# Editorial

Eleven years ago WWF-SA bought 930ha of land near Kamieskroon, today known as the Skilpad Wildflower Reserve, with funds donated by Dr Anton Rupert. That set in motion a process which culminated in the launch of the country's newest national park in August 1999.

The Namaqua National Park in the Northern Cape is the first major protected area in Namaqualand where the region's wealth of succulent plants can be formally conserved. Over 60 per cent of these plant species occur nowhere else. It is for this reason that WWF-SA has identified the Succulent Karoo as one of the six priority eco-regions that must be conserved in order to protect South Africa's unique biodiversity. Read more about the Park on pages 4 and 5.

In the June 1999 edition of Our Living World we appealed to our reders to contribute towards WWF-SA's Campaign 2000 by supporting our freshwater conservation programme. Thanks to your support, a total of R75 400 was raised!

Welcome to the following trustees who recently joined our board: Dr P Cluver of Capespan, Ms M Hau-Yoon of Afrikom, Mr M Hill of Microsoft SA, Mr D Rattray of Fugitives' Drift Lodge, Dr F Sonn of Africa Group Corporation, Mr J van Huyssteen of Thebe Investment Corporation, Mr L Zim of M-Net, Mrs E Meaker and Mr P M Goss. We look forward to a long and productive relationship.

The following individuals stepped down as trustees and we would like to thank them sincerely for their contribution to WWF-SA's work: Messrs Lawrence Clark, Tony Farr, Dennis Poole and Dr Tinie van Vuuren.

# Namaqualand's Floral Riches Conserved

## Northern Cape

Namaqualand is a significant but threatened centre of biodiversity, with some 4000 plant species, of which 60 per cent occur nowhere else. These species have adapted to survive the harsh climate of the region and have also developed remarkable relationships with the birds and insects that pollinate them. The area is internationally renowned for its annual Spring flower display, especially for its multi-coloured daisies.

## Floral funding

WWF-SA contributed almost 95 per cent of the land included in the new park, purchasing several farms belonging to De Beers with funding from the Leslie Hill Succulent Karoo Trust (LHSKT). These 45 698ha, as well as the original Skilpad reserve and an additional 2 597ha purchased by the South African National Parks, make up the new national park.

## A Gift to the Earth

As a result of his generous support and unprecedented commitment to the conservation of the Succulent Karoo, Mr Hill has been specially honoured by WWF. He becomes the first individual word-wide to be recognised as having made a *Gift to the Earth* in line with WWF's *The Living Planet Campaign*.

# Lowland Fynbos Identified as Cape Priority

## Cape Action Plan for the Environment (CAPE)

WWF-SA's Cape Action Plan for the Environment (CAPE) will concentrate on the conservation of lowland fynbos once the project's planning and research phase is completed later in 2000. This decision is based on research proving that this fynbox type is the most severely threatened of all types.

A number of leading scientists have been involved in an intensive consultation process to identify priorities in the conservation of the Cape Floral Kingdom, which is the home of the unique fynbos. This process will culminate in the development of the CAPE eco-region.

One of these consultants is Professor Richard Cowling of the University of Cape Town's (UCT) Institute for Plan Conservation. He has developed a conservation strategy for the fynbos based on a recent analysis of the threats to the region's natural resources done by the Agricultural Research Council.

The Council analysed satellite photographs to determine the extent of invasion by alien vegetaion, urban development and agriculture, and to identify intact fynbos areas. The survey concluded that lowland funbos is the most threatened amongst fynbos types, and Professor Cowling has recommended that the CAPE project concentrate its efforts on the conservation of these habitats.

# Good News for the Wild Coast

## Eastern Cape

The European Union (EU) approved a grant of approximately R80 million (12,8 million Euro) to support the Wild Coast Spatial Development Initiative (SDI) which will be co-ordinated by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. WWF-SA will be responsible for the management of some R10 million of this funding over the next four years.

The SDI is part of a major programme launched early in 1997 by the South African government to develop the economic potential of specific under-developed areas. In particular, previously disadvantaged communities will be provided with the necessary support structures for them to participate in and benefit from the local economy.

