



## **APRIL 2010 MONTHLY REPORT**

### **Compliance**

In the month of April, Roland checked a total of 84 recreational angling permits. 5 persons checked out of the 84 did not have valid permits, each one of the individuals that did not have a permit was given a friendly warning.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> while on a routine patrol, Roland encountered a group of fishermen that had made a fire on the Fransmanshoek Peninsula. The fire had been made near a popular fishing spot on the rocks and not in the designated fireplaces. Roland reprimanded the group of fishermen who immediately put the fire out and picked up all their litter.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> Roland conducted a spot check of Vlees Bay during spring low tide, and noticed the commercial oyster harvesters were in the area. Roland carried out a routine inspection of the oyster harvesters, all of whom had their commercial permits up to date and in their possession.

Although the site of seeing people removing bags of oysters from the rocks is disturbing to see. One must remember that a legal small scale commercial oyster industry exists. Oysters have been harvested along the southern Cape coast for decades, and still the rocks produce more. Oysters are relatively fast growing and can handle a certain degree of harvesting pressure. The Cape Rock Oyster takes approximately three years to reach a size of commercial value (60mm). In Kwa-Zulu Natal, the Cape Rock Oyster is harvested in rotational zones, closing zones for a few seasons while opening others, etc. While this type of management might be better for the stock, current harvesting pressure seems to be able to be sustained.

One only needs to take a walk on to the rocks at spring low tide anywhere along the coast surrounding Vleesbaai. You'll find a host of intertidal organisms, including crabs, alikreukel, octopus, venus ears, anemones, oysters and sea urchins, to name a few, all operating in a healthy rocky shores ecosystem.



**The beautiful Violet Spotted Anemone (*Anthostella stephensoni*), found at Snuifklip on the Fransmanshoek Peninsula.**

## **Maintenance and Fixed Point Photos**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> Roland together with the generous help of Riekie van Rensburg and his staff, placed more big rocks on the Fransmanshoek Peninsula. The rocks have been strategically placed to keep visitors parking in the designated parking areas and not in the sensitive vegetation.

Our thanks is greatly extended once again to Riekie van Rensburg for offering his assistance, staff, machines, and tools free of charge for the improvement of the conservancy.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> Roland and Damien, conducted some routine maintenance on the Fransmanshoek Peninsula. The staircase leading down to Malbaai needed some gravel filled in holes that had washed open. The regular tasks of cleaning the toilets and picking up litter were also carried out.

On the same day one of two annual fixed point photo monitoring sessions were carried out on the peninsula. Photos of all the rehabilitated areas are taken from the same spot each year in order to determine whether the area is indeed improving or is still degrading.

One only needs to take a drive to the Fransmanshoek Peninsula to see how the area has improved. Much of this improvement is due to the hard work of Wayne Meyer (Ex anger). Designated pathways, signage, railings, bins, boardwalks and soil erosion rehabilitation measures have all been put in place over the last few years, with funding from Eden District Municipality, and one can clearly see the improvement.



**Oom Riekie, making light work of moving very heavy rocks!**

## **Snake DNA**

In April, DNA samples from two snakes were taken. A garden worker for a resident of Vleesbaai found a Boom slang (*Dispholidus typus*), and unfortunately killed it. Roland went to pick up the dead snake and sampled it.

A dead Cape Cobra (*Naja nivea*) was found on the Vleesbaai road. The dead snake was collected and also sampled.

## **1<sup>st</sup> year Nature Conservation visit**

On the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup>, the rangers met with Dr Laurence Watson, and his class of 1<sup>st</sup> year Nature Conservation students from Saasveld University, a division of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU).

Every year Dr Watson takes his 1<sup>st</sup> year nature conservation students to the coast, during the 'rocky shores' section in their curriculum. This year they decided to visit the Fransmanshoek Conservancy for their practical outing. The purpose of the outing was to introduce the students to rocky shores ecology, where they were shown various marine fauna and flora found occurring within the rocky shore ecosystem.

Roland then brought the students to the Info Centre at the Fransmanshoek Peninsula where he explained the purpose, function and responsibilities of the Conservancy. The students, although initially shy, soon shed their skins and showed that they were indeed interested in what was being discussed and shown to them. Many of the students had not before had the opportunity to experience coastal life, and so the day was seen as a success. Opportunity even exists for one of these up and coming Conservationists to become a new ranger of the Conservancy in the years to come. Roland invited Dr Watson to bring his 1<sup>st</sup> year students to the conservancy again next year.



The 1<sup>st</sup> year nature conservation students trying to identify various life forms in the intertidal zone.

## **Shell reference collection near complete**

Damien has already completed digital shell references for nearly 70 different species of shells and molluscs found on our shores. These will soon be placed on the Fransmanshoek website for your perusal. A poster displaying a few of the species has been put up in the Information Centre at the Fransmanshoek Peninsula.

## **Roving Creel**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> Roland attended the interview process for the hiring of two roving creel survey agents. After six interviews, Daniel du Plessis and Brain Jansen (yes, his name is Brain) were hired.

Daniel will cover from the Gouritz River mouth to Nautilus Bay, while Brain will cover from Nautilus Bay to Grootbrak River mouth. The large areas covered have been broken up into walk-able stretches. Both have started walking surveys already, and should be super fit by the end of the year.

