



## SCOUTS SUPPORT FIREFIGHTERS

**South African Scouts mobilised quickly to support over two hundred fire-fighters and conservation staff during this weekend's devastating wild fires on the Helderberg mountain that saw eleven houses and a hotel burned to the ground.**

Scouts, adult leaders and parents from four scout groups in the Helderberg District, Western Cape, South Africa mobilised quickly to support conservation staff and fire fighting personnel during this weekend's devastating wild fire. After taking the initiative to offer assistance to the Helderberg Nature Reserve, Scout leaders in the district mobilised rapidly to the urgent call for assistance.

Springbok Scout and Chairperson of the National Youth Forum, Robert Turner, manned the reserve telephone, fielding general enquiries and questions from the media. Scout parent and adult leader, Nikki Jacobs, provided a child minding service for children whose parents were engaged in the fire-fighting activities and Scout families phoned friends informing them of the donations required to provide food and drinks to the fire-fighting personnel. The biggest task was however carried out by the scouts themselves who made hundreds of sandwiches, packing them into boxes with bottles of water for distribution to the respective fire fighting teams. The scouts set up a system to request and receive donations from the public at the nature reserve's environmental education centre. Here they erected trestle tables and established a production line for making, wrapping and boxing the sandwiches.

Despite the fire fighting efforts of over two hundred fire fighting personnel, thirty fire fighting vehicles and aerial support from five helicopters and three crop sprayers, the fire, fuelled by a strong South East wind, burned eleven houses and a country hotel to the ground, destroyed large tracts of indigenous vegetation and damaged farming infrastructure and forestry plantations.

The scouts in the Helderberg District, who make frequent use of the nature reserve for outdoor activities and overnight hikes, were grateful for the opportunity to assist the reserve staff who are always proving assistance and free access to scouts groups wishing to make use of the reserve facilities. It is going to be a while before the reserve recovers from this fire and can once again be seen as the local playground for the Scouts of the Helderberg District.

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