Nature's Valley Trust

In Support of Conservation

CONSERVATION

portfolio

About

The Nature's Valley Trust (NVT) is a registered section 18A non-profit organisation (PBO 930000123) and was established in 2001, driven initially by a group of concerned members of the Nature's Valley community. Their goal was to engage all stakeholders and to contribute proactively to conserving the ecological integrity of the Valley and the surrounding area.

Although the Trust is a small community-driven NPO, the organisation is working on the cutting edge of integrated conservation in South Africa. The organisation operates in four main arenas, namely conservation, conservation education (e.g. awareness and behavioural change), community engagement and research.

Over the past 21 years, the NVT has grown and evolved into a recognised, award-winning, effective and beneficial resource for the area with the following vision and mission:

Vision To be a catalytic conservation initiative that is inclusive and effective.

Mission Enabling an integrated stakeholder effort that is proactively involved in issues that impact the environmental resilience of the area

The NVT's Board of Trustees consists of experienced senior executives, some of whom are well-known experts in conservation and the business world. The Board maintains high levels of governance and financial management and supports the Programme Director who works with the three fulltime Project Managers, volunteers and interns on the various thematic programmes and projects. The NVT also subscribes to the Inyathelo NPO Code of Governance.

Over the past 21 years, the NVT has:

- Contributed to the Plett Hope Spot programme (launched by the Sustainable Seas Trust).
- Developed and implemented several research projects in collaboration with SANParks (South African National Parks) and several national and international universities;
- Developed and maintained mutually beneficial relationships with an extended network of stakeholders and agencies on a local, provincial and national level;
- Engaged with local stakeholders and implemented community benefitting projects;
- Established an award-winning environmental education programme and catalysed the Bitou Environmental Education Forum - a platform for cooperative

school-based environmental education programmes in the region;
- Facilitated the registration of the Nature's Valley Urban Conservancy;
- Actively participated in the Garden Route Initiative, a landscape initiative which led to the application to UNESCO for the recognition of the Garden Route Biosphere Reserve; and,
- Worked on the expansion of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (as initiated by BirdLife South Africa).

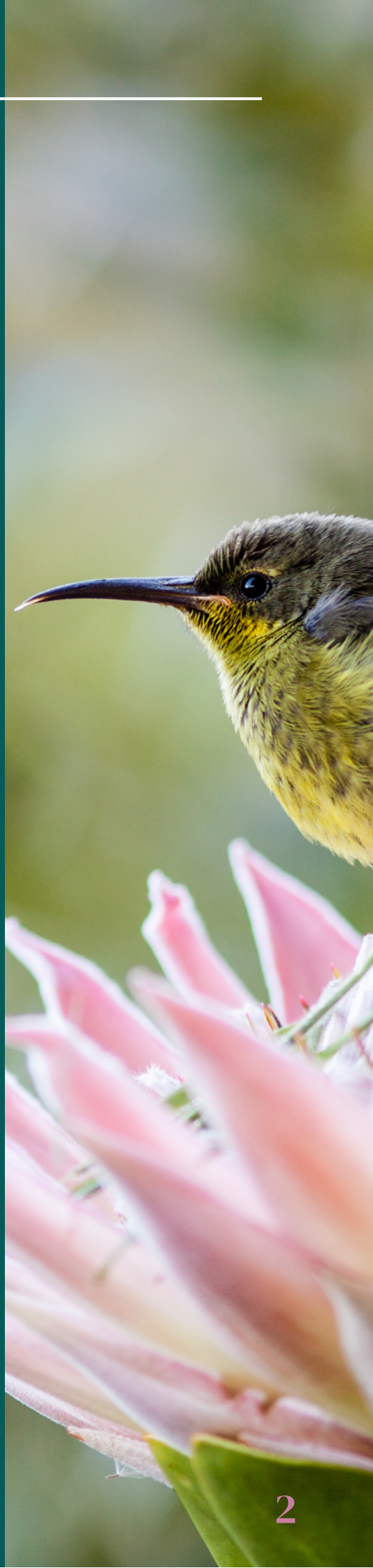
NVT has and still continues to provide integrated research capacity and technical support to local, regional and national conservation initiatives that are working to facilitate conservation and sustainable development along the Garden Route. Through this, sustainability challenges are identified jointly, and integrated needs-driven research is co-designed across six core thematic areas (fynbos, rivers and estuaries, coastal, marine, urban and forests). This research combines:

- Well-designed social and ecological research projects;
- The skills, credibility and networks built over 21 years; and,
- A network of skilled stakeholders who facilitate programmes.

