



MAY 2010 MONTHLY REPORT

Compliance Management

In the month of May, Roland checked 39 recreational angling and bait collecting permits. Of the 39 fishermen checked, only one person did not have a valid fishing permit in their possession, they were given a friendly warning.

On the 28th, five commercial trawling vessels sheltered from the strong winds and rough seas in Vleesbaai. While the trawlers are not allowed to trawl within the closed area mentioned in the March Monthly report, they are allowed to shelter during times of bad weather. While we urge all residents along the coast keep an eye out for bottom trawlers operating in the closed area, stationary vessels are merely sheltering.

Maintenance

On the 3rd Damien with the help of Fred Orban's Oystercatcher Trail Guide Students, repaired the staircase leading from Blok-se-Baai to the road on the Fransmanshoek peninsula. The stairs which have been laid in relatively soft sand had started to come loose.

The staircase is known to the rangers as 'suicide staircase', as after a patrol starting at Springerbaai (roughly 9km back), the steep staircase saps the last bit of energy out of one, with the Fransmanshoek point and the end of the patrol in sight.



"Suicide Staircase", much easier to walk up after being repaired.



On the 6th and 10th Damien upgraded an old soil erosion rehabilitation project on the Fransmanshoek peninsula that was done by John Pereira (Ex Ranger). The soil rehabilitation measures that were put in by John approximately five years ago were starting to rot and fall away. Some of the wooden barriers had even been pulled out by the public to be used as fire wood. Damien removed the broken down barriers and replaced them using natural materials such as driftwood and rocks from the area. The area being rehabilitated is to the right of the boardwalk leading down from 'Die Saal' parking lot. This is one of the areas that fall within the fixed point photos that are taken twice a year. From the photos we have been able to tell that the area was not improving in vegetation cover. The new soil erosion measures will be monitored to see if they are effective.



Damien at work repairing the soil erosion control measures.

The North Westerly winds have started to blow, signalling that winter is here. For those of you that take note of weather conditions, our May, June, July and August Months are characterised by these strong North Westerly's, which have managed to blow down three of our signs at the Fransmanshoek peninsula. While Eden District Municipality are ordering new signs, made of a material that doesn't rust, Roland and Damien re-erected the old signs. Thanks again to Riekie Janse van Rensburg for allowing us the use of his tools and machinery.



Roland and Damien re-erecting the old signage that had blown down.



Intertidal Monitoring

On the 27th Damien, Leon, Sarah and Henry (Oystercatcher Trail Guide Students) completed the second intertidal monitoring transect of 2010. In April the intertidal monitoring program was launched, and the first of four transects around the conservancy were done at Snuifklip (within Vleesbaai).

The second transect was done in Malbaai on the Fransmanshoek peninsula. This area is representative of an exposed rocky shore, and with the swell a bit up all the monitors returned to camp sopping wet, after being washed over by waves a few times. The next two transects are scheduled for Kanon (within Visbaai) and Cape Vacca, also an exposed rocky shore.

Gouritz Initiative Forum

On the 18th Roland and Damien attended the 2nd Gouritz Initiative (GI) forum for 2010. As always the meeting was filled with interesting talks and presentations. First up were Jan Vlok and Steve Du Toit who gave feedback on current logistical happenings within the GI.

Andrew Skowno then presented on the mapping of 'Critical Biodiversity Areas of the Klein Karoo'. Andrew is currently involved in a project that is using GIS mapping technology to map out sensitive biodiversity areas in the Klein Karoo. The final product will be used by local government and conservation bodies when considering development planning for the future.

Mike Powell then presented on the work being done in the Baviaans Kloof and surrounding area with regard to the Succulent Thicket Restoration and Spekboom *Portulacaria afra* projects that are underway in that region. Spekboom has been proven to trap relatively large amounts of carbon through its natural photosynthesis process. Mark explained how the project obtains much of its funding through large companies around the world seeking to offset their carbon production by buying carbon credits. Carbon credits can be measured in the amount of carbon trapped by the Spekboom. Mike is looking to expand the project to other areas of the little Karoo.

