



SAVE OUR SEAS FOUNDATION

# SHARK EDUCATION CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Extracted from the Save Our Seas Foundation Annual Report 2018



save our seas  
shark education centre





# SOSF SHARK EDUCATION CENTRE

ELEANOR YELD HUTCHINGS



save our seas  
shark education centre

2018 was a year of challenging change at the Save Our Seas Foundation's Shark Education Centre: change in staff, change in planned and budgeted activities, change in organisational structure. Looking back, though, it was definitely a year in which the centre came out stronger in the end, more vibrant and more cohesive than ever. The year was also marked by another large increase in the number of learners who came through our doors. We are exceptionally proud of this, especially in view of the reduced budget and budgeted activities for 2018. The number of groups itself did not increase substantially from 2017, but the group size did. Many more of the groups had doubled in size or brought multiple classes in one visit. With the centre's exhibits all up and running, and our Treasure Hunt app working and fully implemented into the programming, we were able to offer an exceptional interactive learning experience.

The centre also saw some changes in staff. After eight years with us, Paul Millar resigned as the education coordinator and left in June 2018 to take up a teaching position at a high school. After we had conducted a thorough recruitment process and received a record number of excellent applications, Wisaal Osman was appointed as the new education coordinator and started work in September 2018. Wisaal graduated from the University of Cape Town with a Master's degree in science, specialising in applied marine science. Her subsequent career path took her from WWF South Africa's Sustainable Seafood Programme (WWF-SASSI) to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), where she was involved with strategic environmental assessments in support of national strategic integrated projects that further the country's development goals.

Wisaal is passionate about sustainability and how to live in harmony with nature and she takes a keen interest in projects that contribute to the development of communities. Since 2016 she has been teaching maths and science to high school students at an under-resourced school in Mitchell's Plain, a suburb of Cape Town. Her aim is to help students to grasp new learning concepts, as well as to contribute to their holistic development as they navigate their life path. The challenge is to make learning fun and relevant to the student, using whatever tools are available. She wasted no time in getting stuck in at the centre and immediately

*'Between taught lessons, rock-pool explorations, board games, beach-based quizzes and races, and now a tablet-based app, there is a big variation of learning techniques employed ..., which makes the whole experience extremely interactive'*

started redesigning and refreshing the programmes, coming up with new ideas, participating in everything and adding a new and enthusiastic presence to the team that was welcomed by one and all.

There was also a fairly significant operational change, with the formation and registration of the Save Our Seas Foundation Non-Profit Company (SOSF NPC) in South Africa, which took over all the assets and operations of the Shark Education Centre from the Save Our Seas Foundation. This involved changing to a new bank account, moving all supplier and contractor accounts and acquiring a new lease agreement for our building. It also meant that all staff of the SOSF Shark Education Centre had to be issued new contracts under the SOSF NPC and that a new payroll had to be set up; that registrations for tax and tax exemptions had to be applied for; and that new auditors for the SOSF NPC audit had to be appointed.

The Shark Education Centre hosted a number of people in the two accommodation bedrooms upstairs. Some of the guests who stayed with us during the year were Dr Ryan Daly and his wife Clare, the programme and research directors of the Save Our Seas Foundation's D'Arros Research Centre; Dr Courtney Cook, Dr Bjoern Schaffner and Dr Olena Kudlei from the Water Research Group at the Unit for Environmental Sciences and Management, North West University, who came to research South African shark parasites; Eva Meyers, the project leader for the Save Our Seas Foundation's project 'Angel of the Canary Islands'; and Dr Ruth Leeney, the project leader for the Save Our Seas Foundation's project 'Protect Africa's Sawfishes'. We love having visitors here, as it is a wonderful opportunity to collaborate and to learn more about what shark science and research is being done around the world.

2018 was a busy year for our formal education programming, with classes visiting the Shark Education Centre for a day out to explore the rock pools and learn about sharks and what we can do to help conserve our oceans and marine environment. The number of learners has increased from nearly 2,000 in 2016 to approximately 2,700 in 2017 and now to 3,600 in 2018. Because the number of groups was fairly constant from 2017 to 2018, it was clear that the groups







themselves increased in average size. This was noticeable to the staff, as we often had to make use of our second classroom, which enabled us to accommodate two or more classes together. Holiday Clubs remained popular and we counted 148 person days, with 20 children attending each day. As has been the case previously, they were fully booked long in advance. The youngsters took part in such activities as shark lessons, rock-pooling, science experiments, beach hunts, coastal walks, harbour tours, arts and crafts, baking and, of course, a lot of swimming!

The extremely popular and successful Marine Explorers programme continued in 2018 with Capricorn Primary School and Muizenberg Junior School, both of which are located within easy reach of False Bay and Muizenberg beach. Both schools have seen real value in this programme and have reported very positive impacts on the learners who participate. We are so grateful for the wonderful collaborations with our partners in this programme: Xpression on the Beach, University of Cape Town Underwater Club and Pisces Divers, each of whom contributes significantly to the success of the programme and to the incredible experience that the participants have. This year both Wisaal Osman and Ntombizanele Mayiya were certified as PADI skin divers through the Marine Explorers Club, along with the learners.

