

ECOSENSE

Internal Newsletter • Issue 63

40 YEARS OF WISDOM

After 40 years of service at CapeNature, Dr Ernst Baard is retiring. EcoSense was privileged to conduct a final interview with the man, known all around as a legend. We speak for everyone who knows him if we say it has been an absolute joy to work alongside such a dedicated leader whose legacy will remain long after he has left. His kind nature and calm demeanour has made him one of CapeNature's most beloved and well-respected Executive Directors. Thank you, Dr Baard, for the love and respect you have shown everyone who had the pleasure of working with you. Now, as you embark on this new journey, may you pursue and enjoy the things you love.

The love for all things *natural*

ES: When did you discover your love for nature?

EB: I owe my love for nature to my father who taught me so much about it. He encouraged me to read his paperback "cowboy books", and the way in which the author described the veld and natural landscapes in his books, made me visualize and appreciate nature and all living things and how we are connected.

I graduated with a Master's degree in Science in 1982. In December of the same year, I married the love of my life and best friend, Stephany. I joined CapeNature as Assistant Nature Conservation Scientist in January 1983, where my focus was research on reptiles and amphibians. I have a daughter and a son, who were blessed during the last three years with three lovely kids; my grandchildren."

In 1986, I commenced a research project on the biology and conservation of the geometric tortoise, one of the most endangered land tortoises in the world to this day, and in 1990, I finished my studies and graduated with a PhD degree from Stellenbosch University. I worked as research specialist scientist for CapeNature and was promoted to Scientific Manager of the Scientific Services Unit in Jonkershoek in 1997. During 1998 and 1999, I formed part of the planning and founding of CapeNature.

From the year 2000 until 2012, I was appointed Senior Manager of the Scientific Services Unit, and in this role I was involved in several research partnerships and also formed part of the founders for multilateral Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE), a project that brought together virtually all the institutions in the Western Cape that shared the same goal and vision of conserving biodiversity.

In 2013, I successfully applied for and was appointed as the Executive Director: Biodiversity Support until 2019, when the organisational redesign took place, I stepped across into my current position in Conservation Operations."

What the *future* holds

ES: What are you looking forward to doing after retirement?

EB: I am looking forward to spending time with my family, including my three beautiful grandchildren, my friends and more time in nature. I love making music, so I will be focusing on that also. I have a few scientific field work and writing projects in the pipeline just to keep mentally fit and sharp. As my way of giving back to the conservation sector, I would love to get involved in training and teaching people about nature conservation.



I OWE
MY LOVE
FOR
NATURE
TO MY
FATHER

At a farewell for Dr Beard, held on 28 June, old and new colleagues who had the privilege of working with him had the opportunity to say good-bye. Colleagues joined the CEO, Dr Razeena Omar and members of the Executive to share their cherished memories and took pictures with him for keepsake. These moments of reflection and appreciation undoubtedly made the occasion even more special. EcoSense was there to capture some of the moments.

Farewell ERNST



Dr Beard receives a photo album depicting his 40 years at CapeNature as well as personalised messages from various staff members from Coral Birss, Executive Director: Biodiversity Capabilities



Heartfelt speeches were made by a number of staff members, including (left) Nombuyiselo Somwahla and Princess Ntsomi at the farewell



Kim Gabriel (right) who served as Dr Beard's devoted secretary for the past 10 years with Dr Beard and his wife, Stephany



A final good-bye from Sheraaz Ismail, Executive Director: Eco-Tourism and Access, Dr Razeena Omar, CEO and Coral Birss, Executive Director: Biodiversity Capabilities to Ernst and his wife, Stephany



The past and the future – Dr Beard with Natalie Hayward who will be taking over as Executive Director: Conservation Operations



Felicia Petersen (middle) joins (from the left) Deon Rossouw, Johan Burger, Pierre de Villiers, Dr Beard, Steve Gildenhuys, Tinie vd Westhuizen and Patrick Shone



A trip down memory lane with Board members and Executive Management



Two peas in a pod – Dr Beard and a geometrical tortoise

Dr Beard's parting message to CapeNature staff:

After four decades of doing what I love and experiencing much success, it is with mixed feelings that I say farewell to CapeNature, my second home for so many years. I am filled with gratitude for so many opportunities that CapeNature provided me with, and I have been working with and alongside many special, talented and dedicated people in the entity.

I thank everyone who has added value to my life and career, including my wife, daughter and son and their families, and who have taught me so many things and brought moments of light to me; I will always cherish that. It is bittersweet to close the door on a long career, but I know that I am opening a new door to the next chapter of my life.

Thank you to everyone for the support, guidance and camaraderie over the years. I wish CapeNature, my colleagues in the Executive and the whole workforce continued success in achieving your vision and mission and I will be watching eagerly how CapeNature continues to lead conservation into the next decade.

On a personal note: please do not spend your life as if you have another one in the bank; look after yourself, make a difference to others and remember: people will not remember your achievements, they will remember how you made them feel. Good luck, thank you very much and God bless.



Notes

FROM THE
EDITOR



It is indeed remarkable how quickly time passes, and we find ourselves in the middle of the year. As we reflect on the past months, we are filled with a sense of pride and joy witnessing our colleagues in various landscapes engaging in activities that align with their passions and goals for CapeNature.

When the Editorial team put together this edition of EcoSense, there was one thing that we agreed on unanimously – the cover story. I think all of us can look up to Dr Baard and his phenomenal achievements spanning 40 years of working at CapeNature. His story is truly inspiring and although we are all sad to see him go, we wish him a rich and fulfilling retirement.

The privilege of being the editor of EcoSense is that I have a bird's eye view of all the remarkable achievements across the landscapes which are packaged and submitted as articles. Each story has a message of hope and I get so excited to share it entity-wide through this platform.

One of the notable endeavors has been the teaching of communities about biodiversity by establishing indigenous gardens at local schools. In a number of our projects, partnerships are key, and shining the light on succulent poaching and what is being done behind the scenes, is a typical example of where we all have to work together to conserve our natural heritage for generations to come.

This edition is jam-packed with articles which are testament to the commitment of our staff to environmental education, conservation, and natural heritage preservation. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you.

