



## WESSA KZN Newsletter | January 2023

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### Reflections on 2022 as we head into 2023

2022 was an incredibly busy and productive year for WESSA KZN and it looks as if 2023 is gearing up to be equally eventful. This latest *Green Spiral* covers the last five months of 2022. [Click here](#) for the January to July issue.

WESSA KZN Youth (Durban and Midlands groups) took the lead in arranging many of the events and activities, which ranged from waste minimisation and tree planting to green enterprise and enviro education. Some of the events took place on special enviro and social awareness days: World Wetlands Day; Human Rights Day; International Mother Earth Day; World Oceans Day; Youth Day; Women's Day; Arbor Day (and month); and International Coastal Clean-up. Food gardening also features prominently in this issue, and we hope it will soon become a main focus area.

2022 has been a year of networking and collaboration towards strengthening civil society and the environmental movement in its efforts to address the perfect storm of issues confronting our communities – environmental, social and economic – and we will continue to build on this.

In June, WESSA National held Strategic Review Roadshows in all five regions and thereafter launched its 5-year Strategic Plan, with its stated mission being to **educate, advocate and act** for the environment and social justice through: sustainability education; partnerships and conservation programmes that drive climate action; restore biodiversity; and reduce pollution.

## 2023 Special Focus Days & Weeks | February – May

Month	DAY	Month	DAY
<b>FEB</b>	02 World Wetlands Day	<b>APR</b>	03 World Aquatic Day
	15 World Earthworm Day		07 World Health Day
	15 World Hippopotamus Day		12 World Street Children Day
	19 World Pangolin Day		13 International Plant Appreciation Day
	20 World Day of Social Justice		18 Family Day (SA) Easter Monday
	20 World Whale Day		21 World Creativity and Innovation Day
	27 Polar Bear Day		22 International Mother Earth Day
			27 Freedom Day (SA)
<b>MAR</b>	03 World Wildlife Day	<b>MAY</b>	01 Workers' Day
	08 International Women's Day		02 World Tuna Day
	11 Solar Appreciation Day		03 World Press Freedom Day
	14 International Day of Action for Rivers		03 International Leopard Day
	18 Global Recycling Day		7-13 International Compost Week
	20 World Meat Out Day		08 Mother's Day
	20 World Frog Day		14 World Migratory Bird Day
	21 International Day of Forests		15 International Day of Families
	21 Human Rights Day (SA)		20 World Bee Day
	21 World Poetry Day		20 Endangered Species Day
	22 World Water Day		22 International Day for Biological Diversity
28 Earth Hour	23 World Turtle Day		
			25 Africa Day

### WESSA KZN EVENTS & ACTIVITIES | YOUTH INITIATIVES

#### Women's Day and Indigenous Peoples' Day | 9 August 2022 *Photos: Jenny Duvenage*



On [National Women's Day](#), WESSA KZN partnered with Amnesty International SA (Durban Group), Adopt-a-River and uMngeni Estuary Conservancy to hold a collaborative knowledge-sharing gathering at the Beachwood Mangroves. Topics for discussion were: Women and Water; Gender-based Violence; Courage and Healing; and *uma usuku ekhaya* (when we leave home), a reflection on how the environment helps us stay connected and find the right friends. Speakers at the event were: Coral Vinsen and Daniela Gennrich (Amnesty), Margaret Burger, Bongani Chisale and Bernard Chatikobo (WESSA KZN), Azile Mpuwana (Adopt-a-River), Crispin Hemson (ICON), Pops Rampersad (ACM) and Zakhe Khuzwayo (The Men Carve). Nobuhle Zulu of [Sunshine Cinema](#) showed a film on gender-based violence. After lunch, some of the participants convened workshops while others went for a walk through the Mangroves. (*See [article on page 11.](#)*)

*August is Women's Month in South Africa and the 9th of August is National Women's Day – a public holiday that commemorates the [1956 Women's March](#) when 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against the pass laws and present a petition of over 100 000 signatures.*



**World Indigenous Peoples Day** is also commemorated on the 9th of August and the 2022 theme was *'The preservation and transmission of traditional knowledge'*. This was 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.

**BotSoc KZN Coastal Indigenous Plant Fair | 3rd – 4th September 2022** *Photos: Jenny Duvenage*



The last Botanical Society | KZN Coastal Indigenous Plant Fair was in 2019, after which Covid hit so it was wonderful to celebrate spring once again with Durban's longest running plant fair. The fair was held at the Beachwood Mangroves Nature Reserve on the first weekend of September. Experts were on hand to assist, and local nurseries had a wide selection of indigenous plants for sale at excellent prices, including **2022 Trees of the Year**. Books and posters – such as *'Indigenous Gardening Handbook'* and *'Plants to Attract Birds, Bees or Butterflies'* – were also available. WESSA KZN and uMngeni Estuary Conservancy had a combined stand, along with other conservation organisations such as Birdlife eThekwi. Ezemvelo North Durban Honorary Officers led guided walks through the mangroves.

