



## Friends of the Fossil Park

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On February the 17th 2010 **The Friends of the Fossil Park** (previously the Fossil Park Support Group) enjoyed an evening of business and pleasure at the WCFP.

Our new Programme Presenter Jerry Gelant treated the group of twenty three to a guided tour of the dig site, after which Catherine Bester spoilt everyone with her delightful fare in the coffee shop.

The aim of this meeting included the motivation to energise the Friends and to outline the WCFP's initiatives and programme for 2010.

The WCFP plans include:

Focus on education, supported by Iziko Museums, WCED and other organizations

Present lecture series and screenings

Tourism Initiatives with input from TEP, SBTO and the Provincial Government Department of Economic Development and Tourism

Formulate Funding Proposals to assist the Park with school groups visiting the WCFP

Development of the Mock Dig site

During the proceeding a committee of nine members was elected, with portfolios of Tourism, Marketing, SANParks and education getting special attention.

### Committee

Chairman	Lindy Warren
Vice Chairman	Jerry Gelant
Secretary	Flo Els
Treasurer	Louise Jacobs
IZIKO	Pippa Haarhoff
Education	Jeff Adonis
SANParks	Neliswa Shamu
Tourism/Marketing	Deidre Luzmore
Tourism/Guiding	Piet van Heerde

The committee's pledge is to run a professional and well oiled support group for the Friends of the Fossil park and any newcomers who wish to help are most welcome.

**Working for the Environment Then and Now**

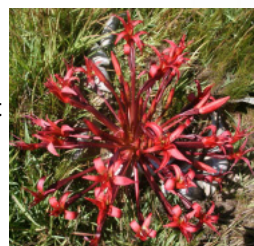


Photo: Heidi Duncan

## Frog Lady at WCFP

Valentina Zaffarani-Caorsi a Brazilian, spent a week at the WCFP. She participated in the lesson planning for the mock dig as well as lending us a hand with the sorting of micro fossils. These activities are far removed from her field of interest, as she is studying frogs in her home country. Valentina came to Cape Town chiefly to polish up her English.

Professor Alan Channing, an eminent frog expert at UWC brought Valentina to the West Coast and we were privileged to host this charming young lady for a little while.

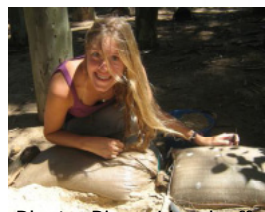


Photo: Pippa Haarhoff

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## June Events

- June 8th : A Cape Odyssey** illustrated talk and book launch  
Speaker: **Gabriel Athiros**  
Time: 18h00 for 18h30  
Venue: L/Baan Country Estate
- June 12th Creative Story Shop**  
Bosman (Oom Schalk)  
Speaker: **Professor Dorian Haarhoff**  
Time: 10h30 for 11h00  
Venue: L/Baan country Estate
- June 13th: Creative Writing Workshop**  
Conducted by Prof. Dorian Haarhoff  
Time 09h00 – 15h00  
Venue: West Coast Fossil Park

## Archaeological team resides at the Fossil Park

During February Dr. David Braun and a group of students made use of the accommodation at the Fossil Park while they were working at Elandsfontein. Although the WCFP is the very much "older sister" so to speak, the fossil finds at Elandsfontein are nevertheless impressive indeed. During eight weeks of digging, the team collected a shed full of fossils. The deposits at Elandsfontein range from 600 thousand years to about a million years, but this haul's sorting, naming and exact dating is still to be done.

Among the fossils are the remains of ancient buffalos, pigs, antelope, jackals, big cats, and even a porcupine.

Very close to the present dig site the 600 thousand year old cranium of "Saldanha man" was found in the early 1950's.

Dr. David Braun is a lecturer in Archaeology at UCT and the students, 16 all told, were third year and Honour's Students. His wife Kathryn, who is also an Archaeologist lent a helping hand as well.

Considering the inhospitable conditions on those hot and windswept dunes, the passion and love of the team for this kind of work is noteworthy. The skull of *Pelorovis antiquus*, once cleared of the sand around it, took 12 hours to lift.

The photo below shows the tooth of *Kolpochoerus*, an extinct pig.

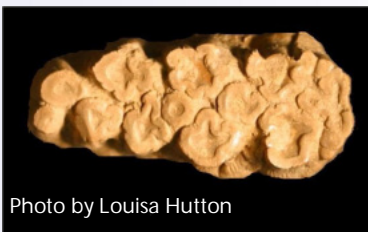


Photo by Louisa Hutton



Photo by Louisa Hutton

Ancient Buffalo skull

## From the Manager

Despite several staff changes the WCFP has continued to deliver good quality service. Unfortunately Edward Adonis, who was with us for almost a year has left to take up an environmental education position at Golden Gate National Park. All of us at the WCFP wish Edward the very best in his new job.

