

## B. NATURE RESERVES

### Field Note B2e. De Hoop Nature Reserve and Marine Protected Area

There are several private and public nature reserves in the Study Area (Figure 1). The nature reserves are described briefly in this chapter. This Field Note is about the De Hoop Nature Reserve (Figures 2 to 14) and the Marine Protected Area (Figures 15 and 16), the largest reserve in the Study Area, located between the De Hoop Vlei in the west and Cape Infanta in the east .



**Figure 1. Satellite image showing the confines of the Study Area and the nature reserves and conservatories which are located within its confines. They are (from the southwest to the northeast): ANR – Andrewsfield Nature Reserve (private); De Mond Nature Reserve Complex (Cape Nature) which consists of three reserves: SVNR – Soetendals Vlei Nature Reserve; DMFR – De Mond Forest Reserve and WKNR – Waenhuiskrans Nature Reserve; HRNR - Heunings River Nature Reserve (private); HBNR – Heuninberg Nature Reserve (municipal); AMT – Ancient Milkwood Tree national monument (private); DOTR – Denel Overberg Test Range; VRNR – Vogel Revier (*German spelling*) Nature Reserve (private); HRR – Haarwegskloof Renosterveld Reserve (private); HKNR – Hasekraal Nature Reserve (private); DHNR – De Hoop Nature Reserve (CapeNature); DHMPA – De Hoop Marine Protected Area (CapeNature); and SSNR – San Sebastian Nature Reserve (private). The ANP – Agulhas National Park – is outside the Study Area.**



Figure 2. Visitor map (undated, end of 2019) of the De Hoop Nature Reserve (eastern part), available at the entrance.



