

CONSERVANCIES IN NATAL, 1978-1993

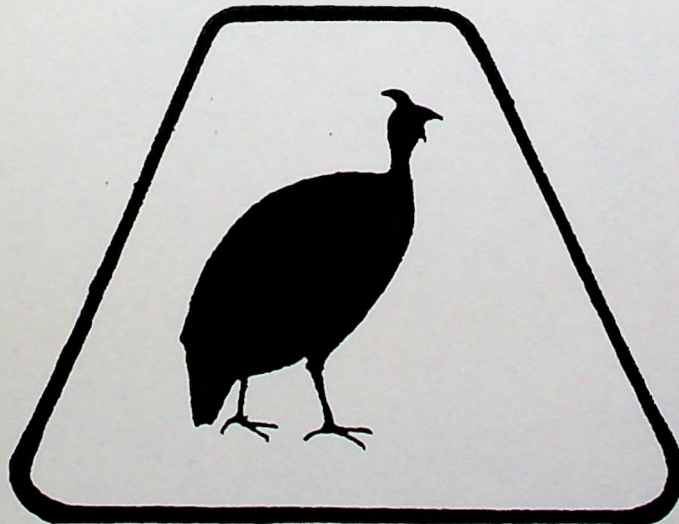
The origins and application of a component in informal wildlife conservation

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBCP: Minutes and correspondence of the Biggarsberg conservancy

BCP: Minutes and correspondence of the Balgowan conservancy.

BEFA: Beaumont-Eston Farmers Association records.

NCA: Documents pertaining to the Natal Conservancies Association in the private collection of the Hon. Senator C.C. Henderson.

NPB: Collection of documents pertaining to conservancies held by the Natal Parks Board.

NSP: Documents pertaining to conservancies held in the private collection of Mr N.A. Steele.

PREFACE

The motivation for this thesis was researching and documenting the origins of informal conservation, providing a demonstration of the historical role of conservancies and locating them within their broad context. However, in order to complete this task effectively, a few impediments had to be overcome. Establishing workable source bases was an important part of the research, but informal conservation is an almost completely unresearched field, and the few people who are looking into the concept from scientific and economic perspectives have not published any of their findings. Records of the origins of conservancies are held by different individuals in various parts of the province and much of the evidence is in the form of oral testimony.

Surmounting these challenges was made easier through the assistance I received from Mr Henry Davies who introduced me to the concept of conservancies and to Rob Markham, who was the Natal Parks Board supervisor of this work. The information with which they provided me in the early stages of this work helped secure the framework of the thesis and directed me to relevant areas of investigation. Researching conservancies was also made easier through the generosity of the individuals I came into contact with in the process of my study on the topic. I owe thanks to the members of the Biggarsberg and Beaumont-Eston Farmers Association conservancies for the kindness with which they received me into their homes. I am particularly grateful to Senator and Mrs Henderson, and Malcolm and Les Stainbank. The origins of conservancies are intimately linked to the Balgowan conservancy. I would therefore like to thank Colonel and Mrs Francis, and Mr and Mrs Kerr for the kindness they showed me the times I visited them at Milestone Forest and Fort Nottingham when I was trying to sort out the complicated birth of conservancies. Another important source on the origins of conservancies was Mr Nick Steele. He considerably provided crucial documents from his private collection and granted me time for an interview when he was in Pietermaritzburg on a busy schedule. Shirley Brooks explained wildlife conservation history to me after my own reading proved fruitless, willingly sharing her expertise. She was always prepared to read another draft of the thesis and offer recommendations and support. I am indebted to the librarians at the University library at Pietermaritzburg, especially Leonie Prozesky who showed me the way through Life Sciences. The layout and format of the thesis was achieved with the extensive help of François van Loggerenberg. The map of conservancies in Natal was made with the assistance of Helena Margeot of the Cartographic Unit of the University of Natal. I am deeply grateful to both François and Helena for helping refine the thesis manuscript into the form in which it now exists.

Unfortunately it is difficult to clearly express the incredible gratitude I owe my supervisors Dr Ruth Edgecome and Rob Markham. Both provided me with endless encouragement and assistance, my effort in writing this mini-thesis would have been pointless if I did not have their thoughtfulness, criticisms and directions to aid me.

In order to successfully locate informal conservation within the established historical context of nature conservation and farming, the part of the thesis which deals with this detail takes up what may seem an extraordinary amount of space. The first chapter is essentially a reinterpretation of various secondary texts and establishes the importance of informal conservation in light of the history of farming and wildlife conservation. As a result of the above factors, the first chapter may be criticised for diverging too far from the topic, but I believe that due to the nature of the original research for this essay, the extensive contextualisation was necessary.

Furthermore, I felt that it was important to make this mini-thesis a part of a discourse of environmental history which examines human relationships with the environment. From the beginning of the 1970s people began to realise that the earth was threatened by human actions and that a new approach to the environment was necessary. Environmental history, as a self conscious sub-discipline within history, grew out of this rising tide of environmentalism. Environmental history is concerned with the integration of political economy, nature and beliefs. This thesis is an attempt to demonstrate the combination of the political economy of farming and wildlife conservation with the beliefs people have about nature and its use as a resource. Conservancies, as a manifestation of farmers concerns about wildlife and the environment, can also be seen as a part of new environmental attitudes that developed after 1970. Therefore, an examination of conservancies constitutes a suitable topic for environmental history.

Due to the challenges already mentioned, especially the time constraints in Honours, the scope of the mini-thesis was determined by strategic decisions about what could be achieved realistically. I decided to concentrate on the origins of the first conservancy, namely Balgowan. The third and fourth chapters of the thesis investigate the application of informal conservation in Natal conservancies. By demonstrating the principles of the idea in theory, and how these work in practice, a better understanding of informal conservation is achieved. The two case studies contrast different ways of applying the theory. There are many variations in the way conservancies are implemented, but once more spatial and temporal limitations forced a concise evaluation of conservancies in operation. The abundance of research material indicated that a deeper analysis of conservancies and

informal conservation would be achieved more efficiently at the level of an M.A. thesis. I thus intend to engage the history of conservancies fully in a Masters degree.

The emphasis of this thesis lies mostly in narrative description of events and ideas. However, in the process of writing, several theoretical issues presented themselves for further investigation in an M.A. thesis. Thus the social aspects of conservancies and informal conservation will be examined fully at a later stage. Of foremost importance among the theoretical issues is the relationship between members of conservancies and dispossessed communities within and surrounding conservancies. Relations of power, and the role of the South African political system also requires deeper examination in this regard, as does the continued development and evolution of informal conservation in Natal, and the rest of the country. In light of the particular context of informal conservation, the role played by hunting and hunters is a special field of philosophical interest. Conservation theory and its historical development in conservancies should also be examined to establish how it is incorporated into people's perceptions of conservancies and their function. I have raised these concerns at this point to demonstrate that their omission is not through error, but that I intend examining them at greater length in an M.A. thesis.

This mini-thesis will hopefully illuminate the material origins of the conservancy concept, and how conservancies should ideally operate. The first chapter deals with environmental problems encountered due to insufficient human respect for the environment. I hope my contribution to the history of conservation could in some way help to bring about some consciousness of environmental responsibility. This hope is born out of a belief in my own status as a creation of God. I therefore recognise that my research and writing would not have been possible but for the indulgence and guidance of God who provides for all needs.

Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra

CHAPTER ONE

The agricultural and conservation context of conservancies

Introduction

Agriculture that is widely practised today can be seen as ecologically transformative. This means that the ecosystems that exist where agriculture or intensive grazing has been practised are radically transformed. Transformative agriculture goes beyond replacing occupants of natural niches within ecosystems with domesticated species. Usually a form of land-use is implemented which imposes a completely different set of species to the kind found naturally in a particular ecosystem.¹ This defines transformative agriculture as the oldest and most widespread of human activities that have damaged the environment. Although it is not the stated primary goal of conservancies, they often halt negative effects of agriculture by making people more sensitive to the processes and needs of the environment. This makes the origins and application of conservancies an interesting topic in environmental history.

Conservancies are groups of privately owned and spatially consolidated properties, which are usually farms, that include in their management the active conservation of the fauna and flora which occur within their collective boundaries.² This definition of what conservancies are contains the two key elements which make them unique in the conservation effort. Firstly, active wildlife conservation is central to conservancies. This entails the employment of one or more full-time game guards to patrol the conservancy. The

1. D.R. Harris, 'The Environmental impact of traditional and modern agricultural systems,' in Conservation and agriculture, ed. J.G. Hawkes (London, Duckworth, 1978), p 63.

2. NPB: O. Bourquin, R.W. Markham, I. Mathias, N.A. Steele and C.W. Wright, 'A new approach to conservation - wildlife conservancies in Natal' (1985), pp 1-2.

game guard is typically a person who has undergone suitable training, and is equipped for the job. The training provides game guards with theoretical knowledge of active conservation and they carry firearms to enforce it. However, the crucial second point defining conservancies is that they are wholly private and are of a collective nature. The basic idea, as laid out above, was developed in Natal and subsequently spread to most parts of South Africa. The originators of the concept, namely the Natal Parks Board and the Balgowan conservancy, contend that at the time of inception it was a wholly original innovation.

Before detailed analysis of the immediate origins of conservancies and their application in Natal is possible, it is necessary to examine the origins of agriculture and demonstrate its historic role in changing the environment. It is also important to ascertain the conceptual source of wildlife conservation. After establishing the parameters of conservancies, a study of conservancies can be realised more successfully.

The origins of agriculture

In the more than two million years that have passed since the beginning of an observable human presence on earth, all but the last 10 000 to 15 000 years have passed with humankind surviving as gatherers and hunters.³ In this pre-agricultural period, people relied on what their immediate environment provided. It was in their interests to maintain a healthy co-existence with the environment.⁴ Thus, the activities which they engaged in and their relationship with the environment was not significantly different to that of the vast number of other animal species. While acknowledging that a romantic and idealised view of pre-

3. C. Ponting, A Green history of the world (London, Penguin Books, 1991), p 18.

4. J.A. McNeely and D. Pitt, 'Culture: The Missing element in conservation and development,' in Culture and conservation: The Human dimension in environmental planning (London, Croom Helm, 1985), p 1.

agricultural society is problematic, there is nonetheless sufficient archaeological evidence to suggest that early human life was well balanced in most areas.

Notwithstanding the view that early humans maintained largely stable links with the environment, it would also be an incorrect generalisation to assert that, up to 20 000 years ago, humans were a non-destructive force in the environment. This largely is a modern ideal that has been transposed onto the pre-historic reality. The presence of humans has always implied some degree of ecological disruption.⁵ They could, and did, use fire to manipulate their environment long before the beginning of agriculture⁶ and often depleted nearly all the usable natural resources in an area before they moved on. In this way they contributed to the extinction of several kinds of large mammals⁷ and, together with long term climatic changes, palaeolithic and mesolithic humans played a role in the disappearance of some parts of the great European forests. However, the impact of their actions was usually localised and never threatened the future of broad ecosystems or great numbers of species at any one time. Of greater significance during this period was the fundamental interaction between humans and their whole environment.⁸

Over the two million years characterised by gathering and hunting, human development exhibited an amazing degree of flexibility in adapting to circumstances. People were able to satisfy their needs by means of rudimentary technology and finding uses for a

5. G.W. Dimbleby, 'Changes in ecosystems through forest clearance,' in Conservation and agriculture, ed. J.G. Hawkes (London, Duckworth, 1978), p 3.

6. *ibid.*

7. D. Brothwell, 'On the complex nature of man-animal relationships from the Pleistocene to early agricultural societies,' in Conservation and agriculture, ed. J.G. Hawkes (London, Duckworth, 1978), p 49.

8. Ponting, Green history of the world, p 20.

wide range of materials. Yet, if humans had become so well adapted to this apparently successful lifestyle, it is imperative to ask why it was rejected in favour of a different mode of survival, namely agriculture.

Human impact on the environment was limited during the hunting and gathering stage mainly because of the small size of the population. The alteration of the human bond to the environment came when the groupings, which up to that stage had been numerically small, could no longer expand into new territories.⁹ There were no longer enough suitable spaces left for gathering and hunting to be employed as the sole method of subsistence. Thus the most plausible explanation for why the gatherer and hunter lifestyle was slowly abandoned lies in the study of demographics.¹⁰ Although our ancestors practised social behaviour such as infanticide and gerontocide which helped to maintain a low population growth they were not able to stop the growth completely.¹¹ The steadily expanding population increased the demands placed on the environment and in the specific conditions faced by gatherer and hunter societies, the pressure became acute roughly 20 000 years ago. Human numbers had attained a limit which could no longer be carried by the natural produce of the earth.

As gathering and hunting was no longer viable in itself, people turned to other means to ensure that there would be enough food. The key option was a more active role in the management of ecosystems.¹² Ultimately, this is the origin of agriculture. It was brought about as a strategy for survival and not necessarily a natural progression of the technological

9. *ibid*, p 37.

10. *ibid*, p 42.

11. *ibid*.

12. *ibid*, p 39.

abilities of humanity. The implementation of agriculture was achieved by means of a slow gathering of techniques that spread equally slowly, with the means of application modified to the varied circumstances that prevailed over the entire globe.¹³ Three geographic areas formed the core regions of innovation and development. From these central points the knowledge spread. Crude pastoral activity, and subsequently more advanced agriculture, first appeared in south-west Asia, then in China and lastly in central America. In all three zones the process was similar, but the material conditions that prevailed in each situation necessarily resulted in the people adapting to circumstances in their respective locations.¹⁴

A further consideration was the social effect of sedentary food production. It made possible the unfolding of more complex systems of community organisation, which in turn had serious environmental consequences. After food production began to take place on a larger scale people sought protection in numbers and as a result villages were formed. When groups of people collected in sufficient numbers for the purpose of food production the concept of private ownership probably entered society for the first time.¹⁵ History demonstrates that political, and economic, control of early social formations, as well as subsequent ones, was gradually concentrated in a leadership elite. It was in the material interests of this elite to control as much land as possible, thus generating the need to engage in war and conquest. Civilisation expanded from this juncture, taking with it its means of advance, agriculture.¹⁶ The world was colonised by the phenomenon of urban and agricultural humans, due to the remarkable efficiency with which they reproduced and the

13. *ibid*, p 38.

14. *ibid*, p 42.

15. *ibid*, p 53.

16. *ibid*, p 68.

effective methods of warfare that they employed to subjugate their neighbours.¹⁷ The rate of reproduction depended on one factor alone, the availability of food. Political leaders knew their power depended on the size of their armed force and thus food production and human reproduction were given a high social priority. The scope of agriculture continually increased in order to keep up with the population. Nonetheless, an issue which did not concern agriculturists and politicians in the least was the effect of their activities on the environment, mainly because they would never have thought of the earth as a finite resource.¹⁸ The dilemma is that the vicious circle of agriculture and imperialism brought about increasing damage in the ecosystems that it was practised in and expansion would clearly have to stop at some stage.

Agriculture usually involves clearing the natural ecosystem in order to create an artificial habitat where humans can grow the plants and livestock they want. In this way the earth itself is used as a resource. The natural balances and inherent stability that had existed in the original ecosystems are thereby changed.¹⁹ In order to practise what is commonly known as transformative agriculture humans expanded over an ever increasing area, serving the demand for food. The techniques used were so successful that humans were able to colonise the planet in a way unlike any other large animal. Together with the continuous expansion of humanity went the replacement of ecosystems with agriculture. The more effort that is invested in agriculture, the greater the environmental impact. The key source of this behaviour which has had such ruinous environmental consequences is a human failure to recognise the limitations of the earth, both as a primary resource and as a repository for the

17. *ibid*, p 66.

18. *ibid*, p 68.

19. Harris, 'Environmental impact of traditional and modern agricultural systems,' p 61.

by-products of industry of all kinds.

The combination of technological and cultural development over 10000 years, which was only permitted by the food resources provided by agriculture, culminated in the techno-centric culture we inhabit today. Over the last 200 to 300 years the process of advancement has increased dramatically through industrialisation, which brought its own destructive forces to play in the environment. Yet agriculture remains a prime environmental concern due to its massive geographic extent. After 15000 years the limit of transformative agricultural expansion has been reached, yet a population of 5.3 billion, which is rapidly increasing, still needs to be fed. Many ecosystems and the landscapes they are a part of, which collectively constitute life on earth, are beginning to demonstrate signs of exhaustion. Alterations in human practice, through conservation of resources, is a pre-requisite if humans intend a continued part in the history of the world.

