

## Maputaland conservation planning software adopted worldwide

Maputaland is an area of high biodiversity value that covers part of Mozambique, South Africa and Swaziland. The region is the focus of a number of national and transnational conservation initiatives but there is no overall planning system to guide and integrate all of these schemes. This problem is being addressed by a project that involves the University of Kent's Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology and a number of partner organisations in the three range states. Together, these institutions will map the biodiversity of the region and identify the most important conservation areas.

A central element of this work is to build capacity, so that the project partners continue to use and update the Maputaland conservation planning system. However, it is also important that the planning system is easy to use, which is why the project has developed a user-friendly computer program called CLUZ (Conservation Land-Use Zoning software). This software allows people to carry out on-screen conservation planning and also acts as an interface for MARXAN, an advanced planning program that was developed at the University of Queensland. This means that anyone with some knowledge of computers can produce conservation plans with real-world relevance.

The project has already run workshops in Kwaluseni, Maputo and Pietermaritzburg to provide CLUZ training (Figure 1). This also allowed people to analyse their existing data and this was done successfully during the Kwaluseni workshop at the University of Swaziland (UNISWA). This workshop took place in December 2004 and brought together people from the Swaziland Environment Agency, the Swaziland National Trust Commission and UNISWA. These organisations have collected a range of species and vegetation distribution data and this information was used to produce the first map showing priority sites for biodiversity conservation in Swaziland (Figure 2, Figure 3).

Our project also makes CLUZ freely available to anyone interested in conservation planning and it can be downloaded without charge from the project website (<http://www.mosaic-conservation.org/cluz>). This means that the legacy of the Maputaland project will not just be in southern Africa, as more than 190 people from 50 countries have already downloaded CLUZ since July 2004.



Figure 1 – Training session in Maputo

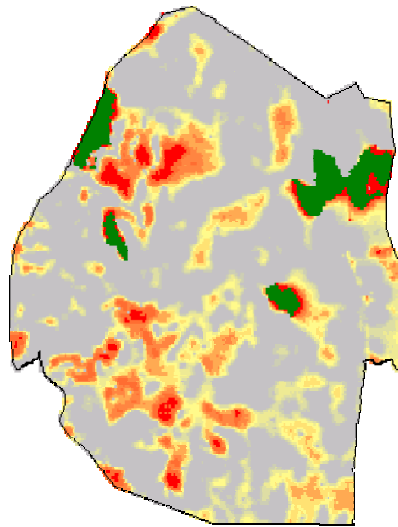


Figure 2 – Map of Swaziland showing the existing protected areas (in green) and important sites for conservation on unprotected land (in red)



Figure 3 – A photograph of the internationally important grassland habitats found in the north-west of Swaziland.