



South African
NATIONAL PARKS

AGULHAS PARK eBULLETIN

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Friends of the Agulhas Park:

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October eBULLETIN

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Rasperpunt



Rasperpunt is one of the important archaeological sites on the Cape Agulhas coast and another of Agulhas National Park's iconic spots. It is located on Portion 58 of the original Farm Paapekuil Fontein nr 281 and to the west of the southernmost tip. The name Rasperpunt is derived from the fact that the sharp rocks regularly cut the fishing lines of the anglers.

Archaeological research has shown that people have occupied the Agulhas area for well over a million years. Middle Stone Age (MSA) and Early Stone Age (ESA) tools occur locally. Large numbers of Later Stone Age (LSA) sites have been recorded. Sites have been described at Die Walle, Hoek se Baai, Gruis se Baai, Oubaa, Bloubaai, Vlei se Bank, Rasperpunt and Cape Agulhas. Substantial concentrations of shellfish remains (shell middens) are densely clustered inshore of the rocky shoreline. It is here that large quantities of shellfish species were exploited, processed and consumed by LSA hunter-gatherers. Well-preserved tidal fish traps occur at Cape Agulhas, Rasperpunt and Suiderstrand. The tidal fish traps were most likely built by pre-colonial LSA people – possibly the same people responsible for the accumulation of shell middens that are found along the rocky shoreline. (KAPLAN, Jonathan: *A phase 1 archaeological impact assessment of a proposed new tourist rest camp facility and associated infrastructure at Pietie se Punt, Agulhas National Park, Western Cape Province*. March 2007)

Fish traps are old stone structures in which fish were caught. The structures consist of low walls of stone built to enclose a portion of a bay or rocky sections on the coast. When the tide rises and floods over the wall, the fish swim into the enclosure getting trapped when at low tide the water seeps away. The fish trapped in the shallow water can easily be caught by hand or net. Rasperpunt is as famous with local fishermen as a fishing spot as it was 20 000 years ago. The fish traps located here are well-preserved but not used anymore.



Read more about recent research on the fish traps at www.agulhas.org.za

FLORA

Vegetation types in Agulhas National Park

Cape Seashore Vegetation (Coastal Strand and Rocky Shelf Vegetation/Kus Strand en Rots Plantegroei)

Cape Seashore Vegetation consists of grassy, herbaceous and dwarf-shrubby vegetation, often dominated by a single pioneer species. Dominant grasses are *Thinopyrum distichum* and *Ehrharta villosa* var. *maxima* and the daisy *Didelta carnosus* var. *tomentosa* on young coastal sandy sediments of the Strandveld Formation exposed to winds and sea storms. Occurring along the South West and South coasts. Least threatened with a conservation target of 20% with almost half of the area statutorily conserved in National Parks and Cape Nature. About 1,7% transformed by urban development. Other specific species in this vegetation type are Sea wheat, *Thinopyrum distichum*, Seepampoen, *Arctotheca populifolia*, Seeseldery, *Dasispermum suffruticosum*, Suurvy, *Carpobrotus acinaciformis*, Bietou, *Chrysanthemoides monilifera*, Wasbessie, *Myrica cordifolia*, and Kusmalva, *Pelargonium capitatum*.

(MUCINA & RUTHERFORD (eds). 2006. *The vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland*. Strelitzia 19. SANBI, Pretoria; MUSTART, COWLING, ALBERTYN. 2003. *Southern Overberg: South African Wild Flower Guide 8*. Cape Town).



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Plants used for Food, Medicine and other

Duinespinasie, Dune spinach, *Tetragonia decumbens*



A plant with thick creeping stems, fleshy leaves and small yellow flowers from August to March. It is cooked like a spinach but the yellow sorrel (*Oxalis pescaprae*) must be added for taste.

Plakkie, Pig's ear, *Cotyledon orbiculata*



A shrubby plant with pink-rose to scarlet flowers all year round. Leaves were used to treat corns and fever blisters.

Aasbossie, Cape may, *Coleonema album*



A fragrant shrub with white flowers from May to November of which the aromatic leaves are used by fishermen to remove the odour of red bait from their hands.

(MUSTART, COWLING, ALBERTYN. 2003. *Southern Overberg: South African Wild Flower Guide 8*. Cape Town; SCHWEGLER, M. 2003. *Medicinal and other uses of Southern Overberg Fynbos plants*. Pretoria).

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS



Celebrate Forests in 2011!!

