

DEVELOPMENT OF THE HILLARDIA PV FACILITY AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE, NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Avifauna Baseline and Impact Assessment Report

July 2022



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pachnoda Consulting cc was requested by Hillardia PV (Pty) Ltd to compile an avifauna impact assessment report for a photovoltaic (PV) solar energy facility and associated infrastructure on Portions 2, 3 and 4 of the Farm Houthaalboomen 31, near Lichtenburg, North West Province.

The objectives of the avifaunal study were to: (a) describe the avifauna associations in the study area according to species composition and richness prior to construction activities; (b) provide an inventory of bird species occurring in the project area including species prone towards collisions with the proposed infrastructure; (c) provide an impact assessment; and (d) provide an indication of the occurrence of species of concern (e.g. threatened and near threatened species).

Baseline avian data was obtained from point count sampling techniques during two independent sampling sessions (January 2022 and May 2022).

Three prominent avifaunal habitat types were identified on the site and consisted of open mixed dolomite grassland with bush clump mosaics, moist grassland and artificial livestock watering holes. Approximately 186 bird species are expected to occur in the wider study area, of which 88 species were observed in the study area (during a wet and dry season survey). The expected richness included eight threatened or near threatened species, 16 southern African endemics and 20 near-endemic species. The critically endangered White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*) and endangered Cape Vulture (*G. coprotheres*) was confirmed during the surveys, mainly as foraging birds soaring overhead. Eleven southern African endemics and 14 near-endemic species were confirmed on the study site.

The main impacts associated with the proposed PV solar facility included the following:

- The loss of habitat and subsequent displacement of bird species due to the ecological footprint required during construction.
- Direct interaction (collision trauma) by birds with the surface infrastructure (photovoltaic panels) caused by polarised light pollution and/or colliding with the panels (as they are mistaken for waterbodies).
- Collision with associated infrastructure (mainly for existing overhead power lines).

An evaluation of potential and likely impacts on the avifauna revealed that the impact significance was moderate to low after mitigation (depending on the type of impact). The study site is not located near any prominent wetland system or impoundment, and therefore the risk of waterbird collisions with the proposed infrastructure was considered to be low. However, in the absence of sufficient information on the occurrence and rate of passing waterbirds, it was recommended that supporting evidence be acquired by means of another pre-construction survey corresponding to

the wet season.

The endangered Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) and critically endangered White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*) (and to a lesser degree also Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos*) were identified as regular foraging visitors to the study area (according to SABAP2 reporting rates and on-site observations). These species are highly prone to power line collisions, whereby any existing powerlines (existing powerlines spanning the facility) could pose a collision and electrocution risk to vultures.

No fatal-flaws were identified during the assessment, and irrespective of the access road alternatives proposed for the PV facility, the significance of the avifaunal impacts (clearing of vegetation along the road reserves) were regarded as identical. Nevertheless, it is strongly recommended that the proposed mitigation measures and monitoring protocols (additional with pre- and post construction monitoring) be implemented during the construction and operational phase of the project.

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DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

I, Lukas Niemand (Pachnoda Consulting CC) declare that:

- I act as the independent specialist in this application to Hillardia PV (Pty) Ltd and Atlantic Renewable Energy Partners (Pty) Ltd;
- I will perform the work relating to the application in an objective manner, even if this results in views and findings that are not favourable to the applicant;
- I declare that there are no circumstances that may compromise my objectivity in performing such work;
- I have no vested financial, personal or any other interest in the application;
- I have no, and will not engage in, conflicting interests in the undertaking of the activity;
- I undertake to disclose to the applicant and the competent authority all material information in my possession that reasonably has or may have the potential of influencing - any decision to be taken with respect to the application by the competent authority; and - the objectivity of any report, plan or document to be prepared by myself for submission to the competent authority; and
- All the particulars furnished by me in this form are true and correct.



Lukas Niemand (Pr.Sci.Nat)

10 July 2022

Lukas Niemand is registered with The South African Council for Natural Scientific Professionals (400095/06) with more than 20 years of experience in ecological-related assessments and more than 15 years in the field of bird interactions with electrical and renewable energy infrastructure. He has conducted numerous ecological and avifaunal impact assessments including Eskom Transmission projects, hydro-electric schemes, solar farms and other activities in South Africa and other African countries.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Description

Pachnoda Consulting cc was requested by Hillardia PV (Pty) Ltd to compile an avifauna impact assessment report for a photovoltaic (PV) solar energy facility and associated infrastructure (herewith referred to as the "Hillardia PV facility") with a contracted capacity of up to 120MW located on a site approximately 10 km north west of the town of Lichtenburg in the North West Province (Figure 1). The development area is situated within the Ditsobotla Local Municipality within the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality and is accessible via the R505.

The development area for the PV facility and associated infrastructure will be located on the following properties:

- Portion 2 of the Farm Houthaalboomen 31
- Portion 3 of the Farm Houthaalboomen 31
- Portion 4 of the Farm Houthaalboomen 31

Two additional 120 MW PV facilities (Euphorbia PV and Verbena PV) are concurrently being considered on the project site (within Portion 2, Portion 3, and Portion 4 of the Farm Houthaalboomen 31) and are assessed through separate Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes.

The PV facility will be located on a 230 ha assessment area¹, and the infrastructure associated with the 120 MW facility includes (Figure 2):

- PV modules ((mono- or bifacial) and mounting structures;
- Inverters and transformers;
- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS);
- Site access road up to 8m wide (three alternative access points assessed);
- Internal access roads (up to 8m wide);
- Auxiliary buildings (22kV or 33kV switch room, gate-house and security, control centre, office, warehouse, canteen & visitors centre, staff lockers etc.);
- Temporary and permanent laydown area;
- Cabling between the panels, to be laid underground where practical; and
- Grid connection infrastructure, including:
 - Underground medium-voltage cabling between the project components and the facility substation (within a 100 m wide and 2.5 km in length corridor); and
 - Up to 132kV on-site facility substation.

The Hillardia PV facility substation (as well as the Euphorbia PV and Verbena PV facility substations) will be located directly adjacent to the Houthaalboomen North

¹ The area being assessed as part of this EIA process.

collector switching station in the south-eastern corner of Portion 4 of the Farm Houthaalboomen 31. The Houthaalboomen North collector substation/ switching station will facilitate the connection of the cluster facility substations to the Watershed Main Transmission Substation (MTS) via a single or double circuit 132 kV overhead powerline.

The connection infrastructure associated with this grid solution (i.e. between the collector switching station and the MTS) will be assessed as part of a separate Environmental Application.

The alternative site access points and associated routes assessed include:

Access Road Alternative 1: Access to the facility off the R505-5 at a new farm access point at km 13. This road alternative is ~5.9 km long and aligned as follows:

- From the R505-5, this route follows the northern boundary of Portion 25 of Farm Houthaalboomen in a westerly direction for ~2.5 km. This portion of the route will be new; and
- Continues in a southerly direction along the eastern boundary of Portions 3 and 4 of Farm Houthaalboomen 31 for 0.8 km.

Access Road Alternative 2: .Access to the facility off the R505-5 at an existing farm access point at km 11.59. This road alternative is ~6.1 km long and aligned as follows:

- From the R505-5, this route follows an existing farm road that dissects Portion 25 of Farm Houthaalboomen in a westerly direction for ~2.5 km; and
- Continues along an existing gravel road in a northerly direction along the eastern boundary of Portions 5 and 6 of Farm Houthaalboomen 31 for ~1 km.

Access Road Alternative 3: .Access to the facility off the R505-5 at an existing farm access point at km 14.87. This road alternative is ~6.7 km long and aligned as follows:

- From the R505-5, this route follows an existing farm road on the southern border of Remaining Extent and Portion 3 of Farm Houthaalboomen 2 in a westerly direction for ~2.2 km; and
- Continues along an existing gravel road in a southerly direction along the eastern boundary of Portions 3 and 4 of Farm Houthaalboomen 31 for ~1.9 km.

1.2 Objectives and Terms of Reference

The main objectives of the avifaunal study were to: (a) describe the avifauna associations in the study area according to species composition and richness prior to construction activities; (b) provide an inventory of bird species occurring in the study area including species prone towards collisions with the proposed infrastructure; (c) provide an impact assessment; and (d) provide an indication of the occurrence of species of concern (e.g. threatened and near threatened species; sensu IUCN, 2022; Taylor et al., 2015; Marnewick et al., 2015).

A bird assessment is required as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process to investigate the impacts of the proposed solar facility on the avian attributes at the study site and its immediate surroundings. The avifaunal attributes at the proposed PV facility will be determined by means of a desktop analysis of GIS based information, third-party datasets and a number of site surveys. It also provides the results from two independent pre-construction surveys as per the best practice guidelines of Jenkins *et al.* (2017).

The terms of reference are to:

- conduct a baseline bird assessment based on available information pertinent to the ecological and avifaunal attributes on the project area and habitat units;
- conduct an assessment of all information on an EIA level in order to present the following results:
 - typify the regional and site-specific avifaunal macro-habitat parameters that will be affected by the proposed project;
 - provide a shortlist of bird species present as well as highlighting dominant species and compositions;
 - provide an indication on the occurrence of threatened, near threatened, endemic and conservation important bird species likely to be affected by the proposed project;
 - provide an indication of sensitive areas or bird habitat types corresponding to the study area;
 - highlight areas of concern or "hotspot" areas;
 - identify and describe impacts that are considered pertinent to the proposed development;
 - highlight gaps of information in terms of the avifaunal environment; and
 - recommend additional surveys and monitoring protocols (*sensu* Jenkins et al., 2017).

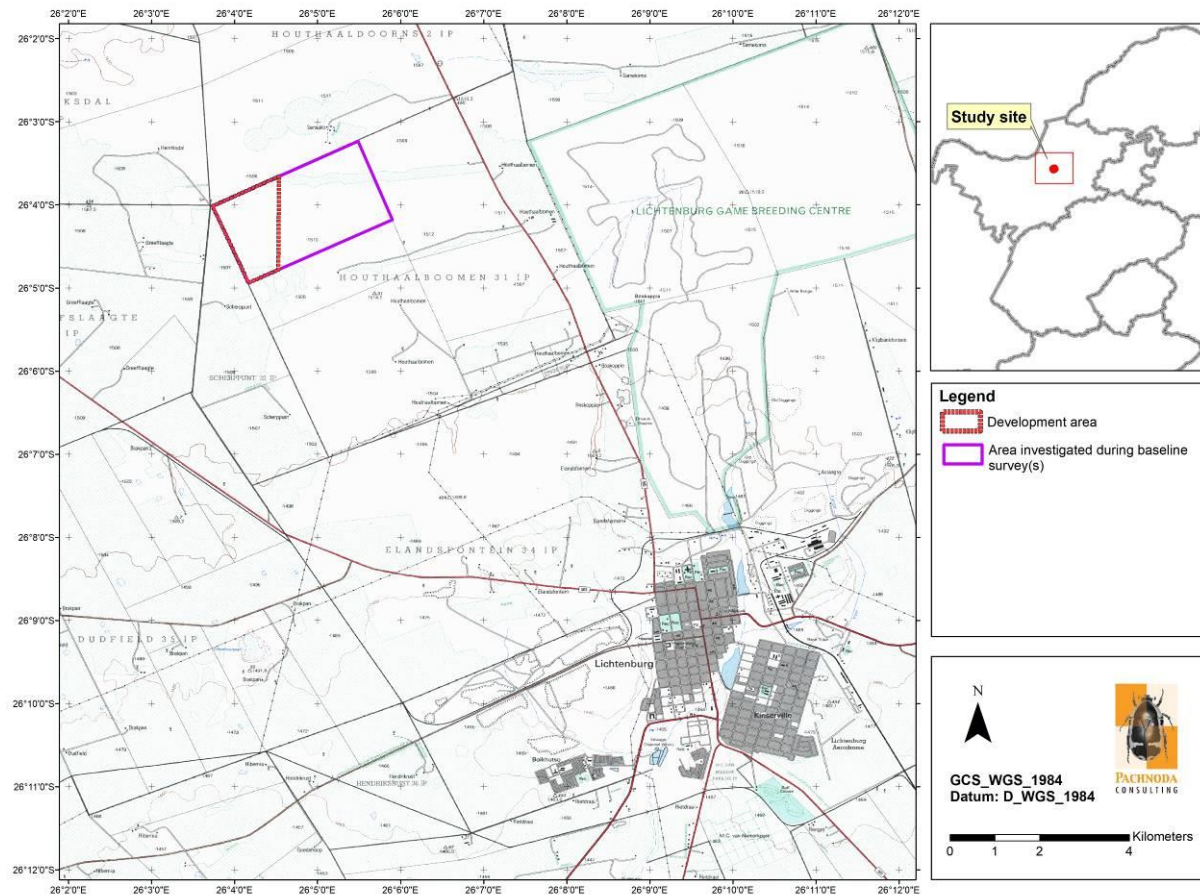


Figure 1: A topo-cadastral image illustrating the geographic position of proposed Hillardia PV facility.

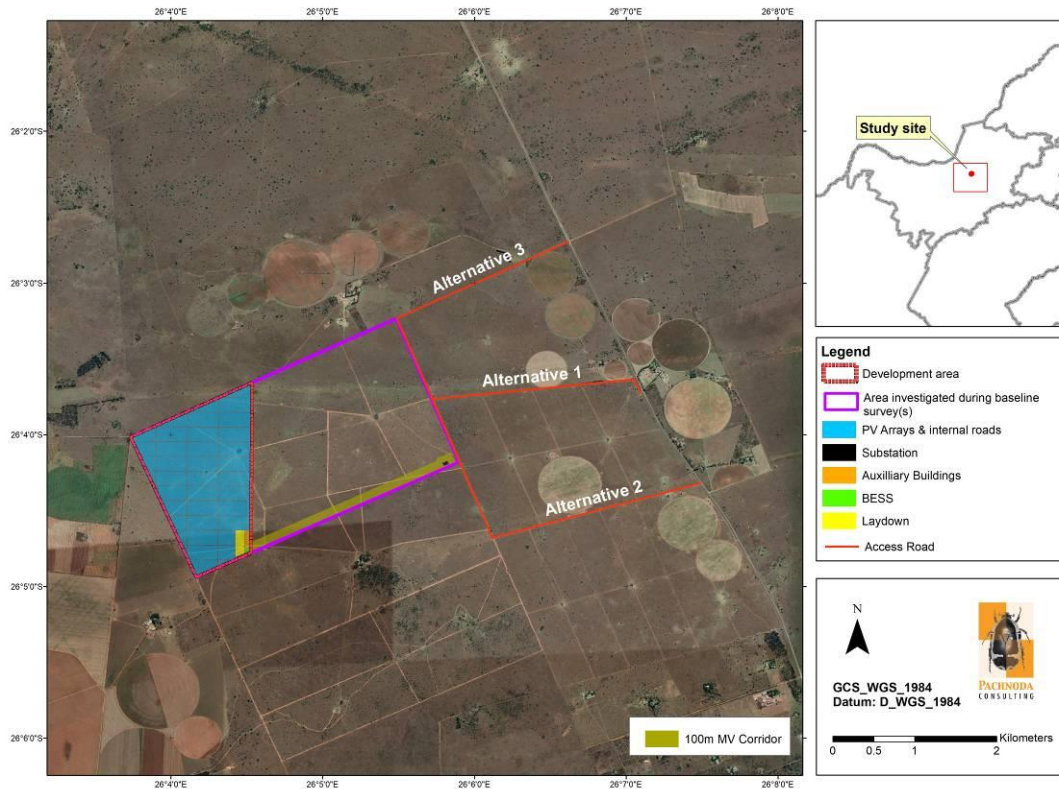


Figure 2: A satellite image illustrating the geographic position of the proposed Hillardia PV facility and associated infrastructure.

1.3 Scope of Work

The following aspects form part of the Scope of Work:

- A desktop study of bird species expected to occur (e.g. species that could potentially be present), as well as species recorded in the past (e.g. SABAP1);
- A baseline survey of observed bird species according to ad hoc observations and two sampling surveys;
- A list of bird species historically recorded within the relevant quarter degree grid in which the study site occurs (SABAP1);
- Any protected or threatened bird species recorded in the past within the relevant quarter degree grid, their scientific names and colloquial names, and protected status according to IUCN red data lists; and
- The potential of these protected or threatened species to persist within the study area.

The following aspects will be discussed during this avifaunal assessment:

- Collision-prone bird species expected to be present and or observed;

- A list of the dominant bird species;
- A list of observed and expected threatened and near threatened species (according to IUCN red data list);
- Possible migratory or nomadic species;
- Potential important flyways/ congregatory sites and/or foraging sites; and
- Avian impacts associated with the PV solar facility.

2. METHODS & APPROACH

The current report places emphasis on the avifaunal community as a key indicator group on the proposed study area, thereby aiming to describe the conservation significance of the ecosystems in the area. Therefore, the occurrence of certain bird species and their relative abundances may determine the outcome of the ecological sensitivity of the area and the subsequent proposed layouts of the solar facility infrastructure.

The information provided in this report was principally sourced from the following sources/observations:

- relevant literature – see section below;
- observations made during two site visits corresponding to the austral wet and dry seasons (17-21 January 2022 and 16-20 May 2022); and
- personal observations from similar habitat types in proximity to the study area (Pachnoda Consulting 2018; 2021).

2.1 Literature survey and Database acquisition

A desktop and literature review of the area under investigation was commissioned to collate as much information as possible prior to the detailed baseline survey. Literature consulted primarily makes use of small-scale datasets that were collected by citizen scientists and are located at various governmental and academic institutions (e.g. Animal Demography Unit & SANBI). These include (although are not limited to) the following:

- Hockey *et al.* (2005) for general information on bird identification and life history attributes.
- Marnewick *et al.* (2015) was consulted for information regarding the biogeographic affinities of selected bird species that could be present on the study area.
- The conservation status of bird species was categorised according to the global IUCN Red List of threatened species (IUCN, 2022) and the regional conservation assessment of Taylor *et al.* (2015).
- Distributional data was sourced from the South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP1) and verified against Harrison *et al.* (1997) for species corresponding to the quarter-degree grid cell (QDGC) 2626AA (Lichtenburg). The information was then modified according to the prevalent habitat types present on the development area. The SABAP1 data provides a “snapshot”

of the abundance and composition of species recorded within a quarter degree grid cell (QDGC) which was the sampling unit chosen (corresponding to an area of approximately 15 min latitude x 15 min longitude). It should be noted that the atlas data makes use of reporting rates that were calculated from observer cards submitted by the public as well as citizen scientists. It therefore provides an indication of the thoroughness of which the QDGCs were surveyed between 1987 and 1991;

- Additional distributional data was also sourced from the SABAP2 database (<http://www.sabap2.birdmap.africa>). The information was then modified according to the prevalent habitat types present on the study area. Since bird distributions are dynamic (based on landscape changes such as fragmentation and climate change), SABAP2 was born (and launched in 2007) from SABAP1 with the main difference being that all sampling is done at a finer scale known as pentad grids (5 min latitude x 5 min longitude, equating to 9 pentads within a QDGC). Therefore, the data is more site-specific, recent and more comparable with observations made during the site visit (due to increased standardisation of data collection). The pentad grids relevant to the current project is 2600_2600 and 2600_2605 (although all eight pentad grids surrounding the central grid 2600_2600 were also scrutinised). (Figure 3).
- The choice of scientific nomenclature, taxonomy and common names were recommended by the International Ornithological Committee (the IOC World Bird List v. 12.1), unless otherwise specified (see www.worldbirdnames.org as specified by Gill et al, 2022). Colloquial (common) names were used according to Hockey *et. al.* (2005) to avoid confusion;
- The best practice guidelines for assessing and monitoring the impact of solar power generating facilities on birds in southern Africa were also consulted (Jenkins *et al.*, 2017).

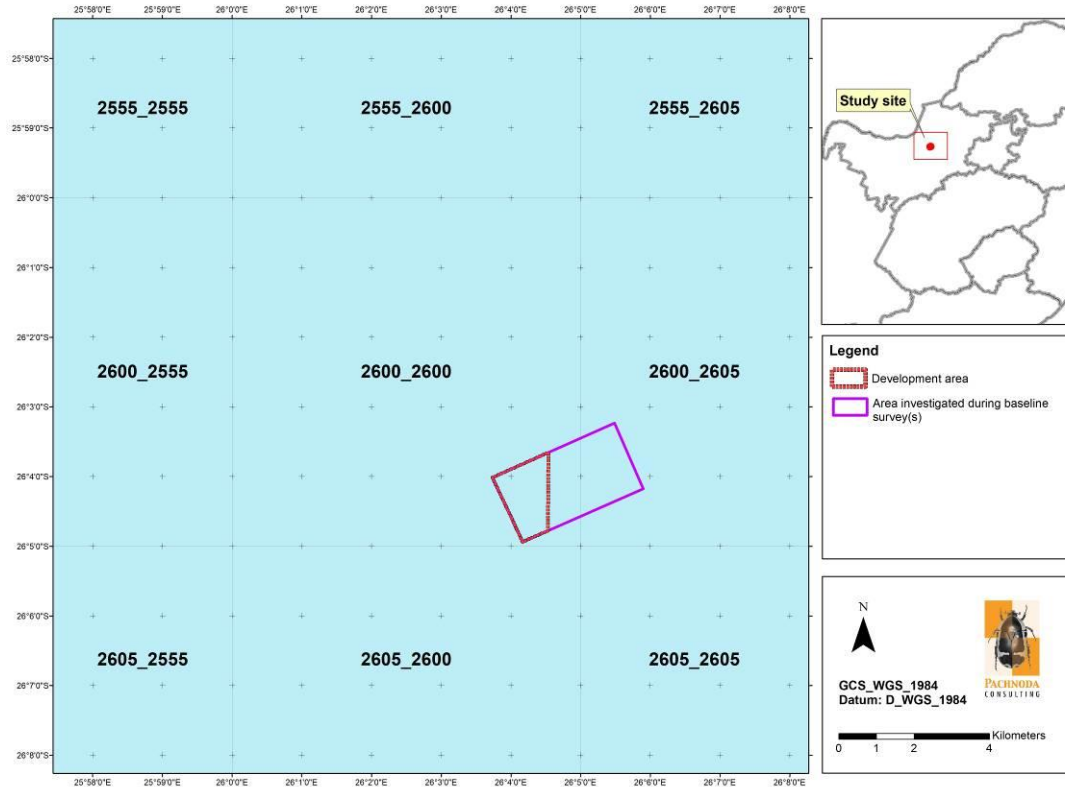


Figure 3: A map illustrating the pentad grids that were investigated for this project.

2.2 Field Methods

The avifauna of the study area was surveyed during two independent site visits representing a wet season (January 2022) and an early dry season survey (May 2022).

The baseline avifaunal survey was conducted by means of the following survey techniques:

2.2.1 Point Counts

Bird data was collected by means of 29 point counts (as per Buckland et al. 1993) from the study area. Data from the point counts has been analysed to determine dominant and indicator bird species (so-called discriminant species), relative densities and to delineate the different bird associations present.

