Newsletter

June 2026

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Dear Members,

In this issue

Public Talks

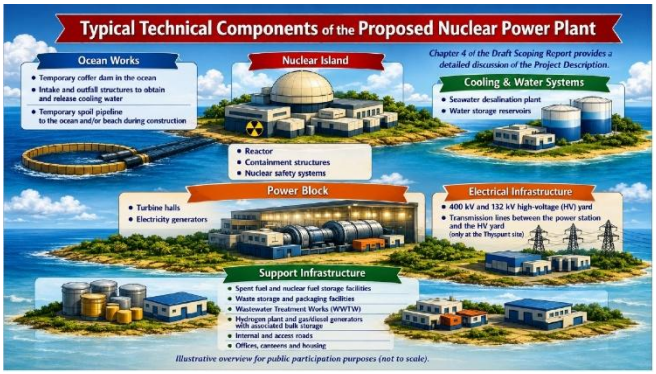
Our public talks are in recess until our AGM in September.

Eco-Watch:

Nuclear Power at Bantamsklip?

The proposal for a nuclear plant at either Bantamsklip or Thyspunt forms part of Eskom's Integrated Resource Plan 2025, which includes plans for a nuclear facility capable of generating up to 5 200 MW as part of South Africa's future energy mix. The plant, together with extensive supporting infrastructure, is expected to become operational around 2039.

While acknowledging the importance of national energy security and constructive public consultation, WCC contends that a project of this scale demands rigorous independent scientific assessment and transparent decision-making because of its potentially significant environmental, social and economic consequences.



Of particular concern is the ecological sensitivity of both proposed sites. Bantamsklip lies within one of the world's recognised biodiversity hotspots and is situated close to the internationally important Dyer Island ecosystem, a breeding area for the critically endangered African penguin and numerous threatened seabird species. The marine environment also supports whale watching, shark cage diving, fisheries and tourism industries that are central to the local economy and identity of the region. Thyspunt, similarly, is regarded as an area of high ecological and heritage value, containing sensitive coastal ecosystems as well as important archaeological and cultural resources.

WCC's concerns include possible impacts on coastal ecosystems, biodiversity and marine life; damage to archaeological and heritage sites; the social and environmental consequences of construction camps and rapid population influx; the expansion of roads and heavy-haul transport routes; and long-term nuclear safety.

WCC is also deeply concerned about socio-economic impacts on already vulnerable communities. Experience from other large

industrial developments has shown that temporary influxes of workers can place major pressure on housing, healthcare, sanitation, policing, schools and municipal infrastructure. WCC warns that informal settlement growth, social disruption, increased inequality and uncertainty over long-term livelihoods after the construction phase could all have lasting effects on local communities. These risks must be studied thoroughly alongside environmental considerations.

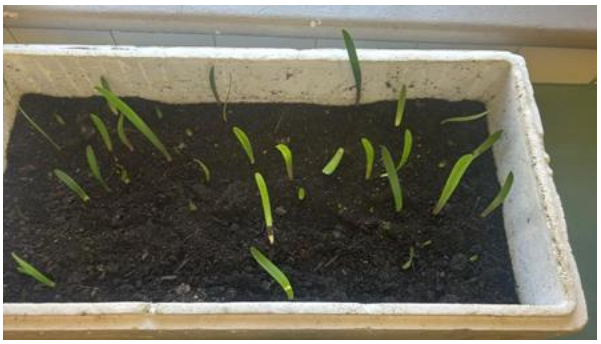
WCC encourages residents, and other stakeholders to participate actively in the public consultation process and to review the Draft Scoping Report and specialist studies as they become available. WCC will continue to monitor the process from a conservation, sustainability and evidence-based perspective.

