GARDEN ROUTE REGION

Newsletter

Molweni GRNP Colleagues

Halala !!! We’re onto the second edition of this newsletter! The editorial team is growing from strength to strength with the addition of Nandi Mgwadlamba, Communications Manager, to the GRNP team. Welcome Nandi!

Colleagues, we are already finding ourselves at the end of the Quarter 1 of 2013/14 and what a busy time it has been! Finding our feet with the allocated budget, setting out maintenance schedules, managing World Environmental Week and launching the coffin factory are but a few of the tasks which had to be juggled.

The Knysna section had been overrun by guests attending the annual Knysna Oyster Festival, with our natural resources providing the platform for activities, such as mountain bike races in the forest and canoe polo on the estuary. Nandi joined the KFM (94.5) team on a boat cruise to exclaim the wonders of the park to an estimated 915,000 listeners. Although there has been a decline of local visitors to the park, there has been a steady increase in foreign visitors.

Connecting to society has seen us hosting a boat trip around the lagoon with Epilepsy SA; working with the Wilderness Rate Payers Association towards a clean and safe town and employing 100% of women in the new coffin factory in Rheenendal.

Our conservation efforts included the launch of the new Fynbos Research Project and Integrated planning with BSP on alien and invader plant species and fire management.

In this edition we include the continued debate on the Knysna elephant (yes, the one and only!) and explore the work done by Lizette Moolman. Continuing the theme, we celebrate the promotion of a SANParks Matriach, our very own, Dr. S. We also celebrate the individual contributions staff has made towards the continued success of the park, via the Regional Kudu Awards. Well done to all of you and keep up the good work.

While you enjoy reading about our park and its people, keep in mind that elephants live in a structured social order, each one playing a very necessary role, supporting the group as a whole. They are also amongst the few animals who can recognize their image in a mirror: let us all therefore take a good look at ourselves and see if we are being what we are meant to be.

Happy reading.

Jill Bunding-Yenter

General Manager: Garden Route National Park
Global

Congratulations to our own ‘Grootvoet’***

Adapted from Reynold ‘Rey’ Thakhuli

Born in the rural village of Tsilitwa near Qumbu in the Eastern Cape, Nomvuselelo is the first of seven children. Her name means ‘revival’ given to her by her maternal grandmother, who had a firm belief that her birth "would revive the humble dwellings and the livelihood of the family.” To an extent Mvusy’s appointment at the top echelons of SANParks with effect from 1 April 2013 should be seen as a stroke of good fortune, hard work, resilience, commitment as well as affirmation of her grandmother’s belief of being able to ‘revive’. Mvusy is armed with an impressive educational track record which includes a BSc, BEd, and a Higher Diploma in Education from the University of the Transkei. She further completed an MPhil in Science Education with the University of the Western Cape, and then proceeded to Rhodes University for an International Certificate in Environmental Education. In 2009 she was also awarded a PhD from the University of Witwatersrand, having done her thesis on ‘A Gender Analysis of the Land Redistribution Programme in Mpumalanga.’

She was a visiting scholar at St Antony’s College, Oxford University and was also awarded a 3-year Ford Foundation Scholarship in 2003. In addition, she received the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship to Cornell University, New York, and is a recipient of the Women in Science Award from the National Department of Science and Technology. Mvusy currently serves on a number of structures including the Ford Foundation Alumni Association.

Mvusy started her career in SANParks as Manager of Social Ecology in the Golden Gate Highlands National Park in 1996. In 1999 she then moved on to become the Environmental Education Coordinator for the then Cape Peninsula National Park. In 2004 she entered the echelons of operations management when she was appointed to the position of Manager: Protected Areas Management for the Mpumalanga Parks Board. She rejoined SANParks in 2006 as the General Manager of the newly created Garden Route National Park, and in 2011 was promoted to Senior General Manager Operations for the Parks Division. In the latter position she was responsible for the day to day operations of 20 national parks, and also played a key role in setting up a structured strategic planning framework for the national park system. We are proud of our own Dr. S and wish her all the wisdom and strength of an elephant matriarch in her new position.

