

Newsletter



GROTTO BAY PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE



Beautiful One Day - Perfect The Next

March 2023 Newsletter

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

We hope you all had a wonderful festive season and that 2023 will be a happy year for us all.

We are all hard at work again, with the many projects and the continuous maintenance that is needed to keep Grotto Bay looking at its best.

GAS PIPELINE

It came to our attention that a gas pipeline was planned to be installed along Grotto Drive in the future, to supply gas to the power station in Atlantis. Our Conservation Director, Michelle Van Acker, has taken up the cudgel on our behalf to fight this with tooth and nail, to have the installation moved to another site.

SOLAR POWER AT THE CONSERVATION CENTRE

One of the projects, was the installation of a solar system at the CC in December. Our generator used during loadshedding to power the security articulation, had a catastrophic melt-down due to the increased number of hours of operation. Petrol generators are not designed to run for long periods of time and our current generator has served us well in excess of 7 years of operation. Parts to repair it and new generators for replacement were not available at short notice in December due to supply and demand. That meant that our security articulation as well as Estate fiber lines (we supply Openserve with backup power to their distribution hub in Grotto), were down during loadshedding, so a quick plan had to be made.

The Board decided to invest in a solar system using the approved budget for the new bigger generator, as this has many more uses, was quieter and produces cleaner energy – We are a nature reserve after all and clean energy fits in nicely with all our conservational goals as well. We now have enough clean power to supply our security articulation, the Openserve Fiber DB as well as all lights and plugs within the Conservation center. Not only that, but we are saving a fortune in the cost of petrol needed to run the generator as well as the logistical time and money to procure the fuel. We have also specified the system such that any future requirements (for instance the Atlas tower requirements) can easily be added as the system is fully scalable.

The smaller battery and inverter that was used previously (replaced the UPS a few months ago), will now be repurposed to the guardhouse to assist in providing the guards with some power during loadshedding for guardhouse lights and plugs.

Conservation News

If you go down to the CC today, you're sure of a big surprise.
If you go down to the CC today, you'd better go in disguise!
For every animal and bird that ever there was, will gather there.
Because today's a day the Grottonians will have their picnic.

Picnic time for Grottonians, the little animals and birds are having a lovely time.
Watch them, catch them unawares, See them gaily gad about from the new bird hide, they
love to play and shout, They never have any care, now that the vlei is clear.

Beneath the trees where nobody sees, they'll hide and seek as long as they please.
'Cause that's the way the little animals and birds are now drinking with ease.
If you go down to the CC today, you'd better not go alone!
Bring the kids, family and friends too and you will have a lovely throne, to watch the animals
and birds enjoy a picnic with you.



The new boma is up and ready for use.
It is encouraging to see so many more animals visiting the vlei now that the reeds have been cleared and the boma allows them more privacy.

Conservation Update – Michelle Vorster-Van Acker

We ended 2022 on a high note when Safring took a special trip to Grotto Bay to ring two of our **Rock Kestrel** chicks that hatched at the CC, before they took to flight. These 2 can now be distinguished from their parents by their shiny new 'jewellery'. We hope to add more to this prestigious list when the next breeding season is underway.



Ringed birds provide valuable information on their flight and migratory patterns.



This **White-fronted Plover** recently dropped in at one of our residents mid-January who managed to get the number off its ring. A call to Safring established it was initially ringed as a juvenile on the 06-01-2023 at the SANCCOB rehab centre, Tableview and made its way to GB a week later.

BEACH HOUR

The year started off with a spontaneous late afternoon Beach Hour to make up for December holidays. (We squeezed in another end January.) Great spirit when even visitors to Grotto join in on the day.



We will also action other areas around our coast that still desperately need our attention. Every bit helps.



CREW OBSERVATION



The 5th of January saw a blustering, wind-swept morning spent with Petra from CREW and her team. We walked block 2 as a pre-block burn that consisted mostly of West Coast Strandveld.

"West coast strandveld does occur on Grotto Bay PNR and is normally found in the dune veld just behind the beaches. The vegetation is sparse and many succulent species are found that have adapted to this windy and salty environment with loose sandy soil structure."

