

BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA NEWS

Kindly sponsored by the Tony and Lisette Lewis Foundation

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2008

TALKING POINTS



BirdLife staff at the World Conservation Conference held in Durban in 2004.

Taking on the millennium challenge

BirdLife's World Conservation Conference, Buenos Aires, Argentina, September 2008

'Taking on the millennium challenge' is the theme for this year's BirdLife International conference. Held every four years, the conference is an opportunity for members of the BirdLife family to debate some of the most pressing issues concerning global bird conservation. BirdLife International's 2008 World Conservation Conference and Global Partnership Meeting will be an exceptional global meeting of the 108 national conservation organisations that make up the BirdLife International Network, plus their collaborators and supporters.

The agenda will cover a wide range of current environmental issues, ranging from climate change, key biodiversity areas, species champions and flyways conservation to global landscapes and local conservation groups. It will empower the BirdLife Partners to adopt and launch their strategy and programmes for the next four to 10 years, and will provide the opportunity

to share common problems and solutions to today's environmental challenges.

The value of birds as indicators of biodiversity will be considered, including their role as indicators for the 2010 UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) target and the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. Data generated by the BirdLife Partnership for the Red List Index will measure the progress made in achieving BirdLife's strategic conservation objectives and give information on policy-relevant processes at national, regional and global levels. The monitoring of threatened species and IBAs will be reviewed, and plans for developing a Global Wild Bird Index will be discussed.

Today there are new challenges that affect biodiversity conservation across the world, including climate change, biofuels and various forms of renewable energy. The conference will debate the contribution that BirdLife can make to these energy challenges.

The approach of BirdLife's IBA Local Conservation Group to addressing poverty and relationships with development organisations will be reviewed. Also on the agenda is a discussion about BirdLife's conservation projects and their impact on people's livelihoods, and the integration of IBA and biodiversity concerns into national and regional development plans.

From a South African perspective, this meeting will help guide our future activities and ensure that our work is aligned to a global strategy. In some instances, our work in South Africa will be spotlighted as an example to other countries; in others, there will be a host of opportunities for South Africa to learn and implement new strategies for bird conservation. Of particular interest to South African bird conservationists will be the impacts that several of our divisions can have in working towards the theme of this conference.

How can we best use our work on Important Bird Areas and the South African Bird Atlas Project to monitor and set targets for our conservation objectives? Can our avitourism- and community-based divisions be used to link biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction? How can our policy and advocacy work be maximised to reach the highest levels? Are we educating and reaching a broad enough

group of people, and are we mobilising our constituency to help achieve these goals?

The 2008 BirdLife World Conference will give BirdLife South Africa an opportunity to answer these questions and develop future strategies for implementing our share of the global strategy for bird conservation. We will keep you, our members,

informed of the outcomes and look forward to working together in the coming years to make a global impact on bird conservation.

DUNCAN PRITCHARD
 ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Today, there are new challenges that affect biodiversity conservation across the world, including climate change, biofuels and various forms of renewable energy

FLYWAY CONSERVATION

The Wings Over Wetlands (WOW) project is the largest international wetland and waterbird conservation initiative in the Africa-Eurasia region. The project is a partnership among international conservation organisations and national governments that aims to improve and conserve healthy, viable populations of African-Eurasian migratory waterbirds. This will be achieved by assisting a wide range of partners to conserve the key critical wetland areas

and many local partners along the African-Eurasian flyways. A new web portal is being developed by the WOW technical team. This will provide access to information on over 400 migratory waterbird species, as well as their migration routes and the key wetland sites they use in the African-Eurasian region. Once developed, the Critical Sites Network (CSN) Tool will unify the conservation efforts of countries along the entire flyway by providing the improved data access needed for focused wetland and waterbird conservation.

WOW supports field projects in 11 wetland areas in 12 countries. These projects focus on conservation issues, such as community mobilisation, management planning, ecotourism, field research, wetland restoration, control of invasive species, transboundary management, education and alternative livelihoods. WOW demonstration projects are active in Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal/The Gambia, South Africa (at Wakkerstroom), Tanzania, Turkey and Yemen.

Objectives of South Africa's Wakkerstroom demonstration site:
GOAL To conserve the Wakkerstroom wetland by maximising biodiversity and the development of ecotourism to benefit local communities.

OUTCOME 1 Promoting and developing ecotourism to achieve an increase in visitor numbers and income flows to local people.
OUTCOME 2 Establishing a secure winter feeding site for the Blue and Grey Crowned cranes, and outreach for local farmers.
OUTCOME 3 Maximising the potential of the site as an ecotourism attraction by raising awareness of the local population and improving the habitat of waterbirds.

For more information, visit www.wingsoverwetlands.org or contact Hansco Banda (site manager) wakkerstroom@birdlife.org.za or Daniel Marnewick (division manager) community@birdlife.org.za

DANIEL MARNEWICK



Wakkerstroom site manager Hansco Banda addressed the conference in the Netherlands.

needed by these birds to complete their annual migrations, by improving international cooperation and by building local professional capacity.

The area covered by this initiative includes all 119 range states of the UNEP-administered African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), which covers Africa, Europe, south-west Asia, Greenland and the Canadian archipelago.

WOW is a joint effort between Wetlands International and BirdLife International, supported by the UNEP-GEF (Global Environment Facility), the government of Germany and other donors and partners. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has been engaged to support its implementation, and the WOW team operates in close coordination with the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, UNEP-WCMC

Partners in Action

North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW) in Germany and South Africa's Mpumalanga have been working together as twin provinces since 1995. In 2001, the Mpumalanga Forum was founded to offer a platform for NGOs in NRW to exchange mutual information with similar organisations in its twin province. This year, a delegation of civil society members from NRW visited Mpumalanga from 11-19 May. The attending conservation NGO was Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU), a BirdLife International partner in Germany.

NABU arranged a meeting with the NRW-based InWent-Capacity Building International, a non-profit organisation dedicated to human resource development. InWent is keen to fund an important component of the Mpumalanga Birding Route project at Wakkerstroom – the promotion of the conservation of wild birds and their habitats by giving the communities in areas in which the route is situated an opportunity to experience the economic value of the birds.

A meeting was also held between NABU, BirdLife SA and the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA). The cooperation between the MTPA and BirdLife South Africa is vital to ensure that conservation areas are managed properly, and that opportunities are created for local communities to become involved in tourism and conservation.

NIKKI McCARTNEY
 MANAGER: MPUMALANGA BIRDING ROUTE



Werner Schroeder (NABU) and Nikki McCartney (BirdLife SA) with the North-Rhine Westphalia delegation, and Thato wa Magogodi and Charles Magagula of the Mpumalanga Provincial Government.

Limpopo guide offsets carbon footprint

‘Finding a way to inspire young people is how we will change the world,’ says David Letsoalo, BirdLife South Africa’s top local guide. David has been raising the bar when it comes to being responsible for one’s environment. Based in the Magoebaskloof area in Limpopo Province, he is the grass-land node co-coordinator for the WESSA-WWF Eco-schools, where he is dedicated to increasing awareness amongst young people about environmental issues.

Although competitions and projects are part of the programme, David has found that the best way to inspire others is through one’s own actions. ‘Litter campaigns make no sense to schoolchildren when the adults around them are throwing tins and packets on the ground,’ he says.

David wanted to show his Eco-school learners how they could offset their

carbon footprint. So, putting his money where his mouth is, he bought 42 indigenous trees and planted them in the school grounds as part of an ongoing greening project. ‘Understanding ideas like ozone-layer depletion and carbon footprint are difficult for children unless they can see something happening,’ says David. ‘Planting a tree and watching it grow makes it real and relevant.’

David has been selected by Rotary International to represent southern Africa in Canada and the US on a Professionals’ Exchange Programme. As David wings his way to New York, his young trees are thriving in rural Limpopo, making a small but significant difference to our quality of life.

LISA MARTUS

David Letsoalo planting trees with learners to offset his carbon footprint.



SABAP2 SETTING THE STANDARD FOR ATLAS WEBSITES



One of the outstanding features of SABAP2 is the project website www.sabap2.org, which provides up-to-date information on project progress and enables observers to view the information

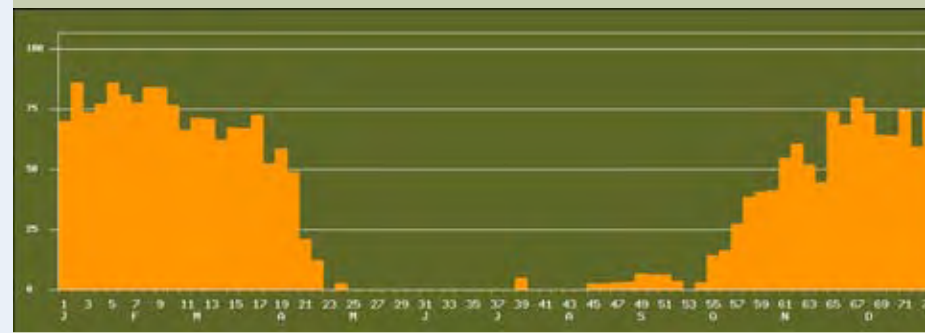
they have provided. The ‘Data summaries’ section updates itself automatically twice a day, with target times of 06h00 and 18h00. The current ‘Coverage map’ indicates where atlasers have been

active, the ‘Gap analysis’ shows where they still need to go and the ‘Provincial summary’ reports relative progress on a finer scale.

Under ‘Species distribution maps’, one can look at the new bird-distribution maps as they are developed, and compare them with those in the first bird atlas. A recent innovation is a plot that shows the arrival and departure of migrants. It divides the year into 73 five-day periods. The plot shows the percentage of checklists for each pentad that reported the species, and indicates the arrival and departure periods.

This addresses one of the key objectives of SABAP2 – in an era of global climate change, the timing of migration must be documented as accurately as possible to establish if it is changing. To achieve this goal, the project needs not only widespread coverage, but also in-depth data. We congratulate the atlasers in Phalaborwa, who have already submitted more than 40 checklists for their local pentads.

If you would like to participate in this project, contact Neil Smith on 082 859 3788, e-mail conservation@birdlife.org.za or visit the website to register.



Barn Swallows started arriving in Pentade 55 (28 September – 2 October 2007), and became increasingly widespread until about Pentade 66 (22–26 November). From then until about Pentade 17 (22–26 March 2008), the reporting rate hovered around 75 per cent. Most departures took place after Pentade 20 (6–10 April 2008), and by Pentade 23 (21–25 April), apart from a few vagrants, Barn Swallows had left South Africa. The right-hand half of this plot refers to 2007, the left-hand half to 2008.



Limpopo Lodges

Conserving the environment and empowering communities



Kurisa Moya Nature Lodge

As ecotourism gathers momentum worldwide, it's becoming easier to support environmental projects in a more specific and direct way than ever before. Many lodges contribute to the conservation of the environment and the empowerment of the communities in which they are situated. Guests can also make meaningful contributions and see the benefits in working projects. BirdLife South Africa endorses these two Birder Friendly Establishments which practise Responsible Tourism.

KURISA MOYA NATURE LODGE is a 422-hectare property near Magoebaskloof in Limpopo Province. Perched on the edge of the Drakensberg escarpment, this soulful place embraces a pristine indigenous forest with massive, moss-covered trees and ancient yellowwoods. Nature's tranquillity is broken only by booming Samango monkeys, croaking crimson-winged Knysna Turacos and the distinctive calls of forest birds.

Kurisa Moya offers accommodation in three unique, private venues – Forest Lodge's cabins are located three metres above the ground in the indigenous forest; a stone cottage has wide mountain views; and a lovingly restored farmhouse sleeps 10 guests.

There is something restorative in being surrounded by ancient trees in a tranquil indigenous forest. These days, there are few places where one can spend a weekend and return home feeling spiritually fulfilled and with a sense of the world being a magical place.

Kurisa Moya Nature Lodge has recently been selected as one of the *Rough Guide's* top 501 eco-lodges in the world, and is one of a handful of Birder Friendly Establishments that have been assessed as environmentally and socially responsible. As custodians of pristine indigenous forest and other sensitive habitats, it

is essential that we establish policies to ensure that these environments are preserved and protected. Following an environmental management plan means that staff, guests and management work towards a common goal of responsible tourism. Amongst other things, Kurisa Moya is electricity free, water conscious and has worked on creating a small footprint in all the lodges. Refuse is separated and recycled, and organic kitchen waste is composted for use in the vegetable garden, which grows produce for both staff and guests.

Birders wanting to tick the elusive Black-fronted Bush-Shrike, Green Twinspot or Narina Trogon also wish to feel that they are contributing to the environment in which these special birds thrive. BirdLife South Africa's top local guide, David Letsoalo, is based at Kurisa Moya and is committed to showing guests the whole picture (see page 75). He also runs the Community Partnership Programme, which offers various options for supporting local schools. Guests can choose donations ranging from stationery to contributions towards solar panels, fencing or computers. Kurisa Moya actively supports local entrepreneurs and cultural enterprises, including produce growers, local wood-carvers and artists. Also available are home-stays in the village, where guests can experience Sotho culture first-hand.

Guests can also offset their air-travel carbon footprint or that of their household in an environmentally and socially responsible way by contributing to greening pro-

jects at local schools. Trees are bought from Bulamahlo Community Nursery or the newly established indigenous tree nursery at the Golwe Community campsite in Venda. Staff and directors at Kurisa Moya also make every attempt to ensure that their daily lives are carbon-neutral, and that the ethics of responsible tourism are the prime focus of the lodge.

For more information, contact (015) 276 1131 or 082 200 4596, e-mail info@krm.co.za or www.krm.co.za, or visit www.limpopobirding.com or www.birdingroutes.co.za.

MOGALAKWENA RIVER LODGE, near Mapungubwe in northern Limpopo Province, offers a truly African experience. The accommodation has been designed to blend into its surroundings, and a delicate balance has been achieved between the harmony of the African bush and upmarket sophistication.

The lodge is sited on the banks of the Mogalakwena River. The area boasts a wealth of fauna, flora and an abundance of bird species, and the private reserve offers game drives, wildlife walks and horseriding. From the deck of the lodge, one is able to view up to 25 species in a sitting, including African Finfoot, Black Crake and Dwarf Bittern as well as many kingfishers and herons. Mogalakwena offers day excursions to cultural heritage sites and half-day outings to the local village.

In 1994, the Mogalakwena Craft Art Development Foundation (MCADF)



African Finfoot

launched a programme to support the economic and social upliftment of the local community and to reduce the pressure to move to urban areas. Training, involving and employing members of the local community resulted in restored craft skills and enabled more people to become self-sufficient and less dependent on unemployment grants and pensions. The Craft Art Village also includes a training centre, where the creative skills of local people are developed, nurtured and promoted to facilitate employment. A variety of skills' workshops are hosted regularly, including embroidery, beading, basket-weaving and screen-printing. Art workshops are held in conjunction with the schools in nearby Raditshaba Villages. Guests can visit Mogalakwena Craft Art Foundation to see the Pedi craftswomen at work.

In 2003, the Mogalakwena Craft Art Development Foundation won the Nedbank/*Mail & Guardian* Cultural Project of the Year award, and at the 10th annual *Business Day/BASA* Awards it was named as the winner in the Synergy Contemporary Bead Art Exhibition.

Mogalakwena is also involved in research projects that fulfil the conservation goals of responsible tourism. The lodge hosts students with projects for undergraduate degrees, technical diplomas and dissertations. The volunteer programme offers a wide variety of subjects for people interested in addressing important conservation questions, and gaining experience and skills in topics such as biodiversity, culture and linguistics, craft art, and education and outreach.

For more information, contact Mogalakwena on tel. (021) 424 0133 or e-mail mogalakwena@mweb.co.za, or visit www.limpopobirding.com or www.birdingroutes.co.za.

LISA MARTUS



Mogalakwena River Lodge

Communities caring about conservation



Community members helping 'build' Golwe.

In Venda, the Golwe-Vhurivhuri Campsite is proving to be as beneficial to the local community as it is to birders.

Driving along dusty village roads in rural Venda, you could be excused for suspecting that descriptions of a waterfall feeding into a stream in a lush forest may be vastly exaggerated. So it comes as a great surprise to drive into the Golwe-Vhurivhuri Community Campsite and discover that even more superlatives could be used to describe this beautiful place.

An oasis of dense, riverine forest follows the meandering stream, which issues from a waterfall that flows through a tight, rocky gorge. Overhanging trees create dappled light over cool pools, where a calabash ladle hangs on a stick, conveniently placed for the use of thirsty birders. Five campsites are hidden beneath large riverine trees, each site with a braai area and picnic table, and a central ablution and kitchen block for the camp.

Visitors wake at dawn to the distinctive calls of forest specials such as African Broadbill, Pink-throated Twinspot, Narina Trogon, Scaly-throated Honeyguide, Yellow-spotted Nicator, Blue-mantled Crested-Flycatcher, Crowned Hornbill and African Wood-Owl, which are easily seen around

the campsite and trails. I suspect that you could not have better sightings of an African Broadbill elsewhere in Limpopo Province. Grey Waxbills also occur.

Golwe is 30 to 45 minutes by road from Kruger Park's Punda Maria camp and one hour from Pafuri, so it is a perfect stopover en route to these Limpopo birding hotspots. Bird guide Christopher Nethonzhe knows the area backwards and can show you all the specials. Best of all, though, are the sumptuous feasts that the ladies of Golwe will prepare for anyone who feels too lazy to cook after a day's birding.

Chief Sumbana of Vhurivhuri is also extremely conscious of the importance of the environment. He has given his support to Christopher's latest project – the establishment of an indigenous nursery for the greening of the village and local schools. Christopher recently attended a workshop, sponsored by the South African National Biodiversity Institute, where he learned how to start a nursery, propagate trees and landscape the environment.

However, the site needs the support of visitors to survive. An increase in the number of guests would allow Golwe to offer self-catering accommodation as well

as camping, and to support the members of the committee who dedicate their time and energy to keep it going. Proceeds from the campsite go towards the development of the village.

Close to Golwe is another community campsite set in a unique habitat. Called Gundani, it has the only known patch of *Brachystegia* miombo woodland in South Africa. Meandering trails lead birders through the woodland with big, flat-crowned trees overhanging a rocky understorey and down to a stream with riverine forest. Gundani's five campsites are well positioned for privacy and early-morning birding, and the facilities are well maintained by the community committee that runs the site.

