

INTEGRATED REPORT

Changing Lives Through Nature



NATURE CONNECT

2024



**"I'm passionate
about the
environment because
I was lucky enough to
be able to connect with
nature when I was young"**

*Elizabeth Wanjiru Wathuti,
Kenyan environment and
climate activist*

*Floral appreciation at Kenilworth Racecourse
Conservation Area.*



The problem our organisation addresses

The climate crisis is marked by rising global temperatures, extreme weather events and widespread ecological disruptions, which pose a substantial threat to biodiversity, our life-supporting ecosystems and human societies.

Addressing this polycrisis requires conservation efforts to protect and restore ecosystems, as well as social awareness initiatives to foster sustainable public behaviour.

In response, Nature Connect has developed three core programmes: Environmental Education, which inspires long-term behavioural change; Green Skills Development, which equips individuals with the skills needed for the green economy; and the Nature Care Fund, which collaborates with stakeholders to protect biodiversity.

NATURE CONNECT



Our mission

Get people in Africa to love and protect nature



Our vision

People in Africa are connected to nature and act as its stewards, benefiting from an expanding green economy



Organisational structure



Our history and milestones

- 2001** The Zeekoevlei Environmental Education Programme (ZEEP) registered with the Master of the High Court with first trustees: Quentin Pavitt, Dave de Korte, Dalton Gibbs; 47 camps held that year
- 2006** Name change to Cape Town Environmental Education Trust (CTEET); False Bay Environmental Education Centre established
- 2007** Nature Care Fund launched; Kenilworth Racecourse and Muizenberg East conservation sites added. Green Skills Development programme launched. Finalist in *Cape Times* Environmental Awards
- 2009** MOU signed with City of Cape Town; eight conservation sites managed
- 2014** First Nature Conservation Learnership launched; conservation sites expanded
- 2015** Gantouw Project launched in partnership with Quemic; Armand Bam appointed trustee, David De Korte appointed chairman
- 2016** First Graduate Internship programme launched with CATHSSETA; received SANParks Kudu Award for contribution to conservation
- 2017** Received *Mail & Guardian* award for Conservation Leadership Programme; SANParks Kudu Award for environmental education and women in conservation; began management of Zoarvlei
- 2018** Closed False Bay Education Centre; began exploring Biodiversity Offset funding. Gold and Silver Eco-Logic awards for Conservation Leadership Programme and Nature Care Fund
- 2019** First Conservation Leaders Programme cohort graduate; River Ambassadors project initiated; Green Skills Development wins silver Eco-Logic award
- 2020** Received SANParks Kudu award for environmental education and innovative biodiversity-offset work. Received SACE accreditation
- 2021** Launched national Sustainable Schools programme
- 2022** Introduced accredited job-readiness training delivered by Nature Connect
- 2023** Rolled out biodiversity offsetting projects; Stephen Granger, Pavitray Pillay and Nicole Biondi appointed as trustees; Nature Connect name officially lodged with Master



CEO's report

I have been fortunate to lead Nature Connect for the past 12 years, witnessed its growth and been part of a team dedicated to increasing the impact of our work. This growth has come with some challenges, not unlike those faced by any other industry or sector undergoing expansion. As a result, this last year we focused on applying and implementing systems to improve efficiencies while reducing risk.

As we considered our growth and path forward, we identified the need for a board with more diverse skills. This led us to appointing three new trustees, Nicole Biondi, Stephen Granger and Pavitray Pillay. Each brings a wealth of experience and fresh perspectives on how we can better serve our beneficiaries. At the same time, we bade farewell to Dalton Gibbs, one of our founding trustees, who stepped down after 23 years of service. It was a bittersweet moment for us, but we are extremely fortunate that Dalton remains available to offer guidance on urban conservation when needed.

As we look ahead to 2024, a year in which more than 100 countries are holding national elections, we are mindful of the potential impact of geopolitics on our organisation. With ongoing global wars and famine, donors and government agencies are shifting their focus to avert these crises. In this climate, it is essential that Nature Connect remains agile, not only to seize new opportunities, but adapt our approach where necessary. Thus, we saw 2023–2024 as the year to revisit our mission and strategies, ensuring our work aligns and resonates with our end goals. The arrival of the new trustees made it the ideal opportunity, so they can help shape the next phase of the organisation's evolution. As part of this process, we redefined our mission to: "Get people in Africa to love and protect nature."

Refining our mission created a platform for unifying our programmes, allowing us to align them more closely with our goals and implement metrics for monitoring our progress. In the past, we worked towards programme objectives in silos, but our renewed sense of unity has provided a clear focus and foundation for fund-raising and growing strategic partnerships.

With our head office located in Cape Town, the City of Cape Town remains a key partner; however, we are also cementing partnerships nationwide as our education and training programmes roll out. These partnerships, founded on a shared vision, have extended the area and extent of our impact.

While we continually explore ways to generate our own revenue, we remain reliant on donor support to fund our work. A number of these donors are also partners who share our belief and vision. We are particularly grateful to Mapula Trust for its unwavering support over the past 12 years across many aspects of the organisation. Additionally, the Allan and Gill Gray Philanthropies provided the majority of the start-up capital that enabled the Sustainable Schools programme to grow from a concept into an impactful, national initiative.

Nature Connect is now poised to expand its influence and impact far beyond what we envisioned during its first 21 years. This progress would not have been possible without a forward-looking board and an engine room of dedicated, driven staff who embrace Nature Connect's mission. It is this remarkable team that makes us what we are, and I thank each member for what they bring to the job every day.

Dr Anthony Roberts



"Nature Connect is now poised to expand its influence and impact far beyond what we envisioned during its first 21 years"

Nature Connect focuses on education through connecting people to nature and then transferring knowledge and skills that empower them to become stewards of nature

Looking forward

Sustainable Schools' expansion plan

As we prepare to scale up our Sustainable Schools programme, we recognise several requirements are necessary: increasing partner participation with schools; implementing a centralised communications and client-management system; and improving the online hub's functionality for information dissemination, communications and data-gathering. To improve efficiencies, we will embark on a custom build of the online hub in the coming year (see page 18 for more).

Connect to Nature

We have boosted our programmes at Bokbaai Education Centre, increasing the use of this incredible venue to host school camps and the annual 2nd-year camp for CPUT's Nature Conservation students. With the addition of an obstacle course, new resources in the Biodiversity Centre and its prime location on the Table Bay coastline, Bokbaai is primed to be the venue of choice for school groups from across Cape Town (see page 28 for more).

Green Skills aims for nationwide partnerships

In parallel, our Green Skills Development training team will expand partnerships with institutions across the country so young conservationists gain the necessary workplace experience to secure decent, career-relevant employment. Our relationships with organisations such as the South African Association for Marine Biological Research reflect our shared commitment to cultivating the next generation of passionate biodiversity stewards (see page 38 for more).

Nature Care Fund to establish more projects

Through the Nature Care Fund, we will collaborate to find innovative solutions that advance nature conservation. In the coming year, we will focus more closely on establishing biodiversity-offset projects linked to land transformation as a viable means of securing and managing land for conservation (see page 48 for more).

OPERATIONS TEAM 2023-2024



Linda Wilson
Operations Manager



Nicole Georgiou
Operations Coordinator
(Resigned)



Louise Matschke
Green Skills and
Partnerships Strategist



Biscoth Tshikuna
Financial Administrator

Chairman's letter

As 2024 draws to close, I am afforded the chance to reflect on the work of Nature Connect for another year.

I am pleased to report that the Nature Connect staff have been hard at work, changing lives through nature. At a time when the world and national agendas are focused on the other large environmental issues, such as climate change, our work has kept its focus on working in predominantly poor communities to make children aware of their natural environment. Our holistic education model aims to cultivate environmentally aware and literate youth who grow into adults that value their natural environment and may even get jobs in the green economy.

All our programmes have seen growth in the past year. The Bokbaai site is a stunning venue, fast becoming the flagship of our camping activities. We are very grateful to Mapula Trust for providing such an amazing venue for overnight school camps. The Sustainable School programme has signed up more schools and is continuing to impact the learners in many ways, from increasing environmental awareness to establishing food gardens in schools that feed school families. Our Green Skills Development work carries on, with trainees qualifying each year and entering the green economy as wage earners; we are grateful to the City of Cape Town for our continued partnership. Many of our graduates have been able to find work in conservation projects with CoCT. The Nature Care fund has again proven to find wonderful and creative

ways of conserving valuable and strategic pockets of land in the City.

I would like to thank all our funders who have believed in our work and joined hands with us to make it happen. A special thanks to Mapula Trust who gave us much-needed support when our camping programme ran low on funds. A big thanks must go to the staff, under the caring leadership of our CEO, Dr Anthony Roberts. In our work we are always asking that little more of a hard working team that is willing to give a lot more.

Finally to thank my fellow trustees. Your goodwill offering of your time and expertise to this organisation is really appreciated. Your insightful and wise contribution to our meetings ensure that we are able to make good decisions and support the staff well.

DAVID DE KORTE
Board chair



Governance

The organisation works to align its policies to various South African governance and ethics documents (such as King IV, the Department of Social Development's Code of Good Practice for South African Non-profit Organisations and The Independent Code of Governance and Values for Non-profit Organisations in South Africa). The organisation has had clean audits from reputable auditors and is in good standing with SARS, the Department of Social Development, and the Department of Labour-COIDA.



Pavitray (Pavs) Pillay, trustee

Pavs has a BSC (Wits) in Zoology and Archaeology, an Honours and a MSC in Marine Biology from UCT. With a wealth of experience in marine science, education, training and communication, Pavs has worked in Namibia, Angola and SA on an UNDP/GEF-funded marine programme and at the Marine Research Institute (UCT) as the communication and scientific officer. In 2010, she was awarded the SANCOR science communicator of the year award and was featured in the *Mail & Guardian's* list of 100 Young South Africans to take to lunch. Pavs was named International Ocean Witness in 2018 by WWF-Netherlands. She leads WWF-SA's Corporate Engagement and Behaviour Change, which drives initiatives related to sustainable consumption, plastics, food waste and market transformation with key corporate partners.



Nicole Biondi, trustee

Nicole is an Independent Consultant, Leadership Coach, Facilitator and People Connector with expertise in non- and for-profit sectors. Her focus includes internal and external communications; business strategy and operations; and senior-level leadership, individual and team coaching. Over the past 20 years, Nicole has held communications-focused roles across industries including tourism, conservation, early childhood development, social impact investing and organisational culture shaping. She has led large-scale strategic communications and marketing activities for Cape Town Tourism, SANParks and Innovation Edge. Her work has encompassed creating comprehensive communications, marketing and PR strategies; driving brand evolution; and utilising social and behaviour-change communication methodologies to execute impactful campaigns.

Nature Connect's mandate is also to preserve biodiversity, as we do with the Western Leopard Toad tunnels



David de Korte, chairman

David de Korte is one of the founding members of Nature Connect (previously Cape Town Environmental Education Trust). David is currently working for Common Good as the Education Programme Coordinator. He was the previous headmaster of Camps Bay High School. From his time as headmaster and now with Common Good, it is evident that David firmly believes in uplifting children from disadvantaged communities. We are grateful to have David's insights and understanding of the school system and curriculum. In his free time, David enjoys the outdoors with his family, and whenever the swell is suitable and time allows, you will find him on his surfboard.



Mike Gregor, trustee

Mike is the CEO of Rapula Farming, a business linked to several conservation initiatives across South Africa. His business knowledge and acumen, coupled with an understanding of conservation challenges in South Africa, enables him to critically assess and guide intervention programmes that Nature Connect pursues. For many years, Mike has served on several NPO boards involved in environmental education and community upliftment programmes.



Dalton Gibbs, trustee

Dalton is another one of the original founders of Nature Connect. Dalton has been involved with the City of Cape Town for over 20 years and was instrumental in developing the Cape Town Biodiversity Network with his colleagues in the Biodiversity Management Branch. He strongly believes and understands the importance of educating children on the value and need of conservation interventions in Cape Town. Dalton is an avid naturalist, ornithologist, and historian and will take all opportunities to share his knowledge with people for the betterment of conservation.



Stephen Granger, trustee

Stephen Granger holds degrees in land surveying and environmental studies from the University of Cape Town. His 15-year tenure as head of the environmental management unit at Ninham Shand consulting engineers was followed by roles in the Cape Metropolitan Council, where he oversaw environmental strategy, climate policy, green infrastructure and partnerships. He contributed to ecological and environmental organisations, serving on the national executive of the South African Institute of Ecologists and Environmental Scientists and the international board of the International Association for Impact Assessment. Additionally, he chaired ICLEI international's Local Action for Biodiversity programme and the Montebello Design Centre Board of Trustees. Beyond his environmental work, Stephen is involved in distance-running journalism and trail-running administration in South Africa. He is a family man with a passion for mountain trail running and has a keen interest in environmental and climate science.



Nature Connect partners

South African Education and Environment Project (SAEP)
South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON)
Project 90 by 2030
Darling Outreach Foundation
Imbovane Outreach
SHAWCO
Periods for Hope
Natures Valley Trust
SANParks
CapeNature
Discover Eden
Fundisa for Change
SANBI
Working on Fire
Cape Town Science Centre
Green Matter
SOS Shark Educational Centre
Shark Spotters
I am Water
Chadwick School
Sustainability Matters
Chrysalis Academy
Quemic
SANCCOB
SAAMBR
Friends of Zeekoevlei and Rondevlei
Cape Leopard Trust
Two Oceans Aquarium Foundation
ETDP SETA
CATHSSETA
WWF-SA
City of Cape Town
Cape Town Tourism
Code4Kids
Enviro Vito NPO
Groundwater Kids
Guardians of the Deep

Key Collaborations for the year

Strategic partnerships have been critical to our organisation's success over the past year. These partnerships span sectors including environmental education, conservation and skills development, demonstrating our commitment to the global SDGs and comprehensive engagement.

