

# Pick n Pay's latest reusable bag initiative aids whale conservation

Pick n Pay has partnered with the University of Pretoria's (UP) Mammal Research Institute (MRI) Whale Unit to create their latest unique reusable bag to raise funds and create more awareness about the research of the Whale Unit on the southern right whales.



Image supplied

The bags, with photos of whales, include the names of the 11 southern right whales tagged in October 2023. Customers can learn more about the cause through a QR code on the bag, providing real-time tracking of the whales' migration.

With R100,000 of the proceeds from the 'Save the Whales' bags dedicated to the MRI Whale Unit, customers will play a role in supporting marine research.

Dr. Els Vermeulen, research manager of the MRI Whale Unit, emphasises the importance of customer awareness, stating that the bags also contain exciting facts about the whales, making every purchase an educational journey.

The MRI Whale Unit advances the knowledge and conservation of southern Africa's diverse whale and dolphin fauna. Every year, it conducts an aerial survey to monitor numbers of breeding southern right whales along South Africa's southern Cape coast.

"The breeding females have dropped 23% in body weight since the late 1980s. This has led to worrying changes in breeding females' reproduction and body conditions, particularly over the past 13 years. This needs further research, but it seems that ocean warming decreases suitable habitat for krill to reproduce, which the whales feed on," says Vermeulen.

"This bag will not only raise awareness but also get the Whale Unit much-needed funds to continue its work," adds Vermeulen.

Throughout the year, Pick n Pay partners with local organisations to create these bags, which help support and promote their worthy cause while driving sustainable customer behaviour and action. To date, 22 organisations have been supported, and almost one million of these reusable bags have been sold.



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These bags are made from four locally collected 500ml recycled PET bottles, encouraging a circular economy by turning used plastic into something reusable. This effort has saved four million plastic bottles from going to landfills or ending up in the ocean.

Vaughan Pierce, Executive: ESG at Pick n Pay, underscores the collaborative effort needed for impactful change. "By partnering with incredible organisations like this and our customers, we can make a bigger impact and create a better tomorrow."

The reusable bags initiative has already left positive marks, from contributing to the restoration of Muizenberg and St James' beach huts to supporting an injured rugby player from the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund with a wheelchair from the iconic Springbok rPET bag.

The 'Save the Whale' bags are now available in Pick n Pay stores nationwide and proceeds will go to the MRI Whale Unit.