*** ‘Grootvoet’ is the title used in Dalene Matthee’s books to describe elephants who used to roam in the Knysna Forests.”

News from Southern Africa...

African elephants are larger than those found in Asia. Their ears are broader and flatter. Most elephants are found in the Kruger National Park, Addo and KwaZulu Natal. They can grow up to 3, 2 and 4 meters at the shoulder and weigh an estimated 6, 5 tonnes. According to South Africa.com, elephants ‘live in groups of approximately 10-20 consisting of an adult male, several bulls, females and calves. They graze both during the day and at night and eat as much as 250 kg of food each day. They use their trunks to eat, clean and signal. They also drink water, dig and dust with their trunks. An elephant can become 60-70 years old, but some become even older.’ Nandi Mgwadlamba

Proof of the Knysna Ellie

It is suspected only an elephant could have destroyed the cycling route signs at the Platbos hut. A gate at the “rotstuin” just 200 m from the office was also destroyed.

Carol J van der Merwe

Seen in the picture is fresh elephant dung. It is suspected that the Big One is roaming around in the Farleigh section of the Park. Rangers are patrolling the area to see if there’s any further damage caused (fallen trees, squashed sign boards). Charlene Sigcu
The Knysna elephant(s)

The Knysna elephant(s) and their chance of survival continue to be an interesting debate for over a century now. Scientists estimate that about 3,000 elephants once roamed around the Cape Floristic Region in pre-colonial times, of which about 1000 occupied the Outeniqua-Tsitsikamma area. Dating as far back as the 1800s, between 400 and 500 elephants remained and by the 1900, only 30 to 50 elephants were left in the Knysna area. This small population dwindled even further and recent attempts to determine the elephant population status included a genetic study, photographic identification, surveys and sightings, with varying results, ranging between 1 and 5 elephants.

The age and sex of the Knysna elephant group is therefore still uncertain. SANParks in collaboration with two laboratory research institutes, recently registered a project, to try and determine the elephant group structure. All methods to be applied are ‘non-invasive’ meaning that the elephants do not necessarily have to be seen and dung is used. The age of individuals will be determined by measuring dung boli circumferences and the sex of the individuals will be determined by taking a small dung sample and sending it off to laboratories in Pretoria. Field rangers and monitors were trained in 2012 to measure the boli and they are already gathering valuable data for this project.

SANParks scientists are working towards a better understanding of the ecological role of elephants and their potential impact on biodiversity in the Southern Cape. They have already registered a project to identify habitat types that were historically preferred by elephants that may be inaccessible to them today. This will be done by analysing old elephant bones and teeth.

The elephant management plan of the Park requires an understanding of the roles played by elephants in biodiversity management and also that of stakeholder perceptions. These may include the public, tourists, media, land owners and other interest groups. We are actively defining perceptions and expectations regarding the Knysna elephants through public forums and surveys.

Lizette Moolman

DID YOU KNOW

Elephants are under extreme pressure from the thriving ivory trade in China and Thailand, while unsustainable human population growth is taking its toll on elephant pregnancies are longer than any other mammal lasting nearly 22 months. A newborn elephant weighs about 91 kilograms and stands about 1 meter tall.

African elephants are the largest land mammals reaching from 2.5 meters to 4 meters at the shoulder.
Locals look forward to an annual sports day hosted by the Knysna Emergency and Essential Services Sports Committee! This is a great opportunity for essential services officers to relax, have fun and distress. The event is jointly organised by SAPS in Knysna, the Knysna municipality’s essential services, ER24, the Department of Health and SANParks.

