



# AgulhasNPark eBulletin



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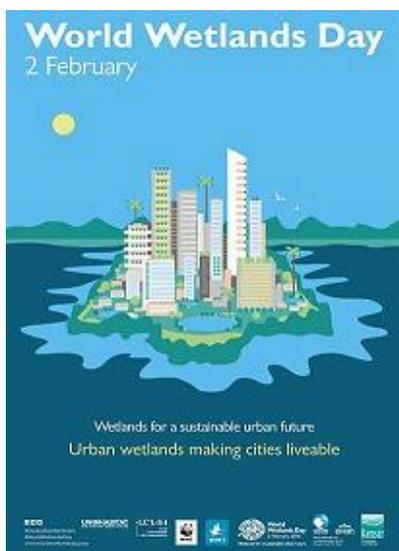
Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future

www.sanparks.org

South African  
NATIONAL PARKS

## World Wetlands Day 2018

The Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands approved **Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future** as the theme for World Wetlands Day in 2018. World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on February 2. This day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on **February 2** 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Since 1997, the Ramsar Secretariat has provided outreach materials to help raise public awareness about the importance and value of wetlands. (SOURCE: <https://www.ramsar.org/activity/world-wetlands-day-2018>)



## Urban wetlands: prized land, not wasteland

Half of humanity, about four billion people, live in urban areas today. By 2050 that proportion will reach 66% as people move to cities in search of jobs and a vibrant social life. Cities account for about 80% of global economic output. As cities expand and demand for land increases, the tendency is to encroach on wetlands - they are degraded, filled in and built upon. Urban wetlands are land areas that are flooded with water, either seasonally or permanently. When left intact or restored, urban wetlands make cities liveable. Wetlands are important to control flooding, filter waste from water, improve air quality, is a source of drinking water, promote human well-being and is a source of livelihoods. Wetlands also attract tourism, another important source of jobs.

## The Langezandt wetland in Struisbaai

The theme for World Wetlands Day 2018 is **Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future**. The wetlands in the Langezandt development will soon be cleaned up. The developer is keen on protecting this natural asset. This is good news for the wetland as nationally wetlands are under great pressure.

## Did you know?

The first cities developed in the wetland floodplains of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. On these fertile plains, early settlers could practise agriculture, access water and transport their goods.

# Please save



# WATER

Image: Western Cape Government



## Agulhas Plain Birding Project: annual report 2017 – Wim De Klerk

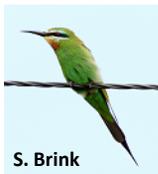
2017 marked the eighth year of the Agulhas Plain Birding Project. Despite the dry conditions, birding kept producing specials. 31 Full and 54 ad hoc checklists were submitted for the year. As a great birding destination, the Agulhas Plain showed that it can sustain its species' diversity even under very dry conditions. This is because the plain has dams, pans and vleis of varying depth which at different stages of drought accommodate the masses of water birds.



An analysis of species' diversity showed surprising results. The highest number of species per checklist is **not** found around the De Mond pentad (3440\_2005) as most birders would expect, but rather around Soetendalsvlei and lower Nuwejaars River pentad (3440\_1955). In second position before the De Mond pentad is actually the Struisbaai pentad (3445\_2000). When you look at the Agulhas Plain as a whole, the top five pentads in terms of species diversity are: 3440\_1955 Soetendalsvlei, 3445\_2000 Struisbaai, 3440\_2005 De Mond, 3445\_1955 Suiderstrand and 3435\_1950 Bo-Voëlvlei. Visitors should know that the Agulhas Plain has much more to offer than just De Mond. A further 11 species were added to the Agulhas Plain Birding List in 2017. The official list now stands at 265 species! The new species recorded in 2017 are: **Common Cuckoo**, **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater**, Black-chested Snake Eagle, **Olive Woodpecker**, Temminck's Courser, **African Olive Pigeon**, **Knob-billed Duck**, **Lesser Grey Shrike**, **Ground Woodpecker** and Brown Snake Eagle. For further information and goals for 2018, please visit the website: [www.agulhasplainbirding.co.za](http://www.agulhasplainbirding.co.za).



