

MAPUTALAND

TRANSNATIONAL CONSERVATION PLANNING PROJECT

NEWSLETTER 1 – Apr 04

Welcome to the first Maputaland transnational conservation planning project newsletter. It contains information on the background to the project and what we have achieved in the last year. We hope that you find this information useful and would welcome any feedback.

Project aims

The Maputaland centre of endemism covers parts of Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland and is internationally recognised for its conservation value. This project aims to help maintain this biodiversity by achieving the following:

- 1) To produce a conservation planning system for Maputaland that includes ecological, socio-economic and land-use data, together with a conservation land-use plan based on input from all relevant stakeholders in the three Maputaland nation states.
- 2) To develop a freely available user-friendly interface for the MARXAN conservation planning software and an associated manual and tutorial for use by conservation practitioners.
- 3) To train one Mozambican and one South African national to Masters level by undertaking the MSc in Conservation Biology at DICE.
- 4) To produce training materials to allow conservation planning and the use of MARXAN to be taught by lecturers as part of relevant BSc and vocational courses in southern Africa.
- 5) To further develop and support links between conservation stakeholders in Maputaland, allowing the transfer of skills and expertise and ensuring the long-term viability of the planning system.

Project website launched

The project website was launched in August '03 and has been visited 3650 times since then. At present, the site describes the background to the project and gives a brief description of how this work will develop in the future. All of the information will be expanded over the coming months, so the site will become an important resource for finding out more about the Maputaland project and conservation planning in general. See the contact details at the end of the newsletter for the website address.

CLUZ developed

The first version of the Conservation Land-Use Zoning (CLUZ) software is now available. This program is an ArcView GIS v3 extension that acts as an interface for the MARXAN conservation planning software. It also allows the on-screen development of conservation landscape plans and protected area networks and has been designed for use by anyone who is interested in conservation planning. A handbook and tutorial exercise have also been developed, so please visit the CLUZ website (<http://www.mosaic-conservation.org/cluz>) for more details.

Preliminary planning map available

A preliminary conservation planning map for Maputaland, South Africa, can now be downloaded from the project website. The map uses the available landcover data to identify areas that are important both for conserving important habitats and for connecting existing protected areas. It provides important information on where new biodiversity-friendly activities could be located in the region and has already been used by KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife to guide land-use policies.

Satellite imagery available

As part of this project we have obtained three Landsat 7 and nine ASTER satellite images. The Landsat 7 images were taken in 2000 and 2001, have a resolution of 30m and show the Mozambican and Swaziland sections of Maputaland. The ASTER images were taken in 2001 and have a resolution of 15m. Please get in touch if you would like more information on these data or if you would like copies of the Landsat images, which have no copyright restrictions.

MSc projects

Three MSc students from DICE will be visiting the South African section of Maputaland during May and June to collect data for their research projects. This research will feed in directly to the larger conservation planning project and will also help develop methodologies for use in collecting data in the rest of Maputaland. The details of these projects are:

Paul Brookes will be mapping and modelling spatial patterns of plant harvesting in Maputaland by focussing on bark stripping for medicinal use and the collection of wood for fuel and carvings. Most of the biodiversity data used in the planning system will be based on remote sensing, so Paul's work is important because it will provide information on the over-harvesting of resources that cannot be measured from satellite images.

Nerissa Chao will be carrying out a conservation planning project by working with the Mathenjwa community, who are in the process of establishing a small nature reserve in the Usuthu Gorge area of South Africa. This work will be done in collaboration with The Wildlands Trust and will act as a pilot project to see how the Maputaland conservation planning system can be used to make fine-scale decisions on the ground.

Julian Easton will be using landcover maps and KZN Wildlife's game count data to predict the potential distribution of large mammal species in Maputaland outside the formal protected areas and privately owned game reserves. This information will then be used to identify areas on communal land where game ranching could be the most profitable land-use and to investigate how these areas could help to maintain links between formal reserves and protect important habitats. This work will be done in collaboration with KZN Wildlife and the University of KZN.

Choosing the conservation features

The Maputaland conservation planning system will contain data on a range of landcover types, ecological processes and species distributions. The list of landcover types has already been developed but we are still consulting with experts to produce the final list of processes and species. We plan to include data on a range of threatened and endemic species from a number of taxonomic groups. We also plan to include data on species with economic value, such as large antelope and medicinal plants, so that locations for sustainable harvesting projects can be identified. We would welcome input from anyone with expertise on the distributions of these species.

Get in touch

This project depends on the help and support of a large number of people and we are grateful for all of their support. We are also very keen to build new collaborations, so please get in touch if you would like to get involved or find out more about the project. Please also let us know if you have any information that you would like included in future newsletters.

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