

# ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SPECIALIST



10 Saddlers Park, 32A Umgeni Avenue, Howick 3290  
Tel: 033 330 5980 • Mobile: 079 184 5011 • E-mail: [enviro.education@telkomsa.net](mailto:enviro.education@telkomsa.net)

## NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2010

Greetings to one and all,

**LEARNING THROUGH NATURE** celebrated its first birthday in April! Thank you to everyone who made it possible to reach this milestone.

Do log onto **LEARNING THROUGH NATURE'S** website [www.learningthroughnature.org.za](http://www.learningthroughnature.org.za). Many thanks to Shaun Holmes for making this possible. The website is undergoing a few changes and you may still need to add my name – Jeanette Stewart – to go directly to the site.

**LEARNING THROUGH NATURE'S** work with **UNISA** continues to expand. Apart from Saturday morning tutorials with the Nature Conservation students, marking assignments and exam scripts, as well as video conferencing with the students in Durban to prepare them for the exams, we have been asked to rewrite the new module entitled *Fundamentals of Conservation I*.

An outing to the Natal Museum was a highlight as the students were able to see many of the animals they may encounter when they are working.

For National Clean Up Week the students initiated a project to clean up a section of the Umsinduzi River in Pietermaritzburg. After some discussion they came to realise how such an event related to all the subjects they are studying.



## Winter Holiday Fun for Children



Cold mornings, dry air and leaves covering the ground created a different ambience for the Winter Holiday Activities. We spent two days at the Dovehouse Organic Farm in the Karkloof and another day, with older children, rambling through the Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve.

This was a chance to make new friends while hiking along nature trails, playing games like nature bingo, and collecting items for art works. We had fun creating exciting items to take home, learning new songs and listening to stories about African animals.



**Be sure to join in the fun during the summer holidays too!**

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Each month **LEARNING THROUGH NATURE** has been submitting articles to **THE MEANDER CHRONICLE** focusing on special environmental weeks/days to celebrate and be aware of such as Arbor Week, Water Week, Desertification, Population and Water Monitoring. These articles can be viewed each month on the Meander Chronicle website [www.meanderchronicle.co.za](http://www.meanderchronicle.co.za) – click on regulars.

In association with **Drum Beat Academy** **LEARNING THROUGH NATURE** has been training and assessing potential tour guides in Kwa Zulu-Natal in the NQF Level 2 (Site guide) and Level 4 (National Qualification) as well as those guides who qualify for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Guides may elect to focus on Culture or on Nature.

Training requires contact sessions, workplace assignments and practical role plays. Level 4 guides write two exams - one on the province and one on South Africa. All training manuals and workbooks are provided. We also provide the opportunity for guides to qualify in additional provinces.

## For teachers

**LEARNING THROUGH NATURE** offers ...  
**Green-school programmes**

- **Greening your School** – environmental policy and practice in schools
- **Greening your Classroom** – teaching environment AND the curriculum in the outdoors.
- **Greening your Teaching** – creative ideas to enrich your lessons and teaching materials in all subjects, from language and maths to life sciences and music.
- **Greening your Year** – celebrating environmental days, from World Wetlands Day to Big Birding Day.

## For families

**Learning through Nature** offers ...  
**Eco-family programmes**

- **Greening your Home** – practical things you can do to make your home healthy, happy and sustainable
- **Greening your Neighbourhood** – practical things you can do to green your community
- **Green Hour Activities** – time out outdoors (night and day) for the whole family,

**OUTDOOR EDUCATORS** invited **LEARNING THROUGH NATURE** to assist them on a course with Alston Primary. We hiked through the spectacular Cumberland Nature Reserve and learnt how to use our senses to learn more about the world around us.



**LEARNING THROUGH NATURE** helped the **LIMA RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION** to update their website [www.lima.org.za](http://www.lima.org.za), prospectus and contact details of their vast network.

**We are committed to developing in learners of every age a sense of wonder, joy, fun, inspiration and creativity. We encourage learning through practical activities in natural and cultural settings.**

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A lot of fun and learning *put a twinkle in the eyes* of people who joined **LEARNING THROUGH NATURE'S** newly developed activities entitled –

## Appreciation of the Night Skies



Many people braved the Midlands winter at Wayne and Clare's hilltop farm. The four planets, Mercury, Venus, Mars and Saturn were reliable companions each night. A highlight was seeing the rings of Saturn through Harry's (expert navigator) telescope. Trekking through the skies we found the constellations of Scorpius, Sagittarius

(The Tea Pot), Lupus (The Dog), Libra and the Southern Cross and the really bright stars - Antares, Spica, Arcturus, Vega, Archenar and Regulus.

