



WESSA KZN Newsletter | July 2022

OVERVIEW



The last six months in the WESSA KZN Region have been a whirlwind of activity with much youthful energy, positive developments, and the realisation that after a decade of grassroots action – and despite many obstacles and setbacks – the aims of the original [KZN Youth Leaders Course](#), held ten years ago in April 2012, are finally taking shape and being achieved. (See also page 20.)

The region is an example of how demographics can be changed with the inclusion of young members, especially those with a strong interest in the environment and who are graduates in this field. KZN Youth has evolved over ten years of tireless effort and commitment from our Chair Margaret Burger, and the hope is that this experience will provide guidelines for youth recruitment in other regions.

The region still has a few well-functioning branches although others are no longer as active as they were historically, and we are pleased to report that the Sani Wild Life Branch is beginning to pick up and flourish again after Covid, while the Southern KZN Branch under Paddy Norman, continues to hold regular walks, talks and geological excursions, network with other groups, and engage with citizens and local government on a variety of issues. The Umbogavango Enviro Education Centre and Nature Reserve is again open to local, rural primary schools with 380 learners attending in June 2022.

The JB Law Trust is funding the Hawaan Forest Project in uMhlanga, with eco-rangers and an ecotherapy/forest bathing focus, while a donation from the Ron Senogles Environmental Education Trust is assisting the Treasure Beach Environmental Education Centre so that deserving schools can visit. This edition of *Green Spiral* covers a wide range of topics, but one of the main themes has been forests and the many benefits we gain from them.

We hope you enjoy this bumper, mid-year update.
Best wishes from the WESSA KZN Membership Team

IN THIS ISSUE

Overview

Membership Events & Activities | Pages 2-13

- 02 Feb:** World Wetlands Day
- 19 Feb:** KZN Youth Volunteers Social Induction
- 02 Mar:** Durban Waste Indaba
- 05 Mar:** Human Rights Dialogue: WESSA KZN and X-Factored Youth
- 21 Mar:** Human Rights Day with Amnesty International SA at the Denis Hurley Centre
- 02 Apr:** South Africa-Norway Research Exchange Programme
- 22-23 Apr:** International Mother Earth Day following the KZN Floods
- 29 Apr-02 May:** iNaturalist City Nature Challenge eThekweni
- 22 May:** Friends of Symmonds Stream Team-up
- 27-29 May:** Ecotherapy weekend at Kululapa
- 28 May:** CJCM Seed Saving Workshop
- 07 Jun:** Durban Invasive Species Forum
- 01-07 Jun:** Travelling Nature Journal and International Nature Journaling Week
- 08 Jun:** World Oceans Day
- 16 Jun:** Youth Day
- 23 Jun:** Tree labelling in Burman Bush
- 25 Jun:** Welcoming of the Whales

Click on link to go to section | Pages 13-25

- 13 [KZN Branches Report Back](#)
- 16 [KZN Strategic Review Roadshow](#)
- 18 [In the Media](#)
- 19 [UPL Multi-Stakeholder Forum](#)
- 20 [Strengthening & Growing Membership, Youth Development & Future Plans](#)
- 23 [Women's Day & Indigenous Peoples Day](#)
- 24 [Networking & Relationship-building](#)
- 25 [KZN Region: Structure & Contact Info](#)

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MEMBERSHIP EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



2022 Special Days February – July

Month	DAY
FEB	02 World Wetlands Day
MAR	21 Human Rights Day (SA)
APR	22 International Mother Earth Day 27 Freedom Day (SA)
MAY	03 World Wildlife Day 25 Africa Day
JUN	05 World Environment Day 08 World Oceans Day 16 Youth Day (SA)
JUL	15 World Youth Skills Day 18 Nelson Mandela Day 26 International Mangroves Day 28 World Nature Conservation Day 31 International Ranger Day

World Wetlands Day | 2 February 2022

By Margaret Burger



WESSA KZN Youth took part in a World Wetlands Day event at Imbabala Park, Ndwedwe. The event was organised by Mdu Gumede and was well attended by government officials and representatives of various organisations, ranging from EDTEA, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Umgeni Water, DFFE, Biodiversity Stewardship, the Deputy Mayor, and local community members including on-site volunteer Xolani Mvubu and the local Mfundisi (pastor). The area is the catchment for the Mloti River in iLembe. When one sees a small stream and realises that – although it looks insignificant, in fact it is of major importance – one begins to understand how [grassland areas such as these function as sponges and wetlands](#). There are many [blue gums](#) in the area that need to be removed. We also saw lots of [pompom weed](#) (*Campuloclinium macrocephalum*) in the surrounding grasslands so there is a great deal of work for this community should they be able to receive funding. The event was most successful and enjoyable, with much networking and sharing of ideas for potential future projects.

The day ended with Mdu taking the youth on a walk across the 550 ha. area of wetland. Pompom weed and gum trees near the water source again indicated the need for coordinated action and monitoring. Our WESSA KZN Youth were very welcome. Thank you Bongani Chisale, Ndimiso Manzini, Melisa Nonjiko, Azile Mpukwana and Zuzile Mpanza for your enthusiasm and dedication. We had a good planning meeting afterwards on the banks of the uMngeni Estuary, together with Sipiwe Rakgabale. A day well spent indeed!

KZN Youth Volunteers Social Induction | 19 February 2022

By Jenny Duvenage



On Saturday, 19th February 2022, WESSA KZN Youth Volunteers got together for a social Induction at the Durban Botanic Gardens. It was held at the currently closed tea garden, which was the perfect venue. The event was organised by our youth leaders Bongani Chisale and Sipiwe Rakgabale, ably assisted by our Groen Sebenza interns Melisa Nonjiko and Azile Mpukwana.

It was a highly successful event with a great turn out. All told, thirty young people, including our youth leaders, participated with

great exuberance on a beautiful sunny day in the shade under the trees. With Covid largely behind us, WESSA Youth now hope to begin holding regular events as well as facilitating the setting up of Youth Action Groups in other areas. Above are a few images that capture some of the magic of this special day. Many thanks to all who took part.

To see more photos of the day, go to: [WESSA KZN](#)

Durban Waste Indaba | 2 March 2022



On the 2nd of March 2022, Groen Sebenza interns, together with WESSA Youth volunteers, attended the Waste Technical Engagement programme held at the ICC and hosted by the KZN Dept. of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA).

The waste economy was explained as a tool to make money out of waste, with one of the proposed solutions to waste management issues being greater involvement by SMMEs and private organisations.

Human Rights Dialogue: WESSA KZN Youth and X-Factored Youth | 5 March 2022

By Jenny Duvenage



On Saturday 5th March, WESSA KZN Youth and [X-Factored Youth](#) got together at Blue Lagoon to workshop what we understand by human rights, how this crucial pillar of democracy is recognised and applied in South Africa, and how environmental rights can help bring about community upliftment and social justice. This was in preparation for [Human Rights Day](#) on 21 March, when a public event – organised by Amnesty International South Africa (UKZN Chapter and Durban Group) – was held at the Denis Hurley Centre. Many thanks to Futhi Sibiyi for facilitating and to the WESSA KZN and X-Factored Youth, who all participated with great enthusiasm, rising to the occasion with fascinating insights and stimulating discussion. To see more photos of the day, go to: [WESSA KZN](#)

Human Rights Day | 21 March 2022

By Jenny Duvenage



For Human Rights Day 2022, WESSA KZN Youth joined [Amnesty International South Africa](#) (UKZN Chapter and Durban Group) – together with a number of other groups and organisations – for a public discussion around the theme of ‘*The Right to a Safe Environment*’. The event was a collaborative effort initiated by the Amnesty UKZN Committee, assisted by Amnesty International SA-Durban, WESSA KZN Youth and X-Factored Youth, while the [Denis Hurley Centre](#) most generously provided an amazing space at which to host the event. All told it was a most successful and inspiring day.

