



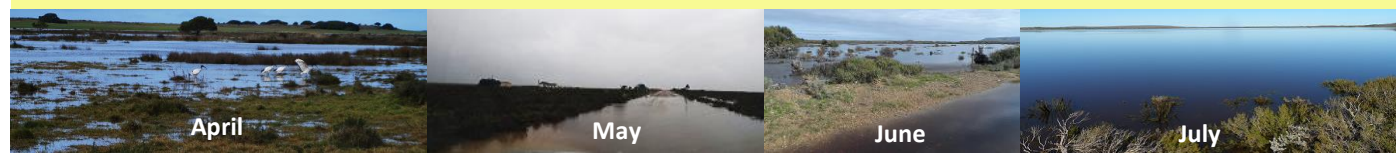
AgulhasNPark eBulletin



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The yellow month

The Agulhas Plain has experienced very good rain since April. All the pans, vleis and rivers are overflowing, filling up the entire wetland. This means that not much of the normal yellow flowers have yet been seen. Even some of the agricultural fields were too wet to plough and the normal spectacle of canola fields are not visible yet. In Agulhas rainfall from April to July measured 474mm and at Waterford in the west 461mm.



Women's Month 2021

Women's Month is celebrated every year in August with special celebrations on August 9, Women's Day. The theme for 2021 is **Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights for an Equal Future**. The concept of Generation Equality is a global campaign and links South Africa to global efforts to achieve gender equality by 2030. Saluting the women of the Agulhas National Park, stay safe.



pinterest

Biodiversity and Climate Change

The IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) was established in 2012 to strengthen links between biodiversity and ecosystem services research and policy to improve conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development. The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. In December 2020, 50 of the world's leading biodiversity and climate experts, selected by a 12-person IPCC and IPBES Steering Committee, participated in a four-day virtual workshop to look at how biodiversity protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation can benefit one another, and, where possible, conflicts might lie. This represented the first-ever collaboration between these two intergovernmental science-policy bodies. On June 10, 2021 the IPBES-IPCC Co-Sponsored Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Climate Change was launched at a virtual media conference. In this report scientists came to the conclusion that **Our Response to Climate Change Is Missing Something Big**. Planting new trees can help, but **intact wild areas are much better**. The world needs to treat global warming and biodiversity loss as two parts of the same problem. Climate change and biodiversity are more deeply intertwined than originally thought, said one of the leaders of the new report. Some environmental solutions are win-win, helping to reign in global warming and protecting biodiversity, while others address one crisis at the expense of another. Growing trees on grasslands, for example, may absorb some carbon, but can destroy the plant and animal life of a rich ecosystem, often losing "unseen carbon" stored underground. Unless the world stops treating climate change and biodiversity collapse as separate issues, neither problem can be addressed effectively. They are also inextricably tied to human wellbeing, but global policies usually target one or the other, leading to unintended consequences. To be continued. (SOURCE: IPBES-IPCC Biodiversity and Climate change report, 2021; the late Prof Bob Scholes, a SANParks Board member at the time, was one of the co-editors and Prof Wendy Foden, General Manager Cape Research Centre, was one of the five South African authors. Also visit <https://ipbes.net/events/ipbes-ipcc-workshop> for more information.)



NASA flies to the rescue of the Cape's natural treasures

If you think of NASA the images that spring to mind are probably rocket launches or the International Space Station; certainly not fynbos. But in 2023, the United States (US) space administration plans to spend six weeks flying aircraft over the "greater Cape floristic region" to map marine, freshwater and terrestrial species and ecosystems in one of Earth's biodiversity hotspots. Equipment on the aircraft will measure the height and structure of vegetation and collect ultraviolet, visual, thermal and other imagery from terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Satellites will gather additional data. South African and US teams on the ground will make observations at locations of particular interest, logging plants and possibly animals. The data gathered will be used to map the south-western Cape's biodiversity, providing estimates of the distribution and abundance of species and the boundaries of ecosystems, and researching how biodiversity affects the physical environment and vice versa. The project titled *Marine, Freshwater, and Terrestrial Biodiversity Survey of the Cape (BioSCape)* is funded by NASA. Institutional partners include the SA National Biodiversity Institute, SA National Parks, CapeNature and the SA National Space Agency. Read more at <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2021-07-10-houston-we-have-a-fynbos-problem-nasa-flies-to-rescue-of-cape-natural-treasures/>.