This year, Epilepsy SA was invited for a boat cruise around Thesen Island. Guests were treated to a braai afterwards at Knysna Angling and Diving Association (KADA). On the second day of the celebrations, SANParks staff rolled up their sleeves and helped clean the Vermont old age home in Hornlee. Staff cut grass and left the facility spotless. *Shamley Titus*

**World Enviro Week Knysna**

Children from Hospice, HERO, Sinethemba and the Rheenendal Swap Shop enjoyed a week of green fun and learning at the Pledge Nature Reserve between Monday and Friday of campaign week. In celebration of World Environment Week, SANParks and partners Knysna Municipality and Pledge Nature Reserve held daily guided walks and green scavenger hunts through Pledge Nature Reserve. *Melaney Barrath*

Staff of the Carpe Diem School took to hiking and canoing. The walked along the Half-collared kingfisher trail and canoed in the Touwriver. Pictured on the right. *Muneer Moses*

132 learners with 15 educators were fascinated by the tidal pool and dune ecology of the Swartvlei Beach. ‘They were most interested in the organisms we showed them’ says Muneer Moses from the Wilderness area. ‘These included the starfish, sea anemones, fan worms, limpets and an octopus.’
A step towards a cleaner Wilderness

Uniquely crafted wooden dustbins produced from eucalyptus or blue gum were donated to the Wilderness Residents Ratepayers Association on Monday, the 03rd of June 2013. Speaking at an event held in Farleigh, Herman Jungbauer-Rudman, cluster manager of SANPark’s Biodiversity Social Projects says the ratepayers approached him to order the eco-friendly bins. An excited Pieter Naude, Chairman of the ratepayers association accepted the gift from SANParks and said the bins are the first of many products planned for the wilderness area. ‘It is part of the Wilderness Improvement Programme aiming to restore the village to its old charm. To make it friendlier and cleaner’ says Naude.

Manufacturing furniture from invasive alien species is one of many products from a 20 year old partnership between SANParks, the Department of Environmental Affairs and the Expanded Works Programme. The eco-factory launched two years ago now employs 165 more people since its inception. Protected areas are under increasing threat from external and internal pressures on biodiversity. Invasive alien species can be identified among the threats. Clearing them could ultimately lead to more water flowing back to water sources such as rivers, lakes and wetlands. A park free of invasive plants lowers the risk of a fire hazard.

From left to right: Mzwandile Mjadu, SANParks area manager for the Wilderness area, Edmund Thys, Training Manager, Carel van der Merwe, Senior Section Ranger at Farleigh, Emile Mopp, Harvesting Manager, Herman Jungbauer-Rudman and Pieter Naude, Wilderness Ratepayers Association

The ladies, part of the team who manufactured the bins, the Eco-Furniture Factory, Farleigh.
SANParks responded to a challenge facing Rheenendal Primary School, by supporting its upgrade to infrastructure. Through its Biodiversity Social Projects (BSP), SANParks has recycled (55 broken desks) to manufacture 55 refurbished desks. Broken parts were replaced, metal parts were all painted and all wooden parts varnished. Instead of the school having to spend scarce funding on new desks, the old broken desks were recycled at a fraction of the cost. Jill Bunding-Venter, General Manager of the Garden Route National Park said supporting the Rheenendal Primary School is another way of bringing the park to learners in its jurisdiction. ‘This way they get a sense of the Park and the issues facing it. Invasive alien plants are a real threat.’ She adds that ‘protected areas are under increasing threat from external and internal pressures on biodiversity. Invasive alien plants can be identified as a threat to water resources, indigenous landscapes and pose a fire risk’ says Bunding-Venter.

Once cut down, invasive alien plants are used to manufacture furniture. Through its Biodiversity Social Projects, SANParks and partners score double, says Cluster Manager, Herman Jungbauer-Rudman. ‘We clear the invasive plants off the land which not only secures biodiversity gains, but also use the same invasives to produce furniture. This has created 160 jobs since 2011.’ To date the Garden Route has two factories, one in Farleigh and another in Rheenendal.

Most farm workers in Rheenendal take their children to the primary school identified by Jungbauer-Rudman’s team. It is an impoverished community situated between Knysna and Sedgefield. It has a beautiful combination of pasture, ferns and forests. On Friday, the 07th of June 2013, SANParks officially handed over desks to Rheenendal Primary.
Hard work to secure water

An independent study revealed that the Working for Water Programme’s clearing efforts will ensure Plettenberg Bay communities have adequate water for the next 20 years. The hard-working and dedicated team in Tsitsikamma recently split their teams and contractors into two to achieve ambitious goals. The now Tsitsikamma West team has 14 teams with more than 200 people. The two teams (East and West) have a huge project area splitting at the Bloukrans River. Team East with 6 teams is to tackle an area on the East which extends about 40km on the N2 east of the Bloukrans.

