



# AgulhasNPark eBulletin



VOL 7 • NR 4 • March /Ihoa#gais 2017

Every  counts!!

[www.sanparks.org](http://www.sanparks.org)

***We can take bold action to address water inequity as part of our efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, World Water Day 2016***

## World Water Day 2017

South Africa is in the grip of a terrible drought for the past eight to ten years. The dependence on water by all and everything was and is too evident. Water is the most important resource to all life on the planet, but is it a reality to man inhabiting this planet? World Water Day is held annually on March 22 as a means of focusing attention on the importance of fresh water and advocating for the sustainable management of fresh water resources. World Water Day was declared an international day in 1992 by the United Nations General Assembly and was first celebrated in 1993. Each year, World Water Day highlights a specific aspect of fresh water. In 2017 the theme is **Wastewater**. (SOURCE: <http://www.gov.za/national-water-week>)



## Strandveld Icons

### The Nuwejaars Wetland System

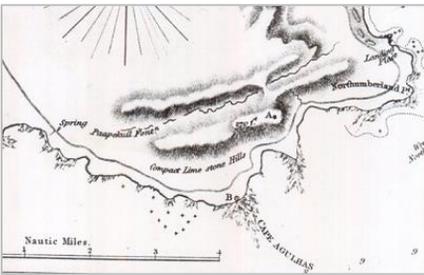
To the north of Agulhas National Park and partially within, lies the Nuwejaars Wetland system – an area of immense diversity and conservation value. It consists of rare and endemic natural fynbos and wetlands, which are all interlinked by the streams and rivers of the Nuwejaars Wetland ecosystem. This system drains the Southern Agulhas Plain and the very low gradients in the south-eastern plain, resulting in significant wetland development. A number of annual and permanent water bodies or *vleis* is created of which the most notable is the second largest lacustrine wetland in South Africa, namely Soetendalsvlei. Another permanent water body is Voëlvlei. The Agulhas region is unique in terms of the wide variety of wetlands (freshwater springs, rivers, estuaries, lakes, *vleis* and endorheic pans) that occur within a relatively small area. The headwaters of the Nuwejaars River are on the south-facing slopes of the Bredasdorp Mountains, the Koue Mountains to the west, the hills to the south of Elim, and the north-facing slopes of the Soetany Mountain. The five tributaries of the Nuwejaars River are the Koue, Wolwegatskloof, Jan Swartskraal, Boskloof and Uintjieskuil. The Nuwejaars River measures 55km from its westernmost source, through Soetendalsvlei to the confluence of the vlei's overflow channel with the Kars River. From this confluence it flows as the Heuningnes River for 15 km to its estuary at De Mond. This wetland system makes Agulhas National Park and its neighbours a significant bird watching destination.



### Agulhas National Park: unique wetland systems

One of the aspects of founding Agulhas National Park was to protect a unique wetland system. A wide variety of wetlands occur in the area. The ecological functioning of the wetlands and other fresh water systems on the Agulhas Plain is critically dependent on water quality and quantity of interlinked pans, wetlands, seasonal streams, flow and interchanges that occur under natural conditions. The Agulhas Working for Water project did sterling work over the past 18 years to open up this unique landscape of wetlands and fynbos.





Land-surveyors map from 1838 by Surveyor General C.C. Michell, showing "A & B – Sites proposed for a Lighthouse. As A. a low building would shew a light 300 feet above the sea, and would be seen 20 miles. At B. the tower should be seen only 12 miles but it would lead vessels round the Cape better. High water F. C.  $11\frac{1}{2}$  h. Tides rise 7 feet. 1838." The map was published in 1839.

## Strandveld Icon

### Cape Agulhas Lighthouse

The Cape Agulhas Lighthouse is the second oldest and southernmost lighthouse in South Africa, as well as the oldest government building in the southern Overberg region. Planning started in the 1830s and it was finally built in 1848. The light was lit on **March 1 1849**. The Surveyor-General of the Cape Colony, Col C.C. Michell, designed the building according to the ancient Pharos of Alexandria in Egypt. Limestone was mined at the quarry about 200m west of the lighthouse and the farm Zoetendals Valleï. In 1962 the building was declared unsafe. To save it from being demolished the lighthouse was declared a national monument in 1973. In 1983 it underwent its first major restoration and again in 2012. The light beam can be seen for 30 nautical miles (55km) from the sea at night. The tower is 27m high and painted in red and white bands which are called day markers. The black false windows on the sea-side are also seen as day markers. The light flashes every five seconds at night. The lighthouse is still functional and houses the only Lighthouse Museum in Africa. In 2016 the Lighthouse was declared an International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers.



Agulhas West Rangers joining integrated roadblocks (CapeNature, SANParks, DAFF, the Traffic Dept and the Gansbaai and Bredasdorp Police) at Buffeljachts intersection and Duinefontein, checking permits for fishing for bait, possession of flora, driving without licenses and abalone raiding, amongst others.