In addition, the NVT has a reputation for ensuring that development occurring in the area is done ethically, legally, and responsibly. To this end, the Trust is also involved in the ongoing management and protection of municipal open spaces in Nature's Valley and can rightfully pride itself in playing a minor but consistently effective role in ensuring that Nature's Valley remains a tranquil haven for residents, holiday makers, the broader community and wild inhabitants.

As an organisation, the Trust also enjoy representation on several forums including the Nature's Valley Urban Conservancy Committee, the Nature's Valley Baboon Management Forum, the Groot River Estuary Steering Committee, the Tsitsikamma Area Park Forum, the Tsitsikamma Conservation Forum, the Plettenberg Bay Community Environmental Forum, the Garden Route Conservancy Forum, BirdLife Plettenberg Bay, and the Bitou Environmental Education Forum.

Finally, the NVT supports and guides action on the ground with innovative and simple solutions to problems that affect all.



21 years of Impact

For 21 years the NVT has been playing a frontline role, working on behalf of our community to ensure we secure the environmental integrity of Natures Valley for future generations... Here are some highlights!

1 Over 50 000 learners are better informed

> The NVT with their range of holistic school and community-based education and awareness programmes, is perfectly positioned to lead a process of further developing environmental knowledge and aware citizens in the greater Garden Route area - Wildlife Society of Southern Africa (WESSA)



2

NVT has *mentored +90 young professionals* from South Africa and across the world, contributing to a new generation of young conservationists.



> **Elizabeth Choi -** *In being exposed to everything I could have possibly imagined - from internal office research to external field work, I was able to fill my internship months with an in-depth reality of what "working for conservation" truly meant.*

> **Ri Galway -** *I left a boy and came back a man - Natures Valley Trust is not just an organisation, but an embodiment of hard work and dedication that can only be created by the kind of people that reside within its local community.*

3 Dogs are legally allowed on beaches.

As a result of NVT's research into the impact of dogs on beach-breeding birds, the beaches were zoned to officially allow dogs off-leash on certain stretches of beach all the way from Robberg to Nature's Valley.



> *The NVT provides a living example of how science can inform policy and lead to implementation and actual impacts on the ground.* **WESSA**

4

From *15% - 36%* breeding success on Nature's Valley beach for the White-fronted Plover.



5

Over *230 Fynbos flowering plant species* recorded and monitored for the area.



6 Mobilising our community



Despite having only, a little over 400 ratepayers we were able to motivate 750 letters of objection to the selling off or rezoning of municipal erven and the Fynbos Reserve and Phyl Martin Park.

7 Blue Economy

NVT's research into the impact of boat-based whale and dolphin watching, as well as swimming-with-seals have shown a **R371 Million** annual contribution to the Plettenberg Bay economy. This research will ensure that the whales, dolphins and seals that these activities are centered around, are protected from exploitation.

Ecological & Social research

At the end of 2011, NVT made a bold move to become a major role player in conducting ecological research in the region. Since then, the NVT played a pivotal role in ecological research along the Garden Route which informs inclusive management of the local area and the greater Garden Route Biosphere Reserve.

The Trust's scientific staff runs long-term ecological monitoring projects that enable a better understanding of the environment and the different habitats, as well as the impact people have on them. The data collected from these research projects is fed directly to local conservation authorities, supporting them in their efforts to ensure the ecological integrity of the area and assisting in managing the sustainable use of the ecosystem services.

Research is also the main driver of the NVT's conservation programmes in the fynbos, local rivers and estuaries and along the coast. The development of a new forest programme is in an advanced stage. The efficient functioning of these natural systems is of primary concern in an area that is largely based on tourism and activities that impact on function.

Plans to develop and implement a new interdisciplinary social-ecological research and training platform in partnership with the North-West University are also in an advanced stage.