A number of bird specials have been seen in this miombo woodland, including White-breasted Cuckooshrike, Green Twinspot, Retz's Helmet-Shrike, Southern Hylia and the prized Pink-throated Twinspot. The positioning of Gundani is also perfect to witness the spectacle that occurs at the Sagole baobab tree, half an hour away. This awesome specimen is not only the world's biggest baobab; it is also one of the few known roosting sites for Mottled Spinetail in South Africa. As the sun sets, up to 300 spinetails whizz past your head into a hole in the tree, leaving you gasping at their acrobatic skill.

Gundani and Golwe are great destinations for birders and nature lovers, and for anyone with an interest in Venda culture. The objective of establishing these campsites, however, is not only to provide opportunities for visitors to enjoy the environment and its

special birds, but also to ensure that the communities that are the custodians of the areas benefit directly from ecotourism. To date, the conservation spin-offs have been tangible and, if more birders visit the campsites, the chance of these habitats surviving into the future is vastly increased.

To book at Golwe-Vhurivhuri Campsite, contact Christopher Nethonzhe on 076 302 9383 or Ernest [SURNAME] on 076 196 3691. Notice of your arrival is appreciated so that preparations can be made.

You could not have better sightings of an African Broadbill elsewhere in Limpopo Province

COMMUNITY PROJECTS ON THE KRUGER TO CANYONS BIRDING ROUTE



Lappet-faced Vulture

The new Kruger to Canyons Birding Route is located in the low-veld region of South Africa, with its information office situated in Phalaborwa. The route was launched at the end of 2007, and is co-funded by Rio Tinto and one of its operations, the Palabora Mining Company. The Palabora Foundation, the mine's corporate social investment NGO, applied for European Union funding to support the project in 2006, and the good news of their successful grant application arrived at the end of January 2007, resulting in a R2.1-million kick-start.

The route is utilising the additional funding to establish five bird hides within the Ba-Phalaborwa local municipality area, and one near Hoedspruit, on the Blyde River. The new hides will not only enhance the route, but will also provide local birders with superior sighting opportunities.

A number of scientific publications have emphasised the link between vulture restaurants and the improved wellbeing of the raptors. In light of this, two vulture restaurants are on the cards. These will support local vulture colonies and provide splendid opportunities to watch these magnificent birds in action, while contributing to their conservation.

In partnership with a local hospitality service provider, a lodge is to be built in Tswenyane, on the Drakensberg escarpment. To be run and staffed by local community members, Tswenyane Community Lodge will act as a hospitality training lodge. Here, local community members will receive a year's training before being placed within the tourism industry. The lodge will also be promoted as an avitourism destination, and will be managed by a trust comprising the Palabora Foundation, BirdLife SA and the local community, with the last-named being the benefactors. This project will give the community a vested interest in protecting the area in which their local bird species occur, as well as provide employment opportunities. The lodge is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2009.

For more information, visit www.krugerbirding.co.za

SANDRA HEDGES

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AUGUST

22–24 The Feathers, Fossils and Flowers weekend. Velddrif, Western Cape

SEPTEMBER

19–23 Glendower Venda 4x4

20–28 Road Munros of Lesotho (Pied Piper Expeditions). Guides: Steven Piper and Matthew Wiggill

26–28 Midlands Adventure Event

OCTOBER

2–5 Digital Bird Photography Photo-safari (Pied Piper Expeditions). Guide: Albert Froneman or Chris van Rooyen

2–7 Wilderness National Park Honorary Rangers' Birding Weekend

3–5 **Stanford Glendower Bird Fair & launch of Western Cape Birding Route.** For more details, contact Elsa on (028) 341 0340 or the Stanford Information Bureau on (028) 341 0340. Entrance is free.

9–12 Garden Route and Klein Karoo Honorary Rangers' Birding Bash

17–19 Kruger to Canyons Birding Weekend, Phalaborwa

17–19 **Sasol Agulhas National Park Honorary Rangers' Weekend.** Guest speaker: Ian Sinclair. In addition to the entertainment provided, there will be a seafood potjie, and a braai in the fynbos. Cost: R300 per person. Contact Angela Altendorfer on tel. (028) 423 3095 or 084 370 5255.

22–26 Southern KZN Birding Weekend

24–26 Punda Beginner's Birding Weekend, Kruger to Canyons Route

25–26 Welcome Back to Summer Migrants, West Coast National Park

30–2 Nov ZBR Rio Tinto Birding Weekend

31–2 Nov Marakele National Park Honorary Rangers, Birding Weekend

NOVEMBER

6–9 Sehlabathebe National Park: Birds and Flowers.

Guides: Elsa Pooley, Steven Piper and Matthew Wiggill

7–9 'Welcome the Waders' Weekend Bash. Western Cape

14–16 Glendower Magoebaskloof Birds and Forests Festival

28–30 Mistbelt Forest Birds and Trees (Pied Piper Expeditions). Guides: Elsa Pooley and Steven Piper

29 Birding Big Day

DECEMBER

13–16 Beginner's Birding (Pied Piper Expeditions).

Guides: Malcolm Gemmill and Steven Piper

For more information about any of these events, visit www.birdingroutes.co.za or contact Sue Anderson of BirdLife Travel on e-mail travel@birdlife.org.za or 082 777 7202.

MANY THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

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Branches (Bird Clubs) of BirdLife South Africa have extensive programmes of indoor meetings and outdoor field trips, and publish newsletters filled with local birding news. Most branches are very social and run courses and other participatory events. They undertake conservation action and bird-monitoring and education programmes. Please contact BirdLife South Africa on tel. (011) 789 1122 or visit www.birdlife.org.za for a listing of local branch contact details.

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P O Box 541, Worcester 6849 | <input type="checkbox"/> West Coast Bird Club,
P O Box 16, Veldrif 7365 |
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P O Box 57, Highflats 3306 | | <input type="checkbox"/> Witwatersrand Bird Club,
P O Box 641, Cresta 2118 |

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CHEQUES MADE PAYABLE TO BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA



Wakkerstroom stakeholder meeting

HOW COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IS AFFECTED BY IMMINENT THREATS

‘Community development’, ‘job creation’ and ‘poverty alleviation’ are some of the buzzwords bandied about by politicians and large organisations. These are undoubtedly critical issues in South Africa and should be prioritised if we are to create a socially and economically stable country. Over the past decade, the conservation industry has become one that seeks to make environmental change meaningful to social development and vice versa. Unfortunately, other industries or specific organisations have abused these priority issues to drive their own agendas.

Despite the strides made by government to provide basic services, the social demography of most big cities and small towns remains unchanged. Wealthier, predominantly white South Africans live in open, well-maintained suburbs, while poorer, predominantly black South Africans live in underdeveloped townships. A small place such as Wakkerstroom is an example of this: the town centre and farmlands host whites, while the majority of the community, who are poorer blacks, live in a confined township on its outskirts.

Poverty is associated with many social characteristics, but the two most prominent are desperation for work and poor levels of education. These communities are, therefore, targets for those industries that need to consult the community about expansion projects from which they will profit, and developers often use statements such as ‘job creation’ as the drawcard for the ‘public participatory process’. Of course, not everyone who

lives in an impoverished community is ignorant but, even to local government, economic development is critical and may overshadow the cost to or impact on the environment.

The Luneberg/Wakkerstroom area is presently facing just such a threat. A mining company is planning to mine for coal on the outskirts of the town. This company promises jobs, social upliftment and little impact on the environment. After serious interrogation of the project, BirdLife South Africa and other stakeholders are not convinced that any of these promises can realistically be met. We believe that the Luneberg/Wakkerstroom community will suffer socially and environmentally if mining is allowed, as avitourism and agriculture form the basis of the region’s economic activity.

BirdLife South Africa is utilising the strong local tourism industry to link community development to the conservation of the area. This mostly involves promoting the area as a tourist destination but, more importantly, ensuring that the impoverished community in the Wakkerstroom area receives a fair proportion of the direct economic benefits.

After working actively with members of the eSizamaleni community, many of these community members have been showing prowess when it comes to engaging the mining company, demonstrating that they will not be bought by a promise of jobs or money.

GRASSLANDS

now you see them,
now you don’t

Grasslands are an important part of our existence in South Africa because, apart from supporting significant biodiversity, they are also water catchment areas. Unfortunately, they are one of the most threatened biomes in the country because of poor veld-management practices, such as overgrazing or over-burning, commercial deforestation, and alien invasive vegetation.

Grasslands are a particularly important habitat for birds, and an astonishing 14 species that occur in these areas appear on the Red Data list. These include Wattled and Blue cranes, Rudd’s and Botha’s larks, Yellow-breasted Pipit and Blue Swallow.

Here are some sobering facts that highlight the need for grassland protection:

30 per cent of the grassland biome has been irreversibly transformed

Only 1.9 per cent of the grassland biome is formally protected

Of the 80 vegetation types found in grassland, two are listed as Critically Endangered, 18 as Endangered and 27 as Vulnerable

Help conserve this precious biome by getting involved in campaigns such as the one recently formed to prevent mining in the grasslands near Wakkerstroom. For more information, contact Neil Smith on conservation@birdlife.org.za

NEIL SMITH

Besides the debate on the need for energy versus that to conserve biodiversity, there is also a necessity to show that conservation (of which ecotourism is a component) is a better long-term development option than, for example, mining. BirdLife South Africa intends using the Luneberg/Wakkerstroom mining issue to prove that community development linked

to conservation can indeed provide sustainable economic growth into the long-term future.

DANIEL MARNEWICK



Spencer, Debbie

From: Saved by Windows Internet Explorer 7

Sent: 10 July 2007 12:39

Subject: About Province



COMMUNITIES URGED TO SUSTAIN ENVIRONMENT.

A call made at the World Wetlands Day Celebration for 2007.



ENVIROFOCUS: MEC Madala Masuku and environmentalists looking focused during the celebration.

Wakkestroom - The future looks bleak for the world's environmental standing and heritage if improper consideration continues to prevail. This and others are concerns that emanated at this year's World Wetlands Day Celebration held at Wakkestroom recently (2/2/07). Environmentalists charge that the world has lost a substantial number of wetlands over the last decade through neglect. This as they submit can still be saved only if proper environmental care can be considered.

This year's event was celebrated under the theme - **“Wetlands support fisheries...keep them healthy”** and fish for tomorrow. Again, government departments, non-governmental organisations and various groups at all levels of the community took the advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising awareness of wetland values and benefits in general. Local pupils recited poems and demonstrations about the importance of wetlands. Gugu Nkosi (**12**) and Nomsa Ndaba (**13**) believe wetlands are critical for the survival of both animals and humans. In their words, “Wetlands assist us to get water for drinking and other amenities”.

The demise of wetlands in some parts of the province has been attributed to number of factors ranging from, grazing to urbanisation. Wetlands Specialist from the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency, Anton Linstrom, argues that such activities encroach on protected areas and compromise protected species. He is, however, not opposed to such, but feels it should be done in a sustainable manner. Wakkestroom is one of the five demonstration sites in Africa .

As wetlands are pivotal in protecting communities against floods, provision of resources and water supply, it is critical that they are preserved. A community based biodiversity conservation NGO – BirdLife South Africa – the world has lost half of its wetlands in the last century, hence, critical to conserve them.

Programme Manager, Daniel Marnewick, they are involving communities in a form of skills development, capacity building and understanding the tourism industry.

The conservation of wetlands can go a long way in reflecting the environmental richness of the province, says MEC Madala Masuku. Masuku mentioned that the celebration comes at a time when the country is looking ahead to the World Cup 2010 showpiece. As a result, the country takes issues of sustainability seriously. "People have begun speaking in unison against environmental degradation," quipped Masuku. He assured people that environmental protection is taken into account, particularly during developments like the building of the soccer stadium in Nelspruit.

The celebration focused on wetlands and fisheries in recognition of the following:

The needs of the one billion people who rely on fish as their primary source of protein, the state of world's fisheries where 75% of commercially important marine and most inland water fish stocks are either over fished or being fished at their biological limit, the important role that inland and coastal wetlands play in supporting fish and fisheries at all levels, from large-scale, commercial fisheries to subsistence fishers.

PROJECTS

Linking livelihoods to conservation

Linking people's livelihoods to natural resources, with the objective of conserving the resource and associated ecosystem, is nothing if not complicated. David Thomas of BirdLife International notes that 'conservation depends on sustainable livelihoods – and vice versa. Poverty is not just a matter of income or nutrition. In its broadest sense, poverty involves a lack of access to decision-makers, a lack of information and a lack of rights to access and manage natural resources' (Langley 2005). The rationale of linking conservation and development is to engender support for conservation among local communities, by involving them in management and decision-making and by providing benefits to offset the opportunity costs of protection (Matthew & Goodwin 2001).

The concept of linking livelihoods to conservation originated in the rest of Africa long before South Africa bought into the idea after democratisation in the '90s. In South Africa, the past 15 years of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) have centred on

using tourism as a means to divert benefits to local people. But these efforts have been frustrating, with communities generally seeing little benefit and much of the focus being on areas that are already highly protected, resulting in the conservation value being generally perceived as redundant.

We have also not done enough to learn from the other African countries that are now seen as leaders in the field. Take Kenya, for instance, where I recently spent two weeks with CBNRM programme managers from other BirdLife Partners in Uganda, Nigeria and the UK. Kenya has developed a model, called Site Support Groups, that has been very successful in mobilising community groups living around Important Bird Areas (IBAs), developing their capacity to generate a livelihood off the resource while simultaneously taking responsibility for actively managing and conserving the environment. This has, of course, also been South Africa's objective, as it is for any community-based conservation programme. Kenya, however, has managed to diversify its strategy by using

multiple-income generating activities from different natural resources, and making communities more resilient to change.

What makes modern CBNRM so dynamic yet challenging is that it involves multiple disciplines. This started with the gradual introduction of social scientists to conservation some 10 years ago. We now realise that when we link livelihoods to conservation, we are also dealing with economic markets, and so we need expertise in sociology, conservation and economics. We need to understand the social and cultural dynamics of the local people, as well as the macro- and micro-economic conditions, if we want to successfully link people's livelihoods to conserving a natural resource or environment.

BirdLife South Africa's newly established Community-Based Natural Resource Management Programme takes cognisance of all the above factors, and plans to use the large BirdLife International network to share and learn from other countries.

The purpose of the BLSA CBNRM Programme is to develop the capacity of local communities to manage important biodiversity sites in order to significantly enhance the status of the sites, while at the same time enhancing the people's livelihoods through sustainable and economically viable income-generating activities.

The programme aims to establish and maintain sustainable community-based conservation projects at three of South Africa's most important and threatened biodiversity sites. Appropriate social and economic assessments will be done at each site to ensure that the projects are locally relevant and accepted. The projects will include the development of community participatory conservation-management strategies. Training and skills development will focus on ecology (site monitoring), socio-economics, awareness raising, and project-management skills. The development of key income-generating opportunities in communities will be stepping stones to self-employment and self-sustainability of disadvantaged individuals and communities. Community-based networks will also be established to strengthen conservation management and experience sharing.



Women from the Grass and Reeds project in Wakkerstroom making mats and bags from locally harvested grasses and reeds to be sold to local tourists.

BLSA has already been involved with two of the project sites for a number of years. In Mpumalanga, Wakkerstroom is conserving an important wetland and grasslands and is well known for its birding. B&B establishments have sprung up around the town and more than 300 beds are on offer to cater for the growing influx of tourists. However, the local black people have seen little of this economic growth bettering their community, and their role in the wetland has been insufficient to properly support their livelihoods.

In Gauteng, the Klipriver wetland system originates from the central business district of Johannesburg, meanders past the old goldmines of the Witwatersrand, across Soweto, then via the Vaal River to end in the Vaal Dam. The Klipspruit Wetland in Soweto, a tributary to the Klipriver, is heavily polluted and subjected to the effects of industry and the extreme poverty of the people who live along its banks. Informal settlements have been established on the banks of the wetland for years, and on any given day you will see people bathing, feeding and slaughtering their livestock,

discarding waste, and children playing and being baptised on its banks. The objective at this site would be to work with the multiple stakeholders, both in the area and in government, and to develop strategies to rehabilitate the wetland. Through creating a powerful civil voice, the local people will ensure that the community is heard and empowered during the rehabilitation planning and implementation. Simultaneously, community awareness and environmental education will be delivered to local schools. Ultimately, the rehabilitated wetland will provide a safe and healthy area that can be used for recreation and income generation through tourism.

The third project site is the Chata community and forest belt, which is situated on the Amatola Mountains in the Eastern Cape. BLSA is partnering with a local NGO, Border Rural Committee, who have been working with the Chata for seven years. BLSA aims to develop positive links between local people's livelihoods and the conservation of the indigenous forest and, more specifically, the endangered Cape Parrot. The project aims to develop the

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

- To promote sustainable natural resource utilisation to improve people's livelihoods and to help achieve BirdLife South Africa's conservation objectives.
- To create jobs and develop skills, particularly within the previously disadvantaged communities, by adding value from birds and the habitats they occupy.
- To educate and create awareness among landowners and any community representatives who determine land uses.
- To create awareness at local and national government levels of the value of linking IBAs to people's livelihoods.
- The CBNRM Programme's role is to train local people and create the skills necessary to develop sustainable livelihood activities linked to an IBA that is managed by the community in partnership with local authorities.

Chata community's skills and resources so they too can benefit from avitourism, and to create initiatives to enhance their livelihood security while simultaneously enhancing the habitat and food source of the Cape Parrot.

DANIEL MARNEWICK

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The Klipspruit Wetland in Soweto, with informal settlements on its banks.

Klipspruit Wetland Clean-up Day

As part of the Sasol National Bird Week, BLSA's Community-based Conservation Project in Soweto, Gauteng, organised a successful clean-up campaign along the Klipspruit Wetland at Lakeview Primary School.

The aim was to cultivate a relationship between the wetland as a natural resource and its neighbouring communities, and the partners involved in changing the negative impact that pollution is having on the birds and the residents.

Mosa Mkhali, Johannesburg City Parks Assistant Environmental Educator who is based at the Dorothy Nyembe Environmental Centre, opened her arms to Soweto schools needing outdoor exposure and informed pupils about the services the centre provides. After formal presentations on the positive impact of a clean-up event on the lifestyle of the surrounding communities, the importance of wetland protection, the benefits of species' conservation and the relevance of taking environmental education to schools, everyone rolled up their sleeves and set about collecting waste. Each group was assigned one type of waste – paper, plastics, glass or tins.

