

Environment Quarterly

EzemVelo Ngenyanga Ntathu • Mbango wa kotara • Mupo nga Kotara



Focus on Wetlands
WoF displays bravery
during Kleinmond fires



forestry, fisheries
& the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**STAY
SAFE**

VACCINATE TO SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS

2022 environment CALENDAR



JANUARY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

FEBRUARY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

MARCH

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

APRIL

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

02 February
03 March
21 March
23 March
22 April

World Wetlands Day
World Wildlife Day
International Day of Forests
World Meteorological Day
Earth Day

MAY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JUNE

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

JULY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

AUGUST

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

14 May
22 May
05 June
08 June

World Migratory Bird Day
International Day for Biological Diversity
World Environment Day
World Oceans Day

17 June
18 July
31 July
September

Desertification and Drought Day
Nelson Mandela Day
World Ranger Day
National Harbour Month

SEPTEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

OCTOBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

NOVEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

16 September
19 September
07 -11 September
21 November

International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer
International Coastal Clean-up Day
South African National Parks Week
World Fisheries Day

Cover story

13 WoF displays bravery during Kleinmond fires

Features

4 Focus on wetlands: Berg Estuary bags international recognition

5 Poster: World Wetlands Day

6 Gqeberha learners partake in World Wetlands Day awareness

7 Infographic: Wetlands a call for action

8 Leapfrogging wetland data into the future

10 Focus on Migratory Birds

12 Poster: 14 May is World Migratory Bird Day

13 WoF displays bravery during Kleinmond fires

14 Minister visits schools in the Overberg Municipality

15 Deputy Minister Sotyú instills hope to primary school learners

16 Poster: Grow your own veggies!

17 Poster: Natural Forests



About the back cover image

The elephant in the room

South Africa's largest protected area, the Kruger National Park, has an elephant population of just under 20 000 according to a 2019 census. At the current growth rate, their numbers could reach 23 000 in the next five years if conditions are favourable. In addition, the 75 000 hectare Madikwe Game Reserve's founding population of 200 elephants in the early 1990s reached 1 200 just two years ago.

Image by SA Wallpaper Flare



To use this QR code conveniently you must have a smartphone equipped with a camera and a QR code reader/scanner application feature.





Dear Valued Stakeholder

Allow me to still say Happy New Year to you and your families! I do hope that you had the chance to enjoy some family time over the holidays. After what seemed like a never-ending

year, I hope we have all stepped into 2022 with a humbling perspective, but also a burning desire to make a difference in our communities.

2022 is already shaping up to be a busy year for the department. During the month of January, the Minister, Ms Barbara Creecy led the national Back to School Campaign in the Overberg Municipality while Deputy Minister, Ms Makhotso Sotyu visited a farm school in the Free State.

The Minister in the month of January also took some time to visit and commend 300 Working on Fire (Wof) firefighters who successfully extinguished fires that scorched over 5000 hectares of land in Kleinmond. We cover the story in this issue.

On 2 February, we celebrated World Wetlands Day. The theme this year, was 'Wetlands Action for People and Nature', drawing attention to

the many ways in which wetlands are important for people and the economy.

This year's World Wetlands Day celebrations took on added meaning for South Africa when the Berg Estuary was included in the list of World Heritage sites. The Berg Estuary is one of 290 estuaries in South Africa and is the second wetland of international importance to be declared in the country in two years. The World Wetlands Day celebrations are also unpacked in this issue of EQ.

In conclusion, I wish 2022 to be a successful, healthier and pandemic free year. I am certain that we can make this happen by taking all the necessary precautions and most importantly, getting vaccinated.

Albi Modise
Head of Communications & Advocacy

Meet our team

Head of Communications and Advocacy
Albi Modise

Editor-in-Chief
Portia Chipane

Editor
Erica Mathye

Editorial Team
Salome Tsoka

Tshegotatso Ndhlovu
Veronica Mahlaba
Zibuse Ndlovu

Design & Layout
Brian Chapole
Sibusisiwe Nxumalo
Titus Tlowana
Lebohang Makhubela

Cover Image
Siyabulela Malo

Contributors
Adwoa Awuah
Gaopalelwe Moroane
Nwabisa Timeni
Siyabulela Malo

Photography
BirdLife South Africa
eBird
Gaopalelwe Moroane

Max Laurell
Nwabisa Timeni
Unsplash
SA Wallpaper Flare
Siyabulela Malo

Find more information on: www.environment.gov.za or call 086 111 2468

**STAY
SAFE**

VACCINATE TO SAVE SOUTH AFRICA

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT CORONAVIRUS

**“MILLIONS ARE
BEING VACCINATED.
YOUR TURN IS COMING.”**

PAM WILLIAMS, SECRETARY



WHATSAPP SUPPORT
0600 123 456
EMERGENCY NUMBER
0800 029 999
sacoronavirus.co.za



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Berg Estuary bags international recognition

By Zibuse Ndlovu

This year's World Wetlands Day celebrations took on added meaning for South Africa when the Berg Estuary was included in the list of World Heritage Sites.