National Environmental Learning and National Environmental Skills Planning forums

Nature Connect is now represented on two prestigious national forums for environmental education and skills development, significantly elevating our national presence and positioning us as a key player in the sector. These forums, which shape national strategies like the Biodiversity Human Capital Development Strategy (BHCDS) and National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), enables us to influence and contribute to critical strategies and policies. Our continued engagement in the BHCDS reinforces our commitment to driving impactful change in green skills development and establishes us as a leading voice in environmental conservation and education.

Education Training and Development Practices, Sector Education and Training Authority

As a Quality Assurance Partner for ETDP SETA, Nature Connect has continued to contribute to the development of the Environmental Education Training and Development Practitioner National Qualification this financial year. The qualification is now awaiting finalisation with ETDP SETA and verification from the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). Once registered, we will apply to be a service provider for this qualification.

Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sports Sector Training Authority

Our long-standing involvement with CATHSSETA has been pivotal in developing youth through learnerships and internship grants. This past year, Nature Connect was asked to become a Quality Assurance Partner, participating in the development and review of Nature Conservation qualifications and skills programmes for verification by QCTO. Once registered, we will begin offering the new qualifications.

Fundisa for Change and the National Environmental Learning Forum

Nature Connect was one of only two NGOs involved in the national curriculum-strengthening process in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education. Louise Matschke played a significant role in enhancing the Marine Sciences and Natural Sciences curriculum.

South African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds

This year, our partnership with SANCCOB entered a new phase, with its Gqeberha and Tableview facilities hosting learners and interns through our Green Skills Programme. Eight individuals participated in a learnership at the Tableview site.



Nature Connect partners

I AM WATER

Lapalala Wilderness School
One Planet South Africa
Perridon Conservation College
Rand Water: Water Wise Education
Ingungcu
The Beach Co-op
Greenpop
Two Oceans Aquarium
Captain Fanplastic
Environmental Monitoring Group
Arkys outreach
Grootvaly Blesbokspruit Conservation Trust
Breteau Foundation
Society for Ecological Restoration
Wildlife Forensic Academy

Forums

National Skills Planning Forum
National Environmental Planning Forum
Western Cape Environmental Education Forum (EE Friends)
Biodiversity Human Capital Development Strategy
Sand River Catchment Forum
Zeekoevlei Catchment Forum
Marine and Coastal Educators Network
False Bay Nature Reserve PAAC,
Zandvlei Nature Reserve PAAC,
Blaauwberg Nature Reserve PAAC
Table Bay Nature Reserve PAAC
Conservation at Work

Donors



Risk Assessment and Mitigation

Risk Area	Risk Factor	Mitigation
Finance	Sustainability	Identify and pursue new sources of income, with a particular focus on international donors, leveraging our long history of good governance.
		Manage donors diligently, providing regular reports on expenditure and organisational developments; encourage donors to advocate for the organisation by promoting our mission and work.
		Adapt our fundraising strategy to changing conditions, explore new avenues, and diversify our funder base. Leverage the favourable exchange rate.
		Shift from donor-based dependency towards generating independent revenue. Ensure cost-recovery from projects where possible. Refine MOUs to ensure terms are clear and unexpected costs do not arise.
		Forge strategic partnerships with local and international NGOs, education institutions, the private and public sector to pool resources and expertise to collectively address sustainability challenges.
		Seek external guidance to build the marketing and PR strategy, promoting the Nature Connect brand and increasing awareness among potential donors.
	Liabilities	Conduct a comprehensive review of vulnerabilities and exposure risks, ensuring the organisation maintains appropriate and sufficient insurance coverage.
	Financial management	Maintain regular reviews and engagement with an external accounting firm experienced in NPO financial management, while improving financial management of internal staff. Leverage the expertise of FINCOM to improve our financial management processes.
	Policy changes (governmental and private sector)	Maintain regular internal and external stakeholder engagement to apply adaptive management to rapidly adjust to uncertainty, volatility & regulatory changes, such as SARS S18A.
		Continue positioning Nature Connect as a leader in conservation policy development.
		Engage legal advice as needed to ensure compliance.
Governance	Board Review	Consider appointing board members or advisors with IT and legal expertise to contribute to digital transformation, data privacy and regulatory compliance.
		Establish appropriate committees to assist management.
	Senior Management	Succession planning and talent management. Increase mentoring and development of senior management team.
	Policies and Procedures	Continue developing and implementing effective policies that foster a supportive environment for the organisation while minimising potential risks.
	Liabilities	Review and update legal and registration obligations and MoUs.
Staff	Skills	Match staff capacity (new and current) with job requirements through KPA reviews and alignment and regularly update personal improvement plan.
	Organisational culture	Consistently engage with staff to include them in defining and taking ownership of the organisations culture, focussing on individual agency. Strong corporate culture around shared values, behaviours that reflect our ethos of caring for self and the environment.

Risk Area	Risk Factor	Mitigation
Staff	Support	Put measures in place to support staff, institute training interventions and improve performance tracking to ensure optimal productivity and acknowledge employee contributions through recognition/reward.
	Staff retention	Continuously review salaries to ensure competitiveness and institute appropriate rewards or incentives—such as professional development opportunities and performance-based bonuses—to aid staff retention.
	Lack of staff engagement	Foster open and transparent communication channels within the organisation, encourage ideas sharing and celebrate successes.
Communi- cations	Change management	Ensure top-down, bottom-up communications for staff. Ensure timely, consistent and transparent communication of changes to all stakeholders, using the most appropriate communication methods.
	Stakeholder engagement	Implement a communications strategy for internal and external stakeholders.
	Internal communications	Foster open communication channels between the board, staff and other internal stakeholders, ensuring broader organisational perspectives are considered in strategic decisions.
	Reputational damage	Set up a communication process for all communications directed towards external stakeholders.
	Online presence	Strategically increase reach and support through well-defined media and social media strategy.
		Ensure the website unifies the programmes and showcases our holistic environmental education model and aligns with our Theory of Change.
Organisational structure	Framework	Absorb and adapt to internal and external changes and challenges, and accommodate growth when required.
	Relevance	Engage with stakeholders to ensure that all our activities are relevant and in line with holistic environmental education.
	Strategy	Keep abreast of all global to local changes to ensure change management is well planned and managed
		Ensure effective governance that allows for swift decision-making in disruptive circumstances, while assessing opportunities and threats.
		Engage in strategic planning processes that involve the board, staff and key stakeholders to ensure unified resolve in disruptive times.
		Ensuring that those responsible for leading the change have the capabilities, authority, support and capacity to do so.
Data	Data storage and access	Create, enforce, and update a comprehensive data storage security plan that encompasses on-premises infrastructure, mobile devices and online systems.
	POPIA compliance	Regularly audit data practices to ensure compliance with POPIA, and provide ongoing staff training to reinforce best practices.
	Data protection	Set simple, concise and practical policies utilising appropriate software for data protection. As far as possible, to ensure copyright/trademark with the relevant registrations.



Funding and sustainability

Nature Connect changed its financial year end from March to February and the figures for this reporting cycle reflect only eleven months. The income stream breakdown has remained stable from the last financial year, with the vast majority coming from the same pool of regular donors. This reflects positively on our donor management and relationships. As we have significant growth plans, additional sources of income are essential for the next financial year and we have put plans in place for the following revenue streams: increasing donor income, increasing revenue-generating activities, and expense management.

Increasing donor income

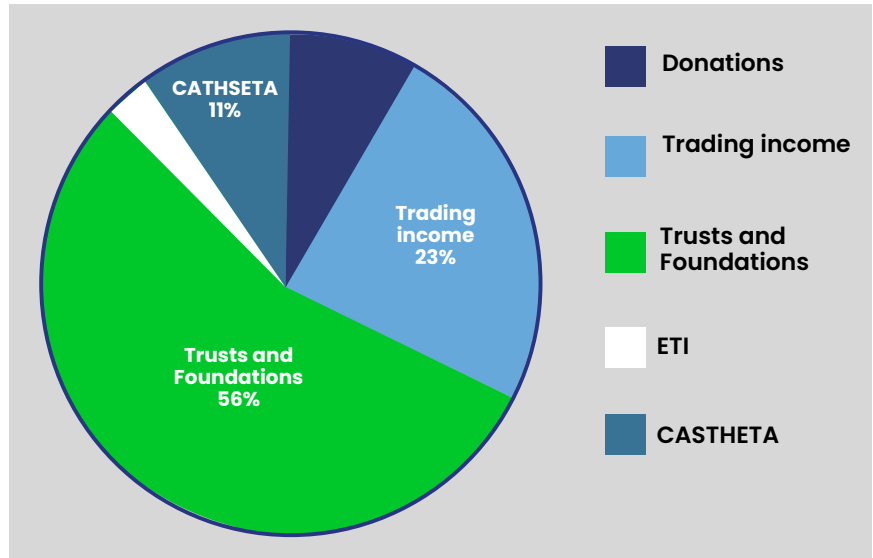
In the 2024 financial year, 10 main donors contributed 56% of Nature Connect's income. In an ever-tightening global economy, increasing donation income is a challenge; however, the weak Rand offers benefits to leveraging off smaller international donations. There are also opportunities to attract new donations within South Africa as the forecast for improved governance and electricity provision has a positive impact on investor confidence and local businesses.

The rising recognition of climate change increases the popularity of environmental donations; however this is counter-balanced by increasing number of NPOs competing for donations in this space. Nature Connect can leverage off our 23-year history of good governance to give potential donors confidence over newer NPOs.

Financials

The current reporting period is for 11 months as the trust's financial year-end was changed from 31 March to 29 February.

Breakdown of organisational income streams





Increasing revenue-generating activities

In the 2024 financial year, 23% of Nature Connect's income was generated by trading activities, a similar percentage to the previous year. There has been a shift towards a social-enterprise mindset, moving us incrementally away from the historic donor-based dependency towards revenue generation. This is demonstrated in the focus on attracting fee-paying schools to our camps, private landowners and developers for the Nature Care Fund, private companies and individuals for Green Skills training, and increased cost recovery efforts for the Sustainable Schools programme. We are working towards developing the new skills required and in some cases additional recruitment is needed. While shifting to increasing revenue is logical and aligned with global trends, Nature Connect needs to be cautious that it does not impact on existing donor agreements or relationships. While a rather modest contribution, maximising the interest off positive balances in our current accounts is a passive way to acquire additional revenue and this has increased by 15% through refining our banking portfolio.

Expense management

Stringent expense management and a shift to wholesale catering suppliers offer opportunities to reduce costs. While organisational growth will increase expenses, we are able to manage some overheads by negotiation with service providers in some cases or more careful supplier sourcing. Overall, Nature Connect has a dedicated team and many opportunities have been thoroughly exploited already.

From the AFS: Nature Connect (Registration number IT416/2001) Annual Financial Statements for the period ended 29 February 2024

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Nature Connect Trust set out on page 8 to 18, which comprise the statement of financial position as at 29 February 2024, statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in funds and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and the notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, except for the possible effect of the matter described in the basis for qualified opinion section of this report, the annual financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Nature Connect Trust as at 29 February 2024, and its financial performance and cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities and the requirements of the Trust Deed.

Basis for qualified opinion

In common with similar organisations it is not feasible for the Trust to institute accounting control over cash collections from donations prior to initial entry of the collections in the accounting records. Accordingly, it is impractical for us to extend our examination beyond the receipts actually recorded. We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report.

We are independent of the Trust in accordance with the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors' Code of Professional Conduct for Registered Auditors (IRBA Code) and other independence requirements applicable to performing audits of financial statements in South Africa. We have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities

in accordance with the IRBA Code and in accordance with other ethical requirements applicable to performing audits in South Africa. The IRBA Code is consistent with the corresponding sections of the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' International Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including International Independence Standards). We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Other Information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the Trustees' Report and the supplementary information as set out on pages 19 to 20, which we obtained prior to the date of this report. The other information does not include the annual financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. Our opinion on the annual financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express an audit opinion or any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the annual financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, to consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the annual financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of the Trustees for the Annual Financial Statements

The trustees are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the annual financial statements in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities and the requirements of the Trust Deed, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of annual financial statements that are free from ➔

material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the annual financial statements, the managing agent engage with the trustees in assessing the Trust's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the Trust or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the annual financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these annual financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the annual financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order


to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Trust's internal control.

- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.

- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting and based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Trust's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the annual financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Trust to cease to continue as a going concern.

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the annual financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the annual financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the trustees regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit. ♦


LPH Chartered Accountants Inc.
Registered Auditors
Per: ER Livesey
Director
Chartered Accountant (SA)
Registered Auditor



STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	2024	2023
Total Income	15,338,869	13,178,664
Expenses	-15,481,145	-13,794,254
Total	-142,276	-615,590
ASSETS		
Non-current Assets		
Property Plant and Equipment	1,320,499	904,071
Current Assets		
Trade and other Receivables	3,559,162	4,715,392
Other Financial Assets	1,983,779	2,777,581
Cash and Cash Equivalent	5,648,934	13,491,814
Total	12,512,374	14,395,885
FUNDS AND LIABILITIES		
Funds		
Accumulated Funds	463,115	1,021,819
Asset Fund	1,320,499	904,071
Total	1,783,614	1,925,890
Non-current Liabilities	472,249	529,684
Finance lease obligation	472,249	529,684
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other Payables	252,865	211,307
Funds for long-term projects	2,027,360	6,678,846
Deferred Income	5,376,243	4,816,309
Provisions	2,600,043	233,846
Total	10,256,511	11,940,311
Total Funds and Liabilities	12,512,374	14,395,885



The problem our programme addresses

In this era of unprecedented environmental challenges, environmental protection and sustainable development are more crucial than ever. Sustainable development demands that we balance our current resource needs with preserving the natural systems supporting life, ensuring that future generations can meet their needs. This relies on society to cultivate environmentally literate citizens capable of managing resources sustainably, which requires environmental education (EE) and education for sustainable development (ESD).