Wearing rubber gloves and equipped with refuse bags, we started on the school grounds and – birdwatching all the while – worked our way to the edges of the wetland system and into the Chicken Farm informal settlement, where most of the pupils live. The Klipspruit Wetland provides an interesting birding experience, unknown to many residents. Soweto has three BLSA-trained guides who can accompany birders to various hotspots. There is great avitourism potential and an untapped market in diversifying what the current tour operators provide to tourists, especially among the growing black middle-class who want to invest in Soweto.

Bags full, we headed back to the waste-collection point. After cooling down, we enjoyed lunch provided by Jeff's Mobile Kitchens and Catering. The excitement on the children's faces was a pleasure to



Students from the University of Johannesburg and Soweto schoolchildren clear pollution from the Klipspruit area.

watch as they discovered gifts donated by Sasol. Each received a backpack filled with a Sasol BLSA National Bird Week-branded cap and T-shirt, *My First Book of SA Birds* by Errol Cuthbert, and *Primary Matters* for fun lessons about birds. Lakeview Primary in Dlamini and Nkathuto Primary in Dube were each presented with a pair of Leupold binoculars to use in their Eco-School campaigns and to introduce more pupils to birdwatching as a hobby and, ultimately, as a career choice in conservation.

A moving poem was recited by a second-year University of Johannesburg student, who was one of 20 invited to participate in the clean-up event, reflecting the concerted effort to network with diverse stakeholders and make a meaningful impact on peoples' lives. Pupils from Lakeview also sang a song, indicative of the amount of preparation that ensured the success of the day. Mthetheleli Ningiza, a teacher from Lakeview, gave us the background of the school and expressed his heartfelt appreciation for the students having been given the opportunity to participate. The school director echoed his colleague's sentiments by requesting a sus-

tainable partnership with the school, and suggested that it should adopt a long-term conservation programme.

City Vision, a local newspaper which has a distribution of nearly a million readers, was there to cover the event and publicise it to the rest of Soweto.

RAYMOND RAMPOLOKENG
BLSA COMMUNITY-BASED BIODIVERSITY
CONSERVATION PROGRAMME
PROJECT SITE COORDINATOR: SOWETO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sasol
 Murrie Slotar and Lance Robinson of Wits Bird Club
 Jabu Banda, Chairman of BirdLife Soweto Darwin Initiative and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
 Vivian Malema, Manager: Johannesburg City Parks Environmental Education Unit Lakeview and Nkathuto Primary staff, pupils and governing bodies
 Professor Natasha Erlank and students from the University of Johannesburg
 Mayibuye Wetlands Programme
 City Vision
 The people of Soweto



SOUTH AFRICAN BIRD ATLAS PROJECT 2 (SABAP2)

Online registration for participation in the project is now live. Visit www.sabap2.org to read the latest news and to register. See also page 17 of this issue.

Local Swazi Chief a pro-conservationist

A humble, down to earth, visionary, focused and principled traditional leader, that is how you can describe the Wakkerstroom District Swazi Chief. Chief Ndabazwe Shabalala is a traditional leader for amaDlangampisi Tribal Authority. He is of Royal Swazi blood with a very strong bond to the King Mswati III of the Swaziland Kingdom. Hansco Banda had been lobbying and engaging the chief in conservation issues and challenges facing the Wakkerstroom District.

Chief Ndabazwe has instructed the amaDlangampisi Tribal Authority to include Verraux (Black) Eagle on their letterhead in order to show his nation's support for nature conservation. During his recent meeting with Hansco he stated that a nation who does not conserve and preserve its natural resources is doomed to extinct. He strongly believes that the human race is the product of nature and its complicated processes. That was a very positive, emotional and optimistic statement from Chief Ndabazwe.

The Chief has pledged his full support for the local conservation initiatives for the sake of the endangered biodiversity and future generations.



Photo: Chief Ndabazwe Shabalala and Hansco Banda (BLSA community conservation Wakkerstroom Site manager)

Cata establishes its first ever Eco-Club

The 9th of August 2008 saw the formation and election of Ikhwezi Lentaba Eco-Club Committee. The club's main purpose will be heightening awareness about the environment and working towards building a new society of 'eco-warriors'. This eco-club will be engaging different age groups in the community in recycling, rehabilitating the river catchments, removing alien invasive trees and other environment related activities. Although the club will be run by youth, the elders have vowed to support this initiative. Everyone in a meeting felt that currently there are no environmental initiatives in the village and since nature provides for the community, the community needs to do something to show that they appreciate the this relationship and they will do this for present and future generations. A learner from local High School said "We have always taken our environment for granted, but now we can see how important our environment is to us. Different from urban residents we can still cook our food without having to buy electricity or paraffin whereas they have to pay to cook. Another reason I decide to be involved in this club is that I was involved in Cape Parrot Counting Day and the identification of different bird species that occur in our forest and had a lot of fun and wanted to do this more often".

BirdLife South Africa has been able to send one community member on the Bird Guide Training Course and given out 13 field guide books to learners who took part in the bird identification activity (this was all possible through funds from the Darwin Initiative). The eco-club meeting indicated that bird identification will be part of their activities with the help of newly trained bird guide.



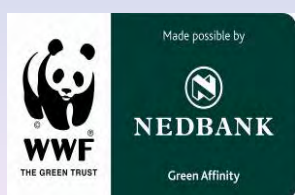
Photo 1 Eco-club members



Photo 2 Eco-club Committee members

The club had the blessings of East London Museum's Educational Officer who has already given the club some ideas on activities and will be linking this club with other eco-clubs in the region to share information, knowledge and experiences. The driving force of this club will be 4 elected members of the committee (shown on the picture 2).

From BirdLife South Africa Community Based Conservation we wish Ikhwezi Lentaba Eco-Club all the success.



Newsletter written and compiled by Daniel Marnewick, Monde Ntshudu & Hansco Banda—Community Based Conservation Division, BirdLife South Africa.
E-mail: community@birdlife.org.za



DARWIN NEWS

Issue 16
October 2009

Newsletter of the UK Darwin Initiative



Promoting biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of resources • <http://darwin.defra.gov.uk>

This is a bumper issue of the Darwin Initiative's newsletter due to a fantastic response to a request for articles on 'Training and Capacity Building'. This is obviously a subject with which many Darwin funded projects have had great success. We feature articles from projects that are able to demonstrate the long-term legacy as a result of Darwin Initiative funding. We also feature relative newcomers to the Darwin Initiative and their hopes for the future with regards to training and capacity building.

In addition to a new cohort of Darwin Initiative Fellows, the Darwin Initiative has also welcomed new faces to the Darwin Advisory Committee (DAC). Following applications from highly talented biodiversity specialists we can now announce the appointment of 5 new Darwin Advisory Committee members, two of whom are featured in this newsletter. The new members are Alistair Gammell (formerly of RSPB), Dr. Brendan Godley (Exeter University), Joanna Elliott (African Wildlife Foundation), Prof. Mary Gibby (RBGE) and Dr. Monique Simmonds (RBG Kew). We hope to feature the remaining new DAC members in future editions of the newsletter.

This quarter saw the close of Stage 1 applications for Main Projects. We received over 180 applications with a record 24 for work in the UK Overseas Territories. The DAC faced the difficult job of reducing this number for Stage 2 and all applicants should have received feedback letters by now. The deadline for applications to Stage 2 is 30th November which is also the closing date for all Post-Project applications. Details of the Scoping, Challenge fund and Fellowship application dates will be announced later in the year.

This quarter we are also pleased to announce the next Darwin Initiative Regional Workshop which is to be hosted in Brazil this year. Full details of funding support for delegates is available on the website (<http://darwin.defra.gov.uk/>). Whilst financial support is restricted, other Darwin Initiative project staff are more than welcome.

The deadline for articles for the next newsletter is the 20th December. The theme of articles of the next newsletter is 'Communicating Biodiversity'.



Department for Environment
Food and Rural Affairs



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Darwin News Editors – Ruth Palmer & Lesley Brown

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Full contact details for the Darwin Secretariat and the Darwin Initiative Programme are available on the Darwin website (<http://darwin.defra.gov.uk>)

Alistair Gammell

OBE



In July this year, I retired from RSPB, having worked at Sandy for just over 40 years. Most of my career has been spent undertaking international work and for the past 15 years, I was the RSPB's International Director, responsible for projects undertaken with BirdLife Partners,

Governments and other NGOs in Europe, Africa, Asia and the UK Overseas Territories as well as for RSPB's work on international legislation. And of course some of the projects we undertook were supported by the Darwin Initiative, so I have practical experience of being a several times Darwin recipient.

Retirement didn't last long – one month - and from September this year, I have started working for The Pew Charitable Trusts to get the Chagos – a UK Overseas territory containing the largest coral atoll in the world - and its surrounding waters, designated as a large marine no-take reserve.

It is a privilege to have the chance to join the Darwin Advisory Committee. The Fund has already made an enormous difference to conservation in the world and I see it as my task to help this to continue and indeed to make it even more successful. For me winning projects have at least 3 components. Clear and achievable end objectives that are measurable in terms of a species' status being improved, local collaborators who really believe in the project and want it to succeed and finally a clear and realistic picture of how the gains achieved by the project are going to be maintained or better still built upon once the project funding has ceased. And we must not be frightened to look at projects five years after they have ended to see what the results have been – if we have got it right, they will be there, thriving and building on the work that the Darwin Initiative supported.

Joanna Elliot



After a decade in finance and management consulting, I have spent the past twenty years trying to help integrate biodiversity conservation into mainstream development practice. Based in Indonesia 1990-1994 I worked with the local umbrella environmental forum, WALHI, as well as WWF, The Nature Conservancy, the

World Bank, USAID and the Ministry of Forestry on a series of conservation economics and policy projects to strengthen the practice of economically sustainable conservation, with a specific focus on tropical forests.

Based in Kenya 1994-99 I worked with Kenya Wildlife Service and then with the African Wildlife Foundation focusing on the economics of landscape scale approaches to conservation. I then worked for DFID 1999-2006 as a Rural Livelihoods Advisor, overseeing a portfolio of biodiversity related work including the DFID Wildlife and Poverty Study in 2003 and acted as the DFID focal point for the Darwin Fund. I now work as Vice President for Program Design and Knowledge Management for the African Wildlife Foundation and a Visiting Fellow at the International Institute for Environment and Development, where my particular interest is the link between biodiversity conservation and local livelihoods.

I am looking forward to joining the Darwin Advisory Committee. The Darwin Fund is a vital source of funding for critically important work across the world, and has become more important as parallel sources of funding for applied biodiversity conservation research have diminished. In my experience the critical factors determining the success and impact of these projects are: the ideas, attitudes and experience of the project leaders, the identification of and role determined for southern partner organisations, the definition of the scope of the project and the underlying questions being tested, and the way in which learning is captured and shared.

Botanical Training and Capacity Building in Nepal

Project ref: 12-030
Mark Watson & Colin Pendry
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Nepal is part of the globally significant Sino-Himalayan Biodiversity Hotspot, but conservation and sustainable development are hindered because it is neither easy to name plants nor get access to information about their biology and uses. A comprehensive Flora provides this and is a priority for Government of Nepal, but local capacity for plant taxonomy is limited and help is needed. A big step forward was made during RBGE's three-year Darwin Initiative (DI) project Building Capacity for Plant Biodiversity, Inventory and Conservation in Nepal (12-030), completed in 2006. Biodiversity research requires a skilled workforce, using the right tools, working in facilities with reliable reference collections. Building capacity in all these areas is way beyond

Photo: Mark Watson @ RBGE.



the scope of a single DI project, so our focus was on increasing skill levels, expertise and experience through intensive hands-on training events in Nepal and the UK. Sixteen Nepalese botanists participated on the workshops, fieldwork expeditions and study visits to the UK. At the time this was hailed a success by partners and external reviewers, but what of the long term benefits - the legacy?

Three years on we have been very encouraged to see many signs of a lasting legacy. Most notable is the personal development of many of our trainees. Almost all of those from the Government and Tribhuvan University have since been promoted and are undertaking biodiversity assessment projects of their own, including one who has set up a regional herbarium. Several trainees are contributing further

PMark Watson @ RBGE



accounts for the Flora, and others have been successful in securing international funding to document plants and their uses in National Parks. We are proud that five of our trainees are now studying for PhDs, three at institutions beyond Nepal. Anjana Giri is studying in Austria and Bhaskar Adhikari is nearing the end of his PhD in Edinburgh. Bhaskar is funded by the Royal Horticultural Society, University of Edinburgh and RBGE to research the genus *Berberis* in Nepal. He has joined our recent expeditions and undertaken fieldwork on his own working in remote areas of Nepal.

Changes in the DI Fellowship enabled a successful application to fund another of our high fliers, Ram Poudel (EIDPS015), to attend RBGE's highly respected MSc course in plant taxonomy and biodiversity. Ram's Fellowship features in a past Darwin News (Issue 12), and he has just started PhD research at Kunming Institute of Botany (China) working on Himalayan Yews, jointly supervised by RBGE staff and funded by the Chinese Academy of Science. Recently Lokesh Shakya (EIDPS021) started a one-year study visit with us funded by a second DI Fellowship to complete his documentation of all 400 orchid species in Nepal. Sangeeta Rajbhandari is undertaking PhD research on the

genus *Begonia* in Nepal, and is on a one-year study visit at RBGE to incorporate DNA data into her work (part funded by the Macintyre and Sibbald Trusts). Finally Sheetal Vaidya has just begun her PhD on *Anaphalis*, a genus prominent in the Himalayas and Umesh Koirala is researching his PhD on the ecology of Terai aquatic macrophytes.

The short UK study visits during the DI project had unexpected benefits and a far reaching legacy. Working with researchers and collections in UK herbaria opened trainee's eyes to possibilities back in Nepal. The curation of the collections is much improved and a programme of digitisation

has now started in the National Herbarium. Although the DI project significantly improved the capacity for biodiversity research in Nepal, it must be followed up with sustained efforts which build on this solid foundation. The further training at MSc and PhD levels, and extended study visits have made significant impact in taking this forwards and extending the legacy, and we will seek to continue these. With hindsight, it would have been worthwhile to also include on the UK study visit, senior staff from the institutes. If they had had the same first hand experiences as their staff then changes in working practices would have been much faster and more extensive and the overall legacy still greater.

Darwin People - Samuel Mutisya

Samuel Mutisya was one of four fellows selected from applicants to the 16th round of Darwin Initiative funding in 2009. Samuel Mutisya has previously been working as an ecologist for the OI Pejeta Conservancy in Laikipia, Kenya. The Darwin Initiative Fellowship will support Samuel to study for an MSc in Conservation Biology at the Durrell Institute for Conservation Ecology (DICE), University of Kent from October 2009. The Darwin Fellowship will provide Samuel with postgraduate training so that he can in future work within OI Pejeta's management team, sustain and develop the programme of human-elephant conflict alleviation and management initiated by local partners in Laikipia, and supported by Darwin project 15-040.



The OI Pejeta Conservancy has the largest breeding population of black rhinos in Kenya and supports other endangered large mammals (including cheetahs and Grevy's Zebra). Its aims are to conserve wildlife and to generate income, mainly from through wildlife tourism for reinvestment in conservation and community development. For the past three years, Samuel has been collaborating directly with Cambridge

University through the Darwin Initiative project Building Capacity to Alleviate Human-Elephant Conflict in North Kenya (15-040). Samuel's work has involved coordinating the monitoring of endangered mammals and vegetation within the conservancy, monitoring elephants that break the conservancy's perimeter fence and raid crops on the neighbouring small-scale farms.

A number of initiatives to strengthen local capacity to manage human-elephant conflict in Laikipia have been initiated with the support from Darwin Project 15-040. The most important work has probably been to support the Laikipia Wildlife Forum and other local partners in the management of the newly-constructed West Laikipia Fence, which on completion will be

163 km in length. The OI Pejeta Conservancy is playing a key role in making this fence effective by providing technical expertise for its maintenance and the management of consistent fence breaking elephants. Samuel will be well placed to contribute to the success of this work when he has completed his fellowship. The management of human-elephant conflict is vitally important for the thousands of small-scale farmers that will depend on the West Laikipia Fence to secure their livelihoods.

Protecting Key South African Biodiversity Sites through Community-based Conservation

Project ref: 15-012

Dr Chris Magin (RSPB) and Daniel Marnewick
(Birdlife South Africa)

RSPB has been working since 2006 with BirdLife South Africa to build the capacities of communities to conserve four critical biodiversity sites: the Soweto and Wakkerstroom wetlands, and the Ongoye and Cata Forests. The project aims to link livelihood improvement of impoverished communities with sustainable natural resource use, capacity building and grassroots conservation action. As this Darwin project funding is drawing to an end, we can finally reflect on the successes of a very intensive project.

Linking livelihoods with conservation meant that training needed to be diverse. At each site, project-appointed community site managers were trained in socio-economic assessments, participatory rural appraisals, media and fundraising and project management. The community beneficiaries were trained in site monitoring, environmental education, site management planning, policy and advocacy, bird guiding and business and financial management.

Overall this has amounted to 228 weeks of training of some 1,500 community members.

The most successful of these sites has been the magnificent Wakkerstroom wetland and surrounding grassland, home to countless mammals, insects and birds, none more important than the globally threatened White-winged Flufftail *Sarothrura ayresi* and Blue Crane *Grus paradisea*. The sleepy little town of Wakkerstroom, four hours drive from Johannesburg, has grown into a bustling tourism village, with visitors attracted by the rich bird life, cultural heritage and scenic beauty of the area.

Unfortunately the area has also been plagued by numerous inequalities resulting from South Africa's apartheid past, resulting in benefits from tourism and the wetland being skewed towards the wealthier community members. The impoverished community has battled for equal access to resources and economic benefits. This Darwin project was able to start building the capacity and skills of these 'poorer' members of the community and showcase some successful projects, demonstrating the wetland's ability to benefit all. Once the community at large started

Blue Cranes: Chris van Rooyen@RSPB



realizing the successes we were having, many racial and cultural walls began to crumble. Capacity building though is about more than just training. It also includes supporting the trainees to use their new found skills and giving them the necessary resources to get started. We supplied community-based enterprises with the necessary financial management tools such as ledgers and bank accounts, and assisted them with the first purchase of goods to begin production. Woodworkers were supplied with chainsaws to cut down exotic trees for carving and handicrafts; artisans producing ornate beadwork were given beads, wire and pliers; and an irrigation scheme was installed for a cooperative vegetable farm. Meanwhile, resource user groups were assisted to develop constitutions for their cooperatives or associations,

Manager said “*For the community of Wakkerstroom to benefit from bird tourism, it is important that they align their activities to the needs of the birders*”. Muzi Makhubu, a self-taught wood carver, is a clear example of this. He was producing wooden statues in his back yard to try to eke a living. The project gave Muzi additional skills training in wood carving and developing a business plan, and provided the necessary equipment. It also contracted Muzi to carve four live size Grey Crowned Cranes (see photo 1) to use as decoys to attract wintering cranes to the wetland for birdwatchers. Muzi says “*I never thought that carving could be linked to tourism and bird conservation, but this is evidence that it can*”. With the project’s help Muzi is now negotiating with commercial farmers to cut down their alien invasive trees for wood and sell them similar crane decoys, whilst his wooden art work has become a sought-after souvenir by visitors to Wakkerstroom.

