

ENDANGERED SPECIES DAY: 16 MAY 2026

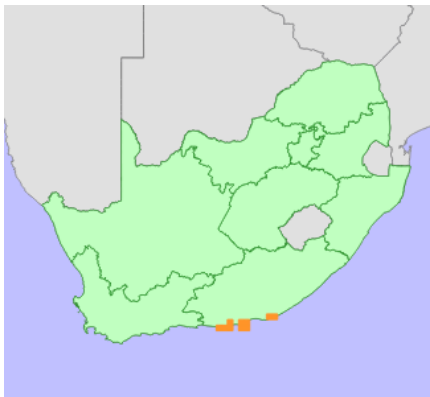
Look Closer: Endangered Species Are Closer Than You Think

When people hear the words *endangered species*, the same images often come to mind: rhinos, elephants, or large iconic animals. While these species deserve attention, conservation is not only about Africa's giants. Some of the most vulnerable species are far smaller, less visible, and in many cases, living right here within and around our Marina community.

This Endangered Species Day, we invite residents to look a little closer. Our estate and surrounding environment host unique and threatened plants, birds and marine life that many people pass every day without realising their significance. Learning about them is the first step toward protecting them.

Hidden treasures in our own backyard

Within the Arthur Fennell Park area and the valuable Gamtoos Thicket habitat found inside the estate boundary grows the endangered Dwarf Cape-beech. This rare shrub is found nowhere else in the world except a narrow coastal strip of the Eastern Cape between St Francis Bay and Port Alfred.



Its scientific name, *Rapanea gilliana*, may not be widely known, but its story matters. Habitat loss from coastal development and invasive alien plants continues to threaten its survival. It serves as a reminder that biodiversity conservation starts with protecting the spaces around us.

Residents can explore more through the [SANBI Red List of South African Plants](#)

Life beneath the canal surface

Not all endangered species live on land.

Beneath the water surface in our canals grows Cape Eelgrass (*Zostera capensis*), a species of seagrass that may appear unremarkable at first glance. Yet these underwater meadows provide critical shelter, nursery areas and feeding grounds for many aquatic species.

Cape eelgrass naturally occurs in sheltered bays, estuaries and lagoon systems, including environments like our canal network where conditions periodically resemble temporary closed estuaries.

Unfortunately, this species faces pressure from declining water quality, coastal development and habitat disturbance. South Africa has already lost eelgrass populations from major systems such as Durban Bay and St Lucia.



Images from:: iNaturalist URL: https://www.inaturalist.org/guide_taxa/841492

A surprising canal resident: the Longsnout Pipefish

Sometimes conservation arrives unexpectedly.

In May 2025, residents recorded the first observation of the Longsnout Pipefish (*Syngnathus temminckii*) in our canals, followed by another confirmed sighting in January 2026.

First observation in our canals on 5 May 2025



Photograph by Hester van der Westhuizen, as posted on the Social Hub (5 May 2025).

Spotted again on 4 January 2026



Photograph taken by Ken van Tonder and reported via WhatsApp (4 Jan 2026)

This remarkable species is related to seahorses—and like seahorses, males carry and give birth to live young.

Longsnout Pipefish depend heavily on seagrass habitats such as Cape eelgrass. These underwater meadows provide shelter, breeding areas and feeding grounds. Their presence in our canals reinforces an important message: healthy habitats support healthy wildlife.

Read more in the HOA article: [Longsnout Pipefish article](#)

How residents can help:

- Avoid disturbing canal vegetation
- Operate boats responsibly in shallow areas

- Report wildlife sightings to the HOA
- Support conservation awareness and education initiatives
- Share observations and photographs with the community

Every sighting contributes to understanding and protecting our local environment.

Look up too: the endangered Cape Cormorant

The skies above us also tell an important conservation story.

The Cape Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax capensis*) is an endangered seabird breeding on the West coast of South Africa. Being dependent largely on sardines and anchovies, they move along the south and eastern coast, following food sources moving to the warmer waters of the northern coastal areas, also passing through our magnificent marina.

Scientists regard seabirds as indicators of ocean health. Changes in their numbers can signal broader environmental changes happening beneath the surface.

Observing and appreciating species like these helps us better understand the health of our coastal ecosystems.

Become curious. Become involved.

Endangered Species Day is not only about awareness—it is about participation.

The next time you walk through Arthur Fennell Park, paddle along the canals, or notice a bird overhead, pause for a moment. Ask questions. Take a photograph. Read more. Share what you see.

Conservation does not begin in distant national parks. It begins where we live.

This Endangered Species Day, challenge yourself and your family to discover one local species you have never noticed before.

Complete this word puzzle by clicking on this link: <https://www.educaplay.com/learning-resources/29131899-coastalendangeredspecies.html>

Involve the kids by clicking on this link to their own activity page: <https://marinamartiniquehoa.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/WildKidz-ENDANGERED-SPECIES-DAY.pdf>

You may be surprised by the extraordinary wildlife already living alongside us.



my home, my marina, my lifestyle