



## *Nedbank acknowledges Diamond Route for its 'many benefits'*

The Diamond Route was recently recognised by Nedbank for the benefits it offers to a range of people and organisations; including school and university students, mine employees, scientific researchers, local communities and the public.



*Barend Petersen and the rest of the Diamond Route team after winning the prestigious Nedbank Capital Green Mining Award hosted annually by Nedbank in recognition of best practice.*

### Judges cited the following as some of the many benefits:

- The creation of 261 permanent jobs;
- Company staff have access to all properties and all staff are familiar with the Diamond Route;
- All properties are open to the public, which benefits national and international tourism;
- The training of 14 cultural and bird guides;
- Some of the properties have been conserved for over 100 years – these areas provide important reference sites which are invaluable for scientific research;
- More than 120 research projects have been conducted to date on the various properties. These relate to mammals, birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians, plants, general ecology and archaeology;

- Benfontein has successfully preserved the most important herd of pure, un-hybridised black wildebeest, which, according to scientists, is the single most important conservation effort that will save these animals from genetic extinction;
- A variety of new insect species have been recorded on the Diamond Route properties, including a new genus;
- Four universities are currently running research projects on the different properties;
- Every year between 10 and 15 school groups from disadvantaged communities visit the reserves and every group receives a full day of environmental education from professionally qualified staff;
- A section of the Ezemvelo Nature Reserve has been donated to the Maharishi Institute to run its Youth Development Programmes;
- An Endangered Wildlife Trust partnership has been established with the Diamond Route, which includes an MOU being signed to utilise facilities at Ezemvelo Nature Reserve and Telperion near Bronkhorstspruit by the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Conservation Leadership Programme. This programme aims to give practical training to aspiring young conservationists from disadvantaged backgrounds.

One of the strongest aspects of the Diamond Route Programme, the citation added, was the partnerships formed with universities, research organisations, NGOs and schools.

This extended to research, experiential learning, sound environmental and sustainability management, leadership, organic farming and the provision of learning materials.

The adjudicators were particularly impressed that the Diamond Route extended beyond conservation and research by making the sites accessible to all – thus providing an excellent example of sustainability.



Above: Brenthurst Garden, filled with indigenous and plants and completely organically sustained

## *First Diamond Route Conservation and Research Conference a major success*



The first annual Diamond Route Conservation and Research Conference recently took place in Johannesburg.

The event, held at the De Beers campus in Johannesburg, attracted 120 delegates and 16 leading academics and conservation managers, who presented papers on scientific research undertaken on the nine properties that make up the Diamond Route.

The conference was launched by Manne Dipico, De Beers Deputy Chairman and Chairman of Ponahalo Holdings.

He said that the event illustrated 'the good diamonds do' and pointed out the irony that while it is accepted that mining impacts the environment, it is also an industry that is often responsible for conservation of ecologically significant areas in South Africa and for making privately-owned areas available to scientists, as well as to visitors seeking to commune with nature.

He commended the scientists, mining and conservation leaders on freely sharing the outcomes of the research

projects that have been undertaken across the Diamond Route, and other

sites in De Beers, Namdeb (in Namibia) and E Oppenheimer & Son properties in South Africa.

"The papers advance our understanding of the ecology of many areas," he said.

"Such sharing of expertise is as meaningful as the soils and vegetation which host the species of animal, insect and bird life protected on the Diamond Route, which exists alongside local communities and mines."

Strilli Oppenheimer, patron and founder of the Diamond Route, said such a gathering helped give the body of scientific research undertaken a wider audience and 'academic wings'.

"It is the liberation of knowledge that may otherwise not be exposed to the wider public," she explained.

Strilli also added that it is important that scientific work be made accessible and understandable to the average person. "Passion," she said, "is what drives successful research, and there was certainly no shortage at this conference."

