



New map to reduce the impact of wind farms on South Africa's birds

The Endangered Wildlife Trust and BirdLife South Africa want to ensure that wind farms are developed at sites which do not negatively impact on South Africa's birds

Johannesburg, 12 March 2012 - Wind energy is a renewable source of energy, and is hence part of an emerging sector in South Africa. Wind energy generation has a lesser environmental impact than, for example, coal-fired power stations, but the wind turbines can still pose serious risks for a number of bird species. Research in Europe, the United States, Mexico, Australia and China indicates that a number of bird species collide with wind turbines, sometimes causing significant mortalities. Eurasian Griffons have been recorded to collide, in large numbers, with wind turbines at Tarifa in Spain with more than 1500 birds being killed in 18 months at just one site and Golden Eagles are known to collide with wind turbines at Altamont Pass in California. It is therefore important that South Africa learns from the experiences of other countries and place wind farms at sites where bird collisions are unlikely.

With this in mind, two conservation NGOs, the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and BirdLife South Africa (BLSA), designed an Avian Wind Farm Sensitivity Map. The map provides guidance to the wind farm industry on the best location of wind energy facilities (WEFs) by providing an indication of the geographic areas in South Africa where a wind farm could have a negative impact on particular bird species. The map identifies sensitive areas for birds which are sites where threatened and/or endemic birds, or birds which are known to be vulnerable to collision with wind turbines occur.

The map was designed using a number of data sources, including the data collected during citizen science projects as well as the Southern African Bird Atlas Project 1 and 2. The data was analysed using data priority scores based on the conservation status of each species in addition to various characteristics that render certain species vulnerable to collisions with the wind turbines and the associated infrastructure. The protection status of an area was also taken into account with nature reserves and national parks, for example, receiving higher sensitivity scores. Extensive use was made of sophisticated Geographical Information System (GIS) tools to collate, analyse and present the data.

The map and all the supporting documentation can be downloaded from the EWT web site:

<https://www.ewt.org.za/WHATWEDO/OurProgrammes/WildlifeEnergyProgramme/OurProjects/WindMap.aspx> and the BirdLife South Africa website (<http://www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/birds-and-wind-energy/windmap>). The map and supporting documentation should however be interpreted with care. The

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The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

NPO Number: 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature
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map does not replace the need for the required Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), as it only provides an initial indication of the level of sensitivity of an area.

BirdLife South Africa and the Endangered Wildlife Trust strongly recommend that all WEFs conduct pre- and post-construction monitoring, following the “BirdLife South Africa/Endangered Wildlife Trust best practise guidelines for avian monitoring and impact mitigation at proposed wind energy development sites in southern Africa”. The guidelines can be downloaded from

<https://www.ewt.org.za/WHATWEDO/OurProgrammes/WildlifeEnergyProgramme/OurProjects/WindMap.aspx> or alternatively <http://www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/birds-and-wind-energy>

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Notes for the Editor:

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The Mission of BirdLife South Africa is to promote the enjoyment, conservation, study and understanding of wild birds and their habitats.

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