



ANNUAL REPORT

2024/25

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Letter from the Trustees

Dear stakeholders

Progress in 2024/25

Measured against our core objective - to bring Table Mountain National Park's alien plant infestation under control - we are proud of the progress made in 2024/25.

We have now cleared 3,300 of the Park's 25,000 hectares. Key areas cleared include:

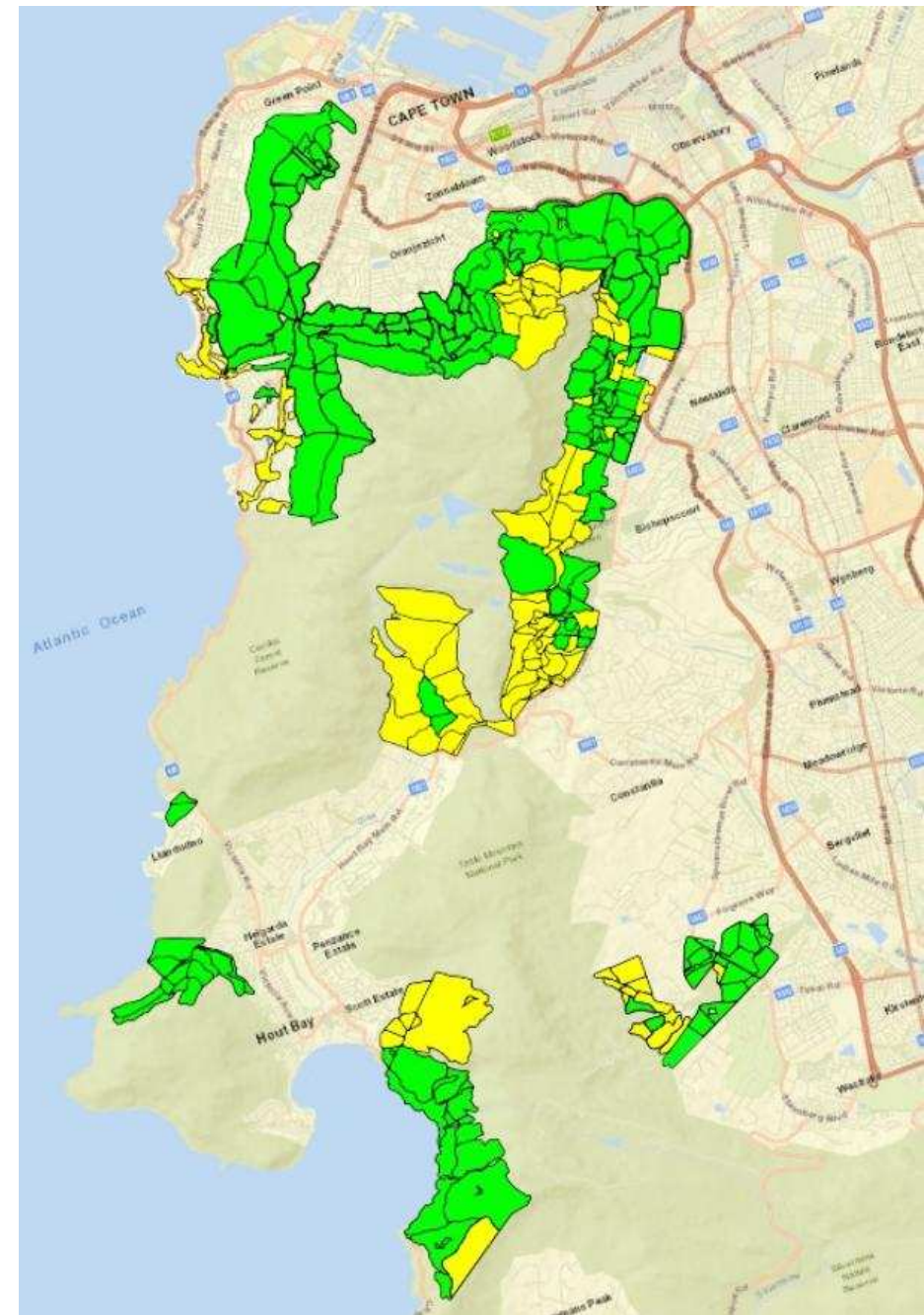
- Signal Hill, Lion's Head, the slopes above Camps Bay, the Front Table, the lower slopes of Devil's Peak (except the black wattle infested valleys which we are almost done with).
- Most of Chapman's Peak, Rhodes Memorial, Newlands Forest.
- Parts of Cecilia, Kirstenbosch, Orange Kloof, and Tokai.

In Newlands Forest, we painted the bark of an additional 20,000 targeted trees. This helps protect them from bark-strippers, who have moved to more remote parts of the forest in response to our earlier efforts. This simple intervention is proving remarkably effective at safeguarding the Park's old indigenous trees.

We added two more teams this year, bringing us to 12 permanent contracted teams made up of 67 men in total. Our volunteer management group has grown to 18 awesome people who dedicate their time and expertise on a pro-bono, part-time basis, each bringing different skills to the table. Our budget for 2025/26 is R15.5 million. We have raised about R12 million so far. Encouragingly, our donor base continues to grow - a powerful sign we're on the right path. Our annual financial statements for 2025 are signed off and available on request.

We now have a full-time team support and quality control officer, Glen Mabekha, who ensures the teams are adequately equipped and kitted out and performing to a high standard. This has been a game-changer for us. The project could not have grown to its current size and retained its high standard of performance without this essential role.

On the institutional front, a Memorandum of Agreement with SANParks is in the pipeline. This agreement will secure our long-term access to the Park enabling us to undertake essential ongoing follow-up work - work that will get faster and more efficient over time but must never stop.



