

MEDIA RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY DAY

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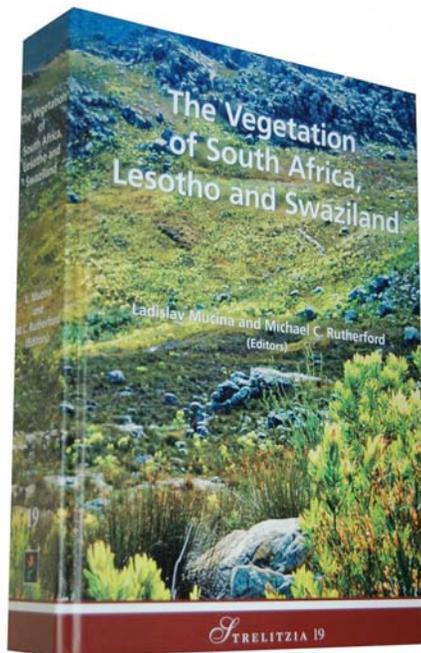
OLD MUTUAL CONFERENCE CENTRE
KIRSTENBOSCH NATIONAL
BOTANICAL GARDEN



A new major biodiversity resource for three nations: Launch of the book on the vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland

South Africa needs good, reliable information on the natural environment to serve decision needs relating to the AsgiSA (Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa) development goals. To this end, after more than 10 years of collaborative effort, the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) has published a new and detailed account of the vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. The new map and book provide a first resource that planners can use together with the NBSA (National Spatial Biodiversity Assessment) and fine scale assessments that SANBI can supply. The practical use of the book and map for planners thus cuts across national, provincial and municipal levels and is fundamental to many of the bioregional approaches led by SANBI. The key is the consistent

national framework that the map and book provides – it is the anchor reference that researchers and planners in natural resource development – agriculture, forestry, water, and urbanization can use, just as Acocks was used by the farming and conservation professions for over 50 years.



The current work was initiated by Professor Brian Huntley, Chief Executive Officer of the then National Botanical Institute (NBI) who convened a workshop at Kirstenbosch in 1995. This was a national workshop of vegetation experts to discuss the feasibility of the project. The NBI was officially contracted on 30 January 1996 by the National Department of Environmental Affairs to coordinate the project. The production of the map and book was made possible with a generous donation from the Environmental Agreement between the Government of the Republic of South

Africa and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway through the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

Around 100 scientists drawn from all provinces of South Africa as well as from Lesotho, Swaziland and overseas contributed to the book.

The book features:

- 440 vegetation types
- 807 pages
- 579 colour photos and figures
- About 10 000 unique plant species listed
- About 3 400 species listed as endemic (restricted) to specific vegetation types
- About 3 000 unique literature references cited
- An electronic version of the map on CD

The map details in full colour 435 vegetation types in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland and an additional five types on the South African Prince Edward Islands in the Southern Ocean. This contrasts with the mere 70 vegetation types on the best vegetation maps previously available. The new map is entirely original. For the first time at national level detailed units such as vegetation types along rivers, the seashore, in pans and in salt marshes are included. There are 34 of these so-called azonal vegetation types. These join the 119 Fynbos, 87 Savanna, 72 Grassland, 63 Succulent Karoo, 15 Desert, 14 Nama Karoo, 14 Albany Thicket, 12 Forest and 5 Indian Ocean Coastal Belt types. The map consists of more than 17 500 individual polygons (mapped patches). In addition to the descriptions of each vegetation type each main chapter of the book is preceded by introductory accounts including information on biogeography and origins, geology, soils, climate, ecology and conservation.

The vegetation type concepts, delimitation and descriptions were managed and edited by Professor Ladislav Mucina of the Department of Botany and Zoology at Stellenbosch University and Dr Mike Rutherford of the Kirstenbosch Research Centre of SANBI. The Geographical Information Systems (GIS) were managed by Mr Les Powrie at the same centre of SANBI. Final cartographic rendition of the map was by the Centre for Geographic Analysis of Stellenbosch University. Keith Phillips (images@iafrica.com) was responsible for all production management, design, layout and reproduction of the book.

The book (which includes an atlas section of the vegetation map) and wall-map are currently available from the SANBI Bookshop in Pretoria and the Botanical Society Bookshops at Kirstenbosch, Cape Town. Respective costs of the book and wall-map are R390-00 and R120-00 (inclusive of VAT) for SADC countries and US\$ 100-00 and US\$ 30-00 elsewhere.

The book is referenced as: Mucina, L. and Rutherford, M.C. (eds) 2006. The vegetation of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. *Strelitzia* 19. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria. ISBN 978-1-919976-21-1

The wall-map is referenced as: Mucina, L., Rutherford, M.C. and Powrie, L.W (eds). 2005. Vegetation map of South Africa, Lesotho & Swaziland. 1 000 000 scale sheet maps. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria. ISBN 1-919976-22-1