GARDEN ROUTE REGION

Newsletter

Molweni “GRNPers” :)

How apt for our Marine Week campaign theme to be published during October, the month where the importance of our marine resources are recognized and celebrated worldwide. With Tsitikamma being the oldest Marine Protected Area in Africa, Knysna being the number one and Swartvlei the number six estuary in terms of biodiversity, the Garden Route National Park seems to be the perfect backdrop to these celebrations.

It is therefore heartening to know that the Tsitikamma MPA will be a focal area in a ground-breaking study on the dwindling numbers of dolphin species to get to the root cause of the problem. Marine Protected Areas or MPAs, considered as ‘natural laboratories’ are highly rated in terms of biodiversity conservation and fisheries management. Dolphins are regular visitors to MPAs, providing insight into the status of marine ecosystems, shedding light on over-fishing and other environmental changes. Sadly, many dolphin species are in decline, which has an effect on the food chain. This has resulted in the need to investigate the reasons for these population changes by Dr. Pierre Pistorius from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU), Dr. Steve Kirkman and Dr. Toufirk Samaai from the Department of Environmental Affairs. As custodians of the MPAs, SANParks and Cape Nature have a vital role to play in the research.

As dolphins are highly sociable animals and often create a “life raft” for one of their own, the colleagues also reached out on Mandela Day, where amongst others local crèches were painted, clothing handed out, assistance at a local Hospice and orphans were taken out on the boat onto the estuary. SANParks week, offering free entrance to all South Africans down went with a bang, with Radio Algoa broadcasting to over 690,000 listeners from the Ebb and Flow Camp in Wilderness. Both Eden District and George municipal Councillors participated in the main event, which brought learners to the park to experience the different career paths in Conservation. Exhibitions included those by CAPENature and the Nelson Mandela Metro University. A very successful Kids in parks programme was hosted by the P&C colleagues from Knysna, which included fun learning programmes about our ecosystem services, forests, fynbos and freshwater.

In yet another co-operative scoop with the Eden District Municipality, R 21 000 was paid to WESSA for the registration of Wilderness as a Blue Flag beach. Partnerships with the NSRI and the BSP team will ensure the smooth execution of this status over the festive season. The analysis of supply and demand for ecosystem services generated by the Knysna river catchment and estuary basin is at its completion stages, with a growing realisation that the estuary, catchment and Knysna Town constitute a single socio-ecological system with many critical interconnections.

Quarter two saw us implementing our Adventure Tourism Destination strategy with big events such as the Otter African Trail run and Southern Storm in Wilderness being a huge success. The Otter Trail run was even covered on BBC news as Ricky Lightfoot from Great Britain won the race. Our very own Marco Bernado completed the grueling race in just under 6 hours and Bheki Mpanga in 6 and a half. We are so proud to regard them as part of our winning team. An excess of 2500 athletes participated in the various events.

Women’s Day is a major event in the park and this year it was celebrated via team building at Monkey Land and Birds of Eden. The resilience our ladies have in the Garden Route the topic of the day. Staff and stakeholders alike salute our Ranger Corps for their daily heroic deeds of protecting our environment. Colleagues, let’s continue to celebrate and respect each other and embrace our differences.

Happy reading!

Jill Bunding-Venter

General Manager: Garden Route National Park

Contribute!

Want to see your news in the GRNP bi-monthly? Send your news, pics, articles and announcements to: Nandi Mgwadlamba, Shamley Titus or Melaney Barrath
Global

**New Marine Hotspot**

*Adapted from Science Alert (Australia)*

New global patterns of marine fish diversity have revealed a new marine hotspot. Information collected through a ‘citizen science’ initiative developed in Tasmania reveal an area rich in marine fish diversity. It is part of the Reef Life Survey Program where committed recreational SCUBA divers are trained and supported to survey numbers of reef animals worldwide. Analysis of information provided by Reef Life Survey volunteers over the past six years has confirmed fish diversity in South Western Australia and the Galapagos Islands.

‘The assistance of over 100 dedicated divers has allowed us to look at ecological patterns and processes impossible for scientific dive teams to cover’ says an expert working on the Project, Professor Edgar.

A report based on the Reef Life Survey data, published in the journal *Nature*, presents an alternative view of global biodiversity patterns. In order to reflect ecological processes, global diversity was considered in terms of the abundance and characteristics of fish species for the first time, rather than simply the number of species present in different regions. Results provide new insights into how different fish species associate with each other around the world, and highlight novel and informative ways that diversity information can benefit coastal management.

‘The level of detail and fact that data were collected using the same methods globally allow us to assess theoretical ideas that have not previously been tested. Reef Life Survey fits into a level of citizen science that is unique for marine research, with trained volunteers providing information equivalent in detail and quality to experienced scientific teams’ says Edgar.  