Gansbaai Laerskool Garden Project

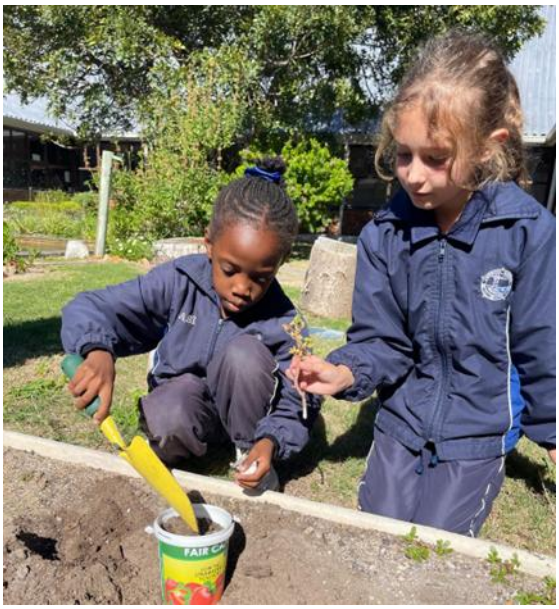
Laerskool Gansbaai requested WCC to initiate a garden project at the school where younger leaners could learn about nature, indigenous plants and the pleasure of gardening.

The school's garden was rather neglected and needed a little love from the children.

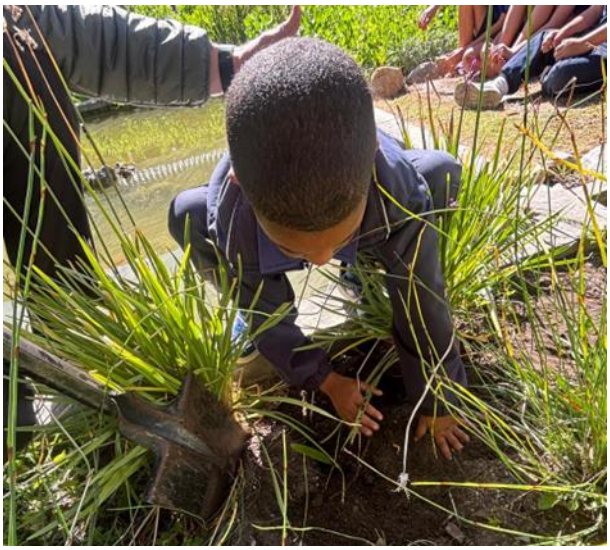
Sheraine van Wyk kicked off the project with suggestions about the appropriate plantings to do in each part of the garden – shade plants like clivias in the shady spots, water-wise succulent plantings in the sunny spots and vegetables in specially raised beds in a sheltered sunny position.



The children grew clivias from seed, and, in due course, these could be planted out into the shady garden. They also learned how to take cuttings of water-wise flowers, how to grow them in yoghurt tubs, and, once established, to plant them out in the sunny spots.



With enthusiastic help from the staff, flower beds were planted up and the garden is transforming.

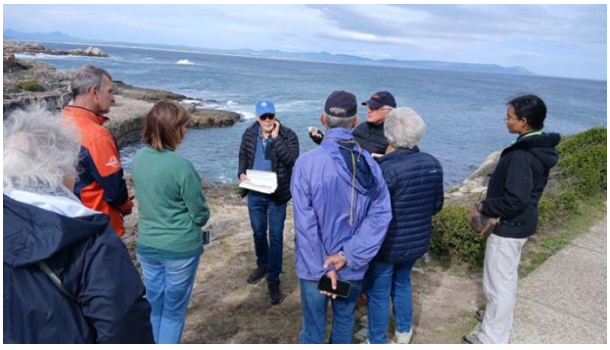


Little hands make a big difference.

Eco-Adventures in May

To raise funds for publishing Book 3, WCC offered 4 eco-activities each Friday in May.

The first adventure was the geology of the Hermanus cliff path, which runs along the edge of a wave-cut sandstone platform between the ocean and the base of the mountains. In geological time, sea level has varied considerably, with alternate deposition and erosion of rocks.

