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A NARRATIVE INTERPRETATION OF CONTEMPORARY NATURE EXPERIENCES IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

There is an increasing awareness that human beings are disconnected from nature. Physical disconnectedness from nature may lead to psychological and spiritual malfunctioning. Those who are aware of this disconnectedness try to compensate by spending leisure time in nature. The urge to go 'back to nature' was the start of ecotourism. The increase in tourist traffic and the concomitant development brings about negative effects, subjecting tourists to disappointment. Development has destroyed the specific experience which the people came for in the first place. Should environmental degradation continue, the enriching experiences people have in nature will no longer exist. The preferred outcome for ecotourists is to acquire a sense of spiritual sustenance that could enhance their optimal functioning after experiencing a natural environment. A disregard for sound principles of responsible ecotourism development could result in lost opportunities.

The research problem is located in the fact that individuals are seldom aware of their disconnectedness from the natural environment. Secondly, there is a need for more pristine, natural environments where humans can restore their encounters with the nature. Ecotourism development should be sensitive to the tastes of tourists who have as their objectives memorable experiences in natural environments.

During this exploratory study, interviews, questionnaires and field observations were used to collect qualitative and limited quantitative data. Findings confirm that human beings are part of nature. Technological progress has led to an indoor lifestyle that causes humans to become disconnected from nature. Disconnectedness also involves a spiritual dimension. To restore a sense of connectedness between human beings and nature, people need to spend time in nature. Ecotourism originated from and exists because of the desire of individuals to reconnect to nature. They fulfil this desire by experiencing unspoilt natural environments, both physically and spiritually.

Although a pattern of phases in a nature experience can be distinguished, every individual attaches a personal meaning to the experience. People have satisfying nature experiences in any natural environment. The intensity or fulfilment of such experiences depends on personal perceptions as well as external disturbances, such as litter and inappropriate behaviour.

People attach meaning to experiences by structuring them into stories. The more we talk about the nature experience, the more knowledge is added to it. Consequently the experience becomes powerful, adding quality to people's lives and relationships. In this regard, aspects of rituals, metaphors and symbols, as well as spiritual experiences, play a significant role in the meaning people find in natural environments.

OPSOMMING

Daar is toenemende bewustheid dat die mens van die natuur vervreemd is. Fisiese vervreemdheid van die natuur kan tot psigologiese en spirituele wanfunksionering lei. Individue wat van die vervreemding bewus is, probeer kompenseer deur vryetyd in die natuur deur te bring. Die behoefte om 'tot die natuur terug te keer' was die begin van ekotoerisme. Die toename in toeristeverkeer en gevolglike ontwikkeling het negatiewe invloede en teleurstelling by toeriste meegebring. Ontwikkeling vernietig die spesifieke ervaring waarvoor mense die omgewing primêr besoek. Indien omgewingsagteruitgang voortduur, sal die verrykende ervarings wat mense in die natuur het nie langer bestaan nie. Die uiteindelike gewensde uitkoms is vir ekotoeriste om 'n gevoel van spirituele ervarings in die natuur te ondergaan, wat hul optimale funksionering kan bevorder. Wanneer die gesonde beginsels van verantwoordelike ekotoerisme-ontwikkeling verontagsaam word, kan geleenthede verlore gaan.

Die navorsingsprobleem is gegrond op die feit dat individue selde van hulle vervreemdheid van die natuur bewus is. Tweedens is daar 'n behoefte aan meer ongeskonde natuurlike omgewings waar mense weer met die natuurlike omgewing kan herverbind. Ekotoerisme-ontwikkeling behoort sensitief te wees vir die smake van toeriste wie ten doel het om onvergeetlike ervarings in natuurlike omgewings te hê.

Tydens hierdie ondersoekende studie is onderhoude, vraelyste en veldwaarnemings gebruik om kwalitatiewe en beperkte kwantitatiewe data in te samel. Bevindinge bevestig dat die mens deel van die natuur is. Tegnologiese vooruitgang het tot 'n binnenshuise leefstyl gelei, wat veroorsaak dat mense van die natuur vervreemd raak. Die vervreemding het ook 'n spirituele dimensie. Om 'n gevoel van gebondenheid tussen mense en die natuur te herstel, is dit nodig dat mense meer tyd in die natuur bestee. Ekotoerisme het ontstaan en bestaan tans as gevolg van die begeerte van individue om met die natuur te herverbind. Hierdie begeerte

word vervul deur ongeskonde natuurlike omgewings op 'n fisiese en spirituele vlak te ervaar.

Hoewel 'n patroon van fases in 'n natuurervaring onderskei kan word, heg elke individu 'n eie betekenis aan die ervaring. Mense het bevredigende ervarings in enige natuurlike omgewing. Die intensiteit en vervulling daarvan is onderhewig aan persoonlike persepsies en eksterne steurings soos rommel en ongeoorloofde gedrag.

Mense heg betekenis aan ervarings deur dit in stories te struktureer. Hoe meer oor die natuurervaring gepraat word, hoe meer kennis word daartoe bygevoeg. Gevolglik kry die ervaring mag en voeg dit kwaliteit tot 'n mens se lewe en verhoudings toe. In hierdie verband speel die aspek van rituele, metafore en simbole, asook spirituele ervarings, 'n merkbare rol in die betekenis wat mense in natuurlike omgewings vind.

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PROLOGUE

Imagination is more important than knowledge
(Albert Einstein, 1879 - 1955).

This document is not a conventional thesis.

Many people deny the existence of anything they cannot perceive. This thesis is part of a process of developing a vision of life which promises hope for the future. To have an effect, certain things must be understood and practised. One way of doing this is by sharing experiences we have in and with nature. Many of the 'facts' presented in this thesis often consist of personal interpretations of observations and experiences, but cumulatively they point the way to a vision and understanding for those who are willing and able to approach these concepts with an open mind. Considering the condition of the world and the behaviour of humanity towards other creatures and the planet itself, it is an open question as to whether we have a choice.

This thesis attempts to share experiences honestly and without prejudice, not necessarily to convert the reader, but to invite you, the reader, to join me on my journey into nature and the minds of people, to discover the value of Einstein's observation that *imagination is more important than knowledge*. It takes us on an exciting and, sometimes, philosophical expedition of experiences into the unknown and the unexpected to eventually uncover 'truth' and knowledge, or perhaps just better understanding...

For a long time I have wondered about the question: "What is the value of nature for people?" There are many theories about the effect of nature, or elements of nature, on people. This study is about the fundamental meaning of nature to individual persons. What does one personally gain from having contact with

nature? To find answers, I had to listen, observe and experience... Sometimes I even attempted to 'measure' experiences.

This thesis is about an integrated and holistic approach to the interpretation of econarratives, of people who are trying to find meaning in nature. When realising this essential need for unspoilt nature, perhaps then perspectives will change towards conserving and taking care of nature. Nothing but changing our way of seeing and understanding the world can produce real, meaningful, and lasting change ... and that change in perspective will then naturally lead us to begin to control our populations, save our forests, re-create community and reduce our wasteful consumption (Hartman, 2001:3).

This study is an inquiry into the life-changing potential of a true nature experience and whether the effects are lasting. It attempts to determine what inner processes occur within the individual and what spiritual benefits the nature experience may offer. It examines nature experiences from different perspectives and tries to find what these features of experience have in common.

By comparing the diversity of nature experiences of individuals, the study seeks commonalities and differences, what they are, why they exist and what value they might add to the understanding and well-being of the individual. It is an attempt to contribute to the qualitative and narrative research in this area, to help formulate more ideas regarding the dynamic nature experience and its implications to all species on earth.

The following is a synopsis of the study.

1. TYPE OF RESEARCH

This thesis is a report on an exploratory research conducted over four years. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through narratives expressed as experiences, through discussions, documentation analyses, literature reviews, observation checklists, questionnaires, diaries, interviews and reflections.

2. THE THESIS

- Each chapter has the potential to be an independent research topic. In the presented format, it contributes to the understanding of the theme in general.

- My point of departure is that human beings are part of nature and that nature has a fundamental meaning to each individual, even if the individual is not (yet) aware (conscious) of that.

- The open-minded reader is going to explore: the dynamic nature of this thesis, the dynamics of nature within each study participant, and hopefully, the dynamics within oneself... because, while doing this research I often find myself 'playing on the seashore, diverting myself every now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me...' (Isaac Newton, 1642 - 1727).

The chapters are divided into the following topics:

1. Introduction

At the outset there is an exposition of the substantiation, the research problem and research questions.

2. Research methodology and exposition

The reader is provided with a description of the methodology used and the exposition of the thesis.

3. Narrative and social constructionism in human-nature interrelationship

This chapter provides the reader with some insights into the basics of the thesis. An overview of the narrative and social construction theory is provided. The intention is to shed some light on the constructs used in the study.

4. The origin of human-nature disconnectedness

This is an analysis of the current fundamental disconnection that exists between human beings and the natural environment. In addition, an overview is given on the lives of cultures who were in close connection with nature, for example the San of the Kalahari.

5. Reconnecting to nature: a spiritual experience

Reasons are provided why humans need to reconnect with nature. There are proposals on methods to make people realise the state of disconnectedness and how they try to become reconnected to nature. The spiritual dimension is emphasised.

6. Ecotourism: meaning, growth and implications

Ecotourism is discussed as a means whereby people have become partially reconnected to nature. South Africa boasts some of the world's prime natural environments. It is therefore important to look at the more effective appreciation of these places.

7. Nature experiences in selected natural areas

In this chapter an analysis of the data, obtained from nature experiences of individuals in three selected categories of natural areas in South Africa, namely developed, less developed and undeveloped, is provided. A description and interpretation of different identified phases of a nature experience is included.

8. Factors that affect a nature experience

A number of factors are identified and interpreted in respect of aspects that negatively influence nature experiences of people.

9. Narrative interpretation of a nature experience

This chapter describes the effectiveness of econarratives in the everyday existence of individuals. An interpretation and analyses of the stories people tell about their nature experiences are provided. The relationship between the story (language), knowledge and the power of this knowledge on the individual's life, is interpreted.

10. Summary and conclusions

A summary and concluding remarks.

11. References

A list of all primary and secondary sources.

12. Addendum

Examples of questionnaires, interview questions and all comments, interviews, journals, reflections and other data used.

3. GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

The following concepts are often used and need contextual clarification for unambiguous interpretation throughout the thesis.

- *Conservation*: Refers to nature and environmental conservation which is the protection, preservation, management, or restoration of wildlife and of natural resources such as forests, soil and water.
- *Econarrative*: Refers to people's stories, and the effect thereof, from experiences in natural environments.
- *Ecotourism*: Nature-based tourism, a subdivision of tourism in general.
- *Ecotourist*: A person who spends time in a natural environment for leisure purposes.
- *Emotions*: For the purpose of this study, all feelings and inner thoughts are regarded as emotions (affective responses).
- *Narratives*: Stories people tell about experiences they encountered in their lives.
- *Natural environment/Natural area/Nature*: Where used in this thesis it includes any natural setting where people spend time for leisure purposes. It includes national, provincial and private game and nature reserves, undeveloped open spaces, resorts and destinations with a 'natural' character where people can at least have some experience with natural phenomena. It includes all of nature - living (plants and animals) and nonliving components.

- *Nature experience*: Any personal experience (that which an individual experiences in his/her own unique manner, irrespective of the nature or intensity thereof) that an individual has from being in a natural environment.
- *Language*: Any means of communication, including symbols and metaphors, to convey messages and meaning.
- *Spirituality*: For the purpose of this study it is a dimension different from the physical. It includes that part of the experience that is not always possible to verbalise. It also includes emotions and feelings. Although it can include a religion, it is more than only that.
- *Wilderness*: A region which contains no permanent inhabitants, no possibility for motorised sport (except perhaps for a limited number of 4 x 4 vehicles), and is spacious enough so that a traveller crossing it must have the experience of sleeping outdoors. There is no (or very limited) development with regards to manmade structures. These areas are somewhat hard to get to, somewhat difficult to travel through and possess certain rugged characteristics (Frederickson & Anderson, 1999:32). Although literature refers to wilderness as those areas which are uninhabited and undeveloped, 'where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, and man himself is a visitor who does not remain' (Graber, 1976:8), this study refers to 'wildlife' or 'natural' areas which include all natural environments as well as those places traditionally classified as 'wilderness'.

4. ASSUMPTIONS

- Where the concept 'environment' is used, it implies the natural environment unless otherwise stated.
- Where the word 'experience' is used, it implies an experience in a natural environment.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Study participants interviewed for the experience evaluation in Chapter 7 were not all exposed to all the different environments. Those who were interviewed for opinions on the Richtersveld have all visited developed and less developed areas, whilst those interviewed for developed and less developed areas, have not necessarily been to the Richtersveld. To ensure validity and reliability each individual was asked to describe their perception and understanding of all three areas, prior to being interrogated in respect of experiencing each environment.
- Study participants were diverse in age, ranging from 18 - 74 years of age.
- All study participants were asked to reflect on experiences in nature, irrespective of the place they had visited or the time they had spent there.
- Some study participants drew from their memories of relatively recent experiences, whilst others recalled experiences dating back to their childhood.

6. GENERAL

- All personal interviews, comments, field notes, personal reflections and journals of study participants are included in an addendum (written on CD included). Each consists of the following:

  → Personal interviews: Transcriptions of study participants' replies to questions from the researcher.

  → Personal reflections: Verbal and written representations of study participants' and the researcher's observations, particular feelings and experiences during visits to natural environments.

  → Comments: Precise notes taken of brief reactions of study participants during trips, short comments written in visitor books, short communications during informal conversations and information added as additional comments on questionnaires.

→ Field notes: Notes taken by the researcher during observations and participation in events at, and trips to natural environments.

→ Journals: Day-to-day records of experiences and feelings of study participants.

- Excerpts and examples from the above-mentioned in the text are direct quotations from study participants. In cases where interviews, reflections, etc., were done in Afrikaans, excerpts and examples are free translations from the original language.
- Personal details of each study participant are provided with each of the above-mentioned in the addendum. All participants gave informed consent to participate in this study. Some participants asked for anonymity. All information is regarded as confidential.
- Each interview, comment, field note, personal reflection and journal is individually numbered and referred to as follows in [ ]:

→ Personal interview: [PI-number:page number in addendum (applicable paragraph or question)] e.g. [PI-10:390(4)]

→ Personal reflection: [PR-number:page number in addendum] e.g. [PR-2:452]

→ Comment: [C-number:page number in addendum] e.g. [C-3:474]

→ Field note: [FN-number:page number in addendum] e.g. [FN-5:482]

→ Journal: [J-number:page number in addendum] e.g. [J-1:606]

- In cases where the complete interview, journal, etc., is referred to, only the number and page number in the addendum are indicated, for example [PI-2:290].
- In the addendum interview questions are numbered, printed in bold and are followed by the response of the study participant.
- References to chapters, paragraphs and study participants' contributions within the thesis are indicated by square brackets [ ].
- All photographs, illustrations and diagrams are referred to as 'Figures'.

- All photographs referred to in the thesis are taken by the researcher, unless indicated otherwise.

This thesis is a story about the stories of people who need to find sustenance in nature.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

No declaration of rights, human or other, can be complete unless it includes the rights of the earth and what the earth brings forth. The earth is wounded and bleeding to death around us. Remember this urgency and recognize above all that what we have begun to do here, is to make the world aware that we are a base from which all humankind can go forward to renew and make its divided self and the wounded earth whole, healed and holy again (Sir Laurens van der Post, 1906 - 1996).

1. ORIENTATION

Today the world finds itself in a paradox. On the one hand, we are in a golden era of scientific, technological and industrial sophistication. On the other hand we might be on the road to a multiple global crisis (Cavalieri, 1986:8). A closer look into this statement explains this paradox. Capra (1982) points out that scientific advances were, until recently, to a great extent, an intellectual issue. They were dominated by rational and analytical thinking. Simultaneously the earth was ecologically neglected. For example, while technological progress has lead to the development of complex systems of nuclear weapons to realise security objectives, nuclear war is currently one of the greatest threats to the earth. The degradation of the natural environment is mainly caused by industrialisation and technological advancement. As a result of the apparent contribution that these advancements have made to improved living standards, continued industrialisation remains high on the agenda of society. Capra (1982) is of the opinion that such perceptions are undoubtedly short-sighted. Apart from the potential health risks that plastics,

insecticides, synthetic preservatives and cosmetics and their by-products impose on the environment, the social implications are even greater. Capra (1982:4) rightfully says:

> The industrialised countries are plagued by the chronic and degenerative diseases appropriately called "diseases of civilisation", the principal killers being heart disease, cancer and strokes. On the psychological side, severe depression, schizophrenia and other psychiatric disorders appear to spring from parallel deterioration of our social disintegration, including a rise in violent crimes, accidents and suicides, increased alcoholism and drug abuse, and growing numbers of children with learning disabilities and behavioural disorders.

1.1 Realisations

Only relatively recently people have started realising in what ways we abuse the natural environment (Veitch & Arkkelin, 1995:2). We have also realised that the environment influences our lives. Gradually we have become aware of the delicate balance between the quality of the natural environment and the quality of human life. We also have come to realise that this balance can easily be upset by human actions. The dangers of acid rain, nuclear power plants, and the difficulties in handling and disposing of toxic waste are now being appreciated. We are now responding to a variety of realisations. Among these are urban decay (much has been recently been done to re-establish the city centres of Johannesburg and Pretoria to their previous state), while the depletion of non-renewable resources is an inevitability. Moreover cheap energy is a thing of the past. Chemicals such as formaldehyde and sulphur dioxide are becoming household words and unknown places like Love Canal, Chernobyl and Bhopal are first and foremost on people's minds when they think of human 'tragedies'. The incredible capacity of human beings to misappropriate and abuse the environment is now painfully apparent. Despite these realisations, we have only just begun to understand the human role in maintaining the health of the planet, to comprehend the effect of present

actions on future outcomes, and to consider alternatives to environmentally destructive behaviours (Veitch & Arkkelin, 1995:2).

Along with the recent heightened concern about the human impact on the environment, has been a rising interest in the effect of the environment on human functioning (Veitch & Arkkelin, 1995:3). Biological, psychological and social horrors have been predicted, should environmental degradation and uncontrolled population growth continue. Research with regards to physiological, psychological, and behavioural effects of unwanted noise, air and water pollution and other environmental factors is on the increase. The current literature suggests that some environmental conditions have detrimental after-effects in humans. Instead, they show up much later, after their causes have been removed. Similarly, the potential to alter values, attitudes, and behaviour towards the natural environment is being explored.

1.2 The need to conserve

The 1990s was globally an era noted for a heightened environmental awareness in society. Informed people in most countries maintained that the need to conserve the natural environment - whether for personal needs, economical purposes or ultimate survival of all that lives - was not negotiable.

Until recently, environmental protection was viewed by many as a natural responsibility of the developed countries. Many people in developing countries appeared to be under the impression that environmental protection was the result of the wealth of developed countries. The rich, they argued, created for themselves disposable time and resources to care for the environment (Mordi, 1991). However, environmental awareness is no longer confined to the developed (industrialised) countries. Even low-income, developing countries are now becoming aware of the need for the conservation of natural environments. They are also aware of the benefits to be reaped.

Environmental consciousness is not a new concept in Western countries. Canada and the USA would date the rise of a popular call for environmental conservation to the 1960s when Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1960) was published. In Europe, the formation of a Green Peace party in Germany and the gradual demise of trees in British forests heightened awareness of environmental concerns. In Africa a rising volume of trade in big cat trophies in the 1960s and the growing traffic in elephant ivory raised the voices of conservationists in the West.

1.3 Conservation and economic development

From this it is clear that the conservation awareness and activism of the 1960s were championed by Western conservationists and environmentalists. In developing countries, environmental activism was not a natural outgrowth of prevailing local cultural traditions. Consequently meaningful conservation awareness was not spreading in many developing countries. In Africa many countries were preoccupied with more immediate concerns such as poverty, illiteracy and the challenge of economic development. Conservation was regarded as an environmental 'luxury'. Other factors contributing to the neglect of the environment include:

- the perception that nature would continue to take care of itself regardless of how it was treated by human beings;
- ever increasing population pressure on natural resources; and
- the process of industrialisation was interpreted to entail nothing more complicated than mere technological transfer.

Economic development was disconnected from environmental conservation. Economic development and the environment were two parallel lines that never met. The inseparability of economic development and environmental conservation was neither clearly articulated nor taken seriously by state planners. They felt economic development could be pursued without sensitivity to the state of the environment. In retrospect, such an approach was obviously misguided. Today we

are more than aware that the health of the environment and that of the economy are inseparable.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is an increasing awareness that human beings are somehow separated or disconnected from nature. This statement will be discussed in Chapter 4. A state of disconnection between human beings and nature in modern society may seem self-evident. In industrial societies, most people live indoors and most interactions take place between people and human-made environments. This is of fairly recent origin, and in the case of South Africa, can be traced back to 1871 when the first diamond mining operations started at Kimberley in Griqualand West. More than a decade later in 1886, the gold discoveries of the Witwatersrand finally put South Africa on course for rapid industrial development (De Kiewiet, 1941:88-140). It shaped the transitional character of South Africa from a predominantly rural to an urban society. In the post-industrial era, which has manifested as a global phenomenon particularly in the developed countries since the 1980s, the communications revolution has had a further impact on the dislocation of human beings and their interaction with nature. Circumstantial evidence suggests that South Africans in contemporary urban settings spend more time watching television or working on computers than being outdoors.

For human beings the physical disconnectedness from the natural world may lead to psychological and spiritual malfunctions. Refer to Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion on this aspect. Those who are aware of this disconnectedness try to compensate by spending leisure time and holidays in nature. The urge to go 'back to nature' was in the 1970s the start of, what is now called, ecotourism (Giannecchini, 1993:429). This trend to go back to nature has become marked in the South African tourism industry. Since 1990, following the end of the country's international political isolation, many choice natural environments have become exclusive ecotourism destinations for visitors from all parts of the world (Mocumbi, 2001).

It has become evident that although ecotourism has great potential to become a thriving sector in the country's economy (Kotzé, 2002a:1), some preconditions have to be realised. Before ecotourism, as a sophisticated subdivision of the tourist industry can take off, it is important to manage the natural environment in such a manner that it would satisfy the discerning tastes of ecotourists. Only by being aware of certain sensitive aspects of ecological appreciation, would it be possible to generate sustained economic growth from a potentially lucrative sector of the tourism industry. It is equally important that the local population, (often members of previously disadvantaged communities), are informed of the benefits that can be derived from conservation. However, these should not only be perceived in material, or more specifically, economic benefits. There should also be clear spiritual advantages for the intended beneficiaries of conservation. For tourists it would naturally mean that they would enjoy exceptional personal experiences in unspoilt natural environments.

There is currently an increase in visitors to natural environments in Southern Africa. There is also a demand for increasingly remote destinations (Bolton, 1997:232). Furthermore, nature is now being used in certain alternative therapy practices aimed at providing individuals with basic life skills (Petrie, 2001; Seiler, 2001; Knode, 2001; MacCallum, 2001; Robertson, 2001, pers. comm.; Van der Zee, 2002, pers. comm.). It seems as if more people realise the importance of nature for their well-being.

In view of the apparent trend in ecotourism, it stands to reason that more natural areas should be protected and kept in a state of under-development. However, this is not the case in practice (Bolton, 1997:232). The pristine state of nature is usually one of the first peripherals of the natural environment to be lost. 'New', remote or undeveloped destinations are usually pioneered by researchers and biologists. They are followed by adventurous back-packers. More visitors follow and, depending on the tourist demand, comfortable facilities are as a rule built for various kinds of visitors. The increase in tourist traffic and the concomitant development brings about a long and imposing list of negative effects. These include amongst others, pollution, disruption of natural habitat, destruction of

natural features and sites, overuse of resources such as water and firewood, and the breakdown of indigenous cultures.

These and other forms of degradation, caused by ill-considered planning, inevitably subject tourists to frustration, disappointment, and even resentment. Lack of satisfaction and positive feelings with such an experience are almost guaranteed (Giannecchini, 1993:431). One negative reaction may be a decline in tourist numbers. The so-called 'development' would then typically have destroyed the specific experience which the people came for in the first place. Should we allow environmental threats, caused by the human species, to continue, the enriching experiences people have in nature will no longer be available. Ultimately the preferred outcome is for ecotourists to acquire a sense of spiritual sustenance that could enhance their optimal functioning after the experience in a natural environment. A disregard for sound principles of responsible ecotourism development could thus lead to a number of lost opportunities.

From the above exposition, it becomes clear that the research problem is that individuals are seldom aware of their disconnectedness from the natural environment. Secondly, there is a need for more pristine natural environments where human beings can restore their encounters with the natural environment. However, if ecotourism as an important subdivision in South Africa's flourishing tourism industry is to be developed, it would be important to accentuate responsible development that is sensitive to the sophisticated tastes of tourists who have as their objectives memorable nature experiences in natural environments.

The literature study done for this research project indicated that a fundamental disconnectedness between human beings and nature does exist [Chapter 4]. However, it seems as if a deeper interest is developing in the relationship between human beings and nature. For many decades biological sciences and human sciences were regarded as separate entities and were studied as such. In this research different disciplinary approaches were used. In the process it is endeavoured to achieve new usable scientific insights by means of integration.

Nature is the primary metaphor or construct, while human experiences are studied in relation to nature. This research is therefore primarily a study about the relationship between human beings (society) and nature (ecology). This relationship is globally seen as being problematic (Zweers & Boersema, 1994:4) due to overpopulation and exploitation of natural resources. This leads to degradation of the natural environment, with the consequent detrimental physical and psychological (spiritual and emotional) effects on human beings.

Initially environmental problems were only seen as scientific or technical difficulties. However, research indicated that sociological problems are also included (Zweers & Boersema, 1994:4). It is not possible to exclude economical and political systems when addressing ecological problems. For the same reason, relationships between people and between people and the natural environment cannot be ignored. The more one understands the fundamental nature of the ecosystem or natural environment, the clearer the role of human beings as part of the system becomes.

Human behaviour is often a product of the perception of our place in nature, as well as our knowledge of nature. Our perception of humankind's place in nature may vary from nature being there only to the advantage of human beings, to nature being there for nature itself and the survival of everything. These perceptions are closely connected with our knowledge of nature. Knowledge may be scientific, but it can also be hermeneutic. This means that we get our knowledge by expressing our understanding of nature in words, but meaning through sensory perceptions and emotional or spiritual experiences are equally important. Nature is thus experienced and therefore, attains meaning. Thus, apart from the analytical construction of quantified knowledge as "pure science", there is also an interpretive level of understanding. It embraces detailed states of consciousness which are dominant in individual experience (Combs & Freedman, 1996; De Crom, 1999; Relph, 1976).

Human beings do not stand outside nature - we are part of nature. 'Ecological' may be regarded as a concept which does not only include the biological world, but

also the cultural, social and human relationships. In this regard, aspects of rituals, metaphors and symbols, as well as spiritual experiences, play a significant role in the meaning human beings find in natural environments.

The following brief summary outlines the meaning of ecology and the human race as it is interpreted in this research.

2.1 Ecology

Ecology is derived from the Greek words *oikos* and *logos*, respectively meaning 'home' and 'study'. Literally ecology means a study of organisms and their homes (environments). Many definitions exist, but the most descriptive and simplest, which is most commonly used is: Ecology is a study of living organisms in their relationships with each other and with their environment (Molles, 1999:2). The words *relationships* and *environment* should however, be understood in their full meaning. Environment does not only include the physical, but also the biological circumstances in which organisms live. Relationships involve interactions with the physical environment as well as the interactions with members of other species and individuals of the same species. Ecology, therefore, involves all living creatures, including human beings. It is thus to a great extent also the study of the habitat of human beings and the interactions of human beings with the physical and the biological environment.

When the principles of ecology are applied in practice, it immediately involves a great variety of aspects of the biology which are of importance to human beings. It constitutes the cornerstones of numerous practices, varying from pollution to ecotourism.

2.2 Ecosystems

Within the variety of the living and nonliving components of ecology, one finds the existence of ecosystems. An ecosystem consists of a biotic community of living organisms which are integrated with their physical environment. Within this

system a great variety of interactions within the complex of living and non-living components takes place. Whether an ecosystem is large, small, complex or simple, it is a dynamic unit.

The following schematic representation (Fig. 1.1) is a simplified explanation of the interactions within an ecosystem.

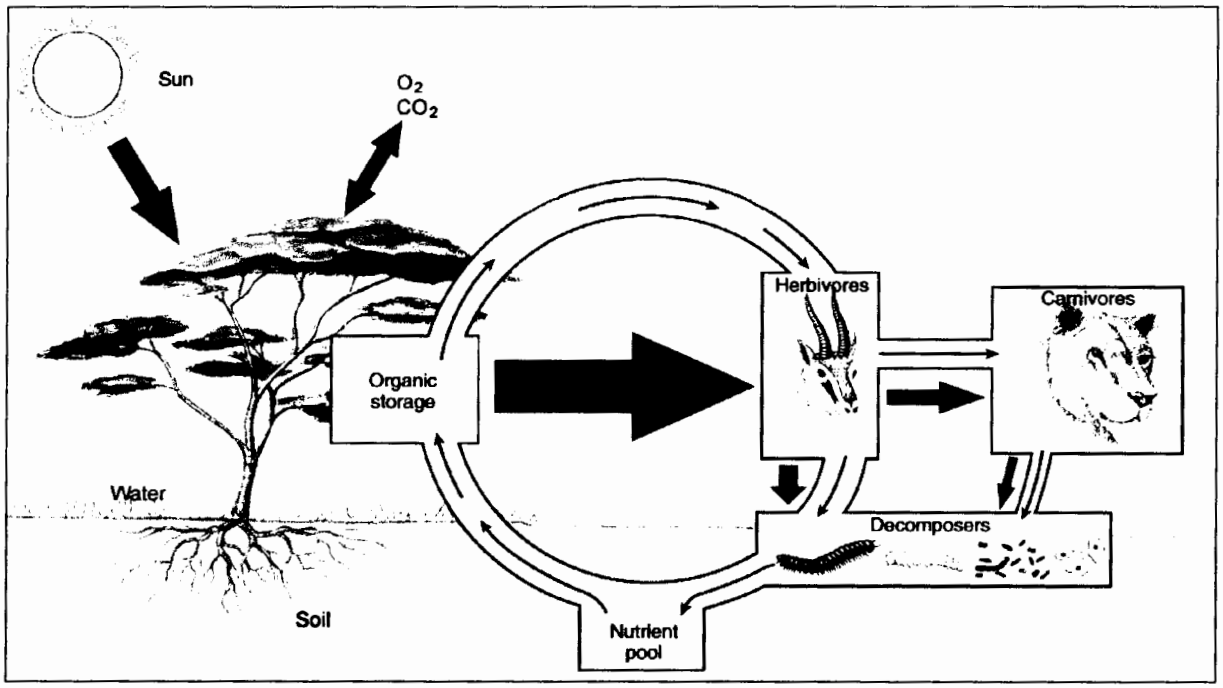


Figure 1.1: Schematic representation of an ecosystem as a dynamic unit.
(Adapted from Hickman, Roberts, Larson & I'anson, 2004:803)

The following interpretation results from Figure 1.1: The abiotic (non-living or inorganic) component consist of soil, water, oxygen, sunlight, carbon dioxide and other organic and inorganic substances. Plants need the abiotic components to produce energy for herbivores, which form the initial link to the consecutive carnivore series. Through the action of decomposers, basic elements incorporated in the organisms themselves, are released into the environment and become re-usable to the producers (green plants). The inseparability of living organisms and the abiotic environment is obvious. Should one component, for example water, be taken away, the producers will not be able to survive and what the consequent reaction is, goes without saying. In all ecosystems, therefore, an ecological

process of energy flow and a cycle of inorganic building blocks exist. Within this process an interaction between the physical-chemical and the biotic component occurs. This movement of energy in ecosystems ensures the dynamics in the system.

2.3 Ecological homeostasis

Ecosystems also have the capacity of self-maintenance. Ecological homeostasis is the tendency of biological systems to resist change and to maintain a state of equilibrium. Ecosystems, like many other systems, have feedback mechanisms to bring about homeostasis. This means that the reaction that takes place, happens in the opposite direction than that of the original change. This is known as negative feedback. Negative feedback, therefore, erases an error and leads to stability. Positive feedback, on the other hand, will enhance an error or cause instability. These processes are indicated schematically in Figure 1.2.

2.4 Human ecosystem

Metaphorically, a human being is nothing less than an ecosystem. The abiotic components can be compared with those unconscious behaviour patterns of human beings, while the biotic components are the conscious parts [Chapter 5, par. 3]. Although the biotic components of an ecosystem seem to be the most important, because these are the visible, prominent and conspicuous constituents, it is the abiotic parts that are the essential components. The latter are invisible and unobtrusive, but without these the biotic section would not be able to survive. By comparison, therefore, although the conscious behaviour of human beings seems to be predominant, it is subject to the unconscious. What happens in the unconscious affects the conscious. Should a basic component of the unconscious be taken away, for example the connection with the natural environment, it manifests in a conscious behaviour contradictory to the norm. This could, for example, typically imply carelessness and general neglect of the natural surrounding. This behaviour equates with a positive feedback mechanism as explained in Figure 1.2. On the other hand a corrective mechanism can be installed, for example establishing a

true reconnection with nature. Awareness will be created, probably unconsciously, resulting in negative feedback and returning to the norm. In this example the norm is to care for and value the natural environment.

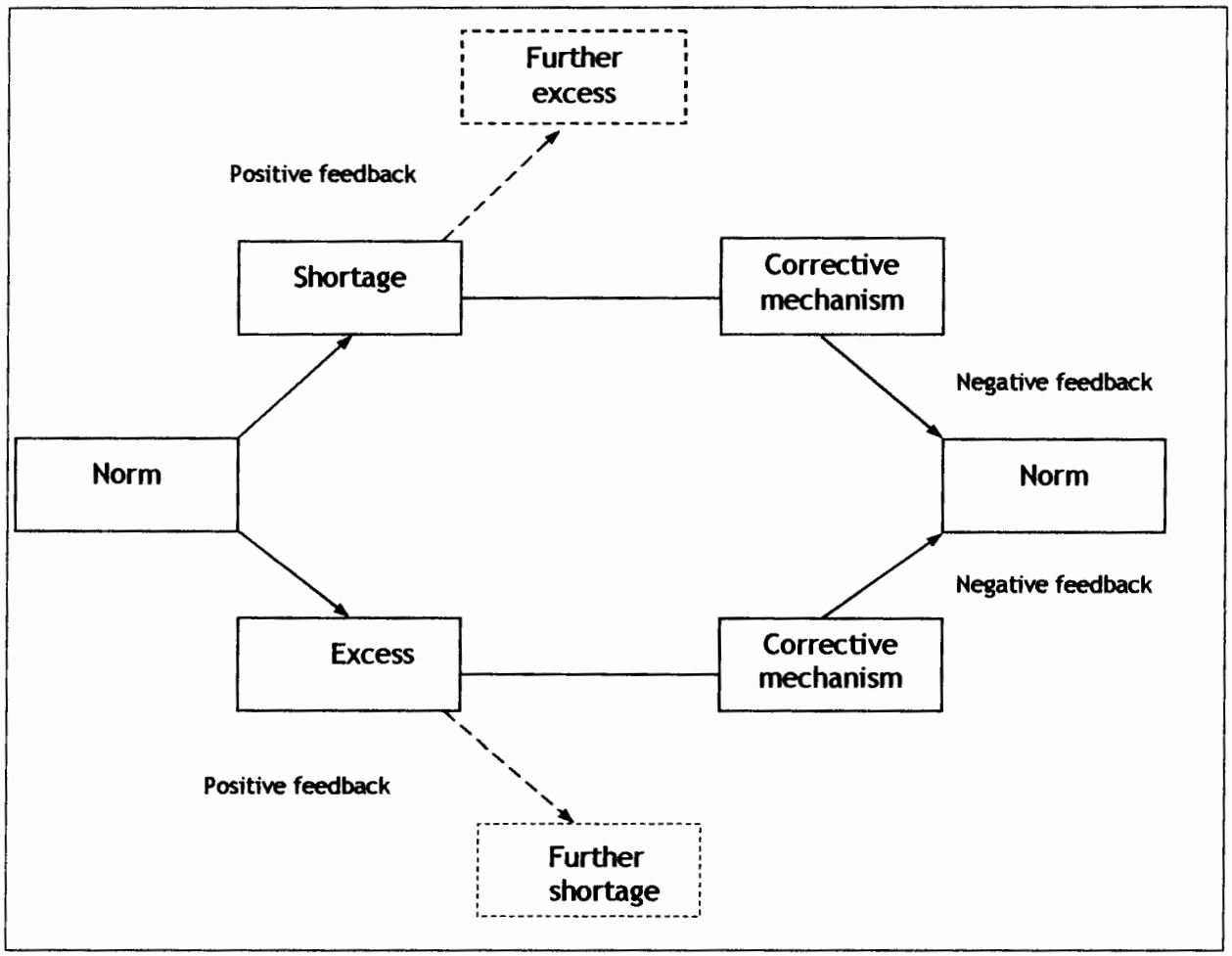


Figure 1.2: Schematic illustration of the homeostatic control process.
(De Crom, 1999:15)

Many contemporary human-environment studies do not identify the impacts or consequences of human activities on either the abiotic or biological components of the environment. Consequently these contributions are not ecological but spatial. They do not account for both natural and human ecosystems, their constituent parts, and the interrelations between them (Lawrence, 1993:214). This study attempts to show that it is possible to integrate the abiotic, biological (biotic) and human science in order to construct an integrative framework of knowledge.

The following research questions are asked:

1. Where did the fundamental disconnection between human beings and nature originate?

2. Is it possible to establish a reconnection between human beings and nature? If so, how can this be done? What are the spiritual experiences of visitors to natural environments?

3. What is the meaning of and what are the implications of a growing ecotourism industry?

4. Is there a difference in nature experiences in different natural settings? What are the various phases of such experiences?

5. What is the impact of external influences on the nature experiences of an individual?

6. Does the storying of experiences in nature shape the lives and relationships of people? What are the effects of these experiences on the lives of individuals and how successful and lasting are they?

3. OBJECTIVES

Concerns in human-environment relations, especially those on a spiritual or emotional level, are extremely complex. This fact is reflected in the diversity of this econarrative study. The study places emphasis on the individual in his/her relationship with the natural environment, in other words the 'psychological' (spiritual and emotional) aspect thereof. At the same time a variety of social and physical forces also function within these relations.

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the areas of fundamental disconnection between human beings and nature [Chapter 4].

2. To make proposals towards the restoration of a sense of connectedness and to determine and interpret the spiritual experiences of visitors to natural environments [Chapter 5].

3. To investigate ecotourism as a means by which people become reconnected to nature and the implication of the growing ecotourism industry on the natural environment [Chapter 6].

4. To determine how nature experiences in developed, less developed and undeveloped areas differ from each other by constructing a theoretical framework that will evolve from empirical data acquired in the research process. At the same time, to identify the various phases of a nature experience and determine the significance of the experience for the individual [Chapter 7].

5. To identify external factors that influence the nature experience negatively [Chapter 8].

6. To interpret the stories (econarratives) people tell about their experiences in nature and to determine the lasting effects and benefits of these experiences on the lives of individuals [Chapter 9].

4. LEADING THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS

The following preliminary statements can be made:

1. Our modern culture's indoor life-style has caused a disconnection between human beings and nature.

2. A sense of connectedness between human beings and nature can be restored. People who visit natural environments have experiences on a spiritual level.

3. More people visit natural environments to become reconnected, resulting in a growth in ecotourism. Unplanned development causes environmental degradation, resulting in less people visiting such areas.

4. Nature experiences in developed, less developed and undeveloped natural environments differ from each other. However, people have fulfilling experiences in all three environments, depending on their own expectations. Nature experiences consist of different phases and each may have a different meaning to an individual.

5. External factors negatively influence a nature experience.

6. It is often difficult to express experiences verbally. When people are encouraged to tell their stories (experiences in nature), it has an effect on their lives and relationships due to the narrative of stories. It is possible to interpret these econarratives. People value their experiences, which consequently have some effects and benefits on their lives and relationships.

This study pre-eminently uses the narrative approach with emphasis on a postmodern viewpoint. Due to the narrative nature, photographs and schematic representations are used extensively throughout the text. This helps to illustrate findings and clarify the stories of individuals used in this study. At the same time the reader has the opportunity to interpret the experience or story from his/her own perspective and experiences and by means of a language known to him/her. In the process, new meanings and significance can be attached to the story. It is precisely because of this that visual representations are used as an additional narrative discourse. In this way an integrated process of interpretation in various shades can be obtained.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND EXPOSITION

Now my suspicion is that the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose... I suspect that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in any philosophy (Haldane as quoted in Siegfried, 2002:77).

1. INTRODUCTION

This study combines human and natural sciences and therefore a combination of research methods had to be applied. All different sciences are united, not by their different subject matter but by their common methods, in the manner in which knowledge is acquired (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:3). Where the natural sciences deal with investigations into the properties and laws of natural phenomena, the human sciences investigate the characteristics, behaviour and emotions of people.

This study is primarily qualitative. Certain aspects will be verified quantitatively. The term 'qualitative' indicates that the approach focuses on qualities and characteristics of human behaviour. The aim of this research is not to find explanations for specific human behaviour in terms of universally valid laws and generalisations, but rather to understand the meanings and experiences that underlie everyday human actions. This approach strives to obtain the individual's perception of their experiences of reality and thereafter to determine the meaning they ascribe to those experiences. It is therefore, compatible with the narrative approach where emphasis is on working within the respondent's context, language and understanding.

Some methods used in this study were adapted from research done by Patterson, Watson, Williams and Roggenbuck (1998:423-452) on hermeneutics. Traditional survey techniques become problematic when the study requires more specificity than simply stipulating that visitors 'enjoyed nature'. This is because many traditional measurement techniques used to establish the reliability, validity, and statistical generalisation of responses are partly designed to eliminate specificity or uniqueness in items used to measure responses (Patterson et al., 1998:423). Therefore, the starting point for the analysis of experience in the study reported here was to obtain individuals' unique descriptions of their nature experiences.

Within the hermeneutic paradigm, a variety of methods and tools were applied to gather the required empirical data:

- Participating respondents in the research were individuals who visit natural environments on a regular basis. A convenience sample was used.
- A qualitative research method was applied by entering into conversation with individuals who spend time in nature and who went through certain experiences and emotions. This method focused on in-depth conversations during which relevant information was identified and detailed descriptions and explanations of various personal experiences were gathered. This enabled the researcher to probe the intensity of an individual's feelings about a certain event, and how it influences/d his/her life in other areas. This study required spontaneity within the process that would lead to the exploration of new avenues and a new way of thinking. Spontaneity within the conversation allows the researcher to gain access to information that will not have been possible within structured research methods. Informal conversations used in this study, allowed the individual absolute freedom to talk spontaneously about his/her true emotions, feelings, experiences, meanings and perceptions.
- Semi-structured and unstructured interviews were held with selected individuals to determine their experiences in a natural environment.

- Personal observations were continuously made and photographs and notes were taken to gather information on experiences of study participants while in nature.
- Structured questionnaires were used to determine how people rate their experiences in different natural setting.
- In addition, personal reflections of individuals in the form of journals, field notes, letters and comments were analysed and interpreted.
- Photographs and videos were used to enhance certain explanations and stories.
- There was a comprehensive investigation into the available published literature to locate information on related topics.
- Personal experiences of the author in nature have also provided a wealth of experience over an extended period of time. These experiences were also considered and compared to those found during this study.
- All relevant information was subject to analysis, interpretation and critical evaluation.

During the research process individual thoughts, emotions, feelings and behaviour were all considered as valuable information. This type of information is not necessarily measurable. Consequently it could not always be strictly categorised and generalised. A multiple research approach was deemed more appropriate and capable of disclosing diverse dimensions of behaviour. Such an approach took the researcher on a journey of discovery rather than one of scientific confirmation.

2. TYPES OF RESEARCH

2.1 Exploratory research

This study explored areas that we do not know the answer for yet (Munro, 2004:23). The purpose of this exploratory research was therefore to gain insight into a situation, namely the meaning of nature experiences for individuals who spend leisure time in a natural environment. The study attempts to explain

concepts and constructs relative to the theme. From this exploratory work, priorities were determined for further research.

2.2 Narrative research

In terms of narrative research (Muller, Van Deventer & Human, 2005), the researcher mainly focuses on the shaping effect of the participant's dominant story and the impact it has on his/her life. Facilitating a process of spontaneous participation during conversation, as applied during this study, establishes the dominant story within the specific context. In this case it deals with experiences in nature.

In the modernistic approach to research, the emphasis is on the problem and the correct formulation of the problem. In a more narrative approach, the emphasis is on the action and not on the problem. The narrative researcher has a deconstructive agenda. Ideas need to be 'unpacked' and alternatives have to be explored. According to this approach, not only the problem areas of life have to be researched, but also every action, bearing in mind that there might just be an alternative story (Muller et al., 2005).

The danger in research is that the respondents' stories are suppressed in that their responses are limited to 'relevant' answers to narrowly specified questions (Mishler, 1986:68). In the narrative approach it is more likely to invite respondents to tell their stories in their own way and to speak in their own voices (language known to them). They are allowed to take control of the topics that feature in the discussions. The researcher tries to facilitate a situation where stories can be told in an un-interrupted manner.

The second form of action involved, is the *inter*action of the researcher with the action that is researched. The action of this research consists of an interaction with people and their actions (experiences) in a natural environment. The research is understood as a social-constructionist process. Through the researcher's interaction with the action one becomes part of the action.

2.3 Participatory research

Participatory research is distinguished from other research methods by two characteristics: the relationship between the people involved in the research, and the use of research as a tool for action, as well as for increasing human knowledge (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:55). In this process the conventional roles of the researcher (the expert) and subjects (naïve objects unaware of the research hypotheses) are changed. Participatory research encourages the active participation of the people whom the research is intended to assist. In this way, it empowers the people to be involved in all aspects of a project.

Participatory research techniques in this study focus on questions facing individuals. They also ultimately have a bearing on communities and populations. The objective is then to use research, and the resulting action, as a tool to bring about behavioural and social change, thus improving the quality of life of the individuals participating in the research. Subsequently it also has an effect on whole communities.

In this study participatory research uses many of the conventional tools of social research, such as interviews, questionnaires and observation. However, tools that acknowledge the value of opinions and thoughts of people, i.e. small groups, visual diaries, in-depth interviews and participant observation, are used extensively. Implementation of these methods resulted in the realisation that there is no one way of doing participatory research.

3. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The following methods were used to collect data:

3.1 Informal conversations (Unstructured and semi-structured interviews)

The technique used in the informal conversations is adapted from the works by Merton and Kendall (1946:541-557), Rogers (1954:279-283) and Ackroyd and Hughes

(1981:69-97) and supported by further works of Foucault (1980). These works concentrated on interviewing techniques within the narrative process (Combs & Freedman, 1996:67-91). The conversations were spontaneous and dynamic, unfolding according to the prevailing circumstances.

At the beginning of conversations there was not necessarily a clear vision of what the conversation might produce or what could be achieved. The non-directive approach was used where the researcher was led by the participant into his/her world. This required an in-depth conversation with the participant regarding his/her feelings and emotions of his/her experience in a natural environment. The rationale behind encouraging spontaneous interchange is that the conversation may reveal important information that would not have emerged on direct questioning. This was also found in studies done by Ferreira and Puth (1988:172). Although a broad idea of the objectives was known, the unstructured conversation allowed the researcher not to cling to the idea of a specifically desired outcome. It rather facilitated the unfolding of the conversation through a process of self-expression. For example, informal or spontaneous conversation allowed remarks from either the researcher or the participant to pursue a line of thinking that might not have been followed in a structured interview. The cross-pollination of concepts and the consequent growth of explanation of experiences was an exploration of new meanings.

During informal conversations, direct open-ended questions were asked when specific information was needed, when it was necessary to probe someone to talk about an experience(s), and to test feelings or emotions. Addendum A presents examples of open-ended questions asked during these semi-structured interviews. These conversations usually took place before, during or after visits to a specific natural environment. This was found to be the most reliable way to obtain unbiased data, when the participant is in an informal, spontaneous and relaxed situation where he/she can be him/herself. This type of data collection requires true participation from the researcher. Data collected in this manner are presented as 'personal interviews' [Addendum D].

3.2 Participant observation

Participant observation was used to gather first-hand information on experiences of study participants who visited natural environments. This method required the researcher to take part in the experiences of the study participants while also being in nature. The goal of participant observation was not only to observe the experiences of the participants as a detached outsider, but to experience them first-hand. The researcher became a member of the participant group and actively participated in activities. This was necessary in order to:

- Determine what the participants experienced
- Gain understanding of their world
- Observe things, as far as possible, from their perspective
- Interpret the meaning and significance which they attach to their experiences, including their own behaviour.

3.3 Questionnaires

In addition to the above-mentioned conversations and observations, questionnaires were used in some circumstances to collect data. To avoid time-consuming questionnaires, different brief formats and questions were used, depending on the type of data needed; for example, separate questionnaires were used to test perceptions on disconnectedness/connectedness to nature, motivations for visiting natural environments, negative influences on a nature experience, spiritual values experienced, etc. [Addendum B]. Open-ended questions were asked where study participants were to express their answers as detailed as they felt was appropriate to describe an experience. Structured additions to open-ended questions were used to rate experiences in the three different natural environments [Addendum C].

3.4 Naïve sketches

Naïve sketches are documents written by participants relevant to their experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions about their visits to natural

environments. These documents were presented as reflections [Addendum E], comments [Addendum F], field notes [Addendum G] and journals [Addendum H] and were narrative descriptions of the experience(s) of participants. It provided a rich source of data that could be analysed using content analysis. This method of data collection included participants who were geographically distanced from the researcher.

3.5 Illustrations and recordings

Illustrations and photographs are powerful forms of language. According to Jung:

> An image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider 'unconscious' aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. Nor can one hope to define or explain it. As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason (Jung, 1978:4).

The use of illustrations and photographs throughout this study has the purpose of encouraging participants to 'tell their story'. It inspires participants to describe natural environments and scenes which would otherwise be difficult to put into words. A photograph connects a person with a past experience or memory. The photographed moment is fixed forever and therefore provides the opportunity to re-absorb the details of the specific experience. Photographs are symbolic representations of emotions and memories. We invest in a variety of images in our photographs. They acquire extended meanings that come from our inner world, thus creating visual symbols (Berman, 1993:53,189). Some individuals use photographs to communicate their deepest feelings. In this study participants often used photographs to describe an experience. Significant details about traditions, rituals, attitudes and relationships of individuals with the environment and with co-participants, became clear in these descriptions.

Photographs also have valuable symbolic meaning. Berman (1993:13) says a photograph:

> (F)its into a continuous flow in time. It is a second's flash in a multi-coloured life-story that has specificity of meaning, a life-theme that develops up to and after the photographic moment. It encourages us to contemplate the recurrences in our own lives and perhaps to explore which patterns can be changed, once they are brought to consciousness, and which are beyond our control.

In this study participants also had the opportunity to explain their individual perceptions and experiences of the same phenomenon. It made comparisons empirically verifiable. At the same time, the reader has the opportunity to interpret the events or phenomena illustrated in the photograph, from his/her own realities and language known to him/her. As a result, an integrated process of interpretation is laid down.

3.6 Literature study

In addition, an extensive search was launched for published research findings on related topics. Other documented case studies were investigated in order to obtain a broader understanding of the influence of a nature experience on the individual's daily life.

3.7 Personal experiences

My own wildlife journeys and individual nature experiences during the past 25 years gave me the lens through which to see what others might find there as well. Furthermore, I have tried to find confirmation for my feelings in writers and co-travellers who have recorded their own responses to nature.

This study hopes to capture some central elements of the experiences that many modern Westerners have of nature. If these experiences are something that we share with our co-human beings born to other cultures, then that is good.

4. STUDY PARTICIPANTS

No specific selection criteria for participants were applied. A convenience sample was used: individuals known to visit a natural area, with the main purpose of recreation and spending leisure time, were interviewed. The same applies for the distribution of questionnaires.

Participants in this study mainly consisted of:

- Students at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) enrolled for a B.Tech. degree in one of the courses presented in the Department of Nature Conservation.
- Individuals who visited a specified natural environment as part of a holiday or short vacation, for day visits or extended periods of time, with the main purpose of spending leisure time in a natural environment.
- Individuals reflecting on their experiences in nature by means of reports, letters and comments to popular magazines, newspapers and visitor books.
- Authors of books and reporters with articles about experiences in natural environments.

5. REQUIRED DATA

Information needed for the background to this study, namely the narrative and social constructionist viewpoints, as well as the origin of human-nature disconnectedness, was mainly gathered and interpreted from literature sources. To a lesser extent, data for these topics was collected from participants' opinions.

Information gathered from the stories people tell about their experiences in natural environments (econarratives), include:

- Preferred areas visited and reasons for preferences. The extent of development within the area visited compared with the activities, needs and personal experiences of the individual.

- Feelings experienced during different stages of the visit, i.e. the time before departure, while travelling to the destination, during the actual visit, travelling back, and various time-lapses after returning from the visit.
- What contributes to a negative experience in nature.
- Reconnection experiences, i.e. spiritual connections with nature through symbols or rituals with certain objects, phenomena or sightings in nature. These may also be described as experiences in nature on a subconscious level.
- What makes people return to nature; what in nature inspires them.

Nature experiences of individuals were investigated in three different categories of natural environments:

- The developed areas for the purpose of this study include most South African national parks, game reserves and holiday resorts.
- Privately owned reserves, game farms and most hiking routes are categorised as less developed areas.
- The Richtersveld National Park is the undeveloped natural environment chosen for the purpose of this study. (A complete description of these categories is provided in Chapter 7).

The objective of this strategy is to develop a methodological and theoretical framework for differentiating the nature experiences of individuals in different natural environments.

6. DATA MANAGEMENT

Due to the narrative approach of this study, data consists mainly of descriptions, notes from observations, transcripts from tape-recordings of interviews, entries in journals of both participants and the researcher, short communications, letters and to a lesser extent, questionnaires. Data capturing was also done via informal video recordings and photographs of people's visible experiences in nature. Becoming familiar with the data involved a process of reading and rereading written

material, recalling observations and personal experiences, listening to tape-recordings and viewing video-recordings and photographs until the researcher became immersed in the data. Tapes, videos and photographs contain more than words; they contain feelings, emphasising nonverbal communication of many kinds, which are as important as verbal communication. Listening to and re-viewing this material repeatedly produced a rich source of information.

Data reduction was done by attaching meaning to certain common elements in the gathered data. Where possible and applicable, data was categorised and then interpreted. However, due to the narrative nature of the study, information obtained from participants was, in many instances, treated as case studies; each individual might have experienced nature in a different way and ascribed a unique meaning to the experience. Generalisation, therefore, was not always possible. Consequently, an integrated framework of perceptions was established. This information served as the basis from which guidelines for improved life-skills for personal well-being can be developed.

7. VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH METHOD

In choosing a research method, it was found that no method is more correct than any other to conduct this study. However, it is the objectives and what the researcher wanted to achieve at the end of the day that ultimately determined the method implemented. According to Schurink (1988:136) the researcher should keep in mind that the respective research methods determine the quality of data.

According to Ferreira and Puth (1988:162) studies in human science research are intended to explore and explain human thought, emotions and human behaviour. This however, poses a problem in that it is almost impossible to measure human thought and human behaviour scientifically. The observation of human behaviour therefore, presents a variety of practical and methodological problems.

Qualitative research copes with the complexity of human observation through unstructured participation. The method of unstructured data collection facilitates

spontaneity within the conversation. The participant is free to express feelings and related experiences of the event. This spontaneity allows the interviewer to gain access to information that would not have been possible within the structured method of research.

Structured interviewing on the other hand means that the interviewer enters the conversation with a set list of questions that has been formulated before the interview. The researcher either has a hypothesis that must be scientifically tested or wants to test the validity of data. The researcher therefore has preconceived ideas of what needs to be achieved from the interview (Schurink, 1988:138).

The aim of this research was not necessarily to bring about change, but to listen to the stories and to be drawn into those stories. While the structuralist researcher has objectivity in mind by trying to be an observer from outside, and by trying to bring about change from the outside, the narrative researcher has subjective integrity in mind and strives for participatory observation (Muller et al., 2005).

In this instance the study required spontaneity within the process that would lead to exploration of new avenues and a new way of thinking. It was clear that the structured quantitative method would reduce and prevent the recognition of new options and experiences.

The combined narrative-participatory approach within the primarily qualitative research, was therefore the most appropriate. This method allowed the absolute freedom to talk spontaneously about the individual's true emotions, feelings, experiences, meanings and perceptions. This spontaneity created a suitable environment in which new ideas and new ways of thinking regarding a specific event were discovered.

The qualitative research also supports the postmodernistic viewpoints of the narrative process. This method recognises the uniqueness of individuals and their emotions and supports the development of various alternatives for a specific event, a view supported by Doan (1997). Furthermore, it recognises the mutual influence

the researcher and participant have on each other, the possibility of changing experience through the development of new meanings embedded in language and the influence an event has within a given context (Potgieter, 2000:103). When working with qualitative research it allows the researcher to concentrate on the individuals' experience, meaning, symbolism and feeling regarding a specific event and the unique manner in which the individual expresses him/herself in his/her own language (Marshall & Rossmann, 1995:87). Furthermore, qualitative studies look in depth into a few conversations rather than generalising similar events and making certain assumptions and drawing conclusions (Potgieter, 2000:106).

8. EXPOSITION

This thesis is compiled from a combination of literature - published and unpublished - personal observations, stories of various study participants and the individual interpretation thereof, with reference to available known language and realities.

The thesis consists of 10 chapters and a reference list at the end. Photographs and schematic representations are used throughout to illustrate the text and to give meaning to stories and interpretations. All photographs and illustrations appear in numerical order immediately after the text reference.

Due to the unconventional nature of this thesis, the research report is not presented in the traditional format of introduction, research methodology, results, discussion and conclusion. The structure rather includes an orientation chapter, a chapter on the research methodology followed by separate chapters on each of the study topics, with a final conclusion. Table 2.1 provides a summary of the structure of the thesis:

Table 2.1: A summary of the structure of the thesis.

Chapter	Topic	Summary
Chapter 1	Orientation	An exposition of the substantiation, research problem and research questions.
Chapter 2	Research methodology and exposition	Background information on qualitative research, types of research used, data gathering, study participants, and data management.
Chapter 3	Narrative and social construction in human-nature interrelationships	Overview of the narrative approach and the role of social construction in human-nature interrelationships as the construct used in this study.
Chapter 4	Origin of human-nature disconnectedness	An analysis on the disconnection of modern human beings from their natural environment, in comparison with cultures who lived in harmony with nature.
Chapter 5	Reconnecting to nature	How people realised their disconnectedness and how they become reconnected to nature, emphasising spirituality.
Chapter 6	Ecotourism	Ecotourism as a means by which people have become partially reconnected to nature. The meaning of ecotourism and the implications of the growth in the industry are emphasised.
Chapter 7	Nature experiences in selected natural environments	An analysis of results obtained from individuals' experiences in three selected categories of natural areas in South Africa and a description and interpretation of seven identified phases of a nature experience.
Chapter 8	Factors that affect a nature experience	An overview on some identified external features that negatively influence a nature experience.
Chapter 9	Narrative interpretation of a nature experience	An analysis and interpretation of the stories people tell about their experiences, and the relationship between these stories, and the power and benefits they have on an individual's life.
Chapter 10	Summary and conclusions	A summary of the study, concluding remarks and recommendations for further research

CHAPTER 3

NARRATIVE AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM IN HUMAN-NATURE INTERRELATIONSHIPS

> *What is left when a child (a person) has everything taken away? All that is left is a child and a story. If we lose our stories, we lose our very selves* (Allen & Allen, 1995:327).

1. INTRODUCTION

This study concentrates on experiences we have, and what we want future generations to be able to experience, the intrinsic value of biodiversity which is no mere social construct, no mere 'resource', but the anchor and bedrock of reality. Its main purpose is to bring humankind back to a more accurate understanding of the nature that is the substrate of our biological existence.

2. THE NARRATIVE APPROACH

The narrative approach gives the perspective of people's lives as stories (Muller et al., 2005). We organise our experiences in terms of stories. This is in no way to suggest that people are living in a fantasy world. This structuring takes a particular form, the narrative form, and this is widespread throughout human cultures. Econarratives imply people's stories, and the effect thereof, from experiences in natural environments (De Crom, 1999). Authors from various cultures storied their individual nature experiences in many variations of narratives. For example, Gareth Patterson accounts for his experiences with lions in the wild (1989, 2001), Roy Siegfried (2002) storied his views on the environmental challenge for Africa and the world, Irene van Lippe-Biesterfeld

(1997) speaks about her experiences in nature since early childhood, Joan Anderson (2001) recorded her thoughts and emotions after living a year by the sea, and Ian Player (2001) remembered his first encounters with wild nature. All these people live according to the stories, the econarratives, they tell. These stories form, compose, embrace, shape and determine their lives. Doan (1997:131) confirms that individuals live according to the stories that they tell themselves.

All stories told by people have a quality of sufficiency in common (Parry & Doan, 1994:2). In other words, it is the meaningfulness of the story rather than the factual truthfulness that gives it credibility. The narrators and hearers of the story believe it is true because it is meaningful, rather that it is meaningful because it is true.

MacIntyre (1981:211) quotes Barbara Hardy who says:

> We dream in narrative, day-dream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative.

Sarbin (in Burr, 1996:134) sees narrative as the organising principle of our psychology, to be present in all manner of facets of daily life. It is present in our dreams and daydreams, in our rememberings, in our plans for the future or for the day ahead, and in our accounts that we tell to others (refer to Fox's (2000) account of his experience in the Kruger National Park later on). This statement is also confirmed by the stories of nature experiences and feelings of all the above-mentioned authors. When we 'remember' a dream, we do not recount a list of unconnected events and images; we see it and recount it as a story that has a beginning, a middle and an end. In some cases, we are aware of having to do a good deal of 'story construction' with the dream material in order to give it a sense of narrative. Even quite abstract and on the surface, meaningless perceptual events tend to be given narrative structure by people.

MacIntyre (1981:208) relates narrative with intentionality in the following:

> Behaviour is only characterised adequately when we know what the longer- and longest-term intentions invoked are and how the shorter-term intentions are related to the longer. Once again we are involved in writing a narrative history.

Therefore, life gets meaning by placing it on a meaningful continuum. This continuum contains a past, a present, and a future. Each one of these is linked by a particular quality. This quality is intentional. Thus, it makes it possible for people to choose the course of their lives, rather than living it in reaction to the initiatives of others. The latter is what occurs when people respond before checking in with their own intentions. This alone allows them to dictate their own narratives instead of serving only as characters in other people's narratives. These principles apply for the experiences people have in a natural environment: an experience gets meaning because it is placed on a continuum with a past, a present and a future, as suggested above, each with a specific quality. The following excerpt from the experience of Fox (2000:76-83) in the Kruger National Park is an example. He starts his story with the present and a certain quality is ascribed to the park, which is clear from the language he uses:

> The Kruger is a part of the South African psyche. It's a space which defines us, a national treasure, our park. The crown jewels.

He then returns to the past (beginning) on the continuum by describing something about the history of the Kruger Park. By using words such as "oupa" and "uncle", the personal quality of this event to Fox becomes clear. With the next statement he moves to the present. The question at the end, again contains a specific quality:

> Our forefathers, Oupa Kruger and Uncle Stevenson-Hamilton, made a grand investment and we are the inheritors. But this treasure is not a blank slate, an untamed wilderness. It's managed, fenced,

> controlled; it's subject to fashions, politics, the whims and sins of the fathers. How could it be otherwise in this crazy country of ours?

Fox's remembering of his visits to the Kruger Park as a child, has great significance to him. This becomes clear in the metaphors he uses, which also illustrate the meaning (qualities) he ascribes to life in general. The following is a clear example of the beginning of his story:

> As a child my father used to take me to the park, as his father had taken him. It was a part of the rite of passage, of growing up and learning about the wilds of our country and continent. It was like a sacrament with age-old rituals lovingly administered. Sunset at the baptismal font (water hole), breaking of bread together (the braai), moments of annunciation (the spotted cat up close). And there were the teachings, the gospels. Like learning how to see. As a child I was blind. I'd look at a koppie and see only a koppie. Then my father taught my eyes to stroke the hillside for the flick of a tail. Once my eyes were rewarded, blessed even, they never forgot. It was a revelation.
>
> That was then. I'm an adult now (at least in age) and was returning to the park to explore some of the curious new developments. Who better to take along than dad (or Revel, as he's known by non-siblings)?

He continues his story by describing his physical experiences, his emotions, concerns and joys, while driving through the park. Again the significance of the experience is clear when one considers the intrinsic qualities and the metaphors Fox uses:

> Heading south to Letaba the next morning, I was worried that we were not seeing enough game. I wanted the animals to toe the line

for dad. For the first time this was me taking him to the park. My trip, organised by me. Didn't the animals understand this?

I needn't have worried - this was, after all, the Kruger. It started small. A flap-necked chameleon with colourful Nike running shoes - obviously brand new as he was reluctant to get them soiled-crossed in front of us. Next came a puffadder with a little more determination. Then Nature gave up the teasing and plonked a herd of 200 buffalo in the road. Now that's more like it, I thought, as I noted dad's pleasure out the corner of my eye.

(W)e passed the Kruger Memorial Tablets and trundled into Skukuza. I was shocked to see the devastation wreaked by the Sabie River. During the February downpours (490 monstrous millimetres of rain) the river rose by seven metres. The hippos knew what was coming. Two days before the wall of water arrived, they vacated the river and moved inland. I'll bet their fathers didn't teach them that.

"You know, for some people the Kruger is screaming kids in the back, queues at the shop, burnt meat-and-fingers and obsessive game campaigns with a wish list that needs ticking," reflected Frank (the manager of a private game reserve accompanying Fox). "But the sooner you get over the cat count and relax into the silence, feel the wilderness, the better the experience you have. Then the animals are just a bonus."

That's what is so good about many of the Kruger's new activities. They're wilderness experiences which aren't cat-counts. Rather they are geared towards giving the visitor a greater appreciation of the bush. For what is a national park other than a 'reserve' where older forms of time and space and order are preserved? By breaking the cocoon of the motorcar - which is what all these new activities

(hiking, game drives in open vehicles) strive to do - you get closer to the great Order of things; perhaps, for the more devout, you feel the hand of the Father.

If the new Kruger can achieve a closer relationship between visitor and Nature, between visitor and visitor, father and son... then bring on more.

This year's floods were first registered as a disaster, but now the fauna and flora are showing their resilience and 'newly formed' landscapes can be admired. Silted waterways have been unclogged and alien thickets uprooted from the banks.

Like the flood, a new broom is sweeping through the Kruger. The new-fangled ideas were at first shocking to the fathers, perhaps even heretical in the eyes of the forefathers, but the sons are, I think, getting it right. Then again I am one. But so were they.

White and Epston (1990:9) compare the storying of one's life with a written text. Similarly the storying of a single experience in nature, like the story of Fox's visit to the Kruger Park, can be like a written text. This enables the interaction of persons in the story (Fox with his father) and persons with the natural environment (Fox and his father with the animals and scenery they encountered), to be considered as the interaction of readers around particular texts. This analogy also makes it possible to understand lives and relationships in terms of the reading and writing of texts, in so far as every new reading of a text is a new interpretation of it, and thus a different writing of it.

2.1 Constructs of the narrative approach

The main constructs of the narrative approach can be summarised in *story*, *knowledge* and *power*.

2.1.1 Story

We are continuously telling stories to others and to ourselves. One can say we are our stories. By telling and re-telling stories, we consolidate and modify our memories, our sense of identity and our unique sense of our 'self' (Allen & Allen, 1995:327).

We cannot have direct knowledge of the world (White & Epston, 1990:9). Therefore, what people know of life, they know through 'lived experience'. This statement leads to various questions: How do people organise their stock of lived experience? What do people do with this experience to give it meaning and to make sense out of their lives? How do they express lived experience? In order to make sense of our lives and to express ourselves, experience must be 'storied'.

Epston (1998:11) defines a story as:

> A unit of meaning that provides a frame of lived experience. It is through these stories that lived experience is interpreted. We enter into stories, we are entered into stories by others, and we live our lives through these stories.

These stories, therefore, provide the framework that makes it possible to interpret and ascribe meaning to experience. The story forms the basis of a person's identity, history and future, because it is the story that determines where the individual comes from and where the individual is going. These features of a story also apply to econarratives. The individual's life begins as a story as people are born within the family's story and history (Freedman & Combs, 1996:42). In the same way, an individual's econarrative begins with his/her first exposure to nature. Mair (1988:127) summarises it when he says:

> Stories inform life. They hold us together and keep us apart. We inhabit the great stories of our culture. We live through stories. We are lived by stories of our race and place.

The history of each story has an impact on each individual's past, present and future experiences. These lived experiences are translated into narratives that ultimately shape a person's life. For example, Daly (2000:93-101) reports on a visit to the Karoo National Park and comments as follows:

> 1 The Karoo has a way of creeping into your sensibilities and reshuffling neatly ordered... assumptions of the way things are in the world. Take time for instance. Eternity is almost within your grasp; 100 million years is cast in stone. Human beings can see creatures - in bone - which went extinct around 190 million years ago....
>
> 2 Alone at the trail's end (Fossil walking trail in the Karoo National Park), questions envelope me. What would cause the end of our own age? Would human beings surrender like the curled up *Diictodon* skeleton on the trail, or would our last grasp be a struggle against certain doom? The outcome looked dismal, everything on the trail whispered extinction. It seemed a foregone conclusion.
>
> 3 (T)hat first day in the Karoo National Park had produced more questions than answers. It was answers I was after. The search would lead me into mountains and across the plains.
>
> 4 The Karoo National Park had presented a great deal to think about and there were too many questions to find answers to all of them. But there was one kernel amid all the uncertainty: extinction is final. It is hard to accept that humankind would want to leave behind a legacy of comebacks, staged to make retribution for past mistakes. The Karoo is a living testament that the creatures and plants we have are fragile and precious. If we only hold on to what remains, that would make a fine chapter in the chronicle of eternity.

What Daly experienced in the Karoo, clearly left her with questions and new knowledge about life. In the first instance, time assumed a new meaning (paragraph 1). Secondly, she posed questions in her own mind about extinction and the role of humankind in it (paragraph 2 and 4). She also considered the future of human influence on plants and animals (paragraph 4). The meaning Daly attributes to the events experienced during her visit to this natural environment, is likely to determine her behaviour in other environments and life in general.

In striving to make sense of life, persons should arrange their experiences of events in sequences across time. This must be done in such a way as to arrive at a coherent account of themselves and the world around them. Specific experiences from events of the past and present, and those that are predicted to occur in the future, must be connected in a lineal sequence to develop this account - the story or self-narrative. The success of this storying of experience provides persons with a sense of continuity and meaning in their lives. Furthermore, they rely upon this for the ordering of daily lives and for the interpretation of further experiences. Since all stories have a beginning (or history), a middle (or a present), and an ending (or a future), then the interpretation of current events is as much future-shaped as it is past-determined. To illustrate this, the following concise version of the memories of Van Rooyen (2002:47) refers:

> 1 Eighteen years ago I was a young 'troopie' stationed in Namibia, where I spent fourteen months of my life in the service of the South African Defence Force. I worked in Windhoek in a building that is now the South African Embassy. Back then it was an important military intelligence centre.
>
> 2 I cannot remember much of the military stuff I worked with, as I was really not all interested in that. What I do remember are the beautiful rosy cheeked lovebirds that used to settle on the windowsill of my office... Or the rock kestrel that often perched on the same windowsill and gazed at me for hours at a time.

3 I had a spectacular view of the countryside from my office, and marvelled at the beautiful sight of the Khomas Hochland Mountains that surround Windhoek. By the time I left Namibia in 1984, I had not nearly seen enough of the country to satisfy my curiosity. I vowed to come back one day.

4 Little did I realise that it would be eighteen years before the chance would present itself to revisit Namibia.

5 It came in the form of a request... for input into an environmental impact assessment for a new 220kV power line to be built between Windhoek and Walvis Bay.

6 (Soon) I was on an aeroplane to Windhoek... My brief was to do a bird impact assessment study for the Namibian electricity utility, along the selected power line route.

7 My official report describes the route as 'approximately 290 km long and runs through the undulating hills of the Khomas Hochland, then passes through the rugged terrain of the Great Western Escarpment, traverses the open plains of the central Namib Desert and it terminates at the coast.'

8 What this simple statement does not reflect is the sheer emotional impact of the countryside, which at times left me battling to concentrate on the task at hand.

9 Most striking was the almost total absence of human infrastructure. Rugged mountains and vast plains seem to carry on forever, with only the occasional farmhouse sometimes visible from the gravel road.

10 For me the highpoint of the journey was a magnificent lappetfaced vulture perched on a small camel thorn near Ganab against a backdrop of gravel plains and granite outcrops in the Namib-Naukluft Park. Other birding highlights were a beautiful augar buzzard soaring above sheer cliffs of the Great Western Escarpment, a white-tailed shrike posing on a thorn bush next to the gravel road, and several pairs of Rüppel's korhaan looking quite at home in the harsh gravel plains of the Namib Desert.

11 Two days later I was winging my way back to the big smoke in Gauteng. With me I took the memories of an ancient landscape forever etched in my consciousness. I also knew this was the start of a journey of discovery, not the end.

Van Rooyen's lived experience of Namibia is clearly expressed by his story. It is clear that the story consists of specific experiences of events of the past (paragraph 1, 2 and 3) and present (paragraph 4 to 10) and those that are predicted to occur in the future (paragraph 11). He succeeded in arranging his experiences of events and thoughts in a sequence across time. His past and present experiences are connected, and even his thoughts for the future link with these experiences. One can assume that the success of this storying of experience provides Van Rooyen with a sense of continuity and meaning in his life. His memories of eighteen years ago are clearly connected with his present experience (paragraph 11).

Since the above narrative has a beginning/history (memories), a middle/present (current observations and feelings), and an ending/future (discovery and possible human impact), it is possible to interpret his current observations and feelings as future-shaped, as it is past-determined (the meaning it has for the person himself).

A narrative can, however, never encompass the full richness of our lived experience:

> Life experience is richer than discourse. Narrative structures organise and give meaning to experience, but there are always feelings and lived experience not fully encompassed by the dominant story (Bruner, 1986a:143).

Referring to both Daly's and Van Rooyen's stories, one can detect a sense of care and concern from these reports and observations (paragraph 2 to 4 of Daly's story and paragraph 8, 9 and 10 of Van Rooyen's report). Although Van Rooyen does not explicitly tell us this, the 'untold' story is one of 'be careful not to spoil this unique landscape by power lines and other development' - feelings not fully encompassed by his dominant story of good memories and striking observations. The untold story of Daly is one of concern for the actions of humankind contributing to the extinction of species.

The structuring of a narrative requires a selective process in which we prune, (and form our experience), those events that do not fit with the dominant evolving stories that we, and others, have about us or situations we found ourselves part of. Thus, over time and of necessity, much of our stock of lived experience goes unstoried and is never 'told' or expressed. In Van Rooyen's case, a certain amount of his personal feelings and concerns may never be expressed, but the results thereof may possibly be experienced by others in the future (the inevitable effects of development on the area).

According to Bruner (1986b:6):

> Some experiences are inchoate, in that we simply do not understand what we are experiencing, either because the experiences are not storyable, or because we lack the performative and narrative resources, or because vocabulary is lacking.

This is especially true for storying lived experiences in nature. It is often difficult to find vocabulary to express one's feelings and emotions accompanying a specific nature experience. For example, observing a special bird or animal, experiencing

a sunset or sunrise, or listening to spectacular sounds. Feelings and individual experiences encountered with the view of the following landscape in the Richtersveld National Park (Fig. 3.1) were described by participants as: '...hauntingly beautiful...', '...the glowing colours and shifting shadows saturate the senses and leave a lasting impression of wildness...', '...pure, unique beauty...', 'a feeling of loneliness and wildness prevails', '...it has a charm and distinct atmosphere of its own...' and words such as 'awesome', 'isolation', 'endlessness' and 'spectacular' have also been used. Nevertheless, few of these descriptions truly express the very personal experience of each individual. Many nature experiences are therefore untold and subsequently never storied.

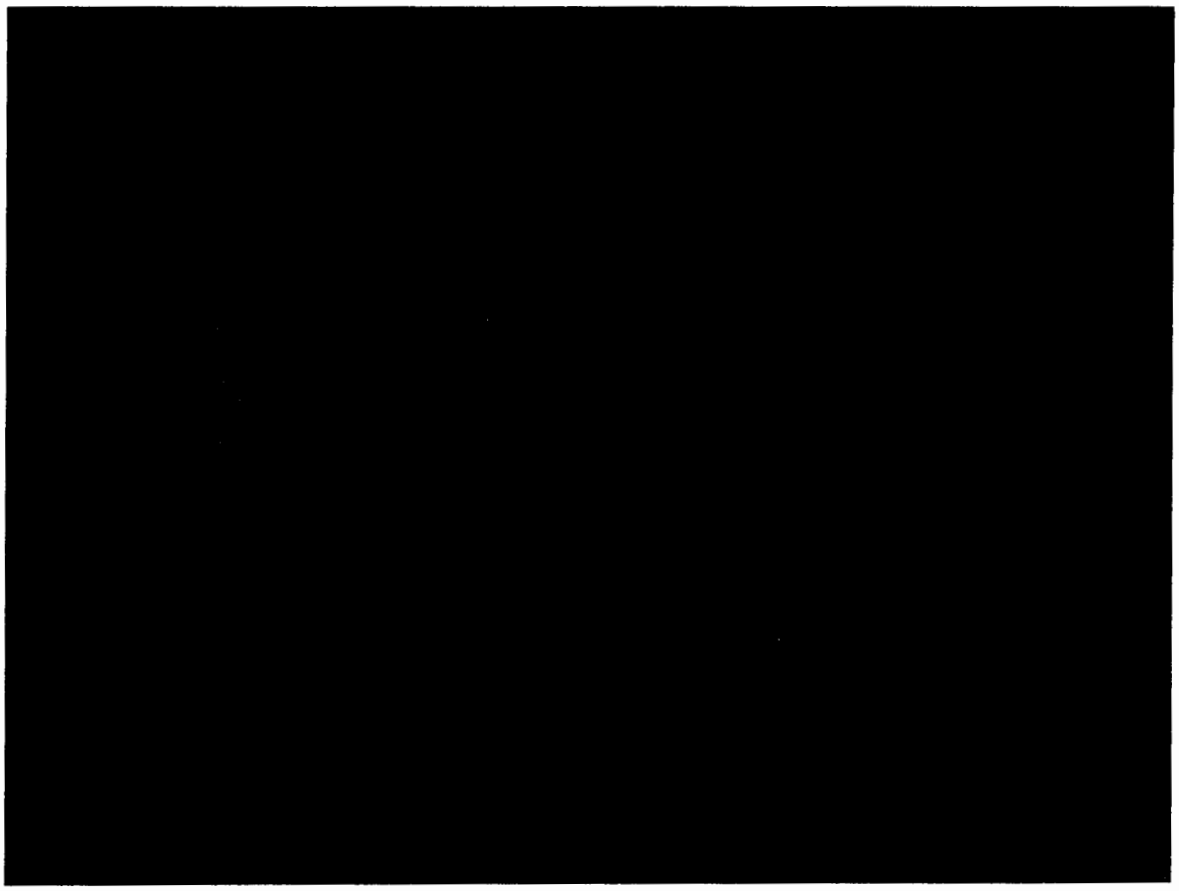


Figure 3.1: View towards the Rosyntjieberg in the Richtersveld National Park.

If it is accepted that individuals organise and give meaning to their experience through the storying of experience, and that in the performance of these stories

they express selected aspects of their lived experience, then it follows that these stories are constitutive - shaping their lives and relationships:

> It is in the performance of an expression that we re-experience, re-live, re-create, re-tell, re-construct, and re-fashion our culture. The performance does not release a pre-existing meaning that lies dormant in the text... Rather the performance itself is constitutive (Bruner, 1986b:11).

By implication, this means that when looking at the photograph (Fig. 3.1), the individuals sharing their stories and feelings experienced at the site, are re-experiencing and re-living the emotions felt at that time. By re-telling their story, they perform their experiences in some or other way - emotionally, enthusiastically, excited and inspired. This performance of their realities can create relationships with other participants, as well as individuals who were not part of the experience. In interacting with others in the performance of these stories, they are active in the shaping of their own, and possibly other people's, lives and relationships (White & Epston, 1990:13) [Chapter 9].

From this it can be seen that the text analogy advances the idea that the stories or narratives that persons live through, determine their interaction and organisation, and that the evolution of lives and relationships occurs through the performance of such stories or narratives (White & Epston, 1990:12). The text analogy is distinct from those analogies that would propose an underlying structure or pathology in families and persons that are constitutive or shaping of their lives and relationships.

Stories are full of gaps which persons must fill in order for the story to be performed and completed. These gaps recruit the lived experience and the imagination of persons. With every performance, persons are re-authoring their lives (White & Epston, 1990:13). The evolution of lives is related to the process of re-authoring, the process of persons entering into stories, taking them over and making them their own. Again the text analogy of White and Epston (1990) makes

sense: it introduces an intertextual world. It proposes that persons' lives are situated in texts within texts. Every telling or re-telling of a story, through its performance, is a new telling that encompasses and expands upon the previous telling.

From the above-mentioned one can say that narrative practices have some obvious advantages. Firstly, a person's experience is situated in the flow of time. (Chapter 8 elaborates on the different phases of a nature experience over time). Unlike scientific accounts, narratives make no attempt to eternalise experience; rather, they temporalise it. Bruner (1987:12) argues the necessity for this:

> We seem to have no other way of describing 'lived time' save in the form of a narrative. Which is not to say that there are not other temporal forms that can be imposed on the experience of time, but none of them succeeds in capturing the sense of lived time: not clock or calendrical time forms, not serial or cyclical orders, not any of these.

Secondly, as stories are richer and more complex than what we can explain, a far wider range of happenings or intentions tend to be inclusive. As a result it enriches events in people's lives, whereas explanations tend to be exclusive and to ignore those events beyond their reach. Narratives, then, allow for lived experience to be understood in lived time and rendered eventful by being plotted into a story.

2.1.2 Language, knowledge and power

To be able to tell a story, we need language. In the postmodern paradigm knowledge is seen as socially constructed (Roux, 1996). Knowledge and people are interdependent, assuming that interrelationships exist between context, culture, language, experience and understanding.

People create meaning among each other through language - words, sounds, gestures, signs and other forms of communication. This language provides order

and meaning to our lives and our world. In the context of econarratives this means that people who spend time in natural environments would develop a language which conveys meaning between them. The growing number of outdoor magazines, shops specialising in outdoor equipment, and off-road vehicle clubs for example, indicate a 'common' language among members of a culture who enjoy being outdoors.

Knowledge is also linguistically constructed. What we know (knowledge, feelings, emotions, thoughts and perceptions) we know through our constructions. These are communicated through language. Language creates. Therefore, when people complement each other by means of language, co-construction of their stories/lives is taking place. For example, people share their experiences with each other through letters and reports published in outdoor magazines, joining off-road clubs and "Friends" groups (Friends of Pilanesberg, Friends of Rietvlei, etc.), or participating in national events, such as the National Birding Day and photographic competitions to help endangered animals. In the process, individuals are co-constructing each other's stories by adding knowledge through experience. As these stories get bigger and bigger they become more powerful and will affect future events. In the process people's skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies become emphasised. New possibilities and meanings for experiences can be created.

As this storying of experience is dependent upon language, we ascribe meaning to our experience and constitute our lives and relationships through language (White & Epston, 1990:27). When engaging in language, we are not engaging in a neutral activity. A stock of culturally available discourses exists. These discourses are used to express or represent particular aspects of our experiences. Thus, our understanding of our lived experience is mediated through language. It can also be expected that 'truth discourses' of society contribute to the understanding of lived experiences and in the constitution of a person and of relationships (White & Epston, 1990:28). This links with social constructionism.

3. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

According to Roux (1996:6) social constructionism is a movement away from the objective and therefore belongs within postmodernity. Social constructionism as an approach to the social sciences draws its influences from a number of disciplines including sociology, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, and anthropology, making it multidisciplinary in nature.

Burr (1996:2) states that there is no single description or definition for social constructionism. Instead, any approach which has its foundation in one or more of the following key assumptions may be regarded as social constructionism:

- We should take a critical look at our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world (including ourselves). Furthermore, we should challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world. Social constructionism therefore opposes positivism and empiricism in traditional science - the assumption that the nature of the world can be revealed by observation, and that what exists is what we *perceive* to exist. Social constructionism cautions us to be careful of our assumptions about how the world appears to be. This means that the categories with which we as human beings apprehend the world do not necessarily refer to real divisions. For example, 'wilderness' may be regarded as an undeveloped, unspoilt, natural place which people visit for its ultimate peace and beauty. However, a person who lived his whole life in the Kalahari Desert may regard the centre of a city as 'wilderness'.

- The ways in which we commonly understand the world, the categories and concepts we use, are historically and culturally specific. Whether one understands the world in terms of urban life and wilderness, past and future, etc. depends upon where and when in the world one lives. For example, the idea of conservation has undergone tremendous change over the centuries. Conservation has developed from being a luxury of the royalty and the upper class to something which is increasingly accessible to all people. It has also

developed from an exclusive concern for the protection of specific animals to that of entire ecosystems. Increasing concerns about the state of the global environment has lead to the development of a concern, not only with nature reserves and parks, but also with the environment as a whole, including the human environment.

- This means that all ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative. They are specific to particular cultures and periods of history and they are also seen as products of that culture and history. They are also dependent upon the particular social and economic arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time. Should one take the history of conservation in South Africa as an example, it is clear that different cultures have a different understanding of the rationale for conservation (Pienaar, 1990; Pringle, 1982; Shillington, 1985). The particular forms of knowledge that abound in any culture are therefore artefacts of it. We should not assume that our ways of understanding are necessarily any better (in terms of being nearer the truth) than other ways.

- Knowledge is sustained by social processes. Our knowledge, or common ways of understanding the world, is derived from people constructing it between themselves. It is through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated. For example, the magnitude of the problem of global warming is difficult to grasp for most people. This is not only because we do not yet experience its effects physically, but also because of daily interactions between people that play down the seriousness of the problem. The richest and most powerful corporations on earth manufacture motor cars, extract oil and fund other profitable but destructive practices (Ashton, 2004:74). They effectively control global political systems, perpetuating the problem. Therefore, what we regard as 'truth', i.e. our current accepted ways of understanding the world, is a product not of objective observation of the world, but of the social and economic processes and interactions in which people are constantly engaged with each other.

- Knowledge and social action go together. Our 'negotiated' understandings could take a variety of forms. Each different construction brings with it a different kind of action from human beings. With regards to conservation, the following summary from Hall (1990) illustrates this assumption:

> By the middle of the 1980s political pressure against state conservation in South Africa was mounting, resulting, among other things, in challenges to the established history of conservation in the country. The alienation of land that had historically accompanied the establishment of national parks in the past, became an intensely politicised issue. For example, in 1933 the National Parks Board discussed the resettlement of the Makuleke community from what was to become the northern section of the Kruger National Park.
>
> It also became apparent that the attitudes of rural people towards conservation were not what they should be. South African conservationists began to look at efforts made elsewhere in Africa to overcome the conflict between rural people and conservation. In Zimbabwe the Campfire Projects emphasised local participation in the management and utilisation of resources.
>
> A range of projects aimed at linking rural development with conservation has since been implemented in South Africa. Projects aim at giving local people access to resources such as firewood, thatching grass, traditional medicines, water and meat. Emphasis is also placed on the employment of locals in conservation and on their participation in the tourism industry. In some instances, such as in the Richtersveld, contractual parks have been established. There are also examples where local communities have become active participants and large shareholders in private conservation-based tourism (ecotourism) ventures. It would be legitimate to say that these different social constructions with regard to

conservation in South Africa, invites a different kind of action from all people concerned.

Social constructionism is more than a mere new social paradigm. It is a way of understanding the phenomena of knowledge itself. Gergen (1985:266) stated that the study of social process could become generic for understanding the nature of knowledge itself. Gergen (1985:3) also said that social constructionism is mainly concerned with elucidating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world in which they live.

The above statement, also reiterated by Ferreira and Botha (1998:78), confirms that the narrative perspective is formulated within the social constructionism discourse. This discourse is an attempt to approach knowledge from the perspective of the social processes through which it is created. It views ideas, concepts and memories co-constructed within social interchanges and mediation through language (Anderson, 1991:30), characteristics also found in the narrative perspective.

3.1 The social constructionist view of language

Language, *per se*, is unique to human beings. Other animals, however, also communicate with each other. Scent, sound, markings, posture and colour are used by animals to signal danger, territoriality, sexual advances, etc. to each other. These behaviours have clear meanings to which other animals respond, but it is not language. The difference is that these meanings appear to be fixed and relatively stable. When a wild dog rolls over and displays its belly, it is a sign of submission (which is the meaning human beings ascribe to this behaviour). It has the same meaning for all members of the species, and this meaning has remained stable for many generations (Apps, 1999; Estes, 1991; Skinner & Smithers, 1990). Language on the other hand, is constantly changing and meanings are varied.

We use language to transfer thoughts, meaning, knowledge or information from one person's reality to another person's reality (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988:371).

Freedman and Combs (1996:19) emphasise the fact that ideas, knowledge and attitudes within the social context are socially constructed through language. The community measures and judges others and themselves in terms of the prevailing normative and moral standards that evolved within a particular community. This socially constructed knowledge is not a reflection of the external reality but is an attempt of a specific society to develop a system that enables people to coexist. The value system of a specific culture is constructed through a universal language which creates an understanding of how the system functions. (Self-policing is a direct result thereof and ensures social behaviour stability). The prevailing standards and norms within society are maintained by the social environment and consequently become the dominant discourse by which everything is evaluated. Numbers, tradition and power structures support this dominant discourse (Doan, 1997:128).

The way that language is structured therefore determines the way that experience and consciousness are structured (Burr, 1996:35). Wozniak (1992) discusses Descartes and emphasises that he radically changed the way people thought about themselves by suggesting that human experience was divided by a fundamental dichotomy - the physical versus the mental. He saw this as two separate realms of experience, with their own phenomena. This mental-physical dimension is inevitable when trying to make sense of our experiences in nature. For example, what do we experience physically and how does this experience affect us mentally?

3.2 The social constructionist view of knowledge and power

Our common-sense understanding of the relationship between knowledge and power is the notion that knowledge increases a person's power. Foucault (1979, 1980, 1984) argues that we predominantly experience the positive or constitutive effects of power. We are subject to power through normalising 'truths' (stories) that shape our lives and relationships. These 'truths', in turn, are constructed or produced in the operation of power. Foucault refers to power in the sense that it is constitutive for the shaping of peoples' lives. 'Truths' are normalising in the sense that they construct norms around which persons are eager to shape or

constitute their lives. Therefore, these are 'truths' that actually specify a person's life.

A primary effect of this power through 'truth' and 'truth' through power is the specification of a form of individuality, which in turn is a vehicle of power. According to Foucault (1980:93) power and knowledge are inseparable. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.

3.3 Social construction of nature

Cronon (1995) wrote an article which stimulated what came to be known as the 'great wilderness debate'. He 'deconstructs' wilderness (wild nature) by arguing that rather than offering an antidote to industrial capitalism and ecological exploitation, wild nature might very well serve the same ends. He reaches this conclusion by emphasising the separation of nature and culture, or nature and society, that effectively removed human beings from what is considered as nature.

The problem in this 'construction' of nature is twofold: (1) it denies human actions that influence natural areas (e.g. removal of indigenous people, predator extermination, recreation impacts); and (2) it leaves no room for a nature ethic in those places where we live (Hollenhorst, 2001:16). Thus, we are excused to further destroy places of non-nature (culture/society) because they have 'fallen' and are not worthy of protection. Nature gives us false comfort in the belief that there is a pristine 'nature' out there beyond our reach. Cronon (1995) concludes by calling for an expanded ecological ethic that embraces all places as places of nature, and reintegrates human life into ecological thinking.

Ecologists and wilderness supporters argued that Cronon ignores the biological reality of wilderness (can one socially construct a black rhino?) and that he

provides unwise academic support for anti-wilderness forces (Hollenhorst, 2001:16).

Cronon (1995) takes the received wilderness doctrine and says that he is a true believer: he knows the delights of a misty waterfall and in the presence of the irreducibility of the non-human; he has experienced something profoundly other than himself. Cronon's appeal stems from his support of the worldview that reality is a social construct. Bammel (2001:17) criticises Cronon on his social construction worldview. According to Bammel (2001:17) and Anderson (1995) we all have four different worldviews, which we slip in and out of, often unconsciously:

- Worldview I - the world is inhabited by those of us who think we are practitioners of modern science. It is a scientific, rational approach, in which 'truth' is found through methodical, disciplined, replicable inquiry. We can, for example, 'know' the actual carrying capacity of an area, i.e. the amount of plant and animal life a given area can sustain. Those, for whom biodiversity is the primary justification for nature, regard this worldview as supreme. For many scientists this worldview becomes a kind of absolute, because it provides something as close to absolute truth as one can possibly get. The stubborn, irreducible facts of the physical world support this point of view. As Wittgenstein (1999:45) expressed it: 'The world is everything that is the case.'

- Worldview II - a social-traditional approach in which truth is found in the heritage of civilization.

- Worldview III - has been called 'neo-romantic' because truth is found either through attaining harmony with nature, or through spiritual exploration of the inner self.

- Worldview IV (the view that Cronon supports) - the truth is socially constructed. This view has been explained best by Kuhn (1962), who suggested that we all operate within some given paradigm, we have a

> picture that we apply to reality, that helps us solve our everyday problems. Philosophically, this view dates back to Kant (1973), who said we never know things-in-themselves; we only know the constructs of things our own mind imposes. Therefore, natural places (wilderness) become a social construct, a picture we impose upon a given reality, to make it comprehensible. Bammel (2001:18) asks what is wilderness then? Is there something intrinsically valuable about wilderness? For those who would validate wilderness, its objective reality, its ontological primacy becomes the critical issue. Wilderness, areas that are 'forever wild', where human beings are visitors who do not remain, where mining and logging and road building are not permitted, must have some legitimacy in its own right. It is not just a social construct, not just a 'landscape of choice for elite tourists', nor just a 'place of recreation'. It is something that should be left as it is, something that has the same right to exist as human beings (Bammel 2001:18).

Kant (1973) says you must treat persons as ends in themselves, and never as mere means. According to Bammel (2001:18) in this regard, Kant is as guilty as the rest of the Western tradition in supporting human exceptionalism - that human beings are somehow not just a part of nature, but superior to it. Bammel proposed that human beings conceive nature as an area that must be treated as an end in itself, and not as a mere means. Since nature is not a person, human beings must act as guardians of nature, much as someone might be 'appointed' a guardian for someone unable to engage in self-care.

In conclusion, nature may be regarded as a social construct, but it is also an objective reality that can be appropriated by various scientific disciplines. It is also subject to the interpretations that our traditions have placed upon it. Traditional visions from various cultures and spiritual experiences help many, not only to understand nature, but also to come to grips with their lives in an urban civilisation that has gone global, yet who seek support from wild nature. Nature can also be a source of personal renewal, of spiritual exploration, of individual oneness with that of which we are a part. There is a sense in which nature is a

'social construct'; it is in a way what we make it out to be. However, we must also be aware of the realist response: What we make it out to be is limited by the shortcomings of our understanding of what the thing-in-itself really is (Bammel, 2001:19).

The same goes for all our reflections about nature. American philosophers and environmentalists such as Muir, Thoreau and Leopold (Morse, 2003), as well as South African conservationists such as Ian Player (Player, 1999) and authors of nature experiences, for example Laurens van der Post (Van der Post, 1974, 2002a, 2002b), all offer us helpful incentives to grasping what nature 'really' means. However, there is no substitute for the personal experience of the thing-in-itself.

4. CONCLUSION

Experiences of people are organised in terms of stories. The same applies for experiences of people in natural environments. People share their nature experiences through econarratives. Stories are like written text: every new reading of a text is a new interpretation of it. By telling and re-telling stories new meanings and interpretations are attached to it and experiences are performed in some or other way, whether it is with emotion, enthusiasm or inspiration. Stories therefore provide the framework that makes it possible to interpret and ascribe meaning to experience.

To make sense of life or of an experience, people should arrange their experiences in sequences across time. The past, present and future must be connected to provide people with a sense of continuity and meaning in their lives. However, it is often difficult to find vocabulary to express one's feelings and emotions accompanying an experience. Many experiences are therefore untold and subsequently never storied, or the stories told are full of gaps. These gaps recruit the lived experience and the imagination of persons. As stories are therefore richer and more complex than that which we can explain, a wide range of happenings or intentions are included in the meaning of the story.

To be able to tell a story, language is essential. Language is unique to human beings. People create meaning (knowledge) among each other through language, which includes all forms of communication. Knowledge is linguistically and socially constructed. Social constructionism causes us to be careful of our assumptions about how the world appears to be. For example, 'wilderness' can have different meanings to people who live in cities and people who live in the Kalahari. The way we understand things are therefore products of culture and history. Our understanding of the relationship between knowledge and power is the notion that knowledge increases a person's power. We are subjected to the productions of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.

Various viewpoints exist with regards to nature as a social construct. Nature may be regarded as a social construct, but it is also an objective reality subjected to interpretations we have placed upon it. It is also a source of personal renewal, spiritual exploration or individual oneness with that of which we are a part. Although many authors offer helpful incentives of what nature really means, there is no substitute for the personal experience of the thing-in-itself, something we have become disconnected from.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the fundamental disconnection of human beings from their natural environment.

CHAPTER 4

THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN-NATURE DISCONNECTEDNESS

I feel a little alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit... What business have I in the woods, if I am thinking of something out of the woods? (Henry David Thoreau, 1817 - 1862).

1. INTRODUCTION

Most of us walk through daily life, drive to work, sit in the workplace, or wander around the house in a state of disconnection from the natural world around us. We are thinking of the past or the future, worrying about some problem or task. We prepare to meet or avoid the challenges and tasks of our day. In a sense, we act as if not aware, not alive. Awareness does not seem to be part of our daily lives. We fail to experience the meaningfulness of life. We become alienated from our natural environment.

On the question 'What is the single most important threat to nature and world ecology', all participants interviewed for this section of the study (N = 144) agreed that human beings are the major threat to the planet. The following list includes some of the direct and indirect actions mentioned as to why they see human beings as the main reason for being a threat to nature:

- Pollution caused by various activities
- Deforestation and erosion
- Agricultural practices
- Industrial development
- Overpopulation

All these activities are in some way linked with one another, the one causing, or resulting from the other.

One of the essential goals of this study is the healing of, and preventing further alienation by promoting reconnection with nature. Nothing but changing our way of seeing and understanding nature and our place in it can produce real meaningful and lasting change in the lives of human beings. When enough people change the way they view their place in the natural environment, solutions may become evident. Understanding how things in nature are interrelated, with us as part of that interrelatedness, we discover tools all around us which are positive and transformational. A change in perspective will then naturally lead us to the reduction of wasteful consumption, save ecosystems, control births, become connected - to nature and to our own kind.

Eco-alienation is the splitting or distancing of human beings from connectedness with the natural world in which they live (Clinebell, 1996:34). This separation has an inward dimension, namely an inner alienation from nature in people's whole mind, body and spirit (see Chapter 5 for a description on the spiritual aspects). This inner alienation runs parallel with a disconnectedness from 'real' nature as experienced in the outside world. It seems as if these inner and outer dimensions of eco-alienation tend to reinforce each other. Eco-alienation (and reconnection or bonding) also reinforces interpersonal alienation (and bonding). O'Connor, as cited in Roszak, Gomes and Kanner (1995:154), points out that the very patterns of denial, control and projection, that disrupt human relationships, are the patterns that endanger the natural world.

Something has halted the social development of our society, freezing almost all of modern civilisation in an immature stage of awareness about life. It appears that this is a cause of why today's human beings are capable of ruining their environment for short-term gain, even when they know they are damaging the future for themselves and all other life on earth. For example, South Africa is regarded as one of the 16 major contributors of pollution due to the burning of low grade coal to generate electricity, releasing carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide

into the atmosphere (Tempelhoff, 2004a:1). According to a study done about the effect of coal burning on human health, carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide cause serious heart-, lung- and respiratory diseases. Apart from high medical expenses directly related to diseases caused by pollution due to coal burning, human beings will soon also experience the direct effects of global warming. A large part of South Africa's agricultural industry consists of the cultivation of maize. Therefore South Africa is extremely vulnerable to climatic changes. It is already suggested that farmers start looking at cultivating alternative crops, because within the next three decades maize farmers will not be able to exist due to continuous droughts (Tempelhoff, 2004b:2) - a direct cause of global warming.

At some stage we separated humanity from the rest of the creation. When we decided that the world was here for us, that we are separate from it, and that it is our duty to dominate and control it, we lost touch with the power and spirit of that which we needed most - a natural connectedness with the earth, an eco-reconnectedness.

2. REASONS FOR DISCONNECTEDNESS

A total of 87% of participants interviewed for this section of the study confirmed that human beings are somehow disconnected from nature. Table 4.1 summarises some of the reasons mentioned for this disconnectedness.

The majority of participants (55%) (Table 4.1) admitted that they are dependent on the comforts and conveniences of modern life-styles, while 23% realised that human beings became disconnected from nature because of a lack of awareness and knowledge about the advantages nature can provide. Both the dependency on modern comforts and our dislocated priorities, lead to a materialistic viewpoint towards life, resulting in further disconnectedness. Inside our homes, vehicles, schools and air-conditioned office buildings, most of us live comfortable and well-regulated lives, protected from the challenges of the natural world.

Table 4.1: **Reasons mentioned by participants for human-nature disconnectedness.**

Reason	%
Dependence on conveniences of technology and life in cities	55
Wrong priorities with regards to nature (exploitation, unawareness, inadequate respect for other life-forms)	23
Materialism	14
Other	8

There is also an alternative view. Environmental damage and human suffering may be less a result from a disconnection from nature than from more immediate causes acting on social institutions or on individuals in their roles of investor, producer, or consumer. Many economists and behavioural psychologists have argued that environmental degradation has resulted from the incentives built into the economic or social system (Scitovsky, 1992). Consumerism is the result of a dysfunctional relationship to money or the artefacts of civilisation along with a lack of relationship with nature (Dominguez & Robin, 1992; Elgin, 1993). Thus, the psychological separation from nature may be seen as a consequence, as well as a cause, of consumerism (Durning, 1995; Kanner & Gomes, 1995).

2.1 Technology

Glendinning (1994:34) states that human beings have been embedded in an artificial world for so long that it is hard to imagine a day without the synthetic materials provided by a technological and industrial society. It seems that the overwhelming presence of these materials in our lives is a distraction from and a substitution for other sources of peace, pleasure and quality. Some are content with the 'benefits' of technology (Table 4.1). They are the ones asking 'How can technology be bad when it has improved the quality of life?' There are many aspects of technology which impact on our lives. Many people do not realise the influence of technology on our lives. To most people it is even incomprehensible.

Many ills of our society may be seen as the result of a division between what we perceive to be natural and what is not. Western culture's technological consumption is responsible for the belief that human beings are not a part of nature. Snyder (as cited in Glendinning, 1994:34) sums up this perspective with his statement about 'civilised', and one can assume 'technological', cultures:

> A culture that alienates itself from the very ground of its own being - from wilderness outside (that is to say, wild nature, the wild, self-contained, self-informing ecosystems) and from that other wilderness within - is doomed to a very destructive behaviour, ultimately perhaps self-destructive behaviour.

2.2 Indoor life-style

Being immersed in the tendencies and demands of our civilised, technological cultures prevents us from bonding with the natural environment that surrounds us. By the age of 18, most children have spent more than 12 000 hours in a classroom - indoors (Skull, 2001:1). A survey with 46 first year Ecotourism Management students was done to determine the time they spend outdoors. Students had to list their activities according to a time schedule, for an average day in the week. They were also asked to list times and occasions where they spend time outside buildings and vehicles. Table 4.2 summarises the results.

Table 4.2: Summary of daily activities of first year students (N = 46).

Time	Activity	N (%)
06:00 - 08:00	Personal preparation for the day	44 (96%)
08:00 - 13:00	Attending classes, part-time work, library	46 (100%)
13:00 - 17:00	Attending classes, part-time work, library, shopping malls, home	46 (100%)
17:00 - 22:00	Home, entertainment (movies, clubs, restaurants), part-time work	46 (100%)
Time spend outside	Walking between buildings, between vehicle and building; lunchtime, off-times between classes; participating in certain sport activities	7 (15%)

Of the 46 students, not more than 15% (7 students) spend more than one hour of their time per day outdoors. Most of the time spent outside a building or vehicle is made up from sheer necessity when changing classes or walking between a vehicle and building. Students who spend time outside a building do so during a break between classes, waiting in the campus gardens or when they participate once or twice a week in a sporting activity such as soccer, rugby or similar. Tempelhoff (2003, pers. comm.) conducted a similar survey with third year environmental history students. Nobody in the group spends so much as an hour outdoors every day.

Limiting our experiences to the orderly and safe, but poorly integrated human-built environment creates boredom and a sense of loss (Skull, 2001:1). Spending more than 90% of our lives indoors, we might have developed 'indoors thinking' and therefore find it difficult, or sometimes even impossible, to relate to the natural environment. We have simply become disconnected.

3. PERSPECTIVES ON DISCONNECTEDNESS

Perspectives on the separation from nature vary. Several writers have used mental illness metaphors to describe this separation (for example Shepard, 1982; Roszak, 1993). Exploring the mental dimensions of environmental degradation is as important in understanding the ecological problems of today, as are the emphasised results of the earth's physical destruction. Many Western paradigms have come to fully embrace the industrial modes of competition and exploitation. As Western thought spreads to indigenous populations and developing countries, it distorts humankind's understanding of its place in the natural order of things.

Roszak (1993:93) refers to Shepard's view and sketches our path away from natural integration. Since the agricultural revolution, we have experienced 10 000 years of the ontogenetic crippling, we have manhandled the environment in ways that broke the bond which had for so long kept it connected to nature. The result has been 'chronic madness'. At an advanced stage of evolution, intelligence took over from instinctive drives. Since then, we have had culture as a 'second nature'. Our

early responses to nature are now subject to intellectual consciousness [Chapter 5]. It loses the immediate responsiveness we find in animals. It is expressed in human myth, ritual, symbols or rites conveyed by teachings or images symbolising what were once instinctive. What other creatures understand instinctively, we have to learn from discourse, folk-tale or religious ceremony.

Roszak (1993:72) says that we are pressing forward to create a monocultural world-society. Whatever survives in this must do so as the add-on of urban-industrial civilization. Such a depletion of natural variety is ecologically hazardous.

One example of our insensitivity and destructive tendency is the rate at which we transform natural habitats through land-use change. For example, commercial timber operations in South Africa mainly grow exotic tree species because they are fast growing. As a result these trees use large quantities of water (Wakelin, 2001:14-15). Where exotic trees are planted too close to streams and wetlands, the ground water is used by these trees, resulting in a reduction of the water flow. An increase in afforestation in catchment areas further reduces the flow of water to a level where the biodiversity is seriously affected. One of the most threatened areas is the endemic Natal Mistbelt grassland which has been transformed by more than 90%. According to Wakelin (2001:14) the Mistbelt grasslands are known for their high levels of threatened species endemicity and richness. Afforestation displaces the indigenous grasslands and consequently the grassland-dependent species such as the critically endangered blue swallow and terrestrial mammals such as the striped weasel and serval are threatened with possible extinction.

Our devastation of the biosphere deprives us of the beauty and magnificence of things in the natural environment. In the end the loss that results from that crime falls upon us as much as upon any species of plant or animal we annihilate. We are being diminished by our selfish destructive insensitivity in ways that weaken our ability to enjoy and grow spiritually. By becoming so aggressively and masterfully 'human', we lose our essential humanity.

It may be that our disconnectedness is a matter of perception or consciousness. Sewall (1995) has suggested that modern people have learned not to perceive certain phenomena in nature. Cohen (1997) has made a similar suggestion. Disconnection from nature or its opposite, connection, may be seen as altered states of consciousness [Chapter 5].

All the above-mentioned suggest one point of evidence: At some stage in Western human history, we began believing and living a myth. Patterson (2001:21) calls this myth 'human supremacy'. On this myth Serpell (1983:44) writes:

> The doctrine of human supremacy was a myth contrived from a mixture of biblical and classical sources which achieved formal expression during the 13th Century... it dominated Western belief for the following 700 years.

4. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

4.1 Prehistory

Several authors view the origin of the alienation from our natural environment differently. Shepard (1982) tries to trace the disconnection from nature to its earliest beginnings. He sees the separation from nature as resulting from the domestication of animals and plants by early pastoralists and agriculturists. The first phase of human beings is known as the hunters and gatherers (foragers). This means that they hunted the available wildlife and collected edible plants. About 8 000 years later, the domestication of animals and plants took place. This gave rise to pastoralists and agriculturalists. The false sense of superiority that these practices brought about started humankind's dissociation from the natural world. Shepard explains the existence of a psychopathological split between a harmonious human-nature relationship. This split, he states, develops from an 'ontogenetic crippling', which began roughly 12 000 years ago. This resulted in arrested development, with people in modern culture never maturing completely.

Some authors saw the separation as arising later in prehistory with the appearance of the first cities (Allman, 1994; Bookchin, 1991; Wilson, 1975). These views see the hunter-gatherer at the basis of a spiritual connection to nature and the agricultural life-style as the foundation of the separation from nature.

Others have seen the separation arising from the Enlightenment, Rationalism, the Industrial Revolution, or other changes in European culture in the 15th to 18th centuries. For example, Marshall (1994) has outlined the evolution of the idea of nature in Western civilization with the emphasis on colonialism, capitalism, and the industrial revolution.

All these historic and prehistoric accounts share the belief that contemporary agricultural and urban human communities were once connected to nature but have now lost that connection.

What is clear is that human beings are indeed separated from nature. This may not be solely the result of having lost an earlier state of connectedness. Some authors see human life as a process of growth and development rather than as an overcoming of past trauma. Wilber (1996) has suggested that human consciousness is evolving and expanding from unconsciousness, to an individual self, to an ecological self, and eventually to a self that includes the entire universe (Hillman, 1995). These aspects are explained in depth in Chapter 5. The connection with nature, in addition to being something we may once have had but have now lost, is seen as a higher level towards which we can move.

4.2 Northern (Europe and America) influences in Africa

Serpell (1983) wrote about the settlers of North America who were permeated with 'dominion-over' views and beliefs. The self-righteous Presbyterian divine, Cotton Mather, and other New England Puritans, preached against wilderness as an insult to God, and recommended its wholesale destruction as proof of religious conviction.

On the other hand, the animals and the indigenous Native Americans were persecuted and impoverished. They were used to live with kinship of all life principles and were horrified by the destruction caused by the European settlers.

In Africa, the land, its people and wildlife were also cursed by European settlers. They brought to the land an obsessive need to try to subdue nature, coupled with disconnectedness and insensitivity (Patterson, 2001:24). The white man's religious beliefs did not allow him to feel part of the natural environment, unlike the indigenous people's beliefs. The white man felt apart from nature. He saw it as something from which to extract what he perceived as 'wealth' to be used for selfish reasons.

In Southern Africa the San people, known to millions as leather-clad foragers, were also subjected to destruction and westernisation. To some Europeans the San have assumed iconic status, that of pristine Africa, while in Botswana, elite Africans see the 'Basarwa', as they are known in Botswana, as quite the opposite: a social problem, a feckless underclass standing in the way of progress (Lee & Hitchcock, 2001:263). It is striking how closely these contemporary African elite views mirror those of white settlers of the last century. However, a process of cultural sensitivity on the side of people of Western origin has brought about a change in this perception.

During the last two millennia the San have been the exclusive occupants of significant portions of Southern Africa, living as autonomous hunter-gatherers in parts of the Kalahari and Namib Deserts (Solway & Lee, 1990). The San played a major role in the colonial history of South Africa. They met the early explorers at the Cape, guided them into the interior and later fought tenaciously to preserve their land in the face of European expansion (Wright, 1971; Marks, 1972; Elphick, 1977; Ross, 1993).

When the San had been pursued almost to extinction in South Africa, it was believed, at the turn of the century, that they were a 'dying race' (Lee & Hitchcock, 2001:263). However, in the Kalahari Desert thousands of San remained,

existing in harmony with their harsh (to others) environment. Some San populations in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana were dispossessed of their traditional hunting-gathering traditions as a result of the establishment of game reserves and national parks (Gordon, 1992; Hitchcock, 1987, 1995). Fencing of farming lands, ranching, agriculture, dams, and road construction projects also significantly affected the well-being of San communities (Wily, 1979; Gordon, 1992; Hitchcock, 1995; Hitchcock & Holm, 1993).

The Republic of Botswana is unusual in Africa in that it has had a program aimed directly at assisting its indigenous hunting-gathering minority, the Basarwa (Wily, 1979; Lee, 1979, 1993; Guenther, 1986; Hitchcock, 1987; 1996; Hitchcock & Holm, 1993). Regarded by other Africans as ethnically distinct, their current class position is complicated by disabilities of race and ethnicity. Diamond mining interests in Botswana, as well as the government's objectives of promoting development at all costs have jeopardised the future of the Basarwa in, for example the Kgalagadi region - an area they had been relocated to, by the former British colonial authorities, in the second half of the twentieth century. Thus the internal politics of the Botswana Basarwa have come to resemble the politics of the oppressed (Hitchcock & Holm, 1993; 1995).

Many, if not most of the San of Botswana are seeking at least a certain degree of cultural and political autonomy. They would like land of their own and, as they put it, 'to be left alone so that we can live the way we wish'. In most cases San in Botswana generally have little say about the kinds of development activities that affect them. Decisions are often made by outsiders, including the central government, district councils, land boards, companies, cattle owners, and even foreign 'experts' (Hitchcock & Holm, 1993). San want the opportunity to have a say in matters relating to their own internal and local affairs, including information, education, culture, religion, health, social services, access to local resources, and pursuit of their own types of economic activities, to be able to again live in harmony with other cultures and with their environment, as it was before Europeans interfered with their connectedness with nature.

The historic relationship between the North (Western Europe and Northern America) and Africa has been conquest followed by resistance (Marks, 1984:4). Northerners came as outsiders and through their dominant economic and political reference frameworks were largely responsible for stamping down their own myths and realities to the exclusion of indigenous societies. They gave up living in harmony with natural environments. Instead, nature was exploited to create material wealth. Klausner (1965:111-115) shows that the virtual exclusion of wild animals from the sites of human habitation is the consequence of industrialisation.

Chief Seattle asked in 1854:

> What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts soon happens to man. All things are connected.

Associated with the conceptual separation of human beings and nature are other ideas. As Nash (1982) and Worster (1977) point out, what is considered as a natural environment depends on the particular culture and society defining it. The Northern concept of 'wilderness' began as an intellectual movement in cities far removed from the threatening qualities of the hinterlands. This 'romantic' movement, with its enthusiasm for nature, changed the previously foreboding aspects of wild lands into desirable qualities capable of invigorating the human spirit. Many of these romantic ideas survive, promoted in the tourism industry of today. Materialistic Europeans and Americans preserve African landscapes in the only way they can, by separating them from daily human activities and setting them aside as national parks or reserves where human beings enter on holiday. In contrast, most rural Africans continue to live off the land. For these increasing populations, land is a necessity. In keeping with their own traditions, they will progressively rearrange and allocate the components of the land.

4.3 History of National Parks in South Africa

The idea of national parks, with their initial exclusion of people from wildlife areas, is a Northern solution to the perceived problem of wildlife destruction (Marks, 1984:5). By forbidding 'people of the land' to make use of the land and completely removing them from the land, wildlife managers and conservationists are intensifying the struggle between wild nature and developing people's aspirations (Macleod, 2004:48-51).

4.3.1 Background

As is the case with most of Africa, conservation in South Africa is currently faced with risks and challenges that can be related directly to the history of conservation in this country. In South Africa, for instance, the development of conservation has been inextricably linked with the powerful processes of environmental change that accompanied colonisation (Pringle, 1982:9). A deep-seated conflict of interests between rural people and conservation underlies many of the problems currently experienced in and around conservation areas. The reason for this conflict is that resource management and conservation measures control access to natural resources. Decisions are made about the use of natural resources and the rights of people to use those resources. By implication, therefore, any social measure that aims to regulate human interaction with the natural environment also constitutes a political act. Politically mediated access to natural resources results in what is known as the political ecology of any particular country or region (Marks, 1984:5).

In much of the literature on pre-colonial South Africa an image of societies in balance and harmony with their environment is created. This is then contrasted with the fundamental changes that occurred during the colonial era (Pringle, 1982; Pienaar, 1990; Anderson & Grové, 1987).

4.3.2 Creation of cultural landscapes

Whereas extensive environmental change during the colonial era is a well-established fact, the impact of pre-colonial societies on their environment is often ignored. The short-term impact of these societies was less dramatic than that of the various groups during the colonial era. Long-term cumulative change, however, can also fundamentally transform the environment.

The Iron Age pioneers settled in the south-eastern coastal forests of South Africa about 2000 years ago. Clearing of bush and forest took place to create grazing necessary for domesticated animals. With the development of larger herds the early pioneers no longer depended on marine resources for protein, and a few centuries later they had established larger villages further inland. Sheep and goats outnumbered cattle in these early villages and it was only after the environment had been changed sufficiently that cattle began to outnumber the smaller livestock. Over a period of up to 1 500 years the original indigenous bush was changed by means of fire and the iron hoe and axe. In the place of woodland, a landscape consisting of a mixture of bush, fields, savanna and patches of regenerating areas emerged. It was a landscape that could be maintained only by continued farming activity - a so-called cultural landscape (Hall, 1990:61). In ecological terms this is known as a disturbance climax or disclimax (Molles, 1999).

Plans to mine the sand dunes of St Lucia in the final quarter of the twentieth century, the area in which the first Iron Age people settled (Hall, 1990:60), serves as a modern day example of such a cultural landscape, an illustration of how human beings bring about their disconnectedness from nature. Some forty years ago the St Lucia estuarine dunes were covered with grass. The environment had been transformed over a long period of time by farming activities, resulting in the development of a cultural landscape. After the estuary was declared a conservation area and the Mbuyazi and Mkwanazi clans were expelled, forest vegetation once again began to grow on the dunes. Movement onto the midland savanna and highveld was possible only after these early communities had developed the 'cattle complex', a finely balanced economic and sociocultural system (Hall, 1990:61). On

the highveld, adaptation to the basic cattle complex necessitated by environmental conditions was very different from those in the coastal zone. The lower carrying capacity of the more arid savanna placed severe ecological limitations on cultivation, grazing and the establishment of permanent settlements. The immigrants had to adapt the manner in which they exploited the environment (Shillington, 1985:7). In the process they had to adapt themselves to this 'new' environment.

Even today the different forms of social organisation of the Nguni and Sotho people reflect these adaptations. The Nguni, who still live mainly along the eastern coastal lowlands and midlands, are able to maintain a dispersed settlement pattern. This is due to the topography of the area and because water and different types of grazing are generally available within small confined areas. On the highveld, however, grazing, water and arable land in earlier times, extended over a large area. Access to all these resources required of a community to have control over a larger, more extensively used land area. These conditions promoted the development of concentrated settlements from which political control over the scattered resources was exercised (Shillington, 1985:8).

4.3.3 Traditional motivation for conservation

The Iron Age people, as was the case with pre-colonial societies in other parts of Africa, also developed a variety of measures and practices to control and regulate their interaction with the natural environment. The best-known religiously motivated conservation measure in South Africa was that of the protection of totem animals (Andrews, 2002), especially among traditional Sotho-speaking societies (Clarke, 1977). Traditionally the Sotho people were divided into clans, or subgroups, each of which had a specific totem animal, for example the crocodile. The killing of a totem animal by a member of the clan was believed to bring bad luck to the clan as a whole. As a result totem animals were protected relatively effectively until very recently.

Iron Age societies also had formal resource management and conservation measures. Throughout Southern Africa various species of birds, insects and plants were, and sometimes still are, protected because of their use in traditional medicines (Khan, 1994:502). Various rules protect certain useful trees from being destroyed and these can generally only be cut down with permission from the local headman or chief. The first formal game reserves in South Africa also date back to this period with the establishment of royal hunting reserves and the protection of animals such as the white rhinoceros. One of these royal reserves has in fact survived the colonial era and is today known as the Mkuze Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal (Player, 1999:60-73).

Pre-colonial societies in South Africa, therefore, developed ways of managing and regulating their interaction with the environment. At the same time, however, they changed the environment to suit their own needs. Environmental change also initiated a long-term process of environmental degradation, contributing to further disconnectedness between human beings and the natural environment. According to Guy (1979:9) traditional ways of utilising the environment were sustainable only if:

- the population remained small enough
- there was enough room for movement in difficult times
- access to emergency foods was maintained

Eventually increasing population density and the inability to convert further forest and bush areas into grassland and arable land would have led to increasing competition between various groups for control over the natural resources. This is one of the main reasons for the development of large Iron Age kingdoms, such as that of the Zulu. Political centralisation and an increase in the area controlled by a single organised society (such as the Zulu Kingdom) could therefore be seen as efforts to restrict access to natural resources in competition with other groups of people (Guy, 1979).

Furthermore, technological constraints and lack of markets were the principal pre-colonial limitations to environmental destruction (Carruthers, 1995:2). Both of these constraints were lifted when the Dutch settled in the Cape and provided a growing link between the natural resources of the subcontinent and the industrialised world.

4.3.4 Ecological invasion

Colonial governments in Southern Africa, as elsewhere in the world, changed the interaction between indigenous people and their environment (Carruthers, 1995:4).

The European colonisation of South Africa could also be seen as an ecological invasion. The success of this invasion depended to a large extent on the European collection of plants, animals and microlife that had been made tough by thousands of years of competition as a result of agriculture.

Just as was the case, therefore, with the early Iron Age pioneers in South Africa, European colonisation imported a human ecology, that is a new set of relationships between human beings and their environment.

The most immediate effect of colonisation on the indigenous societies and the way in which they used their environment was loss of land. As the colonial frontier expanded, 'native reserves' were created by the second half of the nineteenth century in some parts of South Africa. In the twentieth century these 'reserves' proliferated. The enforced territorial confinement disrupted the seasonal grazing movement of cattle in pastoral communities. This resulted in the carrying capacity of the land being exceeded. Furthermore, traditional sources of emergency foods, such as veldkos and game, were destroyed. These changes cast indigenous communities into an ecological crisis (Peires, 1981:162).

Simultaneously, as these subject societies were integrated into the colonial economy, new opportunities were created that encouraged further exploitation of the natural resources still at their disposal. Shillington's (1985) research on the

history of the southern Tswana provides a good case study of how the relationship between African societies and their environment changed, how they originally became disconnected.

Until at least 1840 the southern Tswana lived more or less within the ecological limitations of their environment. During colonisation, however, they lost a lot of land. In addition, the remaining land was divided into plots. This meant, firstly, that more people had to live on less land. Secondly, it also meant that traditional pasture management systems could no longer be practised. The beginning of the mining industry in Kimberley in 1870, however, also provided the southern Tswana with an opportunity to gain an income. They were able to link up with the expanding colonial economy and exploit the land still at their disposal more intensively than was possible earlier. From the 1840s they traded hides, ivory and ostrich feathers for arms and ammunition. However, by the 1870s, as a result of both their exploitation and the impact of European hunters, the game had disappeared, and the Southern Tswana had lost a major food source. They then changed to wood-riding for the Kimberley market. This continued until the 1880s, by which time most of the trees had been cut down. The firewood industry finally collapsed with the import of cheap Welsh coal. Next, increased maize cultivation and winter wheat became the way to retain access to the colonial market. This practice hastened environmental degradation because the land was unsuitable for intensive agriculture, and agriculture also reduced the availability of grazing land. By the late 1800s the Griqualand-West area had reached the limits of its carrying capacity. Local agriculturalists also had to compete with the high rates of production and low prices of maize produced by Sotho farmers on the southern highveld. In conjunction with a typical season of low rainfall, the effects of overstocking quickly became apparent in the Tswana regions. Droughts and locust plagues further reduced the agricultural productivity of the region, and the condition of Tswana cattle deteriorated. When the rinderpest of 1896 struck, herds in the Cape Colony were reduced by 35%. In contrast the Tswana lost up to 90% of their total life-stock. These losses were exacerbated by the environmental stresses at the time.

Within a very short period the southern Tswana had lost a number of important resources: trees and cattle, while the condition of the land itself was progressively deteriorating. Veldkos was virtually extinct due to exploitative pressure and the climax grasses had been replaced by, in many places, karoid (karoo-like) vegetation.

The European colonisation of Southern Africa, therefore, set in motion a very complex process of environmental change. It undoubtedly disrupted the existing relationships between indigenous societies and their natural environment.

Access to markets and the availability of new technologies had overcome the ecological restrictions within which communities previously had to live. In addition, a new political ecology was established through what has been described as a process of 'ecological imperialism' (Crosby, 1988:103). Ecological imperialism meant that European control had been established over the natural resources of the subcontinent. These were now made available for the expansion of the European economy.

4.3.5 European conservation measurements

The first formal European conservation measure came from Jan van Riebeeck. On 14 April 1652 he declared that his men were allowed only two meals a day and half a penguin per person in the evening in order to prevent an important food source from being wiped out (Pringle, 1982:18).

However, environmental concerns in the Cape Colony extended beyond the protection of wildlife. In the 1800s South Africa experienced a series of severe droughts, and naturalists began to make a link between deforestation and reduced rainfall - the desiccationist theory. For the first time, conservation measures were introduced that aimed at managing artificially induced climate changes (Grove, 1989:165).

By the late 1800s farmers started to use wire fencing on the farms. This cut off the migration routes of the game, but simultaneously provided the means to protect them. Both bontebok and black wildebeest populations had by then been virtually eradicated and were saved from extinction by two far-sighted farmers who provided them with protected camps (Grove, 1989:166).

