

Amphibian biodiversity and eco-tourism

**L.H. Du Preez, North-West University
FBIS150520118204**

Although amphibians are considered the most threatened vertebrate class, they comprise the bulk of terrestrial vertebrate biomass. South Africa is ranked fourth in terms of number of Threatened amphibian species in the Afrotropical realm, with 43% of South African frog species being endemic. The highest species richness for frogs occurs in KwaZulu-Natal, an area that has been recognised as being important for both frog endemism and having high levels of human activity. Since the last comprehensive frog survey in northern KZN more than 30 years ago, northern KwaZulu-Natal underwent a complete transformation, both in terms of the number of people residing there and in terms of habitat alteration. This will undoubtedly further impact on region and is part of global changes taking place in the form of a reduction of suitable habitat for amphibian species. Public perception surrounding amphibians has often been less positive. Despite mixed social attitudes towards amphibians, the general public remain apathetic to the plight of amphibians and their importance in general. Overcoming this apathy through education and raised awareness is necessary for improving the support of amphibian conservation efforts. In order to address the above problem statements we plan to undertake a comprehensive survey of amphibian species along three fixed transects, using active and passive monitoring techniques over a two-year period. Collections will include calls, pictures, tissue and vouchers specimens. Molecular tools will also be used to bar-code the amphibian species diversity. Lastly we plan to identify and train local frogging guides (create new job opportunities and impact on the bio-economy), in The Ndumo Reserve. This initiative will contribute to local economic development through bio-economical activities. Once established, the initiative will be rolled out to other reserves and provinces.