

Off with a bang!



To get everyone into 'work mode' after the December holidays, the Visitors Centre rolled out a 'Back to school/office' programme from 8 to 12 January 2018.

Many Koeberg staff members used the opportunity to show their family and friends where they work and how electricity is produced at Koeberg Nuclear Power Station.

The programme was very well received with 222 people participating in the fun, but educational, programme.

More programmes will be presented during the year starting with Wetlands Week in February, Water Week in March and several outreach projects, all to spread the word about the good work, being done at Koeberg.

Watch this space for news about our programmes.

The Visitors Centre wishes everyone a fantastic 2018!



Thirsty work

Being a creature in the current drought in the Western Cape is thirsty work! The lack of rainfall and available water puts pressure on the environment and in particular, on wildlife.

Drought is a natural phenomenon and not all its effects are negative. Predators and scavengers will benefit from being able to prey on weakened animals. Kruger National Park reported a positive increase in buffalo numbers after the 1991/2 drought when the buffalo population dropped from around 30 000 to 14 000. Their numbers bounced back to around 47 000, after the drought. These ups and downs are important regulators of the ecosystem. Weak animals die off in the process, allowing the stronger individuals, which survive the drought, to repopulate with more resilient genes.



Godfrey Heynes sharing a sip with his skink friend

Koeberg Nature Reserve has not experienced animals dying off as the reserve has several dams and wetlands. But every now and again we are reminded that they too experience water stress: Showing amazing patience, a Koeberg employee managed to befriend a Cape skink (*Trachylepis capensis*) which he frequently met outside his office building. Eventually the skink became so tame and would gratefully take a sip of water. This is truly remarkable! If you ever tried to capture one of these swift animals you would understand how incredible this relationship is. With a long, hot summer ahead, pressure on wildlife will worsen. If you spot an animal in the reserve in distress please contact the Central Alarm Station on 021 550 4600.

You can do your bit by placing water bowls outside in a protected spot for animals to drink from – all creatures need water, including birds, reptiles and insects.



Bird of the year

BirdLife South Africa has chosen the near-endemic **African Black Oystercatcher** (*Haematopus moquini*) as the Bird of the Year for 2018.

The African Black Oystercatcher is a modern-day conservation success story with its population having dramatically increased over the last few decades, leading to its regional red listing status being downgraded from Near Threatened in 2000 to Least Concern in 2015. Although numbers are on the rise, the African Black Oystercatcher still faces some challenges, especially where it breeds in or near urban centres.

The biggest threats include continued habitat loss due to coastal development, and disturbance of breeding birds by beach visitors and their dogs.

A proactive intervention and awareness programme by the Nature's Valley Trust, in collaboration with BirdLife South Africa, is addressing some of these issues and enabling people to #ShareTheShores with these iconic birds.

At Koeberg these birds are thriving thanks to the protected section of shoreline falling inside the National Key Point area.



Mole snake rescue

Conservation staff were recently called out to assist with a rather bizarre situation at the Fitness for Duty (FFD) Centre. What, at first, appeared to be one mole snake stuck in the sand, turned out to be two mole snakes. The snakes must have been in pursuit of some prey and were trapped in the underground labyrinth when the walls collapsed around them.

Thanks to the vigilance of the FFD staff, the two snakes were carefully uncovered and relocated to a safer area in the reserve.

Mole snakes can grow up to two metres long. They are powerful constrictors feeding on rats, moles and other small mammals. They are not considered harmful, but large adults may inflict a painful bite.

