



AgulhasNPark eBulletin

VOL 4 • NR 10 • September 2014

Conservation as Heritage / Tourism Month / Park week

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South African
NATIONAL PARKS

Agulhas National Park celebrates 15 years

On 23 September 1999 Agulhas National Park was officially declared in the Government Gazette (GN 1135 in GG 20476) as a national park. The key intention of founding the park was to protect the following four aspects: lowland fynbos, the unique wetland systems, the geographic location at the southern tip of Africa where two oceans meet and the rich cultural heritage. The park was established around the four hectares at the southernmost tip and expanded to the 21,971.0161 hectares it is in 2014.

Tourism in Agulhas National Park

It is Tourism month! We would like you to come and enjoy the splendour of Agulhas National Park by staying in our accommodation, walk through the Fynbos and along the coast and birding in the wetlands.

World Tourism Day ~ 27 September

This date was chosen as it coincides with an important occurrence in world tourism - the anniversary of the adoption of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) Statutes on 27 September 1970. The main purpose of World Tourism Day is to create awareness among the international community of the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political and economic values. In South Africa, tourism brings in foreign revenue and exposes nations to the South African culture. Eco-tourism involves creating a tourist industry which will help the economy of a country by creating jobs while promoting the sustainable use of natural resources. Tourists may visit areas to see and photograph wildlife and scenic beauty. However, the numbers of tourists and methods of approach in the tourism industry must be carefully monitored to maintain the spirit and natural status of an area and avoid disturbing both wildlife and ecosystems. (SOURCE: A Year of Special Days, 2012. Sharenet)



Cultural Experience

Learn more about the historical farms, the stone walls stretching for kilometers along the Soetanysberg, Saltpans, middens, fish traps, food from the veld and so much more and the huge impact the shipwreck survivors had on life and traditions in the Overberg.

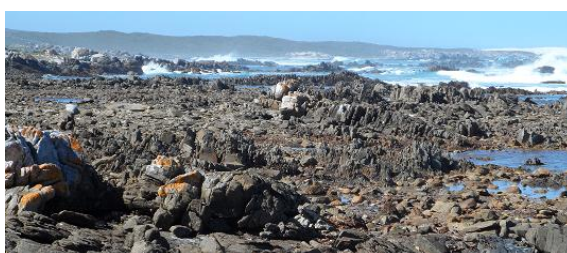


Connecting to Society

Agulhas Khoe-Khoe Park??

In 1999 the Cape Agulhas coastline from Suiderstrand to Brandfontein caught the attention of the Supreme Court. The Minister of Environmental Affairs at the time, Valli Moosa, was in dispute with the Overberg District Council. The question was whether this particular stretch of coast should be closed to all but landowners. The CSIR was called in to investigate. In a study done in 1998 by the University of Stellenbosch an archaeological reconnaissance report by L. Du Toit and A. Rehder, in association with Prof. H.J. Deacon, was filed. The report showed the importance of this particular stretch of coast as the core of Africa's Khoe-Khoe Park for eco-tourism. The aim of the investigation was to find examples of archaeological sites along the coast and to determine their significance. Archaeological sites along the coast are principally shell middens which are refuse heaps and a very visible sign of places people occupied. What are less visible are other elements usually associated with settlements like living and activity areas. Virtually all the shell middens date to the last 12 000 years when sea levels rose to near the modern level. Sea levels stabilised at the present level 4000 years ago and the best preserved shell middens are younger than this date. The rocky sections of the coastline were favoured by shellfish gatherers and it is along those sections that midden occurrences would be expected. Fresh water is also usually accessible close to a midden area. Middens are protected by the National Heritage Resources Act 25:1999 (the National Monuments Act No 28 of 1969), but in spite of that their destruction has continued under the pressure of development.

