

Description of Demonstration Project

Adapted from Annex G of the *UNEP/GEF "Wings Over Wetlands"*
 Project "Enhancing Conservation of the Critical Network of Sites required by
Migratory Waterbirds on the African/Eurasian Flyways (AEWA)" – project no. 51210

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1a. Table 1: Summary of background information on demonstration site

Name	Wakkerstroom Wetland and surrounding grassland (part of the Grassland Biosphere Reserve Important Bird Area).
Size (hectares)	1250 ha
Location (grid reference)	27° 22'S; 30° 07'E
Principal wetland features.	The Wakkerstroom Wetland (1000 ha) is predominantly a mosaic of <i>Carex acutiformis</i> - <i>Leersia hexandra</i> marsh. The centre of the vlei is permanently wet and is dominated by <i>Phragmites australis</i> . An often extensive belt of sedge marsh surrounds this, on permanently to seasonally flooded ground, characterised by <i>Typha</i> , <i>Schoenoplectus corymbosus</i> , <i>Cyperus fastigiatus</i> and <i>Eleocharis</i> . This marsh grades into a narrow zone of sedge meadow with <i>Andropogon appendiculatus</i> , <i>Eleocharis</i> , <i>Pycneus macranthus</i> and <i>Kyllinga erecta</i> and then into extensive wet grassland dominated by <i>Eragrostis</i> , <i>Andropogon</i> and <i>Hemarthria</i> . The vlei contains very little open water, the largest area being in the northeastern corner. The wetland is located in the upper catchment of the Tugela River and is important for maintaining the quality of water supplied to the Zaaihoek Dam.
Bird species of principal importance under the AEWA agreement and Ramsar Convention.	The Wakkerstroom wetland regularly contains populations of the, South African Shelduck (<i>Tadorna cana</i>), Yellow-billed Duck (<i>Anas undulata undulata</i>), Avocet (<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>), Threebanded Plover (<i>Charadrius tricollaris tricollaris</i>), Marsh Sandpiper (<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>), Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>), Wood Sandpiper (<i>Tringa glareola</i>), Little Stint (<i>Calidris minuta</i>), species included in the AEWA agreement. The Wakkerstroom wetland occasionally contains a number of the globally threatened Blue Crane (<i>Grus paradisea</i>). This is usually during periods of drought when smaller wetlands in the Grassland Biosphere Reserve have dried up. During times of drought the populations of the other water-birds also increase substantially. The wetland is further important from a national perspective as it contains the second largest number of breeding pairs of Grey Crowned Cranes (<i>Balearica regulorum</i>) of any wetland in South Africa and seven pairs of White-winged Flufftail (<i>Sarothrura ayresi</i>), these two species are not included in the AEWA agreement.
Protective status of the	The Wakkerstroom Wetland is a formally protected Provincial Nature Reserve. Application for its RAMSAR designation is currently underway. BirdLife

site.	South Africa and the Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Authority (MPTA) are in the process of completing a memorandum of understanding with regards to co-operative management of the wetland and adjacent grasslands on BirdLife South Africa's property. MPTA no longer has the resources to manage the Wakkerstroom Wetland and have approached BirdLife South Africa to take over the management from them. The Wakkerstroom Wetland is part of the Grassland Biosphere Reserve Important Bird Area, the most important IBA in South Africa.
Summary of wetland uses.	Current wetland uses include controlled grazing, controlled reed cutting and bird watching. The water from the wetland enters water storage schemes downstream for human consumption.
Summary of wetland threats.	There are two main threats to the site. The most significant is in the wider catchment of the site. Management of the privately owned adjacent grasslands is in isolation from the wetland. This is resulting in erosion damage on inlet channels and invasive alien trees in the catchments. In the latter case, this will reduce long-term water inflow and alter the ecological character of the site. The second threat to the site corresponds to a low level of support for conservation of the site from local people. Currently there is relatively little benefit to them from conservation of the site. If this situation is not remedied, then long term protection cannot be assured particularly as current levels of financial support for protection and management have been reduced and as a result there is no formal conservation presence. This has occurred as funds for the provincial government conservation department have been drastically reduced.
Agencies responsible for site management and their roles.	<p><u>BirdLife South Africa</u>: management of ecotourism, a guide training facility and grassland on its property.</p> <p><u>Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Authority</u>: BirdLife South Africa, Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Authority (MPTA) and Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Society are working on a management plan for the wetland that will include obtaining Ramsar status for the wetland. MPTA and BLSA are currently negotiating joint management of the BLSA Wakkerstroom property.</p> <p><u>Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Society</u>: an NGO, provides funding and action support for Mpumalanga Parks Board.</p> <p><u>Private individuals</u>: management of their grasslands adjacent to the wetland.</p> <p><u>Ekangala Grasslands Trust</u> The high altitude moist grasslands that extend across the boundaries of the KZN, Free State and Mpumalanga provinces host extraordinarily high levels of biodiversity and endemism, and deliver numerous important ecosystem services such as water production and livestock grazing.</p> <p>However, these important grasslands are not well represented in any network of formal protected areas and are under constant threat of transformation through unsustainable land-use practices.</p> <p>Current land uses are however compatible with conservation objectives. An independent Trust, the Ekangala Grassland Trust has been established to assist farmers and other landowners to continue farming as they currently do through access to funding and promoting ecotourism. The area targeted by the Ekangala Grassland Trust represents one of the largest remaining contiguous pieces of</p>

	<p>relatively untransformed grassland in southern Africa. Establishing this area as a Biosphere Reserve is a positive way forward.</p> <p><u>SANBI</u> (South African National Biodiversity Institute) The grassland biome is the most threatened biome in South Africa. A Grassland Forum was initiated in 2002, which brought together various role-players from across provincial boundaries. This Forum has now requested that SANBI lead a National Grassland Biodiversity Initiative and develop appropriate programmes within the grassland biome. The goal of this programme is to ensure that ecological services provided by the grasslands are sustained now and into the future, contributing to economic development and poverty alleviation. Grasslands are important for economic development but this development also threatens the grasslands. As such the initiative will follow a strategic approach of mainstreaming biodiversity in production landscapes and sectors including agriculture, forestry and urban sectors.</p> <p>In October 2004, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) approved funding to support an 18-month detailed planning process, involving in-depth stakeholder participation, to develop this initiative.</p>
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NOTE: The activities described in the present project description are indicative only and may be subject to revision as a result of a project launching workshop to be held on site at the outset of the project. The workshop will ensure participation of all project stakeholders in the review and update of the project objectives, workplan and budget. Subject to prior approval by UNOPS, the results of the workshop and associated revised workplan will be incorporate in the project Inception Report.

