

Verlorenvlei

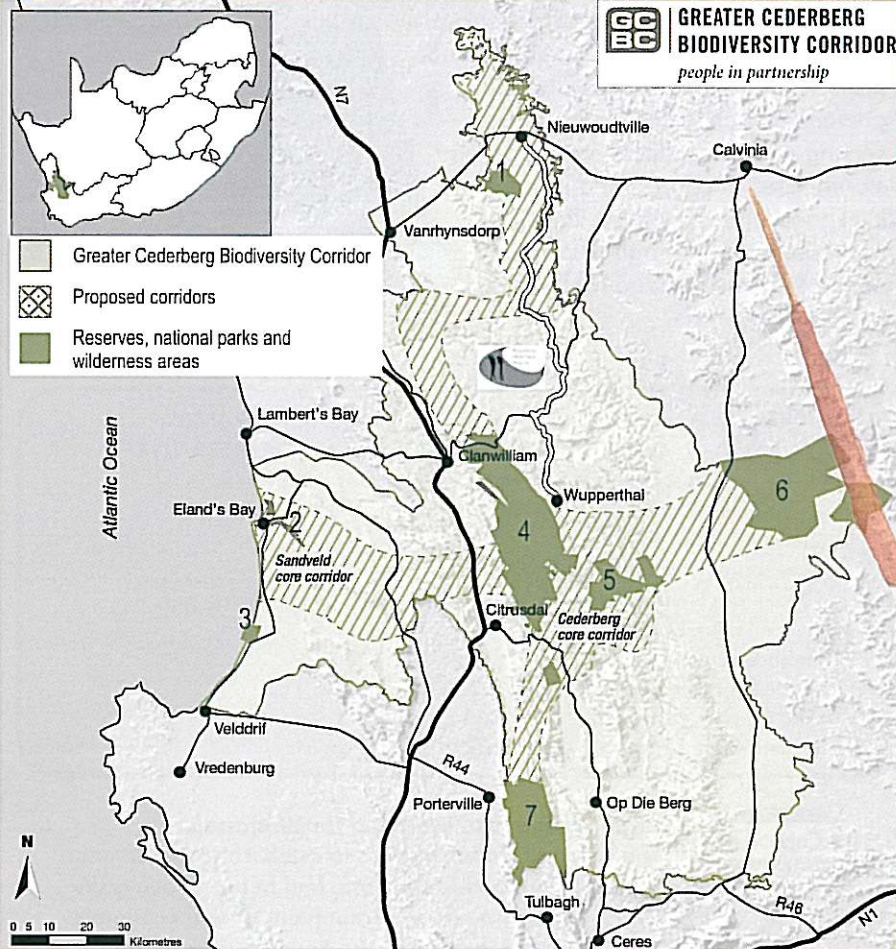


Circles, sand and solitude — these are unmistakably part of the Sandveld in which Verlorenvlei lies. This 1 500 ha coastal lake stands out like an oasis in this seemingly barren landscape. The Sandveld, with a rainfall of 300 mm per annum, supports a variety of crops such as potatoes, citrus and grapes, all of which receive their water from Verlorenvlei. The vlei stretches 50 km upstream to where three rivers feed this channel valley bottom wetland system. It opens up to the ocean on a seasonal basis, allowing estuarine processes to take place. Mullet come into the vlei to spawn and for the vlei there is the opportunity to flush built-up sediment out of the system. Verlorenvlei is host to various species such as the Cape Clawless Otter, Fish Eagle, Purple Gallinule and the Verlorenvlei Redfin — a species endemic to Verlorenvlei and found nowhere else. Verlorenvlei forms part of the West Coast Flamingo Birding Route and is unique owing to its Ramsar status, which is based mainly on its international importance to bird life.

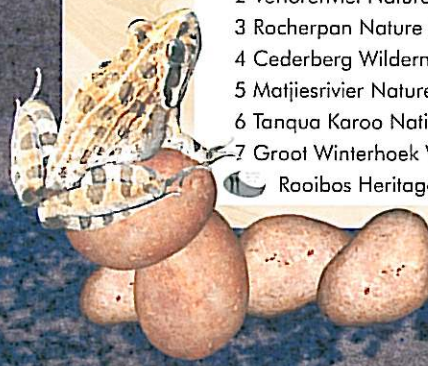
Verlorenvlei is a Channel Valley Bottom System. Even though 3 rivers feed the system, it is mainly driven by groundwater, making it a very slow-moving system. It is also one of the largest coastal lakes on the West Coast of South Africa.

Verlorenvlei received Ramsar status in 1991 mainly due to its international significance for birdlife.

The West Coast is turned into a bouquet of colourful flowers in August/September every year. The area is also famous for its Rooibos tea and plants of medicinal value. In the past, various species of *Helichrysum*, for example *Kooigoed*, were used for chestiness and also for stuffing pillows and mattresses. Geophytes such as the *Kandelaarblom* and March Lily sparkle in the veld at the end of the long, hot summer. The West Coast is also well known for its seafood and the best spot to experience West Coast cuisine is at Muisboskerm, near Lambert's Bay — famous for its seafood meals offered in a traditional *kookskerm*.