Research & Conservation programmes

Fynbos

This programme includes a wide range of ecological research studies to better understand the ecosystem functioning of the biome and provide valuable insights to improve management practices of the area and safeguarding natural resources for sustainable use.

Marine & Coastal

These programmes consists of several long-term research projects that investigate anthropogenic impacts on coastal environments and wildlife.

Rivers & Estuaries

These programmes aim to incorporate an ecosystems approach and catchment-wide study in the exploration of the unique biodiversity assemblages that rely on the system as well as the various levels of anthropogenic impacts that have bearing on the health of the system.

Behavioural Change

These programmes aim to encourage learners and learning institutions to be more environmentally aware and sustainable through our curriculum-based initiatives and outdoor classes. The Trust works alongside local communities to create and improve livelihoods and surroundings through creative conservation initiatives.

Urban

This programme aims to support good urban planning and the conservation of green spaces within urban environments to enable co-existence of humans and biodiversity.

Forest

This programme is aimed at researching, conserving and restoring Southern Cape Afrotemperate Forests in the Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park.



Marine & Coastal programme

Nestled on either side of Nature's Valley and Plettenberg Bay are two marine protected areas, signifying the high ecological importance of marine biodiversity in the area. At the same time, the region is used extensively for tourism, and recreational fishing is a popular leisure activity. With growing tourism numbers, conflict with coastal biodiversity is bound to happen. The NVT research team runs several important research projects to enable a better understanding of tourism's impact on coastal ecosystems. This understanding allows better management to ensure responsible use and long-term availability of these resources for all. Supporting this, the NVT conservation education team designs and implements high-profile intervention and awareness projects to inform visitors of the rich biodiversity found on the beaches and how we can all #ShareTheShores.

Past and current projects include:

- Anthropogenic disturbance of shore breeding birds
- Marine debris and the impact thereof on our coastline
- The impacts of fishing on nearshore linefish stock
- Sustainable marine tourism
- Penguin rewilding

Future priority projects identified as part of the NVT's coastal programme:

- Human pressure and storm-surge impacts on the dune system
- Assessment and mitigation of poaching and illegal harvesting
- Beach access for disabled persons



Estuaries & Rivers programme



Given that South Africa is an arid country with an average rainfall far below the global average, the level of freshwater supply to water systems such as rivers and estuaries is low. These systems, though, are known as biodiversity hotspots with estuaries, in particular, providing important habitats for many species, particularly fish, and supporting a number of estuarine dependent endemic species. However, given their importance for society, these systems are also subject to intense human pressure. When combined with the impacts of climate change, this scenario is bound to cause a decline in water quality.

The NVT conducts regular “health” assessments of the Groot River and its estuary within the Tsitsikamma section of the Garden Route National Park. This not only involves sampling to assess water quality by way of standardised methods but also assessing mainly fish and bird species with a view to informing management plans for the area.

Recognising this, the Cape Estuaries Programme, a provincial government initiative, is working with local authorities, government organisations, non-government organisations and civil society to establish estuary management forums in the province. To this end, the NVT is a key partner in the establishment of the Salt River and Groot River Estuary Forum.

Both the Salt River (west of Nature’s Valley) and Groot River (east of Nature’s Valley) are considered to be of high importance. The Salt River is home to several yet unnamed freshwater invertebrate species which have been a subject of research in collaboration with Rhodes University, while the Groot River is one of the most pristine systems in the province and is home to two near-threatened and endemic fish species (Eastern Cape Redfin and the Cape Kurper). A new source-to-sea project is currently being planned and will be implemented soon.

Fynbos programme

The Cape Floristic Region (CFR) is an ecosystem unique to South Africa. It is recognised as one of the six floral kingdoms of the world and, given its biodiversity and potential high level of endism, has been registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. As a major tourist attraction, the CFR contributes significantly to the economy of South Africa, and many communities surrounding the CFR depend on this income. In addition, quite a number of fynbos species are used by local communities for medicinal purposes – a practise that goes hand-in-hand with a wealth of traditional knowledge in itself unique to these communities. To help safeguard this treasure, the NVT contributes significantly to research on and creating community awareness around southern Cape fynbos.





