

Times

Edition 3. December 2024
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Sustainable Coastal Tourism

A thriving contributor on South Africa's
economy and environment

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Strengthening our commitment to people and planet

Dear WESSA Community,

As we close off the year with the final edition of WESSA Times for 2024, our One-WESSA team can be proud of all the incredible strides we have made this year. It has been a year of growth, collaboration, and impact — a year in which WESSA has continued to drive environmental action, advocacy, and education through powerful partnerships that achieved significant milestones. Among our many accomplishments, I am particularly excited to highlight our collaboration with Outliers Coffee Roasters for Armoured Aroma, blending innovation with conservation in a way that promises a lasting impact on pangolin conservation.

Our partnership with UNICEF South Africa on the Young Environmental Reporters and Advocates (YERA), Youth Leading in Water Resilience Project (WASH), and the Green Rising (Protect and Restore) have also been major highlights. As the implementing partner, we have addressed biodiversity, climate, water, and sanitation challenges facing vulnerable communities, providing platforms and spaces for youth to become environmental stewards in building their community's resilience.

This year, we also celebrated the success of the annual Blue Flag and Green Coast Awards, which continue to be a powerful catalyst for environmental advocacy in the sustainable tourism sector of South Africa. These awards recognise good environmental management and inspire municipalities, businesses, civil society, and communities to embrace sustainable practices – encouraging a connection between people and nature. The Green Key Programme has grown significantly this year, with three new hotels earning certification, setting a strong example of what sustainable and responsible tourism can look like. These achievements pave the way for even more businesses to commit to greener practices. Our Advocacy Unit has been instrumental in emphasising citizen action and amplifying voices for environmental justice. Their work has ensured that WESSA's collective voice is heard to influence key decisions that impact the health of our people and planet.

Meanwhile, the work done at our Education Centres continues to inspire the youth to take responsibility for the environments their communities are in. As we celebrate these achievements, I would also like to take a moment to reflect on the Groen Sebenza interns whose time with WESSA has now come to an end. While their internships may have concluded, their contributions have been invaluable. Over the past year, these passionate and dedicated young individuals have brought fresh ideas, energy, and enthusiasm to our work, and we are grateful for the positive impact they have made during their time with us. We are excited to see what new beginnings lie ahead for them, knowing that they will continue to make a difference in the world, carrying forward the knowledge and skills they have gained here at WESSA. None of our achievements would be possible without the support of our donors, members, and partners. Your belief in our mission and your ongoing commitment are the backbone of our success, and we are deeply thankful for your support and dedication.

WESSA's members have played a vital role in shaping the success and impact of our organisation. Our members have been instrumental in advancing WESSA's mission as well as helped create a strong network of like-minded individuals, committed to making a positive difference. A special thank you also goes to the entire WESSA team, including our Board and Exco— your passion, dedication, and hard work have made every success possible.

As we look toward the future, I am filled with optimism and hope. The challenges are great, but our strength and commitment to the environment will continue to guide us. Together, we can look forward to an even greater impact in the years ahead, because we are people caring for the earth.

Thank you for your continued support, and here's to new beginnings and exciting opportunities in 2025 and beyond.

Warm regards,

Cindy-Lee Cloete
CEO of WESSA



Contents

- Groen Sebenza interns reflect on two years of impact and growth at WESSA 4 - 5
- Education Centres – A journey of learning, innovation, and global collaboration in Germany 6 - 7
- eWASA Awards - Transforming communities through waste education 8
- WESSA Corporate Breakfast event sparks high level dialogue - The Climate Change Act 9 - 10
- Sustainable Coastal Tourism - A thriving contributor on South Africa's economy and environment 11 - 12
- Green Key Awards - Paving the way for sustainable tourism in South Africa 13
- WESSA and Outliers Coffee Roasters brew up "Armoured Aroma" for pangolin conservation. 14
- Membership Highlights 15

Groen Sebenza interns reflect on two years of impact and growth at WESSA

For two years, WESSA hosted 17 passionate young professionals from SANBI's Groen Sebenza Internship Programme. This cohort of environmental trailblazers brought fresh energy to WESSA's Education Centres as well as Projects and Programmes across South Africa, contributing significantly to environmental education, youth development, and biodiversity conservation. Now, as they prepare to embark on new adventures, WESSA reflects on their contributions and celebrates their readiness to tackle the challenges of a world in flux.