Zolile Simawo, Liwa Gunguluza & Xolile Mthethwa (Cape Nature), then presented on the various community projects being run by Cape Nature. Much of the talk revolved around Cape Nature's attempt to include the public in conservation areas and parks, by running poverty alleviation schemes such as the Working for Water program in many of their protected areas.

Anita Wheeler (Cape Nature) then presented on the work being done to establish the Gouritz corridor as a Biosphere Reserve. For those of you who were at the Fransmanshoek Conservancy's 2009 AGM, you will remember Anita giving a presentation on this topic. Cape Nature is seeking to promote conservation strategies on private land through stewardship agreements. This is done through various agreements entered into between the land owner and Cape Nature. Different levels of protection exist within these agreements ranging from what is known as 'Biodiversity Agreements' to 'Contract Nature Reserves'. Each level has various restrictions on what activities may be carried out on the land so as to ensure the protection of biodiversity in the future.



Educational talk at Reins Private Nature Reserve

On the 21st Roland and Damien visited the Reins Private Nature Reserve near Gouritz. The Glenwood House School from George were on a two day environmental camp at the nature reserve and asked the rangers if they would present a talk to the kids on the ecology of fynbos.

Roland and Damien walked the 20 odd learners a short distance into the veld where practical examples of what was being spoken of could be seen. Damien spoke to the group about fire in the fynbos system, while Roland informed the group of some of the adaptations of various animals found in the fynbos biome.

Throughout the two days the learners were taught about the marine environment, Khoisan culture and fynbos amongst other things. Well done to the Glenwood House School for incorporating such a strong environmental curriculum in their syllabus.



Damien discussing 'Fire in the Fynbos system' with the Glenwood School Learners at Reins Private Nature Reserve

Alien Vegetation – Steven Prins

Steven Prins (an alien clearing contractor regularly used by the Fransmanshoek Conservancy), has been busy on Erf 257/26 for the last two months, ridding the property of all the Rooikrans present. Steven is nearly done, after doing excellent clearing work throughout the +/-9ha property. If any member of the conservancy is interested in doing any alien clearing on their property, please contact Roland for advice or to arrange a site inspection.



SBBDF Meeting

On the 7th, Roland met with the St. Blaize Biodiversity Forum (SBBDF), the second quarterly meeting of the year. The meeting focused on the SBBDF merging with the Mossel Bay Environmental Partnership (MEP). The SBBDF's website will from now on form a subsection on MEP's website. The SBBDF now has an upgraded logo, and work is being done to create an interactive web-space, where the internet user can browse through all the ecological monitoring projects being carried out in the area.

The Fransmanshoek Conservancy will contribute greatly to this database, as much of the data being collected in the Vleesbaai area is being collected by the rangers of the Conservancy.

Here is a brief summary of some of the monitoring projects currently being carried out by the rangers within the Conservancy:

- Oystercatcher Breeding Success and Winter Roost
- State of Biodiversity Monitoring (All dead animals, and unusual sightings)
- Snake DNA sampling
- Caracal Scat and Dietary Analysis
- Roving Creel Surveys (Recreational Shore Based Fishery Monitoring Program)

The idea is to turn the data into a user friendly interface, where the internet browser can easily interpret all the data that has been collected. At the end of the day, one will be able to see the overlap of diversity in the area. From Southern Right Whales that come to calf and mate within Vleesbaai to breeding Oystercatchers along the shores, to rare and endangered succulents growing on the land.



Mist over the beautiful Vleesbaai.



Proposed Exploration for natural gas in Cape Agulhas area

Around the 20th an email inviting all Interested and Affected Parties wishing to register for the proposed exploration for natural gas in the area, was circulated. The Fransmanshoek Conservancy has registered as an I & AP and the rangers will attend any public participation meetings that take place.

It seems that the exploration for gas is this time being done by the Petroleum Agency of South Africa (PASA) and not PetroSA. They are seeking to explore the offshore and onshore areas from around Cape Agulhas to the Mossel Bay Area. This could have huge implications for landowners along the coast and immediate inland areas. We urge all affected parties to get involved and stay up to date with the process. We will continue to send out any updates that are made aware to us.

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