Although the Cape Floristic Kingdom occupies a mere .04% at the southern tip of Africa in a tiny crescent of the Western Cape, it boasts of at least 45000 different plants, over 69% of which are endemic to the region and found nowhere else on earth.
Molweni GRNPers

The end of winter always brings a sense of nostalgia, while the beginning of Spring brings new life. As humans we are continuously in a tug of war between these two: hanging onto the old, but wanting to forge out into the new. The “old” brings comfort and the new, uncertainty. But together, as a committed team, we can celebrate that which we have overcome and face the future with a smile.

July marked the month during which we honoured our ranger corpse for their dedication in often difficult circumstances, especially during law enforcement operations. We were however reminded about the special joy it also brings to be able to work so close our natural resources and to know your area like your own home. July also brought an opportunity to once again remember Tata Madiba and his ideals by giving 67 minutes of our time to those in need. Staff enthusiastically did some maintenance at the Kleinkranz crèche; handing out clothes and toiletries to the society of epilepsy and even some kindness towards the Knysna Animal Welfare.

The ‘Adventure is in our Nature’ slogan continues to gain momentum via events such as the Knysna Oyster Festival and the identification of new activities both in the water and in the forest.

In celebration of the excellent work done by our colleagues, the annual regional awards was hosted at Simola Golf club. Smiles and cheers were at the order of the day with local talent coming to the fore.

With the annual SANParks week coming up, much preparations have been done. Please continue to encourage all you know to make use of this wonderful opportunity. Let’s showcase our pride in the management of our natural and cultural resources.

We wish Phelisa much joy in her new job. We are certainly going to miss our “little Derec.”. We also wish our beloved Dr. S every success in her venture into the Eastern Cape and thank her for her lasting legacy of the GRNP.

To the GRNP women, I remind you that we need to support each other in the workplace and at home. As women, we have come a long way, but can grow even more by empowering each other.

Jill Bunding-Venter
General Manager: Garden Route National Park
**Global News**

**World Heritage extended to include forests in the GRNP**

The Afromontane forests of the Southern Cape, most of them part of the Garden Route National Park (GRNP) were recently listed on the World Heritage List (UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation). The IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) received a nomination in March last year to double the existing World Heritage site. The current site is 557, 584 hectares and includes Table Mountain National Park, Agulhas complex, Langeberg complex and the Garden Route complex. The extended site includes the Wilderness area, State forests and Mountain Catchment Areas which form a chunk of the GRNP.

At least 119 recognized Fynbos vegetation types will be added to the existing site of both endemic and/or threatened Fynbos species.

The CFK consists of the five biomes namely: fynbos, renosterveld, succulent karoo, sub-tropical thicket and afromontane forest. Fynbos is the dominant vegetation of the CFK as 80 percent of the CFK consists of fynbos.

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**Local News**

**The very first upgrades in Tsitsikamma** as part of the +R 17 million project will start with the entrance gate and administration building. Good news is visitors will not be affected by this at all. ‘The plan is to vacate the existing office building before December’ explains Area Manager for Tsitsikamma, Lesley-Ann Meyer. Roll out of the Project will be the new Office Block closest to reception, then once that’s completed, work on the Entrance gate will begin.

‘The gate project is expected to start in early 2016. Visitors will be able to access the Park through a newly developed temporary access route just behind the new office building.’ All upgrades in the Park are planned on an existing footprint.

The upgrades are eco-friendly and will make ample provision for universal access (all revamps have wheelchair accessibility considerations). The Park attracts both soft and hard adventurers with its multiple activities including water-related mostly organized by concessionaires operating from the Park (snorkelling, kayaking, lilo, swimming, black water tubing, stand up paddling) and also forest excursions (12 of the Park’s hiking trails have Green Flag status making it the only National Park in South Africa with so many concentrated day and overnight nature walks that meet International standards). ‘

‘We’ve planned for all activities including the restaurant to operate fully throughout’ affirms Meyer.

