

BUSH LIFE

News from the Wilderness Trust of Southern Africa

1998 Number 1

From the Chairman's Desk

For the period April 1996 to March 1997, a total of 2071 pupils attended courses at the Lapalala Wilderness School, in addition to which 167 teachers attended courses.

The Wilderness Trust sponsored the following courses:

- 24 pupils and two teachers from the Warmbaths/Nylstroom area, through the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. These students came from a number of schools within this area.
- The Northern Province Department of Environmental Affairs, together with the Lapalala Wilderness School, arranged for a group of teachers from the Northern Province to attend a course. This course, especially designed as Teacher Training, was conducted over a period of four days.
- The Northern Province Department of Agriculture, Land and Environment arranged for a group of students, two teachers and two Departmental Heads to attend a four-day course. The Department had declared the month of June as "Youth and the Environment" month and an environmental competition was held. Schools and Youth Clubs in the community became involved, the theme being "I Care" and the prizewinners attended the course.
- Game Farm Management and Tourism course: 20 teachers from underprivileged areas attended the course. Participation in the course equipped them with the skills to impart knowledge of Game Farm Management and Tourism to their pupils.
- A group of 33 students and two teachers from Atteridgeville Technical College attended a four-day course.
- A four-day course for a group of 40 students and three teachers from Ipelegeng Youth Development Programme.
- A group of 58 pupils and six teachers from the Refihlile School.
- A group of 33 pupils and three teachers from the Growth of Children's Potential attended a five-day course.
- Assistance was given to Christian Brothers College in Boksburg.

The Lapalala Wilderness School, under the auspices of the Wilderness Trust, has today become recognised internationally for its work amongst students and teachers who come from as far afield as Asia, Australia, Tanzania, England, Botswana, West Africa and, of course, South Africa.

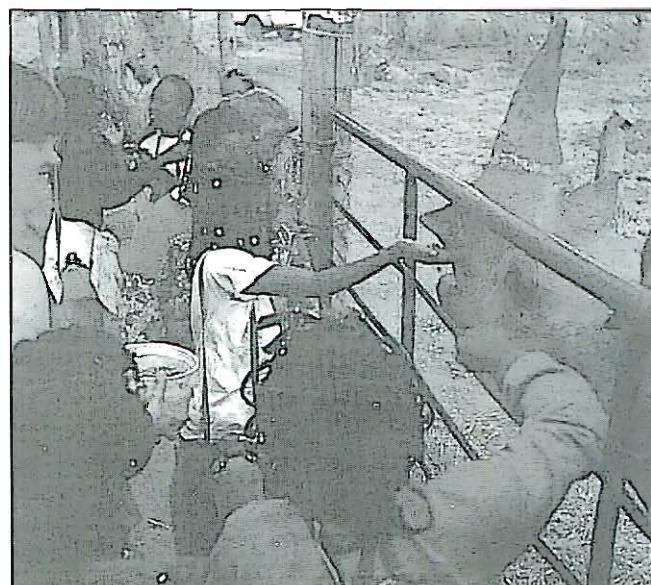
The School hosted a number of teachers from New Zealand and Australia, as well as representatives from the Werribee Zoo (Australia). Dr David To and Miss Patricia Au from Breakaway Travel International, based in Hong Kong, visited the School to assess the programmes conducted. They subsequently arranged for a group of young Asian students to attend a week-long course during the latter part of 1997.

Eight educators, Government Forestry officers from the Huai Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary (Seub Foundation) in Thailand, attended a special course. These educators were planning to set up an education centre similar to what has been established at Lapalala Wilderness and the objective of the tour was to give them an insight into the development of such a facility and to demonstrate how South Africa conducts programmes in environmental education. Cathay Pacific sponsored the air fares.

A group of 81 veterinary students from all over the world held a week-long workshop at the Lapalala Wilderness School.

A group of girls from the New England Girls School in Australia attended a course and the Wilderness Trust sponsored a further six South African girls to join the Australian contingent.

