



SAPRI
South African Polar
Research Infrastructure



Mahlaelela **Mentorship Programme**

Cohort 3: Webinar Series

Deep Sea biodiversity Research in South Africa



Dr Lara Atkinson

Offshore Biodiversity Scientist



Wednesday, 09
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13:00 - 14:00
(GMT + 2)



science, technology
& innovation

Department:
Science, Technology and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



SAEON
South African Environmental
Observation Network



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Offshore Biodiversity Scientist

 [LINK TO THE WEBINAR](#)

Lara has served as the Offshore Biodiversity Scientist with the NRF South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) since 2010, focusing on long-term monitoring of offshore benthic epifaunal invertebrates and assessing human impacts on the marine environment. Her work led to the publication of South Africa's first Offshore Marine Invertebrate Field Guide (2018), and between 2022–2025 she led the SeaMap project, generating and collating national-scale invertebrate and bacteria occurrence records and barcodes.

Lara collaborates actively with offshore industries including commercial trawl and petroleum mining, promoting sustainable resource use and marine conservation.

As an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Cape Town, she contributes to capacity development through lecturing, mentoring, and postgraduate supervision. Most recently, she co-led the first science leg of the OceanX-OceanQuest Around Africa expedition, uniting early-career researchers from six African nations for their first deep-sea research experience.