Here are a few of the feedback comments we have received from teachers who brought their learners to the centre during 2018:

- *'I wanted to thank you for an awesome morning. We all really enjoyed it to the max! It was so interesting and I wish we could have stayed a bit longer.'*
- *'The students, and myself, walked away with more knowledge.'*
- *'I could see the passion you have for what you guys are doing there.'*
- *'Just wanted to thank you for our marvellous visit there yesterday. The educators were excellent guides, with a wonderful ability with, and energy for, young children. [There are] not many of those around! I eagerly await the children's return after the weekend to see which pictures of our seas you have engraved in their minds.'*



Photos by Francis Moutt







- *‘We really enjoyed our day with you all. All the best for your very important work.’*
- *‘Thank you so much for an enjoyable morning at the Shark Centre. You are all doing such a great job. Keep it up!’*

We also helped to organise or participated in a number of events during 2018. Some of the highlights were: the LIMPET (Longterm Intertidal Monitoring citizen science initiative) workshop to train teachers how to participate in LIMPET with their learners, held at the centre in February; a beach-based holiday programme coordinated with the 9Miles Project in March; an exhibit for the Western Cape Education Department aimed at teachers at the Western Cape Marine Educators Fieldtrip Fair (advertising the programmes that we run to teachers) in August; an exhibition and interactive sessions at the Zandvlei Festival in October; and the TRAFFIC (wildlife trade monitoring experts) workshop to train its collaborators at the centre in November.

This year the South African Marine and Coastal Educators Network (MCEN) held its annual January conference in the Northern Cape. The week began in the Augrabies Falls National Park, moved to Port Nolloth, a diamond mining and fishing town on the coast, and then returned inland to Upington. The Northern Cape in mid-summer is a challenging environment, with midday temperatures rising to 47 °C (116 °F) at midday. This week is always such an inspirational time for us, as we network with other coastal and environmental educators, learn some new ideas and activities, share our own experiences and get ready for the year ahead. This year I shared two activities: Shark Bingo, which is a version of the popular game Bingo using different shark species (allowing you to share shark information and fun facts while the children are playing an entertaining game); and ‘Oceanopoly’, a game modelled on Monopoly that I created for younger learners. This game encourages numeracy, literacy, monetary literacy, knowledge of False Bay marine creatures – and it’s a lot of fun too. Highlights of the week included visiting the Augrabies Falls, a waterfall system on the Orange River, exploring the diamond mining museum at Port Nolloth and a

visit to three Northern Cape schools where the MCEN group presented various curriculum-aligned activities. Another highlight was the sunset cruise on the Orange River, which is a spectacular contrast of water and greenery set against the arid desert of the Northern Cape!

As I am the Western Cape representative on the MCEN's National Steering Committee, it is my responsibility to organise the annual regional meeting. The 2018 Western Cape Regional MCEN conference was held at the SOSF Shark Education Centre in October, which is National Marine Month. It was a great success, with keynote addresses from the likes of Emeritus Professor George Branch and some wonderful in-field sessions run by the crew from the LIMPET citizen science programme.

One of the real challenges for NGOs and education centres is how exactly we assess the impact that we are having with our programmes. This goes beyond just keeping a detailed list of schools, numbers of educators and kids, visitor numbers and the like; it needs to be an ongoing process of monitoring, evaluating and learning. In order to do this, we have been working with a specialist company to develop an evaluation system to assess the impact of the SOSF Shark Education Centre. This very important process needs to be targeted specifically to our audience and facilities and can take a lot of time and effort to set up properly. The first step was to conduct a rapid evaluation and then develop the centre's 'theory of change'. This theory is used as a framework on which to construct exactly what we need to measure and how we go about it. We began trialling some of our data collection tools for measuring our impact during 2018. It adds a fair bit of time and effort in the preparation of our programmes, but it should be worth it! The first data collection tool consists of a 'pre and post' question session, where the learners are asked a set of eight questions at the beginning of their day with us (basic questions to which they answer 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know') and are asked the same set of questions at the end of the day. The answers are anonymous and the learners can't see what their classmates answer. The two sets of answers are then scored and compared, so that we can assess whether we are teaching them any of the knowledge associated with our identified key messages.