Wood-carver Muzi
Makhubu: Hansco Banda



and management plans to ensure sustainable use.

To date, the Wakkerstroom project has supported seven community-based enterprises, which have 44 direct beneficiaries and 250 indirect beneficiaries (family members). These activities have earned more than £7,500 since their inception. For people living off 60 pence a day, this is a significant increase in household income.

Hansco Banda, the Wakkerstroom Project Site

The project’s work with other resource users of the Wakkerstroom wetland, e.g. the reed harvesters, has resulted in the mitigation of threats to the wetland, such as annual, unplanned burning. The reed cutters were involved in developing a sustainable use management plan for the removal of reeds, and were given training and skills to develop a small business selling reed fences to local residents. As a result of this group having a say in the management of the resource, and being given the skills to earn money from the resource, the wetland has not been burnt in the last two years.

The results of this project are very encouraging and have developed a solid foundation for further work. Essential skills and capacity have been developed on the ground, but it would be premature to withdraw from the communities and sites now. The RSPB and BirdLife South Africa are therefore currently trying to secure further funding to continue and consolidate its existing success.

From trainee to trainer: tackling bushmeat in Madagascar

Project Ref: 17-006

Richard Jenkins (Madagasikara Voakajy)

Capacity is not built in a day. Very often it is not built by a single project. Capacity needs to be nurtured and supported, with individuals' confidence increasing as they face emerging challenges which allow them to develop their capabilities and become more independent. A series of Darwin Initiative grants supporting vertebrate conservation in Madagascar have allowed Julie Razafimanahaka to make the journey from student trainee to trainer. She is now host-country coordinator for a Darwin-funded project tackling the urgent issue of bushmeat hunting in this biodiversity hotspot.

Julie Razafimanahaka and Julia Jones Faralah Tefimanana



Julie's first contact with the Darwin Initiative was in 2003 as a student trainee on a bat conservation project through the University of Aberdeen. She learned the basics about bat fieldwork and biology and obtained her diploma from the University of Antananarivo in 2004. Identified early on as a potential leader by Darwin Initiative project staff, Julie worked on the follow-up project funded by the Darwin Initiative that created a Malagasy biodiversity conservation organisation called Madagasikara Voakajy and became responsible for their environmental education projects. With the support of Madagasikara Voakajy she has successfully applied for a number of awards, including a WWF scholarship and an overseas bursary from the

Julie Razafimanahaka radio tracking in 2006 Ramaro



British Ecological Society. These allowed her to conduct her Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies and establish a research project on the endemic leaf-nosed bats in eastern and southern Madagascar.

A key moment in Julie's professional development was winning a Darwin Initiative fellowship to study for an MSc in Applied Ecology and Conservation at the University of East Anglia in the UK. Julie says *"My MSc was really good as I learnt so much from the lecturers who have a very different approach to teaching than I had experienced in Madagascar. We were encouraged to use the library and to teach ourselves more, which is a useful skill for the workplace"*. Crucially, she was able to return to her post at Madagasikara Voakajy, as agreed, in September 2008 when she took up a new position as manager of the 'Sustainability and Outreach Programme'.

This was well timed, as it coincided with the early stages of Madagasikara Voakajy's drive to tackle the bushmeat issue. Julie is now host-country coordinator for a joint project between Madagasikara Voakajy and Bangor University. She is leading a five-person team as well as coordinating all student and staff training for the organisation. She is now also supervising diploma students from the University of Antananarivo. 'I'm reminded of 2003 when I first introduced myself to Darwin Initiative project staff in the hope of obtaining some training and capacity building, and wishing to become a project leader in the future'.

Bushmeat studies abound from sub-Saharan Africa but there have been remarkably few from Madagascar. However evidence from the initial studies which Madagasikara Voakajy have carried out suggest that hunting may pose a threat to some threatened species and that wild meat contributes significantly to rural livelihoods where alternative animal protein sources are limited. The new Darwin Initiative project combines the experience of Madagasikara Voakajy staff with the expertise of British scientists from Bangor University to quantify the pressure on threatened species while investigating opportunities

for sustainably management of game species. With Julie leading by example, it will combine science, community involvement and student training to help the Malagasy government address this important issue which is currently moving up the political agenda. *“This project gives me the opportunity to put into practice the skills I have learnt. At the end of this project, I hope the students, staff and community members I’ll be working with, will be leading on new projects for the conservation of Malagasy biodiversity while sustainably using it”.*

Assessing the Impact of Exotic Salmonids on Chilean waters

Project Ref: 15-020

Dr Carlos Garcia de Leaniz (University of Wales)

Photo: Patricia Beristain



Students attended our workshops in some numbers and received updated information from national and international expert on the threats posed by exotic fish species, and the use of various tools for studying the origin and impacts of exotic fish escapes. Practical ‘hands-on’ sessions were scheduled at the end of our last two workshops. Here students were taught to use software for monitoring and assigning fish escapes, and learned through dissection and scale reading how to identify recent escapees from naturalized fish.

In addition to the workshops, extensive field training has been provided to 13 students and volunteers, both from Chile and overseas, resulting in 10 theses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Through our project, students have been able to appreciate the beautiful landscapes of southern Chile, but also to study – and learn to mitigate – the process of biological invasions in situ.

Photo: Daniel Isla



Three international workshops have been organized within the framework of the Darwin Initiative “Reducing the Impact of Exotic Aquaculture on Chilean Aquatic Biodiversity” (www.biodiversity.cl), and these have been popular with students and stakeholders, fulfilling important training and outreach components. We met all major stakeholders at the beginning of the project in 2007(15-020), when a proud Chilean salmon industry (based on exotic species) was still operating under the paradigm of unlimited growth, solely regulated by market forces. We saw them again at the end of 2009 when the industry had been decimated by the outbreak of the deadly ISA virus, several massive escapes of invasive salmonids had occurred, and a Code of Best Practices was badly needed.

Darwin People - Eric Blencowe

How did you get involved in the Darwin Initiative?

I was appointed to the post of Head of the International Biodiversity Policy Unit at Defra, which covers both the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Darwin Initiative. It also looks after our biodiversity interests in the UK's Overseas Territories.

What did you do before you worked on Darwin?

After leaving university in Manchester I started working in town and country planning. Realising fairly early on that my interests lay elsewhere I swiftly moved across to what was then known as the Wildlife Division in the, then, Department of the Environment. With short breaks in other thematic areas I have largely stayed within this discrete area of work. Having said that, the work has taken me to Bonn, where in the 1990s I spent three years establishing the first permanent secretariat for the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe (coining it EUROBATS), and setting up European Bat Night, which still runs annually across the continent.

After a brief spell back in the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions in the late 1990s, where I was responsible for UK Government interests in the World Conservation Union (IUCN), I took on the job of Private Secretary to the



Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme, Dr Klaus Töpfer, a former Environment Minister of Germany. This role gave me a fascinating insight into the workings of international environmental governance right at their very core. It involved an enormous amount of travelling to the US and across the world,

for meetings, visits, and World Environment Day, which for me was the most memorable occasion as it involved a three-day visit to Cuba, where I met Fidel Castro!

After that I returned to the UK to the renamed Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), sponsoring the Environment Agency, before returning finally to my chosen field of biodiversity, back in Bristol.

What do you enjoy about working on the Darwin Initiative?

I enjoy my work with biodiversity immensely, both in developing countries and in our own Overseas Territories. My greatest source of pride has to be working with the Darwin Initiative, and seeing how much its legacy is changing things for the better, in those countries where it counts most.

Information for Authors

Darwin News is published quarterly. Suggestions for articles can be submitted any time. In the first instance only titles should be sent. Articles will then be commissioned for specific issues.

If you would like to publicise any events such as workshops, you can also submit this information and it will be posted on the Darwin newsletter information page.

Building University Capacity to Train and Support Cambodian Conservationists

Project ref: EIDPO028
Dr Jenny Daltry (Fauna & Flora International)

Photo: Heng Sokrith



Cambodia is biologically one of the richest yet least-known nations in the world. It forms an important part of the Indo-Burma Hotspot and holds many of the best remaining forests and wetlands in Southeast Asia, with countless endemic and globally threatened species. Following the mass persecution of educators and scientists, and the systematic destruction of almost all written materials during the Pol Pot regime, Cambodia's ability to manage its natural heritage has been severely hampered by a chronic lack of both skilled people and biological information.

This has worrying repercussions, because Cambodian biodiversity faces escalating pressures from a variety of threats, including major new extractive industries. For example, while environmental impact assessments are required by law for all new developments, too few nationals possess the necessary qualifications or experience to undertake these properly. As a result, many major projects such as mines, hydropower dams and logging concessions are being authorised without any real forethought of what impact they will have on the environment or local

communities.

This innovative Darwin Initiative project, led by Fauna & Flora International (FFI) in partnership with the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), Harrison Institute and the Government of Cambodia, is creating a new generation of conservation trainers and technicians to address the skills gap and meet the country's environmental needs (14-037). Activities began in earnest in 2005, with the launch of a Master of Science course in Biodiversity Conservation, the first higher degree course in Cambodia. The new curriculum was initially designed with assistance from university lecturers and conservation professionals from the UK and around the world. These are gradually being replaced by trained Cambodian lecturers.

More than 120 students have enrolled in the MSc course to date, receiving advanced training in such subjects as 'Community-based natural resource management', 'Species conservation', 'Environmental impact assessment', 'Project management' and 'Fund-raising'. Many of the students are already 'in service' employees of government departments and NGOs, and thus well-placed to immediately apply their new knowledge and skills to their work.

The Darwin project staff and students, along with other FFI initiatives in Cambodia, are also addressing the pressing need for reliable

Photo: Jeremy Holden © FFI



Photo : Jenny Daltry@FFI



information. For example, Neang Thy, a Ministry of Environment officer, spent two years developing the first field guide to Cambodia's amphibians, with guidance from FFI mentors, and raised the number of known species in Cambodia from nine to more than sixty. Dozens of original research projects have been conducted throughout the country with support from this project, ranging from baseline species inventories to assessments of national laws and development policies.

To further understand Cambodia's little-known biodiversity, the Darwin project has established the first national herbarium and zoological reference collection in purpose-built, climate-controlled rooms at the university. These collections are an important step in reversing the historical pattern of all biological material from Cambodia being lodged in western institutions, where few Cambodians scholars can afford to access them. With several hundred specimens catalogued to date, the new national collections are freely accessible and will be especially valuable in future systematic studies and development of much-needed identification guides.

To disseminate the growing knowledge, the Darwin project launched Cambodia's first

peer-reviewed scientific journal - the Cambodian Journal of Natural History - in 2008. The journal is free and encourages Cambodians and visiting scientists to publish research on any topic that will further understanding and management of Cambodia's biodiversity. Novice authors benefit from the journal's voluntary network of expert advisors from Cambridge, Harvard

and other universities across the world.

The Darwin project, with the support of Darwin Post Project funding (EIDPO28), is presently establishing a Centre for Biodiversity Conservation within the RUPP to consolidate these many achievements and provide a permanent national hub for training, original conservation research, information dissemination and inter-agency collaboration. Talented graduates from the MSc course are being offered placements at the centre, as the first, full-time scientists in Cambodia, with unprecedented opportunities to support their country's conservation management efforts.

While there is still more to be done, the Darwin project has truly achieved its goal of creating a new generation of skilled and highly motivated Cambodian conservationists, who are benefiting from host of new resources and a rapidly-growing network of peers, trainers and affiliated scientists.

The project team is grateful to the Darwin Initiative for its vital support since 2005. This work has also been generously assisted by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and, since 2009, the Macarthur Foundation.

The Waria Valley Community Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods Programme



Project ref: 15-041
Peter Raines
Coral Cay Conservation

After three years of hard work and long hours of many volunteers and participants, the Coral Cay Conservation and Darwin Initiative's Waria Valley community-based conservation project in Papua New Guinea (PNG), has successfully concluded. The local NGO and community actors included Bris Kanda, The Forest Research Institute, Papua New Guinea University of Technology, and The Village Development Trust, in addition to Coral Cay Conservation, the Darwin Initiative and Jacqueline Fisher Associates of the UK. From its inception in 2006, the Waria Valley Conservation Project (WVCP) helped to implement a number of livelihood projects. Developing a sense of ownership for members of the local community was seen as vital for this project's success, therefore free handouts of materials were seen as de-motivational and were purposefully avoided during the project.

The many engaging and imaginative alternative livelihood projects implemented by volunteers included: building chicken houses for people to raise their own chickens for food, a tree nursery for reforestation, training people in pond construction for sustainable fishing and helping the St. John's women's group with baking and sewing projects, which would provide uniforms for local elementary schools. All of these activities greatly help to reduce the locals' dependency on the rainforest, therefore contributing to its conservation, while giving local communities the skills and knowledge needed to improve their standard of living in a way that best suits them.

According to research leader, Dr. Craig Turner, *"the project has passed several of the initial tests and*

achieved successes on many fronts, in research, education, training and livelihoods." Additionally, chief scientist Jeff Dawson remarked that, *"the ultimate success of any such project ... is down to the local community, and without their support throughout my time there, the achievements we made would not have been possible."*

All of the hard work by these groups, the local community and volunteers has led to the development of an environmental management plan for the future. Part of this plan aims to have the Waria Valley Conservation Project registered as a local NGO, which will ensure the continued conservation success of the work ignited by CCC, The Darwin Initiative, JFA and most importantly the people of the Waria Valley.

Photo: Coral Cay



In addition to the alternative livelihood projects, this project also included the first ever rainforest surveys to be conducted in the Waria Valley, resulting in the identification of over 221 species of birds, bats, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. In the upcoming months and years, the information gathered will be analysed and habitat /species maps can be developed for measured and effective community led conservation management in the area.

Building the Capacity of Indigenous Conservationists

Through its Darwin Initiative awards for Malaysia and Mexico, the Global Diversity Foundation (GDF) and its academic, government and NGO partners offer diverse training opportunities for indigenous people involved in community conservation and collaborative management initiatives.

Dr Gary Martin (Global Diversity Foundation)

Initiative project (17-018) in partnership with the National Forestry

Over the course of eight years – funded by a series of two Darwin projects (13-009, 17-030) and one post-project (EIDP020) – GDF has been working in partnership with Sabah Parks and Partners of Community Organisations (PACOS) to develop the skills of 21 Dusun indigenous researchers in four communities along the Papar River valley, which borders the Crocker Range Park in Sabah, Malaysia. The community contingent of our Resource Catchment Assessment Team, comprising young to middle-aged men and women, has become

Commission, GeoConservación and the National Polytechnic Institutes' Interdisciplinary Research Center for Integrated Regional Development. It focuses on capacity building for Chinantec people involved in community conservation of cloud and lowland tropical forests in Oaxaca, Mexico. The local researchers supported by the project are part of the technical team of another partner, the Regional Committee for Chinantla Alta Natural Resources (CORENCHI), a community-based organization created by six Chinantec communities of northern Oaxaca in 2005. CORENCHI, along with village authorities, has been responsible for setting aside 27,564 hectares of community conserved areas, and for obtaining over £1.7 million in payments for environmental services from the Mexican National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR).

Resource Catchment Team and 3D model of Buavan-Kionon

Santiago Tlatepusco stream. José Ángel Benjamín



proficient in diverse conservation research approaches, ranging from monitoring of hunting activities to creating participatory 3-dimensional models of their lands. They are also experienced in conducting social research, including techniques such as livelihood surveys, demographics and open interviewing about resource use. Our current Darwin project, which started in August 2009, allows us to extend this training to four additional communities in the upper Papar River valley and another in the southeast of the Park.

In April 2009, GDF launched its Mexican Darwin

As part of this project, eight community researchers are expanding skills they learned during previous training workshops on participatory video, plant collecting, legal frameworks for conservation, scientific and community tourism and sustainability of non-timber forest products. They are gaining practical experience in managing biological stations and cultural museums established in their communities and in developing participatory biodiversity registers that identify biological resources of subsistence and potential commercial value. Much of the capacity building supported by our Darwin Initiative projects take place in the

target communities, but some specialised training is conducted in urban venues. For example, in September 2009 four of the Sabah community researchers attended an introductory workshop in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah's capital, on biodiversity and GIS. Conducted by Shahir Shamsir and Muhammad Al-Hadi of the Bioinformatics Research Group of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, the workshop demonstrated online mapping tools, biodiversity databases and GIS software programs.

specific conservation goals. The Dusun Resource Catchment Assessment Team is contributing to the nomination of Crocker Range Park as Sabah's first biosphere reserve by mapping community use zones and documenting local agricultural, fishing, gathering and hunting activities. The CORENCHI team in Mexico is preparing community conserved area management plans, which are essential to gaining consensus on the use of landscapes and resources as well as maintaining certification by the Mexican National Natural Protected Areas Commission (CONANP).

Photo: TH Wong



In Mexico, the community researchers will continue their learning process by participating in community-based workshops given by teams of Mexican and UK specialists, followed by supervised work experience. Specific workshops on community mapping and participatory GIS will enhance CORENCHI's ability to zone the conserved area and provide signs for all boundaries, roads and paths. Specialists in environmental education will provide training for residents on transmitting local ecological knowledge and sharing it with visitors. Workshops on ethnoecology and social science methods will build the capacity of community researchers to conduct floristic and faunal inventories, livelihood analyses and resource management studies. Sessions on nature tourism will aim to improve the infrastructure – such as the cabins being built in each community – and prepare the communities as a whole to receive visitors in areas of public access.

In both Malaysia and Mexico, the training and capacity building is oriented towards the achievement of

An important aspect of both projects is building community awareness of best practices by working with external researchers from academia, government and NGOs. Following principles established by the CBD, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and Code of Ethics of the International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE), the communities require free, prior and informed consent for any outside research conducted on local knowledge, landscapes and resources. This includes negotiating community research agreements signed by project partners and conducting periodic community participatory evaluations of the progress of each study. Inspired by the work of Natural Justice (www.naturaljustice.org.za) on community biocultural diversity protocols in Kenya, India and South Africa, GDF will work with the community researchers to develop similar documents in Oaxaca and Sabah.