Schools play a pivotal role in education about the environment and sustainable development; however, teachers often struggle to integrate EE or ESD into their classes. Reasons for this include limited knowledge, skills and resources, large class sizes, and the preference given to examinable content. The Sustainable Schools programme addresses these challenges by offering teachers of all subjects and grades tools, resources, and real-person support to incorporate EE and ESD into their classes.

Sustainable Schools is one of two arms of Nature Connect's Environmental Education pillar, which targets the 'hearts and minds' of society to enable long-term behaviour change for the good of society.

Environmental Education: Sustainable Schools

Sustainable Schools strengthened foundations, prepared for scale

Since Sustainable Schools' launch in 2021, our team has focused on establishing a strong foundation. With more than 150 schools in six provinces, we have made good progress. This financial year, we concentrated on assessing the programme's scalability while continuing to build trust in our product. We set four strategic goals: to prepare the Sustainable Schools programme for scaling; expand our national footprint; increase teacher resources through partnerships; and facilitate events to enhance engagement with schools, teachers and youth. The programme has made significant strides towards these goals and is now poised for greater impact in the coming year. We remain optimistic and steadfast in our mission to advance EE and ESD in schools throughout Africa, building resilient, environmentally literate citizens who care for themselves, others and the planet.

First steps were taken to scale the programme

We began by identifying the limitations of the existing programme and what was needed to scale it effectively. Leveraging technology emerged as a clear pathway, which meant revising and improving the existing Sustainable Schools Hub. Entering the EdTech space has revealed gaps in our team's skills and capacity, which will be addressed through additional training. To support our expansion strategy, we selected software company SovTech to develop an innovative, seamless platform designed for scalability.

An important step in this process was separating Sustainable Schools' operations from Connect to Nature activities, allowing our team to focus solely on the programme's development. We implemented new systems to improve project management and customer relationships, coupled with targeted training for the team. To enhance user engagement, we redefined key metrics and plan to add gamification elements to improve the overall user experience. In addition, we streamlined data management with CRM tools like Salesforce, crucial for monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning activities.

We expanded our school network and national reach

We expanded our programme from four to six provinces, registering 150 schools, an increase of 29, several in untapped areas. The submission rate for School Environmental Management Plans (SEMPs) increased from 49% to 73%, with more than 227 action projects initiated. Notable ➡

projects included vegetable gardens, recycling initiatives, renewable-energy installations and sustainability partnerships. The SEMP's provided valuable insights into how sustainability initiatives are being implemented across South African schools. Over the year, our team supported more than 500 teachers through one-on-one engagements during more than 300 school visits, as well as in-person and online workshops. New staff additions—another school coordinator, a school liaison officer and a part-time data and partnerships coordinator—along with staff training on Salesforce and the introduction of other crucial new processes and systems, helped us achieve this level of engagement.

Partnerships increased teachers' resources

We formed partnerships with more than 21 organisations, five new, providing teachers with additional resources and expertise to integrate ESD into their daily lessons. The Online Hub saw 1 620 resource downloads; audits and guidebooks were most popular.

Events grew our engagement

We engaged with 542 learners in the Western Cape and Gauteng through Action Days like clean-ups and the Marine Week Art Exhibition, fostering learners' environmental agency and contributing to ecosystem restoration. We also hosted South African Council for Education-endorsed workshops for teachers, focusing on whole-school sustainability, the effective use of SEMP's, health and wellbeing, and production, consumption and waste. Our annual Rewards Ceremony in the Western Cape celebrated the achievements of teachers, schools and partners, encouraging collaboration, idea-sharing and partnerships, enriching the Sustainable Schools Community of Practice. Similar events will be hosted in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo by our partners, One Planet SA and Lapalala Wilderness School, in the new financial year. ●

Amanzimtoti Primary learners explored water filtration, learning about the vital role of wetlands in cleaning our water





PROJECT LEAD TESTIMONIAL

Jocelyn Anderson Manager, Sustainable Schools

This year, I've witnessed remarkable growth and innovation within the Sustainable Schools team. One of my proudest achievements was cultivating a dynamic and dedicated team, whose passion for sustainability drove our success. Together, we've advanced the Sustainable Schools programme through a revised programme strategy and exciting redevelopment plans for the Sustainable Schools Hub. Venturing into the Edtech space is a thrilling journey as we explore innovative ways to integrate sustainability education into school curricula.

These highlights have not only enriched my professional journey, but also deepened my commitment to advancing EE and ESD in schools and communities throughout South Africa.



Strategic Targets and Impacts

Strategic Targets

Action and Impact

1.

Prepare
Sustainable
Schools for
scaling

1.

Began Sustainable Schools Hub redevelopment, identified EdTech-related training for staff

Software company selected for platform redevelopment; two EdTech courses identified for training; key metrics redefined; data management streamlined with CRM tools; separated from Connect to Nature

2.

Expand
national
reach

2.

Increased staff capacity with additional school coordinator, school liaison officer, data and partnerships coordinator

Increased reach from 2 to 6 provinces; additional 29 schools registered (150 total); SEMP submission rate increased from 49% to 73%; facilitated 227 action projects; 542 learners engaged; 500 teachers reached through one-on-one support and our SACE-endorsed teacher training workshops; 300 school visits conducted

3.

Increase
teacher
resources

3.

Provided more tools and materials for teachers through partnerships

21 partnerships (5 new); 1 620 resource downloads

4.

Facilitate events
to enhance
engagement

4.

Increased opportunities for engaging with schools, teachers and youth

6 Action Days and exhibitions; 542 learners engaged with; 1 Rewards Ceremony.



We partner with organisations in the following sectors:

◆ Environmental education

Experts who offer tailored advice and strategies for integrating EE and ESD into the curriculum or provide workshops, webinars and coaching.

◆ Sustainability

NGOs and community groups that offer resources and support for implementing sustainability projects or provide project templates, funding opportunities and volunteer support.

◆ Green products

Companies that supply sustainable products and materials for school projects or offer discounts and bulk purchasing options for schools.

◆ Renewable energy

Companies that specialise in solar, wind and other renewable energy solutions or provide educational resources and hands-on project kits for renewable energy experiments.

◆ Waste-management services

Organisations that offer recycling programmes, composting solutions and waste-reduction workshops, or resources to help schools set up and maintain waste-management systems.

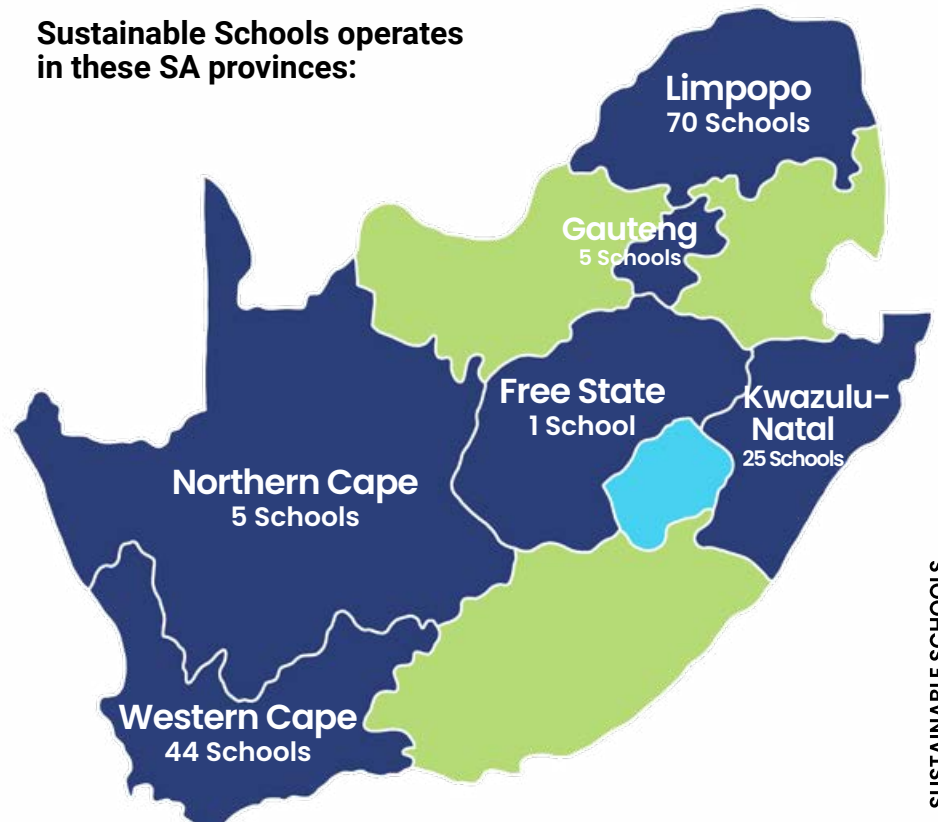
◆ Green-building and landscaping

Professionals who help design and implement green-building projects and sustainable landscaping, or offer consultancy services for creating eco-friendly school environments.

2 726

The number of educational hours we've achieved this year

Sustainable Schools operates in these SA provinces:





(partners continued...)

◆ Local government and municipalities

Government agencies that provide funding, resources, and support for sustainability initiatives, or collaborate on community-wide environmental projects and policy development.

◆ Health and wellness

Organisations and practitioners who offer programmes on topics like sustainable nutrition, physical activity and mental health.

How Sustainable Schools furthers SA's NDP and the global SDGs

Our programme cultivates environmentally literate citizens, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to implement sustainable practices in their communities.

The NDP 2030 emphasises the importance of sustaining ecosystems and using natural resources efficiently. Sustainable Schools supports this goal by promoting sustainability through education, hands-on environmental projects and community involvement to protect natural resources and ecosystems.

We integrate the following global Sustainable Development Goals into our Focus Areas for our teacher-training workshops and educational resources:



By investing in the education and empowerment of educators, we can ensure that environmental protection and sustainable development become integral parts of the educational system, driving positive change both in the short term and for future generations.





Case Study

How some local schools are reducing waste of natural resources

Western Cape St Mary's RC Primary School in Retreat has implemented a comprehensive composting programme, where fruit, vegetable peels, eggshells and tea bags are collected in dedicated bins. The school's feeding scheme also diverts its vegetable peels, which were previously discarded, to the bins. Both learners and teachers participate. Each classroom has colour-coded recycling bins, promoting a recycling culture among learners. The Eco Club plays a crucial role in raising awareness. Its compost-awareness posters are informative guides, illustrating what should and should not be composted. The school's collective effort reflects its commitment to environmental consciousness and sustainable practices.

Gauteng Ntokozweni Primary School has partnered with Kellanova to provide nutrition and gardening knowledge to learners, parents and the community. The school has received greenhouses, seeds and small gardens, and each learner and 100 parents have been given gardening boxes with seeds, fertilizers and watering caps. To tackle a persistent pest issue earlier in the year, the school has successfully implemented companion planting to repel pests.



St Mary's composting policy applies to all



Ntokozweni Primary School was paired with Kellanova, who provided the schools with seed



Children learn how to garden, skills they can take home to their communities



St Mary's Eco Club compost-awareness posters educate learners about recycling and promote sustainability knowledge



We celebrate dedication to sustainability

The annual Sustainable Schools Rewards Ceremonies celebrate teachers, schools and partnering organisations for their sustainability efforts. This year's Western Cape event was held in Cape Town on 10 February, 2024. It was attended by 23 schools, 37 teachers, eight partner organisations and three provincial government representatives. 'Most Sustainable School of the Year' went to Mondeor Eco-school, in Somerset West. Four schools were awarded three Sustainability Stars; nine, two Sustainability Stars; and four, one Sustainability Star. St Mary's RC Primary School, in Retreat; Stephen Road Primary School, in Lotus River; and Mseki Primary School, in Gugulethu, received recognition for notable projects. Rewards ceremonies in other provinces will be hosted in the next financial year. Rewards included birding books, vouchers and excursions.

"The community of practice and provision of resources to help schools overcome the challenges they may experience."

Karen Merrett, Save Our Seas Foundation Shark Education Centre

"This programme supports and provides teachers with resources. Helping learners in becoming sustainable warriors of our planet."