The 1000- year old Outeniqua Yelloowood with a Boardwalk is also an attraction that is open to members of the public and can be accessed via segways.
News from South Africa

New SA Immigration regs kick in

President Jacob Zuma and the Minister of Home Affairs, Naledi Pandor, signed off on new immigration regulation on Friday, 16 May 2014 in a move that marks the first time since 2004 that the law has been adjusted. The changes officially came into effect on Monday, 26 May, and the amendments to the act impact foreigners looking to visit, study, work, live and own a business in South Africa.

Critics respond to new immigration laws

- Critics described the new laws as ‘tough’. They claim it will take longer to process documentation which will discourage international visitors and investors
- Critics also claimed the Department of Home Affairs did not have proper systems in place to process applications

Department of Home Affairs defended

- New laws with stringent criteria introduced to address security concerns
- The Department of Home Affairs said the launch of the new VISA facilitation centers, to ‘cut long queues and to also shorten the adjudication process.’

National Arbor Week
01st – 07th September 2015

According to a statement released by the National Department of Agriculture Forestry & Fisheries (DAFF), South Africa celebrates Arbor Week from 1-7 September annually. The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), as the custodian of forestry in South Africa, is responsible for the campaign.
‘National Arbor Week is an opportune time to call on all South Africans to plant indigenous trees as a practical and symbolic gesture of sustainable environmental management.’
Cameroon Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife visits the GRNP
Writes Graham Durrheim

The Cameroon tour group included senior regional officials from the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary managers and researchers, and consultants from the GFA Consulting Group. They are managing the Programme for the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the South West Region of Cameroon, which is an international biodiversity hotspot. The programme is implemented by the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and co-funded by the German government. The programme’s objective is to contribute to the preservation of high-value ecosystems in the South West Region of Cameroon and thereby contribute to improved livelihoods of the surrounding communities in a sustainable manner. It aims to promote sustainable forest and wildlife management by affected stakeholders for their own benefit.

The aim of the tour was to provide opportunities for information sharing with natural resource managers and researchers elsewhere in Africa. The group spent a few days visiting conservation areas in Ethiopia before travelling to South Africa.

The second and third days in the GRNP were spent mainly with Scientific Services, where many issues of common interest were discussed. Presentations on the terrestrial monitoring and research programme, fire management, and the harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products in the GRNP set the scene for the field visits to follow. The group was shown timber harvesting compartments, the Diepwalle Forest research area, the King Edward VII big tree, fern monitoring, fynbos islands, bark harvesting research, the Tsitsikamma Big Tree, gap monitoring and the Storms River Mouth rest camp. Highlights for the visitors were a trip with Tsitsikamma Segway Tours and a boat trip into the Storms River Mouth gorge.

The delegation from Cameroon with the management team of the GRNP outside the Regional office in Knysna

Cameroon is in Central Africa and has coastal areas, deserts, savanna, rainforests and mountains.

The country has a stable economy with over 20 million people

Pidgin is a popular language in Cameroon. Hello is ‘How na?’

Cameroon has francophone (French speaking) and Anglophone (English speaking) areas.
GRNP celebrates Mandela Day

Colleagues in the GRNP rolled up their sleeves for more than 60 minutes to celebrate Mandela Day in July. According to Marionette Scholtz, the team in the Wilderness section of the Park surprised the Kleinkrantz creche by doing some maintenance work on the equipment used by learners. This included painting items to protect them from weather conditions and donating food items to the school to prepare lunch for the learners.

According to Melaney Barrath (People & Conservation Officer, Knysna), this year the Knysna section teamed up with Ocean Odyssey to provide a ‘fun-filled Marine themed day for the children of the Dorothy Broster Home, Khayalethu.’ In addition ‘staff from GRNP Knysna, GRNP Regional office and GRNP Scientific Services donated clothes, blankets, toys, stationary and toiletries for the Dorothy Broster Home and for the Epilepsy Knysna Charity shop. These were sorted and bagged on the day and delivered with a smile to both charities.’