Tree of the Month

Hardepeer, Hard pear, *Olinia ventosa*

The Hard pear, an evergreen tree, is found in forests, coastal scrub and on exposed hillsides from the Cape Peninsula to just above the east coast of South Africa. Under forest conditions it has proven to be the fastest growing of all of the South



African indigenous trees. Hard pears are spectacular when in flower, for although small, the white flowers are borne in profusion, are sweetly scented and develop into red, berry-like fruits. The seeds do not germinate easily which is no doubt the reason why this beautiful tree remains relatively unknown to South African gardeners. All parts of the tree smell strongly of almonds when crushed, and the dead wood gives off a glorious incense when burnt. The Xhosa name for this tree means "tree without embers", indicating that in spite of its perfume, it does not make good firewood. The timber is hard, heavy and comparable to walnut. It was used for telegraph poles and wagon-making in the past. Today it is mainly used for furniture and musical instruments. (Identified by Platbos Forest, www.platbos.co.za)

Kelp Forests: forests of a different kind - Gavin W. Maneveldt



The United Nations has proclaimed 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness on sustainable management, conservation and development of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations. One immediately accepts that only *Terrestrial Forests* are focused on. But, what about that region of the planet that encompasses nearly three-quarters of its surface, namely the oceans? The oceans too have their equivalent of the terrestrial forests, namely *Kelp Forests*. In order to see this similarity, one has to understand what is meant by the term "forest" in its purely technical sense. The United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) defines a forest as being "more than 0,5 hectares with trees higher than 5m and a canopy cover of more than 10 percent, or trees able to reach these thresholds *in situ*", ... and that this "does not include land that is primarily under agricultural or urban land use". According to this definition, a forest is "determined by the presence of trees". Critical to the interpretation of the term forest, is the capacity of the structural components (trees) to attain the minimum thresholds in their natural environment, unaided by direct human intervention. So, if we can argue that kelp communities meet these basic requirements, would we accept that they can be classified as forests, albeit of the marine kind? (Go to www.agulhas.org.za to read more about Kelp forests)

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FAUNA

Colourful birds in Agulhas National Park

Swarttobie, African Black Oystercatcher, *Haematopus moquini*

The Black Oystercatcher is endemic to the coast of Africa south of the Sahara. It is an easily identifiable wader with a pitch black body, bright orange-red bill and ring around the eyes and dull pink legs. Generally found in pairs and during high tide when they cannot hunt for food, they gather in large flocks on the rocks.



Even though they are called Oystercatchers they very seldom eat oysters. The numbers have increased in the last few years due to a combination of the beach driving ban and an increase in a new food source namely, the alien invasive Mediterranean mussel, which has spread from Saldanha Bay where it is commercially farmed all along the coast and now even occurs on the Agulhas coast.

(Photography by Anton Odendal)

Most Popular Southern Coast Angling Species

Beenbek, Wit mosselkraker, White musselcracker, *Sparodon durbanensis*

Spawning season: August-January

Maximum age

(lewensverwagtinge): 31 years

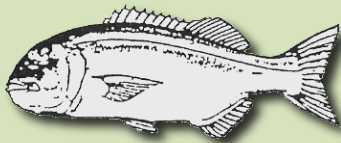
Length at first capture: 60

cm TL (~11 years)

Status: Protected species

SASSI status: Red (Not for sale)

Origin of name: Refers to the ability to crush molluscs



To check the status of any fish, text its name to 079 499 8795.

(SASSI Consumer Seafood Pocket Guide, September 2010)

Mediterranean mussel, *Mytilus galloprovincialis*

This alien invasive mussel is originally from Europe and was first found on the west coast of South Africa around 1979. It was thought that it was originally introduced through ship hull fouling or ballast water. Subsequently it was also spread by live mussels being transported for food. It is an extremely successful species on high energy exposed rocky shores and in temperate regions and also in areas with large shipping ports. The dispersion rate is about 5km per year. Alien species have many impacts and the Mediterranean mussel outcompetes the indigenous mussels Ribbed mussel, *Aulacomya ater* and Black mussel *Choromytilus meridionalis*. It also

changes the community structure by increasing infaunal density and competes with limpets for space. It increases mussel cover on the rocks pushing out other organisms. It does increase food supply for predators such as the black oystercatcher and has potential economic value for mariculture and small scale commercial exploitation. To reduce further spreading functionally sterile mussels could be cultured and released.



