

AgulhasNPark eBulletin

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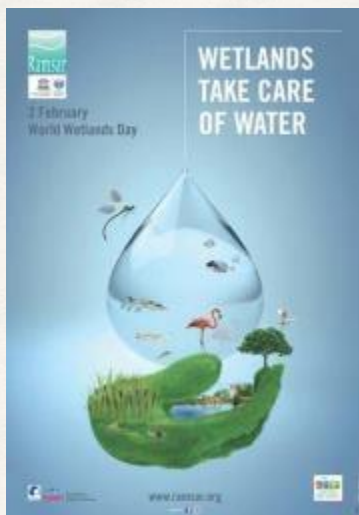


World Wetlands Day, 2 February

World Wetlands Day is celebrated internationally each year on 2 February. It marks the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971. The international theme for World Wetlands Day 2013 is *Wetlands take care of water*.

Agulhas Working for Wetlands Project

The Agulhas Working for Wetlands Project started in 2004 and focuses on rehabilitation of degraded wetlands in and around the Agulhas National Park. The rehabilitation interventions are aimed at restoring a natural hydrological regime. The project is part of the government's Expanded Public Works Programme and SANParks Biodiversity Social Projects. The targeted beneficiaries are households where women, youth and disabled persons are the sole breadwinners. The project started with a R400 000 budget in 2004 and expanded to nearly R2 million per annum today. The project created employment for 108 persons with an estimated number of 648 indirect beneficiaries. Forty percent of the budget is spent on wages and two percent on training. The project is managed by Mr Arnold Viegeland with the administrative assistant, Simoné Koert and consists of nine teams: four teams doing alien clearing, 12 individuals per team and five teams doing earth works, 12 individuals per team.



Management team
A. Viegeland, Project Man
S. Koert, Admin Officer

Best Project runner-up 2012 in South Africa

Wetland interventions were done at De Mond Nature Reserve, Elim and the Farm Toekoms. In Agulhas National Park rehabilitation work were executed in the following sections namely Ratelrivier, Rietfontein, Springfield, Salt Pans, Soutbosch and Bosheuwel.

Earth work teams

The Earth work teams working on 640m³ at Springfield and 200m³ at Bergplaas



J. Mavusa and team



K. Groenewald and team



L. Petersen and team



V. Ahrends and team



M. Kies and team



Alien clearing teams

The Alien clearing teams working on 133.2ha at Dirk Uyskraal



A. Asongo and team



A. Rudolph and team



L. Mitchell and team



T. Diop and team

Training

A vigorous training programme on various subjects and skills development helps the beneficiary to be absorbed into the mainstream economy when he/she exits. Skills development initially focuses on life skills and task-related training. In addition to first aid and health and safety training, the team members learn construction skills in the form of gabion and concrete building. The training programme includes First Aid, Fire Awareness, Fire Fighting, Health & Safety, Peer Education, Primary Health and HIV AIDS Awareness.



Working on Wetlands interventions

The mission of Agulhas Working on Wetlands is to secure water resources by rehabilitating the wetlands to its original state and thereby improve the rich biodiversity and associated patterns and processes of the Agulhas wetlands and secure a water source for human consumption. Various interventions are implemented in the process of rehabilitating wetlands. They are earth plugs, rock packing, gabions, building of weirs and building concrete structures. The building of the concrete structure in the Ratel River was a first for the Agulhas project which happened most of the time during winter. It posed some unusual obstacles and challenges, but the teams completed the project successfully and were one to the reasons which won them the first runner-up prize in 2012.



Gabion



Earth plug



Rock packing



Ratel River structure



Weir



Alien clearing

Cape Lowland Freshwater Wetlands (Wet Restioid Fynbos)

Cape Lowland Freshwater Wetlands consists of tall reeds of *Phragmites australis* and *Typha capensis*, restioids, sedgeland and rush-beds, as well as permanent water body vegetation on sandy, silty and clayey soils derived from weathering Cape Supergroup shales and Cape granites, as well as Table Mountain sandstones. It is distributed in some of the vleis of the Agulhas Plains. The conservation target is 24%. About 14% is statutorily conserved in Agulhas National Park, other National Parks and Cape Nature reserves. More than 15% is transformed by cultivation and urban areas. Plant species you will find are Dekriet, *Chondropetalum tectorum*, Knoppiesbos, Line-leaf cone-bush, *Leucadendron linifolium*, *Cliffortia ferruginea*, *Orphium frutescens*, *Limonium anthericoides*, Fluitjiesriet, *Phragmites australis*, *Falkia repens*, Waterblommietjie, *Aponogeton distachyos*.