Students travelling from Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, representing the International School of Tanganyika and two groups from Botswana, one from Livingstone House and one from Kgaswe School, attended courses.



Face to Face with an Endangered Black Rhino

CATHAY PACIFIC bridges cultural barriers through wilderness experience

"Over the past four years the Lapalala Wilderness Experience has proved that cultural barriers exist only in the mind. It takes a little effort from individuals and it is amazing how quickly true friendships are built out of self-awareness and self-confidence." James Morley-Kirk.

The Cathay Pacific Lapalala Wilderness Experience, now in its fourth year, has brought a further 48 students together from ten different countries with one goal in mind, to build bridges and break down barriers through this unique cultural, environmental and self-awareness project.

The 36-strong Asian contingent met their South African counterparts at a welcoming ceremony held at the Helderfontein Conference Centre in July 1997, prior to departing for Lapalala in the rugged Waterberg mountains for a week of hiking, eating around campfires, sleeping under the stars, sharing ideas and experiences and exposure to cross cultural thinking and conservation issues.

The Cathay Pacific Lapalala Wilderness Experience Patron, Judy Sexwale, sent the students a message of goodwill, encouraging them to foster friendships whilst learning about new cultures, and wished them a safe journey and an enjoyable week.

At the press conference, Cathay Pacific's country manager, James Morley-Kirk, said the cultural gap in South Africa had not yet been bridged because society has been unable, largely as a result of ignorance and misconceptions, to apply its collective mind to developing a solution.

The solution is within the grasp of all of us. Cultural barriers in South Africa exist only in our perceptions – a fact that is driven home to us by the young people who come together to participate in the Cathay Pacific Lapalala Wilderness Experience, he added.

The event, which is growing in popularity, drew students between the ages of 16-18 years old, from the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Thailand, Korea, India and Taiwan. It was the first year that the Philippines and India participated.

The Wilderness Trust would like to extend its sincere appreciation to Cathay Pacific and E.R.M. Travel, without whose sponsorships this unforgettable experience would not have been possible.



Mazda Wildlife Fund - proud sponsors of the Wilderness Trust vehicle.



Joyce Li with Clive Walker. "In the Lapalala programme, I found a new learning attitude. In Hong Kong, we only sit inside concrete classrooms and learn from books. However, at Lapalala, we learnt by walking in the bush and climbing rocks".

Sponsored Courses at Lapalala

SOS Children's Village

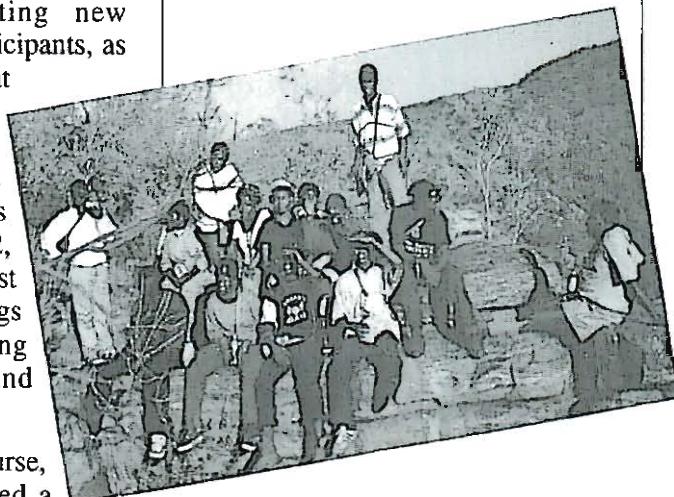
The South African Breweries (Beer Division) sponsored a group of students from the SOS Children's Village to attend a four-day course at the Lapalala Wilderness School. This was an exciting new experience for the participants, as the majority were not at all familiar with conservation concepts. This very enthusiastic group of 30, with ages ranging from 16 to 22, expressed special interest in the ecology teachings they received, including veld interpretation and water studies.

