



Addo Elephant



South African
NATIONAL PARKS



Camdeboo



Garden Route



Karoo

Frontier Times



Mountain Zebra

November
2017



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Successful Interschool's Birding Weekend

In a technological age where our youth spend so much time on cellphones, video games and a host of other high tech distractions, the South African National Parks Honorary Rangers in the Camdeboo region are commended for their initiative to provide the children of Graaff-Reinet with something different, wholesome and positive to do at Camdeboo National Park's Environmental Education Centre.

They hosted their second annual Interschool's Birding Weekend from 22 to 24 October. The weekend kicked off with the town's primary school learners. The day entailed an introduction to birds, walks in the veld and assessments. The Honorary Rangers say they were aware that they couldn't expect the learners to know the different birds after such a short amount of time, which is why they were assessed more on their ability to pay attention and on their passion for the birds and nature in general. They say it is not necessary to have a lot of knowledge to be able to love and appreciate nature.

It was the turn of the high school learners on the Saturday. As expected, some of them knew some of the birds, but again the emphasis was on the appreciation of nature and how birds fit into the ecosystem.

Professor Adrian Craig, an ornithologist from Grahamstown, and his wife, Cheryl, came for the weekend and demonstrated to the learners how to catch and ring birds. This added a wonderful dimension into birding at a more complex level for the captive audience.

On Sunday all the children returned to the Park for the final bird hike, which was followed by the prize giving ceremony. Hoër Volkskool took the overall win in the senior schools category, while Thembalizwe Primary came out triumphant in the junior version.

The Honorary Rangers would like to thank the following sponsors: Camdeboo National Park, Montego Pet Nutrition, Pick 'n Pay Graaff-Reinet, Shoprite Graaff-Reinet, Spandau Spar, L'ormarins, Bush Transport, McNaughtons Book Shop, Kens Radio, Mesh Steel & Weld and Mr Paint. A special word of thanks as well to the following: Members of the Graaff-Reinet Bird Club, Alan Collet, Zorb and Judy Caryer and the South African College for Tourism.

The team's aim for the 2018 Interschool's Birding Weekend is to involve more schools from the surrounding areas and to involve more parents to join in on the festivities with their children.



Message from Dries Engelbrecht, Regional General Manager

Fostering a love for nature in our youth is one of the biggest and best steps we can take in ensuring it is conserved in the future. Even something as small as identifying birds may be just the spark needed to ignite a passion for the environment in our youth, and that's exactly what the Honorary Ranger corps in Camdeboo National Park are hoping for. Who then knows what the

spin-offs in future will be of their Interschool's Birding Weekends – it could soar to great heights, inspiring young minds to become conservators who'll look after our natural assets in years and decades to come. Well done to everyone involved in pulling off what seems to be becoming a bigger and better event each year.

Meanwhile, in the Garden Route National Park, individuals committing environmental crimes in the estuaries will think twice before disregarding its rules and regulations going forward (pg 4). Knysna section's new patrol vessel, the iLINDILE, will among others, be used for compliance monitoring patrols, maintenance, research, rescue operations and for assistance to other stakeholders.

Even with the end of the year approaching, there's still a lot happening in our parks. In actual fact, it seems as if we may only be getting busier as the festive season approaches. Read about developments at the Tsitsikamma section of Garden Route and improvements to Mountain Zebra's rest camp (pg 4), happenings in Karoo National Park (pg 3) and some of our confirmed December holiday programmes for the kids (pg 5).

Happy reading!

Compliments received

Karoo National Park

I would hereby like to inform you about the wonderful service we received from your workers. We stayed at the Karoo Rest Camp from 15/10/17 to 17/10/17. When we arrived home (Monte Vista, Cape Town) we realised that we had forgotten our little braai stand for our chops on the braai grid at Chalet nr. 38. When I phoned to find out if it was there, I spoke to Simonay Majoka, who informed me that she will find out and let me know. She did indeed phone back and said they found it.

When I phoned again to find out how we will be able to get it here, I spoke to Patricia Sazela, who suggested we get a courier, something I never gave a thought to!

She gave me the number of a courier in Beaufort West who I contacted. I arranged that the parcel would be picked up at the gate of the Rest Camp the following Monday morning. Patricia arranged from her side that the parcel would be at the gate by I IAM for collection.

We received the parcel the Wednesday morning, beautifully wrapped and marked with my name. I phoned Patricia to thank her for the extra mile that she went.

I would like to compliment both these ladies for their service rendered. They are a real asset to your Park.

