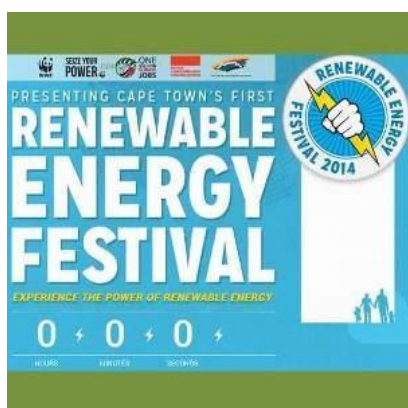




March 2014

Renewable Energy Festival puts power in people's hands



In a first for South Africa, WWF-SA, the Alternative Information and Development Centre (AIDC), the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the City of Cape Town co-hosted an open festival dedicated to renewable energy. The venue, the city's Green Point Urban Park, saw almost 6 000 environmentally minded visitors pass through early in February.

Energy experts, artists, musicians, crafters, activists, business people and the public came to the festival from all over Cape Town as well as surrounding areas in the province. The aim of the festival was to grow public support for the use of renewable energy as a solution to South Africa's triple crises of energy, environment and unemployment. Climate change and its economic, social and environmental impact are matters of pressing global concern and the battle between the use of fossil fuels and renewable energy is proving to be a new site of economic strife.

Festival goers attended educational seminars and debates; as well as a mini film festival focusing on hot topics such as 'fracking' and nuclear power. Some of the topics discussed at the seminars and debates included: a session on "how severe is the climate crisis and should South Africa be involved?" a panel discussion on "can renewable energy be a solution to South Africa's energy crisis?"; and "should renewable energy be socially owned?".

At the fringe forum and debate sessions the following topics were some of the items on the agenda: sustainable cities: how does renewable energy pose a solution to a sustainable city?; i-SHACK - Making technology work for the poor; schools - making them sustainable in energy, water and food; agro-ecology a major contributor to tackling climate change while creating climate jobs; the climate job ecosystem: providing opportunities to learn about potential green career pathways; carbon capture and storage and the role it can play in South Africa's energy future; discussion of energy consumption patterns, rising prices and the energy mix going forward; fracking, water and climate change.

There was also an interactive exhibition showcasing renewable energy technology and projects. Meanwhile, the event was sound-tracked by a line-up of top musical talent include Hot Water, the Gugulethu Tenors, Matthew Gold and The Kiffness.

“It was fantastic to see so many people participate in the various learning forums and visit the exhibitors to learn more about renewables and climate change,” said Saliem Fakir, the Head of WWF’s Living Planet Unit. “But more importantly it showed that South Africans want to know more about renewables, and events such as this one are important for informing the public and communities about energy issues.”

Original article: <http://www.wwf.org.za/?10041/REF-wrap>

SA Marine Conservationist Receives Future for Nature Award



South African Marine Conservationist, Bronwyn Maree, has been awarded the international *Future for Nature Award* for young conservationists for her work as part of BirdLife South Africa’s acclaimed Albatross Task Force. The Albatross Task Force undertakes work to prevent unnecessary deaths of seabirds during fishing operations.

The Future for Nature (FFN) Foundation has recognised the role Maree played over the last 6 years in conserving these ocean wanderers. Through this annual award, FFN supports young, talented and ambitious conservationists working to protect endangered species. The Future for Nature Award encourages individuals to become conservation leaders and opens doors to an international network of dedicated conservationists who are able to provide learning support, mentoring and financial assistance. Maree is one of three winners, chosen from a total of 126 applications from 58 countries. This prestigious international award celebrates role models who can pass on their passion and love of nature conservation to other young people, while stimulating the individual to continue their outstanding efforts in protecting endangered species. In addition to international recognition, this award carries a purse of €50 000 for each winner. The prize money will be used to test new devices for eliminating seabird bycatch in tuna longline fishing.

Over half of all the seabird species in the family that includes albatrosses are decreasing and threatened with extinction. The overriding threat to these graceful ocean wanderers is the accidental, yet deadly, interaction with longline and trawl fisheries. To address this global threat, in 2005 the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and BirdLife International established the Albatross Task Force (ATF) as the world’s first international team of mitigation instructors working directly with fishermen to demonstrate best practice measures to reduce seabird bycatch.

The ATF is active in nine countries, filling a critical gap in translating knowledge and regulations to prevent seabird bycatch into direct action onboard vessels. Maree joined the ATF team in 2008, her first job after graduating with a Masters in fisheries science from Rhodes University. She is one of the

longest-serving ATF team members, and until recently was the only female instructor in a heavily male-dominated industry. She has been instrumental in leading her team to achieve significant results in albatross conservation on board local trawl and longline fishing vessels, which are of global significance.

Since implementing ATF-recommended measures, seabird mortalities have decreased by more than 80% in these fleets, resulting in tens of thousands of threatened seabirds being saved each year. “Critically, the solutions that we advocate to fishing companies and crews are cheap, simple and don’t affect fish catches – the perfect win-win outcome” said Maree.

Original article. (<http://www.greenafricadirectory.org/south-african-marine-conservationist-receives-future-for-nature-award/>)

WWF and Mondi working towards sustaining ecosystems through responsible business practices



In February 2014, WWF and the Mondi Group announced that they will work together in a three-year strategic partnership that focuses on increasing environmental stewardship in the packaging and paper sectors. The partnership which is intended to link one of the largest packaging, pulp and paper producers in the world with the world’s largest conservation organization, sends a strong signal that addressing environmental sustainability makes good business sense.

