



Two Oceans Aquarium FOUNDATION

Annual Report

March 2023 - April 2024



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A message from our Executive Chair

Dear Supporters and Friends,

As we reflect on the past year, it brings me immense pride to share the achievements and milestones of the Two Oceans Aquarium Foundation. Despite the challenges presented by a rapidly changing world, and some internal challenges posed by a rapidly growing organisation, our commitment to marine education and conservation has remained unwavering.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, we continued our mission to inspire conservation action and foster a deep appreciation for marine life. Our goals were brought to life by the exemplary dedication of our team and the inspiring passion of our volunteers.

One of the highlights of the past year was the growth of our education and outreach programmes, as well as our advocacy work. Through school visits and courses, outreach visits, workshops, and community events, we reached over 70,000 young people, empowering them to become ambassadors for ocean conservation. We are also encouraged that our initial Grade 12 Marine Sciences students achieved a remarkable 100% pass rate in their NSC exams. By fostering a sense of stewardship and responsibility, we are nurturing the next generation of environmental leaders. In addition, our adult training division was launched and grew well in its first year of operation.

Our rehabilitation initiatives also flourished, and with dedicated care from the team we were able to save 87 stranded sea turtles with the help of 287 volunteers in the network. Furthermore, we successfully rehabilitated and released 70 turtles including our long term, complex and special patient, Nobomvu, the 80kg loggerhead turtle. The release of 14 satellite-tagged post-hatchling loggerheads in a research collaboration with Florida Atlantic University and UPWELL was a first in Africa. Our 7th Annual Turtle Rescue Road Trip reached 703 people and we erected our 12th Turtle Rescue Sign along the coastline.

In addition, our globally pioneering Marine Wildlife Management Programme also grew and our team was able to save 122 entangled seals, many of whom would have faced an agonising death without our intervention. During this year they undertook 4692 patrol hours and rescued 68 seabirds. We have now positioned our research activities to align with our strengths and are developing an exciting new research focus on People and Ocean. Our very first Research Open Day was attended by 43 academics from 19 Western Cape institutes.

Crucially, none of this would be possible without the unwavering support of our donors, especially the Two Oceans Aquarium Trust, our partners, and the V&A Waterfront and other supporters. The generosity of our donors enables us to continue our vital work, ensuring a brighter future for our ocean and all who depend on it. Looking ahead, we are excited about the opportunities and challenges that await us. With continued support, we are confident that we can overcome any obstacles and continue making a positive impact in marine conservation. In closing, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each person and company who has contributed to our cause. Together, we are creating a better world where our ocean thrives, and future generations will be able to marvel at the wonders of the deep.

With gratitude,

Ann Lamont, Executive Chairperson, Two Oceans Aquarium Foundation

1. Operational Overview of 2023-2024 Financial Year

The last year has been one of intense growth, revised focus, and increased output. We have continued to support our mission through Education, Conservation and Research, in line with our five-year strategic objectives.

The Foundation is well positioned to take an increasingly strong leadership role in the Western Cape in marine education, training, research, and conservation, and internationally in turtle rehabilitation and Ocean Literacy.

Passionate, hardworking, and dedicated staff remain the backbone of the Foundation and our increased emphasis on staff well-being and capacity have resulted in a more cohesive and competent team who are working well together with greater focus and a better understanding of the rationale for our work.

The administrative challenges we experienced have revealed gaps and opportunities, and these are being addressed. While we still have human capacity issues, the recent appointment of two new senior staff members will help to address these challenges.

Overview of Programmes

1.1. Ocean Campus

During the year, the team settled down well and new leaders are emerging. We continued to provide quality educational opportunities to learners of all ages, inspiring within them an interest in the ocean and empowering them to act for the ocean. Launching in mid-2024, our Ocean Campus will bring together under one brand all our educational offerings, specifically, Early Childhood Development; Primary and Secondary School; Marine Sciences, Adult Education and Film Productions. This will enable us to build an ocean-aware community and create opportunities for lifetime learning.

The Ocean Campus will be physically located at the Aquarium and longer term will include online learning as well as opportunities at The Turtle Conservation Centre, to be built at Granger Bay. We also use the Waterfront as a learning space including the Marine Wildlife walk and sustainability examples.