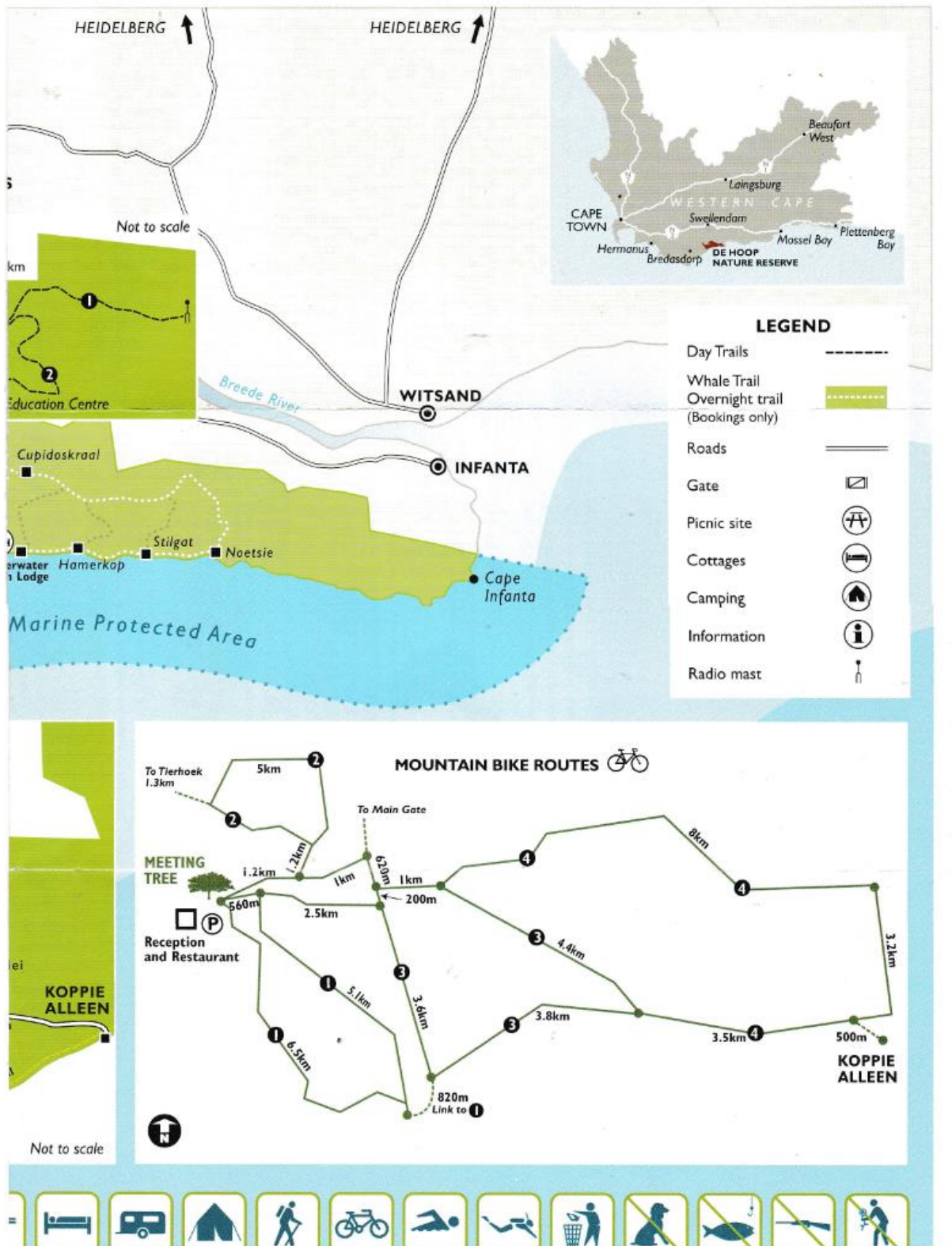


Figure 3. Visitor map (undated, end of 2019) of the De Hoop Nature Reserve (eastern part), available at the entrance.





**Figure 4. Topography map (western section) of the De Hoop Nature Reserve.**



**Figure 5. Topography map (middle section) of the De Hoop Nature Reserve.**



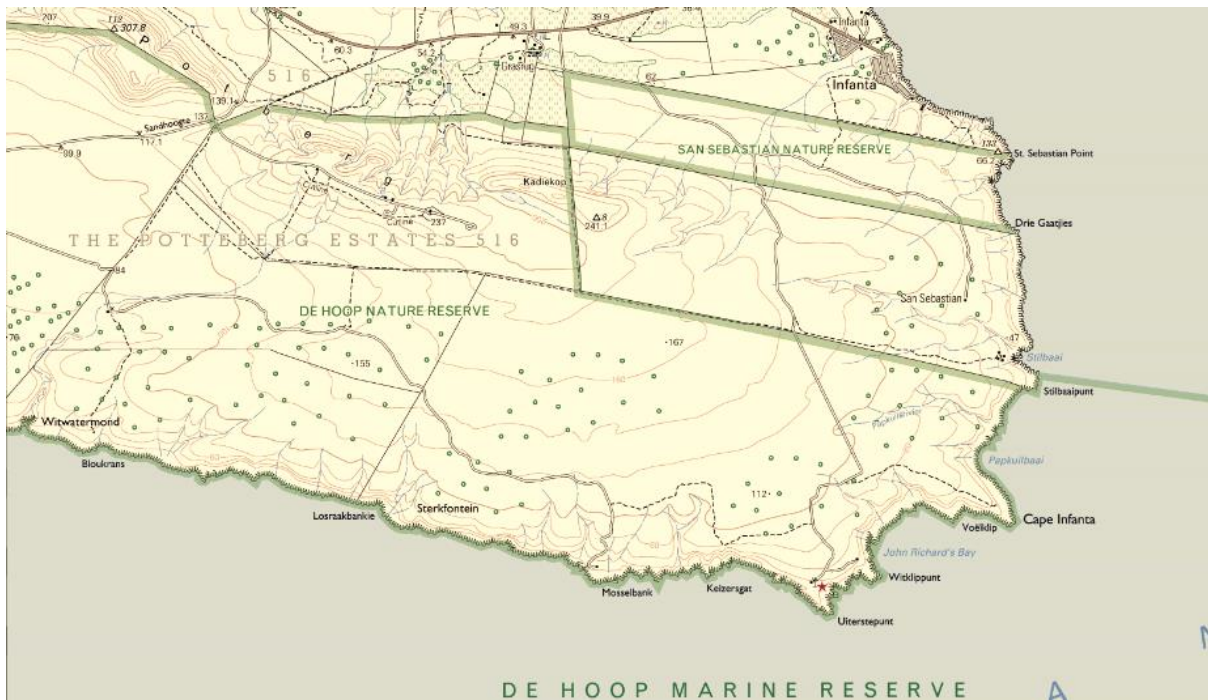


Figure 6. Topography map (eastern section) of the De Hoop Nature Reserve.