Despite this we still managed to add 9 species to the list!

INTERNAL WILDLIFE OBSERVATION

In line with our Environmental Management Plan (EMP), we have started an internal observation list of the wildlife in our Nature Reserve and our Estate. Other than the bokies and the hares around the CC we are accustomed to seeing, we have been surprised by a few unusual visitors at the Conservation Centre, such as caracal and Cape Genet.



We can now build a library of our 'inhabitants' and start to identify them from one another by distinguishing marks, for example a nick in the ear.



We would love for our residents to contribute to this growing list. If you have a webcam or bushcam set up at your home and have captured images of our wildlife, or captured a unique animal such as the Black Harrier and can provide a date and time and even better location, please share these with us to add to our library.

The Table Mountain Fund recently commissioned photographer Scott Ramsay, to capture Grotto Bay. We are proud to be featured in their latest social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram.

IN THE MEDIA

Table Mountain Fund
7h · 🌐

Celebrating the Cape Floral Region's Protected Areas Network

Grotto Bay Private Nature Reserve

A short 45min drive from Cape Town, up the West Coast's R27, you will find the spectacular Grotto Bay Private Nature Reserve. The 356 ha reserve was proclaimed in 2002 and forms part of the Cape West Coast Biosphere reserve which was proclaimed by UNESCO in 2000.

The reserve is home to a 60 ha housing estate and offers a range of activities including a hiking trail that runs along the coastline and through some of the reserve's stunning Strandveld and Sandveld bush. In Spring, during flower season, the reserve is a magical blanket of colour and it is truly worth a visit to witness this natural spectacle. The reserve is also home to over 120 species of birds, as well as duiker, steenbok, greysbok, ostriches, tortoise, and other wildlife.

TMF's ongoing support of [CapeNature's Biodiversity Stewardship Programme](#) and [Conservation Outcomes Validation and Verification](#) project has proudly contributed to the restoration and protection of critical biodiversity areas such as the Grotto Bay Nature Reserve.

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#biodiversityframework #stewardship
#conservation #biodiversityhotspot
#capefloralkingdom #fynbosforever #fynbos
#fynbospride #TMFInTheField
#natureconservation #biodiversity
#BiodiversityConservation

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👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share



OURS, NOT MINE DOCUMENTARY.

I came across this little documentary on YouTube called: Ours, not Mine, A Protect the West Coast Film. Please look it up and watch it.

Ours, Not Mine exposes heavy mineral sand mining on the West Coast of South Africa that entails the industrial-scale extraction of minerals such as zircon, ilmenite, rutile, magnetite, and garnet (used in everyday products) from huge tracts of coastline between Columbine and the Orange River, including parts that are officially deemed Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas. Visually rich footage shows the biodiversity and splendour of a pristine wilderness. This is juxtaposed with the wasteland left behind for generations by mining companies from Australia, South Africa, China and others.

Woven into a visually disturbing narrative are the stories of indigenous and local people affected by the mining, including elders from the Khoi Griqua people, who depend on the land and ocean for their livelihood. Directed by Bryan Little and produced by Ana-Filipa Domingues of Fly on the Wall Films, the film is a call to action to push the government into following the correct, legally binding procedures before granting licenses, such as environmental impact studies and fully comprehensive public participation. The film underlines that a destructive, single-use activity stifles efforts to find sustainable economic activities, such as agriculture, fisheries, and nature-based tourism.

What is at Stake? From the Orange River to Cape Columbine, hundreds of kilometres of the South Africa's West Coast coastline are being mined or have been earmarked for mining. These industrial-scale extractions have lasting consequences for local communities, fisheries, and the natural environment, for generations to come.

South Africa's West Coast is part of the Cape Floristic Region and inside the Fynbos biome, the West Coast is home to thousands of species of unique plants, most of which are found nowhere else in the world. UNESCO deemed the Cape Floristic Region Protected Areas World Heritage Sites including the Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve and the Namaqua National Park. The whole area is a biodiversity hotspot with the largest concentration of succulent plants in the world.