We have stayed several times at Karoo Rest Camp and have never been disappointed in any of your staff members. Keep up the good work and best wishes for the future.

Trudie Roux and May Hannah

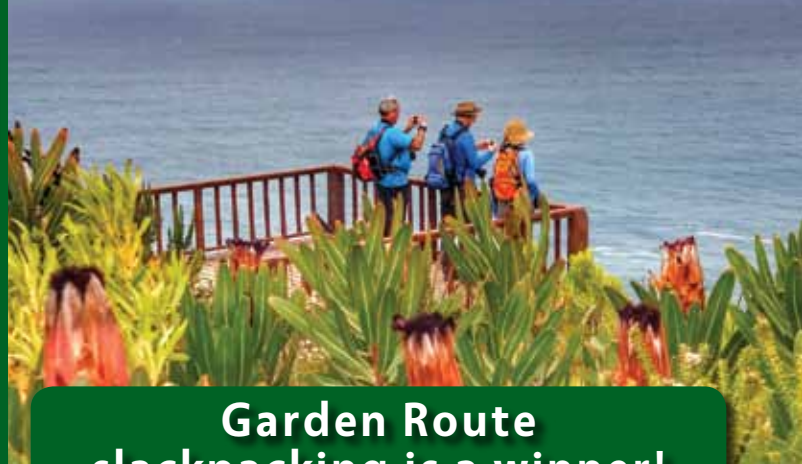
Mountain Zebra

On Sunday 22 October my husband and I checked into Mountain Zebra National Park with short notice with our caravan.

On our arrival we were very, very pleasantly surprised by the most pleasant young gentleman at the main security gate.

Unfortunately I did not notice his name but his appearance, his uniform and his manner was absolutely outstanding and we feel that some sort of recognition should be given to him.

Cassie and Helen De Bruin



Garden Route slackpacking is a winner!

People walk through nature for various reasons. Some for the therapy of walking through naturally scented paths - the aroma of the indigenous forests and coastal fynbos areas is charming. Others walk for a passion, to lose weight or to unwind.

Walking in Tsitsikamma is an adventure, where hikers get to walk the Dolphin Trail in luxury. "They can traverse the Tsitsikamma with well-trained local guides," says the Area Manager of the Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park, Bulelwa Msengi.

First to be accredited with Green Flag status, the luxury Dolphin Trail hike is co-owned by SANParks, Misty Mountain Reserve and the Fernery Lodges & Chalets.

Hikers are spoilt with the picturesque views of the rocky coastline, coastal forests and fynbos areas. The rocky coastal and excited water birds are part of the scenic package. The hike starts in the Storms River Rest Camp (Tsitsikamma) section of the Garden Route National Park.

Its green flag status system officiated by the Hiking Organisation of Southern Africa (HOSA) ensures the trail meets standards in terms of trail outlay, accommodation, facilities and service, as well as the conservation of natural resources. In turn, hikers are guaranteed that their expectations will be met and that they receive value for money.

Two of the private co-partners of the Dolphin Trail have four-star accommodation. The second day of the hike is to the Misty Mountain Reserve where hikers meet at the Khoisan Lounge for pre-dinner sundowners, with a world class sunset as a backdrop spanning a 180 degree view of the Indian Ocean, before sitting down to a delectable three-course menu skillfully paired with award-winning estate wines served in the restaurant.

Director of Misty Mountain Reserve, Tracey Scott, says the Dolphin Trail is becoming popular for its array of experiences it offers to hikers. "The Dolphin Trail is for those who wish to experience a luxury hiking trail with all the challenges of varying degrees of difficulty. The views will not disappoint! It is guided by passionate, professional and knowledgeable guides." All three establishments offer unique and unforgettable experiences along the spectacular Tsitsikamma coastline."

The hike ends at the exquisite Fernery Lodge & Chalets. Owner of the Lodge, Frans Gerber, says the hike was recently nominated for a provincial Lilizela Tourism Award. He calls it "A hike along the magical Tsitsikamma coast in luxury! Imagine it as a shorter version of the famous Otter Trail - with luxury overnight accommodation and without the heavy backpacks!" The Fernery Lodge & Chalets won the award for best accommodation in Tsitsikamma at the Lilizela Awards for their enchanting views and experience to visitors. They are situated on the Sandrift River Gorge above a 30m waterfall.

Other provincial winners of the Eastern Cape Provincial Lilizela Awards who operate in the Garden Route National Park include Untouched Adventures for providing the best action and adventure experiences. They guide water-related activities, majorly snorkelling, kayaking, lilo and others in the Tsitsikamma waters.