Pictures of the Wilderness team hard at work: Right: Robert, Head Chef of the Kleinkrantz creche and Muneer (People & Conservation Officer).

The scientific services team from Knysna also took time to volunteer services to a local animal welfare center. From left to right: Wessel, Lizette, volunteer from the animal welfare and Melanie.
Feedback from round table discussions with stakeholders

Concerning cycling in Knysna

Subsequent to a readjustment of the tariff structure last November 2014, the Knysna Area Manager, representing cyclists from Plettenberg Bay (Leon Evans and Colin Shave and now James Stewart), representing cyclists from Knysna (Greg Vogt) further involvement of Jacques Brink & Stewart Lightley. The following conclusions were reached:

• To establish a technical team to identify maintenance needs of cycling routes in the Knysna forest: A technical team assessed routes and began implementing new maintenance plans. This is currently underway and recently cyclists gave positive feedback on the SANParks-GRNP facebook site.
• Maintenance of existing routes & new signage: A new route to be added to the famous Harkerville set, includes the ‘black route’. It is a 12 kilometer route known as ‘graspad’.

New signage to be adopted first by the Knysna section is adapted from the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA).
• Open Day: SANParks is planning a 1-day free entry for all cyclists in the Garden Route and surrounds. This is to mainly launch the ‘Graspad’ route but to also meet and register cyclists on the database.
• Broader cycling strategy: Knysna Tourism in collaboration with WESGRO (the Western Cape Economic development agency) are driving a bigger strategy for cycling. The GRNP’s input is to take learnt from implementation of matters above for consideration by the Province.
• Combining permits for adjacent land to the Park (such as Cape Pine): Although this will prove to be a challenge, there is a need to further liaise with the National tourism division regarding the combined permit system. Currently auditing and governance tools in the organisation pose a barrier for this.

Picture from the SANParks-Garden Route National Park facebook page, of cyclists in Harkerville, supplied by Knysna Cycle Works,

Stakeholders in the Wilderness section of the Park met up with the Area Manager (Sandra Taljaard), and her team (Carel van der Merwe and Jonathan Britton), as well as the Area Manager of Knysna (Johan de Klerk).
• SANParks indicated the introduced tariff would not change for Wilderness as this would affect Knysna and Natures Valley. There is no planned increase this year, but an introduction of CPI.
• Jonathan Britton and Carel van der Merwe (SANParks) to stay in contact with stakeholders regarding maintenance of slipways and other areas of concern.
• Stakeholders & SANParks all agreed to cooperate, a tariff structure must be emailed to all present by the 1st week of October 2015 prior to releasing anything in the media.
• SANParks agreed to support any forum established re-boat, vessel and sailing forum (to release Jonathan to be part of such an initiative). Stakeholders also indicated a need for a meeting like the current forum.

SANParks also agreed to explore the possibility of a pro-rata rate and a daily fee for canoes.
SANParks Week 2015

Last year (2014) more than 4000 people visited the GRNP during the SA National Parks Week 2015. Knysna is the host Park for this year’s Regional event. It will be held at the Harkerville Sports Ground. People expected to attend include tour operators, entrepreneurs, members of the public, learners from tertiary institutions, Government (Municipalities & tourism boards).

Other events during the campaign that have enticed members of the public include the ‘Serenade in the Park.’ Members of the public include your families are invited to this event in Wilderness (Ebb & Flow Rest Camp), bring your picnic basket and enjoy the Spring sunset to melodic sounds of a local orchestra.

Take full advantage of the potjie kos competition, planned hikes, walks and talks provided by our People & Conservation Officers from all 3 sections of the Park. Spread the word, make sure everyone who comes brings a valid SA Identity document to prove their citizenship.