Happy reading!

Mimi



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Message

FROM THE CEO

The first quarter of the 2023-2024 financial year has passed rapidly, with all the hard work and commitment from all staff, for which I am very grateful. Thank you for taking initiative and going the extra mile for our entity. It is through the collective efforts of each team member that we can achieve our goals and reach new levels of success.

I commend the enthusiasm and energy that you bring to your work, and I encourage all staff to maintain that same level of commitment and positivity throughout the year.

Some highlights from Quarter One included the launch of our winter campaign, and the release of our Environmental Education and Friends book. The Cubs Club also rewarded its members for environmental projects completed. Furthermore the entity launched the Greening Initiative Project that assisted schools and communities to plan, develop and maintain indigenous gardens and green spaces.

We will be implementing exciting endeavors that require focus and dedication from all of us as we enter Quarter Two. I urge you to continue supporting the campaigns and initiatives that showcases our commitment to become an ethically grounded and sustainable entity, contributing towards biodiversity conservation with positive mindset, knowing that we have the capability to accomplish what we have set out to achieve. It is crucial that we support each other, fostering a collaborative environment where we can maximize our potential and overcome any challenges that may arise.

Together, we can accomplish great things.



Dr Razeena Omar

Razeena

UPCOMING EVENTS

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | 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 | | | | | | |

18 July • Mandela Day

31 July • World Ranger Day

August

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | 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 | | | |

1 August • MPA Day

1 – 30 August • Invasive Species campaign

21 August • Senior Citizen Day

31 August • World Traditional Medicine Day

September

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | 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 | |

1 September • National Arbor Week

1 – 30 September • #dontbetrashy drive
National Clean-Up Day & International Coastal CleanUp Day

2 September • International Vulture Awareness Day

23 – 29 September • Access Week

25 September • World Rivers Day

27 September • International Tourism Day

FROM EELS TO REDFINS

and EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

By: Dr Martine Jordaan, Fauna Ecologist, Biodiversity Capabilities

Protected Area Management Plans play a vital role in the work of CapeNature staff, providing guidance for management actions and monitoring the protected areas. Recently, freshwater fish surveys were conducted in the Cederberg and Limietberg Nature Reserve Complexes, with the active support of landscape staff, reserve managers, and field rangers. These surveys were led by fauna ecologist Dr Martine Jordaan.

A total of 22 sites across 15 rivers were sampled during the surveys. While the data is still being analysed, initial findings indicate that the fish fauna in the majority of these rivers is in good condition, with all expected species present. Multiple size classes of fish were observed for most species, indicating successful recruitment and the presence of viable populations. The preliminary results are encouraging and highlight the effectiveness of conservation efforts in maintaining healthy fish populations within the surveyed rivers. Further analysis of the data will provide additional insights into the overall health and sustainability of freshwater ecosystems in the surveyed areas.

This may at first glance appear to be good news, but the situation is very dire for most of the freshwater fish of the Cape Fold Ecoregion. This ecoregion,

which encompass the Western Cape and small sections of the Eastern and Northern Cape, is home to a very unique fish fauna characterised by high levels of endemism and very high numbers of threatened freshwater fish taxa. The main threats are loss of habitat and the impacts of predatory invasive fish. While nature reserves protect against impacts on habitat, the linear nature of rivers make them vulnerable to impacts originating outside the reserve boundaries. An example of this is invasive fish where the invasion source may be off reserve, but the impact felt in sensitive on-reserve areas. This is the case for the Endangered Giant redbfin which persists in isolated populations in the Krom and upper Riversonderend rivers but has been extirpated from the majority of its historical range in the rest of the Breede River system, mainly as a result of invasive fish.

In addition to generating information to support conservation interventions, the surveys also served as a training opportunity for landscape and reserve staff. Ecological staff from both the West and Central Landscape gained practical in field experience in the use of various sampling techniques, handling of fish to collect biological information and capturing and interpreting field data.



An adult Clariid sawfin about to be released back into the Matjies River (Photo: Lucky Seabi).



An enthusiastic Central Landscape team on the way to the Holstloot River.



Field staff moving fish from a fyke net to a holding bin in order to record species identification and size measurements. (Photo: Lucky Seabi).



The Central Landscape team and a student volunteer measuring and counting redbfins in the upper Witte River.

WESTERN CAPE PEOPLE & PARKS PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

By: Fhulufhelo Tshikovihi: People & Parks Officer

The Western Cape People & Parks provincial elections took place in early May 2023, at Grootvadersbosch Nature Reserve. These elections are held every five years in accordance with national guidelines for People & Parks Steering Committee elections. The electoral process follows a hierarchical structure, starting from local/park, regional, provincial, and culminating at the national level.

At the provincial level, 16 members were elected from various CapeNature landscapes to participate in the elections. Mr. T. Sibiya and Mr. V. Nomandla from the National Community Task Team (NCTT) were deployed from KwaZulu-Natal to oversee the Western Cape elections. CapeNature SEOs (Stakeholder Engagement Officers) and SANParks Officials were also present to provide logistical and administrative support.

The first day of the elections was dedicated to allowing community members to acquaint themselves with one another and discuss the challenges they face within their respective landscapes and a way forward once the new structure was elected. On the second day, the steering committee members were elected, and the previous secretariat report was presented. The NCTT explained the election process, emphasising that all community members were eligible to vote and be voted for.

The provincial top five members were elected, including Mr. H. Bruiners as Chairperson, Mr. S. Mpemba as Deputy Chairperson, Mr. N. Theodore as Secretary, Mr. C. Snell as Deputy Secretary, and Ms. Y. McKay as Treasurer. These top five elected members from the province will be invited to participate in the National People & Parks elections at the end of June 2023.



5 TOP

The elected provincial top 5, outgoing provincial secretary, NCTT members and CapeNature officials.



The elected provincial top 5 joined by the NCTT together with CapeNature & SANParks officials.

