

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTRES

LAPALALA WILDERNESS SCHOOL

This article is the first in a series aimed at covering all the major environmental education centres in Southern Africa. The material was supplied by Clive Walker of The Wilderness Trust and compiled by the editor.

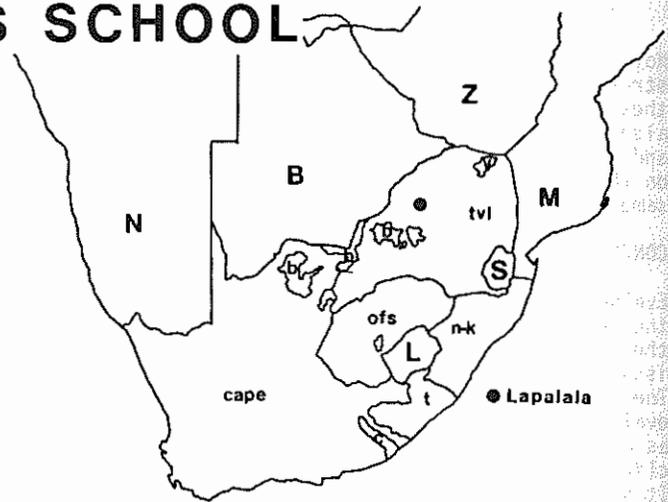
The Lapalala Wilderness School is a Field Study Centre for the Wilderness Trust of Southern Africa. Established in 1982, it is an independent non-profit organisation which teaches the fundamentals of environmental conservation. The School is located in the Lapalala Wilderness, a 13 500 ha wildlife sanctuary in the Waterberg Mountains of the north-western Transvaal, some 300 km from the Wit-Watersrand.

The Lapalala Wilderness in turn forms part of the 25 000 ha 'Waterberg Conservancy' which is made up of various privately owned reserves sharing common boundaries. The Palala river, a tributary of the Limpopo, runs through the centre of the Conservancy, providing an abundance of water throughout the year. The area contains a wide variety of large and small game, a prolific bird life and the botanical diversity associated with a bushveld ecosystem. Archaeological sites occur in the sanctuary in the form of rock paintings and iron-age sites.

The aims of the Lapalala Wilderness School are closely linked to those of the Wilderness Trust, which are:

- To promote an awareness amongst all peoples of the serious effects of the continuing abuse of natural resources in Southern Africa.
- To secure the conservation of wilderness areas, natural vegetation and habitats, and all forms of wildlife on both public and private lands and to press for the increase and establishment of further such areas.
- To provide all people, especially the youth of Southern Africa regardless of race, culture or privilege, with a knowledge and appreciation of the environment in which we live by means of Wilderness Schools, Field Study Centres, trails, films and lectures and all other possible means; to publicize their existence and encourage their use and to seek and provide financial aid for those wishing to attend, but who may be unable to afford to do so.
- Support for the aims of the Endangered Wildlife Trust.

Additionally Lapalala Wilderness has as its primary objective the conservation of its ecosystem in



order to facilitate its other priorities which are the breeding of rare antelope, conservation education, public recreation and research.

The School is based in converted farm buildings with classrooms and dormitory space, with a capacity for 36 children/students as well as accommodation for three accompanying teachers. There are also facilities for families and 'bush camps' may be hired. Manadu Camp accommodates ten pupils/students and one teacher under canvas on the banks of the Palala river.

The School offers a variety of courses to children from Std. 2 to Matric level on a weekend, vacation and in-term basis. The normal pattern has been to conduct courses in groups of ten individuals in order to expose participants to high quality experiences. From the first courses run in 1983 there has been an annual average growth rate of participants of 66%. To date 1 576 children and 274 teachers have been exposed in this way to the intricate and delicate workings of nature.

Courses are run by three professional officers and cover *inter alia* the following fields: ecology, conservation of resources, fieldcraft, human relationships, a historical perspective and aesthetic, spiritual and emotional dimensions as well as relevant aspects of geography, biology and geology. In addition courses involve vigorous outdoor activity - walking, climbing, swimming and canoeing as well as survival in the bush.

Further details may be obtained by writing to:
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Tel. (011) 53-1814

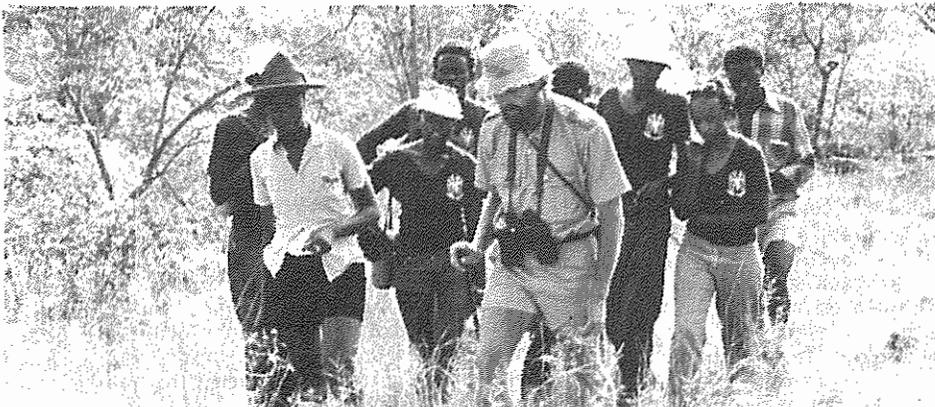


FIGURE 1
On trail at Lapalala