



Addo Elephant



South African  
NATIONAL PARKS



Camdeboo



Garden Route



Karoo

# Frontier Times



Mountain Zebra

May

2017



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## Bullet proof vests for Addo's ranger dogs

Dog handler - Vusumzi Nxamleko, Section Ranger - Anban Padayachee, Quemic Director - Gerrit Lamprecht, Ballistic Body Armour International Sales Manager - Henry Ainslie, Quemic Regional Ranger - Nikki Haynes, Park Manager - Mzwandile Mjadu and Environmental Monitor - Raghoo Saterdag, with Addo's two dogs, Bullet and Banshee.

The two canine members of Addo Elephant National Park's (AENP) ranger corps are now equally protected from life-threatening situations, like their human counterparts, thanks to the donation of bullet proof vests from integrated risk solutions company, Quemic. In addition to this, the company also donated two trauma/first aid kits specifically for the dogs, as well as dog food for an entire year.

Quemic's Regional Ranger in the Western Cape, Nikki Haynes, was born in Addo when his father, Mike Haynes, was the Hospitality Services Manager in the Park. Mike heard about Addo's need for the items at a demonstration with the dogs about three months ago and thought it was an ideal opportunity for Nikki to get involved, as the company he works for, Quemic, already provides firearm training to SANParks' Environmental Monitors. The company is also involved in anti-rhino poaching operations with private landowners and other nature conservation agencies.

Quemic's Director, Gerrit Lamprecht and Nikki were on hand to personally hand the safety equipment and food over to the dogs and their handlers in the Park. The vests, trauma/first aid kits and food is valued at over R130 000.

"If one is personally involved in nature conservation, as we are through our business, you know the landscape and try to help wherever you can. All of us in the nature fraternity need to look out for one another, irrespective of the size of our organisations. And for me, personally, this was just the perfect fit, given my history with and in Addo," said Nikki.

Addo's two canine rangers, Banshee and Bullet, are about five years old and provide sniffing and tracking support to the rangers. Bullet, provided to AENP by the Endangered Wildlife Trust, and Banshee will now be kitted out in their bullet proof vests while on duty, protected from gunshot wounds and knife attacks. Their handlers will be given training on how to use the dogs' trauma/first aid kits, which are advanced enough to sustain them until they reach a veterinarian.

AENP Conservation Manager, John Adendorff, says "We cannot tell you how grateful we are for your handover today. We want to give our dogs everything we can to ensure their safety, as we do with our rangers. They are integral to our operations and today's sponsorship ensures that they have the best protection when they're in the field."



## Message from Dries Engelbrecht, Regional General Manager

In a time when it feels as if there's so much negativity in the world, isn't it great to read that a "son of Addo", literally born in the Park, returns years later to sponsor its canine rangers with life saving equipment in the form of bullet proof vests and trauma kits, and adding a year's supply of food on for good measure? What an amazing, feel good story for everyone involved and also for the rest of us.

Water – while it gives life, it can take life too. Some guests to Addo have been enquiring about what they term the lack of water provision in the Park. We've put together what we hope will provide clarity on the matter on page 3. And on this page, you'll read about what turned out to be a heartwarming story about a little elephant calf who nearly drowned at Hapoor Dam. This story was written by one of Addo's conservation students, Dalene de Villiers, while another student, James Dicker, did the write-up on page 4 about Rhino Art's visit to a local school near Darlington Dam. Well done to these youngsters for taking the time to give us a bit of insight into their worlds.

Garden Route National Park has also been a hive of activity lately – having hosted the second annual Walking Festival in April. Brenton in Knysna also finally went through a planned ecological burn of approximately 71 000 hectares, which had been postponed since last year. Many thanks to all who made this a successful operation - Southern Cape Fire Protection Association (FPA), Knysna Municipal Fire Services, Working on Fire, PG Bison, Knysna Municipality - Traffic Control and the landowners (VWF & Susan Campbell) and others.

