



## REPORT: HERMANUS BOTANICAL SOCIETY

### FYNBOS EXPO ZWELIHLE PRIMARY

**25 August 2016**

On Thursday 23 August the Whale Coast Conservation Expo on Fynbos went to Zwelihle Primary School.

The school chose the 200 learners in their five Grade 4 classes to attend the Expo. The presenters were initially apprehensive about being able to communicate with such young children in their second language. We need not have been concerned.

The children behaved impeccably, they were interested in the topics and eager to learn. They had a good enough understanding of English and when there was a problem, one of the more fluent children translated into isiXhosa.



John Cowan illustrated the amazing plant diversity in fynbos by comparing different parts of Africa. He explained to the learners how 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.



The children were amazed to see that a protea is actually a whole bunch of flowers.



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



Pat explained that fynbos needs to burn so that nutrients can be returned to the soil.



Shirley Mgoboza and Denfred Bruintjies talked about the threat that alien plants pose to fynbos, and how to deal with them.



Shirley showed how human transformation of the landscape through urban sprawl, agriculture and mining threatens fynbos habitats.



Volunteer Elisabeth Smit explained how important fynbos is for the local economy, with eco-tourism being a major job-creator.



The children loved tasting the different honey flavours.

**The Expo at Zwelihle Primary School was sponsored by the Hermanus Botanical Society.**