

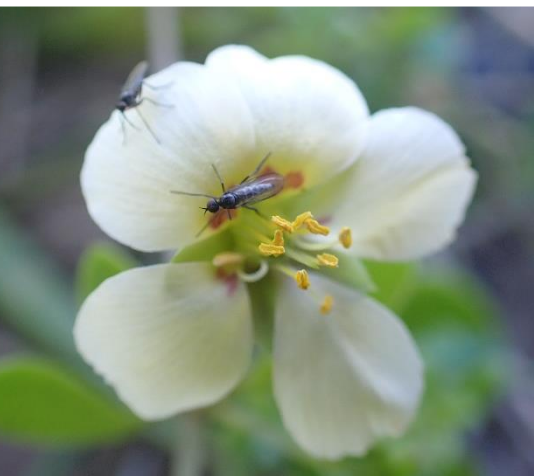


Dunefields

Private Nature Reserve

Nature News

April 2025



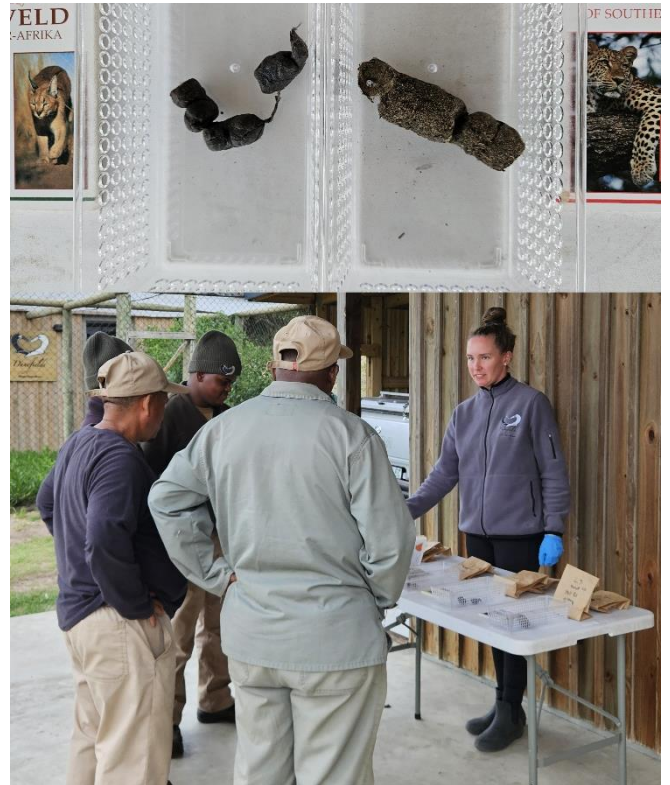
What happened at Dunefields?



This Little sparrowhawk was a new species needing care at Dunefields. Don't be fooled by its size, it weighed a mere 72 grams. It suffered a concussion after flying into someone's window, but it recovered well in our care before sending it to the rehabilitation centre.



Zanri was invited as a guest speaker at the Knysna Hollow Hotel. She presented the caracal research that Dunefields is leading, which clearly peaked the interest of the public as there was >130 attendees at the talk.



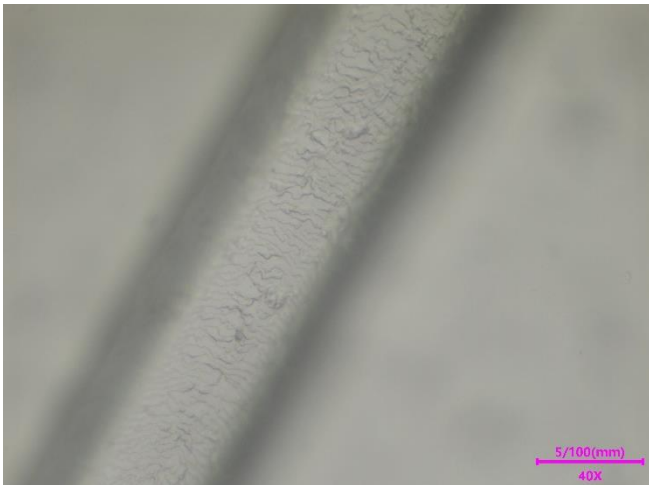
Zanri facilitated training to the staff to distinguish between the scat of leopard and caracal. With the staff being out on the roads every day, they were eager to learn about the identification of some of the scat that they have been seeing.



Tiaan rescued a gannet from Wilderness beach. This individual was stranded on the beach as a result of an injury. A seal bit its tail off but the gannet luckily escaped the jaws of the seal, and we provided emergency care.



This hatchling Loggerhead turtle washed up on the Wilderness beach as a result of the cold ocean temperatures. We stabilized this individual before it was driven to the Two Oceans Aquarium in Cape Town for rehabilitation.