## Compliments received

### Addo Elephant National Park

- Our family of four did a morning horse ride in Addo. It was so good. We loved our guide. So friendly, informative and knowledgeable. Highly recommending the horse ride to everyone.
- We met one of your game drivers at a lookout. He was so friendly and outgoing. Made us wish we were going on a drive with him. Overall your staff members were good to excellent.
- Your Addo guide, Ryan, was excellent.
- I grew up in Port Elizabeth and visited Addo many years ago. I have lived in Canada for the past 17 years. We had a wonderful experience showing off Addo to our kids. Keep up the good work!

### Camdeboo National Park

- I would like to congratulate the staff. They were very friendly with everything as clean and neat as possible.
- Really a gem of a Park. I will definitely stay there again!
- Well managed and clean.

### Garden Route National Park

- The camping decks are an excellent alternative to normal huts, etc. We had everything we needed and it was fantastic to be a part of the forest. Hope to see this initiative replicated in other Parks. (Knysna)
- Absolutely amazing facilities in the tree top chalet. Felt very exclusive having the place to ourselves. Wish I could have stayed there for more than one night. (Knysna)
- I was assisted by a trainee and she handled Reception well. I booked additional nights and she was assisted by the senior person to make sure everything went smoothly. (Storms River Mouth)
- Excellent reception office with very friendly staff. Well done, thank you. (Ebb & Flow)
- We stay frequently at Ebb & Flow south camp, often in the Forest Cabins. We love the Park and the personnel there.

### Karoo National Park

- May we congratulate you on what we experienced as the best managed national park. In particular we were impressed with the professional reception staff, the very high standard of maintenance and the cleanliness of the facilities in the caravan park. The upgrading with paving blocks was also a pleasant surprise.
- Ons het heerlik vir 14 dae by julle gekuier. Die leuermannetjie het op die oegend van ons vertrek kom koebaaï sê. Die onse horlosie was 'n bietjie uit, want net voor 04:00 het hy nader gestaan. Gewoonlik kom hy ons so 06:00 wakker maak. So ongeveer 04:20 was hy by kampeerplek no 3. Ons was by no 6. Dis seker 'n afstand van 30/35 meter. Hy't in my rigting gebrul asof die hel los was. Ek was buite en glo my as ek jou sê ek het die lugverplasing in my gesig gevoel. Op geen plek op aarde sal ek weer hierdie ervaring hê nie..
- We enjoyed our stay. Accommodation is the best and an ideal position to sit out in the evening and enjoy a braai. Of all national parks, the staff here, in all departments we have found are the best.

### Mountain Zebra National Park

- We had been in October last year when it was so dry. This time we couldn't believe how much grass and water there was. It was fantastic.
- The guesthouse was gleamingly clean. Really a lovely spot and definitely need more than one night, hopefully another time.
- The Mountain Zebra National Park was really beautiful and we enjoyed our stay. The clean/comfortable picnic sites along the roads were great as well.
- We will certainly visit your Park again. I would like to compliment the staff of Mountain Zebra National Park on their friendliness and professionalism.
- This national park goes to the top of our list of Cape Nature and SANParks locations. Our family cottage was lovely. Excellent roads, stunning views. A wonderful experience, we highly recommend this Park and will be back!

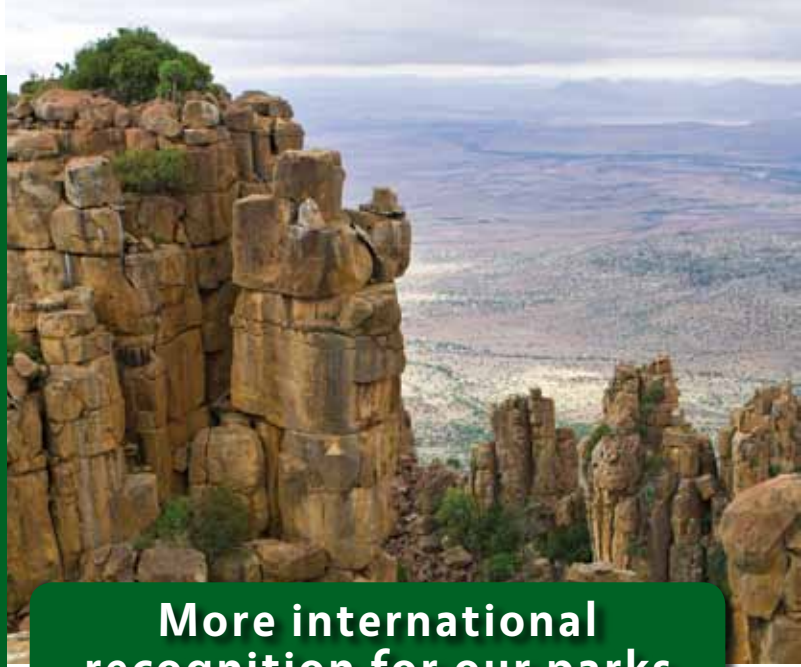
## Compliment of the month: Karoo National Park