Conservation is essentially optimising the benefits and minimising the costs to the environment of any actions taken by humans.²⁰ In the light of this belief, three objectives within wildlife conservation can be isolated. Firstly, it is critical that the essential ecological processes and life supporting systems be maintained, through care of bio-diversity, to ensure the survival of the biosphere and provide for all living things. Secondly, it is necessary to secure the endurance of the human race; and thirdly, in order not to create bigger problems in the future, and to leave ways open to solve current crises, it is important to have the widest possible choice of options when dealing with environmental issues.²¹ The importance of such

20. W.R. Siegfried and B.R. Davies, Conservation of ecosystems: Theory and practise (Pretoria, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 1982), p 4.

21. *ibid*, pp 4-5.

an attitude is underlined by the fact that we know relatively little about the functioning of ecosystems, as well as the roles of the constituent species. There is a lack of appreciation that every species plays a part that cannot be underestimated. Unfortunately, this self-conscious recognition of the need for wildlife conservation has only emerged recently, as a response to the global environmental crisis. Yet, the roots of wildlife conservation and awareness of the intricacies of ecology can be traced to preservationist beliefs of the last century. These ideas came about when people began to realise that human actions threatened wildlife in its natural state. The relevant legislation flowed out of existing laws governing the use of resources.

The origins of wildlife conservation

The earliest environmental laws came about in the interests of the elite. Three hundred years ago in Britain the common people were prevented from hunting so that game could breed and multiply in relative peace, to provide quarry for the nobility.²² This protection was under the auspices of royal authority. Assuming that all game was Royal Game, belonging to the state, only the crown could give permission to hunt. It is thus plain that preservation of wildlife was initiated in self-interest by powerful social groups. In the nineteenth century the process which developed into conservation, as it is known today, first started. The first people to be concerned about the widespread depletion of game and its habitat after the industrial revolution were also elite groups.

The first nature reserve in the world was established at Yosemite valley, California,

22. Unless specifically indicated, most of the information contained in the following two pages is a synthesis of information gathered from discussions with Shirley Brooks. Her M.A. thesis, 'Playing the Game: The Struggle for wildlife conservation in Zululand, 1910-1930,' (Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, 1990), deals with the ideological and historical origins of wildlife conservation.

in 1864. The United States was also the location of the world's first National Park when the Yellowstone National Park was proclaimed in 1872.²³ Although there was a degree of involvement by hunters in American conservation, the initiative was dominated by scientists and other individuals concerned about nature. A concept of Progressive Conservation developed in the early twentieth century under the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt. Ideas of economic efficiency and aesthetics were uneasy partners in the development of a strategy of environmental management. It was believed that an impartial scientific discourse could help determine the land use options which would best serve the economic interests of the public. Gifford Pinchot used these utilitarian philosophies as the basis of the work he attempted in the United States Forestry Service which he founded in 1907.²⁴ His opinions were based on 'scientific' forestry as practised in Germany. The emphasis on scientific supervision of nature in America was continued by Aldo Leopold, who developed concepts of game management in the 1930s. Though the methods used were often based on incorrect assumptions and lacked proper scientific analysis they are part of the foundation of modern conservation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century American initiatives were without parallel in the rest of the world.

In the colonial administrations of the British empire, especially in Africa, scientists and hunters were the originators of preservation, for reasons completely different than in America. Hunting was an important part of the social life of the colonial elites, and in Africa was also integral to the frontier economies. The interaction between hunters and wildlife gave the hunters an awareness of the destruction of huge numbers of game and the imminent

23. R.F. Fuggle and M.A. Rabie, 'The Rise of environmental concern,' in Environmental management in South Africa, eds. R.F. Fuggle and M.A. Rabie (Cape Town, Juta, 1992), p 11.

24. C.R. Koppes, 'Efficiency, equity, esthetics: Shifting themes in American conservation,' in The Ends of the earth: Perspectives on modern environmental history, ed. D. Worster (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), p 231.

extinction of a great many species. Unfortunately this realisation only dawned after these people had wiped out most of the legendary African herds themselves. This was a result of the remarkable efficiency of hunting with guns, which also allowed the indigenous peoples to bring about destruction of game on a scale never seen in their own cultures before.

As a response to the circumstances it was suggested that areas be set aside where hunting would not be allowed. The people behind this move were the sport hunters who had themselves contributed to the situation, and who now wanted to ensure the future of their pastime. Sport hunters had allies in the scientists who wanted radical protection of game, but the alliance was uneasy due to the scientist's abhorrence of any killing of game. They aimed for a complete ban on all hunting, except for research purposes. Resulting from the co-operation of these parties were the game preserves, where wildlife security was enforced in the interests of the hunting elite. Colonial administrations supported the plans because there was a potential source of income from the sale of hunting licences.

The concept of mass extinction was foreign to the individuals involved in wildlife preservation, but they were conscious of the depletion of numbers of game.²⁵ It was thought that if a safe haven was created there would always be a final resort to turn to for supplies of game.²⁶ Preservation was thus a concern of a minority and even among them was not necessarily a principled priority. Early wildlife conservation lacked any co-ordination with the needs of specific ecosystems.²⁷ The participation by scientists in preservation was limited to their aim of achieving an idealised pristine environment. The effect was that the areas set

25. W. Beinart, 'Introduction: The Politics of colonial conservation,' Journal of Southern African Studies, volume 15, 2 (January 1989), p 149.

26. Fuggle and Rabie, 'Rise of environmental concern,' p 11.

27. M.E. Meadows, Biogeography and ecosystems of South Africa (Cape Town, Juta, 1985), p 148.

aside for preservation were those for which no-one had any other viable uses. Economic issues were of greater importance than preserving game. The areas subsequently proclaimed as reserves were not necessarily representative of any particular ecosystems, and the borders were often decided upon arbitrarily with negative consequences for their biotic diversity.²⁸

Research by ecologists and allied scientists has demonstrated that an ecosystem is not a self contained or easily described geographic unit.²⁹ When a game reserve or national park is defined it becomes a terrestrial island, in which certain observable biogeographic processes take place.

There is a direct link between the size of a terrestrial island and the rate of local extinction: in smaller areas there is a high probability that greater numbers of species will die out.³⁰ Other important factors which determine the ecological health of a terrestrial island are shape and the degree of isolation from other terrestrial islands.³¹ A problem resulting from the isolation of ecosystems is that one change in the system brings about a number of effects. The extinction or introduction of one species, for instance, alters the way in which all the other remaining species interact. A common result of an extinction is sequential extinctions, known as trophic cascades, where the effect of one missing link in the chain of an ecosystem spreads out in the biotic community.³² Once humans have made an alteration to an ecosystem it can never be regarded as 'pristine' again. In order to maintain biodiversity in a reserve or park there has to be consummate care in deciding on the location, size and

28. *ibid.*

29. *ibid.*, p 149.

30. Siegfried and Davies, Conservation of ecosystems, p 54.

31. *ibid.*, p 47.

32. *ibid.*, p 54.

species characteristics of the mosaic of ecosystems which constitute an area, and afterwards there has to be constant monitoring of changes in the system.³³

Advances achieved in science, and greater co-operation between various bodies concerned with wildlife around the world, led to the adaptation of preservationist ideas to ones of conservation, although the actual process of change requires further study. When theoretical and technological progress in the twentieth century allowed the scientific community to realise the importance of participation in environmental research it was too late to rectify the errors of the preservationists. Sadly, there was very little territory left that was not occupied by some kind of human development. The interim had seen most of the suitable fertile land become private farms which were cultivated or used as pastures for stock.³⁴ The chance to conserve representative ecosystems had apparently been missed. Wildlife conservation organisations were largely forced to make the most productive use of those areas over which they did have control. The best available means of containing the effects of biogeographic isolation was by connecting different reserves with 'corridors' through which species could move. It is in this context that conservancies make their most valuable contribution to wildlife conservation. Conservancies increase the area where species are actively protected and they act as truncated 'corridors' which facilitate the dispersal and movement of species, thereby softening the effects of biogeographic isolation.

Admitting that, in the pursuit of their own interests, humans have irrevocably damaged the ecosystems of which they form part, it is crucially evident that a solution must

33. *ibid*, p 66.

34. J. Ing, 'Large scale farming enterprises and their effect on the environment,' in The Relationship between agriculture and environmental conservation in Natal and kwaZulu (Durban, Wildlife Society of South Africa and Royal Society of South Africa, 1978), p 92.

be reached. Just as humanity resolved a crisis over resources 20000 years ago, twentieth century society has to find new ways of managing resources. This goal must be achieved without further damage to the environment or a future will not be guaranteed. However, the reality is that a large part of the food production process will continue in the same basic manner as it always has. Recognition of the urgent need to conserve the remaining natural assets is vital, but attempts at conservation should be within a broader definition of the concept. Farming districts must be appreciated as an important areas of conservation work due to the long history of environmental damage inflicted by agriculture, the intimate relationship shared between rural people and their ecosystems and the appreciation that fertile ground is the most precious resource. Hence the conservation value of conservancies is infinite as these projects actively incorporate commercial farms as practising conservation areas and extend wildlife conservation immensely.

CHAPTER TWO

The origin of the first conservancy

Introduction

In the form that they presently exist, conservancies are clearly the product of the thorough integration of two factors. These are: Firstly, the location of conservancies on private land which is being used mainly for agriculture; and secondly the active management involved in their operation, primarily in the presence and work of the game guards. In turn, the origin of each of these can be traced back to separate but related concepts which arose independently of each other. The nature of these two related concepts was determined by the kind of work done by the people that formulated them. Thus the private landowners, as farmers whose profession it was to understand the functioning of their immediate environment, contributed their expertise in the detailed knowledge of local conditions. Likewise professional nature conservationists made their contribution in the scientific understanding of active conservation management.

In the first instance, the role of conservancies as conservation areas specifically on private land has its material origins in the formation of the Balgowan conservancy on 14 August 1978. This conservancy was in origin a wholly private initiative by concerned landowners who felt that they should be making an effort to preserve the natural resources shared in common among them.³⁵ However, from the very beginning the process of the formation of conservancies was informed by the specialist knowledge of conservation management, the second important aspect of conservancies, which was provided by the Natal

35. Interview with Mr and Mrs A.F.B. Kerr, 21 July 1993 at Fort Nottingham village.

Parks Board.³⁶ Since the time of the founding of the first conservancy, conservancies have always entailed co-operation on the most practical level by farmers, who wanted to implement the principle, and officers of the Natal Parks Board, who provided the technical information that made good conservation management possible and assisted with administrative information.

To understand the origins of conservancies it is necessary to examine the development of the private initiative that culminated in the formation of the Balgowan conservancy in 1978. At the same time it is essential not to underestimate the important contribution made by specialists at the Natal Parks Board. The scientists involved were themselves part of an internal process at the Natal Parks Board that had steadily expanded their field of work to include the conservation management of private farmland. In order to deal with the dual origins of conservancies in a satisfactory manner it is necessary initially to examine the record of the two constituent parts separately.

The role of private landowners in the development of conservancies

The Balgowan conservancy was the first successful structured attempt by a group of private landowners to manage the fauna and flora on their combined properties. The scheme had its earliest foundation in the observations and concerns of Tony and Lyn Kerr during the period 1972-1978.³⁷

36. BCP: Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Balgowan conservancy, 14 August 1978, p 2; NCA: P.C.A. Francis, C.C. Henderson, A.F.B. Kerr and R.W. Markham, 'History of how the conservancy concept started' (1983).

37. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 21 July 1993.

The Kerrs moved to the farm Boschfontein in the Balgowan area in 1962. From the time that they took residence they noticed a steady decline in the number of buck in the area, due to unauthorised hunting.³⁸ They believe this was largely the doing of one person, who worked as the caretaker of the property owned by Charlotte Alexander.³⁹ According to Tony Kerr this person once boasted that he and his family only ate venison. Until the mid 1970s the Kerrs did not act upon their concerns about the decreasing number of buck, but from 1972 until 1978 the illegal hunting took on alarming proportions.⁴⁰ The reason for this was possibly the many properties in the area that were owned by absentee landlords who were not aware or not concerned about the declining numbers of wildlife on their properties. This situation, along with the attitudes of resident landlords who also did not care about the hunting, made it easier for those engaged in this unauthorised activity to do as they pleased.⁴¹

Although antelope are only one example of the variety of wildlife found at Balgowan, and even their dramatic depletion would not have a serious effect on the local environment, they were prominent in the neighbourhood and their removal caused some concern. Farmers could rightfully assume that if the buck were completely absent, the wildlife was generally in decline and therefore the antelope served the farmers as an indicator of how healthy the Balgowan habitat was. The Kerrs were led to consider what could be done to put an end to the destabilisation of the buck population. Tony Kerr felt the most obvious solution would

38. Unauthorised hunting is traditionally called 'poaching'; but there are considerable value judgements and ideas relating to the ownership and control of wildlife contained in the term 'poaching.' In an attempt to separate the activities of the dispossessed people of South Africa from terms which categorise them as inherently criminal, I decided to use the term 'unauthorised hunting' which more accurately describes what happens. The difference between unauthorised and illegal hunting should be noted. Illegal hunting is hunting out of season or not strictly in terms of ordinance governing nature conservation in Natal (Number 15 of 1974).

39. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 22 September 1993.

40. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 21 July 1993.

41. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 22 September 1993.

be the organisation of patrols to remove snares and keep away hunters. These patrols would be undertaken by labourers working on the respective properties, and would cover the land of all the landowners that were interested in taking part in such a plan.⁴² However, most of the farmers could not spare any of their own labourers to do this intensive work. The use of local labourers as part-time game guards was also problematic because the labourers were usually also the people who were hunting without permission.

It is important to examine, and thus gain an understanding, of the reasons why farm workers take part in illicit hunting. Among African societies in South Africa there are apparently hardly any beliefs relating to the ownership of natural resources.⁴³ Humans are seen as the guardians of wildlife, and as guardians they are expected to make wise use of wildlife resources. The natural resources that are most easily accessible are game, and the various plant species that have a cultural or medicinal use. The labourers, who are usually Africans, regard the exploitation of local wildlife as a right which is not subject to condition. This provides the rationale for workers to hunt without consent. Why it is so widespread is also an economic issue of some importance.

Farm workers have traditionally been the most disadvantaged portion of the South African labour sector. Their wages have never kept up with the cost of living and thus, in order to provide their families with sufficient food they often resort to use of the environment. This may take the form of gathering edible wild plants or killing game. The hunting may also be a form of protest against the status quo, and is an easy way for workers

42. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 21 July 1993.

43. Natal Witness, 2 October 1993, p 2.

to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with wages or broader grievances.⁴⁴ These issues often make farm workers poor candidates for part-time game guards. This is currently the state of affairs but, it was obviously also rife in the mid-1970s and was a serious obstacle to conservation by private landowners. Due to the fact that farm workers usually made inappropriate game guards, the only other alternative was for the group of landowners collectively to employ a game guard, or guards, who would patrol the property of all the participating landowners.⁴⁵

From about 1975-1976 Tony Kerr became convinced that a full-time game guard was in fact the only solution to the hunting problem. He also felt that an added benefit of co-operation among neighbours on the issue of conservation would be better management and co-ordination of a fire-break burning programme. The necessity of such co-operation was becoming obvious due to the increasing damage done every year to the indigenous forests that occur in the area by careless burning.⁴⁶ Unfortunately many farmers used the forest as a natural fire-break. When they wanted to burn their annual breaks they would begin their fires at a given point knowing that the flames would stop at the forest. The only problem was that every year the forest retreated by approximately one metre.⁴⁷ It was hoped that the formal establishment of a group of landowners concerned about the environment would help to end this practice, thereby saving the forests. The essence of Tony Kerr's proposal, namely the co-operative conservation of fauna and flora on private land by private individuals,

44. This is currently a topic of considerable interest among scholars from different disciplines. More research is necessary before the theories which have been developed elsewhere can be applied accurately to conservancies, but unauthorised hunting is clearly a form of "every day" protest. Although it is important to recognise that workers take big risks when they hunt without authorisation.

45. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 21 July 1993.

46. *ibid.*

47. *ibid.*; interview with Colonel and Mrs P.C.A. Francis, 22 September 1993 at Balgowan.

provides the first key element of conservancies.

Tony Kerr tried to involve his neighbours in his plan so that the collective nature of the idea could be fully expanded and implemented. The only substantial support came from neighbours Felix Caldow⁴⁸ and Brian Kramer.⁴⁹ Keith Cooper, from the Wildlife Society of South Africa, supported the plan enthusiastically and begged the Kerrs not to abandon their idea.⁵⁰ Yet due to the apparent lack of interest among the majority of landowners in the area Tony Kerr did not pursue the matter further.

By late 1977 the situation had become worse than before. Snaring had become common and local labourers often hunted with packs of dogs which mauled the buck in the process of killing it. This occurrence had become frequent on Milestone Forest, the property belonging to Colonel Peter Francis and his wife Priscilla. As a result of these incidents, the Francis' saw the benefit of the plan that Kerr had proposed the year before.⁵¹ Colonel Francis believed that it was important for the preservation of the ecosystem to involve local landowners in such a plan, and that it should be operational as soon as possible.⁵² His occupation as a lawyer made available to him administrative facilities Tony Kerr did not have and he therefore offered to approach the local landowners once more about the Kerr plan. At this time, however, the plan was elaborated slightly. After a suggestion made by Colonel Francis, Tony Kerr agreed that, if it were possible, he would take on the position of

48. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 21 July 1993.

49. *ibid*; NCA: P.C.A. Francis et al, 'History of how the conservancy concept started' (1983).

50. *ibid*.

51. *ibid*; interview with Colonel and Mrs Francis, 22 September 1993.

52. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 21 July 1993.

an honorary officer of the Natal Parks Board to oversee the work of the game guard.⁵³ On 6 December 1977 Colonel Francis contacted the Parks Board regarding the possible appointment of Tony Kerr as an honorary officer to oversee conservation in the Balgowan area.⁵⁴ This is the first correspondence recorded between the landowners at Balgowan and the Natal Parks Board. The Parks Board response to the proposed conservation plan was supportive. The letter indicated that Tony Kerr's application to be an honorary officer would be considered within the guidelines set down, and an offer was made to assist the project generally in any way possible.⁵⁵

The plan moved ahead slowly and was discussed informally over the next six months, but by the middle of 1978 Colonel Francis and Tony Kerr decided to pursue the co-operation of their neighbours in their conservation strategy.⁵⁶ Although most of the neighbours had shown limited interest when the Kerr's had first proposed the idea, with the help and enthusiasm of Peter and Priscilla Francis it was possible to obtain a favourable response. The collaboration between the Kerrs and the Francis' is significant. Tony Kerr had been a practical farmer his whole life and had an intimate relationship with the physical environment on a daily basis, he was thus predisposed to notice changes in the environment. On the other hand, apart from the time he had spent in the army, Colonel Francis had always been a lawyer. He did however have a keen amateur interest in wildlife and was an avid trout fisherman. It was partly for these reasons that he decided to move to Balgowan. The combination of skills that Tony Kerr and Colonel Francis possessed made their arrangements

53. *ibid*; interview with Colonel and Mrs Francis, 21 July 1993.

54. BCP: P.C.A. Francis to Dr D.R.M. Stewart, 6 December 1977.

55. BCP: Dr D.R.M. Stewart to P.C.A. Francis, 13 December 1977.

56. Interview with Colonel and Mrs Francis, 22 September 1993.

easier. Tony Kerr was able to oversee the management of the wildlife as a resource because this was a part of farming, and Colonel Francis was well versed in how an organisation should be structured. Together they were able to successfully initiate the conservancy idea at Balgowan.

On 1 June, in an attempt to see how many people would respond favourably, Colonel Francis informed 17 of the landowners neighbouring Milestone Forest and Boschfontein of the plan that he and Tony Kerr wanted develop in the area.⁵⁷ By 6 July he had received replies from 13 interested individuals. This demonstration of support was substantial enough to justify proceeding with organised conservation of the local natural heritage. In the correspondence of 6 July the plan is called the Balgowan conservancy for the first time, and thereby the name which has come to signify conservation by private landowners came into use.⁵⁸ On 21 July 1978 Colonel Francis notified the 15 landowners who had indicated an interest that a meeting was to be held on 14 August to discuss the proposal at hand.⁵⁹ On the same day he wrote to the Natal Parks Board enquiring about Tony Kerr's appointment as an honorary officer. He also took the occasion to invite the Board to send a representative to the meeting on 14 August.⁶⁰ On 28 July the Natal Parks Board confirmed the appointment of Tony Kerr as an honorary officer and informed Colonel Francis that Nick Steele, or "a suitable deputy" would represent the Natal Parks Board at the meeting on 14 August.⁶¹

57. BCP: P.C.A. Francis to J. Clark, 21 July 1978; P.C.A. Francis to C.S. Barlow, 21 July 1978; interview with Mr R.W. Markham, 15 December 1992 at Pietermaritzburg.

58. BCP: P.C.A. Francis to B. Kramer, 6 July 1978.

59. BCP: General letter, 21 July 1978.

60. BCP: P.C.A. Francis to Dr D.R.M. Stewart, 21 July 1978.

61. BCP: Dr D.R.M. Stewart to P.C.A. Francis, 28 July 1978.

Nick Steele was the Midlands⁶² Conservator at the Natal Parks Board. This made him responsible for assisting farmers with wildlife problems, and in the process of this work he had written 'The Farm Patrol Plan' in 1975.⁶³ This document outlined the practical requirements of active conservation management on private land,⁶⁴ and essentially constitutes the second key element of conservancies. Nick Steele's subsequent suggestions and advice were to have significant implications for the operation of the Balgowan conservancy, and indeed all future conservancies. On the most basic level, the Farm Patrol Plan gives details on the best method of operation for a conservancy.

Colonel Francis had been made aware of the Farm Patrol Plan when he received a clipping of an article about it which appeared in the April 1978 edition of Naunlu, the journal of the Natal Agricultural Union.⁶⁵ The article was entitled 'Poaching - a proposed solution' and stated that "[through the Farm Patrol Plan] the Natal Parks Board wishes to encourage those landowners who have wildlife on their farm to provide their own protection against poaching."⁶⁶ This demonstrates the similarities between the Farm Patrol Plan and the Balgowan idea. However, until July 1978 there had been no contact between the concepts that emerged at Balgowan and those that Nick Steele had consolidated in his plan.⁶⁷ It is only after 14 August 1978 that the two bodies of thought merge into the coherent idea that a conservancy now entails.

62. i.e. the Natal midlands, the geographic zone within the province.

63. NPB: N.A. Steele, 'The Farm Patrol Plan' (1975).

64. Interview with Mr N.A. Steele, 13 July 1993 at Pietermaritzburg.

65. BCP: Attached to a letter dated 6 July 1978.

66. 'Poaching - a proposed solution', Naunlu, April (1978), p 2.

67. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 21 July 1993.

On 14 August 1978 the inaugural meeting of the Balgowan conservancy took place at Milestone Forest. Of the 15 landowners that had indicated an interest in being members of the conservancy, nine were present at the meeting.⁶⁸ Apologies had also been received from five landowners who could not attend the meeting but who still wished to be included in any developments.⁶⁹ The Natal Parks Board was represented by Nick Steele.

At this meeting the plan was formally named the Balgowan conservancy, the name was proposed by Colonel Francis as he had already been using it in correspondence for more than a month. Billy Caldwell, the wife of Felix Caldwell asked him what a 'conservancy' was. His response was that it was the an area where fauna and flora were conserved, being derived from the same etymological stem as 'conservation'.⁷⁰ As no-one had any better suggestions, the name was adopted.⁷¹ The extent of land to be incorporated into the conservancy, covering approximately 3000 acres (c. 1200 ha),⁷² was described to those present. The conservancy would include,

as far as possible all the land between the National Road and the old Main Road, bounded North West by the road from the National Road fly-over to Balgowan and South East by and inclusive of the farms 'Sitele', 'Bonny Rigg', 'Riversfield' and the 'The Dormers', all as shown on Degree Sheet No. 2930 A.C. Howick.

68. BCP: Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Balgowan conservancy, 14 August 1978: Mr and Mrs M.J. Acutt, Mr and Mrs F.J.M. Caldwell, Mr A.G Davis, Mr B. Eccles, Colonel and Mrs P.C.A. Francis, Mr and Mrs A.F.B. Kerr, Mr and Mrs L. Rouillard, Mr J.W. Versfeld and Mr W. Woodhouse.

69. Mr C.S Barlow, Mr H.S. Bastard, Mr J. Cribbens, Mr B. Kramer and Mr P. Wiles.

70. Interview with Colonel and Mrs Francis, 22 September 1993.

71. Interview with Colonel and Mrs Francis, 21 July 1993; interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 21 July 1993.

72. BCP: Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Balgowan conservancy, p 1; NCA: P.C.A. Francis et al. 'History of how the conservancy concept started' (1983).

Notwithstanding the aforementioned road boundary, the area would be inclusive of the farm 'Fagazaan'.⁷³

In his capacity as author of the Farm Patrol Plan, Nick Steele was the only person at the meeting who had detailed knowledge of what was required for active conservation management, especially on private land. Colonel Francis therefore asked Nick Steele to explain how the conservancy should proceed.⁷⁴

Nick Steele argued out that the maintenance of law and order was the first priority for the reproduction of wildlife as without physical protection the best ecological conditions could not ensure the propagation of species.⁷⁵ He added that the Natal Parks Board did not have sufficient resources to provide full protection outside the proclaimed reserves, but that it was willing and able to give advice on management and nature conservation.⁷⁶ This advice was synthesised directly from the opinions Nick Steele had expressed in the Farm Patrol Plan, and the intimate knowledge he had of the Natal Parks Board's inability to provide for better wildlife conservation on private land.

The most significant measure agreed to at the meeting was the collective employment of a game guard. The only potential difficulty lay in finding a suitable guard. This was resolved when Nick Steele agreed to recruit a suitable game guard for the conservancy from among individuals he knew were competent. This shows that the enthusiasm of the

73. BCP: Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Balgowan conservancy, p 1.

74. *ibid.*

75. *ibid.*, p 2.

76. *ibid.*

landowners at Balgowan was matched by the desire of the Natal Parks Board to see the plan succeed. From this point on the conservancy can be seen as an organised co-operative venture between the landowners and the Natal Parks Board.

Balgowan conservancy was privileged to have as a member an honorary officer of the Parks Board. Nick Steele argued that Tony Kerr's status as an honorary officer of the Parks Board would facilitate the management of the conservancy as the game guard would be able to liaise with one person in the conservancy who held a recognised conservation post.⁷⁷ This concern proved well founded, and part of the success at Balgowan was the central role Tony Kerr was to play in the operation of the conservancy, yet his appointment as an honorary officer should be seen within the context of the specific conditions that led to the establishment of the original conservancy. Conservancies established after Balgowan replaced the post of honorary officer with that of a conservancy warden. This office within a conservancy was rotated among members and served the same function as Tony Kerr's in his capacity as honorary officer in the Balgowan conservancy.

The principles that had been established in the formation of the Balgowan conservancy have affected the initiation of conservancies elsewhere. Although the plan was altered to suit the specific needs of communities, and the nature of conservancies has varied over time, the fundamental basis of the idea remains the same as when it was first implemented at Balgowan in 1978. Successful conservancies have and do always require enthusiasm and commitment on behalf of the landowners, supported by the advice and expertise supplied by the Natal Parks Board.

77. *ibid.*

The evolution of Natal Parks Board involvement in conservation on private land

The Natal Parks Board contribution to the Balgowan conservancy in the form of the advice given by Nick Steele was not the first attempt that the organisation made in the field of nature conservation on private land. Nick Steele based the advice he gave to the Balgowan conservancy on the opinions he expressed in the Farm Patrol Plan. Yet the Farm Patrol Plan itself was merely the latest part of a succession of Natal Parks Board initiatives that were aimed at extending wildlife conservation beyond the proclaimed reserves.

When the Natal Parks, Game and Fish Preservation Board (the Natal Parks Board) was formed in 1947 the only areas in Natal that were the focus of concerted conservation management were the game and nature reserves.⁷⁸ The administration of fisheries research and the enforcement of fisheries legislation was the extent of work the Natal Parks Board did beyond the reserves.⁷⁹ It soon became apparent that this was not in the interests of the Board, the wider community or wildlife conservation generally. Private landowners approached the Natal Parks Board regularly for advice about wildlife on their farms. The need for an official means of liaison between private landowners and the Natal Parks Board was evident. By 1964 the informal communication of advice to landowners by the Natal Parks Board had developed to a point which made the creation of a more formal arrangement essential.⁸⁰

In 1965 the Natal Parks Board started an advisory section consisting of a farm game biologist and a technician.⁸¹ This advisory section was known as the farm game extension

78. NPB: O. Bourquin et al, 'A new approach to conservation' (1985), p 1.

79. *ibid*, p 2.

80. *ibid*.

81. *ibid*.

service. Its purpose was to perform a central advisory function that various officers and scientific staff of the Natal Parks Board had been fulfilling until then. However, away from the Natal Parks Board Headquarters in Pietermaritzburg, the inland fisheries officers of the Parks Board were also being asked for advice on diverse wildlife problems. Five years after the farm game extension service was started it was decided to increase the efficiency of the service by having Natal Parks Board officers stationed in the rural areas to give advice to the local landowners. Therefore in 1971 the Parks Board divided the province into nine inland zones for this purpose.⁸² One Natal Parks Board officer and two game guards were responsible for each zone and these covered an average of approximately 5220 km² each.⁸³ It is thus obvious that, due to logistics, the zone officers and guards would never be able to patrol and monitor the entire zone adequately.

In 1973 the farm game extension service, was expanded to provide a more substantial central support for the zone officers.⁸⁴ However, in spite of the constant efforts the Natal Parks Board were making to facilitate conservation on private land it was clear that limited finances restricted the number of officers that could be made available to assist with conservation on private land. By the early 1970s farmers were making increasing demands on the Natal Parks Board for help with their farm game.⁸⁵ It is in this context that the Farm Patrol Plan was drawn up by Nick Steele. The Farm Patrol Plan is in essence the final part of the Natal Parks Board process that brought about active conservation management on

82. *ibid.*

83. *ibid.*

84. *ibid.*

85. M. Mentis, 'Integrated farming and wildlife conservation in Natal,' in The Relationship between agriculture and environmental conservation in Natal and kwaZulu (Durban, Wildlife Society of South Africa and Royal Society of South Africa, 1978), p 108.

private land. When conservancies were formed, using the principles of the Farm Patrol Plan as a basis for private conservation management, another aspect informal conservation had been achieved. Thereby the area under potential conservation management, whether formal or informal had been vastly increased.

Nick Steele, whose role in relation to Balgowan has already been discussed, had been an officer in the Hluhluwe-Umfolozi complex since the mid 1950s.⁸⁶ In 1974 he was transferred to the Natal midlands in the capacity of Conservator. In this job he was required to support the zone officers and deal directly with the farming community. As a result of his wide ranging travels in the region he became acutely aware of the "vacuum in the wildlife management system on Natal farms, the basis of which was a lack of cohesion and a lack of co-ordination."⁸⁷

His experience led Nick Steele to believe that by co-operating as a group, private landowners could solve their own wildlife problems. He sought to assist the development of a process by which landowners could co-operate by providing technical information to landowners in the field of his expertise. Using the knowledge he gained through 18 years of practical work as a professional wildlife conservation officer he wrote the Farm Patrol Plan in 1975.

The central role played by the Farm Patrol Plan in the origins of informal conservation makes a specific focus on this issue necessary. The plan lays a heavy emphasis on providing

86. NSP: Text of an address given by N.A. Steele to the 'Conservancies 100' seminar held at Pietermaritzburg, 21 June 1990.