Forest programme

NVT staff are currently in the process of establishing a forest programme aimed at conserving, restoring and expanding Southern Cape Afrotemperate Forests in the Tsitsikamma section of the GRNP (between the Robberg Nature Reserve and the Storms River). This programme, headed by the Trust's director, will involve basic research and interventions aimed at understanding anthropogenic threats to the forest inside and outside protected areas (forest baseline project), establishing a long-term forest mammal and bird monitoring project, conserving the remaining forest via targeted interventions (forest stewardship project), and expanding the forest by linking fragmented parts of the larger complex (forest restoration/expansion project).

Urban programme

NVT supports and guides action on the ground with innovative and simple solutions to problems that affect all. Additionally, it bridges the gap between urban communities, government structures and formally protected areas. One of NVT's key goals is the integration of conservation education and community involvement as a key priority for all its projects. The organisation recognises the need for complex conservation issues to be inclusive, taking positive and proactive approaches to include communities in seeking solutions to the impact they have on local biodiversity.

Good urban planning and the conservation of green spaces within urban environments can enable humans and biodiversity to co-exist. Furthermore, by cultivating a more ecocentric mindset in young and old, we can ensure that important vegetation types and the wildlife that inhabit them are safeguarded while, simultaneously, enhancing our sense of place and well-being. However, every now and then humans come into conflict with local wildlife or has an adverse effect on local wildlife. In such cases these threats have to be mitigated.

Projects include:

- Revitalising open spaces
- Re-establishing indigenous nursery
- Bushbuck research surveys
- Baboon management
- Rescue network: terrestrial and marine/coastal
- Citizen science buzzard project



Behavioural change programme

The NVT has a strong focus on instilling environmental awareness in local youth to ensure sustainable and equitable utilisation of natural resources for future generations. There is an extensive education programme that addresses many topics of environmental concern. These are focused on the coastal environment, rivers from source to sink (recognising the value of key ecosystems services and the importance of clean water), as well as the biomes that fall within the GRBR. This programme also extends into society with greening events, clean-ups and relevant stakeholder training to develop and support local communities.

Community impact

Over the years, the NVT successfully completed a number of social-environmental community engagement projects in the two communities that are closest to it: Kurland and Covie. Many of these initiatives are ongoing and are showing signs of sustainability.

- Kurland Gardening Club
- Kurland greening
- Kurland and Plettenberg Bay clean-up
- Covie Hiking Trail
- Covie Fishing Club
- Skills training workshops

Conservation Education & Awareness

The NVT uses curriculum-based initiatives to reach over 4 000 learners each year, making this one of the biggest environmental education initiatives in the Western and Eastern Cape. The Trust believes in investing in both the current and the next generation, equipping them to understand why conservation should be an integral part of how they live their lives.

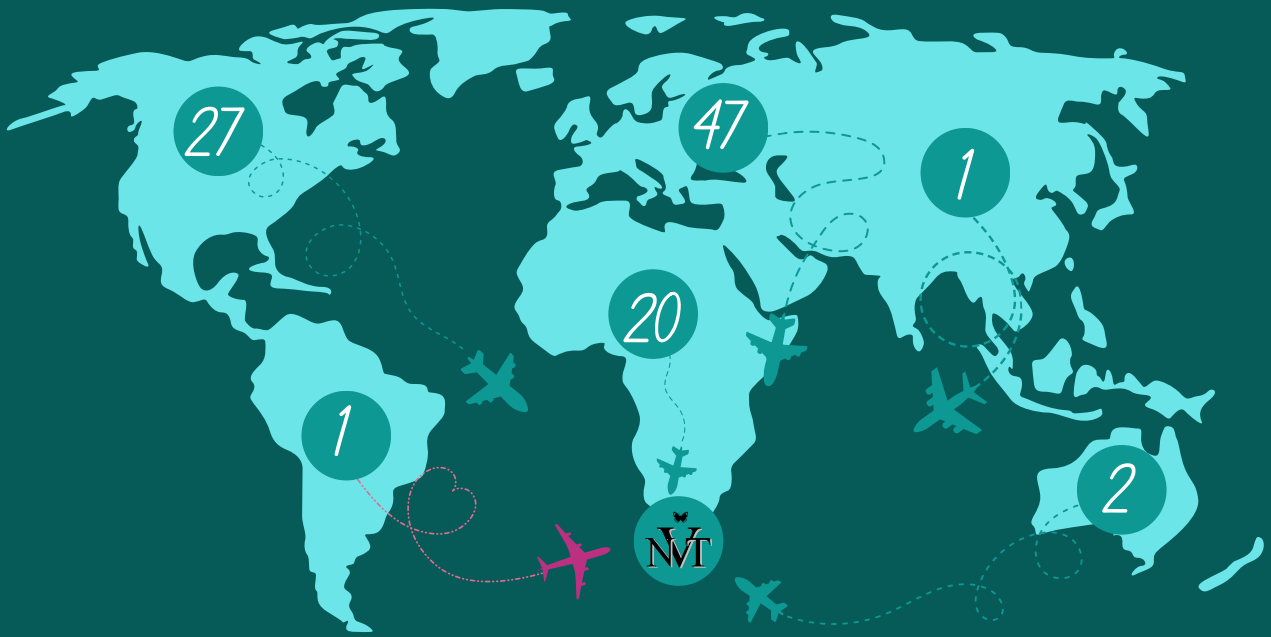
- Abopt-A-Beach
- Adopt-A-River
- Birding Connect
- Outdoor Classrooms
- WESSA Eco-schools



