

## CEPF FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

<b>Organization Legal Name</b>	Midlands Conservancies Forum - originally granted in the name of <b>Dargle Conservancy</b> as the Forum had yet to be established
<b>Project Title</b>	Midlands Conservancies Forum: Biodiversity Stewardship Initiative
<b>Report Date</b>	31 <sup>st</sup> July 2014
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**CEPF Region:** Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Hotspot

**Strategic Direction:** 2. Conservation and Land Use in 22 Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)

**Grant Amount:** \$154,329

**Project Dates:** August 1, 2011 June 30, 2014



### Implementation Partners for this Project

#### Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

The Midlands Conservancies Forum entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the provincial conservation authority, which champions the provincial Biodiversity Stewardship Programme. This agreement has enabled the Forum to become one of ten category 1 programme partners in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). These partners provide capacity to the KZN Stewardship Programme to assist in achieving its aims and objectives in terms of the conservation of biodiversity.



#### Duzi-uMngeni Conservation Trust (DUCT)

DUCT is a non-governmental organisation working in the uMngeni River Catchment in which the Midlands is situated and we have formalized our partnership to avoid duplications and gaps on water issues. The uMngeni River and many of its tributaries arise in the Midlands and the photo shows the uMngeni Vlei, the source of the



uMngeni River. This river is strategic to the economy and sustainability of the KZN province, providing more than 5 million people downstream with drinking water. The Forum is partnering with DUCT on their River Custodians project. The landowners commit to complying with legal requirements, controlling Alien Invasive Plants, minimising pollution and preventing erosion for at least 3 years. In return they get training on how to deal with invasive plants and herbicide assistance for the duration.



The photo on the right shows school children on a Forum Educational and Leadership outing to Hlatikulu, drinking fresh water directly from a stream.

**Midlands Meander Association’s Education Project (MMAEP)**

Their vision is to help KZN Midlands Schools nurture capable, confident and curious children who are sensitive to environmental issues, who have the resilience to cope with a changing world and are able to contribute positively to their communities. The MMAEP fieldworkers or Bugs as they are better known, bring enthusiasm and a new dimension to learning in a way which we believe has a positive impact on the development of the learners attending schools which participate in the programme. The photo shows a Bug with her tools getting to a rural school during the summer rainy season.



**KZN Crane Foundation**

The KZN Midlands is home to all 3 species of Cranes and especially to 50 pairs of the less than 260 Wattled Cranes left in South Africa. We have partnered with this organisation to use their centre as an open air classroom and to demonstrate the chick rearing programme for our Environmental Learning and Leadership projects. We also use the talents of their facilitator, Nkanyiso Ndlela, to conduct creative lessons about Cranes and the ecosystems which support them at the schools our Conservancies support. The Bill Barnes Crane and Oribi Nature Reserve, which is home to the KZN Crane Foundation started an Enviro Club for the children who live around the 450ha reserve



with their allocation of the MCF funds from the N3TC grant. The photo shows the club members getting wet and learning about water. The photo shows creative learners from the Silindele Primary School in the Lion's Bush Conservancy, working in a Crane Lesson.



### Relationships

During the implementation of this project, the Forum has developed relationships with numerous stakeholders from a variety of sectors. Many of these relationships have enabled the Forum to realise our objectives in ways that would not have been possible working on our own. An alphabetical summary of the key stakeholders and a description of the nature of the relationship is shown below.

Government sector (all spheres and tiers):

Stakeholder	Relationship
AmaHlubi Tribal Authority	The Biodiversity Stewardship project has engaged with this authority to ensure correct management of a nearby private <b>Snowflake Private Nature Reserve</b> for which the AmaHlubi have access rights in the Giants Castle area. The community was informed of the proposed proclamation and the management changes required in future.
KZN Department of Environmental Affairs	We have worked officials from this Department in terms of commenting on <b>proposed developments</b> to ensure they are appropriate and the impacts are minimised. We have also worked with them to deal with <b>Alien Invasive Plants</b> through DUCT. Their officials have responded to our notifications of <b>illegal activities</b> such as ploughing virgin grasslands and destruction of wetlands and illegal sand mining in rivers.
National Departments of Environmental and Water Affairs	These Departments have been involved with the Forum where the issues have national or regional relevance and the provincial departments do not have the mandate in terms of <b>EIA's and pollution</b> . We have also worked with the <b>Upper uMngeni Catchment Management Forum</b> , which was formed by the Dept of Water Affairs, in order to manage water issues at a catchment level.
Department of Land Affairs & Rural Development	This project has been closely involved with the department to ensure certain <b>proclamation requirements</b> are met such as receiving training on how <b>Title Deed endorsements and survey diagrams</b> are developed.
eThekweni Metro & Msunduzi Local Municipalities	Working with them as a stakeholder in the newly established <b>uMngeni Ecological Infrastructure Project</b> , in which they intend to invest in water-bearing ecosystems. The MCF area is a <b>National Freshwater Priority Area</b> in which the source of the uMngeni River and many of its tributaries are located.
Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife	Our formal partnership with the KZN BSP mentioned above, has enabled the project to develop close relationships with Ezemvelo's <b>Protected Area Planning</b> Unit, Scientific Services department and <b>Conservation Planning</b> division. We also work closely with their officials supporting Conservancies through the <b>District Conservation Officers</b> and on development applications.

KZN Department of Agriculture	This Dept. provides management advice and support specifically for <b>veld assessments</b> and the development of <b>grazing and burning plans</b> for stewardship sites where cattle are raised.
uMgungundlovu District Municipality	The MCF has worked with officials on several initiatives coordinated by the Municipality, such as the Umgeni Ecological Infrastructure Program and the Climate Change Adaptation Fund project, managed in collaboration with the South African Biodiversity Institute. We have also commented on their <b>Strategic Environmental Assessment</b> , which is used for land-use planning in the MCF area.
uMngeni Local Municipality	We have actively engaged the Municipality as it falls within the MCF boundaries. The work has led to the establishment of two formal Protected Areas on Municipal land, a first for them. We also are represented on the committees for the Landfill Monitoring and the Land Use Management Systems.

Other organisations:

Stakeholder	Relationship
BirdLife SA	The Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA) Programme has four focal areas – species, sites, habitats and people. It identifies and works to conserve a network of sites critical for the long-term survival of bird species that are globally threatened, have a restricted range, are restricted to specific biomes/vegetation types and sites with significant populations. The MCF area has many such sites and so this collaboration is vital.
Botanical Society of South Africa	BotSoc SA has been very supportive in assisting with conducting biodiversity assessments on MCF BSP sites and the development of associated reports. In turn, the MCF BSP regularly assisted in conducting veld condition assessments for sites managed by them.
Custodians of Rare & Endangered Wildflowers (CREW)	Volunteers who help SANBI collect data on special plants around the country and who assist with creating awareness of these plants among users and owners of land in the Midlands.
Duzi-Umgenei Conservation Trust (DUCT)	DUCT has provided ongoing support in providing management advice, mostly wrt Invasive Alien Plant control. DUCT has partnered with the MCF where mutual support is provided in leveraging funding and tackling the issue of Invasive Alien Plant control as part of the MCF's Ecological Infrastructure project.
Endangered Wildlife Trust	The Endangered Wildlife Trust has assisted several stewardship sites in providing management advice and support to landowners involved regarding the management of priority species such as Cranes and Oribi antelope. We have also been working with them on grasslands, dog hunting and poaching management and the formation of a Berg Conservancies Forum.
GroundTruth	This is a multidisciplinary consulting company with a particular focus on environmental issues relating to water. Specialists from GroundTruth have been involved with training MCF Conservancies to undertake miniSASS River health assessments and to log the results for trending spatially and temporally using an internet based website.



