

Green Spiral



People Caring for the Earth



## WESSA KZN Newsletter | January 2024

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Above, snippets from an eventful year: KZN Region AGM; Enviro Week finale at the Green Hub; Composting Networking Forum at Botanic Gardens; Human Rights Day at Denis Hurley Centre with Amnesty International SA-Durban Group

### Reflections: Looking back on 2023 as we head into 2024

As WESSA heads into its 98th year, the WESSA KZN Region looks back on 2023, a year in transition in which much has been undertaken and there have been many opportunities for networking and extending our outreach. Though busy to the extent of being quite chaotic on occasions, we have continued the task of growing and strengthening our youth volunteer base, though much still needs to be done to ensure our efforts are sustainable. This requires: a) continuing to build a strong core of motivated, resourceful and skilled youth leaders; b) setting up an effective system for recruitment, induction and active participation; c) developing a structure for efficient administration and management d) financial support.

We are also looking to find ways in which activities can be more widely available as presently we mainly operate in Durban and surrounds, and the Midlands area between Pietermaritzburg and Howick. This will entail planning a calendar of activities well in advance so we are able to communicate timeously with our whole membership base made up of our active youth volunteers, paying members, and longstanding, older members who are the foundation upon which the original Wildlife Society was established in 1926. The events will be guided by our Green Matchmaking Programme (see below) and special focus days will also be incorporated. This year end newsletter will give some idea of the range of events and activities that took place in 2023. We wish all our members a very happy New Year as we rise to face the challenges of 2024.

GREEN MATCHMAKING FOCUS AREAS	EVENTS & ACTIVITIES
<b>Conservation</b>	<b>Out in Nature</b>
Ecosystems & Biodiversity; Water Protection; Citizen Science; Environmental Education	Cycling, hiking and walking groups; Guided nature walks; iNaturalist; Nature Journalling; Birding
<b>Local Initiatives For the Environment</b>	<b>Community Action</b>
Community Food Gardens; Waste Minimisation; Green Enterprise; Enviro Skills Training; Green Energy Solutions	Beach and River clean-ups; Food Gardens; Waste Minimisation: Composting, recycling and upcycling; Tree Planting; IAP Clearing
<b>Green Art In Action</b>	<b>Social and cultural</b>
Poetry; drama; art; writing; nature journaling; photography; videography ...	Open Mic: Music and poetry; Green Books; Film screenings; Eco discussions; Talks and Workshops; Enviro Awareness; Special Days; Exhibitions; Public engagement around enviro issues
<b>Environmental Governance</b>	
Environmental Advocacy & Compliance	

## 2024 SPECIAL FOCUS DAYS & WEEKS

January – May

### JANUARY

- 19 International Flower Day
- 20 Penguin Awareness Day
- 26 World Environmental Education Day
- 31 International Zebra Day

### FEBRUARY

- 02 World Wetlands Day
- 10 World Pulses Day
- 15 World Hippopotamus Day
- 17 World Pangolin Day (third Saturday)
- 18 World Whale Day (third Sunday)
- 20 World Day of Social Justice
- 27 Polar Bear Day
- 28 Leap Day for Frogs (SA-EWT)

### MARCH

- 03 World Wildlife Day
- 08 International Women's Day
- 11 Solar Appreciation Day
- 14 World Day of Action for Rivers
- 18 Global Recycling Day
- 20 World Meat Out Day
- 20 World Frog Day
- 20-26 National Water Week
- 21 International Day of Forests
- 21 Human Rights Day (SA)
- 21 World Poetry Day
- 22 World Water Day
- 23 World Meteorological Day
- 23 Earth Hour (usually last Saturday)
- 30 International Day of Zero Waste

### APRIL

- 01 Family Day (SA) | Easter Monday
- 03 World Aquatic Day
- 07 World Health Day
- 12 World Street Children Day
- 13 International Plant Appreciation Day
- 17 World Bat Day
- 21 World Creativity and Innovation Day
- 22 International Mother Earth Day
- 25 World Penguin Day
- 27 Freedom Day (SA)
- 27 World Hyena Day

### MAY

- 01 Workers' Day
- 02 World Tuna Day
- 03 World Press Freedom Day
- 03 World Sun Day
- 03 World Leopard Day
- 5-11 International Compost Week
- 08 Mother's Day
- 14 World Migratory Bird Day
- 15 International Day of Families
- 20 World Bee Day
- 20 Endangered Species Day
- 22 World Day for Biological Diversity
- 23 World Turtle Day
- 25 World Fish Migration Day
- 25 Africa Day

**uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve Guided Walk | 11 February**



Bongani Chisale, one of our longstanding and most dynamic youth leaders, left us in May having received an employment offer in Cape Town. We are delighted this opportunity has arisen, and that his experience with WESSA KZN and the Umhlanga UIP have provided him with the experience and qualifications for the position.

He will be greatly missed however, although we remain in contact and hope he will be able to interact with the WESSA Western Cape Region. ❤️

*Left: A wonderful, Saturday morning guided walk in the uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve led by WESSA KZN Youth leader and forest guide Bongani Chisale.*

**eThekweni Enviro Education Network Indaba & EEPAN | 16 February**



**About EEPAN:** In 2022, faced with increasing environmental and eco-social pressures, the eThekweni Municipality began looking at ways to scale up environmental awareness, education and networking in the eThekweni Municipal Area. This resulted in Luci Coelho of LC Consulting – working with Pandora Long and Margaret Burger – exploring ways for this to be achieved. Towards the end of November 2022, an *Enviro Education & Awareness Workshop* was convened.

This was followed by the *Enviro Education Network Indaba* (above) on 16 February, 2023. Thereafter, a diverse network began to emerge that took on organising and participating in the inaugural *eThekweni Enviro Week* | 18-25 March (see page 5), which ended in a vibrant, well-attended finale at the Green Hub (see page 7). Further liaison and discussions took place via Zoom meetings and at an in-person workshop on 03 November 2023.



The *Environmental Education and Public Awareness Network (EEPAN)* was formally launched on Saturday, 09 December at the Green Hub. READ ARTICLES: [Organisations collaborate in north Durban to go green](#) | GREEN CORRIDORS: [Environmental Education and Public Awareness Network Launched in Durban](#)

**The Vision of EEPAN:** The vision of the Environmental Education & Public Awareness Network (EEPAN) is to foster local to global earth stewardship, ensuring eco-social justice, liveability, and sustainability in eThekweni and beyond by promoting environmental education and public awareness, sharing knowledge, providing expertise, and mentoring inclusive network initiatives for holistic behaviour change and greener lifestyles, nurturing our shared ecosystem, and advancing the health of the planet and all living beings.

**EEPAN Core Principles and Values:**

- Shared responsibility and collective response-ability
- Equity, equality and inclusivity
- Transparency and accountability
- Socio-economic and environmental justice
- Regenerative policy and practice
- Sharing, caring, respect and compassion for all
- Promote and support democratic participation
- Build resilience within and across all our communities

**Eco-Schools' Awards | 18 February**



The WESSA KZN Region participated in the KwaZulu-Natal Annual Eco-Schools' Awards, which were held on Saturday, 18th February at the Hilton Garden Inn, Umhlanga Arc in partnership with Sun International. Eco-Schools were also celebrating their 20th Anniversary. The event was opened by Cindy-Lee Cloete, Head of Programmes & Projects, with the history of Eco-Schools in South Africa and the role this inspiring programme has played in developing environmental education in South African schools. Two Eco-Schools earned their green flag and three Eco-Schools received their International flag status. Nineteen Eco-Schools were awarded with trophies for their active participation in over a decade of dedicated environmental engagement.