Volunteer-internship programme

The NVT runs a volunteer-internship programme to upskill international students who understand the importance of comprehensive experience in the increasingly competitive job environment. To date, the organisation has hosted more than 97 international students from 19 different countries attending universities such as Duke (USA); ZHAW (Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften, Switzerland); York (Canada & UK); Aeres (Netherlands); Coventry (UK); Jean Monnet (France); Northwestern (USA) East Anglia (Norwich, UK), etc.

Our volunteer-interns spend a minimum of six weeks with the organisation. They participate in all aspects of the Trust, from conservation and research to environmental education and community engagement, but they are also responsible for their own specific project. While with NVT, interns gain valuable skills, resumé-quality work experience, and a passion for hands-on integrated conservation work.



Key Partners

Through the years, the NVT has developed and maintained mutually beneficial relationships, collaborations and partnerships with a network of stakeholders and agencies on a local, regional, provincial, national and international level:

International

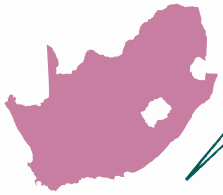
BirdLife Australia
Cousine Island, Seychelles
Global Vision International
Van Hall Larenstein
Wader Quest
Wildlands Studies
Working Abroad
York University

Regional



Breede-Gouritz Catchment Management Area
Dyer Island Conservation Trust
Eden District Municipality
Garden Route Biosphere Reserve
Garden Route Interface and Networking
Garden Route National Park
Lower Breede River Conservancy
Sustainable Seas Trust

National



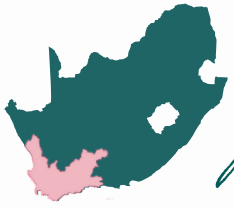
BirdLife South Africa
Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment
Department of Water and Sanitation
Plastics SA
South African National Parks (SANParks)
Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa
WWF-SA

Municipal



BirdLife Plettenberg Bay
Bitou Municipality
CapeNature
Eco Atlas
Ingwe
Keep Plett Clean
Keurbooms Property Owners' Association
Local schools
Lunchbox Theatre
Nature's Valley Ratepayers' Association
Ocean Safaris
Offshore Adventures
ORCA Foundation
Plett Community Environmental Forum
Plett Tourism
Raptors Rescue Plettenberg Bay
Renew Able Plett
Tenikwa Wildlife and Rehabilitation Centre
Tsitsi-Tuiniers Garden Club
Willing Workers in South Africa

Provincial



Cape Estuaries Programme
CapeNature
Greenpop
Nelson Mandela University
University of Cape Town
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Western Cape Government

Partner with us

Assist us in our endeavours towards a greener, more sustainable future through building eco-centric mindsets in our children and conserving our environment for future generations.

Connect with us

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Donate here

Donations are tax deductible

Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)

Account name: Nature's Valley Trust

Bank Name: Standard Bank

Account number: 001913859

Branch Code: 051001

SWIFT: SBZAZAJJ