Our experience in the first quarter of the year can be summed up as ‘an exciting time for growth in unfavourable weather conditions brazed by fires, bad roads and scarce transport, not for sissies!’ Megan Loxton

GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR GOUNA LANDOWNERS!

By Lisa Picard (June 2013)

It is very rare that I find my expectations vastly exceeded, but today it is my delightful task to report back on a project that has certainly achieved that lofty goal! This project represents a unique opportunity for Gouna landowners to have their land completely cleared of alien vegetation, at absolutely no cost to themselves, and to thereby contribute to an internationally recognized and funded, highly successful, job creation and social upliftment scheme. As a landowner you win... and as a human being too!

Arn and I are overseeing the Working for Water (WfW) alien clearing project on Ian’s property in Gouna. To be honest, as a landowner, I had my reservations when I first heard about this project. I was concerned about the implications of having unsupervised teams of unemployed people working on private land.

The team leader on Ian’s project, Nosisana, is a young mother of two. Her English is excellent and I have been pleasantly surprised at the level of professionalism and the positive attitude exhibited by Nosisana and her team. I learnt that the WfW team leaders are actually contractors to SANParks and run the clearing projects as their own small businesses. I was impressed to discover that Nosisana has received training in a vast array of topics, in addition to the obvious training on conservation, identification and eradication of alien vegetation, first aid, snake identification, chainsaw skills etc. These topics include business skills, management skills and computer literacy, as well as HIV/AIDS and other topics of key importance to developing communities. Before starting work in the morning, a 15min “toolbox” training session is held, in which Nosisana presents additional training to teams in relevant topics. This is truly an example of community upliftment and skills development in action.

The team working on Ian’s property is comprised of more than 50% women and the WfW project itself is aiming to eventually employ 60% women. At first I had concerns over whether Nosisana would be able to manage and control 25 people, of which more than 40% were male, working over a large area of land. However, Arn and I have spent sufficient time daily following and observing the teams working and interacting and I am pleased to report that Nosisana has her team well under control and working efficiently. The attitude of the teams has been friendly and positive throughout and Nosisana has impressed me with her ability to manage the teams and the project, as well as in her management of our expectations and in her excellent communication skills. Team members were always properly attired and easily identifiable in their yellow WfW shirts and blue work outfits, with team supervisors and safety officers being identifiable through the correctly coloured helmets.
Launch of the Tsitsikamma Fynbos Research Program

It’s official. Nature’s Valley Trust and SANParks will be conducting fynbos research in and around the Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park. It’s a five year walk to examine the intricate pollination systems in the fynbos and specifically how these may change over time. 66 birds were netted and ringed on the morning of the launch including 39 Southern Double-collared Sunbirds, 14 Cape Sugarbirds and 2 Orange-breasted Sunbirds. The Sugarbirds and some of the Sunbirds were fitted with numbered color rings, enabling the research team to identify individual birds in the field to track movements throughout the fynbos research project.

The plan for the next weeks is to start some flower surveys, insect surveys, small mammal trapping and continue bird ringing in the area.

Watch this space for more action from our research team!

Environmental Monitors pictured:
Brandon Barnardo, Roshan Campher, Morne Kriga, Hestel Lourens, Adrian Carelse.

For many onlookers, today was their first experience of bird ringing.

Did you know
A hummingbird’s wings beat between 50 and 200 flaps per second depending on the direction of flight and air conditions. THAT’S FAST!

Hummingbirds also lay the smallest eggs of all birds. They measure less than 1.5cm long.
Interview with a Ranger

Quintin Solomons

Quintin Solomons (QS) speaks to Shamley Titus (ST)

QS: How long have you worked for SANParks?

ST: 1 year, 2 months to be exact.

QS: Tell us about your team

ST: I am part of the Tsitsikamma Marine team, working in Bloukrans. The team has a great pool of skills and I’m learning lots from my Ranger Sergeant and the 4 rangers

QS: Who is your role model and why?

