

AgulhasNPark eBulletin

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International Earth Day 2017

Earth Day is a global attempt for international cooperation to address issues such as global warming, toxic waste, destruction of rainforests, expanding deserts and ocean pollution. Individuals and organisations are encouraged to use Earth Day to take environmental action in their area. Education is the foundation for progress. We need to build a global citizenry fluent in the concepts of climate change and aware of its unprecedented threat to the planet. We need to empower everyone with the knowledge to inspire action in defense of **Literacy**. Before we can solve the dire environmental threats of the 21st century, we must build a global citizenry knowledgeable in environmental science and fluent in local and global ecological issues. (SOURCE: <http://www.earthday.org/earthday/earth-day-theme/>; www.earthday.org).

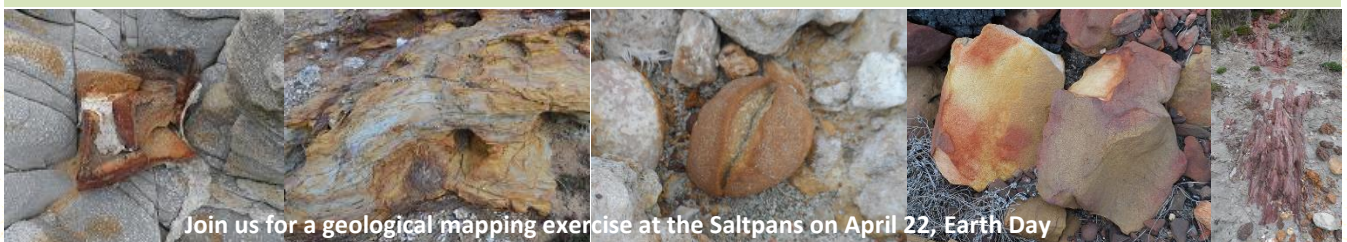
Strandveld Icons

The Salt pans

Salt was the first mineral to be exploited in South Africa during colonial times. Salt was used for flavouring food, curing skins and hides and preserving fish and meat. The story of salt and its use as a flavour enhancer stretches back millennia. Salt gets its name from *salarium* (Latin for salary). Roman soldiers were sometimes paid in salt, then a valuable commodity, which gives some idea of the historical value of what is now an every-day condiment. The traveller and explorer Peter Kolbe reported the discovery of saline pans near Elim and Bredasdorp during his stay at the Cape between 1705 and 1713. In 1791 the VOC administration at the Cape took over ownership of these pans and leased them to prospective operators. This system remained unchanged after the Cape became a British colony in 1806. The Saltpan at Springfield was the largest pan and the largest producer of salt and was exploited by the *Springfield Salt and Farming Company (Pty) Ltd* from 1914 to 1950. The pan and the mineral rights were sold to Lord de Saumarez in 1950, who continued its exploitation until production ceased in the 1960s. The remains of the concentration and crystallisation ponds, production plant (factory) and manager's (or caretaker's homestead) are now part of the cultural heritage in the Agulhas National Park. The Salt pans area today is a very good seasonal birding spot.



Rock and stone formations at the Salt pans



Join us for a geological mapping exercise at the Salt pans on April 22, Earth Day



Buttonquail Birding Bash 2017

The Nuwejaars Wetlands Special Management Area, in association with the Agulhas Plain Birding project, Overberg Crane Group, Strandveld Vineyards and the Black Oystercatcher Restaurant, will be hosting the Agulhas Plain's first Buttonquail Birding Bash on Saturday April 8, 2017. The event focuses on finding the elusive Hottentot Buttonquail and to build up existing knowledge of this species, which would assist in conservation efforts in the area. The event includes a guided tour of the farms within the Nuwejaars Wetlands Special Management Area, refreshments and a prize giving! Booking is essential and the cost per person is R130,00. This includes entrance to the Nuwejaars Wetlands SMA, a guide, refreshments. All profits go to the Nuwejaars Wetlands SMA 'Bird Hide Fund'. Email Erica Brink to make your booking at erica@nuwejaars.com.



Flight for Birders course

A bird identification course for novice and intermediate bird watchers is being held at the Bosheuvel Environmental Educational Centre, Agulhas National Park, on May 11 and 12, 2017. The cost is R500 for adults which includes the course notes and certificate endorsed by BirdLife South Africa. For enquiries and to register and secure a place, contact Elaine at mwjasser@mweb.co.za or 082 455 8402. All further queries could also be forwarded to Elaine. For more details visit

http://www.westerncapebirding.co.za/Overberg/events/618/flight_for_birders_course_at_bosheuvel%2C_agulhas_national_park.