Algoa FM will be broadcasting Live from the Main event. Listen to radio for interviews about activities during the campaign week.
SANParks met interested business people who responded to a call to a ‘due diligence meeting’.
The purpose of the gathering was to inform attendees of opportunities identified by SANParks in the Knysna estuary. Planning Manager for the Garden Route National Park (GRNP), Len du Plessis clarified that recreational activities considered ‘the dual zoning process’. This is done to minimize conflict between different uses. The process considered ‘visitor experience and also special management classes (areas in the estuary for bait collection, resources uses, etc.).
The 2005 zonation plan was used.

Business Development Manager for the GRNP, Andile Namntu, says the PPP (Public Private Partnerships) as per National Treasury toolkit. The process also adheres to the SANParks Commercialization Strategy adapted in 2000.

Opportunities include the following

• Fishing charters (for the purpose of angling and fishing in the estuary)
• Canoeing, Kayaking, Stand up paddling and Dinghies
• Diving and snorkeling: One operator will be granted the rights to run a diving operation in the estuary.
• Commercial Sailing School: There is one commercial sailing school opportunity that is allowed on the estuary.
• Houseboats
• Cruises are not part of the PPP.

Important notes regarding the PPP tender documents already uploaded on the SANParks website.

SANParks requests proposals for the commercial use of sections of the of the Knysna Estuary which is in the Knysna Section of the Garden Route National Park through a public private partnership (PPP) agreement for the Water Based Adventure Activities in the Knysna Section of the Garden Route National Park.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) is issued by SANParks in accordance with the guidelines for public private partnerships (PPP) contained in National Treasury’s PPP Toolkit for Tourism, and in compliance with Treasury Regulation 16 issued in terms of the Public Finance Management Act, 1999.
Tourism
‘Adventure is in our nature’

New cycling route for Knysna

Knysna is adding a 12 kilometer mountain biking (MTB) cycling route to its existing set in Awesome Knysna. Harkerville is known globally for its mountain biking routes in the Knysna forest. The new route known as ‘Graspad’ is accessible from the scenic Kranshoek gate and promises a ride through species-rich indigenous forests. Cyclists will ride through towering trees with a backdrop of the ocean.

**How to get to Kranshoek:** GPS Coordinates: 34°05’28”S 23°18’23”E

Other activities in Kranshoek: Picnic spots, the waterfall, dolphin and whale watching and the Kranshoek hiking trail.

Other MTB routes in nearby Harkerville will also get a facelift.

![View to see on the new ‘Black route’ or Graspad. A cycling open fun day to launch this route is planned for November 2015](image)

Report back on the Oyster Fest

Events in the Park boost eco-tourism in Knysna. This contributes to the economy directly and indirectly. There are approximately 34 events held annually in the Knysna section of the GRNP, including cycling races, trail runs, hiking, swimming competitions in the estuary, boating and vessel sporting events.

During the Knysna Oyster Festival alone, the following events run in and through the Garden Route National Park:

**Cycling race** The Momentum, Weekend Argus cycle tour is a 30- km race riding through popular areas of the Knysna forest such as Kom-se-Pad and Gouna.

**Knysna Dragons Lagoon Swim** occurs in the Knysna estuary.

**Forest Family Hike** attracts families for 3 days in a year to Harkerville (Knysna forest) easily accessible from the N2 (national road).

**Marathon** - this year marks the 32nd year since the inception of the marathon. Runners pace from one part of the indigenous forest to the next in either a 21-km half marathon or a full 42 km run.

**Houtkapper Trail Run** occurs in Goudveld, a historic mining town in the middle of the forest.

UP COMING EVENTS

Southern Cross event

This 3-day trail buffet is not for the faint hearted. Distances for each day are 29km (mountain), 31km (forest) and 18km (coastal).

