

SAVE OUR SEAS FOUNDATION

SHARK EDUCATION CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Extracted from the Save Our Seas Foundation Annual Report 2019

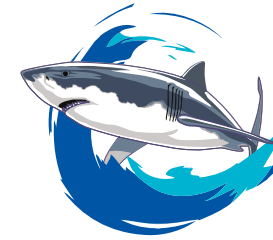


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Exploring the wonderful world of sharks on the 3D shark wall at the centre.



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CLOVA MABIN

SOSF SHARK EDUCATION CENTRE

DR CLOVA MABIN

2019 SUMMARY

2019 was my first year at the Save Our Seas Foundation Shark Education Centre and I have loved every minute of it! My predecessor, Eleanor Yeld Hutchings, left in January and I took over as manager in March, aware that since its inception in 2008 the centre has grown as an ambassador for marine conservation and is fostering a deep connection between the public and sharks. Although I was on maternity leave for several months, I maintained regular contact with the staff and am pleased to report on a successful year of reflection and much-needed maintenance. Unfortunately the education coordinator also resigned in 2019, but Tom Campbell provided plenty of help during my leave period.

Due to the changes in management, we decided to make this year about reviewing our status quo. This included an assessment of administrative processes and educational content and materials, as well as the physical space we work in. The aim was to improve efficiency and identify ways to further increase our impact in line with our mission statement.

As an education centre, the number of people we reach each year is an important statistic. In 2019 we taught a total of 2,867 pupils from 42 schools. This is similar to the figure for 2018, with a continuation of the upward trend seen in previous years. The centre receives wonderful feedback on a daily basis, but it



Opposite: The Save Our Seas Foundation Shark Education Centre overlooks the Dalebrook beach, which is part of a marine protected area in False Bay.

Left: Schoolchildren learning about the important role Shark Spotters play in Cape Town. Right: Wisaal giving a lesson on sharks and their very special dermal denticles.

Dalebrook rocky shore visits and the highly interactive Treasure Hunt app on the Ipads remain firm favourites with school groups.

is clear that the Dalebrook rocky shore visits and the highly interactive Treasure Hunt app on the Ipads remain firm favourites with school groups. We also had 25 non-school groups visit the Shark Education Centre, totalling 755 children and adults. Our open afternoon sessions saw a total of 1,587 members of the public come through the doors, with a record of 77 visitors on one day alone in January 2019.

In addition to the school and public visitors, we hosted several independent workshops, including the WildOceans Marine Protected Area (MPA) youth group, the WWF South Africa Sustainable Seafood Initiative (WWF SASSI) and the Long-term Intertidal Monitoring through Participation Evaluation and Training (LIMPET) programme. The Cape Town Environmental Education Trust (CTEET) also requested a customised workshop for teachers from its Eco-Schools programme. The feedback from this event was such that we hope not only to make it a regular addition to the calendar, but also to encourage the teachers to return with their schools.

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The interactive touch table where each player drives their own shark research boat is a big hit with visitors of all ages.



Above: A school group learning about shark senses while playing the Treasure Hunt app.
 Right: Learning to work as a team while exploring the centre.
 Opposite: What does the skin of a marine animal feel like? Children exploring the touch panels at the Shark Education Centre.







Previous spread: The Save Our Seas Foundation Shark Education Centre in the heart of False Bay is perfectly located to promote experiential learning.

Left: Catching a wave during the Marine Explorers programme. Below: Time to dive beneath the surface and meet some sea creatures on the Marine Explorers programme.

Our Marine Explorers programme continued this year with children from Capricorn Primary School and Muizenberg Junior School. A total of 23 children (aged 10–11 years) completed the programme, which involved six months of surfing and snorkelling sessions with our team, with the assistance of the wonderful volunteers from the UCT underwater club. The programme culminated with a Marine Awareness camp at the Soetwater Environmental Centre on the Cape Peninsula. Camp activities included lessons on marine ecology, a night hike, interactive snake and bird experiences and of course plenty of team-building opportunities.

