

N. DE HOOP VLEI GORGE

Field note N1. Overview

The De Hoop Vlei Gorge is situated in the middle of the Study Area. It contains the De Hoop Vlei, which has no outlet to the sea, from which it is separated by a ~2.5 km wide field of shifting dunes (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Satellite image of the De Hoop Vlei Gorge area.

The formation of the De Hoop Vlei Gorge is probably the result of tectonic activity (faulting) or by an earthquake, or by both (see Field Note N5).

The widely accepted explanation for the formation of the De Hoop Vlei is, that the Salt River mouth was blocked by the dunes, which were driven westward by the winds. This is a very possible scenario, as the river carries (and probably also carried in the past) very little water.

The dunes between the vlei and the sea have been deposited over calcarenite ridges of the Waenhuiskrans Formation (Figures 3 and 4).

The De Hoop Vlei Gorge is wholly within the confines of the De Hoop Nature Reserve (see chapter B).



Figure 2. Satellite image showing the southern end of the De Hoop Vlei (Die Mond, yellow arrow) and the dunes between it and the sea. The distance from Die Mond to the sea is about 2.5 km. Yellow box indicates area enlarged in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Satellite image showing part of the dune field, which separates the De Hoop Vlei from the sea. Arrows point to outcrops of buried ridges, 3 to 16 m above sealevel.

Maps are given below (Figures 4 to 7) for familiarity with names of features around the gorge, which appear in the rest of the Field Notes of this chapter.

