



## MARCH eBULLETIN

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Have you noticed that the bottom banner changes every month?

### Rhenosterkop accommodation



Rhenosterkop is situated to the north of the Agulhas dunefield on the Agulhas Plain; 31km from the Park's offices in L'Agulhas on the Struisbaai-Elim road, turning off onto the Brandfontein road. Accommodation comprises three self-catering units with 10 beds in total: two units have two bedrooms each with twin beds and the third is a one-bedroomed unit with twin beds. This unit is equipped for physically-challenged people. All units are furnished with some fine antique furnishings. All lighting is supplied by solar energy with gas stoves and fridges. The kitchens still have their original fireplaces which are in a working condition. A cultural trail encompassing the *werf* is currently being developed.

### Shipwrecks along the Cape Agulhas Coastline



The Agulhas bank was the most dangerous passage of the voyage for Eastern sea traders between Europe and India during the early years of sailing around the southernmost tip of Africa. The Agulhas Bank became the graveyard of mariners and the Cape Agulhas coastline the coast of shipwrecks. (E.H. Burrows)

#### DUCHESS OF BUCCLEUGH

(British wooden barque, 404 tons, built 1843), en route from Calcutta to London; cargo: indigo, rice, sugar and silk; run ashore on a sandy beach close to the Ratel River mouth, 13/06/1850. (Cape Town Mail, 15/06/1850; Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1850-51; Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C. 2/17)

#### GLORIA DEO

(Italian barque, 977 tons), en route from Singapore to Falmouth; cargo: rice and rattans; wrecked on a reef in front of the Ratel River, 19/06/1882; 15 survivors. (Cape Argus, 3, 5/07/1882; Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C. 3/7/2/3)

For more information on shipwrecks:

BURROWS, Edmund H. 1994. *Overberg Odyssey: People, Roads & Early Days*. Swellendam Trust.

TURNER, M. 1988. *Shipwrecks and salvage in South Africa – 1505 to the present*. Cape Town: C. Struik.

### FLORA

#### Amaryllis family of the Strandveld

In March all the well-known bulbs of the Strandveld start flowering. It is against the law to pick the flowers and regrowth of the bulbs is often damaged when the flowers are not picked correctly. Some plants only grow a single leaf attached to the stem. This is the only way the plant is able to feed the bulb – therefore when the flowers are picked together with the leaf, the bulb dies, e.g. the Bluebells.

#### Koningskandelaar, Candelabra Flower, *Brunsvigia orientalis*

Bulbous perennial; prostrate leathery leaves after flowering; bears red or deep pink flowers on long red pedicels, rounded head; grows on sandy coastal flats from Saldanha to Knysna.



#### Veldskoenblaar, April fool, *Haemanthus sanguineus*

Bulbous perennial; prostrate leathery leaves after flowering; bears red or pink flowers on a plain red peduncle; widespread on sandy and loamy slopes in the Western and Eastern Cape, flowering especially after a fire.



### Southern Tip Day programme:

- 13 May 2011: Southern Tip Talks and Meal
- 14 May 2011: Southern Tip-Zoetendals Vallei Relay Race
- 13 to 15 May 2011: Strandveld Activities
- 18 May 2011: International Museum Day, Visit Shipwreck Museum in Bredasdorp, Lighthouse Museum in L'Agulhas and the Elim Heritage Centre in Elim.

For more information contact Giel and Emmerentia, 029 435 6078 (Mo-Fri, 8:00-16:00)

Download the Southern Tip-Zoetendals Vallei Relay Race entry form at [www.agulhas.org.za](http://www.agulhas.org.za)





## Maartblom, *Amaryllis belladonna*

Bulbous perennial; erect strap-shaped leaves, dry or absent at flowering; bears large funnel-shaped narcissus-scented pink flowers; grows in loamy soils in lowlands of the Western Cape, often in seasonal vleis, and flowers best after fire.

(MANNING, J.: *Field guide to Fynbos*. 2007).



## Did you know?

- Forests cover 31% of our total land area.
- Forests are home to 80% of our terrestrial biodiversity.
- Forests are home to 300 million people around the world.
- The livelihoods of over 1,6 billion people depend on forests. (from [www.un.org](http://www.un.org))
- Despite the relatively dry climate, Johannesburg has over ten million trees, and it is now the biggest man-made forest in the world, followed by Graskop in Mpumalanga which is the second biggest.