At the end of the course, the participants showed a clear understanding of nature and commented on the unique experience of learning different problem-solving skills. They improved their awareness of the environment and came up with various suggestions as to how they could influence their own communities.

The SOS Children's Village Association of South Africa aims to help abandoned and orphaned children by giving them a "Family", a permanent home and a sound basis for independent adult life. At SOS, each child is given a new mother, a new family of between eight and ten brothers and sisters, a new home and a village. By exposing the children and young adults to courses such as those run at the Lapalala Environmental School, they are prepared to take their rightful places in society.

The International SOS Association was founded in 1949 in Austria by

Dr Hermann Gmeiner. He identified the need to create family units for the many orphaned victims of the Second World War. Today this network consists of more than 1 350 projects in over 125 countries, making the SOS Children's Villages Association the world's largest private child care organisation. To date, over 30 000 children have grown up in these villages.



GCP and Australian students

Three students from Growth of Children's Potential Programme attended a Lapalala course with students from Australia. This is what they had to say:

"Lapalala is one of the most beautiful, exquisite and convincing places. It is a place that lets you see how fragile and special our planet is. It is surprising to see how we take the litter we see around us for granted – the effects are unimaginable. This is where the five R's come in: REDUCE, RECYCLE, REUSE, REJECT and REACT. If we remember to apply these, then we would have covered a long road to recovery. By being economically active and spreading the message we will win the battle. Let us make our land a Lapalala land."

A Wilderness Adventure on the Internet

In August 1997, three young people were jetted in, their air fares sponsored by Air Namibia, to visit one of the great wilderness areas of South Africa, namely Lapalala. These youngsters - David Foster (16) from Northern Ireland, Judith Whitley (16) from Lancashire and Lindsay Harding (18) from Yorkshire - were selected from hundreds of entrants in an Eco-Warriors competition held in schools throughout the United Kingdom early in 1997.

The three winners shared their unique wilderness experience with a group of South African students in a humbling, cross-cultural experience in the wilds, far removed from any prejudice or distraction which may have prevented them from truly getting to understand one another.

Thanks to the power of Internet, all these youngsters' friends, their families, children from schools across the United Kingdom, and indeed the children and adults from around the world, shared in this adventure in a very intimate and special way. From the time they set foot in Africa, the experiences of these youngsters were documented both in text and in the form of digital photographs.

The Wilderness Trust would like to thank Dr Andrew McKenzie and his team at Wildnet Africa for offering the Lapalala Wilderness School the opportunity to share its wild places and adventures with literally millions of people around the globe.

Visit the Wilderness Trust's colourful Internet site at:
<http://wildernesstrust.org.za>
or send us some interesting e-mail at:
school@wildernesstrust.org.za



THE WATERBERG MUSEUM

"The idea of a museum first manifested itself about five years ago when I realised that my two sons might not be too happy about inheriting certain aspects of my collection one day - in particular a large collection of rhinoceros skulls, let alone a number of elephant skulls". Clive Walker

I do believe that the idea of ultimately creating a museum was always on my mind, but neither the opportunity nor the circumstance had ever arrived. Initially I had the idea of extending the concept through the Lapalala Wilderness School's Environmental Education Centre, but abandoned the idea because it would limit the number of people who would have access to the facility. It was only about three years ago, when I started to focus more specifically on the possibility of establishing a Rhinoceros Museum, that I began to develop the concept.

Some twenty one kilometres away from our home is an historic landmark known as the Melkrivier School which, as it transpired, was first built in 1935 for primary school children of the local farming community. One day, whilst stopping outside the old school, I climbed over the gate and wandered around, trying to visualise what might have transpired from the time the school first opened until it closed in 1962. It occurred to me that it would make an exceptional museum and I tentatively approached the husband of one of the owner's daughters. He informed me that the property was in fact going to be inherited by his wife and her three sisters and that they were quite prepared to dispose of it. As I had been given first option I immediately took up the offer and before I knew what I had really undertaken, I had become the new owner of the original Melkrivier School.