Sweet Valley Primary, Bergvliet, Cape Town

Events we hosted:

Teacher workshop, Health and Well-being at Soil for Life, Constantia, Cape Town. 22 April, 2023
Doordrift Planting Action Day, Doordrift, Cape Town. 10 June, 2023
Teacher Workshop, Production, Consumption, and Waste at the Kraaifontein Integrated Waste Management Facility, Kraaifontein, Cape Town. 12 August, 2023.
World Water Week in partnership with Rand Water, Johannesburg. 20-24 August, 2023
Mocke Wetland River Cleanup Action Day with I AM WATER, Elfindale, Cape Town. 26 August, 2023
Teacher Workshop, Production, Consumption, and Waste, at EGSC Building, Germiston. 15 September, 2023
International Coastal Cleanup event with various partners. 16 September, 2023
Marine Week Art Exhibition, Zeekoevlei, Cape Town. 14 October, 2023
International Day of Climate Action in partnership with Blesbokspruit Wetland Reserve, Gauteng. 24 October, 2023
Sustainable Schools Rewards Ceremony, V&A Waterfront, Cape Town. 10 February, 2024

Events we attended:

Breteau Foundation Plastic Changemakers Campaign Launch, Cape Town. 28 September, 2023
Captain Fanplastic book launch, Cape Town. 29 September, 2023
Table Mountain Fund Closeout Event, Cape Town. 18 November, 2023
Games for Change Africa Festival, Cape Town. 1 December, 2023

Events we participated In:

Triologue: Business in Society 2023 conference, Johannesburg. 8-10 May, 2023
South African Principals Association (SAPA) Conference, Grabouw. 15-16 June, 2023
Mi Learning: Facilitation Course, Cape Town. 3-13 July, 2023
Western Cape Environmental Education Friends (WCEEf) Conference, Cape Town. 15-16 August, 2023
Cape Town Youth Tourism Workshops, Cape Town. 29 August, 2023
Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA) conference 2023, Johannesburg. 18-22 September, 2023
Ocean Guardianship workshop: I AM WATER, Cape Town. 7-8 November, 2023

“[The programme provides] access to a network of schools to market our free workshops that will act as nature immersion for their projects. We love the concept of coming together and achieving more for the environment and the people that depend on it through collaboration instead of competition.”

*Amalia de Abreu, I AM WATER
(partner)*



SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS TEAM 2023–2024



Jocelyn Anderson
Programme
Manager



Melissa Zackon
Operations
Coordinator



Tamsyn Henshall
Resource and
Platform Curator



Amy Walters
Administrator



Lanah Murray
School Coordinator



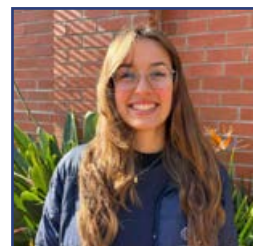
Mapula Mokwele
School Coordinator



Thandokazi Qayi
School Coordinator



Megan-Rose Francis
School Coordinator



Mikaela Tuck
Part-time Data
and Partnerships
Coordinator



Marilize Morren
School Liaison
Officer





The problem we address

Cape Town is known for its iconic UNESCO World Heritage Sites—Table Mountain and Robben Island—but is less recognised for the rich biodiversity of the Cape Floristic Region, home to numerous endemic plant species. Despite the area's abundant natural beauty, a growing disconnect between urbanised youth and the environment is becoming increasingly prevalent. Termed Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD), reasons for this phenomenon include too much screen time, less outdoor play because of safety concerns, and restricted access to nature. NDD has significant physical, emotional and behavioural consequences, particularly among youth in impoverished communities (Louv, R. 2005).

The Connect to Nature programme is a response to this disconnection. It falls under Nature Connect's Environmental Education pillar, which targets 'hearts and minds' to enable long-term behavioural change for the good of nature.

The programme provides immersive outdoor experiences to nurture a reconnection with nature and cultivate environmental champions via its three initiatives: the Overnight Camps, Day and Conservation Leadership programmes.

Louv, Richard. 2005. *Last child in the woods: saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Chapel Hill, NC, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

Environmental Education: Connect To Nature

Good outcomes reflect quality programmes

Connect to Nature has faced many challenges this year, marked by changes in management, limited staff and financial constraints. Despite this, the team remained committed to maintaining high-quality programmes. Its dedication is evident in the outcomes: as a whole, Connect to Nature conducted 161 sessions, reaching 10 771 individuals, of which over 52% were female. Although the number of participants decreased by 8.57%, the total educational impact hours increased by 35.19%, indicating a deeper level of engagement with each individual. Additionally, the programme's content and facilitators were rated at 96%, and catering was rated as good to excellent. ➔

Educational Impact Hours

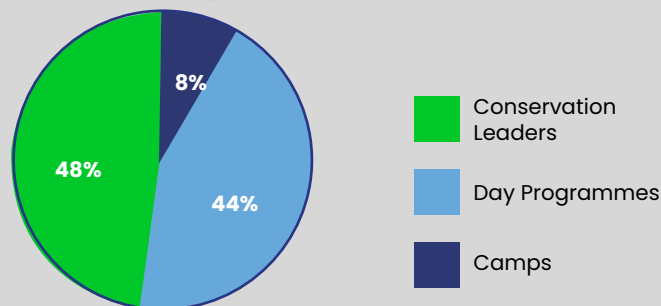


Figure 1 Breakdown by percentage of the 65 950 Educational Impact Hours

Percentage breakdown of programme interactions

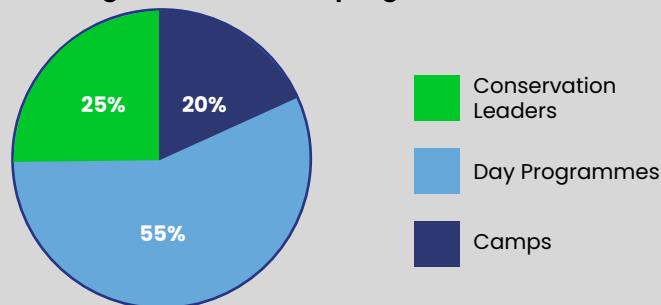


Figure 2 Percentile breakdown of 161 interactions over the year

**Wangari Maathai said, “When we plant trees, we
plant the seeds of peace and hope.”
In every Connect to Nature programme we are
sowing these seeds of hope, with the knowledge
that some day, we will sit in the shade of the peace
and resilience they bring**



*Conservation Leaders hike regularly to connect with nature,
explore local biodiversity and enhance their well-being*



These camps cultivate a connection to nature

The Overnight Camps provide immersive experiences that cultivate a deep connection with nature while instilling essential leadership skills. The programme—first known as the Zeekoevlei Environmental Education Programme—has been offered since Nature Connect's inception in 2001; it provides hands-on environmental education and team-building activities. The camps, run in partnership with local schools and environmental organisations, are a catalyst for personal growth and environmental stewardship. **Over the past 23 years, we've engaged with 59 383 participants from diverse backgrounds across the region.**



Fairview Primary School learners enjoying a nature walk at Rondvlei Nature Reserve

Overnight Camps received very positive feedback

Connect to Nature hosted 41 camps, educating 1 542 learners about the natural environment, how to take action for conservation, participating in and leading team-building activities and leadership skills. The camps attracted diverse participants, including learners from underprivileged schools, special needs groups, and youth groups from churches, Scouts and NGOs. Notably, learners from historically disadvantaged schools and youth groups made up 88.5% of all camps. The majority of camps were held at Bokbaai (25), followed by Rondvlei Island Camp (14) and Glencairn Rotary Camp (2). The feedback from school teachers and group leaders was overwhelmingly positive and highlighted the energetic and engaging facilitators, well-aligned programme content and educational value of the camps. Learners' feedback reflected the camps' positive impact by enhancing their knowledge of the environment, ecosystems and wildlife; providing memorable experiences; and opportunities for stress relief and personal and social growth. This feedback underscores the programme's impact on enhancing students' learning experiences and deepening their connection to nature. ➡

"On behalf of our learners and teachers, we would like to say a very big thank you for the opportunity to be able to enjoy a camp full of lively activities and entertainment. To all the facilitators who made our stay special and our safety a priority, thank you for your input as well. Our learners will surely remember their engagement with you for years to come. To Anwar, for all the hard work and for the special engagement with each and every learner, we appreciate your special personalised gift, talent and demeanour you have with dealing with special-needs children. To the chefs, thank you for your involvement in making our meals and sharing your motherly love and care with our children. You will be remembered for your involvement in making the best burgers and chips, pancakes and spoiling them with 'seconds'. To Tammy-Lee and all office staff, thank you for the arrangements in making this camp materialise. Thank you to the sponsors who have made our learners dreams come true. This is the first time our learners experienced a camp and socialising with others away from home. They have experienced lots of knowledge, values and life skills needed in a community and society."

Ms October, Fairview Primary School, Grassy Park, Cape Town

"It was fun and exciting. I learned a lot about nature and animals. I finally realised the importance of nature and animals. We depend on them. We as people, we are always in town and we do not have time or a chance to connect with nature, but in this camp I got the chance."

Masiyile Secondary School, Khayelitsha, Cape Town

"I would describe my camp experience as a way to escape the community and city, away from technology and stress of the modern world."

B.E.S.T. College, Salt River, Cape Town



Bridging classroom knowledge with lessons from nature is the aim of the Connect to Nature Programmes

Day Programme excursions and lessons are popular and impactful

This programme achieved considerable success this year, reaching a range of students and enhancing their classroom lessons with environmental knowledge. The lessons focused on critical topics aligned with the school curriculum and eight focus areas of the Sustainable Schools Framework, engaging students in practical and meaningful learning experiences. Over the four quarters, 34 schools and organisations participated in 80 programmes, reaching 8 493 students, of which 87% were from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. While the majority of these programmes targeted primary schools, the initiative also included pre-schools, high schools and out-of-school youth. As in previous years, schools showed a strong preference for in-school lessons, accounting for 70.5% of the total sessions. This was followed by Half Day Programmes at 11.5%, Action Day Events at 6.3%, with Eco-Club Sessions, Assembly Talks and Full Day Programmes each constituting 3.9% of the activities. ➔



When stepping into nature, Connect to Nature encourages learners to embrace the beauty that touches all their senses to reconnect them to the natural world

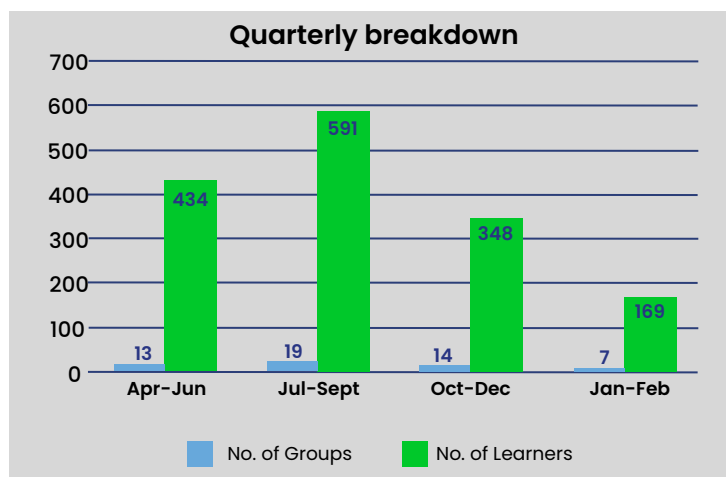


Figure 3 Breakdown of Overnight Camp participants for 2023-2024



Day Programme experiences are fun and all part of the school day

Since 2005, the day excursions and in-school lessons have provided fun, enriching, hands-on experiences that integrate environmental education into the school day. These programmes, delivered through in-school lessons and excursions to sites such as the Zeekoevlei Environmental Education Centre, offer learners a unique opportunity to engage with the natural world, explore potential career pathways and experience a dynamic learning environment that extends beyond the traditional classroom. This programme has reached 78 806 learners, thanks to the long-standing relationships with schools and community organisations over the past 19 years.

Lessons were well-received, with content designed to be informative and fun, incorporating hands-on activities allowing learners to connect theory with practise. Teachers consistently provided positive feedback, praising the facilitators' energy, the practical nature of the lessons, and the relevance of the content to students' lives. For instance, students at Newfields Primary School appreciated the interactive elements of their lessons, while those at St. Mary's RC Primary School found practical activities, like making jewellery from waste, particularly memorable. Many schools rebooked sessions, indicating a strong desire to continue participating in these impactful programmes. ➡

"The educators were summing up the whole revision of our syllabus. The songs that are included in the lessons are really fun and exciting for the learners. The resources they provide are great. I, as the teacher, also learn something new every time."

Teacher, St Theresa Primary School, Athlone, Cape Town

"We didn't know that you could drink tea made from fynbos plants – it didn't taste nice, but it was interesting."

Learner, St Mary's Primary School, Gardens, Cape Town

"It was so cool making jewellery out of waste; you won't even say we used waste."

