

Greater St Lucia Wetland Park

Some places become world **heritage** sites because they are home to a range of living things or they are places of exceptional natural beauty. **Preserving** these sites is very important.

Greater St Lucia Wetland Park is in South Africa. The park is an amazing and **unique** place because so many different animals and plants live there. The park is made up of wetlands, lakes, beaches and coral reefs, as well as forests, grasslands and **savannah**. The animals and plants that live in Greater St Lucia are protected because the park is a world heritage site.



Greater St Lucia Wetland Park is home to a lot of different animals, including many **species** of fish and more than 500 species of birds. A range of animals, such as bison, deer, hippopotamuses, rhinoceroses, turtles, kudus, zebras and buffaloes, live there. There are some extremely **rare** animals at the park. Before they were found at Greater St Lucia, some of these animals were thought to be almost **extinct**.

Protecting elephants

The last elephants in this region were killed by hunters 85 years ago. But people have worked hard to bring elephants from nearby parks to start new herds in Greater St Lucia Wetland Park. At first the elephants were put into a small pen to let them get used to their new home. Then they were freed into the wider park. Since then, the elephants have made themselves at home.

Ancient fish

An ancient fish called the coelacanth has been found in a **submarine canyon** in this park. These fish, once thought to have been extinct for 65 million years, were rediscovered in 1938. But no one knew until recently that they were alive and well in Greater St Lucia Wetland Park.



Know your vocabulary



extinct When a group of animals becomes extinct, it means no animals in that group are still alive. For example, there are no longer any dinosaurs living on Earth.



heritage Our heritage is what we think is important and valuable and what we want people in the future to enjoy, too. Natural heritage areas are beautiful places.



preserving Preserving means keeping something the way it is so that it stays healthy for the future.



rare If something is rare, it is not often seen or found because not many of these things exist. For example, giant pandas living in the wild are rare. There are not many left.



savannah A savannah is a large area of land that is mainly grass. It has very few trees and shrubs and they are not close together. There is a lot of sunlight so the grass grows well.



species Animals are grouped according to how similar they are. A species is a group of animals that are the same in just about every way. For example, gorillas are a species of animal.



submarine canyon A submarine canyon is found at the bottom of the ocean. It is a steep valley that goes very deep into the ocean floor.



unique When something is unique, it is the only one of its kind and is not like anything else.