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ECO-SCHOOLS AWARD CEREMONY AND INTRODUCTION TO WASTE EXPO

The Award ceremony took place on Tuesday 12 February 2013 at the Green House.

There was a good turnout of about 100 educators, learners and guests. The function was opened and the guests welcomed by Dr. Pat Miller, WCC Board member. In her short speech, she apologised on behalf of the older generation to the younger generation present for not having done a better job of protecting the environment and for the need to pass on so many environmental challenges for them to find answers to in the future.

Helena Atkinson, WESSA's Western Cape Eco-Schools coordinator, gave an overview of the Eco-Schools Programme, which now operates in 51 different countries worldwide. The movement is not yet strong in other parts of Africa and this presents us with a challenge to help to promote the programme to our north.



Marilyn vd Velden and Mayor Nicolette Botha-Guthrie

Mayor Nicolette Botha-Guthrie spoke about the importance of looking after the environment in the Overstrand and encouraged the learners to continue with their excellent start to becoming committed custodians of this precious gift. She referred to the strong benefit derived by the municipality and community from the work of the Eco-schools programme and the WCC newsletters and other materials, which are used by the municipality to support its application for Blue Flag Beach status and for the Greenest Town Award.

Sheraine van Wyk announced several competitions for schools with environmental themes and encouraged them to enter. She reported on the on-going shark egg case survey project in which schools are involved; there are now collections points along most of the Whale Coast. She also announced a new project under the auspices of the

University of Stellenbosch. This entails a survey of the distribution of different ant species in our area which will be entered into a comprehensive data base to ascertain the extent of invasion by Argentinian ants.

The final speaker was John Kieser, representing the Plastics Federation, who talked about the statistics obtained from the International Coastal Clean-up last year. The usual litter culprits were found, but a troubling trend is the widespread presence of plastic polymer beads on our sandy shores. These beads are the basic starting materials for the manufacture of plastic products and they are escaping from factories and during transport, are washed into the sea and land up on the beaches. The trash we find in the sea is a sad reflection of what we waste on land.

Achievement awards were handed out to 30 schools that had participated in the Eco-Schools programme during 2012. Small grants were awarded to 20 schools for which successful project funding applications had been made by the WCC through WESSA to the HSBC. These schools were encouraged to identify specific expenditure items for their projects so that the WCC can coordinate the distribution of the funds. Special awards for their exceptional individual participation were given to Ester Pitzer, Zani Muller and Deseree Davids. A total of 10 schools have now achieved International status.

The first cut of the WCC's rhino video was shown, which features learners from schools that had raised funds for rhino conservation and appeals to other children from Eco-Schools in Asian countries to engage with them and to make a difference in preventing rhino poaching. The video, funded by the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF), will be distributed throughout the world through the Eco-Schools network.

WCC also took the opportunity to introduce the exhibits for "Waste not, Save a Lot", the theme of our sustainability awareness campaign for 2013. With the help of some of our partners in this campaign, Overstrand Municipality, the Recycle Swop Shop, Working for the Coast, Modern Energy, to name a few, we put on a pretty marvellous show. And to conclude the proceedings, Estelle Schuurman's soup went down a treat.



Visitors to a "Waste not, Save a Lot" exhibit

Thanks to WCC's Eco-Schools programme coordinator, Delray Janse van Rensburg, and the WCC Team who made the event a great success.

DEAD, DYING AND DESPERATE TO SURVIVE

Talk On Rhino Conservation by Dr William Fowlds

Wednesday 13 March at 18h00 for 18h30 at the Green House. Entry free; donations for rhino conservation accepted.

In 2013 two rhinos are being poached every day, and the numbers are increasing alarmingly. But there are people who are trying to make a difference and Dr William Fowlds is one such person.

Dr Fowlds is a wildlife veterinarian working in collaboration with Investec Rhino Lifeline, a fund initiated by Investec SA to address their concern to increase the survival rate of rhinos after horrific poaching attacks. Their funding enables Dr Fowlds to be on the forefront of the treatment of rhino survivors in South Africa.

After graduating with a veterinary degree from the University of Pretoria in 1997, Dr Fowlds managed a small animal veterinary practice in the UK for 5 years. He returned to the Eastern Cape in 2002 and has since then developed knowledge and experience as a wildlife veterinarian and has managed several wildlife conservancies. He has been Chairman and an executive committee member of the Association of Eastern Cape Private Nature Reserves since 2007. He provides wildlife veterinary services to private photographic game reserves, game ranches and to the Eastern Cape Parks Board.

His professional activities have inevitably brought him into contact with wildlife poaching and he has been involved in anti-poaching initiatives since 2008. He has appeared in a number of wildlife TV series, on NBC (in the USA), Animal Planet and ITV (UK). He is best known for the series *Vets go Wild* and *Safari Vet School*.



Dr William Fowlds and patient

Having been involved directly with several poaching cases treating the survivors, he is at the 'coal face' of rhino conservation. Now with the aid of Investec Rhino Lifeline he helps to motivate and advise on several initiatives aimed at saving the rhino and other species facing similar threats.

He will talk about his personal experiences of treating wounded poached rhinos and the current rhino crisis in the context of all other threatened species.

