

World Wetland Day Cape Town: Rehabilitation workers hooked on fish focus Rondevlei Nature Reserve, Western Cape, South Africa

The World wetland day celebration held at Rondevlei Nature Reserve near the False Bay coastline was a big success. Workers employed on the state funded Working for Wetlands programme were taken by the fish theme.

Cape Town has a long cultural association with fish on which many locals, for centuries, have depended for a livelihood. Several wetland rehabilitation team members, employed within the Working for Wetlands poverty relief programme, expressed concern about how some of their favourite seafood, like snoek (*Thyrsites atun*), seems to be less available than in the past. They were able to get almost instant information about their concerns via a text message to the WWF managed South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (<http://www.panda.org.za/sassi/sa.html>) and find out that officially the species is at sustainable levels – unlike several others which are critically depleted.

The links between these fish and those that use estuaries in their breeding cycle were discussed, as was the problem of alien invasive species like carp and tilapia. Already sensitised to exotic plant problems the teams were interested that the battle had to be fought on other fronts too.

The day concluded with simple messages of commitment from all wetlanders present to increase public education, volunteer efforts and community ownership of wetlands in the Western Cape.

Organisations present included:

- The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (<http://www.wessa.wcape.school.za>)
- South African National Botanical Institute (<http://www.sanbi.org/>)
- Working for Wetlands (<http://www.sanbi.org/research/wetlandprog.htm>)
- WET-LAND Solutions
- City of Cape Town (<http://www.capegateway.gov.za>)
- Zeekoevlei Conservation Trust
- Zandvlei Trust (<http://www.zandvleitrust.org.za/>)
- Friends of Tokai Forest
- Friends of Die Oog
- Friends of Constantia Valley Greenbelts
- Keyzers River Restoration Project (<http://www.wessa.wcape.school.za/keyzers.htm>)



Photographs taken during World Wetlands Day 2007



An old game with new meaning: Wetland workers prepare to go fishing for species in a healthy state, using the Sustainable Seafood Initiative ideas of “green” fish species from relatively healthy and well managed populations that can sustain current fishing pressure, “orange” may be legally sold by registered commercial fisheries and retailers, but an increase demand could compromise a sustainable supply and “red” are by law illegal to buy or sell in South Africa.



Training around wetland issues: The events of the day involved explanatory picture boards, presentations and hands on activities