Cold, nutrient rich waters upwelling along the West Coast fuel high rates of phytoplankton growth that sustain the highly productive Benguela ecosystem.

These interconnected ecosystems are a haven for marine life such as whales, dolphins, seals, fish, birds, land-mammals, reptiles, plant and unique insect and invertebrate habitats.



NSRI are appealing to surfskiers, fishermen on sea-kayaks and anyone launching any kind of craft to go to sea to download and use the free NSRI RSA SafeTrx smart phone application.

We often hear paddlers saying that one person in their group of paddlers has and is using the NSRI RSA SafeTrx application amongst a group of paddlers and they feel no need for all of the paddlers to have the app on their phones. The concern is that if paddlers are separated during a paddle or if a paddler capsizes and is unable to get back onto their craft and the other paddlers are unable to turn around to assist and they are separated from each other, when the one person amongst the group that has and is using the NSRI RSA SafeTrx app is unable to maintain a close proximity to the casualty paddler, this raises safety concerns.

For this reason NSRI are appealing to everyone launching any kind of craft to go to sea to have and use the NSRI RSA SafeTrx smart phone application even when paddling in groups.

SAFETRX - TRACKING YOU HOME SAFELY

This is a tracking app, used internationally and customised for South Africa. SafeTrx is available to download from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Enter your vessel details, the people on board, your planned route and your ETA. And load your emergency contact details (i.e spouse / person at home). Then, if you are late or if you press the panic button, NSRI is alerted and we are sent your position. False alarms do happen so, while we are preparing to launch, a controller will call you or your emergency contact to verify if it was a mistake. No one minds the mistakes – they are a good opportunity to test the system. Download it now and try it out. It takes the “search” out of search and rescue. And the best part - it's for free!

The RSA SafeTRX App monitors a boats journey and alerts emergency contacts, who are nominated by the user (family and friends), should they fail to return to shore on time. This free cellphone application, enables the user to plot their intended course, store essential emergency numbers that can be used by NSRI if you fail to return from your trip, gives NSRI your location at all times during your trip, gives the user the ability to call an emergency by the push of a button and giving NSRI your exact position throughout our rescue response if you press the emergency button.

Features Include:

An Emergency Call button which allows you to quickly make a distress call from the application. The app sends an emergency location update to the Emergency Operations Centre and your emergency contacts if you have a cell phone connection.

Track only mode can be used to begin tracking at a touch of a button. Personalised Checklists aims to promote safety awareness by allowing you to create and review your own list of Checklist items prior to departure.

A new Mobile Logbook stores up to 20 trips on your phone, and can be replayed at any time within the app in video playback mode. Download the Free NSRI SafeTRX app now.



FEEL LIKE A DAY OUT? THINGS TO DO IN THE AREA.

West Coast Fossil Park

Roughly five million years ago, the Langebaan we know today looked very different. Profuse with water, the area was subtropical, lush and fertile, teeming with fantastic beasts like the sabre-toothed cat, the African bear and sivathere (short-necked giraffe). The fossilised remains of these and many other animals can be seen at the site of an ongoing excavation at West Coast Fossil Park (north of Langebaan in the hamlet of Langebaanweg). Great for all ages, the park features a museum, interactive exhibitions and a guided tour of the dig sites (with a "mock dig" for children). The West Coast Chef School also has a cafe here, and there is a market every second Saturday of the month.

Good to know The park is home to modern-day fauna and flora, too, best seen on the hiking and cycling trails (R20 – R50).

Cost Museum: R50 (adult), R30 (child age 5 – 15 years), R40 (pensioners/students)

Tour: R100 (adult), R50 (child), R70 (pensioners/students)

Opening times Tuesday – Sunday, 9am – 3pm

Guided tours: 11am, 12.30pm, 2pm (weekdays); 10am, 11am, 12pm (weekends)

Contact 022 766 1606, edu@fossilpark.org.za

Where to find it Off the R45, Langebaanweg



Groote Post Vineyards

One of the oldest farms on the West Coast, originally a trading post for sailors heading down to Table Bay, is now a celebrated wine estate run by three generations of the Pentz family. Groote Post bottles West Coast flavour – the Sea Salter Sauvignon Blanc has been lauded as the quintessential "Weskus white". Pop in for a tasting and stay for a picnic in the garden or a modern country lunch at Hilda's Kitchen, a restaurant housed in the former home of Hildagonda Duckitt (an avid cook and late-1800s cookbook author).