The Tsitsikamma Segway Tours and the Storms River Adventures also guide forest related excursions to visitors.

The fully inclusive package for hiking the Dolphin trail:

- All meals, from dinner on the day of arrival, to breakfast on the day of departure (excluding drinks),
- The attendance of well-trained local guides,
- A 4x4 drive through the old Storms River Pass,
- The transportation of all luggage by vehicle between overnight stops,
- All you need to carry is a light daypack and your camera, and
- Additional activities for those who want to hike the trail and go back for more activities at each establishment



Karoo National Park – an ever-changing landscape

There've been a lot of subtle changes to Karoo's landscape of late – with our staff keeping busy by implementing changes in an effort to either beautify the area, providing water to animals or fixing up damage caused by some of the resident fauna.

Anyone who's ever visited the Park would agree that the landscaping on the outside of the entrance gate is one of the most welcoming and eye-catching throughout SANParks. Now the Hospitality Team has carried this through to the inside of the gate, too. So next time you drive through the gates, take a minute to enjoy what's been done before rushing in to explore further.

Inside the game viewing area, a team of Field Rangers recently constructed a water point at the beginning of Berg n dal. Previously, a windmill used to feed into a water trough for the small stock in the area. However, a decision was taken recently to build a bigger water point to supply a larger number of game.

Finally, two solar panels at another waterhole needed replacement recently, after a "single-horned animal" caused irreparable damage. OOPS!



Otter Trail

Tsitsikamma Area Manager, Bulelwa Msengi, has reported a record high in terms of attendance and tourism revenue for the world-famous Otter trail hike. She says the event is not only exciting for athletes and organisers, but boosts the section's revenue and the town's economy for the duration of the event and afterwards. Our own Scientific Services staff, Bheki Maphanga and Kyle Smith, participated in the event.



Swartvlei series to raise awareness

Some of Garden Route National Park's management team and scientists met recently to discuss the intricate Swartvlei system as Communications is planning a series of messages to communities living around the system to better understand it.

Opening and closing estuary mouths
Estuaries have many natural states - open and closed and high and low levels of inflow of both fresh and marine waters.

Both the Swartvlei and Touw River systems have estuaries and estuarine lakes. Estuaries are globally understood to be enclosed coastal bodies of brackish water (resulting from a mixture of freshwater and seawater) with one or more rivers or streams flowing into them, with a connection to the open sea.

The presence and height of a sandbar determines open/closed phases of the mouth of the estuary. During open phases on high tides, water moves from the sea to the estuary, ensuring a combination of both fresh and sea water. This is important for fish species dependent on the opening of the estuary mouth in order to facilitate recruitment of larvae and post-larvae into the system from the sea.

Closed phases are natural and can be highly productive for a variety of estuarine biota including plants, zooplankton, macrobenthos and fish.

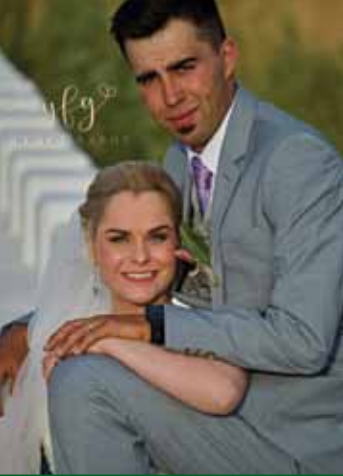
This allows a whole range of juvenile forms of estuarine-dependent and estuarine-associated marine species to be recruited inside their sheltered and productive reaches, where they complete their growth to maturity.

Whitfield and Bate (2007) - annual migrations of postlarvae into temporarily opened and closed estuaries 'indicate that these life stages act as the dispersal phase for this species, allowing it to spread into areas where it is otherwise unable to breed successfully. Mud prawn larvae require a marine phase of development and are often absent from intermittently open estuaries that are, on average, closed for more than 50% of the time. This observation illustrates the importance of the open mouth phase for these and other zoobenthic species with marine larval phases.'

Water levels in the Lakes are managed co-operatively by SANParks and during extreme weather conditions in conjunction with the Eden District Municipality and the Knysna Municipality as low-lying residential properties adjacent to the estuary often get flooded.

When is the mouth opened?
The method used for opening the mouth is 'periodic artificial breaching' of the estuary mouth. The set standards for breaching are when water levels in the estuary reach two metres above mean sea level for Swartvlei and between 2,1 and 2,4 metres for the Touw River.

