys and to service the toilets at the same time. I decided to refurbish the actual structure while we were there. We raised the walls about half a metre with shade cloth and made each loo a bit more private. The ladies loo was re-concreted as it was a bit loose. We generally cleaned up the site, a good mornings work.

Another great work party with good weather and great friends.

Well until next time go well.

Regards,

Paddy



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Moloto Team: Ladies gearing up to sand and paint the picnic benches.





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Construction of the second half and roof of the shade structure.





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Pathway team, who loaded and poured load after load of concrete





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Looking good!



Thank you to Debbi Adcock for these fabulous photographs!



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September 2018

PaddyCoombe-Heath

Hi folks,

They just keep coming! 39 people, amazing! We had a fantastic weekend all round- weather, people and work. There were a couple of new people, namely Cindy Riederer, Rose Simpson, Frank and Sarah Biesman-Simons, Bret and Claire Souter, Johan Schlemmer and Sharon Holliman. Very impressive. Welcome to you all and hope to see you again soon.

As for the projects, we had 4 teams out in the field.

Top of the list was Iron Age Site:

A big group of 11 people cut and sprayed till they nearly dropped. We should have the site cleared by early 2030. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

Then, Moloto picnic site and Bathlako parking fence:

The guys had to repair one of the Gazebos- elephant damage, just for a change. They finished the concrete slabs for the walkway. They also repaired the wash up sink which was also damaged by the elephant. Then they went down to Bathlako to repair the fence. This time lions had chased a water buck into the fence. They managed to get both jobs done. Well done.

Makorwane: Here the guys cut a fire break around the fence and also repaired a number of poles in the fence.

Lastly, road clearing: Tshepe drive and along Mankwe way- There was a big grove of Syringa trees on Tshepe by the causeway, also a lot of bush encroachment on Tshepe. Then, along Mankwe Way, a couple of trees had been pushed into the road and a few overhanging branches were also in the road. All in all, it was a very successful morning. Well done to everyone.

Before I sign off, as you have most likely heard, they had a fire over the weekend, a big fire. By Sunday evening Mankwe hide was gone, along with the walkway. It was burnt to the ground, literally. The fire went all the way down to Kwa Maritane and along towards Sun City. It was eventually extinguished on Tuesday. Thank goodness Mankwe was the only structure affected. F.O.P.S was on top of the situation immediately. I had a meeting with Johnson Maoka, the park manager to decide the plan of action. Because the hide was insured, we have to wait for them to decide what they are going to do. But as you know, Mankwe was a very popular hide and the parking fence was pretty badly damaged by the fire. About one third of the fence was affected. F.O.P.S. decided to do a special work party to repair the parking area. By Friday we had 29 volunteers. The poles were ordered and repair work was ready to begin. They also had the task of picking up thousands of nails, screws and brackets, along where the walkway used to be. No mean task, believe me.



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The guys under the leadership of Roland White, tackled the job head on. By 3 pm on Saturday it was all done and dusted. A lot of very tired, very dirty people came back to camp, exhausted but MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.

From me a very, very big thank you to all who attended the special work party. We can hold our heads high for an amazing feat. Well done.

I feel very proud of you guys for your immediate reaction to the call. Thank you.

Parks board were quite amazed when I told them what we had done. I know the Jeep jockeys will be very happy with what we did.

So F.O.P.S. to the rescue again.

Until next time go well.

Regards,

Paddy



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September Special Work Party

Roland White

Work party Report

Date: 8th September 2018
Area: Mankwe Hide
Tasks:
1. Repair fences in the car park, primarily the Northern Fence, and secure the walkway entrance to the destroyed walkway at the ablution area.
2. Remove foreign objects from the walkway and hide areas that pose a threat to the wildlife and environment.
Participants: Members 22
Roland White and Kerry-Anne Hare (RW co-ordinator)
Ken Loveland (team leader)
Chalkie Corlett (team leader)
Peter and Zika Bennett
John and Juliette Loveland
Brian Williams
Nigel and Debbie Adcock
Darren Gibson
Lindy and Clinton Coombe-Heath
Lauren Gunn
Kyle Rossouw and Alicia Schubbe
Bill Beer and Lucy Lowther
Pieter Swanepoel
Chris du Plessis
Lampies Lamprecht
Guests 5
Danny Joseph
Sandra Valenta
Ronnie Schmidt
JP Smith
Albert Bennett
Minors 3
Total manhours worked 156
Direct material costs R 6 316,98

