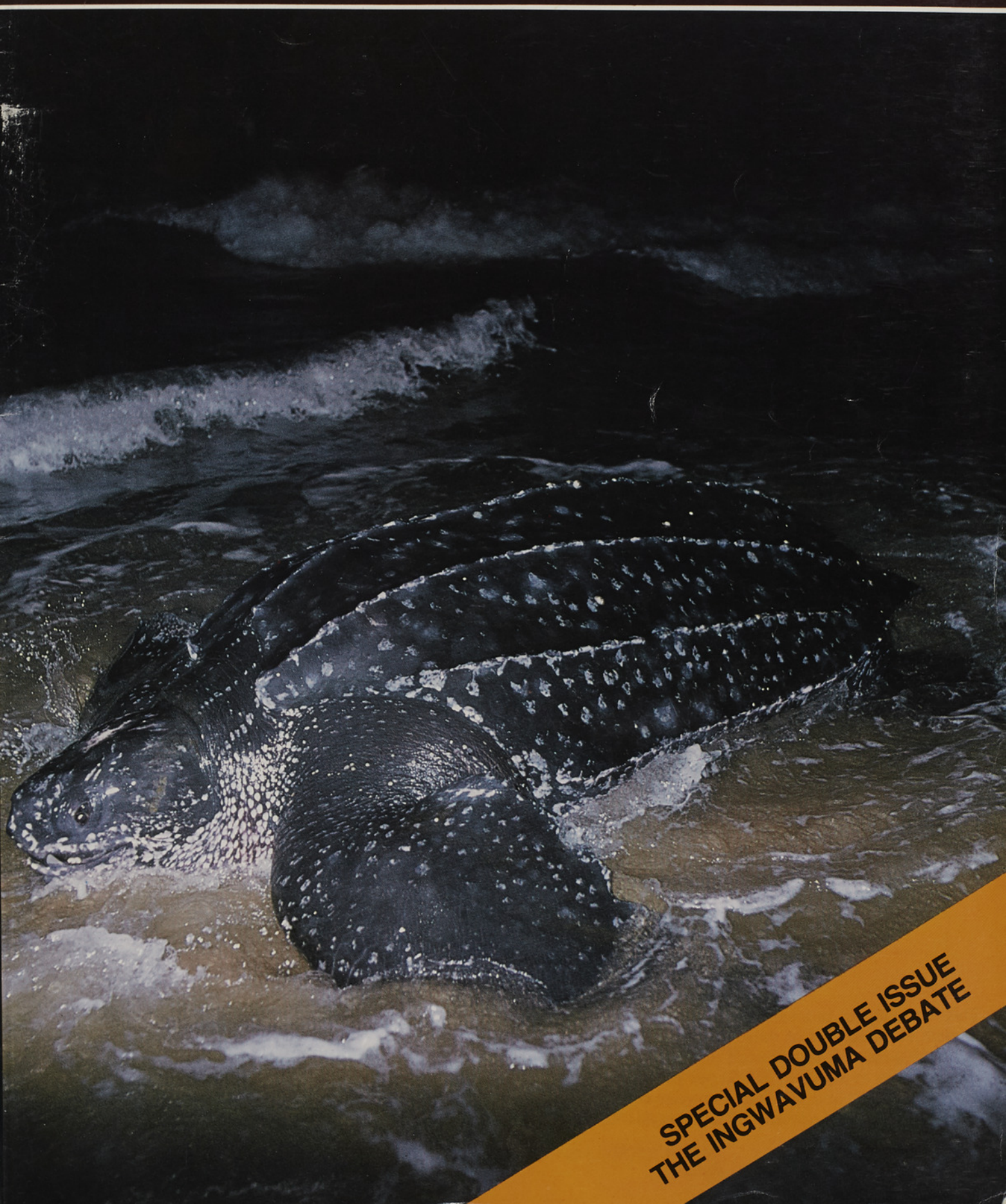


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SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE  
THE INGWAVUMA DEBATE





