



AgulhasNPark eBulletin



VOL 9 • NR 1 • December /galkani 2018

Happy Festive and Water wise Season to all

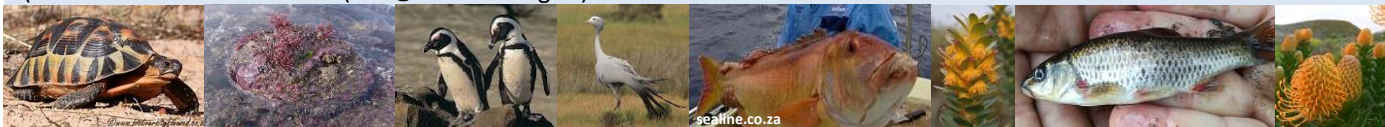
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South African
NATIONAL PARKS

It is that time of the year again and the most popular holiday time for all South Africans – summer and sea. But, unfortunately, also time to reflect on a few challenges and realities humankind has to face.

Living on the edge

Human activity is pushing the planet's natural systems that support life on earth to the edge. From the insects that pollinate the crops of food we eat to the water we drink and rely on for everything we produce. Nature sustains us and everything around us. It also gives us places to relax and play. So, what are we doing to look after it and what is the state of our planet? The 12th edition of **WWF's Living Planet Report** has been released and paints a disturbing picture: nature and its life-giving resources are being pushed to the edge. Global populations of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles have decreased, on average, by 60% between 1970 and 2014. The top threats are directly linked to human activities. Globally, nature provides services worth around US\$125 trillion a year. In the 20th century, freshwater fish have had the highest extinction rate worldwide among vertebrates. Nearly 200 million people depend on coral reefs for protection against storm surges and waves. Rainforests are shrinking: almost 20% of the Amazon has disappeared in just 50 years. In the last 50 years, global average temperature has risen to 170 times the background rate. At least 70% of new small molecule drugs introduced over the past 25 years have come from a natural source. Almost 6 billion tons of fish and other seafood have been taken from the world's oceans since 1950. Today, 90% of the world's seabirds are estimated to have fragments of plastic in their stomach. But, nature's ability to rebound is a reason to be hopeful and motivated to make a difference. Our challenge is to give nature a chance to truly recover. Be a part of the solution for nature, for you; not the problem. (SOURCE: WWF South Africa (info@wwfmail.org.za))



Solution to pollution - Mosie Hope

Pollution seems such a vast problem on land and in the air – even in space. My focus is the **oceans** and I try to build marine pollution awareness through my constructed pieces. In 2002 my decision to stay permanently in L'Agulhas was because I realised that the only bits of colour I saw on the vast beach, *Die Plaat* at Struisbaai, were plastic bits, bags and rope. There were birds and marine animals which had been affected by entanglement in fishing line and other plastic items. Something clicked and I began making items from sea-washed flotsam and jetsam in order to stimulate questions about where the items had originated and how they arrived at our shore. I also realised how huge the problem is. Since then public awareness has slowly grown, mainly because our health is threatened by micro-particles of plastic in our food-chain. A positive side to this endeavour is that the basic materials are free and one needs a little creative imagination, some paint, glue and paper mache to make saleable objects. If this idea was taken up by every tenth person we would soon have the 'turn-around' I dream of. 'The power of one to care, can change everything here'. Never doubt that as one person you are making a difference. There are others all over the country and the world who are also seeking different ways to solve the pollution problem. I can be contacted at 082 296 0144 for more information or visit the Shell & Sea Life Museum in L'Agulhas. Also visit the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse to see the Plastic art pieces and installations. Sign your name that you will undertake to recycle and reuse.



Proudly doing my small bit for our environment – Dahlene Griffiths

Observing our dump site in Struisbaai for the first time, I was shocked at how wasteful we are. Being married to a fisherman and free diver as well and hearing about all the pollution they encounter at sea, made me want to do something. **Remember, if you want to make a difference, it starts at home.** I learnt about Eco Bricks when we went to “Africa Burn” in April 2018. We drink a lot of Coke and I decided to use these 2L bottles. To keep conformity in the bottles we now only buy soda water. To start making the bricks the label is cut off, the bottle cleaned and dried thoroughly and left open for a few days. Then every wrapper or piece of plastic from products are pushed into the bottle. Unpacking groceries, you soon realise how much forms part of packaging brought into homes. Styrofoam and cellophane meat packaging are rinsed in grey water and hung to dry. Cellophane is best put close to the bottom of the bottle as it fills the little bubbles there nicely. It is amazing HOW MUCH plastic can fit into a bottle. I am currently still filling a bottle that I started with on September 21.