**Sourced by Melaney Barrath**  

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**News from Southern Africa...**

The best time to watch dolphins and whales in the Garden Route is between July and November. This is when they migrate from cold to mild waters from Stillbaai right through to Wilderness, Knysna and Tsitsikamma. Bryde’s whales or orcas as well as humpback dolphins are often spotted in Wilderness. Visitors stream in to watch these marine mammals from land or from boats. Whales and dolphins reportedly spend more than 5 months a year in water in the Western Cape. Elsewhere in the country, they can also be spotted in KwaZulu Natal and some parts of the Eastern Cape (specifically Cape St Francis and the Eastern Cape Wild Coast).

Our very own Knysna and Plettenberg Bay is so loved by the sea mammals that it can be compared to Hermanus, claimed to be the ‘whale capital of the world.’ Globally, the whale watching industry generated $2, 1 billion per annum in 2008 according to the International Fund for Animals/ IFA). The famous Bryde’s whale which can be spotted in Knysna can grow up to an average of about 18 tonnes, and about 14 meters long. Females are larger.

Although closely related to whales, dolphins can weigh between 40kg to 10 tonnes. Globally, there are almost 40 species. They also feed on fish - 30 pounds of fish daily to be exact. Guess how many teeth a whale has ?On average:100!

Dolphins & Whales

A new study from the Dolphin Research Center in Grass Keys, appears to indicate that dolphins are smart enough to solve problems in the same way as humans. Working with a bottlenose dolphin named Tanner, researchers found he was able to imitate behavior, even when one of his senses was blocked. ‘We already knew dolphins imitate other dolphins, but this time we blindfolded Tanner and used humans instead of dolphins to make the movements in the water’ said Dr. Kelly Laakkola, Research Director. ‘What we found is that he imitated the human movements even when he couldn’t see them. ‘The news is that he made a choice’ she said.’

Whales are warm-blooded and have hair. They are the largest animal on earth and also the loudest in the world. They can travel about 12, 500 miles migrating to a location miles for food.
Female dolphins are called cows, males are called bulls and young dolphins are called calves.

Dolphins consume a variety of prey including fish, squid and crustaceans.

Dolphins mate throughout the year, though in some areas there is a peak in spring and fall.

Gestation: 9-17 months depending on the species and the surface of the water.
The Knysna sea-horse is an endangered species. It can be found in Knysna, Keurbooms and Swartvlei estuaries. They are about 12 cm long. It is believed to have been around for more than 40 million years.

The Garden Route is considered a colony for Cape fur seals.

The Garden Route is also home to more than 280 species of birds including sea birds, among them penguins, Egyptian geese and many, many more.

It is fitting that the theme for this year’s National Marine Week is ‘better understanding of your oceans – for the protection of life and property’, writes Nick Hanekom, marine scientist, Garden Route National Park, because global climate change and its oceanic responses have been identified as a major challenge facing humankind in the 21st century. The impacts of sea level rise, intensified storms and changes in sea temperature patterns on the economies and on societies of coastal areas could be substantial, and governments and fishing industries need to plan ahead to mitigate the effects. Therefore the surveillance of the nearshore marine environment is important, and the use of instruments on satellites and oceanic buoys has opened up new possibilities. In 2011 the Deputy Minister of Water and Environmental Affairs (Ms. Rejoice Mabudafhasi) highlighted the commitment of the South African Government to the conservation and protection of its coastal environment by arranging, in the Tsitsikamma Marine Protected Area, a display of ocean surveillance buoys used by her department along the South African coast.

One of such buoy, nicknamed Deep Blue, has been used to assist the South African chokka squid fishery, which provides jobs for more than 2000 fishermen, and brings much needed foreign revenue into South Africa. The problem facing this fishery is that chokka squid catches may fluctuate greatly from year to year, and this uncertainty hinders optimal management of human resources. The fishery depends on the migration of mature squid to the shallow waters of the Eastern Cape to spawn and lay their eggs on the seabed. Here the males and females mix, forming large aggregations, comprising thousands of animals. The fishing fleets target these aggregations and catch the squid, using handheld jigs. Good catches rely on large and frequent aggregations. However, three environmental factors are thought to affect spawning activity, and may even prevent or terminate spawning. These are low water temperatures, strong waves and turbid waters. In a study to investigate this situation Deep Blue, equipped with an underwater video-environment-acoustic telemetry system and environmental surveillance equipment, was deployed on a spawning ground where several squid had been tagged with micro hydro-acoustic transmitters. Counting the frequency at which tagged individuals swam passed the receiver to lay eggs on the seabed provided an indication of spawning intensity and this was evaluated in relation to the environmental factors recorded.

Another surveillance buoy that was displayed at Tsitsikamma (Oceanor Wavescan) is used in the deeper, offshore environment and is deployed by research ships. It consists of a large, disc shaped surface buoy with batteries and solar panels providing power to instruments, such as an Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler, which may be housed in a subsurface buoy suspended below the Wavescan to depths up to 500m. Such surveillance platforms are capable of providing both long-term data series on currents, sea temperatures and weather data, as well as access to real-time data, which is significant in coastal spatial planning and crucial in predictive modelling of events within the ocean. This surveillance and planning is particularly important in a time when the effects of climate change are becoming more and more evident.