The Berg Estuary is one of 290 estuaries in South Africa and is the second wetland of international importance to be declared in the country in two years. In 2021, the Ingula Nature Reserve in the northern Drakensberg was declared the country's 27th Ramsar Site.

In her remarks, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Barbara Creecy hailed the declaration of South Africa's 28th Ramsar site as another milestone in conservation and protection of estuaries. "These unique environments are considered super ecosystems because of their contribution to the provision of water and because they provide habitats to a large variety of migratory birds, especially water birds," said Minister Creecy.

Situated at Velddrif, close to St Helena Bay where the Berg River flows into the sea, this estuary spans an area of 1 162 ha. The West Coast fishing village is situated in the Bergrivier Local Municipality.

The Berg River forms one of only four estuaries on the West Coast of southern Africa that always has water. This is in addition to the main estuarine channel which is a floodplain encompassing five major wetland types of importance to 250 species of waterbirds. These are ephemeral pans, commercial salt pans, riparian marshes, saltmarshes (which are the third largest on the cape coast) and intertidal mudflats. Although estuaries comprise less than 2% of South Africa's territory, these highly productive ecosystems contribute R4.2 billion per annum to the South African economy. They are focal points for development,

tourism and recreation, as well as important for supporting biodiversity, livelihoods and marine fisheries. The Berg Estuary, in particular, contributes about 60% of the estuarine habitat on the West Coast and is therefore extremely important in terms of the biodiversity, cultural and economic activities that it supports.

"As a signatory to the Ramsar Convention, South Africa remains committed to working towards the wise use of all wetlands through effective land use planning and the development of appropriate policies and legislation," said Minister Creecy.

World Wetlands Day is marked annually on 02 February commemorating the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands in 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea.



Above: Despite their significance to human life, wetlands are threatened nationally and globally. The 2018 National Biodiversity Assessment found that at least 79% of South Africa's wetland ecosystems are threatened.



About the contributor: Zibuse Ndlovu

Zibuse Ndlovu is the Assistant Director in the Communications and Advocacy Chief Directorate at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment.



VALUE • MANAGE • RESTORE • LOVE

WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2 FEBRUARY 2022

“Wetlands Action for People and Nature”

What is World Wetlands Day?

World Wetlands Day is celebrated each year on 2 February to raise awareness about wetlands. This day also marks the anniversary of the Convention on Wetlands, which was adopted as an international treaty in 1971.

Why celebrate World Wetlands Day?

Nearly 90% of the world’s wetlands have been degraded since the 1700s, and we are losing wetlands three times faster than forests. Yet, wetlands are critically important ecosystems that contribute to biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation, freshwater availability, world economies and more. It is urgent that we raise national and global awareness about wetlands in order to reverse their rapid loss and encourage actions to conserve and restore them.



 Find us:
Department of Forestry,
Fisheries and the Environment

 Follow us:
@EnvironmentZA

 Follow us:
EnvironmentZA

 Follow us:
@Department of Environmental Affairs

Call centre: +27 86 111 2468
www.dffe.gov.za



**forestry, fisheries
& the environment**

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Gqeberha learners partake in World Wetlands Day awareness

By Siyabulela Malo



Above: Swartkops Conservancy official, Ms Patricia Ntonye taught learners about the importance of protecting wetlands.



Above: KK Ncwana Primary School learners cleaning up in and around the wetland inside school premises.

The Department of Forestry Fisheries and the Environment in partnership with Swartkops Conservancy led a Wetlands Day outreach activity in KK Ncwana Primary School at Kwazakhele, Gqeberha on 5 February 2022.

Officials from the department discovered that the school has a wetland on the premises, and a request was issued by the school urging the department to come and host a wetlands awareness day at the school in Kwazakhele.

Swartkops Conservancy's Ms Patricia Ntonye led a wetlands outreach classroom workshop and emphasised the importance of conserving wetlands to the learners and teachers, and she encouraged everyone present to refrain from littering in and around the wetland as that would be risk to the other species that live in it.

The outside workshops were followed by a clean-up around the school and around the wetland on the school premises.

During his welcoming address, KK Ncwane Primary School Principal, Mr Vambe said, "We have adopted the wetland and we appreciate the awareness day hosted in our school today and I hope the department will work closely with us in protecting the wetland."

Learners, Lathitha Mde and Sibulele Mthethwa thanked the department and Swartkops Conservancy on behalf of KK Ncwane Primary School learners for an eye-opening session and volunteered to be the ambassadors of

protecting the current wetland in their school premises and promised to hold accountable every learner who will litter around the wetland.

World Wetlands Day is an international day that marks the acceptance of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar on Caspian City.

