



MAY UPDATE

Dear BBC Members

It is Father's Day today.

High-Fives to all the BBC 'dads and father-figures' who support the BBC and conservation in Betty's Bay, and beyond, in a variety of ways.

In our local wildlife, the "dads" play a variety of roles. From minimal "parental responsibility" in tortoises, to share the incubating, feeding and protection of their offspring in bird species, to the alpha male in charge of and protecting our baboon troop.

This doesn't happen in the local African Penguin, but the male Emperor Penguin is a particularly devoted dad. He is left "holding the baby" for two months of "dad duty" while mom heads off to sea to feed after laying the egg. Through the Antarctic winter, he balances the egg on his feet, keeping it warm with his brood pouch. He can't feed during this time. When mom returns, he can go to sea to feed again. That is a devoted dad! *Photo credit: screengrab from Secrets of the penguins*



Dad positioning the egg for his two-month duty

Our winters are not as icy as Emperor Dad has to endure, but our wildlife still change their activity levels and prepare in various ways (see the Infographic). Many humans have their own form of winter behaviors and many "hibernate" or fly off to warmer places. Perhaps Nature Journaling can be a new form of winter activity for you (see the article).

In midst of the winter chill, we extend a warm welcome to our newest BBC members: Birgit and Martin joined at our Bee and Tea event. Thanks so much for joining and supporting the BBC.

BBCthSATURDAY on 27 June: We look forward to hosting Keith Hamilton to tell us about Winter Birding in Betty's Bay. From 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. at the Eco Venue at Stony Point. Advert to follow.

Best wishes from the BBC Team

Carol, Ann, Barbara, Galia, Tony, Pete, Herman, Jan and Johan – who is on an exciting cycling adventure in Namibia.



“BEE and TEA”



It was World Bee Day on 20 May. The theme for World Bee Day was “Bee together for people and planet – A partnership that sustains us all.”

To celebrate this day, at our BBC4thSATURDAY event on 25 May, we hosted Lourens and Dylan Kruger from the Cape Honey Bee Conservancy.

May was a tough month for many residents of Betty’s Bay after the severe storm left damaged houses in its wake, and no water and electricity in certain areas. We decided to make this “Bee and Tea” a lighthearted event. We added cheerful yellow flowers and serviettes to our colour scheme, invited people to wear their favourite, fun or gardening hat and had a ‘bring and share’ tea afterward.

Louren and Dylan began their journey into beekeeping after a swarm of bees made a home in an owlbox in their garden. They founded the Cape Honey Bee Conservancy (CHBC) in 2018. The Cape Honeybee (*Apis mellifera capensis*) is only found in the Western Cape.



In 2022, after helping to remove a swarm from the gardens at Helderberg Hospice, the CHBC embraced the Hospice as their social responsibility. Every October, they donate their income from bee removals during the month to the Hospice. They want to spread their support of Hospice, and they have a vision to help establish a Palliative Care Unit at Overstrand Hospice.

They want to develop relationships with farmers—built on trust, collaboration, and a shared commitment to conservation. They also strive to educate communities about reducing pesticide use and choosing safer alternatives that protect pollinators.

"We are simply custodians of God's creation, privileged to serve as beekeepers.

For us, this is not a hobby—it is a calling. Saving one bee at a time."



Then came the quiz:



Xena Gericke gave away four of her "Colours of an African Penguin" book as prizes. Lourens contributed two of their final bottles of the seasons CHBC honey as prizes. I won one of the bottles and decided to put it up for auction to try and raise some funds for the Palliative Care Unit at Overstrand Hospice. Pete Oxford accepted my call for a volunteer "Auctioneer" and helped to raise R260 for the bottle of honey.



And the tea ...

It was lovely to see many people stay for tea, chatting to friends and visitors. Thanks to everyone who contributed towards the refreshments.

Carol Clark

POISON!



Last month, Mike The Owl Box Man, showed us how dangerous it is to put poison out for rodents. Owls suffer from secondary poisoning after eating those rodents and other poisoned prey. He asked us to stop using poison and consider using humane animal traps.