We have been fortunate to replace Edward with Jerry Gelant from Langebaan. Jerry has been appointed as head of the Public Programmes Unit. He comes equipped with wonderful natural skills for teaching and tour guiding.

The Public Programmes team is assisted by Lindy Warren. This appointment is made possible by a years funding through the DST African Origins Programme. Lindy comes with a bundle of enthusiasm and passion for teaching and is enjoying her new position. She is primarily responsible for implementing new "Learnthings" lesson plans.

It is with regret that we say goodbye to Carol Booyesen, who has successfully headed up our administration team for six months. At the beginning of April we welcomed Laura Bournhill who took over from Carol. Laura is a very dedicated lady and the Fossil Park is fortunate to have her on board.

Last but by no means least we have Jan Coetzee who will be assisting with the all important gardening and maintenance work.

Our very best wishes for success and happiness to the people who are leaving us and also to the new appointees.

The Park continues to play a meaningful role in the local community. Joint activities with SANPark's "Kids in Parks" programme and the Cape West Coast Biosphere, Department of Agriculture with the Junior Landcare Programme are successful ventures. *P. Haarhoff*

## Diagenetic Study in the WCFP

Ian Brumfitt an Honours Student in paleontology at UCT is currently studying the diagenetic changes in bone and teeth of fossils at the WCFP.

The Elandsfontein, Varswater and Langebaan formations which make up the West Coast Fossil Park succession have been a treasure trove of information on palaeo- environment and the ecology of the area at the time of our fossil deposition, around 5.2 mya.

The aim of this project is to investigate the diagenesis (or low-temperature alteration) of vertebrate bone and teeth in relation to the geochemistry of the sedimentation associated with the fossils.

In order to determine these objectives, Ian needs to involve X-ray diffraction, SEM Probe analysis, mineral mapping, and chemical analysis of sediment and isotope analysis as well. A challenging task indeed and we wish him well in his endeavor to meet his goals.



Ian Brumfitt (seated) with co-supervisor, Professor John Compton.

Photo: Pippa Haarhoff

## Milestone for WCFP

Mining operations within the boundaries of the WCFP ceased in 1993. After a long process, the area comprising 700ha of land has finally been transferred from Bhpbilliton to the WCFP. We extend our sincere gratitude to Bhpbilliton and to Andre van der Bergh who headed up the team, as well as Andre van der Walt who assisted in taking this process to a successful conclusion. A big thank you to all concerned.



## More than just old fossils at WCFP



It might not be common knowledge that the WCFP, apart from guided tours and lectures, offers other recreational facilities as well. Biking is one of them and the park sports properly laid-out cycle routes. As is shown in the map above, the cyclists have the choice of a good work out or can opt for a more sedate peddle through the park. Cycling through the WCFP is a great experience for bird watchers too, as the area is home to about 110 bird species. In fact, you could even meet the occasional Emu !! as the inserted photo proves.

Imagine the surprise when Pippa and Jan (a former Intern) came upon this exotic visitor. As it turned out, the bird was on a walk-about from one of the neighbouring farms, where he is kept as a pet.

Birds are not the only creatures that live here. Steenbok, Duiker, a variety of rodents, including porcupine, hare and not forgetting the tortoises also share the park with us. With the wet season upon us, we look forward to lush and green splendour with wonderful flowers along the cycle routes.



Photo:Pippa H.



Photo: Heidi Duncan

## ...and talking of cycling

Dieter Sporn from Germany is a person with an inquiring mind and he likes to keep up with current affairs worldwide. However he does not believe all he reads, therefore he takes off to find out for himself. This time his destination was South Africa. Nothing special one might say, only he does all his fact-finding by bicycle ! He landed in Cape Town early January this year, unwrapped his "iron horse" which he brought with him and set off for Hermanus. From there he made his way along the South Coast to Knysna, then over the mountains into the Little Karoo and back again to the Fairest Cape. On his travels he gets to meet many people from all walks of life , gets first hand information and opinions and so decides for himself what a country is all about. By the time he arrived at the WCFP he had clocked up 1900 km. Dieter tells us that he was met with friendliness and goodwill all along the way and will certainly come back again.

South Africa is not the first country he visited on his bicycle. Australia, Brazil and Peru have undergone Dieters scrutiny as well.