My wife and I have overnighted at Karoo National Park a number of times, but this time for three nights in April on our way down to the Cape and again on our way back.

When we pitched on the 27th, we were given a rousing welcome by Patricia and Gertruida. Both had been very good to us, but then all of your staff are really nice people. Once we had settled, I went in search of a size 10 nut that had fallen off and caused the tailpipe of my old Landcruiser to rattle. That was extremely optimistic, as your workshops were closed as they should be on a public holiday. Returning to our spot, I flagged down an oncoming bakkie. It was Mondie. He told me to relax and returned 20 minutes later with three nuts. It was no problem for him to refit it. His attitude and willingness to be helpful was just great.

We thoroughly enjoyed our stay. Please be so good as to pass our appreciation on to the staff named above!

Rob Lloyd



## More international recognition for our parks

In the last edition we brought you news that the Garden Route had been voted by National Geographic in its list of 12 Global Destinations, encouraging Northern Hemispherians to visit the area.

Earlier this month, one of the USA's biggest news agencies, CNN, recommended South Africa as a place to visit on holiday, with Camdeboo National Park's Valley of Desolation featuring on its list of "23 reasons to visit SA". This while it issues European travel alerts, cautioning its citizens to be wary of terror attacks at tourist destinations on the continent.

The CNN list notes neighbourhoods to natural wonders in their highlights, which for us also is a reminder of just how magical our country is, and hopefully motivates you to explore South Africa too.



## Elephant rescue at Hapoor Dam

What do Addo Elephant National Park rangers do when they get wind of an elephant calf stuck in one of its dams? They go out and save it, of course.

That's exactly what happened on the evening of Sunday 9 April when they heard of a calf in trouble - too small to get itself out.

After picking up a tow rope from Main Camp, the rangers made their way to Hapoor, where they found two Honorary Rangers who pointed out the calf to them, as well as the mother frantically trying to help her baby.

Backup was called, and a further two Honorary Rangers arrived to assist as well. One of the rangers used a vehicle to drive the mother away from the scene and keep an eye on her, while another pulled up to the calf with two rangers on board who would lift the calf out of the water.

But he/she wasn't safely on terra firma just yet. When the rangers retreated, they noticed that the calf was exhausted and with spotted hyena approaching, it slipped back into Hapoor. A second attempt at saving the calf was launched, but this time to far enough from the slippery banks of the waterhole. The rangers and Honorary Rangers, who had remained to provide light, then watched from a safe distance as the frantic mother ran to her baby and protectively stood over it until he/she had gained enough strength for the two of them to wade off into the distance.

The tension and anticipation in the air was quickly replaced with relief, excitement and jubilation after everyone eventually took in the magnitude of what had just happened.

Well done to all concerned – Michael Paxton, Sandile Gunya, Gibson Thambo, Dalene De Villiers and all the other rangers and Honorary Rangers! Sandile, though, seemed to be the man of the hour, as everyone cheered and praised him for courageously jumping into Hapoor on both occasions to help the little tyle out.

