

NEWS FROM THE ADDO ELEPHANT NATIONAL PARK, South Africa *May/June 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.

BLACK RHINO FROM NAMIBIA RELEASED

Three black rhino translocated from Namibia were released into Addo Elephant National Park in mid-May.

The three rhino of the *Diceros bicornis bicornis* subspecies, or so-called 'desert-ecotype', are part of a group of twelve rhino that have been translocated to South Africa. Six rhino are being held in the Addo Elephant National Park bomas until they are moved to Baviaanskloof Wilderness Area. The other three rhino were released into Karoo National Park near Beaufort West.

The rhino translocation is the first step in a four-way partnership between South African National Parks, the Namibian Ministry of Environment & Tourism, the Zambian Wildlife Authority and the Eastern Cape Parks Board. The partnership was initiated with the intention to exchange rhino for antelope between Namibia and Zambia.

Rhino of the *bicornis* subspecies from Namibia have been released into Addo Elephant and Karoo National Parks in exchange for the translocation of black rhino of the *Diceros bicornis minor* subspecies from South African National Parks to Zambia at a later date. The *minor* black rhino subspecies is the subspecies naturally found in Zambia.

The three rhino spent a few days in the bomas, after their arrival on the 9th of May, to acclimatise to the local conditions and enable SANParks veterinarians to ascertain that their condition was stable following translocation. The rhino also had transmitters fitted to their horns to provide a means of locating the rhino, both for monitoring purposes and for security.

Such translocations of rhino are an important management tool for South African National Parks to ensure genetic diversity in managing its metapopulation of *bicornis* subspecies black rhino in the Karoo, Addo Elephant and Mountain Zebra National Parks, as well as the new national park situated outside Kimberley that will replace Vaalbos National Park.

ADDO PART OF "BEST PERFORMING REGION" IN SANPARKS

At the South African National Parks third annual Kudu Awards held on the 21st of May, Addo Elephant National Park received recognition for excellent performance as part of the Frontier Region.

The SANParks Frontier Region - made up of Addo Elephant, Camdeboo, Karoo and Mountain Zebra National Parks - received the Chief Executive Award for Best Performing Region for outstanding financial performance and excellent performance in the three core business areas of SANParks: Conservation, Tourism and People & Conservation.

For the past financial period (April 2006 to March 2007), revenue increased from R31 million to R37 million: an increase of 18.1%. The main contributors to this growth in revenue were an increase of 17% in conservation fees received and a 10% increase in tourism income.

In the Tourism sector, Unit Occupancy increased by 2.2% over the Region. Bed Nights increased by 7.3% while Camping Occupancy increased by 11.3%. Guests to Parks (visitor numbers) increased by 16.7%. Total Activities increased by 13%. Camdeboo National Park successfully introduced a conservation levy, creating a revenue source for the Park.

In terms of Conservation, the Parks in the Frontier Region succeeded in increasing biodiversity with introductions of wildlife and expansion of protected area. Both cheetah and oribi were introduced into Addo Elephant National Park and cheetah were introduced into Mountain Zebra National Park, becoming the first large predators to be reintroduced. Addo Elephant National Park increased its protected areas to 164 233 hectares and Camdeboo National Park increased to 19 397 hectares. Karoo National Park concluded four land deals to increase its size and consolidate the Park.

Excellent performance in the People & Conservation department is demonstrated by a total number of 18661 learners and 2793 adults that visited the Parks for environmental education over the past year, the successful implementation of the Kids in Parks Programme in Addo Elephant and Camdeboo National Parks and the continued successful functioning of the Mayibuye Ndlovu Development Trust, creating benefits for communities surrounding the Addo Elephant National Park.

The Kudu Awards is an initiative that aims to recognise external stakeholders for their contribution and efforts in making South African National Parks the custodian of choice for the national parks system of South Africa, and also plays a significant role in the conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage, thus protecting South Africa's most valuable national assets. The Kudu Awards also celebrates SANParks staff members for their exceptional work performance and efforts on customer service with various categories under the Chief Executive Awards.

Addo Elephant National Park received the Chief Executive's Award for Best Park at the inaugural Kudu Awards held in 2005.

ADDO STAFF SHINE AT FRONTIER REGION AWARDS

The first ever Frontier Region Awards were held on the 12th of June to honour staff members who have performed excellently in the region.

Addo Elephant National Park's Michael Witbooi - a gate guard at Addo Main Camp entrance gate - scooped the award for Outstanding Customer Service for the positive image he portrays, for his efficient service and for always being friendly to each visitor entering the Park. Michael was also honoured at the Kudu Awards with the Chief Executive Award for Outstanding Customer Service.

Addo's Human Resource Officer, Esther Truter, won the Outstanding Service in the Workplace Award.

Addo Main Camp Reception was named Reception of the Year for excellent customer service under the tremendous pressure of a camp with over 92% occupancy and 160 000 visitors per year, for always being friendly and efficient and assisting visitors beyond the call of duty and for consistently promoting and portraying a good image on behalf of the Addo Elephant National Park. Three receptionists - Quezette van der Mescht, Adri Julies and Sithisa Sibidla - collected the award.

The Field Ranger of the Year Award went to Johannes Jaantjies from Camdeboo National Park, while Johan De Klerk from Mountain Zebra National Park was awarded both the Section Ranger of the Year and the Regional Manager's Award.