ST: Victor Cunningham. He is resourceful, helpful and has admirable leadership qualities.

QS: What is the scariest situation you have found yourself in your line of work?

ST: During my environmental monitoring training in animal behaviour, on a 10-day survival and tracking course of the Big 5, I came in close contact with dangerous game, lions and hyenas!

Well done to our rangers who held the fort during the recent Oyster Festival held in Knysna. They patrolled until early hours of the morning every day for 2 weeks.

Genet Relocated to Goudveld

A genet was relocated from Homtini Guest Farm in Rheenendal to Goudveld. It was transported on a road called ‘boer se pad’ located along the forest margin. The genet had killed poultry in neighbouring farms. SANParks rangers were there to fully support the move. Dominique Du Toit

Left to right: G.Slinger, C.Keswaart, N Jantjies
Fieldtrip to Formosa Peak to explore the wild side of the Park

Johan Baard of the Scientific Services, Fred van Berkel of the Mountain Club of SA and Maretha Alant from the Planning and Implementation division climbed the Formosa peak. The aim was to establish exactly where the peak trail crosses the boundary. Johan started this venture by switching on his GPS to identify the exact location. Next the team stopped at the Du Toit apple farm to begin the trail. They quickly ascertained that the farm is in a buffer zone and is significant for conservation objectives. The team had much discussion about fire management and the clearing of invasive alien species and the importance of such work for places situated on the boundary of the park.

The next adventure was to collect and record endangered plants. Johan who manages the Species for Conservation Concern (SCC) Programme for the Garden Route National Park was too happy to do what he knows best! He collected 10 plants suspected to be on the threatened and endangered list of species, including protea grandiceps, Felicia tsitsikamae and alepidea delicatula.

Did you know: Fermosa is the highest mountain at 1, 676m in the Tsitsikamma Mountain Range. Maretha Alant

Did you know: Fermosa is the highest mountain at 1, 676m in the Tsitsikamma Mountain Range. Maretha Alant
New employees at Goudveld

Goudveld is making its mark with the latest appointment of two hard working employees. They welcome you from the gate! Mzwandile Mjadu, Area Manager for the Wilderness Area says ‘at some stage, we shall have to apply for the creation of their positions onto our staff establishment. They are friendly and seem to be quiet able to take up the challenge’ he laughs. Mzwandile Mjadu

Win-win: Exciting way to cut down calories and enjoy the forest

The Harkerville cycle route in the forest is 12 kilometres long. It is situated between Knysna and Plettenberg Bay. Intermediate cyclists grab the challenge of riding on this route’s rough gravel surface. When Senior Section Rangers for Knysna, Khathutshelo Nelukalo and colleague Nico Oosthuizen chose to cycle this route instead of driving around inspecting the site, it seemed like an overly ambitious goal. Both Nelukalo and Oosthuizen are amateur cyclists, and the Garden Route National Park’s guide for intermediate riders is to allocate between +1, 5 hours to complete the ride. On the 18th May, both completed an 11- kilometre route in less than two hours! Although characterised by plantations and open fynbos, the beautiful ride can be difficult. There are also coastal redwoods planted as far back as 1927. The trail itself goes from smooth to rough gravel. Nelukalo says they often patrol this area with cars but never really take the time to actually enjoy them. Encouraged colleagues working at the Garden Route National Park have vowed to join the pair for weekly cycling trips and regular walks to cut down on calories as well as to better acquaint themselves with the Park. Nandi Mgwadiamba

Knysna Oyster Festival 2013

SA Navy cadets (left) honour Bondi, during the Knysna Oyster Festival. Bondi was a royal navy mascot dog who died in 1931. Manning the Garden Route National Park’s exhibition stand is Geneve Lupacchini (right).
More Tourism

A two year journey ends successfully

Anthony Innes, Gate Guard from the Wilderness section writes: The Tourism Ambassador Program started two years ago (2012) with a group of 25 learners. It is a group of young and ambitious young people reporting to the Wilderness National section of the GRNP. The course provided extensive training on room attendant duties including housekeeping and basic supervision. The training is well-recognised by established hospitality industry peers from small bed and breakfasts (B&B) to large-scale hotels.

