



Environment

In South Africa, the Government leads protection of the environment by example. National and provincial departments must compile environmental implementation and management plans. Recently, the Auditor-General was asked to devise a mechanism for monitoring compliance with such plans.

World heritage

South Africa has taken several concrete steps to implement the United Nations' (UN) Agenda 21 on sustainable development. These include reforming environmental policies, ratifying international agreements, and participating in many global and regional sustainable-development initiatives.

In 2002, nearly 200 countries were represented at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. The Summit saw the launch of over 300 partnerships, including 32 energy initiatives, 21 water programmes and 32 programmes for biodiversity and ecosystem management.

The biggest success was getting the world to turn the UN Millennium Declaration into a concrete set of programmes, many focusing on the most marginalised sectors of society.

FACT

To encourage recycling and reduce litter, new regulations require plastic bags to be 30 microns thick. Printing with inks that are not environmentally friendly may cover only 25% of a bag's surface.

Environmental heritage

South Africa enjoys the third highest level of biodiversity in the world.

Some remarkable aspects of the abundance of life in this country include:

- over 3 700 endemic marine species
- some 18 000 vascular plant species, 80% of which occur nowhere else
- there are more plant species in the Cape Peninsula National Park than the whole of the British Isles
- South Africa has 5,8% of the world's mammal species, 8% of bird species and 4,6% of reptile species
- one third of the world's succulent species are found in South Africa.

South Africa is one of only six countries with an entire plant kingdom within its national confines. The Cape Floral Kingdom has the highest recorded species diversity for any similar-sized temperate or tropical region in the world.



FACT

South Africa has 66 families of spider, comprising 6 000 species, and 175 species of scorpion. Fatal bites and stings are, however, extremely rare.

Biomes

There are eight major terrestrial biomes, or habitat types, in South Africa. These biomes can, in turn, be divided into 70 veld types. The biomes are savanna, Nama-Karoo, succulent Karoo, grassland, *fynbos*, forest, thicket and desert. The *fynbos* biome is one of only six floral kingdoms worldwide.

Conservation victories

- The population of southern white rhinoceros in South Africa has risen from less than 20 in 1910 to 8 000 today.
- By mid-2002, more than 200 000 seedlings of endangered

Biodiversity values by province

Province	Number of species				
	Plant	Mammal	Bird	Amphibian	Reptile
Eastern Cape	6 383	156	384	51	57
Free State	3 001	93	334	29	47
Gauteng	2 826	125	326	25	53
KwaZulu-Natal	5 515	177	462	68	86
Limpopo	4 239	239	479	44	89
Mpumalanga	4 593	160	464	48	82
Northern Cape	4 916	139	302	29	53
North West	2 483	138	384	27	59
Western Cape	9 489	153	305	39	52

Source: Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism

cycad species had been sold to the public, reducing the threat to wild populations.

- Many cheetah are bred in captivity and relocated to protected areas.

Conservation areas

South Africa has 403 terrestrial protected areas, an area of 6 638 658 ha or 5,44% of its total land area. Twenty-two of these protected areas are national parks.

Scientific reserves

These are sensitive, undisturbed areas managed for research, monitoring and maintenance of genetic sources. Access is limited. Examples are Marion Island and the Prince Edward Islands near Antarctica.

Wilderness areas

These areas are extensive in size, uninhabited, under-developed, and access is strictly controlled. Examples are the Cedarberg Wilderness Area and Dassen Island in the Western Cape.

National parks and equivalent reserves

SANParks manages a system of 20 national parks.

Commercial and tourism-conservation development, and the involvement of local communities, are performance indicators. Since 1994, parks under SANParks have expanded by 166 071 ha.

There are currently six Transfrontier Conservation Areas along borders with neighbouring countries. The proposed 35 000 km² Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park covers South Africa's Kruger National Park and parks in Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

In August 2003, a treaty was signed between South Africa and Namibia for the establishment of the Ais-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park, which includes the world's second largest canyon, on the Fish River.

On 22 August 2003, the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism launched the Maloti-Drakensberg Conservation and Development Area in Lesotho.

National and cultural monuments

These are natural or cultural features, or both, and may include botanical gardens, zoological gardens, natural heritage sites and sites of conservation significance.

In December 1999, Robben Island, the Greater St Lucia Wetlands Park and the Cradle of Humankind were proclaimed World Heritage sites by the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organisation.

The Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg Park was nominated as a mixed site. In July 2003, the site of the Mapungubwe civilisation became the fifth Heritage Site. The Cape Floral Region also became a World Heritage Site at the end of June 2004.

Habitat and wildlife management areas

These areas are subject to human intervention. They include



FACT

The west coast of southern Africa is home to the largest mainland seal colonies in the world. Nearly two million seals have been recorded there.

conservancies; provincial, regional or private reserves created for the conservation of species, habitats or biotic communities; marshes; lakes; and nesting and feeding areas.

Sustainable-use areas

These areas emphasise the utilisation of products on a sustainable basis in protected areas such as the Kosi Bay Lake system in KwaZulu-Natal.

Wetlands

Wetlands include a wide range of inland and coastal habitats – from mountain bogs and fens and midland marshes to swamp forests and estuaries, linked by green corridors of streambank wetlands.