Agulhas East Rangers busy with erosion control and road maintenance after flash flooding on a service road, installing camera traps and checking angling permits while coast patrolling.



People & Conservation monitoring sour fig harvesting, facilitating Awareness programmes and mapping man-made structures as it becomes visible after alien clearing.



## A day in the life of an African Black Oystercatcher - Scenes from the Agulhas Rest camp



Images by Bennet Temmers



"No log, no journal, no chart – DIAS VOYAGE"

19 May 2017



## Interesting sightings in the Agulhas Plain

### Spotted in the Park ...

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**  
**Blouwangbyvreter**  
*Merops persicus*

Only the second recording in the Agulhas Plain (WdK)

**Amethyst Sunbird**  
**Swartsuikerbekkie**  
*C amethystina*

First recording in Agulhas NP (WdK)



### Spotted in the Nuwejaars SMA ...

**Little Bittern, Kleinrietreier**  
*Ixobrychus minutus*

Only the second recording in the Agulhas Plain (W. De Klerk)



### Spotted at De Mond ...

**Common Cuckoo,**  
**Europese koekoek**  
*Cuculus canorus*

The first official record in the Agulhas Plain spotted by Des Hall



### Caught on camera .... Nuwejaars SMA



**Secretarybird**  
**Sekretarisvoël**  
*Sagittarius*  
*serpentarius*



**Black-backed Jackal**  
**Rooijakkals**  
*Canis mesomelas*

### The season has changed .... Flowering now



**Maartlelie**  
*Amaryllis*  
*belladonna*



**Bloedblom**  
*Haemanthus*  
*coccineus*



**Koningskandelaar**  
*Brunsvigia*  
*orientalis*



**Lamprantus**  
*caudatus*



**Erica**  
*casta*

Images by B. Temmers & L. Lewis

### Celebrating International Wetlands day in the Overberg, Agulhas National Park - Carin Malan & Chris Cheetham

BirdLife Overberg joined Agulhas National Park to celebrate International Wetlands day on February 4. Unfortunately being held up with some birding on our way, but who would not stop for, amongst others, ..... the Agulhas Long-billed Lark!!, we arrived late. SANParks staff very kindly turned around and came to fetch us. We were in an area which could be accessed for the first time in years by a vehicle, the Soetendalsvlei area. Apart from several other species, we saw hundreds of different waders; 11 African Snipes in one place!! We moved on to the Salt pans which was dry unfortunately, but saw a pair of Secretary Birds on the way. There were lots of Greater Flamingos at Rhenosterkop pan. At a Milkwood forest next to a dam an Amethyst Sunbird was sighted, which was a first ever for the Agulhas National Park. At the end BirdLasser scored 94 species in overcast and very windy conditions. The Agulhas National Park is certainly a birder's paradise and has something to offer for novice as well as experienced twitchers. For the full report visit [http://www.westerncapebirding.co.za/overberg/news/2317/celebrating\\_international\\_wetlands\\_day\\_in\\_the\\_overberg%2C\\_agulhas\\_national\\_park](http://www.westerncapebirding.co.za/overberg/news/2317/celebrating_international_wetlands_day_in_the_overberg%2C_agulhas_national_park)



### Did you know?

Have you ever seen the Renosterbos *Elytropappus rhinocerotis* with the strange white foam blobs that are sometimes present on them and wondered what it is? These slimy white galls are not seen on other plants in the area, but is common in short fynbos vegetation. They are made by small insects called Fynbos Spittlebugs *Rhinaulax analis*, more commonly known as Froghoppers. The nymphs are surrounded by a frothy mass resembling spittle, produced from a mixture of anal secretion derived from plant sap and air. This blob protects them from predators and from drying out. Once adulthood is reached, these sap-sucking bugs live in the open and rely on their jumping skills to escape danger. Studies show the adults can leap up to 70cm. They can jump further than fleas. Sent in by Agulhas West Rangers. (SOURCE: nationalgeographic.com; PICKER, GRIFFITHS, WEAVING. 2004. *Field guide to Insects of South Africa*; [www.projectnoah.org/spottings/13556004](http://www.projectnoah.org/spottings/13556004))