As a signatory to the Ramsar Convention, South Africa remains committed to working towards the wise use of all wetlands through effective land use planning and the development of appropriate policies and legislation, management actions, and public education to protect these natural purifiers of water resources.



Above: KK Ncwana Primary School after cleaning up and collecting litter around the school as part of celebrating World Wetlands Day.



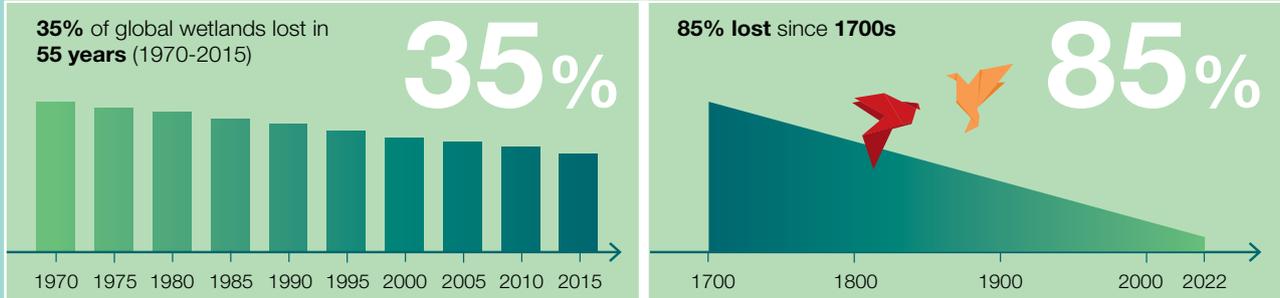
About the contributor: Siyabulela Malo

Mr Siyabulela Malo is a Media Relations & Editorial Services Intern in the Directorate : Communication Services in Cape Town. He holds a BA Communications Management Degree from the University of Fort Hare.

WETLANDS

A CALL FOR ACTION

NATURAL WETLANDS ARE DISAPPEARING THREE TIMES FASTER THAN FORESTS



WHAT LOSS OF WETLANDS MEANS

FOR PEOPLE

- Water scarcity
- Exposure to flooding and extreme weather events
- Lost livelihoods and well-being
- Food insecurity



FOR THE PLANET

- Biodiversity decline
- Increased carbon and methane emissions
- Loss of natural freshwater filtration



TAKE THREE ACTIONS

<p>VALUE WETLANDS</p> <p>BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS FRESH WATER STORES CARBON SINKS SOURCE OF LIVELIHOODS</p> 	<p>STOP DRAINING</p> <p>THE LIFE FROM WETLANDS USE WISELY</p> 	<p>REWET REFOREST RESTORE WETLANDS</p> 
---	--	---

SOME WETLANDS TO LOVE

<p>PEATLANDS</p> <p>Pastaza-Marañón Foreland Basin - Peru</p> 	<p>CORAL REEFS</p> <p>Great Barrier Reef - Australia</p> 	<p>MANGROVES</p> <p>Sundarbans - Bangladesh</p> 
<p>MARSHES</p> <p>Okavanga Delta - Botswana</p> 	<p>FLOOD PLAINS</p> <p>Pantanal - Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay</p> 	<p>ESTUARIES</p> <p>Severn Estuary - UK</p> 
<p>COASTLINES</p> <p>Amalfi Coast - Italy</p> 	<p>SWAMPS</p> <p>Everglades - USA</p> 	<p>BOGS</p> <p>Cuvette Centrale - Republic of Congo</p> 



forestry, fisheries & the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Leapfrogging wetland data into the future

By Adwoa Awuah

On 2 February, we celebrated World Wetlands Day. The theme in 2022 was 'Wetlands Action for People and Nature', drawing attention to the many ways in which **wetlands are important for people and the economy**.

Wetlands provide valuable ecosystem services to people. In addition to protecting property and infrastructure from storms and floods by diffusing fast-moving water, wetlands help retain water for longer by slowly releasing it downstream, while also helping to purify water. As we are facing the prospect of more erratic rainfall, greater risk of floods, and longer and more intense droughts, wetlands can provide us with a buffer against such extreme events.

Wetlands also trap sediment and debris, helping to store carbon and combat climate change. Recognising the many services that wetlands provide, it is easy to understand why they are an essential kind of ecological infrastructure and critical to South Africa's water security.

Given how important they are as ecological infrastructure, investments made to secure, manage and restore wetlands are likely to have significant, long-term returns in terms of water supply and quality. Knowing where wetland ecosystems are and what condition they are in is essential information to guide such investments. This is why the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) continues to collaborate with its partners to improve **the foundational wetland data that are needed to inform efforts to care for our wetlands**.

Wetland data are the lily pad from which we leap

Maps of the country's natural assets like wetlands give policymakers, decision-makers and managers powerful information to help them make decisions. The first National Wetlands Map was produced in 2006 and successive versions have made notable improvements to the science that informs policy and management of wetlands.