# THE INGWAVUMA DEBATE

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*In this article, the President of The Wildlife Society, Dr. E. A. Zaloumis, outlines the Society's feelings on the "Ingwavuma Land Deal". We believe that the Society has the backing of the vast majority of nature conservationists in this country in its stand against the proposed cession of the Ingwavuma District of northern Natal to Swaziland. This guest editorial, and the articles which follow it, outline the ecological arguments against the proposals.*

**T**O some, the Ingwavuma controversy is a political issue, pure and simple. To The Wildlife Society of Southern Africa it is a conservation issue, and one which shows signs of becoming the most controversial conservation dispute of the 1980s. We do not presume to pass political judgement on the thinking of the governments of South Africa, or Swaziland, or upon the thinking of the Legislative Assembly of KwaZulu, but we hold strong views on the ecological implications of the proposed "Ingwavuma Land Deal", and we believe they should be brought to the attention of the people of southern Africa.

We have decided therefore to devote this entire issue of *African Wildlife* to the Ingwavuma District of northern Natal, to give our members and readers an insight into this fascinating but little-known part of our natural heritage. The articles have been written by a group of ecologists, whose individual fields of expertise are as varied and diverse as the many ecosystems of Maputaland (of which region the Ingwavuma District forms a part). We hope that, after reading this magazine, our readers will have a better understanding of the issues involved.

Ingwavuma itself is a small village in the Lebombo Mountains on the western edge of Maputaland, but within the magisterial district which bears its name is an array of natural areas of immense ecological value to South Africa and to the world. These include:

- Ndumu Game Reserve, with its series of shallow lakes and pans, rich in crocodiles, hippopotamus and especially birdlife;
- Kosi Bay, an unspoiled estuary and lake system, with raphia palms and the famous "fish kraal" network at the mouth of the estuary;
- the Maputaland coral reef; this is the only coral reef system in the Republic

of South Africa; it is a truly magnificent and ecologically important resource;

- the famous nesting beaches of the endangered leatherback turtle and loggerhead turtle;
- the Sand Forest of Sihangwane, with its free-ranging elephants, the last in South Africa outside nature reserves;
- the Gwaliweni Forest of the Lebombo Mountains, a particularly fine example of "Lebombo Forest", and the only one in South Africa; it is also the burial place of the renowned Zulu king, Dingaan.

I could go on, but these are merely examples of the unique ecosystems of northern Maputaland. The term "unique", so often misused, is truly difficult to avoid in this context. Indeed Maputaland has been proposed as a World Heritage Site for consideration by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (I.U.C.N.); only four other such sites have been put forward as candidates in South Africa by The Wildlife Society. Our concern for the area also led us to the co-production, with Rhodes University, of the book *Studies on the ecology of Maputaland* (see article on p. 146).

## THE BOMBSHELL

When the South African Government made known, during June 1982, its intention to cede the whole of the Ingwavuma Magisterial District to Swaziland, the announcement came as a complete surprise to the people of South Africa. Apparently without prior consultation with numerous interested parties, proclamations were issued excising the area from KwaZulu. The validity of these proclamations has since been successfully challenged in the courts where a Supreme Court action and subsequent appeal has declared, in effect, that the Government had acted beyond its powers. Nevertheless, the matter has not been shelved and a Commission has now (November 1982) been appointed to investigate the matter fully and to make recommendations on the future of this area.

The waves of protest from historians, anthropologists, ecologists, politicians of many persuasions, the general public and in particular from the Zulu nation, have rocked the issue since June. Now at least, with the establishment of a commission, the voices of these interested parties will be heard formally by the Government.

For its part, The Wildlife Society took the view that the proposed transfer could have very serious consequences for nature conservation in the region, and we condemned the Government's intentions in the strongest possible terms. I emphasise that our actions were in no way politically motivated. Our sole concern

was, and is, that this unique area should be properly conserved for the benefit of future generations of humankind.

## A HARBOUR FOR KOSI BAY?

The area has been threatened in the past. On several occasions a harbour has been proposed for Kosi Bay. This would not only be the kiss of death to this, our last pristine estuarine system in Natal (see George Begg's article on page 178), but it would also seriously threaten the immediate hinterland of Kosi Bay because of the inevitable development of the infrastructure necessary to support the harbour — a town, factories, railways, roads, drainage schemes, and probably intensive agricultural development.