What is Groen Sebenza?

The Groen Sebenza initiative, launched by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), is a programme designed to bridge the gap between environmental education and professional practice. Over 1 050 unemployed graduates, from diploma to doctoral levels, were recruited and placed in various organisations nationwide. For two years, they received training and mentorship to hone their skills in

biodiversity and environmental management. The programme's goals are ambitious: encouraging workplace-based learning, creating job opportunities, strengthening organisational transformation, and building a skills intelligence system to inform the sector's future needs. Participants leave with invaluable experience and a platform to launch meaningful careers in conservation.

Their WESSA experience

The interns joined WESSA's Projects and Programmes teams, as well as the Education Centres in uMngeni Valley, Twinstreams and Treasure Beach, working on a diverse array of initiatives. Their efforts spanned the Green Coast Programme, Pangolin Programme, and the Schools and Youth initiatives, inspiring young environmental stewards. They also contributed to nationwide environmental campaigns, integrating sustainability into communities through education and action.

Here are eight of these inspiring individuals:



Unathi Sihlahla

Qualification: BSc in Geography and Environmental Management

I am an environmental science professional with a BSc in Geography and Environmental Management from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My career has been shaped by hands-on experience in environmental education with WESSA, where I also took on administrative roles, including receptionist and switchboard operator. I am currently pursuing my BSc with Honors in Environmental Management at the University of South Africa. My recent projects involve analysing water quality data from the Shelter River, focusing on dissolved oxygen and pH metrics, and using tools like SASS5 to assess ecosystem health.



Sandiselwe Mabani

Qualification: National Diploma in Nature conservation

I have worked with various organisations, including WESSA, CapeNature, the Water Research Commission, and the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency. My experience encompasses environmental education, biodiversity monitoring, community outreach, stakeholder engagement, and environmental management. I have facilitated workshops, developed campaigns, and supported conservation efforts. Working at WESSA has greatly contributed to my growth as a young professional and has deepened my passion for engaging communities in meaningful conservation initiatives and promoting environmental stewardship. My favourite aspect of the work was developing and implementing educational outreach programmes that made a tangible impact on conservation awareness, as well as facilitating workshops.



Sithembile Precious Mayise

Qualifications: Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Management. Several skills training programmes under my belt too.

I joined WESSA as a volunteer and supporter of KZN youth in 2021 while working on the Amanzi Ethu NoBuntu project, which focused on environmental conservation around the uMngeni Estuary in Durban. My activities included educating the public about solid waste pollution, learning about invasive plants, and biomonitoring ecosystems. In 2022, this experience led to a Graduate Internship at the KZN Department of Water and Sanitation under Working Solutions International. There, I evaluated water use authorisation applications, implemented water resource management policies, and ensured compliance with the National Water Act (36 of 1998). Additionally, I gained valuable administrative experience at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

During my six months with WESSA Treasure Beach, I experienced significant growth in my knowledge of environmental issues, especially biodiversity and conservation. I enjoyed presenting on topics like climate change and pollution to younger audiences, which improved my public speaking and project management skills.

Organising workshops for school and community groups taught me effective time management and logistics coordination. Seeing the positive impact of our programmes was incredibly rewarding.



Groen Sebenza interns reflect on two years of impact and growth at WESSA



Sthabile Nomonde Sibisi

Qualifications: Bachelor of Social Science degree in Geography and Environmental Management, as well as a Postgraduate Certificate in Education

I consider myself truly blessed to have been granted the opportunity to work with WESSA not once, but twice. My journey began as a TBF Beach Steward from 2020 to 2021, and now, I am proud to have served as a Groen Sebenza Intern. In between, I gained 2.5 years of experience in call centers, working as a Customer Service Advisor and Team Leader.

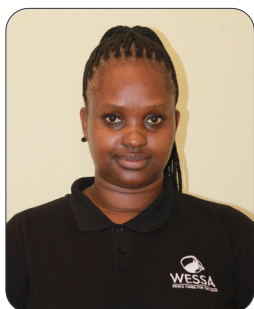
My time at WESSA has been incredibly fulfilling, with some of the highlights including the chance to be actively involved in both the Child Safe and Blue Flag Programmes. Additionally, I was fortunate to be part of the Blue Flag Launch for the 2024/25 season.



