

2022 Eco Update

Our Ongoing Eco Projects

Biodiversity Awareness Initiatives:

- We strive to encourage ongoing awareness of how our actions negatively affect our environment and biomes. Relevant concerns are addressed during our weekly assemblies, as well as in our Life Skills and Natural Science lessons, and in the weekly Foundation and Intersen Phase Eco Club meetings.
- Rhino Shoutout: We raise awareness around the endangered rhinoceros as well as other animals that are under threat. Aspects, such as the long-term effects of poaching, receive attention during our annual rhino shoutout event. This year the funds raised were once again donated to The Princess Charlene of Monaco Foundation, #ChasingZero. Our collaboration with the Foundation is important, as it builds a long-term relationship with an organization that engages first-hand with these concerns. The Foundation provides practical and sustainable methods to ensure the future of this species and other endangered animals and their environments.
- Biodiversity Workshops are presented as part of our dedicated Round Square Days. The themes of these days include aspects surrounding sustainability and problem-solving techniques to ensure the sustainable preservation of our environment.
- The Junior school continues to work hard to remove alien species, specifically black wattle, from the school's nearby Linksfield Ridge.
- Weekly Foundation and Intersen Phase assemblies promote awareness of biodiversity and highlight important Eco days, as inspired by the WESSA calendar.
- Eco Solution Owl Release Programme: This involved establishing a high level of student involvement, i.e. a feeding team roster, release-day countdown and post-release observations of the Spotted Eagle Owls. This year, we were fortunate enough to be temporary caretakers of three owlets which were released onto the grounds safely.
- A talk about the declining number of bird species in South Africa encouraged awareness and incorporated measures that can be employed to safeguard our vulnerable birds.

- Sunny Morgan (an Al Gore spokesperson and a recent attendee and participant at the School's Leading Green Conference) presented a talk about climate change to our students.
- The Senior School planted seedlings for the new year and hosted a documentary and discussion afternoon regarding climate change, which also included the making of sustainable beeswax wraps.
- The environmental task team made it their goal to focus on sustainable environmental education throughout 2022. They guided a nature-based chapel service and a scavenger hunt where students could observe and engage with the school's climate-conscious projects.
- We continued to replace exotic trees with indigenous ones on campus.
- Our composting initiatives remain a going concern.

#EarthHour pledges:

This student initiative aims to highlight the importance of saving our planet by committing to pledges, investigating different ways to spend our time without using electricity, and testing our general knowledge about sustainable and green forms of energy.

Our Recycling Bins:

Mrs Essop and Mrs Smith, in conjunction with the School's Maintenance Team, started the term by implementing changes to our recycling strategies. This involved rebranding and redistributing all of the recycling bins throughout the school. Recycling not only helps to reduce our carbon footprint, but it also helps reduce the need for harvesting raw materials, saving energy, reducing greenhouse gases and preventing pollution. Improving our recycling habits ensures that we keep our environment clean and preserve our natural resources.

The School's Greenhouse:

Our long-awaited greenhouse arrived at the beginning of the term and, to our delight, was far larger than we expected. The Junior School Eco-Club meet on a Monday afternoon and were excited to experience the new greenhouse. They continued to learn about plants and different methods to ensure an eco-friendlier lifestyle.

In January, peas were harvested and have been recently planted. Research was conducted about the right time and depth to plant the peas. We also harvested Clivia seeds, and an inquiry-based activity is in progress to observe how many seeds develop and if it is a sustainable process. Another experiment is to grow cuttings of roses and hydrangeas using a growth hormone; this is something we are very excited about as it is yet another first for the girls.

Our Vegetable Gardens:

Grey Loeries and other bird species currently pose a threat to our garden, as vegetables are often eaten before they are fully grown or ready to be harvested. Solutions are being discussed and will hopefully lead to the prevention of this threat soon. We were, however, excited to have sent our first crop of spinach to the Ithemba Soup Kitchen in the first week of August 2022.

New initiatives in 2022

OCE and FEE Climate Change Classroom Filming:

St Andrew's is proud to have been selected as one of six schools worldwide, to be an example of good practice for a massive open online course (MOOC) focused on "Climate Change Education: from knowledge to action". This course is co-produced by the Office for Climate Education (OCE) and the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) and has been designed for primary to secondary school teachers internationally, aiming to provide them with resources on how to teach climate change.

The OCE is a non-profit organization under the auspices of UNESCO. They promote climate change education to equip young generations with the tools of understanding and action to protect them from preconceptions, ideologies or irrationality, and to prepare them to live in a changing world. The FEE is a non-governmental, non-profit organization, promoting sustainable development through environmental education. Their educational programmes use a solution-based approach to empower young people to create a more environmentally-conscious world. A Grade Six Geography lesson on 'The Difference Between Weather and Climate' was used as an example of good practice for the filming.

Environmental Conference – Leading Green:

We are proud to have hosted the first environmental conference for schools. This was attended by approximately 50 schools. Our programme included renowned speakers like Cindy-Lee Cloete (GM of WESSA), Jaimal Anand (DIRCO), Graeme Codrington and Dr Adriana Marais (Proudly Human).

Our conference included the eco-walk around the school, entailing visits to the different environmental points in order to give delegates a practical view of how environmental solutions and activities can be carried out within a school environment.

We had breakaway sessions with old girls, Dr Melissa Whitecross and Kelly Smith, as well as a WESSA representative, who explained how teachers can use project-based learning to enhance environmental education in their schools. Sunny Morgan, a climate activist, also led us on a climate protest, as our conference fell on Climate Action Day.

The feedback from all who attended the conference was incredibly positive, and delegates felt that there was definitely a need for this type of conference in the future, as environmental issues remain a serious concern.

Plans for 2023

Plant the Seed:

We are consulting with 'Plant the Seed' to find more sustainable solutions for the tuckshop, and to investigate a machine that converts food waste into methane gas, which can then be burned to create electricity to heat pools, etc. We also plan to partner with 'Plant the Seed' for Leading Green 2.0 in 2023.

Butterfly Garden:

We plan to revamp our Butterfly Garden which is currently overgrown. This is a space for indigenous insect life and birdlife to thrive on the school campus. It will also provide valuable learning experiences for the pupils.

Solar Canopies:

We continue with our long-term plan to place solar canopies in our parking areas. By utilizing land that has already been cleared, while providing shade for cars and renewable electricity for the school's use, the environment and St Andrew's will benefit.