

## **Beaumont Nature Reserve New Protected Area**

*28<sup>th</sup> September 2015*

*Start*

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is proud to introduce members of the public to the newly declared Beaumont Nature Reserve in the Swartberg region of KwaZulu-Natal. The reserve is the first of a number of privately owned properties in the region that will have protected area status bestowed upon them. The declaration of the Nature Reserve follows as a result of the active efforts of the EWT's African Crane Conservation Programme (ACCP) to protect catchments and wetlands in the area through the Provincial Biodiversity Stewardship Programme.

Beaumont Nature Reserve is 1050 ha in size and stretches into the upper catchment of the Umzimvubu River. The reserve provides foraging grounds to a number of Endangered and endemic species such as Grey Crowned Crane, Cape Vulture, Drakensberg Rock Jumper, Secretary Bird and Southern Bald Ibis. The reserve consists mostly of grasslands, steep slopes and rocky sections, and in addition to the rich birdlife to be found, the Nature Reserve has several sites of cultural significance.

With the majestic Drakensberg towering in the background, the Beaumont Nature Reserve presents a special opportunity to conserve watershed services that feeds the mighty Umzimvubu River that sustains countless communities all the way through to Port St Johns in the Eastern Cape where the river eventually meets the ocean.

Due to the strategic position of the reserve in respect of the Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Park, a World Heritage Site, and the border of the Eastern Cape, the reserve is set to become a conservation catalyst in the area. Plans are already afoot to purchase additional private land in the vicinity and to conclude conservation agreements with neighbouring communities in the Eastern Cape. If successful it will open the door for expansion of the Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Park and the development of community tourism and restoration projects.

According to the EWT's ACCP Drakensberg Regional Coordinator Cobus Theron, "the declaration of the Beaumont Nature Reserve represents the first step towards achieving a conservation outcome

that will have impacts at a landscape level and fulfil a long held conservation vision for the expansion of the Maloti Drakensberg Transfrontier Park.”

The Biodiversity Stewardship Programme in KwaZulu-Natal is championed by Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife who provided valuable assistance in the efforts to declare this site and will be a pivotal partner for the EWT and landowners in the Swartberg going forward.

Speaking on behalf of all landowners involved, Mr. Francois Talbot, one of the owners of the Beaumont Nature Reserve, said, “the declaration is a significant milestone to secure and return the biodiversity to this globally recognised ecologically sensitive area”.