The green and yellow highlights show the areas currently under adoption, with the yellow areas not yet cleared.

A Colossal Challenge

Despite our achievements on TMNP, the scale of the invasion remains daunting. Invasive alien plants (IAPs) grow and spread relentlessly.

Environment writer Leonie Joubert recently compared invasive trees to “an oil spill, a kind of pollution that lives, breathes and self-replicates”, crowding out indigenous species, drying out the soil, increasing the fuel load, diminishing our water resources, and disrupting natural systems.

Take the Black Wattle: it doubles in height and stem width annually in its early years, producing up to 12,000 seeds each year. Those seeds can remain viable in the soil for up to 50 years. Once cut, a precisely mixed herbicide must be applied within seconds to prevent regrowth (coppicing) - timing and technique are critical.

Blackwoods and Grey Poplars are even more challenging. Cutting them stimulates vigorous regrowth from their root networks, leading to hundreds of new shoots. The only effective method is frilling—stripping bark from the lower stem and applying herbicide to the rim. There are literally hundreds of thousands of them. It is slow, painstaking work, but it must be done.

Once an area is cleared, we must go back each year to do follow-ups.



*Top set: Before and after cutting black wattle on Devil's Peak
Bottom set: Before and after frilling blackwoods on Devil's Peak*





Why Do We Keep Going?

Because Cape Town is the most biodiverse city on Earth - but also the extinction capital of the world. Within Table Mountain National Park alone, 348 indigenous species are currently under threat.

Because the Cape Floral Kingdom is a globally unique treasure trove of biodiversity, found nowhere else but the southern tip of Africa.

Because Table Mountain is majestic and deserves to be cloaked in the finest attire.

Because this is undoubtedly a battle worth fighting.

But we must be more relentless than the invasives, and we must work smart, not just hard. Resources are limited and clearing is expensive. That's why the Tokai-Silvermine fire of April 2025 offers us a rare and exciting opportunity...



Above: The Cape Floral Kingdom in context – the smallest of the Floral Kingdoms with the highest concentration of plant species. A UNESCO World Heritage Site



Above: Originally named “Hoerikwaggo” by the indigenous Khoisan people of the Cape – the “Mountain in the Sea”, Table Mountain is one of the oldest mountains in the world. Proclaimed as one of the seven natural wonders of the world, it is rated as Africa’s leading tourist attraction.

Tokai-Silvermine Fire Response – A Rare and Exciting Opportunity

What many are calling a 2,800-hectare “burn scar,” stretching from Tokai across Silvermine to Clovelly, we see as a “vegetation rejuvenation area”. The fire will cause about 90% of the invasive seed bank to germinate, creating a critical window of opportunity to clear it by hand-pulling the saplings while they are still small and the ground still soft - before they take hold again. We expect them to emerge like hairs on a dog’s back from mid-August, giving us a four-month window to do in one season what might otherwise take decades.

SANParks has asked us to undertake the response. Regulatory restrictions prevent SANParks’ Working for Water teams from working on post-fire sites for 18 months - by which time the window will be long closed and the scene dystopian. We plan to deploy 10 of our permanent teams to the site, supplemented by around 100 unemployed people from nearby informal settlements.

This is a defining moment. This has been the most invaded and degraded part of the park. If we succeed here, we will have broken the back of the invasion and made a giant leap toward restoring Table Mountain to its natural glory.



Site visit to the most critical areas of the burnt area, with SANParks on 23 May 2025 – Silvermine Valley (above) and Tokai (below).