Eco-Schools was established to support environmental learning in the classroom. The programme is active in 68 countries with the participation of 59 000 schools around the world. In South Africa, it has been implemented by WESSA since 2003 and is aimed at creating awareness and action around environmental sustainability, both in schools and their surrounding communities. It also supports Education for Sustainable Development in the national curriculum.

Eco-Schools is an international programme of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). FEE's five programmes include: Blue Flag, Eco-Schools, Young Reporters for the Environment, Learning about Forests, and Green Key International.

**Durban Youth Workshop | 11 March**



A successful WESSA Durban Youth Workshop was held on 11 March. This followed on from the November 2022 Youth Meeting, which combined planning for 2023 with an induction for new, youth volunteers. The objective was: 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. The other key item on the agenda was identifying events and action ideas for eThekweni's newly launched Enviro Week, 18-25 March. (See page 5.)



### Groenies Exit Gala | 16 March



A gala, Groen Sebenza graduation event was held on 16 March, at the Premier Splendid Inn, Umhlanga.

This was the first time that WESSA KZN Membership has had the opportunity to host Groen Sebenza interns, and it was a valuable journey for all.

Having these amazing young conservation graduates onboard to help drive our environmental work has been greatly empowering, and our strong youth group was able to receive them with confidence.

Our Chair, Margaret Burger said: *“These young people are our hope for the future, and it has been a privilege to mentor those who were assigned to me, Melisa Nonjiko, Sbonelo Sikhakhane and Siziwe Hlongwa who stayed through to the final exit at the end of March 2023. Not forgetting Thembeke Mkhwanazi who joined the eThekweni PRL Department as an intern, as well as Azile Mpukwana who was quickly snapped up by Adopt-a-River NPC. Two interns, Ndumiso Manzini and Luyanda Cele, were also mentored by Siphwe Rakgabale of TriEcoEmvelo at the Green Hub,. We have been a great team and look forward to staying in touch and supporting incoming youth who wish to join our passionate environmental circle.”*



**Enviro Week 18-25 March** The inaugural eThekweni Enviro Week was a call to action for everyone in eThekweni to work together to care for the environment. Hosted by the eThekweni Municipality with partners Green Corridors and the City of Bremen, Germany, Enviro Week offered a packed programme of fun and learning at venues in and around Durban. Important environmental days (international and national) fall during this period and the planned activities focused on these themes.

These days are as follows: *Global Recycling Day – 18 March; World Frog Day – 20 March; Human Rights Day & International Day of Forests – 21 March; World Water Day & World Meteorological Day – 22 March; Earth Hour – 25 March; National Water Week & National Library Week – 20 to 26 March*

**Global Recycling Day: Waste Focus with Connaught Bridge Recyclers** The Connaught Bridge Recycling Project is a collaboration between the Roadhouse Crescent Recyclers, [Green Corridors](#); the City Parks Department; Durban Solid Waste, the [Umgeni Estuary Conservancy](#); and Ward 36 councillor, Shontel de Boer.

In February 2021, despite plans to formalise the area by installing a fence, employing one of the collectors as a security guard and cleaning up the site, illegal dumping continued until a group of concerned residents from the Umgeni Park Neighbourhood Watch and other members of the community, gathered to clean up the area. This initiative took two days to complete and thereafter, 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 and establishing a vegetable garden. The team works with WESSA KZN, Green Corridors and TriEcoEnvelo. The Connaught Bridge collaboration is a recycling project in progress and is looking at innovative ways of upcycling waste via the [Green Corridors–KwaMashu Beneficiation Centre](#). On Global Recycling Day, together with the Connaught Bridge EnviroChamps, Siphwe Rakgabale of TriEcoEnvelo was present to assist with information on waste and recycling and how to separate waste for recycling. SEE ALSO: [Green Corridors sponsors PPE kit for Roadhouse Crescent informal collectors](#) | [Unrecyclable plastic waste collected from the Umgeni River could soon become part of paving networks, walkways and eco-landscapes in and around Durban](#) | [Recycling Project Demonstrates the Value of Super Collaboration](#)



**Human Rights Day with Amnesty International SA-Durban Group | 21 March**





On [Human Rights Day](#), WESSA KZN participated in an event organised by the Durban Group of Amnesty International and hosted by the Denis Hurley Centre. The interactive programme titled 'Understanding, Reflection & Action' focused on [Gender Based Violence](#) (GBV) and included discussions, poetry and dance.

In addition, there was a photographic exhibition and presentation by the [Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives](#) (GAIA), [groundWork](#) and the [South African Waste Pickers Association](#) (SAWPA). Waste picking provides job creation and poverty alleviation and is the backbone of recycling in many global south countries. The South African Waste Pickers Association have between 4 000 and 6 000 members across all nine provinces of South Africa.

The programme ended with a performance by Mhayise Productions, an internationally acclaimed performing arts company based in KwaZulu-Natal and headed by choreographer and artistic director Musa Hlatshwayo. The company features full-time dancers and trainees and specialises in creating cutting edge, socially conscious contemporary performing arts through the medium of dance, theatre and site-specific installation performances.

### Enviro Week Finale with EEPAN at the Green Hub



On 25th March, the Environmental Education and Public Awareness Network (EEPAN) organised a finale to mark the end of eThekweni Enviro Week. The event was held at the Green Hub and approximately 50 people attended. It was a busy, breezy day out in the sunshine by the river, with games for the kids and entertainment provided by The Flatfoot Dance Company. The event aimed to bring network members into an experiential learning environment. The themes were the interface between: Rivers and Estuaries; Beach and Ocean; and People in Urban Spaces.

Various members of the participant groups were invited to give inputs on: the state of our rivers; the function and value of estuaries; life on the edge of a significant river – especially in a time of increasing, extreme weather events; the economic rationale for protecting natural resources, especially rivers and marine resources in eThekweni; livelihoods enabled by the protection of these natural areas, including tourism; the recreational and wellness value of our natural resources, including green spaces and oceans for surfing; and water quality testing. The integration of people and planet and the mutual obligation of care underpinned the event. Matti Hanisch represented Bremen, sister city to eThekweni and an EEPAN global partner. 7



### KZN Annual Regional Meeting | 22 April



The Annual Regional Meeting of WESSA KZN was held on [Earth Day](#) at 10 Mount Argus. The meeting was well attended by both youth volunteers and longstanding older members from Durban and further afield such as the Midlands Branch based in Howick, and Southern KZN Branch located in Port Shepstone. The Chair's Report covered the period November 2021 – April 2023 and Paddy Norman explained the work being undertaken by the Environmental Governance Committee (EGC). Reports were presented on the following projects, programmes and branches.

- Hawaan Forest Project | Bernard Chatikobo
- uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve Nature Guides | Bongani Chisale
- Umbogavango Environmental Education Programme (supported by AECI) | Siziwe Hlongwa
- Midlands Youth Branch | Mbali Mnikathi and Nathan Kayembe
- Durban Youth Branch | Sipiwe Rakgabale
- Don't Mess with Mzansi Project | Sipiwe Rakgabale
- Groen Sebenza Internship Programme | Margaret Burger
- Membership Administration | Jenny Duvenage

After the formalities were over, everyone got together to enjoy a potjie meal and long overdue catch up.  

