

THE TRAIL OF THE ROSEATE TERN

(Cape Recife Nature Reserve)

The walk of 8 km (3 – 4 hours) starts at the **entrance gate** to the **Cape Recife Nature Reserve** where there are ablutions. The 366 ha **Cape Recife Nature Reserve** was proclaimed in 1973 and is situated adjacent to the Pine Lodge Resort off **Marine Drive**. No permit is required for hikers leaving their vehicles outside the gate, but an annual or weekly permit, available from the **Pine Lodge Resort** is required for vehicles entering the reserve. The trail is suitable for moderately fit persons who are advised to walk in a group, wear stout shoes and take a sunhat and drinking-water. **NO DOGS** are allowed.

A **bird hide** on a reclamation pond is located on the trail. The pond is part of the Cape Recife water reclamation works and the water is unsuitable for drinking or washing purposes. These ponds make this area one of the best birdwatching venues around Port Elizabeth where several species of **ducks** and **waders** can be seen. Shy reed bed birds such as **black crane**, **purple gallinule** and **little bittern** may show themselves, and **otters** are not uncommon. The purple flowers of the **Ipomoea** creeper are very conspicuous along the trail leading from the hide. **Bushpig** spoor is usually seen as are several **buck** species in the vegetated dune areas adjacent to the beach.

The trail passes the **lighthouse**, built in 1851 and automated only recently. The area around the lighthouse is part of a sand by-pass sand-dune system, typical of many of the southern coast peninsulas. At low tide the rock pools provide a fascinating glimpse of life under the waves where **sea-anemones** and **starfish** can be found. Near the lighthouse is a large tern roost, where the rare **roseate tern**, is sometimes seen. On a rocky promontory at the end of the sandy beach waves can be seen breaking over **Thunderbolt reef**, the graveyard of numerous ships, the last being the **Kapodistrias** which was wrecked on 29th July 1985.

The trail heads inland over sand-dunes vegetated with **fynbos** and **dune scrub**. It meanders through the remains of World War II barracks before climbing the hill to the **fortress observation post**, erected in 1940 as part of the harbour defences. From here there is an excellent view of the bay and the reserve which consists of many stabilized vegetated dunes, once part of an extensive shifting dune system that covered much of Summerstrand.

NOTE: Use of the area is entirely at your own risk