LANDSCAPE EAST HOSTED A CITY NATURE CHALLENGE 2023 EVENT

By: Thabiso Mokoena • Stakeholder Engagement Officer Conservation Operations

Landscape East recently organised an exciting event at the Outeniqua Nature Reserve as part of the City Nature Challenge 2023 initiatives. The event welcomed 22 participants from the Thembaletu CADETs, and it was a truly unforgettable experience. The participants had the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the reserve, exploring its natural beauty and capturing the remarkable biodiversity using their cameras.

The City Nature Challenge (CNC) is an exceptional citizen science initiative that encourages people from diverse backgrounds to actively contribute to scientific research and conservation efforts. By involving communities in projects like the CNC, a stronger connection between people and their environment is fostered. The participation of the Thembaletu CADETs in this year's CNC was particularly meaningful, adding a special touch to the event.

The organisers were thrilled to have the Thembaletu CADETs take part in the City Nature Challenge. They hope that the knowledge and skills gained by the participants during the programme will continue to inspire and empower them in their future endeavors. Engaging communities in such initiatives is a powerful way to promote environmental awareness and create a positive impact on both individuals and the natural world.



CEAN SKIPPER DEVELOPMENT READINESS

By: Keith Spencer • Marine and Coast Specialist, Biodiversity Conservation Operations

The Task Team from Walker Bay has partnered with HR Talent Optimization to prepare skippers across the province with improved skills and long-term mentoring actions to assist aspiring skippers. The first development event successfully took place in Hermanus from 02 - 05 of May 2023.

A total of 15 skippers made enthusiastic commitments to various responsibilities over the two days. They were instrumental in launching the Storm Petrel and Seal vessels from the Benguela Cove slipway and the Hermanus harbour. All skippers had to pass a set of assessments which examined their capacity to conduct pre-launch vessel checks, backward trailer manoeuvres, boat operation, crew management, and standard boating skills. Despite a few apprehensions, all the skippers performed exceptionally well during the simulated emergency scenarios involving fire and man-overboard drills.

It was the first time all (or most) of the CapeNature skippers were gathered in the same place. The long-timers shared stories and the short-timers quickly became acquainted. It was not long before everyone shared ideas and eagerly learnt from each other, creating a relaxed but productive atmosphere.

At the end of the assessment, only three of the skippers had minor deficiencies in a few areas of competency. Their lack of experience was mostly the cause, and these shortfalls can be fixed with assistance from the experienced skippers, and a "can-do attitude".

Following the success of Phase 1 of the Ocean Readiness Programme (Mentoring & Skippering), Phase 2 will focus on aspiring or inexperienced skippers, ensuring they go through various drills and gain crucial water time while receiving mentoring and assistance from our experienced skippers. CapeNature will be focusing especially on the staff members who qualify to take part as a Deckhand and Skipper Support Crew for Phase 3. Ocean Readiness will also be linking this programme to WIOCOMPAS, and will move towards a comprehensive training, coaching and mentoring system.



WORKSHOP FOSTERS COLLABORATION

By: Anita Wheeler • Conservation Stewardship Specialist, Biodiversity Capabilities

In April a workshop on Protected Area Expansion (PAE) was held at Grootbos Private Nature Reserve in Landscape South. The workshop brought together various partners and stakeholders involved in PAE. The main objective of the workshop was to visually map the priorities and work areas related to protected area expansion for all stewardship partners in the landscape. The aim was to identify opportunities for aligning resources and stewardship efforts to support the implementation of Landscape South's protected area expansion plan.

CapeNature presented the latest biodiversity spatial planning layers, which serve as a guide for prioritisation in the Western Cape. Following this presentation, all partners and stakeholders shared their priorities and areas of focus within the landscape. Break-out groups were formed to facilitate discussions on future collaboration opportunities.

As a result of the workshop, a small working group was established to coordinate efforts for biodiversity conservation and stewardship in Landscape South. This group will drive forward the actions identified during the workshop. Similar stewardship protected area expansion workshops are planned for each of the other CapeNature landscapes, fostering collaboration and advancing conservation efforts across the Western Cape.



Stewardship partners in break-away groups develop ideas to collaborate PAE and biodiversity conservation efforts in Landscape South



MEDIA TRIP SPOTLIGHT ON THE ILLEGAL TRADE IN SUCCULENTS

CONSERVATION EXCELLENCE

is the future

By: Jacklyn Farmer • Conservation Officer, Conservation Operations

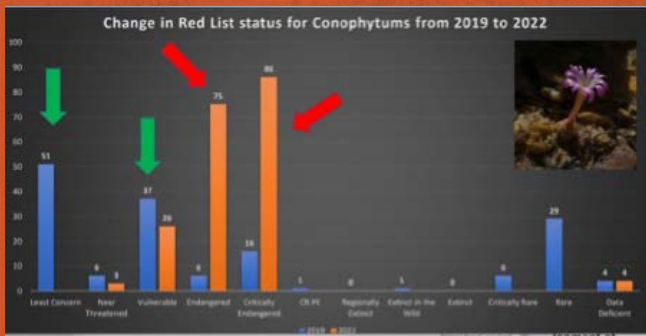
By: Petro Van Rhyn • General Manager: Advocacy

South Africa is a country rich in botanical diversity and many of the country's unique species, including leafy succulents, caudiciform succulents and bulbs, are prized for their alluring characteristics and rarity and are desired by specialist plant collectors around the world.

Significant social media buzz and an expressed interest in certain growth forms has resulted in a new marketplace for rare flora including many of southern Africa's unique plants. This explosive demand has given rise to large-scale collection and trade of wild plants from the country.

Although no qualitative data is available to understand why wild plants have been targeted so intensively, it is speculated that the trends are due largely to a limited supply of many species in cultivation within emerging markets. Several of the targeted species are long-lived (individuals surviving for more than 20- 50 years) and slow growing which means that it not easy or sometimes impossible to obtain large quantities and large specimens through artificial propagation. However, many species are easy to propagate from seed and/or cuttings and have been widely cultivated across the globe.

The concern is that trends appear to move readily, and once commercial growers can produce one species at scale, the demand can quickly shift to other not-yet-widely available species, with several plant groups thus remaining at risk from illegal wild collection. Local drivers also play a role in facilitating these activities. Of particular concern is the change in red list status for the Conophytum genus (a form of dwarf succulent) within the space of a few short years. This SANBI slide shows that there are now 86 species on the Critically Endangered list, compared to 16 in 2019.



