



02 February 2024

iSIMANGALISO CELEBRATING WETLANDS DAY



iSimangaliso Wetland Park joined the world in the celebration of Wetlands Day by spending the whole day exploring the wetlands of iSimangaliso with learners from Siyaqala High school. This is one of the high schools situated in the Mtubatuba area (South of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park). A total of 22 learners participated in the field excursion where they were taught about ecological, social, economic and cultural value of wetlands. Some of the ecosystem services from wetlands include protecting and improving water quality, providing fish and wildlife habitat. iSimangaliso Wetland Park is a World Heritage Site which is home to four Ramsar listed sites namely; St Lucia Lake, Lake Sibaya, Mgobozeleni and Kosi Bay Lakes. Thus, raising awareness through celebrating environmental calendar days is important at a local, regional and international level.

iSimangaliso celebrated the Wetlands Day under the theme “**Wetlands and human wellbeing**”, focuses mainly on the interconnection between wetlands and human wellbeing, highlighting the urgent need to prioritize the restoration of these ecosystems around the world”. Learners were collected from the school using

iSimangaliso Environmental Education bus. They explored the park with iSimangaliso's Environmental Education team who took their time to expose learners to the interesting facts around the ecological, social, cultural and economic value of wetlands but also highlighted some conservation threats facing wetlands. Conservation threats highlighted include gill netting, littering, fishing without permit, invasive plants and developmental activities.



Learners visited Catalina Bay, Mission Rocks and Mziki look out point which gives a better view of the St Lucia estuarine lake which is one of the Ramsar listed sites within the iSimangaliso Wetland Park. They ended their excursion at the St Lucia estuary mouth where iSimangaliso's Park Ecologist Dr. Riaan Cedras did an interesting scientific presentation on the functioning of system. He took his time to explain the ecological value of the system and what it means when scientists talk about closing and opening of the mouth. Dr. Cedras also touched on the role played by four major fresh water catchments supplying fresh water into the system. The human wellbeing depends much more in nature; the interconnection between the two can have a significant impact and also restore the other degraded wetlands.

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Statement issued by iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority

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