

C-Plan to revolutionise land use decisions in Western Cape

Decisions on land use in the Western Cape is being whisked into the cyber age with a state-of-the-art, computer-based decision support system called C-Plan.

Developed for local use by UCT's Institute for Plant Conservation and the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Services in Australia, C-Plan uses a geographical information system and fine-scale mapping to calculate the regional conservation implications of land-use decisions speedily and accurately.

It is a key aspect in the Cape Action Plan for the Environment's (CAPE) government-backed bid to put in place planning and environmental policies that ensure integrated decision-making in support of biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use in the region.

"The Western Cape Nature Conservation Board will update C-Plan on an ongoing basis to be used in bioregional planning in the Cape Floral Kingdom," says Dr Ernst Baard, head of the WCNCB's scientific services.

"Bioregional land-use planning uses biological patterns and processes to inform and guide the planning process. By December 2002, we aim to incorporate all the priority areas identified by the CAPE project into bioregional planning," he adds.

The Western Cape government has already adopted a bioregional approach to land-use planning which depends on accurate and up-to-date conservation information to influence decisions on development planning and agricultural permits.

C-Plan has been identified as the foundation for long-term conservation planning and analysis in the Cape Floral Kingdom and is already being used as a working tool.

Mr Dawie Kruger, Director of Regional Planning for the Western Cape Department of Planning, Local Government and Housing, describes C-Plan as an interactive tool which pro-actively identifies land for conservation purposes.

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First black rhino calf for Ophathe Game Reserve

KZN Nature Conservation Service (NCS) staff in the Ophathe Game Reserve near Ulundi reported the birth of their first black rhino calf following the recent introduction of five adult animals from the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi Park to supplement the one animal already there.

Staff engaged in a controlled burn in the reserve reported seeing a "warthog-size" calf running at the heel of an adult female black rhino when she broke from cover and ran away from them. The Officer in Charge of Ophathe Game Reserve, Mr Abednigo Nzuzza, says that his staff is monitoring the cow and calf by careful tracking, but is avoiding any contact in order not to disturb them.

He also reports that Ophathe Game Reserve is in excellent condition as with the good rains in early winter many streams are still running and water is therefore

plentiful.

"We are really pleased that our new arrival is doing well - this is a very good sign for us and we intend to see that the little black rhino - as well as the other newly introduced animals grow in peace," said Mr Nzuzza.

The reserve is stocked with a wide range of game and offers spectacular views across really wild country.

Ophathe Game Reserve has limited visitor facilities and although about 10 km of roads are suitable for two-wheel drive vehicles, visitors are advised to travel in a 4x4 vehicle as a further 24 km of rough tracks are available for game viewing.

No refreshments are available and visitors should take everything they need.

For further inquiries about Ophathe Game Reserve contact the staff on 035 870 5000.

Talk on wild dogs

Dr Gus Mills, a specialist scientist with the National Parks Board, is talking at Kelvin Grove on 11 November. He is co-ordinator for the IUCN Canid Specialist Group and heads the Carnivore Conservation Group, a working group within the Endangered Wildlife Trust. Dr Mills is also chairman of the IUCN Hyaena Specialist Group and is considered the world's leading authority on hyaenas.

Earlier in his career he worked in the southern Kalahari where he studied the behaviour and habits of the brown and the spotted hyaena, completing his doctorate on the former. Dr Mills has spent over 25 years researching the world of the larger carnivores. He is the author of a book on hyaenas and a popular guide to the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park, as well as numerous magazine articles and more than 55 scientific papers dealing with carnivore and herbivore ecology. In 1982 he won the Agfa Wildlife Photographic Award. Dr Mills is married to Margie and they have two children, Mickie and Debbie.

Dr Mills is obviously very involved with the Wild Dog Project and more recently with the 3rd Kruger National Park wild dog survey. The year 2000 has also seen the reintroduction of wild dogs into the Venetia Game Reserve in the Northern Province,



which has been overseen by Dr Mills. Gus Mills has been asked to serve on the Advisory Committee for the Zimbabwe Lowveld Wild Dog Project.

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