Wetland datasets have been used in countless different projects and initiatives. In the National Biodiversity Assessment, they are used to assess the status of wetland ecosystems. As a result, we know that wetlands make up only a small fraction of the country and are the most threatened of all ecosystems.

Many wetlands have already been converted to other land uses such as cultivation, urban development or mining. In substantial parts of the country, outright loss of wetlands is estimated to be more than 50% of the original wetland area. Wetlands are also impacted by activities in the wider catchment, like poor grazing management, disruption of water flow and pollutants that come from surrounding land uses.

While the best available data for wetlands is the National Wetland Map 5, released in 2019, there remain data gaps that need to be filled. The current wetlands map was developed by digitising satellite images, without capacity for review and field validation. The extent of wetlands is known to be under-represented – especially where wetlands have been converted, or where field validation and expert inputs are limited. A big leap was needed to further improve this important national base dataset.

Taking the leap

A new expanded mapping process was developed to help address the gaps. The desktop mapping component takes advantage of basic theory of where wetlands are found and why. It combines maps of the topography, hills and valleys, with sophisticated models of hydrology – how the water flows. This can show in great detail where water collects in the landscape. Thus, wetlands!

The objective of the wetland mapping work is to develop the next generation of wetland maps, classify wetland hydrogeomorphic unit types, and determine the condition of each wetland. The new mapping process is set up as a geographic information system GIS workflow

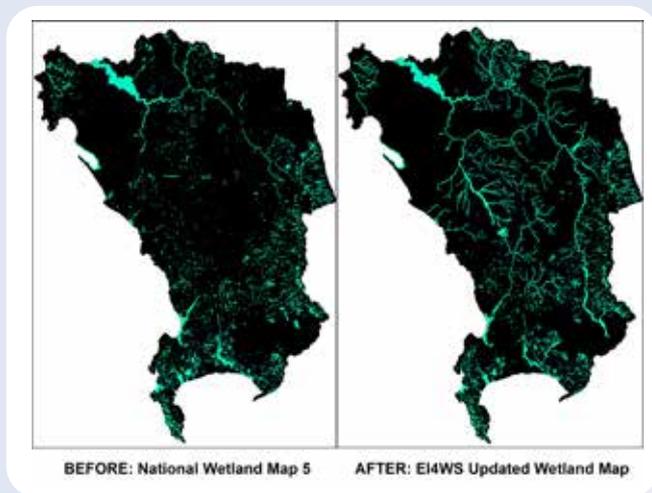


About the contributor: Adwoa Awuah

Ms Adwoa Awuah is a Freshwater Scientist for the Freshwater Biodiversity Programme within the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) in Cape Town. Her primary role includes coordinating the National Wetland Map and continuously contributing to maintaining and updating this foundational dataset.

that can even be run semi-automatically. Due to this, it is ready to be rolled-out systematically to other parts of the country. The mapping was designed to align strongly with the development of the new National Wetland Map 6 and to move beyond the first phase of initial desktop mapping to build in adequate time for data cleaning, specialist review and field validation.

The current mapping of pilot catchments is made possible through the Ecological Infrastructure for Water Security (EI4WS) project, funded by the Global Environmental Facility. The project is improving wetland maps in its two demonstration catchments – the Berg-Breede (Western Cape) and the Greater uMngeni (KwaZulu-Natal) – piloting methods that can then be applied nationally. The wetland maps for the demonstration areas are now the most detailed available so far. They map many wetlands that were previously unknown, resulting in a much larger wetland footprint than was previously recognised.



Above: Improved mapping of wetlands in Berg Catchment in the Western Cape has identified more than double (121%) the wetland extent than was previously known.

We learn as we leap

The work of mapping wetlands has previously been entirely outsourced. However, the EI4WS project provided the opportunity to build capacity and grow wetland experts for the future within government institutions. The SANBI Freshwater Biodiversity Programme coordinated the mapping work – supported by a national technical working group. It was recognised that pooled efforts from experts across the country would be needed to achieve a jointly-owned and seamless

wetlands map from catchment to national scale. The work is multidisciplinary and is greatly enriched by sustained engagement with partners, such as provincial authorities, to ensure that the end-products are inclusive, standardised and fit-for-purpose. Collectively, the team has expertise across GIS and wetland ecology, which allows them to complement and learn from each other.

Capacity development includes learning how to identify and classify wetlands within different landscapes and climatic conditions. Field validation experience is particularly critical in growing capacity to correctly map wetlands. Wetland mapping is slow, detailed work, yet the return on this investment is in building capacity to continue to with these efforts in the future. Undertaking this work during the COVID 19 pandemic also meant that interactive virtual workshop techniques were needed to engage across the team.



Above: Fieldtrips to validate wetland extent, wetland types and condition with various partners were valuable learning experiences.

