

Green Spiral



People Caring for the Earth



## WESSA KZN Newsletter | September 2024

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*Editing, Research, Layout & Design: Jenny Duvenage  
Content: Jenny Duvenage & Margaret Burger unless otherwise stated*

### EDUCATE. ADVOCATE. ACT



## OVERVIEW

WESSA KZN has had a busy year to date, with our youth volunteer base growing and our youth leaders rising to the occasion. Our branches are also active with ongoing events and projects and we are continuing to network with a wide range of other environmental organisations. See WESSA KZN Youth Page 19, WESSA KZN Projects Page 20-21, Networking & Partnerships Page 21-22.

Sani Wild Life Branch is engaged in an anti-litter campaign along the Sani Pass access route to Lesotho, which also extends into separating waste in the southern Sani district. The Sani Schools Essay Competition focuses on High Schools in the area. Funds for this project are raised through the annual Sani Wild Flower Walk with Elsa Pooley as the expert botanical guide. Successful candidates from schools attend a week long course on biodiversity at WESSA uMngeni Valley.

Southern KZN Branch plays a strong advocacy role in the region engaging with and reporting on: Umgeni and Ugu [water and sanitation issues](#); Coastal issues; the legitimacy and potential impacts of the [Umzumbe Lithium Mine](#); Proposals in progress for the [Eastern Seaboard Development Framework](#); Proposed harbour developments; Estuary Management Plans (one in progress with four out for tender) and a Dune Rehabilitation Plan.

Durban Branch currently functions as part of the Region with its main project being [Friends of Pigeon Valley \(FoPV\)](#). Acting as a longstanding stewardship partner to eThekweni, FoPV assists in keeping the nature reserve free of invasive alien plants and is an exceptional example of a working partnership with the Natural Resources Dept. under the larger city banner of Parks Recreation and Culture (PRC).

Currently, KZN Youth Volunteers have a group in eThekweni with a smaller group in the Midlands. Many of the Youth are nature conservation graduates and have qualified in various environmental fields. Connection and collaboration creates opportunities to learn, socialise and network with like-minded groups and individuals, while broad mentorship provides exposure to a variety of advocacy, education and citizen science activities.

## 2024 SPECIAL FOCUS DAYS

### October

01 World Vegetarian Day  
 02 Energy Efficiency Day  
 04 World Animal Day  
 05 World Teachers Day  
 07 World Habitat Day  
 7-13 National Marine Week  
 12 African Penguin Day  
 14 Sustainability Day  
 14 E-Waste Day  
 15 International Day of Rural Women  
 16 World Food Day  
 17 World Day for the Eradication of Poverty  
 21 Earth Worm Day  
 21 National Reptile Awareness Day  
 24 International Day of Climate Action  
 31 World Cities Day

### November

02 National Children's Day  
 10 International Day of Science and Peace  
 16 International Day for Tolerance  
 20 Universal Children's Day  
 21 World Fisheries Day  
 30 Buy Nothing Day

### December

04 World Conservation Day  
 04 International Cheetah Day  
 05 World Soil Day  
 05 International Volunteer Day  
 07 Birding Big Day (SA)  
 10 World Human Rights Day  
 11 International Mountain Day  
 14 International Monkey Day  
 20 International Human Solidarity Day

## KZN REGION

Regional Committee	Branches   Nodes	Affiliate Members	Business Members
<b>Chair:</b> Margaret Burger <b>Vice-Chair:</b> Paddy Norman ** <b>Regional Rep:</b> Pieter Burger <b>Coordinator:</b> Jenny Duvenage <b>Treasurer:</b> Indira Maharaj <b>Youth Chair:</b> Siziwe Hlongwa ** and Enviro Governance Committee (EGC)	Durban Youth Node Midlands Youth Node Southern KZN Sani Wildlife Upper South Coast & Kingsburgh	Pennington Conservancy Enviro Fixers Durban North Durban North Conservancy Westville Conservancy Mqatsheni Hiking Club Adopt a River Eco Solutions Friends of Pigeon Valley	South African Sugar Association (SASA) S&V Publications

### General information

**Info & Inquiries:** [membership@wessalife.org.za](mailto:membership@wessalife.org.za)  
**Apply online:** [WESSA LIFE membership](#)  
**Donate:** [WESSA LIFE donations](#)  
**Join us on Facebook:** [WESSA KwaZulu-Natal Region](#)

### Banking Details

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

### Contact details

Margaret Burger (Chair) [kzn.chair@wessalife.org.za](mailto:kzn.chair@wessalife.org.za)  
 Jenny Duvenage (Coordinator) [membership@wessalife.org.za](mailto:membership@wessalife.org.za)

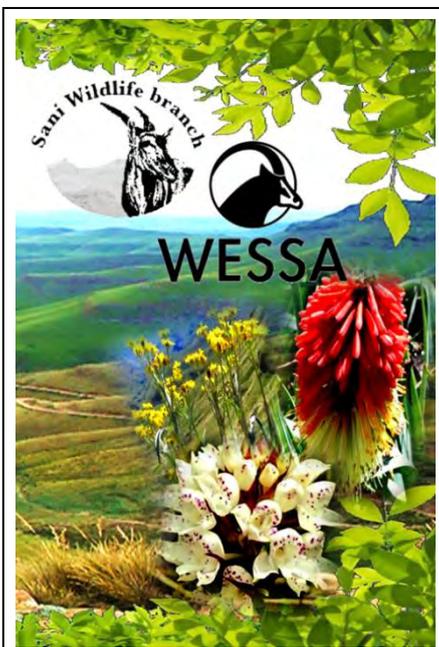
## EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

### WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION DAY | 26 January

From report by Zuzile Mpanza / Photos: S. Hlongwa, T. Tsotetsi & Z. Mpanza



On 26th January 2024, WESSA KZN Youth Volunteers hosted 14 children from Shining Stars Academy at uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve. They were taken on a guided forest walk and in the process learned of the interconnecting importance of wetlands, the forest, lagoon and ocean. In addition, they saw the effects of climate change following [heavy rainfall](#), which resulted in floods that almost destroyed the wetland. The human impact was also evident at the river mouth after the [UPL chemical spill disaster](#) plus the solid waste that continually pours into the ocean.



### SANI PASS WILDFLOWER WALK | 28 January

The Sani Pass Wildflower Walk is organised every year in January by the Sani Wildlife Branch of WESSA. This January, WESSA KZN Chair Margaret Burger joined this very special event, which takes place at the peak time that Berg flowers are in bloom. Expert botanist Elsa Pooley often leads the 8km walk, as she did again this year. Funds raised from the walk go towards Sani Branch's environmental education projects.

