



AgulhasNPark eBulletin



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Time for nature, time to celebrate biodiversity

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"It is time to act decisively. My message to governments is clear: tax pollution; end fossil fuel subsidies; and stop building new coal plants. We need a green economy not a grey economy." — Secretary-General, António Guterres, United Nations

World Environment Day, June 5

The United Nations, aware that the protection and improvement of the human environment is a major issue, which affects the well-being of peoples and economic development throughout the world, designated June 5 as World Environment Day. Humans are both creatures and moulders of their environment, which gives them physical sustenance and affords them the opportunity for intellectual, moral, social and spiritual growth. In the long and tortuous evolution of the human race on this planet, a stage has been reached when, through the rapid acceleration of science and technology, humans have acquired the power to transform their environment in countless ways and on an unprecedented scale. But, **it is time for nature, time to celebrate biodiversity.** The foods we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink and the climate that makes our planet habitable, all come from nature. Yet, these are exceptional times in which nature is sending us a message. Nature is showing that we are

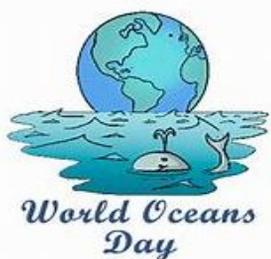


on the verge of a breakdown. Recent events, from **bushfires** in Brazil, the United States and **Australia** to **locust infestations** across **East Africa**, severe **droughts** in **South Africa** —and now, a **global disease** pandemic—demonstrate the interdependence of humans and the webs of life in which they exist. World Environment Day offers a global platform for inspiring positive change. It recognises that global change requires a global community. It pushes for individuals to think about the way they consume; for businesses to develop greener models; for farmers and manufacturers to produce more sustainably; for governments to safeguard wild spaces; for educators to inspire students to live in harmony with the Earth; and for the youth to become fierce gatekeepers of a green future. It requires all of us. It is time to wake up, to take notice, to reimagine our relationship with nature. It is time to raise our voices to tell the world that we need action now.

(<https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/>; <https://www.themightyearth.com/world-environment-day-2020/>; <https://www.worldenvironmentday.global/about-world-environment-day>)

World Oceans Day June 8

For 2020, World Oceans Day is growing the global movement to call on world leaders to protect 30% of our blue planet by 2030. This critical need is called 30x30. By safeguarding at least 30% of our ocean through a network of highly protected areas we can help ensure a healthy home for all! June 8 is **World Oceans Day**, the United Nations day for celebrating the role of the oceans in our everyday life and inspiring action to protect the ocean and sustainably use marine resources. The 2020 theme is **Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean.** (<https://worldoceansday.org/>)



WORLD OCEANS DAY 2020



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2oceansaquarium



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Biodiversity – “Our solutions are in Nature and in the Oceans” - Gavin W. Maneveldt, Department of Biodiversity and Conservation Biology, University of the Western Cape

On May 22 we celebrated the *International Day for Biological Diversity* with the theme “Our solutions are in nature”. In essence this theme should really be *Our solutions are in nature and in the oceans*, especially as we approach *World Oceans Day* on June 8. The oceans cover roughly 71% of the Earth’s surface and contain roughly 97% of the Earth’s water. It is not surprising then that the oceans are the largest source of biological diversity on the planet and both directly (such as food) and indirectly (breathable air) supply most of our biological requirements. The oceans have vast convoluted canyons and are considered to contain 99% of the living space on the planet. As a consequence, it has been estimated that 80% of all life on Earth is found under the surface of the oceans and as much as 90% of all photosynthetic life – producing some 70% of the world’s oxygen – occur in the oceans. Although we often can neither smell nor taste them, a large percentage of the ingredients in our foods and household products come from the oceans. South Africa is particularly blessed with a rich marine diversity. As a consequence of our unique geographic position, our seas straddle three oceans – Atlantic, Indian and Southern oceans. While our coastline is less than 1% of the world’s total coastline length, we are home to 10% and 16% of the known seaweed and coastal marine species respectively. We have one of the largest forests (kelp forests) on the planet, stretching about 1000km along shore and roughly 100m offshore on our west to southern coasts. Current records suggest that only about 4% of the world’s oceans remain undamaged by human activity. With all that the oceans provide and their importance to us as a species, this needs to be remedied. This year, under the theme **Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean**, perhaps we will make a meaningful contribution to saving our oceans - and ourselves in the process.

