



WESSA at Work

October
2011

WESSA Chairman of the Board Richard Lewis with Simon Gear as he receives his Patronage certificate at the WESSA Northern Areas Art Auction and Dinner evening in celebration of the 85th Anniversary - 15 October 2011, Johannesburg Country Club.



in this issue

WESSA Member Survey **P.3**

WESSA appointed as an Institute of Sectoral and

Occupational Excellence **P.4**

News from the Regions **P.5**

WESSA Friends Groups **P.11**

WESSA IN ACTION!

Celebrating People caring for the Earth

Dr Richard Lewis, WESSA Chairman of the Board, gave a special speech at the Northern Areas Regional 85th Anniversary Celebration held at the Johannesburg Country Club on 15 October:

It gives me great pleasure to be the current Chairman of WESSA as it celebrates its 85th Birthday. What incredible endurance – borne primarily out of passion – a deep passion, and calling, of so many, over so many years.

Tonight is, just this one special time, all about WESSA – this fine organization that is one of the oldest and largest membership-based environmental organizations on the continent.

Over the years there have been several landmark achievements:

- 1926: WESSA played a critical role in the proclamation of the Kruger National Park.
- 1937: After 8 years of petitioning by WESSA, the Mountain Zebra Park was established.
- 1948: WESSA was a founder member of the IUCN (the International Union for the Conservation of Nature)
- 1980: WESSA produced the first Environmental Conservation Strategy for South Africa (the first NGO in the world to do so.)
- 1995: WESSA established the Drakensberg Wetland Project
- 2001: South Africa, through WESSA, became the first country outside of Europe to run the Blue Flag Beach programme.
- 2003: The Eco-schools Programme was launched in SA and now has over 1000 participating schools across the country.
- 2008: WESSA became a founder member of the Climate Action Partnership

More recently:

- WESSA was again appointed as the Africa Coordinator for the International Training Programme in Education for Sustainable Development. This year the training programme is supporting capacity building in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Malawi, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Afghanistan and Indonesia.
- WESSA Share-Net won the 2011 Europcar Green Office Week Competition.
- WESSA is currently developing 11 centres for sustainability technologies.
- More than 10 000 teachers, parents and school administrators and 20 000 young people participate enthusiastically in the Eco-Schools programme each year.
- The WESSA Energy & Sustainability (E&S) Programme continues to achieve high accolades. In the past 6 months it was a finalist at the Volvo Adventure awards in Sweden. It has also won an Africa wide award, in Kenya, for innovative partnerships in service delivery.
- The WESSA E&S programme has also been a winner in the prestigious “eta”, national energy awards, for a record 7 years in a row!
- There has been a massive increase in media exposure for WESSA. (by way of example over 200 magazine and newspaper mentions in July alone)
- WESSA was the preferred NGO that the Department of Environmental Affairs proposed to be part of the itinerary of the Swedish Minister of Environment when he was on his

Special dates in November:

20 November
Universal Childrens' Day

26 November
Big Birding Day

26 November
Buy Nothing Day



climate change and biodiversity mission in South Africa;

- WESSA is also the preferred environmental NGO to co-host, with the American based Wildlife Society, the IV International Wildlife Management Congress to be held in July 2012 in Durban.

Fantastic achievements WESSA! – I am proud of you.

It's a troubled world we find ourselves in. Never before have we been so connected, and yet so disconnected – communication takes place through sms, BBM, facebook and mixit. Whilst the world hurtles towards outcomes that are going to alter or end life as we know it, levels of apathy abound.

Just pertaining to water alone, we in SA have lost 50% of our wetlands – (the countries kidneys); 82 municipalities no longer have water engineers meaning that in many cases pure sewerage is flowing into water supplies; in the Vaal Catchment area; 50 000 tons of uranium from mines seeped into water supplies just last year alone, causing acid mine water which is highly radioactive and necessitating the evacuation already of people on the west rand. The EU is already refusing vegetables growing along the Vaal as being too toxic unless the farmers have their own purification works. Stark realities loom, and yet people are more inclined to watch mindless TV shows of the most base or pathetic themes, or expend huge amounts of passion in watching sport, whilst real issues facing them are scarcely given a thought.

Added to this, WESSA finds itself operating in an international and national financial context that is clearly one of the most severe economic crises the world has faced since the great depression of the 1930's. The levels of debt are unprecedented in the world economy, and unemployment, together with country, and individual debt, are threats ever present and seem set to continue for the foreseeable future. At a time when materialism is still being marketed as the source of happiness and messages of consumption continue unabated, we realize that even those that point to economic recovery are pointing towards returning to an economic system that in itself is not ultimately sustainable. Coupled with population growth, the world is stressed.

I am not a scientist, I am a business strategist and in fact my doctorate is in law, in case you wondered. My math is dubious to say the least but even I realize that the simple equation of limited resources minus (increasing consumption and increasing populations) = bad news. You see, 20% of the world's population consumes 80% of its resources. And the 80% low consumers want very much to be like the 20%. When brains, such as Steven Hawking, start saying that we don't need a

Plan B, but a Planet B, then I start getting worried.

WESSA has for 85 years taken a stand to do something about this. We have as our Vision: To achieve a South Africa which is wisely managed by all, to ensure long-term environmental sustainability. To this end, we promote public participation in caring for the Earth.

Bearing in mind how society in general has stopped caring about so many things, we took a decision that we had to reduce our reliance on just fund raising, sponsorships and membership fees, as these could minimize, and instead adopt a model of becoming a highly effective, environmental project implementation organization.

This would attract funding for implementing high impact projects for government and corporates who would understand that we can do these projects better than they could, base them around our Mission, and which would provide us with sustainable income to do the unfunded interventions that we are so well known for.

We have been largely successful in this transition, securing increased funding for projects whilst at the same time 'improving our internal processes and procedures to ensure higher levels of efficiency - and we wish to continue on this trajectory. But we have to be pro-active, nimble, decisive, and continually work smarter.