Other participants with whom WESSA KZN networks and partners, were: The [Durban Innovative Leadership Programme](#) based at DUT and coordinated by Crispin Hemson, director of [International Centre of Nonviolence \(ICON\)](#); Futhi Sibiya and Bliss Sibiya of [X-Factored Youth](#); and Delwyn Pillay of [Greenpeace Africa | Local Durban Group](#). Under the overall theme of *'The Right to a Safe Environment'* the following focus areas were identified via a Google Forms survey: 1. Gender Based Violence; 2. Environmental Rights and Justice; 3. Violence In Communities; 4. Fraud and Corruption; 5. Covid-19 ethics, measures and mandates

The unrest that took place in KZN during July 2021 was the basis for WESSA KZN's participation. Together with X-Factored Youth, WESSA KZN Youth felt that dialogue and developing critical thinking skills are vital if we are to understand what drove the mayhem and destruction that erupted. Though no doubt instigated by political factors, the underlying causes run a lot deeper. Social and environmental justice are key, and ensuring a safe environment that provides the most basic necessities of life – clean air, clean water, healthy food, and decent housing – are crucial to avoiding such a situation ever arising again.



WESSA KZN Youth created an exhibition intended to demonstrate the differing patterns of violence that took place and which have been traumatising for so many. In the aftermath of those terrible eight days, ordinary citizens came together in a remarkable and unified effort to fix and clean up as best they could but the impacts are still being felt.

As an environmental organisation, our immediate concern was (and continues to be) the destruction of our ecological resources. WESSA KZN is represented on the Cornubia Multi-Stakeholder Forum set up after the UPL chemical spill disaster that resulted after the UPL Warehouse in Cornubia, Umhlanga was burnt to the ground during the July riots, releasing tons of toxic chemicals into the environment. (See page19)



What the long-term effects on human health might be has not been determined but experience of past industrial accidents involving toxic chemicals indicate that this possibility should be taken seriously. The full extent and fall-out from the disaster is still unknown. It has been reported that it could take up to two years or longer for degraded marine and aquatic areas to recover. The immediate effects are: the death of countless marine and other life such as frogs and insects; ocean and river dead zones; and potential damage to natural vegetation and farmland.

As a result (added to the economic costs of Covid), the livelihoods of subsistence fishers, farmers and communities have been badly affected. These are complex and difficult issues for young people to tackle but they did it with great enthusiasm, application and insight. They are our hope

for the future and we greatly appreciated this opportunity to combine our efforts and resources to work together for a better world, especially at this critical time when we so badly need to build solidarity with our fellow citizens. Sincere thanks to Amnesty's UKZN Chapter and Durban Group, and all the participants ... rising stars and tireless, longstanding stalwarts alike. To see more photos of the day, go to: [WESSA KZN](#)

South Africa-Norway Research Exchange Programme | 2 April 2022

Mphathesithe Mkhize, a Research Coordinator for the [South Africa-Norway \(SANO\) Research Exchange Programme](#) and a long-standing member of WESSA Durban Youth, saw the need to further nurture our networks by inviting us to attend a constructive exchange of ideas workshop with the SANO Research Exchange Programme team. This event was held on the 2nd of April 2022 at Sica's Guest House. Its objectives were placed around having sensible discussions on the devastating effects of plastic pollution in our oceans and its impact on global warming. Ten KZN Youth were invited to the workshop.

International Mother Earth Day following the KZN floods | 22 – 23 April



On Earth Day, 22nd April 2022, WESSA KZN Youth teamed up with the staff of the [uMhlanga Hilton Hotel](#) to tackle the massive amount of waste that, due to the catastrophic KZN floods, swept down the uMngeni River and covered Durban's beaches.

On Saturday, 23rd of April, our dedicated and indefatigable WESSA KZN Youth were back to take on another load ... thank you our Green Heart Family and a huge thank you to the Hilton Hotel group! ❤️

Left: Earth Day 2022, WESSA KZN Youth with the staff of the Hilton Hotel, uMhlanga



On 23rd April, WESSA Youth Midlands joined forces with WESSA Youth Durban to continue with the clean-up of the waste: *"It tore my heart to pieces to see so much waste piled up along the coast, exactly like a dumping site ... we have done our part hoping to inspire others to roll up their sleeves as well."*

Afterwards Dejaaysips took us for a city tour on bicycles along the coast. It was wonderful to feel the ocean breeze, watch the turbulent waves, and enjoy all the different vibes. I'm grateful to be surrounded by such an energetic, passionate and dedicated team." – 'Howickman' Bheki Gcumisa, Chair of WESSA Youth Midlands

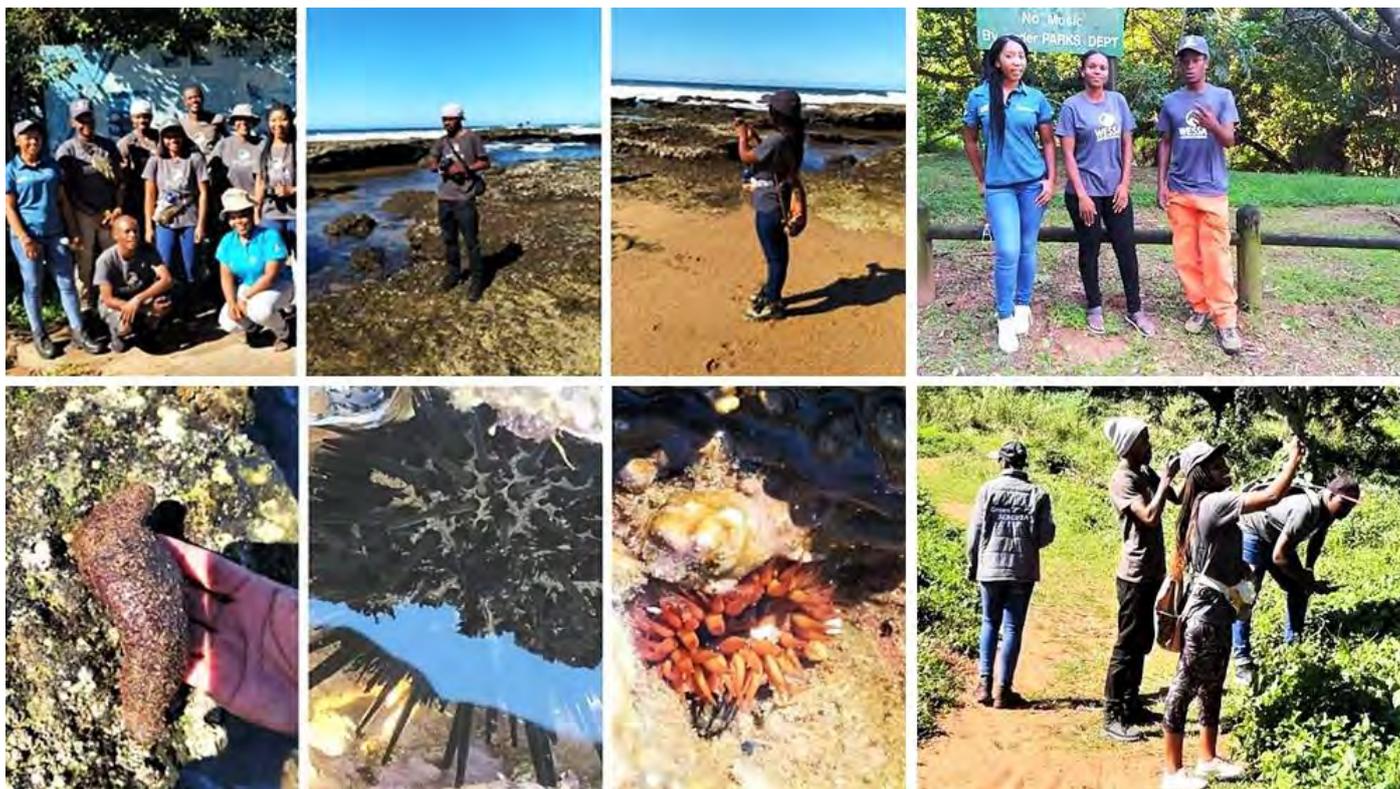
Below: Midlands and Durban WESSA Youth Volunteers team up to help tackle the huge amount of waste that washed up on Durban beaches following the catastrophic floods, 11-12 April 2022.