Thabo Gavin Tsheole

Qualification: BA Environmental Management; BSc Honours in Geography (Final Year Student)

I really enjoyed my time at WESSA, where I had the opportunity to explore my role as an Environmental Trainer and Educator. I led, planned, implemented, and closed out a project in Limpopo. Additionally, I assisted with various environmental education projects and gained valuable experience throughout the process. I also networked with individuals from different organisations through environmental exhibitions and meetings. Overall, my experience at WESSA was fantastic.



Kim Ngcobo

Qualification: Diploma in Nature Conservation

My Groen Sebenza internship journey began at WESSA, uMngeni Valley, where I served as an Environmental Education Intern. The stunning valley was my classroom, and the zebras and wildebeest were my neighbours. I then had the pleasure of leading explorations along the rocky shores at WESSA, Treasure Beach, and teaching about my favourite place in the world—the East Coast shoreline. Currently, I am stationed at WESSA in Durban as an Environmental Education Officer Intern, where I help drive sustainability projects in schools and communities throughout KwaZulu-Natal.

My favourite part of being in this programme has been engaging with people from diverse backgrounds and age groups to share the wonders of the natural environment. I believe this is the first step in cultivating a sense of responsibility towards nature, as you cannot care for something you do not know about.



Nokwazi Zulu

Qualification: Bachelor of Geography and Environmental Management (UKZN)

I am currently pursuing my Honours degree in Environmental Science at the University of South Africa. In addition to my studies, I have obtained several professional certificates, including Environmental Auditing and Monitoring, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Occupational Health and Safety, Basic Firefighting, and Level 1 First Aid. These qualifications demonstrate my commitment to environmental sustainability, safety, and risk management in both academic and practical settings.

I have gained valuable experience working for the Department of Water and Sanitation for one year as an Environmental Officer and for nearly two years at WESSA as an Environmental Educator. My time at WESSA was particularly rewarding, contributing significantly to my professional and personal growth. During this period, I acquired extensive knowledge and skills that have shaped my career, and I consider WESSA to be a key influence in my professional journey.



Nobomi Ngalo

Qualification: Honours Environmental Science and published author on waste management.

I began my career in March 2023 as a Groen Sebenza intern, supporting the regional project manager, where I gained valuable project management skills, enhanced my problem-solving, and strengthened my adaptability. This foundation prepared me to lead multiple 2024 projects with organisations like Green Cape, Orion, and UNICEF South Africa.

One of my proudest achievements was implementing FEE's Eco-Schools and Young Reporters for the Environment Programme, inspiring young people to embrace sustainable practices.

My goal is to empower future generations, lighting the path to a healthier, greener world.





A journey of learning, innovation, and global collaboration in Germany

When the WESSA Education Centre team set off for Germany in late September, they were stepping into a world of innovative educational practices, global sustainability efforts and partnerships. As part of an exciting exchange initiative hosted by EPIZ – a centre for global citizen education, senior manager, Sifundo Sibiyi along with education centre officers, Seipati Mphasane, and Kevin Lakani, embraced the opportunity to gain insights, learn new teaching strategies, and strengthen the foundation of WESSA’s sustainability programmes back home in South Africa.

From the very start, the team’s German experience was designed to be immersive and multifaceted. “We had a truly holistic learning experience,” says Sifundo Sibiyi. “From Afro-diasporic initiatives in Berlin to school visits, conferences, and engaging with local environmental projects, we gained a broader understanding of how education and sustainability intersect.”

The team’s first stop was Johann-Strauß Grundschule, a primary school where the curriculum blends art, culture, and language. “At this school, each student is expected to learn at least one musical instrument, and they also express themselves through poetry and song,” says Seipati Mphasane. “This shows how well-resourced schools can cater to diverse learners, offering more than academics

but also nurturing creativity and emotional development.” At the Humboldt-Gymnasium School, WESSA delivered a lecture to 112 Grade 12 students, focusing on climate change and the importance of education for sustainable development (ESD). The lecture was met with great enthusiasm, sparking discussions about the global environmental challenges facing both South Africa and Germany.

One of the most striking aspects of the trip was how differently Germany approaches sustainability and education for sustainable development. “In South Africa, we have to consider both environmental and socio-economic factors when addressing sustainability,” says Sifundo. “In Europe, particularly in Germany, they are ahead in terms of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), with strong governmental support and a well-integrated focus on both education and sustainability. We are still developing these systems back home, but this trip has shown us that we have much to learn.”