DONATIONS TO WCC RHINO PROJECT OF WHICH DR FOWLDS' PROJECT IS A BENEFICIARY GRATEFULLY ACCEPTED

JOIN US AND SWITCH ON TO EARTH HOUR 2013

20h30 to 21h30 on Market Square, Hermanus

Every year, around the world, Earth Hour is celebrated on the 23rd of March from 20h30 to 21h30 local time. It serves as a reminder to people everywhere that human activities, especially energy consumption, have a serious impact on the planet, notably our contribution to climate change.

This year Hermanus will once again be part of the global Earth Hour movement. Whale Coast Conservation, in partnership with the Municipality and the Overstrand Junior Council, will organise a fun event on Market Square in front of the Whale Museum. You are invited to show up and show support!

In contrast to previous years when we were all asked to switch off our lights for an hour as a symbol of our commitment to reducing our impact on the global environment, this year we will not switch off, but switch on. Yes, that's right! We will encourage the people of Hermanus to switch over to LED lights that use so little energy that we need no longer feel guilty about lighting up our lives.

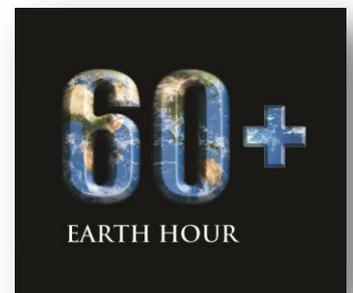
To illustrate what we mean, we will light up a whale. Well, since the real ones have gone down south, it will have to be the model in front of the Whale Museum. And for good measure we'll light up the two museums on Market Square as well. We appeal to all businesses that don't yet have LED lighting, to switch off their lights for that hour to show both commitment to the event and help to make the 'switching on' spectacular.

To further add to the fun there will be singing and dancing girls as well. Yes, we know the Stormers will be playing up a storm at Newlands against the Brumbies that evening, so the singing and dancing will only commence after the match. What better way to celebrate a win for both the Stormers and the planet! We look forward to every one of our members coming and showing commitment to a more sustainable future.

And when all the fun is done, we will remember that "Every Hour is Earth Hour".

CPMG ANNUAL REPORT

During February 2013 the Cliff Path Management Group (CPMG) under the Chairmanship of David Beattie issued its 11th Annual Report covering the period March 2012 to February 2013. The mission of the CPMG is to conserve and maintain the Cliff Path section of the Fernkloof Nature Reserve, from the New Harbour to Piet-se-Bos (adjacent to Grotto Beach), and including Hoy's Koppie.



The CPMG reports that all its construction and maintenance goals for the year were met, with only minor negative public responses regards trimming of a few edges to the path. In detail, the CPMG resurfaced 556m of the path with exposed aggregate concrete, repaired 5 instances of the original laterite surfacing that were suffering wear and tear; removed a large quantity of alien vegetation; replaced a number of signs that had been vandalised or weather damaged; monitored and repaired all boardwalks and bridges; monitored the entire length of the path on a regular basis, utilising 19 volunteers; and fulfilled all its obligations in serving on or cooperating with other interested bodies.

Income for the year was R215,777 and expenditure R215,380. Since inception the CPMG has raised R2,723m and expended R2,688m.

The CPMG remains concerned about assaults on or close to the path; vandalism, especially of signage; homeowners extending gardens and even structures into the nature reserve around the path; and dog faeces on the path.

CPMG thanks all those voluntarily involved in its activities and all public and private bodies it had cooperated with over the past year.



Cliff Path scene

BIRDS ON THE KLEIN

Lee Burman reports that the Hermanus Bird Club carried out its half-yearly CWAC (Co-ordinated Waterbird Count) on the Klein River on Thursday, 17 January 2013. These counts have been undertaken by the Club at least twice a year for the past 12 years or so and valuable data has been collected. Over this period a total of 65 waterbird species were recorded, including 49 resident species and 16 Palearctic migrants. Of the resident species, 6 are listed as Red Data species and 5 are South African endemics. One species, the Goliath Heron, is a Western Cape rarity, while two species, White-backed Duck and African Black Duck are uncommon species in the Western Cape.



African Black Oystercatchers

The latest count in January 2013 yielded 2,983 birds of 35 species. They included 816 Greater Flamingo. Conditions seem to suit them at the moment as they have been around in large numbers for quite a while and are beautiful to watch. They have not been recorded in such numbers since 2003/04. We also counted 703 Common Terns, 661 Red-knobbed Coot and 354 Yellow-billed Ducks amongst smaller numbers of numerous other species.

Two species, African Black Oystercatcher and Caspian Tern (both Red Data species) have on a number of occasions reached or surpassed their 1% global population thresholds (i.e. RAMSAR status). Four species reached or surpassed their 0.5% global population, (African Black Oystercatcher, Caspian Tern, Hartlaub's Gull and White-breasted Cormorant) giving them Sub-regional Important Bird Area Status. It is thus appropriate that the Bot River Important Bird Area is in the process of being expanded to include the Klein River Estuary.

WOULD YOU SUPPORT A LAN EVENT?

For those of you who know about Organised Chaos (OC), WCC is gauging support for hosting a monthly LAN event at the WCC Green House. Please give us your feedback at www.whalecoastconservation.org.za/ole.

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