"We are so thrilled to have a youth group in Howick to support the important environmental work in the Midlands area and Pietermaritzburg. Thank you so much to those who came to Durban to help after our disastrous floods, and did their bit to take some load off our beaches. Everyone without fail is shocked when they see the amount of waste we humans produce. Thank you for coming all the way and helping out and being such awesome members of the WESSA Youth KwaZulu-Natal Region." – Margaret Burger | WESSA KZN Chair

From Carbonbrief: [Climate change made extreme rains in 2022 South Africa floods 'twice as likely'](#) The extreme rainfall that triggered one of South Africa's deadliest disasters of this century was made more intense and more likely because of climate change, a new "rapid-attribution" study finds.

iNaturalist City Nature Challenge eThekweni | 29 April – 2 May 2022



Above: WESSA KZN Youth observed and uploaded pictures of marine life on the rocky shores of Treasure Beach as well as around the city's nature reserves and gardens using the iNaturalist app.

From Friday 29th April to Monday 2nd May, WESSA KZN joined the Botanical Society and SANBI to take part in the [City Nature Challenge Bioblitz](#). The natural areas and nature reserves our WESSA Youth team visited over the 4 day period were: Burman Bush in Morningside; Pigeon Valley in Glenwood; Treasure Beach's grasslands and marine environments on the Bluff; and Virginia Bush, Bridgevale Park and the Japanese Gardens in Durban North. Cape Town won the Southern African chapter of the City Nature Challenge with 66 265 observations by 1 689 participants who identified 3 822 different species. eThekweni came 4th in both the observation categories with 12 903 and 1 838 respectively. 131 people took part in the Durban event.

Read articles by Duncan Guy

[Citizen scientists go app in hand for species census](#) | IOL 23 Apr 2022

[Mother City wins local species count](#) | IOL 22 May 2022

Team spirit with Friends of Symmonds Stream | 22 May 2022



On 22nd May, WESSA KZN Youth from the Midlands and Durban teamed up with Friends of Symmonds Stream. This was a great opportunity to work together, plan future combined projects, and inspire other groups to establish 'Local Initiatives For the Environment' in our communities.

"Friends of Symmonds Stream – registered with the [KZN Conservancies Association](#) as the Symmonds Stream Conservancy – are a group of volunteers working on the upkeep and restoration of this urban stream and its riparian habitat.

The stream flows through Howick and was once a pristine tributary of the uMngeni River. It runs parallel to Symmonds Lane, with its source near Buchanan Street, under Gush Avenue and beneath the Karkloof Road before tumbling 18 metres over the Forgotten Falls. The grassland area alongside the stream is a remnant of the indigenous grassland that once covered the area. It contains many special and rare species of grasses and other plants.

As the urban area has increased in density, more and more ‘hard’ surfaces have been built in the catchment area causing high flows of water run-off during heavy rain. Invasive alien plants, litter from storm water drains, leaking sewers and illegally dumped builders’ rubble and soil have caused the further degradation of the stream. Through assistance by the uMngeni Municipality and donations of money and time by Howick residents since 2008, Friends of Symmonds Stream have managed to attend to some of these problems.” – Source: [Friends of Symmonds Stream Facebook Page](#).

Ecotherapy weekend at Kululapa | 27 – 29 May 2022

Photos by Zuri Mkhwanazi



On 27 May, our WESSA KZN Youth headed to the cold mountains of Kululapa in the Midlands for an Eco-Therapy adventure weekend. Great thanks to Zuri Mkhwanazi of [ZuriXpress](#) for being an inspirational host. [Kululapa](#) is nestled in the forested highlands of the Karkloof mist belt, and is just the place to go to escape the stress of city life and be immersed in the beauty of nature. (See also, the [Hawaan Forest Project](#) page 21)

Shinrin-yoku 森林浴 combines the kanji for ‘forest’ (3 trees) ‘wood’ (2 trees) and ‘bathe’(bathhouse)



It is common knowledge that being in nature makes us feel good. Sunshine and fresh air as well as the sights, sounds, and scents of the forest invigorate and relax us in equal part. [Shinrin-yoku](#) or forest bathing became popular in Japan in the early 80s. The term was first used in 1982 by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries with the intention of encouraging healthy lifestyles while also promoting the protection of the nation’s natural environments. Forest bathing develops both fitness and mindfulness and can be practiced in a variety of ways. It can be as simple as walking in any natural environment and consciously connecting with the nature around you, or you can join a trained guide for a full ecotherapy experience. Other activities such as yoga and nature journaling can also be combined with forest bathing.

Left: Photo credit ‘Letting Nature Back In’ | **Read article:** [Mistbelt forests of the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands](#)

CJCM Seed Saving Workshop | 28 May 2022

By Jenny Duvenage

On 28th May 2022, Jenny Duvenage participated in a Seed Saving Workshop hosted by the Gandhi [Phoenix Settlement](#) in Bhambayi on behalf of the [Climate Justice Charter Movement](#) (CJCM). Delwyn Pillay of Greenpeace and CJCM presented the workshop, with much active participation by the community members who attended. After lunch, seedlings were planted in the settlement's food garden. With its focus on community self-reliance and resilience, the Phoenix Settlement was the perfect venue to hold the workshop. It was fascinating to identify the parallels in Gandhi's philosophies of Swaraj (self-rule) and swadeshi (self-sufficiency) – to which Charkha (the spinning wheel) and Khadi (handwoven cloth) are so central – and the food sovereignty movement. Great thanks to Ela Gandhi who arranged this ideal and inspiring venue, Delwyn Pillay who presented the workshop, and to all who participated with such enthusiasm.

"We always draw lessons from the independence movement. Gandhi did not merely say 'no' to the imported textile that was destroying our textile industry; he put everyone to work spinning cloth. The spinning wheel became the symbol of Indian independence. So we always say: if the spinning wheel was the symbol of our first independence, then the seed is the symbol of our second independence." – [Vandana Shiva](#)



Above: CJCM Seed Saving Workshop at the Gandhi Phoenix Settlement | 28 May 2022

To see more photos of the day, go to: [People's Climate Durban](#)

Durban Invasive Species Forum | 07 June 2022



From 18 May to 13 July 2022, the [Invasive Species Forum Roadshow](#) held workshops in Bloemfontein, Durban, Johannesburg and Mbombela. Issues related to biosecurity compliance, invasive species, biocontrol and the removal of invasive species were discussed at the forums.

On 7th June, WESSA Youth attended the Durban workshop and in the process learned more about invasive species in general as well as directives and compliance from the different departments, government officials and field experts that were present.

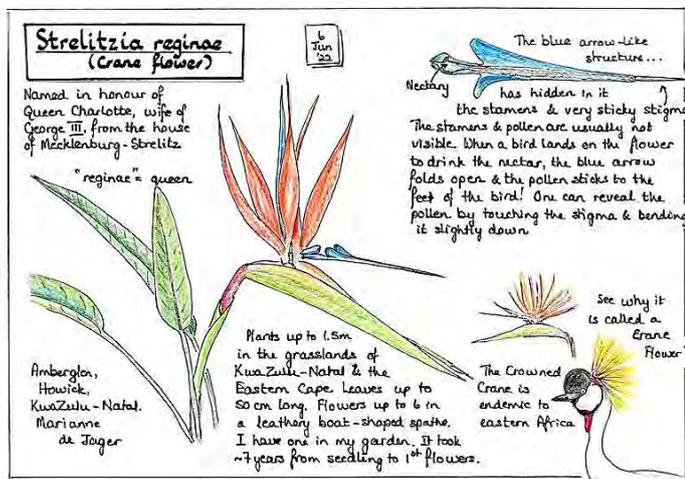
Travelling Nature Journal and Nature Journaling Week | 1-7 June 2022

By Jenny Duvenage



Nature Journaling is a creative, learning activity with people journaling together as part of a global community of nature lovers. Several WESSA KZN youth volunteers are enjoying [Nature Journaling](#), which is a complementary activity to ecotherapy and forest bathing, an aspect of the Hawaan Forest Project coordinated by eco-ranger Bernard Chatikobo (see page 21.) See also, this [blog post](#) by Cati Vawda, Themhani Luthuli, Mbalenhle Zulu, Tanya Dayaram and Yousuf Vawda describing how the group first came together, the foundations of inclusivity on which it is founded, and its mission to encourage action that will protect and heal the environment as well as ourselves.