The Roving Creel data will contribute to the greater data collection currently being carried out, which will show the ecological importance of our beautiful area.



**Daniel du Plessis, trying to figure out how the GPS works, before setting off from Nautilus Bay to Springerbaai, on one of his first surveys.**

## **27<sup>th</sup> Outeniqua Conservancy Forum**

On the 10<sup>th</sup> Roland and Damien attended the 27<sup>th</sup> Outeniqua Conservancy Forum held in George. The forum is hosted by Cape Nature and is a great platform where conservancy's from around the area can get together and share information.

Mbulelo Jacobs (Cape Nature - Garden Route Area Manager) chaired the meeting. Rhett Hiseman was the first of the two guest speakers. Rhett gave some very interesting feedback regarding the rehabilitation of Palmiet wetlands, with specific focus on the work being done on the Goukou and Duiwenhoks rivers.

Mark van Niekerk from the South Cape Fire Protection Association gave an update to the happenings within the SCFPA. His presentation focused on how much the SCFPA had grown, as well as the possibility of the Mossel Bay South Coast Fire Protection Association joining the SCFPA.

Barend le Roux (Cape Nature Conservation Services) reported on various projects and issues they were busy with.

Feedback was then heard by various conservancies, including the Kaaimans Corridor, Glenwood, Boggomsbaai, Touw River, Constantia Kloof and Fransmanshoek Conservancy. Roland presented on behalf of the Fransmanshoek Conservancy, and gave feedback specifically regarding the ecological monitoring the rangers carry out. It was once again clear that Fransmanshoek was one of the more active conservancies. While the rangers are both busy with a lot more

than just ecological monitoring, here is a list of ongoing ecological projects being carried out by the rangers:

- Oystercatcher Breeding Success Surveys and Winter Roost Surveys.
- Roving Creel Monitoring (Recreational Shore Based Line Fish Monitoring)
- Snake DNA Sampling
- Caracal Scat Analysis
- State of Biodiversity Data Collection

The Outeniqua Conservancy forum has changed its name to the Garden Route Conservancy forum, as the area being managed by Cape Nature has expanded. The name change better represents the area that all the conservancies occur in.

The forum is a great place where different conservancies can get together and share knowledge and experience. Our thanks are extended to the Cape Nature Garden Route Conservation Services team, for organising the forum, and providing support active support to the conservancies in the area.

### **Intertidal monitoring**

On the 28<sup>th</sup>, a new monitoring project was launched within the conservancy. Roland and Damien together with the help of Fred Orban's Oystercatcher Trail guiding students, Leon Claassens, Henry Salt and Sarah Gibbons, initiated the first intertidal monitoring survey of its kind along the rocky shores of the conservancy's coastline. Ex rangers John Perreira and Werner Kriel carried out a similar study but with different objectives. Theirs was a short term study to determine any difference in rocky shore organisms between two sites, east of the Gouritz river mouth and west of the Gouritz river mouth.

The current intertidal monitoring program will firstly help us determine a species composition for what is occurring along our shores. We will also be able to pick up any change of species composition over time, possibly due to rise in sea temperature or an increase in pollution. It will also greatly contribute toward the overall data collection in the area, increasing the amount of recorded data showing the diversity and conservation value of our coastline. The intertidal monitoring will take place at four different sites around the conservancy coastline. Each site will be sampled once a year.



**The team trying to work out whether there's a 110 or 112 'Six Plated Barnacles' in the quadrant.**

## **Seal Scratch**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, Vleesbaai had an unusual visitor. A Sub-Antarctic Fur Seal came ashore to take a break in Hoekbaai where the rocks to the point start. The seal seemed sick or very tired and was not bothered by the few interested onlookers that had gathered.

Just then Vleesbaai resident Ichy Louw, came down from his house with a broom stick, and started giving the seal, what looked like one of the best back scratches its ever had. The seal stayed calm and bent left and right to allow Ichy to scratch it on its back and chest.

Unfortunately, a seal in that condition is usually sick, and as it happens, a few days later while on patrol, Roland found the large Sub-Antarctic seal dead a few hundred metres to the east.

Although this seal was calm and even seemed to enjoy the attention, one should always be very cautious when encountering seals that seem to be sick, injured or even dead. There is often nothing wrong with them and can lunge out unexpectedly. Seals have very strong jaws, with large dog-like teeth, and should rather be left alone to allow nature to take its course.



**A Sub-Antarctic Seal coming for its morning scratch from Ichy.**

## **Wind Turbines in the Greater Vleesbaai Area**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> the rangers attended a public participation meeting regarding the possible erection of electricity generating wind-turbines in the area. The project is still very much in its infant stages, as the meeting was more about sensing the feeling of the farmers whose land might be used for the erection of the turbines.

The project first requires the erection of a weather monitor, which records wind direction, wind speed and more importantly wind consistency for approximately

18 months. For the project to be viable the wind does not necessarily need to blow very strong but consistently throughout the year.

All the energy created would be sold to Eskom at a certain rate and fed directly into Eskom's grid. The project is being initiated by a company called AfriCoast, but is still very much at the beginning. Any updates on the project or official public participation notifications will be distributed by Roland to property owners in the area.

**Roland Scholtz**  
**FRANSMANSHOEK CONSERVANCY**  
**082 084 2791**  
**ranger@fransmanshoek.co.za**