### YOUTH INDUCTION WORKSHOP | 09 March

From report by Melisa Nonjiko / Photos: S. Hlongwa and T. Tsotetsi

On the 9th of March, WESSA Durban youth group hosted an induction workshop for new sign-ups from the last quarter of 2023. This workshop was held at Margaret's home in Durban North, the beautiful scenery and tranquillity of her garden set the tone for the day. The objective of this workshop was to formally welcome the new members of the group, get to know them, and provide an understanding of the group and its objectives.



The program began with the history of WESSA, where we are now, our objectives and where we envision ourselves in the future. This was followed by an explanation of structure, current projects and activities, the role of volunteers and finally, the benefits and opportunities of joining WESSA Youth Durban.

### WESSA AWARDS | 13 March



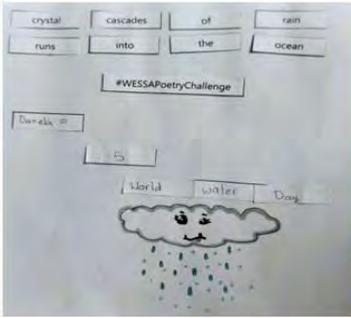
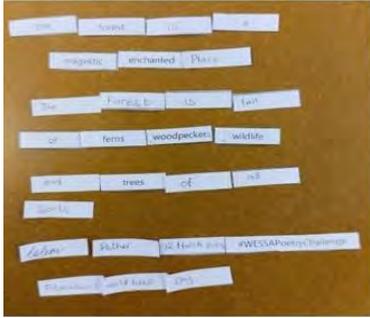
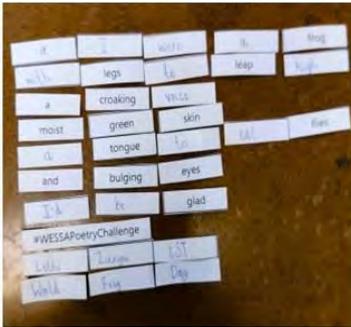
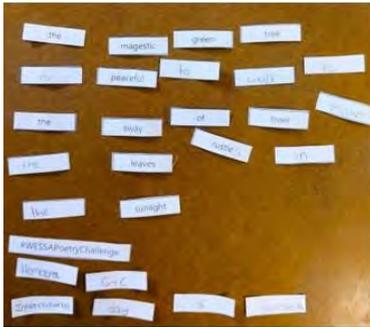
WESSA KZN Chair Margaret Burger, receiving a WESSA Individual Award in recognition of her outstanding contribution to citizen-led conservation and environmental education. 🌱 🌍

### ETHEKWENI CITY NATURE CHALLENGE | 26-27 April

Go to: [City Nature Challenge 2024: eThekweni Events](#)



## SPECIAL DAYS POETRY CHALLENGE



### World Water Day

Crystal cascades of rain  
run into the ocean.

Daniela Grade 5

### World Frog Day

If I were a frog with legs to leap high,  
a croaking voice, moist green skin,  
and a tongue to eat flies ... I'd be glad!

Lethi Grade 6

### International Day of Forests

The majestic green tree is peaceful to walk by.  
The sway of trees makes the leaves  
rustle in the sunlight.

Hemeera Grade 7

### International Day of Forests

The forest is a majestic, enchanted place.  
The forest is full of ferns, woodpeckers, wildlife  
and trees of all sorts.

Calem Grade 7



Virginia  
Preparatory  
School



## POETRY CHALLENGE

In response to our March Special Days Poetry Challenge, Virginia Preparatory School Environmental Club had fun with 'fridge magnet' poems. By creatively arranging individual words relating to the themes, these short poems, reminiscent of Haiku, emerged in time for *Human Rights Day (SA)*, *World Poetry Day*, and *International Day of Forests* – all on the 21st of March – as well as *World Frog Day*, which was on the 20th, and *World Water Day* on the 22nd. *National Water Week* also took place from 20-26 March. Thank you, Calem, Daniela, Hemeera and Lethi ... your poems made these days special indeed!

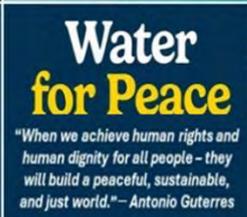
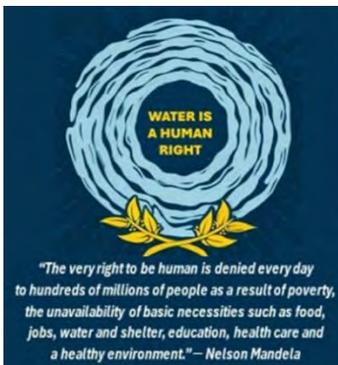


## HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

WESSA KZN youth leaders Zuzile Mpanza, Sibusi Chonco, and Tebello Tsoetsi (above right) and KZN coordinator Jenny Duvenage, participated in an amazing South African Human Rights Day at the Blue Waters Hotel.

The event was organised by the Active Citizens Movement with Zero Waste Durban, Amnesty International Durban, Greenpeace Local Volunteers, and the Centre for Fine Art Animation and Design (CFAD).

Inspiring speakers, short documentaries commemorating legendary human rights activists, stunning art by Nanda Sooben and CFAD students ... plus live music made for a truly memorable, informative and fun event!



## ENDANGERED SPECIES DAY AT UMHLANGA LAGOON NATURE RESERVE | 14th May

From report by Siziwe Hlongwa Photos: S. Hlongwa and T. Tsotetsi



On 14th May, Mthubi Primary School based in Inanda, participated in Endangered Species Awareness Day at uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve.

The 3-hour Environmental Education programme was facilitated by WESSA Youth Volunteers with the aim of educating learners, raising awareness, igniting a passion for nature, and encouraging sustainable behaviour.

The event was from 10h00 to 13h00, and 40 learners (Grades 4-7) with 3 teachers and 8 WESSA Youth Volunteers participated.

The programme entailed a guided forest walk that extended to the river and ocean. This highlighted human impacts on marine ecosystems and incorporated endangered species, climate change and recycling.

### Images above L-R

1. At the river mouth, Zuzile explains water ecosystems, tides, and the human impact on marine life.
2. Siziwe and Zuzile leading a forest walk.
3. Zuzile talks on endangered species and global warming with the Pickersgill's reed frog as an example.
4. Sipiwe Ndlozi conducting a waste management study on recycling.



