



AgulhasNPark eBulletin

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Heritage & Tourism Month

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Heritage and Tourism month

Tourism Month is celebrated annually in September, and provides a heightened month-long focus on the importance of the sector to the South African economy. Tourism Month features themed activities that are aligned to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) World Tourism Day Celebrations that take place annually on September 27. The 2019 UNWTO theme for World Tourism Day was **Tourism and jobs – a better future for all**, which highlights the tourism sector's vast capability to create jobs and therefore reduce the country's unemployment rate. This sentiment echoes so much more because of the present economic state South Africa is in due to a virus which kept the people of South Africa behind closed doors. For South Africans, known as an outdoors nation, now is the time to rediscover its natural and cultural heritage. (<https://www.gov.za/TourismMonth2020>)

World Tourism Day 2020 Theme

The World Tourism Day 2020 celebrations will focus on **Tourism: Building Peace! Fostering Knowledge!** as stated by the European Council on Tourism and Trade (ECTT). The day will be dedicated to exploring the contribution of tourism to foster peace and bringing nations together. The Council decided to mark the event with themes like: Culture, History, Sustainable Development Goals and World Heritage. (<https://www.pr.com/press-release/795065>) This will tie in very well with South Africa's Heritage Day on September 24.

Rediscover the Southernmost Tip of Africa, your piece of a World Heritage site

The Agulhas National Park welcomes you back to come and celebrate the incredible natural and cultural heritage of the Southernmost Tip of Africa.

Agulhas Rest camp

The Agulhas Rest camp is situated on the coast, 10,3km from the Park's office in L'Agulhas on the road to Suiderstrand and consists of chalets and a guest house. It was decided that 10 of these chalets, consisting of three Family Cottages and seven Single Chalets, will be open during Lockdown 2 for visitors. Either two individuals or a family of four will be allowed per chalet. The guest house, Lagoon House, is not open. Visitors book in at Reception at Main Road 214 L'Agulhas, where they will go through the required Covid 19 procedures. Reception hours are from 8h30 to 16h30 (Monday to Sunday) and check-in from 14h00 and check-out before 10h00. No late check-in is allowed. There will be no room service for long stays. On leaving after their stay visitors will again go through the Covid 19 procedures at Reception.



Southernmost Tip, Cape Agulhas Lighthouse, Fish-traps

Agulhas National Park is an open access park and the Southernmost Tip is open to visitors. Unfortunately the Lighthouse and Museum will not be open, yet. The fish-traps at Cape Agulhas and Rasperpunt can be explored at low-tide.



Hiking and walking trails

The 5km circular Rasperpunt hiking trail is open, as well as a walking trail from the Cape Agulhas Lighthouse, descending down to the shipwreck and back to the Lighthouse, about 6,5km. The Two Oceans hiking trail is **only** open to overnight visitors in the Rest camp. Walk along the coast to experience the rock formations, life in the rocky pools, coastal birding, coastal fynbos, colourful lichens and the only visible shipwreck, the Mishu Maru.



Birding

Drive the Struisbaai-Elim road for amazing bird sightings on the wetlands and pans. Drive to the Springfield Salt pans by turning off at the Springfield/Brandfontein turn-off for great flamingo sightings. Enquire at the Agulhas Reception in L'Agulhas for permits to visit the Springfield Salt pans. (Pictures: L. Wessels, 29/08/20)



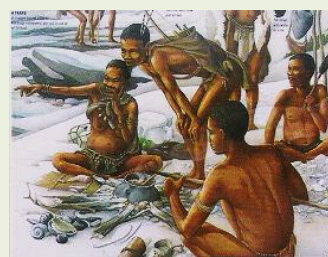
Where have all the Korhaan gone? – Wim de Klerk

