

Grasping environmental knowledge at Umkhumbane and Lynford schools using attitude surveys.

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Frogs are very threatened but do not get the attention they should be getting. We often ignore the fact that they play a huge role in our freshwater systems and in the food chain. The Pickersgill's Reed Frog is highly threatened by human activities, including encroachment of alien vegetation. A lot of research is being done to conserve this species and its wetland habitat, be it by genetic sampling and monitoring to wetland health assessments. Scientific research is not the only way to conserve a species, education and awareness is also very important. The Endangered Wildlife Trust's Threatened Amphibian Programme (TAP) is working with Martha Bishai, the director of the Umkhumbane Schools Project to engage learners on the importance of wetlands and amphibians using attitude surveys.

We have been engaging two schools in Cator Manor namely, Chesterville Secondary and Wiggins Secondary. The purpose of the engagement is to get an idea of the learners' level of environmental knowledge, focusing on frogs and wetlands. To date we have conducted surveys for grade 8 and grade 11 learners in both schools. The total number of learners that have participated is 93 from Wiggins and 90 from Chesterville. The process involves a before and after assessment whereby learners are given a pre-questionnaire to answer without us engaging them about environmental issues. We then go back to the learners the following week to engage with them, showing them frogs in the classroom and actually taking them out on a wetland trip. We then conduct follow-up questionnaires to find out if their attitudes have changed at all towards frogs and wetlands after the interventions and hands-on learning experiences. This work is very interesting because we also find out different stories from different families, which helps us understand why people behave in a certain way towards an animal.