More specifically on projects, almost R400mil of project proposals were submitted over the past year for funding, with R60mil now already approved. Of the projects that have been decided upon, almost 40% of the outcomes have been approvals thus far. R240mil of proposals are still pending, several of which appear to be very hopeful prospects.

WESSA as such, continues to play its role in increasing public participation in caring for the earth, and this role is growing rapidly.

Change is never easy, in fact it's full of fears, uncertainties, discomfort and sometimes strong opposition; we are after all creatures of habit and many do find change something they instinctively avoid – but that been said, we have come a long way; we still have a long way to go.

At WESSA, we experience good times, hard times, laughs and stress, and people coming and going, but we continue to grow in influence, and in the current financial crisis the world finds itself in, growing markedly. For this, I, as Chairman, am truly proud of WESSA, and I wish to thank Board, EXCO, management and all staff for their hard work, commitment and team spirit.

A very big thank you to those external stakeholders, the government, local and international funders and those corporate citizens who are savvy enough to look beyond just the single bottom line and have partnered with this fine organization, WESSA.

To those of you here tonight, thank you. As Cousteau says "It's all about connectedness -when we address saving the environment, we are addressing saving human life too". Those here tonight, please take this message with you into your circles of influence. Change comes from millions of little actions and always starts with making people aware.

When the machinery of excellence and effectiveness starts to turn, it becomes something so powerful it changes whole contexts and paradigms and this is certainly starting to happen. It is the role of the leadership of WESSA to ensure that this trajectory continues. We are at the forefront – and we will steadfastly maintain our course.

No more will it be a begging bowl to find partners in saving the earth – WESSA, and its kind around the world, are doing possibly the most important work for the future of this earth, and its time due recognition was given in this regard.

I read recently that one translation of the word 'sin' means 'to have lost your way, gone astray, your thinking and actions have gone awry'. This then made sense of the scripture that the 'sins of the forefathers shall be visited upon their children and their children's children'. Each generation will live in a world left behind and created by their parents 'errant ways'.

Man is a unique creature – we are the only creatures that consume more than we need. It takes a conscious disciplined decision deep within each individual, and guts, to give back to this world. Man has made the problem; will you stand with us to help rectify it?

I thank you, all of you – I personally am extremely proud of WESSA. I look forward to the road ahead – who says life is not interesting!

Dr. Richard Lewis
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Newsflash!

• A window on the world...

The artwork for a new WESSA Share-Net environmental education resource "**Windows on the World: Coast**" arrived at Umngeni valley this week!

This Enviro-picture building resource has been contributed to by many scientists and NGO's around South Africa and Namibia.

In the picture Magnus Elmquist (Linkopping university: Sweden, on left), joins Martin Foth (from the German GIZ programme who supported the resource development) Wolfgang Brunner (SWEDESD - Sweden) and Mumsie Gumede, (WESSA CEO) to admire the creative artwork!



The artwork was painted by Sally Barrett and the materials are being coordinated by Clare Peddie at WESSA Share-Net. (Please contact Clare for further details at sharenet@wessa.co.za)

The resource will be complete by December 2012. A pre-launch event will be conducted at the Blue Flag conference in Kenton, in the Eastern Cape on the 25th October, when Ted Knott (WESSA's Coastal Coordinator & Blue Flag Manager) and Professor Rob O'Donoghue (Rhodes University) will demonstrate the resource!



• WESSA Member Survey

WESSA's Membership team recently undertook a member survey and over 250 responses have been received to date. Information received from members will help us improve on our Membership service, and we thought we'd share a broad summary of the feedback:

1. To the question why members joined WESSA, the majority of members (69%) joined WESSA to contribute financially to WESSA's work, while 40% joined to receive the magazines and 49% to be involved in environmental activities in their communities.
2. The majority of members enjoy the opportunity membership provides for keeping in touch with developments in conservation and in environment issues through WESSA's publications, and enjoy the new magazine format of "Environment". Interaction with other like-minded members is important through meetings, outings and talks organised by WESSA branches and regions.
3. Members enjoy making a contribution to the environment in the knowledge that WESSA is acting on their behalf to address environmental issues and concerns.
4. Some general suggestions to enhance WESSA's effectiveness are that:
 - WESSA should raise its profile within African communities.
 - WESSA should provide more support to branches financially and in terms of resources.
 - WESSA courses should be more affordable.

- there should be improved follow-through with regard to matters that have been taken up by WESSA.

5. 88% of members are happy with the amount of communication they receive from WESSA. There could however be more evidence of WESSA's involvement and policy with regard to important environmental issues on the website and more frequent but shorter newflashes regarding current issues with response opportunities for members.

6. Value would be added to membership through WESSA:

- offering general benefits and discounts at nature reserves;
- exerting more influence on legislation;
- showing more interest in urban issues e.g. recycling in major cities;
- featuring more prominently in conservation issues of national importance.

7. 33% of members indicated that they would consider making a bequest to WESSA.



The WESSA stand

• WESSA at the annual Sunday Tribune Garden Show

WESSA was donated a stand at the annual Sunday Tribune Garden Show at the Royal Agricultural show grounds in Pietermaritzburg. The show ran over 3 days from 30 September to 2 October 2011.

As far as we are aware, this is the largest 'green' event in the Southern Hemisphere with an average of 23 000 visitors yearly which provided a wonderful opportunity to showcase and create awareness of WESSA's work. Various WESSA staff and projects contributed to the display which won a Silver Award!

• WESSA appointed as an Institute of Sectoral and Occupational Excellence

The WESSA five year strategic plan focuses on biodiversity and life-support systems, waste, water and energy. These pressing environmental issues are addressed through the development and review of legislation, enforcing and enabling compliance, as well as voluntary social change supported by environmental education processes. With 284 municipalities responsible for most land in South Africa, local government, and the local government Sector Education and Training Authority (LG-SETA) is a key target group for any organization that is serious about stimulating meaningful environmental change.

