

SOUTH AFRICA - Rewarding the selfless in our community

The Environmental Awards honour those who try to make a difference November 10, 2005

The coveted Environmental Awards, instituted by the Cape Times in 1976, now sponsored by Caltex and run in association with the Cape Institute for Architecture, once again attracted a large number of entries. That there were 41 entries this year is a reflection of the great interest generated by this annual event. Every year it gets better and better. Even though there were fewer entries than last year, the range of topics was wider. There are so many unselfish people doing wonderful things in the community. They are trying to make life better for ourselves and others. They are trying to ensure a secure future for the environment of all living beings on this planet.

So the Cape Times Caltex Environmental Awards pay tribute to the many people who have contributed to the preservation, conservation and enhancement of the natural, cultural, historic and social environment of the Western Cape.

Entries were judged in six categories: Architecture and the Built Environment; the Natural Environment; the Social Environment; Heritage; Education and the Raising of Public Awareness; and Youth.

The adjudicators decided to make awards to three nominees - from the categories Natural Environment, Social Environment and Education and Raising of Public Awareness - and commendations to another 12 nominees in all categories.

The winners of the Environmental Awards were **Gareth Patterson**, Jo Barnes and Lindie Buirski.

Gareth Patterson has so far spent an amazing eight years investigating the welfare of the mysterious and almost mythical elephants of the Knysna Forest. Fewer and fewer sightings in the vast expanse of this dense forest led to fears that they were extinct. But he would not accept this. So he started, at his own cost, walking and recording systematically what he found. It took him a long time but, despite only one or two extremely rare sightings, he has built up enough evidence to conclude that there is a small but thriving population of elephants. It took immense dedication and perseverance. And it has paid off. He has given us hope.