Leapfrogging wetland data into the future

The methods for refining wetland extent and condition are a great stride in mapping wetland ecosystems. They will improve the next National Wetland Map so that it can be the foundation for meaningful assessment, planning and monitoring of wetland ecosystems. The way in which the work has been undertaken has leapfrogged the capacity available for wetland mapping in the future. As we celebrate World Wetlands Day, we are closer to having far more accurate and freely available maps to help guide strategic investment into the wetlands that are essential to people's lives and the economy.



Focus on Migratory Birds

By Salome Tsoka, Tshegofatso Ndhlovu, Veronica Mahlaba and Zibuse Ndlovu
Images by BirdLife South Africa, eBird, Max Laurell and Unsplash

Migrating birds know no boundaries and are arguably the most mobile creatures on Earth, undertaking epic journeys each year. More than 100 migratory bird species have been recorded in southern Africa, with 44 Palearctic migrant species (Europe, Asia, northern Africa and the northern and central parts of the Arabian Peninsula) and 35 Intra-African migrant species having been recorded in South Africa.

Grey Heron (*Ardea Cinerea*) Ingwelala



Above: Grey Heron with a long neck. Photo by Max Laurell

Distribution and Habitat

Grey Herons are commonly found in South Africa and it may be confused with the Black-Headed Heron (*Ardea melanocephala*). They are found in shallow bodies of water including coastal lagoons and estuaries.

Grey Heron Appearance

The main identifying characteristic is to look at the head. The Grey Heron has a black streak on its head whereas the Black-Headed Heron has a solid black head. Feathers are predominantly grey. Grey Herons are waders, they have long legs and can measure up to a metre in height. Average body weight is 1.5 kilogrammes.

Diet

Their preferred diet is aquatic creatures, feeding in shallow water or from the bank. The beak is large and pointed to assist its predatory behaviour. It is not restricted to fresh water only, known for being able to adapt and feed in shallow salt water if necessary. They also prefer fish, frogs, insects, beetles and small birds.

Breeding

Grey Herons breed in colonies, known as heronries. Breeding takes place in spring and incubation of a clutch of 3-5 eggs is approximately 25 days.

Behaviour

Both parents feed the chicks which fledge after two months. Heronries can be rather noisy with adults and chicks vocalising. They are known for their ability to stand motionless for extended periods when hunting.

Information sourced from: <https://ingwelala.co.za>

Lesser Flamingo



Above: The lesser flamingo is one of the species to which the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds applies. Photo by BirdLife South Africa.

The Lesser Flamingo is a bird that is scientifically known as *Phoeniconaias minor*, predominantly found in the southern region of Africa, as far south as South Africa and northwestern India. They are identifiable by their long, curved necks and thin pink legs. They are the smallest species of flamingo that can weigh from 1.2 to 2.7 kg. As small as it is, it has the largest number of population.

This species is expected to have a maximum lifespan of 32 years in the wild and 44 years in captivity.

This species is classified as Near Threatened by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) because the populations appear to be undergoing a moderately rapid decline. The lesser flamingo is one of the species to which the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) applies.

Lesser flamingos inhabit large alkaline or saline lakes, salt pans and estuaries throughout Africa. The alkaline or saline lakes have high levels of sodium and potassium salts as well as calcium and magnesium ions. They feed primarily on Spirulina, algae which grow only in very alkaline lakes. The algae has the photosynthetic pigments that give the birds their pink colour. Their deep bill is specialised for filtering tiny food items

They are typically found in large flocks. They fly and stay in a group to communicate information such as the locations of predators and food. Moving in large flocks reduces the risk of predation. The flock has a better chance of detecting approaching predators because numerous birds are scanning for threats. They are identifiable by their long, curved necks and thin pink legs. Their eyes are a golden colour with a purple eye-ringing

Information sourced from: <https://www.birdlife.org.za>

The African Darter Bird



Above: The African darter, also known as the snakebird or, slanghals in Afrikaans, is a water-bird that is common throughout sub-Saharan African. Photo by eBird

The Anhinga Rufa is a water bird of Sub-Saharan Africa commonly known by many as The African Darter Bird. Rarely found in fast moving rivers and lagoons, this bird prefers still bodies of freshwater surrounded by trees, banks and rocks where it can rest. This long necked bird is also called the snake bird because of the manner in which it swims with its neck above the water.

The African Darter feeds mainly on fish. Known for its ability to be stealthy in water, this bird uses its webbed feet to dive underwater before stabbing the fish with its bill. The African Darter also has a tendency of hanging motionless in the water, ambushing the fish then coming to the surface to toss it in the air and swallow it whole.

The bird can be identified with its black body with white flecks and streaks. Male species have a rusty neck and a white stripe running from the eye down the side of the head while the females and juveniles are muted and brown. Unlike many other waterbirds the feathers of the African darter do not contain any oil and are therefore not waterproof. Because of this, the bird is very light and its diving capabilities are enhanced.

