



## Lightings...

### Leopards at De Hoop – TANYA BEATTIE

In an effort to establish the numbers of leopards in De Hoop, Jeannine McManus, a Phd student, set camera traps at five different locations in the reserve during September 2011. Two cameras are set at each location in order to get photographic images of both sides of the animal, which is needed for identification purposes. Three sets were installed in the eastern sector of the reserve, one set in the Tierhoek area and the last set in the Dronkvlei area.

In early November the first data sets were downloaded and the results were better than expected. One adult male was photographed on three separate occasions at the Tierhoek cameras. Another adult male, accompanied by an adult female, was photographed at Lekkerwater in the eastern sector. This same adult male was also photographed on two other occasions at the Vaalkrans cameras, also in the eastern sector.

The above mentioned three leopards, along with a collared female from Potberg, bring the known total up to four individuals at present. Monitoring of the cameras, to give us a better understanding of the habits of these elusive creatures, is ongoing.



Male at Tierhoek



Male at Vaalkrans

A further advantage of having these cameras installed is that we are obtaining photographic records of other species in the reserve, including african wildcat, bushpig, honey badger and caracal. All this adds to the reserves baseline data inventories.



African wild cat and bushpig photographed at the Dronkvlei fenceline.



## Some interesting facts on Southern right whales by Meredith Thornton

- Mammal Research Institute - University of Pretoria

Whales only calve every 3 years, so the population is naturally separated into 3 cohorts of calving adults. 2010 was the lowest cohort and 2011 the so-called bumper year, with 2012 being the in-between year.

Towards the end of the season, there is a general westwards movement every year, as cows move along the shore and eventually head off south (or in the case of some of them, up the west coast) to feed.

In addition to this movement the entire distribution of the population seems to be shifting westwards over time, so we now see almost as many whales from Agulhas to Muizenberg as there are from Nature's Valley to Agulhas. In the past there were not that many animals along the De Hoop coastline, but now that area has hundreds of animals, so given the apparent distributional shift I don't believe that our numbers are very useful in "promoting" specific numbers of whales in any given locality... for all we know, over time False Bay could eventually become a hot spot for whales!

While the average date for calving is late-August, we choose to fly around the mid-October because that is when all the calves are probably born. I see really tiny calves as well as big calves, so by the time I fly over De Hoop, the larger ones may already have headed westwards along the coast and out of the De Hoop area. It is quite typical for us to see very large calves from Agulhas to Hangklip.

We also fly the De Hoop section over a couple of days, using several flights, so because of this movement described above, we have numerous repeated sightings, so the figures that I give you are very rough figures, and include repeated sightings, as these are only taken out when we do data analysis at a much later date. For example 2007 was flown very late due to bad weather, so De Hoop numbers will artificially be higher than expected for that year; and 2008 was a crazy year with bad weather and heaps of animals, so we have some huge overlaps (so that we don't miss any pairs), and thus these numbers are a large over estimate.

I think that using actual whale numbers for marketing (see table below), and trying to compare what is happening between years, is both tricky and misleading because whales move up and down all the time, so when we fly over it is literally just a brief snapshot of what is happening in your area on that particular day. As a result of depending on good weather for flying, we are sometimes earlier and sometimes later – and the animals respond to some other cue than our calendar, so I would suggest saying something along the lines of: "The De Hoop coastline is an important nursery ground for srw's and over 100 cow-calf pairs can be seen close inshore along the coast during the peak whale season."

## *What's* happening in 2012...

### **14 -15 February 2012 - De Hoop Valentines Evening**

Special Valentine's offer! Women who visit the reserve for a minimum of 2 nights with their partners will be treated to a complimentary 4 course dinner under the giant fig trees.

### **6-9 April 2012 - De Hoop Easter Weekend with the Family**

Join us for a fantastic family holiday, with a wide range of unique Easter activities for children - including Easter egg painting, an Easter-egg hunt amidst the Fynbos, and a guest appearance by the Easter bunny. Parents can take a timeout and indulge in a sumptuous Easter Sunday brunch at The Fig Tree Restaurant. Booking is essential, and remember to include the number of children in your party.

### **11-13 May 2012 - De Hoop Special Mother's Day Weekend**

Take the opportunity to spoil your mother by booking a luxurious trip to De Hoop over Mother's Day weekend (and make sure you or a sibling joins her). If she's accompanied by at least one of her children, she will get one night's accommodation FREE over this weekend. We'll also be laying on a delectable Mother's Day lunch at the famous Fig Tree Restaurant, complete with added TLC for mothers! Booking is essential.

### **25 – 27 May 2012 - De Hoop Culinary Adventure to Remember!**

Learn how to create delicate canapés for those special occasions, followed by a delicious dinner made ahead of time so that you can enjoy time with your guests! Guests will also have a hands-on cooking class to produce a delicious lunch, with a selection of small portions paired with sensational wines from the Area. This is guaranteed to be a yummy weekend!

### **1-2 June 2012 - Welcome De Hoop Whales with Style!**

Around 40% of the world's Southern Right Whale population starts arriving in the bay along the De Hoop shoreline in June, and you can join our welcoming party. This weekend kicks off the annual breeding season and a leading whale authority will be sharing some of his expertise and stories through complimentary talks for all De Hoop Collection guests.

