



AgulhasNPark eBulletin



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August, the month for women and yellow in the veld

In August women are celebrated nationally for their courage, perseverance and just holding out under severe pressure and circumstances. In nature August is also the month of yellow in the Overberg, celebrating a new season of rebirth, growth and abundance to come.



Spotted in the Park



Geelstompie, Limestone pagoda, *Mimetes saxatilis*

R. A. Salisbury established the genus in 1807. The name is derived from a Greek word meaning to "imitate", referring to the leaves that are similar to some *Leucospermum* sp. *Saxatilis* is Latin and means growing among rocks. Grows and thrives in alkaline soils unlike other Proteaceae which prefer acidic soils. The vegetation type is called Agulhas limestone fynbos. It grows to two metres, flowers from June to December with 10 -12 flower heads. Red listed, Endangered (EN) and locally endemic. (Pictures and info by CRC)

Drive through the agricultural landscape of the Overberg to visit the Southernmost Tip of Africa



Connecting to Society

Tubular structures spotted near Churchhaven in the West-Coast National Park

West-Coast National Park is a sister park in the Cape Cluster. Recently a visitor to the West-Coast National Park, James Wagner, spotted "circles of stone" which are level with the water on the edge of the lagoon near Churchhaven. He spotted something similar, but much smaller at Quoin Point and it turned out to be a fossil tree root. The enquiry landed on John Pether's desk (a palaeontologist) and the explanation for these structures is very interesting. The large tubular structures or "circles of stone" at Churchhaven have in the past been thought to be fossil tree trunks, but they are in fact dissolution pipes formed in the soft dune rock. For an explanation of how they form see this article kindly made available by Ken Grimes: <http://www.hamilton-field-naturalists-club-victoria.org.au/images/pdf/D/solution%20pipes%20%20pinnacles%20k%20g2009.pdf>



Buffalo and Blue Cranes: A day in the life of a Junior Ranger

The Nuwejaars Wetland Special Management Area (NWSMA) played host to the Agulhas National Park Junior Rangers in July. Nine young nature lovers and adult assistants visited various NWSMA activities as part of their Junior Ranger Winter Camp. The young rangers, who are between Grade 7 and Grade 10, visited the buffalo at the boma, as well as the SMA offices at Haasvlakte for presentations. At the Boma that overlooks the Waagschaal Vlei, they were also introduced to renewable energy sources and structures made from natural and alien biomass resources. Former NWSMA Executive Member Mick D'Alton told the youngsters about the Quagga Project. In this project, a group of southern Plains Zebras are being selectively bred, in an attempt to retrieve the genes responsible for the Quagga's characteristic markings. The SMA is host to 14 'Quagga', including Freddie – rated as one of the top 'Quagga' in the country. The rangers also learned about the Blue Crane, South Africa's national bird. The Overberg region serves as a hub for the Blue Crane, which is listed as vulnerable on the Red Data List of Threatened Species. The NWSMA in particular provides the habitat that Blue Cranes make use of, including the wheat fields and wetland areas. The NWSMA will again partner with the Agulhas National Park in October, to play host to five schools, as part of the Kids in Parks Programme. From the NWSMA Executive Committee, a huge thank you to the Park, and in particular to the People & Conservation Section, for organising these important environmental education opportunities. The NWSMA is excited to be a part of building capacity for future conservationists. (Supplied by Heather D'Alton)



Agulhas Women

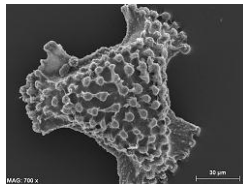
August is Women's Month in South Africa with specific programmes on or around 9 August. We celebrate all women working in Agulhas National Park conserving and managing the valuable natural and cultural heritage of the Southernmost Tip of Africa in their respective sections within the Park. Apart from having a female Park manager Agulhas prides itself in providing work to 357 women in total thereby helping the South African Government to empower women from all walks of life, and helping them to provide for their families. The Biodiversity Social Projects alone employs 341 women.



New species of *Riella* discovered at Cape Agulhas

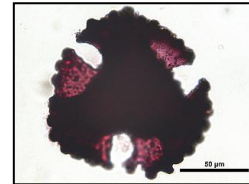
Researchers from Spain, José Gabriel Segarra-Moragues and Felisa Puche, very recently contacted Agulhas with very exciting and interesting news of a new discovery. They are busy with a world-wide study of the genus *Riella*, an Inland Salt Pan vegetation type. They recently revealed that they have cultured a new species from sediments collected around Cape Agulhas in June 2012. This species (*Riella trigonospora*) originates from the Springfield Salt pans. While studying the sediments they discovered another species (*Riella alatospora*) endemic to the Saltpan area. Species of *Riella* are very rare aquatic liverworts which have adapted to colonise ephemeral ponds of fresh and brackish water, like those that are abundant on the Agulhas Plains. José Gabriel and Felisa enquired about the possibility to collect more soil sediments from ephemeral pans in the area. The amount of soil needed does not have to be large; about 0.5 kg dry sediment collected around the perimeter of the pans will be enough. They were put into contact with the Cape Research Centre researchers who will now assist them in this research project. Knowing the distribution of these plants will contribute to preserve their diversity. (José Gabriel, Desertification Research Center-CIDE; Felisa Puche, University of Valencia).