On 21 October, Valentia Mashego, LG-SETA (Local Government Sector Education Training Authority) Education and Training Quality Assurance Manager, handed Mumsie Gumede, WESSA CEO, the Service Level Agreement for the appointment of WESSA as an Institute of Sectoral or Occupational Excellence (ISOE) for LG-SETA. Sibusiso Kunene (LG-SETA KZN Provincial Manager), also in picture, is supporting the management of the ISOE training processes.



Valentia Mashego, hands Mumsie Gumede the Service Level Agreement for the appointment of WESSA as an Institute of Sectoral or Occupational Excellence (ISOE) for LG-SETA. Sibusiso Kunene (LG-SETA KZN Provincial Manager), also in picture, is supporting the management of the ISOE training processes.

The initial contract with WESSA will provide the training courses and resource materials to address Waste, Biodiversity as well as Water and Sanitation through Environmental Practices training that will be provided to managers and workers in local municipalities. Designed by Jonathon Wigley and Lawrence Sisitka at WESSA: SustainEd each course will have a compulsory section on understanding the ecological environment, applying environmental tools and action taking.

Electives will then follow on one or more of:

- Water and Sanitation,
- Problem Plants (alien invasives), and
- Waste management.

The first pilot courses will take place early in 2012.

• WESSA supports Amashova Durban Classic race



WESSA staff supporting the cyclists

One of South Africa's safest but toughest and most grueling cycling events, the MTN Amashova Durban Classic, took place on Sunday, October 16th at 06h30. The 106 km road race follows a similar route to that of the Comrades Marathon although a short 38km fun ride is also on offer. The race started in Pietermaritzburg and ended at Durban's Moses Mabhida Stadium.

Eight WESSA staff members were present 30 kilometres away from the finishing line, cheering on and encouraging the cyclists. A large WESSA banner by the side of the road as well as the enthusiastic staff, in bright green T-shirts left no doubt of WESSA's presence at the event. SABC 1 news showed the WESSA team in action on the Sunday evening news bulletin.

News from the Regions



Jim Taylor on the right and Pearl on the left with the summit team between

WESSA Border Kei

Youth Summit

The Eastern Cape Forum for Environmental Education and Sustainability (ECFEES), of which WESSA Border Kei has been a driving force over the past few years, held their second Youth Summit from 29 September to 2 October 2011. Learners, teachers and Environmental Education Stakeholders from across the Eastern Cape gathered in Chintsa East on the Wild Coast for four days to learn more about the Province's biodiversity and ecosystems, exchange ideas and learn from other students about the exciting projects that different schools are involved in. The 69 Grade 9, 10 and 11 learners (mostly be drawn from rural, under resourced schools from 23 Eastern Cape Department of Basic Education districts) benefitted from the hands on teaching

methodologies available during the summit and partook in different activities. They learned about estuaries and rocky shores and the different sea shells. They were also taught about different animals that live in the forest. At the local Chintsa East School and community they learned about the food chain, permaculture and were taught how to make a permaculture garden and even planted some seeds and fruit trees.

In addition to learner focused learning activities, the Summit ran parallel Capacity Development sessions for teachers and other stakeholders and partners. Among the challenges that organisers faced was budget constraints as the event relies on funding from partners and sponsors. "We would like to have more learners but due to budget constrains we take a limited number of learners," added Sindi Yoyo of the Department of Basic Education (DBE). This year's event was made possible through the generous contributions from national Department of Environmental Affairs, Amatole District Municipality, the Eastern Cape DBE and the provincial WESSA Eco-Schools Programme with the support of Nokia.

"This summit is really educational; it's not just fun and games. Today I've learned about the different shells in the ocean and that there is even a career in shells. WOW!!! I didn't know that," said Xola Vukani a Grade 9 learner from Vukanana High School in Lusikisiki.

Chintsa Plant Nursery

Phikisile Zondani has been working with Friends of Chintsa's Daniel Pherani to train woman household farmers in improved agricultural techniques in Chintsa. This is part of the development of the Food Plant Nursery which is a joint initiative involving WESSA Eco-Schools, ESKOM Energy and Sustainability programme and community stakeholders. The area has been fenced and construction of the nursery structure begins this week.

WESSA Eco-Schools Arbor Day Celebrations

Phikisile Zondani headed up WESSA Border Kei Arbor Celebrations towards the end of September around the province. Working closely with Amathole District Municipality, Department of Agriculture and Forestry and the Department of Water Affairs, WESSA initiated a number of school celebrations. Themes followed the link between environment and local economic development, wetland preservation, soil erosion concerns and the importance of water. The schools put on performances, enjoyed visits from local councillors, had informative talks and planted trees.



Local Councillors, learners, teachers and parents enjoy Arbor Celebrations at Khwezi Primary School in Ngqamakhwe

Coastal Clean-Ups on the Wild Coast

Towards the end of last month, over 1 100 kids from 22 schools along the Eastern Cape coast from Mkambathi in the north to Kidd's Beach in the south were on our beaches and along our rivers cleaning up litter in support of National Clean-up week and the annual International Coastal Clean-up Day.

The aim of the annual Coastal Clean-up is to remove man made litter from all bodies of water (including rivers that lead to the sea); to heighten public awareness of the causes of litter; to make a positive change and to promote water pollution prevention efforts.

Nine of the participating schools are part of the Eco-Schools programme while another nine are from around Port St. Johns, Coffee Bay and the Mkambathi, Silaka,



WESSA's Ntosh Tsheyi & Lucie Chuchmakova with learners and teachers from Mkambhati School partake in the Coastal Clean-Up

Hluleka and Dwesa/Cwebe Nature Reserves along the Wild Coast. These schools are currently participating in the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency's (ECPTA) Wild Coast Project (WCP) Environmental Awareness and Teacher Training Programme Wild Coast Project. This programme focuses on teacher capacity development with the aim of increasing the benefits of the protected areas to the surrounding communities.

