



AgulhasNPark eBulletin

VOL 3 • NR 11 • October 2013

www.sanparks.org



National Marine Week ~ 7-11 October 2013

Celebrations around our marine life have taken place each year since 1988 as government endeavours to create public awareness on marine conservation issues and remind South Africans of our spectacular ocean heritage that provides employment and recreational opportunities for all. South Africa boasts a coastline of over 3 000 kilometres which stretches from the Orange River in the west to Kosi Bay in the east. The oceans along this coastline are rich in marine life and support many different marine ecosystems. Great demand is put on our marine life by commercial fisheries, fishermen, and for recreational purposes such as the collection of marine creatures for fish tanks. These factors and the increase of marine pollution cause the decline of many species and it is our duty, as humans, to make sure such resources are not overexploited resulting in total destruction and possible extinction. To celebrate this special week, we can learn more about our fragile oceans and its inhabitants in order to help conserve and utilise this natural resource in a more sustainable manner. The theme for 2013 is "Better Understanding Of Your Oceans – for the Protection of life and property", shortened as "Buoy-O". See page three.

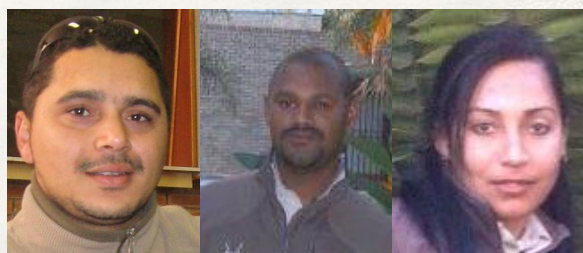
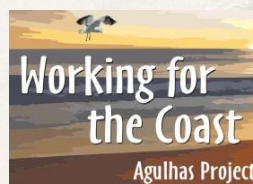
(SOURCE: A Year of Special Days. 2012. Sharenet.)

Agulhas Marine Environment and Oceanography

The Agulhas coast is an area of exceptional marine, coastal and estuarine biodiversity. The park lies at the extremities of Indian (Agulhas bioregion) and Atlantic (South Western Cape bioregion) oceanic systems and supports highly diverse fauna and flora including many endemic species. The number of different species harvested for commercial and recreational usage is well over 100, and ranges from fish to shellfish and seaweed, including rock lobster, abalone and line fish. The oceanography of the area is dominated by the broad and relatively shallow Agulhas Bank. The Agulhas Bank has ideal temperatures and food supply to ensure sustained spawning, promotes rapid development of eggs and larvae which shortens their exposure to predators thus enhances their survival. Furthermore, the Agulhas Bank has an east-west orientation, so offshore advection is minimised. (SOURCE: Agulhas National Park management plan, 2013-2023.)

Agulhas Working for the Coast project – Ian Kies, Project Manager

The Agulhas Working for the Coast project is running since May 2001. The 2013/2015 cycle has officially started on 01 September 2013. Their objectives are Coastal clean-up, Visitor Facilities Clean-up, Picnic Site Clean-up and Marine monitoring. The management team is Project manager Ian Kies, Field assistant Joel Mentoor (WfWC and WfW) and Project administrator Karen Hamer.



I. Kies

J. Mentoor

K. Hammer

They are assisted by four contracting teams, which consist of one contractor and seven workers for this cycle, while a marine monitoring team has one contractor and six monitors. The project received R 4 600 000.00 for this cycle.

Len le Roux

Agulhas Honorary Ranger

We sadly said goodbye to HR Len le Roux on 11 September 2013. Len passed away on 1 September 2013 from complications after a stroke on 28 August. Len joined the SANParks Honorary Rangers in 2009 and became a much valued member in the Agulhas region. He was regional secretary since 2011 and organized very successful fund-raising wine auctions in 2010 and 2013. He was very involved in Park's programmes and activities. He will be sorely missed.



Working for the Coast contracting teams

The Working for the Coast contracting teams are: two beach clean-up teams, one infrastructure (visitor facilities) maintenance team and a Marine monitoring team. A Struisbaai team headed by Julia Adams is responsible for beach clean-ups from the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse to Brandfontein. An Elim team headed by Abigail Davids is responsible for beach clean-up from Brandfontein to Quoin Point. The team dedicated to the infrastructure (visitor facilities) maintenance is headed by Gilberto Swartz and the Marine monitoring team is headed by Branden Aploon. The marine monitoring team is responsible for recreational fishing data collection along the coast ranging from De Mond Nature Reserve in the east to Quoin Point in the West.



