

Knersvlakte

PARTNERING FOR CONSERVATION IN AN ARID WONDERLAND



DURATION: 24MIN 22SEC

The Knersvlakte is a starkly beautiful area of quartz gravel plains on the arid west coast of South Africa. This is a story about respectful land use, traditional tenure, conservation planning and collaborative management of natural resources. **Elbé Cloete** is CapeNature's Area Manager stationed at Vanrhynsdorp, someone born and raised in the area with insight into how different land uses can come together under the banner of nature conservation. Giving thought, feeling and substance to this perspective, we hear from a range of stakeholders in this starkly beauty land. These include **Cecil le Fleur**, leader of the Griqua community whose land claim has placed the farm *Ratelgat* into their care; farmer **Bertie de Beer**, whose sheep find difficulty in negotiating peaceful co-existence with the naturally occurring black-backed jackals and rooikatte; conservation botanists **Annelise le Roux** and **Adrian Fortuin**, who show us some of Knersvlakte's natural wonders; and WWF Land Planner **Natasha Wilson**. We also meet **Valerie and Thys Mentoor** from the Griqua community, who take us on a day trip with youth from the area to look at the magic of the spring veld, which is a powerful draw-card for local, national and international tourists.

I'm proud to say there has been a big improvement in the communities where I have been working. People's attitude to conservation has changed. They're now saying "We want to help conserve this" – Elbé Cloete

TERMS

Stewardship; Conservation Planning; Biosphere Reserve; Stoneplants; Endemism; Land Restitution; Succulent Karoo

THEMES & ISSUES

- Cultural heritage and conservation stewardship
- Sheep farming in the land of the black backed Jackal
- Botanical treasures and the enthusiasm they invoke
- Towards a biosphere reserve on the Knersvlakte
- Comprehensive conservation planning and land acquisition
- Ecology of disturbance in arid environments
- Mining and fragile ecosystems

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Griqua leader, Cecil le Fleur states that they will never give up ownership of their ancestral land for inclusion in a biosphere reserve, and yet he speaks very positively about protection of the natural flora? How do you think that this will be achieved?
2. Elbé was born in the Knersvlakte region and has now returned to serve as a nature conservation manager. What do you think might be advantages and disadvantages to doing such a contentious job in your own community?
3. In the film we see Bertie discover the carcass of a sheep killed by a rooikat. Although this is a serious financial loss to him as a farmer, he seems to be stoical. How might one try resolve the predicament for a farmer who loves nature, yet has to find practical solutions to problems of predation? Do you think the springbok idea will work?
4. Anelise has been looking for one small plant for 30 years, and is obviously very excited to find it. Can you describe an event in you own life that would be as important to you as *Babiana lewisiana* was to Anelise?
5. Valerie and Thys Mentoor have taken on the task of transferring both cultural and conservation values to the next generation living in the area. Do you think that tourism is a good option for bringing badly needed income into the community?

CareTakers is partnership project of SANBI and STEPS. For further information contact:
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And to order a copy of the film: Jannie du Plessis (jannie@steps.co.za)