Paul Kruger has for long been considered the father of conservation in South Africa and the prime mover behind the ZAR Volksraad's 1890 proclamation of the Pongola Game Reserve, the first game reserve in South Africa. However, it was only after the Anglo-Boer War (1899 - 1902) that game reserves became formally administered by the state. Some authors are of the opinion that the game reserves in the Transvaal could until then, be more accurately described as 'game farms' in which 'vermin' such as lion and other predators were systematically eliminated, a practice frowned upon today (Grove, 1989; Pienaar, 1990). This changed with the re-establishment of government game reserve administration under the British military administration. Stevenson Hamilton, for example, was appointed chief warden of the Sabie Game Reserve shortly after the end of the war and formal management of the reserves was initiated (Pienaar, 1990:245).

In 1926 the National Parks Act was passed by Parliament. The Act established a National Parks Board, responsible for conservation management at a national level. Simultaneously the old Sabie and Shingwedzi Reserves were consolidated and enlarged to become what is known as the Kruger National Park. The Act also included provisions for the proclamation of further national parks, leading to the establishment of the Kalahari Gemsbok Park (now Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park), Addo Elephant and Bontebok National Parks in 1931 and the Mountain Zebra National Park in 1937 (Pienaar, 1990).

4.3.6 Changes in conservation policies

By the middle of the 1980s political pressure against state conservation in South Africa increased, resulting, among other things, in challenges to the established history of conservation in the country (Carruthers, 1993:11-22).

The alienation of land that had accompanied the establishment of national parks in the past became an intensely politicised issue. In 1933 the National Parks Board discussed the resettlement of the Makuleke community from what was to become the northern section of the Kruger National Park (www.wildnetafrica.com). It also became apparent that the attitudes of rural people towards conservation were not what they should be.

A range of projects aimed at linking rural communities with conservation has since been implemented in South Africa. Projects aimed at giving local people access to resources such as firewood, thatching grass, traditional medicines, water and meat (North West Province, 2004:76-77, Steenkamp & Hughes, 1997). Emphasis is also placed on the employment of locals in conservation and on their participation in the tourism industry. In some instances, such as in the Richtersveld, contractual parks have been established (Robinson, 1998). There are also examples where local communities have become active participants and large shareholders in private conservation-based tourism (ecotourism) ventures (Macleod, 2004:48-51). It would be legitimate to say that the era of 'conservation with a human face' has arrived, getting people reconnected to nature.

From the above historical overview, it is clear that the human species is a part and a product of nature. We are created from nature and throughout our entire evolutionary history we lived in nature, as a part of nature. In modern times it seems as if human beings have become denaturalised. They have become like alien parasites that feed so relentlessly upon their host that ultimately they will die, having totally consumed what their own survival was dependent upon. In these modern times we have acted as though all things natural were only there to serve us and were infinite, inexhaustible (Patterson, 2001:16).

5. OUR CULTURE AND DISCONNECTEDNESS

5.1 Older and younger cultures

One of the most appropriate descriptions of 'culture' in this regard, is that of Hartmann (2001). He uses the concepts of 'older' and 'younger' cultures to emphasise the important distinctions between how we are today and how we used to be. He discusses a cultural change and explained that after 100 000 years of living cooperatively with each other and nature, people began dominating and enslaving each other and nature. Hartmann compares the lives of ancient people with that of modern people.

As mentioned earlier, one of the oldest cultures on earth is that of the San of the Kalahari Desert. They live off the earth. Hartmann (2001:166-169) explains something of their close connectedness with nature. The San, as an example of the 'older culture', values community. They share their world with everything else, take only what is necessary, and thank the earth for providing in their needs. They hold, as their most fundamental concept, the belief that they are not different from, separate from, in charge of, superior to, or inferior to the natural world. They (we) are part of it. Whatever you do to nature, you do to yourself. For most, there is no concept of a separate 'nature': it is all us, and we are all of it. This idealistic picture of the 'old culture' might have created the perception that all people in Africa, the 'younger culture', lead a life closely connected to nature. This perception was tested among 166 participants for this study (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Study participants opinion on disconnectedness/connectedness to nature of people of Africa comparing to those of Europe and America (N = 166).

Are South Africans and people of Africa closer to nature than people from Europe and America?	Yes	No	Not sure
	120 (72%)	29 (17%)	17 (10%)

Results from Table 4.3 indicate that the majority (72%) of participants agree that people of Africa live closer to nature than those from western countries. Many reasons were mentioned as to why this is so, for example:

- The demographic distribution in Africa is more rural than urban.
- Our historical farming background and pioneer life are carried over from generation to generation.
- There are more open spaces and undeveloped natural environments in Africa where people still have the opportunity to get close to nature.
- Some cultures lead a life-style that keeps them connected with nature (referring to traditions and beliefs of certain indigenous cultures).
- Southern Africa has a vast variety of unspoilt natural environments.

However, although only 27% of the participants disagree or are not sure about this, they have mentioned equally legitimate reasons why we are not necessarily closer to nature than our co-species in Europe and America. They suggested that we destroy in the name of development to suit our own selfish needs with pollution and erosion as a result [PI-1:404(26,27), PI-2:411(20) and PI-3:415(13)]. Like our equals in the north, we consume natural resources without considering its (and our) future existence. According to these participants, it only appears that we are closer to nature, but on the contrary we are all equally guilty of abuse and misconduct of our resources.

In the same survey, study participants' view on consumption of South Africans versus Americans and Europeans was asked. Fifty four percent were of the opinion that we do not consume more than other western countries, while 46% feels that the opposite is true (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Study participants' opinion on consumption of South Africans (N = 125).

Do you think South Africans consume more than Americans and Europeans?	Yes	No
	58 (46%)	67 (54%)

The majority felt that we are not educated and disciplined enough with regards to reuse and recycling principles and that we lack proper laws and law enforcement to live a less consumptive life [C-1:589(a)-(e), PI-1:404(27)]. Those participants who felt that we consume less than America and Europe, stated that we have less to consume and that consumption depends on economy and the politics of a country [C-2:589(a)-(h)]. Furthermore, the natural environment itself also determines to what extent wasteful consumption can take place. The current situation in Zimbabwe illustrates this viewpoint.

Over the past decade, Zimbabwe has experienced an increasing rate of economic decline and growing political confrontation. Drought plagued the country in the early 1990s and mid-1990s, and again during the past two years. Floods in 2000 further exacerbated the rural situation. Consequently, agricultural output has suffered severely. The situation has been worsened by the Government of Zimbabwe's (GOZ) land tenure reform programme that has resulted in a serious reduction in food production by the commercial farming sector. The current (2004) food-deficit may be as high as 1,5 million tons, suggesting that up to 10 million of Zimbabwe's 12,5 million people may face food insecurity in the coming months. The political environment has deteriorated, especially following the rejection of a new Constitution proposed by the ruling ZANU-PF party in 2000, its near loss in the Parliamentary elections soon after, and most recently with the lead-up to, and the aftermath of, the highly controversial Presidential elections. Political violence has become commonplace, especially in rural areas, and the rule of law has been seriously compromised throughout the country. The GOZ's decision in early 2000 to 'fast-track' the land reform programme, and the resultant occupation of many commercial farms, especially over the past year, is producing a growing population of displaced and/or economically destitute farm workers. Thus, the physical and/or economic displacement of farm workers, together with the displacement resulting from political violence, especially in the aftermath of the recent election, has created a serious problem of internally displaced population in the country (IDP Unit, 2002). Therefore, the people of Zimbabwe can hardly be wasteful consumers, realising that they do not even have the resources to survive.

On the other hand, South Africans generate 560 million tons of waste annually (Tempelhoff, 2005:10). Inhabitants of Gauteng, the richest province of the country, produce 480 kg waste per capita per year. It is generally accepted that the amount of waste generated per person annually is an indication of the prosperity of a society. It is therefore not strange that the USA again got into the *Guinness World Records 2005* as the country that generates the most waste per capita. Each person in the USA disposes 760 kg of waste material on an annual basis. Australia with 690 kg per capita is in the second place. According to Tempelhoff (2005:10) the municipalities of three of our biggest cities, Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, spend R2,5 billion annually on waste removal and waste management - money that can surely be spent more efficiently if South Africans could be disciplined and enforced by law to manage their own domestic waste material and recycle at least paper, cans and glass.

Modern cultures (civilizations) have come to truly believe that a better life is to be gained by consumerism and to use our intelligence to manipulate nature to our sole advantage. Again, we are totally disconnected. This disconnection has caused the world's dominant culture to become stuck in a stage of arrested development, more concerned with 'me' and 'now' than with being custodians for the future. This is in direct contrast to the way older culture people view the goal of day-to-day life and, indeed, the very meaning of life itself.

According to Hartmann (2001:272) our culture has two main problems. First, when we decide what we are responsible for, we draw a narrow circle around ourselves. The second problem is even worse. Increasingly our culture gets stuck in this immature stage of development that says 'I am the centre of the universe, I am what is important'.

What is the reason for this increasing regression in our maturity with regards to our natural environment? Hartmann (2001:272) feels strongly about the influence of television in this regard:

> The primary 'immature' cultural concept - 'you are the most important (thing) in the world' - is shouted at us daily through TV, the primary spokes vehicle of our culture. The constant reinforcements of this immature message keeps our culture immature, trains our young in immaturity, and prevents us from growing in maturity. Only when we turn off the messages, can we begin the process of maturing - and this is rarely done in our culture. Consumerism was born - the idea of making your life better by getting something - and amplified by television into a culture-consuming monster. It works great for corporations and marketers in a 'me-centred' world, but it completely distracts human beings from the more mature view of making life better for us all.

5.2 Validation of natural environments and resources

According to Hartmann (2001:168), in contrast with the 'old culture', our 'younger culture' values productivity and individual possession. He refers to a study done by researchers in 1997 in which they quantified the value of all environments of the planet. From measuring the size of a Louisiana shrimp harvest to how much people were willing to pay for access to a lake, coral reef, or other natural attraction, they concluded that the planet's natural areas were worth about US$33 trillion. That someone would even consider putting a price tag on the world, is an indication to Hartmann of how far over the edge we have gone.

Many people (including many economists) believe that it is not possible to measure the total value of wildlife, but the past few decades have seen considerable efforts to develop methods for quantifying at least some of the values. These are expressed as a monetary figure, since exchanges in the market place are usually accompanied by money changing hands.

In South Africa, Geach (2005) amongst others, examined the economic value of elephants. She regards the 'economic' value of elephants as a reflection of:

- Direct use (non-consumptive): elephants are key drawcards for the growing ecotourism industry
- Indirect use: elephants are keystone species in the ecology. This value is not usually measured, but some ecosystem benefits are quantified, for example seed dispersal of plant species by elephants
- Non-use values: the global concern for the continued existence of elephants is expressed by donations of public money

This 'validation' of ecosystems or any component of an ecosystem, demonstrates a mind-set of 'the world is here for us and only has value to the extent to which we can use it'. According to this perspective, 'natural resources' are only a 'resource' if they are usable by human beings.

Many people share this point of view, from those who claim that the planet is a self-stabilising, living system, to those who argue that we need more wild areas for campers and backpackers to enjoy. The implicit message is that we need to save ecosystems because they have value to human beings, directly or aesthetically. Natural things - landscapes, animals, plants, the structures of these things - are often found to be beautiful, and this can give us a powerful reason to value them, and to want them preserved. Sometimes nature as a whole is said to be beautiful. Philosophers, under the heading 'aesthetics', explore the nature of beauty, and what it may be grounded in, i.e. whether beauty is something objective, for example. A good deal of work in aesthetics has to do with works of art, but the aesthetics of nature becomes an important topic in the context of the decisions we have to make about our environment (Guide to the philosophy of the environment, 2005).

Carlson (1992) proposes the idea that natural objects have natural properties and that attention to at least some of such properties is necessary for correct or appropriate aesthetic appreciation of natural environments. His examples involve natural objects and environments that have likewise acquired cultural properties due to human physical activity, but in less direct and/or in less obvious ways. Examples range from 'natural' sunsets, the colours of which are wonderfully

enhanced by air pollution, to particular objects such as specific trees. For example, baobabs (*Adansonia digitata*) are one of Africa's best known trees (Fig. 4.1).



Figure 4.1: The baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*) of the African savanna.

In South Africa they only grow in the low-lying, warm and dry bushveld area of the Limpopo province (Schmidt, Lötter & McCleland, 2002:394). The baobabs thick, grey, fibrous trunk (sometimes over 25 meters in circumference) and large, spreading crown, seasonally devoid of foliage, are instantly recognisable. Recent radiocarbon dating indicates that some of the largest baobabs could be more than 3 000 years old (South African National Roads Agency, 2004:68-71). Baobabs are also important for tourism. In the Musina area (northern Limpopo Province) there are about 40 000 individual baobab trees. Local residents regard them as natural features with a high conservation value. During the public participation of the process of widening the N1 route which crosses the Soutpansberg mountain range

to the north and traverses the baobab tree reserve to the south of Musina, the best-known baobabs were identified as specimens with high tourism value (South African National Roads Agency, 2004:68-71). These trees were not to be moved. Cultural properties of the baobab are also numerous. The tree serves as a meeting place for many leaders and inhabitants of villages to discuss community matters, relate the news of the day, or tell stories. It is also considered to be an object of worship by the people of the African savannahs. Baobabs are protected trees in South Africa and are said to be one of the 'World Trees', or 'Tree of Life' by many of the cultures on the African continent (The Baobab Tree, 2005).

Religious beliefs and practices in Africa have played a role in raising the baobab tree to a level of sacredness. Its ability to survive long periods of time without water, its usefulness and its extremely long life may be some of the possible reasons why the people of the African savannah have worshipped the baobab. One particular way in which the baobab tree has been used as a religious object is as a burial chamber. In some parts of Africa, the bodies of certain important individuals are placed in a hollowed-out trunk of the baobab tree to symbolize the communion between the vital forces of the plant gods and the body of the departed. The tree thus has a complex set of various kinds of natural and cultural properties, knowledge of which is central to its appropriate aesthetic appreciation.

Even at its most noble, in its concern for the environment, our culture is expressing a profound self-centredness, a concern that if our natural environment is lost, we may no longer use, appreciate, or even worship it.

South African conservationist, Ian Player, mentions the continuing need of the Western world to dominate and subdue nature:

> It represents an acting-out of the dark part of the psyche, and we have seen it in the elimination of 60 million bison in the United States and in the decimation of Native Americans, the Aborigines in Australia ... and wherever else the hand of Western man has rested. The destruction of nature in Africa is visible. All we have left in

> South Africa are the national parks and game reserves, and even they are only witness areas, but they are of immense importance for Africa and for the rest of the world (1999:15).

In all cases, what is implicit in our cultural view of the earth, is a hierarchy. Nature is better, nobler than humanity or, a more popular belief, humanity is superior to nature and has a noble obligation to subdue and exercise control over nature. All of humanity once knew how to live in harmony with nature, knew how to live sustainably. However, in the recent past, after more than five thousand generations of cooperation, domination crept in, and it spread around the world like influenza, infecting the whole planet (Hartmann, 2001:199).

Carpenter (1995:72) is of the meaning that since the Age of Enlightenment (the intellectual movement of the eighteenth century which generated so much supposed wisdom and understanding), the Western path has led most of its followers to anything but enlightenment. Sooner or later most people come to realise that materialism does not bring happiness. However, by that time their spiritual lives represent such a void that it is difficult to know which way to turn for inner fulfilment.

Fromm (1956), an earlier philosophically oriented psychotherapist, sees eco-alienation as the basic cause of much of human's anxiety. He also identifies separation from nature as a significant cause of the existential anxiety that is inherent in human life. He declares:

> What is essential in the existence of man is the fact that he has emerged from the animal kingdom. He never leaves (nature); he is part of it - and yet once torn away from nature, he cannot return to it (1956:7).

With this Fromm (1956:11) emphasises that there is an irreversible loss of prehuman oneness with nature. The more human beings separate from the natural world, the more intense the need becomes to find new ways of escaping

separateness. However, what he did not see was a reversible alienation from a healthy reconnection that has been widespread only in recent decades as a result of urbanization, industrialization, and the dominance of mechanistic science (Clinebell, 1996:36). Healing this eco-alienation is both possible and therapeutically desirable.

6. CONCLUSION

Representatives of the 'old cultures', such as the San, lived in harmony with nature over many years. Technological progress led to a lifestyle that caused human beings to become disconnected from the natural environment. Although technology and lifestyle were the two main reasons given in this chapter for the disconnectedness from nature, other factors may also have caused this separation. Religion and people's relationship with the divine and the connection between nature and the divine, may also be considered as a reason. The latter was, however, not included in this study as it is a field that justifies a separate study.

All these stories about the origins of the separation and all the metaphors for the disconnection from nature are just what they seem - metaphors and stories. Some of them may even seem more compelling than others. These investigations and speculations are interesting and important. When we ask practical questions about the consequences of the separation for the well-being of the individual, or about ways to reconnect to nature, the differences among these various myths and metaphors may be significant. In the search for solutions, individual eco-narratives do matter. These stories may have consequences for the individual and his/her relationships with others, with the self and with nature.

Humankind is part of the whole. According to Patterson (2001:17), nothing is meant to be separated from the whole. Separation may result in loneliness of spirit and that means disconnection. Patterson uses lions as his metaphor and says that when people are disconnected, they become like a caged lion in a zoo. Although his food and shelter are provided, because he is separated from his kind and his natural habitat, the zoo lion is lost to the whole. Because he cannot

connect, something dies within. Similarly, our separation from nature is causing something within us to die. The more separated we become, the more we become 'untouched' by nature, resulting in a spiritual 'loneliness'. We may not even realise the cause for this 'loneliness'. Patterson's caged zoo lion is groundless and alone. He continuously walks the unnatural path to nowhere, endlessly pacing up and down. He is lost to the whole (Patterson, 2001:18). Patterson also asks the question whether human beings are becoming like the caged zoo lion. Are we walking the path to nowhere because we have become mentally and physically isolated from the natural whole?

In life one comes across many individuals who feel 'caged', whether it is in relationships, in themselves, or in situations such as work, family or finances. How many of these 'caged' experiences are created by our own doing? We have to find ways to transform, to release ourselves from the cage we have created around us, to get out of our isolated position and to reconnect with nature to enrich our lives. It is imperative, for our own survival - physically, mentally and spiritually - that we reconnect with nature, whether consciously or subconsciously. We have to realise that our harming of nature affects all life, not least ourselves. We should return to the values of the earth of which we are a part, not apart from. We should reconnect spiritually with everything in nature. To do this, one does not have to stand next to a roaring lion. One can feel the connecting energy by seeing a sunset, or watching the sun on autumn leaves. We can feel it anywhere; we are touching it every day. Every step we take connects us with the earth. We are a part of it and it surrounds us. We breathe it.

Creative reconnection is accepting the sometimes painful paradox of our lack of animal unity with nature. It is also accepting the deeply rooted earthiness of our bodies, minds and spirits. Such reconnection or bonding means frequent, intentional and intimate interaction with nature in creative closeness. This is mutually beneficial to our own well-being and to our responsibility as a species, part of the whole, for the well-being of nature around us. Chapter 5 will look into possible methods of how people attempt to become reconnected to nature.

CHAPTER 5

RECONNECTING TO NATURE: A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

> *You are never lost or alone so long as you can claim kinship with everything that is. You are no more alone than the river is alone or the mountains are alone or anything in the universe, for you are part of the whole. Everyday you can come out and meet yourself in the sky's reflection, or the dew lying on flower's petals or any other natural thing. Renew yourself in these things, identify yourself with them...* (De Watteville, in Patterson, 2001).

1. INTRODUCTION

When it comes to understanding nature and its ecosystem complexity, knowledge of biology, geology and ecology is essential. For saving and preserving nature, knowledge alone is not sufficient. Something else is needed, at the very least a proper non-ethnocentric humility and a willingness to admit that we have made errors in many of our ways - a sentiment that reintroduces the religious processes of regret and compensation. One of the many experiences of conservationist Ian Player, who has an extensive knowledge of ecology, illustrates the above-mentioned statement:

> I often sat in the semi-darkness of the caves once inhabited by the San in the Drakensberg and looked at their exquisite, (mystical), paintings of the animals, the birds, the snakes, and the people, and in my imagination I heard their voices above the sound of the rapids in nearby streams. There I found a great peace, and the only disturbance was the sickness I felt at the modern graffiti scratched

> or painted on the ancient walls by persons unfit to be described as human (1999:14).

Reconnecting or bonding with nature is not merging with nature or finding oneness with nature in the way that animals seem to do. Although we have much in common with them, the degree in which animals bond with nature is impossible for human beings. According to Clinebell (1996:26) this is because we seem to be distinguished from other animals by our transcending consciousness, choicefulness and spirituality.

It is important to influence human beings towards a sense of meaning and significance in life. There is urgent need for redirection of human activity to avoid further damage to the living systems of the earth. For this to take place it would be necessary for humanity to develop a radically changed attitude to the natural world. Any adequate response by the general public to planetary needs will have to be driven by 'a change of heart', by essentially 'religious' values and processes. Such religious processes involve the experiencing of immersion of the self in a greater meaning, a sense of the self as significantly related to the world, of security, of being at ease, of fitting the environment, of being part of the whole. From this may follow attitudes of concern for the needs of the natural environment, other people and other species. Thus, there would be a merging of individual identity with the larger entity: society, ecosystem, planet and universal mind.

The world we could live in would have a different look if we made globally ethical considerations before acting. The rainforests would not be felled, the seas would not be polluted, and we would not inflict the earth with the calamities that we have created through our actions. By bringing in and acting upon our ethical considerations, by listening to our inner voice, we would have a calmer, quieter and ecologically sounder world around us (Patterson, 2001:181).

2. PRIMITIVENESS AND CONNECTEDNESS

Commenting on the current re-discovery of 'savagery as ecological wisdom', Roszak (1993:226) claims that the durability of traditional societies had to do with moral reciprocity between people and environment. He refers to the Jamie Uys movie, *The gods must be crazy*, which set records in many cities. It pictures the life of the San of the Kalahari. Audiences found them charmingly naïve and trusting, the perfect foil for the mad antics of the civilised whites around them. Implicit in this image has always been the assumption that living close to untamed nature accounts for the superiority of 'uncivilised' people. The wilderness was often credited with little more than the capacity to isolate the wild and primitive from the cities. These images fail to grant these 'primitive' people intellectual competence, the ability to understand the world better than their civilised counterparts and use its resources to greater advantage. Primitive people were, by definition, underdeveloped. They had no true science; they possessed no technological proficiency. This was seen as contributing to their moral health, but not their economic well-being. These people, however, were noble *in spite of* their 'ignorance, backwardness and poverty'.

It is exactly this lack of scientific proof and technological simplicity that establishes the perceived environmental harmony in which traditional people live. Historically these ecosystems were 'ritually regulated' [Chapter 4, par. 4.3]. Religious tradition and ritual processes of respect were essential. Granted that one can find instances of tribal societies that have abused habitat by overcutting and overgrazing, one finds nothing in the historical record to compare with the assault upon the environment we experience today (Roszak, 1993:228).

A very appropriate example is the story told by Player (1999) about Magqubu Ntombela, a Zulu wilderness guide, who always remained connected to nature. Ntombela could not read or write and spend almost all of his 92 years in the KwaZulu-Natal wilderness. Player regards Ntombela as his mentor in life.

> Magqubu took me on a journey into an Africa that taught me the vital importance of indigenous knowledge and the benefits modern people could derive from a greater understanding of African cosmology, the relationship with the natural world which should be our guide to the future (2000:65).

Player and Magqubu grew up in the same country, but lived in different worlds. Magqubu never had the opportunity to go to school. 'My ears are my books and my lips my pen, he would say' (Player, 1999:9). He started working in conservation in 1914, in the homeland of the Ntombela clan. He knew the country intimately. At the age of ten he had already accompanied white hunters, guiding them into the hunting zones of the small Zululand game reserves. Although he had no formal schooling, he was highly intelligent, dignified, and deeply religious. He absorbed knowledge in the traditional verbal way of the Zulu people. He had an incredible memory. Knowledge of animal and bird behaviour came naturally to him because he has spent so much time in the veld and he was prepared to share his knowledge and experience.

Player built up a very intimate relationship with Magqubu. Together they did many field guiding trips with people from all over the world. In 1986, while walking along rhino paths skirting the Black Mfolozi River, Player mentioned the forthcoming Fourth World Wilderness Congress in America. He explained that it would be an important affair and that he wanted Magqubu to be a speaker. Magqubu had met many Americans on trail, but he asked Player if they could travel via England because he wanted to go where the men lived who had fought against his father (referring to the Zulu War of the late 1870s). He wanted to make peace with the spirits of the men his father had killed.

At the congress, Magqubu interacted brilliantly with the delegates and the other speakers. For his own presentation he was dressed in all his Zulu finery of beadwork, skins and plumed feathers. His essential strength and humanness ensured that no matter what he was saying or doing, there was no loss of dignity. One of Player and Magqubu's contributions to the congress proceedings was an

audiovisual presentation of Magqubu leading a trail in the Mfolozi. In contrast to the other films presented, there was no commentary. The only sounds were the animals and the birds and one plaintive Zulu lyric. The impact on the audience was staggering and both presenters were overwhelmed by delegates and speakers offering their congratulations. Magqubu greeted everybody with the same openness.

Magqubu was invited to a television and radio interview together with Finlay MacRae (a Scottish delegate whom he had first met at the 1977 World Wilderness Congress in Johannesburg). It was an unusual radio session in Denver, with Finlay talking in his broad accent and Magqubu in Zulu with Bongani (the interpreter) translating, except when Magqubu imitated the lion, hippo, elephant and other animals, which needed no interpretation. Magqubu's fame had already spread after the publication of an enormous colour photograph before he arrived in Denver. Mrs. Harlem Brundtland, then Prime Minister of Norway, addressed the congress and Magqubu was asked to make a presentation to her. The importance of the lady was explained to him, but he was untroubled. At lunchtime he took some beautiful Zulu beadwork, a necklace and bangle to her. Instead of simply handing it to her, he insisted on placing the necklace around her neck and the bangle around her wrist. The gracious actions of Magqubu and Mrs Brundtland's response were an emotional experience to many at the table.

The finale to the congress was an indaba and a prayer circle. Magqubu gave a long prayer about the coming together of people from all over the world to celebrate our reunion and our re-affirmation of the power of wild country and wilderness to guide humankind on the right path.

In spite of the intense exposure to influences and experiences of Magqubu Ntombela in the 'civilised' world, he never became disconnected from nature. Many times perceived as 'primitive' by his co-species in civilisation, he had enormous intellectual competence, the ability to understand the world better than his civilised counterparts and he had the intrinsic knowledge of how to use its resources to greater advantage, for spiritual and physical well-being. Ntombela is

a true example of remaining connected, irrespective of the intensity of external influences.

Player (2000:65) refers to Andrew Lyttle's *Heron Dance* in which he says:

> Prophets do not come from the cities, promising riches and store clothes. They have always come from the wilderness, stinking of goats and running with lice, and telling of a different sort of treasure.

Contrary to popular belief, primal religions are today reviving in many parts of the world. The superior attitude that spread European civilisation over the world, spurred on by western Christianity and materialism, has been discredited in the twentieth century. Native faiths - forbidden, almost destroyed - reached their lowest point at the end of the nineteenth century. Their flame was extinguished. Today the disregard for the earth, for community, for spirituality, has brought the whole human enterprise into jeopardy. Arising like a phoenix from the ashes, tribal peoples are gathering again in their ceremonial circles, remembering discarded teaching, renewing the ancient ways (Newbery, 1982).

> Only now, as the empire of cities crowds the wilderness towards obsolescence and threatens all traditional societies with extinction, does an intriguing new variation on the old theme emerge: *savagery as ecological wisdom*, the secret of survival and permanent well-being (Roszak 1993:226).

3. A PARADIGM CHANGE?

Although many environmentalists believe that an urgent and serious threat to the earth's biosphere exists due to human activities (Beck, 2004:651-670; Jain, 1993:403-420; Tonn, 2002:117-132), many realise the need for a change in worldview with regard to our relationship with the natural environment (Huesemann, 2001:271-287; Tanimoto, 2005:1-24; Ukwe, Ibe, Alo & Yumkella,

2003:219-225). What is needed is a mind shift to a view that recognises the fragility of the natural environment and the interdependency of species. Such a change in mindset may lead to an effective change in human behaviour.

Many authors recognise that a paradigm change is indeed occurring in scientific, philosophical and technological thinking. For example, Bateson and Bateson (1988:178) write that our beliefs are undergoing rapid change and that 'the old beliefs are wearing thin and there is a groping for new'. Capra (1983) believes that there is an overall paradigm shift in progress. He defines paradigms as inter-related networks of concepts, values, perceptions and practices shared by a community. Capra sees the present paradigm shift as bringing about a change in values in general. Such changes include moves from competition to co-operation, reductionist to holistic, linear to cyclic, quantification to quality and hierarchy to networks.

These shifts are apparent in the changes that have taken place in conservation practices and policies (Wildlife and Environment Society of Southern Africa (WESSA), 2001; South African National Parks (SANP), 2004) since the early years of the establishment of national parks: from competition for natural resources to co-operation in conservation practices (Macleod, 2004:48-51), from reductionist (saving single species) to holistic (saving ecosystems) thinking (SANP, 2004), from linear (use what is available) to cyclic (sustainable living), quantification (how many resources are available) to quality (improve and sustain the available resources) and from hierarchal thinking (decision-making by conservation authorities exclusively) to networking (inclusion of all role-players) (Humphreys, 2003:20-22).

As mentioned in Chapter 4, there have recently been several conflicts between South African conservation authorities and rural communities about land (Humphreys, 2003:20-22). One of the reasons for the land rights debate is the way in which conservation was implemented during the colonial and post-colonial period of African history (MacKenzie, 1988). The first environmental legislation implemented by colonial governments around the turn of the century was generally

aimed at controlling hunting, deforestation, soil erosion and desertification (Anderson & Grové, 1987:1-12). A number of game reserves and forest sanctuaries were also established. Following the spread of American ideas of nature conservation, a number of national parks were established in Africa between the 1930s and 1960s. This is where the conflict and threat to the conservation of Africa's wildlife and natural resources started.

Most of the land now conserved in Africa was once permanently inhabited, as is the case in most areas in the world. Alternatively, such land was used on a seasonal basis by migratory people, for example the San in South Africa. The establishment of national parks, game reserves or protected areas in many instances, therefore, meant that the rights of local people to use their environment for survival were reduced or eliminated (Brady, 2004:78-83). In other words, one of the major drawbacks of colonial conservation was that it served to create a fundamental conflict of interests between rural people and conservationists. Rural people felt that they had lost access to certain natural resources and consequently had little motivation to identify with conservation objectives. Competition for scarce resources set the scene for increasing confrontation between human needs and conservation objectives (Pringle, 1982:45). This problem lay at the root of many of the conservation problems experienced from the independence of the African countries onwards.

As conservationists, politicians and other interested parties increasingly realised that nature conservation in Africa was in trouble, pressure developed for a change in the prevailing conservation philosophy. This initiated the paradigm shift. It was realised that conservation, even in situations where it was supported by the government, could not be implemented without the support and participation of people. The conflict of interests between rural people and conservation had to be addressed for conservation to become sustainable.

As early as 1972 Myers wrote that the future of parks would depend on the extent to which ecological needs are balanced with socio-economic needs. The aim should be to establish a symbiotic relationship between man and nature. Viewing parks as

natural resource ecosystems, rather than as refuges for wild animals and tourists from a crowded world, would at least allow a start on the mobilisation of all exploitable resources (Myers, 1972:1255-1263).

In recent years thoughts about nature conservation have changed and conservationists had to change their mind set (Humphreys, 2003:20-22). Conservation became not a matter of saving a single species or part of an ecosystem anymore (although the conservation of species is becoming increasingly important). It is now more a matter of taking care of whole ecosystems, with all the ecological and cultural components included, a step in the right direction to reconnect human beings to the natural environment.

Skolimowski (1993:21) claims that a similar transition is occurring which he expresses in value terms: technological consciousness towards ecological consciousness, atomistic towards holistic, quantitative towards qualitative, and secular towards spiritual.

A range of projects aimed at linking rural development with nature conservation has been implemented in South Africa [Chapter 4]. With this process of including people in natural systems, reconnection with nature is encouraged.

We have reached a stage where the world speaks about ecology (as an underlying system of values) for the first time. Ecology itself is becoming a form of thought and awareness. To be a sensitive human being now requires ecological sensitivity.

What is notable in the present paradigm change are new understandings of the interrelatedness of objects and events, of the nature of mind, and of evolution and transcendence. Referring to the changes taking place in nature conservation in South Africa, the new insights are preconditions for a change by which processes and values that are essentially spiritual are being transferred from being 'supernatural' into that of the natural world. These processes and attitudes include the following: the ability to regard the natural world (including human beings and their activities) as worthy objects of respectful feeling; a sense of the

self as significant and meaningful in the processes of nature, resulting in feelings of 'being at home' in the world; and the resurrection of the concept of sacredness as a value relating to real entities and processes (Charlton, 1994:7). The key process is the experiencing of the self as immersed in a meaningful and greater process, merged with a larger reality. This sense of oneness is what members of many religious faiths have called a relationship with the deity, with God.

4. A NEW PARADIGM: SCIENCE TO SYSTEMS

Roszak saw these changes in thinking even in science as early as 1972:

> Even science, in its awkward single-visioned way, has been drawn to continuities that baffle traditional assumptions. It can no longer draw hard lines between matter and energy, organic and inorganic, man and lower animal, law and the indeterminate, mind and body (1972:462).

The 'new science' shows that the understanding of truth and reality as laid down by Newtonian deterministic science is inadequate. The assumption that the only true knowledge is that derived from quantifiable experience by means of logical deductive reasoning, is false. There is a new understanding of mind-like or mental processes within living systems at all levels. It is particularly significant that human beings are seen within the larger ecosystem - the opposite of the 'man above nature' stance of the 'old' paradigm (Charlton, 1994:55).

4.1 A human ecology

Although the term human ecology is characterised by a lack of consensus about what it means, it generally focuses on the relationship between people and their surroundings (Lawrence, 1993:213). Bruhn (1974:105-125) presented a brief overview of the development of human ecology studies in various disciplines. These studies show that concepts, principles and methods from the natural sciences, especially biology, have repeatedly been used analogically at the expense

of those in the social sciences. For example, many environmental and economic analyses of cities have frequently adopted a biological analogy by treating human settlements as metabolisms, and by examining flows of energy and materials at the expense of other social processes, especially human knowledge, communication and information. Consequently, the term 'environment' has been interpreted and studied restrictively, according to academic concepts and methods that often emphasize human products and processes. Many inorganic or abiotic, biological and symbolic constituents of the environment have commonly been overlooked.

Although the majority of social scientists have been divided between those who describe 'nature' and those who examine 'culture' as separate entities, it is instructive to recall those significant integrative contributions dating from the early nineteenth century. According to Bruhn (1974:105-125) Alexander von Humboldt, a German geographer, botanist and zoologist, made significant contributions to regional geography, the distribution of plants, and human demography, especially during his studies in Mexico and South America. He examined the interrelations between the natural components of the environment and human activities. Moreover, Carl Ritter, also a geographer, argued for the mutual dependence of human and natural components of the world in his holistic view of the earth. Friedrich Ratzel, colleague of von Humboldt, examined the distribution and growth of human resources. He interpreted land as a basic resource of human life which has both an ecological and a political stake (Lawrence 1993:214).

Lawrence (1993:214) describes human ecology as a holistic, integrative interpretation of those processes, products, orders and mediating factors that regulate natural and human ecosystems at all scales of the earth's surface and atmosphere. It implies a systemic framework for the analysis and comprehension of three logics and the interrelations between their components. These three logics are:

- A bio-logic, or the orders of biological organisms (biotic component)
- An eco-logic, or the order of inorganic components, e.g. water, air, soil, sun (abiotic component)
- A human-logic, or the ordering of cultural, societal and individual human factors

It is suggested that this macro-system of three logics regulates the world with respect to energy flows, material resources, human labour, and knowledge, communication and information. Consequently, it is inappropriate to emphasise one set of components to the detriment of others, or to distinguish between the 'physical' and the 'social' components of environments. Since these components are linked, the one cannot survive without the other. This kind of integrative approach would examine specific situations in terms of the reciprocal relations between the components of these three logics, both at one point in time, and over an extended period of time. In Chapter 7 these relations will be discussed in terms of the phases in which individuals see their experiences in the natural environment.

This interpretation of human ecology differs from the 'human-environment paradigm' which distinguishes human beings from their 'natural habitat'. Such viewpoints are misleading when the abiotic, biotic and human components of the environment are studied as separate entities. All of these are components of one ecosystem, of which people are but one constituent. Human attitudes, motives and values influence what people perceive and understand, how they use precise settings, and how they modify them over time. It is therefore, not 'the people' or 'the environment' which should be given priority in such a study; rather it should be the interrelations between energy flows, resources, human activities, knowledge, communication and information that should be examined over a period of time and in the context in which they occur.

An outstanding feature of human beings is that they are highly social animals. They form societies with arrangements that tend to influence the purely biophysical relationships of human beings to their environment. Early in this

century the sociologists of the so-called Chicago School, held the opinion that there are underlying biological motives to human actions such as a drive for competition, but that these drives become restrained by superimposed social rules. The resulting processes, however, could still be described by a biological language: the migration of populations through a city and the change of neighbourhoods could be understood in analogy to the succession of plant societies (Steiner & Nauser 1993:3).

According to the system-theoretic version of Hawly (1986), human populations are ecosystems in the sense that they are capable of adapting themselves to an environment. From an opposite point of view, this discipline is criticised for disregarding relationships between social and non-social facts, in particular human environmental impact. An ecological perspective on human societies, which stresses questions such as carrying capacity and sustainability, is suggested (Steiner & Nauser 1993:4).

The importance of the insights of 'new' science is recognised by writers such as Bateson and Bateson (1988), Capra (1983), Roszak (1993) and Skolimowski (1993). Although viewed from their individual philosophies, they also share the belief that the trends they describe may lead to more responsible human action in the world.

Bateson and Bateson (1988:183) believe that their understanding of natural systems and 'mind' might, if widely understood, cause people to act differently on such issues as war and ecological balance. They see enhanced sensitivity to natural systems as depending on both aesthetics and 'the sacred'.

4.2 Systems thinking: knowledge, ethics and values

Capra (1983) sees systems thinking as a useful contribution to the paradigm change because it is a different type of science. One type, he says, is Baconian science in which knowledge is power; the purpose is to dominate nature and the method is to measure and to quantify. The new type of science is one in which knowledge is wisdom, and the purpose is to understand nature and to live accordingly, the

method being the mapping of patterns (after Bateson, 1979), which are qualitative features. To present science as only a search for quantifiable data is just not how science works. It is embedded in a culture, a social and political structure and in a paradigm that contains values.

Capra (1983) denies that there are any values inherent in systems thinking itself. You can, he says, have a perfect understanding of interconnectedness and of the environmental damage you are doing and still be selfish, decide that the effects on yourself will be minimal and go on doing the damage. This may be true in as far as conscious knowledge of the environment concerns. Physical observations during this study included tourists digging out wild plants, picking up rocks, collecting firewood from natural areas and driving off-road in restricted areas. Reactions of study participants upon viewing these actions include: '... I was also guilty of such irresponsible behaviour, until I discovered that by damaging (the environment) like that, I actually inflict damage to myself...' [C-3:589], '...they don't realise what they are doing... they destroy it for everyone... they haven't yet experienced the meaning of that area. I can actually hear the trees complaining...' (by driving among endangered plants in the Etosha National Park) [C-4:589].

When a person moves to 'experiencing' nature, a different story evolves. Systems thinking would support the values of not hurting the environment because it is seen as part of oneself. The following excerpt from PR-1:564 illustrates this argument.

> I enjoy hiking in the forest and taking in the vitality and beauty of nature. When I am in the forest, I feel like I am home in a way that I can experience nowhere else. Even where I live (close to Kirstenbosch and Table Mountain) there is a feeling of artificiality in comparison to the reality of the forest. It is as though man-made things entrap the spirit, while the natural world sets the spirit free. At first I only recognized the huge trees ... and often stood in awe, feeling their presence, something I had never felt before. I started to admire the creatures of the forest ...colourful fungi and lichens, some attached to the trees. I slowly realized that these creatures

> need each other, there is a link. So, my connection with the forest, as well as the various kinds of weather, wild animals (on wing of four legs), patches of wild flowers, waterfalls, streams, ocean, skies, stars and bird and insect songs, is a life-affirming experience, as necessary as my next breath....

This telling confirms Shepard's (1982) viewpoint that there is a long-established sense of kinship with nature that can be recovered. It also agrees with what Roszak says, namely that changes cannot come from reason alone but require psychological transformation:

> What the earth requires will have to make itself felt within us. Facts and figures, reason and logic...cannot motivate. They cannot teach us a better way to want to live (1993:49).

Bateson (1979:157) believes that we cannot know with certainty about things, but we can know about relationship between things. Qualities exist in the relationship between the observer and the object. From the above-mentioned example [PR-1:564], one can gather that the study participant started to understand (added quality to) his feelings, after knowing about the relationship between the different parts in his surroundings. It is possible that a person should first have the knowledge of the links and relationships between the parts, before having the understanding of relationships and our relationship with nature. Only then we can become reconnected. To have this understanding, experiencing nature is necessary.

Though many of the trends evident in the paradigm change and new science appear to be desirable and necessary for avoiding the threatening environmental catastrophe, the real risk is that it will take too long for these changes to become part of general public understanding. At the same time the changes must also become apparent in effective decision-making, not only in nature conservation, but also in commerce, industry, economics and politics. These changes may not be effected without a general adoption of values reflecting responsibility and

generosity towards other social and national groups, future generations, other species and the total interactive web of the biosphere. The question is: what influences can produce such a profound change in attitudes and values quickly enough and is there something that can bring about these influences?

To be effective, a paradigm shift would require a deeply felt change of attitude in the larger population. There should be a 'change of heart' involving a move away from anthropocentrism towards a disinterested valuing of nature (Capra, 1983). To restore values in society requires a public campaign. For this, emphasis should be placed on systems thinking. Skolimowski (1992:10) says that to make peace with the planet we must change the present mind-set. Relationships between natural systems and the embeddedness and absolute interdependence of different levels of these systems and humanity should be emphasised. Only with better understanding of systems, ecology may be moved towards a science that might steer human action towards sustainability.

According to Patterson (2001:179) there seems to be a shift in perceptions. We are increasingly focussing on developing a healthier mind, body and spirit. From this empowerment our focus will extend to the health of those around us, the environment - everything in nature around us. We can access a small portion of the true healing power within ourselves by reconnecting with nature - not by consumption and consumerism.

What is needed then, is a general public acceptance of the need for a move away from our high consumptive lifestyles, to co-operation with other species rather than competition, to sharing rather than greed, to live responsibly (some call it 'sustainable living') (Beukes, Cowling & Higgins, 2002:221). Humanity is distinct in nature but not separate; each species does its own thing and man's thing is to tend nature with responsiveness, which is defined as the ability to respond appropriately. Purposeful consciousness (which is limited to human beings according to Capra, Steindl-Rast, & Matus, 1992) presents the capacity to respond appropriately, to care for nature and for our own species.

When asked to respond to the question 'Do you think reconnection with nature is possible?', almost all study participants (95%) answered that it is, provided that a purposeful attempt is made by each individual. Table 5.1 provides the perceptions of 186 study participants on what to do to reconnect. Most feel that reconnection is possible by spending more time in nature and to foster value and respect for nature. Although education, life-style changes, introspection and others are also mentioned, all these aspects come down to a change in mindset to a simpler life-style.

Table 5.1: Response of study participants on how reconnection can be established.

Do you think that reconnection with nature is possible? Yes (95%)		
How?	n = 186	%
Spend time in nature	62	33
Value and respect nature	42	22
Get educated about and involved in nature	24	13
Change lifestyle	20	11
Get an understanding of nature	14	8
Be quiet and look into yourself	8	4
Mind change necessary	5	3
Get connected to God	6	3
Learn to appreciate small things in everyday surroundings	5	3

Thus, we need to scale down, slow down, decentralise...

> I think how warmly, often wistfully many people, though hopelessly enmeshed in our industrial society, continue to respond to the wild things of the world as if some deeply submerged loyalty bound them in fellowship to these creatures (Roszak, 1993:97).

How do we begin to regain scale? Not by fear or guilt or self-denial, but from within, meeting a genuinely personal need for new quality of life. Most participants in this study shared this sentiment. The following quotations are examples:

> My job sends me into nature sometimes. I just stand there and look. I see little birds on branches, nests in crooks. I smell the wetland, rain, decayed leaves. I look around and see moss, wild berries. I hear the frogs, bird songs, rustle of leaves. I realise without nature, I cannot survive... [C-5:590].

> I just got back from a few days in Kwazulu-Natal. What a great place... mountains, lakes, trees, birds, rhinos, fish, everywhere. I had a wonder-filled journey... with a lot added to my life [C-6:590].

Bateson (1979) sees the focus of today's changes as the need for a new and unitary solution to the mind-body problem. The conceptual separation of mind and matter is the product of 'an insufficient holism'. Concentrating on the parts or isolated themes, we fail to see the characteristics or to understand the meaning of the whole.

4.3 Wholeness

From the systems viewpoint, all things are connected to each other in some way. Nothing functions in isolation. Nature also consists of systems. The ecosystem [Chapter 1, par. 2.2] includes all living and non-living components on earth and the interrelationships they have with each other. All the living components are directly or indirectly dependent on the non-living components for survival. Human beings are part of this system of interdependency. This is illustrated in Figure 5.1.

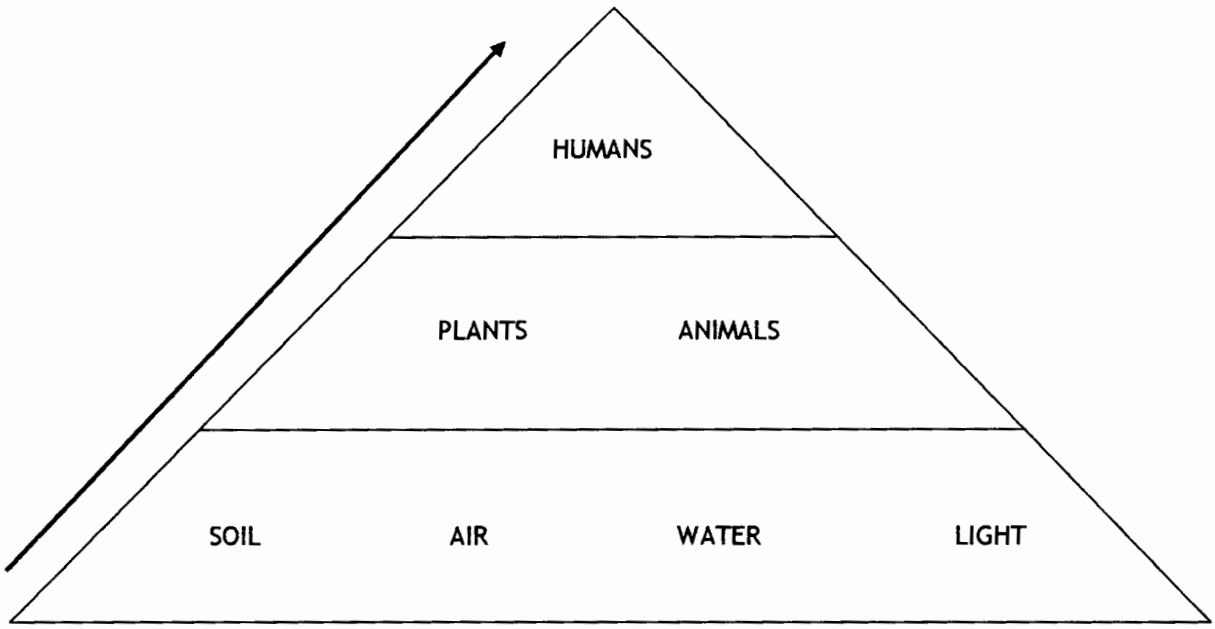


Figure 5.1: Illustration of the interdependency of living and non-living components of the ecosystem.

Each of the consecutive sections of the pyramid in Figure 5.1 includes all the previous ones. This elementary diagram also illustrates that human beings are dependent on and linked to everything else in nature. However, although human beings are the 'crown of creation', nothing depends on us for survival. Physically we can never be disconnected from nature. We are connected to our life-sustaining environment of oxygen, water, sunlight and food. Separation from any of these means death.

In our modern industrialised and highly technological times, it seems as if we have lost our connection with nature and also our understanding of our place in nature. We cannot see the big picture. We see only a narrow view of life. We can no longer understand the humility of our smallness in relation to a sunset, or an ever-flowing waterfall, or the changing of the seasons or the majesty of snow-capped mountains. We have lost touch with the earth and the understanding, the reality, that man is just a part of life on earth. We have lost touch with our place in the pyramid of life - so much so that not only do we view ourselves as being at the pinnacle of the pyramid but probably, subconsciously, that we created the pyramid

ourselves! We have lost touch with the fact that the pyramid of life, the soil, the trees, the air we breathe, water, the animals, rain and sunlight and ourselves are all part of one community (Patterson, 2001:179). We have become separated from the whole. Separated from nature and even separated from each other, we cannot possibly experience life to the full. Hence there is an enormous need to rediscover and to enhance principles which can reconnect us to the whole and which can lead us to true spiritual fulfilment. The process that will produce a reconnection with nature is to discover, befriend and intentionally develop one's profound rootedness in the life-giving natural environment.

It appears that the growing alienation from nature results in a desire to reconnect with one's inner self that what comes instinctively. The West African shaman and scholar Malidonna Patrice Somé (1999) wrote that 'feelings of absence, of being out of touch, any form of alienation, anonymity and purposelessness - all are symptomatic of a disconnection with the earth'. Such feelings result in our attempting to fill the empty space caused through disconnection by compulsive behaviour such as consumption (hence the phenomenon of eating disorders in the Western culture). Instead, we need to reconnect to the earth, to fill ourselves spiritually, to touch the earth and to recognise that we are part of the dynamic whole. Through reconnection, spiritual and physical healing can be found.

We tend to emphasise parts of nature, for example, in natural science research, in visiting natural areas, and even in our physical experiences of nature. In the process we attribute the experiences that we do have to the supernatural, which may come down to further evidence of our disconnectedness from nature.

5. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

The term 'supernatural' as used by Bateson (1979) may be interpreted in different ways. Some participants in this study describe their experiences in nature as something beyond previous experiences or feelings, '...something I have never felt before' [PR-1:564, PI-4:424(45), PI-5:427(6)]. It is something new, something 'supernatural' to them. These 'uncommon, unknown' feelings are sometimes

ascribed to supernatural in a spiritual and even religious context, implicating that they feel very 'close to' (connected) with nature. Although a person's initial experiences may be isolated events, the more they have these experiences, the more they conceptualise the wholeness of them all and of their role in this whole.

Experiences in natural settings result from a transaction between people and the natural environment (Williams, 1986:17-31). These experiences are not determined simply by nature, but are partially based on active cognitive processes that involve interpretation of stimuli from the environment. People to a large extent create their own experiences based upon past learning, their needs, and selective focusing (Leff, 1978:67). According to Jung (1969) our immediate experience consists only of conscious psychic images which derive ultimately from the external world. Our disconnectedness is that of a psychological or emotional (affective) and spiritual one. Reconnecting with nature is both a physical (conscious) and a spiritual (unconscious) experience [Chapter 1, par. 2.4].

People value nature because it provides the individual with a physical form of recreation (relaxation) (Rubenstein, 1997). The majority of study participants in this study (45%) mentioned relaxation as their primary motive for nature-based activities, followed by 'find the activity challenging' (16%) and 'closeness to nature' (13%) (Table 5.2).

We hike, climb mountains, do off-road trails, go river-rafting or do bird-watching because it is a form of physical recreation at which we excel. Sixty four percent of the study participants in Table 5.2 chose physically or mentally stressful activities (hiking, adventure activities and sport) as their most favourite outdoor activity. We often challenge ourselves in physical activities that stress body and mind. Therefore we are conscious of these activities. We can verbalise the experiences and share them with each other. As individuals we know what we experience when walking in the bush, hiking in mountains, exploring 'new' natural environments or just be at the sea shore, finding a quiet place to spend alone or with a friend. This is the physical dimension of the experience, the part that we are aware of and that can be storied [Chapter 3, par. 2.1.1].

Table 5.2: Motivations for nature-related activities of 181 study participants.

Activity	Motivation								
	Relaxation	Challenge	Socialise	Closeness to nature	Exercise	Spiritual experience	Be alone, feel free, time to think	Experience new things	N = 181
Hiking	38 (21%)	6 (3%)	6 (3%)	6 (3%)	8 (4%)	1 (0,5%))	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	**69 (38%)**
Adventure (river rafting, 4 x 4, mountain biking)	14 (8%)	6 (3%)	1 (0,5%)	4 (2%)				4 (2%)	**29 (16%)**
Sport (water, swimming, fishing)	4 (2%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	4 (2%)	4 (2%)	2 (1%)	1 (0,5%)		**19 (10%)**
Hunting		6 (3%)		2 (1%)					**8 (4%)**
Be in nature, camping, reading	16 (9%)		5 (3%)	8 (4%)		3 (2%)	2 (1%)		**34 (19%)**
Game viewing	4 (2%)		2 (1%)						**6 (3%)**
Bird watching	6 (3%)	8 (4%)	2 (1%)						**16 (9%)**
N = 181	**82 (45%)**	**28 (16%)**	**18 (10%)**	**24 (13%)**	**12 (7%)**	**6 (3%)**	**5 (3%)**	**6 (3%)**	

Experience means more than merely a physical sensation, observation, or passive looking. It includes both active and passive dimensions. It involves thought, feeling, doing, undergoing, handling, working - any sort of human involvement with the natural environment. Experience includes what is experienced and the way it is experienced, as well as the one who undergoes the experience. It is hands-on contact with and manipulation of actual conditions, as well as reflection, imagination and feeling about these things (Ziniewicz, 1999).

These feelings and emotions, the affective component accompanying the physical experience are harder to verbalise. They may include things such as the smell of a flowering shrub, the variation in colour of vegetation or the silence during a sunset. This is the 'lived experience' of the individual, the spiritual dimension. One can perhaps say that these experiences happen at an 'unconscious' level. Although we are not always able to verbalise the spiritual dimension of the experience, it is no less important to the quality it adds to our lives. When people do not have a physical connection with nature, they cannot experience the spiritual dimension. For example, study participants mentioned that they cannot share these feelings with their partners or families, because they do not spend time in natural settings and therefore do not know about the existence of these feelings [C-7:590, C-8:590]. Because of the fact that they do not spend time in nature they remain disconnected, unaware of what nature holds for them.

On the other hand, the more people visit nature and engage in activities that take them into natural environments, the more they become conscious of this 'unstoryable' experience (Brits, 2004, pers. comm.; Van der Zee, 2003). Consciousness in this context is to be awake to one's natural surroundings and to one self. Consciousness is shared (Hartmann, 2001:212). This consciousness may result in a personal interest in nature or aspects of nature. By being awake and receptive for the feelings and emotions, in other words becoming affectively responsive, evoked by an experience in nature, one becomes drawn to nature (Van der Zee, 2003) and one wants to know more or be more involved in the natural environment [PI-4:424(45), PI-5:430(15)]. Developing such an interest in nature, results in awareness. When we are aware, we begin to realise what nature means

to us. Our attraction to nature can be seen as an increasing awareness of our inseparability from nature (Van der Zee, 2003). This awareness influences our attitudes and behaviour in the natural environment. Fig. 5.2 is a schematic illustration of the pattern of consecutive experience stages as proposed in this study.

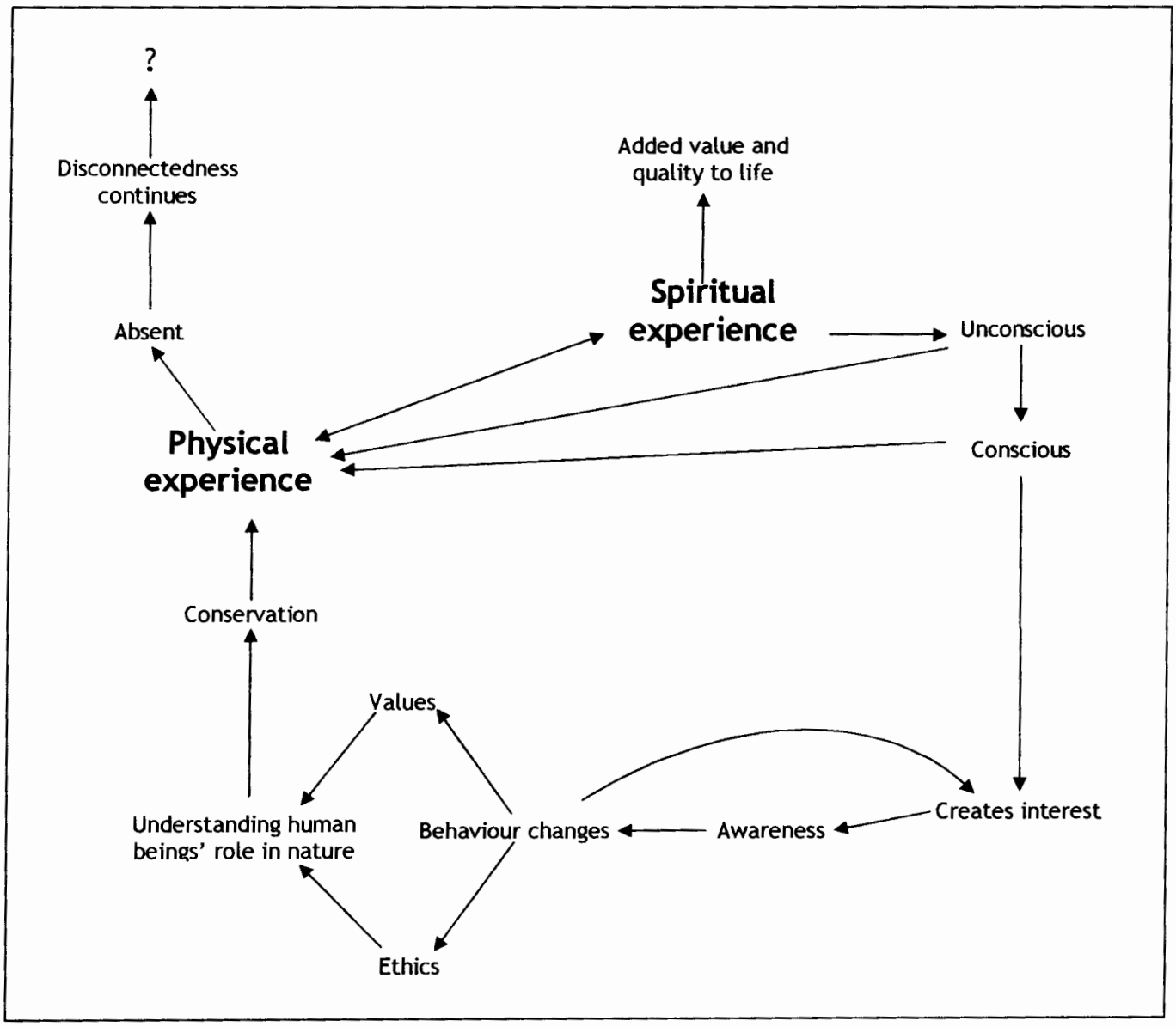


Figure 5.2: Schematic illustration of the pattern of consecutive experience stages as proposed in this study.

The question remains: Will this change of attitude in the natural environment ensure a behaviour change towards nature, which will eventually lead to true environmental conservation ethics recognising people as part of nature? Taylor (2003:70-73) says that the place of environmental awareness often remains a pastime for nature excursions or for weekends and holidays, and that our daily work and live patterns remain untouched. He also mentions that while in natural areas, participants would soon recognise the appropriate way to behave and act accordingly. For example, people who would naturally discard plastic bags in the streets soon realised a responsible way of behaving in a natural environment such as a nature reserve. However, when these participants return to their own cities and towns, they casually litter again! Was this nature experience only a superficial physical experience, without moving to the spiritual dimension?

5.1 Physical dimension

Although participants suggest that the way in which individuals react to and interpret the natural environment varies greatly, a few feedbacks will be singled out to clarify this section of the study.

After multiple readings of participant reports and comments on various field trips, it becomes evident that there are several factors that are significant as physical experiences. Many participants report about the importance of travelling with someone, not to be alone in such beautiful places, to share the experience with others. The following excerpts are examples:

> We (my partner and I) do everything together as far as possible. I like to share all the beauty and peacefulness of Stilbaai with her [PI-6:432(12)].

> (M)y family and friends must join me. It is nice to be with others and share everything you experience... [PI-7:436(19)].

> I prefer to travel with my husband, and now and then with a few friends. It depends on where we go. It is not safe to travel alone when we visit remote areas, but we still prefer to be on our own when visiting known resorts such as the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park or Namaqualand. We prefer to do off-road journeys with friends and in a convoy of two or three cars. I want to share the beauty of nature with someone, preferably my husband [PI-8:442(24,26)].

In addition, many participants mention their excitement of being in nature which gives them the opportunity to explore the physical surroundings, which for many has the effect of getting in touch with their physical senses again [PR-1:564, PR-2:565 (Pinnock, 2002:2), J-1:606]. In some cases the environment poses certain physical challenges and several participants report about having feelings of fear or uncertainty in response to particularly challenging events. The following excerpt of study participants' expectations and feelings while doing the Otter Hiking Trail in the Western Cape Province [J-1:606] is representative:

> (A)ll were tremendously excited and some were a little anxious. We had no idea what to expect and worried about whether we all would 'make' it. After watching a video, which scared us because of the dreadful experience shown when you got to places at the wrong time of the tide, we started the trail. After lunch we negotiated a steep ascent and a few started complaining and panting!
>
> The second day started with a heavy climb. (A)nother climb and again people start expressing feelings of 'getting tired', 'legs don't want to do more', 'exhausted', and so on. (A)t the fireside the stiff muscles, scraped legs and sunburned faces got a little attention. Some expressed their fear for the next day and for crossing huge rivers. A few also felt concern for more steep climbs

and steep declines the next day as their legs were aching and the feet were not too well!

With aching bodies, but high spirits, we tackled the challenges of the third day. Later that day, after another long, steep uphill climb, it seemed as if the world disappeared before you. The trail meandered down the slope of the ravine and then one walks inland where the dark water of the river becomes visible. We were glad and relieved that we got the river at low tide; it was scary to think that we could have got it in full flood!

On the fourth day four of us started very early to ensure that we got to the famous Bloukrans River at low tide. We walked the first two hours of the day in total darkness. We did not speak much. Every step was dangerous. It was pitch dark, especially in the forest, and our torches battled to lighten up the path. I sensed fear amongst the others as we approached a very steep hill. We did not know how far we were from the edge. One could hear the ocean way down below. At last the sun appeared. It was beautiful and the four of us sat down for a while to absorb the moment. It was a very emotional experience: We were exhausted, aching, anxious, scared and very, very satisfied....

We spent time on the dry sand after crossing the (Bloukrans) river. Then we had to proceed rather quickly, as the tide was coming in. The next few moments were nerve-racking. From the few in front we could hear screams of fear and shouting to be careful, because it was dangerous. The steep edges of the rocks that we had to negotiate were very sharp pointed, like blades! We moved very slowly, very carefully. We realised that one misplaced step and you could be hurt badly and no one will be able to carry you out from here! The adrenalin was pumping. After almost two hours of

> strenuous climbing, the path entered a forest and peacefulness came along.

Despite the physical challenge these activities present, the participants claim to have experienced a reawakening to their physical capabilities and a renewed sense of their bodies. This is confirmed by findings of Fredrickson and Anderson (1999:21-39) with a group of 12 women travelling through remote areas in Arizona.

Almost all participants note biophysical features which are observed or felt. Vegetation, geographical formations, wildlife, water and climate are always noted in some way. In addition colours, sounds, scents and textures are often mentioned [PR-2:565, J-1:606, PR-3:567 (Bester, 2003:24), PI-9:446(16,17)]. Particular physical events are also described, sometimes in great detail. For example, participants experienced extreme weather in the Richtersveld. An excerpt from their report is as follows:

> We saw the rain coming down strongly. We felt safe, as we pitched camp more than 30 meters from the river bank, at least 3 meters above the water level. Fifteen seconds after seeing it appearing on the horizon, the brown mass of water hit our campsite. After that it was chaos (Gous, 2004:127-128).

Gous continues describing the force of the water, their panic and the help they got from other campers.

While out in the field, it is observed that most participants are in awe of the relatively untouched and remote characteristics of the environment they encountered [J-1:606, PR-3:567, J-2:612, PR-4:569]. Comments are made throughout trips as to how far removed they feel from modern civilization. They also comment that the environment and settings are very different from everyday life, but that they are comfortable with the basics offered. Furthermore, to many of them it is also a thrill to be exposed to nature. Participants frequently discuss

among themselves what it must have been like in these areas long ago, before people actually invaded the environment. For example:

> Yesterday, we walked amongst huge boulders on our way to view rock paintings. The rock formations are so extraordinary... it is a mystical place. I can imagine how the first people who lived here, experienced those unbelievable spiritual feelings. The yellow-brown boulders remind one of images and altars, rather than cairns. Each one is unique. All of them contribute to the almost holy atmosphere you experience while wandering amongst them, creating a feeling of respect [PR-5:572].

Mention is made of things related to other individuals, such as the number of people present, their relationships with each other, activities of the group or individuals in the group, preferences and dislikes, encounters with others and also with regards to sharing thoughts and experiences with each other [J-1:606, J-2:612, PR-3:567, PR-6:574, PI-5:427(6)].

Participant observations also revealed that there is a certain spirit of trust that quickly developed between the individual members of a group. It was noted that although individuals do not know each other prior to the trip, it is striking to see how quickly they bond. They continuously offer each other physical and even emotional support. For instance, the physical terrain of the Otter Hiking Trail and some off-road routes are physically challenging. Participants are faced with a degree of physical challenge they have not expected. The Otter Hiking Trail has often steep and difficult to conquer inclines and routes, making hiking with a heavy pack challenging. Frequently the participants extend a steadying hand to one another. In most cases, at the end of the day the participants gather around the campfire and review the day's events, discussing their accomplishments, disappointments, sharing feelings and listening attentively to one another describing the landscapes in terms of how it 'touched' them throughout the day [J-1:606].

When exposed to the natural environment in these ways, one becomes aware of another dimension of experiences, namely the construct of spirituality.

5.2 Spiritual dimension

People ascribe different meanings to the concept 'spiritual'. Definitions for 'spiritual' or 'spirituality' include various aspects of the soul, religion and mind. The following is one example of the complex nature of such a definition:

> Spiritual or spirituality is a practice that is concerned with sacred or religious things. It is a belief that is concerned with the higher qualities of the mind, and of the spirit, as opposed to matter (Cybermuse, 2005).

Participants have a broad definition of the words spiritual and spirituality, but their self-definitions and descriptions are not necessarily centred on organised religion (also refer to Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999:34). Some participants' outlooks are shaped and influenced by traditional religions and to some this could shape their understanding of spirituality. Some of the views are as follows:

> I am a religious person and therefore spirituality is very important in my life. God made everything and we must sustain it. One cannot appreciate nature if you do not observe... [PI-10:448(9)].

> In the first place it has to do with my relationship with God, but it manifests in various ways because I live in His creation. The state of spirituality is in my head, and in plants and animals. That to me is secondary. It is primarily about my relationship with God. Because I have a relationship with Him, I am able to have a relationship with all other things [PI-11:452(13)].

However, most experience spirituality on a deeply emotional level. Therefore it is necessary to first determine the understanding of 'spiritual' for each participant. Some understandings are explained in the following quotes from interviews:

> It is something in yourself and your feelings with regards to the world in which you are. It is about a calmness within, or the absence thereof... If it is not there, it is not possible to be happy. If you have it you are aware of the things surrounding you. It helps you to continue through each day [PI-7:435(10)].

> Spirituality is the realisation that there is more than just you. You are part of a whole earth and a whole life and recognising your role in that life... it is also a realisation of what is greater than you and more special than you and what you should do to protect that around you, in terms of people's feelings or emotions or an animal or a tree. Spirituality to me is that you are not the be all and end all of all things, that your life is dispensable, and that there is a greater power and something beautiful that you can learn from. There is more out there... on a level that we don't recognise - a spiritual level in terms of... if energy cannot be destroyed, where does it go to? There has to be some kind of holiness or God or being or love behind the whole scene. There is kind of a 'different dimension' that guards and governs us. It is to realise that you are living above it [PI-1:402(17)].

> It is a very deep experience of everything around you. It is something very intensive which changes you... [PI-2:410(12)].

> (F)inding some inner calm place in yourself and connect with that [PI-12:459(11)].

When participants describe 'spirituality' during interviews, many need a few minutes to think. Some express that it is something beyond words, or that words

simply could not adequately describe what they feel when experiencing something spiritually. According to Fredrickson and Anderson (1999:34) participants frequently claim to have experienced a certain heightened sensory awareness. Momentary loss of passed time when encountering that which is spiritually inspirational is also mentioned. Participants in this study also note these aspects when describing the more spiritually inspirational qualities of their visit.

Participants who are subjected to physically challenging activities in nature, report that regaining the sense of one's physical abilities is one of the primary dimensions of what several define as spiritual. Correspondingly, several suggest that having the opportunity to fully indulge in the more physical sides of their nature, rather than the intellectual, in itself is spiritually inspirational (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999:33). Participants who hiked the Otter Trail [J-1:606] and did river rafting on the Zambesi [FN-1:597] confirm this. Participants felt deeply empowered by the experience.

The initial feelings that could not be described, the unconscious, is now becoming meta-cognitive (conscious) due to the increased physical connection with nature (Fig. 5.2).

Some of the key probing questions directed at participants to get a more holistic understanding of the meaningful aspects (spiritual value) of the individual's physical experience include 'What are your favourite place(s) to visit?', 'Why is this your favourite place?', 'Recall any highlights of your trip in as much detail as possible', 'Why was this a highlight? (Why was it meaningful?)', 'Could you describe your feelings and emotions experienced at that time?' Answers to these questions revealed whether the setting was a source of spiritual inspiration. The following excerpt illustrates the meaningful aspects of a participant's experience.

> (I)t was my first visit to the Richtersveld. It is a place like nowhere else. The highlight was surely the view and experiences from Tsoba Pass. It was beauty beyond words... I felt it. It was sometimes overwhelming... the vastness... the space... I felt very humble and at

> the same time very privileged to be part of this greatness. It was meaningful because I recall that place so often in my daily life. It is as if I get perspective. It was that endlessness, the mountain upon mountain upon mountain that gave me the feeling of openness. If I think back of that, then I realise our very limited view of things here in our work. We only see our problems. We must look further and will probably get a solution if we can expand our view [PI-4:423,426(36,53)].

An interesting aspect is the interchanging thoughts mentioned by participants in conversations about the more meaningful aspects of nature experiences, with the thoughts and feelings they perceived as spiritually inspirational [PI-5:427(6)]. Participants relate ideas about spirituality to their interpretation of meaningful aspects of an experience [PI-13:462], a feature also found by Fredrickson and Anderson (1999:33). This clarifies the transfer from the unconscious (unstoryable) to the conscious (those aspects that can be storied and get meaning in the process).

These excerpts seem to capture the complexity of emotions and cognitive dimensions that participants feel in response to the spiritual dimensions of their nature experience.

From all the above excerpts spiritual inspiration is a combination of biophysical, emotional, and also social attributes. Spiritual inspiration is therefore not only caused by the interactions with the landscape, vegetation, wild animals or a specific natural setting of an area. The interpersonal interactions within a group of individuals also play an important role. The setting 'comes alive' when the participants share their life stories around the camp fire at night [for example, the sharing of the days events during the Otter Trail - J-1:606, sharing the solitude and quietness of the night on a beach - PI-5:427(6)]. Some even claim that this specific group interaction was spiritual in itself.

The reconnection with nature they experience in the process itself, empowers participants to view their nature experiences within the larger context of their lives. Some describe aspects of their experience in a more personally intimate way, describing the landscape or its features as if there is some deep connection between it and themselves. They usually refer to these descriptions in a metaphorical manner [also refer to Chapter 9]. For example, the quote from PI-14:471(19):

> I often feel like the wind... You can see the effects of the wind, but you cannot necessarily see the wind. Sometimes it feels like I am blown by the wind in all different directions, not knowing where I am going. I do know, however, that I have a specific destiny and plan for my life and even though the wind may blow me around, I will reach my destiny. I am doing everything without people seeing me, but hopefully some day I will see the effects of these doings. Sometimes I am a soft breeze. At other times I can be a stronger wind. At times I love change and sometimes I am happy to be consistent in the way I live my life. I am free and nothing can stop me. I am the wind upon which eagles fly on....

By connecting to nature in this way, a special interest is created (Fig. 5.2). Participants are now aware of their surroundings and of themselves as individuals. Many note things that are happening in their lives at home or work or things that have happened in the past which seem to hold particular meaning to the individual [PI-4:426(53), PI-13:465,466(8,10)]. For many this 'awareness' is a very authentic experience in itself. The following story illustrates this:

> We (husband and I) are both qualified professionals with a more than generous monthly income. We owned a double-storey mansion on a golf estate where we merely slept, due to our long, exhausting hours earning our income. These, to us, were the characteristics of a civilized life! Until we decided to explore the unknown wilderness... We started to visit the so-called 'primitive' and did a

> camping trip to a very secluded spot, undeveloped, uninhabited and unknown on the Mozambique coast. We found true existence....
>
> We have since sold the mansion and live (in the same town) in a small cabin settled in the bush, close to the lagoon and ocean. We decided to live a life that makes us happy from inside, close and connected to that what is important to us.
>
> We actually live a hermit crab life and are extremely relieved when we can get out of town and make our way to the beach. I cannot imagine living a life in the city (or even inland) again. We miss the sea when we have to skip a day there. We would have left our jobs long ago and gone to the wilderness permanently if it wasn't for responsibilities.
>
> In the meantime, we try to maintain some form of balance. To maintain sanity, we must, however, from time to time, get away to our 'secret place'. Here we realize that the things we do in 'civilized society' do not really matter. Here we have time to think, read, converse and to be still... to listen. We get closer to each other as family, are more spiritually and sensually attuned. No radio, television or people to 'keep one busy'... For the first time, we feel comfortable with life [PI-15:474(11)].

When we are most alive, when we feel this sense of connectedness with the whole, then the boundaries of the ego, which we feel so acutely in western culture, dissolve. We then actually experience a sense of belonging to the whole, of being most alive. Referring to PI-15:472, one can detect a sense of connectedness that they have discovered. Their egocentrical way of life was not fulfilling. When they started to belong to the whole, their life got meaning, they became most alive.

From the above [PI-15:472] it is clear that the experiences in nature are not only beneficial for potential emotional (affective) growth, but also provide the

opportunity to grow spiritually. Once faced with questions about one's own spirituality, unique opportunities may be found in everyday life of ways to enhance spiritual growth (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999:38). The ultimate benefit is a change in attitude towards nature and life in general. Attitudes influence behaviour (Bell, Greene, Fisher & Baum, 1996:31). For example, when someone thinks that a natural setting is inviting, that person is more likely to engage in activities in the natural environment. A greater interest results and awareness increases and the cycle is repeated (Fig. 5.2). Eventually a rich understanding of the interaction between human beings and nature and the role of human beings in nature and the benefits of nature to human beings is created.

A field guide doing wilderness trails in the Kruger National Park confirms this by saying:

> I know I have had a successful trail when the group tells me that although they know what the words 'remoteness, solitude, tranquillity, peace of mind, and spiritual rejuvenation' mean, they now also understand it. These are feelings that you can not describe to someone; you have to experience it for yourself and you would know if you do (Badenhorst, 2001:15-16).

Personal experiences in nature are fundamental to the development of an ethical system that recognises the value of the natural environment and understands how human beings can function within such a system to reap its benefits without degrading or destroying it. This type of value system is a prerequisite to individuals and society having a real commitment to environmental conservation (Grabowsky, 2001). The question is: Is there a shift towards the recognition of the value of conservation where the human experience is included?

5.3 Personal transformation

For many participants who reported on field trips, these trips were the first time they had been out in remote natural environments [J-1:606 - J-5:650, PI-4:419,

PI-5:427]. The experience had a very powerful and moving effect on many of them. From the feedbacks it becomes evident that individuals experience a great sense of freedom and release, simply having the opportunity to go out and explore, rediscovering the sights and sounds of nature. They recall, sometimes in great detail, how various tangible features of the natural environment greatly contributed to their overall experience, leaving lasting impressions. Many mention the exhilaration of hearing and seeing signs of wildlife, feeling the weather gradually shifting, the significance of being out under the open sky, being able to see the stars at night without interference from city lights. This direct contact inspired many participants to identify (connect) with nature, especially specific features of nature, which made them realise that they very rarely experienced the natural world in their everyday lives elsewhere. This being in nature and getting connected to nature, helped them to 'get in touch' with more important spiritual matters. The following excerpts illustrate the importance of having this direct contact with nature as a means of introspection and deep contemplation.

> The total purity of nature (in the Richtersveld) was extremely beautiful. It seemed so untouched. The silence - I could almost feel it, as if I could actually touch it. The birds also had a special fascination, and the river... The flow of the river was as if it took all the concerns and negative thoughts with it. The magnitude of the area left me feeling small and humble. It was an experience just to see the bright yellow bunches of flowers ('perdeblomme') in the veld; I stood in awe of the stretches of aloes... [PI-8:443(29)].

> One evening I was hiking in the Drakensberg with a relatively large group. At some stage I decided to walk at the back and gave the rest of the group a gap in front of me. As the group went on, it became quiet. I walked up a koppie and sat down. In this total silence I looked up into the sky. The stars were plentiful and very bright. The landscape around me was visible in the dim moonlight. It was a very humbling moment. I realised how very small and vulnerable we, as human beings, are on this earth. The total

> silence, with just the night sounds around me was something I appreciated very much at that moment. The stars were extremely bright and I again realised how almighty our Creator is. The moment was special, the sounds, smell of clean air, the stars, silhouettes of rocks and mountains... and the cool breeze against my face... [PI-9:446(16,17)].
>
> I thought of this area (Namib Desert) as an uninhabited wasteland. To my amazement it is actually a living Eden of totally unique and special creatures who are all adapted to one specific area and found nowhere else on earth. The uniqueness of the area did something to me. I cannot say what. There are no words to describe that humbling feeling. I can identify with the clear night sky. Just as the stars and galaxies out there are complex and infinite and ever changing, so too are the choices and paths in life that I will decide to take as I start my life here on earth. The night sky is overwhelming to me since I am infinitely smaller than what the heavens hold. Yet, the choices and decisions that I make are just as infinitely large in my context [PI-16:477(14-16)].

Although these excerpts cannot be generalised too broadly beyond this study, they do indicate that we are recognising the value of nature conservation where the human experience is included. An unspoilt natural environment has the distinct potential to positively enrich the lives of those who take to nature.

Badenhorst (2001:15-16) says that it is never the same people that you say goodbye to (after doing a wilderness trail in the Kruger Park) as the people you met at the start. The experiences in unspoilt nature change people and have a restorative power. That is a very important value of undeveloped natural environments in our overpopulated world and will become even more valuable in future.

The potential for attitude change in the majority of people depends initially on the effects of the complete nature experience. General awareness of the natural

environment's story as one of purpose and meaning with life as a key factor may provide the context in which perceptions can change. The development of a new sense of interspecies identity is possible. Endangered species and the biosphere cannot speak for themselves. When we speak for our own species we speak for them because both are endangered by the same forces. We have to take our species, work with it, strive to educate it, shape it into the tool the planet needs. Increasing internalisation of nature and enhanced self-discovery can answer our ecological need. According to Roszak (1993:316) we are confronted by the oldest philosophical task: 'know thyself'.

Ecopsychologists, whose work includes long wilderness trips, claim to make dramatic breakthroughs in peoples' minds that shake individuals to their core.

> When the natural world awakens in every fibre of our being the primal knowledge of connection, and graces us with a few moments of sheer awe, it can shatter the hubris and isolation so necessary of narcissistic defences. Once this has happened, ongoing contact with nature can keep these insights alive and provide the motivation necessary for continued change. It is these experiences that will ultimately fill the empty self and heal the existential loneliness so endemic to our times (Clinebell, 1996:223).

This statement is confirmed by Harper (1995:183) when he says that the authentic experience of wilderness (nature) undercuts all our suppositions about the 'civilised' and the 'primitive' in ways that can deliver a 'reality shock'.

Badenhorst (2003:20) confirms this in a humorous way in the following story about a trailist doing a hiking trail in the Kruger National Park:

> Someone once said that there is only a wire mesh between Nyalaland wilderness area and hell. This was well illustrated while we were sitting in the Nyalaland trail camp lapa one hot summer during an afternoon break. One of the trailists was a big, irritating

> man in his mid-forties, who after the first five minutes after he introduced himself told me how much money he makes, how many expensive vehicles he has and how many game farms he owned. He was sitting in the lapa and he sweated profusely. He then said something that I will never forget. It does not matter who you are, how important you are or how much money you have - when the heat is on, no one escapes it in the wilderness. He said: 'That such a wealthy man like me, can get so darn hot!'

In the case of the study participant of PI-15:472, she had to have an authentic personal experience in nature before she realised the reason for life. Her camping experience in the undeveloped (primitive) brought her to new realisations about civilization and primitiveness. According to Harper (1995:183), these experiences and realisations delivered a reality shock. The family reconnected with nature and this might have lead to a change in behaviour, new realities and improved qualities and new values in life.

6. A MORAL CHANGE TO RECONNECT

How each individual lives his/her life, is ultimately up to that individual. This can be anything from being most alive, but it can also be inhibiting if we live according to the conditions of society. 'New', 'better', 'more', 'improved', 'upmarket', 'bigger' are words that have become new mentors since the latter half of the previous century.

Reconnection is possible. In this modern, highly technologically advanced era, we are 'unconsciously' trying to attain a connection with the earth. Why else, for example, do we keep plants in our homes, keep pets as companions, spend a lot of money on maintaining attractive gardens, and drive great distances to be in natural surroundings during weekends and holidays?

Many of us today are at last beginning to see once more that the inhabitants of the natural world are our fellow constituents of the only home we all share. Even

perceptions about the 'beasts' and 'vermin' are changing rapidly. The lion is, for example, tremendously better loved today than it was in the recent past (Patterson, 2001:181). So too are the jackal, African wild dog, martial eagle, vultures and even snakes. For example, the wild dog has disappeared from 25 of the 39 countries in which it used to occur (Mills, 2002:20). Habitat fragmentation due to human needs, persecution, and loss of prey are the major causes of their decline. All large carnivores, the lion, spotted hyena, leopard and even the cheetah have also experienced these pressures. More than any of the other African carnivores, the wild dog has suffered from negative attitudes of people. The naturalist, R.C.F. Maughn wrote in 1914:

> It will be an excellent day for African game and its preservation when means can be devised to give practical effect to some well thought out scheme for these unnecessary creatures complete extermination (Mills, 2002:20).

Even the highly respected naturalist and first warden of the Kruger National Park, Colonel James Stevenson-Hamilton, described the wild dog as 'a terrible foe to game with a wasteful method of hunting' (Mills, 2002:20). Consequently stock farmers have held a concerted campaign to exterminate it. Until the mid-1960s even game wardens controlled wild dog numbers in conservation areas in order to 'protect' prey populations.

Today, African wild dogs are no longer persecuted in protected areas. Even game ranch owners become tolerant, sometimes regarding the wild dogs as an asset. Various efforts are made to protect the wild dog, i.e. the South African Wild Dog Action Group was formed in October 1997, the Endangered Wildlife Trust sponsors wild dog operations and various research and breeding programmes were established. Similar actions, societies and research programmes exist for previously 'pest-species', for example, the Raptor Conservation Group and the Vulture Study Group were established to protect certain birds of prey from extinction and to ensure a better understanding of their ways of living by farmers and people in general.

These major changes in attitude have occurred in a few short decades and some are still in the changing process. Despite what we sometimes feel, we are evolving morally. We start realising that harming the earth means self-destruction.

We cannot lose any of the creatures of great inspiration, or any more species on earth. They should be nurtured and protected for their own and our sake. We have much to learn from the animals and plants and their wild domains. Our own destiny on earth is reliant on the existence of these ancient and long ago perfected forms of life (Patterson, 2001:182). Their existence creates in the human species a memory of its own roots in nature, roots that if severed spiritually and forgotten would invariably result in the spiritual death of humankind.

We will continue to head towards increasing spiritual reawakening as long as we realise that the connection between ourselves and the natural world is essential to our health and that of the planet. We will go forward spiritually by reopening ourselves to learning from special beings in nature. Increasingly today, we are recognising and reaffirming our permanent connection with the earth and nature. We are reaching out to touch the earth and all that lives on her.

In the words of Patterson (2001:186):

> We are recognising the sacredness of the earth and the sacredness within each and every one of us. We are learning that by loving the earth, we can love ourselves (which is one of the requirements for self-respect). We, after so long, are listening again to the wisdom of the drumbeat of our ancestors. We are at a time of rediscovery. It is a very exciting time. We are, in different ways, reaching out to touch the divine. The old ways were never dead, but were hidden, quietly waiting for the time when we had reached the stage at which we said: 'Enough, I will no longer be alone, living by dictates rooted in shallowness and ignorance.' The old ways contain such wide wisdom, for they are of nature and of earth. This wisdom is to be found on the rough intricate bark of a tree, in a single grass

seed, in the flow of a brook, in the wind beneath an eagle's wings and in a child's smile. It is wide... all-embracing.

The understanding of how we once used to interrelate with nature, the environment and the earth, and for so long - this is beginning to return today. The sun still rises and it still sets; on cloudless days, the sky is still blue and the tides advance, then ebb as they have always done. Such phenomena, such miracles, are the inspiration upon which we should build our connection with the earth. We should do it in the miracle of every breath that we breathe.

The earth speaks to us as it always has. We, now, should listen to the earth. To listen is to begin to understand. The reconnection is happening. By renewing the ancient ways in the spiritually experienced context, our descendents will look back at the present time and remember it as a part of human history when humankind was disconnected from nature. However, it will also be a time remembered when humankind began to listen to the earth, when spiritual strands of connection began to be built all over the world. This time will be remembered as the 're-awakening' of the human species.

7. CONCLUSION

Although knowledge is essential to understand the natural environment, knowledge alone is not enough. Experiencing nature is needed. When moving out into the natural environment, we simultaneously leave our comfort zones which technology created for us. In the natural environment we are therefore vulnerable and ready to be nature-orientated. We are then open for influences to grow and to be inspired in a positive way. This is usually not necessarily a conscious process.

What we experience physically evokes some deeper meaning that takes us to a spiritual dimension. This 'unconscious' dimension becomes increasingly conscious by increasing exposure to nature.

Personal transformation is the effect of fulfilment of one's capabilities and potential. We are all seeking growth for motivation and inspiration in our lives to keep us focussed. Therefore, when we visit a natural environment we are receptive. In some instances the experience must put a bit of physical or emotional stress on us. We must feel vulnerable, scared or unsure, but still we know that we can cope successfully. We become more aware of our surroundings and of ourselves. We develop insight and understanding of who we really are below the surface and what makes us truly happy. Awareness returns us to the essentials and one feels insignificant in the face of nature's power.

Experiences in nature also take us away from normal life, slow us down and give us time to focus on what really matters. We tend to compare ourselves with nature, resulting in core values that emerge, for example humility. We often use metaphors from nature to describe our lives. This can enhance self-esteem and confidence. In nature we are all more or less equal and have to interact with each other as basic human beings without any added status. We get the opportunity to see each other and ourselves as never before.

This realisation brings about a change in mind, not only towards ourselves, but also towards nature and our place in nature. We realise the need for conservation practices that includes the spiritual dimension. More and more people feel the need to get to natural environments, a re-awakening of human beings to be reconnected.

Chapter 6 discusses how this re-awakening manifests in the popular concept of ecotourism.

CHAPTER 6

ECOTOURISM: MEANING, GROWTH AND IMPLICATIONS

I began to see my part in the interdependence of Life - not at the apex of a hierarchy but as a peer in a larger community of interconnectedness (Lindner, 1998:60).

1. INTRODUCTION

Mexican architect and environmentalist Hector Ceballos-Lascurain (presently Special Advisor on Ecotourism to the World Conservation Union (IUCN), is credited with inventing the term 'ecotourism' in 1983. He originally defined ecotourism or nature tourism as 'tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specific object of studying and enjoying the scenery, its wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural aspects' (Wild Net Africa News Archive, 2005). Later, he was to add a clause to the definition to include the promotion of conservation and sustainable development and stipulating the importance of low-visitor impact and the need for 'beneficial, active socio-economic involvement of local populations'. It is significant that for Ceballos-Lascurain ecotourism is about 'studying', 'enjoying' and 'cultural aspects' and that the 'experience' and 'connectedness', or a spiritual dimension of any kind do not feature in his explanations of ecotourism.

In a joint United Nations Environment Programme/World Travel Organisation report, ecotourism is explained as 'a phenomenon composed of a wide spectrum of options, ranging from a hard-core scientific approach to a casual visit to a natural area'. It also distinguishes ecotourism from mass tourism and resort tourism by

having a lower impact on the environment and by requiring less infrastructure development (Wild Net Africa News Archive, 2005).

In all descriptions ecotourism is about nature and about tourism. Kotzé (2002a:1) endorses Ceballos-Lascurain's description of the term and adds that the visit must be without having a negative impact on nature or local cultures. Kotzé continues his description of ecotourism, saying it is an enlightening experience about local people and ecosystems in which the ecotourist, the product/service supplier as well as the local community participate and have an interest. It brings both economic and social benefits to local communities and ensures conservation and responsible utilisation of cultural and natural resources. It is an activity, which originated from social, economic and environmental concerns. Again no mention is made of a reconnection or spiritual experience.

Hawkins (1991) mentions that 20% to 25% of leisure travel can be defined as nature tourism or broadly defined as ecotourism. Many in the ecotourism industry are not concerned about what the term means; for them the prefix 'eco' is nothing more than a useful marketing tool. Has greed transformed ecotourism to 'ego-tourism'? In many cases, ecotourism has become little more than marketing ploys - mass tourism disguised as responsible or sustainable tourism.

Tourism and the leisure sector are at the crossroads of its development (Kotzé, 2002a:2). Being one of the largest sectors, it is increasingly criticised about its sustainability and compatibility with environmental conservation and community development. Consideration of tourism, the environment and sustainability face a number of challenges, i.e. (1) an understanding of how individuals (tourists) value and use natural environments, (2) empowerment of communities dependent on tourism, (3) identification and addressing of tourism's social and environmental impacts, and (4) establishment of systems to manage impacts. A fifth challenge can be added to these, namely an awareness of the reconnection possibilities or spiritual dimension of ecotourism.

This chapter addresses the various perceptions of ecotourism, the growth in ecotourism and emphasises some of the above-mentioned challenges. An understanding of ecotourism and the value of unspoilt natural environments to individuals are explored. The importance of the neglected aspect of reconnection through a spiritual experience in nature is also discussed.

2. PERCEPTIONS IN ECOTOURISM

It is generally agreed that ecotourism is nature-based tourism. In their descriptions of ecotourism, writers generally refer to nature as the basis, but have placed different emphases on responsibility, local culture, sustainability, education, and local economic benefits. For example, the Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people (ResourceAfrica, 2004). There are however, many definitions for ecotourism. All appear to have four elements in common:

- The natural environment
- Ecological and cultural sustainability
- Education and interpretation
- Economic benefits at the local level

It is nevertheless distressing to realise that no definition mentions the spiritual or even psychological benefits of ecotourism. From the arguments proposed in Chapter 5, it is reasonable to claim that ecotourism originated from and exists due to the desire of individuals to reconnect to nature. They fulfill this desire by experiencing unspoilt natural environments both physically and spiritually. Therefore, this research proposes that it is the intrinsic meaning of being in nature that makes people return to eco-destinations over and over again. The fact that not a single definition of ecotourism refers to a spiritual benefit or element, is further proof of our disconnectedness from nature and our egocentric greed.

As part of a document in which a national ecotourism development strategy for South Africa is suggested, Kotzé (2002a:2) emphasises the importance of

ecotourism as a global economic activity and its potential to add value to land, oceans and coasts. It also mentions that ecotourism is paying for nature conservation. Therefore, it necessitates constructive interaction between conservationists, developers of tourism activities, tourists, and local communities as custodians of the land. Ecotourism demands a strong commitment to sustainable environmental management and a sense of social responsibility as it creates many challenges as well as problems. Kotzé (2002a:2) mentions that it is for these reasons that the White Paper: Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa, regards 'responsible tourism' as fundamental for all tourism-related activities undertaken by any party, whether at the various levels of Government, private sector, local communities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or any other grouping with an interest in tourism (development).

According to Kotzé (2002a:2) South Africa's vision is to develop the tourism sector as a national priority in a responsible and acceptable manner, so that it will contribute significantly to the improvement of the quality of life of every South African. Should this mean that 'quality of life' includes spiritual qualities, then the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) will contribute to improving life in general in South Africa. If, however, this vision indicates an economical 'quality' only, improvement will be very superficial and short-lived.

3. THE ECOTOURIST

If ecotourism is nature-based tourism, then a person who visits relatively undeveloped areas to appreciate, participate and be sensitive (to reconnect) to these areas, may be regarded as an 'ecotourist'. According to Mader (2000), Ceballos-Lascurain says that traditional tourism emphasises escapism, while ecotourism emphasises the learning experience. The traditional tourist has been conditioned into believing that sea and sun are the primary ingredients of a good holiday. The best ecotourism delivers a holistic experience and shows the way to achieving greater simplicity and at the same time greater quality of life (Wild Net Africa News Archive, 2005). The question is, what does 'quality of life' entail for Ceballos-Lascurain?

An ecotourist is not content to merely tick off trophies. He doesn't see animals merely as objects, a lion as a large wild creature with four legs and a mane, and separated from its environment. An ecotourist might ask 'what ecological niche does it occupy?' and 'what may be its cultural significance?'. This study adds a further question, 'what can I learn from the lion to apply in my life and to add to the quality of my life?'

Nature-based tourism includes people who travel and spend money to see wildlife, view scenery, hike, hunt, spend time on beaches, climb mountains or see seasonal features such as wildflowers, whales and sardine-runs. According to Gosling (2004:6) there are more of these tourists in Southern Africa, both domestic and international, than any other type of tourist. Ecotourists do not 'use' any of the natural resources *per se*; they practice a non-consumptive use of wildlife and resources (e.g. sight-seeing, canoeing). While visiting these areas they have to contribute financially to the local community by paying for various commodities, such as accommodation, entrance fees and food. In the process they contribute to job creation, directly benefiting the economic well-being of the local residents and supposedly, conservation of the site or area.

However, according to Myles (2001) the term ecotourist does not differentiate between:

- a large group of people visiting a private game reserve, arriving at their destination by aircraft, staying in luxury accommodation, expecting to be pampered with all the modern conveniences and spending very little money at the destination because everything is prepaid before departure and
- a low impact traveller, back-packing or camping to save money on accommodation, but spending money readily wherever they go to explore, enjoy and experience natural areas and cultures, pursuing a minimal impact experience in a natural environment.

An ecotourist can therefore be involved in a wide range of activities which may have different environmental impacts and attract people with different sets of

values and motivations. It may also involve the pure need for people to reconnect with nature without deliberately impacting in any way on the environment or cultures of an area.

4. GROWTH IN ECOTOURISM

Ecotourism activities have been expanding rapidly all over the world during the past two decades (Kotzé, 2002a:1). Significant further growth is anticipated well into the future.

According to DEAT (2002:1) tourism still plays a relatively small role in the South African economy and it has a long way to go if it is to fulfil its potential to significantly contribute to national income. Traditionally the main focus of governments has been on the growth in international arrivals and total foreign exchange earnings. Now it focuses on fostering entrepreneurial opportunities for the historically disadvantaged, poverty relief, employment and local economic development. Both domestic and international tourism can create employment; it is a relatively labour-intensive industry and it employs a multiplicity of skills. Tourism can provide very good skills development opportunities for local communities.

DEAT (2002:1) mentions that in 1996 the White Paper for the Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa concluded that tourism development in South Africa had largely been a missed opportunity. The focus on a narrow market has reduced the potential of the industry to spawn entrepreneurship and to create new services, like local entertainment and handicrafts, and to drive local economic development. In fact, the formal tourism sector provides major tourism opportunities for the informal sector. Tourists travel to the 'factory' to consume the product; they travel to the destination to enjoy their holiday. Tourism is the 'final good', all the final touches have to be provided in South Africa and so the value is captured here. The value of a taxi ride from the airport, wildlife viewing and restaurant meals all accrue to the local economy. The challenge is to maximise it by reducing leakages and developing the multiplier effect. Tourist

enterprises attract the domestic and international tourists and create opportunities for small entrepreneurs and economic linkages, for example agriculture, hunting, handicraft production, and a wide range of service industries which tourists are likely to consume in the destination (DEAT, 2002:1).

Tourism is an enormous industry and still one of the fastest growing industrial sectors worldwide. In 1950 about 25 million tourists generated US$8 billion. In 1991 about 450 million tourists generated about US$260 billion. International tourism arrivals are expected to double again between 1991 and 2010 (World Trade Organisation, 1992). Countryside pursuits are also booming in popularity. Mocumbi (2001) mentioned that between 1990 and 1998, Africa showed an average annual growth in international tourist arrivals of 6,6%. During the same period, Southern Africa reached the figure of 18,2%. In 1998 Africa was the fastest-growing region for international tourism with an increase of 7,5% and almost 30 million tourists visiting African countries during the year according to figures compiled by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) (Vieta, 1999:1-6).

Ecotourism is meant to be different. Originally used to denote nature travel, ecotourism in its strictest sense means travel which has a low impact on the natural environment whilst contributing to local sustainable development and encouraging environmental conservation. This combination of interest in travel and the outdoors is causing the ecotourism subsector to grow at twice the average tourism rate (Cater, 1994:3). According to ResourceAfrica (2004) ecotourism is the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry in Southern Africa, with an estimated growth rate of 10% to 15% per year. The Southern African Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report confirms this and states that while tourism is the fastest growing economic sector in the world, the section motivated by a desire to visit places of natural beauty - ecotourism - is growing the fastest of all (Gosling, 2004:6).

In recognition of ecotourism's growth potential, particularly for developing countries, the United Nations Economic and Social Council declared 2002 the International Year of Ecotourism. Many countries in Africa, particularly the

continent's tourism leaders (Kenya and South Africa) are investing heavily in ecotourism.

Gosling (2004:6) reports that the value of nature-based tourism in Southern Africa, worth $3,6 billion in 2000, is rapidly overtaking the combined values of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in the region. This emerged from the Southern African Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report, which examines the capacity of ecosystems to provide the services needed to support human well-being. South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Madagascar helped lead the growth of ecotourism in Africa. Several African countries are set to cash in on the expected continuous increase in ecotourism. Zimbabwe, for example, which targets ecotourists who spend more and stay longer, earned foreign currency from tourism in 1999 up to an amount that makes tourism the third largest foreign currency earner after agriculture and mining (Vieta, 1999:1-6). Political issues in Zimbabwe, however, brought tourism (and agriculture) almost to a complete halt, resulting in the country being near to bankruptcy. Ecotourists do not travel to areas at risk from war or civil strife or where there are severe problems of any kind. The eruption of any of these factors quickly dries up the supply of would-be ecotourists (Vieta, 1999:1-6).

Fillion, Foley and Jacquemot (1992) outline the magnitude of the ecotourism market through the use of general tourism statistics. They qualify ecotourism as 'travel to enjoy and appreciate nature' and with the latter perhaps touching the spiritual value of a nature experience. They identified that between 40% and 60% of all international tourists are 'nature' tourists (tourists visiting a destination to experience and enjoy nature) and that between 20% and 40% are wildlife-related tourists (tourists visiting a destination to mainly observe wildlife, e.g. birdwatchers, game-viewing).

Not only do more people visit natural environments, but there is also a tendency to visit less developed and remote areas. Study participants in this study indicated a higher demand for less developed destinations (Table 6.1). This trend is confirmed by Bolton (1997:232).

Table 6.1: Preferred destinations of 209 study participants who visit natural environments on a regular basis.

Preferred environment	N = 209	%
'Quiet', undeveloped game farms, reserves, mountain resorts	47	23
Bushveld, including Kruger National Park	46	22
Coastal areas (undeveloped)	27	13
Neighbouring countries (undeveloped destinations)	26	12
Western Cape Province (excluding urban areas)	24	11
Rivers and dams (water bodies)	14	7
City environments	13	6
Upmarket parks and reserves (Mabula, Pilanesberg)	12	6

Table 6.1 shows that the majority (61%) of the study participants prefer game and nature reserves of various kinds (quiet undeveloped - 23%; bushveld, including Kruger Park - 22%; upmarket parks and reserves - 6%). Less than 30% of participants prefer environments with highly developed infrastructure.

In the period of 1986 - 1998 the number of visitors to game and nature reserves in South Africa had grown by 108% annually. In 1986 the number of visitors to reserves was less than half a million. By 1998 this number had grown to almost 6 million visitors. Game and nature reserves were the number one activity for visitors to the country in 1997 (60%), rising by 2% over the previous year (South African Tourism Board, 1998). According to Gosling (2004:6) ecotourism in private conservation areas in South Africa is substantial and growing, but the role of state-owned protected areas remains crucial. The Southern African Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report states that National Parks generally provide the nucleus around which private and community-based nature tourism activities cluster. Private institutions cannot guarantee the stability of protection over time that state-owned protected areas offer.

South Africa is rapidly developing, especially in respect of its potential as an ecotourism destination (economically). The Southern African Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report compares income from ecotourism with that generated from agriculture, forestry and fisheries, the main sectors in Southern Africa based on 'ecosystem services' (Gosling, 2004:6). The contribution by ecotourism is almost equal to the other natural resources sectors combined, which are also growing slowly, around 1% to 3% per year. The report further states that the balance of policy drivers in relation to natural resources is likely to shift over the next decades from being strongly influenced by the needs of agriculture, forestry and fishing, to being more influenced by considerations of conservation and aesthetics. Ecotourism depends on 'ecosystem services' such as clean air and water, unspoilt scenery and biodiversity. These 'natural resources' are important for the spiritual experience accompanying ecotourism.

The dominance of industries based on non-renewable resources, like mining and oil extraction, must decline in the long term. However, it is likely to remain high over the next 25 years (Gosling, 2004:6). A key trade-off is between the social benefits that such sectors offer now, and the long-term benefits that may accrue from ecotourism. It is therefore important to conserve the natural environment in order to succeed in sustained economic growth. Equally important is that the population is informed of the benefits of conservation. This can be done through raising awareness, imparting knowledge and enlisting co-operation (De Crom & Brits, 2003). However, information should not focus primarily on the economic benefits, but should also emphasise spiritual benefits, which are achieved through personal experiences in unspoilt natural environments [Chapter 5, 7, 9].

5. UNDERSTANDING ECOTOURISM: REASONS FOR VISITING NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Responsible (sustainable) tourism is about enabling local communities to enjoy a better quality of life, through increased socio-economic benefits and an improved environment. It is also about providing better holiday experiences for guests and good business opportunities for tourism enterprises (Kotzé, 2002b:1). 'Better

holiday experiences' should not only include services, but guaranteed opportunities for spiritual experiences as well. These may include opportunities for quietness, solitude and unspoilt natural areas [Chapter 5, 7].

Ecotourism needs the conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem function, ecological processes and genetic diversity. These are some of the objectives managed in protected areas to ensure sustainable utilisation. This is accepted where consumption practices (e.g. hunting, fishing, harvesting grass) are applied. It can only be achieved when the areas are large enough to allow for natural processes, or where smaller areas are actively managed to maintain equilibrium.

The same concept applies to ecotourism practices. Areas are often developed without planning or ecotourism activities are not actively managed, causing the loss of the intrinsic qualities of nature. The building blocks for good experiences are then no longer available. At this stage people start looking for alternative destinations and do not return to these areas. This translates into unsustainable ecotourism practices (De Crom & Brits, 2003).

The provisional guidelines in the White Paper of DEAT (2002) are an illustration of what tourism was and is all about, not only in South Africa, but worldwide. The point of departure is economic gain. Although economical well-being is essential for the continual existence of governments, industries and society, the question arises whether the point is not missed as far as tourism, and especially ecotourism, is concerned. No matter how hard governments try to create jobs, deliver services, create opportunities and encourage entrepreneurship in the tourism industry, if people do not get the experience they require and what they travel for in the first instance - personal and spiritual well-being - all the efforts are wasted. When DEAT talks about 'value', it refers to economical value. There is hardly any reference to the intrinsic value of the experience, primarily in a natural environment, that people need at a destination. 'Leakages' to be reduced are those influencing the monetary income, not in the personal experience of the individual.

DEAT focuses on the wealth of local people as the primary objective for tourism in South Africa. The first aspect mentioned in the provisional guidelines for National Responsible Tourism Development for South Africa, are the guiding principles for economic responsibility. This is followed by the guiding principles for social responsibility, with the slogan 'Putting people first' (DEAT, 2002:5). Under this heading it is mentioned that tourism is dependent upon the social, cultural and natural environment. The empowerment of communities is emphasised, again not keeping the reason for why people want to visit an area (especially natural areas) in mind. The third and last principle is environmental responsibility. Even in this section objectives are focussed on development of tourism facilities 'keeping the impact on the natural resources in mind, not to be in conflict with local communities needs, avoid waste and over-consumption by using wood and other natural resources with great care, etc.' Although objectives include for example 'conservation' and 'care', 'discourage tourism activities that can damage ecologically sensitive areas', nowhere is mention made of the development of awareness of the intrinsic value of natural environments, wildlife or even cultural sites, of the local people or visitors to such areas.

In all definitions and discussions on ecotourism there is a total lack of recognition of awareness and of the spiritual value of natural places (and the reason for, at least, ecotourism). This should be of great concern for those who have the experience and knowledge of these values and consequently of the necessity of keeping natural areas natural and free from 'development for tourism'. Such development will ultimately drive the tourist away.

Ecotourism in Africa varies widely. Visitors go to watch gorillas in Uganda or lemurs in Madagascar, go birding in Botswana, look at rock paintings and fossils in South Africa, visit rainforests in Ghana, scuba dive in the Seychelles and enjoy walking and photographic safaris in East and Southern Africa.

According to Mocumbi (2001):

> The African continent has great potential for tourism and is suitable for activities related to ecotourism. The governments are responsible for creating a favourable environment for the development of tourism in general and, especially, of ecotourism. Tourism can be seen as a vehicle for interaction amongst our people, helping us to promote a spirit of coexistence, tolerance and understanding.

Mocumbi (2001) illustrates understanding to a certain degree of the intrinsic meaning of ecotourism when he says that ecotourism could help to improve standards of living in Africa, provided that there is awareness that sustainable economic and social development require changes in patterns of production, consumption and human behaviour. It is important to meet the needs of the present without affecting the capacity of meeting the needs of future generations (sustainable living). It must be understood that all human activities have an impact on the environment and are influenced by it. The capacity for controlling this link will determine whether or not the activity will continue. It is therefore fundamental that we systematically integrate ecotourism considerations when drawing up policies and strategies at all levels.

Reports, discussions, legislation and literature promoting ecotourism should be of great concern if the real reason and objectives of ecotourism are not understood and internalised. Whereas its proponents acknowledge that ecotourism, as it is generally understood, has destructive potential against natural and cultural resources, they promote ecotourism as a powerful tool for boosting economic development (Kamuaro, undated:5). These documents argue that its benefits will far outweigh its problems. That should be the main concern. When ecotourism is practiced according to this belief, it will eventually kill itself, for it will destroy that which people need in the first place - unspoilt nature for the spiritual experience. Very few ecotourism developers have the understanding of why people visit natural areas. This has a direct effect on the kinds of development

that are taking place and ultimately on the sustainability of the destination. Many efforts need to be made to fully inform and educate all stakeholders and decision-makers.

It is not only tourists that should be informed about the influence their inappropriate behaviour may have on the natural environment and fellow visitors. Most of the times people who visit these areas are there for the experience. It is more a matter of educating and informing developers and money-makers, including local and state governments, for eventually they will also feel the negative consequences of ignorance and misinformation on ecotourism *per se*. What is needed is a shift in societal values and attitudes [Chapter 5], in world economic systems, in international conservation agreements, and the granting and receiving of foreign aid for development projects toward the natural environment.

Most of the natural environments in South Africa where ecotourism is practiced fall within protected or larger game-ranching areas (De Crom & Brits, 2003). Ecotourism forms part of the non-consumptive utilisation of natural environments and is often promoted to be the most economic and sustainable form of utilising these areas. Preservationist and animal rights groups mostly promote this to combat consumption use in forms such as hunting or culling. There is, however, not enough understanding of how to practise sustainable ecotourism in natural environments.

6. IMPACT OF ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Tourism may be the world's largest industry, but if poorly managed and understood, the costs of tourism often outweigh the benefits. Large numbers of tourists contribute to environmental degradation. Foreign-owned travel companies and airlines make most of the profits. Although international tourism earns foreign exchange for developing countries, the World Resources Institute estimated that 55 cents of every dollar spent by tourists in the developing countries, leaks back to developed countries as imports (ResourceAfrica, 2004).

Ecotourism includes special interest and activity holidays, known as 'adventure tourism'. People have many examples of stress-related behaviour in society such as road rage, family killings and racial conflict. Myles (2001) raises the question of why anyone would engage in a potentially dangerous activity, such as white-water rafting, bungee jumping and extreme sports, as a form of recreation. He comes to the conclusion that it should be the 'adrenaline rush', but also questions the ethics of these activities. What is of great concern is that many of these adventure tourism activities disturb the environment causing noise pollution, visual pollution, erosion and in some cases even mud slides.

The Southern African Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report warns against the negative impacts of ecotourism, which can undermine its own viability. These include the treatment of sewage and other waste in sensitive environments and 'visual pollution' from badly designed or poorly sited developments in areas of scenic beauty, which are difficult to reverse (Gosling, 2004:6).

Except for the fact that more people visit more remote, less-developed natural areas, nature is increasingly being used in certain therapeutic practices (Knode, 2001; MacCallum, 2001; Petrie, 2001; Seiler, 2001; Van der Zee, 2002, pers. comm.). It seems that more and more people realise the importance of nature for their well-being. In view of this and of the apparent trend in ecotourism, it stands to reason that more natural areas should be protected and kept in a state of under-development. However, this is not the case in practice (Bolton 1997:232). The pristine state of nature is usually one of the first peripherals of the natural environment that is lost.

Clearly people fear environmental threats such as overdevelopment, for the personal experiences they have during visits to these areas will probably be not the same. Study participants who visited the Kruger National Park on a regular basis (at least 5 - 6 times per year) since the early 1980s, stopped their visits in 1998, because:

> (I)t is too busy nowadays. It is not like in the old days where one could still sit outside your chalet and hear the lions roar or jackals calling. Today you only hear generators, heavy vehicles speeding on the tarred roads, especially during the night, and people... There are too many facilities now - all contributing to noise, taking away the 'natural' atmosphere and peacefulness of the bush. We prefer to go elsewhere now, where we can again appreciate the quietness of evenings, no generators, no mechanical noises... [C-9:590].

On the question 'Why do you visit a place like the Richtersveld, where there are no facilities whatsoever', typical answers from study participants include the following sentiments [C-10(a)-(j):591]:

- There is nothing, or very little human-made, thus nature is unspoilt.
- There is nothing artificial in unspoilt nature.
- A special quietness and peacefulness is experienced.
- The experience is spiritually fulfilling, ensuring general well-being.
- Fellow visitors are people with similar sentiments and values.

The results presented in Table 6.1 indicate that most study participants (70%) prefer destinations with limited development. A great number of participants who visit the highly developed Kruger National Park prefer the 'quieter' or more remote rest camps such as Letaba, Mopane, Shingwedzi and Punda Maria or the smaller bush camps where there are fewer people. Many participants who prefer destinations at the coast, near rivers and other water bodies also mention the less-developed areas such as the north coast of KwaZulu-Natal or the west coast of the Northern Cape. Even participants who indicated a preference for highly developed nature reserves such as the Pilanesberg National Park (situated in the Northwest Province), generally prefer the 'quiet' rest camp where there are less facilities in terms of upmarket restaurants, playgrounds and other entertainment.

Bolton (1997:232) identified different phases of what he calls nature-based tourism. The first phase is where an area is being explored by researchers. The

second phase starts when they are followed by a few adventurous backpackers. In the third phase more visitors follow and, depending on the tourist demand, comfortable facilities are, as a rule built for various kinds of visitors. The third phase can be considered as that stage of development which fulfils the needs of middle income people. The fourth phase will be the one in which small numbers of wealthy people arrive for exclusive holidays. Ultimately, where a destination has the potential for mass tourism, package tours will be introduced. The destination will have run its course and reached phase four. By then, those individuals seeking unique nature experiences in remote, undeveloped places, will be going elsewhere.

The increase in tourist traffic and the concomitant development brings about a long and imposing list of negative effects. They include, amongst others pollution, disruption of wildlife habitat, destruction of natural features and sites, overuse of resources such as water and firewood, and the breakdown of indigenous cultures.

These circumstances of degradation, caused by ill-considered planning, inevitably subject tourists to frustration, disappointment, and even resentment when a perceived vacation in exotic and pristine surroundings, is transformed into a stressful, disappointing visit. Lack of satisfaction and positive feelings with such an experience are almost guaranteed (Giannecchini, 1993:431). One negative reaction may be a decline in tourist numbers. Those individuals seeking unique experiences in remote places, away from other people and development, will be going elsewhere. The so-called 'development' would then typically have destroyed the specific experience for which the people came for in the first place. Should we allow environmental threats, caused by the human species, to continue, the enriching experiences people have in nature, will continue to decline.

Ultimately the preferred outcome is for ecotourists to acquire a sense of spiritual sustenance that could enhance their optimal functioning after the experience in a natural environment. A disregard for sound principles of responsible ecotourism could thus result in lost opportunies.

This progression can occur at the scale of single sites (for example, the development at the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park as discussed later on), or whole regions. Alaska is set to move from the phase of discovery and exclusivity to one of rapid tourism growth (Prosser, 1994:19-37). The Okavango Delta in Botswana is a typical example of rapid growth in ecotourism and the subsequent consequences. Leach (2005) shares the following experiences and concerns:

> The Okavango Delta stands alone as one of these last great animal refugee camps in the world-a true wonder of nature. There are no fences restricting the movement of the animals; they have free rein to go wherever they want, whenever they want. The Okavango Delta is made up of such a complex maze of waterways, islands and rivers that it is impossible to navigate through it without local help. For this reason, it has long been protected from intrusive outsiders. Natives of the Okavango Delta live by supporting themselves with fish caught in the rivers and streams.
>
> Our group of eight makoros crawled along in single-file through the narrow passageways for the next four hours. Every now and then, the head poler would slap his pole hard and flat against the water to scare away crocodiles. Guides lead us on a 45-minute hike directly into a forest. We were led into a clearing with a large pond in the middle. We slowly approached... By the time we were standing ten yards from the edge we saw at least 50 hippos. They spread out across the entire pond and showed off their gigantic mouths and large teeth. I was dumbfounded by these enormous and powerful animals and, for the next 15 minutes, I watched them roll and dive around the pond until our guides announced that it was time to go.
>
> The following morning we started the long trip back across the border into Namibia, away from the Okavango Delta. On the way back, I was informed of the increasing popularity of the Delta and

> of the potential danger facing it over the next ten years. With the rise of ecotourism and the lack of strict regulations, the Okavango Delta is now being threatened by over-development and exploitation. I was left with the words, "If you ever make it back here, you probably won't recognize it," echoing through my head as we began the long trek back up the river.

Leach's concerns are valid when one considers that the Okavango Delta is one of Botswana's leading tourist destination areas, mainly because of the rich wildlife resources it sustains and its scenic beauty. Tourism has stimulated the development of a variety of allied infrastructure and facilities, such as hotels, lodges and camps, airport and airstrips, in the Okavango region. Through its backward linkages, wholesale and retail businesses have also been established, especially in Maun, offering various goods to the tourist industry. Tarred roads and communication facilities have also been developed in the Ngamiland District, partly to facilitate tourism development (Mbaiwa, 2002:1). Despite its positive socio-economic impacts, the industry is beginning to have negative environmental impacts in the area such as the destruction of the area's ecology through driving outside the prescribed trails, noise pollution and poor waste management. Eventually, the ultimate outcome that tourists expect from a visit to the Okavango Delta, namely spiritual fulfilment, will not be possible resulting in negative socio-economic impacts in the region.

Bolton (1997:234) states that if ecotourism is to benefit conservation, it will be mainly because it provides an incentive to protect habitats from more destructive forms of use. Although this may be true, conservation and ecotourism should go hand-in-hand. In the long run, the one will not survive without the other. Conservation ensures that people will keep on visiting natural areas, providing they have a nature experience. If the quality of the experience is negatively affected, they will seek the experience elsewhere, and consequently withdrawing the financial input to the area. Bolton (1997:235) says that if tourism is to support wildlife financially, then there must be something on which visitors can spend money, but it must not be something that will spoil the quality of the experience

that visitors primarily come to find. The development of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park is discussed as a case study to illustrate the interaction of ecotourism and conservation practices and the influence of management strategies in this regard on communities.

Development of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park: a case study

The development of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park (GSLWP) in KwaZulu-Natal evoked substantial reaction with regards to sensitive management of ecotourism and the local people. In 2003 the then Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Mohammed Valli Moosa, announced a successful investment of R432 million into ecotourism in the GSLWP (SA Wilderness Support Group, 2003). He announced eight winning bidders who had been given concessions to develop lodges, self-catering resorts, camping facilities and adventure travel activities at eight sites in the park. This would create more than 800 new and redeveloped beds as the new investments come on stream, offering a range of luxury and affordable accommodation to domestic and international tourists.

In reaction to this announcement, the Beach Action Committee of South Africa (BACSA), claimed that the cost in damages to the environment would far exceed the capital investment, stating that:

> It is common cause that the pioneer dunes will carry the brunt of the hotel/camp developments at Cape Vidal, Perrier's Rock and further North to Kosi Bay. These environmental damages will never be repaired or mitigated and past experiences have proven that once intervention has taken place, further development and damages are unavoidable (SA Wilderness Support Group, 2003).

Minister Moosa also said that this latest investment is the culmination of efforts by the national government to uplift one of the poorest regions in the country, further hailing it as a major step in the transformation of the tourism industry. The Minister pointed out that up to 50% of the construction work for the new resorts

would be conducted by local small businesses, further contributing to the alleviation of poverty. In addition, at least 900 permanent jobs would be created.

According to BACSA, creating 900 low-income and menial jobs could not be seen as an achievement of any standard. It was common cause that the under-privileged would not benefit much from this venture (SA Wilderness Support Group, 2003).

Mr Moosa continued to say that this development would form part of the national government's Lubombo Spatial Development Initiative, which also successfully implemented a malaria control programme. The CEO of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park Authority reported the use of DDT, which resulted in a decrease in infection rates of up to 94%. The use of DDT should be of great concern. The use of this chemical is internationally forbidden. BACSA was also of the meaning that the CEO and minister failed to mention that the area had experienced the worst drought ever between 2000 and 2003. The breeding pattern of mosquitoes and availability of water are inversely linked. It was therefore very likely that the lack of water was the direct cause of the absence of mosquitoes and not the DDT programme and that the return of high malaria prevalence would be a certainty once the rainy season returned to normal. According to them, tourists were misinformed (SA Wilderness Support Group, 2003).

According to the SA Wilderness Support Group (2003) Minister Moosa added that:

> The Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, South Africa's first World Heritage Site, was set to become an international model of the way in which the protection of wilderness can contribute to the alleviation of poverty and benefit social groups way beyond their boundaries - in accordance with new conservation principles recently adopted at World Summit on Sustainable Development as well as the World Parks Congress in Durban (September, 2003). The new investments would also establish the Wetlands Park as one of South Africa's key tourism and conservation icons.

According to Mr Moosa, the new facilities at the park would ultimately accommodate between 80 000 and 100 000 guests a year, who would spend about 200 000 nights in the Park annually, generating over R300 million a year in direct spending, excluding the 'knock-on' effect on secondary development, indirect expenditure and ancillary spending in and around the region.

The tourism investments would have to conform to strict international guidelines designed to preserve the biological diversity of the GSLWP. The park has an integrated development management plan that sets carrying capacities and zones different sections of the wetlands for development while reserving other large areas for wilderness areas. The developers would also be obliged to conduct Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) at their sites.

BACSA was convinced that the projected influx of tourists would not result. If tourists were to visit the GSLWP, they would come from overseas as the South African tourists were by then exploring neighbouring countries since the banning of beach driving in South Africa. BACSA said:

> The countrywide 'beach ban' is now taking on more perspective. It is clear that the people of South Africa were forced to give up their rights to the use of their beaches for a few (privileged individuals) who want to have exclusive-use beaches for their developments within the park. It is time that the constitutional principles of accountability and transparency are revisited (SA Wilderness Support Group, 2003).

The controversies with regards to St Lucia were also evident among residents and business people in the area. In September 2003 ecotourism students who visited shops, restaurants and pubs in St Lucia did an informal survey. They conducted interviews with owners and local residents about ecotourism and the current state in the area. None of the individuals who they talked to were positive about the future of St Lucia, unless the 'beach-ban' was lifted. According to them, people visited St Lucia in the past primarily for the beaches and fishing. Since the ban,

visitors decreased substantially and many shop owners had already closed down or were on the brink of closing down.

However, according to Kriel and Sonnekus (2003:12), who visited St Lucia apparently more or less at the same time (September, 2003), the town was 'alive and well'. They reported a very changed picture of St Lucia, mentioning that previously the town was filled with fishermen from all over South Africa. Now St Lucia had been 'suddenly' discovered by overseas visitors and the town is 'swarmed' with backpackers and hired four-wheel drive vehicles. Many shops and business people had adapted and focused on these tourists. This trend could not be seen during our own visit to the area in September and, as mentioned earlier, a different account was given by the local business representatives. With regards to fishing, Kriel and Sonnekus also reported that cod of 15 kg were caught near the dredger in the estuary.

They also mentioned that the new organisation, Special Development Initiative, had spent 'millions of rands on development' in the area. The road to Cape Vidal had been upgraded, making it accessible to more people. They mentioned that areas which had never before been open were now used, for example the 'nature road for vehicles around the Benghazi lake'. All that everyone was waiting for was the unbanning of vehicles on the beach 'for at least 4,5km'.

Although the article by Kriel and Sonnekus (2003:12-17) endeavours to sound positive, the underlying tone is one of a concern, especially if one considers the accompanying photographs of a huge dredger in the mouth, an enormous construction site, and 'no entry' signs on the beaches. The interview with a marine biologist also has an undertone of concern. In this regard the silting up of the iMfulozi River mouth due to development further up along the river has a major impact on the ecosystem.

In reaction to the above-mentioned article, a resident of St Lucia mentioned that many of the 'facts' stated by Kriel and Sonnekus were doubtful (Bester, 2004a, pers. comm.). Bester said:

> A survey done in May 2003 indicated that only 25% of holiday accommodation was booked for the June/July 2003 season, comparing with the 80% to 90% bookings for the same period in 2001. The fact that the town was swarming with backpackers and other tourists during the holiday season, was also doubted. During the previous 18 months seven businesses closed their doors. Jobs for rural communities outside St Lucia decreased drastically. A ban was placed on cod-fishing in the lake. Cars parked at the beach were being broken into at an alarming rate. The Minister had finally rejected the re-opening of the beaches of St Lucia, Cape Vidal and Mapelane (Bester, 2004b:6).

Requirements for sensitive management

Barnes, Burgess and Pearce (1992:136-151) suggest certain requirements for sensitive management of ecotourism, namely:

- It needs to be sensitive to the scale and type of tourism, and the effect upon local cultures.

In the case of the GSLWP, the apparent prosperity comes from the use of the beaches and ocean, primarily for fishing. One may conclude that 'fishing' is a type of tourism that contributes to the sustainability of this area. If this is tampered with, the local cultures are affected detrimentally, with businesses closing down and employment decreasing.

- Income from ecotourism needs to find its way to the local people whose lands and interests are affected.

According to BACSA this is not the case in the GSLWP. While the local people do not benefit anything from new developments or the closing of beaches, a privileged few get the advantage of exclusivity (SA Wilderness Support Group, 2003).

- Where tourism occurs in protected areas, the goals of protected area management must be furthered by the economic gains of tourism.

The minister proposed that the new investments would establish the GSLWP as one of South Africa's key tourism and conservation icons, implying that economic gain of tourism would be vested in preserving the unique biodiversity of this area.

- In developing countries, ecotourism should be accessible to visitors from a wide range of economic status and not restricted to the rich or foreign.

As mentioned earlier, Kriel and Sonnekus (2003:12) wrote about the change of the tourist profile at the GSLWP. Although it was South African tourists from a wide spectrum of economic and social status who visited the GSLWP previously, tourism is now focussed on the foreign market. Therefore this does not correspond with the requirements as laid down by Barnes et al. (1992). The new focus also concentrates on package tours, promising the tourist various group adventures. Numerous websites advertise a variety of tours and activities in and around the GSLWP.

Consequences of uncontrolled development

In Southern Africa, the wildlife spectaculars have been able to withstand the onslaught of package tours up to now, mainly because areas involved, such as the Kruger National Park, are relatively large. For most part tourists are confined to vehicles and designated routes as they pass through wildlife habitats. However, wildlife attractions can easily be destroyed, both ecologically and in terms of visitor satisfaction, by tourist development.

In the GSLWP for example, study participants mention the unnecessary tarring of the road to Cape Vidal as well as the development of more accommodation facilities in the 'little forest', as negative influences on their wildlife experience. Some even mention their fears about building a lodge or hotel-like structure at Cape Vidal. On a question of what they would do if such development should

occur, most of the study participants suggested that they would probably not visit the area again. The following excerpt represents some of the concerns:

> It was a while since I had been to Cape Vidal and I was horrified on a recent visit to see the destruction of dune forest to make way for a big new road to the camp. Surely this could have been handled more sensitively? I also gather there are plans on the go to treble or quadruple the number of chalets. That will presumably involve destroying even more forest. I hope the powers that be have done their homework properly. I wonder how full the hotels and campsites in nearby St Lucia are to justify such a huge expansion...? As with so many of these schemes, there is also a real danger that conservation will take a back seat and the spirit of the place, which attracts people in the first place, might be destroyed (Rorich, 2001:40).