Stakeholder	Relationship
groundWork	This is a local environmental justice organisation which has assisted us to access Green Grants funding which they administer, for our Mpophomeni Building Resilience project and the newly approved fracking awareness campaign.
Institute for Natural Resources (INR)	The INR has been appointed to manage an environmental offsets program for the Department of Water Affairs for the Spring Grove Dam. Some of the offset components will be implemented within MCF BSP stewardship sites, resulting in improved functioning of important wetlands in the upper Mooi-Mpofana River Catchment. We have been working closely with the INR to implement these projects.
KZN Crane Foundation	MCF makes use of their excellent "Cranes in the Classroom" programme at schools supported by our Conservancies and provides a platform to publicise their work protecting the three Crane species found in the area and the Chick Rearing Facility for endangered Wattled Cranes.
Lions River Fire Protection Association	This Midlands organisation has been closely involved in assisting stewardship site landowners to align fire safety with improved conservation.
Midlands Meander Association	The Meander is a collection of arranged routes for visitors to the Midlands and the vision is a collective of creative and hospitable people, making a living at a gentler pace. We work with the Association on many levels, but especially in terms of commenting on developments to ensure they are appropriate and sustainable.
Midlands Meander Association's Education Project (MMAEP)	MCF makes use of the specialist skills of MMAEP to fulfill its commitment to Environmental Education. MMAEP has a unique hands-on approach that ensures learners, teachers and community members participate together. Learning often happens outdoors into the school grounds – planting wildlife friendly gardens and teaching about soil and sunlight, earthworms, energy, weather, water, indigenous plants, invasive species.
MiniSASS.org	This organisation was established by GroundTruth and WESSA EcoSchools with funding from the Water Research Commission, to set up a website with a downloadable toolkit and reporting system for results logging. miniSASS is a simple tool which can be used by anyone to monitor the health of a river. A sample of macroinvertebrates is collected from the water, and depending on which groups are found, it provides a measure of the general river health and water quality in that river. The score sets the health class of the river, ranging across five categories from natural to very poor. The Forum uses this system widely and workshops are conducted in schools and Conservancies to ensure as many people can do the assessments and track the trends with time and along the reaches of our rivers. Knowledge is power.
N3 Toll Concession (N3TC)	N3TC manages the N3 highway route that runs through the Midlands and has funded (and continues to) many MCF Projects including Environmental Learning and Leadership. They regularly share news of our projects on their social media platforms ensuring that biodiversity and environmental awareness is spread to a much wider audience than just ours.

Stakeholder	Relationship
Snake Country	Pat McKrill, or the Snake Man as he is known to us, has helped many of our landowners, members' schools and farm personnel to become less fearful and more respectful of snakes. He has held many talks and demonstrations with his assortment of snakes brought to our educational events. This has been vital in ensuring snakes are not killed on sight and allowed to continue as an essential part of biodiversity in the Midlands.
Royal Haskoning DHV	This civil engineering company has provided GIS training support to the Biodiversity Stewardship project and supplied the most recent, rectified aerial imagery.
SA National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI)	They are responsible for championing biodiversity for the benefit and enjoyment of all South Africans. We work with them on stewardship, alien invasive species initiatives and the uMngeni Ecological Infrastructure Project.
Wildlands Conservation Trust (WCT)	As the Regional Implementing Entity for the CEPF, they have given us ongoing support and advice for project management and biodiversity conservation. Wildlands also works directly with many of our Conservancies on stewardship, fundraising events and recycling.
Wildlife & Environment Society of SA's (WESSA) Eco-Schools	The Eco-Schools programme was initiated in South Africa with WESSA as the implementing agent. There are over 1 200 registered schools with the programme and many of these are in the MCF area of the Midlands. We partner with them on with Environmental Learning and Leadership projects.
World Wide Fund for Nature SA (WWF SA)	We have worked together in providing mutual assistance with stewardship related work such as conducting site assessments and seeking advice on engaging and communicating with landowners. We have also involved them in our river walks and water workshops with DUCT and encourage our farmers to use their Sustainable Farming guides.

## Introduction

The Midlands Conservancies Forum was established as part of the CEPF-funded Biodiversity Stewardship Project by the Dargle Conservancy. An application for a CEPF large grant was developed and submitted by the Dargle Conservancy in early 2011 which came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> August in the same year. This application was the result of a series of proposals developed by the then Guduza Trust, which was established by the Dargle Conservancy.

The proposal that was submitted to CEPF outlined the opportunity identified to make a real impact with a community based biodiversity initiative. It was evident that the future of Biodiversity in the Midlands lies in the hands of private landowners and this proposal provided an opportunity for Guduza to prove its value to the community. The objective was to add real value by working close to communities on local projects, generating environmental awareness and assisting to facilitate local living.



A total amount of USD 154 329 was granted which at the time equated to approximately ZAR 1.2 million. The funding was intended to cover the costs outlined in the project proposal for a period of 22 months. The exchange rate from USD to ZAR resulted in the project benefitting during the latter part of this period. This enabled two “no cost” extensions to the project, bringing the project termination date to the 30th June 2014. The extensions enabled the completion of many of the Biodiversity Stewardship components which were delayed for reasons beyond the Forum’s control.

The purpose of the Forum is to facilitate and coordinate the activities of a coalition of KZN Midlands conservancies, focusing on biodiversity conservation to ensure long-term environmental sustainability in the area.

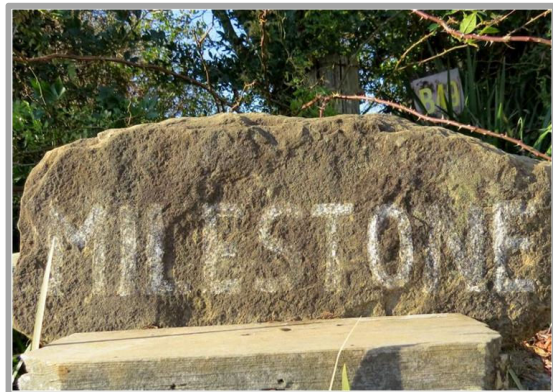
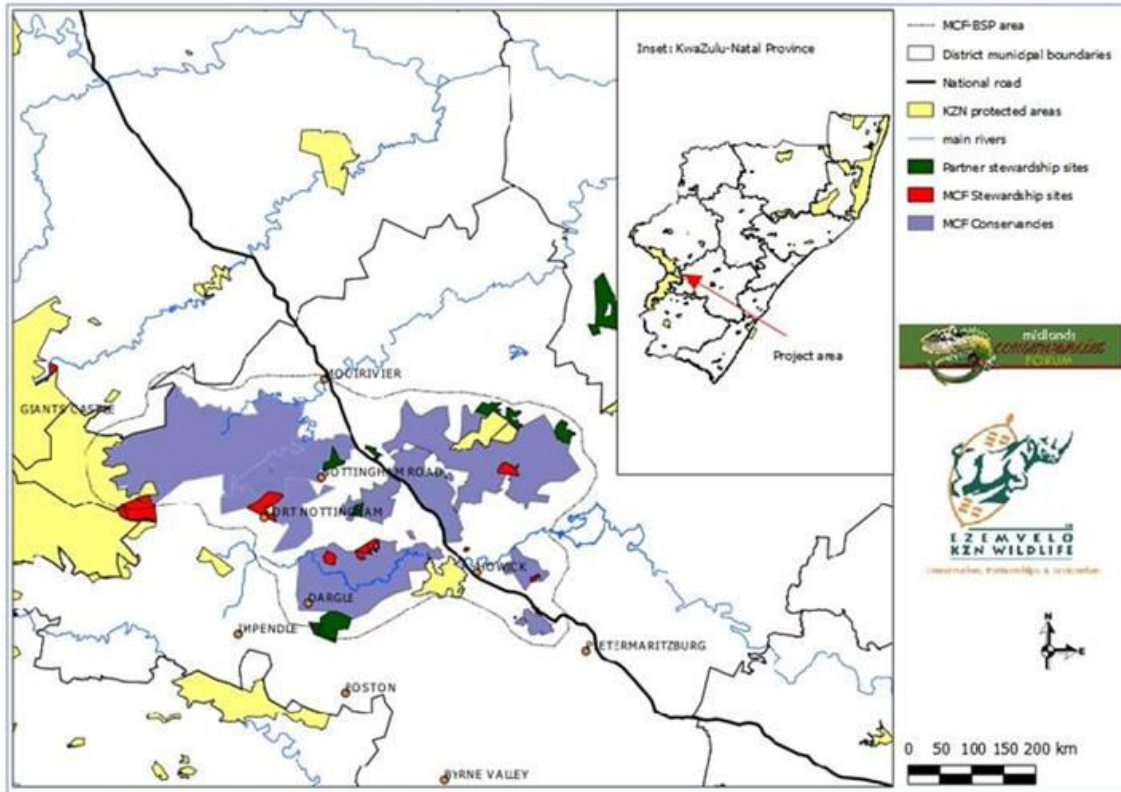
The Forum’s members are listed below, with the Rosetta-Nottingham Road Conservancy the newest addition. The Mhlangeni Conservancy is dormant and is currently being supported by the Lion’s Bush Conservancy to ensure conservation issues are managed. It is proposed that the Mhlangeni Conservancy will become part of the new Rosetta Conservancy.