At his talk, Lourens shared the story of a situation that resulted in the loss of 14 of the CHBC hives.



A farmer sprayed a cocktail of poisons on his land. When Lourens and Dylan next went to service their hives on this farm – they found devastation. The winds blew this poison in the direction of the Cape Honey Bee Conservancy hives. The bees were dead. The 14 hives had to be destroyed. This was tragic and a significant loss for CHBC.

The Wild'nFree Infographic at the end of this newsletter also calls for us to stop using poisons and pesticides.

Who sprays in our community? Homeowners, the Municipality? Do they understand the ripple effects of poison?

If preventing the use of poison within our community is an issue that you are concerned about, please contact us on bettysbayconservancy@gmail.com. Perhaps we can work on an education campaign.

STONY POINT NATURE RESERVE

Thanks to those of you who completed the community engagement survey on the Stony Point Nature Reserve.



Some of you attended the Community Engagement Session on Tuesday 9 June in Crassula Hall.

It was a facilitated session, with presentations by SANCCOB and CapeNature.

CapeNature announced their plan to introduce a predator-proof fence around the Stony Point colony. This invoked mixed opinions, and many concerns from residents.

We plan to include information on this in next month's Newsletter.

Carol Clark

PERSPECTIVES ON BIOSPHERE LIVING

In the last newsletter we included an infographic on Biosphere Living, and a question of "do we love the biosphere to death" with our actions?

Here is a "50/50" type question from a resident

This style of article is different from those we usually feature in our BBC newsletter, but it is an interesting question. Have you noticed anything similar or do have any "on the ground" ideas, observations or solutions to contribute? I have edited the question and answer slightly to shorten it.

Question:

I noticed that our Grysbokkies seem to have more ticks than usual, especially on their ears and face. Is it due to a decrease in certain plants that would normally act as a natural repellent or have the dynamics of the bush changed to such an extent that grysbok find it difficult to rub off the ticks? Alternatively, is there another reason?



AI response:

It is an excellent observation, and you have hit on some very specific environmental triggers. What you are seeing on the Cape Grysbok (*Raphicerus melanotis*) in the Kogelberg Biosphere, is actually a combination of the natural mechanics of how these small antelope move through the bush, combined with subtle, shifting dynamics in the fynbos ecosystem. The heavy tick burden on the ears and faces of the grysbokkies, and why it seems so much worse lately, is driven by a few key ecological factors:

1. The Anatomy of "Questing" and Foraging



The primary reason ticks concentrate so heavily on the ears and face of the grysbok comes down to how both the insect and the animal behave:

The "Questing" Height: Ticks climb to the tips of vegetation and wait with their front legs extended—a behaviour called questing. Because grysbok are small, low-slung antelope, their faces and large, sensitive ears are the very first point of contact as they push through the brush to forage.

Self-Grooming Limitations: Antelope use their teeth and hooves to groom themselves. While a grysbok can scratch its body or lick its flanks, it is incredibly difficult for them to effectively remove tiny larval or nymph ticks from the delicate skin around their eyes, muzzle, and inside the folds of their large ears.

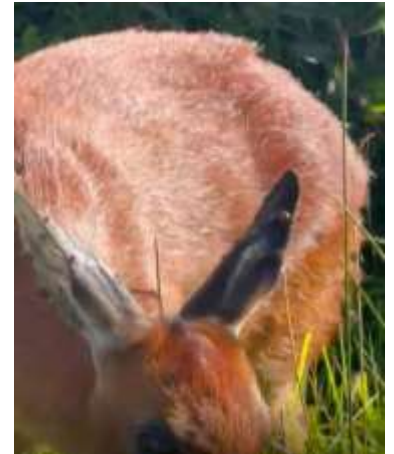
2. Shifting Bush Dynamics: Aging Fynbos and Alien Encroachment

Overgrown Understory: Grysbok prefer relatively thick, "weedy" undergrowth or young fynbos where they can hide. However, if an area of fynbos goes too long without a fire cycle, it becomes tall, woody, and dense. This creates a continuous, enclosed canopy at exactly the height of a grysbok's head. Instead of lightly brushing past plants, they are constantly forcing their faces through dense, tangled twigs, functioning like a biological broom that sweeps up every questing tick.

