



PRINCE EDWARD ISLANDS

# WHERE NATURE STILL REIGNS SUPREME

In a landmark decision, the South African government recently afforded the Prince Edward Islands official protection. This would not have been possible without Sanlam's ceaseless backing of the **World Wide Fund for Nature South Africa (WWF-SA)**. But what makes these islands so special, and what does it mean for the future of our oceans?



**(Opposite) ROYAL SHAKE** The king penguin is the second-largest species of penguin in the world; only the emperor penguin is larger. An adult stands nearly a metre tall and can weigh as much as 16kg. **(Top left) SAFE HAVEN** Yellow-nosed albatrosses mate for life and hatch one nestling every two years. **(Top right) DISTANT SHORES** Sooty albatrosses ride the air currents above Ship's Cove. This protected bay near the research station is an important nesting site for the albatross. It's also home to a colony of king penguins and is regularly visited by huge elephant seals.

The Prince Edward Islands, which consist of Marion Island and Prince Edward Island, lie nearly 2 000km south-east of Port Elizabeth. Gale-force winds blow almost every day and rain falls about 320 days a year. Despite the harsh conditions, Dr Samantha Petersen, who lived on Marion Island when she was a student and is now head of the WWF's Marine Programme, considers it the most amazing place she's ever been.

She speaks passionately about the dramatic ice caves at the island's summit. She laughs about the ubiquitous bog, which means gumboots and waterproof trousers are obligatory. And she enthuses about the playful killer whales that come right to the shore to chase pebbles thrown into the shallows.

Apart from being breathtakingly beautiful, the islands are also extremely important to the biodiversity of the Southern Ocean. 'Albatrosses, petrels and penguins breed on these islands,' explains Samantha, 'and the run-off from the islands provides invaluable nutrients to the oceans around them.'

In the 1980s the fishing grounds near the islands were subjected to illegal fishing of the Patagonian toothfish. This was disastrous not only for the toothfish but also for the albatrosses that were frequently ensnared by the long lines used for this type of fishing.

Over the past seven years the WWF, with the backing of Sanlam and the Charl van der Merwe Trust, has worked very closely with Government to establish South Africa's first offshore Marine Protected Area (MPA),

which at 180 633km<sup>2</sup> is the seventh-largest MPA in the world. Francois Adriaan, Sanlam's Head of Group Corporate Affairs, could not hide his joy about the news: 'This giant step might seem unimportant, given the islands' remote location, but it is actually unbelievably significant as it signals our intent as human beings to form a meaningful part of the future on this planet. Where South Africa has led, we hope that others will follow.'

'The establishment of the MPA is a major step in the right direction,' says Samantha, 'but there is still a long way to go.' Only 1,2% of the world's oceans are protected – a figure she says 'will have to increase if we want to ensure a healthy marine environment that provides society with food and jobs, and one that can respond to global climate change.'

Samantha adds that with Sanlam's help this might be possible. 'Sanlam is an extremely special donor because the company takes a long-term view. Many donors want short-term gains, but Sanlam is prepared to walk the often long and treacherous road with WWF.'

Kulthoom Razak, Sanlam's Sustainability Manager, explains Sanlam's generous attitude: 'Sanlam is in the business of growing and preserving wealth, and the work done by WWF mirrors our core values on an even bigger scale. We want generations to come to be able to marvel at a creature as magnificent as the albatross, but we also want to ensure they have basic rights such as access to clean drinking water and uncontaminated air. It is all about ensuring a legacy.'

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SAMANTHA PETERSEN

'What makes Sanlam even better,' says Samantha, 'is that their relationship with us is a two-way street. We are working together not only to improve the environmental footprint of Sanlam's operations but also to engage them in a broader analysis of the role a financial services provider can play in sound environmental decision-making in our country.'

'If I were a Sanlammer,' she concludes, 'I'd be very proud of the future my company was securing for our planet.' ■

## The world's 10 largest Marine Protected Areas

- 1 Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve (Australia, 989 842km<sup>2</sup>)
- 2 Phoenix Islands Protected Area (Kiribati, 408 342km<sup>2</sup>)
- 3 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (Australia, 343 480km<sup>2</sup>)
- 4 US Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (Hawaii, 334 154km<sup>2</sup>)
- 5 US Mariana Trench Marine National Monument (Pacific Ocean, 247 179km<sup>2</sup>)
- 6 US Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument (Pacific Ocean, 212 788km<sup>2</sup>)
- 7 Prince Edward Islands Marine Protected Area (South Africa, 180 633km<sup>2</sup>)
- 8 Kermadec Benthic Protection Area (New Zealand, 164 840km<sup>2</sup>)
- 9 Macquarie Island Commonwealth Marine Reserve (Australia, 161 895km<sup>2</sup>)
- 10 Galapagos Marine Reserve (Ecuador, 137 975km<sup>2</sup>)

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