On the aspect of uncontrolled development Dr Ian Player wrote the following story in 1980:

> On (wilderness) trails when night falls, I am often asked, 'Why don't you allow lamps?' and I tell the following story:
>
> This is a wilderness area where man should only walk, canoe, or ride on horseback away from the sights and sounds of human installations. It is our job to try to keep it as wild and primitive as possible - hard work in this twentieth century where the battle cry of humanity is development.
>
> Now if I allow a storm lantern in the camp it would mean to carry paraffin in every time we came. People would soon become irritated and ask why a drum could not be brought to the camp. So a 44-gallon drum would be rolled down the river and everyone would be happy for a while. But when it was empty another one

would have to be brought and people would say, 'How silly it is to roll it down river, why don't you construct a small road, just a track, and bring it in by vehicle.' So this would be the next step.

Then somewhat would ask, 'These storm lanterns don't give much light and seeing there is ample paraffin, why don't you have a little engine, with just enough horsepower to light six electric bulbs?' So an engine - only a little one- would be brought in and there would be more light in the camp.

Before long, another person would say, 'It seems so silly sitting on logs around the campfire, what harm would a few deck chairs do, so long as they are green and fitted in with the environment. We would be able to read in comfort late into the night and not have any of this keeping watch alone. And we could have a guitar and sing songs around the fire. It would help to drown out the noises of the lion and the rhino - which can be jolly frightening.'

Later, someone would say, 'Only bringing seven people on trail is a bit mean. Why don't you double the number and all those who can't walk too well could be brought by vehicle, along the little dirt road, offloaded a hundred meters from the camp so they have to walk the last bit and be in keeping with the wilderness atmosphere.'

The pace starts to quicken. 'You can't have people going behind trees and bushes. It is very unhygienic and also the thorns scratch which makes it uncomfortable. Why not have a little pit drop latrine with a wooden seat to fit into the environment.' So a lavatory is erected. Soon there would be complaints about the smell and a nice red brick building would arise in the bush, plastic seats, white walls and waterborne sewerage.

'Well, seeing that we have a lavatory', a newcomer would say, 'why on earth do we have to sleep on the hard ground, with smoke blowing in our faces and all those ants and other nunus running over us in the night. It's dangerous, snakes could come too; why can't just two little rondavels be built, one for the men and one for the women. Very simple in style with camp beds and some nice rugs to add colour to the drab bush. A radio should be installed because people are getting tired of guitar music around the campfire. No, there should be no television set; that really would be carrying things a bit far.'

Years pass and there is a big camp with restaurants, a supermarket and swimming pool. It boasts of sleeping a thousand people a night and tarred roads have been constructed so no one is bothered by dust.

Now comes the final act. Someone says the camp is too big and sprawling, and it costs a lot of money to maintain. Buildings should go upwards and not be spread around. So plans are drawn up and thought is given to the birds and the animals and the wilderness atmosphere. At last the big announcement and headlines in newspapers: a 40 storey building is to be build and in order that it should be in keeping with the wild atmosphere, it will have a thatched roof to preserve the rustic appearance.

This, I explain, is the reason for not allowing lamps.

This may sound improbable and perhaps exaggerated. However, if one considers areas such as the KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape coastline many examples of similar situations are obvious. Even development in the Kruger National Park rest camps illustrates these 'improbables', for example the huge thatched-roof restaurant-reception complex overlooking the Sabie River at the Lower Sabie rest

camp which replaced the original smaller buildings. A study participant commented as follows on this specific development:

> Then we finally arrived at Lower Sabie. The place was beautiful. Except for a walking-deck and look-out stand that stretched from the cafeteria right to the edge of the river. They made it so big! It stood out from every place you looked at it! I felt they could have saved money and gain tranquillity by making it smaller and less obvious. I wanted to go to Kruger to have a relaxing time and get away from the everyday life in the city, but here was the huge man-made structure reminding me of back home! [PI-25:519(4)].

According to Goodwin and Leader-Williams (2000:259) public concern about development of ecotourism has focussed on the impacts of mass tourism, both on the natural environment and on the culture of local people. These concerns led to alternative forms of ecotourism, which tended to be small-scale and 'low key', with an emphasis on locally owned, traditional accommodation, intended to cater for the 'alternative traveller seeking intimate but non-destructive contact with foreign cultures and environments'.

7. ECOTOURISM AND EDUCATION

In all countries of the world, both rich and poor, ecotourism has the potential of playing an outstanding role in educating people about the importance of an environmental ethic. This ethic must include recognition of the complexity and sensitivity of nature and a rejection of the belief that we can understand nature scientifically and manipulate it with technology. Participation in sound ecotourism can contribute to the development of a deep environmental ethic among people who travel internationally to visit wildlife settings, especially those in developing countries. Minorities of rural people are educated to behave responsibly toward the natural environment. The least environmentally concerned are residents of rural areas living in close proximity to wildlife settings (Fredrickson, 2002). They are almost totally dependent on the local flora and fauna for their sustenance. For

them, the land is not for leisure, but a means of livelihood and survival. The very concept of nature and wildlife is very different from the environmental ethic that drives many of the conservation activities known to the 'civilised' world.

People visit natural environments to reconnect [Chapter 5, par. 5.2]. Education and interpretation are important elements of the ecotourism experience. It will not only enhance the reconnecting experience of the ecotourist, but should also help to ensure better management for conservation purposes and development objectives. If ecotourism seeks to promote responsible travel, then its foundation must be education. According to Black (1999:1) education can serve two distinct roles, that of

- satisfying the needs for a fulfilling nature experience for the tourist, and
- to ensure effective ecotourism management.

7.1 Education for the ecotourist

To reconnect with nature an ecotourism experience is usually associated with learning and environmental consciousness. Bragg (1990:12) suggests that ecotourism involves active appreciation, education or interpretation. It strengthens environmental awareness, concern and commitment through an increased understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural environment. This process of discovery and learning will eventually result in the ecotourist acquiring a consciousness and knowledge of the natural environment, enhancing reconnection experiences. This may convert the tourist into somebody keenly involved in conservation issues [Chapter 5, Fig.5.2].

The values and attitudes of ecotourists are beginning to change, and tourists are now demanding more environmentally responsible services and products as well as information (Black, 1999:1). Ecotourists want to learn about the environments they visit and they want to understand their connections with nature. Lück (2003:943) who did a study to determine whether ecotourists want to be educated confirms this. He finds that despite the existing interpretation in place, study

participants clearly indicated that they would have liked to have received more information on the particular environment.

Ecotourism activities often involve active participation, which in many cases allow the visitors to come into direct contact with nature. Examples are hiking, diving, snorkelling, bird-watching and many more. Through these activities the individual can realise and learn to appreciate the importance of nature for their own well-being as well as the importance of conservation. Providing education as part of such an ecotourism experience has the potential to make people aware of, and become actively involved with environmental issues following their experience.

Figure 6.1 shows a group of students exploring rock pools during a day walk along the beach at the GSLWP. Interpretation of the ecology of this phenomenon provides the students with information and knowledge which they did not have. After various such stops and informative conversations, they started to show an appreciation for the variety and sensitivity of the whole ecosystem [C-11(a)-(h):592]. This awareness may lead to further interest, understanding and appreciation of the ecosystem and perhaps also result in an increase in the spiritual experience, enhancing reconnection (Fig. 5.2).

Thus, education and interpretation create the potential to provide the ecotourist with an environmental consciousness and to facilitate long term attitude and behaviour changes (Black, 1999:1). Interpretation can play an important role in ecotourism by educating the ecotourist about the nature of the host community and region, addressing natural resource management issues, informing them of the consequences of their actions, enhancing their experience and encouraging them to engage in sustainable forms of behaviour (Moscarde, 1996:376).



Figure 6.1: Students interpret rock pools during a walk on the beach at The Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, KwaZulu-Natal.

In addition, to guide the ecotourist in having a fulfilling nature experience (to reconnect), they should also be 'educated' in the spiritual experiences one can have in natural environments. This creates quality and value to the experience. When they become aware of these experiences a connection will be established, creating a better understanding of the whole and the role of human beings in that whole.

7.2 Education for conservation management

Education and interpretation have an essential function in the natural resource management of every park, recreation area, and reserve, as it has the capacity to reduce inappropriate behaviour (Alcock, 1991; Beckmann, 1988; Hall & McArthur, 1996; Herbst, 1979). This does not only apply to the visitor, but essentially to the owner, manager and all other role-players involved in the park or reserve. It is these role-players who should have an understanding of the needs for a nature

experience. Only when they understand what the ecotourist's needs are, action with regards to development can be reconsidered.

With the increased interest in ecotourism, private operators and tourist resorts have recognised the importance of education and interpretation in terms of meeting the needs of the ecotourist as well as protecting the resources. Ecotourism operators are in an excellent position to provide environmental and cultural interpretation and to create awareness in the ecotourist. This is usually attempted through guides and other media such as brochures, videos, walks and talks, and also through the provision of information prior to, during and after the experience.

Tour guides are one of the key front-line players in the tourism industry. Through their knowledge and interpretation of a destination's attractions and culture, and their communication and service skills, they have the ability to transform the tourists' visit from a tour into an experience (Ap & Wong, 2001:551). This experience should include the spiritual dimension.

Therefore, there is a need for trained guides and interpreters who can set examples by their behaviour, as well as being able to communicate efficiently with ecotourists. It happens too often that local guides, untrained and poorly paid, disturb wildlife in order to please some visitors to give them a better view, take a better photograph or to be as close as possible to a specific animal. This often happens to the dismay of other visitors who want to experience nature without interference from co-visitors and guides.

Myles (2001) is of the opinion that there is a paradigm shift occurring in the tourism industry the world over. The 'golden age' of mass tourism, of unlimited growth and disregard for the environment, of standardised, rigidly packaged products and services, is over. A new tourism is emerging: sustainable, environmentally and socially responsible, and characterised by flexibility and choice. A new type of tourist is driving it: more educated, experienced, independent, conservation-minded, respectful of cultures, and insistent on value for money.

Knowledgeable, trained managers, guides and other role-players may contribute an integral part to an ecotourism experience. By having an understanding about the needs themselves, they are empowered to provide in those needs. Because they have an understanding and have developed a consciousness for nature, educating these role-players has the additional benefit of reducing the negative impacts of tourism on the area as a whole. In the process the environmental awareness of the local community is increased, the tourist is provided with environmental education and conservation principles, and finally employment to the local people is provided because they are the 'informed' people of the area.

An example of an ecotourism operation where the whole experience is interpretive, educational and highly spiritual is the wilderness trails in the Kruger National Park. Visitors come here for the experience to be close to nature to reconnect. They have a strong interest in learning and experiencing this 'new' environment (Krippendorf, 1986:131-135). Close encounters with animals, extraordinary scenes and quiet sunsets, all teachable moments, ensure that the entire experience is stimulating and absorbing, but also meaningful for the visitor (Fig. 6.2).



Figure 6.2: Close encounters with animals on a wilderness trail ensure a meaningful experience for the visitor.

By taking them on foot into the wilderness, providing ecotourists with an opportunity to learn more about nature and their role in it, guides should be highly qualified in their own experience and understanding of nature and their own role in it.

A wilderness guide testifies to this understanding of his own experience by sharing his feelings as follows:

> Just before first light - the time of unanswered hyena whoops - just before the francolins wake, my day begins. A waking realisation that my actions today will increase my opportunity tomorrow, and a simple understanding that I, like all the other inhabitants of the African bush, will go about my business with an innate evolutionary cause - survival!
>
> My actions in daily routine are written in the air and in the sand. My smells, footprints and noises tell stories of my behaviour, my development and my function within this place of greatness, of great sadness and joy, of fear and compassion. This place is called home, and within it, my life.
>
> Observation is unequivocally the first rule of interpretation, and then like the first light of dawn, a clear picture begins to brighten around us. With it comes the opportunity to interact and communicate, to re-establish the instinctive mechanics of our behaviour, our physical and emotional security, ...status, our position within our environment, our wants, our needs, and more importantly our past lessons - just like all the other animals in the bush.
>
> The first things we do when we get up are self-assessments. We yawn, rub our eyes, shout 'good morning' like the francolin and some remain silent like the leopard. After that we have our

individual routines, and then some sort of social bonding or territorial display occurs - just like all the other animals in the bush.

On trails, coffee in the morning can be a fascinating observation. ...re-establishment that goes on by way of questions like 'Good morning, how are you?', 'Did you sleep well'... The subsequent answers to these questions, the induced conversation, the discussions we have about the new day... all make up a behaviour amongst us that will provide a basis for how we communicate and interact with each other during the day... how we will see and hear and interpret our encounters with the other animals around us will tell a lot about our individual boundaries and personal needs within this interaction - just like all the other animals in the bush.

External or peripheral danger, a sense of feeling of instinctive trust or mistrust and our ability to respond to stimuli that we do not necessarily perceive, are all sensations and intuitions that have evolved with us for millions of years. These feelings are all processed irrationally until they are coupled with our ability to recognise signs, to process information from these signs. When we are truly watching, listening and feeling where we are in any particular situation, we are able to interpret, anticipate and predict a startling amount more than we thought was possible.

All this is only possible with continual practice, re-affirmation and acquired knowledge through supported reading and physical observation. Relying on one's intuition without this knowledge and experience can land you in an uncomfortable situation. 'I sense the presence of a lion!' Without a reasonable and fundamental understanding of why you uttered the remark, it may not have the desired effect.

> I continue to sit quietly under the stars with my guests in order to 'see' what we communicate and what we can recognise, what stimuli we can process while life 'talks' to us (Heron, 2003:21-22).

7.3 Education for ecotourism guides

The role of the ecotourism (nature) guide in assisting the visitor in meaningful nature experiences has not been given the attention it needs. Comparing syllabi of training programmes for nature guides reveals that a great deal of knowledge about the physical environment is required to achieve a qualification in guiding. This knowledge is important for a guide to help creating a successful physical experience for the visitor. However, knowledge about the physical aspects is not enough. What is needed is an interest and knowledge in reconnecting people with the nonhuman values in nature. An awareness of the intrinsic value of each life form should be cultivated. To be able to direct tourists towards such awareness, guides should start to re-evaluate their own role in the web of life. The more conscious they become of being part of nature, the more responsible they will feel for the natural environment and for guiding their tourists to feel the same.

National parks and nature reserves could be more than a beautiful leisure environment to their visitors. Being in these parks can change the attitudes towards nature, towards fellow human beings and towards life itself. Protected areas are invaluable in providing space and protection for species, for the livelihoods of local communities and for the future of humankind. In addition, these protected areas can be a powerful stimulating force for the necessary change in consciousness of people.

To enhance the unique fulfilling experience, guides should help tourists to have these experiences on an emotional and spiritual level. It is only by changing our way of thinking that we will change the way we treat ourselves and other creatures. The more mindfully we live, the more we get to know ourselves, the more we can be in contact with our surroundings and see each life form in its unique essence - the reconnecting experience. The interaction between human

beings and nature is always there, but people are not always sensitive to it. However, a person can be open, aware and mindful, becoming multi-sensory. A multi-sensory person can feel the oneness with other beings and will take his/her own responsibility towards others.

Learning how to listen, to see, to hear and to feel and to be very silent and emotionally open to receive whatever nature has to offer, becomes an enriching spiritual experience. Then names, specifics and academic knowledge of plants and animals become less important. The national parks and reserves can offer this opportunity to recover harmony within the tourists themselves while being in nature. Even a glimpse of our own true nature can restore us. In the same way: a glimpse of nature itself can restore us.

All around Southern Africa there are local guides who have the opportunity to take tourists into natural environments in such a way that they can experience magic moments; moments they will never forget and which can in effect change their attitude towards life. However, only a very few guides know how to facilitate such magic moments. Training institutions and employers of guides should therefore become aware of including a policy to train all guides to follow an approach of sensitivity to a nature experience in the natural environment.

Educating the guide should involve a programme that endeavours to change the consciousness from that of spectator to participant. It should reinforce the inner knowledge and experience of nature. Guides themselves should actively participate in a change of perception towards all life forms by connecting with the deeply spiritual value of nature. This will offer the opportunity to enhance and re-evaluate humanity's role on earth and the chance to heal our broken relationship with the natural world and other human beings.

Guides should play a facilitator's role in this reconnecting experience. They should work in various ways and not necessarily according to a specific pattern. They should be trained to guide their tourists to become mindful, i.e. to become aware of their surroundings by using their senses. Guides should be skilful listeners. They

should be able to listen to the stories of tourists, but they should also be able to ask the appropriate questions to stimulate tourists to become involve in a nature experience. Training programmes need to enable guides to understand the meaning that ecological events or nature experiences hold.

Guides need to help individuals to 'forget' about old ways of doing or seeing things in nature and to focus on a 'new' awareness and behaviour. This involves the redefining of nature experiences and the meaning of these experiences. It can be done by means of metaphors, language and rituals. For example asking people to identify with something in nature, imagine how this creature lives, breathes, eats, moves, etc., or letting them participate in a ritual, e.g. taking off their watches while being on a hiking trip, total quietness during sunsets or personal feedbacks of feelings around the campfire.

It is true that ecotourists help with the economy of the local community, they do assist in conservation of land, but they also need to sit next to a tree, to walk up the mountain, smell a flower, watch a bird, and open up to whom they are. They need to listen, to learn from what they see and feel, to reconnect. Guides are in the position to help restore deeper relationships with nature, and working from their hearts they will take people along.

8. IMPORTANCE OF ECOTOURISM AS A MEANS TO RECONNECT

Ecotourism can only be sustainable if the following is understood: People visit nature to relax, to feel one with nature, to experience peacefulness, solitude and silence, to get away from other people, to feel free, to become aware of the beauty of nature, to be oneself. These are some of the standard answers to the question, 'Why do you visit natural places?' Giannecchini (1993:430) confirms this by saying that many people seek to enhance their experiences through nature. This deeper value or meaning of nature experiences enables human beings to realise their own qualities (also refer to Heron's story in paragraph 7). Individuals do benefit, physically and spiritually, from visiting nature, they reconnect [Chapter 5].

Scientifically verifiable natural features stimulate many of the experiences people have in natural surroundings. If this is not true, then people may have these experiences as readily in a built-up area or shopping mall as in nature (Johnson, 2001:2), especially as far the spiritual experience is concerned. But the human mind contributes essential components to the individual's experience in nature. We do, however, also need sensitivity to become aware of these experiences. Therefore, although most people who visit nature do have these spiritual experiences, they will not be aware of the meaning thereof because they lack the necessary sensitivity.

Thus, spiritual experiences require both an inner and an outer dimension. Chapter 5 explains that people are consciously aware of visiting nature for the 'obvious' reasons, that is, to relax, to do game viewing, bird watching, fishing, etc. However, unconsciously they experience the intrinsic qualities of nature. This is the spiritual meaning - the real reason why people return to natural places over and over again - and the reason for a growing ecotourism industry.

People visit natural environments for the 'good things that can happen to them'. Based on data collected by a survey completed by consulting firms of North American travel consumers, The International Ecotourism Society (TIES, 2000) has constructed an ecotourist market profile, consisting of, amongst others, the following:

- 82% are college graduates
- 60% state they prefer to travel as a couple, 15% prefer to travel with their families and 13% prefer travelling alone
- Top three important elements of a trip: (1) wilderness setting, (2) wildlife viewing, (3) hiking/trekking
- Top motivations for taking the next trip: (1) enjoyment of nature/scenery, (2) new experiences/places

Results from similar surveys undertaken by students who participated in this study are presented in Table 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4.

Table 6.2: Preferred travel companions of student study participants who travel to natural environments.

Companion preference	N = 79	%
With friends	37	47
With my partner (as a couple)	22	28
With family	14	18
As part of a tour group	4	5
Alone	2	2

Table 6.3: Favourite outdoor activities of student study participants who visit natural environments.

Activity	N = 140	%
Hiking	44	31
*Action activities	42	30
Bush and game drives (4 x 4)	16	11
Meditation, be quiet	13	9
Horse riding	10	7
Bird watching	5	4
Fishing	5	4
Others	5	4

* Including scuba diving, mountain biking, hunting activities

Table 6.4: Most important reasons why certain destinations are preferred for visits, as singled out by study participants.

Reason	N = 85	%
The 'wildness' and beauty of the area	36	43
I feel at home, relaxed, calm, can be myself, alone	21	25
Variety to see and do	14	16
Socialise, having fun and enjoyment	14	16

In comparison with the results of TIES (2000), students who participated in this study prefer to travel with friends (47%) or with their partners (28%), and only 2% indicated that they prefer to travel alone (Table 6.2). It corresponds with the findings of TIES (2000) in as far as the majority of participants prefer to travel with company. Most participants in this study also prefer to be active in some or other way while being in a natural environment. Hiking and action activities such as scuba diving, snorkelling, hunting, mountain biking and mountain climbing are highlighted as important elements of a visit to nature (Table 6.3). Almost 70% of the study participants chose these settings because of the scenic beauty and unspoilt environments and the comfort they experience within themselves while in these areas (Table 6.4). These findings also correspond with those of TIES (2000) with regards to important elements of a trip which motivate people to take a next trip to a natural environment.

A possible reason for the results of TIES and those recorded in Table 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4, is the need of human beings to escape from their daily routine. Nearly 80% of the world's population is now urban (Myles, 2001). Therefore, it makes sense that urban dwellers need wildlife experiences for a change in daily routine. Human beings generally need spells of solitude, peace and tranquillity, and an escape from heavily industrialised overcrowded urban environments, in order to relax and recover from the stress of the hurried way of life in the cities [Chapter 5 and 7].

Obviously, ecotourism is important for the economic benefit of local communities. However, what about the survival of humankind? If there are no natural or wild places left, what will motivate and inspire individuals? In unspoilt nature we can participate in something that is, if not truly eternal, at least enduring in comparison to human life. This is a comfort in the face of the mortality of humankind and the impermanence of all we care about. It is not the abstract idea of endurance that we encounter in nature, but the experience of endurance that is important. Without the idea, our experience would be 'blind', as the philosopher Immanuel Kant noted in 1929 (in Johnson, 2001): 'Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concept are blind.'

In nature we encounter the divine, or at least its analogue, because we come face to face with ancient things and timeless cycles. Looking upwards to stars every night reminds us of their age and of the immense mystery that enfolds our lives. To drive through the Richtersveld (Fig. 6.3) or climb down the Fish River Canyon (Fig. 6.4) is to feel ourselves descending into a timeless realm. We may learn of these things through textbooks, videos and television. When we face them in nature, it is this direct contact that makes an experience in nature a spiritual one.

When we visit nature (become ecotourists), we experience an image or a sense of the divine that speaks to our deep-seated spirituality. The ancient rocks and landscapes of places like the Richtersveld and Namibia, the continuous flow of rivers and the activities of the ocean and the change of seasons reminds us of the timeless rhythms of life and that we are part of something everlasting.

The vast size and awesome power of places like the Richtersveld, Namibia and the Kalahari, for example, are a source of comfort for us. While being in these places as ecotourists we become humble. By comparison with this wildness and vastness, our personal troubles and even the troubling doings of the human race, seem petty enough to be forgotten. In other words, nature encourages the self-forgetting that is inscribed in every spiritual tradition (Johnson, 2001:13). Nature pulls us away from our own small troubles toward identification with a greater whole. This movement is strengthened by physical removal from our daily scenes, routine environments and causes of our normal concerns. This identification with our natural environment is further enhanced by the demand that we focus our attention on a few, deeply felt and immediate concerns, such as conquering a difficult descend on a hiking route. In addition, the beauty of nature has a calming effect on us and pulls us outward - away from the self and into our surroundings (Johnson, 2001:14).

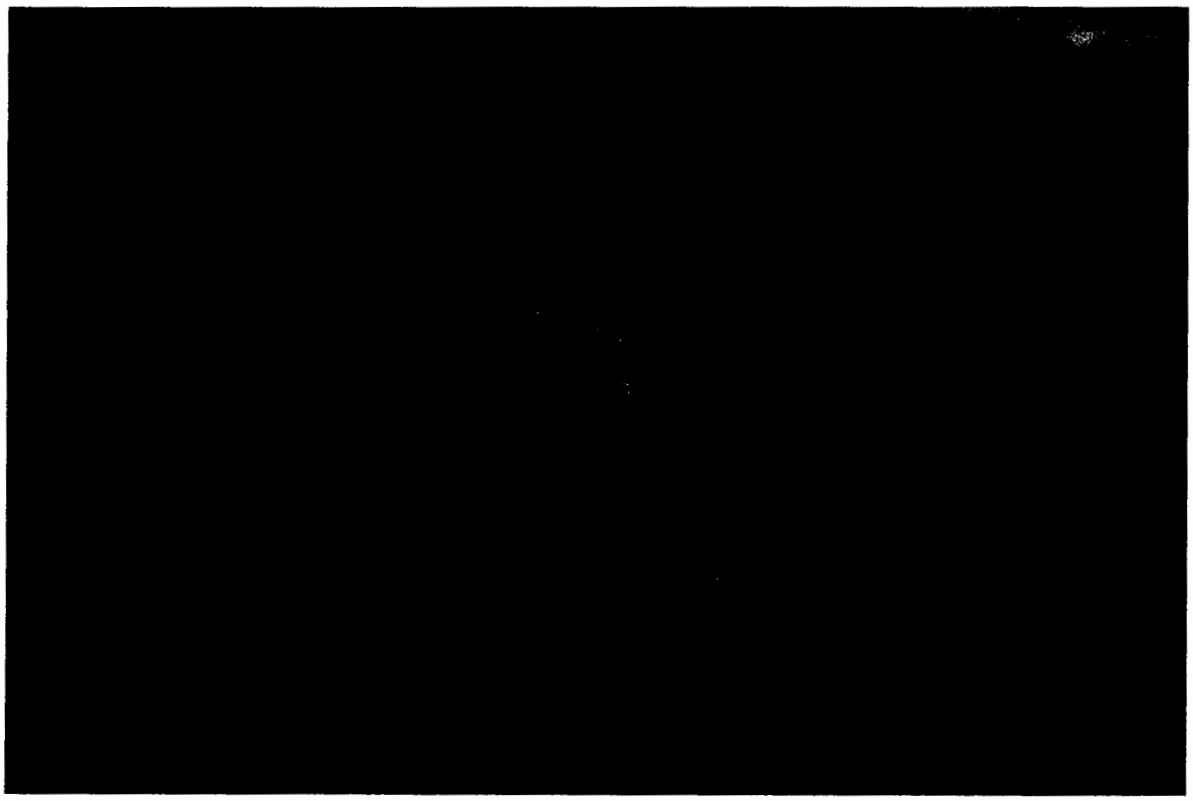


Figure 6.3: Driving through the Richtersveld reminds one of timeless cycles and contributes to the spiritual dimension of a nature experience.



Figure 6.4: Facing the descents into the Fish River Canyon is to feel oneself descending into time.

Nature is non-judgemental. To be insignificant in a human crowd is painful. It reminds us that we are not as good or successful as others are. To be insignificant in nature, by contrast, can be comforting, for nature diminishes not only ourselves, but also the status and fortune we keep in routine life. It provides a perspective from which we can forget the concerns accompanying these things and be content with what makes us truly alive. In nature these joys are abundant despite the simplicity (Fig. 6.5) and sometimes even the danger that the natural environment can hold. To be able to experience these humbling joys, one must have the awareness [Chapter 5].

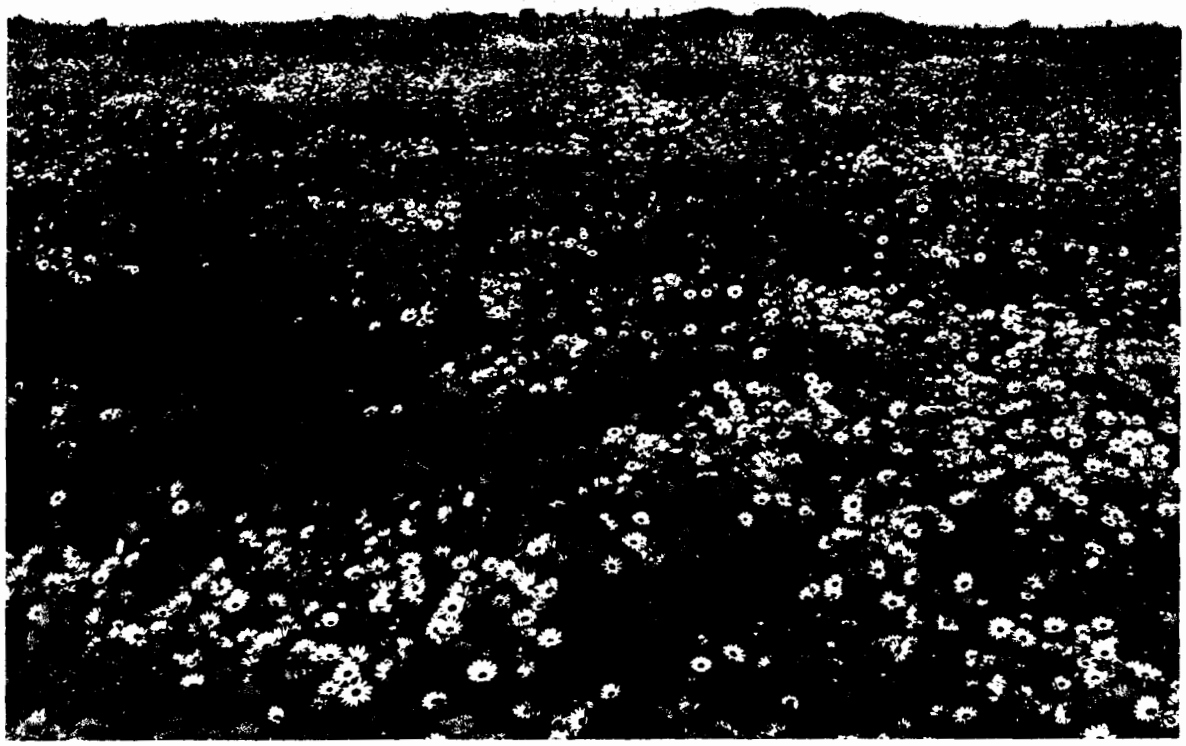


Figure 6.5: When one has awareness, simplicity in nature becomes a joyful experience.

As McKibben (1990:180) has suggested, however, the natural landscapes that provide our deeply felt experiences are endangered, and along with them the sense of nature as a scene of awesome forces and timeless cycles, a place untouched by human drama.

9. CONCLUSION

It should be realised that the spiritual experience and the reconnection that human beings value in nature is available to a greater extent when nature is in a more or less undeveloped condition or if the area is managed in such a manner that the visitor still perceives it as such. The condition of the place is therefore one of the most important factors that determines the sustainability of any ecotourism venture. In South Africa the natural areas where conditions contribute to 'good' nature experiences are rapidly declining: only 3% of South Africa is under official protection by legislation, while a further 14% is under 'protection' in the hands of private owners in the form of game ranches (De Crom & Brits, 2003).

This means that there are very few remote and undeveloped natural areas left in South Africa. It is indeed rather a case of endangered *spaces* than endangered *species*. The remainder of these areas should therefore be developed or utilised with extreme caution to ensure this generation will not be the last to benefit from the rewards the ecotourism industry has to offer.

Crucial to the premise that the ecotourism destination areas of South Africa remain 'unspoilt' is an understanding of what people want and why they visit certain areas. It is not because of air-conditioned five-star chalets, haute cuisine and super luxury; it is because of the *intrinsic qualities of nature*. This simple fact is either ignored or is unknown to so many ecotourism destination developers that the end result is overdeveloped areas that permanently scar the landscape. This leads to a loss of interest in the area and ultimately a loss of income and desperately needed jobs for the local community.

When the condition of a place is discussed, it is often referred to as 'untouched', meaning that the presence of man is negligible. This should however, rather read as 'unspoilt', since the proper development and management of facilities and infrastructure can be done without the presence of man being evident. If development is planned properly and in conjunction with professionals in all fields, development will not impinge on the naturalness of the area.

By doing peripheral development, the core of most areas can be left untouched and the zonation of this area can ensure different experiences, catering for people with different levels of awareness (De Crom & Brits, 2003). The technology to achieve this is readily available, yet is seemingly seldom applied. The major problem is still ignorance and the problem of unsustainable economic goals, where short-term financial goals govern what development takes place and long-term effects are ignored.

What will happen to this sense of wild nature as a noticeable equivalent of the divine as global climate upheavals and other environmental threats change the face of nature, still remains an open question. Whether we will be able to maintain positive feelings about nature and whether nature will have the same positive effects on human well-being if we have to witness the extinction not only of selected species (as we already do), but also of whole ecosystems, is doubted. Nature will not seem divine to anyone when the survival of species or ecosystems depends on the absence of human beings, when the entire world is but a greatly impoverished park. Nature cannot exist as a refuge from humankind's disappointing behaviours and failings when we know that that refuge is a victim of our failings.

This dilemma has in recent years led to the concept of 'environmental intelligence'. As Clinebell (1996:207) expresses it:

> Many *earth-literate* people... feel considerable anticipatory grief about expected future losses in nature. Anticipatory grief is especially prevalent among children and adolescents as they become aware of the increasingly threatened future of the natural world in which they will live.

The survival of the planet - and of humankind - may depend on raising global awareness of the importance of nature to human experience by encouraging the development of this kind of intelligence among our fellow human beings. This can

be enhanced by educating the tourist, conservation practitioners and nature guides. Education should include an element of spiritual awareness.

In an age where the media dominates and shapes our view of the world, it is imperative that we utilise ecotourism as a means of communicating with one another. Through encounters with people we meet on travels, a universal theme may be discovered. We become acutely aware that, no matter where we live, we all belong to the whole, confronting similar situations, totally dependent on nature for survival.

South Africa has some of the world's most prime natural environments. With the proper use of ecotourism practices and the understanding of ecotourism as a product of the human need to reconnect with nature, a more effective appreciating of these places can be accomplished.

Chapter 7 will look into the wildlife experiences of ecotourists in three selected categories of natural environments in South Africa. A comparison will be drawn between developed, less developed and undeveloped areas.

CHAPTER 7

NATURE EXPERIENCES IN SELECTED NATURAL AREAS

I became more and more aware of the poignant difference between the world of 'doing', characteristic of people in our Western society, and that other world of 'being', in which nature lives (Van Lippe-Biesterfeld, 1997:57).

1. INTRODUCTION

Historical records as well as religious and philosophical literature relevant to nature experiences, reveal that human beings have been deliberately seeking nature experiences long before the postmodern, technological era and, what is called by Taylor (1999), our collective psychological and ecological crises. The most outstanding example in Western culture is Jesus fasting alone in the 'wilderness' (The Thompson Chain-reference Bible, 1983, Gospel of St. Matthew 4:987). Mohammed, Moses, Buddha, and countless other shamans and figures from various religions, cultures and philosophical doctrines have intentionally sought experiences in nature.

Results from a number of studies indicated that people who visit natural environments share certain experiences and effects that such areas have on them. Some experiences result in changes in awareness [Chapter 5, par. 5]. These experiences are then highly valued by those individuals having them (Kaplan & Talbot, 1983:163-204; Scherl, 1989:123-135, 1990:11-26).

People have many reasons for visiting nature [Chapter 6]. One of these is to re-connect with nature and with themselves [Chapter 5, par. 5]. However, this is a

very simplified explanation of what people experience individually while being in nature. Some value the challenges nature offers them as a significant experience. The decisions individuals have to take in a natural environment are different from those faced in everyday circumstances. Some regard this as an important feature of a nature experience.

Closeness to nature and stories told because of nature also describe nature experiences amongst individuals. The effect and meaning of such experiences are as many as there are people who seek them. Although there are common factors to these experiences, each individual attaches personal meanings and values to the experience. The questions that arise are 'What actually does happen to individuals while in nature that makes them value the experience?' Does the setting itself contribute to how the experience is valued?' 'What differentiates an authentic nature experience from other uses of the natural environment?'

The following scenario sets the background to this chapter.

In the early 1900s a dam was constructed to provide in future needs of a nearby city. The resulting 'lake' soon became an attraction for a variety of recreational activities. For the next several decades the road system used for building the dam was expanded, facilitating access to recreational opportunities. Evidence of use became obvious as people camped and played along the shore and several streams that emptied into the dam. The primitive conditions that once characterised the area around the dam were no longer present, but the people who came looking for semi-primitive types of recreation were apparently happy with what they found.

A few years later use at the dam had increased markedly and users had established several camping areas. Fire pits were plentiful in favoured spots, trails led to prime fishing areas, and vegetation had been trampled or removed in frequently used areas. In response, the government body responsible for managing the area, developed several sites that had been heavily used. Roads were improved and rustic tables and pit toilets were erected. Fire prevention and directional signs and a list of rules and regulations regarding the use of the area were posted. The area,

now much more developed, appealed to people looking for some of the conveniences of modern living. Most were apparently happy with what they found.

In response to the rapidly growing use and increasing impact on resources the governmental body further modified the area. Paved roads were built in the campgrounds, a new camping area was constructed and parking barriers were added to prevent the increasing number of cars driving off the established roads. Soon the recreation complex included separate camping sites with ablution and cooking facilities, and a 2 km long hiking trail indicated by markers every few meters. Most resemblance with the primitive area had disappeared by this time. Campers had the convenience of paved roads, modern toilets and kitchens and running water. People seeking modern kinds of camping opportunities came in ever-increasing numbers and were apparently happy with what they found.

As use increased the government body privatised the area and further development took place. More flush toilets, permanent fireplaces, and concrete tables were built. The access road was widened and paved. A swimming pool and play area for children were built. The dam area represented a highly developed, intensively used recreation complex readily accessible to large numbers of people. On a typical summer weekend, hundreds of people visit the area and engage in a variety of pastimes.

The level of recreational activities in the dam area has evolved for almost a century from a primitive environment to a highly developed modern setting for recreation. Several questions can be asked about this process of change: What opportunities for recreation was the dam area best suited to provide? What effects have past management decisions had on opportunities for recreation in the area? Have the changes in the natural environment affected the kinds of experiences the area provides?

Many examples throughout South Africa follow this pattern of development (for example rest camps in the Kruger National Park, provincial reserves such as Pilanesberg, and private parks and game lodges such as Mabula Game Lodge). This

chapter will explore the last question asked as well as the significance and value of nature experiences in different natural settings. Three main categories of natural environments are compared, namely developed, less developed and undeveloped environments. Existing phases of nature experiences are looked into and new phases are identified, incorporating the values of natural environments. The impacts of these phases on the total experience are interpreted.

2. THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AS A RESOURCE

The significant growth in tourism and related developments over the last few decades has led to increasing concerns regarding the impacts of tourism upon the environments of what may be termed 'ecotourism destination areas'. It is known that different types of tourists impose different types of impacts and make different demands upon resources of an area (Butler, 1991:201). Holder (1987:7) states that the environment is tourism's resource. Virtually every survey of reasons why tourists visit destination areas includes sightseeing, natural heritage, cultural heritage and spiritual fulfilment of some kind (see for example Hall, 2001:20-24; Lew, 1987:553-575). Damage to, or destruction of these resources, threatens the economical viability of tourism to the specific destination, including the tourists themselves.

All too often tourists are blamed for damaging the natural environment, which in many cases is true. However, developers should consider the impact they have by continuously supplying in the demand of ever-increasing tourist numbers. Butler (1991:201-209) promotes the idea of a symbiotic development in which the full range of needs as required by tourists must be considered. In other words, development should not only include the physical needs, but should also take the spiritual needs of the visitor into account. When this principle is applied, both developers and tourists will benefit. If this is not allowed for, there will be little chance of achieving truly symbiotic development in the general meaning of the term. All that will be achieved will at most be a limited success and it will be a success only to a very limited and specific section of the population. In such a case it is unlikely to be a success of any lasting significance.

There are many examples of national parks, nature reserves and other destinations established and developed for the perceived benefits they would receive through their expected encouragement of tourism. All too often, however, the success of the establishment and development of tourism has resulted in over-use and unsuitable use of the resources. In such cases, from being the reason and justification for the establishment of the place, tourism is now identified as the reason for its ruination (Mathieson & Wall, 1982).

As suggested by Butler (1991), Butler (1980) and Plog (1973) tourism is essentially cyclical (Fig. 7.1) and unless specific steps are taken, tourist destination areas and resources will inevitably become overused, unattractive, and eventually experience declining use. The tourist cycle in Figure 7.1 is based on animal populations which experience growth in size when first introduced into an area.

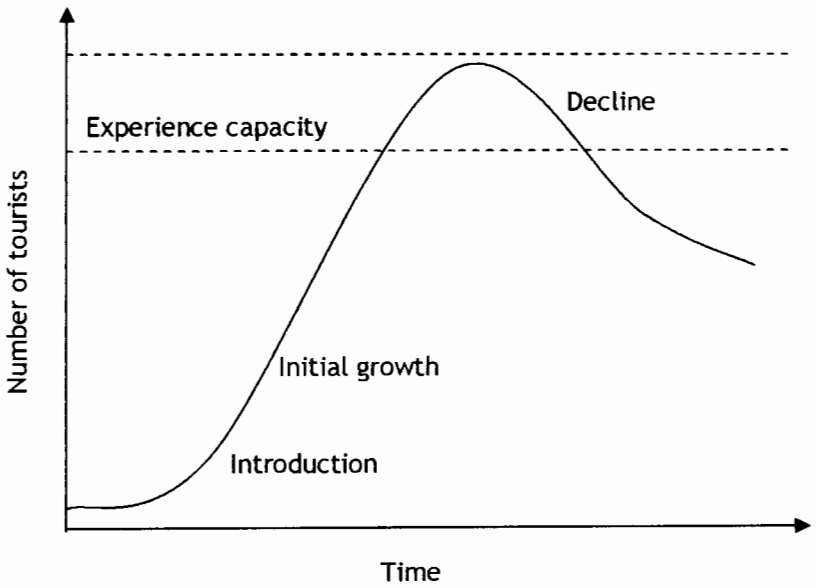


Figure 7.1: The tourist cycle in tourism destinations.
(adapted from Butler, 1980)

The initial growth is often of rapid proportions until the population exceeds the capacity of the environment that supports it (carrying capacity). This results in a crash when the environment cannot sustain the numbers involved. In ecotourism it is in most cases the experience (enjoyment, pleasure, memories, etc.) that is

purchased (Butler, 1991:203). The destination can be expected to increase in popularity during the first stages of introduction and low-scale development. When the 'experience' capacity is reached due to over-development, the tourism population for that specific destination will decline unless remedial action is taken.

3. STUDY AREAS

3.1 Description

For the purpose of this study, natural environments that are frequently visited by people for leisure purposes are divided into three categories. The environments are classified according to the extent to which each one is developed. The criterion for the classification is a subjective grouping of the destinations mentioned by study participants and visited by the researcher. The following categories are identified:

3.1.1 Developed destinations

This category includes natural environments where facilities and infrastructures are highly developed. For example, accommodation facilities with television, a road network, entertainment facilities, restaurants and shops. Usually a variety of accommodation options is available ranging from self-catering, camping to equipped and fully catered-for-chalets. These destinations are readily accessible with any kind of vehicle, resulting in high numbers of people visiting them, primarily during weekends, long weekends and holiday seasons. The following destinations are classified as 'developed':

- Most of South Africa's national parks, e.g. Kruger National Park, Augrabies Falls National Park, Tsitsikamma National Park, Wilderness National Park, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Golden Gate Highlands National Park, etc.
- Parks in neighbouring countries, e.g. Etosha (Namibia)
- Provincial and private game and nature reserves, e.g. Pilanesberg, Umfolozi-Hluhluwe, Londolozi, etc.

- Urban nature reserves, e.g. Rietvlei, Suikerbosrand, etc.
- Holiday resorts, e.g. Forever Resorts Aventura, Klein-Kariba, etc.
- Coastal resorts, e.g. Banana Beach, Stilbaai, Knysna, Hermanus, etc.

3.1.2 Less developed destinations

Natural environments which are moderately developed with regards to facilities and infrastructure are classified as less developed destinations. Accommodation consists of rustic chalets offering basic amenities such as ablution facilities, which are most of the times communal. No modern facilities are available and electricity might be available to a certain extent. No accommodation options are available, except for in certain cases a choice between camping or rustic huts. Everything is self-catering. These destinations are most of the time accessible with any type of vehicle although access roads are mostly untarred. Although these destinations are often fully booked, encounters with other people are limited due to the restriction on visitor numbers. Despite the moderate development of these areas, a wilderness atmosphere is still experienced to a greater or lesser extent. The following destinations mentioned in this study, are classified as 'less developed':

- Some private and provincial nature reserves, e.g. Thaba Moriri (in the Waterberg mountains near Bela-Bela), Borakalalo (Northwest Parks Board), St Lucia camp site, Lapalala Wilderness, etc.
- Campsites in some national parks and nature reserves, e.g. Marakele National Park, Ndumo Game Reserve, Mkuzi Game Reserve, etc.
- Specific areas at destinations such as the Drakensberg, Cedarberg, and places in neighbouring countries, e.g. Sossusvlei (Namibia), Okavango Delta and privately owned nature resorts in Zambia.
- Most hiking routes.

3.1.3 Undeveloped destinations

Undeveloped destinations as used in this context may also be regarded what authors call 'wilderness areas' (Bainbridge, 2001:30-34; Dawson, 2002:3-8; Schuster

& Hammitt, 2001:26-29). The Richtersveld in the far north-western section of the Northern Cape Province (South Africa) is chosen as the destination where development is still minimal and where people can still experience unspoilt nature without excessive human interference. Until recently (2004) there was no development in the Richtersveld National Park camping areas with regards to buildings, accommodation facilities or well-maintained road structures. Nothing is provided and visitors to this destination must be self-sufficient in all respects. The area is accessible only to 4 x 4 vehicles and in certain areas to vehicles with a high ground clearance. Due to the relatively inaccessibility and remoteness of the area, other people are seldom encountered. Other places included in this category are selected areas in Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique and the Kalahari.

3.2 Rationale for the selection of destination categories

Southern Africa boasts some of the world's most sought after natural environments. A number of South Africa's tourist destinations received top honours in this year's US Travel and Leisure magazine's (2004) prestigious 'The World's Best' awards. Two private game reserves in Mpumalanga achieved top honours. Natural environments such as Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve in the Cedarberg are being voted amongst the top 25 eco-lodges in the world (South Africa Info, 2003).

Not only is South Africa a preferred destination for foreign tourists, but also local citizens use natural environments for leisure and recreation to a great extent. Mabunda (2004) indicated that more than 60% of tourists visiting the Kruger National Park during December (the least popular of visiting times to the Kruger Park for local citizens) are South Africans. Therefore, it is important to explore the value and meaning of natural environments to people who visit them and to look at a more effective appreciation of these places.

Natural areas, especially those that are unspoilt by human interference such as the Richtersveld, are complex, diverse environments. These areas provide visitors with a wide variety of stimulating, challenging and calming opportunities. The Richtersveld and similar destinations were chosen for their vastness, remoteness,

high level of biodiversity, lack of big game, and the 'unusual' landscape. The process of getting into such an environment, becoming part of it and then leaving it, would seem to provide ample opportunity for study participants to become aware of various dimensions of their experience. It also takes time and effort to reach the different overnight stops due to the vastness and relatively difficult terrain. Study participants therefore have time for introspection and for sharing emotions and expectations with companions.

The Richtersveld National Park is also one of the last pristine natural areas in South Africa, now threatened by human interference due to mining and tourism development. A more complete understanding of the total experience of a visit to a natural environment such as the Richtersveld, will contribute to better management practices, benefiting all role-players in the long run.

4. VALUES OF A NATURE EXPERIENCE

The writings of wilderness philosophers (Thoreau, 1862; Muir, 1916; Leopold, 1949), South African wilderness experts, (Player, 1999; Patterson, 2001), my own experiences as well as those of the study participants, were used to identify the following eight fundamental value-clusters of a nature experience:

- Solitude
- Oneness
- Primitiveness
- Timelessness
- Humility
- Care
- Self-knowledge
- Spirituality

Solitude, oneness, primitiveness, timelessness, humility and care are the six historically identified values of wilderness experiences (Thoreau, 1854; Muir, 1916;

Olson, 1966; Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1996). Results from this study produced two additional values, namely self-knowledge and spirituality.

Various authors use different terminology to describe the values of a nature experience. Borrie and Roggenbuck (1996) talk about 'facets of a wilderness experience' referring to solitude, oneness, primitiveness, timelessness, humility and care. Shroyer, Watson and Muir (2003:41-45) use the term 'value' to describe outcomes derived from protection of wilderness qualities. For clarification and consistency in this study, the above-mentioned eight values are also referred to as 'value-clusters' as they are composed of various similar contributions from the authors mentioned and the study participants.

5. PHASES OF A NATURE EXPERIENCE

A nature experience is not static. It varies over the course of its duration and has different phases (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Hull, Stewart & Yi, 1992; Lee, Dattilo & Howard, 1994; Stewart, 1998; Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001). It consists of a sequence of interactions between individuals and the natural environment. A person relates with these interactions through personal narratives which take place in chronological order. A nature experience is a lived experience. It is also a sequence of emerging mind states. All of these are subjected to a variety of characteristics and factors of a personal nature, for example, individual emotions (moods), perceptions, attitudes and knowledge.

The very early recreation theorists, Clawson and Knetsch (1966), distinguished five phases in a nature experience:

- Anticipation
- Travel-to
- On-site experience
- Travel-back phase
- Recollection phase

They were of the opinion that a person is either satisfied or dissatisfied with each phase of the experience and that there may be a common pattern between different people who experience nature. They argue that individuals may experience feelings of increasing joy, satisfaction, or benefit from anticipation through travel-to and including the on-site experience. There may be a drop in satisfaction during the travel-back phase, but then considerable recovery occurs during the recollection phase. Literature research indicated that this view has not been tested satisfactorily.

Many factors, both externally (physical) and internally (e.g. emotions), may have some influence on the quality of each of these phases, as well as on the total experience. Stewart (1998:391-400) challenges the 'truisms' of Clawson and Knetsch (1966) and also acknowledges that a variety of other factors may influence the overall experience. Similar to the nature experience as a whole, each one of these factors is dynamic and dependent upon the specific situation, place and context in which it occurs. Therefore individuals cannot frame their nature experiences in a single image. The experience evolves within personal stories and is associated with multiple meanings. As characterised by Mannell (1980:77) and Tinsley and Tinsley (1986:1-45) such experiences involve a collection of positive events that are 'accompanied by satisfying and pleasurable moods, emotions, and feelings' (affective elements).

Results obtained in this study indicate that there are significant varieties in the experiences of individuals during the different phases, as well as in the total nature experience itself. These variations may be attributed to many factors, of which one could be the 'mood state' of the individual (Hammitt, 1980; Hull, 1990a; Hull, 1991; Hull & Michael, 1995; Hull, Michael, Walker, & Roggenbuck, 1996). However, according to this study a common pattern of phases is indeed recognisable.

In addition to the existing five, two additional phases in the total nature experience are identified in this study. A clear 'reluctance-to-leave' phase, prior to the 'travel-back' phase, is identified. It is also found that the 'recollection' phase consists of two separate phases, namely a 'short-term recollection' and

'long-term recollection' phase. The extent to which individuals experience the values of the natural environment, is included in the 'on-site' phase. These seven main phases are briefly explained as follows:

1. Anticipation: This first phase includes any time before the actual departure date. For some study participants the anticipation phase starts several months before leaving for the destination. Others experience this phase only a single day or several hours before leaving, depending on how long in advance the trip was planned and the nature of the trip.

2. Travel-to: The second phase includes the actual time spent travelling to the destination, irrespective of the mode of travel. While on tour, this phase also includes the time while travelling from one stop-over to another.

3. On-site: All experiences while at the destination are included in this phase. While on an extended tour, the experiences at stop-over points are relevant. This phase includes the individual experience of each of the following value-clusters of a nature experience:

    (1) Solitude
    (2) Oneness
    (3) Primitiveness
    (4) Timelessness
    (5) Humility
    (6) Care
    (7) Self-knowledge
    (8) Spirituality

4. Reluctance-to-leave: This can also be regarded as the final part of the on-site phase, since the individual is still at the destination. It is however, clearly distinguishable as a different phase before departure and is therefore considered as such.

5. Travel-back: This is the actual time spent travelling back home from the destination, or from the last stop-over of an extended tour.

6. Short-term recollection: This phase includes the time immediately after arrival at home for up to three days.

7. Long-term recollection: This includes the period from resuming normal routine and may vary in duration for up to several years after the trip.

These phases comprise the individual's personal emotions and experiences. Although literature and other research findings ascribe phases and the values of the experience as mentioned in this chapter to 'wilderness' *per se*, this study finds that these attributes may also be applied, to a greater or lesser degree, to various other natural environments. It is important to realise that the meaning and interpretation thereof depend on the perception and experience of each individual, the context and the natural environment in which the experience takes place.

5.1 Cloud effect of the phases of a nature experience: the cumulus model

Results obtained in this study regarding the different phases of a nature experience are graphically represented as a cumulus cloud formation in Figure 7.2.

The 'cumulus effect' is a concept created to illustrate the format of the sequence of phases typical of a nature experience. At the same time the cloud analogy illustrates the uniqueness of a nature experience.

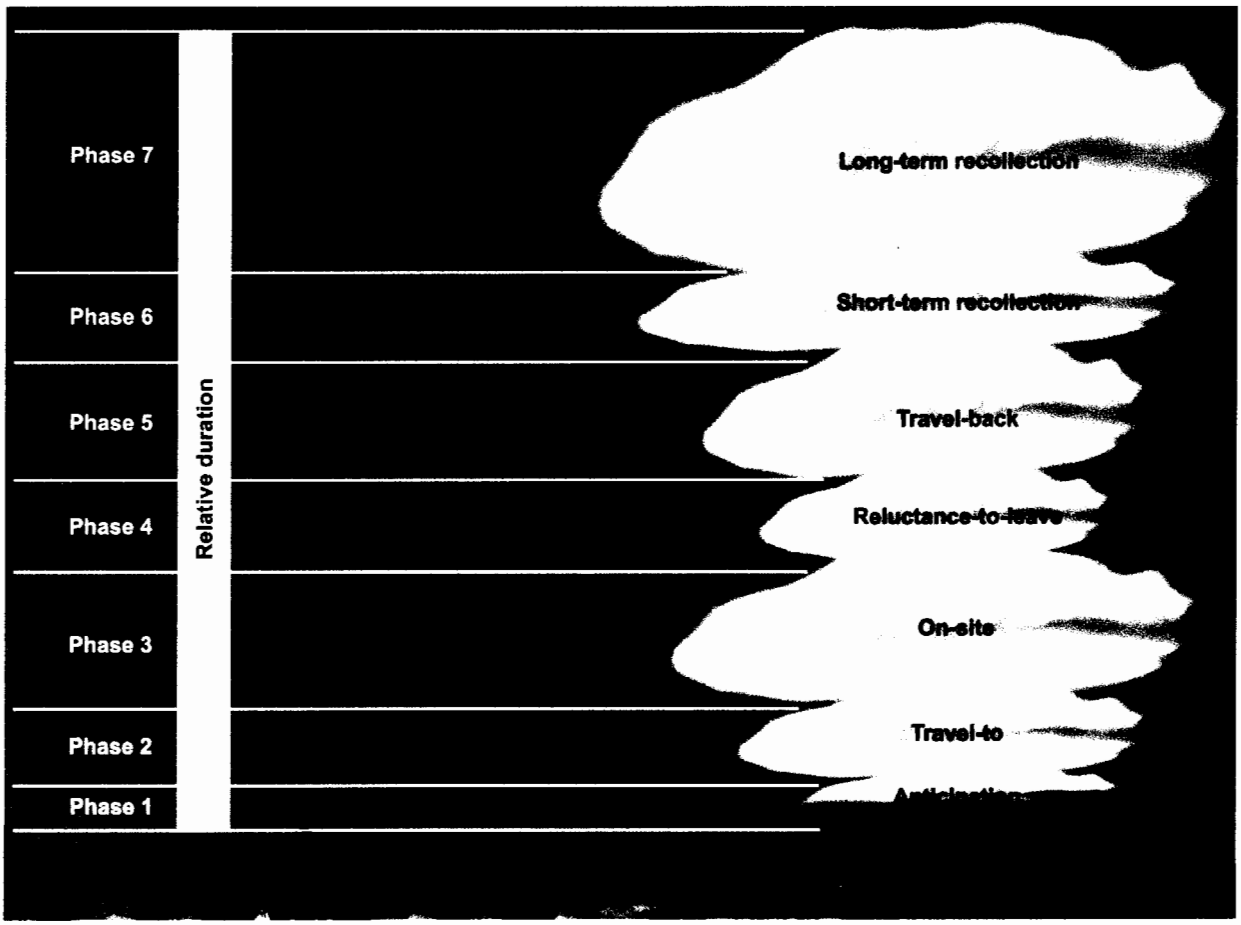


Figure 7.2: The cumulus effect of a nature experience.

The analogy is explained as follows:

- Cumulus is the Latin word for heap or pile (accumulation). The cumulus cloud is shaped in phases until it reaches the final 'heap'. Likewise the nature experience starts taking shape (getting meaning) from the anticipation phase and only becomes fully shaped in the final long-term recollection phase (ultimate meaning).
- The shape of each cumulus cloud differs from every other one and is thus unique. So do the various phases that shape the complete cloud. Similarly each nature experience is unique. No two people experience the same natural environment exactly the same. The same goes for each phase of the total experience.
- Although the general structure of cumulus clouds is based on the same principle and pattern, the end products vary in shape and size. This variation is caused by the actions of different forces from both inside and

outside the cloud. The nature experience is based on all the phases comprising the total experience. However, each individual experience is unique due to personal emotions, circumstances, perceptions, the context of the experience, the specific natural environment and other internal and external influences (the forces shaping the cloud).

- The size of cumulus clouds depend on the force of the upward movement of warm air and the amount of moisture in the air. The large cumulus clouds form when the warm air is moving up very fast and can extend upward for hundreds of metres. In the nature experience analogy the warm air represents the intensity of the experience from anticipation to the long-term recollection phase and the moisture is the positive impact of these phases on the total effect. In other words, the more intense the experience and positive impacts from external forces are from the first phase, the more meaningful the total experience will be.
- When cumulus clouds develop thunderheads, thunder storms are the result. Comparing this with a nature experience one can predict that when the final phase of long-term recollection is as powerful as the thunderhead of a cumulus cloud, the effect and meaning of the total experience will be powerful in the life of the individual.

The following (Table 7.1) are comparative characteristics of a general cumulus cloud and a general nature experience:

Table 7.1: Comparative characteristics of a cumulus cloud and a nature experience.

Cumulus	Nature experience
It is a detached cloud	It is a unique experience
It develops vertically upwards	It develops from anticipation onwards
It is domed, piled or cauliflower-shaped	It has unique meanings based on basic principles
It has shaped outlines	It has shaped phases
Its base is nearly horizontal and sometimes relatively dark	The anticipation phase is usually preceded by stress or tiredness
The size depends on the stage of development	The total experience depends on the effects of the phases

5.2 Applying the cumulus model

From the reports of study participants a general cumulus effect comes to light in the majority of nature experiences. In most cases the same pattern evolves:

5.2.1 Anticipation

This phase is generally one of positive feelings with negative aspects only in exceptional cases. Participants look forward to the trip from the planning stage with a rise in excitement shortly before the departure date [PI-1:407(40,41), PI-10:449(28,29), PI-17:480(28,29), PI-18:487(43,45)]. Some experience the greatest excitement when they start with the physical preparation for the trip, e.g. preparing camping equipment, trailers, caravans and off-road vehicles [J-4:636]. Excitement is sometimes suppressed due to work obligations which should still be completed before leaving for the trip [PI-4:424(41), PI-19:494(39)] and concerns about the safety of property or care of pets staying behind [PI-19:494(40)]. These feelings can be associated with the dark base of the cumulus cloud (Fig. 7.2).

No significant differences within this phase could be identified between any of the selected natural environments. It seems that all individuals, to a greater or lesser extent, look forward to a trip to a natural environment, irrespective of the location, reason for or duration of the visit.

5.2.2 Travel-to

This phase produces very similar results to that of the anticipation phase. In most cases study participants report a relaxed atmosphere and informal, uncomplicated conversation with travel companions and a slight increase in excitement [PI-1:407(42), PI-20:500(44,45)]. All initial concerns of uncompleted tasks at work, safety, etc. seem to become of little concern. The internal forces (positive feelings) act on the formation of the cumulus (total experience). Study participants have no significant differences in feelings during this phase irrespective of the destination they are going to visit. Participants who visited the

Richtersveld and Namibia for the first time, however, were more excited than they had been when they were visiting other areas [PI-4:424(42), J-2:612, J-3:623, J-4:636].

5.2.3 On-site

Of all the phases of a nature experience, the on-site phase shows the largest diversity amongst study participants. In general the majority of reports are of a positive nature with some negative aspects mentioned. The latter are mostly due to external factors influencing the experience. Initial reactions of study participants after arrival at a destination in most cases are of a negative nature. Some feel tired after the drive and do not feel like unpacking or pitching tents. These feelings soon subside and are replaced by feelings of enjoyment, relaxation and excitement [PI-2:413(36), PI-6:433(23), PI-18:487(49-51), PI-21:507(41)]. It is during this phase that the values of the natural environment are experienced.

Figure 7.3 to 7.11 summarises the extent to which study participants experienced the eight identified value-clusters in the three different categories of natural environments. Questions asked to evaluate the experience of solitude, oneness, primitiveness, timelessness, humility and care were adapted from those of Borrie and Roggenbuck (2001:202-228). The additional value-clusters of self-knowledge and spirituality were identified from interviews during this study and were later added as set questions to questionnaires. Various feelings were tested for each value-cluster. A total number of 42 study participants completed interviews and questionnaires for both the developed and less developed categories, while 26 study participants were interviewed and completed questionnaires on the Richtersveld.

(1) Solitude

Experiences or feelings of study participants expressed as 'peaceful', 'peace-of-mind', 'only person here', 'being alone', 'silence', 'tranquillity' and 'privacy' were

clustered under solitude. A comparison of these feelings in the three different destination categories is presented in Figure 7.3.

When study participants were asked what contributed to a sense of solitude the majority mentioned the absence of other people. Those who said they had not experienced solitude in general said it was because they encountered many other people. Although a few said that interactions within their group prevented a feeling of solitude [PI-4:424(45)], such factors were less important than intergroup encounters [FN-2:599, PI-22:509(7)].

Several other factors contributed to a sense of solitude, including silence or natural sounds and being away from sounds of civilization or cars [PR-1:564, PR-5:572, PI-16:475(5)]. Others referred to the natural setting, usually trees, open veld or bushveld [PR-4:569, J-1:606], water [J-1:606], night sky [PI-9:446(16,17), PI-22:509(9,10)] or mountains [PR-5:572]. Several referred to experiences, such as feelings of calm or peace (Fig. 7.3). Many say that they seek places where they could be physically apart or separated from other people. Some describe their own actions e.g. sitting quietly in some place, usually with a nice view, with expressions such as 'We were the only people in paradise! What a blessing!' 'Baboons played on the cliffs. The river was beautiful' [C-12:592]. Others simply want to remove themselves from daily routines and do not need to separate physically or socially from the others in their group [J-1:606, PI-3:415(15), PI-4:422(26), PI-6:433(29), PI-8:442(26)].

Rubenstein (1997) argues that it is possible that when we say we need privacy, we mean a place of protected intimacy rather than solitude. Most likely we consider natural areas to be places that enable a 'psychological escape' or an opportunity to think in a less pressured way about the demands of daily life whether we do so in solitude or in the company of others sharing the environment with us [PI-1:400(3)]. Natural environments are unique in the ability to provide solitude and privacy, no matter how we use them. The very idea that one can get away when needed, provides a psychological 'time-out'.

The results obtained follow a definite pattern with regards to the extent to which visitors experience solitude in the three study area categories (Fig. 7.3).

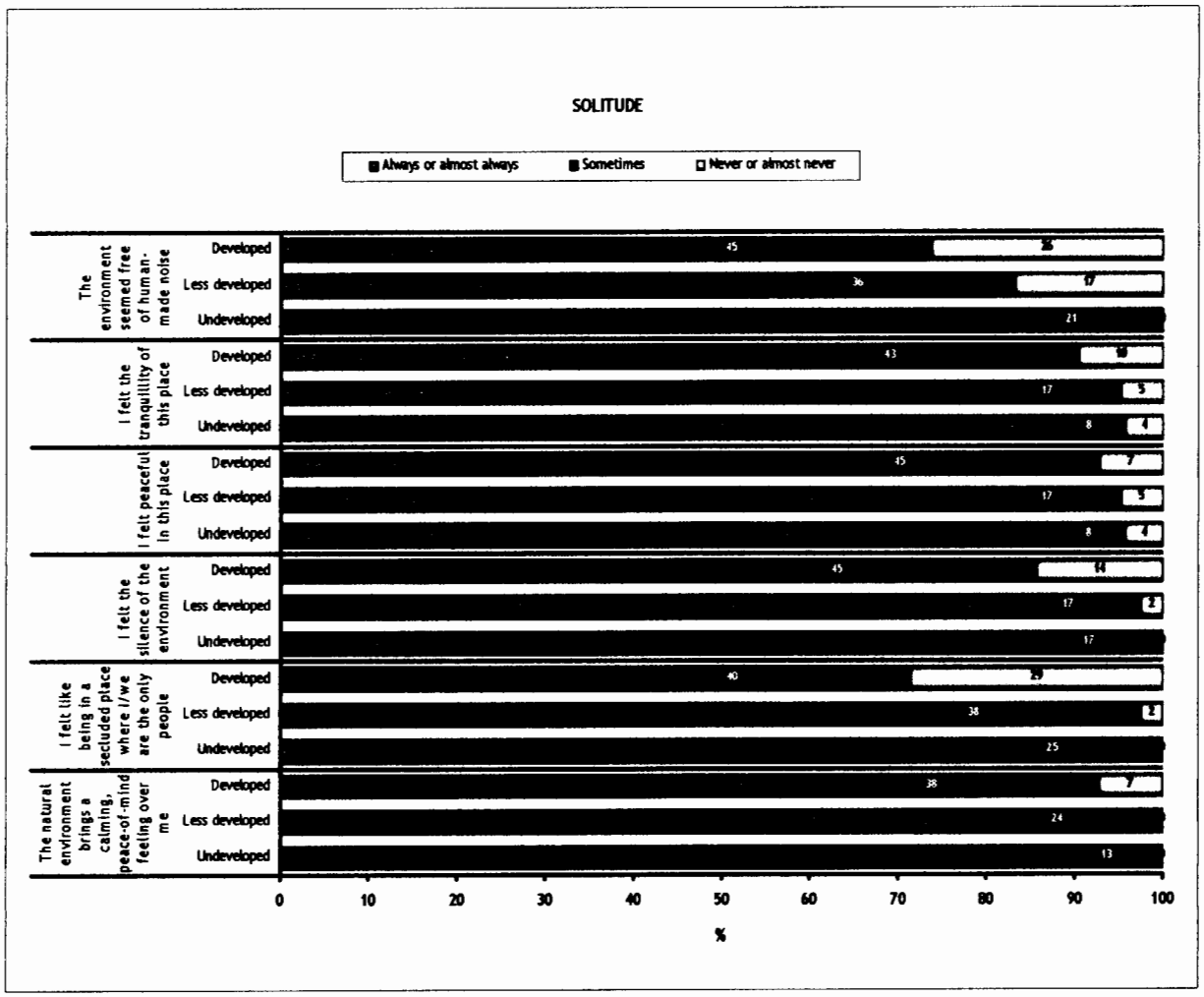


Figure 7.3: The perceived experience of solitude in three different natural environments.

In all cases the developed destinations are rated considerably lower than the less developed and undeveloped destinations. For each feeling the solitude strength increases from developed to undeveloped. Where human aspects are involved, only 29% and 31% of the study participants in the developed category experienced the feeling that the 'the environment seemed free of human-made noise' and that they 'were the only people in the area' respectively.

This is in contrast to the findings for the undeveloped and less developed areas. When considering the full spectrum, the total absence of solitude is almost negligible, with the exception of the above-mentioned two feelings. Categories most prone to human influences (the developed destinations) indicate a more or less equal division in the frequency of experiencing solitude. Overall the category of 'always' is the strongest and in most instances overwhelmingly so (indicated by the blue bar in the figures). The fact that undeveloped destinations stand out as the environment where solitude is experienced most of the time is unmistakable. On average 82% of study participants always experience solitude in the Richtersveld.

The opportunity to experience solitude is an essential component of the idea of being in a natural, relatively undeveloped place. Solitude in nature is much more complex than merely being alone or even being alone with others. Solitude in this regard rather refers to solitude from unknown others, since very few of the study participants prefer to travel alone (Table 6.2). In general, people in undeveloped natural environments prefer to interact and to develop relationships with those in their own group, but not to meet others along the route (Bell et al., 1996:514). For example, study participants mention an encounter of a convoy of 25 vehicles en route through the Richtersveld and that they deliberately avoided the camp site where this tour group was camping [J-4:636]. Although the absolute number of encounters with other people in areas such as the Richtersveld is relatively low due to the specific features of the environment, 'overcrowding' might be a perception of visitors who expect solitude and privacy in such an area.

In an effort to measure privacy and solitude, Hammitt and Madden (1989:296) found that the travelling and peacefulness of the remote environment, and an environment free of human generated noises, to be the two most important privacy items. On the other hand, people who seek solitude are more likely to perceive crowding than those seeking excitement or entertainment in developed destinations (Ditton, Fedler & Graefe, 1982). In addition, more 'experienced' visitors (for example, individuals who are aware of the spiritual dimension of the nature experience) are likely to perceive more crowding (Schreyer & Roggenbuck,

1978:373-394) than those who visit an area for mere 'enjoyment and socialising' (Table 6.4). Some study participants qualified their comments about crowding by contrasting this trip to other times they had visited or other places they had been to [C-9:590].

There are strong individual differences in people's preferences in how much solitude they want in a natural setting (Bell et al., 1996). For example, while Richtersveld campers prefer solitude (Fig. 7.4), families who go camping for a weekend in a nearby resort actually want to meet and interact with people outside their immediate group. Part of what makes the outing attractive to them is the expectation of interacting with 'new' people (Pitt & Zube, 1987:1009).

Solitude in nature is an important aspect of people's enjoyment of the travelling and naturalness of the environment. It is identified as one of the required characteristics of a natural environment (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001). In all wilderness writings it is generally accepted that wilderness (undeveloped natural areas) must provide definite opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. In the past, when wilderness areas provided low-density recreation, meeting these requirements was not difficult. However, as visits and demands for such areas have increased, solitude has become less common and indeed more difficult to find.

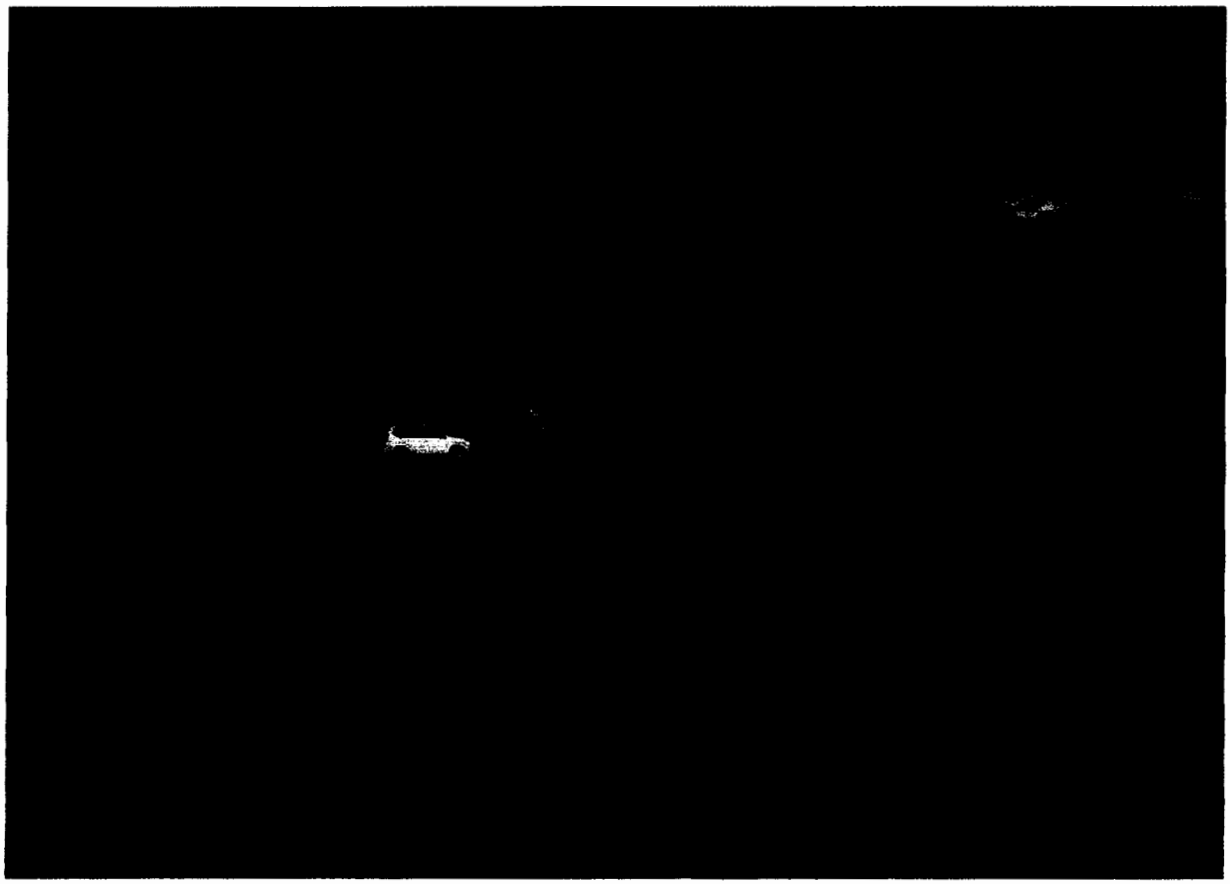


Figure 7.4: Richtersveld campers prefer solitude while experiencing this destination.

(2) Oneness

'Part of', 'close to nature', 'immersed', 'feeling connected', 'at home' and 'attuned' are expressions used by participants clustered under 'oneness'. The basic theme of oneness indicates that a nature experience allows a unique opportunity to establish or re-establish close relationships with nature.

Going into an unspoilt natural environment can be an overwhelming experience, particularly for first time visitors. Not only are there feelings of insignificance and wonder, but initially it is not unusual to feel an 'otherness' to everything that is out there. But as one begins to feel more comfortable in this seemingly foreign environment, this feeling of separation often diminishes (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1996:4). Feelings of harmony, acceptance and comfort arise. Many authors speak

of feeling 'at ease' and 'at home' within the wilderness. The following excerpt from PR-6:574 illustrates this 'at home' feeling:

> We intuitively slow down our own breathing, our speed, our thoughts. We have arrived at our destination. We feel at home. Our gaze becomes softer and wider. We take in the visual delights of the last moments of the sun.
>
> Night falls quickly and brings with it the chill of air this time of the year. We see the first star, and the first falling star and we make a wish, smiling at each other with an inner knowing of each other. We sit and talk quietly, sharing stories of previous travel and experience in places we have felt a call, an inner sense of home. We share expectations... I feel at peace....

These expressions of 'feel at home' may prove to be the most all-encompassing statement of reconnecting to nature [Chapter 5]. In unspoilt natural environments, human beings are perhaps most free to see themselves as connected to and dependent upon the rest of nature. For example, '...froth of waves blows against your legs and you can taste the saltiness of the breeze. You become part of it all; feel everything as part of yourself. You become one with all the different parts and everything fitted into one whole...' [J-1:606]. Such a nature experience promotes harmony and immersion within nature. Kaplan and Talbot (1983:200) described oneness as the sense of being at one with the universe and that this may be a spiritual dimension of the human experience [Chapter 5].

What is interesting from this study is that the overall feeling of being one with nature is strong in all categories of development (Fig. 7.5).

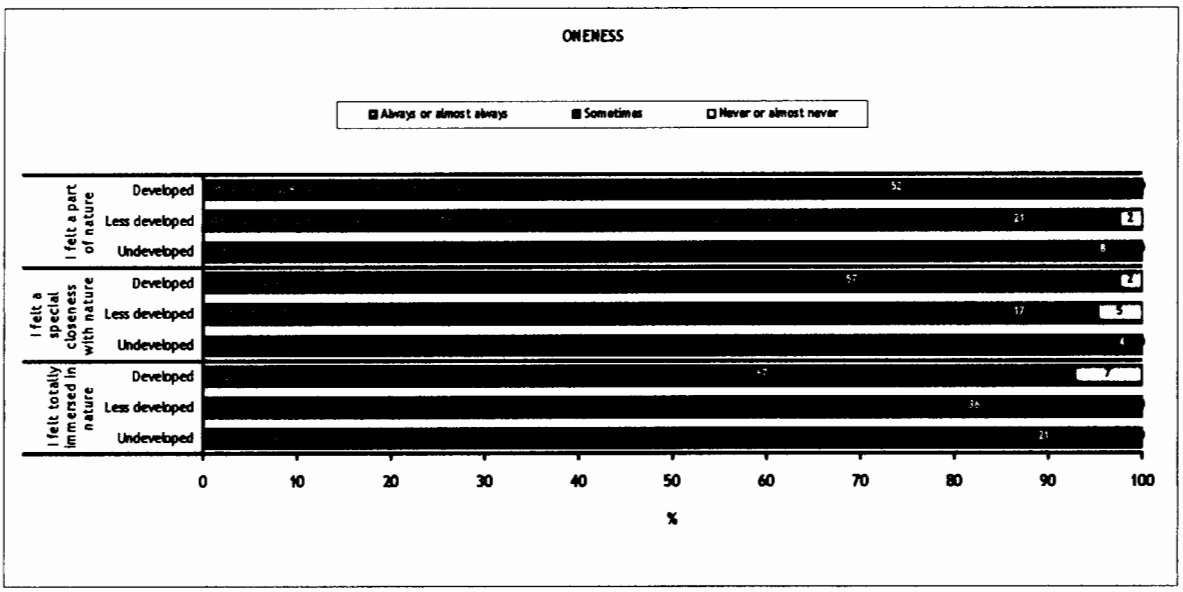


Figure 7.5: The perceived experience of oneness in three different natural environments.

Although the strength of the feeling decreases in frequency from the undeveloped to the developed destinations, the overall feeling of not being part of nature at all is insignificantly small (white section of bars in Fig. 7.5.). The feeling of oneness is primarily and most frequently experienced in the undeveloped Richtersveld. The immense vastness and majestic landscapes and absence of human interference promote harmony and immersion within nature.

Study participants described a sense of inter-relatedness with nature, for example:

> It was my first time to the Richtersveld. It is a place like nowhere else. The highlight was surely the view and experiences from Tsoba Pass. It was beauty beyond words... I felt it. It was sometimes overwhelming... the vastness... the space... I felt very humble and at the same time very privileged to be part of this greatness [PI-4:423(36)].

Similar intense feelings of oneness were experienced in other unspoilt natural environments such as Sossusvlei in Namibia:

> The morning sun coloured the dunes and camel thorn trees with enormous beauty. We did not say a word. It was a very emotional moment. The environment had us quiet... with your own individual thoughts, admiration and gratitude that you can actually experience this and be part of this [J-2:500].

3) Primitiveness

Expressed feelings such as 'pioneering feelings', 'comfortable with basics', 'life is simple, uncomplicated', 'connected to times long ago', 'myself' and 'free to be as it is supposed to be', are included under the value of primitiveness. In nature there are no constraints and responsibilities like that of the society we live in. Nature allows us the freedom to be 'wild', to tune in with the ancient rhythms of life (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001:211). Nature also allows visitors the opportunity to escape the constraints and pressures of the outside world. Therefore, when people experience primitiveness in nature, they feel 'uncomplicated and relaxed', they feel that life can be 'simple and good' and they can 'be themselves'. These feelings were experienced to a greater extent by participants in the undeveloped destination (always more than 70% of the time) and less so in the other areas (Fig. 7.6).

The feelings associated with primitiveness in this study are surprisingly consistent over the categories of destinations (Fig. 7.6). Feelings of primitiveness in the undeveloped category are almost always present. The value of primitiveness of such a natural environment relates to its contrast with modern and technological society. In certain natural areas there is the chance to revisit nature as our ancestors might have found it and to feel part of the past, for example the Richtersveld, Shamwari Game Reserve, Lapalala Wilderness and isolated mountainous areas such as the Wolkeberge Wilderness and the Cedarberg. Such environments are experienced as a place of challenge, adventure, and for some, hardship. Here, a simpler way of life is guaranteed for those who are prepared to leave the conveniences of civilisation behind. A study participant who visited the Cedarberg reports as follows:

> We drove on the yellow dust roads among these enormous mountain faces and were astonished at their magnificence. Here in the Cedarberg I felt a very powerful force of attraction. When I woke up last night, the fog was hanging low and ghostly in the valley. It was amazing! Yesterday, we walked amongst huge boulders on our way to view rock paintings. The rock formations are so extraordinary... it is a mystical place. I can imagine how the first people who lived here, experienced those unbelievable spiritual feelings....
>
> Here one feels if this is the place where you should have been all the time. A place away from everything you are confronted with each day, isolated, but safe. A place that gets you to think, motivates and inspires you. Perhaps the San new something that we still do not understand... [PR-5:572].

Individuals also experience these feelings to a lesser degree in the less developed destinations (Fig. 7.6). What is interesting is that primitiveness was also experienced in the developed destination category. This confirms that individuals may experience the values of nature in many different natural settings. The experience is context, place and person dependent (Bell et al., 1996).

Overall, modern conveniences do not seem to be important (Fig. 7.6). It is, however, interesting to notice that modern conveniences are almost never missed (83%) in the Richtersveld (where there is nothing), while close to 50% of the study participants reported that they missed modern conveniences in less developed and developed destinations. From this it can be concluded that people's expectations for a setting can affect their reactions to it. For example:

> When I specifically go to a place for the solitude and wilderness experience, I do not want any development (conveniences). Sometimes I do go to a place where I need some form of development. It depends on what you want from the area. I would

not appreciate development in the Richtersveld to such an extent that people can flock to the area in their hundreds! Then the whole experience will be gone. But in areas where you expect many people (e.g. Aventura), you get what you want because of development [PI-4:422(32)].

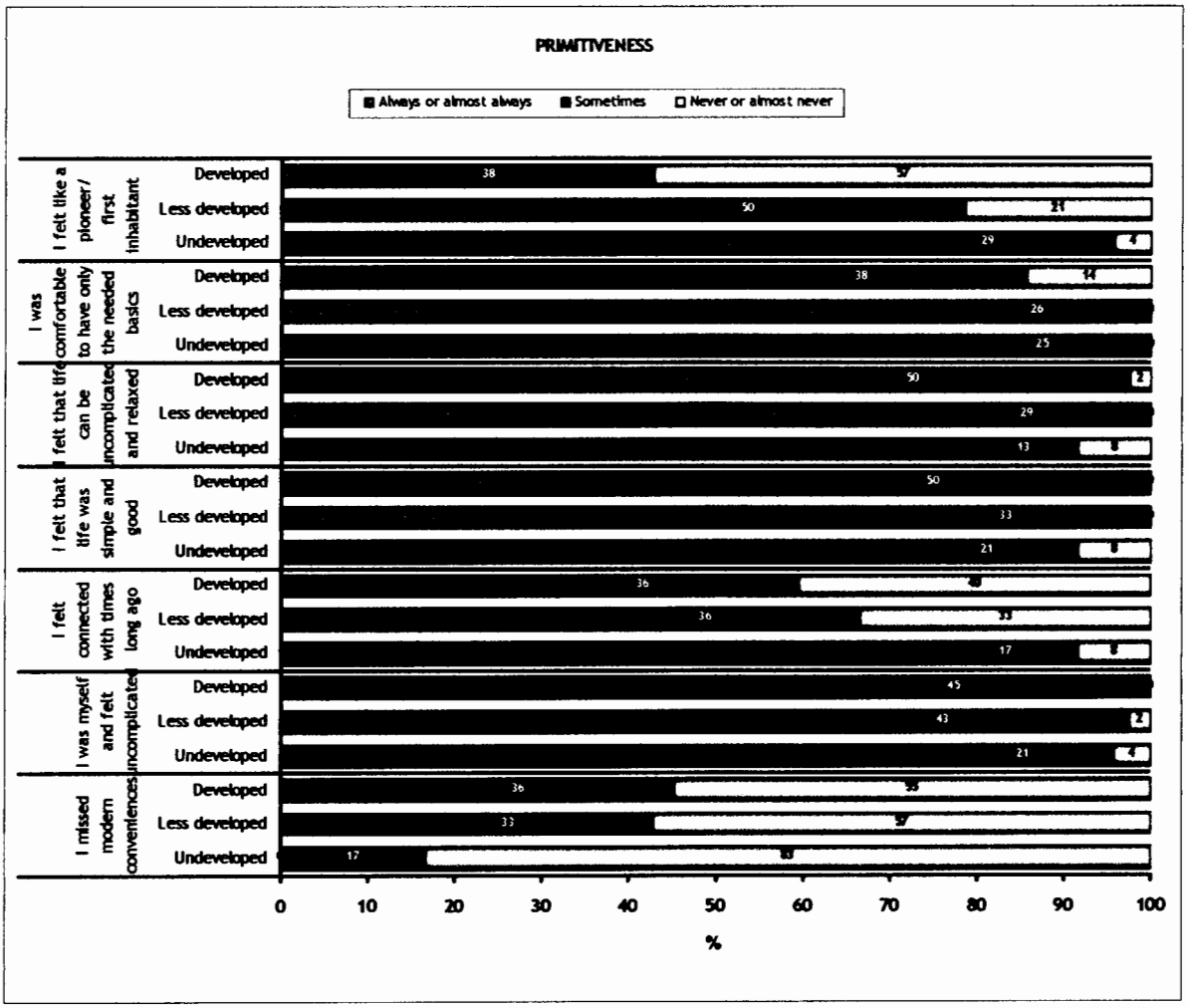


Figure 7.6: The perceived experience of primitiveness in three different natural environments.

When visitors expect good facilities (e.g. modern conveniences) and a particular level of comfort and these expectations are not met, they will experience disturbing feelings. People who visit undeveloped destinations expect to find no conveniences and therefore do not miss them. On the contrary, when they do find that such conveniences are available, it is not necessarily a good experience. The

following are excerpts in this regard from study participants who visited the Richtersveld:

> I am worried about (the facilities being put up) because it will now open up the area for more people. It was sort of exclusive and only people who have a feeling for the 'tough' visited the place. Now it is more 'comfortable' and more people will go there. I am afraid that it will lose the special atmosphere of remoteness and wildness. Then I also ask the question of 'will it stop here, or what will be next, upgraded roads...? [PI-8:443(28)].

> The newly build ablution facilities...? Perhaps the toilets may be acceptable... The showers and basins? No, I don't think that is necessary. You can use the river water for washing purposes! That is part of the atmosphere of this place! It brings me back to development. Where does it stop? Will the ablution be the end? [PI-4:425(47)].

> We arrived at De Hoop via the river beds and narrow paths... like it should be in the Richtersveld - undeveloped. ...then we had a great disappointment - ablution facilities were being built...! It 'looks nice' and 'fits in with the natural environment', but what will be next... chalets, better roads, concessions...? [PR-7:576].

As expected, study participants could more frequently identify with times long ago and feel like first inhabitants in undeveloped destinations (67% - 75%) than what they could have in other areas (5% - 24%) (Fig. 7.6). Unspoilt nature offers the chance to still feel part of the past. As early as 1938 Olson commented:

> It is surprising how quickly a man sheds the habits of civilization and how soon he feels at home in the wilds. Before many days have passed, he feels that the life he has been living was merely an interruption in a long wilderness existence and that now again he is

back at the real business of living. And when we think of the comparatively short time that we have been living and working as we do now, when we recall that many of us are hardly a generation removed from the soil, and that a few scant thousand of years ago our ancestors roamed and hunted the vastness of Europe; it is not strange that the smell of wood smoke and the lure of the primitive is with us yet (1938:51).

4) Timelessness

Feelings of study participants expressed as 'forgot about time', 'lost track of time' and 'time flies here' are clustered as timelessness.

Tinsley and Tinsley (1986:1-45) suggest that leisure experiences are to some extent characterised by a decreased awareness of the passage of time. When people are in a natural environment, it seems that time of day is of very little importance (Fig. 7.7).

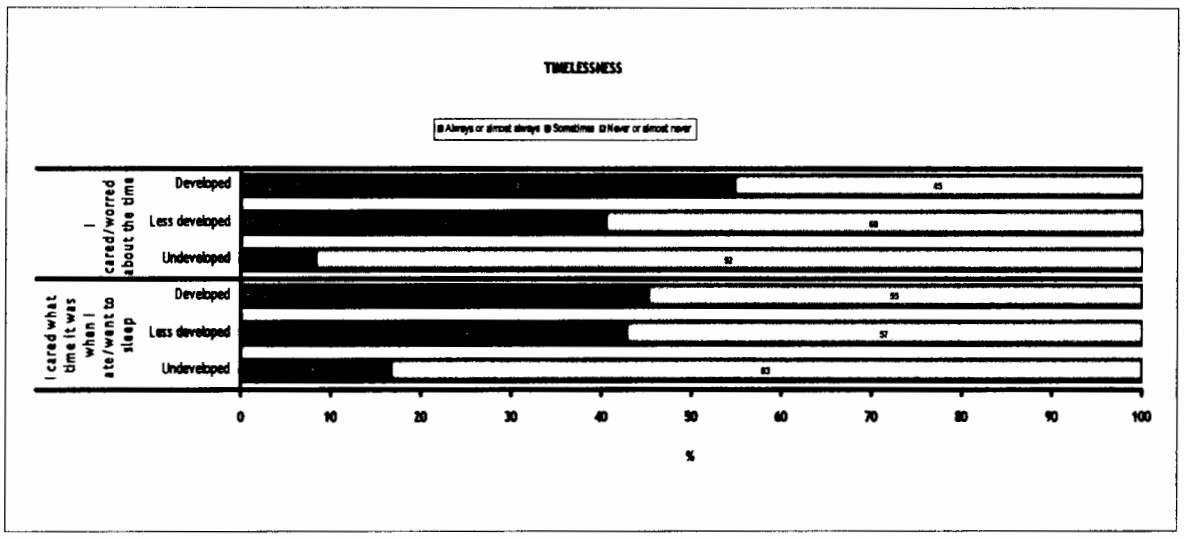


Figure 7.7: The perceived experience of timelessness in three different natural environments.

In undeveloped destinations more than 80% of the instances study participants did not care about what time it was or when they ate or went to sleep. This means that while in an area such as the Richtersveld people forget the normal pace of everyday life and enter into an experience of unmeasured and uncontrolled time, or timelessness.

Different from the overall timelessness feeling of the Richtersveld, study participants experienced a concern for time in certain cases in other destinations. Less than 60% of these participants feel that they never cared about the time (Fig. 7.7). In the developed destinations almost 50% of participants always cared about what time it was.

One can argue that visitors to developed settings are still in a time constraint due to opening and closing hours of entrance gates, shops and other facilities associated with such places. On the other hand, wilderness (undeveloped destinations) provides the opportunity to leave behind the frantic pace of modern life, and to experience a far less structured and perhaps unmeasured pace. Some may find a natural attraction to the ancient rhythms of life, the cycles of the seasons, and the day/night patterns of light, temperature, and activity. Indeed, some may find the stillness and time to stop and contemplate or reflect on, an activity otherwise not easily compatible with their lives. Within the stillness of wilderness they can find the opportunity, and the time, to contemplate and reflect. Within these unspoilt natural environments, the demands for action may come more naturally. For example, to eat when hungry, to sleep when tired, and to plan the day by the warmth of the sun, might represent timelessness.

Olson (1976:28), for example, is convinced that given sufficient time, all visitors to wildernesses can experience timelessness. As they accept the time clock of nature, their lives become entirely different. It is one of the great compensations for primitive experiences, and when one finally reaches the point where days are governed by daylight and darkness, rather than schedules, where one eats if hungry and sleeps when tired, and becomes completely immersed in the ancient rhythms,

then one begins to live. It is also then that one becomes sensitive for a spiritual experience and regains connectedness.

5) Humility

Study participants' feelings of humility include a wide spectrum of expressions, e.g. 'awe', 'I feel small, unimportant and humbled', 'wonderful', 'magnificent', 'insignificant'. The strength of humility experienced in all destinations is extraordinary high (Fig. 7.8). Even in the developed destination category, 95% of participants experienced feelings of humility at some stage during their visit, with more or less 60% experiencing the feeling almost always. A very high 92% to 96% always feel humbled by the environment in undeveloped destinations.

Feelings of humility could be expected in nature, given the complexity, beauty, and often grand scale of essentially unspoilt natural environments such as the Richtersveld. The beauty of the nature experience is one of the simple attractions that draw us to the bush and open spaces. Nature amazes us with its many forms and colours, its myriad of shapes and tones.

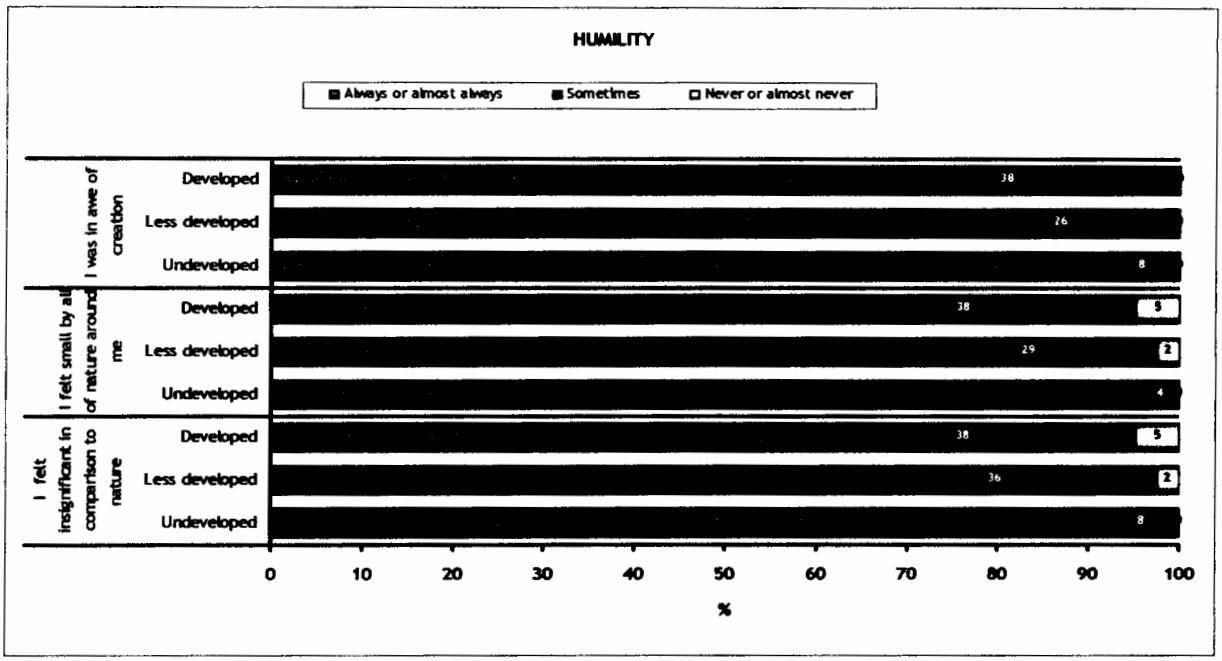


Figure 7.8: The perceived experience of humility in three different natural environments.

The following excerpt is an example of a study participant's humbling experience in the Cedar mountains:

> You... admire. On the left hand side, the abyss appears sometimes too close. Right, are steep boulders, striped in various colours in the sun's rays. They talk to you from times long ago, exposed to the forces of wind and water for eons. Around the next corner, the world is scattered with loose rough stones. Then you see large patches of brown soil covered with Karoo-type shrubs. Always changing, fascinating...
>
> In the distance you see huge white clouds gathering above the valley, separating the clear blue sky from the brownish mountains. This is beautiful!
>
> The contrast and variation are mind-boggling! You see impressive rock formations, different structures and textures and the complete variety of autumn colours and shades. Everything is changing all the time, a surprise around each turn!
>
> There are open spaces, valleys, rolling hills, but always surrounded by mountains. Yellowish-brown close up, then brownish-gray ridgebacks covered with shrubs and rock stacks, followed by blue and gray mountains, each one toothed behind the other. ...we are filled with silence, in awe and wonder of the variety and uniqueness surrounding us... [PR-5:572].

Nature is, however, more than just pretty. The range and abundance of beauty is almost overwhelming. There is something humbling about all this natural beauty and surprise. Feelings of awe, insignificance and lack of superiority are regularly experienced. This is due to the lack of control visitors have over the wild

environment (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001:211). Many expressions describe the humility felt by participants. For example:

> The total purity of nature was extremely beautiful. It seemed so untouched. The magnitude of the area left me feeling small and humble. It was an experience just to see the bright yellow bunches of flowers ('perdeblomme') in the veld; I stood in awe of the stretches of aloes... This place got me to realise how very small and insignificant I am in the greatness of Creation... [PI-8:442(29)].

Similar feelings are expressed by participants who visited the Namib Desert in Namibia:

> Lichen fields lay extended as far as one can see (in the Namib Desert). When we stopped to admire the different forms and colours of the lichens, we became aware of the amazing life forms all around us. We truly experienced a sense of total insignificance, humility and wonder... [J-2:502].

Zahniser (in Nash, 1982:256) says that humankind's deepest need for wilderness (unspoilt nature) is as an aid in forsaking human arrogance and courting humility in a respect for the community and with regard for the environment.

Nature has the powerful message of that within it, human beings are but a small part of a much larger community of beings, each sacred in its own right. Nature levels us out, reminding us, perhaps, of our correct place within the natural world, and provoking an intellectual humility (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1996:3).

6) Care

As indicated in Figure 7.9 an ethic of care reflects perhaps one of the greatest impacts any nature experience could provide. To 'care', 'behave properly', 'conserve and respect', 'inspired to care' and 'appreciation for the small' are

overwhelming feelings in all categories of development. Although care feelings reach 100% responses in undeveloped destinations, participants who visited less developed and developed destinations also experienced feelings of care most of the time (blue bars in Fig. 7.9). The only significant difference in care feelings, are those experienced to care for the specific place. In this regard 88% always feel that they want to care for the undeveloped environment, while 57% and 48% experience this feeling in the less developed and developed destinations respectively.

The nature of a visit may induce profound changes in a person's relationship to the environment and their value systems. Admiration and enjoyment of nature may lead to experiences of a spiritual dimension [Chapter 5], resulting in new priorities and actions towards natural environments. Out of an intimate relationship with the unspoilt environment an actively caring response to, and perhaps reconnection with nature can develop (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1996:4).

Warren (1990:134-135) writes of a lived experience that she had:

> I closed my eyes and began to feel the rock with my hands. At that moment I was bathed in serenity. I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude for what (the rock) offered me - a chance to know myself and the rock differently... to come to know a sense of being in relationship with the natural environment. It felt as if the rock and I were silent conversational partners in a longstanding friendship. I realised then that I had come to care about this cliff which was so different from me... I felt myself caring for this rock.

Participants in this study mention similar experiences:

> When I spend time in nature, I get inspired by all the fascinating aspects around me. I find myself thinking a lot and often I stand in awe of everything that nature offers. I then realise I should take care and inspire others to take care of nature... it is essential for

survival... [PI-23:513(17)].

The moment I saw this tree ...I had to touch it. I put my fingers into the deep grooves in the bark and I could feel the tree "breathe" (for lack of a word). This type of attraction is something I have felt all my life and I know that it is real. If I were to lose this ability I would feel very alone. I want to be part of the world around me, I want to take care of it and I appreciate it allowing me to hear and feel it [PR-8:578].

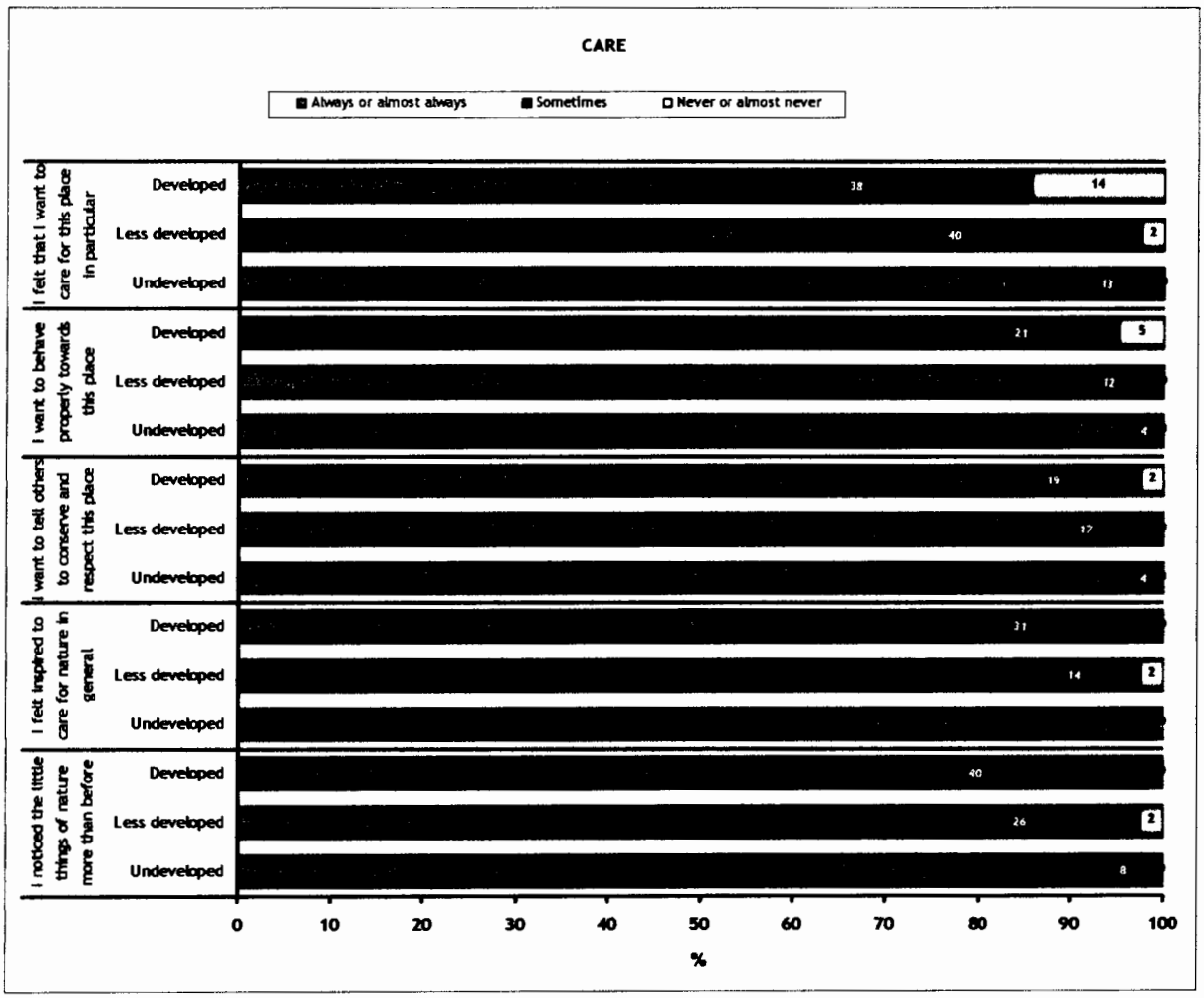


Figure 7.9: The perceived experience of care in three different natural environments.

Focusing on the human experiential opportunities inherent in nature should enhance respect for the environments which make this experiential diversity and complexity possible (Pigram, 1993:418).

7) Self-knowledge

Immersed in a nature experience, with fewer external distractions than in our everyday life, the individual has the opportunity to observe the natural environment and his/her place in it. One may acquire feelings and knowledge of the self in the environment. Study participants experience a strong awareness of the self in whatever natural environment they found themselves (Fig. 7.10). The lack of self-knowledge is very small across all categories of development and the level of development apparently does not significantly influence it. All feelings are more often experienced in the undeveloped destination than in the less developed and developed destinations. The difference in frequency of feelings in the latter is negligible.

Ittelson, Franck and O'Hanlon (1978:187-206) suggest that during a nature experience, a focus on self or introspection represents the individual concentrating on internal thoughts and processes. Evidence of this is found in reports by the majority of study participants. A few excerpts from reports illustrate this point:

> Every time (when visiting nature) I feel that I am not making use of all the opportunities life has to offer. When returning from the Richtersveld, I intent to do everything I want to do, to make use of opportunities to enjoy life! [PI-8:443(30)].

> In nature I have time to think, to find myself, to set goals and get rid of the everyday nonsense. Even just looking at the flames of the fire at night, relaxes me. I also find it very relaxing just to experience a sunset or admire the stars at nights. It is during quiet times like these that I can get to look into myself... get to know myself... [PI-9:446(15)].

Nature motivates me in life. Time spent in nature gives me the passion in life to achieve and do well... [PI-24:517(17)].

Nature creates a place where I can find calmness and rest within myself. In nature I can find myself. Nature teaches me a lot because nothing is learnt like learning by self-experience! [PI-25:520(12)].

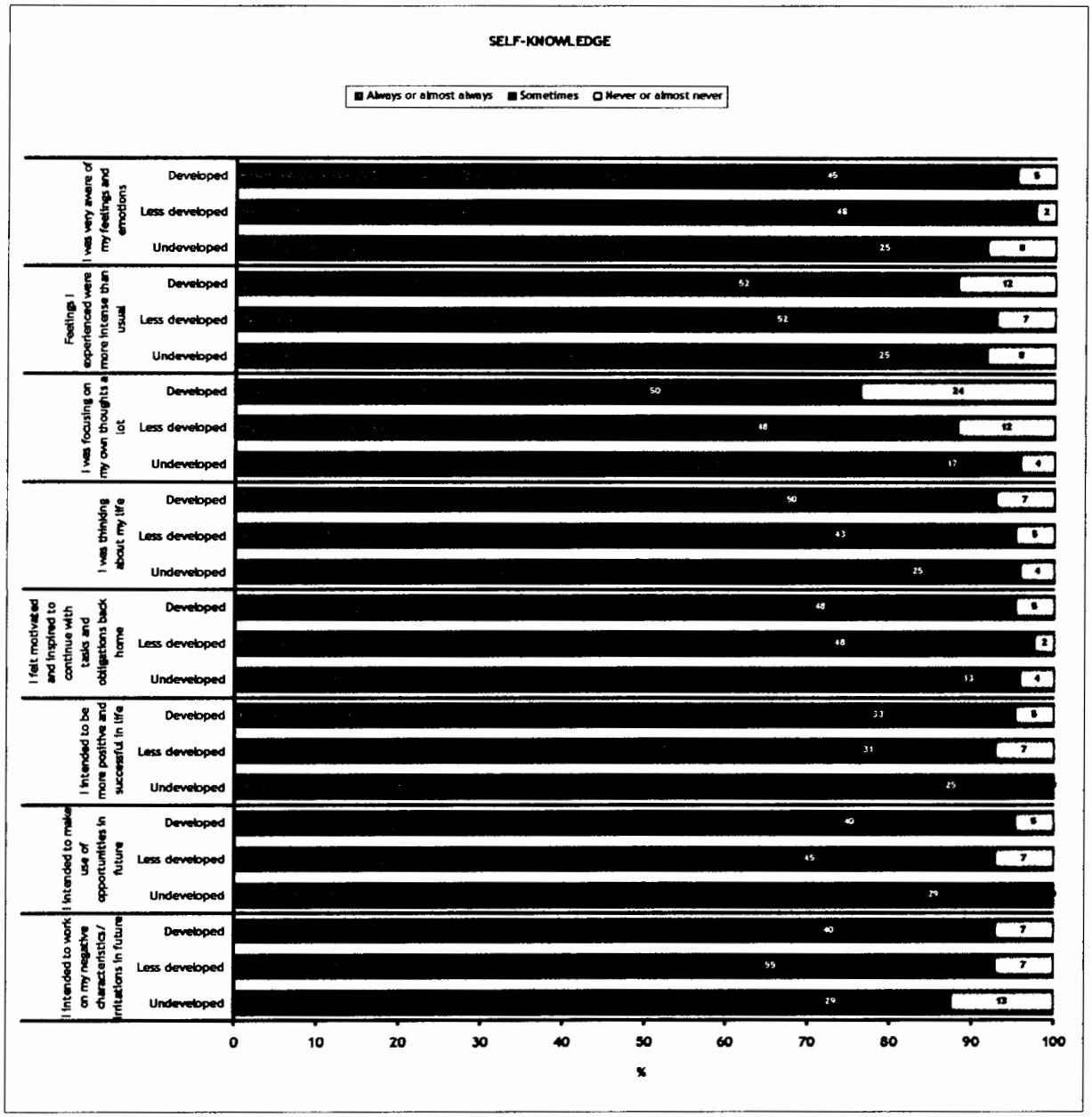


Figure 7.10: The perceived experience of self-knowledge in three different natural environments.

The components of the nature experience are internalised to a certain degree in every individual. In this mode, the experience of the environment is a largely self-centred one, and consists of reflective thought and contemplation (Ittelson, 1978:193-213). The time spent in nature and the experience while being there, provide the opportunity to consider and re-construct one's self-identity. Then the environment ceases to be separate and becomes part of the self. Through discovering one's place in the whole, which also refers to oneness, one perhaps might come to terms with oneself, one's thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Study participants who spend time in nature experience a greater sense of concern for other people (for example, Gous, 2004:127-128), a more realistic outlook of their own strengths and weaknesses [J-1:606], a greater self-sufficiency in the use of their time and goals [PI-26:522], and a rather positive view of the self [PI-15:472]. These findings were also recorded by Kaplan and Talbot (1983:169).

8) Spirituality

Expressions such as 'my place in Creation', 'closeness with others', I was accepted', 'close to the Creator', 'enlightened' and 'close to other life forms' were clustered together under spirituality.

Capra (1983) uses the term 'spiritual' in its original sense, referring to 'breath', as the breath of life. In many spiritual traditions, 'the animating breath of life', is what unites the living world. Spirituality is expressed when religious experience flows into daily action; the spiritual life is then spirituality. Awareness of this unity, of belonging to the web of life, is spiritual experience. Spirituality is the active aspect of religion. The following abstract summarises the understanding of the spiritual value of nature as experienced by study participants:

> Spirituality is the realisation that there are more than just you. You are part of a whole earth and a whole life... recognising your role in that life and what is greater than you... what you should do to protect that around you, in terms of peoples' feelings or

> emotions or an animal or a tree. Spirituality ... is that you are not the be all and end all of all things ... that there is a greater power and something beautiful that you can learn from. There is more out there and also on a level that we don't recognise - a spiritual level. There has to be some kind of holiness or God or being or love behind the whole scene. There is a kind of a 'different dimension' that guards and governs us. It is to realise that you are living above it. There are other things and other people and life. I started to become more tolerant and accepting and realised that I have a role towards society to better things....
>
> Religion is there for one to better one's life. To me, that would be the purpose of having a religion. You live your life according to religious guidelines or guidelines that you believe in. I would go into nature and actually sit and contemplate what am I to do, who am I, what is my purpose in life, where should I go, how should I feel about certain things? These are all major decisions in my life. It allows me to quieten down and to actually listen to who you are inside, what you don't hear when there is so much noise and activity around you. You lose track of who you are because you live in a world that tells you how to live. When you go into nature, there's nothing like that. You open up and it is almost like a religious experience - the travelling and peace of mind that comes with nature. It has such a special meaning to me... That is why I want to protect it so much, because when someone destroys it, it will be like destroying my religious experience or religious sanctity [PI-1:402(17,18].

Although many study participants in this study experience and express a connection between nature and God, spirituality as a value of nature experiences involves ecological values and attitudes and not necessarily only a religion [Chapter 5]. Spirituality connects these values with the individual and ultimately with societies. Skolimowski (1993:5) says that for the individual, spirituality is about how our life

affects other human beings and other beings in nature. Healing nature and healing ourselves is spiritual work [Chapter 9].

Skull (2001:1-5) suggests that if people feel disconnected or alienated from nature, they are likely to be disconnected from vital aspects of themselves. The reality of life and the awareness of what life means, comes most intensely while human beings are experiencing nature.

Study participants report a strong overall feeling of spirituality while in natural environments. These feelings are the strongest in undeveloped destinations (Fig. 7.11).

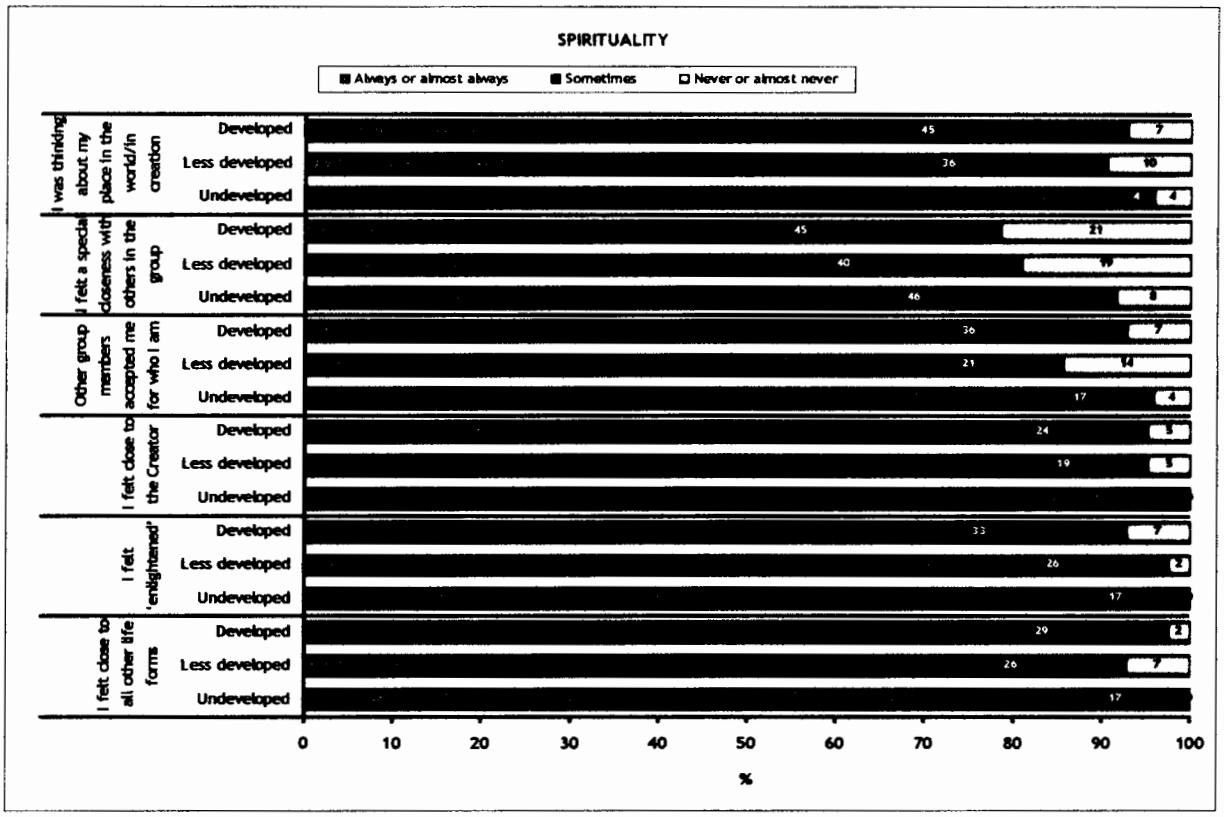


Figure 7.11: The perceived experience of spirituality in three different natural environments.

Significant from these results is the strength of feelings amongst study participants with regards to the Creator, for example 100% of the participants from the undeveloped destination indicated that they always felt close to the Creator, while 95% experience similar feelings from time to time in other destinations. Many participants experience some connection between nature and the Creator.

In a survey conducted during this study, participants were asked about their connection with God and nature. Sixty three percent indicated that a separation from God may be related to a separation from nature [C-13:593]. Other feelings in this regard were expressed as follows:

> Nowhere is one closer to God than in nature. When one looks at small things like the curve of a fern leaf... a spider's web - no one can copy that (for example Fig. 7.12). Those are the things that one can observe and just look at and admire and feel the greatness of God. One then must realise the almightiness of a Creator [PI-8:441(18)].

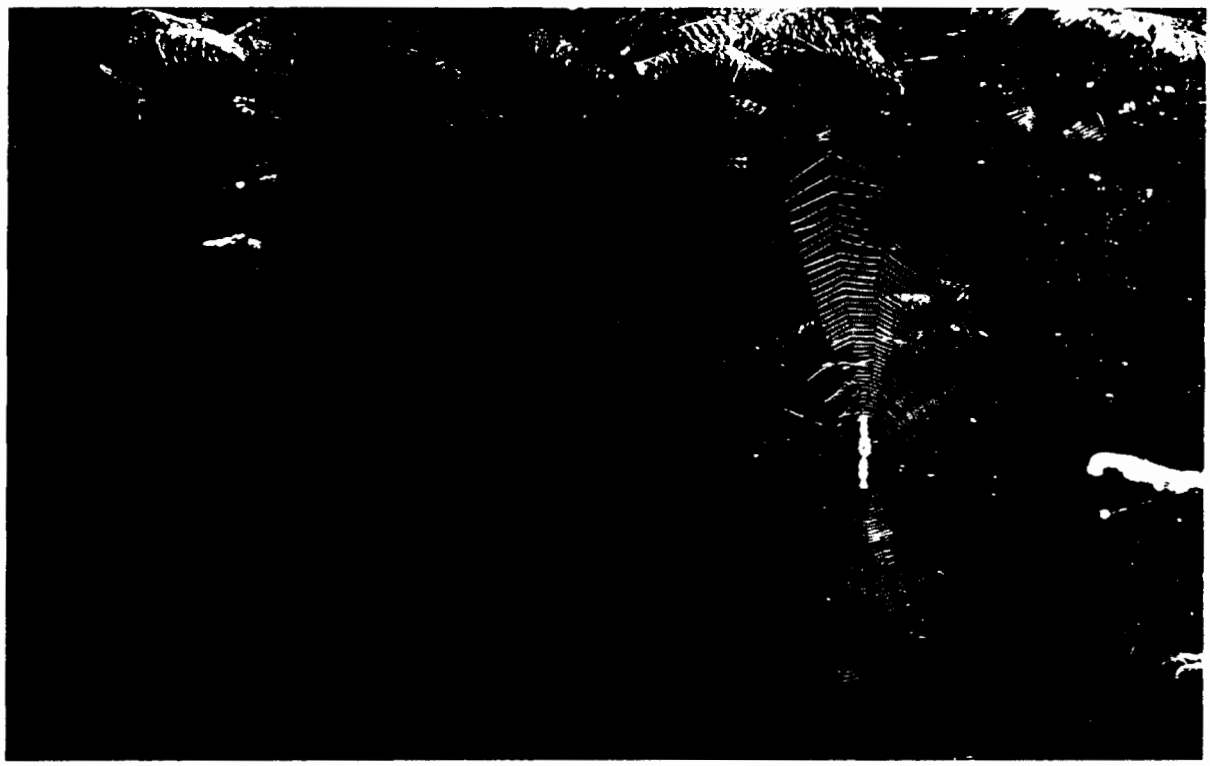


Figure 7.12: A photograph of fern leaves and a spider web used by a study participant to describe the feeling of closeness to God in nature.

Although individuals may experience a profound closeness to the Creator while they are in nature, many feel close to nature without a religious connection [C-13:593]. Again this connection depends on the individual's conviction, beliefs and experiences.

Feelings of belonging are strong throughout the categories and experiences of study participants (Fig. 7.11). What is prominent from the results in Figure 7.11 is that these feelings decrease where other people are involved. For example, the experience of closeness with other people is rated the lowest in all destinations with 46% being the highest in undeveloped natural environments. Capra (1983) emphasises the sense of belonging in the world as the basic religious experience. For him, this is spiritual consciousness. Because we are 'special, capable of abstract thinking and so have the tendency to separate from nature', we have to seek reconnection with nature and with our own kind. This is an essentially spiritual process. It means finding healing through relationships with people and nature, creating meaningful communication, experiencing the sense of belonging to the whole, counteracting the sense of isolation. A study participant proposes the following:

> It seems that humanity as a whole has chosen to be separated from God, and that includes being separated from nature. This separation has not only caused our human misery, but also increasing environmental destruction. As a result of this, we are becoming more aware.
>
> Many 'spiritual' books mention the 'ego' - that which we think we are. It is the result of separation. Ego thinks in terms of good and bad, of superior and inferior. It leads to anxiety, fear, guilt, and has an enormous need to control. Most people on earth probably reject these ideas. Most people also participate in the destruction of our environment. Our separation from nature is directly related to our apparent separation from God [PI-26:527(13)].

Summary

The values of a nature experience discussed here, i.e. solitude, primitiveness, oneness, timelessness, and care are those described by wilderness philosophers. Values prominently mentioned by participants, i.e. self-knowledge and spirituality, are added to the existing values. Participants who visited undeveloped destinations recorded the strongest levels of feelings for all the values in general. Those from developed destinations recorded the lowest levels of experiencing the values, while it was experienced at moderate levels in the less developed destinations. Feelings of care for the environment, humility and oneness were reported highest over all, and timelessness, self-knowledge and spirituality to follow. In contrast, solitude and primitiveness scores showed the lowest overall levels. This phenomenon may be attributed to the extent to which development has already infiltrated most natural environments, leading to the parting with what was regarded as primitive, and making more areas accessible to many people, thus the loss of the feeling of being alone.

Excerpts from reports from study participants show an increased sense of awareness (mindfulness) to natural surroundings during the on-site phase. They mention that after a few days they start noticing their surroundings in a fuller way, being newly aware of the smells, sights and sounds around them. Some reports even include photographs of the 'smaller' things noticed during this time (Fig. 7.13).

This produces evidence that one of the first things people experience in nature is a renewed use of the senses. Harper (1995:189) says that this awakening of the senses is a subtly powerful and underrated experience and that people then learn how greatly some of our basic modes of perception have been dulled in order to survive in the urban world.

With this growing sense of awareness a spiritual meaning becomes clear as individuals feel one with nature. People start to feel comfortable in these new surroundings. They 'feel natural to be here' and 'feel at home'. As the time

passes they start expressing feelings of a deep sense of peacefulness and tranquillity and that they feel completely relaxed and calm, with an ultimate feeling of contentment and at peace with themselves (Fig. 7.14). This is confirmed by Kaplan and Talbot (1983:178) who say that each day in nature increases the enhanced feelings of awe and wonder in a person, facilitating a new vision of themselves.

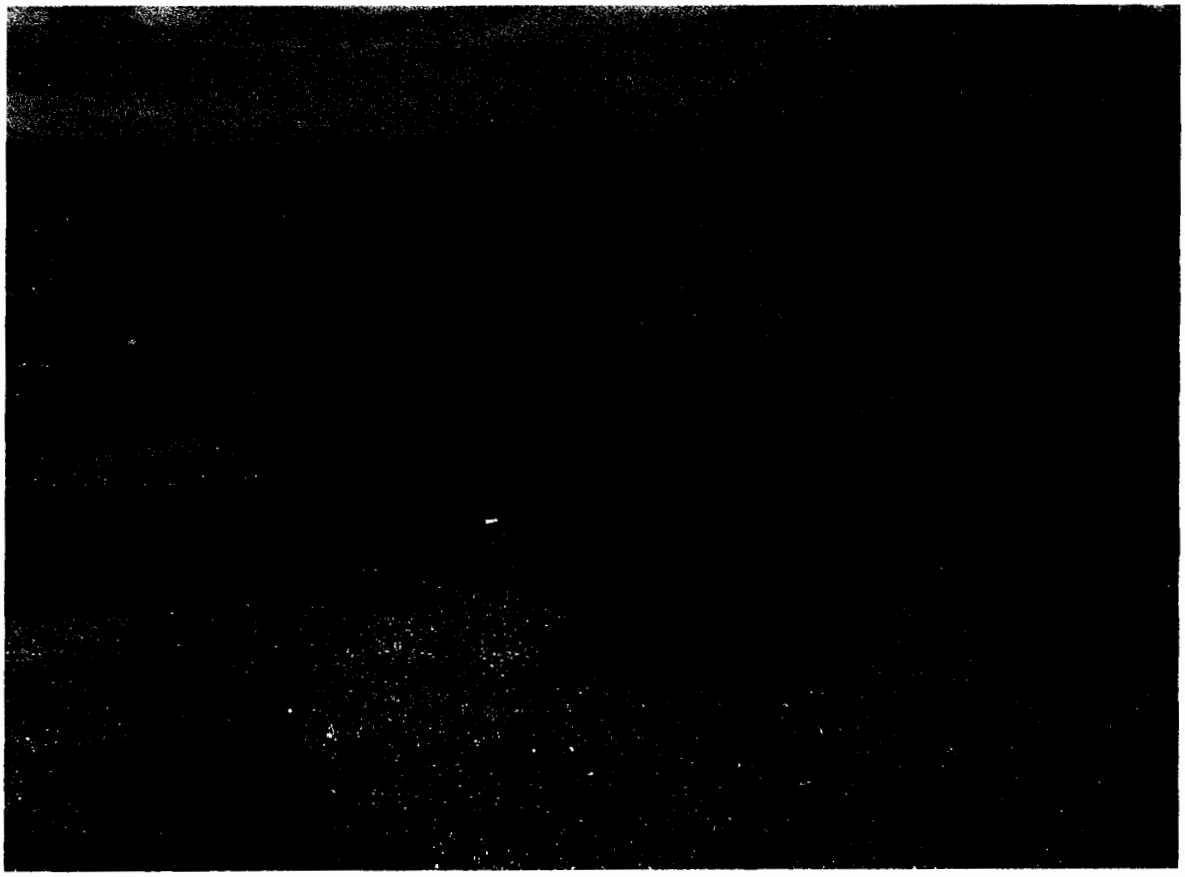


Figure 7.13: Photograph taken in the Richtersveld to illustrate participants' increased sense of awareness and notice of 'smaller' things around them, like the colour and smell of a *Stapelia* sp. (carrion flower).

