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SEPTEMBER eBULLETIN

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The Salt pans



Another of Agulhas National Park's iconic spots of interest is the Salt pans, also called the Springfield Salt pans. Salt was the first mineral to be exploited in South Africa during colonial times. Salt was used for flavouring food,

curing skins and hides and preserving fish and meat. The traveller and explorer, Peter Kolbe, reported during his stay at the Cape between 1705 and 1713, the discovery of saline pans near Elim and Bredasdorp. In 1791 the VOC administration at the Cape took over ownership of these pans and leased them to prospective operators. In the early 19th century the system of granting leases by public auction was adopted. Salt prices were fixed. This system remained unchanged after the Cape became a British colony in 1806. The growing fishing industry was one of the main markets of salt production in the Bredasdorp region. The Salt pan at Springfield was the largest pan and the largest producer of salt. Here, diluted brine was pumped from boreholes, wells and trenches sunk into the floor of the pan into large concentration ponds, where the liquid was allowed to concentrate into saturated brine. This saturated brine was then led into shallow crystallisation ponds to evaporate. The product was harvested after the removal of the remaining liquid. The Springfield pan was exploited by the *Springfield Salt and Farming Company (Pty) Ltd* (1914-1950). The pan and the mineral rights were sold to Lord de Saumarez in 1950, who continued its exploitation until production ceased in the 1960s. The remains of the concentration and crystallisation ponds, production plant (factory) and manager's (or caretaker's homestead) are now part of the cultural heritage in the Agulhas NP. The Salt pans today is a very good seasonal birding spot.



FLORA

Vegetation types in Agulhas National Park

Cape Inland Salt Pans

Cape Inland Salt Pans is dominated by low succulent scrub and salt-tolerant herbs and grasses on Bokkeveld Group shales and much younger sandstone and limestone of the Bredasdorp Group. Most of the saline pans were coastal lagoons that became dry after been cut off from the sea. It is distributed on the Agulhas Plains as salt pans and vleis. Vulnerable with a conservation target of 24% with some 20% statutorily conserved in Agulhas National Park and other National parks, as well as Cape Nature reserves. More than 20% has been transformed by cultivation and mining.

(MUCINA & RUTHERFORD (eds). 2006. *The vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland*. *Strelitzia* 19. SANBI, Pretoria)



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS

Celebrate Forests in 2011!!

A Weekend of Celebrating Forests at Platbos Forest – Melissa Krige, Platbos Forest

Imagine being surrounded by nothing but a majestic forest, hearing nothing but the sound of the wind in the trees, seeing no-one except the creatures of the forest and your fellow campers, and doing only earth loving activities like pruning, weeding and alien clearing, all the while learning about and being inspired by the trees around you. For an entire blissful weekend ...

Come and join us in Celebration of Forests and Arbour Week for A Tree and Forest Awareness Weekend at Platbos Forest. Friday 9th Sept – Sunday 11th Sept 2011.

For more information visit www.platbos.co.za.

Tree of the Month

Witstinkhout, White Stinkwood, *Celtis africana*

With their human-like, pale-silver trunks and tender green growth each spring, white stinkwoods are perhaps the most popular of all South Africa's indigenous trees. Related to the English elm, the deciduous white stinkwood occurs from the Cape of South Africa to Ethiopia in northern Africa. Very adaptable, it grows on sand dunes, rocky outcrops and in lush forest. As a consequence of this adaptability, its appearance and size varies considerably. In spring, clusters of tiny flowers – resembling miniature, golden crowns – appear. These are followed by the small, round fruits which are

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enjoyed by an array of wild life. They have a very sweet, almost carrot-like flavour. The leaves are browsed on by kudu, bushbuck, grey duiker and impala, as well as the larvae of the African snout and blue-spotted charaxes butterflies. The name

“white stinkwood” has caused some confusion – it is not related to the true stinkwood, *Ocotea bullata*. The name in fact refers to the slight smell released when the wood is cut. The wood has a medium hardness and makes a good general timber, suitable for planking and shelving. In days passed it was used to make yokes.