The course was financed by the Department of Tourism and implemented by Networx. Once qualified, learners will receive a NQF Level 12 certificate in accommodation services. Here is some feedback from some learners:

Gerswill Appels: ‘This was definitely an amazing experience and I realised that this could be a future career path for me. It is a huge responsibility that I am willing to take.’

Sonia May: ‘I enjoyed the training sessions and all the information helped me to perform better within the workplace.’

Anthea Ruiters: ‘This was a huge responsibility for me and a very nice first experience, although a bit demanding with the working hours but we all could adjust.’

William Innes: ‘Practically spoken I had an adventure, learned many skills in the different departments that I can gain from in the near future. I would like to thank Networx for the opportunity and the theoretical advantages, thanks to all the facilitators.’

Sheridan Kennedy: ‘Unfamiliar with the Hospitality Industry at first, I did not think that I would benefit from this experience. I found that I have come to love the drill and I have really developed myself. Appointed as the Learner Representative of our group I had to take responsibility. Had to attend PAC meetings to solve any concerns from my colleagues and gave feedback from the side of Networx.I improved my leadership skills and performance inside the workplace and different departments. This was a very educational and amazing experience for me.’

Visitors to the Storms River have plenty to see this winter!

The winter waves are normally much bigger than normal making spectacular scenes when braking over the reef. Strangely, skies are a lot clearer in winter due to offshore winds producing star photos of excellent quality! Four valid reasons why you should make your way to one of Tsitsikamma’s secrets, the Storms River:

- Views from the Storms River Gorge Suspension Bridge are spectacular!
- The park is quiet making way for more animals to roam around the Otters. You are most likely to spot bushbuck and birds galore, ideal for birding enthusiasts and those wanting to enjoy the beauty and serenity of nature
- Enjoy the romantic view overlooking the ocean while snuggling up in a warm cabin inside a forest camp.

Hop on the Boat Ride to the famous Otter Waterfall and experience different types of Marine species.
The South African National Parks (SANParks) and the Stormsriver Adventures Pty (Ltd) - operators of the canopy tours in the Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park met on Friday, 26 April 2013 to agree to work together until the completion of the tender period.

The parties have agreed on a smooth transition period without putting any jobs on the line and disrupting operations of the popular canopy tours in the Tsitsikamma National Park.

Annemi van Jaarsveld, GM: Business Development at SANParks said the meeting between the two parties resolved to allow due process as per the National Treasury regulations governing Public Private Partnerships which dictates that at the end of the contract an opportunity should be put on an open and transparent tender.

Van Jaarsveld said that SANParks will ensure that no jobs will be lost and operations will continue to run uninterrupted. “This includes facilitating a seamless handover of the current workforce to the appointed service provider as per Section 197 of the Labour Relations Act in the event the current service provider is unsuccessful.”

Clementine Mbatani, Marketing Manager of the Garden Route National Park says in April 2013 all tourism indicators for April 2013 showed a decline compared to April 2012, due to the fact that Easter fell in April last year.

‘May however was a very good month and all indicators were up with the Guest to Park 30.8% increase YOY except for Knysna. I showed a 11.2% decrease, Unit occupancy 2.2% YOY and Camping persons night sold went up by 14.7% increase YOY. Unit nights sold up by 3.6%, bed nights sold up by 1.1%, bed occupancy up by 1.9%, camp site occ up by 0.6%, activities declined by -9.0% YOY.

Tsitsikamma Business Chamber provides training for entrepreneurs

Tsitsikamma Business Chamber in association with the AHI (Afrikaanse Handels Instituut) has pledged to assist entrepreneurs from Tsitsikamma with basic skills necessary to start their own businesses. The first phase of training kicked off with a five-day Entrepreneurship Skills Development course facilitated by Doctor Johan Louw, a seasoned business consultant, coach and mentor. His informal way of communication made it easy for participants to interact and discuss day-to-day challenges. The course was arranged and coordinated by Yolande Le Roux, the Chairperson of Tsitsikamma Business Chamber.

