

Newsletter



GROTTO BAY PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE

Beautiful One Day - Perfect The Next



Grotto Bay Newsletter December 2024

From the Editor

Another year has come and gone already! As we approach the holiday season, we wish to remind you that Grotto Bay will be full of families enjoying the holidays. Please be on the lookout for children on the roads, drive carefully and please stop at the stop signs.

Fire Season is also upon us – please do not light fires in open fireplaces and braai areas and ensure your guests know not to do this too.

Welcome to all the new residents to Grotto Bay, we hope you will be very happy here.

Wishing everyone a very happy Festive Season and may 2025 be an amazing year for us all.

Let's Make a Good Impression

While we have outside guests, our friends and families around, let's keep Grotto clean. Pick up after your dogs, put your litter in the bins provided and do not drop cigarette butts around the estate. Smoking is not allowed anyway, while you walk around. Take a bag with you to the beach and pick up what the sea has washed up as you walk along, every little bit helps.

Rip Currents

I know I have said this before, but it is very important to know this as we sometimes have a rip current on our beach.

Be careful of rip-currents, especially during full moon when the seas can be rougher than normal. Unfortunately, it's where it looks easiest and safest to enter the sea. This is because the rip current is looping around and pulling back out. Hence no waves rolling in. NEVER ENTER THE SEA HERE. If you are already in the sea and get caught in a rip-current (you'll know because you will suddenly be moved from your location, and it will be impossible to swim against it) don't panic. Swim ACROSS, not against the rip current. For example, rather than trying to swim to shore while being pushed out, swim parallel to the beach and you will be able to get out of it. Then you can swim ashore, that is your best option.



This is what a rip-current looks like.

Southern Elephant Seals

There are a few different species of seals that can be found along the South African coastline. Most commonly seen is the Cape fur seal, but Sub Antarctic fur seals, Leopard seals and Southern Elephant seals are also spotted. There are two types of elephant seals, the Northern (*Mirounga angustirostris*) and Southern (*Mirounga leonine*). There is a single, vagrant Southern elephant seal that has been visiting Plettenberg Bay for several years.

The Southern elephant seal is the largest seal species in the world, with males that can weigh up to 3.7 tons and measure 6 m in length. They are up to 10 times bigger than the females (max 600kg in weight) and have an enlarged proboscis that looks like an elephant trunk (hence their name).



Southern elephant seals breed on islands and main land sites from the Antarctic continent to Patagonia with their main concentration on the sub-Antarctic islands. The two closest colonies to South Africa's coastline are on Prince Edwards Island and the Tristan da Cunha group. Elephant seals generally haul out twice a year to moult, mate and give birth. They prefer to be on gradually sloped, sandy or pebble beaches, but have also been seen to use boulders or rocky shores.

Their breeding season starts when the bulls haul out in August and the females join them in mid-September.

A single male can dominate harems of between 120-150 females and they will fight to the death with competing males who attempt to take over their harem. Females will spend about a month on land giving birth to a 1.3m and 40kg pup. They are mated shortly before returning to sea.

Elephant seals spend most of their life at sea and can dive between 300-500 m in depth for 20-30 minutes in search of food. One female was recorded diving to a depth of 1430m and another individual dived for 120 minutes.

The Southern elephant seal is classified as 'least concern' by the IUCN due to its widespread occurrence and large population sizes. Historically they were hunted for thousands of years by aboriginals and native people in Australia and South America. They were also subjected to an intensive commercial harvest from the early 19th century to 1964. The target product of this harvest was the large amount of blubber that could be made into oil. Although they are no longer commercially hunted, they face other threats such as a reduction in prey availability due to overfishing and climate change. Their isolated habitats, away from human settlements, largely protect them, from disturbance and habitat destruction.

Over the past 10- 15 years, a few elephant seals have been recorded in Plettenberg Bay. The most recent individual, (2011-present) a male, has been returning to the Robberg Peninsula on a yearly basis. It appears that he arrives shortly after moulting and remains in Plett for several months. In 2012 and 2014 he was observed killing and feeding on Cape fur seal pups, an extraordinary behaviour that had never been documented for Southern elephant seals before.