Dahlene continues: I also started a “Bokashi Composting” system for all my food waste. Since I started in August 2018, I now send only ONE black bag a month to the dump site. I also now only put out a “recycling” white bag for collection once a month. This is mainly all the glass bottles and Styrofoam packaging and a few tins and yoghurt containers. Everything is cleaned before being put in the bags. I also burn most small pieces of cardboard (like cigarette packets) whenever we have a fire going – reducing what goes to the dump even further.

Rhino Connect initiative: looking after rhinos while on holiday

A wonderful initiative by three young women to help farmers look after their rhinos developed into a new way to spend holidays or weekends. The three became aware of the problems with rhino poaching on game farms during full moon nights and so the Rhino Moon concept was born. Volunteers who are prepared to pay their own accommodation and meals are sourced and they buy a weekend of hard work and little sleep on a game farm during full moon, or Rhino Moon. The weekend begins with information sessions, a short course in survival, tracking and observation techniques with a practical session afterwards. Only those who show that they will be able to handle themselves in the veld go on patrols. Those who cannot will do other rhino-related tasks. For more information about this unique opportunity to get involved in the fight against rhino poaching, go to www.rhinoconnect.co.za. (SOURCE: *Landbouweekblad*, 19/10/2018)



The Blue Crane – Alouise Lynch, Bionerds



Did you know that there are more White Rhino left in the wild than Blue Cranes? Fortunately, Blue Cranes have found refuge in the Overberg, in a severely fragmented agricultural landscape – and they are flourishing! In 1998 the total population was estimated at 16,000 birds left in the wild – an 80% decline in population over the previous two decades. The 2015 census showed an overall increase in population of over 34% to roughly 25,000 birds counted. There are about 12,000 Blue Cranes that call the Western Cape home, and the majority of these are found in the Overberg on private property. This conservation success story is due to collaboration between the landowners and the conservation organisations that work in this region, to secure a future for these iconic national birds. The Overberg Crane Group (OCG) has been raising awareness about the plight of this species since 1991, alongside Cape Nature – with the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) joining the partnership later and leading research into crane movements in the Overberg. Training and awareness campaigns have led to private landowners taking custodianship of this near-endemic bird species. Some of the biggest threats that this species face are fence line collisions and overhead power line electrocution – both of which can be reported to the OCG on support@bluecrane.org.za.

Agulhas NP new staff appointments

**Welcome to
Agulhas East Section Ranger:
Carmen Gagiano**



**Welcome to
Agulhas West Section Ranger:
Nosipho Tyagana**

Sour figs – observations by Ian Fortuin

Come summer, come holidays, it is sourfig harvesting time in the Strandveld. Suurvy, *hotnotsvy* or *ghoenavy*, as it is also called, is part of the Fynbos family. The sourfig is a protected species and endemic to South Africa - it only grows here and specifically along the South African coast. It is a pioneer plant which comes up in abundance after a fire. The flower is purple and the fruit can be sweet, sour or tarty, depending on the soil type. The beard differs as well; it can be short or long depending on whether it grows in sandy or limestone soil. A harvester must have a permit from Cape Nature as well as a permit from the landowner. Soft fruit (*papvy*) is used to cook jam. It is a very tasty ingredient in stews and potjiekos, as well as on a cheese platter. These days it is also used as a flavouring in gin distilling. Mice, baboons, ostriches and insects enjoy sourfigs just as much. Audrey Blignault, well-known Strandveld essayist, once wrote that sour fig jam on whole-wheat bread and thick yellow farm butter, is the *lekkerste lekker*, and she could taste the Strandveld in it. The harvesters can vouch for that. (To be continued)



African Grass owls – Alouise Lynch, Bionerds continues

The African Grass Owl is listed as a trigger species for the Important Birding Areas (IBA) and many of the conservation issues listed are of concern for the species. Therefore the value of research and conservation questions surrounding the African Grass Owl on the Agulhas Plain is self-evident. The project includes determining the area where the owls occur, probable habitat and habitat use, as well as DNA analysis to determine diet to compare with other populations in South Africa. Conservation threats to each population or fragment of viable habitat will be noted and used to support best practise land management to secure the conservation of viable habitat for the African Grass Owl on the plains. How do you know that you may have grass owls on your property? These owls are terrestrial breeders, creating extensive tunnels and feeding platforms in and on *Juncus* grasses, a type of sedge-like rush that grows in typical floodplain habitat. If you have a patch of *Juncus* that you are unable to walk through comfortably you may have African Grass owls on your property. Please contact us should you have further questions: alouise.lynch@bionerds.co.za.