Reference article:
Mandela Day presented a good opportunity to reach out to communities in need in Knysna, Wilderness and Tsitsikamma. In Knysna, the finance team and the GM, Jill Bunding-Venter packed clothes for the Disaster Fund in Knysna. Rangers went about fixing a colleague’s house in White location, Knysna.

In Wilderness and Tsitsikamma, creches in the community were painted by staff. It was a great day for kids who went on a cruise co-sponsored by SANParks and The Featherbed Company around the Knysna estuary.

A special day for car guards and the homeless who enjoyed boerewors rolls.

The team from Tsitsikamma also refurbished schools in the area focussing on replacing broken windows, fixing fences, cutting grass and sanding old school benches according to Richmond Gewers, P&C in Tsitsikamma.

Buntu Magobiyana says the Touw River Working for Water project under the Biodiversity Social Projects (BSP) unit in the Garden Route National Park spent their 67 minutes for Mandela Day providing extra hands at the Bethesda Hospice in George. ‘The Bethesda Hospice is a Section 21 Company that provides medical care, social work services and relief for destitute communities, particularly in combating the social and economic impacts of HIV/AIDS. The contractors decided to raise money for 60 litres of paint and other cleaning materials to beautify the Child and Youth Care Centre. About 27 beneficiaries from the project, 7 contractors and 3 members of the management staff spent the day painting the walls, washing windows and cleaning the interior of the Centre.’
Citizens walk through Park gates free of charge

The theme for the SA National Parks Week was ‘Know Your Parks’ (09-13 September 2013). People and Conservation (P&C) team (Elzette Bester, Melaney Barrath, Muneer Moses and Richmond Gewers) from Wilderness and Knysna to a central event held in Wilderness. Over 100 youngsters attended the event where SANParks and Partners chose to educate them about the Park in a fun and entertaining way. The General Manager, Jill Bunding-Venter welcomed Councillors from Eden District Municipality, exhibitors, the youngsters and elders from nearby Wilderness were also at the event. Exhibitions for the day were from Partners (Cape Nature, Bird Life, Natures Valley Trust, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Eden Municipality, Working on Fire). Algoa FM was also there broadcasting from 3pm until 7pm. Volunteers from abroad (GVTI) and Groen Sebenza interns had their hands full coaching teams of youngsters around the treasure hunt and other fun games prepared in collaboration with the P&C team.

The main attraction in Tsitsikamma was hosting children from disadvantaged schools. Mostly girl children from vulnerable groups were counted among the attendees. A night walk in Knysna kept interested middle aged and young members of the public captivated. Transport was availed for members to travel from Thesen Island to the Garden of Eden. Rangers gave an interesting talk about most animals found in the forest, the elephant, leopards and many more.

Unforgettable trees

An unforgettable walk in Wilderness

The Touw River Conservancy and the Hoekwil 100 Committee invited citizens to a walk to Hoekwil’s Big Tree. While some may have been discouraged by the inclement weather that had preceded the walk that day, the walk was a success. The rain stopped just before 10 o’clock and we were fortunate to enjoy ideal walking conditions in the forest. After a brief introduction on the forest habitat the group set off and, judging from the enthusiastic pointing and talking, all had a good time. The beauty of the forest was truly appreciated although, not surprisingly, very few birds were seen! The forest visit demonstrated that the interest in the beauty of our surroundings is highly appreciated and this augurs well for future excursions. The intended Goodie Bags for participants were afterwards distributed to the women of Touwsrante. Neil Champ
Connecting to Society...

Kids in Parks!

Kids in Parks—Knysna, writes Melaney Barrath

Local kids from local communities braved the winter chill and enjoyed action packed camps at the Harkerville section of the Knysna Area. The event was a great success. ‘Kids in Parks’ (KIP) is an environmental education program which began in 2005, partnering The Department of Education (DoE), the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), Pick ‘n’ Pay Supermarket, and South African National Parks (SANParks). Its aim is to bring children from local communities to a Park to experience and interact with South Africa’s natural environment and cultural heritage.

The KIP Programme in Knysna included lessons on Fynbos, Ecosystem Services, Climate Change, Animal Adaptations and Cultural Heritage. The success of this programme is owed entirely to an amazing KIP team. We’re talking 12 to 16 hour days with very excited children and a variety of subjects and topics to teach for five days a week, over five solid weeks. Guided night walks were the highlight for many during their stay.

KIP Facilitators: Shamley Titus, Honorary Ranger Marlene Leibenberg, Mhlanga M杜tyana, Shandro Jordaan, Zoleka Shasha, Peter Roman, David Jornet, Sabelo Roman, Solomzi Bobo, Rano Fredericks, Elsie Mhlangu, Billie Tala, SANBI Interns from Natures Valley Trust.
There are a number of weeds introduced from other countries which multiply and spread very quickly.