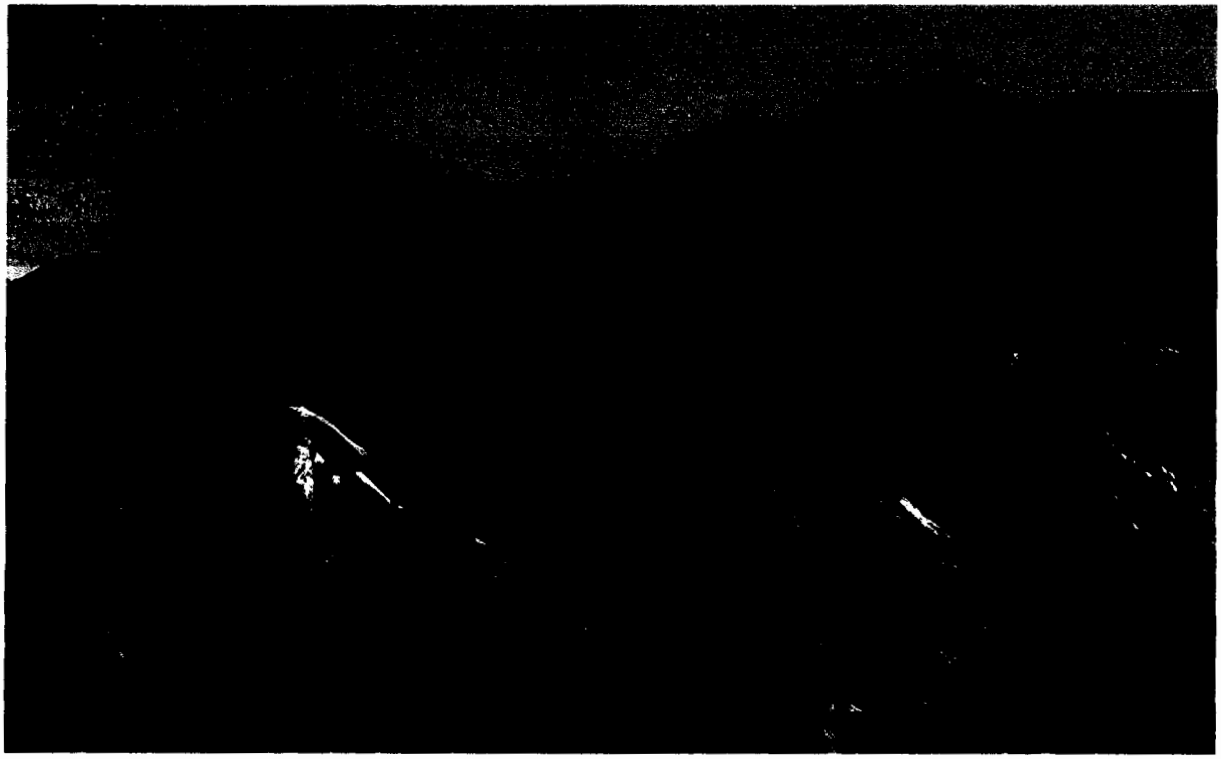


Figure 7.14: As time passes in a natural environment, individuals feel progressively relaxed and calm, with an ultimate feeling of contentment and at peace with themselves.

5.2.4 Reluctance-to-leave

In this phase study participants express a general 'depressing feeling by the thought of leaving'. Feelings of sadness, 'becoming moody' and a general reluctance to leave the destination are mentioned. Some mention a 'restlessness' when they realise that it is time to leave. These feelings are usually accompanied by feelings of gratitude for being able to spend the time at this particular place. At this time many reports state that participants feel refreshed and motivated for tasks ahead, despite a moderate feeling of depression [PI-2:413(38), PI-7:437(31), PI-10:450(33), J-2:612, J-5:650].

This phase can be regarded as having a negative tone with significant positive aspects and appears to be the same for all visited natural environments. In the cumulus model this phase is represented by a relatively deep indent after the huge column of the on-site phase. However, participants who visited remote

destinations, such as Namibia and the Richtersveld, mentioned a greater reluctance to leave the area because they 'realise that it is too far to return to on a regular base' [J-2:612, J-3:623, J-4:636].

5.2.5 Travel-back

The travel-back phase shows similar tendencies as the reluctance-to-leave phase. It is represented by a slight increase in column width in the cumulus model. Study participants report less depressing feelings and more neutral feelings of acceptance of the fact that they should return home and resume normal routine. In general feelings of gratitude are predominant. Study participants seem to be less talkative while travelling back home. Some refer to this phase as a time to 'reflect within oneself', to 'contemplate without talking to others' and to 'think about what is lying ahead'. This is particularly significant in feedbacks from study participants who visited remote destinations and those who had significant on-site experiences [J-2:612, J-3:623, J-4:636, J-5:650, PR-4:569, PI-1:408(44), PI-4:424(49)].

5.2.6 Short-term recollection

On returning from a visit to a natural environment, study participants usually report feelings of slight to moderate depression and they feel unmotivated to continue with tasks ahead. Although the feelings expressed are generally more positive than during the previous phase, an undertone of 'sadness' is detectable, for example, 'It always takes a day to get back into it all. Reality kicks in very soon - meeting deadlines, and so on! I don't feel much like working today, I feel very 'unstressed'. I know that I will have to tell myself to get started very soon...!' [PI-1:408(45)], 'Initially (I felt) depressed, but then reality kicked in and I had to get on with it!' [PI-6:433(26)], 'We chatted a few times about (the trip), that we would have liked to stay on a little longer. It is a bit of a shock to return and have to fall in with the normal routine (so quickly)...' [PI-11:457(41)] and 'You 'come down' a bit and I didn't really think about the trip as soon as I was back' [PI-12:461(34)]. These feelings are reported to remain for a relative short period of time only, varying from one day to one week. Thereafter individuals tell others

about their experiences and by doing that relive their experience positively, leading to the next phase.

5.2.7 Long-term recollection

Comparing all phases with the long-term recollection phase, this appears to be the most significant of the nature experience. Study participants report a positive feeling with specific meanings attached to the total experience. Considerable change in motivation for tasks ahead and attitudes towards life in general are mentioned, for example, 'I feel good... I am encouraged and see my way open to do many things' [PI-2:413(41)], 'I learnt to appreciate life' [PI-27:535(44)] and 'I am not making use of all the opportunities life has to offer. When returning from the Richtersveld, I intend to do everything I want to do, to make use of opportunities, to enjoy life!' [PI-8:443(30)].

Although some study participants could not identify specific meanings to a specific event or trip to a natural environment, all agreed that nature makes them feel more positive in general. The majority of study participants felt 'good' about the trip and were looking forward to return to nature again [PI-10:450(36), PI-11:457(43), PI-28:540(49), PI-29:546(50), PI-30:551(48)].

What also came forward from this phase is that participants tend to easily fall back into old routines, habits and thought patterns. Some mentioned that demands from work and social life forced them to return to these routines. However, study participants were convinced that they needed to get back to nature on a regular basis to 'recharge batteries' to be able to deal with demands of everyday life [PI-1:405(32), PI-4:422(28-30), PI-8:442(27)].

5.3 Interpreting the cumulus model

Referring to the above-mentioned discussion, the phases of the nature experience can be interpreted according to the cumulus model. J-2:612 represents the feelings experienced during the different phases by study participants while on a

tour through Namibia. It is representative of most feedbacks and can be summarised as follows:

A dominant high spirit during both the anticipation and travel-to phase is evident, although a slight 'dark base' of the cumulus could be detected during the anticipation phase due to busy schedules prior to departure. An accident during the travel-to phase was a suppressing factor to a great extent. The frequent recall of the incident and the people involved, throughout the trip is significant of the influence it had on the total experience. Therefore, a huge indent will occur in this phase (travel-to) of the cumulus. The internal forces (impact) of this event may have influenced the total shape of the cumulus in the end. However, the scenery and spiritual experiences encountered during the rest of the trip soon lifted the moods of the group during the on-site phase.

Many remarks indicate a significant experience with regards to physical features, the sensory experiences, as well as the values of the different sites, for example, 'most spectacular scenery of the Fish River Canyon' (physical), 'This is a special place; you cannot describe the feeling...you just feel it', '(Sossusvlei) where the morning sun coloured the dunes and camelthorn trees with enormous beauty... It was a very emotional moment' (sensory and spiritual) (J-2:500). This phase of the cumulus cloud is most likely the widest in this experience due to the intense sensory and spiritual awareness. At the end of the trip a definite reluctance to leave with the accompanying degree of depressed feelings was apparent. These feelings persisted during the travel-back phase as well as during the short-term recollection phase ('It took me almost two weeks to adapt to city life and work routine' (J-2:508). All three of these cumulus columns have more or less the same shape and size, which are considerably smaller than the previous.

The long-term recollection reflects a very positive attitude and almost a change in perspective in life (J-2:508). In this case the long-term recollection column of the cumulus will probably be even larger than the on-site column. The conclusion to this case is that irrespective of the impact of events in previous phases, the intensity of experiences during the on-site phase and the values of the

environment can compensate to ensure a meaningful and highly inspirational nature experience. In fact, unpleasant events such as the accident mentioned may even contribute to new perspectives and attitudes towards life, especially when experienced before or after inspiring experiences in nature (refer to reflection, J-2:508).

To experience nature is more than a mere recreational activity. People interpret 'nature' or 'natural environment' from their own perceptions, skills, past experiences and knowledge. They do however, refer to nature as a place where one has the opportunity to experience freedom from everyday demands and from one's own concerns. It is also regarded as a place of 'undisturbed' wildness, where one can still be in touch with times long gone and where one can reconnect [J-2:612, PI-4:419(2), PI-13:462(1), PR-5:572].

Some study participants regard a nature experience only to start when they arrive at the destination. They do however, admit that the time it takes to prepare and before leaving home and the time to get to the destination, may have an influence on the total experience. Others regard the moment they start looking forward to the trip as the start of their total experience. In all circumstances, a person's unique preferences, dislikes as well as many internal and external aspects impact on the total nature experience.

The natural environment as used in this study varies from highly developed luxury coastal resorts to undeveloped, remote and primitive areas in Southern Africa. Irrespective of the state of development, to study participants these areas are nature distinct from society. For many it is 'something else' and it differs to a great extent from their everyday environment. To those who visit the 'wilderness' of remote, undeveloped places, these environments may even be foreign. Such areas are typically not a place with which one has day-to-day interaction. For that reason it is likely to take most visitors some time to adapt to it.

When people decide to visit a natural area, they gradually start expecting something different. They experience various levels of excitement prior to arriving

at the destination. On entry to the natural environment, they may progressively forget many of the concerns of their routine world as they adjust and adapt to the rhythms and demands of the natural world. During this time (travel-to and on-site phases) of the nature experience, one can expect a weakening of thoughts, requirements and demands of modern civilisation. As nature gradually becomes the demanding environment, people tend to refocus on their immediate environment in order to satisfy the requirements and to accept the opportunities of this environment.

For individuals to adapt to the natural environment, they need to learn a new way to perceive and act accordingly. They need to 'survive' in this 'new' environment. During the on-site phase individuals have the opportunity to use all senses to adapt and to experience the environment for what it is and what it offers. When they are completely immersed in the natural environment, thoughts and behaviour are adjusted to fit with what they experience in this environment [Chapter 9]. The more the natural environment demands attention and adaptation, the less the outside world features in thoughts and actions. Individuals become aware, not only of nature surrounding them, but also of themselves and of other human beings. This 'new' knowledge makes them comfortable in the natural environment and reluctant to leave this newly found tranquillity. The sudden departure from this 'comfortable' environment back to the routine world causes a melancholic state of mind, which is soon replaced by motivation and a desire to return to the natural environment again. These returns should take place regularly in order to help the individual to deal with demands of everyday life.

6. CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with the validation of the findings of previous researchers and the newly identified findings from nature experiences. It also explored the effects of a nature experience and adds other perspectives to enhance understanding of the importance of natural environments and experiences.

From the reports and comments from participants as well as literature consulted about nature experiences, the first conclusion that can be made is that individual experiences cannot be generalised. Many personal perceptions, skills, interests and past experiences, as well as numerous external aspects influence the nature experience of individuals.

Various aspects of the nature experience have been identified from study participant reports and literature. Seven phases of a nature experience were explained in using the analogy of a cumulus cloud. The concepts of solitude, oneness, humility, primitiveness, timelessness, care, self-knowledge and spirituality were highlighted as values of a natural environment experienced by individuals. The awareness of these values differentiates an authentic nature experience from other uses of the natural environment because individuals become more focused on their natural surroundings and themselves.

While these phases and values are not all inclusive of any natural environment, they clearly suggest that the nature experience is more than a simple recreational visit. This is not to say that all people who visit natural environments will seek or experience these feelings. Rather, the constructs discussed provide insight into the meaning and value of nature experiences. They represent some of the beliefs that are influential in protecting natural environments, in particular those few undeveloped areas still found in Southern Africa. In general, individuals value these undeveloped environments in general very strongly. It seems as if the primary source of these declared values is the unspoilt natural environment itself. There are psychological benefits in the environment and the wilderness environment is the source of peoples' satisfactory experiences. Therefore the setting itself contributes to how the nature experience is valued. Changes in the natural environment affect the kind and intensity of the experience the area provides.

Study participants' reports illustrate that there are deeper and more profound spiritual events that can occur when people spend time in natural environments. These events are what make them value the experience. The experiences reported in this study go far beyond the traditional 'to get away from it all'. Although

reports include the stress reduction and relaxation characteristics, they also illustrate the development of a more spiritual process of awareness and fulfillment. Whatever the reason for visiting a natural environment or the implications it holds for the individual, important benefits are produced by the lived experience.

Some aspects, however, may have a negative influence on parts or the whole of a nature experience. This may lead to a perception that the nature experience as such was negative or that negative feelings were caused by the experience. These perceptions are mostly caused by external factors to the nature experience. They should be highlighted as external factors influencing perceptions. This aspect will be covered briefly in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 8

FACTORS THAT AFFECT A NATURE EXPERIENCE

Setting an example is not the main means of influencing others; it is the only means (Albert Einstein, 1879 - 1955).

1. INTRODUCTION

Although many of South Africa's most popular national parks and provincial and privately owned nature reserves are by world standards, well-managed, there is extensive evidence of visitor pressure (South Africa Info, 2003). This may lead to stressful situations which have the potential to negatively affect a nature experience.

Previous research has suggested that overcrowding, noise, weather conditions, environmental degradation and an inappropriate mix of facilities are all conditions that may detract from visitors' experiences in certain environments (Anderson & DeNeve, 1992:347-351; Daniel & Boster, 1976). It was also found that visitors are more likely to be influenced by evidence of inappropriate human behaviour such as littering, noise or environmental destruction (Leung & Marion, 1999:270-279). Factors such as the numbers and types of structures (e.g. boats, aircraft, motor vehicles), the distance between them, and the number of people they support are all examples of 'social conditions' which may have an impact upon visitors' experiences (Stankey, 1973:62; Manning, Lime & Freimund, 1996:39-59). Many surveys have shown that visitors to natural areas prefer minimal development and are disappointed by visual intrusions, noise and crowding (Buckley & Pannell, 1990:24-32; Kepe, 2001:155-159).

The nature experience of an individual can be influenced by both internal and external factors. 'Mind states' (moods) as used by Borrie and Roggenbuck (2001:202-228) and Hull and Michael (1995:1-14) will be regarded as internal influences as far as this study is concerned. External influences are mainly caused by other human beings, directly or indirectly, and are seldom seen as positive influences. Factors that influence a nature experience in a positive way usually originate within a person him/herself (e.g. appreciation of a landscape, using senses in a nature setting, connecting with nature in a spiritual sense, etc.), while external factors often degrade a nature experience (e.g. destruction of the environment, crowding, litter, etc.).

People experience stress in everyday life and have learnt skills to cope with it. Certain forms of stress may also accompany recreation in natural environments. What some people refer to as 'hassles' encountered during a trip to a natural environment, can be regarded as a form of stress. The 'daily hassles' concept was developed by DeLongis (1985), DeLongis, Folkman and Lazarus (1988:486-495), Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer and Lazarus (1981:1-39) and Lazarus, Delongis, Folkman and Gruen (1985:770-779). The hassles concept suggests that every day demands on a person have a greater overall effect than larger life events. Hassle variables measure the immediate and multiple pressures that occur during the nature experience and the disruption associated with them (Schuster & Hammitt, 2001:26).

For the purpose of this study, the term 'disturbance' is used to describe different forms of hassles. Disturbance refers to the irritating, frustrating events or situations that occur during visits to natural areas. They can range from minor annoyances to fairly major pressures or problems.

A visitor to a natural environment may experience numerous events that must be evaluated and coped with, but these may be regular events in a nature context. For example, travelling off-road routes may create route-finding trouble, nearby campsite users may cause irritating noise, and seeing litter in remote destinations may create frustration or even anger (Schuster & Hammitt, 2001:26). In addition,

situations that may lead to conflicts in outdoor settings can be sources of disturbances, such as user crowding, for example hikers on a day-long hiking route, or negative interactions between anglers and ski boat operators on a river. These types of disturbances represent specific attributes of the nature experience that may negatively affect the experience, and when taken collectively, could have a significant disruptive impact on the experience as a whole.

The following paragraphs illustrate the disturbances which were highlighted by participants in this study as those which have a negative impact on their nature experience or parts thereof. Disturbances are explained by means of practical examples.

2. DISTURBANCES AFFECTING A NATURE EXPERIENCE

During the latter half of the 1990s, The Zambezi Society (a Zimbabwe-based non-governmental organization devoted to conserving the biodiversity and wilderness values of the Zambezi River) began to receive complaints and concerns from various sources about negative impacts of tourism. These were wide-ranging and were all disturbances to the individual's nature experience. Reports included unchecked commercialisation, ad hoc development, tree cutting, unauthorised road and camp building, noise pollution, littering and abuse of camping sites and illicit tour and guide activities (Wynn, 2002:34-39). Study participants in this study frequently mentioned these concerns.

Human activities are commonly reported as the most important distraction of a nature experience or feeling of a place feeling truly wild. In her findings Wynn (2002:39) mentions that too many people, vehicles and tour operators, pollution and litter, harassment by curio sellers, unruly and insensitive visitors contribute to 70% of visitors' complaints. This was followed by noise created by aircraft, motorboats, cars, trains, radios, generators and construction companies and general overdevelopment of the area. Ecosystem damage was also rated as an important disturbance.

Figure 8.1 indicates the most common disturbances identified by study participants that affect their nature experiences in some or other way. Study participants could mention more than one disturbance encountered. No distinction is made between disturbances experienced in different natural environments or settings, although some are emphasised by study participants in specific cases. These are interpreted as such. Similar disturbances are grouped together under a single heading.

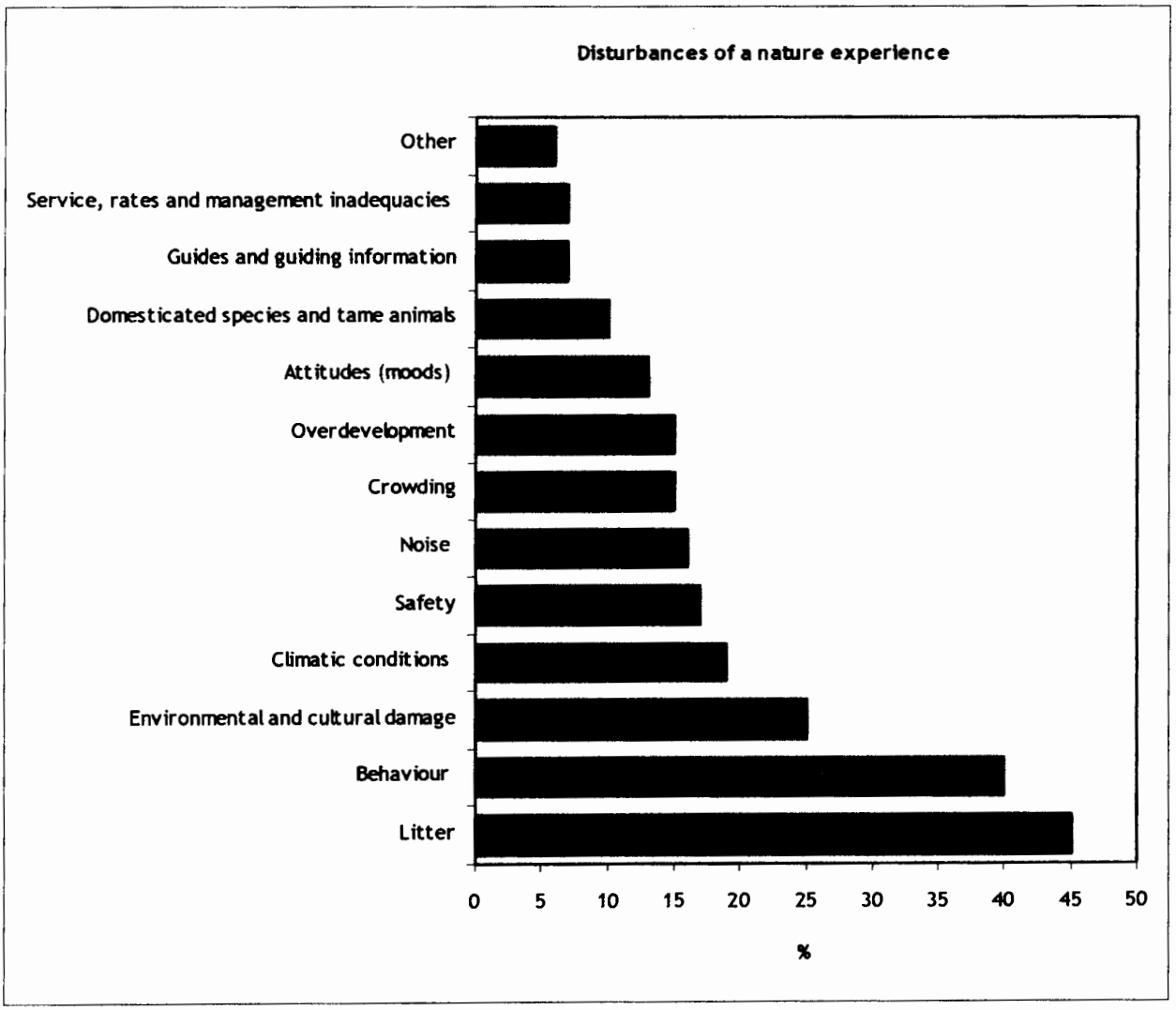


Figure 8.1: Disturbances in natural environments as reported by study participants (N = 210).

Although Figure 8.1 represents views of study participants from various natural environments, litter, including visual pollution, was singled out as the greatest source of disturbance in all destinations. This is followed by the inconsiderate behaviour of co-visitors which includes aspects such as 'bad manners', 'being selfish', 'appalling behaviour', 'ignorance', 'alcohol abuse', 'loud and noisy', as well as people who interfere with natural objects or insult cultures.

Many study participants felt strongly about damage done to the natural environment as well as influences on indigenous cultures. Mining activities, agricultural practices and trade in indigenous plants and animals, and other objects from nature, play a prominent role. Disrespect for the values and beliefs of local cultures also contributes to negative experiences.

A considerable percentage of study participants (19%) mentioned climatic factors as a disturbance, e.g. excessive heat or cold, rainy weather, strong winds and even effects of long spells of drought were mentioned.

Safety plays an important role in a nature experience and 17% of the study participants indicated that unsafe feelings and the continuous nuisance of locals begging or selling items at certain destinations influenced the experience to a great extent.

Noise from vehicles, aircraft, neighbouring villages and towns, construction, maintenance and infrastructure activities were indicated as disturbances in many destinations.

Too many people and vehicles were seen as a disturbance in many areas. These aspects are grouped together as 'crowding'.

Study participants regarded development in many cases as a disturbance. Where development already exists, it is accepted as long as it is maintained. At least 15% of the study participants said that excessive infrastructure with the accompanying side-effects influence an experience in nature negatively.

The attitudes of co-group members play an important role in the nature experience and 13% of the study participants indicated that the 'moods' of others in their group seriously influenced the total experience.

Other important disturbances identified were:

- the presence of alien species such as domesticated animals in natural environments,
- wild animals that have lost their fear for human beings and became a nuisance,
- guides that are not well informed,
- the lack of information on a specific feature or environment, and
- poor service and facilities.

Unreasonable rates were also frequently mentioned. Mismanagement of an area is of a great concern to a considerable number of individuals.

People do not want to be rushed during a visit to a natural environment and some get frustrated when vehicles give problems and time is lost due to repairs that have to be done.

The respective disturbances are interpreted as follows:

2.1 Litter

Litter is identified as the most important disturbance on experiences of visitors as was mentioned by 45% of study participants. Litter typically originates from hikers dropping items, campers not cleaning sites thoroughly, rubbish bins not emptied frequently, or toilet paper visible from inadequate burial of human waste. The following excerpt from an anonymous letter to the editor of the Kruger Park Times illustrates the impact of litter on the individual's nature experience:

> (T)he prevalence of visitors using lookout points as open-air toilets... The situation seen at the Bobbejaanskrans viewing site along the Orpen-Satara road is despicable. ...an indication of the mentality of visitors to the Park. Who on earth goes to a so-called National Heritage area and does their private business, leaving toilet paper in full view, where other tourists have to smell and look at their 'litter'? What a great advertisement for our foreign visitors...! Is litter along the roads in the Kruger National Park not enough to show what pigs we South Africans are? Just have a look at the litter at the Orpen entrance gate for example... (Anon, 2004:12).

At the Lambertsbaai caravan park a visitor responds as follows:

> (You find) beautiful rocks from where you can admire the bird island and the Atlantic Ocean - that is to say if you can manage to battle your way through the waste and sewage. This once wonderful place is now transformed into a pig-sty. The once beautiful beaches are also littered. Nothing is being done to clear the rubbish (Hofmeyr, 2005:13).

The above excerpts attest of great frustration and shame for other people's behaviour in natural environments. Such feelings affect the overall experience negatively. Individuals' recalling of the impact of the 'litter' event and the power of the telling and retelling of this aspect may overshadow the overall benefits of the trip [also refer to Chapter 9].

2.2 Behaviour

Forty per cent of study participants mentioned unacceptable behaviour of other people as a serious disturbance with significant impact on nature experiences. People creating noise, especially loud music from car radios, are specifically

annoying and these people are generally regarded as impolite and selfish [FN-2:599, Chapter 8, par. 2.9].

The irresponsible use of four-wheel-drive vehicles was a frequently reported disturbance. Many reports from study participants contain the feelings represented in the following excerpts:

> Recent experiences in Mozambique have proven to me that the locals are increasingly irritated with the arrogant attitude displayed by South Africans. It is heartbreaking to see pristine environments being torn up by hooligans on quads, the irresponsible use of water craft and 4x4s tearing up and down the beaches (McJannet, 2004:4).

> There are few things as destructive as certain members of the South African 'off-road' fraternity, be they campers, fishermen or divers. Their common goal seems to be to kill, spoil and destroy. They remove coral and shellfish as souvenirs, and catch any species of fish with no regard to size. They buy under-size crayfish, female crayfish in berry as well as shells, thereby creating a market for the destruction of marine life by the local population.

> These are the people who made Sodwana Bay what it is today: over-commercialised and polluted. So how do you prevent Mozambican beaches from becoming another Sodwana? The answer: rules, rules and more rules. Ban all unnecessary driving on beaches and ban all quad bikes, scramblers, jet skis and microlites. Ban diving compressors, generators and hi-fis in resorts and camps. Ban all fishing and spearfishing of non-game species as well as the taking of live shells, corals and crayfish. If these rules are transgressed, vehicles and boats should be confiscated at the border (Van Wyk, 2000:27).

The following account represents many reports on the inconsiderate actions of co-visitors to natural environments:

> There is always someone who goes against the flow, who tries to drive on the beach even though everybody knows it is not allowed, and then challenges you to 10 rounds when you ask him to please stop because he is damaging the environment. How do we deal with these idiots...?
>
> We visited the West Coast and stayed at the lovely Tietiesbaai campsite. As luck would have it a teenager-filled vehicle ...pulls into the site behind us with drunken youngsters spewing out from the doors. They could barely stand or talk or light a fire. ...and they had to play their music at maximum volume. Every so often the campsite kids were given an education in words not to use when talking to the local dominee as the drunkards exchanged pleasantries. Sadly the even bigger idiot next to the youngsters saw the whole affair as a challenge and decided to turn up his music.
>
> The following morning we saw the boys having their car speakers repaired in Paternoster. Rather than endure another night of madness we complained to the camp manager who assured us that if the situation continued they would be asked to leave. Fortunately that was the end of that and everyone was able to watch the boats at sunset in peace and quiet.
>
> Some of us come to places like Tietiesbaai to enjoy nature's sights and sounds and not to take a class in crude language or listen to (some artist's) greatest hits. In the ideal world one would be able to eliminate (this) by signs with 'Sorry no entry because you drive on beaches or you are a noisy nuisance. Access denied.' I think a

> blacklist of those who cannot behave is a superb idea... (Anon., 2005:73).

Similar reports from other natural environments were received. For example, Hofmeyr (2005:13) mentions loud music from car radios in the caravan park at Lambertsbaai, accompanied by alcohol abuse, and drunken people driving around at high speeds and screeching tyres. This experience resulted in Hofmeyr and 30 of his co-campers' decision to seek alternative campsites in future.

From the above reports it is also clear that alcohol abuse is regarded as a major disturbance affecting a nature experience. Not only do the drinkers become loud, in certain cases they can also be a danger to others. For example, a study participant who did a difficult off-road trip writes:

> We ran into a group of youths who had a problem crossing various obstacles (en route). They approached our vehicle with beer in hand asking for help... (Vorster, 2005:5).

The impact of irresponsible behaviour of visitors to natural environments on those who go there for what nature offers them, can be regarded as one of the primary disturbances that affects the overall experience. People are around most of the time. Should their behaviour be perceived as disturbing and should this behaviour persist then the total experience may be perceived as being negative. Also refer to the events in the Tsitsikamma National Park as discussed under paragraph 2.12 in this chapter.

2.3 Environmental and cultural damage

2.3.1 Natural environment

Individuals feel very strongly that damage to the environment in whatever form affects their nature experience. Mining activities in sensitive areas (Fig. 8.2) were rated as very important in contributing to a negative experience.



Figure 8.2: Destruction caused by mining activities in the Richtersveld National Park.

The following excerpt as well as PR-7:576 are examples of generally strong feelings mentioned by participants.

> My son and I undertook a short trip to the Richtersveld National Park to test his new double cab. We reached Port Nolloth in the evening and found a bitterly cold wind blowing across the open campsite on the coast. We decided to drive on to Beauvallon as our Northern Cape Tourist map showed campsites at Beauvallon and Brandkaros. From Port Nolloth to 16 kilometres inside the national park, the countryside has been turned upside down in search of diamonds. All we found at Beauvallon were huge mine warning signs. The campsite fireplace was still visible but Beauvallon is now a private mining area - NO ENTRY!

> So, we travelled until a small sign pointing to the left, 'Brandkaros', with a huge sign behind it proclaiming a mine area. However, lights in the distance drew us on and we found a pleasant woman just closing up the office. ...we paid up early and were on our way to Sendelingsdrift. Here again, at every road junction we found a green-and-yellow sign reading National Park with the inevitable mine sign.
>
> At Sendelingsdrift, look for (National) Park vehicles under a tree on the left and you have found the Richtersveld Park office, lost amongst the buildings and workshop of the mine. The first 16,5 kilometres we drove on a wide gravel road (Fig. 8.3) that curves to the left with a large sign once again, PRIVATE. This road leads to a mine on the banks of the Orange River. Instead we travelled straight on and spent our last night at the beautiful, quiet Richtersberg campsite on the banks of the Orange (Pletschke, 2003:29).

The above-mentioned reflection proves that damaging activities such as mining can cause lasting negative impacts to individuals, especially those who are connected to nature.

The majority of reflections on such damage to the environment reflect this conclusion, for example:

> We, by accident, pass the quarry. The stretched-out valley is a gaping wound. The machines of destruction are hidden behind the nearby remaining hills and a fence. We wonder when they will stop. When all these mountains have been razed? Perhaps, they will go further, into the depths of the earth's crust, stripping more and more of the top layers of her precious skin, and still hope there is more to satisfy their unquenchable lust for what exactly? Images of abortion and destruction swim in our heads. Is the fascination,

disgust, intrigue and horror with the (re)productive system so stimulating that it cannot be left alone? When does exploration become exploitation? The line seems very fine [FN-3:600].

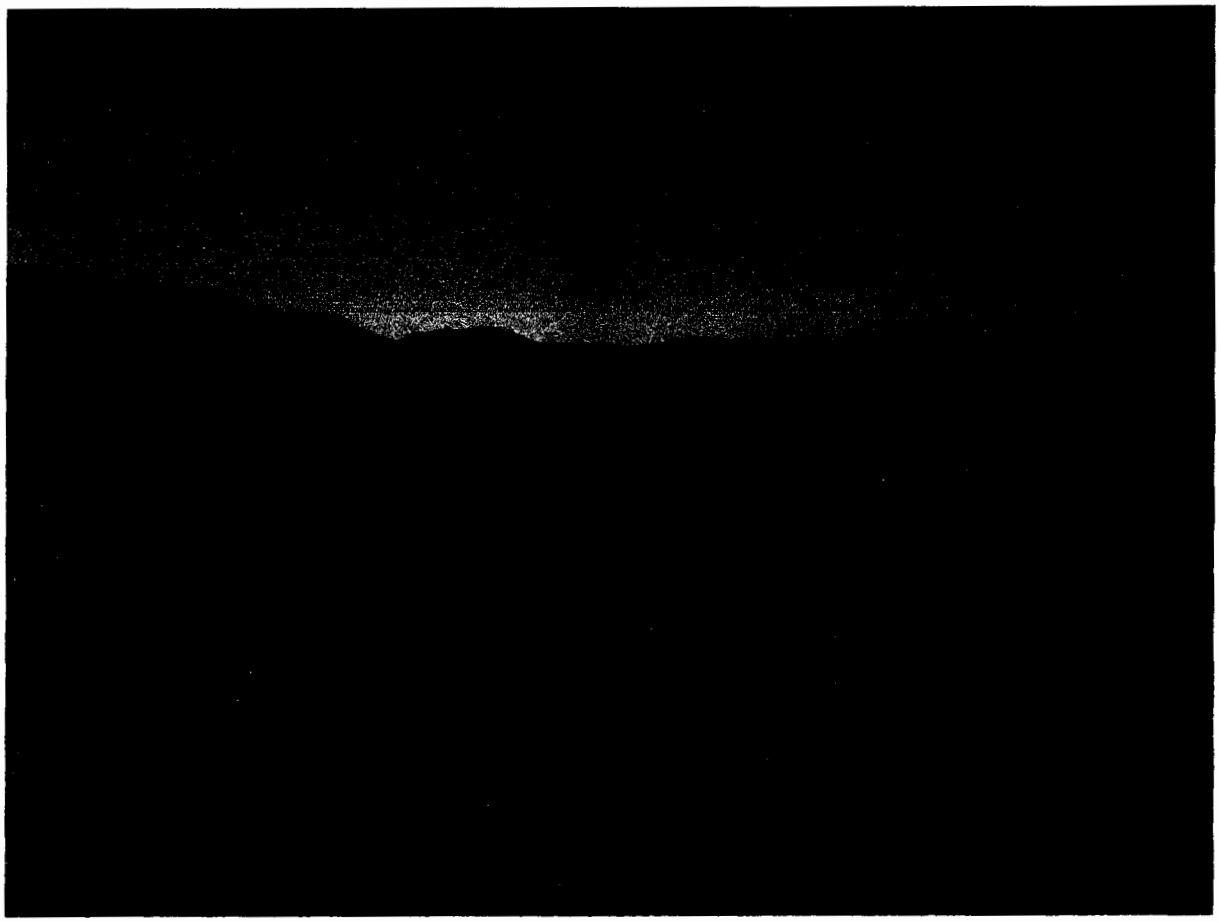


Figure 8.3: One of the wide, thoroughly scraped roads leading to the campsite and mining activities in the Richtersveld National Park. Mining activities are visible on the right hand side.

Another observation reads:

> It was a while since I had been to Cape Vidal and I was horrified on a recent visit to see the destruction of dune forest to make way for a big new road to the camp. Surely this could have been more sensitively handled? I also gather there are plans on the go to treble or quadruple the number of chalets. That will presumably

> involve destroying even more forest. I hope the powers that be have done their homework properly. I wonder how full the hotels and campsites in nearby St Lucia are to justify such a huge expansion...? As with so many of these schemes, there is also a real danger that conservation will take a back seat and the spirit of the place, which attracts people in the first place, might be destroyed (Rorich, 2001:40).

Also refer to PI-4:425(46), J-3:623, J-4:636, as well as Wakelin, (2001:14) in this regard.

Aspects such as abuse of natural phenomena, selling of indigenous species and objects from nature also play an important role in a nature experience. The following excerpt confirms this statement:

> On a tour through the Eastern Cape we stopped at Ladybrand. At a stop street a hawker approached us to sell his wares ...live chameleons at R5 each! This was an extremely bad experience and concerns about this phenomenon remained with us for quite some time. We did not buy it and insisted that he set it free... [FN-4:600].

Reports of rare plants being sold as curios (e.g. trees being dug from the Dukuduku forest near St Lucia in KwaZulu-Natal, selling them for decorations to visitors along the route) and where huge trees were being cut down for firewood, curios or boats (Fig. 8.4) attest to the influence of such events on a nature experience. Some participants mentioned that although they did not actually see this type of damage to the environment, the knowledge that it happens is disturbing enough to influence a nature experience.



Figure 8.4: Sights such as a huge tree that was cut down to carve a boat are a disturbance to the nature experience of individuals.

According to Tempelhoff (2005, pers. comm.) the construction activity of the mokoro (Fig. 8.4) is part of the cultural transformation of the landscape. In this particular case the ecotourists were aware of the fact that this activity is part of the indigenous culture. Despite this knowledge, the damaging effect on the environment due to activities such as these still had a negative influence on their experience.

2.3.2 Culture

Cultural concerns included the interrelationships between visitors and local people, especially where cultures show little resistance to western influences. Cruywagen (2004a:16) stated that the Maasai people that he encountered on a tour to the Serengeti are fascinating and friendly but that they have, unfortunately adopted

one Western tradition - the US dollar. They offer village tours, spears and other traditional artefacts for sale, payable in US dollars.

It is often mentioned that local people are mostly friendly and hospitable. Usually there is a reciprocal cultural curiosity between visitors and locals. However, in certain areas, negative consequences have begun to show. According to Bolton (1997:246) on the part of the visitor these include the following:

- Improper dress and offensive behaviour to local customs

Respondents mentioned that individuals' behaviour or ignorance of local laws negatively influenced their experience in Malawi. While the law stated clearly that women are not to be seen with trousers or bare knees outside tourist resorts, some ladies ignored this and felt offended when they were reprimanded. They were unfriendly and uncooperative for the rest of the tour, spoiling it for the other members in the group.

- Ignorance of required behaviour at sacred sites

Group members visiting the archaeological site at Mapungubwe, Limpopo Province, picked up 'sacred' items and stood on graves during a guided tour. The local guide kindly referred to this behaviour as inappropriate due to ancestral spirits and the local beliefs regarding sacred sites.

In KwaZulu-Natal, visitors intruded on rituals of sangomas by talking and laughing out loud, spoiling the experience for their co-visitors who were patiently waiting to continue their walk through the forest where the sangomas were practicing their rituals.

- Taking photographs without asking permission

Many cases were mentioned where tourists took pictures of local's villages, houses, children, old people, artefacts and dress, and in the process offending these people

without knowing it. Reactions from the locals and counter-reactions by the photographers often spoilt the moment for the group.

- Intrusion into homes and villages

Respondents visiting the Richtersveld mentioned their embarrassment when co-visitors entered the houses of the Nama people at a village without asking permission or even knocking. 'They entered the houses as if they were museums!'

- Encouraging begging

Many respondents regard the offering of sweets, money, cigarettes and other items to local people as a negative experience while on tour through remote areas. Children in particular quickly learn to stand next to the roads or running towards oncoming vehicles, shouting and begging for these items, encouraging a 'begging culture'.

Study participants mention that local people also cause negative feelings through unwelcome responses on their part. This is confirmed by Bolton (1997). Some of these responses include:

→ begging by children for food, money, sweets or stationery;
→ pestering visitors to buy souvenirs, and in the process damaging vehicles or causing visitors to feel unsafe;
→ 'mobbing' visitors who try to take photographs without paying;
→ trying to unlawfully sell wildlife, e.g. chameleons, snakes, tortoises, rocks, plants and plant products, to visitors;
→ use of swearwords and gestures learned from visitors;
→ conceding to western influence, pretending to be culturally original.

The latter is mainly mentioned by respondents who visited the Kalahari. For example, 'San were standing next to the road, selling 'traditional' artefacts, made

from Coca-Cola cans and wire, while they were dressed in traditional animal hide cloths and a khaki shirt, claiming to be 'true' San people!'.

According to Tempelhoff (2005, pers. comm.) this phenomenon has a bearing on the hybridisation of culture and of the environment. This forms part of the realisation that pristine natural landscapes rarely are historically undisturbed environments. White (2004:564) states:

> (H)ybrid landscapes are where we spend our lives, and, as much to the point, where most wild creatures spend theirs.

Tempelhoff (2005:1) says that the realisation that the environment is part and parcel of a constant process of change over time - capable of transforming humans in their natural state - forms an inherent part of our contemporary understanding of cultural dynamics.

For ecotourism to claim that it preserves and enhances local cultures is not entirely true. Ethnic groups are increasingly being seen as a major asset to natural scenery. Though ecotourism attempts to integrate indigenous communities into the market driven economy, the underlying objective is to keep them as archaeological artefacts, stimulating the tourist's nostalgic desire for the authentic, the untouched, the primitive and the savage. Photographs and descriptions of ethnic women used to promote ecotourism give credibility to the false impression that they are willing and available for 'discovery' by tourists (Kamuaro, 1998:45).

The Maasai in Kenya is one example of indigenous cultures under threat due to ill-considered tourism practices. The Maasai from Loita Hills, 300km southwest of Nairobi, have been fighting a fierce battle to prevent an indigenous forest, known as 'The forest of the lost child', from being turned into another ecotourism destination. Having experienced the devastating effects of tourism at the nearby Maasai Mara National Park, they are determined to preserve their sacred forest, which for generations has been under their management and control and carefully kept as a sacred place for worship and communion with Maasai deities.

Although mainly pastoralists, the Maasai here are also small-scale subsistence agriculturalists who have used resources in a sustainable manner. As a result, the forest is still dense and rich in biodiversity, with abundant wild flora and fauna. Plants serve as herbal medicine and there are sufficient water resources and pastures to raise healthy cattle. With the intrusion of tourists, their spiritual and material way of life will degenerate rapidly. As one local person in the neighbouring Maasai Mara reserve said:

> Tourism has been allowed to develop with virtually no controls. Too many lodges have been built, too much firewood is being used and no limits are being placed on tourist vehicles. They regularly drive off-track and harass the wildlife. Their vehicle tracks crisscross the entire Maasai Mara. Inevitably the bush is becoming eroded and degraded (Kamuaro, 1998:56).

Concerns expressed that similar events are taking place in sensitive areas such as the Okavango Delta, Namib Desert and Richtersveld, warrant further investigation.

2.4 Climatic conditions

Excessive rain, heat, cold and strong winds are climatic factors that were mentioned by study participants as possible influences on a nature experience. For example, comments such as 'When it rains each day of a 10 day holiday, then the weather can spoil a holiday!' and 'It rained for 4 days with almost no sunshine - we were camping!' and 'The unexpected gale force winds during the night gave us a fright and almost ripped our tent apart' were noted by study participants.

The reason why weather changes affect people's experience may be due to the fact that we are more exposed to the natural changes in the physical environment. According to Bell et al. (1996:187) changes in the physical environment have measurable impacts on human behaviour.

Climatic conditions which have a negative influence on the experience are mainly those cases where unexpected storms (for example the flood in the Richtersveld, (Gous, 2004:127)), winds or severe cold or heat spells are encountered. These aspects are usually of a passing nature and when conditions become normal, the negative experience is soon forgotten (Cruywagen, 2004b:13, Gous, 2004:127, J-4:636).

2.5 Safety

Safety is an important aspect for people who visit natural environments. When they don't feel safe, their experience is affected negatively. Participants mentioned crime (theft) as a concern, but the pestering by locals who beg and hawkers trying to sell curios, tours and exchange money are also major disturbances. For example:

> The big problem they have is street hawkers trying to sell you tours and to change currency (Phillips, 2001:27).

> We have just completed a 4x4 trip with three vehicles to the Northern Cape. (W)e decided to do the Riemvasmaak trail as well. We arrived at Riemvasmaak and set up camp and went to relax in the pool. Being from Gauteng we automatically locked and armed the alarms on the vehicles. When we got to the springs there were eight young local girls in the pool. One suggested that they leave but the others said they wanted to see our response. Not being bothered by this we climbed into the small pool. We had not even got comfortable when one of the alarms went off and, on getting to the vehicle, we found that someone had broken the rear side window of one of the vehicles and had also rummaged through all the marley boxes.

> We reported the matter to the office and were informed that they knew who it was and that it had happened four or five times

> before. They said that this guy had already been in jail for theft a couple of times but they could not do anything, as there was never any evidence. I feel that others must be made aware of this so that they can take precautions when visiting the area. Unfortunately we didn't get to do the trail... (Davel, 2002).

Similar incidents have been reported in the Drakensberg Hiking Trails in KwaZulu-Natal (Tempelhoff, 2005, pers. comm.) as well as in various other areas e.g. the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga Hiking Trails since 2003.

2.6 Noise

Noise is a disturbing environmental phenomenon, because disturbing is by definition unwanted. As such, when sounds encountered are loud, unpredictable, uncontrollable and considered inappropriate for a given area, the 'noise' will most likely be considered annoying and detracts from other preferred experiences such as the enjoyment of nature (Mace, Bell & Loomis, 2004:5-31). Driver, Nash and Haas (1987:294-319) suggest that the primary reasons people visit a national park, nature reserve or outdoor recreational environment is to escape the noise and stresses of urban lifestyle.

Noise from vehicles, aircraft, construction and general maintenance activities were often mentioned as disturbing. Noise is one of the most frequently mentioned stressors in surveys of what people do not like in their environment (Bell et al., 1996:152). It is no surprise that noise pollution in natural environments has been classified as an environmental stressor.

Research has shown that noise in natural environments can have a significantly negative impact on recreational experiences by interrupting people's feelings of solitude and tranquillity (Kaplan, 1995:169-182; Kaplan & Talbot, 1983:163-204).

A study participant who sat at a waterhole in the Okaukuejo rest camp in the Etosha National Park, Namibia, commented as follows:

> We arrived early at the waterhole where there was an abundance of life and activities... springbok, gemsbok, kudu, zebra... It was just such a pity that so much 'unnecessary' noise came from the camp. Completely quiet moments did not exist - dustbins were noisily being emptied, car alarms went off, reverse warnings of large trucks were ceaseless... not to speak of the pumps, generators and other mechanical noises! (FN-5:601)

According to Bell et al. (1996:158) noise over which we have no perceived control is more disturbing than noise we can control readily. If one has the means to stop a noise, one is less annoyed by it than if one cannot control it. For example, if your children are turning the car radio on high volume at a campsite, you can tell them to turn it off and thus control the noise. If your neighbouring campers play loud music, you have less immediate control over the noise and so it is more disturbing [FN-2:599].

2.7 Crowding

Often reported disturbances were 'too many people at campsite' and 'too many vehicles on the trail'. Although there are limits to the number of people and vehicles allowed in most campsites and off-road routes as well as hiking trails, individual users perceive large groups using the area or route as 'crowding'. For example, an organised group of 25 vehicles visited the Richtersveld at the same time as six study participants (Fig. 8.5). Although the convoy of vehicles was observed only once, the study participants experienced a feeling of crowdedness [J-4:636]. In such cases, larger groups may be unaware of their impact on other visitors (Schuster & Hammitt, 2001:28).

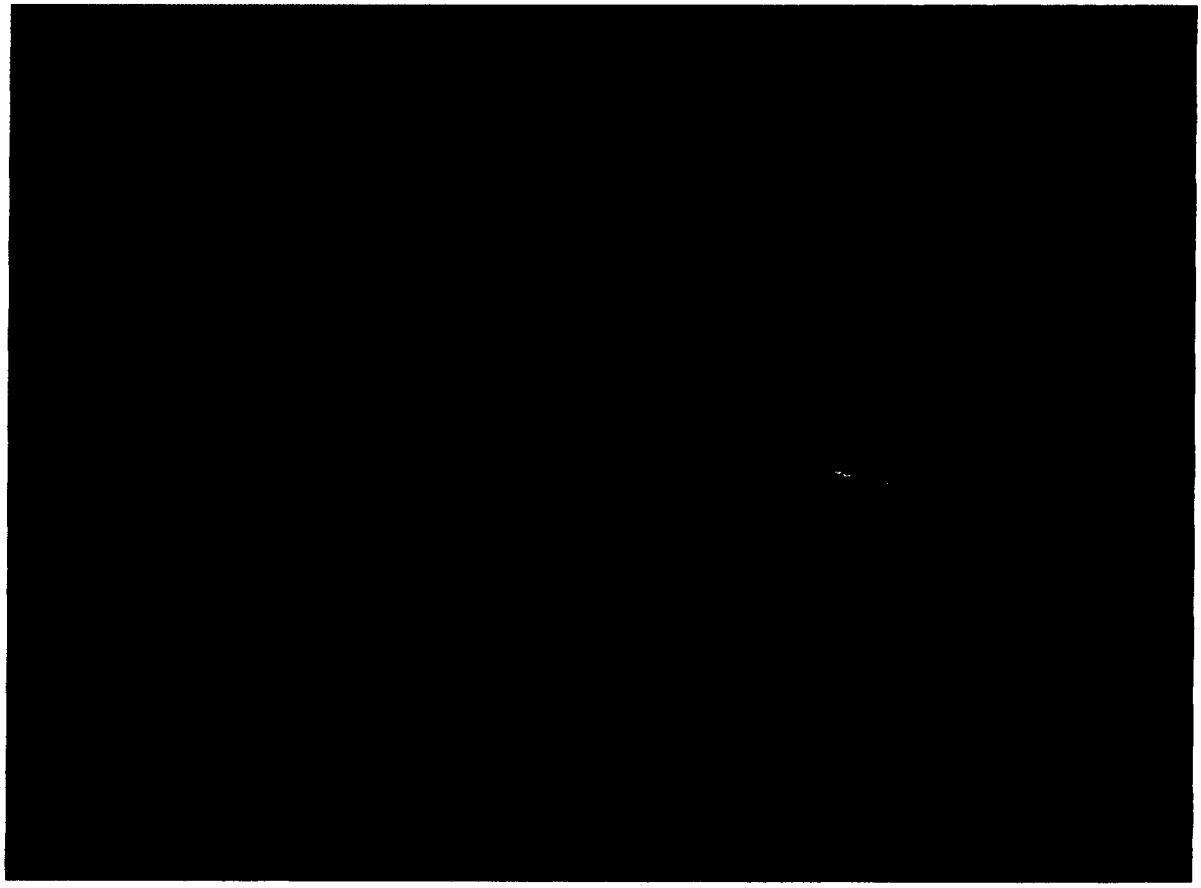


Figure 8.5: A convoy of cars in the Richtersveld created the feeling of crowdedness.

In other cases crowding seemed to be a serious disturbance on the nature experience. The following excerpt is an example of the frustration accompanying crowding especially of pristine natural environments (Anon, 2002:10):

> My wife and I have just returned from an 8 000km tour of Namibia. On this trip, our 13th by the way, we found some very disturbing factors. Etosha was overrun by overlanders: at Namutoni there were 9 trucks, Halali 11, Okaukuejo 15! The Hoanib river bed is a disaster with tracks all over the place turning the area into a powder bath, and the worst of all, the overseas tourists in their hired 4x4s going up Van Zyl's Pass against the oncoming traffic!

Some natural environment destination authorities do impose a limit on visitor numbers but this is usually determined by the capacity of campsites and other accommodation within the destination. Visitor limits are seldom based on other criteria (Bolton, 1997:237). Butler (1991:201) says that people involved with tourism and those in protected natural areas have different priorities. Those most concerned with generating revenue or local employment may not consider that a place is too crowded until it starts to lose popularity as a result of visitor numbers. Surveys of visitor satisfaction could remain encouraging for a long time because of 'recreational succession'. However, at a certain time the carrying capacity will be reached and those visitors who were tolerant of crowding up to a certain point will look for other places to go to (Fig. 7.1).

Social carrying capacity has been described as the level of use beyond which other users negatively affect a person's experience in an environment. The presence of other people and clearly visible human-made structures can cause significant concern amongst some natural environment visitors. Large numbers of people in a natural setting have been judged as intrusive and found to degrade users' perceptions of the natural beauty of an environment (Ulrich, 1993:73-137).

2.8 Overdevelopment

It seems that visitors approve of development and a well-maintained infrastructure in areas where those facilities already exist. In remote areas, or those places where nature is still unspoilt, they feel strongly that development and irresponsible management strategies do affect their nature experience. For example:

> (Development) saddens me. They can develop the cities but natural areas must be left alone. I prefer as little development as possible in nature. I deliberately want to go away from the noise to get to peace and quiet [PI-2:412(27)].

> (I)t depends on where you are. For example in our national parks a certain extent of development is necessary for accessibility.

> Development in unspoilt areas should however be limited [PI-18:486(31)].

People prefer to avoid overdeveloped areas. The following excerpts testify to this statement:

> When I look around I don't think development is being done with care. It seems to be done without considering the impacts on nature. I prefer to go to places where there is no excessive development... where there is silence, open spaces... no built-up areas [PI-28:538(28-30)].

> I have seen too much damaging development in natural areas. I realise that some development must take place to allow people to get to certain places, but it is so sad... It is too excessive. Development takes away the unique simplicity of nature. For example, three years ago (we visited) Graskop. We walked down to the waterfall. It was just us... no one else... we swam. Nature was so extremely beautiful. Now it has been developed. They built an 'adventure' site right at the waterfall, destroying the uniqueness and tranquillity of that spot. It is not the same anymore... [PI-32:558(23)].

Study participants who visited the Richtersveld have different viewpoints as to whether the newly built ablution facilities (Fig. 8.6) are an asset or drawback to their nature experience. Some feel that it is good in the sense that it will prevent further littering of the area by toilet paper not being properly disposed of. Others are of the opinion that any kind of structure detracts from the unspoilt natural environment and that such 'luxuries' will attract more people to the area, with consequent crowding, noise, further development and human interference in a pristine natural area [PI-4:425(47), PI-8:442(28), PR-7:576]. According to Bolton (1997:231-249) this is a common trend in nature-based tourism.

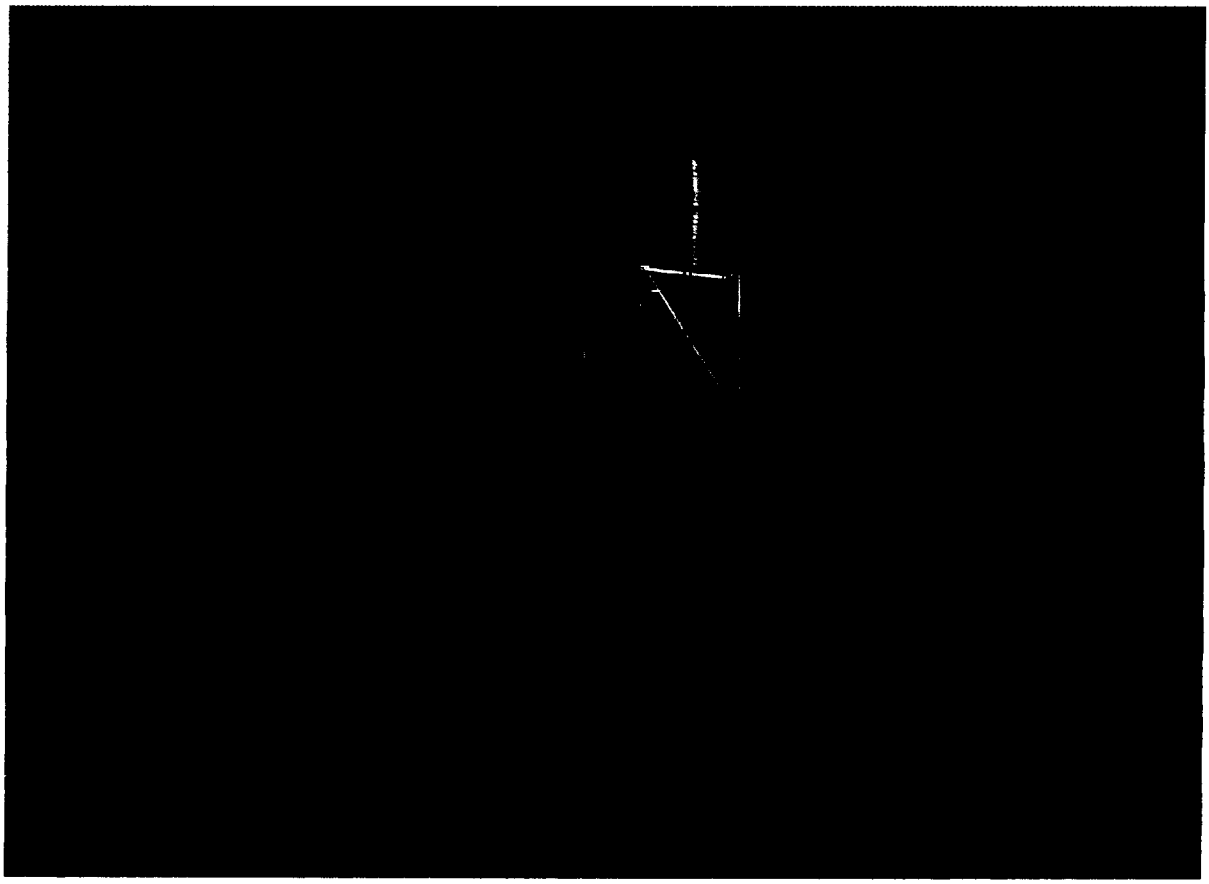


Figure 8.6: The newly built ablution facilities at the camping sites in the Richtersveld National Park.

2.9 Attitudes (moods)

In many reports the aspect of 'mood' or 'mind state' is mentioned right from the beginning of a trip as one of the major impacts on the total nature experience. Mood and mood changes have been found to be sensitive to all the phases and the dynamic nature of the lived and remembered nature experience (Hammitt, 1980:107-115; Hull, 1990b:55-67; Hull & Michael, 1995:1-14; Hull et al., 1996:299-314; Chapter 7).

Mind states are always present in some or other form in all human beings and are a part of everyday experiences. It is defined as 'the subtle subjective state or feelings of a person at any given moment' (Hull, 1991:252). It refers to subjective feelings and people describe these feelings in a language with which they are

familiar. Study participants explain specific moods with words such as 'high spirit, good feelings, excited, peaceful, relaxed and emotional'. Although the experience can influence the mind state, the mind state can also influence the individual's perception of the experience [FN-2:599, FN-6:601].

In cases where the nature experience (or part thereof) is rated as negative, the cause can very often be traced back to an external factor which influenced the person's state of mind at that specific moment [J-2:612]. Individuals who undergo different states of mind (mood changes) during a nature experience, perceive the experience in different ways. When in a negative state of mind, an experience may also be rated as negative [FN-2:599, FN-6:601]. These findings correspond with that of Hull (1990:99-111), Stewart (1992:185-198), Hull et al. (1992:240-252), Hull and Michael (1995:1-14) and Hull et al. (1996:299-314) who focussed on mood as the primary measure of the leisure state of short-term visits to natural environments. They found that moods varied across stages of the on-site visit and that environmental and personal variables shaped at least some moods during the outdoor time.

Some moods change in predictable ways during the nature visit, both across and within the phases of the experience (Hull et al., 1992:240; Hull & Michael, 1995:1). For example, during this study it was found that among a group of students on a field trip to the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, positive moods such as excitement (e.g. energetic, talkative, active, engaged in thought, relaxed) and fulfilment (e.g. playful, humorous, carefree) increased from the anticipation phase, during the travelling-to phase, and the on-site phase of the experience. Although there were slight changes in moods due to the long distance travelled and the high temperatures experienced during the day (e.g. boredom, drowsiness and irritation), the general positive moods increased. However, by the end of the trip (reluctance-to-leave) these positive moods started to decline (due to the fact that it was time to return to normal lectures) and continued to decline during the travel-back phase, until it reached a peak (low) at the short-term recollection phase. At the long-term recollection phase (which in this case was two days after returning from the trip), the positive moods were high again (students told others

about the good time they had on the trip, being talkative, active and energetic in doing so) [PI-5:427, PI-24:515].

Some moods change very little during an experience. For example when being rushed the above-mentioned students almost always experienced frustration, irritation, stress and annoyance, irrespective of the phase of the experience. The same was experienced by study participants who were rushed to be in time at overnight spots during a visit to the Richtersveld [C-15:594]. Also refer to paragraph 2.13 in this chapter.

Moods are not always pleasant during a nature experience. Study participants frequently mentioned feelings of tiredness, uneasiness, irritation, nervousness and even disappointment and guilt during a trip [FN-1:597, J-1:606, PI-4:424(45), PI-6:432(22,23), PI-8:441(12)]. Interesting is that in most cases, these unpleasant mood states are caused to a greater extent rather by co-members of a group or co-visitors to an area, than by environmental factors.

Mood changes in this regard, are reported by participants in all phases of the nature experience. For example, eight participants during a week-end break to the Borakalalo Nature Reserve, North West Province, started the week-end in extremely good moods [FN-2:599]. They were all feeling excited and looked forward to relax and enjoy the peacefulness of the park. The good spirit continued until late morning of day two, when fellow campers turned on their car radio to listen to music. The first observable mood change in the group was annoyance, which quickly turned to irritation. By the end of the afternoon, most of the participants in the group were extremely irritated, seemingly also with one another. A discussion about this change in mood revealed that everyone was frustrated and irritated because of the music that 'destroyed the peace and quietness of the place'. No one was actually angry with any other member of the group; however, the external aspect (loud music) caused a mood change (irritation). They could not eliminate or change the cause of their mood change and found the total nature experience at that stage, 'not good'. By the end of the afternoon, the fellow campers left and again a mood change was apparent.

Everyone seemed relieved and conversations became light-hearted. At the campfire, later the same evening, everyone was peaceful, relaxed and could reflect on the day's experience in a calm, enjoyable manner. The short-term recollection phase revealed that the group experienced an enjoyable weekend, but that the external nuisance (loud music) did influence their total experience.

A further example of how the mood changes of one member of a group influenced the nature experience of the whole group is illustrated in FN-6:601. Comparing the different phases in this case study, one concludes that the anticipation phase was a good part of the total experience. Everyone involved was excited and looking forward to the trip, discussing their plans in 'high spirit'. Even the 'travel-to' phase was generally a positive experience and not even a very bad road and slow travel speed, could really repress their good feelings. However, since their arrival at the first venue, the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, they started experiencing negative feelings and tension due to the one member's attitude. This placed a damper on their total experience while on-site and especially during the travel-back phase. Although they tried to isolate the 'problem', continuing their activities and enjoyment of nature, it did affect their total nature experience. In this case, there was apparently no 'reluctance to leave'. The party was only too happy to leave. In the short-term recollection phase, all members of the group were still feeling a little sad about the whole trip. They mentioned that it was good, but that it could have been so much better if they would have done the trip without their 'friend'. In the long-term recollection phase all participants reported a much more positive account of their feelings and the total nature experience, although the moods of their friend were still mentioned as a negative aspect.

According to McIntyre and Roggenbuck (1998:405) such mood differences as mentioned in the above case studies, appear to be explained by sensation-seeking personality differences, the physical condition of the individual and perceived risk and competency in successfully completing the task or reaching the goal. In the long run, it affects the experience of the individual, as well as those with him/her.

2.10 Domesticated species and tame animals

The presence of dogs, cattle and other domesticated animals was frequently reported as disturbances, especially during on-site contacts.

Study participants mentioned that the extent to which 'wild' animals became tame or lost their instinctive fear for human beings can spoil a nature experience. Habituated monkeys and baboons around tourist campsites are mentioned by respondents for snatching food, raiding tents and chalets and generally being more than a nuisance (Fig. 8.7). Baboons especially, have a tendency towards aggression where they have become used to human beings (Van Wyk, 2003:12).



Figure 8.7: Baboons become a nuisance when they lose their instinctive fear of human beings.

In contrast, some participants regard their contact with tamed wild animals as a highlight and an extraordinary nature experience. Of a group of 60 students who undertook a study tour to the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, more than 30% indicated that their encounter with a semi-tamed bush pig at the campsite, was a personal nature experience. More than 80% of the students mentioned the close sighting of this animal as a highlight of their visit and continued to tell stories about this experience to their friends and family. Although some degree of tameness will probably make animals easier to observe, it can get out of control. For example, a tame warthog (Fig. 8.8) in the campsite of the Chobe National Park in Botswana chased children when being approached. In such cases these animals can pose a danger to people. On the other side, such animals become overweight and probably unhealthy due to the kind of food they consume from people's waste and left-overs. A few individuals in a group of study participants on a tour through Botswana and Zambia also mentioned this aspect as a disturbance to their onsite experience.



Figure 8.8: A tame and overweight warthog in the campsite of the Chobe National Park, Botswana.

The presence of domesticated animals seems to have a greater impact on the nature experience of individuals, particularly in undeveloped remote areas or areas where such animals are not expected to be. Goats in the Richtersveld are of great concern to many visitors (Fig. 8.9). Some of these concerns are represented in the following excerpts:

> The Richtersveld really brought us closer to nature, but we had one very important concern... The goats of the Nama people left me with an uneasiness... I wondered for how long this piece of world will still be this beautiful... [PI-8:442(29)].

> The goats and other domesticated animals are part of the park, but what worries me is the management of these animals. It worries me because I could see the physical damage that these practices have already done to this place. The erosion caused by grazing activities of the goats is alarming (Fig. 8.10). Then I ask myself the question of how much more damage can they cause, and already have caused, to the sensitive vegetation of the area. On the one hand it is one of our last remaining wilderness areas and national park, in the country, but on the other hand this unique wilderness is being damaged at, what I think, an alarming rate! This really worries me. I felt a combination of emotions: sad, furious, disappointed and extremely worried [PI-4:425(46)].



Figure 8.9: Goats roaming in the Richtersveld National Park, consuming and trampling sensitive plants.



Figure 8.10: Visible signs of erosion due to overgrazing by goats in certain areas in the Richtersveld.

Some people detest the presence of domesticated animals in a natural environment such as a game park or nature reserve. A study participant who visited the Mkuzi Game Reserve in KwaZulu-Natal tells the following story:

> It was a dry period in the reserve... One night we were sitting in front of our tent listening to sounds of the night. It was a great experience! Then suddenly we heard something nearby... it was something big and it was grazing...! We got all excited because the first animals that came to mind were rhinos! We grabbed the torches and started searching for some bright eyes. The grazing sounds were getting closer... very close... with the accompanying rise in our excitement. Then a torchlight found the huge animal... it was a cow! Our disappointment was overwhelming... cows in a game reserve! We reported this to the manager who informed us that it was normal for this time of the year when cows from the neighbouring village cross the almost dry river to graze in the park! [PR-12:582].

2.11 Guides and guiding information

Bolton (1997:238) suggests that there is a need for trained guides who can set examples of behaviour, as well as being able to communicate with visitors. It often happens that poorly or untrained guides disturb wildlife to please the visitors, who pay better if they can get a good view of a wildlife phenomenon. A survey done amongst visitors to Mashatu Game Reserve in Botswana indicated that visitors expect knowledgeable guides to contribute to their visit (Marx, 2003). A similar survey done in Livingstone, Zambia indicated that 80% of the complaints of visitors involved inadequate guides or guiding information (Richardson, 2003). Bribes offered to and accepted by guides were particularly highlighted.

On a guided hiking trail in Ndumo, northern KwaZulu-Natal, one of the group members jokingly asked the guide if she could take out one of the huge impala

lilies to take home. 'No', he replied, 'not that one, the roots are too deep, but I will get a smaller one'. In shock the group laughed that off as a joke and said that they know that it is illegal and that they were only joking, to which he replied: 'No, that is not a problem, you can take it; there are plenty here'! This was not a joke and the guide's attitude was of great concern to the whole group. The question was asked 'What if the guide would say this to people who are not conservation-minded?' The extent to which these guides are trained also came under question (FN-7:603).

On a night drive in Umfolozi-Hluhluwe, the guide was blunt and uninterested in what he was doing. A study participant reflects on her experience as follows:

> He (the guide) spoke in a 'tape-recorded' manner. It seemed like we were wasting his precious time. It definitely did not feel like he was delivering a service to paying customers! [FN-8:603].

When a guide is always in a hurry, people feel that they do not have adequate opportunity to experience the environment and it seriously affects the total experience. The following excerpts are examples:

> While being on a tour in the Richtersveld, we were repeatedly hurried on by the tour leader/organiser. There was no time to take photographs or really appreciate the environment. It felt like we pitched tents, ate, slept, woke up, broke up camp, hurried to the next spot ... every day! [C-15(g):594].

> The continuous pressure for time was tiring. It felt as if we just drove quickly up to a place, unpacked, pitched camp, ate, slept, woke up and repeated the cycle the next day. Very little time was allowed to stop, take photographs and admire the area! [C-15(h):594].

> We were on a chase for time. We overstressed our vehicles to be in time at the gate to the Richtersveld National Park. It was always a rush. There was never time to stop and spend some time in this beautiful environment. The plants and landscapes were just flashes while chasing on! What you could not see from the windows of the vehicle, was missed! I will not go on such a trip again! [C-15(i):594].

Untrained guides usually do not know how to communicate effectively with their tourists and how to make all feel welcome and part of the experience. This may also influence a nature experience to a great extent. The following quote confirms this statement:

> The way in which we were introduced to this wonderful area (Richtersveld) was a very negative experience. The guide was so engrossed with two of our fellow passengers in the vehicle that he seldom spoke to the rest of us. They were talking about their experiences on previous visits and did not bother with us who were there for the first time. He also was on more than one occasion blunt with us. We really felt that we were not treated very well although we did pay a lot to be part of this tour [C-16:595].

2.12 Services, rates and management inadequacies

In general study participants did not mention the complete absence of facilities and services as a disturbance in places such as the Richtersveld. However, where facilities are provided visitors expect these facilities to be in good condition. In the same way they expect good service when that is part of the package or included in the rates.

The experiences of study participants who visited the Tsitsikamma National Park on a regular basis, were considerably influenced by the recent lack of proper management and services. They mentioned that SANparks (South African National

Parks) had privatised the restaurant, shop and bar on the premises and that they had never experienced such poor service anywhere else (Brits, 2005, pers. comm.). Many co-visitors could attest to this. Coertze (2005:11) who testifies that a person had to wait one and a half hours to receive a milkshake mentions examples of poor service. A group of Dutch tourists started clapping hands when they finally received their order. Another group had to leave before receiving their food because their bus was leaving. Events such as these contribute to a negative feeling to an otherwise great nature experience.

Coertze (2005:11) says that the park receives visitors from all over the world and the image created by such service is pathetic.

Study participants also mentioned the extremely loud music from the bar (situated on the beach) at Tsitsikamma that can be heard anywhere on the beach, parties being held after-hours inviting day-visitors who do not pay entrance fees, drunkards leaving in the early hours of the morning hooting and screaming at the campers and litter on the beach, as degrading to their experience in such a beautiful place. Broken glass bottles had to be removed by visitors before they could allow their children to play on the beach (Brits, 2005, pers. comm.; Coertze, 2005:11). A visitor also reported that theft became a problem for the first time in 9 years. Coertze (2005:11) says:

> Our natural treasures are now being used to generate money for individuals - at the expense of those who used, supported and enjoyed these national parks for many years.

Another study participant asked the question:

> To whom do the National Parks belong? To the mines, the state, certain individuals who are prepared to pay considerable amounts to have concession rights, or to the people of the land? [PR-7:576].

People are prepared to pay for facilities and good service, but only do so without hesitation when they perceive the service to be value for money. Extraordinary rates and poor service have a definite influence on a nature experience. For example, study participants mentioned that they do not buy anything from shops and try to avoid restaurants as far as possible in National Parks because of exorbitant prices. They rather take all foodstuffs with them (although the extra volume takes up space in the vehicle) than buying it from the park's shops. An example of a report on rates and services in the Kruger National Park is as follows:

> Prices are ridiculous and many items do not have prices displayed providing the visitor with a big surprise at the till. Often, with the price displayed, this is not what is charged at the till. The till also does not have a display that is visible to the buyer so a price can only be confirmed if the till slip is used.
>
> (F)urthermore the packaging size supplied in some instances is bordering on the ridiculous as well. For example, at the Orpen shop only 250kg packets of sugar at R2,05 are available. This equates to a price of R20,50 for 2,5 kg which can be bought at a supermarket for R10,00! Give the visitor fair service... (Anon., 2004:12).

Poor facilities and a lack of maintenance of facilities are aspects that negatively affect a nature experience. An example of a report in this regard is as follows:

> We visited the Lambertsbaai caravan park... Armed with disinfectants one dares to use the ablution facilities and be as quick as possible to get out of there... When taking this situation to the person on duty the reply was 'It is not part of my job. Wait until the other manager arrives' (Hofmeyr, 2005:13).

Visitors expect an area of natural beauty and value to be managed properly. The following comment from a visitor's book in the Mosi oa Tunya National Park in Zambia summarises the feelings of many visitors in this regard:

> There are never any rangers to be seen. The only people to be seen are the receivers of entrance fees at the gate. They only receive money and when asked for any information on the area or contact numbers of people who would know something, they simply shake their heads! [C-17:595].

2.13 Others

Visitors go to natural environments with a specific purpose [Chapter 5, 6, 7]. When they visit game reserves for example, they expect to see game. When they don't it has a negative influence on the nature experience. For example, a couple who visited the Kruger Park for 16 days report as follows:

> Although our main thrust when visiting the Park is for the wonderful birds which inhabit Kruger, we enjoy all the wildlife... However, on this trip we saw very few mammals. The small number of impala was noticeable and we only saw one warthog. We did not see one lion, cheetah or leopard. We travelled all the roads around the two camps and as our vehicle has a high vantage point, the long grass was not a factor.
>
> While talking to other visitors, mainly locals who visit regularly, it became apparent that they had experienced the same lack of game as we had. We heard various reasons put forward as to why this could be, but none really seemed to be logical... (Wynne-Dyke & Wynne-Dyke, 2004:12).

Trouble with vehicles, road conditions, and boredom due to a lack of activities were also mentioned by a few study participants as aspect that could influence

their experience in nature, should the condition persisted. The 6% of the study participants who mentioned these aspects did not regard them as highly important, but rather as irritating at the specific time. The beauty of the environment in which they found themselves usually compensated for isolated irritations [J-2:612, PI-22:509(7)].

3. CONCLUSION

Although the experiences people have in nature are mostly positive or contribute to positive feelings [Chapter 7], sometimes they do experience a visit to nature as being 'negative'. Closer investigation as to why an experience or aspects of an experience is described as being negative indicates that external influences may be the cause of such feelings. These influences are identified as 'disturbances' to a nature experience.

Depending on the attitude of the individual, the nature of the destination visited, the purpose of the visit as well as other aspects, disturbances vary in importance and intensity. For example, in the Richtersveld where roads are primarily manageable by 4x4 vehicles, no one mentioned the condition of the roads as a disturbance. It is expected that roads will be in that state. However, crowding and the presence of domesticated animals were regarded as very important by most of the respondents who visited the area.

On the other hand, visitors to certain areas in the Kruger National Park (e.g. Skukuza and Lower-Sabie rest camps) and Pilanesberg regarded crowding as less important to their nature experience, but the condition of certain of the gravel roads as very important. In this case, it is expected that many people will be present in easily accessible places such as the southern part of the Kruger National Park and Pilanesberg. People visiting these parks are not too bothered by being with many others. However, they expect the roads to be in a fairly good condition and comfortably accessible with any vehicle. Therefore, crowding will negatively affect the nature experience of the individual to the Richtersveld, but will not necessarily contribute to a negative experience in the Kruger Park or Pilanesberg.

Here, the absence of the 'big five' during game viewing drives would be a rather important aspect in the nature experience.

A better understanding of what causes a nature experience to be perceived as negative can help managers, tour guides and individuals to reduce the frequency and intensity of these disturbances. In the process the visitor's experience will be enhanced and an overall improved satisfaction rating will be achieved.

Some concerned study participants suggested ways of addressing disturbances such as littering, alcohol abuse, noise, etc., by co-visitors. All suggestions have an educational element. The most effective management tool may be education efforts directed at increasing visitor awareness of the problem and leading to self-imposed behaviour modifications. Education efforts can highlight the benefits to visitor's nature experiences. In the process the responsibility of the visitor to help maintain acceptable conditions is emphasised. For example, information should make visitors aware of litter as a disturbance of a nature experience. Therefore education should emphasise the need not to leave litter, to remove litter left by others, and to remind visitors of the impact litter has on nature and other people.

Educational campaigns should contrast the differences between a natural environment and other recreational settings to highlight the idea that what is appropriate behaviour in one area might not be so in the other.

Irrespective of the disturbances encountered during a visit to a natural environment, most people value the experience to a greater or lesser extent. The experience becomes more valuable when the individual tells (stories) it from a personal viewpoint and as such attaches a personal meaning to it. Chapter 9 will look into the meaning and benefits of experiences by interpreting such narratives.

CHAPTER 9

NARRATIVE INTERPRETATION OF A NATURE EXPERIENCE

I realised I was slowly focusing on a journey of inner exploration, but I had no true map. I was constantly torn between the contemplative and the active, with the latter being paramount because my daily work demanded it, but in the hinterland of my mind there lurked this powerful force that had to be fed on the other bread (Player, 1999:46).

1. INTRODUCTION

We are story-telling creatures. We venture into the world - the outer world of science and facts, or the inner world of feelings and thoughts - and return to tell each other about it. None of our stories is 'the truth'. The truth is beyond stories. However, stories teach us and help us to make sense of the world. Even when we think we're being very literal, doing science for instance, rather than storytelling *per se*, we usually are relying on metaphor and story to understand and navigate as individuals, groups and entire cultures. Stories are more than just a means of trying to describe the order of the universe, be it physical or social. They are also the primary way in which we create order and meaning (Johns, 2001). The stories we live by have the power to shape our destiny.

The stories (econarratives) people tell about their experiences in nature illustrate that there are deep and profound spiritual events that can occur when they spend time in natural environments [Chapter 3, 5, 7]. These events are what make them value the experience. The experiences storied in this study go far beyond the traditional 'to get away from it all' but also indicate a process of awareness and fulfilment for the individual.

The question covered in this chapter is: What is the meaning behind the story of a nature experience as told by an individual; that is to what extent can personal experiences in nature be applied in one's own day-to-day life? Answers to this question may contribute to our understanding of the deeper value of nature for the well-being of human beings and the co-existence of all species on earth.

If it is accepted that individuals organise and give meaning to their experience through stories and that in the performance of these stories they express selected aspects of their lived experience, then these stories are shaping their lives and relationships.

Specific case studies are used in this chapter to explain the meaning and benefits of nature for individuals. The stories of selected individuals are explored from a narrative perspective as explained in Chapter 3. In this exploration the meaning and effectiveness of the econarratives as applied in everyday live is interpreted.

2. A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION: CASE STUDY - AFRICA, CLOSE TO A MOTHER'S HEART

Knode (2001) tells the following story (shortened):

> I am a woman with two mothers. I didn't really know I had two mothers until I came to Africa to see animals earlier this year. One of my mothers lives in a ranch house in suburban Kansas; my other mother lives inside giraffes and warthogs and leopards and in the eyes of those who love and are loved. I owe Africa everything for it is allowing me to know that this second mother, Nature, is my true mother... and for giving me the chance to discover the mother within me.
>
> My husband and I came to Africa for the month of February 2001. I came to Africa at a time when I was finally looking at my relationship with my mother. For years, my mother and I have

stood side-by-side and pinned the blame for all that was evil in our household on my father, her ex-husband. That was easy to do - he was an abusive, violent, alcoholic who made all of our lives miserable with his inconsistencies and rages. In May of 2000 I was at the point of asking why my mother married him. What is her role in the events that shaped my childhood?

I soon uncovered some difficult truths about my mother and our relationship. The first is that she did not want me to be born. The second truth is that she's a profoundly unconscious person. I have fateful bookends for parents: an unconscious father with volcanic fits of anger; an unconscious mother whose lack of presence and exhausting inertia made me feel unseen and unloved.

As a child, I felt insecure in the world, not knowing if my perceptions of reality were valid because they weren't reinforced or acknowledged by my mother. I felt I didn't matter, because I didn't realise there's a difference between the phrase "I don't matter" and "I don't matter to my mother". I never felt it truly made a difference that I was alive; I needed my mother's approval, as the justification for my life but it never came. I wanted to be seen and validated by her, to be consoled over the disappointments I faced in the world... More than anything, perhaps, I felt self-hatred, because if I'd never been born, my mother wouldn't hate me so much.

I'll give a small example of how the relationship manifested itself in the outer world, now that I'm an adult: I visited my mother in Kansas a few years ago. She had a built-in desk and bookcases along one wall. Twenty or more framed family pictures lined the bookcases, and not one photo was of me...

With this background and understanding of my mother, my husband and I came to Africa. Van der Post (1967:171) says Africa is the only continent still left with a soul of its own. I believe Africa's soul is an overwhelmingly feminine soul. The three characteristics of the Great Mother which Africa invokes most strongly for me are these: First, it represents the goal of our longing for redemption, because it is a paradise; second, it arouses devotion or feelings of awe because you're with the earth and the heavens; third, it has animals.

I was anxious before going on the February trip because for years I've had synchronous experiences in nature, experiences which speak to my inner state with amazing precision. I was anxious about what Africa and her animals would have to say to me now. I was also afraid of dying, not physically but psychologically. A change in my relationship with my mother would be a major death, and I was showing all the classic grieving symptoms before I left on the trip. I had been estranged from my mother since the summer of 2000 because I needed the time away from her to deal with my mother complex. I knew that the trip to Africa would give me some answers. Nevertheless, for weeks before leaving I was having sleepless nights, worrying about what might come.

The anxious, sleepless nights followed me initially to Africa. I was consumed by the idea that there must be a meaning behind the suffering I've endured in my life. Our first night was at Kilimanjaro. The next day was our first day out in the wilds of Africa. We took a day trip to Arusha National Park. In the Land Rover ride to the park, I was again thinking about the meaning behind my suffering, when I looked up to see my first African wildlife: a sacred ibis. A sacred ibis was sacred to the Egyptian god Thoth, god of writing. I was in a career transition from being a teacher to being a writer. Standing next to the sacred ibis was a hamerkop. It's a bird I've

always wanted to see. A few months ago, when reading some Van der Post, I found out what the San think of hamerkops. They call them "the messengers of tidings of death" (Van der Post, 1967:273). There is a precision in Africa and nature connecting inner and outer events, especially for me, who is so closely tied to nature.

Another continuous theme of the trip was mothers and their babies. Watching a mother elephant and her baby in Tarangire modelled for me all that I was missing in my own relationship with my mother: the tenderness, delicacy, and care the female shows her young are evident clearly on the face of her baby. They share a bond between them that I'm not able to share with my own mother. I had the opposite reaction when I first saw an adult lioness licking her grown daughter: it caused instant rage. Why didn't I get that kind of attentive care? Why don't I have this relationship with my mother? Where is our tenderness and mutual affection? I understood, because of this picture, how deeply angry I am with my mother.

The next day we rounded a corner in the dirt road and there were four baby warthogs and they were on the road because they'd lost their mother. Their mother was killed, probably earlier in the day, and now they were on their own. Our guide told us that all four warthogs would be dead within a few hours or days. Warthog mothers are highly protective of their young, and without their mother's protection any number of predators would kill them. What immediately flashed for me was "Of course - my mother is missing too! And there are four of us Knode children!" Several months later, I would understand on a deeper, to the bone level, what this motherless group of warthogs meant to me.

This event with the warthogs ended our time in Tanzania. Next, we flew to Botswana. The most important event during the week was

my realisation that for the first time in my life, I would like to be a mother. I would like to have children of my own.

We saw a pair of lions on the road at sunset after a long drought in game viewing; their appearance seemed so important that I looked up lions in a dictionary of symbols when I returned home. Symbolically, pairs of lions are 'guardians of the doors, gates, and treasures, or the Tree of Life'. The treasure that had been hidden from me was my dawning interest to have children of my own.

Our last week in Africa was spent in the eastern part of South Africa. We had the most outstanding animal event of our month in Africa with leopards. We saw a male leopard relaxing in the grass, stomach distended from a meal. He had killed and partially eaten a male warthog earlier in the day. A female leopard appeared nearby. She hesitated, and then crept over to eat some of the warthog's viscera. The male allowed her that meal, but not the rest of the warthog carcass. He guarded that carefully.

As she ate, another adult warthog and a young one trotted by. Both leopards bolted; the female leopard caught the young warthog and charged up a tree. After the kill, she looked around and made her move, grabbed the dead warthog and moved toward another tree in the vicinity. On the way, she dropped the carcass for a moment. The male leopard charged her. She ran off, but didn't leave the area. Instead, she went over to eat the original carcass. The male leopard, marginal possessor of two warthog carcasses, paused before chasing her off the original carcass. While the one carcass lay undefended, a hyena came in and stole it.

The next morning, the original carcass was gone. From the footprints left behind, it was clear that hyenas had come in overnight. We followed their footprints. The hyenas had dragged

the carcass for about a kilometre before splitting up. As we looked at the scuffle marks in the dirt, the female leopard reappeared with her one-year-old cub. She'd apparently walked all night to retrieve the cub and brought it back for a meal. We followed the leopards to the original kill site. We watched as the female sniffed and searched for the meal while her cub waited expectantly nearby. After checking the trees and determining there was no carcass to be found, the mother and her cub disappeared into a thicket.

We hadn't seen a single snake the entire trip until then. The most striking snake event was a black-breasted snake eagle returned to its nest, handing over a meter and a half long boomslang to its juvenile, who had been waiting impatiently in the tree. The pair jumped up and down in the tree; we were witnessing an adult teaching its child how to kill a snake. The juvenile flew off with the snake in its talons. It was only the second time in all my years of birding that I saw a bird of prey carrying a snake.

The next morning I had a series of events with spiders harassing me in the Land Rover and no animals around except marabou storks. I was struck by the lack of other nature around except these two creatures. Marabou storks are called the undertakers of the veld, and spiders are famous symbols of the dark feminine. After some thought, I realised that the reason I can't accept all that's been given to me has to do directly with the dark feminine. In the moment, I thought the dark feminine meant not wanting to let go - wanting to suffocate the life out of any new impulses toward my mother (or myself) that might want to come up. The black cloud that I breathed in was now turning against me. I felt that my mother owed me something, and I was always waiting for her payment.

Now we were at the end of our trip. I was given a treat for my last few moments in wild Africa: a new mother cheetah with her twin three-month-old cubs. She was sitting in the grass with them, but felt the need to move them when baboons nearby were making too much noise about her presence. This is my last view of wildlife in Africa - the cubs, going up onto a downed limb, trying to follow their mother wherever she will take them.

Since our return from the trip in early March, many inner and outer events have helped me to learn more about my mother complex.

How do I reconcile myself with this mother I was given? I felt I was missing something... Then I flashed back to the four baby warthogs on the road. Their mother was missing. I said to myself, "It can't be that easy!" In a moment of grace I understood at the bone level: my mother is missing. So much of what I'd blamed myself for, so much of my insecurity in the world, my inability to trust myself and to know what is true from my experience, my needing to have attention, my self-hatred and self-doubt, is traceable directly back to my missing mother. The trip to Africa continued to enlighten me and give me clues to help me on my way: my mother complex is actually a no-mother complex.

I had three immediate reactions. First, I felt deeply and truly for the first time that I could have children, because I knew I wouldn't be the kind of mother to them that my mother was to me - a great void. Second, I could again talk with my mother because now I don't need anything from her. I can accept her for who she is, not as I need her to be. Third, I had a spontaneous vision that the tendrils entwining the cells of my body withered and withdrew.

From this I understood more, also about my relationship with nature. Up until then, I'd felt supported, seen, and appreciated by

> nature. Nature's been a better mother to me by far than my own mother. I felt seen by nature. My existence is justified in her eyes. For the first time in my life, I felt deeply secure. I was conscious and aware that I was known in the world.
>
> I followed the animals in Africa, and the Great Mother, Africa, gave me something in return: a new mother and a mother's heart to call my own.

As explained in Chapter 3 people give meaning to their lives and relationships by storying their experience. In the above-mentioned case study Nancy Knode's life increases in meaning with the storying of her experiences in Africa. Knode (2001) admits that she could never talk about her feelings and relationship with her mother and that she felt a sense of emptiness prior to her visit to Africa. Since then she was able to talk about her life and her experiences and each time she felt more enlightened. In interacting with others in the performance of her story, she is active in the shaping of her life and relationships (White & Epston, 1990:13).

In any event a person is rich in lived experience. These experiences are made up of events in our daily lives. However, only a fraction of this experience can be expressed at any one time. A great deal of lived experience inevitably falls outside the 'dominant stories' about the lives and relationships of persons. Dominant stories are made up of that what occupies one's mind, that what you talk about most often. Those aspects of the lived experience that fall outside the dominant story (the part that is not storied) provide a rich source for the generation of alternative stories. In Knode's case only a fraction of her lived experience (life-long) of her mother complex was expressed in the above-mentioned story. Her dominant story was that of an unfulfilled, unhappy mother complex. Many aspects of her lived experience are not told in this story and thus fall outside the dominant story. White and Epston (1990:15) refer to these aspects of lived experience that fall outside the dominant story as 'unique outcomes'. The identification of unique outcomes can be facilitated by the externalisation of the dominant description of a person's life and relationships. Knode externalised her mother complex by using

examples from nature. In the process she identified unique outcomes which became a new story.

Externalisation encourages a person to objectify or personify 'problems' or events that form the dominant story (White & Epston, 1990:16). The problem becomes a separate entity and stands outside the person or relationship. As individuals become separated from these 'problem-saturated stories', they are more able to identify unique outcomes. Knode's problems were in the first place her relationship with her mother and secondly her own self-doubt. She managed to separate herself from these problems by looking at them from a different perspective - initiated by examples from nature. Her problematic relationship with her mother became separate from her as a person and from this perspective she could identify a new situation - her realisation that she did not need her mother's approval and that she could accept her mother for what she is.

Externalisation is also helpful in the interruption of the habitual performance of these stories. With this in mind, one can argue that a visit to a natural environment as such, can be the externalisation of the dominant story of an individual's life. From such a visit unique outcomes may be identified that can become the alternative story in a persons life. A person can attach meaning to identified unique outcomes. For example, in our daily routined lives our dominant stories are often filled with work, family, financially and socially related concerns which affect the quality of our lives. When 'breaking-away' for a weekend or holiday into nature, we create a unique outcome - something 'good' in our dominant story. During such time we externalise our daily concerns, i.e. we become part of our natural environment and 'stand outside' events of our routine lives. On return from such a weekend or holiday we tend to talk about (story) the experiences we had in nature. These experiences are unique outcomes. People value these unique outcomes and attach meaning to them, which become the alternative (new dominant) story. Externalising oneself from problems creates the opportunity to see and describe oneself and one's relationships from a new, problem-free perspective; thus an alternative story. The problem becomes not a problem internal to the person, but a metaphor.

We attach meaning to experiences by structuring them into stories. By living these stories we build our lives and relationships. To be able to tell stories we need language [Chapter 3]. Therefore one can argue that we attach meanings to our experiences and build our lives and relationships through language. The more we research, talk and write about a topic, the more it multiplies. Consequently more language is added to it and therefore it gains more power [Chapter 3, par. 2.1.2]. The more language we add to a topic, the more knowledge is gained. In the event of an experience in a natural environment, the more we talk about the meaning of the experience, the more language and knowledge is added to it. Consequently this experience becomes powerful in our lives and becomes our new dominant story, adding quality to our lives and relationships (De Crom, 1999:105).

The narrative metaphor states that people can change the stories they tell themselves about their lives. They recover events with the dominant story and perform meaning on those events as a way of authoring new stories. These new stories can then change people's ideas about themselves and about what is possible for them (Freedman & Combs, 1993:294-295). This is exactly what happens with people's experiences in nature. In the above-mentioned case study Knode's dominant story was that of unhappiness and unfulfilled relationships, in particular with her mother. Her experiences in nature made her aware of events in her dominant story to which she could attach meanings. In the process she found a way to re-authorise her story. The new story changes her idea about herself (she could accept her mother for what she was and not because she needed her) and about what is possible for her (she could become a good mother herself).

3. METAPHORS

In the narrative approach, language is expressed in the written and spoken word, but also in the form of metaphors. White and Epston (1990:22) discuss the narrative approach in terms of the written word. They use the power of writing to get people to tell their stories.

Lyness and Thomas (1995:127-143) use the term 'metaphor' and 'story' interchangeably. To them it is a framework through which people can convey experiences. Some metaphors are long stories. Others are short, perhaps only one or two words or ideas where a brief connection is made. A metaphor can be a one-time event, or it may be a theme that runs throughout the course of a person's experiences in life.

A story is a metaphor when it is used to carry across more than the events of the story itself (Combs & Freedman, 1990:xv). Any story can be a metaphor. The difference lies in the way in which it is told and how the listener hears it. People are continuously telling stories in metaphors and use stories to illustrate ideas. In nature experiences, metaphors are empowering and encourage a person to be the co-author of his/her life story. Metaphors create meaning to a person and enable him/her to introduce changes in life where it may be necessary. Metaphors, therefore, may contribute to the creation of an alternative story.

Knode (2001) used metaphors from a nature experience in an attempt to make sense out of her working world. These metaphors from nature included resources and ways of solving problems, for example the care of a female leopard to get her cub to food, and the bond that an elephant cow established between herself and her calf. Knode applied this metaphor to her own circumstances. She discovered a new way of looking at herself (solving the problem of self-doubt). By taking the metaphor back to her own working world and making the 'discovery' of a new solution, she has been empowered to solve her own problem. Metaphors make suggestions that require internal searches for individuals to fit the new meaning into their own life. According to Combs and Freedman (1990:xiv):

> Metaphors may symbolise the idea that a single encounter can change the entire meaning and direction of a person's life. Alternatively, it might remind us that a sense of one's own value is more sustaining than physical comfort.

Knode's single encounter with nature provided her with metaphors that changed her entire life. She gained insight into her own values with regards to nature. She felt supported, seen, and appreciated by nature and regarded it as being a 'better mother' to her than her own mother was. She felt secure with this newly discovered sense of value. She was 'conscious and aware' that she was recognised as a person.

According to Combs and Freedman (1990:xiv), the more people are engaged in experience, the more likely they are to build new associative pathways, that is, new ways of thinking about their problems. Applying this statement to nature experiences one can assume that the more people visit natural environments, the more they are exposed to experiences in and with nature. Consequently, the more they find metaphors in nature to which they can link their own lives. These new links or identifications with nature may contribute to finding new ideas and solutions to their own problems.

Nature is filled with metaphors that individuals can apply in their daily lives to help improve life-skills or to help manage stressful situations. An example comes from a single mother with an adolescent son. She found it difficult to let go of her son. She was very protective and he was fighting against her. They visited a nature reserve and on a game drive an eagle's nest was pointed out to them. The guide explained that the parents were still caring for the young eagle, but gradually they began to visit the nest less frequently, encouraging the young eagle to spread his wings and fly on his own. The young eagle was still welcome at the nest but would soon be expected to look after himself.

By telling and retelling this experience the mother began to visualise herself as the caring eagle mother. She could picture herself letting go of her son to 'spread his wings'. This visualisation allowed her to externalise the problem; the problem became holding onto the son too tightly, and she was then able to let go.

Metaphors like the above-mentioned allow individuals to physically experience problems and then come up with new solutions. They can focus on the experience

of the problem, how it feels physically and emotionally. These metaphors can become enacted stories (Roberts, 1993). The person can be both inside the story (acting it out) and outside (telling it to someone). This exposure of being both inside and outside of their stories may show individuals that they can get outside their 'problem-saturated' stories, a new experience for many people. Once you can get outside your story, you may be able to change it. (Is this the real reason why people keep on returning to natural environments?) The following excerpt illustrates this.

> I watched the elephants... (Figure 9.1). They are big and they are strong and highly intelligent creatures. The social part definitely fits in with me. I think there is another obvious characteristic and that is, it is a strong animal, physically and emotional. When a fellow elephant dies, I believe that they do mourn their dead and they support one another in some way that us as human beings cannot see, hear, touch or feel, as these animals are far superior than we think. It is this exact characteristic which I experienced this year in May after losing my best friend in a car accident. In animal terms, he was a fellow elephant and he passed on to the next life. I had to be strong, physically and emotionally, to support his mother, father and sister, as well as his girlfriend and all his other friends and family. I had to do this and simultaneously also deal with the loss in my own way. Elephants never forget and I never forget. They are compassionate animals and that is why I can identify/relate to them [PI-5:430(18)].

This study participant went through a difficult emotional period for almost 6 months after the death of his friend. The elephant metaphor enabled him to experience this loss both physically and emotionally. He was inside the story (being emotionally involved in his own mourning and supporting the family) and also outside (telling his story to others and 'standing' outside the story by visualising the elephants that experienced similar events). This 'getting outside' the story enabled him to change his story of being depressed, feeling guilt and

sorrow, to one in which he remembers his friend and the good times they had, and remains compassionate with the family members.

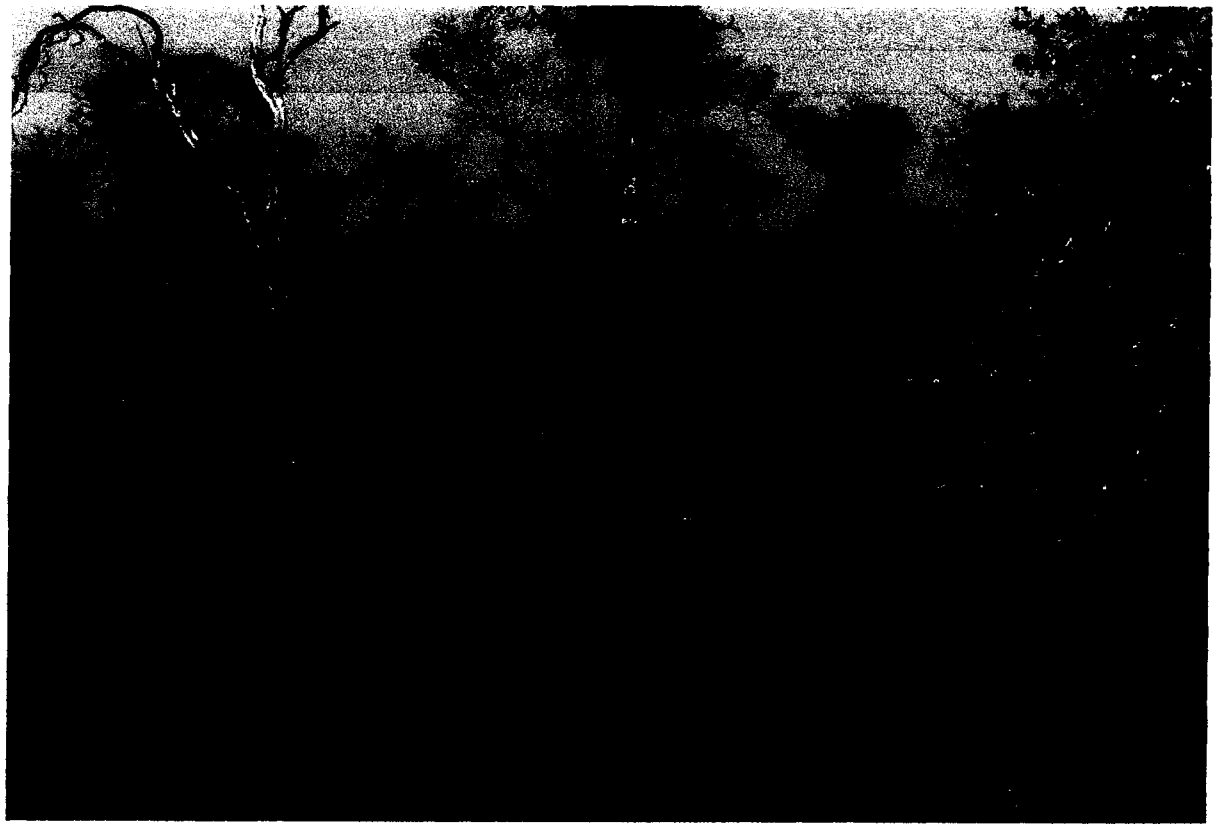


Figure 9.1: A herd of elephant with which a study participant relates metaphorically.

Metaphors are symbols of something else. Many people choose animals or plants as metaphors for their lives. These metaphors are more often symbols or 'role models' for the individual involved. The following excerpt illustrates a study participant's view of ants in comparison with human beings :

> (A)nts are community insects. An ant works together with its fellow ants to gather food and protect the queen. They work in harmony with each other and accomplish a lot. ...but so easily something can threaten their way of life, just as in our human lives. Something big can trample and kill it and not care or even know

> that an ant is dead or injured. So true is it in our lives: people will try and trample on our dreams and aspirations, break our self-esteem. As we see in the ants, they just pick up the pieces (and each other sometimes) and continue. We can't stop life if one is injured, because we all need to eat! [PI-22:510(11)].

The following excerpt illustrates why a study participant identifies with a wild dog:

> I identify with a wild dog. They have always interested me. They are fascinating, elusive and in some way project a very superstitious air to me. I am always fascinated by the unusual and different things. Maybe it is because there is still so much we can learn from them... [PI-23:514(20)].

Some people regard creatures in nature as 'role-models'. They see characteristics in those plants and animals that they would like to acquire themselves. The following three excerpts are representative of many similar metaphors:

> (A) baobab tree has a very long life-span and only occurs naturally in the lowveld. This is the place where I would like to work and live. The tree has many functions in nature and therefore, I can say, it has a great sense of knowledge. If they could talk in human language, I am sure they would be able to tell many stories and myths of the bush. I want to be like that and be of good use to other people [PI-24:518(20)].

> I identify with an elephant, not because of the size or strength, but because of their memories. Each experience I have in nature is special to me and I will never forget them. Whatever I experience in nature, I can re-tell and just like elephants, the memories will be carried over to next generations... [PI-25:521(15)].

> (T)he lion to me is about the pride and self-confidence in its being. I cannot say that I am like a lion, but I strive to acquire some of the characteristics of a lion, for example: pride, confidence, fearlessness, caring, bonded to a group and opportunistic. One day, I will be a lion... [PI-9:446(18)].

Some people experience deep emotional feelings while identifying with plants or animals. They feel that they 'become' the specific creature. The following excerpt expresses such feelings:

> Trees... When I stand still at a tree and become truly quiet all the deepest thoughts surface. Trees talk to you. You must actually plant a tree to become aware of this. I can never be without a tree. I grow with a tree. I have many trees (20) in my garden. With each one I experience something different. With the wild pear I experience feelings of the bushveld, with the white stinkwood I remember my older sister who passed away, with the old oak next to the driveway, I feel its massive power... and then trees always remind me of my father, the anchor in my life. I can identify myself with one of the characters in the novel 'Toorbos' by the author Dalene Matthee where she says: *Tussen mensland en boomland is 'n brug waaroor jy maklik kom terwyl die vrede om jou opnuut in jou lyf intrek en jou optel tot in die hoogste boomtop waar piet-my-vrou sy wyfie roep en roep en roep. Waar die paddas op die bosvloer klik-praat met mekaar. En met jou. Waar jy opkyk en kroonarend teen die bloue lug bo die bosdak sien sweef... Dan begin jy in jou eie vlug weer stadig afwaarts daal tot onder in die skemer bos om die voetpad te soek. Boom toe. Haar boom. Met die baie name waarmee sy hom al gedoop het, maar nie een wat wil pas nie. Kalander, Koning, Oudste, Mooiste, Hoogste. ...(Sy) stoot met haar lyf 'n pad deur die onderbos en bobbejaantou-gordyn waar die bosdou nog in die skadu's lê en aan haar lyf en hare afvee. Dag, Boom, sê sy toe sy by hom kom en*

haar kop eerbiedig laat sak soos vir bid (Matthee, 2003:35) [PI-8:440(9)].

The key reason why metaphors come into play is because individuals don't have the role models they need to have in people, or if they have them they don't have access to them (Hukill, 1999:51). By choosing a role model in nature one can relate personal and subjective stories, insights and feelings with something trustworthy and eternal. In our selves (and sometimes within scientific circles) we challenge currently accepted 'norms' by exploring alternative explanations for personal experiences among the abundance of other animal and plant species surrounding us. Having role models in nature, each individual recounts and reveals moments in his/her life when something occurred, leading one's mind toward new awareness, new realisations and new meanings. By using metaphors from experiences in nature, a number of positive effects on people's lives can be identified.

Rituals, reflecting experiences (storying) and unique outcomes create awareness among individuals. Relating these metaphorically to their own lives, nature experiences lead to more lasting benefits than by just going outdoors (Skull, 2001). While disciplines such as psychology and relaxation therapies can prevent or alleviate stress-related illnesses, awareness of the meaning of your own experiences in nature has the added benefit of restoring or improving self-knowledge, interrelationships and general well-being. For example, Patterson (2001:19) describes a 'golden moment' in his life as follows:

> I stood next to a young male lion in the midst of the African bush. Suddenly... at the start of a new day, he began to call, roaring to the dawn. My right hand was resting lightly on his flank. His calls reverberated through the valley we were in, to the highest hills and within the ground we stood upon. The trees seemed to vibrate with his mighty song. Time stopped and through his calls I felt I was part of everything around me. A portion of my soul was enriched by a beautiful energy that I can only describe as the

> 'connection energy of the earth'. I was the lion, and the lion was me. I was the sky, I was the birds, I was every leaf on every tree, I was every grain of sand in every dry streambed, I was the earth and the earth was me. I belonged, I was free. Those were moments of wonder. ...and it was then that the true meaning of the lion's song crystallised within me. Lions call to the world - *I am the land, the land is me, I belong, I belong, I belong ....*

For Patterson (2001:20) there was a profound meaning in this experience. In that moment of the lion's roar, he gained an understanding of his true 'belonging' to all around him. He believes that we can all share this belonging and that historically, we did share. It was his 'connection moment' when he felt reconnected with the earth. It was only years after his 'golden moment' that Patterson realised that the 'connection energy' he felt at that moment, is an essential energy to access if we are to free ourselves from the modern illness of loneliness of spirit and the brooding sense of no purpose (Patterson, 2001:20). Depression, loneliness of spirit and purposelessness deeply affect people in the modern world.

4. PHOTOGRAPHS AS SYMBOLS

Symbols refer to smaller units of metaphors. These include words, items, images, illustrations and anything else which is rich in meaning. Photographs, paintings and other forms of visual representations are all symbols and form an integral part of a person's life. It is used to fix special occasions and to emphasise personal values. In this study photographs contribute to a great extent to detailed descriptions of individuals' stories as they have seen themselves in an experience on a physical and emotional level [J-2:612, J-3:623, J-4:636, J-5:650].

Various study participants in this study made use of photographs as an additional way to tell a story, to see or to be seen as part of the story [compare FN-1:597, PI-8:438, PR-4:569, PR-6:574]. Photographs connect one with the past and help to view oneself in different phases of an experience and in life. The photographed moment can be extended into infinity and therefore provides the time to absorb

and re-absorb the detail. The journal [J-5:650] kept by a study participant who visited several natural environments in a period of six months, consists primarily of photographs which she used to recap on her experiences. Detailed descriptions of events and people were given afterwards when she had the time and opportunity to absorb and describe the photographed event, person or place.

Many participants referred to photographs or illustrations when they storied their experiences in nature. In certain cases the description that accompanies the photograph is a clear image of the relationship between the individual and the environment (Figure 6.3, 6.4, 6.5). Sometimes the photograph forms the basis for the telling of a story. At the same time it creates an opportunity to describe the emotions and the realities 'behind the picture' (for example Figure 7.12). It also contributes to the re-membering of family and friends or important others who were part of an experience [J-5:650]. A study participant comments as follows on her memories of highlights of visits to nature:

> Memories to me are so wonderful and photographs help to remember. It is always nice to think back to those moments, especially when I look at the photographs. It is like a 'light-up' when looking... and thinking back... it is as good as being there again. I experience that same good feeling again... [PI-32:559(30)].

Photographs and other illustrations are viewed as a powerful form of language (Berman, 1993:188). It provides a specific descriptive type of information that tells us more about the world in which we live. By telling stories by means of photographs individuals present strong and undeniable messages of the visual images that would not have been revealed otherwise. They are therefore powerful metaphors. The photographs are symbols (landscapes, events, items) of emotions and memories. Because photographs are in truth images or symbols of memories, they are used to a great extent to express thoughts and feelings. Berman (1993:189) says:

> We invest various images in our photographs with extended meanings that come from our inner world, thus creating visual symbols.

Individuals attach different values and meanings to photographs. According to Berman (1993:53) some individuals use photographs to communicate their deepest feelings and dreams to the outside world [J-2:612, J-3:623, J-5:650, PR-6:574].

When an individual found it difficult to express feelings verbally, the photograph helped to explain thoughts (Figure 7.12, 7.13).

> An image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider 'unconscious' aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. Nor can one hope to define or explain it. As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason (Jung, 1978:4).

Illustrations often represent rituals. It provides an opportunity to compare past with present (for example compare photographs in J-3:623 with those in J-4:636). These types of illustrations are compared with each other to contrast differences and to discover connections. Patterns and recurrences in the lives of individuals are also traceable in photographs. For example, Berman (1993:13) says:

> A photograph fits into a continuous flow in time. It is a second's flash in a multi-coloured life-story that has specificity of meaning, a life-theme that develops up to and after the photographic moment. It encourages us to contemplate the recurrences in our own lives and perhaps to explore which patterns can be changed, once they are brought to consciousness, and which are beyond our control.

The way in which an individual photographs a particular environment or event may reveal how the individual sees or experiences the environment (what is

deliberately excluded or included?). For example, in Figure 9.2 the photographer concentrated on the behaviour of a group of people who were overlooking an area from a lookout point in the Kruger National Park. The environment itself was excluded. The photographer explained this illustration as follows:

> I was intrigued with the attentiveness with which everybody searched the area for animals. When I looked at their faces, I could immediately feel the excitement... the expectation... it was good to be part of that exciting feeling shared by everyone in this spectacular environment (Venter, 2004, pers. comm.).



Figure 9.2: A group of people overlooking an area from a lookout point in the Kruger National Park. (Photographed by R. Venter, 2004)

5. THE BENEFITS OF NATURE EXPERIENCES

On the questions to study participants in this study to describe a highlight or special personal experience in nature and the reason for this being a special experience, a variety of detailed descriptions were received. For example:

> I went on a camp in the middle of the Kalahari. Although I saw a lot of wildlife, it was the fact that the stars at night looked so much brighter... that made it special. With that, the night sounds, the insects and the lions in the distance, made me feel like we were all part of nature. Each sound was louder than I had ever heard before... We all become too wrapped up in our daily routine of our lives. Living in the concrete jungle, we forget, or do not know how to become peaceful, how to enjoy the night sky, not hearing the sound of police and ambulance sirens. All these traumas around us and our daily lives, separate us from what really matters. So, getting away gave me a chance to unwind, relax and enjoy real silence... [PI-22:510(9,10)].

> (At the time of) (t)he solar eclipse 2002 I was on a game farm in Botswana. We all stood on a koppie. All of a sudden it became cold, the wind started to blow and an eerie glow covered the sky. Children bundled up against each other, scared by the unknown. Even the cattle in the nearby kraal became restless. A weird feeling crept over me... It was something I had never experienced before, something new and unusual. It was very fascinating. Even when I try, I cannot explain what I experienced that day [PI-23:513(18,19)].

A study participant explains the highlights of his experience in the Waterberg mountains as follows:

> I always enjoy being in the Waterberg... On a previous trip I noticed a huge boulder on one of the hills and decided to climb up to it. When I got there, the most beautiful view was exposed to me. I had never seen it before. I sat very quiet for a long time and became aware of nature... I could hear the water far down below in the river... It was the first time ever that I felt nature so close, so part of me. I was quiet and nothing could bother me there. It was like time stood still. I sat there for more than two hours and it felt like a minute... [PI-31:554(17,18)].

From the above-mentioned excerpts it is clear that each individual is attracted to nature in some or other way. In some the attraction is so strong that they regularly need to go to the most remote areas. Others are happy to visit game reserves in their cars every now and then. Some enjoy hiking in the mountains. There are those who do not have the slightest interest in visiting wild areas, but they still like gardening, even if this only means watering the pot plants once a week. When they get stressed, the attraction becomes even stronger. Sitting at a lodge overlooking a waterhole, or sitting at the seaside, or walking in the mountains, leaves them with an overwhelming sense of relief [PI-26:523(3,4)].

Knopf (1983:207) reports that people visit natural environments largely to alleviate stress. In virtually every analysis he identified 'escape' as particularly important. However, people also value the psychological products of an outdoor activity more than the activity itself. The psychological products reported by the surveys done with study participants in this study are 'the opportunity to relax and socialise, to be challenged, to feel closeness to nature, to be free to think and to experience new things (Table 5.2). Patterson et al. (1998:423-452) found challenge, closeness to nature, decisions not faced in everyday environments, and stories of nature, to most completely describe the nature of experiences among visitors to natural environments.

In one sense these studies tell something already known. That is, being in a natural setting relieves stress, promotes relaxation and a general sense of well-

being. By experiencing the natural environment as discussed in Chapter 7, paragraph 4 and the examples in PI-22:508, PI-23:511, PI-26:522 and PI-31:552, individuals feel a connection to nature. Interaction between the person and nature takes place and this influences the individual to shift focus to the environment. In the end, awareness is established [Chapter 5]. Ittelson et al. (1978:187-206) mention that a focus on nature or environmental awareness is the extent to which people pay attention to the biophysical aspects of the environment. It is the degree to which people are focusing on the natural world. It may well be that as people are able to pay attention to more minute details of the environment, a sense of familiarity and orientation is gained. As a result, a spiritual dimension will probably be added, leading to an even greater awareness [Chapter 5]. The nature experience can then be as intense as one lets it become.

Benefits from spending time in natural environments range from physiological to psychological, from sociological to economic and from spiritual to developmental (Driver, Brown & Peterson, 1991). Some of the social and relational benefits of nature experiences include building and maintaining friendships, interacting with others and addressing major life transitions (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1996).

According to Driver et al. (1987:294-319), most benefits of nature would be characterised as personal (as opposed to social or intrinsic). Examples include, amongst others, self-actualisation or skill development, physical health benefits, spiritual benefits, creative benefits and healing benefits (Levitt, 1994:129-137). Other effects of nature experiences include sustained increases in self-esteem and assertiveness, significant reduction in trait anxiety and expectations that powerful others and chance would have less control in one's life (Ewert, 1988:107-117; Marsh, Richards & Barnes, 1986:475-492). Pohl, Borrie and Patterson (2000:415-434) find that effects from a nature experience are 'transferable', meaning that they can carry over into people's everyday lives.

Study participants in this study mention many effects and benefits of experiences in nature. In the following paragraphs some of these identified effects and

benefits are emphasised by means of specific examples and are interpreted accordingly.

5.1 Enhancing affective responsiveness

Experiences of participants in areas that require some physical skills, for example the Otter Hiking Trail [J-1:606], the Zambezi River rafting [FN-1:597] and the Richtersveld [J-3:623, J-4:636], indicated that much of the attention of individuals was focussed on the environment itself and on the individual's thoughts and emotions. At first participants worried about the skills they would require for coping in this environment. As soon as they learned the skill to cope or complete a difficult section of a route, the concerns disappeared. By the end of the second day, participants tended to include more detail about the physical environment in their feedback of experiences than on the first day. Emotional responses also intensified. On the last day, all participants reported feelings of awe, inspiration and spiritual fulfilment. All felt a closer bond with nature and reported a better understanding of the interrelationship between various components of the natural environment (the ecosystem). They also had a better understanding of their own relationship with nature. Everyone experienced a certain degree of sadness to leave, but reported a feeling of being motivated to return to tasks at home and work. Similar results were found by Kaplan and Talbot (1983:163-204) and Talbot and Kaplan (1986:177-188) who studied the experiences of adolescent participants of an outdoor challenge program in a wilderness area. Scherl (1989:123-135; 1990:11-26) also reported corresponding results in studies with participants in an Australian wilderness.

Observations during participating in the Otter Hiking Trail revealed that participants experienced many different feelings (emotional changes) during the course of the trail [J1:492]. Experiences range from fear, nervousness, frustration and exhaustion, to exhilaration and awe. Stories around the evening campfires were filled with references to self-discovery, oneness with nature, bonding with others, as well as feelings of adventure, challenge and excitement. With progression of the trail, deeper connections and knowledge of the self, of others,

and of nature, were discovered. During the last evening revealed emotions were very intense. A mixed mood of sadness that the trail was almost over, and joy that it was successfully completed, was felt. There was also a feeling of sadness to leave - both the place and the group. All felt physically exhausted, but emotionally and mentally well prepared to return to their respective responsibilities.

A focus on emotions or emotional intensity occurs when the nature experience is primarily influenced and dominated by strong feelings and emotions. On the Otter trail, all the participants experienced strong emotions in response to the physical and mental demands from the environment, on the one hand. On the other hand they got enormous fulfilment and satisfaction from the same environment. Emotional involvement is a significant component of the leisure state (Mannell et al., 1988:289-304; Samdahl, 1991:33-49). Other researchers such as Hull et al. (1992:240-252) have demonstrated the relevance of emotions to the overall nature experience pattern.

Affective responsiveness may lead to the discovering of a sense of the self, mental clarity, increased perceptual abilities, new perspectives, improved relationships and fulfilling spiritual experiences.

5.2 Discovering a sense of self

Benefits from nature experiences can transfer into the realms of daily life, resulting in a heightened sense of empowerment and social change (Henderson, 1996:193-202). Because the natural environment offers unique settings, it also offers unique outcomes (Pohl et al., 2000:415-434). One possible method through which people are able to recover from their depression, loneliness and purposelessness is by awareness of the benefits and effects of nature experiences.

For example Henderson (1996:193-202) explained how outdoor recreation was contributing to resisting traditional discriminating female roles that can lead to discovering a new sense of self. She said:

> In nature, conformity to traditional female roles is not acquired. In the outdoors, women often discover aspects of themselves that they did not know existed prior to challenging themselves in this environment (Henderson, 1996:196).

Some of these aspects include a heightened sense of empowerment, self-sufficiency and a change in perspective about the self and others.

This principle is also true for many other aspects in life. Nature provides a context where any individual may go directly against the grain of what they have essentially been socialised to be. The following story of Irene, Princess of the Netherlands, is an example:

Irene van Lippe-Biesterfeld (2004, pers. comm.) tells about her life, the expectations of society, and the value of nature experiences in helping her to be what she truly is. Throughout her childhood in the golden cages of royal palaces, and later her divorce and life as a single parent, Irene often felt misunderstood and even abandoned. At these times she turned to nature for refuge and solace and there found peace and understanding. She recalls one of her first experiences in nature as a fourteen year old girl:

> (A) girl who is carrying out her first official function. I have to step forward, outside the circle of people I don't know, and end up alone in an open space, amidst those curious strangers. Too young still and too unprepared for such intrusive curiosity, for the expectations of all these people who pretend to know who this little princess is - who I am. Scared stiff to get it wrong. Panic! And yet again there is nobody to tell me what I need to know. Eyes, yes lots of them, and opinions... In the middle of the open space there is a tree. I feel that the tree is the only one who sees who I am. I hear it says: 'Come and sit under me...' But the grown-ups don't hear this and are thinking of other things like the building

> of the church (the official ceremony that I am here for). From that moment on there has always been a tree with which I have been safe. I have known their protection, their acceptance of how I am, in contrast to how I should be (Van Lippe-Biesterfeld, 1997:18).

Since then Irene has experienced many events in nature that have changed her life completely (Van Lippe, 2004, pers. comm.). Firstly she reconnected with nature which brought her closer to herself and her surroundings. She tells:

> I had to be alone in a spot where I knew nobody and nobody knew me. (A) need for silence and being away form all that is familiar. I encountered no one but myself. I wasn't always good company. I was alone and lonely. But all through the silence of loneliness I started to enjoy it more and more. I went out into nature. A kind of relationship developed. The colours, rhythms, smells, the apparent silence of the trees, the grass, the flowers, the skies, the clouds... the insects, the birds - good heavens! What life, what presence! Now... all of this got a chance to grow, bit by bit, into real relationship. (All) new experiences that bring me closer to myself and my surroundings... (Van Lippe-Biesterfeld, 1997:53).

Secondly Irene experienced events in nature that made her feel guilty. She explains:

> The encounter with that whole natural world was so intense that I couldn't put distance between the tree and myself. I wanted to be part of it all... And with it came a feeling of guilt as heavy as lead: I am human, part of the destruction that I didn't see. I go round in vicious circles of guilt and shame. Because I am part of the human race that destroys (Van Lippe-Biesterfeld, 1997:56).

The value of this experience is the realisation of the destructive influence of human beings in nature. This led to another realisation - the realities of being and doing. Irene writes:

> I became more and more aware of the poignant difference between the world of 'doing', characteristic of people in our Western society, and that other world of 'being', in which nature lives. (A) world where everything seems to revolve around who we are not, but have to be to please other people. (A) world where there is so little respect for each other and even less for the life of nature (Van Lippe-Biesterfeld, 1997:57).

Eventually Irene experienced connectedness to the whole and realised that everything functions together. She describes the benefit of this experience as follows:

> I begin to understand that I too as a human being form an essential part of the whole. It is useless to feel guilty and inferior, for it doesn't make any positive contribution. (P)recisely the various tasks of the human and the plant and animal worlds contribute not only to life on earth but equally to the growth of the all-encompassing cosmos. Each with its own speciality. Exactly as the differences in world cultures contribute to the development of our humanity. We are free of each other and yet one, bound together in freedom. Guilt starts to give way to power. You are never ever judged by anything in nature (Van Lippe-Biesterfeld, 1997:59).

The value of that very first experience in nature led to more profound meanings in her life. Throughout this time her connection with nature further deepened. Nowadays she owns a farm in the Karoo which she often visits and where she presents courses, seminars and workshops on how to reconnect with nature, sharing her vulnerability and optimism with all who care to listen.

It was during periods of solitude that many participants admitted to contemplating some of life's deepest questions. Many reported asking themselves questions such as: 'What is the purpose of my life?', 'What really matters?', 'What am I going to do with the rest of my life, my relationships?' Engaging in contemplative and self-reflective thinking, seem to help participants to maintain mental, spiritual and emotional well-being (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999:31). Participants recognised that they did not regularly take time out of their daily lives to engage in this type of self-reflection and many expressed regret and frustration for not doing so [PI-7:434(2-4), PI-18:482(4)]. On the other hand, they expressed feelings of rejuvenation and a renewed sense of hope about challenges that were waiting back home [J-2:612, J-5:650, PI-7:437(33), PR-13:583].

This study indicates that as the end of a visit to nature draws near, many individuals may be, physically, mentally and emotionally (spiritually) prepared for the return to civilisation. They realise that behaviours must be re-adopted upon return. However, the mental and environmental adjustments made during the nature experience are, to a greater or lesser degree, sustained. That is, the 'civilised' identity may be changed or merged with the nature identity. For example, the acquired feelings and knowledge of the self and of the environment may carry on outside the 'boundaries' of the natural environment. The following excerpt is an example of a study participant's acquired feelings from a nature experience which helped her making decisions in her life 'outside nature':

> I simply stepped outside and stood on the cliff over the river and enjoyed the solitude. I began to get a feeling for what was attracting me, which in this case was the water and the trees and the cloudy sky. I was also attracted by a sense of centeredness and stability. I was attracted to this sense of inner calm and was told by my inner voice that this was really quite OK. So my last thought was to be at peace and have faith that a tough, life-changing decision that I would have to make in a few days time will turn out perfectly.

> What I learned from this activity is that I am having a rodeo going on inside me constantly, that I have means of sifting through decision making processes that integrate old and new mental insights and needs and that I know that there is an active inner guidance system that comes into focus when I allow multi-sensory nature connections to occur. If this ability was taken away, I would be like a dolphin with no echolocation, an eagle with no wing feathers, an antelope with no hearing or a crane with no migration senses.
>
> This activity enhances my self-worth by allowing me the dignity of having something of nature alive in me all the time. This is a gift from the planet whose insights I continually re-dedicate back to the Earth and its human and non-human creatures [PR-11:581].

Individuals who spend time in nature begin to lessen the importance of investing in a nature identity and begin the re-adoption of an outside identity, which may be changed or merged with the nature identity (Pohl et al., 2000:425).

5.3 Achieving mental clarity

An individual's feelings and language can be a barrier to opening up to nature and to 'hear' what nature has to offer. The following story illustrates:

> I was on one of my first solo backpacking trips. I'd arrived at the trailhead at sunset for a few days of hiking and fishing. Anxious to get a few miles behind me before darkness set in, I hoisted my pack onto my shoulders only moments after turning off the ignition and bounded down the trail. My mind raced with excitement and anticipation. 'What a gorgeous place! Isn't this going to be wonderful? Weather's perfect. Not a cloud in the sky. Eden, here I come.'

As it began to grow dark, my anxious energy started to dissipate. Less than a mile down the trail, no more whistling or humming tunes, the bounce in my step gone. Walking into a thick cloud of silence, I came to a grinding halt, suddenly feeling utterly lost. My body shuddered, and into my head popped the thought that I could hightail it back to the car before dark. What for?

What's going on here? Then it dawned on me. Even though I was telling myself this place was beautiful, I was not really taking in its wonder and beauty. My words unmasked as wishful thinking, I just stood there in the middle of the trail, dumbfounded, the self-deception of my good time exposed.

A big tree, standing off by itself on a nearby hill caught my eye. In response to its beckoning, I staggered over and underneath its branches. I dropped off my pack, plopped down and pressed my back against its massive trunk. I pulled my legs up to my chest... and dropped my forehead to my knees.

