Congratulations to the outstanding individuals and teams who stood out during the 2017/18 financial year, and who were honoured at this year’s annual awards ceremony in Cradock on 1 October.

**Excellent Performance in the Workplace**
- Abraham Windwaai (Garden Route – Wilderness)
- Diba Rikhotso (Garden Route)
- Eugenia Mkhalime (Garden Route – Tsitsikamma)
- Gertrauida “Joey” van der Westhuizen (Karoo)
- Vuyani Dial (Mountain Zebra)

**Best Customer Service**
- Markus Louw (Karoo)

**Best Constituency Builder**
- Bronwyn Botha (Camdeboo)

**Innovation**
- Clement Arendse and Kyle Smith (Garden Route)
- Jonathan Britton (Garden Route – Wilderness)

**The Shield**
- Clève Hendricks (Addo Elephant)

**Best Leadership**
- Nico van der Wall (Karoo)

**Regional Manager’s Award**
- Cheri Mortel (external)
- Cynthia Mdhayo (Addo Elephant)
- Elsie Harme (Garden Route – Wilderness)
- Fundile Hlaba (Garden Route – Tsitsikamma)
- John Pule (Addo Elephant)
- Lourens de Lange (National)
- Sandile Gunya (Addo Elephant)
- Shorneen Meku (Addo Elephant)
- Wilson Ncamelako (Addo Elephant – retired)

**Special Team Effort**
- Addo Chad rhino team
- Finance and Administration – Garden Route
- James Plummer and Alban Booyse (Camdeboo)
- Karoo Ranger Corps
- Knysna Fire teams

**Best Ranger Post**
- Darlington Rangers – Addo Elephant National Park

**Best Performing Gate**
- Wilderness Ebb & Flow Rest Camp (Garden Route)

**Best Performing Reception**
- Mountain Zebra National Park

**Best Performing Camp**
- Karoo Rest Camp

**Best Performing Park**
- Karoo National Park
SA National Parks Week figures up

Addo Elephant
- I have recently visited Addo Elephant National Park. This is a park I visit on regular occasions as I live in Port Elizabeth. Addo is the most beautiful park.
- Thank you SANParks. We’ve enjoyed and appreciated your hospitality.
- We loved staying there (Nyathi) earlier this year. Stunnin.
- We had a very pleasant time in Addo and saw loads of animals. The accommodation was great.

Mountain Zebra
- I would like to compliment our field guide, Robert, who took us cheetah tracking. He was knowledgeable and friendly. He took us to within a safe distance from the dominant male in the Park and gave us some useful information about it. He made the outing memorable.
- Every day is a good day in the Park.
- Vir my was dié ‘cheetah tracking’ seker dié wonderlikste ervaring ooit in ‘n SA Nasionale Park.
- This was our first visit but we will surely be back. Great Park and great people.

Karoo
- ‘n Wonderlike nasionale park om te besoek.
- The best place!

The road less travelled

The SANParks Honorary Rangers, Wilderness Region, are calling 4x4 enthusiasts to the “Road Less Travelled Off-Road Experience” in the Garden Route National Park (GRNP) on 6 and 7 October. Last year the event attracted close to 100 drivers with friends and family.

The event gives 4x4 enthusiasts and nature lovers the opportunity to travel along roads normally closed to the public. Participants get to experience indigenous forests, fynbos, sparkling streams and sweeping mountain views.

There are three routes available (graded 1-4), with each route offering a unique landscape setting off the beaten track to showcase the magnificent natural features of the GRNP. The routes will take participants along “roads less travelled” through Karatara Forest, the Goudveld Forest, the Voortrekker Route and from Windmeulnek to Platbos.

Funds raised from the event will be allocated to conservation initiatives in the Park, as identified by SANParks.

Area Manager for Wilderness, Sandra Taljaard, says: “We are delighted to open the route which is on existing footprints to allow participants to come as close as possible to nature. The drive is scenic and picture-perfect, which is what the Garden Route is famous for.”

Entries are limited so be sure to book early to avoid disappointment. Enquiries may be directed to Derek Oldfield on oldfield@mighty.co.za or 082 350 2075.

Compliments received

Green Flags for elephant routes

All the elephant routes in Diepwalle, Knysna now have Green Flag status!

The Green Flag status system officiated by the Hiking Organisation of Southern Africa ensures hiking trails meet standards in terms of “trail outlay, accommodation, facilities and service, as well as the conservation of natural resources”.

SA National Parks Week, brought to you in conjunction with First National Bank and Total South Africa, saw more people visiting the five national parks in the Frontier Region than last year, ultimately meaning that more people get to enjoy their natural and cultural heritage during this time.

A total of 31 508 South Africans visited the parks during the week-long campaign, more than last year’s 19 644. The parks who tallied increases were Addo Elephant National Park – up from 7 905 last year to 11 706 this year and Camdeboo National Park who went up from 2 255 to 2 575.

Well done to all the staff involved in making this annual event a success. And thank you to everyone who visited. We hope you enjoyed your time in one or more of our national parks.

Message from Dries Engelbrecht, Regional General Manager

“A great employee is like a four leaf clover, hard to find and lucky to have.”
Tammy Cohen

Indeed, we at SANParks, especially in the Frontier Region, are blessed with some amazing members of staff. And the ones who stood out above the rest were honoured at our annual Regional Awards evening earlier this week.

Each year, staff members in all the regions are encouraged to nominate their colleagues who are deserving of recognition firstly at a local level, and then possibly nationally at the annual Kei Awards evening in Queens in November.

