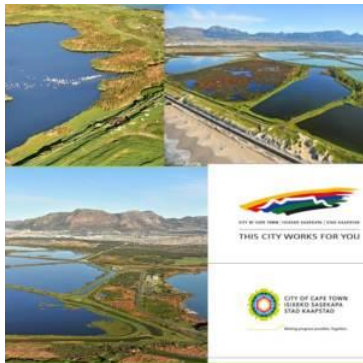




March 2015

City of Cape Town receives Ramsar certificate during World Wetlands Day celebration



2 February marks the celebration of World Wetlands day, the date of signing of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands in 1971. The City of Cape Town's False Bay Nature Reserve became the first reserve within the City's boundaries to secure designation as a Ramsar site. The Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

The City, on this day of celebration which was led by the National Department of Environmental Affairs, received its Ramsar certificate.

The False Bay Nature Reserve is the first truly urban site as it is surrounded by urban residential development, which includes a broad range of socio economic groupings, and is a living example of the City's efforts to create a balanced approach for sustainable urban development

The City's Mayoral Committee Member for Economic, Environmental and Spatial Planning, Councillor Johan Van Der Merwe, mentioned that "wetlands such as this are vital for human survival and countless plants, insects and animal species, which contribute to the delicate balance of our ecosystem. The fact that this celebratory event is being held within the fully functional ecosystem, close to the heart of the city, is amazing." In her celebratory address, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, Ms Barbara Thomson, highlighted that the celebration aims amongst others "to raise awareness on the benefits and importance of wetlands as a natural resource to communities living around them."

Cape Town is incredibly blessed to have environmental spaces intertwined within a metropolitan setting. There are few places in the world in which one can still be in a city while watching hippos at play or listening to leopard toads calling at night. The False Bay Nature Reserve has done much for the promotion of environmental tourism within Cape Town. The reserves boast 24 registered and active user groups and more than 100 000 people enter through its gates in a single calendar year.

Aside from plants and mammals, the site is also a renowned bird watching location. There are six bird hides, two viewing towers and numerous picnic spots hidden within the grassy stretches of the reserve. Environmental education is one of the most important learner faculties the City is tasked with accommodating. False Bay Nature Reserve has committed to spreading the message of environmental education by encouraging community engagement and collaboration. The Village Heights programme is an incredible example of integrating communities and the environment.

The food garden that surrounding residents have created, which acts as an ecologically sensitive buffer between the nature reserve and human society, is an example to all South Africans on how to exist within natural spaces. As a result of the success of this project, similar efforts are being rolled out across the metro. The project, however, would not have been possible without the buy-in from the community, and it is important to recognise the value that the partnerships have had in turning the reserve into what it is. The Friends of Zeekoevlei and Rondevlei, the Cape Town Environmental Education Trust, Birdlife South Africa and the Cape Bird Club are some examples of the wonderful civic organisations that the managers of this reserve are fortunate enough to work with.

For more information contact Dalton Gibbs at 021 396 4281

First ever MAB event showcased in the Garden Route



From 19 – 21 February, the town of Wilderness was abuzz with a suite of events and activities on offer as part of the first ever Man and Biosphere (MAB) showcase; coordinated by the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) in partnership with the Eden Municipality and Garden Route Biosphere Reserve Company, celebrated under the theme '*Biosphere Reserves: sustainable land use management*'.

The annual biosphere reserve event has been identified as one of the approaches to increase the level of public awareness of biosphere reserves in the country, particularly to communities living in these Biosphere Reserves. The awareness highlighted the importance of biosphere reserves and why it is important for sustainable land use management.

Following a meet and greet networking session on 19 February, the DEA joined by Eden District Municipality officially inaugurated the MAB showcase at the Wilderness Hotel Resort and Spa on 20 February which saw more than 100 participants inclusive of organisational and community representatives, in attendance. On 21 February, participants - both youth and adults - were engaged through a suite of activities ranging from puppet shows to guided walks along the half-collared Kingfisher trail. The House of Judah, a community organisation, also showcased their dancing talents.

Representatives of Biosphere Reserves from across the country presented on the work being done in their respective areas reflecting on the successes as well as the challenges experienced. Biosphere Reserves in attendance included South Africa's first proclaimed biosphere reserve, the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve, as well as the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve, Kruger to Canyons Biosphere Reserve, Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Initiative, Cape Winelands Biosphere Reserve, Groot Marico Biosphere Initiative, Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve, Magaliesberg Biosphere Initiative, Garden Route Biosphere Reserve Initiative and the planned Greater uMngeni Biosphere Reserve.

Biosphere reserves are national sites of terrestrial and marine ecosystems designated under United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). They are areas that can form an integral part of a regional planning and development strategy aimed at promoting sustainable

development and conservation. Thus a biosphere is an ecosystem that supports life and all living organisms that inhabit it.

As part of the showcase, cyclists who were 'cycling for biospheres', departed from Mossel Bay and cycled to Wilderness Beach, a distance of 60kms, to deliver a message in a bottle to the Mayor of Eden District Municipality.

For more information on the respective biospheres, please visit www.biosphereresearch.org

For more background information on the MAB programme, please visit <https://www.environment.gov.za/projectsprogrammes/mab>

WESSA participates in UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable development



Three representatives from the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) were among the 1100 delegates from 148 countries that recently attended the invitation-only UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in Nagoya, Japan.