## HAWAAN FOREST TRAIL WIDENING | 30th May

From report by Bernard Chatikobo

Photos: B. Chatikobo

The Hawaan Forest is a high-density forest that results in many thorny bushes and roots growing across the trail. These can pose a danger to visitors so, over a two week period, an intensive hacking and snipping operation was undertaken. This resulted in the trail being cleared and opened up sufficiently for visitors to walk freely without the risk of scratches or tripping on roots. Raking the path free of leaves took another three days.

The trail maintenance was completed in time for eThekweni Enviro Week and two walks were arranged with participants ranging from 9 years to over 70 years. Short links were also established, connecting the pipeline and Hawaan Estate trails to what is now known as the WESSA Trail. The WESSA Trail acknowledges the contribution of the JB Law Trust Fund.

## KWANUNU EXHIBITION AT THE DURBAN NATURAL SCIENCE MUSEUM | 21 June



On 21 June, WESSA KZN Youth participated in the KwaNunu Exhibition, an annual interactive exhibition hosted by the Durban Natural Science Museum. The purpose of 'KwaNunu' – meaning 'Place of the Animals' – is to showcase South Africa's wide biodiversity and its importance in the environment, thereby initiating a dialogue among the younger generation on the role people can play in the conservation of our natural heritage, which is so necessary to our wellbeing and survival.



### ETHEKWINI ENVIRO WEEK | 01-08 June 2024

Enviro Week is a call to action for everyone in eThekweni to work together to care for the environment. On the Special Enviro Days that fall within this week, various events and activities took place focusing on the following themes

#### JUNE

- 01 World Reef Day
- 03 World Bicycle Day
- 05 World Environment Day
- 05 World Day against Illegal Fishing
- 08 World Oceans Day

## CLEAN-UP, SPORTS DAY & NATURE JOURNALING ON WORLD OCEANS DAY | 8th June

*From report by Zuzile Mpanza / Photos: M. Burger and Z. Mpanza*



**Above:** WESSA Youth doing Nature Journaling while others play

On 8th June – for World Ocean Day and as part of eThekweni Enviro Week – WESSA Durban Youth arranged a Clean-up and Sports Day event. This took place at Beachwood Riverside Park with the aim of cleaning along the Riverside Trail; raising awareness of environmental conservation; and connecting with the homeless community living in the area to establish a positive connection and encourage maintaining a cleaner, safer space. The team collectively removed 40 bags of waste, following which they convened to the Beachwood soccer field for a friendly game of soccer. Each team had 7 players and 2 reserves. The match started at 12h00 with great excitement. Team A dominated the early stages by scoring a stunning goal within the first 15-minutes. Team B tried to strike but Team A managed to score 3 goals in the first half. The game resumed after a 15 minute break for oranges and water. Team A's defence continued to hold strong, eventually securing them a 3-1 win. Without a doubt, the soccer match was great fun and a highly successful addition to the event. During the match, some of the WESSA youth engaged with Natural Journaling while Margaret and others prepared a braai for lunch

**Images Below:** (L-R) 1. Clean-up along the trail 2. WESSA team with bags of waste collected. 3. Group photo of participants at the event



**WELCOMING OF THE WHALES FESTIVAL | 29th June**  
*From report by Tebello Tsotesti / Photos: T. Tsotesti*



WESSA KZN Youth participated in the 7th Annual 'Welcoming of the Whales' Festival hosted by [Sodurba Tourism Association](#),

The Festival took place on the Bluff, between Anstey's and Brighton Beach. It included an Educational Centre, Arts and Craft Market, Food Stalls and various beach activities.

This annual event aims to raise awareness about the conservation of whales plus strengthen community unity and active involvement via interactive activities and events. WESSA KZN youth volunteers organised a beach clean-up and played an educational role by providing information about the marine environment.

## IMFOLOZI MTB CHALLENGE | 30th June

From report by Zuzile Mpanza

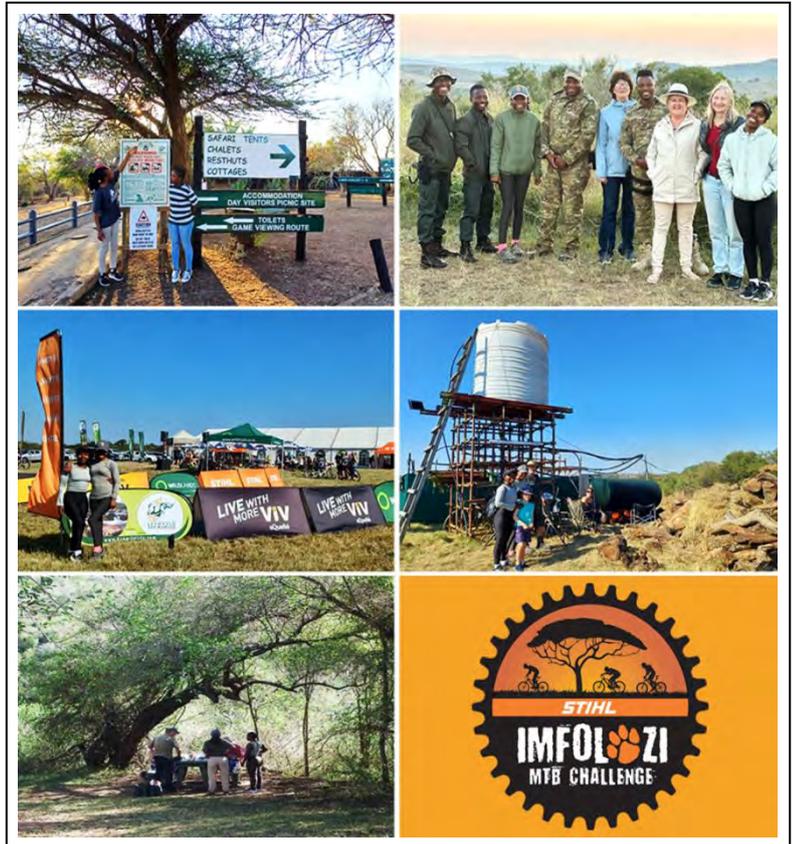
Photos: M. Burger and S. Hlongwa

The iMfolozi MTB Challenge takes riders through the middle of Africa's Oldest Game Reserve on a 2-day, 57km route that encompasses valley thicket, open savannah grasslands, and amazing ridge lines with extensive wilderness views.