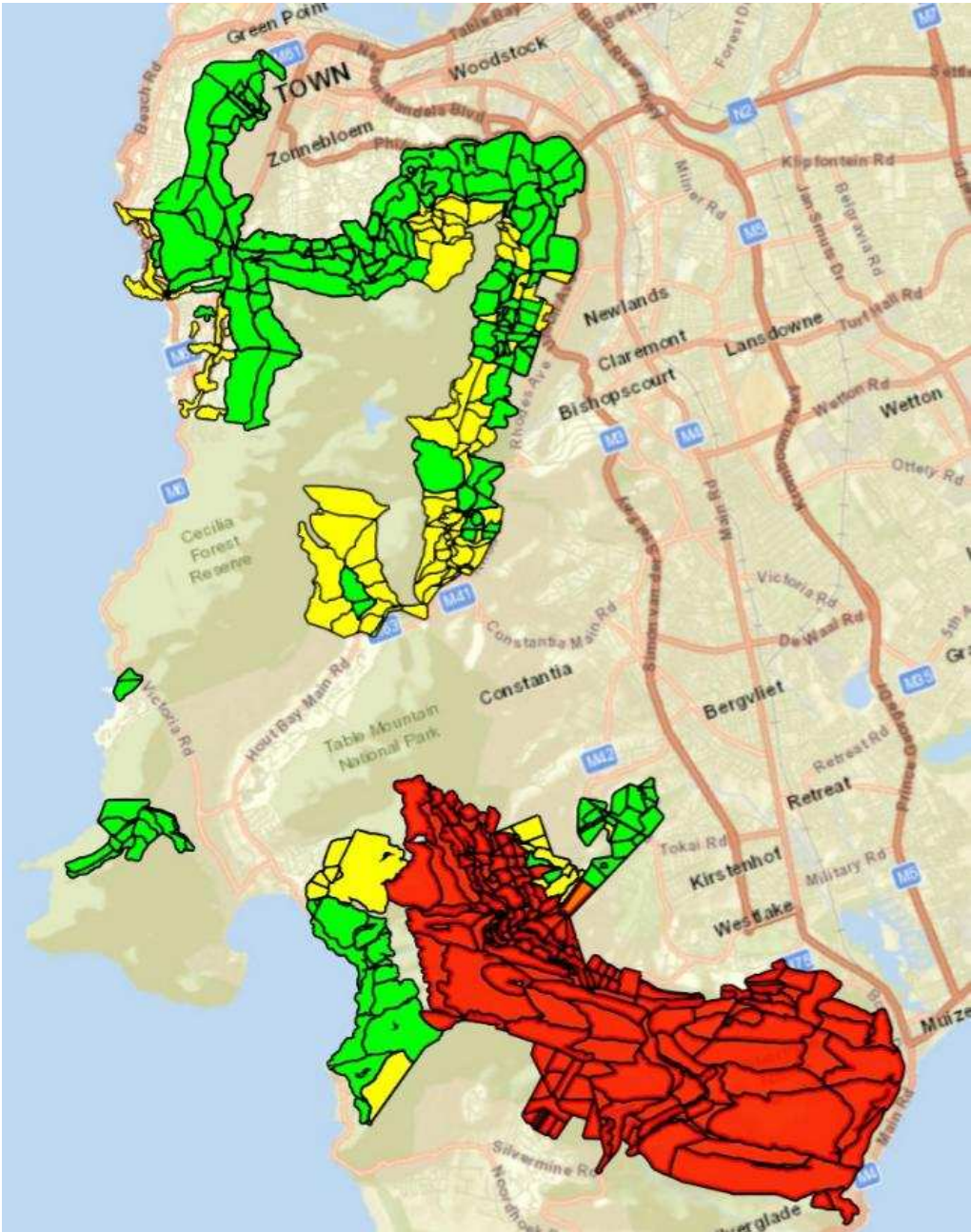


We are currently trying to raise the additional R3.5 million needed to fund the fire response. This will pay 100 people working for 100 days at an average total cost of R350 each per day.

TOKAI-SILVERMINE FIRE RESPONSE	Number	Cost	Days	TOTAL
Team leaders	10	400	100	400 000
Team members	90	300	100	2 700 000
T-shirts w logo	200	180		36 000
Caps w logo	100	160		16 000
Gloves	120	70		8 400
Garden forks / grubbers	100	200		20 000
Transport (number taxi drops)	200	300		60 000
Bonus at end if mission successful	100	2000		200 000
Celebration at end if successful	100	300		30 000
TOTAL				3 470 400



Silvermine Dam and surrounds



The red highlights show the burned area we are looking to restore.

If we miss the fire window, we'll have to respond the way we were forced to respond after the fire of April 2021:





Above and below left: Before and after clearing pines on the Onrus Mountains – a good day's work by our team and others (below right).



Green Shoots Beyond TMNP: Hermanus

The alien plant invasion is accelerating in much of the Cape Floristic Region. Requests have come in for us to start new teams in places like Hermanus, Stellenbosch, Franschhoek, and the Cederberg.

We've been cautious about overextending - but we've made an exception for Hermanus, where Andrew White's offer to direct and oversee operations was too good to refuse. Andrew is a gem of an individual – an experienced hacker and committed conservationist with good local knowledge and already well plugged into the broader hacking network.

Our objectives are:

- To partner with the Overstrand Municipality and the members of the Onrus Mountain Conservancy to clear the Onrus Mountains of pines.
- To assist the Overstrand Municipality in its ambitious “Catchment to Coast” Plan to restore the water catchment area of the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley to good health.
- To partner with members of the Kleinriviersberg Conservancy to clear the pines and hakea on the Kleinriviersberg mountain tops.





Thank you

This work is only possible because of a heroic team effort where so many people give what they can. We are deeply thankful to:

- Our growing base of generous donors, who make this work possible.
- Our volunteer management team members, who make it happen.
- The many local community hack groups, who lend their time and energy.
- Glen Mabekha, who ensures our teams are well-equipped and operating at the highest standard.
- And not least, the men on the frontline, working in tough conditions to protect something truly irreplaceable.

Thank you. Together we're winning – slowly but surely.

With heartfelt gratitude from
Suzie, Paula, Maya, and Sandy



Ralph Roseman checking out the Devil's Peak team's work sponsored by Rotary International



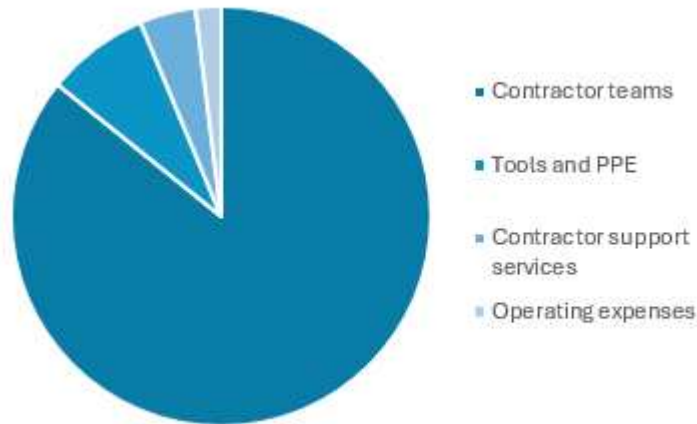
Team Sugarbird up at dawn to run the annual Cableway Charity Challenge



How we operate

An efficient, decentralised, scalable model to tackle the problem of invasive plants:

- 86% of our 2024-25 budget went to paying our contracted teams
- 8% went to tools
- 4% went to support services and quality control
- 2% went to operating expenses (team training, administration fees, bank charges)
- Oversight, planning, fundraising, stakeholder engagement, governance, administration etc is done by volunteers.
- As much follow-up work as possible is done by local community hack groups.