(SOURCES: MUCINA & RUTHERFORD. 2006. *The vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland*; MUSTART, COWLING, ALBERTYN. 2003. *Southern Overberg: SA Wild Flower Guide 8*)



Upstream and downstream, Wetlands connects us all

Freshwater is the one natural resource upon which all life depends and it is wetlands that capture and deliver this to us all. Our bodies are made up of 80% water and our health and well being depends upon the quality of the water that we derive our sustenance from and are closely connected with. The environmental theme for 2013, *Water cooperation*, describes totally what is supposed to happen along a river, in the catchment area and wetlands in general. Catchment areas in mountain ranges, drainage systems, rivers and wetlands is subject to high on-site impacts, particularly through artificial drainage channels (associated with historical cultivation), dams, weirs and dense infestations of alien invasive plants, especially Port Jackson/Goudwilger *Acacia saligna*. Everyone is a user of water; who ever we are, government department, a farmer, fisher, factory owner, or family – our activities will impact on catchment areas way up in the mountains, along rivers and in wetlands in which we live and in-turn, influence our own health and well being. This year we should all reflect on how interconnected we all are within a water system. It is important to realize that activities of those upstream of us will have an impact and how our activities affect those down-stream. How we *cooperate* in managing our most valuable resource in South Africa, is of utmost importance.



**Look out for the Ratel River
structure story in the March
eBulletin !!**

Agulhas Birding Project: recording in the Soetendalsvlei Pentad (3440_1955) in 2012 – Dr Wim De Klerk

The Agulhas National Park Birding Project is now in its third year and what a wonderful birding destination it has been. Due to the heavy rains the Agulhas Plains were flooded for many months and certain areas were still inaccessible in December 2012. The Soetendalsvlei pentad is a 8x8km area that includes part of the Saltpans, Southbosch pan, the Soetendalsvlei perimeter, Nuwejaars River up to Wiesdrif farm, cultivated land near Wiesdrif and the first kilometer of the Heuningnes River. This is certainly the most exciting birding destination in the Agulhas National Park. Eight new species were recorded this year. Interestingly the first Secretarybird was recorded in this pentad since the start of the project in 2010. Since Secretarybirds were seen in five of the pentads in 2012, it begs the question whether they are on the increase in the Park. Greywinged Francolin was also seen on the gravel road for the first time just south of Soetendalsvlei. Little Rush-warbler was listed for the first time but the highlight of the year must be the secretive African Rail identified on the Nuwejaars River in the reed bed near the vlei. Other wetland species recorded in this pentad was: African Purple Swamphen, African Snipe, Cape Longclaw, Cape Shoveler, Glossy Ibis, Greater Flamingo, Hottentot Teal, Lesser Swamp Warbler, Levallant's Cisticola, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, Little Stint, Malachite Kingfisher, Pied Avocet, Purple Heron, Redbilled Teal, Ruff, South African Shelduck, Threebanded Plover, Wood Sandpiper, Yellowbilled Egret, African Marsh Harrier and African Fish Eagle.



Wetlands research in the Agulhas NP

1. Trajectories of change in wetlands of the Fynbos Biome. Dr H. Malan, Freshwater Research Unit, Zoology Dept, UCT, Start date August 2013.
2. Investigating the water balance dynamics of wetlands in the Agulhas National Park, Prof D Mazvimavi, Earth Science Dept, UWC, Start date March 2013.
3. Freshwater monitoring in the Cape Parks, Ms R-M Fisher, CRC, SANParks, Start date June 2013.



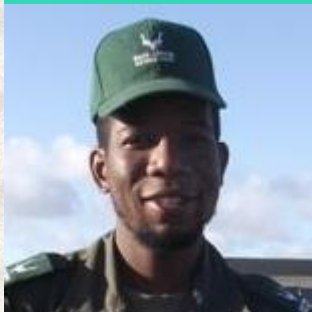
Cape Agulhas Lighthouse closed for renovations

The historic Cape Agulhas Lighthouse was closed to the public as from Monday 4 February 2013 due to renovations taking place. Since November 2012 the lighthouse has been undergoing renovations to the interior and exterior of the building due to erosion. Over the busy tourism season, the lighthouse was kept open to the public to accommodate visitors who flock to the southernmost tip of Africa. Renovations to the lighthouse are in conjunction with a number of precinct development projects currently taking place (e.g. construction of the new Southern Tip boardwalk). While Transnet owns and is responsible for the actual lighthouse, South African National Parks is responsible for the upgrade of the lighthouse precinct. Plans for the precinct must be in line with the heritage value of the site. It is envisioned that the precinct will offer several commercial opportunities for potential operators. During the closure, visitors are urged to visit the southernmost point and take a walk along the completed sections of the Southern Tip footpath and boardwalk.



Meet our new staff members

Conservation section



Masindi Raselabe
Section Ranger,
Western section



P. Matshayana
Field Ranger



Agulhas Restcamp Gate guards



S. Louw



A. Macpherson



D. October



R. Snyders



Southern Tip-Zoetendals Vallei Relay Race

11 May 2013

To commemorate Bartolomeu Dias sailing round the southern tip and all the shipwreck victims that lost their lives along the Cape Agulhas Coastline, take part in a 14km Run and a 40km Mountain bike race in Agulhas National Park. Watch this space for more detail!