87. *ibid.*

protection for wildlife, through the game guards acting as security personnel. This is due to Nick Steele's personal belief that "to ensure the peaceful reproduction of wild game on the farm it is necessary to provide them with physical protection."⁸⁸ He believed that habitat management was secondary in importance to the maintenance of a secure environment.⁸⁹ Therefore the "plan provides preventative and curative law enforcement facilities at no great cost to the farmers or groups of farmers who may choose to introduce it."⁹⁰

The underlying philosophy of providing security as the focus of conservation was the conceptual basis that Nick Steele used to determine the content of the plan. His concepts of how game guards should operate had been formed during the time that he had spent as a ranger in Umfolozi.⁹¹ The plan describes in detail what the necessary requirements are for a private game guard programme. Most of the points of information are of a highly practical nature.

The plan can be seen as consisting of two parts. The first deals with what is demanded of the landowners who will employ the game guard. The demands are basically material; wages, food and clothing. Thus it is necessary for the guard to be provided with a uniform suitable for an active life in the open veld.⁹² Nick Steele had also been exposed to the use of horses in Umfolozi and as a result believed them to be a useful part of conservation work. The plan thus also deals with what horse riding equipment, perhaps including the horse, the

88. NPB: N. Steele, 'The Farm Patrol Plan' (1975), p 1.

89. *ibid.*

90. *ibid.*

91. Interview with Mr N.A. Steele, 13 July 1993.

92. NPB: Steele, 'Farm Patrol Plan', p 2.

landowners would have to give the game guard.⁹³ The plan urges the employer attend to the "welfare...[and] leave requirements"⁹⁴ of the guards and "to ensure that they conform at all times to requirements in regard to dress, cleanliness, attitude, civility and training."⁹⁵

The second part of the plan concerns the training of the game guard in various aspects of the job and what his daily duties would be. It is not clear where the training would take place because at that stage the Natal Parks Board had no game guard training venue of its own. This practical problem could only be solved when there was real need for guards to be trained, the Farm Patrol Plan merely provides the various criteria in which training is necessary. The plan outlines three forms of training. The first is 'Field Operational Training'. This would furnish the game guard with the skills to patrol areas using bushcraft to detect and pursue poachers.⁹⁶ The game guard would also be trained in the procedure of arrest and the treatment of prisoners. The second form of training involved 'Law Enforcement and Court Procedure Training'. The training in this field included equipping the game guard with the necessary legal knowledge applicable to his work and demonstrating the method of presenting evidence in court.⁹⁷ The plan's third portion of training was 'Disciplinary Regulations Training'. The basic function of the training is described as presenting the guard with "a clearly defined line of command and a set of written regulations,"⁹⁸ to ensure "uniformity of approach and maintain discipline." The discipline was built on a system of rank and was generally of a military nature, as can be seen in the 'Rules of Conduct' that

93. *ibid*, p 3.

94. *ibid*, p 5.

95. *ibid*.

96. *ibid*, p 4.

97. *ibid*.

98. *ibid*.

Nick Steele laid out. In the first edition of the plan he issued 19 separate instructions governing the behaviour of game guards.⁹⁹ Steele believed that such a strict and ordered organisation, along the lines of military service, was essential to the success of any conservation effort, due to his primary concern with the physical security of wildlife.¹⁰⁰

The last section of the plan is entitled 'Method of Operation' and gives a detailed account of what the game guard would be expected to do daily.¹⁰¹ This conforms to the view of providing physical security as a priority. The guards are expected to carefully monitor the area under their supervision, with care being taken to emphasise the preventative character of the work, enacted through patrols over the total expanse under consideration.

Once Nick Steele had developed his ideas into this consolidated whole which he called the Farm Patrol Plan, he set about trying to convince landowners of its utility and necessity.¹⁰² He was met with mixed responses. Some groups were enthusiastic in their support of the concept but most were sceptical about having an armed employee on their land. Nick Steele attempted to demonstrate that the benefits of having the guard were not only in terms of wildlife conservation management. The training of the guard meant that he would also perform a secondary role as a private security officer that could prevent crime against the landowner and his or her property. In spite of the incentive this may have held for farmers, there were few groups of landowners willing to implement the scheme and the initial undertakings to seriously consider the plan did not bring about any substantial

99. *ibid*, pp 5-7.

100. Interview with Mr N. Steele, 13 July 1993.

101. NPB: Steele, 'Farm Patrol Plan', pp 7-8.

102. Interview with Mr N. Steele, 13 July 1993.

developments and implementation.

The turning point for the Farm Patrol Plan came with the initiative of the Balgowan landowners. When they approached the Natal Parks Board for practical advice on how to practice active nature conservation on private land, the obvious reference was the Farm Patrol Plan. The advice and practical assistance that Nick Steele gave the Balgowan conservancy in its infancy was to prove invaluable.¹⁰³ The conviction and co-operation of the originators of the two concepts can largely be seen as the foundation of the success of the Balgowan conservancy, and all those that have followed.

103. BCP: P.C.A. Francis to the Nottingham Road Farmers Association secretary, 1 January 1979; P.C.A. Francis to G.C. Oldfield, 1 August 1979; P.C.A. Francis to M.G.W. Crookes, 2 August 1979;

CHAPTER THREE

The practice of informal wildlife conservation¹⁰⁴

The standard definition of 'conservancy' is "an office or board of conservators."¹⁰⁵ These terms, although superficially adequate, are in reality too narrow for the broader understanding of what South African conservancies are. Notwithstanding, the name has been used in diverse circumstances since it was first applied to the commissions or courts that had jurisdiction over parts or the whole of large British rivers as early as 1558.¹⁰⁶ The conservancy courts had to regulate fishing and navigation in the rivers. In the nineteenth century the name was used to describe the legal preservation of forests, especially in the British Raj and other parts of south Asia and the Pacific islands.¹⁰⁷ In these conservancies the Royal Navy had authority over the use of timber, in order to supply the material for ship construction. Central Park, the huge section of New York's Manhattan island that was landscaped into a public common is administered by the Central Park Conservancy. This body is privately funded and is administered by people elected from among individuals concerned about the upkeep of the Park.¹⁰⁸

104. Unless specifically stated, the information in this chapter is contained in the following documents: NPB: N.A. Steele, 'Farm Patrol Plan,' (1975); NPB: O. Bourquin, R.W. Markham, I. Mathias, N.A. Steele and C.W. Wright, 'A new approach to conservation - wildlife conservancies in Natal' (1985); NPB: R.W. Markham, 'Conservancy management guidelines,' (1986); NSP: N.A. Steele, 'Farm Patrol Plan,' revised edition (1977); NSP: N.A. Steele, 'Some preliminary notes on the training of game guards,' (1979); NSP: O. Bourquin, J. Easton-Berry, C.C. Henderson, C. Hugo, K. Morty, N.A. Steele, N. Steele, D. Woods, C.W. Wright, 'Conservancy manual,' ed. N.A. Steele (unspecified date).

105. The Oxford English Dictionary (Second edition), eds. J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989), p 764.

106. *ibid.*

107. W. Beinart, 'Introduction: The Politics of colonial conservation,' Journal of southern African studies, volume 15, 2 (January 1989), p 148.

108. J.L. Swerdlow, 'Central Park,' National Geographic, volume 153, 5 (May 1993), p 28.

In Britain the Nature Conservancy Council is responsible for over 3500 Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The Conservancy council is part of the British National Parks commission which was established in 1949.¹⁰⁹ Its main function is to monitor the changes in the balance of land management in Britain. British National Parks are unusual because the bulk of the land which makes up the National Parks which is supervised by the Conservancy council, is not State land, but is privately owned. Before a National Park is proclaimed the conservation status of land is determined according to ten criteria set down by the Conservancy council.¹¹⁰ Then the council enters into a legal agreement with the owner as to the future use of the land and the degree of supervision the Conservancy council will enforce, according to the conservation status of the land. The qualities of the conservation effort in Britain have significance for South African conservancies. Although South African conservancies are not legally bound to specific land-uses in any way, there is close co-operation with the official wildlife conservation organisations which also help to assess the conservation status of the land in a conservancy. The most meaningful comparison between South African conservancies and the work of the British Conservancy Council is the administration of wildlife conservation as a private venture.

Only three percent of the South Africa's surface area is formally conserved, as part of National Parks or game reserves.¹¹¹ On the other hand, approximately 90 % of South

109. M. Gane, 'The Balance of rural land use,' in Conservation and agriculture, ed. J.G. Hawkes (London, Duckworth, 1978), p 79.

110. *ibid*, p 84.

111. W.R. Siegfried and B.R. Davies, Conservation of ecosystems: Theory and practice (Pretoria, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 1982), p 8.

Africa is privately owned, and most of this area is used as agricultural or pastoral land.¹¹² The International Union for the Conservation of Nature suggests that at least ten per cent of the area of a country should fall under the supervision of some conservation organisation.¹¹³ Although this figure may be arbitrary, it does provide some guidance and the important decision are made about how the various vegetation and climatic types are incorporated into the ten percent. Yet, by definition South Africa, like most countries, does not provide adequately for its wildlife.

The need to conserve the environment and wildlife in South Africa is just as urgent as in any other location throughout the world. South Africa, with particular reference to Natal, displays evidence of anthropogenic disruption of the environment as early as 50000 years ago. The San hunter-gatherers practised veld burning to provide grazing for the herds of large ungulates they relied on for food.¹¹⁴ Pollen analysis shows that the Drakensberg, and indeed most of the south facing slopes in Natal, were covered in podocarpus rain forests.¹¹⁵ Lower down the escarpment the vegetation was primarily protea woodland.¹¹⁶ These areas are particularly sensitive to fire and together with natural climatic changes the anthropogenic introduction of this element caused far reaching environmental transformations. Biotic diversity was reduced and the species composition of the ecosystems was altered. Natal's prevailing vegetation is characterised by grasslands, which humans played a part in creating.

112. J. Ing, 'Large scale farming enterprises and their effect on the environment,' in The Relationship between agriculture and environmental conservation in Natal and kwaZulu (Durban, Wildlife Society of South Africa and Royal Society of South Africa, 1978), p 92.

113. Gane, 'The Balance of rural land-use,' p 80.

114. G. Seddon, 'Journey through Natal: Reflections on 'natural' ecosystems,' Landscape Architecture, November/December (1984), p 62.

115. J.P.H. Acocks, Veld types of South Africa, (Pretoria, Botanical Research Institute, 1988), p 10.

116. Seddon, 'Journey through Natal,' p 62.

The environmental disruption continued when Nguni speaking people migrated into Natal, displacing the hunter-gatherers over the last 1600 years.¹¹⁷ They brought with them their Iron Age farming methods and their more advanced tools. They also practised veld burning to manipulate the grazing for the cattle they introduced into the ecosystems. These Iron Age people did not move as much as the San and they built homes for themselves from the resources they found around them. This placed increased pressure on the indigenous forests, but when the Nguni speakers left an area the effect of their habitation became more apparent. There was systematic scrub encroachment after human habitation in an area.¹¹⁸ As the Nguni speaking people expanded to compensate for their population growth they unwittingly transformed more of the ecosystems in the region into the kind of land suited to the needs of their pastoral and early agricultural lifestyle. Therefore it is clear that the combination of hunter-gatherer and pastoralist activity in Natal began the process of environmental degradation in the region.

Environmental degradation in Natal increased considerably with the arrival of European settlers about 170 years ago. Although the Nguni speaking people had practised agriculture, it was of a type that had less environmentally destructive side-effects. In many ways the pre-settler African agriculture was manipulative. This means that people merely slotted their own domesticated species into ecological niches that already existed. Settler agriculture was part of the colonial system. They introduced alien species, and began a widespread alteration of the ecosystems in Natal through the monoculture technique of planting and pastoralism.¹¹⁹ The agriculture they practised can be categorised as ecologically

117. J.M. Feely, 'Did Iron age man have a role in the history of Zululand's wilderness landscapes?,' South African Journal of Science, volume 76 (April 1980), p 150.

118. *ibid*, p 151.

119. Seddon, 'Journey through Natal,' p 64.

transformative, and its implications for the environment in Natal proved to be grave.

European settlers did not only arrive with methods of transformative agriculture and alien species of fauna and flora. They also brought with them fire-arms. The new farming methods advanced the transformation of the ecosystems on the basic level of species configuration, but fire-arms made possible the extermination of huge numbers of wildlife. Hunting formed part of the social activity of the elite in colonial society. It was also a source of income for professional hunters and the colonial government received hunting licence fees. Guns were also used by the African population to supplement their traditional means of hunting. These factors explain the extensive killing of wildlife that took place over the nineteenth century, and in the early part of this century. As demonstrated earlier, the awareness of the depletion of game led to the establishment of game preserves. The first game protection society in South Africa was established in Natal in 1883.¹²⁰ The scientific involvement in these initiatives was limited and often self-serving. The final product was ultimately the present wildlife conservation areas that are inadequate in terms of the haphazard way in which they represent ecosystems.

In spite of efforts to rectify the situation, formal nature conservation in Natal does not adequately serve the broader objectives of wildlife management. Roughly six per cent of the province is formally conserved. The responsibility for these areas lies with the Natal Parks Board and the Directorate of Forestry. A wide range of vegetation types and fauna and flora are conserved within the province's formal conservation areas. Yet only three of the vegetation types identified by Acocks in Natal have more than ten per cent of their areas

120. J. Pringle, The Conservationists and the killers (Cape Town, Books of Africa, 1982), p 10.

formally conserved. However, there are a total of 18 vegetation types in Natal, including three that are endemic to the province. Four of the vegetation types are not conserved at all. In the interests of habitat conservation, where recognition is given to the importance of the whole ecosystem, it is patently clear that successful wildlife conservation cannot be limited to formal conservation areas.

Informal conservation, by means of conservancies, has vastly expanded wildlife conservation areas in Natal. Approximately 19 % of the provinces's privately owned land forms part of the conservancy movement. Even though conservancies are areas of informal conservation, this contribution to conservation in Natal considerably raises the total area of South Africa which is actively conserved. The value of the endeavour to conserve wildlife on farms is only proved once the extent of habitat destruction in the region is understood. Certain species such as the oribi (*Ourebia ourebi*) and the wattled crane (*Grus carunculata*) require particular habitats if they are to survive and breed well. Hence they are good indicators of the availability and health of sensitive ecosystems, especially as most of their preferred habitats occur on private land. Over the last 50 years oribi have disappeared from 25 % of the area in which they were previously found. The wetlands upon which the cranes depend have decreased by 50 % in 35 years.¹²¹ These changes are the effect of largely uncontrolled agricultural transformation. Conservancies attempt to rectify the imbalance and promote greater awareness of environmental issues through active wildlife conservation on private land. A restatement of the meaningful role conservancies play in combatting biogeographic isolation is also necessary at this point.¹²²

121. NPB: R.W. Markham, 'The Role of the private landowner in maintaining biotic diversity,' (1988), p 1.

122. See p 19 above.

Conservancies are groups of privately owned and spatially consolidated properties that include in their management the conservation of the fauna and flora which occur within their collective boundaries. This definition contains the key elements which make conservancies unique in wildlife conservation history. As far as can be determined, conservancies originated in, and spread out from the Natal midlands, becoming the first private and collective effort to enforce active wildlife conservation on farm land. Examined by itself, there is a long record of private concern for the environment, especially in southern Africa. Zimbabwean peasants do not remove large trees from the fields where they grow crops. It has been established that the reasons for this are partly due to an unspoken awareness of the integrity of the ecosystems they farm within, and partly because the trees are an important additional resource.¹²³ This is a striking parallel with the concept of a conservancy. Game protection led to the establishment of preserves in the last decade of the nineteenth century. One of the earliest was the Phongola Government reserve proclaimed by Paul Kruger on 13 June 1894. The idea was derived from the enterprise of a farmer named Alexander Marsh Robertson who farmed in the Wakkerstroom district. As a measure to keep his horses enclosed Robertson erected a barbed wire fence, making a camp of about 420 ha. An unforeseen side-effect was that game became concentrated in the camp because of the protection it afforded.¹²⁴ Other farmers heard of the success of Marsh's 'sanctuary' and soon others were established. The main function of these sanctuaries was in fact to have reserve of game to turn to when those in the wild were gone. Once more, the links with conservancies are prominent and it could be said that conservancies are merely a modern adaptation of a very old idea.