Media breakfast in the forest (Grootdraai) during the Oyster Festival
Farewell to Phelisa

The Regional Office gathered to bid Phelisa Casa farewell at the end of July 2015. She was the Region’s Procurement Officer. Thea Lucas, who represented the Manager of Finance (Derec Giles) who had other commitments in Pretoria, spoke well of Casa. Describing her as hard working and meticulous, our ‘little Derec’.

Phelisa seen shocked by the surprise farewell and so many gifts. Grace Valela (left), Nadia Erasmus (behind Grace) and a surprised Phelisa (right).

Farewell to Dr. Mvusy Songelwa

The Regional Office bid farewell to their well-beloved ‘Dr. S’ during on a planned cruise around the Knysna estuary. She held back tears as the team reminisced about past events.

GRNP management bid farewell to the ME: Parks on the John Benn and cruised the Knysna estuary before treating her to a delicious lunch.
Rangers met in Natures Valley, part of the Tsitsikamma section of the GRNP to commemorate Rangers Day 2015. SANParks rangers were joined by peers from Cape Nature, Gondwana and Mountain Rescue. Speaking at the event, former Area Manager for Knysna 'Oom' Piet Joubert said rangers today must learn from rangers from the past. He urged rangers to rekindle their passion for nature and excited about discovering nature's hidden assets. 'As a ranger you get to places in the Park where no one else can because you must know the area you work in so well.'

James Stewart from Mountain Rescue affirmed 'Oom' Piet's sentiments that rangers need to 'always be aware of what's around them. To understand where they work.'

He also shared practical hints about helpful things to carry around whilst on duty: Duck-tape (which can stop bleeding and useable as a plaster), something to start a fire and a space blanket.

He also reminded rangers of the 3Hs that are so important: 'Hello, Health & Safety kit and numbers to remember when calling for Help' during an accident.

Area Manager for Tsitsikamma (GRNP), Lesley -Ann Meyer welcomed guests and rangers attending. Brent Whittington, Senior Section Ranger for Tsitsikamma (GRNP) was the Master of Ceremonies for the day and coordinator for the day.

Also in attendance were two Area Managers for Knysna (Johan de Klerk)and Wilderness (Sandra Taljaard).

Above: The overwhelming attendance by GRNP rangers was commended. The event was also well branded by partners in attendance. Pictures below (3 Area Manager, left) and one of the guest speakers of the day, James Stuart and main organizer of the event, Brent Whittington.
In a play on the powerful women’s right’s slogan: “You strike a woman, you strike a rock,”, attendees at this year’s Women’s Day event sported pink golf shirts stating that the women in the GRNP ROCK. Symbolically the ladies teamed up in groups of four on the Knysna Bowling lawns in a feisty competition. Screaming and laughter were interspersed with shouts of encouragement. “Empowered women, empower women,” said the GM of the GRNP, Jill Bunding-Venter. We need to encourage each other and build each other’s strengths, work hard despite day to day challenges in the workplace and at home. Guest speaker for the day, Sharon Lewis from the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership reiterated the GM’s sentiments with various examples on how gender balance works well in the workplace:

• When I have worked in teams that are dominated by men I have found them to be emotionally tough environments, making me less comfortable to open my mouth to offer a different opinion, or even contribute an idea. In my experience, a gentler, more nurturing and maternal energy creates a safer space for debate and problem solving-often to the overall benefit of the outcomes and results.

She further added useful pointers for women
• ‘Don’t judge other women.’
• Be direct to resolve conflicts.
• Respect other women’s experiences.
• Advocate for other women.’

She left women with this quote: ‘Excellence is the best deterrent to racism or sexism.’