1b. Relevance and importance of the site and proposed activities in the national biodiversity strategy.

The Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Tourism compiled a document outlining national conservation priorities for South Africa. This document lists both the Grassland Biosphere Reserve Important Bird Area and the Wakkerstroom Wetland as being of high priority. In terms of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan grasslands have been sited as “severely under protected”. Various programmes are currently being established to conserve grassland biodiversity in the region.

1c. Role and status of the site in other relevant national policies/initiatives

The Ministry of Water Affairs and Forestry view the removal of alien invasive vegetation (Working For Water Programme) as one of the high priority projects in South Africa, which is designed to combat the threat of these invasives to South Africa’s indigenous vegetation and water resources. South African grasslands and in particular the Grassland Biosphere Reserve Important Bird Area is seen as a priority area for the implementation of this project. As a result, BirdLife South Africa and Mpumalanga Parks Board were awarded funding to begin this programme in the catchment of the Wakkerstroom Wetland. The removal of alien vegetation was

accompanied by replacement with indigenous vegetation to prevent the unprotected soil from being eroded away. During the implementation of this project other high erosion risk areas were identified and measures put into place to counteract any erosion occurring. This project (Working For Water) therefore includes erosion control in the catchment of the Wakkerstroom Wetland. Much work has already been completed under this programme

1d. Current conservation status and threats to the site.

The Wakkerstroom Wetland is a formally protected Provincial Nature Reserve. The surrounding grasslands are privately owned. Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Authority (the provincial conservation authority under whose jurisdiction this wetland falls) is in the process of completing the paper work to apply for RAMSAR status for the Wakkerstroom Wetland.

Despite these initiatives there are a number of threats to the site. The hydrological functioning of the wetland is disrupted, largely by invasive alien vegetation in the surrounding catchment, which results in a decrease in input of water to the site. This could have pronounced effects especially during years of very low rainfall (drought). Furthermore, removal of these trees has resulted in a degree of soil erosion, further altering the character of the site. Burning of adjacent grasslands to improve grazing for cattle frequently causes fires to cross into the wetland at times of year that are highly disruptive to the ecosystem (burning biannually at appropriate times would be acceptable).

The site is also coveted as rich grazing land by surrounding landowners and there is increasing pressure from them to open up the wetland reserve and allow cattle to graze. This is reflective of a wider local opinion that the site generates little in the way of income and benefits and so is a resource that could be better put to other uses. Alternative sources of income need to be developed and implemented in order to prevent this from becoming a reality and further degrading the wetland.

1e. Details of current/past management activities, the organisations involved and current status of management in the site.

BirdLife South Africa and the Mpumalanga Parks Board are in the process of completing a memorandum of understanding with regards to co-operative management of the wetland and adjacent grasslands on BirdLife South Africa's property. BirdLife South Africa chairs and convenes a representative forum (Wakkerstroom Wetland Forum) concerned with maintaining and promoting the sustainable use and cooperative management of the wetland and surrounding grasslands. The Wakkerstroom Wetland is part of the Grassland Biosphere Reserve Important Bird Area, the most important IBA in South Africa. In the past, each organisation operated independently, BirdLife South Africa managing the grasslands on its property and Mpumalanga Parks Board managed the wetland. Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Society, an NGO, provides funding and action support for Mpumalanga Parks Board. Private individuals manage their grasslands adjacent to the wetland independently. MPTA together with BirdLife and other interested parties are currently developing a joint management plan for the wetland and surrounding areas.

1f. Synthesis of the current management needs in the site, emphasising the gaps that need to be filled.

The overall need to be filled is to secure the long-term future conservation of the Wakkerstroom Wetland in the face of increasing pressure from local people and landowners to use the site for other purposes. This cannot be achieved by excluding these stakeholders both because the surrounding grasslands cannot be purchased and managed as part of the site and because a root cause of the land-use pressure on the site is more fundamental and linked to low incomes and employment levels in the wider community. Securing the long-term conservation of the wetland can best be achieved by developing and implementing programmes that generate broad local support for conservation of the wetland. This can be accomplished by developing projects and programmes that provide direct tangible benefits to the local community, thus enforcing the value of the wetland to the local community.

A further priority is the need to eliminate erosion in and upstream, of the wetland. This problem is temporarily made worse by the removal of invasive alien vegetation from the wetland and its catchment (under another funded programme). The invasive alien vegetation currently reduces water delivery to the wetland. This reduction in water delivery to the wetland is affecting the hydrological functioning of the wetland with serious potential knock-on effects for the quality of habitat for waterbirds. These negative effects will be more pronounced during low rainfall years and could eventually threaten the functional integrity of the wetland. The programme initiated with co-funding obtained from the Working for Water Programme is aimed at addressing these problems through the removal of the exotic vegetation and erosion control..

2. DEMONSTRATION PROJECT RATIONALE, IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE AND SUB-OBJECTIVES

2a. Demonstration project rationale.

The long-term future of the site is threatened by low awareness on the importance of the site amongst local stakeholders combined with low levels of income and benefits derived from its conservation. The project will therefore seek to directly engage local people in the running of the site through a series of measures focusing on ecotourism that will target naturalists and particularly bird-watchers. There is already some bird watching related tourism, taking place at the site in connection with the Wakkerstroom Centre run by BirdLife South Africa. The Centre aims to perform a number of functions including conservation of biodiversity (particularly birds), the promotion of birding tourism to Wakkerstroom, provision of training for bird guides and the creation of awareness on the values of wetlands and grasslands in particular, using Cranes. BirdLife South Africa has promoted ecotourism at its own camping ground as well as other ecotourism activities, through marketing in its own media, (estimated to have a promotion value of \$15 000). However, this activity is currently based on limited on-site facilities that do not maximise the potential of the site as an attraction or the revenue that can benefit local people. If these problems can be addressed it is envisaged that ecotourism and support activities can create a situation where local people can be more fully engaged through several different activities. These include production and sale of goods to the Centre, the guiding of tourist parties within the site and along ecological corridors linking the site to others in the locality and the development of local trades to support the establishment and maintenance of new facilities and attractions. In

tandem, awareness raising campaigns will be launched amongst the local community, to boost appreciation of the value of the natural resources in the site and the links between its continued conservation and the improved benefits to them. This will help to counter the degradation of lands surrounding the site and perception that it would be better used as a resource for agricultural use.