123. K.B. Wilson, 'Trees in fields in southern Zimbabwe,' Journal of Southern African Studies, volume 15, 2 (January 1989), pp 369-370.

124. J. Pringle, The Conservationists and the killers (Cape Town, Books of Africa, 1982), p 47.

The private and collective nature of conservancies allows for conservation to take place over a substantially increased expanse. It also augments the possible ecosystems that could be monitored and maintained. Landowners who belong to a conservancy recognise that their property is not an isolated pocket of agricultural production. All land was once inhabited only by wild species and there was complete integration on all levels within ecosystems. These may have been supplanted, and the ecosystems altered, by species favoured and introduced by humans but remnants of wildlife remain, and the land itself will always constitute the foundation of an ecosystem. Conservancies are set up in the interests of preserving what remains of wildlife and keeping the natural resources such as grazing material and soil in good condition. South African conservancies were the first wildlife conservation organisations involved collective, co-operative management of their immediate environment.

A conservancy is essentially composed as a voluntary association. This is a legal relationship which arises from an agreement among three or more persons to achieve a common object, usually other than the making and division of profits, and which is defined in a constitution.¹²⁵ It is important to note that although conservancies are urged to adopt a constitution in order to define and facilitate the necessary administrative work, a constitution is not obligatory for a conservancy.¹²⁶ In this way conservancies do not subscribe to the legal definition of a voluntary association.

The primary object of most conservancies is the conservation of wildlife occurring

125. B. Bamford, Bamford on the law of partnership and voluntary association in South Africa (Third edition) (Cape Town, Juta, 1982), p 97.

126. Interview with Mr R. Markham, 16 November 1993.

on the properties of members. Secondary to this is the maintenance of general security within a conservancy. This entails the prevention of theft, arson or any other common crime and the elimination of any stray dogs that could be a potential danger to stock farmers. All these objectives are accomplished by the employment of one or more full-time game guards to patrol the whole area of a conservancy.

Before the inaugural meeting of a conservancy can take place the proposed area is assessed by a steering committee to ascertain its patrolling requirements. It has to be established how many guards will be necessary to patrol the area and what their material needs will involve. These needs include uniforms, food and accommodation. Together with the game guard's salary, the costs of the conservancy are completely contained within these variables. Once they have been determined a rough idea of the costs of the conservancy can be established. The maintenance of the game guards, and the payment of their salary is the focal component of co-operation among the members of a conservancy. All other conservation activities by members of the conservancy stem from the basic collective agreement to pay for these services.

When the costs of a proposed conservancy are confirmed a formal meeting of interested parties is held to constitute the association. The functions and operation of a conservancy can proceed once it has been legally established. The legal status of conservancies varies according to the needs of members and could amount to a verbal agreement to pay subscriptions and levies, without any further written administration. In analysing conservancies three important spheres of business can be identified: Firstly, the active conservation specified in the primary function of the association and implicit in the work of the game guards. Secondly, arising out of the first function is the interaction by the

members of a conservancy on a social level. Usually social functions in a conservancy will have as reference matters concerning local wildlife conservation. Lastly, the maintenance of general security within a conservancy, but the emphasis on these three points diverges considerably between conservancies, and for some the security aspect is the most important.

The first and third objective of conservancies are largely contained in the training and work of the game guards, and an understanding of conservancies necessitates detailed analysis of this element.

The Farm Patrol Plan was the first tangible effort to encourage active conservation on private land. The plan was developed and written by Nick Steele in line with the particular philosophy of wildlife conservation he had developed working as a game ranger in the Hluhluwe-Umfolozzi game reserves. The core of this outlook was that for wildlife conservation to succeed game had to be physically protected. Nick Steele believed the best way to achieve this was through a system of game guards.¹²⁷ He set out his ideas in the plan, the notable innovation was that he applied his opinions concerning conservation to private land.

Due to the emphasis Nick Steele placed on game guards, this aspect forms the central focus of the Plan. Steele set out in detail how he believed active conservation through the game guard system should be approached. The system hinges on two sets of relationships. The first is between the guards and wildlife. Here the plan clarifies exactly how the guards should practice active conservation on private land. Yet vital to the Plan were the

127. The ideas are clearly indicated in the evolution of the Farm Patrol Plan, see pp 37-38 above.

relationships Nick Steele expected the guards to have with people. This second set of relationships existed primarily between landowners and the game guards and among the game guards themselves. Nick Steele used the Plan to explain how he thought the parties should interact. He envisaged that the Plan would result in the broadening of wildlife conservation through landowners adopting the game guard system. The recommendations form the original foundation for conservancies.

In spite of its attention to detail, the plan was deficient in one respect. It failed to consider proper ways in which the game guards were going to acquire the information contained in the plan. There are two points at which Nick Steele mentions the actual training of guards. He admits that "a period of intensive field training in anti-poaching operations and law enforcement as well as self defence is essential,"¹²⁸ and that such training should take place under the supervision of professional game guards. He later adds that "arrangements for a minimum four week crash training course can be arranged with the Natal Parks Board." The assumption is that apart from the unspecified and presumably brief instruction supplied by the Natal Parks Board, the guard's training would depend on the landowners. This would be according to the material advice in the plan, adapted to specific local conditions by the participating landowners. There is a manifest lack of consideration for the landowner's willingness or ability to instruct someone in the skills required to be a game guard. In this state, the proposition was probably a contingency, as it was unlikely that this system would result in a standard execution of the Farm Patrol Plan, and this did not correspond with the comprehensive and military style of the rest of the plan.

128. NPB: N.A. Steele, 'Farm Patrol Plan' (1975), p 2.

Until some landowner, or a group of landowners, agreed to bring the plan into effect on their properties the plan would remain the qualified proposition of an experienced game ranger. It must be remembered that when Nick Steele wrote the original plan in 1975 it was only to translate his long held beliefs into a formal proposal. The obstacles to the efficient operation of the plan could only be properly identified and dealt with as a matter of process when there was a genuine need for a game guard to be employed. This would unfold once the co-operation of landowners was procured in launching the plan.

The important role of guards in conservancies was highlighted by the fact that this was a major issue raised at the formation of the first conservancy at Balgowan in August 1978.¹²⁹ Tony Kerr's suggestion to hire a guard had led to the formation of the conservancy in the first place, but it was not clear how a suitable person would be found to do the job. On that occasion Nick Steele agreed to find a "guard, preferably a retired member of the Natal Parks Board staff, fully trained and reliable."¹³⁰ When the first game guard proved to be unsatisfactory and had to be replaced after a few months, Nick Steele also provided the replacement.¹³¹ This ad hoc procurement of game guards was obviously not acceptable if conservancies were to be successful. The only real solution lay in standard course of training for all newly recruited game guards. This would provide the guards with the proper theoretical knowledge of their work and ensure that they all operated according to the same model. Yet there were no facilities or guides for the training of game guards because up until then the Natal Parks Board had used a system of in-service training. To remedy this situation

129. BCP: Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Balgowan conservancy, p 2.

130. *ibid.*

131. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 22 September 1993.

Nick Steele prepared an extensive and detailed set of notes on the training of game guards.¹³²

The 'Notes on the field training of game guards' were an elaboration of the practical directions contained in the Farm Patrol Plan. The instructions in the 'Notes' are extensive and are broken down into three categories: equipment, duties, and conducting field operations. In the introduction to the 'Notes' Nick Steele indicates that their purpose is to provide the guard with "a start"¹³³ and the Natal Parks Board method of in-service training was still seen as a key element. Yet Steele acknowledges that "training and discipline are vital elements for success."¹³⁴ Although the 'Notes' were seen by Nick Steele himself as an introduction to training, the demand for guards would soon surpass the contribution the 'Notes' made to the process.

Conservancies were steadily established all over Natal and it became apparent that the training of guards required more attention than it was receiving, even when the 'Notes' were taken into account. A decision was taken by the Natal Parks Board to host training courses for newly recruited game guards. This would form part of the Natal Parks Board's services to conservancies. The courses would take place at game reserves and the game guards would receive intensive instruction in basic theory of wildlife conservation, and gain some practical experience. They would learn the elementary skills from professional conservation officers; in conjunction with the guidelines set out in the 'Notes' and the experience gained from doing field-work in the conservancies. These developments laid down the structure of game guard training. Subsequent additions were mainly extensions of this framework, to

132. NSP: N.A. Steele, 'Some preliminary notes on the field training of game guards' (1979).

133. *ibid*, p ii.

134. *ibid*.

accommodate the changing needs of conservancies. Game guards are regularly familiarised with new techniques and attend courses to adapt their work to changing circumstances and new challenges in conservation.

Significantly, in the process of establishing a system for training conservancy game guards, the Natal Parks Board initiated its own training programme. Natal Parks Board game guards undergo the same instruction established for conservancy game guards. Conservancies thus created the infrastructure which ultimately increased the efficiency of the Natal Parks Board. Once the demands for better training of game guards were satisfied the expansion of informal conservation was guaranteed, as the guards were well equipped to do their work.

From the time the Farm Patrol Plan and the conservancy concept were proposed, conservancies were never meant to be areas exclusively reserved for wildlife conservation.¹³⁵ A conservancy is superimposed over the primary agricultural purpose of the land. Thus, unlike a game reserve or National Park, individual conservancies would not have full-time scientists engaged in research on conservancy based ecosystems. The crucial advantage of conservancies in the drive for better conservation was the potential protection of a far greater number of ecosystems and associated species. Conservancy game guard duties were accordingly limited to a specialised kind of security work, in the interests of wildlife conservation.

The work of game guards is by definition to guard wildlife. In the conservancy, as well as the Natal Parks Board context, the work involves mainly patrols and observation of

135. NPB: R.W. Markham, 'The Role of the private landowner in managing biotic diversity,' (1988), p 3.

the surrounding area. The purpose of this is to prevent unauthorised hunting and the removal of protected plant species. Unauthorised hunting usually takes one of two forms: either snaring or organised hunting parties using packs of dogs or rifles. The game guard enforces preventative measures against snaring by removing all those he finds. Hunters using dogs or rifles will be less inclined to come into an area if they are aware that they could be apprehended. The same applies to people who remove protected plant species without authorisation.¹³⁶ The work of the game guard is therefore preventative, but the training enables guards to take pro-active steps to prevent unauthorised actions if it is necessary. According to the original plan, the assistance of the game guards in monitoring species populations, distribution and other ecological processes would be minimal. Any work of this kind would be seen as consequent to the main task of guarding the game.

The secondary part of the game guard's duty is the maintenance of general security within the conservancy. This means protecting private property belonging to the members of the conservancy. The basic skills of surveillance and security enforcement applied to wildlife conservation in the conservancy are used to maintain general security. The guards are expected to be aware of threats to the property of landowners, especially livestock. If they should come across someone in the act of perpetrating a common crime such as theft, burglary or arson they are required to take steps to halt it. The security guard aspect of conservancies has often been over-emphasised by landowners who saw it as the primary objective for their conservancy. Although security surveillance of property was originally a secondary element in conservancies, it has been seen by many farmers as the major benefit. The security aspect of conservancies was sometimes accentuated to encourage farmers to join

136. Interview with Mr N. Steele, 13 July 1993.

a conservancy, especially if they did not see the value of informal wildlife conservation. This periodically leads to a perception among local people that the game guard is part of the official law enforcement establishment.

The impression of local workers that game guards are 'police' figures is given credence by the fact that recruits often come from outside the area of a conservancy. This was suggested by Nick Steele in the original plan and was taken up as a common practice by conservancies. It was believed that the local people would intimidate the game guards if they were familiar with them and their families. Game guards are naturally expected to protect wildlife in a conservancy, but it is clear that by incorporating a coercive element in conservancies some people may see the guard as a threat. 'Imported' guards have in fact done nothing to prevent this problem and creating a focus on the guard's role as a security presence could reinforce the belief that wildlife conservation is an issue of resource control by the white minority. Therefore, an enduring mission of efficient conservancies has been to make clear to the local workers and their relatives that the game guard is not a surveillance mechanism.¹³⁷

Game guards understandably face intimidation if the broad community perceives their presence as a threat. Rural African communities often engage in activities which are infringements of the law. A person may operate a shebeen or cultivate dagga on a small scale for personal use. These activities are not seriously criminal, but people are aware of their illegality. Hence if the community does not understand the work of the game guards they would have cause to fear them. However, if a person staying within the boundaries of a

137. Interview with Mr D. Green at Estcourt, 4 March 1993.

conservancy was engaged in illegal activities of a serious nature, such as stock theft or burglary, they would have more reason to be apprehensive of the game guards. In such a context an element of coercion may be employed against the game guards to ensure their silence. Because some conservancies primarily use the game guards as security guards and in the light of general perceptions of the game guards as security personnel, many conservancy game guards face threats of violence from sections of local communities.¹³⁸

Intimidation causes many conservancies to lose game guards who leave work for reasons of personal security. Another factor which precipitates game guards abandoning their work is the possibility of better employment.¹³⁹ Although game guards are recognised by the conservancies as highly skilled members of the workforce, on a farm they essentially remain farm workers. The Natal Parks Board encourages conservancies to pay the salaries of guards from money derived from the conservancy itself, thereby making it a self-financed programme. However, this is often not possible. The costs of a conservancy are almost wholly contained in the salary of the guards. At the inception of a conservancy the membership fees are usually set at a generally agreed upon limit, which in turn is usually determined by the economic commitments of members. It is thus often impossible to pay the guards any higher salaries without endangering the existence of the conservancy as some members would no longer be able to afford the costs. This means that most conservancy game guards are not paid the same wage as Natal Parks Board game guards, even though they have had the same instruction. In the light of economic realities faced by African workers it is not surprising that game guards take alternative employment if they can find it. Because they have had security training by a recognised institution such as the Natal Parks

138. *ibid.*

139. *ibid.*

Board, with a certificate to prove their proficiency, game guards are often able to find work as security guards with firms based in towns. Conservancies are not able to match the salaries offered by these kinds of companies and thus the guards who chose alternative employment are lost. This is in fact also a direct financial loss for the conservancy as the guards' training is paid for by the conservancy, and when a guard leaves he has to be replaced, with more costs involved.

When all the considerations listed above are taken into account, it can be concluded that not only are game guards a central defining aspect of conservancies but they are also a complex variable in the concept. However, game guards alone do not create a conservancy, they are merely the most visible and active part of informal wildlife conservation. There are several other components in a successful conservancy.

Foremost among elements of conservancies which are apart from the duties of the guards is the fact that landowners have formed a voluntary association in order to pay for the services of game guards. This indicates a firm resolve to work together as a community in the interests of nature conservation, and to pay for it as well. The financial commitment to a conservancy by its members should not be undervalued. The payment of fees is a demonstration of how importantly members view the need for wildlife conservation in South Africa. Yet membership of a conservancy entails more than paying fees. The employment of game guards provides the foundation for the association of members, but the interaction and co-operation of the landowning community is a crucial test of accomplishment for conservancies. Members of a conservancy are expected to meet regularly to discuss the business of the conservancy and elect office bearers. This occurs at an Annual General Meeting, if the conservancy is operating efficiently. Some conservancies choose not to

operate according to set rules or a constitution, but they are exceptions.¹⁴⁰ Conservancies should also have informal meetings which give the members of a conservancy the opportunity to interact on a social level. This is a critical factor in what defines a conservancy, members are encouraged not to see the conservancy as "business", hence to be separate from recreation and other non-farm related issues. The Natal Parks Board urges conservancy members to incorporate the conservancy into all aspects of daily life, thereby stressing nature conservation as a continuous process. Often conservancy business, such as the Annual General Meeting or a game count becomes a part of social interaction when conservancies organise these events around the whole community.¹⁴¹ Families participate in conservancy work, if it is at all possible, for example on the game counts. Many conservancies also combine their A.G.M. with a dinner for all the members and their families. Conservancies that best serve nature conservation bring the membership community together and unite them around their mutual concern for the environment.¹⁴²

The changing political climate in the country over the last few years has brought about new attitudes within conservancies. A realisation has developed that the benefits of the conservancy has to extend to the whole community. In this way misunderstandings concerning the role of the game guards can be avoided and the task of protecting wildlife is made easier. It has been suggested by some members of conservancies and officials of the Natal Parks Board that African communities should be allowed access to game in order to legitimately hunt non-threatened species.¹⁴³ This makes it possible for conservancies to

140. Interview with Mr R. Markham, 1 July 1993.

141. Interview with Mr M. Stainbank, at Eston on 20 July 199.

142. Interview with Mr R. Markham, 1 July 1993.

143. *ibid.*

demonstrate the profits of wildlife conservation to wider sections of the community. When more people are conscious of the positive benefits of nature conservation, co-operation is more productive. Yet this means a substantive progression from the racist heritage of nature conservation and land distribution in South Africa. The complete assimilation of the community within a conservancy around wildlife conservation issues indicates considerable success and the principle of co-operative management can be seen as fully integrated.