Dominique du Toit gave a moving word of support to the GM-Jill Bunding-Venter who is described as kind-hearted, encouraging, hard working and a champion for the advancement of women in the workplace.
GRNP People

GRNP Regional Awards 2015, hosted by the Knysna Section

The Garden Route National Park Awards was held on the 20th August 2015. The purpose of the Awards is to celebrate staff achievement(s). SANParks introduced Regional Awards in an effort to not only motivate its staff, but to recognize and honour those who commit themselves to a matchless level of excellence in performing their duties. In attendance was the Deputy Mayor of Knysna, Esme Edge, Mrs South Africa contestant, Jackie Wilson Louwe (who was a co-Master of Ceremony with a Senior Marine Ranger for Knysna-Owen Govender), Managing Executive of Parks, Dr. Mvusy Songelwa and other distinguished guests. Winners were announced at an occasion where at least a third of the Region’s workforce gathers. Winners were given a certificate and a gift. This year, the organizing committee decided on giving winners medals instead of gifts.

Speaking at the event, General Manager of the Garden Route National Park (GRNP), Jill Bunding-Venter said ‘overall guests to the Park showed an impressive increase by a staggering 19% since 2013. Day visitors also increased by 19, 5%. Overnight visitors increased by 17, 75% in 2014 as compared to 2013. With National Parks’ transformation mandate and objective to attract more black visitors, the GRNP can report an increase of 11, 44% compared to 2013.’

Winners of the GRNP Awards 2015

*Excellence in the workplace category:* Daniel Titus, Suzanne Erasmus, Nicholus Nelukalo, Geneve Lupacchini, Maretha Alant, Melaney Barrath, Thembalaki Sinuka, Quinton Solomons, Hilton Wildeman, The Beervlei team, Julia Visser, Dominique du Toit, Marionette Scholtz, Natasha Pluim, Elton Mi Cheals, The trails division: Tsitsikamma, Louis Camphor, Phillip Williams, Sharon van Rooyen

*Best Performing Camp of the Year*

Tsitsikamma

*Best Performing Entrance Gate of the Year*

Goudveld

*Best constituency builder of the Year*

Richmond Gewers

*Best ranger of the Year*

Peter Roman

*Best customer service of the Year*

Hesron Ruiters

Werner Viviers

*Innovation/Research category*

Dr. Tineke Kraaij

*Best Leadership of the Year*

Johan de Klerk

*General Manager’s Award*

Maretha Alant

*Surprise Awards (long service): 30 & 20 years respectively serving SANParks*

Daniel Titus

Jill Bunding-Venter

Check out the You tube video of the Awards by clicking this link: [https://youtu.be/2_HvrSEVwuE](https://youtu.be/2_HvrSEVwuE)
Smiles and jubilation all around
A. Nolan writes: ‘The staff at Tsitsikamma from Hesron at the front reception through to all others were exceptional. ..they made our stay exceptional!!’

Picture of Hesron Ruiters (left), Werner Viviers and Natasha Pluim at the recent GRNP Regional Awards.

F. Beukes writes: ‘Our stay at Ebb and Flo was excellent! Thank you very much we will be back soon…….

G. Bailey writes: ‘Late April / early May my wife and I undertook a road trip. We stayed at Bontebok, Storms River, Addo and Diepwalle. The Parks, the facilities and the staff were totaly amazing! You guys make South Africa proud! Thank you.’

R. Fouche writes: ‘Dear Sanpark – we loved staying in the Harkerville Treetop house – everything was cleaned and extremely well equipped. The genset did not work, a phone call to the office and an hour later all was good and we had lights and electricity (Eskom Power cuts). We will definitely book the chalet again, and looking forward to explore all other similar accommodation in the Knysna, Plett and Wilderness area.’

Picture of the treetop chalet in Harkerville Knysna
Eugene Maya who worked in the Tsitsikamma technical team passed away
On the 16th July 2015. Sincerest condolences to the Maya family and his colleagues in the
Tsitsikamma section of the GRNP.

Our sincerest condolences to the Coetzee family and the team in Tsitsikamma following
the sudden passing of Catherine Coetzee on the 20th August 2015. Our thoughts and
prayers are with the Coetzee family and colleagues in the Tsitsikamma section of the
GRNP.