Good to know The farm is also a reserve, with game viewing available at 9am, which includes a cheese-and-wine stop with views of Table Mountain. Booking is 48 hours in advance.

Cost R30 (tasting of six wines)

R225 (picnic platter)

Game drive: R980 (1 – 3 people); R245 per person (4 – 9 people); R95 for children

Opening times Monday – Sunday, 10am – 4pm

Restaurant: Wednesday – Sunday, 12pm – 2.30pm

Contact 022 492 2825, wine@grootepost.co.za

Where to find it Darling Hills Road, off the R307 or R27, near Darling

FEATURING THE HEAVISIDE'S DOLPHIN

Heaviside's dolphin (*Cephalorhynchus heavisidii*), is one of four dolphins in the genus *Cephalorhynchus*. The small cetacean is endemic to the Benguela ecosystem along the southwest coast of Africa. They only live in cold temperate seas off the coasts of western South Africa, Namibia, and southern Angola.

It has a distinct black, grey, and white body pattern, and is not easily confused with any other species in its range. The head and thorax are coloured light grey with darker patches around the eye. The dorsal fin, fluke, and dorsal cape are a darker grey to bluish-black colour with a band that extends from the dorsal fin to the blowhole. The underbelly is white, with bands that extend onto the lower rear of the body. Small white patches are located just behind the pectoral fins and a single white patch extends between these fins on the chest. In males, the white patch ends in a point, but in females widens out to cover the mammary slits. The head of the Heaviside's dolphin is cone-shaped with a blunt beak. The dorsal fin is triangular and centred in the middle of the back.



Heaviside's dolphins are energetic and social animals. They are attracted to boats and frequently bow-ride; they may also surf in coastal waves. They perform iconic vertical leaps and then re-enter water headfirst with almost no splash. Heaviside's dolphins usually occur in small groups of up to 10 and may form large aggregations of about 100 individuals or even more in high-density areas. In South Africa, these dolphins are active during the day and typically move offshore in the afternoon to feed on prey that rises to the surface at night. In the morning they rest and socialize inshore. However, in Walvis Bay, Namibia the dolphins typically stay inshore during the night. Heaviside's communicate with the help of high and low frequency echolocation clicks and do not whistle. Low-frequency calls are produced most frequently in large groups engaging in social behaviour. It is likely that the dolphins use these calls when socializing away from predator threat and switch to high-frequency clicks when foraging and travelling. Heaviside's dolphins are carnivores (piscivores) and feed on a wide variety of different fish, squid, and octopus.

Heaviside's dolphins breed once every 2-4 years, and their mating season is thought to occur year-round. The gestation period usually lasts 10 months and females produce a single calf. The young stay with their mothers for about 3 years and become reproductively mature between 5 and 9 years of age.

There is no overall population estimate available for Heaviside's dolphin. However, abundance estimates from photographic mark-recapture studies are available at several locations in South Africa and Namibia. A three-year study between Cape Town and Lambert's Bay estimated 527 animals using 20 km of coastline in western Saint Helena Bay over six weeks of survey effort; 3,429 animals, using the 150 km of coastline around Saint Helena Bay, over three summer seasons; and 6,345 animals using the full ~390 km of coastline from Table Bay to Lambert's Bay. Estimates are also available from two high-use areas in Namibia: Walvis Bay: 508 animals; and Lüderitz: 494 animals. Sadly, the Heaviside's dolphin is currently classified as Near Threatened (NT) on the IUCN Red List.