Photos by Francis Mout



Photos by Francis Mout



*‘With the centre’s exhibits all up and running, and our Treasure Hunt app working and fully implemented into the programming, we were able to offer an exceptional interactive learning experience’*

We have also been implementing the ‘Ocean Pledge’, where at the end of the day we ask each learner to write his or her own ocean pledge. This is a personal promise on their part either to do something or to stop doing something in order to help save our seas. This is aimed more at assessing whether we are effecting any attitude changes, or are giving them the tools they feel they need to take action. Once the learners have written their pledges, we take a photo of the whole class’s pledges. They take their pledge home with them as a reminder. We will follow up with their teachers later in the year so that they can ask who has been keeping their promises. This serves as an active reminder to the learners that they themselves have the power to take environmentally responsible actions that have positive consequences. In addition, we are working with a researcher doing her M.Phil. on ‘Conservation benefits of interpretation at a wildlife tourism site: Using sharks as ambassador animals to encourage pro-conservation behaviour’. In conjunction with her, we are doing teacher surveys with all teachers who bring their groups to the Shark Education Centre. This research will aim to measure the impact that interpretation (educational signage, exhibits, interactive experiences and presentations) in a free-choice learning centre has on the visiting public. It will thus be a valuable resource for us to use as well.

The Treasure Hunt app, developed specifically for the SOSF Shark Education Centre by RetroEpic, is designed to lead players around the centre with mandatory explorations of every exhibit – from the signage to the detailed information within the exhibit itself – in order to earn a ‘reward’. After being trialled in 2017, the app was incorporated fully into our outward-facing programmes in 2018. We have purchased 10 Apple iPad Air tablets for the centre, pre-loaded with the app, and have put them into extremely robust protective cases. This means that the app can be used for groups of 30 to 40 learners, as it really only works with a maximum of three or four young children sharing an iPad. Teachers have been really enthusiastic about this new addition, as it adds a different element of learning. Between taught lessons, rock-pool explorations, board games, beach-based quizzes and races, and now a tablet-based app, there





*‘We are here to help kids discover the magic of the sea and we do it through the imagining of the scientific information to make learning fun’*

is a big variation of learning techniques employed for groups visiting the centre, which makes the whole experience extremely interactive.

The drought that South Africa’s Western Cape endured due to very low rainfall during our 2015, 2016 and 2017 winter seasons was alleviated to some extent by reasonable rainfall in winter 2018. However, it has not broken entirely and the City of Cape Town has maintained water restrictions for municipal water use. We have cut our water use substantially at the centre by collecting all grey water, reducing toilet flushing (and using rain or grey water to do this), reducing dish washing, asking visitors to take extremely short showers and to collect their shower water for toilet flushing, and catching as much rain water as possible by diverting downpipes into barrels, buckets and outside sinks. Four large rainwater tanks, with a total capacity of 5,100 litres (1,347 US gallons), were also installed at the centre. Collected water really helped us during the drought to wash wetsuits, flush toilets and clean the centre. Staff, visiting guests and school groups all helped to keep our water usage to a minimum. The garden managed to survive well with very little watering, thanks to having been replanted with water-wise, indigenous plants during the previous year.

Looking back at 2018, I asked the rest of the Shark Education Centre’s team for the most important lesson that they took away from the year.

Wisaal Osman (education coordinator): ‘We are here to help kids discover the magic of the sea and we do it through the imagining of the scientific information to make learning fun. I am always evaluating myself and my teaching style: the content is similar but how can I get kids excited about the world of sharks and the marine ecosystem? Is there a new, creative or innovative method I could use?’

Ntombizanele Mayiya (assistant educator): ‘Once you get a job work very hard and make sure that you give your employer more than he or she ever expected.’

Claire-Frances Metcalf (facilities administrator): ‘The wheel turns slowly when it comes to certain processes, but it does turn. Keep at it and be patient and persistent until you get it right.’

Nosakhele Lillian Ngotshane (housekeeper): ‘One thing that I noticed this year is that we were very busy, but it brought out the best in everyone because we had to really work as a team to make everything happen.’

For me, the lesson was definitely not to underestimate the power of teamwork and determination. With a number of real challenges facing us this year, we pulled together and, by dint of everyone having a ‘can do’ attitude and displaying grit, passion and enthusiasm, we have really gone from strength to strength. And with Wisaal as our new education coordinator, the future looks bright for the SOSF Shark Education Centre and its incredibly important work. As the renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead said, ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.’





Photo by Francis Moutt



Photo by Nicholas James Good | Fresh Air Crew













## **CREDITS**

Extracted from the Save Our Seas Foundation (SOSF) 2018 Annual Report

Editors-in-chief: Michael C. Scholl, Raoul Delafontaine and Nadia Bruyndonckx

Book design: Raoul Delafontaine | [Raoul.Delafontaine@Bluewin.ch](mailto:Raoul.Delafontaine@Bluewin.ch)

Content coordinator: Lauren De Vos and Jade Schultz

Sub-editor & proofreader: Leni Martin

SOSF Shark Education Centre

28 Main Rd, Kalk Bay, Cape Town, 7945

Photo credits:

Francis Moul: Cover, p.4-9,12-21,23-24,26-31

Nic Good | Fresh Air Crew: p.ii,10-11,25,32

Michael Scholl: p.2-3,33-35





**save our seas**  
shark education centre



Save Our Seas Foundation  
Shark Education Centre



@sharkcentre



SOSF Shark  
Education Centre



@sharkcentre

[www.saveourseas.com/sosf-shark-education-centre](http://www.saveourseas.com/sosf-shark-education-centre)