Donors/Sponsors
(Tax deductible contributions)



Sugarbird Trust

- Trustees Sandy, Maya, Suzie (volunteers)
- Raise and disburse funds
 - Liaise with and support local overseers
 - Contract hack teams
 - Provide training, kit, equipment, herbicide
 - Liaise with SANParks, City for permits etc
 - Regularly report progress to donors
 - Ensure legal and accounting compliance

Local oversight

(volunteers)

- Decide on area of work
- Ensure team has what they need
- Ensure clearing is to agreed standards
- Regular checks on progress
- General support and encouragement
- Liaise with local community volunteer hack group(s) to do follow ups

Contracted hack team

(paid by trust monthly)

- Report to trustees and local overseers
- Clear according to contract
- Communicate daily before-and-after progress via WhatsApp group
- Abide by SANParks permit rules

Trust liaises with local overseers and provides non-financial support



Trust pays contractor monthly based on area cleared, as per contract

Some before and after pictures

Chapman's Peak *Before (above) and after (below) removing Rooikrans, Port Jackson and Pines from the slopes of Chapman's Peak*



Orange Kloof

Before (above) and after (below) removing Pines and Long-leaf wattle from Orange Kloof



Atlantic Seaboard

Before (above) and after (below) removing Rooikrans and Port Jackson from the mountain slopes above Camps Bay



Newlands Forest

Before (above) and after (below) clearing Bleeding Hearts, Chinese Privets, and Common Tree Privets



Cecilia and Kirstenbosch

Before (above) and after (below) clearing Gums



Cecilia and Kirstenbosch

Before (above) and after (below) clearing baby Gums, long leaf wattle and lantana



Devil's Peak – Rhodes Memorial side

Before and after removing Black Wattles above UCT.



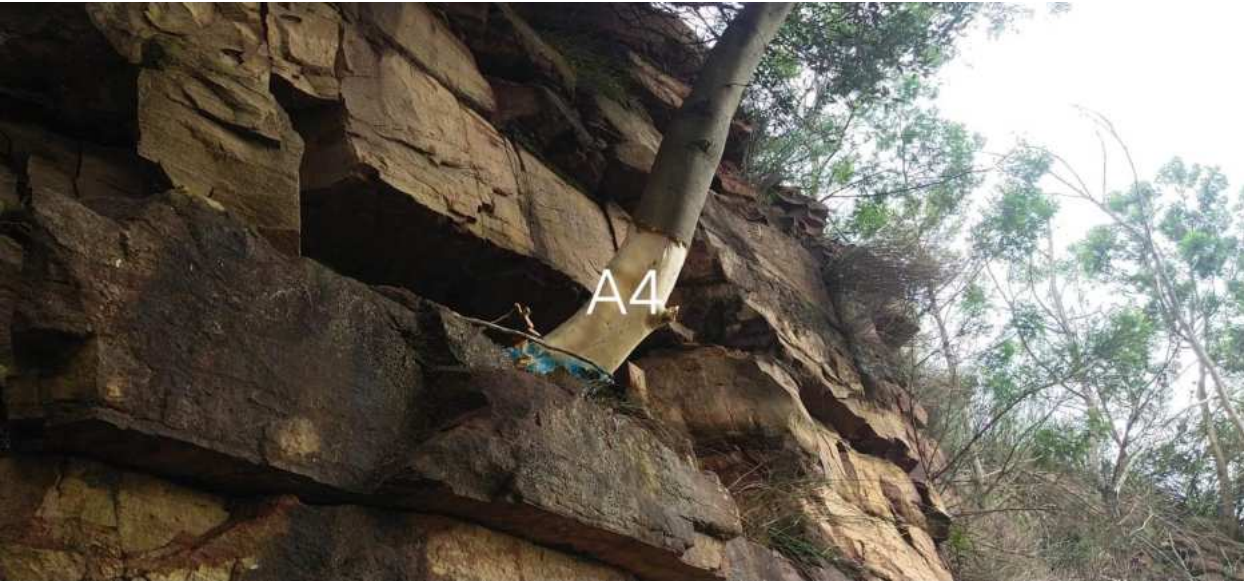
Devil's Peak – City Bowl side

Before and after removing Gums and Black Wattles, and frilling what feels like endless amounts of Blackwood from the slopes of Devil's Peak.