- Balgowan Conservancy
- Boston
- Dargle Conservancy
- Kamberg Conservancy
- Lion's Bush Conservancy
- Mpophomeni Conservation Group
- Fork Spring Conservancy (Bill Barnes Nature Reserve)
- uMgenyane Conservancy
- World's View Conservancy
- Beacon Hill
- Curry's Post Conservancy
- Hlatikulu
- Karkloof Conservancy
- Mhlangeni Conservancy
- Rosetta-Nottingham Road Conservancy
- uMngeni/Howick Urban Conservancy
- Winterskloof Conservancy

Our area is located largely within the borders of the uMgungundlovu District Municipality as shown in the map. This is in the Midlands of the eastern province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. The Forum’s boundaries encompass approximately 108 000 hectares.

The sites chosen for the Biodiversity Stewardship project are shown in the map along with the locations of the member Conservancies of the Forum. The border of the uMgungundlovu District Municipality is shown as a dotted line.

The Forum is located in a Key Biodiversity Area of the Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Biodiversity Hotspot Ecosystem Profile. It is also a National Freshwater Priority Area as determined by the Department of Water Affairs, due to the proliferation of water-bearing and purifying ecosystems also known as “water factories”, that characterise the area.

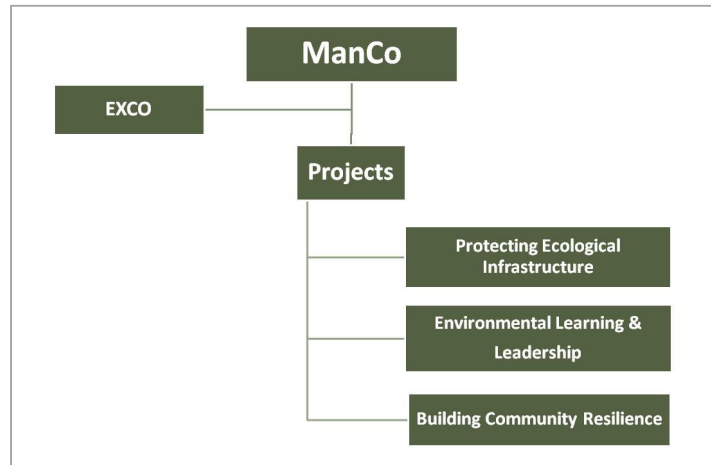


The Midlands is the site of the first Conservancy established in South Africa in Balgowan in 1978. Tony Carr and Nick Steele helped the Francis family to get the Conservancy movement started at the farm, with the magnificent Milestone Forest of ancient yellowwood trees.



Shortly before project inception, work was started on establishing the Midlands Conservancies Forum with a view to take over management of the project from Dargle Conservancy. This involved drafting a Constitution, electing office bearers and setting up a sub-committee to steer the Biodiversity Stewardship aspect of the project.

The organogram shows how the Forum has been set up. The Management Committee (Manco) comprises representatives from each of the Forum's member Conservancies. The Office Bearers work in the Executive Committee (Exco) to deal with the administrative issues that arise and any outputs are either sent to Manco for approval or sent by the Manco to Exco for implementation.



We have held two Annual General Meetings so far and they have been very successful in raising awareness of the Forum's work and inspiring other areas to establish/consolidate Conservancies and also to start a Forum for the Berg Conservancies. We also had a Summer Celebration at the KZN Crane Foundation to thank our members, partners and other stakeholders for their hard work and other contributions to the Forum.

The current office bearers are all volunteers and include a chairperson, vice chair, secretary and treasurer. Our Administrator is paid a small stipend as is our Public Relations person. Many hours are donated to the Forum over and above the hours for which they are paid.

The projects have been divided up into three focus areas:

- **Protecting Ecological Infrastructure** – which includes the Biodiversity Stewardship project, DUCT's River Custodians partnership, monitoring river health and rivers walks, wildlife sightings; working with other organisations in the Midlands for example Crane Foundation, Custodians of Rare & Endangered Wildflowers (Crew), etc.
- **Environmental Learning and Leadership** – working with Conservancies and partners, such as the Midlands Meander Association's Education Project and the KZN Crane Foundation to support local schools to provide environmental education opportunities, using stewardship sites where possible for outdoor classrooms. We organize wilderness excursions for senior learners to inspire and empower them to take environmental action. We have facilitated bursaries for environmental students. We use the website and blogs to raise awareness of environmental issues facing the Midlands and possible solutions from inspirational people doing extraordinary work. Photographic and film workshops have resulted in participants now using these

tools to write their own blogs and make films for themselves instead of relying on Forum experts to assist. Our regular walks ensure that urban dwellers also have access to our precious biodiversity and feel encouraged to protect it.

- **Building Community Resilience** – implementing and showcasing at our events and blogs, best practice in terms of mitigating and adapting to Climate Change to inspire and motivate members to reduce environmental footprints. We received a Green Grant to support the Mpophomeni Conservation Group to equip households for using renewable energy for cooking and heating, harvesting rainwater and establishing food gardens using shared, non-commercial seeds.

## Conservation Impacts

The Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Hotspot Ecosystem Profile highlights several Key Biodiversity Areas. The Midlands Conservancies Forum Biodiversity Stewardship project falls directly within the Mistbelt Grasslands KBA (18). A summary of this KBA has been extracted from the Ecosystem Profile in the following tables. The Forum’s contributions to securing important biodiversity highlighted in the ecosystem profile appear later in this report.

Extent (hectares)	IUCN Red List Species (Number)			Threatened Habitat in Key Biodiversity Area (Ha)		
	Critically Endangered	Endangered	Vulnerable	Critically Endangered	Endangered	Vulnerable
Total area						
80 165	1	4	13	6 375	5 727	55 965

Protected Areas (No.)			Protection Levels of Habitats (Hectares)					Ecosystem services
Formal	Informal	Area (%) proclaimed	Completely unprotected	Very poorly protected	Poorly protected	Partially protected	Habitat with targets met	(v. high / high / med / low)
497	0	0.6	2 726	52 312	6 035	19 092	0	Very high

The photo (below left) shows school children on a Conservancy outing learning about endangered wildlife and their habitats and an endangered Oribi (below right) running free in the grassland of the Midlands.



The interrogation of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife's Systematic Conservation Plan as well as other GIS spatial layers, during our project design and site selection phases, revealed a high concentration of Irreplaceable Biodiversity (prioritised by a selection of 'driving features') for the Midlands. This has resulted in over one third of all KZN Biodiversity Stewardship sites being located within the Midlands Conservancies Forum area.

