



January 2014

CapeNature welcomes new CEO



The Western Cape Nature Conservation Board is proud to introduce and welcome Dr Razeena Omar as CapeNature's CEO Designate from the 6th of January 2014 and as its new CEO from the 1st of February 2014.

Dr Razeena Omar is an accomplished senior manager and has valuable experience within the sector. Omar has demonstrated successes in matters related to the protection of the terrestrial, marine and coastal environments and has in excess of 15 years' experience at Senior Management level with global exposure to a variety of key conservation issues. Omar has an honours degree in Natural Sciences and a Masters and Doctorate in Philosophy.

In her previous roles as Chief Director: Integrated Coastal Management for the Department of Environmental Affairs (Oceans and Coasts), The Executive Director: People and Conservation at SANParks, member of the Council of the Botanical Society of South Africa and the Environmental Adviser to previous National Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal; Omar has contributed greatly to the conservation sector. In addition, Omar received a number of special recognitions and awards including the Gold Medal Award from WESSA in 2003 for contributing to the environment and education over the past twenty years.

Omar is also a previous Board Member of CapeNature (2001 - 2003) and has a long working relationship with CapeNature as a partner in conservation.

"I am humbled to accept the position as CEO of CapeNature and I am motivated to lead this Organisation, and to work together with the committed and passionate staff, in conserving the biodiversity of the Western Cape," says Dr Omar of her new appointment as CEO.

UN body appoints first African woman



Dr Tanya Abrahamse, CEO of the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), is the first African woman to be appointed to the UN Secretary-Generals' Scientific Advisory Board. "We are very proud indeed that SANBI's CEO sits on this inaugural scientific advisory board for the UN," said acting SANBI board chairperson Nana Magomola "This shows that the work we do at SANBI and in South Africa has global value."

Abrahamse is part of a group of twenty-six eminent scientists, representing natural, social and human sciences and engineering, who have been appointed to a Scientific Advisory Board, announced by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon. The new Board will provide advice on science, technology and innovation (STI) for

sustainable development to the UN Secretary-General and to Executive Heads of UN organizations. UNESCO will host the Secretariat for the Board.

“The creation of the Scientific Advisory Board follows on a wide-ranging consultation work entrusted to UNESCO by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova. “It brings together scientists of international stature, and will serve as a global reference point to improve links between science and public policies.”

The Board is the first such body set up by the UN Secretary-General to influence and shape action by the international community to advance sustainable development and eradicate poverty. The initiative derives from the report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Global Sustainability titled *Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future worth choosing* (January, 2012). This report recommended the launch of a “major global scientific initiative to strengthen the interface between policy and science. This should include the preparation of regular assessments and digests of the science around such concepts as “planetary boundaries”, “tipping points” and “environmental thresholds” in the context of sustainable development”.

It aims to ensure that up-to-date and rigorous science is appropriately reflected in high-level policy discussions within the UN system, offering recommendations on priorities related to science for sustainable development that should be supported or encouraged; providing advice on up-to-date scientific issues relevant to sustainable development; identifying knowledge gaps that could be addressed outside the UN system by either national or international research programs; identifying specific needs that could be addressed by on-going assessments (e.g., IPCC or the IPBES); and advising on issues related to the public visibility and understanding of science.

Board members will act in their personal capacity and will provide advice on a strictly independent basis. They will serve pro bono for two years, with the possibility of renewal for one further two-year term, upon the decision of the Secretary-General. The first session of the Board will be held at the beginning of 2014.

Abrahamse hopes to contribute to forge stronger links between science and policy towards human well-being and sustainable development.

Original article by Eye Witness News

Brighter future ahead for participants on YES Programme



A group of Cape Town-based participants who have completed the year-long Youth Environmental Services (YES) Programme beamed with pride as their achievements were acknowledged at a special year-end event held at WESSA (Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa) in Cape Town in early December.

The R15 million youth development and training programme is funded by the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) over a three year period and is being implemented by WESSA in the Western Cape.

The Programme aims to provide training and workplace-based experience for an annual intake of 100 previously unemployed youth beneficiaries from disadvantaged communities; and is implemented in six district municipalities over three years. The 2013 Programme was run in Cape Town as well as the Overberg and Eden Districts.

