

NEWS FROM ADDO ELEPHANT NATIONAL PARK

Eastern Cape, South Africa

February/March 2009



About this newsletter

This is a general bimonthly newsletter about the latest happenings and developments in the Addo Elephant National Park. Please see contact details at the end for further enquiries

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OCCUPANCY & ACTIVITY FIGURES INCREASE DESPITE RECESSION



Photo: Johannes van Niekerk

During the month of January 2009, Addo Elephant National Park's occupancy rate of accommodation units and camping/caravan sites as well as the number of South African visitors increased despite the world-wide recession.

Occupancy rate for units increased overall by 1.7% compared to January 2008. This represents an increase of 0.6% in the Addo rest camp and 8.5% in Camp Matyholweni compared to January 2008. Narina Bush Camp showed a decrease in occupancy.

The number of South African visitors – both day and overnight visitors – increased by 3.7% compared to January 2008. The number of seats sold for Guided Game Drives increased by 3.2% while the income generated by Guided Horse Trails increased by 36% compared to January 2008.

There was a decrease of 8.8% in the number of international visitors to the Park in January 2009 when compared to the same month in the previous year. This decrease of mainly international day visitors, and mainly those traveling in tour groups, is largely due to the influence of the recession overseas.

THE RAINS HAVE COME

Park staff breathed a sigh of relief when the first drops of rain fell on 8 February 2009. The drops that fell, and continued to fall for the next week, signified an end to a very dry period – the driest in over 50 years, said local farmers in the Addo area - and relief to the plants and animals in the Park.



Over 70 mm of rain fell in the following week and soon after, the first signs of rejuvenation of vegetation appeared. Grass plains started to show a green flush, flowers such as the 'April fool' (*Haemanthus coccineus*) bloomed and the wildlife took advantage of the many pans of rainwater which collected in the bush.

A kudu cow leaves Rooidam, a pan which only fills up after rain

The annual rainfall for January to December 2008 was recorded as just over 220 mm in the Addo rest camp, almost half the long-term average annual rainfall of 427 mm. This dry period resulted in a decline in the quality of vegetation and many wildlife species lost condition as a result. Some species, such as vervet monkeys and baboons, extended their foraging ranges in their search for food. No animal deaths were attributed to the dry conditions.

Rainfall figures for this period in February varied over the extent of the Addo Elephant National Park, with the Woody Cape area and Zuurberg Mountain area receiving the highest amount of rainfall and the Darlington Dam area receiving a lower amount of rainfall than the Main Game Area.

SEAL PUPS RESCUED

Rough seas and gale force winds on 22 and 23 December left over 170 seal pups stranded on the coastline between Cannon Rocks and Woody Cape. The seal pups had been washed off Black Rocks, which is part of the Bird Island group.

The Cape fur seal colony on Black Rocks numbers around 4 000 seals and is the most easterly breeding colony of these seals in South Africa.



One of the rescued seal pups

Park rangers collected the exhausted seal pups on the beaches and transported them to the BayWorld Oceanarium in Port Elizabeth for treatment. After a few days, the seal pups were later brought back to the Woody Cape section of the Park where all the pups were tagged and weighed.

On 30 December, the seal pups were transported back to Black Rocks by means of the Park's boat. A happy reunion ensued with pups and adults calling loudly to each other as the boat approached Black Rocks. The majority of the seal pups were reunited with their mothers within 20 minutes of being released from the boat.

The rescue operation succeeded with assistance from SANParks' partners in the marine environment: BayWorld, the Ndlambe Municipality and SAMREC (SA Marine Rehabilitation and Education Centre).

Updated ! 2009 AENP DIARY Updated !