The use of point counts is advantageous since it is the preferred method to use for skulking or elusive species. In addition, it is the preferred method to line transect counts where access is problematic, or when the terrain appears to be complex (e.g. mountainous). It is considered to be a good method to use, and very efficient for gathering a large amount of data in a short period of time (Sutherland, 2006). The spatial position of each point count is illustrated in Figure 4. The spatial placement of

the point counts was determined through a stratified random design which ensures coverage of each habitat type and/or macro-habitat (Sutherland et al., 2004).

Therefore, the sampling approach was adapted so that all the bird species seen within approximately 50m from the centre of the point were recorded (resulting in an area of 0.78 ha) along with their respective abundance values (a laser rangefinder was used to delineate the area to be surveyed at each point). Each point count lasted approximately 20 -30 minutes, while the area within the 50m radius of homogenous habitat was slowly traversed to ensure that all bird species were detected and or flushed (as proposed by Watson, 2003). To ensure the independence of observations, points were positioned at least 200 m apart. Observations were not truncated, and in order to standardise data collection, the following assumptions were conformed to (according to Buckland *et al.*, 1994):

- All birds on the point must be seen and correctly identified. This assumption is in practice very difficult to meet in the field as some birds in the nearby vicinity may be overlooked due to low visibility or were obscured by vegetation (e.g. graminoid cover). Therefore, it is assumed that the portion of birds seen on the point count represents the total assemblage on the point.
- All birds must be recorded at their initial location. All movements of the birds are random and therefore natural in relation to the movements of the observer. None of the birds moved in response to the presence of the observer, and birds flying past without landing were omitted from the analysis.
- In other words, no bird is recorded more than once.

2.2.2 *Random (ad hoc) surveys*

To obtain an inventory of bird species present (apart from those observed during the point counts), all bird species observed/detected while moving between point counts were identified and noted. Particular attention was devoted to suitable roosting, foraging and nesting habitat for species of conservation concern (e.g. threatened or near threatened species). In addition, the fly patterns of large non-passerine and birds of prey were recorded, as well as the locality of collision-prone birds.

2.2.3 *Analyses*

Data generated from the point counts was analysed according to Clarke & Warwick (1994) based on the computed percentage contribution (%) of each species, including the consistency (calculated as the similarity coefficient/standard deviation) of its contribution. Hierarchical Agglomerative Clustering (a cluster analysis-based group-average linkages; Clarke & Warwick 1994) was performed on calculated Bray-Curtis coefficients derived from the data. A cluster analysis is used to assign "species associations" between samples with the aim to objectively delineate groups or assemblages. Therefore, sampling entities that group together (being more similar) are believed to have similar compositions.

The species richness and diversity of each bird association was analysed by means of richness measures (such as the total number of species recorded (S) and Shannon Wiener Index) were calculated to compare the associations with each other.

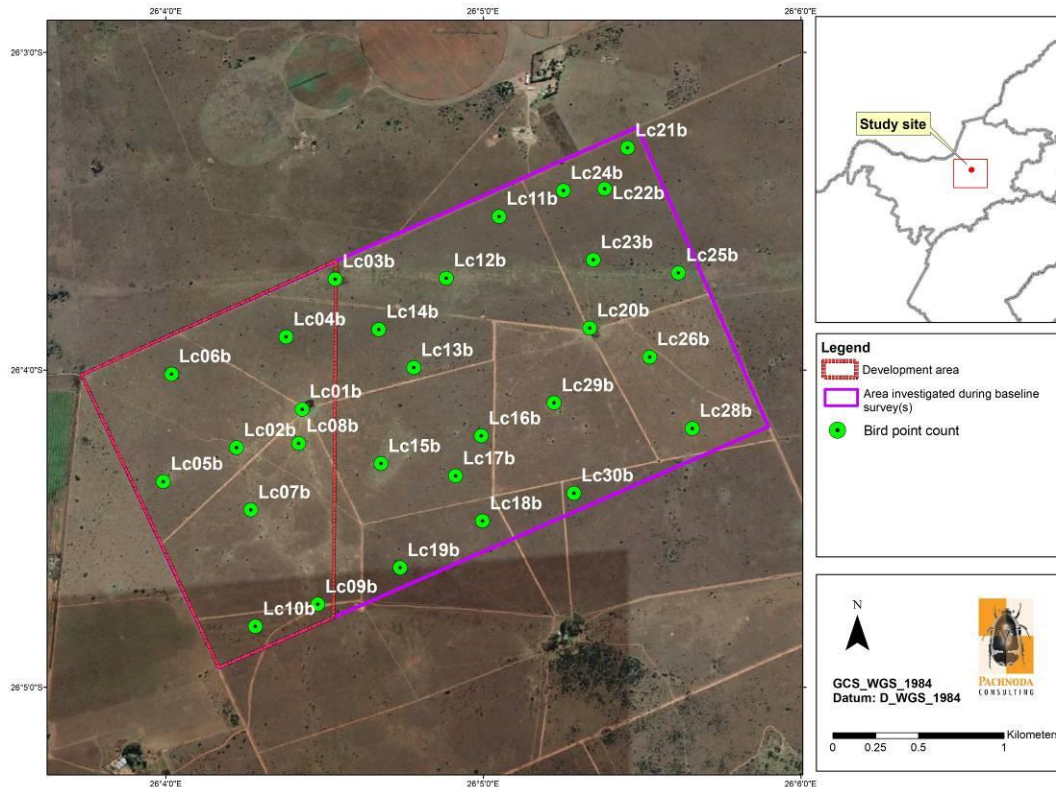


Figure 4: A map illustrating the spatial position of 29 bird point counts located within the study area.

2.3 Sensitivity Analysis

A sensitivity map was compiled based on the outcome of the baseline results.

The ecological sensitivity of any piece of land is based on its inherent ecosystem service (e.g. wetlands) and overall preservation of biodiversity.

2.3.1 Ecological Function

Ecological function relates to the degree of ecological connectivity between systems within a landscape matrix. Therefore, systems with a high degree of landscape connectivity amongst one another are perceived to be more sensitive and will be those contributing to ecosystem services (e.g. wetlands) or the overall preservation of biodiversity.

2.3.2 Avifaunal Importance

Avifaunal importance relates to species diversity, endemism (unique species or unique processes) and the high occurrence of threatened and protected species or ecosystems protected by legislation.

2.3.3 Sensitivity Scale

- *High* – Sensitive ecosystems with either low inherent resistance or low resilience towards disturbance factors or highly dynamic systems considered important for the maintenance of ecosystem integrity. Most of these systems represent ecosystems with high connectivity with other important ecological systems OR with high species diversity and usually contain high numbers of threatened, endemic or rare bird species. These areas should preferably be protected;
- *Moderately high* - Untransformed or productive habitat units (which can also be artificial) which contain high bird numbers and/or bird richness values. These areas are often fragmented OR azonal, and hence of small surface area that are often surrounded by habitat of moderate or low sensitivity. These habitat units also include potential habitat for threatened species. Development is often considered permissible on these areas if there is enough reason to believe that these areas are widespread in the region and future planned developments are unlikely to result in the widespread loss (>50 %) of similar habitat at a regional scale.
- *Medium* – These are slightly modified systems which occur along gradients of disturbances of low-medium intensity with some degree of connectivity with other ecological systems OR ecosystems with intermediate levels of species diversity but may include potential ephemeral habitat for threatened species; and
- *Low* – Degraded and highly disturbed/transformed systems with little ecological function and are generally very poor in bird species diversity (most species are usually exotic or weeds).

2.4 Limitations

- It is assumed that third party information (obtained from government, academic/research institution, non-governmental organisations) is accurate and true.
- Some of the datasets are out of date and therefore extant distribution ranges may have shifted although these datasets provide insight into historical distribution ranges of relevant species.
- The datasets are mainly small-scale and could not always consider azonal habitat types that may be present on the study area (e.g. artificial livestock watering points). In addition, these datasets encompass surface areas larger than the study area, which could include habitat types and species that are

not present on the study site. Therefore the potential to overestimate species richness is highly likely while it is also possible that certain cryptic or specialist species could have been overlooked in the past.

- Some of the datasets (e.g. SABAP2) managed by the Animal Demography Unit of the University of Cape Town were recently initiated and therefore incomplete.
- This company, the consultants and/or specialist investigators do not accept any responsibility for conclusions, suggestions, limitations and recommendations made in good faith, based on the information presented to them, obtained from the surveys or requests made to them at the time of this report.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Locality

The Hillardia PV development area is located approximately 10 km north west of the town of Lichtenburg in the North West Province. The development area is also located Portion 2, Portion 3 and Portion 4 of the Farm Houthaalboomen 31 (Figure 1).

3.2 Regional Vegetation Description

The proposed PV facility corresponds to the Grassland Biome and more particularly to the Dry Highveld Grassland Bioregion as defined by Mucina & Rutherford (2006). It comprehends an ecological type known as Carletonville Dolomite Grassland (Mucina & Rutherford, 2006) (Figure 5).

From an avifaunal perspective it is evident that bird diversity is positively correlated with vegetation structure, and floristic richness is not often regarded to be a significant contributor of patterns in bird abundance and their spatial distributions. Although grasslands are generally poor in woody plant species, and subsequently support lower bird richness values, it is often considered as an important habitat for many terrestrial bird species such as larks, pipits, korhaans, cisticolas, widowbirds including large terrestrial birds such as Secretarybirds, cranes and storks. Many of these species are also endemic to South Africa and display particularly narrow distribution ranges. Due to the restricted spatial occurrence of the Grassland Biome and severe habitat transformation, many of the bird species that are restricted to the grasslands are also threatened or experiencing declining population sizes.

Carletonville Dolomite Grassland is confined to the dolomite plains that stretch from Lichtenburg in the North West Province to sections of rocky grassland in Gauteng, especially between altitudes of 1 350 m and 1 450 m. It occurs on slightly undulating plains dissected by prominent chert ridges, thereby containing a grassland

composition rich in floristic species forming a complex mosaic dominated by many plant species.

Currently, only 2 % of the remaining 76 % of untransformed Carletonville Dolomite Grassland is formally protected within the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site and various nature reserves such as Abe Baily and Krugersdorp Nature Reserves.

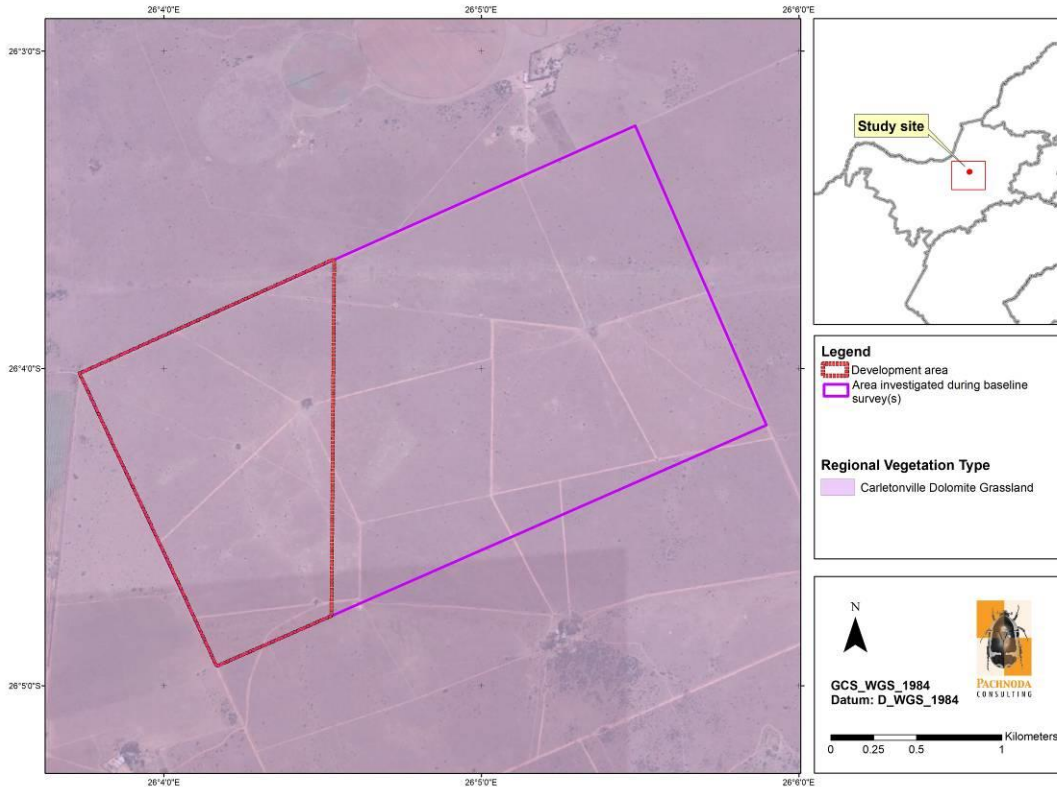


Figure 5: A satellite image illustrating the regional vegetation type corresponding to the study area. Vegetation type categories were defined by Mucina & Rutherford (2006).

3.3 Land cover, land use and existing infrastructure.

According to the South African National dataset of 2013-2014 (Geoterrainimage, 2015) the study area comprehends the following land cover categories (Figure 6):

Natural areas:

- Grassland;
- Low shrubland; and
- Woodland and open bush.

From the land cover dataset it is evident that most of the study area is covered by natural grassland, while some parts consisting of low shrubland, especially on the

southern parts of the proposed Hillardia PV facility. The study area is primarily used for livestock production and livestock grazing. Existing infrastructure includes a cattle kraal/watering point.

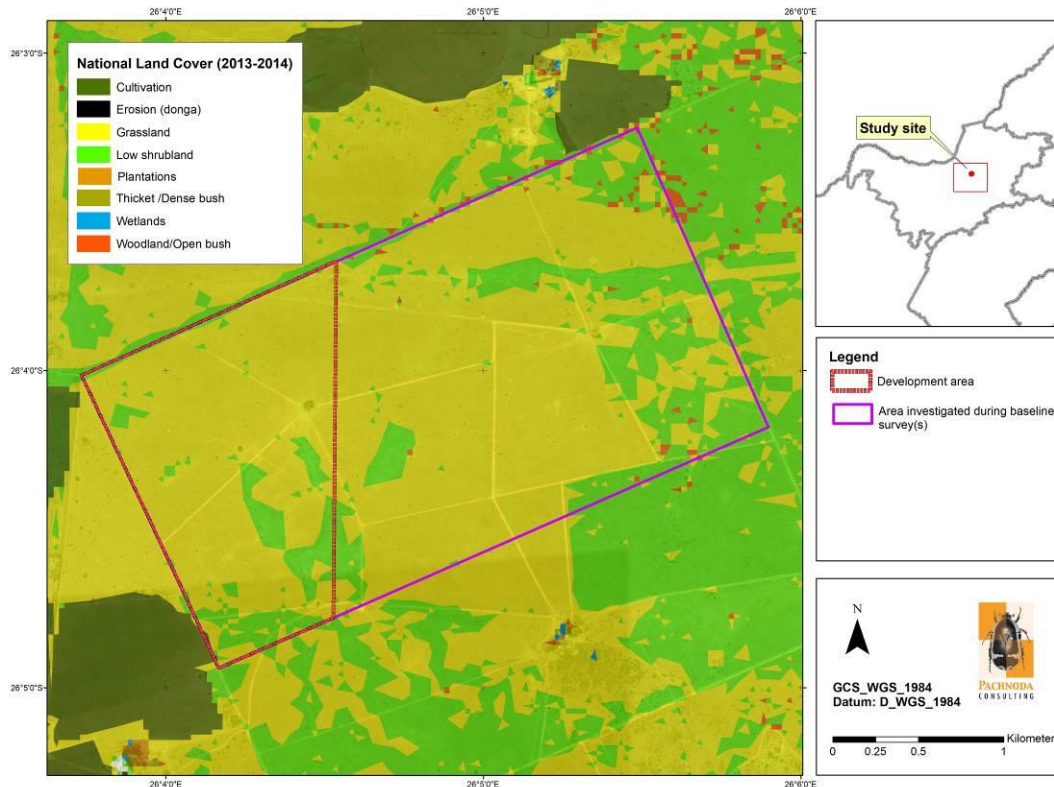


Figure 6: A map illustrating the land cover classes (Geoterrainimage, 2015) corresponding to the proposed development area.

3.4 Conservation Areas, Protected Areas and Important Bird Areas

The study area is located approximately 5.4 km west of the former Lichtenburg Game Breeding Centre (Figure 7). This conservation area contains a variety of game species, and the facility operates a vulture restaurant which attracts foraging vultures (c. three species) to the region. This area is currently under new management (by lease agreement with the municipality).

There are no other formal protected areas or any Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas in close proximity to the study site.

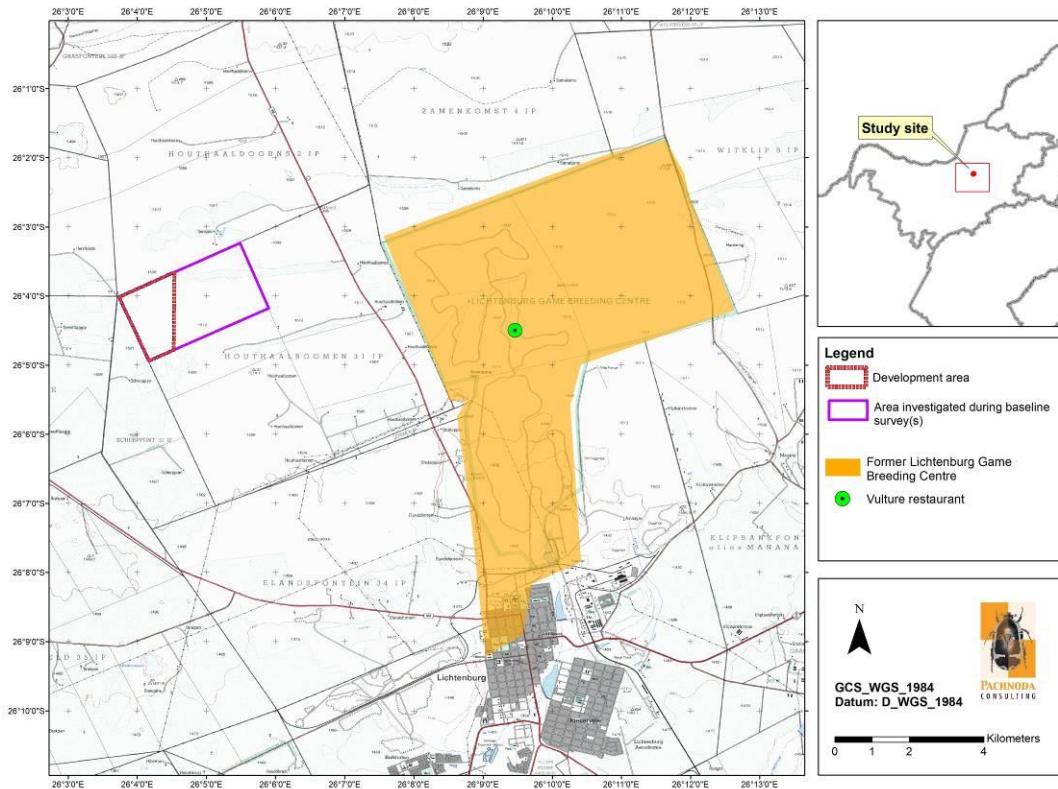


Figure 7: A map illustrating the locality of conservation areas in close proximity to the proposed study area.

3.5 Annotations on the National Web-Based Environmental Screening Tool

Regulation 16(1)(v) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 20145 (EIA Regulations) provides that an applicant for Environmental Authorisation is required to submit a report generated by the Screening Tool as part of its application. On 5 July 2019, the Minister of Environmental Affairs, Forestry and Fisheries published a notice in the Government Gazette giving notice that the use of the Screening Tool is compulsory for all applicants to submit a report generated by the Screening Tool from 90 days of the date of publication of that notice.

The Screening Tool is intended to allow for pre-screening of sensitivities in the landscape to be assessed within the EA process. This assists with implementing the mitigation hierarchy by allowing developers to adjust their proposed development footprint to avoid sensitive areas. The Screening Tool report will indicate the (preliminary) environmental sensitivities that intersect with the proposed development footprint as defined by the applicant as well as the relevant Protocols.

As the Screening Tool contains datasets that are mapped at a national scale, there may be areas where the Screening Tool erroneously assigns, or misses, environmental sensitivities because of mapping resolution and a high paucity of available and accurate data. Broad-scale site investigations will provide for an

augmented and site-specific evaluation of the accuracy and ‘infilling’ of obvious and large-scale inaccuracies. Information extracted from the National Web-based Environmental Screening Tool (Department of Environmental Affairs, 2020), indicated that the study site holds a **high** sensitivity with respect to the relative animal species protocol (Figure 8) (report generated 10/07/2022):

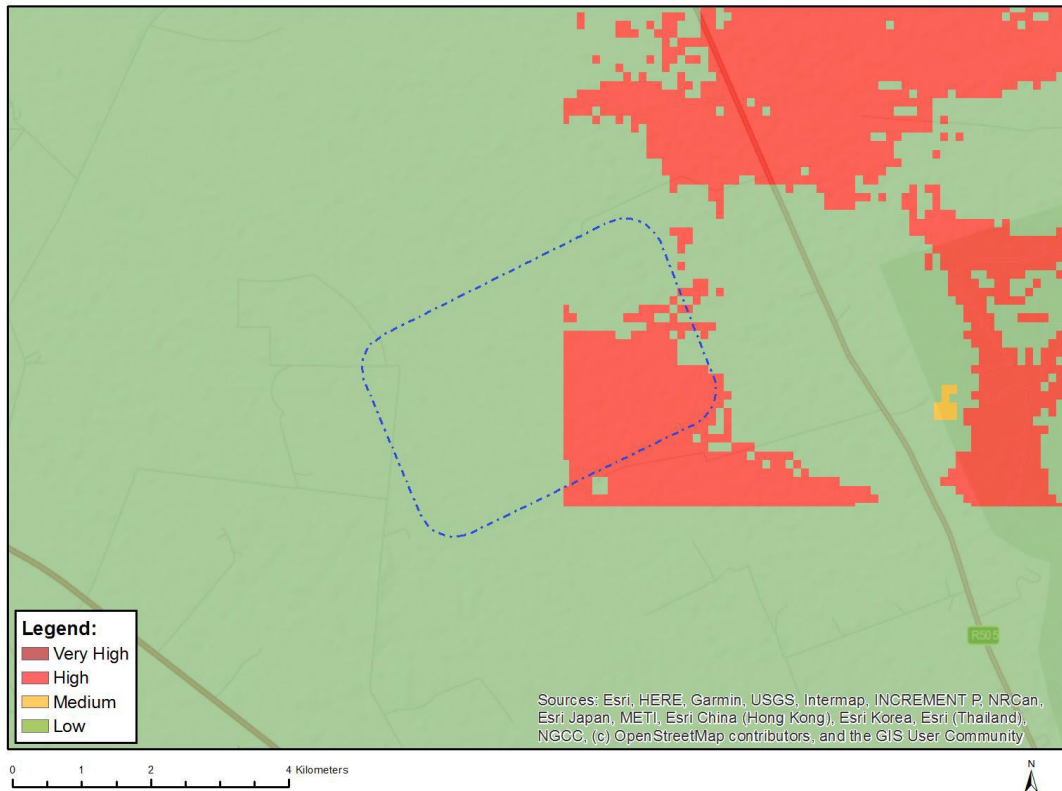


Figure 8: The animal species sensitivity of the study area (including a 500m buffer) according to the Screening Tool.

