June 2012 MONTHLY REPORT

Compliance Management

During the month of June, Roland and Stefan checked 64 recreational fishing and bait collecting permits. Of the 64 permits checked, 10 did not have a valid permit in their possession. There were no serious offences, however four fishermen that were encountered by Roland on the 16th did not have valid permits and were asked to pack up and leave.

The rangers completed their Peace Officers certificate during March, but are struggling to become appointed Fishery Control Officers or Honorary Marine Conservation Officers. They are however still trying, and are going through the motions of gathering all the necessary documents needed for the application.

Day-Trip Guided walk

During the month of June the rangers have been designing a short hiking trail that moves through different eco-systems of the Fransmanshoek peninsula and sheds some light on the rich ecology and archeology of the area.

On the 1st the rangers proposed the idea of a guided day trail at the management meeting. It was agreed that an exclusive guided day trail could bring in some extra funds to help with the running costs of the Conservancy, as well as promote the beauty and value of the area. It also gives the student rangers a chance to practice their guiding skills.

The trail will avoid any existing houses, while moving through some pristine Groot Brak Dune Strandveld thicket, over sand dunes and along the rocky shores of the Conservancy. The trail will also visit some of the areas where Rooikranz is being cleared, to highlight one of the most important management issues the Conservancy is dealing with. The trail also visits some of the archaeological sites that have recently become the focus of spin off projects from the Human Origins Project (Pinnacle Point Caves).

The trail is perfect for those who want to know more about the area while having a chance to experience it first hand. The trail will NOT be open to the public to walk unguided, a ranger will always accompany whoever is on the trail.

Schools or eco clubs are invited to book an outing with us at no charge, however members of the public will be asked a nominal fee for the guided experience. Please feel free to contact Roland should you wish to find out anymore information.
On the 5th of June it was reported to Roland that there was a juvenile Cape fur seal (*Arctocephalus pusillus*) on the beach between Boggomsbaai and Springerbaai, with a spine stuck in it's face. Usually, the rangers do not respond to call outs for injured seals as they can seriously injure a good intentioned Samaritan, however the person reporting the incident informed Roland that he was able to pin the seal down with a V-shaped stick. Based on this Marcel and Roland headed out with a pair of pliers to see if there was anything they could do for the seal.

The couple that contacted Roland was already at the seal when the rangers arrived. The seal was luckily very small but still seemed to be in good condition. The seal was immobilized with the V-shaped stick, while Roland moved in with the pair of pliers to pull out the spine. The seal then quickly moved off into the sea. On closer inspection the group saw that the sharp thing stuck in the seal was in fact a fish spine!

Sometimes seals often end up on the beaches with injuries that have been caused by their predators and even their prey. Predator-prey interactions are a result of the prey and predator evolving together and adapting to one another as part of their environment. So as much as the seal needs to develop speed and agility to capture fish, so fish have developed their own strategies to survive;

**Seal rescue**
schooling, camouflage, feeding behavior and sharp spines are just a few of such examples.

Seals are predators and prey. Occupying a niché where the evolution of agility, speed and social structure ensure the survival of their species by allowing them to catch fish and avoid predators such as *Carchardon carcharias*, the Great white shark.

The pliers Roland used, with the fish spine clasped in them, and the baby seal in the background

**Fix point photography sites**

On the 14th, the student rangers put up three new fixed point photography sites. The first is off the cross on Cape Vacca point, designed to capture long term change in the Misgunst Dune system. The other two were put in Cape Vacca Private Nature Reserve, one in the camp that houses the Zebra and the other across the road.

The goal of the other two sites was originally to look at the difference between the grazed camp with the Zebra in and the camp without any Zebra in. However, Kanon have since decided to remove the Zebra which should happen some time in July, therefore the fixed point photo site can now capture the veld’s response to the removal of the game.
Searching for Red Listed Plants

On the 3rd of June, Roland hosted Dayne De Wet (George Botanical Gardens) and Benjamin Walton (Cape Nature) on an exploratory cruise through the farm Ouland, with son of owner Jurie Muller, looking specifically for rare and red listed plants.