South African national parks		
Park	Date proclaimed	Size (ha)
Addo Elephant	1931	74 339
Agulhas	1999	5 690
Augrabies Falls	1966	41 676
Bontebok	1931	2 786
Cape Peninsula	1998	22 100
Golden Gate Highlands	1963	11 663
Kalahari Gemsbok (now part of Kgalagadi Transfontier)	1931	959 103
Karoo	1979	77 094
Knysna National Lakes Area	1985	15 000
Kruger	1926	1 962 362
Marakele	1993	50 726
Mountain Zebra	1937	24 633
Richtersveld	1991	162 445
Tankwa-Karoo	1986	27 064
Tsitsikamma	1964	63 942
Vaalbos	1986	22 697
Vhembe-Dongola	1998	5 356
West Coast	1985	36 273
Wilderness	1985	10 600

Source: SANParks

Botanical gardens

There are eight botanical gardens in five provinces. The largest, and the site of the National Botanical Institute's headquarters, is Kirstenbosch in Cape Town. It houses 5 300 indigenous plant species, and was voted one of the top seven botanical gardens in the world in 2000.

The Pretoria National Botanical Garden houses the National Herbarium of South Africa, the largest in the southern hemisphere.

Zoos

The 80 ha Pretoria Zoo (the National Zoological Gardens of South Africa) is one of the world's 10 best. It attracted more than 500 000 visitors in 2003. The Zoo is responsible for two breeding centres covering 5 834 ha.

The National Zoological Gardens was declared a national research facility, subject to the provisions of the National Research Foundation, in March 2004. The declaration of the Zoo as a national research facility presents a remarkable opportunity for the Zoo to reposition itself as one of the world leaders in breeding and researching endangered species.

The Pretoria Zoo's 80 ha houses more than 10 000 animals.

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)

The Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism officially announced four new MPAs in June 2004.

The MPAs are modelled on the success of the Greater St Lucia Wetlands Park – with strict zoning of both marine and coastal protected areas. The four MPAs are Aliwal Shoal



South Africa scooped its 26th gold medal at the prestigious annual Chelsea Flower Show in London in May 2004. Some 600 exhibitors participated in the show in 2004. South Africa has been participating in the show for 28 years.

Climate of provincial capitals

Province	Capital	Average temperature (°C)	
		January	July
Eastern Cape	Bisho	22,1	13,8
Free State	Bloemfontein	23,0	7,7
Gauteng	Johannesburg	20,1	10,4
KwaZulu-Natal	Pietermaritzburg	22,9	12,9
Mpumalanga	Nelspruit	24,0	14,8
Northern Cape	Kimberley	25,3	10,8
Limpopo	Polokwane	22,6	12,2
North West	Mafikeng	24,1	12,0
Western Cape	Cape Town	20,9	12,2

Source: Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, South African Weather Service

on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal, the coastal and marine environment next to Pondoland in the Eastern Cape, Bird Island at Algoa Bay, as well as the Cape Peninsula in the Western Cape. Negotiations are underway for the creation of an MPA off Namaqualand.

Some of the protection measures to be implemented in the MPAs are restrictions for people who want to fish, as well as restrictions for stowing fishing gear when fishing with a vessel.

Spear fishers will not be allowed entry to these areas. Scuba divers will also be required to obtain permits.

Marine resources

South Africa's coastline covers some 3 000 km.

South Africa's fisheries are among the best-managed in the world. In February 2003, the first Environmental Court in South Africa was opened in the southern coast town of Hermanus, in the Western Cape, and had an immediate impact on poaching.

FACT

Some 500 million t of topsoil are lost through water and wind erosion. South Africa is a signatory to the Convention to Combat Desertification.

The Kruger National Park

First opened in 1927, more than a million people visit Kruger every year. Comprising almost 2 million ha, the Park has over 500 bird species, not to mention 336 trees and 147 mammals. It even has 49 species of fish.

The second Environmental Court was launched in Port Elizabeth in February 2004.

The Department's precautionary policy on managing the country's marine resources has resulted in pilchard and anchovy populations reaching record highs.

Other recent achievements include the following:

- encouraging surveys allowed the total allowable catch for West Coast rock lobster to be increased in 2002 by 25%
- by mid-2003, it was possible to increase the number of medium-term commercial fishing rights from 400 to 2 200, 60% of which went to historically disadvantaged people
- the Eastern Cape had one of its best squid seasons ever in 2002/03, with some 4 000 t being landed in the six-week season.

In 2003/04, South Africa had eight Blue Flag beaches. They were:

- Humewood Beach, Nelson Mandela Metropole in Port Elizabeth (Eastern Cape)
- Margate Main Beach (KwaZulu-Natal)
- South Beach, Durban (KwaZulu-Natal)
- Hibberdene Beach (KwaZulu-Natal)
- Ramsgate Beach (KwaZulu-Natal)
- Marina Beach, San Lameer (KwaZulu-Natal)
- Umhlanga Rocks Main Beach, (KwaZulu-Natal)
- Grotto Beach, Hermanus (Western Cape).

The Working for the Coast Programme was launched in October 2000. It has succeeded in upgrading the environment and improving the lives of many people living along the coast.

More than 55 teams of workers have been formed along South Africa's coast to upgrade the environment, with many of them having started their own small businesses.