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*Anemones mirrored in a quicksilver sky in a natural tidal pool in the Table Mountain National Park Marine Protected Area, South Africa.*

**Leonie Joubert** is a Cape Town-based science writer grappling with many of today's tough environmental and social justice issues: climate collapse, environmental change, energy policy, cities as development hubs, and why today's food system leaves many hungry, heavy, and sick (the hunger-obesity poverty-paradox).

In short, she writes about pollution: carbon pollution of the atmosphere driving climate collapse; highly-processed food-like products polluting the nutritional landscape, leading to the

hunger-obesity pandemic; who profits from the pollution, and who pays the price. Through this unusual journalistic 'beat', she critiques the limitless-growth economic model — through the lens of 'climate' and 'food security' — and how this is driving systems collapse.

She has spent 20 years exploring these topics through books, journalism, communication support to academics and civil society organisations, podcasting, political illustration, and public speaking.

Her preferred style is long-form journalistic storytelling, which weaves together 'person' and 'place' with the complex science of the issue at hand. Most recently, this has involved a series of assignments for **National Geographic** magazine and its digital platform. This has taken her to the Caprivi in Namibia, Mozambique's remote Niassa Special Reserve, the southern Kalahari, and the African kelp forests along the South African coast.

Since her first expedition in 2003 when she boarded the marine research vessel, the SA *Agulhas*, and ventured into the sub-Antarctic as a rookie writer, Leonie has written over ten books, a number of book chapters, and countless pieces of journalism.

In this time, she has been charged by lions, caught in an elephant stampede, abandoned on the Angolan border by an angry 'witch hunter', airlifted away from advancing Islamic insurgents in Mozambique, and white-knuckled it through a storm in the 'Roaring Forties' that threatened to pluck the helicopters off the back of the ship that was ploughing through the oceans where the 'worst weather in the world' is born.

She has also stood within reaching distance of wandering albatrosses doing their annual courtship dance. She helped collect water samples from the lake in an extinct volcano that contained a water bear (or tardigrade) that was previously unknown to science. She has huddled with king penguins on a rocky beach in the sub-Antarctic, travelled into Cameroon with gorillas on a repatriation trip, been flown into the Cape Fold Mountains in a thundering Vietnam War-era helicopter to help beat out the perimeter of a wildfire, and stood in awe as a wild pangolin tottered over the Kalahari dunes and sniffed her boot.

Recently, this confirmed terrestrialite donned a wetsuit and launched into the other-worldly realm of Africa's kelp forests. She is now a competent marine mammal who regularly and enthusiastically explores these forests as a snorkeler, free-diver and scuba diver.

Leonie is at once in awe of the planet, and struck by the responsibility of telling the stories that warn of our damaging practices to it.



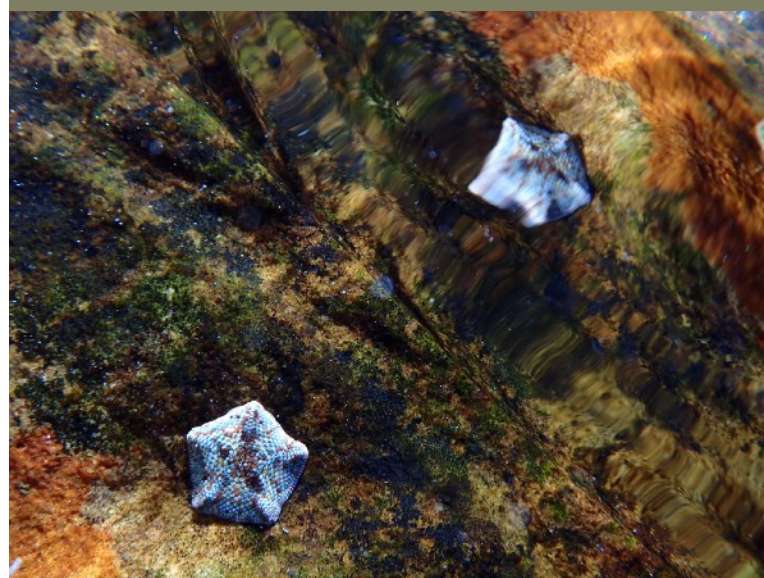
*The alchemy of physics—water and light—create a Dali-esque mood in a tidal pool in the Cape Point Nature Reserve outside Cape Town, South Africa.*

The images in this document were taken as field notes while on assignment for **National Geographic** magazine in 2021 and 2022. This particular story is set in the kelp forests of the Cape peninsula in South Africa. Leonie has written the text which will accompany the visual narrative by veteran **National Geographic** photographer Thomas Peschak [[www.thomaspeschak.com](http://www.thomaspeschak.com)], with whom she has collaborated on other magazine projects.

