



The Oceans Research team doing their part to conserve the sharks in our waters and thus ensuring a healthy and viable marine ecosystem. Here are Enrico Gennari (Italy), Rob Lewis (New Zealand), Kimberley Lowe (Scotland), Dylan Irion (United States), Ryan Johnson (New Zealand), Katie Cummings (United States), Beverly Oh (Singapore) and David Edwards (England).



Oceans Research team members chatting to one of their guests.

Oceans Research deepens community roots

■ Melissa Hills

"Efforts to conserve sharks and South Africa's marine life is an uphill battle. Our clients are the sharks and usually do not pay well, resources are limited and the South African government often has bigger societal worries to spend much time worrying about the plight of sharks," explained Ryan Johnson of Oceans Research, also known as "the shark guys" by locals at recent networking evening held in Mossel Bay with the aim at developing deeper roots with the Mossel Bay community.

The Oceans team discussed the type of work the marine ecosystem are doing for Mossel Bay and the world at large - this work includes whale and dolphin survey projects around the bay hoping to address behavioural patterns, species interactions and migration paths throughout the bay.

"Our work with sharks includes, population dynamics and residency numbers of White Sharks within the bay; a dorsal fin photo identification database of sharks and thermo-physio ecology of White Sharks.

There is a lot of working being done and so much more that we could be doing."

Ryan went on to explain how vital the support from the Mossel Bay community is for Oceans Research.

"With this effort Oceans is growing into something that has the capacity, infrastructure and expertise to ensure the conservation of sharks in our waters and thus ensures a healthy and viable marine ecosystem and we need the support of civil society - we need support from you."

"Often I feel disempowered, how can I as one person do something to help and what difference can I make? I can click support

on all the causes on Facebook, but is this really making a difference, other than making me feel good about myself? I don't know the answer, but I do know there are ways that everyone of us can make a contribution that will benefit our sharks and marine ecosystems and we all can start today by looking in our back yard - Mossel Bay."

Thus far Oceans Research has played a major role in giving back to the community of Mossel Bay.

"With our *Meet the Sharks Programme* we have educated 2 500 students, in 69 schools - many from the Garden Route but stretching out to Johannesburg and Namibia. We also work with local orphanages through which Oceans Aware are reaching out to the children through beach cleanup days, organizing football matches and other fun

activities. Beyond Blue is our online magazine which is a fantastic tool used to reach out to all people interested in the ocean and conservation. Beyond Blue receives visitors from over 159 countries in 6 of the 7 continents. Our readership is over 3 000 and we are really looking to expand our audience even further through innovative articles, journals and photography," says Katie Cummings of the Oceans Research team.

"We also assist with local research based material for operations like the fin fish farm and the desalination plant that is being built in our bay."

Oceans Research is here to educate and inform the Mossel Bay community but need their support to do what they do best. For more information, contact Katie Cummings on 044 690 5799.