Of an estimated 9,000 plants introduced into SA, 198 are currently classified as being invasive.

Biodiversity Social Projects

Recently the owner of Salinas Restaurant in Wilderness shared his experience with Gabriel Schultz, Project Manager, Working for the Coast Programme. We invited him to write his story and it was posted on our facebook page. It is an entrepreneur’s appreciation of the work undertaken by SANParks and its Biodiversity Social Programmes (BSP). ‘My son goes to a school in George called Glenwood College and every year they are required to do a certain amount of hours on community projects. With the assistance of SANPARKS and COASTCARE we utilized the students to clean the beaches in the Wilderness. This year I sent them from Leintjies Klip which is the start of the Wilderness beach to Kleinkranz on the first day and from Kleinkranz all the way past Gerricks point to the Swartvlei parking on the second day, a walk I estimate of approximately 20km. What was amazing is that only 3 bin bags of waste were collected on this 20km stretch showing the benefit of the Working for Coast and SANPARKS program! They collected nearly 2 bags of waste on the first stretch which is not cleaned by SANPARKS being the main beach in Wilderness prior to the start of the Garden Route National Park at the Touw’s River mouth.

In the last two seasons after the traditional beach party on the 01 of January by 07h00 on the 2nd Jan SANPARKS and COASTCARE have cleaned the entire Wilderness Beach.’

The Biodiversity Special Programme (BSP)’s Working for Water programme cleared invasive alien plants (IAPs) with Stepping Stones and Oakhill schools from the 07th – 11th October 2013. This was part of a global campaign known as Weedbuster Week, aimed at creating awareness about invasive alien plant species. While IAPs threaten water, and pose a fire risk, they are also one of the biggest challenges to biodiversity in the Southern Cape.

Eden District Municipality (DM) in conjunction with Partners SANParks, Coastcare, WESSA and Salinas Restaurant recently held a Mayoral ceremony in honour of Blue Flag Wilderness beach. A section of the Wilderness beach will have Blue Flag status for the next 3 summer months, Eden DM Mayor, Wessie van der Westhuizen confirmed. An amount of R21,745 was given to Dr. Steve du Toit of WESSA in George, the sponsors of the Blue Flag certification. Blue Flag beaches are considered clean, safe and well managed. It is an initiative of the Department of Environmental Affairs Coastcare Initiative and managed by WESSA and local authorities. NSRI with SANParks will ensure the provision of response lifeboats during this summer, as well as clean the ablution block and beach.
GRNP HOSTS RESEARCHERS AND LEARNERS

It has become culture here in the Garden Route National Park (GRNP) to share scientific knowledge with local and international researchers and scholars. This time around a team from the Centre of Excellence in Tree Health Biotechnology (CTHB), the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI), based at the University of Pretoria landed in our hospitable hands. Scientists from Argentina and Cameroon also joined them. Their main interest was to discuss an expansion of the research project on fungal tree pathogens in the Garden Route National Park.

In addition to formal research collaborations held with academic institutions, Scientific Services staff also regularly hosts upcoming and developing scientists to share knowledge. A field day was held for the Stellenbosch University fourth year forestry class (Department of Forest and Wood Science), with talks presented on the management of the GRNP forests, timber yield regulation and harvesting, forest monitoring and research and fynbos rehabilitation. Accompanied by a senior lecturer, Professor Coert Geldenhuys, the B Tech Forestry students from NMMU also visited forest research areas at Tsitsikamma and Diepwalle, to get exposure to research and monitoring aspects of forest management. Two Scientific Services staff members participated in the field visit. Talks were also presented on the ecology and management of the GRNP forests and fynbos to second year nature conservation students from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) on a field visit to Groenkop, adjacent to the Saasveld Campus.

It was a juvenile baboon not some mythical forest creature

An autopsy conducted on the creature found in the Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park revealed the animal was a ‘newborn female baboon.’ A mummified body of a creature found in Tsitsikamma was taken to a veterinarian to conduct tests to reveal its identity.

Tests confirmed that it was undoubtedly a newborn female baboon. It is suspected that it was most likely killed by a bite through her scull soon after birth. ‘It could be infanticide which is very common in some primate species when a new male species takes over’ says specialist veterinarian, Dr. Magdalena Braum, who was outsourced by SANParks to conduct tests. She said the body is mummified because it had been carried by its mother for 3 to 4 weeks after its death. ‘We have seen it quite often in baboon research troops, when females carry the deceased infants sometimes for as long as 3-4 weeks before finally discarding them’ she says. That explains the unusually long and narrow mid-body segment.

Tsitsikamma Marine Protected Area (MPA)

A total of 202 species of fish, sharks and rays from 84 families have been recorded in the Tsitsikamma MPA. Fifteen of these species can be found on the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) red data list as either vulnerable or near threatened whilst many other fish species protected by the MPA are classified as over-exploited or collapsed in South Africa. By protecting populations of these species within MPA’s, over exploited populations outside the park boundaries would benefit through the movement of either adults or larval fish.

