

NATIONAL PARKS EXPANDED

The Tsitsikama Forest and Coastal National Park, managed by the National Parks Board, has been enlarged. The additional area comprises the Groot River lagoon, the seashore and part of the Indian Ocean extending 0,5 sea miles to the South of the farm Saltrifor 241 (De Vasselot Nature Reserve). This step will put an end to the fragmented management of the area and will ensure that this particular environment is managed as an ecological entity. Outgoing Environmental Affairs minister Dr. Dawie de Villiers expressed his support for the expansion of the park, as it is anticipated that this step will contribute towards the conservation of the unique ecosystem of the Tsitsikama Forest and Coastal National Park, one of the jewels in South Africa's network of national parks. Dr. De Villiers also officially approved the expansion of the West Coast National Park. Four additional areas, situated in the Division of Malmesbury, Western Cape, were purchased and registered in favour of the National Parks Board. These areas lie to the west of the West Coast Road (R27) and border on the eastern side of Langebaan Lagoon. With the additional land, the West Coast National Park now covers an area of approximately 35 000 hectares. The properties form part of the north-eastern section of the Park and provide protection for an area which is a transition between the West Coast strandveld and lowland fynbos.

NEW TRUST LAUNCHED

In an urgent and concerted effort to stamp out the continued illegal poaching and smuggling operations of international crime syndicates, the Endangered Species Protection Unit Trust was launched in January at Gallagher Estate in Midrand. In his address, superintendent Pieter Lategan, head of the SA Police Service's unit, told the guests: "Extinction is forever, and as long as the ruthless onslaught on our natural environment is allowed to continue, the list of extinct, endangered and threatened species is bound to increase. In the past year alone the Endangered Species Protection Unit (ESPU) has confiscated 110 elephant tusks, 54 rhino horns, 132

birds and 285 cycads, and has made 159 arrests. The ESPU Trust was initiated by Johann Roode, executive chairman of Genfood, and Mrs. Lente Roode, with the full support of the Minister of Safety and Security, Sydney Mufamadi, and Commissioner George Fivaz of the SAPS. Dr. Salomon Joubert will chair the Trust.

RHINO GROUP MEETING



Commissioner Fivaz (second from left) is presented with a beautiful rhino walking stick by artist Suzette Rocher (left). Looking on are founder members of the ESPU Trust, Johann and Lente Roode.

The African Rhino Specialist Group of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) met for the first time in South Africa at the Natal Parks Board's Itala Game Reserve in February. It meets every 18 months to review the status of African rhinos and to develop strategies to ensure the survival of these animals. The Itala meeting was attended by representatives of the governments of Zaire, Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, and delegates reported on the status and management of black and white rhinos in their countries and provided population estimates for each species. Black rhino numbers in Africa are stable at approximately 2 400, with the South African population being approximately 1 020 – an overall increase of 100 since 1993. Southern white rhino numbers have increased by 800 since 1993 and stand at approximately 7 500, of which about 7 100 are in South Africa. The meeting held a number of workshops, and also identified several priority projects requiring international funding. These included security requirements for Cameroon and Namibian rhino; a black rhino survey in Zambia; and rhino horn "finger-printing".

RARE PLANT SPECIES RE-ESTABLISHED AT RONDEVLEI NATURE RESERVE



Dalton Gibbs, nature conservation officer at Rondevlei Nature Reserve, with the very rare plant species, *Erica verticillata*.

A very rare plant species, *Erica verticillata*, thought to be extinct, has been re-established at the Rondevlei Nature Reserve. Dalton Gibbs, nature conservation officer at the Cape Metropolitan Council's Rondevlei Nature Reserve, said, "This beautiful erica is one of a number of plant species whose distribution is restricted to the Cape Flats. In this particular instance, *Erica verticillata* was only recorded growing in seasonally wet areas from Zeekoevlei to Wynberg, a narrow area which was urbanised in the early part of the century. By 1950 the species was no longer found, its marshy habitat having been drained for housing and farming, or overgrown by invasive alien vegetation. Furthermore, because of its beauty, it was extensively cut for the flower trade." In 1984, Deon Kotze of Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens discovered the existence of a solitary old bush growing in a park in Pretoria. From this plant, as well as plants growing in cultivation in Europe, the species has been revived and is growing well at Kirstenbosch.

WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENT SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Wildlife and Environment Society (WESSA) will be held on 21 September 1996 at 16h30 in the Exhibition Centre, Walnut Road, Durban.

To celebrate its 70th Anniversary, WESSA will be holding a gala banquet at the Durban Exhibition Centre to coincide with the Wildlife Heritage Expo, the Annual General Meeting, and a Conference focusing on our vision for the future.

Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, will be the guest speaker at the banquet. This historic banquet will feature the presentation of the Society's

prestige corporate and gold medal awards. The Society's president, Mr. Dave Hatton, will give a short address on the eve of the AGM, and invited representatives from the nine other nations forming the "Alliance of Wildlife Societies of Africa" will deliver messages of goodwill.

Members of the Society and their guests are invited to attend at a cost of R75 per head (which includes free entry to the Expo that evening). Seating is limited. This banquet will take place on Friday, 20 September 1996, starting at 19h00.

For details and bookings, telephone Delise Coad on (031) 21-3126.

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