J. Adams and team



A. Davids and team



G. Schwartz and team



B. Aploon and team

African Penguin Awareness Day ~ 12 October

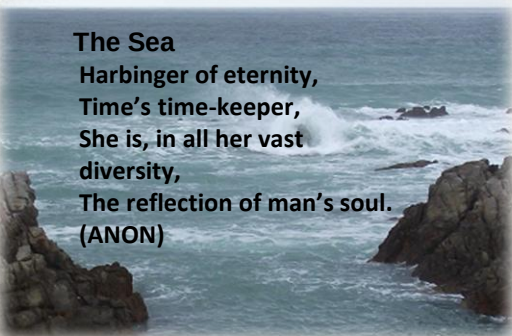
The African Penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*), is also known as the Black-footed Penguin. Because of its call, which sounds like a braying donkey, this penguin used to be called the Jackass Penguin. The African Penguin is so named because it is the only species of penguin that breeds in Africa, and it is endemic to our south-west coast. Unfortunately, due to egg harvesting, guano harvesting (collection of bird droppings for fertilizer), disease, pressure from commercial fishing and oil pollution on their food supply, African Penguin populations have rapidly declined and the bird is listed as vulnerable to extinction. One hundred years ago, it was estimated that the African Penguin numbered four million - today there are only around 56 000 breeding pairs left. African Penguin Awareness Day is an international SANCCOB (Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds) initiative to raise awareness around the plight of this delightful bird. The University of Cape Town's Avian Demography Unit have shown that SANCCOB's rehabilitation efforts have meant that the penguin populations are growing. (SOURCE: A Year of Special Days. 2012. Sharenet.)



**The Sea
Harbinger of eternity,
Time's time-keeper,
She is, in all her vast
diversity,
The reflection of man's soul.
(ANON)**

"Better Understanding Of Your Oceans – for the Protection of life and property" – theme of Marine week 2013

The theme derives its origin from the fact that South Africa is currently developing an Ocean and Coastal Observing System that will comprise of various ocean-based instruments around our coast. The observing system will enable the decision-makers and the public at large to observe the oceans in real-time. The long-term objective is to develop an early warning system and environmental monitoring network to ensure the safety of citizens and property as well as conserving and protection of our ecosystems. Furthermore, the instrumentation will be used to increase our knowledge and understanding of the oceans within the current context but also monitoring the effects of climate variability and climate change. (Information supplied by Prof G. Maneveldt.)



In plain sight!: another new seaweed species from the southernmost tip of Africa

Prof Gavin W. Maneveldt, University of the Western Cape

Who would have thought that in this day and age new discoveries would be made in plain sight? In April of 2011 we reported a new coralline red algal species (*Heydrichia cerasina*— cherry red) for Cape Agulhas. This alga represents the fourth species reported from the genus *Heydrichia*, recognising South Africa as home to three of the four known congeners from the genus. Shortly there after, a second species of coralline algae was reported from Cape Agulhas – both species have their type localities in the small Stinkbaai cove of L'Agulhas. Unlike *H. cerasina* that can only be seen at the low water mark of spring tide events, the latest species, named *Spongites agulhensis*, occurs in plain sight high up the shore. This latter species had probably been overlooked in previous years because of its close resemblance to another very common intertidal coralline alga, named *Spongites yendoi*. For the last two years we have attempted to formally describe the new species, but were hampered by the fact that the species even more closely resembled (differing by only a single anatomical feature) a species from the NE Pacific, USA. DNA analysis, however, showed conclusively that the new species is a cryptic species distinct from both the NE Pacific species and the very common South African species. The new records for Cape Agulhas re-affirm South Africa as a region rich in coralline algal diversity. In particular the current research supports the argument that the Cape Agulhas bio-geographical marine province transition zone is an area rich in seaweed endemism. Most unusual about both species though, are their ranges; they are found occurring along a stretch of coastline no greater than 10 km at the southernmost tip of the African continent. This is by far the narrowest distribution of any known South African species of marine organism.