It conserves up to 11 percent of South Africa’s Temperate South Coast rocky shoreline and provides a ‘laboratory’ for fisheries baseline research on endangered line fish species. SANParks scientist, Kyle Smith says ‘comparisons between protected areas and adjacent open areas where fishing occurs highlights the differences in fish community structure. In general within an MPA there is a greater abundance and diversity of fish whilst the average fish size is larger.’ He adds that research in Tsitsikamma has highlighted the benefit of the Park to many fish species including roman, dageraad, red steenbras, musselcracker, blacktail, galjoen and carpenter. In some instances the abundance has been six times greater within the park compared to outside! The increase in fish size is also important for the simple reason that larger fish produce more eggs. He affirms that ‘from an ecosystem view Marine Protected Areas work and fulfil their function as both conservation and fishery management tools.'
This month I chose to interview a brand new ranger in the GRNP
Mhlangabezi Mdutyana.

Shamley: How long have you been working for SANParks?
Mhlangabezi: For about a month now
Shamley: Where did you work before?
Mhlangabezi: I was working in the Bioprocessing and biotechnology industry, producing mushrooms and doing research on enzymes, and was later joined Umtata Christian School as an educator.
Shamley: I know you’re fairly new, but tell me about your team thus far?
Mhlangabezi: I am part of a team of 8 rangers, I get the sense they’re so knowledgeable and that I’ll soon learn quiet a lot from them.
Shamley: What do you like the most about your section?
Mhlangabezi: The coastal area with beautiful landscapes and cycling trails
Shamley: Who is your role model?
Mhlangabezi: My mother, because she’s never given up on anything she’s set her mind to. She always has a Plan B and I think C!
Shamley: What do you do during your spare time?
Mhlangabezi: I watch movies, listen to good music and go cycling. I love nature.
Shamley: Your most interesting days thus far?
Mhlangabezi: All my few days have been interesting since you work nature, I cannot decide which ones been more interesting than another.

How dolphins communicate

People are also fascinated by the concept of dolphins communicating with one another. Another recent study conducted by a graduate student at the University of Chicago, shows not only do they “talk” to each other, but they remember each other for long periods of time.

Shamley Titus
Ecosystem services study

SANParks and Knysna Municipality are cooperating in a process that will analyse the supply of and demand for ecosystem services generated by the Knysna river catchment and the Knysna estuary basin (including the small rivers draining directly into the estuary). There is a growing realisation that the estuary, catchment and town constitute a single socio-ecological system with many critical interconnections.

The purpose of this analysis is to develop a broad understanding of services which the natural capital of Knysna generates and which Knysna depends on. This understanding will be used to direct future management of the natural and built capital, and to strengthen the relationships of key actors in the system.

Futureworks is the consultant procured by SANParks to facilitate this process, using a participatory modelling system. Currently the plan informed by several meetings held between authorities, organised community structures and NGOs is to understand the implications of several future scenarios which may include changes to both the supply of natural and built assets, and changes to the demand for services.

Indigenous forests make up 25% of Knysna’s landscape, its plantations (23%), upland fynbos (13%), the remaining land cover including marine, lowland fynbos, agricultural land, the estuary and riparian vegetation.

Findings of the study will become practical through Municipal environmental planning tools (the Spatial Development Framework, the Biodiversity Planning tools and others). The introduction of a consultant who had worked on a similar project in KZN (Futureworks) has brought a fresh perspective: To plan together, to find more ways to attract tourists to Knysna and keep them here, but also stay mindful and proactive in protecting the wealthy natural capital found in Knysna.

Collaboration with Knysna Municipality will expand current efforts to eradicate the scourge of invasive alien plant species, as well as to keep pollution away from SA’s number 1 estuary. News of the collaboration is well received by those who think more can come out of this town which once attracted many tourists for its mythical, dense forests. Here natural capital underpins tourism and related activities which include among many adventure sports, nature appreciation activities, water-based recreation, cultural and others. The figures of adventure seekers in SA are incredulous. Of an estimated 95,000 adventure sporting seekers, approximately 5,000 head to the Garden Route, the remaining 90,000 go to alternative spots in the Province and or elsewhere in the country.

Organised community structures such as ratepayers associations and other significant roleplayers in Knysna (Professor Brian Allanson of the Knysna Basin project) and others are part of the consultation process. A report with preliminary findings will soon be made public to all stakeholders.

Progress in fixing Klein Gouna Road

Maretha Alant, the GRNP Environmental Planner recently met contractors to fix Klein Gouna District Road Bridge, DR 1783. The heavy rains in the Gouna Forest in July led to a ‘partial collapse’ of the bridge. The construction work is expected to be completed before the end of October 2013. Gouna is a forest station and any construction work there must comply with environmental regulations, captured in an agreement between the Department of Environmental Affairs and Eden District Municipality. Mending the bridge will ensure the protection of the community in Gouna and children using the bus to travel to schools are safe.

