



Sustainably Yours...

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EXPERIENCING NATURE

WCC staff members spend much of their time introducing both adults and children to the wonders of the Whale Coast environment. Our schools programme takes children out of the classroom to engage with nature. We are now also offering a new series of monthly nature “experiences” to share our passion for the environment with adults (and their families) as well.

FROGS AND FIREFLIES EXPERIENCE

“Thank you for an enchanting evening. We both loved it and are so lucky to have such enthusiastic people like you in Hermanus.” - Mike and Moi Walker

A window of opportunity opened at the end of October when the mating call of the endemic Drewes’ Moss Frog and mating season of the Fernkloof fireflies coincided. It presented WCC with an opportunity to launch its first “experience” for WCC members.

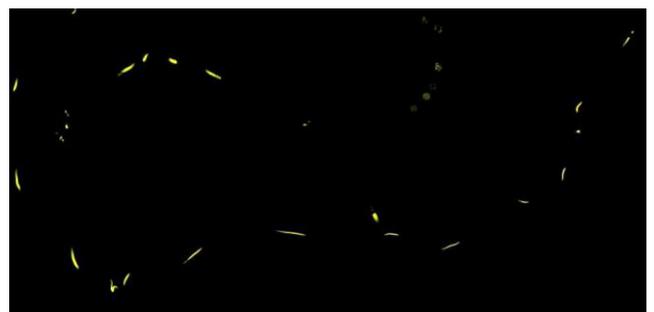
Sheraine van Wyk, local frog whisperer, and Anina Lee hosted two groups of enthusiasts - a total of 26 - in Fernkloof. As dusk fell the explorers, equipped with lights and walking sticks, headed up the hill. We listened for evidence of Drewes’ Moss Frog and recorded the calls and GPS coordinates. Several calls were heard but the tiny moss frogs were too well camouflaged to be seen.



However, Sheraine “whispered” several Cape River Frogs and explained how to identify and to sex them. But the highlight of the ‘experience’ was undoubtedly a beautiful Cape Ghost Frog (above) – a first for everyone there.



It was carefully released where it was found.



And then the fireflies appeared like magic. Leanne Dryburgh recorded the wonderful flight path and flash pattern of 2 fireflies.

"There is something new and exciting to experience on every one of these events. I am humbled to have shared a special time with you all and glad to have made new friends" – Sheraine van Wyk.

COMMUNITY GARDENING COMPETITION

"When we look at beautiful flowers we see the beautiful gardener." This was the message from Rob Fryer, Whale Coast Conservation Manager, when he welcomed the inspirational gardeners of Zwelihle, Mt Pleasant and Hawston to the Green House on Saturday 31 October. Whale Coast Conservation hosted the awards ceremony for its third annual Gardening Competition. The competition is an extension of WCC's ongoing greening initiatives aimed at increasing sustainability in the Overstrand.

"A total of thirty gardeners entered this year and we hope to have twice this number in 2016", said Shirley Volkwyn, organiser of the competition.

Eight of the competing gardeners reside in Zwelihle (gold went to Vivian Nanto), ten in Mt Pleasant (gold to Katie Engel) and twelve in Hawston (gold to Anna Hendricks and Mirlyn Hunter).



Executive Mayor Nicoletter Botha-Guthrie (centre) presented the certificates to the participants.

"IF CHILDREN LOSE CONTACT WITH NATURE THEY WON'T FIGHT FOR IT"

Sheraine van Wyk, Whale Coast Conservation Eco-Learning Manager, was our last speaker for 2015. The title of her talk was taken from a recent article by George Monbiot, who was once an opponent of environmentalism, but now a staunch defender.

Sheraine spoke about her involvement in connecting both adults and children to nature through citizen science.

She explained that Citizen Science projects provide opportunities for children and adults to participate in science projects that have real benefits for their communities. These types of projects equip people with the knowledge and skills that enable them to contribute meaningfully to decisions and to get involved with other stakeholders in finding solutions to environmental problems that affect them.

Creating awareness about an environmental issue or problem is usually not enough to change people's behaviour. What is needed is knowledge, skills, and the motivation to 'do the right thing', which may then lead to better coexistence between people and other species.



Sheraine (centre) chatted to John Verster (WCC Vice Chairman) and Mary Ann Verster after the talk.

SAVING WL TOADLETS

"We could not even save half of them", said a rather distressed young eco-warrior from Die Bron Primary School in Stanford. She was participating in Sheraine van Wyk's citizen science project that is monitoring endangered Western Leopard Toads in Stanford.

A group of Grade 3 learners were up at dawn for several weeks to save toadlets before school. The group is accompanied by an adult volunteer to make sure that the young toad rescuers are safe.

During the breeding season in August, volunteers with the Whale Coast Conservation Frog Project confirmed that Western Leopard Toads were breeding in the Willem Appel Dam in Stanford. At the end of October, 10-12 weeks later, the resultant baby toadlets emerged from the dam and started moving away to look for suitable foraging grounds.



Unfortunately the dam surrounds don't always allow for safe passage and pasture. In the case of an endangered species, every toadlet counts. So the young volunteers took up the challenge to chaperone the toadlets across the roads in the early mornings before school.