Learner, John Graham Primary School, Plumstead, Cape Town

Quarterly breakdown

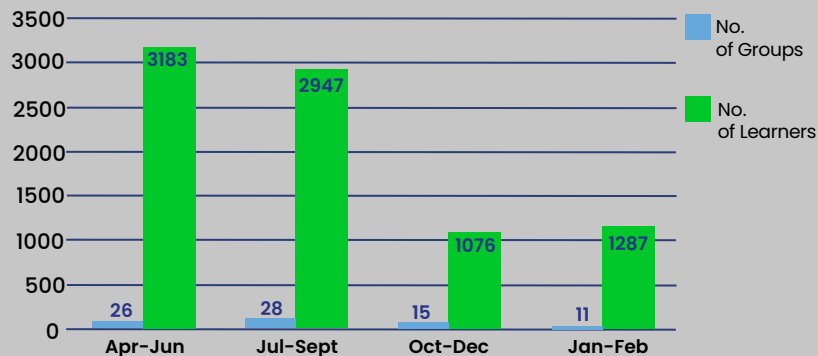
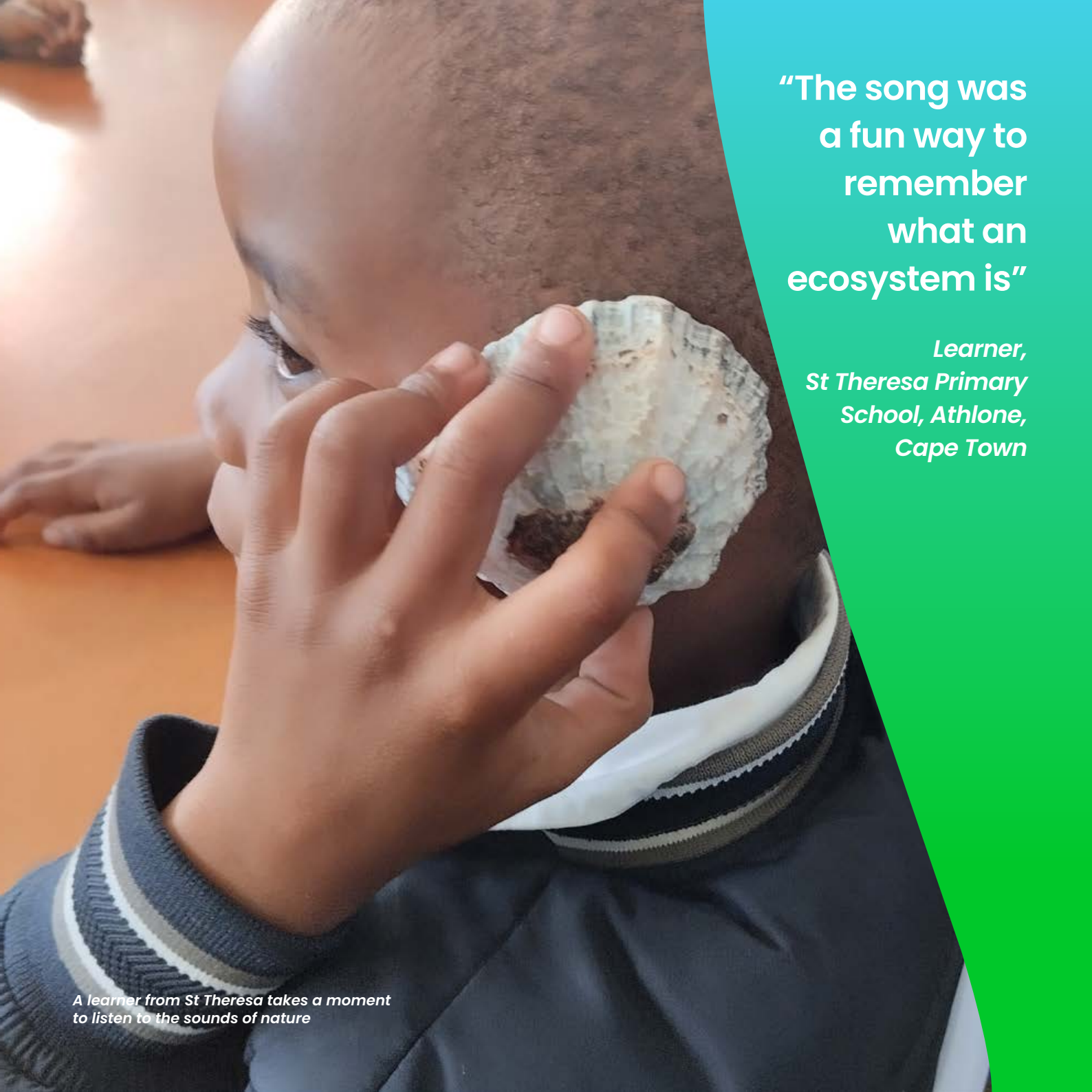


Figure 4 Participation figures for 2023-2024



Through the arts and storytelling, we weave these experiences into narratives that inspire, educate, and bring the magic of nature to life

A close-up photograph of a young child with dark skin, seen from the side. The child is holding a light-colored, scalloped seashell to their right ear. They are wearing a dark blue or black sweater with a white and grey striped collar. The background is a warm, orange-brown surface, possibly a table. A large, bright green diagonal shape is on the right side of the image, containing white text.

**“The song was
a fun way to
remember
what an
ecosystem is”**

*Learner,
St Theresa Primary
School, Athlone,
Cape Town*

*A learner from St Theresa takes a moment
to listen to the sounds of nature*



Its unique approach fosters long-term behaviour change

The Conservation Leadership Programme focuses on developing young leaders with a deep understanding of nature and commitment to being environmental champions. It is unique in its long-term approach to fostering environmental behaviour change. It works with youth over a seven-year period, from ages 11 to 18. The programme has strong collaborations with 19 high schools and 11 primary schools in the Cape Peninsula. The schools select conservation leaders, who often assume pivotal roles within their schools' eco-clubs. More than 10 environmental and community-focused organisations partner with us to offer learning opportunities.

Conservation Leadership Programme welcomes its seventh cohort of young environmental leaders

Last year, the programme continued to successfully nurture young environmental champions despite financial challenges. We welcomed our seventh intake, inducting 22 new students from nine schools. The induction included both students and their parents, emphasising our commitment to community and family engagement. Together, we set goals and visions for the year ahead.

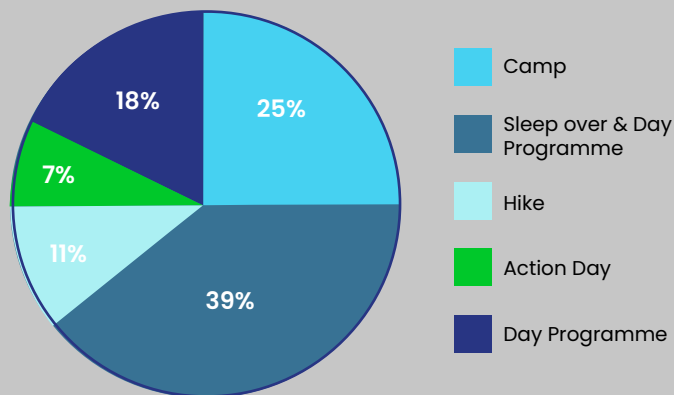
Despite financial challenges in the last two quarters, our 62 current conservation leaders participated in 32 enriching activities, including overnight camps, day programmes, hikes and action days. These activities celebrated environmental days, nurtured biodiversity awareness, and developed practical and leadership skills rooted in environmental responsibility. For example, on World Wetlands Day, participants supported efforts to protect the critically endangered micro frog at the Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area by clearing invasive vegetation. They also explored environmental career paths at the City of Cape Town Career Expo.

A major highlight for the programme was when two current leadership programme participants and one alumnus were invited to attend the SANParks Youth Roundtable in Skukuza as part of the SANParks 2040 Revisioning project, where they engaged with youth from across the nation, discussing challenges and sharing visions for the future of conservation.

Our programme also actively discusses social, health and community wellbeing, topics that profoundly affect our students' lives. Following a Sexual Health Awareness activity, facilitated by Shawco Health Promotion, we observed increased awareness and openness among the leaders in addressing their overall wellbeing. These conversations broadened their knowledge, equipping them with essential life skills.

In December 2023, we celebrated the graduation of our 2017 cohort – nine dedicated leaders completed the seven-year programme with distinction. Their journey concluded with a road trip to Limpopo and a reflective camp at the Lapalala Wilderness School, honouring their remarkable achievements and unwavering commitment over the years. ●

Conservation Leaders Activities





"My highlights of the year, included the trip to Skukuza in June 2023. The reason why this is a highlight for me is because the conference itself opened up my eyes in terms of the problems we face. I knew people experienced problems in their lives but I wasn't fully aware of the extent to how bad it is. It also made me realise that my problems in life are not as challenging, this eye-opening experience motivated me to face my problems head-on and not avoid them. My journey has been a wild one. A rollercoaster if I can put it like that. I learned so many things about myself, life and nature. Beyond learning about the environment, I learned really important life skills. So, I would describe my journey as eye-opening and helped me grow/improve/evolve myself if that makes any sense."

Jade Jacobs, 2019 cohort

"These past seven years have truly been the best of my life. The support and camaraderie we shared have been unparalleled."

McKayla Hendricks, 2017 cohort



"It's been really interesting and fun. Without CLP, I don't think I would be this confident and outgoing. They helped me become the person I am today."

Raigan Abrahams, 2019 cohort



"The programme played a crucial role in my development as a leader. It nurtured my leadership skills, which I applied successfully during my tenure as head prefect at school. The skills I gained were invaluable in my role."

Jumah Alie, 2017 cohort





6 ways Connect to Nature contributes to South Africa's national and global sustainable development goals

1 We advance quality education and skills development

The Connect to Nature programmes integrate environmental, natural and marine sciences into lessons, activities and camps, aligning with the NDP 2030's focus on quality education and skills development and supporting SDG 4: Quality Education.

2 We empower youth and promote inclusivity

By engaging diverse youth in leadership development activities, we empower them to contribute to environmental stewardship, promote inclusivity and reduce inequalities, aligning with SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, and the NDP's objectives for youth participation.

3 We build resilient communities

Educating students on sustainable practices in both terrestrial and coastal areas helps build resilient communities, supporting SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, and advancing the NDP's vision for environmental sustainability.

CONNECT TO NATURE TEAM 2023-2024



Catherine Kühn
Education
Coordinator



Tammy-Lee Solomons
Day and Camp
Programme
Coordinator



Leah Mulenga
Conservation
Leadership
Programme
Coordinator



Sonia Cook
Operations
Coordinator



Dijaro Magana
Facilities and Assets
Coordinator



Nhlanhla Moya
Senior Environmental
Educators



Anwar Boonzaaier
Environmental
Educator



Liezal Solomon
Environmental
Educator



Bevan Vollenhoven
Environmental
Educator



Jeanette Wiese
Hospitality Assistant



Dale Demas
Logistics Officer (shared
with Green Skills team)



Mercia Esau
Hospitality
Assistant



Tashreeq Casker
Hospitality Work
Integrated Learning
Student



4 We foster climate action

Raising awareness of climate change impacts aligns with SDG 13: Climate Action and supports the NDP's climate mitigation and adaptation strategies by fostering informed and proactive communities.

5 We support biodiversity conservation

Our focus on conserving both terrestrial and marine ecosystems directly supports SDG 14: Life Below Water, SDG 15: Life on Land, and contributes to national biodiversity goals.

6 We foster strategic partnerships

Our initiatives involve collaboration among schools, NGOs, government agencies and local communities, fostering partnerships crucial for achieving the NDP's sustainable development targets and supporting SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.





The problem our programme addresses

At the beginning of 2024, the unemployment rate in South Africa rose to 32.9%. Among young individuals (aged 15–35), this figure was even higher: 45.5%*. Many young South Africans face enormous challenges in finding jobs and achieving their dreams of a career in the green economy. Our education system is struggling and high-school dropout rates mean only a small percentage of youth qualify for tertiary education, but fees can be a limiting factor for them. In addition, many face pressure to become breadwinners for their families, which prevents them from furthering their education and skills.

Green Skills Development addresses these challenges, empowering youth by giving them skills and access to opportunities in the green economy. **Our programme implements Nature Connect's goals to train and develop youth to access the green economy and contribute to nature conservation through meaningful employment.** We drive these goals through our three primary projects: Nature Conservation Learnerships, Green Skills Short Courses and Graduate Internships.

* STATS SA. 2024. *Unemployment in South Africa: A Youth Perspective*. [Online]. Available: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/>. [2024, 14 August]

Green Skills Development

Enhanced programmes and increased reach

Since its inception in 2007, Green Skills Development has offered training that fosters biodiversity preservation, the holistic development of predominantly unemployed youth from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, and capacitating women in the conservation sector. Last financial year, our team focused on four strategic targets to enhance our impact and further Nature Connect's mission to inspire people to love and protect nature: First, to expand our national footprint to ensure our learnerships and internships are accessible to more communities across South Africa; second, to develop our capacity-training offerings by providing conservation job-readiness education to equip more unemployed youth with skills for employment; third, to develop and foster biodiversity conservation by breaching the skills gap in the sector; and finally, to continue our support of women's empowerment in the conservation sector. We have achieved almost all these goals and received positive feedback from all participants.

Green Skills graduates can now intern in four provinces

This year, we formed new partnerships to place and mentor graduates in three more provinces besides the Western Cape: the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. While we are still in the early stages of expanding our reach to rural areas, we have encountered challenges in allocating human resources to support these partnerships. Despite these hurdles, our initial efforts have been successful and we remain focused on growing our national presence.

More youth were employed thanks to expanded learning programmes

By aligning with the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sports Sector Education and Training Authority's (CATHSSETA) mandate for the conservation sector, we provided extensive training to diverse people and organisations, receiving positive feedback. The learning programmes focused on job readiness for conservation roles and resulted in a high employment rate for previously unemployed participants. Learners could benefit more if trained to plan their careers and provided with personal protective equipment (PPE) during training. In addition, we identified a need for additional human resources, affordable training facilities and equipment to further enhance our efforts.

Developing and fostering biodiversity conservation

Green Skills training and development programmes focused on bridging the skills gap in biodiversity preservation and management, which directly contributes to conservation efforts. To further support these goals, we rolled out supplementary job-readiness programmes; ➔



"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Former president Nelson Mandela

Employed learners undergoing Wildlife Forensic practical training as part of their learning experience for their Module in Compliance and operations for their FETC: Nature Conservation, Natural Resource Guardianship, Terrestrial course



TEAM LEAD TESTIMONIAL

Letasha Hesqua Green Skills Development Training Manager

Throughout my career, I have embraced and incorporated lifelong immersive learning as an integral part of who I am and what I do, weaving it into all my engagements. I believe this is key to personal and professional growth. By embracing this learning approach, I have been able to expand my knowledge while staying adaptable in an ever-changing world – a golden thread I encourage all young people in our training programmes to follow. I try to apply the same principle within my leadership role, by inspiring growth, nobility and mindfulness. It is a unique position to lead and learn simultaneously.

