





midlands
conservancies
FORUM

Our Purpose

Facilitating and coordinating the activities of a coalition of KZN Midlands conservancies, focussing on biodiversity conservation, which will ensure long-term environmental sustainability in the area

How?

Inspiring, motivating and challenging
Midlanders to value the landscapes,
biodiversity and lifestyles
that make this area truly magic.
(and the ecosystems on which we all rely)



Maputaland-Pondoland-Albany Biodiversity Hotspot
KBA 18 - Mist belt Grasslands 80 000ha
National Freshwater Priority Area

Fencing and formal protection doesn't seem to have worked for Mfolozi....



Perhaps we need to do things differently?





“You know, a person needs some quiet time. It felt good listening to the sound of birds and the river flowing. I felt peace, and the love of nature grew more inside me.”

Nondumiso Mbhida at Cobham Nature Reserve



“This was a whole new experience for me. I am so surprised how clean this place is, I have never been to a place where there is no litter.”

Moses Mazibuko at Khula Shanti Sanctuary



“Thank you for all you do to help with environmental awareness in every possible way.

The enthusiasm is contagious through the MCF blogs. We are all the richer for these wonderful newsletters.”

Sarah Ellis – MCF Blog follower



“This trip and workshop has developed a deeper understanding and passion of plants in us. Now we want to be Botanists.”

Phumelele Madlala and Lindokuhle Mlotshwa



“That was the most glorious day imaginable – a truly memorable hike. When I got home I looked up that little plant we saw in the spring – *Urticularia prehensilis* – so I learnt something new too.”

Gill Woods after Dargle Nature Reserve hike



*“This was a great excursion.
What was running in my mind is that dams highly
destruct our ecosystems on earth.
I hope one day I will find the solution to this issue.”
Lungisani Mthlane after Spring Grove Dam visit*



“Ngiyabonga kakhulu. You are not only educating these learners, but the whole nation. They will spread the word about caring for the nature to many people as they grow up in their lives.”
Thami Sokhela - School Principal



“An amazing collection of flora and fauna pictures for this time of the year and even more intriguing sightings and behaviour of other wildlife. Rivals any coffee table book!”
Meriel Mitchell on Wildlife Sightings



Our Projects

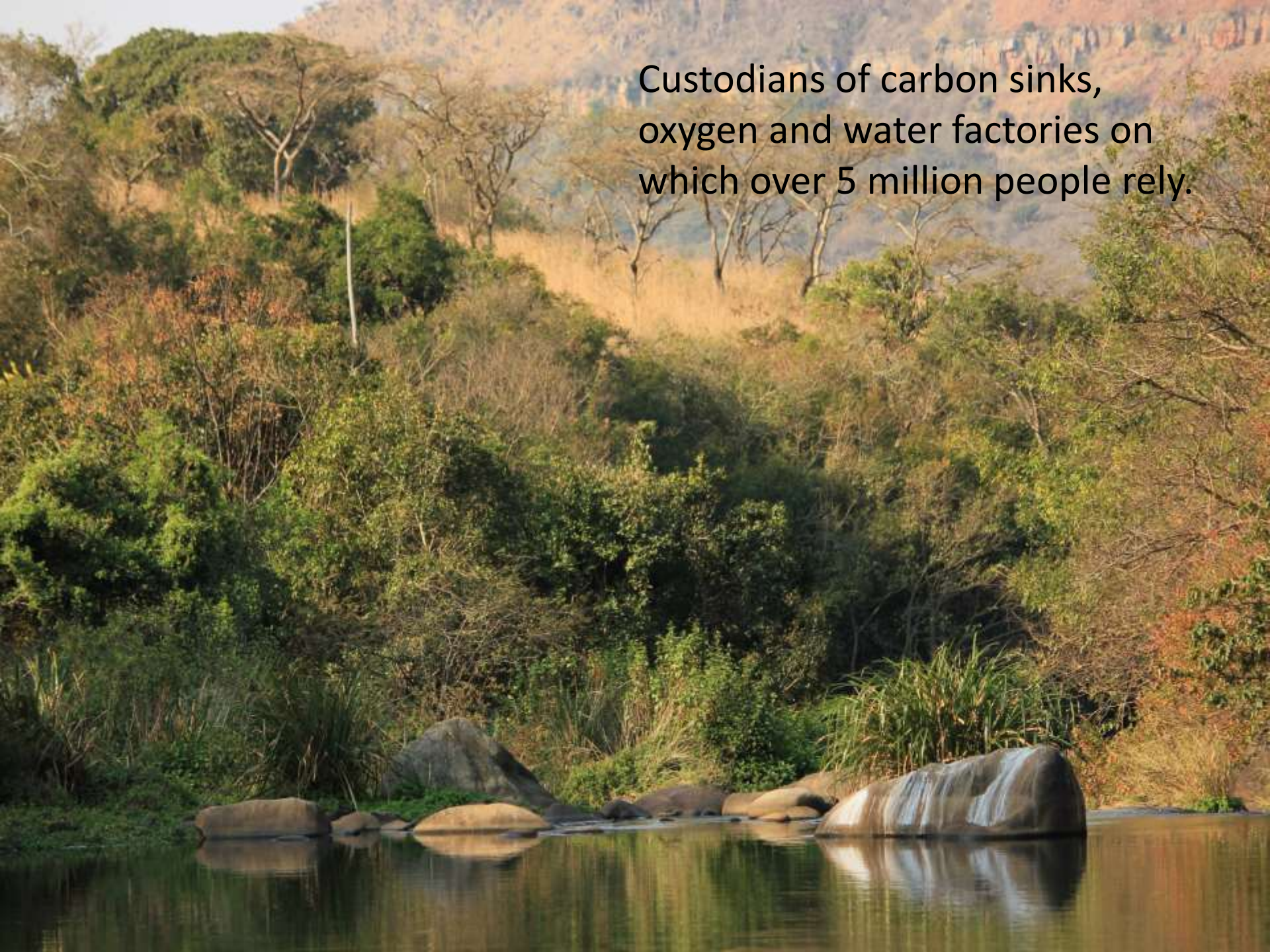
- Protecting Ecological Infrastructure
 - Biodiversity Stewardship
 - River Walks and Water Workshops
 - Midlands CREW
 - Regular walks and access for public
- Environmental Learning and Leadership
 - Schools fieldtrips
 - Wilderness excursions
 - Members leadership & influence
- Building Community Resilience
 - Climate Change Adaptations