The Yellow Billed Egret



Above: The Yellow Billed Egret taking flight. Photo by Unsplash

The Yellow Billed Egret also known as the Egretta intermedia or Geelbekwitreier in Afrikaans is of the heron species and is one of the many birds in South Africa and the rest of the world that are highly dependent on precious wetlands.

Habitat

The Yellow Billed Egret prefers habitats that have shallow water margins, flooded wetlands and wet grasslands. It tends to avoid mountainous regions, deserts and forests and prefers areas such as lakes, rivers, salt pans and estuaries. It is mostly found in sub-Saharan Africa, Australia and southeastern Asia in places like India and Japan. In South Africa, they can be found throughout the Eastern Cape, some parts of the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal.

Food

Much of its diet stems mostly from fish, frogs and aquatic insects which are found in these wetland type of areas.

Features

Although slightly similar to cranes, the Yellow Billed Egret is of the heron species as such their necks are longer than cranes and form an "S" shape when they fly. The bird has a distinct yellow bill and bicoloured legs (yellow thighs, black lower legs). Yellow Billed Egret's are usually solitary birds but they can sometimes be found in loose flocks of up to 20.

Information sourced from: <https://www.easterncapebirding.co.za/id-yellowbilledegret.html>
<http://www.birdmap.africa/docs/sabap1/068.pdf>

14 MAY IS WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY



SING, FLY, SOAR - LIKE A BIRD!



forestry, fisheries
& the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Wof displays bravery during Kleinmond fires

By Gaopalelwe Moroane

Images by Nwabisa Timeni and Siyabulela Malo

The department's Working on Fire (Wof) Programme was part of a team of over 300 firefighters who successfully extinguished fires that scorched over 5000 hectares of land in Kleinmond, in January 2022.

In an event held at the Arabella Hotel, in Kleinmond on 18 January 2022, the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Ms Barbara Creecy met with the Wof firefighters to thank them. "We salute your bravery, and we are very grateful for the lives and property you saved," she said.

The fire started in the first week of January and ravaged the Kleinmond area of the Overberg, destroying 5 417 hectares of vegetation.

The Wof team was key in bringing this fire under control using both air and ground resources. This included 169 firefighters and management, pilots and helicopter support staff, four fire trucks, two forestry support strike vehicles, two-strike units, three transport buses, four bakkies, and three aerial support vehicles to assist fire authorities in the Overberg (Kleinmond) with continuous fire suppression efforts.

WoF also dispatched four spotter planes and three Huey and one Black Hawk Helicopters, as well as a Fixed Wing Bomber to provide additional aerial firefighting capacity. The aerial resources flew for about 83 hours, and made 590 water drops, the equivalent of 1014 million litres of water, to help douse these fires.

Giving an account of the experience of putting out the fire in Kleinmond, WoF's firefighter, Ganya Thuto said, "This

was the most aggressive fire we have ever faced," he said. "We however followed the standing order which is to 'Fight fire aggressively but provide safety first'," he added.

Addressing the impact that Climate Change has on the prevalence of fires, Minister Creecy said, "South Africa is no different from any other country in that we have seen an increase in large disastrous fires in recent years. Climate change plays a role in the frequency and intensity of wildfires."

"Consequently, the need for, and relevance of, effective firefighting resources to manage Wildland Fires, is therefore now more important than before. Two other factors are important to reduce the risk of fire and ensure effective combatting once a fire breaks out: Firstly, the presence of vegetation such as pine trees and black wattle pose significant risks as they are extremely flammable and greatly exacerbate the intensity of wildfires. Once again, we urge private landowners to be cognizant of these risks and be responsible for the clearing of such highly flammable alien vegetation," she said.

"Secondly, as a department we are in the process of amending necessary legislation, such as the National Veld and Forest Fire Amendment Bill, to make it a requirement for municipalities, private landowners, and other stakeholders in wildfire risk areas to be members of local Fire Protection Associations. Such associations are essential in fighting wildfires and coordinating resources and the immediate response to such risks," she added.



About the contributor: Gaopalelwe Moroane

Ms Gaopalelwe Moroane is the Assistant Director in the Chief Directorate: Communications at the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, in Cape Town. She joined the department in 2012 as an intern after completing her studies at Rhodes University.

Minister visits schools in the Overberg Municipality

By Nwabisa Timeni



Above: Hawston Secondary School Principal, Lucille Poole encouraged Grade 12 learners on their first day back at school for the 2022 academic year.



Above: Minister Creecy motivated grade 12 learners on getting ready for the 2022 academic year.

The Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Ms Barbara Creecy visited schools in the Overberg Municipality, in the Western Cape on 19 January 2022.

Public schools in the Western Cape began their 2022 academic year on 19 January 2022 and with this, Minister Creecy visited schools to assess their readiness.