**Above:** L-R Michele Hofmeyer of Twinstreams Indigenous Nursery with Margaret Burger. Michele was able to supply three Kosi Bay palms (*Raphia australis*) for Arbor Month. (See page 4). Videographer Sandile Dube, Matthew Hattingh of **Roving Reporters**, and journalist Dominic Naidoo. Sandile and Dominic recently completed an internship with Roving Reporters.

**Mahwaqa Hiking Club Launch and Meeting | 3rd – 4th September 2022**

*By Bhekisisa Gcumisa | Photos: Nathan Kayembe*

On 3rd and 4th of September, Midlands WESSA Youth were invited to the launch of the **Mahwaqa Hiking Club** based in Bulwer. Mahwaqa is a multi-purpose club that not only focuses on hikes and walks but also on community initiatives. On day one, we checked in at the Mountain Park Hotel and were warmly welcomed by the owners, Ralph and Sam. Unfortunately, we missed the official launch but upon our arrival, met up with a local church bringing a group of Sunday school children for a hike so were able to join with them for the next hike to Mahwaqa Mountain.



Three guides, each with different expertise – Jack (communal history and San paintings), Luvuyo (nature) and Simphiwe (birding) – led the hike and shared their combined knowledge and insights. We managed to complete the challenging route in four hours.

On Sunday after breakfast, Ralph transported us to the Marutswa Forest a few kilometres from the hotel. There we met again with our guides and two other members of the Mahwaqa Hiking Club. The Marutswa Forest is indigenous and popular with tourists and birders alike being home to rare cape parrots and other varieties of wildlife which live among its giant trees. During the Covid-19 lockdown, it ceased operating and with no one there, locals began vandalising the property and stealing the fence. Alien invasive plants are now encroaching into the forest, trails are closing up, and the community is harvesting trees for firewood and medicinal purposes.

After the walk in the forest, our Midlands Youth group and the Mahwaqa Hiking Club had a brainstorming session on ways to work together to get the Marutswa Forest back on track again. The outcome of this meeting was a decision to approach Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife with a proposal on saving the forest. This would entail building awareness in the community about the importance of protecting the forest as well as job creation for Jack and Simphiwe.

As and when permission is granted, we would start off with an IAP (invasive alien plant) clearing day to which everyone would be invited. We also decided that before the end of the year, some of the Mahwaqa Hiking Club members will visit Midlands Youth in Howick to walk in the uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve and visit the Symmonds Stream Conservancy. Afterwards, we will have a report back on the progress made since our last meeting, and finally complete WESSA Green Matchmaking forms. Ralph liked the idea and said he would join the team doing IAP clearing plus bring along some Mahwaqa members. Ralph then drove us back to the hotel to check out. As a favour, he asked for assistance in tree identification within the hotel grounds, and we managed to identify about 90 percent of them.



**Cape Parrot** (*Poicephalus robustus*)  
This beautiful bird once soared in the thousands across South Africa but is now endangered and found only in small patches of Afromontane forest in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

ARBOR MONTH  
2022

National Arbor Month, which takes place annually in September, is a call to South Africans to plant indigenous trees as a practical and symbolic gesture of sustainable environmental management. This year, the theme for the campaign is – forests and sustainable production and consumption.

NATIONAL ARBOR  
MONTH 2022

September is Arbor Month

The Palm-nut vulture (*Gypohierax angolensis*) depends on the availability of the Kosi Bay palm (*Raphia australis*) for its survival

### National Arbor Month

The first Arbor Day celebration was held in Nebraska on 10th April 1872 when more than one million trees were planted. A day specially dedicated to tree planting was the idea of J. Sterling Morton, a politician and the editor of a local newspaper. Within two decades, Arbor Day was celebrated in every US State and eventually spread around the world.

Arbor Day was first celebrated in South Africa on the 1st of September 1983. In 1999, this was extended (from the 1st to 7th of September) to become National Arbor Week. Since then, over the past few years, September is now recognised as National Arbor Month. Arbor Month aims to raise awareness of the vital ecological role trees play, the services they

provide, and the health and well-being they bring to our communities. Every year – by planting and caring for trees; acknowledging their importance; celebrating the value they bring to our lives and their sacred wonder – we are encouraged to participate in events that will improve our local environments and contribute to a sustainable future.

A central focus of Arbor Month is creating awareness of tree species threatened by extinction and the need to plant and maintain indigenous trees throughout South Africa. As important as tree planting is to conserve, protect and restore biodiversity, it is vital that the correct species are planted in the correct areas. South Africa is a water-scarce country and grasslands, which have adapted over thousands of years, are the ideal habitat for this type of climate. They are a threatened biome however, due to a variety of human activities such as urban development, mining, agriculture and plantations of invasive alien trees.