## Composting Networking Forum at Botanic Gardens | 05 May



WESSA KZN Region participated in the first [Durban Composting Networking Forum](#), together with Amnesty International stalwart and WESSA member, Coral Vinsen. The event was held at the Botanic Gardens Conference Centre on 5 May to coincide with International Composting Week 7-13 May. The forum is a partnership with the [Warwick Zero Waste Project](#) in collaboration with the [Durban Botanic Gardens Trust](#). The focus of the network is: zero waste; food security; jobs and economic opportunities; climate change mitigation/adaptation by bringing together those working on: food security; eliminating food waste; improving soil health via composting, organic waste recycling and urban food gardening projects. Project partners are [groundWork](#), [Asiye eTafuleni](#) and the DUT [Urban Futures Centre](#). Exhibitors who gave presentations and showcased their projects included groundWork, Convert the Dirt, Black Umbrellas & CSIR Food Waste Programme. (Refer [leaflet of exhibitors](#) with links and contact details.) As part of the event, tours of the Warwick Zero Waste composting facility were conducted. This large-scale compost production uses vegetable waste from the Warwick Triangle Market combined with plant waste from the Botanic Gardens.

## Umbogavango Nature Walk | 07 May





PEOPLE OF ACTION



AECI, WESSA KZN, Rotary, Amanzimtoti Country Club & Conservancy

**Invite you to a Nature Walk, Talk and Potjie**

At Umbogavango Environmental Education Centre  
AECI Complex, South Gate

On 7th May, WESSA KZN, together with key role-players in the Umbogavango Environmental Education Centre and Nature Reserve, hosted a nature walk, talk and potjie. The objective was to promote Rotary's partnership, the resource centre and the reserve, which are located in the Umbogintwini Industrial Complex and have been sponsored by AECI for the past 32 years. WESSA coordinates the project under the WESSA KZN region and its Upper South Coast Branch.

Chairperson of WESSA KZN Margaret Burger said: *"The goal of the Umbogavango programme is to enable learners from disadvantaged schools in the area to experience nature in an environmental education setting, guided by environmental graduates who are gaining experience in becoming educators."*

This year, there were 2 000 beneficiaries (Grades 4–7) of the programme and 15 local schools were supported. Sponsorship per learner is R150 per day, which covers transport fees, lunch packs and attendance. The programme runs from March to the end of November.

[READ ARTICLE: A walk through Umbogavango Nature Reserve](#)

### G20 Beach Cleanup | 16 May



More than 850 participants – made up of learners, students, civil society and government conservation organisations – joined forces at the G20 Beach Cleanup organised by the Consul General of India in Durban and the eThekweni Municipality. The event took place at the Beachwood Mangrove's Nature Reserve on Sunday, 16 May. Among the organisations taking part were WESSA KZN Region, Adopt-a-River, and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

Together they collected over 3 000 kgs of marine litter. The cleanup was undertaken to mark India's G20 presidency and to celebrate 30 years of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between India and South Africa. The drive is part of India's global initiative to bring attention to the problem of marine litter and the need to work together towards sustaining and protecting our oceans. An open-air Marine Animal Awareness exhibition was also on display, and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife Honorary Officers held guided walks to promote awareness about the importance of mangroves and conservation. SEE ALSO: [Press Release: G20 India – South Africa Mega Beach Clean-up, Durban](#)



### Family Fun Market at uMngeni Valley | 28 May

WESSA membership had a stand at the uMngeni Valley Family Fun Market with the objective of gauging sentiments in respect of forming an Umgeni Valley Friends Group. The feedback was useful for determining what could be offered to Friends and members. Key questions were: 1. Would you support the concept of a Friends Group? 2. What would you, as a community member, like to see for Umgeni Valley as a local green space? The response to the idea was overwhelmingly positive with suggestions on what UVNR, as a local green space, could be and other groups that could be involved. The use of a physical 'model of Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve' was useful in identifying and capturing participant interests. It enabled a record of conversations and a possible participant database. Pandora Long ably assisted Margaret Burger in gathering the information on local Howick support for the formation of a future WESSA UVNR Friends' group.



### Welcoming the Whales | 24 June

Sodurba Tourism hosted its sixth annual Welcoming of the Whales Festival from 23-25 June. The main event took place on the 24th along Foreshore Drive between Anstey's and Brighton beaches. Activities included an arts and crafts market, food stalls and beach games. WESSA KZN and Treasure Beach also held a beach clean-up on Anstey's Beach and a Rocky Shore guided walk.

Other participants in the festival were: Grosvenor Library, Centre for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife, Green Corridors, Litter4tokens, Litterboom Projects, MACE Lab, National Sea Rescue Institute, SAAMBR, Sail Africa, Seasearch, Sharks Board, Oceans Alive Conservation Trust, Greenpeace Local Group: Durban, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and Adopt-a-River. The festival began with a cocktail evening on the 23rd and ended with a tour of the Old Whaling Station on the 25th. SEE: [Welcome the whales from the Bluff](#)

**From Whaling Station to Whale Heritage Site** The Old Whaling Station on the Bluff was one of the largest whaling stations in the southern hemisphere and was used from 1907 to 1975. South Africa banned all whaling in 1979 and in October, 2019 The Bluff became the world's first [certified Whale Heritage Site](#) (along with Hervey Bay in Australia.) Established by the World Cetacean Alliance (WCA), [Whale Heritage Sites](#) are an initiative aimed at increasing the protection and conservation of cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) and their habitats while also contributing to sustainable livelihoods, the arts, science and education. The Old Whaling Station is also being transformed by Sodurba Tourism into a Heritage Site and Eco Tourism Hub. Their vision is to showcase how the local community has evolved to become protectors and lovers of their whales, and to educate the public about wildlife and the importance of ocean conservation: *"Durban has had a long history with whales. The programme is also set to celebrate the recovery of the humpback whale population. There is now a shift towards supporting conservation practices and celebrating their recovery so we are looking forward to promoting responsible and sustainable tourism for all Sodurba stakeholders and community."* – Helga du Preez, Chair of Sodurba Tourism Association. SEE ALSO: [Durban declared Whale Heritage Site](#) | [A tour of Durban's dark whaling past](#) | [The old whaling station on the Bluff – Cinematic Drone](#)



### Climate Change Workshop | 04 July

WESSA Youth joined the eThekweni Climate Change workshop to better understand the deeper issues around climate change as a coastal city managing its mitigation factors with greater capacity in the future. Participants were: Tebello Tsotetsi, Zuzile Mpanza, Nosipho Vezi, Melisa Nonjiko, Sithembile Mayise, and Siziwe Hlongwa

Various units of the Durban Municipality made presentations on what their departments are doing to fight climate change, and Parks and the IPCC presented their disaster management action plans. This was followed by questions from stakeholders, and a debate panel.

**International Nelson Mandela Day – River Mouth Clean-up | 18 July**  
*Report by Tebello Tsoetsi and Zuzile Mpanza | Photos: Tebello Tsoetsi*



To commemorate Nelson Mandela Day and – as is traditionally called for, make a 67 minute contribution to a better world – WESSA KZN youth leaders, Tebello Tsoetsi and Zuzile Mpanza, came up with an on-the-spot action! Since they are both UIP Nature Guides at the uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve, they decided to help the Litterboom Project and eThekweni municipal workers with a river mouth clean-up.

[International Nelson Mandela Day](#), is an annual, global celebration that takes place on Madiba’s birthday. The day is a call to action for individuals, communities, and organisations to honour his legacy, reflect on his values and principles, and make a positive impact in their own communities. The time of 67 minutes is in memory of his 67 years of service to the public.

