



IBA PROGRAMME

Blue Crane

ALBERT FRONEMAN

The Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA) Programme is a BirdLife International initiative to conserve important bird species and their habitats. There are over 12 500 IBAs worldwide.

A remarkable 847 bird species occur in South Africa, about 8% of the world's bird species. Sadly, over 15% of our bird species are threatened with extinction, mainly due to loss of suitable habitat. Managing a network of 112 South African IBAs is our best hope of conserving our threatened, endemic, biome restricted and congregatory birds. There are 11 IBAs in the Free State.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATING IBAS

IBAs are determined using globally accepted scientific criteria. An IBA is selected on the presence of one or more of the following bird species in a geographic area:

- Bird species that are globally (A1) or regionally (C1) threatened;
- Assemblages of restricted-range (A2) bird species (restricted to less than 50 000 km²);
- Assemblages of biome-restricted (A3) bird species (75% of range confined to one biome); and
- Sites that either hold >1% of the biogeographic population of a congregatory species, or hold >20 000 waterbirds to meet the global criteria (A4), or >0.5% or >10 000 waterbirds to meet the regional criteria (C4).

CONSERVING IBAS

BirdLife South Africa conserves IBAs by prioritising sites for conservation action, obtaining formal protection, developing management plans for IBAs and biomes, defending priority sites that are under threat and implementing monitoring programmes. Volunteer based Local Conservation Groups (LCGs) support these projects by surveying IBAs, implementing conservation action and educating the local youth about birds and habitats. BirdLife South Africa works with bird clubs, landowners and other organisations across the Free State to establish LCGs.

Biodiversity Stewardship is a national programme that engages private and communal landowners to assist them to formally declare their high biodiversity value lands as legally protected areas, and to improve the management of these lands for supporting livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. The Regional Conservation Manager is working with partners to implement stewardship work aimed at formally proclaiming priority IBAs as protected areas. BirdLife South Africa comments on proposed developments in or surrounding IBAs to ensure that these developments take account of valuable natural resources.

BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA

BirdLife South Africa is the country partner of BirdLife International, a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and biodiversity. BirdLife International is represented in over 100 countries. BirdLife South Africa works nationally and has more than 4,000 members and over 30 affiliated bird clubs. BirdLife South Africa focuses on threatened bird species and Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas, and works with people to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

BirdLife South Africa relies on the public, especially birders and nature enthusiasts, as well as landowners, government and NGO partners, to assist us in conserving IBAs. You can get involved in the following ways:

- Join BirdLife South Africa: visit www.birdlife.org.za
- Join your local bird club
- Join an existing Local Conservation Group, or assist us to start one around your local IBA
- Bring to our attention any threats to an IBA, and join us in advocating for the IBA's protection
- Become an IBA Champion for a priority IBA
- Donate to the IBA Fund to support ground level conservation work in IBAs

IBAS OF THE FREE STATE

Name	IBA No.	Approx. size (ha)	Protection status	Qualifying criteria
Sandveld & Bloemhof Dam Nature Reserves	SA039	53 570	Partial	A1, A4i
Alexpan	SA042	910	None	A1
Ingula Nature Reserve	SA043	10 030	Fully (pending)	A1, A3, A4i
Willem Pretorius Game Reserve	SA044	12 730	Fully	C4i, ii
Murphy's Rust	SA045	650	None	A1
Sterkfontein Dam Nature Reserve	SA046	34 670	Partial	A1, A2, A3
Golden Gate Highlands National Park	SA047	32 720	Fully	A1, A2, A3
Rooiberge-Riemland	SA048	448 700	None	A1, A3, A4i
Soetdoring Nature Reserve	SA049	7 900	Fully	C1, C4i, ii
Kalkfontein Dam Nature Reserve	SA050	5 240	Fully	C4i, ii
Upper Orange River	SA051	80 570	Fully	A1, A3, A4i, ii

Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas

of the

FREE STATE



WITH THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



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www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/important-bird-areas/iba-directory

SECRETARYBIRD
MARIETJE
FRONEMAN





White-winged Flufftail
WARWICK TARBOTON

HABITAT TYPES The Free State supports three of South Africa's nine biomes: predominantly Grassland, with Savanna and Nama Karoo in the south-west. The two grassland vegetation types that occur in the region are the Mesic Highveld Grassland in the east and Dry Highveld Grassland centrally.

FLAGSHIP SPECIES FOR THE REGION The Free State hosts all of the Grassland Biome's endemic bird species, which occur only in South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland. These include Botha's Lark, Rudd's Lark, Yellow-breasted Pipit and Southern Bald Ibis. Grasslands support Blue, Grey Crowned and Wattled cranes. The latter two species also breed in wetlands, as do the threatened African Marsh Harrier and African Grass Owl. The threatened White-winged Flufftail is a summer visitor to wetlands. These ephemeral wetlands together with the pans in the central and western Free State are a magnet for waterfowl, while migratory waders forage on mudflats.

Priority IBAs include Memel in the Grassland IBA, Golden Gate Highlands National Park and several provincial nature reserves. Semi-arid Kalahari Thornveld hosts dry-country species, including Sociable Weaver, Pygmy Falcon, White-backed Vulture and Kalahari Scrub Robin. Calling African Rock Pipits are synonymous with semi-arid Karoo vegetation.

THREATS TO FREE STATE'S BIRDS Mining is the biggest threat to the Free State's birds as much of our country's remaining mineral resources lie beneath ecologically sensitive grasslands and wetlands. Other threats include habitat destruction and fragmentation due to crop production practices, inappropriate burning and grazing regimes, the rapidly increasing human population and associated development.