Part of WESSA KZN's contribution to Arbor Month was the planting of three **Kosi Bay palms** (*Raphia australis*) in the uMngeni Estuary. *Raphia australis* is the largest palm in the world and one of only six species of palm trees indigenous to South Africa. The distribution of the **Palm-nut vulture** (*Gypohierax angolensis*) is directly linked to the availability of *Raphia australis*, a threatened species due to the drainage of its wetland habitat for agriculture.

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### Connaught Tree Planting | 13 September 2022 By Sbonelo Sikhakhane | Photos: Margaret Burger

On Tuesday, 13th of September, we met with the Transformative Riverine Management Plan (TRMP) team contracted by the eThekweni municipality to rehabilitate the site at Connaught. It was a great opportunity to celebrate Arbor Month and plant indigenous trees as the site had recently been cleared of invasive alien plants.



We discussed why it's important to plant trees, and how tree labelling helps educate the general public and create awareness. One of the points mentioned is that trees often play a major role in many traditional belief and customs. For example, **buffalo thorn** (*Ziziphus Mucronata*) known as *umhlankosi* in isiZulu is used in burial rites. It was once customary when a Zulu chief died, for the tree to be planted on his grave hence the name *umhlankosi* ('that which buries the chief'). A twig from the tree was (and still is) used to attract and carry the spirit of the deceased from the place of death to the new resting place, and a branch of the tree may also be dragged around the village to protect it from evil spirits. The group made a great team with some individuals fetching water and others digging and preparing the holes for planting. It was an eventful day with new learning and opportunities to celebrate nature.

**The trees we planted were:** *Raphia australis*, *Ekebergia capensis*, *Mondia whitei*, *Ficus natalensis*, *Ficus sur*, *Ficus lutea*, *Strelitzia nicolai*, *Ochna natalensis*, *Acacia ataxacantha*, *Rhoicissus omentosa*, *Tabernaemontana ventricose* and *Pycnostachys urticifolia* and *Gomphocarpus physocarpus* seeds.

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### Launch of Don't Mess with Mzansi | 17 September 2022



***“What we throw away doesn't just disappear ... there is no such thing as away!”***

‘Don't Mess with Mzansi’ (DMWM) is an anti-litter campaign that goes much deeper. In addition to clean-ups, recycling projects and preventative measures – to reduce the mountains of trash generated by humans from pouring into our rivers and oceans, and filling rapidly diminishing landfill space – it is about a change in mindset and the way we live our lives. It aims to re-instill in communities our love and respect for the Earth and the myriad other creatures which are part of our shared ecosystems.



The objectives of [International Coastal Cleanup](#) are to engage people around the world in removing trash and debris from beaches, waterways and other water bodies; to identify the sources of the litter; to change behaviours that causes pollution; and to raise awareness about the extent of the marine debris problem.



**WILDLIFE  
RANGER  
CHALLENGE**

**WATCH SHORT VIDEOS**  
[National Arbor Month](#)  
[DMWM & International Coastal Cleanup](#)  
[Wildlife Ranger Challenge](#)

On 17th of September, wildlife ranger teams united for the 2022 [Wildlife Ranger Challenge](#), a half marathon taking place around the world with the goal of raising money to support the men and women on the front lines of Africa’s protected areas. As well as raising money, this pan-African sporting event also raises awareness of the increasingly diverse role of wildlife rangers at a time when resources are more thinly stretched than ever before.

In order to participate in two important events, Ernest Bongani Chisale and Lungelo Mbili ran from their homes in KwaMashu and Clermont – covering 25 km and 30 km respectively – to join the International Coastal Clean-Up at Beachwood on the uMngeni Estuary.

Having logged his time as a public participant in the Wildlife Ranger Challenge, Bongani qualified for 8th position on the 21 km Leaderboard. The Wildlife Ranger Challenge was an opportunity for WESSA youth volunteers to demonstrate their solidarity with the park and eco-rangers of the world who daily put their lives at risk to protect our wildlife, forests, national parks and natural areas.

*“Wildlife rangers are on the front lines of conservation across Africa. Day and night, these wildlife heroes cover vast distances to protect wildlife, preserve habitats and work with local communities to improve human-wildlife coexistence. Rangers are the guardians of our natural and cultural heritage, protecting nature and wild places to maintain functioning ecosystems to benefit us all.” – Wildlife Ranger Challenge*

**Below L-R:** Taking part in the 2022 International Coastal Cleanup, Siziwe Hlongwa and Luyanda Cele; international research students Chiara Meyer from Switzerland and Raul Bergen from Germany; Bongani Chisale and Lungelo Mbili after completing the 2022 Wildlife Ranger Challenge.