We said a fond farewell to our long-standing Head of Education, Russell Stevens, in March 2024. His dedication to marine education and his commitment to creating the Marine Sciences Curriculum are his legacy and testament to his passion and dedication. Leigh Meinert, who has stepped in as our new Head of Ocean Campus, is also a seasoned educator who is committed to preserving and growing the work that Russell established.



1.1.1. Core Education

Building for the future

Our 2023-2024 financial year started off slowly, however we picked up quickly and started exceeding our targets throughout the year. We ended the year with over 54 000 learners having participated in lessons and visited the Aquarium. Our two Outreach vehicles reached over 13 000 learners while over 11 000 were exposed to the Smart Living courses.

Almost 500 learners attended 11 courses ranging in duration from one to five days. All courses were run either as sponsored courses or as fully paid courses. Thanks to the Marketing team, Sales team, and Aquarium teachers, we exceeded budget for fully paid courses. In February 2024, we ran our Wetland activities with students from various communities close to the Edith Stephens wetlands. We ran these activities over five days with three primary schools.

In April 2023, we ran two new courses - a special sponsored Junior Biologist Course for Grade 6 students which included a camp; and an Introduction to the Rocky Shores Course (Grade 10 to 12), which included a practical day at St James beach. We increased staff capacity through internal promotions and the employment of new teachers.

A big highlight was the long-overdue revamp of our classrooms, and we were delighted to showcase our education offerings to 90 delegates of the Western Cape Environmental Education Forum and 60 teachers from the GIFT workshop.



1.1.2. Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Starting young

Our Mobile Puppet Shows continued to excite young learners and our normal day-to-day operations of keeping youngsters (over 30 000) busy in the I&J Play Centre in the Aquarium kept the team fully occupied. In the past year, our dedicated teachers learnt more about isiXhosa, autism, self defense/safety, puppet theater and some staff even achieved their drivers' license.

We concluded our agreement with the Desmond Tutu Foundation, and successfully helped them to launch their own puppet shows. The team has also been working together with the Film Productions team to turn four of our ECD books into videos in four different languages for FNB who will promote this through the nationwide network for ECD centres that they support.

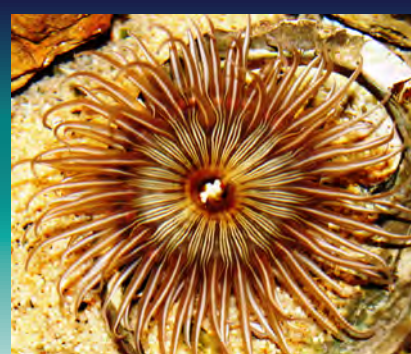


1.1.3. Marine Sciences

In the school curriculum

In 2023 - 2024, the Marine Sciences programme witnessed significant changes and achievements. Our human capacity was enhanced through the employment of Marnus Smith who is an experienced teacher, with administrative support provided by Jamy-Lee Springbok. Our initial Grade 12 Marine Sciences students achieved a remarkable 100% pass rate in their NSC exams.

Asynchronous lessons are underway and 40 out of the 85 topics have been recorded to date. Practical exposure for students included visits to the Aquarium. The Foundation's role as a leader in the national curriculum for Marine Science was enhanced during the year as we met with multiple stakeholders, supported node schools, and hosted several educator workshops. We continued to teach Marine Sciences online and this year we supported 35 Grade 12 students, 29 Grade 11 students and 52 Grade 10 students. Our total student count for 2024 is 116.



1.1.4. Televised Content / Productions

Extending our reach

As mentioned, our team continued to record the Marine Sciences Curriculum lessons on video this year and is almost halfway through capturing this unique content. We are also very proud of our Head of Productions, Marguerite Venter, who secured a coveted opportunity to produce a documentary for KykNET, an MNet television channel. This documentary, entitled 'By die Soutwater' will be broadcast in August 2024.



1.1.5. Adult Training

A new area for growth

The recruitment of a dedicated Training Coordinator in June 2023 sparked the start of an intense focus on the development of the Adult Training division of the Foundation.