Sensitive features include the following:

Sensitivity	Feature(s)
Low	Subject to confirmation
High	Aves - <i>Torgos tracheliotos</i>

It is evident from the results of the Screening Tool report that the eastern part of the study area contains habitat of high sensitivity for one threatened bird species, which includes the endangered Lapped-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*).

The study site holds a **high** sensitivity with respect to the relative avian theme (Figure 9) (report generated 10/07/2022):



Figure 9: The relative avian sensitivity of the study area (including a 500m buffer) according to the Screening Tool.

It is evident from the results of the Screening Tool report that the study area is located within 20 km of known Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) restaurant sites.

In addition, the study site holds a **very high** sensitivity with respect to the relative terrestrial biodiversity theme (Figure 10) (report generated 10/07/2022):

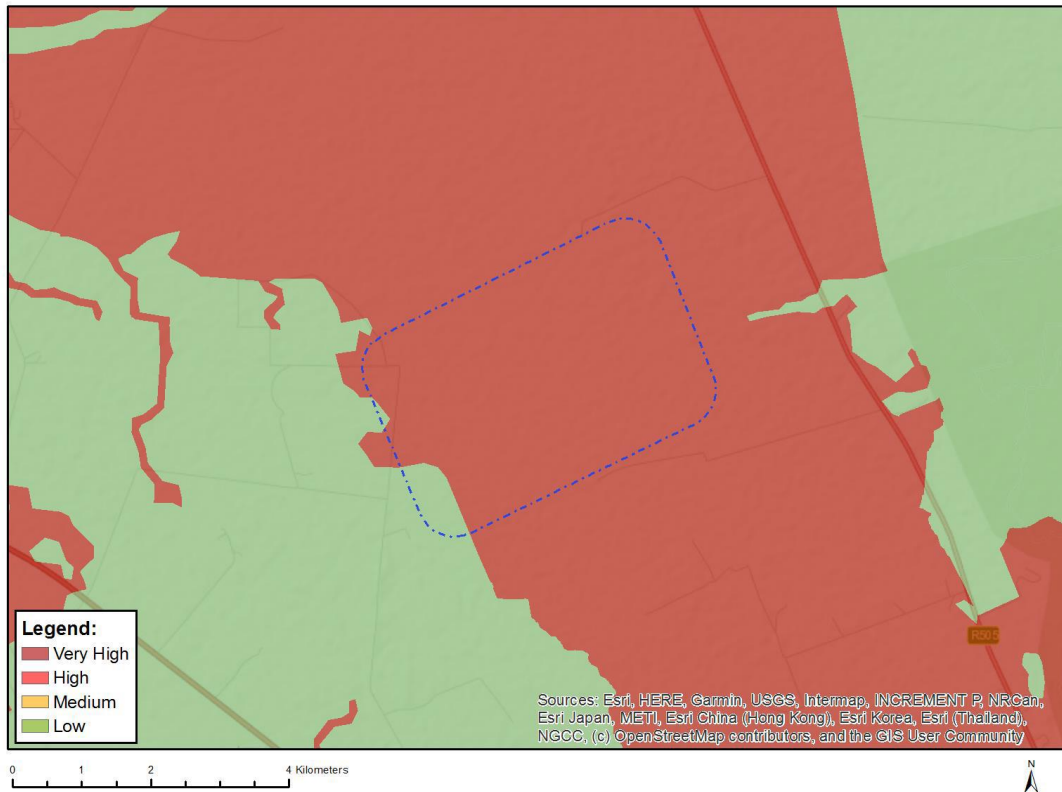


Figure 10: The relative terrestrial biodiversity sensitivity of the study area (including a 500m buffer) according to the Screening Tool.

Sensitive features include the following:

Sensitivity	Feature(s)
Low	Low Sensitivity
Very High	Ecological support area 1
Very High	Ecological support area 2

It is evident from the results of the Screening Tool report that the study area forms part of an ecological support area 1 and 2 (ESA 1 & 2) as per the North West Biodiversity Sector Plan (Schaller and Desmet, 2015).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Avifaunal habitat types

Apart from the regional vegetation type, the local composition and distribution of the vegetation associations on the study area are a consequence of a combination of factors simulated by soil type, geology and grazing intensity (presence of livestock) which have culminated in three major broad-scale habitat units that deserve further discussion (Figure 11, Figure 12 and Figure 13):

1. *Open mixed dolomite grassland with bush clump mosaics:* This unit is prominent on the study site and covers a significant extent in surface area of the proposed PV facility. It is represented by two discrete floristic variations

which also provide habitat for two discrete avifaunal associations (see Pachnoda Consulting, 2018; 2021). The first floristic variation consists of open untransformed to grazed mixed dolomite grassland. The grassland variation is represented by untransformed to grazed Carletonville Dolomite Grassland, depending on grazing intensity, and dominated by "late-successional" graminoids such as *Themeda triandra*, *Cymbopogon caesius*, *C. pospischilii*, *Trachypogon spicatus*, *Elionurus muticus* and *Andropogon schirensis*. It is occupied by a typical grassland bird composition dominated by insectivorous and granivore passerine bird species such as Desert Cisticola, (*Cisticola aridulus*), Eastern Clapper Lark (*Mirafraga fasciolata*), Spike-heeled Lark (*Chersomanes albofasciata*), Ant-eating Chat (*Myrmecocichla formicivora*), Rufous-naped Lark (*Mirafraga africana*) and Cloud Cisticola (*Cisticola textrix*). Prominent non-passerine species include Orange River Francolin (*Scleroptila gutturalis*), Swainson's Spurfowl (*Pternistis swainsonii*), Northern Black Korhaan (*Afrotis afraoides*), Crowned Lapwing (*Vanellus coronatus*) and Helmeted Guineafowl (*Numida meleagris*).

The bush clumps form a prominent mosaic characterised by the dominance of a woody layer of *Searsia lancea* and *S. pyroides*, while *Senegalia cf. hereroensis* and *Vachellia erioloba* forms canopy constituents in some areas. The eminent increase in vertical heterogeneity provided by the woody layer is colonised by a "Bushveld" bird association consisting of insectivorous passerines such as Black-chested Prinia (*Prinia flavicans*), Chestnut-vented Warbler (*Curruca subcoerulea*), Kalahari Scrub Robin (*Cercotrichas paena*), Neddicky (*Cisticola fulvicapilla*), African Red-eyed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus nigricans*) as well as granivores such as Yellow Canary (*Crithagra flaviventris*), White-browed Sparrow-Weaver (*Plocepasser mahali*) and Southern Masked Weaver (*Ploceus velatus*). Non-passerine bird taxa are represented by Laughing Dove (*Spilopelia senegalensis*), Ring-necked Dove (*Streptopelia capicola*), Acacia Pied Barbet (*Tricholaema leucomelas*) and White-backed Mousebird (*Colius colius*).

2. *Moist grassland located within low-lying areas:* This habitat is located on the northern-eastern part of the study site and receives infiltration from run-off water during precipitation events. It is colonised by dense, coarse grass including dense *Hyparrhenia*, *Themeda triandra* and *Heteropogon contortus* which provide breeding and roosting opportunities for Long-tailed Widowbird (*Euplectes progne*), Southern Red Bishop (*E. orix*) and Zitting Cisticola (*Cisticola juncidis*). It is also often visited by terrestrial species such as Blacksmith Lapwing (*Vanellus armatus*).
3. *Artificial livestock watering points:* These are represented by artificial water troughs and reservoirs with the purpose to provide drinking water to livestock. It was present on the eastern part the Hillardia PV facility. However, it acts as focal congregation areas for many granivore passerine and non-passerine species, including Cape Sparrow (*Passer melanurus*), Laughing Dove

(*Spilopelia senegalensis*), Namaqua dove (*Oena capensis*), Scaly-feathered Weaver (*Sporopipes squamifrons*) and Wattled Starling (*Creatophora cinerea*).

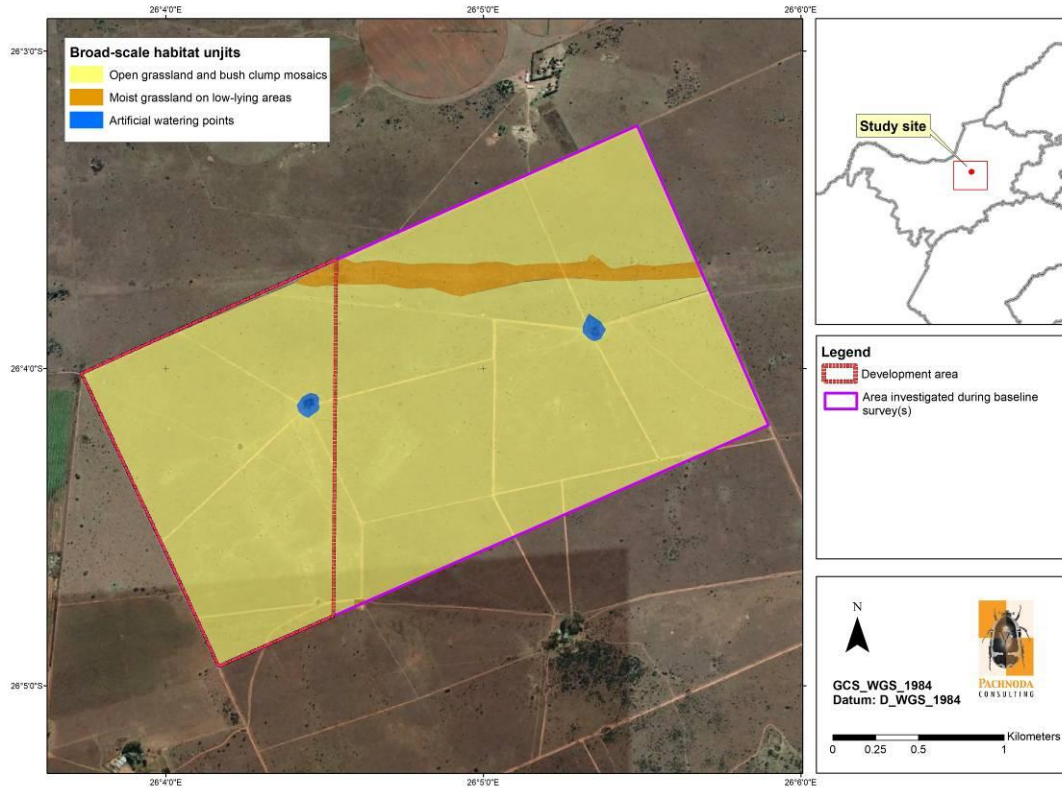


Figure 11: A map illustrating the avifaunal habitat types on the study and development areas.



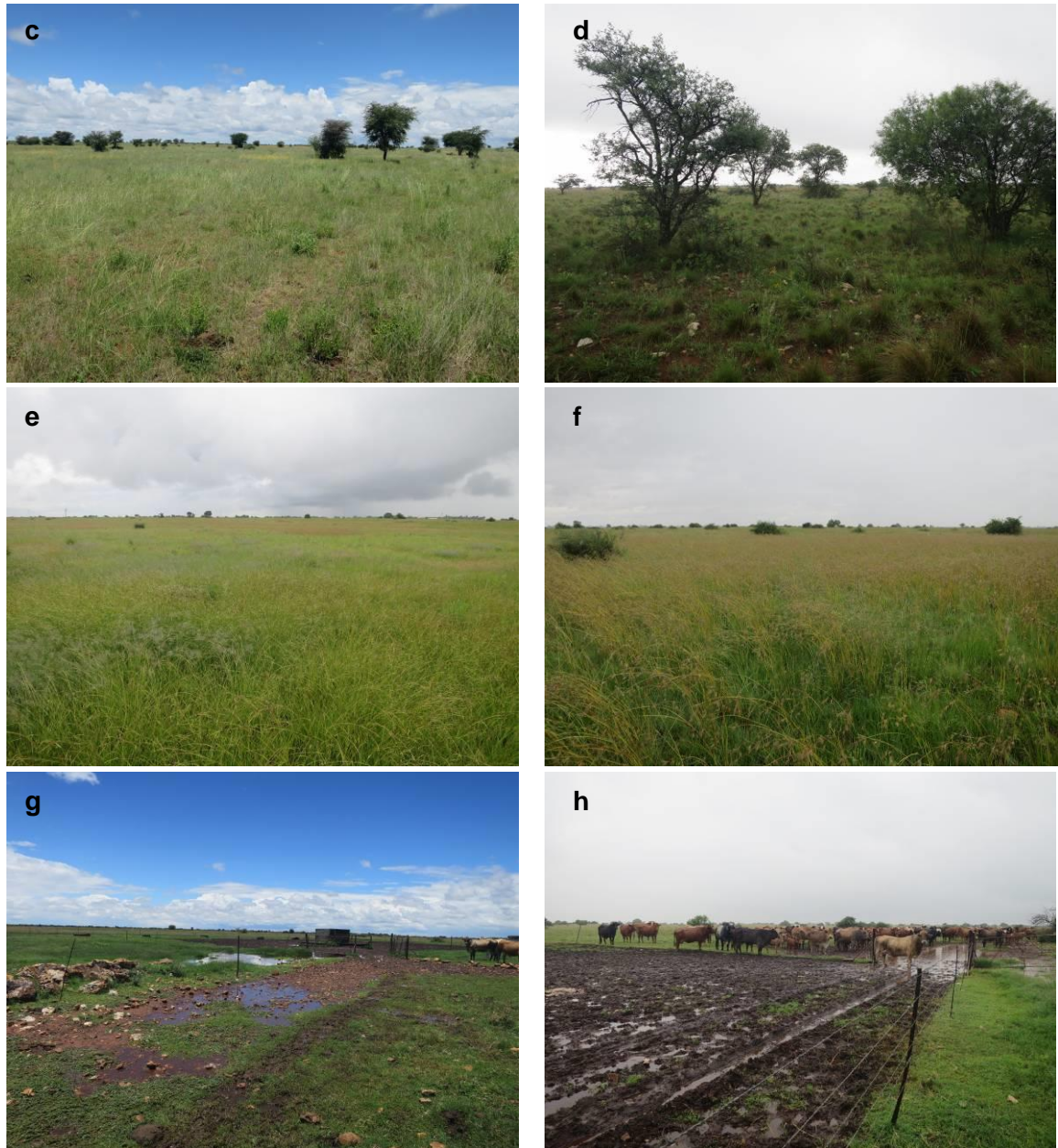


Figure 12: A collage of images illustrating examples of avifaunal habitat types on the assessment area observed during the austral summer season (January 2022): (a - d) open mixed dolomite grassland and bush clump mosaics, (e - f) moist grassland located on low-lying areas and (g - h) and artificial livestock watering points.

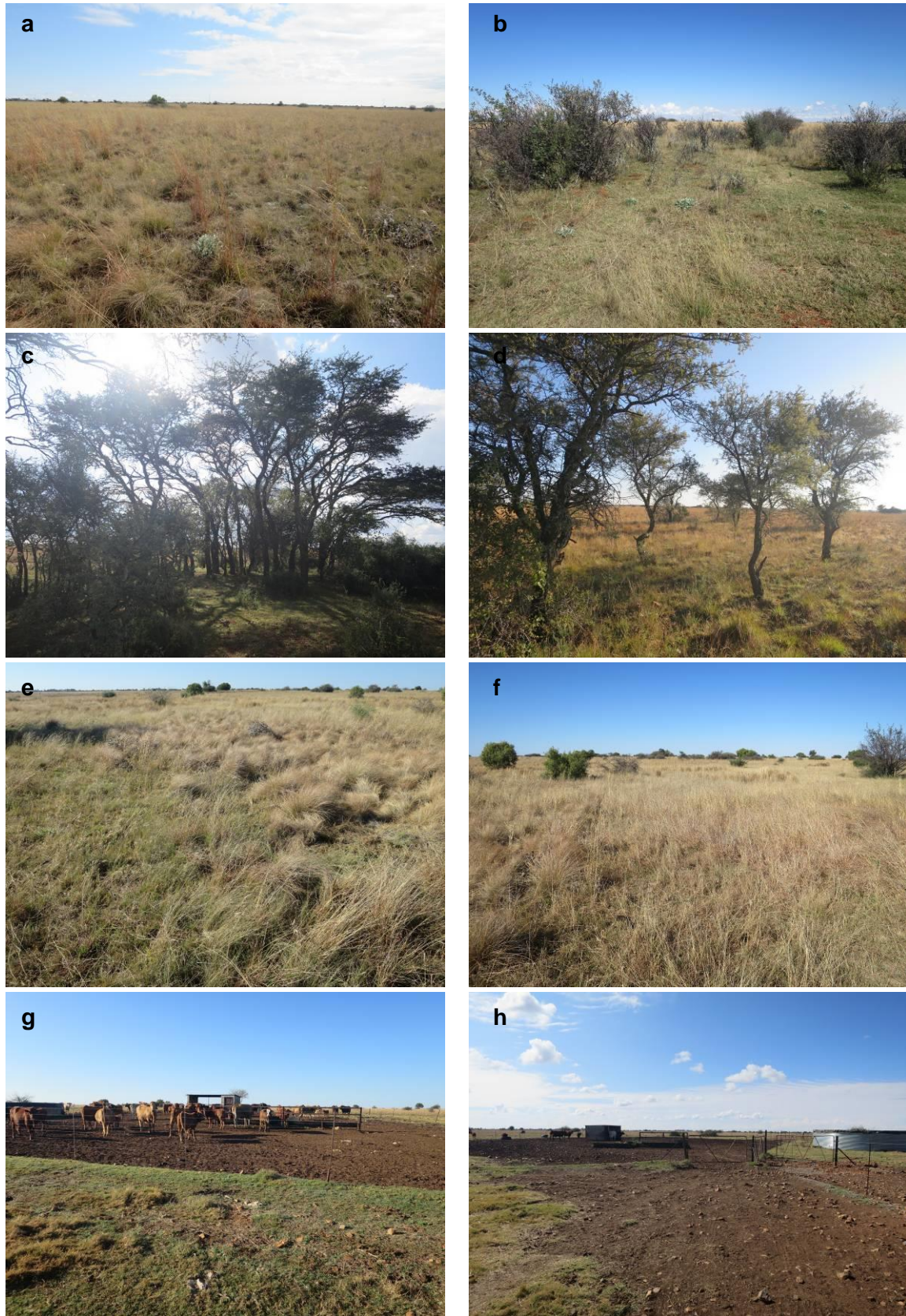


Figure 13: A collage of images illustrating examples of avifaunal habitat types on the assessment area observed during the austral dry season (May 2022): (a - d) open mixed dolomite grassland and bush clump mosaics, (e - f) moist grassland located on low-lying areas and (g - h) and artificial livestock watering points.

4.2 Species Richness and Summary statistics

Approximately ~186 bird species are expected to occur in the study area (refer to Appendix 1 and Table 1). The expected richness was inferred from the South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP1 & SABAP2)² (Harrison et al., 1997; www.sabap2.birdmap.africa) and the presence of suitable habitat in the study area. The expected richness is also strongly correlated with favourable environmental conditions (e.g. during good rains) and seasonality (e.g. when migratory species are present). This equates to 19 % of the approximate 987³ species listed for the southern African subregion⁴ (and approximately 21 % of the 871 species recorded within South Africa⁵). However, the species richness obtained from the pentad grids 2600_2600 and 2600_2605 corresponding to the study area⁶ is lower than the expected number of species with an average of 111.5 species recorded (range: 89-134 species). The average number of species for each full protocol card submitted (for observation of two hours or more) is 45.49 species (range = 15 - 99 species).

According to field observations, the total number of species observed on the study area is ca. 88 species (see Appendix 1). On a national scale, the species richness per pentad on the study area is considered to be high (refer to Figure 14).

According to Table 1, the study site is expected to be poorly represented by biome-restricted (see Table 2) and local endemic bird species with only a single biome-restricted and a single local endemic species present (observed). It is expected to support ca. 33 % of the near-endemic species present in the subregion. Of the 186 bird species expected to occur in the project area, eight are threatened or near threatened species, 16 are southern African endemics and 20 are near-endemic species (Table 3). In addition, two threatened species (White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* and Cape Vulture *G. coprotheres*) were observed on the study area (Table 3). Waterbird species were highly irregular and predominantly absent from the study area owing to the absence of any wetland features on the study area.

² The expected richness statistic was derived from the pentad grid 2600_2600 (including adjacent 8 grids) totalling 219 bird species (based on 75 submitted cards, 55 being full protocol cards and 20 being ad hoc cards).

³ *sensu* www.zestforbirds.co.za (Hardaker, 2020) including four recently confirmed bird species (vagrants).

⁴ A geographical area south of the Cunene and Zambezi Rivers (includes Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, southern Mozambique, South Africa, eSwatini and Lesotho).

⁵ With reference to South Africa (including Lesotho and eSwatini (BirdLife South Africa, 2022).

⁶ Including observations made during the January and May 2022 surveys.

Table 1: A summary table of the total number of species, Red listed species (according to Taylor *et al.*, 2015 and the IUCN, 2022), endemics and biome-restricted species (Marnewick *et al.*, 2015) expected (*sensu* SABAP1 and SABAP2) to occur in the study site and immediate surroundings.

Description	Expected Richness Value (study area and surroundings) ^{***}	Observed Richness Value (study area) ^{****}
Total number of species*	186 (21 %)	88 (47.3 %)
Number of Red Listed species*	8 (5.7 %)	2 (25 %)
Number of biome-restricted species – Zambezi and Kalahari-Highveld Biomes*	4 (29 %)	1 (25 %)
Number of local endemics (BirdLife SA, 2022)*	2 (5.1 %)	1 (50 %)
Number of local near-endemics (BirdLife SA, 2022)*	6 (20 %)	5 (83 %)
Number of regional endemics (Hockey <i>et al.</i> , 2005)**	16 (15 %)	11 (69 %)
Number of regional near-endemics (Hockey <i>et al.</i> , 2005)**	20 (33 %)	14 (70 %)

* only species in the geographic boundaries of South Africa (including Lesotho and eSwatini) were considered.

** only species in the geographic boundaries of southern Africa (including Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique south of the Zambezi River) were considered

*** Percentage values in brackets refer to totals compared against the South African avifauna (*sensu* BirdLife SA, 2022).

