

PengWin Trax engages youth with oceans

PengWin Trax is an inter-university and public competition where real life local penguins will be thrust into the limelight as the unsuspecting stars of an ocean competition in celebration of National Marine Week. The week-long competition kicked off on Monday, 6 October 2014.



Developed by GreenMatter in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Affairs, CapeNature and BirdLife South Africa, participating university students will have the opportunity to compete for badges, points and prizes all while learning about the oceans.

GreenMatter, the national network supporting the development of biodiversity skills in South Africa, aims to create awareness of the importance of the southern oceans and the people that work to protect it, utilising the endangered African Penguin as the early warning mechanism for our marine environment.

Critical role

"Our oceans play a critical role in job creation, improving livelihoods, and contributing towards economic and social welfare in our country and beyond our borders. Not only are South Africa's coastal ecosystems under serious threat, but they are also the most poorly protected of all our ecosystems, whilst providing important functions for us all," comments Chantal Ramcharan-Kotze, head of Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement at GreenMatter.

"Compounding the problem is the skills deficit within the biodiversity sector. Educating and engaging youth on threats and opportunities across disciplines, as well as demonstrating the capacity they have to make a meaningful contribution by opting for a rewarding career working for biodiversity, is a top priority for GreenMatter," says Ramcharan-Kotze.

Students will compete as individuals as well as part of their university team. Working together to bring the penguin's persona to life, teams will then be required to predict its daily progress based on a range of environmental and human factors. By utilising intrinsic rewards, such as badges and points, and extrinsic rewards such as prizes, teams and individual participants will be motivated to learn and have fun. In addition, a penguin profile has also been created for

members of the public to participate alongside university students.

Developing knowledge base

"CapeNature is proud of South Africa's natural assets, especially our marine protected areas which aim to conserve marine life and promote the conservation of our ocean space directly and indirectly," says Pierre de Villiers, head of CapeNature's Marine Programme. "These are examples of successful collaborations between civil society, communities and government departments, committed to protecting our natural resources.

"Being part of the GreenMatter network, allows us to contribute towards the development of the knowledge base that forms the foundation for protecting our marine resources. We are excited to be a part of PengWin Trax enabling youth to engage positively and learn through the process."

CapeNature is looking to host a postgraduate marine intern in 2015 as part of their contribution towards developing South Africa's GreenMatter, and call upon members of the public and business to support the costs by contributing towards hosting a graduate and providing him/her with the necessary learning and job readiness opportunities.

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