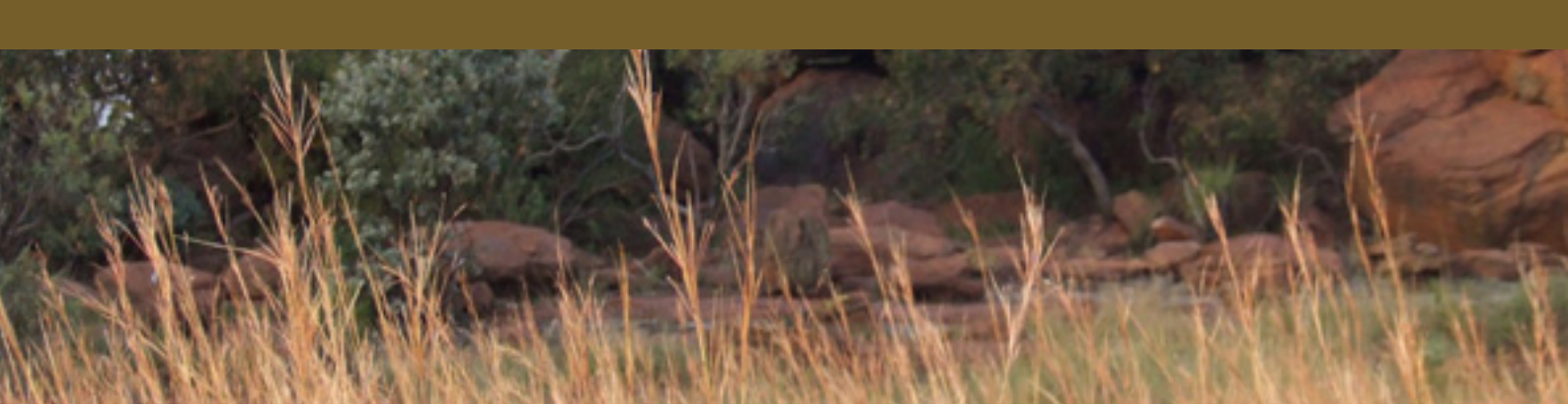
Duncan MacFadyen, Manager of Research and Conservation, added that the



Garden Commodore *Junonia archesia* are common on the rocky ridges of Brenthurst Gardens.

diversity of research projects presented from across the board of properties was outstanding and that he was riveted. "Research ranged from studies of invertebrates through to elephant. It is truly amazing, and I am proud as a conservationist to be working for an organisation that invests so heavily on the environment, and the conservation of species which inhabit it.

"The Diamond Route makes a huge contribution to conservation. How many mining families or companies do you know that are in the position to present such a remarkable, varied and informative programme?"



## *Ezemvelo bike race creates awareness and funds for EWT*

Four years ago a mountain bike race was organised to raise money for and to create awareness of the conservation work of the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT). The event has been such a success that it has been repeated annually since then with four successful events being staged on the De Beers Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve and a further challenge, now in its second year, at the Ezemvelo Nature Reserve, in Gauteng.

Not only has the number of participants increased each year, but the status of the event and its objectives have grown in stature, promoting the exquisite Diamond Route Reserves, as well as strengthening partnerships and boosting local businesses.

It has also raised much needed funds for the EWT – over R250 000 has been collected in the past four years. Each year, a different threatened species is chosen as the “mascot” for the BIKE4BEASTS MTB Challenge and represented on the race medal and cycle vest. This year is the ‘Year of the Lion.’

On 19 September, about 300 mountain bikers took part in the second Diamond

Route BIKE4BEASTS MTB Challenge on the Ezemvelo Nature Reserve, near Bronkhorstspuit. Race organisers, Lycaon Logistics, were again thrilled with the success of the event.

Two race distances were available (65km and 25km) both of which showcased the heart of the Ezemvelo Nature Reserve.

In the 65km event, there was a field of 20 women and 101 men. The men’s individual category was won by George Oertel (a previous winner of BIKE4BEASTS Venetia) in a time of 02:43:20 with Izak Goosen and Kurt Von Buddenbrock in second and third places respectively.

The winning lady was Petrushka Constancon, with a time of 03:14:16. Marita Williams took second place and Cynthia Bekker in third. The winning team was Xxaro, with time of 03:44:48X, with ‘Formica Creations’ in second places.

For the 25km distance, Ross Constancon won the men’s category in a time of 01:06:02 with Larise Venter winning the women’s in a time of 01:17:07.

### *Acknowledgements*

Lycaon Logistics would like to thank George Oertel, Cynthia Bekker and Team Exxaro for donating their prize money back to the EWT. Full race results and details can be found at [www.bike4beasts.co.za](http://www.bike4beasts.co.za).

Colin Donian said of the event, “To participate in a very special event and to assist in developing and maintaining a feature which is fundamental to our country and continent – our natural heritage, fauna and flora in all its glory. The race organisation was perfect”.

In addition to sponsorship from the Diamond Route, the organisers thanked Ezemvelo Nature Reserve, Transpaco, Global Communications, ZEAG and Exxaro.

