

## ECO-SCHOOL LEAVERS GRADUATE AT WILDLIFE COLLEGE

**July 2012** - Twenty three young people, mostly hailing from local community eco-schools from across South Africa, recently completed a six month intensive conservation and environmental education bridging course at the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC).

The echo-schools programme, supported by the Wildlife Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) and the World-Wide Fund for Nature South Africa (WWF-SA) provides a foundation for environmental education that encourages whole-school improvement through better environmental learning and management of the school environment. The Conservation and Environmental Education Bridging Course, primarily funded by the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust (HHCT) - Managed by BoE Clients, is an extension thereof and is aimed at school leavers who are interested in further pursuing a career in conservation and environmental education.

The course focuses on exposing the learner to theory and practical application of environmental education and also the life of a field ranger in a conservation area. Learners are placed in a workplace for two months in order to get a real understanding of an entry level career in conservation and gain field practical experiences relating to the maintenance and integrity of a conserved area. Following the course learners are then better positioned to seek employment in this field, further their studies or build credits towards a qualification having been registered on the National Qualifications Framework.

The pilot project commenced in 2010 with 12 learners. This year 23 students; 16 of whom were sponsored by the HHCT, four by Old Mutual, two by the Timbavati Foundation and one who attended in his private capacity, completed the course. All 23 were awarded with certificates of competence at the graduation ceremony held at the Wildlife College and attended by dignitaries, donors and College staff.

In addressing the students, Mr. Kaizer Mdluli, LEDET Conservation Manager for Mopane District, said in his key note address "I wish to remind you of the crucial role you have taken to be part of the conservation fraternity in South Africa and probably Africa as a whole. You have opened the opportunities to extend your horizons in the field of conserving our environment which is so critical to our overall future."



Pictured with some of the conservation and environmental education bridging course students who graduated are from left are: Mr Jimmy Banda (Old Mutual); Mr Anthony Nicklin from the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust (Managed by BoE Clients); and on the right Mrs Sue Brand; Mr Pieter Brand and Mr Jannie Kriel (back) all of whom represented Old Mutual.