In May 2010, we will have the unique opportunity to bring together representatives of Chinantec and Dusun communities during a workshop and session on community conservation held in conjunction with the XIIth ISE Congress in Tofino, Canada. Together with indigenous participants from other regions, they will discuss progress in establishing Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas, Indigenous Conservation Territories and Tribal Parks worldwide.

Professor Simon Thirgood



It is with great regret that we report the death of Professor Simon Thirgood of the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute on Sunday 30th August, when the building he was in collapsed during a sudden storm. Simon was in Ethiopia setting up the project “Building natural resource monitoring capacity in Ethiopia’s key Afro-montane ecosystems” (17-007), a project to build community capacity conserving and monitoring biodiversity funded by the Darwin Initiative.

The project’s aim is to build the human and institutional capacity of protected area management authorities and community members to monitor community-based natural resource management in four key afro-montane areas – two national parks and two community-managed protected areas.

Ethiopia’s highlands harbour globally significant biodiversity including flagship species such as the mountain nyala and Ethiopian wolf, all of which are listed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as Critically Endangered or Endangered as well as other endemic plant, amphibian and bird species. The highlands are some of the last intact afro-montane ecosystems in Ethiopia, as well as vital water towers supplying arid and semi-arid areas in Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Egypt.

97% of the original habitat has been lost to human agriculture, grazing and unsustainable natural

resource use. With resource-dependent local communities rapidly growing, unsustainable resource use continues to threaten conservation and human well-being in these already impoverished areas. In order to implement biodiversity conservation and sustainability, local authorities, local communities and international non-governmental organisations are working towards Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM).

In addition to the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, the University of Aberdeen, the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources, Oromia Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau, Amhara Parks Development and Protection Authority, Bale Mountains National Park, Simien Mountains National Park, Guassa Community Conservation Area, Abune Yoseph Community Conservation Area, the local NGO Forum for the Environment and the International NGO Frankfurt Zoological Society are involved in the project.

Simon was born in Liberia on 6th December 1962, and brought up in Vancouver, Canada, where his father, was a Professor of Forestry Policy. At an early age Simon developed insights into the relationships between the natural, social and economic sciences for sustainable land management, which he would deploy with distinction in later years.

In 1980, he came to Scotland to read Zoology at Aberdeen and after graduating Simon worked offshore, to earn enough money to be able to afford to volunteer as a research assistant at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (ITE) Banchory. Simon later seized the opportunity to broaden his experience into conservation biology, at Birdlife International where he worked on the Putting Biodiversity on the Map project.

In 1992, he returned to Scotland to work for the Game Conservancy Trust and it was during this employment that Simon worked alongside Karen Laurenson, a veterinary epidemiologist. Karen had

maintained research links with projects in Africa and, as their friendship grew, they explored together a number of issues, including the threat of Ethiopian wolves becoming extinct from rabies transmitted by domestic dogs. Simon moved to a Research Fellowship at the Centre for Conservation Science but within a couple of years an opportunity arose to share their common commitment to conservation in Africa; when they both worked for the Frankfurt Zoological Society, based in the Serengeti National Park. Although, the Serengeti is an ecologist's heaven, it has its challenges for rearing a young family. As their children approached school age, Simon was open to being head-hunted to the post of Head of Ecology at the Macaulay Institute in Aberdeen which he joined in 2004.

While Simon was a natural leader, he was an equally great collaborator. He was an inspiring role model, and unusually generous with his time spent helping early career researchers, who appreciated his directness, enthusiasm and 'get up and go'. An outstanding field ecologist, Simon was highly principled, energetic, articulate,

engagingly amusing and highly intelligent, and caring passionately about wildlife, society and, most of all, his friends and family. Simon is survived by his wife Karen, their two young daughters, Pippa and Katie.

If you would like to contribute to a lasting legacy in Simon's memory, his family have been raising money to create scholarships to allow children, living in the Bale Mountains of Ethiopia and who could not otherwise afford it, to attend secondary school. This will give them the education and opportunity they need to pursue livelihoods that are not dependant on the unsustainable use of the forest and other natural resources of this exceptionally important area for international wildlife conservation. Donations are being channeled through Born Free Foundation, supporters of the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Project.

If you would like to contribute please do so through the following website where GiftAid can be reclaimed by UK taxpayers: <http://www.justgiving.com/Simon-Thirgood>

An obituary for Simon is available here <http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/ProfThirgood/>

Darwin Calendar

- 26 October Darwin Lecture - Natural History Museum, London
- 18 November Darwin Initiative Regional Workshop 2009, Brazil
- 30 November Closing date for Stage 2 and Post Project applications



Community Based Conservation - Empowering local people for local conservation and benefit sharing

Newsletter Issue 4, November 2008

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Greetings from the Editor/Division Manager

This has been a productive year for us and so not to steal the limelight from any of our achievements, this end of year newsletter is a bit longer. This year saw the community based conservation projects really come into their own. The trick with our community work, and what we believe makes it effective and hard hitting, is that it is very intensive and needs to adhere to the principles of sociology or anthropology (depending on which discipline you follow). A lot of time initial is spent understanding the people you work with and becoming a trusted member of that community. It reminds me of the anthropological adage:

‘Every North American tee-pee consists of five family members, namely the father, the mother, two children and an anthropologist.’

The division’s project site staff have not only become integrated in their respective communities, they have also become mentors to the youth, ‘partners’ in small community businesses, conservation practitioners, mediators and true community icons. Of course they were not able to please everyone and hence they also made enemies in a certain mining company and of corrupt officials.

Accolades for 2008 must go to Monde Ntshudu, Martin Ramothibe, Hansco Banda and Xolani Ngebenza for their outstanding work. Next year will be even more exciting as we see continued benefits rolling out for both the people and birds.

1. Communities Take Responsibility for their IBAs

a. **Wakkerstroom livestock owners shaping their destiny** by Hansco Banda

Sixty-six livestock owners attended BirdLife South Africa meeting organised for African livestock owners with the aim of forming an inclusive and democratic association. Hansco Banda presided over a tense and a slightly emotional meeting. The attendants listened attentively as Hansco presented to them BirdLife's findings about challenges facing livestock owners regarding grazing within Wakkerstroom municipal land.

Hansco urged the livestock owners to become organized and unite so as to resolve their challenges in an amicable manner. The meeting agreed unanimously to form a livestock owners association. Six individuals were elected to form Uthaka Livestock Owners Association's management committee. "This is the dawn of a new era and a sign of hope for the destitute residents of Wakkerstroom to shape a common destiny ever since 1994.": commented Mr. Isaac Nkosi who is the newly elected management committee member.

There is a continuous influx of people from surrounding rural areas to Wakkerstroom municipal land with their livestock. Hansco believes that the newly formed association is the vehicle to address grazing and environmental challenges and the degradation caused by overgrazing around Wakkerstroom.

b. **Participatory Forest Management for Cape Parrots** by Monde Ntshudu

In August a group of stakeholders came together to elect Steering Committee Members for Participatory Forest Management (PFM) in the Cata forests, part of the Amothole Mistbelt IBA. The PFM includes communities in the management of state owned forest or community owned forest (as in the case of the Cata community). The stakeholders included representatives from DWAF, Rance Timbers, Opstel, the Communal Property Association and Community members. This meeting felt it was high time that all forest users do something about the state of the forest since there was no representative body to take up or address forest use concerns. Everyone agreed that the forest is being utilized unsustainably and that impacts negatively on the habitat of the different wildlife species, most importantly the endangered Cape Parrot, *Poicephalus robustus*. There are currently fewer than 1,200 birds left in the wild. Key threats are habitat destruction, seasonal depletion of food sources, low suitable nest-site availability, illegal trapping for trade and disease. The PFM agreed that in order to manage and save Cape Parrots and other wild life in Cata, proper management measures need to be developed and implemented. The meeting therefore elected a Steering Committee which will be the driving force on developing the plan.



"This PFM Management Plan will be our tool to protect the Cape Parrot habitat and therefore enabling them to breed without interference, and it is also good that this management plan will be available in our own language" according to the recently trained local Bird Guide.

2. Trees of Hope in Kliptown

The BLSA Community Based Conservation and Education Divisions celebrated Arbor day with Lilydale and Nka thuto primary schools, where some 120 people participated and planted 20 trees. Learners performed a drama on the importance and function of trees. A



further 16 trees were planted in the Kliptown community where about 40 people participated. This BLSA project will continue planting more trees in the community as part of our community conservation projects and contributing towards reaching Joburg City's target of planting a million trees by 2009.

3. **Young Birding Ambassadors in Soweto** by Martin Ramothibe

Ubuntu Eco- Club have been involved in raising awareness around the importance of conserving the wetland and birds in Soweto-Kliptown for the past four years. Twelve of the members underwent training on the basics of bird guiding. The club is busy developing a birding trail along the Klipspruit wetland which links Freedom Square to Thokhoza park where visitors will also get the opportunity to see some of Soweto's heritage sites such as Walter Sisulu and one of the oldest churches in Soweto known as Regina Namunde. Every Saturday the club has a 'culture of birding' walk along the wetlands recording and monitoring bird species. Recently the club has managed to plant 30 indigenous trees along the wetland to mark the Heritage-Birding trail. They are ready to take any interested local and international tourists on the walking trail.



4. **Vegetables for Food and Money**

a. Turning a Dumping Site into a Food Garden by Martin Ramothibe



Through the support of the BLSA Community Based Conservation project, members of the Kliptown community have joined together to develop food gardens on an existing dumping site in Kliptown- Soweto. This dumping site lies between the wetland and railway line. The vegetable growers are called Kgothlang Community Gardens which consist of eight local people. The group will be supported in terms of gardening tools and advice on how to manage the gardens and market their products. Some of them are already selling to local people. In schools like Nkathuto and Lakeview we have also developed food gardens and they are selling vegetables to local people.

b. Cata home gardens go Organic by Monde Ntshudu

The high price of food, taxi fares and energy are severely affecting poor, rural communities. Most families in Cata rely on pension grants to keep them going during the month and this is not enough. They have food gardens but insects seem to be a problem and there is no money for pesticides. BirdLife South Africa and Border Rural Committee partnered and called in the expertise of Earth Harmony Innovators who have done extensive work on organic farming in rural Transkei.



Before BLSA and BRC intervened most of the households had already given up home gardening and so the introduction of the organic vegetables workshop brought hope back to them. The workshop covered theoretical and practical methods on how to protect plants from insect damage, the value of weeds in building soil fertility, making compost heaps, the use of herbs for healing, ways of working with nature such as harvesting rainwater instead of letting it run etc.

The value of this is that they don't have to spend a cent in doing this. With recent rains in the Eastern Cape their gardens are looking good. The participants said this about the workshop: "We will not only apply these methods in our gardens but will share what we learnt with people in our village. We will work with nature and show respect for life. We will keep our homestead tidy as we collect tins, bones, etc to use in planting cycles. We thank BirdLife South Africa and Border Rural Committee that now we don't have to buy vegetables and so we can save money for other things and sell our very healthy vegetables to people who don't have time to plant vegetables. We realize now how important it is to work with the environment not against it. This improves the health and energy of the area the same way as we felt positive in the forest."

5. Money Money Money \$\$\$

The results speak for themselves... this year the division established 18 community owned small business enterprises, with a total of 108 direct beneficiaries (excluding family members) who earned R110,000 this year (mostly in the last half of the year). These businesses vary in size, but all contribute to the conservation of the natural habitat. Soon you will be able to view all the products and services offered by these projects on our website (see below).

a. *Fighting Poverty in Informal Settlements* by Martin Ramothibe

Masithandane Women's project is based in Soweto-Kliptown and is a initiative of the BLSA Community Based Conservation project. Ten women have undergone bead work training in order to make birds with beads. The group has sold some of their products to local and international tourists such as NBA players (USA). The group can design and make beaded goods and traditional clothes for different cultures. They are looking for more support in terms of marketing, resources and management if any one/corporate would like to support the group with resources.



b. *BirdLife South Africa for the people* by Hansco Banda

As you approach the village of Wakkerstroom you wonder as to what the ordinary people do to survive and to maintain their families. There are no industries and the majority of the people depend on agriculture as their means of survival. The majority of the economically active people is swallowed up by big cities like Johannesburg for employment while others are employed in the farming sector around Wakkerstroom.

That is the reason why the Community Based Conservation Division has a mandate to initiate and support any kind of income generating activity that will improve the socio-economic status of the previously disadvantaged Wakkerstroom community. To date, 8 income generating activities have been initiated and supported by BirdLife, namely community bird guides, poultry, grass and reeds, beadwork, community vegetable garden, medicinal plants harvesters, bird carving and traditional dancers' projects. Most of these community projects have business plans, constitutions and bank accounts. Recently BirdLife supported

Igugulethu Community Vegetable Garden Project with start up capital and irrigation material which costed in the region of R40 000.

At an open day that was organized by AmaJuba hospital in Volksrust, the Community Based Conservation Division displayed and marketed products that are produced by its initiated community projects.



“BirdLife South Africa has an obligation to play a role in reducing poverty levels through conservation.” commented Hansco Banda who is the Wakkerstroom Project Site Manager for BLSA.

6. Visit our Website

The Division has revamped its webpage and you can now meet the team, read about our vision and projects, do a virtual tour of our sites, see the products the communities produce and begin to appreciate the conservation impact that such intensive community projects can deliver. Please visit us at www.blsacommunityconservation.org.za or follow the community conservation links on www.birdlife.org.za

7. BirdLife Membership

BirdLife SA is currently on a membership drive and we encourage you to apply for membership on the BirdLife SA website www.birdlife.org.za and discover the benefits of supporting one of the top conservation organizations in the country.

The Fast and the Featherless by Daniel Marnewick



They are Fast, they are Featherless and they are Fearless. Like true hybrid cyclist-birders, they do it standing up, sitting down, uphill, downhill, in the rain or scorching heat - but always with binos around the neck and saddle between the legs... and of course in the name of birds. If reading that tired you out, then you will understand the lengths that BirdLife’s newly inaugurated The Fast & the Featherless cycling team is willing to cycle to raise funds for BirdLife’s conservation work. We have entered the toughest, longest, hardest races and we asking people to sponsor our efforts, either by per/km or lump sum donation. We are also looking for corporates to be a brand sponsor for a year.

So far the team has sweated in some four tough races, namely Dirty Harry, Crater Cruise (2 days), 94.7 mountain bike and road races among others, tallying almost 400km per person. Our last race for the year will be the grueling Sabie Experience middle of December, which will see 8 team members riding four days through the mountainous Sabie forests covering 250kms.

Support our dedicated team of riders and make our blood, sweat and tears worth the effort by sponsoring us at www.birdlife.org.za and click on the Fast&Featherless tab down the left.



8. Thanking Our Funders

As always, none of our work would be possible without our funders. So a big Thank You to:



Thanks very much for reading this newsletter and until next time enjoy your birding! We wish you all a relaxing and safe holiday and festive season.

To unsubscribe send the word unsubscribe to community@birdlife.org.za

ESCAPE ROUTE
STUTTERHEIM, KEI ROAD,
CATHCART &
KEISKAMHAKOEK

**SPECIAL
POINTS
OF INTER-
EST:**

- 17-18 Sept
American
training in
the arts.
- 19 Sept–
Brazilian film
crew visiting
the eEscape
Route.
- Social to be
announced

**INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:**

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LED of the
Month

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tile World

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tion & Envi-
ronmental
Issues at
Cata



eEscape Newsletter Vol. 12

August 2009

eEscape Route is South Africa's LED

of the Month!

What an amazing accolade to receive! Within only 18 months, to be awarded the LED of the month for South Africa is indeed an incredible achievement.

On 24 June this year, during the United Nations Conference on The World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, the question of how the global economic crisis would affect developing countries was raised. Local Economic Development is considered crucial as it enables individuals to work for themselves in a time when unemployment is on the rise.

Several projects on the eEscape Route have been training students in fields such as signage, pottery, ceramics, jewelry making, beading, embroidery and quilting. On the adventure side, young girls have learned not only to work with horses, but become guides through our



local indigenous forest.

Included in the year was TEP training which took these apprentices through the business side incorporating computer skills, marketing and business training to name a few subjects.

Team work is important throughout the route, whether providing accommodation, ac-



TEP Training

activities, attractions or working in the office with the significant task of marketing eEscape. Community projects such as the Wetlands Campaign and the Clean up Operation for Stutterheim have brought residents from all walks of life together to work towards a common goal. This strong community based ideology is one of the reasons for success and allows us to work together in order to pro-



mote the area and provide an exciting new holiday venue.

Tourism is a wonderful channel for creating jobs and income into an area. As more tourists pass through Amahlathi, not only will those directly employed in tourism benefit, but also shops, chemists, the municipality and the general population as more opportunities arise with the growth of tourism and it's needs.

Congratulations go to all members and students of the eEscape Route who have shown great commitment and worked hard throughout the year, bringing us to being named this months Best Project in South Africa



Xmas in July

Well, it definitely felt like a Northern hemisphere Xmas in Hogsback on the weekend of 24-26 July. With a great amount of snow having fallen the two days before the festival and the road from Cathcart having been closed, the area certainly resembled a winter wonderland. Visitors had fun making snowmen at every opportunity and there was a procession of 'men' along the entrance to Hogsback village.

Although biting cold, many visitors from East London,

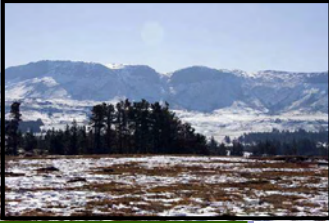
Port Elizabeth and Queens-town braved the snow and Hogsback was fully booked for the entire weekend.

Crafts were on display, ranging from iron work to cosy slippers, clothing and a variety of home made preserves and biscuits. A wood turning demonstration and machinery from a by gone era as well as entertainment every night made for a busy weekend.

From a marketing point of view, our photo books were keenly accepted and many people from the surrounding

areas have now vowed not to just drive through Stutterheim, but to stop off and take part in our activities.

Local marketing is an important part of our tourism drive, allowing for day trippers or weekend breaks. We look forward to welcoming all the new visitors to our route.



Hogsback—A winter wonderland.



'There is a need for us to share a vision and work together for an energized Tourism Department in touch with the industry.'

Exciting Guests.