Shells and Shell collections – Mosie Hope

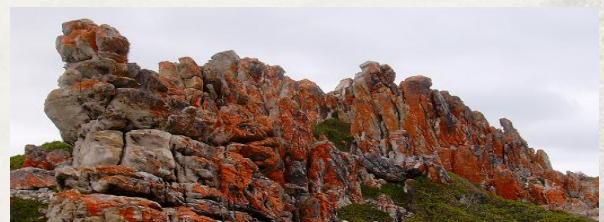
How do we feel about shells? We select them, hold them, examine them and choose to keep them because we desire them - or else we discard them. A shell collector can be anyone, an amateur or professional, child or adult. Thousands upon thousands of shells have been removed from their natural habitat to places and spaces vast distances from their origins. Live shells are caught up in fishing nets and collectors prize these as they are otherwise hard to come by and many are rare. Very delicate shells such as the violet snail and paper nautilus are difficult to keep whole. What happens to shell collections? In a saleable and valuable collection each shell is supposed to be identified and have the date and place of collection with it. Most of us do not worry to do this and keep shells because they are lovely to look at. Often these end up in boxes, in cupboards until, one day, we are tidying up and rediscover them. We then have to decide whether to keep them, display them, give them to a friend or give them away. How many of us can throw shells away in a trash bin? A friend told me she had brought the shells she no longer wanted back to the seashore – she lives in Gauteng! What a wonderful, sensitive thing to do. Are you aware that areas which used to yield abundant samples for collectors have become seriously depleted? This is hard to imagine when walking over crunching shells on a beach. They too have a finite level. Nature, in her infinite wisdom, has ways of making us aware of her needs. Perfection: what is it that makes us think that the biggest and least blemished shell is the one to keep?



The shell which exposes its perfect ratio spiral structure through a 'broken' side is an equally wonderful thing. Did you know that shells reproduce by producing eggs often clumped in ribbons or bunches? The tiny creature has to grow its own shell throughout its life. To collect live shells a permit is necessary.

The SHELL, SEALIFE & ART EXPERIENCE at Seashell House, 8 Golf Street L'Agulhas is becoming the 'shell museum' of the area. Visit and enjoy the display of my own and donated collections as well as the amazing shell wall cladding. Yvonne (Mosie) Hope, 082 296 0144.

Rock formations between Brandfontein and Rietfontein se Baai. The orange lichen is a sign of clean pure air.



Environmental Education in Agulhas National Park

The high level objective for environmental education in Agulhas National Park according to the Park Management Plan for 2013 to 2023, is to work with governmental and non-governmental organisations to shape environmentally conscious citizens, especially from marginalised areas, in order to promote the needs of the environment. Environmental Education in Agulhas NP happened since 1998 with the EPWP programmes when the park was still in its project phase. The People and Conservation department was established in 2005 to run Environmental Education (EE), Awareness and Community facilitation programmes. In 2005 an EE programme was developed which was linked to the school curriculum at the time and developed further according to the EE focus of SANParks over the years. The programme is Park focused, also linked to the environmental calendar and is about experiential learning.



The EE and Kids in Parks programme are managed and were successfully developed by Alliston Appel, Senior People and Conservation officer, together with a supportive group of volunteers and staff members. Alliston is a qualified teacher who studied at the University of Western Cape and obtained a B.A. and B.Ed. Degrees, as well as a teacher's diploma.



The Environmental Education programme

The Environmental Education programme is based on the natural and cultural features of the Park, i.e. the fynbos, Wetlands, the coast, the Saltpans, the lighthouse, the Southernmost Tip, middens, fish traps, to name but a few of these features. It is backed up by activities like canoeing, hiking and swimming in the tidal pools in L'Agulhas.



Agulhas Kids in Parks programme

The 2013 Agulhas Kids in Parks programme starts on 1 October and runs until 18 October. The Kids in Parks programme started in 2006. The Albert Myburgh hostel in Bredasdorp was used as a venue from where the learners were transported to Bosheuvel and L'Agulhas for the programmes. From the start the rationale behind KiP was to get 500 learners through a Park per year. To reach this goal Agulhas received 50 learners per school group over five weeks, two learner groups per week.

The Bosheuvel precinct

Bosheuvel was identified as an environmental education venue in 2006. At the time the precinct consisted of a house, a barn and two worker's houses. Through much trial and error and an insufficient budget, the barn was turned into a lecture hall with a kitchen, ablution facilities and accommodation for a cook and bus driver. The two worker's houses were turned into dormitories for learners and can sleep 50 children and four teachers. In 2007 Bosheuvel as an EE centre received its first school groups for environmental education. In 2011 Bosheuvel became the training centre for the Biodiversity Social Projects and is undergoing extensive upgrading.

