Addo Elephant National Park’s fight against rhino poaching was stepped up a notch in April when it took ownership of a Polaris all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and a specially-designed “rhino anti-poaching” trailer for use in the field. This was thanks to a financial injection from the MySchool MyVillage MyPlanet fundraising programme’s MyPlanet Rhino Fund (administered by the Endangered Wildlife Trust) for the ATV and the Rhino Action Group Effort (RAGE) and TW Steel’s donation of one of only four-of-its-kind trailers.

The ATV and trailer will significantly benefit AENP’s anti-poaching initiatives and will be deployed in the northernmost, Darlington section of the park.

Park Manager, Mzwandile Mjadu, said the monitoring of rhinos forms an integral component of any protection and management plan for the species. “ATV’s have proved to be indispensible workhorses in the Park, allowing rangers to access remote areas that are inaccessible to normal vehicles in order to ensure efficient area coverage,” said Mjadu.

The Polaris ATV replaces an older one, which was irreparable after four years of service and will once again allow field rangers to carry out their sensitive work in the protection of our endangered wildlife. “Patrols can now be more effectively done during the day and night, as well as internally in the main high risk areas. The vehicle will also be used for other conservation related activities and visible policing,” Mjadu said. It is capable of transporting two field rangers, armed with R1 rifles and luggage suitable for anti-poaching activities.

Meanwhile, the specially-designed trailer was developed with funds raised through an initiative by TW Steel, the global lifestyle brand ‘Big in Oversized Watches’. The self-sustaining trailer is equipped with a solar panel, providing power to three deep-cycle batteries, which in turn charge radios, maintaining communication lines. A freezer also runs off the system, benefitting personnel deployed over long periods of time. A panel on the trailer unfolds into a gas stove for cooking purposes. The space inside the trailer is used for storing food, water, bedding and tents, allowing four-man teams to be sustained for a period of up to ten days before needing to be re-supplied.

“The rhino trailer has made it possible for our rangers to be deployed to undisclosed locations in the section. The trailer has made it possible to be mobile and less predictable. Rangers can now deploy to high risk areas quickly and more effectively,” said Mjadu.

“Thanks to these generous donations, our rangers are now better equipped than ever to carry out South African National Parks’ mandate of protecting our natural assets, especially our rhino. We are thankful and humbled,” Mjadu concluded.

Addo Elephant National Park Environmental Monitors Elton Jansen and Hixebisi Toornaat. Front - Park Conservation Manager John Adendorff, Park Manager Mzwandile Mjadu and MyPlanet ambassador and fund member, Braam Malherbe with the sponsored ATV and rhino trailer.
Compliments received

Addo Elephant National Park
- “The new restaurant concession, Cattle Baron, is a huge improvement over the past restaurant. We self-cater but the food was so good that we ended up eating there three times in a week. The children’s ice cream ‘Make your own sundae’ is pure genius. Never saw it before and it was such a big hit. Great job!”
- “Fantastic restaurant staff in the Cattle Baron. Excellent service by very hard-working staff and food was great!”
- “In spite of some wet weather we had some exceptional game viewing and birding. Our highlights undoubtedly were the sightings of two cheetahs. We enjoyed plenty of other good experiences and it is obvious why Addo remains one of our favourite wildlife destinations. Please keep up the good work.”

Camdeboo National Park
- “The staff was very friendly and welcoming. The ablution, kitchen and camp sites were spotless. It was a very good experience.”

Karoo National Park
- “We never made a booking, we just arrived at the Park. However, at Reception we were treated well and our booking was done immediately.”
- “This Park works like clockwork. Everything is in perfect working order. All the staff members are very friendly. The roads are good. The swimming pool is crystal clear and clean. The caravan site and ablutions are 100%. We had a wonderful time.”
- “Ek wil net my tevredenheid uitspreek oor die algemene goeie diens wat ek by die Park ontvang het. Ek kan nie al die name onthou nie, maar dis vanaf ontvangs tot by ons staanplek. Ek wil egter my waardering uitspreek teenoor William vir sy hulpvaardigheid, vriendelikheid en hom gelukwens met sy spesiale poging met die ‘blink poets’ van die krane. Ek het dit nog nooit ervaar in my jare van kampering nie.”
- “The staff are all very friendly and helpful at the front desk.”
- “The campsite was clean and neat and tidy and staff was very friendly and helpful. Thank you for the hard work and sacrifices.”
- “The Karoo National Park shop was something different for a change, very refreshing.”
- “The dining experience was excellent and value for money. We loved every minute and the special treatment we received in the dining room.”

Mountain Zebra National Park
- “I would like to let you know what a wonderful staff member our bird guide Donovan is. He was helpful, knowledgeable, polite, friendly and made our bird watching walk an unforgettable experience. Thanks again!”
- “The service by the staff here is a quantum leap ahead of what we have been treated with in Kruger National Park on virtually every visit. What a pleasant surprise to find people who truly want to look after their visitors. Well done. Mountain Zebra – we will be back and are already telling all our friends!”
- “The man at the gate was thoroughly professional and made sure we had the information we needed.”
- “Dan was well informed, asked what we expected and wanted to see, gave great insights into the habits of the animals we saw. Most impressed that he found an aardwolf.”
- “A wonderful experience and very good value, I’ll be back.”