Chandre Mammes was invited to, and attended an extremely important and interesting workshop in Port Elizabeth on 30 July. It was a 'High Level Ministerial Tourism Industry Engagement' and was headed by Marthinus van Schalkwyk, the new Minister of Tourism.

The purpose of the workshop was to invite both national and local tourism stakeholders along with the 'Captains of Industry' and the

newly formed Department of Tourism, to introduce the Political Leadership, share it's vision and work together for an energized Tourism Department in touch with the industry.

After each person had introduced themselves and explained how they were involved in tourism, the conversations, ideas and plans for the future began to flow. Three hours of brain storming revitalized all those who

attended and brought attention to what is needed for successful tourism in our area.

After talking to Chandre, the Minister admitted that he has not been to our region and promised to rectify that before the year is ended.

It will be with great pride that we will welcome the Minister of Tourism to the eEscape Route and show him all that our members have achieved in such a short space of time.

Rina's Reptile World

On Friday 31 July, Rina Naude opened her brand new Reptile World to the public. All the hard work, planning, building and finally the moving of copious quantities of 'beasties' to their new home had Rina exhausted, but by 5.30pm on that evening everything was in place.

More than 40 guests appeared

for the official opening and a wonderful evening was had by all.

A huge variety of reptiles such as Australian Bearded Dragons, corn snakes, an anaconda, tarantula, Water Cobra, chameleons and the star of the night, a 3.5m Burmese Python, were all on display.

Deon Nel from East London took many of the reptiles out of their cases and on lookers

who were brave enough were allowed to handle them.

A marquee had been erected where guests were treated to a meal after the display which was a lovely way to end the evening.

Rina's Reptile World will offer an amazing educational facility for school children as well as adults and we wish her well in her new venture.

Some guests were braver than others!





eScape Route
Stutterheim, Kei road, Cathcart &
Keiskammahoek

Amahlathi Tourist Association
54 Hill Street
Stutterheim
4930
Phone: 043 683 1521
Fax: 043 683 1520
E-mail: info@escaperoute.co.za

Share experiences

Dear members and friends,
We are very pleased to bring you Janine De Nysschen and Carrie Knowles from America, who will be holding workshops at Thomas River on 17 & 18 September from 9am-4pm. Janine is a 'Changemaker and Purpose Strategist' and will talk on the tools needed to create a purpose blueprint for your business on 17 Sept from 9am till noon. Carrie whose creative workshop will be from 2-4pm on 17 Sept and 9am-4pm on 18 Sept, will explore all avenues of expanding artwork through the community and using your work to inspire others. Should you wish to attend either of these seminars, please contact the office as soon as possible for catering purposes.

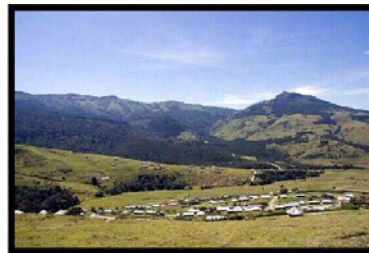
Conservation and Environmental Issues at Cata.

Chandre Mammes and Lindsey Frost were invited to the prize giving at Cata Community Hall where children from the local school were awarded prizes for the environmental projects they had tackled during the previous months. With the three levels, primary, junior and senior all taking part, the eScape Route had been asked to evaluate their projects.

It was with great delight that Chandre handed out the prizes of binoculars, printers and books to the three



The junior school winner.



overall winners and really inspiring to see how Monde Ntshudu, the Site Manager of Bird Life South Africa had motivated the children to take a good look at their community, recognize the problems and think of ways to solve them. Subjects raised included the emptying of the cattle dip and what to do with the contents, rainwater collection at the school thereby supplying extra water and also preventing damp conditions in the playground and rooms and Wattle eradication.

The Choir entertained the audience with beautiful singing while dancers and a drummer had the spectators clapping in time. It is fantastic to see young children becoming aware of their environment and working together to solve problems within the community.

Well done to not only the students, but to Bird Life South Africa for initiating the studies and the educators who taught the children and inspired them to produce such lovely projects.



The proud students with Joe and Monde of Bird Life SA.

BIRDING ROUTE

Southern KwaZulu-Natal

February 2007 has been an exciting month for the Southern KwaZulu-Natal (SKZN) Birding Route. I met with the participants and committees of the four component routes that make up the greater SKZN Birding Route, namely the Midlands Birding Route, Sisonke Birding Route, eThekweni Birding Route and the South Coast Birding Route.

When I attended the BirdLife Sisonke annual general meeting, Malcolm Gemmill from Button Birding took me on a tour of the region, including some beautiful birding sites such as Ntsikeni Nature Reserve, which, I learned, has produced four sightings of the rare Eurasian Bittern. Malcolm is clearly incredibly passionate about birding and his community and he taught me a great deal about the Sisonke Birding Route as well as its birds and people.

Accompanied by the Midlands Birding Route committee, I visited the Karkloof Crane Information Centre, another SAPPI-WWF Tree Routes Partnership Project and also a site on the SKZN Birding Route. Construction of the Crane Information Centre, as well as the hides, has begun. The Crane Centre is on Gartmore Farm, which is set to become one of the most exciting and attractive birding areas on our route. I also had the pleasure of meeting the eThekweni Route Committee (Durban region). Once again I was highly impressed by the knowledge of the committee members and their obvious commitment to birding and avitourism.

The first group of SKZN guides to be trained through our project made the journey to the Twinstreams Training Centre in Zululand to begin their training. Guide training and the creation of employment for these guides are the cornerstones of our project, and on their behalf I would like to thank the SAPPI-WWF Tree Routes Partnership, which sponsored three guides,



The site of the bird-hide at Karkloof Crane Centre.

and Rockjumper Birding Tours who sponsored one, for giving them this wonderful opportunity.

Much of February was spent working on the marketing strategy and materials of the SKZN Birding Route. This exercise has been a huge amount of fun and is crucial to the success of our birding route. I have been working closely with our brand and marketing consultant to achieve a standard of marketing materials that adequately portrays the incredible birding that exists on our route. Adam Riley and the Rockjumper Birding Tours team have been another highly useful and helpful source of information in this regard.

The SKZN Birding Route looks forward to welcoming you and providing you with an unforgettable birding experience. Should you wish to find out more about the Southern KwaZulu-Natal Birding Route, visit www.kzn-birding.co.za or contact us on 082 325 3514.

MATTHEW DREW



objectives are to work with the local community and metro council to rehabilitate this wetland into an important conservation area that will serve both the local birds and people. Soweto has a booming tourism industry and it is on the back of this market opportunity that BLSA hopes to build a positive link between the local community and its wetland. Conservation incentives will be developed in the community through tourism, sustainable resource use, and improved social standards by providing a healthy and safe environment. With seven years of experience in community development, Raymond has strong project- and people-management skills, which will serve him well in his new endeavours at BLSA.

Project partners and sponsors for BLSA's Protecting Key South African Biodiversity Sites through Community-based Conservation programme, of which Soweto is one project site, are the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, project partner in the UK, and the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which is funding the programme through the Darwin Initiative.

DANIEL MARNEWICK



SAMSON MULAUDZI

Bird Guide, Shiluvuvar Lakeside Lodge, Soutpansberg

Growing up in the rural village of Tshivhazwaulu, Vuwani, in Venda, Limpopo Province, Samson Mulaudzi was mocked by his friends for his bad aim with a catapult. He recalls that when he was young, the village boys used to hunt, shooting birds with a catapult for meat. The young Samson often went hungry. However, his skill with birds improved when he picked up a pair of binoculars instead, and he has developed his talents by conserving birds ever since.

Samson's interest in birds was piqued when he worked at Lajuma guest farm in the Soutpansberg while still at school.



Samson Mulaudzi

Lajuma's owner, Ian Gaigher, was fascinated by birds and animals and this rubbed off on Samson. So, when he started working at Ottoshoek in the western Soutpansberg, Samson taught himself the names and characteristics of the birds of the area. His employers, Gail and Alistair Maytham of Igababa Cabin and Campsite, encouraged this interest and sent him on a beginner's birding course, organised by the Soutpansberg Limpopo Birding Route. Here he was provided with a fieldguide and a better foundation for pursuing his interest. His enthusiasm led to him being selected for training through BLSA at the Wakkerstroom Centre in September 2005. He completed this course with flying colours and his career as a bird guide really took off.

Thanks to Sarah Venter of the Soutpansberg Limpopo Birding Route and the continued support of the Maythams, Samson was employed by Clare and Michel Girardin at Shiluvuvar Lakeside Lodge as their bird guide in late 2006. Samson enjoys the variety of habitats at Shiluvuvar and the surrounding birding sites, where he takes guests on guided walks and excursions. Shiluvuvar is situated on the banks of the Albasini Dam overlooking the Luonde Mountains, so Samson is always on the lookout for such varied species as Black-crowned and White-backed night-herons, African Finfoot and Osprey. Various kingfishers can be seen here, as well as Buff-spotted Flufftail, and rarities such as Rock Pratincole have turned up on occasion.

Using Shiluvuvar as a base, Samson leads excursions to various Soutpansberg hotspots such as Hanglip Forest, an easily accessible Afro-temperate mistbelt forest with resident Scaly-throated Honeyguide, White-starred Robin and Yellow-streaked Greenbul found here. Roodewal Nature Reserve is renowned for its fairly reliable sightings of the elusive African Broadbill. Samson has stake-outs for this enigmatic bird, as well as for Gorgeous Bush-Shrike, Eastern Nicator and Green Twinspot in this forest. His other hotspots include the Levubu Post Office, where Grey-headed Parrots come to feed in the large mobola plum tree in summer, and Muirhead Dams, the only reliable place in South Africa to find Blue-spotted Wood-Dove.

If Samson were given the opportunity to broaden his horizons, he would fly to Cape Town to experience new habitats and birds. Ultimately, he would like to become a regional guide and, in time, to own a birder-friendly lodge of his own. Samson can be contacted through Shiluvuvar Lakeside Lodge, tel. (015) 556 3406 or 083 662 9960.

Information on birding sites is taken from the booklet Greater Limpopo Birding Self-Drive Routes with kind permission of the authors.

LISA MARTUS



PERSONALITIES



RAYMOND RAMPOKENG

Project Site Co-ordinator in Soweto for BLSA's Community-based Conservation Division

Raymond's career in community conservation started in Soweto in 2001, where he volunteered for the Soweto Mountain of Hope (SOMOHO) programme, whose objective was to transform a dangerous koppie into an environmental centre.

Raymond has completed BLSA's Building on Experience (BOE) Organisational Development Programme, as well as a first-aid qualification. He spent three years

as an on-site guide, laying firm foundations to pursue conservation as a career. After graduating in 2004 and qualifying as a registered bird guide, he was offered the opportunity to join BirdLife South Africa at Clear Channel Bird Sanctuary in Bryanston, north of Johannesburg. There he honed his skills in bird guiding and community development by leading walks at The Wilds in Houghton and some of Wits Bird Club's (WBC) outings (WBC funded his intensive bird-guiding course). He is also a founder member of BirdLife Soweto, a satellite branch of WBC.

In 2007 Raymond was hired to co-ordinate BLSA's new community conservation project in Soweto, which aims to build the capacity of the community living around the Klipspruit wetland. The



Learning to protect parrots

Youths who aimed catapults at Cape parrots have learnt to see them as feathered friends

LEON MARSHALL

CAPE parrots living in the Eastern Cape's Cata Forest used to have a hard time dodging boys who came after them with catapults and slingshots. The youngsters had no idea how precious these little birds with their bright-green bodies, brown heads and hooked beaks were.

Now they know. The youths and their community were informed how few of the birds survive in the wild, and how lucky they are to still have some in their part of the Amatola Mountain Range.

This area was returned to the community under a land restitution claim. They were told that soon none of the birds would be left if people kept killing or catching them for trading on the black market.

This has changed the situation dramatically and the people now protect the birds. A substantial number of young people have started what they proudly call the Cape Parrot Custodians, or Ikhwezi Lentaba Eco-Club, which means "early morning star".

They help put up nesting boxes in the forest and participate in the annual bird count through which conservationists keep track of the species' state of health. Cape parrots are hard to keep count of, mainly because of the long distances they fly after feeding. They blend in so well with vegetation that they are difficult to spot. But annual counts put the species at hardly 1 000 and conservationists are deeply worried about its chances of survival.

Cape parrots occur only in South Africa. They keep mainly to forests along the country's eastern seaboard.

Among the major causes of their decline is destruction of the yellowwood trees they feed off and nest in.

But youthful hunters also kill them for sport, or they are caught to be traded on the black market.

The change in attitude to the birds at Cata was due to BirdLife South Africa's initiative to involve local communities in the protection of species and their habitats.

The United Kingdom's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds backs the project. Under the Darwin Initiative, it helps developing countries, rich in biodiversity, to protect their natural assets.

The reaction of Cata's youths proves a point that Daniel Marnewick, manager of BirdLife South Africa's community-based conservation division, is passionate about. This is that conservation can be successful only when it involves local communities. But this is not easily achieved.

He says their approach must be discreet, and getting involved in local politics must be avoided.

Normally the method is to appoint a site manager – mostly someone from that particular area – trained by BirdLife South Africa.

Persons of authority in the area, like local headmen, are approached for their blessing. To get the youths involved – like at Cata – the next step is to ask the local school principal's permission to allow the site manager to do a presentation to pupils.

Workshops are set up for those interested in conservation. The workshops include competitions and outings to interesting places.

"The benefits cut both ways," says Marnewick. "It gives the youths a hobby or extra-mural activity, which normally is badly lacking in those areas."

"They learn about environmental issues in a practical way. They learn leadership and management skills through the clubs they start. They elect committees and put together fund-raising and other events – all practical learning experiences."

"It benefits the conservation cause by providing the most effective protection possible for species like the Cape parrot. The youths take ownership to the point of even helping to eradicate invasive plant species in the forest."

"Back home and in their communities they spread the conservation message by telling their parents and others about the environment and the need to protect it."

He says for those who show the aptitude and desire, there are opportunities after school to further their studies in the environmental field.

There are also job opportunities for those who want to be trained as bird guides.

Among other notable successes in involving local communities in conservation is the internationally renowned birding area of Wakkerstroom on Mpumalanga's Drakens-



Members of Cata Forest's Cape Parrot Custodian club help put up nesting boxes and take part in the annual bird count

PICTURE BY MONDE NTSHUDU

berg escarpment.

A major problem has been the annual burning of bulrushes and grass in its extensive wetlands. This severely affects the habitat of the many bird species there, or which visit seasonally, some from as far away as the northern hemisphere.

The burning was done maliciously, or by cattle herders to create green grazing for their stock in summer. By engaging the local community, the situation will hopefully be turned around. The herders, and reed cutters who use the wetland vegetation to weave mats, shades and pots, now have representatives on the Wakkerstroom Wetland Reserve Management Committee.

This multi-stakeholder organisation looks after the site.

"Earlier the attitude to the herders and reed cutters was rather prescriptive. Now that they also have a say, they are prepared to consider the broader interest in keeping the wetlands safe. Last season the wetlands were not burnt, and we hope this is a sign of a change in attitude," says Marnewick.

BirdLife South Africa's involvement with the Wakkerstroom local community has resulted in the establishment of a youth eco-club, which has become involved in the campaign against mining in this sensitive area.

Marnewick mentions an example of where things are not going too well between conservationists and the

local community. This is Ongoye, a magical forest in northern KwaZulu-Natal and home to South Africa's only tiny colony of green barbets.

The provincial authority is said to have a good working relationship with local headmen. But friction has developed with community members, who have been grazing their cattle inside the reserve and oppose plans to fence it off.

Another example of how badly things can go wrong when local communities are ignored is Ndumo reserve on KwaZulu-Natal's border with Mozambique. Frustrated locals have, after years of a stand-off with authorities, resorted to occupying a portion of the park.

Marnewick sees such situations as further cause for refocusing attention on the question of community involvement in conservation. It has to be better managed and monitored. It must be actively pursued and done well, especially in South Africa with its history of exclusive politics and decision-making.

He says BirdLife International – the powerful conservation body representing bird clubs worldwide – is setting up a protocol for doing just that. It aims to draft objective standards for initiating and maintaining interaction with local communities, and for measuring the impact on such communities and the environment.

The involvement of communities in the protection of species and



A Cape parrot

PICTURE BY GRAHAM RUSSELL

their habitats has become a well-established conservation principle. It is advocated by environmental

organisations such as the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and World Conservation Union (IUCN).

After 50 years, land they can call their own

NYERI, Kenya: After a 50-year wait, thousands of Kenyans in Central Province have received the most coveted asset in the country – a piece of land. The move is not only good news for those allocated the land, but for the country as a whole as the move will boost food security when the recipients start farming wheat, beans, maize and livestock on the 6 070 hectares.

The 2 900 families have started tilling their land as the government formalises the settlement, which was part of more than 28 327ha of land initially used for cattle farming, as well as a private game park owned by an investor.

The government paid the investor \$16.5 million for the land, between Mount Kenya and Aberdare National parks near Central Province's boundary with Rift Valley Province.

Most of the recipients had, since independence in 1963, been living on government land within Mt Kenya forest and Aberdare Ranges until 1989 when the authorities evicted them for encroaching on water catchment areas.

They are among thousands of Kenyans who failed to secure land when demarcation took place in the late 1950s before independence.

This was because they had sold off their land, had worked away from home when demarcation took place, or were so poor that they did not have any land when demarcation began.

After they were evicted from the forests in 1989, most settled in areas adjacent to the two major water towers (Mt Kenya and Aberdare National Parks) in areas such as Chehe, Homba, Kagochi and Ragati near Mt Kenya and Zaina, Kabage and Gakanga in Aberdare Ranges.

Japhter Kiplimo Rugut, the Central Province commissioner, who has been overseeing the resettlement, said the settlement scheme involved farmers living on designated sites and farming elsewhere.

Under this model, being tested for the first time, but set to be rolled out in other areas where there are squatters, the allocated land entailed 0.2ha for each farmer to set up a homestead and another 1.6ha on which to farm.

"People will be living in one area and farming elsewhere in this new planned settlement scheme," Rugut said.

"The government will be carrying out a similar exercise in Kibwezi area of lower Eastern Province and in parts of Coast Province where there are landless people waiting to be given land."

The government has set aside more than \$1.2m to set up various amenities in the area, including water, electricity, health and education facilities. – Irin

Man who's over the moon about astronomy

HEATHER DUGMORE

"I COULDN'T believe I was seeing craters on the moon," says South African astrophysicist Dr Thebe Medupe who, as a schoolboy growing up in Mafikeng, decided to build his own telescope.