**Meet uMngeni Valley’s ‘Crazy Walking Lady’ | 22 July**

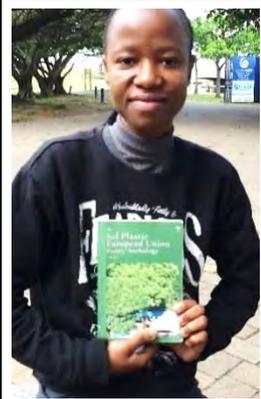


Alison Humphries Engelbrecht has uMngeni Valley Reserve in her blood as the valley was part of her family farm growing up, and she still lives there. When her father started the reserve, she would spend every weekend on horseback doing game counts. This instilled a love of Nature and the need to protect and conserve the environment from a young age.

During the Covid lockdown, while there were no staff at the WESSA Howick offices, she took to regularly patrolling the valley. When Sifundo Sibiyi became the senior education manager, she received formal permission to patrol with her rescue dog Willow for protection.

Alison and Willow have become a well-known fixture in the valley, with Willow wearing a WESSA PATROL harness. Alison however, still needed to be kitted out so she would also be easily identifiable. Because she became such a familiar sight walking in the valley but people didn’t always know who she was, she acquired the moniker of ‘the crazy walking lady’.

After contacting WESSA KZN Chair, Margaret Burger, Alison and Willow came through to Durban on Saturday, 22 July and were duly awarded with a WESSA t-shirt, cap and honorary membership in appreciation of her long and dedicated commitment to the conservation of the uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve.



On 26th August, new youth volunteers, who had joined WESSA KZN in the course of the past three months, participated in a social Induction at the Green Hub, Blue Lagoon. Great thanks to Siphwe Rakgabale, for arranging this venue. It is an ideal space that allows for a variety of activities – from presentations and discussions to socialising after the proceedings, and fun opportunities to experience bike riding and canoeing on the uMngeni Estuary. The programme began with ice breakers prepared by Siziwe Hlongwa and a Code of Conduct explanation by Siphwe Rakgabale. Each then introduced themselves and gave an account of why they wanted to become eco-volunteers. LEFT: Nompilo Cele with a copy of *The Sol Plaatje European Union Poetry Anthology 2022* in which her poem *Uhambo (Journey)* is featured. The 2022 compilation contains the best poems from over 600 entries in 10 of the 11 South African languages. Named after political and social activist **Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje** (1876-1932), the Sol Plaatje Award recognises the life and vision of one of South Africa’s greatest public intellectuals.



## Arbor Day Umbogavango: School outreach – Prescient Primary School | 01 September

*Report and photos by Siziwe Hlongwa*

On Arbor Day (Friday, 1st September) as part of the schools' outreach programme, Umbogavango interns Siziwe Hlongwa and Melisa Nonjiko visited Prescient Primary in Amanzimtoti. After preparing and collecting a variety of specimens from the Umbogavango Resource Centre, they arrived at the school at 10h30 and were met by Mrs Walker, who teaches the Grade Ones.

After a welcome and introduction in the hall, Siziwe gave a talk on nature conservation and the importance of trees and plants. Using the specimens they had brought with them, Melisa then did a presentation on the importance of Arbor Day and the vital role trees play in the ecology of our planet. The learners and teachers interacted enthusiastically and recognised some of the plants in the school grounds. This was followed by an opportunity to smell and feel the plants with a question session at the end.

The topic of climate change was also tackled in the form of a game ending with the donation of a spekboom plant kindly provided by Aneska Du Pont of the Amanzimtoti Rotary Club. After the climate change activity, Mrs Walker gave a vote of thanks and the program ended at 12h30. The event was highly successful, especially as it was to a school outside the WESSA Eco-Schools programme. As such, the interns are looking forward to conducting more outreach programmes as a way to expand WESSA's environmental education network.



## Fulton School Concert Charlie & the Chocolate Factory | 14 September

On 14 September, Margaret Burger (KZN chair) and Jenny Duvenage (KZN co-ordinator) had the great pleasure of joining Alan Job and Jean Senogles – stalwarts of the Highway Branch of WESSA – for the Fulton School production of 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory'. This was the Donor's Concert Performance as, via the Ron Senogles Trust, Highway Branch has been a long-standing sponsor of the school.

The aim is to now support Fulton in joining the Eco-schools programme and becoming a full Eco-school. The concert was the most heartwarming, wonderful experience with excellent performances, direction and creative effects. The audience participated with enthusiasm, and many shed tears as the performance drew to a close and visiting pre-schoolers clapped and spontaneously sang along in a stirring grand finale.

READ ARTICLE: [Fulton School learners are talented](#)



### International Coastal Clean-up: Beachwood Mangroves | 16 September

Photo credits: Zandile Myeza, Tebello Tsotetsi and Zamani Gwala

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. Coastal Cleanup Day was established by the Ocean Conservancy, with the first-ever cleanup event held on the west coast of Washington State in 1986. Now, each year, it is scheduled to take place on the third Saturday in September.



*“Plastic pollution is extremely hazardous to marine life, killing thousands of creatures. International Coastal Cleanup Day encourages people to help limit this problem by cleaning up litter that has been scattered all over our beaches. virtually all the plastic that has ever been created still exists today in some form. Instead of biodegrading (like organic materials), plastic photodegrades or breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces as it’s exposed to the elements. These small pieces persist in the environment even once the pieces (known as microplastics) are too small for the naked eye to see. When plastic ends up in the ocean, marine life often mistakes it for food and eats it. Not only does this threaten the life of the animal, but it also ends up on our plates when we eat seafood. Marine life can also become entangled in plastic causing the death of more than a million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals every year!” – [Save Our Seas](#)*



“At the Beachwood Mangroves Beach, the clean-up efforts were led by the North Durban Honorary Officers with help from several environmental organisations, including Adopt-a-River and the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA). According to Basil Pather, conservation manager at Beachwood Mangroves Nature Reserve, just under two tonnes of rubbish was collected from a single clean-up on Saturday. “To see so many young people come out and support the clean-up was a real positive. We had Scouts groups, schools and families lend a hand to clean up. Each of the volunteers who helped out were given data forms which helped us break down and understand the types of items we keep finding on our beaches. The data collections also show how things are changing in terms of litter found on our beaches and in our oceans.”

READ FULL ARTICLE: [Durbanites tackle clean-up on Beachwood Mangrove Beach](#)

## EEASA Conference | 17-22 September



The Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA), in collaboration with WESSA as host organisation, held its 41st Annual Conference in Gauteng, 18th to 22nd September, 2023.

Educators, researchers, students, practitioners, NGOs and supporters of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) submitted abstracts for oral presentations, workshops and posters.

The Conference was held under the theme: *Education, Advocacy and Actions to Advance ESD in Southern Africa.*

Selected WESSA Youth joined Margaret Burger to present the topic ‘Volunteerism: Pitfalls and possibilities’. Each had a subtopic to prepare and present on their experience of volunteerism as a WESSA Youth member. Presentations were made by Siziwe Hlongwa, Melisa Nonjiko, Mbali Mnikathi and Zuzile Mpanza, supported by Margaret Burger.

**Youth Team Building Event | 04 November**  
*Report and photos by Nathan Kayembe (Midlands Branch)*



On November 4th, the WESSA KZN Youth Team Building event unfolded as a dynamic platform for self-reflection and teamwork. Participants delved into an insightful exploration of their team's strengths and weaknesses, engaging in various activities that provided valuable lessons. The occasion fostered an environment where each member had an opportunity to articulate their perspectives, promoting open communication within the team. Beyond introspection, the event aimed at inspiring and empowering the youth to actively participate in diverse projects, encouraging knowledge acquisition for personal and collective growth.