Rope Access

Before and after frilling Black Wattle from the upper reaches of Devil's Peak

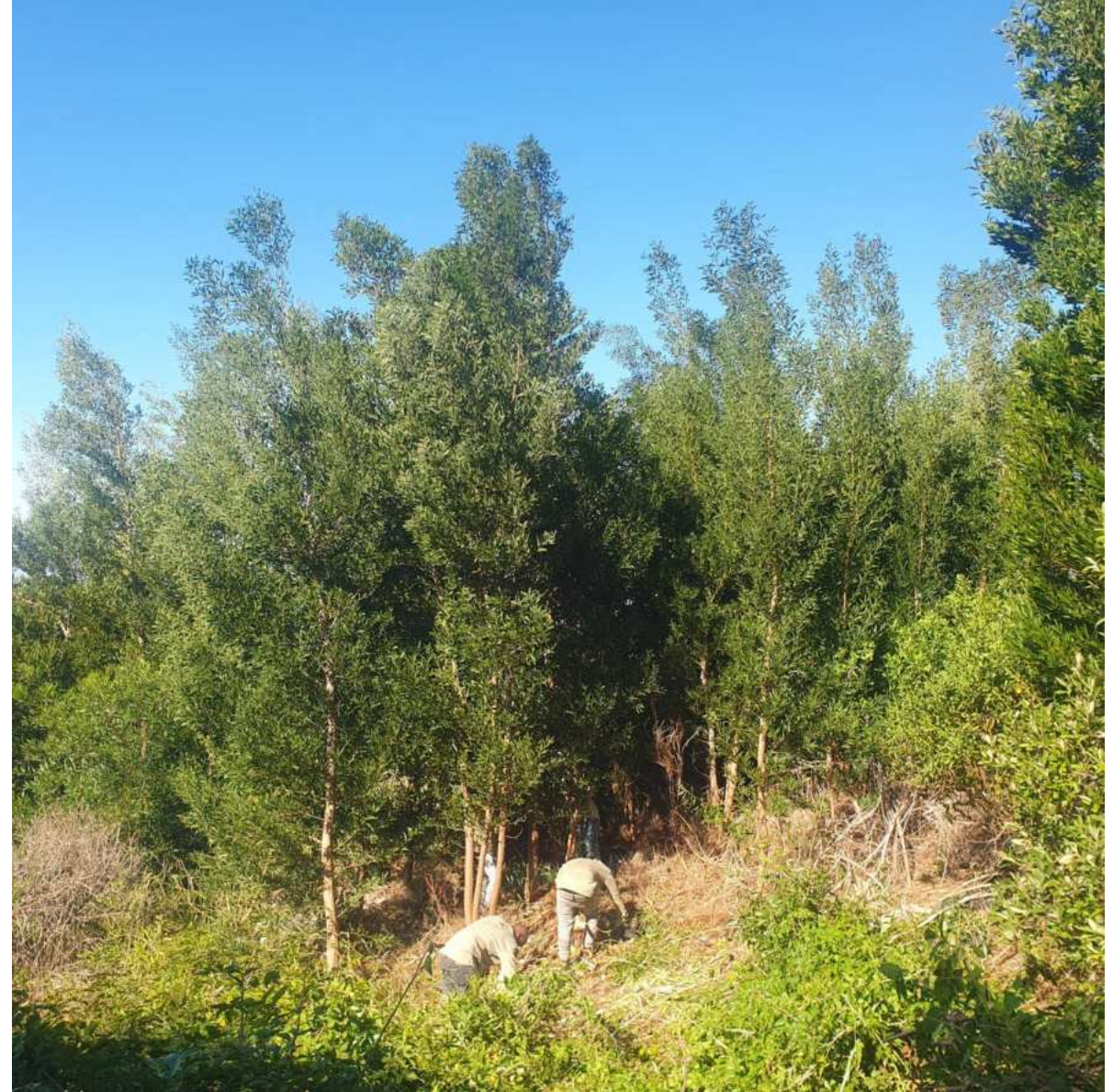


Tokai

Before (above) and after (below) clearing Long-Leaf Wattles, frilling endless Blackwood.

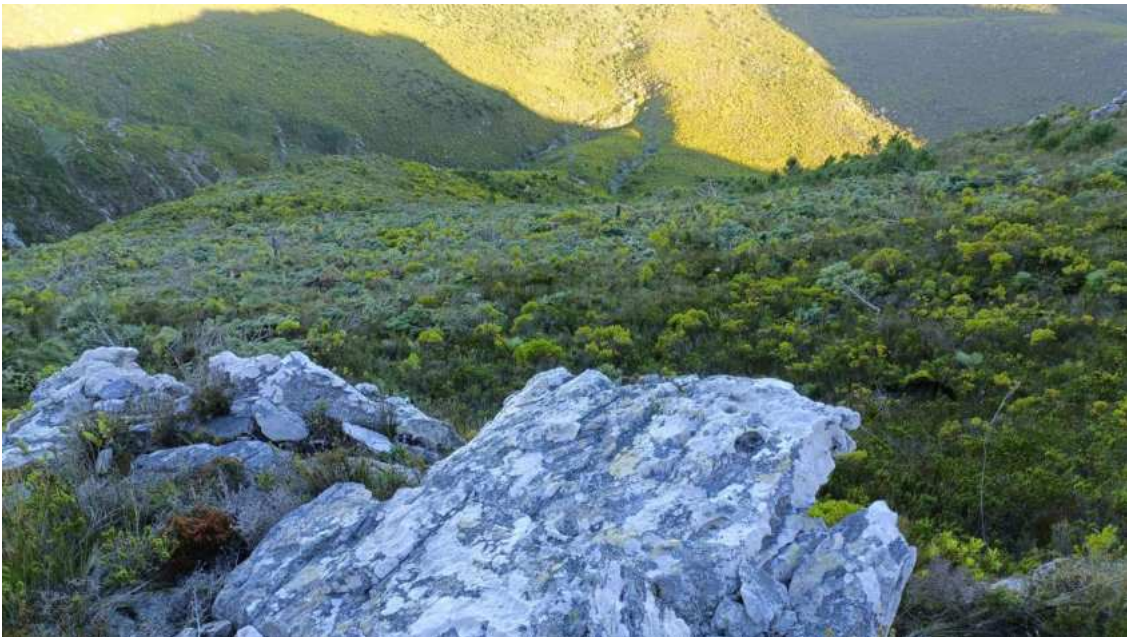


Tokai really is our greatest challenge. This fire has been a gift.



Hermanus

Before (above) and after (below) removing Pines from the Kleinrivierberge



Bark-painting in Newlands Forest

Initiated by Willem Boshoff (founder of the Newlands Forest Conservation Group), who oversees our Rope Access / Bark-painting team, we painted 20 000 targeted trees this time round. We are most grateful to the Stekhoven family, whose company Duram donated the paint.

So far, this intervention has shown to successfully deter bark-stripping.



Left: A painted tree is better than a dead one.

Right: Alex Murahla collected several batches of paint donated by Duram.

Below: Diluting the paint 50/50 with water.