"We had an astronomy week at my school and from that moment the universe had me hooked."

So he went to the local library and found a book on how to build your own telescope. He followed the instructions and it worked.

Medupe still has that telescope and today, in his 30s, he is an astrophysicist (astronomer) based at the South African Astronomical Observatory in Cape Town.

"South Africa has always been a world leader in advanced astronomical research dating back 250 years," explains Medupe. "Our first observations were undertaken in the Cape by French scientist Louis de la Caille. In 1751, he charted the positions of 10 000 stars and 42 nebulae."

In 1820, a permanent observatory was established in Cape Town. It developed into the South African Astronomical Observatory – which established a station in Sutherland in 1970.

"What most people don't know is that African people were the first to study advanced astronomy. In southern Egypt 7 000 years ago they were already building observatories to study the movement of the sun."

Leap forward in time to between 500 and 700 years ago and we find astronomy being studied by scholars in Mali's flourishing university town of Timbuktu.

"At that time," Medupe explains, "during the Songhay empire – the city of Timbuktu was a leading centre of commerce and scholarship. Muslim



Dr Thebe Medupe with the telescope he built as a child.

scholars of all races flourished there and were the top scientists in the world.

"We are collaborating with Timbuktu to translate the Arabic manuscripts on astronomy written by scholars in Timbuktu some 600 years ago."

One of the manuscripts contains this evocative recording of a meteor shower in 1583 by Songhay historian, Mahmud Al Kati:

"In the year 991 (1583) in God's month of Rajab the Goodly (August) after half the night had passed, stars flew around the sky as if fire had been

kindled in the whole sky – east, west, north and south. It became a mighty flame lighting up the earth, and people were extremely disturbed about that."

Spectacular sightings like this, as well as calendar-related heavenly movements and patterns, were all meticulously recorded at Timbuktu.

A few giant leaps later brings us to our own Southern African Large Telescope (Salt), the largest telescope in the southern hemisphere, which can look back 13 billion years to the beginning of time and keeps Africa in the frontline of scientific and astronomical studies. Medupe collaborated on Salt from the outset.

"With Salt we can intensely examine light (travelling at 300 000km/s) and pick up far more detail. For example, Proxima Centauri, the nearest star to Earth (after our sun which is eight light minutes from us) is 4.2 light-years away. The light we are seeing from Proxima Centauri today is what it radiated 4.2 years ago."

"The light tells us about the star's origins because light is very sensitive to the conditions in which the star exists. And because light splits into the colours of the rainbow, we can determine whether any given star is moving closer or further away from us. Crudely, if it is moving closer it will be more blue, if it is more red it is moving further away."

When it comes to Salt's potential to locate intelligent life out there, Medupe remains sceptical.

"I don't believe in aliens or intelligent beings from outer space. I definitely don't believe they have visited us or live among us," he says, then smiles. "But let me keep my mind open. Bring me an alien and I'll believe."

Page 16: Neil Armstrong's small step

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Indwe Environment Club working for cranes

Wakkerstroom is one of the places in South Africa with three kinds of cranes i.e. Blue, Wattled and Crowned cranes. On the 25th of March 2008 members of Indwe Environment Club got their hands dirty designing the crane feeding site for the wintering cranes. They started by clearing the invasive plants next to the Crane Hide which is the most famous bird hide in Wakkerstroom. The next step will be to set up crane decoys that will attract the cranes into their feeding site. Not only the cranes will benefit but other bird species like francolins and Cape Long Claws.



Listening To The Kliptown Community

The team conducted semi-structured interviews with local people from Kliptown who are using the wetlands for different reasons. Among them were Cattle- Goats- Sheep- and Pig farmers, local hunters and a Sangoma. The main objective of the research was to find out how local people use the natural resources from the wetland. The interviews were conducted using a research method called 'Participatory Rural Appraisals' (PRA). Various interactive tools are used giving the community members opportunity to illustrate their current resource use trends and express their concerns around the resource or their access to the wetland.

We found out that all of the resource users depend on the wetland for the grass and water for their livestock; that security of their livestock is a problem; and that farming is what they grew up doing and is all they know.

The Sangomas like to conduct rituals and collect some of their medicine in the wetland. Some of the challenges were mismanagement of the wetland where there is unnecessary burning and stealing of the livestock by local people. The follow up meeting will focus on the formation of relevant user group associations and a representative Kliptown Wetland Management Forum as there is a need to have a relevant structure for user groups to engage decision makers.



Resource Users From Esizameleni Participated In A P.R.A. Workshop



The Participatory Rural Appraisal workshop was held on the 25—26 of March in the BirdLife South Africa Centre in Wakkerstroom. The main aim of the workshop was to empower participants with knowledge and skills of engaging local resource user groups in decision making processes. Other participants were from Soweto—Kliptown (Gauteng) and Cata (Eastern Cape).

On the 28th of March 2008 the participants went to ESizameleni Community Hall where they were joined by cattle grazers, hunters, medicinal plant gatherers, reeds harvesters, and vegetable growers. Mr. Isaac Nkosi who is an agricultural representative for ward 5 stated that the workshop has been an eye opener to them. Follow up workshops shall be conducted in due course with the local resource user groups.

EVENTS

Cata get their 'Parrots in Row' for Cape Parrot Counting Day

This year's Cape Parrot Counting Day was different in Cata. For the first time, Cata community members have been involved in the counting and they did not let the bad weather to stop them. The weather on day one was cold, raining and windy, and the only people you could see in the streets were our counting team. There were 3 teams allocated to 3 patches of the forest in Cata. On day two the weather was no different except there was no rain. The teams gathered at 05h30 in the dark. The dedication was incredible. Why would community members show such commitment in bad weather and no payment? One community member said *"I was very interested in how this counting is done because I know it was not going to be easy to catch these birds and count them, and I was curious about the bird and what it looks like. I also wanted to know why BLSA is so interested in this bird. When the first group of birds noisily emerged from the forest and I was told that these were parrots, I suddenly realize that these are the same sounds from the forest nearby my house. When I saw them I knew these birds, I see them often especially during yellowwood season. Now that I have been involved in the counting I am developing a passion for Cape Parrots."*



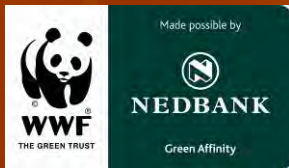
National Bird Week

Monde also organised community events to celebrate National Bird Week. The events saw 45 community members participate in two days of celebrations and events. Day one consisted of presentations and a theatre production by the local youth about the importance of birds. Monde also made a presentation about the Owl and its myths and importance's. The community was encouraged to talk about their feelings regarding owls, and Monde was there to provide information about the true character of the bird and its importance in managing rodents. Day two saw three teams of adults and school learners head into the forest to see who could identify the most birds. The winning team got caps and Sasol bird field guides. Fun was had by all and it is becoming more and more noticeable how consciousness about birds is on the rise among the Cata people.

Wakkerstroom Celebrates World Migratory Birds Day

On the 10th May, the Hansco hosted World Migratory Day at the BLSA Wakkerstroom Tourism center. The event invited the Indwe Environment Club, Uthaka High School and educators. The day consisted of an ice breaker, Hansco explaining the purpose of WMBD, a presentation about the Mpumalanga Birding Route, a slide presentation about grasslands and water birds, a presentation on the importance of the local wetland, and a site visit to the Fluff tail hide to watch and talk about migratory water birds and the flyway conservation approach.

The local youth have been one of the Division's greatest assets, and Hansco has seen this potential. Hansco has been instrumental in guiding the Indwe Environmental Club, a volunteer group of concerned youth from eSizamaleni who and has been working with BLSA on various environmental projects, e.g. alien plant eradication around our hides. Hansco has also started working with school groups using the WESSA Eco-School programme to spread the environmental word.



Newsletter written and compiled by Daniel Marnewick, Monde Ntshudu & Hansco Banda—Community Based Conservation Division, BirdLife South Africa. E-mail: community@birdlife.org.za



NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMUNITY BASED CONSERVATION (CBC) DIVISION

**ISSUE 1,
DECEMBER 2007**

Editorial

This is the Division's first newsletter, and it comes at the end of a exciting yet challenging year. There is nothing more daunting than starting a community based project from scratch, especially one that throws such complex social, economic and environmental issues into one pot. Only someone who has attempted such a feat truly understands the challenges and immenseness. But the rewards of success are as huge, and having even a slight taste on ones tongue is awe inspiring.

Three factors that can often make or brake such a project are *vision*, *practicality* and a *strong person* on the ground. We have spent the first year defining our vision and ensuring that this translates into something practical for everybody. The Division has been very blessed to have three committed, enthusiastic and passionate site managers on the ground. Hansco, Monde and Martin are becoming true leaders in their communities and I wish them everything of the best for 2008 when we begin putting into practice what we have worked so hard to design.

The CBC Division newsletter will be distributed every two months. We hope you find it useful and informative, and we welcome any feedback.

Daniel Marnewick
Community Based Conservation Division Manager

NEW TEAM MEMBERS JOIN THE RANKS OF THE CBC

Monde Ntshudu comes from Grahamstown where he worked as a research assistant at Rhodes University on community livelihood issues. Monde started managing the Division's Cata project site in August, in the heart of the Amathole forest complex, 1.5 hours north-west of East London.

Martin Ramothibe lives in Kliptown, Soweto, where he has been implementing Environmental Education the past 6yrs. Martin is now broadening his skills and will be moving to the CBC Division where he will be implementing community based conservation projects along with Environ Education.

Hansco Banda has been with the Division a year now and has been doing excellent work in Wakkerstroom. His background includes 10 as a government school teacher and Head of Department.

Martin, Soweto



Hansco, Wakkerstroom



Monde, Cata



WAKKERSTROOM YOUTH CARING FOR THEIR ENVIRONMENT

On the 2nd of September 2007, the youth of Wakkerstroom were involved in an intensive Anti-Litter Campaign at eSizameleni. The core drivers of the campaign were Wakkerstroom Primary School, Indwe Environment Club and BirdLife South Africa. The majority of the community members were impressed with the campaign and cited that the campaign was a positive indication that our youth have future leaders that shall be environmentally literate.

Five illegal dumping sites were identified within eSizameleni and a follow up cleaning campaign is planed to address them. The major contributing factors to littering is lack of rubbish bins and illegal dumping in open sites within the residential area. Littering is a health hazard and it causes the place to look untidy. We hope that the community will participate in the future campaigns that are aimed at improving the life of the people.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

How Have Communities Benefited?

- Two new bird guides were trained from Soweto & Wakkerstroom.
- Hansco est. the 'Reed & Grass Cutters Ass. in Wakkies, and they earned R20 000 in the 1st 6 months selling reed fences.
- The above contributed to that portion of the wetland being burnt much later in winter.
- BLSA catalyzed the est. of the first truly representative Wakkerstroom Wetland Management Committee was established.
- BLSA are fast becoming a partner in the Mayor Masondo's 2010 legacy project: 'Greening of Soweto'.
- BLSA partnered with Woolworths to begin establishing the first community owned Cape Parrot Friendly Pecan Nut industry in the E. Cape.

PECAN NUTS FOR CAPE PARROTS

Two of the biggest threats to the Endangered Cape Parrot are the loss of the birds natural food source and illegal capture & trade. In a hunt to find alternative food, Cape Parrots have found themselves in conflict with pecan nut orchard owners. The Cata community's 'Cape Parrot Friendly Pecan Nut' project is a Community Owned Enterprise that aims to grow and sell 'Cape Parrot Friendly Pecan Nuts'. We believe this symbiotic relationship will increase food for the Cape Parrot while providing the community with an economic opportunity to offset the opportunity cost of illegal capture, thus developing a mutually dependant livelihood and conservation initiative. The Cata community also live on the periphery of the Amathole forest, thus creating a buffer zone between the forest and larger pecan nut farms.

Essentially the community agrees to provide the parrot with a percentage of the harvest, while the remaining pecan nuts are sold commercially. BLSA and Woolworths Ltd are currently developing a partnership to assist with the production and marketing of this product.

The CBC Division is supported by and thanks:



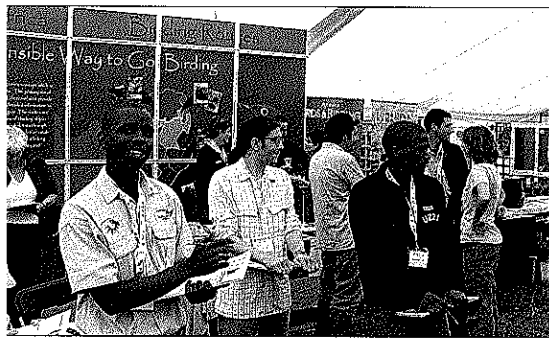
Come Visit Cata to see the Endangered Cape Parrot



The irrigation scheme in Cata, near the forest is where the pecan nuts will be planted.

For further information [click here](#) or to be removed from this list, please contact Daniel Marnewick, Division Manager, community@birdlife.org.za

The opportunity of a lifetime



Innocent Mzindle at the British Bird Fair.

On 13 August 2008, Impendulo Innocent Mzindle realised a life-long dream when he boarded a flight to England to attend the British Bird Fair. This is one of the world's biggest and most popular bird fairs, with more than 20 000 people attending.

Innocent attended the fair as a representative of BLSA and the Southern KZN Birding Route, which is funded by the SappiWWF Tree Routes Partnership. Says Duncan Pritchard, Avitourism Manager for BLSA, 'I believe that it is vital for the BirdLife South Africa-trained community guides to attend international bird fairs, not only to gain exposure to the international market, but also to experience first-hand what an inbound birding tourist would go through when travelling to South Africa.'

Innocent gained useful insights into the worldwide birding market, and these will

give him important skills to improve his services locally.

Matthew Drew, Project Manager of the Southern KZN Birding Route, believes that BLSA has succeeded in developing guides such as Innocent, who now has a far greater chance of becoming a sustainable tourism and conservation entrepreneur. This vision for modern conservation and responsible tourism accords with the vision of BLSA's Avitourism Division and that of the SappiWWF Tree Routes Partnership, namely, linking sustainable broad-based economic development to the environment.

To book Innocent's services as a guide, contact Matthew Drew on tel. 082 325 3514 or BirdLife Travel on 082 777 7202.

Innocent comments on his experience: 'As a guide, it is very beneficial to attend the fairs and meet international tour operators. In terms of doing business, it is good as you need to describe your country to people from all over the world. I can recommend it to other guides as it really opens your eyes. The best thing for me was representing BirdLife South Africa - I felt like I was a part of the team and I was an ambassador for South Africa.'

CATA ESTABLISHES AN ECO-CLUB

The inaugural meeting of the Ikhwezi Lentaba Eco-Club took place in the Cata community in the Eastern Cape on 9 August 2008. The club's main purpose will be to raise awareness about the environment and to work towards building a new society of 'eco-warriors'. It will be involved in recycling, rehabilitating the river-catchment area, removing invasive alien trees and other environment-related activities. The club, which has chosen the Cape Parrot as its emblem, will be run by young people, but has the support of the elders in the community.

A local high-school pupil said, 'We have always taken our environment for granted, but now we can see how important it is to us. Another reason I decided to join this club is that I was involved in the Cape Parrot Counting Day and the identification of different bird species that occur in our forest, where I had a lot of fun and wanted to do it more often.'

The club has the backing of East London Museum's Educational Officer, who will be linking it with others in the region to share information, knowledge and experiences.

MONDE NTSHUDU

Swazi Chief supports conservation in Wakkerstroom

Down-to-earth, focused and principled is how one could best describe Wakkerstroom District's Swazi Chief, Ndabazwe Shabalala (below, left), a traditional leader for the amaDlangampisi Tribal Authority. He is of Royal Swazi blood and has close ties to Swazi King Mswati III. Hansco Banda (below, right), BLSA community conservation site manager for Wakkerstroom, has been lobbying and engaging the chief in the local conservation issues and challenges, such as mining, that face the Wakkerstroom District.

Chief Ndabazwe, who has instructed the Tribal Authority to incorporate a Verreux's Eagle on its letterhead to demonstrate Swaziland's support for conservation, recently stated that a nation that does not safeguard its natural resources is doomed to extinction. He strongly believes that the human race is inextricably bound to nature. The chief has pledged his full support for the local conservation initiatives, which are working towards biodiversity and saving endangered species for future generations.

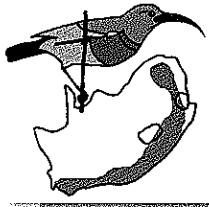
For more information about the environmental challenges facing Wakkerstroom, visit www.birdlife.org.za

HANSCO BANDA



SABAP2 THE OBSERVER EXPERIENCE

SABAP2



I can think of a number of words that describe my experience of atlasing as part of SABAP2 during the past eight months: fun, a learning experience, exciting and,

possibly the most important, valuable. After studying the manuals and getting to grips with the new protocol and software, it only took me a week to get going and I submitted my first list

without any problem. From then on, it was easy to select the pentad, print the map, get my binoculars and bird books, and go atlasing.

In eight months, I have submitted some 40 lists, seen a number of really interesting birds and managed to combine my atlasing with my other usual birding challenges, such as year- and regional lists. Perhaps what I have enjoyed the most is that the new protocol takes me to areas that I would not otherwise have visited, and in the

process I have discovered new and interesting birding localities. All of this, combined with the fact that I am making a contribution to our knowledge of birds, makes it worthwhile.

Why not join me on the journey of discovery and become part of the growing contingent of fellow atlasers?

To register for SABAP2, visit www.sabap2.org or e-mail Neil Smith at conservation@birdlife.org.za

ERNST RETIEF
BIRDLIFE NORTHERN GAUTENG

Witwatersrand Bird Club supports BLSA's work in Soweto

BLSA and Witwatersrand Bird Club (WBC) have been involved in South Western Township (Soweto) for many years, either through supporting community-based organisations, individuals or by promoting environmental education and awareness in the local schools and community.

Soweto has crawled deep into the hearts of BLSA and WBC. Anyone who knows the place will agree that while the people are friendly and welcoming, the social and environmental issues are complicated and intense. Both WBC and BLSA want to make a difference, and we believe that birds are our best tool, used as a catalyst to aid in the development of what is becoming a progressive 'township'. The fact that one of Johannesburg's most important river and wetland systems passes through the middle of Soweto makes it even more appealing to link a heritage icon to an avitourism potential.

