Going into the festive season when we practice forgiveness, celebrate each other’s achievements and generally spend time with those whom we love, it is so fitting that at the same time we can celebrate the gift of values left for us by Tata Madiba. One can only really mourn the loss of someone, when you have claimed that person as your own. How exceptionally lucky we are as a people to be able to claim him as ours. “Son of our soil, heart of hearts, soul of our souls...”. Let us continue to celebrate his life and continue his legacy in forgiving and standing for equality. Rest in Peace, our hero.

While many of us are preparing to go on a well-deserved break, many others in our Tourism and Conservation departments are getting ready for the silly season, which is already upon us. All camps are already filling up, with visitors arriving at least a week earlier than the norm over the last few years. We have so many plans to keep them here longer as well and these include all our new activities like the Segway tours and stand up paddling. Do go and try it out with your families as well. This way we can all be authentic ambassadors for our park.

Allow me colleagues to first thank you for the hard work and achievement during 2012/13. Only as a united team can we reach the heights we have set for ourselves. For those of you who are planning travel, do so responsibly and arrive safely. Celebrate the lives of those around you and all the blessing which has been afforded us. To the team who is staying behind and running the show, we say WELL DONE! We know that you will continue to fly the GRNP flag very high.

Have a blessed festive season and all the best for us all for 2014.

Jill Bunding-Venter

General Manager: Garden Route National Park

Contribute!

Want to see your news in the GRNP bi-monthly? Send your news, pics, articles and announcements to:Nandi Mgwadiambta or any member of the editorial team: Shamley Titus & Melaney Barrath
The Garden Route National Park (GRNP) has embarked on an awareness campaign to proactively guide behaviour of visitors to the Park. In November, SANParks Area Managers Andre Riley and Mzwandile Mjadu met up stakeholders in their respective Areas (Knysna and Wilderness) to raise relevant checks and balances for the upcoming season. Law enforcement agencies and security companies working in the area formed part of the committee.

Travellers voted Peru’s Machu Piccchu as the world’s best tourist attraction. The Angkor came second and the Taj Mahal third. Fourth is the Petra World Heritage Site in Jordan, followed by the Bayan Temple in Cambodia. The Great Cathedral and Mosque in Spain also made it to the Top 6.

The Garden Route is one of the most visited tourist destinations in SA, according to Tourism SA, along with Table Mountain, the V&A Waterfront, Kirstenbosch, Cape of Good Hope, Cradle of Humankind, Cape Peninsula, Boulders Beach, Blyde River Canyon, the Kruger National Park, Lesedi Cultural Village and the Apartheid Museum.

New activities to be launched in the Tsitsikamma section includes ‘stand up paddling’. Adrenalin lovers will paddle through the calm black water in the Storms River, scrambling over rocks, swimming through deep and narrow gorges and jumping from cliff edges.

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Tata Madiba has won hearts and minds globally. He has put South Africa on the map!

As the President of the Republic of SA, he never forgot about the poor. At the 2002 Johannesburg Summit for Sustainable Development, he demanded world leaders ‘put the thirst of poor people first.’ This was at the time when freshwater covered less than 1% of the earth’s surface. Wetlands which include marshes and swamps comprised about 0,3%, lakes (0, 3%) and rivers 0,06%.

The Garden Route National Park team will follow the legacy you left them Tata, of striving more to connect to all people.

Lala ngxololo (rest in peace) Tata Madiba, Dlomo!

To Mandela’s family. May you find consolation in your time of grieving in knowledge that Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was a truly great man, who inspired the world through his enormous sacrifices to unite South Africa into a rainbow nation. I honour and salute you, and will strive to uphold his great principles in my life. Nick-Hanekom
Anglers are encouraged to act responsibly this season. The message from SANParks is: ‘Know your fishing regulations and abide by them. Limit your catch and not catch your maximum limit.’

Interesting research conducted in the Garden Route reveal fish species are on the decline. Kyle Smith, one of the GRNP scientists says there are ‘collapsed fish species as well as considered to be collapsed.

‘Collapsed species are those whose population numbers are dangerously low’ he points out. Fish in the considered ‘collapsed’ category means there simply isn’t enough of that species in our water. Examples of collapsed fish species include the dusky cob and the white steenbras.

Fish species ‘considered to be collapsed’ during the research is a reflection of not having enough information, but working on information indicating population numbers which have seriously declined. Such fish include the white musselcracker and the blacktail.