The harbour scheme has been rejected by senior South African Government politicians, and recently the KwaZulu authorities who control the area have committed themselves to conserving the whole region in its natural state. They intend to set up a "natural resource area" — a network of nature reserves interspersed with human settlements, where hopefully man will live in harmony with nature.

But if the land is transferred to Swaziland, what are the probabilities? Kosi Bay and the strip of land between it and Swaziland would constitute that country's only access to the sea. Kosi Bay is the only possible harbour site on the coastline included in the proposed land transfer, and the likelihood of the Swaziland authorities not developing Kosi Bay as a harbour is small; indeed, they would almost be obliged to develop it, with consequent irreversible damage to be inflicted on the sensitive ecosystems of the area, from the coral reefs offshore, through the Kosi system to the Pongolo floodplain.

The transfer of the district to Swaziland will in our view, as an inevitable consequence of economic and political necessity, signal its destruction as a natural area.

But even if it were to be argued that the Swazi people are equally competent to conserve the area (about which we express no opinion), and even if they pledged themselves to do so, this would still not justify the handing over of the area to them. Indeed it would be a compelling argument against, for if both parties intend to treat the area in similar fashion, then why in the name of goodness hand it over at all?

There are some six million Zulu people who regard the area as part of their country. It is theirs, they take pride in it, and they intend to cherish it, just as any country would its national treasures or its natural cultural heritage. Could Egypt be expected to hand over the treasures of the Pharaohs? Or Greece its Parthenon? Or the United States of America its Yellowstone National Park? The very idea



# GUEST EDITORIAL



is ludicrous. So is the plan to excise Ingwavuma from South Africa.

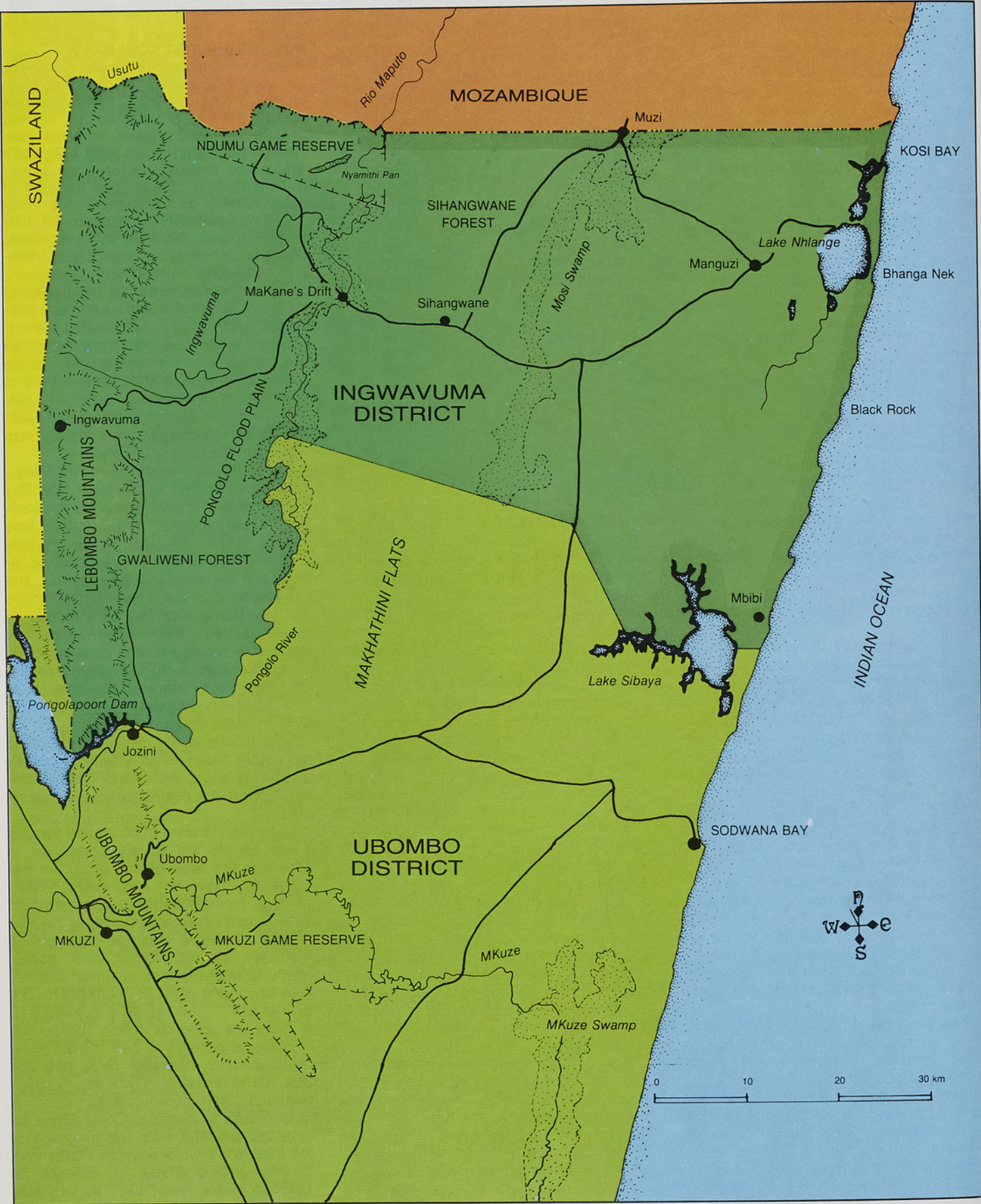
We believe it is the duty of The Wildlife Society to do all that it can to ensure the continued survival of the Ingwavuma District as part of our natural heritage. We

