

Why is SCB internationalizing?

SCB's process of internationalization took a huge step forward at our 2002 annual meeting, where hundreds of people attended seven organizational section meetings, one for each continent plus the marine realm (see page 2). In the midst of all the enthusiasm there were a few skeptics who questioned SCB's motives. Is internationalization driven mainly by a desire to enroll more members? Could this be a neo-imperialistic attempt to increase the global influence of North American conservation biologists?

Before addressing these questions, it is important to note that nominally SCB is, and always has been, an international organization. Our founders were well aware that both biodiversity and conservationists are globally distributed. Furthermore, based on our membership survey [see SCB newsletter 7(4)], 95% of you want SCB to be a truly international organization. So first and foremost, we are internationalizing because it is what we always intended to do so and because our members want us to do it. Unfortunately, SCB ideals and reality sometimes have not been well matched, and we must now actively redress sixteen years of laissez-faire organizational development that has left SCB with too few members outside of North America.

Do we want to gain more members through internationalization? Of course we do; most professional conservationists are not yet members of SCB or any analogous organization, and we need their partnership to develop and strengthen the discipline. But having more members is a benefit of internationalization, not the impetus behind it.

Do we want North American conservation biologists to share their knowledge and perspectives worldwide? Yes, but it is equally important that North Americans listen and learn about the knowledge and perspectives of their colleagues from all corners of the earth.

This global sharing is fundamentally what internationalization of SCB is all about. Early in the internationalization process we considered catalyzing the formation of autonomous conservation biology societies around the world, but a member survey clearly showed that our members did not favor the latter alternative. Our members want to be part of a cohesive, global, professional society, and we are now making great strides in that direction. We still have a long way to go because the new sections are fledglings that will require much support to flourish. If you have not yet joined a section, now is a great time to start participating. If you have already joined a section, you can now join a second section.

Joining Two Sections



At the 2002 annual meeting, SCB's Board of Governors decided that each member of SCB may join two sections as a voting member. Many people have allegiances to two different places (especially those who live on land and work in the sea). Thus, we received numerous requests to make this change, notably from the leaders of the sections. There are two simple ways to join a section: either edit your online member profile at any time, or join when you renew your annual membership. To limit the potential influence of any one person, the Board of Governors also decided that a member may serve on the Board of Directors of only one section at a given time.

Mac Hunter, President

Vote for SCB's logo!

SCB needs a logo that symbolizes the breadth of the world's biological diversity and our efforts to conserve it. Fifty-five individuals submitted a total of 127 entries in response to the logo contest announced in the February 2002 issue of this newsletter and on SCB's web site. The Board of Governors selected two finalists (shown below), and now invites all members to vote for the winner. Cast your vote at www.conservationbiology.org/Vote/ or by contacting the Executive Office, membership@conbio.org. Votes must be submitted by **1 November 2002**.



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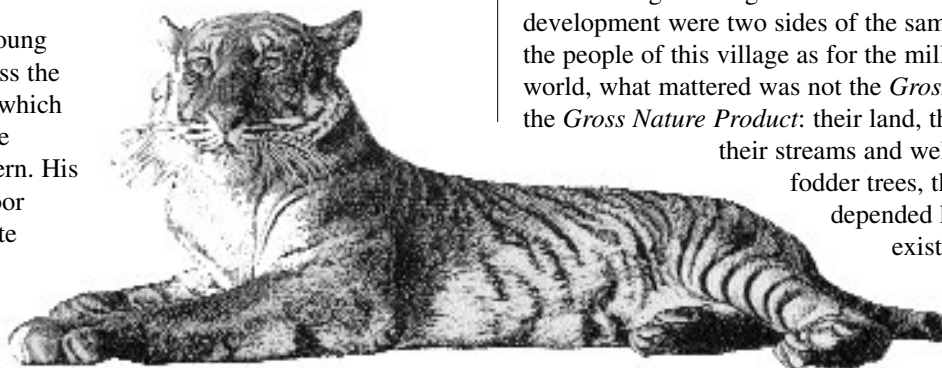
Anil Agarwal: Forensic rigor and passion for change

by *Sunita Narain*

Anil cherished the search for scientific excellence. “Forensic rigour combined with passion” is how a publication once described Anil. I cannot think of a better description of Anil, who lived every day of his life trying to understand life and how much we can learn from innovation and change around us.

Anil was born in the year of India’s independence—a member of the group that Salman Rusdhie has called the midnight children—and in his early years he was greatly influenced both by the legacy of the British and by the legacy of the founding fathers of free India. He grew up in urban India and attended India’s premier engineering institution. Anil was cut off, as most Indians are, from the reality of rural India. But this was soon to change.