Biodiversity Stewardship



Site	Category	Extent (ha)	Ezemvelo Board approval	Contracts signed, Plans developed	Paperwork with MEC for signing
MCF Sites at start of CEPF project August 2011					
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
Total Extent		2 892			
MCF Sites added during project					
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
Total Extent		2 306			

Custodians of carbon sinks,
oxygen and water factories on
which over 5 million people rely.



Fort Nottingham

Natal Midlands Dwarf Chameleon, Long toed Tree Frog, Rhythmic Caco Frog, Oribi



Dargle

Cape Parrot, Samango Monkey, Tree Hyrax, Oribi, Serval



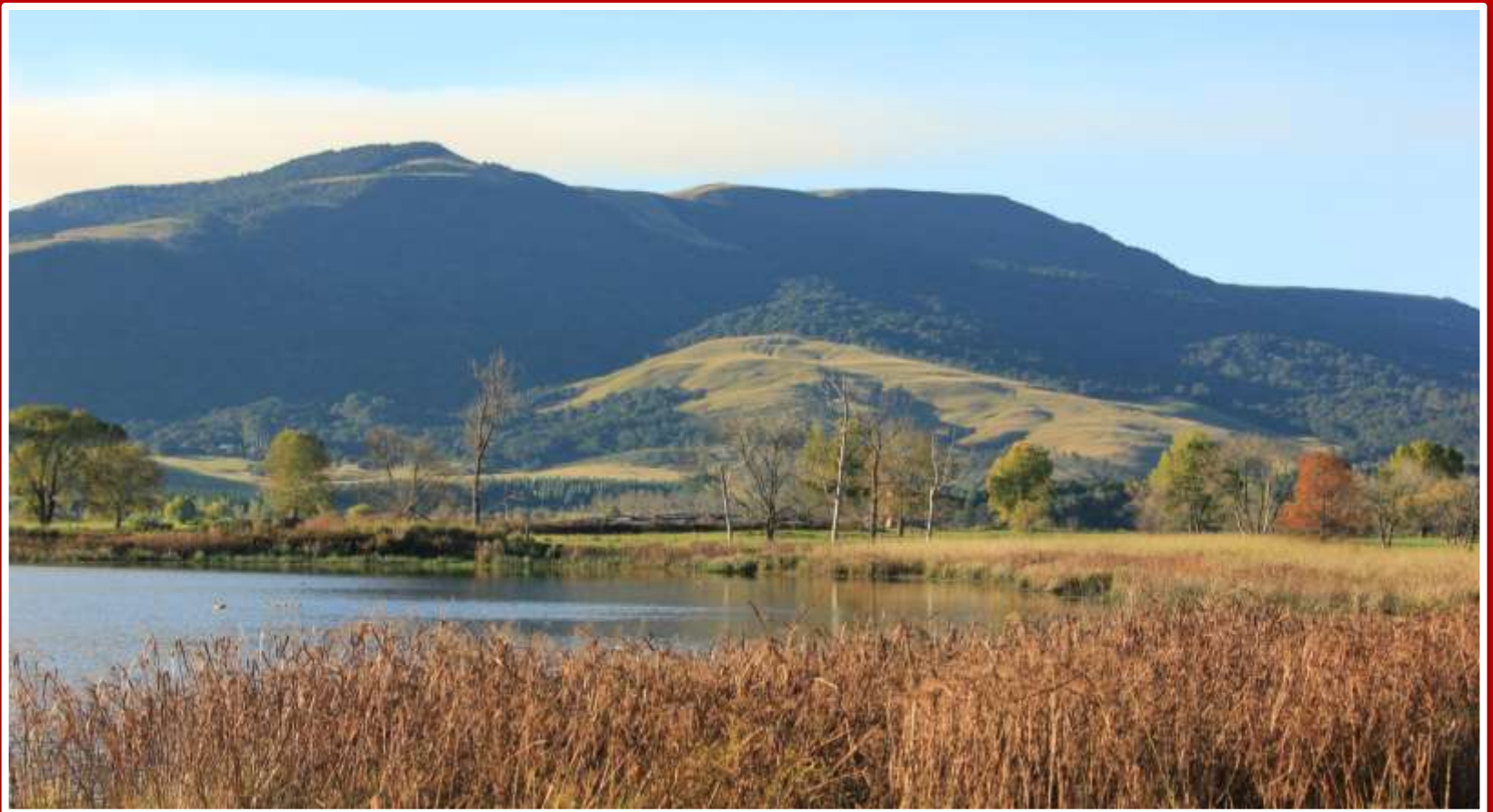
Beacon Hill

Senecio dregeanus , *Alepedia amatymbica*, *Asclepias woodii*, African Grass Owl



Gartmore

Grey Crowned Crane, Blue Crane, Wattled Crane



Snowflake and Allendale

Denham's Bustard, Cape Vulture, Grey Rhebok, Natal Leaf folding Frog

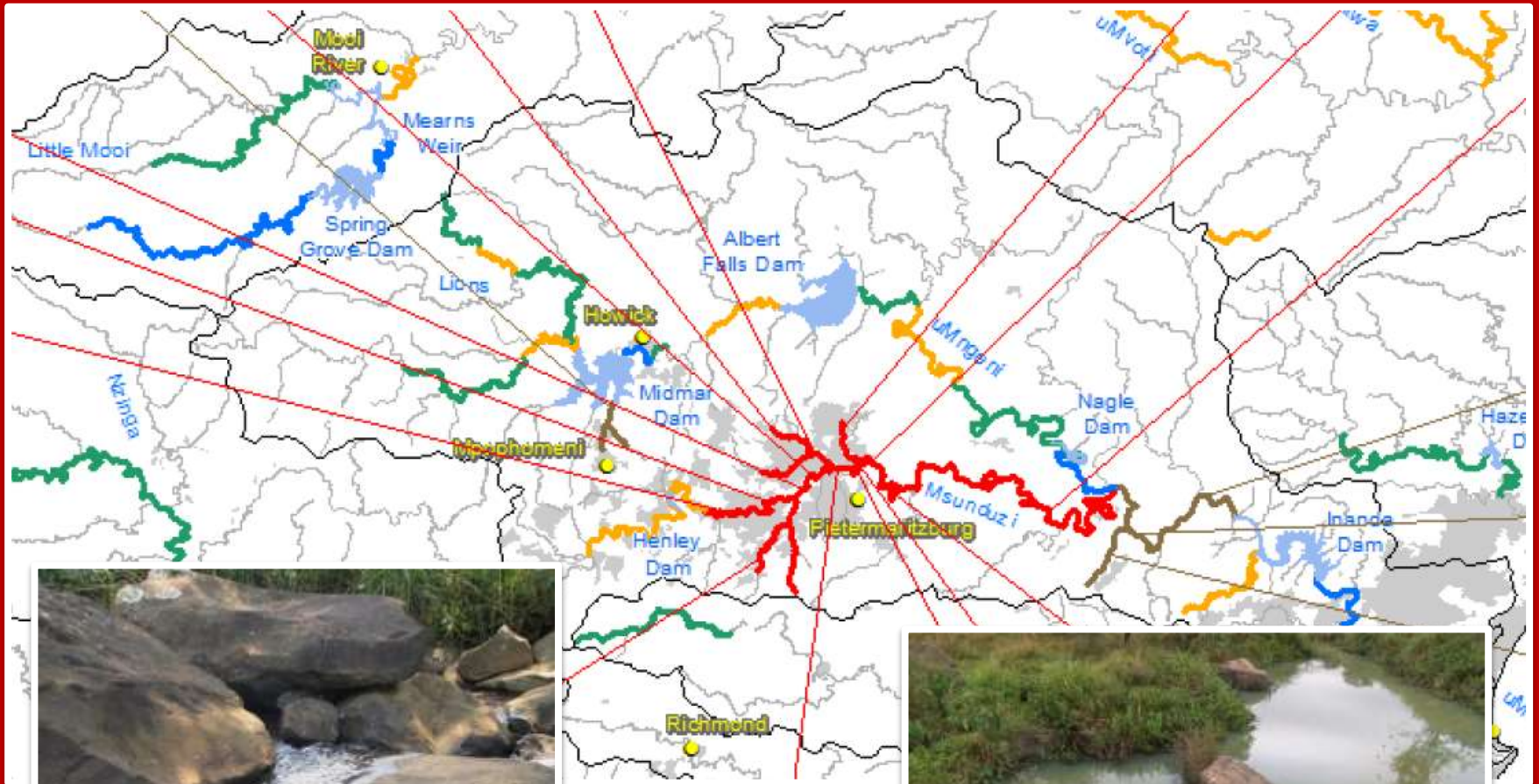


River walks



Monitor and record all impacts
on the tributaries of the uMngeni River
DUCT River Walk Team

Why focus on Water?