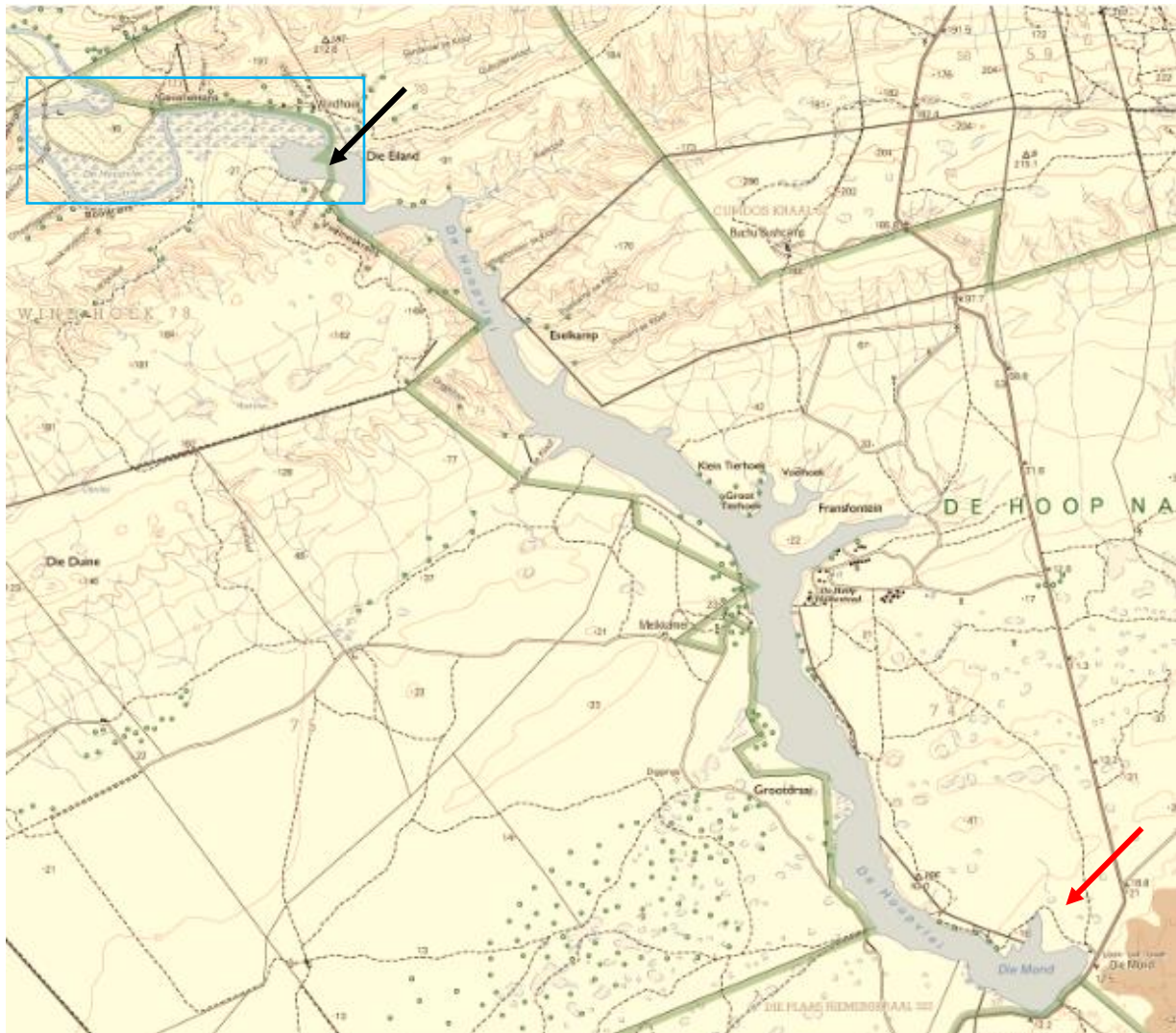


Figure 4. Topography map of the De Hoop Vlei Gorge area. The length of the gorge from The Island in the northwest (black arrow) to Die Mond in the southeast (red arrow) is ~12 km, and its width is 100 - 500 m (the width of the vlei also varies upon the amount of water in it). The southern part of the vlei is deeper than the northern part. Blue box indicates the Salt River Marsh.