Figure 7. Satellite image of the De Hoop Nature Reserve.



Figure 8. The entrance to the De Hoop Nature Reserve.



The main features of the reserves are Potberg, the caves, De Hoop Vlei (Figure 9) and the coastal dune field (Figures 10 and 11).



**9. De Hoop Vlei (when full). View to the north from the hotel.**



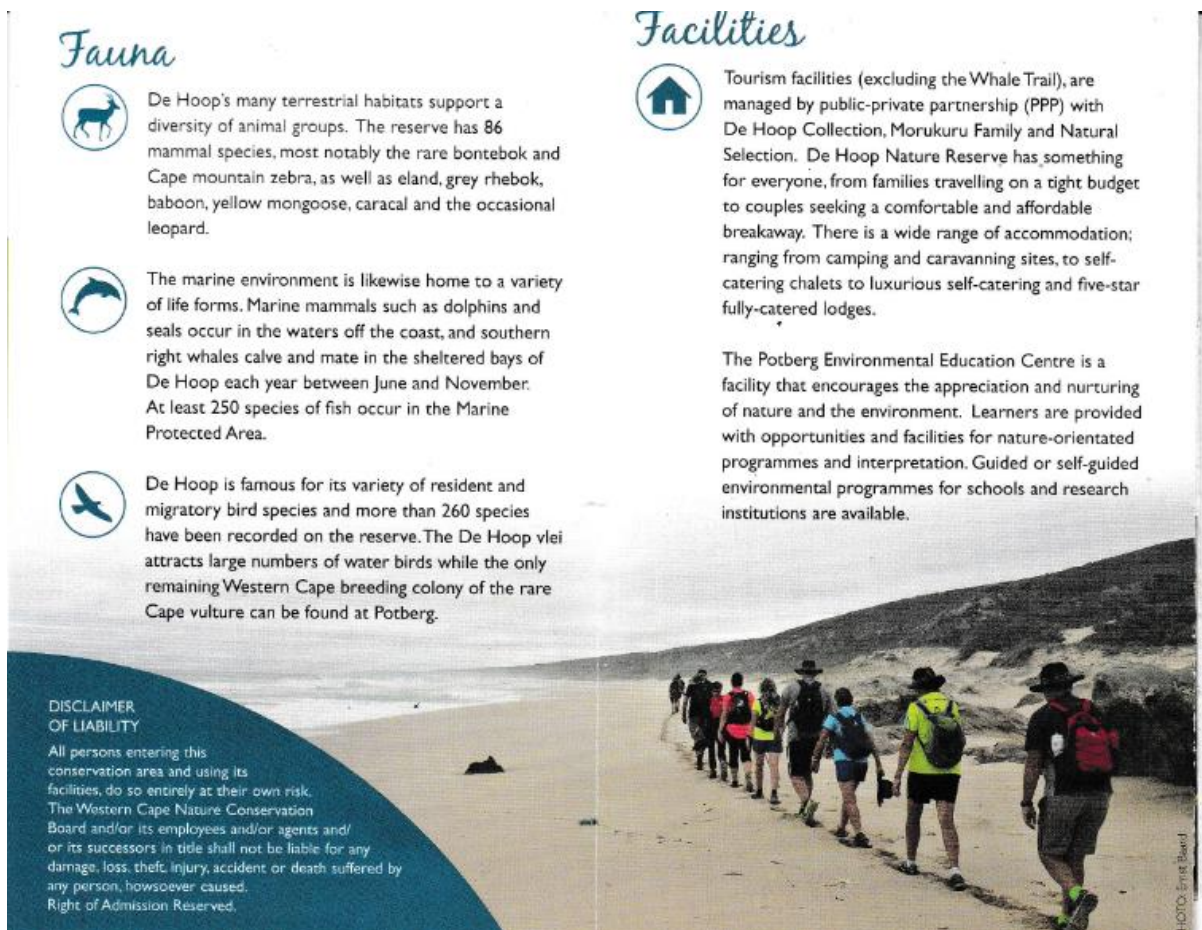
**10. View on the dune field from the entrance.**








11. Satellite image of the De Hoop dune field.


Information and activity flyers are shown in Figures 12 to 14.