- 1 Oorlogskloof Nature Reserve
 - 2 Verlorenvlei Nature Reserve
 - 3 Rocherpan Nature Reserve
 - 4 Cederberg Wilderness Area
 - 5 Matjiesrivier Nature Reserve
 - 6 Tanqua Karoo National Park
 - 7 Groot Winterhoek Wilderness Area
- Rooibos Heritage Route



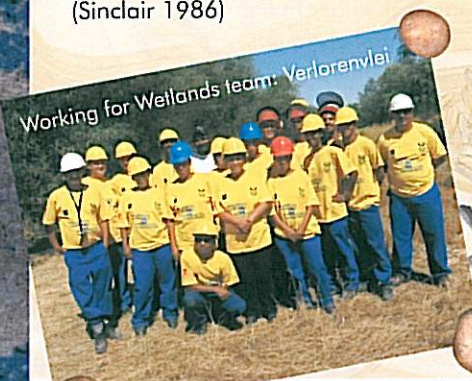
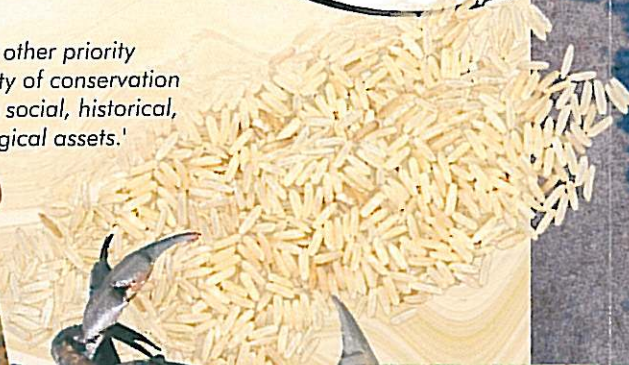
Saan after 2000 years ago, herders, probably Khai ancestors, entered the Valley and grazed their Sheep and cattle along the Verlorenvlei shores.

Verlorenvlei has been utilised by our direct ancestors since 100 000 years ago. Caves along the vlei hold evidence of their activities and related articles have been discovered and are kept at the Fossil Park near Langebaan. Today, humans still enjoy the

Eco Services offered by Verlorenvlei. Although under pressure from agricultural activities, climate change, alien invasive plants and sedimentation, joint efforts by CapeNature, Working for Wetlands, farmers and the Greater Cederberg Biodiversity Corridor are aimed at the sustainable use of Verlorenvlei and its surrounding natural areas. Working for Wetlands strives to rehabilitate wetlands to their natural state as 50% of South Africa's wetlands have been either lost or severely degraded. Two teams of Working for Wetlands from Elandsbaai and Redelinghuys are clearing the upper catchment of Verlorenvlei from alien invasive plants and one of the teams are also the proud constructors of the birdhide at Vensterklip. At Vensterklip visitors have the opportunity to explore Verlorenvlei and its surroundings up close through birding and kayaking, with excellent food and accommodation on offer. It is also one of the first Contract Nature Reserves in the Greater Cederberg Biodiversity Corridor.

'...Verlorenvlei is unique amongst all other priority areas in that it possesses a multiplicity of conservation assets, not only ecologically but also social, historical, cultural, architectural and archaeological assets.' (Sinclair 1986)

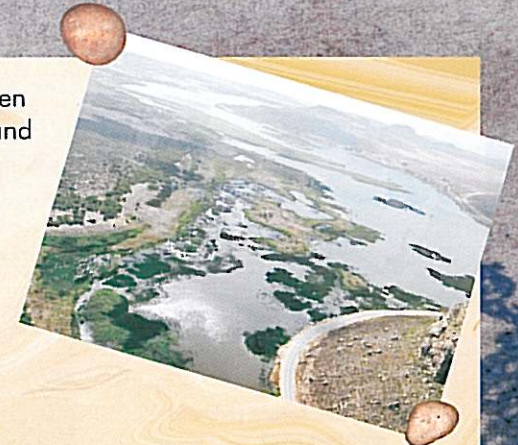
Biodiversity in a wetland is valuable as a reservoir of genes. Rice, a common wetland plant forms the staple diet for over half the world's population.



Photographs: CapeNature and SANParks



A wetland is sometimes easily mistaken for a dam or river. The value of wetland systems lies in their unique ability to prevent erosion, trapping sediment, serving as natural filters, acting as storehouses of carbon and offering livelihood and recreation. They have to be protected through sustainable practices in the wetland itself and in surrounding areas.



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- CapeNature: www.capenature.co.za, 021 - 659 3445.
- Crayfish Trail: 027 851-7108
- Dorpshuis: 022 962-1746
- Elandsbaai Hotel: 022 972-1640
- Greater Cederberg Biodiversity Corridor: www.cederbergcorridor.org.za
- Lambert's Bay Tourism: 027 432-1000
- Muisboskerm: www.muisboskerm.co.za, 027 432-1017
- Vensterklip: www.vensterklip.co.za, 022 972-1340
- West Coast Fossil Park: 022 766-1606
- Western Cape Birding: www.westerncapebirding.co.za



CapeNature and Working for Wetlands

The vision of CapeNature is to establish a conservation economy in the Western Cape and to turn Biodiversity Conservation into a key component of local economic development processes in the Province. The partnership between CapeNature and Working for Wetlands is an example of how this vision is realised.