CapeNature, in partnership with SANBI and WWF, recently hosted a successful media event on the 16th and 17th of May. The trip was aimed at highlighting the unique biodiversity of the Succulent Karoo and the current crisis in terms of illegal harvesting of succulents. It included a visit to a SANBI site to view the work being done to assist with the recovery and rescue of confiscated plants. The afternoon of the 16th involved several presentations by CapeNature specialists Paul Gildenhuys and Carl Brown, SANBI and WWF at the newly refurbished Vrolijkheid conference centre outlining the scale and impact of the illegal trade in succulents, in particular on Conophytums, and current actions, including the development of a national strategy and action plan which has been endorsed by MINMEC. After an early evening walk in the reserve, the media guests and their hosts enjoyed a dinner hosted by CapeNature and were also accommodated overnight at the reserve.

The following morning, the group visited a restoration site within the Rooiberg Breede River Conservancy as well as Saggy Stone on Amandalia farm where they learnt more about the value of the stewardship model, conservancy management and clearing of invasive alien vegetation.

The event was attended by representatives from various media outlets, including Cape Argus, Media24, Daily Maverick, Farmer's Weekly, Landbouweekblad and Voice of America. Attendees were extended the privilege to experience the beauty of succulents on a small hike around the reserve and had the opportunity to gain a stronger appreciation and connection to nature.

At the event, CapeNature provided an eye-opening overview of succulent poaching in the Western Cape and the illegal trade across South Africa. Thank you to all who presented at the briefing and made it a great success. To date the media coverage following the event garnered more than R1.5 million in Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE).

Congratulations to the Knersvlakte Conservancy on receiving their registration certificate! The establishment of the conservancy is a significant step in promoting nature-based agricultural conservation farming in the Matzikama and Namaqualand regions.

Covering an impressive 68 358 hectares, the Knersvlakte Conservancy was established by 12 landowners across 29 farms. It is geographically situated just north of the Knersvlakte Nature Reserve within the Matzikama landscape. The conservancy represents the Succulent Karoo, which encompasses various vegetation types that are currently poorly protected, such as Namaqualand Heuweltjeveld, Southern Namaqualand Quartzite Klipkoppe Shrubland, Namaqualand Klipkoppe Shrubland, and Knersvlakte Shale Vygjeveld.

The primary objective of the Knersvlakte Conservancy is to foster relationships and promote sustainable natural resource utilisation in the biodiversity hotspot of the succulent karoo, with a strong emphasis on the fauna and flora, as well as the protection of its valuable historical heritage.

The establishment of such conservancies plays a vital role in ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources, promoting biodiversity conservation, and maintaining the ecological balance of the region. It is a positive step towards creating a harmonious coexistence between agriculture, conservation, and the local community.



The Voice of America clip can be viewed [here](#).

FLORA

Unprecedented number of plants being poached

KRISTIN ENGEL
Reporter, CNN

OVER the past four years, an unprecedented increase in illegal succulent poaching has been observed within the Succulent Karoo region, with tens of thousands of rare and whimsical plants leaving South Africa through local plant poaching syndicates to supply traders and collectors overseas, largely to Asia.

In 2020, while the government, businesses and society scrambled to respond to Covid-19, the large-scale removal of wild and unique plants through illegal collection was beginning to gain momentum and threaten the country's biodiversity.

South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) spokesperson Nontsikelelo Mphahlele said this increase in global demand for the country's collectible "ornamental" plants over the past few years was because South Africa's rich botanical diversity of unique species, including leafy succulents, caudiciform succulents and bulbs, were prized in international markets for their alluring characteristics and rarity.

Many of the species targeted are restricted endemic species occurring at a single location, making them highly vulnerable to being poached to extinction.

"At present, the practice has been somewhat re-organised, with local South Africans now involved in the wide-scale removal of wild plants to supply middlemen, traders and col-



A POPULAR target in the illegal succulent trade are plants from the Conophytum genus, South African and Namibian succulent plants that belong to the family Aizoaceae. SANBI



SIGNS of Conophytum subterranean having been stolen.

lectors overseas. The scale of illegal collection and trade has increased dramatically over the past few years, most notably within the Succulent Karoo region, with severe impacts for many species and no tangible socio-economic benefits accruing to the country," Mphahlele said.

This week, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Cape Nature and SANBI spotlighted that there was a worrying number of organised crime syndicates operating in the illegal trade in South African succulent flora.

Paul Gildenhuys, a CapeNature enforcement specialist in biodiversity conservation, said the illegal succulent trade was able to boom with the introduction of local plant poaching syndicates in the Western Cape and Northern Cape after Covid-19 because international travel was restricted, these international traders and collectors were unable to travel to South Africa and grab these collectible plant species themselves.

Through social media and online websites, these international traders were able to connect with locals and pay them to dig up the succulents and then courier them to reach the international markets. Through this, a number of plant poaching syndicates erupted.

"The Succulent Karoo is experiencing an unprecedented onslaught by plant poachers supplying international markets. Some of South Africa's rare and endemic plant species are being poached to extinction," Gildenhuys said.

CapeNature biodiversity compliance officer Carl Brown said there were five tiers to an organised crime syndicate in this operation: first was the poacher which could be an individual or group (these were locals); second were the transporters and couriers third were the buyers and facilitators fourth were the exporters; and fifth was the foreign buyer.

Brown highlighted that even the

trafficking methods used by these syndicates were becoming organised.

"He referred to a specific case they picked up in which a worker at a FedEx facility thought it was odd when he noticed a variety of toy packages with the label 'made in China', being sent to China.

The worker flagged the packages and it was discovered that they contained poached succulents meant to be couriered from South Africa to buyers in China.

Mphahlele said: "In the past four years, confiscated material has increased annually by over 20%. By May 2023, there have been 650 different species and more than 1.2 million wild harvested plants seized. While law enforcement and reporting of the illegal harvesting is proving valuable, it is suspected that less than 25% of the trade is intercepted by enforcement officials, and it is likely that over 1.5 million plants have been removed from the wild in the past three years."

