

Savanna region new focal point

The newly established South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) has decided to make the savanna regions of the lowveld one of its focal areas.

Funded by the National Research Foundation, SAEON Ndlovu Node as the Phalaborwa office is called, aims to establish long term ecological monitoring in the region with the intention of being able to provide the data necessary to better understand the effects of global change on our ecosystems. In addition to monitoring they will be facilitating and promoting the necessary research to be able to understand the mechanisms behind the change and thus to be able to better inform policy on land use in the future.

As part of their activities, they have an Environmental Science Outreach Program which aims to begin to redress some of the problems in science, and particularly environmental science, training in the region. This program has a two pronged strategy, to support and better inform the educators and to run environmental science projects with schools to train the youngsters.

During the weekend of 18 February 2006, they ran their first Educator Support Workshop at Letaba Camp in KNP. 13 high school Educators were given presentations by scientists from the



13 High School educators attended a workshop held by SAEON recently at Letaba Camp.

KNP (Dr A. Deacon on biodiversity and Mr H. Sithole on the invertebrates of KNP), the Transvaal Museum (Dr Rob Toms on Mopane worm ecology and sustainable harvesting) as well as Dr D Balfour (Manager SAEON Ndlovu Node) on global change and the science of elephant management. Presentations were interspersed with break away groups tackling tasks and reporting back.

SAEON work in close partnership with SANParks (KNP) and other organisation.