Well, I went a little crazy right there under that tree as waves of confusion and fear, pain and sadness surfaced. On the hike in, I was carrying a burden of psychological junk that was blocking my responsiveness to this beautiful setting. I surrendered to my feelings and accompanying thoughts as they surfaced. I sat there under the tree and grieved. I uncovered some hidden layers of myself. I had no person to cheer me up, distract me with talk, or help me rationalise it all away.

By the next day, having done my grief work, I was no longer merely telling myself, 'This is wonderful.' I was cleared out... and genuinely experiencing the wonder of it all (Swanson, 2002).

Sometimes when one travels into nature, one may experience an overwhelming sense of intellectual clarity or a heightened sense of mental and emotional awareness (James, 1961). According to Pohl et al. (2000:427) Aristotle argued that leisure should result in excellence of the soul and mind. It is interesting to note that some of the values that Aristotle would have considered 'lower' in pursuit are those which directly lead to attaining mental clarity. For Swanson (2002) these values revolved around the following:

- Solitude - he was completely alone in nature and 'had no person to cheer him up, talk to him or rationalise his feelings',
- Freedom of the mind - initially he carried 'a burden of psychological junk' with him. Being alone and in 'beautiful surroundings' he could surrender to his feelings and thoughts. He let go of everything. Only then he had freedom of mind to be able to clear himself out and 'uncover hidden layers' of himself.
- Quiet - the quietness of the setting, absence of people and other distractions and his escape from his everyday life, allowed him clear access to his mind.

Swanson became absorbed in the environment and slowed down. He became truly aware of his environment and fully involved in the moment, experiencing everything - himself and the true value of the beauty surrounding him. In this sense, one knows more by experiencing more.

The mental clarity that Swanson attained from that moment in nature filtered into his life. For example, the solitude and freedom from distractions contributes to self-reflection which leads to self-knowledge [Chapter 7, par. 5.2.3]. Self-knowledge may lead to self-trust and self-worth. These benefits may not only serve the individual, but also his relationships and systems in which he lives and interacts. The solutions he discovered about himself underneath the tree (such as deciding what is important, processing significant events, or addressing disappointments), may be solutions to events in his life.

5.4 Improving perceptual abilities

The more immersed people get into a nature experience, the more they may be moving into a nature way of being. As Kaplan and Talbot (1983:163-204) suggest, as perceptual ability and confidence in abilities increase, and given the necessary time and space, many may move to contemplation, appreciation, and understanding of the human-environment relationship. These perceptions and revelations would not be expected to immediately fade, but would remain important as the individual prepares for, and returns to home and work life.

Findings in this study also suggest that perceptual changes occur during the visit to the natural environment and evolve across time. These changes in perception facilitate the benefits received from the nature experience. Benefits include a greater awareness of the person-environment relationship, and a fascination with what is observed in nature (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001:206). Other benefits include an increase in self-confidence and self-knowledge. Kaplan and Talbot (1983:195) suggest that participants have discovered a different self in the nature setting - a self less conflicted, more integrated, more desirable. J-1:606, PR-4:569, PR-5:572, PR-9:579 and PR-10:580 are examples of perceptual changes that took place and their effect on the person-environment relationship in this study.

5.5 Opening up to new perspectives

People's perceptions change with time in a natural environment. The longer they are subjected to nature, the less the issues of 'normal' day to day life bother them. They get attuned to nature and seem to forget about that what mattered before they got here.

Skull (2001:1-5) suggests that if we are totally present in the moment, we become aware of how everything - including ourselves - is part of an interconnected, self-organising, highly intelligent web. These realisations inspire feelings of security and enhanced self-esteem. (Also refer to Irene van Lippe's case in paragraph 5.2

of this chapter). A study participant contemplated the question 'What is wealth?' She has the following story:

> For a long time I thought about wealth. I want to be wealthy. People have everything when they are wealthy. I will be happy and fulfilled when I am wealthy. What is wealth?
>
> (O)ne day I walked alone in a bush tract... and everything looked beautiful, nothing in particular held my attention. I sat down on a small boulder. As time went by I began to realise that my attention was not with the colours of the flowers, the song of the birds, the strength of the massive leadwood tree or the softness of the redtop grass; it was the bush in its entirety.
>
> As I watched, the interconnectedness of life before me became apparent: the insect attracted by the nectar of the flower, gaining sustenance from it as it pollinates it. The shrubs and trees reaching for life-giving energy from the sun and sharing it with all other life forms; roots holding the earth in place, extracting nutrients and moisture from the soil. Dead leaves transforming into nutrients to sustain new life.
>
> As I became increasingly aware of the exquisite interconnectedness of the bush, my consciousness shifted and I stopped seeing separate entities. Instead, the physical reality before me became a beautiful, continuous flow of attraction relationships that gave rise to life. Everything received just enough energy to sustain itself, returning energy in kind to the web. I sensed myself as part of this web... and I too experienced the perfect flow of energy, the fulfilment of mutual support in the web of life.
>
> I realised that this is what wealth is: the seamless flow of attraction in mutual support... the way life should be lived. When

> some separation blocks this flow, the result is fear and greed, and the balance of the web of life becomes disrupted resulting in many problems. Those who take more than they need without giving back to the web, thinking this makes them wealthy, are really spiritually impoverished and lack true joy and fulfilment [PR-14:586].

This personal experience in nature contributed to the individual's understanding of wealth. Her personal values shifted closer to the web of life. She realised that she is part of this web. Her realisation of the meaning of wealth and her place in the world (web) changed her perspective.

The natural environment provides an optimal setting for suggesting a shift in perspective because it offers an escape and freedom from daily life (Pohl et al., 2000:425). Being able to step back from many of society's rules offers one a new angle on life. The study participant in the above-mentioned excerpt compared 'wealth' in society to 'wealth' in nature. In nature it seemed more 'real' or 'the way life should be lived'. The natural environment was important for a shift in perspective because of the simplicity and solitude which contributed to an increased awareness of what was going on around the individual. This experience facilitated a re-evaluation of her desire for wealth and happiness.

A shift in perspective results in feeling calm, grounded and confident about one's place in the world. In addition it leads to changing one's priorities and formulating a new view (Pohl et al., 2000:425). This new view entails reviewing the norms about materialism (what is 'real wealth') and acceptable social conduct (disrupting the web results in problems).

5.6 Establishing relationships

Nature experiences contribute to connecting with others in that individuals feel that they can be themselves and that others should accept them for what they are. Nature is non-judgemental and perfectly honest (Van der Zee, 2003:40). In

addition, nature's ability to promote a distraction-free environment is ideal for connecting with others. For example, a study participant spent time with her parents in a secluded place in the Kruger National Park. One night she and her father watched hyenas approaching their camp. She describes her experience and connection with her father as follows:

> I think that evening is something I will remember... the closeness it actually had brought my dad and I - together. I will remember that experience. (T)he vulnerability brought us closer, because you know the person next to you and you know you are on the stilts up in the tree house and that you are together ...and guessing together. To me that was a highlight that I will remember and my dad will remember... and my mother will. Then it rained and we couldn't get out the next day. (W)e enjoyed it, especially my father. It was as if he was... proud... He was happy and I was happy to know that he was happy. He had an opportunity because of me that he wouldn't have had and that is special. It was something I could give, that not everybody could. He appreciated it and that is something beautiful... [PI-1:406(37,38)].

Due to common experiences within groups who visit a natural environment, connection and growth between members of such a group are promoted. Shared goals incorporated in common experiences (such as a physical challenge to complete a hiking route or river rafting event) lead to a supportive atmosphere and increased communication [J-1:606, FN-1:597].

The atmosphere and setting in natural environments (e.g. campfires during evenings, sunsets and views over landscapes) contribute to individuals having deeper conversations and increase the intensity of interaction. During such events conversations are often more open (Pohl et al., 2000:427) and emotion filled. For example:

> (W)e all (men only) sat next to the campfire. We chatted and had a great time. We had deep conversations... problems at home, wives, children... Then you hear about problems from people that you never thought would have such problems. There, away from everything else, one of my best friends told me about his problems. I was not aware of him experiencing such difficulties.
>
> (Back here in daily routine) I often think back about that what we have discussed... the men's sadness... When a person tells you everything, only then one realises that he had experienced some bad times in his life. It had a positive effect on me. Out there I got to know people. I will always remember that. [PI-29:546(49,50)].

Fredrickson and Anderson (1999:29) report that participants during a nature experience testified to having grown both in physical experiences and emotionally. They had the opportunity to share their life's joys and sorrows with others who were willing to 'really listen' and to be non-judgemental. They also experienced personal growth due to sharing with others who were actively supportive of what they had experienced both physically and emotionally while on the trip. Additionally, many claimed that if they had not taken this trip, they would not have had the chance to regain a sense of connectedness and meaning in their lives elsewhere.

Some people feel that their strongest relationships in life revolve around sharing periodic trips with others in nature (Pohl et al., 2000:427). Many study participants suggested that it was the ongoing emotional support and continuous verbal encouragement that they had received from other group members that had contributed most significantly to the more meaningful aspects of their experience. Emotional safety and personal bonding are important aspects in this regard. Study participants explained the importance of sharing nature experiences with others as follows:

> We see the first star, and the first falling star and we make a wish, smiling at each other with an inner knowing of each other. We sit and talk quietly; sharing stories of previous travel and experience in places we have felt a call, an inner sense of home. We share expectations [PR-6:574]

Another participant shares these feelings as follows:

> We slowly meandered up the road to the top of Marakele's mountain. There we opened the champagne, sat on a rock and it was freezing. Then the vultures came up in the wind and we just looked at them... and we share... (My friend) recently lost her dog, I lost a cat, so then we started crying... sharing... toasting to the cat and the dog and all the animals that are special and to each other and our friendship... and we got very emotional and it was like nature just bringing everything out. We felt close to everything... and to each other... and to our loved ones back home... After about two hours we longed for the heat of the car [PI-1:407(43)].

A study participant's feelings about sharing two weeks of nature experiences with friends in Namibia, are summarised in the following excerpt:

> I feel grateful and happy, for my partner, my friends and the realisation through this journey that life is not about what you own, but what you can enjoy - with each other - in nature! [J-2:508].

Improved relationships with others through nature experiences spilled over into everyday lives in the sense that people who had these experiences sought other people to share that with and to have relevant conversations on common interests. In the process new relationships are built.

Relationships established during nature experiences are deeply seated and often long-lasting. These relationships are not those of dependence but rather ones that

are healthy, mutually empowering and supportive. The forming of relationships with others is also forming a trusting relationship with oneself. Relying on oneself gives one the freedom to be alone and the freedom to be independent (Pohl et al., 2000:431).

5.7 Improving spirituality

Spirituality may be regarded as a value of a nature experience as discussed in Chapter 7, but it is also one of the benefits of the experience. Therefore the natural environment can cause one to experience a sense of spirituality (value). By becoming aware of the emotional impact of this value, it affects one's perspectives, implicating changes in one's life.

The types of changes in people's lives are diverse and cover the spectrum from self-knowledge to affecting changes in one's work, professional and spiritual life and attitudes toward relationships with God, nature and with other people [PI-6:431, PI-8:438, PI-11:451, PI-13:462, PI-19:490, PI-32:555]. One study participant commented as follows:

> What I experienced while being (in nature) affected the direction of my life. I want to find a way to spend more time in nature and to bring other people into these places. I know I am going to do it... I had the shift in perspective of myself and what I am capable of and what makes me happy. These effects stayed with me... in my garden I changed my perception about the 'pests' - the snails, the harvester termites... Am I that important to decide to kill these creatures because they are trying to survive? The realisation of God in everything and my need to feel this 'togetherness' ...it is like a 'new spirituality' [FN-9:604].

This shift in perspective took on deep spiritual dimensions and affected the participant deeply. She is questioning her place in the world and her previous assumptions and attitudes.

The more we realise how conscious we have to be towards life, ourselves, our fellow human beings and the other surrounding forms of life, the more responsible we will feel for the earth and everything that lives on this planet (Van Lippe-Biesterfeld, 2004, pers. comm.).

Our fast way of life, illusionary priorities and the technological world we live in raised questions about our existence: where do we come from and what place do we have in nature? The human development in the last century has evolved in a focus to reach human goals irrespective of what happens to nature in the process. This has meant a loss of respect for nature and all its life forms. As a result we have separated ourselves from the web of life and our own inner nature [Chapter 4].

The following excerpts are examples of 'acknowledgements' from study participants of their separation from both the web of life and their own inner nature:

> I'm at a point where I have not yet arrived where I would like to be. I know where I want to be but I am not there yet... [PI-2:409(3)].
>
> I don't always have time to think about that (my inner nature) [PI-7:434(2)].
>
> I am not exactly where I would have liked to be in life. I cannot always be myself but I attribute that to the hurried life we live... the pressure to finish everything on time. There is not always time to live your passion and some things happen that you haven't planned for... [PI-18:482(4)].
>
> I never thought that I had a relationship with nature [PI-33:560(2)].

Knowing how a spiritual experience in nature can change one's attitudes, people return to nature to re-establish these life-changing experiences (Taylor, 1999). They report on a deepened relationship with the earth and all living creatures [PR-1:564, PR-2:565]; they come to an understanding of the connectedness of all in Creation [J-2:612, PR-4:569]; they become more conscious of the ways in which human beings hurt the natural environment and explore ways of living harmoniously within the earth's ecosystems [PI-15:472]; they re-evaluate their personal role in the great community of life [PI-5:427, PR-8:578].

From what study participants said in their individual interviews, it appears that several of them might have experienced something quite similar to that of a religious experience. The religious experience is typically characterised by a sudden illumination of individual consciousness, where the experience itself is somewhat fleeting or momentary and lacks specific content. Yet, it leaves the individual with an overwhelming feeling of having made contact with a power much greater than the self (Eliade, 1957:78). Typically, what follows is an intense and pressing recognition of one's insignificance in the larger cosmos and a heightened recognition of the interrelatedness of all life-forms, ultimately leading to feelings of peace and humility. For example, Patterson (2001:91) describes his feelings as follows:

> When I go back into the wilds, where I have spent much of my adult life, I become almost overwhelmed by the beauty of the bush, the majesty of mountains and the serenity of a sunset. I feel so close to God, and very humble indeed. It is a question of being able to see God in everything, seeing God of all things. I revel in the experience of spotting a raptor flying overhead, and chuckle when I find a porcupine's quill while walking my dogs. These sights and moments make me feel alive. They give me identity. It is a question of allowing yourself to see God in everything and to see all things in nature as members of one whole community, of which you too are a part.

It is said that this type of experience is the manifestation of 'sacred power'. When one makes contact with 'sacred power' it is a self-transcending experience which carries the mind to the edge of its limited understanding (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999:37). Graber (1976) suggests that nature (wilderness) is the ideal medium from which to experience sacred power. Furthermore, Fredrickson and Anderson (1999:38) also say that nature helps human beings to achieve transcendence by putting them in a receptive mood for contact with the sacred power. For example, in the case of participants who visited natural environments such as the Richtersveld [PI-4:419, PI-8:438, J-3:623, J-4:636], the Fish River Canyon and Sossusvlei in Namibia [J-2:612], it appeared that the vastness of these places and the total immersion into it, served to remind the participants of the vastness of the universe and one's place in it. The sheer expansiveness of the landscape presupposed spiritual self-investigation. It was the 'unexplored' landscape beyond the next mountain or sand dune that led to questions about the unknown which pulled them deeper into the sacred power.

McDonald (2003:14) suggests that 'soul' experiences are grounded in the direct experience of a vital force, spirit, God, or in experiencing vital spirit (sacred power) through other forms or beings. When such personal experiences are filled with deep meaning, they may create a desire to take action that leads one to a spiritual path. Language inhibits the full expression of those deep meanings. Kovel (1991:22) wrote that spirituality is rooted in the 'direct apprehension of a vital and material force pervading the entire universe'. The direct personal experience of the sacred power does not require any mediating form or being, but it may involve other earthly forms, beings or landscapes (Fig. 9.3).



Figure 9.3: A sunset in the bushveld may be regarded as a direct personal experience of the 'sacred power'.

The following excerpt demonstrates what a direct spiritual experience (experience of the sacred power or vital force) may be like:

> I was standing on the boulder next to the stream when it began to rain. I remained there. I watched the huge drops coming down all around me, splashing down in the stream in front of me. I closed my eyes and turned my face towards the sky. I could feel the cool raindrops on my skin. I stood there for quite some time and became immersed in the sounds of the water splashing over rocks and all around me. I lost track of time. At some stage I slowly became aware of my breathing and the coldness of my skin. I remember how astonished I was that I became so quiet and calm that I could actually feel and hear my heart beating. I felt a

> strange sensation through my body. Then I realised that I was feeling energy... energy from the earth that I was standing on. I became aware of this realisation and felt completely part of everything surrounding me... connected to the earth. I felt part of the other creatures in the area... just another tree, or duiker, or rock... [PR-15:587].

Although not every participant experienced such deep spiritual feelings, results clearly indicated that many study participants were definitely moved to new spiritual heights as a result of a nature experience. Especially those individuals who had more than a superficial guided tour of an area, but went into the 'rough' environment and experienced nature first-hand, developed a deep sense of identification with the place itself [J-1:606, J-2:612, J-3:623, J-4:636, PR-4:569, PR-6:574, PR-14:586]. This seems to support earlier work of Relph (1976) who claims that apart from the individual forming a sense of identification with the place, they also develop a real 'feel' for the place.

It is a unique combination of various interactions between people, and people and the characteristics of the natural environment that render a place as spiritually inspirational. Nature experiences provide individuals to grow spiritually. Once they are faced with questions about one's own spirituality and begin to contemplate and define one's own understanding of 'what is spiritual', they may find unique outcomes and opportunities in their everyday lives to enhance spiritual growth.

6. LASTING EFFECTS: A NEED TO RETURN?

Some study participants express that the changes in awareness, emotions and realisations about themselves as well as the spiritual feelings are lasting and have had a profound impact on their lives [PI-1:400(4-7), PI-3:417(31), PI-13:462]. They feel that the effect of the nature experience is lasting in the sense that they know they need to return to nature to rejuvenate [PI-2:412(26), PI-4:423(28-30), PI-8:442(27), J-2:612].

Taylor (1999:15) describes the effect of a three day stay in a natural environment:

> (B)y the time it was over I felt very different somehow. The changes I experienced were profound and lasting. I had come out of my head awareness and felt like I now inhabited my body more fully. I was also less emotionally invested in things that I previously would have let push my buttons. My sense of self had expanded and with it a greater sense of what was important to me. I was detached from the human-made world of culture and right and wrong; it all seemed such a monumental waste of time and energy. After two or three weeks this slowly wore off and I began acting and reacting less mindfully and more like a culturally programmed person ought to. The lesson here is that the opening and expansion that occurs for me in (nature) is a practice I need to return to regularly.

The lasting effects of the nature experience are as diverse as they differ from individual to individual. The overall feeling is that the effects do not last over long periods, but that the need to go back is persistent. The following three excerpts are examples of feelings expressed by participants in this regard:

> The feelings that I had when I was out there... complete peace... the openness... it gave me sustenance... I could take something with me... I felt enlightened... but when I returned, I only had memories. The feeling was very vague. But what I know is that I need that feeling and therefore I need to go back repeatedly [C-14(a):594].

> (Y)ou can have life-changing experiences while being there... but you should go back to be reminded about the good feelings you experience there and hang on to those feelings for as long as possible. It can carry you for quite some time [C-14(b):594].

> I have enriching experiences in the West Coast... when I spend some time in the dunes, I feel free and for some reason, inspired... motivated to complete things and do my best (for example my studies) upon returning home. However, when I am back I must concentrate to recall the feelings I had 'out there'. The only thing that keeps my going at such times is the fact that I know I will go back there and feel good again [C-14(c):594].

The connection that has been made during the experience is a reminder of what can be the benefit from a revisit. The changes people report with regards to the effect of a nature experience are diverse.

The more time people spend in natural environments, the more aware and mindful they become [Chapter 5]. By becoming aware of the small things in nature, people begin to understand the symbiotic interdependence of all things. They understand that all aspects of the ecosystem are important [Chapter 1]. When they are at this level of awareness, distinctions of large and small fade away (Taylor, 1999:16). The ultimate effect of this experience is the understanding that human beings also fit into ecosystems. We all are part of a system and everything belongs to a system. Together we function in interdependency.

The results discussed in this chapter show that the effects of nature experiences can fill a missing part in our lives. The complete experience can put us more in touch with our selves, enable us to understand our place in the wholeness of nature and to make us realise who we truly are and what we truly regard as important in our lives. This is illustrated in the following reflection after an extended visit to Namibia:

> (L)ooking back, we realise how much we are part of nature, how much we need nature. We learnt afresh from the gemsbok, from its astonishing adaptive abilities in stressful environments; from the elephant and the numerous springbok... We also experienced quality and value of life; what really matters.

> Today, we are back in the rat-race, the noise; where we see a few stars at night, blurred by pollution and city lights - and we have to cope! But fortunately we can, because we have experienced the beauty and the unconditional truth of nature, of which we are indissolubly part and to which we can still return when we want to, to get what is needed to live! [J-2:508].

It is not the case that the effects of nature exist 'out there' in the natural environment but in the interactive relation between human beings and nature (Taylor, 1999:15).

It seems that nature can act as a reflector of our lives. It can give us answers and helps us to see ourselves more clearly. For those who can find the courage and can open themselves to it, nature provides the nurturing space for people to explore themselves. Individuals have reported some profound and life-changing transitions and shifts in perspective, perception and consciousness. The building of self-confidence, self-awareness and other guidance that are facilitated by nature experiences can lead to these shifts in life, or are themselves profound and life-changing.

7. CONCLUSION

There is more in a nature experience than just going out there and exclaiming 'wow!' It also involves a time of storying, sharing and rituals during and after the experience. This reflecting on experiences can take the form of sharing during informal conversation around a campfire at the end of the day (Figure 9.4), after a group activity or personal experience, a written journal or poem, a painting, a photograph, more rituals, an extended discussion or informal storytelling. The important thing is that people reflect on their experiences in nature and record the positive from the experience (unique outcomes) in their conscious, verbal minds so that their daily lives can be transformed by the experience (new story).

Besides the benefits to mental and physical well-being, nature experiences can have spiritual benefits. Awareness through storying of the experiences we have in nature and the meaning thereof, enhances the spiritual feelings and emphasises that we are part of the earth as a living community, supported by a universal intelligence and wholeness that supports all life. With this realisation comes a commitment to be responsible citizens of the biological community and to return to nature the love and care we have experienced ourselves.

For society, nature experiences can provoke our desire and effectiveness to act, change our modes of communication, and change to what we see as desirable human qualities. Nature experiences offer opportunities for enhanced affective responsiveness, resulting in discovering a sense of self, mental clarity, perceptual abilities, new perspectives, improved relationships and heightened spirituality. Therefore it contributes to assertiveness, challenging norms, gaining new views and relationships. This can change one's personal effectiveness and role in society.

A change in perspectives in one's own life may result in a further change in perspective and ultimately behaviour in nature. These behaviour changes may encourage conservation orientated practices in the individual's life and ultimately in the lives of those who have to make decisions on conservation, tourism and development.

In nature we realise the meaning in our actions and in the responses we and others, including nature, have to our actions. All landscapes ask the same question in the same whisper: 'I am watching you; are you watching yourself in me?' (Durrell as quoted by Devall (1988:65)).



Figure 9.4: Reflecting on a day's experiences in nature.

CHAPTER 10

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

> *This we know: the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself* (Chief Seattle, 1854).

At the end of this thesis I find myself still 'playing on the seashore, diverting myself every now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, knowing the great ocean of truth still lay undiscovered before me...'

This document is not a conventional thesis.

- It is about personal and fulfilling nature experiences.
- It includes mind power, meditation, life-mapping, mindfulness.
- It is all encompassing.
- It includes and picks up where motivational seminars, teambuilding and self-help books and courses leave off.
- It even goes beyond all of these.
- It is about making the world a better place for oneself.
- It is about setting examples for others to follow and improve on.
- It is about finding yourself... and nature...

This study is an attempt to trace the reconnection between people and nature, resulting in a lasting reconnection between people and themselves. It establishes the knowledge and awareness that we are one with nature, that our species is but

a link in the whole ecosystem. Therefore, we can overcome whatever confronts us. We have the intrinsic power and knowledge to cope under different circumstances, because we are part of nature and nature has all the intrinsic coping and survival skills. We are all created that way - to live a happy and fulfilled life. We have the ability to do just that. Many of us just don't realise that. We need a role model to make us aware of our own inherited, intrinsic values and skills, by showing us the ways of the wild, of which we are part, always remembering that each individual is different from others.

This study confirms that the individual cannot function independently from the natural environment. Nature influences every person who has contact with it in some way, to a greater or lesser degree. Nature experiences are as diverse as the individuals who have them. This study finds commonalities and indicates differences. It interprets the meaning and value of these experiences and in the process adds to the understanding of human-nature interrelationships.

This study combines a range of techniques and theories that can be applied under various circumstances, to enable individual preferences, knowledge, needs and stories to be uniquely explored. It examines how a person can become aware and conscious of the dynamic nature experiences and their implications to human well-being and to all other species on earth. Verbalisation of an experience enhances its meaning, often resulting in lasting and sometimes extraordinary personal growth.

Based on the above-mentioned, this study can be summarised as follows:

- What a person knows of life, they know through lived experience. To express oneself, the experience must be 'storied'. People are continuously telling stories to others and to themselves. The same applies to experiences of people in natural environments. People share their nature experiences through econarratives. By telling and re-telling nature stories new meanings and interpretations are attached to them and experiences are performed in some or other way, whether it is with emotion, enthusiasm or inspiration.

Stories provide the framework that makes it possible to interpret and ascribe meaning to one's experience in nature. Although many authors offer helpful incentives of what nature really means, there is no substitute for the personal experience of the thing-in-itself, something we have become disconnected from.

- Tribes such as the San have lived in harmony with nature over many years. Technological progress led to a lifestyle that caused human beings to become disconnected from their natural environment. However, not only technology and an indoor lifestyle caused this disconnectedness. Religion and people's relationship with the divine and the connection between nature and the divine, may also be considered as a reason. The disconnectedness from nature has an inward dimension, namely an inner alienation from nature in people's whole mind, body and spirit. This inner alienation runs parallel to a disconnectedness from real nature as experienced in the outside world. When people are disconnected, they become like caged lions in a zoo. The lion's food and shelter are provided, yet he is separated from his kind and his natural habitat, thus the zoo lion is lost to the whole. Because he cannot connect, something dies within. Similarly, our separation from nature is causing something within us to die. The more separated we become, the more we become untouched by nature, resulting in a spiritual loneliness. We may not even realise the cause of this loneliness. We have to find ways to transform, to release ourselves from the cage we have created around us, to get out of our isolated position and to reconnect with nature to enrich our lives. It is imperative for our own survival - physically, mentally and spiritually - that we reconnect with nature, consciously or subconsciously.

- Reconnection can only start when we experience nature. When moving out into the natural environment, we simultaneously leave our comfort zones created by technology. In the natural environment we are vulnerable and ready to be nature-orientated. We are then open to influences to grow and to be inspired in a positive way. This is usually not necessarily a conscious

process. The first experience in nature is a physical connection. What we experience physically evokes some deeper meaning that takes us to a spiritual dimension. This unconscious dimension becomes increasingly conscious by increasing exposure to nature. This leads to increased awareness of our natural environment and of ourselves. Experiences in nature also take us away from normal life, slow us down and give us time to focus on what really matters and what makes us truly happy. We tend to compare ourselves to nature, resulting in core values emerging, for example humility and care. We get the opportunity to see each other and ourselves as never before. This realisation brings about a change in mind, not only towards ourselves, but also towards nature and our place in nature. We realise the need for conservation practices that include the spiritual dimension. More and more people feel the need to return to natural environments - evidence of a re-awakening of human beings to be reconnected.

- The popular construct of ecotourism originated from the need for human beings to reconnect to nature. With ecotourism comes development and the concomitant negative effects to both the natural environment and the people who visit nature to acquire a sense of spiritual sustenance. To enhance awareness of the impacts of such negative effects, education forms an important element of the ecotourism experience. It creates improved understanding in ecotourists and also in role players such as ecotourist guides, operators and decision-makers. South Africa has some of the world's prime natural environments. With the proper use of ecotourism practices and the understanding of ecotourism as a product of the human need to reconnect to nature, a more effective appreciation of these places can be realised.

- Deep and profound spiritual events can occur when people spend time in natural environments. These events are what make them value their experience. Nature experiences go far beyond the traditional 'to get away from it all'. Stress reduction and relaxation are products of a visit to a

natural environment, but a more spiritual process of awareness and fulfillment also develops within an individual. Whatever the reason for visiting a natural environment or the implications it holds for the individual, the lived experience produces important benefits. A person's nature experience can be divided into eight phases starting with the anticipation phase and ending with the long-term recollection phase. These phases can be compared with a cumulus cloud in having different shapes, but all with a basic similar structure. While these phases, concepts and values are not all inclusive of any natural environment, they clearly suggest that the nature experience is more than a simple recreational visit. Awareness of these values differentiates an authentic nature experience from other uses of the natural environment because individuals become more focused on their natural surroundings and themselves. It seems that individuals value these experiences in particular in undeveloped environments. Therefore, the setting itself contributes to how the nature experience is valued. Changes in the natural environment affect the kind and intensity of the experience the area provides. Not all people who visit natural areas will seek or experience nature in the same way. Many personal perceptions, skills, interests and past experiences, as well as numerous external aspects influence the nature experience of individuals.

- Although the experiences people have in nature are mostly positive or contribute to positive feelings, sometimes external influences cause an experience to be perceived as negative. These influences are identified as disturbances to a nature experience. Twelve categories of disturbances are identified in this study of which litter, inappropriate human behaviour, environmental degradation, overcrowding, noise, weather conditions, overdevelopment and moods of other people are the most important.

- Irrespective of the disturbances encountered during a visit to a natural environment, most people value the experience to a greater or lesser extent. The experience becomes more valuable when the individual tells it from a personal viewpoint and as such attaches a personal meaning to it.

Photographs are used as an additional way to tell a story of an experience in nature. They connect one with the past and help to view oneself in different phases of an experience and in life. The photographed moment can be extended into infinity and therefore provides the time to absorb detail and attach deeper meaning to the event. An exploration and interpretation of this meaning determines its application in everyday live. People use metaphors, symbols and rituals in their stories to describe and clarify experiences. By choosing a role model (metaphor) in nature one can relate personal and subjective stories, insights and feelings with something trustworthy and eternal. Finding metaphors in nature, each individual recounts and reveals moments in their experiences where something occurred, leading one's mind toward new awareness, new realisations and new meanings. Relating these metaphorically to their own lives, nature experiences lead to more lasting benefits than just going outdoors. Awareness of the meaning of one's own experiences in nature restores or improves one's affective responsiveness. This may lead to the discovering of a sense of the self, mental clarity, increased perceptual abilities, new perspectives, improved relationships and fulfilling spiritual experiences. Although not every individual experiences such deep spiritual feelings, many are moved to new spiritual heights as a result of a nature experience. It is a unique combination of various interactions between people, and people and the characteristics of the natural environment that render a place as spiritually inspirational. Nature experiences cause individuals to grow spiritually. Once they are faced with questions about their own spirituality and begin to contemplate and define their own understanding of what is spiritual, they may find unique benefits and opportunities to enhance spiritual growth in their everyday lives.

When considering the objectives as stated in Chapter 1, the following conclusions can be made from the results of this exploratory study:

1. Two main areas of fundamental disconnection between human beings and nature are confirmed, namely technology and an indoor lifestyle.

Technological progress has led to the indoor lifestyle that caused people to become disconnected from the natural environment. We became dependent on the comforts and conveniences that technology offers and these conveniences became our priorities for a so-called 'happy' life. Both the dependency on modern comforts and our dislocated priorities, lead to a materialistic viewpoint towards life, resulting in further disconnectedness.

In addition this study also reveals that the disconnectedness has an inward or spiritual dimension. Materialism results in an inner disconnectedness from nature in people's whole mind, body and spirit. This inner disconnectedness runs parallel with a disconnectedness from real nature as experienced in the outside world. Therefore, although technology and lifestyle are highlighted as the two main reasons for the disconnectedness from nature, spiritual factors may also cause this separation.

2. To restore a sense of connectedness between humankind and nature, people primarily need to spend time in nature. The first engagement in a nature experience involves a form of physical recreation. People often challenge themselves in physical activities that stress body and mind. Therefore they are conscious of these activities. This is the physical dimension of the experience, the part that we are aware of and that can be storied and shared with others.

Experiencing nature to reconnect means more than merely a physical sensation. It also involves thoughts and feelings on an emotional (affective) level. These feelings and emotions accompanying the physical experience are difficult to verbalise. They may include things such as the smell of a flower or the silence during a sunset. This is the lived experience of the individual, the spiritual dimension which happens at an unconscious level.

When people do not have a physical connection with nature, they cannot experience the spiritual dimension. Because they do not spend time in nature they remain disconnected, unaware of what nature holds for them.

On the other hand, the more frequently people visit nature and engage in activities that take them into natural environments, the more they become conscious of this 'unstoryable' experience. Consciousness in this context is to awaken to one's natural surroundings and to one's self. This consciousness may result in a personal interest in nature or aspects of nature. By being awake and receptive to the feelings and emotions evoked by an experience in nature, one becomes drawn to nature and wants to know more or be more involved in the natural environment. Developing such an interest in nature results in awareness. When people are aware, they begin to realise what nature means to them. This awareness may influence our attitudes and behaviour in the natural environment.

3. Authors agree that ecotourism is a fast growing industry, due to the fact that more people increasingly feel the need to visit natural environments. This study indicates that ecotourism originated from and exists due to the desire of individuals to reconnect to nature. They fulfil this desire by experiencing unspoilt natural environments both physically and spiritually. This research therefore, proposes that it is the intrinsic meaning of being in nature that makes people return to eco-destinations over and over again.

In all definitions of and discussions on ecotourism there is a total lack of recognition of awareness and of the spiritual value of natural places and the deeper reason for ecotourism. This should be of great concern to those who have the experience and knowledge of these values and consequently of the necessity to keep natural areas free from development for tourism. Such over-development will eventually drive the tourist away.

Crucial to the premise that the ecotourism destination areas of South Africa should remain unspoilt, is an understanding of what people want and why they visit certain areas. It is not because of air-conditioned five-star chalets, haute cuisine and super luxury; it is because of the *intrinsic qualities of nature*. This simple fact is either ignored by, or is unknown to many ecotourism destination developers. The end result is overdeveloped

areas that permanently scar the landscape. This leads to a loss of interest in the area and ultimately a loss of income and desperately needed jobs for the local community.

Not only are more people visiting natural environments, but there is also a tendency to visit less-developed and remote areas. It is therefore important to conserve and manage the natural environment responsibly in order to achieve sustained economic growth.

4. Individual experiences in nature cannot be generalised. Although a rough pattern of phases in a nature experience can be distinguished, individuals attach their own personal meanings to the experience. People have satisfying nature experiences in any natural environment. The intensity or fulfilment of such experiences depends on personal perceptions, skills, interests and past experiences, as well as numerous external aspects.

Nature experiences consist of five different phases which are described in the literature. This study identifies two additional phases recognisable in an analogy of a cumulus cloud: a basic structure with variations in size and shape. In all three identified categories of developed, less developed and undeveloped natural environments, the basic pattern of these phases is similar. This means that people experience all seven phases during a visit to a natural environment, irrespective of the place, the duration of the visit or the extent of development of the area.

The difference comes in with the concepts of solitude, oneness, humility, primitiveness, timelessness, care, self-knowledge and spirituality. These are highlighted as values that individuals experience in a natural environment. Individuals value the undeveloped environments very strongly. It seems as if the primary source of these declared values is the unspoilt natural environment itself. There are psychological and spiritual benefits in the environment and the undeveloped environment is the source of peoples' satisfactory experiences. Therefore the setting itself contributes to how the

nature experience is valued. Changes in the natural environment affect the type and intensity of the experience the area provides.

5. People have mostly positive experiences in nature. Sometimes they experience a visit to nature as being negative. External influences are the cause of such feelings. These influences are identified as disturbances to a nature experience.

   The most significant of these disturbances are litter, inappropriate human behaviour and environmental degradation, followed by weather conditions, safety, noise, crowding, overdevelopment, moods and other isolated conditions. Depending on the attitude of the individual, the nature of the destination visited, the purpose of the visit as well as other aspects, disturbances vary in importance and intensity.

6. Individuals organise and give meaning to their experience through stories. In the performance of these stories they express selected aspects of their lived experience. Therefore these stories shape their lives and relationships. Dominant stories are made up of what occupies one's mind, that which you talk about most often. Those aspects of the lived experience that fall outside the dominant story (the part that is not storied) provide a rich source for the generation of alternative stories or unique outcomes. The identification of unique outcomes can be facilitated by the externalisation of the dominant description of a person's life and relationships. Externalisation encourages a person to objectify or personify, by using metaphors, 'problems' or events that form the dominant story. The problem becomes a separate entity and stands outside the person or relationship.

   This study argues that a visit to a natural environment is the externalisation of the dominant story of an individual's life. From such a visit unique outcomes are identified that become the alternative story in a person's life. A person attaches meaning to identified unique outcomes. For example, in our daily routine lives our dominant stories are often filled with work,

family, financially and socially related concerns which affect the quality of our lives. When breaking-away for a weekend or holiday into nature, we create a unique outcome - something good - in our dominant story. During such time we externalise our daily concerns, i.e. we become part of our natural environment and stand outside the events of our daily lives. On return from such a weekend or holiday we tend to talk about (story) the experiences we had in nature. These experiences are unique outcomes. People value these unique outcomes and attach meaning to them, which become the new dominant story. The more they talk about the meaning of the nature experience, the more language and knowledge is added to it. Consequently this experience becomes powerful in their lives and becomes the new dominant story, adding quality to their lives and relationships. Externalising oneself from problems creates the opportunity to see and describe oneself and one's relationships from a new, problem-free perspective; thus an alternative story. The problem becomes not a problem internal to the person, but a metaphor.

Nature experiences lead to more profound benefits to the individual than just going outdoors. The effects from a nature experience are transferable, meaning that they can carry over into people's everyday lives. Fulfilling nature experiences enhance affective responsiveness which may lead to the discovering of a sense of the self, mental clarity, increased perceptual abilities, new perspectives, improved relationships and increased spiritual experiences.

The lasting effects of the nature experience are as diverse as they differ from individual to individual. Although the effects do not last over long periods, the need to return to nature is persistent. The connection that has been made during the experience is a reminder of what can be the benefit from a revisit. The effects of nature experiences can fill a missing part in people's lives. The complete experience put them more in touch with themselves, enable them to understand their place in the wholeness of

nature and to make them realise who they truly are and what they truly regard as important in their lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Each investigation in the field of human experiences in nature is like throwing a net into the ocean of possibilities. One is bound to come up with similarities with and differences from previous studies. New ways of viewing and understanding the nature experience are discovered. Each bit of information adds to the knowledge of this vast topic. This exploratory study generated more questions and the following may be regarded as further research opportunities.

- What is the relationship between religion and people's relationship with the divine and disconnectedness from nature?

- To what extent will a change of attitude towards the natural environment ensure a behavioural change towards nature? Will this behavioural change eventually lead to true environmental conservation ethics recognising people as part of nature?

- What is the connection between nature experience and behaviour?

- What is the effect of educating guides to enhance the spiritual awareness of visitors to nature?

- Is there a shift towards the recognition of the spiritual value of nature where the human experience is included in ecotourism?

- Which narrative therapeutic tools can be developed and applied to create positive awareness of the value of nature for individuals?

- What are the differences in the meaning of nature experiences amongst different cultures?

- What are the differences in the meaning of nature experiences amongst different age groups and gender?

It is obvious that additional qualitative investigation can only further contribute to the existing knowledge about human-nature interactions and the nature experience. It will enhance a more complete understanding of this dynamic phenomenon. On-going research should be encouraged to deepen our understanding of the spiritual benefits of nature.

Come, listen to the Earth with us, for those who have learnt to hear the song, the Earth can soothe the troubled heart, refresh the weary, soften the hardened, redirect the lost
(Steve van Matre - The Earth Speak, in Patterson, 2001).

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ADDENDUM A: EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW/CONVERSATION QUESTIONS

Addendum A presents examples of questions asked during informal conversations with study participants when specific information was needed, when it was necessary to probe someone to talk about an experience(s), and to test feelings or emotions.

1. What is 'nature' for you?
2. What is your relation to nature? (If you have to describe your personal relationship with nature, would you say it is quite intense, or more superficial?)
3. What role does nature play in your life?
4. What is you relation to your own nature within yourself? (Are you what you want to be - in your work, family, social life, your self?)
5. Does nature teach you anything?
6. What was your very first deep contact with nature and what did that moment/event tell you? Looking back, how does this influence your work and life now?
7. When you are in nature, what is your greatest awareness?
8. What do you do to 'sense' nature around you? (How do you become aware of things around you?)
9. Is there something in nature, an animal, plant, river- or landscape, that you can identify with? In which way do you identify with this? What does it do to you?
10. Do you think that all life forms have some form of feeling, emotion or awareness?
11. How do see the place and the role of human beings in nature?
12. What is your understanding of spirituality?
13. How do you see the relation between religion and nature?
14. Is the human species the most important life form on earth?
15. Do you feel part of nature?
16. Do you think that people are disconnected from nature?
17. Do you think that a disconnectedness from nature reflects a disconnectedness from God, or vice versa?
18. Do you think that we, as people of Africa, are more connected to nature than, for example people from Europe or America?
19. Is there a possibility to become reconnected to nature, if one is disconnected? How?
20. What is your favourite place in nature to visit? Why is this your favourite place?
21. When being on a visit to a place in nature, how do you prefer to travel? (Alone, with partner, family, friends)
22. What do you prefer to do when being in nature? (Your favourite outdoor activities?)
23. Do you personally feel it is necessary for you to return to nature regularly? Why do you have to return to nature from time to time?
24. What is your feeling about development in natural areas? What do you prefer? Why?
25. What is, to you, an example of a natural area (game reserve, national park, etc.) which is well-developed and accessible?

26. And of natural area which is moderately developed, but still have the peace and quiet of a wilderness area?
27. Of an undeveloped, remote (wilderness) area?
28. Can you describe a highlight of a visit to a place in nature? (Where?, When?) Why do you regard this as a highlight?
29. Questions asked about a specific recent trip:
    - Which place did you visit?
    - When and for how long was this visit?
    - How long before the trip did you decide to go?
    - How long before leaving for the trip did your preparations start?
    - How did you feel during this 'preparation' phase?
    - What were your feelings and emotions the day before you left for the trip? Why did you feel that?
    - During the journey to your destinations, were there anything special that you can think of going through your mind, that you talked about in the vehicle, you could sense from the others?
    - Any moods or emotions you can recall?
    - You arrived at your destination. Can you briefly tell me about your experiences, the positive and negatives, while being there. If possible, also recall your feelings accompanying your experiences.
    - So you got to the end of your holiday. How did you feel when you realised it was time to go home?
    - While driving back home, were those feelings still there or did you emotions change? Explain.
    - Were their any negative experiences/feelings during all this time while being at the destination and on the way back? (Elaborate if one syllabus answers are given).
    - When returning to your work and daily routine, can you describe your initial feelings the first few days?
    - And now, how do you feel now?
    - If you sit quiet for a moment and intensely think back and in your mind experience your highlight, does it have any effect on you?

ADDENDUM B: OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE PERCEPTIONS ON PEOPLE-NATURE INTERACTIONS

Addendum B contains some of the brief formats of open-ended questionnaires use to determine perceptions on various aspects of people-nature interactions.

Questionnaire A: Disconnection and reconnection

1. Date	
2. Gender	
3. Age	
4. Occupation	
5. Place of permanent residence	

Please answer the following questions:

1. What, according to you, is the single most important threat to nature and natural systems (world ecology)?

2. Do you think that human beings, in general, are somehow disconnected from nature? Yes/No. Why do you say so?

3. If you are of the meaning that we, as humans, are indeed disconnected (or separated) from nature, would you link this disconnectedness with a separation (disconnectedness) from God? Please provide reasons for your answer.

4. How do you think people, in general, cope with stress?

5. How do you, as an individual, cope with your stress?

6. Do you think human beings are part of nature? Why do you say so?

7. Do you think we as South Africans and people of Africa, are closer to nature than people from other parts of the world? Why do you say so?

8. What do you think does each individual have to do to live closer with nature?

Additional/explanatory comments:

Questionnaire B: Ecotourism

1. Date	
2. Gender	
3. Age	
4. Occupation	
5. Place of permanent residence	

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is your favourite activity/pastime?

2. If different from (1), what is your favourite outdoors activity?

3. For what reasons do you participate in the activity in (2)? Please number your choices in sequence of importance, 1 - most important reason, to 5 - least important reason.

4. What are your favourite places to visit? (If possible, list them in sequence of importance.)

5. What is the single most important reason for these places being your favourite?

6. When staying over in a natural environment, which type of accommodation do you prefer?
   Additional/explanatory comments:

7. How do you prefer to travel or go on holiday? Tick one.
   Alone
   with my partner
   with friends
   with my family
   as part of a tour group
   other (please specify)
   Additional/explanatory comments:

8. Name anything that may have a negative influence on your experiences in nature (your enjoyment of nature). Please indicate the importance of each by numbering them from 1 - 5, 1 being the most important.

Additional/explanatory comments:

Questionnaire C: Dynamics (phases) of a nature experience

1. Date	
2. Gender	
3. Age	
4. Occupation	
5. Place of permanent residence	

Please choose a destination you have visited recently and answer all the questions with regards to that specific visit and place.

1. Place visited:
   Date visited:

2. I visited the abovementioned place:
   - ☐ alone
   - ☐ with my partner
   - ☐ with friends
   - ☐ with my family
   - ☐ as part of a tour group
   - ☐ other (please specify)

3. What were your main activities during this visit?

4. How long in advance did you plan for this trip?

5. What did you include in your planning?

6. How would you describe your feelings and emotions during this planning period?

7. At what stage before leaving for the trip, were you most excited?

8. Before leaving on the trip, what is/was your **personal** most important issue/problem/worry/concern?

9. "While traveling to our destination, I experienced/felt the following:" (If possible, please specify the reason you felt this way).

10. How did you feel initially - physically and mentally - after arriving at your destination?

11. Please describe the highlights of your visit in as much detail as possible. Why do you regard this/these as a highlight(s)?

12. What was your most important concern or issue while being at your destination?

13. How did you feel when it was time to go back home?

14. "While traveling back home, I experienced/felt the following": (Please specify, if possible, the reason you felt this way).

15. How did you feel immediately after your arrival back home? Describe your feelings and emotions. How long did these feelings last?

16. How do you feel about your trip (or environment/place you have visited) in general now? (Please mention feelings, observations, attitudes, moods, general perceptions, what you remember, etc.) If photographs will help you remember, please use and include them.

17. Will you go on the same or a similar trip again? Please provide reasons.

18. Do you need to go back to nature? Please provide reasons.

19. Please list all negative aspects, experiences and feelings you had, if any, from the day of departure for your trip until your arrival back home. If possible, give a reason for these negative experiences you had.

Additional/explanatory comments:

Questionnaire D: Rituals, metaphors, symbols

1. Date	
2. Gender	
3. Age	
4. Occupation	
5. Place of permanent residence	

Please answer the following questions:

1. Do you perform any ritual(s) at some stage during a visit to a natural place? (e.g. campfire every evening, early morning walk, taking of your watch, etc.)

2. What is the meaning of this 'ritual' to you?

3. Is there anything in nature that symbolises something in your life? Please explain the meaning of this (if any) in as much detail as possible.

4. Can you identify with something in nature? Please provide as much detail as possible of the phenomenon and the meaning is holds for you.

Additional/explanatory comments:

Questionnaire E: Spiritual value

1. Date	
2. Gender	
3. Age	
4. Occupation	
5. Place of permanent residence	

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is the meaning of the word 'spiritual' or 'spirituality' to you?

2. Thinking back of any particular visit(s) to a natural environment, were you spiritually inspired at any time? If yes, will you please explain how?

3. What, if anything, did you find particularly spiritually inspiring? Why?

4. On a scale of 1 (to a very great extent) - 5 (not at all) rate the extent to which you experience this spiritual inspiration/feeling.

5. What is the meaning of these spiritual feelings to you?

6. Should you wish to relax body, mind and spirit, (1) where would you go? and/or (2) what would you do?

7. List, in order of preference, your preferred way of "getting away from it all".

8. Would you say that to visit a natural place is essential for your general well-being (spiritually, mentally and physically)? Yes/No. Reasons for your answer?

Additional/explanatory comments:

Questionnaire F: Awareness and affective aspects

1. Date	
2. Gender	
3. Age	
4. Occupation	
5. Place of permanent residence	

Please answer the following questions:

1. If you have to recall one of the most meaningful aspect(s) of a trip to nature, what was that? Describe in as much detail as possible what actually happened and why it was meaningful.

2. Was there anything in particular about your environment that caught your attention at that time?

3. Can you describe in any detail the feelings you experienced at that time.

4. Did you hear any specific sounds?

5. What was the weather like?

6. Were there any specific plants or wildlife present?

Additional/explanatory comments:

Questionnaire G: Daily activities of students

List your activities from 06:00 - 22:00 for an average day in your week. Use the following schedule as an example:

06:00 - 07:00	
07:00 - 08:00	
08:00 - 09:00	
09:00 - 10:00	
10:00 - 11:00	
11:00 - 12:00	
12:00 - 13:00	
13:00 - 14:00	
14:00 - 15:00	
15:00 - 16:00	
16:00 - 17:00	
17:00 - 18:00	
19:00 - 20:00	
20:00 - 21:00	
21:00 - 22:00	

List the times and occasions that you spend outside a building or vehicle, if not mentioned above:

ADDENDUM C: STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF ON-SITE EXPERIENCES IN THREE DIFFERENT NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Addendum C presents the structured questions asked in a questionnaire to compare individuals' experiences in the three natural environments of developed, less developed and undeveloped.

1 - Always or almost always, 2 - Sometimes, 3 - Never or almost never									
Experience	**Undeveloped**			**Developed**			**Richtersveld**		
Solitude	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**
The environment seemed free of human-made noise									
I felt the tranquillity of this place									
I felt peaceful in this place									
I felt the silence of the environment									
I felt like being in a secluded place where I/we are the only people									
The natural environment brings a calming, peace-of-mind feeling over me									
Oneness	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**
I felt a part of nature									
I was feeling a special closeness with nature									
I was feeling totally immersed in nature									
Primitiveness	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**
I felt like a pioneer/ first inhabitant									
I was comfortable to have only the needed basics									
I felt that life can be uncomplicated and relaxed									
I felt that life was simple and good									
I felt connected with times long ago									
I was myself and felt uncomplicated									
I missed modern conveniences									
Timelessness	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**3**
I cared what time it was									
I was worrying about the time									
I cared what time it was when I ate/went to sleep									

Humility	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
I was in awe of creation									
I felt small by all of nature around me									
I was feeling insignificant comparing to nature									
Care	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
I felt that I want to care for this place in particular									
I want to behave properly towards this place									
I want to tell others to conserve and respect this place									
I felt inspired to care for nature in general									
I noticed the little things of nature more than before									
Self-knowledge	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
I was very aware of my feelings and emotions									
Feelings I experienced were more intense than usual									
I was focusing on my own thoughts a lot									
I was thinking about my life									
I felt motivated and inspired to continue with tasks and obligations back home									
I intended to be more positive and successful in life									
I intended to make use of opportunities in future									
I intended to work on my negative characteristics/ irritations in future									
Spirituality	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
I was thinking about my place in the world/in creation									
I felt a special closeness with others in the group									
Other group members accepted me for who I am									
I felt close to the Creator									
I felt 'enlightened'									
I felt close to all other life forms									

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PERSONAL INTERVIEW 1 (PI-1)

Name:	Ann Cheater
Gender:	Female
Age:	29
Occupation:	Part time lecturer, Animal welfare worker, MTech student
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	083 263 9386
Date and place of interview:	30 May 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	60 minutes

1. What is 'nature' to you?
It is the untouched outdoors that does not have man's hustle and bustle. It is just pure nature with plants and animals and fresh air.

2. What is your relation with nature?
It is almost a spiritual relationship, because I like to retreat to nature. I like to get away from the hassles of what is bothering me in the busy life and I like to get away and think and relax, just be free. It is almost like a retreat.

3. What do you do differently during those 'retreats', than at home, for example?
In society you have to live, wake-up, do things in a certain way, speak in a certain way. You have to think and be what society wants you to be. But when you are in the bush, you can be yourself without worrying what people think of you, because it is just you. If you want to act differently, or enjoy the outdoors you don't have to worry about what you are wearing, or any of those kind of things, if you are wearing designer labels. You can just be you. There is nothing judging or complicated about it.

4. What role does nature play in your personal life?
It is two-fold: It is both a passion and a career. Luckily I love my career. From a passion side – because I unfortunately don't work in the bush where I would love to work, I use it as an escape and a relaxing time to get away from the normal work load.

5. What is you relation to your own nature within yourself? (Are you what you want to be – in your work, family, social life, your self?)
I know who I am and I am pretty much a perfectionist in terms of I know what I want and I know that I would get it. What sometimes gets to me is when I can't achieve things. Then things don't work out, either with my relationship with my parents or a friend or work… When things don't work out 100%, then I struggle with that. But I know who I am and what I want out of life.

6. Does nature teach you anything?
In a strange way I often get lessons from nature, either how things work together or survival of the fittest, or just the harmony or the purity of it all. Sometimes I will relate to a natural system, but I think that is also because of what I have studied and what I know. So, I kind of relate life's experiences to something I can understand, which is nature.

7. If you can think back… what was your very first deep contact with nature and what did that moment or event tell you?
I grew up in a family where animals come first. I had a dog shared my cot with me and my mother couldn't decide who got the most attention! If I had to think back of a pure nature experience, I remember being in primary school and we had to collect leaves for a school project and stick the leaves and just put the common name of the tree next to the leave. My parents actually took the opportunity and we went away for a week-end to Kruger. I can remember walking in the camp and my dad holding me up so that I could pick the different leaves. They were actively participating in the whole experience of writing down the names and the different pictures. I can remember them sticking them in books with me. So I grew up with it and that behaviour was encouraged. The outdoors and wildlife was always encouraged.

8. If you look back at that specific event, how does it influence your life, work and relationships now?
I grew up learning, almost like a religion, that wildlife was precious and special and important. I never had to question that. I always agreed with that. It was also an acceptable thing to study and to be, because I was always directed into that and the love of it. So it became something I would want to do and conserve, because it has always been a good thing to have and appreciate.

9. When you are in nature, what is your greatest awareness?
Quietness.

10. What do you hear?
I usually just hear the lack of noise. You can actually hear yourself. There is no traffic, no people, no alarms…. If you just sit a little while, you always go into a state of meditation, because you are sitting and enjoying it, then you start to hear birds. Then you get more attuned and you can actually start hearing the leaves rustle, and you can just … it is like becoming peaceful and the whole world just blocks out. It is like being in this peaceful cocoon…just peaceful noises. It seems not to irritate as the other noises one is used to.

11. Tell me about your meditations.
In terms of thinking and getting my life in order, yes. I like things being correct, so often I need to sit down and plan. I often write down a list or flow diagram of what I am doing, getting organised.

12. What do you do to sense nature around you? What do you do to become aware of things around you?
It is not an active thing. I am actually quite passive when I am in nature. I like to be alone in nature. I often find that having people with me, clutters it back

up to the whole point of why you come here in the first place. What I often like to do, in Kruger especially, is to go for a long, slow cruise through the park, with the windows open. Then I just listen to everything and then I would just park … next to a river… and then I just watch the beauty. Or I would sit for hours watching … vervet monkeys playing… everything!

13. Is there something in nature that you can identify with?
I think the first thing that gets to me is the open space. There is no wall, so I don't feel locked in. I can see for miles, and I don't see fences and I don't see pylons. It is freedom and openness and vastness. That gets to me.

14. What does it do to you?
Firstly it never seems to stop putting me in awe. I just go 'wow… isn't this beautiful to get away, isn't this fresh air….' It is always just a sense of awe… it is just like … I can't explain it. It is like you get there and you go like 'this is so nice to be out in the open'. It is almost a relieve!

15. Do you think that all life forms have some form of feeling or emotion or awareness?
Yes, when I grew up I was quite religious. Now I see religion in things that are pure. So, when I am with things, fresh water, even rocks, there is a sense of almost spirituality that comes with it and the marvel of it. If things feel – yes, most definitely. I am so used to justify it with people that don't agree with me that I started justifying it from a scientific point of view by telling them that of course animals feel: they are good enough to test products on – then they feel. I get very emotional about it. It upsets me if somebody hurts nature. Not in the way of things like perhaps to plough a land, chop down a tree for development… I know that some things are necessary, but there is something that died and I know there is feeling in life. I don't know if there is intelligence in all of life, but that is based on our definition of intelligence….

16. How do you see the place and role of human beings in nature?
If I had it my way, I would have kicked humans into the cities and into high rise buildings so that they would use up the least amount of land and I would force people to respect other life forms. I love it so much and I am so scared that it would get hurt, I would keep people out of it. You see, to me it is my little … it is in my heart. It is so special to me, that when people seem to get involved, they seem to mess things up. A part of me would just like to put a big fence around nature and not let people hurt it. I am very protective and a part of me does not like people changing it. I get very upset if people don't appreciate it. If they appreciate it, they are more than welcome to it, as long as they … I am very selfish, they must appreciate it the way I do… If they exploit it, I get very upset.

17. What is your understanding of spirituality?
Realising that there is more than just you. You are part of a whole earth and a whole life and recognising your role in that life and what is greater than you and more special than you and what you should do to protect that around you, in terms of people's feelings or emotions or an animal or a tree. Spirituality to me is that you are not the be all and end all of all things and that your life is

dispensable and that there is a greater power and something beautiful that you can learn from. There is more out there and also on a level that we don't recognise – a spiritual level in terms of … if energy cannot be destroyed, where does it go to? There has to be some kind of holiness or God or being or love behind the whole scene. There is kind of a 'different dimension' that guards and governs us. It is to realise that you are living above it. I used to be very religious and there used to be one God. With time I learned that I am not perfect and that I am not always right. There are other things and other people and life. I started to become more tolerant and accepting and realising that I have a role towards society to better things…

18. How do you see the relation between religion and nature?
Religion is there for one to better one's life. To me, that would be the purpose of having a religion. You live your life according to religious guidelines or guidelines that you believe in. I would go into nature and actually sit and contemplate what am I to do, who am I, what is my purpose in life, where should I go, how should I feel about certain things, major decisions in my life. It becomes almost more of a religious experience. It allows me to quiet down and to actually listen to who you are inside, which you don't here when there is so much noise and activity outside around you. You loose track of who you are because you live in a world that tells you how to live. When you go into nature, there's nothing like that. You open up and it is almost like a religious experience – the tranquillity and peace of mind that comes with nature. That is why I think I am so paranoid about it, because it has such a special meaning to me, it is almost like a religious experience to me. That is why I want to protect it so much, because when someone destroys it, it will be like destroying my religious experience or religious sanctity.

19. Are you aware of nature every day?
Most definitely.

20. More so when you are on holiday?
More so if I am in a natural environment. But I think based on my love of animals, which is very deep, and what I studied and my career, when I open up the window in the morning, I first recognise the trees and the birds or new bird visiting the garden, or the tree that has got flowers on it… It is things that I pick up, almost subconsciously, I am reading into nature…

21. Is the human species the most important life form on earth?
No.

22. Do you feel part of nature?
Sometimes. It is difficult to be part of nature when society removes you from it. You do your best like do your little bit, such as recycling, putting up a bird nest in the garden… But you feel more part of nature when life gives you the opportunity to be in nature. Sometimes you are not part of nature when life is just to busy and takes over everything.

23. In general, would you regard yourself as part of nature?
From a theoretical point of view, yes. If nature is what is living on the planet, then we are part of it.

24. Do you think that people are disconnected from nature?
For sure. Ultimately we manipulate nature for our species betterment, so we have green houses and aircons and we drive vehicles and we get to places fast and we put our exhaust fumes into nature – all so that we can live the best 'civilised' life that we can know how. But, we don't realise what we are doing to nature and I think, if we did, we would be more connected to it.

25. Do you think that this disconnectedness from nature, reflects a disconnectedness from the Creator (God)?
I don't know. I struggle to answer that because if someone grew up in Hillbrow… or some people just don't like the bush. They like their aircon, they don't want to get wet when it rains, they prefer their designer labels, and they are very religious and very happy. I think one needs to know nature to know if you have lost your connection with it. As I believe I have experienced nature and I know what it means to me. When I plummet, it does have an affect on me as a person, on myself. From a religious point of view, I still know who I am, but there is a sadness, there is a place I would rather be. But then there are people who would not like to be there and they are happy with who they are. So, I think if you had no connection with nature, you cannot loose an experience with it.

26. Do you think that we, as people of Africa, are more connected to nature than, for example people from Europe or America?
I hate to generalise. I would prefer to say Third World or people living within nature, but I think the Bushmen or the Red Indians, no matter on which continent they are, probably had a closer relationship because of the need they had from the environment. As Africans, in general, living a subsistence life style from one day to another, living in the environment, a lot of cultural traditions are based on environmental experiences, things like hunting, building houses, or play – a lot of that is direct from the earth and I think those people are really in touch with it. I will hesitate to say, more than someone living in another country.

27. Do you think that we in SA consume more than people in America or Europe?
Yes and no. In some instances we do not have so much… I think again it depends on the situation. Some people live a very consumerist life style… they buy what they want and throw away what they don't want, without giving it a second thought (of reusability for example…). Others don't have that "privilege'…

28. Do you think that there may be a possibility to get people to become more connected (caring) with nature?
I think you can expose people to it and if they allow themselves some time in it, a lot of people will find in themselves a love for it, something that they didn't even was aware that they have because they were never exposed to it. I feel that I was lucky to be exposed to it, and luckily I liked what I was exposed to. I

have some rural friends who grew up in rural areas, and the quicker they can get into the city and can have a car, the better. Her biggest dream is to go to Paris and shop! She cannot understand why I would take a tent and go camp in the bush. I think based on your experiences and whether you like those experiences, and whether it satisfies you and you are happy with it, you can be connected. But it depends on whether you want to be… Others don't want to experience it. They want to do other things, have other ambitions. It also depends on how materialistic you are. But I think there is opportunities to reconnect people with nature, especially if they never had that opportunity. It is wrong to say that they would never want it. But then I also doubt it if everybody would want it.

29. What is you favourite place in nature to visit?
The Kruger Park. The northern part where I can drive out and not see a car in front of me or behind me and I can just cruise along. I can take my camera and sit for hours at a baobab tree and no one will pass me for hours. I say Kruger for its size, but I like my solitude. I don't bump into someone that often in the north of Kruger. Just the mere size, so much of it is still unaffected. I think perhaps of my training when I go to a smaller reserve, I see things like 'those are invasives', and that effects me. In the north of Kruger I won't see an exotic. I kind of know that it is a sort of a self-functioning ecosystem. I know you could get bigger, but the fact that less man-manipulation is required on a bigger scale, makes it more pure to me.

30. Do you prefer to travel alone?
Yes.

31. What do you prefer to do when you are in nature?
I am not a very active person. So, I do the more passive thing. I love to watch nature and marvel at it. It is probably a lazy approach, but I do like to sit and watch, especially when you come across animals. They have expressions. You can almost get into their lives, where you can see this one is cheeky and this one is happy and all the antics of the vervet monkeys, one grabbing the other's tail. It makes you laugh, and you know a person who acts similarly. It is a life, a whole world that opens up and you can just sit back and enjoy. It is almost like a big theatre playing out in front of you. It is so beautiful and pure. There is none of the hassles of modern society in it. It is a pure living. Everything – from a bug on a stick… I just love to sit and watch the personalities of nature playing out.

32. Why do you have to return to nature from time to time?
I did my practical year in Kruger and then I got a job at the SPCA in Alberton. I worked one week in town and then the very first thing I did that first weekend, I had my tent in the car and I had to run away. I thought I was going to explode, I had to run away. It was almost like a society rage. I couldn't take it. I had to go back where it was calm. And then, after a time you get used to the hustle and bustle of the city. What I like to do, when I get stressed, I will say to people 'you know, I had to get away, I need a break'. It doesn't have to be fancy. Just knowing that I can get away from it, even just a drive to Marakele, or somewhere where I can think. I find it difficult to think with the modern world around me, telling me what I need to do and be. Because I find society to tell

you how and what to be. I don't like that and I like to get away and just think what do I want, because it is very important to me to have control of my life and to know what I feel and it stresses me when I don't. I like to get away. It is almost my psychologist, because it doesn't ask me any questions, but it let me come up with answers, which I can't otherwise…

33. What is your feeling about development in natural areas?
My brain tells me that we are running out of space and that we are going to invade into nature. From a scientific point of view, I would like people to do it in such a way that it minimises the impact on nature. In my heart nature is my sanctuary. Therefore, I would rather see that someone builds another floor on another building, than go in and destroy nature. If you can, I would prefer development in a natural environment to be the last resort. I would prefer utilising the space that we have already destroyed, better.

34. What is to you an example of a natural area which is developed?
The Knysna/Wilderness area. This coastline is very build-up and still there are these beautiful wetlands and tortoises and natural spots. To me it is almost like a glass ball. It is so precious and I am so scared that someone is going to drop it and break it, that I would rather hide it, put it in a cabinet away from humans… because I don't trust human beings.

35. Where would you put Kruger Park?
Moderately developed.

36. Undeveloped?
There probably isn't much left, but I think the closely I know of is when I visited the Masaai Mara. There were no roads, it was not easily accessible and it probably had the least… I look at size when I see nature and when I see a big space like the Masaai Mara and only a very few tourist can get in there, that, as far as I know, is undeveloped.

37. Tell me about a specific place that you have visited and a specific highlight during that visit.
My parents came to visit me during my practical year in the Kruger Park. That was 8 years ago. They thought that I was going to get a chalet in Berg-en-Dal where I worked. I had other plans and what I found was a tree house. I packed all the 'picnic' stuff and at Lower Sabie Rest Camp I told them to go to the bathroom and brush their teeth and do all the things they need to do. I got some snacks and bread and a few beers for my dad and, as a student, the cheapest wine one could find, and off we went to the tree house. Arriving there, we went up and the first thing my mother did was taking of the sheet and shaking it and from it was flying hundreds of little scorpion babies. So she took all the remaining sheets and wrapped herself up like a mummy and did not care whether me and my father froze. She was not going to let the scorpions get near her. Me and my father sat outside. We didn't have a spotlight. There was a little dam underneath and the moon was there… and me and my father were getting terrible on cheap wine… But the experience the two of us had together… looking out with the dim light and you could see a hayena was coming down, and then he went off. I had this pathetic little torch… and then you could here

some elephants and you could listen… but you can't see anything properly and it is almost like some of your senses has been taken away. You couldn't see the elephant, but you could here them up close and you could here the hayena and you don't know where it is… and I think that evening is something I would remember, and also the closeness it actually had brought me and my dad – together. I actually will remember that experience…

38. Why would you regard that experience as a highlight?
I think the vulnerability… brought us closer, because you know the person next to you and you know you are on the stilts up in the tree house and that you are together … and guessing together. That was to me, I think, a highlight that I will remember and my dad will remember… and my mother will – cursing me many times… Then it rained and we couldn't get out the next day… But we enjoyed it… especially my father. It was as if he was … proud…. He was happy and I was happy to know that he was happy. He had an opportunity because of me, that he wouldn't have had…. And that is special. It was something I could give, that not everybody could. And he appreciated it and that is something beautiful…

39. Any other recent trip that you want to tell me about? Which place did you visit?
I just came back this weekend from Marakele. My friend and I went there from early Saturday morning, spend the night and drove back yesterday late.

40. Tell me about the planning phase of this trip.
My friend phoned me a while back and told me that her husband was going on a hunting trip. She was quite upset because she does not want to go with them. So we decided on an affordable place. I got so excited, because I am going to braai! The night before I already prepared everything, the mielies in the tin foil, the vegetarian sausages (she's my vegetarian friend) and her part of the planning was to get the champagne and there was a lot of planning and we made sure that our schedule was empty because nothing was going to ruin this!

41. What were your feelings during all the preparation?
It is exciting and it did not feel like a chore. We were phoning each other probably 20 times to hear what are you bringing, what am I bringing…. We were organised, having the bird books and binoculars… everything was ready.

42. And then?
Well, we don't see each other that often since she is married. So, on our way there, it was sort of quickly catching up with all the problems and stuff and get it over with, so that we can start enjoying ourselves! We both worked on the elephants (Tuli elephants) that were released in Marakele and we get quite emotional and looking forward to the prospect of seeing these elephants again. It was special because it was somebody to share that emotional experience with me… and understand it.

43. What happened at your destination?
Immediately when we entered the park, the radio and aircon goes off, and the windows go open. We both appreciate that fresh air and the space and the sounds of birds and water. We want to hear that. We drove slowly. Sometimes

we just stopped and appreciated everything. We slowly meandered the road to the top of Marakele's mountain. There we opened the champagne, sat on a rock and it was freezing. Then the vultures, about 50 of them, started to coming up in the wind and we just looked at them. She recently lost her dog, I lost a cat, so then we started crying… you know, toasting to the cat and the dog and all the animals that are special and to each other and our friendship… and we got very emotional and it was like nature just bringing everything … out. We felt close to everything… and to each other… and to our loved ones back home… After about two hours we longed for the heat of the car. We slowly drove back to the chalet and marvelling the sunset. Then got all the preparations from the cooler box for the evening…

44. When you realised it was time to return back home, how did you feel?
We first decided to drive around some more and we drove and drove and drove until hunger kicked in, because we didn't have breakfast the morning! Then we realised that it is 12 o'clock and that we are not going to see the elephants. Then we took the road back and on came the radio with both our favourite CD and reminiscing of when are we going to this again and …yes, we drove back home…

45. How do you feel now? (Returned yesterday from the trip)
Very mellow…! It always take a day to get back into it all. Reality kicks in very soon – meeting deadlines, and so on! I don't feel much like working today, I feel very 'unstressed'. I know that I will have to tell myself to get started very soon…!

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 2 (PI-2)

Name:	Dina Labuschagne
Gender:	Female
Age:	57
Occupation:	Head of Department, Languages
Permanent residence:	Balfour
Tel no:	017 779 0286
Date and place of interview:	14 July 2004, Moreleta Park, Pretoria
Duration of interview:	55 minutes

1. Wat is die natuur vir jou?
Die natuur is iets wat my lewe in totalitiet veryk en iets wat my lewe veryk en dit is vir my ongelooflik vervulend om in die natuur te wees en ek kom ook altyd baie naby aan my skepper as ek in die natuur is.

2. Wat is jou verhouding met die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur moet beskryf, sal jy sê dit is intens of net oppervlakkig?)
Baie intens en baie diep en ek sien lewe in alle dinge in die natuur en elke dingetjie het vir my 'n sin in die natuur.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Daar sonder sal ek sterwe.

4. Wat is jou verhouding tot jou eie natuur binne jouself? (Is jou lewe wat jy dit graag wil hê – met betrekking tot jou werk, familie, sosiale lewe en jouself?)
Ek voel ek saam met myself lewe en ek is tevrede met dit wat ek bereik het en ek kry dit reg om myself gelukkig te maak en om in die natuur te wees maak my gelukkig.

5. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?
Ja baie lewens lese in baie vlakke en veral as ek na die diere kyk sien ek so baie dinge wat verkeerd is en ek sien ook hoe die mens dinge reg maak en ook om te sien hoe die natuur self dinge regmaak.

6. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?
Wat het die gebeurtenis vir jou beteken?
Hoe beïnvloed hierdie gebeure jou werk en lewe vandag?
Toe ek begin skool hou het en dit was 32 jaar gelede toe ek vir die eerste keer in die kruger wildtuin in gery het en daar die eerste kontak met die natuur gekry het en van daar af kon ek nie uit die wildtuin bly nie. Dit het my 'n verlange gegee om terug te gaan en dinge te leer en net weer en weer terug te gaan. Dit is my energie bron om in die natuur te wees en dit gee my moet en krag om nuwe kwartale aan te pak.

7. Wanneer jy in die natuur is waarvan word jy bewus? (Gebruik mense hulle sintuie enigsins?)
Ek weet nie of almal hulle sintuie gebruik nie en ek sal net kyk en inneem en die natuur is vir my vars en ‘n teken van lewe.

8. Wat doen jy om van die natuur rondom jou bewus te raak? (Hoe word jy bewus van dinge rondom jou?) (In watter manier gebruik mense hulle sintuie om te verbind met die natuur?)
Ek lees baie oor die natuur en alles intreseer my baie en ek en my familie praat baie met mekaar oor dinge in die natuur.

9. Is daar iets in die natuur, ‘n dier, plant, rivier of landskap wat jy mee kan identifiseer? Op watter manier identifiseer jy met hierdie dier? Wat beteken dit vir jou?
‘n Luiperd want daar is iets gesofistikeerd in hom en dit is ook in my en ek kry altyd die gevoel hy is in beheer en dit is asof hy vir niks skrik nie en dit is net ‘n dier wat in beheer is en ook meerkatte want ek het ‘n boek gelees oor hulle gedrag en dit is vir my ‘n interesante diere. Omdat ek ‘n onderwyseres is is ek in beheer soos die luiperd en die meerkatte is dait daai orde wat ook in my lewe is.

10. Dink jy dat alle lewens vorme op een of ander manier ‘n vorm van gevoel, emosie of bewustheid het?
Ja ek is baie emosioneel by sulke dinge want dit is vir my baie swaar om ‘n boom byvoorbeeld te breek en ek kan moord pleeg as iemand ‘n tak afbraak en diere mishandeling kan ek nie verdra nie.

11. Hoe sien jy die plek en rol van mense in die natuur?
Ek dink die mens doen te min vir die natuur en as hy vir die natuur meer doen sal hy homself ook help en ek dink daar moet meer bewuswording kom onder mense. Die mens vewaarloos die natuur en ek dink die mens is nie regtig in kontak met die natuur nie. Daar is meer uitwisseing as wat daar bewaring is.

12. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Ek dink dit is ‘n baie diepe belewing van als om jou. Dit is ‘n diepe ervaring wat jou intens raak en dit verander jou en dit moet ook verbetering voorspel.

13. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Die natuur speel ‘n baie groot rol in die Bybel en die natuur maak my geloof wakker en ek dink net hoe klein is die mens in die natuur en ek dink hoe nietig is ek en hoe groot is God. Ek dink nie jy kan dit van mekaar los maak nie. En ek dink meer manse moet natuur toe gaan en met hulle skepper verbimd.

14. Is jy bewus van die natuur elke dag? Verduidelik?
Ja elke oomblik van die dag want as ek skool toe ry sal ek dinge raak sien en in die aande sal ek op my stoep en kyk na die sterre en na die nag lewe en as ek ‘n les gee sal ek altyd ‘n voorbeeld uit die natuur gee as wat ek eerder iets oor tegnologie sal gee.

15. Is jy bewus van die natuur elke dag terwyl jy op vakansie in die natuur is of oor 'n naweek in die natuur?
Verseker, ek maak altyd planne waar ek iets met die natuur kan te doen hê.

16. Is die mens die mees belangrikste vorm van lewe op aarde?
Dit is so want dit is die kroon van God se skepping maar ek het 'n probleem met die mens omdat hy ales vertrap. Te veel mense vertrap die natuur en dit is vir my verkeerd en dit is jammer dat ons dit misbruik.

17. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Ja ek kan my lewe nie sonder die natuur indink nie. Ek het 'n groot begeerte dat almal moet sien wat ek sien en beleef.

18. Dink jy mense is verbind met die natuur?
Ja maar hulle staan baie koud teenoor die natuur. Daar is te veel mense wat te min voel vir die natuur.

19. Dink jy dat wanneer mense nie verbind is met die natuur dat hulle ook nie verbind is met God nie? Of omgekeerd?
Ja ek dink nie 'n mens kan werklik God en die natuur vas maak nie en ons is deel van die skepping en ek dink nie jy kan God se liefde ervaar en nie iets vir die natuur voel nie.

20. Dink jy dat ons as mense van Afrika, is meer verbind met die natuur as wat mense van Europa of Amerika is?
Afrika se mense gebruike die natuur en op die staduim word natuur verwoes want die mens moet lewe van die natuur maar hulle misbruik die natuur vir eie gewin. Dit lei gewoonlik tot groot skade soos uitsterwing van plante en diere, besoedeling... In Europa is daar 'n groot terugkeer na die natuur. Baie van hulle kom Afrika toe kom om hier die natuur te kom sien en geniet.

21. Is daar 'n moontlikheid om weer met die natuur te verbind as jy nie meer verbind is nie? Hoe?
Ek kan my lewe nie indink as onverbind met die natuur nie. Mense moet kinders leer en dat jy aan die natuur verbind is van klein tyd af en as jy dinge in die natuur ervaar kan jy weer verbind maar jy moet inneem wat jy sien.

22. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek? Hoekom is dit jou gunsteling plek?
Balule in Kruger wildtuin. Dit is baie primitief en jy voel net nader aan die natuur daar.

23. Wanneer jy 'n area besoek, hoe verkies jy om te reis?
Saam met familie en vriende.

24. Wat verkies jy om te doen wanneeer jy in die natuur is? (jou gunsteling buite aktiwiteit)
Voël kyk, stap

25. Voel jy persoonlik dit is nodig om op 'n gereelde basis na die natuur terug te keer?
Ja!

26. Hoekom is dit nodig?
Om krag en koers te kry in jou lewe. Ek kan myself nie indink daarsonder nie.

27. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike areas?
Dit maak my baie kwaad. Ek het nie 'n probleem met stads uitbreiding nie, maar los natuurlike areas uit. Ek verkies so min as moontlik ontwikkeling want ek gaan juis van die geraas af weg om by die rustigheid en stilte uit te kom.

28. Wat is vir jou 'n voorbeeld van 'n natuurlike area wat baie ontwikkel en toeganklik is?
Party dele van die Krugerwildtuin.

28. 'n Voorbeeld van 'n area wat matig ontwikkel is maar nog steeds die stilte van 'n wildernis area het?
Die Natalse parke en in die Kalahari.

29. 'n Voorbeeeld van 'n area met min of geen ontwikkeling?
In Lesotho…daar by die Katsedam.

30. Kan jy 'n hoogtepunt beskryf van 'n vorige besoek aan 'n plek in die natuur?
Elke keer wat ek in die Krugerwildtuin kom is dit vir my 'n hoogtepunt want ek sien elke keer nuwe dinge. Elke keer leer ek iets nuuts en interessant.

31. Watter plek het jy onlangs besoek wat vir jou spesiale betekenis gehad het, of steeds het?
Balule in die Krugerwildtuin.

32. Wanneer en vir hoe lank was die besoek?
8 dae en 5 dae gelede.

33. Vertel my van jou beplanning, hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan, voorbereidings e.d.m.
Ons het al 'n jaar voor die tyd besluit om te gaan en gewoonlik begin ons al 'n maand voor die tyd regmaak. Dit is maar altyd so. Ons is altyd opgewonde so voor die tyd. Ons was met vriende saam – 7 van ons.

34. Wat was jou gevoel en emosies die dag voor jy vertrek het?
Dit is net goed om te dink waar ek die volgende oggend sal wees. Dit is lekker om te weet ek het 'n tyd wat ek kan ontspan en vergeet van dinge - al is dit net vir 'n rukkie…

35. Gedurende die reis na die bestemming, was daar enige iets spesiaal wat jy aan gedink het? Wat julle oor gepraat het in die voertuig, of enige gevoel van die ander persone?

Ons gesels gewoonlik oor wat elkeen graag wil sien. Soms sien ‘n mens iets wat jou sprakeloos laat – mooi goed. Die pas wildtuin toe is mos baie mooi…

36. Wat was jou belewenisse met die aankoms by Balule?
Negatief is dat ek eers moet kamp opslaan, maar dis gewoonlik gou verby en dank an ons die eerste draai gaan ry. Dit is gewoonlik heerlik!

37. Enige spesiale ervarings wat jy kan onthou?
Ek vergeet nooit die ervarings van Balule nie, maak nie saak hoe klein dit was nie!

38. Hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Verval onmiddellik in ‘n depressie. Maar daar is altyd ook ‘n gevoel van tevredenheid en ek sien weer kans vir die lewe.

39. Terwyl jy huis toe ry was die gevoelens nog steeds dieselfde of het jou emosies verander?
Ons beleef als weer oor in die terugry.

40. Toe jy terug keer na jou daaglikse lewe kan jy jou gevoelens beskryf tydens die eerste paar dae?
Ek dink baie oor wat ek beleef het en ek deel dit altyd met my medemens. Soms is ‘n mens maar teneergedruk so vir die eerste paar dae na ‘n lekker vakansie, maar dan begin die roetine weer terugkom. Ek dink altyd terug aan die mooi en lekker van so ‘n vakansie, veral as ek dit met die mense om my kan deel…

41. Hoe voel jy nou oor die vakansie?
Ek voel goed want ek weet ek gaan weer. Ek is vol moed en ek sien kans vir baie dinge.

42. As jy vir ‘n oomblik terug dink aan jou hoogtepunt en dit weer ervaar, het dit enige effek op jou?
Ja want ek het gedink dat ‘n waterskilpad is dom, maar ek het besef dat hulle net so slim is as wat enige ander dier of voël is. ‘n Mens moenie iemand oordeel op hoe hy/sy lyk nie – jy kan heeltemal verkeerd wees!

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 3 (PI-3)

Name:	Wouter Wium
Gender:	Male
Age:	32
Occupation:	Part-time student, entrepreneur
Permanent residence:	Centurion
Tel no:	012 318-5306
Date and place of interview:	9 February 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	60 minutes

1. What, according to you, is the most important threat to world ecology?
People being overly focussed upon an unstable development. When people are off-balance, compensation is only measurable in destructiveness.

2. When you are in nature, what is your greatest awareness?
Value is influenced by possibilities of response.

3. What do you do to 'sense' nature around you, in other words, to become aware of things in nature around you?
Use my senses in quietness.

4. Is there something in nature, an animal, plant, river- or landscape, that you can identify with? In which way do you identify with this?
An ant. Co-operative existence. For survival the needs of the group is determined by the needs of one. Everyone gains. The needs of one are shared by all. By having the same set of needs, a system is created in which the basic and personal needs are taken care of.

5. What is your understanding of spirituality?
Honesty of thought. Creating distance between pre-set ideas, patterns of response, etc. and your own experience and feelings.

6. Are you spiritually inspired in nature?
Yes. In moments of quiet in which the sea, plants, soil, flowers, spoke, causing liberated thoughts of my own.

7. What, specifically, do you find spiritually inspiring in nature?
A picture is not the colours used, nor is it only the precision with which the form is translated into drawing. It is always the combination.

8. Meaning?
The experience one has is relative to your own personal experience and associated response. It is relative to me, the area, the learned responses.

9. If you suddenly have to 'get away from it all', what is your preferred way of doing so?
In order of preference… I stop… and start thinking. Or I will retreat to the nearest good coffee shop, or take the road and walk, or if that is not possible I will go for a long lonely drive.

10. Would you say that to visit a natural place is essential for your general well-being – body, mind and spirit?
Yes. Especially if the area inspires dreams. A place like Kruger is not such a place – far too busy and artificial. A place like the undeveloped Mocambique coast does.

11. Do you feel part of nature?
Yes, human beings are part of nature. We go through the same cycles as other animals. We might have a greater perception and planning ability, but other than that we are the same.

12. Do you think that people, in general, are disconnected from nature?
No. People are structuring their development around direct/indirect stimuli or threats. Dominance or comfort in an area keeps people in that area. To widen people's area of experiences, in a 'controlled' way, will widen their interactivity or sensitivity to interactions. The greater the developed interactions, the greater the responses to the area surrounding the people.

13. Do you think that we, as people of Africa, are more connected to nature than, for example people from Europe or America?
No. We, in Africa, have a greater exposure to nature based patterns. Knowledge is not equal to exposure. Knowledge is perhaps what people from other parts of the world have. Knowledge, if used with thought, can be a major key to a much higher and greater experience in nature. Knowledge can have different meanings… We have knowledge on many things, but still pollute, destroy, causing havoc in nature…

14. Do you think that South Africans consume more or less than people from, for example America or Europe?
Consumption is dependent on a person's own understanding of his/her responsibility in a situation. For example, the Green Movement stops elephant culling in Africa. 15 years later the savanna woodland is transformed into grassveld.

15. Do you prefer to be alone in nature?
Yes, when my soul needs to be alone. It also depends on the situation, the area, the activity, the people who I am with…

16. When do you prefer to be alone?
In times of repair and thought.

17. What is your favourite place in nature to visit?
I like to visit places of a lesser degree of development; places where the interactions I have with nature are not determined by the workings of a set

structure or system. I prefer places where I can understand and relate to the situation, and if possible and necessary, come up with a solution. This feeling lends me a higher state of participation in nature. In these places I feel more in control of myself, e.g. small villages, sea scapes, deserts.

18. What is your most important issue or concern while being in nature?
To learn as much as I can. To help to conserve. If possible, to revive the area in which I found myself.

19. What are your favourite outdoor activities? Or what do you do when visiting nature areas?
Be quiet to sense nature and be responsive to whatever I get from nature.

20. Do you personally feel that it is essential for you to return to nature regularly?
Yes.

21. Why?
To come to my senses… Keep quiet and let nature speaks.

22. Can you tell me about a recent trip to a place that you regard as special?
The Port Elizabeth area (sea scape). I went there in December (2003) for 2 weeks. This trip was arranged about 6 months prior to December.

23. How long before leaving for the trip did your preparations start?
1 month

24. How did you feel during this 'preparation' phase?
Excitement – for the new.
Dread – because of the new.

25. Tell me about the set-up. How many people, cars, etc. were included in your planning?
I went on my own, partially for relaxation and partially to explore the area for a future business opportunity.

26. What were your feelings and emotions the day before you left for the trip?
Good, because I knew the accommodation and finances were in place.

27. Before leaving on the trip, what was you personal most important issue or concern?
Should I go and what will the consequences be.

28. During the journey to your destinations, was there anything special that you can think of going through your mind?
Normally the travelling part is two thirds of the joy of a trip. I marvelled at the new areas that I saw and of that which I could learn from. I always try to find a

possible understanding of everything along the road and what makes these places 'work'.

29. Any moods or emotions you can recall?
The dread. The insecurity of having to deal and react according to what you have seen and learned.

30. How did you feel initially after arriving at your destination – physically and mentally?
Complete and utter exhaustion. This was actually a momentary phenomenon, followed by an unexplainable desire to go experiencing the area. This lasted until I was physically drained! (1,5 weeks).

31. Can you briefly tell me about your experiences, the positive and negatives, while being there. If possible, also recall your feelings accompanying your experiences.
Initially – exhaustion. This lasted for about an hour. The second stage was a period of an "all consuming wow". I spent time at the sea side, swimming, long walks. My senses became sharpened. I was like a sponge, absorbing as much as possible – the more detail, the higher the level of satisfaction. This lasted for most of the 10 next days. Then came the third stage – the last two days. It was as if the drive was lost and depression set in. This came with the realisation that reality is back and it was time to go home. Although I felt depressed when it was time to go home, I also was burning with hope to be able to apply as much as possible of what I have seen and experience – in nature and in myself. This realisation struck me on my way back home.

32. Is there anything that you would like to be different?
My last two day's feeling of depression.

33. When returning to your work and daily routine, can you describe your initial feelings the first few days?
Initially – dreadful! Two weeks after the trip I got back to reality. I felt totally isolated from the experience I had. As the names on the cell phone became less known, the experience became more blocked into a bracket. The associated value diminished.

34. How long did these feelings last?
With the welcoming traffic of Johannesburg and Pretoria, I soon got used to this again. The realisation of the same experiences everyday, part of the rat-race, was amazingly frightening. All the experiences are the same every day, it is just the days that differ!

35. You had this trip almost a month ago. How do you feel now thinking back to this trip?
I am often reminded by colours, shades, little moments… It is as if the set of experiences reverberates on certain frequencies of expression. I exist on the memories of the experience. My functioning … my everyday existence? My responses are governed by the possibilities of change. In areas in which the

patterns have been thoroughly sculpted, the possibilities have at most been nullified.

36. Will you go on a similar trip again? Why?
Yes! To experience the area, the mindset… Each trip enlarges the possibility of movement.

37. Do you need to go back to nature?
The need is determined by the amount of negative interactions in my daily routine. The negative energies build until all capacities of storage is filled. Then I must go … to vent…

38. Do you perform any ritual or symbolise anything during these trips to nature?
With the whole area in which my experience took place, the Eastern Cape, specifically the undeveloped area surrounding PE. The play between the history, buildings, sea and elements: It is more than just symbolic. These obvious symbols is a history written in sweat. The best way of structuring a metaphor is to find a problem and then do your utmost to become a part of the solution. Then the value, the real value, is easy to see in the way you take hold of the solution in which you normally are.

39. Was there anything in particular about the landscape itself that caught your attention?
In and around PE there are the most amazing parks and beach walks. All that I have read, understood and is busy becoming is intrinsic there.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 4 (PI-4)

Name:	Bokkie Brand
Gender:	Female
Age:	43
Occupation:	Senior lecturer, UNISA
Permanent residence:	Randburg
Tel no:	(011) 471-2355
Date and place of interview:	April 2004, Richtersveld, and 27 May 2004, Wierda Glen, Centurion
Duration of interview:	50 minutes

1. What is 'nature' to you?
Anything outside a building. To me there is a difference between nature such as just being outside, and nature as in the bush. The difference is that I can sit outside on my lawn and smell the freshly mowed grass and breath air. The other side of nature is when you get away from it all, away from all the lights, noise and people, where you are secluded…, such as a farm or nature reserve where there are far less people than in the city where I stay.

2. What is your relation to nature? In other words, if you have to describe your personal relationship with nature, would you describe it as intense or relatively superficial?
No, definitely not superficial. I think it is intense. Because I need nature to live. Not only the physical need such as air and water, but I need to get away from the noise and hustle and bustle to connect somewhere and to get energy from plants and animals that surround me. I need to get away to get perspective.

3. What role does nature play in your life?
Nature plays a very important role in my life: I am from nature and in nature and part of the creation and I get power from nature.

4. What is you relation to your own nature within yourself? (Are you what you want to be – in your work, family, social life, your self?)
This is a very 'loaded' question… I think me and myself … our relationship is not too bad. Now and then we do have differences, but we sort it out… With my work … I enjoy what I do. In any work there are the frustrations keeping you from what you really want to do, but I have a feeling for my work and it is important to me to keep a balance. Nature also plays a role in that to show me what is really important. My relationship with others… yes, I am relatively happy with it. There are always things to be better, but I don't think one is always happy with all relationships.

5. Do you feel that you have to wear masks? And are you happy with it?
No, I don't think I have to wear masks. I am happy with who I am. I am what I am.

6. Does nature teach you anything?
Yes, it teaches me a lot. It teaches me about interactivity. Everything on earth is like a web and my life is part of that. This means that decisions I take, may have implications way down the web. Nature also teaches me that humans are dependent upon God and that God gives us everything we need, like everything else in nature.

7. What was your very first deep contact with nature and what did that moment/event tell you?
The first thing I can remember about nature is the smell of fresh soil when my farther used to work in the garden. I was not even in school, maybe 4 or 5 years old. That I can remember… and ever since, when I get that smell of soil being ploughed or turned over, I remember my dad, who was as stable as soil to me. I learned so much from him, even though he was a very quiet person; but he was strong. His love for the earth and nature probably got into me. I used to 'work' with him in the garden and play outside and I think, perhaps, that is where my love for nature comes from.

8. When you are in nature, what is your greatest awareness?
The greatness of God and the realisation that He made everything perfect and that everything is organised and has a place.

9. What do you do to 'sense' nature around you, in other words, to become aware of things, physically, in nature around you?
Various methods. Visually is perhaps the most common or first sense I use. The longer I am in nature, the more senses become involve. I start smelling things and hearing sounds.

10. Is there something in nature, an animal, plant, river- or landscape, that you can identify with? In which way do you identify with this?
Yes, I think so. I am very fond of water, so maybe a river. A river starts as a small stream somewhere, clear and unpolluted. Then, as it flows it starts to get in relationships with other things: it picks up certain elements, other creatures start living in the river, dead leaves fall into it, it has to flow around and over rocks and boulders. At a stage it gives life to many things and in the end it flows into the ocean, becoming part of a mass of water. My life is exactly the same – started clean and unpolluted. As life goes on one picks up things and give out other things. At this stage I am a deep deep pool in which many other creatures survive. I see a lot of fish, a hippo, even a crocodile and a snake…

11. What does it do to you, feeling like a river?
Firstly it shows me that I am part of nature…

12. Does it give you a sense of direction perhaps?
Yes, it does, because a river has a definite course, unless a great storm disrupts the flow… This is in life the same. But, yes, it definitely indicates direction because the river always moves in a direction.

13. Do you think that all life forms have some form of feeling, emotion or awareness?
Yes, living things. Rocks and soil do have energies, but plants and animals have awareness as well.

14. How do see the place and the role of human beings in nature?
Idealistic I see the role of humans as that which God intends us to do – to take care of nature. At the moment we don't do that. People are greedy and we abuse nature to get as much as possible. We definitely do not fulfil our role as caretakers.

15. What is your understanding of spirituality?
It is something different from religion. Spirituality is something more of the psyche; something more than cognitive.

16. How do you see the relation between religion and nature?
To me there is a huge connection because I am a Christian and from that viewpoint God created everything, first nature and then humans as part of nature. I definitely see the work and greatness of God in nature.

17. Are you aware of nature everyday? Explain.
Yes.
Although I work in an office I am aware of nature around me. When I drive from home to work and back, it is interesting to see the different colours of the trees, especially now when the leaves changes colour so rapidly (autumn). To see which trees are completely leafless. I am in nature everyday!

18. This awareness differs from you being on holiday when you are in nature everyday? Are you then more or less all the time intensely aware of nature?
My holidays and week-ends away are specially planned to be in nature.

19. Is the human species the most important life form on earth?
Most important…? (Long hesitation) I do think that God created us in a special place in nature, but most important … I don't know. I don't think we are 'better' or more important than anything else in that respect that we can abuse and exploit everything for our own benefit. In that sense, no – not at all. But that we do have a special place in Creation, yes! We have more of a responsibility – although we do not adhere to that. So, that we are the most important – no; that we are the crown of creation – yes.

20. Do you feel part of nature?
Yes.

21. Do you think that people are disconnected from nature?
Yes. Definitely. People do not think twice of using harmful things. They have no idea of what nature can mean to them. Cities drew us away from contact with nature. Our grandparents lived on farms and worked with nature. They were aware of nature. We got urbanised. Urbanisation pressures us for time and demand much of us, preventing us from coming into contact with nature. We

think that we cope and we do not realise we need nature, because we do not get time to go to nature and just continue surviving in the cities.

22. Do you think that a disconnectedness from nature reflects a disconnectedness from God, or vice versa?
Yes. I talk from the viewpoint of a Christian. I don't think a Christian can be in nature without recognising God. Christians in the city may be religious, but I think they do miss out on something if they do not get into nature. I think this is where spirituality comes in. You can be religious and sit in your home and read the Bible. But when you get out into nature and realise the greatness of creation, then you get the whole package.

23. Do you think that we, as people of Africa, are more connected to nature than, for example people from Europe or America?
Yes, due to the fact that we are not yet as far 'developed'. In Europe and America, I think there is very little true nature. Nature is being replaced for and by development. Here, in Africa, we still have huge undeveloped areas. We are still more connected. This is actually very difficult if you don't really know the other countries, but I can only guess that they are more disconnected than us.

24. Is there a possibility to become reconnected to nature, if one is disconnected? How?
Yes, I definitely think so.
I personally think that we are on our way to a disaster due to our overexploitation. Nature always tends to bring everything back to equilibrium. Many things are happening to regain equilibrium.

25. What is your favourite place in nature to visit?
I am very fond of the mountains of the Cape. At one stage I enjoyed being in the Kruger Park, but not anymore because there is far too many people nowadays. In the Cape mountains you can still find secluded spots. One of my top five after a recent visit is the Richtersveld. This is one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen.

26. When visiting a place in nature, how do you prefer to travel?
With a few very specific friends. I am alone, so I don't have a partner. I love my family but would not go with them to a place in nature – definitely not for extended stays! Yes, only a few – two exactly – friends!

27. What are your favourite outdoor activities? Or what do you do when visiting nature areas?
Bird watching. But it depends. At this stage I just want to observe. Whether it is game viewing from a vehicle or just sitting around in a campsite, being peaceful. I am not very adventurous, but just being in nature is satisfying to me.

28. Do you personally feel that it is essential for you to return to nature regularly?
Yes. Because I am part of the rat-race, I need nature to charge my batteries…

29. What is charging batteries to you?
To be at a place where there is no one or nothing who demands my attention, where I can be quiet and peaceful.

30. Can't you do that at home?
No, because there is always a telephone or television or people demanding my attention and time. In nature there is other life forms who give their power to me in various forms, who relaxes me and charge my batteries. At home I can relax, but cannot recharge my batteries!

31. What is your feeling about development in natural areas?
I do think that development has a role. I am an idealist in thinking that development can be limited. But then, people are greedy and when you start with development, it is never-ending. In that respect I say that development should preferably not happen in natural areas so that areas can be kept pristine for the future.

32. What do you personally prefer? Why?
When I specifically go to a place for the solitude and wilderness experience, I do not want any development. Sometimes I do go to a place where I need some form of development – where we can do other things as well. It depends on what you want from the area. I would not appreciate development in the Richtersveld to such an extent that people can flock to the area in their hundreds! Then the whole experience will be gone. But in areas where you expect many people (Aventura), you can still get what you want because of development.

33. What is, to you, an example of a natural area (game reserve, national park, etc.) which is well-developed and accessible?
Pilanesberg

34. And of natural area which is moderately developed, but still have the peace and quiet of a wilderness area?
Thaba Moriri - Warmbaths

35. Of an undeveloped, remote (wilderness) area?
Richtersveld

36. Can you describe a highlight of a previous visit to a place in nature? (Where?, When?) Why do you regard this as a highlight?
...It was my first time to the Richtersveld... it is a place like nowhere else. The highlight was surely the view and experiences from Tsoba Pass. It was beauty beyond words... I felt it. It was sometimes overwhelming... the vastness...the space...I felt very humble and at the same time very privileged to be part of this... greatness.

37. The following questions will be about a specific trip that you undertook recently.
Which place did you visit?
The Richtersveld.

38. When and for how long was this visit?
9 – 20 April 2004

39. How long before the trip did you decide to go?
Six months.

40. How long before leaving for the trip did your preparations start?
I usually do not prepare long before the time, so I started packing the day before we left.

41. How did you feel during this 'preparation' phase?
Excitement. Although I had a very difficult time at work at this stage and did not really feel anything before we left, apart from looking forward. I did not really had time to get myself 'tuned-in' to the holiday beforehand.

42. What were your feelings and emotions the day before you left for the trip?
I looked forward to the trip and was quite excited. People who were there told my about the place and I was really looking forward to experience it myself. It was as if I was going to a very different place – the excitement was different than what I have ever felt before.

43. During the journey to your destination, were there anything special that you can think of going through your mind, that you talked about in the vehicle, you could sense from the others?
Excitement and expectation. We all looked forward to get away and out of the city and to unwind. A general positive mood.

44. What about Upington?
Yes. At Upington, due to the previous year's experience (accident), I could sense a sombreness with the others. It was as if the previous excitement was dampered. They were talking about their bad experience and recalled where they slept over, where the accident happened and so on. The moods, however, lifted soon after we have passed the place of the accident. It was as if that episode is something of the past and now the holiday can really start!

45. You arrived in the Richtersveld. Can you briefly tell me about your experiences, the positive and negatives, while being there. If possible, also recall your feelings accompanying your experiences.
My feelings and experiences during the trip were very positive. It was my first experience of the Richtersveld. It was a beautiful, interesting experience. I had feelings and emotions… something I have never felt before!... and the environment stimulated my curiosity to find out more about the rocks and geology and plants occurring in that harsh conditions.

Feelings…. I sometimes experience a need to be alone. It was not that I could not cope with the group, but at times I needed to stop, get out, and just be alone. The Richtersveld is … awesome. One needs time alone to experience the greatness, to become part of it.

Negatives… It sounds bad, but sometimes one or two things in the group irritated me. It is not really the person, I think it is more a matter of being together all the time and then something irrelevant becomes some irritation because you see and hear it over and over… I don't like to be included in gossip and in some situations I felt like being drawn into it… I did not like that and it caused me to withdraw from certain conversations. In another case, I was chosen as a private 'nurse'. This was also, eventually, a negative experience and although minor, I do think it had a negative influence on my general experience!

But the natural area itself – it was wonderful.

46. What about the mining activities?
That was my following comment! I felt sad on the one hand and on the other hand I was furious! It is again greediness. For so many people it is just a matter of money. They have no respect for nature or the value that natural places like this, may have for other people.

The goats and other domesticated animals are part of the park, but what worries me is the management or lack thereof of these animals. It worries me because I could see the physical damage what these practices already have done to this place. The erosion caused by grazing activities of the goats is alarming. Then I ask myself the question of how much damage they can cause, and already had caused, to the sensitive vegetation of the area. On the one hand it is one of our only remaining wilderness areas, and national park, in the country, but on the other hand this unique wilderness is being damaged at, what I think, an alarming rate!
This really worries me. I felt a combination of emotions: sad, furious, disappointed and extremely worried.

47. How do you feel about development in the Richtersveld?
The newly build ablution facilities…? Perhaps the toilets are necessary, if one looks at the hygiene of the area in general. I would not like to camp on the previous campers' toilet area, for example! So, yes. The toilets are maybe acceptable. The showers and basins? No, I don't think that is necessary. You can use the river for wash purposes! That is part of the atmosphere of this place! It brings me back to development. Where does it stop? Will the ablution be the end?

48. So you got to the end of your holiday. How did you feel when you realised it was time to go home?
Ah gee…. Totally depressed, very sad.

49. While driving back home, were those feelings still there or did you emotions change?
They were still there. I could sense a change in the moods of my fellow group members as well. It was as if everybody became quiet, busy with their own thoughts… The journey back home was also much quicker than the journey two weeks before!

50. Where there anything on the way back home that changed the mood?
Yes. On our overnight stop we had an attempted robbery from our car that was parked next to our room. Fortunately we reacted quickly enough and nothing was missing. The event, however, immediately made us realise that our holiday was over and that we are almost back in 'normal' life. That was alarming and depressing…

51. When returning to your work and daily routine, can you describe your initial feelings the first few days?
At first I was still full of energy, the batteries were still fully charged. It was as if I was inspired to do what is expected of me – for the first few days, that is! After that it was as if everything just bolted onto me, as if my wheels were spinning… stuck.

52. And now, just over a month after your visit, how do you feel now?
The whole trip was extremely positive. I don't even think about the negative aspects. The greater whole was much more positive than any of the negative things. Not one day pass in which I do not think back of the trip and especially I recall that wonderful sight from the Tsoba Pass.

53. If you sit quiet for a moment and intensely think back and in your mind experience your highlight on the Tsoba pass, does it have any effect on you?
Yes it does. It was meaningful because I recall that place so often in my daily life…It is as if I get perspective. It was that endlessness, the mountain upon mountain upon mountain, that gave me the feeling of openness. If I think back of that, then I realise our very limited view of things here in our work. We only see our problems. We must look further away and will probably get a solution if we can expand our view…

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 5 (PI-5)

Name:	Giancarlo Pucciatti
Gender:	Male
Age:	22
Occupation:	Senior Ecotourism Management student
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	012 318 5306
Date and place of interview:	2 March 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	25 minutes

1. Can you name a place in nature that you recently visited?
St Lucia, Kwazulu-Natal.

2. When did you visit the reserve?
September 2003

3. What does it look like there? Would you say it is a developed natural place?
The area where we camped is relatively undeveloped, there were only ablutions in terms of infrastructure and roads. On the beach there was no development except for some fence poles and signs warning you of turtle nests. In the town itself is where the major infrastructure is. Standing on the beach at night – it was dead silent, except for the crashing of the waves.

4. What were your initial feelings since you decided to go to St Lucia?
I had heard of St. Lucia for many years from friends and family. I heard of the serene beauty and peace of the area - which is what inspired me and made me want to go. I was excited to go.

5. Did you experience any specific feelings on your way to the St Lucia?
The driving to St Lucia (we went by bus in a group of 50 students) was quite exciting, except I felt a bit disappointed because we were so delayed, due to the slow progress of the bus, frequent stops for the large group, refueling and so on.

6. And from the time you arrived there and during your stay?
We arrived at night time so I didn't even get a chance to see the area or get a glimpse of what it was like. In a way it was disappointing, but at the same time exciting because we pitched our tent and I went to bed that night knowing that I would wake up in a "new" world- a place I had never been to, but wanted to see for many years.

I was excited because I didn't know what the area around our camp looked like, or even where I was in the St. Lucia strip. In the morning when we woke up we decided to go to the beach. The walk through the dune forest area was amazing. No signs of people or development, just a foot path and the sounds of

birds above your head and the sun bursting through the canopy in certain areas – peace, quite, tranquility and solitude is what I felt. The feeling of cool moist sand between my toes and the smell of the vegetation brought all my senses to 100%, the sound of the antelope quietly darting off to the right of me gave me a fright, but a feeling of satisfaction as I knew that there were animals there.

As we got to the beach it was if we had left a different world and entered a new one! I was seeing beach dunes for the first time, beaches without hotels, showers, shops, litter, hundreds of people. All I could see was natural vegetation and the inviting warm blue sea. I closed my eyes and listened to the sound of the ocean and felt the cool sea breeze on my face- for a few seconds. I was completely relaxed and I felt complete solitude in my own capacity and a sense of timelessness, no watch no phone – just natures peace and time. I experienced something I have never felt before… I fell in love with the scenery and that feeling of just me and my friends sitting there by the water watching the birds – Yellow Billed Kites hover above us- was amazing.

My best experience was our last evening when everyone else stayed at camp drinking, my two friends and I decided to go to the beach for the last time and have a swim. The moon was out and we left camp without a torch, underestimating how dark the forest could be. We walked behind one another, quiet – listening, using all of our senses to guide us to the beach along this dark path. We heard many shuffles and sounds around us, but the most amazing thing we saw were the fire flies flying in the path. I had never in my life seen so many before and it was a humbling experience to see these creatures and to think how they light up like that, why they doing it – a hundred questions ran through my mind.

After watching them for a while we carried on towards the beach. The sea was calm and the beach was empty and we could see small animals disappearing in the shadows. I jumped into the water and it was a refreshing sensation, but an uneasy one because I knew this coast was wild – no shark nets and it was dark, but it was exhilarating and a bit of an adrenalin rush knowing that at any moment you could be bitten or die.

St. Lucia had great qualities like peace, scenery, recreation, relaxation, pleasure, enjoyment, loneliness, solitude. I used all of my five senses every second I were there and I completely relaxed, forgot about my worries and stress and the busy city life waiting for me back home. I experienced some degree of solitude, tranquility, definitely, pleasure and enjoyment! The lack of amenities made it even better as it brought me back down to earth. I believe I experienced most of the qualities of wilderness in St. Lucia, although it was not completely untouched by man.

7. How did you feel when it was time to go home?

When it was time to go I was a bit anxious because I know I was going back to the city, technology, stressed and nervous people, noise, pollution, violence, crime! This depressed me a bit, but on the trip back looking out of the window at the other wild areas, I had time to think and reflect of my brilliant memories

and experiences of St. Lucia, feelings of satisfaction I am experiencing now talking to you.

8. How do you feel now about your experience?
When I think back I am humbled by the majestic powers of a place of such beauty can transpire to a person.

9. Will you visit St Lucia again? Why?
Yes, I definitely would and I would really enjoy hiking up along the coast towards Mozambique, to see what is like. I want to experience those feeling of tranquillity, peace, solitude, timelessness, oneness, and happiness again. I saw but a mere fragment of St. Lucia. Now I would like to see the rest of what it is all about and what other wilderness experiences it can offer me.

10. What, according to you, is the single most important threat to world ecology?
The expansion of human civilisation.

11. Do you think human beings, in general, are disconnected in some way from nature?
Yes. In SA in particular, the government does not place enough emphasis on environmental education, especially toward rural people (squatters) for example. In Botswana, for instance, the people are far more aware of the benefits of nature, even in the form of ecotourism. In my opinion the majority of the country – the black population – have not had the privilege of being exposed to nature or being educated about it. Modern day society does not allow people a lot of free/spare time and in the 21st century everyone is thinking: MONEY, SECURITY, ENTERTAINMENT. To me it seems as if people don't care about going to a nature reserve and looking at a rhino or lion. They would rather stay in a busy, noisy, smelly city, driving a luxury vehicle and spending money, instead of going to where it is quiet and peaceful and you have the opportunity to relax and unwind.

12. How do you think, people cope with stress?
Most people don't cope with stress. In SA we seem to bottle it up and store it until we can't anymore. Then we do something stupid – commit suicide, take drugs, murder, etc. The people that do cope with stress, will more than likely talk to someone, e.g. a psychiatrist and talk about their problems.

13. How do you cope with your stress?
I talk. I speak with my mother mostly, sometimes my friends and my brother. I find it is the best way for me – to talk about it and then just get away if I can – ideally to the coast or the bush – any place where I can gather my thoughts.

14. What is the impact of nature on people in general, according to your view?
Nature is a stimulant for the human mind, as well as a relaxant for the soul. I think it can help take people's minds off their problems and help them to rejuvenate. "Take them back to nature" where they have no modern structures and they can focus on enjoying and watching nature. It is beneficial to most.

15. What impact does nature have on you personally?

To me nature is everything. It is my passion. I am the happiest and at my most relaxed when I am in the bush. I really love animals – elephants in particular – and every moment I can spend watching them, I will take. Nature gives me a sense of self-fulfilment. It is the fuel for my number one goal and dream: to own and manage a Big Five Lodge and game farm. Nature gives me the chance to increase my knowledge and share it with people.

16. Describe any single special personal nature experience you ever had.

My most special experience would probably have to be seeing a leopard cub kill an impala at night time, while its mother and sibling watched. Then four spotted hyena came and stole the impala from the leopard and devoured it in less than 5 minutes. I saw how the mother just watched and did nothing. Then I understood that she was letting her cub find out for himself that the first thing to do once you've made a kill, is take it straight up a tree – hide it from enemies!

17. Why was this sighting special?

It was special because I witnessed something extremely rare. I saw this leopard make what was probably its first kill, have a few bites out of it, only to have it stolen away. I witnessed one of the hard lessons of survival.

18. With what in nature can you identify? Why?

I am obviously going to say, an African elephant, because that is my favourite animal and has been since I can remember. I watch elephants… I identify with it firstly because it is a highly social animal. It is big and it is strong and it is a highly intelligent creature. The social part definitely fits in with me. I think there is another obvious characteristic and that is, it is a strong animal, physically and emotionally. When a fellow elephant dies, I believe that they do mourn their dead and they support one another in some way that us as humans cannot see, hear, touch or feel, as these animals are far more superior than we think. It is this exact characteristic which I feel is the same as me as was the case this year in May loosing my best friend in a car accident. In animal terms, he was a fellow elephant and he passed on to the next life. I had to be strong, physically and emotionally, to support his mother, father and sister, as well as his girlfriend and all his other friends and family. I had to do this and simultaneously also deal with the loss in my own way. Elephants never forget and I never forget. They are compassionate animals and that is why I can identify /relate to them.

Name:	Albert Nel
Gender:	Male
Age:	35
Occupation:	Workshop Manager
Permanent residence:	Brackenhurst, Alberton
Tel no:	082 659 0068
Date and place of interview:	6 March 2004, Alberton
Duration of interview:	20 minutes

1. What is 'nature' to you?
Sea, plants, wild animals…

2. What is your relation to nature?
I must get into nature very often to be able to handle everything life gives you at work! Nature gives me the opportunity to relax, to think and to get in touch … I need nature to relax and to unwind. And I need to go 'back to nature' very often …

3. Are we part of nature?
Yes. God created everything – humans and nature.

4. Does nature teach you anything?
How to relax and what is important in life.

5. When you are in nature, what is your greatest awareness?
God's greatness.

6. What do you do to 'sense' nature around you, in other words, to become aware of things in nature around you?
Be quiet.

7. Do you think that people are in some way disconnected from nature?
Yes. With people's need and comfort with technology, it is often more important to think about money and comfort and then nature is often forgotten.

8. Would you say a disconnectedness from nature, reflects a disconnectedness from God?
Yes. People tend to forget God and nature is connected. God created nature. If you only look around you and observe what is happening in nature, then one can see that there is a Higher Hand in everything.

9. What is your favourite place in nature to visit?
Stilbaai, on the Western Cape coast.

10. Why is this your favourite place?
There are few other people and at Stilbaai I am directly in contact with nature.

11. When visiting a place in nature, how do you prefer to stay? Why?
I prefer rest camp facilities, but I like to camp as well. In the rest camp I have everything I need and don't have to bring it with in the car. When I camp, I feel even closer to nature. It depends on where I go.

12. When visiting a place in nature, how do you prefer to travel? Why?
With my partner. We do everything together as far as possible. I like to share all the beauty and peacefulness of Stilbaai with her.

13. What are your favourite outdoor activities? Or what do you do when visiting nature areas?
Fishing.

14. Why do you do this activity?
It is very relaxing. It gives me time to really get close to nature, to God and I can just be in nature and enjoy it. It is also a very good way to get away from the everyday rush.

15. The following questions will be about a specific trip that you undertook recently.
Which place did you visit?
Stilbaai.

16. When and for how long was this visit?
February 2003. The whole month.

17. How long before the trip did you decide to go?
Almost a year.

18. How long before leaving for the trip did your preparations start?
A month.

19. How did you feel during this 'preparation' phase?
I looked forward and was excited. The workload at work was quite depressing and that made the forthcoming trip even more attractive!

20. Tell me about the set-up. How many people, cars, etc. were included in your planning?
It was just me and my wife going away on our annual holiday. The family in-law accompanied us for the first few days, but then they fortunately had to return…

21. What were your feelings and emotions the day before you left for the trip?
Excited, but a little concerned that something on the car or trailer could break on our way.

22. During the journey to your destinations, were there anything special that you can think of going through your mind, that you talked about in the vehicle, you could sense from your wife?

We were both quite tired, but I did feel and sense a feeling of excitement. I also felt blessed that we were able to do this trip and actually felt very happy, despite of the fatigue. The long way to drive to Stilbaai did not make it easier, but it is all worth the trouble!

23. You arrived in Stilbaai. Can you briefly tell me about your experiences, the positive and negatives, while being there. If possible, also recall your feelings accompanying your experiences.
I was tired when we arrived. Stilbaai is such a wonderful place. We go there every year. There are very little negative things. It is quiet (we go there off-season) and we do what we want to. We did not care about the time of the day. It was great to be away from everything and everybody. We took a trip to the West Coast and Cape Town and that was one of the highlights, because we have never been there before. It was a pleasant experience to discover new places and things. I was in a state of excitement all the time and really enjoyed the scenery and different views of nature.

Negative - my thoughts and concerns about possible burglaries at home.

24. So you got to the end of your holiday. How did you feel when you realised it was time to go home?
Depressed, sad.

25. While driving back home, were those feelings still there or did you emotions change?
No I was depressed even the next few days after arriving back home!

26. When returning to your work and daily routine, can you describe your initial feelings the first few days?
Initially depressed but then reality kicked in and I had to get on with it!

27. And now, just over a month after your visit, how do you feel now?
Great, and looking forward to the next trip.

28. Do you think that we as people of Africa are closer to nature than people of Europe or America, for example?
Yes. If you only look at how many people here flee from the cities to reserves over week-ends… SA is less exposed to everything with regards to technology in comparison with USA and Europe – perhaps. Therefore we are less consumptive and maybe exploit nature a little less.

29. Do you prefer to be alone in nature?
No. I want someone with me to share nature.

30. What can be done to live closer to nature?
People must first find time to find themselves.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 7 (PI-7)

Name:	Reneé
Gender:	Female
Age:	43
Occupation:	Human Recources Manager
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	012 346-5056
Date and place of interview:	9 July 2004, Arcadia, Pretoria
Duration of interview:	35 minutes

1. Wat is die natuur vir jou?
Die natuur maak 'n mens rustig en vat jou weg van jou alledaagse probleme en as jy eers in die regte plek is vergeet jy van al die dinge. Sonder dit kan ons nie klaar kom nie. Die natuur laat jou weer mens voel.

2. Wat is jou verhouding met die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur moet beskryf, sal jy sê dit is intens of net oppervlakkig?)
Elke dag het mens nie die geleentheid om aan die natuur te dink nie want jy is in die gewoel en gewarrel van die wêreld. Maar as ek eers in die situasie (natuur) is, is my verhouding rustigheid… maar jy kry nie elke dag die geleentheid om dit te voel nie want jy is in die gejaagde lewe.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Dit speel 'n groot rol want sonder dit is ek verlore. Dit moet daar wees want anders is ons nie bewus van dinge rondom ons nie. Ek raak so opgevang in dinge rondom my… dan moet ek teruggaan om myself net weer te kan vind.

4. Wat is jou verhouding tot jou eie natuur binne jouself? (Is jou lewe wat jy dit graag wil hê – met betrekking tot jou werk, familie, sosiale lewe en jouself?)
Ek het nie altyd tyd om daaraan te dink nie.

5. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?
Beslis. Dit leer my dat daar waardes in die wêreld is en ek moet dankbaar wees vir wat ek het. Die natuur wys 'n mens op 'n eenvoudige vorm van lewe en dit is hoe die mens eintlik moet lewe… maar hy kan nie. Sonder hierdie lesse kan 'n mens nie leef nie… die natuur leer jou alles van die lewe.

6. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur? Wat het die gebeurtenis vir jou beteken? Hoe beinvloed hierdie gebeure jou werk en lewe vandag?
Dit was toe ek Knysna toe was. Ons het so 'n klein houthuisie gehad… as jy uitkyk was daar net bome… en baie stilte… dit was alles net asemrowend. Dit beinvloed my voortdurend, want ek dink daaraan en ek weet ek kan net rustig raak… en dit maak my net baie rustig.

7. **Wat doen jy om van die natuur rondom jou bewus te raak? (Hoe word jy bewus van dinge rondom jou?)** (In watter manier gebruik mense hulle sintuie om te verbind met die natuur?)
As ek iets mooi sien dan besef ek net dat daar is goed daar buite wat ons van moet bewus wees… en dan raak ek doelbewus bewus daarvan…

8. Is daar iets in die natuur, 'n dier, plant, rivier of landskap wat jy mee kan identifiseer? Op watter manier identifiseer jy hiermee? Wat beteken dit vir jou?
Ek sal sê met 'n hele klomp diere… ek kan nie een spesifieke een uitsonder nie … hulle is elkeen uniek op hulle eie manier. Hoe hulle in die natuur oorleef is die wonderlikste ding… hulle kan maar net voortgaan. Ons as mens moet altyd net meer en meer kry en besit… mens kan baie by diere leer.

9. Hoe sien jy die plek en rol van mense in die natuur?
Mense behoort aangetrokke tot die natuur te wees, maar ongelukkig is dit nie so nie. Hulle verwoes eerder die natuur en dit is hartseer… Die mens en die natuur is nie meer een nie al moet dit eintlik so wees…

10. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Dit is in jouself en hoe jy voel teenoor die wêreld rondom jou. Dit is 'n tipe rustigheid binne-in jou, of die afwesigheid daarvan… as jy dit nie het nie, kan jy nie gelukkig wees nie. Dit is daardie iets wat jou bewus maak van dinge rondom jou… en wat jou help om elke dag voort te gaan…

11. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Geloof moet 'n plek hê in die natuur omdat dit geskep is deur 'n Maker en as jy al die goed om jou sien dan weet jy daar is iemand wat dit moes maak. … 'n mens kon dit nie gedoen het nie.

12. Is jy bewus van die natuur elke dag? Verduidelik?
Ja, ek sien 'n houtkapper teen die tak van die boom… en 'n mooi blom wat nie gister daar was nie… maar nou is hy daar.

13. Is die mens die mees belangrikste vorm van lewe op aarde?
Glad nie. Ek dink hulle is die minderwaardigste. Die mens is 'n verwoestende element en ons is dan maar baie primitief.

14. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Ja, nie noodwendig elke dag nie, maar tog is ek deel van alles op die wêreld.

15. Dink jy mense is verbind met die natuur?
Nie soos hulle moet wees nie en ek dink baie mense het nie die geleentheid om die ware natuur te leer ken nie.

16. Dink jy dat wanneer mense nie verbind is met die natuur dat hulle ook nie verbind is met God nie? Of omgekeerd?
Nee ek sal nie so sê nie. Want om deel te wees van die natuur sal jou nie noodwendig nader bring aan God nie.

17. Is daar 'n moontlikheid om weer met die natuur te verbind as jy nie meer verbind is nie? Hoe?
Dit is moontlik. Deur tyd daar te spandeer. Ek sal teruggaan na my huisie in Knysna en daar net rustig word.

18. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek? Hoekom is dit jou gunsteling plek?
Knysna… daar het ek net rustigheid gevind. Pilanesberg ook, maar dit is anders… net wonderlik om saam met diere te wees.

19. Wanneer jy 'n area besoek, hoe verkies jy om te reis? (alleen, saam met familie, vriende)
Familie en vriende. Dit is lekker om saam met ander te wees en die mooi dinge wat ek ervaar ook met hulle te kan deel.

20. Wat verkies jy om te doen wanneeer jy in die natuur is? (jou gunsteling buite aktiwiteit)
Net te sit en kyk na alles wat om my is en dit net in neem.

21. Voel jy persoonlik dit is nodig om op 'n gereelde basis na die natuur terug te keer? Ja

22. Hoekom?
Ek kry rustigheid en krag om met die lewe aan te gaan.

23. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike areas? Wat verkies jy? Hoekom?
Dit is hartseer… diere kan nie in ontwikkelde plekke oorleef nie en daar is nie ander plek vir hulle om heen te gaan nie… Vir my ook nie - ek verkies plekke wat natuurlik is. Ek sal graag wil sê: Laat natuurlike plekke natuurlik bly… moenie dit verwoes nie.

24. Wat is vir jou 'n voorbeeld van 'n natuurlike area wat baie ontwikkel en toeganklik is?
Pilanesberg. Daar is baie plekke gebou, maar daar is tog nog die mooi natuur.

25. Die volgende vrae sal wees oor 'n spesifieke vakansie/reis wat jy onlangs op was: Watter plek het jy besoek? Wanneer en vir hoe lank was die besoek?
Pilanesberg. 'n Naweek in Mei.

26. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
2 Maande

27. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy met voorbereidings begin?
1 week

28. Wat was jou gevoel tydens die voorbereidings?
Opgewonde en ek wou weet wat sou ons hierdie keer sien.

29. Wat was jou gevoel en emosies die dag voor jy vertrek het?
Dankie tog more gaan ons van die geraas af weg. Ek wou regtig net wegkom uit die stad.

30. Beskryf jou gevoelens en ervaring wat jy tydens die naweek gehad het?
Ek het deurgaans 'n gevoel van rustigheid gehad.

31. Aan die einde van die naweek, hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Jy is maar teleurgesteld en wil nie eintlik gaan nie, maar weet ook jy moet.

32. Hoe het jy gevoel oppad huistoe?
Ek het beter begin voel, want dan dink jy aan alles wat jy gesien het en dit laat jou goed voel.

33. Toe jy terug keer na jou daaglikse lewe kan jy jou gevoelens beskryf tydens die eerste paar dae?
Jy het krag om aan te gaan maar soos die dae meer word vergeet jy van die goeie tyd in die natuur. Later dink ek baie daaraan en alles kom terug na my toe, veral soos ek nou hier vir jou vertel… dan sien ek alles weer voor my. Ek dink met verlange terug daaraan, maar terselfdertyd voel ek geinspireer daardeur.

REPORT 4
PERSONAL INTERVIEW (PI-8)

Name:	Poekie le Roux
Gender:	Female
Age:	70
Occupation:	Retired teacher
Permanent residence:	George
Tel no:	044 871-2454
Date and place of interview:	31 December 2003, George
Duration of interview:	30 minutes

1. What is 'nature' to you?
Nature is all the plants, animals, mountains, bush, sea and everything God created.

2. What is your relation to nature? In other words, if you have to describe your personal relationship with nature, would you describe it as intense or relatively superficial?
Very intense. I am dependent upon nature to survive.

3. What role does nature play in your life?
I am very much part of nature and nature is part of me. Nature plays a very important role in my life. It reminds me of my insignificance comparing with everything else in Gods creation. If I have to live without nature, they can bury me! I don't want to be anywhere else than in nature. I am always in nature.

4. What is you relation to your own nature within yourself? (Are you what you want to be – family, social life, your self?)
Yes, at my age I have sorted out all the baggage. I enjoy every moment of life and I am happy to be what I am. I don't want to be anybody else.
I am happy with my family, I have good friends and I do want I want to do.

5. Does nature teach you anything?
Everything there is to be taught.

6. What was your very first deep contact with nature and what did that moment/event tell you?
Planting a tree from a seed with my father. I could see it germinated and grew. I associate a tree with my father. A tree is anchored in the earth. My farther was the anchor in my life. I also associate trees with loved ones and plant a specific tree for those who passed away. I remember them through the growing trees.

7. When you are in nature, what is your greatest awareness?
The greatness of nature and the way God created everything and that I can enjoy all those wonderful things!

8. What do you do to 'sense' nature around you, in other words, to become aware of things, physically, in nature around you?
I look around. I become quiet and I just look. It is only when you stand still and look around that you become aware of the wonder of creation.

