



## FYNBOS EXPO AT GANSBAAI ACADEMIA

**29 August 2016**

Whale Coast Conservation took its Expo on Fynbos to Gansbaai Academia on Monday 29 August. About 200 learners in Grade 8 and the Grade 11 Life Sciences learners attended the expo.

Previous experience at all our local schools showed us that general knowledge about fynbos and its importance in nature and to the local economy is sadly lacking. Young people who live in a fynbos biodiversity 'hot spot' should be inspired to become the custodians of their natural heritage. We trust that the WCC Fynbos Expo will help to do this.



Sheraine van Wyk illustrated the amazing plant diversity in fynbos by comparing different parts of Africa. She explained to the learners how harsh climate, poor soils and fire cause speciation and high biodiversity.



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



Anina Lee showed them examples of the four main groups of fynbos plants.



They learned that if there are no restios, it's not fynbos. And they were amazed to see that a protea is 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 grows on very poor soils and that nutrients become depleted in time. The fynbos then starts to become senescent. It therefore needs to burn every 15-20 years so that nutrients can be returned to the soil in the form of ash. Many fynbos seeds are stimulated to germinate by the smoke of the fire.



Denfred Brintjies talked about the threat that alien plants pose to fynbos, and the various methods of dealing with them.



Shirley Mgoboza explained to the learners how human transformation of the landscape through urban sprawl, agriculture and mining threatens fynbos habitats.



Christoff Longland explained how important fynbos is for the local economy, with eco-tourism and the flower industry being major job-creators. One of the important ecosystem services from mountain fynbos is water.



He also showed them the various products derived from fynbos, including herbal teas and cosmetics.

This event is part of the Youth Environment Programme (YEP) generously sponsored by the AVI Community Trust in this school.

**THANK YOU** 