

**Media Release - 28/09/99**

**ALIEN BIOTA FIGHT IN THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK GOT A BOOST**

The battle against alien invasive plants continues in the Kruger National Park. Over 5 300 ha have been cleared from aliens, along the Levuvhu, Letaba, Olifants, Sabie and Crocodile rivers over the last few months. Teams move along these rivers daily, manually slashing and uprooting the plants they come across. The work is intensive and physical but with the dedication of the sections workers, progress is made at a steady pace.

To assist the section's efforts in reaching their goals, Friday the 23 July 1999, saw the official handing over of a new Toyota Hilux 4x4 from Robor Stewarts and Lloyds to the Alien Biota Section of the Kruger National Park (KNP). The handing over was held at "five minutes" picnic area on the N'waswisthaka Spruit, lighted by rustic lanterns and firelight.

We wish to thank Robor Stewarts & Lloyds, who have had long standing ties with the KNP, for their large sponsorship of events such as the Skukuza Golf Day, a Windmill at Olifantsdrinkpan and now a further contribution through their sponsorship to the KNP Alien Biota Section for the next two years.

Mr Mike Heyns (Managing Director for Robor Stewarts & Lloyds) and Mr Pieter Lotter (Marketing Manager) handed over the vehicle to Dr Gertenbach, General Manager: Nature Conservation.

Alien invasive organisms are rated internationally as the second greatest threat to bio-diversity, after habitat fragmentation and as the greatest threat to the biodiversity of the KNP. With the rapid growth in alien plant numbers (currently 214 species) and the rapid rates of dispersal within and adjacent to the KNP over the past few years, the alien biota section have struggled to control the vast areas. One infestation of *Opuntia stricta* covers over 30 000ha in the Skukuza region, while all the major rivers and many tributaries are invaded with a range of alien plant species. The movement of control teams, surveys, research, biological control release and monitoring, presentations and meetings within and out of the KNP necessitates that large scale independent movement is made on a daily basis and with the vehicle sponsorship, will now greatly aid the section in reaching its goals.

***For more information about the fight of alien biota in the KNP, contact:***

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