**** Percentage values in brackets refer to totals compared against the expected number of species in the project area.

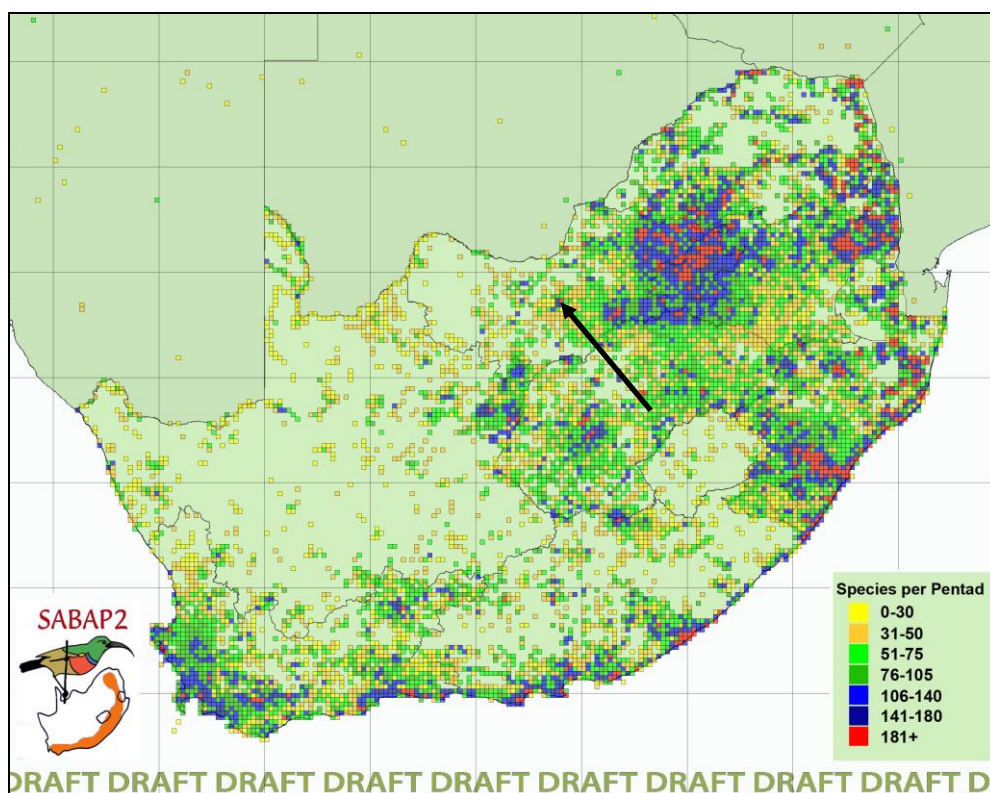


Figure 14: The bird species richness per pentad grid in comparison to the broader study area (see arrow) (map courtesy of SABAP2 and the Animal Demography Unit). According to the SABAP2 database, the study area hosts between 141 and 180 bird species.

Table 2: Expected biome-restricted species (Marnewick *et al*, 2015) likely to occur on the study area.

Species	Kalahari-Highveld	Zambezi	Expected Frequency of occurrence
Kalahari Scrub-robin (<i>Cercotrichas paena</i>)	X		Common
Kurichani Thrush (<i>Turdus libonyana</i>)		X	Uncommon to rare
White-throated Robin-chat (<i>Cossypha humeralis</i>)		X	Uncommon
White-bellied Sunbird (<i>Cinnyris talatala</i>)		X	Uncommon to rare

Table 3: Important bird species occurring in the broader study area which could collide and/ or become displaced by the proposed PV infrastructure.

Common Name	Scientific name	Regional Status	Global Status	Observed (Jan. & May 2022)	Collision with power lines	Collision with PV panels	Displacement (disturbance & loss of habitat)
White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	CR	CR	1	1		
Cape Vulture	<i>Gyps coprotheres</i>	EN, End	EN	1	1		
Lapped-faced Vulture	<i>Torgos tracheliotos</i>	EN	EN		1		
Martial Eagle	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>	EN	EN		1		
Secretarybird	<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>	EN	EN		1		1
Cloud Cisticola	<i>Cisticola textrix</i>	N-end		1			1
Cape Longclaw	<i>Macronyx capensis</i>	End		1			1
Melodious Lark	<i>Mirafra cheniana</i>	End		1			1
South African Shelduck	<i>Tadorna cana</i>	End			1	1	
Northern Black Korhaan	<i>Afrotis afraoides</i>	End		1	1		1
White-backed Mousebird	<i>Colius colius</i>	End		1			1
Karoo Thrush	<i>Turdus smithi</i>	End		1			1
Ant-eating Chat	<i>Myrmecocichla formicivora</i>	End		1			1
Fairy Flycatcher	<i>Stenostira scita</i>	End		1			1
Fiscal Flycatcher	<i>Sigelus silens</i>	End					1
Pied Starling	<i>Lamprotornis bicolor</i>	End					1
Orange River White-eye	<i>Zosterops pallidus</i>	End					1
Cape White-eye	<i>Zosterops virens</i>	End		1			1
South African Cliff	<i>Petrochelidon</i>	End		1			1

Common Name	Scientific name	Regional Status	Global Status	Observed (Jan. & May 2022)	Collision with power lines	Collision with PV panels	Displacement (disturbance & loss of habitat)
Swallow	<i>spilodera</i>						
Orange River Francolin	<i>Scleroptila gutturalis</i>	N-end		1	1		1
Acacia Pied Barbet	<i>Tricholaema leucomelas</i>	N-end		1			1
Eastern Clapper Lark	<i>Mirafra fasciolata</i>	N-end		1			1
Grey-backed Sparrow-lark	<i>Eremopterix verticalis</i>	N-end					1
Ashy Tit	<i>Parus cinerascens</i>	N-end		1			1
Cape Penduline-tit	<i>Anthoscopus minutus</i>	N-end					1
African Red-eyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus nigricans</i>	N-end		1			1
Kalahari Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas paena</i>	N-end		1			1
Chestnut-vented Warbler	<i>Curruca subcoerulea</i>	N-end		1			1
Marico flycatcher	<i>Bradornis mariquensis</i>	N-end					1
Crimson-breasted Shrike	<i>Laniarius atrococcineus</i>	N-end		1			1
Bokmakierie	<i>Telophorus zeylonus</i>	N-end		1			1
Great Sparrow	<i>Passer motitensis</i>	N-end					1
Cape Sparrow	<i>Passer melanurus</i>	N-end		1			1
Scaly-feathered Weaver	<i>Sporopipes squamifrons</i>	N-end		1			1
Red-headed Finch	<i>Amadina erythrocephala</i>	N-end		1			1
Shaft-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua regia</i>	N-end					1
Mountain Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe monticola</i>	N-end					1
Yellow Canary	<i>Crithagra flaviventris</i>	N-end		1			1
Marabou Stork	<i>Leptoptilos crumenifer</i>	NT			1		
Abdim's Stork	<i>Ciconia abdimii</i>	NT			1		
Falcon, Lanner	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>	VU			1		
	Totals:	41	5	25	11	1	33

Threatened and near threatened species are indicated in red

CR - Critically endangered, EN - endangered, VU - vulnerable, NT - near threatened

End - southern African endemic

N-end - southern African near-endemic

Prior to further analyses where species richness values are considered, it is imperative to determine if all bird species present were sufficiently sampled. Species accumulation curves (SAC) provide a means to examine data and sampling efficacy. For this project the species accumulation curves (SAC) for the point count data were generated using the software program Estimates S (version 9) with 100 randomizations (as recommended in Colwell, 2013). Curves were generated for the

full data set (all point counts). Sampling sufficiency was determined by establishing whether a point had been reached where a line representing one new sample adding one new species was tangent to the curve (Brewer & McCann, 1982). The Michaelis-Menten equation (Soberón & Llorente 1993) was fitted to the predicted number of species using Estimates S (Raaijmakers, 1987). A satisfactory level of sampling was achieved if 90 % of the bird species were detected, and hence predicted by the model (Moreno & Halffter, 2000).

The species accumulation curve (SAC) reached an asymptote at approximately 14 point counts (Figure 15). The sampling captured approximately 68% of the number of species predicted by the Michaelis-Menten model at 14 point counts. Approximately 91% of the species was captured by 58 counts. Therefore, sampling effort was considered sufficient and recorded most of the species present on the study area during the respective survey sessions.

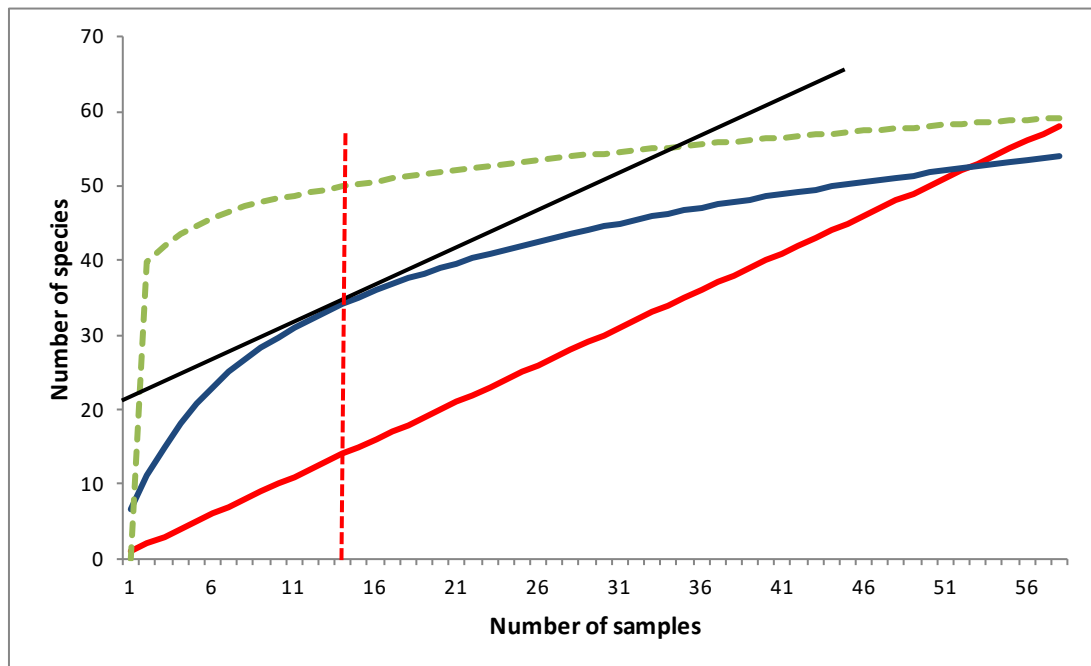
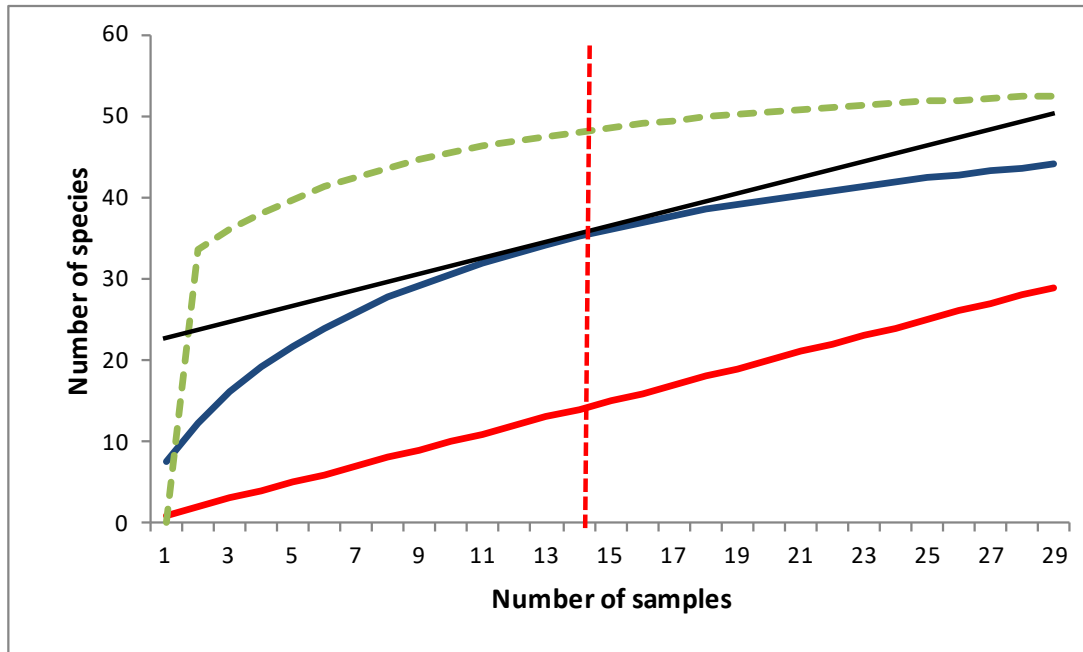


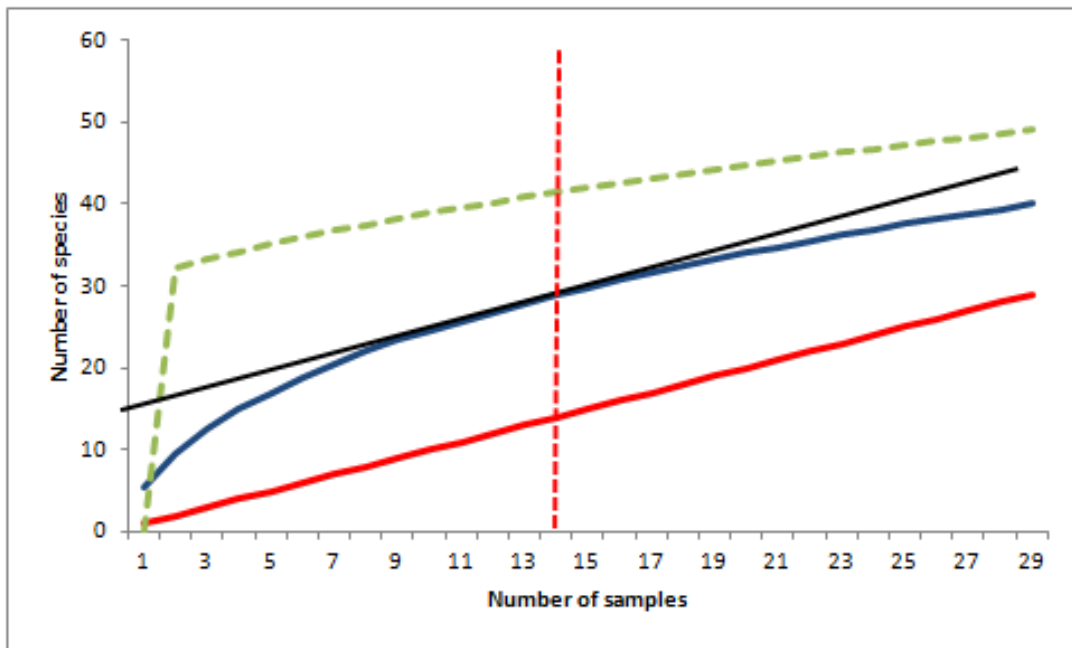
Figure 15: The species accumulation curve (SAC) (red line) for bird points sampled during the January 2022 and May 2022 survey sessions. The blue line represents an accumulation of one species for every additional point count. The black line is parallel to the blue one and is tangent to the SAC approximately after 14 counts (as represented by the vertical red stippled line). The green stippled line represents the Michaelis-Menten curve.

The species accumulation curve (SAC) for each survey (season) also reached an asymptote at approximately 14 point counts (Figure 16). The sampling captured approximately 73% of the number of species predicted by the Michaelis-Menten model at 14 point counts during the wet season and 70% of the species during the dry season. Between 81.6% and 83.7% of the species was captured by 29 counts

respectively. Therefore, sampling effort was considered sufficient and recorded most of the species present on the study area during the respective survey sessions.



a



b

Figure 16: The species accumulation curve (SAC) (red line) for bird points sampled during (a) January 2022 and the (b) May 2022 survey sessions. The blue line represents an accumulation of one species for every additional point count. The black line is parallel to the blue one and is tangent to the SAC approximately after 16 counts for both surveys (as represented by the vertical red stippled line). The green stippled line represents the Michaelis-Menten curve.

4.3 Bird species of conservation concern

Table 4 provides an overview of bird species of conservation concern that could occur on the study site based on their historical distribution ranges and the presence of suitable habitat. According to Table 4, a total of eight species could occur on the study site which includes five globally threatened species, one regionally threatened species and two regionally near-threatened species.

It is evident from Table 4 that the highest reporting rates (>15%) were observed for the globally endangered Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) and the globally critically endangered White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*). These species have a high likelihood of occurrence pending the presence of suitable food (livestock carcasses). Both species were also observed soaring overhead during the respective surveys with a Cape Vulture individual observed soaring over the southern section of the study site (17 January 2022) and a White-backed Vulture individual soaring approximately 300m north-east of the study site (17 January 2022) (Figure 17). The Lappet-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*) shows reporting rates higher than 7% and was previously recorded from similar habitat on the nearby Farm Zamenkomst No 04 located to the east of the study area (approximately 3km east of the assessment area; pers. obs., Pachnoda, 2018). The Lappet-faced Vulture is also regarded as a regular foraging visitor to the area.

The regionally vulnerable Lanner Falcon (*Falco biarmicus*) shows reporting rates higher than 7%. This species have a moderate probability of occurrence and is regarded as an occasional foraging visitor to the area.

The remaining species have low reporting rates (<2% full protocol) and are regarded as irregular foraging visitors with low probabilities of occurrence. However, during the surveys it was noticed that extensive areas of suitable foraging habitat persists for some of these species (e.g. Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius*) despite being ominously absent from the area. It is possible that the low reporting rates reflect the poor coverage of the study area by citizen scientists (e.g. birdwatchers), and some of these species could occur in higher numbers due to being overlooked.

Table 4: Bird species of conservation concern that could utilise the study area based on their historical distribution range and the presence of suitable habitat. Red list categories according to the IUCN (2022)* and Taylor et al. (2015)**.

Species	Global Conservation Status*	National Conservation Status**	Mean Reporting rate: SABAP2	Preferred Habitat	Potential Likelihood of Occurrence
<i>Ciconia abdimii</i> (Abdim's Stork)	-	Near threatened	10.00 (according to two ad hoc cards)	Open stunted grassland, fallow land and	An uncommon summer foraging visitor to areas consisting of open

Species	Global Conservation Status*	National Conservation Status**	Mean Reporting rate: SABAP2	Preferred Habitat	Potential Likelihood of Occurrence
				agricultural fields.	short grassland or arable land.
<i>Falco biarmicus</i> (Lanner Falcon)	-	Vulnerable	7.27	Varied, but prefers to breed in mountainous areas.	An occasional foraging visitor to the study area. It was last recorded during 2016 in the study area.
<i>Gyps coprotheres</i> (Cape Vulture)	Endangered	Endangered	16.36	Mainly confined to mountain ranges, especially near breeding site. Ventures far afield in search of food.	A regular foraging/scavenging visitor to the study site pending the presence of food (e.g. livestock carcasses).
<i>Gyps africanus</i> (White-backed Vulture)	Critically Endangered	Critically Endangered	18.18	Breed on tall, flat-topped trees. Mainly restricted to large rural or game farming areas.	A regular foraging/scavenging visitor to the study site pending the presence of food (e.g. livestock carcasses).
<i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i> (Marabou Stork)	-	Near threatened	1.82	Varied, from savanna to wetlands, pans and floodplains – dependant of game farming areas	An irregular scavenging visitor to the area. It was last recorded during 2010 from the study area.
<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i> (Martial Eagle)	Endangered	Endangered	1.82	Varied, from open karroid shrub to lowland savanna.	An irregular foraging visitor. It was last recorded from pentad 2605_2605 south-east of the study site on 28 Jan 2012.
<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>	Endangered	Endangered	1.82	Prefers open grassland or	Regarded as an irregular foraging

Species	Global Conservation Status*	National Conservation Status**	Mean Reporting rate: SABAP2	Preferred Habitat	Potential Likelihood of Occurrence
(Secretarybird)				lightly wooded habitat.	visitor to the study site despite the widespread presence of suitable foraging habitat.
<i>Torgos tracheliotos</i> (Lapped-faced Vulture)	Endangered	Endangered	7.27	Lowveld and Kalahari savanna; mainly on game farms and reserves.	A regular foraging/scavenging visitor to the study site pending the presence of food (e.g. livestock carcasses). It was confirmed from similar habitat adjacent to the study site (soaring over Portion 02 of the Farm Zamenkomst No 04 during the July 2018, and from at least another three observations corresponding to pentad grid 2600_2605). It is regarded as a regular passage visitor (soaring overhead) to the nearby vulture restaurant.

4.3.1 Notes on the occurrence of Lappet-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*)

The Lappet-faced Vulture (*Torgos tracheliotos*) is a large-bodied scavenging raptor that is globally listed as Endangered in South Africa (BirdLife International, 2021) owing to a very small global population that is rapidly declining due to poisoning and persecution (especially in other African countries). The African population is estimated to represent at least 8,000 individuals, consisting of at least c. 5,330 mature individuals (with 150-200 pairs in South Africa) (BirdLife International, 2021). It remains uncommon over most of its distribution range, although it appears to be a regular foraging visitor to the study area owing to the nearby presence of a vulture restaurant. It was previously observed from similar habitat on a nearby farm (Portion 02 of the Farm Zamenkomst No 04) approximately 3km to the east where it was observed during July 2018 (Pachnoda, 2018). At least another three observations corresponding to pentad grid 2600_2605 was observed in the region (*sensu* SABAP2).

It is therefore regarded as a regular passage visitor (soaring overhead) to the nearby vulture restaurant.

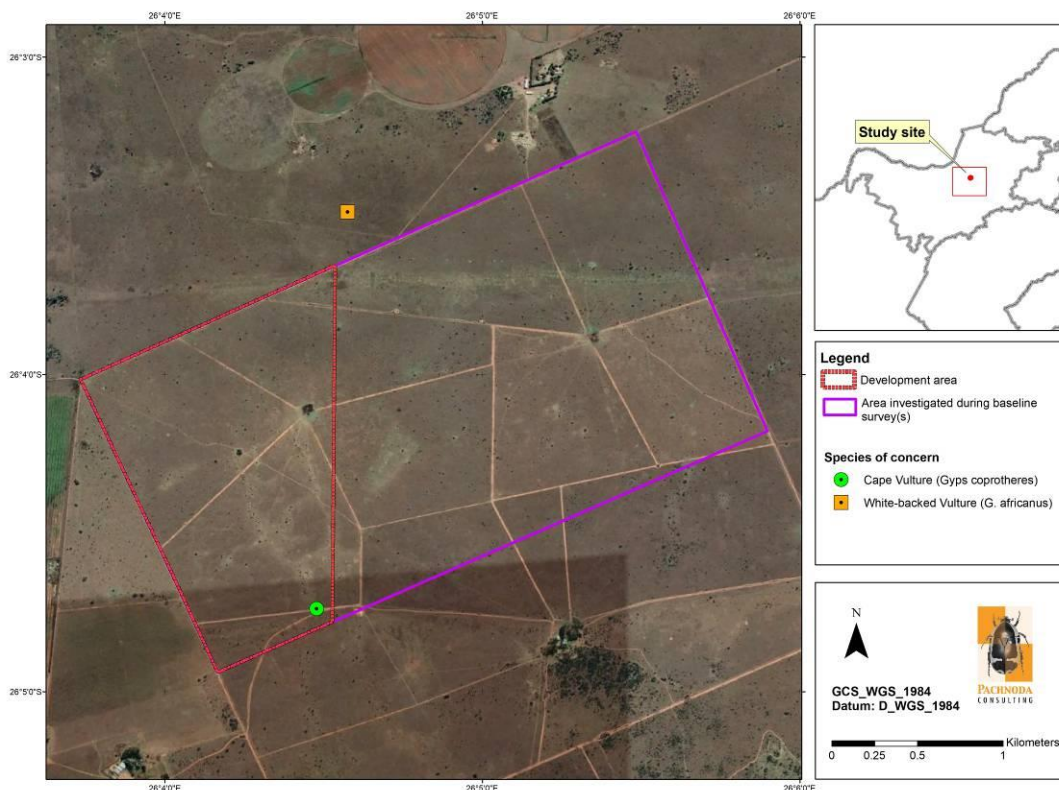


Figure 17: A map illustrating the occurrence of the endangered Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) and critically endangered White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*) in close proximity to the study area.