Special thanks go to the volunteers who made the day such a success: the Off Road Rescue Unit, Friends of Ezemvelo, the Land Rover Owners Club, staff from the EWT and, in particular, Simon Nash, Susan Miller and Ian Hoy for help with designing the course.



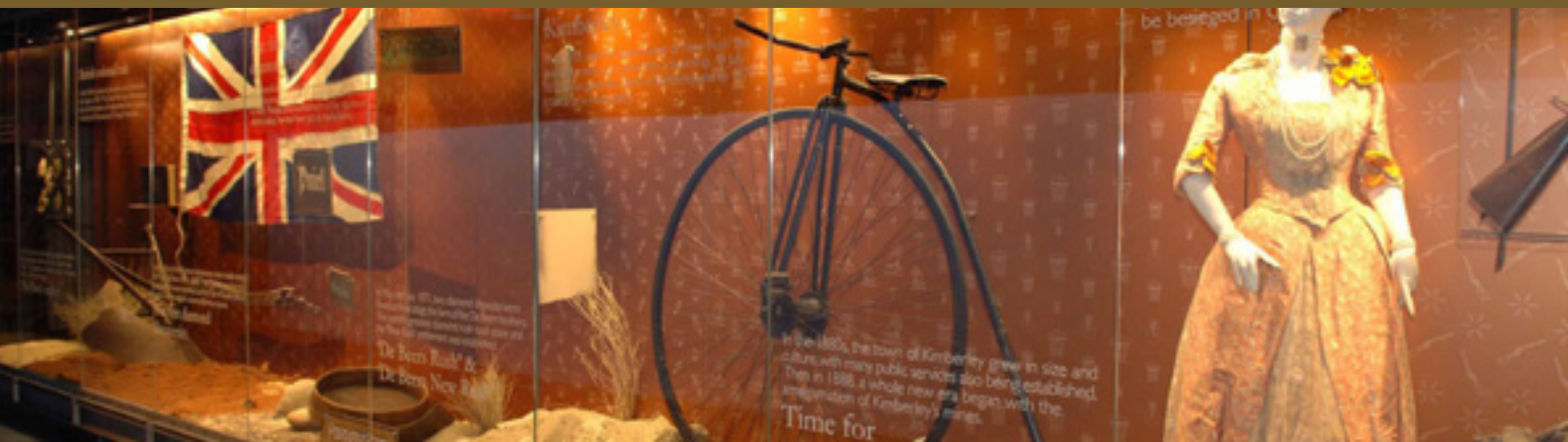
## *Cycling Poles visit Big Hole*



Interesting visitors to the Big Hole recently included a group of cyclists who are traveling from Poland to Cape Agulhas and back to Algiers on bicycles.

They are following in the tracks of Kazimierz Nowak who did the journey on bicycle from 1931 to 1936. They asked if they could mount a brass plaque at the site of the Big Hole.

The group are also involved in doing charity along the way and handed out gifts at one of the schools in Kimberley.



Above: The Big Hole museum

## Diamond Route recognised by the Northern Cape Tourism



The Diamond Route featured prominently at the third annual Northern Cape Tourism Service Excellence Awards held recently.

According to the organisers, service excellence is a national priority and an important attribute that will define the Province in time to come. The awards recognise those businesses and individuals who raise the bar in the tourism sector by improving their standards of customer care and providing service excellence.



Sharon Stainthorpe received an award of the behalf of Dronfield Nature Reserve who won best accommodation at the 3rd annual Tourism Industry Awards hosted by Northern Cape Tourism.

### The Diamond Route was recognised in the following categories:

- ★ **Accommodation – Nature Reserves**  
Dronfield Nature Reserve, Kimberley – *Winner*
- ★ **Tour Guides**  
Diamond Bird Tour Guide, Kimberley – *Highly Recommended*  
Aukwatowa Tours, Port Nolloth – *Highly Recommended*
- ★ **Tourist attractions**  
The Big Hole – *Highly Recommended*

## The positive legacy of diamonds

Diamonds have been vitally important to the development of South Africa, and remain so to this day. Synonymous with diamonds are De Beers and the Oppenheimer family, at the forefront of diamond mining industry for more than 100 years.

The mining operations of De Beers in South Africa often include large areas of natural habitats. These natural areas have been diligently managed over many decades and are now very important reservoirs of biodiversity. Excellent examples are the Black Wildebeest and Red Hartebeest. Had they not been conserved on Benfontein and Rooipoort Reserves near Kimberley, these species may have been lost forever, as extinct as the Dodo.

In measuring the value of biodiversity and natural ecosystems conserved as a legacy of diamond-mining, one may add large tracts of natural lands owned by the Oppenheimer family.