## Trip to Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park | 23-25 September 2022

By Sbonelo Sikhakhane | Photos: Margaret Burger



On 23rd September we embarked on a journey to the [Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park](#) for a weekend getaway. We stayed at the Bushlands Game Lodge, and went for an exciting drive in the Park on both Saturday and Sunday. On the drives we were fortunate to spot four of the big five: elephant, lion, buffalo and rhino. Unfortunately, we did not see a leopard but were delighted with the animals we did see. We had lunch on a hilltop inside the Park with an incredible view while we enjoyed our lunch. We also met a visitor from Germany, who briefly shared with us how life is in Germany at the moment. We got a sense that travel and tourism are picking up again after the disaster of the Covid-19 lockdowns.

A highlight was seeing a herd of giraffes suddenly coming out of nowhere at the lodge. We also got to watch the Springboks vs Argentina which, for some of us, was our first-time. Some of the birds we spotted were: Brown-hooded kingfisher Forktail drongo, Red-collared barbet, Grey heron, Sunbird, Grey Francolin, African open-bill, Emerald spotted wood dove, Paradise flycatcher, Bulbul, Barn swallows, woodpecker, Bateleur Eagle, Yellow-billed kite, Martial eagle, Bee eater, Egret, common cuckoo, Hornbill, Cape glossy Starling and Cape vulture.



Bernard Chatikobo and Bongani Chisale are attending a course funded by [Oceans Alive](#), and received a copy of 'Game Ranger in Your Backpack' sponsored by Elzanne Marais of [Zebra Shark Adventures](#). Both are doing FGASA Field Guide Training with Bongani focusing on marine and Bernard on terrestrial.

## Youth Induction, Reflections on 2022 and Planning for 2023 | 19 November 2022

By Sthembile Ngongoma | Photos: Jenny Duvenage



Youth Induction, Reflections on 2022 and Planning for 2023



On 19th November, WESSA KZN Youth met at Mount Argus Road for the induction of new members, to reflect on the activities that took place throughout 2022, and to plan for 2023 – that is: to analyse and identify the approach needed to further extend our Youth Programme; address short falls; and strengthen its potential to effect positive change in our local communities.

After the welcome and introductions, Bongani led a discussion covering a range of topics. These included: a) How to advance the current method of becoming an active youth volunteer; b) How to implement basic training and the transfer of skills that exist within WESSA membership; c) Setting up a Trust Fund for WESSA KZN Youth; d) Developing entrepreneurial skills.

In addition, any project proposals must be realistic and practical with a clear plan of action to ensure their feasibility; sub committee members overseeing these projects must have clearly defined portfolios so the action and outcomes of the projects can be properly assessed.

The discussion then branched into exploring various future possibilities; reflecting on anything of importance that had not been covered; problems experienced in local areas and what possible solutions could be. Closing was followed by lunch at 13h00.



Faced with increasing environmental and eco-social pressures, the eThekwini Municipality is looking at ways to scale up environmental awareness and education in the eThekwini Municipal Area. To achieve this, LC Consulting has been appointed to explore ways in which Environmental Education (EE) can be increased, expanded and deepened.

To this end, a detailed and extensive database covering organisations, entities and individuals who could be mobilised is being compiled, and a day-long workshop with key role players was convened at the Hellenic Community Centre in Umgeni Park to consider:

- What is meant by EE in a time of climate crisis and lived disasters
- What needs to be done to expand EE in eThekwini, and who should be involved?
- How this should be coordinated for maximum collective impact?
- How and by whom should it be funded?

Thereafter, outcomes of the workshop will be put into a practical recommendation. The assignment is part of a long-standing partnership between eThekwini Municipality, Green Corridors and Bremen Municipality in Germany.



## Coral's Food Gardening and Composting Workshop | 4 December 2022

By Melisa Nonjiko | Photos: Jenny Duvenage



On 3rd of December, WESSA KZN members attended a food gardening and composting workshop hosted by veteran human rights activist, environmentalist and food gardening guru Coral Vinsen. At 91, Coral is indefatigable and continues to be actively involved in the many issues she is passionate about. As well as food security, these include: climate, energy and water issues; poverty and youth unemployment; and gender-based violence. We were also joined by members of the TRMP team who have started a food garden under the Connaught Bridge. (See page 11) and a wonderful group of women involved in establishing food gardening projects in their local areas.

The workshop began with a demonstration on hot compost-making from food scraps and yard waste. Most household food waste can be composted, which saves space in landfills, reduces the greenhouse gas emissions produced when food breaks down anaerobically (i.e. without oxygen) in landfills and of course, it provides nutrient-rich soil to grow healthy plants. After lunch we had a tour of the garden, which is filled with a wide variety of vegetables, flowers and shrubs. It was the best kind of day – a day that integrated socialising, learning and being inspired! 🌱🌿🌻



**Reasons composting is important:** saves landfill space; reduces greenhouse gas emissions; supports sustainable agriculture; supports local farmers and small business; reduces soil erosion and runoff; protects the environment by eliminating the need for chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides; conserves water; improves soil quality; grows healthier, more resilient plants.

