

The Flufftail Festival

CELEBRATING OUR WETLANDS

The Ingula Partnership



Water
Wise
RAND WATER

SANDTON CITY

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate use

The Wonders of Water

Johannesburg, 30 January 2015:

Water is essential to the functioning of every life-form and ecosystem. However it is often undervalued and unnecessarily wasted. If you consider that less than 1% of all water resources on earth is available for use, then the importance of water conservation can be understood. Find out more about water conservation at The Flufftail Festival.

South Africa is considered a semi-arid country. This means that we receive less than half of the global annual average rainfall for a country of our area. This rainfall is not distributed evenly

throughout the year nor distributed evenly geographically amongst the provinces. If this is coupled to the increasing South African population, which implies an increase in the demand for food, infrastructure facilities and sanitation facilities, there is an immediate association with the increased demand for water. Hence water is essential not just for food production, but for the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the country.

Wetlands are among the most threatened ecosystems in South Africa yet they provide essential services related to the cleaning of water and the management of its flow. They act as natural aquifers, provide a buffer zone to regulate water flow and they provide a natural habitat for selected plant and animal species. These attributes make wetlands an important water resource and as such they should be conserved.

Rand Water's environmental brand Water Wise, have partnered with BirdLife South Africa, in conjunction with Eskom, Sandton City and other partners, to host the inaugural Flufftail Festival at Sandton City from 3 to 8 February 2015. Named after the White-winged Flufftail, South Africa's rarest and most threatened wetland bird, the Flufftail Festival aims to create awareness about the necessity to conserve freshwater habitats and waterbirds.

Most of the Flufftail Festival activities will take place in the Checkers Court, Sandton City, Johannesburg, and will include lectures, environmental education activities relating to water and water conservation, and an exhibition displaying the winning photographs of the 'Wetlands of Life' photographic competition.

The Water Wise team will also set up a wetland display indicating the effects of various activities on wetlands and will also provide a water calculator to help determine household water use. Once there is awareness about the water situation and about water use, then an action plan can be developed to reduce water consumption and to conserve water in various forms. Further to this there will be a display of life underneath a river's surface which will include live water life such as crabs, fish, tadpoles and insects. The Water Wise mascot, Manzi, will also make an appearance throughout the day to meet and greet children of all ages. The public visiting the festival will be asked to be Water Wise in their daily lives and sign their names on the Water Wise Pledge.

The purpose of this week-long festival is to celebrate and raise awareness of our planet's wetlands and associated biodiversity and to understand the role water plays in society.

For further information, please contact:

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Notes to Editors:

About Water Wise

- Water Wise is Rand Water's environmental brand, responsible for promoting education and awareness around water conservation.
- The vision of Water Wise is to promote the wise and sustainable use of water
- For more information visit <http://www.birdlife.org.za/events/flufftail-festival> or www.randwater.co.za and click on the Water Wise logo.

BirdLife South Africa

- This work is supported by the BirdLife International Preventing Extinctions Programme through funding from the BirdLife Species Champion, Eskom.
- BirdLife South Africa is the local country partner of BirdLife International. BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership with 120 BirdLife Partners worldwide and almost 11 million supporters.
- BirdLife South Africa is the largest non-profit bird conservation organization in the country. It relies on donor funding and financial support from the public to carry out its critical conservation work.
- The vision of BirdLife South Africa is to promote the conservation, research, understanding, observation of and enjoyment of natural birds, and their habitats.
- Birds are important environmental indicators, the proverbial "canaries in the coal mine". By focusing on birds, and the sites and the habitats on which they depend, BirdLife South Africa aims to improve the quality of life for birds, for other wildlife and ultimately for people.
- Ornithologists are of the opinion that fewer than 250 adult White-winged Flufftails remain in the wild and that the South African population is estimated to number less than 50 birds.
- On 1 February, Dave Chamberlain will start a six day run from Dullstroom to Sandton City in Johannesburg in aid of the White-winged Flufftail. Dave will cover, on average, about 50 km per day, pulling a trailer containing his food supplies, and using the trailer as a make-shift shelter at night.
- To make a contribution towards the White-winged Flufftail project, go to <http://birdlifesouthafrica.givengain.org> and click on "Dave Chamberlain's Flufftail Run" to make a donation. Alternatively, please contact Linda van den Heever at linda.vdheever@birdlife.org.za or +27 (11) 789 1122.
- The Middelpunt Wetland Trust has long understood the need to protect the vegetation at the Berga breeding site, Ethiopia against overgrazing and grass cutting during the July/August breeding season. As a means of gaining the support of the local community, the Trust has provided financial support over the past ten years for the building of a school for the community. Today, 700 children receive their primary school education in the village. Well aware of the value of the flufftail to the community, the site support group patrols the wetland during the breeding season to prevent grazing and grass cutting.
- <http://www.birdlife.org.za/events/flufftail-festival> For more information, visit www.birdlife.org.za

Eskom

- Eskom has partnered with BirdLife South Africa and Middelpunt Wetland Trust over the past ten years to safeguard the Ingula wetland habitat for a number of threatened species, including the White-winged Flufftail. The Ingula conservation area, spanning the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal, covers more than 12 000 ha, and is protects important ecosystems and threatened species.