For more information please read "Advances in the knowledge of South African *Riella* (Sphaerocarpaceae) and a new endemic species, *Riella trigonospora*." J.G. Segarra-Moragues, F. Puche. *South African Journal of Botany* 94 (2014) 166–176 or visit (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0254629914001276>).



Riella trigonospora
spore

The female *thallus* on
the far right



Hottentot Buttonquail *Turnix hottentottus* received new conservation status from BirdLife International

BirdLife International, the custodian of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Bird Species, has recently completed a review of the conservation status of the world's bird species. Dr Stuart Butchart, BirdLife's Head of Science said that the 2014 Global Red List is crucial, not only for helping to identify those species needing targeted recovery efforts, but also for focusing the conservation agenda by identifying the key sites and habitats that need to be saved, including Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas. Important to Agulhas National Park is that the Hottentot Buttonquail *Turnix hottentottus*, was identified as one of the newly recognised species now listed as globally Endangered. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species is the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of plant and animal species and the updated Global Red List for birds will help set further conservation and funding priorities. For more information, images, interviews or the whole article, please contact Martin Taylor at martin.taylor@birdlife.co.za; Tel +27 722777254. For all the changes see: <http://www.birdlife.org/globally-threatened-bird-forums/>. (Information supplied by Dr Wim De Klerk)

Rietfontein birding in August

The Rietfontein area is alive with birds. With the abundance of Fynbos species in bloom, it is no wonder. This is also the area to look out for the Hottentot Buttonquail. Birds to spot are Cape Weaver, Cape Clapper Lark, Common Waxbill, Southern Double-collared Sunbird, Cape Sugarbird, African Stonechat, Malachite Sunbird and many more.



Heritage homes

Anton Rupert, businessman and restorer of old houses, once said: "Historical buildings represent the milestones of history in material form. Historical buildings are the title deeds to the country that we love. We must preserve because we may not blithely obliterate the footsteps of our ancestors." Saying that, he referred to the diversity of buildings to be found in South Africa: from the temporary homes of early Khoi stock farmers and nomads, Cape Dutch homesteads, typical flat-roofed Karoo housing, British and German settler architecture, Georgian and Victorian styles and even the "Ostrich palaces". **Rhenosterkop** in Agulhas National Park is one such house, old and rich in history.

Rhenosterkop

Rhenosterkop was once a working farm where people work hard to make a living. People were closely related and no farm's history can be told without linking it to the neighbouring farms; as Piet van As says: ... *toe se tyd was grensdrade net vir skape en beeste* (fences were only for sheep and cattle). Being one of the oldest farms in the Strandveld, it was used for grazing together with Springfield, Ratelrivier, Rietfontein and Soetendalsvlei, most probably by Matthys Rostock Lourens who officially received grazing rights at *Renosterkop at Soetendaalsvalley on the Buffeljagtsrivier* on 21 February 1757. At the time he was already living at Ratelrivier. His son, Matthys Johannes, who continued farming on *Soetendaalsvalley*, was appointed as the *veldkornet* of the fieldcornetcy *Soetendaalsvalley* in 1799. On 6 June 1831 2482 morgen of Rhenosterkop was granted to Matthys Johannes Lourens (born 1753, died 1840), the *veldkornet*, by the Cape Government and registered formally in his name.



Rhenosterkop house in 1899



Rhenosterkop house in 2012, restored and visitor accommodation; section on the left demolished in the 1950s.

Matthys Rostock [1708 – c.1782], *stamvader* (forefather) of the Strandveld Lourense

The Strandveld is not only blessed with a rich biodiversity, but also with a wonderful history of people and events. One such person was Matthys Lourens, baptized in 1708 at Paarl, better known in the last half of the century as Matthys Rostock. Matthys' father was Johan Lorentz, a soldier in the service of the VOC. He came to the Cape from the seaboard town of Rostock in the former East Germany around 1698. The Overberg can rightly be considered the cradle of the Rostock Lourense in South Africa. Matthys and his second wife, Dina Maria Uys, whom he married on 19 December 1751, had 7 children, all born between 1753 and 1766. Exactly when and where Matthys settled in the Strandveld is open to debate. Some will say 1745 on the farm Ratelrivier; by that time his father-in-law already farmed at Buffeljags. Certainly it was one of his loan farms, but it is believed he settled on the farm Soetendalsvlei. Quite a number of Lourense, all descendants of Matthys, are still living, and had lived in the Overberg. (Researcher: Johan Lourens: *Lourens/Louwrens/Laurens families in SA*. Contributions in the form of stories [especially in the Overberg region] or general family information for a forthcoming Lourens publication will be appreciated. Johan.lourens@dha.gov.za)



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