The clean-up was a collaborative effort and included bags sponsored by the Plastics Federation of South Africa, refreshments provided by Coca-Cola and Pick & Pay, gloves, t-shirts and caps sponsored by the Buffalo City Municipality's Integrated Environmental Management Plan as well as input from ECPTA.

WESSA Eastern Province



Learners playing fish game

WESSA Eastern Province celebrates Marine Week

With the support of Engen and Transnet we transported learners from 6 schools (sixty children each) to SAMREC (South African Marine Rehabilitation and Education Centre) at Cape Recife where we held our Marine Week activities with several other partners. We focussed on Sustainable Fishing and Morgan devised a simple game with lots of fish and predators namely shark, dolphins and penguins. These are made out of small laminated pictures and placed on a table to show how the predators catch the fish etc. We then introduce fishing boats to show the impact over time of more and more boats with bigger nets and refrigerators etc. The fishing boats start to decimate the fish to the extent that they cannot breed sufficient numbers to save themselves. We also show the impact on species such as penguins as the food supply diminishes. The latter then land up at SAMREC due to starvation and need rehabilitation. This visual game worked

very well especially for the learners from the school for the hearing impaired who could follow the message very easily. The lesson also links with the SASSI card of making better choices when eating fish.

Our partnership with corporates, SAMREC, and other NGOs and the Municipality made for a really good week.

USAID Sustainability Commons Gardening Project Turning Gogo's into Permaculture Wizards

2011 will be the year that the Canzibe Community gardeners will never forget. WESSA assisted them in turning their lives around by nominating Canzibe Primary to be used as the site to establish a Sustainability Commons Gardening Project.

Thirty-five community gardeners, who farm on the Canzibe Primary ground, as well as some learners and teachers, attended the Permaculture classes. Seven classes were held during August and September 2011. The Gogo's (as they would prefer to be called), together with some learners from the school enjoyed one another's company. There was lots of respect shown from the younger ones, and the Gogos liked that. They also liked the fact that the whole Permaculture course was practical; it was not classroom bound.

One Gogo said, "Most of the ingredients used as pesticides are those we use for our personal needs, like garlic, chillies, oil, and powdered soap. In the past, we used Blue Death but have learnt now to use common household things. We have managed to plant many different crops and will sell some of our harvest to make more money."

Tata Sduli, one of the papa's commented, "Yes this is the beginning of the new dawn, Wagwetywa Ndlala" (meaning there will be no more hunger).



Community gardeners, learners and educators at the Permaculture Class



WESSA's Luthando explains how to plant a tree

The WESSA Eco- Schools programme has been a hive of activities in the Nelson Mandela Metro during the last term

Arbor Week Tree planting, sponsored by Engen, was conducted in 30 schools from Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Alicedale, Kirkwood and Paterson. This programme also strengthened and sealed the partnership between WESSA, ENGEN, SABC and NMBM. The schools all received trees, compost, spades, bone meal and watering cans.

Litter and education

WESSA EP's Luthando and Pearl were invited by the SABC to join Umhlobo Wenene FM, from 1 am to 4 am in the early hours of the 15 September. The topic was about litter and the National Clean-up week. More than 40 people called in although it was late at night. They congratulated us and WESSA for the work that we do in our communities. Littering is something that the callers were very cross about.



Luthando and Pearl in the radio studio

Environmental Education Youth Summit

Four learners from our Eco-Schools and one educator attended the 2011 Youth Summit that was organized by the Eastern Cape Forum for Environmental Education and Sustainability. The theme was "Celebrating our Natural Habitats and Ecosystems." The four day Summit was held at Chintsa East. Its objectives were for learners, educators and environmental education stakeholders from across the Eastern Cape to learn more about the Province's biodiversity and ecosystems and to exchange ideas with other students about exciting projects that the schools are involved in. WESSA through the Eco-Schools programme and ABB South Africa recently partnered with TIA (Technology Innovation Agency), a government agency that looks to improve Maths, Science and Technology Subjects in schools. They assist in Science Lab renovations, and help learners with their energy related projects by supplying them with the necessary equipment and learning materials. TIA was one of the sponsors for our Youth Summit event and Mrs Zoleka Ngcete (TIA Business Development Manager, EC) also presented at the event.



Clyde Scott helps learners identify trees

Alien Invasive Plants identification exercise

One of the Eco- Schools themes that the schools have chosen for this year is Nature and Biodiversity and four schools invited WESSA and Clyde Scott from NMBM to help them identify alien trees in their school grounds. One tree that was common to all of them was the Syringa Tree, about which they learnt that the orange/brownish berries are highly poisonous. Other alien trees that they all have were the Brazilian Pepper and Pine Trees. Planting of indigenous trees such as spekboom is an ongoing project with our Eco-Schools.

Fun, Forests and Trees Experience at Woodridge Preparatory

The purpose of the Fun, Forest and Trees Experience event was to celebrate Arbor Day, impart information about the importance of trees for life and to provide an opportunity for learners from Eco- Schools from different communities to work together. Woodridge Preparatory, an International Flag School, hosted the event. Janet Campbell, Eco-School co-ordinator at Woodridge undertook the logistical arrangements for the day supported by Roslyn Pienaar. The school hall where most of the activity took place was beautifully decorated to suit the theme. Altogether approximately 80 learners from Grades 6 and 7 took part. Five schools participated in the event. This programme was supported by ABB and Coca-Cola Fortune.



Learners with their owl picture



Vezubuhle Primary cleaned-up New Brighton Beach: 79 learners collected 70 bags weighing 300 kgs. This is a popular picnicking beach, but also gets lots of washed-up litter from the estuary and the Smelly Creak canal.

International Beach Clean up

Three schools participated in this event, organised by WESSA and sponsored by Coca Cola. Different kinds of litter were collected, the majority being plastic wrappers, plastic bags, plastic bottles, and glass bottles. The Enviro educators were encouraged to start up recycling projects in their schools. From the educators' point of view, they were happy to be part of the clean up as this type of event forms part of the curriculum for the Economic Management Science learning area. The educators also indicated that they would very much like to be part of next years' programme as the learners benefited strongly from the environmental education.

