

## POSITION STATEMENT

# Extractive Resource Mining within Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

South Africa has significant mineral resources, and South Africa's economy has historically been built on this economy. Over the history of mining in South Africa, the mining footprint in the landscape has increased substantially, with significant impacts on natural habitats and water resources. While mining continues to contribute to the South Africa economy, resources such as high quality grade coal is running out, and global demand is expected to rapidly decline.

On par with this mineral wealth however is South Africa's exceptional level of biodiversity and important ecosystems which provide a range of ecosystem services. South Africa is globally renowned as a megadiverse country that harbours an exceptional number of species in relation to most other countries. This rich biodiversity and ecological infrastructure also underpin and support our social and economic development in numerous direct and indirect ways.

Extractive mining activities can be extremely destructive to the natural environment, often having residual negative effects for years after closure. Many natural environments, including Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs), are currently negatively impacted upon by mining activities in ways that are not sustainable for biodiversity.

### BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA POSITION STATEMENT

Extractive resource mining is one of the major threats to bird habitats within IBAs and threats such as water extraction and pollution are often not limited to the immediate site. This is particularly true within the Highveld grasslands, which are also strategic water source areas.

BirdLife South Africa acknowledges the contribution of extractive resource mining to the current South African economy. However, where possible renewable energy sources should be encouraged to replace the need for coal. Where extractive mining is permitted, it should be carried out in such a way as to have as minimal an impact on the natural environment as possible.

BirdLife South Africa suggests that a risk averse and precautionary approach be adopted if extractive resource mining is to be considered within or close to IBAs. It is also encouraged that all potential mining developments consult the SANBI Mining and Biodiversity Guidelines published in 2012.

BirdLife South Africa will not support mining within IBAs without a thorough scientific and professional environmental impact assessment (EIA), including a specialist avifaunal assessment that demonstrates that the

proposed development, including associated infrastructure, will not negatively affect the IBA trigger species or their habitats. Thus, assessments should also include consideration of cumulative and residual impacts.

BirdLife South Africa strongly encourages developers and/or their environmental consultants to consult with its staff of experts before beginning an EIA or if they suspect or are unsure of whether a proposed mining development could have significant negative impacts on an IBA. EIA reports must clearly indicate which operational phase mitigation measures have been considered and the applicant must confirm that these measures are feasible.

If significant impacts cannot otherwise be feasibly mitigated, conservation action to compensate (offset) losses should be implemented. BirdLife South Africa will always first seek to engage constructively to resolve significant impacts before considering other options available (e.g. enforcement).

For more information and to download BirdLife South Africa's above-mentioned guidelines, visit [www.birdlife.org.za](http://www.birdlife.org.za)