



THE APPLIED ECOLOGY UNIT (AEU)

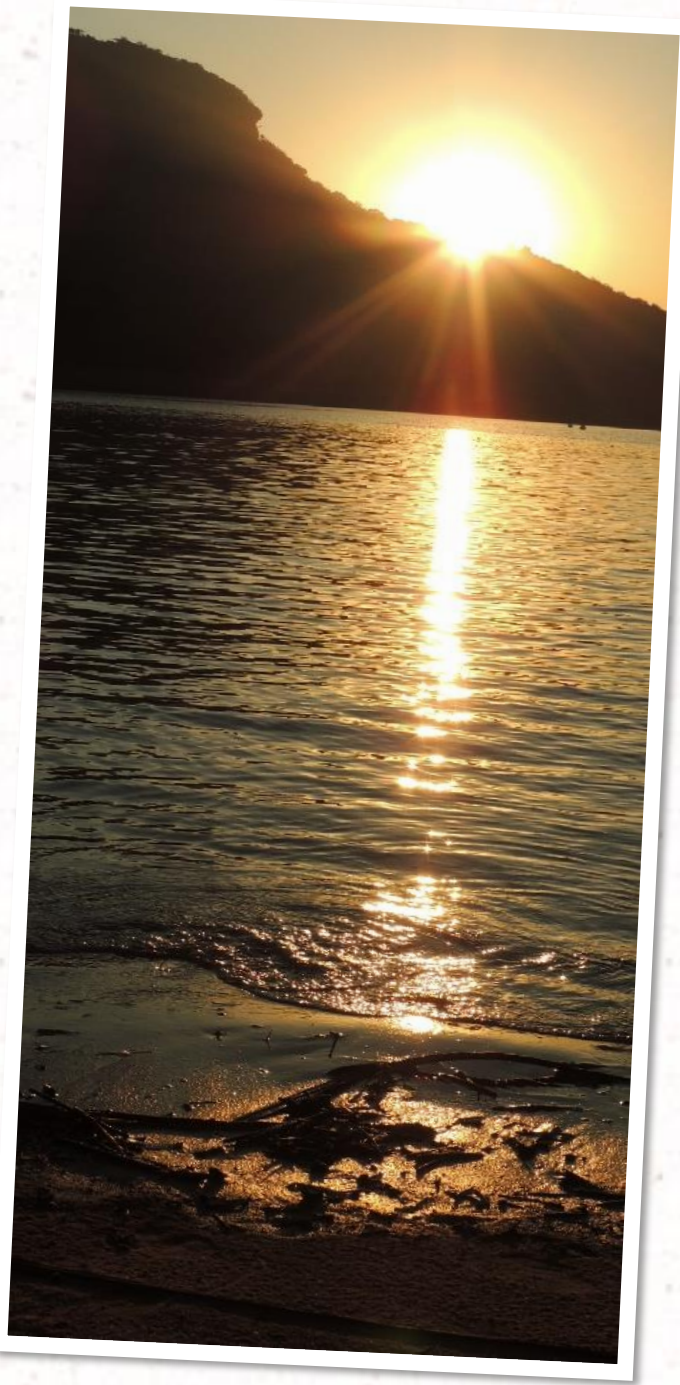
WHAT IS THE APPLIED ECOLOGY UNIT?

The Applied Ecology Unit (AEU) was formed within the African Conservation Trust to address the complex problems associated with the protection of ecosystems. It works by viewing challenges in an holistic manner and working with all stakeholders to find the best solution.

We understand that the problems that affect us today often relate to the interaction between social, economic and environmental issues. These issues have different priorities for different stakeholders- for example, municipal planners may prioritise social issues and ignore broader economic trends or the environment care that protects soil and water provision; farm planners may put people and the environment second to short-term agricultural production and conservationists, too often, separate environmental protection from the human context.

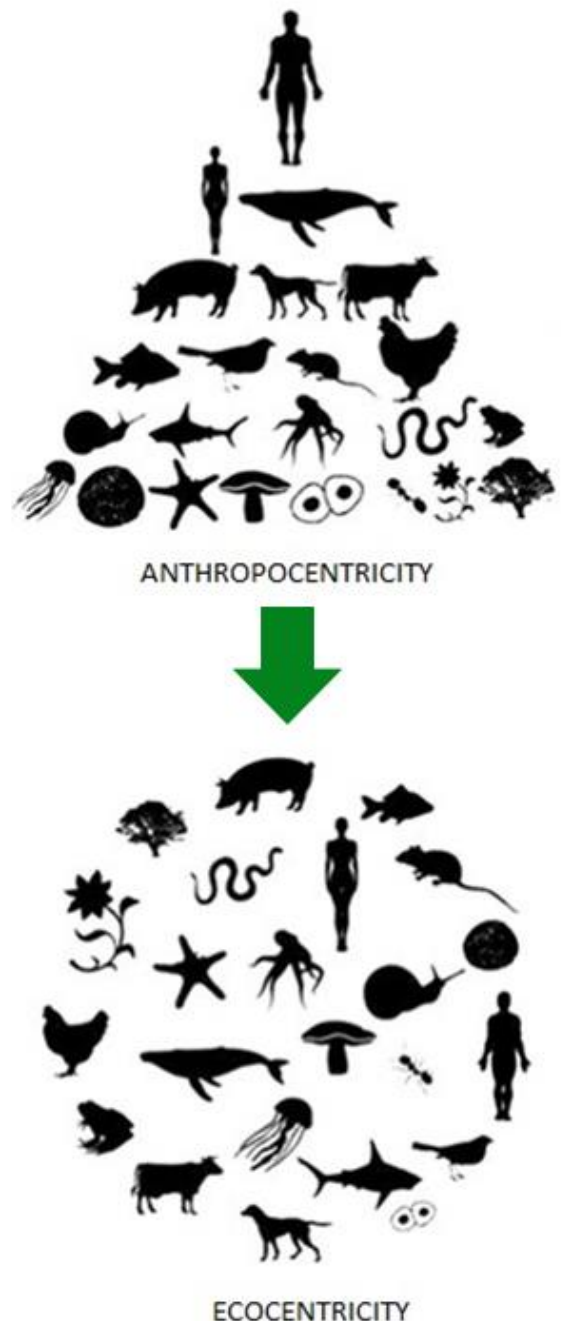
The role of the AEU is to examine these challenges holistically; in a manner that does not ignore the complex interplay between different systems, objectives, time scales and human interpretations.





HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?

THE AEU adopts three characteristic approaches when addressing new situations: the first is that it acknowledges uncertainty, ignorance and surprise in project planning and implementation. This does not mean that we abandon our goals, but rather that they are held less rigidly, allowing stakeholders to co-create solutions. Secondly, ecological situations are examined from multiple geographical and temporal time scales simultaneously and thirdly, the AEU does not utilise anthropocentric thinking, but rather adopts ecocentric thinking in its problem solving



HOW DOES THE AEU WORK?

The AEU consists of people with ecological, agricultural, sociological and economic expertise. Rather than reducing projects, tasks, or problems into component parts, the team makes use of “systems thinking” in which multiple aspects are understood as systems that influence each other within an inseparable whole. This is an holistic way of thinking, which acknowledges that society, the economy and the environment are inextricably interrelated.