**Making a compost heap**

- Start with a layer of sticks and small branches in a 1 x 2 metres space.
  - Add a layer of nitrogen-rich, green material (leaves, plant and grass clippings) followed by carbon-rich brown material (dried leaves, torn up card/paper, straw, twigs etc.)
  - Make a manure mix with a spade full of manure and a bucket of water to sprinkle on the pile using a watering can. This is to accelerate the breakdown of the material.
  - Add a layer of food waste (fruits and vegetable peelings, tea leaves and coffee grounds, crushed eggshells etc.) with a little garden soil, watered lightly with the manure mix
  - Continue with this layering until the pile is 1.5 metres high.
  - Finally, add a layer of wet, shredded newspaper and cardboard. Sprinkle the manure solution over the heap so that it is damp not sodden.
  - After a week, check the temperature in the centre to make sure it is decomposing. Then turn the pile so the top material is at the bottom and the sides are in the middle.
- Once decomposed so it is brown and crumbly with a pleasing earthy smell, the compost is ready to use.

**NOTE Do not use:** meat, dairy, bones, fat, oil or grease; diseased plant material; sawdust or wood chips from treated wood; cat and dog faeces; weeds with seeds; high-gloss magazines

**URBAN FARMING IS THE WAY OF THE FUTURE**

**Public park transformed into community vegetable garden**

A community vegetable garden in Brackenfell leads the way in urban farming:

[Read article](#)

**Are ‘Edible Landscapes’ the Future of Public Parks?**

Green spaces planted with fruits, veggies and herbs are sprouting across the globe, and the bounty is meant to be shared: [Read article](#)

**From rubbish dump to veggie garden | From place of protest to organic garden**

Two pilot community garden projects – Salt River to Soweto: [Read article](#)

**IN THE MEDIA**



**Team transforms illegal dump site on Riverside Road into a garden**  
*Northglen News, 26 December 2022*

The banks of the Umgeni River are the last place you’d expect to find a vegetable garden, but a new project by the Economic Development Unit’s Transformative Riverine Management Programme (TRMP) is bearing fruit – well, in this case, vegetables. A group of Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) workers – the Connaught Bridge EnviroChamps operating under Amanzi Ethu Nobuntu – have been making meaningful change along the banks of the river with various projects and initiatives aimed at stopping illegal dumping as well as removing alien invasive plants.

The team works with the Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), Durban Green Corridors and Tri-Eco Tours. The thriving vegetable garden is looked after by the team who mapped out the parameters of the garden, which was previously an illegal dump site. [Read article](#) | [Watch video](#)

**Organisations celebrate Women’s Day**

Amnesty Durban and WESSA KZN held a Women’s Day celebration at the Beachwood Mangroves with the theme of courage and self-care.

*“As environmentalists, it’s critical we realise how everything is interconnected. Huge emphasis should be placed on community first at a grassroots level ... collaboration between various groups is invaluable.” Margaret Burger (Chair WESSA KZN)*

**Left:** Ivy Cele and Nomnikelo Lundall **Middle:** Thembeke Mkhwanazi, Zakhe Khuzwayo and Melisa Nonjiko **Right:** Coral Vinsen and Margaret Burger.



## REGIONAL PROJECTS

### Hawaan Forest Project

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. The current project is supported by the JB Law Trust and is managed by eco-rangers Bernard Chatikobo and Bongani Chisale. The aims of the project 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 recording of information about the forest.

### uMbogavango Enviro Education Project

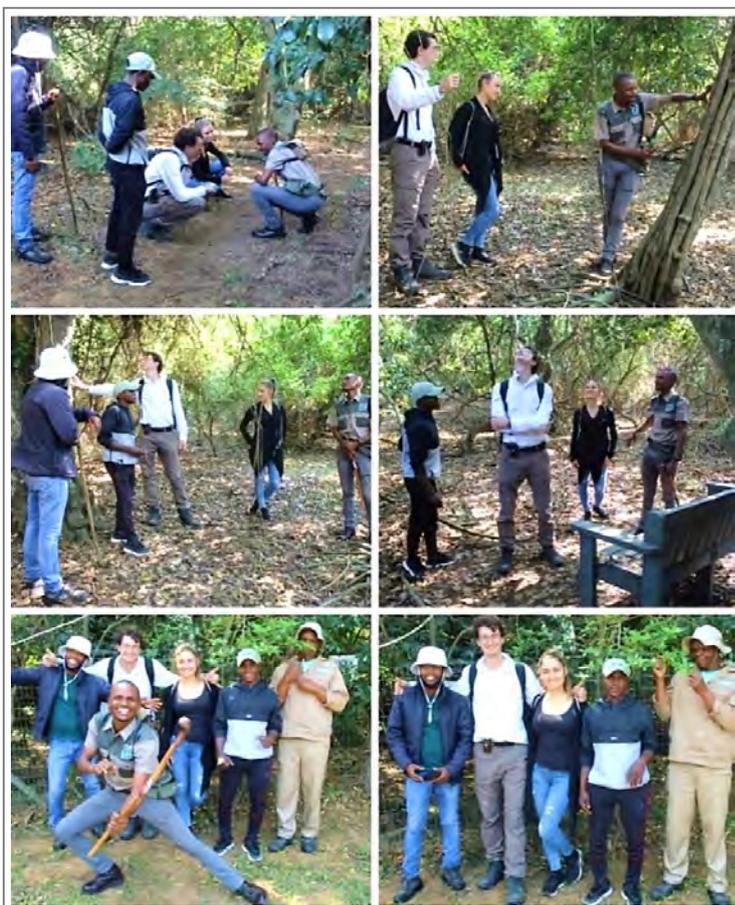
The uMbogavango Nature Reserve was established by the 13 industrial companies that form part of the Umbogintwini Industrial Association (UIA) and includes the Umbogavango Educational Resource Centre. AECI manages and maintains the centre and also funds the uMbogavango Enviro Education Project, a comprehensive educational programme for rural primary schools from the Amanzimtoti area. The programme is run under the auspices of the WESSA Upper South Coast Branch. Siziwe Hlongwa and Phindile Khoza are the Environmental Education officers. 2022 has been a year of recovering from the Covid-19 lockdown. This – in addition to the rioting and looting that took place in July 2021 – badly impacted the centre and the schools with which it engages. 2022 has been an active and successful year however, and we look forward to building on this during 2023.

