At the beginning of every new year, people remember the previous year’s achievements and failures and look forward to the promise of a new year, of a new beginning. With this in mind, we kicked the year off by asking some of our staff members in the region to complete the following sentence, “My 2019 wish for SANParks is…”

- that the employer and employees alike must continue acting with kindness towards each other and treating everyone with dignity and respect. We also need to keep on doing our jobs #ForTheLoveOfNature.
  - Yoliswa Matwa – Regional Marketing Officer (Port Elizabeth)

- that we implant the spirit of Ubuntu within SANParks. The Zulu proverb means “I am a person through other people. My humanity is tied to yours.”
  - Geneve Lupacchini – Personal Assistant to Garden Route National Park Manager (Knysna)

- Transparency, unity and good teamwork in all parks.
  - Donovan Antonie – Assistant Section Ranger (Mountain Zebra)

- to provide a wider variety of activities for tourists to get more visitors to the parks and keep them there for longer.
  - Siphesihle Mkhehleza – Tourism Student (Mountain Zebra)

- …for us all to have compassion towards one another and to understand that compassion for someone, you really want to help out. Let us all strive for that within SANParks.
  - Viola Solomons – Environmental Monitor Assisting HR Manager (Knysna)

- …to have an increase in visitor numbers. To achieve this, I would like to see that the field staff is maintained and encouraged in order to make the job a success. I also wish the team we still see most growth and expansion of facilities to attract more visitors to the park.
  - Njabulo Mathebula – Environmental Monitor (Mountain Zebra)

- …to have more job opportunities and also empower more youth.
  - Nondumiso Brudini – Hut Attendant (Addo)

- …to continue providing more educational initiatives such as the relocation of rhino to Chad last year. This will increase our ranger numbers and growth for now and years to come.
  - Roxanne Erusan – Regional Bio-technician (Addo)

- …to continue to educate and empower the local community members around the parks.
  - Mzukisi Dayile – General Worker (Addo)

- …to have more interventions of a similar nature to our Arial even further.
  - Andile Namntu – Business Development Manager (Knysna)

- …to have its own ranger school to improve the workers’ knowledge about animal behaviour and the environment.
  - Asanda Voto – Conservation Student (Mountain Zebra)

- …to realize a reduction in all forms of poaching.
  - Mpapatsi Matsi – Environmental Monitor (Mountain Zebra)

- …to have a wider variety of activities to get more visitors to the parks and keep them there for longer.
  - Eddy Mavanga – Human Resources Student (Mountain Zebra)

- …to provide a wide variety of activities for tourists to get more visitors to the parks and keep them there for longer.
  - Lithalethu Yafele – Environmental Monitor (Mountain Zebra)

- …to see an increase of local residents visiting our park. To educate more South Africans about the conservation of flora and fauna so that we decrease the high level of poaching and cutting of trees.
  - Eddy Mavanga – Human Resources Student (Mountain Zebra)
I trust that as most of you read this, you are revitalised after a good break over the December period. We hope many lasting memories were made during this time with friends and family, and even better so if they were made in one of our parks.

We hope you enjoy this edition of Frontier Times as much as we have had putting it together for you. Happy reading…

Compliments received

Addo Elephant National Park
• I would like to compliment Addo Elephant National Park for a great experience today. This started with the check in process this morning where an Honorary Ranger was assigned to assist the SANParks staff with high volumes, to security staff at gates and to the Castle Baron staff. All efficiently friendly! Facilities were clean and all working. A true South African example of how we should treat our tourists and South African visitors alike. You made me a proud South African visitor.
• Just spent three nights at Nyathi… as always Addo does not disappoint!
• Nyathi Rest camp is by far the best.

Karoo National Park
• The gate was handled efficiently and a tiny garden (in a drought) was immaculate and tidy and seemed as if someone was proud of it. The roads were clean and swept and soil erosion measures were in place and well maintained. Instructions were clear and warnings (tortoises under cars) were well posted. The parking area was clean and swept. Reception was clean and efficient and I saw staff doing extra duties that you would not expect of an admin appointment like cleaning their own desks, key boards, beautifying the reception area and arranging brochures on the tables. The little shop was well stocked and the teller took an active part in tiding shelves and re-stocking. She knew what she had in stock in an instant. The restaurant was efficient with a tasteful and wide selection of well prepared and presented foods. The tables were covered with dust sheets to protect and tidy the area before the dinner session. I saw the cleaner of the public toilets doing her job. EVEN HER BUCKET AND MOP WERE CLEAN AND ORDERLY ON ITS CARRIER TROLLEY! The chalet was clean and everything was in its place, even bug spray. I was actually very saddened by the good service because it means that it is possible to be done in a South African state owned enterprise. I think that my overall impression was this: Every single staff member was proud of their Park and it showed. It was as if they were sharing something personal and precious with you and were anxious that you too would see its value. If I were in charge, I would study why it is working so well at this camp and apply the solution everywhere else. In our diversified country with all the legislation that governs business and employment do not miss the value that specific sections of our community hold. We should find quality, support and reward it and then strive to raise standards. I would have given everyone at Karoo National Park a raise or reward tomorrow. Thank you to the staff and management.
• It was my first visit to Karoo National Park and I was very impressed with the Park. The rest camp was clean, everything was in order, the food was at the restaurant of high standard and our chalet was clean and neat. Thank you very much for a great experience. Please thank both the Park Manager AND the hard working staff on my behalf for a job well done. I’ll be back.