In 2010 when I met Johannes Uys at Vissersdrift he asked this pertinent question: “Where have all the Korhaan gone?” He explained that the **Southern Black Korhaan** and the **Karoo Korhaan** were much more common on the farm during his childhood. In 1957, Robinson, Robinson and Winterbottom, described Karoo Korhaan as fairly common and Southern Black Korhaan as “Common in the lands and macchia”. During the SABAP1 project (1987-1992) over a 5-year period, the reporting rate of Karoo Korhaan was 5.8% (25 records) and that of the Southern Black Korhaan 48.1% (215 records). During the Agulhas Plain Birding project and SABAP2 (2008 – 2019) the recording rate for Karoo Korhaan was 0.5% and that of the Southern Black Korhaan only 5.1%. This correlates to a shocking 5.3% and 43% drop in their respective numbers. During the Agulhas Plain Birding project, over a 10-year period, 0 Karoo Korhaan and only 8 Southern Black Korhaan were recorded! And now the question remains: Why the rapid decline?

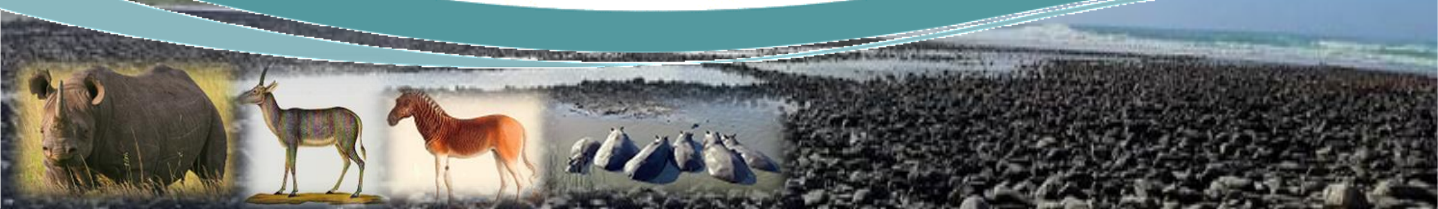


Early humans thrived in this drowned South African landscape - Holly Ober, University of California

Early humans lived in South African river valleys with deep, fertile soils filled with grasslands, floodplains, woodlands and wetlands that abounded with hippos, zebras, antelopes, and many other animals, some extinct for millennia. In contrast to ice age environments elsewhere on Earth, it was a lush environment with a mild climate that disappeared under rising sea levels about 11,500 years ago. An interdisciplinary, international team of scientists has brought this pleasant cradle of humankind back to life in a special collection of articles that reconstruct the paleoecology of the Palaeo-Agulhas Plain, a now-drowned landscape on the Southern Tip of Africa that was high and dry during glacial phases of the last 2 million years. Some of these articles have been highlighted in previous eBulletins. These Pleistocene glacial periods would have presented a very different resource landscape for early modern human hunter-gatherers than the landscape found in modern Cape coastal lowlands, and may have been instrumental in shaping the evolution of early modern humans. Some of the oldest anatomically modern human bones and artefacts have been found in cliff caves along the coast of South Africa. For many years, the lack of shellfish in some layers at these sites puzzled archaeologists. In spite of apparently living near the ocean, the inhabitants hunted mostly big game—the sort of animals that typically live farther inland. During most of the Pleistocene, the geological era before the one we live in now, these caves were not located on the coast. With so much of the Earth's water locked up in continent-sized glaciers, sea level was much lower, and humans could have thrived between the cliffs and a gentler coastline miles and miles to the east. (SOURCE: <https://phys.org/news/2020-05-early-humans-south-african-landscape.html>)