9. Is there something in nature, an animal, plant, river- or landscape, that you can identify with? In which way do you identify with this?
Trees. When I stand still at a tree and become truly quiet, then all the deepest thoughts surface. Trees talk to you. You must actually plant a tree to become aware of this. I can never be without a tree. I grow with a tree. I have many trees (20) in my garden. With each one I experience something different. With the wild pear I experience feelings of the bushveld, with the white stinkwood I remember my older sister who passed away, with the old oak next to the driveway, I feel its massive power… And then trees always remember me of my father, the anchor in my life. I can identify myself with one of the characters in the novel "Toorbos" by the author Dalene Matthee where she says: *"Tussen mensland en boomland is 'n brug waaroor jy maklik kom terwyl die vrede om jou opnuut in jou lyf intrek en jou optel tot in die hoogste boomtop waar piet-my-vrou sy wyfie roep en roep en roep. Waar die paddas op die bosvloer klik-praat met mekaar. En met jou. Waar jy opkyk en kroonarend teen die bloue lug bo die bosdak sien sweef… Dan begin jy in jou eie vlug weer stadig afwaarts daal tot onder in die skemer bos om die voetpad te soek. Boom toe. Haar boom. Met die baie name waarmee sy hom al gedoop het, maar nie een wat wil pas nie. Kalander, Koning, Oudste, Mooiste, Hoogste. …(Sy) stoot met haar lyf 'n pad deur die onderbos en bobbejaantou-gordyn waar die bosdou nog in die skadu's lê en aan haar lyf en hare afvee. Dag, Boom, sê sy toe sy by hom kom en haar kop eerbiedig laat sak soos vir bid".* (Matthee, 2003:35)

10. Do you think that all life forms have some form of feeling, emotion or awareness?
Yes, everything has some form of energy.

11. How do see the place and the role of human beings in nature?
Humans are the custodians of nature. That is our task as given by God. However, humans are the greatest thread to nature.

12. Why do you say that?
I get furious with people. No matter how high one hikes up in the Cedar Mountains for example, you always find litter, especially cigarette butts! I find it disgusting and wherever I go in nature, I always pick up other peoples cigarette butts. I actually suffer very much because of what I see people do in and to nature. I sometimes feel I can scream! For example, when the Agapanthus plants are flowering here in the marshes, it is such a wonderful sighting. Then you get people who pick them for vases in the lounge! No bird or animal will do so much damage to their environment. People make me sad in this respect.

13. Are you aware of nature everyday?
Yes.
Explain.
It is so much part of me that I am there everyday. Not a day pass that I am not in nature in some way, whether its gardening, hiking, walking along the beach or just watching the birds on the feeding table from my sitting room.

14. This awareness differs from you being on holiday when you are in nature everyday? Are you then more or less all the time intensely aware of nature?
I am always aware of nature.

15. Is the human species the most important life form on earth?
We are custodians of nature. We are created that way, but we are part of nature and all other living things.

16. Do you feel part of nature?
Yes. Without doubt! Whether we want to be or not! It is stated to us in Creation. God said that we have to work in it and conserve it. Therefore we have a huge responsibility.

17. Do you think that people are somehow disconnected from nature?
In general, yes. According to me it is mainly because people do not have gardens anymore. People become nature 'specialists', for example bird watchers, people who study aloes or orchids, etc. Long ago all people were closer to nature. Perhaps it is also because of television that people don't go into nature anymore. It is as if people do not see the little things in nature anymore, even when they do get out there. For example, I see it in our own hiking group: most of the hikers don't look around, they just walk to get to the end! A little while ago we went on a day hike to the Old Dam (well-known hiking route in the George area). I always prefer to walk at the back; then I don't have to participate in conversations and I have time to stop and look at small things around me. That day 15 people walked pass a huge tortoise next to the road without noticing it! When I saw the beautiful animal, I called them back and showed it to the group. They were amazed for the moment and just continue walking! Another example is the amazing ferns in Jonkersberg. People just walk through them! To me it is so beautiful, one cannot describe it. You must experience it.

18. Do you think that a disconnectedness from nature reflects a disconnectedness from God, or vice versa?
Yes, because so many people do not realise that God is the Creator. Also because they do not live intense with nature. Nowhere one is closer to God than in nature. When one looks at small things like the curve of a fern leaf… a spider's web (show photograph) – no one can copy that. Those are the things that one can observe and just look at and admire and feel the greatness of God. One then must realise the almightiness of a Creator.



19. How do you think people in general, cope with stress?
Alcohol, gambling…

20. How do you cope with stress?
I do gardening. I work amongst the plants in my garden. Afterwards I can't even remember what it was that bothered me in the first place.

21. Do you think that we, as people of Africa, are more connected to nature than, for example people from Europe or America?
No. People from Thailand, for example, live totally in nature. Madeira's people are totally dependent on nature for their survival. I think our country provides more opportunity to live close to nature, but we do no use those opportunities. In America people consume more than what we are doing, because they probably have more to consume. In comparison with other Africa countries, especially in southern and central Africa, I think South Africans consume much more. Many Africa countries are very poor and therefore have much less to consume.

22. Is there a possibility to become reconnected to nature, if one is disconnected?
Yes. If people can stop running around and just become quiet for a moment to look what is going on around them. They don't even have to be in true nature. They can just become aware of nature around them – trees, birds, running water… It must be a conscious decision to stand still and observe.

23. What is your favourite place in nature to visit?
There are so many. I love the bushveld, but I am also very fond of places like the Kalahari and the Richtersveld. And all the beautiful places here around George – the mountains and the Knysna bushes. There are really many favourite places!

24. When visiting a place in nature, how do you prefer to travel? Why?
With my husband, and now and then with two or a few friends. It depends on where we go. It is not safe to travel alone when we visit remote areas, but we still prefer to be on our own when visiting known resorts such as the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park or Namaqualand. When we do foreign visits, we prefer to travel in an organised group. Off-road journeys, we prefer to do with friends and in a convoy of two or three cars. We prefer to share all the wonderful things in nature with each other and with special friends.

25. What are your favourite outdoor activities? Or what do you do when visiting nature areas?
We prefer to explore new areas or just observe nature.

26. Do you ever need to be alone in nature?
No. I want to share the beauty of nature with someone, preferably my husband. Sometimes I feel alone when we visit wilderness areas, although my group members are with me. But then it is only the few of us in the whole open area!

27. Do you personally feel that it is essential for you to return to nature regularly?
Yes. If you take nature away from me, I will die. I need nature to 'go ahead'… to look forward to do things… to give me a reason to wake up every morning…

28. You have been in the Richtersveld a few times. How do you feel about development in the Richtersveld?
I am worried about that, because I think that it will now open up the area for more people. It was sort of exclusive and only people who have a feeling for the 'tough' visited the place. Now it is more 'comfortable' and more people will go there. I am afraid that it will loose the special atmosphere of remoteness and wildness. Then I also ask the question of 'will it stop here, or what will be next, upgraded roads…?

29. Can you describe a specific highlight you have experienced recently?
The Richtersveld. The total purity of nature was extremely beautiful. It seemed so untouched. The silence – I could almost feel it, as if I could actually touch it. The birds also had a special fascination, and the river… The flow of the river was as if it took all the concerns and negative thoughts with it. The magnitude of the area left me feeling small and humble. It was an experience just to see the bright yellow bunches of flowers ('perdeblomme') in the veld; I stood in awe of the stretches of aloes…

But the goats of the Nama people left with me with an uneasiness… I wondered for how long this piece of world still will be this beautiful…

This place got me to realise how very small and insignificant I am in the greatness of Creation and how great God is!

30. Your last visit to the Richtersveld. If you think back about the whole trip, do you think it had an influence on you for life?
O Yes! Every time I feel that I am not making use of all the opportunities life has to offer. When returning from the Richtersveld, I intent to do everything I want to do, to make use of opportunities to enjoy life!

(Matthee, Dalene. 2003. Toorbos. Cape Town: Tafelberg.)

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 9 (PI-9)

Name:	Kallie Bouwer
Gender:	Male
Age:	24
Occupation:	Senior Ecotourism Management student
Permanent residence:	Krugersdorp
Tel no:	082 335 9373
Date and place of interview:	2 March 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	20 minutes

1. Can you name a place in nature that you recently visited?
The Njala Nature Reserve near Brits in the Northwest Province.

2. When did you visit the reserve?
25-28 December 2003.

3. What does it look like? Would you say it is a developed natural place?
I would say it is moderately developed. Although there is not much infrastructure, the basic facilities are there. The reserve isn't very big - ± 600ha. There is a campsite, with electricity and an ablution block with nice hot showers. The area is developed for leadership and teambuilding camps and you sleep in huts. There is also a place for a campfire in a lapa.

4. What were your initial feelings since you decided to go to Njala Nature Reserve?
Before we went there, I wasn't sure what to expect because no one I know has been there before. I just knew that it is in the Northwest province near Brits. So the area wasn't unfamiliar to me. I expected it to be bushveld with some wild animals. But generally I looked forward to the trip.

5. Did you experience any specific feelings on your way to the reserve?
During the trip I was impressed with the direction indication. It was very clear and it was a beautiful place to drive through. The only "negative" that I experienced on the way, was that it has recently rained and the gravel road that we travelled on was washed away. I must say, it wouldn't have been a problem if I had driven a 4x4, but for my small vehicle it was a bit rough and no one warned us about this problem.

6. And from the time you arrived there and during your stay?
On our arrival we had to drive through a lot of fences and gates so it was very clear to me that the reserve was used for cattle farming and game. The campsite was clean and because we were there in the holiday season, there were no school groups using the camp grounds. We were all alone in the remoteness of the bush. Not a single man-made sound to disturb the quietness. This was great and the reason why we had come to the bush.

BUT: We had no idea that the owner of the reserve invited his family to use the same area to camp in their caravans. The peacefulness and feeling of relaxation was interrupted with a bunch of crying children and drunken loud adults.

We were lucky in a sense that they only came there to drink, because this meant that we had the rest of the farm (meaning everything except the campsite) to ourselves. When we walked out into the bush, away from the noise, the ultimate sound of nothing, except the birds, wind and … and then the snort of an animal would transform me back to the feeling of relaxation and oneness with nature.

7. How did you feel when it was time to go home?
On the way back home I really felt relaxed and renewed even though our whole expedition of getting away from the city and human noise was spoiled by other people. I, at least, had the time to go into the veld and not only learn and relax, but got rid of all my worries and troubles in a place where I felt at peace.

8. How do you feel now about your experience?
My 'after thoughts' of the reserve is not that bad. I experienced everything that I wanted to experience during this trip. I think that should I go there again, I would ask and make sure that there wouldn't be schools or family present in or around the campsite. I feel that more than 50 people on the reserve at any one time would definitely be overcrowding. I would not get the 'desired effect' of the break-away if I have to share it with too many people.

9. What is the 'desired effect' for you?
The feeling of relaxation, getting away from everyday routine, forget about worries and just get close to nature. You cannot do that with many people around you.

10. Will you visit the reserve again? Why?
Yes, definitely. The distance from Pretoria and Krugersdorp where I live, is really acceptable. It is not very expensive to camp in the reserve and the value I got for my money was great. There is no shortage of animals and different species could be spotted. I will just make sure that my next visit will be during a time that I will be there alone!

11. What, according to you, is the single most important threat to world ecology?
Global warming because of people.

12. Do you think human beings, in general, are disconnected in some way from nature?
Yes. Our lives have become so based around technology that we often forget that we have a world with wonders far greater than the most advanced computer programme ever written. Time and money is also limited for many people and you need both to get to nature.

12. How do you think, people cope with stress?

I think the majority of people try and relax over week-ends by socialising with friends, or go shopping, watch a movie, or go to the gym. There are also people who get away as much as possible to some kind of nature based break-away.

13. How do you cope with your stress?
If everything really gets too much, I try to get to the bush where it is quiet and no one is around me. Alternatively I try to get some motivation from someone else.

14. What is the impact of nature on people in general, according to your view?
Nature is a stress-reliever. It relaxes people. It is a natural anti-depressant.

15. What impact does nature have on you personally?
In nature I have time to think, to find myself, to set goals and get rid of the everyday nonsense. Even by just looking at the flames of the fire at night relaxes me. I also find it very relaxing just to experience a sunset or admire the stars at nights.

16. Describe any single special personal nature experience you ever had.
One evening I was hiking in the Drakensberg with a relatively large group. At some stage I decided to walk at the back and give the rest of the group a gap in front of me. As the group went on, it became quiet. I walked up a koppie and sat down. In this total silence I looked up into the sky. The starts were plentiful and very bright. I was completely alone. The landscape around me was visible in the dim moonlight. It was a very humbling moment.

17. Why was this special?
I realised how very small and vulnerable we, as humans, are on this earth. The total silence, with just the night sounds around me was something I appreciated very much at that moment. The stars were extremely bright and I again realised how almighty our Creator is. The moment was special, the sounds, smell of clean air, the stars, silhouettes of rocks and mountains… and the cool breeze against my face…

18. With what in nature can you identify? Why?
The lion. To me it is about the pride and self-confidence in its being. I cannot say that I am like a lion, but I strive to acquire some of the characteristics of a lion, for example: pride, confidence, fearless, caring, bonded to a group and opportunistic. One day, I will be a lion…

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 10 (PI-10)

Name:	Ansie Swart
Gender:	Female
Age:	54
Occupation:	Retired teacher
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	(012) 430-4882
Date and place of interview:	14 July 2004, Moreleta Park, Pretoria
Duration of interview:	35 minutes

1. Wat is die natuur vir jou?
Dit is deel van my lewe en ek kan nie daar sonder nie.

2. Wat is jou verhouding met die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur moet beskryf, sal jy sê dit is intens of net oppervlakkig?)
Die natuur het nie net 'n visuele waarde nie maar dit verryk ook my gees en my innerlike.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Dit verbreed my algemene insig en kennis en dit maak net van my 'n ryker en voller mens.

4. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?
Ja ek het geleer om op te let en fyn te luister en nie dinge by my te laat verby gaan nie en elke ding wat ek sien het 'n impak op my lewe en dit is verrykend vir my.

5. Wanneer jy in die natuur is waarvan word jy bewus?
Mense luister nie fyn nie en baie mense gaan by dinge verby en sien nie die klein dingetjies ronom hulle nie. Hulle mis die klein goedjies en sien net die groot dinge raak. Ek fokus in op alles … ook die klein 'onbelangrike' goedjies.

6. Wat doen jy om van die natuur rondom jou bewus te raak? (Hoe word jy bewus van dinge rondom jou?)
Ek dink die groot ding is hoe minder mense praat, hoe beter want jou stem maak baie keer dinge rondom jou dood, jy hoor minder. Ek kyk, luister, indien moontlik voel…

7. Is daar iets in die natuur, 'n dier, plant, rivier of landskap wat jy mee kan identifiseer? Op watter manier identifiseer jy hiermee? Wat beteken dit vir jou?
Die bosveld. Dit is my lewe. Ek het daar grootgeword. Daar het ek deel van die natuur geword… dit is sielsverrykend.

8. Hoe sien jy die plek en rol van mense in die natuur?
Ek dink die kwessie van bewaring is nie altyd by mense nie. Ek dink mense moet 'n liefde vir die natuur hê - as jy dit nie het nie, hoe sal jy 'n plek kan bewaar? Mense moenie met die natuur inmeng nie … ekosisteme verwoes nie.

9. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Omdat ek 'n gelowige mens is, is die geestelike vir my 'n belangrike ding in my lewe. Die Here het alles gemaak en ons moet dit onderhou. Ek dink nie jy kan die natuur waardeer as jy nie dinge raaksien nie…

10. Is jy bewus van die natuur elke dag? Verduidelik?
Ek bly in die stad en ek kyk elke dag of ek nie 'n nuwe voël in my groot tuin kan sien nie… ek voer ook die voëls en ek kyk baie na die wolke.

11. Is jy bewus van die natuur elke dag terwyl jy op vakansie in die natuur is of oor 'n naweek in die natuur?
Ja defnitief. Ek is absoluut 'n natuur mens.

12. Is die mens die mees belangrikste vorm van lewe op aarde?
Ja ek glo die Here het gesê ons is die kroon van die skepping en ek dink ons het 'n geweldige verantwoordelikheid om die natuur te beskerm.

13. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Ja, as ek net iewers in die natuur is… dan voel ek dit is waar ek moet wees en dit gee vrede vir my.

14. Dink jy mense is verbind met die natuur?
'n Klein persentasie is. Baie mense gaan deur die natuur sonder om iets op te merk. Baie mense kan ook nie altyd die kosbare dinge van die natuur raaksien nie.

15. Dink jy dat wanneer mense nie verbind is met die natuur dat hulle ook nie verbind is met God nie? Of omgekeerd?
Ek dink nie so nie. Daar is baie mense wat nie in die natuur kom nie maar nog steeds 'n baie sterk band met God kan hê en dan ook is daar mense wat baie in die natuur is maar nie God daar in kan sien nie.

16. Dink jy dat ons as mense van Afrika, is meer verbind met die natuur as wat mense van Europa of Amerika is?
Ja ek dink so want ons hier in Afrika leef uit die natuur uit en ons het die mooiste natuurskoon.

17. Is daar 'n moontlikheid om weer met die natuur te verbind as jy nie meer verbind is nie? Hoe?
Ja. Ek het 'n sagte plek vir die boswêreld… Om met die natuur te bind sal ek net in 'n plek gaan sit … en dink… en weer rustig raak… en alles om my net geniet.

18. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek? Hoekom is dit jou gunsteling plek?
Die Krugerwildtuin. Daar is so 'n groot verskeidenheid - al die diere, plante ens.

19. Wanneer jy 'n area besoek, hoe verkies jy om te reis? (alleen, saam met familie, vriende)
Ek verkies maar saam met familie. Ek dink nie dit is lekker alleen nie.

20. Wat verkies jy om te doen wanneeer jy in die natuur is? (jou gunsteling buite aktiwiteit).
Rond te ry, voëls te kyk en ook stap.

21. Voel jy persoonlik dit is nodig om op 'n gereelde basis na die natuur terug te keer?
Dit is een van die "moet goed" in my lewe. Dit verryk my gees en dit is nodig om net weer krag te kry om aan te gaan met die lewe se eise.

22. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike areas?
Ek het baie keer 'n probleem met dit. Ek weet dit is onwykbaar, maar ons verloor baie dinge met ontwikkeling …dit moet seker maar gebeur…, maar ek is nie tengunste daarvan nie.

23. Wat is vir jou 'n voorbeeld van 'n natuurlike area wat baie ontwikkel en toeganklik is?
Baie van die wildparke soos die Krugerwildtuin.

24. 'n Voorbeeld van 'n area wat matig ontwikkel is maar nog steeds die stilte van 'n wildernis area het?
Ndumo in Noord-Kwazulu-Natal.

25. Kan jy 'n hoogtepunt beskryf van 'n vorige besoek aan 'n plek in die natuur? Hoekom sien jy dit as 'n hoogtepunt?
Die waterskilpaaie op 'n plek in die Krugerwildtuin wat uit die water gekom het om by die karre te kom bedel vir kos. Dit was so anders vir my… ek sou dit nie geglo het as ek dit nie met my eie oë gesien het nie. Dit laat mens aan verkeersligte in die stad dink… waar mense ook so bedel…

26. Die volgende vrae sal wees oor 'n spesifieke vakansie /reis wat jy onlangs op was: Watter plek het jy besoek?
Balule in die Kruger wildtuin

27. Wanneer en vir hoe lank was die besoek en oe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
Die laaste week in Junie begin Julie, ± 1 Jaar

28. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy met voorberiedings begin en wat het jy gevoel?
1 week. Ek was baie opgewonde.

29. Wat was jou gevoel en emosies die dag voor jy vertrek het?
Steeds baie opgewonde… ons het baie uitgesien na die breek.

30. Hoekom het jy so gevoel?
Dit was net om in so 'n plek te wees waar daar nie baie min is… net natuur … nie eers elektrisiteit nie.

31. Gedurende die reis na die bestemming, was daar enige iets spesiaal wat jy aan gedink het? Wat julle oor gepraat het in die voertuig, of enige gevoel van die ander persone?
Ons praat oor die dinge wat ons moontlik gaan beleef en wat ons miskien sal sien, alles dinge wat ons opgewondheid nog groter maak.

32. Jy kom by jou bestemming. Kan jy kortliks vir my jou ervaring, positief en negatief, beskryf terwyl jy daar is?
My eerste gevoel is een van blydskap dat ons uiteindelik hier is. Elke dag het ander gevoelens en belewenisse gebring - dit hang af van die dinge wat jy sien en hoor en oor gesels gedurende die dag.

33. Aan die einde van jou vakansie, hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Depressief. Mens voel jy wil nie die plek verlaat nie. Ek wil nie die stilte verlaat nie! Terwyl ons huistoe ry het dit beter geword, maar die hartseer was steeds daar.

34. Toe jy terugkeer na jou daaglikse lewe kan jy jou gevoelens beskryf tydens die eerste paar dae?
Ek het die sterk gevoel oor die natuur en wat ek beleef het onthou, maar dan is daar ook die daaglikse dinge wat moet gebeur en jou aandag vereis…

35. En nou hoe voel jy?
Ek voel of ek more weer soontoe kan ry.

36. As jy vir 'n oomblik terug dink aan jou hoogtepunt en dit weer ervaar, het dit enige effek op jou?
Ek staan telkens stil in verwondering daaroor, want dit is dinge wat nie elke dag gebeur nie… Dit maak my rustig…

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 11 (PI-11)

Name:	Frans van Wyk
Gender:	Male
Age:	52
Occupation:	Minister
Permanent residence:	Ventersdorp
Tel no:	018 264-2307
Date and place of interview:	5 July 2004, Ventersdorp
Duration of interview:	40 minutes

1. Wat is "natuur" vir jou?
Dit is seker 80% van wat rondom my is, of miskien dalk alles wat rondom my is.

2. Wat is jou verhouding tot die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur beskryf, sou jy se dit is redelik intens, of meer oppervlakkig?)
Ek dink redelik intens.

3. Watse rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Dit is nou nie so 'n maklike vraag om te antwoord nie. Ek is altyd bewus daarvan. Die mooiheid daarvan, die geordenheid daarvan, die interafhanklikheid in die natuur. Myself en ander skepsels of wesens, plante en diere en wat ookal daar mag wees. Dit is moeilik om dit in woorde te sit. Dit hang af van waar ek is en wat ek sien en wat ek beleef.

4. Wat is jou verhouding tot jou eie natuur binne in jouself? (Is jy wat jy wil wees - in jou werk, familie, sosiale lewe en jouself?)
Ja. Ek is gelukkig en tevrede met wat ek doen en wat ek is.

5. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?
Baie dinge. Ek is nou veral geintereseerd in die sterre. Ek is nie 'n kenner van bome en plante en diere en insekte nie. As ek die sterre as deel van die natuur mag sien…Ja, verseker… Dit leer my die grootsheid van alles, en veral hoe klein ek is. As jy na die natuur kyk, alles is afhanklik van mekaar. Alles werk op mekaar in. Dit is soos 'n ketting wat inmekaar is. As jy een dingetjie verwyder en aan karring, dan karring jy sommer 'n klomp goed deurmekaar.

6. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?

Dit is nou 'n moeilike vraag. Ek het in die bosveld grootgeword, so ek kan nie sê dit was spesifiek dit of dat nie.

7. As jy terugdink, hoe beinvloed dit jou werk en lewe vandag?
Omdat ek in die bosveld grootgeword het is ek nie 'n stadsmens nie. Ek haat beton, en staal, en verkeer. Ek kan nie met sulke goed saamleef nie. Ek raak heeltemal gefrustreerd, amper depressief. Ek wil buitekant wees. Ek soek die natuur. Dit is waarom ek hier is. In 'n groot mate het dit bepaal dat ek nooit 'n stadsmens sal wees nie. Ek het vir 'n tyd daar gebly maar die mense is anders,

als is net anders van stad na natuur en platteland. Ek dink die natuur het baie daarmee te make. Mense naby aan die natuur is baie rustiger…

7. Wanneer jy in die natuur is, wat is jou grootste waarneming?
Die sterre, die bome, die plante en diere. Alles wat deur ons Skepper daar geplaas is.

8. Wat doen jy om die natuur rondom jou waar te neem?
Ek raak nie noodwendig bewus daarvan nie, ek is bewus daarvan. Ek ry baie uit die aard van my werk en kom baie op plase. Ek is 'n oplettende mens, ek sien goed raak. Ek is ingestel daarop om dit raak te sien…

9. Is daar iets in die natuur, 'n dier, plant, rivier of landskap, waarmee jy kan identifiseer?
Ek gaan nie iets kan uitsonder nie. Laat ek eers vir jou iets vertel, dan sal jy verstaan: Ek was nie baie lus aanvanklik om hiernatoe te kom nie, omdat ek nie lief is vir die hoëveld nie. Ek het nie gedink dit is mooi nie. Toe ek nou eers hier kom bly het, het ek bewus geraak van ander detail wat ek nie voorheen raakgesien het nie. Daar is nie 'n plek wat ek kan uitsonder en sê dit is vir my mooier as 'n ander plek nie. Berge is vir my mooi. Riviere is mooi. Vlaktes is mooi. Karoo is vir my mooi. Woestyn is mooi. Elkeen het iets in hom wat jou op 'n ander manier raak. As ek 'n gunsteling moet kies dan is dit die bosveld, nie omdat dit mooier is nie maar omdat dit vir my meer bekend is dalk. Dit is meer deel van my…

10. Daar is nie dalk 'n spesifieke dier waarmee jy identifiseer nie?
Dit is weer baie moeilik. Dit hang af waar jy hom sien, wanneer jy hom sien… Verskillende diere het verskillende eienskappe waarmee jy kan vereenselwig… Ja, in elkeen is daar iets wat mooi is of uitsonderlik is of wat anders is as wat jy by 'n ander dier sal kry.

11. Dink jy dat alle lewensvorme een of ander gevoel, emosie of waarneming het?
Ja, ek dink beslis so. Hulle kry ook seer.

12. Hoe sien jy die plek en die rol van die mens in die natuur?
Ek kan dit net sien soos die Bybel dit sien. Ek sien die mens as bewaarder en heerser van die natuur en ek dink ons het 'n verskriklike gemors daarvan gemaak.

13. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Daar is seker baie definisies daarvoor. In die eerste plek het dit vir my te make met my verhouding tot God, maar dit kom op verskillende maniere te vore want ek lewe in Sy skepping. Hy het die goed gemaak. Hy hou dit in stand. Hy beheer dit. Die staat van siritualiteit is in my kop maar ook in plante en diere en natuur, alhoewel dit tot 'n sekere mate vir my sekonder is. Dit gaan vir my oor my verhouding met God. Juis omdat ek met Hom 'n verhouding het, ken ek met al die ander 'n verhouding hê.

14. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Geloof loop hand aan hand met die natuur. Jou opdrag as Christen gelowige is: Beheer die natuur. Ek dink ons begin op baie plekke nou eers agter kom watse gemors ons gemaak het. Ons het die interafhanklikheid misgekyk, kettings uitmekaar geskeur. Dinge wat nooit gedoen moes word nie, byvoorbeeld hierdie wereld rondom waar ons nou is wat nooit geploeg en geplant moes word nie. Dit is grasvlaktes en beeswêreld… Die mense het nie voorheen die waarde van die omgewing besef nie… As jy byvoorbeeld kyk die name hier: "Leeufontein", "Elandskuil", "Blesbokfontein", Renosterfontein", "Hartebeesfontein", waar is al die goed heen? Ons het so gelewe dat daar niks van oorgebly het nie.

15. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur? Verduidelik…
Ja, veral as ek koud kry of warm kry. Ek is elke dag van hom bewus ja. Ek het nou die gewoonte vandat ek begin sterre kyk het: As ek buite toe gaan kyk ek op. Ek kyk na die sterre. Dit is die heel eerste ding wat ek doen as ek uitklim by 'n plek, kyk ek of ek die sterre kan sien.

16. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur wanneer jy op vakansie is of weg gaan vir 'n naweek?
Dan dalk 'n bietjie ekstra ja. Ons kampeer baie, so dan is ek nog meer bewus van die natuur. Dan is 'n mens letterlik binne in die natuur. Daar is nie mure of geboue rondom jou nie. Jy sit in jou woonwa of in jou tent en dan is jy meer bewus daarvan as op ander plekke.

17. Is die mens die mees belangrikste lewensform op aarde?
Ja ek dink so. Die aarde is vir die mens geskape soos die Bybel se, maar 'n mens kan nie lewe sonder alles wat hier is nie. Elkeen het 'n belangrike funksie. Die mens kan nie op sy eie sonder die natuur bestaan nie. Daar is 'n interafhanklikheid. Ek dink tog daar is sort van 'n rangorde, wat net ons verantwoordelikheid groter maak. Ons het verstand, ons het insig en ons moet kan besef dat alles inmekaar pas. Ek weet nie of 'n boom dit altyd besef dat hy afhanklik is van 'n voël om hom te bestuif nie. Ek twyfel dat daar daardie tipe bewustheid in 'n plant is want hy het nie verstand soos ek nie. Die feit dat die mens mees belangrik is maak dat hy des te meer verantwoordelikheid het.

18. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Ja, ek is deel van die natuur. Ek is vleis en bloed. Dit maak my deel van die natuur. Al die ander dinge maak my ook deel van die natuur. Ek wens ek het nog meer geweet van ander dinge, dan was ek nog meer deel van die natuur, maar ek weet ek is deel van die natuur.

19. Dink jy dat mense verwyderd is van die natuur?
Ja. Dit verstom my dat mense goed net nie raaksien nie. Hulle lewe met oogklappe aan en dat hulle by goed verby stap. Ons stap baie graag en ek kan vir jou my videos wys dan kan jy sien hoe ek miertjies en toktokkies afneem wat ander ouens nie raaksien nie, dan vra hulle later vir my 'maar waar het jy dit gesien?'.

20. Dink jy om verwyderd te wees van die natuur reflekteer om verwyderd te wees van God of andersom?
Ek dink nogal dit kan wees ja. Waar ek in die natuur is dan sien ek vir God ook raak. As ek ver is van die natuur dan mis ek 'n klomp goed van God… Dan is dit asof jy ver is van God af… Ja, as jy ver van die natuur af is dan sien jy God nie raak nie.

21. Dink jy dat ons, as mense van Afrika, meer verbind is tot die natuur, as mense van byvoorbeeld Europa of Amerika?
Ek dink ons hou daarvan om te dink ons is, maar ek weet nie of dit werklik so is nie. Ek kry baie keer die indruk dat daar mense op ander plekke is wat 'n baie groter waardering het en baie meer doen. Hulle is bereid on 'n myl te loop om iets te doen om die natuur… hulle het sort van 'n missie om iets te doen. Ons is so gewoond daaraan, die wonder en die vreugde daarvan, dat ons dit soms mis kyk.

22. Is daar 'n moontlikheid om weer verbind te word aan die natuur nadat 'n mens verwyderd was van die natuur? Hoe?
Ja, ek dink so. Ek dink nie dit is altyd so 'n maklike proses nie. Dit is 'n opvoedingsproses op die ou einde om mense atent te maak en bewus te maak van die interafhanklikheid. Mense dink hulle kan sonder die natuur klaar kom. Ek het byvoorbeeld met die krieket nou onlangs… Ek het elke keer gevoel ek kan skree as daardie kommentator sê hy hoop nie dit reen vandag nie. Ons het hier 'n droogte gehad. Die ouens in die stede besef dit nie. Hy koop sy kos oor 'n toonbank in 'n winkel. Hy het nie 'n idee wat gebeur, hoe maar die beeste word en as jou mielies verskroei op die land as dit nie reën nie. Dan raak hy sulke goed kwyt oor 'n bietjie vermaak soos krieket, wat seker ook belangrik is maar baie minder belangrik as om kos op die tafel te kry om te kan lewe. Dit raak daardie mense net bewus van as hulle werklik in die natuur kom en sien wat gaan hier aan. Baie mense sê hulle gaan natuur toe en dan sit hulle in 'n luukse chalet, word bedien, ek weet nie of dit iets daarmee te make het nie… Dan kan 'n mens net sowel in die stad bly of hoe…? Dit is net 'n ander plek van gemak. Mense leer nie werklik wat in die natuur aangaan nie. Natuurlik as jy met die sterre deurmekaar raak dan sien jy ons is eintlik niks, ons is belangrik maar uit die oogpunt van die heelal gesien dan is ons minder as 'n spikkeltjie, dan is ons eintlik niks…

23. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek? Waarom?
Daar is 'n paar plekke. Ek en my vrou kuier baie selde twee keer op dieselfde plek. Ons probeer juis soveel as moontlik plekke verken en ek persoonlik hou van 'n plek waar ek half afgesonder is. Ek is nie lief vir 'n gedruis op 'n plek as ek vakansie hou nie. Ek wil in vrede wees. Ek sou nie noodwendig sê ek wil alleen wees nie, maar ek kan alleen ook wees, dit sal my nie pla nie. Ons was nou so paar maande gelede na nie Weskus toe… 'n klein verwaarde plekkie waar daar nie krag of water is nie. Jy is terug op die "basics". Jy moet water aandra, jy moet water kook om te bad. Daar is nie krag nie, jy moet 'n lampie of 'n kers aansteek vir lig. Ons het uit die see gelewe. Maar ek kan dit beleef in die Wildtuin ook, of op 'n bosveldplaas of hier op 'n plaas. Dit is vir my moeilik om 'n gunsteling plek uit te sonder.

24. Wanneer jy op 'n besoek aan 'n plek in die natuur is, hoe verkies jy om te reis? (Alleen, met 'n vennoot, familie, vriende)

Dit is gewoonlik saam met my familie, maar vriende is ook net so lekker. Dit moet mense wees wat ek goed genoeg ken, wat ek voel beleef goed dieselfde as ek. Ek het een keer die "Visrivier Canyon" gaan stap saam met werksmense. Dit was naderhand so dat ek op 'n dag vir die ouens gesê het: Kry julle ry, loop, kom van my af weg, ek wil alleen wees… Eers het hulle 'n draagbare cd-speler met batterye saamgedra, dit kan ek nie hanteer nie. Ek soek die stilte. Ek het my videokamera saamgedra en al wat jy hoor is die "swee" van die telefotolens of die fokus van die lens, dit is al geluid wat jy heeltyd hoor. Dit het ek nie daar gaan soek nie… Ek het dit nie gekry voordat ek die mense weggejaag het nie. As dit mense was wat dieselfde gedink en gevoel het as ek, sou ek die stilte makliker kon kry.

25. Wat verkies jy om te doen as jy in die natuur is? (Jou gunsteling aktiwiteite in die buitelug)

Ek stap of ek kyk… Daardie twee gaan saam, en dan gaan sit en kyk ek ook. Ek jag nie graag nie. Dit is nou nie heeltemal vir my 'n tydverdryf nie. Geselskap is ook belangrik, maar dan met mense met wie jy iets kan deel wat jy gesien, beleef en ervaar het en wat dit aan jou gedoen het… Dit is somtyds lekker om dit te deel met iemand wat verstaan… Ja, maar ek kan alleen wees ook. Baie keer vat ek my boek want ek lees ook graag. Ander kere vat ek my verkyker en partykeer sal ek net sit, bloot net luister. Dit hang af van waar ek is.

26. Dink jy persoonlik dit is vir jou belangrik om gereeld die natuur te besoek?

Ja. Veral vandag, omdat ons lewe eintlik in 'n kunsmatige wereld wat ons self geskep het. Ons tuine is maar ook kunsmatig. Dit is nie goed wat self hier opgekom het omdat hulle hier moet wees nie. Hulle is hierheen gedra deur ons. Jy moet in die natuur kom om te sien hoe steek dinge inmekaar, dat hierdie ding nie by daardie ding hoort nie. Dat hierdie ding nie daardie ding vreet nie en dat sekere diere nie op hierdie plek sal voorkom nie maar op 'n ander plek want daar is vir hulle meer kos. Al daardie goed raak 'n mens van bewus as jy werklik in die natuur kom.

27. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike gebiede? Wat verkies jy? Hoekom?

Dit moet baie baie goed beplan word van wat gaan daar wees. Hoekom wil ek altyd in 'n luukse plek bly, met swembaddens ens? Dit alles maak dit onnatuurlik op die ou einde. Dit word kunsmatig. As daar 'n plekkie is waar ek my tent kan opslaan, vir my is dit ook ontwikkel… Ek verkies dit aan die rowwe kant, waar daar nie te veel ontwikkeling is nie.

28. Wat is volgens jou 'n voorbeeld van n natuurarea (wildtuin, nasionale park ens.) wat goed ontwikkel en toeganklik is?

Die Drakensberge, is een van die plekke waar ek nou al was. Dan moet 'n mens ook weer vra wat is ontwikkeling. Ek was nou in die Weskus waar dit glad nie ontwikkel is nie. Dit was toegangklik, ek kon daar kom…

29. Sou jy se dit is 'n voorbeeld van 'n plek wat onderontwikkel is of 'n verwyderde natuurarea…?
My vraag is juis… My probleem hier met die ontwikkeling storie is… Is die probleem nie baie keer, ons kom op 'n plek en met ons ontwikkeling maak ons dat dit nie meer die plek is wat dit was nie.

30. Kan jy 'n hoogtepunt beskryf van 'n vorige besoek aan die natuur?
Die Drakensberge. Dit was so twee jaar gelede. Die plekkie waar ons was was net genoeg gewees vir kamp en ek kon my eie ding doen. Ek kon in die berg gaan stap… Dit was die eerste keer wat ek werklik in die berg in was. Dit het baie daarmee te make gehad dat dit vir ons 'n nuwe ervaring was. Dit was iets anders… Daar was absoluut net die nodigste.

31. Die volgende vrae is oor 'n spesifieke uitstappie wat jy onlangs onderneem het. Watter plek het jy besoek?
Die Weskus.

32. Wanneer en vir hoe lank was die besoek?
Dit was Aprilmaand en dit was vir agt dae.

33. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
'n Maand.

34. Hoe lank voor die vertrek het jy met voorbereidings begin?
Toe ons besluit het om te gaan het ons begin om sekere dinge te doen.

35. Hoe het jy gevoel tydens hierdie tyd?
Ek dink ek het gevoel soos 'n kind, ek kon nie wag om te gaan nie.

36. Wat was jou gevoelens en emosies die dag voordat jy vertrek het?
As ek toe kon ry sou ek gery het. Ek was baie opgewonde.

37. Hoekom het jy dit so ervaar?
Ek het baie lankal oor die ding getop, om te gaan of nie te gaan nie. Weens verskeie situasies kon dit nie vroeër realiseer nie. Toe besluit ek net nou gaan ek, daar is nou geen keer nie.

38. Gedurende jou reis na jou bestemming,was daar enige spesiale gedagtes in jou kop waaroor jy gepraat het in die voertuig, of wat jy van die ander kon agterkom?
Ek en my vrou het alleen in ons voertuig gery. Met tye het ons geruil sodat ander 'n end saam ry. Ek is 'n baie nuuskierige ou so ek het baie vrae gevra vir mense wat al daar was en saam met ons gery het. Ek het gevra wat presies ek kan verwag en oor die omgewing, ens. Die atmosfeer was baie lekker… vandat ons hier weg is was dit baie aangenaam.

39. Jy het by jou bestemming aangekom. Vertel my kortliks van jou ervaringe, positief en negatief, terwyl jy daar was. As dit moontlik is, vertel ook van jou gevoelens wat jy ervaar het tydens jou onderving.

'n Negatiewe ervaring was toe ek 'n dag of twee later my kar wou skuif toe is sy battery pap…ha-ha… Verder het het ons vir drie dae mis gehad sodat jy nie jou hand voor jou oë kon sien nie, maar dit is die natuur, jy moet hom vat soos jy hom kry. Die mis het egter veroorsaak dat ons lekker met mekaar kon kuier vir daardie paar dae, wat bietjie reënerig ook was… So dit was nie net negatief nie, daar het iets positiefs ook daaruit na vore gekom… Miskien omdat ons al jare lank kamp… Ek beleef nie goed negatief nie. Dit is die natuur, jy moet daarmee maak wat jy kan op daardie stadium… Jy kan dit nie verander nie… jy kan op daardie stadium niks daaraan doen nie. Jy het waarmee jy sit en jy moet die beste daarvan maak. Die saam kuier was deel van die baie lekker op die ou end.

40. Die einde van jou vakansie het aangebreek. Hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?

Dit was nogal interessant. Ons moes vroeër as die ander ry, hulle kon bietjie langer bly. Ons moes nog 'n ander draai gaan maak en dit het nie heeltemaal uitgewerk soos ons dit wou hê nie. Dit was ook saam met ander mense. Ons was van plan om terug te gaan Drakensberge toe, maar toe het ons besef dit gaan 'n verskriklike draai wees en toe moes ons maar terugkom huis toe. Ek wou graag langer bly. As hulle vir my se ons ry more dan ry ek more weer. Dit was sleg om te weet dis nou verby, maar dit was 'n wonderlike ervaring.

41. Toe jy teruggekeer het na jou werk en roetine, kan jy die gevoel beskryf van die eerste paar dae terug?

Ons het 'n paar keer gesels daaroor, dat ons nog bietjie langer daar sou wou wees. Dit is maar 'n skok as 'n ou terugkom en by die normale roetine inval. Dit was ook tog lekker om huis toe te kom, want ons het 'n klomp diere waarna ons verlang het. Daar is altyd maar in alles iets positiefs en iets negatiefs.

42. En net 'n maand na jou besoek, hoe het jy toe gevoel?

Die hele vakansie het 'n baie groot indruk op my en my vrou gemaak. Ons is besig om dit te oorweeg om saam met ander vriende wat nog nie daar was nie weer soontoe te gaan.

43. As jy stil sit en terug dink aan jou ondervinding se hoogtepunt, het dit enige effek op jou?

Ek het ryker teruggekom. Dit is iets wat niemand van my kan weg vat nie. Ek gesels nog baie met ander mense oor wat ek gesien en beleef en ervaar het. Ek vertel hoe lekker dit was… so dit bly deel van 'n mens se lewe. In 'n gejaagde dag dink ek graag terug na daardie rustigheid.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW (PI-12)

Name:	Ursela Tittes
Gender:	Female
Age:	33
Occupation:	Lawyer
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	082 778 8674
Date and place of interview:	23 July 2004, Moreleta Park, Pretoria
Duration of interview:	35 minutes

1. What is your relation to nature? (If you have to describe your personal relationship with nature, would you say it is quite intense, or more superficial?)
It is not intense but is is between intense and superficial.

2. What role does nature play in your life?
It is were I will relax and going to places where I will experience nature… the wildlife and the quiteness.

3. What is your relation to your own nature within yourself? (Are you what you want to be – in your work, family, social life, your self?)
I'm at a point where I have not yet arrived where I would like to be. I know where I want to be but I am not there yet.

4. Does nature teach you anything?
Yes it teaches me a lot. Life is just one big cycle, you are born, you grow up mature and die, and life just goes on. End of the day, if you want to go on you have to lift yourself because no one is going to do it for you.

5. What was your very first deep contact with nature and what did that moment/event tell you?
When I was little we went on holiday and just being in nature. And when you think of nature you think of the peace and quiet that is associated with it. You just apreciate nature more if you had that connection in your early life.

6. When you are in nature, what is your greatest awareness?
Sounds, smells and just being able to listen to sounds. You are always talking … in nature you stop and listen…

7. What do you do to 'sense' nature around you? (How do you become aware of things around you?)
Listen, look at nature, feeling it and the smell of everything around you.

8. Is there something in nature, an animal, plant, river- or landscape, that you can identify with? In which way do you identify with this? What does it do to you?

A river in the sense of my mood swings that can be the same as when a river flood or when it is calm.

9. Do you think that all life forms have some form of feeling, emotion or awareness?
Everything has some form of awareness.

10. How do you see the place and the role of human beings in nature?
We should be guardians but we are like a lot of vultures taking what we can.

11. What is your understanding of spirituality?
Just finding some inner calm place within yourself and just to connect with that.

12. How do you see the relation between religion and nature?
God greated everything and that is the most important connection between religion and nature.

13. Are you aware of nature everyday? Explain.
Everyday I see my garden. When I get home and notice the things around me like the sun and stars in the night.

14. Is the human species the most important life form on earth?
No, if we die life stil goes on and it will only come to an end at the end of the earth.

15. Do you feel part of nature?
Yes. I think about the seasons… and you are part… because in a garden you must water the plants to keep them alive…

16. Do you think that people are disconnected from nature?
A lot of people are.

17. Do you think that a disconnectedness from nature reflects a disconnectedness from God, or vice versa?
I don't think so. Some religions don't include nature.

18. Do you think that we, as people of Africa, are more connected to nature than, for example people from Europe or America?
No, a lot of people come to Africa to go to nature areas just to see the natural environment. Not all have the opportunity to go to natural areas in their own countries.

19. Is there a possibility to become reconnected to nature, if one is disconnected? How?
Yes it is possible and you just need to sit and get quiet within yourself again.

20. When being on a visit to a place in nature, how do you prefer to travel? (Alone, with partner, family, friends)
Most of the time with friends.

21. What do you prefer to do when being in nature? (Your favourite outdoor activities?)
Hiking

22. Do you personally feel it is necessary for you to return to nature regularly?
Yes it just gives you that boost to go on with life.

23. What is your feeling about development in natural areas? What do you prefer? Why?
Try to keep it as close to nature with minimum impact. I prefer as little as possible.

24. What is, to you, an example of a natural area (game reserve, national park, etc.) which is well-developed and accessible?
The place in Limpopo and Kruger National Park.

25. And of natural area which is moderately developed, but still have the peace and quiet of a wilderness area?
Baviaanskloof

26. Can you describe a highlight of a previous visit to a place in nature? Why do you regard this as a highlight?
Baviaanskloof … we drove for hours and the views of everything there is just beautiful.

27. The following questions will be about a specific trip that you undertook recently. Which place did you visit?
Baviaanskloof

28. When and for how long was this visit?
Last year September and for 2 days.

29. How long before leaving for the trip did your preparations start?
Long time, a couple of weeks.

30. How did you feel during this 'preparation' phase?
Very excited.

31. What were your feelings and emotions the day before you left for the trip? Why did you feel that?
Exitement. It was just to get off from work and find out about the place that I didn't know. Every one was just excited and relaxed.

32. You arrived at your destination. Can you briefly tell me about your experiences, the positive and negatives, while being there. If possible, also recall your feelings accompanying your experiences.
Negative was that it was very far and I didn't know that. Positive was the exitement during the trip. All the beautiful things… it was great all the time.

33. So you got to the end of your holiday. How did you feel when you realized it was time to go home?
I don't get depressed… it is just to go on with life.

34. When returning to your work and daily routine, can you describe your initial feelings the first few days?
You come down a bit and I didn't really think about the trip as soon as I was back.

35. And now, just over a month after your visit, how do you feel now?
Thinking of that time… and just experience the feelings again… It helps me through the day…

36. If you sit quiet for a moment and intensely think back and in your mind experience your highlight, does it have any effect on you?
I just want to go back… and have a lot of fun… also in life…

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 13 (PI-13)

Name:	Martin Myer
Gender:	Male
Age:	45
Occupation:	Post Doctoral research fellow
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	012 318-5306
Date and place of interview:	9 March 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	60 minutes

1. How would you describe your personal relationship with nature? (What is your relation to nature?)

I had go back to where my career actually started after graduating with a BSc Honours from Wits University with Zoology as my major. Then I went for the two years in the defence force. Some of us had the privilege to end up becoming what they call professional officers because of the background we went into our areas of discipline. Mine ended up in nature conservation. I was fortunate to travel around at the state payers expense to various interesting areas of the then Northern Transvaal, in particular the Vembe base, which the National Defence Force was using as a rehabilitation centre for people that were on drugs. I think it has now become called Greeffsveld again. There is a strong cultural connection there with one of the koppie areas looking like the Voortrekker Monument and I believe that when General Smuts was up there he felt a very strong affinity to the Vembe area. In fact, he purchased a farm near the Vembe base, which has a very strong connection with the current understanding of Mapungubwe which is where I can say my story starts.

It starts with one afternoon when we were giving our usual census of the area. The Vembe base was important because it was an important confluence between the Sashe river and the Limpopo river coming down. It was the 'gate' between Botswana, then Rhodesia and the Northern Transvaal. So they were concerned about a lot of movement of infiltrating, people coming in. The person in command of the base, Sergeant Major Summers, was also a nature conservation orientated person. We were then going down in the plains area surrounding Mapungubwe hill. We were told that they had a very special significant with the blacks in the area. In fact, blacks who walked past Mapungubwe were not looking at it directly. They used to turn their heads away because they say it was a sacred site. The people I was with at that stage, said to me, lets go up into the foothill. We were allowed to go to the foothill part but not onto the plateau part. That was now in the late afternoon and I remember it was on the western side of the Mapungubwe hill. As we started climbing up the foothills, there was quite a lot of shadows, lots of Baobabs growing up along the side. Then I just got this distinctly uncomfortable experience: the hair on my back and neck started to rise. It was that experience that one has that you feel there is a presence, there is something here that is not terrible friendly; in other words, we're moving into a area that we shouldn't be moving into. I mentioned

to my colleagues this strange experience that I'm having. The one person said to me that apparently there had been a massacre in the foothills, going back probably a few hundred years to the time of various Bantu tribes coming down from the north before the brake up of, lets say, the Mapungubwe culture and from there, as I understand, it went up to Zimbabwe and down to the eastern Transvaal to Mudjadje. So there was a spin off there and they said that where we were standing was the site were there was a massacre and there were hundreds of bodies that was spread out over the veld. So that is one of the experiences I had in nature, but it didn't put me off.

A second experience that I had in that area on the Vembe base, was at the base itself. There were a number of koppies that you could climb up and if you wanted to go for a walk, not a long distance walk without telling anybody, but you could have that kind of silence, solitude type of experience. This particular koppie that we climbed up onto was a fairly regular thing you would do. Just looking out into the valley and then onto the Mapungubwe plateau. It had that nice sort of feel about it that you had this panoramic view of the Mapungubwe valley. I spend quite a lot of time up there for companionship and had the usual birds the mocking chat, the dassie, particular the dassies, and the odd klipspringer. On this one particular occasion, once again in the late afternoon, I was sitting there and I had seen some black eagle around there. (They were trying to educate the farmers not to shoot these birds because they had an impact on the thriving dassie population.) All of a sudden, out of the corner of my eye, I caught a flicker of movement… and this black eagle just appeared out of nowhere… It landed on a flat peace of rock, a couple of meters from were I was sitting. Because I was sitting quiet, it didn't see me initially. They were hunting dassies, she or he, and the mate was now circling, distracting the dassies attention. This bird was apparently taking a rest … and stopped and settled on the rock… and was now looking at me! I could see the nictitating membrane closed … and then he or she just jumped and spread their wings like a hang-glider… disappeared, and then just rose! But it was that second, almost like an eternity, that I looked into the birds eyes and the bird looked at me… and there was an awareness, a consciousness, of we were sharing …

Those two things were very significant that it had happened to me at Mapungubwe, and nowhere else in all my travels.

2. Any other significant experiences you had while being in nature?

We went once into Letaba Ranch, also helping the Military that was bordering right on the Kruger National Park. We camped out in the veld. (We prefer that rather than being in the base camp!). There were elephant moving through the Letaba Ranch and this was once again, very late in the afternoon, sort of the early evening. Where our camp was it was like a gully and then there was a ridge going up the one side. These elephants were moving up, about three or four. We could not actually see them very well, but we could hear them breaking branches. You couldn't hear them walking because of those pads on their feet… So, in other words, if you were walking at that time of night, you would probably walk slap bang into it and wouldn't even know it! It is just once again, the presence of a large animal that was in harmony with the environment. All you could pick up was the crack of a branch… it was like shadows drifting

through this late afternoon with the fading light situation. That's one of the most amazing things about being in Letaba Ranch and all the Vembe areas, namely how quickly the evening appeared. You would be in the afternoon and would be walking along the road thinking that you have enough time to get back to the base and all of a sudden it is black and it is dark, especially if there is no moon. It just comes upon you very, very quickly. Then there is the change and smell of the veld that time of the evening… suddenly everything changes: the character changes - you become aware of certain scents being released depending on the time of the year, there is a quietness before the nocturnal species starts coming out…

3. Where would you think people will have similar experiences? (less remote, or more 'developed' areas, accessible to most).

There is one place in the Kruger National Park which I would suggest to any tourist where you can have that wilderness experience: It is just south east of Olifants rest camp. It is also a kind of a panoramic view at the Olifants river, not far from the camp. (Explaining the route to get there) you look out over the river, the Lebombo mountains with the riolite pillars… If you go there in the afternoon, you get the sun setting in the west, highlighting the riolite of the mountains… That is a wilderness experience, especially if there is nobody else around and you can just sit there and be quiet … Things will happen to you … in fact, a lot happens, even if 'nothing' happens.

4. That 'nothing' can be very powerful?.

You've got to be prepared to enjoy the nothing that happens and then you start hearing sounds around you. You hear the Emerald spotted wood dove or something like that, and I mean, the sounds echo and it blends in with everything that is 'said'. Every sound fits in, it's like harmony. It's almost like a language of its own, but you've got to learn to read it and tune in to it. If you are coming from the sounds of the city, a lot of people who have that experience… initially they feel uncomfortable, the horizons are to big…

I might just share this story and I am sure my wife would not mind. She grew up on a farm in the Krugersdorp area, but she never had a real wilderness experience. The first time she had actually been to the Kruger park and we were travelling from Satara to Skukuza, all of a sudden she became aware of the fact that there were no fences, no power lines. It was a very emotional experience for her this thing of wilderness, this space which was something she hadn't experienced before and that was for her a lasting experience of Kruger, this first wilderness experience.

5. Was this her first expression of awareness of openness?

Yes, and it's the same when you travel in that northern part, which is now the North West province. I don't know if it is still like that today, I am talking about the years 1980, when, if you travel you could see the moon above the horizon and it is flat, flat, flat, and here and there the shine of it on the Limpopo river… that was really amazing.

6. Do you have a totem animal?

For me probable, it is the black eagle, definitely. I have actually seen them also at the Witwatersrand Botanical Gardens. Sometimes they also go over to the farm that belongs to my wife's family, circling on the currents. So, for me that would be a totem animal.

7. Why? Because of that first impression on the mountain?

My interest as a child wasn't only nature conservation. I think that interest grew out of my parents, particularly my dad. Every holiday we went to the Kruger Park. Very seldom down to the sea or elsewhere. So, I kind of grew up in that environment, but anything that flies interest me. Therefore, I had very strong interest in aircraft. I build model airplanes, fly them and, of course it is not difficult to move across to birds and they do it a lot better! And from a biological point of view, understand the energetics - they still got to land, they still got to feed, the long distances travelled during migration and then coming full circle to my interest in global information systems, computer technology. All that fitting together as a package. Anything that has got a map, that is of interest to me!

8. Is there anything specific that you can identify within a Black eagle?

That experience that I had with this bird - the 'jumping'. The feeling of freedom and that sort of power that you have to spread your wings and suddenly it lifts … that is wonderful! I think the freedom to see from a bird's eye view of many things. Everything that I have studied and I know that diverse interest from the small, the micro-biological to the grains of the cosmos and my interest in astronomy.

My philosophy is one of having a bird's eye view of things. I realise that being part of a team, being part of a greater whole, and being appreciative of things that have gone before, and see everything that we have accumulated, whether it is scientific or cultural in terms of being able to embrace that to some degree of respect rather than to say, well we trash everything and start anew, which sometimes seems to be the policy of modern business approaches, you loose out on a lot of things. I think that in terms of conserving biodiversity we don't really understand the half of what is growing around here in terms of its potential to solve various diseases. In fact all our drugs come from nature, come from plants.

9. Does that fascinate you?

What amazes me is this thing of ethnobotany. When you speak to the rural people they will tell you the same plant growing on a different soil in a different area has different qualities. Its almost like being interested in drinking wine and if you have that kind of a taste it is that kind of a grape! It is a product of the soil. I think it is the same thing with plants. Unless you understand this very close association for what is happening in nature and that there is something happening beyond our selves, and whether one believe in the creative force or not, it was very much like what Ronald Reagan used to say when hundreds of people came around and eat these wonderful meals that they would serve and he would say "do you believe there is a chef who made this?" of course they would say: "obviously". So he said: "Do you believe there is someone who

created nature, because it didn't happen by itself" and of course they could not argue the point, but something must have prepared all of this which we now come down and partake of, hopefully in an appreciative way.

10. Do you think of nature in the same way?

I think nature is very much the same. It is a platter: you can go out, you can abuse it, or you can appreciate it. If you abuse it, you will suffer in the long run and everybody around you does so also. You need to create an awareness and an appreciation. I come back to the experience I had at Mapungubwe. There was, apparently, also a massacre of elephant in that area. Now whether the massacre of people and the massacre of elephant have something to do with each other, I wouldn't know. But I strongly feel that there is a story there…

11. Is it a specific feeling you are talking about, a feeling everybody must have? Something you can feel, but cannot explain; you can't put your finger on that but you feel something…?

Absolutely. There is definitely something there. I have also spoken to Jane Carruthers on that, because of the experiences I've had there. I said to her is it just my imagination or does she think there is something more to it. She believes that one should take it further, because she has a fair amount of exposure to all kinds of culture history development of nature conservation areas and game parks in the country and she believes that it is not far fetched to think you could have a central unifying area that has got some real special significance. The fact that, maybe, the inspiration to build something that looks like the Voortrekker monument that comes from a hill in one of these places next to Greeffsveld that inspired some architect creatively..! What does it say to us? Again, that there is a general unified feeling that one gets about by being there. I believe I will go there again on of these days (Mapungubwe).

12. And you feel it (Mapungubwe) does have something, that it talks to you?

I also believe that one goes with the right attitude… There was another experience that was with my family. We went up to Masorini-ruins in the Kruger Park and it was also out of season before our daughter's school. We were climbing up the foothills of Masorini and we heard this massive sound; it sounded like 3 or 4 cement bags slapping against the rocks and it ended up being a mamba that has been sunning itself and it just decided it wasn't going to provoke us or that we weren't provoking it. I don't really have that fear of walking in the bush… I mean one is obviously cautious, but somehow if you don't go round injuring animals, it is unlikely that you will be attacked by another.

13. Am I right when saying, you don't harm them, but you must respect them.

That's it! You have got to feel an affinity and a sense of belonging. It is not a foreign place. In fact, if you come back to Menlyn shopping centre… the worst combination is to go out to Rietvlei nature reserve, lets say on a Sunday morning, take your picnic basket, and for some reason my wife remembered that she has forgotten something. So we quickly race back to Menlyn and that now destroys that wilderness experience we just had.

14. Are you aware of nature every day?

At home I plant as many indigenous trees as possible and enjoy the bird life as it arrives. For me, that is important. Also the late afternoons… to sit out on the stoep area and just take it all in. Suddenly there is a quietness that descents on the city as well.

15. How would you describe your spiritual experiences in nature?

We are like bonsai trees. We live in a society and work in places where you are limited. The roots of a bonsai are not allowed to expand, so the bonsai tree remains 'static'. In the spiritual sense it is the same thing: Without that wilderness experience the roots don't grow.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 14 (PI-14)

Name:	Jan Joubert
Gender:	Male
Age:	31
Occupation:	Senior Ecotourism Management student
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	Unknown
Date and place of interview:	2 March 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	20 minutes

1. Can you name a place in nature that you recently visited?
Mabalingwe Nature Reserve near Bella Bela (former Warmbaths).

2. When did you visit this area?
December 2003.

3. What does it look like? Would you say it is a developed natural place?
It is unfortunately very developed with extensive facilities and infrastructure. Although most structures blend in with the surroundings, a lot of natural area had to be sacrificed for all the buildings!

4. What were your initial feelings since you decided to go to Mabalingwe?
I was really looking forward to go. I just wanted to have a peaceful holiday with a lot of rest and try to focus clearly again. I couldn't wait for the actual day to arrive.

5. Did you experience any specific feelings on your way to this area?
Well, first I had do pack the motorcar and the caravan. While doing this I sometimes got the feeling that I did not want to go anymore. I just wished that it wasn't that much of a hassle for me to do all these preparing and packing. Eventually, when the packing was done, I felt better and said to myself that I need this holiday very much and that I am going to enjoy this very much! I consciously decided that I would rest properly and be ready for the future! Driving there was longer than I expected. This was due to a lot of holiday traffic. I found this very irritating and drivers who showed no respect for others added to my irritated feeling!

I decided that I had to relax now and started looking at the bushveld trees along the road. That helped because slowly I started to unwind, getting that 'holiday feeling'. This was going to be great!

6. And from the time you arrived there and during your stay?
I started to get peaceful after unpacking and getting our stand ready for the next few days. The holiday started! I first allowed myself to completely relax in the heated swimming pool. Here I could really unwind and calm myself.

Later the evening, when the braai fires started to form orange glows here and there in the bush, there was no stopping to the wonderful, peaceful, and solitude I found in the surroundings. I could hear nature talk… The animal voices increased as night falls… I just listen and feel…

As the days follow, I started relaxing even more. This was enhanced by the game drives and horse riding. What an experience it was for me getting close to wild animals like elephant and rhino on horseback! I had never experienced any fear, maybe because I knew that there were no lions or other dangerous predators. It was just great! I enjoyed myself so completely, the world could pass me and I wouldn't even notice or care!

At first I thought that this reserve wasn't what I needed, but I soon realised that it was everything I needed. I also expected fellow campers to be 'isolated' in their own camping spot and with their own families. Yet, we talked and socialised and even planned a horse safari together. This was an experience of care to me personally. I realised that nature is not judgemental. In nature we are all the same. People tend to drop their defences and masks. In nature you can actually be yourself. We were unknown to each other when arriving there. But soon we felt relaxed, made friends, had braais together, telling stories and really enjoying just to be!

I could smell the fresh air and it was more than welcome. I got so used to the polluted air from city life, the freshness almost hurt! Even the horse's skin felt nice under my palms. I could look deep into their brown eyes and suddenly experienced the feeling of oneness with it all. The leaves touched me and the fog clung onto my face. I felt humble realising how little time I spend to admire the things God made for us.

7. How did you feel when it was time to go home?

I didn't want to go home, but knowing the period of timelessness has passed for now, we started packing slowly, very reluctantly. I felt encouraged to focus on what lies ahead of me and to start my routine again. I felt ready for tomorrow. (The idea of sleeping in my own bed was also a bit encouraging and helped to make the leaving a little less heartbreaking!) I knew that I would miss my new friends, but also had the assurance that we would keep contact.

8. Did you experience any specific feelings while driving back home?

Knowing what I gained through these few days in nature, I drove home with new eager and courage to get back to the next day to face the routine and work!

9. How do you feel about your experience now?

When I first arrived back home, I sat at the pool in the middle of the city and I just reflected on the holiday, the things I did and experienced, the good of nature, the horse safaris and what it meant to me. It was a great experience. Every time I think back of this special experience, I get focussed and I feel ready to conquer life and the things it may throw in my way. This was the best experience of my life…

10. Will you visit the reserve again? Why?
Yes. I will revisit this place because there I learned to relax, to take part in recreation, how to look at animals and nature. It is a nice and refreshing feeling. I inhaled unpolluted air, listened to animals, birds, nature… I now always feel fresh and it is just great, almost unexplainable…

11. What, according to you, is the single most important threat to world ecology?
Humans. Everyone needs to make money and in the process, the ecology is affected.

12. Do you think human beings, in general, are disconnected in some way from nature?
Yes. Everything is a chase for money and no one seems to care what negative effects this have on nature. People only perhaps get to nature during annual holidays, instead of spending time in nature and teach children how to appreciate nature. Everyday life in the cities is pressured for time and money, and then, if you don't have the money, you are not even able to get into nature for a holiday!

13. How do you think, people cope with stress?
Addictions. Some people will just eat and eat. Others will smoke and/or drink to "get away" from stress of life. Most people don't cope with stress at all. Depression and anxiety are results of this and it plays a sickening role in the lives of people. People who try to cope sit in parks (during lunch hours), they read or relax in some way on their own. Religious activities bring some kind of stress release. Some might go on holiday to get away from that which causes stress.

14. How do you cope with your stress?
I like to sleep and relax completely in the process. I also just sit outside my house and watch the birds and insects in the trees. Sometimes, I like to social with friends – it also releases stress. It depends on how I feel, or how high the stress levels are: sometimes I just drive around, or visit a restaurant, drink something or sometimes I do a physical activity like playing tennis.

15. What is the impact of nature on people in general, according to your view?
It is a stress releaser. It also gives a sense of peacefulness. It has a healing – physical and emotional – effect. Some people may have a religious experience and feel closer to his/her Creator. In general, I think it relaxes and gives off a freshness in everyone's life.

16. What impact does nature have on you personally?
It definitely has a relaxing influence on me. It is a refreshment in my life. It also impacts me emotionally. There is a sense of awe for God (religiously). I learn things from nature that I can apply in my life.

17. Describe any single special personal nature experience you ever had.
I was walking in the bush listening to the sounds of birds and animals. I was alone and nature talked to me. While walking I came close to kudu, who just

watched me as I watched them. They slowly turned and calmly walked away, knowing that I was of no danger to them. It was a great, awesome, special experience that I will always remember.

18. Why was this special?
They were so close, I could almost touch them. I experienced something so awesome and special, so different from everyday experiences. It was something I had in nature that day between myself and the animals that I cannot explain.

19. With what in nature can you identify? Why?
I often feel like the wind… You can see the effects of the wind, but you cannot necessarily see the wind. Sometimes it feels like I am blown by the wind in all different directions, not knowing where I am going. I do know, however, that I have a specific destiny and plan for my life and even though the wind may blow me around, I will reach my destiny. I am doing everything without people seeing me, but hopefully some day I will see the effects of these doings. Sometimes I am a soft breeze. At other times I can be a stronger wind. At times I love change and sometimes I am happy to be consistent in the way I live my life. I am free and nothing can stop me. I am the wind upon which eagles fly on…

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 15 (PI-15)

Name:	Ronél Bornman
Gender:	Female
Age:	36
Occupation:	Dentist
Permanent residence:	East London
Tel no:	082 928 9545
Date and place of interview:	20 January 2002, Telephone interview
Duration of interview:	20 minutes

1. What is your favourite place to visit?
A very secluded place in the southern part of the Mocambique coast. I actually don't want to say more. It is our secret escape. But I will say it softly – Pangane. We go here annually and our last visit lasted 45 days! (Sept – Okt 2001). We took our daughter (grade 5) with us. She missed school, but gained a lot while being out there on the sea and at the beach with us. She learned far more than she would ever learn in a class room!

2. Where did you stay?
We always camp. Camping feels like real holiday. There is no other accommodation available anyway.

3. What do you do while being there?
My husband is fanatic about fishing, so we fish much of the time. We are also mad about sailing. We have our own yacht and spend many days on the water. We often sail from island to island and spend a few days on an island. That is absolute marvellous. Here we are totally isolated from anyone. We regard it almost as our private island! We also do a lot of snorkelling and scuba diving. I am a keen amateur photographer and there are more than I can ever photograph! Sometimes we feel like just being peaceful. Then we will do some rowing in the quiet waters. When we feel like being adventurous, we will explore the area in the 4 x 4. We sometimes just walk on the island, explore the marshes, or just be quiet and enjoy whatever there is to marvel at.

4. What makes this place so special to you?
In the first place, there are very few other people. Those who go through all the trouble to get there, are people who really want to be there for the peace and quiet and nature. So, we are sort of family…

Then, of course, nature is something very special. Especially ocean life is not yet influenced by people.

We also love the idea of being out of contact with modern conveniences. We don't hear or see a thing of what is going on in the world while being out there. We don't have any radio, newspaper or television. Thank goodness, for that! We live totally secluded and in solitude there. Wish it could be like that forever!

The climate is absolutely wonderful. It is usually hot, the sea water is warm, which makes diving wonderful, and there is HUGE fish…!

Obviously we come here for the sea and the sea creatures, but you still find 'wild' elephants and lions here. The live in the bush and are seldom seen. We did, however, once saw wild dogs. This is not a fenced-off game park or nature reserve; it is just a pure natural area. The wild animals roam freely and even sometimes are spotted in the little villages. People are sometimes killed in the villages by wild animals.

5. During your last visit, can you recall any special experiences?

We realised that everything we do in society and so-called civilisation, is not really worth anything. Here, we had time to think, to read, to converse and to be quiet. We listened… We got closer to each other as a family and got more spiritually and sensually attuned. As I have mentioned, there is no radio or TV to occupy your mind with trivialities.

6. Are you generally satisfied with the information given about the area, the accessibility and other 'tourists' aspects of the place?

Yes! We prefer that NO information, maps, route indication of whatever kind, being made available. People will flock to the place and then it will be ruined. No development should be allowed. It will damage the area and the atmosphere of the place! People are not yet a problem. The few of us who go there are 'similar' with regards to our values of nature. Litter is no problem either. The local people are very poor and everything is recycled in some way. We must prevent development of any kind. This pristine area is unique in every aspect.

7. Any special encounters with nature that had a lasting impression on you?

Everything that we experienced had a lasting impression! However, we spent hours on and under the water. We got to know some of the fishes and the dolphins that we encountered day after day. I cannot describe the feeling that goes through you while looking into the eyes of a dolphin!

8. Did you have any negative experience or something that had a negative influence on your experience in general?

No. The only negative aspect was when we left. We experienced the fear and anxiety of finding a hotel here when we return on our next visit!

9. Except for that, do you have any other concerns about the area?

Yes. The local people are increasing. They create more small agricultural areas. More people and more farming areas result in more destruction of natural bush, resulting in fewer animals… less tranquillity and pristine nature. Nothing is done about that. The government sees it as progress, irrespective of the fact that the local people will suffer more in the end, because the land there s not suitable for crop farming. It is far to wet and sandy for the maize they try to grow.

Another concern is the improvement of roads leading to and in Mocambique. Better roads will open up remote areas for people – tourists. That scares me. If I look at this place five years from now on… it has potential to be totally ruined in the name of tourism.

10. What is nature to you?

No people or man-made constructions, plants and animals should benefit, silence, where I can be alone, have spiritual experiences. Nature is oxygen to me. I die slowly in the city.

11. What is the meaning of all this to personally?

We (husband and I) are both qualified professionals with a more than generous monthly income. We owned a double-storey mansion on a golf estate where we merely slept, due to our long, exhausting hours earning our income. These, to us, were the characteristics of a civilized life! Until we decided to explore the unknown wilderness… We started to visit the so-called 'primitive' and did a camping trip to a very secluded spot, undeveloped, uninhabited and unknown on the Mozambique coast. We found true existence …

We have since sold the mansion and live (in the same town) in a small cabin settled in the bush, close to the lagoon and ocean. We decided to live a life that makes us happy from inside, close and connected to that what is important to us.

We actually live a hermit crab life and is extremely relieved when we can get out of town and make our way to the beach. I cannot imagine living a life in the city (or even inland) again. We miss the sea when we have to skip a day there. We would have left our jobs long ago and went to the wilderness permanently if it wasn't for responsibilities.

In the meantime, we try to maintain some form of balance. To maintain sanity, we must, however, from time to time, get away to our 'secret place'. Here we realize that the things we do in 'civilized society' does not really matter. Here we have time to think, read, converse and to be still … to listen. We get closer to each other as family, are more spiritually and sensually attuned. No radio, television or people to 'keep one busy'… For the first time, we feel comfortable with life.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 16 (PI-16)

Name:	Justin Goddard
Gender:	Male
Age:	22
Occupation:	Senior Ecotourism Mangement student
Permanent residence:	Johannesburg
Tel no:	Unknown
Date and place of interview:	2 March 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	20 minutes

1. Can you name a place in nature that you recently visited?
Kruger National Park

2. When did you visit the reserve?
April 2001

3. Would you say it is a developed natural place?
Yes. There is a good road network. The degree of development varies from rest camp to rest camp. Overall, very developed.

4. What were your initial feelings since you decided to go to the KNP?
I looked forward and was excited.

5. Can you describe your holiday and all the feelings and experiences you had?
The two week stay in the KNP had a calming and stress relieving effect on me. It made me forget about the worries and issues I left behind in the city. Some of the animals I spotted were animals I had never seen before, like the leopard we viewed in a tree at a distance. This is special to me, because this is new! During the nights, the times of total solitude, I listened to lions calling for mates right near the fence and I also heard hyenas at close proximity to the fence of the camp.

The second week of the trip was my most enjoyable. We went on night drives and hikes and we witnessed the nocturnal life of the park of which I have a real interest for. During the hike we had spotted baboons that were alarmed by a snake and witnessed their humorous antics as they tried to escape from it. I also experienced a bushveld sunset from a fairly high rocky outcrop. I just sat in awe… In the distance I could hear and see elephant and hyenas.

On the night drive we also saw hyena and witnessed one that seemed to have been moulded by a larger predator, perhaps a lion. This made me feel a little sad and sorry for the animal, by I realised that nature will go its way. This also made me think about my life and the hurts that healed eventually. I also think

about hurts that will probably come my way in future. Then I will think back and remember this hyena, and his wounds that will also heal with time…

The highlight, however, was the hunt we experience on the night drive. We could see antelope (unsure of species) approximately 150m ahead of us. They seemed restful at first but then became nervous of something in a large clump of grass. Then, unexpectedly, a lioness bolted out from between the grass and almost immediately overpowered a younger member of the herd. The animal did not put up much of a fight. The lioness was soon joined by other pride members and they too went in pursuit of the rest of the herd. We ended our visit to the KNP by that intense note and I will never forget it.

6. Does this highlight have a specific meaning to you?
It perhaps teaches me about the vulnerability of life. Anything can happen anytime. Therefore, one always has to be aware of your surroundings and what waits behind a situation…

7. Will you visit the reserve again? Why?
Yes, definitely! This is one true way of forgetting about the worries of the city and learn more about yourself!

8. What, according to you, is the single most important threat to world ecology?
Humans, because they are irresponsible and ecologically uneducated.

9. Do you think human beings, in general, are disconnected in some way from nature?
Yes. People do not take time to realise nature's importance and its full potential. Most people live in cities and do not find the time in a busy modern life-style to just spend some time observing the natural processes and structures that take place in the natural environment.

10. How do you think, people cope with stress?
I don't think people cope sufficiently in everyday life when it comes to suppressing stress because one can sense that stress builds up to large extents in society. The amount of time spend in nature is insufficient and far less than time people spend in stressful situations in cities.

11. How do you cope with your stress?
I cope by taking time out of my day to sit outside and just listen and observe the small processes of nature that everyone else does not take note of. I do this on a regular basis.

12. What is the impact of nature on people in general, according to your view?
In general people neglect the impact nature has on them. However, without it, no one could survive. Nature has an advantageous effect on people, even on people who are not educated about it or realise it.

13. What impact does nature have on you personally?
Nature has a calming effect on me and it also eases my stress levels from being in a city. Nature helps me to realise that the human race should guard nature because we are totally dependent on it – just like all other creatures.

14. Describe any single special personal nature experience you ever had.
It was in the Namib desert. I could not believe that such a hostile and seemingly barren area could support such a wonderful variety of animals, insects and plant life!

15. Why was this special?
I thought of this area as an uninhabited wasteland. To my amazement it is actually a living Eden of totally unique and special creatures who are all adapted to one specific area and found nowhere else on earth. The uniqueness of the area did something to me. I cannot say what. There are no words to describe that humbling feeling.

16. With what in nature can you identify? Why?
I can identify with a clear night sky. Just as the stars and galaxies out there are complex and infinite and ever changing, so too are the choices and paths in life that I will decide to take as I start my life here on earth. The night sky is overwhelming to me since I am infinitely smaller than what the heavens hold. Yet, the choices and decisions that I make are just as infinitely large in my context.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 17 (PI-17)

Name:	Yvonne Engelbrecht
Gender:	Female
Age:	38
Occupation:	Personal Assistant
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Contact address:	Sunland 60, 4242 Reitz street, Sunnyside
Date and place of interview:	9 July 2004, Arcadia, Pretoria
Duration of interview:	35 minutes

1. Wat is die natuur vir jou?
Ontvlugting van alle daagse lewe.

2. Wat is jou verhouding met die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur moet beskryf, sal jy sê dit is intens of net oppervlakkig?)
Die natuur is 'n baie intense ervaring vir my. Ek voel nader aan my Skepper as ek in die natuur is.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Dit gee my meer waardering vir die lewe en vir wat ek het.

4. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?
Dit maak my rustig

5. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur? Wat het die gebeurtenis vir jou beteken? Hoe beinvloed hierdie gebeure jou werk en lewe vandag?
Ek was in 'n woud in die Yosemite Park in Amerika met die grootste Redwood bome in die hele wêreld. Ek het net besef hoe klein die mens werklik teenoor die skeppingswondere van God is. Ek probeer altyd nederig teenoor ander mense wees.

6. Wanneer jy in die natuur is waarvan word jy bewus?
Die lekker klam lug, die reuk van ou klam blare en tot 'n mate voel ek half veilig daar.

7. Wat doen jy om van die natuur rondom jou bewus te raak?
Ek konsentreer op elke klein dingetjie en ek hou daarvan om te teken wat ek sien. Reuk, oë en die gevoel van waar jy is.

8. Is daar iets in die natuur, 'n dier, plant, rivier of landskap wat jy mee kan identifiseer? Op watter manier identifiseer jy met hiermee? Wat beteken dit vir jou?
Hoë bome, berge en klein blommetjies. Ek sien dit as 'n vorm van perfeksionisme en ek wil altyd self verbeter in alle opsigte.

9. Hoe sien jy die plek en rol van mense in die natuur?
Mense verwoes alles wat hulle in die hande kry al is hulle intensies ook hoe goed.

10. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Of jy in 'n Almagtige glo wat sulke wonderlike skeppingswerke kan doen.

11. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Die skepping is vir ons gemaak om te geniet.

12. Is jy bewus van die natuur elke dag? Verduidelik?
Dit hang af van waar ek is. Vir myself is dit die wonderlikste ding om enige lewende dingetjie om my te hê. By die huis is dit my voëltjies en plante en blomme om my.

13. Is die mens die mees belangrikste vorm van lewe op aarde?
Ja. God het ons so geskape.

14. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Beslis.

15. Dink jy mense is verbind met die natuur?
Ja.

16. Dink jy dat wanneer mense nie verbind is met die natuur dat hulle ook nie verbind is met God nie? Of omgekeerd?
Dit hang af van persoon tot persoon. Ek persoonlik voel baie nader aan my Skepper in die natuur.

17. Dink jy dat ons as mense van Afrika, is meer verbind met die natuur as wat mense van Europa of Amerika is?
Ja die meerderheid leef baie primitief en is soms baie blootgestel.

18. Wanneer jy 'n area besoek, hoe verkies jy om te reis? (alleen, saam met familie, vriende)
Alleen want ek het meer tyd vir myself.

19. Wat verkies jy om te doen wanneer jy in die natuur is? (jou gunsteling buite aktiwiteit)
Ek is baie lief vir stap.

20. Voel jy persoonlik dit is nodig om op 'n gereelde basis na die natuur terug te keer? Hoekom?
Ja, ek moet net weer 'n bietjie mens gaan word.

21. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike areas? Wat verkies jy? Hoekom?
Ek is nie tengunste daarvan nie en ek verkies dat die mensdom nie daaraan sal raak nie. Alles word versteur wanneer die mens inmeng.

22. Wat is vir jou 'n voorbeeld van 'n natuurlike area wat baie ontwikkel en toeganklik is?
St Lucia

23. 'n Voorbeeld van 'n area wat matig ontwikkel is maar nog steeds die stilte van 'n wildernis area het?
Nature's Valley

24. 'n Voorbeeeld van 'n area met min of geen ontwikkeling?
Maroela, buite Warmbad

25. Kan jy 'n hoogtepunt beskryf van 'n vorige besoek aan 'n plek in die natuur?
Toe ek 'n wandelpad gaan stap het en rooi paddastoele gesien het. Dit was in die Kaap op die Otter wandelpad. Ek het nooit geweet daar bestaan werklik rooi paddastoele met wit kolle soos in die feëverhale nie.

26. Die volgende vrae sal wees oor 'n spesifieke vakansie /reis wat jy onlangs op was: Watter plek het jy besoek? Vir hoe lank was die besoek? Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
Villa Spa, 2 weke, 2 maande

27. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy met voorberiedings begin?
1 week

28. Wat was jou gevoel tydens die voorbereidings?
Baie opgewonde.

29. Wat was jou gevoel en emosies die dag voor jy vertrek het?
Nog meer opgewonde.

30. Gedurende die reis na die bestemming, was daar enige iets spesiaal wat jy aan gedink het? Wat julle oor gepraat het in die voertuig, of enige gevoel van die ander persone?
Gehoop ons kom veilig anderkant uit. Ek moes sorg dat my voëltjies genoeg water en kos kry en ek het verder rustig oor allerhande dinge gesels met my maat.

31. Jy kom by jou bestemming. Kan jy kortliks vir my jou ervaring, positief en negatief beskryf terwyl jy daar is?
Ek is altyd 'n bietjie gespanne aan die begin want jy moet staanplek kry vir die karavaan en die tent opslaan - wat jy lanklaas gedoen het. Wanneer dit eers gedoen is, ontspan ek en my man totaal en al.

32. Aan die einde van jou vakansie, hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Ek wou glad nie huis toe gaan nie.

33. Terwyl jy huis toe ry was die gevoelens nog steeds dieselfde of het jou emosies verander?

‘n Mens berus maar daarby, maar voel maar ‘n bietjie ‘af’. Vir my is dit darem altyd lekker om weer by my huis ook te wees. Dus is dit hartseer om weg te gaan van die vakansieplek af, maar goed om weer terug te wees by die huis.

34. Toe jy terugkeer na jou daaglikse lewe kan jy jou gevoelens beskryf tydens die eerste paar dae?
Aanvanklik moeilik om weer terug te kom, maar dan begin ek weer kans sien vir alles.

35. En nou hoe voel jy?
Ek is maar weer waar ek was. Gespanne en terug in die “rat race to who knows where”. Ek verlang om weer terug te gaan as ek aan die vakansie dink.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 18 (PI-18)

Name:	Noëla Wessels
Gender:	Female
Age:	52
Occupation:	Avon Representative
Permanent residence:	Ventersdorp
Tel no:	083 050 6547
Date and place of interview:	25 June 2004, Ventersdorp
Duration of interview:	35 minutes

1. Wat is natuur vir jou?
Natuurlike gebiede, plante en diere, die oorspronklike skepping van God.

2. Wat is jou verhouding tot die natuur?
Ek bly op 'n plattelandse dorpie waar 'n mens relatief gereeld op 'n plaas iewers uitkom en omring voel deur die natuur. Die natuur het 'n baie intense uitwerking op my. Ek word rustig en stil binne-in myself wanneer ek in die natuur is.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
As ek werklik in die ongerepte natuur kom, dan maak dit my rustig en kalm. Dit laat my dink aan dinge wat ek normaalweg nie tyd het om oor te dink nie. Dit is vir my belangrik om van tyd tot weg te kom van alles af en tyd in die stilte van die natuur deur te bring.

4. Wat is jou verhouding tot jou eie natuur binne in jouself? (Is jy wat jy wil wees – in jou werk, jou familie, sosiale lewe en jouself?)
Nee, ek is nie presies waar ek nou in die lewe sou wou wees nie. Ek kan nie altyd myself wees nie maar ek skryf dit toe aan die gejaagdheid van die lewe, die druk om altyd alles klaar te maak. Daar is nie altyd tyd om jou werklike passie in die lewe uit te leef nie, en daar kom dinge op jou pad wat jy nie altyd voor beplan het nie.

5. Leer die natuur vir jou enige iets?
Ja, 'n mens kan definitief iets by die natuur leer. Die natuur leer jou om suiwer en opreg te wees. Wat jy sien is wat jy kry. Elke plant en elke dier het sy plekkie en is afhanklik van mekaar.

6. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?
Sjoe, ek weet nie. As ek so terug dink, dan dink ek aan my kinderjare, baie lank terug. My ouma en oupa het op 'n plaas gebly in die outydse Rhodesië en ek onthou hoe ons altyd vreeslik uitgesien na die vakansies op die plaas. Daar was groot natuurlike damme en groot vrugteboorde. Ons het baie maal in die vrugteboorde gestap om vars lemoene en naartjies te pluk, en ons het van tyd tot tyd klein bokkies gesien. Ek onthou hoe ek al 'n lemoenskil afgeskil en vir die bokkie gegooi het, en dan proe hy so half skrikkerig daaraan. Ek onthou van die een groot dam spesifiek, waar daar baie babers in was, wat my boeties altyd

gevang het. Jy kon die krieke en al die veldgeluide hoor, selfs die springkane wat so teen die gras vasvlieg. Dit was die goeie ou dae.

7. So daar was nie ‘n spesifieke gebeurtenis nie, dit was maar van kleins af die tyd op die plaas deurgebring…?
Ja, die tyd op die plaas. Die stilligheid, die rustigheid daar, die natuur, die mooiheid van alles. Ek het van kleins af ‘n liefde vir diere ontwikkel. Ek het ook ‘n paar jaar, so vyf of ses jaar, by die dierehospitaal gaan werk, wat vir my baie leersaam en interessant was.

8. Wat het daardie tye op die plaas vir jou beteken?
Dit het ‘n deel van my bewus gemaak van alles om my. Die skepping wat God vir ons daar neergesit het. Dit is net of ek dinge meer intens waargeneem en waardeer het.

9. As jy terug dink, benvloed dit enigsins jou werk en jou lewe vandag?
Soos ek nou-nou gesê het, ek het vroeer by ‘n dierehospitaal gewerk, en alhoewel ek nou nie meer vandag direk met die diere of die natuur werk nie, probeer ek nog steeds tyd maak om in die natuur uit te kom.

10. Wanneer jy in die natuur is, wat is jou grootse waarneming?
As ek in die natuur is, dan neem ek waar dat ek rustiger is, dat ek stiller in myself is. Ek sien en hoor dan dinge wat ek normaalweg nie sien en hoor nie.

11. Wat doen jy om die natuur rondom jou waar te neem?
Ek stap graag in die tuin rond, of ek sal ‘n draai gaan ry en bietjie rondkyk. Dit is ook lekker om die voëltjies in die tuin te hoor fluit, of selfs om na wind en reën te luister.

12. Is daar enige iets in die natuur, ‘n dier, plant, rivier of landskap, waarmee jy kan identifiseer?
Ja, daar is eintlik meer as een ding maar iets soos ‘n landskap met ‘n sonsondergang was nog altyd vir my baie mooi. Die fantastiese kleure wat daarby betrokke is. Dit is of die dag stil word en of jy jou dag met vrede kan afsluit. As jy daai fantastiese prentjie aanskou dan raak jy in jouself ook stil en besef die wonder van God se skepping.

13. Op watter manier identifiseer jy hiermee?
Vir my is elke sonsondergang absoluut perfek. Die perfekte kleure van die sonsondergang wat saamsmelt, is vir my simbolies van myself. Ek sien myself as ‘n perfeksionis in my werk. Die mooi kleure van die sonsondergang laat my dink aan myself wat lief is om mooi aan te trek en kreatief te wees in my tuin, en in my huis, en dinge mooi te laat lyk.

14. Dink jy dat alle lewensvorme een of ander gevoel, emosie of waarneming het?
Ja, sover as wat dit diere aan betref, hulle het emosies en gevoelens Alhoewel plante nie emosies het nie, glo ek ook hulle is gesonder met baie aandag en sorg.

15. Hoe sien jy die plek en rol van die mens in die natuur?
Ek dink die rol van die mens is baie belangrik om die natuur te bewaar en te beskerm, veral vandag met die nimmereindigende ontwikkeling wat plaasvind.

16. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Tyd met my Skepper, my Heilige Gees en om in verbintenis met my "inner-self" te wees.

17. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Ek weet net in my geval is daar 'n verhouding tussen geloof en natuur. Wanneer ek in die natuur is, dan voel ek definitief die teenwoordigheid van God makliker aan.

18. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur?
Nee, nie soos ek dit regtig sou wou gehad het nie. Uit die aard van my werk is ek in en uit, spandeer baie tyd in die motor, en beweeg tussen mense. Ek sien net so in die verbygaan 'n boom en 'n voël raak, maar ek het nie tyd om stil te hou en dit regtig te waardeer nie.

19. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur wanneer jy op vakansie is of weggaan vir 'n naweek?
Ja, ek is dan definitief meer bewus daarvan, want dan het ek die tyd om rustig te sit en te kyk en te luister wat om my aangaan.

20. Is die mens die belangrikste lewensvorm op aarde?
Ek sou sê ja, ek glo so. Die mens het tog daardie ekstra verstand en verantwoordelikheid gekry, alhoewel hy dit gereeld misbruik, maar God het hom geskape as heerser oor die natuur.

21. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Ja, veral as ek in die natuur is, dan voel ek absoluut deel van die natuur.

22. Dink jy dat mense verwyderd is van die natuur?
Ek glo dat baie van die stadsmense baie verwyderd is van die natuur, maar dit is omdat hulle nie die pragtige natuur regtig raak sien nie. Daar is te veel geboue en te min tyd, dit is te veel van 'n "rat-race".

23. As jy na jouself kyk met jou werk, dink jy nie jy is self ook 'n bietjie verwyderd van die natuur nie?
Ja, ek besef met my tipe werk wat ek doen raak ek ook verwyderd van die natuur. Ek jaag van die een mens na die ander mens, en ek probeer verkope doen. En ek kry nie tyd om stil te staan en alles rondom my waar te neem en te geniet nie. Ek bly in 'n plattelandse dorpie en dit reeds moeilik, so ek dink die mense in die stede is nog erger verwyderd van die natuur.

24. Dink jy om verwyderd te wees van die natuur reflekteer om verwyderd te wees van God of andersom?
Ek glo dat God en die natuur 'n verband het. Dit is vir my een. Die natuur is Sy skepping. Jy moet dit kan raaksien. Jy moet dit kan waardeer.

25. Dink jy dat ons, as mense van Afrika, meer verbind is tot die natuur, as mense van byvoorbeeld Europa of Amerika?
Nee, ek glo nie noodwendig so nie. Ek dink dit hang van mens tot mens af. Miskien is dit moeiliker vir mense in Amerika en daai lande, in die groot stede, wat dalk ver van mooi natuurlike gebiede woon. Ek dink wel jy kan ‘n besigheidsmens hê wat ‘n honderd maatskappye onder hom het, maar in homself het hy daai “urge”om die natuur te sien en dan maak hy tyd vir die natuur.

26. Is daar ‘n moontlikheid om weer verbind te word aan die natuur nadat ‘n mens verwyderd was van die natuur? En as jy so dink, hoe sal jy dit doen?
Ek dink ‘n mens moet net eenvoudig tyd maak daarvoor. Al is dit dan nou net weggaan vir ‘n naweek of selfs vir ‘n dag iewers heen ry. Jy moet spesifiek tyd maak, al is dit op ‘n Sondagmiddag. Jy hoef nie na ‘n vakansieplek toe te gaan nie, gaan ry op ‘n mooi plek rond. Gaan ry net in die veld uit, en sien weer bome, grasse, klippe en plante raak. Maak tyd daarvoor. Dit is al hoe ‘n mens dit weer kan terugbring na jou toe. As ‘n mens byvoorbeeld die heeltyd in ‘n stad woon of selfs ons wat nou hier in ‘n klein dorpie woon, maak dit jou plan om eendag as jy aftree, na ‘n plek toe te gaan nader aan die natuur. Maak dit dan jou aftreeplekkie. Kom dan nader aan jou natuur en aan jou Skepper.

27. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek?
Ek sou sê die Bosveld. Alhoewel die see ook vir my baie mooi is. My gunsteling bly die Bosveld met sy plante, die diere, geluide, die sterre, die lug wat so oop is ens.

28. Wanneer jy op besoek na ‘n plek in die natuur is, hoe verkies jy om te reis? Alleen, met ‘n metgesel familielede of vriende?
Ek weet nie, baie keer is dit lekker as ek en ‘n metgesel gaan, want dit is vir my meer intens om alles met een mens te deel. Ek geniet dit ook om met my familie bietjie weg te gaan. Ek is egter ook lief daarvoor om soms alleen in die natuur te wees. Sodra dit ‘n groep mense bymekaar is, dan raak dit vir my meer na ‘n kuierstorie en ‘n kosmaakstorie. Ek raak nie dan so stil in myself soos wat ek graag wil wees in die natuur nie.

29. Wat verkies jy om te doen as jy in die natuur is? (Gunsteling aktiwiteit in die buitelug?)
Ek ry dan graag rond en kyk diere of ek stap. Ek kyk na die natuur. Ek kyk of ek diere sien. Ek maak die motor se venster oop, en ek luister na die geluide. Die suising van die wind, die voëltjies en die geritsel van die gras. Ek is ook lief vir lees as ek so rustig in die buitelig is.

30. Dink jy persoonlik dit is vir jou belangrik om gereeld die natuur te besoek?
Ja ek dink dit is belangrik…Hoekom moet jy van tyd tot tyd die natuur besoek?
Omdat dit my persoonlik nader aan my Skepper bring en rustigheid en perspektief gee.

31. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike gebiede?
Ek dink dit hang af waar jy jou bevind. Byvoorbeeld in ons nasionale parke, moet daar 'n mate van ontwikkeling wees om die natuur meer toeganklik te maak vir ons mense. Ontwikkeling op onversteurde natuurlike gebiede moet beperk word.

32. Wat verkies jy persoonlik?
'n Plek soos byvoorbeeld Pilanesberg, sal ek die basiese geriewe verkies. Alhoewel op verafgeleë plekke waar daar nog nie ontwikkeling is nie, sou ek verkies dat dit so ongerep bly. Al is ek in die natuur is dit tog lekker om saans 'n lekker warm stort te neem en dan in 'n lekker gerieflike bed in te kruip en 'n goeie nagrus te geniet. Ek het ook al gaan kamp by plekke waar daar geen krag en geen lopende water is nie. Dit hang af van die tyd wat 'n mens daar moet deurbring.

33. Wanneer jy 'n kort tydjie daar deurbring dan pla dit jou nie?
Nee, dan pla dit my nie regtig nie. Dan sal ek daai ongerief verduur, want die natuur maak op daarvoor. As ek vir 'n langer tydperk gaan dan wil ek dit meer in gemak doen.

34. Wat is volgens jou 'n voorbeeld van 'n natuurarea, soos 'n wildtuin of so-aan, wat goed ontwikkel en toeganklik is?
Krugerwildtuin of Pilanesberg waar ek nou onlangs was.

35. En van 'n natuurarea wat half ontwikkel is, maar steeds die rus en vrede van die wildernis het?
Ons het hier in ons eie dorpie, of net buitekant ons dorpie, 'n plekkie met die naam van Naleloudi Lodge, en ek sou sê dit is matig ontwikkel maar het nogsteeds die rustigheid, weg van alles af.

36. Wat is vir jou 'n voorbeeld van 'n onder ontwikkelde of 'n verwyderde natuurarea?
Ons was al vroeër jare daar op die Weskus, op 'n kampterrein wat sonder water of krag was. Ek beskou dit nie rerig as 'n area wat ver verwyderd is van menslike invloed nie.

37. Kan jy 'n hoogtepunt beskryf van 'n vorige besoek aan die natuur?
So paar jaar gelede, dit is maklik tien jaar gelede, was ek en my man ook op die Weskus, toe het ons 'n plekkie met die naam van Aurora besoek. Ons het uitgery teen die berg en dit was vir my pragtig daar.

38. Hoekom was dit vir jou 'n hoogtepunt?
Ek het besef langs die pad, soos wat ons teen die berg opgery het, dit is werklik fantasties mooi. Toe ek uit die motor uit klim, en ek kyk so af, het die trane onmiddelik begin vloei. Dit was 'n grootsheid, iets wat binne in my gebeur het. Dit was of God 'n skildery so voor my neergesit het en dit was net asemrowend. Ek kan dit nie maklik aan iemand beskryf nie.

Die volgende paar vrae is oor 'n spesifieke uitstappie wat jy onlangs onderneem het:
39. Watter plek het jy besoek?

Pilanesberg.

40. Wanneer was dit en vir hoe lank was die besoek?
Dit was omtrent so ‘n maand gelede en dit was vir ‘n langnaweek, so drie dae.

41. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
So drie weke voor dit het ons besluit om te gaan kamp met die karavaan.

42. Hoe lank voor die vertrek het jy met jou voorbereidings begin?
Ek het so dag voor die tyd begin want dit was vir ‘n kort tydperkie.

43. Hoe het jy gevoel tydens hierdie voorbereidingsfase?
Dit was ‘n lekker opwindende gevoel. Ek het uitgesien daarna om ‘n breek te vat en weg te kom van die gewoel van elke dag en net rustig in die natuur te gaan ontspan.

44. Vertel my van die opset. Hoeveel mense, karre ens. was ingesluit by jou beplanning?
Ons was ses grootmense met twee kinders. Die een paartjie het gery met ‘n 4x4, ek en my man was weg met ‘n bakkie en die ander twee persone met hulle twee kinders is met ‘n gewone motor weg.

45. Wat was jou gevoelens en emosies die dag voordat jy vertrek het?
Opgewonde. Bly. Uitgesien daarna om weg te kom.

46. Hoekom het jy dit ervaar?
Ek dink dit was omdat ek redelik lanklaas so ‘n breek gevat het en spesifiek nou na die bosveld toe gegaan het.

47. Gedurende jou reis na jou bestemming, was daar enige spesiale gedagtes in jou kop waaroor jy gepraat het in die voertuig, of wat jy van ander kon agterkom?
Ek en my man het gesels en gewonder hoeveel diere ons gaan sien, want ‘n hele rukkie terug was ons gelukkig en het heelwat diere gesien.Ons het gesels oor hoe vroeg ons gaan opstaan en hoe laat gaan ons deur die hekke ry en daai tipe van ding.

48. Enige atmosfeer of emosies wat jy kan onthou?
Wel ons was altwee baie opgewonde en my man het ook net kort-kort gesê ek sien uit na hierdie naweek.

49. Jy het by jou bestemming aangekom. Vertel my kortliks van jou ervaringe, positief en negatief, terwyl jy daar was.
Goed, toe ons nou daar aangekom het, het ons ons staanplek uitgesoek het en ek onthou ek het gewens ek was al klaar afgepak en opgeslaan soos die bure. Ek kon nie wag dat die naweek en die rustigheid begin nie.

50. Was daar dalk enige geraas of die tipe van ding wat julle afgesit het?
Nee, ek moet sê dit was stil en rustig. Daar was ‘n klompie mense wat nog saam met ons daar aangekom het, en almel het onmiddelik begin skarrel met tente

opslaan en karavane regpak en goeters, maar daar was ‘n heel gemoedelike atmosfeer.

51. Was daar dalk enige gevoelens of emosies betrokke wat jy in die kampterrein ervaar het?
Soos ek sê, al wat ek daar kon agterkom is dat almal lus was vir die breek wat voorlê. Almal was lekker ontspanne. Daar was redelike mense met klein kindertjies wat op fietsies rondgery het, jy weet, alles was net lekker gewees.

52. Dit het bygedra tot die lekker atmosfeer?
Ja…

53. Die klein kindertjies het jou nie afgesit nie?
Nee, gladnie, want hulle was nie raserig nie. Hulle het net op en af in die paadjies gery en dit was lekker om te sien hoe geniet hulle dit. Daar was rerig ‘n baie lekker atmosfeer gewees.

54. Die einde van jou vakansie het nou aangebreek. Hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef die tyd is om, en dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Die realiteit het my dadelik getref toe ons begin oppak het, dat nou is dit verby, maar ek was dankbaar in elk geval vir die geleentheid wat ons gehad het. Ek het besef die week lê nou weer voor en die werklikheid lê nou weer voor.Dit was nogtans ‘n dankbare gevoel dat ek die ervaring weer gehad het.

55. Tydens jou reis terug huis toe, was daardie gevoelens steeds teenwoordig of het jou emosies verander?
Nee, daai gevoelens was maar nogsteeds teenwoordig gewees. Ek het besef dit is verby maar ek kan eerlikwaar sê ek het nou weer half krag gehad om aan te gaan. Ek het besef ek gaan dadelik weer met die normale roetine aangaan maar dit het vir my gevoel of ek meer krag het om dit te doen.

56. Was daar enige negatiewe gevoelens of ervaringe terwyl jy daar was en oppad terug?
Nee gladnie, ek kan nie sê dat ek enige negatiewe gevoelens gehad het nie…

57. Oppad terug, die enigste negatiewe gevoel, spyt dat dit verby was miskien?
Dis reg ja, ek was spyt dat dit verby is. Dit het vir my verskriklik vinnig verby gegaan. Ek het gewens dit was ‘n week of twee langer gewees.

58. Toe jy teruggekeer het na jou werk en jou roetine, kan jy die gevoel beskryf van die eerste paar dae terug?
Ja, soos ek sê die realiteit het my vinnig getref. Ek het besef nou moet ek aangaan en ek het, ek het nogsteeds maar gewens dat my ou breukie net ‘n paar dae langer kon gewees het. Ek en my man het dadelik besluit ons sal so gou as wat die kans hom voordoen weer so ‘n breukie maak, al is dit dan nou weer net vir ‘n langnaweek.

59. En so omtrent ‘n maand na jou besoek, hoe voel jy nou?
Nou is ek weer terug in die roetine en ek het amper vergeet dat ek so ‘n lekker naweek gehad het.

60. Sou jy sê daardie naweek speel nog steeds ‘n rol…jy dink nog steeds daaraan?
Ja ons het alweer daarna lekker gesels met die vriende saam met wie ons daar was, en ons beplan om dit weer te doen.

61. As jy stil sit en terugdink na jou ondervinding se hoogtepunt, het dit enige effek op jou?
Ja. Die verlange om weer in die natuur te wees. Nie spesifiek weer Pilanesberg toe nie, want as jy na so nawekie terugkom en jy sien weer vriende en familie, dan gesels ‘n mens outomaties weer daaroor en dan hoor jy weer by ander mense van nuwe plekke. So dit laat ‘n behoefte ontstaan om weer ‘n bietjie weg te kom… Dis reg ja. As ek terugdink aan die rustigheid dan wil ek sommer weer gou weggaan.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 19 (PI-19)

Name:	Madelein Wessels
Gender:	Female
Age:	41
Occupation:	Secretary
Permanent residence:	Ventersdorp
Tel no:	018 264 3036
Date and place of interview:	5 July 2004, Ventersdorp
Duration of interview:	30 minutes

1. Wat is "natuur" vir jou?
Dit is vir my alles wat buite is. Alles wat ongerep is, bome, veld, sulke tipe goed.

2. Wat is jou verhouding tot die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur beskryf, sou jy se dit is redelik intens, of meer oppervlakkig?)
Nie vreeslik intens nie, maar ek sal darem nou nie sê dit is heeltemal oppervlakkig nie.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Dit is baie lekker om uit te gaan in die natuur en om weer 'n bietjie jou voete op die aarde te kry. Dit is tog vir my as jy in kontak kom met die natuur is jy net soveel rustiger en jy kom weer agter waar kom jy nou eintlik vandaan. Jy kom weg van die alledaagse gejaag af.

4. Wat is jou verhouding tot jou eie natuur binne in jouself? (Is jy wat jy wil wees - in jou werk, familie, sosiale lewe en jouself?)
Ek dink nie mens is ooit regtig waar jy wil wees inelkgeval nie, 'n mens het altyd iets waarna jy werk.

5. Leer die natuur jou enigiets?
Ja. Dit leer my dat, alles wat is was, en dit kom maar weer. Jy moet maar geduld aan die dag lê.

6. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?
Dit is maar eintlik vandat ek hier begin bly het dat ek begin uitgaan het na wildsplase, en gewone plase wat 'n groot indruk op my gehad het.

7. Wat het daardie oomblik vir jou vertel, of beteken? As jy terug dink, hoe beïnvloed dit jou werk en lewe vandag?
Ek weet nie of dit regtig my werk en my lewe beïnvloed nie, 'n mens het net meer 'n behoefte om weg te kom van jou werksituasie en van jou gewone elke dag situasie, en meer tyd te spandeer in die natuur.

8. Wanneer jy in die natuur is, wat is jou grootste waarneming? (gebruik mense ooit hul sintuie?)
Die rustigheid. Die kleur van jou blare wat jy kry, die diere wat jy sien, die soorte grond, die teksture waarmee jy te doen het wat 'n mens nie elke dag sien

nie…Al die klein goedjies… Ja, ek is geneig om op te let na al die klein goedjies daar buite.

9. Wat doen jy om die natuur rondom jou waar te neem?
Ek werk in die tuin. ‘n Mens het nie altyd die geleentheid om uit te kom in die veld nie. Ons probeer van tyd tot tyd ‘n bietjie weg kom en gaan stap, al is dit sommer naby aan die huis.

10. Is daar iets in die natuur, ‘n dier, plant, rivier of landskap, waarmee jy kan identifiseer?
Nee, niks spesifiek nie.

11. Dink jy dat alle lewensvorme een of ander gevoel, emosie of waarneming het?
Ja. Plante en diere het aandag nodig. Plante het dalk nie emosie nie, maar het wel aandag en sorg nodig om gesond te wees.

12. Hoe sien jy die plek en die rol van die mens in die natuur?
As die persoon wat moet bewaar. Ek dink ons primêre doel is om die natuur te bewaar.

13. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Godsdiens.

14. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Ek dink geloof bring by ‘n mens dieselfde rustigheid. Die natuur is altyd daar, en God is ook altyd daar. Om nader te kom aan dinge soos grond en bome bring jou nader aan die Skepper. Dit laat jou ook weer besef, jy kom maar van stof af en jy is nie mensgemaak nie…So dit bevestig die teenwoordigheid van die Here in die natuur… Ja, die Here is beslis teenwoordig in die natuur.

15. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur? Verduidelik…
Ja. ‘n Mens sien tog as die bome se blare verloor of as die veld spierwit geryp is. Dit is ook maar deel van die natuur. Ja, ek is bewus daarvan elke dag.

16. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur wanneer jy op vakansie is of weg gaan vir ‘n naweek?
Ja definitief… Dan het ‘n mens meer tyd tot jou beskikking vir die kleiner dingetjies… Ja, definitief en ‘n mens gaan hou gewoonlik vakansie op ‘n plek waar die natuur in elk geval mooi is.

17. Is die mens die mees belangrikste lewensvorm op aarde?
Ja, tog seker, omdat God hom geskape het as heerser.

18. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Ja, ‘n mens is tog. Veral as ek in die tuin werk en na die voëltjies luister dan voel ek baie naby aan en selfs deel van die natuur. Op mooi plekke veral.

19. Dink jy dat mense verwyderd is van die natuur?
Dit hang baie af van waar mense bly en hoe hulle groot word. ‘n ‘n Mens kan nie regtig dink dat iemand wat in Johannesburg middestad groot word, dieselfde waarde sal heg aan die natuur as mense op die platteland nie.

20. Dink jy om verwyderd te wees van die natuur reflekteer om verwyderd te wees van God of andersom?
Ek sou nie se noodwendig nie. Die natuur is mskien net ‘n ander manier om nader aan God te kom. Baie mense wat met gestremdes werk is bewus van die Here se werke.

21. Dink jy dat ons, as mense van Afrika, meer verbind is tot die natuur, as mense van byvoorbeeld Europa of Amerika?
Ek weet nie regtig nie. Ek dink nie so nie. Ek het al baie gehoor van mense wat oorsee bly of daar gaan kuier, en hulle is tog baie ingestel op die mooi plekke in die natuur. Daar is ook tog baie mooi plekke…Hulle het dus ook hul eie mooi natuurskoon…Ja, ek dink so.

22. Is daar ‘n moontlikheid om weer verbind te word aan die natuur nadat ‘n mens verwyderd was van die natuur? Hoe?
Ek dink nie as jy eers gewoond was aan die natuur of blootgestel is aan die natuur sal jy sommer daarvan loskom nie. Ek dink ‘n mens het altyd daardie hunkering terug na die natuur. Ek dink as jy weer terug kom in die natuur is dit asof jy nooit weg was nie.

23. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek? Waarom?
Ons gaan graag Dikololo toe want daar is nie gevaarlike wild nie. Ons kan stap of fiets ry in die wildskamp, en dit is vir my die maklikste om naby aan die natuur te kom.

24. Wanneer jy op ‘n besoek aan ‘n plek in die natuur is, hoe verkies jy om te reis? (Alleen, met ‘n metgesel, familie, vriende)
Met my familie.

25. Wat verkies jy om te doen as jy in die natuur is ? (Jou gunsteling aktiwiteite in die buitelug)
Ons stap graag. Jy kan baie goed waarneem as jy stap. Dit is nie so vinnig nie. Jy hoef nie te konsentreer op waar jy loop nie en jy het genoeg tyd om rond te kyk en waar te neem. ‘n Mens kan kyk na die wild en na die plantegroei en jy sien elke dingetjie raak wat groei.

26. Dink jy persoonlik dit is vir jou belangrik om gereeld die natuur te besoek?
Ja, dit is vir my baie belangrik. Hoekom moet jy van tyd tot tyd die natuur besoek ? Dit voel altyd vir my ek kom terug aarde toe. As ‘n mens so verskriklik gejaagd lewe en jy kan net weer ‘n bietjie in die natuur kom, dit is of ‘n mens kalmer is. Dit is asof jy net weer ‘n bietjie jou voete vind en dan kan jy maar weer aangaan. Dan het ‘n mens weer die energie om volheid te werk en weer aandag aan jou huis te kan gee.

27. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike gebiede? Wat verkis jy? Hoekom?
Ek voel ontwikkeling is nodig tot in 'n mate, maar nie te veel nie. 'n Mens wil nog steeds die rustigheid van die natuur ervaar.

28. Wat is volgens jou 'n voorbeeld van n natuurarea (wildtuin, nasionale park ens.) wat goed ontwikkel en toeganklik is?
Krugerwildtuin is baie duur. Ek verkies persoonlik Pilanesberg se wildtuin bo Krugerwidtuin ook omdat dit nie so vreeslik uitgestrek is nie. Jy kan vir 'n dag soontoe gaan en baie wildsoorte sien wat jy nie noodwendig in die Kruger sal sien nie…

29. Pilanesberg is natuurlik ook nader aan julle as die Kruger
Ja, dit is vir ons maklik om soontoe te gaan.

30. En van 'n natuurarea wat half ontwikkel is, maar steeds die rus en vrede van die wildernis het?
Ek kan nie nou aan iets dink nie.

31. Van 'n onderontwikkelde, verwyderde natuur area?
Nee, nou kan ek nie dink nie. Miskien die plaas ver van alles en almal af.

32. Kan jy 'n hoogtepunt beskryf van 'n vorige besoek aan die natuur? (Wanneer, waar?) Hoekom was dit vir jou 'n hoogtepunt?
Ja. Ons het Aprilmaand 'n swartwitpens gesien in Dikololo, wat baie skaars is. Ons het ook die gemsbokke gesien wat ons baie selde sien, en dit was ook vir ons 'n hoogtepunt gewees. Dit was iets anders.

Die volgende vrae is oor 'n spesifieke uitstappie wat jy onlangs onderneem het.
33. Watter plek het jy besoek?
Dit was Dikololo gewees.

34. Wanneer en vir hoe lank was die besoek?
Dit was April maand en dit was vir 'n week.

35. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
Ons besluit gewoonlik lank voor die tyd want ek gaan of soontoe of Kaap toe. Ek weet wanneer ek nie kan Kaap toe gaan nie en dan bespreek ek klaar by Dikololo.

36. Hoe lank voor die vertrek het jy met voorbereidings begin?
Seker so drie dae.

37. Hoe het jy gevoel tydens hierdie voorbereidingsfase?
Opgewonde. 'n Mens het 'n gevoel van afwagting.

38. Vertel my van die opset. Hoeveel mense, voertuie ens. was ingesluit by jou beplanning?
Dit was net ek en my seun en sy een maat. Ons was drie persone.

39. Wat was jou gevoelens en emosies die dag voordat jy vertrek het?
Dan is ‘n mens nogal redelik in ‘n “flat spin” . Die huis moet reg wees, die kos moet gepak wees, die voertuig moet reg wees, die klere moet reg wees. Dan is daar nie vreeslik tyd om te dink aan die vakansie wat voorle nie. Dit is net ‘n gejaag om alles by die huis klaar te kry.

40. Hoekom het jy dit ervaar?
Omdat ‘n mens baie verantwoordelikheid het. ‘n Mens kan nie net jou huis los en weggaan nie want jy het troeteldiere wat agterbly wat versorg moet word. Jy het jou dinge by die kantoor wat op datum moet wees. Jy het jou dinge by die huis wat reg moet wees.

41. Gedurende jou reis na jou bestemming,was daar enige spesiale gedagtes in jou kop waaroor jy gepraat het in die voertuig, of wat jy van die ander kon agterkom?
Ons het net uitgesien na die rus en die vrede.

42. Enige atmosfeer of emosies wat jy kan onthou?
Ja. ‘n Mens kry die vakansie gevoel. Net om ‘n bietjie weg te gaan en te weet alles by die huis is afgehandel. Jy kan ‘n bietjie afskakel.

43. Jy het by jou bestemming aangekom. Vertel my kortliks van jou ervaringe, positief en negatief, terwyl jy daar was. As dit moontlik is, vertel ook van jou gevoelens wat jy ervaar het tydens jou onderving.
Dit is altyd baie positief. Dit is vir my belangrik dat die plek waar ek gaan bly skoon en netjies is. Daarmee het ons nooit ‘n probleem nie. Dit is altyd netjies. Die ontvangs daar is altyd vriendelik. Ons was baie gelukkig, toe ons in ry by die hek het ons kameelperde gekry. Dit voel sommer vir jou die vakansie begin op die regte noot.

44. Die einde van jou vakansie het aangebreek. Hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
‘n Mens het altyd maar die gevoel dat jy maar nog ‘n paar dae kan bly. As ‘n mens daar is vir ‘n week vakansie, dan begin ‘n mens al hier by die laaste dag dink aan al die werk wat vir jou voorlê. Dan kom ‘n mens maar met ‘n snaakse gevoel huis toe en jy weet jy moet maar weer aangaan…Dit is somtyds of jy nie lekker kan ontspan as jy werk het wat vir jou wag nie…Ja, daardie laaste dag is dit asof ‘n mens begin rusteloos raak. Jy wil maar meer huis toe gaan as jy weet daar is nog baie dinge om te doen.

45. Tydens die reis terug huis toe, was daardie gevoelens steeds teenwoordig of het jou emosies verander?
Nee wat, dan is ek rustiger. Dan weet ek nou gaan ek weer huis toe.

46. Was daar enige negatiewe gevoelens of ervaringe terwyl jy daar was en oppad terug? (Brei uit)
Nee, ek dink nie so nie. Net dalk die gedagte dat ek weer moet terugkeer na normale roetine en alledaagse gejaag.

47. Toe jy teruggekeer het na jou werk en roetine, kan jy die gevoel beskryf van die eerste paar dae terug?
Ja. Ek was baie rustiger gewees as normaalweg. ‘n Mens het altyd net daardie “catching up” om te doen as jy weg was. Na die eerste drie dae dan voel dit of jy weer ‘n vakansie nodig het.

48. En net ‘n maand na jou besoek, hoe voel jy nou?
Dan is ek lankal weer terug in die normale roetine van jaag om alles gedoen te kry.

49. As jy stil sit en terug dink na jou ondervinding se hoogtepunt, het dit enige effek op jou?
Dit gee ‘n mens iets lekkers om oor te gesels. Dit was ‘n uitsonderlike gevoel om die swartwitpense te sien en ‘n mens sal dit nie sommer vergeet nie. Dit is lekker om dit te sien want jy weet jy gaan dit vir ‘n baie lang tyd dalk nie weer sien nie. Dit is lekker om daaraan terug te dink.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 20 (PI-20)

Naam en van:	Rosemarie Gurschler
Ouderdom:	54
Kwalifikasie of beroep:	Adjunkdirekteur, Departement Gesondheid, Noordwes.
Dorp / stad van permanente verblyf:	Ventersdorp
Kontak adres of telefoonnommer:	083 532 0637
Plek van onderhoud:	Ventersdorp
Datum van onderhoud:	6 Julie 2004
Tydsduur van onderhoud:	30 minute

1. Wat is "natuur" vir jou?
Alles wat deur God geskape is. Bome, blomme, berge, see, diere.

2. Wat is jou verhouding tot die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur beskryf, sou jy se dit is redelik intens, of meer oppervlakkig?)
Ek dink dit is baie intens. Ek is mal oor die natuur.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Wel ek het groot waardering vir die natuur. Dit is vir my 'n baie belangrike deel van my lewe. Ek sê altyd as ek my lewe kon oorgehad het sou ek iets studeer het in die natuur, met diere of plante. Ek sou daarvan hou om met plante en diere te werk.

4. Wat is jou verhouding tot jou eie natuur binne in jouself? (Is jy wat jy wil wees - in jou werk, familie, sosiale lewe en jouself?)
Ja ek is baie gelukkig. Ek het verder in my beroep gekom as wat ek verwag het, en met my vriende en familie, ons is almal in harmonie.

5. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?
Ja. Dit is vir my baie inspirerend en dit leer my om skeppend te wees.

6. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?
As kind het ek in Komatipoort groot geword. Ons het 'n paar klein apies gehad en dit was maar soos my poppe. Ek het van tyd tot tyd 'n nuwe klein apie gekry en dit was soos my kinders. Dit het 'n blywende indruk my gehad, van baie kleins af. Soos wat ek nou ouer geword het en Hoërskool toe gegaan het moes ek maar afstand doen van hulle.

7. Wat het daardie oomblik vir jou vertel, of beteken?
Dit het my geleer om om te gee. Ek het iets gehad wat ek moes versorg, en dit het my geleer om vir ander om te gee.

8. As jy terug dink, hoe beïnvloed dit jou werk en lewe vandag?
Wel ek het 'n loopbaan gehad in die gesondheidsdienste en daardie saadjie van omgee en versorging is vroeg reeds geplant daar in Komatipoort.

9. Wanneer jy in die natuur is, wat is jou grootste waarneming? (gebruik mense ooit hul sintuie?)
Ek is mal daaroor om blomme te sien en te ruik. Ek is ook baie lief vir die see en sy golwe.

10. Wat doen jy om die natuur rondom jou waar te neem?
Ek is lief daarvoor om in die tuin te werk en na die voëltjies te luister. Ek let graag op na die mooi van die natuur, as ek gaan stap en so aan. Ek is 'n kunstige mens en is lief vir bome en blomme.

11. Is daar iets in die natuur, 'n dier, plant, rivier of landskap, waarmee jy kan identifiseer?
Ja, 'n dolfyn. Op watter manier identifiseer jy hiermee? Wel 'n dolfyn is my gusteling seedier. Hulle is vriendelik, as jy vir hulle kyk, dit lyk altyd of hulle glimlag. Hulle is intelligent. Ek het ook al gelees hoedat hulle mense wat in die moeilikheid was gehelp het. Die grasie waarmee hulle beweeg is besonders…Sou jy sê daar is van daardie eienskappe ook teenwoordig in jou lewe…Ja definitief, ek identifiseer baie met die eienskappe van 'n dolfyn.

12. Dink jy dat alle lewensvorme een of ander gevoel, emosie of waarneming het?
Ja verseker, selfs plante. Plante groei beter met baie sorg en aandag. Diere het definitief ook emosie.

13. Hoe sien jy die plek en die rol van die mens in die natuur?
Kyk, die mens het die intellegensie, soos God hom geskape het om om te sien na die natuur. As ons nie kyk na ons bronne en dat dit korrek benut word en so-aan nie, dan gaan ons nageslagte benadeel word. Die volhoubaarheid van die natuur is in die mens se hande.

14. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Ek sou sê dit is iets van wat van binne in jou af kom. As jy nie in harmonie met jou gees is nie, dan kan jy ook nie ingestel wees teenoor iemand anders nie. Jy moet van binne af reg wees. Jy moet self geestelik gesond wees om na an ander te kan omsien.

15. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Die natuur help my om geestelik in stemming te kom. Dit help my om die teenwoordigheid van God te ervaar.

16. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur? Verduidelik…
Ja definitief. Ek het groot geword met berge rondom my en pragtige natuur, en toe land ek hier in ou Wes-Transvaal. Ek het die berge baie gemis. Ek het met die tyd ook gewoond geraak en gesien jy het 'n ander mooi hier. Ek is altyd bewus van die mooi van die natuur.

17. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur wanneer jy op vakansie is of weg gaan vir 'n naweek?
O ja. As ek met vakansie gaan dan gaan ek altyd na 'n plek waar ek my kan uitleef en stap. My man en kinders word baie kwaad vir my. As ons see toe gaan dan is ek vyfuur in die oggend langs die see. Ek kyk altyd na die kleinste skulpies en tel dit op. As ons ook oorsee gaan na my man se tuisdorp in Oostenryk, dan is ek mal daaroor om in daardie berge rond te stap en te soek vir sampioene. Ons is nie mense wat heeldag op die strand sal lê nie. Ons ry rond en verken nuwe plekke en so-aan.

18. Is die mens die mees belangrikste lewensform op aarde?
Nee ek sou nie sê mees belangrikste nie…In 'n mate ja, want ons het die intelligensie om om te sien na ander, maar as die ander lewensvorme nie hier was nie, waarvoor was ons bestaan dan?

19. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Ja. Ek sal byvoorbeeld buite in die tuin stap en kyk na die klein blommetjies en luister na die wind in die deur die bome se blare. Ek leer ook my kleinkinders as hulle hier kuier, wys hulle die blommetjies en voëlnessies ens. Ek is baie bewus van die natuur.

20. Dink jy dat mense verwyderd is van die natuur?
Ja. Ek dink met die "workload" wat mense vandag het, het hulle nie so baie tyd om in die natuur uit te kom nie. Die mense is ook nie almal so bevoorreg en finansieel in staat te wees om op vakansie te gaan en die natuur te bewonder nie. Ek dink to die natuur is nie toeganklik vir almal nie. 'n Mens moet spesiaal tyd maak en geld spandeer om gereeld in die natuur te kom. Ek dink ook mense moet meer bewus gemaak word van wat in hulle omgewing is om te besigtig.

21. Dink jy om verwyderd te wees van die natuur reflekteer om verwyderd te wees van God of andersom?
Ek sal nie se noodwendig nie. Jy kan God in jou lewe hê al het jy nie noodwendig elke dag kontak met die natuur nie. Ek dink as jy bevoorreg is om gereeld in die natuur te kom sal dit wel jou verhouding met God verskerp.

22. Dink jy dat ons, as mense van Afrika, meer verbind is tot die natuur, as mense van byvoorbeeld Europa of Amerika?
Ek dink so ja. Ons het hierdie groot verskeidenheid hier by ons wat hulle nie het nie. Alhoewel, die Europeërs spandeer baie geld aan vakansies, hulle is finansieel beter in staat om meer vakansie te hou as die gemiddelde Suid-Afrikaner…

23. Mevrou was nou al in Europa, dink mevrou hulle is baie bewus van hulle eie natuurskoon daar anderkant…?
Ja ek dink tog so. Hulle het nou wel nie die verskeidenheid wat ons het nie maar hulle het ook pragtige natuurskoon. As hulle geleentheid kry dan gaan hulle uit in die platteland in.

24. Is daar ‘n moontlikheid om weer verbind te word aan die natuur nadat ‘n mens verwyderd was van die natuur? Hoe?
Ek dink so. As jy daarvan lees sal dit weer ‘n belangstelling wek en ‘n mens kan weer verbind word aan die natuur deur by ‘n voêlklub aan te sluit ens.

25. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek? Waarom?
Op hierdie stadium die see, omdat dit so wyd uitgestrek lê. Jy voel net ontspanne en dit gee jou ‘n gevoel van vryheid. Die geraas van die branders wat jy soms in die aande hoor het ‘n kalmerende effek op ‘n mens.

26. Wanneer jy op ‘n besoek aan ‘n plek in die natuur is, hoe verkies jy om te reis? (Alleen, met ‘n metgesel, familie, vriende)
Met familie en vriende.

27. Wat verkies jy om te doen as jy in die natuur is ? (Jou gunsteling aktiwiteite in die buitelug)
Ek hou van stap. Ek hou daarvan om te loop en klippe op te tel, of skulpe op te tel. Ek sal sommer stap en gras pluk waarmee ek dan ‘n rangskikking sal maak. Ek is vreeslik lief vir natuurlike rangskikkings met houtstompe en klippe en sulke tipe goed.

28. Dink jy persoonlik dit is vir jou belangrik om gereeld die natuur te besoek? Hoekom moet jy van tyd tot tyd die natuur besoek ?
Ja definitief. As ek die geleentheid het is dit vir my wonderlik om in die natuur te kom. Jy voel ‘n ander mens. Dit gee jou tyd om te dink.

29. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike gebiede?
Met industrialisering is soveel natuurbronne al vernietig en ek voel daar moet ‘n beperking wees. As ons nie versigtig is nie gaan daar vir ons nageslagte nie veel oor bly nie…

30. Wat verkies jy…?
Ek verkies ‘n meer onderontwikkelde plek met baie natuurskoon…

31. Hoekom?
Dit is net vir my meer ontspannend om in ‘n minder ontwikkelde gebied vakansie te hou.

32. Wat is volgens jou ‘n voorbeeld van ‘n natuurarea (wildtuin,nasionale park ens.) wat goed ontwikkel en toeganklik is?
Tsitsikamma is vir my ‘n goeie voorbeeld van ‘n wat goed ontwikkeld en toeganklik is.

33. En van ‘n natuurarea wat half ontwikkel is, maar steeds die rus en vrede van die wildernis het?
Ek sou sê Mapelane in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Ek weet nie hoe lyk dit nou daar nie want dit was ‘n hele paar jaar gelede. Dit was so 40km van die naaste dorp af en ons moes ons eie varswater saam neem. Jy kon die area net bereik met ‘n 4x4 voertuig.

34. Van ‘n onderontwikkelde, verwyderde natuur area?
Ek kan nie werklik aan ‘n plek dink waar ek al was nie. Mapelane is seker die naaste aan verwyderde natuurarea waar ek al was.

35. Kan jy ‘n hoogtepunt beskryf van ‘n vorige besoek aan die natuur? (Wanneer, waar?) Hoekom was dit vir jou ‘n hoogtepunt?
Ek was nou Desember weer Komatipoort toe waar ek gebore is, en gebly het totdat ek twaalf jaar oud was. Dit verskil vreeslik van die omgewing waar ek nou bly en dit is waar my wortels is. Dit is pragtig waar die Komati en die Krokodilrivier bymekaar kom. Die hele omgewing is pragtig, die berge, die plantegroei, Krugerwildtuin wat daar naby is…Die hele omgewing het my ontsettend geroer,soveel so dat ek voel ek wil daar gaan aftree.

Die volgende vrae is oor ‘n spesifieke uitstappie wat jy onlangs onderneem het.
36. Watter plek het jy besoek?
Komatipoort.