Jacarandas in parts of South Africa are flowering earlier: why it is a warning sign

In September each year, South Africa's Gauteng province turns purple. The cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria are well covered with trees – and jacarandas (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*), with their purple blooms in late spring, are a prominent part of this urban forest. About 16% of the land in the Gauteng City Region is planted with trees, forming one of the world's largest and most densely vegetated man-made urban forests. Johannesburg alone is recorded to have over 10 million trees. Jacarandas were introduced to Pretoria and later Johannesburg in the early 1800s, specifically as ornamental trees to line the streets of the suburbs and central business districts. Octogenarian residents who have lived in Gauteng their whole life might remember that jacarandas did not always flower in September. In the 1920s and 1930s, the trees only started to bloom in mid-November. Gradually over the decades, the date of bloom has advanced through October to the early weeks of September. This is referred to as a **phenological shift**, and is being observed across a range of species globally as a result of climate change. The most notable example is the Japanese cherry blossom. Not only are the cherry blossoms a key tourist attraction, and the cherry festivals important cultural events, but this also represents the world's longest phenological record. Phenological analyses show that current cherry blossoming is occurring earlier than any time in the last 1 200 years. Read more about the phenological shift in the September eBulletin. SOURCE: <https://www.enca.com/analysis/jacarandas-parts-sa-are-flowering-earlier-why-its-warning-sign>)



Introducing the Tale of Two Leopards at the Southernmost Tip of Africa

In the Western Cape, and across South Africa, the challenges to conservation are complex. To effectively address these challenges, conservation efforts need to be multi-dimensional, involve diverse role players, and span all land-use types. It is this holistic approach to conservation that inspired the exciting new collaboration between the Cape Leopard Trust (CLT) and Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT). The **Tale of Two Leopards** is a multifaceted partnership project which will focus on these two iconic species in the Overberg region – the leopard and the Western Leopard Toad. The question may well be asked *Why cats and toads?*

Leopards (*Panthera pardus*) have survived across the landscapes of the Cape where other large carnivores have not. They continue to be simultaneously admired and persecuted. Across their range in Africa, suitable habitats are shrinking and landscapes fragmenting. Leopards in the Cape are physically smaller than their savannah cousins, and research has revealed they have territories up to ten times larger. Because this need for space necessitates movement across human landscapes, it possibly makes this the most threatened leopard population in southern Africa. A priority therefore is to keep critical landscapes protected and corridors open to them. As apex predators, leopards in the Cape play a crucial ‘top down’ role in maintaining a natural balance in the ecosystem.



Similarly, the Western Leopard Toad (*Sclerophrys pantherina*), an endangered amphibian species that has existed for millions of years in the region, must navigate modified landscapes during its annual migrations between breeding and over-wintering sites. Named for its striking resemblance to a leopard, the species exists only in a very small area of the Western Cape, with one population on the Cape Peninsula and another in the Overstrand towards the **westernmost part of Agulhas National Park**. Like the leopard, they too represent a remnant population, that has adapted to surviving in an otherwise rapidly changing urban and agricultural landscape. The significance of frogs is their indispensable value as indicator species. Amphibians require healthy freshwater and connected landscapes to exist, so current population declines are a red flag in terms of the health of our ecosystems.

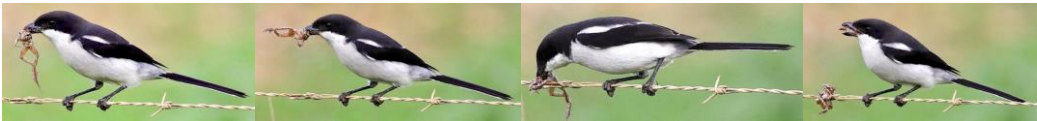
The presence of these two iconic “leopards” in the Overberg gives us an opportunity to look at landscape resilience through an ecological lens. The leopard is an umbrella species and “top down” indicator of ecosystem health, and the leopard toad is the foundation level or “bottom up” counter measure of ecosystem health. Both species thus act as flagships for the viability of a large range of other species. As such, these key species can be used to support the integrity of the area’s biodiversity by acting as important indicators of climate change, habitat integrity and landscape connectivity. To be continued. (SOURCE: bit.ly/To2LIntro)

Name the Raptor

With all the rain falling since April in the Agulhas Plain and Rûens this has resulted in an increase in the breeding of prey for Raptors – resulting in an increase in Raptors attracted to the area. (Idea and images: Steve Peck, Napier Birding)