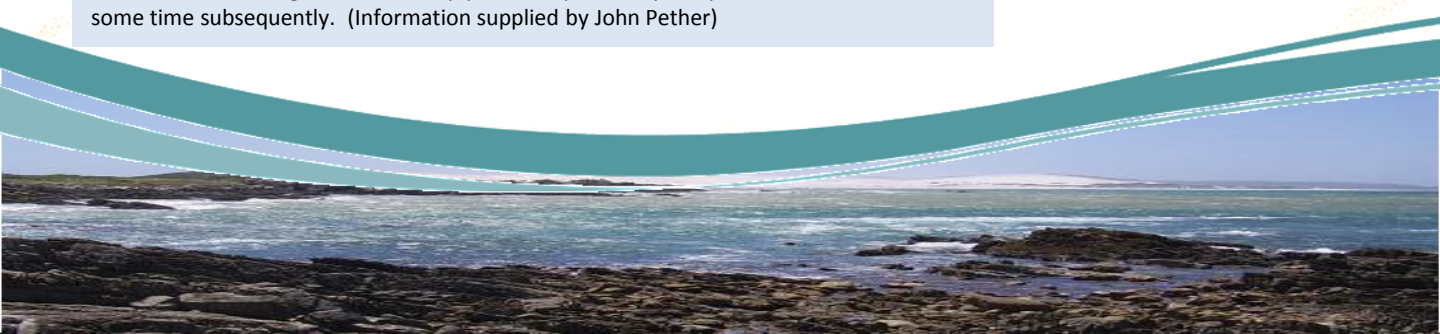
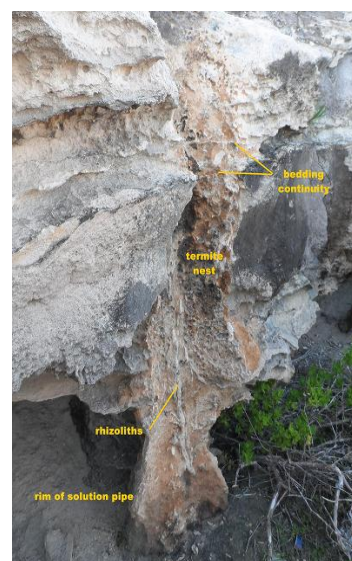
(SOURCE: *Agulhas Vuurtoring 1-3-1849 - 1-3-1999 Lighthouse: commemorative issue 150th birthday celebration*. Placaat, No. 2/1999)



The rich cultural heritage of the Southernmost Tip of Africa was one of four aspects why Agulhas National Park was proclaimed in 1999. The middens are part of this heritage.

Our natural heritage: an eroded solution pipe west of the Lighthouse

An interesting impression on the rock face of the calcrete outcropping west of the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse was noticed in May this year. It was speculated that it might have been a root of a milkwood tree or a tree itself that grew through a crack in the rock. After the article on solution pipes in the West-Coast NPark a picture was sent to John Pether. And, indeed it is an eroded solution pipe. The picture shows typical features of the internal red decalcified soil, with the carbonate re-precipitated to form the rim and calcified roots and burrows. Also visible is the relict bedding continuity across the pipe. This is quite typical and shows that the pipe formed after some initial cementing of the dune sands along bedding planes. A fossil root system (rhizoliths) occupied the pipe, as well as a termite nest. This illustrates that in the calcrete terrain the solution pipes play an important ecological role. And age? It is suggested that dune deposition took place around 160 to 190 thousand years ago (ka) and another phase 120-80 ka. Generally, the younger phase is preserved closer to the coast, the older phase inland. However, the older phase can also be preserved close to the coast in places. The older phase has a well-developed calcrete capping, the younger less so. At a guess, since the calcrete in the picture looks like the older, thick calcrete, it could have formed in the older, 160-190 ka aeolianites. The solution pipes would have formed after the dunes became inactive and their initial calcreting. The solution pipe was exploited by the plant roots and termites at some time subsequently. (Information supplied by John Pether)



Thys Ahrends, appointed as the new Assistant Cluster Manager for the BSP projects in the Cape

Thys Ahrends was appointed in 1999 as task assessor of the Elim Working for Water (WfW) Project. His primary function was to assist the project to develop from a daily wage system to a contract and tender system and this process was successfully completed in 2000. This resulted in the Elim contractors being transferred to the newly formed Agulhas WfW project. At the time he was also involved with the water monitoring in the Nuwejaars River system commissioned by the Working for Water Programme with Toens and Partners as the consultants. Thys took up the position of task assessor within the Agulhas Working for Water project in 2000 and became the assistant project manager a year later. He was appointed as project manager in 2003. Under his management the project's budget grew from approximately R2.5m to nearly R13m in 2014. Over the past 15 years new land was added to the initial four hectares bought in 1998, which meant that WfW's programme had to be adapted to include newly acquired alien infested land. Thys was instrumental in the project's successes and growth which included numerous awards. During his leadership the Agulhas WfW project won twice the "Flagship award" as well as the Cape Region Award for best project. Since October 2012 Thys was acting as the Assistant Regional Cluster Manager for BSP projects in the Cape and from 1 August 2014 appointed in the position. Congratulations, Thys, to a well-earned position!!



