



MOONLIGHT AND MUSSELS ADVENTURE

22 and 23 February 2016

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 – sometimes under water and sometimes 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 studied their 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.