



## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

### SAVING ENDANGERED BIRDS AT VERLORENVLEI ESTUARY

**21st November 2013**

**Start**

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and Eskom recently removed redundant electrical infrastructure from the Verlorenvlei estuary bringing to an end bird mortalities due to infrastructure collisions in the area. Verlorenvlei, located in the Western Cape, is one of South Africa's few coastal, freshwater, estuarine-lake and marsh systems covering an area of approximately 1 500 ha. It is an important feeding area for South Africa's most endangered birds and provides sanctuary to over 189 species of birds, at times hosting over 20 000 individuals. Due to the high significance and diversity of this lake, it was proclaimed a Ramsar site in 1991 but has, unfortunately, not escaped heavy handed development and commercialisation.

"The Eskom/EWT partnership was approached by a group of interested and affected parties from the area. These concerned citizens felt that the electrical infrastructure around Verlorenvlei was an ecological problem as this had caused numerous bird mortalities in the area. One particular section of the power line ran along the edge of Verlorenvlei, serving unused pump houses inside the still to be proclaimed Vleikraal Nature Reserve. Recent legislation nullified the use of the pump houses as a means of extracting water from the lake and so the power lines serving the pump houses served no purpose but posed significant risks to the birds in this area," commented Constant Hoogstad, Project Manager, Eskom/EWT strategic partnership of the EWT's Wildlife and Energy Programme (EWT-WEP).

Hoogstad made the trip down to the area to visit the site and to assess the situation. During the site visit it became apparent that the risk to the birds could be significantly reduced by, firstly, using approved flight diverters (flappers) on the power lines to make them more visible to the birds, and secondly, by removing the power line section running through the Vleikraal Nature reserve. After deliberations, recommendations, meetings and assessments, the un-used lines were finally removed in the Verlorenvlei area, returning the site partially to its original, pristine state.

"We are so happy about the removal of the power lines! The removal of the infrastructure is a demonstration of what can be achieved when people really care and decide to work together in a co-

operative spirit. Many thanks to Eskom and the Endangered Wildlife Trust for making this possible," said Felicity Strange, resident of Verlorenvlei.

"One of the aims of the Eskom/EWT Strategic Partnership is to systematically address problems relating to wildlife and energy interaction and establish integrated management systems to minimize negative interactions. We're very happy with the process and outcome of this particular intervention and look forward to finalising further projects that guarantee the protection of our precious wildlife heritage," concluded Hoogstad.

**End.**

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