Successful ecotourism in the site will also be dependent on providing a site and attractions that visitors want to come and see. The current site is well endowed with rare species and an attractive landscape. However, the nature of bird migration, degradation of the site as a result of alien invasive species, erosion and variable accessibility to attractions can offset these advantages. The project will seek to provide a better all year round attraction for tourists through a number of measures. Degradation of the site will be addressed through a programme that removes the alien species and addresses the problems of erosion (this is funded under the Working for Water Programme and comprises a significant source of co-financing for the project). Access to attractions will be improved by providing walkways, new and improved hides and strategies to attract more of the visiting bird species that are particularly attractive to visitors. Also, habitat creation will increase the capacity of the site to provide refuge for waterbirds.

By linking education, skills development and jobs with biodiversity conservation, national priorities are met (short-term to medium priorities in South Africa are job creation and skills development). The long-term result will be a cadre of people who depend on the conservation of biodiversity for their income and who are equipped with the knowledge, motivation and means to sustainably utilise and conserve the natural resources on which they depend.

2b. Immediate objective.

To conserve the Wakkerstroom wetland through maximising biodiversity and the development of ecotourism including benefits flowing to local communities.

2c. Sub-objectives.

In order to achieve the above mentioned objective the project will address the following sub-objectives:

Sub-objective 1. To develop and promote ecotourism to achieve an increase in visitor numbers of 10% within 6 months and income flows to local people of 25%.

For the long-term conservation of Wakkerstroom to be achieved local communities must secure greater benefits from the management of the site than is currently the case. Ecotourism will form the basis of addressing this problem. Existing facilities will be expanded and the role of local people in these activities increased thus integrating their well-being more closely, with their operation. This will include the improvement of infrastructure provided for tourists, providing an interpretative centre, improving facilities marketing, training of local people as guides, development of an arts and crafts industry, and the development of a vegetable garden to supply quality produce to visitors. Creation of additional attractions for the site will also help to increase visitor numbers and enable local people to become involved in the development and

maintenance of the site; these activities will be carried out to realise objective 2. It is expected that a 10% increase in tourist numbers will result within 6 months of the completion of the enhancements proposed under this objective.

Considerable effort has gone into consulting with stakeholders to ensure their appropriate integration into the project design. BirdLife South Africa held a workshop with all sectors of communities in Wakkerstroom in May 1999, which showed widespread support and enthusiasm for these projects. A second workshop facilitated by Themba Trust, held on 28 August 2001 reaffirmed local support, identified potential stakeholders and current industries being undertaken at Esizamaleni Township at Wakkerstroom. These persons will be the primary stakeholders in the creation of new opportunities. BirdLife South Africa also sits on the board of Wakkerstroom Tourism Authority, Wakkerstroom Wetland Conservation Forum, Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Association, and the Ekangala Grassland Trust (the last aimed at conservation of the Grassland Biosphere Reserve), South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) with numerous meetings on ongoing basis, and thus widespread support for its vision within Wakkerstroom. Since mid-2001, BirdLife has established a working relationship with Themba Trust. This Trust will act as trainers, advisers and managers of the small enterprises to the point of self-sustainability over four years. BLSA has also established contact with the Uthaga Tourism and Development Association (UTDA), an informal community based association which receives development funding from the local municipality and the Wakkerstroom Youth Association.

Sub-objective 2. To establish a secure wintering feeding site for Blue and Grey Crowned Cranes through development of a feeding site and outreach to local farmers.

One of the main attractions of the site is the large number of cranes that visit to feed. Currently this is a seasonal attraction owing to the migratory behaviour of these species. This creates a corresponding fluctuation in visitor numbers. Coupled with this there are no interpretative facilities to enhance the experience (these will be provided through activities under Outcome 2). Therefore the creation of Africa's first crane spectacle is important, creating an attraction to which tourists would come to watch wild cranes feeding during the winter months, when few visitors otherwise come to Wakkerstroom. Elsewhere in the world, Crane feeding sites attract thousands of visitors and constitute viable tourist facility in their own right.

Sub-objective 3. To maximise the potential of the site as an ecotourism attraction by improving the habitat that waterbird species depend on, and raising the awareness of the local population.

The principal value of the site as an ecotourism attraction is in its value as a refuge for waterbirds and so the capacity of the site must be maximized for these purposes. This can be achieved both by better management and enhancing aspects of the site. Activities under this objective will seek to maximize the potential of the site and thereby enhance its value for ecotourism. The site is threatened by alien invasive species and erosion, this needs to be well addressed and managed to prevent long term destruction to the site's capacity. Removal of these tree species and measures to control erosion will be employed. With a different management system, parts of the site could create additional capacity for breeding waterbirds and specifically the highly endangered White-winged Flufftail (they are estimated at less than 1000 individuals

left). New habitats will be created to support greater numbers of these species and to increase the role of the site in breeding. In addition to this, it is essential that the effect of this management on the population of visiting birds can be monitored. It will therefore be important to develop a new monitoring scheme that is sufficiently sensitive to changes in bird numbers as a result of changes to the site.

Sub-objective 4. To make project information available in the public domain.

To truly act as a demonstration project, dissemination of information concerning the planning, execution and results of the programme and its outcomes is therefore important. Information will be disseminated and made available through various media to enable others to learn from the project.

Sub-objective 5. To establish a management and implementation structure that co-ordinates the implementation of the project by different stakeholders.

The implementation of the project and the sustainable development of the area require close collaboration between a number of different stakeholders, particularly BirdLife South Africa, Wakkerstroom Tourist Authority, SACWAG, Themba Trust, Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Association, national and provincial conservation authorities and various local stakeholder groups. A project team will be assembled to execute the project. Staff will be in place by the third month after the project starts. They will be responsible for all aspects of local project management including coordination of activities under sub-objectives 1-3, financial administration and reporting on progress using data collected from monitoring.

2d. Demonstration value of the project.

The site will become a demonstration of an array of measures that build a broad community support and promote conservation through an ecotourism focus. The project will change a significant local project with some national applications to a national and international demonstration of alternative conservation practice. Regionally and in conservation as a whole, this development is not unique but its overall novelty lies in the improvement and adaptations it makes to previous models developed in the far more easily marketed savannah (e.g. Kruger National Park) habitat of South Africa.