Left: *Nature Journaling outing at the Japanese Gardens. Front: Tanya Dayaram Behind, L-R: Cati Vawda, Bongani Chisale, Yousuf Vawda and Lisa Dayaram.*



One very special project, initiated by artist and environmental educator [Bethan Burton](#), who founded [International Nature Journaling Week](#), is a Travelling Nature Journal. This began in Brisbane, Australia and is now making its way around the world. So far it has travelled from Australia to Scotland, America, Canada, England and Japan. It arrived in Durban, South Africa in May and we are delighted that one of our members, Marianne de Jager who is based in Howick, was able to contribute this wonderful piece of journaling on the crane flower, *Strelitzia reginae*. Here also, is a blog post by Marianne with more of her beautiful artwork, observations and storytelling skills: [Qunu Connections](#)



World Oceans Day | 8 June 2022

By Jenny Duvenage for Coastwatch KZN

World Oceans Day is observed on the 8th of June each year. Oceans make up over 70 percent of the planet and are essential to supporting life on Earth. The degradation of the oceans by humans is destabilising the functioning of Earth's systems.

The oceans are home to most of Earth's biodiversity and are the main source of protein for more than a billion people around the world. Scientists estimate that 50-80 percent of the oxygen production on Earth comes from the ocean. The oceans also absorb about 30 percent of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) released into the atmosphere.

However, as levels of atmospheric CO₂ increase due to human activities – such as the of burning fossil fuels and deforestation – the amount of carbon dioxide absorbed by the oceans is leading to ocean acidification. This process has far-reaching implications for the ocean and the creatures that live there.

Covering more than 70 percent of the world's surface, the oceans are the largest ecosystem on earth. They generate more than half the oxygen we breathe; regulate the climate; absorb carbon dioxide helping to reduce climate change; are a primary source of food to more than a billion people; and provide livelihoods, recreation, beauty and wonder to billions of people around the world. In return, we take the oceans for granted, and exploit and abuse them in every way possible.

By changing the chemistry of the seawater, acidification threatens to destabilize and unravel the food web. It is a direct threat to plankton, the foundational species of the food web, as well as many larger marine species. Because billions of people depend on the marine food web, it is a threat to us, too.

Ocean pollution is a complex mixture of toxic metals, plastics, manufactured chemicals, petroleum, urban and industrial wastes, pesticides, fertilisers, pharmaceutical chemicals, agricultural runoff, and sewage. More than 80% arises from land-based sources and it reaches the oceans through rivers, runoff, deposition from the atmosphere – where airborne pollutants are washed into the ocean by rain and snow – and direct dumping, such as pollution from wastewater treatment plants and discarded waste.

HUMAN THREATS TO THE OCEANS	
Overfishing and destructive fishing practices Inadequate marine protected areas Tourism and coastal development Shipping and noise pollution Pollution: <i>sewage, garbage, plastics, fertilizers, oil spills pesticides, industrial chemicals</i>	Oil and gas: exploration and extraction Overfishing and destructive fishing practices Dead zones Climate change: <i>coral bleaching, rising sea levels, acidification</i> Aquaculture Invasive species

World Oceans Day unites environmentalists

To commemorate World Oceans Day, held annually on 8th June, beaches across KZN were filled to the brim with community members, conservancies, environmental organisations and eco-friendly companies who joined forces in cleaning-up our oceans, following the recent natural disaster ...



“The devastation of beaches and oceans through the deluge of waste coming down the waterways, is a sure sign that people are not aware of the impact they are having on the ocean. More needs to be done to educate people and industries about waste and how it can be reduced or reused as a valuable commodity.”

If we can work together with citizens, businesses, organisations and communities of Durban from all walks of life, with an aim to improve our disposal of solid and liquid waste in more appropriate ways, and increase our waste recycling and ultimately decrease our generation of waste, this will be an important contribution to the health of our blue planet, and beautiful city.”

Siphiwe Rakgabale, Tri-Eco Tours, WESSA KZN Youth Leader and Green Corridors’ litterboom coordinator.

[Green Corridors](#) in partnership with the Zero Waste Foundation, Pick ‘n Pay, WildTrust and Youth 4 MPAs rolled-up their sleeves to clean Blue Lagoon Beach. Green Corridors Coastal and Waste Management Projects officer, Musa Shange, said the clean-up aims to propel action throughout the year to protect our blue planet ... Siphiwe Rakgabale of [Tri-ecotours \(Pty\) Ltd](#) and the Green Corridors’ Litterboom coordinator said that waste flowed through the urban waterways via stormwater drains into streams and rivers and finally the ocean. **Read full article:** [World Oceans Day unites environmentalists](#)

Youth Day | 16 June 2022

Durban Youth Branch: Youth Day 2022 in Durban was celebrated with a social induction at the Green Hub for eleven new KZN youth volunteers. It was a full day with a morning workshop followed by games, a braai and a cake for Melisa and Simile, who both had their birthdays. The day ended with a cycling trip arranged by Siphiwe. ❤️

Midlands Youth Branch: With [Howickman Bheki Gcumisa](#) at the helm, the Midlands WESSA Youth group celebrated Youth Day with a commemorative hike up the hills of Mpophomeni to honour the [bravery of the youth of 1976](#). Unfortunately, before they could reach the breath-taking mountain top and spectacular surrounding views, the day was marred by having to pass through an illegal dumping site, a reminder of the constant battle to protect the environment and create awareness in local communities of how vital it is to care for our precious planet.



Above Left: Midlands Youth in the hills of Mpophomeni Above Right: Durban Youth at the Green Hub

Tree identification and labelling in Burman Bush | 23 June 2022

Photos by Sbonelo Sikhakhane & Margaret Burger | Report by Sbonelo Sikhakhane



On Thursday 23 June 2022, WESSA Youth met with game ranger Mr Musa Mfeka to identify and label trees at Burman Bush Nature Reserve. We gathered in the morning and travelled along the Ukhozi trail, identifying and labelling trees such as *Celtis durandii*, *Trichilia dregeana*, *Cordia caffra*, *Dalbergia armata*, *Trichilia dregeana*, *Baphia racemosa* ... and more. The tree labels were previously donated by WESSA, with a few more made recently. A list of tree species – on the trails, at the viewing deck, and at the resting area, which still need to be labelled – was written up, and it was agreed that these would be labelled at another time still to be decided. Tree labels requested for this next occasion are: *Commiphora harveyi*, *Chaetacme aristata*, *Euclea crispa*, *Euclea natalensis*, *Zanthoxylum capense*, *Sclerocarya birrea* and *Ficus natalensis*. A *Pittosporum viridiflorum*, the only one in the reserve, was labelled in Burman Drive. Mr Mfeka told us that the reserve is visited by 120 species of birds and we were fortunate to see a duiker. On our way out, we stopped by at the Scouts site, a great venue with a conference centre ideal for camping and team building. The site has been recently renovated and refurbished after being vandalised. It's now fully functional again and WESSA Youth will be able to meet there by arrangement.

Welcoming of the Whales | 25 June 2022



The 5th Annual *Welcoming of the Whales Festival* took place at WESSA's Treasure Beach Enviro Education Centre on 25 June. WESSA staff welcomed us warmly and it was a great success with a good turnout. Activities included a guided walk with Tsheketshe (Andre Steenkamp) on the rocky shore, followed by a beach clean-up. In addition to whale watching, there were numerous informative exhibits, an arts & crafts market, music, and a variety of food vendors.

WESSA KZN BRANCHES



Upper South Coast Branch

The KZN region has assisted with restarting the Umbogavango Environmental Education programme sponsored by AECI. After 3 years of being on hold due to Covid and various administrative difficulties, the project recommenced on 1st June 2022. The first school was Magama Primary, with 41 learners accompanied by two teachers. Phindile Khoza has returned as the environmental educator, together with Groen Sebenza intern Siziwe Hlongwa. [Umbogavango Nature Reserve](#) is the classroom, where acquiring environmental knowledge and seeing how ecosystems function is practically applied. Schools that will benefit from the programme are those in the surrounding area with disadvantaged learners.