Invasive Alien Vegetation: In areas where alien species like Rooikrans (*Acacia cyclops*) or Port Jackson (*Acacia saligna*) encroach, the microclimate changes. These aliens create a dense, shaded, and highly humid understory. Ticks are incredibly sensitive to desiccation (drying out); they thrive and survive much longer in humid, shaded microclimates than they do in open, sun-drenched pristine fynbos.

3. The "Natural Repellent" Hypothesis

There isn't a documented direct decline in a specific plant that acted as a blanket community shield for the grysbok. Many indigenous fynbos plants—most notably Buchu (*Agathosma species*), Wild Garlic (*Tulbaghia violacea*), and various aromatic Pelargoniums—contain strong essential oils that naturally deter insects and ticks. When fynbos is healthy and biodiverse, animals brushing past these plants inevitably get coated in minor traces of these aromatic oils. If localized clearing, urban fragmentation, or alien plant displacement reduces the density of these highly aromatic understory species in the specific pathways the grysbok use, they lose that secondary, incidental layer of protection.



4. Climate and Weather: The Real Catalyst

The most likely reason you are noticing a sudden spike lately points toward regional weather patterns over the last couple of seasons:

Warmer Winters and Delayed Frosts: Ticks in South Africa are increasingly active year-round due to higher-than-average pre-winter and winter temperatures. If a winter is mild, the natural die-off or dormancy phase of the tick population doesn't happen.

Synchronized Spring Hatches: Mild, humid conditions lead to massive, synchronized explosions of tick larvae (often called "pepper ticks") in the spring and early summer. When thousands hatch at once, the sheer volume on the tips of the vegetation makes heavy infestation inevitable for any passing host.

Nature's Balance

While it looks alarming and uncomfortable, wild stable populations of Cape Grysbok have evolved alongside indigenous ticks (like the African Blue tick and various *Amblyomma species*) for millennia. Under normal conditions, healthy adult grysbok tolerate a surprisingly high tick load without suffering severe systemic illness, as their immune systems are well adapted. However, if the habitat continues to fragment or become heavily overgrown with alien vegetation, the increased parasite pressure can become a stress factor.

Question and AI response submitted by Wayne Jackson

BBC: This answer mentions some of the factors that we observe in Betty's Bay that impact the habitat of the grysbok: localised clearing, urban development that fragments habitat, alien vegetation, and older fynbos that gets woody and dense.

This is another motivation NOT to strip plots of all vegetation prior to building. Clearing just the footprint of a home for building helps to maintain some wildlife habitat and corridor space. Fencing the entire boundary of your property also limits wildlife movement. If you have pets, please consider fencing just a portion of your property, and leave the rest as natural habitat for wildlife to traverse.

It is important to note any behavioural changes in a grysbok to try to determine if the tick load has become too heavy for it, or if the animal has become infected.

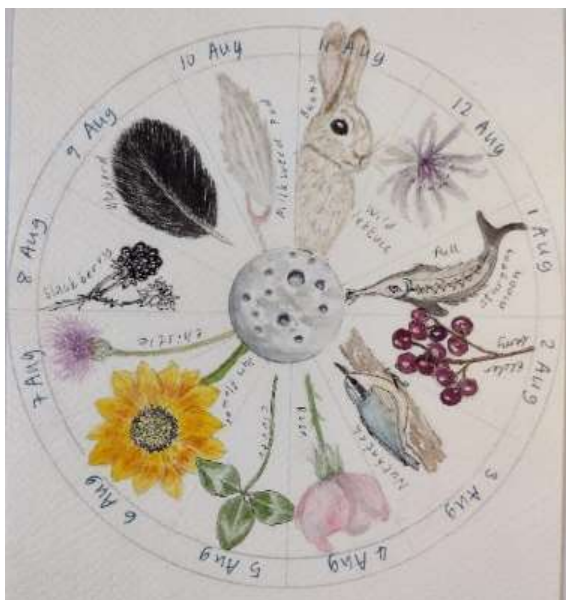
NATURE JOURNALING

The fun of Nature Journaling - why we all need to do it.