The partnership will be focusing on minimizing the impacts of Mondi’s operations on forests, climate and water, and encouraging sustainable practices in the industry. The programme will cover three main areas firstly; ecosystem stewardship - building on the successful Mondi Wetlands Programme in South Africa, this work will focus on protecting high conservation value ecosystems in Russia and other regions and increasing the value and resilience of multi-functional production landscapes in South Africa; secondly manufacturing stewardship – further reducing the water and climate footprint of Mondi’s operations and promoting resource efficiency, recycling and longevity of products, including the cascading use of wood and forest products where appropriate; and lastly product stewardship – further enhancing the environmental performance of Mondi’s products through, among others - credible certification and efficient life-cycle use of materials in their paper and packaging products.

Jim Leape, Director General of WWF International said that forest-based industries that rely on renewable resources can play an important role in protecting and managing vital

ecosystems, “as the population grows and competition for land increases, companies like Mondi that choose to contribute to sustainable resource use and nature conservation are ensuring their own long-term viability, while contributing to the well-being of people and the planet today.”

David Hathorn, Group CEO Mondi also mentioned that, “Mondi and WWF have a successful association working together on projects and this international partnership enables us to join forces on a larger scale. Sustainable development is integral to our business, and we are very pleased to be working with WWF as we continue to reduce our footprint and share responsible practices across our industry and beyond.”

Original article: <http://www.wwf.org.za/?10121/Mondi-partnership>

Clouds of white butterflies gracing the face of Southern Africa



Clouds of white butterflies are currently gracing the face of southern Africa. This phenomenon is an annual occurrence, especially in years when conditions are favourable. Most of this endless flow of white butterflies is made up of the Brown-veined White (*Belenois aurota*, Pieridae family), which have become famous for their *en masse* migrations in southern Africa.

What we do know is that they move in the general direction from the south-western more arid parts of southern Africa to the moister north-eastern parts, more or less mid to late summer. Some of them even fly off shore into the sea on the east coast where they end their migration. There is no evidence of a migration reaching Madagascar where the butterfly is also found. Brown-veined Whites occur over a very wide area in Africa and also into India. Whether there is a regular marked migration in other parts of its distribution is not clear.

In southern Africa core populations of the Brown-veined Whites originate from the Karoo and Kalahari. These populations owe their strength to the main food plant of the caterpillars, the Shepherd's Tree (*Boscia albitrunca*). These core populations are maintained by the females laying eggs on the Shepherd's trees before they move off to migrate. The mass of white butterflies probably plays an important role in pollination but this is still poorly understood. In fact there is much that we still do not know about this widespread butterfly.

Members of the Lepidopterists Society of Africa are studying the Brown-Veined White butterflies in detail. Reinier Terblanche is including this butterfly's landscape ecology into his Ph.D study based at Stellenbosch University. He leads a butterfly ecology project for the Diamond Route (De Beers group of companies) at Tswalu Kalahari private game reserve to find out more about the life history, vegetation and landscape setting of the “breeding habitats” of the butterfly.

Specialists and citizen scientists recently started to gather data for a project called the Great Little White Butterfly Migration. The Great Little White Butterfly Migration is a wonderful initiative of the Animal Demography Unit (University of Cape Town) and the Lepidopterists' Society of Africa. It asks the public, as citizen scientists, to submit observations on the date of arrival of the butterfly migration and numbers seen, in order to better understand the extent of the current migration. (www.facebook.com/groups/WhiteButterflyMigration.) This project is part of the larger project known as LepiMap (<http://vmus.adu.org.za>) which encourages members of the public (all over Africa) to submit their photographic observations of butterflies and moths. These records are invaluable to science for understanding the distribution and conservation status of our butterflies and moths.

Like anything that gains notoriety and fame, myths and urban legends are beginning to surround these fascinating butterflies; as well as exaggerations in the extent of their migration. These myths include that the Brown-veined Whites are pests of crops, that they have something to do with diseases and that they feed mostly on grasses.

For more information please contact the Lepidopterists' Society of Africa (www.lepsoc.org.za).

Fynbos Forum appoints new secretariat



Charles Stuart recently joined the Fynbos Forum community as the secretariat for the Fynbos Forum. The Fynbos Forum is an affiliation of researchers, planners, managers, landowners and a range of other stakeholders that meets annually to discuss management issues and research results; and to formulate priorities for future research and conservation management action required to ensure the conservation and sustainability of the Fynbos.

Stuart has extensive experience in event management as well as secretarial, financial administration and management. Please join the fynbos forum committee in welcoming Charles Stuart to the fynbos community!

With the changes to the Fynbos Forum secretariat in recent times, the Forum has also taken the opportunity to revamp its popular mailing list. People interested in joining the new mailing list are requested to send an email to fynbosforum2014@gmail.com. The new mailing list will serve as an electronic mechanism for the send-out of career development matters including job adverts, bursary and awards processes; as well as conference notices and matters of general interest to the Fynbos Forum community.

The next Fynbos Forum will be held from the 4 - 8 August 2014 in Knysna in recognition of the town's Centenary Celebrations.