WESSA Annual E P Regional Meeting at Amakhala Game Reserve -

Saturday 26 November 2011, 9.30 – 15.00

WESSA Members are invited to attend the WESSA EP Regional Meeting to be held at Amakhala Game Reserve. The reserve is situated between Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown just off the N2. The event aims to bring together our members and Eco-Schools' co-ordinators from the region and provide stimulating food for thought around theme of our majestic but threatened rhino population. A convoy will leave from Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown and hopefully transport can be shared to reduce our carbon footprint. Lunch and tea for the day will be provided at a charge of R75 inclusive. RSVP to Cheryl by 17 November 2011. cheryl@wessaep.co.za 041 5859606



Amakhala Game Reserve

WESSA KZN

WESSA KZN AGM

The 64th Annual General Meeting of WESSA KZN region will be held at Treasure Beach Environmental Education Centre, Bluff, Durban, on Saturday 12 November at 09h30. The event will include the presentation of certificates for the following awards:

Conservationist of the Year Educationalist of the Year Certificates of Recognition

Please RSVP to Wanda on 031 4640990 or email: wstadler@wesakzn.org.za



Freshly Ground Concert for Conservation

WESSA Lowveld

Rocking for Rhinos

The highlight of the year for WESSA Lowveld Region has been the Concert for Conservation held at Casterbridge Lifestyle Centre in White River on 24 September to raise funds for rhino conservation. 1200 people rocked the night away at the concert performed by well-loved South African band Freshlyground and support group Uncut. The bands were brought to the Lowveld by tourism marketing and management company Seasons in Africa, in partnership with WESSA.

Chairman of WESSA's Lowveld Region Andrew Rossaak was over the moon with the response and attributed the events success to Casterbridge being the right venue where people felt safe and comfortable, a great band (who are, in their own right, great supporters of conservation) and the right cause. The importance of the event was not lost on the audience as short impact speeches on conservation in general, rhino protection in particular and education was given during the interval by WESSA and SANParks. The concert raised upwards of R200 000 and increased public awareness dramatically. These funds will be used by WESSA, other partner organizations, and private and state conservation agencies to:

- Develop an intelligence gathering database to really try and get a grip on what is happening with rhino poaching and what are the real issues.
- Develop a skills training system for state staff at all levels to ensure that the right information is gathered at the 'scene of the crime'

WESSA extends a huge vote of thanks to all the sponsors whose support made the Concert for Conservation a major success. They also grateful acknowledge all the 'Lowvelders' and their family and friends that were involved, especially to the small but dynamic team of WESSA Members and friends who took on this massive project with commendable dedication and effort.

WESSA Western Cape

Special Meeting of WESSA Members

A special meeting was held in the WESSA Barn on Thursday 20 October with the objective of giving Western Cape Members an opportunity to address matters not covered at the abridged AGM in August. The meeting was opened by Bridget Johnsen, followed by a with a brief, 10-year overview given by John Green on how we arrived at a 'one WESSA' organisation. Bridget then introduced the CoG (Co-ordinating Group) concept and acknowledged work done by the staff and interim CoG members over the past year. She also gave brief feedback on the recent regional representatives conference call in which she participated, and reported that, going forward, representatives from each region will 'meet' via conference call pre and post every WESSA Board meeting to ensure regional issues are communicated at Board level. Members present were invited to join the CoG group for the Western Cape Region; Eugene Moll, Graham Avery, Bill Wilson, and John Green agreed to stand. WESSA National COO Mike Ward was present to comment on points raised regarding the Articles of Association and WESSA's new focus on project-funded work in order to sustain its staff and regional offices, as well as the organisation's standpoint on Members speaking on behalf of the WESSA. A point that came across strongly is that WESSA is its Members and the onus is on the Members themselves to integrate ownership of WESSA into their activities and organisations in our joint mission to care for the Earth.



Recent riveting talks at WESSA Western Cape Members' Evenings

Dr Simon van Noort, Curator of Entomology at the Iziko South African Museum in Cape Town spoke at our September Members' Evening on **"Exploring the Wonderful World of Wasps"**, looking at the world of wasps and fascinating interactions of parasitoids and pollinators. His presentation included humorous, interesting anecdotal information and footage from his various field trips into central Africa. To find out more about his research, visit www.figweb.org/Research/Laboratories/van_Noort/index.htm

Alison Kock, Marine Biologist at the Save our Seas Foundation, spoke at our October Members' Evening on **"Living with sharks - why humans are in the way, not on the menu"**. Alison provided interesting statistics relating to shark activity in South African waters, dispelled some of the exaggerated fears of sharks, and gave some surprising facts about these widely-feared predators such as the ability of researchers to identify individual sharks from their distinctive dorsal fins.

USAID Stepping up to Sustainability – Western Cape project update

As part of the USAID Stepping up to Sustainability Project, WESSA Western Cape is developing a 'sustainability commons' that will showcase environmentally friendly technologies. These technologies have been carefully selected in order to make our 'commons' relevant to the needs of our social context and to make sure that they speak to WESSA's four thematic areas – waste, water, biodiversity, and energy.



OWL wireless energy monitoring device

Here is a snapshot of some of the technologies you will already find in place on our commons:

OWL wireless energy monitoring device – this enables you to see how much electricity you are using, how much this is costing you, and how much carbon is being generated - all of this information available to you at 5 second intervals. A great feature is that you can connect your OWL to your PC and get historical and live data in graph format which can be useful for educational purposes.

A 100L solar water heating system - this system relies of Infrared absorption and can heat your water in rainy and cloudy conditions. It is made from evacuated tubes that passively track the sun and because the tubes are round, Infrared energy can be absorbed from the top as well as the sides of the tubes. It uses a PV (photo voltaic) panel to circulate water through the hot water cylinder – 100% off the grid.