6-9 APRIL	HOLIDAY PROGRAMME FOR KIDS
2-3 MAY	ADDO ELEPHANT 100 MILER & 50 MILER TRAIL RUNS in Zuurberg Area
29 MAY	ADDO HONORARY RANGERS GOLF DAY in Port Elizabeth
26-28 JUNE	KIRKWOOD FESTIVAL & WILDLIFE AUCTION in Kirkwood
JUNE	SANPARKS KUDU AWARDS in Pretoria
SEPTEMBER	SA NATIONAL PARKS WEEK free entry for SA day visitors
23-25 OCTOBER	BIRDING WEEKEND
1 NOVEMBER	MONDI ADDO MOUNTAIN BIKE CHALLENGE in Zuurberg Area
EVERY DAY	MAIN GATE OPEN FROM 07H00 – 19H00 MATYHOLWENI GATE OPEN 07H00 – 16H00 GAME AREA GATE OPEN ACCORDING TO SEASON (please check times) SOUTHERN GATE OPEN ACCORDING TO SEASON (please check times) PICNIC SITE IN GAME AREA OPEN 08H00 – 17H00

ADDO'S MAIN GATE GETS A FACELIFT

The Main Entrance Gate to Addo Elephant National Park is undergoing a face lift which will provide greater comfort for visitors while processing their entry into the Park.



Construction work on the Main Gate

The construction work on the Main Gate is set to take place over the next two months. Visitors entering the Park at the Main Gate could experience a delay in access when one of the access lanes is closed from time-to-time due to construction activities.

Park management has appealed to visitors for cooperation and patience when encountering such delays, adding that visitors have the option of using the alternative entrance at the Matyholweni Gate, which is located just off the N2 highway near the town of Colchester.

A 16-kilometre access road allows visitors to travel from Matyholweni Gate to the Park's Main Game Area for wildlife viewing, with a further 20-kilometre drive to the Addo Main Camp to access the accommodation, activities and facilities located there.

ADDO'S SIZZLING CYCLISTS

Five Addo Elephant National Park staff members are on their way to becoming sizzling cyclists as part of a mountain biking development programme.

Joseph Khohlakala, Phillip Tom, Glen Brudini and Luyanda Warrington were selected from trials to compete in last year's Mondri Addo Mountain Bike Challenge. They each received a brand new mountain bike valued at R5 000 from CycloPro, cycling kit from Mondri and helmets from Leisure Cycle Tours & Adventures. Entry fees for the event as well as equipment such as puncture kits were also sponsored.

The four cyclists – two field rangers, a driver and a technical worker – competed in the gruelling 55km race which started at the Addo Polo Club before climbing the Park's Zuurberg Mountains. Joseph



Khohlakala had a run of bad luck when another competitor rode into him, causing him to fall off his bike and sustain injuries which saw him withdraw from the race. The injuries to his back, legs and arms took about two weeks to heal. The other three Park cyclists completed the race.

Brudini, Tom and Khohlakala then competed in the Herald Mountain Bike Challenge held on the 31st of January. This time the race course covered 65km and traversed part of the Park's Nyathi section, as well as the rugged Zuurberg Mountains. The three achieved 108th, 122nd and 126th positions respectively out of a field of 170 finishers. This meant they achieved times of 3 hours 39 minutes, 4 hours 19 minutes and 4 hours 22 minutes respectively.

LtoR: Joseph Khohlakala, Phillip Tom, Glen Brudini

"I was very happy to finish the race," said Joseph Khohlakala. "There was a good mood amongst the cyclists in the race and everyone was talking to each other and helping each other," he added.

Sandile Gunya, another field ranger at Addo Elephant National Park, also competed in both events on the 30km and 42km routes. Gunya, who is also captain of the Park's rugby team and competes in community provincial rugby tournaments, competed with one of the Park's patrol mountain bikes and was sponsored entrance fees.

"I enjoy mountain biking as it keeps me fit and healthy. I also enjoy the races where the cyclists all enjoy the route and everyone is happy," said Gunya.

The cyclists have already set their sights on the next mountain bike event which takes place in Uitenhage in March and are burning up the tracks and tar roads around Addo Elephant National Park as they practice to improve their times.

ENJOY LIFE ON THE 'WILD' SIDE AT THE ADDO GOLF DAY

The Honorary Rangers of the Addo Elephant National Park are organising their 4th annual golf day on 29 May 2009 at Humewood Golf Club in Port Elizabeth. All funds raised will assist towards the further improvement of facilities and conservation support work at the Addo Elephant National Park.