Last week, we had one park itself off on the rocks at Pebble Beach to begin the annual moulting processes. We think it's a female. During this time, they do not go into the water at all, nor do they eat or drink anything. They not only shed all their fur but also a layer or 2 of skin, often cracking and even some puss may be present. This whole moulting process is quite painful for them.

We ask that you please DO NOT go close to her or disturb her in any way. They are very aggressive animals.





African Penguin newly classified as 'critically endangered' as breeding pairs fall below 10,000.

On the 28 of October, The African Penguin, with its distinctive black-and-white tuxedo and playful nature, a cherished symbol in South Africa and around the world was classified as critically endangered. It reveals that it is one step away from becoming extinct in the wild. The bird is the first penguin species (of the 18 species globally) to meet the criteria for this classification.

Faced with numerous threats, a primary cause of the African Penguin's decline is a lack of available food due to climate change, made worse by competition from commercial fishing around its breeding colonies, which impacts the species' survival and breeding success. While there are existing no-take zones where commercial fishing is prohibited to help the penguins better access the fish they feed on, primarily sardines and anchovies, research by seabird scientists has demonstrated that these zones are currently inadequate for penguin conservation.

SANCCOB and BirdLife South Africa, with the support of ocean conservation charity Blue Marine, are urging the South African government and the international community to take immediate action to save the African Penguin.

This must be one of the saddest things to have happened all year!



GANZEKRAAL HOMESTEAD WEST COAST – Paul Nylor

"Destruction by Neglect" of this homestead, which in its day was one of the finest in the Cape.

It was also the host to many luminaries (Lichtenstein, Gen.De Mist, Gen.Janssens, and Rev Latrobe) and in 1798/9, Lady Anne Barnard painted the farm and surrounds.

Its history goes back to early 1700 and in 1791 the title deeds were transferred to Jacobus Van Reenen in recognition of the part he played in searching for survivors of the wreck of "The Grosvenor" The slave bell tower that still stands, housed the bell from the wreck.

Sadly, in 1965 the Manor House burnt down and today all that is left, is the old Schoolroom/Stable, Dovecote, outbuildings (pig sty, cart house and cowshed) and whilst there has been attempts to restore this valuable example of South African history from a bygone error, never to be repeated, these efforts have come to naught.

One can only hope that some organization will soon come forward and recognize the importance of renovating this site and bring it back to its former glory and preserve one of the very few examples we have of the history of this fascinating West Coast area. (Ganzekraal can be seen just off the R27 opposite the turnoff to the Ganzekraal Holiday Resort).



Star Sand

These star-shaped grains of sand, collected from southern Japan, look like miniature works of art -- but they were not sculpted by an artist. They are the shells of microscopic organisms called foraminifera, which build intricate shells from the calcium carbonate they collect while drifting through the water. Their shells have settled on the seafloor for 500 million years and are used by scientists to study the earth's changing climate.



There are different types of beaches and multiple factors that influence the formation of sand. Many beaches may look alike, but they are actually very different from each other. Wave patterns, geology, and other factors shape the composition, size, texture, and colour of sand. Grains can be big or small, rough or smooth, glittery or dull, and made of light shells, many kinds of rock such as volcanic rock, dark minerals, pebbles or even glass such as Ussuri Bay in Russia.

Congratulations to one of our own!

Julian Van Jaarsveld, 13, has been crowned the 2024 MSA Western Cape Reginal Motorcross 85cc Overall Champion. Julian has been practicing hard and has entered many races and travelled the country, with his father, Martin, to realise his dream. Well done, Julian!



Did you Know?

- Fleas can jump 350 times its body length.
- Hummingbirds are the only birds that can fly backwards.
- Crocodiles cannot stick their tongue out.
- Starfish do not have a brain.
- Slugs have 4 noses.
- Only female mosquitoes bite.
- Polar bear skin is black!
- The only mammal capable of flight is the bat.
- A newborn kangaroo is the size of a lima bean.
- 25% of all animal species are beetles.