The Forum's member Conservancies report on wildlife sightings through our blogsite and these are starting to be used to track changes in terms of the impacts of Climate Change and provide data to scientists studying particular species. We are already seeing how species are moving, showing how vital the linked corridors are to conservation of ecosystems and the habitats and species they support. The altitudinal corridors of the Midlands for example, are vitally important in allowing the movement of species unable to adapt to extremes of temperature we are experiencing.

**Please summarize the overall results/impact of your project.**

**Planned long term project impacts 3+ years**

***1. Have a well-resourced, successful, Biodiversity Stewardship Project operating in the Midlands Conservancies Forum area.***

Thanks to CEPF's investment in the Forum, the project has contributed significantly to securing areas containing important biodiversity. The funding contributed to:

- Contracting a Biodiversity Stewardship Manager for the duration of the project, without whom the implementation of the plan would not have been achievable;
- Establishing the Midlands Conservancies Forum to facilitate and co-ordinate Conservation in the Midlands and to inspire, motivate and challenge members to improve biodiversity in their Conservancies, not only in terms of conventional Stewardship;
- The work of an Administrator to ensure that the documentation and systems of the Forum and the project are set up and maintained;

- Developing an effective communication network and methodology to highlight best practice and report on progress in achieving objectives;
- Develop an informative website on Midlands' biodiversity and conservation issues.
- A network of volunteers contributing their time, passion and expertise to the Forum and the project, which in turn has provided leadership in Conservation, not only in the Midlands;
- The spread of environmental values amongst Midlands residents which has in turn inspired the younger generation to make changes in their lives, giving them hope and confidence to realise their dreams.
- The Forum's brand is now well established in KZN, with many organisations inviting us to comment on their work, give presentations, asking advice or becoming partners in new initiatives.

This investment has inspired the Forum to pursue additional ways to promote the conservation of biodiversity. Some of these include:

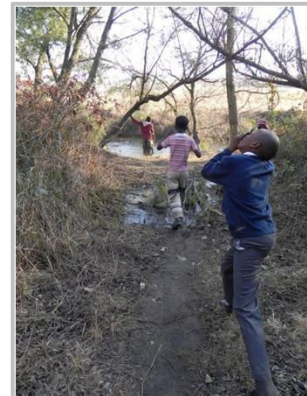
- Hosting of MCF 'Road Show' events at alternating venues where members are given the opportunity to showcase their efforts in conserving biodiversity. These events also provide a platform to raise and discuss biodiversity conservation issues.
- Thirteen regular walks have been established in Midlands Conservancies, which are guided by people with a passion and deep understanding of local history, biodiversity and impacts of development. These walks are aimed at locals, visitors and are well attended.
- River walks have been undertaken by DUCT members and supported by the Forum's Conservancies members with riverine properties. The blogs allow people to follow the walk and learn about the impacts affecting the riparian zones from their computers and phones.



The photos show a flower with pollinating insects taken on a walk on Gartmore Nature Reserve; one of the River Walkers crossing the Dargle River and enthusiastic community members getting wet while undertaking a miniSASS river health assessment.



- These walks have inspired citizen science and the Water Workshops where many people have learnt to assess river health using the miniSASS techniques. The easy to learn and use methodology has enabled people of all ages, education levels and from all communities to become involved in monitoring river health. The results are uploaded onto a site where maps document the status spatially and temporally. We received additional funding for these workshops and used our partners DUCT for the initial training.
- The concept of photographing and recording wildlife sightings has inspired Forum members to record the fauna and flora on their properties and the area in which they live or visit. Records are compiled by the MCF and distributed regularly to members and the public who follow the blog. This instils a curiosity for the biodiversity present which leads to important discussion on the conservation of these species. It has also helped struggling Conservancies to persevere, such as Boston.
- We have held photographic and video workshops to inspire our members, other ngo's and school children to use visual images and movies to tell their stories. We have received donations of cameras and funding for these workshops and our film making training project raised funds for the Forum.
- Environmental Learning and Leadership opportunities have been provided by the Forum through funding from N3TC. These are helping to change hearts and minds of the younger children of the Midlands, especially those from disadvantaged schools. These opportunities inspire the children to want to conserve nature and help them to imagine possibilities for careers of which they had previously not even been able to dream. After the visit to Spring Grove Dam, one of the learners said: "*They brightened out my mind.*"



These activities have been made possible through CEPF and other funding, with the enthusiasm and dedication of volunteers.

The photos are examples of some of the exceptional photos of wildlife taken by Forum members; Corrie Lynn School pupils at the photographic workshop in the Dargle and geography students from the Shea O'Connor Combined School touring the Spring Grove Dam in Rosetta, which gave them a unique, behind-the-scenes look at the dam, its

construction, the impact that it has had on the surrounding social and biophysical environments, as well as the people employed to build it.

## ***2. Make considerable contributions to Provincial Conservation Goals***

Given the high levels of important biodiversity located in the KZN Midlands, several KZN Biodiversity Stewardship partners are prioritising and investing in stewardship sites in this area. This includes CEPF investments by WWF-SA, Birdlife SA, the Botanical Society of SA and the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa. These partners have made considerable contributions to securing important biodiversity which amounts to just under 10 000 hectares. The MCF BSP has contributed to securing just over 50% of this total with our formal protection of 5 160 hectares.

## ***3. Make a considerable contribution to filling the Protected Area gaps to assist in forming corridors EKZNW has identified.***

The Macro Ecological Corridors identified in Ezemvelo's Systematic Conservation Plan largely remain a concept, with relatively small areas within these corridors being formally protected. The establishment of the Fort Nottingham Nature Reserve by the current project has now secured a portion of the Thukela Macro Ecological Corridor.

Our Forum has inspired the neighbouring Berg Conservancies to form a similar organisation, with the aim of securing corridors from south to north along the base of the Drakensberg, to form a buffer around the formally protected reserves. Their aim is to encourage low impact tourism for the benefit of local people and the neighbouring Basotho communities.

The Midlands Conservancies Forum's events, projects and blogs have raised awareness of the need for conservation and linking ecosystems. As a result there are many Conservancies' members working with their neighbours to create corridors of, and for biodiversity. They have realised that formal protection is not the only way to conserve biodiversity and small changes locally can have big impacts.

The River Custodians project is also helping to conserve the fluvial corridors of the Midlands. It has helped to inspire the establishment of the uMngeni Ecological Infrastructure Project which is working to invest in the "water factories" of the Midlands.

## ***4. Have a successful, self-sustained Environmental Awareness Program operating within the Midlands Conservancies Forum area.***

The **Mpophomeni Conservation Group** (MCG) was established with the support and guidance of the Midlands Conservancies Forum and member Conservancies. This township was established in 1964 to house labourers who came to Howick to work, but were forcibly removed for the construction of Midmar Dam. In 1985 a thousand workers were dismissed from the rubber factory in Howick following a prolonged strike. Many of them lived in Mpophomeni and as a result families became impoverished.

After this, a local “war” broke out between the opposing supporters of the African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party. The apartheid government supported the latter group and the community from Mpophomeni was mainly supporting the ANC. The death of a five-year-old girl was a turning point in this violent period. Nokulunga Gumede was run down by an army vehicle and a memorial was built to commemorate her death and those of the others involved.

Peace slowly returned to the community following facilitated negotiations in 1993. Our work has focused on supporting the Mpophomeni Conservation Group to grow good healthy food at home, to provide environmental learning and leadership opportunity for children and to work with the community to improve the water quality of the wetlands and the streams flowing into Midmar Dam. The pollution by sewage is a significant health issue.



The photos show the view from Mpophomeni Hills above the town towards Midmar. It was taken during a walk which explored the Mthimzima River from its source to where it flows into Midmar Dam. The snake talks helped children in Mpophomeni experience the wonders of these reptiles close up and learn about their place in biodiversity conservation.

The Group has received funding for Water Workshops to assess the Mthimzima River’s health and educate the community about pollution and wetlands. The river flows into Midmar Dam, which is a strategic source of water for residents downstream all the way to Durban, the economic hub of the province. The photo shows community members enthusiastically looking for organisms to assess the health of the Mthimzima River, despite the stench and obvious pollution.