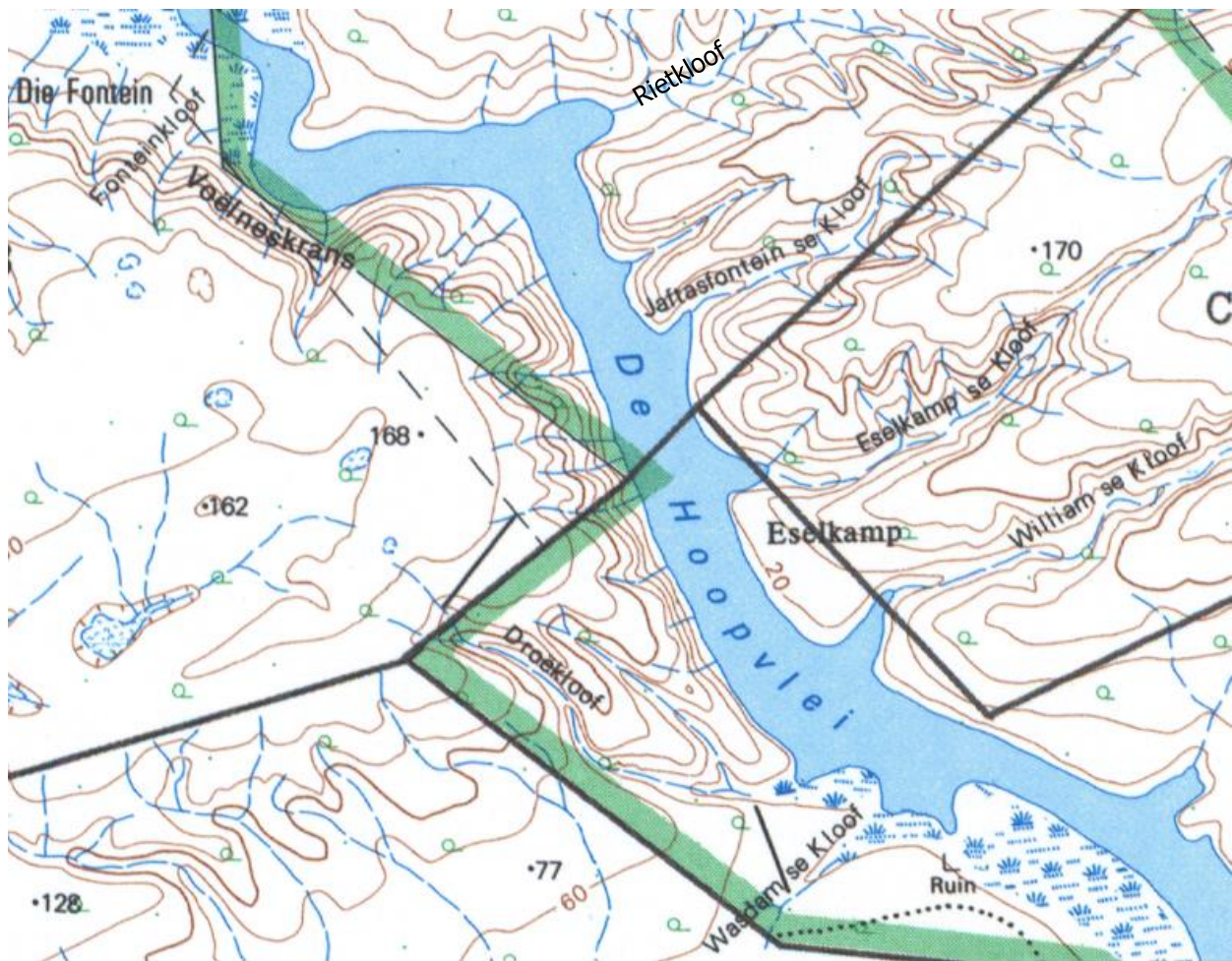


Figure 5. Topographic map (1981) showing the northern part of the gorge. (In the 1968 edition of this sheet, the Jaftasfontein se Kloof was called Jagersfontein se Kloof).

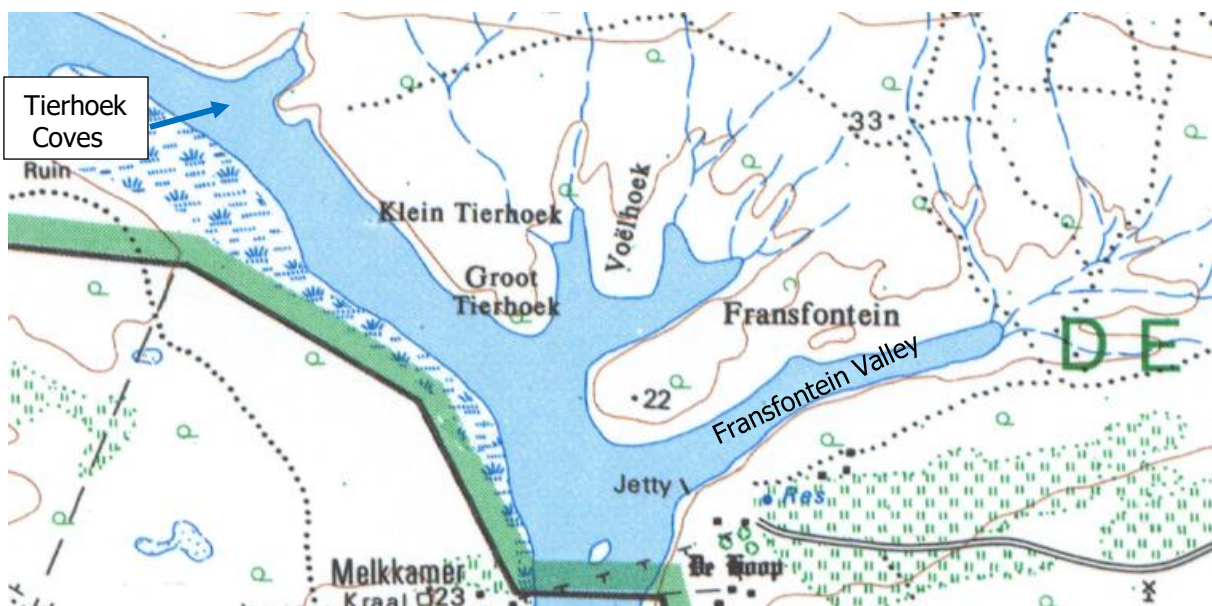


Figure 6. Topographic map showing the middle part of the gorge. (The names Tierhoek Coves and Fransfontein Valley were given by the author).