100L solar water heating system

Our goal is to promote innovative thinking around the equipment we have at our Sustainability Centre and will soon be inviting all interested people to come to WESSA in Kirstenhof to find out more about these and other on-site technologies!

WESSA Western Cape joins in observing World Rhino Day

WESSA Kirstenhof staff member Caroline Richmond joined hundreds of other peaceful protesters - including environmental activist and 50/50 presenter Braam Malherbe - outside Parliament in Cape Town on 22 September in an effort to encourage greater government and private sector cooperation in tackling rhino poaching. By wearing red, protesters symbolised the innocent blood that is being spilt for monetary gain.



WESSA and other peaceful protesters outside parliament



Patrick Dowling (front, middle) with the learners and mentors.

WESSA launches third certificate course in Environmental Education

WESSA Western Cape has successfully launched its third Environmental Education Training and Development Practices Course. The intake of 13 new learners - mostly associated with the City of Cape Town's Environmental Resource Management Department as well as two assistant educators from Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens and an independent student - attended a special induction session at WESSA's training centre in Cape Town on Monday 10 October. Senior training and management staff from their workplace joined in to encourage their colleagues and to find out more about the mentoring support expected from them over the course period. The SAQA accredited, Level 5 course has been especially developed by WESSA for people employed in the environmental field or involved voluntarily with an

organisation and wanting to spread the environmental word through education. The course equips participants with the knowledge and communication skills required in such a role or career. The 12 month, part-time, workplace-based course includes four four-day 'contact sessions' conducted at WESSA. Intended to address scarce and critical skills needs in the field, topics include Humans and Environment Relationships; the Environmental Movement Timeline; Environmental Ethics and Justice; and Environmental Learning Methodology and Course Development.

Course work is integrated into the learners' workplace, as is regular mentoring and assessment, to ensure that the learners have a supportive environment in which they are able to develop and implement their new skills during the year. By October 2012 the 13 young participants should emerge as proficient environmental educators capable of effecting positive change to the benefit of people and the environment.



Patrick Dowling (front) with some of the workshop participants

Green Councillor Workshops at WESSA

WESSA's Patrick Dowling recently ran two short workshop sessions on "Environmental issues and municipal decision making" for ward councillors who were elected at the municipal elections held in May this year. The workshops provided a holistic understanding of the present environmental landscape in South Africa and covered issues such as energy, water, waste, food security, biodiversity and land-use planning. They were intended to help councillors in achieving the sustainable development of our country during their tenure, with minimum negative impact on the environment. They also aimed to highlight the important connections between national and provincial environmental legislation, local bylaws and sustainable living within a municipal context. Each of the two-hour interactive sessions explored issues such as the difference between the letter and the spirit of the law, public participation, co-operative governance, ethics and environmental justice.

News from two of our regional branches:

WESSA George/Sedgefield Branch

Recent branch activities include:

- Sponsorship of a 2nd year Nature Conservation student at NMMU to a Wilderness Leadership School Trail
- Organising meetings between the George Municipality and interested groups and Ted Knott, WESSA Coastal and Blue Flag Co-ordinator to discuss the Blue Flag accreditation advantages and process
- A talk on the Peruvian Amazon by Alan Lee
- Screening of the film "A Convenient Truth: Urban Solutions from Curitiba", the city that won the Globe Sustainable City Award in 2010.
- Organising the ECO section of the annual fundraiser of the Garden Route Botanical Garden Fynbos ECO Festival at the end of October.

Members and public can still look forward to a talk on astronomy by Wim Filmlalter this year, as well as the end of year joint Bring and Braai with the Garden Route Botanical Garden Trust. *To get involved with Member events in the George/Sedgefield area, contact Christine Ridge-Schnauffer on 044 873 4203 or e-mail wessageorge@isat.co.za .*



Anien Venter on the Wilderness Leadership course

WESSA Knysna Branch

Knysna Branch continues to be involved in various environmental issues.

Two of the larger activities include:

- We are part of the initial group joining the SANParks Garden Route National Park Forum for the area, in a bid to give more direct input into the forest and estuary management of the area.
- The Basic Assessment for the investigation into building a dam on the Knysna River is about to begin. We, and the Knysna Environmental Forum, are anxious to ensure that properly independent consultants will be appointed by the Knysna Municipality to run the process, so that the outcome provides the best solution for our long-term water availability and supply. For this we have the enthusiastic support of Dr Steve du Toit, our WESSA head of conservation for the Western Cape.

To get involved with member activities in the Knysna area, contact Lorna Watt on 044 381 0237 or lornawatt@telkomsa.net .

WESSA Friends Groups

WESSA has over 50 active Friends Groups throughout South Africa. These are groups of volunteers that band together to conserve, rehabilitate and protect a natural area or space of special interest, and are guided by the mission statement, policies and position statements of WESSA. In this section WESSA would like to pay tribute to these groups of committed individuals who embody and encourage WESSA's mission of building public participation in caring for the Earth.

For more information on getting involved in or establishing a Friends Group, please contact Nina on 033 330 3931 or e-mail wessamembers@wessa.co.za

Friends of Nylsvley - Northern Areas

Whilst at a family gathering at Nylsvley recently we had the delightful experience of being lulled to sleep by Fiery-necked Nightjars calling!

The wonderful news is that the solar water pump has been installed. We are thrilled that the department took over the project and it was fitted and in working order in a quick two days. We thank Natasha for her input and Maylene Broderick HOD of Ledet for understanding the needs and getting things moving to make this project happen. We thank everyone who contributed to our fundraising: it has been successfully accomplished. Now for the not so good news: we have heard that Black/wide mouthed Bass have been introduced into one of the Nyl floodplain feeder rivers. My first thought was that fishing would make a very nice work party, thus removing them from the affected stream! But before that happens we are making inquires to make certain that they are there and to determine what the best method of removal is. Do we have any Friends involved with fishing who might like to help?