The group stopped at four different sites, mainly focusing on the renosterveld ridges that were still intact. A number of very interesting geophytes (Bulbs) were discovered, however flowering season is months away, so revisits to the site will be necessary.

Later in the month, CREW’s Garden Route branch of plants enthusiasts, the Outramps visited the area. The Outramps spend their weeks driving to different localities searching for rare, endemic or listed plants. They are well known in the area for their dedicated work in locating, identifying and recording these populations of rare and endangered plants. They are an extremely passionate group of ‘Aunties’ and a couple of ‘Uncles’ and have done excellent work throughout the Western Cape.

Roland decided to take them to the series of ravines and drainage lines below Johnsons Post, that lead down to the salt pan and Voelvlei. The Outramps enjoy a good walk, so stopping at David Johnsons house, they crossed the road and spent the next six hours exploring the ravines and vegetated ridges around the salt pan. Again a number of geophytes were discovered that will also have to be revisited during the flowering season, however the highlights of the day was surely the discovery of Haworthia turgida and Gasteria carinatus both are listed species and site sheets for each were filled out accordingly.
On the 21st Roland and Stefan met with Prof. Curtis Marean from The Institute of Human Origins (Arizona State University) at the Pinnacle Point Caves just outside of Mossel Bay. The student rangers had indicated to Curtis that they were keen to help out on some of the field work that was taking place in the broader area. Curtis was kind enough to first give Stefan and Roland the tour around the excavation that was taking place within the caves. Curtis with various teams have been returning to the caves for a number of years and have made some of the most significant discoveries relating to the origin of modern humans on the planet. He showed the rangers the main excavation profile which is probably close to 20m in length and explained how the lighter layers of soil (from being exposed to fire) indicated human occupancy of the cave. These layers now show the archaeologists the different times that people inhabited the caves and the amount of time they spent inside. The cave would have been abandoned during glacial periods due to the ocean retracting many kilometers. Through carbon and OSL (Optically Stimulated Luminescence) dating they have found that the caves were used periodically from 160 to 50 thousand years ago.

The actual purpose of the meeting was to see how Marcel and Stefan could assist Simen Oestmo in his mapping and data collection of the prehistoric land surfaces that can be found around Nautilus Bay and in the Misgunst Dune System. On the 22nd Stefan accompanied Simen Oestmo, Benjamin Schoville and Zynobia Jacobs to an area in the dunes at Nautilus Bay. Simen set up a GPS that is accurate to the nearest centimeter and mapped out all the areas that had blown open and showed signs of Middle Stone Age artifacts. Benjamin meanwhile helped Zynobia measure the age of the soils that the artifacts are lying in. Zynobia is an OSL (Optically Stimulated Luminescence) dating expert and she measured
radioactivity of quarts grains in the soil to see how old the soils are. This is a very complicated process that Zynobia perfected herself. After she took samples Benjamin took her back to her car where she left to date another excavation in the area.

Benjamin, Simen and Stefan then completed observation sheets of possible excavation sites in the areas between Nautilus Bay and Dana Bay. They looked at the different stones tools lying on the ground, fossilized animal bones and how fine the stone tools where chipped and broken. It was a very interesting day for the ranger and he learnt a lot from the experts.

Voortrekkers 2012

On the 24th the Voortrekkers arrived for their annual survival camp at Vegkop. It seems due to the torrential downpours the previous year, the group this year was much smaller with only the diehards coming to the camp. During the days that they stayed at Vegkop the weather was really good with only the wind making the nights unpleasant.

As the Voortrekkers arrived Stefan and Roland explained to them more about the conservancy and how tides work. While the tide was still low they showed the kids what shellfish are edible and can be collected.

On the afternoon of the 25th Stefan and the Voortrekkers cleaned the beach from in front of the large Misgunst Dunes to Fonteintjies. They collected 16 bags of rubbish consisting mostly of plastic bottles and Styrofoam. After the rubbish collection Stefan took the kids on a short walk around Vegkop and showed them the stone tools and pottery whilst painting a picture of how the KhoiSan survived in the area.
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