The Green Grant obtained by the Forum kick started a project to build resilience to enable communities to adapt to Climate Change. Mpophomeni was chosen as the most suitable site through the Mpophomeni





Conservation Group. They started food gardens in their homesteads and have continued to inspire and help others to do the same. They have enthusiastically embraced solar cooking and rainwater harvesting. The photo shows the group trying out their wonder bags, efficient wood burner (isitofu) and solar cookers.

Ntombenhle Mtambo successfully secured a lease for municipal land currently being used as an illegal waste dump in Mpophomeni to turn it into a food garden. Ntombenhle and Tutu have become well known as Garden Angels – sharing inspiration, knowledge and also working hard



to help get gardens started. Mrs Mgoza celebrates the change to her life: "I am 73 years old and am not well. Since this Angel came into my life, things are better. Now I am back where I used to be – growing food using umquba (manure). Ntombenhle told me what to plant and to mix the flowers in – it is so beautiful. I am very proud of who I have become in my old age. I used to think it was all over, I was just waiting to die."

Three members of the Mpophomeni Conservation Group are organising Saturday morning activities at the Nokulunga Gumede Memorial Wall. Children also arrive after school



and during the holidays hoping to be entertained as well, and generally are included in whatever is happening, so the learning is ongoing. Every formal session is attended by up to 35 children and includes storytelling and playing games, as shown in the photo.

The Mpophomeni Conservation Group were one of the sponsors of a long weekend featuring international and local thought-provoking films, talks about seeds, rivers and family farming. All intended to inspire positive changes in society and in our relationship to the natural environment and to each other. Groups from Venda, Pondoland and the Berg participated in a seed exchange during the opening session, titled "*Seeds of Freedom*", to symbolize the important role seeds play in our lives.



Planned Long-term Impacts - 3+ years (as stated in the approved proposal):

Actual Progress Toward Long-term Impacts at Completion:

Planned Short-term Impacts - 1 to 3 years (as stated in the approved proposal):

**Describe the success or challenges of the project toward achieving its short-term and long-term impact objectives.**



**1. Secure +5000 hectares of privately owned land with good representation of biodiversity under formal conservation.**

A total of 5 198 hectares will fall under a formal conservation as contemplated in the KZN Biodiversity Stewardship Program stewardship categories. A further 10 569 hectares will fall under 'improved management' with several smaller areas already being identified within these hectares as potential formal protected areas.

An additional approximate 1 200 hectares would have been proclaimed as formally protected areas under the management of this project, however there were issues that prevented successful conclusion of the process. These included unresolved land claims and changes in ownership, resulting in new landowners declining to participate.

**2. Complete 4 BSP sites that EKZNW started in the MCF area prior to losing their stewardship facilitator.**

These sites included the Dargle Stewardship Site, James Wakelin Nature Reserve, Gartmore Biodiversity Agreement and the Fort Nottingham Nature Reserve. All of these sites have reached the stage where they are ready for entering the proclamation stage, or as in the case with Gartmore, the Biodiversity Agreement has already been concluded.

**3. Through the MCF, develop an Environmental Awareness Program aimed at serving land owners and other stake holders in the Midlands Conservancies.**

The projects include:

- Protecting Ecological Infrastructure
  - Development monitoring to influence appropriate development
  - Monitoring the uMngeni River and its tributaries
  - MiniSASS river health assessment and recording of results to enable spatial and temporal trend mapping
  - River Custodians with DUCT
  - Fracking Campaign to raise awareness of shale gas deposits, authorizations issued, legal rights of users and owners of land, understanding of impacts.
- Environmental Learning and Leadership
  - Schools, Clubs and Wilderness Excursions
  - Film craft and photographic Workshops
  - MiniSASS and Water Workshops
  - River walks
  - CREW field trips to record wildflowers and share knowledge
  - Blogs on environmental issues facing the Midlands, as well as showcasing the good work being done in each of the Conservancies and the wildlife sighted monthly. Local Press of picks up on the stories and reprints them, increasing readership enormously.
  - Regular Forum events held to highlight best practice and conservation initiatives in the Midlands with experts providing their insight.

- Building Resilience Mpophomeni Conservation Group's
  - Food gardens
  - Renewable energy
  - Rainwater harvesting
  - Permaculture, nutrition and food processing.

**4. Directly influence over 40 landowners in the Midlands Conservancies area in making positive changes towards biodiversity conservation.**

The Forum's Biodiversity Stewardship Project has actively engaged with 31 landowners involved in the stewardship programme. In addition the Forum has provided post proclamation support to many more landowners involved in the KZN Biodiversity Stewardship Programme, working with many more than 40 landowners in total.

The Midlands Conservancies Forum has engaged hundreds of people during the implementation of this project through our Protecting Ecological Infrastructure, Environmental Learning and Leadership and Building Resilience Projects. The Forum convenes regularly to influence its members and other stakeholders on biodiversity conservation.

**Hectares Conserved**

The Forum's work has ensured that the following hectares containing important biodiversity will be secured as formal protected areas. The outstanding processes, leading to proclamation of these sites will be concluded by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, as the project has come to an end prior to reaching the signing of the documentation by the Minister.

Site	Category	Extent (ha)	Ezemvelo Board approval	Contracts signed, Plans developed	Paperwork with MEC for signing
<b>MCF Sites at start of CEPF project August 2011</b>					
Dargle	Nature Reserve Biodiversity Agreements	1 067	yes	yes	yes
Fort Nottingham	Nature Reserve	1 300	yes	yes	yes
Gartmore	Biodiversity Agreement	430	yes	yes	Not required
James Wakelin	Nature Reserve	95	yes	yes	yes
<b>Total Extent</b>		<b>2 892</b>			
<b>MCF Sites added during project</b>					
Allendale	Nature Reserve	1 989	Yes	Landowner yet to sign	No
Beacon Hill	Protected Environment	40	Yes	Yes	Yes
Snowflake & Dunsink (Giants Castle)	Nature Reserve	277	Yes	Contracts in draft, Plan complete	No
<b>Total Extent</b>		<b>2 306</b>			

## Hectares under improved conservation management

Both World's View and the new Nottingham Road-Rosetta Conservancies have received support regarding biodiversity management during the project period. A Conservancy Management Plan has been developed for the World's View Conservancy which identifies key biodiversity features and management recommendations. This Conservancy will be the first of the Forum's Conservancies to have such a plan.

The newly formed Rosetta–Nottingham Road Conservancy absorbs the local struggling Conservancies and seeks to engage in projects focussed on water quality and supply within the upper Mooi-Mpofana catchment. The new Conservancy serves the Mhlangeni, Nottingham Road and Bill Barnes Nature Reserve areas. Projects will focus on ensuring that the ecosystems providing water focused goods and services are properly managed.

The Forum has only recently facilitated the formation of the Conservancy and will continue to assist them to firmly establish and also in developing projects.

Site	Category	Extent (ha)	Ezemvelo Board approval	Contracts signed, Plans developed	Paperwork with MEC for signing
<b>MCF Sites at start of CEPF project August 2011</b>					
World's View	Conservation Management Area	1 069	Not required	Management Plan Workshop	Not required
Nottingham Road-Rosetta	Conservation Management Area	9 500	Not required	Not yet	Not required
<b>Total Extent</b>		<b>10 569</b>			



Photos taken in Worlds View Conservancy of *Begonia geranioides* – near threatened, *Kniphofia buchananii* a KZN endemic and *Dierama pallidum*, listed as vulnerable.

## Species and habitat conserved

In KwaZulu Natal we are losing natural land cover at a rate of approximately 1% per annum, and with almost 50% of the province's natural land surface already lost to various forms of development and transformation, all will be gone by approximately 2050 if our business as usual approach to life is allowed to continue unchecked.