World Rhino Day, 22 September



First ever ‘Field Guide to Renosterveld of the Overberg’ released

The first *Field Guide to the Renosterveld of the Overberg* has been completed and released. This comprehensive guide includes 980 Renosterveld species and 140 animal species, which include birds, insects, reptiles, fish and amphibians you will find in this habitat. The authors are Dr Odette Curtis-Scott, Director of the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust, Mike Goulding, Nick Helme, Rhoda McMaster, Sean Privett and Prof Charles Stirton. The book brings to life one of the world’s most threatened habitats – and is a vital addition to any nature lover’s field guide collection. Renosterveld is one of the most threatened habitats on earth – with only 5% remaining. Most has been lost to agriculture, while it also faces threats from land degradation and broad-scale chemical use. However, it is known as the richest bulb habitat on Earth, and houses the highest levels of plant diversity known within the Mediterranean ecosystems globally. Renosterveld is perceived as the ‘ugly’ sister of Fynbos and has been neglected and misunderstood for too long. The book is available at all major book shops. (Flower images from the book)



Historic herbarium specimens as bio-cultural assets: an examination of herbarium specimens and their in-situ plant communities of the Agulhas National Park, South Africa - Carly R. Cowell, Pippin M. L. Anderson, Wendy A. Annecke

European colonization (1500–1800) was a time of acquisition and nature was often seen as a collection of objects. Such objects in the natural world include living and non-living specimens listed according to their contributions to science. In botany these take the form of dried plants collected, and kept as herbarium specimens, remaining as a permanent record that can be perpetually referred to. Plant collections in Africa, and South Africa, date back to some of the first exploratory voyages from Europe and many of these specimens have been designated as type specimens. Certain specimens are the first recorded collections of a species holding historic value. While some may have been retrospectively denoted as type specimens, meaning can be drawn from these early collections where they carry a certain scientific status and purpose, lending additional value to their role in bio-cultural heritage. Herbarium specimens hold significant scientific value as objects of information representing the living world, unmatched as a historic baseline. Historic botanical records are generally the longest standing record of a species occurrence used by scientists for many purposes and provide more than just species information. Herbarium specimens, including type specimens, are used for comparative purposes, such as the prevalence of pests and diseases, monitoring temporal changes in climate or phenology. Given an accession number for tracking they provide verifiable proof and credibility to biological and ecological science. These curated historical datasets can be used to investigate environmental history and answer fundamental conservation questions and form an important baseline for conservation managers. Herbarium specimens are well recognised in the academic literature as scientific records in their own right. However, the use of historical data do have a number of limitations and should be used with caution when undertaking contemporary research. Historic herbarium records are presence only records, often with minimal descriptive notes to provide more information of habitat and associated species. We argue that their associated in-situ plant populations carry heritage value, like archaeological artefacts and associated excavation sites. Environmental humanities literature supports a view that objects and places hold more than a purely scientific value and cultural relict plants are already recognised. Aspects of cultural and biological heritage speak directly to the core mandate of the South African National Parks (SANParks) which ‘...is the conservation of South Africa’s biodiversity, landscapes and associated heritage assets, through its system of national parks’ available.

(SOURCE: *People Nat.* 2020; 00:1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10087>)



Restio calcicola
Collected near Ratelrivier, the type specimen from the original collections. The site has been lost as it was ploughed for crops many years ago.



Example of the description of early collections of plant specimens
1912, *Portulacaceae* sp,
Spring beauty, by Collis

Xoub/gu/khab in Khoe means diarrhea moon (abundance of milk causes diarrhea)

The Cape Honey Bee – the ultimate feminist and part of the Strandveld's natural heritage – Richard Penwill

