



AgulhasNPark eBulletin



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**"We will lose something deep within ourselves if
we allow wilderness to be destroyed" Dr Ian Player**

www.sanparks.org

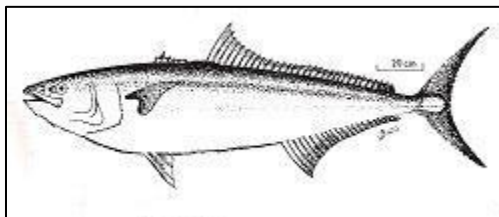
We wish you all of the best and more for 2015!!

Yellowtail (Geelstert) on the run!!! Fishing at the Southernmost Tip

Fishermen flock from far and wide in January and February to the Agulhas waters to be part of the Yellowtail run. These are the traditional months when the South-Easter wind, and sometimes the Black South-Easter, which brings rain, must blow solidly for eight days – then the fish appear. The South-Easter makes the sea water brown, dirty and cold and brings the bait on which fish feed. After eight days the wind turns westerly, and the fish come closer into shore to feed. When the Black South-Easter blows in September or October, as it has done in 2014, it is normally a good year for fishing. Locals also believe that when snakes are plentiful the fish will also be in abundance.

Geelstert, Yellowtail, *Seriola lalandi*

The Cape Yellowtail is a common, but seasonal, game fish along the Cape Agulhas coastline and is much sought-after. It is mainly an inhabitant of Atlantic waters. It is a favourite with fishermen because it is a strong fighter with an excellent taste. Yellowtail occurs in offshore shoals, but will move to areas with abundant food and to spawn in the warmer coastal waters about 30 to 40 km from the coastline during the summer months. In the past Yellowtail was caught with purse seine nets, but because of dwindling numbers, this method was stopped. Yellowtail is however still a fish that can be managed effectively to resist the threat of overfishing. (SOURCE: VAN DER ELST, R. 2010. *A guide to the common sea fishes of southern Africa*.)



Chuckies

Chuckie is the name for local fishing boats which can be seen in Struisbaai harbour. There are various explanations why it is called a *chuckie*, but the main reason is because it is very slow and small. In English slang *chuckie* is the name for a loved one or close friend. Before engines were added, sails and oars were used. The original *chuckie* was built from wood by local fishermen. Later it was fitted with an engine and built with fiberglass. The crew consists of eight to 10 people, depending on the boat license; the Skipper, the driver, the anchor man - the rest of the crew catch fish with hand lines. The boat can take up to two tons of fish. The fishermen believe the *chuckie* is safer than speedboats.



Launching from in front of the Nostra site in the days before the Struisbaai harbour

Dan sê jy nog, Meneer, die vis is duur. (Then you say, Sir, the fish is expensive.) (FROM: *Ken jy die see...* by Uys Krige, Afrikaans poet, 1960.)



Connecting to Society

Summer holidays at the sea a South African tradition from way back

Trekking to the coast for a summer sea-side holiday during the Christmas and New Year period has always been a major attraction for many South Africans over years. Regional and local history tells us that this was particularly the case for people from inland districts and towns. For the Albertyn family, who farms at Zeekoeivlei between Struisbaai and Bredasdorp, and who owned the Agulhas Rest Camp Area in the last century, this annual "trek" took on a different proportion. Their holiday to the Lagoon was an annual adventure, according to Peter Albertyn. With no refrigeration, everything had to be taken along for the Christmas holiday. The load included a live sheep, a chicken coop, a milking cow - and even a sucking pig destined for the Christmas table. It began with a seven hour mule wagon trip from Zeekoeivlei over the dunes. The route they normally followed was through the dune field at the back of the rest camp. On some occasions the Albertyns first visited L'Agulhas from where they then followed a track at the back of the Agulhas Ridge to the west. In those days the dunes were bare and the highest dunes had names such as Seagull's Head and Kilimanjaro. Fish and shellfish were always plentiful at Lagoon House, formerly known as *Pietie se Huis*, which was built in 1898. Many a galjoen was caught directly in front of the cottage, while casting from a wagon parked there. Perlemoen (abalone) and Alikreukel (periwinkle) were easily collected from the rocks without even getting your feet wet. The family braai was on drums on either side of the house, depending on the wind direction. Fresh water was drawn from a fountain near Lagoon House. At first the house consisted of only the middle section with two rooms and a kitchen with an open fire place. Rooms were added on both sides of the original cottage. There were two *pondokkies* on the *werf* (yard) in which the children slept, the boys in one and the girls in the other. The men bathed in the *Baai* east of the house and the women in the Lagoon. The Human family, who also had a holiday house nearby, called it Uncle Peter's Bay. The Lagoon will always remain a paradise for the Albertyn family. Their wish is that it will be cherished by many people for years to come.



