

# NEWS FROM THE ADDO ELEPHANT NATIONAL PARK, South Africa *September/October 2007*



## ***About this newsletter***

*This is a general newsletter – sent out on a monthly basis - about the latest happenings and developments in the Addo Elephant National Park. Please see contact details at the end for further enquiries*

## **ADDO ELEPHANT NATIONAL PARK OPENS ITS GATES FOR SANPARKS WEEK**

Addo Elephant National Park opened its gates to South African residents on day visits free of charge from the 17th to the 21st of September in celebration of South African National Parks Week.

The annual South African National Parks Week which will be celebrated during South Africa's Heritage month was officially started in September 2006.

The week is aimed at showcasing the best of South Africa's 22 national parks and seeks to give South Africans an opportunity to experience the pride and joy of South Africa's natural and cultural heritage.

The Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Marthinus van Schalkwyk, officially launched the start of the South African National Parks Week (SANParks) 2007 on the 17 September at Skukuza rest camp in the Kruger National Park. The Minister will be extended an invitation to all South Africans to visit national parks.

Local community and school groups such as the Life Care group from Kirkwood, a Senior Citizens group from Bergsig and a group from Kirkwood Prison were hosted in Addo Elephant National Park during the SANParks Week with the focus on exposing them to the activities and opportunities on offer in the Park.

## **ENDANGERED ORIBI PROTECTED IN ADDO ELEPHANT NATIONAL PARK**

Addo Elephant National Park (AENP) is contributing to vital conservation efforts to protect the oribi, an endangered antelope restricted to grassland habitat.

In recognition of this conservation effort, the Oribi Working Group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT-OWG) handed over an Oribi Custodian Board to the Park in Durban last week.

AENP's Conservation Manager, John Adendorff, received the Board from Cliff Walton of the NCT Forestry Co-operative Limited, the primary supporters of the EWT-OWG Oribi Custodian Programme.



John Adendorff (left) receives the Oribi Custodian Board from Cliff Walton

The Park's oribi population is resident on the coastal grassland habitat in the Woody Cape section of the Park.

Oribi numbers in South Africa have declined over the years, leading to their classification as an endangered species on the South African Red Data List. The decline is due to a number of factors including loss of habitat due to farming and forestry activities, overgrazing and poaching.

It is estimated that less than 2 500 oribi occur in South Africa.

Ten oribi were introduced to the Langvlakte contractual area of Addo Elephant National Park in July 2006.

Natural grasslands, on which oribi depend, are one of South Africa's most threatened ecosystems, with only 2% being formally conserved and more than 80% having been irreversibly transformed by commercial forestry and agriculture.



Oribi in Addo Elephant National Park

Future plans include the introduction of additional oribi to this area of the Park to further boost conservation efforts.

### **NEW SATELLITE RESERVATION OFFICES LAUNCHED**

Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism, in conjunction with the South African National Parks (SANParks), launched four new satellite reservation offices in Nelson Mandela Bay during September. The official launch of the offices was held on 26 September 2007 to commemorate National Tourism Month and as a curtain raiser to World Tourism Day celebrations on 27 September.

The new SANParks reservation offices are located within the Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism Information Centres - at the Boardwalk, Donkin and Uitenhage - as well as the Call Centre at the NMBT office in South End, Port Elizabeth.

The offices are a first for the Eastern Cape and offer a one-stop source of information and accommodation bookings port for all South African National Parks, as well as a purchasing point for the SANParks wildcard, which entitles the bearer to free access at all SANParks.

The one-stop booking offices offer a more convenient service to the public, as well as a faster and more personal service, alleviating the high call volumes directed to the SANParks central reservation call centre in Pretoria.

