



MARCH 2016 NEWSLETTER 5:3 wcc@ocf.org.za www.whalecoastconservation.org.za 028 316 2527

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WHAT ARE WE DOING IN MARCH?

We are walking for water on Friday 18 March, starting at 18h00 and ending at 19h30.



Hermanus is a water-scarce area and the history of our town reflects the ongoing quest to secure adequate water for the growing population. It is also a success story. The quality of our water – both in purification and treatment ('blue drop' and 'green drop' standards) - is up there with the best in the country.

The Walking 4 Water event will raise awareness of the precious commodity that is our water, the need to protect our water sources and in praise of our local authority for the quality of water we enjoy.

Members of the Hermanus History Society will give us some historical facts about water, point out the

interesting social history of the "wasbakkies" at Hermanus-pietersfontein and explain why Fick built a pool.

The walk will start at Gearing's Point at 18h00, proceed along the Biodiversity Walk, continue past Hermanuspietersfontein and stop at Fick's Pool. We will return to the lawns in front of the Windsor Hotel to watch the sunset.

We can accommodate unlimited numbers, so please join us to raise awareness of how we can care for the water – both fresh and marine – that on which we depend. Bin those butts, say 'no' to straws and avoid unnecessary packaging.

To emphasise the detrimental effect on the environment of bottled water, we ask that you **bring only tap water on the walk** (in a re-usable or recycled bottle). After all, in Hermanus taps are tops.

SWIMMING WITH GREAT WHITES

We are privileged to have Michael Rutzen as our guest speaker on Tuesday 29 March at 17h30 (5.30 pm) at the Green House.



Mike free dives with great white sharks in order to understand their behaviour better. He is one of only

three people in the world able to communicate with great white sharks using body language.

Michael has been a member of the White Shark Cage Diving Foundation since its inception and helped to pioneer techniques that are now the backbone of the industry. With Shark Diving Unlimited he has guided several world-renowned still photographers and film crews and started a series of internationally acclaimed documentaries to promote white shark conservation. He also provides field support for researchers, including the Department of Environmental Affairs.

Despite a negative popular image, Great White Sharks are extremely vulnerable as a species that's rapidly declining in numbers. Lack of knowledge remains a huge obstacle in planning their effective protection. Michael has dedicated 20 years of his life to promoting a healthier relationship between humans and great white sharks by way of education, documentary films and by supporting the major research projects currently running in South Africa.

Michael's documentaries bring greater understanding of the great white shark - potentially dangerous to prey, but astonishingly interesting if approached in the right way.

Michael has been involved in the SharkSafe barrier Project since 2011. The SharkSafe barrier is a new technology that combines magnetism and visual stimuli to deter the three shark species considered dangerous to humans, to find an alternative solution to anti-shark nets.



In recognition of his great contribution to the environment, Michael Rutzen (left) was awarded the 2015 Mayoral Award for Conservation. On the right is Kim "Sharklady" Mc Lean, Woman of the Year 2015. It was a great year for shark conservation.

Your donation of R20 at the door goes towards the speaker's travel costs and other expenses.

TROPHIC CASCADES EXAMINED

Our "talk" on 16 February took on a different guise. Instead of a guest speaker, we showed two thought-provoking videos and engaged each other in discussion. What new insights did we gain from our video and discussion evening?

Scientists have recently begun to understand the vital role played by top predators in ecosystems and the profound impacts that occur when those predators are wiped out. Now, researchers are citing new evidence that shows the importance of lions, wolves, sharks, whales and other creatures at the top of the food chain.

A brilliant BBC documentary on the reintroduction of wolves in Yellowstone National Park illustrated this trophic cascade. This was followed by a thought-provoking TED talk by George Monbiot challenging us to think about 're-wilding' large tracks of former farm land. After all, Europe was at one time home to close relatives of modern lions, elephants and rhinos.

BUY FIREWOOD TO SUPPORT CONSERVATION



Hoek Van De Berg Nature Reserve, between Vermont and Hawston, is one of the last green lungs in the area, and has been identified by World Wide Fund for Nature as a key climate change corridor. The endangered natural vegetation of the reserve has become overrun with alien species such as Rooikrans, Myrtle, Port Jackson and Gums. Now Michael Raimondo and Justine du Toit are making a major effort to clear the aliens and restore these highly endangered fynbos types.

Currently a small local team is clearing the 480 hectares of land of aliens. Sale of alien wood will raise funds to employ a larger team. By purchasing this firewood, you are helping to create jobs, rehabilitating the natural vegetation, managing fire risk for surrounding communities and supporting local enterprise.

Rooikrans can be bought at the Green House.
1000 pieces = R950; 500 Pieces = R500
Smaller bag sizes either R20 or R50 per bag
For large orders, please contact Michael via email
(info@greenrenaissance.co.za) or SMS (082 290
0197). Delivery for orders of 1000+ pieces can be
arranged at an additional cost of R150.

BY THE LIGHT OF THE SILVERY MOON

On 22 and 23 February our monthly eco-adventure
took us to Grotto Beach where we examined the
relationship between the moon and the tides and
combed the beach for creatures that live between the
tides and have to adapt to harsh inter-tidal conditions.



As the sun set over the sea, the group gathered round
for a briefing.



Using an ingenious prop. Pierre Hugo explained how
the moon influences tides.



Sheraine van Wyk demonstrated how animals have
adapted in amazing ways to the changing tides. At
times they are under water and at other times
exposed to the blazing sun.



Our first excitement on the beach was plough snails.
They picked up the chemical trail of some juicy bait
within seconds and came from many meters away,
leaving their 'plough trails' behind them.



We searched for sand mussels ...



... and watched them filter feeding.

Then we examined the kelp debris on the beach to
see the creatures that break it down to return
nutrients to the sand and sea.



Sand hoppers, sometimes called beach fleas, were in abundance. Sand lice were less abundant, waiting under the sand for the moon to rise.

The participants gained much insight into the amazing navigational capabilities enabling these tiny creatures to adapt to tides and the moon.

Free cocktails, generously sponsored by the Dutchies beach lounge, concluded the adventure on a high note.

VISIT FROM AVI COMMUNITY TRUST

During February Whale Coast Conservation was privileged to host Pearl Phoolo (Transformation Officer) and Mechelle Mochali (Transformation Manager) at AngloVaal Industries Community Trust. The Trust sponsors 3 Gansbaai schools' participation in the WCC Youth Environment Programme (YEP).



Pearl and Mechelle presented each school with a certificate of successful completion of the 2015 programme as well as a pledge of commitment to the YEP.

WCC is justly proud of the accomplishments of these schools and we thank the AVI Community Trust for the sponsorship that enables us to walk the environmental talk with these young people.

FUNDRAISING MADE EASY

During December our partnership with Woolworths through their MyPlanet card raised R1,883. Admittedly this was an exceptional month, but it demonstrates how painlessly our members and supporters can raise money on our behalf. If you do not already have a MyPlanet card with Whale Coast Conservation as beneficiary, please get one asap. It costs you nothing. Every time you shop at Woolworths (or any other of the participating outlets) a simple swipe of the card will allow Woolworths to give us some money. If you already have a card (MySchool) with another beneficiary, you can add WCC as a beneficiary. You may have up to 3 beneficiaries that share the donation. You can acquire a card online (our emails have a button on the right you can click) or fill in a form next time you are at Woolies, or contact WCC to help you do it.

Please help us to care for our environment by becoming a Green Gem Investor.



The visitors were welcomed at Gansbaai Academia by the accomplished Academia marimba band.



G & R RAIMONDO CHARITABLE TRUST

AVI



Johan and Catherine Conradie

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