

# Delicate balance under threat

Compiled by JANINE DE VILLIERS

## Publications and Promotions

The indigenous natural treasures of South Africa are constantly under threat. One way to prevent the extinction of sensitive ecosystems and habitats is to create awareness amongst communities, including library users of all ages.

The Central Film and Video Collection of the Library Service will enable interested librarians to take up this challenge to spread the message of conservation and preservation through its wide variety of videos. The breathtaking beauty of our country evident in these videos not only cultivates an appreciation for our natural resources, but also stimulates an interest to gain more knowledge about this aspect of our natural environment.

**Flower from the flames** / producer, Caroline Weaver; director, Rodney Borland.

The Swedish botanist Linnaeus named the Protea after the Greek god Proteus, who had the ability to take on numerous different forms. Some 69 species are unique to the Western Cape and one of them has been made South Africa's national emblem. This attractive film presents an introduction to this most magnificent of flowers, revealing an infinite variety of colour, shape and size. In particular it shows how each species has evolved to attract a specific pollinator and the interrelationship that exists between the flowers and a number of insects, birds and, in one case, a mammal. It also depicts the way one species takes advantage of normally destructive fires to assist in its reproduction. The film was made in co-operation with the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and is narrated by David Attenborough.

**The last Edens: Knysna** / directors, Claudio Velasquez and Francois Odendaal.

The area that lies between the Outeniqua Mountains and the Indian Ocean around Knysna is a unique habitat that has managed to survive from ancient times. This film, one in a projected series, first takes a look at the local forests and then follows the Knysna River as it travels down to the sea, resulting in an estuary that forms a rich feeding ground for a variety of birds. Regular rainfall

throughout the year ensures the survival of a diversity of forest plants, which in turn provides food for the creatures that live in the river. Attractively photographed, the film concentrates on creepy, crawly animals, though on the mudflats the birds get a look in. The commentary is strictly informative and the accompanying music non-intrusive.

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## Let's look at fynbos

Fynbos is the collective term used to describe the indigenous vegetation of the South and South West Cape. Although it comprises a small area, it is acknowledged to be one of the world's six richest botanical areas. From a distance this shrublike vegetation looks uniform, but when examined from close by there turns out to be a great variety. It is estimated that there are no fewer than 8 500 species, including some that are found nowhere else. This programme provides an introduction to the three most important plant families - proteaceae, restionaceae and ericaceae - and then shows examples of plants from other families. This is followed by a discussion of the climate and environmental factors that influence their form and appearance. Finally it describes the fine network of relationships that ensures the survival of this part of our natural heritage. This programme is also available in Afrikaans under the title of **Kom kyk saam na fynbos**.

## Let's look at the Tsitsikamma forest

Since the middle of the 18th century, when the first settlers established themselves, the Tsitsikamma forest has been ruthlessly exploited. This destruction meant that, by 1886, three-quarters of the region had already been damaged. In 1939 the forest was placed under state control and today it is a protected area. This programme describes the forest as a living organism with a complex ecosystem. It first discusses the topography of the three basic regions - mountain, plateau and coast - and the abiotic influences upon them. Then it identifies different species of indigenous trees, amongst them the yellowwood and the stinkwood. This is followed by an analysis of the food chain, from plants, who produce energy, to the different kinds of consumers, namely herbivores, carnivores and omnivores. It asks for appreciation for the complexity of the system and makes a plea for its preservation. This programme is also available in Afrikaans under the title of **Kom kyk saam na die Tsitsikammawoud**.

**Mountain of the sea** / producer and director, Trevor de Kock.

Originally produced for the British Broadcasting Corporation's (BBC) *The natural world* slot, this programme presents an overview of the animal life and plant kingdom of Table Mountain and its immediate surroundings. Filmed throughout the year, from the hot summers to the wet winters, it depicts how wildlife is influenced by climatic factors such as the changing winds and the famous 'table cloth', which provides much-needed moisture during the dry months. It also shows how the fynbos benefits from the sometimes-raging fires, with some plants actually requiring the heat in order to spread their seeds. Various creatures feature, but some, like penguins, baboons, dassies and sunbirds, are returned to more than once in order to supply continuity. Another aspect is the relationship between the environment and the people of Cape Town, many of whom are aware that they are privileged to live in one of the most beautiful parts of the world. The producer/director, Trevor de Kock, was also responsible for **The Great Karoo: a secret Africa** (1991) and **Springbok of the Kalahari** (1993), both made for the BBC.

## Related titles

**Durban's mangrove swamps**

**A fragile harmony: the West Coast National Park**

**The Great Karoo: a secret Africa**  
**Kirstenbosch: an introduction to the Cape floral kingdom.**

These informative titles can serve to instill pride in the natural wonders of South Africa and thereby result in its preservation for generations to come.

Note: Reviews by Freddy Ogterop, Film/Video/DVD Selector.

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