The examination of how conservancies operate has up to this point focused on various human relationships. This is an area of informal wildlife conservation that cannot be escaped. Indeed, one of the most important contributions that conservancies have made to wildlife conservation in South Africa is the improved relationships between official wildlife conservation organisations, in the local context, the Natal Parks Board, and farmers.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, conservancies are wildlife conservation organisations. The reason why they are formed and why they employ game guards is usually to protect wildlife. The rationale behind the protection of wildlife is diverse. Some conservancies are formed to protect and enhance the aesthetic value of an area, while others seek to increase the stock of game for the purpose of hunting. Common to both these apparently contradictory motives is the need for sound resource management. The Natal Parks Board contribution has always been the greatest in this sphere of the administration of conservancies. Most conservancy landowners require advice on wildlife management that will produce the best results in terms of species population growth and health.

The Natal Parks Board assists conservancies in their efforts to manage wildlife

144. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 22 September 1993.

through the recommendations that the zone officers and other scientists make. There is a constant flow of information about wildlife management that the Natal Parks Board prepares and distributes among conservancies.¹⁴⁵ The Natal Parks Board section concerned with conservancies constantly liaises with individual conservancies to establish their needs and help solve problems. When a conservancy is established the Natal Parks Board prepares a 'Conservancy management guideline' which describes how the conservancy should operate, considering the particular ecological conditions which prevail in each conservancy. This, in conjunction with the work of the game guard, ensures that ecosystems receive competent supervision. The extent to which conservancies operate according to Natal Parks Board suggestions, in terms of scientific management of ecosystems, is therefore another means of ascertaining how successful a conservancy is. The achievement of good wildlife management is measured by conservancies and the Natal Parks Board according to a scale defined in "degrees of implementation."¹⁴⁶ This terminology means the degree to which the game management plans are successfully implemented in a conservancy.

Successful conservancies develop beyond proven standards of game management. It has already been stated that conservation means the wise use of resources, and conservancies usually consist of well run farms. The landowners are, either consciously or by chance, managing the wildlife resources as another part of their farm. This increases the productive potential of the land because of the environmental conservation which takes place, ensuring high productivity.¹⁴⁷ The benefits which arise beyond this, such as game for hunting or the

145. For example the set of 26 Wildlife Management Plans that were written from 1984 to 1991. These pamphlets are designed to explain ecological processes, and the habits of certain species of game, in layperson's terms so that wildlife can be successfully managed on farms.

146. Interview with Mr R. Markham, 1 July 1993.

147. Interview with Sen. C.C. Henderson, at Balbrogie, Waschbank, 6 July 1993.

aesthetic appreciation of wildlife, are additional. Although, many conservancies are able to make themselves economically independent of the farms upon which they are established. This means that the conservancy is able to pay the game guard's salaries from profits derived from allowing hunting or some other activity to take place in the conservancy.¹⁴⁸ Hunting buck or wild-fowl seems the most obvious way of procuring revenues for conservancies but there are other methods conservancies use to raise funds. The most successful non-hunting revenue source has proved to be hiking trails and overnight huts on conservancies.¹⁴⁹ Conservancies are in reality a means for farmers to use all the possible resources on a property profitably, guided by the desire to conserve the environment.

The practice of informal conservation, in conservancies, is thus a consolidation of assorted methods of resource management for a variety of motives. Ultimately the accomplishment of the aims of informal conservation can be determined according to the manner in which the different aspects, such as the dual roles of the game guard, the degree of implementation of wildlife management plans, community integration around conservation, and economic self sufficiency for the conservancy are incorporated.

148. Interview with Mr R. Markham, 1 July 1993.

149. Interview with Sen. Henderson, 6 July 1993.

CHAPTER FOUR

The evolution and application of the conservancy concept

The establishment of the Balgowan conservancy was a tangible demonstration that landowners were willing to take responsibility for the conservation of their own wildlife. Nevertheless, the Balgowan conservancy was not seen as an end in itself. The Natal Parks Board saw it as the first example of private co-operative wildlife management on farms. Although the motivation for the Balgowan conservancy came from the landowners themselves, the Natal Parks Board believed the conservancy was a demonstration of the viability of the ideas contained in the Farm Patrol Plan. The final success of the Farm Patrol Plan, and conservancies, hung upon additional conservancies coming into operation.

The initial spread of conservancies was linked to the Balgowan conservancy. A key factor in a conservancy is the co-operation between the Natal Parks Board and farmers. At a time when farmers and the Natal Parks Board were often in opposition, mainly because of differences over hunting laws,¹⁵⁰ the Balgowan conservancy demonstrated the positive benefits of co-operation between farmers and the Natal Parks Board. Balgowan conservancy, by the mere fact that it existed, was a means of achieving the establishment of other conservancies. This is in fact how events transpired, the spread of conservancies depended on the success of existing conservancies. In the beginning, it was hoped that other farmers would follow the example of Balgowan.¹⁵¹

In 1979 Doug Woods, a farmer from Eston, heard of the Balgowan conservancy and

150. Interview with Mr and Mrs Kerr, 22 September 1993.

151. *ibid.*

became interested in the idea. He contacted the Natal Parks Board and requested information on the matter. Arrangements were made for Nick Steele and Tony Kerr to address the Beaumont-Eston Farmers Association (B.E.F.A) to explain how the Balgowan conservancy worked.¹⁵² The result was that on 26 September 1979, the B.E.F.A. conservancy was formed.¹⁵³ The ability of the Natal Parks Board to prove its ability to co-operate well with farmers was an instrumental factor in convincing the Beaumont-Eston farmers to start a conservancy. When the importance of stressing a joint effort on the part of farmers and the Natal Parks Board became apparent, it was recognised that farmers participating in conservancies would have an important role in spreading conservancies. Due to their enthusiasm to see the concept flourish, Tony Kerr and Doug Woods became ambassadors for conservancies among farmers.¹⁵⁴ Nick Steele was able to explain the conservation aspects of the plan, but because of their being farmers themselves, Tony Kerr and Doug Woods were adept at presenting the interests of the farming constituency. Clearly, a principled acceptance of conservancies by farmers would ensure long-term commitment to the concept.

The experience of farmers convincing other farmers to begin conservancies demonstrated to the Natal Parks Board that the future of conservancies lay in leaving decisions about implementation and operation to those who would bear the responsibility.¹⁵⁵ It was decided that the Natal Parks Board would not suggest the establishment of any particular conservancies. Its interest would be confined to assisting in the administration of established conservancies and providing information on wildlife management. Farmers

152. *ibid.*

153. BEFA: Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Beaumont-Eston Farmers Association conservancy.

154. *ibid.*; interview with Mr N. Steele, 13 July 1993.

155. Interview with Mr R. Markham, 1 July 1993.

would have to indicate an interest before the Natal Parks Board would assist in the establishment of the conservancy. In this way the accountability for the conservancy was closely linked to the dedication of the farmers involved.

However, a large part of Natal's farming community was already aware of the benefits of informal wildlife conservation. There was an natural desire to participate in conservancies on the part of many.¹⁵⁶ This is clearly another part of the increasing trend towards better environmental attitudes. Some farmers had always practised good wildlife management, while others had exercised co-operative management of game on an informal level, without any structured organisation.¹⁵⁷ Conservancies provided these farmers with the theoretical medium to formally accomplish what had previously been latent. Substantive evidence for this lies in the rapid expansion conservancies underwent in the first few years. After three years there were 34 conservancies covering over 300 000 hectares.

The acceptance of conservancy ideas by farmers is underlined by the formation of the Natal Wildlife Conservancies Association in 1981. The name subsequently changed to the Natal Conservancies Association when marine conservancies became established and the organisation felt that the term 'wildlife' excluded these conservancies.¹⁵⁸ The organisation represents conservancies collectively on a provincial level and membership is voluntary. The Natal Conservancies Association is a central liaison body which can negotiate on behalf of the conservancies which belong to the association, but it has no authority over conservancies, regardless if they are members of the association or not. Its role is therefore largely

156. Interview with Mr J. Taylor, at Umgeni Valley Ranch, Howick, 14 July 1993.

157. *ibid.*

158. NCA: Natal Conservancies Association constitution, amended 8 May 1991.

administrative, and it is also a unifying factor for conservancies which belong to the association.

The Natal Conservancies Association facilitated the spread of conservancies by giving the concept added prominence in the farming community. The association developed the familiar guinea-fowl road sign which indicates the names of conservancies.¹⁵⁹ A result of the gradual acknowledgement of conservancies in rural areas has been the establishment of inventive new applications for the conservancy concept. Owners of land which borders on the sea have started marine conservancies to conserve the wildlife along, and beyond, the shore. A more recent development has been the urban conservancy along the Mgeni estuary in Durban. This is a deviation from the traditional application of conservancies because the members of the conservancy own or rent property adjacent to the estuary. There is no game guard either, but the membership fees are used to help protect the estuary, and the members of the conservancy actively take part in the care of the ecosystem by picking up litter.¹⁶⁰ Durban was also the location of the first industrial conservancy. This is the Maydon wharf conservancy in the harbour which was established in 1989. Companies which use the wharf started a form of conservancy to bring about awareness of the unique habitats which exists in this highly transformed ecosystem and to promote environmental awareness.¹⁶¹ These two innovations must be recognised as variations of the original plan, but this does not invalidate their status as conservancies.

Conservancies spread beyond the borders of Natal almost as soon as they began

159. R.W. Markham, 'What's in another logo?', Natal: News from the Natal Parks Board, (Winter, 1987), p 5.

160. Interview with Mr R. Markham, 1 July 1993; NCA: Minutes of an executive committee meeting held on 5 November 1991, p 5.

161. 'Maydon wharf - a model industrial area,' Natal Conservancies Association Newsletter, 2 (1992), p 9.

spreading inside them. On 5 August 1982 the first conservancy in the Eastern Cape was established,¹⁶² and in 1985 the Orange Free State farmers launched their conservancies, which were called "bewareas", a synthesis of the Afrikaans words "bewareing" and "area."¹⁶³ The growth of conservancies outside Natal has not been at the same brisk pace, but there is a steady increase in the numbers.¹⁶⁴

Most conservancies are made up of farms and are rural.¹⁶⁵ There are currently 144 conservancies in Natal,¹⁶⁶ but there are several which were established and later stopped functioning. The main reasons for this were an inability to finance the endeavour efficiently, or the mismanagement of the game guards, which resulted in their leaving the conservancy.¹⁶⁷ Often these two problems were associated with incorrect motives for establishing the conservancy in the first place. In some cases not all the farmers were fully convinced of the need for a conservancy but participated regardlessly.¹⁶⁸ Other groups of farmers thought it was fashionable to start a conservancy, but were not fully committed to the ideals of informal wildlife conservation.¹⁶⁹

The 144 conservancies currently in operation are spread widely across province, and

162. D. Long, 'The Wildlife conservancy movement in the Cape province,' Pelea, volume 7 (1988), p 41.

163. NCA: R. Earle, 'Conservancies outside Natal,' Proceedings from Conservancies 100 seminar and workshop (Natal Parks Board, 1990), p 5.

164. *ibid*, p 7; see also map two, Appendix A on page 81 below.

165. NPB: Consolidated list indicating numbers of conservancies, location, size of membership and numbers of game guards. (July, 1993). Reproduced in this thesis as Appendix B, pages 82-86 below.

166. NPB: Consolidated list.

167. Interview with Mr R. Markham, 1 July 1993.

168. *ibid*.

169. *ibid*.

include most vegetation types within their management.¹⁷⁰ Successful conservancies still operate according to the basic plan which came about at Balgowan and which has been discussed at length above. To demonstrate exactly how conservancies implement their policies on a practical level, it is necessary to present two conservancies as case studies. By comparing and contrasting the Biggarsberg and B.E.F.A. conservancies, it is possible to attain a better understanding of efficient conservancy management.

It has already been mentioned that the B.E.F.A. conservancy was the second one formed. The Biggarsberg conservancy was formed in 1981. The established histories of these conservancies makes them suited to analysis of applied informal conservation. The analysis is further supported by the differences in operational method between the two conservancies. Their geographic separation is extensive, and the land-use in the two areas is very different. The types of vegetation, climate and wildlife species found also vary between the conservancies. These differences in the ecological structure of the two conservancies explain part of the contrasts in the method of operation. However, there are human factors as well, and by using the experiences of the B.E.F.A. and Biggarsberg conservancies a composite image of effective conservancies can be constructed.¹⁷¹

The Beaumont-Eston Farmers Association conservancy

B.E.F.A. conservancy is dominated by sugar cane fields and wattle plantations. In between these two crops, which form the economic base of the conservancy, are areas of pasture for cattle and sheep. There are several small streams which fall into the conservancy,

170. Map one, Appendix A, page 80 below.

171. The information from this point in the chapter is derived from a series of personal interviews conducted with various members of the Beaumont-Eston Farmers Association conservancy and the Biggarsberg conservancy.

and they are surrounded by thick indigenous bush in places. The conservancy has 36 members, and covers an area of approximately 25 000 ha.¹⁷² The original impetus for the establishment of the conservancy was very similar to Balgowan. In the late 1970s farmers noticed a reduction in the numbers of game, due mainly to snaring, hunting dogs and general human population pressure in the area.¹⁷³ The farmers, nonetheless, did not know what steps could be taken to ameliorate these factors. Then Doug Woods, who was farming for Dering Stainbank at that time, heard about the Balgowan conservancy. It has been noted earlier that this led to Nick Steele and Tony Kerr addressing the Beaumont-Eston Farmers Association about the Balgowan conservancy, and as a result the B.E.F.A. conservancy was established in September 1979.

When the conservancy first came into being there were ten game guards, but the numbers declined when some of the guards left and were not replaced. There are currently six game guards who adequately serve the needs of the conservancy as the way in which the guards work was changed in order to make more efficient use of their time. The primary reason for establishing the conservancy, and hence for having the game guards was to end the unauthorised hunting. In this way the B.E.F.A. conservancy followed the pattern of Balgowan, and subscribes to the normal procedure for a conservancy. The guards mostly remove snares and patrol the conservancy to prevent unauthorised hunting with packs of dogs and the stripping of bark from rare trees. The members of the conservancy noticed that after the game guards arrived, there was a decrease in the amount of petty crime, but this was an element which only reinforced the belief in the advantages of the conservancy. It was not seen as the most important reason for having the conservancy and in this way the secondary

172. NPB: Consolidated list, see B.E.F.A., appendix B, page 82 below.

173. Interview with Mr M. Stainbank, 20 July 1993.

role of the game guard, as envisaged by Nick Steele, was fulfilled without an over-emphasis on the game guard as a security guard.¹⁷⁴

The B.E.F.A. conservancy is engaged in a joint project with the Mid-Illovo conservancy and the Camperdown Conservation Committee to upgrade the Mquahumbe catchment area,¹⁷⁵ and this is probably the most ambitious project undertaken as part of implementing wildlife management, it is too early to ascertain the degree to which the project will succeed. There is an awareness among members of the conservancy that a greater threat to game is increasing human population pressure in the region and intensive wildlife management is necessary if the various species are to survive. Particular species, such as the oribi (Ourebia ourebi), require special attention because not only are they threatened by illegal hunting, but their preferred habitat is being converted into agricultural land. An additional project the conservancy administers is the replanting of areas of indigenous bush previously damaged by fire or careless agricultural practices. John Lowe, a member of the conservancy, grows indigenous trees in a nursery which in effect is operated by the conservancy. The nursery satisfies the requirements of the conservancy for all the replanting that is necessary. The trees are grown from seeds collected in the bush on the conservancy. Thus the ecosystem is not further damaged by the introduction of species or sub-species not originally found in the area. Malcolm Stainbank, another member of the B.E.F.A. conservancy, plans to grow plants that are used in traditional medicine in order to supply healers with the stock that they need. This is an effort to supply the demand for the material and at the same time prevent further damage being done to rare trees and plants in the conservancy.

