



SAVE OUR SEAS FOUNDATION

SHARK EDUCATION CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Extracted from the Save Our Seas Foundation Annual Report 2020

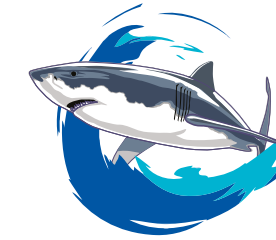


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The SOSF Shark Education Centre team ready for action on Dalebrook beach.



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CLOVA MABIN

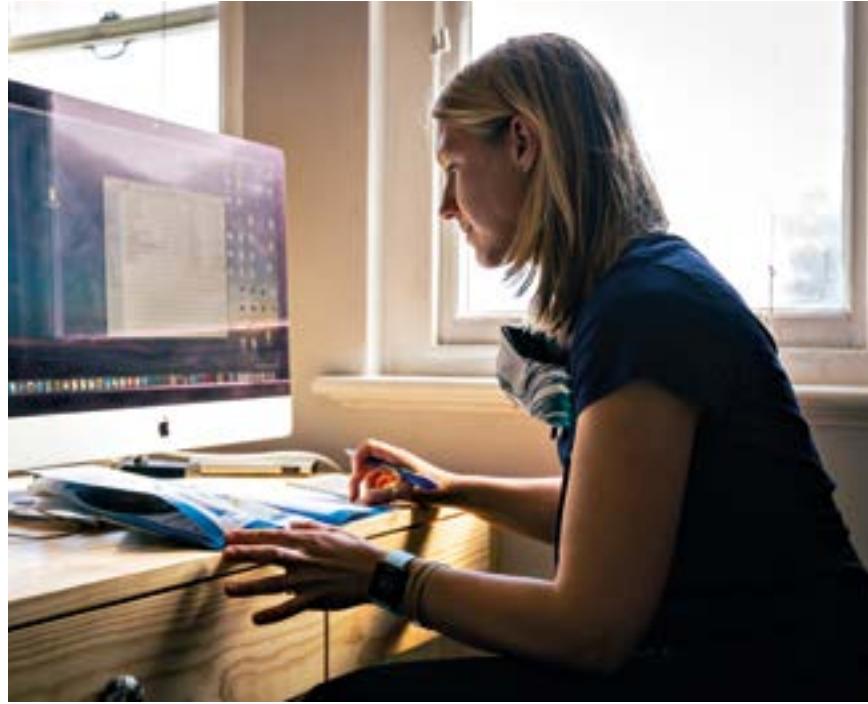
SOSF SHARK EDUCATION CENTRE

DR CLOVA MABIN

The Save Our Seas Foundation Shark Education Centre aims to connect the public to the ocean through experiential education programmes that focus on sharks and local marine ecosystems in order to nurture awareness, encourage environmentally responsible actions and develop a healthy respect for sharks. Our facility can accommodate school groups for an immersive educational experience, with a visit to the Dalebrook rocky shore a definite highlight. We are also open to the public and run several long-term educational programmes with under-resourced communities.

EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

With the strange circumstances that Covid-19 brought to the world in 2020, our working lives looked very different. While parents around the world were suddenly facing the prospect of homeschooling, our team were actually missing working with the groups of school children whose voices usually fill our centre. South Africa was in some form of national lockdown from 23 March until the end of the year. With a hard lockdown for the first two months, staff worked from home if they were able to. Then as restrictions lifted, the team returned to the centre in shifts to limit exposure; we returned in full as of September.



Above, left: Clova Mabin, director of the Shark Education Centre, works on an activity book developed for primary school learners in 2020.
Above, right: Some of the participants in the 2020 Marine Explorers programme having fun even before they enter the water.

As a result of Covid-19, visitor numbers this year were unfortunately lower than in previous years. The total number of people reached directly by the Shark Education Centre in 2020 was 1,028. This included 849 school learners in organised groups (both onsite and offsite), with 113 accompanying adults (parents or teachers). In addition, 377 members of the public visited during the year. These numbers would not have been as high had we not had a very busy start to the year, with 601 learners and 222 members of the public visiting us during January and February 2020. We were able to open to visitors again in September under strict Covid-19 protocols, with limited group sizes and a dedicated cleaning schedule.