The visit to the University of Sustainable Development in Eberswalde was one of the key highlights of the trip. The team learned about the MARISCO method, a systematic approach to managing vulnerability and risk at conservation sites. “MARISCO is a powerful tool for ecosystem-based management,” says Kevin Lakani. “Learning about it and seeing it applied in real-time

in the University Forest gave us practical knowledge that we can adapt for reserve management at nMngeni Valley.”

Bringing sustainability home One of the most valuable lessons from the trip was how to integrate new learning techniques into WESSA’s education programmes. “The use of art and poetry to enhance environmental consciousness is something we want to bring to our own classrooms,” says Seipati. “Through poetry, pictures, and play, we can engage learners in a more holistic way.”

The team also drew inspiration from the Spore House, an initiative in Berlin that promotes biocultural diversity. The Spore House’s exhibits and educational displays offer a perfect model for creating interactive, self-guided educational tours at WESSA’s centres. “We could do something similar in our own classrooms,” says Kevin. “It’s a fantastic way to make sustainability tangible for learners of all ages.” The trip also opened doors for future collaborations. The team met with Prof. P.L. Ibsch from the University of Sustainable Development in Eberswalde, whose work on sustainable development could align with WESSA’s goals for ecosystem management. “We are excited about the potential of working with institutions like this to strengthen our reserves management and sustainability programmes,” says Sifundo. The visit also included an invitation to deliver



a keynote address at the Conference for Berlin Foreign Language Teachers, where the WESSA team highlighted South Africa's unique approach to language, history, and education for sustainability. "It was a privilege to share our experiences and learn from others in such a global setting," says Seipati.

But it wasn't all work. The WESSA team was also able to explore Berlin's cultural richness, visiting the Koloniales Buro and Deutsches Historisches Museum to learn about the impact of colonisation on African social structures. "This was a powerful moment of reflection on how history shapes our present, especially in terms of sustainability and human development," says Kevin. In addition to these educational visits, the team took in the lifestyle of the city, noting the German commitment to environmental consciousness. "The use of public transport, bicycles, and the emphasis on recycling were all reminders of how much we can learn from Germany's approach to sustainability," says Seipati. A visit to Berlin's Olympic Stadium was a highlight, where the team attended a live soccer match and explored how sports can promote community engagement.

"It was a fantastic mix of professional and personal experiences," says Kevin. "And it reminded me of how sustainability intersects with so many parts of life, from education to recreation."

The WESSA team returned from their trip to Germany with new knowledge, ideas, and a broader vision for their education and sustainability efforts. "This trip has deepened our understanding of what sustainable education can look like," says Sifundo. "It's not just about teaching facts—it's about inspiring a mindset that understands the interconnectedness of our world and our responsibility to it."

As WESSA continues to expand its efforts in uMngeni Valley, the lessons learned in Germany will play a crucial role in shaping their future programmes. "What excites me most is the opportunity to bring back these strategies and ideas to South Africa," says Seipati. "From innovative classroom techniques to new partnerships, we are ready to take our sustainability programmes to the next level."



The MARISCO method is an adaptive management framework designed to improve decision-making processes, especially in complex and uncertain environments, such as those found in sustainability, conservation, and natural resource management. MARISCO stands for:

- **Monitoring**
- **Assessment**
- **Review**
- **Interpretation**
- **Strategy**
- **Communication**
- **Outcomes**

The method helps organisations and stakeholders manage complex systems by continually assessing and adapting their strategies based on new information and feedback. It's widely used in environmental management, particularly when managing ecosystems or projects that involve multiple stakeholders with diverse interests and goals.





Transforming communities through waste education

In the heart of Gauteng and the Western Cape, an environmental revolution is quietly unfolding in schoolyards and classrooms, led by a group of students, proving that small actions can spark massive change. The eWASA South African Schools Waste Management and Education Project, a partnership between WESSA, has influenced waste management practices across 20 schools and ignited a movement towards sustainability, shaping eco-conscious leaders. Over the course of the project, these schools have collectively recycled more than 10,000 kilograms of waste—ranging from paper and plastics to e-waste. Beyond collecting recyclables; the project drives a mindset shift, empowering students to take charge of their own environment.