‘Over-exploited’ fish includes the Leervis/Garrick. Findings of the research point to seriously dwindling population numbers of this species.

The WWF SASSI initiative is a great awareness tool. It uses colour coding to indicate the best choice of fish for consumption. The colour green indicates the best sustainable choice whereas red points to the opposite. It is illegal to sell fish in the red category in SA either because of their protected recreational or ‘no sale’ species.

The Green List includes Abskan Salmon, Anchovy, Angelfish, Atlantic Mackerel, Calamari (Squad), Dorado, Gurnad, Hake, Herring, Horse Mackerel, Oysters and Mussels.

The Red List includes Black Musselcracker, Dageraad Cob/Kob, Red Steenbras, Red Stumpnose, Sharks, Tuna, White-edge rock-rod, Yellowbelly.
Holiday Fun for all

Tsitsikamma has an exciting Guides Programme, Richmond Gewers from Tsitsikamma gives us a sneak preview.

13 December: 11:00—12:00, Exhibition, Photos on sealife tent
Guided Mouth Trail: 10:00am, Meet at the restaurant, minimum of 4 people
15:00: DVD of Children’s animation programme

14 December: 11:00—12:00, Presentation, photos on sealife
19:00— Shallow Seas (All)

15 December: Church Service (in Afrikaans)
15 December: 08:45, Rock Pool Exploration in front of site 113
14:00–15:00 – Exhibition, Presentation, Photos on sealife
18:00–19:00 – Photos on sealife

17 December: 09:15, Rock pools in front of site 113 guided Loerie Trail
10:00– Meet at the restaurant, minimum of 4 people
18:00–19:00– Exhibition, Presentation, Photos on sealife

18 December & 19th : 09:45, Rock Pools in front of site 113. Come and explore what the Park has to offer (guided activities for local kids)
14:00–15:00 Exhibition, Presentation, Photos on sealife
19:00: Forests

20 December: 09:45, Rock Pools in front of site 113. Come and explore what the Park has to offer (guided activities for local kids)
14:00–15:00 Exhibition, Presentation, Photos on sealife
19:00: Deep Seas

22nd, 23th December: Same as the 20th December 2013

25th December, there is a Christmas Programme and the venue will be confirmed.

Water aerobics start on the 26th December, at 09:30 in the Rock Pool until the 10th January 2013

***Richmond is available on 042 281 1557 ext. 5413***
Marine Week campaign a success

About 50 Grade 10-12 pupils from Knysna Secondary School and High School took part in this year’s Marine Week campaign.

Marine Week was organised by Joclyn Fearon, senior environmental officer at Knysna Municipality, with the help of the Knysna Basin Project and SANParks. Joclyn said the campaign was a success in that it met all its objectives. ‘The teachers/educators who accompanied the learners were equally enthusiastic and have congratulated organisers for an educational and fulfilling event. ‘Getting out into the field provided the necessary practical evidence.’ said Arlene Groom, a teacher from Knysna High.

The three groups of pupils from the schools first visited the Knysna Basin Project’s laboratory and then went on to Bollard Bay in Leisure Isle. During their laboratory visit they were given a short lecture by the Project Director, Professor Brian Allanson, about the key physical and environmental features of the Estuary. Project volunteers Maureen Lake and Frances and Peter Smith then demonstrated specimens of many of the creatures that live on and under the Estuary shores. Highlights for pupils were looking at the organisms under a microscope and being able to touch a bloodworm, the sea horses and sea anemones.

At Bollard Bay the groups spent time in the three ‘biomes’ – the sand, rocks and eelgrass zones - learning how to find and identify the creatures they had seen in the laboratory in their natural habitats with the help of the volunteers and SANParks rangers led by Shamley Titus. They were able to see barnacles feeding – “I have learnt that barnacles have legs” reported one eager pupil, while another noticed he had learnt that true limpets have gills and false ones have lungs. Peter Smith

Six years and still counting, writes Shamley Titus

The Knysna sports day has become a gathering of most major organisations for six years now.

This sports day was initiated as a time for all the emergency and essential services staff to get together in a more relaxed manner, as they primarily see each other at a crime scene, boat or roadside accidents. SANParks took the time to join it again this year along with SAPS, Knysna Municipality, ER24, Knysna Provincial Hospital and local banks (ABSAs and Old Mutual).