The prospect of restoring it, however, was very daunting, for by now I not only wanted to create a Rhinoceros Museum, but had decided to establish the first-ever Cultural and Natural History Museum in these mountains. Since moving permanently to the Waterberg in 1993, I was struck by the absence of any real concern for the pioneer farming community's history, which I believed was rapidly in danger of disappearing. Apart from the fascinating history of the early trek boers, the

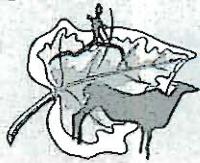
area is rich in natural history and tales are legend of early hunters who came into these mountains to hunt the wild game, especially elephant. The English farming folk who, incidentally, sided with their Boer neighbours at the outbreak of the great South African war, suffered afterwards from the high-handed attitude of the British army and lost their livestock and their homes. The British were not prepared to offer them any compensation whatsoever - their reply being "you backed the wrong side".

The Waterberg must also represent one of the most important San Rock Art areas within southern Africa, many of which have never been discovered and are hidden away along rivers and gorges. I felt a compelling urge to record this and felt there could be no better way, other than writing a book, of capturing as much of this as possible within the walls of this old school.

During the last nine months, with the generous support of private individuals and corporations, we have come a long way in restoring the school to its original self, with reconstruction work being carried out by John Young, a Trustee of the Wilderness Trust, together with a dedicated team of helpers. I have been given no less than four ox wagons (in various stages of deterioration), tractors, ploughs, implements, grinding stones, mealie stampers, oxen yokes, rifles, and so the list goes on. I sought the advice of the Cultural History Museum in Pretoria, who enabled me to gain a far better insight into the role of museums.

Should you wish to make a donation towards the restoration of the museum or require any further information on the Waterberg mountains and the Museum Centre, kindly contact Rose Smith at (011)453-7646 or fax her at (011) 453-7649.

Clive Walker



Our Annual Burns Supper

Held in the Wanderer's ballroom, the evening of 23 January saw another commemoration of the birth of Scotland's famous Bard, Robert Burns. It was the eighth year that the Wilderness Trust paid tribute to this poet extraordinaire. Guests were charmed by Celtic Music star Fiona Kennedy accompanied by Ali Napier on keyboards. Entertainment was provided by superb guest speakers, the Transvaal Scottish Pipe Band and MacKenzie. Once again the event was expertly hosted by Master of Ceremonies, the inimitable Scott McRae.

Included in the works of art auctioned on the evening was a Clive Walker original "Elephants of Savuti". Once again, our sincere appreciation to our Chairman for the donation of this painting.

The Wilderness Trust would like to thank all our supporters of the evening and would like to make special mention of the following sponsors:

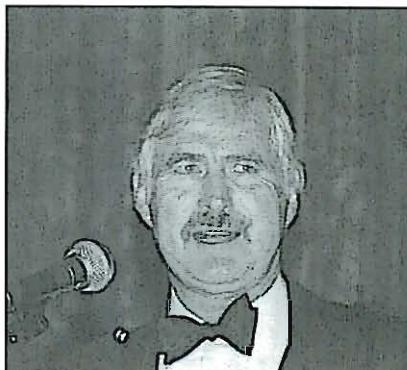
- Stocks Leisure Developments
- William Grant International
- PJ's Printing & Mailing Services
- Radio 702
- Gary Freeman Safaris
- Patrick's Trail Camp
- Michelangelo Hotel
- Douglas Green Bellingham
- Scott McRae
- Ken and Ina Fraser



Clive Walker with Scott McRae



Above: Fiona Kennedy. The Trust would like to thank not only Ms Kennedy, but also Mr Alister Stewart whose generosity enabled Fiona to travel to South Africa especially for the Burns celebrations



Above: Kenneth Fraser, delivering his toast to "The Immortal Memory"



Above: Frances Kendall, replying to the "Toast to the Lassies"



Above: Principal guest of honour, the Hon Richard Emslie and Keryn, who travelled from Pietermaritzburg for the occasion



Pipe Major Adrian Haddow

Acknowledgement to our SUPPORTERS

The Wilderness Trust would like to sincerely thank all our 1997 "Friends", sponsors and supporters for their commitment to the conservation of the environment and the education of South Africa's youth.