The Southern KZN Branch is known for its interesting walks and talks. On 16th July, an especially fascinating walk was arranged from the Wild Coast Sun to the famous [Mzamba fossils and Petrified Forest](#). These are the fossilised remains of an ancient marine environment deposited during the Cretaceous period some 80 million years ago. The site was discovered in 1824 by Pioneer HF Fynn and brought to the notice of the scientific world by Captain JR Garden in 1855. The inter-tidal reefs exposed on the beach during low tide and the cliffs on both sides of the Mzamba Estuary, comprise a collection of large, petrified logs and the fossilised remnants of marine animals, including: ammonites; giant clams; blackened pieces of bone; turtle scutes; shells and shell fragments. One of the interesting facets of these rocks is the way they record cyclical changes affecting marine biodiversity over the millennia, and the implications for species extinction and adaptation.



The following day, the Bendigo Conservation Group hosted Mike Fraser to talk about *'Finding Coelacanths'*. Incredibly, Mike, his son Alan and friend Bruce Henderson have come across no less than four coelacanths [since 2019](#), the most recent one being in March this year.

Read: [Latest coelacanth discovery amazes local divers](#) | South Coast Herald, 4 Mar 2022 **Watch:** [Coelacanth Dive KZN The original footage of the Coelacanth discovered off the coast of Pumula, 22 November 2019](#) **Also:** [Rare Coelacanth seen off KZN South Coast](#) | IOL 28 Nov 2019 **Left:** Screenshot from video of first find in 2019

Branch action, advocacy and education: The last year has been relatively quiet on the lower south coast, perhaps because infrastructure issues have come to the fore. We continue to keep watch on new proposals, both good and bad. We were very pleased that the consultants for the [proposed weir on the Umzimkulu River](#) arranged to meet with local NGOs up-front, and listened to our concerns. We do not support this proposal as it appears to us to be both unsustainable and an excessively intrusive and expensive solution, which will not actually solve the water supply issues except in the very short term. It will certainly have a major negative impact on a key river estuary.

The [Oatlands Landfill site](#) is another source of great concern, and highlights a failure of political will at a local government level. Despite raising the issue through both official channels and subsequently in the media, the municipality has not budgeted funds to implement the approved extension so it appears that the site will run out of space, at least for a few weeks or months. We are assisting [The Green Net](#) in setting up a comprehensive recycling scheme and have encouraged efforts to promote recycling, although this requires some caution as recycling entrepreneurs may also cause pollution on occasion. For example, we recently discovered a large dump of glass in a small valley, probably due to the poor demand for glass waste.

Currently a new challenge has arisen, with the public rallying in support of the South Coast Tidy Towns initiative. [Tidy Towns](#) has great potential and we have seen some excellent improvements. We also very much appreciate those groups who have contacted WESSA for advice and heeded it. Unfortunately, there have also been some very ill-considered actions, including clearing of bush in the coastal zone “to improve access to the beach” or “make things look tidier”. This illustrates how fine a line we walk between managing our environment for now and managing it for our future.

Bush-clearing is an ongoing issue we are constantly battling against, and we welcome the move by the EDTEA to require environmental consideration *prior to any clearing*. The Sea Park Stormwater scheme is another example of good intentions leading to bad consequences, and we are still trying to get the authorities to produce a viable long-term solution.



Sometimes we also ‘Talk the Walk’ and our long-term project, the Bendigo Nature Reserve, has inspired lengthy discussion on how to replace a now decrepit boardwalk. With a bit of funding and some wonderful expert helpers, the Bendigo Conservation Group has begun construction and the first section is now in place. The drafting of a Bendigo Nature Reserve guidebook is also a slow but steady work in progress.

Left: *Maxi, the local building inspector, giving cautious approval to the first section of the boardwalk. 😊*

Sani Wild Life Branch | From 2022 AGM, Chair’s Report by Mike Bloom

The Covid pandemic has had a very negative impact on branch get-togethers, whether committee meetings or general events and activities. It has also badly affected small local businesses, many of which depend on tourism. Thankfully, the worst now seems to be over and it is encouraging to see the Branch rallying with a new committee and becoming active again.

One of the first outings of 2021 was arranged by Helen Small and Don Guy, who took pupils from Clowes Farm on Scotston Road up into the grasslands above the dairy where they tested the water. Compared to the water tested where the stream crosses the road below the dairy, it proved to be clean and fresh. It was a great learning opportunity and the kids were fascinated by the microbes they discovered in the water course.



Thereafter, in June, a group of ten from the local [Mqatsheni Hiking Club](#) went to WESSA’s uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve with Skhumbuzo Mlibeni, who is now councillor for Lotheni. In the past, Sani Branch has regularly sent older educators from local schools, the objective being to provide the knowledge and skills required to take the environmental message back to their communities. The approach now is that as hikers, this group already has a love and passion for the environment so is ideally placed to impart the knowledge gained to their peers and others in the community.

Left: *Mqatsheni Hiking Club members, arrive at WESSA’s uMngeni Valley for a 5 day winter hike in the reserve.*



Sadly, Sani Wildlife has lost two of its environmental champions in the past year; Sani Branch vice chair and WESSA board member Mdu Majozi, and longstanding environmental stalwart and artist, Ann Weaver. Mdu was a passionate environmental educator and community activist and Ann did the artwork for *Sani Pass Reptiles*, one of the posters on the branch's well-known series *The Fauna and Flora of the Sani Pass*.

The famous *Sani Pass Wildflower Walk* took place on Sunday, 30 January 2022 and was a great success with the copious rains bringing out many seldom seen flowers. Great thanks go to the local guides and especially Elsa Pooley. The branch also assisted at the [Sani Stagger](#) (20 November 2021) and the [Ultra-Trail Drakensberg](#) (22-24 April 2022) by manning water tables and supporting runners with refreshments and encouragement.

Ex-Chair Russell Suchet has been busy over the past few months drawing up and presenting an Environmental Manifesto to the NDZ Municipality. The Manifesto will be directed towards three of the new Councillors appointed in the last local election, all of whom were affiliated to Sani Wildlife Branch prior to their new positions. The document covers the following areas of concern: *Waste Management; Water; Invasive Alien Vegetation; Climate Change; Biodiversity*. It is envisaged that the branch will need to work with the Environmental Officer in charge and those Councillors who grasp the importance of these issues, as the recent devastating floods in Durban have shown. It is essential that local government heeds these issues and takes immediate steps to monitor, improve and make the necessary changes as required.

Russell also approached Paul Roth about his *Mountain Leadership Course* and subsequently arranged for seven members of the Mqatsheni Hiking Club – some of whom attended the WESSA uMngeni Valley course – to be taken into the mountains for two nights to learn the skills and safety drills that Paul specialises in. The benefit of this course is that Sani Branch now has a group of volunteers who will be able to safely guide and mentor the youth of the local communities into the wilderness while passing on knowledge to these youngsters on the importance of Caring for the Earth. Lastly, the tar road to the Border Post has been completed and by all accounts, is in good order and tidy so there will be no more roadwork equipment to avoid when going up and down the Pass. Most of the replanting of indigenous plants has also taken place and is scheduled for completion this coming Spring.

WESSA KZN Strategic Review Roadshow

WESSA's Strategic Review Roadshows took place in all five regions from 29th June to 9th July. The KZN Roadshow was the last in line and a great success in every respect. An invitation was sent to all members and supporters, and we had an excellent turnout from both our old stalwart members and new rising stars.



Meet bestselling author **TONY PARK**

TONY PARK
RHINO WAR
Written with Johan Jooste, whose bold anti-poaching strategy in the Kruger National Park turned a force of demoralised men and women into arguably the finest anti-poaching unit on the African continent.

JOHAN JOOSTE
with TONY PARK
RHINO WAR

Date: Saturday, 9 July | Time: 13h00
Venue: Hilton Garden Inn, 1 Condo Place, Umhlanga Ridge, Umhlanga

Books will be available for sale

We are most grateful for the generosity of the [uMhlanga Hilton Hotel](#) – a WESSA sustainable tourism and Blue Flag partner – for providing the wonderful venue at no cost to WESSA. The Roadshow could also be attended online and we had a total of 64 participants.

At the Roadshow, Helena Atkinson, chair of the Strategic Review Working Group and acting CEO, presented WESSA’s proposed 5-year strategic plan and there was an opportunity for members to give input and gain clarity on WESSA’s intended future direction.

The KZN Region also hosted bestselling author [Tony Park](#) for a book signing of his recently published book [Rhino War](#).