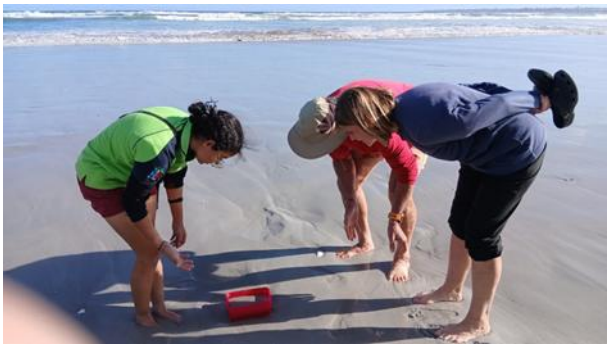


John Blaine and John Bristow set the scene with an explanation of the earth's history from the first continents and the earth's great convection current that moves the tectonic plates around the globe to repeatedly crash the land masses together and then tears them apart.

They explained how the Cape Fold Mountains were formed by subduction of one plate beneath another resulting in buckling and uplifting of a massive pile of sedimentary rock layers in the ancient Agulhas Sea about 450 million years ago. These upheavals resulted in the spectacular Cape fold mountains cradling Hermanus.

The second Friday was on the beach. "Who was the Walker of Walker Bay?" He was Cmdr. William Walker, from HM Store Ship Dispatch, sailing along this very coastline in the early 1800s, carrying ships' timber from the Knysna forests to Simonstown. Although not a mandate, he mapped the coastline, including the bay that now carries his name – an honour bestowed by the Admiralty.

On the beach, we studied kelp flies, sand hoppers, plough snails and sand mussels and the adaptation of each to a life in the challenging intertidal zone.



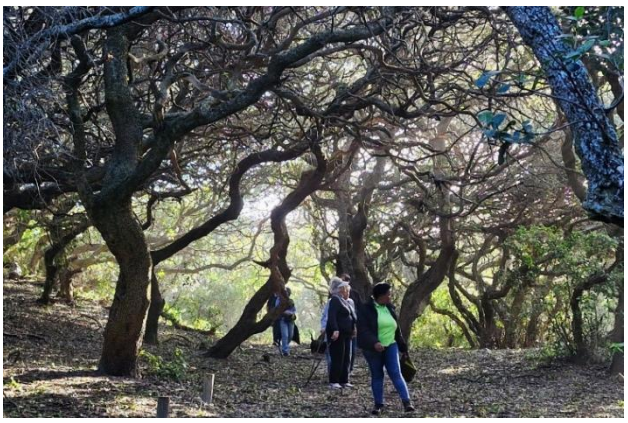
It was a beautiful day to be on the beach.

Our third Friday adventure started at the grottos in the cliffs behind Grotto Beach (named after said grottos). In the early 1900s the area between the beach and the grottos was a beautiful wetland, with flowers, birds, frogs and insects. The grottos were home to the rare maidenhair fern. The real value of wetlands was not appreciated when, in the 1990 E. coli was discovered in the wetland (then referred to as a "swamp"). The municipality over-reacted and filled in the wetland with building rubble and grassed it as a picnic area (now much neglected. Of course, the wetland was not the source of the contamination – it was more likely the leaking septic tanks of houses built on top of the cliff.

Shirley then led the group through the milkwood forest, while explaining the ecology of milkwoods and why they are able to withstand the salt sea spray.

Some of these trees are as much as 1,000 years old.

In summer the flowers have a musty smell and are pollinated by kelp flies breeding on washed-up kelp on the beach.



This forest is a truly magical place.

Tiny Ten Talks for Tiny Tots

During May WCC visited four our AVI-sponsored schools in Stanford and Gansbaai to tell stories. Whereas the Expos are aimed at older learners, these stories are for Foundation Phase classes. We all know about the "Big Five", but what about the "Tiny Ten"? These included fireflies, chameleons, dung beetles, ant lions, Acraea butterflies, Demodex. Roridula and Peripatus. Whatever was weird and wonderful – and especially gross – about the creatures, was described with zest and gusto.