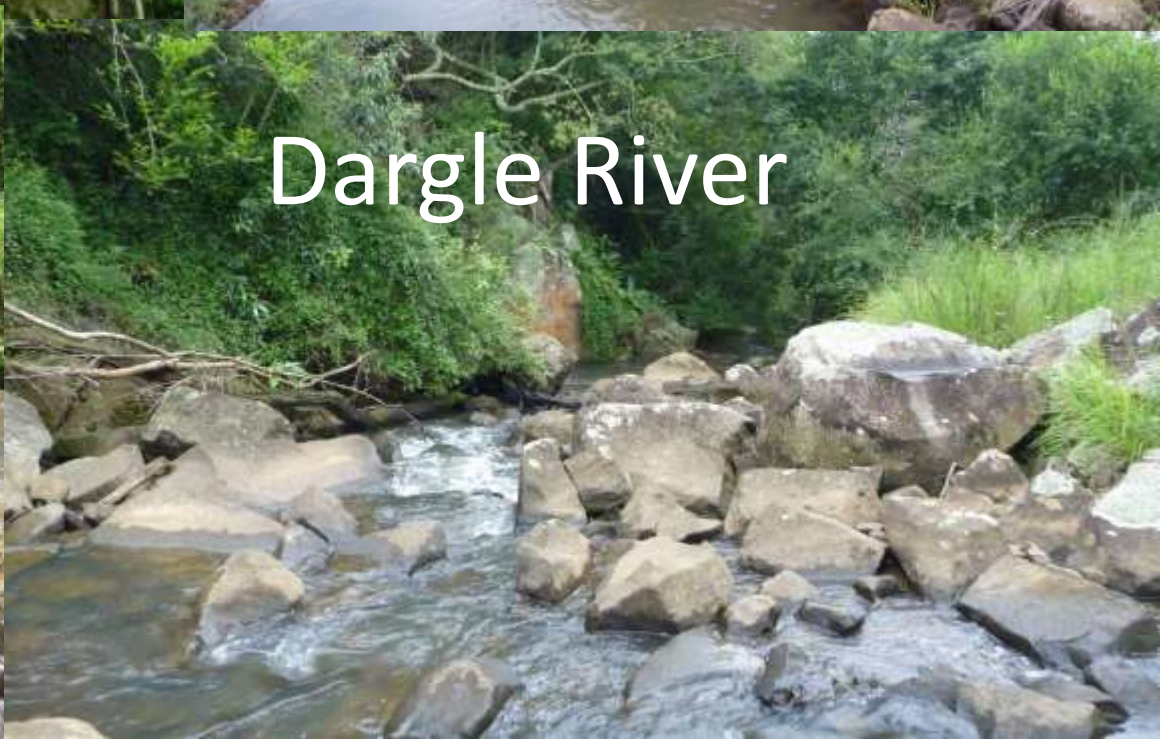




Lion's River

The Lions River starts life in the Fort Nottingham area and then twists and turns through many, many wetlands before the confluence with the uMngeni just above Midmar.

“All the way the mini sass scores were low – the river was never better than in ‘fair condition’. This calls for a concerted effort to improve our catchments or we will all be in serious trouble.” Penny Rees



Dargle River

The highlight of the Dargle River walk was a stretch of completely untransformed grassland and river where, on the third day, the team found stoneflies (which indicate exceptional water quality) and marvelled at the ability of a river to heal itself when ecosystems are intact.

“This made my heart sing. It gives me hope for all our unloved Midlands rivers.” Penny Rees



Mpofana River



A mere 500 metres from the source on a housing development/dairy farm the Mpofana stream dries up.

Add the impacts of the interbasin transfer pipeline - bulldozed river banks, unprotected slopes leading soil erosion, lack of control of emerging invasive weeds.

The Mooi River water releases into the Mpofana have eroded the river banks causing heavy siltation. Without adequate protection measures, this will be exacerbated with the increased loads from the Spring Grove Dam.

“This river is in real trouble.”

Water Workshops



Encouraging Citizen Science through MiniSASS



GROUPS	SENSITIVITY SCORE
Flat worms	3 ✓
Worms	2
Leeches	2
Crabs or shrimps	6 ✓
Stoneflies	17 ✓
Minnow mayflies	5
Other mayflies	11 ✓
Damselflies	4
Dragonflies	6
Bugs or beetles	5 ✓
Caddisflies (cased & uncased)	9 ✓
True flies	2
Snails	4
TOTAL SCORE	74
NUMBER OF GROUPS	15
AVERAGE SCORE	6.8

Average Score = Total Score ÷ Number of groups

Interpretation of the miniSASS score: Although an ideal sample site has rocky, sandy, and vegetation habitats, not all habitats are always present at a site. If your river does not have rocky habitats use the *manu funa* natatory above to interpret your scores.



Regular monitoring by landowners can detect early threats and facilitate prompt action

River Custodians

Partnership with DUCT – clearing riparian zones





Rivers can heal if given 10km
free of negative impacts.
Invest in all ecosystems, not
just those that are intact.

Midlands CREW

(more citizen science)



32 new species identified in Happy Valley, Impendle to add to 10 year record of Summer plant species