(Identified by Platbos Forest, www.platbos.co.za)

Plants used for Food, Medicine and other

Duinekool, Strandkool, Wild cabbage, *Trachyandra divaricata*



A rhizomatous perennial growing to 800 mm high with tufts of narrow fleshy leaves; much-branched flowerheads with short-lived whitish flowers; common in the coastal zone; young shoots make a healthy and delicious dish; flowerheads are picked before the flowers open from August to September.

Strandsalie, Dune sage, *Salvia africana-lutea*



Much-branched aromatic shrub growing to 2m tall; grey leaves; orange-brown flowers; occur in dune fynbos between Gifberg and Port Elizabeth; excellent tea for coughs, colds and numerous other ailments; flowers from June to December.

Dekriet, Thatching, *Elegia tectorum*



An erect tussock about 1m tall; occurs in marshes and seeps from Vanrhynsdorp to Port Elizabeth; harvested for thatch and is an old Elim village traditional activity.

(MUSTART, COWLING, ALBERTYN. 2003. *South African Wild Flower Guide 8: Southern Overberg*. Cape Town: Bot Soc)

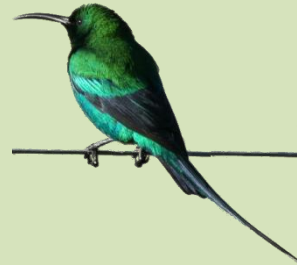
FAUNA

Colourful birds in Agulhas National Park

Jangroentjie, Malachite Sunbird, *Nectarinia famosa*

Only male Sunbird with an entirely metallic green plumage in breeding season; appears in fynbos, protea- and aloe-covered hills and mountain scrub. Sunbirds are nectarivores (feed mainly on nectar) and are avian (bird) pollinators of many of our fynbos species. They have a give-and-take relationship that benefits both parties; while feeding on the nectar, the birds are at the same time fulfilling the important function of pollinating the flowers. It is thought that this mutual relationship has evolved between certain flowering plants and nectarivorous birds (known as co-evolution) to such an extent that in some cases they are totally dependent on each other for their survival.

(Photography by Anton Odendal)



An interesting sighting in the Park

Erdvark, Aardvark, Anteater, *Orycteropus afer*

An Aardvark has been spotted at various times in the vicinity of Southbosch and Bosheuwel.



Most Popular Southern Coast Angling Species

Silwervis, Kapenaar, Carpenter, *Argyrozona argyrozona*

Spawning season: Summer and Autumn

Length at 50% sexual maturity: (geslagsrypheid): Males 26.3 cm, Females 25 cm FL

Age at 50% sexual maturity (geslagsrypheid): Unknown

Maximum age (lebensverwagtinge): 12 yrs

Length at first capture: 25 cm TL (~ 4 years)

Status: Regulated species

SASSI status: Orange (Think twice)

Origin of name: *Argyrozona* means silver animal which refers to the silvery colour.



To check the status of any fish, text its name to 079 499 8795. (SASSI Consumer Seafood Pocket Guide, September 2010)

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HERITAGE



Agulhas Heritage programme

Oral history project display, 5 – 9 September 2011, Struisbaai Library, Struisbaai-Noord

Exhibition of material collected plus a compilation of the stories collected. Time: 10:00-17:00.

Food, Medicine and other Useful plants from the Veld, 19 – 24 September 2011, Soutbosch, Agulhas National Park

Plant specimen displays plus something to eat and drink. Other activities to take part in are birding, hiking and canoeing. Time: 10:00-16:00.

Braai4Heritage/Braai vir Erfenis, 24 September 2011, Soutbosch, Agulhas National Park

Spitbraai, R70,00 pp, Bring own drinks, glasses and camping chairs; please book. Time: 13:00.

For more information: Emmerentia De Kock, 028-4356078 (8:00-16:00), Alliston Appel, 028-4356216 (8:00-16:00)

Elim Heritage programme

The Elim community is celebrating their cultural heritage during the weekend of 23 to 25 September 2011. Everybody is invited to join in for a weekend of festivities and events as they journey back in time to reflect upon the rich cultural history of the "ELIMERS". The main theme of the programme is family history. A cover charge of R10,00 for adults and R5,00 for children is applicable. Contact the Elim Heritage, Culture and Tourism Committee at 028-482 1806 for more information.