In 1974, Anil as a young journalist came across the Chipko Movement, which baptized him into the environmental concern. His teachers were the poor women of this remote Himalayan village. The women were ecologists, but of



a slightly different variety. They hugged the trees saying that a government could cut forests only over their dead bodies. But not because they believed that trees should not be cut—instead, the women believed they should have the right to cut the trees. For them the environment was much more than pretty trees and tigers. Their cause, in fact, had very little to do with trees. It was more selfish. Their own lives were so deeply and desperately intertwined with the existence of those trees that their very culture and survival was at stake. Hence, their protest and their struggle.

Anil understood this pain and espoused the women’s message. From this he gave the Indian ecological movement its intellectual grounding. He wrote that environment and development were two sides of the same coin. He said that for the people of this village as for the millions in the developing world, what mattered was not the *Gross National Product* but the *Gross Nature Product*: their land, their crops, their forests, their streams and wells, their grasslands, their fodder trees, their animals. Their lives depended heavily on the very existence of these natural resources and, of course, their productivity.

see **Agarwal**, page 6

The Fitful Evolution of the Sperrgebiet National Park, a Namibian Wilderness in a Biodiversity Hotspot

by *Phoebe Barnard*

On paper at least, there could be few better examples of environmental planning and policy than the activities over the past few years leading—we hope—to the proclamation of a new park in a biodiversity hotspot, the Sperrgebiet National Park in southern Namibia. But whether this wilderness park will be proclaimed in the next 12 months as planned by the Namibian government remains to be seen, since the park represents a pioneering but often difficult partnership of conservation and mining, in which good intentions must be proven to be more than noble platitudes on paper.

The Sperrgebiet, or ‘forbidden area,’ is a vast and spectacularly beautiful wilderness in the southwestern coastal corner of Namibia, abutting the cold Benguela Current of the Atlantic Ocean. It forms the northern part of the Succulent Karoo biome, one of the world’s top 25 biodiversity hotspots, and the only arid hotspot. The Succulent Karoo lies mainly in South Africa, extending into Namibia, and is home to an extraordinary richness of succulent plants and associated biota, some with extremely restricted ranges. It is a mediterranean-type but harsh winter-rainfall environment, a very species-rich island in the sea of the hyper-arid, summer-rainfall Namib Desert. Fog, wind, and sand movements are important ecological drivers.

Most of the Sperrgebiet has been protected for millennia by its harshness and inaccessibility. It is nearly uninhabitable by humans, and completely unsuitable for agriculture by virtue of its lack of water, fragile substrates, and the unforgiving wind which sculpts its austere beautiful landscapes. Over most of the past century, the Sperrgebiet also has been protected because of its diamond deposits. Diamonds were found near the coastal village of Lüderitz in 1904, and coastal and riverine stretches of the area have been mined intensely under high security since then. The Namibian government now manages most of the 26,000 km² area (not including the active mining area held by the Namibia–DeBeers Corporation, which makes up about 5% of the overall area). However, more than a third of the Sperrgebiet is covered by mining and prospecting licenses issued by the Ministry of Mines and Energy, which is under pressure to open the restricted area to base metals prospecting and mining.

In 1998, a Sperrgebiet Land Use Plan was commissioned by a joint committee of the ministries of Environment and Tourism, Mines and Energy, Lands, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, and other parties to explore sustainable land use options and minimize opportunity

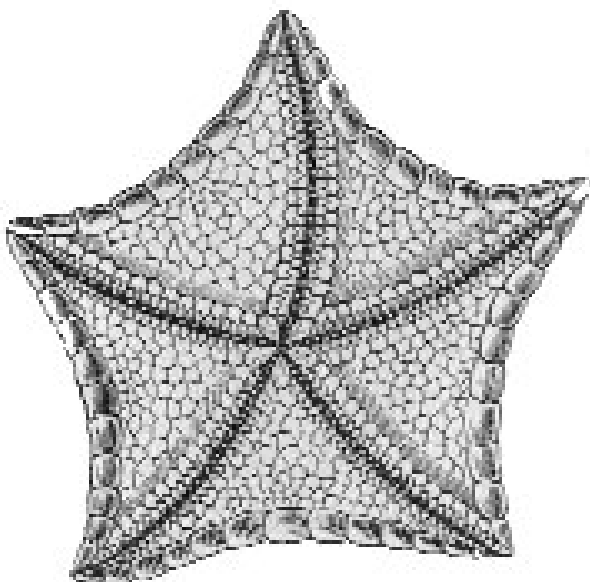
see **Barnard**, page 7

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Anil then spent a lifetime trying to get us to focus our attention on the protection, enhancement, and sustainable use of this Gross Nature Product, and he tried to find answers to problems in the knowledge of the people themselves. It is from this basis that the environmental movement drew its sustenance. The concept of 'protectionist conservatism' prevails across the paradigms of environmental management in the Western world. But the Indian environmental movement is built on the concept of 'utilitarian conservatism.' It remains deeply humanist and deeply conservationist.