The Challenge was started by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife as a way of exposing the general public to the reserve and all its beauty. On the 30th of June, two of our WESSA KZN Youth leaders, Siziwe and Zuzile, participated in this two days mountain biking event considered to be one of the wildest mountain biking experiences in Africa.

### Images L-R

1. Siziwe and Zuzile at the reception area at iMfolozi Park
2. K9 Unit team and event participants
3. Siziwe and Zuzile at the MTB challenge
4. Zuzile, Siziwe and EKZNW Honorary Officers
5. The team at Isiwabasabafazi Picnic Area



## BURSON ALI WAL SHOAL EXCURSION | 16th July

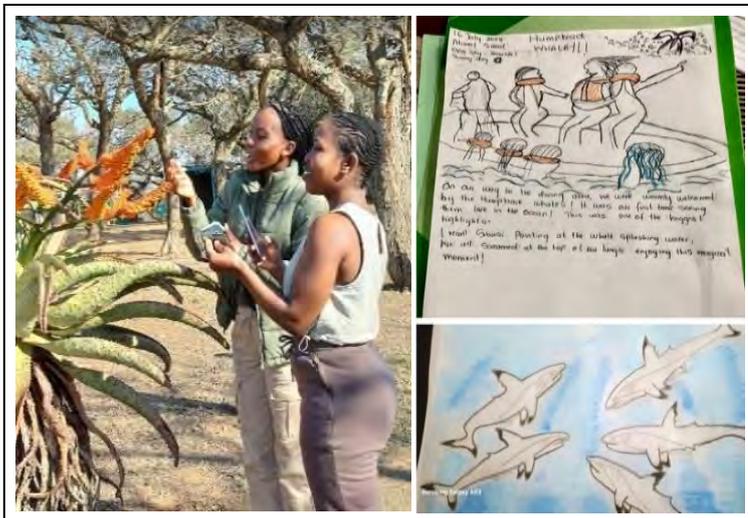
From reports by Siziwe Hlongwa & Zuzile Mpanza / Photos: S. Hlongwa and Z. Ndhlovu



**Images:** (Top) WESSA KZN Youth Leaders with Zandile Ndhlovu and Lindi from the Discovery Agency.

**See article:** [Diving into diversity with Discovery Shark Week's Black Mermaid](#)

**See NJSA Interview:** [Fearless Diving with Sharks](#)



On Tuesday 16th July, five WESSA KZN Youth leaders participated in a sponsored ocean excursion at [Aliwal Shoal](#), off the South Coast at Umkomaas. The excursion was organised by the Burson PR Agency on behalf of [Discovery Channel Africa's Shark Week](#), which premiered on 15th July.

They partnered with the [Black Mermaid Foundation](#), which specialises in introducing young girls of colour to the ocean through snorkel excursions. The Foundation is founded and directed by Zandile Ndhlovu, a South African conservationist and the first black woman, free-diving instructor in South Africa.

The day began with basic training before proceeding to the diving area. The snorkelling activity took about 90 minutes before everyone headed back to the Diving Centre and then on to lunch at a nearby restaurant. The excursion offered educational insights, thrilling shark encounters, and a focus on African marine life.

*"The 16th of July was a dream come true, when we went free-diving for the first time in our lives and got to see blue whales, dolphins and rays, blacktip reef sharks and a sea turtle ... thank you Black Mermaid Foundation for this wonderful opportunity."* — Zuzile Mpanza

**Images Above:** (Left) Nature Journaling: Siziwe and Zuzile photographing aloes. (Right) Journaling by Siziwe ('Pointing at whales') and Sibusi ('Blacktip sharks'.)



#### MANDELA MONTH PROGRAMME | July 2024

- 05 July | EEPAN Webinar:** Monthly online webinar
- 13 July | Nature Journaling SA Zoom Meet-Up:** with Cati Vawda and the NJSA community
- 14 July | uMngeni Estuary Conservancy Annual Social:** uMngeni Estuary Conservancy and WESSA members at the Beachwood Mangroves
- 18 July | Nelson Mandela Day Virginia Bush Walk:** A call to the community to assist Virginia Bush Nature Reserve in removing invasive alien species
- 27 July | WESSA KZN Annual Regional Meeting:** Umbogavango Environmental Education Centre & Nature Reserve | Bird and Tree Walks in the Reserve | Bring & Braai Lunch.

#### REGULAR ACTIVITIES

- Hawaan Forest Nature Therapy Walks with WESSA guide and eco-ranger Bernard Chatikobo.
- uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve walks with Tebello Tsoetsi & Zuzile Mpanza every day, by arrangement.
- Umbogavango Nature Reserve Walks with local Community Conservancies.
- Umbogavango EE Centre & Nature Reserve School visits throughout the month, and walks by arrangement.

#### MANDELA DAY AT VIRGINIA BUSH: IAP CLEARING | 18th July

For Nelson Mandela International Day, WESSA KZN and Durban North Conservancy arranged to meet at Virginia Bush Nature Reserve in Durban North to spend 67 minutes removing invasive alien species such as *Tradescantia zebrina* and *Tradescantia fluminensis*.



**Images**

**Above left:** Invasive Alien Plant removal teams at Virginia Bush.

**Above right:** See Northglen News Article: [Locals tackle alien invasive species at Virginia Bush Nature Reserve.](#)

- Siziwe Hlongwa, of WESSA KZN was joined by Kiara Mohan and Yashna Jhinu in removing IAPs.
- Margaret Burger (Chair WESSA KZN) and Jane Troughton of Durban North Conservancy
- **Right:** [Watch video on X](#)



**WESSA KZN ANNUAL REGIONAL MEETING | 27 July**

The WESSA KZN Annual Regional Meeting was held at the Umbogavango Environmental Education Centre and Nature Reserve in Umbogintwini.

The event included Bird and Tree Walks in the Reserve before and after the meeting, and a bring & braai lunch.

A highlight of the meeting was the official election of Siziwe Hlongwa as the Youth Chair on the KZN committee.

**KHETHA NEW NARRATIVES 2024  
GAME CHANGERS GALA EVENT | 31 July**

*From report by Siziwe Hlongwa  
Photos: R. Inglis, D. Chiwangwa,  
and F. Kockott*

This Gala Event was held in Hoedspruit to celebrate the contribution of Khetha Game Changers. Khetha New Narratives is a story project that focuses on tackling wildlife crime through Roving Reporters journalism training.

Khetha Game changers are individuals and projects that bring about a positive transformation in the Kruger area by advancing conservation and community wellbeing.