4.3.2 Notes on the occurrence of Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*)

The globally endangered Cape Vulture (*G. coprotheres*) occurs on the study area and its presence is related to the occurrence of a nearby vulture restaurant (see 3.4). It is of international significance and any mortality of adult individuals could have a negative effect on its species' population recruitment. Most of these suffer from a shortage of food supplies which is responsible for low reproductive rates (Taylor *et al.*, 2015). In addition, Cape Vultures also typically search for food in groups. It is such congregations which increase the risk of mortalities whenever these individuals forage or roost in close proximity to overhead power lines. The proposed study site is also in close proximity to the foraging rangeland of Cape Vultures as evidenced by dispersal data obtained from vulture individuals fitted with satellite tracking devices (Figure 18).

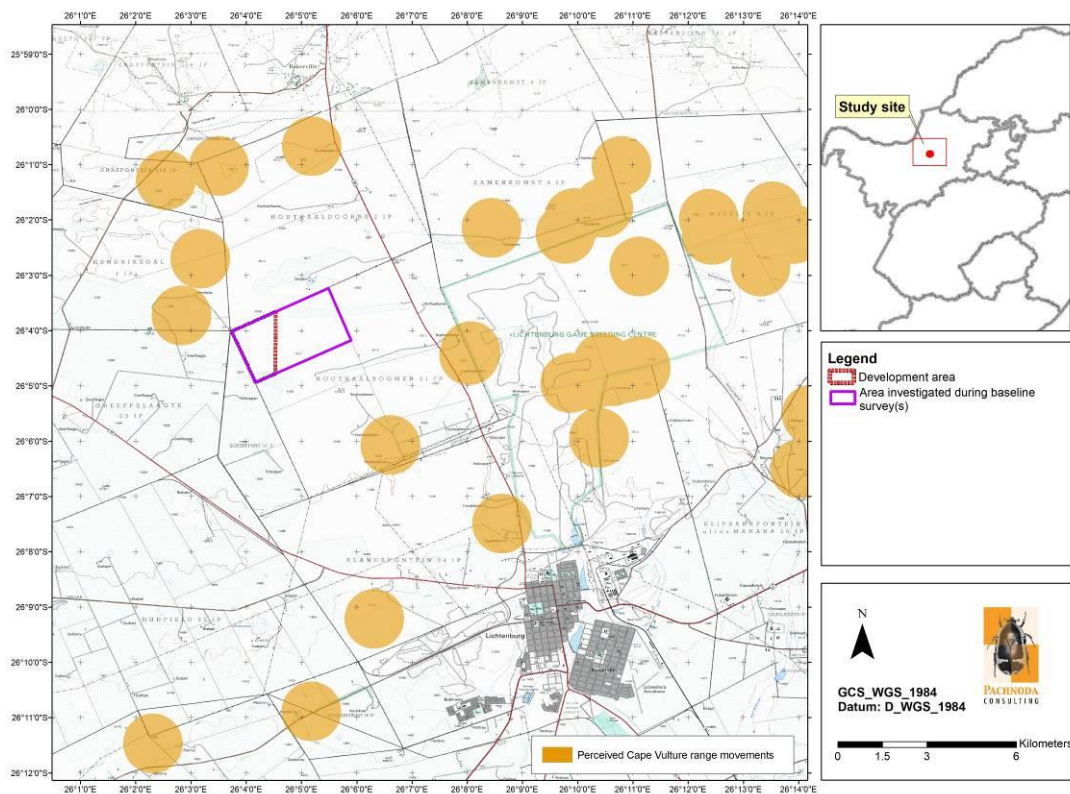


Figure 18: The occurrence of Cape Vultures (*Gyps coprotheres*) within the study region fitted with satellite trackers.

4.3.3 Notes on the occurrence of Secretarybird (*Sagittarius serpentarius*)

The conservation status of this species was upgraded from Vulnerable to Endangered since recent evidence suggested that it has experienced rapid declines across its entire range due to habitat loss, anthropogenic disturbances, and intensive

grazing (Birdlife International, 2020). Secretarybirds are widespread in Africa south of the Sahara, but have declined over most of their geographic distribution range due to the loss of suitable habitat caused by inappropriate grazing regimes (resulting in the expansion of woody vegetation), cultivation and urbanization. The expansion of woody vegetation often results in a reduction of suitable foraging habitat and foraging efficacy (Birdlife International, 2020). In addition, it is also highly susceptible to collision with electrical cables of powerlines, with over 94 powerline fatalities recorded over the past 20 years in South Africa. Based on reporting rates, this species appear to be largely absent from the study area, with high reporting rates further to the east (mainly the North West-Gauteng border) and south (grids 2605_2605, 2610_2610 and 2615_2615 - an area between Lichtenburg and Coligny) of the study region (Figure 19). The low reporting rates (or absence) of Secretarybirds on the study site remains unclear and is probably correlated with disturbances (displacement) associated with widespread cattle ranching in the area.

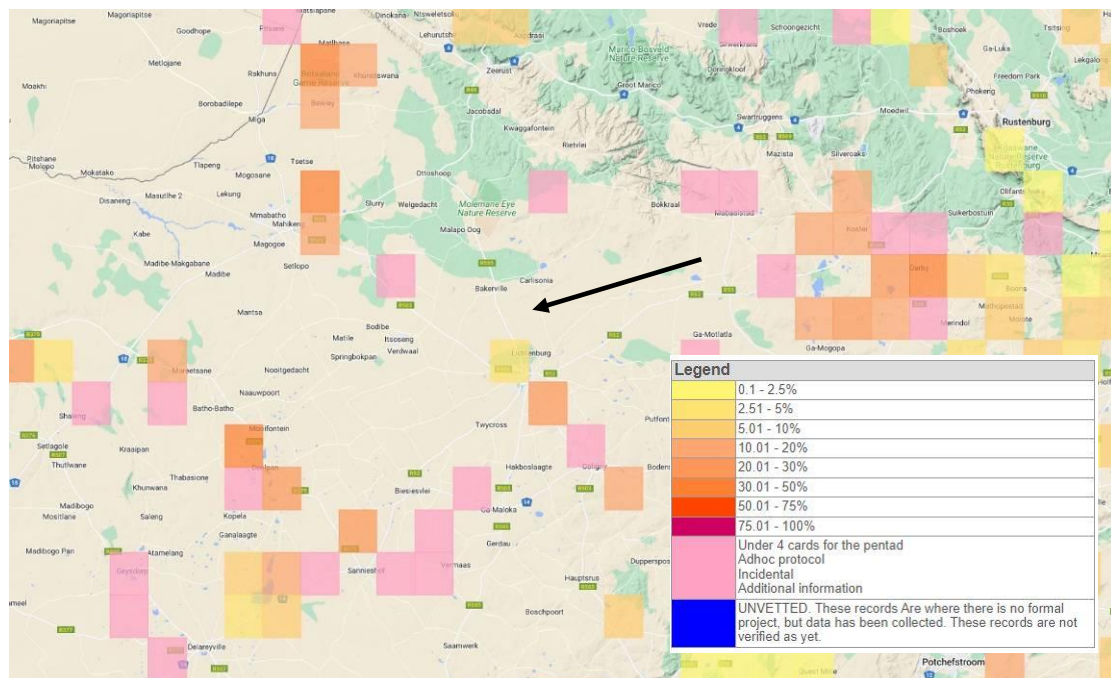


Figure 19: The occurrence of Secretarybirds (*Sagittarius serpentarius*) on the study area according to SABAP2 reporting rates (the arrow indicates the position of the study area). Note the presence of Secretarybirds to the south and east of the study region (map courtesy and copyright of SABAP2 and Animal Demography Unit).

4.4 Bird Assemblage Structure and Composition

4.4.1 Summary of point counts

A total of 54 bird species and an average abundance of 371 individuals were recorded from 29 bird points (representing two replicative counts during two seasons) located on the study area. The data provides an estimate of the bird richness and their numbers on the study site and immediate surroundings obtained during two independent survey sessions. A mean of 10.79 species and 12.79 individuals were recorded per point count. The highest number of species and individuals recorded from a point count was between 20 - 21 species (mainly from artificial livestock watering holes) and 30-38.5 individuals (from artificial watering points). The lowest number of species and individuals was respectively four species and 2.5 individuals (from dense open grassland in low-lying areas dominated by *Heteropogon contortus*). The mean frequency of occurrence of a bird species in the study area was 19.99 % and the median was 12.07%, while the most common value (mode) was 3.45%. The latter represents those species that were encountered in only one point count. One species occurred in all the point counts (c. Desert Cisticola *Cisticola aridulus*), while five species (c. Cloud Cisticola *C. textrix*, Black-chested Prinia *Prinia flavicans*, African Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus*, Eastern Clapper Lark *Mirafra fasciolata* and Rufous-naped Lark *M. africana*) occurred in 50% or more of the counts (Table 5).

Table 5: Bird species with a frequency of occurrence greater than 50% observed on the study area (according to 29 counts).

Species	Frequency (%)	Species	Frequency (%)
Desert Cisticola (<i>Cisticola aridulus</i>)	100.00	African Pipit (<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>)	58.62
Cloud Cisticola (<i>Cisticola textrix</i>)	65.52	Eastern Clapper Lark (<i>Mirafra fasciolata</i>)	58.62
Black-chested Prinia (<i>Prinia flavicans</i>)	62.07	Rufous-naped Lark (<i>Mirafra cheniana</i>)	51.72

4.4.2 Summary of richness and average abundance (per point count)

Displacement of birds by the proposed infrastructure is one of the impacts that is anticipated to occur. By mapping the spatial distribution of the number of species and average abundance values obtained from each point count, it is possible to predict where displacement of birds will be more intensive. According to Figure 20 and Figure 21 it is evident that high bird numbers (as well as a high number of bird species) occur at artificial watering points, along moist grassland on low lying areas (in the north-eastern corner of the study site) and at bush clumps with a tall canopy structure. Therefore, the potential displacement of birds due to the loss of habitat during construction is likely to occur at habitat which features the availability of surface water and a tall tree canopy located within the grassland mosaic.

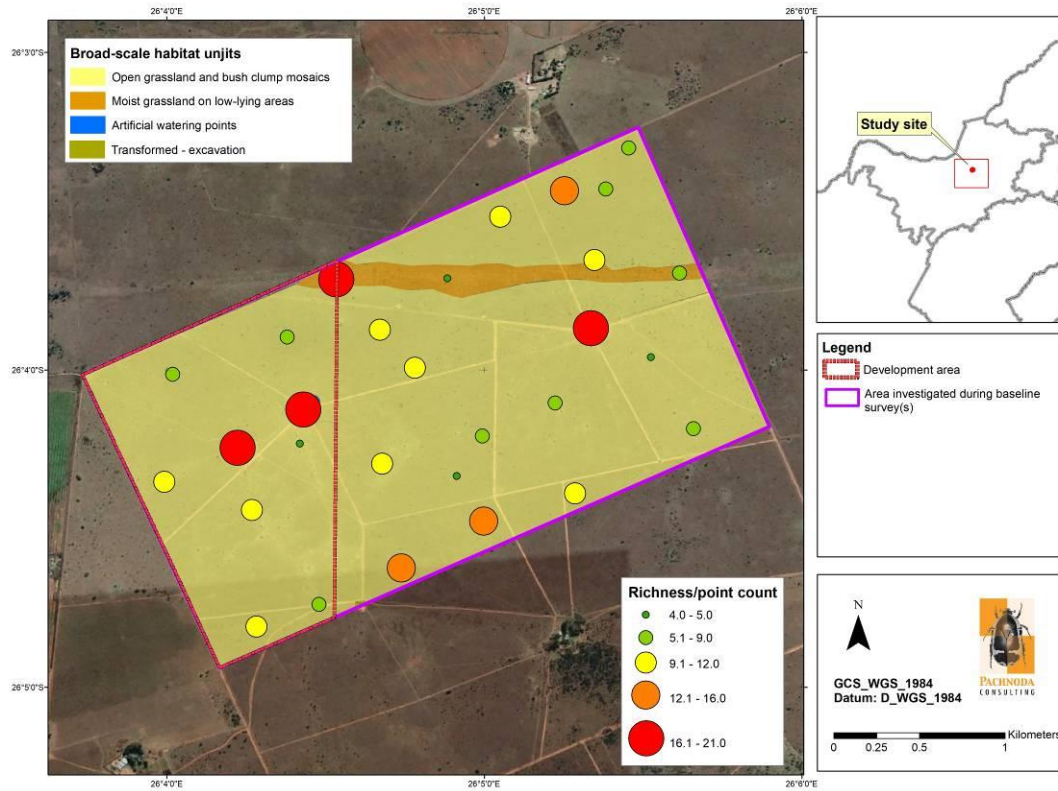


Figure 20: A map of the study area illustrating the spatial distribution of bird richness values (number of species) obtained for each point count.

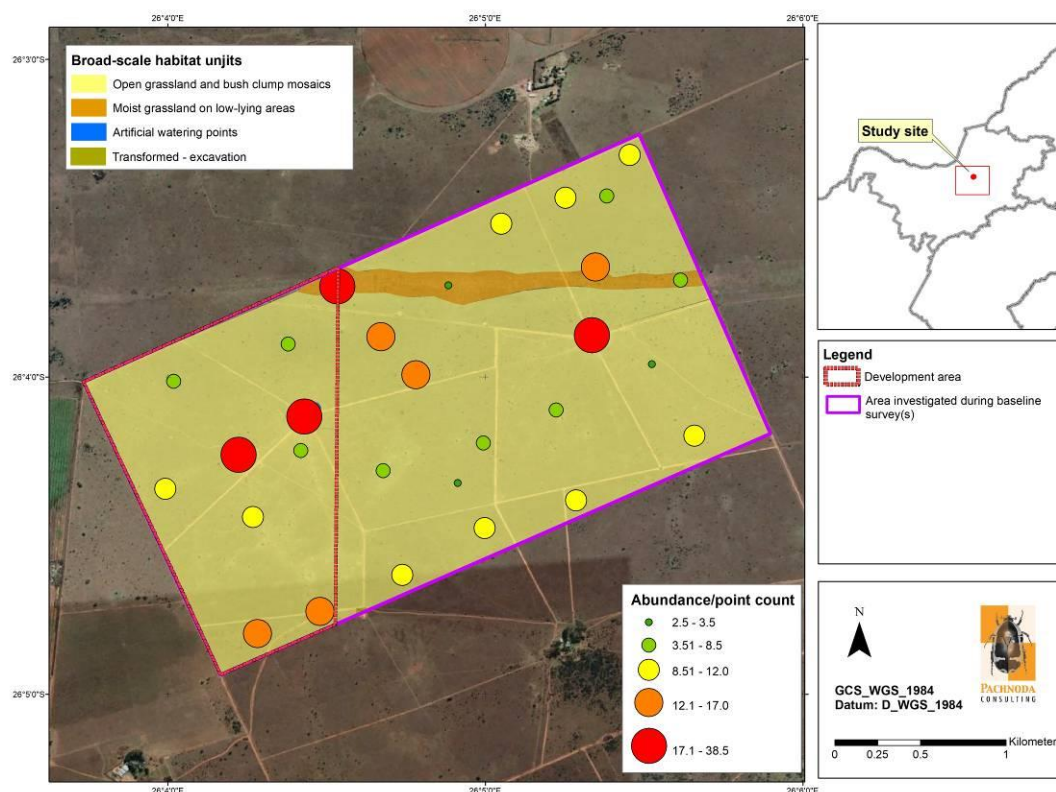


Figure 21: A map of the study area illustrating the distribution of bird abundance values (average number of individuals) obtained for each point count.

4.4.3 Dominance and typical bird species

The dominant (typical) species on the study area are presented in Table 6. Only those species that cumulatively contributed to more than 90% to the overall similarity between the point counts are presented.

The three most typical bird species on the study area include the Desert Cisticola (*Cisticola aridulus*), Cloud Cisticola (*C. textrix*) and Black-chested Prinia (*Prinia flavicans*). These species are considered widespread species in the broader study area and occur in most of the habitat types that are present. It is also evident from Table 6 that the typical bird assemblage is predominantly represented by insectivores (insect-eating taxa) and by granivores (seed-eating taxa).

Table 6: Typical bird species on the study area.

Species	Av.Abundance	Consistency (Sim/SD)	Contribution (%)	Primary Trophic Guild
Desert Cisticola (<i>Cisticola aridulus</i>)	1.26	2.84	28.58	Insectivore: upper canopy foliage gleaner
Cloud Cisticola (<i>C. textrix</i>)	0.45	0.77	9.80	Insectivore: upper canopy foliage

				gleaner
Black-chested Prinia (<i>Prinia flavicans</i>)	0.95	0.73	9.75	Insectivore: upper canopy foliage gleaner
Eastern Clapper Lark (<i>Mirafra fasciolata</i>)	0.50	0.65	8.16	Granivore/Insectivore: ground gleaner
African Pipit (<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>)	0.47	0.66	7.55	Insectivore: ground gleaner
Rufous-naped Lark (<i>Mirafra africana</i>)	0.33	0.56	5.92	Granivore/Insectivore: ground gleaner
African Red-eyed Bulbul (<i>Pycnonotus nigricans</i>)	0.34	0.47	4.06	Frugivore: upper canopy forager
Southern Fiscal (<i>Lanius collaris</i>)	0.26	0.37	3.01	Insectivore and carnivore: upper canopy foliage gleaner

4.4.4 Composition and diversity

Multidimensional scaling and hierarchical agglomerative clustering ordination of bird abundance values obtained from 29 point counts on the study area could not statistically differentiate between any discrete bird association (Global R= 0.21, p=0.65 Figure 22), which means that most of the composition on the study area is similar to each other irrespective of the prevalent habitat types. However, three associations (although statistically insignificant) were detected due to the presence of surface water and tree canopy height. These include (1) an association on open dolomite grassland and bush clump mosaics (2) an association pertaining to tall *Vachellia erioloba* bush clumps and (3) an association confined to the presence of surface water (artificial watering points).

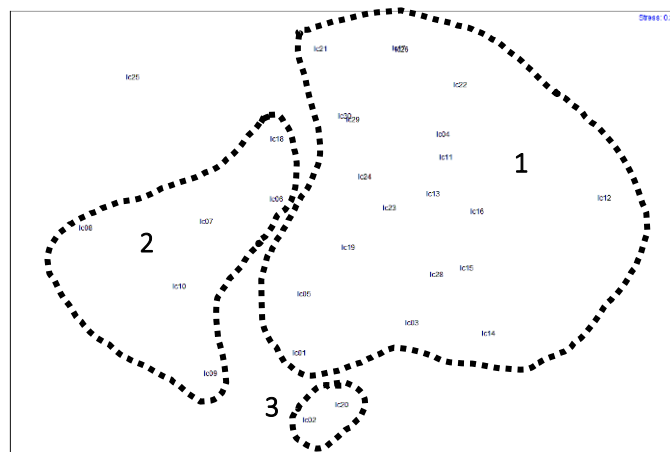


Figure 22: A two-dimensional non-metric multidimensional scaling ordination (stress=0.24) of the relative abundances of bird species based on Bray-Curtis similarities obtained from 29 point counts on the project area. It differentiates between three bird associations: (1) an association on open dolomite grassland with scattered bush clumps, an (2) association pertaining to tall *Vachellia erioloba* bush

clumps and (3) an association confined to the presence of surface water (artificial watering holes).

The following bird associations are relevant to the study site and immediate surroundings:

1. Association on open dolomite grassland and bush clump mosaics

Dominant species: The Desert Cisticola (*Cisticola aridulus*), Black-chested Prinia (*Prinia flavicans*), Cloud Cisticola (*C. textrix*), Eastern Clapper Lark (*Mirafrasciata*), African Pipit (*Anthus cinnamomeus*), Rufous-naped Lark (*M. africana*), African Red-eyed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus nigricans*), Ant-eating Chat (*Myrmecocichla formicivora*) and Laughing Dove (*Spilopelia senegalensis*).

*Indicator species*⁷: Mainly African Red-eyed Bulbul (*P. nigricans*). Spike-heeled Lark (*Chersomanes albofasciata*), Zitting Cisticola (*C. juncidis*), Orange River Francolin (*Scleroptila gutturalis*) and Cape Longclaw (*Macronyx capensis*), which occur in high numbers.

2. Association on tall *Vachellia erioloba* bush clumps

Dominant species: Desert Cisticola (*Cisticola aridulus*), White-browed sparrow-weaver (*Plocepasser mahali*), Ring-necked Dove (*Streptopelia capicola*), Southern Fiscal (*Lanius collaris*) and Laughing Dove (*Spilopelia senegalensis*).

Indicator species: Ashy Tit (*Melaniparus cinerascens*), Cape Starling (*Lamprotornis nitens*) and White-browed sparrow-weaver (*Plocepasser mahali*).

3. Association at surface water (artificial watering holes)

Dominant species: The Black-chested Prinia (*Prinia flavicans*), Speckled Pigeon (*Columba guinea*), White-backed Mousebird (*Colius colius*), Chestnut-vented Warbler (*Curruca subcoerulea*), Crowned Lapwing (*Vanellus coronatus*), Blacksmith Lapwing (*V. armatus*) and Ring-necked Dove (*Streptopelia capicola*).

Indicator species: Blacksmith Lapwing (*V. armatus*), Wattled Starling (*Creatophora cinerea*), Southern Grey-headed Sparrow (*Passer diffusus*), Capped Wheatear (*Oenanthe pileata*) and Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark (*Eremopterix leucotis*).

The highest number of bird species on the study area was observed from the open dolomite grassland with scattered bush clumps, followed by the bird association at artificial watering holes (Table 7). The lowest number of bird species was recorded

⁷ Indicator species refers to a species with high numbers that is restricted to a particular habitat.

from the tall *V. erioloba* bush clumps, although the number of individuals was similar to that of the surrounding open dolomite grassland.

Table 7: A summary of the observed species richness and number of bird individuals confined to the bird associations on the study area.