The group saved 735 toadlets and found 2055 dead during the 12-day monitoring period, but this does not account for the ones that got to safety all by themselves. But there is obviously a need to find and apply innovative ideas to the problems facing the little creatures. There is much good will in the community, so there will be a way.

These budding naturalists - and the toads - need more help. To become involved in any of the Whale Coast Conservation Frog Projects contact Sheraine van Wyk at sheraine.wcc@gmail.com

AND WERE THERE FAIRIES IN THE FOREST?

Of course there were! We at WCC knew just where to find them – 2 nights in a row.



In the second of our monthly “experiences” of nature Sheraine van Wyk took two groups of eager participants on a “Walk in the Fairy Forest” in Piet se

Bos. The excitement of walking by torch light in the dark forest was complemented by fascinating facts about milkwood ecology.

The event ended on a high note with Rob Fryer’s spectacular display of lights (thanks to his battery and inverter back-up system), with fairies and butterflies that appeared like magic to surprise the group at the end of the walk.

Repeat by popular demand

The Fairy Forest experience will be repeated once more on Thursday 10 December. Complimentary cocktails will be served at the new Dutchies beach lounge after the walk. We can accommodate only 15, so please book early by return email. Adults R100, children under 12 R50 and families of four R250. All proceeds go to WCC education programmes.

MEET US FOR A MOONLIGHT MEANDER

We plan another ‘experience’ in December - a Moonlight Meander on Hoy’s Koppie with Carols in the Cave. Please diarise 23 December at 20h00. It will be near full moon and the holiday spirit will be in the air. We will meet at the foot of Hoy’s Koppie on the north (mountain) side. Please bring a flashlight, headlamp or solar lantern – in fact any light source that isn’t a flame. Dr Robin Lee of the Hermanus History Society will tell us briefly about the history of Hoy’s Koppie. Then we will set off along the contour path, accessible to wheelchairs and prams.

Along the way we will stop at the Klipkop Cave and fill the air with a few popular seasonal songs. Continuing on we will form a circle of light around the Koppie and photographers will capture the image to celebrate our town.

Please join us for the first of what we hope will become an annual event in Hermanus. Bring all your family and friends and be part of an historic occasion. Your donation of R20 or more will help us with our environmental education projects.

We need as many volunteers as possible to help with organising the event or to be marshals on the night. Please contact us urgently.

FUNDING OUR PROJECTS

Over the past three years the National Lotteries Commission supported our project to raise awareness of sustainable lifestyles. This project has now come to an end and we have submitted a proposal for new funding.

In the interim it is still extremely important to continue with our work in schools and communities. We need to raise the necessary funds from other sources as well as generate income from the services we offer.

The support of our members, in both time and financial assistance, has become crucial. We will therefore tell you about our various projects that are worth your support.

The first of these is the **Youth Environment Programme (YEP)**.

WCC has nine years' experience of environmental education, having implemented the Eco-Schools programme in the Overstrand since 2007. During this time, the registered schools achieved significant milestones and awards offered by the programme. However, many of the schools now feel the need for new challenges so in response WCC has designed the Youth Education Programme (YEP). This programme draws on all the resources at WCC's Green House Environmental Resource Centre.

The YEP offers a different theme in environmental education each term. The themes are: water and other natural resources; the importance of the region's biodiversity; sustainable energy; and waste management.

WCC staff members assist schools that participate in the YEP to achieve all their environmental education goals. Schools are encouraged to visit the Green House Environmental Resource Centre for displays and lessons on the four educational themes; WCC also takes its famous themed Expos to venues accessible to all the schools; offers Teacher Professional Development workshops and short courses; and aids schools with their "Green Reports". WCC membership and benefits are extended to all these schools.



At the WCC Expo in Zwelihle, WCC Board member Pat Miller explained to learners from Hermanus Waldorf

School why fire (at the right time) is so important in fynbos. Other exhibit 'stations' can be seen in the background.

The cost of offering the full Youth Environment Programme is R30,000 per school per year. There are some schools that cannot even afford the annual registration (administration) cost of R850.

Do you believe that our children should experience the texture and function of the natural world so that they will grow up to care for it? If you do, please help us to achieve this by sponsoring a school yourself or finding a corporate donor that understands the benefit of investing in the environment – the whole basis of the Overstrand economy.

ACCOMMODATION NEEDED

Amanda Ellwanger, Ph.D. candidate based at WCC and doing research on baboons in Hermanus, writes:

I'm looking for housing for my research assistant, who will arrive in mid-January. She is looking to rent a room or a granny flat from 20 January until the middle of July. She is a recent university graduate, hoping to keep rent below R3000 pm.

If anyone can help, please contact us at 028 316 2527.

ALL OF US AT WCC WISH ALL OF YOU AND YOURS A JOYFUL AND SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON

The WCC offices will be closed from 22 December 2015 to 4 January 2016. We look forward to engaging with you again in 2016.

THANKS TO OUR GREEN DIAMOND AND GREEN EMERALD INVESTORS IN THE ENVIRONMENT

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



Johan and Catherine Conradie

Compiled by Anina Lee