Exciting sports for the day included ‘potato on spoon, the three legged race, rugby, soccer, volleyball, relay and others.’
Memories of celebrating Tata Madiba’s life

On Tata Madiba’s birthday, the 18 July 2013 the Touw River Working for Water project under the Biodiversity Social Projects (BSP) unit in the Garden Route National Park, spent their 67 minutes for Mandela Day providing extra hands at the Bethesda Hospice in George. The Bethesda Hospice is a Section 21 Company that provides medical care, social work services and relief for destitute communities, particularly in combating the social and economic impacts of HIV/AIDS. The Touw River Working for Water contractors and management staff wanted to give back to the community for Mandela Day and show their appreciation for the work done at Bethesda.

The contractors decided to raise money for 60 litres of paint and other cleaning materials to beautify the Child and Youth Care Centre. About 27 beneficiaries from the project, 7 contractors and 3 members of the management staff spent the day painting the walls, washing windows and cleaning the interior of the Centre. A special thanks to all the contractors, beneficiaries and staff involved, especially Nicholas Harmse, who coordinated the event and made things happen.

Nelson Mandela International Day is about individuals around the globe giving 67 minutes of their time to make a change in their community and thus, the world: some will take food to disadvantaged people; visit old age homes; read to children in an orphanage, thereby helping to make ubuntu a reality. Buntu Magobiyan

***We will miss you Tata and will continue to honour your birthday and give 67 minutes of that day to serve others, a legacy you left us.
Scientific researchers headed to the Touw/ Wilderness estuary on Saturday, the 07th of December. The multiple study will examine the surface of water, groundwater, estuaries and wetlands. SANParks recently requested citizens to take note of the study.

It is a reservation determination study aiming to protect the ecological protection of water resources and the provision of basic human needs especially in areas where people are not supplied directly from a formal water services delivery system and thus directly dependent on the resource as stipulated in Section 1 of the National Water Act.

The Water Act No36. of 1998, Section 3 requires the Reserve be determined for water resources, such as quantity, quality and reliability of water needed to sustain both human use and aquatic ecosystems, so economic development criteria can be met. The main rivers under study are the Gouritz and its major tributaries, the Buffels, Touws, Groot, Gamka, Olifants and Kammanassie rivers. The requirement for conducting an extensive study is to consider if water allocation and licensing can proceed.

It is not the first time an ecological reserve determination study is conducted in the Garden Route National Park. Estuaries that were previously subjected to this study include Swartvlei, Knysna and Bloukrans. These form part of 21 estuaries in the Gouritz Water Management Area.

The Touw/Wilderness system is the most complex of them all, according to a project document devised by private consultants and Government agencies. Work will include collecting a data set of various aspects of the system. This will be guided by the Department of Water Affairs (Resource Directed Measures for Protection of Water Resources).
Shamley Titus (ST) spoke to Khathutshelo Nelukalo (KN)

**Conservation**

**Interview with a Ranger**

How long have you been working for SANParks?

**KN:** 5 years and 2 months to be exact

Tell us about your highlights whilst in the GRNP?

**KN:** The beauty of the area, the lovely team that supported me so much (Andre, Billy and Shamley). Andre is a cool, motivated manager with great leadership qualities. Billy is reliable and has a great attitude towards work. Shamley was extremely helpful, he is a computer whizz and adds some of his great attributes to the team and I like his passion for kids.

Your lowlights?

**KN:** Working away from home quickly became draining. I was always thinking about my wife raising our young kids some 6 hours away from me (their dad).

Can you recall an interesting day at work?

**KN:** There were many, but it was quiet insightful to walk and cycle with Nico Oosthuizen recently from Diepwalle to the Fisantehoek Hut.

Your scariest moment on the job?

**KN:** I’m not afraid of anything! (We laugh)....I can recall an incident whilst patrolling at the Heads with Elsie Mahlangu and Nomabhevu Sigcu, we decided to stop 2 suspiciously looking fishermen. We requested for permits. One of them took out a knife and told us to stay away from his fish!

Tips for the next Senior Section Ranger

**KN:** It will help you to take personal attacks with a pinch of salt and focus on the job. At hand Spend most of your time trying to gain understanding.

Where will you be in the next 10 years

**KN:** I plan to go back to school and to complete a Master degree in Environmental Management in the next 5 years. I also think I’ll be ready to be a Director in the next 5 years as well. My wife provides great inspiration, she’s well-learned and seems to be growing in knowledge, skill and other areas as well. Whatever happens, I still want to be working in the environment sector.