KEEPING IT WILD IN THE CEDERBERG

By: Monique Ruthenberg • Conservation Manager, Conservation Operations

Between 12 and 14 May 2023, CapeNature participated in the "Keeping it Wild in the Cederberg" get-together, along with the Cederberg Conservancy, Driehoek Guest Farm, and Love our Trails. This event brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds who all share a love and passion for the Cederberg region. Approximately 150 people attended the event, representing various groups such as local farmers, community members, researchers, scientists, conservationists, and outdoor enthusiasts. The gathering took place at Driehoek Farm, providing a beautiful setting for people to connect and share their knowledge and experiences related to the Cederberg.

Throughout the weekend, participants engaged in nature conversations around campfires, fostering a sense of community and camaraderie. Local farms sponsored Cederberg wines, craft beer, and kombucha, adding to the festive atmosphere and allowing everyone to enjoy local products. The event featured guest speakers from different fields, including conservationists, scientists, journalists, and subject matter experts in areas such as cosmology, entomology, botany, and freshwater biology. It was especially valuable to have local farmers and trail enthusiasts share their perspectives, as they play a vital role in the conservation and stewardship of the Cederberg.

Overall, the "Keeping it Wild in the Cederberg" get-together provided a platform for people with diverse interests and expertise to come together, learn from one another, and strengthen their commitment to the preservation and appreciation of the Cederberg region. On Saturday, 13 May 2023 over 100 volunteers embarked on various activities aimed at cleaning, maintenance and restoration. Activities included litter clean ups on selected trails, removal of remains of illegal fires, trail trimming, alien clearing, removal of stickers from signboards, removal of stone cairns and planting of cedar trees. Approximately 60 children from the local communities at Algeria, Wupperthal and farms engaged in environmental awareness activities in and around Driehoek. These activities included identifying leopard spoor and setting up camera traps; an interpretive walk and learning about the wonders of fynbos plants; exploring rocky outcrops, searching for and understanding the importance and uniqueness of insects, scorpions and snakes; and doing a mini SASS, identifying freshwater invertebrates.

Enthusiastic discussions ("conversations about conservation") lead to renewed commitment to the Keeping it Wild in the Cederberg principles, which include:

- 1 **Meaningful connection with nature.** We are part of nature and our access to these amazing wild areas should not negatively impact our natural environment.
- 2 **Prevention of pollution, including light pollution.** Cederberg has incredible night skies and this should be protected. Continued effort is required to reduce light pollution.
- 3 **Restoration efforts to ensure the persistence of the Cedar Trees of Cederberg.**
- 4 **Promoting responsible and sustainable tourism activities.** Ensuring all visitors are aware and practise only responsible activities, ensuring respect for nature (plants, animals) and people (other user groups).
- 5 **Appreciating and protecting our natural and cultural heritage.** These include archaeological sites, rock art sites, historic buildings as well as landscapes and trees.
- 6 **We can all do our part.** By volunteering we can enhance conservation efforts

The weekend proved that when Science, Conservation and Nature enthusiasts come together for a common goal, we can achieve a great many things.

WHEN SOMETHING LOOKS AND SMELLS FISHY, IT PROBABLY IS!

By: Pierre de Villiers • Senior Manager, Marine and Coasts Conservation Operations

In May CapeNature officials received information regarding a suspicious boat that had launched from the Kraaltjie slipway in Port Beaufort. Field rangers Brenton Booysen and Curtly Ambrose, stationed at Witsand, responded to the call.

They conducted an inspection and discovered a hidden compartment filled with fish. Two male suspects were apprehended with the assistance of the local South African Police Service (SAPS).

Various species of fish were seized as evidence for court proceedings. The confiscated species included 45 Red Roman (*Chrysolehus laticeps*), two Red Steenbras (*Petrus rupestris*), three Dageraad (*Chrysolephus cristiceps*), one Yellowbelly Rockcod (*Epinephelus marginatus*), and one Common Smooth-hound shark (*Mustelus mustelus*).

Following the seizure of the suspects' 6m ski-boat, the suspects were taken to Heidelberg SAPS, and released the next morning, pending their court appearance.

Overfishing is one of the greatest threats to our ocean's biodiversity. Global fish populations are rapidly decreasing due to high demand and unsustainable fishing practices. We urge everyone to report any suspicious behaviour to the authorities.



GET READY TO EXPLORE CAPE NATURE ON TIKTOK: UNVEILING OUR *Travel* ADVENTURES!

By: Courtney Davids • Promotions Officer, Marketing & Promotions

Courtney worked for the official South African TikTok partner during 2022 – the only partner licensed to sell TikTok for business in the country, as a client success manager. (Entravision 365 Digital)

It inspired the creation of CapeNature's TikTok account.

Q&A

What is TikTok?

TikTok is a creative entertainment platform. It allows individuals, content creators, and businesses to bring their brand to life using their unique talents and selling points, to get their brand message across using immersive video content. It's a platform that encourages participation through dance challenges, lip syncing battles, and creating trends that can be followed and enjoyed by other users. It helps build confidence and creates a space for anyone to go viral and have their voice heard by millions of people who share the same interest. It's diverse, it's fun, and ranks number one globally for ad equity, which means TikTok is the preferred ad hub compared to others.



What is CapeNature's TikTok account name and how can the organisation follow the account?

CapeNature can be searched for and followed using the @capenaturetravel username on TikTok.

What is CapeNature's TikTok plan?

To create brand awareness to a larger target audience group using short, creative video to showcase what the reserves have to offer and where reserves are located with the intention of boosting local and international bookings. TikTok has a very diverse audience, and the plan is to grow the account and use TikTok to drive conversion campaigns, i.e., book, follow us on other social media channels, visit our website – any action taken would be a step closer to achieving our goal.

What type of content is posted on CapeNature's account?

CapeNature's content is centred around travel in the Western Cape. Videos will be destination-featured content that positions our nature reserves in an enticing way – making viewers feel the need and want to visit our nature reserves.

