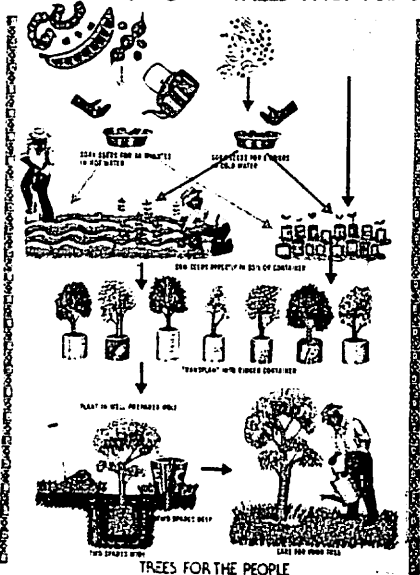


# News in Brief

## NEW FORESTRY EXTENSION POLICY

At the current rate of use, the natural timber resources of southern Africa will be exhausted within the next 30 years. With as much as 30 per cent of the population dependent on wood as their primary source of energy, urgent steps must be taken to prevent a serious energy crisis within the foreseeable future. With this in mind the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has shifted its emphasis in extension from promoting commercial forestry to promoting rural forestry. This means that the curbing of environmental degradation and the provision of wood in rural areas will, in future, be the major objectives of forestry extension. Minister of Water Affairs and Environment Affairs Mr. Japie van Wyk estimates that some 8,3 million tons of firewood will be used annually in South Africa by the year 2000. The Forestry Branch aims to identify as many as 3 000 rural forestry projects to be implemented during the next decade. According to Mr. van Wyk, the key to success lies in community involvement. He appeals to all individuals and organisations within communities – in particular rural communities – to become involved in the promotion of rural forestry. This includes agroforestry, where trees and crops are interplanted on the same piece of land, establishing woodlots for firewood and building materials, and planting trees in gardens for utilisation by the residents.

## GROW YOUR OWN TREES FROM SEED



## FLORA '93

A spectacular display of South Africa's flora is expected to draw visitors from all quarters of the globe to FLORA '93 at the Good Hope Centre in Cape Town from 10 to 15 September. The National Botanical Institute, and particularly the Kirstenbosch branch, will be organising the event. It will be mainly an indigenous flower show, but with some international participation. Organisations or individuals interested in taking part should contact Mr. Grobler, Tel. (021) 762-1166.

## FISH DIE IN UMFOLOZI

As a result of heavily silt-laden flood waters in the Umfolozi and Umsunduzi rivers, hundreds of fish recently died of oxygen starvation and tons of debris washed out on to beaches at Mapelane and St. Lucia. This demonstrates the urgent need to conserve the catchments of Natal rivers. Catchment degradation causes multiple problems, including massive soil erosion every time heavy rain falls, the destruction of estuaries through siltation, and the death of aquatic organisms. Repeated flooding by heavily silted water will also destroy the coast's attraction for tourists. Staff of Natal Parks Board, in conjunction with the National Wetlands Officer, Mr. Jon Wyatt, are implementing a catchment conservation programme where possible. The help of the broader public of Natal is needed for the programme to be effective. Landowners and interested members of the public are asked to contact their nearest Natal Parks Board office or Mr. Wyatt on (031) 25-1271.

## BLUE CRANE CONSERVATION

A conservation programme for the blue crane was recently launched by Cape Nature Conservation and the Overberg Crane Group. Blue crane numbers have declined drastically over the last 10 years and they could soon be included in the South African Red Data Book of threatened bird species. Their critical status is due mainly to the indiscriminate use of insecticides and, in some cases, deliberate poisoning. An attempt will be made to determine the bird's conservation status in the Overberg, to address problems which the bird causes farmers, to reduce mortality and to promote breeding success. There is also a campaign to increase awareness about blue cranes among school children and farm workers. The economic value of the cranes in terms of tourism will also be investigated. Through this conservation programme and the support of the community, it is hoped that the conflict between agriculture and other large birds will also be defused.

## NAMIBIAN FARMERS TO BORROW RHINOS

Thirty black rhinos will be translocated from Etosha National Park on contract to suitable local game farms during the next two years, in a bid to extend their range. Rhinos on farms will be monitored and protected by the farmers, initially with help from Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism officials. To prevent the animals from injuring one another and to reduce the poaching threat, they will be dehorned before translocation. Through this scheme the Ministry aims to double the Namibian black rhino population to 1 000 animals within the next 10 years.

## STIMULATION OF FYNBOS SEED GERMINATION

Propagation of most fynbos plants from seed is difficult as seeds are dormant and require very specific environmental conditions before they will germinate. A characteristic feature of the fynbos environment is recurrent fires, and seeds of many species are adapted to germinate in response to one or more cues provided by fire. Researchers

of the Conservation Biology Unit at Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden have recently discovered that smoke from fynbos fires stimulates the germination of seed of many fynbos species. This important finding, a world "first" for South African botanists, has considerable significance for the conservation and restoration of fynbos, and great economic importance for the utilisation of fynbos plants with horticultural potential. Funds are urgently needed for this important project, and any individual or organisation who may be able to offer assistance (financial or other) is asked to contact Dr. Neville Brown at Kirstenbosch, Tel. (021) 762-1166, or Fax (021) 762-3229.

## AUGRABIES FALLS NATIONAL PARK TO BE ENLARGED

Pharmaceutical company Lagamed has donated R306 000 to the National Parks Board to increase the size of the Augrabies Falls National Park. The additional 5 800 hectares will be used to breed the rare black rhino subspecies, *Diceros bicornis bicornis*. Over the past seven years Lagamed has raised and donated R1,25 million to various conservation organisations and has been associated with projects involving wattled crane, roan antelope, pangolin, the Kaoko-veld, and birds of prey, as well as black rhino.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Nico van der Walt, Warden of the Augrabies Falls National Park; Anthony Hall-Martin, Executive Director of Southern Parks; and Lucky Mavrandonis, General Manager of Lagamed.

## CROCODILES HATCH AT ST. LUCIA

Twenty baby long-snouted crocodiles recently hatched at the Natal Parks Board's Crocodile Centre at St. Lucia. The hatchlings were immediately moved from the parents' nesting pen to a safer nursery enclosure. These crocodiles are an endangered species and virtually extinct in their natural range in Central and West Africa. There was also a successful incubator hatching of 19 dwarf crocodiles, another endangered species from West Africa.

## BOTANICAL RESOURCES SEMINAR

An international seminar, which includes a two-day symposium, will be convened in Cape Town on 7 and 8 September 1993. The symposium will present regional and national reviews on topics including centres of floristic diversity, indigenous plant use, herbarium resources, database development, training and infrastructure needs. This will result in the development of a strategic plan for the conservation and utilisation of the botanical resources of southern Africa. Enquiries can be directed to The Chief Director, National Botanical Institute, Private Bag X7, 7735 Claremont.

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