**Fauna**

-  De Hoop's many terrestrial habitats support a diversity of animal groups. The reserve has 86 mammal species, most notably the rare bontebok and Cape mountain zebra, as well as eland, grey rhebok, baboon, yellow mongoose, caracal and the occasional leopard.
-  The marine environment is likewise home to a variety of life forms. Marine mammals such as dolphins and seals occur in the waters off the coast, and southern right whales calve and mate in the sheltered bays of De Hoop each year between June and November. At least 250 species of fish occur in the Marine Protected Area.
-  De Hoop is famous for its variety of resident and migratory bird species and more than 260 species have been recorded on the reserve. The De Hoop vlei attracts large numbers of water birds while the only remaining Western Cape breeding colony of the rare Cape vulture can be found at Potberg.

**Facilities**

-  Tourism facilities (excluding the Whale Trail), are managed by public-private partnership (PPP) with De Hoop Collection, Morukuru Family and Natural Selection. De Hoop Nature Reserve has something for everyone, from families travelling on a tight budget to couples seeking a comfortable and affordable breakaway. There is a wide range of accommodation; ranging from camping and caravanning sites, to self-catering chalets to luxurious self-catering and five-star fully-catered lodges.

The Potberg Environmental Education Centre is a facility that encourages the appreciation and nurturing of nature and the environment. Learners are provided with opportunities and facilities for nature-orientated programmes and interpretation. Guided or self-guided environmental programmes for schools and research institutions are available.

**DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY**  
All persons entering this conservation area and using its facilities, do so entirely at their own risk. The Western Cape Nature Conservation Board and/or its employees and/or agents and/or its successors in title shall not be liable for any damage, loss, theft, injury, accident or death suffered by any person, howsoever caused. Right of Admission Reserved.

PHOTO: Ernst Bauer

12. Information and activity flyer, page one.



*The glittering jewel of De Hoop,* just three hours' drive from Cape Town, is one of CapeNature's flagship reserves and has a well-deserved reputation as a truly magical wilderness. The reserve lies at the southernmost tip of Africa, where mountains meet the sea and create a fusion between freshwater and marine habitats that support a staggering array of terrestrial and aquatic life.



Encompassing roughly 36 000 hectares, this World Heritage Site is one of the largest natural areas managed by CapeNature and is a favourite destination for hikers, cyclists and bird watchers. The Marine Protected

Area at de Hoop covers an area of 29 000 hectares and stretches along a coastline of 57km. It extends three nautical miles (5km) out to sea, is one of the largest marine protected areas in Africa, providing a sanctuary for a vast and fascinating array of marine life. It also encompasses the breeding grounds of the southern right whale. These whales return to the waters of De Hoop every year to calve and mate. The sight of these massive mammals leaping out of the sea or simply wallowing in the azure waters is definitely one of the highlights of a visit to the reserve. The high dunes at Koppie Alleen offer an excellent vantage point for whale watching.



## Climate



A typical Mediterranean climate prevails in the region - summers are warm and winters mild. Annual rainfall is about 380mm and August is usually the wettest month. Sea mists also occur. The most frequent summer winds are east, west and southeast, while westerly and south-westerly winds prevail in winter.

## Flora



De Hoop Nature Reserve forms part of the world's smallest and most threatened plant kingdom - the Cape Floral Kingdom. Fynbos is the dominant vegetation within this kingdom - largely confined to nutrient-poor soils in the winter rainfall areas of the Western Cape. Fynbos is adapted to fire and drought, and characterised by four growth forms:

- **proteas** - tall shrubs with large leaves
- **ericas** - heath-like shrubs
- **restios** - wiry, reed-like plants which are always present in fynbos
- **geophytes** - bulbs that store moisture in fleshy underground organs

De Hoop is important for the conservation of lowland fynbos as it contains the largest conserved area for this rare type. The Bredasdorp/Agulhas and Infanta area, of which De Hoop is a part, has an estimated 1500 plant species of the approximately 9000 species found in the Cape Floristic Region. Of these 1500 species:

- 108 species are rare or threatened
- 34 species occur nowhere apart from the De Hoop Nature Reserve
- 14 species were recently discovered and are still undescribed

## Activities

Activities at De Hoop are plentiful and diverse. Visitors may choose between mountain bike rides, scenic game drives and various day walks along the pristine coastline. Relax on the beach, or take a leisurely walk along the vlei which is a birder's delight.