The Southern Tip under lockdown 4

At the end of April word was out that the Southern Tip, or Cape Agulhas Municipal area, recorded two positive virus cases, unfortunately introduced from outside our borders. These two individuals have recovered and the Southern Tip was virus free again. But, during the last weeks of May seven more individuals tested positive. One unfortunate discovery was, on the first day of lockdown, four disposable masks were found in a rocky pool in front of the Lighthouse, together with a Nautilus shell, curry powder packet (of all things) and old fishing line. The Conservation Department continues to patrol the Agulhas National Park and the Technical Department does maintenance where needed.



M. Hope



Lockdown early morning walks in L'Agulhas - DT Stegmann



Rewaldo Gertse 11/09/1996 – 02/05/2020

It is with sadness that we said good-bye to Rewaldo Gertse who passed away on May 2, 2020, in a tragic accident. Since his appointment as an Environmental Monitor with People and Conservation, he was very eager to learn and always willing to develop and was really excited about this new venture in his life. We will remember Rewaldo as a spiritual, caring, dedicated and hardworking person who always saw the bright side of life, always smiling and who could take control and inspire others. He will be missed by the People and Conservation team, as well as all in the Agulhas National Park.



On patrol – C. Gajiano

Agulhas National Park supporting the Cape Agulhas Municipality humanitarian aid to neighbouring communities

The Agulhas National Park took part in a national SANParks food parcel distribution initiative, and is supporting the Cape Agulhas Municipality, in Struisbaai, Elim and surrounding farms, delivering 100 food parcels to households in need. A significant initiative started when lockdown was introduced and developed into a massive feeding operation during the past two months. 2400 individuals in L'Agulhas and Struisbaai received food three times a week, consisting of soup, bread, stews, mince and vetkoek, as well as dry rations. The informal settlement consisting of 322 individuals received food four times a week, also stews, pap and dry rations. The partners assisting in this initiative are Meals on Wheels, the NG Kerk, Black Oystercatcher Restaurant, Sea Shack, the Van Breda family of Zoetendals Valleï and private individuals. Lists were compiled by street of the most vulnerable individuals, amounting to 295 families out of 535 families. Food is also provided at the local school to the learners. To give the reader an example of the amount of food being prepared at one go: the Meals on Wheels kitchen prepares 160 liters of soup, the NG Kerk kitchen prepares 180 liters of soup, a total of 1020 mugs of soup. And, at times mince and vetkoek are prepared for 60 elderly people. Sometimes there is even jelly and custard for pudding. A total of 17 218 food portions were provided to the community in April.



The Agulhas National Park's Climate Change Programme

As was mentioned in the May eBulletin, the purpose of the programme is to document extreme weather events and changes in average climatic conditions and to understand and recognise climate change impacts in the park and their cascading consequences on biodiversity and park operations. Other impacts include an increase in high fire-risk days, which has already been recorded, and should fire frequency increase, alien species might be favoured over natural vegetation. More frequent fires can lead to fire-induced soil hydrophobicity (for example soil water repellence). Soil hydrophobicity hampers the infiltration of water and may have negative impacts on plant growth. Sea-level rise will also have implications for the park's wetlands and coastal areas, and may affect the park's attractiveness and usefulness for tourism. Data indicating which species could gain or lose range within the park are becoming available through the University of Stellenbosch's Spatial Planning for Resilience under Climate change project. The future expansion and consolidation of the park will be an important component of how we respond to climate change. Continued maintenance of alien clearing and wetland restoration programmes also constitute a core component of the park's Ecosystem Based Adaptation (EBA) to reduce the impact of prolonged drought, increased temperatures and frequent fires. Priority areas for implementing EBA should be identified near and within the park's buffer zone. (SOURCE: *Agulhas National Park Management Plan, Draft 2020 – 2029*)