"This is a very important year so in order to help you get through this year, here are some tips that may help. To start with, form a study group with fellow students but in this group, ensure that you do not form a study group with your friends but rather with learners who you think are smarter and hardworking because those are the people who will carry you throughout your studies and support you. Furthermore, sit your parents down and ask them for time for your studies so that you can focus on them and with this, they won't necessarily give you as much chores do to around the house so that your time and energy can be directed towards your studies. And lastly, just do your best," said Minister Creecy.

Hawston Secondary School was one of the schools the Minister visited. The principal of Hawston Secondary School, Lucille Poole mentioned that the Grade 12 academic year was a crucial year for learners and that it paves the way for their future.

"The Grade 12 year is the most important academic year for any learner. It forms the stepping-stone to tertiary studies that a learner wants to pursue. It is therefore important that parents, learners, and teachers work together towards achieving targets that they have set for themselves for the year," said Poole.

"My message to the learners is one of hope, which is if you didn't do well today, use tomorrow to do better. That they should aspire to become better and achieve better

than what they have now and that hard work pays off. At the end of the day, they are the only ones who ultimately control their future in the goals they set for themselves," Poole emphasised.

"The Minister's visit was welcomed by the whole school, not only because the Minister is familiar with the parent community but also because she can relate to the circumstances of our learners. The Minister's message of the importance of education was received very well by the learners. The Minister still encouraged them to do better and let the learners know that it's not only their teachers who believe in them but the entire community at large. To sum it up, the Minister provided the learners with helpful tips on how to approach the challenges of their final year. Those tips were simple but effective ways in which learners can cope with a year that can be very strenuous at times," explained Poole.

Grade 12 learner from Hawston Secondary School, Griffon Damon said he will apply the tips that Minister Creecy had shared.

"I found that the tips that the Minister provided were helpful and will implement these tips. The fact that the Minister emphasised teamwork made a big impact on me. In addition, the Minister also stressed the importance of learners achieving success and that this success could uplift my community. The Minister spoke about us serving our community by doing things that will better our lives," said Damon.

"I would like to serve my community as a political leader and aim to study political science. To have a Minister at your school is a big honour and to have one that is associated with the community is even better. This tells me that politicians do care about us learners and schools and not just about our parents and teachers," explained Damon.

Deputy Minister Sotyú instils hope to primary school learners

By Tshegofatso Ndhlovu



Above: The learners of Summerville Primary Farm School were joyful after receiving their stationery from Deputy Minister Sotyú.



Above: Eco-furniture school desks were amongst some of the things that Deputy Minister Sotyú donated to the school.

Learners of Summerville Primary Farm School in Bullfontein, Free State were filled with joy after receiving stationery and school shoes from the Deputy Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Ms Makhotso Sotyú during her Green Back to School campaign visit to their school on 4 February 2022.

Deputy Minister Sotyú's visit to the school also saw her promote a culture of a healthy and conducive learning environment at the school through the promotion of effective waste management practices and the donation of colour-coded waste bins that will allow the learners to separate their waste at the source. She also donated over 100 eco-furniture school desks, gardening tools, vegetable seeds and sanitary towels.

The Green Back to School campaign aims to encourage learners to commit themselves to their schoolwork while creating awareness about environmental management and encourages learners to be environmental champions who tackle environmental challenges in their schools and communities at large.

Deputy Minister Sotyú encouraged the learners to remain hopeful and to keep pushing to reach their dreams even when the type of school and community that they come from makes it seem impossible.

"I urge each and every one of you to study hard and to dream big. Do not let your surroundings and those that came before you discourage you from reaching whatever it is that you dream of becoming. I myself, am a product of a farm school, I know exactly how it feels to stand where you are standing right now. So, believe me when I tell you that it is possible for you to become the next doctors, teachers and even presidents of this country," said Deputy Minister Sotyú.

Speaking on behalf of the teachers and the school governing body, the Principal of Summerville Primary Farm School, Mr Stora Malefane said that the Deputy Minister's visit to the school meant a lot to them and it showed them that the government cares about the less privileged schools.

"Farm schools and other schools that are in a state such as ours are often overlooked hence, the children that attend schools like this one are very quick to lose hope and think that there is no future for them when they are done with school. So, I know for a fact that today's visit will inspire these learners and for that I thank you very much," said Mr Malefane.

Following a challenging 2021 year where the COVID-19 pandemic marred and disrupted the school calendar, causing uncertainty and anxiety, the Green Back to School campaign is an effective way of lifting a portion of the stress away from the teachers and parents while also ensuring the readiness of schools.

Talking about the campaign and why they chose to visit a farm school, Deputy Minister Sotyú said farm schools are perfect because they allow the department to educate the children about sustainable living in the kind of environment that they live in.