It has been a heartening journey watching our Green Skills team grow and mature in the training space. In my experience, adult-based education demands wearing multiple hats and managing a range of complexities, especially when working with dynamic groups. Despite its unique challenges, it is rewarding to see our youth grow, learn, apply their skills and strengthen their careers while navigating a world of uncertainties. Through immersive lifelong learning, we are able to change and adapt. As our great leader Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

however, despite a high turnover of attendees, we were unable to meet the targets for further job-readiness programmes. To address this, we will develop new job-readiness initiatives, with plans for fundraising and implementation. The programme also identified the need for additional human resources, affordable training facilities and equipment to enhance our effectiveness.

Women make up over 50% of most Green Skills courses

Women's empowerment and gender equity have been focal points this year. We trained and mentored 47 women in job-readiness programmes for the conservation sector, maintaining over 50% female participation. Although we also enrolled male participants, we emphasised supporting women, particularly single mothers, in reaching their career goals. We enhance this support through advocating a work-life balance, family support guidance, and additional backing from host sites and Nature Connect. ●



Quemic learners undergoing their assessment for their Mathematics Literacy module



Learners undergo a practical experience in clearing debris from wetland areas



First Aid is an essential skill in any environment and practical applications are essential in supporting the theory



NATURE CONSERVATION GRADUATE TESTIMONIAL

"My internship experience with Nature Connect has been nothing short of transformative. As a graduate from a disadvantaged background, this opportunity has been a beacon of hope and a gateway to new possibilities. Moving from Pretoria to Cape Town presented both exciting adventures and daunting challenges. However, each obstacle I encountered served as a valuable lesson, shaping me into a more resilient and adaptable individual. Transitioning between host sites in Cape Town and Pretoria was a unique experience that pushed me out of my comfort zone as I was used to the work Shark Spotters was doing and my contribution and dedication towards it.

I am very grateful for the opportunity Nature Connect offered me; I gained a lot from this internship. I enjoyed the trainings and programmes... [My] qualification, which is a National Diploma in Nature Conservation, I am definitely sure that they will come in handy while applying for jobs.

Overall, my time at Nature Connect has been a transformative journey filled with learning, growth, and unforgettable experiences. It has reaffirmed my belief in the power of conservation and education to effect positive change and has equipped me with the tools and inspiration to pursue my passion for protecting our planet's precious biodiversity.

Christinah Mathaba (Graduate Intern)



*CATHSSETA Unemployed Learners on a
bird-watching exercise as part of their Fauna Module*



GROEN SEBENZA GRADUATE TESTIMONIAL

"This week has meant facing a great deal of challenges head-on and having to rapidly adapt to the new environment and working environment. I have achieved fundamental skills and moreover I have obtained long-lasting relationships with like-minded professionals who have made my transition from being a student to being a young professional quite smooth. Words could never be enough to express how grateful I am for having being part of this training week."

*Tshepo Dikobo, Groen Sebenza intern,
March 2023*

NUMBER OF LEARNERS TRAINED THIS YEAR

CATHSSETA

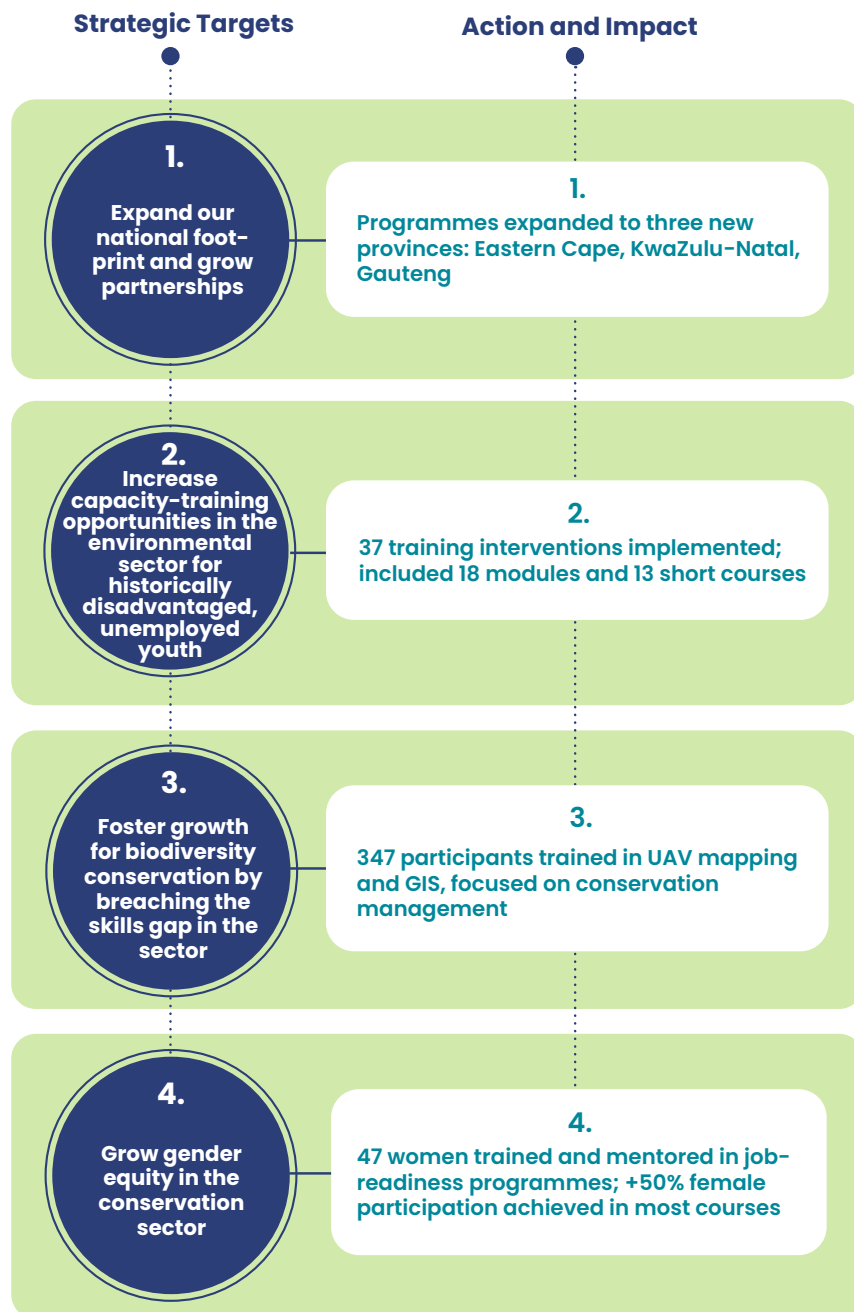
- Unemployed Learnerships: 15 learners
- Employed Learnerships: 10 learners
- Graduate Internships: 20 graduates
- WIL interns: 5

Of the CATHSSETA intake, 14 incumbents were awarded employment opportunities.

QUEMIC Africa

- Unemployed learnerships: 8 learners
- Employed learnerships: 11

Strategic Targets and Impacts





4 ways Green Skills Development contributes to SA's NDP 2030 and the global SDGs

1 Our training helps reduce poverty and inequality

The National Development Plan 2030 (NDP 2030) aims to reduce poverty and inequality by 2030. We equip historically disadvantaged youth with skills for sustainable employment in the green economy.

2 We promote gender equality

The NDP 2030 aims to advance gender equality. We train and mentor women to help them overcome barriers in the conservation sector and achieve their career goals.

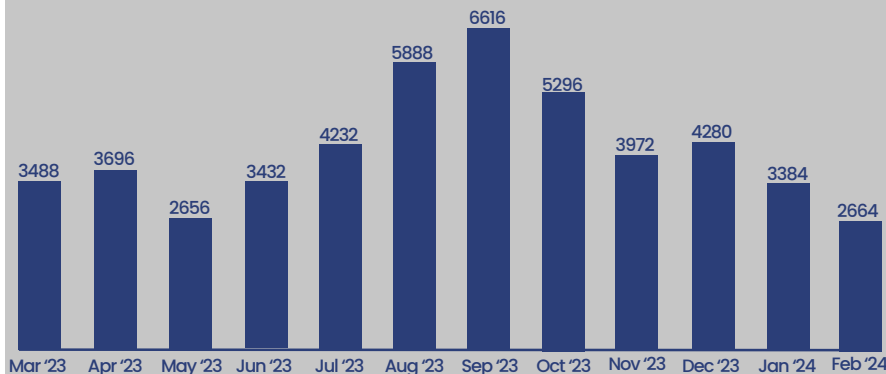
3 We help bridge the skills gap in the conservation sector

The National Skills Development Strategy III addresses the skills gap within critical economic sectors. Our conservation training prepares participants for employment by addressing the skills and knowledge gap in the conservation sector.

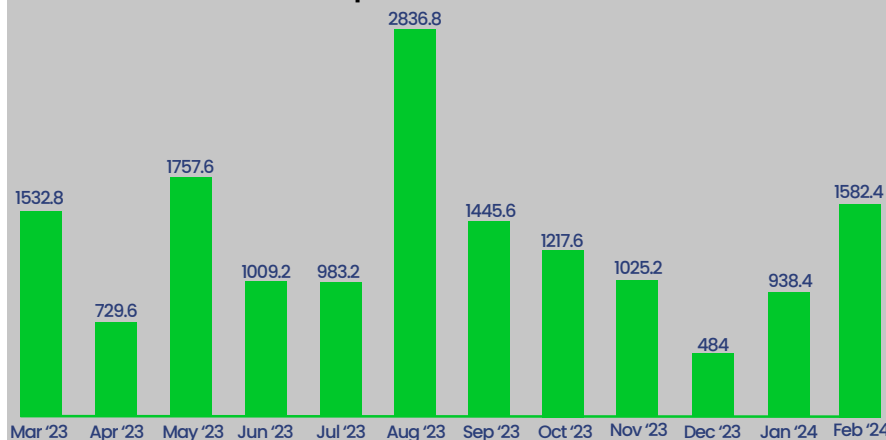
4 We advance black economic empowerment

The B-BBEE Act aims to advance black people's participation in the economy. Our programme empowers previously disadvantaged young black South Africans by providing training and opportunities for the green economy.

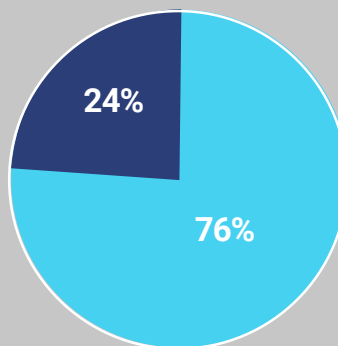
Environmental Impact Hours Mar '23 - Feb '24



Educational Impact Hours Mar '23 - Feb '24



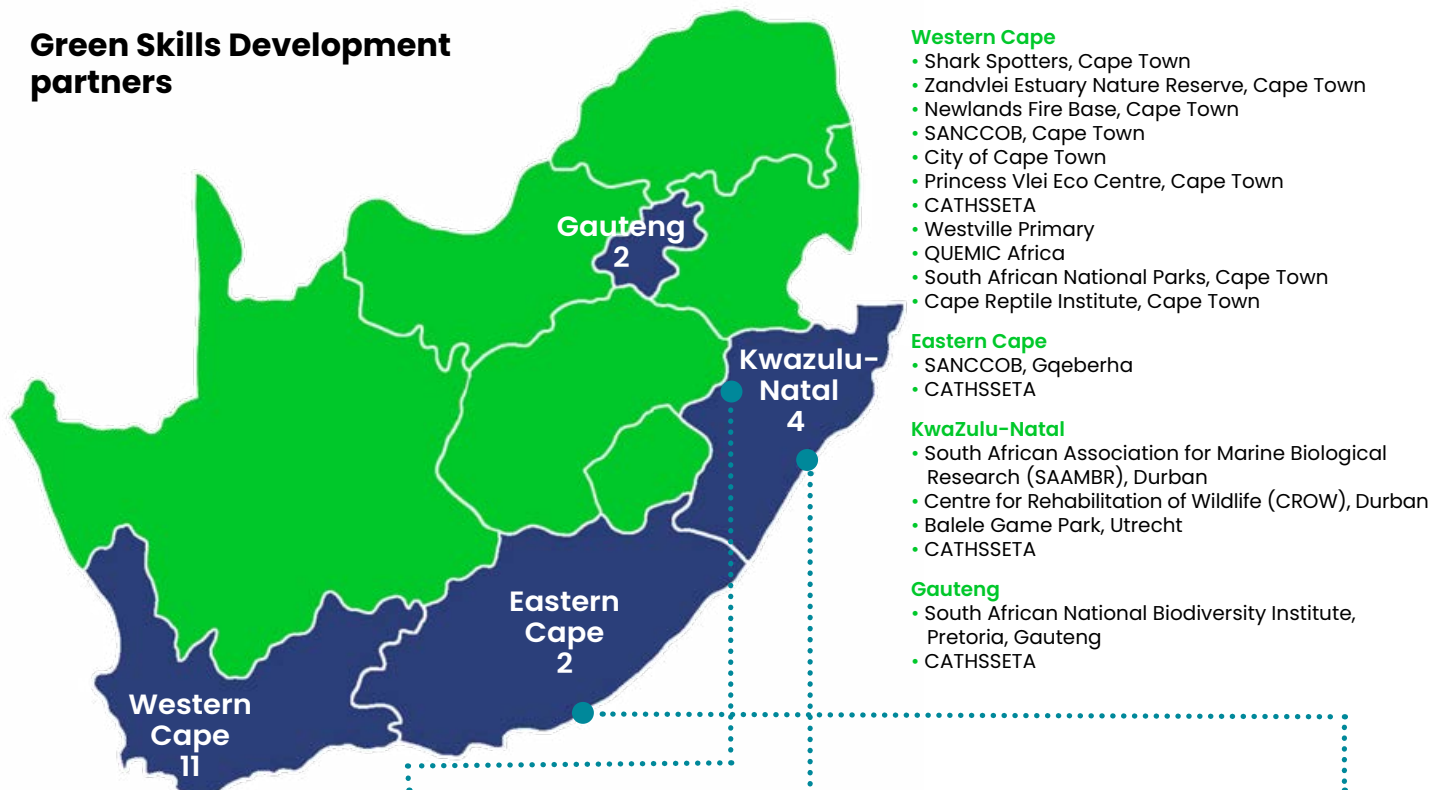
Total Environmental and Educational Impact Hours



Educational Impact Hours:
15 542

Environmental Impact Hours:
49 604

Green Skills Development partners



PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

"I want to thank Nature Connect for partnering with Balele Game Park. Without this programme, all the students that the park takes on would have been merely on voluntary basis. This has an effect of making Balele Game Park unattractive to prospective students to join the park as interns and as WIL students ... I would like to applaud the administrators for the open relationship they seem to encourage with the students, this is helpful.