174. *ibid.*

175. *ibid.*

The strongest element within the B.E.F.A. conservancy is the interaction between members and the incorporation of the whole community in the operation of the conservancy. Many children from the conservancy attend the Eston school where the conservancy is responsible for running a junior conservator programme. The Natal Parks Board zone officer responsible for the conservancy, Charlie Arter, plays an important role in this project by providing the children with environmental education and a chance to be involved in voluntary excursions, learning more about the aspects of nature surrounding them. Malcolm Stainbank, acknowledging that "it is difficult to change adult views,"¹⁷⁶ indicated that the ultimate goal of this project was to instill children with environmental concern in order to create more responsible adults. In the same way, members of the B.E.F.A. conservancy visit schools in the area administered by the Department of Education and Training in order to extend environmental education to African school children as well. Until the effort was made by the conservancy, African children were denied meaningful education about the natural processes around them. The conservancy therefore plays an important social role in developing a greater awareness that the most important part of the environment is the human component. There is clearly an effort to include the broad community in the work accomplished by the conservancy, with the aim of enabling better conservation of resources.

The conservancy attempts to include whole families in conservancy events such as the annual game count. This is part of a process of complete social integration within the conservancy. There is also an initiative to encourage farmers' wives to accept election to the conservancy committee, as it is argued that a farm and everything on it is part of a conservancy. Malcolm Stainbank felt that in light of this, men should not monopolise

176. *ibid.*

conservancy activities.

The B.E.F.A. conservancy does practice prudent conservancy resource use. Some members shoot buck, but only for domestic consumption. There have been no hunters who have paid to shoot in the conservancy. Sometimes game is shot and given to the workers and the game guards. The conservancy feels this demonstrates that the conservancy is for all the people who are a part of it, and it discourages unauthorised hunting. An interesting resource use that is practised by the B.E.F.A. conservancy is the 'Wild-flower day.' This is a means of exploiting the aesthetic beauty of the conservancy. The landowning community is normally accompanied by a botanist to a particular place in the conservancy where features of the indigenous plant-life are examined and explained. The most productive part of this exercise is that use is made of conservancy resources without any disruption of the ecosystems.

The indigenous trees that are grown by John Lowe are also a source of income for the conservancy as extra trees are sold to members of the conservancy and the public. If plans for a nursery for traditional medicine plants goes ahead this will be another form of revenue for the conservancy. There are several species of cycad on the land owned by Malcolm Stainbank. Yet another nursery is undergoing feasibility tests in order to establish if the conservancy can successfully grow these plants from the freely available seed. This could potentially supply the demand for legal cycads and bring in funds for the conservancy. It is thus clear that there are many ways in which a conservancy with the right resources could use them to become self-financed.

The conclusion reached from the above information is that the B.E.F.A. conservancy

successfully demonstrates many of the practical characteristics of conservancies. Within the conservancy there is an element of pessimism relating to the new political dispensation. People frequently voice concerns about land redistribution and what the implications of this would be for conservancies. A common attitude is that this possibility may make the effort involved in the conservancy meaningless.¹⁷⁷ Yet Malcolm Stainbank believes these fears are merely an immediate response to the current situation, the vast majority of members remain committed to the principle of the conservancy.

The Biggarsberg conservancy

The Biggarsberg conservancy has a distinctly different mode of operation to the B.E.F.A. conservancy. Part of the reason for this may lie in the fact that the land-use which takes place on Biggarsberg farms is vastly different to that in the Beaumont-Eston area. Primarily this is because of the distinct climate and vegetation types of each area. The Biggarsberg conservancy covers a more extensive area than the B.E.F.A. conservancy and is dominated by thornveld and grasslands which determine that the main farming activity in the area is beef cattle, sheep and a some maize production. Unlike the high impact transformative agriculture of Beaumont-Eston, the Biggarsberg conservancy does not face the problem of widespread ecosystem alteration. Rather, because the impacts of pastoral farming are less transformative than agriculture, in most places the environment is largely the same as it has been for a long time. There are of course significant examples where humans have intervened. There are indications that humans artificially introduced fire into the area thousands of years ago. In modern times, human action through farming may have increased the amount of thorn trees in the landscape. However, the environment of the

177. Interview with Mr M. Stainbank, 20 July 1993.

Biggarsberg conservancy is fairly consistent, and is largely unchanged.

The big alterations made by humans in the Biggarsberg ecosystems were in terms of the numbers of game. In the early 1890s the area had abundant game but by the time of the South African war of 1899-1902 this had already been depleted.¹⁷⁸ The Biggarsberg conservancy therefore ranks the protection of game as a high priority.¹⁷⁹ It has already been indicated that the conservancy was started in 1981, but the idea of practising good wildlife management was a part of at least one farm in the conservancy for a long time. Senator Charles Henderson had long admired the British aristocratic tradition of game keepers.¹⁸⁰ A game keeper fulfils the same role as a game guard, physically protecting the game and ensuring good wildlife management. Senator Henderson believed that part of a well run farm was the game that co-existed with the farming activities, and has always managed all the natural resources on his farm in line with this belief. When Senator Henderson heard about conservancies, he was presented with the means of acquiring the services of 'game keepers' as he saw them. Senator Henderson convinced several of the surrounding farmers of the benefits contained in conservancies.¹⁸¹ The motivation for the Biggarsberg conservancy therefore lay partly in an effort to curb unauthorised hunting, and partly in a desire to establish productive game management, especially wild-fowl. From the beginning, resource use in the form of hunting played a role in the Biggarsberg conservancy. Having guards to protect property was certainly seen as secondary to protecting the game. Therefore in the Biggarsberg conservancy, the game guards largely serve the purpose for which they were

178. J. Pringle, *The Conservationists and the killers* (Cape Town, Books of Africa, 1982), p 47.

179. Interview with Sen. C. Henderson, 6 July 1993.

180. *ibid.*

181. BBCP: Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Biggarsberg conservancy, p 1.

originally intended.

A concern that is often raised about conservancies is that, in order to function as a stable organisation, all the members have to understand the benefits of belonging to the conservancy, and actually feel that they are receiving a return for their investment. Unfortunately, the Biggarsberg conservancy was not able to sustain the interest of all the original members, and the structure of the conservancy was altered through the resignation of certain members. Two of the original members resigned from the conservancy because their properties were situated in a way which they felt excluded them from the efficient management of the conservancy.¹⁸² Another two members no longer make use of the game guards, although they still pay a reduced membership fee and are thus considered part of the conservancy. The reasons for their qualified withdrawal relate to their belief that the game guards were unnecessary. They believed that effective informal wildlife conservation could be attained by merely paying proper attention to the management of a farm. Unfortunately, this means that the conservancy does not operate according to the understanding of informal wildlife conservation which is expressed in chapter three above. The co-operative management of the land in a conservancy must be complete and there should be full participation of all members, otherwise the structure of the conservancy concept, which has been demonstrated as highly successful, is threatened. The kind of farming that takes place in the area contributes to the reasoning behind certain members' partial withdrawal from the conservancy. Farms dominated by pastoral activity do not have as many labourers as those which practice intensive agriculture. The smaller workforce on pastoral farms is expected to be more efficient and perform a greater variety of tasks. The work of game guards is

182. Interview with Mr J. Henderson, 7 July 1993.

specialised and there is no immediate concrete evidence of the work that is done by the game guards. This may prejudice certain farmers against the employment of game guards as they would feel that the guard does not work properly.

Wildlife management in the Biggarsberg conservancy mostly involves the prevention of unauthorised hunting. The main task of the game guards is therefore patrolling, and preventing unauthorised hunting. However, the Biggarsberg conservancy currently only has one game guard.¹⁸³ This is naturally not a healthy situation but is proof of the difficulties in retaining game guards in the current economic climate where necessity forces people like game guards, who have skills which enable them to work for higher salaries. Several game guards employed by the conservancy left to become security guards.¹⁸⁴ This demonstrates the problem which was explained in the previous chapter. Yet the conservancy risks the problem of becoming dysfunctional as the work-load is too great for one guard.

General wildlife management in the Biggarsberg conservancy involves regulating the hunting that does take place in the conservancy. Ensuring that the game populations are healthy and are not over-exploited means that this resource will be available for future use. Senator Henderson attempted to reintroduce spring buck, but they were not able to breed successfully and gradually died out or were killed. Henderson believes in the management of the complete system, without a singular focus on the game. He therefore tried to include the management of the plant species in the conservancy as well.

A key development in the conservancy has been the hiking trails. The trails extend

183. *ibid.*

184. Interview with Sen. Henderson, 6 July 1993.

over several properties within the conservancy and are open to the public. There are overnight facilities and guides are provided to the hikers. The profits from these trails was initially used to augment the membership fees, but now the funding of the conservancy comes mainly from the trails. Wildlife conservation therefore largely pays for itself in the Biggarsberg conservancy, a situation which benefits efforts to bring about effective care of the environment by demonstrating the possibility of self-financed conservancies that do not rely solely on membership fees.

Therefore, although the Biggarsberg conservancy does have certain points which makes its operation different from the way conservancies usually operate, namely only having one game guard and the partial withdrawal of two members, these points affirm the principle of this form of informal wildlife conservation in their absence from the Biggarsberg conservancy. By being aware of the deficiencies of the conservancy it is easier to see the benefits of conservancy management according to the original plan. In spite of structural differences to other conservancies and management problems, the Biggarsberg conservancy is able to finance a large portion of its running costs from the conservancy itself. Other conservancies need to adopt these measures as finance is the largest threat to conservancies. The high costs of running conservancies, especially when farmers are struggling because of drought or the economic hardships currently being faced, often causes them to dissolve. Therefore if conservancies are capable of finding imaginative ways of raising funds from sources outside the conservancy, through activities which form a part of the conservancy, informal wildlife conservation should prosper.

The contrast between the B.E.F.A. conservancy and the Biggarsberg conservancy clearly demonstrates the different styles of operation between conservancies. By examining

these it is therefore possible to achieve a better understanding of the practical ways that conservancies put the theory of informal wildlife conservation into practice. The important issues remain focused on sound resource management of farm land and the game which is found on it. These two conservancies are foremost examples of groups of people who are committed to conserving what fundamentally remains the most important human assets.

CONCLUSION

In final analysis, conservancies can be defined as the co-operative management of spatially consolidated private land, in the interests of wildlife conservation. The co-operative management of conservancies is displayed in different ways. This thesis has focussed on the co-operative management in conservancies, and the collective payment of game guards' salaries as the most important part of this form of informal wildlife conservation. However, new applications of the conservancy in urban and industrial areas necessitates a slight adaptation in the theory of conservancies. There is a need for an inclusive analysis of how conservancies have evolved into their present forms. Yet, rural conservancies that are based on farms still constitute the bulk of conservancies, and understanding the manner in which they operate is crucial to an initial study. The management of game guards therefore remains a central area of interest. This management consists of organising the two function which the game guards perform in conservancies. The first priority game guards usually serve is securing the safety of wildlife within conservancies. The secondary tasks entail maintaining general security of property in conservancies. Co-operative supervision of wildlife in conservancies is facilitated through the assistance of the Natal Parks Board game management plans, and is monitored in degrees to which these plans are implemented. Vital to successful conservancies is social integration on the broadest level. This means involving the whole community in the activities of the conservancy and demonstrating the use of nature conservation. Lastly, conservancies illustrate that resource management on farms goes beyond agricultural production, and efficient farms use all resources, including wildlife, wisely. This often enables conservancies to exist in a state of self sufficiency. This is clearly not achieved in all conservancies, but where it does occur it indicates new perspectives in wildlife conservation. These conservancies bring wildlife conservation into daily community activities, actively conserving large additional areas and are able to fund themselves.

It is possible to conclude that the methods of operation and integration listed above have certain fundamental repercussions. The extension of active nature conservation, as it is practised by conservancies, is a key component of the concept. The importance of the issue lies partly in the historical origins of wildlife reserves and the ecological implications of island biogeography. Conservancies are able to provide new areas of security for wildlife and form concentrations of game in farming areas which ultimately increase game populations beyond conservancies. A central example of the way in which conservancies assist the Natal Parks Board, by softening the effects of island biogeography, is through the very large area that conservancies cover and which can be considered a part of South Africa's wildlife management structure. The significance of this lies in its demonstration of the movement made by ordinary individuals toward greater environmental concern. In this way conservancies illustrate the global patterns of ecological ethics.

The introduction of conservancies also ushered in new relations between farmers and the Natal Parks Board. Before the development of conservancies there was often a degree of antagonism between farming communities and the official wildlife conservation organisation in the province. This was in spite of many individual farmers asking for Natal Parks Board assistance in solving farm game problems. Conservancies, and the Natal Conservancy Association, help to demonstrate that wildlife conservation and farming have many of the same interests. Better relations between the two communities therefore extends beyond established conservancies. This makes wildlife management in Natal more efficient.

Financial features of any project are highly important in the current period of economic stagnation. The improved resource management that takes place on farms that belong to conservancies has incremental effects for several reasons. Conservancy farmers are

usually more environmentally aware and adjust their farming techniques because of this. The ultimate effect of this is that the land as a resource is conserved for future use, and the output could potentially increase as well. Conservancies employ game guards, thereby supporting families by directly funding their needs, from basic primary care to education. Job creation is an important contribution to the management of the resources of the country as a whole. Wildlife which is correctly managed is an additional resource for a farm. This resource may be in the form of increasing the intrinsic value of a farm because of aesthetic appeal, or in more direct financial terms, activities such as hunting, hiking or some other outdoor events of interest could be made into money making ventures for conservancies. It is possible to re-invest the profits accumulated through these efforts in conservancies by paying for the game guards' salaries. In this way not only is the process commendable for environmental reasons, it is able to function independently as well, further increasing its value.