At the forefront of this initiative are the “waste champions,” students who have embraced leadership roles within their schools and communities. These young eco-warriors have spearheaded recycling campaigns and organised innovative initiatives like bread tag collections and community clean-ups. At Intsebenziswano Secondary School in the Western Cape, the school’s eco-club is actively driving this initiative. Under the guidance of passionate teachers and project facilitators, students have been equipped with skills, such as project management, advocacy, and leadership through hands-on experience.

But the learning doesn’t stop there. Creativity has played a key role in the project’s success, with students using art to explore environmental issues. Events like the “Trashion Show,” where participants repurpose waste materials into wearable art, have proven that sustainability can be both fun and fashionable. The biomimicry youth design challenge, which encourages students to design solutions based on nature’s own principles, has brought innovation and environmental awareness together in an inspiring way. Workshops and debates further honed students’ public speaking and critical thinking abilities, helping to develop confident, articulate environmental advocates.

The project has also connected students to the practical side of waste management. Excursions to local recycling facilities have given them invaluable real-world insights into how waste is processed and the broader implications of their actions. Meanwhile, teacher workshops have equipped educators with the tools and knowledge to integrate waste education into their curricula, ensuring that sustainability is part of everyday learning. The results of these efforts have been tangible. All 20 participating schools were awarded Bronze Eco-Schools Awards, celebrating their commitment to environmental stewardship. But the benefits extend beyond accolades—through their recycling initiatives, the schools collectively generated more than

R12,000, funds that were reinvested into sustainability projects that will continue to benefit both students and the surrounding communities.

This project has empowered learners and teachers, enriched school curricula, and inspired a culture of sustainability that promises to resonate for years to come. These students carry with them the lessons of environmental responsibility, a connection to their communities, and the knowledge that even small actions can have a big impact on the world around them.





WESSA Corporate Breakfast event sparks high level dialogue

The Climate Change Act and its implications

In a world where climate change no longer feels like a distant concern, but an urgent reality, businesses can no longer afford to sit on the sidelines. The Coastlands SKYE Hotel in Durban recently became a hub for forward-thinking corporate leaders, environmental advocates, and potential donors as WESSA hosted its highly anticipated Corporate Breakfast – Climate Change Act Dialogue. This event served as a crucial platform for businesses to engage with the implications of the newly enacted Climate Change Act, South Africa's landmark response to the global climate crisis.

The event was not only a resounding success in terms of attendance but also a clear demonstration of WESSA's leadership in guiding South African businesses towards sustainability. The event offered a rare opportunity for companies to understand their role in tackling climate change and to explore ways to integrate sustainability into their operations. One of the highlights was a compelling discussion led by Tina Costas, a director and environmental law expert at Norton Rose Fulbright South Africa, who provided invaluable insights into the Climate Change Act and its far-reaching implications for South African businesses. Costas outlined the legal requirements for companies to adapt to carbon reduction targets, integrate sustainability into business models, and comply with the new regulations designed to mitigate climate change risks. She also highlighted the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in this evolving landscape, highlighting how businesses can no longer view sustainability as a peripheral concern but as a central part of their future success. As Costas explained, companies that fail to embrace these changes risk not only legal repercussions but also losing their competitive edge in an increasingly environmentally conscious global market. Her insights on environmental impact and sustainable practices resonated deeply with attendees, offering both a wake-up call and a roadmap for action. For WESSA, the event was a strategic step

in strengthening its position as a leader in environmental advocacy and climate change education. As a non-profit organisation with a 98-year track record in conservation and environmental education, WESSA is uniquely placed to support businesses in navigating the complexities of the Climate Change Act.

Cindy-Lee Cloete, WESSA's CEO, addressed the gathering with a powerful message about the critical role the private sector must play in the fight against climate change. She emphasised that the Climate Change Act represents both a challenge and an opportunity for businesses to innovate and adapt. "This is not just about compliance. It's about securing a future where businesses thrive while contributing to the health of our planet," Cloete said, emphasising the potential for companies to transition to a low-carbon economy.

Apart from the informative talks and expert presentations, the event highlights were also the meaningful connections forged between WESSA and the corporate sector. It was clear from the discussions that businesses are ready to engage in climate action, but they need the guidance, tools, and expertise that organisations like WESSA can provide. The dialogue highlighted the importance of collaboration between corporates, government, and environmental organisations in order to achieve the emission reduction goals set out in the Climate Change Act.