Mountain Zebra National Park
• We spent two nights in Mountain Zebra on our way back to Johannesburg. The Park is a little hidden gem! Accommodation was spotless and exactly what we wanted. The reception team and shop staff were phenomenal and a total pleasure to deal with. We will most certainly be back even if it means a special trip from Jozi. Well done, SANParks!

Message from Dries Engelbrecht, Regional General Manager

I get excited when I read snippets like those on pg 1, of our staff members’ hopes and wishes for SANParks. It means they have faith in our organisation and in one another as colleagues, and all this bodes well not just for us, but for our guests as well. It gives me hope that this will indeed be a wonderful year. To my staff - let us be mindful, though, that it takes a lot of hard work from many people’s sides to do what we do on a daily basis – a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

To our visitors – if you see something amiss in our parks, please use the correct channels to report it so we can improve/correct what needs fixing. In the same vein, recognise the hard work that goes on behind the scenes and lavish those praises too. As we all know, the nature of life is that most people find it easier to criticise than to praise. Remember, people feed of positive reinforcement. And the more we recognise good work, the happier they are to do more good, which hopefully starts a trend among colleagues.

Addo Elephant National Park

Karoo National Park

Mountain Zebra National Park

Canon/MyAddo moments competition

The SANParks Honorary Rangers in the Addo Region, together with Canon and Katz Camera Warehouse in Port Elizabeth will be hosting the Addo Moments competition from 1 February to 30 April.

Only photos taken within the confines of the Park during the December holidays may be entered. The competition only has one category, namely “My Addo Moment”, taken with either DSLR and point and shoot cameras or cellphones.

Exciting prizes are on offer! Further info to follow.

Good news for Knysna is that the Kranshoek trail has reopened after the 2017 fires. Megan Taplin, Area Manager for Knysna, walked the trail and shared this picture.
A total of 21 volunteers from Sedgefield joined 11 SANParks staff members (Scientists, Rangers and a People and Conservation officer from Wilderness) in an effort to collect seahorses in December – a day after the Swartvlei estuary was breached (opened).

The two-day project saw the volunteers filling in a research permit which indicated the exercise was part of an ongoing research project conducted by marine biologist, Clement Arendse and regional ecologist, Jess Hayes.

Clement says on the day of a breach, water levels in the estuary drop from about two metres down to one metre. A lot of the banks get exposed because they’re quite flat and seahorses then tend to hold on to whatever is around them instead of moving to deeper water. He says this is the ideal time to mobilise staff and volunteers to go out and look for them and take the live ones into deeper water.

The dead ones inform ongoing research and helps to give baseline information to start analysing the system and seahorses and how they respond to breaching and other events.

Visitors to the Tsitsikamma section of Garden Route National Park during the December holidays were welcomed at the newly completed gate!

If you are a keen birder in and around Mountain Zebra National Park, why not join the 2019 BirdLasser birding challenge? The challenge is already underway in the Park.

The BirdLasser App is fun for birders and good for birds. For both beginners and twitchers, BirdLasser is a fun way to record your sightings and share with friends, your community and contribute to conservation. Plot your sightings with GPS precision, instantly update your lifelist, compete in challenges and seamlessly share your data with conservation causes. So, while you have fun spotting and plotting birds you automatically play a part in helping the thing you love. Double win! The free app can be downloaded from the respective online app stores.

A total of 210 species were seen by participants last year by the time the competition ended on 31 December. Krista Oswald led the pack with 132. Willem Johannes Olivier followed closely with 122 species and Japie Claassen with 115. The information will be included by the SANParks Honorary Rangers in a bird list for the Park.

If there are birders who would like to join this challenge, please send Willem your email address that is linked to BirdLasser – Wjolivier@mymtnmail.co.za

Lift a cup for conservation!

Join the SANParks Honorary Rangers in the Addo Region for a Conservation Tea for the whole family. The event takes place on Saturday 9 February at 2PM at the Greenwood Primary School in Port Elizabeth.

One of the guest speakers, Angus Tanner from Wilderness Foundation Africa, will speak on the work done through the Forever Wild Rhino Protection Initiative, which supports organised protected areas and their dog units. Furthermore, Addo Elephants National Park’s conservation team will elaborate on the work that is currently being done in the Park as well as some of their future plans.

One of Addo’s anti-poaching dogs, Bullet, will also make a guest appearance at the tea. There will be fun lucky draws with exciting prizes up for grabs. Each attendee will receive a goodie bag and a spekboom plant to take home and plant. The tickets price is R120 per person or R1 500 per table of 10. Contact Nicky Bosman on 082 336 4471 or nbosman@mandela.ac.za to secure your seat.
This month we focus on our veritable leader in the Frontier Region - Dries Engelbrecht. The Regional General Manager was a kind, yet no-fluff-get-to-the-point interviewee. With great experience in South African National Parks, it is understandable how one can be intimidated by him. Even so, his humble demeanour and the odd joke quickly diminishes the tough exterior.