The modifications to the process / approach are necessary in order to make this undertaking sustainable in an area that is less marketable relative to the savannah habitats. It is therefore an important demonstration of how these methods can be adapted to wetlands in this region and will provide considerable lessons to be learned from the attempt to make this type of system 'marketable'.

3. DEMONSTRATION PROJECT OUTCOMES AND ACTIVITIES.

3a. Outcomes and activities

Outcome 1. Ecotourism promoted and developed to achieve an increase in visitor numbers of 10% within 6 months and income flows to local people of 25%.

Activity 1.1 Development of infrastructure to provide an improved and more extensive visitor experience.

Infrastructure for ecotourism will be significantly improved to create an experience for visitors. Currently only a camp site and some basic hides are present; expansion of these could attract more visitors. Additionally, new infrastructure will be built to enhance the range of activities visitors can undertake, increase access to wildlife and make the experience more comfortable. A small specialist hide on a wetland area for photographers will be constructed. Facilities at existing hides will be upgraded, through the provision of wall-mounted bird identification plates and information, placing rocks and tree stumps strategically as bird perches in the water in front of the three new hides. An interpretative centre will be built to provide information on wetlands and cranes (much of this will be provided by The South African Crane Working Group (SACWAG)), and on grasslands, the Wakkerstroom district and history and other tourist information (to be provided from several sources).

Activity 1.2 Marketing of the Wakkerstroom site to potential visitors

Currently some marketing is carried out through media run by BirdLife South Africa. However, the intention is to attract additional visitors and expand the site's niche. A marketing programme will be developed and will include placing articles in national outdoor magazines in South Africa, an improved web-site presentation and invitations to journalists of outdoor magazines to visit Wakkerstroom. New materials will be developed for visitors to the site including a birding route map. Guide availability (guide training is described in Activity 1.3) will be publicised on the BirdLife South Africa web-site, and will help generate increased tourism to Wakkerstroom as well as elsewhere. Marketing skills are essential in this regard and it's part of the ongoing support to newly trained wetland guides that BirdLife South Africa offers. Other opportunities that will be used are advertising the database in BirdLife South Africa's Newsletter, "Africa Birds & Birding", "African Bird Club" and other media. Concurrently BirdLife South Africa will continue to improve the promotion of the site within its own networks. Birdlife South Africa has already established a new web-site www.birdlife.org.za, which is already attracting queries on birding in South Africa, and will offer substantial additional support marketing through its glossy magazine and newsletter. BirdLife Travel will promote the site and the guides at travel shows both locally and internationally and include Wakkerstroom in itineraries for birders. The BirdLife South Africa Avitourism Division will develop a birding route in the area.

Activity 1.3 Training of local people as guides

One of the other functions of the Wakkerstroom Centre is as a training centre for guides. The first dedicated bird guide-training course in South Africa was held in Wakkerstroom Centre, with 80 trainees from South Africa trained within four courses. Also, an international "train-the-trainers" course was held in September 2001. These references will be used to train 10 local people as wetland and birding guides. The guides will be trained to cover a greater area than just the Wakkerstroom site, this will offer birders additional options, including the newly established Northern Natal Birding route to the east of the site. Wakkerstroom will benefit from promoting this route, and will receive more tourists as part of a greater regional tourist initiative. Two of the ten guides will be based permanently in Wakkerstroom to offer courses to schools.

Activity 1.4 Creation of jobs and businesses for local people

There is a need to increase the benefits generated to the local communities through job creation and business opportunities. This will be achieved through creation of an arts and crafts industry, construction of a shop to sell these items and establishment of a vegetable garden to supply the needs of the local tourism industry. The arts and crafts industry will be stimulated through partnership with the Themba Trust. This operates from Dirkiesdorp 40 km from Wakkerstroom. Themba Trust is a long-established trust with an annual turnover of \$500,000 and substantial experience with training local persons in indigenous arts and crafts and in creating vegetable gardens. A target craft is the carving of life-sized painted wooden crane decoys, required to attract cranes, but which can also be sold to tourists. The Trust has sourced a carver who can train Wakkerstroom residents to create the crane decoys. It is estimated that the arts and crafts industries will employ between 7 and 10 persons. The shop will be built in Wakkerstroom and will sell locally made arts and crafts, employing one or two persons. Vegetables are either non-existent, or expensive and of poor quality in Wakkerstroom. There is a need for quality vegetables during guide-training courses, for tourists and for the local community generally. The establishment of a vegetable garden, owned by a trust created for this specific purpose, using techniques well tried and tested in South Africa, will provide income for another 5-8 persons.

Outcome 2. A secure wintering feeding site is established for Blue and Grey Crowned Cranes through development of a feeding site and outreach to local farmers.

Activity 2.1 Develop a Crane feeding site to attract wintering cranes

Blue and Grey Crowned cranes flock in winter, and are susceptible to poisoning at this time. By creating a crane-feeding site at Wakkerstroom, it is hoped to protect the birds from poisoning, whilst creating a tourist spectacle (linked with sub-objective 1). Cranes will be attracted to the feeding site using crops and dry feed. Firstly, there are Grey Crowned Cranes at the wetland and they are currently part of small-scale feeding experiments, to find out which dry feed and crop is preferred. Secondly, wooden decoys will be used to lure wild birds (these will be made by the arts and crafts industry described above and will also be sold to tourists).

Activity 2.3 Implement a Crane Outreach Programme for local school children and farm-workers.

SACWAG has established the crane outreach programme, which employs a full-time worker, from the local isiZulu community and supervised by a volunteer. The programme is targeted at school children in urban (Wakkerstroom, Dirkiesdorp) and rural (farm) schools within approximately a 150 km radius of Wakkerstroom. Farm-workers are from farms within a 150km radius of Wakkerstroom. The programme aims to educate school children, in their own language (isiZulu), on the need to conserve and protect water, wetlands and cranes. The programme incorporates and builds on real examples from the area to illustrate why (e.g. droughts result in water shortages and why the Wakkerstroom Wetland is the only source of water remaining at such times, the problems caused by erosion and how to prevent it). This session will be the same for farm-workers with the addition of a section dealing with crane poisoning and the responsible storage and use of pesticides.