The dialogues and relationships built at the event continues to foster new collaborations, support for WESSA's initiatives, and the collective momentum needed to tackle South Africa's climate challenges. WESSA's commitment to advocacy, education, and conservation remains strong, as the organisation continues to work with corporate South Africa to build a more sustainable future.

Email us to book your seat at the next Climate Change Act dialogue session: communications@wessa.co.za



WESSA Corporate Breakfast

The Climate Change Act and its implications





Sustainable Coastal Tourism

A thriving influence on South Africa's economy and environment

As South Africa embraces the summer season, the country's coastline is taking centre stage - not only for beachgoers and tourists but also as a model of sustainable tourism in action. In recent years, the focus has shifted toward coastal destinations that combine environmental responsibility with exceptional visitor experiences, creating a growing demand for eco-friendly travel options along our shores.

South Africa's stunning beaches, marinas, and coastal communities are increasingly recognised through WESSA's Blue Flag and Green Coast Programmes for their commitment to sustainability. These efforts are helping to drive a new era of tourism, one that values the maintenance of our natural resources as much as the economic benefits that the tourism industry brings. The integration of sustainable tourism practices is becoming a central theme for operators, local municipalities, and community groups across the country's coastal regions.

Sustainable coastal tourism has far-reaching benefits - protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as generating economic opportunities for local communities. Initiatives like the Blue Flag and Green Coast programmes, which assess coastal destinations for their environmental management and sustainability efforts, are playing a key role in this transformation.

These initiatives ensure that tourism activities do not come at the expense of South Africa's coastal ecosystems, but rather help protect them.

For tourism operators, the shift towards sustainability is more than a passing trend. It has become a vital part of the industry's long-term viability. As global travel trends evolve, there's a growing demand for nature-based experiences and eco-conscious destinations. Tourists are increasingly seeking out areas that are not only beautiful but also aligned with their values around conservation and responsible travel. This has created new opportunities for local businesses to cater to this market, while also contributing to the protection of the environment.

Take, for example, the many coastal communities that have embraced conservation efforts through the Green Coast initiative. This community-driven programme highlights areas of high biodiversity and eco-tourism value, encouraging local participation in monitoring and protecting vital coastal ecosystems. From protecting mangrove forests to maintaining healthy estuaries, these communities are playing an active role in safeguarding their natural environments, while also benefiting from the rise in eco-tourism.

The potential of nature-based tourism to contribute to local economies is also significant. Coastal tourism not only attracts

visitors but also supports a wide range of local industries, from hospitality to eco-tourism activities like kayaking, hiking, and wildlife watching. This sector provides jobs and boosts income in areas that may otherwise have limited economic opportunities. Through these efforts, sustainable tourism is becoming an important driver of inclusive growth in coastal regions, helping to address socio-economic challenges while prioritising the health of the environment.

Another vital part of this movement is the increasing involvement of businesses in responsible coastal tourism practices. For instance, the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town, a key player in South Africa's tourism sector, is working with WESSA to reduce marine litter and improve stormwater management to protect the surrounding coastline. Their commitment to sustainable practices is a prime example of how urban centres can play a leading role in environmental stewardship. By integrating ocean education and conservation into their operations, the V&A Waterfront is helping to drive greater awareness among tourists and locals alike about the importance of protecting our oceans and coast.

WESSA has also partnered with Gqeberha-based eco-tourism operator, Awehness Travel, to offer fully immersive travel experiences that connect visitors to local communities and the environment.

Awehness Travel specialises in curating eco-conscious, culturally rich experiences that allow tourists to engage with conservation projects, local biodiversity efforts, and community-driven sustainability initiatives. This collaboration is part of WESSA's wider strategy to bridge the gap between eco-tourism and community empowerment, ensuring that tourism dollars flow directly into the hands of local stakeholders while encouraging an understanding of the importance of protecting South Africa's natural coastline.

