

Moutonshoek declared protected area

Lying in the mountains of the Moutonshoek valley near Piketberg, the Moutonshoek Protected Environment (MPE) is South Africa's newest privately protected area.



The Moutonshoek Protected Environment was established through the work of BirdLife South Africa's Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA) Programme, with support from CapeNature and forms part of the Verlorenvlei Protected Areas Project, funded by the WWF Nedbank Green Trust.

This project has not only facilitated the declaration of the 9000-hectare Moutonshoek Protected Environment, but also assisted with the establishment of the 12,000ha Verlorenvlei Conservancy which brings together landowners around the Verlorenvlei estuary committed to improving the environmental management of this critical site.

The project also facilitated the training of more than 40 local community members working on environmental management projects in the area, thereby helping to enhance their socio-economic situation, whilst simultaneously contributing to the conservation of South Africa's natural resources.

National biodiversity stewardship programme

A "protected environment" is a category of protected area declared under the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (NEMPAA, 2003), which, after a nature reserve, offers the next most secure form of protection. The declaration of protected areas on privately owned land is facilitated through the national biodiversity stewardship programme. Biodiversity stewardship allows for the expansion of our protected area estate through ground-breaking legislation and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Jan Coetzee, manager: Land Programme, WWF-SA, commented: "WWF-SA's Land Programme supports current efforts in the establishment, expansion, consolidation and management of protected areas in South Africa. The programme focuses mainly on acquiring land through land purchase, facilitation of donations of land and funds, and innovative mechanisms for securing biodiversity, such as biodiversity stewardship. Also, the programme continues to support the strengthening of capacity within provincial conservation agencies and processes to develop and implement key conservation policies.

"Through the support of the WWF Nedbank Green Trust, BirdLife South Africa has been able to secure the protection and sustainable management of the Moutonshoek catchment and Verlorenvlei Estuary. This project has successfully engaged landowners and other stakeholders in the area, and thus has ensured the continued support of the initiative. The Land Programme would also like to congratulate BirdLife South Africa on this important achievement in this critical biodiversity area. We value this partnership with BirdLife South Africa, and will continue to support this project and other landscape initiatives in biodiversity priority areas."

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