

The forgotten heroes of The Miroshga

JOHN HARVEY

Five-and-a-half years after the sinking of the whale-watching charter boat The Miroshga near Duiker Island, some of the poachers who assisted in the rescue operation believe their role in the effort has been “forgotten”.

The Miroshga was returning to the harbour on October 13, 2012 when it capsized. Two people were killed, including crew member and Hout Bay resident John Roberts, who had offered his own life jacket so that someone else might be saved.

UK tourist Peter Hyett also died in the tragedy.

However, 37 tourists were rescued, thanks in large part to the efforts of nine abalone poachers who suspended their fishing to aid the stricken passengers.

These men, Alfonso Wichman, Denton Davids, Fabian Fray, John Knowles, Kyle Cairns, Lincoln Theunissen, Monray Isaacs,

Reemo Raats and Stachleigh van Rooyen, received a “Director’s Thanks” from the NSRI later in 2012.

Mr Davids and Mr Wichtman recently became qualified commercial divers (class 3) thanks to the involvement of Guerrini Marine Construction (GMC) and Gordon’s Bay-based dive school Jack’s Dive Chest in the salvage operation in Hout Bay harbour (“Magnificent seven almost done salvaging,” Sentinel, February 16).

Mr Davids hopes that the other seven divers who assisted in The Miroshga rescue will receive greater recognition so that they can follow in his and Mr Wichtman’s footsteps.

On the day the vessel capsized, Hangberg resident Angelo Joseph, who has acted as contractor for GMC, was acting as a lookout for the poachers.

“I was on the mountain, and I saw a boat had capsized in the water. I radioed to our guys on the



boats to tell them what was happening. When they approached the capsized boat they saw there were bodies lying in the water,” he said.

“Immediately Alfonso told the guys that today they would not poach, as lives needed to be saved. They immediately got to work, and helped save about 90% of the people.”

Mr Davids added: “We would get them out the water and put them in our rubber duck, and then transported them to the Extravagance and the Nauticat (the first boat to come to the aid of the survivors).”

Mr Joseph said when it appeared that people had been rescued, the nine divers pointed out that there were still three

■ The nine men who rescued tourists from the capsized Miroshga are, John Knowles, Kyle Cairns, Fabian Fry, (obscured), Reemo Raatz, Alfonso Wichman, Lincoln Theunissen, Monray Isaacs, Stachleigh van Rooyen and Denton Davids.

passengers trapped in the hull of the boat.

However, they were unable to attend to these passengers themselves as they did not have the requisite diving mouthpieces to carry out the rescue, and the task was undertaken by SAPS divers instead.

“When everyone was rescued, our guys got a thank-you from the police, who also told them they wouldn’t pursue their illegal activities that day.”

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Know your water to conserve your water

This week our second study article for the 2018 Thrive EnviroQuiz competition, written by sustainability advocate **ANNABEL RYDER**, explores different “types” of water. Included are 10 questions that may be asked during the inter-schools quiz on Friday September 7.



turn the tap on and simply expect the water to flow? And how often do we “give thanks” for the water?

With the dam levels having fallen by almost two thirds, from some 94.4% in 2014 to just 36.2% in 2017 as measured on the same day, 20 November each year, we begin to see how dam replenishment rates have not recovered, due to poor rainfall during Cape winters of this multi-year drought. Hence, we still face the very real “Day Zero” situation, when the taps could be turned off.

So, let’s rethink water and our water collection system: how many of all those household water uses need the superior, SANS 241 drinking water? Do we really need to flush the toilet with drinking water? Should all “waste” water be treated the same and removed from properties through the sewerage system? This water crisis is inviting us all to better understand the different “grades” or types of water available for use and to question how many times water can be used before “throwing it away”. Remember, in nature, there is no “away”. Water flows continuously in different forms (as water, water vapour or ice/snow) and is constantly recycled as it flows from mountains via rivers to the sea, to then evaporate, cool, condense and make rain.

So, what can you do? Start thinking about what “type” of water is needed for each activity that requires water. Start collecting rainwater. Install a rain gauge. Put plastic containers in your sinks and showers and start re-using that water to bucket flush the toilets. Put a brick or a sand-filled plastic bottle in the toilet cistern to reduce the volume of water per flush. Find out about waterless toilet systems. In the next article, we will re-think water usage and collection systems, and look at living on 50 litres per person per day, with ways to reduce



■ The Cape Town Urban Water Cycle – source <http://resource.capetown.gov.za/documentcentre/Documents/>

this further to just 25 litres.

Become a Water Warrior (not a Worrier). Here’s how to know your water:

Potable water

Water from the City’s reticulation system, fit for drinking, to SANS 241 standard, compliant with the World Health Organisation’s water standards. SANS 241 is the South African National Standard for water quality required for personal health and hygiene where there is high contact and possibly ingestion such as cooking, drinking and washing food. Used potable water can be collected as grey water.

Non-potable water

Water that is not fit for drinking – “raw” fresh water that has not been treated to the SANS 241 standard and is not monitored. Typically, spring, borehole, well point water and harvested rainwater from roofs and gutters. Should not be used for personal health and hygiene.

Groundwater

Sub-surface water that provides a key role in the environment by replenishing low flowing rivers during dry periods, to keep them flowing. Accessed and harvested via springs, boreholes and well points. Not safe for drinking.

Surface water

Water from lakes, rivers and streams.

Grey water

Recycled “waste” water from shower, bath, basin, washing of linen, dishes, vegetables and fruit. Grey water can be filtered and cooled, for use in bucket flushing or to water gardens e.g. drip/sub surface irrigation in garden.

Grey water should not be sprayed, for health reasons and to reduce evaporation. Care needs to be taken as to the type of soaps, cleaning products and washing up liquids used, as these can harm the plants in the garden and affect groundwater. Grey water is not advised for use on vegetable, fruit or herb gardens, and should be used within 24 hours as it contains bacteria and organic materials.

Black water

Sewerage: water mixed with urine and/or faeces in toilet system which is removed from properties through the sewer drain.

Borehole / Well point water

Access to underground water that is drawn/ pumped to the surface,

used mainly for irrigation purposes, as it is of mixed quality, depending on soil and depth. Borehole/Well point water requires registration with the municipality to ensure that it is tested for pollution and is not over exploited, affecting long-term groundwater levels.

Rainwater

Rain diverted off roofs and gutters and caught in water storage containers, tanks or buckets, which can be stored in dark conditions. Most rainwater is channelled into stormwater drains which flows directly into lakes, rivers and eventually the sea. Such stormwater drains are separate from the sewer drain and it is illegal to connect or divert stormwater drains to the sewer drain.

Treated effluent

Recycled sewerage water, distributed via a separate network of pipes to high water users, that can be used “as is” for irrigation (e.g. golf courses and sports fields when not in use) and selective industrial purposes (e.g. construction sites), thereby conserving water supplies. It must not be used for drinking water.

Questions

1. What is SANS 241?
2. What is non potable water?
3. Name three possible sources of grey water that can be recycled for additional use.
4. What is black water?
5. Why must boreholes and well points be registered and metered?
6. By what percentage had the dam levels fallen between 20 November 2014 and the same date in 2017?
7. What is “Day Zero”?
8. Name three activities that do not require drinking water to SANS 241 standard.
9. Why is groundwater important?
10. Of all of Cape Town’s SANS 241 standard water used, what approximate percentage do permanent homes account for?

Answers on facing page