### **16 - 17<sup>th</sup> June - De Hoop – Fathers' Day**

Take the opportunity to spoil your father by booking a luxurious trip to De Hoop over Father's Day weekend (and make sure you or a sibling joins her). If he's accompanied by at least one of his children, he will get one night's accommodation FREE over this weekend. We'll also be laying on a delectable Father's Day lunch at the famous Fig Tree Restaurant, complete with added TLC for fathers! Booking is essential.

### **7 – 8 July 2012 - De Hoop – Stargazing Weekend**

Away from the artificial lights, De Hoop offers exceptional stargazing opportunities. A stargazing specialist will be doing presentations on the stars – An opportunity not to be missed

### **13-15 July 2012 - De Hoop Christmas in July**

Join us for a festive weekend filled with Christmas cheer. Lined up we have a Friday night braai, chocolate making and a traditional Christmas dinner along with some other great family activities.

### **27– 29 July 2012 - De Hoop - Wonderful Cooking amongst the Whales**

Welcome in the Whales with a special meal! Come learn how to create dishes of the Overberg area followed by a delicious dinner made ahead of time so that you can enjoy time with your guests!

There will also be a hands-on cooking class to produce a delicious lunch, with a selection of small portions paired with sensational wines from the Agulhas/Elim/Napier Region



## **AUGUST - De Hoop - Women's Month**

In tribute to the wonderful women of our country, we will be offering every woman who makes a reservation in August a complimentary extra night's stay. And if you're there on Women's Day on 9 August, you can join in the celebrations at our special Fig Tree Restaurant Women's Day brunch where women will receive special gifts and a presentation by a dynamic motivational speaker.

## **25 – 27 August 2012 - De Hoop - Agulhas Wine Festival**

Join local wine makers from Elim, Napier, Agulhas and surrounding areas for an unforgettable weekend of wine tasting in a beautiful setting! Sunset on Friday and Saturday evenings will see wine tasting taking place at The Fig Tree Restaurant, which will also serve a special 5-course gourmet food and wine pairing meal. Limited wine will be on sale.

## **SEPTEMBER 2012 - De Hoop Potberg Challenge – an Exclusive MTB event**

Mountain Bikers will have their work cut out for them with this race in an exquisite setting in and around De Hoop – Limited to 400 participants. The race will raise money for conservation and the local school

## **16- 18 September 2012 - De Hoop Music Weekend**

Come and enjoy delicious wine, cocktails and canapes while top musicians treat you to music for strings and flute by Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, Donizetti and Tchaikovsky, along with some spectacular African pieces. The weekend will also include guided walks, a picnic and sumptuous meals.

## **1 – 5 October 2012 - Dance of Light Photographic Workshop by Nicole Palmer**

The talented Nicole and Eric Palmer will help you discover the many facets of the beautiful De Hoop Nature Reserve through a lens! During the workshop, you will learn a number of tips and techniques to photograph the landscape. The lectures include Basic Photoshop, Exposure, Histogram and White Balance, Visual Design and Composition, 2 photo shoots per day with 'hands on tuition' in the field, daily analysis of participants photographs and Audio Visual shows. With their expressive approach, the Palmers will help you to develop your creativity while immersing yourself in photographing the spectacular Nature Reserve.

**NOVEMBER - Birding Month** - November is birding month and there can be few better places to celebrate than De Hoop, which is home to rich variety of different bird species. The 19 km vlei and surrounding fynbos is a birding enthusiast's paradise, home to several pairs of fish eagles, breeding pelicans, flamingos, waterfowl, as many as 13 species of migrant waders, purple heron and many others too numerous to mention. We'll be hosting regular birding talks by experts and guests will receive a free birding walk and breakfast with every booking made during this month.



## Guest Feedback...

We are just back and I just wanted to let you know we had SUCH a SUPER time!!! The weather could not have been better, no wind at all and the whales were fantastic!! We loved staying in the beautiful Melkkamer Manor, a real treat in every way – full of old world atmosphere and modern comforts, just gorgeous! All staff was very attentive and friendly, and special compliments to our guide Dalfrenzo, he was very informative and enthusiastic as well as knowledgeable - LOUISIANNE DIEPERING

We had a wonderful time at De Hoop. The food at the restaurant was exceptional - please pass on our compliments to Lisl and the team ... The boys also thoroughly enjoyed the guided quad bike tour. Please can you pass on our compliments to your team - their warmth went a long way in making our stay such a pleasurable one! We hope to return next year - LUBNA BHAYANI

Having returned to the UK we would like to thank you for the most fantastic time at De Hoop - we would certainly return if and when we were able to do so! There was so much more we could have done in the way of walks etc. The whales were fantastic, as was the wild life on terra firma. The accommodation was fantastic, together with all the staff - MIKE THACKER

Just wanted to share with you the feedback received from the Willows Family who stayed with you last month. They enjoyed a fabulous day's outing on the Reserve and a good lunch at The Fig Tree Restaurant. Bravo to you all and keep up the good work. BARBARA JAMES – ODLUM TRAVEL & TOURS

I would like to thank you and your team for the wonderful opportunity of staying at De Hoop - we had an amazing time. I fell in love with the Melkkamer accommodations and will definitely have to come back in 2012 ERIKA COSTA - XO AFRICA



For more information please visit our website or contact us: [www.dehoopcollection.co.za/](http://www.dehoopcollection.co.za/)  
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