So... why am I telling you about **Nature Journaling**?

Because somewhere along the way, we became permanently attached to our devices. Not *all* bad, of course—but in the process, we drifted away from nature. Life sped up. More to do, more places to be, more accounts to follow.

We've forgotten how to slow down. To stop. To actually *notice* things—like the smell of the air after rain or the tiny details hiding in plain sight. Nature journaling gently pulls us back into that connection, reminding us of the quiet magic that's been here all along (no Wi-Fi required).



The best part? **Nature journaling is for everyone.**

You don't need to be a writer, an artist, or a scientist. You just need curiosity. It's simply about documenting what you experience in nature and creating memories you can return to again and again.

Nature journaling is a personal relationship built through observation. It can happen anywhere—on a city sidewalk, at the beach, or deep in the forest. It's the practice of slowing down, stopping, listening, and really looking. As you record what you notice, you become the explorer, the scientist, and the lifelong student (sometimes all at once).

As John Muir Laws puts it beautifully:

"The goal of nature journaling is not to create a portfolio of pretty pictures, but to develop a tool to help you see, wonder, and remember your experiences."

All you need is a pen/pencil, a notebook and your curiosity.



Not sure where to start? Follow the W's:

Who?

Who do you see? A butterfly doing ballet among the flowers? A squirrel playing an intense game of hide-and-seek? Keep an eye out for nature's tiny celebrities.

What?

What do you smell, hear, or feel? Birds singing their greatest hits? Wind through the trees? The sun giving you a warm, cozy hug? Close your eyes and tune into the orchestra around you.

When?

When did it happen? How often? What season is nature showing off today?

Where?

Where is it happening—on the ground, in the trees, in the sky, or perched on a single leaf?

Why?

Why is it windy? Why are there only three baboons? Why is this plant thriving here and refusing to grow two steps over? (Nature loves a mystery.)

With those questions in hand, you have started and you are journaling! No notifications, no filters, just you and the world outside.

Ria Kotze

BBC: Ria runs Nature Journaling workshops. Contact her on 082 4388585.

We hope to host her at one of our BBC4thSaturdays.



SPEEDING ON THE R44

ATTENTION BETTY'S BAY RESIDENTS!



PETITION TO THE WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT

End the lawless speeding on the R44 through Betty's Bay

UPDATE THREE!

We are happy to report that having petitioned the Western Cape Provincial Parliament (WCPP) on 27 March 2026, our petition was tabled in Parliament on the 22 May 2026. It was approved by the Office of the Speaker and was referred to the relevant committee.

The Procedural Officer has notified us that by the end of July 2026, they will have the capacity to address the concerns and the proposed solutions of the residents of Betty's Bay. This is the final stage within the legal Petition Framework and will be conducted in consultation with the R44 Petition Steering Committee.

THANKS TO ALL THE SIGNATORIES WHO SUPPORTED THIS PETITION!

AFTER THE OVERSTRAND ECO-INDABA ...

Drafting of the proposed Environmental Alliance Constitution

Subsequent to the Overstrand Eco Indaba held on 28 March 2026, the Interim Steering Committee ("Steercom") responsible for the drafting of a proposed Constitution for the Environmental Alliance kicked-off on 9 April.

They completed the drafting process on 21 May 2026, and followed this with proofreading and final formatting. The focus was to develop a 'fit for purpose' constitution that:

- Clearly defines the purpose and governance framework of an Environmental Alliance;
- Is accessible and workable for members;
- Avoids unnecessary complexity or administrative burden; and
- Has a strong foundational framework while remaining flexible to support the future growth and evolution of an Environmental Alliance.



