



# AgulhasNPark eBulletin

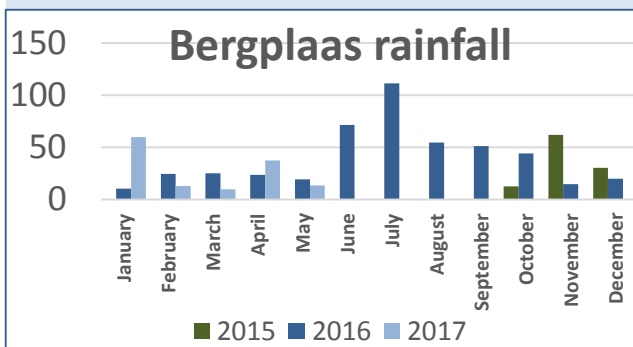
VOL 7 • NR 8 • July //gai/lab 2017

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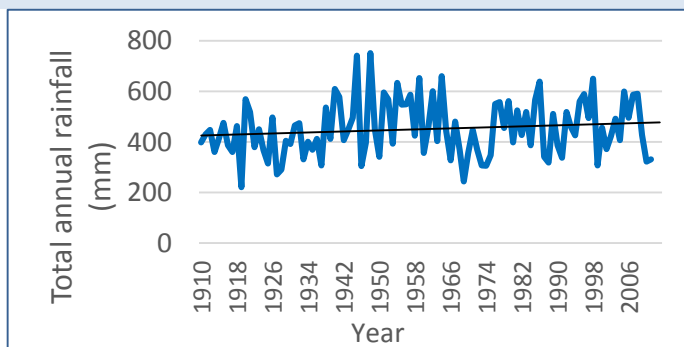


## Changing rainfall patterns on the Agulhas Plain - Nicola van Wilgen, Global Change Scientist, SANParks

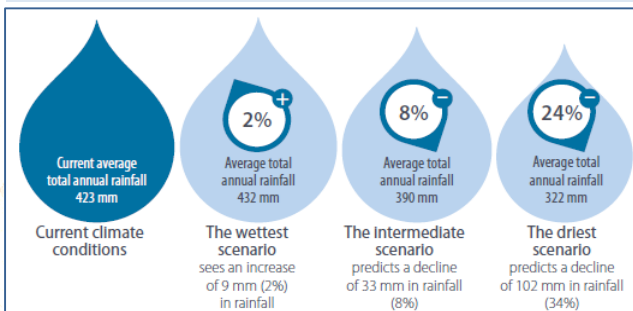
Interpreting the change in rainfall patterns is difficult as the total rainfall received varies from year to year and also follows cycles over many years. Rain is driven by complex processes including ocean temperatures and currents that affect global circulation of heat, air and clouds. Therefore detecting and predicting changes in rainfall for any region is very difficult. No overall change has been detected in rainfall over the last 100 years at Agulhas, but wet and dry cycles are clearly evident. Data from the South African Weather Service indicate that the Agulhas region received only slightly below average rainfall in the period between July 2016-April 2017, but that March, April and May 2017 were significantly drier than previous decades, with about 25% less than the expected rainfall. Rainfall data from the Bergplaas weather station in Agulhas National Park support this, and show that January 2017 appears to have been particularly wet. Current climate models suggest that rainfall in the Agulhas region can be expected to decline by around 8% by 2050, although greater declines are possible under a more extreme scenario as shown in the figure on the bottom left. General climate change predictions also suggest that rainfall is likely to become more erratic – high in some years and low in others, making water saving and the implementation of long-term water saving plans essential. Large storms and downpours like the one in mid-June are also expected to increase.



Rainfall at Bergplaas since October 2015, when the weather station was installed, shows it was particularly high in January this year, but there is not yet enough data to make any year-on-year comparisons. Total rainfall for 2016 on top of the Bergplaas Mountain was 471mm.



Historical rainfall data from a farm (courtesy of Pieter Albertyn) near the Agulhas National Park was 452mm. No significant trend in rainfall is obvious over the entire period, but wet and dry cycles are evident.