The article, which is still in production, explores the African kelp forests, the importance of marine protected areas, and how a new generation of conservationists is moving in as the forests' custodians.

All images by Leonie Joubert unless stated otherwise.

*In the words of astronomer Carl Sagan, everything is made of star-stuff. A cushion starfish in a natural tidal pool on the Cape peninsula, South Africa.*





'Game spotting' in an artificial tidal pool near Cape Town with one of the central characters of the kelp forest story.

## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- 2023 **Vodacom South African Journalist of the Year** — national winner (sustainability category, narrative writer on team entry)
- 2023 **Africa Science Journalist of the Year**, Science for Africa Foundation (narrative writer on team entry)
- 2023, **Vodacom South African Journalist of the Year 2023** — Gauteng regional winner (sustainability category, narrative writer on team entry)
- [Leonie distanced herself from the 2023 **Standard Bank Sikuville Journalist of the Year Award** (feature category), given to the team behind *A Perfect Storm*, owing to Standard Bank's suppression of journalists and climate activists in the same month as the award was announced.]
- 2022 **Distinguished Alumni Award** from the School of Journalism & Media Studies, Rhodes University
- 2009 **SAB Environmental Journalist of the Year Award** (print/internet category)
- 2007 **Ruth First Fellowship**
- *Mail & Guardian's 200 Young South Africans You Must Take to Lunch* (2008)

- Shortlisted for the 2016 **City Press Tafelberg Nonfiction Award**
- Honorary mentions in the *Sunday Times Alan Paton Nonfiction Awards* (2007 and 2010)

