



Oceans Research scientist Enrico Gennari with a group of learners during a 'Meet the Sharks' programme.



Humans have decimated the population of sharks worldwide. The interactive programme at Mossel Bay offers learners the opportunity to learn about conservation.

'Meet the Sharks' school programme

Eskom and the DG Murray Trust have teamed up with the privately funded Mossel Bay Oceans Aware to increase awareness of the vital role of sharks in the marine environment.

"Education is important when trying to teach people about conservation," said Oceans Research scientist, Enrico Gennari.

"This is why we offer our 'Meet the Sharks' programme to use fun activities to inspire and motivate children from underprivileged schools. They can make a difference in the world by caring for our ocean and sharks in particular."

Gennari said sharks have inhabited the ocean for more than 400 million years. They now face their greatest threat from modern-day humans.

"Through misunderstanding and malice, we have decimated the population of sharks worldwide and brought them close to extinction," he said. "But through education and awareness we are motivating children to carry a message of conservation." The 'Meet the Sharks' programme is interactive. It encourages listening, learning, questioning and touching to inspire interest.

Each day-long programme begins with a

lecture that has been tailored to the ages of the children. It is delivered by an Oceans Research scientist. This is followed by a dissection to develop an understanding of the amazing characteristics of sharks.

A tour of the institute's shark lab and aquarium where sharks endemic to the region are kept, is also on the programme. Participants also enjoy a viewing of the National Geographic documentary, *Sharkville*, which was filmed in Mossel Bay by Oceans Research scientists.

The day ends with a visit to Seal Island with sponsors Romonza Boat Trips to look for Cape fur seals, dolphins, whales and

possibly even the great white sharks themselves.

The outing is supervised by scientists from Oceans Research.

"We want to reach as many schools in the Garden Route area as possible," said Gennari.

Mossel Bay tourism chief Marcia Holm said: "Thanks to Eskom and the DG Murray Trust, the programme is provided free of charge to local schools. It is an excellent example of how scientists and the tourism industry can work together."

Contact Kim Lowe on 044 690 for more information.