Eighteen participants from villages around Tsitsikamma attended the course. At the end of the course an Entrepreneurs Forum was established and a committee of five was chosen. This committee will be absorbed into the broader structure of Tsitsikamma Business Chamber as a sub-committee.

SANParks sponsored the venue and accommodation for the course. Yolande Le Roux
Dale James writes:

‘This is just a short note of my warm appreciation for the Harkeville rangers enthusiastic and positive approach to solving my problem. I recently completed the Harkeville Forest/Beach hike and left my camera on the beach. It would have been at least a 6 hour hike back to retrieve it. I returned to the Harkeville Forest station to report it in case the next bunch of hikers picked it up and handed it in. At the office Ruby-ann Temmers listened carefully and quickly called ranger Clive Coetzee. He arrived and was very enthusiastic about driving out to see if we could locate the beach by a fishermans path. Ranger Sabelo Roman accompanied us. We drove through the forest to the coast. Clive showed us the fisherman’s path which led down to the beach. Clive and Sabelo led me down the path and in 15 minutes we were on the beach where the camera was found! My sincere appreciation and admiration for Clive Coetzee and his enthusiastic ‘can do’ approach, showing much initiative and positive energy. Both rangers were extremely fit and capable and it is comforting to know that this is the calibre of staff employed by our National Parks. Please pass this on to the staff at the Harkeville Forest station. All the best and thank you once again.’

Email sent to Catherine Jaintjies, Switchboard Operator, Tsitsikamma Section

Hallo Catherine!

Ons is weer almal veilig terug in Kroonstad, en ek wou sommer net sê BAIE BAIE BAIE DANKIE!! Ai Catherine, ek weet nie waar om te begin om dankie te sê vir die voorreg om te kon bly in julle pragtige Park nie, vir al jou reëlings om ons te huisves en sommer vir al jou vriendelikheid elke keer as ek gebel of ge-epos het!!

Stormsrivier se bestuur was so goed vir ons. Hesron het so hard probeer om vir ons dit so maklik moontlik met die reën en die kindertjies te maak. Baie baie dankie. ‘N Baie goeie vriendin het ons laat weet in die tyd wat ons daar was, dat ons die reën moet voel en dan moet dink daaraan dat dit al die harteer ook in julle gebied is, al die swaarkry van mense en hul kindertjies, en dat dit die trane is wat ons moet troos. En so sal ons die reën onthou. Daar is soveel swaarkry in hierdie ou stuk ende wêreld!! By die skole waar ons was, by die mense in die gemeenskappe, oral is daar soveel hartseer. Baie baie dankie Catherine. Julle Park was so vol en ek het gevoel ons maak dit vir julle swaar – die dat ek vir Hesron al ons tentstaanplekke behalwe 2 gegee het, en gesê het hy moet dit vir ander kampeerders gebruik, om so te probeer suus sê dat ons jul in so ‘n vol tyd gepla het. Ek hoop hy kon dit gebruik. En vir Christo – die ere Veldwagter wat ons kom help het om die kinders droog te hou toe dit die aand so gereën het.... Shoe, dankie vir die liefde teenoor ons groep se kinders. Ons waardeer dit so opreg. Hulle het die aand se DVD vertoning in die saal daar so geniet saam met Neville! Mag julle Park so mooi bly soos altyd. Mag julle daardie mooi gebruik pas aan dit en al wat so pragtig is so geniet. Mag julle daardie mooi nog met distended Ander mense deel oor duisende jare vorenowe!! Dis vir my die mooiste van God se natuurskeppings ooit!!!

Claudien Louw en Kaapse Draai vir Jesus-groep.

It was wonderful to visit the park, writes Mark Collins of Magnetic South Events. As a visitor and not event organisers and be able to absorb the magnificence of the place without any pressure or responsibilities. Right from our arrival we were warmly welcomed by the professional gate staff, who greeted us like old friends and ushered to the luxury of the guest house which is just pure indulgence. The Tsitsikamma is one of the most special places on earth. It has an energy which never fails to reach into ones core. Out of reach of noise and light pollution and tucked away in the indigenous forest as a family we relaxed, unwound, laughed and slept deeply. Of course we ran the trails and hiked to the waterfall and even had a swim. The whales have arrived for the season and put on a show for us!! We had a precious family weekend and made memories which we will treasure for a long time. Thank you so much to your team for treating us to this.
Birthday Feature
Life begins at 50!