Kid's Corner

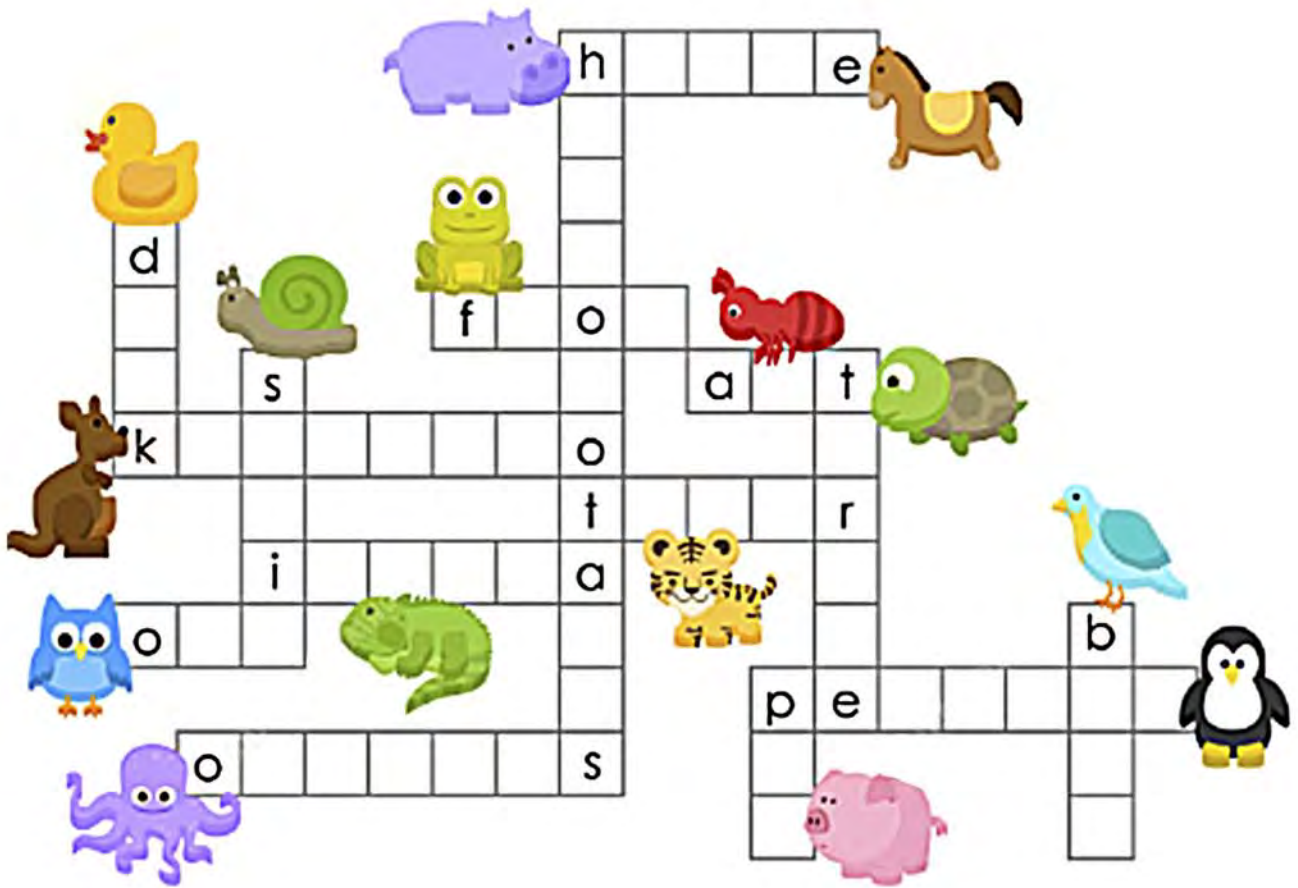
Did you know?

- All the ants in the world weigh more than all the humans in the world?
- A cow gives nearly 200,000 glasses of milk in a lifetime.
- Pigeons can do math.
- Giraffes can hum, but only at night.
- Koalas sleep up to 22 hours a day.
- Elephants are the only animal that can't jump.
- Octopuses can taste with their arms.
- Squirrels Will Adopt Orphans

COLOUR ME IN



Crossword



Autumn is on its way. Find some leaves and make a lion.

