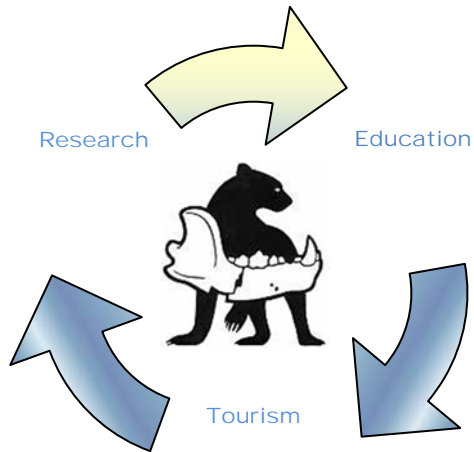


Background to the African Origins Platform/West Coast Fossil Park initiative (AOP/WCFP)



Despite its importance on the world stage, the amount of primary research that has been done at Langebaanweg is relatively small and a huge portion of the fossil collections are as yet unstudied. Many new species remain undescribed and entire families of extinct organisms are poorly understood. This situation is currently being rectified, however, as research at the West Coast Fossil Park has received a big boost in the form of a three-year grant from the African Origins Platform (AOP, **see note**), a Department of Science and Technology driven initiative, for a project entitled;

“Maximising the research, educational and tourism potential of the West Coast Fossil Park”.

The various facets of this three-pronged approach, Research, Education and Tourism, are closely interlinked, with Research forming the power house of the project.

Research:

The project aims to initiate and facilitate scientific research at Langebaanweg. As part of the research program bursaries have been made available for postgraduate students. Currently, three students are working on various aspects of the Langebaanweg fauna, palaeoecology and geology. Further



research opportunities are available.

In addition, five multidisciplinary research projects have been set up under the auspices of the AOP/WCFP project to investigate the geology and fauna at Langebaanweg, and the origin and evolution of the terrestrial and marine ecosystems of the Western Cape coast. The broader aim of this research is to



document changes in Western Cape coastal environments, and to determine how these changes have influenced the biodiversity of today. The end result will be a better understanding of the processes by which environmental and climatic changes have occurred over time, and the effects they have had on the indigenous west coast fauna and flora.

Education:

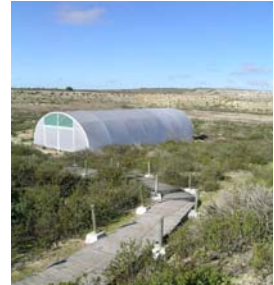


We aim to provide unique and exciting curriculum-based activities and lessons for visiting learners and educators which aim to bring the many facets of science alive, incorporating the unique experience offered by the Fossil Park. The educational programs available at the Fossil Park for visiting schools are being extended and added to on an

on-going basis. We are currently busy building an interactive, educational website where learners and teachers will be able to access online lessons and lesson plans, including pre and post-visit activities for learners.

Tourism:

The new and exciting information coming from on-going research will be made accessible to the public. The AOP/WCFP project aims to attract a larger number of both national and international tourists with the unique and exhilarating experience which a visit to the West Coast Fossil Park provides.



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Note: The African Origins Platform program aims to integrate and coordinate scientific research conducted in such way as to exploit South Africa's geographical advantage in paleontological, paleo-anthropological and archaeological research.