**School Beautification Awards | 10 November** *Report and photos by Siziwe Hlongwa*



The 28th year of the Upper South Coast School Beautification Project was celebrated at a Prize Giving on 10th November 2023. More than ten participating schools came together to be acknowledged for their interest and hard work. The project aims at developing environmental awareness in educators and learners. To monitor participants, schools are visited at least three times a year. Visits are unannounced and focus on main entrances, lawn areas, refuse management, classrooms, play areas, food gardens and recycling efforts. Although the project was interrupted by Covid-19, over the past three years it has continued to generate keen interest and the number of schools participating has grown. WESSA Umbogavango interns were invited as guest speakers to the Award Ceremony, which was held at Magama Primary School in Kwamakhutha.

After a prayer and welcome by the principal, Nomali Msomi, AECI's Community Liaison Officer, spoke about the history of the School Beautification Project and the important role it has played in nurturing environmental awareness within many schools. Gratitude was extended to the Dept. of Environmental Health, Durban Solid Waste and the Umbogintwini Industrial Association for their commitment as sponsors. Other partners, including WESSA KZN's Upper South Coast Branch, were also acknowledged. Interns Siziwe and Melisa then spoke on the importance of conserving nature and the role played by the Umbogavango Schools Project in Environmental Education. This was followed by wonderful music and poetry performances by Magama Primary learners. Zipho Mkhwanazi and Sxolile Hlongwane from Durban Solid Waste then presented certificates and special awards. The Special Awards categories were: Best Improved School; Best Co-ordinator; and Best Supportive Principal. Additional categories were: Neatest Classroom; Most Hygienic Classroom and Toilets; Best Lawn; Best Kitchen; and Best Garden.

## eThekwini Great Southern Bioblitz | 24-27 November



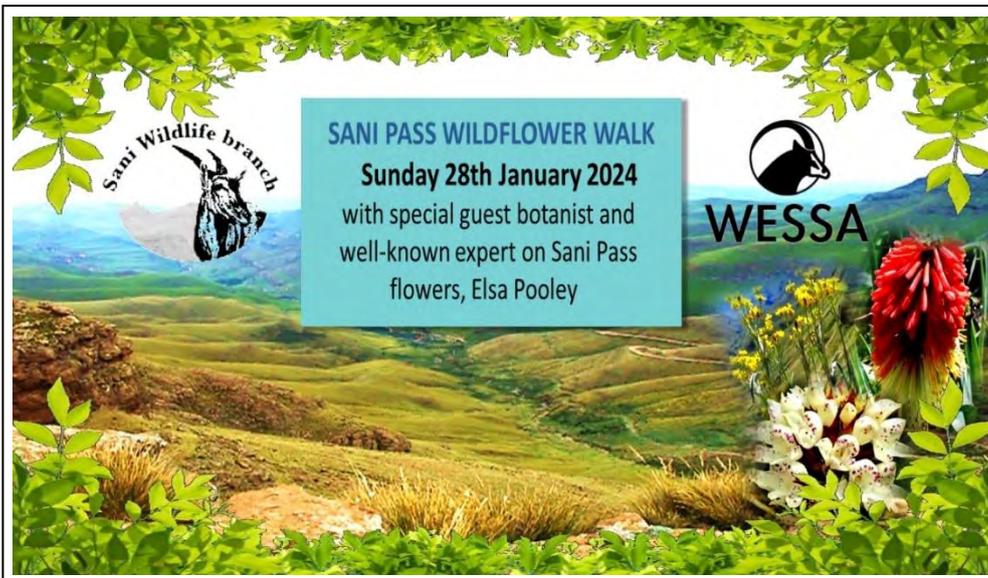
The annual [iNaturalist Great Southern Bioblitz](#) (GSB) took place between 24-27 November. Our WESSA participating groups went all out on Friday the 24th to enable participation and contribute observations to the eThekwini numbers. Tebello Tsotesi encouraged as many to join as possible. She hosted the WESSA GSB at Burman Bush and was surprised by the number of eThekwini staff who joined her group. Melisa Nonjiko and Siziwe Hlongwa hosted their iNaturalist GSB at the Umbogavango Nature Reserve supported by WESSA KZN Youth who are familiar with the southern parts of eThekwini. Margaret Burger was joined by Rosemary Harrison and Siphwe's YES Programme Youth for the Riverside Park GSB counts. Sadly, no one joined Zuzile Mpanza at the uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve. eThekwini can be justifiably proud of its record of observations and the number of observers and identifiers. We look forward the 2024 City Nature Challenge.

### Planning Meeting for 2024 | 18 December

On 18th December, we met up with our core WESSA KZN Youth leaders at the Breakers Resort overlooking the wetland at uMhlanga Lagoon. The aim of this informal meeting was to begin planning 2024 events and activities. We also took the opportunity to celebrate a year of 'Caring for the Earth' with a dedicated and passionate group who, throughout 2023, have been at the forefront of initiating activities, organising volunteer inductions, and participating in meetings and workshops.



## SANI PASS WILDFLOWER WALK | Sunday 28th January 2024



### **COST R750 PER PERSON includes:**

- Coffee and tea served at registration
- Transport in 4x4s up Sani Pass
- A walk around Sani Top in Lesotho, exploring different flowers in a different botanical niche
- A slow 8 km walk down the Sani Pass enjoying the unique flowers, the superb views, and birds along the way with expert botanists and local tour guides to help identify the flowers and add to your appreciation and enjoyment
- Transport back from SA border to Giant's Cup Café from 3pm

**REGISTRATION:** 06h30 sharp at the Giant's Cup Café, 10.5km down the SANI PASS ROAD on the left-hand side.

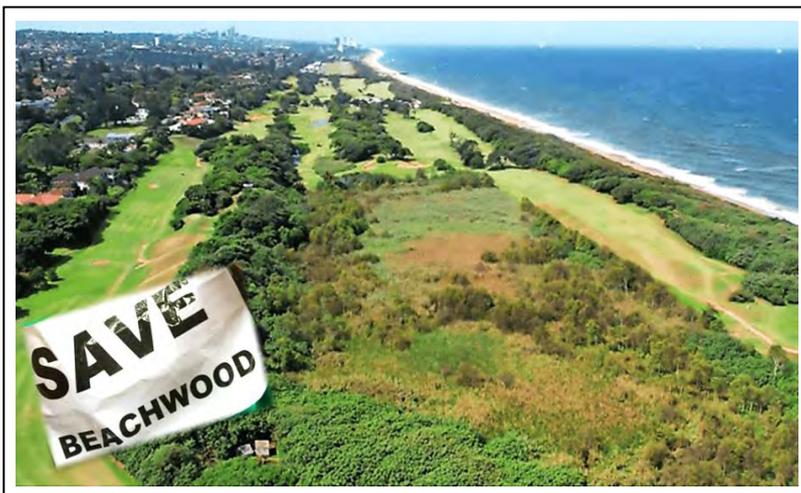
**BOOKINGS:** for the walk – contact Sani Lodge by emailing [info@sanilodge.co.za](mailto:info@sanilodge.co.za)

**ACCOMMODATION:** is available at Sani Lodge Self-catering cottages or Backpackers, on the same property as Giant's Cup Café. See website: [www.sanilodge.co.za](http://www.sanilodge.co.za) Bookings may be made directly on the website or by email.

**SANI FLOWERS POSTER:** Sani Wildlife has recently brought out a new and updated Sani Pass Flowers poster. The small pocket A4 foldable poster is on sale on the day at R20, but we are also offering this beautiful poster printed on vinyl at full poster size at a price of R200. This is a limited edition, so all orders need to be placed and payments made by Monday, 15 January 2024 at the latest. They can be collected at the event on the 28th.