Bird Association	Number of species	Number of Individuals	Shannon Wiener Index $H'(\log_e)$
Open dolomite grassland & bush clump mosaics	45	11.43	3.35
Tall <i>Vachellia erioloba</i> bush clumps	27	11.08	2.86
Artificial watering points	30	32.25	3.05

4.5 Passerine bird densities

Thirty-eight passerine bird species were recorded from 29 point counts on the study area. The study area comprises of approximately 10.74 species.ha⁻¹ (Appendix 2). The average density per hectare is 12.38 birds.ha⁻¹ and ranges between 5.13 birds.ha⁻¹ to 46.79 birds.ha⁻¹.

4.6 Movements/dispersal of Collision-prone birds

Deterministic daily dispersal of birds (Figure 23, Figure 24 and Figure 25) was not observed apart from a high frequency of foraging Pied Crows (*Corvus albus*) (Figure 24). The occurrence of birds of prey was regarded as occasional, although foraging vultures occurred during the wet season pending the availability of carcasses or food at a nearby vulture restaurant (Figure 18). In addition, large numbers of Amur Falcons (*Falco amurensis*) were observed perching on the overhead powerlines on the assessment area. Furthermore, the home ranges of approximately 20 to 22 pairs of Northern Black Korhaans correspond to the project area, with 10-12 pairs observed on the Hillardia PV site (Figure 25). It is evident that the highest concentration (according to observations) of korhaan individuals on the assessment area was confined to the Hillardia PV site.

The flight routes of the birds were random and haphazard and no predicted/deterministic pattern could be established. Therefore, these species utilise searching as a means to find potential food during foraging excursions. However, it appears that most of the crows occur in pairs and many pairs tend to visit (based on flight route direction) the artificial watering points, probably to drink/bath or to search for food.

The absence of any nearby water bodies, dams and drainage lines explains the general absence of waterbirds passing through the area.

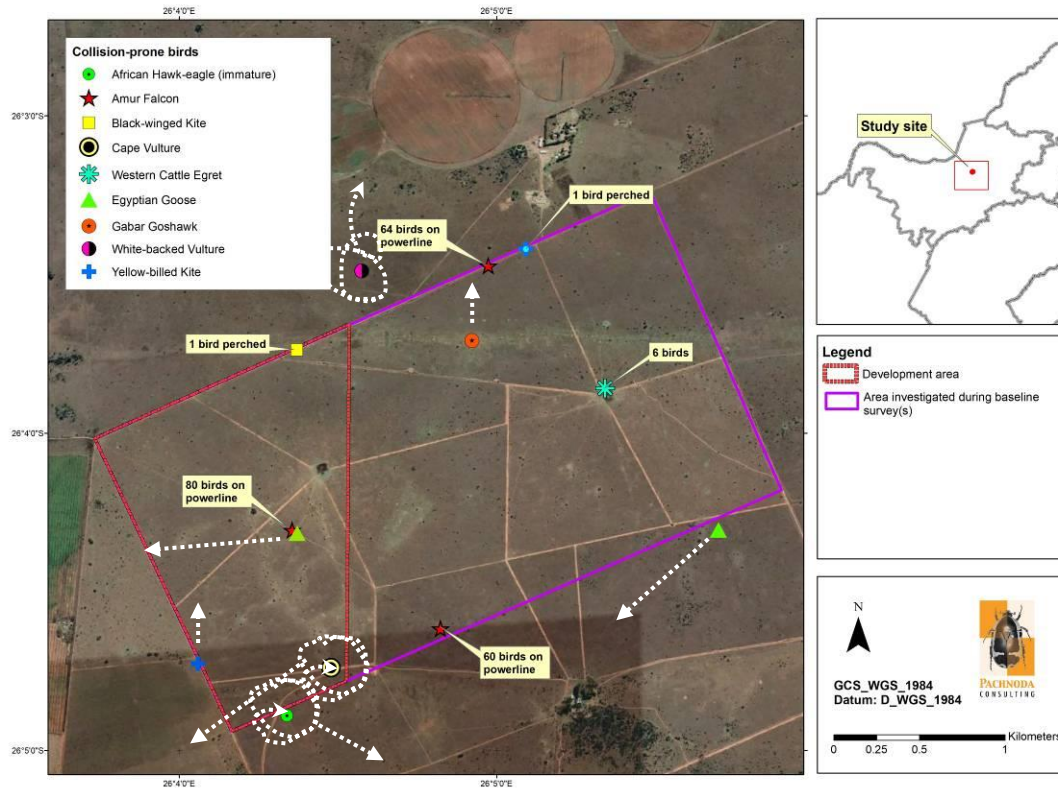


Figure 23: A map of the study site illustrating the occurrence and movements of collision prone birds.

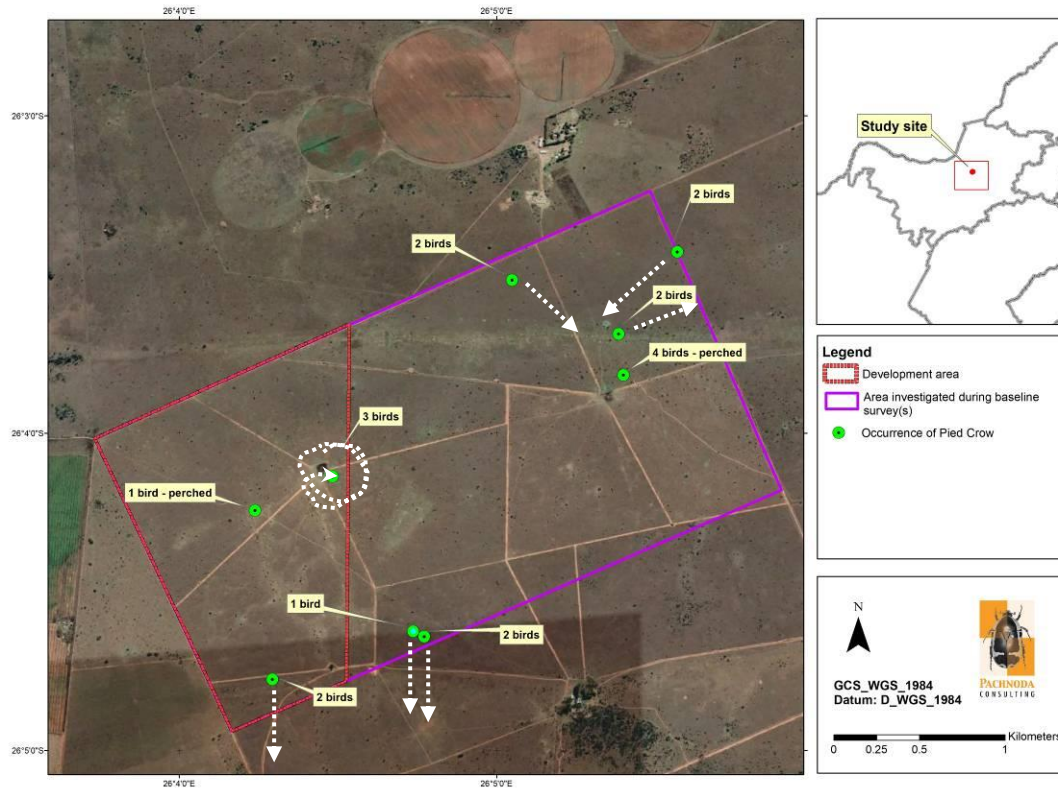


Figure 24: A map of the study site illustrating the occurrence and movements of Pied Crows (*Corvus albus*).

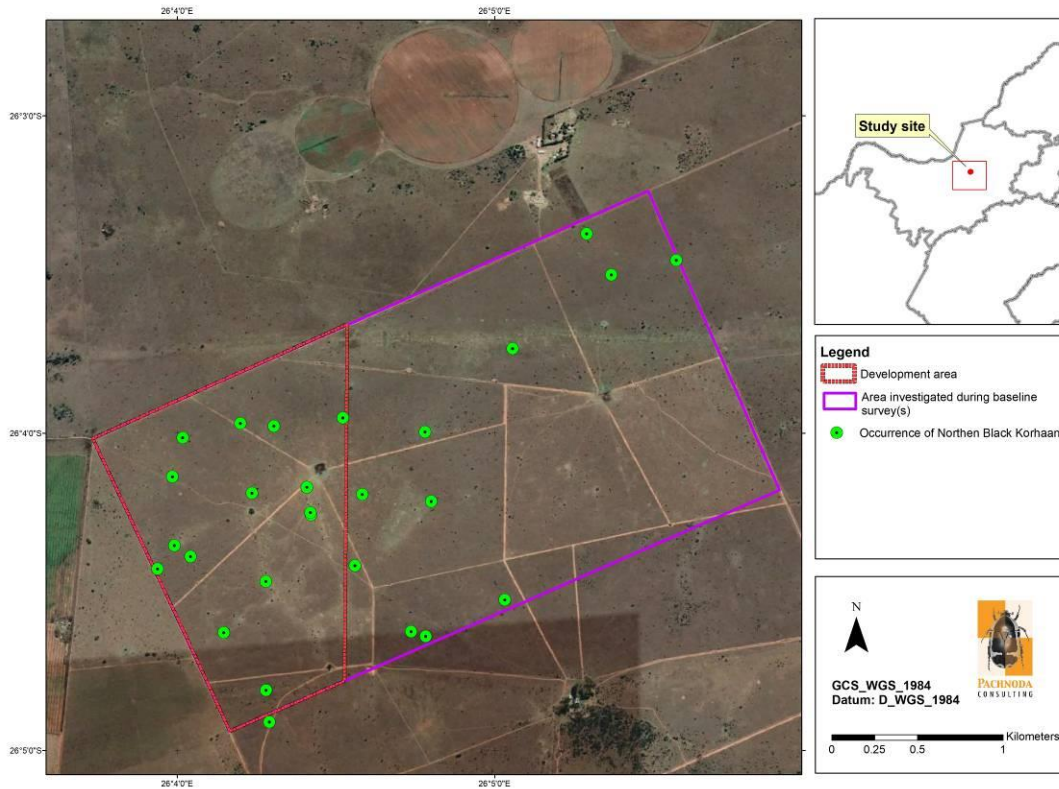


Figure 25: A map of the study site illustrating the occurrence of Northern Black Korhaan (*Afrotis afraoides*):

4.7 Avifaunal sensitivity

A sensitivity map was compiled, illustrating habitat units comprising of potential sensitive elements based on the following arguments (Figure 26 and Figure 27):

Areas of high sensitivity

The artificial livestock watering points attract large numbers of granivore passerine and non-passerine bird species, of which many need to drink water on a daily basis (e.g. pigeons, doves). The placement of electrical and PV infrastructure in close proximity to these areas could increase potential avian collisions with the infrastructure. In addition, these also attract medium to small birds of prey which hunt the small passerines and non-passerines that come down to drink at the troughs. These areas are therefore of artificial origin, but could be relocated to other areas or can be removed.

Areas of medium sensitivity

It includes the extensive open grassland and bush clump mosaics and the moist grassland unit on low lying areas. The extensive open grassland and bush clump mosaics provide potential suitable foraging habitat for some collision-prone bird

species, including the Northern Black Korhaan (*Afrotis afraoides*) with the potential to interact (e.g. collide) with the proposed electrical infrastructure. However, reporting rates for threatened and near threatened bird species are relatively low, thereby suggesting a medium sensitivity rating instead of a high sensitivity even though the majority of the habitat is natural. In addition, the open grassland and bush clump mosaics are widespread in the region.

Areas of low sensitivity

These habitat units are represented by transformed types (excavation).

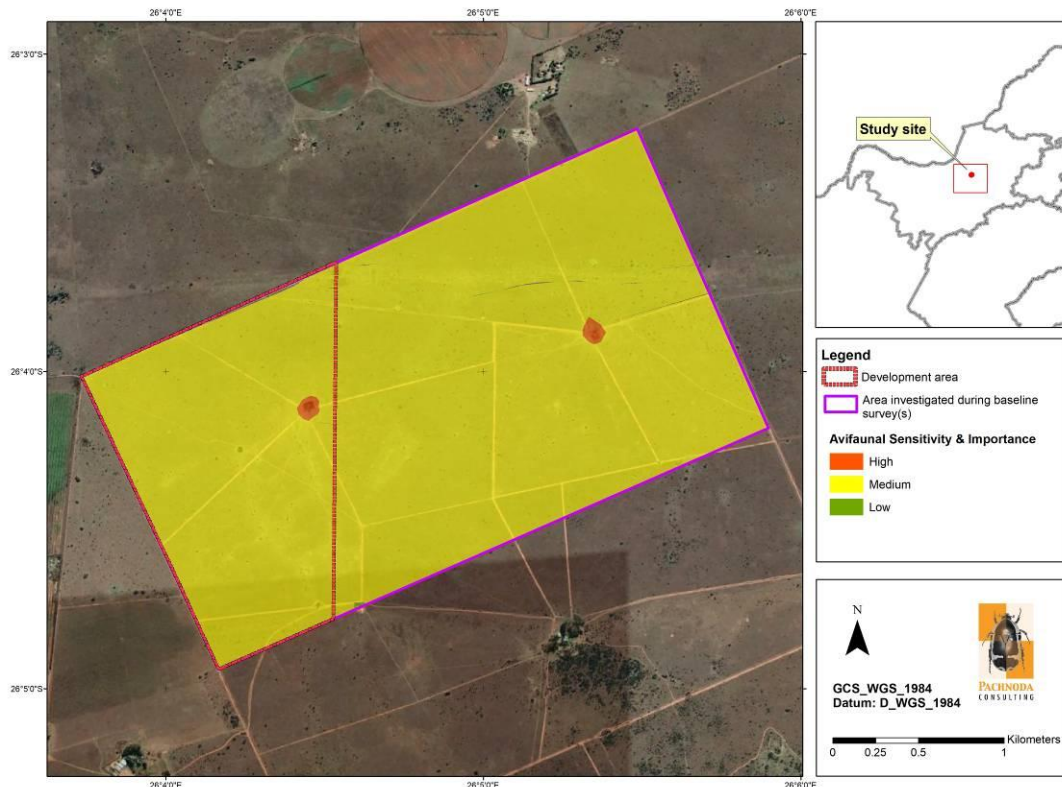


Figure 26: A map illustrating the avifaunal sensitivity of the development areas based on habitat types supporting bird taxa of conservation concern and important ecological function.

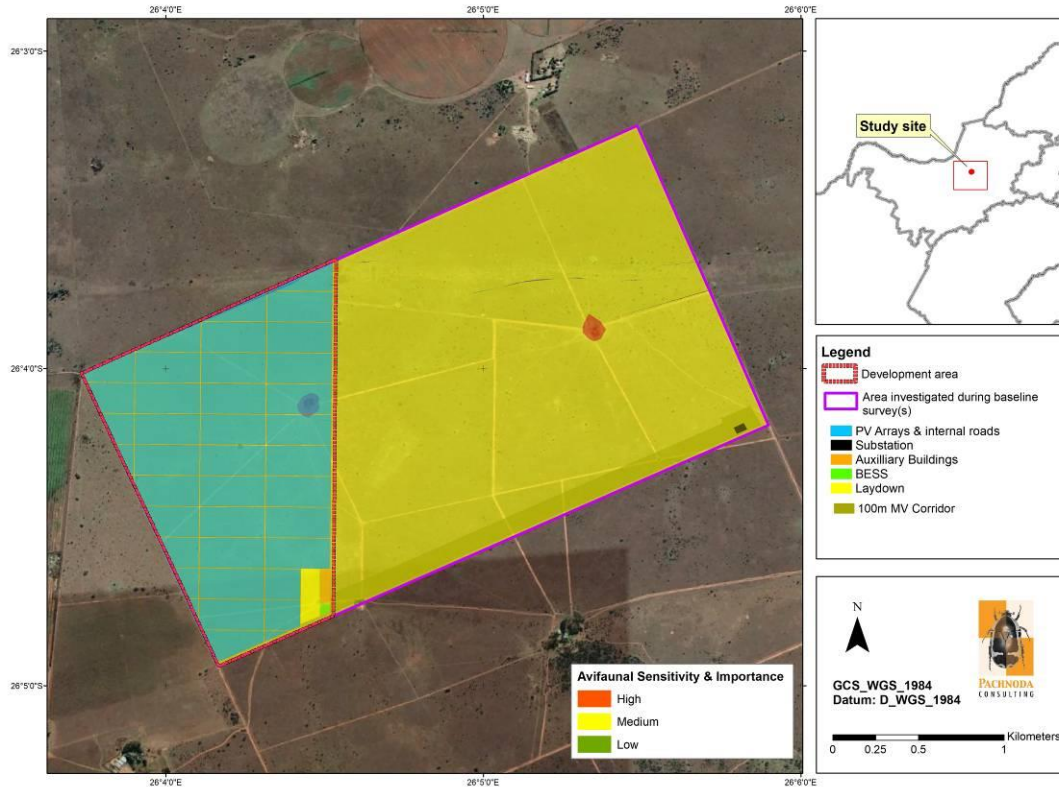


Figure 27: A map illustrating the avifaunal sensitivity of the development areas relative to the proposed facility infrastructure (for clarity the yellow area north of the auxiliary buildings is the “Laydown”. The other yellow areas refer to “medium sensitivity”).

4.8 Overview of Avian Impacts at Solar Facilities

4.8.1 Background to solar facilities and their impact on birds

Birds are mobile, and are therefore also more readily affected by solar facilities than other taxonomic groups (e.g. mammals). In fact, birds are also vulnerable to impacts caused by other types of energy facilities such as overhead power lines and wind farms. Little information is available on the impacts of solar energy facilities on birds although Gunerhan *et al.* (2009), McCrary *et al.* (1986), Tsoutsos *et al.* (2005) and the recent investigation reports on bird fatalities in the USA by Kagen *et al.* (2014) and Walston *et al.* (2016) provide discussions thereof. These studies have shown that avian fatalities vary greatly between the geographic positions of the solar facilities and also depend on the type of solar facility. In addition, very few of the large solar facilities in operation undertake systematic monitoring of avian fatalities, which explains the lack of detailed information of avian impacts. According to these studies conducted at both Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) and PV facilities, avian incidental fatalities range from 14 to over 180 birds which were summarised over a survey period conducted during one to three years. According to the Walston *et al.* (2016) assessment, the average annual mortality rate for known utility-scale solar

facilities (the annual number of estimated bird deaths per megawatt of electrical capacity) is 2.7, and 9.9 for known and unknown fatalities (which include carcasses found on the project site of which the death is not known). McCrary *et al.* (1986) found an average rate of mortality of 1.9-2.2 birds per week affecting 0.6-0.7% of the local bird population. However, most of the avian fatalities at these solar facilities are also probably underestimated since 10-30% of dead birds are removed by scavengers before being noted. From these analyses and assessments it was evident that:

- Medium levels of bird fatalities occur at PV sites when compared to CSP sites (due to solar flux-based mortalities associated with CSP sites).
- Approximately 81 % of all avian mortalities were caused by collisions, including collisions with electrical distribution lines.
- Most of the mortalities were small passerines (especially swallows).
- Fatalities at these solar facilities also include waterbirds (e.g. grebes, herons and gulls) which were probably attracted by the apparent "lake effect" caused by the reflective surface of the PV panels.
- Approximately 10-11 % of the fatalities consists of waterbirds, but could be as high as 49 % at certain facilities.
- It is unclear if the "lake effect" caused by the panels (at PV facilities) or mirrors (at CSP facilities) are the main cause of birds colliding or interacting with the infrastructure (since both waterbirds and other passerines are colliding with the infrastructure).
- Most of the fatalities are of resident birds as opposed to migratory species.

In a review report by Harrison *et al.* (2016), an attempt was made to provide evidence of the impacts caused by solar PV facilities alone (not combined with CSP facilities) on birds in the UK. These authors reviewed approximately 420 scientific documents, including 37 so-called "grey" literature from non-government and government organisations for any evidence relating to the ecological impacts of solar PV facilities. Their main findings were as follows:

- The majority of the documents were not relevant and peer-reviewed documents of experimental scientific evidence on avian fatalities were non-existent.
- Results based on carcass searches suggest that the bird collision risk at PV developments are low, although these studies did not take collision by overhead power lines into account.
- Many of the documents recommended that PV developments in close proximity to protected areas should be avoided.
- The PV panels reflect polarised light, which can attract polarotactic insects with potential impact to their reproductive biology. In addition, the polarising effect of the PV panels may also induce drinking behaviour in some birds, which may mistake the panels for water.

- They conclude that impact assessment reports should consider taxon-specific requirements of birds and their guilds.

4.8.2 Impacts of PV solar facilities on birds

The magnitude and significance of impacts to birds caused by solar facilities will depend on the following factors:

- The geographic locality of the planned solar facility;
- The size or surface extent of the solar facility;
- The type of solar facility (according to the technologies applied, e.g. PV or CSP); and
- The occurrence of collision-prone bird species (which are often closely related to the locality of the solar facility).

Any planned solar facility corresponding to an area with many threatened, range-restricted or collision-prone species will have a higher impact on these birds. In addition, any planned solar facility located in close proximity to important flyways, wetland systems or roosting/nesting sites used by the aforementioned species will have a higher impact.

The main impacts associated with PV solar facilities include (Jenkins *et al.*, 2017):

- The loss of habitat and subsequent displacement of bird species due to the ecological footprint required during construction;
- Disturbances caused to birds during construction and operation;
- Direct interaction (collision trauma) by birds with the surface infrastructure (photovoltaic panels) caused by polarised light pollution and/or waterbirds colliding with the panels (as they are mistaken for waterbodies);
- Collision with associated infrastructure (mainly overhead power lines and reticulation); and
- Attracting novel species to the area (owing to the artificial provision of new habitat such as perches and shade) which could compete with the residing bird population.

4.9 Impacts associated with the Hillardia PV Facility

Table 8 provides a summary of the impacts anticipated and quantification thereof (see Appendix 3 for methods used during the assessment of impacts).

4.9.1 Loss of habitat and displacement of birds

Approximately 230 ha of the site will be cleared of vegetation and habitat to accommodate the panel arrays and associated infrastructure. Clearing of vegetation will inevitably result in the loss of habitat and displacement of bird species. From the results, approximately 5.13 species.ha⁻¹ and 12.38 birds.ha⁻¹ will become displaced should the activity occur across all the habitat types on the study site (as per Jenkins

et al., 2017). Displacement will mainly affect passerine and smaller non-passerine species inhabiting the untransformed dolomite grasslands and bush clump mosaics.

The following bird species are most likely to be impacted by the loss of habitat due to their habitat requirements, endemism and conservation status (although not limited to) due to the proposed development:

- Northern Black Korhaan (*Afrotis afraoides*);
- Ashy Tit (*Melaniparus cinerascens*);
- Kalahari Scrub Robin (*Cercotrichas paena*);
- Orange River Francolin (*Scleroptila gutturalis*) and potentially also small to medium birds of prey such as:
 - Black-winged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*);
 - Gabar Goshawk (*Micronisus gabar*);
 - Yellow-billed Kite (*Milvus aegyptius*);
 - Amur Falcon (*Falco rupicolus*) and
 - African Hawk-eagle (*Aquila spilogaster*).

When considering the number of displaced bird species and their widespread occurrence in the region, the predicted impact due to the overall displacement and habitat loss is moderate without mitigation measures.

