

Monthly Newsletter



Highlight of the month

A very special sighting was had this month by our researcher, Melissa Nel – the endangered Knysna Seahorse carrying eggs in the Keurbooms estuary. The Knysna Seahorse (*Hippocampus capensis*) is endemic to Southern Africa and is only found in 3 estuaries around in the world – and guess what – the Keurbooms is one of them! The limited range of this species indeed puts it at risk of extinction and makes keeping the Keurbooms estuary clean & healthy of utmost importance. We are happy to say that seeing this seahorse in our estuary has become a common sight and the population seems to be thriving.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY @MELMAKESWAVES



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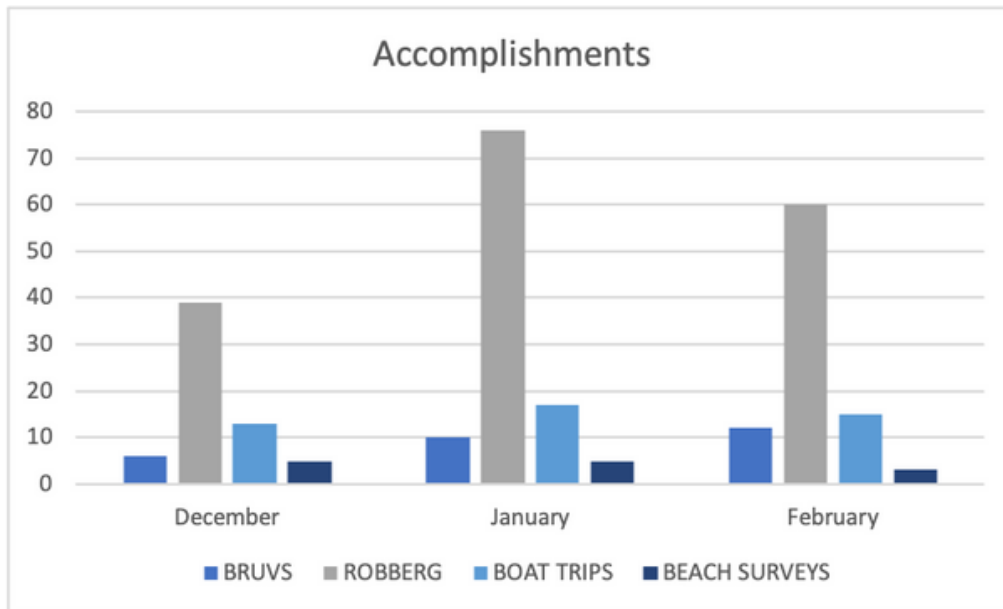


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A quick catch-up



We might've been quiet for the past few months, but that doesn't mean we haven't been busy. Here is what we have been up to the past couple months, in between rescuing seal pups & snorkelling with smooth hound sharks!



Twice a week we head down to the **Keurbooms** estuary to deploy a camera system (called a Baited Remote Underwater Video System or BRUVS for short). This camera system records all of the underwater species that pass in front of the camera field-of-view. We then screen the collected video footage for the presence of sharks and rays. In February we managed to deploy 13 BRUVs and are still in process of going through the hours of footage and counting all the stingrays.

Between December end of February our volunteers have spent just over 225 dedicated hours doing observational sessions from nine cliff-top monitoring sites located along the Robberg Peninsula hiking trail. A total of 66 shark sightings were made. Shark species included Bronze whalers & Hammerheads.



*A shiver of Bronze
Whaler sharks cruising
along Robberg Peninsula*



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We managed to conduct 40 opportunistic surveys with Ocean Blue Adventures to collect data on the cetaceans and marine life of Plettenberg Bay. During this quarter we had 55 cetacean sightings. The sightings were dominated by the Bottlenose dolphin.



On the 26th of February the first turtle hatchling of the season was found in Plett by Rudi Visser. During the months of February until May it is not uncommon to see baby turtles washing up along our coastline. If you are a regular beach goer, we urge you to please keep a look out for any live or deceased hatchlings and if found to please contact the ORCA Foundation on +27823362979 or the Plett Stranding Network Hotline on +27794634837.

PRO TIP: If you see a turtle on the shore – it needs help! Sea turtles are deigned to live in the ocean & the only time they come ashore is to lay eggs or if it is in need of help. Please never return a turtle to the ocean, you will only be doing more harm.



Our volunteers also conducted 15 beach surveys along Plettenberg Bays coastline, the most popular beaches being Robberg beach, Lookout & Salt River. During these surveys we do a beach clean, count shark egg cases and keep a lookout & record any marine strandings.