(Information from WESSA Share-Net, [www.WESSA.org.za](http://www.WESSA.org.za))

## FAUNA

### Elf, Shad, *Pomatomus saltatrix*

**Spawning season:** September-February, peak in October-December  
**Length at 50% sexual maturity** (geslagsrypheid): males 24 cm TL; females 25 cm TL

**Age at 50% sexual maturity** (geslagsrypheid): <1 year

**Maximum age** (lebensverwagtinge): 10 years

**Length at first capture:** 30 cm TL

**Closed season:** 1 September to 30 November

**Status:** Protected species

**SASSI status:** Red (not for sale)

**Origin of name:** *Elft*, Dutch word for a similar European fresh water fish



## TREE OF THE MONTH

Klipels, Rock-alder, *Canthium mundianum*  
[www.platbos.co.za](http://www.platbos.co.za)



## Witkruisvleivalk, Black Harrier, *Circus maurus*

Population of the Black Harrier has been estimated at 500-1 000 breeding pairs. Like the African Marsh-Harrier, Black Harriers have been elevated to a species of conservation concern following the realization that they may number less than 1000 individuals. Threats in South Africa are listed as habitat loss and fires during breeding and vulnerability to land use changes. A more recent discovered threat is the high rate of unhatched eggs in nests with chicks. This could signal a high pesticide uptake from prey taken on sprayed grain fields. Harriers favour nesting in coastal and mountain fynbos.



## Platbos – a unique South African forest jewel - Prof Eugene Moll

Between Stanford and Gansbaai in the Western Cape, hidden in the gently folded landscape, there are five substantial patches of indigenous forest. The largest and best conserved of these is Platbos (= flatbush/forest). The major portion of Platbos is owned by Francois and Melissa Krige, two ex-Capetonians who sold up everything they owned in the city to buy Platbos. They have dedicated themselves to conserving the forest and are assisted with this by three well-trained staff members from Gansbaai's Masakhane township.



## INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FORESTS

### Celebrate Forests in 2011!!

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness on sustainable management, conservation and development of all types of forests.





Platbos is unique, not only because of the composition of the canopy tree species but also because to find forest in South Africa on gently undulating terrain, covered by deep, alkaline sandy soils, is rare. The nearest similar forests are around Alexandria (just east of Port Elizabeth) and then into KZN. What also makes Platbos unique is that it is still home to Bushbuck, and according to Skead is about the southwestern limit of this shy forest and scrub dweller. It seems too that the tiny and increasingly rare Blue Duiker also once occurred here.

Walking through Platbos on one of the trails is indeed a privilege. The terrain is essentially flat so the walks are not onerous, and the forest is relatively open so visibility is good. What also makes Platbos unique is that structurally the canopy is low – a maximum of ~10m. Thus the biggest canopy trees have minimal trunks, so it is akin to walking through the lower canopy, which means leaves, flowers and fruits are close at hand – making the identification of the vascular plants easier.

The dominant tree species are the Afromontane species of *Celtis africana* (White-stinkwood), *Olinia ventosa* (Hard-pear) and *Apodytes dimidiata* (White-pear) and the coastal Forest species *Sideroxylon inerme* (White-milkwood). In the understory *Chionanthus foveolata* (Pock-ironwood),

*Myrsine africana* (Cape Myrtle) and *Euclea racemosa* (Dune Guarri) are most common. Many of large tree branches are covered with epiphytes such as *Peperomia*, ferns, mosses and lichens (that after rain or fog are bright green, but in dry times all but the *Peperomia* are



shriveled and brown waiting for moisture). Also many of the exposed branches are festoon with the old Man's Beard lichen (*Usnea* cf *barbata*). (To be continued.)

## FLORA

Seaweeds too have a hard time surviving in this environment for they have to cope with problems (desiccation stress and temperature extremes) associated with prolonged exposure to air. All the vital functions of life such as respiration, photosynthesis, growth and reproduction must be adapted to two completely different environments.

*Porphyra* or purple laver, abundant seaweed on rocky substrates within this zone, is able to lose almost all its body fluid, drying out to a crisp, paper thin film only about 10% of its



original mass. For this very reason, it is often also called cellophane seaweed. While many other seaweeds would die if they lost this much turgidity, this species readily recovers once re-hydrated. Often this seaweed has to rely on salt spray for re-absorption of valuable life-giving seawater. This species has a remarkable rate of recovery, with some plants having been reported to remain dried out for several days to weeks. Thin seaweeds like *Porphyra* also lose their water content very fast, but overcome the problem by growing in dense populations where they can cover and shade each other when exposed.