The lists of species and habitat conserved for each project site is provided below. The list focuses on species and habitat with a threatened status and therefore common

species with least concern have not been included in the tables. Non-viable populations have also not been included.

### Allendale Nature Reserve:

This proposed Nature Reserve is located in the Kamberg area, with the photo showing the breath-taking scenery. The farm is the only private Drakensberg Reserve to be physically included into the World Heritage Site. It includes exceptional historical, cultural, natural and ecological features.



Vegetation	Threat status	Extent (ha)	Natural (ha)	Transformed (ha)	Protected area target (ha)	Contribution to target (%)
Mooi River Highland Grassland	Vulnerable	1429	1407	25	61 395	2.3
Northern Drakensberg Highland Grassland	Least threatened	358	358	0	19 089	1.8
Alluvial wetlands: temperate vegetation	Vulnerable	2	2	0	35 592	1.6
Drakensberg Montane forest	Least threatened	3	3	0	4 072	0.1
<b>Total (ha)</b>		<b>1 792</b>	<b>1 770</b>	<b>25</b>		

Threatened species	SA Endemic	KZN Endemic Species	Priority Species	
			Must Report on	May Report on
Oribi - Endangered		Drakensberg Dwarf Chameleon	Blue Crane	Oribi
Grey Crowned Crane - Vulnerable		Natal Midlands Dwarf Chameleon	Grey Crowned Crane	Denham's Bustard
Blue Crane - Vulnerable		Natal Ghost Frog	Wattled Crane	Cape Vulture
Wattled Crane – Critically Endangered				Natal Folding Leaf Frog
Denham's Bustard - Vulnerable				
Cape Vulture - Vulnerable				
<b>Totals</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Critically Endangered</b>	<b>1</b>			
<b>Endangered</b>	<b>1</b>			
<b>Vulnerable</b>	<b>4</b>			

### Beacon Hill Protected Environment:

This protected environment is located on a hill above the town of Howick, on land owned by the uMngeni Municipality. The grassland is home to many species of forb worthy of conservation. Regular guided walks are provided for locals and visitors alike and the site is used as an outdoor classroom for school children to learn about heritage and biodiversity.



This photo of *Asclepias woodii* was taken on a walk of Beacon Hill. It reappeared on the hill recently after not being seen for nearly 100 years. It is a KZN Midlands endemic, a member of the Milkweed family and is listed as Vulnerable. Chafer beetles are shown on the plant and are responsible for pollination.

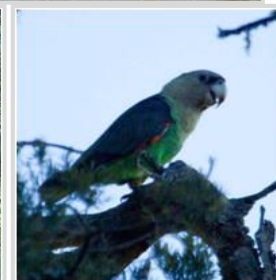
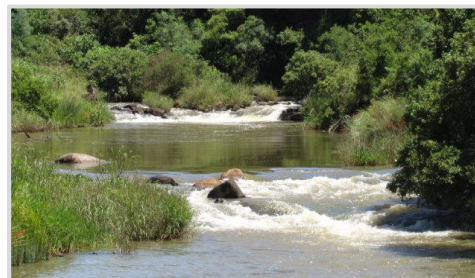


Vegetation	Threat status	Extent (ha)	Natural (ha)	Trans-formed (ha)	Protected area target (ha)	Contribution to target (%)
Midlands Mistbelt Grassland	Endangered	40	40	40	125 912	0.03
<b>Total (ha)</b>		40	40	40		

Threatened species	SA Endemic	KZN Endemic Species	Priority Species
			May report on
<i>Senecio dregeanus</i> - Vulnerable	<i>Alepedia amatymbica</i>	<i>Asclepias woodii</i>	African Grass Owl
<i>Woodia verruculosa</i> - Vulnerable	<i>Dierama trichorizum</i>	<i>Senecio dregeanus</i>	
<i>Asclepias woodii</i> - Vulnerable	<i>Schizoglossum stenoglossum</i>	<i>Woodia verruculosa</i>	
<i>Alepedia amatymbica</i> – Vulnerable	<i>Merwillia plumbia</i>	<i>Kniphofia buchalinii</i> (Midlands)	
<i>Merwillia plumbia</i> – Near threatened			
<i>Drimia robusta</i> – Data deficient			
<i>Drimia elata</i> – Data deficient			
<i>Boocephane disticha</i> – Declining			
<i>Eucomis autumnalis</i> – Declining			
African Grass Owl – Vulnerable			
<b>Totals</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Declining</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Vulnerable</b>	<b>5</b>		
<b>Near threatened</b>	<b>1</b>		
<b>Data deficient</b>	<b>2</b>		

### Dargle Stewardship site (Nature Reserve and Biodiversity Agreements)

The establishment of the Dargle Nature Reserve will contribute to the long term protection of the Critically Endangered Midlands Mistbelt Grassland and the Vulnerable Eastern Mistbelt Forests of the Midlands. These vegetation types are known to contain a great diversity of plants and animals, some of which are endemic to the Midlands. The Nature Reserve is placed within a highly productive landscape on privately owned land, providing the ideal habitat for a



number of iconic species. The Dassie and Cape Parrot are shown in the photos.

Vegetation	Threat status	Extent (ha)	Natural (ha)	Transformed (ha)	Protected area target (ha)	Contribution to target (%)
Drakensberg foothill Moist Grassland	Least threatened	280	255	25	88 417	0.3
Midlands Mistbelt Grassland	Endangered	214	150	64	125 912	0.1
Alluvial wetlands: temperate alluvial vegetation	Vulnerable	2	2	0	35 592	0.01
Mistbelt forest	Endangered	239	239	0	29 574	0.8
<b>Total (ha)</b>		<b>735</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>89</b>		



The photo on the left was captured by the Conservancy's Trail Camera set up in the forest. It shows a Samango monkey which is listed as vulnerable.

The other photo is of a school outing to a wetland to learn about biodiversity and conservation.

Threatened species	SA Endemic	KZN Endemic Species	Priority Species	
			Must Report on	May Report on
Oribi - Endangered		Natal Midlands Dwarf Chameleon	Grey Crowned Crane	Oribi
Grey Crowned Crane - Vulnerable			Blue Crane	
Blue Crane - Vulnerable				
Secretary Bird - Near threatened				
Serval - Near threatened				
Samango Monkey - Vulnerable				
Tree Hyrax - Vulnerable				
Cape Parrot - Critically endangered				
<b>Totals</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Endangered</b>	<b>1</b>			
<b>Vulnerable</b>	<b>4</b>			
<b>Near threatened</b>	<b>2</b>			
<b>Critically endangered</b>	<b>1</b>			

### Fort Nottingham Nature Reserve:

The process has taken nearly seven years in Fort Nottingham but Roy Tabernor, Chair of the Lion's Bush Conservancy, thinks it was worth the effort. "Villagers walk regularly on the commonage and value the wildlife found there, including Oribi, Samango monkeys and the Long Toed Tree Frog. Our members see this as a great step forward in conservation and many are now also in consultation regarding portions of their land being under the stewardship programme."



Vegetation	Threat status	Extent (ha)	Natural (ha)	Transformed (ha)	Protected area target (ha)	Contribution to target (%)
Drakensberg foothill Moist Grassland	Least threatened	1 085	717	184	88 417	0.8
Mistbelt Grassland	Endangered	25	25	0	35 592	0.07
Alluvial wetlands: temperate alluvial vegetation	Vulnerable	140	140	0	35 592	0.47
<b>Total (ha)</b>		<b>1 250</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>184</b>		

Threatened species	SA Endemic	KZN Endemic Species	Priority Species	
			Must Report on	May Report on
Oribi - Endangered	Long-toed Tree Frog	Natal Midlands Dwarf Chameleon	Grey Crowned Crane	Oribi
Grey Crowned Crane - Vulnerable		Natal Leaf Folding Frog	Blue Crane	
Blue Crane - Vulnerable				
Secretary Bird - Near threatened				
Serval - Near threatened				
Samango Monkey - Vulnerable				
Tree Hyrax - Vulnerable				
Long-toed Tree Frog - Endangered				
Natal Leaf Folding Frog - Vulnerable				
Rythmic Caco Frog - Data deficient				
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Endangered</b>	<b>1</b>			
<b>Vulnerable</b>	<b>5</b>			
<b>Near threatened</b>	<b>1</b>			
<b>Data deficient</b>	<b>1</b>			



The photos depict examples of some of the threatened species found on Fort Nottingham.