Addressing the participants and guests at the year-end event, Project Manager Andrea Gordon said “this Programme is Government’s response to the national youth unemployment crisis and speaks to Government’s Human Capital Development Strategy and Sustainable Development policies”. Gordon also said that creating new opportunities for youth by providing training to develop their skills capacity in the environmental sector is geared towards achieving President Zuma’s mandate for establishing SA’s green economy.

The event, which also marked the end of the first year of successful implementation of the programme, acknowledged the hard work and dedication shown by the participants, and celebrated the fact that – through their involvement in this programme – a number of participants have been offered posts with NGO partners or government agencies. Lizo Mati who represented DEA at the event thanked WESSA, saying that the organisation had implemented the project successfully in the first year. He also thanked the host organisations for their work, and said that reaching people “on the ground” was exactly what the DEA had wanted to achieve through the programme. He mentioned that participants leaving the programme, to take up formal positions in the green sector, should also be viewed as a favourable outcome. One of the successful participants, Lee-Anne Japtha, based at the City of Cape Town’s Invasive Alien Species Unit, and recently employed by the City, said “the programme has been a milestone in the lives of the participants, creating many platforms for us and enabling us to see many possibilities for our futures.” She thanked WESSA for the nurturing environment provided to the participants and for the knowledge and wisdom shared by the project staff. She also thanked the DEA for creating such a programme that provided a platform for growth.

Similar year-end events took place in the Overberg and Eden District municipalities for participants who completed the programme in those areas. An official graduation ceremony will be held for the beneficiaries in early 2014 where learners from around the Western Cape Province will gather in Cape Town where they will be presented with certificates of achievement.

WESSA has already selected participants for the 2014 YES Programme, which will be implemented for a second year running in Cape Town, targeting specifically Langa, Lotus River, Bonteheuwel and Lavender Hill. The programme will also run in Worcester and Oudtshoorn in 2014.

For more information please contact Andrea Gordon – andrea@wessa.co.za or on tel 021 701 1397/ 021 701 1397 or cell 072 399 5819/ 072 399 5819.

IBA Champion Dr Dave Whitelaw



After all the planning and strategising is done, it is the visible and practical conservation of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) that is the key measure of success. This conservation at site level would not be possible without the assistance of local champions who voluntarily give of their time and skills.

One of these local champions is Dr Dave Whitelaw, who joined the Cape Bird Club Committee in 1988 and has been serving on it for the past 25 years. In 1989 he formed the club’s Conservation Committee and has been the chairman ever since. Whitelaw has been involved in Coordinated Waterbird Counts (CWACs) and Coordinated Avifaunal Road (CAR) counts for a number of years and has played an active role on the Western Cape Birding Forum since its inception.

Since 2000 Whitelaw has focused his conservation work on the False Bay Ecology Park IBA, particularly the Strandfontein Birding Area. Through his positions on the Julie te Groen Trust and Cape Bird Club, he serves on the committee overseeing the Memorandum of Understanding between BirdLife South Africa, the City of Cape Town and the Cape Bird Club. Whitelaw's position with the Julie te Groen Trust requires almost daily contact with Erica Essig, manager of the Strandfontein Birding Area; and he gives tirelessly of his personal time, without financial or other gain, and is a role model for the kind of impact a volunteer can make in conservation.

During his outgoing address as BirdLife South Africa's President, Professor Peter Ryan remarked on Whitelaw's contribution, using him to illustrate the power of the volunteer. "Dave Whitelaw has been a passionate birder for more than 25 years, but it is for his championing of bird conservation at our IBAs that we truly commend him. We hereby acknowledge Dave as an IBA Champion and thank him for his immense contribution to the False Bay Ecology Park."

There are many other champions across the country and Birdlife South Africa will be using this and other platforms to highlight IBA champions' work and acknowledge their contributions.

Please contact iba@birdlife.org.za if you would like to follow Dave's example and become an IBA Champion or form a Local Conservation Group.