Tell us about your career history with SANParks?

My career with SANParks kicked off in 1977 when I was appointed as a Nature Conservation Student in Kruger National Park. I started working permanently in 1982 in my new position as Information Officer based in Pretoria.

After that I became a Section Ranger in the Wilderness Lakes area. I was then promoted to Park Manager at Langebaan National Park which is now West Coast National Park. From there I went to Karoo National Park, still as Park Manager, and then to Kalahari Gemsbok National Park which is now called Kgalagadi.

My next promotion was that of Regional General Manager for the Arid Region of SANParks, based in Upington, before I was transferred to head up the Frontier Region in 2013, now based here in Port Elizabeth.

You have worked in many different areas within SANParks – from Kruger to the coastal parks and then back inland. Do you perhaps have a favourite?

It’s difficult to compare because each national park has something special. I do think that the park that has that “true wilderness” feeling is Kgalagadi.

What made you get into conservation?

I actually grew up on a farm and that’s where my love for conservation started.

What part of the job do you enjoy the most?

There are so many different aspects to what I do and each of them brings something special to the table. The areas I enjoy more, though, are conservation, finance, legal, communications and marketing.

Are there any exciting new developments that visitors can look forward to in 2019?

There are quite a few I can think of. We hope to start with the introduction of big elephant bulls from the Tembe Elephant Park in KwaZulu-Natal to Addo’s Main Camp and Darlington sections. Still in Addo – plans are afoot to add more chalets to Main Camp. Then we are also opening the Leeuwriver 4x4 trail in Karoo National Park. We look forward to opening up the Soetkraal 4x4 trail in Tsitsikamma and also replacing the shop and restaurant that burnt down in Tsitsikamma. There is also the kiosk and visitor centre at the Big Tree in Tsitsikamma which will come online this year. And in Knysna, the zipline at Kranshoek.

Do you have any words of advice for the employees in the region?

I think that would be to never lose faith in SANParks. We’ve got excellent people working for us and we must just do our best and keep the flag flying high.

This month we’ve asked some of our staff to complete the following sentence, “My 2019 wish for SANParks is...” How would you finish that sentence, with particular reference to your staff.

I suppose it’s just meeting all our deadlines. Let us do all the things we know needs to be done and be proud of what we are doing.
A RIDE YOU AND
THE ELEPHANTS
WILL NEVER FORGET.

There are still a few slots available for the May 2019 Addo Elephant Cycle Charge.

Spend six days camping and riding through unspoiled wilderness areas in the company of lions, elephants, buffalo, rhino, etc. protected by armed rangers in the heart of Addo Elephant National Park.

Day 1
Check in at the Addo Main Camp lapa. Transfer to Darlington Dam and overnight at the dam.

Day 2
Ride anti-clockwise around the dam and its environs and overnight at the dam.

Day 3
Ride clockwise around the Middelplaas area and environs and overnight at the dam.

Day 4
Ride to Prince Harry’s Camp and back. Transfer to Addo. Overnight at Nyathi.

Day 5
Ride through central Nyathi. Overnight at Nyathi.

Day 6
Ride through the southern section of Nyathi to the Main Camp lapa. Lunch at the lapa. Depart.

Additional Day 6 option: Night game drive, braai and tented accommodation. There are regular rides, and they can be organised by arrangement for groups of 20 riders. Non-riding partners can be accommodated on the route. The route, on jeep tracks, is not suitable for beginners.

The cost is R7 650 per single rider and R11 850 per couple. The extra night costs R750 per person. These prices do not include VAT of 15%. The cost includes transfers within the Park, tented accommodation, all meals and refreshments.

For more information, contact Clive at: cagibson@global.co.za or Rob at: henwoodglass@iafrica.com

Garden Route
staff news

Knysna colleagues bid farewell to Suzanne Erasmus just before the December holidays. She is now officially on retirement. A farewell breakfast was organised for her by the finance team at Cruise Café at the Knysna Waterfront.

Meanwhile, Knysna Rangers bid farewell to their colleague, Jeff Sekatane, during the holidays. Jeff relocated back to Gauteng and we wish him all the best for the future. Pic: Jeff (2nd row, left) posing with colleagues.

Knysna Marine Section Ranger, Peter Roman is off to study at the South African Wildlife College for a few months this year. All the best Peter!

Congratulations to Mohlamatsane Mokhatla for obtaining a Doctorate, now making him Dr Mokhatla! His thesis was on frogs and climate change. We’ll have more for you on this in next month’s issue.

New appointments in Addo

Eurika van der Westhuizen has joined Addo’s Reception team from Groenkloof in Pretoria. Another addition to the Addo family recently was Sherne Williams, who can be found at Game Drives Reception. Sherne previously worked at Tsitsikamma National Park.

A warm welcome to both of you. We wish you well in this next chapter in your careers!