

## GARDEN ROUTE BOTANICAL GARDEN TRUST

### Piloting a Resource for Environmental Education in the Little Karoo

This project was funded for 6 months, starting on 1 April 2004. In mid-September an extension of one month was requested. This report refers to the period 1 April to 31 October 2004.

#### Objectives:

To work with teachers to determine the kind of resources which they need:

- to enable them to better appreciate the nature of the succulent Karoo hot-spot
- to help them identify local plants
- to give them the confidence to lead learners on field outings
- to relate biodiversity issues to social issues

To write two booklets to be used by teachers.

#### Achievements:

Herron and McGibbon attended a 10-day course on Environmental Education resources in Natal.

Three formal workshops were held with teachers.

There was also extensive telephone communication.

We interacted with 34 teachers from 19 schools.

Two booklets were produced in English: "Fat Plants and Thin Plants" and "People, biodiversity Patterns and ecological Processes".

Each was translated into Afrikaans: "Vetplante en Skraal Plante" and "Vygies, Volstruise en die Vreemdelinge".

About 60 booklets have been sold at R5, a minimal amount which just covers printing costs.

50 booklets have been distributed to libraries, interested and influential people, by way of promotion, etc.

#### Lessons learned:

Teachers are not equally accessible in all months of the year. They are not available during vacations and are very busy during the final quarter.

Things seem easier before you actually try doing them; e.g. we did not realise how long the "laying up"(that is getting the pages and diagrams in the right places) would take.

It is impossible to be all things to all people. One must identify whom one is writing for, even if it means giving up a portion of one's possible audience.

Writing about issues is much more difficult than writing about how to identify plants.

Editing is a separate activity from writing or translation. One must factor in time for editing.

It is very helpful to work with a colleague. Things, which you have written, always seem totally clear until someone else questions them.

Flexibility is important. One may at first act like a new mother and not want to alter things. Allowing some time to elapse also helps the process of revision and editing.

The support of Annemarie Gebhardt, curriculum adviser with the Department of Education was invaluable. Her contribution to the booklet was small, but she created confidence in the teachers; they trusted us because of her input.

Not all experts agree on whether to discuss rare plants with the general public.

The feeling of satisfaction and pleasure in seeing our booklets being used, is hard to beat.

### **Conclusions:**

Four small (about 30 page) booklets have been produced: two titles in two languages. The main result of these will be the empowerment of teachers in the Little Karoo. Two workers (Herron and McGibbon) have attended training and have experienced the challenges of this project.

This small project has brought us into contact with many players in this field. There is a real sense of partnership and teamwork, which is raising the awareness of many stakeholders in the region.

### **The Products:**

Our booklets are VERY INEXPENSIVE.

Our booklets are small, A4 pages are printed on both sides, folded in half and stapled with a cardboard cover. Each booklet has about 30 pages.

The booklets are illustrated with sketches made in the veld by an ordinary person. The sketches are well annotated. Our motto has been “Look, draw and describe. Don’t pick”.

Both booklets have a page of information followed by a page of suggested activities for learners. We relate these to Learning Outcomes in documents of the Department of Education.

“Fat Plants” gives a little background on the area; explains how to organise a field trip; homes in on 8 kinds of fairly common plants; and discusses food-webs.

“People, Patterns and Processes” attempts to handle issues like soil erosion, water supply, the hunter-gatherer way of life and it’s relationship with pastoralism; the interface between conservation and agriculture; as well as plant and animal communities.

When a teacher (who had not yet seen the booklet) told us “That trip was not so successful, next time I go on an outing I will go first and check out the place...” we were able to open to page 3 and say, “It says that right here!!”

Our favourite comments:

- This book is so scruffy; nobody would hesitate to take it out into the veld.
- I’ll never be ashamed of my drawing again.
- I found this piece of veld close to the school and when I took your booklet there I found those plants.

**For more information about this project, please contact:**

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