Our aim was to identify areas of expertise, train staff and build internal capacity, develop courses and workshops that could be offered and find suitable clients. During the year we developed training proposals, designed the courses, prepared the presentations and activities, and then conducted training for institutions including WWF-SA; Shark Spotters; International Ocean Institute (IOI); Stellenbosch University MPhil students; Wildlife Forensics Academy (WFA) students; UCT Business School; SANNCOB; Life Assist and SANParks.

Almost 30 training interventions (ranging from one hour to five days) were facilitated with over 400 adults (plus another 300 through light touch interactions). Over 40 days were spent delivering training and we ended the year close to achieving our ambitious budget. This is an incredible achievement for a team that only started to focus on adult training in March 2023.

1.2. Conservation and Research

Our contributions to marine conservation have been consolidated into three strategic pillars: namely the Turtle Conservation Centre, Marine Wildlife Management Programme and focused Campaigns.

1.2.1. Turtle Conservation Centre

Saving endangered species

It was a busy year for the Turtle team. We rescued 87 turtles with the assistance of 287 people from the Rescue Network. We successfully rehabilitated and released 70 turtles, including our long-term and special patient, Nobomvu an 80kg female loggerhead. Sadly over 490 pieces of plastic were removed from 55 turtle hatchlings – highlighting the severity of plastic pollution in our ocean. The release of 14 satellite tagged post-hatchling loggerheads in a research collaboration with Florida Atlantic University and UPWELL was a first in Africa.

Our 7th annual Turtle Rescue Road trip reached 703 people and we erected our 12th Turtle Rescue Sign along the coastline. We also started a Turtle Newsletter that has grown to an audience of over 1410 people and through this we share regular updates on our tracked turtles out at sea including Pan, Turbo, Bob, Bheni and Nobomvu.

In this year, the Turtle team has stabilised and matured through consistent leadership, and we look forward to more growth in the future as we start the process of developing the Turtle Conservation Centre at Granger Bay. The design stage has started and getting the Centre designed, built and operational will be a focus for the next four years.



1.2.2. Marine Wildlife Management Programme (MWMP)

Showing our care

The MWMP disentangled 122 seals, undertook 4692 patrol hours, and noted 8 473 seal sightings. A total of 68 seabirds were rescued and the leader of the programme walked 3660km on patrols and rescue responses. We focused on training staff and strengthening relationships with aligned organisations.

The seal and otter monitors did their Discovery Dive experience, intensive disentanglement training and further animal behaviour training.

One young monitor successfully disentangled 29 of the seals. We also signed a three-year contract with the City of Cape Town, which is a significant move for the future of the programme. This contact will see the Foundation supporting the City in managing human wildlife co-existence through staff training, equipment provision and ongoing practical interventions.



1.2.3. Campaigns

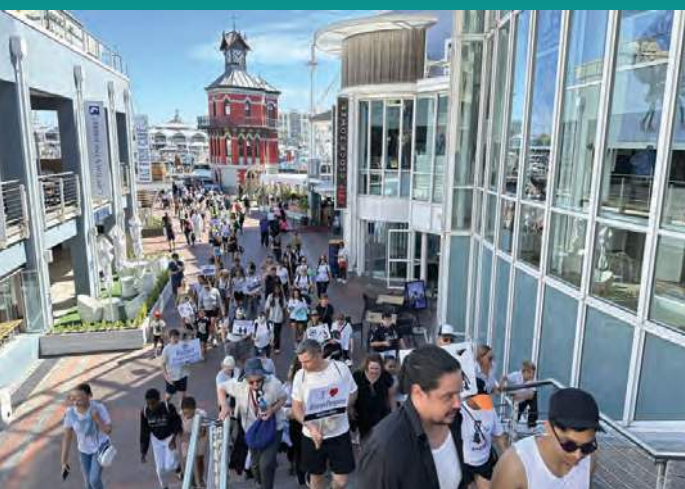
Making a difference

The African Penguin #NOOW (Not On Our Watch) Campaign grew substantially both online and in person. In October 2023 penguin waddles took place on seven continents, involving at least 15 countries and thousands of people.

Media support was impressive. Behind the scenes we continued to support the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE) with the updated Biodiversity Management Plan and initiating and leading the IUCN-Conservation Planning Specialist Group process.