World Water Day walk, March 23, 4km, Rhenosterkop back road to the Salt pans

Contact E. De Kock, 028-4356078 during office hours

### Sour fig harvesting in Agulhas National Park – Alliston Appel, Snr People & Conservation Officer

Sour figs have traditionally been harvested by local communities throughout the Agulhas region. Consequently, when Agulhas National Park (ANP) was established and subsequently expanded, park management inherited the current challenge of managing sour fig harvesting for sustainable resource use in a way that complements SANParks primary mandate of biodiversity conservation. At least two species of *Carpobrotus*, namely *Carpobrotus edulis* (Hottentotsvy) and *Carpobrotus acinaciformis* (Suurvy), are known to occur in the park. However, only the latter is harvested for its sweet and sour fruits that are produced in two fruiting seasons each year. *C. acinaciformis* initially produces its fruits during December and January, but also supports a late harvest in March. The sour figs are harvested for subsistence and small-scale commercial purposes, where the fruits are eaten or used to make jams and preserves. Yellow soft juicy figs are sold for approximately R40/kg while dried figs fetch a price of approximately R12/kg on the local market. A feasibility study of sour fig harvesting as a resource use project with community benefits, estimated that 3kg/ha of sour figs are currently harvested over 3000ha of the park, producing an annual yield of 9000kg. The annual contribution to the local economy was estimated at R 90 000. Consequently, the harvesting of sour figs appears to be able to yield potentially significant socio-economic benefits for local people. The data capturing of the amount of sour figs (kg) harvested in the Agulhas NP do not give this info as the illegal component cannot be verified and current figures vary around R70 000 per annum.

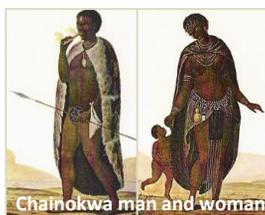


### Shipwreck survivors and the Khoekhoen – Jimmy Herbert continues

On the morning of Monday June 8 1682, survivors on the deck of the *Joanna*, fast breaking up, observed "the wild people" (as they had put it) on the sandy beach at *Die Dam*. Terrified of the latter, yet with the will not to drown, many were compelled to leave the ship in an attempt to make it to shore. On arrival and to their relief and amazement, the Khoekhoen all set about helping wherever they could. Even in the pouring rain, the Khoekhoen helped the English to gather firewood and get fires going. Once the overland trip commenced, they took the route showed to them which led them almost directly to the village of Captain Klaas, the local Khoekhoen leader (*Swart River* and *Bot River*). In turn, after ensuring that all had enough to eat and drink, the latter even accompanied them all the way back to the Cape. Captain Klaas was a Chainouqua leader.



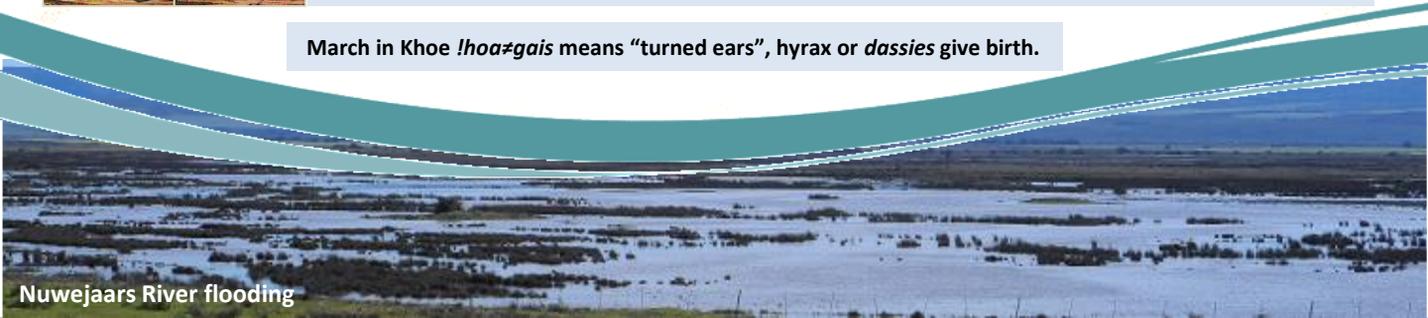
The march to the Cape of the surviving crew, passengers and slaves that made it to shore from the Portuguese ship *Nossa Senhora de los Milagros* in 1686, was completed with much less assistance from the local Khoekhoen than their predecessors. As a result, many paid with their lives. The greatest losses were from the largest group of mainly Portuguese and slaves, who had left others behind to fend for themselves. This latter group of 15 Siamese Nationals, hopelessly lost and without any navigation equipment or navigation skills, wisely decided to spend time in the "place of plenty" at the *Mussels River* at what is today *Hermanus*. It was close to this place that three Khoekhoen, sent by the Dutch, found them. These three locals not only guided them, but also continuously motivated the barely alive Siamese all the way to the Hottentots-Holland outpost successfully and safely. (To be continued)



### Overberg Khoekhoen

Two Khoekhoen groups lived in the area between the Hottentotsholland Mountains and the Breede River before 1652. They were the Chainouqua in the west and the Hessequa in the east. Their territories, however, overlapped from Tygerhoek (Riviersonderend) to the Breede River. They were traditional herders with a nomadic lifestyle and their movement was dictated by grazing and water. The Chainouqua was also called the Soesequa after a leader, Sousoa.

March in Khoe *Ihoa#gais* means "turned ears", hyrax or *dassies* give birth.



Nuwejaars River flooding