

## The effects of small game farms

**It is natural for South Africans to want to own game farms. Because of the cost of game farms, they are getting smaller and smaller. This is having some negative effects on the industry.**

After 1994 the opportunities for people to visit South Africa opened up and those who dared not or could not visit this country previously were now able to do so. They came to explore our beaches, enjoy our sunshine, mild climate and, of course, to experience our unequalled natural biodiversity and wildlife. Many of them came merely to enjoy an "African Safari" while others came to hunt.

After the initial excitement the numbers started declining because instead of visiting vast open spaces visitors and, particularly hunters, were finding that they were being lured by owners or operators of small fenced in game farms or reserves. This caused many of them to look elsewhere – especially Namibia and Botswana, neither of which has the infrastructure of South Africa - but where there is vast open spaces!

The wildlife breeding frenzy from 2010 to 2015 also had a negative effect on the size of farms when everyone was trying to get of the band wagon by buying a few hectares, fencing it in and setting themselves up as specialist game breeders. That bubble has burst, and we suffer the aftermath of an even larger number of small farms.

Through negatively affecting the natural migration patterns of wildlife we have now almost domesticated them. This in turn is having a huge negative effect on the state of our fauna and flora. Yet we have a truly unique situation in the Waterberg: sunshine, clean air and water, an abundance of wild life and birds as well as wonderful scenery. These are things people pay a lot of money to enjoy. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and it is sustainable. We have a wonderful opportunity to grasp it and benefit from it.

Is it not the time to start taking down fences by creating more conservancies and allowing biodiversity to flourish?

