

“The beauty of Africa is not man made, it is nature's gift to humanity”

Paul Oxton



Before colonisation, the indigenous people of South Africa did not have to consider conserving natural resources as their low numbers, needs, transient living and ethos kept the balance between nature and human needs. When European settlers arrived in 1652, this balance changed because of, firstly, establishing fixed towns and villages which put immense strain on local resources and, secondly, the ability to kill more efficiently and use more resources than were needed to sustain the local population.

foreign miners and settlers who started off killing for the pot and then for sport at an unprecedented scale.

In 1912, he submitted a proposal to Sir Patrick Duncan that the reserves should become a national park. This idea was well accepted and was also supported by the Wildlife Society of Southern Africa.

In 1923, Col Denys Reitz MP visited the Sabie Game Reserve, was very impressed and used his influence to lobby the idea of a national park. He drafted the bill on national parks, but due to the elections and change in government, the bill was not passed. Minister Piet Grobler, the Minister of Lands, once again tabled the bill in parliament. At long last, the memorable day dawned and it was on

The first sign for conservation in South Africa was when in 1658 when Jan van Riebeeck issued a Placaat to burgers to stop cutting down trees on the eastern side of Table Mountain from Rondebosch to



Bishopscourt (Boschheuvel). In the Overberg, in 1800, the Blue Buck becomes extinct and in the same area, in 1837, there were only 27 bontebok left on the planet. Alexander van der Bijl, on his farm, Nachtwacht near Bredasdorp, made it his goal to increase the numbers. By 1927 there were 77 in the area and 44 at Swellendam. A dedicated reserve for these buck was called for, resulting in the establishment of the Bontebok National Park just outside Swellendam at a later date under SanPark management.

Other nature reserves, private and local government initiatives, were put in place before a network of national parks were conceived. The first game reserve to be established was Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Game Reserve in 1895. What was lacking with all these separate nature reserves was a holistic view and planning of the needs of all of South Africa's conservation requirements.

The idea for a national park and thereafter a network of game reserves under one umbrella came about in 1910 when the game reserves and general wildlife preservation were placed under the Transvaal Administration.

At this stage, Stevenson-Hamilton was very optimistic about the future of the reserves and conservation. He had managed to convince landowners to oversee the land between the Sabie and Olifants rivers, as well as between the Letaba and Shingwedzi rivers. One of the reasons was the decimation of wildlife in this area by

31 May 1926, that Minister Grobler moved the National Parks Bill in Parliament. He presented it as a realisation of President Kruger's ideal. Despite opposition, the National Parks Act, Act No. 56 of 1926, was promulgated on this day, finally turning a vision into a reality and the first board of South African National Parks was appointed.

In 1927, the park was opened to the public who were charged a £1 fee. The first three tourist cars entered the park in 1927,

