



# Enviro-News: Village on Sea

## AUTUMN 2021

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### Introduction

These past few months have treated us to a feast of marine life. Following on summer, with its excellent whale viewing, the autumn period is also treating us well. Great shoals of anchovies and marine mammals, notably dolphins, with massive schools of common and bottlenose dolphins and most recently a huge school of aerobatic 'spinner dolphins'.

The single scrub hare that has been active on the Estate for several months seems to have found a mate. Let's hope their playful antics lead to a litter of leverets.

We can also add a new bird species to our list: Rock Martin. This bird was spotted over several days flying very fast along the front of the cliff at the Trail. Unfortunately, not easy to take a photo.

In the last Enviro-News we reported on the application and subsequent appeal to convert a harbour premises to a fish processing plant with many opposing and others recognising the economic value. In the end the responsible MEC made a wise decision by authorising the development for an initial period of five years. This gives enough time to assess any smell problems as well as the economic viability of the facility.

### Marine and coastal regulations.

In 1998, eleven scientists got together and formed a 'Coastal Policy Group' that would spearhead the development of a Coastal Zone Act for South Africa. Past abuse of coastal resources was threatening the realization of the full benefits of the fantastic SA shore line. This core group managed to persuade the British Ministry for International Development (DFID) to provide funding. Then, with extensive public involvement, a Green Paper was produced which set out the people's aspirations in each of the following five themes: Our Natural Heritage, Coastal Planning, pollution Control and Waste Management, Natural Resource Management, Governance and Capacity.

Following years of deliberations, arguments and conflicts it was only in 2008 that the Integrated Coastal Zone Act was promulgated. However, what was lost in time has been gained in quality as the new Act has been considered amongst the best coastal zone legislation in the world. The critical element now is its proper implementation.

Significantly, the Heritage Theme remains central as it confirms the collective ownership of the coast for all South Africans and grants rights of free access to all to the sea and coast, (on a managed basis). This has a bearing on our approach to anyone wanting to access the coast via our Estate. In order to have an equitable distribution of coastal access, the authorities have formally legislated different sections of the coast as public zones and identified routes to the coast. Additional paths are not allowed, mainly because too many paths destroy the front protective dunes. Thus, wherever access is impeded by private ownership (rather like our Estate), a public route to the sea must be maintained, as indeed we do. We can manage the use of this access, for example by recording personal details of visitors, setting times of access, etc Our neighbouring estates have a similar arrangement So..., next time we see a bunch of anglers walking via our estate to reach the coast we should wish them a friendly "tight lines"!

## Street Names

As previously suggested, those who named our streets did a marvellous job in drawing on indigenous plant names but with a local touch. This time we highlight 'Strandsalie', a splendid plant also known as beach- or golden sage *Salvia aurea*. Its grey and aromatic leaves attractively offset its golden brown flowers. This species is quite common in the Western Province, especially near the coast where it can live on beach sand dunes. This is an excellent choice for a garden, and it attracts sunbirds, butterflies **and** bees. The leaves can be used in preparing aromatic tea, which is said to be a remedy for coughs.



## Dolphins

On most days when one walks down to the Trail you are likely to spot dolphins. With a measure of good luck, it is possible to spot humpback dolphins, normally close inshore. This species has a large bump on its back, making it less appealing than the traditional 'Flipper', but with plenty of character nonetheless. It is also brownish in colour, most evident when looking down from the top of the cliff.

Humpback with calves. (photo-IWC)



This Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin is popular with visitors and especially supports dolphin tourism activities, in Zanzibar, India and Australia. Its preferred habitat is around river mouths and estuaries, often areas of elevated pollution, fishing nets, shipping and other potentially harmful threats. This impacts on the viability of the humpback dolphin populations, prompting the World Conservation Union (IUCN) to raise this species to Vulnerable status. Research suggests that populations are declining by 3.7% which translates to 1/3 of the total population over three generations (=75 years). Scientists have been keeping track of the South African humpback by photographing their unique features, such as fin shapes and nicks and body scars. A total of 526 distinct animals has been documented in SA waters, with 73 individuals having been so photo-identified as 'resident' in Mossel Bay.

## Plant in focus

When negotiating the Trail or other sections of our Estate, every so often one can expect a flash of red in an otherwise drab piece of ground. This is the George lily (*Cyrtanthus elatus*) one of the many species belonging to the Amaryllis family. This striking flower pops up for only a day or two before wilting. Others in this family have a range of colours from yellow to mauve. While the George lily is endemic to the southern Cape, it is increasingly cultivated for the cut flower trade.

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