Other seaweeds, less tolerant of desiccation stress, survive in high shore tide pools. Here, however, they have to cope with salinity stress as these tidepools become extremely saline under hot, dry conditions and tend toward fresh water under rainy conditions. The few seaweeds (mostly green seaweeds like *Ulva* and *Monostroma*) adapted to this environment have a high salinity tolerance ranging from as little as 3 parts per 1 000 to as much as 115 parts per 1 000. They are able to regulate the amounts of dissolved internal salts, keeping their internal osmotic pressures somewhat higher than the surrounding medium. This process prevents loss of water to the surrounding saline environment allowing them to maintain a fairly constant turgidity.

Surprisingly, besides mangroves (tropical and subtropical trees and shrubs that grow in salty coastal habitats), there appear to be no true plant specialists within this environment. Some terrestrial plants such as *Sarcocornia* (glassworts) are saltmarsh plants while others like *Tetragonia fruticosa* (sprawling duneweed or kinkelbossie) are early colonizers of sandy, calcareous areas typical of beach dunes. The reason that these plants survive in this harsh environment is probably a combination of two factors: a greater tolerance of extreme conditions; and reduced competition from other terrestrial plants that can otherwise not survive here. (To be continued.)

**Life at the margins of the continents - An examination of the intertidal marine life of the southwestern Cape - Gavin W. Maneveldt, Department of Biodiversity and Conservation Biology, University of the Western Cape**



The astonishing ways in which both plants and animals from a typical southwestern Cape shore have evolved to adapt and cope in the harsh environment of the intertidal zone.





**Nature is greatest tourist attraction on Agulhas Plain – Heather D’Alton, Flower Valley Conservation Trust**

A new study has found the Agulhas Plain could make up to R123-million a year more than it currently does from tourist activities. Currently tourists spend some R67-million in the area. What’s more, the study found most tourists visit the area to enjoy its nature-based attractions – including hiking, fishing and experiencing nature. This is the first study of its kind to put a value on nature-based tourism in the Agulhas/Bredasdorp region. To date, there’s been disagreement among tourism stakeholders as to the value of the industry on the Agulhas Plain.

According to researcher Maria Garcia, tourism could potentially reap between R64-million and R123-million a year more than what is currently being spent by tourists in the region. The study found the fishermen’s harbour in Arniston to be the top tourist destination in the area, followed by the Lighthouse Museum in Agulhas and the Waenhuiskrans cave. Tourists also enjoy land-based whale watching, as well as parks and reserves such as the Agulhas National Park and the De Hoop Nature Reserve.

Top activities include going to the beach (68 percent), followed by hiking (61 percent) and experiencing nature and wildlife (48 percent). Garcia says, “Considering over three quarters of visitors in the sample prioritised nature and biodiversity as influential in their decision to visit the Agulhas Plain... it can safely be assumed that the substantial majority of the values estimated in this study can be attributable to nature-based tourism within the region.”



**Southbosch Project Update**

In February the stabilization process of the Southbosch house commenced under the supervision of the Agulhas Honorary Rangers. The house now has a new thatched roof. Piet Van As sourced two very interesting pictures of the house from the 1920s and the 1950s. It shows what the front of the house looked like during these two different periods. The hearth in the kitchen was also rebuilt and the ablution

facilities at the back are being upgraded. The annual birding programme will be managed from here, as well as cultural heritage programmes, a satellite information office and a meeting place for the Agulhas Honorary Rangers.



1920's



1950's

**Events Calendar**

March	
14 - 18	National Water Week
22	World Water Day
23	World Meteorological Day
26	Earth Hour (20:30 – 21:30)
April	
5	Shipwreck Carnival, Shipwreck Museum, Bredasdorp
22	Earth Day
May	
9 - 15	National Bird Week
13 - 15	Southern Tip Day Festivities
13	Southern Tip Talks
14	Southern Tip Zoetendals Vallei Relay Race
18	International Museum Day
22	International Day for Biological Diversity

**World Water Day, 22 March 2011**  
**Theme: Water for Cities**