**SALES:** (Before and/or after the walk) Snacks, sunscreen, Elsa Pooley's Wildflower Field guidebooks; Brabys' Orchid Field Guide; Sani Pass flowers, mammals, birds and reptile's posters; WESSA publications; local books and maps; indigenous plant species; ceramics and art by local artist Simone Suchet.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY



### **Beachwood Golf Course Development**

WESSA KZN and the Umgeni Estuary Conservancy are part of the coalition of individuals, organisations and NGOs that make up the [Friends of Beachwood](#), which are opposing the proposed, multi-billion rand development on land that is presently the Beachwood Country Club and golf course.

On 21 November 2023, eThekweni Municipality approved the housing and hotel development after an appeal was heard and dismissed. The Friends of Beachwood say they will fight the eThekweni council all the way to the high court to stop construction on this environmentally sensitive coastal land, which they believe is unlawful.

To date, a 1 000 objections have been formally submitted, together with a petition of 3 000 signatures and the results of a poll of over 1 000 respondents showing that 98% of people strongly disapprove of the development. A fundraising campaign has been launched to cover legal costs. | *Photo: Oceans Alive Conservation Trust*

### **Details of site and proposed development**

- The Beachwood Resort and Estate will consist of an up to 280-bed hotel within 100m from the high water mark of the sea plus a series of three-storey 'drive up apartments' and six-storey units on the northern part of the site. Further housing units are planned for the southern section of the site
- The site is on Fairway Road next to the Virginia Airport. This area is located on a wetland flood plain adjacent to environmentally critical mangroves that stretch down dunes to the beach.

- The development is situated within **D'MOSS** (Durban Metropolitan Open Space System), and an access road will cross wetland and forested areas as well as require the clearance of indigenous vegetation.
- The development of the site has been identified among a list of R44,5 billion worth of future 'catalytic projects'.

**Objections to the development are based on a number of concerns**

- Failing city infrastructure, water and sanitation, roads and electricity will not cope with a 1 000 additional housing units.
- The original developers of the suburb chose to grant a praedial servitude right against the property. This means that the 42-hectare plot may not be entirely developed for business, commercial or residential purposes.
- Developers are only interested in the immediate profits to be made from such a development. The problems the residents of the area and the owners of the properties encounter in years to come is not their concern.
- With climate change already having substantial impacts, it is unwise in the extreme to be building on a flood plain so close to the sea. Virginia Airport is also under threat, despite having played a crucial role after the 2022 floods when it was transformed into the **logistical and operations nerve-centre** for search and rescue and relief distribution.
- It is also situated within the Durban Metropolitan Open Space System, which was implemented to protect biodiversity and ensure a range of ecosystem services such as: soil formation, erosion control, water supply and regulation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, cultural and recreational opportunities, pollination, nutrient cycling and waste treatment: *"From a climate adaptation perspective, D'MOSS plays an important role. The impacts of sea level rise for example can be reduced by ensuring the protection of well vegetated fore-dunes and setting coastal developments back from vulnerable areas. Increased flood events can be moderated by ensuring that wetlands and floodplains are protected and where necessary."* – From: [What is the Durban Metropolitan Open Space System](#)
- As such, residents are fighting to retain a vital, green recreational space that forms part of eThekweni's environmentally sensitive D'MOSS zone connecting the Umgeni River to Virginia Bush. In its original, formal objection to the development, the Fairway Residents Forum stated: *"No one wants this development. This pristine, unparalleled site is a real asset to the area, and to the city. It is self-sustaining ... As ratepayers and residents of the area [we] are firm in the belief that this should not be parcelled up for maximum profit and lost to future generations. We request that the provincial and city authorities act on our behalf to ensure this land remains as open space."*

FIND OUT MORE: Friends of Beachwood Website: <https://friendsofbeachwood.co.za/>

READ ARTICLES: [Durban residents oppose property](#) M&G Pressreader 29 Sep. 2023 and [Residents oppose R3bn Beachwood Golf Course development](#) M&G 12 Dec 2023 | [Green light for Beachwood development](#) IOL 8 Dec 2023 [Durban North residents object to Beachwood residential development](#) IOL 19 Dec 2022.

**Update on the UPL Cornubia Chemical Spill Disaster**



During the July 2021 unrest in KwaZulu-Natal, the United Phosphorus Ltd (UPL) chemical warehouse in Cornubia was set alight. *"In the early hours of 13 July, a group of unknown people set fire to a massive warehouse full of agrochemicals in the Cornubia area of Durban on South Africa's east coast. The fire burned for 10 days, incinerating unknown quantities of hundreds of toxic chemicals in a smoke plume that extended across surrounding residential neighbourhoods; firefighting efforts washed bright blue effluent into an adjacent river system, and thousands of riverine and marine creatures washed up dead in the Umhlanga Lagoon and beaches up to 9 kilometres away."* – [Nature takes a beating after chemical explosion in South Africa civil unrest](#) | 23 Aug 2021

There are countless articles (in both local and overseas media) reporting on the events of that night and the disaster it has been, the full extent of which is still unknown. So, after two and a half years, what is the situation and how has it been handled by the parties concerned?

[According to UPL](#), *"There has been significant progress in terms of remediation work across most of the impacted system ... Nonetheless, some challenges remain, many of which are faced from external pressures not related to the initial arson attack and spill or within the control of the independent expert team or UPL. Most critically the high levels of sewage from surrounding communities are impeding the remediation and rehabilitation efforts in these areas."*

Sewage pollution in rivers across Durban is indeed a major issue and has been repeatedly [reported on throughout 2023](#). However, it seems this is not the full story and although many of the toxic substances have disappeared or been diluted, some of these substances remain deeply buried in the sediments of the Ohlanga River and beneath the soil in a wetland near Blackburn Village. There are reasons therefore, to still be very concerned although scientists have differing opinions on the risks this may pose.

One view is that it is unlikely these chemicals will surface and escape to any large extent but should this occur, harmful impacts would be confined to river life (plants, insects and possibly fish), rather than downstream human communities: *"Within the Lower Wetland, contaminants are largely herbicidal in nature and with the most concentrated and isolated pockets mostly confined at depth in sediments. As such, the primary receptors of contamination within this system are wetland plants. This is supported by the fact that wetland vegetation in the system has to date shown little sign of recovery. Additionally, some insecticides are also found in elevated concentrations in the wetland sediments suggesting that sediment dwelling invertebrates are also likely to be receptors (and hence at risk) of contamination within the Lower Wetland. However, this risk is thought to be limited. There is no known community use of these sediments or surface water from within the Lower Wetland and as such, human receptors are not considered to be of major concern ... "* – [GroundTruth](#), Sept. 2023

An alternative assessment is that: *"The uMhlanga estuarine ecosystem continues to exhibit persistent contamination ... the process of ecological recovery remains gradual, with the current invertebrate community representing a diminished remnant of its former composition ... Given that the estuary is still nowhere near its pre-spill state, it is imperative to maintain ongoing monitoring of the estuary to continually assess the health and at the same time potential actions that could be implemented to facilitate restoration. Restoration of the estuary would aim to create a situation that results in the system having the species present prior to the spill and the level of functioning to be on a par, or even better, than previously ..."*

*"The trophic levels and functioning will need to be assessed once sufficient information is in place to provide a perspective on the local and regional significance of the impact. This would need to be factored into an assessment to determine the level of restoration or reparation required once the scale of the issue has been fully discussed between UPL and the relevant authorities. The otherwise hypothetical question of the recovery potential of an estuary following complete defaunation now becomes a highly significant reality, accentuated by the fact that there is now data to evaluate the current state of the system ..."*

*"The unfortunate overall conclusion at this stage is that the Umhlanga event has no precedent in this country, and one is left with the northern hemisphere experience that full functional recovery has to be timed in years and in the worst case scenario, in decades. Recovery of the estuary and its biota has become a major issue as has the possible time required. The European (Refs.) and American literature (Refs.) indicate that 12-15 years can be expected."* – [Marine and Estuarine Research](#), 28 Sept. 2023

The impact of this spill on the livelihoods of subsistence fishers and communities that depend on the ocean has been considerable, as has been the case for the already hard-hit tourism industry. And, while the long-term effects on human health have not been determined, experience of past industrial accidents involving toxic chemicals indicate that this possibility should also be taken seriously. There can be no question of simply 'moving on' from an event as devastating as this. Lessons must be learned and it is vital that environmental regulations be strictly enforced and policies to protect and rehabilitate the environment be instituted. We cannot afford future such human and environmental catastrophes and, when faced with a disaster of this magnitude, absolute transparency and the cooperation of all parties is essential to ensure everything is done to effectively address the issues.