## PORTFOLIO HIGHLIGHTS

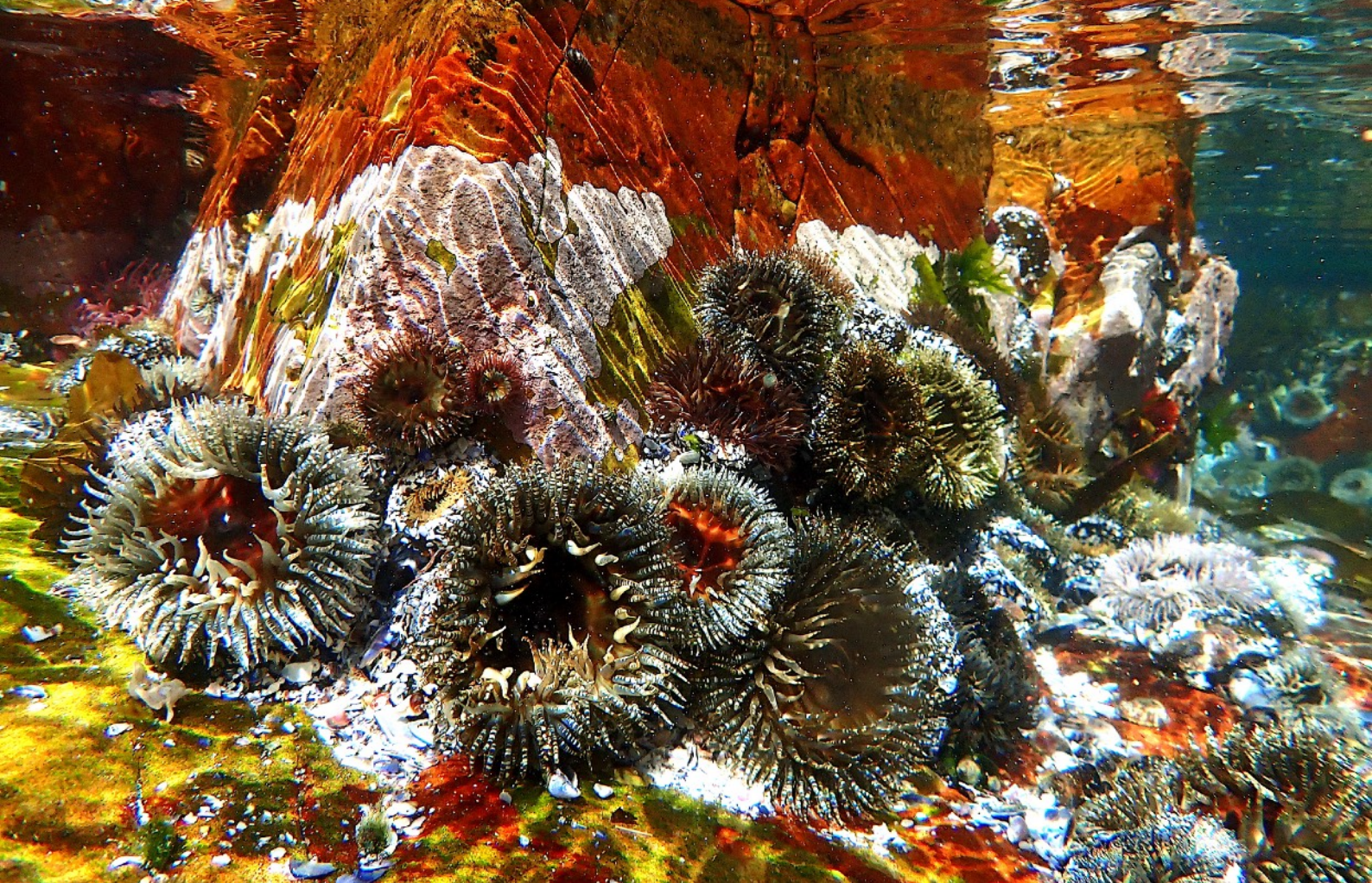
### Some recent journalism

***Rising heat puts the Kalahari's ecosystem on the edge of survival***, *National Geographic* magazine, 27 July 2021.

***Africa's only penguins face an uncertain future***, *National Geographic* digital, 21 October 2021.

***An exceptional wilderness***: To help protect its largest wildlife preservation, Mozambique is giving local people a stake in its success, *National Geographic* magazine, September 2023.

***Guardians of Eden***, *National Geographic* magazine (due for publication in 2025). This article explores the African kelp forests, the importance of marine protected areas, and how people of colour are moving into the marine conservation space. Meanwhile, see ***Spellbound***, a self-published reflection on this storytelling process (August 2023).



***Living with dementia in southern Africa is a heartbreaking challenge***, *National Geographic* digital, 22 June 2022. Historically, the elderly were cared for by extended families. As development gains allow people to live longer, the number of people living with dementia will increase. This article explores how to support families to adopt an age-in-place care model.

See a full portfolio of work [here](#).

### **Other journalism**

Leonie has been published widely in the SA media and abroad.

Most notable of the recent work are her contributions to *National Geographic* magazine, *Mongabay*, *Nature Africa*, and the *Daily Maverick*'s climate reporting team for *Our Burning Planet*.

### **Books** (selection)

***Realising Just Cities*** (African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town, 2021)

***Tomatoes & Taxi Ranks*** (African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town, 2018)

***Oranjezicht City Farm: Food, Community, Connection*** (OCF NPC, 2016)

***The Hungry Season: Feeding Southern Africa's Cities*** (Picador Africa/Pan MacMillan, 2012)

***Invaded: the Biological Invasion of South Africa*** (Wits University Press, 2009)

***Boiling Point: People in a Changing Climate*** (Wits University Press, 2008)

***Scorched: South Africa's Changing Climate*** (Wits University Press, 2006)

### **Book chapters**

***Opinion Pieces by South African Thought Leaders*** (Penguin, 2011)

***Bending the Curve*** (Africa Geographic, 2009)

## **Special projects**

**Hit Me(n): Protest Art as a Communications Tool to Reframe the Hunger-Obesity Poverty-Paradox in the Global South**, Matatu - Journal of African Culture & Society, Volume 54 (Nov 2023): Issue 1: Special Issue: South African Food Studies.

**Small is Beautiful** and other contributions to the *FLOW: Fostering Local Wellbeing* collaboration.

**Food Dialogues Report 2020**: rapporteur for the 2020 Food Dialogues, organised by the SA Urban Food and Farming Trust.

**At the bottom of the food chain: small operators versus multinational corporations in the food systems of Brazil, Mexico and South Africa** (Economic Justice Network/NRF-DST Centre of Excellence on Food Security at the School of Public Health, University of the Western Cape, 2014).

**The Farmer & The Entrepreneur**: two long-form pieces for the City Desired exhibition by the University of Cape Town's African Centre for Cities (2014).

**Food Dialogues Report 2014** (Cape Town Partnership & the Oranjezicht City Farm, 2014): rapporteur for a lecture series.

**Untold Stories** (Environmental Monitoring Groups, 2014).

**Choice 2012**: end-of-project report written in a 40-page magazine format for Marie Stopes South Africa (MSSA), as commissioned by Creative Consulting & Development Works (2012).

**Life: the State of South Africa's Biodiversity** (South African National Biodiversity Institute, 2013).

**Better Production for a Living Planet** (WWF South Africa, 2013).

To see her full portfolio and read more about Leonie's various areas of interest, please visit her [website](#) or contact her directly.

