

# Table Mountain Fund looks to empower more conservation-minded leaders

The Table Mountain Fund (TMF), an associated trust of WWF-South Africa has, since 1998, focused on protecting the Cape Floristic Region (CFR). It is the only funding body that only funds fynbos-related conservation and social upliftment projects, setting the scene for conservation-savvy leaders.



TMF manager Kerry Maree

According to TMF manager Kerry Maree, the fund helps to address the threats to the Cape Floral Kingdom by introducing more people to conservation. “We believe strongly in strengthening the conservation community of the CFR, specifically by including new entrants to conservation. Through these vibrant new, and mostly young voices, we believe we’re setting the scene for a future led by conservation-minded leaders, who understand that we rely on nature, just as nature relies on us.”

## Conservation strategy

The TMF has made this a key outcome in its new conservation strategy for 2019-2024. “This means we’ll look to support projects that help existing organisations become more conservation-minded. But even more importantly, we’ll work with new startup conservation organisations to bring more people into the sector.”

In order to achieve this, the TMF is rolling out a small grants fund and is supporting learnership programmes across the CFR. Partner organisations include the Cape Town Environmental Education Trust, Emerging Leaders SA, Nature’s Valley Trust, Whale Coast Conservation, Wolseley Water Users Association, Dassenberg Coastal Catchment Partnership and the Grootbos Foundation.

Carla Wood, project manager at the TMF says, “These projects, like the Cape Town Environmental Education Trust (CTEET), are successfully linking the youth to environmental greening projects and to regional reserves. We’re so proud of the impacts to date.” The CTEET has reached 79 individuals through the TMF-funded Learnership Project, helping to introduce them to careers in conservation.

## Meet Ntomibiziphi Rafu: The first female field ranger at her nature reserve

Ntomibiziphi Rafu is one of these individuals. She completed her NQF Level 2 Nature Conservation qualification with support from the CTEET, through the TMF. She then went on to graduate in her NQF Level 4 Nature Conservation qualification. Today Rafu is employed as a field ranger at the Steenbras Nature Reserve. “I am the first female field ranger at Steenbras ever,” she says. “I’m proud of myself that I managed to make it this far. The learnership was important; it helped me.”



Carla Wood, project manager at the TMF

Rafu loves the work, because she’s helping to make a difference. “I do this to conserve what we have so that my grandchild

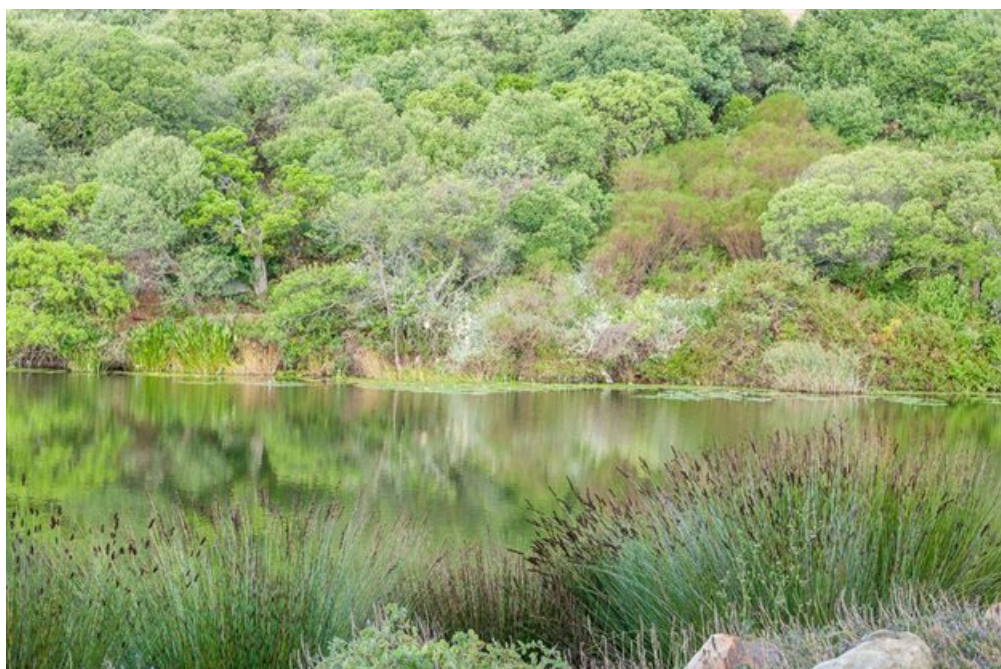
can (one day) see some of the plants.”

Melvin Booysen has also benefited from the CTEET Learnership Programme. He works at the Harmony Flats Nature Reserve. Here he helps to protect the critically endangered Lourensford Alluvium Fynbos vegetation. “They (the CTEET) gave me this opportunity and I took it open handed. It feels really good – I’m really glad I’m doing nature conservation.” His job also includes environmental education for younger children. This allows Booysen to help “change their mind” about conservation matters.

Wood says this is the essence of the TMF’s strategy to grow the conservation community. “It’s about equipping young people to value a sustainable planet. And they in turn reach their community, their areas of influence, to bring about more change.”

## Developing a better relationship with nature

That is also the strategy adopted by Emerging Leaders South Africa. Through the TMF Small Grants Programme, Emerging Leaders are providing training and skills to 21 young environmental leaders. Once the training is complete, they will put their new skills into practice, by planning and running their own environmental project. The ultimate aim is to leave the emerging environmental leaders, and their school communities, with a better relationship with the natural world.



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And in the Dassenberg Coastal Catchment Partnership along the West Coast, CapeNature is rolling out a small grants programme, funded by the TMF. They are introducing the local communities of Mamre, Pella, Atlantis and Riverlands to conservation. It includes mentorship for these communities to run their own conservation projects.

The TMF has furthermore introduced a new funding mechanism to support the sustainability of these projects. Corporates are now able to ‘buy’ many of these projects in order to fund them. Wood says, “These projects are already developed and running successfully. Their impacts and success are already measurable. That makes them attractive for corporates wanting to do good and hoping to get involved.”

Says Maree, “The challenges to our CFR are immense. And that threatens humanity. Just look at the impacts of invasive plants in our fynbos catchments during the recent drought in Cape Town. We believe we’ll do more by working together: corporates, government and non-profits. That’s the only way we’ll be able to bring about greater impact.”

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