Grass Owl habitat

The first survey of Struisbaai in 1682 – Jimmy Herbert

After the English East Indiaman *Joanna* came to grief on a reef at Die Dam on June 7, 1682 it took the first salvage party eight days of hard travel to arrive at the wreck on July 30. Taking into account the challenging overland route and the significant finds of salvaged goods, the *Jupiter* under Reynier Dadel, set sail on August 15 to the western side of the bay (east of Quoin Point), where the *Joanna* had been wrecked. On arrival, Dadel noticed many treacherous reefs lying far offshore (today called *Driebranders*) and immediately started to search for a safe place to anchor the ship, but found the entire area to be rocky. To search for better anchorage, they sailed all along the coast until, in the afternoon, reaching a south-eastward extending reef [today 'Northumberland Reef'] which was safely rounded, entering a large bay – Struisbaai today. Entering the bay, they constantly cast the lead [a method of measuring not only the depth, but also the type of bottom – rock, mud, shells or clean sand]. Depths of 22m, 24m, 36m were found, all with a



beautiful sandy bottom. As no rocks had been located, they cautiously ventured further into the bay and anchored in 18m of water until the next morning. They set about rowing the smallish ships-boat surveying the whole bay. The morning survey once again produced good and safe sandy anchorage with no sharp reefs or rocks. This encouraged the skipper around midday to weigh the ship's anchor to sail closer to shore where they anchored in 13m of water on a clean sandy bottom once again. With all this newly-gained knowledge, Reijnier Dadel and Roosierick Harmens concluded that the western section of the bay provided excellent anchorage. Also, the bay offered protection against strong winds from all



directions, except from the south and southeast. This first recorded survey, already carried out in 1682, was done so thoroughly that it enabled Dadel to describe the bottom impressively and precisely as divers know it today.



Why on earth would we name ourselves after a bird? – Dirk Human, Black Oystercatcher Wines



Our name, the Black Oystercatcher, is not an afterthought. The Black Oystercatcher means a lot to us: the cool ocean down the road, where our ocean-fresh winds originate. And which in turn keep our berries small, compact and bursting with flavour. But, we also happen to really love the Black Oystercatcher bird. Since those holidays at the beach when I was young, these birds have been part of my love for nature. The African Black Oystercatcher is Birdlife South Africa's 2018 bird of the year, an initiative we really support. Visit:

<https://blackoystercatcher.co.za/test-yourself-6-things-you-may-not-know-about-our-namesake/> to test your knowledge of these birds and why you and I really should TAKE ACTION to protect this species; also to see some beautiful pictures of the Black Oystercatcher. (SOURCE: Black Oystercatcher Wines Newsletter, November 2018)

Agulhas National Park at the SANParks Kudu awards ceremony

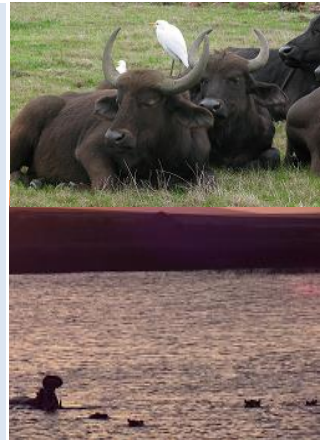
2018 was a good year for the Agulhas National Park at the annual Chief Executive Kudu Awards ceremony held at Gallagher Estate, Midrand Johannesburg on November 16. The **Agulhas Rest Camp** Housekeeping Staff won the Best Performing/Division Business Unit of the Year Award. Alliston Appel and Theseville Matheunis won the Excellent Performances in the Workplace Awards Cape Region of SANParks.



Festivities and Places to visit at the Southernmost Tip

Buffalo, hippos and rich bird life - a Wildlife Tour in the Nuwejaars SMA – Heather D'Alton

Hippo and buffalo have returned to the Agulhas Plain, after 200 years. Now you can be one of the first to see these – and a rich display of wildlife and flora, in the Nuwejaars Wetlands Special Management Area. The Nuwejaars team has, since the middle of November, started hosting Wildlife Tours, taking visitors into areas that are not otherwise open to the public, being on private land. The Nuwejaars SMA is offering two tours: on Saturday mornings the **Morning Wildlife Tour**: follow a slightly bumpy gravel road to travel to the buffalo and the buffalo boma. Look out for a rich array of other game, birds and flora along the way; on Saturday evening, take a **Sunset Wildlife Tour** which takes you to a secretive lake where the hippos live. Sip a cold glass of wine while watching the sunset. Besides the game, you will be treated to some of the most impressive bird life at the vlei. Remember to bring your camera, binoculars, walking shoes (and maybe your raincoat, just in case). For more information, visit: www.nuwejaars.co.za (booking is essential)



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HOLIDAY BEACH CLEANUP
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FUN AT LOW TIDE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Explore Elim village with Horse cart rides - Freddy Goliath 082 974 4308

The Black Oystercatcher Summer Festival 26 - 31 December 2018



For any other activities and events at the Southernmost Tip go to <https://www.facebook.com/suidpunteventscaander/?ref=bookmarks>
Visit www.blackoystercatcher.co.za or Tel. 028 482 1618.

December in Khoe /galkani means small eland