After the event, a group of our youth volunteers reconvened at the Green Hub, some for a walk and fresh air and others for a bicycle ride, courtesy as always, of Siphwe Rakgabale, vice chair of the Durban Youth Branch and founding director of Tri-Eco Tours. **To see more photos of the day, go to: [WESSA KZN](#)**



We are people caring for the Earth

Our Mission

Educate. Advocate. Act.

We educate, advocate and act for environmental and social justice through sustainability education, strategic partnerships and conservation programmes to drive climate action, protect and restore biodiversity, and reduce pollution.

Our Vision

To be a trusted and highly effective organisation working for environmental and social justice in support of a healthy and sustainable planet.

WESSA
Strategic Plan
2022

IN THE MEDIA



conservation organisations need to transition and empower the young generation as it's their future. With interns such as these, I find hope for the future."

Don't Mess With Mzansi | IOL 05 February 2022 Eco-warriors Melisa Nonjiko, 26, and Azile Mpukwana, 27, want young South Africans to join them in creating a sustainable future – and the upcoming #DontMessWithMzansi project says it all. Based in Durban, Melisa and Azile are both interns on the SA National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) Groen Sebenza Internship Programme, which is implemented by WESSA (Wildlife and Environment Society of SA) Margaret Burger, chair of the WESSA KZN Region, who guides and facilitates WESSA KZN Youth and is mentoring interns for the Groen Sebenza programme, said:



is a lot of lost knowledge." Guided walks cost R30 a person and can be booked through the Breakers resort when they resume. Telephone 031 561 2271.

Forest guide waits in the wings | IOL 20 February 2022 A great article on WESSA KZN Youth Leader Bongani Chisale, who is also a guide in the uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve. The beaches and reserves were closed in July 2021 due to the UPL chemical spill disaster. Bongani is passionate about nature, ecology and rediscovering lost knowledge through history and traditional practices. He enjoys being able to introduce urban folk to the wonders of the forest right on their doorstep: *"I ask them if they know what tree it is, about herbal medicines from plants. The more we know about them and think about them, the more we'll appreciate them. There*



In 2020 Rakgabale started offering bike hire, guided canoeing and bike tours for individuals and groups as well as school groups. Hard-hit by the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, his business all but shut down that year: *"There were no enquiries, no leads, no bookings and no people to take out on walks, rides and trails. It was hard for all of us in tourism during the hard lockdown."*

From eco-warrior to tour operator | Northglenn News 07 March 2022 A write up in the Northglenn News about our very own, indefatigable Sips! "Siphiwe Rakgabale is an eco-warrior, nature lover, and now the successful business owner of Tri-Eco Tours in Durban. He is also a WESSA Durban youth leader and Green Corridors' Litter booms and Clean-ups coordinator. Siphiwe was one of the first nature and cultural guides mentored, trained and employed through Green Corridors' sustainable development programme to empower young people in the enviro-tourism industry, with a view to them starting their own business in this sector ...

Citizen scientists go app in hand for species census | IOL 23 April 2022 and Mother City wins local species count | IOL 14 May 2022. SEE ALSO: iNaturalist City Nature Challenge eThekwin on page 7



How a backpackers in KZN is giving back to the community by practising fair trade tourism | DM 05 June 2022

A great write up in the Daily Maverick by Mark Heywood about our very special WESSA KZN business member, Sani Lodge Backpackers. Russell and Simone Suchet of Sani Lodge have worked tirelessly for many years to put into practice their belief in caring for the environment, giving back to their local community, funding environmental education and creating environmental awareness via both Sani Lodge and the Sani Wildlife Branch of WESSA, of which Russell was chair for a number of years. In every way, Russell and Simone walk the talk!

Above left: To honour Alan Job, dedicated environmentalist and retired, longtime chair of WESSA Highway Branch, the LW Field Trust unveiled a brass plaque on a bridge at the Kloof and Highway SPCA | Highway Mail

UPL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FORUM



Above: Site visit to the UPL warehouse and affected environments. The residents of Blackburn Village have borne the brunt of the fire's toxic fumes as well as contamination of the Ohlanga River and the soil in which many grow vegetables

On 23 February 2022, Jenny Duvenage, representing WESSA KZN and Coastwatch KZN, attended a site visit with members of the UPL Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF). Following the [chemical fire disaster](#) at UPL during the unrest in July 2021, the MSF was set up in October 2021 by Ravi Pillay, MEC for Economic Development Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA). In order to ensure easy access for all interested and affected parties, a repository has been established where reports and other relevant documents are posted. Go to: www.cornubiaenviroinfo.co.za

The stated aims of the MSF are to:

- be inclusive and representative of all stakeholders
- create an environment for interested and affected parties to engage meaningfully with each other, the authorities and UPL South Africa (Pty) Ltd
- make coordinated input into all relevant processes, studies and investigations being undertaken on all aspects of the pollution incident
- act as a conduit for the dissemination of information to communities affected by this incident; and
- be managed independently of government and UPL South Africa (Pty) Ltd, by a committee chosen by the stakeholders

There has been some disagreement between UPL and the MSF on the official role of the MSF. However, after a meeting on 30th June 2022, some common ground was established and a [joint press statement](#) released. Another meeting was held on 23 July 2022. At this second meeting, the following consultants presented the findings of various studies on the impacts of the disaster on human and environmental health as well as progress made over the past year to remediate the situation: GroundTruth (Dr Mark Graham | freshwater environments); MER (Nicolette Forbes | coastal and marine environments); Skyside (Santuri Pillay | environmental improvement monitoring); Apex (Leon Pretorius | health risk assessment); CopperLeaf & GMG (Dr Digby Gold/Rupert Sebire | geology and groundwater). Members of the MSF who attended represented several environmental organisations and communities including [Blackburn Village](#) and [KZN subsistence fishers](#). The media was not allowed to attend the meeting, and UPL released another press statement: [UPL South Africa specialists brief interim Multi-Stakeholder Forum](#). It was agreed to arrange further meetings that will include government as well as a meeting to specifically address health issues, around which there are a number of unanswered questions and areas of concern.

STRENGTHENING & GROWING MEMBERSHIP YOUTH DEVELOPMENT | FUTURE PLANS

Ten years ago, WESSA KZN's Durban Branch held a pilot [Environmental Youth Leaders Course](#). It took place over 3 days (from 29 April to 1 May) and the response to it exceeded expectations. The aims were to develop a network of young leaders committed to building a sustainable future and to establish a platform for further learning. The 32 young environmentalists who attended ranged in age from 15-25 and were from both urban and rural backgrounds – we could not have hoped for a more diverse, vibrant and inspiring first group.

Since then, under the direction of our chair Margaret Burger, WESSA KZN has continued to work with and mentor young people who are passionate about the environment and, in many cases, are either studying or have graduated in a conservation/environmental field. It's been a progressively evolving, organic process in many respects – and the Covid pandemic was a major setback – but hard work and perseverance are now showing encouraging results.

WESSA Durban Branch has officially become a Youth Branch, run for and by our youth volunteers, and is proving very successful. A Midlands Youth Branch, based in Howick, has also been established and is going from strength to strength under the guidance of 'Howickman' Bheki Gcumisa. There is also the possibility of forming a youth group in the Underberg area connected to the Sani Wild Life Branch. If so, KZN will have three 'Youth Action' nodes. In addition, for the first time, the KZN region has had the benefit of six Groen Sebenza interns who have contributed greatly to our capacity.

