



BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA ETHICS COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference of the BirdLife South Africa Ethics Committee (BLSAEC) are as follows:

1. The BLSAEC, according to the South African National Standards (SANS 10386), consists of the following members:
 - a. One qualified and registered veterinarian;
 - b. One academic scientist;
 - c. One representative of a welfare organisation;
 - d. One Public Representative;
 - e. One BirdLife South Africa representative;
 - f. Linda van den Heever (LvdH), administrator.
2. The BLSAEC will revert electronically to the applicant no later than six weeks from the date of the applicant's submission to the BLSAEC with an outcome of the ethics approval, subsequent to the following procedure:
 - a. All relevant documents will be available for download on the BLSA website.
 - b. All applications will be received electronically by LvdH at linda.vdheever@birdlife.org.za.
 - c. LvdH will process all application documents and forward all relevant documents to
 - d. From time to time certain ad hoc documents may be submitted to the BLSAEC for comment/approval. These include Adverse Event Reports, Applications for Modification and Extensions, as well as Annual Progress Reports.
 - e. Applicants who wish to keep birds captive for experimental purposes will be required to submit their Monitoring Reports, Animal Welfare Sheets and Observation Templates to the BLSAEC every six (6) months. These will be evaluated by the NSPCA Representative, Academic Scientist and Veterinarian who will inform the Chairperson of any concerns, if applicable.
 - f. The above process may be subject to modification once the BLSAEC comes into effect. Such changes/amendments will be recorded accordingly in writing.
3. PLEASE NOTE:
 - a. An application will be evaluated at the discretion of the committee.
 - b. The BLSAEC will consider any scientific project focusing on avian research, including applications from individuals who are not affiliated with a university or other institution. This includes scientific projects with a bird ringing component as well as ALL projects requiring the fitting of tracking devices.

- c. Applications involving taxa other than birds will be evaluated at the discretion of the committee, provided there is a link to avian research and conservation.
 - d. The BLSAEC shall only approve the proposed protocol if the use of animals is deemed essential and conforms to the requirements of SANS 10386:2008 “The care and use of animals for scientific purposes”, taking into consideration ethical and welfare aspects as well as scientific and educational value.
4. The BLSAEC requires that adequate records are kept on the acquisition, breeding, health, care, housing, use and disposal of captive animals, and reserve the right to monitor and inspect these records on an ad hoc basis.
5. The BLSAEC will initiate an investigation into any suspected or alleged non-compliance with this standard, any institutional policies or the Animals Protection Act, 1962 (Act No. 71 of 1962). Handling and attaching devices to birds can carry inherent risks to the individual birds, including potentially impacting on their survival and reproduction. These risks must be minimised as far as possible, and must be justified in terms of the science and conservation outcomes expected from the deployment.
6. The BLSAEC requires that the impact on the wild animal be kept to a minimum during handling e.g. the fitment of a tracking device or the ringing of a bird, both during capture, the fitment process and deployment of the device or marking of the animal. The captured bird should be released after handling to minimise further stress. Refer to the BirdLife South Africa position statement “Tracking of birds” for further important considerations when tracking birds.
7. Ringing of birds should adhere to the code of ethics of The South African Bird Ringing Unit (SAFRING), which places the well-being of the bird above all other considerations. Trainee ringers should only handle birds under the supervision of a qualified ringer. SAFRING’s full code of ethics forms part of the SAFRING manual, which can be viewed at <http://safring.adu.org.za>.
8. The BLSAEC reserves the right to formally withdraw approval for a study should it be found that
 - a. The study in any way contravenes the requirements of SANS 10386:2008 “The care and use of animals for scientific purposes”, the Animals Protection Act, 1962 (Act No. 71 of 1962), or any other applicable liable statutes and requirements; and/or
 - b. The original application included false or misleading information; and/or
 - c. The study does not adhere to the protocol approved.
9. It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure full compliance with any legislation (national and international) and to secure requisite permits for access to sites and sourcing of animals, handling of animals including the fitting of any devices to the animals (also see BirdLife South Africa Position Statement “Tracking of Birds” for permit requirements), and will make such permits available upon request by the BLSAEC.
10. The applicant shall:
 - a. Ensure that all aspects of the study conform to the approved protocol;
 - b. Should any adverse events occur, the BLSAEC should be informed immediately as per the contact details given on the Approval Certificate. These include any unanticipated events not described in the protocol. Refer to reporting requirements below;
 - c. Adhere to the reporting requirements set out by the BLSAEC. These include

- i. I – Annual Progress report: once a year, on the anniversary of the date of approval; (is there a format for the annual report?)
 - ii. G – Adverse Event report: as soon as the adverse event occurs;
 - iii. H – Application for Modifications and Extensions: as and when required;
 - iv. For applicants who wish to keep birds for experimental purposes, the following reports, every six (6) months:
 - 1. D – Animal Welfare Sheets;
 - 2. E – Monitoring Reports;
 - 3. F – Observation Templates.
- d. Refer all correspondence to Linda van den Heever at linda.vdheever@birdlife.org.za.
11. All approvals are based on the standards of replacement (i.e. is it necessary to use the proposed bird in the experiment), reduction (minimum amount of birds needed without comprising statistical sample size) and refinement (least amount of stress).
12. When a BirdLife South Africa project is evaluated, BirdLife South Africa staff will recuse themselves from the evaluation committee in order to ensure that independence in the decision-making is maintained.