### Hawaan Forest Wednesday Walk | 14 September 2022 By Sbonelo Sikhakhane

WESSA KZN holds regular guided walks in the Hawaan Forest every Wednesday. On 14th September, we had special guests – Chiara Meyer from Switzerland and Raul Bergen from Germany – who are studying which brands of plastic bottles are the biggest polluters of our oceans. Bongani led the guided walk and used the opportunity to teach some Zulu as our guests expressed an interest in learning it.

Part of the discussion during the walk was about Zulu culture, especially as it relates to the history of the Hawaan Forest. The area was first inhabited by San hunter-gatherers and later by the Nguni-speaking people who became the Zulu nation under King Shaka in the early 1800s. It is said that Zulu royalty used to hunt in the Hawaan during the reign of Shaka. Bongani explained that Zulu culture is rooted in humility and respect and demonstrated a traditional knobkierie, which Zulu men always used to carry as it was their responsibility to safeguard the homestead and be strong, dependable protectors.

The group also learnt about trees in the forest that play an important role in Zulu culture (see below.) We were fortunate to see guinea fowl, red duiker and bush buck and came across markings on the path which were probably from a bush pig searching for roots to eat.



The group was very active, with our guests even climbing up the aerial roots of a sycamore, Chiara being the first woman to successfully attempt this on our regular walks. In fact, our guests were very engaged from start to finish and there was never a dull moment! A great time was had by all and Chiara and Raul plan to visit again.

### Trees in the Hawaan Forest

*Ziziphus mucronate* Common names: buffalo thorn; isiZulu: umhlankosi

*Dalbergia armata* Common names: thorny-rope; isiZulu: Umhluhuwe

*Buxus natalensi* Common names: large-leaved box; isiZulu: umhlulambazo

*Celtis Africana* Common names: white stinkwood; isiZulu: uSinga lwesalukazi

*Carissa bispinosa* Common names: forest num-num; isiZulu: Umvusankunzi isibethankunzi

## Hawaan Forest Wednesday Walk with the MER Team | 28 September 2022

By Melisa Nonjiko | Photos: Bongani Chisale and Melisa Nonjiko



On 28th September, eThekweni's Municipal Ecological Restoration (MER) team came on one of our regular Wednesday guided walks in the Hawaan Forest. The team of eight were welcomed by Bongani Chisale who gave a brief introduction to the forest, highlighting the forest's pristine state, explaining how it was a historical hunting ground for local chiefs in the era of King Shaka, and emphasising the importance of absorbing the healing energy of the forest.

The municipal team – which forms part of the Ecological Restoration and Rehabilitation of Ecosystems project – is currently working on the [Buffelsdraai landfill site](#), a carbon offset project aimed at restoring the forest ecosystem in order to absorb the greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the FIFA World Cup in 2010, and facilitating the adaptation of both people and biodiversity to the effects of climate change. The team was amazed at the size of indigenous trees they normally only see as saplings.

On the walk we spotted three red duikers, and identified birds by sound only as the density of the trees made it

impossible to see them. We also came across a [boomslang](#), which was a dramatic end to our walk. We look forward to visiting the Buffelsdraai site, together with the team, who has also promised to visit the Hawaan Forest again.

## uMbogavango Enviro Education Centre Arbor Day | 1 September 2022 By Siziwe Hlongwa



The uMbogavango EE Project Arbor Day event was organised by WESSA educators to raise awareness about the value of trees in our society. It was a four-hour event. There was a total of 68 participants which included 45 learners from different schools (15 from each school), 4 accompanying educators, project committee members and a member of the press. Primary schools present were Magama, Kusakusa and Phembisizwe

The day was celebrated with tree talks and music and poetry about trees, which made it a fun and exciting experience! Great emphasis was placed on the importance of trees in the environment and learners enthusiastically participated in the day's activities. After the tree talks and activities, everyone went on a forest trail to explore the different plants and forest features of the Reserve.