37. Wanneer en vir hoe lank was die besoek?
Dit was Desember 2003 gewees. Ons was daar vir omtrent ‘n week.

38. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
So omtrent vier weke voor die tyd het ons besluit om te gaan.

39. Hoe lank voor die vertrek het jy met voorbereidings begin?
Seker so drie dae voor die tyd.

40. Hoe het jy gevoel tydens hierdie voorbereidingsfase?
Opgewonde.

41. Vertel my van die opset. Hoeveel mense, karre ens. was ingesluit by jou beplanning?
Net een voertuig en twee mense.

42. Wat was jou gevoelens en emosies die dag voordat jy vertrek het?
“Excitement”. Ek het vreeslik baie uitgesien daarna.

43. Hoekom het jy dit ervaar?
Ek was opgewonde om weer my kinderjare te gaan herleef, waar het ek geloop en gespeel ens. Ons het as kinders in daardie rivier geswem en gespeel, as kind het jy nie die gevaar van krokodille en seekoeie verstaan of besef nie. Ek was opgwonde om bietjie my lewe en roetine van vandag agter te laat en weer in die natuur te kom waar ek as kind groot geword het.

44. Gedurende jou reis na jou bestemming,was daar enige spesiale gedagtes in jou kop waaroor jy gepraat het in die voertuig, of wat jy van die ander kon agterkom?
Ja, die persoon wat saam met my gery het was nog nooit daar nie. Sy was ook baie opgewonde om sien hoe lyk dit daar, want ek het haar oppad soontoe vertel hoe mooi dit is en van my kinderjare. My opgewondenheid was aansteeklik.

45. Enige atmosfeer of emosies wat jy kan onthou?
Net ‘n gevoel van afwagting en opgewondenheid.

46. Jy het by jou bestemming aangekom. Vertel my kortliks van jou ervaringe, positief en negatief, terwyl jy daar was. As dit moontlik is, vertel ook van jou gevoelens wat jy ervaar het tydens jou onderving.
Daar was eintlik geen negatiewe ervaringe nie. Ons het alles baie positief ervaar. Ons het by my oorlede broer se seun tuisgegaan en hulle het uit hul pad uit gegaan om ons rond te neem. Hulle het ons baie goed onvang en daarom was al die ervaringe positief.

47. Die einde van jou vakansie het aangebreek. Hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Ek het maar gemengde gevoelens gehad. Jy laat nou daardie plek wat jou so diep geraak het agter, maar aan die ander kant is my familie weer aan die kant. ‘n Mens verlang maar na jou familie.

48. Tydens die reis terug huis toe, was daardie gevoelens steeds teenwoordig of het jou emosies verander?
Ek het maar dieselfde gevoel oppad terug huis toe.

49. Toe jy teruggekeer het na jou werk en roetine, kan jy die gevoel beskryf van die eerste paar dae terug?
Dit was lekker om terug te wees by die huis, maar ek het ‘n baie stresvolle werk. Dit het nie eers gevoel of ek vakansie gehad het daardie eerste paar dae terug by die werk nie. Ek moes weer met alles opvang wat stil gestaan het terwyl ek weg was.

50. En net ‘n maand na jou besoek, hoe het jy toe gevoel?
Nee wat, toe was ek weer terug in my roetine. Ek het maar so nou en dan net gedink aan die lekker vakansie en gewens ek kon weer so bietjie wegbreek en ontspan.

51. As jy stil sit en terug dink na jou ondervinding se hoogtepunt, het dit enige effek op jou?
Dit is vreeslike mooi hehinneringe en dit is iets wat my altyd sal by bly. As ek daaraan dink het dit ‘n positiewe invloed op my, dit gee my krag om weer ‘n bietjie aan te gaan.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 21 (PI-21)

Name:	Maarten Roosenschoon
Gender:	Male
Age:	37
Occupation:	Director - Property Practice
Permanent residence:	Brooklyn, Pretoria
Tel no:	012 346-5056
Date and place of interview:	29 June 2004, Pretoria
Duration of interview:	45 minutes

1. Wat is die natuur vir jou?

My alles. Ons kamp mos gereeld dit het net so vir 2 jaar tot 'n einde gekom met die geboorte van my 2 kinders. Dit is moeilik om met 2 babas te gaan kamp want dit is camping cot en bottels en alles wat nog nodig is. Ons het 'n boot wat ons gereeld mee dam toe gaan en gereeld gaan ons op game drives in wildtuine en Pilanesberg. Ek neem wild foto's en kry groot satisfaksie. Die natuur self is die wegbreek van die stad af en ek probeer dit so primitief as moontlik maak. Ek het nog so 'n ou blikketel wat ek in die vuur kan sit en water kook en ek vat geen luxury saam nie met die dat die kinders nie kan gaan nie. Ons kom nou op 'n stadium waar ons weer begin aanpas.

2. Wat is jou verhouding met die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur moet beskryf, sal jy sê dit is intens of net oppervlakkig?)

Ek is baie naby aan die natuur en as ek in die natuur is moet net niemand 'n lawaai maak nie. Dit is wat my baie keer pla van waar mens kamp. Is daar kom 'n klom jongmense en hulle speel hierdie musiek tot 2 uur in die oggend en ons gaan eintlik vir die rustigheid daarvan en om om die kampvuur te sit en gesels en familietyd te hê en dan is dit vir my moeilik en ek raak baie keer knorrig.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?

Ek dink dit is een van die belangrike rolle in my lewe en ek dink ook dat jy jou kinders met die natuur moet groot maak en dis die probleem met van dag se kinders. Hulle word almal computer georiënteer en dra brille van hulle 5 jaar oud is want die oë is al opgepak, hulle speel nie meer met paddas en slange nie. Vra jy enige oudjie van 12 of 13 jaar oud om vir jou 'n vuur te maak en hy kan nie vir jou 'n vuur maak nie, maar vra jy hom om in die Internet in te gaan en jou alles te wys dan doen hy dit. Ek en my vrou het ook besluit die kinders moet natuur manier groot word. Ek is mal om by 'n vuur te sit met 'n glas port of koffie net vir die rustigheid daarvan. In die dag ook die kinders moet gewoond raak aan die primitiewe deel van die lewe. As jy teruggaan huis toe moet jy weer waardeer wat jy by die huis het. Ek dink dit is hel belangrik vir enige iemand om 'n gebalanseerde lewe te hê anders kan ek nie dink dat mense 'n gebalanseerde lewe kan hê nie.

4. Wat is jou verhouding tot jou eie natuur binne jouself? (Is jou lewe wat jy dit graag wil hê – met betrekking tot jou werk, familie, sosiale lewe en jouself?)

Ek dink as ek my lewe kan oor hê het ek 'n game ranger geword weereens ek weet nie hoeveel geld die game rangers maak nie en ek dink as jy 'n game ranger is in vandag se tye moet jy nie trou en kinders wil hê nie, dan moet jy 'n man van die bos bly en ek het op Naboomspruit in die berge gebly en laat in my lewe getrou en ek dink dit was die lekkerste tyd van my lewe. Ek dink as ek of kon gaan boer het. Boerdery is nie maklik vandag nie en as jy nie 'n plaas met vol kudde beeste en implimente erf nie gaan jy nie die pyp rook nie maar ek dink om game ranging en met diere te kan werk is die ultimate lewe wat 'n single ou kan hê.

5. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?

Ek dink baie dinge en een ding is dat mense moet nooit die natuur onderskat nie. Die natuur is baie sterker as wat jy dink. As jy maar net vat noem dit 'n "act of God" en daar kom 'n oorstroming. Die water vat alles weg wat voor kom en die natuur het 'n manier om die balans reg te stel en ons moenie daarmee rond foeter nie. Dit is as gevolg van ons wat al die bome uit kap en grondverskuiwings doen dat ons al hoe meer oorstroming en meer van die en daai kry. Ons is maar te blameer daarvoor maar jy moenie met die natuur speel nie.

6. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?

Toe ek nog 'n klein seuntjie was in die Voortrekkers toe ons gaan kamp het en dit was vir my baie lekker. Dit is baie jare terug ek was nog in die laerskool. Die saal was net agter die skool en die dinge wat hulle ons daar geleer het, het ek net gesê hel die natuur is vir my interessant en lekker. En dan natuurlik die plaas. As 'n seun het ons altyd plaas toe gegaan en naweke en vakansies het ek nie see toe gegaan nie maar plaas toe en dit was vir my baie lekker om daar tussen die beeste en die goed rond te loop en dit was baie lekker.

7. Wat het die gebeurtenis vir jou beteken? Hoe beïnvloed hierdie gebeure jou werk en lewe vandag?

Dit het baie rustigheid oor my gebring as kind en dan wil ek vir jou sê ek het baie gehakkel op skool, ek kon nie een woord sê sonder om te hakkel nie en jy sal dit nie vandag sê nie maar met die gevolg is kinders het my baie gespot en ek het eers in hoërskool gegaan vir spraakterapie en die feit dat ek altyd alleen kon wag gaan plaas toe en my ma hulle see toe en daar was nie kinders om my te spot nie en dit is waar ek my liefde vir diere gekry het. Ek jag ook nie, ek skiet nie diere nie. Ek het as klein seuntjie het ons springhase gajag en ek het nooit een doodgeslaan nie. Dit is my liefde vir veral honde - hulle praat nie terug nie en hulle het my nooit gespot en gesê jy hakkel so baie nie.

8. Wanneer jy in die natuur is waarvan word jy bewus? (Gebruik mense hulle sintuie enigsins?)

Ek dink nie mense gebruik hulle sintuie nie. Die lug is baie varser al sukkel ek met my sinusse maar die bietjie wat ek ruik is altyd vir my beter en die stilte is baie lekker. Die rustigheid van my siel en net terug te gaan na die "back to basic" idee.

9. Wat doen jy om van die natuur rondom jou bewus te raak? (Hoe word jy bewus van dinge rondom jou?) (In watter manier gebruik mense hulle sintuie om te verbind met die natuur?)

Jy moet kyk en observeer. In die ou apartheidsjare is ek geleer om deur die boom te kyk en nie in die boom nie want anders kan jy nie die diere sien nie. Die natuur is nie 'n ding wat jy om elke hoek en draai 'n ding gaan sien nie en jy moet dit in gedagte hou om diere te kan sien. Jy moet baie tyd in die natuur spandeer om als te sien en net deur dit jaag en dink jy het dan als gesien nie.

10. Is daar iets in die natuur, 'n dier, plant, rivier of landskap wat jy mee kan identifiseer?

My hero is Jopie Adams en as kind het ek daai storie gekyk van hy en sy beer daar bo in die berge hy met sy groot baard. Hy was my groot hero met die groot baard. Dit is net te warm hier, ek groei so van tyd tot tyd baard maar daai groot baard en die houthuis daar bo in die berge dit was vir my net die ultimate en ek dink as jy 'n lewe wil hê is dit dit.

11. Op watter manier identifiseer jy met hierdie voorwerp? Wat beteken dit vir jou?

Dit is seker omdat ek ook in die berge gebly het en ek as klein seuntjie het ek hom gesien as my role model en ek ook langhare en baard en oorbelle gedra en als wat daarmee saamgaan en dit is wie ek dalk sou wou gewees het.

12. Dink jy dat alle lewens vorme op een of ander manier 'n vorm van gevoel, emosie of bewustheid het?

Ek dink enigiets wat daar buite is het bewustheid en ek dink jy moet 'n plan maak om bewus te word van dinge rondom jou. Jy as persoon moet die tyd vat om jou bewus te maak van daai dinge in die natuur en die helfte van die mense weet nie hoe die natuur werk nie en ek weet nie alles nie en elke keer as jy iets op tv sien is ek verbaas oor hoe goed by mekaar aanpas en jy as mens sal dit nooit by mekaar gepas het nie.

13. Hoe sien jy die plek en rol van mense in die natuur?

Weereens dit is net jammer mense foeter die natuur so op want die natuur het sy eie manier om dinge reg te stel en dan kom ons en en ons verander landskappe en van daar kom baie van ons probleme. Die mens moet meer damme bou want op die einde van die dag gaan dit oor survival en sonder water gaan ons nie oorleef nie. Ons is besig om die wêreld te vernietig. Gaan terug na die basics.

14. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?

Nou praat ons oor 'n ding waaroor ek baie mal is. Ek lees geweldig baie oor die rooi Indiane en ek het baie boeke en foto,'s oor hulle en my by naam is ook "free spirit". Ek dink daai mense was spiritueel seker die rykste mense in die wêreld net jammer oor hoe die Amerikaners met hulle gemaak het. Hoe daai mense kommunikeer met die natuur is uniek.

15. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?

Ek dink geloof is 'n ding wat van mens tot mens afhang. Of jy hou van die natuur of nie en ek sien nie wat geloof daarmee te doen het nie.

16. Is jy bewus van die natuur elke dag? Verduidelik?
Ek wens elke dag ek net by water en kan net uit kom en nie wees waar ek vandag sit nie.

17. Is jy bewus van die natuur elke dag terwyl jy op vakansie in die natuur is of oor 'n naweek in die natuur?
Elke dag.

18. Is die mens die mees belangrikste vorm van lewe op aarde?
Mense is belangrik maar ek dink die natuur is die belangrikste want sonder die natuur sal ons nie kan oorleef nie.

19. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
As ek daar buite is ja maar nie in die stad nie dit is te mal hier in die stad.

20. Dink jy mense is verbind met die natuur?
Nee op die oomblik is die natuur vir baie mense 'n "fashion statement" almal skielik fly fish by Dullstroom en hulle bly in die fancy hotel en dan sê hulle hulle was in die natuur.

21. Dink jy dat wanneer mense nie verbind is met die natuur dat hulle ook nie verbind is met God nie? Of omgekeerd?
Geloof is 'n ding wat elke mens met homself moet uitsorteer. Dit wil nie sê dat as jy op 'n sekere manier glo nie kan jy nie verbind met die natuur nie.

22. Dink jy dat ons as mense van Afrika, is meer verbind met die natuur as wat mense van Europa of Amerika is?
Nee ek glo nie en ek dink daar is meer van die oorsee se toeriste wat al meer van Suid-Afrika gesien het as wat ons mense van hom gesien het.

23. Is daar 'n moontlikheid om weer met die natuur te verbind as jy nie meer verbind is nie? Hoe?
Natuurlik enige ou moet net die moeite doen en die natuur aan die mooi kant gaan sien en sit en luister en besef wat rondom jou aangaan. Jy moet die moeite doen en daar is ook die mense wat net nie belang stel nie.

24. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek? Hoekom is dit jou gunsteling plek?
Daar is 2 plekke dit is die Lone Creek waterfal in Sabie en God's Window by Graskop. As ek totale rustigheid wil hê is dit natuurlik op die boot by die dam. Ek en my vrou slaap net op 'n matras agter op die boot onder die sterre.

25. Wanneer jy 'n area besoek, hoe verkies jy om te reis? (alleen, saam met familie, vriende)
Vroeër jare het ek verkies om alleen te reis maar nou is ek getroud en het kinders so ek nie veel van 'n opsie nie.

26. Wat verkies jy om te doen wanneeer jy in die natuur is? (jou gunsteling buite aktiwiteit)

Dit hang af waar ek is. By die dam is dit net om rond te ry of net op een plek te wees en oor die water te kyk.

27. Voel jy persoonlik dit is nodig om op 'n gereelde basis na die natuur terug te keer? Hoekom moet jy terug gaan na die natuur van tyd tot tyd?
Ja om die gebalanseerdheid te kan handhaaf en net weer naby aan die natuur te wees.

28. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike areas? Wat verkies jy? Hoekom?
Dit is jammer. Ek sien natuurlike groenstroke as belangrik en ons as mense is besig om als te bebou. Ek verkies matig ontwikkel dit gee 'n mens nog nie verbintenis met die natuur.

29. Wat is vir jou 'n voorbeeld van 'n natuurlike area wat baie ontwikkel en toeganklik is?
Pilanesberg maar hulle moet net nou sê daar is nou genoeg oorde en hulle moet net op 'n stadium stop anders gaan daar te veel wees.

30. 'n Voorbeeld van 'n area wat matig ontwikkel is maar nog steeds die stilte van 'n wildernesarea het?
Sun City aan die een kant is dit baie ontwikkel maar by Pilanesberg is dit darem net 'n bietjie siller en rustiger.

31. 'n Voorbeeeld van 'n area met min of geen ontwikkeling?
Ons plaas en as ek daar in kloof rondklim en daar is niks so ver jy kan sien is daar niks.

32. Kan jy 'n hoogtepunt beskryf van 'n vorige besoek aan 'n plek in die natuur? Waar en wanneer? Hoekom sien jy dit as 'n hoogtepunt?
As jy by 'n watergat sit en 'n kill kan sien en sien hoe die diere mekaar uitsorteer. By Pilanesberg het ons weer so iets gesien by die watergat.

Die volgende vrae sal wees oor 'n spesifieke vakansie /reis wat jy onlangs op was:

33. Watter plek het jy besoek?
Pilanesberg.

34. Wanneer en vir hoe lank was die besoek?
5 dae.

35. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
Gereelde timeshare - so gereeld.

36. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy met voorbereidings begin?
Vrou pak die aand voor ons ry. Ons berei nie regtig voor nie.

37. Wat was jou gevoel tydens die voorbereidingsfase?
Ek kan nie wag om weg te kom nie en net van die geraas van die stad af weg te kom.

38. Wat was jou gevoel en emosies die dag voor jy vertrek het?
Ek is gewoonlik bedonderd want dan wil ek kla kry om te ry en dan gaan als gewoonlik verkeerd by die kantoor.

39. Hoekom het jy so gevoel?
Moet nooit in kom kantoor toe as jy die dag wil ry nie want daar gebeur altyd iets en ek raak knorrig.

40. Gedurende die reis na die bestemming, was daar enige iets spesiaal wat jy aan gedink het? Wat julle oor gepraat het in die voertuig, of enige gevoel van die ander persone?
Ons praat altyd oor die verkeer op die pad tot so halfpad dan begin ek ontspan en ons praat maar oor alles wat opkom.

41. Jy kom by jou bestemming. Kan jy kortliks vir my jou ervaring, positief en negatief beskryf terwyl jy daar is?
As ek eers daar gekom het is ek baie negatief want Pappa moet alles aflaai en met 2 klein kinders vat jy iets van alles saam. Waar ek my eerste bier drink dan is ek baie gelukkig. Ek dink as ek dan daar buite is dan vergeet ek partykeer ek het ‘n familie…

42. Aan die einde van jou vakansie, hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Jy voel maar mislik want dan besef jy jy kom weer terug na die geraas van die stad en die lewe.

43. Terwyl jy huis toe ry was die gevoelens nog steeds dieselfde of het jou emosies verander?
Jy is net altyd jammer dat jy moet terug kom.

44. Was daar enige negatiewe gevoelens tydens hierdie tyd terwyl jy by die bestemming was en op pad terug?
Nie by die bestemming nie maar op pad terug het ek gevoel ek wil die regtig terug kom nie.

45. Toe jy terug keer na jou daaglikse lewe kan jy jou gevoelens beskryf tydens die eerste paar dae?
Ek dink jy is nog ‘n bietjie vriendelik en luister beter na ander mense, maar later word jy maar weer jouself.

46. En nou hoe voel jy?
Ek wens ek kan more weer ry.

47. As jy vir ‘n oomblik terug dink aan jou hoogtepunt en dit weer ervaar, het dit enige effek op jou?
‘n Paar dinge het in my lewe gebeur en ek is net jammer ek het nie aangegaan met dit nie. Ek kan nie regtig net een beskryf nie. Die lewe as sulks is vir my ‘n hoogtepunt en ‘n laagtepunt is hoe mense die natuur verwoes. As jy nie die gevoel van vryheid kry nie dink ek die lewe gaan vir jou baie swaar wees.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 22 (PI-22)

Name:	Claire Ellitson
Gender:	Female
Age:	23
Occupation:	Senior Ecotourism Management student, TUT
Permanent residence:	Gaberone, Botswana
Tel no:	012 318-5306
Date and place of interview:	2 March 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	20 minutes

1. Can you name a place in nature that you recently visited?
The Garden Route in the Western Cape.

2. When did you visit the reserve?
During December 2002.

3. What does it look like? Would you say it is a developed natural place?
The coastline is extremely developed, but some natural areas appeared to be pristine.

4. What were your initial feelings since you decided to go to the Garden Route?
This was not a planned holiday. We almost decided at the last minute to go. There was no real time to plan properly and make reservations and so on. It was actually only the second time I had gone on holiday alone with friends. So choosing the holiday destination had mainly to do with how much money we could spend. We wanted to explore the Garden Route with all its sight seeing opportunities, but we had to look for cheap accommodation options. We decided on a camping spot in Plettenberg Bay. We chose a specific spot in a remote area, a distance away from the closest neighbours, because we would really like to be on our own, doing our own thing!

5. Did you experience any specific feelings while being there?
It was awesome. From our camping spot we could see the sunrise. This was really great. I was also exposed to a totally different lifestyle of people who were living almost on the beach. I had spoken to some local people, some were fisherman who went into the ocean each day to make a living. I learned so much from them, of being thankful for every sunny day, for energy and also to look forward to the next day.

I also engaged in a lot of, to me, 'foreign' activities, such as canoeing. This was my first ever canoeing experience! At first I was worried and then terrified when I realised that it was not as easy as I thought it would be. It was easier going up-stream, but when it was time to turn back (which was 7 kms later), we could not turn against the current. What made things worse was that I had a huge lady, probably weighing close to 120kg in my canoe! We finally survived

when we got help from a nature conservationist who was patrolling the area with a speed boat. This was an exhilarating experience!

We also visited small towns and did a lot of 'foreign' things. The whole purpose of this trip was to do things we have never done before! My friend even did bungee jumping!

Instead of driving on the highways, we took the 'old' roads and mountain passes. This was breathtaking. All the boulders and the heights and the majestic size of the mountains were amazing. I was so amazed at the little streams flowing amongst these enormous mountains. I felt very small.

It was also funny to not have the need to go out during the night! We were so exhausted in the evenings of everything we had explored and enjoyed during the day, that we had no need or energy to visit nightclubs or pubs! Very different from our needs in the city!

6. How did you feel when it was time to go home?

On New Year's day we decided to go back home. It was not a nice feeling, but we realised that we had no choice! We decided to visit Knysna (to have a 'for old times sake' new experience) and went to the heads for the last time, not knowing whether we will ever have such an experience again.

7. How do you feel now about your experience?

This holiday was to be the best one I've experienced as we did a lot of new things. What I remember most clearly about this holiday, is the waking up early in the morning, excited with our itinerary planned the previous evening. (Who will get up early in the morning in the city?) I realised that by being in nature, you can be yourself. We also learned to respect each other. One cannot always have it your way. Sometimes one has to compromise. This we realised with camping duties and travelling!

I did experience some negative aspects, yes! Two of our group of four, selected themselves as the leaders! At first they tried to enforce their favourites and wishes upon us. We calmly refused and eventually everybody started to work as a team.

The long distance in a very loaded, very hot, car also contributed to a little negativity. But all the positives made up for the few negatives!

I basically have a beautiful and serene memory of the holiday. When thinking back of it, I feel peacefulness. I am glad I did something different because it made all the difference in my life. It has almost been a year and a half ago, but it still feels so great. Despite the arguments and initial 'bossiness' and the few negative experiences, the over all experience for me was amazing.

8. Will you visit the area again? Why?

Maybe … when I have been to other places that I want to visit as well. When I am financially stable to go again on my own.. this time without friends.

9. Describe any single special personal nature experience you ever had.
I went on a camp in the middle of the Kalahari. Although I saw a lot of wildlife, it was the fact that the stars at night looked so much brighter that made it special. With that, the night sounds, the insects and the lions in the distance, made me feel like we are all part of nature. Each sound was louder than I had heard before. The sound of crickets made the night air seem so peaceful.

10. Why was this special?
I feel we all become too rapped up in our daily routine of our lives. Living in the concrete jungle, we forget, or do not know, how to become peaceful, how to enjoy the night sky, not hearing the sound of police and ambulance sirens. All these traumas around us and our daily lives separate us from what really matters. So, getting away gave me a chance to unwind, relax and enjoy fresh air and real silence…total solitude…

11. With what in nature can you identify? Why?
An ant. It is a community insect. It works together with its fellow ants to gather food and protect the queen. They work in harmony with each other and accomplish a lot. … but so easily something can threaten their way of life, just as in our human lives. Something big can trample and kill it and not care or even know that an ant is dead or injured. So true is it in our lives: People will try and trample over our dreams and aspirations, break our self-esteem. As we see in the ants, they just pick up the pieces (and each other sometimes) and continue. We can't stop life if one is injured, because we all need to eat!

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 23 (PI-23)

Name:	Chané Smith
Gender:	Female
Age:	20
Occupation:	Senior Ecotourism Management student, TUT
Permanent residence:	Brits
Tel no:	072 157 1770
Date and place of interview:	2 March 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	20 minutes

1. Can you name a place in nature that you recently visited?
Kruger National Park.

2. When did you visit this area?
December 2003.

3. Would you say the Kruger Park is a developed natural place?
It is unfortunately very developed with very modern facilities and an extended infrastructure. Although different rest camps have different degrees of development, the Kruger Park in general is, according to me, overdeveloped, concentrating more on foreign tourists than taking care of nature and South African people's needs.

4. What were your initial feelings since you decided to go to the Kruger Park?
This is actually a holiday that my family (myself, sister and mother) undertakes every year! This time, however, it was a surprise… That specific morning we got up early (3 o'clock) to go to the farm, Rooibokkraal, near Thabazimbi. Of course, excitement was high, but little did I know that my excitement would grow to massive proportions within the next hour…. We packed the bakkie – tents, gas braaier, camping chairs, food crates and the mini fridge. I expected then that something was not right. All these stuff for Rooibokkraal, where we have everything, except food…? I started to become curious about where we were really going to. (There was no talk of Kruger Park this year!)

5. What happened when you actually start driving to you destination?
Usually when we go to the KNP, we always drive via the Abel Erasmus Pass to Hoedspruit. The first part on the N4 is dreadfully boring, especially the Highveld regions where one drives through maize lands and nothing much interesting. Eventually I made the comment that this is a strange way to Thabazimbi. I asked my mom where we were going. "O, of course to the Kruger Park" she calmly announced. I was so ecstatic about this news. Neither myself, nor my sister expected a holiday in Kruger this year and we thought we were not 'going to make it', missing out on our annual unwinding in Kruger! I literally wished that time past faster. Unfortunately we had to overnight at a motel (it was a cosy little place) at the Wonder caves just before the Abel Erasmus pass. I can

still remember a big shoe statue at the gate / entrance of the place. The following morning we were off again, heading for Kruger…

6. What were your feelings and emotions from the time you arrived there and during your stay?

At about one o'clock we reached the Phalaborwa gate. We were so excited, I think people who saw and heard us, would think that we are mad. We were screaming, laughing and just being silly, filled with joy and pleasant feelings. After the formalities at the gate we started driving at 20 km/h in our "second home" (KNP.)

That afternoon (4 o'clock) we set out to go and look for the elephants and specifically to spot some birds. At first we were a little disappointed; we saw only a few animals for the whole day so far…. Suddenly the car in front of us stopped, pointed to a thorn tree ahead of us and appeared very excited. Then we saw them: 2 gigantic male lions and 7 females, casually lying around, sleeping and licking each other. One of the males stood up, and started with a low, deep call to the others (I could not believe my ears, I've never heard it so beautifully: that call, strong and dignified.) All of them stood up and started to move towards the road, and coming towards our bakkie, ahead of us, at the back and on both sides! Then we saw why they were so determined to get to the other side of the road - they have spotted wildebeest. Adrenaline and excitement filled me as I watch them spreading out to surround the herd. No animal was caught, but this was an amazing experience.

We were very lucky and witnessed many other beautiful sightings during this particular holiday!

7. How did you feel when it was time to go home?

Our wonderful holiday came to an end as I woke up the morning of the 10th day. I felt sad and empty, as I knew I would only, maybe, see my "second home" next year. We packed, all excitement gone and only sadness and depression as our companions.

8. Did you experience any specific feelings while driving back home?

Leaving the park at Orpen gate and into the madness of the hurried pace of life I thought to myself "All things good must come to an end". But immediately I realized that we can always return to this wonderful place. We left it for a while, but were already looking forward to the next visit.

9. How do you feel about your experience now?

I still, constantly, think of all the previous experiences I had in Kruger, lion, elephant, hyena, the list goes on and I feel deep satisfaction and appreciation and inspiration for having the privilege to be able to feel part of such a precious gem.

10. Will you visit the reserve again? Why?

Will I revisit? A million times over and over! This place motivates me, inspires me and teaches me new things with every visit.

11. You mentioned qualities that you experienced in Kruger. Can you explain?
When I enter Kruger I feel 'gone is the hurried, worrying and stressful life of the city'. Time does not matter and it seems to pass without notice, because I get lost in the amazing things nature offers. I sometimes even experience the feeling of being alone, even when others are present. When spending time at a waterhole during sunset you only experience tranquility and peace – it is just nature. Then one re-establish the strong bond between yourself and nature, finding peace within oneself, becoming one with nature. All these experiences create and stir feelings of awe, inspiration, realising your lack of superiority as a species among so many others. I become aware of my insignificance when I see a giant Baobab standing there for 300 years, or an elephant breaking the thick branches of a marula tree without effort… Then I know: there is something to fight for in this life, because without these, we would not be able to cope.

12. What, according to you, is the single most important threat to world ecology?
Global warming due to human activities.

13. Do you think human beings, in general, are disconnected in some way from nature?
Yes. We are continuously being made aware of the consequences of our actions and the effect it will eventually have on the environment. We are, however, not preventing any further degradation because of our actions. Humans are actually causing their own deaths!

14. How do you think, people cope with stress?
They turn to substances – smoking, drinking, destructive actions, etc.

15. How do you cope with your stress?
I first get quite depressed and then think about myself and my situation and consequences of possible actions. I then organise my thoughts and get to the best solution for whatever the problem is.

16. What is the impact of nature on people in general, according to your view?
By being in nature, people may get inspired to take care of nature – for their own enjoyment and for future generations.

17. What impact does nature have on you personally?
When I spend time in nature, I get inspired by all the fascinating aspects around me. I find myself thinking a lot and often I stand in awe of everything that nature offers. I then realize I should take care and inspire others to take care of nature… it is essential for survival…

18. Describe any single special personal nature experience you ever had.
The solar eclipse 2002. I was on a game farm in Botswana. The local school came out to the farm to witness the event. We all stood on a koppie. All of a sudden it became cold, the wind started to blow and an eerie glow covered the sky. All of the children bundled up against each other, scared by the unknown.

Even the cattle in the nearby kraal became restless. I weird feeling crept over me…

19. Why was this special?
It was something never experienced before, something new and unusual. It was very fascinating. Even if I try, I cannot explain what I experienced that day.

20. With what in nature can you identify? Why?
A wild dog. They have always interested me. They are fascinating, elusive and in some way project a very superstitious air to me. I am always fascinated by the unusual and different things. Maybe it is because there are still so much we can learn from them…

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 24 (PI-24)

Name:	John Blandy
Gender:	Male
Age:	23
Occupation:	Senior Ecotourism Management student, TUT
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	012 318-5306
Date and place of interview:	2 March 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	20 minutes

1. Can you name a place in nature that you recently visited?
St Lucia, Kwazulu-Natal.

2. When did you visit the reserve?
September 2003

3. What does it look like there? Would you say it is a developed natural place?
St Lucia has a well-developed infrastructure for tourism, offering many different activities and facilities that can be used by tourists. Development in the area has been limited to the town and the coastline is still relatively 'wild'. The banning of 4 x 4 vehicles from beaches also, I think, limited further development.

4. What were your initial feelings since you decided to go to St Lucia?
I was really looking forward to go as I had only been there as a child and could not remember much of what the area looked like and what it had to offer me in means of my interests, likes, and dislikes of an area. All that I could remember was seeing a lot of hippos and crocodiles! I had also heard and read about the huge variety of bird life within the area. As I had taken a keen interest in birding I was excited to see what new (and old!) species I could see.

5. Did you experience any specific feelings on your way to the St Lucia?
Travelling there was interesting as I got to see some part of S.A. that I had not seen before. It also gave me the opportunity to see how some people have learned to making a living and adapt to their specific environment. It gave me the change to open my eye to something that I had not really seen before.

6. Can you be specific on that, John?
Yes. I mean the local people making use of whatever the land provides. I was amazed to see the enormous areas covered with sugar cane. Others try farming with cattle and goat. Closer to St Lucia, people sell things they produce from material from nature – wood carvings, soap stone animals, beads from seeds, and so on. Then, also the illegal wood gathered from the indigenous forests … It was an eye-opener to become aware of that as well.

7. What did you experience from the time you actually arrived at St Lucia?

Arriving at St. Lucia, I felt glad that I had made the right decision to come here. Everything that I was seeing, hearing, breathing in the air, and feeling, everything just felt very positive. It also felt very right inside me.

During my stay here, I felt that everything I experienced was to my personal advantage. It was so brilliant to feel that way! I was exposed to som many new things – a new type of bush (I was not familiar with coastal forests at all). The experience of walking in these forests is humbling. I learned to look at everything inside in a different way. It was as if I had to adapt to fit in. My experience during the whole stay was everything I had hoped for. I learned many new things, also about myself. I also became aware of my special interest in this 'different' kind of nature, the turtles and their breeding ground I spotted along the beach.

8. How did you feel when it was time to go home?

I felt reluctance, but also gratitude for having this opportunity. Back in the city I just again sat still and felt the total satisfying feeling of the whole experience.

9. How do you feel now about your experience?

I know that I had to go back one day soon and gain more info on the new interest I had developed. I also must still take part in a number of things that I did not get the chance to the first time round!

10. Will you visit St Lucia again? Why?

Yes, for the reasons mentioned. But I would also go back to explore a few other things about St Lucia.

11. Such as?

St. Lucia appears to be a modern, but quiet, high standard town. It gives one the sense that you have managed to get away from the busy life of the city, but the influence of modern day technology is definitely starting to show. One does get the feeling that you are in an area that works on Africa time, especially if you look at how the hippo and crocodile spend the day asleep on the estuary bank. Then one surely get the feeling that they have no worry in life and are in no rush to get anywhere or do anything. And one envies them… Sometimes you also get the feeling that you could be in a world of something unique. As I was walking towards the mangroves, I got the feeling or sense that it takes me into a world that is made up of such a variety of fauna and flora and that I was totally outnumbered. I then realized that this should really be appreciated. I came to the realization that nature now has the upper hand on me. A very humbling experience. Knowing this, I could only think about one thing: How to preserve and keep it this way for as long as possible. There has to be new and improved methods to ensure that this part of nature be kept pristine so that I could have the opportunity and privilege to return, even years, and still find it as it is today. But then I also know about the mining in the dunes and what man is capable of. I know about his ability of destruction and destroying wilderness resources. I remember the estuary and the influence man and his actions had on the natural flow of the river and all the damage caused. I saw all the farms and sugar cane and cattle and erosion and the impact of it all on natural places like

this. I just feel this urge from inside to fight for nature's rights. Nature should be granted the right to follow its own course and should not be influenced or destruct by any human being. We should only be there to provide support, and care.

12. What, according to you, is the single most important threat to world ecology?
Man, trying to control nature and its natural processes.

13. Do you think human beings, in general, are disconnected in some way from nature?
Yes. I think that everything in life is just 'given' to people and in the process people have become very lazy. Therefore people take things for granted and do not go out of their way to find out where they come from and where they fit in with nature or what their function is. Cities are growing and taking up more and more space and natural land. People destroy ecosystems in many ways and don't even think twice about it.

14. How do you think, people cope with stress?
People very easily go to a doctor or shrink and take medication. In this way they try and cover up stress. They also try and do different things but don't talk about their problems.

15. How do you cope with your stress?
I try and think through my problem, identify what is bugging me and then decide what I can do to correct the problem or get rid of the stress. In other words, I spend time with myself.

16. What is the impact of nature on people in general, according to your view?
I think to most people nature has no impact. Most people take nature for granted and think that it is going to look after itself after we, humans, have destroyed it.

17. What impact does nature have on you personally?
Personally nature motivates me in life. Time spend in nature gives me that passion in life to achieve and do well.

18. Describe any single special personal nature experience you ever had.
Sitting around a camp fire at Satara Camp in Kruger watching hyenas along the fence. Then, suddenly we hear an animal in distress. The next moment the hyenas were gone. I then walked in the direction of the sounds, to the main gate, following this noise. What I found next, was astonishing: A pride of five lions had taken a wildebeest down 10m away from the gate. I spent 4 hours watching them from the gate. The interaction between the lions and hyenas was absolutely amazing.

19. Why was this special?
It was something I had never seen before. It was a real eye-opener. It was only me and 8 other people in the whole camp who had realised what had happened.

I just felt very lucky to be able to see something so close and so special and so real and feel so close to everything.

20. With what in nature can you identify? Why?

A baobab tree. It has a very long life span and only occurs naturally in the lowveld. This is the place where I would like to work and live. The tree has many functions in nature and therefore, I can say, it has a great sense of knowledge. If they could talk in human language, I am sure they would be able to tell many stories and myths of the bush. I want to be like that and be of good use to help other people.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 25 (PI-25)

Name:	Claude Buys
Gender:	Male
Age:	23
Occupation:	Senior Ecotourism Management student, TUT
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	012 318-5306
Date and place of interview:	2 March 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	15 minutes

1. Can you name a place in nature that you recently visited?
Kruger National Park

2. When did you visit the KNP?
10 – 13 January 2004.

3. Would you say it is a developed natural place?
Yes. Tarred and gravel roads are criss-crossing the park. In rest camps, it seems to increase all the time. In addition to chalets and upmarket facilities, certain structures such as walking decks, look-out points, and so on, are newly constructed. Development increases at such a rate that it damages the ecosystems along the river and decreases the tranquillity of the place. It looks like the 'park' is more interested in making money than to keeping the conservation and natural atmosphere of the place!

4. What were your feelings and experiences while being in the Kruger Park?
Now that I think back about my trip to Kruger, I remember the excitement and pleasure I had the day we departed. The trip was a long one, but the main idea of it was to relax and I tried to that from the start. When we arrived I felt glad to see the place was still the same as we left it a few years back. Nothing was added or removed. After entering at Numbi Gate, I could see the bush was very dense. I was filled with excitement and expected to see something behind each bush! This feeling made me realise I'm now in a wilderness area, and it is my duty to respect and care for this particular ecosystem. It awaked another type of excitement in me because I now felt part of this special place. The place had this primitive feeling to it, almost like time has stood still. It was so primitive we got lost, because route indications were overgrown by plants. Then we finally arrived at Lower Sabie. The place was beautiful. Accept for a walking-deck and look-out stand that stretched from the cafeteria right to the edge of the river. They made it so big! It stood out from every place you looked at it! I felt they could have saved money and gain tranquillity by making it smaller and less obvious. I wanted to go to Kruger…to have a relaxing time and get away from the everyday life in the city, but here was the huge man-made structure reminding me of back home! Fortunately the chalets were more environmental friendly, much smaller and less obvious.

Every morning we got up early, drove out to the nearby dam and listened how nature woke-up. This was my highlight of the day! In the developing world we as humans have forgotten to just stop and listen to nature. That's why on holidays people rush to the national parks and experience the whole feeling. The recreational value of the park was so big to me, I felt it the whole time, freedom and peace.

5. How did you feel when it was time to go home?
At first I had this funny feeling… I did not want to leave. I wish I could stay for longer. But then, when we actually took the long road back home, I did not feel that disappointment to leave anymore, because I knew that it will be there to visit again. It is going to be the same as I left it when I go back there! Accept for the huge deck! I hope there would be no more of those!

6. Will you visit the park again? Why?
Yes! Definitely! Because the relaxation, freedom, tranquillity, peace and knowledge I gained there, would still be there in the future for me to enjoy!

7. What, according to you, is the single most important threat to world ecology?
Global warming

8. Do you think human beings, in general, are disconnected in some way from nature?
Yes. We moved further away from nature because of evolution and apparently became less dependent on nature. We live indoors, buy what we need. We do not spend time in nature anymore.

9. How do you think, people cope with stress?
They bottle it up inside themselves and become emotionally unstable. Then they need psychologists to give them some positive mindsets.

10. How do you cope with your stress?
I take time off and break away from everything stressful. I prefer to go fishing or just be quiet somewhere in nature and listen to the sounds.

11. What is the impact of nature on people in general, according to your view?
People see nature as a place to relax and get away from city life. Few of them realise that they are totally dependent on nature to stay alive.

12. What impact does nature have on you personally?
Nature creates a place where I can find calmness and rest within myself. In nature I can find myself. Nature teaches me a lot because nothing is learned like learning by self-experience!

13. Describe any single special personal nature experience you ever had.
In KwaZulu-Natal, I saw a black rhino cow giving birth. I heard about their endangered status and realised how precious the moment was.

14. Why was this special?
During that moment I took the decision to make my career in nature.

15. With what in nature can you identify? Why?
I identify with an elephant, not because of it size or strength, but because of their memories. Each experience I have in nature is special to me and I will never forget them. Whatever I experience in nature, I can re-tell and just like elephants, the memories will be carried over to next generations.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 26 (PI-26)

Name:	Douwe van der Zee
Gender:	Male
Age:	48
Occupation:	Facilitator
Permanent residence:	Johannesburg
Tel. no:	082 575 2731
Date and place of interview:	(1) November 2001 Port Elizabeth (2) February 2002 Pretoria (3) 2 April 2002 via e-mail (4) October 2002 (5) March 2003

This interview report is a summary of various communications between myself and Douwe van der Zee.

1. What is your relation to nature?
From early childhood, I had an intense interest in nature. To study for a BSc degree in Botany and Zoology, and later continue with a BSc Hons and MSc in Zoology seemed to me the natural extension of this interest. That was accepted as the norm to express an interest in nature.

2. What is you relation to your own nature within yourself? (Are you what you want to be – in your work, family, social life, your self?)
I was not a very happy child, and I wanted to be happy. Problem number one was that I had some problems with this God I was told about. Things did not match. All attempts to somehow communicate with Him seemed futile. This made me very angry.

I tend to be very gullible. For a long time I simply accepted what I was told as true. But there always comes a time when I add up, and then one and one does not make two. Then I start questioning.

My scientific career seemed cut out for me. I got awarded my masters degree with distinction. There were possibilities in the academic field. Yet, I could not get myself do to a PhD, which would have been a prerequisite. It was only later that I deeply questioned the philosophy of science, and came to discover its foundations of clay. "Coincidentally" it was the same time that I was trained to become a voluntary counsellor with Life Line SA in Pretoria. The discovery of my emotional side, and the power of emotion, led to a major change in my life.

I started to look for answers. Who am I? Who is this God that I have been told to believe in? What is nature? Why does the church seem to regard anything "natural" as evil?

It took me many years, but the answers started coming. I realised that the limited, fragmented way of thinking that I had been brought up with, did not

allow me to find the answers I was looking for. It was part of the problem. And so I had to let go of all my old beliefs and attachments in order to find new answers. At times this was scary. My limitations had been my security. Every timid exploratory step into a new, unknown world was met with criticism and attack. Other people also felt secure within their limitations and did not want these threatened. I had no intention to threaten or offend anybody, but then I realised that the simple act of opening a door to explore outside, is a threat to what is inside. When I saw that, I could accept it and live with it. I have never regretted it.

3. Are all people attracted to nature?

All of us, in some way or another, are attracted to nature. A certain ecologist, Edward Wilson, calls it "biophilia". In some of us the attraction is so strong that we regularly need to go to the most remote wilderness areas in the world. Wilderness trails in the Kruger Park are extremely popular and fully booked. Others are happy to visit game reserves in their cars every now and then. Some enjoy hiking in the mountains. There are those who do not have the slightest interest in visiting wild areas, but they still like gardening, even if this only means watering the pot plants once a week.

4. Do some people only go into nature when they are stressed?

When we get stressed, the attraction becomes even stronger. Sitting at a lodge overlooking a waterhole, or sitting at the sea, or walking in the mountains, leaves us with an overwhelming sense of relief.

5. How do you see the relation between religion and nature?

I grew up in a fairly orthodox Christian home. My education and surrounding were essentially Western. I, therefore, know much more about this aspect of society than about other cultures or religions.

Christianity, especially, tends to have the view that it is the only "true" religion and that followers of all others should be converted to this religion. As far as I know, Judaism, Christianity and Islam (which I group together as "Western" religions), are patriarchal in their approach and together they have been, and still are, responsible for most of the religious conflict on earth. Whereas these three religions see God as an all-powerful male being (Farther) outside humanity, the Eastern religions see "God" as something in all of us an in nature. They are more oriented towards nature and that which is natural.

Many people in Africa, North and South America, Australasia, traditionally lived in harmony with nature before the Europeans arrived. All of these have traditionally been called "barbaric", "heathen" or "primitive". They all had very limited technology and believed in ancestors or other spirits, etc.

As you know, the "Western" religions, usually in collaboration with "civilisation" and capitalism, have conquered huge areas of the world. Many of these areas have become infected with the anti-nature, high technology norm. The results have in many cases been catastrophic for the locals.

6. You earlier mentioned that you realised that science has fundamentals of clay. What do you mean?

Science is a typically western way of thinking about the world. Just as there have been genuine searchers in every religion, there have been genuine and sincere scientists. But science as a whole is simply another religion.

The scientific process starts with an idea – a human idea – called a hypothesis. Usually this hypothesis is the result of thoughts about observations. The hypothesis then has to be tested. Scientists do experiments or make specific observations to test whether the hypothesis is true or false. If the hypothesis explains the results of all the experiments, it is now called a theory. Now comes the crunch: More people will do experiments in many different circumstances to see whether the theory can explain everything. This means that if a hypothesis or theory explains phenomena a number of times, it is accepted to be true. In the past this way of 'scientific' thinking was called 'logical positivism'.

Science cannot operate without assumptions. Because normally only one variable is tested at a time, the others are 'reasonably' assumed to be constant.

In practice, anything which could not be measured or about which theories could not be tested, came to be seen as non-existent. This is one of the core systems of belief of what has become to be known as 'hard science': what cannot be seen, heard, felt, smelled or tasted, directly or indirectly (through instruments), does not exist. We owe satellites, computers and telephones to this scientific approach. We owe the desperately unhappy state of mankind and the destruction of the world to the dismissal of all that is not measurable as non-existent.

One of the common assumptions made in the scientific process was that of 'objectivity'. The scientist is supposed to distance himself from the experiment emotionally and only consider the 'facts'. Although scientists have traditionally always been keen to stress this (and admitted by implication the existence and influence of emotion), they were very reluctant to explore what emotions actually were and where they come from, because of the difficulty of falsifying theories about emotions. The 'Human Sciences' had a major battle to 'prove' their validity. Because a scientist was supposed to be 'objective', which, as we know, is impossible, emotion was simply denied. The religion of science came to deny the very humanness of humanity.

7. Why do so many scientists want to deny the existence of a spiritual dimension?

Perhaps for the same reason that other religions do. Science is nothing more than a form of religion, an indoctrinated belief system reluctant to look at its own foundations and assumptions. And as religion tries to limit God and man, so does science.

'Social scientists' such as psychologists had an interesting time with this. By their very nature, they deal with things of the human mind that cannot be seen, touched, or heard. For this reason they have traditionally been regarded with

scepticism by natural scientists. From their side they tried their best to be recognised.

Phenomena of the mind were at first simply assumed to be seated in the brain and were studied by medical doctors who called themselves psychiatrists. They believed that because the 'pathological' symptoms were essentially malfunctions of the brain, they could be treated by physical techniques, such as medicines and 'shock treatment'. To this day there are many who still follow this approach. I wonder how much damage they have done…?

The 'psychologists' at least partly abandoned this assumption, although psychology students still have to study the anatomy of the brain! But now they have a problem: Where do you start? How do you 'prove' your findings? More and more psychologists are venturing into the realm of 'spiritual healing'. But they still have to register with the Medical and Dental Council …

8. What, to you, is useful of nature?

'Useful' is a term created by people. We call trees bearing fruit useful, because we can eat the fruit. We call pioneer plants 'weeds' (not useful), because they grow where we don't want them to grow. It is only we, people, who see ourselves as somehow better than nature. That is what it is when you define everything purely in terms of its use to us. It ignores the fact that in nature things simply **are**. Every organism has its part to play, but their only 'use' is simply to play that part. If an organism disappears, the ecosystem changes. It can continue without that organism, but it will now function differently.

As a nature guide, one of the most frequent questions I encountered was: 'What is the use of this?' Sometimes it is easy. Aardvark have long, strong claws with which they can dig open termite mounds. But of what use are aardvark themselves in nature? They eat termites. Would it make a difference if they don't? Yes, they dig many holes and these serve as hiding places for warthog and other creatures. So, yes they seem to be useful. But what about mosquitoes? Well, their larvae serve as food for many insects and fish, and they themselves are eaten by frogs, reptiles and other animals. They definitely have a role to play in the food web. But they are also responsible for transferring of diseases, like malaria. In nature, the malaria parasite has its function. From a human perspective which includes judgement, fear of death, etc., it is 'bad'. Just as insects that feed of crops are 'pests' and pioneer plants are 'weeds'. 'Useful' has come to denote that which is of 'economic benefit' to humans, i.e. which can make some people rich, often at the cost of nature and other people.

9. Do you think that people are disconnected from nature?

On the one hand it is clear that we are part of nature. Like other mammals, we have mouths, digestive systems, reproductive systems, and so on. There is no single part of our bodies that somehow distinguishes us from other animals. On the other hand, we deny our relatedness to nature. We regard ourselves as somehow 'better' than nature. I mentioned before, nature has traditionally been regarded as 'evil'. We had to 'conquer' and 'tame' the wilderness. People that do 'bad' things, we call 'beastly', even though animals do not do those things.

10. Why have we become so separated from nature, from ourselves and perhaps, from God?

The Bible tells the story about a man being seduced by a woman, the woman by a snake (devil), and both man and woman then being evicted from paradise. Similar stories can be found in all cultures all over the world. All human beings try to somehow 'explain' the origin and the 'fall' of man. In the West this was taken very literally and many people still believe that snakes should be killed because of this.

What seems certain is that, at some stage and in some way, mankind started experiencing itself as separate from both God and nature. With that separation came the sense of 'good' and 'bad' judgement. What we call 'thinking', is essentially judgement. Our mind is what separates us.

One of the authors that most dramatically affected my thinking in this regard was Erich Fromm. He says: 'The experience of separation arouses anxiety; it is, indeed, the source of all anxiety.' He goes further: 'The awareness of human separation, without reunion by love, is the source of shame. It is at the same time the source of guilt and anxiety'. Guilt is the one sensation that is common to every single human being. We say that events, or certain behaviours, make us feel guilty. I would contend, however, that guilt is, as Fromm says, inherent in our state of separation. Things that seem to 'make us feel guilty' are merely events that trigger a sense of guilt that is already there.

11. Is there a possibility to become reconnected to nature?

Forgiveness resolves guilt. Forgiveness is in essence the realisation of oneness – a very deep and powerful experience. In fact, if you do not have such an experience, you can be sure that you haven't really forgiven. When we experience Oneness, we do not experience the guilt and anxiety that goes with the experience of separation anymore.

I have finally come to the conclusion that our attraction to nature is nothing other than the desire for the experience of oneness – for being ourselves, free from all guilt and anxiety.

12. Do you think that we, as people of Africa, are more connected to nature than, for example people from Europe or America?

With the exception of 'primitive' people who have never been separated from nature, people who live in nature do not necessarily respect it. Take the 'pioneers' who crossed America or the Voortrekkers in South Africa. They learned to live with nature, but also destroyed it. There was a time not long ago in South Africa where farmers regularly killed any predator or bird of prey they could lay their hands on! Many still do! To them these animals are 'vermin'.

The idea of nature reserves where there was to be no hunting was detested, as witnessed by the enormous opposition to the establishment of the Umfolozi Game Reserve and the Kruger National Park, for example.

Many of these pioneers have left the land, and have come to live in the cities. They lost the contact with the land, and many are longing back for that contact.

With a greater sensitivity and understanding, they now have a very different approach to nature.

Black South Africans that used to live on the land had an intimate knowledge of it. It was the only world they knew. Before the Europeans came, they too, seemed to live in harmony with their environment. Then many of them left the land and flooded towards the cities, where they lost the contact. Today many black people have no link with the earth anymore.

Fifty years ago, interest in nature mainly came from the English. It seems that, only once people have been completely separated from nature, do they develop an interest to return to nature. Only through knowing who you are not, will you come to know who you are.

13. Do you think that a disconnectedness or separation from nature reflects a disconnectedness from God, or vice versa?

It seems that humanity as a whole has chosen to be separated from God, and that includes being separated from nature. This separation has not only caused our human misery, but also increasing environmental destruction. As a result of this, we are becoming more aware.

Many 'spiritual' books mention the 'ego' – that which we think we are. It is the result of separation. Ego thinks in terms of good and bad, of superior and inferior. It leads to anxiety, fear, guilt, and has an enormous need to control. Most people on earth probably reject these ideas. Most people also participate in the destruction of our environment. Our separation from nature is directly related to our apparent separation from God.

14. What is awareness and what is consciousness with regards to our disconnectedness?

We are becoming more aware, because we are beginning to realise what we are doing. Human rights movements, anti-cruelty movements, organic farming, 'New Age' movements are all aspects of the human spirit aimed at changing the norms that have separated us from nature, our fellow human beings and God – whatever you perceive Him to be.

Similarly, our attraction to nature can be seen as an increasing awareness of our inseparability from nature. I believe that the method of operation is the series of norms in nature that directly oppose our own norms. As judgement has been responsible for our norms, we long to be somewhere where there is no judgement. This could be to be with another person that is not judgemental, or in nature. Because so many of us do not trust other people (because we do not trust ourselves), we find it so much easier to find the lack of judgement in nature.

What separates us from nature is not a 'higher consciousness', as so many have claimed. As indicated by our norms, we are still to a large extent 'unconscious'. There are three levels:

1. There is an underlying unity and perfection in all things.

2. We (humans) (unconsciously) experience ourselves as unworthy/imperfect and separated and therefore deny our oneness/worthiness/perfection.
3. We (unconsciously) deny this separation, i.e. we deny that we are denying our oneness/worthiness/perfection.

To re-reach our unity with nature consciously, we have to become aware of the different levels of denial:

1. That we are denying our denial of our sense of separation and concomitant unworthiness.
2. That we experience ourselves as separated and unworthy.

15. Coming back to spirituality, do you think there is any spiritual connection between humans and animals?

Dalene Matthee leaves the reader with an uncanny sense of connection between Saul and the old elephant in the Knysna Forest in her book 'Circles in the Forest'. Many people who have lived in the bush for a long time, can testify to this kind of communication with animals and plants.

I have observed a distinct difference in demeanour between the elephants of the Botswana game reserves and those of Klaserie in South Africa. The difference is the presence or absence of a similar mentality or warfare. The Klaserie elephants are hunted and are also subject to culling n the Kruger Park. A friend of mine had been responsible for shooting a large number of elephants as part of culling operations in Africa. He claims that, even when he approaches an elephant in a zoo, the elephant immediately becomes aggressive!

I have always been aware of a kind of communication with animals. Not verbal, just a kind of feeling. I have also never had any fear for wild animals. However, I have no need to take risks. The essence of communication is mutual respect. Anyone with a feel for nature realises that to move too close to an animal with young, is looking for trouble. That is not respect.

On a trip with a group in Botswana, I had an encounter with a lion. It is a long story, but eventually I ran into a lioness with cubs, or rather she ran into me! She charged from a bush and I knew, if I ran now, I would have had it. So I stood still, facing the lioness. When she saw me, she 'slammed on the brakes'. She growled incessantly and loudly. I stood like that for what seemed like hours, but was probably less than a minute, and the growling continued. Then I decided to retreat slowly. I gave on step backwards, and the lioness charged. 'This is not going to work' I decided, and stopped in my tracks. The lioness also stopped. She was now 10 or 15 meters from me. Although I could feel the adrenalin pumping, and I was very alert, I also had a strange sense of calm, and I started talking to her. She had cubs, and there were people around. I could sense her fear and confusion, and I honed in on that. It was as if she understood me. Eventually I could physically see her relaxing. Her tail dropped, she stopped growling, turned round and walked away.

Recently I was walking past a house in Johannesburg with a viciously barking Alsatian dog inside. As I passed the gate, the dog charged and pushed the gate open, coming straight for me. I did exactly the same as with the lioness. I stood

still, facing the dog. The response was amazing. Time vanished and everything seemed to happen in slow motion. Within a second she changed from a vicious demon to a cowering, submissive dog that lay down in front of me. It was a miracle.

16. Why do some people seem to have the ability to communicate with nature and most people not?

Communication means to share. Sharing indicates a kind of mutual respect, trust and humility; the kind of respect, trust and humility so many of us have lost. When this happens, there is fear, and fear inhibits communication.

Eckhart Tolle, in his book, The Power of Now, says that people who carry a lot of anger inside without being aware of it and without expressing it, are more likely to be attacked, verbally or even physically, by other angry people, and often for no apparent reason. They have a strong emanation of anger that certain people pick up subliminally and that triggers their own latent anger.

I believe it is the same with animals. I know of some trail rangers who have repeatedly been charged by potentially dangerous animals, and some who have almost never been charged. This is my problem with carrying rifles. They give a false sense of security and often encourage guides to disturb animals to give their clients a 'good experience'. Instead of promoting communication, they actually build resentment.

Yet, in most of the instances where I felt in communication with animals, were during charges. The difference is that I did not have a rifle with me in two of the instances. Somehow the potential danger inherent in the situations produced a kind of very alert state in me, and that state enabled a different level of perception. It is not fear, but more like a heightened awareness.

I have often kept snakes, and have been bitten by venomous snakes twice, without any effect. In both cases I was negligent. But in both cases the snakes seemed to have felt a lack of aggression from my side and kind of said: 'Careful! This time it was only a warning, but don't let it happen again!'
When I was with a group in potentially dangerous situations, the first reaction of the people was panic. Only when they saw how calm I was did they calm down.

Perhaps this could be that I have spent many years 'confronting' myself. I would rather call it 'getting in touch with myself'.

17. Do you think self-searching is necessary?

This has been on of my major struggles in life. I had to deal with a lot of pain. I was a hypersensitive child and things that others may scarcely have noticed, caused me to shut down completely. I was especially aware of this during the time I lived in Tsitsikamma. At times I was able to relax and deeply enjoy the beauty of the area, but most of the time I was plagued by a restlessness. I had to work, work, work. Often I was unable to deeply savour the long walks I did along the coast when performing duties. It was as if something was driving me. I recall my wife's sighing when I took books with me to study even when we went to the beach!

Now I understand what it was. It took me many years to get in touch with my childhood pain, and to do the grieving that I never did as a child, because I had shut down. As I did so, my ability to relate to nature improved.

Getting in touch with my childhood pain also necessitated the realisation that the God I was so angry with and felt so alienated from, did not exist. I had to let go of all my old beliefs in order to let a reality so much greater than I had ever imagined enter my consciousness. It is not over yet…

18. You have been doing wilderness therapy for some time now. Why are experiences in nature so effective?

In 'normal' society, we fight crime, we try to be good and 'civilised', we work harder and harder to achieve results. Yet, one glance at the world would immediately tell us that it is simply not working. We talk about love, unity and compassion all the time, but there is very little evidence of it. What you resist, persists.

Nature represents the original state of oneness. Its norms are the exact opposite of our society and that is what attracts us. Yet we are reluctant to let go of control and therefore seldom allow us to experience the full effects of the norms in nature.

At a subconscious level, we get confronted with a very different set of norms. In a short encounter with nature, we also experience this, but do not allow it to have much effect on us. In a longer experience however, especially where we spend long periods alone, it affects us by forcing us to become aware of ourselves. For many people this can be a terrifying experience. One of the first things to emerge in our consciousness, are the 'negative' emotions. Those that lead us to our pain. That is the very reason why many people do not want to be alone, especially not in the wilderness. However, if the 'negativity' is allowed to be, it subsides. Other emotions may appear and go. Often a deep sense of peace is eventually experienced. This may take time.

To some extent this happens in any encounter with nature. The longer the encounter and the wilder the area in which it happens, the more lasting the experience (I think!). However, it is an internal experience. Even when with a group of people, participants will seldom share the lack of judgement and other norms they experience in nature with others. We have fewer inhibitions, but will seldom allow ourselves to let all aspects of ourselves emerge.

19. Are we part of nature?

We are part of nature. Nature is not a collection of objects, but a communion of subjects. In our 'primitive' state we were not conscious of our being part of nature. There may still be people who live in that state. Through some mysterious process that lies beyond our comprehension, humanity started perceiving itself as separate from, and better than nature. This (unconscious) process was also responsible for the assumptions and norms that characterise a society alienated from nature. Many, if not most, people on earth are still in this phase.

20. Will we 'consciously' 'heal' and become one with nature?

The sense of separation and the consequent destruction of the environment, violence, and general human misery, is beginning to cause a shift in consciousness in humanity as a whole. The many 'green', 'new age', 'health', 'anti-cruelty to animals', 'self-help', and similar movements, as well as the considerable increase in interest in nature, are all symptoms of this. We are still partly unconscious, as typified by blaming, conflict and rationalisation, but we are moving towards consciousness of our sense of separation. This is the prerequisite for attaining consciousness of our oneness with nature. As mentioned before, attempting to become conscious of our oneness with nature is impossible without first becoming conscious of our state of separation. However, our tendency is to deny all that goes with the sense of separation (such as racism, sexism and violence).

What is needed, is a shift in consciousness by humanity as a whole. But in order to reach this, every individual human being has to go through it – Jung's concept of 'individuation'. This is the paradox. All our efforts to change the world are in vain, and simply continue the sense of separation with all its consequences. Only by turning towards ourselves and taking responsibility for ourselves, will we have an effect. Self discovery is not a luxury indulgence anymore – it is essential for healing the world.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 27 (PI-27)

Name:	Daleen van der Heever
Gender:	Female
Age:	30
Occupation:	Clerk
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	083 703 6332
Date and place of interview:	29 June 2004, Pretoria
Duration of interview:	25 minutes

1. Wat is die natuur vir jou?
Ek dink dit is waar jy weer krag kry vir jou daaglikse lewe.

2. Wat is jou verhouding met die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur moet beskryf, sal jy sê dit is intens of net oppervlakkig?)
Ek sal nie sê dit is 'n verhouding wat jy genoeg maintenance gee nie maar te dink ek is tog nader aan die natuur as wat meeste van die stadsbewoners is omdat ek op 'n plot groot geword het.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Ek dink dit is 'n baie spirituele een want dit herinner jou aan die Skepper en omdat ons almal soos 'n legkaart in mekaar pas en dit gee 'n mens so 'n bietjie van die waardering van waar 'n mens in die hele ding in pas.

4. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?
Ek dink dit leer ons om nederig te wees om terug te sit en te dink dat ek is eintlik net stof. Nederigheid en waardering.

5. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?
Ek het in die stad gebly tot ek 9 jaar oud was en toe het my ma hulle na 'n plot getrek en ek dink dit is daar wat ek vir die eerste keer besef het hoe mooi 'n sonsopkoms eintlik is sonder om geboue rondom jou te sien en ek het weer bewus geraak van die klein dinge rondom my.

6. Wat het die gebeurtenis vir jou beteken?
Ek dink as kind besef jy nie werklik die impak nie maar nou dink ek dit is dat dit jou nader aan die natuur bring.

7. Hoe beïnvloed hierdie gebeure jou werk en lewe vandag?
Dit beïnvloed meer my persoonlike persepsie en net 'n bietjie terug sit en net dink oor dinge en jy kan kalmeer.

8. Wanneer jy in die natuur is waarvan word jy bewus?
Ek dink die natuur is die enigste ding wat jy met al jou sintuie kan ervaar.

9. Wat doen jy om van die natuur rondom jou bewus te raak? (Hoe word jy bewus van dinge rondom jou?)
Isolasie en my self af te sonder en die oogklappe af te haal en net rondom jou te kyk en in te neem.

10. Is daar iets in die natuur, 'n dier, plant, rivier of landskap wat jy mee kan identifiseer? Op watter manier identifiseer jy hiermee? Wat beteken dit vir jou?
Klip vir 'n harde kop en 'n verbintenis met die see en berge. Ek is nie regtig soos 'n berg nie want ek het nie so baie standvastigheid in my nie en die see is meer wispelturig.

11. Dink jy dat alle lewens vorme op een of ander manier 'n vorm van gevoel, emosie of bewustheid het?
Ek dink hulle het. Ek dink die natuur druk homself meer uit as wat ons dink en ons moet net begin luister.

12. Hoe sien jy die plek en rol van mense in die natuur?
Ons het 'n opdrag gekry om na die natuur te kyk en dit nie so te verniel soos wat ons doen nou nie.

13. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Ek sien dit as 'n baie persoonlike ding en ek dink dit het baie te doen met die natuur en dit is ook vir my interessant want ek dink mense wat die natuur afskeep skeep ook hulle spiritualiteit af. Alles is deel van die skepping en ons pas ook in dit in.

14. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Baie belangrik vir my. Daar is ook baie mense wat vandag nie eers aan God glo nie en ek dink 'n mens kan dit nie skei nie.

15. Is die mens die mees belangrikste vorm van lewe op aarde?
Ek dink ja ons het die opdrag gekry om die Skepping op te pas en jy moet dit ook maar in konteks sien.

16. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Ja.

17. Dink jy mense is verbind met die natuur?
Baie meer as wat ons dink.

18. Dink jy dat wanneer mense nie verbind is met die natuur dat hulle ook nie verbind is met God nie? Of om gekeerd?
Ek sal nie sê in alle gevalle nie maar ek dink tog daar is 'n konneksie.

19. Dink jy dat ons as mense van Afrika, is meer verbind met die natuur as wat mense van Europa of Amerika is?
Nie noodwendig nie. Ek dink nie so. Ek dink jy kan enige plek bly en deel wees van die natuur as jy wil.

20. Is daar 'n moontlikheid om weer met die natuur te verbind as jy nie meer verbind is nie? Hoe?
Ek dink dit is die beste om jouself te isoleer en jy moet baie eerlik wees met jouself en net stil word en dink.

21. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek?
Die Drakensberge.

22. Hoekom is dit jou gunsteling plek?
Berge fasineer my baie en dit gee ook vir my 'n gevoel van rustigheid.

23. Wanneer jy 'n area besoek, hoe verkies jy om te reis? (alleen, saam met familie, vriende)
Ek verkies om alleen met my familie te gaan.

24. Wat verkies jy om te doen wanneeer jy in die natuur is? (jou gunsteling buite aktiwiteit)
Ek geniet dit baie om te stap.

25. Voel jy persoonlik dit is nodig om op 'n gereelde basis na die natuur terug te keer?
Ja ek dink mens moet net weer verbind en net weer gaan krag kry om met die lewe aan te gaan.

26. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike areas? Wat verkies jy? Hoekom?
Ek is baie teen dit. Moenie hierdie enorme huise in groen areas of ander belangrike natuur plekke bou nie. Ek verkies eenvoudig.

27. Wat is vir jou 'n voorbeeld van 'n natuurlike area wat baie ontwikkel en toeganklik is?
Die Krugerwildtuin.

28. 'n Voorbeeld van 'n area wat matig ontwikkel is maar nog steeds die stilte van 'n wildernesarea het?
My skoonpa se plaas.

29. 'n Voorbeeld van 'n area met min of geen ontwikkeling?
Mosambiek

30. Kan jy 'n hoogtepunt beskryf van 'n vorige besoek aan 'n plek in die natuur? Waar en wanneer? Hoekom sien jy dit as 'n hoogtepunt?
Dit was baie mooi om vir die eerste keer die Alpe te sien en dit was een van my grootste drome om eendag die Alpe te kan sien en dit was vir my net verskriklik mooi.

Die volgende vrae sal wees oor 'n spesifieke vakansie /reis wat jy onlangs op was:

31. Watter plek het jy besoek?
Mosambiek.

32. Wanneer en vir hoe lank was die besoek?
1 week.

33. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
2 maande.

34. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy met voorberiedings begin?
Laaste 3 dae.

35. Wat was jou gevoel tydens die voorbereidingsfase?
Baie rof en uitgesien .

36. Wat was jou gevoel en emosies die dag voor jy vertrek het? Hoekom het jy so gevoel?
Ek het baie uitgesien daarna. Wat dit is 'n area wat ek nie geken het nie.

37. Jy kom by jou bestemming. Kan jy kortliks vir my jou ervaring, positief en negatief beskryf terwyl jy daar is?
Positief – dit was vir baie mooi. Negatief – baie van die klein motorfietse en dit maak baie geraas.

38. Indien moontlik beskryf jou gevoelens saam met die ervaring wat jy gehad het?
Tragedie in die plek met soveel moontlikheid en dit is so half toegedruk en weggesteek.

39. Aan die einde van jou vakansie, hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Ek dink ek was in 'n mate bly want ons was nie alleen op die vakansie nie en daar was baie negatiewe gevoelens tussen ons en die ander persone.

40. Terwyl jy huis toe ry was die gevoelens nog steeds dieselfde of het jou emosies verander?
Ja die gevoelens was dieselfde.

41. Was daar enige negatiewe gevoelens tydens hierdie tyd terwyl jy by die bestemming was en op pad terug?
Ja maar dit is nie die omgewing se skuld gewees nie.

42. Toe jy terug keer na jou daaglikse lewe kan jy jou gevoelens beskryf tydens die eerste paar dae?
Mens verlang na die rustigheid.

43. En nou hoe voel jy?
Lus vir vakansie. Maar dit het waardering vir die lewe by my tuisgebring.

44. As jy vir 'n oomblik terug dink aan jou hoogtepunt en dit weer ervaar, het dit enige effek op jou?
Ek dink dit het waardering by my weer gebring en my gewys om alles weer te kan waardeer.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 28 (PI-28)

Name:	Jana Engelbrecht
Gender:	Female
Age:	34
Occupation:	Teacher
Permanent residence:	Ventersdorp
Tel no:	018 264-3524
Date and place of interview:	5 July 2004, Ventersdorp
Duration of interview:	25 minutes

1. Wat is "natuur" vir jou?
Alles wat natuurlik in die omgewing voorkom.

2. Wat is jou verhouding tot die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur beskryf, sou jy se dit is redelik intens, of meer oppervlakkig?)
Ek sou sê dit is oppervlakkig. Ek dink nie dit is so intens nie.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Ek dink dit speel 'n groot rol maar ek is nie altyd so bewus daarvan nie.

4. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?
Ja, dit leer my baie.

5. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?
Seker maar soos ek groot geword het op die plaas, van klein tyd af.

6. Wat het daardie oomblik vir jou vertel, of beteken?
Dat die natuur rustig is, 'n mens kan daar rustigheid gaan kry…dis waar jy bietjie afskakel…

7. As jy terug dink, hoe beïnvloed dit jou werk en lewe vandag?
Ek dink elke keer as ek rustigheid soek, dan weet ek ek kan teruggaan na die natuur toe, weer daar gaan rustigheid soek…

8. Wanneer jy in die natuur is, wat is jou grootste waarneming?
Hoe alles so volmaak saamwerk en die rustigheid en die vrede wat 'n mens daar kry.

9. Wat doen jy om die natuur rondom jou waar te neem?
Ek word net stil en kyk wat om my gebeur.

10. Is daar iets in die natuur, 'n dier, plant, rivier of landskap, waarmee jy kan identifiseer? Hoe? Wat doen dit aan jou?
Ek sal sê 'n dolfyn…dis baie interessant. Ek dink die vry wees van die dolfyn. Dit maak my baie kalm.

11. Dink jy dat alle lewensvorme een of ander gevoel, emosie of waarneming het?

Ja, ek dink tog so ja. Plante en diere en alles.

12. Hoe sien jy die plek en die rol van die mens in die natuur?
Ek sien ons as bestuurders van die natuur, wat ons nie altyd baie goed is mee nie.

13. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Ek dink dit is jou bewus wees van ‘n skepper, van die hele skepping.

14. So dit is definitief gekoppel aan jou geloof?
Ja.

15. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Ek dink die natuur maak geloof makliker, ‘n geloof in ‘n God.

16. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur? Verduidelik…
Ja. In ‘n mindere of in ‘n meerdere mate. Party dae meer as ander, maar ek sal sê elke dag ja.

17. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur wanneer jy op vakansie is of weg gaan vir ‘n naweek?
Ja, dan beslis…dan is daar bietjie meer tyd vir oplet na die klein dingetjies…Ek maak my vakansie ook so uit dat dit om die natuur is.

18. Is die mens die mees belangrikste lewensform op aarde?
Nee, ek sal nie so sê nie… Ek dink elke lewensvorm het ‘n doel hier op die aarde en ek dink as een van daardie lewensvorme nie meer daar is nie, het die ander ook nie meer bestaansreg nie. Dan gaan hy ook nie meer bestaan nie…dan stort dit in een, die hele ketting…

19. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Ja. Die meeste van die tyd. Ek dink partykeer meer as ander kere.

20. Dink jy dat mense verwyderd is van die natuur?
Ja, ek dink die meeste mense, jy gaan aan met jou lewe en jy dink nie aan watter gevolge jou dade op hierdie oomblik op die natuur gaan hê byvoorbeeld nie. Ek het nou die dag met iemand gepraat en die persoon se toe ook, hy leef vir vandag, “never mind” wat more gaan gebeur met sy kinders of sy kleinkinders of wat ookal…so baie mense lewe verby die natuur… mens probeer net jou brood en jou botter op die tafel kry en dit is al.

21. Dink jy om verwyderd te wees van die natuur reflekteer om verwyderd te wees van God of andersom?
Ja, ek dink tog daar is ‘n verband tussen, om ingesteld te wees op die natuur en om ingesteld op God te wees. Ek wil nie sê dat mense wat nie so na aan die natuur is nie, is nie godsdienstig nie…dit is nie noodwendig so nie… Ek dink net party mense se ingesteldheid is anders as ander s’n.

22. Dink jy dat ons, as mense van Afrika, meer verbind is tot die natuur, as mense van byvoorbeeld Europa of Amerika?
Ek glo so ja.

23. Is daar 'n moontlikheid om weer verbind te word aan die natuur nadat 'n mens verwyderd was van die natuur? Hoe?
Ja ek dink jy kan. Weet jy ek dink om net elke dag 'n klein bietjie weer met die natuur in kontak te kom en jouself bewus te maak van die natuur. Klein dingetjies jy weet. Al grawe jy net 'n onkruidjie uit jou tuin uit, so bietjies bietjies…stap vir stap… Stap vir stap ja.

24. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek? Waarom?
Die see. Ek weet nie, die see is net vir my…ek kan daar gaan sit en hy kan in en uit kom, hy kan woes wees, hy kan stil wees, dit is vir my verskriklik kalmerend.

25. Wanneer jy op 'n besoek aan 'n plek in die natuur is, hoe verkies jy om te reis? (Alleen, met 'n metgesel, familie, vriende)
Met my familie.

26. Wat verkies jy om te doen as jy in die natuur is ? (Jou gunsteling aktiwiteite in die buitelug)
Stap, sit en kyk. Ek is nie baie aktief nie…

27. Dink jy persoonlik dit is vir jou belangrik om gereeld die natuur te besoek? Hoekom moet jy van tyd tot tyd die natuur besoek ?
Ja ek dink dit is tog belangrik, soos ek gesê het, batterye herlaai.

28. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike gebiede?
Ek dink net nie dit word altyd met die nodige sorg gedoen nie. Ek dink partykeer word daar sommer net ingespring en dit word ontwikkel sonder om te dink aan die konsekwensies wat dit gaan hê op die natuur.

29. Wat verkies jy?
Natuurlike plekke.

30. Hoekom?
Dit is maar net hoe ek is, ek hou meer van stiltes, ruimtes… Ek verkies die ruimtes eerder as toegeboude plekke.

31. Wat is volgens jou 'n voorbeeld van 'n natuurarea (wildtuin, nasionale park ens.) wat goed ontwikkel en toeganklik is?
Goed ek gaan ook nou ook nie so baie rond nie maar ek dink die Krugerwildtuin byvoorbeeld, en hierdie Vredefortkoepel. Ek dink dit is plekke wat nogal redelik toeganklik is en 'n mens nogal na aan die natuur kan kom.

32. Kan jy 'n hoogtepunt beskryf van n vorige besoek aan die natuur? (Wanneer,waar?)
Toe ons by Plettenbergbaai was. Ek dink net daar by die see, dit is maar altyd vir my die lekkerste.

33. Hoe lank gelede was dit min of meer.?
So twee jaar terug.

34. Hoekom was dit vir jou 'n hoogtepunt?
Die vroegoggend stappe langs die see, as die son opkom so vyfuur in die oggend. Dit is net lekker. Die see… dit voel so of jy skoongemaak word.

Die volgende vrae is oor 'n spesifieke uitstappie wat jy onlangs onderneem het.

35. Watter plek het jy besoek?
Krugerwildtuin.

36. Wanneer en vir hoe lank was die besoek?
Dit was verlede jaar en dit was oor 'n langnaweek so vir vier dae.

37. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
Twee weke.

38. Hoe lank voor die vertrek het jy met voorbereidings begin?
Ek het net die aand voor die tyd gepak.

39. Hoe het jy gevoel tydens hierdie voorbereidingsfase?
Ja, 'n mens is opgewonde, jy het uitgesien daarna.

40. Wat was jou gevoelens en emosies die dag voordat jy vertrek het?
Nog steeds opgewonde. Ek is altyd opgewonde as ek met vakansie gaan.

41. Gedurende jou reis na jou bestemming,was daar enige spesiale gedagtes in jou kop waaroor jy gepraat het in die voertuig, of wat jy van die ander kon agterkom?
Ja, ek dink almal was opgewonde. Hierdie een ou met 'hierdie verskriklike kennis' het alles opgeneem en alles wat ons gesê het neergeskryf.

42. Enige atmosfeer of emosies wat jy kan onthou?
Ja, ek dink die hele atmosfeer was een van genieting en ek kan onthou toe ons daar bo ingery het… Ons het by die heel boonste hek van die Kruger ingery, Dit was so mooi, die bome het oor die rivier gegroei... Net algehele ontspanning en rustigheid.

43. Jy het by jou bestemming aangekom. Vertel my kortliks van jou ervaringe, positief en negatief, terwyl jy daar was. As dit moontlik is, vertel ook van jou gevoelens wat jy ervaar het tydens jou onderving.
Positief, soos ek sê, om daar deel van die natuur te gewees het. Die plek waar ons die eerste aand gaan slaap het, ons het vleisgebraai en toe het die bokkies en goeters sommer tot by ons gekom waar ons gesit het. Dit was 'n ervaring wat ek nog nooit gehad het dat die goeters so mak is en so naby kom nie. Ons het nie regtig van die groot vyf gesien nie, maar ek dink ons was 'n bietjie te vinnig deur die Krugerwildtuin om hulle rerig te sien. Maar elke olifant, elke dier was vir my 'n ondervinding om dit te sien…

44. Die einde van jou vakansie het aangebreek. Hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Ja, soos dit maar altyd voel, sleg.

45. Tydens die reis terug huis toe, was daardie gevoelens steeds teenwoordig of het jou emosies verander?
Nee ek dink dit was maar nog steeds so. ‘n Mens is hartseer dat dit verby is, maar ek dink ‘n mens het nog steeds die lekkerte saam met jou gevat. Jy het nog steeds die… lekker uitgerus… Nee, nie so seer uitgerus nie want dit was ‘n vinnige besoek maar ek dink dit was meer… Ons het weer iets anders gesien en iets anders gedoen. Dit was lekker.

46. Was daar enige negatiewe gevoelens of ervaringe terwyl jy daar was en oppad terug? (Brei uit)
Ek dink net die spoed waarmee dit gedoen is. Ek dink dit was al wat vir my negatief was. Jy weet, dit was net te vinnig. Daar was nie genoeg tyd om rerig…alles te sien nie.

47. Toe jy teruggekeer het na jou werk en roetine, kan jy die gevoel beskryf van die eerste paar dae terug?
Skool. Dit is al wat ek kan sê, dit was maar weer skool… (die gesigsuitdrukking vertel alles…)

48. En net ‘n maand na jou besoek, hoe voel jy nou?
Ja, ek dink mens het nog steeds die lekkerte gehad, maar ‘n mens sal graag weer wil gaan.

49. As jy stil sit en terug dink na jou ondervinding se hoogtepunt, het dit enige effek op jou?
By Olifantskamp … as ek weer dink toe ek kon uitkyk oor daardie vallei, ek weet net dit motiveer my weer om aan te gaan en te dink ek wil een dag weer daar uitkom.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 29 (PI-29)

Name:	Jan Bosman
Gender:	Male
Age:	54
Occupation:	Farmer
Permanent residence:	Klipplaatdrift
Tel no:	083 733 5814
Date and place of interview:	6 July 2004, Klipplaatdrift
Duration of interview:	30 minutes

1. Wat is "natuur" vir jou?
Plantegroei, grond, net soos God hom geskape het, soos hy daar buite staan. Bome, grond, wild, alles wat nie kunsmatig is nie is natuur.

2. Wat is jou verhouding tot die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur beskryf, sou jy se dit is redelik intens, of meer oppervlakkig?)
As boer is ek redelik intens betrokke met die natuur.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Ja definitief. Ons boere is afhanklik van son en reen en grond ens.

4. Wat is jou verhouding tot jou eie natuur binne in jouself? (Is jy wat jy wil wees - in jou werk, familie, sosiale lewe en jouself?)
Ja wel, ek sal nie sê ek is presies waar ek wil wees nie. 'n Mens wil altyd graag verder wees as wat jy is. Ek is 'n boer en ek doen tog in 'n mate wat ek wil doen. Jy kan ook nie altyd doen wat jy wil nie, jy moet doen wat die natuur jou toelaat om te doen.

5. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?
Elke dag. Hier is nou baie ouens wat reenvoorspellings doen, en waarna kyk hulle, na die natuur. Doe natuur leer die mens wat in die toekoms gaan gebeur en wat in die verlede gebeur het.

6. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?
Ek dink die tyd toe ek begin boer het. Ek was klaar met die weermag en het begin boer…

7. Hoe lank gelede was dit?
Dit was hier by negentien nege en sestig. So om en by 30 jaar terug.

8. So dit het 'n definitiewe invloed gehad op jou werk en jou lewe vandag?
Ja, ek sou so dink. As ek nie lief was vir die natuur nie dan sou ek nie nou geboer het nie.

9. Wanneer jy in die natuur is, wat is jou grootste waarneming? (gebruik mense ooit hul sintuie?)

As jy in die natuur stap, die geluide wat jy hoor, voëls, diere, water, weersomstandighede. Daar is baie dinge in die natuur wat jy kan sien en waarna jy kan luister in die natuur.

10. Wat doen jy om die natuur rondom jou waar te neem? (Hoe word jy bewus van dinge rondom jou?)
Ek stap en ek kyk en ek luister. Ek kyk ook rond as ek in die bakkie is.

11. Is daar iets in die natuur, 'n dier, plant, rivier of landskap, waarmee jy kan identifiseer?
Ek sou sê wat vir my die grootste aantrekkingskrag het in die natuur is die wild, seker ook omdat ek self 'n wildsplaas gehad het. Daar is nie 'n spesifieke dier waarmee ek identifiseer nie.

12. Dink jy dat alle lewensvorme een of ander gevoel, emosie of waarneming het?
Ek dink so. Ek dink hulle moet met mekaar kommunikeer.

13. Hoe sien jy die plek en die rol van die mens in die natuur?
Die mens is in die natuur geplaas om dit te bestuur na die beste van sy vermoe. Nie volgens wat hy wil nie, maar volgens wat die natuur vir hom wys wat hy kan dioen en wat hy mag doen. Jy kan nie die natuur versteur soos jy wil nie. Die mens moet hom bestuur en bewaar.

14. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
In die stilte van die natuur kan jy nader aan jou God kom. Waar kan jy nou nader aan jou God kom as in die natuur waar jy kan stil raak en luister na die natuur. Jy kom nader aan jou Skepper in die natuur.

15. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Daar moet 'n verhouding wees tussen geloof en natuur. As jy nie geloof het in dit wat jy doen nie gaan jy die natuur heeltemal versteur.

16. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur?
Ja definitief. Ek sien elke dag die mielies en ek voel die wind waai en ek sien as dit reën. Ek is elke dag bewus van hom.

17. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur wanneer jy op vakansie is of weg gaan vir 'n naweek?
Ja,dan is jy nog meer bewus van hom. Ek hou daarvan om in die bos in te gaan. Ek gaan bly nie in 'n hotel in die Kaap nie. Ons was onlangs vir 'n troue af Kaap toe en daar was te veel rumoer.

18. Is die mens die mees belangrikste lewensform op aarde?
Ek sal sê ja. Die mens is tog daar geplaas om die natuur te bestuur.

19. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Ja ek voel tog deel van die natuur. Dit hang af waar jy met jou Skepper staan. As jy rebels raak dan raak jy meer verwyderd van die natuur, maar as jy stil word binnekant dan voel jy meer deel van die natuur.

20. Dink jy dat mense verwyderd is van die natuur?
Ek dink baie mense in die stede het nie ‘n benul wat daar aangaan nie. Party van hulle bly in Johannesburg en gaan hou vakansie in Durban, hulle gaan van die een stad na die ander stad. Hy klim hier op die vliegtuig en klim daar af en hy sien nie eers wat in die natuur aangaan nie. Hulle weet nie waar kom die goed vandaan nie. Ons sien dit as hulle opnames maak oor die voedselpryse. Baie mense koop hom in die bottel of koop hom in die blik, en hulle het nie ‘n idee waar dit vandaan kom nie en dus ook nie ‘n benul van wat in die natuur aangaan nie.

21. Dink jy om verwyderd te wees van die natuur reflekteer om verwyderd te wees van God of andersom?
Nie noodwendig nie, maar as jy na aan die natuur is en op die platteland is dan het jy meer tyd vir jouself en ook meer tyd vir jou Skepper. Die jong manne daar in die stede weet net van dagga en “drugs”, drink en jol. Dit is hulle afgod. Ek dink daar is ‘n duidelike onderskeiding tussen die natuurliefhebber en die ou wat niks van die natuur wil weet nie.

22. Dink jy dat ons, as mense van Afrika, meer verbind is tot die natuur, as mense van byvoorbeeld Europa of Amerika?
Ek sal nou nie namens die mense in Europa kan praat nie, maar ek dink tog omdat die mense in Afrika meer primitief is lewe hulle nader aan die natuur.

23. Is daar ‘n moontlikheid om weer verbind te word aan die natuur nadat ‘n mens verwyderd was van die natuur? Hoe?
Ja ek dink seker so. Ek het myself voorgeneem om die dag as ek aftree en dit kan bekostig, om weer terug te gaan bos toe. Ander mense kan ook miskien op hulle ou dag eers nader aan die natuur kom.

24. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek? Waarom?
Enige plek in die Bosveld. Ek stel nie belang om oorsee te gaan en al daardie plekke te gaan verken nie. Daar is soveel mooi plekke in Suid Afrika met mooi natuur wat ek nog self nie gesien het nie, maar ek soek die Bosveld. Die see maak my maag onstuimig. Daardie branders klink vir my net soos ‘n wind in ‘n bloekombos. Dit maak my onrustig.

25. Wanneer jy op ‘n besoek aan ‘n plek in die natuur is, hoe verkies jy om te reis? (Alleen, met ‘n metgesel, familie, vriende)
Ek gaan gewoonlik saam met die familie. So nou en dan saam met vriende op ‘n “jag-trip” of so iets.

26. Wat verkies jy om te doen as jy in die natuur is ? (Jou gunsteling aktiwiteite in die buitelug)
Stap in die natuur, of rustig ry tot op ‘n punt en sit en luister en dink.

27. Dink jy persoonlik dit is vir jou belangrik om gereeld die natuur te besoek? Hoekom moet jy van tyd tot tyd die natuur besoek ?
Vir my as mens is dit belangrik. As ek in die stilte kom dan is ek rustiger en kalmer en baie nader aan my Christelike omstandighede. As jy elke dag met die

boerdery besig is raak jy onstuimig. As jy ‘n paar dae in die Bosveld was en jou kop ‘n bietjie skoongemaak het, dan is jy tog nader aan jouself ook weer. As jy bietjie van die gejaag af weg kom het jy tyd om te dink, en die beste tyd om te dink is wanneer jy in die bos sit.

28. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike gebiede? Wat verkies jy? Hoekom?

Dit hang af van watse ontwikkeling praat ons. As ontwikkeling is ten bate van die natuur, wat hom meer toeganklik maak dan het ek nie ‘n probleem daarmee nie….maar jy kry ontwikkeling waar bome wat honderde jare oud is uitgestoot word, en daai grond omgeploeg word, en landerye gemaak word op swak grond, wat glad nie gedoen moet word nie. Dit is vir my sinloos. Met praktiese ontwikkeling het ek nie ‘n probleem nie, solank hulle net nie voor die voet vernietig nie.

29. Wat is volgens jou ‘n voorbeeld van ‘n natuurarea (wildtuin, nasionale park ens.) wat goed ontwikkel en toeganklik is?

Meeste van ons national parke is goed ontwikkel dink ek. Hulle is iewers in Karoo besig met een of ander ontwikkeling waar hulle die groot vyf wat voorheen daar voorgekom het weer wil hervestig. Ek dink dit is ‘n voorbeeld van ‘n plek wat goed ontwikkel is, ek sal graag wil gaan kyk hoe lyk dit daar.

30. En van ‘n natuurarea wat half ontwikkel is maar steeds die rus en vrede van die wildernis het?

Pilanesberg het dele wat goed ontwikkel is maar daar na boontoe is daar nog honderde hektare wat gladnie ontwikkel is nie.

31. Van ‘n onderontwikkelde, verwyderde natuur area?

Ek was al op verskeie jagplase waar daar bitter min ontwikkeling was, maar dit is nie heeltemal verwyderd nie. Die eienaars is baie keer dorpenaars wat geld het en wild koop en toe span, maar hulle het nie ‘n benul waaroor dit gaan nie. Ek was nou onlangs op ‘n wildsplaas met twee watersuipings, en om daardie suipings is dit twee of driehonderd meter kaal getrap. Daar trap hulle die bos dood. Dit is mense wat te veel geld het en dan ‘n speelplek soek.

32. Kan jy ‘n hoogtepunt beskryf van ‘n vorige besoek aan die natuur? (Wanneer, waar?) Hoekom was dit vir jou ‘n hoogtepunt?

Daar is ‘n paar hoogtepunte as ek so terugdink. My grootste hoogtepunt in die natuur was vroeer jare toe ek ‘n plaas daar in Alldays se wêreld gehad het wat my eie grond was. Ongelukkig het omstandighede my gedwing om dit verkoop, maar as ek daar was was ek die rustigste van almal.

Dit is ‘n ander rustigheid. As jy op die klipkoppe sit en jy kyk oor die Limpopovallei dan sien jy myle ver. Daar is niks wat jou pla nie. Jy sien in die toekoms in. Daar is geluide van die natuur oral rondom jou. Ek het daar gesit dan seil daar ‘n luislang twee drie meter van jou af verby. Jy kan dit nie vir ‘n ou beskryf nie. Jy weet nie moet jy skrik, moet jy spring, moet jy kyk of wat moet jy maak nie. Daar het ek so baie ervarings en die natuur gehad en jy kan dit nie oorvertel nie. Daar het soveel dinge met my gebeur daar, jy kan dit probeer vertel maar jy sal nie kan verduidelik nie.

Die volgende vrae is oor ‘n spesifieke uitstappie wat jy onlangs onderneem het.

33. Watter plek het jy besoek?
Ons het onlangs gaan jag op ‘n plaas naby Cumberland, links van Ellisras.

34. Wanneer en vir hoe lank was die besoek?
Dit was seker so ‘n maand gelede, van die Donderdag af tot die Sondag.

35. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
Seker ook so ‘n maand.

36. Hoe lank voor die vertrek het jy met voorbereidings begin?
Omdat ek redelik gereeld gaan jag was daar nie vir my te veel voorbereidings gewees nie. So drie dae voor die tyd het ek maar al die goedjies gekry wat ‘n ou nodig het.

37. Hoe het jy gevoel tydens hierdie voorbereidingsfase?
Opgewonde. Dit is maar soos ‘n jagter is. Jy sien uit daarna om te kyk wat kan jy oplewer in die jagveld.

38. Vertel my van die opset. Hoeveel mense, voertuie ens. was ingesluit by jou beplanning?
Ons was agt persone wat daar was met drie voertuie.

39. Wat was jou gevoelens en emosies die dag voordat jy vertrek het?
Ek was opgewonde, het baie uitgesien na die paar dae. Dit was lekker, ons het lekker begin ontspan oppad soontoe.

40. Hoekom het jy dit ervaar?
Jy skakel af. Ek het vergeet van wat by die huis aangaan. Dit is vir my lekker.

41. Gedurende jou reis na jou bestemming,was daar enige spesiale gedagtes in jou kop waaroor jy gepraat het in die voertuig, of wat jy van die ander kon agterkom?
Oppad soontoe in die bakkie het ons maar gesels oor wie wil wat skiet. Dit het maar oor pryse gegaan, jag is deesdae nie meer so goedkoop nie.

42. Enige atmosfeer of emosies wat jy kan onthou?
Net ‘n gevoel van uitsien en opgewondenheid. Almal was bly om bietjie weg te kom van die huis af.

43. Jy het by jou bestemming aangekom. Vertel my kortliks van jou ervaringe, positief en negatief, terwyl jy daar was. As dit moontlik is, vertel ook van jou gevoelens wat jy ervaar het tydens jou onderving.
Ons het nie regtig negatiewe ervarings gehad nie want ons is goed ontvang daar. Ons was opgewonde en het afgepak, en sommer dadelik vuur gemaak en ontspan. Dit was rustig, daar was nie nie ander vakansie gangers wat gepla het nie. Die ou het ligte opgesit sodat jy in die aand kan kyk na die watergat, wat lekker was.

44. Die einde van jou vakansie het aangebreek. Hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Ek was nie heeltemal morbied nie maar ek was steeds spyt dit was so vinnig verby. Alle lekker dinge wat tot op 'n end kom is nie lekker nie.

45. Tydens die reis terug huis toe, was daardie gevoelens steeds teenwoordig of het jou emosies verander?
Ja, maar dit was tog lekker om by die huis te kom. Ons het die Sondag middag terug gekom sonder enige teëspoed. Niemand het my gepla nie en ek het rustig afgepak. Daar was gelukkig nie breuke en skade terwyl ek weg was nie, so alles het darem goed afgeloop.

46. Was daar enige negatiewe gevoelens of ervaringe terwyl jy daar was en oppad terug? (Brei uit)
Die enigste negatiewe gevoelens wat ek daar gehad het was dinge wat die eienaars van die plaas gedoen het, wat vir my nie lekkker was nie. Hulle laat goed skiet wat nie geskiet moet word nie. Dit is maar besigheid. Jy kan nie vir hom sê wat moet hy doen nie, hy bedryf hom soos hy wil. Elke ou bedryf maar die natuur op sy plaas soos hy dink is goed. Soos ek vir jou gesê het die ouens was dorpenaars en hulle voel nie so baie vir die natuur nie.

47. Toe jy teruggekeer het na jou werk en roetine, kan jy die gevoel beskryf van die eerste paar dae terug?
Ek het darem bietjie uitgerus, maar dit was maar swaar daardie eerste paar dae om weer in die roetine te kom.

48. En net 'n maand na jou besoek, hoe voel jy nou?
Ek wil al weer gaan. Ek sal enige tyd nou ry as ek die tyd gehad het. Dit was baie lekker.

49. As jy stil sit en terug dink na jou ondervinding se hoogtepunt, het dit enige effek op jou?
Ja. As ek nou moet terugdink aan die hoogtepunt van ons "trippie", die Saterdagaand het ons klomp manne gesit langs die vuur. Die gesels en die kuier rondom die vuur. Ons het diep dinge gesels, huisprobleme, vrouens probleme, kinders probleme… Daar hoor jy van ouens se probleme wat jy nooit verwag het hy sal sulke probleme het nie. Een van my groot vriende het daar bietjie verder weg van alles af vertel van sy probleme, wat ek nooit van geweet het nie. Wat ek gehou het van die bedryf is ons het lekker gekuier en ontspan, en diep dinge gesels. Partykeer as dit net so 'n klomp mans bymekaar is dan raak dit mos 'n "varkbedryf" met 'n gedrinkery. Dit was nie so nie. Ons het lekker gekuier. Die ouens het maniere gehad…

50. Watter effek het dit op jou as jy terugdink aan die tyd daar op die plaas?
Ja, as ek op die stroper sit, dan dink ek aan die lekker van die storie. Ek dink ook aan waaroor ons gesels het. Die ouens se sere in hulle hart. As 'n ou eers sy hart uitgepraat het dan besef jy ook dat hulle al baie swaar gehad het in die lewe. Ek dink dit het wel 'n positiewe effek op my, ek het mense beter leer ken daar in die veld en ek sal die trippie onthou.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 30 (PI-30)

Name:	Petrus Jacobs
Gender:	Male
Age:	54
Occupation:	School principal
Permanent residence:	Ventersdorp
Tel no:	084 5177 084
Date and place of interview:	7 July 2004, Ventersdorp
Duration of interview:	30 minutes

1. Wat is "natuur" vir jou?
Natuur is wat God geskape het, voordat ons ingemeng het en die goed deurmekaar gemaak het.

2. Wat is jou verhouding tot die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur beskryf, sou jy se dit is redelik intens, of meer oppervlakkig?)
Ek is baie lief vir die natuur. Ons gaan baie op staptoere. Ek probeer soveel as moontlik in die natuur wees, dit is vir my verskriklik lekker.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Die natuur speel 'n groot rol in my lewe, dit laat my ontspan. Ek vergeet al my sorge, dit laat my voel soos 'n nuwe mens.

4. Wat is jou verhouding tot jou eie natuur binne in jouself? (Is jy wat jy wil wees - in jou werk, familie, sosiale lewe en jouself?)
Op my ouderdom moet ek maar 'n onderwyser bly, ek sou nie 'n onderwyser wou op hierdie stadium nie, maar ek het nie 'n keuse nie. Ek sou graag meer betrokke wou wees by die natuur, maar ek het nie 'n keuse nie, ek moet maar aangaan.

5. Leer die natuur jou enigiets?
Ja baie. Bevoorbeeld die interaksie tussen diere, en hoe hulle afhanklik is van mekaar.

6. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?
As kind het ek op 'n plaas grootgeword in die Laeveld, tussen die berge. Ons het baie gaan stap en onder die watervalle gaan swem en daardie tipe goed. Ek het in die natuur grootgeword, Nelspruit, Sabie, Tzaneen se wêreld…As jy terug dink, hoe beïinvloed dit jou werk en lewe vandag? Dit is waar ek geleer het van die natuur en begin lief word het vir die natuur. Vandag is my hele familie lief vir die natuur, dit is vir ons baie lekker om in die natuur te wees en daar te kamp.

7. Wanneer jy in die natuur is, wat is jou grootste waarneming? (gebruik mense ooit hul sintuie?)
Die interaksie tussen verskillende diere en voëls, hoe God dit alles geskape het.

8. Wat doen jy om die natuur rondom jou waar te neem? (Hoe word jy bewus van dinge rondom jou?)
Ek is nooit sonder my verkyker en kamera nie. Ek loop rond in die veld en kyk wat ek kan sien en hoor.

9. Is daar iets in die natuur, 'n dier, plant, rivier of landskap, waarmee jy kan identifiseer?
Daar is nie spesifieke dinge in die natuur waarmee ek identifiseer nie. Wat wel vir my interessant is, is hoe kleiner diere bv. 'n rooibok in die natuur reageer om te kan oorleef.

10. Dink jy dat alle lewensvorme een of ander gevoel, emosie of waarneming het?
Ja ek dink so, selfs plante. Party mense dink jy is simpel as jy met plante gesels, maar ek dink steeds hulle het ook 'n tipe van gevoel of emosie aangesien hulle ook kan seer kry. Dit is vir my interessant om na 'n praatjie op die radio te luister waar hulle navorsing op plante doen. Ek glo alle lewensvorme reageer op aandag.

11. Hoe sien jy die plek en die rol van die mens in die natuur?
Soos dit behoort te wees, moet die mens die natuur help en bewaar, maar op die oomblik is ons besig om af te breek teen 'n geweldige tempo. 'n Voorbeeld is, toe ek nou onlangs by Pilanesberg was, hoe die olifante te veel geraak het en plantegroei vernietig. Dit is ons skuld. Ons het by die natuur ingemeng en daarom moet ons dit nou bestuur, bv. olifante uitdun.

12. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Dit is 'n geestelike ervaring.

13. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
As jy nie geloof het nie, kan jy die natuur nie waardeer nie. Deur jou geloof sien jy hoe God alles geskape het en hoe dit inmekaar vloei. Selfs al die klein dingetjies pas in die groter prentjie in.

14. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur? Verduidelik…
Ja, selfs as ek in die stad is kyk ek na die wolke en die reën. Ek is die heeltyd bewus van wat die natuur gaan maak, want ek is afhanklik daarvan.

15. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur wanneer jy op vakansie is of weg gaan vir 'n naweek?
As ek op vakansie gaan, gaan ek gewoonlik see toe of Bosveld toe. Dan is ek eers bewus van die natuur.

16. Is die mens die mees belangrikste lewensform op aarde?
Nee, ek dink nie so nie. Ek dink almal is gelyk. God het ons geskape as die kroon van die skepping, maar as jy die woord belangrik gebruik, sal ek sê, nee. Die natuur is aan ons onderworpe, maar ons is nie belangriker as die kleiner skakels in die natuur nie.

17. Voel jy deel van die natuur?

Ja, as ek in die natuur is, voel ek deel van die natuur. Daarom voel ek ook jy moet jou kant bring in die natuur.

18. Dink jy dat mense verwyderd is van die natuur?
Ja, veral mense in die stede.

19. Dink jy om verwyderd te wees van die natuur reflekteer om verwyderd te wees van God of andersom?
As jy in die stad bly, dan is jy nie elke dag bewus van die natuurlike skepping van God nie, maar jy kan nogsteeds 'n christen wees. Op die platteland is jy wel minder gejaagd en het dalk meer tyd vir jou godsdiens

20. Dink jy dat ons, as mense van Afrika, meer verbind is tot die natuur, as mense van byvoorbeeld Europa of Amerika?
Nee, ek dink nie so nie. Kyk hoeveel buitelanders kom na ons land toe vir die natuurskoon. Ek dink ons plaaslike mense is te min bewus van die natuur.

21. Is daar 'n moontlikheid om weer verbind te word aan die natuur nadat 'n mens verwyderd was van die natuur? Hoe?
As daar sekere inmenging in jou lewe kom, wanneer jy op die verkeerde pad is, glo ek kan jy weer verbind raak aan die natuur.

22. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek? Waarom?
Omdat ek in die Laeveld grootgeword het, sal ek sê tussen die berge en die klowe waar jy kan rondstap en na die varings kyk ens. Dit is fantasties mooi.

23. Wanneer jy op 'n besoek aan 'n plek in die natuur is, hoe verkies jy om te reis? (Alleen, met 'n metgesel, familie, vriende)
Met my familie en met vriende wat dieselfde belangstelling het as ek. Van my vriende is goeie boomkenners en dierekenners, en dit is lekker en leersaam om saam met hulle weg te gaan.

24. Wat verkies jy om te doen as jy in die natuur is ? (Jou gunsteling aktiwiteite in die buitelug)
Ek stap rond en neem foto's en ek kyk rond met my verkyker.

25. Dink jy persoonlik dit is vir jou belangrik om gereeld die natuur te besoek? Hoekom moet jy van tyd tot tyd die natuur besoek ?
Ja, veral as jou stresvlakke begin opgaan. Dit is lekker om te ontlaai in die natuur en rustig te word.

26. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike gebiede??
As daar nie eers impakstudies gedoen word nie, dan glo ek nie ontwikkeling moet plaasvind nie. As jy na ons eie regering kyk, waneer daar baie geld by betrokke is, word daar ontwikkel al is dit totaal onverantwoordelik. As die natuur nie vernietig word nie, dan is dit aanvaarbaar tot in 'n sekere mate.

27. Wat is volgens jou 'n voorbeeld van 'n natuurarea (wildtuin, nasionale park ens.) wat goed ontwikkel en toeganklik is?

Ek sou sê die Pilanesberg. Ek voel dit word redelik goed bestuur op die stadium en dit is toeganklik vir mense soos ons van Ventersdorp byvoorbeeld.

28. En van 'n natuurarea wat half ontwikkel is, maar steeds die rus en vrede van die wildernis het?
Ek weet nie regtig nie, miskien 'n plek soos Mabalingwe, wat 'n vakansieoord het, tesame met 'n groter wildernisgebied.

29. Van 'n onderontwikkelde, verwyderde natuur area?
Ons het 'n plaas daar in die Groot Marico wêreld, daar is niks. Dit is vir ons lekker om somtyds met 'n karavaan soontoe te gaan, en van die natuurlik spruite se water te gebruik.

30. Kan jy 'n hoogtepunt beskryf van n vorige besoek aan die natuur? (Wanneer, waar?)
Die Kaapse berge, klowe en passe, dit is iets besonders wat ons hier nie regtig ken nie. Dit is vir my 'n hoogtepunt om vanaf die Kaap na Knysna te ry…

31. Hoekom was dit vir jou 'n hoogtepunt?
Dit lyk anders as wat ek ken. Hier by ons is ons gewoond aan die bosveld met 'n heeltemal anderse plantegroei.

Die volgende vrae is oor 'n spesifieke uitstappie wat jy onlangs onderneem het.
32. Watter plek het jy besoek?
Die Pilanesberg.

33. Wanneer en vir hoe lank was die besoek?
Dit was omtrent 'n week gelede vir sewe dae.

34. Hoe lank voor die tyd het jy besluit om te gaan?
Ons het 'n jaar voor die tyd bespreek om plek te kry.

35. Hoe lank voor die vertrek het jy met voorbereidings begin?
'n Week voor die tyd basies.

36. Hoe het jy gevoel tydens hierdie voorbereidingsfase?
Ek het nie anders gevoel nie, maar was opgewonde soos normaalweg.

37. Vertel my van die opset. Hoeveel mense,karre ens. was ingesluit by jou beplanning?
Een kar en vyf mense.

38. Wat was jou gevoelens en emosies die dag voordat jy vertrek het?
Ek sien gewoonlik geweldig uit na die breek wat voorlê, en vergeet van al my probleme.

39. Hoekom het jy dit ervaar?
Jy kan jou probleme by die huis los en gaan ontspan.

40. Gedurende jou reis na jou bestemming,was daar enige spesiale gedagtes in jou kop waaroor jy gepraat het in die voertuig, of wat jy van die ander kon agterkom?
Daar was drie dogters in die kar, en ons het maar oor hulle eksamens en universiteitslewe gesels.

41. Enige atmosfeer of emosies wat jy kan onthou?
Hulle was bly die eksamens was verby en het uitgesien na die rus.

42. Jy het by jou bestemming aangekom. Vertel my kortliks van jou ervaringe, positief en negatief, terwyl jy daar was. As dit moontlik is, vertel ook van jou gevoelens wat jy ervaar het tydens jou onderving.
Toe ons daar aankom was daar nie ‘n bespreking vir my nie, dit was die enigste negatiewe aspek. Hulle het egter die probleem vinnig uitgesorteer, en het ‘n aangename chalet gekry. Die natuur is pragtig daar en verder was dit baie lekker en het ons alles positief ervaar.

43. Die einde van jou vakansie het aangebreek. Hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Dit was maar bietjie neerdrukkend om te dink dit is weer tyd om terug te gaan na die realiteit, maar ons het ten minste bietjie uitgerus.

44. Tydens die reis terug huis toe, was daardie gevoelens steeds teenwoordig of het jou emosies verander?
Ja, dit was nog steeds nie lekker om terug te keer na die normale roetine toe nie.

45. Was daar enige negatiewe gevoelens of ervaringe terwyl jy daar was en oppad terug? (Brei uit)
Ek was bietjie teleurgesteld oor die hoeveelheid wild wat ons daar gesien het, maar dit is te verstane na die reën die vorige week en dit was redelik ruig. Die park se veld was egter in goeie kondisie en dit was lekker om te sien.

46. Toe jy teruggekeer het na jou werk en roetine, kan jy die gevoel beskryf van die eerste paar dae terug?
Gelukkig het nog vakansie vir twee weke gehad, so ek het darem tyd gehad om weer aan die gang te kom. ‘n Mens gaan maar vinnig weer aan met jou normale lewe.

47. En net ‘n maand na jou besoek, hoe dink jy sal jy dan voel?
Wel, ek dink ek sal seker maar begin uitsien na my volgende vakansie.

48. As jy stil sit en terug dink na jou ondervinding se hoogtepunt, het dit enige effek op jou?
Daar was baie hoogtepunte in ons week, onder andere het ons gesien hoe ‘n wildbewaarder ‘n olifant gepyl het uit ‘n helikopter en dit was vreeslik interessant. Dit was eintlik erg om te sien hoe die olifante verward geraak het en in ‘n bondel probeer het om mekaar te beskerm. As ek terug dink daaraan besef ek net weer watse wonderlike natuurskoon ons het en hoe kosbaar dit vir ons is. ‘n Mens vergeet dit in vandag se gejaag om aan die lewe te bly.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 31 (PI-31)

Name:	Stewart Steyn
Gender:	Male
Age:	22
Occupation:	Senior Ecotourism Management student
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	012 318-5306
Date and place of interview:	2 March 2004, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria Campus
Duration of interview:	15 minutes

1. Can you name a place in nature that you recently visited?
Leopard Creek game farm in the Limpopo province, between Vaalwater and Ellisras.

2. When did you visit this area?
November 2003.

3. What does it look like? Would you say it is a developed natural place?
The farm consists of a few wooden bungalows with thatched roofs, a main building with a bar and restaurant and a sky deck with swimming pool and relaxation area. Although this sounds 'developed', the whole area is actually undeveloped and one has the feeling of being in a very rustic environment.

4. What were your initial feelings since you decided to go to this game farm?
In our everyday lives, we are so busy and pressured for time, that we forget about nature and all the wonderful things out there. No wonder we sometimes feel disconnected from other living things! This Leopard Creek game farm belongs to one of my old school friends and he invited me and a couple of friends over for the weekend. The invitation could not come at a better time!

5. Did you experience any specific feelings on your way to this area?
From the moment we left Pretoria, I got this exciting, peaceful feeling inside me. I had this picture in my mind that there where we are going, no one can bother us or irritate us like in the city. The moment we left, we all took our watches off and threw them in a box in the trailer.

The journey to the farm was wonderful. The scenery was beautiful and very relaxing. As we drove into Vaalwater, on could feel the bushveld atmosphere. The people are very friendly, relaxed and excellent hosts.

6. And from the time you arrived there and during your stay?
We got to the farm (normally about 2½ hours drive from Pretoria) almost six hours later, because of all the beautiful sightings and stops we made along the route. As we drove into Leopard Creek, two giraffes were standing not twenty

meters from us, looking at us as if they are glad and equally excited to see us! This was an amazing sighting!

The facilities on the farm were excellent, still very primitive (exactly what you want in the bush!) The huts were almost invisible from a distance. We had no electricity. Gas was used for cooking and lights.

Our first priority was to have sundowners on the huge wooden deck, overlooking the Tamboti River. The experience was overwhelming. We all just stood there for at least half an hour, observing, listening to all the sounds of nature. No one said a word. I have never felt so connected with nature and the surroundings in my life. I cannot describe the peaceful, relaxing, one-with-nature feeling we had. We felt so close to nature at that moment. I almost felt untouchable; nothing could do us any harm at that moment. Sundowners were not that important anymore! The experience during 'sundowner' time meant so much more!

The weekend was like a dream. The early morning happy chirping of the birds was a lovely sound to wake up to. We walked and drove around the whole day. We observed many different animals. Giraffe, kudu, impala, warthog, bushbuck, eland, and zebra taught us about life in the wilderness. We wanted to learn more.

7. How did you feel when it was time to go home?
Obviously we were sad when it was time to leave.

8. Did you experience any specific feelings while driving back home?
We discussed our experiences on the way back home. This was definitely an experience not one of us would ever forget.

9. How do you feel about your experience now?
I always appreciated and loved nature, but since that weekend, my feelings for nature had multiplied by 100. It is as if I had use my inner senses for the first time to really experience nature!

10. Will you visit the game farm again? Why?
Definitely! Firstly because of the extraordinary experience we had with nature. The road to the farm is actually a very beautiful, pleasant drive. It is not far from home and is easily accessible for a weekend break-away.

11. What, according to you, is the single most important threat to world ecology?
Humans

12. Do you think human beings, in general, are disconnected in some way from nature?
Yes. In the modern world, people are moving to cities because "that is where the money is". People only go to nature in the very little spare time they have, or perhaps for an annual holiday. Those who manage to get to nature, knows very little about it and do not realise the potential nature may have for them.

13. How do you think, people cope with stress?
I think many people commit to physical activities for stress release.

14. How do you cope with your stress?
I also do outdoor activities, but mostly I do some positive self-talk.

15. What is the impact of nature on people in general, according to your view?
It has a calming effect on people. Therefore, they go to nature to enjoy themselves and forget about the life in the city.

16. What impact does nature have on you personally?
As soon as I realise I am on my way to a place in nature, an indescribable calming and relaxing feeling comes over me. Nothing or no one can touch me when I am in nature. Every time it is a wonderful learning experience.

17. Describe any single special personal nature experience you ever had.
We own a farm in the Waterberg bushveld for the past 15 years. I always enjoy being there and learned to appreciate nature very much. On a previous trip I noticed a huge boulder on one of the hills and decided to climb up to it. When I got there, the most beautiful view was exposed to me. I have never seen it before. As far as I could see it was just bushveld and the wonderful mountain range. I sat very quiet for a long time and became aware of nature… I could hear the water far down below in the river…

18. Why was this special?
It was the first time ever that I felt nature so close, so part of me. I was quiet and nothing could bother me there. It was like time stood still. I sat there for more than two hours and it felt like a minute.

19. With what in nature can you identify? Why?
The gemsbok. It is a strong, yet very calm animal. Gemsbok always make a deep impression on me. Nothings seem to bother them (like me).

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 32 (PI-32)

Name:	Lizzie Kotzé
Gender:	Female
Age:	52
Occupation:	Teacher
Permanent residence:	Ventersdorp
Tel no:	018 264-3802
Date and place of interview:	5 July 2004, Ventersdorp
Duration of interview:	35 minutes

1. Wat is "natuur" vir jou?
Dit is vir my eintlik enige iets ,plante, diere, waar ek 'n bietjie van die beskawing af weg is…al die mensgemaakte goed…

2. Wat is jou verhouding tot die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur beskryf, sou jy se dit is redelik intens, of meer oppervlakkig?)
Nee, ek sou se dit is baie intens. Ek is eintlik van kleins af verskriklik by die natuur betrokke. Op plase gekuier toe ek nog op die dorp gebly het, maar nou bly ons ook al lankal op 'n plaas. Dit maak nie vir my saak of ek by die huis is en of ek op vakansie is nie, ek gaan stap in die veld. Ek geniet die natuur. Dit is vir my verskriklik belangrik. As ek ontsteld is, gaan ek na die natuur toe.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur dus in jou lewe?
Dit is vir my so half 'n herstellende fase… Dit maak nou nie saak of jy ongelukig is en of jy ontsteld is of watookal nie maar as jy bietjie in die natuur was, voel jy net beter. Dit het so 'n vernuwende effek...

4. Wat is jou verhouding tot jou eie natuur binne in jouself? (Is jy wat jy wil wees - in jou werk, familie, sosiale lewe en jouself?)
Ja, op hierdie stadium is ek heel tevrede met myself soos dit is. 'n Mens kom natuurlik deur baie krisisse en dinge en lewensveranderinge en so-aan, maar ek het nou 'n redelike rustigheid. Ek voel in harmonie …

5. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?
Ja, ontsettend baie. Die natuur is vir my verrassend. Dit maak die lewe interessant. Ek wat lewenslank in die veld gestap het en eers 'n paar jaar terug die eerste keer ontdek het hier by ons groei orgidieë in die veld… Daar is altyd nuwe dinge en dit is vir my wonderlik hoe die natuur homself kan herstel as iemand hom beskadig het.

6. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?
As kind het ons in die dorp gebly maar daar by die spruit het my pa 'n stukkie grond gehad. Daar he tons gaan speel onder die Wilgerbome en met die water, en krappe gevang… Van kleins af was ek net lief daarvoor ja.

7. As jy terug dink, hoe beinvloed dit jou werk en lewe vandag?
Dit is nog steeds vir my ontspanning of 'n tipe van vernuwing. As dinge 'n mens vang of jy voel gefrustreerd of gespanne of watookal, en jy gaan doen iets in die natuur, al is dit nou net stap of al is dit noiu visvang of voëls kyk, maak dit dat mens weer beter voel. Dit is vir my belangrik. Ek kan nie sonder die natuur lewe nie.

8. Wanneer jy in die natuur is, wat is jou grootste waarneming?
Ek beleef deur te sien. Sien speel 'n verskriklike belangrike rol… reuk ook… As jy in 'n bos ingaan… die atmosfeer… en reuke… 'n Mens sien die mooi – dit trek jou eerste. Dan hoor ek ook die geluide van die voëls en water.

9. Is daar iets in die natuur, 'n dier, plant, rivier of landskap, waarmee jy kan identifiseer?
Die see is vir my iets besonders. Die ritme van die see laat my aan 'n mens se hartritme dink. As 'n mens stil sit en kyk raak ek meegevoer. Dit is vir my 'n geestelike ervaring. Dit wis vir my alle dinge uit, 'n mens kom op 'n ander vlak… Ek weet nie hoe om dit mooi te verduidelik nie, maar dit is hoe dit vir my voel. Jy kan mediteer daar… dieper dink.

10. Hoe sien jy die plek en die rol van die mens in die natuur?
Ek dink hy het 'n verskriklike belangrike rol, veral vandag. Die mens het 'n baie belanrike rol in bewaring. Ek voel elke mens kan iets doen. Dit was eintlik die mens wat die natuur in die toestand het wat hy nou is. As ek kyk in die afgelope dertig jaar … Dertig jaar terug vertel ek vir kinders in die Vaaldriehoek van die lugbesoedeling en waterbesoedeling oorsee, en nou is dit hier 'n groot realiteit.

11. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Ek dink dit is 'n tipe geestelike ervaring wat 'n mens maklik in die natuur kry… ek in elk geval.

12. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Dit is vir my persoonlik heeltemal ineengestrengel want ek glo die Here openbaar Hom in die Bybel en ook in die natuur. Omdat ek nog altyd so lief is vir die natuur, spreek die natuur vir my baie hard. Elke wonderlike sonsondergang of pragtige blom of uitsonderlike voël… Ek sien die Here daarin… Sy teenwoordigheid… Ja en Sy grootheid…

13. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur?
Ja ek is. Of ek by die huis is of waar ek ookal is, ek let altyd op na die natuur. Ek kyk elke aand of die sonsondergang nie besonders mooi gaan wees nie. Ek dink 'n mens leer jouself om meer op te let… dit is 'n poging wat 'n mens aanwend… en dan geleidelik word dit 'n gewoonte.

14. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur wanneer jy op vakansie is of weg gaan vir 'n naweek?
Ja, dan meer. Dan het jy meer tyd. Jou daaglikse roetine beperk jou partymaal van die natuur. As ons gaan vakansie hou beklemtoon ons eintlik die natuur. Ons gaan gewoonlik na 'n plek toe wat vir ons mooi is. Ons hou van stil

natuurlike plekke. Ons hou nie van ‘n gebrom nie. Dit gaan nie oor mense nie, dit gaan eintlik oor die natuur as ons vakansie hou.

15. Is die mens die mees belangrikste lewensform op aarde?
Ja, ek glo tog so. Die Here het hom iets spesiaal gemaak, meer as al die ander, maar al die ander is ook belangrik.

16. Voel jy deel van die natuur?
Ja. Waar mens ookal is, jy is maar eintlik deel van die natuur, of dit atmosfeer of plante of watookal is…

17. Dink jy dat mense oor die algemeen verwyderd is van die natuur?
Oor die algemeen ja, want die meeste mense bly in stede. Daar is deesdae kinders wat nog glad nie op ‘n plaas was, nie bewus is van die diere… Die idee wat ek kry is dat die meeste mense eintlik verwyderd is van die natuur. Jy het hierdie verskriklike ‘rat –race’, jy werk om te leef en so gaan dit aan. Jy is in ‘n roetine, jy het nie geld vir vakansie. Ons op die plaas is dan eintlik nog gelukkig om sonder om eintlik geld uit te gee, darem nog naby te wees aan die natuur terwyl hulle moet eintlik iets spandeer om by die natuur uit te kom… Spesiaal tyd maak…

18. Dink jy om verwyderd te wees van die natuur reflekteer om verwyderd te wees van God of andersom?
Ek persoonlik sou so dink. Ek dink dit is ook die rede hoekom mense so verskriklik gestres is en allerhande onwettige middels gebruik. Mense raak onstabiel en ek dink hulle is verwyderd van die natuur, maar dan ook outomaties van God. Hulle het nie die intense belewing van God nie en dan kom al die verkeerde dinge.

19. Is daar ‘n moontlikheid om weer verbind te word aan die natuur nadat ‘n mens verwyderd was van die natuur? Hoe?
Ek glo so. Jy moet spesifiek tyd maak daarvoor. Jy moet die wil hê, of iets moet jou prikkel om weer daarmee kennis te maak. Ek meen dit sal van individu tot individu afhang, maar selfs in die vakansies sou ek glo is dit ‘n manier wat jy dan geprikkel sal word. As jy eers die ervaring van die natuur gehad het, dan gaan dit jou dalk noodsaak om naweke in jou omgewing rond te kyk vir ‘n plek om by die natuur uit te kom. En ek glo dat dit al beter sal gaan.

20. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek? Waarom?
Daar is verskriklik baie…maar ek is baie lief vir die see. En dan vir inheemse woude, soos of by St. Lucia of by Tsitsikamma of by Graskop… Namakwaland…

21. Wat verkies jy om te doen as jy in die natuur is ? (Jou gunsteling aktiwiteite in die buitelug)
Stap…en as dit by besonderse plekke kom, tyd te vat en rustig te word en dit net te geniet.

22. Dink jy persoonlik dit is vir jou belangrik om gereeld die natuur te besoek?
Ja, dis vir my baie belangrik. Dit is 'n herlaaiproses… 'n naby belewenis van God. Dit doen net iets aan my. Ek voel net altyd baie beter as ek terugkom uit die natuur uit.

23. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike gebiede?
Ek het al so baie skadelike ontwikkeling in die natuur gesien. Ek weet dat 'n sekere mate van ontwikkeling moet plaasvind om mense toe te laat om by sekere plekke uit te kom, maar dit is so hartseer… Dit word heeltemal oordoen. Ontwikkeling neem gewoonlik die besondere uniekheid en eenvoud van die natuur weg. Byvoorbeeld, drie jaar terug was ons daar by Graskop. Ons het na die waterval gestap. Dit was net ons, niemand anders nie… ons het geswem… Die natuur was ongelooflik mooi. Nou is die plek ontwikkel. Hulle het 'n avontuurplek by die waterval gebou… die hele uniekheid, die rustigheid is weg by daardie plek. Dit is net nie meer dieselfde nie…

24. Wat is volgens jou 'n voorbeeld van n natuurarea (wildtuin,nasionale park ens.) wat goed ontwikkel en toeganklik is?
Vir my is die meeste nou al goed ontwikkel…amper te… Pilansberg natuurreservaat. Ons gaan gereeld omdat dit naby is en heeltemal goed ontwikkel is. Alles wat 'n mens wil hê is daar, maar dit raak ook al te oorbevolk…

24. En van 'n natuurarea wat matig ontwikkel is, maar steeds die rus en vrede van die wildernis het?
…miskien 'n wildsplaas…

25. Van 'n onontwikkelde natuur area?
Umfolozi… daar is 'n wildernis gebied wat vir my 'n verskriklike wonderlike omgewing is.

26. Kan jy 'n hoogtepunt beskryf van n vorige besoek aan die natuur?
Namakwaland, die hele Weskus gebied in blomtyd is ongelooflik mooi. Tietiesbaai sal ek uitsonder. Ons het gekamp. Daar was min mense en ongelooflik stappaadjies by die see… met al die blomme

26. Hoekom was dit vir jou 'n hoogtepunt?
Ek dink die stilte en die alleenheid. 'n Mens is nie altyd so gelukkig om alleen daar te wees nie, ons was net op 'n tyd daar wat daar nie eintlik ander mense was nie. Ons kom hier van Noordwes af waar alles droog en dood is, Augustus, September. Dan kom jy daar, en dis so ongelooflik vars, lente in die lug en sonnige weer en die see is mooi en die blomme is mooi… Ek dink die kontras tussen die twee plekke maak dit vir 'n mens besonders, baie spesiaal.

27. Hoe het jy gevoel voor julle vertrek?
Ek was opgewonde, en ek weet nou mos dit is lekker in die natuur, so ek het baie uitgesien daarna.

28. Hoe het jy gevoel toe jy besef dit is tyd om huis toe te gaan?
Ek was eintlik baie spyt. Ons het 'n wonderlike tyd gehad.

29. Toe jy teruggekeer het na jou werk en roetine, kan jy die gevoel beskryf van die eerste paar dae terug?
Ja, dit was nou weer werk. Dit is so half 'n terugkom aarde toe gevoel, maar die herinnering maak dit tog die moeite werd. So tussen deur die werk dan dink jy aan iets lekkers wat gebeur het, dan vrolik dit jou dag op.

30. As jy stil sit en terug dink na jou ondervinding se hoogtepunt, het dit enige effek op jou?
Hierdie een, maar ook enige vorige hoogtepunt… Herinneringe is vir my 'n wonderlike ding, en die fotos help die herinneringe aan. So dis vir my altyd lekker om op enige stadium terug te dink daaraan, veral as ons dan weer na die foto's kyk. Dit is so 'n "light-up" as jy dit weer sien en kan terugdink daaraan… dit is amper so goed asof jy weer daar is. Jy beleef weer daardie lekker gevoel.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW 33 (PI-33)

Name:	Joey Shirge
Gender:	Female
Age:	74
Occupation:	Retired teacher
Permanent residence:	Pretoria
Tel no:	012 343-5504
Date and place of interview:	Pretoria
Duration of interview:	20 minutes

1. Wat is die natuur vir jou?
God se mooiste skepping. Elke oggend as ek deur die venster na die tuin kyk kan ek Hom net loof en prys.

