

# Taking charge at Zoo Lake

PARKVIEW – Zoo Lake saw its fair share of trials during the past festive season as thousands upon thousands descended on the park daily.

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City Parks' regional manager for Region B, Alton Rankin, points to the damage caused by hot coals which in turn caused this tree to collapse, injuring two park users on 19 December.

But these trials were nothing compared to the tribulations and successes that have recently been made by those striving to preserve it.

Before and during this period, the Rosebank Killarney Gazette reported on a number of shocking incidents taking place within the park, including a 100-year-old tree burning down and another incident where two men were critically injured after a tree had been blown over by a gust of wind. The most harrowing report was that of a 20-year-old male car guard being raped by a 40-year-old vagrant. The vagrant has since been arrested and is awaiting trial.

These reports depict a rather dark picture of the 2015 festive season, but residents living in and around Zoo Lake – as well as those who are passionate about its preservation – will welcome the news that Joburg City Parks and Zoo, Metro police and Parkview Police Station have teamed up with the Zoo Lake Users Committee to ensure that Zoo Lake will once again be restored to its former glory.

“Parkview and Metro police held joint blitz operations on 16, 26 and 31 December,” said chairperson of the Zoo Lake Users Committee, Fran Haslam.

“They used a zero-tolerance approach and it certainly made a difference. “Lots of alcohol was confiscated and cars were impounded for illegal driving in the park.”

Haslam further commended Parkview Police Station commander, Colonel Thembi Kubone, who put in a tireless effort along with her policing staff to see that laws were adhered to. Both Metro and Parkview police remained highly visible at the park throughout the month.

“A huge thanks to everyone for working so hard during this period,” said Haslam. “May these efforts continue throughout the new year, especially on weekends.”

Other than the law enforcement operations, City Parks and Zoo also took charge of the many environmental issues the park is currently facing. Many of the unstable trees were removed, and those which could still be saved were cordoned off and are in the process of being rehabilitated.

The committee has also been in talks with a private security company to ensure that the park is patrolled regularly and plans are in place to set up security cameras which will be monitored by City Parks.

Litter, sadly, became a serious problem at the park due to the Pikitup strikes, but this issue was also seen to, thanks to the unwavering commitment from City Parks.

Owner of the Rambling Roses florist based at Moyo's restaurant, Gary Prentice, praised all stakeholders for their efforts after New Year's Day, stating that the day was a model of well-behaved picnic parties.

"It has been phenomenal and such a pleasure to see people enjoying themselves at Zoo Lake in such a well-controlled, very relaxed environment," said Prentice.

"Gone were the drunken taxi parties. From what I saw, people, local and day visitors, had good clean fun. I can only assume that the presence of the law enforcement officers turned the situation around."

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