Back at the resource centre, each attending school was awarded a certificate of attendance, together with a spekboom cutting. Spekboom was one of 2021's plants of the year. See: [Everything you need to know about the humble Spekboom](#) by Dominic Naidoo. Everyone then gathered in the garden to plant the Spekboom.

**Left above:** Planting Spekboom **Below:** L-R Lungelo Mbili, Bernard Chatikobo; Margaret Burger; Melisa Nonjiko; Siziwe Hlongwa Sbonelo Sikhakhane

## NETWORKING & RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

Spring Garden Activation Workshop | 20 August 2022 Photos: Jenny Duvenage and Paleni Iyer



On 20th August, Religions For Peace | [Interfaith Youth Climate Forum](#) held a Spring Garden Activation Workshop in partnership with Religions for Peace SA, the Durban Group of Greenpeace Africa, Phoenix Gandhi Development Trust, the Active Citizens Movement, and WESSA KZN. The event was hosted by the Phoenix Settlement in Inanda. There was a good turnout of around forty people of all ages, faiths and cultures creating an ethos of ubuntu and togetherness. Spirituality was an integral part of the program, and everyone took part in an Earth Meditation while Bernard Chatikobo of WESSA KZN played [the mbira](#). The day culminated in planting vegetables in the garden of the Phoenix Settlement, followed by vegetable breyani for lunch. Everyone also received a spekboom plant. Special thanks were given to Ela Gandhi and Coral Vinsen for sharing their time, knowledge and wisdom.

### Phoenix Child Welfare AGM and Food Security Project | 20 August 2022



As Guest of Honour at the Phoenix Child Welfare's 41st AGM, Ela left the Spring Garden Activation Workshop early. This gave Jenny D the opportunity to also attend and see their [food security project](#), which was launched on Mandela Day 2021. The Food Project played a pivotal role in providing food hampers to over 26 000 families throughout the Durban area during the Covid-19 lockdown. Relief was also provided to victims of the devastating 2022 floods. Phase Two of the project began in April 2022 with the aim of empowering unemployed members of the community to grow fruit and vegetables for themselves and their families, and sell the surplus to earn an income.

A hydroponics system has also been installed. The long-term objectives of the project are: assisting the community to start their own food gardens and teaching children the importance of food security, caring for the environment, and participating in programmes that mitigate climate change.

## CJCM Festival of Alternatives | 12-13th and 19-20th November 2022 *Photos: Jenny Duvenage*



[Click here](#) to see more photos of The Festival of Alternatives

### Participating civil society organisations

- Climate Justice Charter Movement (CJCM)
- Active Citizens Movement
- University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)
- Greenpeace Africa | Durban Local Group
- WESSA KZN Region
- Oceans Not Oil
- Break Free From Plastic
- Zero Waste Durban
- Phoenix Settlement Trust
- Save Our Soil
- Interfaith Youth Climate Forum
- KZN Beach Clean Up
- Mimosa School
- Tibet Society of Society of South Africa
- Sutton Park Pool Food Garden
- Cultures of Resistance
- Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator
- Green Thumb Society

The CJCM Festival of Alternatives took place at the Blue Waters Hotel for 4 days over 2 weekends: 12-13th and 19-20th of November. The start of the Festival was timed to coincide with the [Global Day of Action](#), civil society's response to [COP27](#) being held in Egypt. The aim of the Festival was to highlight the [fourteen articles](#) of the Climate Justice Charter (CJC). [The Charter](#) was first presented to Parliament on World Food Day, 16 October 2020. The programme included discussions forums and workshops, a green film festival and various other events and activities, ending with a Blue-Green Parade on the 20th. Participants in the Festival also joined the Protest March against Climate Inaction and Ecocide on 11th November, organised by South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) and Oceans Not Oil

**Discussion Forums, Talks and Workshops:** Training the Trainer Eco-Workshop; Storytelling & Mapping Change; Green Economy: Beyond Mainstream Economics; Democratising the Water Commons: Rights to Water in a Changing Climate; Seeding Sustainability: Dialogue with the Earth; Brand Audit and Trashiversary; Roof of the World: The Environmental Situation in Tibet; Knowledge is crucial for survival; Seed Freedom Workshop

**Film Screenings:** Cultures of Resistance; From Trash To Treasure; Burkinabe Rising; Burkinabè Bounty – Agroecology in Burkina Faso; The Story of Plastic; Becoming Visible.