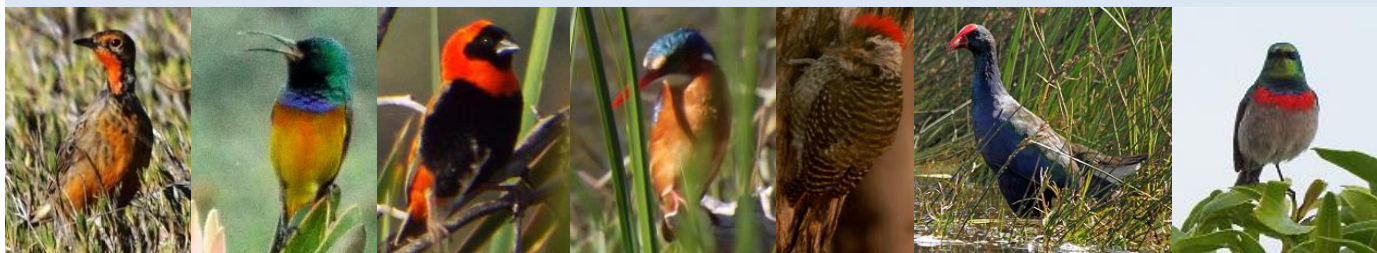


This figure shows how climate change might impact on current rainfall totals, represented here by agro-hydrology data averaged across all grid cells (1.8 x 1.8 km) of which all or part occur in the park, thus representing current averages at a landscape level. Although it is not yet clear which of the future scenarios is the most likely for the southern coast of South Africa, taken collectively, it appears that no change to a moderate rainfall decline is likely. This range of predictions does not include rainfall predictability which may be more erratic (high in some years, low in others, or fewer but heavier rainfall downpours in place of lighter steadier rain events).

Models by DEA collaboration: SANBI, CSIR, SANParks



The Agulhas Plain Birding website went live in April 2017. The aim of the website is to promote the goals of the Agulhas Plain Birding project: to raise general awareness of the Agulhas Plain as birding destination; to monitor the 27 pentads for SABAP; to compile and monitor the Agulhas Plain bird list; to protect the avifauna of the Agulhas Plain by creating awareness among the local farming community; to lead the way in further research into endangered species such as: African Grass-owl, Hottentot Buttonquail, Southern Black Korhaan and Striped Flufftail; to grow birding tourism in the area; to train bird guides for the area; to monitor the Langezandt species and organise "Friends of the Langezandt" and to develop the infrastructure for birding tourism, a website and bird hides. The website has bird lists relevant to the Agulhas Plain, describes the best birding routes to follow and even has a list of the bird friendly accommodation in the Plain. Bird photographers are invited to register on the website and post their best pictures on the "Gallery" which is a record of birds photographed exclusively in the Agulhas Plain. The website has proved to be a great success and within the first two months had 379 visits of which 159 were unique visits. More than 3 800 pages were opened and 23 500 hits were registered, a sign that the visitors use the website extensively and do not just browse without interest. The website was designed by Sam Beeslaar of Suiderstrand and we are grateful for his contribution in promoting the Agulhas Plain as a birding destination.



#### Fishery Control Officer Appointments in Agulhas Conservation teams

On June 8, the Agulhas Conservation teams celebrated World Oceans Day 2017 at the Gansbaai Harbour with officials from the Fisheries branch of the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF). Field Rangers, Environmental Monitors and technical staff were issued with Fishery Control Officer (FCO) cards at the DAFF office in Gansbaai. A need for formal training to enforce the Marine Living Resources Act (MLRA) 18 of 1998 and the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) Act 24 of 2008 was identified. All Conservation staff now have FCO identity cards to identify themselves when patrolling the coast. This will increase the law enforcement capacity in and around the Agulhas National Park and help to protect the marine resources along the beautiful Cape Agulhas coastline.



#### Plant monitoring and cyber-tracker training in Agulhas National Park

Rangers from the Agulhas National Park always enjoy a visit from researchers and ecologists of the Cape Research Centre (CRC). It gives them an opportunity to learn more about the plants in their area and to do some interesting training, like working with a cyber-tracker. Recently Trevor Adams of CRC visited the Park again. New species were found and herbarium samples were taken by Environmental Monitors, assisted by the Field Rangers, and some cyber tracker training with Trimble Juno 3. Unfortunately the weather was bad and not as much was done as was planned. The Ranger group experienced again the excitement of finding new plant species.

July in Khoe, //gai/ab, means "make fire, the cold is getting worse"



*Amphi-thalia* sp.

*Syncarpha canescens*

*Aspalathus pinguis*

*Freesia caryophyllaceae*

*Erica filipendula*



## Caught on camera ...



Luiperd, Leopard, *Panthera pardus*

## Smooth Horsefish, *Congiopodus tovus*



Picture:  
S. Du Plessis

This creature was caught in July 2009 by Pieter Thompson and in May 2017 another one by Theunis Newman; not very common, but also not that uncommon; distributed along the entire South African coastline and occurs at a range of depths from 10 to 150m. (Info: Prof G. Maneveldt)