This beautiful and diverse nature reserve is a hiking paradise. De Hoop's day trails allow visitors to explore the reserve's rich plant and wildlife. There are routes along the coast - perfect for exploring rock pools and the beach - and in the interior, across the Potberg mountains with breathtaking views of the Breede River Valley (see day trails map overleaf).



Enjoy De Hoop's natural beauty from your saddle on one of the many mountain bike trails through the reserve. Please use sunscreen, riding gear and make sure you have plenty of water on the trail. (see routes on map overleaf).



Bring along your binoculars for a closer look at some of the 260 bird species in the reserve. Of special interest is the breeding colony of rare Cape vultures at Potberg.



At night stargazers can experience the magnificent stars and constellations of the clear De Hoop night sky.

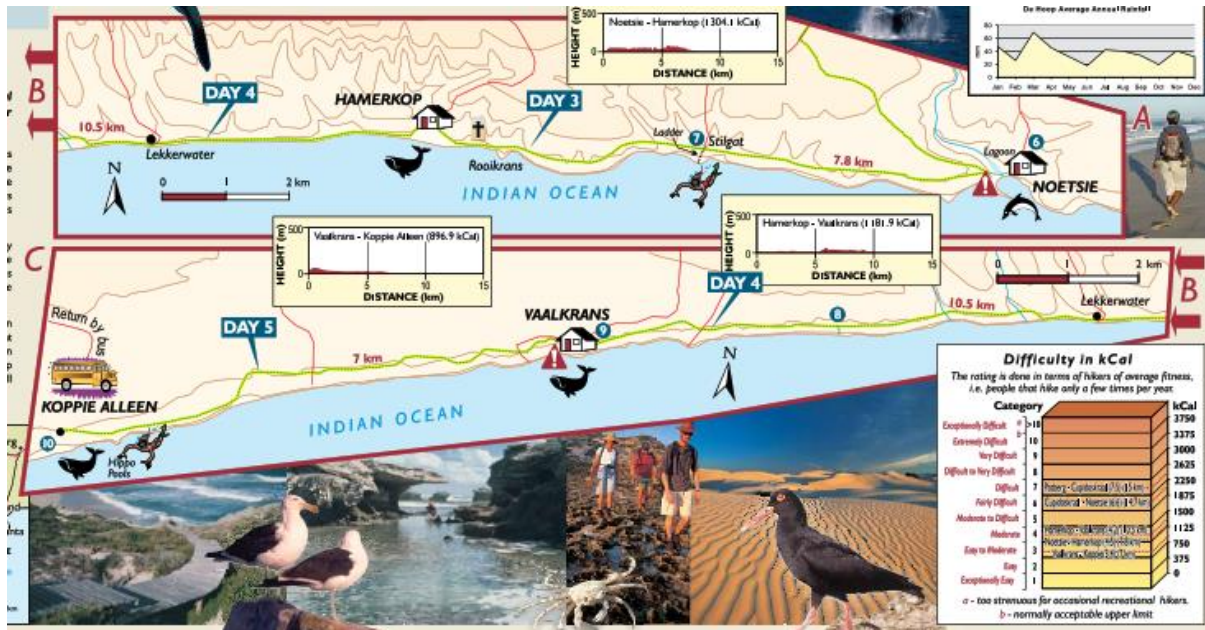
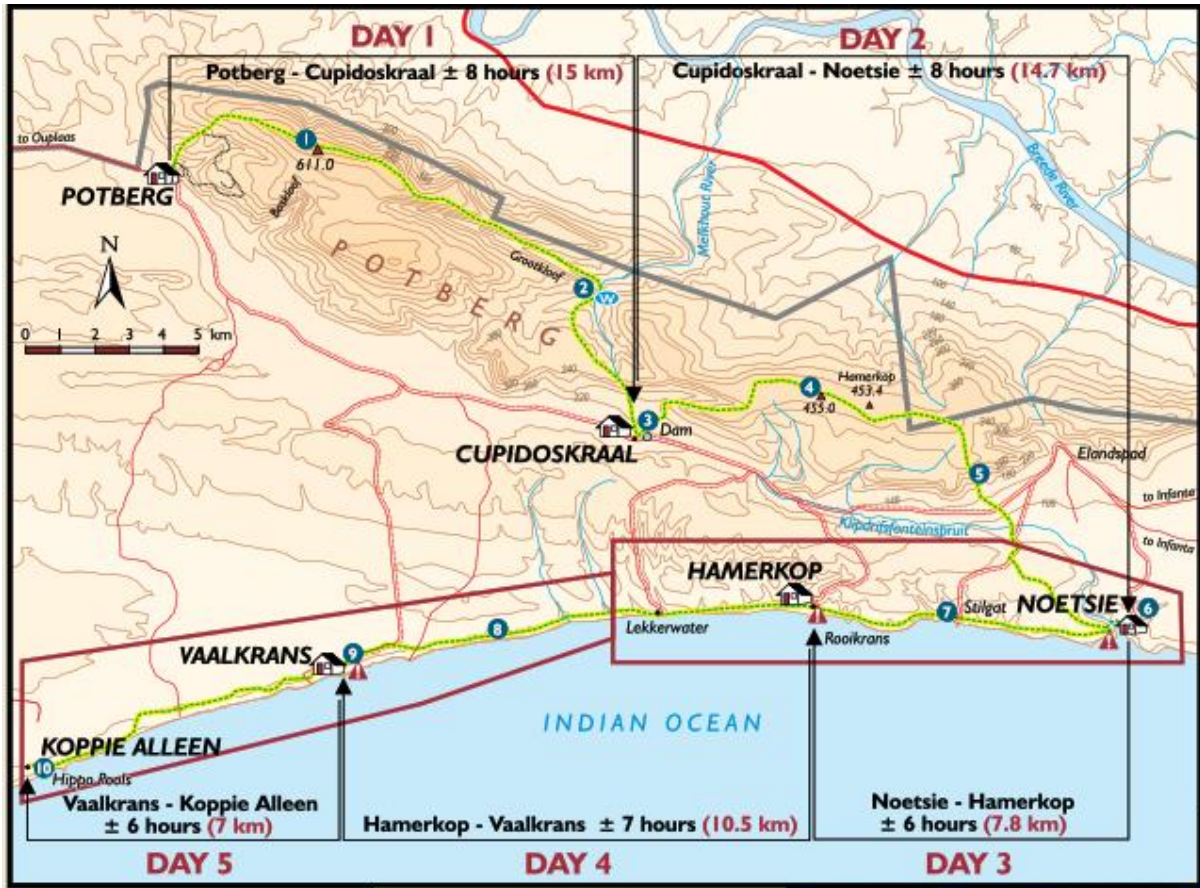