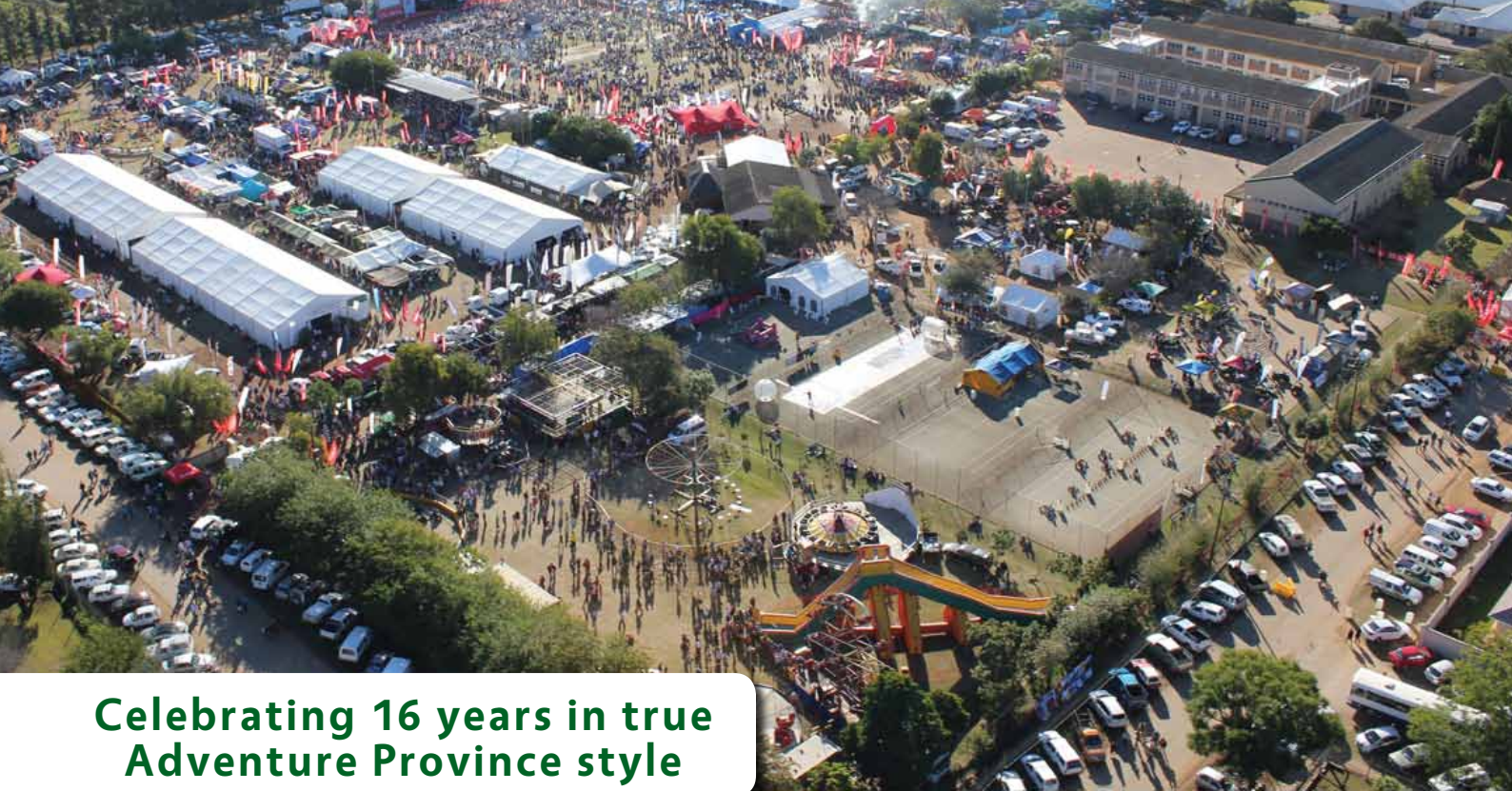
## Garden Route Walking Festival a hit

The second Garden Route Walking Festival attracted some 9 000 people to walk the combination of walking and hiking trails offered by various landowners in the Garden Route. The one and only walking festival of its kind in South Africa was held between 14 and 17 April, with all the hikes guided by experts.

Festival organiser, Galeo Sainz, said there was a hike for everyone on the festival's menu. "There were strenuous, long ones which took long hours, then also moderate and relatively shorter ones," said Galeo.

What makes the festival so unique is the buy-in received from various landowners including conservation agencies, non-governmental organisations and private landowners. The walking festival was initiated during the Easter Holidays last year to encourage a truly collaborative festival where municipalities, conservation groups, local companies and walking enthusiasts come together each year over Easter to celebrate the beauty and magic of the natural environment in the area, said Galeo.