This was the objective of the UPL Multi-Stakeholder Forum (MSF) established on 23 October 2021 by Ravi Pillay, former KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Environmental Affairs in line with the recommendation of the Portfolio Committee on Environment, Forestry & Fisheries during its visit to the UPL site on 11 August 2021. The stated aims of the forum are:

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

Unfortunately, this has not been the case and in early December, after efforts to arrange a meeting with all parties was unsuccessful, the MSF submitted a letter to the government departments involved, and UPL. In addition to numerous questions, plus the detailing of significant events and measures taken for which there has been no collaboration, it highlighted that all authorities with mandates in connection with the UPL chemical spill, are required to exercise their mandates in a coordinated and cooperative manner. Having received responses from the various stakeholders, it is hoped that a meeting will shortly be set up and ways will be found to move forward constructively.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Consultants' Reports

To view all reports, go to: Department of Environmental Affairs Repository: [UPL Chemical Spill Consultant Reports](#)

### UPL Press Releases

25 Oct 2023: [The Road to Recovery – Updated Edition](#)

08 Jan 2024: [UPL response to false reports of alleged ongoing contamination arising from chemical spill following July 2021 unrest](#)

### Media Articles

Daily Maverick 11 Sep 2023: [Two years after UPL chemical inferno outside Durban, still no sign of a criminal trial](#)

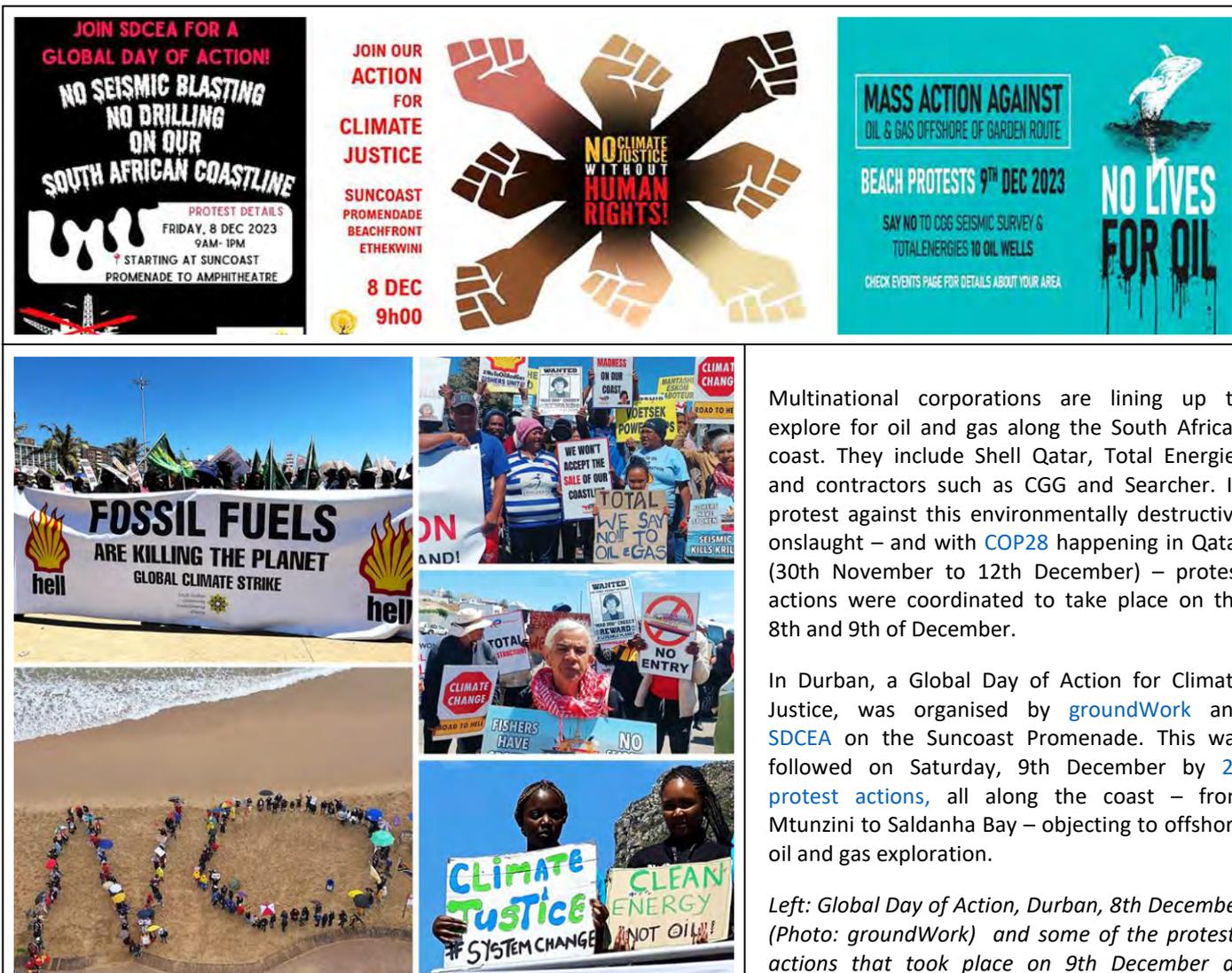
Daily Maverick 24 Oct 2023: [Watchdogs call for criminal charges after UPL's contaminated water pours into Durban river again](#)

Daily Maverick 03 Nov 2023: [High court orders UPL to prevent another toxic chemical water spill in Durban](#)

Daily Maverick 14 Nov 2023: [Happy tomato and tadpole tales don't tell the full story of UPL river devastation](#)

Daily Maverick 11 Dec 2023: [UPL asked to explain how 'Agent Orange' war poison chemical ended up in Durban river](#)

## Global Day of Action for Climate Justice and Offshore Oil & Gas Resistance | 08-09 December



Multinational corporations are lining up to explore for oil and gas along the South African coast. They include Shell Qatar, Total Energies and contractors such as CGG and Searcher. In protest against this environmentally destructive onslaught – and with COP28 happening in Qatar (30th November to 12th December) – protest actions were coordinated to take place on the 8th and 9th of December.

In Durban, a Global Day of Action for Climate Justice, was organised by [groundWork](#) and [SDCEA](#) on the Suncoast Promenade. This was followed on Saturday, 9th December by [28 protest actions](#), all along the coast – from Mtunzini to Saldanha Bay – objecting to offshore oil and gas exploration.

