

Project Update: February 2012

Another 4 months in the field, with no lack of challenges. One can underestimate accessibility to some of the areas of the Baviaanskloof Nature Reserve when only relying on roads drawn on maps. The team attempted on travelling by chopper, but management board has denied access as the reserve host the poaching targeted species of black rhino and safety protocols have been put in place recently. The team had to restrict sampling to less rough terrain, resulting on changes in the geographical focus of the research. Nevertheless, new habitats (gaps from previous surveys) were surveyed and are going to support the calculation of demographic figures.

The team located individuals and created 1-year-round diet observations data of the cape mountain zebra, supporting the interpretation of the modelled habitat suitability. Black rhinos' sightings data have been fed into the habitat suitability model and results presented to the management board, contributing to a better understanding of the species roaming area and supporting the prediction of areas for future population's expansion. Buffalo's population has been monitored and future results of the modelled habitat suitability will be delivered to management board.

The team have organised three presentation days with partial results to the management board, although future involvement of the surrounding communities will be taken in a later stage when data is better translated into "popular language". Nature reserve staff have been involved in the whole process and have been learning from the survey techniques.

