



AgulhasNPark eBulletin

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South African
NATIONAL PARKS

We wish you all a happy and peaceful 2019

2019 is an eventful year for the Agulhas National Park. It is 20 years since the Park was officially proclaimed in 1999 - and the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse will be 170 years old. Celebrations are being planned throughout the year according to the environmental and cultural calendar.

It all began in 1997 and 1998 ...

Barry Heydenrych was appointed as Agulhas National Park Coordinator in 1997 to begin interactions with stakeholders (State entities, communities, planning forums and heritage committees) to communicate and explain the plans to establish a national park at the Southernmost Tip of Africa. He operated from offices in Stanford. On September 14, 1998 SANParks acquired a four hectare portion of land at the southernmost tip of the African continent to establish a national park. In 1998 portions of the historical *Papenkuilfontein* farm of about 96ha and owned by Transnet were negotiated for and, in an important agreement between the National Ports Authority (NPA) and SANParks, were formally declared as part of the park in **1999** (GN 1135 in GG20476 of September 23, 1999). Included in this agreement is the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse which is managed by SANParks, but the NPA retained its right to maintain and operate the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse (which was excluded from the declaration) and associated navigational infrastructure. On February 1, 1998, the Elim Working for Water project started with the immense task of clearing the Agulhas Plain of alien vegetation.



Celebrations follow the environmental and cultural calendar

The Agulhas National Park's year programme is developed annually according to the environmental and cultural calendar. This year the programme will focus on celebrating the Park's 20th birthday through activities and displays.

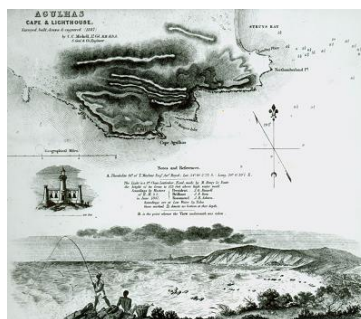
February: Wetlands Day



Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on February 2. The international theme for 2019 is **Wetlands and Climate change**. The **Agulhas Plain wetlands** is one of the main reasons the Agulhas National Park was established. A wide variety of wetlands (freshwater springs, rivers, estuaries, floodplains, lakes, vleis and pans) occur here and the ecological functioning of these wetlands and other fresh water systems is of utmost importance in these times of severe drought and climate change. The work done by the Agulhas Working for Wetlands to restore and rehabilitate these wetlands will be celebrated. A Wetlands Birding Day and Walk are planned for February 2. Visits will also be organised to rehabilitation sites.

March: Cape Agulhas Lighthouse 170th Anniversary; National Water Week

The **Cape Agulhas Lighthouse** is the second oldest working lighthouse in South Africa and also the oldest government building in the southern Overberg region. It was built in 1848 and the light was lit on March 1, **1849**. The lighthouse is still functional. The Cape Agulhas Lighthouse 170th Anniversary will be celebrated through displays and interpretive walks.



Connecting to Society

World Water Day is celebrated every year on **March 22**. The Working for Water project began on the Agulhas Plain in 1998 with its office in Elim. The outstanding work that has been done over the past 20 years to eradicate the infestation of alien plants will be celebrated in collaboration with Agulhas Working for Water. Walks and visits to alien clearing sites, as well as birding outings, are planned.



April: Earth Day

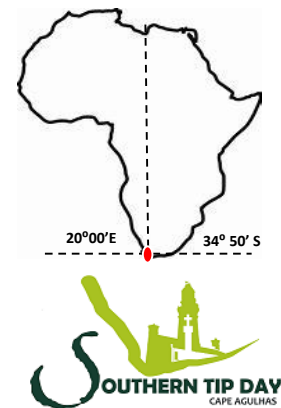


Earth Day is held annually on **April 22** to promote awareness of and appreciation for Earth's environmental issues of which climate change is a severe threat to man's future on Earth. It is also an opportunity to celebrate Planet Earth. Walks to visit specific geological sites will be organised.

