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AGM AND PUBLIC TALK ON OCEAN CONSERVATION TUESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER

The Whale Coast Conservation Annual General Meeting will be held at the Green House on Tuesday 20 September at 17h30.

Immediately after the very brief AGM, brilliant conservation photographer Jean Tresfon will be the guest speaker. The title of his talk is "Ocean Conservation from the Public's Perspective".

Jean Tresfon is a wildlife and landscape photographer specializing in underwater and aerial images. He lives in Cape Town and his passion lies in showcasing both his city and his country as a superb photographic

destination for capturing alluring and unusual wildlife images. His initial foray into underwater photography was a natural extension of his many years spent diving and the frustration experienced in trying to explain the wonders of the underwater world to his surface dwelling acquaintances.



Bottlenose dolphins enjoy the storm swells, Brazen Head. Photo by Jean Tresfon.

It is Jean's belief that the official lack of protection for many of our underwater ecosystems stems from their very inaccessibility and an "out of sight, out of mind" mentality. Now he hopes that his images will inspire more people to visit and conserve these beautiful places and their inhabitants.

Jean is also a pilot and has found that flying and diving share a common trait in that they both allow a different and unusual perspective and viewpoint. He has recently started building a collection of aerial images to showcase the natural magnificence of the Western Cape.

TALK ABOUT DECEPTION!

About 60 people attended Jeremy Midgley's talk on 16 August at the Green House. The audience was both intrigued and fascinated by the amazing evolutionary adaptation of a plant to slip into an ecological niche for its own benefit.



Sheraine van Wyk with Prof Jeremy Midgley

In ground-breaking research his team was able to show that a plant has evolved to dupe an insect into dispersing its seeds.

Ceratocaryum argenteum, is a tall restio that occurs in sandplain fynbos. It produces large, smelly, brown, round seeds that look and smell remarkably like bontebok dung. In fact, it's 10 times smellier than the dung. Prof Midgley showed us video clips of dung beetles getting into quite a frenzy when they encountered these 'delectable' seeds. Chemical analysis of the smelly compounds showed remarkable similarity to those in bontebok dung. By attaching fluorescent string to the seeds, the team could follow what happened to them – they were avidly rolled away and stashed into the beetles' burrows.

Dung beetles are thus deceived into burying the seeds as they would the dung. Since the seeds are too hard for adult or larval dung beetles to eat, this is a remarkable example of chemical and visual deception in seed dispersal. Having its seeds dispersed and buried is a great benefit for the plant as it prevents intense seedling competition, and protects seeds from being incinerated in fynbos fires. The researchers found no dung beetle eggs attached to buried seeds, so the beetles did not lay eggs on them. The cost to dung beetles is irritation rather than a more serious loss of reproductive energy.

SA ASSOCIATION OF RETIRES PERSONS



Sheraine van Wyk was the guest speaker at the SAARP monthly meeting in August. She spoke about citizen science and how frogs can be used as bio-indicators of environmental health.



About 60 members visited the Green House where they were given a preview of the schools expo on fynbos. Denfred Bruintjies (middle above) showed them the finer points of frog ID.

SCHOOLS EXPOS ON FYNBOS

In the second half of August we took our Expo on Fynbos to 9 schools, with 3 more to come in September. Past experience has shown that knowledge about fynbos is sadly lacking, particularly in school learners. This is of real concern to us. If the next generation is not fully informed about the importance of fynbos and the real threats it faces, there will be little motivation to protect it.

The expo was attended by Grades 6 and 7 learners from the primary schools and the Life Sciences classes from Gansbaai Academia, and even some pre-schoolers.

Our thanks to the Hermanus Botanical Society, the Kogelberg Branch of the Botanical Society of SA and AVI for sponsoring these Fynbos Expos.



John Cowan explained how the evolutionary pressure of harsh climate, poor soils and fire cause speciation and high biodiversity.



They then used dissecting microscopes to look at how Erica leaves are specially adapted to hot dry summers.



Anina Lee demonstrated the four main groups of fynbos plants. They were intrigued by the fact that a protea head is a whole bunch of flowers and that a pincushion flower changes from male to female.



Pat Miller described how fynbos is both adapted to fire and reliant on fire to return nutrients to the soil. She demonstrated serotiny in *Protea repens*.



Shirley Mgoboza talked about the threats to fynbos through alien plants and human transformation of the landscape.



Sheraine van Wyk explained how important fynbos is for the local economy, including eco-tourism, ecosystem services, the flower industry and bee-pollinated crops.

HERMANUS FLOWER FESTIVAL

The Hermanus Botanical Society's annual Flower Festival takes place from 22 to 25 September. The theme this year is "Fynbos and Fire" which provides an excellent opportunity to see what has happened in the reserve since the fire in December last year.

Whale Coast Conservation will take visitors on an eco-adventure "**Fynbos, Fire & Frogs**". We will examine fynbos 'before' and 9 months 'after' the fire. We will also look at whether our endemic Drewes' Moss Frog survived the burn. There will be two opportunities to go on this adventure when participants will be among the first to hear all about the results of our Drewes' Moss Frog survey in Fernkloof.



FYNBOS, FIRE & FROGS



**Hermanus Flower Festival
Fernkloof Nature Reserve**

A Whale Coast Conservation Eco-Adventure
Friday 23 September 14h30-16h00
Saturday 24 September 13h00-14h30

Adults R100, children R50
 Maximum 20 persons

Bookings at WCC stand in the Eco-tent or
 Anina at 083 242 3295, anina.wcc@gmail.com

OUR BINS IN PUBLIC PLACES

Many of our members will have seen our cigarette butt bins and the doggy doo bag dispenser bins that have gone up in Hermanus, the latter mainly on the Cliff Path.



Sheraine van Wyk, Clr Kari Brice, Anina Lee, Rob Fryer and Pam Herd (HRA) at the launch of the bins.
 Photo: Village News

We are concerned that these bins should not deteriorate into eyesores and become part of the visual clutter rather than a solution to specific waste and litter problems. It would also reflect badly on WCC. It is therefore essential that these bins should be serviced and cleaned regularly, replaced if necessary, labels renewed from time to time, and that the dispensers should always have a supply

of bags. WCC will therefore in future enter into service agreements with sponsors for WCC to regularly maintain the bins in public places.

FINANCIAL REALITIES

As some of our members are aware, WCC ran a successful project for 5 years to raise environmental awareness. Funding for this project by the National Lotteries Board expired at the end of 2015. However, WCC's commitment to continuing this important work did not end there. The reality is that we are not a funded organisation.

In order to continue our projects, expand our impact and maintain high professional standards, we have either to secure funding for specific projects or cover our costs through a nominal charge. For example we ask for small donations at our talks, charge a fee for our eco-adventures, find funding for our citizen-science projects and sponsors for our schools expos. But this does not cover our staff salaries and overheads. We are constantly exploring ways of securing a revenue stream through innovations such as our energy-shop and consulting work.

We believe that the work we do is important in ensuring an environment that will provide delight to our residents and support a vibrant tourism economy in years to come.

We therefore request your help in securing funding or revenue-earning opportunities as a matter of urgency. We are especially keen to find an experienced fundraiser who will organise fundraising events for us on a commission basis. With your assistance, we can keep caring for our environment. Your feedback, suggestions or recommendations would be greatly appreciated.

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**Johan and
 Catherine
 Conradie**

Compiled and written by Anina Lee