These areas have also been well-managed – the most spectacular is the 100 000 ha Tswalu Kalahari Reserve, which is the largest private nature reserve in Africa.

Not only are these reserves havens of biodiversity, they have also been the focus of a considerable research output, supported and often funded by De Beers and by the Oppenheimer family. This investment in research constitutes a further environmental contribution – knowledge invaluable for conservation.

Global concerns about the planet’s sustainability are rapidly intensifying. Sustainable development in tandem with socio-economic upliftment is essential. Such action is taking place, ranging from global cooperation to individual actions. In response, many commercial companies have broadened their responsibilities to active participation in environmental actions.

The reality is that De Beers and Oppenheimers were committed to conservation and social upliftment and have practiced offset of diamond mining impacts before the term of offset became current in conservation.

## *New moth species discovered at Tswalu*

A new “clear wing” moth species (Family: Sesiidae) was found on Tswalu by Daniel Bartsch recently.

The Sesiid’s, or clear wing moths, are a small family of fascinating, usually day flying, moths. A total of nearly 1 400 species worldwide are known with about 60 from southern Africa.

Most of them are small to medium in size and show an amazing, bee- or wasp-like mimicry. Because of this and also due to their inconspicuous, rapid flight, adults are easily overlooked.

Daniel Bartsch had to come all the way to South Africa to study these moths. During his recent stay in Tswalu, Daniel’s

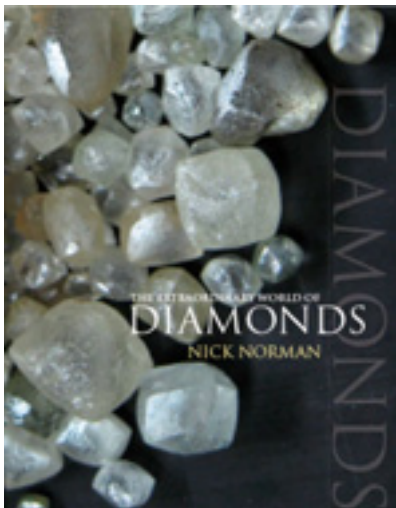
experienced eyes saw a bush, looking a bit dry. He dug out the roots of the plant and discovered the typical little tunnels which the larvae create. A day later, and to everyone’s delight, an adult moth hatched and Daniel could tell immediately that he had found a new species.

Daniel Bartsch has decided to name the new moth after the Oppenheimer family to show his appreciation for their efforts in nature conservation.

We will have to wait for more details about the new find when Daniel publishes his scientific article next year.



## *New book highlights the extraordinary world of diamonds*



The diamond is the brilliant emblem of endurance, the essence of romance, the stuff of legend.

But behind the mystery lies an extraordinary and fascinating story, which stretches back to the deep geological

time of the earth’s formation. Indeed, the geological history of the diamond is so convoluted and complex that it has taken almost a hundred years to understand it fully.

Only now can we grasp how perfectly this simple crystal of carbon symbolises creation in all its magnificence. Over the last hundred years, this understanding has been applied with dramatic results to the search for diamonds across the globe, from the frozen wastes of Siberia, to the arid outback of Western Australia and the barren lands of Arctic Canada.

The stories of exploration and discovery are here recounted with close attention to the larger-than-life characters who prospected often against the odds, finally struck it lucky and then built mines, companies or even empires out of their finds. Nor does the book ignore the practical aspects of its subject: it describes in graphic detail how geologists search for diamonds and miners extract them; explains the geometrically precise art of cutting and polishing the finished gems;

explores the development of a single global supply chain which for almost a hundred years was controlled exclusively by De Beers and the Oppenheimer dynasty; and looks at the underworld of illicit diamond buying and how ‘conflict diamonds’ have fuelled some of Africa’s bloodiest rebellions. Every aspect of this unique gem appears in this book as well as the stories that characterise the diamond’s remarkable history, sometimes bizarre, always romantic.

Author Nick Norman studied geology at the University of Natal in Durban, where he graduated with an MSc in 1968. He has worked in mineral exploration in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Brazil and Chile, undertaking, in addition, shorter-term assignments elsewhere in South America and Africa. For the last 10 years he has consulted on diamond exploration and mining projects in South Africa, Lesotho and Angola. He is the co-author of *Geological Journeys: A Traveller’s Guide to South Africa’s Rocks and Landforms* (2006).



Ponahalo Holdings

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A DIAMOND IS FOREVER