'Adventure is our nature' is the Garden Route National Park's (GRNP) slogan. Hiking is not only healthy but also a great, fun way to explore nature on foot. SANParks has dedicated teams to maintain the quality of trails in the GRNP to allow visitors to walk. The picturesque route is popular for its estuaries, lakes, beaches and mystical forests. A total of 14 of the Park's trails have green flag status - 12 in Tsitsikamma and two in Knysna. This is a global benchmark affirming the quality of trails meet the following criteria: conservation status, health and safety measures, cleanliness and maintenance, sustainability, management and others.



## Celebrating 16 years in true Adventure Province style

Visitors of all ages to the 16th annual SPAR Kirkwood Wildsfees are invited to “Embrace your Wild in the Adventure Province,” says festival director Jennifer Honsbein.

This year’s three-day festival at the end of June includes a unique “festival for all seasons” for kids, the Eastern Cape’s premier game auction, “wild rides” and “wild shopping” at over 350 specialist stalls, as well as a galaxy of stars performing under the Karoo sky on the province’s biggest stage.

Kirkwood is situated in the picturesque Sundays River Valley of the Eastern Cape. It is the heart of the Eastern Cape’s citrus and wildlife industries.

An integral part of the Valley is Addo Elephant National Park, which this year will be offering 56 disease-free, prime buffalo at the Kirkwood Wildsfees Game Auction on Friday, June 30. Added to this are 50 mountain zebra from Mountain Zebra National Park outside Cradock.

There is an adventure zone where families can embrace their wild together. These include pony rides, enchanted walks through the Faeries for all Seasons Wonderland and meeting favourite characters from Paw Patrol for the youngsters, while parents and the older kids enjoy giant games such as dominos, jenga and croquet and the more adventurous try their hand at paint ball.

Families are encouraged to venture into the Walk on the Wildside marquee to discover endless opportunities available for nature enthusiasts to interact with nature and find a career in the wildlife industry.

Top South African artists will be on the all new giant Adventure Province Main Stage for the three day duration of the festival. Artists include the hunky Brendan Peyper, the energetic Radio Kalahari Orkes, the oversized hat rapper Jack Parow, the stunning Riana Nel, the Kaptain Kurt Darren, the leulooper Robbie Wessels, Emo Adams, as well as legends PJ Powers and Sonja Herholdt.

Other favourite attractions include 350 selected stalls, wine tasting all weekend, South Africa’s White Gold Mohair expo, agri expo, a Coca-Cola fun Zone featuring funny man Roland Gaspar, and the Flavourfontein beach bar with lots of exciting activities from South African Breweries and the kykNET Leefstyl Plein.

The SPAR Kirkwood Wildsfees takes place from Friday, June 30 until Sunday, July 2. Gates open from 9am and festinos can party late into the night.

Tickets are available from the SPAR Kirkwood Wildsfees office on 042 230 0064 or go to [www.wildsfees.co.za](http://www.wildsfees.co.za) for more information.



## Clarity around the provision of water in Addo Elephant National Park

South African National Parks are managed as natural systems in which conservationists try as best as possible to mimic natural processes. Addo Elephant National Park (AENP) is managed with a natural gradient of water in place. Nowhere in a natural system would one find water holes dispersed evenly across the landscape. Nature has a way of avoiding this at all costs to prevent the homogenous use of vegetation which ultimately will lead to the extinction or degrading of species.

Take a look at Hapoor; for example, if one wants to see what could potentially happen at water holes if limitless water is provided. The habitat is altered significantly and we have to try and avoid the same happening around all water points.

If AENP is to be sustainable into the future, we have to try and mimic nature as closely as possible.

For this reason the Park has a water gradient in place that has been around for a couple of years now. AENP’s unnatural river is represented by Hapoor, Spekboom, Ghwari, Woodlands, Nyathi and Domkrag, where large amounts of water is provided. The remaining water holes in the Park are not in place to quench elephant water needs, but rather to meet the needs of other species.

In this way elephants are forced to not homogeneously use the landscape. In times when there are good rains elephants will be found across the landscape when all pans and dams have water. During drier periods, elephants move back to the main water sources, thus protecting the Colchester thicket from being over browsed during dry periods. The water holes in the Colchester section are purposefully limited in number as well as the quantity of water available.