What I also found amazing was Anil's love, indeed fascination, with how people lived with their ecology. He wrote how cultural diversity of the world was a direct outcome of the biological diversity of the world. He wrote often how he began to understand the extraordinary ecological diversity of India—ranging from the rangelands of the trans-Himalayan cold desert of Ladakh to the pastures of the hot desert of Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat. From the forests of the sub-temperate high mountains of the Himalayan range, which outside the poles boast of more glaciers than anywhere else in the world, to the forests of the high tropical mountains of the Nilgiris and Palnis in the south. Amongst all these different ecosystems and land formations, Anil was most fascinated by the vast riverine and coastal plains, especially the Indo-Gangetic plains where he was born. The Indo-Gangetic Plains are the world's most flood-prone plains. They sit below Earth's most seismic and also its youngest mountain system; as a result, these ranges, which are lashed by intense rainstorms, are also intensely fragile and erodible. These are highly productive, life-supporting lands, but their ecology is inherently tumultuous and crisis-ridden.

Anil made us realize that these ecological formations were inhabited by diverse people—nomads with sheep, goats, and cattle in the desert lands; millions of farmers living in the extensive plains growing rice, wheat and millet; tribal people in India's vast and diverse forests; and the fisherfolk living on the resources of the innumerable wetlands and rivers and expansive coastal waters. He said there is hardly any ecological space that



is not occupied by some human group. Instead of becoming a nature-centered environmentalist, he became more and more interested in the extraordinary diversity of the human-nature interactions that exist in India. And in the wholeness, complexity, beauty, innovativeness, and intelligence of these varied human-nature interactions.

The third step in Anil's understanding of humanist deep ecology was his belief about the extraordinary cultural diversity and its rationality in the India's extraordinary ecological diversity. From ecology, he had moved to people, and from people-ecology interactions, he had discovered, as he loved to say, culture and its importance and its relationship with ecology.

It was in the innate intelligence of local practices and knowledge that Anil began to see the most unifying factor in the country's cultural diversity. In fact, as he said, he began to see that over time, the culture itself had encoded and incorporated traditional knowledge of the Indian people in their diets, in the way they live and heal themselves, in the way they cultivate and care for their animals and for plants, in the way they relate to water and to rivers. Almost like culture has become a genetic code—a genetic structure slowly incorporating information on how to deal with the changing environment and pass it on to succeeding generations—the myriad Indian cultures have incorporated practices and beliefs over millennia, which helped them to survive and grow in the harsh, difficult, yet promising and diverse Indian environment.

But Anil was never interested only in studying India. He always was interested in studying what can change India, what can get rid of its poverty, what can eliminate its growing helplessness in dealing with basic issues like water, how it can govern itself better, and so forth. Therefore, he repeatedly asked what he could learn to answer these questions, which will shape current and future India.

Because of this, Anil's advocacy was about the need to involve local custodians and knowledge-holders in the management of natural resources. The political economy of ecological concern was his business. His major impact was in making us realize that ecological security and food and social security go hand in hand. Because he believed always and fervently that sustainability is about making people understand the impact of their actions and giving them the ability to make the change, Anil's message was always inspiring and always empowering. This is a far more difficult struggle because it is a struggle against us. But as his work and legacy shows, mindsets are changing and action is beginning.

On his behalf, let me thank the chair and members of SCB's Awards Committee for recognizing Anil and what he stood for. This award would have meant a lot to him. It means a lot to me.

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Anil Agarwal received a special posthumous award from the Society for Conservation Biology in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to making mankind's onward advancement consistent with ecological protection.

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costs of the short-term mining activities. An environmental investment fund and a natural resource accounting project in Namibia both are trying to facilitate the reinvestment of profits from unsustainable land uses into sustainable uses. Coupled with Namibia's constitution, which explicitly protects biodiversity and ecological processes in support of Namibians' welfare, and a recently completed national biodiversity strategic plan that promotes systematically derived conservation targets in biodiversity priority areas, the situation on paper in Namibia looks pretty good.

As always, however, the proof will be in the pudding, and not in the recipe book. The land use plan, prepared for the Namibian Government by Walmsley Environmental Consultants with the interministerial committee and other partners, proposes the proclamation of a multiply-zoned national park (with upgrading of zones as mines are phased out and restored). In the longer term, the park will be a major jigsaw puzzle piece in the envisaged trinational, transfrontier Namib Desert conservation area, which will link Angola in the north, Namibia at the core, and South Africa in the south.