One internal substation and three access road options (alternatives) are proposed. It is unlikely that the significance of the impact will differ should the proposed substation and road alternatives be constructed at the proposed layout footprint and alternative alignments. All three road alternatives occur along existing farm (dirt) roads and contain the same habitat types which will be impacted by the PV panels. However, if an alternative should be selected, then the road option that is shortest in length will have the least impact on the clearing of vegetation during the widening of the road. For this reason, Alternative 1, which is 5.9 km in length, is shorter than Alternative 2 (c. 6.1 km) and Alternative 3 (c. 6.7 km), and hence preferred. In addition, the proposed substation covers a small surface area, which will result in a reduced impact significance rating (when compared to the PV panel layout).

4.9.2 Creation of "new" avian habitat and bird pollution

It is possible that the PV infrastructure (during operation) could attract bird species which may occupy the site or interact with the local bird assemblages in the wider region. These include alien and cosmopolitan species, as well as aggressive omnivorous passerines which could displace other bird species from the area:

- House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*);
- Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*);
- Pied Crow (*Corvus albus*); and
- Speckled Pigeon (*Columba guinea*).

The infrastructure may attract large numbers of roosting columbid taxa, especially Speckled Pigeons (*Columba guinea*), which may result in avian "pollution" through excreta, thereby fouling the panel surfaces. The impact is manageable and will result in a low significance.

4.9.3 Collision trauma caused by photovoltaic panels (the "lake-effect")

The study site is not located in close proximity to any major wetland system or water body. The nearest wetland system is approximately 6 km south east of the site, which explains the low occurrence of waterbird taxa at the study site. These wetland habitat types are often utilised by waterbirds which could accidentally mistake the reflective panels for waterbodies, thereby resulting in bird collisions with the panel surfaces. The impact is considered to be low although predictions regarding the occurrence of waterbird species and their numbers (e.g. density) in the area inconceivable.

However, desktop results and site observations show that the following species could interact with the panel infrastructure:

- Yellow-billed Duck (*Anas undulata*);
- Red-billed Teal (*Anas erythrorhynchus*);
- South African Shelduck (*Tadorna cana*);
- Spur-winged Goose (*Plectropterus gambiensis*);
- Egyptian Goose (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*);
- Black-headed Heron (*Ardea melanocephala*); and probably also
- Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*);
- African Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*) and
- White-faced Duck (*Dendrocygna viduata*).

Of these species, the Egyptian Goose was confirmed from the study site and immediate surroundings.

In the absence of sufficient information on the occurrence of waterbird taxa in the area, as well as the lack of data on bird mortalities caused by collisions, the precautionary principle was applied which results in an impact of moderate significance (in the absence of any mitigation measures).

4.9.4 Interaction with overhead powerlines

Overhead powerlines are not part of the facility infrastructure and all internal cabling and MV corridors will be placed underground. However, a single or double circuit 132 kV overhead powerline is proposed to be constructed between the Houthaalboomen North collector switching station and the Watershed Main Transmission Substation (MTS). This proposed powerline could result in bird collisions and electrocutions, and

these impacts will be assessed as part of a separate Environmental Application (separate EIA report).

However, it is highly recommended that all existing overhead powerlines (irrespective of size) that span the proposed Hillardia PV site be retrofitted with bird guards and appropriate bird flight diverters to reduce any potential collision trauma in birds due to birds attracted to the facility by the PV panels.

Table 8: The quantification of impacts associated with the proposed PV facility and its infrastructure.

1. Nature:		
Losses of natural habitat and displacement of birds through physical transformation, modifications, removals and land clearance. This impact is mainly restricted to the construction phase and is permanent.		
PV Layout (and associated infrastructure)	Without mitigation	With mitigation
Extent	Local (2)	Local (2)
Duration	Permanent (5)	Permanent (5)
Magnitude	High (8)	Moderate (6)
Probability	Definite (5)	Highly Probable (4)
Significance	High (75)	Medium (48)
Status (positive or negative)	Negative	Negative
Reversibility	Low	Low
Irreplaceable loss of resources?	Yes	Yes
Can impacts be mitigated?	Yes, to some extent	Yes, to some extent
Access Road (all Alternatives)	Without mitigation	With mitigation
Extent	Local (1)	Local (1)
Duration	Permanent (5)	Permanent (5)
Magnitude	Low (4)	Minor (2)
Probability	Definite (5)	Probable (3)
Significance	Medium (50)	Low (24)
Status (positive or negative)	Negative	Negative
Reversibility	Low	Low
Irreplaceable loss of resources?	Yes	Yes
Can impacts be mitigated?	Yes, to some extent	Yes
Mitigation:		
It is difficult to mitigate against the loss of habitat since clearing of vegetation (or habitat) will be required for the infrastructure associated with the project. It is unlikely that the significance of the impact will change should the facility be constructed on any of the roads alternative options since these correspond to existing farm roads. Both the PV facility and the access roads options contain the same habitat types of medium sensitivity. The best practicable mitigation will be to consolidate infrastructure to areas where existing impacts occur and to relocate (remove) any artificial watering holes (these should preferably be located at least 100m away from any overhead powerline and at least 200m from any PV panel array).		
Residual:		
It is anticipated that during rehabilitation (after removal of the panels) that the vegetation will revert to secondary grassland and shrubland resulting in a decreased bird species richness with low evenness values on a local scale. The residual impact of the PV facility will be medium. The residual impact of the access road will be low since the alignment coincides with that of an existing farm road.		

2. Nature:		
The creation of novel or new avian habitat for commensal bird species or superior competitive species. This is expected to occur during the operation phase of the facility.		
PV Layout (and associated infrastructure)	Without mitigation	With mitigation
Extent	Footprint (1)	Footprint (1)
Duration	Medium-term (3)	Medium-term (3)
Magnitude	Minor (2)	Minor (2)
Probability	Probable (3)	Improbable (2)
Significance	Low (18)	Low (12)
Status (positive or negative)	Negative	Negative
Reversibility	Moderate	Moderate
Irreplaceable loss of resources?	No	No
Can impacts be mitigated?	Yes, with experimentation	Yes
Mitigation:		
Apply bird deterrent devices and remove nest structures constructed on infrastructure associated with the PV facility under the guidance of the ECO.		
Residual:		
Secondary displacement by competitive bird species such as crows and increased fecundity rate for commensal bird species that are adapted to anthropogenic activities. The impact is regarded as low.		

3. Nature:		
Avian collision impacts related to the PV facility during the operation phase (collision with the PV panels).		
PV Layout (and associated infrastructure)	Without mitigation	With mitigation
Extent	Local (2)	Local (2)
Duration	Long-term (4)	Long-term (4)
Magnitude	Low (4)	Minor (2)
Probability	Probable (3)	Improbable (2)
Significance	Medium (30)	Low (16)
Status (positive or negative)	Negative	Negative
Reversibility	Low	Low
Irreplaceable loss of resources?	No, although threatened species are present in the area, these are likely to become displaced while waterbirds are uncommon due to the absence of prominent water/wetland features in the area.	No
Can impacts be mitigated?	Yes, to some extent	Yes, to some extent
Mitigation:		
Apply bird deterrent devices such as rotating flashers/reflectors to the panels for birds that may mistake the panels for open water and to prevent them from landing on the panels. Security/CCTV cameras may be installed to quantify mortalities (cameras are also installed along the perimeter fence for security measures and may also proved effective to quantify mortalities). If post- and pre-construction monitoring predicts and/or confirms any bird mortalities, an option is to employ video cameras at selected areas to document bird mortalities and to conduct direct observations and carcass searches on a regular and systematic basis. If bird mortalities occur at watering points, Relocate (remove) any artificial watering holes (these should preferably be located at least 100m away		

from any overhead powerline and at least 200m from any PV panel array).

Residual:

Direct mortality is possible and may still occur irrespective of applied mitigation measures. Regular and systematic monitoring is proposed to assess the efficacy of applied mitigation and further research and testing is suggested to improve mitigation measures (e.g. bird deterrent devices). The residual impact is regarded as low.

4.10 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are defined as impacts that result from additional or incremental activities caused by past or present actions together with the current project. Therefore, cumulative impacts are those that will affect the general avifaunal community in the study area due to other planned solar farm projects and electrical infrastructure in the region.

The Hillardia PV facility is one of three similar facilities located in the project area. The other two facilities include the Euphorbia and Verbena PV facilities which are also located on Portions 2, 3 and 4 of the Farm Houthaalboomen 31. These three solar facilities will cumulatively occupy an area of approximately 595 ha.

In addition, three other PV facilities (Dicoma, Setaria and Barleria PV facilities) are planned on Portions 1, 9 and 10 of the Farm Houthaalboomen 31. These three solar facilities will cumulatively occupy an area of approximately 542 ha and are located 2.4km to the south of the Hillardia PV facility.

Another three PV facilities (Lichtenburg 1 - 3 PV facilities) are planned on the Remaining Extent of Portion 02 of the Farm Zamenkomst No 04, Portion 06 of the Farm Zamenkomst No 04 and Portion 23 of Farm Houthaalboomen No 31 respectively, with Lichtenburg 2 PV being 2 km east of the Hillardia PV facility. These three solar facilities will cumulatively occupy an area of approximately 784 ha.

Other solar projects are also proposed in the region which includes the 75MW Tlisitseng PV Facilities (covering a maximum of 600 ha in total on Portion 25 of the Farm Houthaalboomen No. 31), the Watershed Solar Energy Facility and the Lichtenburg Solar Park. An additional two 120MW PV facilities are also considered (Aristida PV and Themeda PV) within Portion 7 of Farm Elandsfontein 34 which is located approximately 4.2 km south of the proposed Hillardia PV facility.

The cumulative impacts are likely to exacerbate the displacement and loss of habitat.

A summary of the cumulative impacts is provided in Table 9.

Table 9: A summary of the cumulative impacts.

1. Nature:		
Regional losses of natural habitat and subsequent displacement of birds.		
	Overall impact of the proposed project considered in isolation	Cumulative impact of the project and other projects in the area
Extent	Local (2)	Local (2)
Duration	Permanent (5)	Long-term (4)
Magnitude	Moderate (6)	High (8)
Probability	Highly Probable (4)	Definite (5)
Significance	Medium (48)	High (70)
Status (positive or negative)	Negative	Negative
Reversibility	Low	Low
Loss of resources?	Yes	Yes
Can impacts be mitigated?	Yes, to some extent	Yes
Confidence in findings: High.		
Mitigation: The best practicable mitigation will be to consolidate infrastructure to areas where existing impacts occur. The development footprint of the various individual facilities must be kept as small as possible and sensitive habitats must be avoided.		

2. Nature:		
Avian collision impacts related to the PV facility during the operation phase (collision with the PV panels).		
	Overall impact of the proposed project considered in isolation	Cumulative impact of the project and other projects in the area
Extent	Local (2)	Local and immediate surroundings (3)
Duration	Long-term (4)	Long-term (4)
Magnitude	Minor (2)	Low (4)
Probability	Improbable (2)	Probable (3)
Significance	Low (16)	Medium (33)
Status (positive or negative)	Negative	Negative
Reversibility	Low	Low
Irreplaceable loss of resources?	No, although threatened species are present in the area, these are likely to become displaced while waterbirds are uncommon due to the absence of prominent water/wetland features in the area.	No, although threatened species are present in the area, these are likely to become displaced while waterbirds are uncommon due to the absence of prominent water/wetland features in the area
Can impacts be mitigated?	Yes, to some extent	Yes, to some extent
Confidence in findings: Low.		
Mitigation: Apply bird deterrent devices to the panels for birds that may mistake the panels for open water and to prevent them from landing on the panels.		

4.11 Recommended avifaunal mitigation

4.11.1 Loss of habitat and displacement bird taxa

It is difficult to mitigate against the loss of habitat when fixed infrastructure is applied. However, proper site selection of the facility is key to reducing the predicted impacts.

The following mitigation measures are proposed:

- Concentrate all surface infrastructure on habitat of medium to low avifaunal sensitivity. The development footprint of the various individual facilities must be kept as small as possible and sensitive habitats must be avoided.
- Where possible, existing access roads should be used and the construction of new roads should be kept to a minimum.
- Prevent an overspill of construction activities into areas that are not part of the proposed construction site.
- Use indigenous plant species native to the study area during landscaping and rehabilitation.
- All internal electrical reticulation should be placed underground.

4.11.2 Creation of "new" avian habitat and bird pollution

The following mitigation measures are proposed:

- Apply bird deterrent devices at selective areas (for example at the corners and middle part of the facility) to the PV panels to discourage birds from colonising the infrastructure or to discourage birds from constructing nests. These could include visual or bio-acoustic deterrents such as highly reflective rotating devices, anti-perching devices such as bird guards, scaring or chasing activities involving the use of trained dogs or raptors and/or netting. Nests should be removed when nest-building attempts are noticed under the guidance of the ECO.
- Reduce or minimise the use of outdoor lighting to avoid attracting birds to the lights or to reduce potential disorientation to migrating birds.
- Use indigenous plant species native to the study area during landscaping and rehabilitation.

4.11.3 Collision trauma caused by photovoltaic panels (the "lake-effect")

The following mitigation measures are proposed:

- Implement at least an additional bird survey (pre-construction surveys - see section dealing with monitoring and EMP) during the peak wet season to obtain additional quantified data on the occurrence or flyways of waterbird

taxa. The data will enable informed decisions regarding the use of deterrent devices.

- Apply bird deterrent devices to the panels at selective areas (for example at the corners and middle part of the facility) to discourage birds from colonising/colliding with the infrastructure. These could include visual or bio-acoustic deterrents such as highly reflective rotating devices, anti-perching devices such as bird guards, scaring or chasing activities involving the use of trained dogs or raptors and/or netting.
- Apply systematic reflective/dynamic markers to the boundary fence to increase the visibility of the fence for approaching birds (e.g. korhaan taxa) and to avoid potential bird collisions with the fence structure.
- Reduce or minimise the use of outdoor lighting to avoid attracting birds to the lights or to reduce potential disorientation to migrating birds.
- Remove/relocates artificial watering holes. It is recommended that watering holes be relocated at least 200m from any PV arrays.

4.11.4 Existing powerlines (spanning the facility)

The following mitigation measures are proposed:

- All internal electrical infrastructure and cabling should be placed underground.
- Install bird guards/spikes above conductors at pylons.
- Fit powerline spans with bird flight diverters (see Figure 28).



Figure 28: Examples of bird flight diverters to be used on existing power lines: Double loop bird flight diverter (left) and Viper live bird flapper (right).

4.11.5 General mitigation measures

- All construction sites/areas must be demarcated on site layout plans (preferably), and no construction personnel or vehicles may leave the demarcated area except those authorised to do so. Those areas surrounding the construction sites that are not part of the demarcated development area

should be considered as “no-go” areas for employees, machinery or even visitors.

- All road networks must be planned with care to minimise dissection or fragmentation of important avifaunal habitat type. Where possible, the use of existing roads is encouraged.
- Open fires is strictly prohibited and only allowed at designated areas.
- Killing or poaching of any bird species should be avoided by means of awareness programs presented to the labour force. The labour force should be made aware of the conservation issues pertaining to the bird taxa occurring on the study site. Any person found deliberately harassing any bird species in any way should face disciplinary measures, following the possible dismissal from the site.
- Checks must be carried out at regular intervals to identify areas where erosion is occurring. Appropriate remedial action, including the rehabilitation of eroded areas should be undertaken.

4.12 Suggested monitoring and Environmental Management Plan

Information on collision trauma (bird mortalities) and the displacement of birds caused by PV solar facilities is insufficient. Therefore, as per the guidelines of Jenkins *et al.* (2017) it is highly recommended that additional pre- and post construction monitoring be implemented to augment existing data:

- At least one additional pre-construction survey is recommended, consisting of a minimum of 1-2 days which is necessary to inform the final EMPr during operation. The survey should coincide with the peak wet season when most of the drainage lines and wetland features in the wider study region are inundated. This will enable the observer to obtain quantified data on waterbird richness and potential flyways, which will contribute towards the understanding of impacts related to collision trauma with the panels.
- A post-construction survey during operation (with a minimum of 2-3 x 3 day surveys during a six month period (including the peak wet season)). The surveys aim to obtain mortality data from birds colliding with the panels to advise on appropriate mitigation measures to be implemented to reduce potential bird mortalities. The surveys should be conducted in a regular and systematic manner by means of direct observations and carcass searches. A management programme must be compiled to assess the efficacy of applied mitigation measures and consult or change measures to reduce on-going mortalities when detected. Additional mitigation measures should be tested or applied, especially if mortalities include birds of prey and species of conservation concern.
- It is possible that bird mortalities due to collision will occur at **existing** power lines even after mitigation. The post-construction monitoring (during operation) should also quantify mortalities (especially vulture mortalities) caused by the existing power line network. The information could then be

used to inform the electrical infrastructure mortality incident register. It is suggested that monitoring should be implemented once a month for at least one year when in operation. All searches should be done on foot. A management programme must be compiled to assess the efficacy of applied mitigation measures and consult or change measures to reduce on-going mortalities when detected. Additional mitigation measures should be tested or applied, especially if mortalities include birds of prey and species of conservation concern.

OBJECTIVE 1: Minimise potential collision trauma with infrastructure and augmenting existing information on bird interactions with solar infrastructure

Project Component/s	» PV panel arrays
Potential Impact	» Collision trauma caused by photovoltaic panels (the "lake-effect")
Activity/Risk Source	» Operation of PV infrastructure
Mitigation: Target/Objective	» Zero bird mortalities due to collision trauma caused by PV panels

Mitigation: Action/Control	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Apply bird deterrent devices to the PV panels to discourage birds from colonising the infrastructure or to discourage birds from constructing nests. These could include visual or bio-acoustic deterrents such as highly reflective rotating devices, anti-perching devices such as bird guards, scaring or chasing activities involving the use of trained dogs or raptors and/or netting. Nests should be removed when nest-building attempts are noticed.	ECO & OM	Operation (on-going)
2. Reduce or minimise the use of outdoor lighting to avoid attracting birds to the lights or to reduce potential disorientation to migrating birds.	ECO & OM	Operation (on-going)
3. Use indigenous plant species native to the study area during landscaping and rehabilitation.	CER & ECO	Construction phase
4. Implement pre-construction monitoring protocols (as per Jenkins et al., 2017).	ECO & EM	Prior to construction - At least 1 survey of 1-2 days (during wet season)
5. Implement post-construction monitoring and carcass surveys (as per Jenkins et al., 2017)	OM & CER	Post- construction - At least 2-3 surveys, each 3 days during a 6 month period
6. Compile management programme to assess	EM & OM	Operation (on-going)

efficacy of mitigation and on-going research/trials		
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Performance Indicator	Reduced statistical detection/observation of bird mortalities
Monitoring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement at least one pre-construction survey consisting of a minimum of 1-2 days. 2. Surveys should coincide with the peak wet season when most of the drainage lines and wetland features in the wider study region are inundated. 3. Obtain quantified data on waterbird richness and potential flyways, which will contribute towards the understanding of impacts related to collision trauma with the panels. 4. Monitor terrestrial birds at the fixed point counts by using the exact protocol applied during this report. 5. Implement post-construction survey during operation with a minimum of 2-3 x 3 day surveys during a six month period (including the peak wet season). 6. Obtain mortality data from birds colliding with the panels and advise on appropriate mitigation measures to be implemented to reduce potential bird mortalities. 7. Conduct post-construction monitoring in a systematic manner by means of direct observations (an option is the use of installed video cameras at selected areas) and carcass searches. 8. Implement management programme to assess the efficacy of applied mitigation measures and consult or change measures to reduce on-going mortalities when detected. Additional mitigation measures should be tested or applied, especially if mortalities include birds of prey and species of conservation concern.

OBJECTIVE 2: Minimise collisions and electrocution associated with existing power lines

Project Component/s	» Existing overhead power lines
Potential Impact	» Collision and electrocution caused by existing power lines
Activity/Risk Source	» Overhead power lines
Mitigation: Target/Objective	» Reduced bird mortalities due to collision/electrocution

Mitigation: Action/Control	Responsibility	Timeframe
1. Apply bird deterrent devices to all existing power lines spanning the facility	ECO & CER	Construction
2. Implement post-construction monitoring and carcass surveys	OM	Operation - daily
3. Compile management programme to assess efficacy of mitigation and on-going	OM & CER	Operation - monthly for at least one year

research/trials		
4. Report mortalities (number, locality and species) to Electrical Energy Mortality Register at EWT	OM	Operation (on-going)

Performance Indicator	Reduced statistical detection/observation of bird mortalities
Monitoring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement surveys for carcasses. 2. Implement post-construction monitoring to quantify bird mortalities caused by the power line network. All searches should be done on foot. 3. Compile a management programme to assess the efficacy of applied mitigation measures and consult or change measures to reduce on-going mortalities when detected. Additional mitigation measures should be tested or applied, especially if mortalities include birds of prey and species of conservation concern.

4.13 An opinion regarding the feasibility of the project

Pachnoda Consulting cc was requested by Hillardia PV (Pty) Ltd to compile an avifauna impact assessment report for a photovoltaic (PV) solar energy facility and associated infrastructure on Portions 2, 3 and 4 of the Farm Houthaalboomen 31, near Lichtenburg, North West Province.

Three prominent avifaunal habitat types was identified on the site and consisted of open mixed dolomite grassland with bush clump mosaics, moist grassland and artificial livestock watering holes. Approximately 186 bird species are expected to occur in the wider study area, of which 88 species were observed in the study area (during a wet and dry season survey). The expected richness included eight threatened or near threatened species, 16 southern African endemics and 20 near-endemic species. The critically endangered White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*) and endangered Cape Vulture (*G. coprotheres*) was confirmed during the surveys, mainly as foraging birds soaring overhead. Eleven southern African endemics and 14 near-endemic species were confirmed on the study site.

An evaluation of potential and likely impacts on the avifauna revealed that the impact significance was moderate to low after mitigation (depending on the type of impact). The study site is not located near any prominent wetland system or impoundment, and therefore the risk of waterbird collisions with the proposed infrastructure was considered to be low. However, in the absence of sufficient information on the occurrence and rate of passing waterbirds, it was recommended that supporting evidence be acquired by means of another pre-construction survey corresponding to the wet season.

The endangered Cape Vulture (*Gyps coprotheres*) and critically endangered White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*) (and to a lesser degree also Lappet-faced Vulture

Torgos tracheliotos) were identified as regular foraging visitors to the study area (according to SABAP2 reporting rates and on-site observations). These species are highly prone to power line collisions, whereby any existing powerlines (existing powerlines spanning the facility) could pose a collision and electrocution risk to vultures.

No fatal-flaws were identified during the assessment, and irrespective of the access road alternatives proposed for the PV facility, the significance of the avifaunal impacts (clearing of vegetation along the road reserves) were regarded as identical. Nevertheless, it is strongly recommended that the proposed mitigation measures and monitoring protocols (additional with pre- and post construction monitoring) be implemented during the construction and operational phase of the project.