On the plus side, fewer classes allowed the education team to focus on projects that had been in the pipeline for several years. This included a



Opposite, left: Craig Haley, the centre's Education Coordinator, teaches a class about rocky shore ecosystems.
Opposite, right: The proud owner of a newly developed pocket guide that has been designed for young people to use while exploring the rockpools of the Cape Peninsula.

Rockpool Pocket Guide, a *Sharks of False Bay* poster and two primary school activity books. These educational materials will be used to increase our impact after outreach events at under-resourced schools.

With a gloomy outlook for school visits for the remainder of 2020, we decided to use our annual outreach budget to offer five local primary schools a once-off donation to alleviate some of the unexpected Covid-19 costs. The majority of donations consisted of either pre-printed educational materials that were distributed to learners who could not attend school during the lockdown or a supply of paper to print their own worksheets. This support was greatly appreciated by all the schools we worked with and I hope it will be the start of long-term partnerships with these schools.





2020 was also the year we revised our Marine Explorers programme. We decided to try partnering with a local swim squad that worked with teenagers from under-resourced communities. It was a great success and despite Covid-19, we managed to put 14 learners through the programme.

Like most companies, we had to move the majority of our work to online platforms during 2020 in order to continue reaching others. Unfortunately, due to its nature, online content is restricted to learners who have access to a smart device and mobile data or Wi-Fi to view and participate in the lessons. The majority of our target groups do not have these privileges. However, we took the opportunity to trial different teaching techniques with an aim to adapting them in future. One example of this was the water cycle webinar series that we undertook in collaboration with the Cape Town Environmental Education Trust and the Environmental Learning Research Centre. The programme consisted of three sections, with the first an overview of the water cycle and a discussion about global citizenship. The second component ('Home-to-Sea') was hosted by the Shark Education Centre with a focus on impacts that people have on the marine environment from their homes, in terms of pollutants in sewage systems and littering, as well as the positive influences that consumers can have. The final webinar emphasised the 'Source-to-Home' pathway, with a great discussion of water usage. A total of nine learners completed the programme and we hope to develop this into a formal package for teachers to use in future.

Opposite: A Marine Explorers participant tries out the snorkelling gear in a swimming pool before diving into the ocean.

Below, left: Some Marine Explorers participants learn how to use snorkelling equipment correctly at the Pisces Divers pool in Simon's Town. Below, right: Others enter the water at the nearby Windmill beach for their first open-water snorkel.





Left: A youth group helps the Shark Education Centre team collect nurdles from Dalebrook beach.
Above: Nurdles, nurdles everywhere! These tiny plastic pellets are polluting Western Cape beaches following a recent container spill.



Above: The new signage and flags at the Shark Education Centre are helping to draw visitors through its doors.
 Opposite: Our talented muralist in action, creating a backdrop for the sevengill cowshark sculpture that will be installed in 2021.

FACILITIES UPGRADE

With minimal foot traffic during 2020, we took the opportunity to make several changes to the centre, focusing on our outside facilities where school groups congregate during their visits. The principal objective was to create more seating spaces for groups, particularly with some shelter from rain, while the design allows visitors to experience the False Bay environment from the shoreline to deeper waters. Eight beautiful shark sculptures made of various recycled materials add the final touch and we can't wait to invite school groups back.

After the success of our recent installation of solar panels and a battery, we decided to connect our rainwater storage tanks to the plumbing system. Now all the toilet cisterns, taps and appliances receive filtered potable rainwater and our consumption of municipal water is significantly reduced. Our water storage tanks have been clad to resemble the False Bay beach huts and visitors can use this space (which also houses our recycling station and 'Eco-code') to learn about what we at the centre do to reduce our environmental impact – another teaching opportunity!



LOOKING FORWARD

As 2020 looked so different for us, and our visitor numbers are much lower than previous years, I hope that we will get the chance to change this in 2021. Our aims for 2021 will be to increase our educational reach in our current programmes as well as to introduce several new projects. These include an increase in our outreach activities with assemblies at schools that have never visited us before (especially high schools), a pilot pop-up roadshow along the False Bay coastline and the development of an Ocean Ambassador programme to increase our messaging in local communities.

Below: Staff check on the animals that live in the Shark Education Centre's touchpool.
Right: Young visitors study the Shark Education Centre's collection of shark biofacts, which include jaws from several species, teeth and vertebrae, as well as skin samples.



CREDITS

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