Breaching is done by SANParks, the custodians of the system. SANParks scientists have measured the temperature of the system, salinity, total dissolved solids, dissolved oxygen and others closely since 1991.



Karoo staff news



It would seem as if Karoo National Park's Conservation Department has certainly been bitten by the coming of spring, which represents new life, love and beginnings.

Elize Horn (temporary worker) and her husband, Freek (field ranger) became the proud parents of little Greyton 22 August. (second from top).

Not to be outdone, Monde Minnies (field ranger) and his wife Tobeca welcomed little Sibahle into their family on 28 September. Both babies and moms are healthy and doing well.

Added to this, field ranger Armond Nel tied the knot with his true love, Alecia on 7 October. The ceremony took place on a farm, with the typical Karoo wedding enjoyed by all who attended. The two lovebirds spent their honeymoon in Mauritius.

Also, with the warmer weather one can usually expect snakes. Ask Senior Section Ranger, Riaan Nel, who was a real hero to the local community when he managed to catch an almost six foot Cape Cobra in one of the housing complexes in Beaufort West on 27 October. The Cobra slithered over a six foot pre-fab wall into the next property, from where a set of birds alerted him of the snake's whereabouts near the dog kennel. He successfully caught the snake and released it into the Park.

Sketch of the entrance gate once completed



Progress of the Tsitsikamma section's upgrades

The construction of the office building that will house client services and reception staff was completed and is operational. The entrance gate to the Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park (GRNP) will be completed in 2018. SANParks is in the process of appointing a new contractor to complete the construction work at the gate after a hired company could not complete the task due to unforeseen circumstances.

SANParks followed due process after the termination of the company's contract by obtaining three quotations. Negotiations with a suitable local contractor to complete the task are underway. This is the best decision to fast-track the completion of the work at the main gate.

The project began in 2016 as part of a R19 million project to upgrade infrastructure in the Storms River Rest Camp and also includes the development around the Big Tree. To date 80% of the work is complete including a temporary road constructed in 2015 to allow visitors to access the Park.

The renovation of the gate aims to introduce a streamlined structure and system for visitors entering the Park's main gate. Noise levels around the site have remained normal and parking space has not been affected by the construction work. No heavy machinery is used and all work is on the existing footprint.

The Park has a temporary restaurant and curio shop and a variety of accommodation on offer. Measures to ensure traffic flows efficiently from the Park's main gate are also in place. They include an introduction of a new lane and additional staff to assist visitors.



Left to right: Werner Jonck, Megan Taplin, Paddy Gordon, Warrant Officer-Francois Cowley, Owen Govender, Dries Engelbrecht

Vessel launch to clamp down on enviro crimes

SANParks is intensifying efforts against environmental crimes in the estuaries in the Garden Route National Park. A new vessel was launched at the beginning of November as part of numerous actions to clamp down on environmental crimes, which replaces the 10-year-old rubber duck, and which will patrol the Knysna estuary.

The vessel was named iLINDILE (Xhosa meaning – 'It awaits'). The 5.8m Infanta rubber duck has two Yamaha 60-horse power, four stroke engines sourced through Knysna Marine.

Speaking at the media launch, Garden Route National Park Manager, Paddy Gordon, introduced Megan Taplin as the new Area Manager for Knysna. He said the Knysna estuary was declared as South Africa's number one estuary in terms of its rich biodiversity. According to Gordon, "It rakes in billions for property agents from people who buy along the water body for its sense of place and is a huge money spinner for tourism in terms of water activities." According to independent researchers, Barry Clarke and Jane Turpy, the estuary is home to 43% of South Africa's plant and animal life and supports rare fish species such as the grunter, white steenbras, dusky cob and Cape stumpnose. Knysna's jewel, the estuary, alone contributes some 21.6% of the total economic value of the 249 national estuaries.

Senior Section Ranger for Knysna Marine, Owen Govender, says the vessel was SAMSA certified under Category C, meaning it complies with all safety requirements and has equipment to enable it to go out to sea and assist other stakeholders if necessary.

The vessel will be used for compliance monitoring patrols, maintenance, research (internal and external researchers, local and international), rescue operations and for assistance to other stakeholders (SAPS, DAFF, NSRI etc.)

In terms of the environmental crime statistics in Knysna, the number of fines are on the increase for people collecting bait illegally. Other fines issued have been for not having a fishing permit available for inspection, use of a seine net, fishing without a permit, exceeding the daily bag limit, collecting of bait by means other than by hand, not being in possession of an invoice for fish bought and failure to comply with a written notice. Two garden forks, a spear gun and a seine net were confiscated.