Workshops & fieldtrips

learning, sharing, inspiring, challenging





Wildlife Sightings

spectacular monthly contributions by conservancy members
of birds, flowers, bugs & butterflies



photos in this presentation taken by members

recording biodiversity and observing changes



Captured on Camera



Bushnell

06-04-2013 08:00:49



Bushnell

06-07-2013 10:58:23



Bushnell

06-09-2013 12:51:04



14 regular walks across the Midlands

forest, grasslands, hillsides, peri-urban, farms, riverside -
controlled access to private land



Opportunities to see Nature as it should be



New walks created – clearing IAPs, improving access

Can we really expect people to care about things they don't even know about?



Discovery of *Asclepias woodii*

small colony of rare plant found during regular walk





Environmental Learning & Leadership



Water and Wetland lessons



Forest Ecology and Biodiversity



Snakes





**Dispelling
myths,
challenging
fears**



Wilderness experiences are often life changing – improving self-esteem, enhancing brain development, increasing curiosity and creativity and sense of connectedness to community and the environment.



Inspiring hope and influencing the future







Hands on sharing and learning
is most meaningful



Our future leaders are environmental activists already!



Building Community Resilience



Exploring sustainable options

demonstrating that small changes can make a difference





Green Grants Fund
to empower
community icons



Ntombenhle's Garden June 2013



January
2014



Penelope's Garden August 2013





Summer
2013/2014



Small family farms are the best way
to feed the planet
and deal with Climate Change



- Sthembile Mbanjwa:
- “I am so grateful to be one of the people who learn from the best. My father used to plant our garden, but after he died the garden stay still. One day Ntombenhle pass by and ask why we don't make this garden good. I told her I don't know how to start. She just arrived on Friday with the tools and said let's do it. She showed me how and I love it. We harvest a lot and we save some seeds for next year.”
- Baba Gwamande: “These wonderful ideas work well with us elderly people. We need to eat well and stay healthy. I love to walk around helping others in their gardens, it gives me strength and the reason to face another beautiful day.”



