

The Lesotho Biodiversity Trust is officially launched

Experts and Professionals of the Environment Biodiversity discipline from Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa gathered in Maseru on 10 December 2004 to workshop and officially launch the Lesotho Biodiversity Trust (LBT). The LBT was registered on 02 July 2004 under the deeds registry Act 1967 – its objectives include projects and interventions to prevent the extinction of wild plants and animals in Lesotho, with special emphasis on the endangered Maloti Minnow.

The implementation of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) in respect of the impoundment of the highlands water; affected the maloti minnow habitat in the upper reaches of Phase 1B rivers. The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) instituted mitigation intervention under the Environmental Action Plan (EAP) to address the threat poised by the impoundment through the establishment of LBT referred to above. The LHDA Chief Executive, Mr. Liphapang Potloane is the Chairman of the Trust.

The Chairman of the LBT, Mr Liphapang Potloane, welcomed the delegates. Professor Maitland Seaman of Free State University and a Trustee of the LBT made some interesting observations on biodiversity to set the scene for the workshop.

The keynote address on “the importance of biodiversity” was delivered by the Honourable Minister of Tourism, Environment and Culture, Ms L. Nts’inyi. She said that Lesotho had international obligations to conserve biodiversity as a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity. She welcomed the establishment of the LBT and its commitment to lending support to government’s activities, in areas of conservation and protection of wild life in Lesotho.

At the same occasion, Dr Thikhoi Jonathan, of the National University of Lesotho, submitted a presentation on biodiversity research on plants particularly medicinal plants in Lesotho. Dr David Maphisa, also of NUL, presented a paper on wild animals found in Lesotho, particularly those threatened by extinction.

Professor Paul Skelton of Institute of Ichthyology at Cape Town presented work done by Dr Johan Rall on the Maloti Minnow in Lesotho Highlands. He symbolically handed-over the minnow project to the LBT to continue with the research and conservation activities on this critically endangered fish, found only in Lesotho. Dr Jim Taylor from the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) also gave a presentation on environmental education in the SADC region. He was followed by Ms Yolán Friedmann, who is a conservation manager of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, and also Chairperson of the South African IUCN (World Conservation Union) committee and Programme Director for the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, Southern Africa. She presented a paper on “The IUCN, Red Data Books and the role of NGOs in biodiversity conservation”. A copy of the new South African Red Data Book on Mammals was presented to the Minister. She also offered the minister assistance in respect of establishing a Red Data Book for Lesotho wild life.

Mr. Potloane, thanked the presenters and everyone for attending. The day was ended in sharing various professional ideas or conservation in Lesotho.



Mr Adri van der Veer (LBT Trustee), Honourable Minister Ms L. Nts'inyi, Mr Liphapang Potloane (LBT Chairman), Dr Thikhoi Jonathan (LBT Trustee) and Professor Maitland Seaman (LBT Trustee)



Ms Yolán Friedmann, Honourable Minister Ms L. Nts'inyi and Dr Thikhoi Jonathan



The Honourable Minister Ms L. Nts'inyi chats to Professor Paul Skelton over a cup of tea