# 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.

# Hackers tackle Betty's Bay aliens

## Western Cape

WWF-SA is supporting several hack groups, including the Kogelbaai Branch, of the Botanical Society, based in Betty's Bay. This group is working to clear alien vegetaion from the former *Koppie Alleen* property, which WWF-SA purchased early in 1999 for inclusion in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve.

The hackers meet on the first Sunday of every month to remove Australian invader species such as Rooikrans (*Acacia cyclops*), Port Jackson (*Acacia saligna*), Myrtle (*Leptospermum laevigatum*) as well as pine trees and spider- and flowering gums.

According to Dr Allan Heydorn, consultant to WWF-SA and a member of the hack group, the age of the hackers varies from twelve to eighty years. "But the spirit of determination and comradeship in the quest to rid the fynbos in the area from invaders, transcend all age barriers," he says.

## Koppie Alleen

The purchase of *Koppie Alleen* by WWF-SA was made possible through a very generous donation by London-based Mrs Rita Brodie and her family. The property has been renamed the *Bernard Brodie Biosphere Reserve Link* in honour of her late husband, a great lover of African wildlife who was particularly concerned about the conservation of leopards.

The Brodies have made other donations to WWF-SA, including funds for the purchase of prime leopard habitat in the Baviaanskloof/Kouga Wilderness Area in the Eastern Cape.

*Koppie Alleen* links the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve to the nearby Blesberg climbing dune system. This makes the propery a key link in the conservation of the natural vegetation of the Betty's Bay area.

# Dassen Island on the alert

## Western Cape

Cape Nature Conservation (CNC) recently launched a WWF-supported Seabird Rescue Plan for Dassen Island, which aims to equip the staff on the island to help protect Dassen Island's birds from the effects of future oil spills. WWF-SA has supported this initiative by funding the purchase of equipment such as oilskins, goggles and gloves, cleaning equipment and medical supplies.

Oil pollution is considered one of the major threats to seabird populations, especially the already endangered African (Jackass) penguin. Their vulnerability to such spills was vividly illustrated when the Apollo Sea ore carrier sank off Saldanha Bay in June 1994 and spilt 2 400 tons of oil. Close to 10 000 penguins were oiled, mostly on Dassen Island.

Many died before they could be transported to the South African National Council for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) centre for cleaning, and more after arrival. This was because it took too long for them to be treated. Time is a critical factor in such cases: the quicker they can be cleaned, the better their chances of surviving.

With the Seabird Rescue Plan in place, birds can be treated on the island before being transported to rehabilitation centres.

Dassen Island is a proclaimed nature reserve with restricted access due to the sensitivity of the area. It is home to the second largest colony of African penguins with a population of about 35 000, and is literally riddled with penguins' nesting holes. Several other seabird species breed on the island, including the white pelican and at least four species of cormorant. Tortoise and rabbits can also be found on the island.

In contrast, only four human live on Dassen Island. CNC has stationed two rangers there to look after the reserve. Anton and Leigh-Anne Wolfaardt live on the island permanently, only crossing to the mainland every few weeks for a rest and to do some shopping. The other two islanders are the lighthouse keepers.

# Investing in the future

## South Africa

Two recent reports from the United Nations and WWF have confirmed that the environment is in an even worse condition than anticipated, yet many South African companies are still debating about whether they should be spending money to control their environmental impacts.

Over and above moral reasons, there are a number of convincing business reasons for companies to invest in responsible environmental management and improve their environmental performance. Here are a few reasons:

* Customers' expections of their suppliers making it mandatory for their suppliers to be certified to ISO 14001, the international standard for environmental management systems.
* Stakeholders are putting pressure on companies to be "open and transparent" about their environmental performance. It is becoming a *de facto* requirement for reputable companies to issue these reports and they are expected to become as closely analysed as annual financial statements.
* 'Non-reporters' are being increasingly targeted. Last year a list of non-reporting companies was published by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), putting the spotlight on those companies which have been keeping their heads below the parapet by not issuing an environmental report.
* Companies can protect their asset value. With the spare of acquisitions by foreign companies in recent years, having a 'due diligence' assesment carried out by external auditors has become standard practice in assessing a company's worth.
* Prevention rather than cure usually saves costs substantially, with training being one of the most cost-effective forms of prevention.
* Companies and individual industrial sectors can control their own destiny. If they do not clean up their act, then government will feel obliged to step in and increase the level of regulation.

One of the best ways for an organisation to start introducing responsible environmental management is by discovering what skeletons are lurking in its cupboard - before someone else does so. Once the organisation is confident enough that it has good environmental controls in place, it can then publish a public environmental report.

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