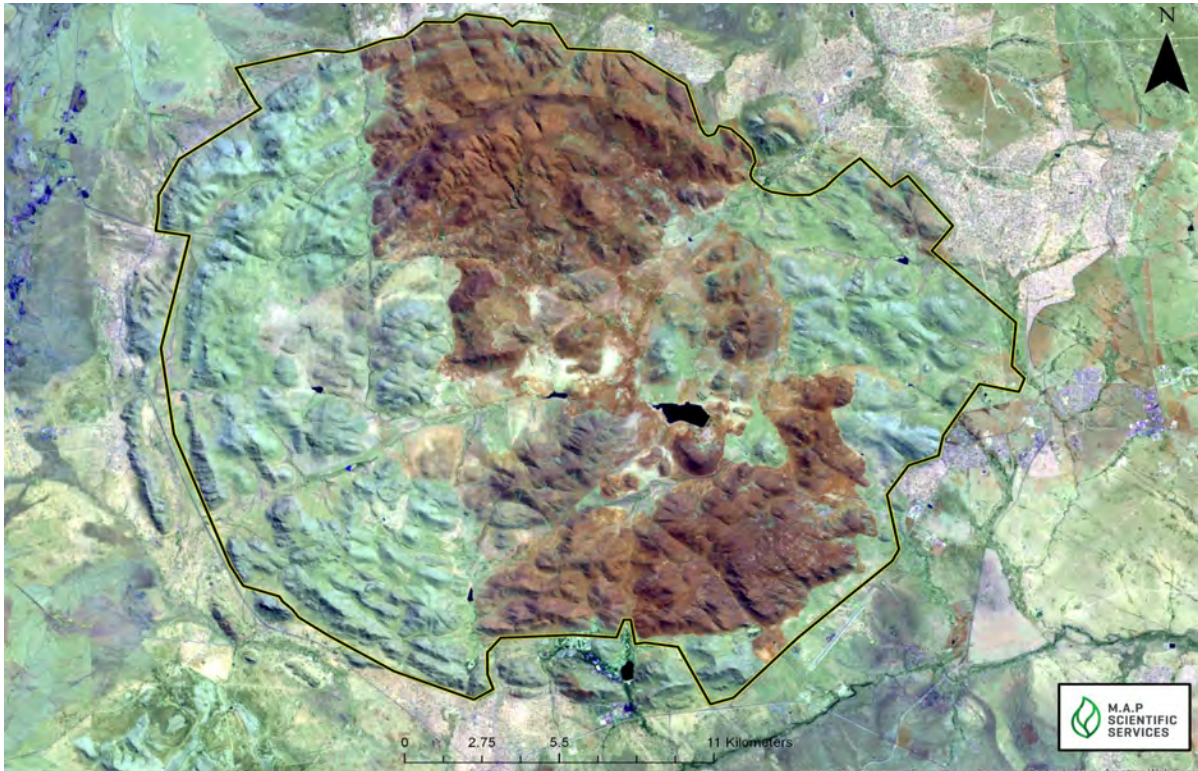


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On the week-end 1st and 2nd September a massive fire swept through Pilanesberg, originating in the Northern boundary, and ultimately sweeping through virtually the entire central block. Mankwe Hide, walkway and a portion of the car-park fencing serving the hide and ablution facilities were destroyed.

Sunday afternoon and Monday morning were mired in confusion and uncertainty as Parks management tried to find out just what had been lost, and what needed to be done to start getting back to normality. Notwithstanding the fact that most of us had not yet cleaned off the dust from the work-party week-end, we put ourselves on stand-by for assistance wherever needed. The response from FOPS members, friends and the public was incredible, and we started taking volunteers immediately.

By Wednesday, the dust had settled enough to determine that the fencing was a priority job, as was the collection of all the screws, nails etc. that had been deposited on the ground. Paddy did an inspection of the site, we did a bit of quick buying of materials and by Friday we were ready. Ken Loveland, as always, stepped up and offered to collect the poles etc. in his trailer on his way to the park. Lampies did a bit of banking magic, and we were set to go.

Saturday muster gave us 26 willing volunteers, plus three assistant helpers (Lauren and Debbie arrived for moral support after finishing their own work in Johannesburg). Of the guests, we will hopefully see Ronnie Schmidt and Jean-Pierre Smith (LADA Club), Sandra Valenta, Danny Joseph, and Albert (Bert) Bennett joining us as members in the future. A special thanks to Chris du Plessis who was in the tents with his daughter and her friend for the week-end but volunteered to work with us anyway. We also were very grateful to receive a donation of water and cookies from Michelle Loveland and her colleagues at Econorisk, as well as a mid-morning donation of snacks and fruit juice from Keni Richards. Full opportunity was also taken to do PR work with the many interested members of the public who dropped in during the morning, and Brian Williams did what Brian does best here. We will hopefully get some funds in from donations to cover our direct costs.

The work-party was split into three groups, with Chalkie and Ken overseeing the fence work, and the remainder doing clearance work.





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By lunchtime, all the fences had been replaced. A removeable section has been made in the old entrance to the walk-way to facilitate movement of crews during the construction phase.



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The walkway and hide areas were scoured for debris, using rakes, magnets, hands and knees to pick up (by our estimate) over 12 000 fasteners, plus other bits of rubbish. Once this has been removed (by Parks), we feel sure that the Site will be safe for the animals.



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We did an inspection of the hide supports and bridge whilst working. In my opinion:

1. The concrete supports could be re-used in the new hide. No major damage was seen, and the condition of the concrete (visual inspection) seems fair.
2. The bridge steel works are in fair condition and could be re-used. The bridge abutment ends will need to be re-established, which would be a considerable project, but far from beyond our capabilities. Minor repair of the steel structure, clean and repaint, new supports and fasteners are required.





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3. Of major concern is the half-brick wall to the East of the non-disabled toilet. The wall is unstable and could collapse easily (in my opinion). This may be because of the fire, but adjacent damage to the wood-work does not indicate this. The wall instability should be conveyed to Park Management for further inspection.



In conclusion, this was an extraordinary work-party, and achieved an incredible amount within a very short period. Thank you to all who contributed and participated on the day. A job well done.

Roland White

17/09/2018