## Fallow deer on the Agulhas Plain – Lindsay Lewis, Section Ranger, Agulhas West

Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*) are indigenous to Europe and have been spotted in large numbers in and around the Agulhas National Park (ANP). They are active throughout the day but in areas with high human disturbance they tend to be more active at night. Males and females occur in separate single sex groups, but will congregate in large herds in open areas where there is plenty of food (Invasive Species South Africa 2017). Fallow Deer are considered “invasive” for the following reasons. They are an exotic alien species brought to South Africa in the 19th century for venison production. SANParks is mandated by the Protected Areas Act to eradicate invasive alien species or bring them under control. As there are no large predators in ANP to assist with population control, the Deer are breeding very successfully and their numbers are increasing. With the limited nutrients available in fynbos for larger game, they are out-competing indigenous animals like the Bontebok (Endangered) and Red hartebeest. In general, Deer either eliminate or retard the growth of young trees, shrubs and herbs, allowing grasses and a few unpalatable species such as bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and rushes (*Juncus* spp.) to increase which the indigenous South African game cannot eat. As shrubs and herbs constitute much of the species richness of Lowland fynbos this loss or reduction may reduce the diversity of this threatened vegetation type (Gill. 2000). Deer can also cause damage to commercial practices such as damaging forestry seedlings, agricultural and horticultural crops, commercial flower crops, orchards, irrigation systems and fences. To control Fallow Deer in the national park, a key strategy is preventing more deer from entering wilderness areas. Most Fallow Deer are farmed for their meat (venison) and must be kept within fenced areas. It is an offence to allow these Deer to escape into the wild. Deer control is often best done by collaborative exercises, involving all land owners and conservation bodies as the negative impacts they cause to biodiversity affects us all. (SOURCES: GILL, R. 2000. *The impact of deer on woodland Biodiversity. Forestry commission*; [www.invasives.org.za](http://www.invasives.org.za) 2017. Invasive Species South Africa. All Rights Reserved; [www.business.qld.gov.au](http://www.business.qld.gov.au). 2017 The State of Queensland 1995–2017. Queensland Government; edited by Carli Cowell, CRC)



## The joy of living in a park: animal life in our front garden – Waterford Ranger station



Duiker, *Sylvicapra grimmia*



Pictures: Lindsay Lewis



### The *Matjieshut* of the Khoekhoe

The *matjieshut* was the traditional home of the Khoek stock farmer. The hut consisted of a framework of rounded poles between three to five metres in length, covered by reed mats. This suited the nomadic lifestyle of the Khoek very well as the hut could be easily demolished and loaded onto their pack oxen. If available the hut was covered with animal skin on the outside or fastened on the inside for protection against winter cold. In summer the huts were cool. The reed swelled in wet conditions which makes it waterproof during rainy weather. In the middle of the hut was a hollow for a fire and further away hollows in which the inhabitants slept. All huts had a *kookskerm* or cooking shelter next to it. It was a round enclosure made of small bushes packed together and kept in place with upright poles planted in the ground. The cooking fire was made in the middle and people would gather around it at mealtimes. At the entrance longer forked poles were planted onto which utensils and meat were hanged to keep out of reach of animals. (To be continued)

(SOURCE: MEFFERT & VAN HEMERT. 1996. *Gids tot die uitstalling Die Khoisan van die Overberg*. Swellendam Museum; DEACON & DEACON. 1999. *Human beginnings in South Africa: uncovering the secrets of the Stone Age*. David Philip; Pictures: Dr Lita Webley and Namaqua files)



### **Strandroof along the Overberg coast: *Oriental Pioneer* 1974 – Jimmy Herbert**

Since 1673 with the first recorded marine loss, the Dutch Fluit *Zoetendaal*, the Overberg boasts many stories of *strandroof* (pillaging) and the purchasing of items at the auctions that were always held on the beach opposite a loss. One such intriguing story of *strandroof* unfolded in 1974. On Monday, July 22, the 58,926 tonnes *Oriental Pioneer*, stranded on the Northumberland reef, some 3km offshore. The Overberg was exposed to a major oil pollution catastrophe and the insurers, realising that the ship might have been beached on purpose, were contemplating payment or not. During the period of uncertainty regarding payments for any form of salvage, the locals started to plunder the ship. Struisbaai and Gansbaai fishermen went out to the *Oriental Pioneer* with their chukkie boats and dropped off people to commence with the looting. One well-known fisherman broke into the store room situated in the bow section, finding thousands of canisters of paint. Apparently he recovered so many tins of paint that, once stored in his garage in Struisbaai, he was unable to close the garage door. Whatever was available was taken. The chief plunderers are reputed to be two well-known Overberg divers who sailed with a trawler from Gansbaai. They cut a section open on the landside (port side) and through this hole removed fridges, freezers and any big or large equipment out of the relatively luxurious *Oriental Pioneer*. Apparently the trawler was so heavily laden that some hours after leaving the scene, the trawler sank. In the end the entire ship was illegally stripped of valuables and moveable equipment. Most items that could not be removed, were destroyed. Some beautiful chandeliers were even ripped from the ceiling and crashed to pieces.



1980

1974