Work underway includes the building of a coffer dam with 450kg sand bags. Insert shutters to close the area off. Pump the water out to create dry space where they can pour cement (without polluting the water). Pour concrete and wait for it to dry. Remove the sandbags to restore the river flow and rehabilitate the area as required.

Although the subject is broad, the definition for ecosystem services was attempted by 1, 300 scientists for the 2005 UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessments. The definition included provision (of food and water), regulation (such as of control of climate and disease), supporting (such as nutrient cycles and crop pollination) and cultural (such as spiritual and recreational benefits).
Southern Cross event

Southern Cross Adventures attracts visitors to the Wilderness section of the Park through a trail run. The event comprises of 3 unique routes starting with a Mountain stage on Day 1 in the Outeniqua Mountains, beautiful trails through the indigenous Forest on Day 2 and finishing off with rugged “on-the-edge” coastline run on Day 3. It is 75 kilometres in total, 25 km in the mountain, 30km forest and 20 km coastal.

Otter Trail run

The Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park congratulated Ricky Lightfoot from Great Britain for winning the Otter trail run this past weekend. The event organisers (Magnetic South) pulled off another successful event this year. Ricky Lightfoot won the Otter trail run this year with a record of 4:23:24. This beat last year’s record of 4:15:27 by Don Wauchope (2012’s winner).

The run starts and finishes where the Otter trail is and is 42 km long with the same altitude of 2600 meters. Ruby Muir also smashed the female record of 5:24:59 held by Krissy Moehl (2012) and set a new high of 4:55:48.

Lesley-Anne Meyer, Area Manager for Tsitsikamma said there were no reported unfortunate incidents or injuries during the event and spectators were well behaved. Those not following the run were out enjoying the Park and its beauty.

Our very own Marco Barnardo and Bheki Maphanga took part in the Otter trail run 2013. Marco completed the race at 05:57:15 and Bheki in 06:27:09. Well done!

2 things you have to do this summer in the Park

- Which one of the big trees have you visited with family, friends and relatives? Did you know that 3 of the Garden Route’s oldest trees are in the Park? The Park is home to yellowwood trees that have been around for more than 8 centuries. The Outeniqua yellowwood tree in Woodville is a huge, tall tree that is about 31 meters. It is believed to be over 800 years old. The 800 year old Diepwalle Big tree survived the unsustainable methods of harvesting post the 1939 era. The Outeniqua yellowwood in Tsitsikamma is estimated to be over 800 years old. It is close to 40 meters high and about 9 meters in diameter.

- This summer, explore the Park’s water sports. You can rent a canoe and paddle up to Touw River past indigenous trees, or explore the Park’s Lakes through boat trips. You can also opt to tube down the Storms River, swimming, rock jumping, hiking or snorkelling.

The SANParks Code of Conduct for People walking with Dogs on Beaches in Wilderness was sent to us by Nellie Grootendorst, Senior Section Ranger in Wilderness. The code of conduct highlights dos and don’ts. While more information will be communicated to the public, here are some areas where dogs are not allowed: in Wilderness:

- Wilderness Lagoon, all boardwalks and hiking trails within the Park
- River mouth and adjacent bathing area up to the entrance onto the beach at NSRI car park
- NSRI cap park from 1st December to 31st January of each year between the hours of 09h00 and 17h00
- Gerrick’s point and Swartvlei Beach up to Myoli beach access
- Swartvlei beach west and east up to the river mouth
- River mouth and adjacent bathing area up to the entrance onto the beach at Myoli car park.
- Myoli Beach car park from 01st December to 31st January of each year between the hours of 09h00 and 17h00. Dog walkers may use the entrance at Blacktail Street and the Cola Beach Entrance during these times.

Areas where dogs are allowed

- East of the parking at NSRI (except during times above) up to the staircase before the Wilderness Hotel
- Kleinkrantz parking area, west to 6th Avenue and east up to the first rocks at Gerrick’s Point
- East of the parking at Myoli beach (except during times above) and Cola beach
- Along the Vlei where there is reasonable access and no signage prohibiting dogs.

Look out for more info on guidelines for conduct while in the Park this summer. These guidelines will also be placed on the intranet and website.
Process matters

Write Derec Giles, Financial Manager, Garden Route National Park: The GRNP is strategically well positioned to take on any budget process anytime, due to the investment of resources and energy over the last few years. Process does matter. SANParks’ officials are entrusted with the essential duty of managing the organisation’s finances, making critical decisions about how to balance revenues and expenditures to ensure a successful future for the entity. Although attention is usually focused on the ultimate outcomes of a debating session, we should not forget the decision-making process that underpins this process. A good process ensures a well-informed debate which includes ample stakeholder participation.

The next budgeting process will start mid October 2013, when the guidelines become available. Adhering to the next five basic principles will ensure a Better Budget Process. Yours is to be aware of these steps before planned meetings and workshops begin.