This year we received a record number of submissions – 191, and awarded 30 awards. Even though SANParks Managing Executive: Parks, Property Mokoena, could not make it on the night, he sent the following message through: “Congratulations to all the heros and heroines being honoured tonight. Yes, I have most of you have never thought of yourselves in that way before. Whether you work directly in Conservation Services as a Ranger or Field Guard protecting our natural heritage, or in Hospitality – looking after our valuable guests as either a Receptionist or Hut Attendant and even in Administration – because you too are a hero or heroine for providing support services to your colleagues. Same for our colleagues in People and Communication and all the other departments within the organisation. 2017/18 was a busy year all round, one that tested all of you on the ground, but a year which you nonetheless triumphed over. Congratulations to everyone who will be ascending the podium tonight and may you continue to contribute to conservation in the country in a meaningful and significant way by helping each of us to discover our personal connection to our national heritage. Carry on the good work. You are our shining stars. I salute you.”
Residents in and around Garden Route National Park braved the cold and rain and responded to the call to clean up the coastline on Saturday 15 September. The initiative was spearheaded by Ocean Odyssey, BioWise, SANParks Honorary Rangers and the Knysna Basin project.

Teams gathered at five points around the Knysna estuary, South Africa’s number one estuary in terms of biodiversity significance. One of the groups cleaned a part of the Wilderness beach, which is managed as part of the Wilderness section of Garden Route National Park. SANParks Marine Ecologists, Clement Arendse and Kyle Smith, even went diving for trash.

September, which usually signals the start of spring, kicked off with snow instead in some of our Parks.

Mountain Zebra, Camdeboo and Karoo National Parks, which are loosely referred to as our “karoo” parks, reported snow over the weekend of 7 September – accompanied by quite a bit of rain too.

Mountain Zebra’s rest camp and the Park itself was covered in snow and received 33mm of rain. It snowed quite heavily in the area around Camdeboo National Park’s Valley of Desolation, with the following rainfall recorded throughout the Park: Winterhoek - 50mm, Gannaleegte - 40mm and Lakeview - 49mm.

In Karoo National Park, Senior Section Ranger Ruan Nel took staff members’ children out into the Park on the Saturday morning where they got to experience playing in the snow for the first time.

The SANParks Honorary Rangers, Addo region, held a beach clean-up work party on 15 September as part of International Coastal Clean Up day.

A total of 13 Honorary Rangers, six family members and one guest participated. A further 33 learners and six educators from three school Eco Clubs also got involved, namely Mount Pleasant Primary School, Laerskool Newton Park and Morningbidge Primary School. A 10km section of beach from Sundays River towards Woody Cape was cleaned.

Lots of plastic bottles and tops were picked up as well as glass bottles, plastic bags, ropes of different sizes, a wooden pallet, two tractor tyres, lobster cages and other debris. A dead penguin, some large whale bones and bird skeletons were also found.

Individual Ocean Conservancy certificates will be awarded to the learners and educators, while each school will also receive a Pick’n Pay voucher and SANParks Honorary Ranger certificate in recognition of their participation.

Mountain Zebra National Park, together with the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, celebrated Arbor Day at Michausdal and Carinus Primary Schools in Cradock this year.

After a short educational on the importance of trees, the benefits we as humans derive from them and why it is important for us to care for them, the learners were divided into groups and taken through all the necessary steps for planting and preserving the trees. They then got hands on and planted the 10 trees the Department donated to each of the schools.
A formal welcome to the Frontier

Portia Langutelani Chake joined the Frontier Region as a Game Guard to Scientific Services at the beginning of September.

Portia is not new to SANParks, having come from Marakele National Park as an Environmental Monitor and has a keen interest in large mammals, veterinary technology and marine species.

Her primary responsibility will be game guarding visiting researchers and the Regional Biotechnician. When she is not in field she will be assisting with administrative duties and maintaining the research facility.

Heritage Day celebrations

Heritage Day was celebrated in the Tsitsikamma section of Garden Route National Park on Friday 21 September. The event was organised by People & Conservation Officer, Nebulwenke Gantsho, Business Development Manager, Andile Namntu, was the MC on the day during which community members filled the Mandela Village community hall.

In Mountain Zebra National Park, staff used the public holiday as an opportunity for a chance at a fun-filled, team building session. Staff members were divided into groups and had to work together for a week in preparation for a cook-off competition. Each group was given a particular South African culture to research and had to come up with a dish and a song for their particular culture. The selected cultures were Swazi, Ndebele, Southern Sotho and Tswana.

Addo’s sporting spoils

Addo Elephant National Park’s soccer and netball teams are becoming a force to be reckoned within the Eastern Cape. They recently returned home victorious after tournaments hosted by Shamwari and also excelled at another local soccer event. Showing off their spoils are Xolani Witbooi and Joseph Khothakala.

Garden Route netball players shine in Kruger

Congratulations to Garden Route National Park netball players, Verouxze Morris and Siphokazi Nelo, who both won Women of the Match awards at the inter-regional netball tournament outside Kruger National Park in September.

The team represented the Frontier Region in the tournament, which formed part of the launch of SA National Parks Week. They unfortunately lost their first game to Kruger, but were victorious against the Cape Region – finishing up third among the regions.

Welcome to the Region

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Her primary responsibility will be game guarding visiting researchers and the Regional Biotechnician. When she is not in field she will be assisting with administrative duties and maintaining the research facility.
Frontier Regional General Manager, Dries Engelbrecht, congratulating the award winners at this year’s Regional Awards evening.
Karoo Rest Camp

Addo Chad rhino team

Finance and Administration – Garden Route

James Maarman and Alban Booysen (Camdeboo)

Karoo Ranger Corps

Knysna Fire Teams

Darlington Rangers – Addo Elephant National Park

Wilderness Ebb & Flow Rest Camp (Garden Route)

Mountain Zebra National Park

Karoo Rest Camp