May: Africa World Heritage Day; Southern Tip Day; International Museum Day; Biodiversity Day

Africa World Heritage Day is celebrated on **May 5** to increase international awareness of African heritage. The Southernmost Tip of Africa and the Agulhas National Park as a World Heritage Site will be celebrated through various activities.

Southern Tip Day is celebrated every year on **May 16**, the day Bartolomeu Dias passed the Southernmost Tip on his way back to Europe in 1488. The **geographic location of the Southernmost Tip of Africa** was the main reason why the Agulhas National Park was established. The geographical, spiritual, cultural and historical values of the area, as well as the tourism potential, are of considerable significance, not only locally but also globally. Celebrations will consist of the Southern Tip Talk and Meal and Interpretation of the Southernmost Tip area.



International Museum Day is celebrated on **May 18**. Visit the Lighthouse Museum and Tower, the Bredasdorp Shipwreck Museum and the Elim Heritage Centre.



Biodiversity Day is celebrated on **May 22**. The **Lowland fynbos vegetation type** is one of the reasons the Agulhas National Park was established. Lowland fynbos grows predominantly on the coastal plains in the south-western Cape. There are four vegetation units within Lowland fynbos with a high conservation status. Walks at different sites to experience the Lowland fynbos biodiversity will be organised.

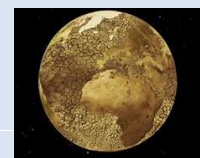


June: World Environment Day; World Oceans Day, World Day to combat Desertification and Drought Environmental Day

is celebrated on **June 5**, weather permitting.

World Oceans Day is celebrated on **June 8**. A coastal clean-up activity will be organised.

World Day to combat Desertification and Drought is celebrated on **June 17**.



August: Women's Day

Women's Day is celebrated on **August 9**, with a special walk.



September: Heritage Month

The Agulhas Plain has an exceptionally rich **cultural history** and this is one of the main reasons the Agulhas National Park was established; from the Late Stone-age, San, Khoe herders, Shipwrecks, European settlement, Fishermen, agriculture, flower farming, salt mining, until today, as well as the second oldest working lighthouse on the South African coastline. SANParks week, Coastal Clean-up day, the **Park's birthday**, World Rhino day, Heritage day and Tourism day will be celebrated.



October: Marine month; Weed Buster Day

During **Marine month** we will concentrate on Coastal clean-up actions and plastic pollution awareness, and coastal birding with emphasis on the African Penguin (African Penguin Awareness day, October 13).

For **Weed Buster day** Hacking activities will be organised together with the Working for Water teams.



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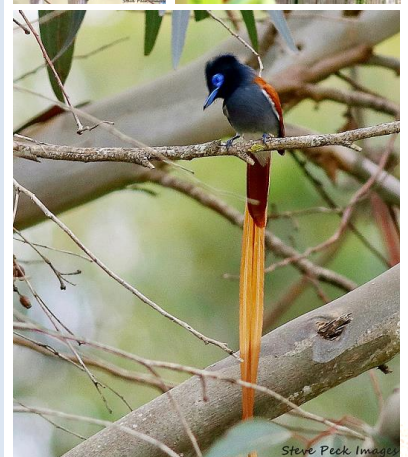


November: Birding Big Day

Birding at various sites in the Park on **November 26**.

African Paradise Flycatcher, *Terpsiphone viridis* (Paradysvlieëvanger) – Steve Peck, Napier Birding

Paradise Flycatchers are intra-Africa Migrants, which are found throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa. They have a liking for riverine and open forest areas and are regularly found in gardens, even in densely populated areas. The Flycatchers are passerine (perching) birds. They have short legs, and sit upright on small branches from where they can catch small insects such as flies, moths and butterflies by hover-hawking (hunting on the wing), or they can be seen darting under foliage to grab insects such as beetles, ants and spiders. The African Paradise Flycatcher is the most eye-catching of all Flycatchers found in this region, with both the male and female being similarly brightly coloured. Their chestnut orange back, crested blue-grey head and a bright blue bill and eye wattle makes them easy to identify. In the breeding season of October to December, the male grows long central tail feathers, used as a courtship tool in his flight displays to attract a mate. Often heard before being seen, a high-pitched *jig-see* call gives them away. Tiny egg-cup shaped nests are constructed in the fork of a tree, sometimes up to 10m off the ground, where two to five eggs are laid. Both parents take responsibility for feeding and raising their young and they will defend their nest and territories vigorously. They are a favourite host for brood parasites such as Diederik Cuckoo and Honeyguides, both of which can be found in our region.



