Staff in the Frontier Region of South African National Parks (SANParks) walked away with no fewer than five Chief Executive Awards at this year’s 12th Kudu Awards ceremony hosted at Gallagher Estate in Gauteng on Friday 19 November 2016. The awards are hosted annually in partnership with Total SA and First National Bank.

Mr Fundisile Mketeni, SANParks CEO, said that the Kudu Awards recognises internal and external stakeholders for their vital contribution in making South African National Parks the custodian of choice for the national parks system in South Africa. “These awards honour people for their meaningful contributions to the protection of the environment through various means which reflects society’s admirable social responsibility - giving meaning to the SANParks vision of ‘A Sustainable National Parks System Connecting Society’.”

The Karoo Lion Search Team who successfully returned the escaped “Sylvester the Lion” back to Karoo National Park on two separate occasions received The Shield Award (for Bravery).

Another Karoo staff member, albeit a newly retired one, Anna Kamfer, won the prestigious Lifetime Contribution Award, for her 38 years of service to the organisation. Anna began her part-time career at SANParks in 1976 as a hut attendant in the old Kalahari Gemsbok Park now known as Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, before being permanently employed in 1978. In 1999 she moved to Karoo with a promotion to Rest Camp Supervisor, a position she’s been filling with great professionalism, enthusiasm and dedication ever since.

In the category Excellent Performance in the Workplace, Garden Route National Park’s Marine Biologist, Kyle Smith, received recognition for his outstanding work over the past financial year.

Another individual winner on the night was Mountain Zebra National Park’s People and Conservation Officer, Mxolisi Fulumente, who won the Best Constituency Builder Award.

The fifth award, for the Best Performing Division/Business Unit, will take pride of place in Addo Elephant National Park – as won by its Game Drives Department. This highly efficient and profitable business unit plays a significant role in generating very important revenue for both the Frontier Region and SANParks as a whole.

Regional General Manager, Dries Engelbrecht, said he was exceptionally proud to work with such a high calibre of staff. “These employees are a good example of the quality of staff we have working in our national parks. Their dedication, passion and loyalty is evident in everything they do, and receiving these awards will go a long way in not only motivating them to carry on in this fashion, but also see their colleagues striving for better. I am very proud of them, as well as all our other staff members who were nominated,” said Engelbrecht.

See more photographs on pg 4.
Addo Elephant National Park
- We have now visited all but five of the national parks. For us it rates right after the Kruger in terms of the game viewing experience.
- Very impressed with the upgrades that have been undertaken since our last visit.
- A special word of appreciation to Kevin (Reception) who literally walked the extra mile to our chalet to deliver a can opener when we reported that our accommodation did not have one.
- Excellent service from guide. From Wayne steadily driver veld. Very informative and excellent value for money.
- We had the meals based each time we dined at this restaurant. The menu was superbly cooked and tender. We were lucky enough to be at the restaurant when the staff/Park members sang with a Swedish choir staying at the Park. We dined again and joked with the restaurant staff about more singing. They sang again for the patrons. This was special. All the staff were beautiful with our seven month old daughter.

Camdeboo National Park
- All great as usual.
- Good service again.
- Abiations were regularly checked and cleaned.
- We had a real good time at Camdeboo!
- Staff professional.

Garden Route National Park
- Another 10 out of 10. Abiations facilities clean and well maintained. Keep up the good work.
- Wilderness National Park is always our peace haven. Thank you.
- The lady at the front desk that helped me, I think her name was Wendy, was extremely friendly and helpful. She helped me overcome my WildCard and also register me as a junior. (Out of 10 I’d give 11!)
- The grass was neatly mowed, dustbins were clean and empty and we loved the tarentaal and other birds singing. They sang again for the patrons. This was special. All the staff were beautiful with our seven month old daughter.
- Ebb & Flow is such a peaceful and lovely camp to come to for a relaxing nature holiday.

Karoo National Park
- Karoo National Park is really well managed and the nature experience is excellent. Keep up the good work!
- Amazing long weekend. We will definitely return next year. Thank you so much SANParks!
- One can see that the staff takes a lot of pride at this camp. The facilities were very clean and staff very friendly.
- The gentleman at the gate are always friendly and courteous and answer all your stupid questions with a smile.
- The receptionists are fantastic - friendly yet professional and process without any fuss or bother!

Mountain Zebra National Park
- Staff at accommodation very friendly and were far beyond their duty to assist, much appreciated.
- Thank you.
- Our guide, Dan, was excellent and everyone should be done to keep him working at SANParks rather than letting him leave for other work overseas.
- Doornhoek Guest House is stunning and very comfortable. We loved it.
- We were most impressed with the state of the roads in the Park. Abiations facilities were very well maintained and cleaned.

OLLI contributes to counter-poaching efforts

Wayne Bolton, the SANParks Honorary Ranger (SRH) who earlier this year completed a 6 000km cycle connecting all 19 national parks, personally handed over anti-poaching equipment along with the SRH in the Diamantveld Region to Mokala National Park near Kimberley recently.