The Khetha New Narratives 2024 trainees were awarded for completing the first phase of the project, together with the young Environmental Writer of the Year Award.

There were about 70 participants: young reporters, high school students, and conservationists from various green organisations including SANParks, WWF and South African Wildlife College. *“If I was a Journalist”* was a keynote topic.

**Images above L-R**

1. Maxcine Carter receives the Young Environmental Reporter of the Year Award for 2023.
2. WESSA KZN Youth leader Siziwe Hlongwa, receives her certificate for completing the first phase of training on wildlife crime reporting.
3. Lindie Botha, the Khetha Story Project Manager.
4. Human elephant stones connect us to our source, to life, and to the Earth.

“The multifaceted approach of the Khetha 2024 Story Project involving webinars, online training, and story grants, represents an effective training model to enhance media reporting on wildlife crime and conservation challenges in the Greater Kruger.”

**WORLD WATER AWARENESS DAY FOR WORLD WATER WEEK | 23 August**



**Above:** Preparations for World Water Awareness Day

KZN Youth leaders, Tebello and Zuzile organised a special **Water Awareness Day** on 23rd August at uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve. Around 40 participants attended from Christianenburg Primary School in Clermont.



**CLIMATE CHANGE MULTIPLIER WORKSHOP | 31 August**

*From report by Siziwe Hlongwa  
Photos: S. Hlongwa and N. Manzini*

Three of our WESSA Youth leaders attended a *Climate Change Multiplier Workshop* facilitated by Marlies Craig and hosted by Kloof High School and [EASTERAction](#).

There were 11 participants in total. These included educators from Wild Trust, Umkhumbane Schools Project, DUCT, and teachers from Hillcrest High and St Mary's.

**Images**

1. Discussion session with participants
2. Climate Change presentation by Marlies Craig
3. Interactive activity on the main contributors to climate change
4. Group pic of participants before lunch break
5. WESSA Youth attending the workshop L-R Sibusi Chonco, Ndumiso Manzini and Siziwe Hlongwa



**Image:** From article [Progress with partners](#) by Marlies Craig

The purpose of the workshop was to empower educators, teachers, learners – and thereby families and communities – to spread climate knowledge and stimulate action. The programme aims to build climate change literacy and accelerate citizen action with the goal of mitigating climate change to secure a liveable planet. It is an action-based programme that is at an advanced stage in some aspects while others are still under development. The idea is to have 3 modules each of which has different units and activities.

**Module 1:** Core facts and standard information on climate change.

**Module 2:** What I can do about it, based on a booklet that takes one through key areas.

**Module 3:** Climate adaptation based on local circumstances to help communities adapt to a changing climate.

**The workshop covered the following:**

- What is this all about?
- Low levels of climate literacy despite decades of knowledge,
- Can civil society drive change and can the youth spread the message?
- Can we trigger a social tipping point that results in urgent and effective climate action?
- Overview of the Edu-Action Programme & What I can do about climate change.

**WESSA members attended the annual [Botsoc KZN Coastal Plant Fair](#) at the Durban Botanical Gardens**

**The Botsoc KZN Coastal Plant Fair took place at the Durban Botanic Gardens Visitors Complex, 14 and 15 September.**



**Friday, 20 September 2024**

Members of the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) KZN, Silungile Maphumulo, Zuzile Mpanza, Sibusisiwe Chonco and Sizwe Hlongwa, enjoy the selection of indigenous plants on sale.

## Locals root for indigenous plants

**Shiraz Habbib**  
shirazh@dbn.caxton.co.za

THE Durban Botanic Gardens was a hive of activity this weekend as plant lovers visited the annual Botanical Society KZN Coastal Branch Indigenous Plant Fair. The fair, which ran over two days, saw a selection of KZN nurseries that sold indigenous plants.

Visitors and local residents also had the opportunity to purchase pots and plants as well as indigenous gardening handbooks. Di Higginson, who has been involved with the fair since the early 90s, thanked the residents for their support.

"The fair was a great way to drive awareness on the significance of planting indigenous, especially as it helps promote biodiversity," she said.

In a statement on



North Durban honorary officers, Vanessa Brummer and Rosemary Harrison, sell plants potted at the nursery at the Beachwood Mangroves Nature Reserve. *Photos: Shiraz Habbib*

Members of the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) KZN, Silungile Maphumulo, Zuzile Mpanza, Sibusisiwe Chonco and Sizwe Hlongwa, enjoy the selection of indigenous plants on sale.

The Maunier family, Gabi, Amalia and Cruz

Horticulturalist and one of the organisers of the event, Muhammad Adamjee.



**PLANNING MEETING WITH YOUTH LEADERS**

Margaret, Ndu, Siziwe, Melisa and Zuzile after a meeting to plan the upcoming Youth Gathering & Induction on 24th August, with iNaturalist and GSB learning to prepare those wishing to participate in the Great Southern Bioblitz 20-23 September 2024

**YOUTH GATHERING & INDUCTION | 24 August**  
Umbogavango Nature Reserve

**At the event, participants:**

- Engaged in team building activities and games
- Learned about the importance of the iNaturalist App for the upcoming Great Southern Bioblitz, 20-23 September
- Did some Nature Journaling together with discussions on interesting conservation topics.
- Newly signed up volunteers completed a one-hour induction session.



WESSA KZN Youth Gathering and Induction at uMbogavango Nature Reserve | 24th September 2024