***GRNP wishes KN all the best in his new job. We know he is up for the challenge!***

**How are ecosystems benefiting you?**

*How do you benefit from our rivers, forest, croplands, estuaries, grasslands, nearshore ocean, wetlands, woodlands, sandy beaches and coral reefs?*

*Khathutshelo Nelukalo would say ‘it is the sense of place’ that makes him smile... the good life enjoyed by those whose houses have a view of the famous Knysna estuary...*
Buffer zones are areas surrounding the Garden Route National Park (GRNP). Camera traps placed in the Knysna buffer zone reveal a lot of mammal presence in the forest, fynbos and riverine areas. There are 18 cameras in the field, 10 from SANParks and 8 from WWF.

‘The objective of the Project is to undertake a camera trap assessment of focal mammals species less than 1 kilogram. The cameras will determine the presence of species on private land linking up to Goudveld and the Diepwalle sections of the Garden Route National Park with the Knysna estuary’ says Maretha Alant, Environmental Planner for the GRNP. She adds that ‘cameras are placed on game trails or footpaths and fixed to trees at a height of approximately 50cm.’

The five species captured by the camera thus far include the blue duiker, honey badger which is listed in the Red Data List as a critically endangered species, the leopard, the caracal and the bushpig.

Other mammals expected to occur in the area under study, according to a joint report by the Fynbos Forum, WWF, Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE) and SANParks, include bushbuck, African Clawless Otter, the marsh mongoose, the South African large spotted genet, the chacma baboon, Cape grysbok, Cape grey mongoose, Cape porcupine, the velvet monkey and the African savannah elephant.
Tourism

New tourist attractions in Tsitsikamma

Untouched Adventures, a SANParks concessionaire has provided some of the most exciting water based adventure activities on the Stormsriver Mouth. The company currently holds an operating license granted by the Garden Route National Park. Untouched Adventures has used this opportunity to introduce various water based activities that visitors and guests to the park have enjoyed thoroughly. The guests have an opportunity to enjoy scuba diving and snorkelling up the mouth to the gorge. In addition there is also an opportunity to experience the Lilo. Imagine floating on top of a durable raft, while taking in the wonders of nature! Kneeling on the raft and rowing with hands is equally fun.

The latest invention is called Stand Up Paddling (SUP) which has become popular in a very short space of time. This is similar to the very popular kayaking which remains the most popular product on the Untouched Adventures list of offerings. However, the major difference is that instead of paddling sitting down the person does it in a standing position. Mr. Marthinus Van Der Westhuizen, the owner of Untouched Adventures, is always on the lookout for new ways to offer guests to the Stormsriver Rest camp more and improved activities. Andile Namntu

Segway through the forest

The Tsitsikamma area already has some of the most spectacular adventure activities in the country. The world renowned Bungy Jumping from the Bloukrans, the Canopy Tours in the indigenous forest as well as black water tubing to mention but a few. To add to these the newly introduced Segway Tours is fast becoming one of the most sought after activities. It is a new way of experiencing the spectacular Stormsriver area and the cycle into the indigenous forest up to the Tsitsikamma Big Tree is enjoyable to put it mildly.

Instead of the traditional cycling on a traditional bicycle the Segway Personal Transporter can now be used to navigate the forest. It is exceptionally easy and safe to use considering that it is a self-balancing two wheeled electric vehicle. It combines body movement to either move forward, backwards or to stop and the handle bar steers it in different directions.

The Garden Route National Park has granted the Tsitsikamma Segway Tours an operating permit to traverse SANParks land on segways. The company operates this for commercial purposes and in return pays a concession fee to SANParks. The Company also has to operate against strict conservation principles as contained in the permit. The excellent customer service provided by the owners, Andre and Michelle Kruger, and their guides makes the experience is exceptional. Andile Namntu
Goudveld tea room now operating

It is official. Visitors to the Wilderness section of the Park can now stop over for refreshments. A much needed facelift was given to this heritage precinct within strict guidelines of the South African National Heritage Council. After the conclusion of a thorough tender process, SANParks is proud to announce that Mr Garth Van Rheenen is the new operator of this historic tourism attraction.

He will operate the tearoom and also be in charge of the Pitt Street house as well as conducting the Bendigo Gold Mine Tours. Mr Van Rheenen's passion for this project comes from the fact that as a man born and bred in the area, his roots are firmly anchored in the Goudveld/Rheenendal area. The history of the Van Rheenen's in the area can be traced back to the discovery of gold in the 1830s as well as the woodcutters of the 1870s.