Leader of the “One Land Love It” expedition, Wayne and his support team made up of his family, raised R150 000. Wayne’s journey on a mountain bike was specifically aimed at supporting the counter-poaching initiatives of SANParks (through the SANParks Honorary Rangers) and Care for Wild Africa, a rhino orphanage.

The equipment he handed over, valued at R70 000, will be used in the war against rhino poaching.

In the spirit of joint Custody, three generations of the Bolton family were involved in different ways in a journey that spanned the heat of summer. From Wayne starting out, to soaring temperatures resulting in sunstroke and dehydration, and from long, silent stretches of road to being chased by warthogs and close run-ins with trucks and traffic officials, Wayne was resolved to show his commitment.

As Wayne arrived at each park, a Scroll of Unity in Conservation was signed by SANParks Rangers who, like many South Africans, have committed themselves to doing their part to conserve our natural heritage. The Scroll now has pride of place at the Interpretive Centre in Addo Elephant National Park.

Wayne and his wife, Nikki, handed over the anti-poaching equipment purchased through the SRH’s, represented by their Chairperson of the Diamantveld Region, Nathilda Swanepoel, to Mokala National Park Manager, Deon Joubert, Section Ranger, Koketso Kotoe and the Rangers of Mokala National Park.

Wayne says Mokala plays a significant role in regenerating important and protected species and OLLI is privileged to make a contribution to this invaluable work. “If we can’t stop the poaching of the rhino, what hope do we have of conserving other endangered species for future generations? I believe that there is an activist in each of us and by example OLLI hopes to challenge people to consider what they can do,” he said.

Dear Megan

I am writing to you to say what a wonderful weekend we have had at the Mt Zebra National Park!

My husband, Tim, turned 70 on the 17th of November and he wanted a group of us to meet at Mt Zebra to celebrate this milestone in his life. We asked 9 couples to join us and not one refused - even the ones who had never visited the park before (5 couples in fact!), so I phoned Mt Zebra to ask if there was availability for the 4 days. I dealt with Janice and I cannot tell you what a pleasure it was - nothing was too much to ask or organise! She was an absolute star! Talk about going the extra mile! All the friends had chalets next to each other as requested and we were in the Guest House with 2 couples. We also organised a lunch for everyone on the Sunday with Sherele! The lunch was really good and nobody clued us from the restaurant even though I am sure we outstayed our welcome!

I must also mention the Guest House. We are great lovers of SANParks and visit many of the parks on a regular basis and have stayed in all sorts of accommodation - from Tsodilo Rustic Camp in the Kruger to your beautiful Bush Camps. But nothing can beat the Guest House at Mt Zebra! It is outstanding and the staff who look after it must love it - as the attention to detail is remarkable. It bowled us over when we walked in!

Thanks to all the staff at Mt Zebra who made Tim’s celebration such an outstanding event and congratulations to SANParks for having such wonderful places and such outstanding staff who make the whole experience truly memorable.

Best regards
Rose Calie Meyer Leach

Statue unveiled at the Heads for Knysna

On Saturday, 29 October, Mrs Ushki Schultz, a champion for conservation in Knysna, dedicated a bronze statue to SANParks. The statue serves as a milestone for the journey travelled thus far to protect the Knysna estuary in terms of biodiversity conservation. “I learnt this was not a lagoon but an estuary because of the various tributaries to it and also that it opens to the sea,” said Schultz.

Former Area Manager of Knysna, Pete Joubert, who is affectionately known as ‘Oom Pete’, said Schultz was a trailblazer for open access national parks, raising awareness for Knysna. “Although we do not have big furry animals, the estuary has over 200 animal species,” said Oom Pete.

Tina Lovely, Mrs Schultz’s daughter, shared fond memories of her parents’ love for nature.

The Scroll now has pride of place at the Interpretive Centre in Addo Elephant National Park.

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**Fire in Tsitsikamma**

A fire in Tsitsikamma broke out in the kitchen of the restaurant on Friday 25 November 2016, affecting the restaurant and the nearby shop only. The rest of the camp is open and safe. A chopper was dispatched at once to prevent the fire from spreading to the forest area and the rest of the camp.

The cause of the fire is under investigation. No injuries were reported. Park officials met on site over the weekend to assess the extent of the damage.

The damage as a result of the fire is estimated at approximately R10 million. A forensic team is on site to determine the cause of the fire which started in the kitchen and spread through to the shop. The site is cordoned off and no members of the public are allowed to access the site. It is also under supervision by the Park’s rangers and Honorary Rangers. All day activities in the Storm River Rest Camp are up and running including the re-routed walk to the popular suspension bridge, water activities, day hikes, day trips to the river gorge and others.

Park management is moving ahead with a temporary structure for the restaurant and shop. Progress of these structures and plans for the holiday season will be communicated shortly. In the meantime, all visitors are advised to either bring their own meals and drinks or to use facilities in the Storms River Village which is less than 10 minutes from the Park.

For more information, guests can call 042 281 1607.