Taplin said this year's statistics of what was removed from the estuary illegally between January and September is concerning:

- 110 x polychaete worm
- 20 x bloodworm
- 444 x moonshine worm
- 50 x cracker shrimp
- 330 x mud prawn
- A number of undersized fish species

Also in attendance at the vessel launch were General Manager of the Frontier Region, Dries Engelbrecht, representatives from the South African Police Service and other agencies assisting with protecting the Knysna estuary.

The Knysna estuary is popular for its various water activities such as the ferries, boats and vessels, swimming, diving, stand-up paddling, and dolphin and whale watching among others.



December school holiday programmes

Ado Elephant

Dates: Monday 4 to Thursday 14 December

ACTIVITIES

Daily at 9AM:

Kids on the move: Explore our natural and cultural heritage on a game drive vehicle. Get up close and personal with the Ado ellies, the first inhabitants of the Park. Learn about the Big Five and all the other creatures of the Park. For youngsters between the ages of five and 13. We can accommodate a minimum of five children and a maximum of 22. The cost is R60 per child. Parents to sign up their children at the Game Drives Reception office.

Daily between 13:30 and 15:00 at the Interpretive Centre at no cost. All ages welcome:

Monday 4 December:	Face painting
Tuesday 5 December:	The spotted hyena - story telling
Wednesday 6 December:	What is the Big Seven?
Thursday 7 December:	Explore nature on foot – a walk on the wild side
Friday 8 December:	Movie corner on a big screen
Monday 11 December:	Face painting
Tuesday 12 December:	Scavenger hunt
Wednesday 13 December:	What is your favourite animal?
Thursday 14 December:	Movie corner

Please note:

- **The programmes may be cancelled due to bad weather conditions.**
- **Conservation fees are payable upon entry for all visitors, including holiday programme participants.**
- **For further information regarding the bookings, please don't hesitate to contact the parks directly.**

Mountain Zebra

Day visitors and overnight guests alike can enjoy a week long holiday programme at Mountain Zebra National Park from Monday 11 to Monday 18 December.

The free programme is open to all children between the ages of six and 16, as well as those who are young at heart. The game drives, however, are only for the youngsters, and are the only activities which are offered at a reduced rate.

Monday 11 December (08h00 - 10h00):	A guided game drive at a cost of R90 per child.
Tuesday 12 December (09h00 - 10h30):	A guided 1km walk on the Imbila hiking trail (inside the fenced area).
Wednesday 13 December (10h00 - 12h00):	Watching nature DVD's.
Thursday 14 December (10h00 - 12h30):	Signs of the wild – tracks and tracking.
Friday 15 December (11h00 - 12h00):	A guided game drive to a rock painting site inside the Park at a cost of R85 per child.
Saturday 16 December (12h00 - 13h00):	Know your birds.
Sunday 17 December (10h00 - 12h00):	Watching nature DVD's and playing ecological games.
Monday 18 December (09h00 - 11h30):	A guided walk on the Black Eagle Hiking trail – 2.5km (inside fenced area).

Annual tariff increases as of 1 November

Entry tariffs to all South African National Parks underwent a scheduled annual increase from Wednesday 1 November. These are the new rates for the Frontier Region parks:

PARKS	SA RESIDENTS		SADC NATIONALS		OTHER GUESTS	
	ADULTS	CHILDREN	ADULTS	CHILDREN	ADULTS	CHILDREN
ADDO	R68	R34	R136	R68	R272	R136
KAROO	R48	R24	R96	R48	R192	R96
MOUNTAIN ZEBRA	R48	R24	R96	R48	R192	R96
TSITSIKAMMA NATURES VALLEY	R48	R24	R48	R24	R96	R48
TSITSIKAMMA STORMS RIVER	R54	R27	R108	R54	R216	R108
CAMDEBOO	R38	R19	R76	R38	R112	R56
KNYSNA	R32	R16	R64	R32	R128	R64
WILDERNESS	R40	R20	R80	R40	R130	R65

Conservation fees are discounted for South African citizens in view of the financially disadvantaged status of the majority of people and the contribution by taxpayers to government funds.

All funds generated from conservation fees are used with the primary mandate of South African National Parks which is to oversee the conservation of South Africa's biodiversity, landscapes, seascapes and associated heritage assets through a system of national parks.