Elim, The Oasis of the Overberg
1824-2011

Heritage Festival 23-25 September 2011

Cover Charge
R10-Adult
R5-Children

*In celebrating the cultural heritage of the Elim Community
Come and join us for a weekend of festivities and events as
we journey back in time to reflect back on the rich cultural
history of the "ELIMERS"*



AGULHAS PEOPLE

Friends of the Park



In 2009 a group of L'Agulhas and Struisbaai residents took part in the annual marine walk that is organized in October each year to commemorate Marine week. They were so much inspired by taking part in this activity that they decided to establish the Agulhas hiking club, calling themselves the Golden Oldies. People and Conservation staff is very proud of this outcome from one of their programmes. This group of people eventually became involved as the Friends of the Park. They help with alien clearing on the farmsteads and in graveyards, with documenting cultural sites, developing hiking trails with the Honorary Rangers and assist with other programmes, for example Southern Tip Day. They built the first "shipwreck" for this event, which is fast becoming the icon for the event. Thank you very much, Friends, for your help and support.



Kids in Park programme starting in September

As part of the programme it was decided to concentrate on recycling. All waste generated during the programme will be sorted, recycled or taken to the recycle depot in Bredasdorp. The learners will receive lessons regarding littering and the associated problems. A DVD called *Sea Life* developed by Mosie Hope, local artist, and bought for the KIP programme will be shown to the learners. This will highlight the problem of litter and especially



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pollution at sea. This DVD shows the collection of litter over four months by one individual and what can be created and recycled. Thus raising awareness of the problem, but also coming up with fun, innovative solutions and linkages to the school curriculum. Agulhas NP, through the Working for the Coast Project, will recycle all possible waste material collected from the coastal zone.

Study finds alien clearing is not necessarily enough – Heather D'Alton, Flower Valley Conservation Trust

A new study has found that in certain instances fynbos may struggle to be rehabilitated on land cleared of aliens – without help from the landowner. A study by the University of Stellenbosch found that the recovery of native plant communities where *Acacia* and *Eucalyptus* have been removed, is accelerated when appropriate native species are sown in the cleared areas. It also recommended burning as a cost-effective means of removing alien thickets and promoting regeneration of indigenous species as well as alien regrowth, that then requires follow-up clearing. According to the authors, "Active restoration is required to restore functioning ecosystems dominated by native species in the *Acacia* thicket and *Eucalyptus* plantation." The final publication is available at www.springerlink.com.

New Strandveld hiking trail launches in September



A new three-day hiking trail will be launched in the Strandveld in September. The trail, which is 25km long in total, traverses three farms, Witvoetskloof, Flower Valley Farm and Baviaansfontein, all near Gansbaai. The trail, which starts at Grootbos, will offer walkers views of the ancient Steynbos Milkwood forest, a fresh water spring in Witvoetskloof, further afromontane forests, and views stretching

down to Dyer Island. Much of the walk is through fynbos-covered mountains. Accommodation is provided at Witvoetskloof and Bodhi Khaya. The trail finishes at Grootbos's Green Futures horticultural and life skills college.

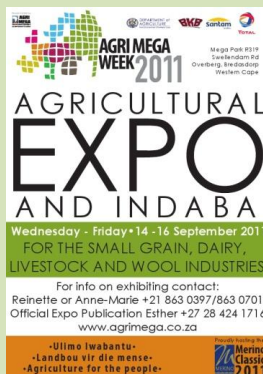
The Secret Season

The fairest Cape's best kept secret, Cape Agulhas in the Southern Overberg, is situated at the most southerly region of the African continent, and only two hours east of Cape Town. Cape Agulhas is the southernmost tip of Africa and the **official meeting place** of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. The Agulhas Region is also the heart of the Cape Floral Kingdom. This is due to the exceptional quality and biodiversity of its fynbos, which starts to bloom in early winter.



Events Calendar

September	
Heritage & Tourism month	
1 - 7	National Arbour week
5 - 9	Oral history project display, Struisbaai-Noord
7 - 30	Kids in the Park Program
12 - 17	National Clean-up Week
14 - 16	Agri Mega Week
16	International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer National Recycling Day
17	International Coastal Clean-up Day
19 - 24	Plant week, Agulhas NP
24	Spitbraai, Soutbosch, Agulhas NP
23 - 25	Elim Heritage festival
24	National Heritage day
27	World Tourism day



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