Birding in your garden under lockdown



Gewone janfrederik
Cossypha caffra



Bokmakierie
Telophorus zeylonus



Kaapse glasogte
Zosterops virens



Klein-rooibars dsuikerbekkie
Cynnirys phalybeus



Hoephoep
Upupa africana



Greater Crested Tern *Sterna bergii* in Stinkbaai, L'Agulhas

A lost world and ecosystem under the southern ocean waves: the Palaeo-Agulhas Plain

Louis Willemsse, FGHASA guide trainer and researcher of everything that is worth knowing, once wrote while describing the *spirit of place* of the southernmost tip of Africa, that the actual Southernmost Tip is in fact about 250km further south at the edge of the continental shelf, and that sea levels here have varied between 200 metres higher and 100 metres below the current level. So, the noise of the surf pounding on the shore was once heard where Swellendam is today. Were there any humans there to hear it? Now, research reports on the archaeological excavations at Pinnacle Point on the coast at Mossel Bay are revealing an extra-ordinary landscape. In reports and surveys while SANParks was investigating the desirability to establish a national park at Africa's southernmost tip, the phrase *Serengeti of the South* was used. Reading these reports it is clear why. 200,000 years ago during glacial phases and lower sea levels a vast plain existed. The coast was sometimes as much as 90km distant. Archaeological data shows that this was the prime foraging habitat for early modern humans. The far southern shores of South Africa hold the world's richest records for the behavioural and cultural origins of our species. The earliest evidence for symbolic behaviour, complex pyro-technology, projectile weapons and the first use of foods from the sea were discovered. The Palaeo-Agulhas Plain, when exposed, was a *Serengeti of the South* positioned next to some of the richest coastlines in the world. This unique confluence of food from the land and sea, cultivated complex cultures and provided safe harbour for humans during the glacial cycles. (To be continued) (SOURCE: <https://phys.org/news/2020-05-lost-world-extinct-ecosystem.html>)



Shipwrecks around the Southernmost Tip in June – Jimmy Herbert

At the Southernmost Tip of Africa, June is the month when the cold winter storms move in. One can imagine that before the 20th century, quite a few shipwreck incidents happen due to the change of the season and an unknown roadstead. Second to sailing around Cape Horn (tip of South America) the Cape Agulhas passage was the most dangerous when venturing between Europe and India. During the early years of sailing around Africa's most southern tip, the Agulhas Bank became the 'graveyard of mariners' and its coastline the 'coast of shipwrecks'. About 21 shipwrecks sunk along the section of coastline between L'Agulhas and Die Dam. The *Johanna*, an English East-Indiaman of 550 tons en-route from Batavia to Amsterdam came to grief on the most inner reef at Die Dam a little east of Quoin Point. The wrecking occurred in the early, very-dark-with-hard-rain, hours of June 8, 1682. Of the 113 on board seven drowned and another two perished in the "wilderness". Her outward-bound cargo consisted of sugar, tobacco, rubber and 70 chests of silver (pieces-of-eight and bullion). Oloff Bergh, a sergeant at the Cape, was successful in recovering some of the cargo. After that, the wreck lay untouched until it was rediscovered in 1982. In 1865 on June 26, the *SS Eastern Province*, a British iron screw steamer, weighing 784 tons and built in 1864, ran onto the rocks opposite Mr Van Breda's farm *Visch Vlei* near Quoin Point (Ratelrivier farm). She was en-route from Port Elizabeth to Falmouth. A year before the accident, she set a record time of 32.5 days between the two destinations. All on board survived, but part of the cargo was lost. Reportedly the disaster was due to the change of the compass deviation once, on passing Cape Agulhas, when the ship's course altered to the north. Due to thick fog, they were unable to see that their new course was steering them towards land. Other ships wrecked on this coastline during June are the *Duchess of Buccleugh*, a British wooden barque, June 13, 1850 (due to a gale); the *Gloria Deo*, an Italian barque on June 29, 1882; the *Trevelyn*, a British sailing vessel (emigrant ship) sank on June 3, 1888, about 15km south-west of Cape Agulhas due to stormy weather and the *Highly 302*, a Taiwanese motor vessel (trawler) that sank between Brandfontein and Die Walle on June 9, 1976.



June in Khoe, //hei//khab, means pale moon (good grazing, flowers began to grow)