DID YOU KNOW?

Blue marker boards are used to help you report your exact location

Should you be involved in a crash or incident contact a Centralised Communications Centre (CCC) and give them your location.

All 1122 Centralised Communications Centres (CCCs) are located in each district throughout the province and are responsible for providing all the emergency services to respond to a crash or incident.

EMERGENCY CCC NUMBERS FOR WESTERN CAPE			
Cape Town Metro	021 480 7700	Garden Route	044 805 5071
Cape Winelands	023 346 6000	Overberg	028 212 9111
Central Karoo	023 449 8000	West Coast	022 433 8700

Wild Coast Beach Walk Reveals Remarkable Fossil Discovery!

by Ashleigh Nefdt @goodthingsguy September 5, 2024



Photo Credit: Belinda McCall

North Beach, South Africa (05 September 2024) — When Belinda McCall got the opportunity to step away from her busy schedule for a long weekend along the Wild Coast, she had no idea she'd stumble across a remarkable discovery and a slice of history.

Belinda might have accounted for gorgeous views and coastal wonders, but her expectations would soon be exceeded after one beach walk turned out to be a pathway to a precious part of the past, right here in the Eastern Cape along the Wild Coast's North Beach.

"During a marine walk with our lodge guide, I stumbled upon something extraordinary," Belinda tells Good Things Guy.

"As we wandered along the untouched coastline at low tide, I noticed a 'shiny rock face' catching the sunlight. Intrigued, I approached it and was astonished to find what appeared to be a large, fan-shaped fossil embedded in the rock. It was unlike anything I had seen before."

Belinda explains that at first, she felt a mixed wave of disbelief and excitement—wondering whether her lucky find could actually be something archaeologists often spend years to find. After calling out to the walk guide, the excitement grew as the guide shared that she had never encountered the discovery during any of her previous walks.

"We both realised that this might be a significant discovery," Belinda says. After snapping up photos of the scene, they returned to the lodge and sent the photos off to a geologist to learn more.

"A few days later, after returning home, I received updates from our guide via WhatsApp, confirming that we had indeed made a significant find. The fossil, according to experts, likely dates back to the Devonian or Carboniferous periods when much of what is now South Africa was covered by shallow seas.

"They suggested that it could be an imprint of a marine invertebrate, such as a brachiopod or possibly a plant like a fossilised fern," Belinda informs.

Her guide shared insights from an expert, saying:

"Certainly, looks like material was compressed into sedimentary sandstone and fossilised. And I can see the later (younger) rocks of aeolianite over the very much older sedimentary rock. Definitely flipped by hectic seas we've had—my guess at the moment is a late Devonian compressed fossil. Unusual shape and size. The mineralisation aspect is also intriguing."

Kid's Corner



If mosquitoes went extinct, birds and bats would starve. If roaches went extinct, the nitrogen cycle would be disrupted. If wasps went extinct, some plants would go extinct too. We may not like "pests", but they have a purpose.

Santa Word Search

X U R S C T X B O J I W W I Y
 S O W X H O Q T O C N F F I Q
 L W K T I Y M T Q O A S F D Q
 R F F B M S E Q A I U C Y Z B
 V E K Y N S R S R H S O H L K
 K Y I V E X L I U L G Q Q C C
 T H C N Y U E E L U G I S K I
 M D C E D S K E D X H E E Z N
 J O L L Y E B U G C V E O L T
 F U O J D H E H P L O D U R S
 Z E U C G T D R E N K O W X Q
 W F I I G Q J Z G E H W C M D
 D X E L O Y P J H I W K X Z Y
 N L N O R T H P O L E O S L Z
 S T Y R V U D M Q A W K U Z A

- Chimney
- Elves
- Fairies
- Jolly
- North Pole
- Reindeer
- Rudolph
- Sled
- Sleigh
- Sleigh Bells
- St. Nick
- Toys



Colour me in.