Solar powered water point

The Boer War Memorial at the railway line opposite the gate to Shumba's Rest was very neglected but we are pleased to report that Natasha arranged to have it cleaned up. Thank you Natasha!

We have had some drop outs for the Raptor course to be presented by Ulrich Oberprieler on Saturday 29 October. Please phone immediately if you are interested in attending, I think we have 4 beds left!

We welcome new members: Fanie du Plessis, Jan Corry and Dr Jan and Michelle Moll. Michelle runs the company Animal Handling who supplied us with the humane cages to collect the rest of the feral cats that are still roaming around Nylsvley, apparently the best bait is the cheap Russian sausages!



Woodland Bird Census at the Nylsvley Nature Reserve - 27- 29 January 2012

Knowledgeable and keen birders are invited to help us count Nylsvley's Woodland Bush Birds!

Unique prizes for 24 hour species count. Meet Friday from 16h00 for registration, supper, route confirmation, census training and bird ID review. Saturday 06h00 census followed by brunch. Saturday evening speaker! We invite attendees to stay over in case of bad weather when the census is done on the Sunday instead. Booking essential: Marion: Tel/fax 012 667 2183 email friendsnylsvley@mweb.co.za

Friends of the Liesbeek - Western Cape

This year we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Friends of the Liesbeek and we are very proud to belong to such an active environmental organization. To celebrate the occasion we would like to ask all members and interested persons to contribute photographs, poems, newspaper articles or anecdotes – be creative! Please let us have your contributions before the end of October so that we can set up a display on the anniversary of the founding meeting of FOL, Monday 28th November.

We would also like to honour past committee members and ask that if you were a committee member or know of someone who was active in FOL in the past, to call Francine on 021 6715385 or email secretary@fol.org.za.

Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) update

While single Purple Loosestrife plants found along the banks Liesbeek have been easy to control in the past two years, those found as dense stands in Phragmites reed beds have not. Accessing plants through the dense reeds provides one problem and adequately treating them with herbicide, another. To combat this, the LMP team began clearing reeds before the Loosestrife growth seasons (spring and summer), cutting them as low to the ground as possible using a brush cutter, piling the brush on site to prevent seed dispersal. The first section in the Valkenberg Wetlands was cleared in May and monitored closely. As we moved to the beginning of July it was noted that the *Lythrum* had begun to resprout from root stock and that the disturbance and removal of the reeds had enabled thousands of *Lythrum* seeds to germinate and begin to grow in a concentrated area, something we hadn't seen before. The City's Early Detection Rapid Response Programme, together with Friends of the Liesbeek and SANParks, are currently developing an intensive control plan (focusing on physical removal) for *Lythrum* on the Liesbeek River, as the population may be small and localized enough to attempt complete eradication.



Lythrum salicaria (Purple loosestrife)

Friends of Cape of Good Hope - Western Cape

Things have been moving at a rapid pace with the Red Hill Eco Club. We have had three meetings and have been very lucky to have found Jean who is proficient in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa and is proving very good at "making a plan". We are going to acquire the use of a container as a clubhouse/office/storage space with the use of the ground next to it as a garden. But it is early days and we are aware that there's many a slip etc. We have set the kids the task of designing a t-shirt design and Jean has been talking to the printers. If any of you have any contacts with printers, soil, compost suppliers, please let us know. It is necessary to do things as cheaply as possible so any assistance would be welcome.

Friends of Silvermine Nature Area - Western Cape

We have had both gabion ponds dredged to make room for the leopard toads to breed. This has resulted in some birds coming back, and we have had lovely sightings of the juvenile purple heron as he sits next to the dredged reeds waiting for frogs to appear. A moorhen and a couple of yellow billed ducks have already been seen – the first for some months.

We have started an otter watch and Evanne Rothwell is working with the Kommetjie monitors and a post-grad lady doing research on the Peninsula otters. We have no idea of the size of the group but it isn't big. Interestingly, our group eat sea crabs while the Kommetjie group eat crayfish. We have been seeing quite a lot of fresh spoor near the railway line bridge and the Clovelly Neighbourhood Watch has seen a few, including a youngster.

Zebra born in Cape Point National Park!

For the first time in over nine years, a Cape Mountain Zebra foal was born in July in the Cape of Good Hope Section of the Table Mountain National Park. Staff is monitoring the newcomer very carefully and will allow the group of zebras to settle down first before approaching them to photograph and record key information.

As such, the park is appealing to the public and hikers not to try and approach the mother and her foal on foot but to keep a safe and respectful distance and to respect the speed limit of 60km/hr and slow right down if the family group of zebras are seen. Photographs at this stage are strongly discouraged.



Friends of Die Oog - Western Cape

Pauline Pierce

We had a good migration of Western Leopard Toads in the last week of August, with over 600 toads being counted arriving at Die Oog. We were grateful for the help in monitoring their safe passage that we received from members of the public and the local cub packs. Mark Day and his team were tireless in their work, from clearing weed at the edges of the pond ahead of the migration and in their evening patrols. There were very few road kills recorded this year so the public awareness campaign appears to be bearing fruit. There seem to be thousands of tadpoles swimming around so we hope for a good 'crop' of toadlets in December.



Die Oog

The central island has been planted with indigenous plants and is looking good. A nesting pair of blacksmith plovers have taken up residence there. Our coot families have all produced chicks as have one pair of yellowbill ducks. As always, our colony of weavers

provide a wonderful spectacle as they build their new nests.

Our education programme encourages youngsters to help protect this little oasis of nature in the middle of suburbia. Talks were given to two cub packs and we have just had a successful visit from the WPPS Grade 4s, who raised over R1000 to help with the upkeep of Die Oog by doing odd jobs. The children enjoy the 'Be a Die Oog Detective' and 'Bird Identification' work sheets.



Friends of Doringkloof Spruit - Northern Areas Clean-up in Doringkloof Spruit- Saturday 8 October 2011

We filled 25 yellow and two black bags full of rubbish and removed a large roll of barbed wire which has slowly been making its way down the spruit, at

Zambesi Bridge.