The Wild Coast is one of the few remaining unspoilt stretches on the South African coastline. It has several nature reserves and state forest reserves, and is traversed by numerous hiking trials. However, most its 1.4 million population live in abject poverty.

Tourism has therefore been identified as the priority sector for development of the region, and the initiative aims to establish profitable and environmentally sustainable tourism in this extremely important area of the northern Eastern Cape Province.

Three non-governmental organisations - WWF-SA, the Triple Trust Organisation and Pondo Crop - will be responsible for the implementation of this programme. WWF-SA's role will be to help ensure that the local enviroment is conserved as the region's economy develops. As part of this process, the organisation will channel R1 million a year of the EU funds through the Southern African Wildlife College for the training of protected are managers from the Eastern Cape.

# New Horizons for Cape Zebra

## Eastern and Western Cape

The Cape mountain zebra is one of South Africa's most threatened mammal species. While once abundant, only some 1 000 remain today. There are now only three naturally occurring herds, in the Mountain Zebra National Park in the Eastern Cape, and in the Kammanassie and Gamkaberg Nature Reserves in the Western Cape. All other populations have been reintroduced to areas once frequented by zebra.

## A national park for zebra

When the Mountain Zebra National Park was established near Cradock in 1937 it covered just 1 700ha. Early attempts at maintaining zebra on this propery were unsuccessfull due to the inadequate grazing, so the park was enlarged and restocked with zebra from privately-owned neighbouring farms. By 1964 the herd had grown to 25. That year more adjoining farms were purchased and another 30 zebra were introduced into the park. By 1980 the size of the herd had passed 200 and 23 animals were relocated to the Karoo National Park at Beaufort West, the first of several translocations to other protected areas.

In 1999, WWF-SA purchased four more adjoining properties totalling 9 229ha, with funding from its associate trust fund, the National Parks Trust of South Africa. This Fund has already helped create or expand eight South African National Parks, including the purchase of 1 712ha for the Mountain Zebra National Park on 1996.

## What zebra is that?

The most notable differences between South Africa's two zebra subspecies are that the stripes on Burchell's zebra extend right around the belly, while Cape mountain zebra have white undersides. Burchell's zebra are also slightly larger when full grown.

# Field Notes

## Northern Province

### New park in Northern Province

The mining company De Beers has returned most of the funds it received from WWF-SA for its properties in Namaqualand that were included in the new Namaqua National Park. WWF-SA will use these funds to purchase properties for inclusion in the new Vhembe-Dongola National Park in the Northern Province which will border on both Botswana and Zimbabwe. WWF-SA's sister organisation, the Peace Parks Foundation, is spearheading an initiative to link the new park to protected areas in these countries to form a new trans-frontier conservation area, or peace park.

### WWF-SA goes online

WWF-SA has joined the list of WWF offices with their own web sites. The site has been designed and is hosted by M-Web as a donation-in-kind to WWF-SA. At present it contains basied information on WWF-SA and its work. Future plans for the site include regular news updates, discussion forums and interactive material that can be downloaded. The site's address is http:/www.panda.org.za. In other Internet news, the WWF-Canon Photolibrary will soon go online, making up to 30 000 environmental images by more than 56\00 photographers available to anybody in the world. The images will initially only be accessible through the WWF Intranet, but should be available on the World Wide Web by mide-2000.

### American crocs bit back

WWF-US reports that the extremely rare American crocodile has suddenly begun appearing on golf courses and in parks across Florida, years after it was declared almost extinct. The American public have been warned that the crocs are only dangerous when fed. Unfortunately, the don't know where the hand-out ends and the hand begins!

## Support for Campaign 2000 Still Growing

### WWF-SA Campaign

When WWF-SA launched its *Campaign 2000* in 1998, it set itself a target of raising R15 million. This money, it was envisaged, would help the organisation well into the 21st century as it concentrated on the conservation of six key South African eco-regions.

These eco-regions - fynbos, forests, freshwater, oceans and coasts, Succulent Karoo and grasslands - are the treasure trove of South Africa's unique biodiversity. They hold the key to the growing eco-tourism industry and the country's sustainable development, and are even referred to as South Africa's "new gold".