**Snowflake Nature Reserve:**

This is located in the Giants castle area and is a privately owned farm which borders on the Giants Castle Nature Reserve. The scenery is spectacular and the biodiversity is worthy of conservation.



Vegetation	Threat status	Extent (ha)	Natural (ha)	Transformed (ha)	Protected area target (ha)	Contribution to target (%)
Drakensberg foothill Moist Grassland	Least threatened	237	222	15	88 417	0.3
Northern Drakensberg Highland Grassland	Least threatened	32	32	0	19 089	0.2
Alluvial wetlands: temperate alluvial vegetation	Vulnerable	8	6	2	35 592	0.02
<b>Total (ha)</b>		<b>277</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>17</b>		



Threatened species	SA Endemic	KZN Endemic Species	Priority Species May report on
Oribi - Endangered		<i>Euonyma lineaeformis</i> (modeled)	African Grass Owl
Grey Rhebok - Vulnerable		<i>Lepidopchrysos pephredo</i>	Denham's Bustard
Cape Vulture - Vulnerable		<i>Transvaalana draconis</i>	Cape Vulture
Denham's Bustard – Near threatened		<i>Kniphofia brachystachia</i> & <i>K. breviflora</i>	Natal Leaf Folding Frog
African Grass Owl – Vulnerable		<i>Othonna burtii</i>	Grey Rhebok
Natal Leaf Folding Frog - Vulnerable		<i>Schizoglossum hilliardiae</i>	
		<i>Afrivalus spinifrons intermedius</i> (KZN)	
		<i>Centrobolus tricolor</i> (modeled)	
		Natal Leaf Folding Frog	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Vulnerable</b>	<b>5</b>		
<b>Endangered</b>	<b>1</b>		
<b>Near threatened</b>			

**Gartmore Biodiversity Agreement:**

This covers an area of 430 Hectares. Although the land has been highly transformed for agriculture, this agreement is in place for a period of 30 years to ensure the appropriate management of 3 Crane species that utilise the property for foraging and or breeding purposes:

- Blue Crane - Vulnerable
- Grey Crowned Crane – Vulnerable
- Wattled Crane – Critically endangered.



The Karkloof Conservation Centre was established on Gartmore to provide a venue for environmental education and hides built for visitors to be able to view the wetland birds up close. Although the area is highly transformed for agriculture, seeing that wildlife and the farm activities are not mutually exclusive, is an inspiration to others.

There is also an array of grassland flowers to be seen, with some KZN endemics identified, such as the Small White Poker (*Kniphofia buchananii*) and the Slender Poker (*Kniphofia laxiflora*).shown in the photos taken in February on a walk through Gartmore.



### Summary of the results achieved against the project components

- 1 Identification of Stewardship Sites and initial interaction with Land Owners**
- 2 Conduct Biodiversity Assessment on property and determine Protected Area Status**
- 3 Negotiate relevant contracts and assist with development of Management Plan**
- 4 Facilitate approval of agreements and management plan throughout various EKZNW management levels.**
- 5 Facilitation of formal provincial proclamation of protected areas**
- 6 Identification of stewardship sites requiring Post Proclamation Support and initial interaction with Land Owners.**

Progress made on project components against project period							
Component	1	2	3	4	5	6	Component (#) details
Project time line	Aug - Dec 2011	Jan - June 2012	July - Dec 2012	Jan - June 2013	July - Dec 2013	Jan - June 2014	
Beacon Hill Protected Environ	█	█	█	█	█	█	# 6 underway, site unproclaimed
Dargle Stewardship Site	█	█	█	█	█	█	#2 started prior to MCF, 6 underway
Fort Nottingham Nature Reserve	█	█	█	█	█	█	#2 started prior to MCF inception
Gartmore BA	█	█	█	█	█	█	#2 prior to MCF, #5 not required
James Wakelin NR	█	█	█	█	█	█	#2 prior to MCF
Snowflake NR			█		█	█	# 4 underway, landowner lease done
Allendale NR		█	█	█	█	█	#4 underway, landowner not yet signed

## Component 6

This component was added after the second no cost extension application was accepted by CEPF in late December 2013. It involved additional sites to those in the table above. The following table provides details of these additional sites, their size and type of support received through the Forum's Biodiversity Stewardship Project. This component was initiated after the no cost extension application was accepted by CEPF in late December 2013.

Sites recently supported – Grant No Cost Extension		Extent
Michaelhouse Nature Reserve	Management advice & support	235
Bill Barnes Crane & Oribi Reserve		449
Mbona Nature Reserve	Veld condition assessment, management advice & support	678
Higlover		1 062
<b>Total hectares</b>		<b>2 424</b>

The Forum's Biodiversity Stewardship project is assisting two PhD students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal working on the Fort Nottingham Nature Reserve (Festuca grass and oribi). The data and reports provided will contribute to the improved biodiversity management of this reserve.

Meetings have been held and facilitated with our member Conservancies and the CEPF-funded *Izele* project. It is being piloted in 3 Conservancies situated in the Midlands Mistbelt Key Biodiversity Areas. The Forum has assisted the KZN Crane Foundation with the establishment of a new conservancy also within the Midlands Mistbelt area, which will cover approximately 9 500 hectares (Rosetta-Nottingham Road). As explained elsewhere in this report, it incorporates Conservancies which are no longer functioning and one which has been struggling to survive.

EcoGuard distributors and the KZN Department of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs have agreed to supply our stewardship sites with herbicide and the associated training free of charge. This is to deal with the infestations of Alien Invasive Plants in ecosystems. The herbicide and training will allow landowners to save on these costly, but essential chemicals.

The member conservancies of the Forum have been informed of the progress of the Biodiversity project at the regular Forum management meetings. These gatherings have also provided an opportunity for all members to engage with the process. We have also made use of the website and blogs to provide information on Biodiversity Stewardship and conservation issues.

[Were any components unrealized? If so, how has this affected the overall impact of the project?](#)

We are still awaiting signatures on Stewardship Agreements from the landowner of Allendale Nature Reserve. This delay has been due to him being abroad and unavailable

to sign. The landowner has had reservations recently about the declaration agreement, which we believe will be overcome during an upcoming meeting with the landowner (mid-August 2014). Many of the landowners that the MCF BSP has dealt with have been nervous of making long term commitments but most having eventually signed agreements in time.

**Were there any unexpected impacts (positive or negative)?**

A real risk remains as explained in previous reports submitted, namely that of securing funds to ensure landowners are properly supported after proclamation. While it can be viewed that this is the responsibility of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to fulfill, we are concerned about the numbers of staff available to achieve this in relation to the number of stewardship sites, especially in the Midlands where approximately one third of all stewardship sites occur.

It has also been found that there can be a significant delay between landowners signing the agreements for proclamation and when the MEC signing these agreements. There is a serious need to address support to the landowners in this period as they could otherwise lose interest in proceeding to proclamation.

The unexpected positive impacts have been that people from within (and beyond) the Midlands have enthusiastically joined our events, especially the Conservancy walks. We have also been delighted by the enthusiastic response to the first Wildlife Sightings blog that was published. It is now becoming a feature for most Conservancies and most of the photographs have been a stunning inspiration to us all, and even those living out of the country who also follow our blogs. These sightings are also being used by conservationists as indicators for Climate Change impacts and assisting researchers.