**SOUTHERN KZN BRANCH**

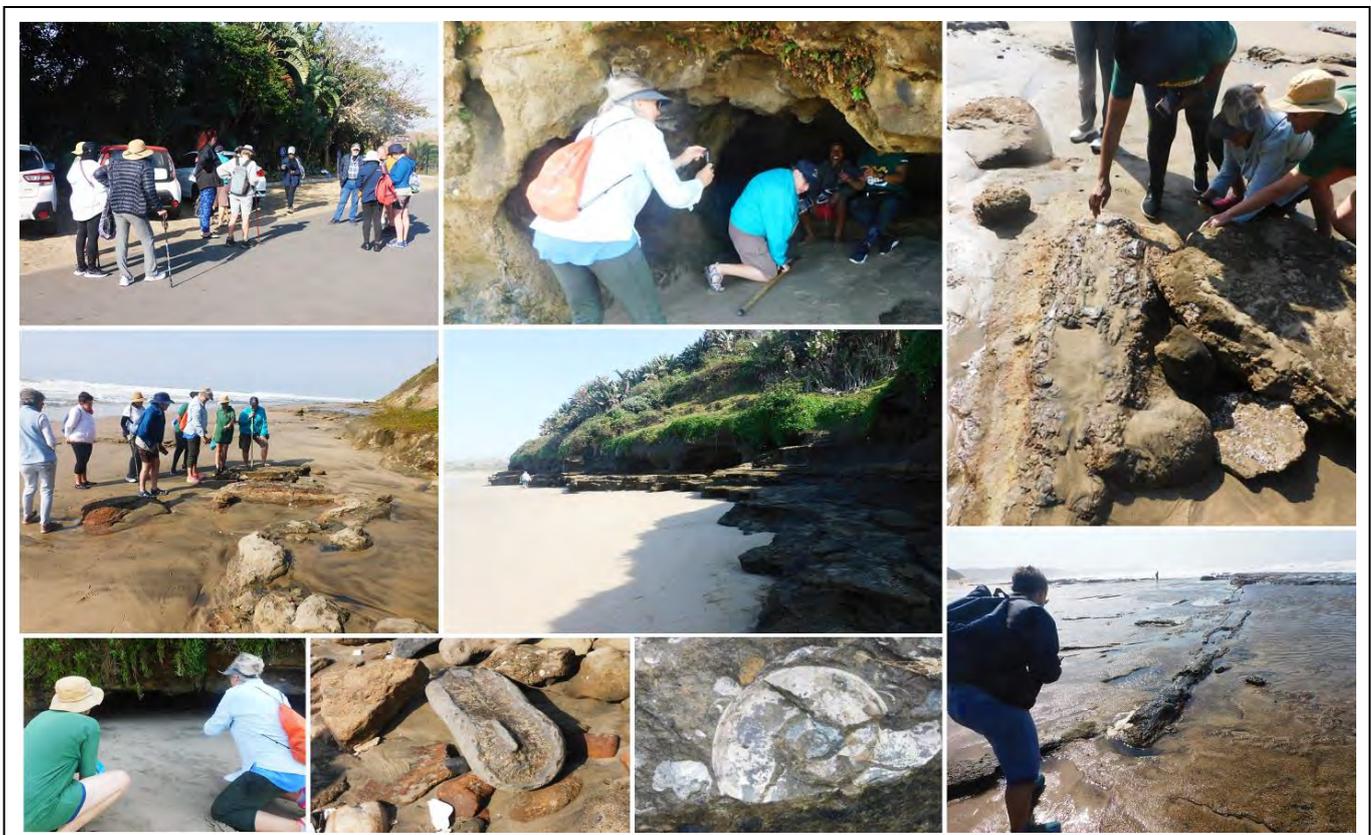
From report by Paddy Norman, (Branch Chair, Regional Vice Chair & Environmental Governance Committee)



**Environmental Issues with which the branch is engaged**

- Umgeni & Ugu water and sanitation
- Coastal issues, especially the social media fracas over the illegal construction of steps (now gone) at Port Edward
- Umzumbe Lithium Mine, its legitimacy and potential impacts
- Eastern Seaboard Region SDF – no feedback, but proposals are in progress
- Proposed harbour developments – meeting with Govt appointed feasibility team
- One estuary management plan in progress, four more out for tender, along with a dune rehabilitation plan
- Honorary Officer beach walks as an opportunity to make contacts
- Threats to Durban's DMOSS system
- Environmental education for realtors!
- Support for conservancies; etc.

Images Above: Southern KZN Branch AGM Southbroom meeting, walk and braai



This outing was a gentle stroll along the beach, with or without a trek over the hills. On the **24th of August**, with low tide at 12h30, we met at 09h00 in the beach car park at the Wild Coast Sun for a walk to the [Mzamba Caves](#), renowned for their fossil trees, molluscs and extinct 'whatevers'. The inland route back has beautiful grasslands and nice views. A picnic followed!

**SANI WILDLIFE BRANCH** From report by Russell Suchet (Branch Chair)



Are you a Grade 10 learner in the Dr. NDZ Municipal area? Then enter the exciting Sani Wildlife **ECO-CHAMPIONS WESSA COMPETITION 2024** uMngeni Valley

**TOPIC:**  
What are the main types of waste generated in our community, and how do they impact the environment? Discuss how cultural attitudes and behaviours affect recycling habits within YOUR community?

**HOW TO ENTER:**  
Candidates are expected to prepare:  
1) AN ESSAY OF 500 OR MORE WORDS  
Entry Deadline for Essay: Friday 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2024.  
We will then notify the top 30 candidates who will be asked to prepare:  
2) AN ORAL PRESENTATION TO THE JUDGES  
3) A POSTER SUMMARISING THEIR PRESENTATION

We will acknowledge receipt of your essay and then contact the top 30 candidates to arrange the time and venue for your oral presentation accompanied by your poster which will take place on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2024.

Presentations to be in English.  
Email to [russ.suchet@gmail.com](mailto:russ.suchet@gmail.com) or WhatsApp: 0817724319 or by hand to your principal.  
Every entry must be accompanied by the name and contact phone number of the candidates.

**PRIZE:**  
A 4 night | 5-day environmental course at WESSA's world-renowned uMngeni Valley Nature Reserve. In addition to the course, the focus of which will be to empower you to be an advocate for environmental justice in your community, the visit will include hiking and viewing the local population of animals and a special visit to the spectacular Howick Falls.  
This great prize includes transport from Underberg, accommodation, meals and the course itself.  
There will be 10 prize winners.  
This will take place from 12- 16 December 2024.

**Sani Wildlife Branch Eco-champions Competition**

The inaugural Eco-champions essay competition was launched in 2023 and was extremely successful, as detailed in the report back after its conclusion.

**Vision:** To send 10 prize-winners on a 4-night | 5-day course at uMngeni Valley.

**Aims:**

- To encourage young people in our municipal district to think about environmental issues
- To improve their English writing and oral skills
- To show young people that issues around their environment are ‘cool’ and that it is a positive thing for them to think about and advocate for such issues
- To expose young people who have often not left the district before to go to uMngeni Valley and experience more of what our province has to offer
- To expose them to the fantastic educators at uMngeni Valley and thus to change the course of their lives
- And ultimately, to truly make them Eco-champions in their communities.

uMngeni Valley have been extremely supportive of the competition, and it would not have worked without the input of Sifundo Sibiyi. In addition, they offer our groups a very special price which means that the exercise is viable for our branch.