It is WESSA's aim to also draw in the support and involvement of our members in these two programmes. Members are being drawn into the activities of the Green Coast sites, with opportunities for citizen

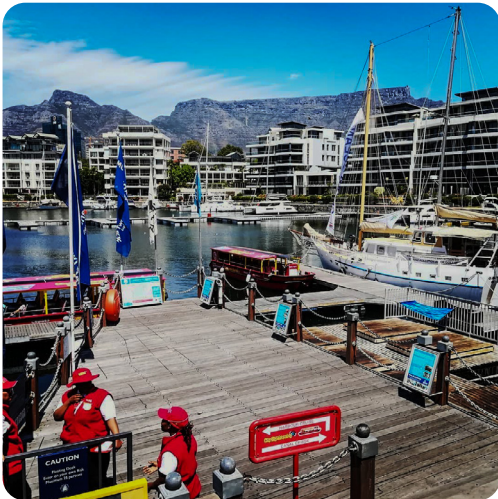
science and community education activities. The Blue Flag Programme is grateful to our members who have volunteered to form a cohort of Blue Flag "Guardians"; who will be carrying out visits to participating beaches and marinas to check for compliance against the 33 Blue Flag standards of excellence. In this way we hope to provide more regular feedback to the Blue Flag operators, to support their efforts to improve coastal management.

WESSA's work in promoting sustainable tourism is about creating a framework that supports long-term environmental stewardship, with tangible benefits for both tourism operators and local communities. These initiatives encourage a connection between people and planet, fostering

an understanding that coastal ecosystems are not only beautiful but also fragile. By promoting the responsible use of natural resources and encouraging community-based conservation efforts, sustainable tourism can become a powerful tool for maintaining South Africa's coast.

As South Africa continues to develop its coastal tourism sector, the intersection of environmental responsibility and tourism holds tremendous promise. With strong collaboration between local communities, businesses, and government, the future of coastal tourism in South Africa looks bright.

For more information on Awehness Travel experiences, visit: <https://awehehness.org/>





Green Key

Paving the way for sustainable tourism in South Africa

In a significant leap for South Africa's hospitality sector, three premier establishments - Cape Grace, the President Hotel, and the newly certified Pullman Cape Town City Centre - have joined the ranks of over 6 000 global establishments proudly bearing the Green Key certification. This internationally recognised accolade is a game-changer for tourism and hospitality, heralding a new era of eco-conscious travel.

What is Green Key?

Green Key, an initiative by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), is the leading international certification for sustainable tourism and hospitality establishments. With a presence in more than 70 countries, the programme equips hotels, restaurants, and attractions to embrace rigorous environmental management standards. In South Africa, WESSA operates as the national custodian of the application process. Establishments undergo a strict auditing process, ensuring compliance with criteria spanning energy efficiency, waste reduction, water conservation, and corporate social responsibility. Once certified, they are equipped with tools and frameworks to continuously improve, offering an exceptional experience for their guests.

Cape Grace and the President Hotel have long been icons of South African hospitality, blending luxury with authentic local charm. The

addition of Pullman to this illustrious group highlights the growing momentum of sustainability in the industry. Each of these establishments demonstrates how luxury and sustainability can coexist, offering guests an environmentally responsible stay without compromising comfort or quality.

Driving sustainable tourism South Africa's natural beauty is a foundation of its tourism appeal, but maintaining it requires collective action. Green Key provides an essential roadmap for the industry to reduce its environmental footprint. Certified establishments benefit from:

- **Enhanced marketability:** International travellers increasingly seek eco-friendly options, giving Green Key holders a competitive edge.
- **Operational savings:** Energy-efficient practices and waste reduction result in significant cost savings.
- **Improved guest loyalty:** Transparency in sustainability efforts encourages trust and repeat business.
- **Global recognition:** The certification signifies adherence to internationally respected standards, elevating South Africa's tourism profile.

Green Key certification represents a commitment to sustainable practices. As more establishments join the programme, the collective

impact grows, benefiting communities, biodiversity, and the economy. For travellers, it offers the assurance of staying at a venue that aligns with their values.

As South Africa's hospitality landscape evolves, initiatives like Green Key prove that sustainability is a necessity. By investing in green tourism, establishments play a pivotal role in ensuring the longevity of the nation's unparalleled natural and cultural assets.

For more information on the Green Key Programme in South Africa and how establishments can join this global movement, contact WESSA at greenkey@wessa.co.za





WESSA and Outliers Coffee Roasters brew up “Armoured Aroma” for pangolin conservation

What if you knew that the simple pleasure of your brew of coffee was helping to protect one of the world’s most endangered creatures?

