



## **BirdLife South Africa & the Endangered Wildlife Trust**

### **Position statement on wind farms and birds**

- BirdLife South Africa (BLSA) and the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) acknowledge the demand for energy from efficient renewable sources, and the associated environmental and climate change considerations. Large scale wind power is currently the most advanced of these and is more frequently available as a renewable source of energy at an apparently economically viable cost.
- There is remarkable global evidence from scientific studies (in for example England, Spain and USA) that wind turbines can be hazardous to birds and their habitats. Specifically, wind turbines can cause three major problems for birds:
  1. Disturbance (scaring birds away from their roosting, nesting or feeding sites).
  2. Loss or damage to bird habitat.
  3. Collision with tower or blades responsible for fatalities.
- Although BLSA and EWT support wind energy as an alternative source of energy that can significantly cut greenhouse gas emissions, the EWT and BLSA only support wind farm developments where:
  1. Environmental assessments and in particular avifaunal specialist studies have been adequate according to a general standard as approved by the EWT-BLSA wind farm committee.
  2. Where Red List bird species (and other bird species considered to be of conservation importance for various reasons) and/or their habitat will not be threatened or altered.
  3. Where regional populations of birds and/or their habitat will not be negatively impacted on.
  4. Where bird species which are limited in numbers and/or in their distribution or are endemic to South Africa will not be threatened.
  5. Where the turbines/blades are not located in a major flying pathway of bird species.
- Wind farms proposed to be located in the following areas will not be supported by BLSA and EWT:

1. Inside protected areas (nature reserves, national parks, Ramsar sites) and Important Bird Areas (IBAs).
  2. Inside buffer zones (the range of which is determined by the relevant species) around IBAs, nature reserves, national parks and Ramsar sites.
  3. In major migration routes and especially migration bottlenecks where large numbers of birds are highly concentrated.
  4. In habitats where wind farms are known to pose high collision risks to birds. Wetlands, mountain ridges and roost sites would be examples of such critical locations.
- BLSA and EWT will support only those projects with adequate environmental assessments based on sufficient information on the influence of the development on relevant birds and their habitats.
- 1 All stages of the life cycle and the habitats and locations that support essential functions (including breeding, feeding, moulting, roosting, non-breeding, including migration stopovers) should be taken into account in assessments.
  - 2 Comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and avifaunal specialist studies undertaken for all wind farm proposed developments should include the effects of the associated infrastructure such as power lines and roads on birds.