**Images above L-R**

1. Heather Wilson and Russell Suchet showcasing the Recycling Project established with the local municipality
2. Essay competition winners with WESSA KZN Youth Leaders, Melisa Nonjiko and Siziwe Hlongwa
3. Paddy Norman and Bart Fokkens
4. Russell Suchet (Branch Chair) and Bart Fokkens (Branch Treasurer)
5. Vulture restaurant and hide at Bushman’s Nek



**KINGSBURGH BRANCH**

Kingsburgh Branch continues to meet as a small, committed group. It stays in touch with local Eco Schools and Sports Clubs; participates in and reports on various activities e.g. cleanups, walks, the Ashburton Aloe Festival; and keeps an eye on issues like waste management and sand winning.



## WESSA KZN YOUTH

### Green Matchmaking Focus Areas

<b>Conservation</b>	Ecosystems & Biodiversity; Water Protection; Citizen Science; Enviro Education
<b>Local Initiatives For the Environment (LIFE)</b>	Community Food Gardens; Waste Minimisation; Green Enterprise; Environmental Education & Skills Training; Green Energy Solutions
<b>Green Art In Action (GAIA)</b>	Poetry; drama; artwork; writing; nature journaling; photography; videography
<b>Environmental Governance</b>	Environmental Rights, Advocacy & Compliance

Initiated in 2012 with an Environmental Youth Leaders Course, WESSA KZN Youth has proven to be a successful programme with much potential still to be realised. Durban Branch soon became a Youth Node run for and by WESSA KZN Youth Volunteers, followed by Midlands Youth, based in Howick under the guidance of ‘Howickman’ Bheki Gcumisa. Ideally, a Youth Node – based in the Underberg area as part of the Sani Wild Life Branch – is the next goal.

Both members and supporters may wish to become active volunteers. Generally however, youth sign up as supporters and, although they may not be able to afford to pay an annual subscription, can make a valuable contribution to the work we do by becoming active volunteers and at the same time, gaining skills and experience. Active volunteers submit a *Green Matchmaking Profile* and once they have completed an Induction Course and participated in a number of activities, receive a WESSA T-shirt and cap. In addition, we are hoping to introduce certificates of acknowledgement.

The following (and above) is an overview of the goals and focus areas of the Green Matchmaking Programme. This developed from WESSA LIFE (*Local Initiatives For the Environment*), which was workshopped with the Regions and National Office in 2014.

### Work, learning and play

WESSA LIFE (*Local Initiatives For the Environment*) is aimed at growing the environmental movement from the ground up by working actively in our communities with volunteer members, supporters and partners.

- 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

## WESSA KZN PROJECTS



### Images (L-R)

1. Biodiversity Stewardship with eThekweni's Bheka Memela and Isimahla Conservancy at the Vumbuka Nature Reserve
2. Sibusi and Siziwe with Grade 7s from Sophie Phewa Primary school leading an interactive discussion in the forest amongst the pine trees.
3. Learners exploring 'The Owl House' one of the old buildings in the Reserve dating back to WW2.
4. Siziwe Hlongwa with Grade 4s from Phupphuma Primary learning about a *Kigelia africana* tree.
5. Sesifikile Primary Grades 6&7
6. Siziwe with Sophie Phewa Grade 6s on the newly restored bridge, leading a talk on how climate change has affected Umbogavango infrastructure over the years.
7. Grade 4 learner from Phupphuma completing a painting of a tree
8. Sibusisiwe leading a forest walk with Adams Primary.

### UMBOGAVANGO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & RESOURCE CENTRE

This is an ongoing programme sponsored by AECl for the past 32 years, which connects learners to a natural green space in a very urban, industrial environment. To date in 2024, almost 2 000 learners from local disadvantaged schools have visited. The Centre exposes learners to activities supporting the CAPS from Grade 4 to Grade 7. We are encouraging other community groups to apply and experience this special place we have the privilege to occupy. In addition, the programme supports our KZN WESSA Youth to gain experience in becoming environmental educators of a high standard. All educators, part time or full time, attended First Aid training recently. Exposure to other areas of nature guiding is also supported. The reserve boasts an extensive bird list, not only at Umbogavango but also at Vumbuka, the AECl reserve that had 25 000 trees planted to restore the historical slime dams. Now, 25 years later, Vumbuka is a haven for raptors and a strong refuge for local birds.

Access to Vumbuka is extremely controlled, and we are privileged to be allowed to utilise this reserve as we did on 23 August. This event was hosted by WESSA KZN, IsiMahla Conservancy and Bheka Memela, Specialist Ecologist and Stewardship Manager with eThekwini's Biodiversity Management Dept. Mr. Musa Mfeka from Burman Bush also joined us to share his extensive knowledge of trees acquired through years of experience as a ranger in the eThekwini Parks, Recreation & Culture Dept. and Environmental Planning & Climate Protection.

### HAWAAN FOREST PROJECT & UMHLANGA LAGOON NATURE RESERVE | ECO-RANGERS

This project continues the historical involvement of WESSA's uMhlanga Branch in the Hawaan Forest and the uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve. It is a joint project between the Hawaan Home Owners Association, WESSA and other supporting entities. We regard this as a critical partnership and are seeing a benefit in that the Trail inside the Hawaan Forest is now labelled the WESSA Trail. Durban Youth's core leadership group – two of whom are based at the uMhlanga Lagoon Nature Reserve – have taken the lead in many activities thereby developing important skills while gaining knowledge and experience. The venue, supported by Breakers Resort and the UIP in uMhlanga, lends itself ideally to education across forest, lagoon, wetland and beach. This was evident in the event organised by our Youth members on 23 August as part of World Water Awareness Day for World Water Week | 20-24 August 2024.

**DON'T MESS WITH MZANSI.** *What we throw away doesn't just disappear ... there is no such thing as 'away'!* Don't Mess with Mzansi is an anti-litter campaign that goes 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.

### **CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL OFFICE PROJECTS**

Roving Reporters and the Khetha Project | Siziwe Hlongwa; Environmental Governance Committee (EGC) Contribution by Paddy Norman; Eco Schools | Support for the WESSA AECI Modderfontein EE project; Blue Flag and Green Coast | Pennington Conservancy and Green Coast through Paddy Norman on the South Coast in the Ugu Region.

### **SANI WILDLIFE ECO-CHAMPIONS ESSAY COMPETITION & SOUTHERN DRAKENSBERG RECYCLING PROJECT**

Eco-champions Essay Competition is aimed at creating awareness of deep environmental issues and how to better co-learn with our Youth to resolve sustainability and stewardship issues. Funds are raised through the Wild Flower Walk annually. Winners of the competition are awarded with a week at uMngeni Valley.