To enquire or to book accommodation, please contact:

Call Centre Tel: 041 582 2575 Hours: 08:00 – 16:30 (Monday – Friday)

Donkin Tel: 041 585 8884 Hours: 08:00 – 16:30 (Monday – Friday) 09:30 – 15:30 (Saturday – Sunday)

Boardwalk Tel: 041 583 2030 Hours 08:00 – 19:00 (Monday – Sunday)

Uitenhage Tel: 041 922 5214 Hours: 08:00 – 16:30 (Monday – Friday)

Or visit the offices at:

Boardwalk: The Boardwalk complex, Shop 48, Marine Drive, Summerstrand, Port Elizabeth

Donkin: Donkin Reserve Lighthouse complex, Belmont terrace, Central, Port Elizabeth

Uitenhage: 73b Graaff-Reinet Road, Uitenhage

### **Don't miss Addo's Birding Bonanza 26-28 October**

A chance to spot some of the over 400 species which occur in the five different biomes of Addo Elephant National Park

More information: visit [www.sanparks.org/about/news/2007/october/addo\\_bd.pdf](http://www.sanparks.org/about/news/2007/october/addo_bd.pdf)  
or email [charlesmarais@webmail.com](mailto:charlesmarais@webmail.com)

## LEOPARD GIVEN NEW LEASE ON LIFE

A female leopard was given a new lease on life last week when she was released into the Addo Elephant National Park after being rescued from the Baviaanskloof area.

The leopard was rescued after being caught in a gin trap on a farm in the Cockscomb Mountains. The leopard was treated at Shamwari Game Reserve and then released, with a tracking collar for monitoring purposes, into the Kuzuko Contractual area of the Addo Elephant National Park.

This is the fourth leopard that has been released into the Park as part of the recovery and release programme driven by the Landmark Foundation.

Through a partnership with willing farmers in the Baviaanskloof area, the Landmark Foundation discourages the use of gin traps and poisoning to tackle problems with predators such as leopards. Instead, the use of methods such as capture and relocation, the use of Anatolian sheep dogs to guard sheep and wire collars on sheep which prevent attacks by predators are encouraged.



Leopard recorded by camera trap in Addo Elephant National Park

The Landmark Foundation has also approached retailers such as Pick 'n Pay to sell meat products with a guarantee that the farming methods involved in producing the meat have not included the use of gin traps, poisoning or hunting with dogs.

Pick 'n Pay has agreed to promote this "predator-friendly" brand and has also promised further support with the provision of tracking collars for leopards and preventative wire collars for sheep.

Although the exact number of leopards in Addo Elephant National Park is not known, conservation staff monitor their numbers by means of tracking collars, spoor observation on patrols and camera traps.

*News from South African National Parks...*

### Mountain Zebra National Park Celebrates 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

SANParks Week kicked off to a festive start in the Frontier Region with the celebration of Mountain Zebra National Park's 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

The Park, proclaimed in July 1937, boasts a success story in terms of conservation of the Cape mountain zebra with a population of over 370 zebra today.

When the Park was proclaimed in 1937, only six zebra existed on a 1712-hectare piece of land. These zebra died out and it was only through the donations from local farmers that the population was again built up.

Speaking at the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September, SANParks Chief Operating Officer, Mr. Sydney Soundy, said, "Today we are taking an important modest step towards the promotion of a culture of national celebrations for a job well done in the conservation industry."

Soundy also emphasized the important role that South African National Parks (SANParks) plays in the tourism industry being the largest single provider of hospitality accommodation in South Africa.

SANParks has about 6 000 beds and 1 000 camping/caravan sites and can accommodate almost 12 000 overnight guests in its 22 national parks. Average occupancy rates are currently over 70%.

Mountain Zebra National Park Manager Lesley-Ann Meyer commented on the rich history and cultural heritage of the Park, as well as a bright future ahead.



“We have many plans for the Park including the construction of new tourist roads, entrance gate and new child-friendly facilities for the Weltevrede picnic site”, said Meyer.

Mayor Zenzile of the local Inxuba Yethemba Municipality spoke of how the natural heritage represented in the Park is no longer alienated from the people and of how the council is committed to working together with the Park Management.

L to R: SANParks COO, Sydney Soundy, Park Manager, Lesley-Ann Meyer & Regional Manager, Lucius Moolman

Mr. Soundy and Councillor N. Pasha of the Chris Hani District Municipality were later called on to test their lungs by blowing out 70 candles on the birthday cake.

