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### **Endangered Wildlife Trust partners win big**

Presented since 1974, the WESSA Awards recognise and honour individuals and groups making a significant contribution to the environmental conservation or environmental education sector in South Africa. The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is therefore extremely proud to announce that two of our strategic partners, who were nominated by us, are the recipients of the WESSA Award for Corporates 2017. These are Bridgestone SA and Eskom's Biodiversity Centre of Excellence.

Bridgestone SA has supported the EWT's Wildlife and Roads Project since its inception in 2011, resulting in a number of projects that are assisting the EWT to better understand the causes of wildlife-road-mortalities, and to make a difference. The EWT and Bridgestone SA initiated the 'Roads in Parks' project, which is a five-year project that aims to reduce roadkill in protected areas of the country. "This project attempts to minimise the impact of road users on wildlife in protected areas, and we have been examining ways to improve driver vigilance; this will ultimately lead to a reduction in roadkill", says Wendy Collinson, the project executant.

The EWT's Wildlife and Roads Project is the only large-scale initiative in Africa that tackles the issue of wildlife deaths on our roads. Road Ecology is a rapidly emerging field of research in which the EWT and Bridgestone SA are spearheading pioneering initiatives, and are recognised as being at the forefront of this area of research. The project continues to grow from strength to strength and has been sustainable mainly through Bridgestone's support, for which the EWT is extremely grateful.

The EWT and Eskom formalised their long-standing relationship by entering into a partnership in 1996. The partnership works together across South Africa to reduce the risks of electrical infrastructure to wildlife. Negative interactions between wildlife and electricity structures take on different forms including electrocution on electrical infrastructure and collision with power lines. Over the years, since a central register was introduced, the EWT has investigated 1,996 incidents and issued 1,472 recommendations to Eskom. More than a 100 annual audits over the last six years have ensured that the implementation of recommendations is tracked. Since 2010, 493 training interventions have taken place, amounting to over 10,000 Eskom staff who have received training through the Eskom/EWT partnership. We have developed proactive mitigation plans and rolled these out nationally across all nine operating units in Eskom's distribution division and ten grids in their transmission network. Over the last three years an estimated 2,172 spans of power line have been marked with bird diverters and an estimated 3,834 structures have been modified or mitigated to be bird-friendly. Research conducted by the partnership indicated that bird diverters on lines reduce avian collisions by over 75% and the nocturnal OWL device that we developed

reduces collisions at night, usually involving cranes and flamingos, by over 90% – this world-leading partnership literally saves thousands of threatened birds each year.

Through the partnership, Eskom has now established a Biodiversity Centre of Excellence to address the mainstreaming of biodiversity into the utility's business. Some of the key objectives of the Eskom Biodiversity Centre of Excellence are to reduce bird electrocutions and collisions through the proactive use of technology and creating awareness of the issues within the organisation; the management of game on Eskom land with a focus on conservation; removal of alien invasive species; undertaking biodiversity offsets and stewardship; skills development; research into biodiversity-related challenges; and partnering with relevant NGOs, such as the EWT, to achieve these objectives.

The EWT is proud to be associated with conservation-minded organisations such as Bridgestone SA and the Eskom Biodiversity Centre of Excellence, and congratulates them on these well-deserved awards.

## **Contacts**

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