Send us your birthday photo!
Send us your birthday photo and stand a chance to feature in the next monthly issue!
Send photos & words to:
Nandi.mgwadlamba@sanparks.org

Wellness News
5 ways to boost your immune system this winter

1. Eat your protein in order to get plenty of zinc.
Did you know that protein-rich foods are the best sources of zinc? Many turn to zinc lozenges when a cold hits, but taking in adequate zinc on a consistent basis is important for keeping the immune system strong. Protein-rich foods include meat, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds, beans and lentils, and dairy.

2. Optimize vitamin D levels.
Vitamin D plays an important role in keeping the immune system strong and may help protect against the development of autoimmune diseases like multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis. There are limited food sources of vitamin D, so luckily we can make vitamin D in our skin with sun exposure. The best food sources of vitamin D are egg yolks and fish.

Caffeine may raise levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which suppresses the immune system. If you’re a coffee-drinker, try substituting green tea for coffee. Green has less than half as much caffeine as coffee and is rich in antioxidants.

5. Manage your stress.
Like caffeine, stress elevates cortisol levels, which suppresses the immune system, making it harder for your body to fight infection and get rid of cells that have become abnormal. Incorporate yoga, meditation, time with family and friends, an inspiring book, or any other methods that help you to reduce stress and thus support your immune system.
Sister Anneline from the Knysna clinic has partnered with SANParks for years to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS. She gave a moving talk at the candlelight event held in Harkerville.

Nomthi Maxwele, HR Manager (left) was the first to be tested by sister Anneline on that day. ‘The day aims to encourage staff to go for voluntary counselling and testing (VCT)’ says Maxwele. Similar events are held in the Wilderness as well as Tsitsikamma areas of the Garden Route National Park.

Cheryl Wiley, HR officer for the Knysna section of the Garden Route

6 things to remember from the recent HR roadshow

1. The forestry houses belong to the Department of Public Works and the Department of Fisheries and Forests (DAFF) was a caretaker. SANParks is trying to get the houses transferred to SANParks.

2. You qualify for SnT when you go and work outside of your Park provided you use your own car.

3. There are contracts with doctors that can be used, you may find that Umvuzo does not have a contract with that doctor so they will not recognize your medical aid; you need to find out from HR and get a list.

4. Cases where some employees are not required to pay rental: If someone stays in a flat or house and they are not paying, please notify management.

5. Only when there is an agreement between employee and employer can an agreement be entered into for time off in exchange for overtime work.

6. What happens when both spouses are working for SANPARKS and are on group life and one passes away? The fund will pay the surviving partner; if you do not pay the premium then you will not be able to claim anything from the insurance.

Look out for a snippet on housing in the next issue.
GRNP Awards 2013

Themed ‘promoting a culture of excellence, the Regional Award ceremony was held on a fairly warm and sunny day in Tsitsikamma. The Afro Quartet’s enchanting melody captivated the audience. The Municipal Manager from Kou-Kamma (pictured 3rd from the top right) graced the event with his delegation. MCs for the day were Lesley-Anne Meyer and Andile Namntu (pictures top right). The General Manager, Jill-Bunding Venter (2nd picture right) gave a challenging talk on upholding a culture of excellence, in the workplace.

Winners of Awards are:

- **Research:** Professor Brian Allanson and Dr Albrecht Kotz
- **Leadership:** Frans Douglas and Lesley-Anne Meyer
- **Best customer service award:** Geneve Lupacchini
- **Best performing division:** Ranger Corps (Tsitsikamma West)
- **Camp of the year:** Tsitsikamma section
- **Ranger of the year:** Victor Cunningham, Jonathan Britton and Peter Roman
- **The General Manager’s Award:** Catherine Jantjies, Marionette Scholtz and Andile Namntu
GRNP People

GRNP Awards 2013
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