would be failing in our duty if we stood silent.

*"To sustain an environment suitable for man, we must fight on a thousand battlegrounds. Despite all our wealth and knowledge we cannot create a*

*redwood forest, a wild river, or a gleaming sea-shore. But we can keep those we have."*

President Lyndon B. Johnson  
Message to Congress, February 1964.





# THE KWAZULU BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES

J. C. Greig, Editor, *The Wildlife Society of Southern Africa*.

ON 14th June 1982, the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr. P. J. G. Koornhof, informed a stunned KwaZulu Legislative Assembly of the South African Government's intention to hand over the Ingwavuma District of Northern Natal to the Government of Swaziland. Predictably, this proposal unleashed a storm of protest from all points of the compass and from all shades of political persuasion. It is not my purpose to discuss the political implications of the "Ingwavuma Land Deal" as it is called — these have been thrashed out *ad nauseam* in the Press, on television and in the Supreme Court. I would, however, like to state the conservation viewpoint of the KwaZulu authorities because we believe the South African public at large should be made aware of the important developments taking place in the conservation field in KwaZulu.

The Chief Minister of KwaZulu, Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi, needs little introduction to the readers of *African Wildlife*. His views on the problems of nature conservation in an overpopulated, deforested, overgrazed KwaZulu have been the subject of several articles in recent years.

In a speech by Chief Buthelezi at the KwaZulu Nature Conservation Week in May 1981 he said: "In the meantime, whatever resources are at our disposal, and however limited these are in terms of land apportionment, we Blacks have a duty and a moral obligation to protect them. This is for our own sake and not because this is also in the interests of the White man whose image is, by and large, and rightly or wrongly, that of greed and extreme selfishness".

KwaZulu has had an active Nature Conservation Section for some years now, but recently the conservation movement there has received new impetus thanks to the formation of a Bureau of Natural Resources under the direct control of the Chief Minister. The establishment of the new Bureau is a significant step in the right direction in view of the enormous environmental problems confronting KwaZulu.

These problems are closely linked with the rapid increase in the population of KwaZulu and are exacerbated by the serious shortage of land. As population increases, housing needs swallow up more and more arable land and the problem snowballs. Cultivators have been forced to move into marginal and fragile ecosystems often causing irreparable damage to the environment.

In addition, high human populations in rural areas go hand in hand with high stock numbers. Overpopulation of livestock in hilly KwaZulu can lead only to severe soil erosion — as anyone who has travelled through this part of Natal will attest.