Funds raised by the Honorary Ranger's Golf Day will enable the Park to fund research as well as the upgrade of facilities for the benefit of all visitors to this wonderful conservation area. The funds which were raised over the past three years are currently being used to assist in building a new entrance gate at Addo's main camp.



Park Manager Norman Johnson in action at the 2008 Golf Day

Prizes of luxury accommodation at Nguni River Lodge and RiverBend Lodge, situated within the Addo Elephant National Park, and Hunters Country House near Plettenberg Bay are up for grabs. In keeping with the "Wild" theme of the golf day, a venison potjie will be served at the prize-giving.

Companies and individuals are invited to enter a 4-ball at R1000 per team and/or sponsor a tee or green for slightly less. Here is your opportunity to associate your company (or yourself) with the conservation efforts of the Addo Elephant National Park. As always, donations of prizes are also very welcome.

For further information please contact Nicky Bosman at nbosman@nmmu.ac.za or by phone on 0823364471.

NOMINATIONS for the KUDU AWARDS NOW OPEN

The fifth annual SANParks Kudu Awards will take place in June 2009 to celebrate the contributions and efforts of external stakeholders in making South African National Parks the custodian of choice for the national parks system in South Africa



The Categories for nominations are:

- **Corporate Contribution to Conservation Award**
- **Environmental Media Contribution to Conservation**
 - **Community Contribution to Conservation**
- **Environmental Education/Capacity Building Award**

Find out more here:

http://www.sanparks.org/about/news/2009/february/kudu_awards.php

News from South African National Parks...

Book Now for a Karoo Birding Weekend

The Karoo National Park's Birding Weekend, hosted by the Karoo Honorary Rangers, will take place from 17 to 19 April 2009. Join us for a light-hearted competition with the aim of having lots of fun! Discover the tranquillity and wide open spaces of the Great Karoo.

Karoo National Park is well known for being home to one of the largest Verraux's eagle breeding populations in the country and is home to over 280 bird species.

More birding info here:

<http://www.sanparks.org/groups/birders/accounts/default.php?p=Karoo>

PROGRAMME:

Friday

14h00 - 17h30 Registration

18h00 Welcome drink, Team forming, Information & Regulations
Birding starts after the evening function



Saturday
Early Birding
17:30 Hand in Competition lists
19:00 Dinner, prize giving, lucky draws

COST:

R200 p/p without accommodation
R350 p/p camping;
R650 p/p in chalets (sharing)
This includes registration fee and a dinner on Saturday evening

NB: A limited number of participants can be accommodated so early booking is essential!

BOOKING:

Bookings (and payment) not later than **10th April 2009**
with Maria at: **mtandela@telkomsa.net**
Telephone: 023 414 3615
Cell: 0730 199 353

Come along to Camdeboo's Dam Day

Why not put your creative skills and team work to the test and join us for Dam Day at the Camdeboo National Park?

SANParks sponsors the "Anything that Floats" competition where contestants create a home-built float and race each other on the Nqweba Dam for a whole lot of fun and some super prizes. Prizes are awarded for the "best recycled float", "most original float" and for "team spirit" as well as for first and second place.



2008 "Anything that Floats" contestants

The Dam Day Event takes place on Friday 27 and Saturday 28 March 2009 with the Anything that Floats competition being held on Saturday afternoon.

Dam Day festivities include a "Miss Dam Day" competition, "Mini-Survivor" Competition and the Kudu Nissan Mile Swim on the Dam. There will also be a beer tent, live music by DJ Ossewa and Third Degree, as well as food and craft stalls.

Dam Day takes place on and around the Nqweba Dam which covers about 1000 hectares in the Camdeboo National Park. The Park surrounds the historic town of Graaff-Reinet and boasts the world-renowned Valley of Desolation as well as conserving species such as buffalo, Cape mountain zebra, eland, black wildebeest and springbok.

For more information about the Dam Day festival, visit <http://damday.netapes.net>

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