Outcome 3. The potential of the site as an ecotourism attraction is maximized by improving the habitat that waterbird species depend on and raising awareness of the local population.

Activity 3.1 Establish a waterbird monitoring system to enable evaluation of the success of habitat improvement measures.

BirdLife South Africa is already undertaking and facilitating car-based bird counts and waterbird counts in the area. However, this is not sufficiently sensitive to detect changes in visiting bird numbers that may result due to changes in habitat quality, quantity, and other management measures designed to attract birds. BirdLife South Africa will set up a regular system of counts and will build an archive of all past counts. This information will be used to establish the success of the habitat related measures in the GEF project and inform reviews of the habitat management plans that will take place in 3.2.

Activity 3.2 Management of habitats to maximise biodiversity.

Development of the wetland as an eco-tourist attraction means that the area must be able to cater for substantially increased number of visitors without a significant impact on the biodiversity of the area. The Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Association and Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Authority have produced a habitat management plan for the wetland. This did not take into account an increase in visitor numbers. The management plan therefore requires revision. Habitat plans will be reviewed and amended to create a situation where biodiversity on the site can be maintained and improved within the context of substantially increased visitor numbers and facilities. The review will involve Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Authority, BirdLife South Africa, Wakkerstroom Natural Heritage Association, Wakkerstroom Municipality, and the South African Crane Working Group, land-owners with land adjacent to the wetland and individuals from the local community. A limited inventory of the biodiversity of the wetland will also be made. This information will be used to attract birders and specialists in other biota (e.g. frogs, ground orchids etc) to the wetland. Specific attention in the plans will be given to the need to create breeding opportunities for all resident and migratory waterbirds, especially where opportunities may be lost due to the creation of certain visitor facilities. More precise details will only become clear once the project is implemented. These will be implemented in Activity 3.3

Activity 3.3 Creation of island and floating platforms as waterbird breeding site.

This would include the establishment of new breeding opportunities for resident and migratory waterbirds. It is envisaged that increased visitor numbers will reduce the available habitat for all feeding and breeding waterbirds along the outside edge of certain sections of the wetland. In order to counteract this; initial thinking is to create islands within the wetland – allowing visitors to see the birds and providing the birds with safe feeding and breeding sites far enough away from the visitors. It is at this stage not clear what species may be affected. The species and other innovative ideas to counteract unwanted consequences of developing the site will be identified and implemented during project implementation.

Activity 3.4 Run local schools wetland and education programmes.

The long-term conservation of the wetland will depend on the elimination of threats to the wetland. This depends to a large degree on the long-term support of the local people, the great majority of whom are poor. It is essential that awareness and education programmes be set up to

promote the value of the wetlands and cranes. The interpretative centre will support these educational programmes with static displays on the values of wetlands, waterbirds and biodiversity (see Activity 1.1). The crane outreach programme of SACWAG is specifically aimed at school children and farm workers (see Activity 2.3). Initially school children and adults in the local communities will be targeted with financing (co-financing in the context of this AEWPA project) from two additional programmes; the Working for Water programme and BirdLife South Africa’s “Learning for Sustainable Living” programme (specifically aimed at school children). Once the GEF project is completed, the ongoing education of local Wakkerstroom school children will be covered through revenue generated by the increased ecotourism to the area. BirdLife South Africa’s “Learning for Sustainable Living” programme involves the development of an environmental education resource book intended for inclusion into the South African National Education Curriculum. The publication entitled “Learning for Sustainable Living” uses environmental examples to teach school subjects as diverse as English and Maths. BirdLife South Africa is currently holding teacher workshops throughout South Africa, to promote the resource and assist teachers in its use. Wakkerstroom and surroundings, is one of the areas targeted for a teacher’s workshop. Local community members employed by the Working For Water project will undergo training on the project’s why, what? and, how? In this way the labour is provided with, not only employment, but also some basic environmental education.

Activity 3.5 Maintenance of site character and value for ecotourism

The long-term sustainability of the site will be linked to ecotourism in the future by expanding and improving facilities thereby increasing visitor numbers. It is therefore essential, that the site continues to sustainably support the wildlife attractions people come to see. As already noted, alien invasive tree species and erosion pose threats to the continued value of the site, its role as an ecotourism attraction and indirectly to the local people’s well-being. The “Working for Water” poverty relief programme of the South African Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism, which is also providing some co-financing for outreach will also fund this essential maintenance work. It includes the removal of alien trees within the catchment, and halting the current erosion damage within the wetland and its catchment. When considering the benefits to local communities, this programme will create 80 jobs in two years.

Outcome 4. Project information is available in the public domain.

Activity 4.1 Document and make available information on projects

This relates to the documentation and dissemination of all activities and results that may be useful to programmes in Africa or elsewhere. This will be made available through BirdLife South Africa’s website. Hard copies will also be made available for free or at cost, depending on the financial status of the requesting agency, for any aspect of the project. Thus the list of materials will include the Business Plan for the Wakkerstroom Development, the Working for Water programme, inventory of hide designs, management plans, visitor centres, management plans, establishment and operation of small enterprises and guide-training manuals etc. This is expected to significantly boost the demonstration value of the project.

Outcome 5. Smooth project execution and evaluation of success.

Activity 5.1 Creation of project team and steering committee.

Coordination and supervision of the project activities will be carried out by a project supervisor (BirdLife South Africa: Director), project leader (BirdLife South Africa: Community Based Biodiversity Conservation Project Manager) and a local co-ordinator. Detailed terms of reference for project staff will be developed in collaboration with the overall GEF Project Coordinator and will include lines of management and responsibilities for project activities and output. All staff are already in the employ of BLSA. A Project Steering Committee drawn from the Wakkerstroom Wetland Forum will, in the context of this project, have terms of reference designed by the project supervisor and members invited to participate. For more details see section 7 of the proposal.

Activity 5.2 Supervision and financial administration of implementation.

The project team will be responsible for day to day technical, financial and administrative supervision of the project. Roles of each staff member are presented in more detail in section 7 of this proposal. Work plans will be developed for the implementing team every six months with each team member allocated specific tasks to be completed over the reporting period. Work plans will be developed to fit within the external project reporting schedule for the GEF project overall, so that review of the previous six months can be integrated.

Activity 5.3 Reporting.

The project supervisor will be responsible for maintaining an overview of the project progress and success. Regular periodic reports will be submitted to the overall GEF Project Coordinator. These will be prepared by the project team and submitted to the Project Steering Committee for approval, prior to submission to the GEF Project Coordinator. Evaluation of progress and success of project activities will be made against the indicators provided in the log-frame.

