



# AFC TRIP TO THE WEST COAST FOSSIL PARK

6-7 May 2023



On the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> of May, the Archaeology Field Club embarked on an overnight fieldtrip to the West Coast Fossil Park. The trip was a great success, and the group had a lot of fun while learning about archaeology and the rich history of the area.



Upon arrival, Patricia gave us a brief history of the Park and Museum and then we went off on a self-guided tour of the museum. Afterwards, we did a microfossil sorting activity, where we sifted through bags of material excavated in the 1990s. The aim was to separate bone fragments, rocks, tiny snake vertebrae, and minute frog bones from the sediment. It was a delicate and challenging task that required patience and attention to detail. Overall, the microfossil sorting activity was a fascinating and informative experience that allowed the group to learn more about the rich biodiversity of the region and the importance of careful excavation and preservation of archaeological sites.



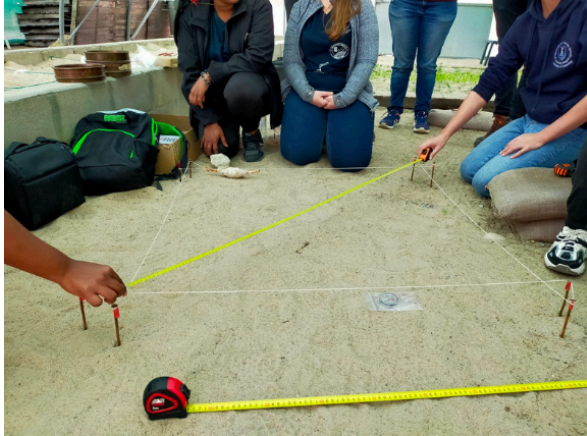


After lunch, the group had the opportunity to try their hand at making stone tools. Cuan, a member of the Archaeology Field Club, was particularly skilled in this area and helped the group to learn the basics of stone tool making. We then used the flakes to drill holes into ostrich eggshell to make beads. This required a lot of patience and concentration, but the group found it to be a fun and rewarding experience.





In the afternoon, Patricia walked the group through the steps needed to set up a 1 m x 1 m grid. We then participated in a mock dig exercise, where we used brushes and trowels to carefully excavate some buried toy animals and bones. We gained a better understanding of the excavation process and the techniques used to uncover and document archaeological finds.



We ended the day with a braai where we socialised and played games around the fire.





The next day, we were accompanied by a visiting group of students from Northwestern University on a tour of the dig site led by Patricia. We learnt about the history of the site and its excavation process and were fascinated by such a rich concentration of extinct megafauna remains.









We were then split into teams for an orienteering activity, during which we used a GPS and map to navigate around the Fossil Park. We moved from point to point, locating clues and solving archaeological puzzles. It provided a unique perspective on the Fossil Park, as we were able to explore areas that we may not have otherwise visited. It was a great team-building experience, and definitely the highlight of the trip.



After a quick lunch, we packed up and headed back to Cape Town.

The overnight field trip to the West Coast Fossil Park was a great experience for the Archaeology Field Club. The group had an enjoyable time while also gaining valuable insights into the practical side of archaeology and the history of the area. We are grateful to the West Coast Fossil Park for hosting us and providing us with such an enriching trip. It was a reminder of the importance of preserving and learning from our rich cultural heritage, and the group members left with a greater appreciation for the fascinating history of South Africa's West Coast region.



Feedback from members:

*I think the grid setup, mock dig and GPS exercises, especially because of Patricia's experience and knowledge, gave me lots of useful info and confidence for real-world fieldwork. I think it's important that real-world explanations and tips are given with these activities, because time constraints mean that the immersive and practical experience is limited. I found the microfossil sorting to be a good exercise for being attentive to detail. I really enjoyed the evening with the braai and was chuffed that Hesmari and Martina joined, I think it was cool to get to chat with them outside of their work.*

– Cuan Durler (2<sup>nd</sup> Year)

*The weekend away at the West Coast Fossil Park was a wonderful learning experience. Under Patricia's guidance, we gained valuable hands-on experience in archaeological fieldwork. I truly learnt a lot at this outing: from how to set up a grid, sort fossils, working in a dig site, to making roosterbrood and pap! Overall, the trip provided great learning opportunities, and it was a memorable experience.*

– Chieh-Ya Ho (3<sup>rd</sup> Year)