Honey bees have been described as 'the miracle-workers of nature'. Worldwide, they play a leading role in pollinating flowering plants. Bees and their flowering plants are interdependent. The bees provide pollination services to their plants who in return provide the bees with pollen and nectar. The encroachment of man through urbanization and agriculture has greatly diminished their natural habitats. The geographical area now broadly occupied by the Cape provinces is the ancient and natural habitat of the Cape Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera capensis*) which, like bee species elsewhere, has now lost much of its original territory to mankind's presence. The Agulhas National Park provides a protected sanctuary for the rare and multitudinous indigenous flora (which we call 'Fynbos') peculiar to the region and has likewise secured a place for these superior pollinators to thrive and do their invaluable work. Over thousands of years, different sub-species of honey bees world-wide have adapted to their particular environments. There is, however, a unique characteristic that is found only in the Cape Honey Bee. In her article "A Honey Bee's History and Origins" (14 January 2019) by Eve Puttergill, she says: "There is one race which, although of small economic importance, possesses an apparently **unique biological character** which renders it of great importance in the study of the genetics of honey bees. In all other races, when a colony is rendered queenless, laying workers may appear which are capable of laying drone eggs only. **In *A m capensis*, the Cape Bee, when a colony is deprived of its queen, a laying worker appears within a few days which, for a period, is able to lay predominantly diploid worker eggs. From these eggs true queens capable of being mated can be raised, re-establishing queen rightness in the colony**". In a very recent article published in May 2020 from the University of Sydney we read: "In honeybees, the ability of workers to produce daughters asexually, i.e. *thelytokous parthenogenesis*, is **restricted to a single subspecies inhabiting the Cape region of South Africa, *Apis mellifera capensis***". (Yagound et al: 'Thelytokous Parthenogenesis, the defining feature of the Cape Honeybee, *Apis mellifera capensis* Current Biology 2020, <https://doi.org/10-1016/j.cub.2020.04.033>). The geneticists may find this the defining feature of our *Capensis*, but those of us who share their habitat know that what really distinguishes them, is their Fynbos honey. It is wonderful that part of our natural heritage should be edible at all; but that it should also be so delicious is surely miraculous! (More interesting facts to follow from the Beekeeper's notes.)



Have you heard? Bumblebees (*Bombus* sp) have been discovered on Mount Everest at more than 5,600m above sea level, and in scientific tests, they coped in a flight chamber that simulated conditions at 9,000m - higher than the 8,848m summit of Mount Everest. At 9,000m, air pressure is about a third of that at sea level, so it is harder to fly, with less air for wings to beat against; it is also harder to breathe. (Africa Geographic, 24 July 2020)

Guns on the Overberg shores – Jimmy Herbert

Once upon a time, the Overberg shores were littered with ships' cannons. The first to make a cannon deposit was the Dutch Fluit **Zoetendaal**, that struck the Cape Agulhas coast in September 1673 during a high spring tide; also the first recorded shipwreck. Dutch ships were known to have a shallow draft to facilitate their sailing in the shallow Dutch sandbank waters. With the **Zoetendaal's** shallow draft, a strong wind from behind and it being high spring tide, resulted in the vessel ending up close to shore – about 200m out. Over time, she broke up leaving her five anchors on the spot of her demise. Her cannons, in turn, were washed closer to shore and ended up spread out on the rocks over almost the full distance to shore. Over the years, most have been removed, and some can still be found in the gardens of the odd Struisbaai home. The next to 'donate' was the English East Indiaman **Joanna**. In the early hours of Monday June 8, 1682, this 550-ton three-deck vessel carrying 36 heavy cannon struck the coast. As she broke up, her guns were spilt everywhere towards the shore. It appears that some washed a full kilometre into the shallows. When Oloff Bergh and his salvage team arrived at the scene on a low spring tide in July, he found three iron cannons (two 12-pounders and one 8-pounder) lying visible below the high watermark. There they lay for centuries. It is safe to presume that these cannons were never removed as modern local fisherman knew about them and told us about them in 1984. They said they often used to stand on them when fishing, but later the sand took over, and the three iron guns are now buried above the present-day high watermark. In 1722, the VOC ship **Schonenberg**, armed with 28 guns for protection and 110 people on board, hit the eastern side of today's Northumberland reef. The accident occurred in the early hours of Friday November 20. She stood firm on the rocks for two months until, on orders, the ship was burned entirely down to the waterline. Since she lay 800m out to sea, she remained standing sturdy on her fatal spot, and was then burned down to the spring low water line, where one would expect all her guns to be lying on site. Therefore, it is strange that her name was often mentioned in the years to come as a possible source for cannon stocks onshore. (To be continued)



Agulhas National Park birthday, 23 September, 21 years