Key stakeholders were sent a shortlist of preferred alliance names, and the preferred name will be voted in at the Alliance's inaugural meeting to be held 27 June 2026.

The inclusion of ancestral references in the alliance's name was investigated. Consultations were undertaken with academics as well as elders with direct ancestral lineage and cultural knowledge. The committee resolved not to pursue the use of ancestral references after careful thought was given to the risks of cultural misappropriation, unintended exclusion, and the potential for division between ancestral groupings. Instead, priority was given to a name that promotes broad, diverse, and inclusive membership.

Ann Bradshaw, Chair of Interim Steering Committee

WATCH OUT FOR OUR WINTER WILDLIFE!

OVERBERG WildnFree
Conservation in Action

ECO TIP THURSDAY

WILDLIFE AFTER THE RAIN & PREPARING FOR WINTER

Small changes, big difference for our Overberg wildlife

Rainy days may feel gloomy to us, but for many Overberg creatures, it's a **busy** and **important** time of year!

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN NATURE?

- FROGS**
become more active after rain.
- SNAILS & INSECTS**
emerge in the damp weather.
- SMALL MAMMALS**
search for extra food and shelter.
- BIRDS**
fluff nests and find warmer roosting spots.
- REPTILES**
soak up rare sunshine between cold fronts.

YOU CAN HELP!

- WATER IS LIFE**
Leave shallow fresh water out in a safe spot for birds, frogs, insects and small animals.
- LEAVE NATURAL CORNERS**
Keep leaf litter, logs, and untidy patches - they provide shelter and protection.
- AVOID PESTICIDES & POISONS**
These can harm wildlife directly or by reducing their food sources.
- PROVIDE SHELTER**
Logs, rock piles, indigenous plants and thick shrubs offer warmth and hiding places.
- PLANT INDIGENOUS**
Indigenous plants support local wildlife and more resilient ecosystems.

Nature is quietly preparing for the colder months - and every wildlife-friendly garden helps.

Observe. Respect. Protect. Together.

After the rain, Overberg wildlife comes alive. Let's keep it that way!

#EcoTipThursday | #OverbergWildnFree | #WildlifeFriendlyGarden | #NatureLovers

Spiders, predators and prey

Spiders belong to the arthropod phylum. This is a massive group of animals making up well over all the known species in the world. It includes, the insects, crustaceans, centipedes and arachnids. They are all invertebrates (no back bone), have an exoskeleton (external skeletal 'shell' or chitinous cuticle) and jointed limbs (which is what arthropod means).

We expect to see a multitude of crustaceans and insects on the shoreline, but to actually see a true spider in the intertidal zone is much less expected. Specifically the Formidable Shore Spider (*Desis formidabilis*) lives between the low-water and high-water neap tide marks. This is a truly extreme environment for a spider as it is submerged by sea water twice per day! It survives by building itself a silky cocoon, between rocks and in crevices, that trap a bubble of air for it to breathe on! It has massive and powerful jaws that it uses to hunt mostly isopods (sea lice) at low tide. The Betty's Bay Marine Protected Area is a prime spot for them. They are endemic to Namibia and southern Africa. If you do turn over any rocks in the rock pools please be sure to put them back as they were.

Further up the shore, at the top of the beach, more expected as a spider hangout, I spotted this very large and fat rain spider, being



dragged, with Herculean effort by a Rain Spider Wasp (*Tachypompilus ignitus*), in itself a very large wasp. It seemed way too large for the wasp which struggled to gain purchase on the loose sand. The wasp had stung the rain spider to paralyze it and was dragging it to its subterranean nest. The wasp lays a single egg on the spider, buries it and covers it up. The spider stays alive but is moribund with paralysis. Once the egg hatches, the wasp larva begins feeding on the live spider. It saves the vital organs until last to not kill the spider outright and keep the meat 'fresh'. Once hatched the adult wasps make their living by feeding on the nectar of flowers! A bit of a Jekyll and Hyde lifestyle if you ask me.

Pete Oxford



Formidable Shore Spider



Rain Spider Wasp and rain spider prey