Ruth Barbour and her husband Colin, were there to share in their knowledge and to present her book **"Look at the Stars!"** This book is ideal for newcomers, taking you on a light-hearted but informative journey introducing the wonders of the night skies.

Annie Powell, Grade 2 teacher at Cowan House, organized her class to share in "Appreciation of the Night Skies" and to learn about the Universe. The playing field was the perfect venue and we even got to see the International Space Station fly over with six souls on board.



*Due to the enthusiasm shown for "Appreciation of the Night Skies" LEARNING THROUGH NATURE is sure to be doing these activities again next winter.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson once asked what we would do if the stars only came out once every thousand years. No one would sleep that night, of course!*

**LEARNING THROUGH NATURE** has been working with **WESSA's SustainEd** department in assessing portfolios of evidence for the Environmental Educators Course and the year long EETDP (Environmental Education Training and Development Programme) course as well as being a co-facilitator on the Enviro-Eds. course for 22 teachers from Eco-Schools in the KZN region sponsored by KZN Agriculture, Environment Affairs and Rural Development.

The **Pietermaritzburg Botanical Society** invited **LEARNING THROUGH NATURE** to present a talk on "Gardening with Children" at the Botanical Gardens. A large bed and many indigenous plants were made available for the children to plant after the talk.

*A garden stimulates curiosity, excites and educates and is a perfect way of spending quality time with ones children. It also takes us, adults, outside and away from the office, computer, car and chores.*

The **University of KZN (Education Department)** invited **LEARNING THROUGH NATURE** to expose students to outdoor learning and the role of natural habitats as a teaching tool. This was conducted in the Queen Elizabeth Park KZN Wildlife's park on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg.

**Learning through nature** – understanding the world around us and how we can learn to use resources wisely and develop a caring and positive attitude to our environment.

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## **For the agriculture, environment and tourism & hospitality sectors**

**Learning through Nature offers ...**

### **Enviro-learning programmes**

- **Exploring Ecosystems** – hands-on learning about and for local ecosystems, from forests and grasslands to rivers and wetlands
- **Greening your Business** – making your business sustainable and ethical
- **Train the Eco-Trainers** – supporting trainers in the environmental field to develop NQF-based training courses and materials and assessment of portfolios.

**CAREERS BY DESIGN** an executive search and career management company based in Pietermaritzburg wanted to learn more about greening their office and invited **LEARNING THROUGH NATURE** to teach them how to do this. The outcome of the workshop was to have a strategy for better environmental office management that all the staff could agree upon and implement every day and to inspired them to implement similar ideas in their homes as well. We used the Eco-Office kit to analyse the equipment used, paper, energy, and water consumption and the workplace in general in order to cut running costs of the office, create a quality workplace and in so doing reduce the environmental footprint by more sustainable practices.

*Many thanks to Rehenza le Roux,  
Pat Cahill, Prudence Stevens, Alison Kelly,  
Clare Peddie, Annie Powell and Pam Curtis  
for the photographs.*

**LEARNING THROUGH NATURE** has been advising Pam Curtis on a new three-part DVD series titled '**Nature Ways**'. This is a visual learning experience for the younger generation covering aspects of our natural heritage in South Africa. It can be enjoyed by the whole family, and allows children to see concepts taught in the Natural Science curriculum.

Volume One includes:

- Differences between various wild African animals
- Behaviour patterns of some familiar wildlife
- Wildlife habitats & habitat loss: streams, ponds, grasslands and forests.

Well researched, interesting footage and photography together with good, clear narration will make this DVD an enjoyable and beneficial learning tool for schools and homes alike.

'**Nature Ways**' Volume One will be available mid-October from CURTIS P.A. PRODUCTIONS. Contact [curtispa@polka.co.za](mailto:curtispa@polka.co.za) for further information.



Picture by Pam Curtis

Kind regards,

*Jeanette Stewart*

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