Companies who sponsored their own groups:

Alpha Ltd
Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd
Commercial Union Group Services of SA (Pty) Ltd

The sponsorship received from the following assists the Trust with its mission to provide environmental education for students who, due to their circumstances, would never have the opportunity to experience our natural heritage:

Gencor Development Trust
Mutual & Federal Insurance Co Ltd
The Lorenzo & Stella Chiappini Charitable & Cultural Trust
Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Co Ltd
The Stella & Paul Lowenstein Trust
The Ruth & Anita Wise Trust
The Liberty Life Group Community Fund
Anglo American & De Beers Chairman's Fund
Malbak Limited
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Dr Vincent Wager Fund
Dr Gwen Neuendorff (private capacity)
Mr Jerry Keating (private capacity)
Woolworths (Pty) Ltd
Sentrachem Ltd
Southern Life Foundation

Donations received:

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Mrs S J Gordon
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New Friends:

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Mrs M C G Breuer
Ms Shona Poole
Mr M Main
Mr K I Dixon
Mrs S J Gordon
Mr A Skillicorn
M L Phashe

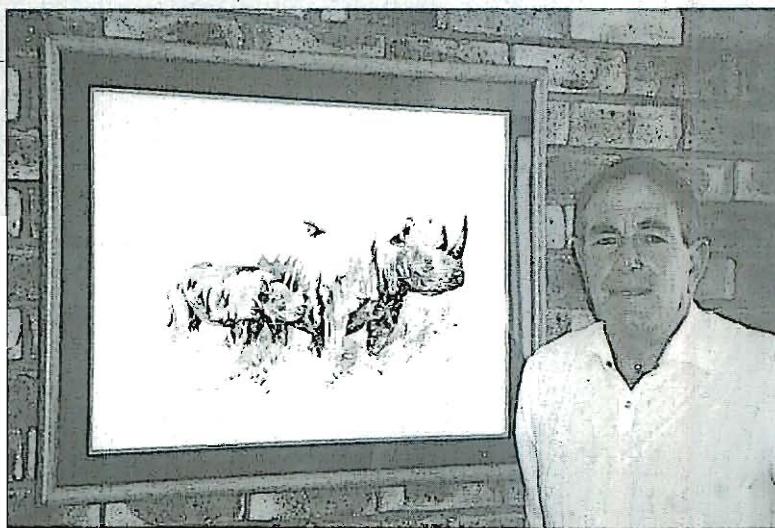
A special word of thanks to the following:

- ★ The support received from **Mazda Wildlife** for the 16 seater marathon.
- ★ Legal assistance received from **Paul Botha and Brad Pistorius at Bell, Dewar & Hall**.
- ★ **Willie Matidza** from **Comuta Services** for the excellent service he provides when arrangements are made for busses.
- ★ **Deloitte & Touche** for the execution of the honorary audit.
- ★ Special rates received from **Spoor & Fisher**.
- ★ Assistance received from **Jack de Beer from Vistel Vision**.
- ★ Sponsorship of a bus from the **Putco Foundation** for the Diepkloof Youth Ensemble.

Winner of the Clive Walker Print

We congratulate Niel Passet on winning the print of a Black Rhino and Calf, in the draw for the "Friends" of the Wilderness Trust, which took place in December last year.

The original painting was presented to Hanneke van der Merwe, Director of our Environmental Education Programme, in recognition of 10 years of dedicated service.



Encourage someone you know to become a "Friend" of the Wilderness Trust in order to spread the need for environmental education. All friends receive our newsletter "Bushlife", "Wilderness Sanctuary", a "Friends" sticker and a certificate, and special rates at Lapalala Bush Camps and Kolobe Camp.

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