The quality of life of KwaZulu's inhabitants is not high at present. If environmental degradation cannot be checked, this quality of life will decline further. How far can it go?

The Bureau of Natural Resources is involved in the protection and rational utilisation of KwaZulu's total environment. It will concern itself with such basic environmental issues as:

- control of pollution;
- control of soil erosion
- environmental impact studies

In addition it will sponsor the formulation of regional development plans (one such plan for Maputaland has in fact been completed), and it will develop the tourist industry in KwaZulu to its fullest extent. The region has tremendous potential for tourism and the Bureau is presently devising a comprehensive plan to develop this somewhat neglected industry. The tourist facilities of KwaZulu will be aimed at the South African market as well as at the lucrative international market.



Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi.  
photo: H. C. Bourn

The Nature Conservation Section, which was formerly part of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, forms the nucleus around which the Bureau is being built. However, the Bureau is widening its scope far beyond the development of game and nature reserves — to which nature conservation departments traditionally confine themselves.

The Bureau has already identified and started to develop 18 priority conservation areas, and has embarked upon

- a survey of indigenous plant utilisation in Maputaland
- a survey of the ecology of the Kosi Lake System
- a study of the utilisation of rocky sea-shore life by the people of Maputaland
- large-scale extension projects aimed at informing the people of KwaZulu of their environment and how to conserve it for future generations.

The indigenous forests of KwaZulu constitute a botanical resource of inestimable value. The Wildlife Society's Forest Survey has drawn attention to their importance but, sad to say, the Bureau has established that 80% of the Tribal forest reserves proclaimed between 1942 and 1952 have been chopped out totally, or damaged so severely that they will never recover, or will recover only with vast injections of money and ecological exper-

tise. Thanks to the work of the Department of Forestry, however, the major forest areas such as Ngoye, Ngome, Qudeni and Nkandhla are still preserved intact. They will provide "living laboratory" facilities and a source of genetic material for any future plans to revive despoiled indigenous forest areas.

Overpopulation with humans has manifold effects. One is the removal of firewood to satisfy energy requirements. Without electricity, a villager requires an estimated one ton of firewood per person per year. That's not a small quantity — that's a chunk of an ecosystem! And don't forget that rural people use indigenous wood sources for building houses and stock enclosures. Termites take an annual toll of untreated wood, and replacement is expensive in regenerating timber.

But forests aren't only sources of timber. Forests are reservoirs of genetic material, they are irreplaceable ecosystems, and they exert a little-understood but not inconsiderable control over patterns of climate, hydrology and nutrient-cycling.

The Bureau of Natural Resources was established on 1st April 1982 and it has a staff complement of 162. Its main objective is to improve the quality of life of all the people living in KwaZulu by ensuring that they live in a healthy environment.

KwaZulu has a fully-fledged environmental agency, a conservation infrastructure which is not a source of hot air, but of determined action. The loss of Ingwavuma would be a cruel blow to this forward-looking department. No other body in this ecologically sensitive area, where Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa meet, with the honourable exception of the Natal Parks Board, has a comparable conservation record. It surely deserves to be given a chance!

If Ingwavuma should be lost to a nation which has proved itself eager to set itself in the forefront of conservation action, and here we are talking of the Zulu nation, it would be a conservation tragedy.

Conservation should not be a nationalist obsession — it is international. KwaZulu's conservation problems are most immediate to the Zulu, but they are the problems of White South Africa, and they are the problems of the world.

Think on the words of the 17th Century English poet John Donne:

"No man is an *Island*, entire of it self; every man is a piece of the *Continent*, a part of the *main*; if a *clod* be washed away by the *sea*, *Europe* is the less, as well as if a *promontory* were . . . any man's death diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *Mankind*; And therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It tolls for *thee*."

John Donne: *Meditation XVII*

For further information on the work of the Bureau of Natural Resources, write to its Director, Mr. H. C. Bourn, The Bureau of Natural Resources, Private Bag X01, Ulundi, 3838 (telephone 0358-211 ext. 105).