2022 Special Days August-December

Month	DAY
AUG	09 National Women's Day (SA) 09 World Indigenous Peoples Day 12 International Youth Day World Water Week 23 Aug to 1 Sep. 31 African Traditional Medicine Day
SEP	National Arbor Week 1st week of Sep. 18 World Water Monitoring Day 17 Int. Coastal Cleanup 3rd Sat. in Sep. 21 International Day of Peace 21 Zero Emissions Day 24 Heritage Day (SA) 25 World Rivers Day Last Sun. of Sep.
OCT	03 World Habitat Day 04 World Animal Day 05 World Teachers Day 05 Energy Efficiency Day 14 E-Waste Day 15 International Day of Rural Women 16 World Food Day
NOV	05 Children's Day (SA) 1st Sat. of Nov. 10 International Day of Science & Peace 20 Universal Children's Day 26 Birding Big Day (SA) 26 Buy Nothing Day Last Sat. in Nov.
DEC	04 World Conservation Day 05 World Soil Day 16 Day of Reconciliation (SA)

WESSA Durban Youth Branch

Committee: Bongani Chisale (Chair), Sipiwe Rakgabale (Vice Chair)
Sbonelo Sikhakhane (Secretary), Melisa Nonjiko (Volunteer Coordinator)

Green Matchmaking Focus Areas

Citizen science
Ecosystems and biodiversity
Environmental education and training
Environmental governance
Green enterprise
Waste minimisation
Water protection

Community Action and Education

Beach clean ups
Polystyrene activism
Hiking, Guiding & Birding:
*uMngeni Trail, Beachwood Mangroves,
Burman Bush, Hawaan Forest, uMhlanga Lagoon*
Know your Mangroves
Nature Journaling
Tree identification and tree labelling

WESSA LIFE Projects

Burman Bush Project | Sipiwe Rakgabale
Hawaan Forest Project | Bernard Chatikobo
uMhlanga Lagoon Reserve & Guiding Project | Bongani Chisale
Tree Labelling Project | Sbonelo Sikhakhane
Umbogavango EE Centre Project | Siziwe Hlongwa
Treasure Beach EE Centre Project

MiniSASS
iNaturalist
WESSA EE Centres:
Treasure Beach, Twinstreams, uMngeni Valley
Climate Change activism
X-Factored Youth
ZuriXpress
Personal development



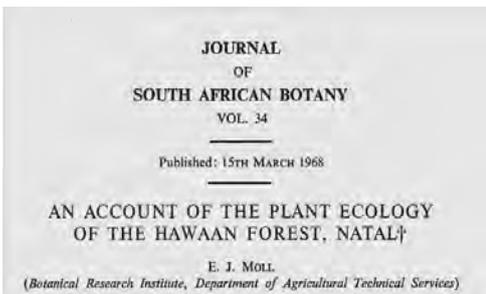
The Hawaan Forest Project

By Jenny Duvenage

The Hawaan requires protection and support and WESSA KZN is committed to maintaining its historical responsibility of conserving and caring for the forest into the future. A project proposal was therefore submitted to the JB Law Trust with a request for funding. This was approved for the project to run from 1st April 2022 to 30th March 2023.

The project is now well underway led by eco-rangers Bernard Chatikobo and Bongani Chisale. Bongani is usually based at the [uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve](#). However, the reserve currently remains closed after the UPL chemical spill disaster in July 2021, which means he is able to spend more time with Bernard in the Hawaan.

Above: Wednesday's have become a day for WESSA Youth (and others) to take a walk in the forest. It is the ideal way to connect with nature, unwind, socialise, [hug trees](#) (Bongani) and play the [mbira](#) (Bernard) ❤️



The aims of the project are extensive and multi-faceted. They range from maintaining the ongoing presence of WESSA Eco Rangers in the forest to regular snare patrols, invasive plant monitoring and removal, and the research and compiling of material for 'Hawaan Forest Guides'. Botanist Phoebe Carnegie has been working on 'A Study of Dioecious Trees in the Hawaan Forest' and is being assisted by Bernard. Ideally, this will be a first publication with additional editions to follow. This ongoing study will be useful to guides, scientists, forest managers and many others.



Above: The first botanical survey of the Hawaan by Eugene Moll in 1968 | The Hawaan Forest in 1968 (Photo E. Moll)

Engaging with nature is scientifically proven to improve health and wellbeing. Bernard is a strong advocate of the benefits of ecotherapy and the Japanese practice of [Shinrin Yoku](#) or forest bathing (see also page 8), which is becoming increasingly popular around the world. Research has shown that it helps to: lower blood pressure and stress; boost the immune system; counter depression and anxiety; restore balance in body and mind.

History of the Hawaan: The [Hawaan Forest](#) is located on an 18 000 year-old sand dune in uMhlanga, which is now one of the [fastest-growing areas](#) in South Africa. The area was first inhabited by [San hunter-gatherers](#) and later by Nguni-speaking people who became the Zulu nation under King Shaka in the early 1800s. In 1859, the forest became the property of Sir Marshall Campbell, a pioneer of the sugar industry, who had it set aside as

a protected private reserve in 1860. In 1895, he founded Natal Estates Ltd, which was later absorbed into the Tongaat Hulett company. The origin of the name 'hawaan' is not known but it has been suggested that it may be derived from Havan (or Hawan), a Hindu ceremony practised by indentured Indian labourers who were brought to South Africa to work on the sugar-cane plantations. The forest may have been a source of the fruits, honey and wood used in the ceremony.

Bordered by the M4 freeway, Ohlanga River and the Hawaan Forest Estate, the Hawaan is approximately 80 ha. and one of very few remaining climax, dry coastal dune forests in southern Africa. It is under the custodianship of Phoebe Carnegie of WESSA and is privately owned, the largest portion by the Tongaat Hulett Group. Amid great controversy over 20 years ago, 31 ha. were sold to Hawaan Investments. However, in November 2003 – following determined and united opposition from members of WESSA and other environmentalists – the [Kwazulu-Natal Development Tribunal](#) ruled that the forest be preserved as a nature reserve. The Hawaan Forest Conservation Trust was also formed to exist in perpetuity. Pieter Burger of WESSA KZN is a trustee appointed after the passing of the late [Alastair Carnegie](#).

Over the years, the Hawaan has been subjected to constant threats. In the 1920s, a portion was cleared to grow sugarcane while logging for furniture, ship and house-building may explain disturbed patches in the forest. All this has been added to the inexorable push for development in general. In the 1950s, the M4 split the forest in two, resulting in the [Umhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve](#) being on the other side of the M4. A pipeline was also destined to slice through established areas of the forest but thanks to the advocacy of Dr Vincent Wager and Bill Duthie, it was moved instead to the periphery. Current threats are its earmarking as a tourist attraction, which may lead to the widening of paths and the construction of coffee shops and other refreshment areas. Coastal development is also growing apace along the seaward side of the forest.



The Hawaan Revisited after 50 Years

In late September 2012, Professor Eugene Moll revisited the Hawaan Forest. Prof. Moll undertook the first botanical survey of the Hawaan in 1968 so to mark this historic occasion, WESSA Durban Branch partnered with Botsoc (KZN Coastal Branch) to organise a talk by Prof. Moll giving background and reportback on the condition of the forest. The event was hosted by [Breakers Resort](#), together with the [Umhlanga Urban Improvement Precinct](#) (UIP), and attended by about 130 people, including many well-known environmentalists. It was a quite remarkable gathering of older WESSA and Botsoc members, re-united in their common passion for this unique forest.

For more about the event, go to: [The Hawaan Revisited](#)

Left: (L-R) At the 2012 Breakers event, the late Dr Keith Cooper with Phoebe Carnegie | Prof. Eugene Moll | The Natal Hickory (*Cavacoa aurea*) is a key species found in the Hawaan. There are very few other locations in KwaZulu-Natal. | Prof. Moll in the Hawaan, September 2012.

Thanks to a succession of dedicated individuals, the forest has continued to survive as described here by [Jocelyn Sutherland](#) in 2020: “Bill Duthie, the Conservation Officer for the then Umhlanga Town Board, together with Dr Vincent Wager, a retired plant pathologist and frog and spider expert, originally got permission to maintain the forest on behalf of WESSA. They mapped out the paths, started to label some of the trees and together with two rangers patrolled the forest on a weekly basis. Over the years Bill and a tireless band of volunteers kept alien plants from taking hold in the forest. When Bill retired, Phoebe Carnegie took over the reins of forest management and did a sterling job for many years with little assistance until Umhlanga UIP (Urban Improvement Precinct) provided a worker to help with clearing. I joined Phoebe’s Thursday work party two years ago on my retirement.”



uMngeni Estuary Conservancy

Working alongside the uMngeni Estuary Conservancy and Tri-Eco Tours, WESSA Youth and Durban Branch are involved in trail maintenance, waste removal, invasive plant removal, tree labelling and planting. In addition, we work with Green Corridors to assist the [Roadhouse Crescent Recyclers](#) who for several years, have been working in and around Durban North and North Coast Road collecting paper and cardboard waste. They assemble under the Connaught Bridge near the Bird Park as it is a safe, shaded space to sort, pack and await commercial paper recyclers to collect. Unfortunately,

this led to [illegal dumping](#) by residents and businesses in the area and the wastepickers became the target of complaints from the local community. Along with Green Corridors, a number of concerned organisations then stepped in with a [vision to provide solutions](#) for the benefit of all.