Elim 1824 - 2014



Elim village was established in 1824 by the Moravian Mission Society on the farm *Vogelstruiskraal* along the banks of the Nuwejaars River. The village is named after the Biblical Elim where the Israelites rested after their trek through the Red Sea. The village developed into a totally self-sufficient community with vegetable gardens, water-mill, shop, etc. The church and *werf* are of historical importance with the windmill declared as a national monument. Elim was the first community to trade in fynbos. The *Matrassewejaartjie* *Syncarpha argyropsis* was the first fynbos specimen to be picked and exported. Elim is celebrating its 190th anniversary with events throughout 2014. Visit the Elim Heritage Centre to learn more about the history of Elim and its people.



Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum



Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum

The Bredasdorp Museum was officially declared a Provincial-aided Museum on the 4th December 1968. Since 1975 it was called the Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum and specialises in shipwrecks along the South African coastline. The Museum consists of three sections. The Old Parsonage is a typical Strandveld house and is furnished with articles salvaged along the coast. The Independent Church houses the shipwreck museum with various shipwreck and maritime artefacts. The Old Coach House houses carts and vehicles from days gone by. Recently "A Memory Lane" exhibition was added in 2011. The museum buildings are national monuments. For more information visit www.bredasdorpmuseum.co.za.



Matrassewejaartjie *Syncarpha argyropsis*



Plant biodiversity on road verges and public open spaces –
Gavin W. Maneveldt, Department of Biodiversity and Conservation Biology,
University of the Western Cape

South Africa (SA) boasts an astonishingly high biodiversity. The Western Cape (WC) Province occupies only 11% (129,462 km²) of SA's land area, but is home to more than half of the country's biodiversity, containing 56% of the country's plants, 51% of the country's birds, 51% of the country's mammals and 65% of the country's fish species. Unfortunately, the WC province is also the country's most threatened reservoir of plant and animal life. Currently more than 1700 species of plants in the Western Cape are threatened with extinction; this equates to 68% of all SA's threatened plants. Roughly 65% (21 species) of the known plant extinctions from SA have been from the Western Cape. While just over 20% of the Western Cape Province is under formal conservation protection, it is estimated that a high percentage of the province's threatened plants occur outside of these formally protected areas. Of these threatened plants, those that occur on road verges and public open spaces are particularly vulnerable. Threats to biodiversity on road verges and public open spaces include: permanent habitat loss (from urban and agricultural expansion, and infrastructure development); habitat degradation (through overgrazing, improper conservation management practices and inappropriate fire regimes); and invasive alien plant species (that displace the indigenous species). Although most species are not currently under threat, like many other areas in the Western Cape, the plant biodiversity on the road verges and public open spaces of the Cape Agulhas region are potentially threatened largely because little conservation effort is being applied to such areas.



Pictures: G. Maneveldt



Celebrating our conservation heritage

The Nuwejaars Wetland Special Management Area (NWSMA) is participating in - and benefiting from - Heritage Day celebrations in the region. Invasive alien plants cleared on the NWSMA will be used to light up a 1km long braai on 24 September. The Braai Day, organised by the Black Oystercatcher, raises funds for the NWSMA's on-going conservation efforts. The Heritage Day activities aim to celebrate and support the rehabilitation of the NWSMA's wetlands - home to the critical Nuwejaars Wetland Ecosystem, and to benefit the fauna and flora living around this ecosystem. The NWSMA has reintroduced buffalo to the Agulhas Plain - a first in 200 years, and hippo for the first time in 150 years. The group is also part of the Agulhas Biodiversity Initiative (ABI) Alien Clearing Project, with the NWSMA clearing more than 1400 hectares in the past three months, creating more than 60 jobs. This is the second year the Heritage Day celebrations will be held in the area, supporting the NWSMA's work. Visitors can enjoy wine tasting, live music and good food - in the name of conservation. For more info visit: <http://blackoystercatcher.co.za/braai-day/>