- **Responsible fiscal management.**
  SANParks financial standing (including the state’s contribution) depends on adequate reserves. A strong level of reserves also enables policymakers to respond to economic downturns strategically and with thoughtful deliberation, avoiding quick and drastic decisions. The long-term fiscal health of the entity would be aided by procedures that ensure a sufficient level of reserves.

- **Clear lines of accountability.**
  Tax payers should be able to hold policymakers accountable for the decisions they make.

- **Flexibility to respond to short-term challenges and plan for a long-term vision.** A healthy decision-making process recognizes that the circumstances facing SANParks will change, and officials should have the flexibility to make the management choices necessary to both anticipate and react to those changes.

- **Good financial information.**
  SANParks policymakers and the public both require comprehensive and understandable information about the organisation’s financial circumstances that can guide the decision-making process.

- **Stability in the decision-making process.**
  Just as good financial management values stability in the organisation’s revenue sources, there is also great value to ensuring consistency in the procedures that guide the decision-making process. Encoding best budget practices guarantees SANParks employees that policymakers will follow these procedures every session.

**What you absolutely have to remember:**

- Each cost centre owner develops a draft budget, six months before it is implemented
- Draft budgets presented are evaluated for affordability and then finalised
- Once allocated, budgets are used for spending and revenue generation
- Expenditure and revenue reports are analysed for performance and variations
Well done to the team of managers and supporting rangers who pulled their weight during the Kiani Satu incident.

- Owen Govender
- Mark Phillips
- Rob Milne
- Billy Tala
- Peter Roman
- Marco Barnardo
- Bheki Maphanga
- Evull Botha
- Neville George
- Macmillan Agulhas
- David Jornett
- Randall Uren
- Diane Botha
- Rano Fredericks
- Elsie Mahlangu
- Nellie Grootendorst
- Jonathan Britton
- Petrus Mitchell
- Andrew Appels
- Charles April
- Goliath Antas
- Edward Kivett
- Daniel May
- Abram Windwaai
- Ursula Joseph
- Jonathan Lottering
- Douglas London
- Abram Lamini
- Robert Mtshizana
- Paul Oelf
- Oom Snyders
- Liezel Wagner
- Shantel Prinsloo
- Johannes Matabata
- William Jafta
- Jacobus Muller
- Donavan McKeith

Dave Jones was impressed by Working for Water team

It is my pleasure to report that your Working for Water Team arrived as arranged at the Yacht Club on Wednesday 18 September and very efficiently removed all the prickly pear they could find in our grounds and along the road.

Even better, today the team called again to check that all had truly been removed and indeed went though the infected area with a fine tooth comb and picked up a few stray pieces from two weeks ago. Very impressive!

Please pass on my appreciation to the Team Leader for a job very well done indeed, and accept our club's thanks for helping us with this problem that was beyond our means to tackle.

Dave Jones - Responsible for Grounds - GLYC
Birthdays

4 colleagues who work closely together celebrate their birthdays in September

Our very own GM, Jill Bunding-Venter recently celebrated her birthday with family on her special day (the 14th September). We wish her many happy years filled with countless memories.

Annie Makalane (her PA) celebrated hers on the 15th and Andre Riley, Area Manager for Knysna on the 13th September and Len du Plessis, Manager for Planning on the 02nd September.

To all you September and October babies, we wish you a great year ahead.
Women are celebrated

Women are celebrated here in the Park and this time around were treated to various events to open up channels of communication and encourage discourse. Women based in Wilderness had a great time visiting Birds of Eden and Monkeyland in the Crags (just outside Plett), then were treated to a sizzling braai and drinks galore. It was a day to bond and giggle. Lesley-Anne Meyer, Area Manager, Tsitsikamma section was the guest speaker and affectionately encouraged the ladies to be themselves, to love, appreciate themselves and to support each other at work.

Annie Makalane explores the gender agenda

This year marks the 57th anniversary of when women marched to the Union Buildings to protest against the carrying of passes. This day marks the beginning of women stating openly that they are strong, courageous human beings, equal to all others.

I am proud to confirm that the good positive leavey provided by that March. Women have become stronger and are as united as ever. We only have to look within our own organization to see some of those results. Two of our Managing Executives are female, Wanda Makatshulwa and our own Dr. S. Consider our own Umphathi/ GM, Ms Jill Bunding Venter. We have a female Tourism, Human Resources, People and Conservation and Communications Manager. Lesley Ann Meyer, Area Manager at Tsitsikamma is one of the first female park managers and doing exceptionally well.

SANParks is playing a big role to support all women in their development, with particular support to become future leaders in the organization. SANParks women and specifically those in the Garden Route can attest to that, we have support from our superiors who have planted a seed.