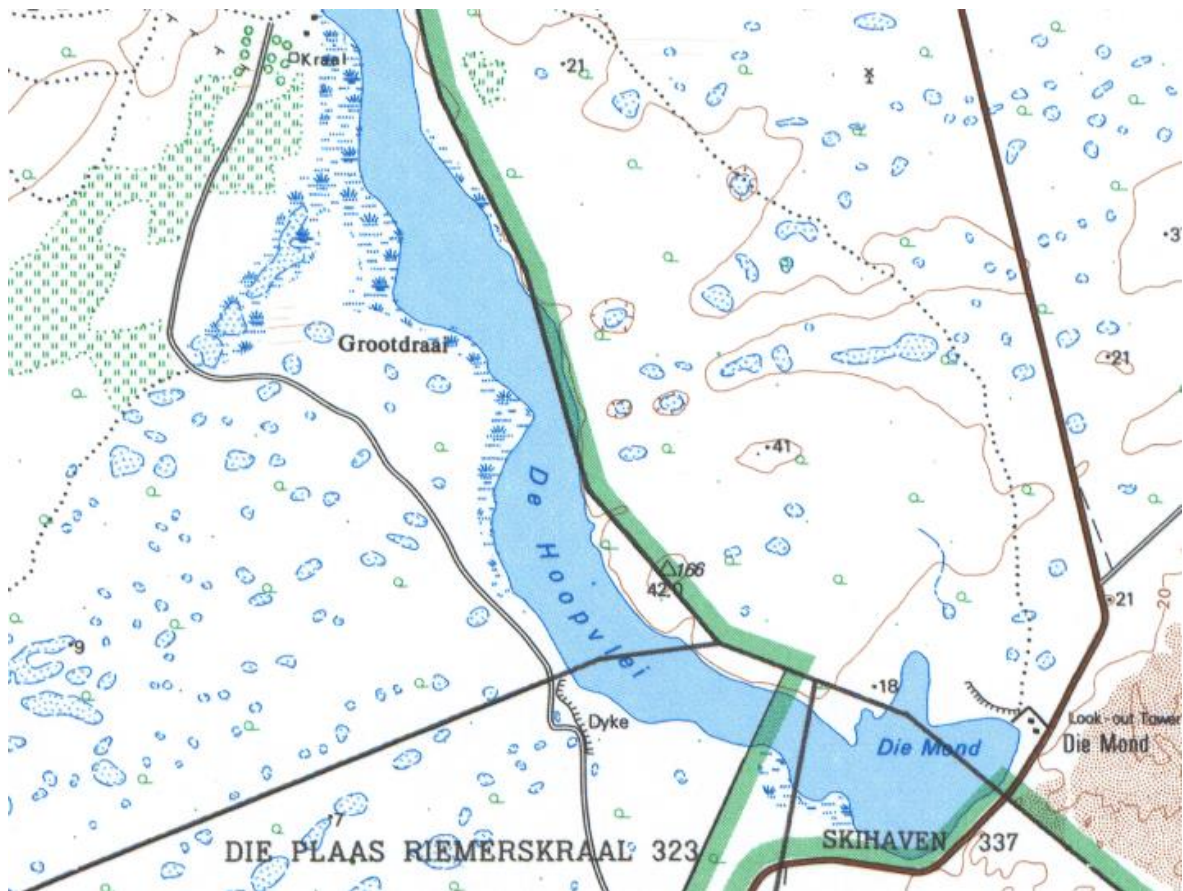


Figure 7. Topographic map showing the southern part of the gorge.

The level of the vlei fluctuates with years and seasons. At times it may be totally dry (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Satellite image of the middle part of the gorge when the vlei is dry.

The De Hoop gorge is the central feature of the De Hoop Nature Reserve. A resort is built at the site of the historical farm De Hoop (Figures 9 to 12).



Figure 9. Satellite image of the middle part of the gorge showing the De Hoop Collection resort. Arrow points to Melkkamer.



Figure 10. Oblique aerial image of the middle part of the gorge showing the resort.
Source: The Internet



Figure 11. The “De Hoop Collection” resort is located on the east side of the gorge. Top - view of the resort (arrow) from the northeast; middle - view of the resort (arrow) from the northwest; bottom – wild figs next to the resort’s reception.

The resort also uses structures on the west side of the gorge (Figure 12).



Figure 12. The “De Hoop Collection” resort is using the Melkkamer and the surrounding buildings, on the west side of the gorge (top and middle). Bottom – the boat which is used to shuttle guests to the other side of the vlei and back.