Above: Musa Shange (local area co-ordinator of Green Corridors), Siphwe Rakgabale (Green Corridors’ litter-boom and clean up co-ordinator), Teboho Kikine (team leader Adopt-a-River), Margaret Burger (WESSA KZN and Umgeni Estuary Conservancy), Lavela Juda and George Moyo (sitting) (Roadhouse Crescent Recyclers). Photo credit: [Rising Sun](#)

Durban Innovative Leadership Programme

The [Durban Innovative Leadership Programme](#) aims to develop responsible and ethical leadership for positive change in society. It is jointly hosted by the Durban University of Technology (DUT), the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, and the International Centre of Nonviolence (ICON), which is part of DUT. Our WESSA KZN youth are encouraged to apply for this course, and we are pleased that three have made it to selection.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY & WORLD INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY | 9 August 2022



To honour [South African Women's Day](#), International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, and the connection both have to our environment – of which women are the primary carers and protectors – here is an account by the ever-inspiring, ecofeminist [Vandana Shiva](#) on how the forest taught her everything she knows. **Read full article:** [Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Forest](#) | **Also:** Beyond monocultures; The dead-Earth worldview; What nature teaches; The poetry of the forest

My ecological journey began in the forests of the Himalaya. My father was a forest conservator, and my mother became a farmer after fleeing the tragic partition of India and Pakistan. It is from the Himalayan forests and ecosystems that I learned most of what I know about ecology. The songs and poems our mother composed for us were about trees, forests, and India's forest civilizations.

My involvement in the contemporary ecology movement began with Chipko, a nonviolent response to the large-scale deforestation that was taking place in the Himalayan region. In the 1970s, peasant women from my region in the Garhwal Himalaya had come out in defence of the forests. Logging had led to landslides and floods, and scarcity of water, fodder, and fuel.

Since women provide these basic needs, the scarcity meant longer walks for collecting water and firewood, and a heavier burden. Women knew that the real value of forests was not the timber from a dead tree, but the springs and streams, food for their cattle, and fuel for their hearths. The women declared that they would hug the trees, and the loggers would have to kill them before killing the trees. A folk song of that period said: "These beautiful oaks and rhododendrons, They give us cool water Don't cut these trees We have to keep them alive."

In 1973, I had gone to visit my favourite forests and swim in my favourite stream before leaving for Canada to do my Ph.D. But the forests were gone, and the stream was reduced to a trickle. I decided to become a volunteer for the Chipko movement, and I spent every vacation doing pad yatras (walking pilgrimages), documenting the deforestation and the work of the forest activists, and spreading the message of Chipko.

One of the dramatic Chipko actions took place in the Himalayan village of Adwani in 1977, when a village woman named Bachni Devi led resistance against her own husband, who had obtained a contract to cut trees. When officials arrived at the forest, the women held up lighted lanterns although it was broad daylight. The forester asked them to explain. The women replied: "We have come to teach you forestry." He retorted, "You foolish women, how can you prevent tree felling by those who know the value of the forest? Do you know what forests bear? They produce profit and resin and timber." The women sang back in chorus: "What do the forests bear? Soil, water, and pure air. Soil, water, and pure air, sustain the Earth and all she bears."



On SA Women's Day, WESSA KZN is partnering with Amnesty International SA (UKZN Chapter & Durban Group), Adopt-a-River, and uMngeni Estuary Conservancy at the Beachwood Mangroves. Topics for discussion are: Women and Water; Gender-based Violence; Self-care and Healing focusing on how to help women deal with the stress, anxiety and trauma they so often experience; and *Uma uyasuka ekhaya* ('when we leave home') how the environment helps us stay connected.

World Indigenous Peoples Day: [Indigenous Peoples Day](#) is also commemorated on the 9th of August. This year's theme is 'The preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge' and is an opportunity to recognise the rich knowledge of which [indigenous women are the custodians](#): This includes knowledge of the natural world, health, various skills and technologies, rituals ... and other expressions of cultural heritage, a precious legacy that is passed on from one generation to the next, mainly by women. *Photo credit: Jenny Duvenage*

NETWORKING & RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING



Affiliated Friends Groups
 Adopt a River Eco Solutions
 Coastwatch KZN
 Enviro Fixers Durban North
 Friends of Pigeon Valley
 Westville Conservancy



School Members
 Durban High School
 Our Lady of Fatima
 Tree Tops Pre-Primary
 Poppy Seeds Montessori Preschool



Business Members
 South African Sugar Association | Silver
 S&V Publications | Silver
 The Waffle House of the Blue Lagoon | Silver
 Sani Lodge Backpackers | Bronze
 Doculam (Pty) Ltd | Bronze

Partnering with
 X-Factored Youth
 Tri-eco Tours
 ZuriXpress
 uMngeni Estuary Conservancy
 Journaling with Nature
 Green Corridors
 KZN Conservancies Association
 Amnesty SA | Durban & UKZN Chapter



Green Corridors



JOIN WESSA | DONATE TO WESSA



WESSA is a membership-based organisation and throughout South Africa, our members initiate environmental projects and organise educational events and activities in their local communities.

By joining WESSA, you will be helping to provide valuable support for these volunteer initiatives and will be part of a growing environmental network operating at a local community level via our regions, branches and friends groups.

As a non-profit organisation we rely on support from our members, sponsors and the general public. We are most grateful for any donation you are able to give. Your donation, no matter the size, helps make possible WESSA life projects (Local Initiatives For the Environment) undertaken by active volunteers in our five regions. It also assists in training youth in conservation and ecology, and raising awareness of environmental issues in our communities.

Apply online: [WESSA LIFE membership](#)
Donate: [WESSA LIFE donations](#)
Info & Inquiries: membership@wessalife.org.za

Banking Details

Name: WESSA Membership | Bank: FNB
 Branch: Howick | Branch Code: 22-07-25
 Account No: 62 219 969 732

Join us on Facebook

[WESSA KwaZulu-Natal Region](#)
[WESSA Youth KwaZulu-Natal Region](#)

WESSA members work to:

- Protect and conserve natural habitats and biodiversity
- Engage with individuals and communities to promote sustainable livelihoods
- Create opportunities for social and economic upliftment through enviro education
- Collaborate and network with groups and organisations with similar objectives
- Raise awareness and promote public participation around key environmental issues



WESSA KZN REGION

KZN Executive Committee

Pieter Burger (KZN Regional Rep)
 Margaret Burger (KZN Chair)
 Paddy Norman (KZN Vice Chair | Environmental Governance Committee)
 Jenny Duvenage (KZN Coordinator | Central Membership Admin)
 Bongani Chisale (Chair Durban Youth)
 Sphiwe Rakgabale (Vice Chair Durban Youth)
 Melisa Nonjiko (Volunteer Coordinator Durban Youth)
 Sbonelo Sikhakhane (Secretary Durban Youth)

Branches

Kingsburgh: Rob Jack (Chair)
Midlands: Dale van Ryneveld (Chair)
Sani Wildlife: Mike Bloom (Chair)
Upper South Coast: Bob Skippings (Acting Chair)
Southern KZN: Paddy Norman (Chair)

Midlands Youth
 Bheki Gcumisa (Chair)
 Qiniso Mnikathi (Vice Chair)
 Nozibusiso Sithole (Secretary)
 Nompumelelo Bhengu (Treasurer)

Friends & Affiliates

Adopt-a-River Eco Solutions: Janet Simpkins
Enviro Fixers Durban North: Helen Koch
Coastwatch KZN: Jenny Duvenage
Friends of Pigeon Valley: Crispin Hemson
KZN Conservancies Association: Margaret Burger
uMngeni Estuary Conservancy: Frederike Liasides
Westville Conservancy: Rob Jamieson

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WESSA is a CIPC-registered Non-Profit Company and NPO registered as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) with Section 18A status



WESSA KZN REGION Executive Committee L-R

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