I would like to thank the frank relationship the administrators also have with the mentors regarding current and future plans. This has helped us to an extent with future planning. Thank you very much, the programme is a great initiative..."

Kerotse Mosebetsi, mentor at Balele Game Park, Utrecht

PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

"We were fortunate enough to have three Nature Connect Interns placed with us [via SAAMBR] at uShaka Sea World for the past 9 months. The interns were in three different teams within the Curatorial Department..."

At their time of appointment, all three interns had limited husbandry experience, with no prior experience of caring for marine animals. All three were fast learners, and have provided immense value to the uShaka Sea World team... They have used the time with us to improve their knowledge and have gained skills vital to working in the industry. One of the interns placed with us went on to hold a contract position on our team.

The hosting of Nature Connect interns at uShaka Sea World has resulted in Curatorial staff mentoring interns during their training. This is extremely beneficial to both Nature Connect interns and Curatorial staff as interns have gained training from subject experts, and Curatorial staff have gained skills in teaching and mentoring interns.

Justin Hart, mentor at uShaka Marine World, Durban

PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

"We only have one intern from Nature Connect by the name of Zenande Majija. She has been a key in the rehabilitation of SANCCOB Gqeberha and she been a great fit to our team. She has also been excellent in assisting with important administration tasks for our organisation. Zenande has adapted very quickly to the organisation and the nature of the work done at SANCCOB."

Simbonile Mdunyelwa, mentor at SANCCOB, Port Elizabeth



**Green Skills Development
implements Nature Connect's goal to
train and develop youth to access the
green economy and contribute to nature
conservation through meaningful employment**

*Safe handling techniques are taught in the Chainsaw Operator course, which
provides the learners with the skills necessary to work with these types of machinery*

Events we participated in:

Flora Workshop at Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area, Cape Town. 23 March, 2023

Trip to Two Oceans Aquarium with the unemployed learners for marine life training as part of their fauna module, Cape Town. 23 May, 2023

Trip to the Wildlife Forensic Academy with the employed learners for training on 'Investigating a wildlife crime scene' as part of their compliance module, Buffelsfontein, West Coast. 13 June, 2023

June 16th Youth Day Career Expo Day, Retreat Community Centre, Cape Town. 16 June, 2023

Commemoration of Youth Month, Youth Empowerment Day, Princess Vlei Eco Park, Retreat. 30 June, 2023

Graduation for DG2021/22 learnership candidates, City of Cape Town Environmental Education Centre, Cape Town. 4 August, 2023

Kenilworth Race Course Conservation Area site visit for plant studies for unemployed learnership group, Cape Town. 23 August, 2023

Acquired Wildfire Suppression Accreditation with AgriSETA, online. 26 October, 2023

WWF & Cape Nature site visit, Calvinia. 11-13 December, 2023

Site visit for potential partnerships, Vrolijkheid, McGregor. 16 January, 2024

Celebrating the Vitality of Wetlands on World Wetlands day with City of Cape Town and Alderman Eddie Andrew, False Bay. 2 February, 2024

Lettas Kraak site visit for potential partnerships, Touws River. 21 February, 2024

UAS mapping and GIS basic training, Look-out Hall, Zandvlei. 26 February-01 March, 2024

Initiating the Typha clearing project, Bokbaai. 27 February, 2024



The Flora module provides practical aspects in identifying and handling plants and flowers in a manner that does not cause harm or destruction



CATHSSETA Unemployed Learners receiving a practical experience in identifying Marine Fauna

Events we hosted:

Green Skills conducted training in-house

Connect to Nature

First aid: 5 persons
Health and safety: 2 persons
Chainsaw: 2 persons
Brush cutter: 3 persons
Wildfire suppression: 3 persons
Handling of venomous animals: 2 persons

Nature Care Fund

First aid: 11 persons
Health and safety: 8 persons
Chainsaw: 15 persons
Brush cutter: 11 persons
Wildfire suppression: 5 persons
Handling of venomous animals: 6 persons

Sustainable Schools

First aid: 1 person
Health and safety: 1 person
Brush cutter: 1 person
Wildfire suppression: 1 person

Training and Development

First aid: 4 persons
Health and safety: 3 persons
Chainsaw: 1 person
Brush cutter: 1 person
Wildfire suppression: 1 person
Handling of venomous animals: 1 person

Total number of persons attended Green Skills
Development in-house training for the financial year

88

in-house persons

GREEN SKILLS TEAM 2023-2024



Letasha Hesqua
Training
Manager



Petro Botha
Training
Officer



José Ganess
Training
Administrator



Meagan Eddy



Nature Connect Educators undergoing a practical demonstration of identifying plant and animal life in rock pools at their Marine Education workshop



The problem our programme addresses

The planet faces a global crisis characterised by rising temperatures, extreme weather and widespread ecological disruptions that threaten ecosystems, biodiversity and societies. More than three-quarters of animal species and over half of plant species have been lost, demanding urgent changes in human behaviour.

The Nature Care Fund's mission is to lead conservation efforts and influence policy, empowering communities to love and protect nature. This is achieved through Stewardship Solutions projects, which channel private funds into conservation projects on public and private land, and Funding Solutions projects, which hold funds in trust for the public good, ahead of their expenditure. These Funding Solutions include funds from biodiversity offsets or other environmental non-compliance events linked to development processes.



Felicia species
at KRCA

Nature Care Fund

Expanding biodiversity, building trusted partnerships

The Nature Care Fund continues to champion environmental stewardship and biodiversity protection through effective site management and innovative funding solutions, strengthening its network and expanding its footprint. This past year, we directed R5.7 million towards environmental stewardship, with R2.1 million sourced from biodiversity offset processes. We also secured three new full-time positions through partnership agreements. Our programme focused on five goals: consolidating and expanding biodiversity conservation in the City of Cape Town; conserving threatened species and habitats; directing biodiversity offset funds towards conservation; capacitating grassroots NGOs; providing work experience; and strengthening partnerships to amplify our impact.

We expanded partnerships and conservation teams

The Nature Care Fund secured three new full-time conservation field ranger positions last year. One of these roles, created in partnership with the Friends of Rondebosch Common, focuses on conserving 40 hectares in the southern suburbs, home to over 300 plant species. Two additional positions were established through the Mapula Trust and seconded to FynbosLIFE, supporting its FUNDA FYNBOS Veld Circle Project, which links environmental education, recreation and habitat restoration in public creative spaces. We also expanded our 13-year partnership with SANCCOB, the City of Cape Town and SANParks to protect the African Penguin colony at Boulders Beach in Simon's Town, adding two Penguin and Seabird Rangers to the team.

Four new leopard-toad tunnels were installed

Our species conservation efforts this year focused on installing four additional Western Leopard Toad underpass tunnels in Zeekoevlei, supported by international and local funders such as the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund, Leisure Charitable Trust, Forvia Foundation, and Hensoldt. Next year, we will focus on monitoring the effectiveness of these tunnels and the associated drift fences in improving Western Leopard Toad survival in this roadkill hotspot.

We've become a trusted partner for biodiversity offset funds

Last year, the National Biodiversity Offset Guideline was officially gazetted, establishing it as a formal conservation tool. In partnership with the City of Cape Town and CapeNature, the Nature Care Fund directed R2.1 million towards conservation efforts on high biodiversity-value land along the West Coast. We have also been approached ➡

to facilitate three additional offset processes within the City. Although these processes have long lead times, we are confident that Nature Connect is increasingly recognised as a trusted channel for biodiversity offset funds. Success in these initiatives relies on our strong partnerships with the City of Cape Town, CapeNature, and the Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning.

Our team upskilled 4 NGOs

The Nature Care Fund once again facilitated the Small Grants programme for the Table Mountain Fund, supporting grassroots conservation and upskilling four NGOs in the sector. The first year of grantees, all based in Cape Town, are Community Women Action (The Wines), ARKYS outreach (Imhoff Farm), Green Hearts (Retreat) and Mosselbank Wetland Wonderes (Fisantekraal). ➡

Arum lily frog at Soralia Village, Muizenberg

"Working with Environmental Education and doing alien clearing at Bokbaai inspired me to share my knowledge that I've gained with people around me and the importance of why I love doing what I'm doing. I enjoy coming to work because it inspires me to know that I'm making a difference."

Christyline Matthews, General Worker Supervisor, Bokbaai invasives clearing team and works with the Connect to Nature schools programme

"At Nature Connect, I was able to delve into the wonders of Cape Town's landscapes, immersing myself in the intricacies of its Fynbos ecosystems. Amidst breathtaking views and the warmth of its people, my experience became truly unforgettable. Adventure awaits those who dare to embrace the wild side of this vibrant city."

Peter van Munnen International Masters Programme Student, Wageningen University, The Netherlands

"Nature Connect was very enjoyable to work with. As a volunteer, I was given access to many sources of knowledge. Their passion and dedication made it clear, these were the type of people I wanted to work alongside once I am working in this industry. After volunteering for a while, the team even assisted me in joining their Learnership programme, a great opportunity to learn, develop skills and meet other people that wish to help nature. Every staff member I met at the Nature Connect project sites was a guiding hand when I needed it most, swift to give advice and share their knowledge both in the field and out. The experience I received with this organisation has been invaluable, and critical in getting to where I am today."

Wesley Freese, long-term volunteer with the Nature Care Fund team, based at Kenilworth. He has since gone on to study a National Diploma in Nature Conservation at Cape Peninsula University of Technology





Funding Solutions

The Nature Care Fund invests in conservation using funds from legislative land transformation processes associated with mitigating biodiversity loss, such as biodiversity offsets, ecological compensation and environmental management noncompliance. We also direct funding from voluntary arrangements where organisations set aside land or resources for conservation, leveraging partnerships with Special Rating Areas or City Improvement Districts, developers, conservation NGOs, 'friends' groups and the City of Cape Town. These partnerships multiply conservation impact by sharing costs and/or resources. Nature Connect amplifies these benefits by placing Green Skills Development interns or learnerships on-site and using these areas as outdoor classrooms. Lastly, as an NPO and Trust, we can hold funds in trust and offer small grants to support grassroots environmental conservation NGOs.

Stewardship Solutions

Our funding solutions support on-the-ground conservation, enabling effective stewardship of nature. We align our conservation projects with the City of Cape Town's Biodiversity Network, placing conservators on high biodiversity-value land. In some cases, we focus on specific species, such as the Western Leopard Toad and the African Penguin, where targeted conservation efforts are essential. We also undertake catalytic short-term projects to explore and develop potential conservation opportunities into sustained activities.

Our sites provided work experience for more than 20 young people

Our long-term conservation sites offer junior staff work experience, from which they can launch their career. We are excited to report that one of our penguin rangers has accepted a position in a research team exploring Marion Island, while another moved to a national research institution. At Bokbaai Nature Reserve, a team of Green Skills Development graduates gained valuable experience by clearing over 1 510m² of invasive reeds, acquiring useful hands-on experience. We also amplified our work across our key biodiversity sites—Muizenberg East Biodiversity Cluster, Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area, Zoarvlei Wetlands and Milnerton Racecourse Conservation Area—acquiring additional labour while providing work experience for six learnership students, seven interns, three international students, and a long-term volunteer. This year, we again helped the Cape Bird Club direct some funds towards ecological restoration in the Strandfontein section of False Bay Nature Reserve, employing five recruits, all of whom have a history of working with Nature Connect and the City of Cape Town False Bay Nature Reserve staff.

Networking and knowledge-exchange strengthened partnerships

Nature Care Fund staff actively maintain a strong network with conservation professionals to stay updated on best practice in the sector. We have a representative on the Committee for the Cape Floristic Region partnership and sit on the Board of the African Chapter for the Society for Ecological Restoration. Our participation in various provincial and local environmental governance spheres also strengthens our partnerships. We engage in knowledge exchange both locally and internationally. This year, we delivered talks at the South African Wildlife Management Association conference, Fynbos Forum and the Western Cape Stewardship Forum Peer Learning Workshop. We also presented virtually for the African Conference on Linear Infrastructure and Ecology and the 10th Society for Ecological Restoration world conference, where we also served as judges for international student presentations. ♦



From left Llewellyn Williams installs an environmentally friendly water-level monitoring pole at KRCA; Shaquille Benjamin and learners pick up litter at Zoarvlei Conservation Area



PROJECT LEAD TESTIMONIAL

Lynette Munro
Nature Care Fund Manager

Unlocking biodiversity offset funds received by Nature Connect several years ago and directing them towards conservation and job creation, in partnership with the City and CapeNature, has been a major highlight this past year. The promulgation of the National Biodiversity Offset Guideline mid-year gave greater authority to this new conservation tool, while the Western Cape Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning engaged with us to enable the release of these funds.