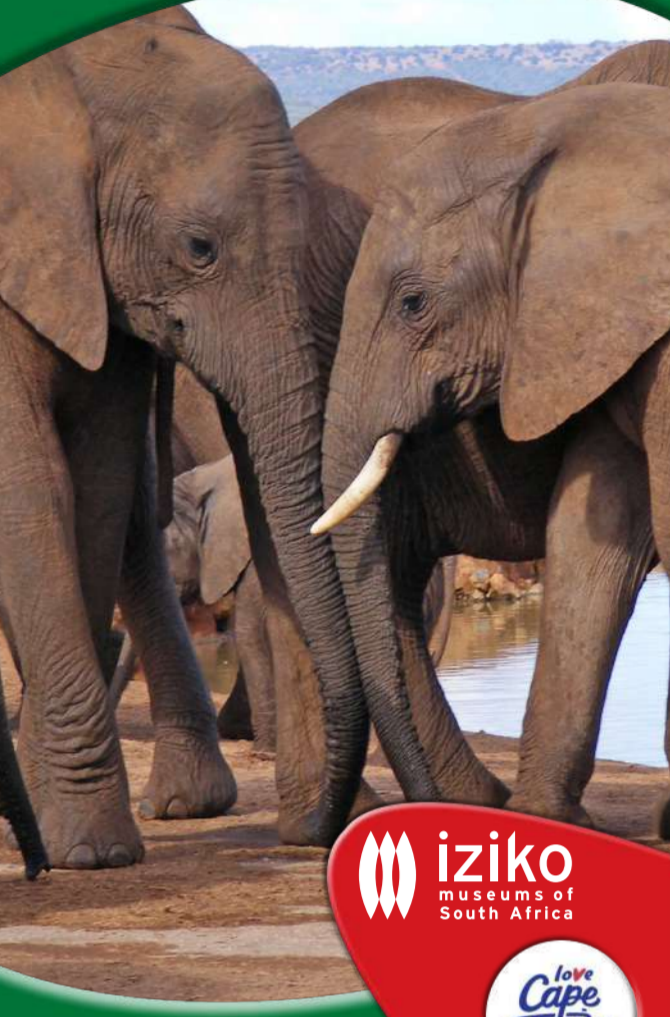
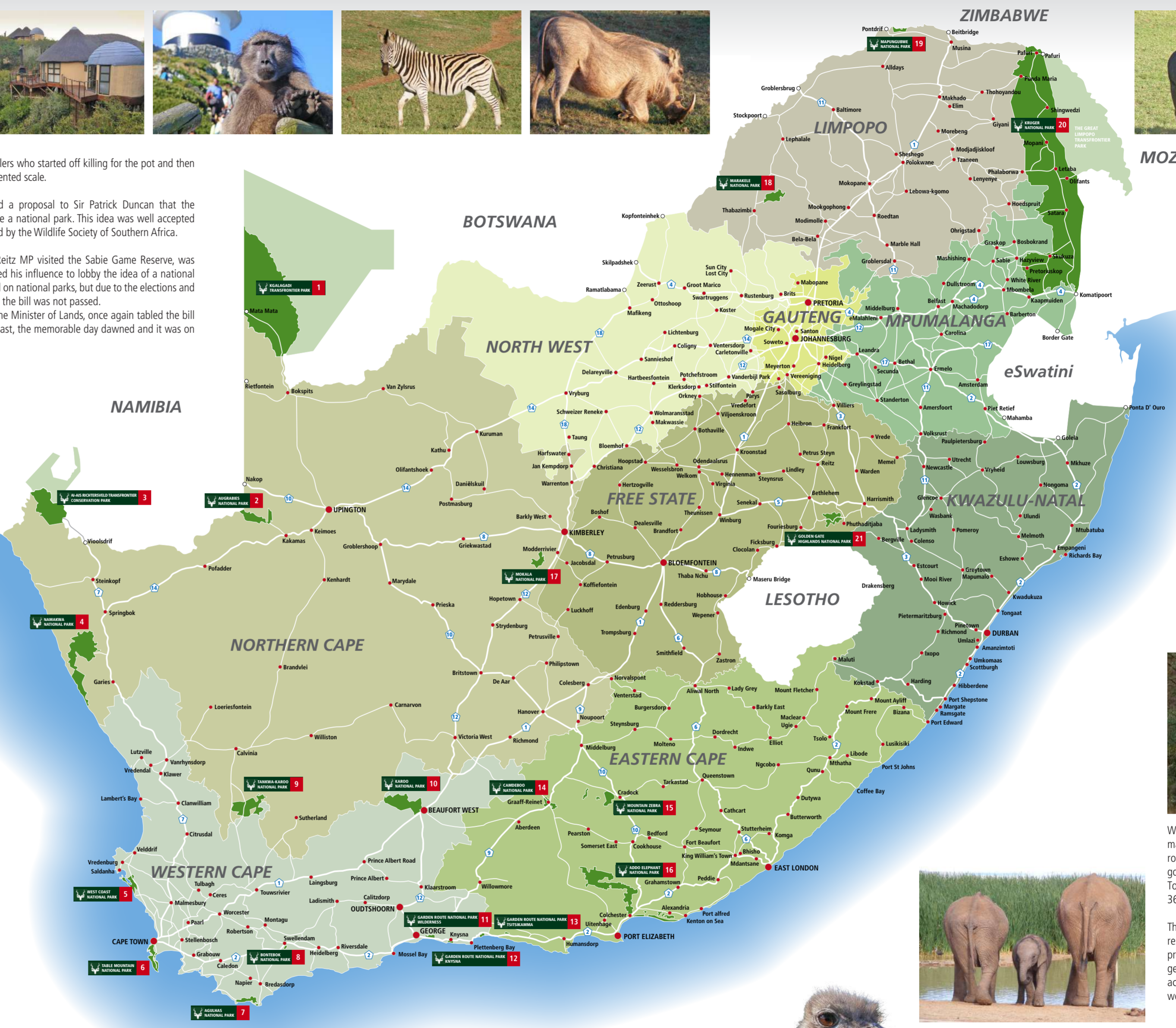
jumping to 180 cars in 1928 and 850 cars in 1929. Warden James Stevenson-Hamilton retired in 1946, after 44 years as warden of the Kruger Park and its predecessor, the Sabie Game Reserve. Today, the Kruger has over a million visitors per year.

From this first national park, SanParks has been acquiring land by design to establish areas throughout the country to protect certain species of flora and fauna that are unique to the area and in need of protection.

The stiched face of a kudu with its magnificent, curved horns was adopted as the face of South African National Parks. First appearing in 1955, it has undergone many improvements over the years. This logo was considered secondary to those of the individual parks; however, now the Kudu is the predominant logo used to represent all parks within the SANParks framework.

South African National Parks (SANParks) is the leading conservation authority in all national parks around this country, responsible for 3 751 113 hectares of protected land in 19 national parks.

The focus for SANParks in the first decade of democracy has been to make national parks more accessible to tourists and people of all colour in order to ensure conservation remains a viable contributor to social and economic development in rural areas.



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With the changed structure of the country after 1994, and with majority rule, the then National Parks Board re-conceptualised its role in South African society. SANParks, supported by the government through the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, has also increased the area of land under its protection by 360 000 hectares in this time.

The organisation has managed to transform itself, continue its high research and management standards, expand the land under its protection at an entirely unprecedented rate and has also begun to generate 75% of its operating revenue – a spectacular financial achievement compared to most conservation agencies in the world, including those in developed countries.