"This campaign is one that has been active for a couple of years now so I knew that this year we had to do something different and this is where the idea of visiting farm schools came from. These types of schools are perfect because these learners are already exposed to things such as planting vegetables and taking care of trees and other plants so it makes it easier for us to teach them the importance of taking care of their environment while also shining a light on all the different environmental careers that they can take up," said Deputy Minister Sotyú.

Grow your own veggies!



What you need:



two or three 2-litre plastic cooldrink bottles

seeds or seedlings



rope



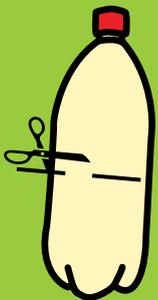
potting soil



stones

Use plastic bottles to make your own hanging garden, and have lovely fresh homegrown vegetables.

What you do:



1 Cut the bottoms off the plastic bottles.

2 Turn them upside down and thread the rope through the bottles tying knots to hold them in place.



3 Make sure you leave enough rope at the top to tie onto a tree or fence.

4 First place stones into the necks of the bottles, then fill the bottles with potting soil



5 Carefully tie your garden to a tree or fence.

6 Plant your seeds carefully.



7 Water the top bottle well, and you will see the water trickle down into the other bottles.

8 When planting and watering, follow the instructions on the seed packet.

9 Enjoy your very own homegrown veggies!



forestry, fisheries
& the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE PROTECTION OF NATURAL FORESTS AND PROTECTED TREES ON PRIVATE COASTAL PROPERTIES

WHAT IS NATURAL FOREST?

Many properties along this coast are covered by natural forest. Natural forest consists of closed canopy stands of indigenous trees, usually with shrub and herb layers below, and the height may vary from about 2 metres (scrub forest) or even lower in early pioneer or re-growth stages, to more than ten metres. Certain tree species only occur in forest (indicator tree species) and botanists can therefore distinguish forest from other woody vegetation. Such trees include white milkwood (*Sideroxylon inerme*).



Destruction of protected trees or natural forest without a license is a **criminal offense**



Whitemilkwood (*Sideroxylon inerme*) - occur on the whole Indian Ocean coast of SA



Red milkwood (*Mimusops caffra*) - mostly on the KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape coasts

License application forms for activities affecting protected trees or natural forests can be obtained from the website www.environment.gov.za and must be submitted to the nearest forestry regional office of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

NATURAL FOREST IS PROTECTED



Section 3 of the National Forests Act of 1998 determines that natural forests may not be destroyed. Section 7 of this Act also determines that trees in natural forest may not be cut, destroyed, pruned or damaged without a license. In terms of policy

such destruction is only allowed in exceptional circumstances such as strategic projects like bulk services and infrastructure (e.g. major roads, power lines, dams and pipelines) but not for residential development. The only other exceptions to this rule are:

- vested rights such as zoning certificates issued and properties registered at the Surveyor General before the year 2000, when the National Forests Act was enacted;
- primary property rights, such as the right to erect a dwelling for own use on a vacant property (number of units per specified area in semi-urban areas may have been determined in local zoning schemes).

These exceptions do not apply automatically due to complex land use and legal issues, and do not do away with the need to apply for a license, in which case the responsible forestry official may have to investigate these land issues first.

CERTAIN TREE SPECIES ARE PROTECTED

A list of 47 tree species have been declared as protected under the National Forests Act of 1998. No such trees may be cut without a license under Section 15 of this Act. Trees such as white or red milkwood are forest species that sometimes occur outside forest and are also listed as protected tree species.

Cutting or pruning also requires a license except if less than 25% of the crown is pruned, but not for the topping of such trees, and also not for new development or re-development (exemptions published in Government Gazette on 27 August 2007). No topping or excessive pruning for seaviews are allowed.



White milkwood (*Sideroxylon inerme*). This tree and the red milkwood (*Mimusops caffra*) are dominant keystone species on the coast and are protected because of their aesthetic and ecological role



forestry, fisheries
& the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

Ms Barbara Creecy
Private Bag 313
Pretoria, 0001
Environment House
473 Steve Biko Road
Arcadia Ext 6
Pretoria
Tel: (012) 399 8743

Deputy Minister Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

Ms Makhotsa Magdeline Soty
Private Bag X313
Pretoria, 0001
Environment House
473 Steve Biko Road
Arcadia Ext 6
Pretoria
Tel: (012) 399 8854

Director-General of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

Ms Nomfundo Tshabalala
Private Bag X447,
Pretoria, 0001
Environment House
473 Steve Biko Road
Arcadia Ext 6
Pretoria
Tel: (012) 399 9008

Call Centre: 086 111 2468 • callcentre@dffe.gov.za
Website: www.dffe.gov.za



PLEASE RECYCLE THIS PUBLICATION



**For any enquiries or contributions, please contact:
Ms Erica Mathye, Tel: 012 399 8976 email: EMathye@dffe.gov.za**