Steve Peck Images

Keilkani January in Khoe means big eland (eland calves are growing up)



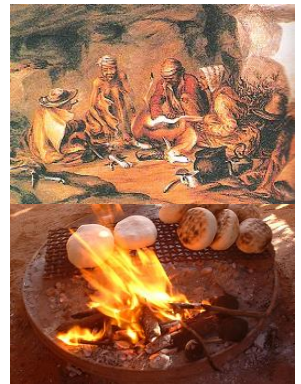
Southern Wildlife and Environmental Society (SWAES) - Neil Falck

Here at the southern tip of Africa we are in the privileged position to live very close to nature. We should cherish this and try to not only conserve, but also to assist our wildlife wherever possible. The Southern Wildlife and Environmental Society (SWAES) is a non-profit organisation (NPO 191-557) with its main objective being to advance nature conservation in the Cape Agulhas region through wildlife rescue, support, rehabilitations, research and education. The organisation will also work in collaboration with other nature conservation and wildlife-rehabilitation organisations. SWAES aims to serve as a wild animal ambulance, responding to call-outs from the public, to rescue or collect injured animals. We will stabilise and move such animals to specialised rehabilitation institutions for further care. Animals that have been assisted by SWAES include penguins, coastal birds, birds of prey, sea turtles, tortoises and snakes. SWAES will also respond to calls from the public to catch and safely relocate any unwanted snakes from private properties. Please also feel free to let us know about any conservation issues that need to be raised in the Cape Agulhas area. We ask the community to support our cause and to contact us when they see an animal in need. For more information contact Niel Falck 083 973 2511, Pamela Falck 076 486 9996.



Camp fires belong to South Africa

The earliest evidence of camp fires made by our human ancestors was uncovered in a cave in South Africa, suggesting that the practice may have started one million years ago. Hints of such activity have been found in Africa, Asia and Europe, but the earliest signs of fire were believed to be scorched pot pieces in Israel, dating to around 700 000 to 800 000 years ago. Fragments of burnt animal bones and stone tools that appear to be even older have since been found in layers of sediment at the *Wonderwerk* Cave in north-central South Africa where earlier excavations have shown a significant record of human occupation. The control of fire would have been a major turning point in human evolution. The impact of cooking food is well documented, but the impact of control over fire would have touched all elements of human society. Socialising around a camp fire might actually be an essential aspect of what makes us human. (Source: Unknown)



Sourfigs – observations by Ian Fortuin continues

Sourfig harvesting creates jobs and contributes towards the local economy. The harvesting season is from late November to May, just before the rainy season starts; hence references to early and late figs. Harvesting starts very early in the morning until the heat of the day; from 6am until noon. Harvesters must always be on alert for ticks on reeds, snakes and the heat. Harvesters leave 20 percent of the fruit on the plant for sustainability. Harvesting encourages further growth. The Working for Water and Wetlands projects clearing alien vegetation and opening up natural veld, contribute greatly to the propagation of sourfigs. Drought and not harvesting have a negative influence on the propagation of sourfigs (although there is no scientific evidence to back this up); Records are being kept of how many figs are harvested for research purposes. The fruit can be eaten dry and is a good laxative. The sap of the leave are used medicinally for blue-bottle stings and in medicine for aids patients who have problems with swallowing. The medicine is registered as “Virobuster” with the University of the Free State, where the research is being done. It also helps for warts. Sourfig is a good groundcover against soil erosion and stabilises soil. It is also a good natural firebreak and reduces fire from spreading. Insects and animals assist with the pollination and reproduction of the plant. Dry sourfigs can be kept for years in a cool dry place.