Swim and snorkel in De Hoop's large, clear rock pools, the reserve has excellent examples of some of the finest inter-tidal ecosystems in the Western Cape.



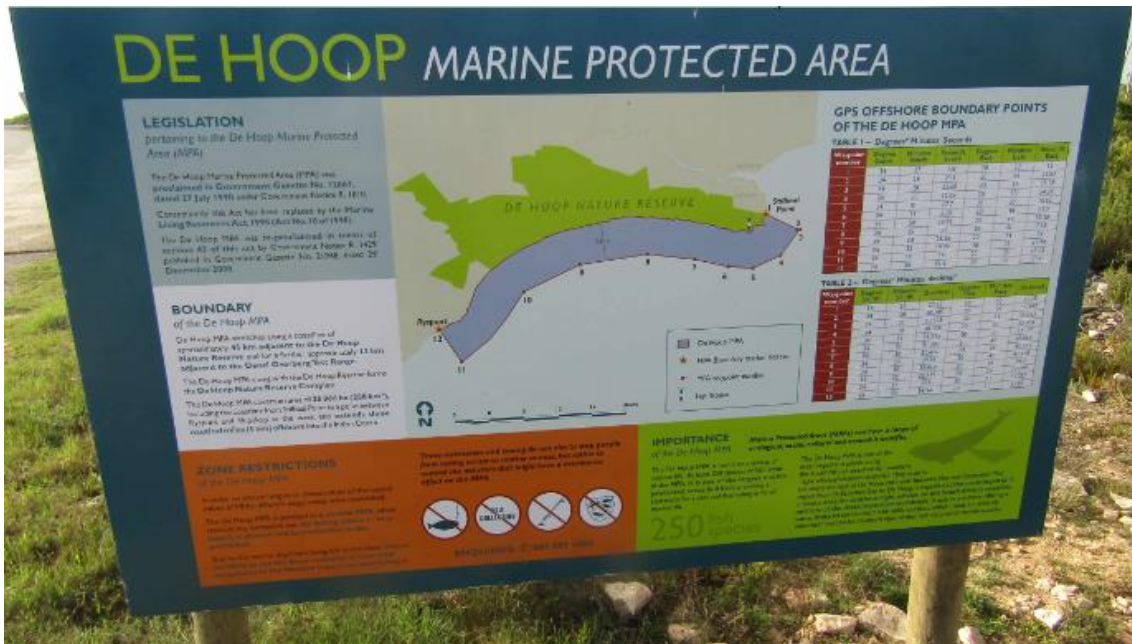
The entire length of the De Hoop coast is a Marine Protected Area (no take zone) and fishing is not permitted. Visitors should take care not to disturb or remove marine organisms.