Birding in Agulhas National Park – Dr W.A. De Klerk

Agulhas National Park (ANP) once again revealed itself as an incredible birding spot. On December 18 at about six am a group of 12 birders left the Bosheuvel facility on a birding trip. The morning was crisp, but ideal for birding with a light breeze. Even before leaving Bosheuvel the group spotted an adult Spotted Eagle-Owl, (Gevlekte ooruil) *Bubo africanus* on a water tank behind some Eucalypti - a good omen. The first stop was near Soutbosch where a Black-Shouldered Kite (Blouvalk) *Elanus caeruleus* had a nest with three nestlings; a once in a life-time experience to see this from such a close distance. Then, onto the wetlands along the Nuwejaarsrivier where a great variety of water birds were heard and seen. The highlight of this area was eight Hottentot Teal (Gevlekte eend) *Anas hottentota* and a Red Knot (Knoet) *Calidris canutus*!! The first record of both in the ANP! The best sighting of the day, however, after moving from the river through the old fields, the grassland area and the milkwood stands, sighting a wonderful variety of birds, was at the Springfield Saltpans. The Lesser Flamingo (Kleinlamink) *Phoenicopterus minor* rarely occurs in the ANP, and if so, in small numbers of one to 20. We found at least 250 of the endangered Lesser Flamingo on the saltpans!! What a special sight. Could they be considering nesting in the park? Birding opportunities in the Agulhas National Park simply never fail the avid birder! We are certainly blessed with a very special protected area at the Southern Tip of Africa! Read more about the bird species sighted in the February and March eBulletins.



There's a Tortoise in Town!

With their aeons of wisdom, ability to survive and unique perspective of life, the Travelling Tortoise family recently entered the tourism market. They are compiling tourist maps, sell and support satellite trackers for their human friends with less navigation skills than themselves and, because humans do not carry their homes with them, Travelling Tortoise is also currently building lodges in Namibia. *Lighthouse Tortoise* made his way to the Southern Tip of Africa where he joined forces with the Agulhas National Park to open a shop at the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse. Although Lighthouse Tortoise knows all about the weather and can also feel it in his legs when rain is predicted he is aware that his human friends need some gadgets to see how strong the wind is blowing and when it is going to rain, so he will be selling a range of weather instruments. Then of course there will be range of unique crafts as gifts and mementos for locals and visitors alike. Tortoise realises the importance of sharing wisdom and will thus offer books on subjects relating to the region and conservation. Come take a stroll at the southern tip of Africa and visit Tortoise @ the lighthouse, quench your thirst with a cold drink and buy a unique gift to share this special place called Agulhas with someone.

Tortoise @ the Lighthouse opened shop on December 5, 2014 and will be open every day of the week, all year round. www.travellingtortoise.com, www.facebook.com/travellingtortoise.



Prevent the "roadkill" of our Tortoises

The Southern Tip community is very fortunate to live with tortoises in their gardens and on their roads; unfortunately not so fortunate for the tortoises. The tortoise regularly seen on the roads is the Rooipens, Angulate Tortoise, *Chersina angulata* and an endemic species to the Southern Tip of Africa. They are unique among African tortoises in having an undivided gular at the front of the plastron. The Angulate was identified in 1831 and the name derives from the Greek word *chersinos* which means land tortoise. Within its natural range the natural predators are mongoose, jackal, baboons and predatory birds (such as crows) which attack the hatchlings. But a man-induced threat is "roadkill" - many tortoises are killed by speeding vehicles on our roads. We beg motorists to please be aware of tortoises crossing the roads; they are especially visible before rainy weather. It is illegal to remove tortoises from the veld and a permit is required to move or to keep them in captivity. It is an offence under the Animal Health and Welfare Act of 2006 to remove tortoises and such an action could result in a heavy fine. Suiderstrand resident Pierre Massyn, who "loves" tortoises - and all wildlife - has been instrumental in facilitating tortoise signboards along South African roads. They can today be seen along the West Coast and even in Namibia. Man-alone he battled with bureaucracy for many years to have the tortoise awareness boards accepted - especially on what he calls the "death road", between Struisbaai and Bredasdorp. The tortoise sign on this road is near the Elim Road turnoff and bears warnings in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa.