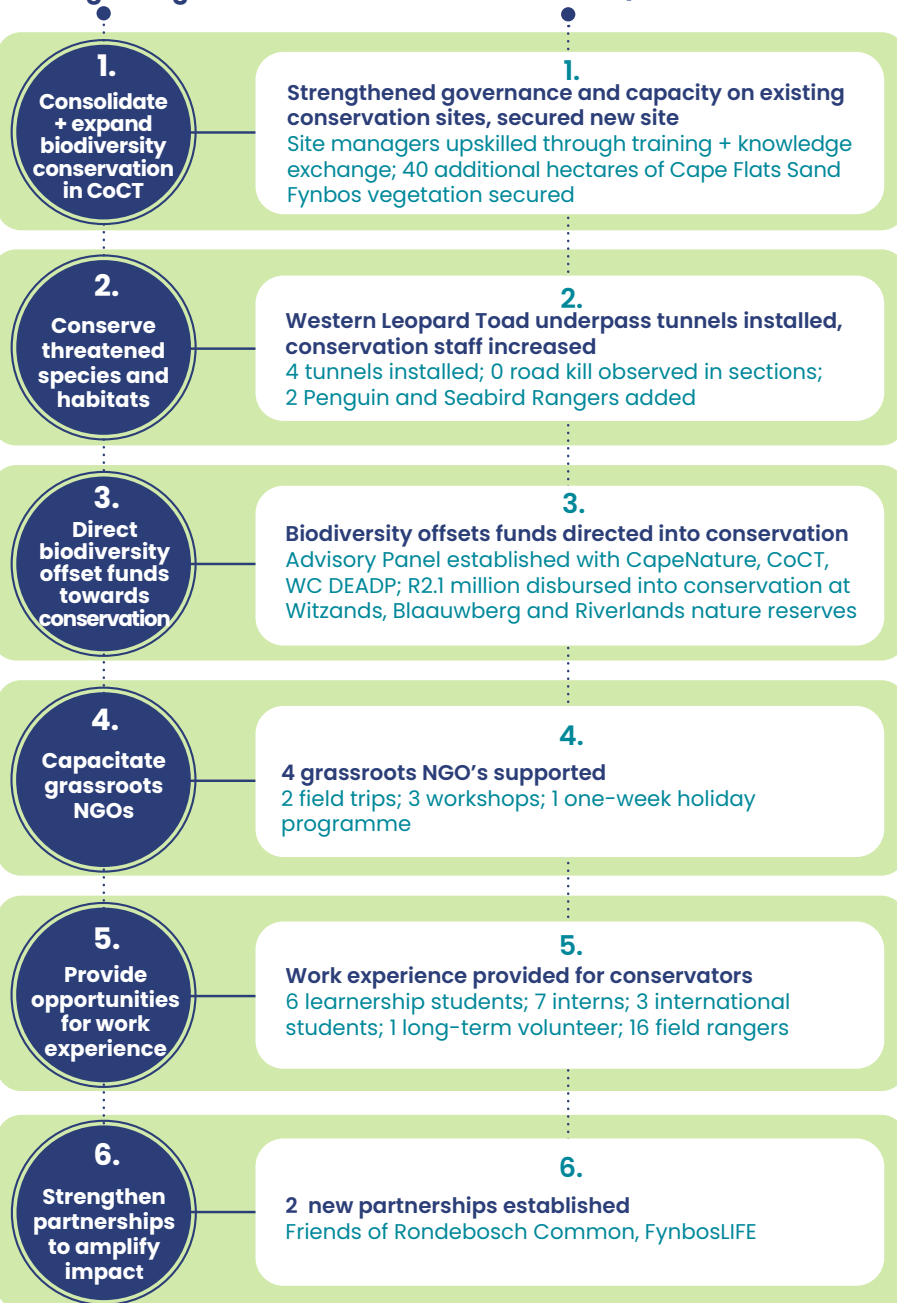
It is always a pleasure to share the collaborative funding model that channels private funds towards public good with more people, highlighting the work of our site managers who make this model successful. It was a joy, therefore, to introduce our site managers at the Western Cape Stewardship Reference Group Peer Learning Workshop, where they presented their work.



Strategic Targets and Impacts

Strategic Targets

Action and Impact





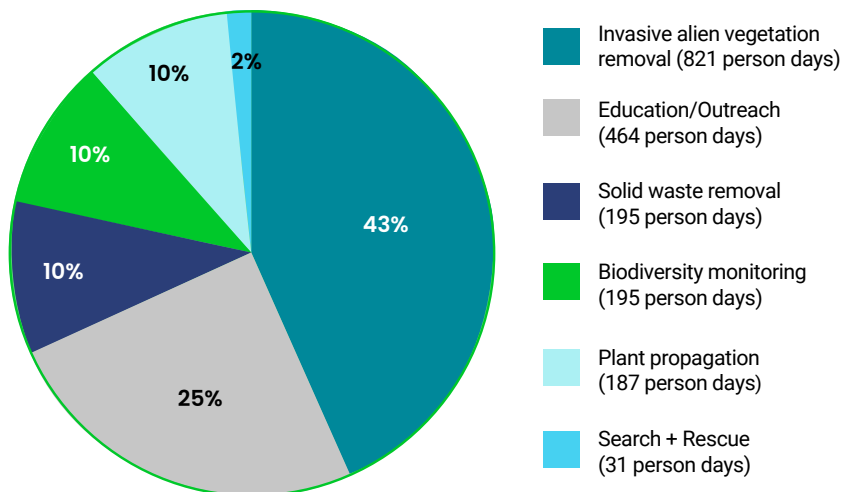
PROJECT LEAD TESTIMONIAL

Kim Gordon
Stewardship Programme
Coordinator

My year at Nature Connect has been a whirlwind of experiences that contributed to my personal and professional growth. Managing the Table Mountain Fund Small Grants Facility allowed me to oversee impactful conservation projects where environmental champions in communities around Cape Town actively safeguard our natural heritage. It has been inspiring and humbling, reaffirming the importance of grassroots conservation efforts. Leading invasive species clearing at Bokbaai Nature Reserve and restoration on the Doordrift Greenbelt highlighted the importance of hands-on conservation in ecosystem recovery. Overseeing the installation of four additional tunnels for the Western Leopard Toad Underpass Project in Zeekoevlei has been instrumental in mitigating habitat fragmentation. Mentoring Groen Sebenza interns and presenting at the SAWMA and ACLIE conferences provided opportunities to share insights with fellow conservationists. Working closely with the dedicated Nature Care Fund site managers has reinforced our collaborative conservation approach. I'm grateful for the invaluable experiences and connections forged this past year, which have fuelled my commitment to environmental stewardship.



Conservation area management effort composition April 2023 – February 2024





HOW THE LEOPARD TOAD TUNNELS FUNCTION

The Western Leopard Toad underpass tunnels are designed to assist the endangered Western Leopard Toad (*Sclerophrys pantherina*) to pass under the road and avoid being driven over and killed by cars. Road deaths present the greatest threat to this critically endangered species.

During breeding season (late July to September), there is an annual mass migration of toads as they move from their summer resting areas to their winter breeding grounds. During this period barriers are set up close to roads, guiding the toads into tunnels that run under the roads.

Left A Western Leopard Toad is measured on grid sheets at Peninsula Road in Zeekoevlei

Right Western Leopard Toad underpass tunnels being installed on Peninsula Road



ROAD TUNNELS ARE ONE WAY NATURE CONNECT PROTECTS BIODIVERSITY

LAST YEAR'S IMPACT?

4 tunnels were installed

No road kill was observed in these sections



Nature Care Fund partners with the following organisations:

- International Society for Wetland Scientists
- Society for Ecological Restoration, African Chapter
- IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management: Impact Mitigation and Ecological Compensation Thematic Group
- International Association for Impact Assessment South Africa
- Society of Wetland Scientists (African Region)
- South African Botanical Society
- Western Cape Stewardship Reference Group
- Western Cape Wetlands Forum
- Fynbos Forum
- The Cape Floristic Region Partnership
- Protected Area Advisory Committee for the following nature reserves: Blouberg, Table Bay, False Bay and Zandvlei

We have an MOA/MOU with:

- SANCCOB
- Milnerton Race Course Conservation Area
- Muizenberg Master Property Owners Association
- South Break Home Owners Association
- Sunrise Villas Property Owners Association
- Friends of Rondebosch Common
- FynbosLIFE

Where the Nature Care Fund operates



Events we attended:

South Break AGM, Muizenberg, Cape Town. 18 April, 2023
 Friends of Rondebosch Common AGM, Cape Town. 9 May, 2023
 Doordrift Greenbelt Planting Action Day, Cape Town. 10 June, 2023
 Meadowridge Common Planting Action Day, Cape Town. 23 June, 2023
 Cape Leopard Trust Snare Free Campaign Launch, Cape Town. 1 August 2023
 Fynbos Forum conference, Gourikwa Nature Reserve. 14-16 August, 2023
 FynbosLIFE Fair, Cape Town. 10 September, 2023
 South African Wildlife Management Association conference, Golden Gate National Park. 10-15 September, 2023
 African Conference on Linear Infrastructure and Ecology (virtual). 18-21 September, 2023
 Western Cape Stewardship Programme Peer Learning Workshop, De Hoop Nature Reserve. 24-25 October, 2023
 Society for Ecological Restoration Conference (virtual). 7-8 November, 2023
 Cape Floristic Region Partnership Knowledge Exchange Workshop and AGM, Stellenbosch. 5 December, 2023
 Protected Area Advisory Committee meetings (Blouberg, Table Bay, Zandvlei, False Bay and Helderberg). Every quarter at each nature reserve



7 ways the Nature Care Fund contributes to the global SDGs

- 1 We promote good health and well-being**
 By providing access to well-managed urban conservation spaces, we support SDG 3: Good Health + Well-being, contributing to healthier communities through nature-based recreational opportunities.
- 2 We advance quality education**
 Our conservation sites serve as outdoor classrooms, aligning with SDG 4: Quality Education by fostering environmental learning and experiential education.
- 3 We create work + economic growth**
 Through sustained, inclusive economic growth and the creation of productive employment opportunities on our conservation sites, we support SDG 8: Decent Work + Economic Growth.
- 4 We foster innovation + build infrastructure**
 Partnering with the City's Green Infrastructure programme, we contribute to SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure by promoting sustainable urban development solutions.
- 5 We contribute to sustainable cities and communities**
 By maintaining urban conservation areas, we help make cities more resilient and sustainable, supporting SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.
- 6 We protect life on land**
 Through the active protection and restoration of terrestrial ecosystems, we contribute to SDG 15: Life on Land.
- 7 We strengthen partnerships for conservation**
 Our work secures conservation funding and amplifies impact through collaborations with CoCT and other parties, supporting SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

Events we hosted:

Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area City Nature Challenge, Cape Town. 28-29 April 2023
 Milnerton Racecourse Conservation Area City Nature Challenge, Cape Town. 29 May, 2023
 Western Leopard Toad Underpass Launch, Cape Town. 21 August, 2023
 Society for Ecological Restoration 'Make a Difference' restoration events, Cape Town. 3-10 August 2023
 Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area Night Walk, Cape Town. 21 September 2023
 Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area Spring Flower Walks, Cape Town. 27 September, 2023
 Zoarvlei Wetlands Community Clean Up, Cape Town. 27 September, 2023
 Milnerton Racecourse Conservation Area Spring Walks, Cape Town. 8 + 14 October, 2023
 Milnerton Racecourse Conservation Area Night Walks, Cape Town. 3 + 10 November 2023
 Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area Reptile and Arachnid Walk, Cape Town. 7 December, 2023
 Muizenberg East Biodiversity Cluster School Holiday Programme, Muizenberg. 18-22 December, 2023
 Table Mountain Fund Small Grants Induction for new grantees, Cape Town. 30 January, 2024
 Zoarvlei World Wetlands Day event, Cape Town. 2 Feb, 2023
 Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area Wetlands Day event, Cape Town. 2 Feb, 2023

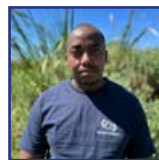
NATURE CARE FUND TEAM 2023-2024



Lynette Munro
Nature Care Fund Manager



Kim Gordon
Stewardship Programme Coordinator



Lindile Masinyana
Site Manager, Kenilworth Racecourse Conservation Area (KRCA)



Fayruz Prins
Assistant Conservation Officer, KRCA



Tanya Snyders
Senior Field Manager, KRCA



Jamy Lee Fredericks
Site Manager, Muizenberg East Biodiversity Cluster



Shaquille Benjamin
Site Manager, Milnerton Racecourse Conservation Area



Fabrice Turikumwe
Site Manager, Zoarvlei Conservation Area



Sivumo Zibaya
Field Ranger, Rondebosch Common



Angelo Hufke
Penguin Ranger



Kashiefa Amos
Penguin Ranger



Mikaela Slier
Penguin Ranger



Mpumelelo Mabutyana
Penguin Ranger



Phillie Duze
Penguin Ranger



Vardaman Hahndiek
Penguin Ranger



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