Martin Ramothibe is the BLSA site manager implementing the community-based conservation programme and environmental education and awareness-raising in Kliptown, Soweto. As a resident of Kliptown and passionate about Soweto, Martin is equally concerned about conservation. To facilitate his work, WBC secured a sponsorship from Leica for a high-quality digital camera. BLSA would like to thank WBC and Leica for their support.



At the presentation of the Leica-sponsored camera were (left to right) Gisela Orther (WBC Programme Planner), Daniel Marnewick and Martin Ramothibe (BLSA), Lance Robinson (WBC Chair) and Murrie Slotar (WBC President).

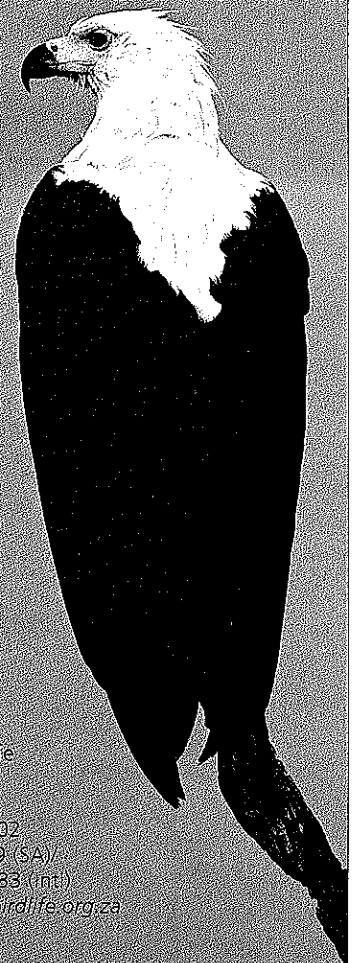


KRUGER TO CANYONS BIRDING WEEKEND

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Vleiland gaan deur diep waters

jorisna bonthuys

KLIPTOWN (Soweto). – Hy voel partykeer soos die Bybelse Dawid wat Goliat moet trotseer wat die Klipspruit betref.

Dit is hoe mnr. Martin Ramothibe (27), omgewingsbeampte van die Mayibuye-vleilandprojek, sy persoonlike stryd van die afgelope ses jaar om die verval van dié vleilandstelsel te help stuit, verwoord. In baie opsigte is dit 'n “spirituele uitdaging”, sê hy. Een wat sy geloof in homself, en veral sy geloof in plaaslike owerhede, toets.

Destyds toe hy by dié gemeenskapbewaringsprojek betrokke geraak het, is hy deur sy familie en sy vorige meisie verkleineer. Laasgenoemde het hom gelos omdat sy óók nie kon verstaan waarom hy onbetaald as vrywilliger vir 'n vleiland wou werk terwyl bestaansmiddele tuis kortkom nie.

Ramothibe is egter steeds vasbeslote om 'n 5 km lange groen strook deur Kliptown en die ander buurte wat langs die erg besoedelde Klipspruit hier kronkel, te help vestig.

Hy is gebore in dié ou deel van Soweto, waar die ANC se historiese Vryheidsmanifes vyf dekades gelede onderteken en groot vierings hieroor onlangs gehou is.

Ramothibe sê hy het “mooi herinneringe” van 'n tyd toe hy as 'n kannetjie in dié spruit kon swem.

Sedertdien het die meeste van die voëllewe in dié gebied grootliks verdwyn. Die Klipspruit, 'n sytak van die Kliprivier, is geruime tyd reeds onder groot ekologiese druk weens onder meer industriële en mynbesoedeling.

Dié vuil wateraar, wat stroomaf vir rituele plegtighede deur tradisionele genesers en kerklui gebruik word, word deesdae versmoor deur indringerplante en rioolwater wat tussen die plakkershutte deur tot in die vleilandgebied hier stroom.

Die Klipspruit word bestempel as die mees besoedelde varswaterstelsel in die groter Johannesburg-gebied, sê mnr. Daniel Marnewick, programbestuurder van BirdLife Suid-Afrika gemoeid met gemeenskapbewaring. Dié omgewingsgroep is die afgelope paar jaar 'n vennoot in die Mayibuye-projek.

Ramothibe is een van 'n handjievol mense wat hulle sedert 2001 beywer vir 'n skoner omgewing vir die mense van Kliptown en omstreke. Dié woonbuurt is een van die teikengebiede van Mayibuye (dit beteken “om te herstel”).

Dié projek poog om lede van die plaaslike gemeenskap by die rehabilitasie van die vleilandgebied te betrek. Dit doen hulle deur onder meer omgewingsonderrig by skole te verskaf, eko-groepe te vestig en die rivier skoon te maak.

Met 'n begroting van sowat R250 000 per jaar afkomstig van die Groentrust – 'n vennootskap tussen die WWF-SA en Nedbank – en geld van Premium Foods finansier hulle die afgelope vier jaar hul bedrywighede.

“Dit is 'n gemeenskap en 'n vleiland waarvan almal oënskynlik vergeet het,” sê Marnewick.

“Ons uitgangspunt is om 'n gemeenskapstem oor dié verval te vestig en ingrypings van owerhede en nywerhede te noodsaak.”

Vroeër vanjaar het 'n groot aantal geelvis in die Barrage gevrek toe ongesuiwerde rioolwater en industriële afloopwater in die Kliprivier gestort is en in die Vaalrivier beland het, het Beeld, susterkoerant van Die Burger, berig.

Die toestand van die riviere wat in die Johannesburgse metropolitaanse omgewing ontspring, verswak toenemend. Die vleilandgebied bevat onder meer 'n groot hoeveelheid swaarmetale wat weens dekades se besoedeling in sedimentlae neergelê is, blyk uit studies van prof. T.S. McCarthy van die Universiteit van Witwatersrand en mnr. Jaco Venter van die Raad vir Geowetenskappe.

Die Klipspruit is nie die enigste akwatiese stelsel wat in dié toestand verkeer nie.

Die druk op vleilande en riviere is feitlik oral hoog, sê mnr. Japie Buckle van die Suid-Afrikaanse Biodiversiteitinstituut se projek Werk vir Vleilande. Sowat die helfte van die land se vleilande is na skatting reeds uitgewis of vernietig.

Feitlik ál die oorblywende vleilande word bedreig – onder meer deur indringerplante en paaie wat daardeur gebou word. Ander bedreigings sluit in onsensitiewe ontwikkeling en landboupraktyke (veral die drooglegging van vleilande), die bou van damme en keerwalle (wat die watertafel beïnvloed) en brande (wat erosie en vloedgevaar vererger).

“Dit is kommerwekkend dat selfs dié bietjie water tot ons beskikking oorbenut word en dié bronne teen ’n kommerwekkende koers agteruitgaan,” sê Buckle.

“In ’n waterskaars land soos Suid-Afrika maak elke vleiland saak.”

Hoe nader aan ongerep natuurlike (varswater)stelsels is, hoe beter funksioneer hulle, sê hy. Dié stelsels, wat as die natuur se “niere” beskryf kan word, help onder meer om waterbronne te suiwer en vloedskade te voorkom.

Pogings om die Klipspruit skoon te maak en die aangrensende vleilandgebied te rehabiliteer, word gekortwiek deur ’n gebrek aan steun en kapasiteitsprobleme, veral op plaaslike regeringsvlak, sê mnr. - Patrick Kwelepete, projekteier van Mayibuye. Aangesien die vleiland op munisipale eiendom geleë is, is ’n vennootskap met plaaslike owerhede broodnodig om op lang termyn ekologiese verval te stuit.

“Ons doelwit is om begrip te vestig oor die direkte verband tussen mense se welstand en die stand van die omgewing,” sê Kwelepete. “Ons het nodig dat politici inkoop in ons werksaamhede.

“Ons benodig ’n verbintenis om die gebied rommelvry te maak, indringerplante te verwyder en ’n rehabilitasieplan toe te pas. Sonder die nodige steun van plaaslike owerhede kan die soort planne wat ons vir die gebied het, waaronder ’n voëluitkykpunt en die oes van riete, nie realiseer nie.”

Ondanks die uitdagings waardeur Kwelepete en sy span in die gesig gestaar word, glo hulle dié projek hou volop belofte in.

Die regering het reeds aangedui daar is planne vir stedelike hernuwing in Soweto, wat die hervestiging van duisende mense wat tans onder die vloedlyn woon, sal insluit.

Intussen gooi mense soos Ramothibe nie die handdoek in nie.

“Dié rivier is ons rivier. As ons nie daarvoor omgee nie, wie sal?

“Ek droom van die dag dat dit weer die lewensaar van dié gebied sal word en dat vooruitsigte vir die mense van Kliptown sal verander,” sê Ramothibe. “Vir my sal dít ware vryheid beteken.”

Community Based Conservation Division

Congratulating new Bird Guides

Miss Thuli Nkosi and Mr. Xolani Ngobese were part of the recent Bird Guides who received their certificates after undergoing an intensive Bird Guide Training Course that was held recently at BirdLife South Africa Centre in Wakkerstroom.

Nigel Anderson who is the Guide Training Manager said that Xolani and Thuli have a bright future in the Avi-Tourist Industry if they can be focused and motivated. Their training was sponsored by the Community Based Conservation Division of BirdLife S.A. in Wakkerstroom site.



* Mr. Nigel Anderson, Ms. Thuli Nkosi and Xolani Ngobese.

Wetland Reserve Management Committee

On 4 September 2007 in BirdLife S.A. Centre a Wetland Reserve Management Committee was launched and elected.

Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Agency, Pixley ka Seme Municipality and BirdLife S.A. are holding key management portfolios respectively.

Councillor Lungile Nkosi, Councillor Chris Smit, Mr. Oupa Mavuso and Mr. John Burchmore were instrumental in the establishment of the committee.

The community shall be informed about the developments with regard to the wetland management.



* The choosing of the new Wetland Reserve Management Committee.

Wakkerstroom youth caring for their environment

The youth of Wakkerstroom was involved in an intensive Anti-Litter Campaign at eSizameleni on 2 September 2007.

The core drivers of the campaign were Wakkerstroom Primary School, Indwe Environment Club and BirdLife South Africa.

The majority of the community members were impressed about the campaign and cited that the campaign was a positive indication that our youth has future leaders that shall be environmental literate. Five illegal dumping sites were identified within eSizameleni and a follow up cleaning campaign is planned to address them.

The major contributing factors to littering is lack of rubbish bins and illegal dumping in open sites within the residential area. Littering is a health hazard and it causes the place to look untidy. We hope that the community will participate in the future campaigns that are aimed at improving the life of the people.



* Children cleaning up the area surrounding eSizameleni.

Amajuba behaal eersteplek by SA Landloop

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FIGHTING POVERTY!

Project empowers women



Members of the Masithandaneni Women's Project show off their beautiful products.

Photo by Happy Baloyi

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By HAPPY BALOYI

A GROUP of unemployed women have found ways to fight hunger and poverty.

The Masithandaneni Women's Project formed their own business to generate an income.

When they started late last year, they wanted to bring people who had moved to the cities and forgotten their African culture back to their communities.

This group of eight motivated women design and run their traditional business at Kliptown Youth Centre in Soweto.

They design and make beaded goods and traditional clothes for different cultures such as *Mgaxo*, *Cimbi*, and *Mhengele*.

The People's Paper spoke to project leader Annah

Mathebula (54). She said the team never studied at an art school but are naturally talented.

Annah said she started doing beadwork and designing traditional garments when she was young.

"People encouraged me to take what I was doing further. Today, I lead a successful project where we make and sell beaded bags, traditional attire, necklaces and shoes."

She added that Masithandaneni Women's Project designs goods for many different cultures in South Africa.

They sell to the community and to tourists.

They are proud mothers who can put food on the table, and send their kids to school with pride.

For more information call them at 076 281 1069.

paradise. And even though only a few are under direct threat, we need to consider the cumulative effect of several wetlands being lost.

'Conservation of wetland ecosystems is essential not only for a sustainable fresh water supply, but also for preserving biodiversity and ensuring other services necessary to the health and wellbeing of people around the world,' said Alexander Müller, Assistant Director-General of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, at the signing of a memorandum of cooperation between the Global Terrestrial Observing System and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

The Important Bird Areas programme (IBA) has been implemented and includes many of South Africa's important wetlands. If you would like to get involved in monitoring these wetlands and help with their conservation, contact Neil Smith on tel. (011) 789 1122 or e-mail conservation@birdlife.org.za

NEIL SMITH



Participants in Wakkerstroom's Working for Wetlands programme celebrating World Wetlands Day.

WETLANDS AND PEOPLE

BirdLife South Africa's Community-based Conservation Division has identified the need for working with local communities situated near wetlands, as a strategic conservation partnership. This is done through conservation management, ecosystem monitoring, access to resources and economic benefit sharing.

Wetlands offer a wide range of services to farmers and the general public, yet humans are the source of the main factors leading to the loss and degradation of these fragile ecosystems. BirdLife South Africa is focusing on the need to educate

communities by utilising the 'conservation for people with people' model to protect the Wakkerstroom and Soweto wetlands.

Community involvement includes consumptive use, through individuals harvesting reeds or grazing their cattle, or larger scale ecosystem services such as water hydrology, to non-consumptive use such as avitourism. People's level of commitment to conservation is determined by the degree to which the wetland and its management cater to their respective interests. This has necessitated BirdLife South Africa's involvement at grassroots level by selecting and placing project managers from the respective communities to work with the partners involved.

By linking bird conservation to income-generating initiatives and social upliftment, BirdLife South Africa works closely with both the Soweto and Wakkerstroom communities to identify areas of collaboration in wetland conservation and community development.

DANIEL MARNEWICK

PROTECTING OUR WETLANDS

Protection of wetlands is vital for the survival of birds and their habitats, and they are under daily threat from urban developments and mining operations. To highlight the critical need for the protection of wetlands as a natural resource, BirdLife South Africa's Policy and Advocacy Division is forming strategic partnerships with industry, government and local conservation groups. Some of South Africa's wetlands represent Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and have received Ramsar status, yet the country's environmental legislation offers little or no protection in this regard.

BirdLife South Africa is involved in the protection of two prominent wetlands: Nylsvley and Chrissie Pans.

Nylsvley, designated a Wetland of International Importance and a Ramsar site, is under threat because of an illegal development. The 4 000-hectare reserve boasts almost 370 bird species, including breed-



Wakkerstroom's wetlands

ing vagrants, and at peak flood (every three to four years), more than 80 000 birds can be seen.

Since August 2006, Friends of Nylsvley and BirdLife South Africa have been leading an investigation into the illegal development. This was finalised in May 2007, yet provincial authorities have failed to carry out their duties in terms of the relevant environmental legislation. We have now elevated the matter to the national office of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism and we await their official response. BirdLife South Africa is, in addition, seeking alternate legal redress to criminally prosecute the developer.

Chrissie Pans is another IBA that is under major threat; in this instance, by coal-mining. Since August 2006, BirdLife South Africa has been offering support to a group of Mpumalanga farmers in their fight against a decision issued by the regional office of the Department of Minerals and Energy. We are also working with the Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Agency and the national office of the Department of Environmental Affairs to ensure that the area is Ramsar compliant.

BirdLife South Africa continues to petition government to make the Ramsar Convention legally binding in South Africa, thus ensuring the survival of these avifaunal sites.

CAROLYN AH SHENE

Background The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

year's National Bird Week was 'March for the Penguins'. The African Penguin is endemic to southern Africa and is listed as Vulnerable in the Eskom South African Red Data Book. Its survival is threatened by, among other things, activities such as overfishing, leisure pastimes at the coast, and shoreline and pelagic pollution.

The **Eco-Schools** programme was introduced to South Africa from Europe in 2003 by the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA). The programme seeks to encourage participating schools to



Eco-Schools ambassadors ready to hoist their flag.

optimise the use of the environment as a learning tool while, at the same time, providing curriculum-linked action plans which aim to improve environmental problems identified by the learners.

BLSA entered into partnership with WESSA/WWF-SA to coordinate the Limpopo Bird Node in Namakgale Township, Phalaborwa. The programme has now been in operation for four years and has obtained a 98 per cent success rate with its schools. In 2007, six out of seven schools that registered for the programme in this node qualified for the Eco-Schools flag status.

BirdLife SA is also establishing good relationships with **institutes of higher learning**. First, the Tshwane University of Technology requested help with its workshops in Ndumo, northern KwaZulu-Natal. This was so successful that we have been asked to enter into a formal agreement with them.

The second university we are working with is UNISA. It has established a project known as Young Community Leader, which seeks to identify an outstanding community leader in the field of environmental and social responsibility.

In short, BirdLife South Africa aims to help take the education of our youth to higher levels, in order to assure the future of the next generation of environmental lobbyists.

JOE PEU

Educating communities on sustainable conservation

When one considers a broad definition of poverty, such as that given by BirdLife International's David Thomas, then 'poverty is not just a matter of income or nutrition. In its broadest sense, poverty involves the lack of access to decision-makers, a lack of information and the lack of rights to access and manage natural resources'.

It is therefore clear that if any community-based conservation efforts are to be sustainable into the future, then educating young people about the environment and how their lives are linked to nature should be an integral part of any project. This is the way it is with all of BLSA's Community-based Conservation Division's Projects.

The choices we make are based on the amount of information we have (and, of course, the resources at our disposal). Fundamentally, environmental education is about providing people with enough information to make the right choices. Sustainable living is not only about reducing waste or logging indigenous forests, it also involves health, gender rights, and environmental justice. High HIV infections in a community cause increased rates of exploitation of local resources. Lack of clean, accessible water impacts on gender rights and causes diseases. For the poor, environmental awareness is not only an ethical question or a lifestyle choice – it is a necessity to a better quality of life.

DANIEL MARNEWICK



Schoolchildren in Soweto studying wetland micro-organisms.

REACHING OUT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Late in 2007 I attended the Council for the African Partnership (CAP) meeting, where it was evident what a critical role people play within the BirdLife International family and, more specifically, within the African context. There is therefore a need to grow national membership (especially among the young) and to create awareness of environmental and conservation issues through education programmes.

The success of conservation bodies and NGOs should be measured by their ability to engage with and mobilise as many members of society as possible, and specifically with marginalised groups such as women and children. BirdLife South Africa's Membership and Education divisions are working together to ensure that we involve young people in matters such as the conservation of birds. We are also targeting a new band of keen birdwatchers, particularly in the rural areas. Youth ambassadors have already been appointed and their enthusiasm and passion is an indication of the avid interest that exists at this level.

A new category of membership is being developed to promote this initiative of raising awareness of environmental issues, and of encouraging sound environmental management and sustainable development among the young.

DOUG NEWMAN