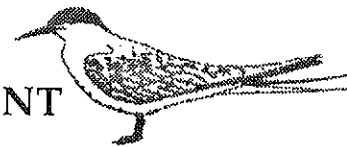




City of Port Elizabeth

PARKS and RECREATION DEPARTMENT



The Trail of the Roseate Tern

(Cape Recife Nature Reserve)

The walk of 9 km (3 - 4 hours) starts at the *entrance gate* to the *Cape Recife Nature Reserve*. The 366 ha reserve was proclaimed in 1973 and is situated next 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 *beach office* at *Happy Valley*, is required for vehicles entering the reserve. The trail is suitable for moderately fit persons. It is advisable to walk in a group, wear stout shoes and take a sunhat and drinking-water.

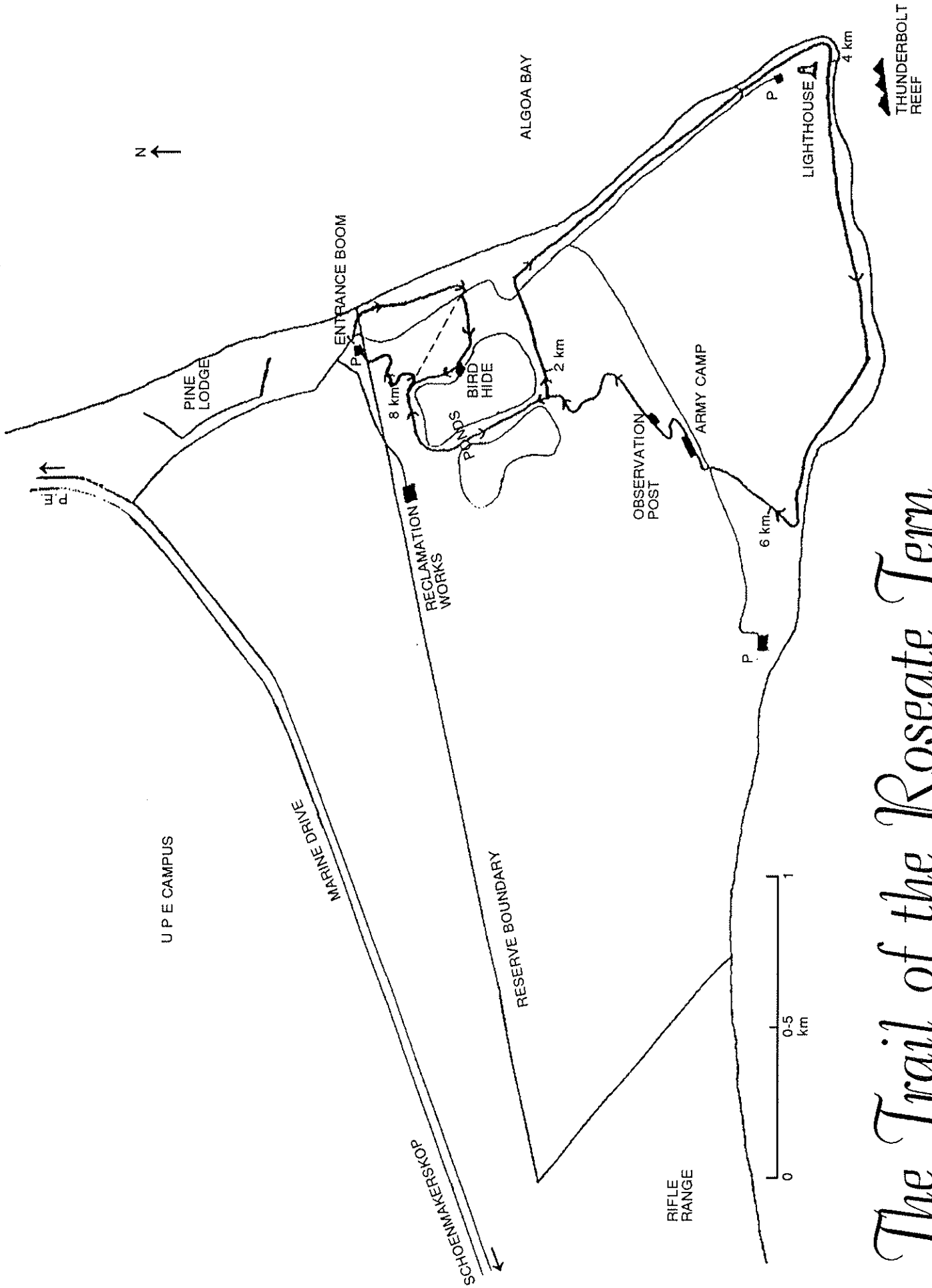
At the entrance gate red arrows indicate the route to the beach. The trail turns inland at the concrete outlet pipe from the water reclamation works and crosses the road. The *bird hide* on the lower reclamation pond is reached after passing through a stand of alien *rooikrans* bushes. The ponds are 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 and several species of *ducks* and *waders* can be seen. Sitting quietly in the hide, shy reedbed birds such as *black crane*, *purple gallinule* and *little bittern* may show themselves, and *otters* are not uncommon. The purple flowers of the *Convolvulus* creeper are very conspicuous along the path leading from the hide.

The trail now passes along the causeway next to the top reclamation pond, crosses a wooden bridge and then turns sharp left, following a reedbed to the beach. *Bushpig* spoor can usually be seen and several *buck* species are found here.

A long beach walk passes the *lighthouse*, built in 1851 and automated only recently. Observe how sand is transported around the point via the by-pass sand-dune system, typical of many of the southern coast peninsulas. Waves can be seen breaking over *Thunderbolt reef*, the graveyard of numerous ships, the last being the *Kapodistriias* on 29 July 1985. At low tide the rock pools provide a fascinating glimpse of life under the waves where *sea-anemones*, *sea-urchins* and *starfish* may be found. Near the lighthouse is a large tern roost, where the rare *roseate tern*, which used to breed here, is sometimes seen.

After traversing a rocky outcrop and a shell beach, 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 reserve. The trail now leads over the stabilised vegetated dunes, once part of an extensive shifting dune system that covered much of Summerstrand. Returning to the reclamation ponds, the trail is followed in reverse until just before the bird hide, the route back to the gate passing through a *rooikrans* forest.

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



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