How many brands have you managed when you worked for TikTok SA?

Wow, so many! My 'book of business' as they would call it, consisted of more than 120 accounts within the retail, financial,



beauty, and the technology industry. Popular brands would be the likes of Pepsi, the Cosmetix group, Sanlam, Cetaphil Skincare, Rimmel, various Toyota dealerships, LekkeSlaap accommodation listings, and so much more.

Your most memorable highlight working for TikTok SA?

It was challenging – being a Client Success Manager would mean having to understand how the TikTok campaign management dashboard works, predict how campaigns would run using statistics on the dashboard, and train clients to use the dashboard. If it's a big client who spends a certain budget on campaigns, I would provide full services, which includes campaign assistance from the get-go, the campaign set-up, campaign monitoring, providing TikTok guidelines and how-to documents, setting up ads with clients, and sending them regular feedback. This stands out for me most because it was something I never done before, and I really came out of my comfort zone. It was a great challenge and experience within my career.

Another key highlight would be attending a media event for SA celebrities and influencers, as a TikTok representative with the Essence South Africa brand.

Introducing the newly appointed Executive Director: Conservation Operations

GETTING TO KNOW

Natalie

In June the appointment of Natalie Hayward as the new Executive Director for Conservation Operations was announced, taking over from Dr Ernst Baard who is going on retirement. EcoSense sat down with Natalie to get to know her a little better.

Q: Tell us more about yourself

"My second name is Ann. I was born and bred in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town. I went to Fairmont High School and headed straight to Cape Peninsula University of Technology and thereafter Nelson Mandela University for a degree in Nature Conservation. I took a gap year after study, and worked in adventure sport, tourism and hospitality for about seven years across various parts of South Africa. My job ranged from dive master to tour guide to aspiring lodge manager. I had dreams of practicing conservation overseas and so took myself to the UK for two years trying to make some money and work in conservation and travel. I quickly realised how special the Western Cape is and when I returned to South Africa, I re-entered the world of conservation management with a fresh perspective."

Q: How do you relax?

"I love to spend time in the sea, whether snorkeling, surfing, swimming, stand up paddle surfing or learning to wing foil. I also love to trail run and mountain bike and explore new trails and new places. I like hiking but I always want to see more, so I tend to want to run or mountain bike. I also love to travel, read and spend time with my family and friends and taking time to recharge."

Q: What do you love about working for CapeNature?

"I love that we have the ability to nurture nature and contribute meaningfully to society. I live and breathe in the knowledge that our decisions to act, or not to act, can change the world we live in, whether its local or global."

Q: If you were granted presidency of the country for a day, what would you change?

"Wow... ok, I think I would place decisive action for a healthy, natural, biodiverse environment on the agenda, right at the top, with food security and human health."

Q: Describe yourself in three words.

"Find the Adventure"





with CapeNature

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Paul Goldenhuys

**ENFORCEMENT
SPECIALIST:
BIODIVERSITY
CONSERVATION**



What's the hardest and easiest part of your job?

Hardest part: Law enforcement is not about what you know but what you prove. Good knowledge of the applicable legislation is the cornerstone of any investigation and statement writing. The hardest part is to teach staff on how to apply and interpret the Ordinance and other relevant pieces of legislation and how to write proper statements.

Easiest part: To provide guidance and assistance to staff who is willing and interested in law enforcement.

What was your first job?

I started to work for CapeNature on 1 January 1983. Working for this entity was my first and only job.

What do you do for fun?

I enjoy going on scenic drives and fine dining.

Tell us something that's true that hardly anybody knows about you?

I like to listen to hard rock songs from bands like ACDC, Iron Maiden and Deep Purple.

A favorite holiday destination that you've been to?

Kruger National Park.

What are you watching at the moment on Netflix?

I prefer to watch crime scene investigations, sports and nature-based programs on DSTV. I do not have Netflix.

What's the best thing that's happened to you this year?

The birth of my first grandchild.

What are your new year's resolutions for 2023?

I am not one for new year's resolutions. I believe that you must do your best every day.

Sizwe Mathye

**SENIOR
MANAGER:
FINANCE**



What's the hardest and easiest part of your job?

Hardest part: Allocating enough time for all stakeholders to engage on all finance matters.

Easiest part: Regular efficient interactions on MS Teams.

What was your first job?

Trainee accountant.

What do you do for fun?

Watching Formula 1. But with Hamilton recently disappointing everyone, it's no longer competitive.

Tell us something that's true that hardly anybody knows about you?

I am a good soccer player but decided to become an accountant.

A favourite holiday destination that you've been to?

Bilene, Mozambique. Good scenery and delicious Portuguese food.

What are you watching at the moment on Netflix?

Nothing at the moment, Ozark was my No.1. Your Honor on Showmax.

What's the best thing that's happened to you this year?

From my probation I was made permanent.

What are your new year's resolutions for 2023?

I am into gym.

Welcome ON BOARD

*new
appointments*

ELNA PIETERSEN Field Ranger

EVERTON MAKAKELLA Intern

CAIRESTINE LOTTRING Field Ranger

JEROME KANNEMEYER
Conservation Officer (On Reserve)

THOMAS BARRY
Conservation Manager off Reserve

XAVIER RATHEPAUL
Landscape Administrator

ANRI THEUNIS Field Ranger

KYLE HENDRICKS
Graduate Intern: Human Resources

CAITLYN GEORGE
Graduate Intern: Eco-Tourism & Access

ADRIAN FORTUIN
Landscape Unit Manager

LIZANNE VAN EEDEN
Conservation Officer on Reserve

PATRICK MEYER
Ecological Co-Ordinator

THANDEKA MABENA
Conservation Officer off Reserve

NATALIE HAYWARD
Executive Director: Conservation Operations

GOOD BYE

*and
goodluck*

***You've been dependable,
supportive and inspiring
during your time with us.***

TARCIA EIMAN
Communication Officer

MSHUMAYELI NTSEPE
Intern

ATHENKOSI SOCUTSHANA
Intern

RAYMOND JULIES
Field Ranger

ALLETTA BURGER
Ecological Technician

***We wish you all the best
for your next chapter.***

BIRTHDAYS

CapeNature wishes you a great year ahead!