This is the inspiration behind Armoured Aroma, a new coffee blend launched by WESSA in partnership with Outliers Coffee Roasters. Designed to bring conservation into your daily routine, every bag of Armoured Aroma sold contributes a portion of proceeds to the WESSA Pangolin Programme, supporting vital efforts to protect these elusive, yet critically endangered, animals.

Pangolins are sadly the world’s most trafficked mammal. Their unique armour of overlapping scales, which should be their protection, has tragically made them a target for poachers who supply the illegal wildlife trade.

“Armoured Aroma” represents a creative and engaging way for coffee lovers to directly contribute to pangolin conservation. By simply enjoying a cup of this special blend, individuals can play a part in ensuring their survival.

But who are the masterminds behind this delicious brew?

Outliers Coffee Roasters, a family-run business, brings a wealth of passion and expertise to the table. Founder and master roaster John Kinghorn’s love affair with coffee began in his childhood, fuelled by weekend trips with his father to the local coffee roaster. His fascination with the origins of the beans

and the art of roasting blossomed into a lifelong adventure.

After honing his skills as a chartered accountant and working in China, John returned home and together with his wife Geraldine, there was a burning desire to delve deeper into the world of coffee. Through hours of dedicated self-teaching, he mastered the intricacies of roasting, coffee origins, and equipment. This, combined with their adventurous spirit and determination to make a difference, led to the birth of Outliers Coffee Roasters. Today, John’s expertise extends beyond “bean counting” to encompass the art of bean roasting, delighting the Outliers Coffee family with every sip. This dedication to quality and passion for the craft shines through in “Armoured Aroma” and a commitment to support conservation.

R40 is donated to WESSA for each 1kg bag sold.
R10 is donated to WESSA for each 250g bag sold.




CLICK HERE
to buy your bag





Membership Highlights

This quarter has marked encouraging progress in WESSA’s journey toward a unified One WESSA. From 14-18 October, CEO Cindy-Lee Cloete and Morgan Griffiths: Senior Manager: Advocacy, Membership & Governance met with leaders from WESSA’s five membership regions, including committees, Branch and Friends Group (FG) chairs, and youth coordinators. Discussions centred on aligning membership activities with the WESSA Strategy 2022-2026 and fostering collaboration between members and staff.

Key alignments have emerged with the Schools Unit, Pangolin Programme, and Blue Flag initiatives, where members have become Blue Flag Guardians, monitoring compliance at beaches and marinas. Members are also engaging in Green Coast activities, contributing to citizen science and community education.

A notable milestone is the establishment of the Ibhayi Sub-branch under the Algoa Bay Branch, extending WESSA’s membership into nontraditional areas like New Brighton, Kwazakele, and Zwide.



The WESSA in ACTION! webinars continue to spotlight local impacts, covering topics such as Advocacy, Pangolin conservation, and biodiversity initiatives. The final webinar for 2024 included updates on giraffe reintroduction at Umgeni Valley, the Kei Mouth Green Coast community, long-term Bat Hawk monitoring, and the draft WESSA Policy on Sustainable Use of Biodiversity, now open for member feedback.

Across regions, members and volunteers have made significant contributions:



KwaZulu-Natal (KZN): Collaborations with the UNICEF WASH project and Treasure Beach Education Centre have revitalized efforts, while youth groups from the Southern Berg participated in WASH training. Over 3,300 students benefited from Umbogavango’s environmental education field trips guides by eThekweni Branch youth volunteers. Lowveld: Citizen science events, waste cleanup at White River Nature Reserve, and Arbor Day activities showcased community impact.



NAR: Highlights included International Vulture Day celebrations, large-scale cleanup efforts at Hartbeespoort Dam (removing over 3,000 bags of rubbish), and bio-control initiatives for invasive species. The advocacy team secured Green Scorpions’ investigations into illegal mining in the Magaliesberg Biosphere buffer zone.

Western Cape: Small Project Fund grants supported initiatives like the Piesangs Valley Greenbelt Project, Liesbeck River health monitoring, and Cape Flats dune restoration. The Friends of Blaauwberg and Princess Vlei continue impactful community conservation and restoration efforts.

These collective achievements highlight the power of grassroots partnerships in extending WESSA’s reach, amplifying its impact, and reinforcing its presence in advocacy and environmental action.

“Thank you to all our volunteers and members for driving meaningful change!”



#WeAreOneWESSA

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You can become a champion for nature from as little as R150 monthly. The more you give, the more we can achieve together.

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