**Leading by
example**

Turning a dumpsite into a community garden





Just start, others will follow...





Mpophomeni becomes a food forest, one garden at a time

Blogs and Facebook

- About 10 stories a month.
- Most popular are Wildlife Sightings.
- Press regularly reprints stories.
- Facebook drives people to the blog.



Our efforts have inspired the formation of Southern Berg and Durban Conservancy Forums.



Monitoring inappropriate, unsustainable development

Influencing early in the project

Agriculture, roads, dams, inter-basin transfers, pipelines
housing/office/industrial developments



Leave the gas under the grass.



NO MINING THE KZN MIDLANDS

What part of
turning water
into toxic sludge
makes sense?

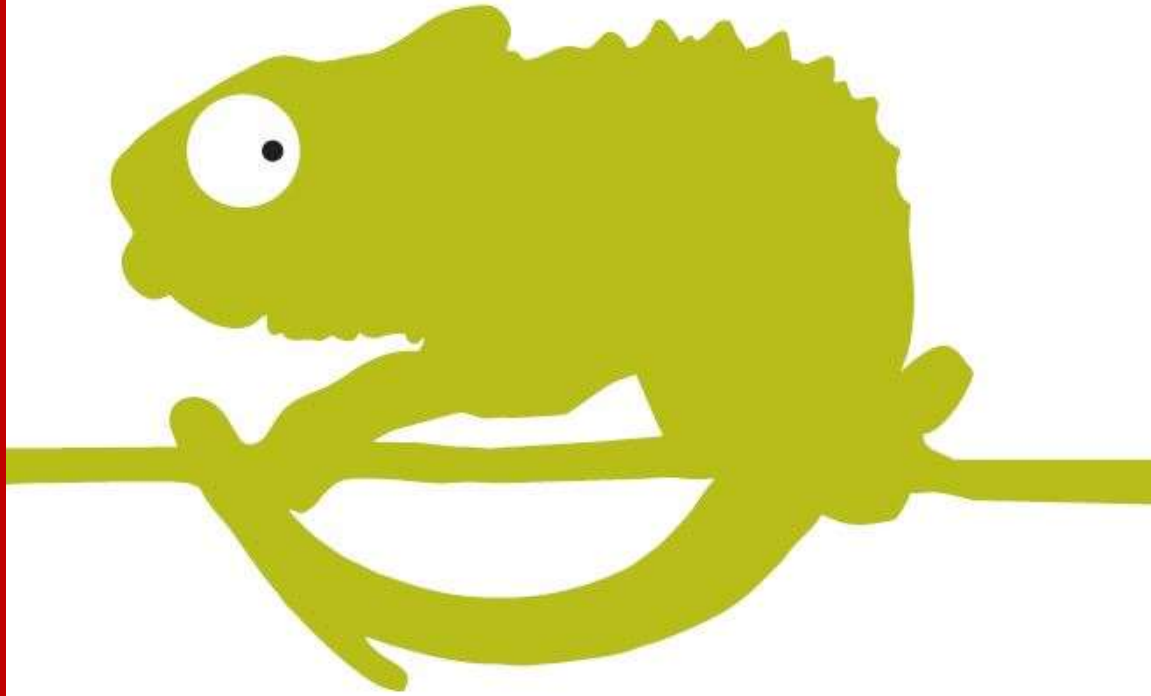


NO MINING THE KZN MIDLANDS

Farming not Fracking.



NO MINING THE KZN MIDLANDS



CHAMELEON
custodian

www.midlandsconservancies.org.za

Peter Thomson - Upper uMngeni Catchment Management Forum

“We think the Midlands Conservation Forum is showing the way.

With all the governance problems facing conservation in KZN and in the country it is really encouraging to get together with people who are so enthusiastic about what they are doing.

Well done, strength to your arm.”



midlands
conservancies
FORUM

www.midlandsconservancies.org.za

www.midlandsconservanciesforum.wordpress.com

[facebook/midlandsconservanciesforum](https://facebook.com/midlandsconservanciesforum)