A buffalo is born: a first in 200 years - Heather D'Alton, Flower Valley Conservation Trust

The first buffalo calf in approximately 200 years has been born on the Agulhas Plain. The calf forms part of a herd of buffalo reintroduced into the area by the Nuwejaars Wetland Special Management Area (SMA) venture. Records show buffalo were last seen on the Agulhas Plain in the late 1700s. According to Dirk Human, Chairman of the Nuwejaars Wetland SMA, the buffalo calf signifies the first step in turning back the clock on the Agulhas Plain. "Aside from buffalo, we've also reintroduced hippo, last seen here some 150 years ago. We're slowly moving towards bringing back the natural systems as they existed in previous centuries." The buffalo calf will be given an appropriate indigenous Khoisan name still to be decided upon.

www.nuwejaars.com



HERITAGE

Heritage Month Celebrations in Agulhas National Park – Len Le Roux, Agulhas Honorary Rangers

During the week 19 to 24 September the Agulhas National Park celebrated Heritage Month at Soutbosch, a historical house in the Park, in a unique manner. The focus of the celebrations was on "food, medicine and other uses of plants from the veld". During the week there were exhibitions of many plant species and their traditional uses. This included the use of veld plants for food, medicine and the manufacturing of goods. The reason for this theme was the special part that such plants played and still play in the daily lives of people and is part of the cultural heritage of the Strandveld

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today. During the week people could taste local traditional food and on the Saturday a spitbraai was organized by the Honorary Rangers. (Read more on www.agulhas.org.za)



Memories are made of this - by Mosie Hope



On Friday the 9th September 2011 a group of L'Agulhas, Hotagterklip, Skipskop and Struisbaai North people gathered for tea and refreshments at the Struisbaai Public Library, to view the

Oral History project exhibition. Emmerentia de Kock, cultural officer at Agulhas National Park, and Melani Jomat who collected the oral histories of the fisher folk and Hotagterklip inhabitants of old, were there to welcome them. This exhibition was part of Heritage Month, and the photos, oral histories, as well as paintings by the Agulhas Art Group gave a wonderful insight into life long ago. Margo Matthee (neé Wolhuter) attended. She is the niece of Manie Matthee who owned the general dealer's store, and was 12 years old at the time. Everyone enjoyed the stories and the memories stimulated by the exhibition. The exhibition can still be viewed at the public library - just ask the librarian.

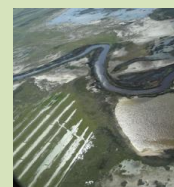


AGULHAS PEOPLE

Agulhas wetlands: Save, conserve and live – Simone Koert, Agulhas Working for Wetlands

The responsible governance, protection and rehabilitation of wetlands are of the outmost importance, as wetlands play a fundamental role in erosion control and prevention, rising water tables, climate stabilisation, improving water quality and to serve as an oasis in dry areas. One of the aims of the Agulhas Wetlands project is to restore the wetlands on the Agulhas Plain to its original state. The positive effect of the rehabilitation work done on the Agulhas wetlands so far is very visible after the rains of the past few

months. Plugging of artificial channels has proven to be a huge success. The plugs deflected the water back over the wetlands, thus preventing it from running down the artificial channels. It was previously experienced that if the water stays on the wetlands, it creates a habitat for insects and frogs, which in turn draw birds to the area. This shows that the rehabilitation process can in fact control erosion and re-create wetland habitats and that wetlands are an ecosystem of their own.



NATIONAL MARINE WEEK, 17 – 23 OCTOBER 2011

"Changing Climate, Changing Oceans, Changing People."

Marine hike, Brandfontein to Rietfontein se Baai, 18 October 2011, 9:00 - 16:00.

"Close encounters of the Marine kind": Oral presentation by and a walk with Prof Gavin Maneveldt (Department of Biodiversity & Conservation Biology, University of the Western Cape), Agulhas National Park, 21 October 2011, 15:00 - 16:00.

Rocky shore walk at Stinkbaai, L'Agulhas, 16:30 - 18:00.

Please book, Emmerentia De Kock, 028 435 6078 during office hours.

Events Calendar

October 2011	
3	World Habitat Day
4	World Animal Day
8	African Penguin Awareness Day
17-21	National Marine Week
18	Marine hike (Brandfontein to Rietfontein se Baai)
21	National Marine Day: Close encounters of the Marine kind, Prof Gavin Manefeldt.



For more information and bookings contact:

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