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www.sabap2.birdmap.africa

Appendix 1: A shortlist of bird species expected to be present on the study area. The list provides an indication of the species occurrence according to SABAP2 reporting rates. The list was derived (and modified) from species observed in pentad grid 2600_2600 and the eight surrounding grids. The reporting rates include submissions made during the January and May 2022 surveys.

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Observed (January & May 2022)	SABAP2 Reprting Rate			
				Full Protocol (%)	Number of cards	Ad hoc Protocol (%)	Number of cards
78	Abdim's Stork	<i>Ciconia abdimii</i>		0.00	0	10.00	2
432	Acacia Pied Barbet	<i>Tricholaema leucomelas</i>	X	52.73	29	5.00	1
141	African Hawk-eagle	<i>Aquila spilogaster</i>	X	n/a	1		
418	African Hoopoe	<i>Upupa africana</i>		29.09	16	5.00	1
387	African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>		27.27	15	0.00	0
682	African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>		5.45	3	0.00	0
692	African Pipit	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>	X	43.64	24	5.00	1
544	African Red-eyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus nigricans</i>	X	50.91	28	0.00	0
606	African Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i>		10.91	6	0.00	0
81	African Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>		9.09	5	5.00	1
576	African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>		32.73	18	0.00	0
247	African Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
772	Amethyst Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra amethystina</i>		3.64	2	0.00	0
119	Amur Falcon	<i>Falco amurensis</i>	X	20.00	11	10.00	2
575	Ant-eating Chat	<i>Myrmecocichla formicivora</i>	X	63.64	35	20.00	4
533	Arrow-marked Babbler	<i>Turdoides jardineii</i>		5.45	3	0.00	0
514	Ashy Tit	<i>Melaniparus cinerascens</i>	X	7.27	4	5.00	1
510	Banded Martin	<i>Riparia cincta</i>	X	27.27	15	5.00	1
493	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	X	30.91	17	10.00	2

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Observed (January & May 2022)	SABAP2 Reprting Rate			
				Full Protocol (%)	Number of cards	Ad hoc Protocol (%)	Number of cards
513	Black Cuckooshrike	<i>Campephaga flava</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
159	Black Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i>		3.64	2	0.00	0
650	Black-chested Prinia	<i>Prinia flavicans</i>	X	70.91	39	15.00	3
146	Black-chested Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>		7.27	4	0.00	0
431	Black-collared Barbet	<i>Lybius torquatus</i>		27.27	15	10.00	2
715	Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>		5.45	3	0.00	0
55	Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>		20.00	11	10.00	2
521	Black-headed Oriole	<i>Oriolus larvatus</i>		5.45	3	0.00	0
245	Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>	X	49.09	27	5.00	1
860	Black-throated Canary	<i>Crithagra atrogularis</i>	X	40.00	22	5.00	1
130	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	X	27.27	15	30.00	6
270	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		7.27	4	5.00	1
839	Blue Waxbill	<i>Uraeginthus angolensis</i>		21.82	12	10.00	2
405	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	<i>Merops persicus</i>		12.73	7	0.00	0
722	Bokmakierie	<i>Telophorus zeylonus</i>	X	60.00	33	5.00	1
145	Brown Snake Eagle	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
714	Brown-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra australis</i>	X	21.82	12	15.00	3
509	Brown-throated Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
731	Brubru	<i>Nilaus afer</i>		3.64	2	5.00	1
695	Buffy Pipit	<i>Anthus vaalensis</i>		3.64	2	5.00	1
4131	Burchell's Coucal	<i>Centropus burchellii</i>		10.91	6	0.00	0
703	Cape Longclaw	<i>Macronyx capensis</i>	X	34.55	19	5.00	1
531	Cape Penduline Tit	<i>Anthoscopus minutus</i>		3.64	2	0.00	0
581	Cape Robin-Chat	<i>Cossypha caffra</i>		16.36	9	0.00	0

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Observed (January & May 2022)	SABAP2 Reprting Rate			
				Full Protocol (%)	Number of cards	Ad hoc Protocol (%)	Number of cards
786	Cape Sparrow	<i>Passer melanurus</i>	X	69.09	38	5.00	1
737	Cape Starling	<i>Lamprotornis nitens</i>	X	40.00	22	10.00	2
316	Ring-necked Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>	X	40.00	22	20.00	4
106	Cape Vulture	<i>Gyps coprotheres</i>	X	16.36	9	0.00	0
686	Cape Wagtail	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>		41.82	23	0.00	0
1172	Cape White-eye	<i>Zosterops virens</i>	X	34.55	19	0.00	0
568	Capped Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pileata</i>	X	12.73	7	0.00	0
484	Chestnut-backed Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix leucotis</i>	X	12.73	7	10.00	2
658	Chestnut-vented Warbler	<i>Curruca subcoerulea</i>	X	60.00	33	10.00	2
673	Chin-spot Batis	<i>Batis molitor</i>	X	12.73	7	5.00	1
872	Cinnamon-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>		14.55	8	10.00	2
631	Cloud Cisticola	<i>Cisticola textrix</i>	X	36.36	20	5.00	1
	Common Buttonquail	<i>Turnix sylvaticus</i>	X	n/a	1		
154	Common (Steppe) Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>	X	7.27	4	10.00	2
734	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	X	49.09	27	5.00	1
421	Common Scimitarbill	<i>Rhinopomastus cyanomelas</i>		21.82	12	5.00	1
843	Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>		10.91	6	0.00	0
594	Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>		3.64	2	0.00	0
173	Coqui Francolin	<i>Peliperdix coqui</i>	X	16.36	9	0.00	0
439	Crested Barbet	<i>Trachyphonus vaillantii</i>	X	60.00	33	5.00	1
174	Crested Francolin	<i>Dendroperdix sephaena</i>		5.45	3	0.00	0
711	Crimson-breasted Shrike	<i>Laniarius atrococcineus</i>	X	29.09	16	5.00	1
242	Crowned Lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>	X	67.27	37	5.00	1
545	Dark-capped Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i>		36.36	20	5.00	1

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Observed (January & May 2022)	SABAP2 Reprting Rate			
				Full Protocol (%)	Number of cards	Ad hoc Protocol (%)	Number of cards
630	Desert Cisticola	<i>Cisticola aridulus</i>	X	41.82	23	10.00	2
352	Diederik Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>	X	40.00	22	5.00	1
1183	Eastern Clapper Lark	<i>Mirafra fasciolata</i>	X	38.18	21	0.00	0
89	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	X	20.00	11	0.00	0
404	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>		23.64	13	0.00	0
412	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
570	Familiar Chat	<i>Oenanthe familiaris</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
665	Fiscal Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis silens</i>		45.45	25	5.00	1
	Fairy Flycatcher	<i>Stenostira scita</i>	X	n/a	1		
517	Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
	Gabar Goshawk	<i>Micronisus gabar</i>	X	n/a	1		
874	Golden-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza flaviventris</i>		1.82	1	5.00	1
603	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
785	Great Sparrow	<i>Passer motitensis</i>		3.64	2	0.00	0
440	Greater Honeyguide	<i>Indicator indicator</i>		7.27	4	0.00	0
122	Greater Kestrel	<i>Falco rupicoloides</i>		9.09	5	10.00	2
502	Greater Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis cucullata</i>	X	36.36	20	5.00	1
419	Green Wood Hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>		10.91	6	0.00	0
830	Green-winged Pytilia	<i>Pytilia melba</i>	X	16.36	9	5.00	1
339	Grey Go-away-bird	<i>Crinifer concolor</i>		27.27	15	5.00	1
54	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		14.55	8	5.00	1
485	Grey-backed Sparrow-Lark	<i>Eremopterix verticalis</i>		5.45	3	0.00	0
557	Groundscraper Thrush	<i>Turdus litsisirupa</i>		7.27	4	0.00	0
84	Hadada Ibis	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	X	54.55	30	5.00	1

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Observed (January & May 2022)	SABAP2 Reprting Rate			
				Full Protocol (%)	Number of cards	Ad hoc Protocol (%)	Number of cards
72	Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>		5.45	3	0.00	0
192	Helmeted Guineafowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>	X	43.64	24	5.00	1
784	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	X	40.00	22	5.00	1
586	Kalahari Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas paena</i>	X	50.91	28	10.00	2
1104	Karoo Thrush	<i>Turdus smithi</i>	X	43.64	24	0.00	0
114	Lanner Falcon	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>		7.27	4	0.00	0
108	Lappet-faced Vulture	<i>Torgos tracheliotos</i>		7.27	4	5.00	1
317	Laughing Dove	<i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i>	X	85.45	47	25.00	5
706	Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	X	16.36	9	0.00	0
442	Lesser Honeyguide	<i>Indicator minor</i>		5.45	3	0.00	0
125	Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	X	14.55	8	0.00	0
604	Lesser Swamp Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus gracilirostris</i>		12.73	7	0.00	0
646	Levaillant's Cisticola	<i>Cisticola tinniens</i>		27.27	15	0.00	0
410	Little Bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>		7.27	4	5.00	1
385	Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>	X	29.09	16	0.00	0
621	Long-billed Crombec	<i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>		14.55	8	0.00	0
852	Long-tailed Paradise Whydah	<i>Vidua paradisaea</i>		3.64	2	0.00	0
818	Long-tailed Widowbird	<i>Euplectes progne</i>	X	41.82	23	5.00	1
73	Marabou Stork	<i>Leptoptilos crumenifer</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
661	Marico Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis mariquensis</i>		7.27	4	0.00	0
	Marsh Owl	<i>Asio capensis</i>	X	n/a	1		
607	Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>		5.45	3	10.00	2
142	Martial Eagle	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
	Melodious Lark	<i>Mirafrā cheniana</i>	X	n/a	1		

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Observed (January & May 2022)	SABAP2 Reprting Rate			
				Full Protocol (%)	Number of cards	Ad hoc Protocol (%)	Number of cards
564	Mountain Wheatear	<i>Myrmecocichla monticola</i>		3.64	2	0.00	0
318	Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>	X	27.27	15	15.00	3
637	Neddicky	<i>Cisticola fulvicapilla</i>	X	30.91	17	5.00	1
1035	Northern Black Korhaan	<i>Afrotis afraoides</i>	X	56.36	31	10.00	2
179	Orange River Francolin	<i>Scleroptila gutturalis</i>	X	38.18	21	5.00	1
1171	Orange River White-eye	<i>Zosterops pallidus</i>		18.18	10	5.00	1
522	Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	X	61.82	34	10.00	2
746	Pied Starling	<i>Lamprotornis bicolor</i>		7.27	4	5.00	1
846	Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>	X	21.82	12	0.00	0
694	Plain-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>	X	9.09	5	0.00	0
844	Quailfinch	<i>Ortygospiza atricollis</i>	X	32.73	18	5.00	1
642	Rattling Cisticola	<i>Cisticola chiniana</i>		7.27	4	0.00	0
708	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>		21.82	12	0.00	0
837	Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>		9.09	5	0.00	0
805	Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>	X	45.45	25	0.00	0
97	Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>		16.36	9	0.00	0
501	Red-breasted Swallow	<i>Cecropis semirufa</i>		1.82	1	5.00	1
488	Red-capped Lark	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>	X	16.36	9	0.00	0
813	Red-collared Widowbird	<i>Euplectes ardens</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
314	Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	X	67.27	37	15.00	3
392	Red-faced Mousebird	<i>Urocolius indicus</i>	X	50.91	28	15.00	3
820	Red-headed Finch	<i>Amadina erythrocephala</i>	X	18.18	10	0.00	0
940	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>		14.55	8	0.00	0
506	Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>		5.45	3	5.00	1

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Observed (January & May 2022)	SABAP2 Reprting Rate			
				Full Protocol (%)	Number of cards	Ad hoc Protocol (%)	Number of cards
458	Rufous-naped Lark	<i>Mirafrā africana</i>	X	49.09	27	10.00	2
460	Sabota Lark	<i>Calendulauda sabota</i>		10.91	6	5.00	1
789	Scaly-feathered Weaver	<i>Sporopipes squamifrons</i>	X	40.00	22	0.00	0
105	Secretarybird	<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
847	Shaft-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua regia</i>		3.64	2	5.00	1
504	South African Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon spilodera</i>	X	14.55	8	0.00	0
90	South African Shelduck	<i>Tadorna cana</i>		12.73	7	0.00	0
707	Southern Fiscal	<i>Lanius collaris</i>	X	81.82	45	20.00	4
4142	Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer diffusus</i>	X	23.64	13	5.00	1
803	Southern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>	X	70.91	39	5.00	1
808	Southern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes orix</i>		50.91	28	0.00	0
390	Speckled Mousebird	<i>Colius striatus</i>		14.55	8	0.00	0
311	Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>	X	69.09	38	15.00	3
474	Spike-heeled Lark	<i>Chersomanes albofasciata</i>	X	40.00	22	0.00	0
368	Spotted Eagle-Owl	<i>Bubo africanus</i>		3.64	2	0.00	0
654	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>		16.36	9	0.00	0
275	Spotted Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus capensis</i>	X	10.91	6	0.00	0
88	Spur-winged Goose	<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>		10.91	6	0.00	0
867	Streaky-headed Seedeater	<i>Crithagra gularis</i>		7.27	4	0.00	0
185	Swainson's Spurfowl	<i>Pternistis swainsonii</i>	X	54.55	30	5.00	1
411	Swallow-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops hirundineus</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
649	Tawny-flanked Prinia	<i>Prinia subflava</i>		3.64	2	0.00	0
238	Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>		18.18	10	0.00	0
840	Violet-eared Waxbill	<i>Granatina granatina</i>		5.45	3	0.00	0

#	Common Name	Scientific Name	Observed (January & May 2022)	SABAP2 Reprting Rate			
				Full Protocol (%)	Number of cards	Ad hoc Protocol (%)	Number of cards
735	Wattled Starling	<i>Creatophora cinerea</i>	X	38.18	21	5.00	1
359	Western Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	X	7.27	4	0.00	0
61	Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	X	45.45	25	10.00	2
391	White-backed Mousebird	<i>Colius colius</i>	X	56.36	31	5.00	1
107	White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	X	18.18	10	0.00	0
763	White-bellied Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris talatala</i>		10.91	6	0.00	0
780	White-browed Sparrow-Weaver	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>	X	72.73	40	15.00	3
588	White-browed Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i>		3.64	2	0.00	0
727	White-crested Helmetshrike	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
100	White-faced Whistling Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>		12.73	7	0.00	0
409	White-fronted Bee-eater	<i>Merops bullockoides</i>		12.73	7	0.00	0
582	White-throated Robin-chat	<i>Cossypha humeralis</i>		n/a	1		
383	White-rumped Swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>	X	23.64	13	0.00	0
495	White-throated Swallow	<i>Hirundo albigularis</i>		20.00	11	0.00	0
814	White-winged Widowbird	<i>Euplectes albonotatus</i>	X	12.73	7	0.00	0
599	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>		9.09	5	5.00	1
866	Yellow Canary	<i>Crithagra flaviventris</i>	X	65.45	36	15.00	3
96	Yellow-billed Duck	<i>Anas undulata</i>		18.18	10	5.00	1
129	Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus aegyptius</i>	X	14.55	8	5.00	1
812	Yellow-crowned Bishop	<i>Euplectes afer</i>	X	7.27	4	0.00	0
859	Yellow-fronted Canary	<i>Crithagra mozambica</i>		1.82	1	0.00	0
437	Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus chrysoconus</i>		3.64	2	0.00	0
629	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	X	41.82	23	0.00	0

Appendix 2: Preliminary density estimates of birds recorded from the study area during two independent surveys conducted during January 2022 and May 2022.

Species	lc01	lc02	lc03	lc04	lc05	lc06	lc07	lc08	lc09	lc10	lc11	lc12	lc13	lc14	lc15
Ant-eating Chat	5	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1.5	0.5	0	0	0	1	0.5
African Pipit	0.5	0	1.5	1.5	1	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	1
African Red-eyed Bulbul	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.5	0.5
Ashy Tit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Black-chested Prinia	3	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	1	2
Brown-crowned Tchagra	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Plain-backed Pipit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cape Sparrow	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Capped Wheatear	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cloud Cisticola	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	0	0.5	0	1	0	1	0	0.5
Cape Longclaw	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0.5
Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crimson-breasted Shrike	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cape Starling	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chestnut-vented Warbler	1.5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Desert Cisticola	1	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	2.5	0.5	1	1.5	1	0.5	1	1.5	1
Eastern Clapper Lark	0.5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	1.5	0	0.5	0	0
Fairy Flycatcher	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Green-winged Pytilia	0	0.5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kalahari Scrub-robin	0	0	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0
Long-tailed Widowbird	0	0	1.5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
Melodious Lark	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Species	lc01	lc02	lc03	lc04	lc05	lc06	lc07	lc08	lc09	lc10	lc11	lc12	lc13	lc14	lc15
Neddicky	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pintailed Whydah	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quailfinch	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Red-billed Quelea	0	0	12.5	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.5	0
Red-capped Lark	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Red-headed Finch	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Rufous-naped Lark	0	0	0	1.5	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	1	1	0
Scaly-feathered Weaver	1	0	5.5	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	0
Southern Fiscal	0	0.5	0	0	0	1	0	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spike-heeled Lark	1.5	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0
Southern Masked Weaver	0	0.5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wattled Starling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White-browed Sparrow-weaver	2	2.5	0	0	1	0	1	2	3	3.5	0	0	0	0	0
Yellow Canary	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Zitting Cisticola	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	0	0	0
Number of individuals	19.5	13	36.5	7.5	8	6.5	6.5	3	7	8.5	9	2.5	13	14.5	8
Number of species	13	13	18	7	7	7	6	3	5	7	9	4	10	9	9
Number of birds/ha	25.00	16.67	46.79	9.62	10.26	8.33	8.33	3.85	8.97	10.90	11.54	3.21	16.67	18.59	10.26
Number of species/ha	16.67	16.67	23.08	8.97	8.97	8.97	7.69	3.85	6.41	8.97	11.54	5.13	12.82	11.54	11.54
Average number of birds/ha	12.38														
Average number of species/ha	10.74														

Species	lc16	lc17	lc18	lc19	lc20	lc21	lc22	lc23	lc24	lc25	lc26	lc28	lc29	lc30	Mean Birds/ha
Ant-eating Chat	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	2	0.5	0	0	0.5	0	0	0.023
African Pipit	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	1	0.5	1.5	0.5	0	1	0	0.5	0.5	0.021
African Red-eyed Bulbul	0.5	0	0	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.5	1	0.015
Ashy Tit	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.001
Black-chested Prinia	2	0	0	1	2	0	0.5	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	0.042
Brown-crowned Tchagra	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.001
Plain-backed Pipit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.001
Cape Sparrow	0	0	0	0	0	1.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.005
Capped Wheatear	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.001
Cloud Cisticola	0.5	0.5	0.5	1	0	0	1	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	1	1	0.020
Cape Longclaw	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.005
Chestnut-backed Sparrowlark	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.002
Crimson-breasted Shrike	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.001
Cape Starling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.002
Chestnut-vented Warbler	2	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.016
Desert Cisticola	1	1	2	1	0.5	1	1	1	1.5	1.5	1.5	2	1.5	1	0.056
Eastern Clapper Lark	0.5	1	1	1	0	1.5	1	0.5	1	0	0.5	1	1	0.5	0.022
Fairy Flycatcher	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.001
Green-winged Pytilia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.002
Kalahari Scrub-robin	0.5	0	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0.005
Long-tailed Widowbird	0	0	0	0	2.5	0	0	5.5	0	2.5	0	0	0	0	0.027
Melodious Lark	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0.003
Neddicky	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0.002
Pintailed Whydah	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.001
Quailfinch	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.011
Red-billed Quelea	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.022

Species	lc16	lc17	lc18	lc19	lc20	lc21	lc22	lc23	lc24	lc25	lc26	lc28	lc29	lc30	Mean Birds/ha
Red-capped Lark	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.002
Red-headed Finch	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.003
Rufous-naped Lark	0	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	0.014
Scaly-feathered Weaver	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.018
Southern Fiscal	0	0	1	0	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	1	0	0	0.5	1	0.011
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.005
Spike-heeled Lark	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0.019
Southern Masked Weaver	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.006
Wattled Starling	0	0	0	0	5.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.008
White-browed Sparrow-weaver	0	0	0	1	1.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.027
Yellow Canary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.004
Zitting Cisticola	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.5	0.5	0.005
Number of individuals	7	3	8.5	9	19.5	9	7	14	9	7	3.5	7	6	7.5	
Number of species	7	4	9	12	14	8	8	9	11	6	4	6	8	10	
Number of birds/ha	8.97	3.85	10.90	11.54	25.00	11.54	8.97	17.95	11.54	8.97	4.49	8.97	7.69	9.62	
Number of species/ha	8.97	5.13	11.54	15.38	17.95	10.26	10.26	11.54	14.10	7.69	5.13	7.69	10.26	12.82	
Average number of birds/ha	12.38														
Average number of species/ha	10.74														

Appendix 3: Assessment of Impacts

Direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of the issues identified through the scoping study, as well as all other issues identified in the EIA phase must be assessed in terms of the following criteria:

- The **nature**, which shall include a description of what causes the effect, what will be affected and how it will be affected.
- The **extent**, wherein it will be indicated whether the impact will be local (limited to the immediate area or site of development) or regional, and a value between 1 and 5 will be assigned as appropriate (with 1 being low and 5 being high).
- The **duration**, wherein it will be indicated whether:
 - the lifetime of the impact will be of a very short duration (0–1 years) – assigned a score of 1;
 - the lifetime of the impact will be of a short duration (2-5 years) - assigned a score of 2;
 - medium-term(5–15 years) – assigned a score of 3;
 - long term(> 15 years) - assigned a score of 4; or
 - permanent - assigned a score of 5;
- The **consequences (magnitude)**, quantified on a scale from 0-10, where 0 is small and will have no effect on the environment, 2 is minor and will not result in an impact on processes, 4 is low and will cause a slight impact on processes, 6 is moderate and will result in processes continuing but in a modified way, 8 is high (processes are altered to the extent that they temporarily cease), and 10 is very high and results in complete destruction of patterns and permanent cessation of processes.
- The **probability** of occurrence, which shall describe the likelihood of the impact actually occurring. Probability will be estimated on a scale of 1–5, where 1 is very improbable (probably will not happen), 2 is improbable (some possibility, but low likelihood), 3 is probable (distinct possibility), 4 is highly probable (most likely) and 5 is definite (impact will occur regardless of any prevention measures).
- The **significance**, which shall be determined through a synthesis of the characteristics described above and can be assessed as low, medium or high; and
 - the status, which will be described as either positive, negative or neutral.
 - the degree to which the impact can be reversed.
 - the degree to which the impact may cause irreplaceable loss of resources.
 - the degree to which the impact can be mitigated.

The significance is calculated by combining the criteria in the following formula:

$$S=(E+D+M)P$$

S = Significance weighting

E = Extent

D = Duration

M =Magnitude

P = Probability

The significance weightings for each potential impact are as follows:

- < 30 points: Low (i.e. where this impact would not have a direct influence on the decision to develop in the area),
- 30-60 points: Medium (i.e. where the impact could influence the decision to develop in the area unless it is effectively mitigated), and
- 60 points: High (i.e. where the impact must have an influence on the decision process to develop in the area).