Rhodes Memorial



Rope Access / Bark-painting



Front Table



Devil's Peak



Hermanus

The teams



Tokai 2

Newlands Forest



Orange Kloof



Chapman's Peak



Tokai 1



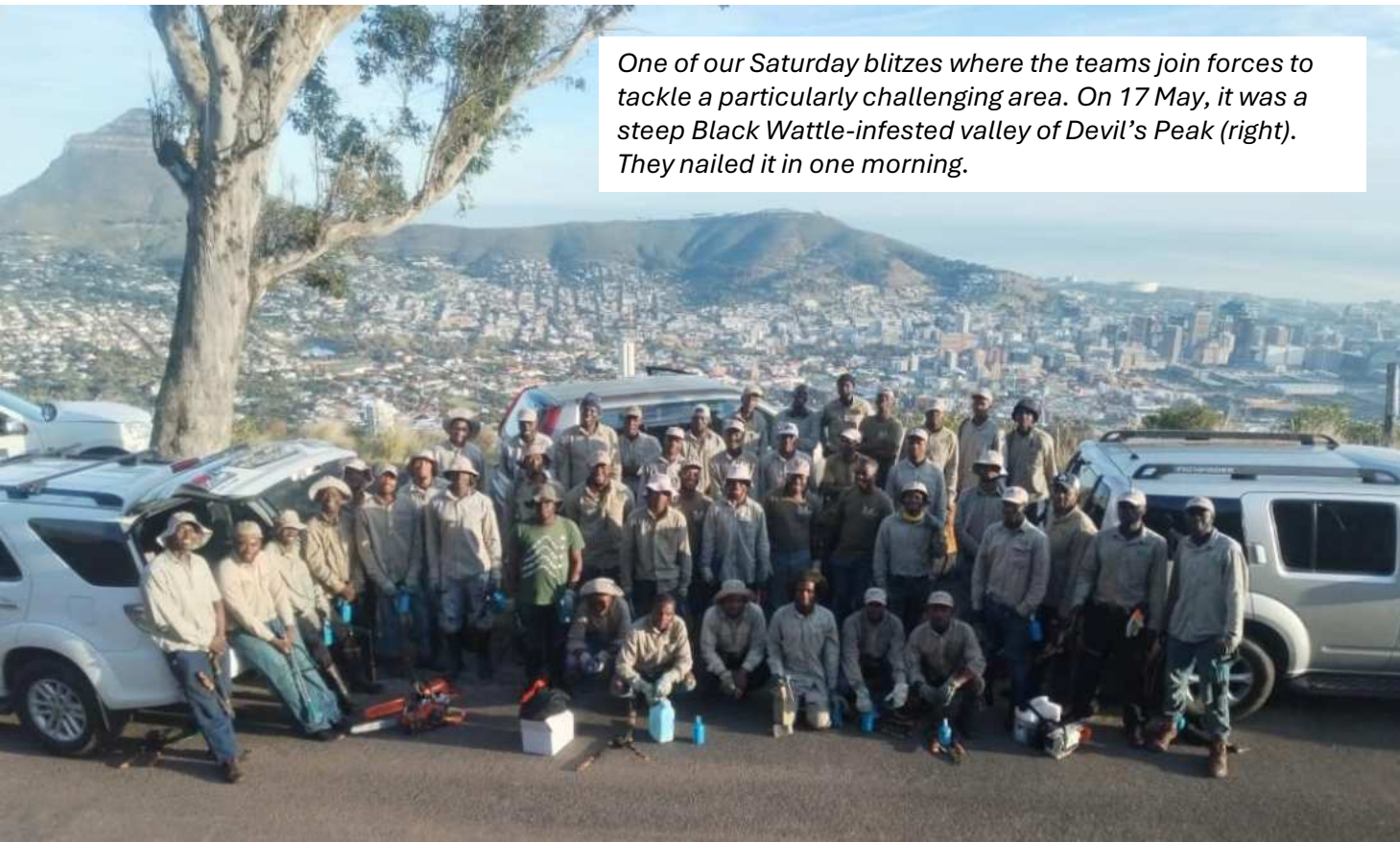
Atlantic Seaboard



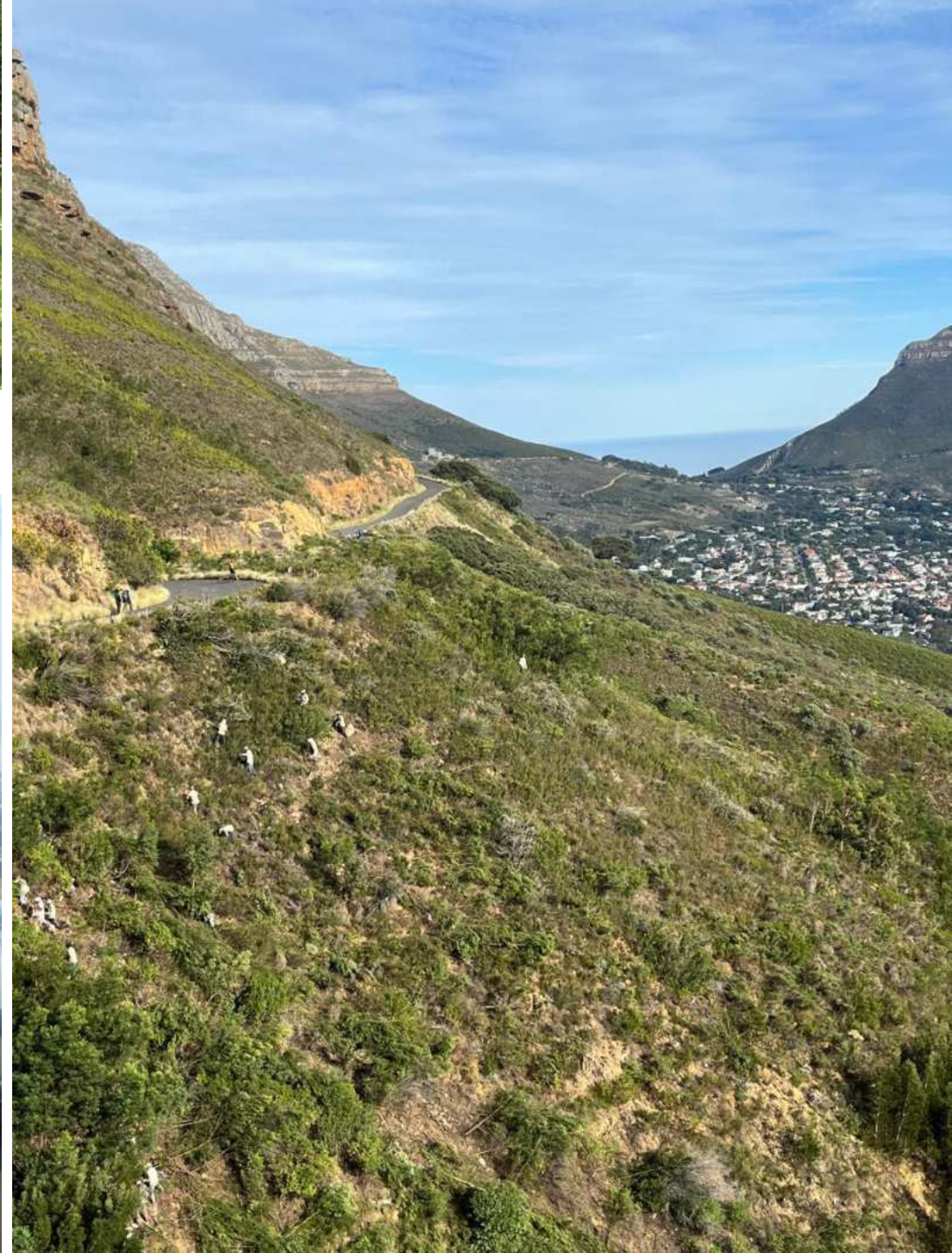
Cecilia team with Botsoc trainees



Above: Devil's Peak team joins the Vredehoek hack group to do follow-ups at Deer Park on a Saturday



One of our Saturday blitzes where the teams join forces to tackle a particularly challenging area. On 17 May, it was a steep Black Wattle-infested valley of Devil's Peak (right). They nailed it in one morning.



Tokai Hackathon: About 80 people attended. A great way to get a lot done in one morning. Thank you to Guy, Penny and Ian Preston for donating the drinks!



The volunteers making it happen

A very big thank you to all the volunteers involved in this project.



Left: Botanist Dr Tony Rebelo is an invaluable source of knowledge, and oversees the Tokai teams.



Above: Liz Sparg oversees the Rhodes Mem, Newlands Forest and Cecilia teams, and mobilises her community hack group to do weekend follow-ups.



Above and below: Liz Sparg's community hack group pulling long-leaf wattles and other baby invasives in Newlands Forest.



Left: Anton Weers does the mapping and planning, gives expert advice on plant identification and control, and helps oversee all the teams.



Volunteers - continued



Jarrod Ball directs and oversees our Orange Kloof team



Dr Berta van Rooyen oversees our Tokai team when they work in the Tokai Arboretum