March bird sightings on the Agulhas Plain – Wim De Klerk

A trip to Strandveld and Blomfontein resulted in the sighting of almost 50 species which included four new species and the most Southern record of an **African Black Duck** (Swarteend, *Anas sparsa*) so far. Other sightings included Cape Longclaw, (Oranjekeelkalkoentjie, *Macronyx capensis*), Cape Clapper Lark (Kaapse klapperjie, *Mirafra apiata*), Lanner Falcon (Edelvalk, *Falco biarmicus*) and a Giant Kingfisher (Reusevisvanger, *Megaceryle maximus*). A quick trip to Brandfontein on the coast revealed beautiful fynbos which looks splendid after the alien clearing! Sunbirds were everywhere and the **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters** (Blouwangbyvreter, *Merops persicus*), on the way back, were still in place! On Vlooiakraal farm, the next day, 50 species were identified and another pair of Southern African Black Duck was found. Other "nice to sees" were: **Cardinal Woodpecker** (Kardinaalspeg, *Dendropicos fuscescens*), **Black Saw-wing** (Swartsaagvlerkswael, *Psilidoprocne holomelas*), **Greater Double-collared Sunbird** (Groot-rooibandsuikerbekkie, *Cinnyris afer*). The jackpot was, however, the **Spotted Flycatcher** (Europese vlieëvanger, *Muscicapa striata*) only the third record in the Agulhas Plain. The western mud plains of Soetendalsvlei was found bone dry. On the way back an adult **Martial Eagle** (Breëkoparend, *Polemaetus bellicosus*) was photographed for the first time in the Agulhas Plain. With permission from the farmer, Heuningberg was visited from the farm Wiesdrift. Another 56 species were identified. The Heuningberg was burnt two years ago and the fynbos is simply stunning and the first big record was spotted: two adult Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk (Bleeksingvalk, *Melierax canorus*) (previously only juveniles). Could this be due to the improvement of the habitat over the past few years? It certainly appears to be so. Leaving Wiesdrift, in the setting sun - the cherry on the cake - a pair of Southern Black Korhaan (Swartvlerkkorhaan, *Afrotis afra*) quietly flies off to safety.



April in Khoe *gama/ais* means "crooked fire", "krom vuur", hungry times.



Agulhas Wetlands Contractors supporting colleagues

On March 14 2017 one of the BSP (Biodiversity Social Projects) Project Managers, Roxanne Adams, from Table Mountain NP North Section, sent out a request for assistance. A devastating fire raged through the informal settlement of Imizamo Yethu in Hout Bay leaving about 15 000 people desolate and displaced. A least 50 of these residents are employed in the EPWP projects within SANParks. They lost everything. As soon as the Agulhas Wetlands Contractors heard about the tragedy they immediately sprang into action. On Friday March 17, 2017 they donated R1,500 in cash and two very big suitcases – filled to the brim – with clothing to their colleagues in the Cape. This generous gesture of compassion for fellow staff members is heart-warming and is a reminder, and even more so a challenge, to all of what can be achieved by working and standing together as a team.

Contractors Thozama Diop, Peter (Pawn) Thomas, Velesta Ahrends, Vuyokazi (Judy) Mtshungwa

Agulhas Working for Wetlands ‘The Pietersielieskloof challenge’

Lana Du Toit, Project Manager, Agulhas Working for Wetlands and Coast

During the past financial year the Agulhas Working for Wetlands teams set out on a new approach to wetlands rehabilitation - a pilot intervention type in peat soils using geo-cell chutes to address head-cut erosion. Although geo-cells have been used for smaller problems in the past, it was decided to use a softer option where usually harder options such as gabions or concrete structures were used. The soft option is more cost effective and the footprint area much smaller on the wetland. So in essence, if softer options can be used in place of harder options and it is successful, this may change the face of wetland rehabilitation. Pietersielieskloof is a tributary of the Nuwejaars River. This unchannelled valley-bottom wetland forms part of the broader Nuwejaars wetland complex and was identified to be a priority wetland within the Agulhas Plain. What happens upstream in the catchment area of wetlands has a major impact on what happens downstream. Read in the next issue the challenges brought on by Pietersielieskloof.



