

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTRES OMGEWINGSOPVOEDING SENTRUMS

SUIKERBOSRAND NATURE RESERVE

P. J. Mills

This article is the second in a series aimed at covering all the major environmental education centres in Southern Africa.



Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve and its educational facilities are run by the Transvaal Division of Nature Conservation. The reserve is 17 000 ha in extent, all of which falls within Acocks Veld Type 60 (Bankenveld). Ecologically the reserve's main function is to conserve that veld type and the associated fauna. The other major function is to educate the public about our natural environment. Because of its proximity to the Vaal Triangle, Suikerbosrand has become a popular reserve for the surrounding urban population. Financing of the extensive facilities has come largely from the municipalities in the area.

A distinction may be drawn between the interpretation and the education facilities provided. The former are utilized mainly by the general public while the latter cater for specific groups, such as school pupils or teachers. The staff of four interpretive officers is concerned mainly with the activities for organized groups, although they also do duty at the visitor centre.

With the exception of trail huts there are no overnight facilities for the general public within the reserve. A full range of accommodation is however

available in the adjacent Kareekloof Resort. A visitor centre including an exhibition hall was opened to the public in 1980. The exhibits depict the variety of animals found on the reserve and the habitats in which they are likely to occur. The aim is to introduce this complex natural environment to the general public in order to make it more intelligible when walking one of the trails or going on the game drive. There is a tarred road through the reserve for light vehicles only. There is a nominal cost.

A network of hiking trails meander through the reserve, the total length being 66 km with six overnight huts. There are also the *Bokmakierie Nature Trail* and the *Cheetah Interpretive Trail* which can be used by day visitors. The former has two loops, one of 10 km and another of 17 km. The *Cheetah Trail* is much shorter and various points of interest are interpreted *en route* by means of a small booklet which is available free at the beginning of the trail.



FIGURE 1 A school group at Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve

The main educational objectives of the reserve are to:

- Provide activities and facilities that will enable the general public to come into contact with nature.
- Make people aware of the interactions that make up our environment and make them more concerned and motivated so that they may become more involved in conservation action.
- Provide syllabus-based programmes for school groups and teachers.
- Co-operate with teachers and teachers' training colleges in order to develop programmes that benefit the objectives of both the Division and the relevant organization.

In order to accommodate specific groups three 'group camps' have been constructed. *Kiepersol* is the largest with room for 100 people. *Ouhout* and *Protea* can accommodate 50 persons each. These facilities are open to any groups, from schools, churches, adult and youth organizations. Groups of over 90 can be accommodated if all interpretation officers are available. All facilities are avail-

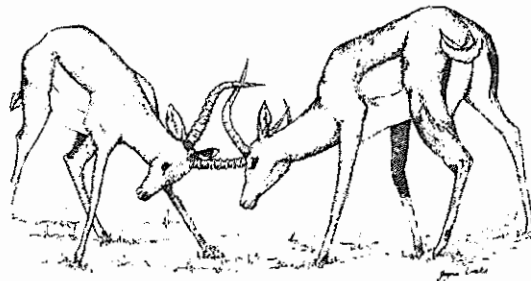
able to all racial groups. For those wishing to use these camps it is advisable to book well in advance.

All programmes are flexible and are adapted to each group's particular needs. Teachers often make contact with the education officer prior to the visit and the specific needs for that group are discussed. Programmes are usually designed to fit into the syllabus and are thus relevant to the child's work at school. Programmes of a more general nature are offered to groups should they request it. Groups may conduct their own programmes, but the Division of Nature Conservation does prefer to have some kind of an input.

Topics which can be studied include ecology, water studies, signs of the wild, habitat studies, erosion control and tree and grass identification. These can also be altered to suit the needs of individual groups. For further details contact:

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Forum



RHINO AND ELEPHANT FOUNDATION LAUNCHED

Readers of the Journal will be interested to know that a new conservation body, the Rhino and Elephant Foundation (REF), was launched in Johannesburg towards the end of last year with the support of one of the sponsors of this Journal. The launch coincided with the publication of the superb book, *The Elephants of Africa*, by Anthony Hall-Martin and artist Paul Bosman (already reviewed in the EEASA newsletter). The co-founders of the Foundation are internationally-known elephant expert, Anthony Hall-Martin; equally renowned rhino man, Peter Hitchins and quintessential conservationist, Clive Walker. Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi is the President and patron.

The major sponsor of the REF, and its first corporate member, is Camel (R.J. Reynolds), a conservation-conscious company. Many will remember the Camel Caravan for Conservation of a couple of years ago, when a group of intrepid young men navigated a group of equally intrepid young camels across the Kalahari and Namib Deserts. That was a joint Camel (if you'll pardon the pun) and Wildlife Society venture. To prove that camels are not Camel's only concern, they will be sponsoring a number of REF projects this year, in a concerted effort to help rhinos and elephants to survive.

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MORE INPUT NEEDED FROM THE ARTS

On reading the article entitled "English as an Arts Discipline in Environmental Education" (Sthn. Afr. J. Env. Ed. No. 3) I feel I must respond to the author.

As one of the much berated scientists who have been forced to reduce the artistic disciplines to non-disciplines through lack of expertise I would welcome any input from someone trained in this field.

The fact that Environmental Education has been unable to promote a truly holistic, interdisciplinary approach is not so much through a "lack of understanding of the nature of artistic disciplines" as a lack of artists! I submit that the "division in our society between scientist and artist" stems not from the scientists who at least do attempt to accommodate the art forms, albeit "creative mutterings" and "poems about animals", but from the artists themselves who do not feel committed to labouring in the field of Environmental Education.

I think I speak for all Environmental Educators when I say we would welcome far more input from those who describe themselves as artists and decry our feeble scientific attempts to incorporate artistic elements into Environmental Education.

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