It should also be kept in mind that stress is part of nature and it is vital that everyone understand this. Drought times are supposed to induce stress which affects the elephants’ inter-calving intervals. Conservationists need to mimic this or else our elephants will keep a growth rate up of between seven and nine percent per annum. This is not a sustainable model and the very elephants we are trying to protect will become the biggest threat to our precious national park.

Currently AENP is experimenting with elephant exclusion water points outside of the public eye. This is to ensure that elephants don’t out-compete other species, especially the rare and threatened species. This is the case currently and we need to manage all species, not only elephant.

With this in mind, we will erect these exclusions around Lismore and Peasland in the near future, hoping that the general, loyal visitor will understand. The structure is rectangular in shape, with four telephone posts in the corners. An electric strand is suspended at two metres in height and has vertical one metre strands hanging off the main strand at 800mm intervals. These strands are electrified to stop elephants from walking in, who will soon realise that water point is not available to them and proceed to areas with water that is able to sustain them. Other game is then able to use those water points without having to compete with elephants.

Some may think this is cruel, but the alternative requires the reduction in elephant densities. This buys us time and protects the Park from catastrophic homogenisation of the landscape.

AENP hopes to extend the elephant home range in the near future. We are currently completing a fence in the Darlington section which will see the introduction of elephants from the main game viewing area into a 50 000 hectare area around the Darlington dam. Furthermore, we are shortly going to request funds to fence off another 29 000 hectares of land in the Kabouga section which will allow us to move another large number of elephants across to this area.

Lastly, we are currently making use of contraceptive drugs to halt the growth in elephant numbers in the Nyathi and Kuzuko contractual areas of the Park. This is an expensive method but works very effectively.



## Planned burns - a huge win for conservation

The planned ecological burn in Brenton (Knysna), which was postponed last year, got underway on 15 May. The steering committee concerned about the ecological wellbeing of the area made a decision guided by the weather to burn on the day. Approximately 71 hectares on the Southern slopes along the Brenton-on-sea Road was set to burn which included Portions 39 and 40 of the Uitzigt Farm.

"It is a collective effort from all stakeholders because 85% of the fynbos scheduled to burn has not burnt in the last 30 years," said Dirk Smit of the Southern Cape Fire Protection Association (FPA).

Partners included the Southern Cape FPA, SANParks, Knysna Municipal Fire Services, Working on Fire, PG Bison, Knysna Municipality - Traffic Control and the landowners (WVWF & Susan Campbell). All are adamant to restore Knysna Sand Fynbos and to provide habitat for species dependent on this ecosystem over the medium to long term. Portions 39 and 40 of the Farm Uitzigt 216 are ideally located spatially and are relatively free from alien vegetation, thus providing an excellent opportunity to benefit conservation for such a critically endangered ecosystem.



Maretha Alant, Environmental Planner of the Garden Route National Park adds, "Many fynbos species only recruit after a fire as fire stimulates seed release and germination. In a landscape where fire is kept indefinitely, fynbos often reverts to thicket vegetation or forest. Without fire, fynbos will lose its true character and species." In addition, Fynbos fires should occur at intervals of 10 to 30 years. Natural fires typically occur during warm and dry weather conditions, which result in high intensity fires, which is desirable from an ecological point of view.

Fire close to an urban area is risky business. However, there are trade-offs that have to happen to preserve a system that has not had fire for so long.

Controlled burns such as this planned one will help minimise the risk of uncontrolled, accidental wildfires. The lower fuel load after the burn is said to result in lower fire risk for a few years.

The remaining natural Knysna Sand Fynbos is approximately 1 478 ha (9.6% of the original extent) and falls short of the conservation target of 3 531 hectares.



## Rhino Art at Middelwater Primary School

Rhino Art is a non-profit organisation (NPO) with the goal of educating and involving children in the fight against rhino poaching in South Africa, created by the Kingsley Holgate foundation. They focus on the next generation of conservationists by visiting schools and teaching its learners about conserving these critically endangered animals in a way that they understand and can relate to - with a dash of fun added into the equation. Their focus is set on rural schools far from cities and towns, as these children don't receive much exposure to education from a conservation point of view. Many corporates are involved in the Rhino Art project as supporters towards the cause in the war against poaching.