*Left: Global Day of Action, Durban, 8th December (Photo: groundWork) and some of the protest actions that took place on 9th December all along the SA Coast (photos via Oceans Not Oil)*

### Recent authorisations that led to these protest actions are:

- [UK-based CGG](#) has been granted an [Environmental Authorisation](#) to undertake a speculative 3D seismic survey in the Algoa/Outeniqua Basin off the Southeast Coast of South Africa. The authorisation was granted on the 16 November 2023 with appeals due by 13 December, a move calculated to take advantage of the upcoming holiday season.
- In October, Barbara Creecy, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE), [rejected appeals to block TotalEnergies' application](#) to drill for gas and oil in over 10 000 square kilometres off the West Coast between Cape Town and Cape Agulhas. This means [seismic surveys by Searcher](#) are planned to take place after 01 January 2024 unless taken to court.



## MORE INFORMATION

Greenpeace Africa 06 Jun 2023: [The Real Story On The Harms That Seismic Blasting Causes](#)

The Conservation 07 Sep 2023: [Whales stop singing and rock lobsters lose their balance: how seismic surveys harm marine life](#)

George Herald 30 Nov 2023: [Uproar over coastal seismic survey approval](#)

Daily Maverick 02 Oct 2023: [Drill, baby, drill: Environment Ministry gives Total green light for Western Cape offshore drilling](#)

Oceans Not Oil 05 Dec 2023: [Please Appeal & Protest against the CGG Seismic Survey authorisation](#)

GroundUp 07 Dec 2023: [Australian company to start seismic survey off West Coast in January](#)

Oceans Not Oil 07 Dec 2023: [Nationwide Actions erupt against Offshore Oil and Gas](#)

Daily Maverick 12 Dec 2023: [Activists scramble to submit appeal after government approves seismic survey in Algoa Basin](#)

Oceans Not Oil 14 Dec 2023: [ONO Appeals against CGG Seismic](#)

Oceans Not Oil 14 Dec 2023: [What Next for Off-Shore Oil and Gas Resistance?](#)

The Green Connection: [Who Stole Our Oceans campaign](#)

## WESSA KZN BRANCHES & PROJECTS



### Regional Overview & Branches Report Back

**Durban Branch** currently, mainly acts as the regions Youth Hub (*see below*) and as support for Friends of Pigeon Valley, an outstanding example of a Friends Group in an eThekweni Nature Reserve.

**Sani Wildlife Branch** is flourishing again with Russell Suchet as chair and youth again attending courses at uMngeni Valley.

**Southern KZN Branch**, under chair Paddy Norman, holds regular excursions and acts as a local environmental authority on numerous issues.

**Upper South Coast Branch** assists the KZN Region in managing the Umbogavango Environmental Education

**Kingsburgh Branch** continues to meet regularly and act as a point of contact for the region on various issues.

### WESSA KZN Youth (Durban & Midlands)

As reported on in this Newsletter, our KZN Youth Volunteers have been very active during the past year. We are fortunate to have an outstanding group of resourceful young people willing and able to take the initiative and actively organise and participate in a range of projects and activities. Those on the Youth Committee are also gaining valuable experience working with regional projects and as nature guides in the uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve under the Ezemvelo-UIP.

**Amanzi Ethu Nobuntu:** WESSA KZN continues to provide financial support to [Amanzi Ethu Nobuntu](#) for work being undertaken in uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve.

**JB Law Trust:** The Hawaan Forest Project, uMhlanga is funded by the JB Law Trust. Currently we are waiting for feedback from the attorneys who hold the JB Law funds in trust. Eco-ranger Bernard Chatikobo heads the project.

**Umbogavango Environmental Education Centre:** The 2024 grant from AECI will continue to fund this project, which includes two environmental educator positions.

**Maqatsheni Hiking Club:** Sani Wildlife Branch mentors this WESSA Friends group based in the southern Berg.

## WESSA KZN BRANCHES & PROJECTS



### WESSA KZN Sani Wildlife Branch

Russell Suchet of Sani Lodge Backpackers has taken up the position as Branch Chair again and fund raising efforts have enabled Sani Branch to support a group of young environmentalists to attend a course at uMngeni Valley. This started with an *Eco-Champions* essay competition at Pholela High School with the prize-winners spending four days at uMngeni Valley. The intention is that this becomes an annual event. Russell and the committee have also been putting forward an Environmental Manifesto for the NDZ Municipality. This manifesto is directed towards the Councillors appointed in the last local election, all of whom have been affiliated to Sani Wildlife prior to their new positions, and one is now the mayor. This document covers the following, very important areas of concern: Waste Management; Water; Alien Vegetation; Climate Change; and Biodiversity.

*LEFT: Ayanda Shabalala giving his presentation at Pholela High School.*



*Sani Wildlife Branch Eco-Champion essay winners spent four days at WESSA uMngeni Valley*



## **WESSA KZN Southern KZN Branch**

*By Branch Chair & Regional Vice Chair Paddy Norman*

The Southern KZN Branch works with other local groups in the area, especially [The Green Net](#) and local conservancies. In recent months we have had several public meetings, most notably a meeting to alert the public to the implications of the proposed dam in the Umzimkulu Estuary. This took the form of a panel discussion with Prof. Turton, Des de Sa from SDCEA, and the WESSA Branch chair. It was reported in the local press and also caught the attention of the national press. READ ARTICLE: [Scepticism over Mzimkulu River plans](#). The Umzimkulu is [the last significant, free-flowing river in South Africa](#) and is as ecologically important as the Okavango. It is therefore vital that the correct solutions are implemented to ensure water security and appropriate economic development. READ ARTICLE: [Proposed Umzimkhulu weir is inappropriate solution](#)

We had a get together of local conservancies, which resulted in the DFFE setting up a meeting to promote the Forest Officers program in our area. We have supported talks on a wide variety of topics, from Bataleurs to bees, and beach management to biomimicry. The branch is pleased to report that in our area we remain actively engaged with the district municipality in both the Coastal Management Forum and the Biodiversity Forum. The branch continues to maintain a watching brief and participation on anything that affects our environment, including our landfill site and stormwater issues. On the positive side we look forward to WESSA rolling out the [Green Coast Program](#) and have several sites on our to do list as mentioned in the recent online presentation by Kerry McLean.

*LEFT: Top: A long climb up from the Umzimkulu River, where WESSA has been prominent in opposing the construction of a dam; Middle: A visit to Umtamvuna ... this huge male [baboon](#) fortunately chose to ignore us; Bottom: WESSA members 'building bridges' ... an impromptu initiative while hiking along the Ivungu River Trail.*



### 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 environmental education
- Collaborate and network with groups and organisations with similar objectives
- Raise awareness and promote public participation around key environmental issues

## KZN REGION & WESSA LIFE INFO

### About 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*



WESSA KZN REGION	
<b>KZN Executive Committee</b>	
Pieter Burger (Regional Rep) Margaret Burger (Regional Chair) Paddy Norman (Vice Chair & Enviro Governance Committee) Jenny Duvenage (Coordinator & General Membership Admin)	<b>Durban Youth Leaders</b> Siphiwe Rakgabale; Tebello Tsotetsi; Melisa Nonjiko; Siziwe Hlongwa; Zuzile Mpanza; Bernard Chatikobo
<b>Branches</b>	
<b>Kingsburgh:</b> Rob Jack (Chair) <b>Sani Wildlife:</b> Russell Suchet (Chair) <b>Upper South Coast:</b> Bob Skippings (Acting Chair) <b>Southern KZN:</b> Paddy Norman (Chair)	<b>Midlands Youth Leaders</b> Bheki Gcumisa; Nathan Kayembe; Fezile Khumalo
<b>Friends &amp; Affiliates   Partners</b>	
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