Delegates were entertained by the Sofunda Cultural Group from nearby Cradock.

The Park now covers 28 412 hectares and conserves species such as the critically endangered black rhino, cheetah and buffalo.



Sofunda Cultural Group dancers

### The Intangible Value of National Parks

The intangible values of national parks are often overlooked because Protected Area Agencies focus mainly on evaluating those aspects of operations that can be easily quantified

The South African National Parks’ Annual report for the financial year 2006/7 was recently released from the head quarters (Groenkloof) of SANParks in Pretoria. The report highlights the successes of the organisation in terms of its mandate to the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in conserving biodiversity. The tangible deliverables are impressive: 24 000 hectares of land were purchased for inclusion into the national parks’ estate, a new national park (Mokala) was proclaimed near Kimberley, 100 000 learners took part in environmental education activities in parks and the Minister allocated R575 million over the next four years for infrastructure upgrading and development in parks.

The commercialisation plan is running smoothly and tourism numbers increased by 9.5% with Table Mountain (1.6 million visitors) and Kruger (1.3 million visitors) at the top. The financial value of parks is equally impressive with a 22% increase in revenue to R594 million for the year. The direct value to local economies is currently under review but should be substantial considering the knock-on effects of tourism related activities and that SANParks now employs over 7000 employees (4000 of these are employed through the Governments Expanded Public Works Programme) excluding Staff employed by concessionaires. Concessionaires are tourism service providers who manage tourism lodges and related products in National Parks for a period of time according to agreed upon outcomes.

Whilst the figures above paint a very positive image of SANParks in terms of tangible and measurable values, it is the intangible values of parks which are often forgotten. This could perhaps be because they are less obvious and more difficult to measure in terms of popular scientific or financial methodologies.

SANParks subscribes to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources' (IUCN) definition of a protected area: "An area of land and/ or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means." (IUCN 1994) This requires the organisation to manage the natural assets that it is responsible for, based on biodiversity conservation principles.

Whilst the conservation of biodiversity is one of the most important challenges of our time, most South Africans are unfamiliar with this framework of thinking or do not ascribe to biodiversity values. Many South Africans do not see National Parks as repositories of genetic wealth but rather as landscapes in which they can experience deeply the touch of spiritual, cultural, aesthetic and relational dimensions of human existence. These are the fundamental aspects of the human spirit that inspire and move, that trigger responses of awe, appreciation, and, for the keen observer, the understanding that all is related. As Allen Putney so clearly articulates in the book "The Full Value of Parks", "The interrelatedness of all things is a basic concept that is central to many fields of study, such as economics, ecology, physics and spirituality. Yet, it is the profound, personal, gut-level knowing of oneness that causes individuals and communities to act to seek harmony with the environment and the rest of humanity. As a consequence, perhaps one of the most important values of protected areas in the long run will be their potential to reconnect increasingly urbanised societies to nature and to encourage a reencounter with the knowing of oneness."

...Read the full article on [www.sanparks.org/about/news/2007/october/intangible.php](http://www.sanparks.org/about/news/2007/october/intangible.php)

#### DID YOU KNOW?

✂ The telephone numbers for Addo Elephant National Park have changed. Please dial +27(0)42 2338600 or send your fax to +27(0)42 2338643.

✂ You can help purchase a webcam for Addo Elephant National Park by making a donation online at [www.sanparks.org](http://www.sanparks.org)

✂ You can have your say or simply read what others have to say on our website forums. Visit [www.sanparks.org/forums](http://www.sanparks.org/forums)

✂ You can check availability of accommodation in any of the 20 South African National Parks by clicking on the link below, then choosing the park and rest camp you wish to investigate:  
[www.sanparks.org/tourism/availability/default.php](http://www.sanparks.org/tourism/availability/default.php)

The information is updated once a day at 08h00. This will save you time when making your booking. To book, email [reservations@sanparks.org](mailto:reservations@sanparks.org) or Tel: +27 (0)12 4289111.

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