July

| | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|----|---------------------|----|---------------------|----|---------------------|
| 4 | Johnny Brander | 10 | Abraham Lottering | 19 | Soraya Majiet | 25 | Veronique September |
| 4 | Mmuso Lerutla | 10 | Marika Van Der Walt | 20 | Bongani Tshingana | 27 | Pieter Booysen |
| 5 | Nicole Breda | 13 | Willem Goemas | 21 | Ntombomntu Ntsomi | 27 | Nam Makwetu |
| 6 | Ludeeka Sass | 14 | Althea Somdyala | 22 | Felicia Petersen | 28 | Garth Roziers |
| 8 | John Minnaar | 15 | Koos Engelbrecht | 22 | Lesley-Ann Williams | 28 | Jamie Dippenaar |
| 8 | Marius Poole | 15 | Thembakazi Makaula | 23 | Andre Saptou | 28 | Lyndall Swartz |
| 8 | Hanli Hendricks | 16 | Darryn Field | 23 | Johan Burger | 29 | Thielshaat Adams |
| 9 | Natalie Baker | 17 | Katleho Mothae | 23 | Derick Damon | 29 | Lonwabo Mkosi |
| 9 | Lee-Xavier Schoonraad | 18 | Paul Gildenhuys | 24 | Nicholas Barry | 30 | Darryl Menigo |
| 10 | Malcolm Botha | 18 | Willem Wagenaar | 25 | Lwazi Vani | | |

August

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|----|---------------------|----|--------------------|----|--------------------|
| 1 | John Goliaths | 7 | Wayne Meyer | 17 | Dirk Dreyer | 24 | Nkosazana Nongxa |
| 1 | Anthony Erasmus | 7 | Marlene Van Onselen | 17 | Jonatha Zimri | 26 | Jacqueline Blaauw |
| 2 | Alan Wheeler | 7 | Jonathan Jasson | 18 | Keith Spencer | 26 | Kelly Sokoko |
| 2 | Siyabulela Mandlake | 9 | Kirschtwell Arendse | 18 | Thabiso Mokoena | 26 | Zenoebia Gamielien |
| 2 | Marietta Plaatjies | 10 | Evan Kortjé | 20 | Jan Josephs | 27 | Jaimé Preston |
| 2 | Imilda Ontong | 11 | Sizwe Mathye | 20 | Lucien Swartz | 28 | Patrick Meyer |
| 2 | Matome Shadung | 11 | Lucinda Witten | 20 | Ameera Mahomed | 28 | Wesley Farmer |
| 3 | Westley Oransie | 11 | John Rossouw | 21 | Jeanetta Claassens | 29 | Barend Le Roux |
| 5 | Onelisa Qwaka | 14 | Rodney Kissen | 21 | Sydvilley May | 31 | Amber Ing |
| 5 | Everton Makakella | 16 | Pierre De Villiers | 23 | Elmarie Hendricks | | |
| 6 | Waseem Parker | 16 | Wilfred Williams | 23 | Whilmien Geduld | | |
| 7 | Rowena Bosman | 16 | Carlo Van Tonder | 24 | Deon Hignett | | |

September

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|----|---------------------|----|------------------|----|------------------|
| 1 | Sibusiso Ngubane | 7 | Jerome Dowrie | 14 | Morris Floris | 24 | Loren Pavitt |
| 2 | Graham Lewis | 9 | Esethu Mxoli | 15 | Micheal Jennett | 26 | Nophiwe Nkqayi |
| 2 | Ruida Stanvliet | 9 | Sheldon Diedericks | 16 | Erna Muller | 27 | Sandile Mdoko |
| 3 | Jason Valentyn | 9 | Ramese Mathews | 17 | Newille Dynaard | 27 | Jo-Marie Fortuin |
| 3 | Anthea Oliphant | 9 | Zainab George | 18 | Valerie Jansen | 27 | Leonie Erasmus |
| 5 | Thulani Ndlovu | 10 | Chanel Hauvette | 19 | Geralda Adams | 27 | Imran Brey |
| 5 | Wentzel Hornimann | 11 | Ismat Adams | 20 | Thomas Horne | 27 | Danie Landman |
| 6 | Yasmina Domingo | 11 | Danielle Bowen | 21 | Rochelle Dickson | 28 | Brenton Matinka |
| 6 | Allistair Pietersen | 14 | Antoinette Veldtman | 22 | Yves Chesselet | 29 | Jean Du Plessis |
| 7 | Marx-Lenin Nagan | 14 | Anita Wheeler | 24 | Lucinda Theron | 30 | Anele Mdleleni |

IN THE PRESS

SWEET OUTENIQUA THRILLS

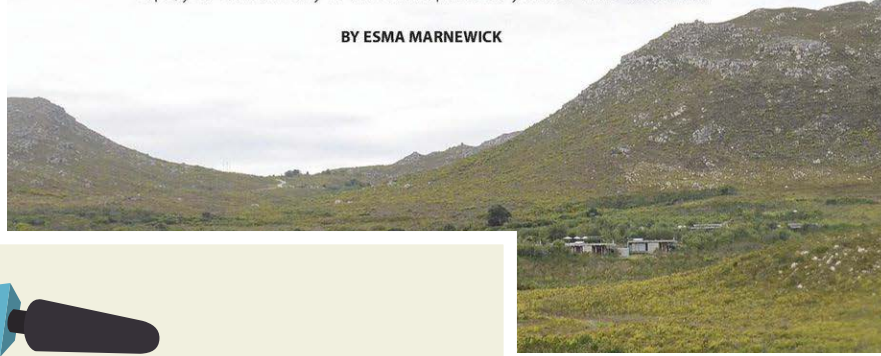
Zane Schmahl gives us the lowdown (or should that be highdown) on the running scene in the Garden Route city of George.



At home in the wild

Where does your soul find peace? Deep in the mountains, on a deserted beach, next to a river? In the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve in the Western Cape, you can have any of these wild places to yourself in no time at all.