Amnesty International SA | Durban Group held their Annual General Meeting on 26th November 2022 at St Mary’s Church Hall, Lilian Ngoyi Road, Morningside. Jenny Duvenage and Nonokululeko Zungue attended on behalf of WESSA KZN. Teaming up with the Amnesty Durban Group has resulted in two very successful events and we hope that we will continue working together in 2023.

### Sutton Park Pool Food Garden

CitiZen Gardens and Greenpeace Africa Durban volunteers proposed the idea of a community food garden located in Sutton Park in early 2019. Sutton Park Pool management was supportive of the idea and a team of volunteers soon established a small permaculture garden. Thereafter, the Covid-19 pandemic led to the closure of the pool and it became difficult to maintain the garden. Ideally, a team that can regularly work in the garden is needed for the project to realise its full potential, and WESSA KZN Youth are keen to join forces with the other volunteers and take on the challenge!



The garden is located at Sutton Park in Morningside, within the fenced area around the Sutton Park Pool. It is therefore ideally situated, being in a very central position within a diverse community. As such, it has potential for a number of other activities to take place in conjunction with the food garden project.

First priority however, is the garden – weeding; pruning and tidying the beds; planting vegetable seedlings; starting a compost heap and removing a few IAPs and other problem plants – as currently it is very overgrown and Craig, the pool manager, wants to see action taking place urgently. It will entail a lot of work and learning so we will be seeking guidance and advice from those with expertise: among our members and within the environmental network .

On a recent visit to the garden, the above plants were identified. Peppers, spinach and squash are also growing in the pool grounds. The garden needs regular care and maintenance however, if the project is to realise its potential.

## NEWS FROM THE NETWORK



### A unique sanctuary on the edge of the city

Erf 81, also known as Tamboerskloof Farm, lies between the suburbs of Tamboerskloof and Bo-Kaap on the slopes of Signal Hill. A retired military magazine (originally built in 1891) as well as a provincial heritage site, it was largely unused by the city until in 1995, artist and farmer André Laubscher moved on to the land with his family. Initially, this was as a temporary caretaker and to graze his goats, but in time he established a unique sanctuary and work environment for a diverse range of people, animals and plants. It became a foster home for abandoned children, a place to grow vegetables with a neighbourhood market, a creative centre for artists, musicians and writers, a conservancy for animals whose habitat is increasingly endangered, and a shelter for a variety of rescue animals.

The threat of eviction has hung over Erf 81 since 2013 and is ongoing. At any time, André Laubscher and the other residents of the farm, both people and animals, could find themselves out on the street should bids to convert this prime piece of land into an upmarket, mixed-use development eventually succeed.

See Daily Maverick: [When trees are all you've got for title deeds](#)

Former Durbanite Rochelle Duvenage, who is now living in Tamboerskloof, routinely visits the farm where she is greeted by dogs and kittens, feeds chickens, herds goats, and held a new-born lamb on one occasion. Together with a friend, she recently began helping to regenerate one of the vegetable patches on the farm. This has entailed regular watering and weeding and they will soon be planting a variety of vegetables, herbs and other plants to create a healthy ecosystem that produces food and caters for bees and other pollinators. In fact, there is an impressive beehive located near the patch. *"Erf 81 nurtures a sense of community, promotes a more wholesome and sustainable way of living, and provides people from all walks of life with the opportunity to develop practical skills and other abilities. It's an all too rare example of what is possible, and what more towns and cities could (and should) be enabling,"* says Rochelle.

### Youth Climate Justice Camp Tunisia | 25 September – 1 October 2022



In the lead up to COP27 held in Egypt 6-18 November, 400 young activists, representing over 65 countries from the Global South, gathered in Nabuel, Tunisia to participate in a [Climate Justice Camp](#). The Camp was organised by Greenpeace International and included workshops on a wide range of topics such as: Fighting Climate Disinformation, Organiser Burnout and Resilience, and Just Transitioning to Low Carbon Resilient Economies.

In view of the lack of progress in addressing Climate Change despite 27 years of COPS, the objectives of the Camp were to: build activist solidarity; highlight the importance of youth and grassroots community involvement in decision-making processes; recognise that key to tackling the climate crisis is addressing basic human rights. This requires: climate resilient housing and public infrastructure; access to clean water; functioning sanitation services; food sovereignty to provide healthy, affordable food; community-based renewable energy; clean-energy public transport systems ... *Climate Justice is Social Justice!*

Paleni Iyer is a volunteer with the Durban Local Group of Greenpeace Africa who has actively and enthusiastically participated in many of the collaborative events of 2022. She was fortunate to be one of the participants in the Climate Justice Camp and shares her amazing experience [here](#), describing how much she gained from this opportunity to interact with so many hardworking, passionate and inspiring people. Many have also been victims of climate change and she heard first-hand of the hardships and personal tragedies they have been through.



**WESSA life**  
local initiatives for  
the environment



**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

**ABOUT WESSA KZN**

**Join | Renew | Donate**

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 region. It also assists in training youth in conservation and ecology, and raising awareness of environmental issues in our communities.

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

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