3b. Project sustainability

The project will become self sufficient, as all activities being undertaken are underpinned by both biodiversity conservation and business principles. However it is business principle being based on the sustainable use of biological resources that will ensure the long-term viability of this project. The basic existing facilities are already attracting birders. The area will be marketed to biologists researching components of grassland biodiversity. Funding has been obtained nationally to train a further 40 individuals from previously disadvantaged communities. The Leventis Foundation (an international foundation) provided funding to train 6 candidates from 6 African countries as bird guide trainers. This international training course was held in September 2001.

4. BUDGET

Table 2: Project financing by expenditure categories

Budget Summary

Budget Category	Link to Project Outcomes & Activities	TOTAL		
		GEF	co-fin.	Total
Personnel	All	90 000	10 000	100 000
Equipment	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9,	49 000	34 000	83 000
Subcontracts	3.5		38 000	38 000
Workshops and training	1.6, 1.8, 1.10, 2.3, 3.1, 3.4,	39 000	4 000	43 000
Travel	All	30 000	10 000	40 000
Executing agency support overhead	All	12 000	11 000	23 000
Monitoring, evaluation, auditing	All	2 000	4 000	6 000
Miscellaneous	All	26 000	190 000	216 000
Total		248 000	301 000	549 999

NB: The travel budget has been calculated to allow the demonstration project to participate in two international WOW workshops

Table 3: Budget and Disbursement Projection

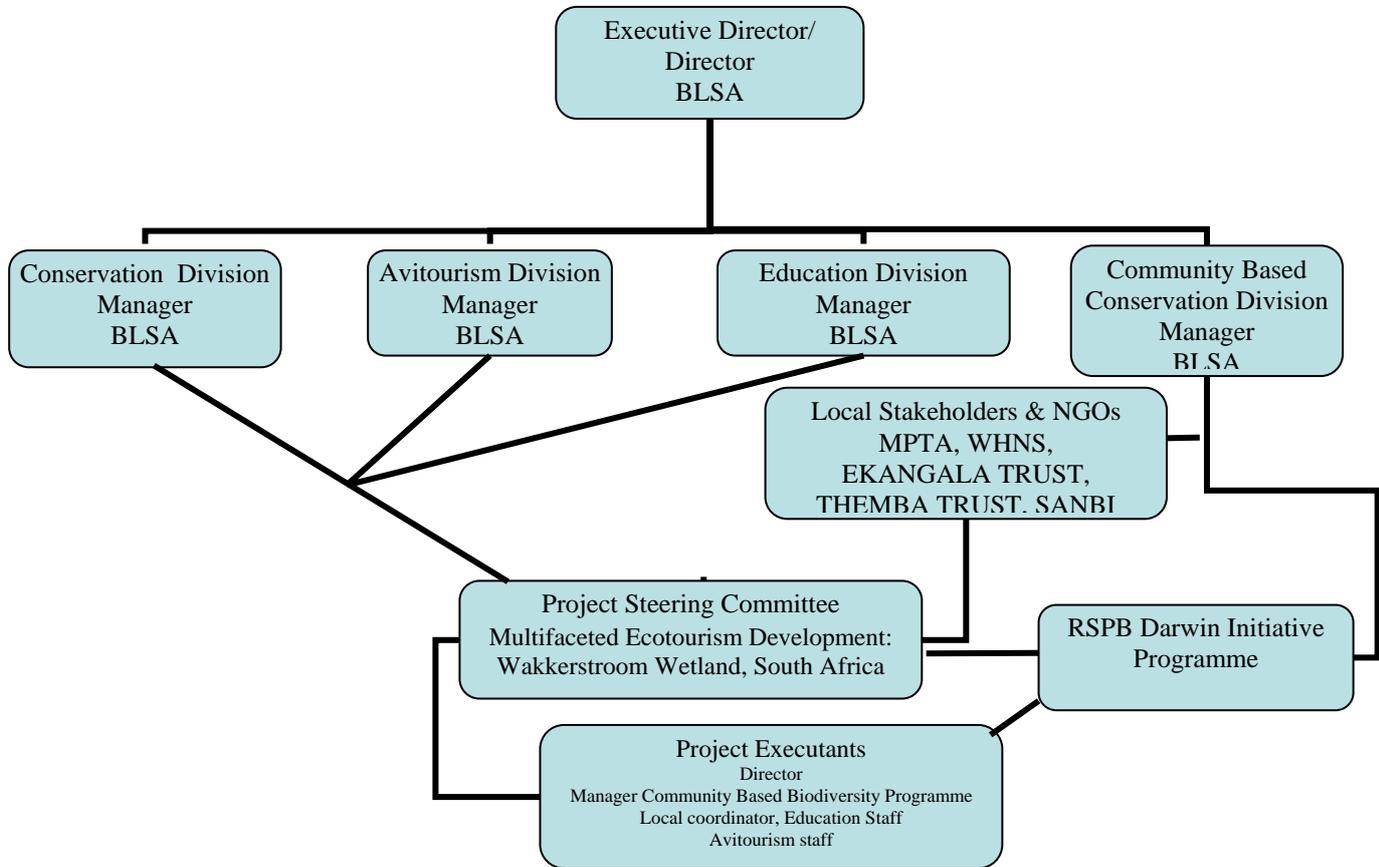
Budget Category	Link to Project Outcomes & Activities	Year 1 – breakdown		Year 2 - breakdown		Year 3 - breakdown		Year 4	TOTAL
		semester 1	semester 2	semester 3	semester 4	semester 5	semester 6	semester 7	
		GEF	GEF	GEF	GEF	GEF	GEF	GEF	GEF
Personnel	All	11 536	22 061	16 073	15 226	13 472	5 581	6 051	90 000
Equipment	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9,	6 265	12 011	8 750	8 290	7 335	3 039	3 310	49 000
Subcontracts	3.5								
Workshops and training	1.6, 1.8, 1.10, 2.3, 3.1, 3.4,	4 988	9 560	6 960	6 600	5 840	2 417	2 635	39 000
Travel	All	3 840	7 350	5 360	5 073	4 488	1 859	2 030	30 000
Executing agency support overhead	All	1 535	2 942	2 142	2 030	1 797	744	810	12 000
Monitoring, evaluation, auditing	All	255	486	360	340	300	125	134	2 000
Miscellaneous	All	3 289	6 381	4 645	4 398	3 892	1 615	1 780	26 000
Total		31 708	60 791	44 290	41 957	37 124	15 380	16 750	248 000

Table 4: Timetable

The project timetable reflects a project duration of 3,5 years (42 months).