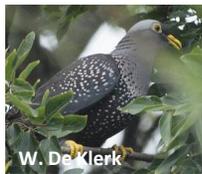
B. Hall



S. Brink



W. De Klerk



W. De Klerk



K. Lynch



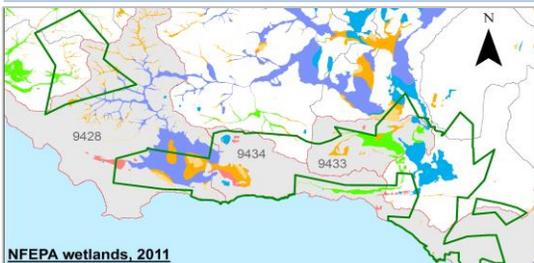
K. & A. Lynch



K. Le Roux

## Wetland ground-truthing in Agulhas NP: January 2018 update – Ruth-Mary Fisher, Earth System Scientist, SANParks

Ground-truthing the National Freshwater Ecosystems Priority Areas (NFEPA) wetland layer within the Western Cape started in 2013 as a partnership between the then Mondi Wetlands Project, Working for Wetlands, CapeNature, Department of Water and Sanitation and SANParks in the Agulhas Plain within the Ratel River catchment. The field work during the first few years was done in a haphazard way and without a strategic focus. Since then the field work became more strategic, with field work planned to complete one quinary catchment at a time. The time spent on the project was also restricted to two field trips for the year as this project forms a small part of the work functions of the partners. The field work are usually scheduled during August and November. Since 2013 the participation of the partners dwindled due to other work commitments and staff leaving the institutions. Luckily the core partnership between CapeNature and SANParks has been sustained. The project was not SANParks based and therefore was not restricted to SANParks property. The strategic approach is to complete one quinary at a time. The Department of Water and Sanitation has been using a unique quaternary catchment naming convention since 1994. A quinary catchment is the 5<sup>th</sup> level of delineating river catchments into a much smaller unit. Working in specific quinary catchments necessitated that field work be done on both private property adjacent to the Agulhas National Park and within the park. However, the quinary catchments spanning the Agulhas National Park were targeted to be completed first in order to complete a wetland map for the park. Before 2017 the field work for the Ratel River catchment, sections to the east of Ratel River and Bergplaas, were completed. During 2017 the field work for the Hagelkraal catchment to the west of the Ratel River catchment, and the Soetendalsvlei catchment was completed during August and November 2017, respectively. The Geographical Information Systems (GIS) editing will be done during 2018. Plans for 2018 are the completion of the GIS editing for the abovementioned catchments. The catchments within the Nuwejaars River Special Management Area (SMA) will be targeted for field work. A wetland map will be produced for the Agulhas National Park by the end of 2018. (To be continued)



Map of the location and numbering of the quinary catchments (in grey) where the fieldwork was completed before 2017 and the GIS editing done during June 2017. The dark green indicate the boundaries of the Agulhas National Park.

**National Freshwater Ecosystems Priority Areas (NFEPA) wetlands, 2011**

### Bird of the Month: Whiskered Tern, Witbaardsterretjie, *Chlidonias hybrida*

Whiskered Tern and White-winged Tern (Witvlerksterretjie, *Chlidonias leucopterus*) are two of the so-called Lake Terns or fresh water wetland terns found in the Agulhas Plain. The Whiskered Tern of the Agulhas Plain is an intra-African migrants from Tanzania, Kenya and Angola visiting South Africa every year to breed in the area, while the White-winged Tern is a Palearctic migrant. Palearctic Whiskered Tern does not migrate to South Africa.



Whiskered Tern arrive from September onwards and in wet years are found around Prinskraal. This year the drought forced them to find new breeding grounds and some of them were seen at Langpan. They favour inland wetlands, pans and vleis where they normally breed on floating vegetation. They feed by flying two to four metres upwind, hovering and plunge-diving for fish and frogs, but the bird also surface-dips, taking insects and other invertebrates. The juvenile Whiskered Tern which is quite common, can be confused with White-winged Tern which could lead to incorrect identification. Although the White-winged Tern has been reported in the area and accepted by SABAP, this could not yet be corroborated by the Agulhas Plain Birding project. If anyone has pictures of White-winged Tern taken in the Agulhas Plain and showing the diagnostic "headphones" and white rump, please email to [doc@agulhasplainbirding.co.za](mailto:doc@agulhasplainbirding.co.za). (Wim De Klerk)

### Small mammals on the Agulhas Plain

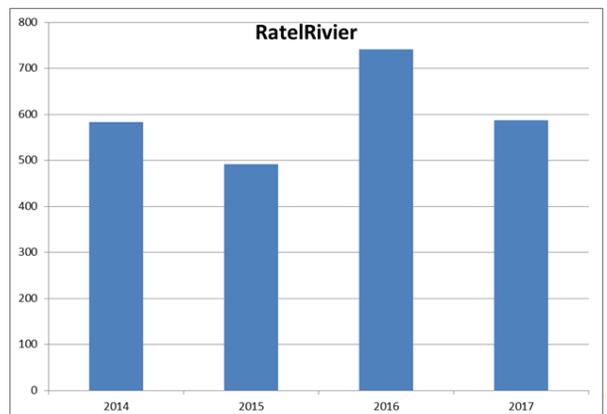
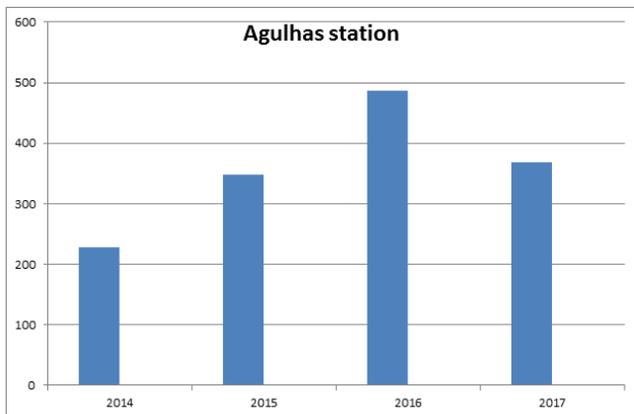
#### Witkwasmuishond, Rooimeerkat, Yellow Mongoose, *Cynictis penicillata*