LTAS climate change research and policy products from Phase 1 now available



Deputy Director-General Mr Alf Wills on behalf of the Minister of Water and Environmental Mrs Edna Molewa hosted a Climate Change Breakfast Briefing, held at the Royal Elephant Hotel in Centurion in early November 2013.

The Department of Environment Affairs (DEA), the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), launched the first series of products from the Long-Term Adaptation Scenarios Flagship Research Programme (LTAS) at the Briefing.

The LTAS aims to respond to the South African National Climate Change Response White Paper (NCCRP, para 8.8) by developing national and sub-national adaptation scenarios for South Africa under plausible future climate conditions and development pathways. This will be used to inform key decisions in future development and adaptation planning so as to build climate resilience.

Climate change is already a measurable reality and South Africa, though vulnerable to its impacts, is taking action at national, provincial, local and community level. South Africa's vision for a just transition to a climate-resilient and lower-carbon economy and society is presented in the National Climate Change Response Policy. A key objective of this policy is to build and sustain our social, economic and environmental resilience and emergency response capacity. As part of implementing the provisions of the Policy, a set of Long Term Adaptation Scenarios is being developed in consultation with all key stakeholders.

The first phase, completed in June 2013, developed a consensus view of climate change trends and projections for South Africa. It summarised key climate change impacts and potential response options identified for primary sectors, namely water, agriculture and forestry, human health, marine fisheries, and biodiversity. Phase 1 products include a brief summary for policy-makers, six

technical reports and seven factsheets, and are now available on the SANBI LTAS web page as well as in the November 2013 LTAS newsletter.

The second phase will use an integrated assessment approach and model to develop adaptation scenarios for future climate conditions using the information, data and models from Phase 1 and inputs from a range of stakeholder consultations and task-team workshops.

To access the full speech, as given by Mr. Alf Wills on the Minister's behalf, please [click here](#).

New hope for a precious endemic in a precarious state



Barber's False Bay Ranger (*Kedestes barbarae bunta*) is a small, dark brown butterfly that doesn't stray far from its larval food-plant, Cotton wool grass (*Imperata cylindrica*). The rich brown upperside of this little Skipper (Hesperiid) is neatly enveloped by chequered cilia.

Barber's False Bay Ranger was originally discovered near Steenberg railway station on the Cape Flats, where it has not been seen for more than half a century. This neighbourhood is now developed as an industrial and residential area and it is unlikely that it will be seen here again.

This butterfly's particular habitat requirement is damp seeps between dunes where their larval food plant grows. Until recently it seemed that this butterfly has been reduced to one last population in Cape Flats Dune Strandveld which is bisected by a road, earmarked for a road widening project later this year. The boundary markers for the road reserve are clearly seen in the middle of stands of Cotton wool grass within the butterfly's colony! However, Mogamed Samsodien, site co-ordinator of the Pelican Park section of the Falsebay Nature reserve and Andrew Morton, chairman of the Western Cape branch of the Lepidopterist society of Africa (Lepsoc) made a momentous discovery of two populations of Barber's False Bay Ranger within the nature reserve on the same day!

Lepsoc recently started a programme to appoint a custodian for each of South Africa's threatened butterfly species. Some of their duties include: liaising with land owners, identifying various threats to existing populations and searching for new populations. Through this program good relationships have been forged within the conservation community, none more important than the one between the management and staff of the various parks that form part of The False Bay Nature Reserve and Lepsoc's custodian for Barber's False Bay Ranger, Andrew Morton.

Alien Australian wattles were one of the concerns and for a number of seasons the butterfly hadn't been seen on the Western side of the road where a profusion of these trees grew. They dry out the seeps causing the grass to die off and they also increase the intensity of potential fires due to the flammable oils in their leaves.

Increasingly dry winters and the colony's close proximity to the road also increases the risk of fire. Not much is known of how this butterfly copes with fire, but there is no evidence to suggest that it is fire adapted like so many of the other Cape butterflies. The management of False Bay Nature Reserve have implemented an alien eradication project at the Pelican Park section, which has led to the recovery of the Cotton wool grass on the Western side of the road and an estimated 10 individuals were observed by members of Lepsoc during last year's flight period!