Pietersielieskloof erosion



Geo-cell chutes

New Environmental Monitors appointed in Agulhas East



Emile Du Plessis



Siphelele Madubela

Ratelrivier farmstead and stables restoration nearing completion



Farmstead

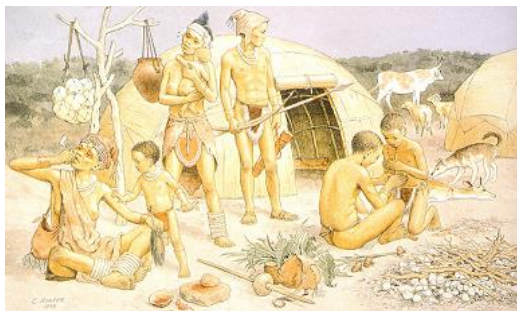
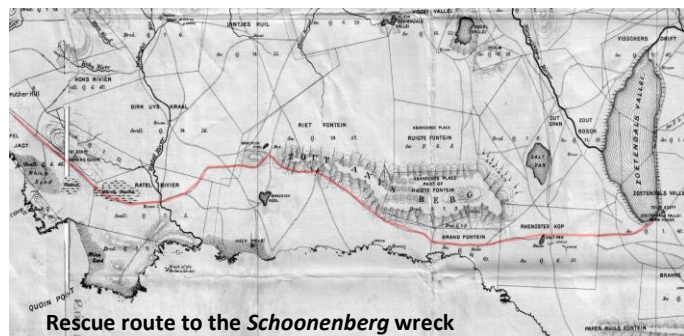


Stables



Shipwreck survivors and the Khoekhoen

On December 3, 1722 five or six Khoekhoen met the survivors of the *Schoonenberg* on the beach of the present Struisbaai. Horse riders from Caledon told them about the shipwreck. They were paid with tobacco and other “*wissegasjes*” to fetch fresh water for the survivors. (SOURCE: MALAN, Jan G.: *Die VOC-skip Schoonenberg: waarheid en verdigsel*, dl 1: *Die stranding van 1722*. SA Tydsk vir Kult-Gesk 27(1), Jun 2013, p77.)



The Chainouqua

Southern Africa was called “The land of fire” by the first European mariners sailing around the Southern Tip of Africa. The nomadic Khoekhoen burnt the veld annually to ensure good grazing for their animals and an annual harvest of edible bulbous plants, for themselves, the next season. People were living a hunter-gatherer lifestyle for many thousands of years. The Khoekhoen reached Southern Africa about 2 000 years ago and can be seen as the first stock farmers in the area. They were divided into a number of sub-groups. The **Chainouquas** lived in the western Overberg

from the Hottentotsholland Mountains to the riviersonderend area and sometimes moved south towards the coast. According to Khoekhoen custom, the tribe took their name from their “kaptein” (captain) and by around 1666 they began to be called *Soeseqwa*, after their chief captain Sousoa or Soeswa. They were influential, wealthy in cattle and numerous, according to the number of kraals observed by travellers. **Sousoa (Soeswa)** was the chief captain in 1661 until his death in 1663. Sousoa was seen by other Khoekhoen groups as the *Khoeque*, paramount king. (SOURCE: DE JONG, M. 2016. *A forgotten first people: the Southern Cape Hessequa*. N.p.: Watermark Press; MEFFERT & VAN HEMERT. 1996. *Gids tot die uitstalling Die Khoisan van die Overberg*. Swellendam, Drostdy Museum; Nienaber, G.S. 1989. *Khoekhoense Stamname: ‘n voorlopige verkenning*; edited by Dr Lita Webley.) (To be continued).

Treasure maps or not? – Jimmy Herbert

“Did the Dutch East India Company (VOC) draw *treasure wrecks* maps and did they call it that?” According to historical records on the shipwrecks lost around Cape Agulhas this appears not to have been the case. Rather, what appears to have been the norm, when sending expeditions to places “unknown”, was to give expedition leaders strict orders to keep a Journal, as well as to indicate their position on a map. In accordance with this protocol, when the first two salvage teams were sent to the shipwrecked *Zoetendaal* in 1673, their orders were to go by LAND and SEA and for both to keep good journals of their position, what they experienced and did there. Some nine years later, when a salvage expedition was sent to the *Joanna* (a new unknown area) again, they were instructed to keep journals and to plot the route taken onto a map. In such journals, their exact daily trips from one water source to the next was recorded, as well as important sights and experiences. (To be continued)



Southern Tip day Talk & Meal: “No log, no journal, no chart – DIAS VOYAGE”, talk by Esna Swart, Captain’s Dinner by the Suiderlig Dienssentrum, Struisbaai, 19 May 2017

