



### HELPING HAND

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SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITY UPLIFTMENT.

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# Empowering young people

Writer & Photographer  
**Taylum Meyer**

The Volmoed Youth Leadership Training Programme (VYLTP) is a ecumenical initiative which was launched at Volmoed in 2016 by Prof. John de Gruchy and Rev. Edwin Arrison. Over the years the programme, which is aimed at nurturing and developing young leaders, has brought together young adults at Volmoed's Retreat and Conference Centre in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley.

In September 2022 the VYLTP, with the help of Bevil Spence of Drumba, introduced the Volmoed Drumming Project. Bevil has been a drummer, drum maker and drum circle facilitator for more than 20 years and is passionate about traditional drums and how they can be used in a modern, educational and therapeutic setting. Drumming has a positive effect on anxiety, grief, depression and behavioural issues. It can help people express themselves and get in touch with their emotional state. Community drumming also has the ability to break down barriers between people and dissolve social hierarchies.

At the start of the project, Don Shay and Wilma Jakobsen paid for a drumming lesson and in the process subsidised the training for young people in Zwelihle and Mount Pleasant. The project received further support from St Peter's Church in Hermanus who



**LEFT: Some of the youth that are part of the Volmoed Drumming Project include (from left) Zikhona Magxukwana, Thapelo Ponoane, Ayabonga Mgqolozana, Arone Swart, Tsepiso Ponoane, Sithandiwe Mali, Jayradene Geduld, Lucia Mkhwenkwe and project manager Siyabonga Vonco. RIGHT: Siyabonga arranges pieces of wood to begin the construction of the next drum.**

made space available for the group to practise. Other supporters include the Church of Christ in Zwelihle and La Pentola Restaurant.

In May 2023, an excited group of 13 young adults (18 – 35 years old) from the VYLTP began making their own drums at the All Saints Anglican Church in Zwelihle thanks to training from Bevil. Skilled carpenter Siyabonga Vonco, who was part of the first group to join VYLTP in 2016, has since taken over the management of the project with Bevil always ready to help when needed.

The drums they make are a design cre-

ated by Bevil, which he calls gashiku drums. They are made from 18 pieces of wood from pallets, goat skin, and rope. It can take more than a week to complete one, depending on the size of the drum (45 cm / 55 cm / 65 cm) and how long the goat skin takes to dry.

While most other drums, like the djembe drum, need to be tilted forward so that the bottom is open (air needs to move in and out to allow the notes to ring), Bevil's gashiku drum can stand upright on the floor. This is thanks to several holes that are drilled around the drum which allow the movement of air.



The 18 pieces of wood are cut from the pallets, glued together and held in place with straps until they are dry. Holes are then drilled into the wood (18 at the top and 6 at the bottom) before it is passed on for sanding. Once the wood is nice and smooth, it is varnished and the goat skin and rope is added (the tighter the goat skin the better the sound). Once dry, a rope handle is added to the drum to allow for easy carrying, and in some cases, the drum is painted.

The drum making group, which now has 14 members, meets every Monday, Tuesday and Friday and has already sold four drums: three to clients in the

USA and one to a client in France. They also recently got their first local order from Lukhanyo Primary School for two drums, which have been painted with the school's name (they offer custom paint jobs on the drums). Every drum that they complete is carefully quality checked to make sure that they are all of the same high standard.

When they take a break from drum making, they make time to drum together. Siyabonga says, "Drumming and drum making has created a way for us to reach out to other communities and to build new relationships. It is therapeutic and becomes a kind of support group where we check in on one another."

VYLTP would like to thank La Pentola, Ocean Basket and Harbour Rock Restaurant for the meals they have been donating for the group. They would also like to thank Tolbos for the pallets that they donated.

If you would like to support the Volmoed Drumming Project, they are in need of more food donations, pallets or wood, a table saw, and an electric sander (at the moment all the drums are being sanded by hand).

**If you would like to purchase/order a drum, or if you would like to make a donation, you can contact Rev. Arrison on [edwin@volmoedyouth.org.za](mailto:edwin@volmoedyouth.org.za), or Siyabonga on [siyabonga.vonco@gmail.com](mailto:siyabonga.vonco@gmail.com).**

# Help the African penguin

Writer & Photographer  
**Tweet Gainsborough-Waring**

The recent spate of bad weather has taken its toll not only on Overstrand-ers, but also on our feathered friends, the African penguins at Stony Point Nature Reserve in Betty's Bay. After exceptionally heavy rains, 144 chicks and 44 eggs were rescued from their flooded nests.

Some were stabilised at the Stony Point ICU before being transferred to the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) Table View Centre for further care and rehabilitation. The rescue operation took place between 25 May and 3 June, with patrols being done on a daily basis. The chicks were transferred in 'penguin boxes' and the eggs in mobile incubators to SANCCOB's rehabilitation facility. The chicks will remain at SANCCOB until they are fledged and ready to go to sea, which will vary according to age. Once ready for release, they will be

returned to the colony in which they were born.

Thus far the project has been a success, with only three chicks lost according to a Hermanus Bird Club (HBC) committee member. The HBC has been able to donate R3 000 to SANCCOB in support of this operation and is hoping the public will further boost the available resources by donating to SANCCOB to ensure its success.

Stony Point Nature Reserve and Boulders Beach in Simonstown are Southern Africa's oldest land-based African Penguin colonies. Interestingly, both sites were previously whaling stations. Other colonies include Dassen Island, Robben Island and Dyer Island.

A pilot project driven by BirdLife South Africa, in collaboration with Cape Nature and SANCCOB, was started in 2021 to reintroduce penguins to an abandoned colony in De

Hoop Nature Reserve, where over 140 juveniles have been released by SANCCOB since 2021.

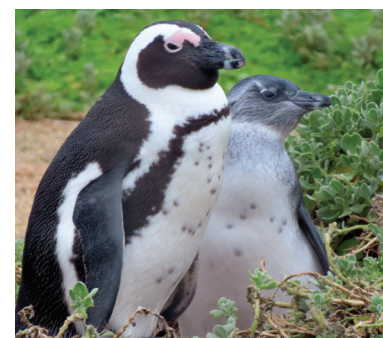
Last year in June, three adult penguins were found roosting at the site. These birds had arrived spontaneously and were not any of the released birds. It is hoped they will form the nucleus of the new colony.

The African penguin is endemic to the coast of Southern Africa and is not found anywhere else. It is currently endangered and because of this, it has become necessary for human intervention to prevent a further decline in numbers.

At present there are only 10 000 breeding pairs left in South Africa, of which (at the last official count) 1 565 pairs were located at Stony Point. African penguins pair for life unless breeding fails, in which case they will look for another partner. Breeding is usually between March and May, with a pair producing



**LEFT: African penguins are monogamous and mate for life. BELOW LEFT: Hands-on penguin parenting. BELOW: A pair of African penguin chicks. PHOTO: Michael Kokot**



two chicks. The main threats which they face are the lack of food from overfishing and predators. Predators include seals, mongoose, and Kelp gulls, which go for the eggs. At the Stony Point colony, numbers of penguins and their chicks and eggs are monitored, and injured penguins are treated at the on-site ICU.

Anyone wishing to donate to this rescue operation can donate to: **SANCCOB FNB (Branch 203809) Acc No: 5923 7135 859**

Alternatively, visit [www.sanccob.co.za/donate/](http://www.sanccob.co.za/donate/) for alternative payment methods.

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