The conference marked the closing of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), which had been implemented from 2005 to 2014 in some 160 countries and has been an umbrella for significant achievements in education aimed at allowing "every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future".

The three WESSA delegates; Tichaona Pesanayi, Mike Ward and Jim Taylor participated actively in the review of the DESD and in the forming of the follow-on Global Action Programme, which will run from 2015 to 2020. They contributed to the development of high-level policy for Education for Sustainable Development and attended several associated meetings and workshop sessions. WESSA was pleased to note the attendance of the South African Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, who was selected to speak on Education for Sustainable Development at the opening plenary.

Two of WESSA's flagship projects were profiled at the conference, with the SADC-REEP (Southern African Development Community – Regional Environmental Education Programme) project being selected as one of 25 global best-practice projects that were exhibited in the main foyer of the meeting. Furthermore, the final report of the DESD specifically mentioned the international Eco-Schools programme, which is implemented by

WESSA in South Africa, as one of the most effective projects for bringing about much needed change for sustainability over the past 10 years.

One of the key findings in the DESD final report is that there is increased global recognition that education is a critical tool for moving societies towards sustainable development, but there is still much work to be done and the report calls on governments and other stakeholders to scale up their actions towards a more sustainable future.

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Elegant wading Blue Crane Bird selected as 2015 Bird of the Year



Birds are excellent flagship species and valuable indicators of the environment. Places that are rich in bird species are often abundant in other forms of biodiversity. The presence of birds indicates a healthy environment and thriving ecosystems. Every year, BirdLife South Africa chooses an iconic bird species to create awareness about birds and bird habitat conservation as educating people is one of the key components of BirdLife South Africa's conservation work. The 2015 Bird of the Year is the Blue Crane (*Anthropoides paradiseus*).

The elegance and dignified beauty of the blue crane has thrilled man for many centuries. Their trumpet call and their exquisite mating dance are among the wonders of nature. The blue crane pairs for life and raises one or two chicks per year. However, survival rates are not very high. The Blue Crane is South Africa's national bird and features on the 5 cent piece. As such, it is one of the most recognisable birds in South Africa. It is also a bird under threat - there are only around 25 000 blue cranes left in the country and of the remaining population, almost half are found in the Overberg in the Western Cape. Power line collisions, wind farms, mining, climate change affecting the agricultural landscape, and capture for trade could easily trigger future declines unless appropriate conservation measures are implemented.

Before 1980 these birds were not so plentiful in the Overberg, but landowners, farm workers and conservation organisations made efforts towards conserving them and creating friendly blue crane man-made habitat that resulted in the numbers of cranes in the Overberg increasing dramatically. Countless educational projects and workshops have been presented in co-operation with Cape Nature, and these are now bearing fruit.

The aim of the Bird of the Year project is to choose a bird species and focus education and other activities on it during the year. Through these activities Birdlife SA aims to improve public awareness about the species and the need to protect the species (and related species) and its habitat. BirdLife South Africa conserves our country's birds by focusing on birds, the sites and the habitats on which

they depend, and hopes to improve the quality of life for birds, for other wildlife and ultimately for people.

For more information about Bird of the Year contact Nikki McCartney, at 083 636 1060 or email events@birdlife.org.za

Dump site transformed into Cape Town nature reserve



After a decade of hard work; and a R2-million investment; a 36-hectare area in Cape Town that was once deteriorated; deserted and largely used as a landfill has been rehabilitated and restored into one of the city's most important nature reserves known as Bracken Nature Reserve. The reserve is now transformed into an environmental space that is enjoyed by the city's residents.

Bracken Nature Reserve was named as the reserve of 2014 by the city's Environmental Resource Management Department. The rehabilitation project started with the planting of 60 indigenous trees including, karee, real yellowwood, wild peach, Cape ash, wild camphor and milkwood, which are growing well.

Councillor Johan van der Merwe, the City's Mayoral Committee Member for Energy, Environmental and Spatial Planning, singled out Tshepo Mamabalo for her will and vision in transforming the space. Mamabalo's involvement began when she was doing a city internship at the reserve. "With the support of the reserve team, she dedicated her passion and energy to transforming the site into what it is today;" and is now the area co-ordinator.

The reserve is now home to Swartland granite renosterveld and Cape sand fynbos, both of which are highly threatened vegetation types.

The reserve is also home to one known plant of the critically endangered Kraaifontein spiderhead (*Serruria furcellata*) remaining naturally in the wild. The reserve supports a great diversity of wildlife. Regularly sighted birds are the red-capped lark, black-shouldered kite, peregrine falcon and southern double-collared sunbird. Other mammal species found in the reserve include the small grey mongoose and a myriad of rodents and reptiles. "The reserve has been surveyed and found to have great potential as a receptor site for critically endangered species.

Van Der Merwe highlighted that "the tremendous turnaround of the Bracken Nature Reserve is a good example of how, when the city sows the seeds of collaborative partnerships, the community and the surrounding environment will reap the benefits". He also added that it is of paramount importance that we place a higher financial and environmental value on our nature reserves so that, together, we can make progress possible in building a sustainable future.

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Read more: <http://www.southafrica.info/about/sustainable/bracken-nature-reserve-050115.htm#.VMoK90104dV#ixzz3QCpBfl7j>