Rhino Art member and SANParks Honorary Ranger, Dave Pattle, and a film crew made their mark on the hearts and minds of 40 children in the rural primary school of Middelwater, near Addo Elephant National Park's Darlington section, during April. The school consists of two classrooms and an informal hostel. Grades 1 and 2 are taught together in one of the classrooms while the Grade 3 and 4 learners occupy the other. The principal is one of two teachers at the school, while a hostel mother cares for the children's every need from Mondays to Thursdays.

Dave's initial visit to the school was on Wednesday 19 April, when he delivered colouring pictures and crayons to the school and told the children that they should do their best to make them beautiful. He promised them that the best artists would win a prize when he returned. Two days later, the kids were waiting for his return, masterpiece in hand.

The teachers, Dave, his film crew, a Kuzuko Lodge staff member, and a Student Ranger and Environmental Monitor from Addo were given the task of choosing the best works of art. However, before Dave announced the winners, he gave the learners a short educational session where he spoke about what is happening to rhino populations, why it is happening, who is creating the problem and what can be done about it.

When that was over he called out the winners of the competition, handed over their certificates and announced the top two artists. These two received not only their certificates, but also a bicycle each, donated to the Rhino Art project by supporters. Pictures were taken and hands were shaken whilst everything was captured on film.

The Rhino Art team left that day knowing that they delivered a message and hopefully lit a flame in the hearts of those children, who could potentially become influential in the conservation of the environment in the future. They will continue this task all over the country, as educating for a sustainable environment begins with the youth.



## Addo cheetahs translocated to KwaZulu-Natal

Two of the three cheetahs which broke into Addo Elephant National Park (AENP) outside Port Elizabeth in 2014 have been captured and will be translocated to the Phinda Private Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal.

The three males from a neighbouring property were not destined to remain in Addo as they never occurred in the area naturally. It is South African National Parks' policy to only introduce wildlife species to parks where they would have occurred before hunting or habitat loss forced them to local extinction. One of them had since died.

The three caused great excitement among guests, who had never before 2014 seen cheetah in Addo's game viewing area. They had been the topic of many discussions since, with some groups planning visits to the Park with the specific hope of capturing them on film. Today's operation was conducted by AENP conservation officials, with assistance from the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT). The animals will now form part of the EWT's Cheetah Metapopulation Project (CMP), which entails the management of over 300 cheetahs on more than 50 small fenced reserves in South Africa.

A managed population is a set of geographically isolated populations of the same species that exchange individuals through human-controlled movement. Fenced metapopulations need to be managed to prevent the undesired effects of inbreeding. The project is a collaborative effort between all cheetah reserves in South Africa, co-ordinated by the EWT and funded by a number of international environmental entities and generous donations. In other words, the principal goals of the CMP are to maintain the genetic and demographic integrity of the metapopulation and to increase the resident range of cheetah in South Africa.

AENP Conservation Manager, John Adendorff, says they foresee the two will form a coalition at Phinda and hopefully pass on their genetics to new generations.



## VW came to town!



Volkswagen Group South Africa had motoring journalists from across the country experience the road up to the Valley of Desolation in their new generation Golfs at the beginning of May. Needless to say, they weren't disappointed when they got to the top to enjoy the view over some drinks and snacks, and apparently the car doesn't drive too badly either!

## New appointments in Mountain Zebra

Ayeza Vabaza, previously based in Tsitsikamma, started in her new position as Receptionist at Mountain Zebra National Park at the beginning of May.

Meanwhile, hard work paid off for Sinethemba Tiem, who used to be a Field Guide (intern) in the Park. He has now been appointed as Field Guide on a permanent basis.

Congratulations and welcome to you both!



**Ayeza Vabaza**



**Sinethemba Tiem**

## New dads!

Congratulations to Hesron Ruiters from the Tsitsikamma section of Garden Route National Park on the birth of his twins last month! Can anyone say "double trouble"?

We also wish to congratulate to Kyle Smith (Garden Route - Scientific Services) and his wife Matty on the birth of their son, Kane, on 7 April.

We wish you all the best with your new extended families, colleagues!



## Well done Karoo National Park!