ACTIVITY	YEAR 1		YEAR 2		YEAR 3		YEAR 4	
	\$1	\$2	\$3	\$4	\$5	\$6	\$7	\$8
	Activity 1.1. Develop artificial wetland and photographic hide							
Activity 1.2. Enhance existing hides with displays and features								
Activity 1.3. Build, fit and run interpretative centre								
Activity 1.4. Develop and implement marketing plan								
Activity 1.5. Develop regional birding map								
Activity 1.6. Train 10 local guides in birding and wetlands								
Activity 1.7. Build and run shop for local arts & crafts								
Activity 1.8 Develop arts and crafts industry to supply shop								
Activity 1.9 Develop crane-carving industry								
Activity 1.10 Develop vegetable garden to sell to tourists and guide-training centre								
Activity 2.1 Develop crane feeding site to attract wintering cranes								
Activity 2.2 Produce wooden decoy cranes to attract cranes.								
Activity 2.53 Implement crane outreach programme for local farm workers.								
Activity 3.1 Develop waterbird monitoring system.								
Activity 3.2 Management of habitats to maximise biodiversity								
Activity 3.3 Creation of island and floating platforms as waterbird breeding site.								
Activity 3.4 Run local schools wetland and education programmes								
Activity 3.5 Rehabilitation of erosion damage								
Activity 4.1 Document and make available information on projects								
Activity 5.1. Creation of project team and steering committee.								
Activity 5.2. Supervision and financial administration of implementation.								
Activity 5.3. Reporting								

ORGANISATIONAL DIAGRAM



The Project Steering Committee will be representative of all the major agencies and NGOs involved in wetland and/or grassland conservation in the Wakkerstroom region. Community based organisations involved in skills development or job creation projects will also be represented. The steering committee will ensure that the activities of the various groups involved are coordinated and not duplicated and that an overall management plan is devised and implemented between all the parties involved. Mpumalanga Parks and Tourism Authority will manage the development of the Wetland Management plan. The BLSA Manager Community Based Biodiversity Programme and the Local Coordinator will ensure execution of activities and outcomes in terms of this MOU. They will also coordinate with the BLSA Education Manager who will ensure execution of the education programme and the Avitourism Division who will develop the tourism programme. Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) is in charge of the Working for Water (Clearing of invasive plant species and erosion control) poverty relief programme.

