Concervancies in the Overberg

Conservancies originated in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands where they were very popular. Through co-operation between the farming community and conservation authorities, this concept developed into a national conservation movement. The Overberg has at least ten conservancies. Groenlandberg Conservancy was the first to be established in 1998. Then followed Walker Bay Fynbos in 1999, and the Akkedisberg, Blinkwater, Dedraay,

Kleinswartberg, Kleinriviersberg, Diepgat and Onrus Mountain Conservancies in 2002.
Conservancies are established by land-owners to conserve nature on private property and especially to facilitate the eradication of alien species, but also to promote environmental consciousness and the sensible use of natural resources. A talk with Shaun Page of Cape Nature Conservation in Voëlklip has shed more light on the constitution and activities of local conservancies. Cape Nature Conservation facilitates, advises and provides administrative support to the conservancies in its region.

The Kleinriviersberg Conservancy, which includes Hermanus and Stanford, comprises an area of 5 029 ha on farms along the Klein River mountain range and has 22 members. They have already implemented a management plan to determine the density of alien growth. On many farms, aliens are already being eradicated. Hiking and horse-riding trails in the conservancy are also being planned.

The Walker Bay Fynbos Conservancy lies between Stanford and Gansbaai. It comprises an area of about 12 000 ha and its present membership is 18. Their aims include the following: Conservation of indigenous plants and animals; securing funds for its activities; reaching out to communities in its area on a social and educational level; and the creation of employment opportunities in the field of alien and veld-fire management.

On one of their farms, Flower Valley (they have their own website – www.fynbos.co.za), Fauna and Flora International are involved in projects to improve the environment and amenities for the local population. They are also involved in negotiations for improved protection. The conservation area has a stewardship programme in terms of which members undertake to protect and improve their natural assets as effectively as possible.
The creation of conservancies holds distinct advantages for our wildlife, while the economic and aesthetic values of the environment are also greatly enhanced. Security is improved and people become more conscious of their environment. The attractive signs along the roads, with their brightly coloured guinea-fowls, serve to instil pride in passing motorists.