Dawie Bosch oversees our Devil's Peak team and coordinates a local community hack group to do follow ups



Keri Muller is handling our social media marketing campaign for the Tokai-Silvermine fire response, to grow a volunteer base and raise funds



Neil Williamson helps oversee and direct our Newlands Forest team



Koos Rossouw, Trustee of the Sophia Foundation, helps oversee our Hermanus team



Penny Brown and Catherine Moss oversee our Chapman's Peak team



Gee Muller oversees our Chapman's Peak and Orange Kloof teams.



Willem Boshoff oversees our rope access and bark painting team



Andrew White directs our Hermanus team and coordinates with other stakeholders in the area

Volunteers - continued



Finn Behnken does our bookkeeping, signage, Instagram page and public relations, and helps with fundraising and oversees the Front Table team



Maya Naumann



Suzie Joubert



Paula le Roux



Sandy v H

Trustees Maya and Sandy run the overall project while fellow trustees Suzie and Paula keep a governance eye on things.

And though they are paid, with special thanks to:



Glen Mabekha for holding the whole project together, getting things done, and truly being a role model to all the men on this project.



Roger Price modifies and sharpens our tools. Roger has hacked on Table Mountain for 26 years now. We'll all be celebrating Roger-style once Table Mountain National Park's IAP infestation is finally under control!

Budget for 2025/26

Our revised budget for 2025/26 is now R15.5 million, as we need an additional R3.5 million to fund the Tokai-Silvermine fire response. We are currently looking to raise this amount.