Garth plans to create a unique cultural heritage experience to provide guests with a taste of history as experienced by miners and woodcutters back in the 18th century. This includes keeping the rustic and historic conditions of the Goudveld Tea Room, which was used as the restaurant during those times.

The concessionaire will also ensure that the Pitt Street Accommodation continues to provide guests with the motel experience of those times. Bigger and long term plans include re-establishing part of the old miners' village. However, whilst these plans are put in place Mr Van Rheenen will for the next three years seek to continue serve guests and visitors to the Goudveld tearoom, the "Materroli or Mother Holy as it is affectionately known to many.

Plans to turn the Pitt Street house into sought-after accommodation are just as exciting as short-term ones to make the Goudveld Heritage Area part of the Rheenendal Rumble. This will link all activities and establishments in the area to allow visitors to experience the rich cultural heritage in the Garden Route National Park.
Lesley Doble writes: ‘Nothing happens on the ‘feedback’ button or on the click here button. However, I can say that Storms River is wonderful. I have been there three times now. The people in the shop are very friendly and so very helpful. The restaurant is fairly mediocre. Perhaps a few South African dishes like Bobotie could be added …? Where else do all the overseas visitors learn about our dishes? The Tsitsikamma Inn in Storms River serves samp – delicious!

We have stayed in Chalet no 21 twice now – impeccably clean – your staff are to be congratulated.

Best wishes and thank you. ’m already looking forward to next year’s visit.’

Outramps Crew wins a Kudu Award

Crew Outramps was selected as one of the finalists for the SANParks Kudu Awards under the category – Corporate Contribution: Non-Profit Making Institutions. SANParks was impressed by the CREW Outramps efforts to conserve and save rare and endangered wild flowers in the Southern Cape. They are part of the Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers (CREW) team. In 2012, the team discovered new species, monitored 63 special plants and 250 sites.

Di Turner has led her team of volunteers for the past 10 years now. They also walked away with a WESSA Regional Award in October this year, a month prior to the prestigious Kudus.

Avid hikers find interesting ways to profile fynbos

Many more people have joined our social media sites especially facebook. Recently the inspirational Director of Garden Route Walks started a ‘fynbos Friday’. Look out for postings of anything and everything exciting they might post on the SANParks GRNP facebook timeline.

https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/147847698591558/
Birthday Feature

Life begins at 50!

Marie Baard (right) recently turned 50, so did Thea Lucas (holding flowers in pic 2) and Mzwandile Mjadu (pic 3) earlier this year. Suzanne Erasmus (pic 4) also recently celebrated her birthday. Congratulations to you all, may you see many more! Happy birthday to all the November and December babies....

Wellness News

Test your IQ for HIV & AIDS

Adapted from Medicine Net.com

1. HIV/ AIDS is considered a cancerous disease? Yes or No
2. HIV is an abbreviation for?
3. Roughly how many people are living with HIV in South Africa?
4. No one knows how long it takes for HIV to cause AIDS? True or False?
5. HIV is believed to have originated from insects in Brazil? True or False?
6. HIV infection destroys a type of white blood cell in the body? True or False?
7. A viral load test determines if HIV has been transmitted to another person? True or False?
8. What is stage 3 of HIV infection referred to?
9. People can prevent HIV and AIDS by getting a vaccine? True or False?
Looking back at 2013

Ursula Joseph and Davy Antas are Marine Rangers in Wilderness. They were on duty on the day of the breaching of the Swartvlei estuary in October 2013.

The GRNP Business Strategic Review held in June 2013 was held with the Management Development Programme. It was a full house.

Ranger Corp from Tsitsikamma won the Best Performing Camp at the Regional Awards 2013

The GRNP staff went all out to serve on Mandela Day

Over 1,500 visitors to the GRNP during Parks Week and over 500 for Kids in Parks held in Knysna.
If only we had enough words that would reflect how much we appreciate your individual and collective contribution in effectively managing the national park system throughout the years. Particularly this year with the changes in leadership within the Division ... the experience was challenging yet empowering because you have made it possible for the smooth transition. What matters the most is that we have pulled through together as a team.

With special thoughts for you this season and hoping the joys of Christmas are followed each day of the year with hope, peace and happiness.

Merry Christmas and looking forward to a prosperous and fruitful New Year.

With Complements from:
Dr Songelwa