The **Yellow Mongoose** (*Cynictis penicillata*), sometimes referred to as the **Red meerkat**, is a member of the Mongoose family, lives in open country, from semi-desert scrubland to grasslands in Angola, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. *Cynictis penicillata* is the only member of its genus, but as many as twelve subspecies of Yellow Mongoose have been described. Southern Yellow Mongooses are larger, have yellow or reddish fur, longer fur, and a longer tail with a characteristic white tip. The Yellow Mongoose is carnivorous, consuming mostly arthropods, but also other small mammals, lizards, snakes and eggs of all kinds. It is primarily diurnal, though nocturnal activity has been observed, living in colonies of

up to 20 individuals in a permanent underground burrow complex. The social structure of the Yellow Mongoose is hierarchical, based on around a central breeding pair and their most recent offspring. There are also sub-adults, the elderly, or adult relatives of the central pair. A colony can have 20-40 members. The Yellow Mongoose's mating season is between July and September and it gives birth underground between October and December, with no bedding material, in a clean chamber of the burrow system. Usually, two offspring are produced per pregnancy, and they are weaned at 10 weeks, reaching adult size after 10 months. The yellow mongoose adapts easily to an urban environment to its own detriment. Please do not feed these animals. (SOURCE: STUART, C. & T. 2008. *Field guide to mammals of Southern Africa*. Struik.)

### Rainfall in Agulhas National Park 2014 - 2017



(ong)/o-ha in Khoer means stars are dead (origin unknown)

## Social legacy projects in South African National Parks

SANParks decided in 2012 to set aside 1% of tourism income to support the implementation of legacy projects in communities bordering national parks. In 2016 science and mathematics laboratories were prioritised and the Albert Myburgh Secondary School in Bredasdorp was identified for the establishment of a science laboratory. Albert Myburgh is an under-resourced and no-fees school with various challenges. This high school serves not only the rural community of Bredasdorp, but all the surrounding towns, villages and farms of the Southern Overberg. A science laboratory will improve the science results of learners and also instill a culture of interest in science as a subject and will encourage learners to follow a career in science and maths. Former pupils are employed in Agulhas National Park and the current Junior Ranger group consists of learners from the school. A contractor has been appointed and the building of the laboratory will start in February.



## We say good-bye to...

### Lana Du Toit, Project Manager Working for Wetlands and Working for the Coast

Lana started off her career at SANParks Biodiversity Social Projects as Field Assistant for Working for Water in April 2010 and was appointed as Assistant Project Manager in October 2010. In October 2012 she was appointed as Acting Project Manager for Working for Water in Table Mountain National Park South to become the Project Manager in March 2013. In 2014 she became Project Manager for Working for Wetlands in the Agulhas National Park and was requested to assist the Working for Wetlands projects nationally. She was later appointed as Ecological monitoring co-ordinator for SANParks nationally, focusing specifically on the monitoring of wetlands. Between August 2016 and November 2017 she managed both the Agulhas Working for Wetlands and the Coast. In November she was asked to focus on Agulhas, because a pilot intervention with geo-cell chutes was identified. The star project otherwise was the pilot intervention at Pietersielieskloof, working with geo-cell chutes in a peat wetland system. This pilot was presented by Lana at the Wetlands Indaba in Durban in October 2017 after which she was nominated as a finalist under stewardship. In November 2017 Lana was approached to join Zonderend Water Users Association in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and was appointed as Project Manager working on the Zonderend river. We wish her all the best with her new career.



## Heritage sites in L'Agulhas village

### Oupos

Oupos in L'Agulhas Main Street was built between 1937 and 1939 by Marthinus Swart Van As as a family home. The same Marthinus Swart Van As also built Chalet 3 at Rhenosterkop in the 193040s. The family called the house "Midway" as it is situated halfway between the entrance of L'Agulhas and the Lighthouse. During World War Two (1939 – 1945) it was used as a post office for the soldiers who lived in the barracks (Mount Pleasant today) across from "Midway". Mrs Dickie Van As acted as the postal mistress. After the war the post office was closed as it was only the lighthouse which received mail at the time. In 1958 the Thomson family of Montagu, who were holidaying in L'Agulhas for years, bought the building as a beach house. It was bought on an auction - and when Father Thomson returned he told the family he bought them a post office as a beach house. The family then decided to name the building "Oupos", old post. Loffie and Elma Beukman, born Thomson, have lived in the house since 1997.



Marthinus Van As family; Dickie, the Postmistress is second from left



*If you think you are too small to make a difference, you haven't spent the night with a mosquito – African proverb*