Summary of budget

TOTAL PROJECTED COSTS FOR 2025/26	15 420 070
Contracts	9 190 480
Transport	1 212 000
Tools	351 290
PPE	426 150
Other (Training, Signage, Contingency)	769 750
Tokai-Silvermine Fire Response	3 470 400

Detailed budget

CONTRACTS	Contractor	Daily rate	Month	Members	Daily rate	Month	Month Total	TOTAL
ATLANTIC SEABOARD	Munyaradzi Kasava	530	11 660	5	430	47 300	58 960	766 480
CITY BOWL	Kudzai Munhenga	530	11 660	5	430	47 300	58 960	766 480
DEVILS PEAK	Evason Mutandabute	530	11 660	5	430	47 300	58 960	766 480
RHODES MEM	Benjamin Zuwai	530	11 660	5	430	47 300	58 960	766 480
ROPE ACCESS	Alex Murahla	580	12 760	5	480	52 800	65 560	852 280
NEWLANDS FOREST	Raymond Chinembiri	700	15 400	5	430	47 300	62 700	815 100
CECILIA / KIRSTENBOSCH	Erick Ngandu	530	11 660	4	480	42 240	53 900	700 700
ORANGE KLOOF	Given Ngadya	530	11 660	4	430	37 840	49 500	643 500
CHAPMANS PEAK	Godknows Chidhaka	530	11 660	5	430	47 300	58 960	766 480
TOKAI 1	Ayanda Piti	530	11 660	4	430	37 840	49 500	643 500
TOKAI 2	Enock Chafa	530	11 660	4	430	37 840	49 500	643 500
HERMANUS	Andrew Martins	530	11 660	4	430	37 840	49 500	643 500
SUPPORT SERVICES	Glen Mabekha	1 000	22 000	0			22 000	286 000
TOOLS	Roger Price		10 000	0			10 000	130 000
TOTAL							706 960	9 190 480

Detailed budget - continued

TRANSPORT	No men	Month	TOTAL
ATLANTIC SEABOARD	6	8 000	96 000
CITY BOWL	6	8 000	96 000
DEVILS PEAK	6	8 000	96 000
RHODES MEM	6	8 000	96 000
ROPE ACCESS	6	8 000	96 000
NEWLANDS FOREST	6	8 000	96 000
CECILIA / KIRSTENBOSCH	5	8 000	96 000
ORANGE KLOOF	5	1 000	12 000
CHAPMANS PEAK	6	8 000	96 000
TOKAI 1	5	8 000	96 000
TOKAI 2	5	8 000	96 000
HERMANUS	5	8 000	96 000
SUPPORT SERVICES	1	9 000	108 000
TOOLS	1	3 000	36 000
TOTAL	69	101 000	1 212 000

TOOLS	Number	Cost	TOTAL
loppers	69	500	34 500
lopper replacement blades	138	50	6 900
bowsaws	34,5	180	6 210
bowsaw replacement blades	138	50	6 900
secateurs	20	150	3 000
axes	30	300	9 000
spray bottles	276	50	13 800
gloves	414	70	28 980
grinders	6	2 000	12 000
chainsaws	10	5 000	50 000
petrol per month for chainsaws	11	3 000	33 000
makita reciprocating saws	10	9 000	90 000
powertool repairs	12	1 000	12 000
rope access gear	3	15 000	45 000
TOTAL			351 290

Detailed budget - continued

PPE	Number	Cost	TOTAL
shirts w logo	207	750	155 250
hats w logo	69	200	13 800
T-shirts w logo	100	180	18 000
caps w logo	100	160	16 000
jeans	138	300	41 400
boots	34,5	1 600	55 200
re-sole boots	69	800	55 200
gumboots	10	300	3 000
socks pack	138	100	13 800
rain gear	69	500	34 500
chainsaw pants	10	1 500	15 000
chainsaw helmets	10	500	5 000
TOTAL			426 150
OTHER	Number	Cost	TOTAL
Signage (cost of erecting signs)	20	100	2 000
Training (herbicide use)	24	500	12 000
Training (first aid)	24	2 000	48 000
First aid kits	12	500	6 000
Netcare911	12	1 250	15 000
Chainsaw certification	10	3 500	35 000
End of year event	69	750	51 750
Tools for volunteer groups			20 000
Herbicide contingency			50 000
Accounting and bank charges			30 000
Cover for injury on the job			500 000
TOTAL			769 750

Detailed budget - continued

TOKAI-SILVERMINE FIRE RESPONSE	Number	Cost	Days	TOTAL
Team leaders	10	400	100	400 000
Team members	90	300	100	2 700 000
T-shirts w logo	200	180		36 000
Caps w logo	100	160		16 000
Gloves	120	70		8 400
Garden forks / grubbers	100	200		20 000
Transport (number taxi drops)	200	300		60 000
Bonus at end if mission successful	100	2 000		200 000
Celebration at end if successful	100	300		30 000
TOTAL				3 470 400



Ou Kaap se Weg, looking towards Muizenberg



Ou Kaap se Weg, looking towards Fish Hoek



Kalk Bay

Donors

From everyone working on the Sugarbird Project, a heartfelt thank you to our donors big and small who make our work possible. We are incredibly grateful to each one of you for your financial and moral support.

Ann Roese Quantity Surveyors	Karl & Gina Leinberger	Sandro Lallas
Anonymous Trust	Kathy Leslie	Sonja Moore
Auramet International	Libby Arnold	Summit Events - UTCT
Avalon Shipbroking	Mapula Trust	Sybille Eickhoff
Bill Gild	Mark Pienaar	Thomas Vergunst
Chris & Di Liddle	Maya and Ruediger Naumann	Tim Acker
Duram Paints	Paula Clarke	Tracey Chiappini-Young
Euromonitor International	Paula le Roux	Treekeepers
Elizabeth Meinert	Penny & Michael Stekhoven	Trellis Charitable Trust
Finn Behnken	Pippa – The Book Revue	Vega Graphics
Fangorn Foundation	Rachel Teanby	Vivien Hodgson
Friends of Wynberg Park	Rob & Liesel Dower	Watchmaker Genomics
Ian Liddle & Sandy VH	Rohan & Karine Young	W Stransky
Inge van Reenen	Rory McMillan	All those who donated via
Jean Stephenson	Rotary International	Snapscan
John Abbott	Samantha Newdigate	