We have been conducting a caracal diet study using the microscopic patterns on the hair in their scat to determine which mammals these cats prey upon. This is the hair of a Small grey mongoose that was found in the caracal scat.



We identify the caracals using the spots on their face. Seen here are two photos of the same caracal individual, taken 20 months apart at Dunefields. The first time that we recorded this individual was in 2023. This is one of the cats that defend a territory at Dunefields, hence the individual being resighted.



Tiaan inspected the filtered rainwater that is used for drinking at the office. He used the stereo microscope to investigate the water samples in search of any organisms swimming in the water to test the efficacy and longevity of the ultra-violet water filter.



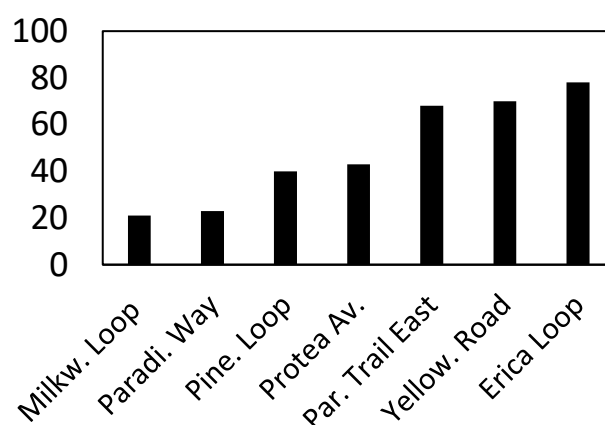
Yngvild and Annika visited Dunefields and they enjoyed a tour around the nature reserve. It was a rainy day which made for a scenic drive around, paying a visit to our patient in the Stabilization Station and a bee hive in the veld.



We do monthly on-foot patrols in search of leopard scat. The aim is to collect a small sample of it to conduct a diet study based on the hair from the prey in the scat. The leopard scats that we have found on the nature reserve were only between June and October every year, yet we continue to monitor leopard presence during every month.



We conducted our autumn wetland health-survey through investigating the diversity of freshwater invertebrates present in the wetland. Freshwater invertebrates differ in size but we specifically target those that are microscopically small.



These are some camera traps deployed throughout the nature reserve that record the most caracals. Throughout all the years, the camera on Erica Loop has always delivered the most footage of caracals, despite us seldomly finding scat on this road.



Another flight of stairs was built by our staff on Paradise Trail. This method is used on very steep slopes to combat soil erosion and ease walking along the trail.



New loads of woodchips were deposited onto our roads. This reduces dust around the office, and it makes for a smoother ride.



We anchored a few new lilies in our wetland, and this makes for a beautiful sight. The big leaves of the plants provide shelter to our freshwater invertebrates, which also serves as protection against predators.

Who calls Dunefields home?



With guinea fowl mostly preferring open-spaced areas, we don't often see them at Dunefields with the high vegetation that we have. Therefore, when we sighted this pair with their chicks it was very special knowing that they also draw benefit from this piece of paradise.



We are always interested in the diversity of pollinators on the fynbos flowers. Here is the beautiful Hummingbird hawkmoth drinking nectar at daytime from the Cape-forget-me-not flowers.



Tiaan sighted our very first Rock agama. We have always been looking out for agamas, but it was only recently that Tiaan was stopped in his tracks. In the breeding season the face of the male changes into a blue colour which he will use to attract females.



With the ocean temperature having dropped, we had many days of thick mist covering the vegetation like a blanket.



The White bristle bush is flowering again, and it provides a great source of food to the bees in autumn and winter. The bees collect the pollen of these small fynbos flowers that smell just like honey.



The Peeling oysterling mushroom was seen growing among some lichens on the bark of a living tree. Generally this mushroom is more commonly found on dead tree material.



As seen here on animal dung, the Cape flightless dungbeetle is one of the many insect species that calls Dunefields home. This species is classified as vulnerable to extinction so we are particularly proud to be protecting their habitat.



Small grey mongooses are solitary animals but can sometimes be seen with their young after the breeding season. This is the first time that we have ever noted this species of mongoose with more than one individual per sighting.



The bushbuck at Dunefields are a great pleasure to have around. We always catch ourselves smiling when we stumble across one while we are driving on the roads.



Different species of aquatic birds visit our wetland during the year. Here are two Egyptian geese that were drying off in the early morning sunlight.



The Bottlenose dolphins enjoy surfing the waves in front of Dunefields. We have conducted a research study on them over the last two years with specific interest to their foraging and travelling behaviour.



A genet is an arboreal animal meaning that it mostly lives in trees. Typical to the behaviour of a genet, here this individual is seen on a branch of a tree that is only 30cm off the ground, but even just that 30cm makes them feel safer than being on the ground.



With the breeding season on Bird Island, Algoa Bay coming to an end, gannet numbers recorded from Dunefields are increasing again. It is heartwarming seeing them successfully hunt for fish in our area of all areas.