We also have our fair share of challenges, like:

- Working side by side with male counterparts, often in difficult physical circumstances, fighting fires, preventing floods, building gabions, doing law enforcement.
- Fighting to be taken seriously in meetings and workshops
- Going home after a full day of work to manage a household and being a mother

To address some of these challenges, the Garden Route runs a development programme, where 8 out of the total number of 17 employees are women. Out of the 8 women, 7 are C and upper bands where as one of the women in the B band is as determined as the rest of them to make a change for the better in the organization as well as for themselves. We are optimistic that managers are in the making in the Garden Route. Funds have been made available to assist employees to attend courses and others to study with accredited colleges in order to equip them with better qualifications for development.

In the Biodiversity Special Programme department, an all women team has been employed to manufacture coffins to supply the Rheenendal area. This has created jobs for the women in that area as well as being a reliable supplier of coffins and furniture. Plans are afoot to build a creche in order to ease the working mother’s minds about their children’s safety as they work.

BIRTHDAYS

**OCTOBER**
- 3 October
- Larry Wentzel
- 5 October
- Mitchel Draaj
- 6 October
- Adam De Vos
- Rosy Van Straden
- 7 October
- Elroy Gentles
- 8 October
- Girshvon Kriga
- 10 October
- Paul Olivier
- 11 October
- Catherine Coetzee
- 14 October
- Mauricha Meshaka
- 16 October
- Marie Baard
- 17 October
- Billy Tala
- 19 October
- Owen Govender
- 20 October
- Alida Mabhula
- 24 October
- Patricia Koli
- 28 October
- Mario Swartz
Rangers Day 2013

Rangers Day on the 31st of July 2013 was celebrated by Rangers throughout the world. The day is meant to honour rangers who lost their lives while on duty. In the Garden Route, rangers saw it best to use this day to strengthen relations with Partners. The event held by the Knysna team at Pezula Private Estate sought to share lessons on raising fences against fish poachers and other threats.

In Wilderness, the Mayor of George graced the event. Rangers had fun playing games and feasting on delectable eats.

The Tsitsikamma ranger corps used this day to reach out to communities around the Park. Their approach was to educate learners about what rangers actually do with a focus on terrestrial poaching on both flora and fauna.

Our own ranger helps raise funds for the vulnerable

He looks strong and often wears a ‘no-nonsense’ façade, but this was soon to change.

...Jonathan Britton, pictured by The Edge community newspaper (second from the left), joined a good cause to raise funds through a hilarious show, called ‘melodrama’. Our own ‘Jono’ joined men raising funds for the vulnerable in Sedgefield. Real men will go to any length to protect the vulnerable even if it means slipping into that pretty looking pink number! Over R140,000 was raised by this initiative. Way to go Jono, you did us proud!
GM, Jill Bunding-Venter says all should strive to show as much professionalism in the workplace as possible. Here are some pointers she shared with GREXCO recently:

**How to Show Professionalism in the Workplace**

- Adhere to your commitments - Live up to your commitments every time.
- Realize the sensitivity of the work that you represent - Make sure not to jeopardize the confidentiality and reputation of your organization or misuse it any way. This will help make you trustworthy. Do not shrug and claim to not know or intone that your colleagues and decisions made, cannot be trusted.
- Treat everyone with respect. That means everyone - from upper management, peers, and administrative staff to vendors, clients and competitors, to the person on the phone and the stranger in the elevator. Respect and communication in a business environment gives all employees the feeling of safety and collaboration.
- Value the time and effort spent by others - Do not take other members of the organization for granted.
- Always maintain ethical conduct - Be honest and refrain from deceitful practices.
- Smile and put your best face forward - Friendliness and understanding go a long way to creating an atmosphere of teamwork. Maintain a positive can-do attitude even during stressful situations.
- Admit your mistakes - We all make mistakes. Admitting your mistake shows that you are not only human, but also a professional. Don’t be surprised at how understanding people will be when you admit that you have made an error.
- Display competence - Competence is the culmination of what you say that you can do and what you actually can do. Competent employees know their job and which skills they are capable of. It is not arrogance. It is an honest display of competencies.
- Take a leadership role whenever possible - Show that you are willing to accept responsibility and produce results.
- Keep personal issues at home - Refrain from using the company’s time for personal issues. While personal issues will be considered by management when required, employees need to refrain from discussing it during office hours. This keeps the office environment free from empathy-related biases about productivity.
- Demonstrate the core values of professionalism - appropriate attire, etiquette, punctuality, organization and dedication to your job, just to name a few.
- Project a positive business appearance - It has long been recognized that those who dress professionally will behave in the same manner.
- Be polite in speech and body language - “Please” and “Thank you” go a long way in establishing a good working relationship.
- Turn off or silence mobile devices - This will minimize distractions for you and others. It shows that you value the time spent by others (see rule #4).

**Characteristics that Undermine Professionalism:**

- Gossip: Do not gossip. It is not only detrimental to the work ethic between employees; it can also place one’s job in danger. A person can quickly lose their aura of professionalism by being a target of or a participant in office gossip.
- Negative attitude: Your attitude colors everything you do.
- Poor attendance and frequent tardiness:
- Unprofessional body language: Yawning without covering your mouth and chewing gum in the presence of others are just a couple of examples.