We have also noticed that small changes inspire and motivate people from far and wide. The most popular stories are those featuring the children in our Environmental Learning and Leadership and the Mpophomeni Conservation Group's Building Resilience projects. With our additional funding, the Conservancies now get the opportunity to do these projects in their areas.

The Water Workshops have also challenged the Conservancies to engage their members in "citizen science" and learn how to monitor the health of the rivers in their areas. This is helping to inspire the users and owners of land to become River Custodians through our partnership with DUCT. As the Midlands features many of the KZN "water factories", we believe this is worthwhile work and will continue with our water focus in the years to come.

**Please describe and submit (electronically if possible) any tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.**

A website ([www.midlandsconservancies.org.za](http://www.midlandsconservancies.org.za)) was established and continues to be maintained for the Midlands Conservancies Forum. It will be useful for years to come as a resource of KZN Midlands and Conservation.



The website is linked to our blog site, where the stories and photos have served to inspire, motivate and challenge members and the general public. There is a search facility to find blogs according to key words and it is found at [www.midlandsconservanciesforum.wordpress.com](http://www.midlandsconservanciesforum.wordpress.com). Our FaceBook page has spread awareness and information about our biodiversity and events to an even wider audience.

## **Lessons Learned**

**Describe any lessons learned during the design and implementation of the project, as well as any related to organizational development and capacity building. Consider lessons that would inform projects designed or implemented by your organization or others, as well as lessons that might be considered by the global conservation community.**

- **Project Design Process: (aspects of the project design that contributed to its success/shortcomings)**
- **Project Implementation: (aspects of the project execution that contributed to its success/shortcomings)**
- **Other lessons learned relevant to conservation community:**

### ***Stewardship process:***

Unforeseen changes such as a recent shift in provincial departments for reporting and authorizing of Declaration Agreements at MEC level, can occur from time to time. Although infrequent (this change occurred as a result of National Elections in May 2014) the KZN BSP and partners need to communicate this possibility to landowners during such times.

The necessity for forward/future planning was highlighted during this period as it became clear that the project would reach finality with some objectives not yet attained. It became increasingly necessary to articulate measures to ensure the project objectives would be realised, albeit outside of the project period.

Allowing for a scoping process would have helped the Biodiversity Stewardship project to be more strategic in site selection and analysis of the potential success likelihood. Timeous conclusion of Stewardship Agreements depends on a process of engagement with the Landowner, which can be lengthy and time-consuming.

The total extent of hectares declared is reliant on the landowners' willingness to participate and is difficult to predict during proposal drafting, as the situation changes over time and many may change their minds. It would have been better to set targets for ecosystems (and their linkages) conserved and not necessarily just hectares as an indicator of success.

Post proclamation support should have been included in the initial proposal, as with the problems in the Ezemvelo-KZN Wildlife, this is not guaranteed and is essential for the

success of the project. CEPF has invested a lot in stewardship in SA, and considerable success had been achieved. The CEPF funding was envisaged as catalytic and has invested a lot in stewardship in SA, and considerable success had been achieved. We need to find ways to consolidate the gains to form the basis of viable and sustainable biodiversity stewardship programmes that can continue into the future. At the moment, it all hinges on capacity within and political will from Ezemvelo to fulfill their mandate.

Alternatives to Biodiversity Stewardship are required as we believe the focus on the extent of land under formal protection was too narrow and encouraged a numbers game instead of getting ecosystems conserved by formal or informal means.

The formal stewardship process does not adequately deal with some of the landowners' perceptions relating to their unwillingness to engage in conservation with Ezemvelo. It has the mandate for conservation in the province of KZN, but has been tainted by so many issues that many landowners will not be involved in any of their initiatives.

The DUCT River Custodians and WWF Sustainable Farming projects appear to be a better way to inspire and motivate landowners to conserve biodiversity, although much of it is informal. It has the potential to have longer-lasting conservation impacts as it does not focus on the perception of creating barriers to people in these areas.

### ***Establishment of the Forum***

- We should have included in our proposal, mentorship from another organisation while setting up financial management systems from the outset, including obtaining NPO and SARS exempt status. This proved daunting and a significant drain on the organisation.
- Communication is essential and the blogs have proved to be an effective method of informing people and keeping them updated.
- The use of social media, such as FaceBook is proving popular, despite our initial wariness of using it to communicate, but it is popular with especially younger stakeholders.
- We did not include the position of a Development Monitor in the proposal, which is essential to ensure that we are aware of all proposals in and around the Midlands and participate effectively to influence all projects to ensure they are appropriate and sustainable.
- While it is never easy to establish a new organisation with volunteers, the development of a vision and values at the onset, helped to tide us through some of the more difficult moments.
- Through this project, the Forum has inspired the KZN Conservancies Association with the help of some of our members to review their vision and Constitution. The newly established Berg Conservancies Forum also

demonstrates that our CEPF project has reaped rewards over and above those initially imagined.

- The leadership shown by our Forum’s members has inspired, motivated and challenged the KZN conservation movement and we believe that the legacy of this project will continue to grow.

We have found that for conservation initiatives to be sustainable, people must be included:

- Biodiversity conservation is not only about erecting fences and keeping people out, but is also about building bridges between neighbours and communities;
- Our project has empowered many people to make small changes in their lives to inspire and motivate others to do the same, thereby increasing the rate and scale of change;
- Young people need to be exposed to nature and wild places for them to appreciate it enough to want to look after it. This has been a very important legacy of the Forum through the Environmental Learning and Leadership projects.

**Provide details of any additional funding that supported this project and any funding secured for the project, organization, or the region, as a result of the CEPF investment in this project.**

Donor	Funding Type*	Value USD	Details
MCF Office Bearers	Co-financing	\$15 714	Value of volunteers time in providing advice and support to the project
N3Toll Concession	Leveraging	\$ 2 400 \$ 13 200 \$ 15 000	Assisted with the purchasing of project equipment in year 1 and then for the next 2 years with communication, Environmental Learning and Leadership, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mpophomeni Conservation Group (Building Resilience)</li> <li>• River Walk blogs (Inspire. Motivate. Challenge)</li> <li>• Environmental Learning and Leadership – Schools, Clubs and Wilderness Excursions</li> <li>• Monitoring the uMngeni Catchment &amp; Water Workshops (Protecting Ecological Infrastructure )</li> </ul>
Green Grant	Leveraging	• \$ 5 000 • \$ 8 000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Climate Change Building Resilience project in Mpophomeni</li> <li>• The Fracking Campaign for raising awareness of impacts and the legal rights of users and owners of land</li> </ul>
Climate Change Adaptation	Regional Investment	\$ 8 000 000	Through the uMgungungdlovu District Municipality, this project will have a number of project sites and the Forum’s proposals for Lidgetton and Mpophomeni have been provisionally accepted.
DEA	Regional Investment	\$130 000	DUCT has been chosen for this work on their River Custodians project, due in part to the publicity received through the Forum on their River Walks – our blogs and website links are very

			popular and shared with the media, government and other organisations.
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**\*Project co-financing:** Other donors or your organization contribute to the direct costs of this project;

**\* Grantee and Partner leveraging:** Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF funded project;

**\* Regional/Portfolio leveraging:** Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.

### Sustainability/Replicability

**Summarize the success or challenge in achieving planned sustainability or replicability of project components or results.**

**Summarize any unplanned sustainability or replicability achieved.**

KZN Conservancies Forum has reviewed their work following the establishment of our Forum and with the enthusiastic participation of our members. They now believe that the establishment of similar fora in the rest of the province will help to support and sustain the Conservancy movement.

The establishment of the Berg Conservancies Forum recently is directly as a result of our Forum's work in the Midlands. They have modeled their Forum on ours and with input from our Office Bearers.

### Information Sharing and CEPF Policy

**CEPF is committed to transparent operations and to helping civil society groups share experiences, lessons learned, and results. Final project completion reports are made available on our Web site, [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net), and publicized in our newsletter and other communications.**

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