BY ESMa MARNEWICK



STEP OUTSIDE / Challenging Treks

THE VALLEY OF THE RED GODS – CEDERBERG WILDERNESS AREA

It's time to explore part two of the Cape's three wilderness areas. Cederberg, a more parched landscape, is a must for any serious hiker.

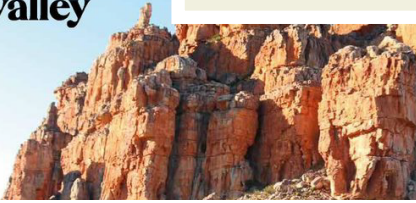
The Cederberg Wilderness Area is just 250km north of Cape Town but feels completely otherworldly. Temperatures in these parts hover between 30°C and 40°C in the summer, with rocks burnt an orange-red hue by the iron oxide that dominates the landscape. Your destination in these parts is an iconic rock formation, that happens to be on our cover: Wollberg Arch.

To stay over at the Wollberg Arch, you will need to pre-book permits through CapeNature as well as check in at the Dwaarsvler farm at the beginning of the hike (the farm's office is just a few kilometres before the start).

There's no water on the trail, so be sure to pack at least four litres per person. Prepare for 'Cederberg moderate': 34°C.

Permit yourself to Over the D Winer you on Inowor Fro of the parkin Crack Wit minuat notice to the To l all abc you'll

Brace yourself. It's time to enter the burning valley



DESTINATION

Sanbona Wildlife Reserve: RECLAIMING THE WILDERNESS

by Dr Fiona Zerbst

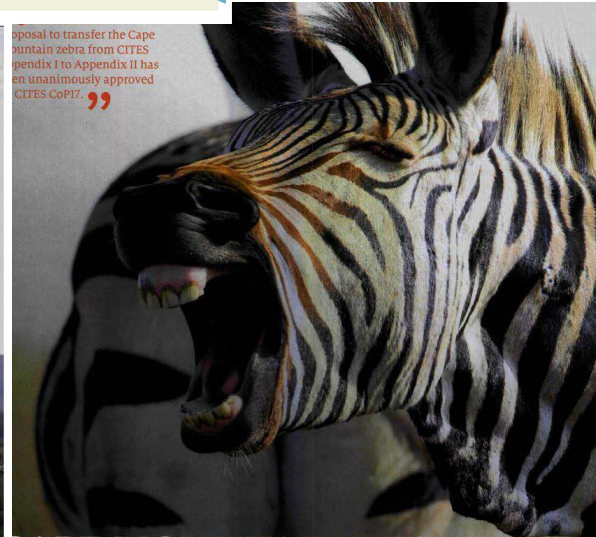


SCALING NEW HEIGHTS

With its tough routes and beautiful scenery, the George Mountain Ultra Trail has fast established itself as a popular challenge on the South African trail running circuit. Now it's breaking new ground as part of the UTMB World Series – and adding an exciting 100 Miler going deep into the Outeniquas.



proposal to transfer the Cape mountain zebra from CITES Appendix I to Appendix II has been unanimously approved CITES CoP17.



CAPE MOUNTAIN ZEBRA ACHIEVEMENT

Joseph Mulders

MULTI-MEDIA

The Cape mountain zebra (CMZ) subspecies (Equus zebra zebra) was listed on Appendix I in 1975. In 2017, the species was transferred to Appendix II.

SOCIAL MEDIA DASHBOARD

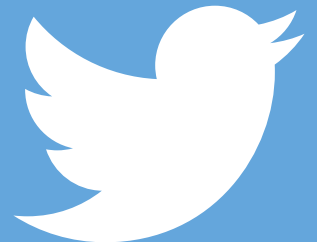
43 047
page likes



19 716
followers



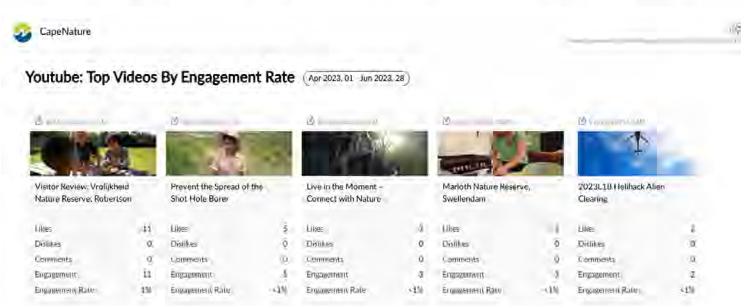
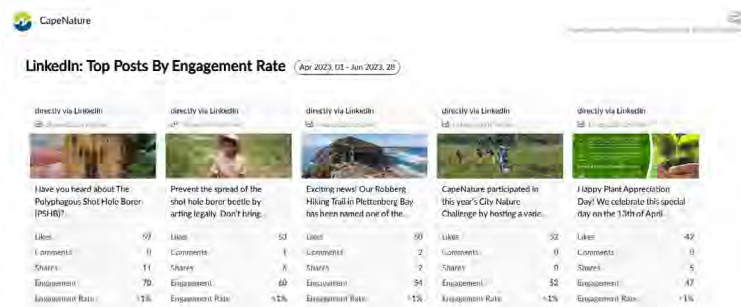
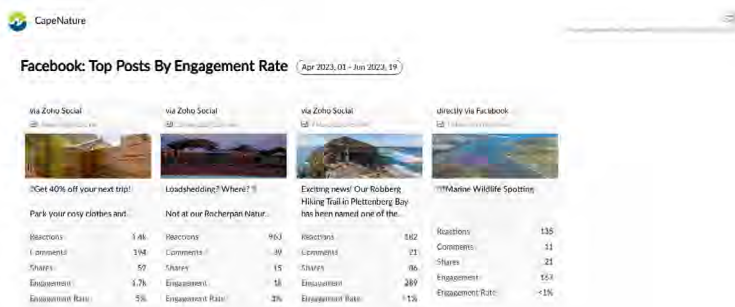
8 402
followers



8 838
followers



954
subscribers



Quote OF THE QUARTER

“Carry out a random act of kindness,
with no expectation of reward, safe in
the knowledge that one day someone
might do the same for you.”

- *Princess Diana*

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