Marine Protected Areas Day 2023 was the largest to date with various activities conducted around South Africa and internationally.

Social media received support from a wide range of countries and organisations. This campaign was recognised with several local and international awards. The Foundation also supported the Aquarium with the Mission Blue launch of the False Bay Hope Spot, of which the Aquarium is a Co-Champion. We have a unique opportunity to be a convenor and a facilitator of this important initiative.



1.2.4. Research

The basis for all our decisions

This was a year of consolidation and focus for our Research team. Attention was paid to identifying, sorting, and analysing internal datasets to enable us to use our data more effectively. Two reports will emanate from the historical turtle rehabilitation and seal entanglement data. Given our capacity constraints we decided to focus on one primary research project, namely Searching for Sunfish. Our role as a research collaborator of choice was enhanced through the first Research Open Day, which was attended by 43 academics from 19 Western Cape institutes. Through the year we supported 20 research projects with higher education institutes.

Although no external funding was sourced for research, good progress was made. The team supervised four interns and two PhD students. One Post Graduate Diploma in Marine Sciences and one Master's degree was granted based on projects undertaken at the Aquarium. We also initiated six social science research projects: South African Ocean Literacy; Two Oceans Aquarium visitor demographics and psychographics; Knowledge and Attitudes to African Penguins and Otters; Waterfront Zero Waste and Waterfront Sustainable Seafood.

Our Ocean Literacy workshop was a great success and established our role as a leader in this field in Africa. One publication that is directly attributable to the Foundation was produced, and we did four presentations at international conferences and four at local conferences during the reporting period.





1.3. Granger Bay

An exciting new opportunity

We served as the V&A Waterfront's Marine Science Expert Advisor within its Granger Bay development team. Our continuous input aims to develop the Bay sustainably and inclusively, while enhancing biodiversity. Our multidisciplinary team provided guidance and oversight to the marine engineers' oceanographic modelling and undertook surveys and mapping to generate a comprehensive biodiversity baseline report. These efforts were pivotal in steering the Granger Bay development process towards environmentally conscious and culturally sensitive outcomes.

2. People and Ocean

A new focus area

Our new focus on People and Ocean addresses the urgent need to support people to solve pressing ocean challenges. Our goal is to create a reputable and credible unit that has the capacity to deliver high quality research, communication strategies and training opportunities to enhance the relationship between people and the ocean, to support pro-ocean attitudes and behaviour. During the first year we will focus on identifying and initiating appropriate partnerships and building internal capacity. We will also work with leading local and global social science researchers to formalise this strategy.

Key Global and Local Leadership

Serving on international and national boards gives the Two Oceans Aquarium Foundation credibility and exposure and establishes the Foundation as a world leader in the field of ocean conservation and within the zoo and aquarium community. Dr Judy Mann continued to serve on four local boards and five international bodies, including President of the International Zoo Educators' Association and Africa representative of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Dr Nathalie Viljoen serves on the Marine Sciences Advisory Committee of CPUT.

3. Organisational Overview

People

The passion and commitment of our staff is indeed rare and valued by the organisation. We have emphasized internal staff promotion to support our policy of succession planning and internal staff development. In some departments the year brought stability and consolidation, while for others it was a year of change. Emerging leaders have been identified and they are being supported to grow as managers. Operational and administrative oversight is being addressed through new appointments and changes to the time allocation of key staff members.

The Foundation continues to offer support to the many staff who wish to advance their skills by attending a wide range of training courses, seminars, and conferences. We will continue to strive towards developing new initiatives to enhance staff well-being. Overall, the last two years have been ones of intense growth for the Foundation team. The team has risen to the challenge and are now in a far better position to realise the true vision of the Foundation.

Financial Sustainability

We continue with our strategy of three major funding sources namely, Aquarium Funding, Donor Funding and Operational Income from services. We would like to ensure that our donor funding required for operational expenses is never more than 30% of the budget. We require dedicated capacity in this area and have recently recruited Kelly Rosenthal, as a senior manager for stakeholder engagement on our team.

For more detail about our sustainability, please see our Annual Financial Statement.