We cleaned between Sonya St, and Outeniqua St Bridges. We also have noticed a bad habit sticking its head out. On a Wednesday the "Asblik-krappers" tend to remove bags from dustbins and carry them into the spruit. Once under a bridge they sit and calmly sift through the rubbish, take what they want and LEAVE the rest of the contents in an untidy heap scattered around for the wind and rain to disperse down the spruit. Here is the gift the "Asblik-krapper" left for us to clean.



Clean-up in Doringkloof Spruit

Thanks to all those who came to help clean the spruit.



Friends of Loskop - Lowveld

This month, the friends group experienced a very interesting outing. Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency has several breeding projects, one of which is for Servals. These two kittens were sent to us for this purpose. Even though only four members arrived for the day, we still managed to plant up two cages for these cats. The little male is so friendly and was very curious as to what exactly was going on in his normal cage. I think he will be pleasantly surprised at the end of the day. Anglo Coal has sponsored and built these cages as well as the ones for the Small Spotted Cats that reside next door.

It is with great pleasure that I can report that we now have Small Spotted Cat kittens from the original breeding stock of three cats! Next month we plan to take out some Matric learners to help with the sickle bush eradication programme.

Friends of Stellenbosch Mountain (FSM) - Western Cape

The above Group was unofficially started early in 2008 by some very enthusiastic conservationists, and consists of volunteers who are interested in the preservation of the unique Flora and Fauna to be found on the mountain slopes above Stellenbosch. Predominantly aimed at eradicating invasive species like Hakea, Black Wattle, Port Jackson Willow, Rooikrans etc, the group have concentrated their efforts mainly above Paradyskloof and Brandwacht where the invasives are a potential threat to rare Fynbos species, and sustainable water supply to the suburbs of Stellenbosch.

The official launch of the FSM took place in March 2010 and Dr. Guy Preston, well-known National Programme Leader for "Working for Water", spoke on "The Tsunami of Invasive Alien Species-the Fight to Conserve Life and Livelihoods". A Constitution has already been drawn up, and to accelerate the process, a Contract was agreed upon with an experienced Contractor and the Municipality, to take care of the heavily invaded areas. Winter was not the appropriate time for contractors to work as the weather is unpredictable, and we ended up with a rushed job however, we succeeded in our objective in killing the Black Wattle, Port Jackson and Long-leaved Wattle, thus preventing them from spreading new seed and nipping further invasion in the bud. A follow up operation was carried out by some FSM volunteers to mop up areas that had been cleared by the Contractor, and our first target area along Stellenbosch Mountain's western slope is now virtually clear of flowering invasives. The random Hakea higher up is in our sights as soon as the Acacia saligna, (Port Jackson) Acacia longifolia, (Long-leaved wattle) and Acacia mearnsii (Black wattle) have



Prof. Hans Eggers surrounded by freshly cut Hakea and Port Jackson Willow on the mountain slopes above Paradyskloof.

been eradicated. The Eco-Maties have helped on occasion, as have Rotary and the Ratepayers Assoc. members, but studies and work takes priority, so the mainstay of persons involved are understandably those who are more committed and have more time on their hands.

FSM members also ensure that the public are educated as to the disastrous effects of fire and erosion and act as a watchdog over the area to prevent unlawful acts such as picking of flowers, unofficial motorbike races.

In the place of the invasives, lovely proteas and ericas are making a colourful appearance, so the work is very rewarding. Obviously it will be an ongoing battle, but I have noticed a growing tendency among the youth to be more aware of the importance of conservation, and far more interest is shown in hacking than in the past.

New Friends Group hatching in Bronkhorstspuit! - Northern Areas

On Sunday 16 October National WESSA Friends Group co-ordinator Marion Mengell visited Bronkhorstspuit Dam to meet with a group of concerned residents.

The landowners of the properties on the hill to the west of the dam are feeling aggrieved because when they purchased their properties years ago, access to the shore line for boat launching and fishing was guaranteed. The over the years various properties have been developed along the shoreline thus denying them free access. Across the dam is the Nature Reserve, part of which borders the residential area. This group of Friends are now in the process of banding together along with their local councillor to form a Friends Group to help rectify the situation. They are very enthusiastic about gathering together many of the resort visitors to help care for the dam. One problem that needs solving is water weeds which foul boats' propellers and secondly the councillor has committed herself the making sure the various complex's sewage works are functioning as they should be! The whole area has recently been allocated to Tshwane Municipality to run as the Kungweni (Bronkhorstspuit) Municipality has proved not to be very efficient. There are suspicions that some of the intervening properties between the folk on the hill and on the shore were granted without full and proper EIA's and are therefore vulnerable to flooding!

We wish Abel, Gerhard, Johannes and Hilda and team all the very best as they take up the challenge of conserving the vulnerable grassland surrounding nature area and correcting past indiscretions.

Friends of the Black and Vygekraal - Western Cape

Another group of Friends has been formed to fight for the clean-up of rivers in the Peninsula.

Taking a cue from the efforts of the Friends of the Liesbeek, concerned citizens of some of the southern suburbs have joined hands to form the Friends of the Black and Vygekraal. The group, which is already registered as a "hatchling" group with the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa, officially came into being on September 13 at a public meeting held at Rondebosch Golf Club.



The Black River

A constitution was approved and a committee elected at the meeting. The committee has yet to meet to elect officers. The new group has the support of civic associations in Rosebank, Mowbray, Park Estate and Sybrand Park. The group intends to focus its efforts on finding ways to clean up the Black River, the Vygekraal River and the Kromboom River, all of which are heavily polluted and contaminated. The group plans to affiliate as soon as possible to WESSA and also to establish a website. Among the proposals it will be considering are anti-litter education campaigns; involving communities in clean-up efforts; installing litter-traps at various points; and lobbying the city to do more to upgrade of the nearby sewage works, a considerable source of pollution.