Dieter Sporn Photo; Flo Els

## Drawings in Tunnel

Visitors to the WCFP will have noticed the life size drawings of *Sivatherium hendeyi* as well as *Agriotherium africanum*. The drawings, done by Cedric Hunter, help to explain the fossil bones to visitors as well as give a perception of the stature of these extinct creatures. Our grateful thanks to Shane Hutchison from Digital Colour, who donated his valuable time, effort and artistic knowhow to reproduce these beautiful drawings for us.

## Is this necessary?



Photo: Lindy Warren

The carnage on the roads around the WCFP and no doubt elsewhere too, is cause for serious concern. A large variety of animals get killed daily, from bat eared foxes, wild cat species, spotted Eagle Owls and other birds, snakes and tortoises. Even a Black Shouldered Kite was noticed among the victims. Is there no way that motorists could be more caring and cautious while using the roads? More concern for the environment and the realization that we humans are not the only creatures who have a right to live would perhaps go a long way in saving the lives of many of these animals.

## Lecture Series at WCFP

On Tuesday 25 May the WCFP was proud to host Prof. Maarten de Wit , one of the guest speakers during our current public lecture series. Our esteemed guest describes himself as a Field Geologist, interested in "How the Earth works". His profession has taken him to North-and South America, Europe, Antarctica and throughout Africa. He has contributed significantly to the production of the BBC series "Planet Earth". With the topic of "Africa Alive, Corridor-Journeys through Africa's Autobiography with everyone a Stakeholder" Professor de Wit highlighted the challenges this continent and indeed the earth is faced with, be it deforestation, global warming, pollution, demand on energy or excessive exploitation of resources. A doom and gloom story one might think, but Prof de Wit not only outlined the perils of our time, he also made us aware that with concerted effort of each and everyone of us, we might still save this planet.

His excellent presentation, delivered with passion and enthusiasm will hopefully help to bring about a change in mindset for many of us.



[www.fossilpark.org.za](http://www.fossilpark.org.za)

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#### Where to find us

R45 between Langebaanweg  
and Vredenburg, West Coast

#### General Information

**Weekdays** (Monday to Friday):

08.00 -16.00

**Saturday, Sunday & public holidays:**

Opening times vary according to season. (You are advised to phone or email ahead of your visit).

**Closed:** Christmas Day, New Year's Day & Good Friday

#### Entrance Fees

Adults: R10.00

Seniors and Students: R8.00

Children: R5.00

Acknowledgment: Material supplied for this publication: Lindy Warren, Flo Els and Lara Meyer for Elli's photo.

## Our Programme

**Tours:** Duration approximately 45 minutes

Hourly tours on weekdays:  
10:00, 11:00, 12:00, 13:00, 14:00, 15:00

**Fees:** Adults R50

Students and Seniors: R25

Children: R15

There is no entrance fee charged for registered tour guides and accredited press representatives.

Children under 5 years of age are free.

**The park entrance fee includes the guided tours but does not include the fee for the mountain bike and walking trails.**

## In Memoriam

### Elli Boegershausen



It is with sadness and a deep sense of loss that we have to advise our friends and clients of the death of our colleague and friend Elli. She left us on Sunday May 23rd 2010, two days after her 61st birthday. Elli had been working for the WCFP for three years, to begin with as a volunteer and later she joined as a part-time staff member. Elli was a dedicated and very loveable person and all of us will miss her very much. We extend our sincere condolences to her family.

## People in the Park



It is with pleasure that we introduce our two new Interns, Pauline Bernard from France and Stefan Bosman from Darling in the Western Cape. Both are very dynamic young people and certainly a blast of fresh air for us all at the WCFP.

**Pauline** is a B.Sc Biology graduate of the University of Bordeaux. She is currently working on her M. Sc in ecological engineering and management of biodiversity. Her practical experience during her student years has been interesting and diverse. She participated in a scientific survey and awareness campaign for the protection and study of seals in the Baie de Somme. She took part in the annual census of *Arenaria grandiflora* population in Fontainebleau Forest, and she participated in a survey for Ferus (Large Predators Protection National Association) to determine the status of bears in the Pyrenees as well as an awareness campaign of Brown Bears in France generally.

Pauline came to the West Coast in March this year and works under the auspices of the West Coast Biosphere. She is tasked to help draft a conservation management plan for the WCFP. Besides this she is helping us with the implementation of alien clearing.

**Stefan** worked for three years for African Film and Drama Association, doing sound design and film editing. At present he is studying Nature Conservation through Unisa. He joined The WCFP as a volunteer guide and soon proved himself as very valuable to the team. Stefan is a computer whizz kid, a good guide and teacher and he also helps with the clearing of alien plants.

We wish Pauline and Stefan the very best for the future.