The children (here Die Bron Gr 3) loved it!

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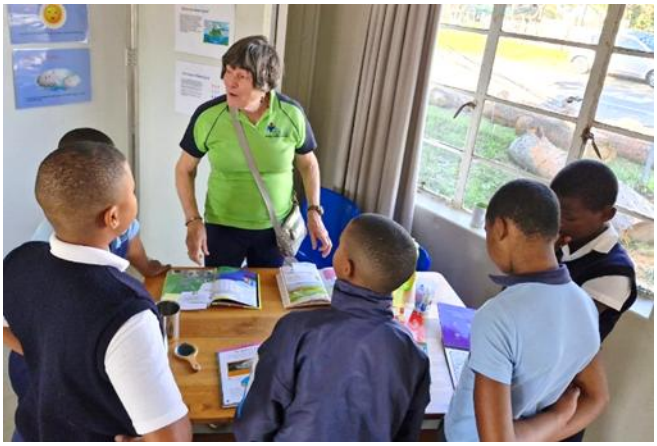
Expos on Water

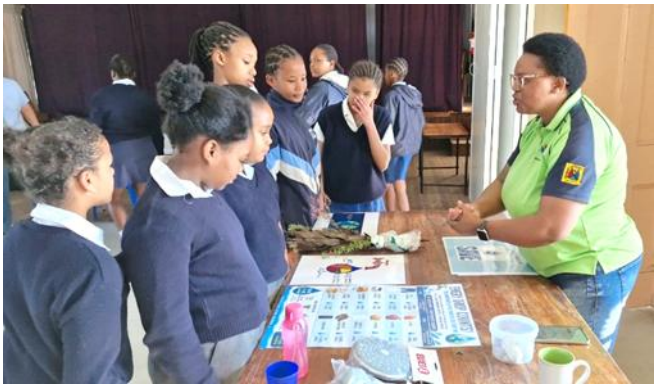
WCC took expos on Water to 4 schools in Stanford and Gansbaai. We emphasised the preciousness of this commodity.

At Die Bron Primary's Water Expo, held on 21 May 2026 in Stanford, we educated 71 Grade 6 learners about the importance of water and water conservation in South Africa. The learners rotated through five interactive educational stations led by volunteers and educators, each focusing on a different aspect of water and its management.



Volunteer Kathie Buley introduced learners to the water cycle and the importance of water for all living things. Using hand movements, brainstorming and reusable water colouring boards, learners explored evaporation, condensation, precipitation and collection in a fun, hands-on way that reinforced understanding of the continuous movement of water through the environment.

Volunteer Judy MacFarlaine focused on groundwater and aquifers. Using posters, rock samples and water bottles, she explained how groundwater is stored underground, how aquifers are recharged and how they can become polluted through surface contamination or saltwater intrusion. The session also introduced learners to careers such as geology, hydrogeology and environmental science.



Shirley Mgoboza discussed water conservation and responsible water use. Learners learned that South Africa is a water-scarce country facing increasing pressure on freshwater supplies. Common forms of water wastage, such as leaking taps and long showers, were discussed along with

practical ways to save water. She also introduced the concept of "virtual water," helping learners understand that products such as clothing and paper require large amounts of water to produce.

Intern Morgan Hendricks addressed surface water and pollution. Learners traced the journey of water through the landscape and identified pollution sources including industry, agriculture, sewage and litter. The discussion explored the environmental and health impacts of polluted water, including disease and ecosystem damage. Learners also discussed practical ways to reduce waste, recycle and prevent littering.

Sheraine van Wyk explained stormwater systems and flood risks in urban areas. She described how hard surfaces prevent rainwater from soaking into the ground, increasing runoff and the need for drainage systems. Learners examined how litter blocks stormwater drains, contributing to flooding, pollution and harm to aquatic ecosystems. "The ocean starts here".

We thank our sponsors

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