Sani Wildlife has worked successfully with municipal management in the southern Drakensberg to fund and establish a recycling facility that includes waste collection and waste delivery to the Himeville transition dump.

### **M19 GRASSLAND CORRIDOR PROJECT**

This is a new project that supports and secures an indigenous grassland corridor from Pinetown to the N2 along the M19. The New Germany Nature Reserve is included in this critical zone. The KZN Region supports the project through its relationship with Westville Conservancy.

## **NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS**

**EEPAN** (eThekweni Environmental Educators and Public Awareness Network) Established in 2023 by Luci Coelho, Pandora Long and Margaret Burger, EEPAN focuses on environmental awareness, education and networking in the eThekweni Municipal Area. Initially supported by Green Corridors NPC, climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as encouraging the participation of an active citizenry, are central to its operational model.



Celebrating 5 June as World Environment Day. WESSA, uMngeni Estuary Conservancy, Adopt a River, Tri Ecomvelo and the YES programme team for EEPAN and eThekweni Enviro Week

**HAWAAN FOREST ESTATE HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION:** WESSA KZN has historically assisted in keeping the Hawaan (owned by Tongaat Hulett's) as original coastal forest and a no-go development zone in the denser uMhlanga area. See additional reporting (page 20) on the WESSA Trail in the Hawaan Forest.

**AAR, UEC & SEF:** Working on the north bank of the uMngeni Estuary Zone, WESSA KZN partnered with Adopt-a-River NPC and the uMngeni Estuary Conservancy through the Social Employment Fund available via DUCT. New tenders are on offer from eThekweni to NPC's but we are unsure of whether or not to apply at this stage.

**INATURALIST AND THE CITY NATURE CHALLENGE:** WESSA KZN regularly participates in this global Challenge with SANBI, eThekweni, and the Botanical Society. This is in addition to the Great Southern Bioblitz, which takes place in September and focuses on the Southern Hemisphere. **See:** [WESSA iNaturalist Projects](#). In addition we have expanded our area of interest to include nature journaling as part of the GeoArtBlitz, a project on iNaturalist.

**CONSERVANCIES KZN:** The KZN Region has a strong relationship with Conservancies KZN. Members from both organisations collaborate around issues of advocacy and compliance, which affect both the south and north coasts of KZN. Many WESSA members are also members of conservancies where action and education take place locally. Paddy Norman, Jenny Duvenage and Margaret Burger serve on the Executive Committee of CKZN. Conservancies formed in the traditional areas have been invited to visit the Umbogavango Nature Reserve linking the project to eThekweni's Biodiversity & Stewardship Manager and the Municipality. WESSA KZN and CKZN also connect with SANBI and the Botanical Society for the iNaturalist challenges.

**GREEN CORRIDORS NPC:** WESSA KZN has a longstanding relationship with Green Corridors and supports waste management projects around litter booms and recycling.

**ETHEKWINI NATURAL SCIENCE MUSEUM:** WESSA KZN Youth Volunteers network and volunteer as guides and researchers at the Durban Natural Science Museum, uShaka Marine (to become marine guides) and the Durban Botanical Gardens (guiding schools.) Midlands Youth Volunteers join local conservancies, especially Symonnds Stream (near uMngeni Valley), and Beacon Hill in Howick.

**NATURE JOURNALING SOUTH AFRICA (NJSA)** Youth from WESSA Durban and Cape Town are NJSA members, and participate in Nature Journaling with Cati Vawda. Cati is also a WESSA member who has moved from KZN to the Western Cape – we value working with members across regions. Bongani Chisale our previous Youth leader, cemented these Cape networks when working at restoring the Cape fynbos in mountainous areas. Bongani is now back in KwaZulu-Natal supporting our Youth volunteers once again. **See website: [Nature Journaling South Africa](#) Read: [KZN Conservation Awareness and Nature Journaling for Learners](#) Guest bloggers Siziwe and Margaret relay their introduction of the new SA Nature Journaling zine to learners - keep your eyes open for more about the zine in the newsletter.**

**ROVING REPORTERS:** RR focuses on training environmental science graduates and young journalists keen to write for the media on environmental and social justice issues. Through Fred Kockott and the Khetha Project, WESSA KZN encourages youth volunteers who wish to train as environmental journalists. We are extremely proud of Siziwe Hlongwa and her journalism journey that took her all the way to Limpopo to support the Khetha Gala Award ceremony, with Jive Media, WWF and USAID as funders. **See website: [Roving Reporters](#)**

### RR Articles

- [Why we miss out if we don't involve women in conservation](#) | By Matthew Hattingh and Siziwe Hlongwa: *Women are increasingly taking on dynamic leadership roles in conservation, breaking stereotypes, overcoming barriers, and driving impactful change — but it often comes with significant personal cost and sacrifice.*
- [Beyond oblivion: critical trade-offs necessary to balance biodiversity and community needs in South Africa](#) | By Matthew Hattingh with additional reporting by Siziwe Hlongwa: *Conservationists can no longer afford to neglect community needs in the pursuit of biodiversity, says SANParks executive conservation manager, Howard Hendricks.*

Siziwe assisted in an interview with SANPark's executive conservation manager, Dr Howard Hendricks, who is also a former WESSA Board member. The interview enabled a strong, preconference profile of Dr Hendricks who gave the opening presentation at the Oppenheimer Research Conference on Wednesday 9th October 2024. A subsequent investigation into the current hot topic of poaching in the Kruger National Park – [Unravelling the threads of snaring in Kruger park](#) – by Dinah Chiyangwa and Roving Reporters has also recently been published.



**Above:** WESSA's dedicated old stalwarts and young rising stars outside WESSA's Brand Road offices in Glenwood, Durban following a warm and vibrant meeting.

**Right:** KZN Youth leaders Siziwe Hlongwa, Zuzile Mpanza and Sibusi Chonco with WESSA CEO, Cindy-Lee Cloete.

### WESSA KZN REGIONAL MEETING WITH OUR NEW CEO

WESSA KZN Membership (regional committee, branch chairs, and youth leaders), together with National Office senior management (Advocacy, Membership & Governance, Education Centres, Schools & Youth), gathered at the WESSA Offices in Durban to meet with [Cindy-Lee Cloete](#), our new CEO to get know each other and discuss the way forward as WESSA approaches its 100th year of dedication to conservation.