The results of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) assessment were revealed in 2019. Using a theory of change model, key messages had been identified in 2018 and questions were developed to assess how students received these messages. We now know that in 2018, before visits, approximately 60% of students answered these questions correctly. The proportion increased to 80% after the visit. As expected, the groups that had less prior knowledge showed the greatest increase in learning. These results indicate that we are on the right track, but also highlight which areas require more attention in 2020. As a consequence, we have decided to adapt our lesson content to include a stronger conservation message. This will continue to be a focus for us in the years ahead, as will a targeted campaign to reach more under-resourced schools.



Left: Did you know that many seaweed species are edible? A child on a school outing tastes a small piece of sea lettuce.

Right: A shark egg case (or mermaid's purse) is discovered on the rocky shore.



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A beautiful nudibranch is an exciting find in a rock pool.

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The centre exhibits see a considerable amount of wear and tear each year at the hands of our many visitors and as a result, regular maintenance is essential. We replaced the bench on which our microscope and bio-viewers stand and undertook a major revamp of the main aquarium. In addition to the repairs, we introduced some new features, including the eco-code mural on a wall close to the school group snack area. This code states the conservation actions we take as a centre to lessen our environmental impact. By painting this in an area that is visible to school groups during snack time, we hope to inspire change in the children who read it. In addition, our 'swimming' hammerhead shark sculpture on Kalk Bay main road was lifted so that it is more visible to passing traffic and pedestrians. Our water-wise garden continues to thrive despite the drought and in order to further improve the aesthetic of the garden, we enclosed the rainwater collection tanks with wooden panels.

During 2019, the offices of the Education and Communications team were moved upstairs to make way for the development of the downstairs rooms into

Previous spread: A school group gets an introduction on how the scientists do it, learning how to count creatures on the rocky shores.

Opposite: A school group enjoying some experiential learning in the rockpools at Dalebrook beach, across the road from the Shark Education Centre.



Opposite: The team at the Shark Education Centre, from left to right: Clova, Lillian, Zanele, Tom and Claire.

Above: Clova showing a learner how to gently handle the creatures that live in the Dalebrook rock pools.



Above: Claire guiding a team through the Treasure Hunt app. Left: Tom teaches a school group about life on the rocky shores.

educational exhibits. These installations are currently being designed in collaboration with Heidi de Maine from Sunfish Consulting – we can't wait to see them take shape.

The changes to the centre in 2019 were not limited to the interior; we also repaired and painted the roof and gave the external façade an instant face-lift with a new paint colour. Unfortunately, scheduled power outages continue to be an issue in South Africa as the national electricity provider struggles with reduced capacity. As a result, several of our systems in the centre suffered, including the sump tank that catches the overflow from our main aquarium. A back-up system has been installed for the tank and we have ordered batteries to store the charge from our solar panels. This will enable us to run selected appliances for several hours in the event of a power failure.

Over the course of 2019 the staff attended several external conferences and workshops. The 2019 South African Marine and Coastal Educators Network (MCEN) conference was held in January in the Southern Cape area. The conference provides an opportunity for educators from organisations all over South Africa to meet and motivate each other by sharing their work, their ideas for lessons and educational activities and their experiences. We were also very





Left: A school group listening to a safety briefing before they explore the rocky shore at Dalebrook beach. Right: Zanele enjoying a rock pooling session with a Xhosa-speaking group.



Opposite: An outreach group visit to the Shark Education Centre. Following spread: High-spirited learners prepare to explore the rocky shore at Dalebrook beach.

fortunate to attend the 5th Southern African Shark and Ray Symposium in 2019, which had as its theme 'Elasmobranchs in the Blue Economy'. The talks were excellent and it was wonderful to learn about the latest research coming out of southern Africa and to network with key scientists and NGO and industry professionals. This event also provided an opportunity for the inaugural meeting of the Southern African Shark Conservation forum, which we hope to be a part of in future years.

Looking back, 2019 was a year for finding our feet. Now we are all looking forward to 2020, which we expect to be filled with positive impacts, calm seas and, of course, big smiles on the faces of the children we teach!

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CREDITS

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Michael Scholl: p.2,6-7,9-11,18-19





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