

LEGEND OF THE HOLE IN THE WALL

As Xhosa legend would have it, there was once a beautiful girl who lived in a village on the Wild Coast. Her village was situated near a large lagoon which was cut off from the sea by a huge cliff. She was so beautiful that one of the water people fell in love with her and persuaded her to come and live with him in the sea.

One night, when the tide was high, the water people came to the sheer cliff which towered above the shores of the lagoon, bringing with them a great fish. Using its enormous head, the mighty fish rammed a gaping hole in the wall, and through this breach poured the water people, singing and shouting. All the villagers hid in fear, except for the lovesick girl who rushed down the shore into the arms of her lover. She was never seen again.

FACTS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

DEAT has officially launched an educational resource that will enable you to access accurate and up-to-date information on a range of coastal and marine subjects.

A series of over 200 factsheets - on topics as diverse as dugongs, penguins, mangroves and coastal legislation - has been compiled and printed, and will shortly be distributed to schools and libraries around the country. A set of six posters complements the factsheet series.



Factsheets and posters may be ordered from:
John Kieser, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism,
PO Box 120, Greenpoint, 8051. Tel: (021) 430 7018
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DANGEROUS SEA CREATURES

The stonefish *Synanceia verrucosa*, is the most venomous fish in existence. It occurs widely in the tropics and in South African waters north of Durban. The fish is a drab, mottled brown and has a rough, warty skin, imparting excellent camouflage as it rests on coral reefs or on the sandy sea floor. Along its back is a row of hollow spines, each with its own venom sac. If a person accidentally treads on the stonefish, the spines pierce the victim's skin and inject venom, resulting in an extremely painful injury that may be fatal if not treated quickly.

BE SHARK-WISE!

The recent spate of attacks along this coast proves that KZN is rightfully home of the Shark(s). While some are embarking on their Super12 campaign... and on-field mauls, others have been roaming the shores. **Experts advise fishermen, paddlers and bathers not to go into the sea at night - during the sharks' feeding time.** You are also reminded that fishing in the harbour is only allowed from a boat.



No fishy tail: Angler Sean Thompson spent over an hour fighting this record-size kingfish in Durban harbour - only to be robbed at the last moment when a shark bit his catch clean in half. The remaining part of the fish weighed in at 12,6kg. Thompson estimated that the fish originally weighed close to 20kg.
Photo: Tony Carnie



"Ulwandle", which means "sea" in Zulu, is produced by the KwaZulu-Natal Coastal Management Unit

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4X4 BEACH BAN BEGINS

Those caught driving an off-road recreational vehicle across a South African beach on or after January 20, 2002 will be dealt with strictly, including having their 4x4 seized and confiscated, says the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT).

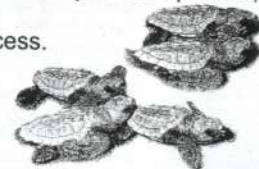
The use of 4x4s on beaches has increased, and their negative impact on the country's coastal environment is considerable. As popular as these 4x4 vehicles have become, their sheer size, number and power have the potential to irreversibly damage our coastal landforms, ecosystems and archaeological sites. Certain coastal landforms - including dunes, salt marshes, estuarine sands and mud flats - are easily damaged by vehicle traffic.

The regulations impose a general ban on the use of 4x4s on the coast for recreational purposes. However, certain uses of vehicles within the coastal zone are permissible, including the use of a vehicle by an employee of the state for the purposes of performing public duties and the use of electrically-propelled vehicles by physically disabled persons.

The regulations also allow applications to be made for:

- licences to operate boat launching sites;
- permits to use vehicles for the purpose of scientific research;
- permits for recreational use within a recreational use area;
- permits for non-recreational activities allowed in terms of fisheries legislation;
- permits for a tourism business conducted by a tour operator; and
- getting to properties without road access.

Applicants for such permits will be required to follow environmental impact assessment procedures.



WHAT IS THE SCLP?

The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) is contributing to South Africa's Coastcare initiative through their support for a three year 'Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Programme'. Key focus areas of the SCLP include:

- piloting public and private sector strategies to create and promote sustainable coastal livelihoods;
- building institutional capacity to support sustainable coastal development; and
- raising awareness of the value of the coast and integrated coastal management.

In order to assist DEAT engage provincial and local sphere partners more effectively, six two-year contract posts are being financed through the SCLP: two support staff for DEAT's Coastal Management Office and one Provincial Coordinator in each of the four coastal provinces. The Provincial Coordinators will be located within the provincial lead departments responsible for coastal management.

KZN'S COASTAL MANAGEMENT UNIT

The White Paper for Sustainable Coastal Development in South Africa proposes the identification of a provincial lead agent to coordinate coastal management.

In KwaZulu-Natal, the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs has been identified as the lead provincial agent responsible for coastal management. A fledgling "Coastal Management Unit" has been established in the Strategic Environmental Planning component: Environmental Management.

For more information on the Unit's activities contact:
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Department of
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Affairs

KZN BEACHES GO BLUE

The Blue Flag campaign is one of a number of current projects that forms part of the implementation of the White Paper for Sustainable Coastal Development. It involves a prestigious annual award to beaches that conform to international standards such as safety, environmental and tourist friendliness, cleanliness and visible security.

South Africa has become the first country outside Europe to be awarded this status. This is indeed an outstanding achievement noting that countries in the Caribbean, Canada, Russia, Australia and others have also been aspiring to this status.

The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) will be acting as the National Operator of the Blue Flag campaign, presently funded by DEAT. Current Blue Flag beaches in KZN are:

- Willard Beach, Ballito;
- Durban South Beach; and
- Margate Main Beach.



A workshop with local authorities on the Blue Flag initiative will be held in Ballito shortly. See next issue for update!



Venomous spines

What is this dangerous creature?
Surf the U-ZONE to find out.

CORAL BLEACHING AT SODWANA BAY

Coral bleaching is the whitening of the coral tissue resulting from a loss of zooxanthellae (symbiotic algae) or a reduction in photosynthetic pigment within zooxanthellae residing in vacuoles in the host gastrodermis. This sudden loss of algae from the host organisms often causes partial or complete coral colony death.

The local reefs exist because of a range extension brought about by the fast-flowing Agulhas Current that transports warm water from the tropics to our coastline. The rise in global temperature, causing an increase in sea temperature, has been identified as the most probable cause of bleaching. A gradual increase in regional sea temperatures has been evident in the western Indian Ocean since 1950.



The cauliflower coral *Pocillopora* sp. is one of the most common corals on the upper reef slope

The effect of bleaching became evident during the last decade although the coral communities at Sodwana Bay were not severely affected. Limited coral bleaching was observed at Sodwana in 1998 and again in 2000. A concerted effort is currently underway to determine positive links between this coral bleaching and factors such as sea temperature. ORI has been monitoring sea temperatures at Sodwana Bay since 1994 and has recently expanded this study by installing several new underwater temperature probes on various reefs and at different depths. It appears that coral bleaching at Sodwana is caused by a multitude of factors of which temperature is only one. Continued coral monitoring will ensure that we can predict the influence of bleaching on the coral communities and contribute to the understanding of this fascinating, albeit destructive, phenomenon.

Louis Celliers, ORI