The Sperrgebiet Land Use Plan is an excellent and visionary plan. But by April 2002 it still had not been submitted to the Namibian cabinet for approval, so the National Biodiversity Programme has resuscitated the plan and the steps toward park proclamation. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable development provides a relatively rare 'window of opportunity' for fast-track political commitment, and in that light we have found good political support for the idea of a new national park—not an easy concept to promote in a country with very urgent needs for land reform and poverty alleviation. However, pockets of apathy remain, and it is not yet clear whether our efforts to proclaim the area will succeed.

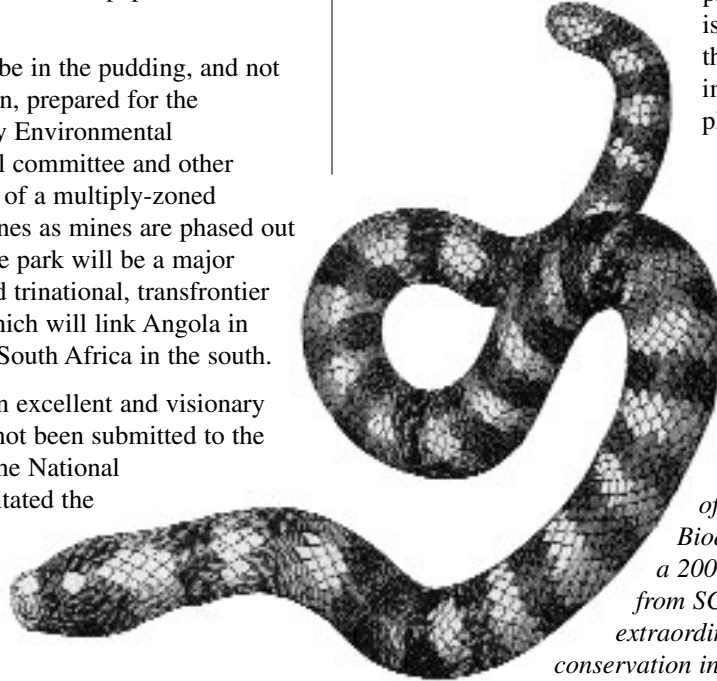
Mining and conservation are not comfortable partners during the best of times, but Namibia has remarkably good mining partners. It cannot afford to forego millions of dollars in treasury revenues from diamond and zinc deposits in order to protect a remote and inaccessible biodiversity hotspot. So delicate negotiations at the political and technical levels are underway to secure commitment for a partnership of mining and conservation interests within a national park framework. At the same time, the Sperrgebiet Conservation Plan has been initiated to refine the initial land use zoning. This area-prioritization process is led by the Namibian firm EnviroScience in partnership with the National Biodiversity Programme, Directorate of Parks and Wildlife Management, and is expertly facilitated by Conservation International. The Sperrgebiet Conservation Plan is closely associated with SKEP (Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Plan), the larger, transfrontier conservation plan for the entire Succulent Karoo. SKEP is an important process facilitated by Conservation International that is similar to the very successful CAPE (Cape Action for People and Environment) program in the Cape Floristic Region, southern Africa's other top biodiversity hotspot.

The Sperrgebiet National Park will substantially increase the broad level of protection afforded to the Succulent Karoo hotspot. Strengthening of conservation measures in the adjoining Richtersveld Park in South Africa, and identification and protection of additional sites in that country, will be important outcomes of the SKEP process. Given the vulnerability of the Succulent Karoo biome to climate change and land use pressures, as demonstrated by Guy Midgley, Richard Cowling, Timm Hoffman, and others, it is important to design conservation areas with process corridors to support

predicted species responses. It is also essential that we have the management capacity to implement these conservation plans in the long term.

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Phoebe Barnard, Coordinator of the Namibian National Biodiversity Programme, received a 2002 Distinguished Service Award from SCB in recognition of her extraordinary contribution to conservation in Namibia, especially for putting science into practice. Building on her highly regarded research on animal ecology, Barnard has obtained the support of natural and social scientists throughout Namibia, whose expertise and energy are making the National Biodiversity Program a truly national effort.



Donations to SCB promote the science of conservation biology and protect the diversity of life on Earth

- Donate appreciated stocks, bonds, or mutual funds. If you donate equities owned more than a year, you can avoid tax on the capital gains and reduce income tax by deducting the fair market value as a charitable contribution.
- Make a bequest to SCB in your will. A bequest may reduce taxes on your estate.

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