Suurvy, Sourfig, *Carpobrotus acinaciformis*

December-January is sourfig time at the Southernmost Tip. Sourfig jam is a well-known and sought after delicacy in the Strandveld, and, traditionally, the fruit formed part of the Khoisan people's diet. The Sourfig is a mat-like succulent with trailing stems with large rose-purple flowers from August to October. Away from the coast it flowers until December. The fruit is fleshy and become tough and leathery. The plant is protected by law and a permit from Cape Nature is needed to harvest. The fruit is ripe from the end of November until end of December when it is harvested to make the famous Sourfig jam. Dry fruit is also used to make jam. Nothing beats fresh bread and Sourfig jam with a piece of freshly fried Yellowtail. The late Aunty Minnie Groenewald from Buffeljags, as many other Strandveld women, made the most delicious jam with soft ripe sourfigs - one kilogram of sugar with one kilogram of sourfigs. Boil until brown and enjoy - soft pieces of fruit with a sour taste.



Read more: SCHWEGLER, M. 2003. Medicinal and other uses of Southern Overberg fynbos plants.)



Lighthouse tourism – James Collocott

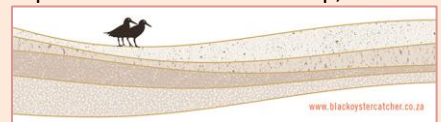
There has always been something special about lighthouses that draw people to them. Whatever the reason, lighthouse tourism is a very marketable product which offers many opportunities. The reasons are that lighthouses are located in very prominent locations, isolated spots, far away from noisy traffic with minimal atmospheric pollution, thereby offering magnificent views and a unique atmosphere, the ideal setting for a proper getaway. Lighthouses present a tremendous historical component with a degree of mystery that appeal to anyone with an even slightly romantic nature, an ideal opportunity to use these attractive and unique assets for tourism purposes. Due to the circumstances and restrictive policies of the past, visitors were not always allowed to visit lighthouses, but the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse played an important role in changing this approach and opening of lighthouse doors to the public. A lighthouse museum was established in 1994 in one of the annexed rooms of Cape Agulhas lighthouse, while a tea-room was established in a second room. This paved the way for other South African Lighthouses to accept the public as visitors, as in September 2002, the then Honourable Minister of Public Enterprises, Mr Jeff Radebe symbolically opened the doors of eight other South African lighthouses by launching the lighthouse tourism venture of the National Ports Authority of South Africa. (To be continued)



Cape Agulhas Lighthouse's 1st order traditional lens, producing a light of 7.5 million candela that can be seen at a distance of 31 nautical miles (57 km)

Agulhas National Park and Black Oystercatcher Wines – connecting to society

The Human family of Black Oystercatcher (BO) Wines has a special connection with the Agulhas National Park. They have sold a special holiday site that was in the family for about 44 years to SANParks in 2001. This site is where the Agulhas Rest Camp is today. Black Oystercatcher Wines recently redesigned their label, logo and look to better capture the essence of who they are and the partnerships they value and foster. The new look now includes two Black Oystercatcher birds on the abundant plains of Cape Agulhas. These special birds pair for life, in a relationship based on the strengths of any good partnership – cooperation, trust and commitment. Agulhas NP values this approach and sees Black Oystercatcher Wines as an important partner in this relationship, as also reflected in Black Oystercatcher's involvement in the Nuwejaars Special Management Area. The elements, according to which the new logo was designed, also reflect those which Agulhas NP wants to conserve for all South Africans and the rest of the world. They are: the unique **climate** and **geology** of the Cape Agulhas region; the four diverse **soil types** found here and which are distinctive to this region. Together with the cool **coastal winds**, they are responsible for the concentrated fruit flavours and distinctive minerality found in the grapes, and ultimately the wines. The Human family, has been farming at Cape Agulhas for generations the last ten years – since the launch of Black Oystercatcher Wines – have been particularly special. Agulhas NP wishes Black Oystercatcher the best for 2015 and to stretch their horizons further.



Swarttobie, African Black Oystercatcher, *Haematopus moquini*

The African Black Oystercatcher is the only species of oystercatcher that breeds in Africa and is confined to the shorelines, estuaries and lagoons of South Africa and Namibia. It is South Africa's most rare, endemic coastal bird. They are more rare than the southern right whales that visit our shores in winter and are listed on the International Red Data list as a threatened species. The name oystercatcher can be misleading because the birds feed mainly on mussels, limpets, whelks, crustaceans and worms. They rarely eat oysters.