2. Wat is jou verhouding met die natuur? (As jy jou persoonlike verhouding met die natuur moet beskryf, sal jy sê dit is intens of net oppervlakkig?)
Ek geniet dit verskriklik om in die tuin te wees en in die tuin te werk ek hou daar*van* om wildtuin *toe te gaan of* waar alles ongerep is. *As ek* nog so nou en dan 'n dier sien is dit 'n ekstra bonus. Ek het nog nooit gedink dat ek 'n verhouding met die natuur het nie. As ek in die oggend deur die venster kyk en die son kom op en dis groen, dis blomme en as dit in die nag gereën het sê ek die blomme steek weer hulle "hande" op en sê dankie. Ek geniet net die natuur.

3. Watter rol speel die natuur in jou lewe?
Ek is 'n stadsmens al my lewe lank en die afgelope 24 jaar woon ek in die stad. Jy sien nie veel van wat ons die natuur noem nie. So dit kan nie 'n vreeslike groot rol gespeel het ooit nie, maar plante, mooi bome, blomme – dis baie belangrik vir my. My pa het altyd 'n mooi tuin gehad, my man het 'n pragtige tuin gehad…

4. Leer die natuur jou enige iets?
Ja, afhanklikheid van die Skepper, niks kan groei as dit nie reën nie en Hy nie sy hand oor dit hou nie.

5. Wat was jou heel eerste diep kontak met die natuur?
In 1939. Ek was 9 jaar oud. Ons was toevallig daar toe die WOII uitgebreek het die 3de September 1939. My ouers en ek was na die Victoria Watervalle toe. Ek sal nooit vergeet die wonderwerk van daardie water wat daar afkom en niks verongeluk nie en als het saamgewerk. Elke ding het op my 'n indruk gemaak en ek sien dit vandag nog.

6. Wat het die gebeurtenis vir jou beteken?
Ek dink selfs as so 'n jong kind het ek besef dat die majesteit van die Here is so groot dat jy klein voel. Wat is 'n mens per slot van rekening teen daardie massa

waters wat daar afkom. Dis die wat hulle dit noem "The water that thunders" want dit klink so en van ver af sien jy dit lyk soos rook wat in die lug hang.

7. Wanneer jy in die natuur is waarvan word jy bewus?
Ek luister, kyk en neem waar. Ek is in die natuur.

8. Hoe sien jy die plek en rol van mense in die natuur?
Ons is almal totaal en heeltemal afhanlik van die natuur. Net met mense se tegnologie kan en sal ons dit nie maak nie.

9. Wat verstaan jy onder spiritualiteit?
Ek dink dit is jou verhouding tot die natuur en deur die natuur met jou Skepper.

10. Hoe sien jy die verhouding tussen geloof en die natuur?
Jy kan nie ongelowig wees as jy in die natuur is nie. Die twee loop hand aan hand.

11. Is jy elke dag bewus van die natuur?
Ja, dit gebeur dat ek dalk eensaam en alleen is en as ek dan deur my tuin gestap en hier gekrap en bietjie water gegee het, en ek kom terug dan voel ek beter.

12. Is die mens die mees belangrikste vorm van lewe op aarde?
Die Here het die aarde geskape en eers die plante toe die diere. Toe die "fout" gemaak om mense te skape, want toe Adam en Eva op die aarde gekom het, het al die ellende begin. Mense het die gawe om te kan kies en daarom het hulle gekies om sonde te doen, diere doen dit nie - hulle leef op instink. Ek dink nie 'n mens is 'n baie wonderlike ding nie.

13. Dink jy mense is verbind met die natuur?
Ja jy moet verbind wees om rustigheid te kan vind.

14. Dink jy dat wanneer mense nie verbind is met die natuur dat hulle ook nie verbind is met God nie? Of omgekeerd?
Ek dink nie jy kan aan God verbind wees as jy nie van die natuur hou en met dit verbind is nie.

15. Wat is jou gunsteling plek in die natuur om te besoek?
Die Krugerwildtuin. Dit is vir my net lekker rustig en dit is weg van die daaglikse geraas van die stad.

16. Voel jy persoonlik dit is nodig om op 'n gereelde basis na die natuur terug te keer?
Dit is die ideale ding as jy dit kan doen want jou siel moet asem skep om net weer aan te gaan met jou lewe.

17. Wat is jou gevoel oor ontwikkeling in natuurlike areas?
Daar is so min plekke wat natuurlik is. Mense wil net ryk word deur ontwikkeling en wat maak jy as daar niks natuur meer oor is nie?

18. Kan jy ‘n hoogtepunt beskryf van ‘n vorige besoek aan ‘n plek in die natuur?

Dit was op ‘n brug in die Krugerwildtuin. Ek het op die brug gestaan en gesien hoe ‘n visarend afkom en ‘n vis vang. Ek het besef hy sien die vis en duik van daar bo af… en tog mis hy selde. My mikpunt moet ook soos die visarend s’n wees… Ek mag nooit mis nie. Die ander hoogtepunt was op dieselfde brug toe daar ‘n leeuwyfie aangestap kom, met die pad langs, en sy loop reguit af oor die brug en hier staan ons en sy het nie na ons gekyk nie. Ons het geen betekenis vir haar gehad nie en sy het geen vrees of belangstelling in ons getoon nie. Sy is sonder meer weer net weg in die bosse in. Sy was vir ons so belangrik, maar dit was nie van haar kant af skynbaar so ervaar nie…

ADDENDUM E: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

No.	Page	Person	Date
PR-1	564	Robert Simpson	2003-11-18
PR-2	565	Don Pinnock	2002
PR-3	567	Elizabeth Bester	March 2003
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PERSONAL REFLECTION 1 (PR-1)

Name:	Robert Simpson
Gender:	Male
Age:	32
Occupation:	Unknown
Permanent residence:	Cape Town
Tel no:	Unknown
Background information:	Casual conversation at picnic area while sharing a braai facility; study participant was a visitor to the Knysna-area for a few days' relaxation.
Date and place of conversation:	18 November 2003, Knysna – Diepwalle picnic area
Duration of conversation:	20 minutes

Summary of verbal reflection:

…The concept of ecopsychology attracted me so much several years ago that I did my graduate thesis with it. The idea that the needs of the human psyche are essentially intertwined with the earth's life, seems a perspective that could keep the human race from self destruction. Individually, the concept can help us maintain our mental health, because we can assess the degree to which we are valuing life by being aware of how connected we feel to the earthly provider of our breath and bodily elements.

I consider my sense of connection to the earth to be sacred. That other people are valuing their experience of nature will be an encouragement to my own life perspective.

I connect through my senses – sight, hearing, and smell. That is a consciousness I need without interference from my reasoning mind. I want to be present in what my senses experience.

I enjoy hiking in the forest and taking in the vitality and beauty of nature. When I am in the forest, I feel like I am home in a way that I can experience nowhere else. Even where I live (close to Kirstenbosch and Table Mountain) has a feeling of artificiality in comparison to the reality of the forest. It is as though man-made things entrap the spirit, while the natural world sets the spirit free. At first I only recognized the huge trees … and often stand in awe, feeling their presence, something I have never felt before. I started to admire the creatures of the forest … colourful fungi and lichens, some attached to the trees. I slowly realized that these creatures need each other, there is a link… So, my connection with the forest, as well as the various kinds of weather, wild animals (on wing of four legs), patches of wild flowers, waterfalls, streams, ocean, skies, stars and bird and insect songs, is a life-affirming experience, as necessary as my next breath…

PERSONAL REFLECTION 2 (PR-2)

Name:	Don Pinnock
Gender:	Male
Age:	Unknown
Occupation:	Unknown
Permanent residence:	Unknown
Tel no:	Unknown
Background information:	Editorial in: Undercurrents. Newsletter from Two Oceans Aquarium. Vol. 7. No.1. p. 2.
Date:	Autumn 2002
Duration of conversation:	Not applicable
Reference:	Pinnock, D. 2002. Of rain and reflections. *Undercurrents: a newsletter from the Two Oceans Aquarium*, 7(1), Autumn: 2

Written reflection:

Cities contain more than half the people on earth. When you try to leave them for rest and recovery, you often find they've come along for the ride. The solution is simplicity itself.

Let me say this before rain becomes a utility we can regulate and sell: I celebrate its meaninglessness.

The rain I am in is not like the rain in the city. It fills the forest with a huge and confused sound. It hammers the corrugated-iron roof of the hut and stoep with insistent and controlled rhythms. I listen, because it reminds me again that the whole universe runs by rhythms I have not yet learned to recognize; rhythms not those of clock or engineer.

I came in from the city late this afternoon, sloshing up the track, and fired up some pasta and tomato sauce on the Cadac for supper. It boiled over while I was toasting some bread on the log fire. The night is now inky dark. The rain envelops the hut in its enormous, virginal myth, a whole world of meaning, of secrecy, of sudden silences, of rumour.
All that rainspeech pouring down, selling nothing, judging nobody, drenching the thick mulch of dead leaves, soaking the trees, filling the streams and koppies of the woodland with water, washing out places where men have stripped the hillside.

What a thing it is to sit absolutely alone, in a forest, at night, cherished by this wonderful, unintelligible, perfectly innocent speech, the most comforting speech in the world, the talk that rain makes all by itself against the leaves, the talk of watercourses everywhere in the hollows, the shuddering expletives of thunder.

Nobody started it, nobody is going to stop it. It will talk as long as it wants, this rain. And I am going to listen as long as I am able.

Eventually I'm going to sleep, because here in this wilderness I've learned how to sleep again. Here I am not alien. The trees I know, the night I know, the rain I know. I close my eyes and instantly sink into the whole rainy world of which I am a part, and the world goes on without me.

The city is filled with useful things. It is a monument to usefulness. Rows of houses, paved streets, electricity, shops, trains, cellphone towers; even helicopters that give you minute-by-minute traffic reports. There are schools for learning, hospitals for body and mind repair, and prisons for those who don't obey the rules. There are even clinics and beauty parlours for the animals we have tamed. Unscheduled water is dealt with severely; guttered off roofs and streets, led into drains and captured in underground tunnels. Sometimes, when you cross a street, you can hear the water roaring below manholes down which the behaviour of the newly tamed river can be checked.

There is so little in the city that is not fabricated; if a tree gets among the apartments or even in a suburban street by mistake it is usually surrounded by paving stones or tar. It is given a precise location, a reason for existing, or it is yanked out. Or maybe it is left for tame dogs to pee on.

The celebration of rain cannot be stopped, of course, even in the city. The woman from the coffee bar scampers along the pavement with a newspaper over her head. A suited executive flips up his black umbrella and high-steps over a swollen gutter. The suddenly washed streets become transparent and alive, and the noise of traffic becomes a splashing of fountains. You would think that urban citizens would have to take account of nature in its wetness and freshness, its baptism and its renewal. But though it waters gardens in the suburbs, the rain brings no renewal to nine-to-fivers, only tomorrow's weather and the glint of windows in tall buildings reflecting a turbulent sky. Somewhere inside those walls the 'real' city carries on, counting itself and selling itself with complex determination.

Meanwhile the citizens who must move plunge through the rain, intent on their busyness, slightly more vulnerable than before, probably piqued by the inconvenience of rain. Few see that the streets shine beautifully, that they themselves are walking on stars and water, that they are running over inverted skies to catch a bus or taxi, or to shelter in packed malls which ooze the mindless sound of elevator music. But they must know there is wetness abroad. Perhaps they even feel it. For them it's a nuisance, nothing more. Am I presuming too much? Sitting here in this hut, alone and perfectly happy, with wet sounds, a camp bed and a Cadac, I wonder at the organized pleasures marketed as vacation. Among the many things the city sells is the happiness of escaping from itself. It urges you to 'have fun' by presenting you with irresistible images of yourself as you would like to be: having fun without the interference of guilt or worrying about the cost. Having fun with others who are having fun.

If you flip through the pages at the back of this magazine you'll find endless variations on a theme of how to take the conveniences and luxuries of the city out of town and into beautiful places. Hotels with courtesy fridges full of

mindaltering liquors, safaris from luxurious tented camps with gun-slung rangers for 24-hour protection, advertisements which coo: "Just come and relax."

If you think I'm pushing a point let me quote one taken at random: "Luxury tents with en-suite shower and toilet, situated on a private game park, offers game drives, walks, horse trails and boat cruises. Beach trips, swimming pool, excellent cuisine, boma dinners, personal service. Children welcome." Nice holiday - undoubtedly a home-from-home atmosphere, with assurances that the conveniences of the city are right on hand. In practice, though, expensive fun often harbors a doubt, which can blossom into another full-blown need, which then calls for a still more credible and more costly refinement of satisfaction, which again generally fails you. The end of the cycle can be despair. How often do you feel the need for a vacation to recover from the stress of the one you've just had?

A person in modern society is generally a person in a rush, a person with no time, a prisoner of necessity who would probably find it difficult to understand that a thing might perhaps be without usefulness. Those who dare to be alone in wild places, who celebrate and seek out times of solitariness (are they a dying breed?) can come to see that the 'emptiness' and 'uselessness' of the wilderness which the collective urban mind fears and views from afar are necessary conditions for the sort of renewal the word 'holiday' suggests. It is derived from 'holy day'.

It is quiet reflection - moments of tranquillity which realign us with this shimmering planet - that renews us. Not body comforts, en-suite bathrooms, sundowners and game drives. It seems to me that it's only in these times of solitary simplicity that we can remind ourselves of our true capacity for maturity, freedom and peace.

Philoxenos, a sixth-century Syrian who left us some texts well worth digging up, said: "I will not make you such rich men as to have need of many things. But I will make you true rich men who have need of nothing, since it is not he who has many possessions that is rich, but he who has no needs." Obviously we will always have some needs. But it is in times when we reduce our needs to the most simple, when we shed the material and mental clutter of the city, that we can see who it is we really are - since the only needs we then have are real ones. A rucksack, a sleeping bag, a Cadac and a pair of good boots. Some simple food.

The rain has stopped. The afternoon sun slants through the trees, refracting off myriad useless drops of water. The valley resounds with the totally incomprehensible talk of streams and fountains. Guinea fowl chatter and cluck in the clearing and a robin is scratching round in the useless underbrush beside the stoep. There's nothing I would rather hear, not because these are better noises than other noises, but because they are the voices of the present moment. They remind me that I am utterly, solitarily, blissfully here.

PERSONAL REFLECTION 3 (PR-3)

Name:	Elizabeth Bester
Gender:	Female
Age:	Unknown
Occupation:	Unknown
Permanent residence:	George
Tel no:	Unknown
Background information:	Letter to the Editor, Getaway, p.24
Date:	March 2003
Duration of conversation:	Not applicable
Reference:	Bester, E. 2003. Letter to the editor. *Getaway.* March.

Written reflection:

Having been only to Algeria in the Cedarberg, we felt we hardly knew the place. So last September school holiday we set off for Kromrivier in our Land Rover. The trip through the southern part of the reserve was truly beautiful. Its unspoilt vastness was soft green and filled you with eagerness to see what lay beyond the next valley, and the next. We camped in tents on the bank of crystal-clear waters. Now camping does require a certain level of adaptability. There is, however, one thing that does not go well with camping: stormy weather. Fortunately a cottage was available.

Our daughters (12 and 15 years old) were in awe of the incredible rock formations. They eagerly set out in search of Bushmen paintings and the elusive Cape cedar. We found the abundant fynbos breathtaking and best viewed on horseback. Our appetite for the Cedarberg has just been whetted – we will most certainly be back for more. Above all, it's also a very affordable family holiday.

PERSONAL REFLECTION 4 (PR-4)

Name:	Piet de Crom
Gender:	Male
Age:	52
Occupation:	Company director
Permanent residence:	Centurion
Tel no:	082 459 7378
Background information:	Written reflection on a week-end visit to Marakele National Park.
Date of visit:	26-28 April 2003

Name of study participant	Age	Occupation	Contact no.	Residence
N de Crom	42	(Researcher)	082 853 2454	Centurion
P de Crom	52	Company director	082 459 7378	Centurion
M Wepener	59	Retired teacher	016 454 9216	Vereeniging
J Weitz	63	Company director	082 461 6372	Benoni
D Weitz	53	Company director	082 461 6372	Benoni

This was a great week-end! It was supposed to be a 'trial run' for our forthcoming Namibian tour with all five participants, but it was much more! Marakele is far more beautiful than what we could remember from previous visits more than 8 years ago!

On arrival the camping site was full, but we managed to find a nice secluded spot underneath quite big thorn trees. We wanted to spot some birds here, but they were surprisingly rare – perhaps because of the drought.

Saturday was very relaxing and we spend most of the day in each other's company, conversing about everything under the sun. We tried to do some planning for our Namibia trip within two months time, but were so happy to be here under these beautiful trees and with each other, that we did not really get to planning. The whole day was spent in and around our camping site, walking, watching birds, animals that came to the water hole nearby, chatting and just enjoy being in nature. Despite the many campers, it was actually very peaceful and quiet, as if everybody needed the silence and tranquillity the area offered. We drove around in the 'lower' part of the park. Although we did not see many animals, the trees were telling us stories – of themselves, of the animals they know, and of the drought… The campfire burnt warm and high and stimulated more conversation – until late night.

Sunday morning we drove out with the long, steep, very narrow road to the top of the mountain (Fig. 1). The scenery has an "anxious" beauty. At the top we had a 360 degree view of the surroundings. We felt totally alone, almost secluded… isolated… Mountains were endless… Rock formations had a calming effect with their 'soft' round shapes. We spent a lot of time here. We watched birds and were surprised by the quantity and variety up here. It was as if we couldn't get enough and were continuously staring through binoculars at

something special, afraid that if you did not look, it would be gone (Fig. 2). The vegetation amazed us. Even some examples of Cape fynbos grew here – with the associated birds! We felt isolated from the world out there! Eventually we sat down on a flattish rock and had breakfast together – coffee and sandwiches – with birds flying past, the wind blowing and making funny noises through the crevices and boulders. We listened to the beautiful song of the mocking chats, entertaining us a few meters away on a rock for more than 10 minutes. We marvelled at the gracious movements of the Cape vultures high up in the sky (and wondered about their safety). This was beautiful… A very chilly wind forced us to leave the mountain and another campfire kept us company during the evening.

Early Monday morning, we spent the time available driving along the 4 x 4 route, which took us to the most spectacular places – views so beautiful, words cannot describe the experience. We were very excited when we spotted the herd of 'Tuli' elephants. A strange sadness came over us at the sighting of these magnificent animals. The sadness was mixed with a sense of gratitude and relief that they seemed to be happy and adapted to the area.

We left with added value to our souls and vowed to return … soon.



Figure 1: The road lead to the highest peak of the Kransberg mountain in the Marakele National Park



Figure 2: The group were fascinated with the variety and quantity of birds on the top of the Kransberg in Marakele National Park.

PERSONAL REFLECTION 5 (PR-5)

Name:	P Nolte
Gender:	Male
Age:	Unknown
Occupation:	Musician
Permanent residence:	Johannesburg
Tel no:	Unknown
Background information:	This reflection on a trip to the Cedarberg was adapted from an interview the participant held with report writers, Marana Brand and Jomarié Dick, for the *Veld Toe* magazine.
Date:	Autumn 2003
Duration of conversation:	Not applicable
Reference:	Brand, M. & Dick, J. 2003. Sederberg. *Veld Toe*, Autumn: 16–18.

Written reflection:

The mountains seem to get some hold on me.

We did not really plan for this trip. We just decided to fly down to Cape Town the following weekend, hire a car and do some exploring in the Cederberg. This is what I found:

We drove on the yellow dust roads among these enormous mountain faces and was astonished at their magnificence.

Here in the Cederberg I feel a very powerful force of attraction. When I woke up last night, the fog was hanging low and ghostly in the valley. It is amazing!

Yesterday, we walked amongst huge boulders on our way to view rock paintings. The rock formations are so extraordinary … it is a mystical place. I can imagine how the first people who lived here, experienced those unbelievable spiritual feelings. The yellow-brown boulders remind one of images and altars, rather than cairns. Each one is unique. All of them contribute to the almost holy atmosphere you experience while wandering amongst them, creating a feeling of respect.

Here are rocks, rocks and rocks, and dust – but good dust.

You drive and admire. On the left hand side, the abyss appears sometimes too close. Right, are steep boulders, striped in various colours in the sun's rays. They talk to you from times long ago, exposed to the forces of wind and water for ages on end. Around the next corner, the world is scattered with loose rough stones. Then you see large patches of brown soil covered with Karoo-type shrubs. Always changing, fascinating.

In the distance you see huge white clouds gathering above the valley, separating the clear blue sky from the brownish mountains. This is beautiful!

The contrast and variation are mind-boggling! You see impressive rock formations, different structures and textures and the complete variety of autumn colours and shades. Everything is changing all the time, a surprise around each turn!

There are open spaces, valleys, rolling hills, but always surrounded by mountains. Yellowish-brown close up, then brownish-gray ridgebacks covered with shrubs and rock stacks, followed by blue and gray mountains, each one toothed behind the other.

On one of the mountains we got out of the car. Suddenly we are filled with silence, in awe and wonder of the variety and uniqueness surrounding us, so very glad that no cellphone noise can disturb one here. The fresh, crisp air causes you to take deep breaths. The variety of smells tickles your nose.

Here you feel cut-off from everything, and it feels good. It is a feeling of safety and fulfillment.

We walked, followed the sound of the wind, of birds. Our clothes got dirty, our shoes got filled with mud, but it did not matter. We wanted to sit on the soil, climb the rocks, rub against the branches of the shrubs. This is an intimate place; it invites you to make contact. You may climb over a rock, walk through a stream, splash through mud-pools, struggle through thick sand, carefully conquer dongas… It is part of you.

We watched the change in landscape late afternoon and sat around the campfire in the evening. One can hear the rustle of the trees around you, see the strange shadows of the mountains, the valley with the dark stream running way down, and the full moon reflecting in the water, the fog rolling closer…

Wonderful moments, unforgettable, mystique.

Here one feels if this is the place where you should have been all the time. A place away from everything you are confronted with each day, isolated, but safe. A place that gets you to think, motivate and inspire you. Perhaps the Bushmen new something that we still do not understand …

And today when we had to leave, it is as if something keeps on dragging you back; as if the place doesn't want you to leave.

PERSONAL REFLECTION 6 (PR-6)

Name:	N de Crom (Researcher)
Gender:	
Age:	
Occupation:	
Permanent residence:	
Tel no:	082 853 2454
Background information:	This reflection on a trip to the Augrabies Falls National Park was done about awareness since the arrival and camping activities and entails a summary of group comments, discussions and observations.
Date of visit:	9-13 April 2003

Name of study participant	Age	Occupation	Contact no.	Residence
B Brand	42	Senior Lecturer	082 853 0610	Randburg
N de Crom	42	(Researcher)	082 853 2454	Centurion
P de Crom	52	Company director	082 459 7378	Centurion
M Wepener	59	Retired teacher	016 454 9216	Vereeniging

There are a few camping spots available. It is a long week-end and everybody wants to get out. We choose a spot that affords us our primary desire – optimum peace and quiet. We breathe deeply, tasting, smelling, feeling the fresh, clean air, before starting our camp setting. Our ears are focussed on the rumble of the waterfall, which drops down the steep cliffs only a few hundred meters before us. Directly across from our campsite are the incredible granite rock formations. The patterns and colours are striking.

We perform the ritual domesticities of setting up camp. We work on erecting and securing the tents, inflating mattresses and then shift to off-loading chairs and the 'kitchen' requirements. Once our chores are completed, we celebrate our accomplishments and sit overwhelmed by the sounds of our surroundings. We are most aware of the birds. The plump pale-winged starlings, with eye-catching orange-coloured eyes, sit on the wooden poles next to us and watch us, watching them. They are looking for morsels of human food, pecking frantically between the sand grains, finding remains of bread crumbs and crushed biscuits. Seeing we don't have more donations, they move on. Our next guest of the day is a mature klipspringer. He first appears on the perimeter of our campsite. Fearlessly and unyielding, he comes closer. His movements are smooth and without hesitation. After disappearing behind a shrub, he reappears and approaches our quarters very closely. He moves right up to us, checking us out, our vehicle, our tents, making friends with each of us (Fig. 1). Then, as skilfully as he appeared, he is gone.

We become aware of the trees. Their movement in the wind catches the eye.. and then you listen… The long, low hanging branches and small evergreen leaves of the ebony trees swing smoothly from side to side. A soft crackling of the twigs is just audible. It sounds like breathing…



Fig. 1: The klipspringer approached our campsite fearlessly.

We intuitively slowdown our own breathing, our speed, our thoughts. We have arrived at our destination. We feel 'at home'. Our gaze becomes softer and wider. We take in the visual delights of the last moments of the sun.

P meticulously works to build a fire in the ever-shifting breeze. The sun is gone behind the rocky horizon and we move in closer to our fire. We sit with cups in hands, we watch and listen. We are aware that one cannot here the river or the fall. The water level has decreased drastically since we were here 10 months earlier. The trees are talking again. Now and then they drop leaves or a small twig, occasionally getting our attention by landing on our bodies or in the fire. We smell the woodfire around our heads as the smoke drifts with the ever-changing direction of the wind.

Night falls quickly and brings with it the chill of air this time of the year. We see the first star, and the first falling star and we make a wish, smiling at each other with an inner knowing of each other. We sit and talk quietly, sharing stories of previous travel and experience in places we have felt a call, an inner sense of home. We share expectations. The winds starts to blow stronger. Our sleeping bags are surprisingly warm. I can sense the omnipresent moon-glow reflecting off the surroundings. I feel at peace and fall to sleep.

The daylight will bring with it the outcome of the night's trail, and the excitement of a new day…

PERSONAL REFLECTION 7 (PR-7)

Name:	Piet de Crom
Gender:	Male
Age:	53
Occupation:	Company Director
Permanent residence:	Centurion
Tel no:	082 459 7378
Background information:	Written reflection after returning from a visit
to	the Richtersveld National Park
Date:	24 May 2004

Richtersveld: 'n Herbesoek – hoogte-en laagtepunte

Twee jaar sedert ons vorige besoek, het ses van ons besluit om weer in die besonderse Richtersveld te gaan kuier. Dié keer was daar egter 'n paar laagtepunte (in teenstelling met vorige besoeke se uitsluitlik hoogtepunte). Ek begin by die laagtepunte, omdat ek liewer op 'n hoogtepunt wil afsluit: Eerstens, by die ingang na die Richtersveld Nasionale Park, word ons deur die **sekuriteit van Transhex** (die mynmaatskappy wat in die Richtersveld myn) "verwelkom"! Dit was reeds vir ons vreemd. Dit is immers 'n nasionale park. Behoort dit aan die myne (Transhex), die staat, sekere individue wat groot bedrae geld betaal vir konsessieregte, of aan die inwoners van die land? Ons ervaar die onaangename verwelkoming as 'n irritasie, maar vergeet dit gou na die inbespreking baie vriendelik afgehandel is.

(To whom do the National Parks belong? To the mines, the state, certain individuals who are prepared to pay considerable amounts to have concession rights, or to the people of the land?)

Die pad van Sendelingsdrif na Pooitjiespram is breed en mooi glad geskraap. Nie soos die laaste keer nie … soos dit hoort… Dis nou amper soos 'n snelweg op 'n plek waar dit nie hoort nie. Die groot, breë pad word deurgaans vergesel van telefoonpale en kraglyne…

> (…the road from Sendelingsdrif to Pooitjiespram is wide and nicely grated… not like the previous time (narrow) as it should be… It is almost like a highway at a place where it should not be! The huge, wide road are continuously accompanied by telephone posts and power lines …)

Ons slaan kamp op by Pooitjiespram en verlustig ons so in die omgewing dat ons van die pad en pale vergeet… vir eers.

Die volgende dag vertrek ons na De Hoop. 'n Stormreën het vroeër die maand De Hoop byna weggespoel. Gelukkig is daar nie kampgeriewe wat kon wegspoel nie – dis soos ons daarvan hou, so sonder die alomteenwoordige konstruksies. Dit is wat die Richtersveld spesiaal maak, die ongereptheid sonder 'ontwikkeling'.

Saam met die vloed het die padaanwysers verdwyn. Ons verdwaal en neem ‘n verkeerde afdraai. Ons beland op nog ‘n “snelweg”. Dit lei ons in die hole, gate, hope en mere wat Transhex geskep het. “Geskep” deur te vernietig… dit wat kosbaar en onvervangbaar is.

> (…we got lost and took the wrong turn-off. This road leads us to the holes, dongas, heaps and lakes created by the mining company. ‘Created’ by destruction… of that which is precious and irreplaceable…)

Ons was uiteraard op ‘n plek wat nie vir die publiek se oë bedoel is nie, maar die ongelooflike verwoesting het ons ontstel. Ons het omgedraai en dié stuk vinnig teruggery om die regte pad te probeer opspoor en die gemors agter ons te laat.

Later die middag bereik ons De Hoop, via die rivierlope en kleiner paadjies soos dit in die Richtersveld moet wees: Onontwikkeld.

Toe kom ons tweede groot teleurstelling: oral word ablusiegeriewe opgerig. Dis mooi en “pas in by die natuurlike omgewing”, maar wat is nou volgende? Chalets, beter paaie, konsessiehouers….?

Hierdie bekommernisse eenkant geskuif, was die res van ons besoek aan die Richtersveld, soos altyd, onvergeetlik. Woorde ontbreek. Soos altyd is die Tsobapas en Helshoogte se uitsigte op ons laaste dag ‘n onbeskryflike hoogtepunt.

As ons toer andersom verloop het, wonder ek of ons weer sou wou gaan… Maar nou het ons gelukkig die mooi as laaste indrukke om te onthou, en ons sien uit na ons volgende besoek. Ons wens net dat die sekerheid daar was dat nie nog vernietiging en ontwikkeling sal plaasvind nie…

PERSONAL REFLECTION 8 (PR-8)

Name:	Jan Goldfield
Gender:	Female
Age:	Unknown
Occupation:	Unknown
Permanent residence:	Cape Town
e-mail:	pondlady@pondlady.com
Background information:	Personal reflection of a nature experience, via e-mail
e-mail received and read on:	20 August 2002

I am sitting on a park bench in a soft rain. Because of the rain there are very few people around. I am sitting here because a very old, very large tree has called me here. The tree is several cm around and must be hundreds of years old. I cannot explain the way it called to me; but I knew immediately that I wanted to do this "knowing without names" activity here.

When I know this area without names or labels I feel an ancient presence, timelessness, warmth (but not temperature warmth) "heart warm", whatever that is. The place is saying wisdom, knowledge, power. I feel sad that I cannot know what it knows. I wish it could teach me. Without my name I am nature, the same as the tree, the grass, and the soft rain that falls on my face and becomes a part of me.

I am a question, I am hungry, but not for food.

In doing this activity I have reaffirmed my trust in nature. My eyes very often fill with tears when I do these activities. The moment I saw this tree my eyes filled and I had to touch it. I put my fingers into the deep groves in the bark and I can feel the tree "breathe" (for lack of a word). This type of attraction is something I have felt all my life and I know that it is real. If I were to lose this ability I would feel very alone. I want to be part of the world around me, I want to take care of it and I appreciate it allowing me to hear and feel it.

PERSONAL REFLECTION 9 (PR-9)

Name:	Beth Baker
Gender:	Female
Age:	Unknown
Occupation:	Unknown
Permanent residence:	USA
e-mail:	driftlessfriend@yahoo.com
Background information:	Personal reflection of a nature experience, via e-mail.
e-mail received and read on:	22 February 2002

Where we are, in the Driftless Region (upper midwest United States, as politics reckons it), the ancient glaciers did not roll over and grind down and rearrange the terrain, as can be observed in so much of the surrounding areas. We live amongst low, rolling hills that once were higher and sharper than the Rocky Mountains (sharp and lofty peaks, indeed), but which are now worn so soft and low by time itself (wind, rain, gravity). When one listens, approaches connection, with the Land (and its many interdependent inhabitants), profound depth can be felt in many different ways. I struggle to describe this experience; for me, it is like a subtle background of murmuring, chortling, humming; all admixed with scent and motion and ... a distinct sense of being invited into relation. Frankly, rather a great responsibility; anyone who actually listens is liable to eventually feel distinctly implored by the Life here to please help, to allay the depredations being heedlessly imposed by those who will not or cannot tune in.

My daughter Claire, who is now sixteen, has always been very naturally connected; when she was only a toddling baby, she would insist that we stop while out on walks, saying that a particular tree nearby needed a hug. I have practiced respect for her intuitions - and she is now a wonderfully connected, Life-loving young woman. We also, of course, experience the usual struggles a mom and growing daughter are heir to. But it's so much more agreeable, with the great Web holding us both in greater relation.

I am attracted today to the mitochondria, which are "me" and yet "not me", and with whom I so intimately share every bit of living, every moment. Am intrigued with practicing asking to make connection with these folks, excited by the possibilities we may unfold together, with consensual, conscious connection. And - is it possible to become attracted to and know relationship with another person's mitochondria? What happens when we try this? Pretty exciting to consider, more so to experience directly.

PERSONAL REFLECTION 10 (PR-10)

Name:	Jan Goldfield
Gender:	Female
Age:	Unknown
Occupation:	Unknown
Permanent residence:	Cape Town
e-mail:	pondlady@pondlady.com
Background information:	Personal reflection of a nature experience, via e-mail
e-mail received and read on:	27 August 2002

I went for a walk between rain storms on a very stormy day here on the coast. It felt right to do this.

As I walked the wind pushed me along and I felt how warm and strong it was. It seemed to push me cushion me as I became part of the wind. That sounds backwards but it was not on a verbal thinking level, but on a much deeper level. Here I was in the middle of a violent storm and feeling the greatest comfort. I was a part of this exciting world and I enjoyed it without thinking, just feeling. The peace that came over me was profound. I walked several blocks and circled back home and the wind stayed behind me. It felt like I was in a big soft comforter. Just as I arrived home, the rain started again, with hail and I was glad of the shelter of our house. The feeling of peace continued throughout the rest of the storm, during my inside activities.

PERSONAL REFLECTION 11 (PR-11)

Name:	Jan Goldfield
Gender:	Female
Age:	Unknown
Occupation:	Unknown
Permanent residence:	Cape Town
e-mail:	pondlady@pondlady.com
Background information:	Personal reflection of a nature experience, via e-mail
e-mail received and read on:	30 August 2002

For this activity I simply stepped outside and stood on the cliff over the river and enjoyed the solitude. I began to get a feeling for what was attracting me, which in this case was the water and the trees and the cloudy sky. I was also attracted by a sense of centeredness and stability. I was attracted to this sense of inner calm and was told by my inner voice that this was really quite OK. So my last thought was to be at peace and have faith that a tough, life-changing decision that I have to make in a few days will turn out perfectly.

What I learned from this activity is that I am having a rodeo going on inside me constantly, that I have means of sifting through decision making processes that integrate old and new brain insights and needs and that I know there is an active inner guidance system that comes into focus when I allow multi-sensory nature connections to occur. If this ability was taken away, I would be like a dolphin with no echolocation, an eagle with no wing feathers, a deer with no hearing, and a crane with no migration senses.

This activity enhances my self-worth by allowing me the dignity of having something of nature alive in me all the time. This is a gift from the planet whose insights I continually re-dedicate back to the Earth and its human and non-human creatures.

PERSONAL REFLECTION 12 (PR-12)

Name:	Anonymous
Gender:	Female
Age:	Unknown
Occupation:	Unknown
Permanent residence:	Unknown
Background information:	Personal verbal reflection of a nature experience by an individual during casual group conversation at camping site, Chobe, Botswana.
Date:	30 August 2002

It was a dry period in the Mkuzi reserve… One night we were sitting in front of our tent listening to sounds of the night. It was a great experience! Then suddenly we heard something nearby… it was something big and it was grazing…! We got all excited because the first animals that came to mind were rhinos! We grabbed the torches and started searching for some bright eyes. The grazing sounds were getting closer… very close… with the accompanying rise in our excitement. Then a torchlight found the huge animal… it was a cow! Our disappointment was almost overwhelming… cows in a game reserve! We reported this to the manager who informed us that it was normal for this time of the year when cows from neighbouring village cross the almost dry river to graze in the park!

PERSONAL REFLECTION 13 (PR-13)

Name:	Anon.
Gender:	Male
Age:	38
Occupation:	Dentist
Permanent residence:	East London
Tel no:	Unknown
Background information:	Reflection send via e-mail after telephone conversation on the topic.
Date received and read:	26 February 2004

A group of 6 participants had the following wildlife experience while touring the Eastern Cape Province (formerly Transkei area) (a summarised report):

We first met in East London where our tour started. We planned to go off-road and stay away from popular tourist destination like Coffee Bay and therefore arranged for a local guide to accompany us through the Transkei.

Our first experience was a being pulled of the road due to exceeding the speed limit! None of us noticed any speed sign, but after paying a 'spot-fine' we were allowed to continue towards the Dwesa Nature Reserve. (We felt not too good about the spot-fine and our spirits were a bit down after this incidence so early on our trip. However, our guide managed to minimize the fine, and although we still thought about this as bribery, we decided to put it behind us and enjoy the landscape). Progress was relatively slow due to rain and it was already dark when we reached Dwesa. The smell of rain-sodden earth and vegetation filled our senses when we got out to pitch camp. With an enthusiastic, 'This is paradise', our guide welcomed us in the darkness. (We were excited with anticipation to see what the place looks like in the morning). We managed to pitch our tents in the continuous rain and even kept our bedding relatively dry! We recalled our student days, when no rain or any kind of bad weather would stop us from having fun in the outdoors! With the sound of breaking waves behind our tents, we turned in early and hoped for a clear day tomorrow!

Awakening, not too early, the next morning, we could eventually not only hear, but also see the ocean. The weather was still gloomy, but it was not cold. While preparing breakfast, the local monkey population was watching us, waiting their turn to snatch whatever available the moment we were not looking. They actually became a nuisance and had to be chased away time and again (without great success!). We had a bad experience when they managed to get into our 'food tent' and did a lot of damage to our food stock. Every time we left the campsite, we had to lock up all the food in the cars.

Our guide recommended a hike back in the direction of Willowvale (from where we came last night), as the roads were now extremely slippery. We had some interesting encounters with inquisitive locals, got some really good exercise due

to all the hills we had to conquered, and returned to our campsite for a late lunch. It was still raining!

Late afternoon we decided to walk down to the river. We had amazing sighting: Thousands of fingerlings of some sort were swimming in the shallows. We watched them for quite a while, amazed by their speed and seemingly crazy movements. The rain stopped for a while and clouds slowly made way for the full moon. We all watched the moon surrounded by a strange circle of 'fog-like' clouds, when one suddenly draw our attention back to the fish. Every now and then some of them would jump out of the water, illuminated by the moonlight, causing the water to make a soft 'splashing' sound. We sat watching this spectacle until the clouds covered the moon and it became pitch dark. This was one of the most interesting sights we all had in a long time. We went to bed with the sound of rain splashing against the canvass of our tents, the sound of the ocean in a distance.

After a few days we got annoyed with the weather and decided to move on. Our guide got tired with us, got a ride back to Willowvale, and now we were on our own! Although feeling a little apprehensive, we encouraged each other, confirming that we are at least three vehicles should something happen! By now the condition of the roads deteriorated dramatically. The rain had turned some sections to mud, causing the vehicles to slide and the drivers to keep their cool! The roads got worse and low range was the only way to tackle the rain-cut gulleys. Eventually we reached the cottage where we unpacked and immediately got something to sooth the nerves! Although the surrounding area on our way to Xora Mouth was beautiful, we could not appreciate it fully, as the road needed all our attention.

The cottage was beautifully situated. It lies on a hill, a wooden deck overlooks the river. One could see way down the river and on the other side was the sea. One member of our group remarked 'Now this is really paradise!'. Below the deck, steps lead you down right up to the river. When you look around, you feel relieved to see that the area is not developed at all. All you see is a few rustic cottages, and a cell phone tower on the opposite hill looking completely out of place. Why would anyone disturb such a peaceful view with something so completely unnecessary? The last thing you want out here is to be disturbed by a cellphone!

The next day the sun was out and we were ready to explore! We met a regular visitor who has been coming here for as long as he can remember. He showed us photographs of enormous sized fish he caught in the river. About the local inhabitants, he said, 'We have been here with them forever. Our kids have grown up with their kids. They played together. We are friends.' He mentioned the prospect of further development and clearly gave us his disapproval of any of the kind. A pub means trouble, and that is the last thing they want.

We enjoyed coffee on the deck when someone suddenly and excitedly announced the presence of whales. Such impressive animals. We had a few moments of absolute silence, almost like a spontaneous sign of respect and

appreciation from all of us, while they casually swam past. We walked down the river as far as we could go. The colour of the river in the afternoon sun was tropical island like. This was a magic moment!

Development in this area will be a disaster. Even if carefully planned. One wonders whether it will really be to the benefit of the local people. The last thing you want here is to take away that which makes this place so special, that which makes people come here, its rustic, simple and unspoilt atmosphere.

The last evening was spent mostly in silence. We sat from late afternoon on the deck, absorbing as much as we can of the last few hours 'in paradise'. It was both a sad and solemn time as we watched the sun disappear on the horizon. Our trip was over and we would be heading back the next day. We realized this with reluctance.

Even though the weather was not on our side for most of the time and we had a good share of negative experiences, it was all in all a wonderful trip. We got something from this wonderful place to continue with whatever awaited us back home. This part of the country remains special and one we would return to at any time.

PERSONAL REFLECTION 14 (PR-14)

Name:	Pieternella vd K
Gender:	Female
Age:	Unknown
Background information:	Reflection written in visitor book, Poelepetaat cottage, Marloth Park
Date:	2001-10-10

What is wealth?

For a long time I thought about wealth. I want to be wealthy. People have everything when they are wealthy. I will be happy and fulfilled when I am wealthy. What is wealth? …

I walked alone in a bush tract… and everything looked beautiful, nothing in particular held my attention. I sat down on a small boulder. As time went by I began to realise that my attention was not with the colours of the flowers, the song of the birds, the strength of the massive leadwood tree or the softness of the redtop grass; it was the bush in its entirety.

As I watched, the interconnectedness of life before me became apparent: the insect attracted by the nectar of the flower, gaining sustenance from it as it pollinates it. The shrubs and trees reaching for life-giving energy of the sun and sharing it with all other life forms; roots holding the earth in place, extracting nutrients and moisture from the soil. Dead leaves transforming into nutrients to sustain new life…

As I became increasingly aware of the exquisite interconnectedness of the bush, my consciousness shifted and I stopped seeing separate entities. Instead, the physical reality before me became a beautiful, continuous flow of attraction relationships that gave rise to life. Everything received just enough energy to sustain itself, returning energy in kind to the web. I sensed myself as part of this web… and I too experienced the perfect flow of energy, the fulfilment of mutual support in the web of life.

I realised that this is what wealth is: the seamless flow of attraction in mutual support. When some separation blocks this flow, the result is fear and greed, and the balance of the web of life becomes disrupted resulting in many problems. Those who take more than they need without giving back to the web, thinking this makes them wealthy, are really spiritually impoverished and lack true joy and fulfilment.

Signed: Pieternella vd K

PERSONAL REFLECTION 15 (PR-15)

Name:	Anonymous
Background information:	Awareness of nature during weekend visit to Lapalala wilderness. Bush camp – no other people. Written report by study participant who prefer anonymity (details with researcher)
Date of visit:	7-9 Maart 2003

…I was standing on the boulder next to the stream when it began to rain. I remained there. I watched the huge drops coming down all around me, splashing down in the stream in front of me. I closed my eyes and turned my face towards the sky. I could feel the cool raindrops on my skin. I stood there for quite some time and became immersed in the sounds of the water splashing over rocks and all around me. I lost track of time. At some stage I slowly became aware of my breathing and the coldness of my skin. I remember how astonished I was that I became so quiet and calm that I could actually feel and hear my heart beating. I felt a strange sensation through my body… Then I realised that I was feeling energy… energy from the earth that I was standing on. I became aware of this realisation and felt completely part of everything surrounding me… connected to the earth. I felt part of the other creatures in the area… just another tree, or duiker, or rock…

ADDENDUM F: COMMENTS

These are brief reactions of study-participants during field trips as observed and noted by the researcher, written down in visitor books or short communications during informal conversations or added as additional comments on questionnaires.

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C-1: Additional written comments on questionnaire. (Yes answer to question: Do you think that South Africans consume more than Americans?):

C-1(a) Our people are less educated and we don't realise that our natural resources are becoming less.
C-1(b) We still need to be persuaded to recycle and re-use…
C-1(c) We are a wasteful nation…
C-1(d) We think we have enough, but we don't know… we should start living with the future in mind…
C-1(e) We are not forced to recycle…

C-2: Additional written comments on questionnaire. (No answer to question: Do you think that South Africans consume more than Americans?):

C-2(a) We do not have that much.
C-2(b) We still have resources left.
C-2(c) Their economy and lifestyles are more advanced.
C-2(d) We produce food ourselves…
C-2(e) We are a Third World country… we don't have what the Americans have.
C-2(f) Africa is a poor continent. Most countries have unstable political situations… recycling is not a priority…
C-2(g) With political unrest and poverty in certain areas, people in countries such as SA and Zimbabwe don't think about what they use, they use what is available at that time…
C-2(h) To a certain extent, we still appreciate our nature and try to conserve it for our coming generations as well as for foreigners to enjoy.

C-3: Study participant's comment while driving to St Lucia, spotting someone digging up an *Aloe* next to the road. (2003-10-08).

I was also guilty of such irresponsible behaviour, until I discovered that by damaging (the environment) like that, I actually inflict damage to myself.

C-4: Comment made by very upset study participant while watching someone driving among endangered plants in a no-go area in the Etosha National Park. (2003-06-20).

They don't realise what they are doing … they destroy it for everyone… they haven't yet experience the meaning of that area. I can actually hear the trees complaining.

C-5: Via e-mail Nature Connect, <mermaidhaven@starfishnet.com>. (2003-11-18).

My jobs sends me into nature sometimes. I just stand there and look. I see little birds on branches, nests in crooks. I smell the wetland, rain, decayed leaves. I look around and see moss, wild berries. I hear the frogs, bird songs, rustle of leaves. I realise… without nature, I cannot survive…

C-6: Comment made by study participant encountered in a relaxed mood after December holidays. (2004-01-08).

I just got back from a few days in Kwazulu-Natal. What a great place… mountains, lakes, trees, birds, rhinos, fish, everywhere. I had a wonder filled journey… with a lot added to my life. (Comment 4)

C-7: Casual conversation between 5 study participants around a campfire in Marakele National Park. (2003-04-15).

My husband never joins me on trips like this. If he does visit nature, it is once a year when he goes hunting with his friends. They have different experiences… more of a quick adrenalin rush… it is difficult to really talk to him about what I experience in nature… **(Noted by researcher – answer of one female participant to a question asked by another on how her husband experience nature with her).**

C-8: Comment made by study participant during a walk and casual conversation on the beach, St Lucia. (2004-09-10).

I am so glad that I have you to share these feelings… and that you understand… My partner prefers other forms of relaxation and therefore does not share these deeper emotions with me… those that I only experience in nature…

C-9: Comment made by fellow camper at Twee Rivieren, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, on the difference between certain national parks in SA. (September 2002). We used to go to Kruger at least 6 times per year, but not anymore. It is way too busy nowadays. It is not like in the old days where one could still sit outside your chalet and hear the lions roar or jackals calling. Today you only hear generators, heavy vehicles speeding on the tarred roads, especially during the night, and noisy people at the swimming pools, cafeterias and at the picnic spots. There are too many facilities now – all contributing to noise, taking away the 'natural' atmosphere and peacefulness of the bush. We prefer to go elsewhere now, where we can again appreciate the quietness of

evenings, no generators, no mechanical noises… That is why we travel great distances to places like the Kalahari, the Richtersveld or remote areas in Mocambique.

C-10: Reactions of visitors to the Richtersveld on a prompting question during informal conversations of 'Why visit the Richtersveld in particular? '

C-10(a) André Prinsloo (Meyerton, 362-3232, September 2001): Because of the remoteness from human impact. Here I realise that this is what I want… no noise, no construction, no vehicles… just unspoilt nature.
C-10(b) Rykie Prinsloo (Meyerton, 362-3232, September 2001): The absence of structures such as buildings and roads requires no maintenance, therefore no maintenance is needed, therefore no workers, no machines, no noise… just total silence and peace.
C-10(c) Johan & Bibi van Heerden (Meyerton, 362-2249, September 2001): We prefer the 'nothing' to get real close to nature, to get the real experience.
C-10(d) Caroline Rabie (Vanderbijlpark, 982-2216, September 2001): This is pure nature… wilderness… with nothing artificial (a pitty about the mine on the other side of the river (referring to mining activities of … in Namibia). Here one can truly experience nature…and find oneself.
C-10(e) Marietjie Wepener (Risiville, 454-9216, April 2004): It has so much meaning to be out in a place where it is really wild… with no interference from man. It is here where I can get in touch with myself and what is really important.
C-10(f) Bokkie Brand (Florida, 082 853 0610, April 2004): The physical environment is so exceptional, so untouched by man, so quiet… This is where I can experience nature…
C-10(g) Jan Weitz (Boksburg, 083 229 5844, April 2004): I will definitely return. This place is amazing… the vastness, unspoilt nature… what we need to be able to go back and resume our 'normal' lives.
C-10(h) Diana Weitz (Boksburg, 082 461 6372, April 2004): The fact that there is nothing makes it so attractive. The total peace and quietness… you will not get that anywhere else. I think all the people who visit this place are of a special kind… no need for things to entertain you…
C-10(i) Dawie Annandale (Centurion, 011 803 0395, April 2004): This place has such a unique atmosphere… here we can re-charge… nowhere will you find this peacefulness, uninterrupted by artificiality.
C-10(j) Gideon Roets, tour leader of a group who were on their third visit to the Richtersveld (Centurion, 012 653-3569, April 2004): I know that to be here, is more than just to be here… we go back spiritually fulfilled.

C-11: Feedback from students from TUT after spending a day walking along the beach in the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, Kwazulu-Natal, exploring ecosystem and obtaining information from lecturers (11 September, 2004):

C-11(a) Lizelle Steenkamp (student number: 204063583): I learned about marine ecosystems and wildlife at the coast. I experienced nature from a different perspective. I even learned about the people who live there. I have more knowledge and I am able to understand and interpret new things.
C-11(b) Zanelle Lepen (st no: 204034419): I formed strong bonds with nature by learning about the sensitivity and dependence of everything along the beach…
C-11(c) Lorey Viljoen (st no: 202013961): I learned so much about the sea and the role of everything in that ecosystem. I have a better understanding of everything…
C-11(d) Marlene Stemmet (st no: 204013640): I have never been to this area before… It was a great learning experience. I did not only gain knowledge of the plants and animals along the coast, but I learn an appreciation for everything, fellow humans included…
C-11(e) Adriaan Nell (st no: 204074577): I have never been to St Lucia… and this experience was great! The rock pools were very interesting and I gained a lot of insight and appreciation of everything!
C-11(f) Solomon Makume (st no: 204088640): I gained knowledge and a better understanding of the ecosystems at the sea. I now see where everything fits in. I realised that there is space for people in nature and that we have a role to play. We can do this without damaging the natural environment. Then we all can benefit… I learned how I can teach others to have fun and at the same time learn something about the environment and themselves while 'escaping' into nature…
C-11(g) Wynand van Niekerk (st no: 204087717): I had a real nature experience…
C-11(h) Neo Hatlane (st no: 204013675): I learned about and now understand sustainable use of the environment. I really feel close to the ocean…its breeze…the animals and plants…

C-12: Lapalala - Comment from visitor book at Umdoni bush camp. (Henk, Johannesburg, 5-6 February 2002).

Bad road to here, have to pay at gate in advance. This was strange? Why not at rest camp? Little did I know, we were the only people in paradise! What a blessing! No TV, electricity and some very novel lights. Baboons played on the cliffs. We learned so much from them. The river is beautiful. We went for a walk and encountered a lot of animals and birds. Hope to come back soon.

C-13: Additional written comments on questionnaire on the question:
If you are of the meaning that we, as humans, are indeed disconnected (or separated) from nature, would you link this disconnectedness with a separation (disconnectedness) from God?

Yes	**63%**
No	**37%**

Yes (n = 72) 63%

- If not disconnected, they would have the need to be close to God.
- God created man, animals and plants, and now we disconnect it.
- Humans came to live with animals and God told us that we must become one and look after nature and care for it.
- God put us on earth to manage and maintain nature, but we are not fulfilling God's purpose and word.
- Being close to nature and appreciate nature, bring you close to God.
- People get too used to just work and do not believe or have time to think about God and nature.
- God is always around us, but His presence is experienced more in nature.
- In nature one can see God's beauty and grace.
- We do not have time for appreciation of God and nature
- We do not care to do what God told us to do – looking after nature.
- Because God created everything.
- We lost respect for creation.
- They have lost respect and morals that God has for us.
- When in nature one is closer to God, people's priorities and their way of looking at life has 'wrongly' changed.
- If you can't see and enjoy the basic things in life (like nature), that's Gods creation, then we don't see God.
- Some people think they can do everything themselves.
- God created earth and in nature you realise how great He is.
- With a separation from God there is a separation from the earth and nature.

No (n = 43) 37%

- They are just not interested in nature.
- You do not have to be in touch with nature to be in touch with God – He loves you anyway.
- No one can be disconnected from God.
- It depends on the individual.
- People can be true Christians, but have no feeling for the bush.
- Some people do not have the opportunity to visit nature areas, but still are Christians.
- People stay connected or be disconnected without thinking about God.
- It is a choice people make.
- It doesn't mean you don't believe in God if you are not a nature person.
- Believers misuse nature just as much as non-believers, maybe even more.

C-14: Comment during informal conversation between senior students on why the same people continually visit places such as the Kalahari, Richtersveld, Namib Dessert, etc. (15 April, 2004):

C-14(a) …The feelings that I had when I was out there… complete peace… the openness… it gave me sustenance… I could take something with me… I felt enlightened… but when I returned, I only had memories. The feeling was very vague. But what I know is that I need that feeling and therefore I need to go back continually… (Edrich Jansen van Rensburg, TUT, 012 318 5306).

C-14(b) …you can have life-changing experiences while being there… but you should go back to be reminded about the good feelings you experience there and hang on to those feelings for as long as possible. It can carry you for quite some time… (Peter Adams, TUT, 012 318 5306).

C-14(c) I have enriching experiences in the West Coast… when I spend some time in the dunes, I feel free and for some reason, inspired…motivated to complete things and do my best (for example my studies) on returning home. However, when I am back I must concentrate to recall the feelings I had 'out there'. The only thing that keeps my going at such times is the fact that I know I will go back there and feel good again. (Riaan Venter, TUT, 082 775 6633)

C-15: Comments by participants who visited the Richtersveld with a tour guide who was constantly rushing the group:

C-15(a) We did not have time to appreciate the environment, because we seldom stopped! This was the case from day one. We were not happy at all! (M Klemp, Meyerton, August 2002).

C-15(b) We were always tired. It was just get up, go, stop, pitch tents, eat, sleep, get up and go! (F Klemp, Meyerton, August 2002).

C-15(c) I was so glad when it was over. The rushing all the time was tiresome. (Anon. August 2002).

C-15(d) We decided to separate from the group after the third day. It was too much of a rush. We couldn't appreciate this beautiful area at this rate. We continued on our own. (M Wepener, Vereeniging, April 2002).

C-15(e) I hate to rush through a place like this. In the first place it damages my vehicle and secondly this is not why I am here. I want to enjoy every moment and in this way it is just not possible. (P de Crom, Pretoria, April 2002).

C-15(f) I have asked him (the guide) many times to stop more often, but he refuses and says that we will not make in time to the next stop-over. It is quite frustrating to everyone! (R Prinsloo, Meyerton, April 2002).

C-15(g) While being on a tour in the Richtersveld, we were repeatedly hurried-up by the tour leader/organiser. There was no time to take photographs or really appreciate the environment. It felt like we pitched tents, ate, slept, woke up, broke down camp, hurried to the next spot … every day! (Anon., 1-7 Oct 2001)

C-15(h) The continuous pressure for time was tiring. It felt like we just drove quickly up to a place, unpacked, pitched camp, ate, slept, woke up and started the cycle for the next day. Very little time was allowed to stop, take photographs and admire the area! (Anon., Apr 2002)

C-15(i) We were on a chase for time. We overstressed the vehicles to be in time for the gate at the Richtersveld National Park. It was always a rush. There was never time to stop in nature and spend some time in this beautiful environment. The plants and landscapes were just flashes while chasing on! What you could not see from the windows of the vehicle, was missed! I will not go on such a trip again! (Anon., Aug 2002).

C-16: Comment of study participant on his experience with a guide/tour leader to the Richtersveld: (Anon., Meyerton, 14 October 2002).

The way in which we were introduced to this wonderful area (Richtersveld) was a very negative experience. The guide was so taken with two of our fellow passengers in the vehicle that he seldom spoke to the rest of us. They were talking about their experiences on previous visits and did not bother with us who were there for the first time. He also was on more than one occasion blunt with us. We really felt that we were not treated very well although we did pay a lot to be part of this tour.

C-17: Comment from visitor's book in the Mosi oa Tunya National Park in Zambia (2003-10-25).

There are never any rangers to be seen. The only people to be seen are the receivers of entrance fees at the gate. They only receive money and when asked for any information on the area or contact numbers of people who would know something, they simply shake their heads!

ADDENDUM G: FIELD NOTES

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FN-2	599	2003-01-25	Borakalalo, Klipvoor Dam
FN-3	600	2004-04-17	Richtersveld mining
FN-4	600	2003-12-20	Ladybrand
FN-5	601	2003-06-23	Etosha, Namibia
FN-6	601	2002-09-21	Augrabies, Kgalagadi NP
FN-7	603	2002-03-24	Ndumu, KwaZulu-Natal
FN-8	603	2002-03-20	Umfolozi
FN-9	604	2004-04-20	Bergplaas, Nieu-Bethesda

FIELD NOTE 1 (FN-1)

Name:	Researcher
Background information:	Summary of individuals' feelings, expectations and emotions before, during and after a white river rafting experience on the Zambezi river.
Date and place:	22 September 2004, Zambezi River, Livingstone, Zambia.
Additional information:	Video

Morning before departure a pre-trail briefing was attended. During the guide's instructions and preparation talk, the atmosphere was one of excitement and tension.

Val: 'I think we should have chosen the elephant back ride. It looks much safer and calmer!'

The route to the starting point was extremely bumpy (all participants on a truck) and the way down towards the river was strenuous and even sometimes dangerous, although very beautiful. Once in the rubber boat nervousness tended to built to extremes. The 'team' tried numerous times to get pass the first rapid (Fig. 1) ... and almost flipped. Everyone was exhausted and almost wanted to go back to the safety of the river bank. At last we succeeded!

At the next rapid one member got flipped out. That was a scary experience. Some individuals in other boats wanted desperately to get out! Our team continued...

Although very tired we conquered all the rapids – without serious losses! We swam many times – not out of free will!

At the end of the trail we had to walk back up to the vehicle. The climb up the gorge was even more exhausting than the river rafting. The view was spectacular (Fig. 2).

Afterwards we had a meal and something to drink. We toasted on our huge accomplishment. We all felt very good, although very exhausted, about our performance and achievement.

Comments: 'To think I did this on my age!' 'At some stage I felt like giving up, but knew that it was not possible!' 'I am tired, but it was an extremely wonderful accomplishment – I am ready to do anything else, nothing can be worse!' 'The physical experience made us aware of what we can do, of what we can experience. It is almost spiritual.' 'This was one of the most wonderful experiences in my life. I will do it anytime again'.



Figure 1: Bird's eye view of the first rapid to conquer on the Zambesi River



Figure 2: The view over the Zambesi River from the top of the gorge

FIELD NOTE 2 (FN-2)

Name:	Researcher
Background information:	Summary of observations of behaviour during a weekend with 7 friends on a camping trip at the Klipvoor Dam, Borakalalo National Park, North West Province.
Date and place:	25 January 2003, Klipvoor Dam, Borakalalo NP.
Participants:	N de Crom Researcher P de Crom 082 459 7378 M Wepener (016) 454-9216 F Klemp (016) 362-1777 M Klemp 082 588 8390 S Klemp 082 689 4333 J Potgieter 083 797 8348

It was a weekend planned for two weeks in advance and all were looking forward. It was self-catering and everybody took care of his/her own food and other requirements for the week. It was everybody for himself, but doing everything together!

All were feeling excited and look forward to relax and enjoy the peacefulness of this 'undeveloped' park. The group drove to Bora with two vehicles and arrived there early afternoon of day one. It was a happy, high-spirit, deep conversations, evening around a campfire under a very open sky. We went to be in the early hours of the morning. The good spirit continues until late morning of day two, when fellow campers started to turn on their car radio to listen to music. The group was immediately a little agitated and visibly unhappy with this noise. No one approached the fellow campers, but rather sit and shout at each other. Now and then one or two of the group would disappear and go for a walk.

The first observable mood change in the group was annoyance, which quickly turned to irritation. By the end of the afternoon, most of the participants in the group were extremely irritated and even snapped at each other, complaining about various things, including the food and each other's attitudes. We decided to go for a game drive. This lifted the spirits. On arrival back at camp the noisy campers were gone. Immediately the atmosphere of tension changed. We started to joke and laugh at each other again. (We were not really angry at each other, although irritations were obvious.)

The fire was set early evening. At last it was peaceful and quiet again. We started to talk about the day and our irritations with each other. We all agreed that it was not us, who irritated each other, but we were frustrated by the noise and took this frustration out on each other! That so-called 'music' destroyed the peace and quietness what we needed and what we came for in the first place. We spend the rest of the evening and week-end in high spirit. Our moods were positive again and we enjoyed nature and each other's company. We realized it was something "beyond ourselves" that caused our irritations.

FIELD NOTE 3 (FN-3)

Name:	Researcher
Background information:	Summary of observations of discussion and feelings expressed during a roadside stop at some mining activities in the Richtersveld National Park.
Date and place:	17 April 2004, Richtersveld.
Participants:	B Brand 082 853 0610 N de Crom Researcher P de Crom 082 459 7378 D Weitz 082 461 6372 J Weitz 083 229 5844 M Wepener (016) 454-9216

We, by accident, pass the quarry. The stretched out valley is a gaping wound. The machines of destruction are hidden behind the nearby remaining hills and a fence. We wonder when they will stop. When all these mountains have been razed? Perhaps, they will go further, into the depths of the earth's crust, stripping more and more of the top layers of her precious skin, and still hope there is more to satisfy their unquenchable lust for … what exactly? Images of abortion and destruction swim in our heads. Is the fascination, disgust, intrigue and horror with the (re)productive system so stimulating that it cannot be left alone? When does exploration become exploitation? The line seems very fine.

FIELD NOTE 4 (FN-4)

Name:	Researcher
Background information:	On tour through the Eastern Cape – personal experience.
Date and place:	20 December 2003, Ladybrand.
Participants:	N de Crom Researcher P de Crom 082 459 7378

On a tour through the Eastern Cape we stopped at Ladybrand. At a stop street a hawker approached us to sell his ware … live chameleons at R5 each! This was an extremely bad experience and concerns about this phenomenon remained with us for quite some time. We did not buy it and insisted that he set it free…

FIELD NOTE 5 (FN-5)

Name:	Researcher
Background information:	Observation during time spends at waterhole with several other people in Okaukuejo restcamp in the Etosha NP, Namibia.
Date and place:	23 June 2003, Okaukuejo.
Participants:	N de Crom Researcher P de Crom 082 459 7378 M Wepener (016) 454-9216 30+ co-visitors

We arrived early at the waterhole where there was an abundance of life and activities... springbok, gemsbok, kudu, zebra... It was just such a pity that so much 'unnecessary' noise came from the camp. Completely quiet moments did not exist – dustbins were noisily being emptied, car alarms went off, reverse warnings of large trucks were ceaseless… not to speak of the pumps, generators and other mechanical noises!

FIELD NOTE 6 (FN-6)

Name:	Researcher
Background information:	Four friends (including researcher) went on a 10-day visit to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and the Augrabies Falls National Park, both in the Northern Cape Province. We travelled in one old, but reliable Land Rover, to be together and to save money on fuel expenses. These field notes were mainly taken to record a 'bad' experience due to behaviour of group member(s). (Summary)
Date and place:	21 – 30 September, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and Augrabies Falls National Park
Participants:	N de Crom Researcher P de Crom 082 459 7378 J de Beer Bloemfontein D Kapp-de Beer Bloemfontein

We (4 friends) experienced very positive moods during the 'planning stage' (anticipation) of our trip. We planned together, looking forward to an exciting time. Our spirits were high and we often, excitedly, discussed the trip during a 'braai' or other social 'get together". The day of departure arrived and we were all 'on a high'; we talked, were full of energy, active, having a lot of fun and laughter. This high mood state lasted for most of our travel time to our first destination, the rest camp at Kgalagadi. Although we had a few mood changes

due to a little boredom, slow travel speed and bad roads, we still managed to maintain a good spirit. When setting camp (in an already overcrowded campsite) male friend started to give orders as to how and where to pitch the tents. Trying to satisfy his demands, we still pitched the tent in the wrong spot! A mood swing was apparent!

Male friend started doing his own thing, not participating in the cooking activities, etc. that followed, leaving the rest of us at the tents while he went for a swim. (It was quite hot at the time!). Therefore, everybody felt bad because of his mind set and started to do things to please him and get him in a more pleasant mood. This caused a little tension because we all knew that he was acting a little childish. Eventually his mood lifted and we all could enjoy the trip. The remainder of our visit to Kgalagadi was not too bad, although various mood swings were obvious with male friend due to the heat, bad roads and dust. The wild animals and scenery, however, fortunately got him positive and talkative again. These mood swings were minor and we all could live with that without being too much affected. We were enjoying the magnificent environment and ourselves! We really felt close to nature most of the time, especially when driving on the 'less-travelled' roads and being the only people for long stretches.

After five days male friend suggested we leave for Augrabies and explore the area down there (this was their first visit to the area). We had no problem and left for Augrabies. All spirits were high and we felt excited about the new environment to be visited. At Augrabies we all participated in an activity which involved canoeing, hiking and mountain-biking. All went well as long as male friend was in the lead. With the hiking part, he got very tired (blaming his shoes for his slow progress) and started to 'blame' us others for being so stupid to suggest such an activity! The last section involved the cycling part on a relatively easy route. Male friend found that quite easy and was in the lead again. After completion of the whole activity, we all felt a little tired, but extremely fulfilled and happy that we actually managed to complete and got the opportunity to get so close to nature. Even male friend felt good, still complaining about his choice of shoes for the hiking part. However, his spirit was lifted and we all were happy.

The next day, male friend suggested to go fishing (as decided at home, if we get to a place where fishing will be possible, we will do that). As one is not allowed to fish at Augrabies National Park, we first had to find out where we could fish. We managed to find a spot on privately owned land and got permission. By now it was already late morning. Male friend was still relatively happy, as we have succumbed to his desire. At the fishing spot I made a comment on the fishing antics of male friend – to which everyone laughed – and all carried on having a good time. However, soon we realised that male friend was not communicating with anyone. The exception was his wife to which he only spoke in their tent at night. He did not talk to any of us – not for that day and the next three days, no matter the apologies, invitations and attempts to small-talk to lift his mood. We all felt negative after a few days and also uneasy for his wife, who tried her utmost best to rectify things. It ended up that my partner and I started doing things on our own to avoid male friend completely, feeling sorry for his wife. All

of us at that stage experienced a very negative mood state. We felt disappointed, angry, irritated and very frustrated. We felt that male friend ruined our trip. We decided to go home earlier than planned. Although, looking back, we had a good wildlife experience, but male friend's attitude and mood swings left a really bad taste on our total experience.

FIELD NOTE 7 (FN-7)

Name:	Researcher
Background information:	Observation during guided walking trail in Ndumu, KwaZulu-Natal.
Date and place:	24 March 2002, Ndumu
Participants:	N de Crom Researcher P de Crom 082 459 7378 M Wepener (016) 454-9216 4 unknown group members

On a guided hiking trail in Ndumu, one of the group members 'jokingly' asks the guide if she could take out on of the huge impala lilies to take home. "No", he replies, "not that one. The roots are too deep, but I will get a smaller one". In 'shock' the group laughs that of as a joke and say that we know that it is illegal and that we were only joking, on which he replies: "No, that is not a problem, you can take it; there are plenty here"! This was not a joke and this attitude was of great concern to the whole group (7 individuals). What if the guide would say this to people who are not conservation minded? It made us wonder about the level of training of these guides.

FIELD NOTE (FN-8)

Name:	Researcher
Background information:	Observation during a game drive in Umfolozi, KwaZulu-Natal.
Date and place:	20 March 2002, Umfolozi
Participants:	N de Crom Researcher P de Crom 082 459 7378 M Wepener (016) 454-9216 9 unknown group members

On a night drive in Umfolozi-Hluhluwe, the guide was blunt and uninterested in what he was doing. A study participant reflected afterwards on her experience as follows: 'He (the guide) spoke in a 'tape-recorded' manner. It seemed like we were wasting his precious time. It definitely did not feel like he was delivering a service to paying customers!'

FIELD NOTE (FN-9)

Name:	Researcher
Background information:	Notes taken during feedback session. Study participant (Marianna) who attended a course in spiritual awareness in nature.
Date and place:	20 April 2004, Bergplaas, Nieu-Bethesda

What I experienced while being (in nature) … affected the direction of my life… I want to find a way to spend more time in nature and to bring other people into these places. I know I am going to do it… I had the shift in perspective of myself and what I am capable of and what makes me happy… These effects stayed with me… in my garden I changed my perception about the 'pests' – the snails, the harvester termites… Am I that important to decide to kill these creatures because they are trying to survive…? The realisation of God in everything and my need to feel this 'togetherness'… it is like a 'new spirituality'…

ADDENDUM H: JOURNALS

No.	Page	Person	Date	Details
J-1	606	Researcher	2000-07-20	Otter Hiking Trail
J-2	612	Marietjie Wepener	2003-06-13	Namibia
J-3	623	Researcher	1997-08-23	Richtersveld
J-4	636	Bokkie Brand	2004-04-09	Richtersveld
J-5	650	Barbara Els	2004-12	6 months experiences

JOURNAL 1 (J-1): Summary of experiences during The Otter hiking trail

Name:	Researcher
Background information:	Journal kept by researcher during 5 days Otter hiking trail. The journal was read, edited and approved by all participants four weeks after returning from the trail.
Date of trail:	16-20 July 2000

Name of study participant	Contact details
Lourette Bredenkamp	De Wildt Nature Reserve, Brits
Issabel Greyling	Unknown
Sulet Klemp	082 689 4333
Anél Lourens	Unknown
Jaco Lourens	environmental@drakensville.co.za
Natius	Unknown
Clarence Potgieter	082 689 4333
Susan Strydom	Raymondstraat, Risiville, Drie Riviere
Marietjie Wepener	(016) 454-9216

July 2000

Before departure: The planning started months in advance. Some of us trained in a gym to obtain a certain level of fitness. We planned for everything – who is travelling with whom, meeting point, before and after overnight venue, what to take and what to leave. We depart one day before the actual hike starts and overnight at Nature's Valley – a beautiful spot next to the lagoon. We had a huge campfire that evening, but turned in early due to the next day's activities. All were tremendously excited and some were a little anxious: We had no idea what to expect and worried about whether we all will "make"it.

Day 1:
The drive to the starting point passed beautiful scenery along the garden route and all were getting very excited. We couldn't wait to experience this very popular and exciting hiking route.

After watching a video, which scared us because of the dreadful experience shown when you got at places at the wrong time of the tide, we started the trail. Everybody was more or less responsible for him/herself, although we would always help each other when necessary.

The first day was relatively short and took us more or less 5 hours to complete – very leisurely. The route meanders through the edge of the coastal forest and now and then huge breakers can be seen through the thick overhanging vegetation. We had to stop to admire the surroundings. It felt as though we were in some fairy forest. An amazingly calming, but exciting feeling, got hold of me.

The road continues onto bare rocks. The rock formations are incredible and a beautiful waterfall and clear pool got us to off-load the backpacks to have lunch. Everybody was in awe of the surroundings. Some of the group left before the others and a total sense of solitude was overwhelming here next to the waterfall and water pool.

After lunch we negotiated a steep accent and a few start complaining and panting! It was not that bad, though, and soon we spotted the overnight wooden huts at the edge of the forest and very close to the see – a magnificent spot. Some of the group were there quiet early and started to set a fire. We talked about the magnificent environment, stood in awe of the surroundings, took deep breaths of the fresh air and listened to the sea. The conversation around the campfire was light and happy. It was still the first day … We discussed a little of tomorrow and decided that each one will continue at his/her own pace. We all wanted to enjoy every moment and everything without being rushed or feel responsible for 'holding back' the group. That night I fell asleep, very peacefully, with the sound of breaking waves against rocks, only a few meters away.

Day 2:
The second day started with a heavy climb. The route followed the edge of the cliff to a magnificent viewpoint. All the moaning and suffering with the accent was worthwhile! From here we were often struck by silence, having no words or expressions for our feelings and observations.

The inside of the forest looked inviting, it felt cool and warm at the same time. You feel completely on your own… One could hear faint sounds of running water and insects and frogs. The light was dimmed at places due to the dense canopy overhead. The narrow streams gave us opportunity to refill water bottles and stop for yet another few moments to let the surroundings sink in.

On the outside, the scenery was equally magnificent, the ocean always in view. Another climb and again people start expressing feelings of 'getting tired', 'legs don't want to do more', 'exhausted', and so on. Reaching the top, it was again of no concern that to get here was so difficult.
At the fireside the stiff muscles, scraped legs and sunburned faces got a little attention. The warmth of the campfire and the smell of wood smoke from the fire, soothed all physical and mental aches and pains before getting to bed. (Although some members did indicate a little tiredness, the moods were still high. Some expressed their fear for the next day and for crossing huge rivers. A few also felt concern for more steep climbs and steep declines the next day as their legs were aching and the feet are not all too well!)

Day 3:
With aching bodies, but high spirits, we tackled the challenges of this day. (Two of our group members got very irritated with each other over breakfast arrangements! I suspected that it was more a matter of anxiousness for the steep mountain we spotted on the map than about the breakfast!).

The route meanders along the beach, over rocks, soft sand and forest edges. While walking alone, one experienced nature to its full extend – no talking, no listening to talking – just peaceful nature and nature's sounds… It was extremely spiritual moments: One got so close to the surroundings; the sea talked to you; the little fishes in the rock pools scattered away from the moving shadow crossing their space; froth of waves blew against your legs and you can taste the saltiness of the breeze. You became part of it all; felt everything as part of yourself. You became one with all the different parts and everything fitted into one wholeness. It was a breathtaking experience. I did not want it to end and managed to stay on my own for most of the day.

Later the day, after another long, steep uphill climb, it seemed as if the world disappear before you. The overnight hut appeared way down on the other side of a deep ravine. The trail meandered down the slope of the ravine and then one walks inland when the dark water of the river become visible.

We were glad and relieved that we got the river at low tide; it was scary to think that we could got it in full flood! The location of the overnight hut is dramatic. Both huts are located very close to rumbling breakers. Here we had the opportunity to observe the immense power of the ocean.

A few of our group members again got a little frustrated and irritated with each other: The water some of them fetched from the river was salt because they did not walk far enough upstream to collect fresh water. Again it was more a matter of tiredness and sore limbs and feet, than the salty water!

Later that evening emotions were touched by each one telling his/her story of an experience of the day. Anél got lost at some stage during a lone walk, panicked and took the wrong path. That led to much panic and fear in their subgroup. Discussions of the feelings indicated that there was a lot of care for each other. Comments such as 'I don't know if I would be able to live with myself if something would have happened to you today'; I was really very worried when you did not pitch at the river', 'I was very relieved to see you here… (and Isabel started to cry).

Despite our tired bodies, we discussed the day's excitement until late that night, until the last coals went dead and we sat in total darkness, with only the slight breeze and the breaking waves to accompany us. We tried to inspire each other for tomorrow – the hardest day of the trail.

Day 4:

Four of us started very early to ensure that we got to the famous Bloukrans River at low tide. We walked the first two hours of the day in total darkness. We did not speak much. Every step was dangerous. It was pitch dark, especially in the forest, and our torches battled to lighten up the path. I sensed fear amongst the others as we approached a very steep hill. We did not know how far we were from the edge. One could hear the ocean way down below.

At last the sun appeared. It was beautiful and the four of us sat down for a while to absorb the moment. It was a very emotional experience: We were exhausted, aching, anxious, scared and very, very satisfied…

At some stage we got separated and again I was in total solitude, one with my environment. I admired the greatness and harmony of everything surrounding me. While walking I observed the proteas, hearing the sunbirds visiting their long stamens.

The climbing was exhausting, but my mind opened up for whatever wanted to enter. My thoughts seemed to be organised, pure. At that moment I knew exactly what I wanted from life, from my self… It was a very satisfying, fulfilling feeling.

We arrived at the Bloukrans River well in time and could walk ankle deep through the long stretch of clear water. Standing on the high hill before crossing the river, one wonders 'how on earth' will we get on the other side… and where to from there… It was an almost too quick process to get on the other side – so easy – after all the worries!

We spend time on the dry sand after crossing the river, had lunch and marvel at the landscape. Then we rather quickly had to proceed, as the tide was coming in. The next few moments were nerve- racking. From the few in the front we could hear screams of fear and shouting to be careful, because it is dangerous. The steep edges of the rocks that we had to negotiate were very sharp pointing, like blades! We moved very slowly, very carefully. We realised that one miss step and you could be hurt badly and no one will be able to carry you out from here! The adrenalin was pumping.

After almost two hours of strenuous climbing, the path entered a forest and peacefulness came along. It continuous along the beach, over hill tops and I spend a few hours, alone, watching whales in the distance… Very, very humbling…

The last overnight hut came into sight and a sad feeling came along. We all spend some time in the cool waters, to get rid of the aches and pains and to relive the day in our minds.

That night around the campfire, we felt very close to one another. It was as if there was something in the air, like an intimate bond, no words were needed. It was felt by everyone. Sadness was felt when realising that this was our last night in this extraordinary piece of world. There was a kind of reluctance to leave this freedom. In the last glow of the fire we experience a very clear feeling of happiness, satisfaction, content, a feeling of pride and achievement, of love, of knowledge, of being one…

<u>Day 5:</u>
Again we had to conquer a very steep hill right from the start of the last almost 7km of the trail. On top of the mountain you must stop: The view is splendid. Here you are delightfully frightened by the odd sugerbird and frequent sunbirds

flying from protea to protea when frightened by the hikers. The path keeps following the zig-zag of the plato and we made quick progress towards the end of the trail.

The trail suddenly and steeply descents down the mountain slope and end on the soft white sand of the beach close to Nature's Valley. Here we waited for everyone and then celebrated! We had done it! We felt proud, happy, sad, and every other emotion that one can experience at such a moment. We happily hugged and congratulated each other and then walked back to our cars.

While driving away from Nature's Valley a few hours later, one felt new, well-prepared for what lies ahead when one get back to normal life. The feeling is so magnificent … it feels as though one has just swallowed the sun…

JOURNAL 2 (J-2): Summary of experiences during tour through Namibia

Name:	Marietjie Wepener
Background information:	Journal kept during 2 weeks touring Namibia. The journal was read, edited and approved by all participants six weeks after returning from the tour.
Date of tour:	13-27 June 2003

Name of study participant	Age	Occupation	Contact no.	Residence
N de Crom	42	(Researcher)	082 853 2454	Centurion
P de Crom	52	Company director	082 459 7378	Centurion
M Wepener	60	Retired teacher	016 454 9216	Vereeniging
J Weitz	63	Company director	082 461 6372	Benoni
D Weitz	54	Company director	082 461 6372	Benoni

Background: We were a group of 5 friends who started to plan for a 14-day tour of Namibia four months in advance. We have 4x4-vehicles and therefore we planned to travel 'off the beaten track'.

From day one, when we decided to undertake this trip, we were all looking forward to this adventure. The excitement was different than what it was when we had gone to known places previous times. We couldn't wait for the time to come! At last, the day arrived!

Day 1 - 2:

We met along the route and arranged to meet each other at the camping site at Augrabies Falls National Park the evening. From there we will travel together. Just before arriving in Upington, we got a phone call from our friend (J) who passed us on the road earlier. He informed us that they had a bad accident and were on their way to hospital! What a shock! Especially when we arrived at their overturned vehicle! Immediately a lot of things went through one's mind… Will they be o.k.? How long will it take? What is going to happen with the holiday? These were questions we asked ourselves without thinking that we will continue without J and D.

Day 3 - 4:

However not injured very seriously, they had to remain in hospital for at least 5 days (for recovery after emergency treatment). Together we decided that the rest of the tour would continue after the third day, as we could not do anything else for them, except arrange for them to fly back home.

This event had a major influence on the rest of us: While looking at the damaged equipment (some very expensive) at the accident scene, one realizes the insignificance of materialism. All of a sudden, nothing seems to have any worth. Everything can be substituted – except life!

Fortunately, the remainder of our trip, continued uneventfully. We adapted our plans slightly to fit in with the time lost. However, all felt sad and guilty to leave our friends in hospital and continue the trip without them. Conversation in the vehicles and around the campfire at night was dominated by thoughts about them for the first two days at least.

We travelled through the most spectacular scenery of the Fish River Canyon (see Fig. 1). Although our thoughts were continuously with our friends in hospital, spirits started to lift. Sad and depressed feelings changed to that of awe and admiration. It was as if everything was appreciated more intensely. We all agreed that we should start enjoying the trip to the utmost! All were amazed at the magnificent canyon, the cliffs, desolation and the great variety in the landscape along the way from the Fish River Canyon to Lüderitz.



Fig. 1: One of the spectacular views of the Fish River Canyon

We reached the border of the Namib-Nauklft Desert. When you stop and walk a few meters away from the road, you can actually 'feel' the wildness: You hear the wind in the dry grass around you, the joyful twitter of the birds in a nearby camel thorn tree (the only one in the area!), you smell the unknown aromas of the shrubs and the beautiful flowers of the quiver tree… You just know: This is a special place; you cannot describe the feeling, you just feel it… You feel close to the wild horses next to the road … and the free-roaming gemsbok disappearing behind a dune. This whole area has a very peculiar atmosphere. Here, one can loose yourself… or you can find yourself… and our thoughts are still with J and D.

Day 5 - 6

We found Lüderitz a pleasant little town, but battle against the wind to pitch our tent! The night sounds were continuous and we woke early morning. An almost full moon, together with the calls of seagulls and terns, greet us on the island where we camped (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: The almost full moon visible early morning at Luderitz

One of the other most extraordinary places we visited, was Sossusvlei. We were extremely excited to see the sun rises behind these spectacular dunes. Early morning we awaited the sun in the middle of the desert, right among these huge sand dunes. We were not disappointed: The morning sun coloured the dunes and camel thorn trees with enormous beauty (Fig. 3). We did not say a word. It was a very emotional moment. The environment had us quiet… with your own individual thoughts, admiration and gratefulness that you can actually experience this and be part of this.



Fig. 3: The spectacular scene of colour when the sun rises in Sossusvlei.

Day 7 - 9:
Our trip continues to Walvis Bay through the Kuiseb valley. The gravel road was quite bad and sometimes we expressed our irritation with the condition and length of this part of the route. The scenery and uniqueness of the environment lifted the spirit quickly and draw the attention away from the road and dust!

The towns were not impressive and we continued north, pass the fisherman's paradise of Henties Bay, until we reached the next section of the Namib desert. We started our 'lonely' drive through this totally untouched wilderness. The vastness of the desert is overwhelming (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: One of the magnificent views over the vastness of the Namib desert.

Lichen fields lay extended as far as one can see (Fig. 5). Here we also realize that the seemingly lifelessness of the desert is deceptive: When we stopped to admire the different forms and colours of the lichens, we became aware of the amazing life forms all around us. Now we really experienced that sense of total insignificance, humility and wonder.

The only negative thing that we experienced here was the numerous tracks of ignorant, uneducated visitors, who drove off the existing tracks, creating immeasurable damage to this very sensitive ecosystem. We all expressed our concerns about this trend. It made one feel sad and angry, and also powerless… We spoke about how this trend can be eradicated and really felt great concern for damaging such a special place in this way.



Fig. 5: The many life forms in the lichen fields made us humble and very grateful to experience this greatness

We stopped at a cave with rock paintings of people who inhabited this harsh environment a long time ago. We felt almost 'out of place'. Those people knew so much about nature and here we stand, totally dependent on our modern technology! We sat down here for quite a while and speculated about their way of life. With times, it was as if one could feel something of those times. It is hard to explain …

The experience we had while driving, walking, sitting or just being in the desert, was something very different of what we had experienced up to now. You know that you are absolutely alone. You feel it! You see the wild gemsbok running pass you and try and figure out where they are going to, what do they eat… drink. There are no other people here, no so-called civilization, except you and what you have with you. It really makes you feel very vulnerable!

We did not pitch the tent tonight. We wanted to see the stars, smell the fresh air of the night and woke up feeling the breeze in your face… (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6: Tonight we want to experience the night to its fullest desert beauty.

Day 10 - 12:
We had many more wonderful experiences, sightings and discussions while driving through spectacular places on our way to the Etosha National Park. (From here we could also phone our friends – who were home by now, fortunately).

We found a beautiful camping spot in the shade of young camelthorn trees (Fig. 7). Here we discussed many topics and sightings of our journey so far. We experienced nature to its fullest sense: Listening to the wood fire's cracking in the evenings, the jackals calling each other right here in the camp, lions roaring in the distance, watching the moon and stars through the thin leafs of the camelthorns, following the slow-motion movements of a genet through the branches… Everything so perfect!

From early morning till late in the evening, only taking a break when hunger drove one back to the tent for a snack, we watched numerous animals at the waterhole. We identified with the gemsbok, springbok, kudu, wildebeest and zebra (Fig. 8). We talked in a whisper an in admiration of the elephant herd, wishing to be a part of the herd, becoming part of them in our minds… (Fig. 9).



Fig. 7: Our camping spot in Etosha under the young camelthorn trees



Fig. 8: Gemsbok displaying their fearlessness of water



Fig. 9: Animals of all kinds display their unique behaviours, setting examples for human beings who watch them.

Day 13 - 14:
We spotted many birds and other interesting creatures along the road on our way back to the south. Two of us had a scary experience when we got lost on foot in a desolated area while admiring the astonishing quiver trees (Fig. 10).



Fig.10: The quiver tree forest near Keetmanshoop – an unforgettable experience.

We start realizing that it was time to go home. It was a sad feeling. This country is so extremely beautiful and peaceful; we did not want to leave the feelings that we had experienced the past 12 days behind. We felt immensely relaxed and calm. It felt like we had been here for much longer than the two weeks.

Day 15:
We did not keep track of time or really cared what day it was up to now, but this morning we suddenly realize that the time had come! We were still in Namibia. With everything still to do (border post, picking up belongings of J and D in Upington), we had a long way ahead!

Reflection (NdC)
We all got along very well, through all the circumstances; we had wonderful inspiring conversations around the campfires every evening – some of which got quite emotional.

I can summarise this trip by saying that it did not start good, but looking back, it was one of the best wilderness experiences I ever had. The unbelievable magnificence and otherness of the Namibian nature had us completely without words. There was a lot of time to think… to get into contact again…

We had our friends in our thoughts all the time, wondered how they would have experienced certain aspects of the trip and sometimes share our thoughts about them with each other. Everyone knew that everyone else was thinking of them too.

We were not too anxious to get back home, to the same routine where we left just more than two weeks ago. Back home, we battled to 'get started' again. It took almost two weeks to adapt to city life and work routine! But looking back, we realize how much we are part of nature, how much we need nature. We learned afresh from the gemsbok, from its astonishing adaptation abilities in stressful environments; from the elephant and the numerous springbok… We also experienced quality and value of life; what really matters. Today, we are back in the rat-race, the noise; where you see a few stars at night, blurred by pollution and city lights – and we have to cope! But fortunately we can, because we experienced the beauty and the unconditional truth of nature, of which we are indissolubly part of and to which we can still return when we want to, to get what is needed to live!

Reflection (PdC)
I want to thank MW and NdC for the abovementioned. It definitely reflects all my feelings too. I could not have expressed it better myself.

This experience made me realised what really matters in life. What is really important is definitely not money – it cannot buy life!

I asked myself, 'What is life'? Life is to experience God's creation in the form He gave it to us – to enjoy, appreciate and to take care of. I truly belief that we did exactly that during this tour.

I arrived back home, feeling both depressed and grateful. Depressed, when I thought back at the beginning of our tour, and when thinking of the rat-race laying in front of me like a huge mountain. But I was grateful and happy to be able to have a part in the joy of Creation again. I got depressed when I realised that it would probably be a long time before I would be able to have another experience like this.

But I feel grateful and happy, for my partner, my friends and the realisation through this journey, that life is not about what you own, but what you can enjoy – with each other - in nature!

JOURNAL (J-3): Summary of experiences during Richtersveld trip 1997

Name:	Researcher
Background information:	Journal kept during 8 day trip to the Richtersveld.
Date of tour:	23 - 31 August 1997

The following are excerpts scanned from the original document.

23 AUGUSTUS SATERDAG

Toe Piet ("Liefie") 'n paar jaar gelede gesê het, ons moet nog eendag Richtersveld toe, het ek dit entoesiasties "Ja!" beaam, sonder dat ek eintlik regtig geweet het presies waar die Richtersveld lê. Nou het die eendag uiteindelik vir ons aangebreek en ons is – goed bevoorraad met kampgoed en blikkieskos, water en "jumpers" – oppad na die Richtersveld! Ons gaan sommer ook kyk hoe lyk dit by Augrabies en sommer so oppad hopelik ook van die veelbesproke "blomme van Namakwaland" te siene kry.

Die bakkie is gisteraand al gepak en dis vanoggend net koffie, kameras en klere wat gelaai moet word – tog genoeg om ons eers twintig voor ses (40 minute na ons beplande vertrektyd!) te laat wegkom by die huis. (Die afskeid van die honde was, soos altyd, maar swaar.)

Die eerste deel van die pad is bekend – tot op Kuruman. Hiervandaan ry ons gewoonlik Hotazel toe oppad Kalahari Gemsbokpark toe. Nou neem ons die pad in die rigting van Upington. Upington is 'n mooi skoon dorp en die omgewing skep 'n rustige atmosfeer. Anderkant Upington oppad Augrabies toe, stop ons 'n klomp kere om die interessante plante langs die pad van nader te bekyk.



Hoewel dit net uitgestrekte vlaktes anderkant Upinton is, hou ons baie kere langs die pad stil en loop sommer net 'n entjie in die veld in om die interessante plantsoorte te bekyk.

Laatmiddag kom ons by Augrabies Nasionale Park aan waar 'n vriendelike hekwag ons op sy tipiese "Kalahari-Afrikaans" welkom heet. Ons tentjie staan vinnig en met drie kameras en ons verkykers sit ons gretig af waterval toe om nog die laaste sonskyn van die dag te benut. Maar daar's maar min water en die val is nie regtig so skouspelagtig nie.



Later om die braaivleisvuurtjie bespiegel ons oor môre se planne: Ons sal seker maar so 'n uur of twee gebruik om die hele park te verken, die res van die dag hier in die kamp deurbring en "rus" en dan teen sononder valle toe vir 'n mooi foto. Ons sal in elk geval môre genoeg tyd hê om die leesstof wat ons oor die Richtersveld saamgebring, klaar te lees…..

<u>24 Augustus Sondag</u>

Ons slaap laat vanoggend (10 voor 8). Ons het mos die hele dag om die paar kilometer in die park te ry en alles te verken. *(Dankie tog dat ons nie moet jaag om eerste die leeus te sien nie!).* Na koffie en beskuit vir ontbyt begin ons die park verken. Hoe ontsettend groot was ons verrassing nie! Hierdie plek het **al** ons verwagtinge oortref! Kort nadat ons die paadjie direk buite die kampplek bereik het, kon ons sien dat hierdie plat graniet terrein vanaf die kamp tot by 'n eerste stroompie (wat nou net 'n moeras is), heelwat interessanthede gaan oplewer.

Onbegryplik mooi! Ons ry baie stadig met die sirkelroete deur Skilpad, stop by soveel as moontlik blomme, neem hordes foto's, skyfies en meters se video. Kort-kort sien ons nog 'n mooier blom, stop, klim uit, neem foto's en bewonder.





om te gaan sukkel met water in die rivier!). Dan maak ons 'n botteltjie rooiwyn oop en ons kuier in die wind om die vuur.



Ons kampie tussen die abiekwasgeelhoute aan die voet van Potjiespram.

Gefoeliede aartappels en uie lê al in die kole en Piet se varktjops sê al tsie-tsie.



Die unieke en ryk plantegroei van die Richtersveld is te wyte aan die klimaat - dramatiese klimaatsverskille oor klein afstande word veroorsaak deur die ruwe topografie van die streek. Die bergreekse wat die ruggraat van die Richtersveld vorm, styg sowat 1000 meter bo seespieël en die gemiddelde reënval op die pieke is soms tot 300mm per jaar in vergelyking met die geringe 15 tot 30mm in die laer gebiede van die Oranjeriviervallei. Die meeste plante behoort aan die vygiefamilie. Dit is die grootste vetplantfamilie ter wêreld en die meeste van die spesies is endemies in Suid-Afrika. Van die groter plante in die Richtersveld, soos die halfmens en die kokerboom, kan jare in versengende hitte met byna geen reën nie, oorleef. Plantkundiges ontdek steeds nuwe plante in die gebied. Die Richtersveld is natuurlik 'n paradys vir plantkundiges, maar dit is kommerwekkend dat daar so min jong plante is. Daar was byvoorbeeld na bewering die afgelope 30 jaar geen ontkieming van basterkokerboomsade nie - hierdie bewering is dalk ongegrond omdat dit baie moeilik is om klein plantjies van dié spesie raak te sien. Dit is egter baie waar dat die voortdurende beweiding van die gebied die groei van nuwe plantjies erg in die wiele ry. Behalwe dat bokke vinnig die geringste groenigheidjie en nuwe sappige plantjies uitsoek, vreet hulle ook graag die blomme van plante af en verminder so die moontlikheid dat sade vorm wat die voortplanting van die plante verseker. (*Hoekom is hierdie gebied nie lankal as bewaringsgebied uigesonder nie?!*).



'n Bokwagter met sy troppie immerweiende boerbokke.



Uitsigte vanaf die Tsoba-pas



Ons volg nog deurentyd die padaanwysings op die kaartjie, maar ons moes iewers iets verkeerds gedoen het, want skielik bevind ons onsself op 'n baie steil, klipperige (of sal ek sê rotserige!) paadjie berg-af.



Ons stel op die kaart vas dat dit die Tsoba-pas is - 'n pas wat ons vooraf besluit het om miskien te vermy weens ons relatiewe onervarendheid in hierdie terrein. Maar nou is ons hier en daar is net en rigting en dit is vorentoe! Dit was egter so bestem dat ons hier moes land... Die landskap om ons is onbeskryflik. Ons stop meer as wat ons ry om alles om ons te probeer inneem - die bergtonele rondom ons lyk soos 'n skildery. Dis oorweldigend en 'n mens voel bitter klein. (Hoe is dit moontlik dat ons as mensies 'n sê kan hê oor hierdie wonder?!) ←

Ons vorder tree-tree teen die steil bergpas af. Soms is die bakkie net op drie wiele. Aan die onderpunt van Tsoba-pas kom ons by 'n kruising waar ons weer met behulp van die kaart en 'n eensame rigtingaanwyser ons rigting kan vind.

Teen laat agtermiddag (en 68km later) bereik ons vannag se uitspanplek - Richtersberg - pragtig reg langs die Oranjerivier.



Aan die oorkant lê Rosh Pinah in Namibië - vanwaar kolganse in die verte van hulle laat hoor. Die rivier lyk baie aanloklik na 'n stowwerige dag en die vorige aand se sand en natwaslapbad, maar nadat ons minder as kniediepte in die water ingeloop het, het die temperatuur daarvan ons gou van die besluit om te swem laat afsien.



Springbokvlakte lê uitgestrek voor ons, omsoom met die Rosyntjieberg in die agtergrond. ‘n Groot kokerboom lyk amper eensaam in hierdie wye vlaktes.



Verderaan word die vlakte onderbreek met hier en daar 'n kokerboom en bloedrooi spatsels van die woestynroos – ‘n lae bossie oortrek met klokkievormige rooi blomme.



Die paadjies na De Hoop loop meestal deur rivierbeddings en die sand word al meer en al dieper. 'n Paar keer sit die bakkie lekker vas. Meestal kom ons darem redelik maklik uit, maar af en toe moet ons diep grawe - die grafie rig maar min uit en ons gebruik maar hande ook. Uiteindelik kom ons darem uit.







Rotse en rotse oral rondom ons en 'n sagte sandrivier-bedding is ons roete verder-aan. Toe moet ons deur die sogenaamde "Hek". Hier vorm die rotse 'n baie nou deurgang en om alles te kroon maak die paadjie presies hier 'n draai. Ek moet uitklim en mooi beduie sodat Piet met die bakkie in een stuk hier kan deurkom. Die draai is so kort dit lyk of die bakkie te lank is om deur te kom, maar ons is nou halfpad en omdraaikans is minder as in die skoorsteen van die Kangogrotte! Piet en die bakkie bly kalm en kom sonder letsels anderkant uit!



Ons neem vir oulaas foto's en staar lank oor die laaste dele van Helskloof uit - in 'n poging om hierdie tonele vir ewig en so goed as moontlik in ons geheue vas te pen.



By Helskloof verlaat ons die park 'n bietjie weemoedig - dis so bitter ver .... wanneer gaan ons weer die geleentheid en voorreg kry om weer hier te kom...? Maar ons is baie dankbaar dat ons hier was - wat 'n voorreg!

Die res van die Richtersveld - dié deel buite die park - is heelwat minder bergagtig, maar steeds is die landskap besaai met klipkoppe, uitgestrekte vlaktes, veelkleurige blomme wat die eentonige sandkleur skerp onderbreek. Dis alles natuurlik grondpad en ons ry by “dorpies” verby met name soos Khuboes en Eksteenfontein en deur 'n piepklein plekkie, Lekkersing. Hier maak sinkhuisies en skamele bleek geboutjies die "dorpie" van 'n voormalige diamantbedryf uit. Die diamantsaak is lankal weg, maar van die mense het gebly. Wat op aarde doen hulle hier in die Godverlate wêrelddeel myle van enige beskaafde plek? Of is hulle dalk in een van die weinige beskaafde plekkies onder die son ....?

Na meer as 150km van stof en klippe, lê die teerpad na Springbok vriendelik voor ons. Ons ry in redelike stilte terug in die rigting van Springbok, elkeen besig om die afgelope paar dae te herleef. Naby Springbok kry ons reën en ons besluit om liewer vanaand 'n alternatief vir kampeer te soek. Ons bly "luuks" in 'n groot kamer in die Springbok Lodge. Ons eet in die restaurantjie - lekker vis en tjips en 'n reuse bak slaai. Later kruip ons in die lekker sagte bed tussen kraakvars

JOURNAL 4 (J-4): Summary of experiences during Augrabies/Richtersveld trip 2004

Name:	Bokkie Brand
Background information:	Journal kept during 10 day trip to Augrabies and the Richtersveld. The journal was read, edited and approved by all participants 12 weeks after returning from the trip.
Date of tour:	9 – 20 April 2004

Name of study participant	Age	Occupation	Contact no.	Residence
B Brand	43	Senior lecturer	082 853 2454	Randburg
N de Crom	43	(Researcher)	082 853 2454	Centurion
P de Crom	52	Company director	082 459 7378	Centurion
M Wepener	60	Retired teacher	016 454 9216	Vereeniging
J Weitz	63	Company director	082 461 6372	Benoni
D Weitz	54	Company director	082 461 6372	Benoni

We've been preparing for this for the last 3 months – bought updated maps, organised get-togethers for the group to get to know each other – B and M have not yet met J and D. The excitement was building and everyone was looking forward to this trip – the first visit to the Richtersveld for B, M, J and D. Watched videos and read books and articles on the part of the country that we plan to travel to – all part of the preparation phase – this is a major trip!

It is Thursday - the day before our long awaited trip. We are preparing the Landy for an "early get-away"– we (N, P, M and B) plan to pitch our tents in the campsite at Augrabies National Park before sunset tomorrow – 900 kms to travel in one day. J and D to join us on Monday night.

The gas bottles were checked, refilled and loaded during the past weekend. Emergency kit checked and packed; extra battery (fully charged); spare tyre checked; camping equipment checked and repacked; groceries and liquid refreshments bought and packed (non-perishables only); camera equipment sorted and packed; relevant books and other information selected. Naturally all these activities and preparation contributed to the expectation and excitement.

After the final packing – camping equipment, boxes with groceries and utensils, bags full of books, cameras, mattresses etc. and preparing "padkos", we have a braai to put us in the right mood for the long awaited departure (as if we needed to be reminded!).

<u>9 April 2004</u>:

Early Friday (not much sleep) – we take to the Landy and start our adventure by asking God's blessing on our trip. The "getting to" our destination is definitely part of the trip – we admire the changing countryside as we drive and discuss or personal expectations of our few days away from our daily routines.

After a long and safe journey, we finally arrive at Augrabies National Park just before sunset – enough time to pitch our tents (Fig. 1) (after some debate about the final lay-out and positioning). We have sundowners and finish off the last of our "padkos".



Figure 1: We pitched our tents in the shade of huge karees.

10 – 12 April:
The first days at Augrabies were very relaxed – we explored the camp, sat in the shade of massive white karees, enjoyed the abundant birdlife, took a drive through the park; watched the interaction between fellow campers (positive and negative – some very noisy and inconsiderate; others friendly and eager to share experiences).

The resident klipspringer frequently "inspected" our campsite (and our tents) (Fig. 2). We enjoyed the different reactions of other campers to this inquisitive little animal – some did not know how to react, others were scared (mostly children) and some wanted to feed it (prohibited of course). Although the klipspringer was obviously used to being amongst people, it was still a wild

animal and sometime reacted accordingly – not everybody expected this. With the increase in numbers of people the klipspringer's visits decreased – we missed him.



Figure 2: The klipspringer inspecting our tent at Augrabies.

By Monday most of the long weekend campers left and thankfully peace and quiet returned to the camp – adding to our pleasure of and enjoyment.

Augrabies has a special charm – the massive cliffs and boulders; the thundering waterfall (even with the water levels being low); the magnificent colours of the red cliffs at sunset and in the soft early morning light (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).

The low water levels also mean fewer midges (real pests at this particular spot) and we thoroughly enjoyed the sights and sounds of the area.



Figure 3: **Some of the massive cliffs and boulders of the Augrabies Falls National Park.**

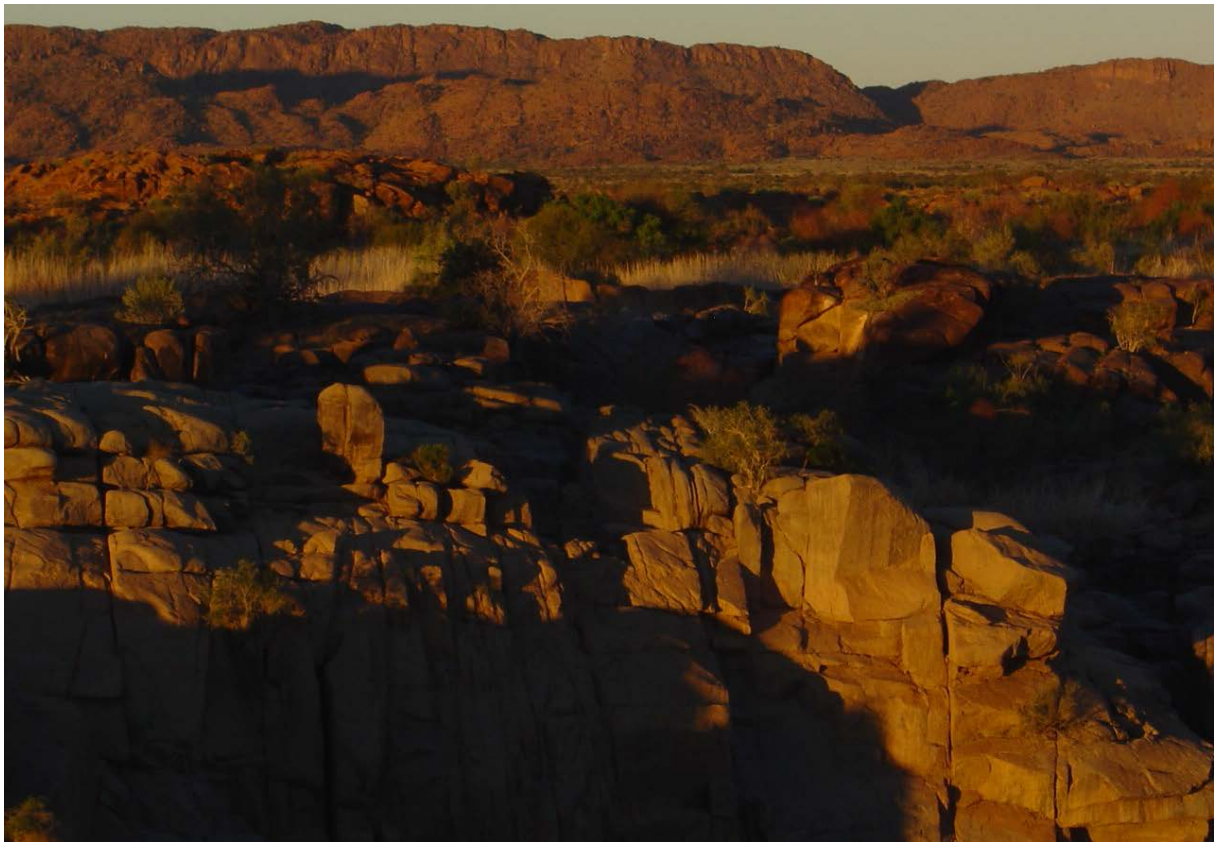


Figure 4: **The magnificent colours of the cliffs in the early morning light at Augrabies Falls National Park.**

13 and 14 April:
J and D join us on Monday night and we set out early on Tuesday morning - direction Pofadder. We refuelled in this quaint little town before resuming our trip to find the Namaqua 4X4 route (somewhere in the vicinity of Pella). This was not as straight forward or easy as we expected (after all – we had detailed instructions and lots of maps!). We eventually find the trail and pitch camp at Khamgab – on the banks of the Orange River (Fig. 5). We enjoy the solitude – no other campers – what peacefulness!



Figure 5: Camping on the banks of the Orange River with no other campers in site

On Wednesday we discover a tear in one of the tyres of the Landy and the men folk took charge of the repairs while the women enjoyed bathing (in our antics can be called bathing) in the waters of the mighty Orange River! We were frolicking like otters – for the record – these are crocodile free waters.

The repairs were not successful and we set of to Vioolsdrift at a snail's pace (mindful of the damaged tyre). We used our slow progress to identify birds and other wildlife in the areas next to the road.

The countryside on our way to Vioolsdrift is wonderful. We see our first "halfmens" - a magnificent sight - each member of the group has a unique experience in the presence of this extraordinary plant (Fig. 6).



Figure 6: The extraordinary 'halfmens' – a unique experience for everybody to be in its presence

The damaged tyre forces us to adapt our original itinerary – we spend a wonderful evening under a reed-roofed lapa in Vioolsdrift. Mindful of scorpions (and the huge amount of dust on the floor) we utilize the bar counter, tables and a few dilapidated beds to sleep on (Fig. 7). It rained and we had to move our "kitchen" into our "communal bedroom". All these unexpected changes and events adding richly to our "adventure".



Figure 7: Scorpions drove us to bar counters and rusty beds at Vioolsdrif

15 April:
Thursday morning and we have to return to Springbok to repair the damaged tyre. Again this was not as straight forward as we thought. Being used to plenty well stocked workshops in the city where we live, we were forced to slow down once again – the tyre had to be delivered (overnight) from Cape Town. Another deviation from our original plan – we pitch camp in the Springbok Caravan Park – very few other residents.

We never expected the storm that hit us during the night – this is the Northern Cape – semi desert! The downpour must have been the total sum of the annual rainfall for the area! The windstorm was frightening - the tent bent and folded to such an extent that we thought we would suffocate! Eventually N got up and secured the pegs.

16 April:
The next morning our neighbours (M and J&D) shared their experiences – we all had a good laugh and were thankful that our equipment was not destroyed! We return to the workshop to have the new tyre fitted and resumed our trip to the Richtersveld National Park via Steinkopf – direction Elandsfontein. The Richtersveld is truly magnificent – wide open spaces, unique with a sense of freedom!

Finally we arrive in the Richtersveld National Park. We conclude the formalities at the gate and set out to find the campsite at Pooitjiespram (Pokkiespram).

The peculiar (but very descriptive) names of the features in the Park we surely know that we are in Nama country. We had some "unplanned detours" – a flash flood washed the road markers away and we inadvertently drove into the mining area. The sight of the damage (in our view) done by the diamond mining operations had a negative impact on our mood and experience. We spent some time discussing whether the benefits warranted the environmental mutilation.

We reach our campsite with just enough time to set up camp and hang out the wet equipment to dry (Fig. 8).



Figure 8: Enough sunlight left of the day to dry out the previous night's soaked equipment

Our camp is on the banks of the magnificent Orange River – directly opposite the Rosh Pinah mine dump (in Namibia). We start a fire and enjoy a well deserved dram of sherry Our surroundings are so beautiful that we barely notice the hideous mine dump. As it becomes darker we are in awe of the night sky – with no moon (or city glare) the sight is indescribable. We share a truly awesome experience.

17 April:
It is Saturday and we break camp to travel to our next stop – De Hoop. The ruggedness of the terrain compel slow (very slow) driving, but we use the time

to take in the overwhelming beauty of the area – sometimes we express our feelings to each other, but are mostly silenced by the magnificence (Fig. 9).



Figure 9: The terrain compel very slow progress, but the beauty of the area is magnificent

To our annoyance we have to stop to allow a convoy of 25 vehicles to pass (Fig. 10). We learned about this group when we refuelled at Springbok and deliberately tried to avoid them. We came to the Richtersveld became of its remoteness, but to some people the Richtersveld presents the ultimate test to prove their driving skills and capabilities of their vehicles – this was part of an expedition arranged the 4X4 club of Radio Sonder Grense (a national radio station). This invasion (and in our opinion over-indulgence) downgraded our experience to some extent and provided a topic for debate at the campfire.



Figure 10: The front part of the convoy of 25 cars of the RSG tour

We also spent considerable time discussing the very nature of the park – that of sharing nature with the nomadic locals (Namas) and their livestock – goats and mules. As we travel the overgrazing and trampling of the veld is clearly visible. Goats are agile and forage even on the steep slopes of the mountains (Fig. 11). This leaves the sensitive soil bare and lead to increased gully erosion – clearly visible!



Figure 11: The agile goats of the Nama people foraging on the slopes

We are alone at the campsite (or so we thought). After setting up camp, N and P decided to go fishing (with varied success!). Once again the campfire became the gathering place and we enjoyed a delightful time of sharing experiences, stories, a nice meal and a bottle (or more) of wine of course! We cannot avoid enjoying the stars again – we are not used to seeing so many!

18 April:
Sunday - and we travel to Tatasberg for lunch. This takes us to a different part of the park – inland (or away from the river). The landscape is ever-changing and we see large granite boulders resembling toes and mushrooms, masses of slate-like rocks with jagged edges, mountains made up of rounded stones and many other variations. En route we enjoy the splendour of the uniquely adapted plants (Fig. 12) - truly amazing to see and experience things that emphasise the wonder of nature.



Figure 12: *Aloe pillansii*, one of the plants adapted to survive in the Richtersveld, endangered due to overgrazing

We have lunch in the shade of a massive boulder – without the interference of ever present midges - N and P recall their previous visit to this specific site and the irritating little insects spoiling their lunch then!

We return to our campsite at De Hoop and true to our established routine – enjoy another memorable evening around the campfire.

19 April:
Monday dawns with the reality of this being our last day in the park. We seem to take longer to break camp – as if to postpone ending the experience. We leave the park via the Tsoba Pass – my personal highlight of the trip. On our way up the mountain we saw beautiful plants, birds and landscapes, but nothing could prepare us for the absolute awe-inspiring, overwhelming magnificence of the scenery at the top of the mountain – not enough adjectives to describe the beauty! (Fig. 13).



Figure 13: The magnificent scenery from the top of the Tsoba Pass, Richtersveld National Park

Reluctantly we leave the park at Helskloof gate and travel to Alexander Bay. We expected to see lots of birds, but were disappointed and decided to travel to Port Nolloth. We treated ourselves to luxurious accommodation and enjoyed the hot water and electricity (so much for roughing it!!). The evening greets us with a splendid sunset which brings a total calmness and almost sadness with it (Fig. 14). Over a nice bottle of wine with our meal at a local restaurant (Anita's Tavern), we reflect on our marvellous time and end our trip in style (Fig. 14).



Figure 14: The final sunset of our trip…



Figure 15: A meal in 'Anita's Tavern', Port Nolloth, to end our marvellous time

20 April:
Tuesday and the start of our return trip. Our moods have changed and we spend the maximum time driving to overnight at Olifantshoek. We find suitable accommodation, but the night is not without a grim reminder that we are back in civilisation (as per popular definition) – the Landy's alarm was activated – we investigate and find the back door open - but no indication or explanation of how it happened. Not much sleep for the rest of the night – the intermittent chiming of the church clock added to the restlessness.

21 April:
Wednesday – tired and gloomy we set off for Pretoria – back to the rat race – but nothing could spoil an unforgettable visit with treasured personal experiences in a truly extraordinary world – the Richtersveld.

It is far, but… We'll be back!!

JOURNAL 5 (J-5): Summary of experiences during 6 months in natural environments - Botswana and South Africa

Name:	Barbara Els
Background information:	Journal kept of personal feelings and experiences during 6 months practical experience in undeveloped and less developed natural areas as a student in ecotourism.
Period of journal:	June - December 2004

The following are excerpts scanned from the original document.



25 Junie 2004

Ek is nou in my kamer (13:15) en is besig om my goedjies reg te kry vir Ellisras. Ek dink terug aan die tyd toe ek my Blouwildebees geskiet het. Ek gaan na 'n wilds-plaas van die 26 Jun - 30 Jun om te help met vertaling (duits)
Ek is angeloof lik opgewonde, en dink net hoe lekker ek die 5 dae gaan ontspan!!
(In die bos)

28 Junie 2004

Het sopas uit die veld gekom, maar niks geskiet nie. (18:13) Dit is baie lekker vir my (Kolobe Bush Safaris) en ek en die "Duitsers" kan mekaar gelukkig goed verstaan.
Nadat ek so ~~5:45~~ 17:45 die son sien onder gaan het, het ek net weereens besef hoe wonderlik die natuur is, en dat ek glad nie sonder die natuur sal kan klaar kom nie!



2 Julie 2004

Ons vertrek vanaand 19:40 Griekeland toe, - my tas is gepak en ek is reg vir die groot reis! Ek is aan die een kant baie hartseer omdat ek so ver van Dirk af gaan weg wees...



Swem vir die dag by die strand - kan nie sy naam onthou! Sal uitvind.

20 Julie 2004

"Ladies + Gentlemen Welcome to Botswana" Dit is die woorde waarvoor ek gewag het.... Dit is nou 21.30 en ek kan nou nog nie glo dat my wens waar geword het nie. Baie opgewonde het Rhannie ons (Alta + Ek) by die lughawe kom haal. Ons slaap vannaand by die kantoor, - maar lyk vir my meer soos n bliksemse stoor!!! Ek en Ôlta het besluit om n ietsie te gaan eet by die "Power Station Restaurant" - wat net oorkant ons 'stoor" is! Glo vir my dit het nie net by eet gebly nie!! Ons moes bietjie "celebrate"... Ek is bnggals skrikkerig vir môre, want ons het gehoor dat ons dalk nie by dieselfde kamp gaan wees nie. Ek en Ôlta sit maaren


Boarding Pass

NAME OF PASSENGER/
ELS/BARBARA GISELA M

FROM/
JOHANNESBURG
TO/
MAUN

CARRIER/ FLIGHT/ CLASS/DATE/ TIME/
BP 222 Y 20JUL 1300
GATE/ BOARDING TIME/ SEAT NO./ SMOKE/
21 12:30 6D XXX
2 43 8
PCS/

AIR BOTSWANA
Going Your Way

Ons het amper ontrekkings simptone gekry! By Steers



Die Buffels!



Daar was seker so 100 of meer in die trop gewees. Hulle het ma kom van ons af gestaan - ek het so iets nog nooit gesien nie! Nadat ons by die kamp aangekom het, het ons aandete gekry.....
Dit was die mingste wat ek

nog in my leeftyd vir aandete gekry het —
slaai met so 5 olywe en so 8 stukkies feta
kaas as dit nie minder was nie en dan
tamatie. Daarby het ons kaue vleis gekry. Teier
Verbaas het ek na Ôlta gekyk en gevra: dit was
seker net ons voorgereg?" Nee dit was hoof-
gereg. Ons het tent toe gekom en maar ons
pakkie chips oopgemaak (Crinkles fruity Chutney)
en verder geëet. Ek het toe vir my en
Berghaan 'n dopple geskink en na die nag-
gelulde geluister. .... Dit was leka - ons
eerste dopple saam in die Botswana bos.

Dit was 'n FOUT!!



Buffalo Herd
An African Experience

Kuns Hakkie !!

26 Julie 2004

olifant fotos 2

Ek + Alta by die olifant!





Hoekom is ouma se oë so groot? Sodat ek beter kan sien my kind.

Olifant se oog!!



"Hy het 'n geheue soos 'n olifant" Dit is wat mense gewoonlik vir jou sê as jy iets baie goed kan onthou wat lank terug gebeur het.
Maar vandag het ek iets gesien en ervaar wat ek vir die res van my lewe sal onthou! Ons is vanaggend saam met Denis die veld binne, want die Amerikaner het vir Oom Olifant geskiet. Nadat ons somer van die grondpaadjie afgedraai het direk in die bos in met die Land Cruiser, het Ek en Alta ~~vir~~ met die hulp van 'n GPS vir Denis die rigting aangewys tot die klein "bergie" voor ons verskyn....
Baie opgewonde het ek uitgespring en die masiewe dier mors dood sien lê. Ek het so iets nog nooit in my hele lewe gesien nie. Ek het nader gestap en dadelik net aan die Olifant gaan vat. Ek en Alta het dadelik paar fotos geneem - maar ek kan nog steeds my oë nie glo nie. Die Swartes het die Olifant begin slag en die vleis weggedra asof dit uit die mode gaan. Ek het die heeltyd by gestaan en gekyk hoe hulle slag, maar Alta se maag het toe paar draaie gemaak en ek het haar so 15 min. later weer gesien. Dit was vir my so interessant dat ek vir die PH (hy is 'n moerse hero) gevra het of hulle nie a.s.b. die Olifant se oog kan uitsny nie, want ek het gehoor sy oog is so groot soos 'n golfbal, en ek wou dit met my eie oë sien. Die oog is uitgesny en 'n min. later in my hand. Ek het ook vir die boesmans gevra om vir my 'n stuk vleis af te sny, want ek wil ook proe..... Ek sal die vleis mêre gaar maak en sommer vir Alta ook!
Ek dink Alta gaan 'n "vigitarier - vegeterian" wees na die 2 maande, want ek het haar vandag so naar gemaak, dat sy amper geen vleis meer wou eet nie.

31 Julie 2004

Dit is nou 11:00 en ek en Alta sit nog steeds met ons vingers in ons ore. Ons het vanoggend al weer eiers geëet en hoender lewers wat nie eers gaar is nie. Kyk ons is ook sommer vriendelik verplig om op die Atcinsins dieet te wees, want ons kry glad nie stysel nie! Ek hou baie van die bos, dit is rustig, maar dit begin te rustig vir my raak. Dit is soms lekker om alleen te wees maar ook nie te lank nie. Ek en Alta het vanoggend besluit dat ons die 1 September 2004 terug gaan. Ons kan nie eers ons take doen nie, want ons doen niks, behalwe kos maak. Ek is nou so uitgehanger vir geselskap tot 'n stom mens sal my vermaak OF dalk "Turbo"..... !: Ek hoop nie Mev. gaan kwaad wees omdat ons vroeër terug kom nie, maar ek glo Mev. sal verstaan....

Ons het vannaand gebraai (sosaties) en na Alta se 3de glasie wyn en my 3de J&B + water het



Giraffe Herd

An African Experience

4 Augustus 2004

Ons was alweer 6uur in die kombuis....
Ek en Alta het besluit om vandag ons vliegtuig-
kaartjies te verander. Die Tannie in Maun
het dit vir ons verander en ons het gehoor dat
ons môre middag 3 uur vlieg vanaf Maun.
Ons wou nog so 2 weke gebly het & om saam
met Janine en Denis te kuier, maar ~~môre~~ vandag is die
enigste geleentheid wat ons in geleentheid Maun
toe het. Ons het maar ons tassies gepak - ALWEER
en so &: 17:30 saam met Louis in sy Toyota Land
Cruiser vertrek. Oppad Maun toe het ons sommer
2 pap wiele gekry. Dit was al so agt uur en
ek en Alta het dors begin raak....





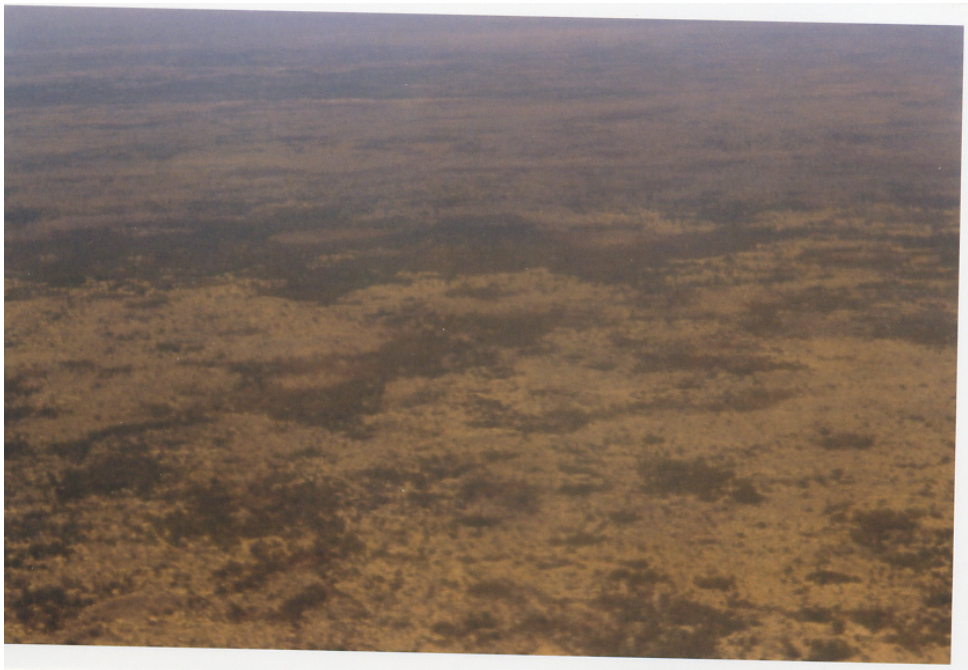
Oppad Maun toe moes ek net 'n foto van die sons ondergang neem....



Alta saam met ons "favaurite" - Brenda links is Etomeleng sy help ook in die kombuis.



Alta by die "diningroom"



Uit die vliegtuig..! Ons laaste "kykie" van Botswana.



Alta by die lughawe JHB internasionaal. Haar gesig sê alles!







Dit is mooi né julle?
"Dit is beautiful"





Ek en Dirk.



Ek by 'n Waterval in die Drakensberge.

7 Oktober 2004

Ja... wat kan ek sê...? Ek is nou al amper 2maande by Ukutula, al voel dit nie so nie. Ek moet bieg dat ek jare laas in die boek geskryf het, maar dit is omdat dit nie lekker vir my is by Ukutula. Dit is wel 'n baie lekker plek maar die mense hier is nie lekker nie. Ek en Alta bly nou by JP en Adelé in die huis en dit voel vir my of ons in die pad is. Ons kan nie eintlik ons eie ding doen nie, want ons bly mos by hulle!! Hier is 'n geweldige atmosfeer in die huis - iets is nie lekker tussen die getrude paartjie.
'n Ding wat my baie ontstel is die feit dat ek en Alta nou al amper 'n week en 'n half kantoor werk doen - ek het beslis nie sekretarieël geswot nie!!
O, ja ons maak baba leeutjies groot en hulle is nou al so 3weke oud. Dit is vir my 'n baie groot ervaring, alhoewel dit nie reg is in my oë nie. Ek verlang ook baie na my Mamma, omdat ons ook baie min huistoe kan gaan.

Dit is maar een van daai ding wat hulle noem: "Groot word proses" Een ding waaroor ek baie bly is, is dat ek nie alleen is nie, dat Alta darem saam met my is. Gelukkig maak ons altyd in grap van alles, of die beste van in slegte saak! Ons ondersteun mekaar geweldig baie .... Vandag het ek en Alta grasopnames gaan doen net om uit die kantoor te kom. Ek het weer besef hoe mooi die natuur is, en watse rustigheid die natuur vir in mens kan gee! Soos wat ek nou voel wil ek net met my prakties klaarmaak en op in ander plek gaan werk!

25 Oktober 2004

"Uit en tuis ek en Alta is in ons eie huis" Dankie tog daarvoor...! Ek werk nou sommer baie lekker- der by Ukutula naudat ek en Alta in ons eie plekkie is. Die leeu welpies raak elke dag al hoe cuiker en mooier. Ek begin nou bietjie stress, want ek het nog nie juis met my take begin nie - ek sal seker maar moet begin vinger trek. Ons bestuurders hier by Ukutula is "heavy" intilligent,



Ek saam met my "kinders".
Trompie + Boesman.

Alta by in "Mamma Leeu"





Die laaste van my kinders...
Hulle is nou so 4 maande.





Daar was lekker tye ook...
Ek saam met kinders van Generaal Nicolaas Smit.



Die was my groot Pel vir die week, ou Marisca