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**Mystical forests attractions**

A zoning plan plays an important role in minimising any possible conflicts between the conservation of nature and resource users. Visitors are mostly attracted to the following activities in the more accessible parts of the forests in Garden Route National Park:

- **Tea gardens:** operating in the forest areas of the GRNP.
- **Cycling trails:** in Harkerville and Homtini go through forest and fynbos areas of the Park. There are routes suitable for individuals and groups alike. These are day and multi-day nature walks in all three sections of the GRNP (Wilderness, Knysna and Tsitsikamma). These are day and multi-day nature walks in all three sections of the GRNP (Wilderness, Knysna and Tsitsikamma). These are suitable for individuals and groups alike.
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- **Camping:** is available in Diepwalle, Elbe & Flow Rest Camp, Diepwalle, Natures Valley and Storms River Rest Camp.
- **Events:** 
  - Trail runs include the Otter trail run, Southern Cross and the Harkerville night run.
  - Cycling events include the GR 300, RECH, K2C and others. There are 34 events a year throughout all sections of the Park.
  - "Adventure is in our nature" is the Park’s motto to encourage adventurers to the Park.
- **Forest excursions:** Zip lining through tree canopies in Tsitsikamma with canopy tours, segways with the Kingfisher Trail in Wilderness and Tsitsikamma forests and scootours in Goudveld are all concessionaires operating in the forest areas of the GRNP.
- **Tea gardens:** in Diepwalle (managed by a community co-operative) and Goudveld are closely located to museums detailing historical cultural accounts of the forest.

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**Addo’s Sylvester king of his larger kingdom**

The country’s most famous lion, Sylvester, has taken the first step towards reigning supreme over his new kingdom at Addo Elephant National Park’s Kuzuko contractual area. On Sunday 20 November 2016 he was moved out of the holding boma he’d called home for the past six months, into a larger 200 hectare enclosure.

Here, he and his coalition partner, the younger male he’s been bonding with in the boma since May, joined up with the two females on the property. The decision to let them out was based on the park management’s opinion that the two had settled and bonded sufficiently in order to start a new coalition and lead Kuzuko’s pride in future.

A carcass was deposited nearby to lure them out of the boma, which the two females initially started feasting on. The younger lion ventured out first and made quick work of moving the leftovers from the awaiting meal. It wasn’t long before Sylvester joined him in chasing the young ladies off, and returned to the carcass to feast. Forty-eight hours later, they were still spotted around the carcass — clearly indicating their dominance, with Sylvester as the resident pride male. The two had not yet ventured further from the boma or from one another and are roaring and marking their new-found territory, while the lionesses keep a cautious watch from a nearby hill.

Park management will keep a close eye on the four over the next few weeks, paying particular attention to their social interaction, before making a decision about when to release them into the entire 15 000 hectares of Kuzuko.

Two weeks ago the two older males on the property, aged 13 and 15 respectively, were moved out of the area to make way for Sylvester and company’s introduction into the area. They were moved to a different section of the Park, known as Kleinvalte.

Three stories merge into one:

Sylvester first escaped from Karoo National Park on 5 June last year, and managed to evade capture for over three weeks. After his capture he was fitted with a combination satellite/VHF collar to find his location should he manage to get out again. This collar then alerted authorities on 28 March earlier this year that the lion had once again left the park’s boundary, and played a big role in tracking him and marking his new-found territory, while the lionesses kept a cautious watch from a nearby hill.

The two lionesses arrived at Kuzuko in May last year. They became a national news item in December 2014 when park authorities made a desperate plea for visitors to report any sightings of them after their mother died of a suspected snake bite. More than six weeks after they were last seen and long after park staff had given up hope of finding them alive, new light arose when a guide alerted park’s rangers that he may have spotted them on 10 January last year. Although sceptical, the park’s rangers still went out and miraculously found the cubs — albeit severely malnourished and lethargic.

Finally, the younger male also has a tale to tell — being the only male in a litter born to Josie last year. He would have experienced the same fate Sylvester did had he been left in Addo’s main camp section of the park — being driven out of the pride and having to fend for himself, possibly even killed by older, more dominant lions. He was moved to Kuzuko to join Sylvester in June.

Time will now tell when these three interesting histories meet — and kick off the story of the new Kuzuko pride.
Best Performing Division/Business Unit Award: Addo Game Drives

Excellent Performance in the Workplace Award: Kyle Smith

This award is based on excellent performance beyond the normal call of duty depicted by the use of innovative and creative measures in meeting organisational objectives where in certain cases it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible to achieve the relevant objectives.

Frontier Region winners of Chief Executive Awards at the 2016 Kudu Awards ceremony

The Shield Award: Karoo lion search teams

The award is bestowed on a person or team who has shown extraordinary bravery to save a colleague, tourist or any person’s life or animal’s life under any circumstances, but with specific reference to work related situations.

Best Constituency Builder Award: Mxolisi Fulumente

This award is based on positive measures employed in engaging communities, building relations in accordance with the People and Conservation ideals of the organisation.

Lifetime Contribution Award: Anna Kamfer

This award is for staff members who have made a significant contribution to SANParks over an extensive career within protected areas which spans over a period of not less than ten years of unbroken service. Nominees are nearing retirement or are newly retired and could have made their contribution at any level within the organisation.

Best Performing Division/Business Unit Award: Addo Game Drives

This award is based on the performance of business units in rendering the specific services required by the organisation or other business units.