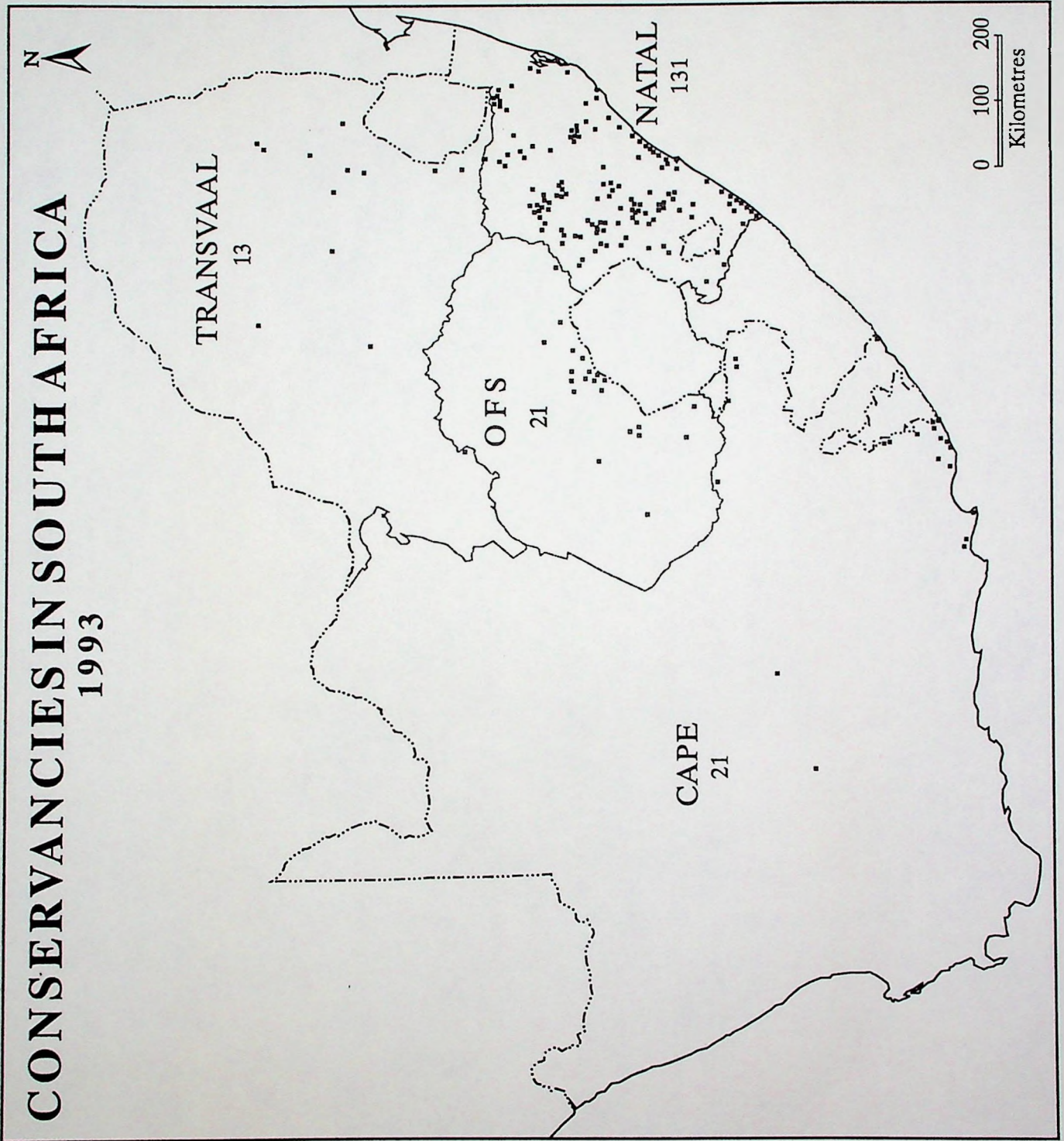
The function that game guards serve as security guards within conservancies is also of some interest. The rising use of game guards, and conservancies, as ways of maintaining security on white farms is certainly a manifestation of fears that farming communities have about violence against themselves or their property. Yet, the element of the game guard as a security presence has been a part of conservancies since the Farm Patrol Plan. This has implications for the game guards themselves, the central one being the problem of identification as a police figure. Indications are thus that conservancies exist as complex patterns of human relations. The combinations of interactions between people within conservancies which devolve upon the role of the game guard to provide safety for private property in conservancies is most obvious between landowners, the game guards, and other workers on farms. Nature conservation is used for utilitarian reasons, namely, the protection of private property, but this is not ordinarily the primary function of a conservancy. The key

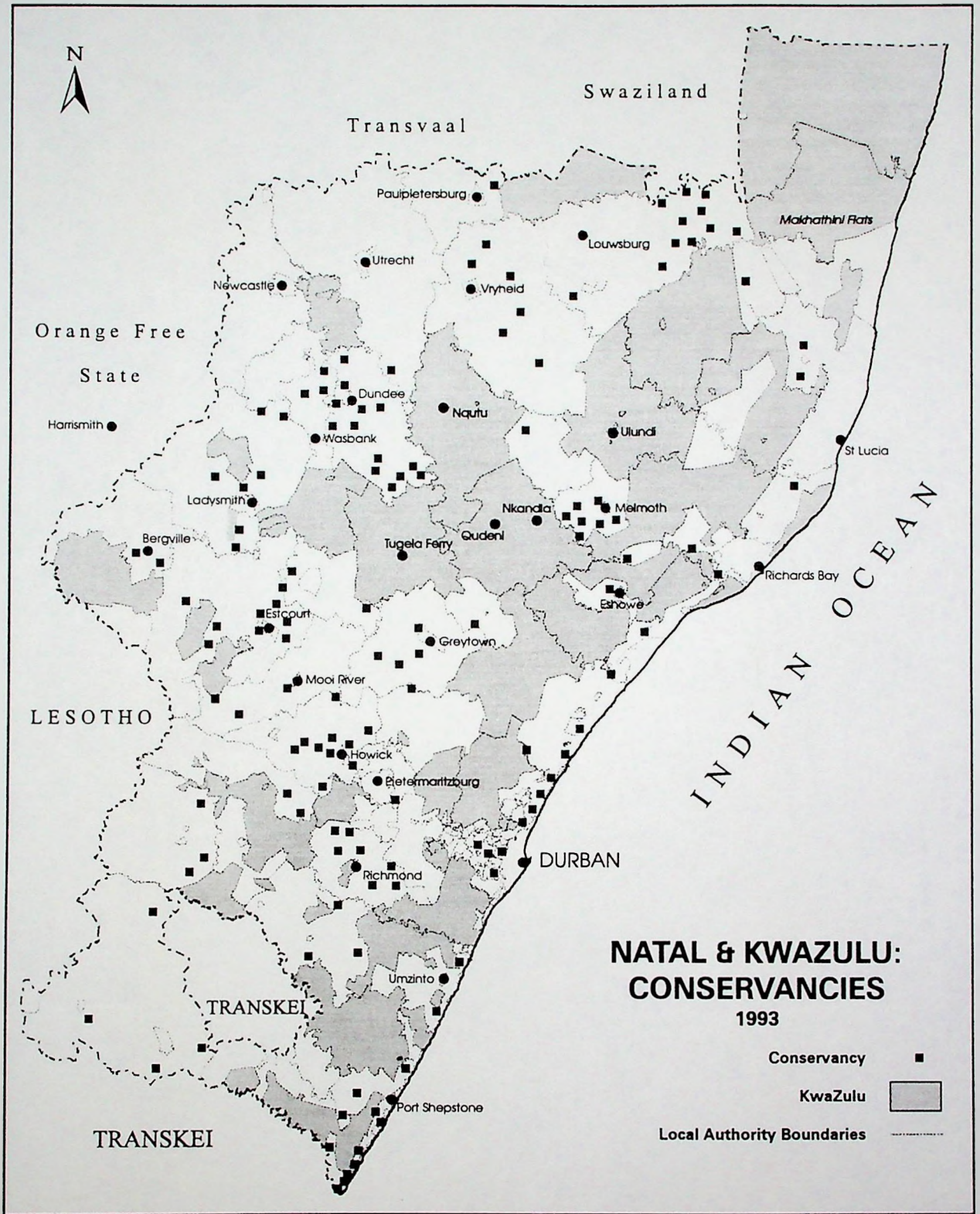
point in this regard is to recognise the varied reasons why conservancies are sometimes started, and that they do not represent simple social or labour relationships.

The prominence of urban and industrial conservancies in the future of the conservancy movement justifies a restatement of their function and relevance. They are indeed a movement away from the original definition of a conservancy, as it is described in this thesis. Yet, they will possibly prove to be an indispensable part of the future of conservancies. They facilitate debate around environmental issues beyond the confines of wildlife reserves, and are yet another example of the real concerns people are demonstrating for the environment.

In conclusion, conservancies are an innovation in the oldest of human relationships with the natural environment, but their novelty creates a complex network of human and environmental relationships. Some of these relationships, the ideas that inform them and the origins of the complete structure have been reflected in this thesis.

APPENDIX A
Maps





Maps based on information kindly supplied by the Natal Parks Board.

APPENDIX B

Consolidated list of conservancies, July 1993

CONSERVANCY NAME	YEAR	SIZE	MEMBERS	GAME GUARDS	N.C.A. MEMBER
AALWYNKOP	1988	8000	1	1	No
ADDINGTON	1981	2500	14	2	Yes
AMANZIMNYAMA RIVER					
B.E.F.A.	1979	24685	34	6	Yes
BALGOWAN	1978	1990	30	1	Yes
BALLITO MARINE	1990	269	1	4	Yes
BAYNESFIELD	1988	10000	1	17	Yes
BERGVILLE	1981	4000	5	2	Yes
BESTERS	1981	15000	6	2	Yes
BHOP BHOP	1981	9147	10	2	Yes
BIGGARSBERG	1981	12500	12	2	Yes
BLYTHEDALE	1990	4998	34	2	Yes
BOESMANSKLIP	1982	1200	1	2	No
BONA MANZI	1981	4000	1	7	No
BOSCHBERG	1988	8500	10	1	No
BOSCHFONTEIN	1988	8000	8	1	No
BOSTON	1982	11900	38	8	Yes
BYRNE VALLEY	1991	120	4	0.00	Yes
CLAN	1988	10344	1	6	No
COLENZO	1982	7000	3	2	Yes
CROSSROADS GAME	1993	16131	20	2	
DAVELSHOEK	1982	2800	1	2	Yes
DINGAANSTAD (MELMOTH)	1990	7911	6	3	Yes
DONNYBROOK (2)	1991	2700	1	3	No
DOORNBERG	1989	12000	16	1	No

CONSERVANCY NAME	YEAR	SIZE	MEMBERS	GAME GUARDS	N.C.A. MEMBER
DUNDEE AGRIC. STN	1989	1200	1	1	No
ENNERSDALE	1986	3040	8	2	No
ESHOWE	1982	6300	28	6	Yes
EVERTON	1991	341	178	2	Yes
GINGINDLOVU	1989	900	2	2	No
GLEN-SHAKA	1989	3887	5	2	Yes
GOEDEHOOP	1991	3409	2	2	Yes
GOLDEN VALLEY	1991	3000	2	2	No
GOLDEN REEF (MELMOTH)	1990	4316	7	2	Yes
GONGOLO	1985	1650	1	0.00	Yes
GREYTOWN	1985	7172	19	1	Yes
HANSFORD	1989	7000	1	1	No
HATTINGSPRUIT	1989	5000	8	1	Yes
HEATONVILLE	1990	3100	7	3	Yes
HELPMEKAAR (1)	1980	8000	5	2	Yes
HERMANSKRAAL					Yes
HIGHFLATS					No
HLATIKHULU	1991	13931	13	2	Yes
HLOMOHLOMO	1990	1000	2	2	No
HLUHLUWE	1989	20352	5	0.00	No
HYDEWOOD	1986	384	1	2	No
IMPENJATI (S)	1981	2814	20	4	Yes
ISIBINDI	1988	4500	4	0.00	No
IZOTSHA	1981	1422	15	2	Yes
KAMBERG	1980	16891	44	2	Yes
KARKLOOF (2)	1991	5000	6	2	Yes
KHOMAS HOCHLAND	1992	65000	11	0.00	
KRANSKOP	1981	16226	13	12	Yes

CONSERVANCY NAME	YEAR	SIZE	MEMBERS	GAME GUARDS	N.C.A. MEMBER
KWA NZIMELA (MELMOTH)	1990	4220	7	2	Yes
LALOUDEFRA	1990	2127	2	2	No
LEEUKOP	1981	4400	1	5	Yes
LENJANE	1991	13464	15	2	Yes
LIONS BUSH	1986	13000	42	2	No
LITTLE TUGELA	1991	8000	25	3	No
LLANWARNE ESTATES	1981	12000	1	6	Yes
LOWLANDS	1980	33250	13	2	Yes
LOWLANDS EAST	1981	6825	7	2	Yes
MACARANGA	1992	875	3	3	No
MASHUDU RANCH (WELTEVREDEN)	1988	2500	2	2	Yes
MASONITE DRA YCOTT					
MASONITE IXOPO	1990	11124	1	14	Yes
MASONITE GREYTOWN	1988	7000	1	2	No
MATATIELE	1982	8000	1	3	Yes
MAYDON WIARF	1992	101	62	3	Yes
MBONA MOUNTAIN ESTATE					
MELMOTH		37993	32	17	Yes
MERRIVALE	1985	5500	10	2	Yes
MFULI (MELMOTH)	1990	5354	6	3	Yes
MGOBHOZI					
MID ILLOVO	1980	10491	31	4	Yes
MKUZU FALLS	1981	3000	1	4	Yes
MONTROSE	1989	800	1	0.00	No
MONZI	1984	5939	60	3	Yes
MOOI-RIVER WEST	1981	12879	29	2	Yes
MOOI-RIVER VALLEY	1982	70000	36	6	No

CONSERVANCY NAME	YEAR	SIZE	MEMBERS	GAME GUARDS	N.C.A. MEMBER
MPUSHINI	1989	4000	23	2	Yes
MOUNT ROYAL	1990	20000	6	2	Yes
NDAWANA	1991	6250	3	2	No
NDUMENI	1988	20000	12	1	No
NEW BIGGIN	1986	4500	4	2	Yes
NEW GERMANY	1985	110	1	6	Yes
NJOMELWANA (MELMOTH)	1990	4688	9	2	Yes
NKANYEZI					
NKONKONI	1985	5000	1	2	No
NKWALINI	1990	8000	25	12	Yes
NOOITGEDACHT	1988	1500	3	2	No
NQUMILE	1981	2100	1	2	Yes
NSELENI	1989	5750	14	2	Yes
NSUBENI	1987	4476	3	0.00	No
NTABAZWA	1988	7384	8	2	Yes
NTONJANENI (MELMOTH)	1990	7354	5	3	Yes
NYALAZI		35000	8	18	Yes
NYAMAKAZI	1980	3468	3	2	Yes
NYONI	1982	5675	10	1	Yes
ORIBI	1981	160	1	3	Yes
PAAPKUILSFONTEIN	1986	1313	5	1	Yes
PADDOCK PLAINS	1981	8000	35	5	Yes
PINETOWN NAT. AREAS	1991	100	2	3	Yes
RENISHAW	1990	9500	8	2	Yes
RICHMOND	1980	10300	3	2	Yes
ROLDAN	1985	2500	4	2	Yes
RONDEBOSCH	1989	2500	1	2	No

CONSERVANCY NAME	YEAR	SIZE	MEMBERS	GAME GUARDS	N.C.A. MEMBER
ROODERAA Y	1986	5002	1	1	Yes
SANDSPRUIT					
SAN LAMEER	1989	78	1	4	Yes
SAPPI (SALIGNA)	1980	86793	20	12	Yes
SEA VIEW	1981	2700	45	5	No
SEA VIEW MARINE	1990	1000	10	4	Yes
SEVEN OAKS	1987	2128	1	2	Yes
SEZELA WILDLIFE	1986	16500	1	8	No
SHUKUZA GAME RANCH	1991	840	1	1	Yes
SMEERTOUW	1991	1000	4	1	No
SUNSET REST	1988	4500	4	1	Yes
SUTHERLAND	1988	900	1	2	No
TENDENI					
THE VALLEY	1986	14700	14	0.00	No
TRANS ATHALIA					
TWO RIVERS	1981	23000	23	4	Yes
TYGERSKLOOF					
UMDLOTI MARINE	1991	74	7	2	
UMFOLOZI	1991	5600	2	2	
UMFULI		700	1	3	
UMGENYANE	1981	7100	18	2	
UMHLALI	1992	5000	70	2	Yes
UMHLANGA	1990	1340	1	2	
UMKOPOZI	1988	800	6	2	
UMVOTI VLEI	1992	7000	4	0.00	Yes
UMZUMBE	1980	4563	47	3	
VALHALLA (HELPMEKAAR 2)	1988	2000	1	1	

CONSERVANCY NAME	YEAR	SIZE	MEMBERS	GAME GUARDS	N.C.A. MEMBER
VANTS DRIFT	1989	10000	12	1	
WAGONDRIFT	1986	983	11	2	
WESTVILLE NAT. AREAS	1990	246	1	4	
ZIETOVER (MELMOTH)	1990	4159	9	2	
ZINKWAZI	1989	315	10	2	
ZONYAMA	1987	12500	1	1	

The size of conservancies is given in hectares.
The above statistics were supplied by the Natal Parks Board.

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Mr D. Green, at Estcourt, 4 March 1993.

Mr E. Hals, at Eston, 20 July 1993.

The Hon. Senator C.C. Henderson, at Balbrogie, Waschbank, 6 July 1993.

Mr J. Henderson, at Balbrogie, Waschbank, 7 July 1993.

Mr and Mrs A.F.B. Kerr, at Fort Nottingham village, 21 July and 22 September 1993.

Mr J. Lowe, at Eston, 20 July 1993.

Mr R.W. Markham, at Natal Parks Board Head-quarters, Queen Elizabeth Park, 15 December 1992, 28 January 1993, 1 July 1993.

Mr R. Smit, at Waschbank, 6 July 1993.

Mr M. Stainbank, at Eston, 20 July 1993.

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