Mountain Zebra National Park field guide, Daniel van de Vyver, delivered excellent customer service to his guests during a cheetah tracking activity in February when he gave up his pair of hiking boots to a guest whose boots broke during the activity. Dan continued to guide the activity in his socks so that the guest could walk in comfort.

The guests, Pauline and Steve Smith, gave the compliment below in the visitors book:

“A fantastic birthday visit. Employee of the year to Dan who gave up his boots on the cheetah trekking when Steve’s disintegrated. Never buy HiTecs. We will be back with new boots.”

Welcome rain in the Karoo

Karoo National Park welcomed much-needed rain towards the end of March. From Monday 23 March to Thursday 26 March 44mm fell at Stolzhoek, while 56mm was measured at Grantham, resulting in some of the larger rivers flooding their banks.

One camera trap was submerged in the Doornhoek dam and had to be retrieved, but is once again operational.

Leeurivier, near Grantham, on the western boundary of the Park, was flowing. There was so much rain in the area that Meiringspoort, the gateway south of the Park towards Oudtshoorn/George had to be closed on the Wednesday.

And there was light!

It’s taken years, but the building at the main game viewing area gate in Addo Elephant National Park finally has electricity. Gate officials have been using torches there when dark all these years.

Pictured here is gate official, Johnson Tambo, proudly showing off the building’s new DB board. The installation was done by the Technical Department’s Bandile Klaas.
The restoration of Mountain Zebra National Park’s Doornhoek Guesthouse is expected to be completed within the next month or two. The building, a restored national monument, built in 1837, was gutted by a fire in September 2013. The cause is believed to have been an electrical short in the roof. The guesthouse will then need to be furnished, but in the meantime, the Park has tentatively re-opened bookings as from 1 October. However, this could be re-evaluated depending on the progress of the entire project.

Equipment handover from HR’s to Karoo Rangers

The SANParks Honorary Rangers - Karoo Region – recently handed over equipment to the value of about R15 000 to the rangers of Karoo National Park. This included two binoculars, a camera and snake catching equipment. Seen here showing off the items are Nico van der Walt (Park Manager), Raan Nel (Senior Section Ranger), Japie Claassen (HR Chairperson), Gavin Lottering (Ranger) and Monde Minnies (Ranger) in front.

Get to know your plants

Guests on the short walk between Karoo National Park’s rest camp and caravan site can now look out for the names of the plants along the trail. As the little trail got used more frequently, park officials thought they’d extend the marking of plants done at the Interpretive Centre’s garden to the trail. Now visitors can stop and learn the names of the plants they encounter while out and about.

Doornhoek guesthouse restoration

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Caught on camera (trap)!

Male lion at the Mountain View Gate on top of the mountain in Karoo National Park

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**Addo says NO to xenophobia**

As the country found itself in the grips of xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals recently, Addo Elephant National Park and Biodiversity Social Projects hosted an anti-xenophobia prayer at the Park’s lapa on 6 May.

The guest speaker was Linton Harmse, the Director of the Refugee Rights Centre at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, which provides free legal services and support to refugees and asylum seekers in the Eastern Cape. He gave an informative, hard-hitting talk to the audience who had gathered.

This was followed by an anti-xenophobia parade by the BSP field guards, which concluded the gathering.

**Bay FM waxes lyrical**

A Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism marketing initiative brought local radio station, Bay FM DJ’s Star Nyembezi and Trevor Flugel into Addo Elephant National Park for the day on 6 May. While Trevor’s a regular, it was Star’s first visit to the Park.

They spent the morning up at Zuurberg horse-riding (both for the first time), enjoying the phenomenal views from atop their stallions. Thereafter they explored Main Camp and all its attractions – the Interpretive Centre, the bird hide and underground hide and Park Shop, before heading out on a midday game drive. Sightings of ellies, buffalo, red hartebeest, kudu, zebra and lots more had Star Tweeting away, while Trevor snapped it all up before heading back home to upload them to Facebook, to the envy of all their followers and friends.

You’d better believe that the next time they were on air, they couldn’t stop talking about their experiences – from Trevor’s experience on Flip the horse to Star being within ten metres of elephants and so much more. SANParks Regional Communications Manager, Fayroush Ludick and Trevor then had a lively on-air discussion about all the park has to offer on fellow DJ, Roch-Le’s show on 8 May. Retelling his experiences once more, and informing the public of what Addo has to offer, will no doubt bring avid Bay FM listeners into the park in the near future!

Many thanks to Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism for the opportunity!

**A lesson in responsibility and appreciation**

In a bid to instil a sense of responsibility and appreciation in their children, staff at Addo Elephant National Park roped the youngsters into their working environments for an hour over the long weekend at the end of April.

Duty Manager Shireen Frank-Meek had the kids assisting Hospitality staff in collecting linen and refuse from the accommodation units. As overhead from one of the international guests, “We do that in London too. Children need to appreciate how hard their parents work”.

Judging from the pics, it looks as if the kids thoroughly enjoyed it!