EDEN TO ADDO MEGAHIKE 2007

The Eden to Addo Mega-Hike is a hiking adventure that takes place from the 5th to the 23rd of September this year, presenting an opportunity to participate in the longest hike of its kind in South Africa.

"It is not only about challenging yourself to the limit, this unusual hike is also about conservation, as your participation assists in the creation of essential biodiversity corridors in the region stretching from the Garden Route to Addo," says organiser, Galeo Saintz.

Saintz continued: "Imagine a hike that is walked only once each year, a route that attempts to follow where elephants once roamed. Imagine walking 380km in 18 days through indigenous forests, over expansive mountains and through winding river gorges, sidestepping buffalo and looking out for sunbirds. Such a hike is now out there. Only 24 hikers have the privilege of hiking this fully catered hike this year."

The route begins in the Knysna Forests, continues to the Keurbooms River outside Plettenberg Bay, then passes through the Tsitsikamma over Peak Formosa and then continues on towards the Kouga Mountains eastwards of Peak Formosa. Hikers then walk through the Baviaanskloof wilderness area, cross the Grootwinterhoek Mountains and end in the western area of Addo Elephant National Park.

For those who cannot take time off for an 18-day hike, the organisers are also offering a few shorter options: a 7-Day Corporate Leadership & Wilderness Programme; a 10-Day Multi-Discipline Trail (mountain biking, hiking, & horse riding) and a 21-Day wild camping and self-catered hike for the really fit.

For more information, visit www.edentoaddo.co.za or call Galeo Saintz on 082 888 8181.

News from South African National Parks...

Cheetah released in Mountain Zebra National Park

Two female cheetah were released in Mountain Zebra National Park on the 29th of May, becoming the first large predators to freely roam the Park area in over 100 years.

These two cheetah, along with two male cheetah, have spent the last three months acclimatising to the local environment in bomas in the Park. The acclimatisation period in the boma has also allowed the cheetah to become familiar with the electric predator-proof fencing that now surrounds the Park.

Whilst in the boma, the cheetah were fed by rangers, but the two wild-caught cheetah will now hunt for their own prey in the Park. The cheetah were supplied by the De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Trust.

The two male cheetah - about five years old - will be released near the end of June, allowing the two younger females - aged 16 months old - to establish themselves in the Park.

Another two male cheetah will be released into the Park within the next two months.

The introduction of cheetah represents the climax of an expansion and re-introduction programme that was enabled by the fund-raising efforts of the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation and other organizations such as the Barbara Delano Foundation, WildAid, Sasol Limited and Vesta Medicines. The programme received a boost after it was much publicised by SABC's 50/50 programme, enabling over one million rand to be raised and nine properties to be bought.

The cheetah will be monitored by means of radio tracking to enable rangers and researchers to study their patterns of movement and ensure that they acclimatise well to their new home. Research will focus on the prey selection, habitat selection and feeding patterns of the cheetah, as well as the change in vigilance and behaviour in antelope species.

The introduction of these large cats is an important step in restoring the predator-prey balance as well as enriching the biodiversity of the Park.

Mountain Zebra National Park, located near Cradock in the Eastern Cape, is 28 412 hectares in size.

Official proclamation and launch of Mokala National Park

On the 19th of June, the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Minister Marthinus van Schalkwyk, officially proclaimed the new Mokala National Park near Plooyberg south west of Kimberley.

The establishment of this new park came as a result of a successful land claim made on a section of the old Vaalbos National Park by the Sidney on Vaal claimants.

The official proclamation follows months of preparation involving de-proclamation of Vaalbos National Park, translocation of 863 wildlife, a stakeholder participation process to name the new park as well as the establishment of facilities.

"We take pride in this new park that will not only replace Vaalbos, but will add to the treasured national park system of our country. We are also pleased that the local community was involved in the establishment of the new park, and also take ownership in its development", said Minister van Schalkwyk.

Mokala National Park boasts 19 611 ha and is home to endangered species such as Black Rhino, Tsessebe, Roan antelope, White Rhino, Black Wildebeest.

Current facilities include two lodges; a restaurant, conferencing, a camping area which is 10km from the main lodge as well as a private landing strip. All units at the two lodges do not have self catering and have bed capacity for 60 guests.

Activities in the park will include guided game drives; bush braais, Bushman rock art painting and engraving excursions, team building workshops; wildlife documentary DVD shows and southern night sky edutainment with large telescope viewing. Guided horse trails will also be introduced soon.

Dr David Mabunda, Chief Executive of SANParks said, "Future growth prospects through contractual land acquisitions will see the park growing to some 50 000 ha in the next five years. Currently the park is very limited in self catering units and this will be our priority to enable us to cater for the traditional SANParks guest."

Nestled between important vegetation units which occur in the park are the Kalahari Thornveld and the Vaalbos Rocky Shrubland which forms part of the Savanna biome, as well as the Northern Upper Karoo which is part of the Nama Karoo Biome on the northern border.

"One of the conservation objectives of the park is to conserve the interface of the two biomes. In line with our mandate, the biomes will be preserved and should serve as permanent reference areas for wider exploration surveys in the Northern Cape region," explained Mabunda.

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

✂ You can have your say or simply read what others have to say on our website forums. Visit 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

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

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