

# Understanding Our Ocean

*A Conversation with Damian Schreiber of Ocean Conservation Namibia*

*Eileen van der Schyff*

**Damian Schreiber, Marine Conservation Communications, Field and Research Officer of Ocean Conservation Namibia, spoke with Namib Times about the critical role the ocean plays globally and within Namibia.**

"Every human on this earth, living on the coast or hundreds of kilometres inland, is connected to the ocean," Schreiber said. "When we eat or simply breathe, the ocean serves an important purpose in our everyday lives. We tend to forget that we are not removed from nature, but a part of it, and as our ocean faces more and more threats, so do we. According to Schreiber, raising awareness about the ocean is essential to building a generation of "ocean-familiar" individuals. This means not only understanding the beauty and biodiversity of Namibia's 1 572-kilometre coastline but also recognising the threats it faces. "If we can spread increased knowledge about our oceans, we can create a new generation of ocean-familiar people who will understand how the ocean works," he explained. "By knowing key information about the ocean and our connection to it, we can share this important knowledge and help inspire smarter choices, both in how we behave and how we use resources, from individuals to entire communities." Schreiber highlighted that despite Namibia's extensive coastline, many Namibians do not feel a close connection to the ocean. This disconnect is rooted in history and geography. "In Namibia, not many people live near the long

coastline, and because of colonial history and harsh conditions, there's not a strong coastal culture," he noted. "It is clear to see why many Namibians feel distant, unsure, or even afraid of the ocean, especially when names like 'Skeleton Coast' accompany the challenging environment." But Schreiber is quick to point out that beneath the challenging exterior of Namibia's coast lies a world of wonder. "The coast is nothing short of sandy beaches, towering dunes, vast salt pans, or lively islands filled with chattering seabirds. Look below the water, and you will find swaying kelp, rugged reefs, and rich open waters," he said. Ocean Conservation Namibia is now launching a new series aiming to bridge this gap in understanding. Schreiber hopes this series will foster a sense of connection among Namibians with their marine environment, sparking meaningful discussions and promoting sustainable actions. "The ocean helps us in more ways than we realise, it boosts jobs, communities, and the planet," Schreiber emphasised. "Yet, it is under increasing threat from growing populations, advanced technologies, and a changing climate. This is why we need to understand the consequences of these issues so that we can safeguard our ocean for the future. By sharing such knowledge, we hope to create a better understanding of our marine ecosystems to spark meaningful discussion and foster a deep connection to Namibia's natural coastal wonders," Schreiber concluded.

**Editor's note:** This article is the first in a series of recurring publications that will appear monthly.