14. Top and bottom: information on, and a map of, the 5-day Whale Trail (undated).

The Marine Protected Area (MPA) is adjacent the Nature Reserve (Figures 15 and 16).



**Figure 15. Marine Protected Area information board.**


From the Internet:

The De Hoop Marine Protected Area lies between Arniston and the mouth of the Breede River on the south coast of South Africa adjacent to the De Hoop Nature Reserve. The MPA is 51 kilometres long and extends 5 nautical miles to sea. The whole MPA is a restricted area (No Take zone) and is part of the migratory route and calving area for Southern right whales. The area protects habitats for several economically important inshore reef fish species and ensures the retention of marine biomass in this part of the coast. The limestone coastline includes archaeological sites and middens that date back centuries. The MPA is close to the Breede River estuary and, provides protection for species, which breed in the estuary and then return to the ocean.



**Figure 16. Oblique aerial view on the western section of the Marine Protected Area.**  
Source: The Internet.



<p><i>Secrets of De Hoop and Environs</i></p>	<p>Field notes on the GEOMORPHOLOGY, HYDROLOGY and ARCHAEOLOGY Between CAPE AGULHAS and CAPE INFANTA</p>	 <p>Geomorphological Research</p>
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About the Marine Protected Area (from the Internet):

De Hoop Marine Protected Area (MPA) lies adjacent to the De Hoop Nature Reserve, approximately 260 km from Cape Town on the Cape Overberg coastline, protecting 253 km<sup>2</sup> between Stillbaai Point and Ryspunt, and extending three nautical miles offshore.

Did you know? *The aim of a marine protected area is to conserve marine life. They take the form of a collaboration between civil society, communities and government that promote conservation and safeguard threatened marine species and important habitats.*

Marine protected areas generally conserve the sea alongside nature reserves. You can think of them as preserving a section of sea the way that nature reserves protect an area of land. What they do, in essence, is severely limit human interference. Fishing and any water activities are markedly limited, if not forbidden.

De Hoop Marine Protected Area is the only area to protect an especially beautiful intertidal system of soft sandstone and limestone platforms. The African black oystercatcher breeds in this inter-tidal zone, largely undisturbed, whilst the rock pools that rest in amongst these platforms are important breeding grounds for reef fish and a huge variety of invertebrates like starfish, sea cucumbers, mussels and urchins.

One of De Hoop's major success stories is the recovery of the Galjoen, a migrant and over-fished species that is protected by the MPA. The biggest, and longest running, fish tagging monitoring and research program - tagging well over 50 000 fish before releasing them - takes place at De Hoop. The project gathers important information for linefish management around the country.

The eastern shores of the Marine Protected Area are washed by deep water protecting a number of reef systems. These shores also provide sanctuary for a little colony of African penguins. Whilst the western section of the MPA is given over to huge migrant sand dunes.

De Hoop is a vital area for the southern right whale. The MPA and St Sebastian Bay combine to provide a critical nursery for as many as 80 percent of the cow-calf pairs on the South African coastline. This translates into as many as 350 whales at any one time within the boundaries of the De Hoop Marine Protected Area.

As a result, De Hoop Nature Reserve is often referred to as a 'whale watcher's paradise'. The popular Whale Trail hiking route is along this shoreline, within the MPA.

But it is not whales alone that grace the waters of the De Hoop MPA. Shoaling pelagic species (those fish neither close to the ocean's bottom nor near shore), like yellowtail, great white sharks who feed on the afterbirths of southern right whales, and the humpbacked dolphin, whose numbers are dwindling, are also frequent visitors.

On the shoreline the MPA protects rock hyrax (dassies), porcupine, mongoose and sometimes leopard, who all feed on the intertidal platforms.