



**ENDANGERED
WILDLIFE TRUST**

Biking for bulbs on the Bokkeveld

13 November 2020

Start

On 6 November, the EWT's Drylands Conservation Programme launched over 100 km of brand-new mountain bike trails on Papkuilsfontein Guest Farm in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. Over 40 participants attended the launch and explored the farm owned by the Van Wyk family. Most farms in the drylands rely solely on agricultural income, which makes them particularly vulnerable to adverse climatic conditions, such as the current drought. These biking trails showcase some of the most unique and spectacular biodiversity in the country and will bring much-needed income and job creation opportunities to this remote area as part of a collective effort to ignite nature-based tourism in the Karoo.

The conservation value of Papkuilsfontein stems from its location on the Bokkeveld Plateau in Nieuwoudtville, also known as the bulb capital of the world. More than 1,350 species of flowering bulbs occur there, and in some areas, the density of bulbs reaches more than 20,000 plants per square meter, more than anywhere else on earth. More than 80 endemic species can be found here, most of these geophytes, together with a few succulents and shrubs. Four main vegetation types can be found on Papkuilsfontein; Bokkeveld Sandstone Fynbos, Nieuwoudtville Shale Renosterveld, Hantam Karoo, and a small area of Vanrhynsdorp Shale Renosterveld. Each of these vegetation types contains a myriad unique species. More than 30% of the endemics are Red Data species threatened with extinction.

Papkuilsfontein Mountain Bike Trails is a flagship project of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) 5 Sustainable Land Management (SLM) initiative implemented by the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Dryland Conservation Programme through the United Nations Development Programme and the Department of Environment, Forestry, and Fisheries. The GEF 5 project facilitates innovative approaches to protecting the vulnerable ecosystems in the dryland areas by diversifying activities and income streams that are not climate-dependent, thereby building economic resilience in the face of adverse environmental and economic conditions.



Launch of the Papkuilsfontein Mountain Bike Trail

The SLM initiative, managed by the EWT, facilitates arrangements whereby small grants are made available to assist farmers with SLM projects of their choice. In exchange, farmers must actively contribute to the implementation of various conservation projects, usually in the form of providing materials or labour. The farmers must also make land management commitments, usually towards the implementation of specific practices, management plans, or conservation actions on the property, integrating a biodiversity conservation approach into the management of working farm landscapes.

The Van Wyk family applied for assistance to develop a network of mountain bike trails to complement their existing guest farm accommodation on Papkuilsfontein. The mountain bike trails will extend the tourism season on the farm beyond the annual flower season and will increase the number of visitors, which will translate into economic benefits and jobs. In exchange for this benefit, the Van Wyk family has agreed to legally declare their farm as a Protected Environment, thereby making their land management commitment.

The remarkable species richness of the area makes it a high conservation priority and the declaration will contribute to provincial and national conservation targets. The declaration process is undertaken as a collaboration between the landowner, the Northern Cape Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs, Rural Development and Land Reform's Provincial Biodiversity Stewardship Programme, and the Endangered Wildlife Trust.

Looking forward, innovative approaches to protecting areas like this will become more critical for sustaining farming, tourism, and conservation activities. We are proud to work with conservation

champions such as the Van Wyks. The success of this project will hopefully encourage other farmers to diversify their activities, reduce their risk, and conserve the biodiversity on their farms. Watch the video of the project at <https://youtu.be/FYWNUt4006o>.

The Papkuilsfontein Mountain Bike Trails are now officially open to the public, and we encourage everyone to add the destination to their holiday plans. Apart from the trails, Papkuilsfontein offers beautiful accommodation, delicious food, incredible plant biodiversity, and breath-taking scenery. For more information visit the Papkuilsfontein website: www.papkuilsfontein.com



Start of the MTB route at Papkuilsfontein

End

About the Endangered Wildlife Trust

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) has worked tirelessly for nearly 50 years to save wildlife and habitats, with a vision to promote a healthy planet and an equitable world that values and sustains the diversity of all life. The EWT's team of field-based specialists is spread across southern and East Africa, where committed conservation action is needed the most. Working with our partners, including businesses and governments, the EWT is at the forefront of conducting applied research, supporting community conservation and livelihoods, training and building capacity, addressing human-wildlife conflict, monitoring threatened species, and establishing safe spaces for wildlife range expansion. A beacon of hope for Africa's wildlife, landscapes, and communities, the EWT is protecting forever, together. Find out more at www.ewt.org.za

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