1. Secretarybird (Sekretarisvoël, *Sagittarius serpentarius*)
3. Western Barn Owl (Nonnetjie-uil, *Tyto alba*)
5. Black-winged Kite (Blouvalk, *Elanus caeruleus*)
2. African Goshawk (Afrikaanse sperwer, *Accipiter tachiro*)
4. Gymnogene (Kaalwangvalk, *Polyboroides typus*)
6. Martial Eagle (Breëkoparend, *Polemaetus bellicosus*)



Southern Fiscal (Fiskaallaksmen, *Lanius collaris*) and prey, Clicking Stream Frog

Images: Steve Peck, Napier Birding

2021 Environmental calendar day

The sustainable development goals for August are Gender equality, Clean Water and Sanitation, and Life on Land.

August

Eco-Tourism

- 9 Women's day 5
- 10 World Lion day
- 12 Elephant day 15
- 23-27 World Water week 6
- 31 African Traditional Medicine day
- 30-5 Arbour week 15



Cape lion (Kaapse leeu, *Panthera leo melanochaitus*)

World Lion Day is celebrated on August 10. Once upon a time the “Black-maned” Cape lions ranged along the Cape of Africa on the southern tip of the continent. It was not the only subspecies of lion, or population of Transvaal lions, living in South Africa. Its exact range is unclear, but its stronghold was the Cape Province in the area around Cape Town of today. The Cape lion was thought by some people to have been large or heavy compared to other Sub-Saharan African lions, but smaller than the North African lion, though this may not have always been the case. It was distinguished by its thick, black mane with a tawny fringe around the face. The tips of the ears were also black. Besides Atlas lions, researchers described the Cape lion as having the "most luxuriant and extensive manes" amongst lions, with "tresses on flanks and abdomen". Cape lions preferred to hunt large ungulates including antelopes, but also zebras, giraffes and buffaloes. They would also kill donkeys and cattle belonging to the European settlers. Man-eating Cape lions appear to have generally been old individuals with bad teeth. One of the last Cape lions seen in the province was killed in 1858. In 1876 Czech explorer Emil Holub bought a young lion who died two years later. The Cape lion disappeared so rapidly following contact with Europeans that it is unlikely that habitat destruction was a significant factor. The Dutch and English settlers, hunters, and sportsmen simply hunted it into extinction. Read more about the Cape lion at <https://alchetron.com/Cape-lion>.



Shipwreck survivors' encounter with the Overberg elephant 1673-1817 – Jimmy Herbert



Elephant day is celebrated on August 12. Elephants not only existed in the *Overberg*, but they were initially here in large numbers. However, after Europeans moved into this part of the Western Cape, their numbers soon dropped. The *Zoetendaal* was the first ship recorded to have been lost on Africa's most southern coastline on September 14, 1673. The skipper and 40 odd men set off to the Cape and near a large fresh-water lake (Soetendalsvlei) one sailor was trampled to death by an elephant. In 1682 on June 8, the *Joanna* foundered on a reef 24km west of *Agulhas*. The 106 survivors set off on June 9 to the Cape and near a large swamp they saw some elephants. At this water source, they saw against a hill three more elephants feeding and to the north three more; the *Quoin Point* and *Buffeljagts* area. The Siamese survivors from the *Nossa Senhora de los Milagros* (1686) mentioned that the elephants in the Overberg were a lot smaller than their Asian elephant. In the *Hermanus* area the Siamese found large quantities of elephant dung which they used in the absence of suitable wood to kindle fires. In 1722 the *Schonenberg* hit the reefs to the East of *Agulhas* on November 20. In the report of the first salvage team en route to *Cape Agulhas* to visit this wreck, reference is made that from *Uilenkraals River* "where the wagon road ended, they took a path made by the elephants". Although no fewer than eight trips were made (and recorded) over this coastal distance between *Hermanus* and *Cape Agulhas*, there was no reference made of seeing any herds of elephants. However, they did refer to sighting one elephant while travelling from *Zoetendaals Valley* towards the wreck, but it immediately ran off and disappeared in the distance. Following the wreckage of the *Meermin* in 1766 and the British Transport ship *Arniston* 49 years later in 1815 no mention is made of elephants. It seems that the Overberg elephant population decreased drastically by the late 1700s and 1815. Hunting was a number one activity in those days. Sir Jahleel Brenton too in his intensive travel through the *Overberg* in 1817, never mentions elephants.

August in Khoe, *shalam* means wide green (rain, abundant veld food, flowers blooming)