

Win R230 000 in prizes



POSER: A Verreux's sifaka reaches out to Dale Morris during a visit to Madagascar. 'The sifakas were great fun. They spent a lot of time near the ground, enabling me to get these wacky shots,' says the photographer.

Canon

You can enter 10 images a month and stand a chance of winning even bigger prizes in the 2013 search for SA's most innovative wildlife and nature photographers. Canon will be giving away R185 000 in wildlife photographic gear to the year's overall winners, and the Green Life Photographer of the Month will win R5 000 from Lifestyle Magazine, so get clicking. We welcome images by amateur and professional photographers alike, so if you have a shot that casts an unusual spotlight on Africa's wildlife, big or small, send it to us.

HOW TO ENTER:

Send your entries to greenlife@sundaytimes.co.za. For full competition details, visit www.facebook.com/stgreenlife and click the "like" button at the top of the page, or visit www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes. Good luck, we look forward to receiving your entries!



green life

Tiara Walters

www.facebook.com/stgreenlife
Tiara is on Twitter via [sundaytimes_eco](https://twitter.com/sundaytimes_eco)
Email walterst@sundaytimes.co.za

Footprints only

All litter is trash, only some is trashier

SMITSWINKEL Bay next to the Cape Point Nature Reserve is only accessible on a footpath that buckles sharply towards the sand below. How is it possible, then, for 10 people to pick up 464 discarded plastic water bottles along less than 1km of coast at this far-flung spot? Yet this is what a group of friends and I collected in one day after hearing Smits was looking the worse for wear.

Smits forms the Cape Point Nature Reserve's north-eastern boundary, which is part of the Table Mountain National Park — but it is no concern of the park, says spokesperson Merle Collins. And it's not the city's problem either, maintains Ricardo Thompson, senior superintendent of Muizenberg's solid-waste department.

"Smitswinkel falls within the Table Mountain National Park. I'm confused why they say it falls under me. My ambit ends after Simon's Town [10km away]. Smits has never been a part of my map. [The park doesn't] even want us to put litter bins there. They say it's city council's responsibility."

An agent at the city of Cape Town's customer-services call centre claimed Smits was "definitely part of the city's cleaning area". Confusion about who is meant to keep this beach clean could be partly to blame for its state, but there is also the mind-boggling source of all this litter.

According to Aiden Biccard, a marine and freshwater consultant who helped with the clean-up: "There's an endless supply of trash that washes up at Smits. Clean it today and in three weeks it will be full of litter again. Land-derived street litter makes its way into stormwater drains via gutters and ultimately flows out to sea and, of course, many of the bottles we collected were imprinted with Asian writing, which suggests they came from vessels passing through our waters."

We collected just one glass bottle, but there were hundreds of plastic bottles, an

indication of how pervasive this kind of pollution has become.

Coca-Cola SA manufactures Valpré, one of SA's most popular bottled-water brands, and defends its products by pointing out that glass thrown overboard "will sink whereas PET plastic [the type of plastic that water is packaged in] can float for thousands of kilometres". In other words, the company is suggesting glass is a "bigger", albeit less visible, problem.

"Less than 40% of glass in SA is recycled and 45% of PET plastic is recycled, compared to 18% in 2000," says franchise technical manager Casper Durandt.

"PETCO [the local industry's official recycling company] plans to grow PET recycling to 70% in 2020. Glass has a higher cost than PET," says Durandt, "and the cost to consumers would be higher."

True, imagine buying water in a 5-litre glass bottle. Then again, why would you want to do that when South Africa's tap water is perfectly drinkable, especially with a filter, and the maths is so simple? Buy a standard 750ml still spring-water glass bottle with a metal cap at around R15 today, and it can last you five years-plus if you look after it. Or you can buy the same product in plastic at R8.95 every day over the next five years and it will cost you R14 600 (if inflation stays the same). Sure, you could reuse your R8.95 plastic bottle — but just guess what that will look like in five years.

While plastic is cheaper and more convenient in the short term, glass has long-term financial and environmental benefits. Glass is made from sand. PET plastic is made from fossil fuels, the driving force behind man-made climate change. Glass breaks down in the environment. Plastic doesn't. It degrades into microscopic pieces, as illustrated by giant ocean garbage patches, which scientists say are impossible to clean.

Best way to reduce this? Buy products that are more durable and less likely to encourage a throw-away industry — and end up destroying our environment.



GREEN LIFE'S TOP FIVE ECO-FRIENDLY BOTTLES

Consol Grip & Go (500ml glass bottle): Locally made, curvy, easy-to-grip silicone sleeve. Available at Pick n Pay and Macro stores R21.50 (recommended price).

Woolworths spring water (750ml glass bottle): The best local, value-for-money find, with a simple, elegant design. R15.95.

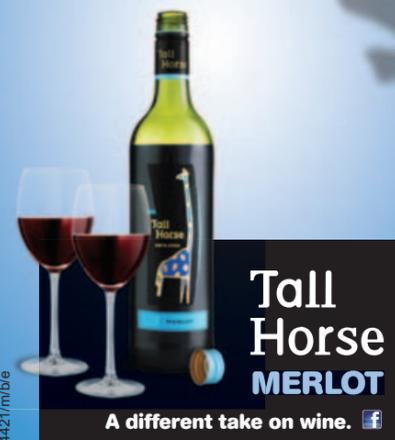
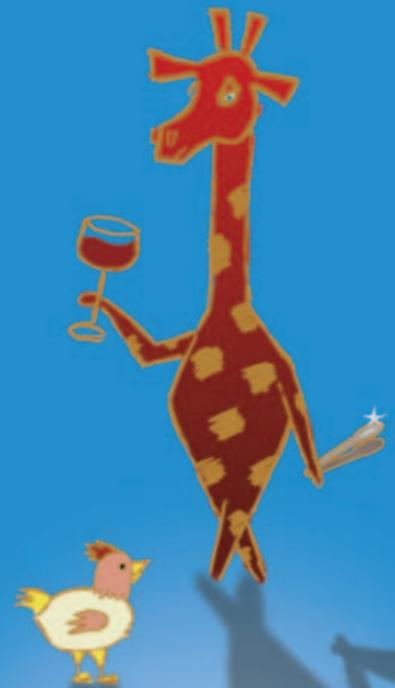
Klean Kanteen (750ml steel bottle): Made from high-quality, food-grade stainless steel designed to last a lifetime. R159.95 at Wellness Warehouse.

Brita Fill & Go (500ml steel bottle): High-quality, tight-sealing, light and compact. R190 www.yuppiechef.co.za.

Maxwell & Williams neon water bottle (1-litre coloured glass bottle): The biggest bottle I could find for water junkies. R69.99 at Green Living Store or Wellness Warehouse.

• The best options are often the simplest products that took the least energy to make and transport: eg Appletizer or Rose's Cordial screw-top bottles

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