8. LOCAL EXECUTING AGENCY CONTACT DETAILS.

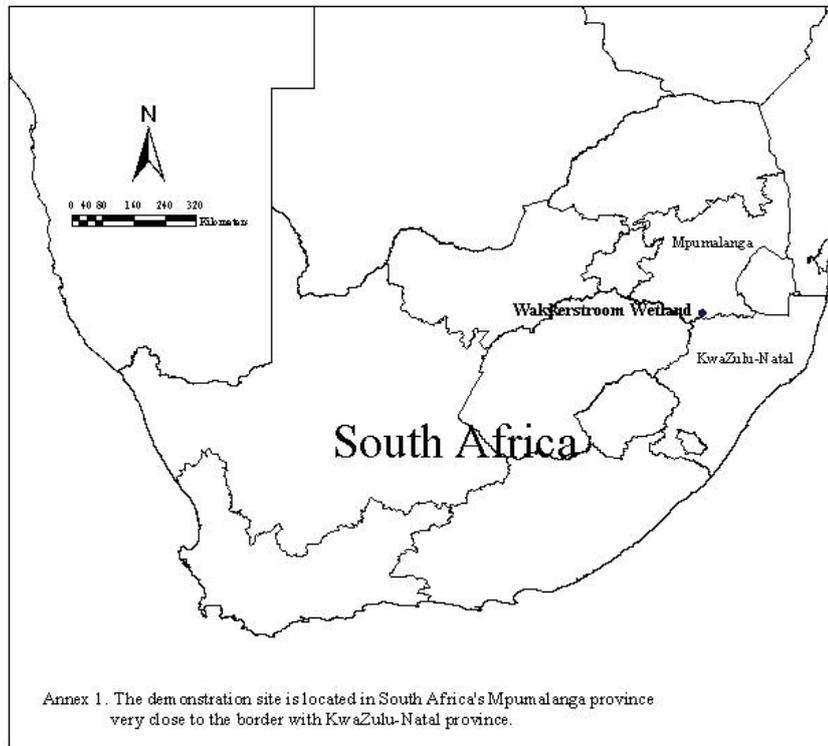
BirdLife South Africa

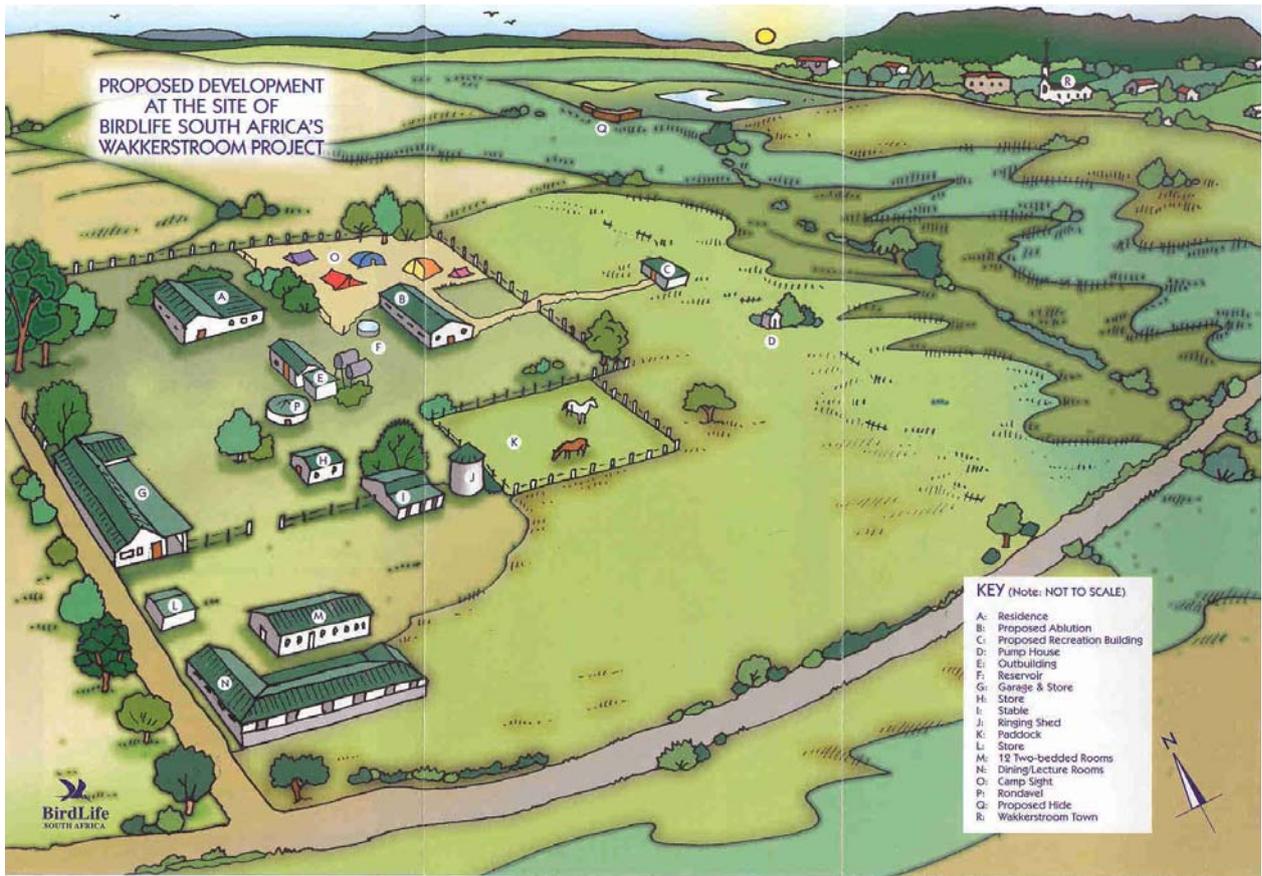
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Annex 1: Location Map and Annex 2: Site Map





A brief explanation of this illustration

This is from a fund-raising brochure compiled by BLSA two years ago. It is certain that some developments proposed in this illustration are no longer taking place. Development options are regularly reviewed and adapted based on what is needed to secure the conservation of the wetland and what will contribute to the economic sustainability of the centre. A, B, D, E, F, J, K, L, M, N, O & R have already been completed. G is partly complete and will ultimately contain the proposed shop. The bird-hide (Q) is intended to be part of the crane feeding and roosting project. A second hide is planned for the area on the wetland in line with D.

8. PROJECT LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Logical Framework diagram for demonstration projects.

Intervention logic.	Indicators of performance.	Means of verification.	Risks and assumptions.
Development objective.			
Immediate Objective. To conserve the Wakkerstroom wetland through maximising biodiversity and the development of ecotourism including benefits flowing to local communities.	Sustainable management of the Wakkerstroom wetland by the fourth year of project implementation. A 10% improvement in the biodiversity of the Wakkerstroom Wetland by the fourth year of	Revised wetland management guidelines and management reports. Wakkerstroom wetland waterbird survey reports (current existing ongoing	Economic and political sustainability in South Africa. BirdLife South Africa's Wakkerstroom

	<p>project implementation.</p> <p>Direct benefits flowing to members of the local community by the third year of project implementation.</p>	<p>monitoring project).</p> <p>Financial and other statements of community members benefiting.</p>	<p>Programme remains viable.</p>
Outcomes.			
<p>1. More ecotourists visit Wakkerstroom and more income/other benefits flow to local communities.</p>	<p>An increase of 10% in number of ecotourists within six months of the enhancements, compared to previous year.</p> <p>Existence of new infrastructure.</p> <p>Development of four new enterprises as a result of this project.</p> <p>An increase of 25% in the income from tourism flowing to local communities compared to the current status.</p>	<p>Records of Wakkerstroom centre. Tourism authority reports.</p> <p>Wakkerstroom financial and written reports.</p> <p>Financial reports of enterprises, Wakkerstroom project. Working for Water, SACWAG, Guide-training Project reports.</p>	
<p>2. Blue and Crowned Cranes visiting the feeding site are seen by large nos. of visitors who are made aware of wetland and crane conservation issues.</p>	<p>At least 80 cranes use the feeding site by the end of the fourth year of the project (currently 4 cranes).</p> <p>Numbers of tourists and educational groups visiting centre increases by 50% compared to visits by the same in the year prior to completion.</p>	<p>Crane counts from BLSA centre.</p> <p>SACWAG crane programme reports.</p> <p>Records of Wakkerstroom centre. Tourism authority reports.</p>	<p>Behavioural or ecological factors do not prevent cranes from using the site.</p> <p>Ongoing good relations with South African Crane Working Group.</p>
<p>3. The numbers and diversity of waterbirds, including AEWA listed species, occurring on and breeding at Wakkerstroom is stable or increases.</p>	<p>Stable numbers of waterbirds.</p>	<p>Waterbird counts.</p> <p>Breeding records.</p> <p>Reports on biodiversity.</p>	
<p>4. Detailed information of all aspects of the demonstration project made available for implementation at other sites.</p>	<p>Number of requests for information increases by 20% compared to the year before project implementation.</p> <p>Increased support for Wakkerstroom wetland by local communities.</p> <p>Existence of information on web-site and/or in hard copy.</p>	<p>Records of Wakkerstroom centre. Tourism Authority reports.</p> <p>Surveys of opinions before and after.</p> <p>Existence of information on web-site and/or in hard copy.</p>	<p>South African Crane Working Group programme continues.</p>

- Activity 1.1.** Construct a boardwalk in wetland.
- Activity 1.2.** Development artificial wetland & photographic hide.
- Activity 1.3.** Enhance existing hide with displays and features
- Activity 1.4.** Build, fit and run interpretative centre.
- Activity 1.5.** Develop and implement marketing plan.
- Activity 1.6.** Develop regional birding map.
- Activity 1.7.** Train 10 local guides in birding and wetlands.
- Activity 1.8.** Build and run shop for local arts and crafts.
- Activity 1.9.** Develop arts and crafts industry to supply shop.
- Activity 1.10.** Develop crane-carving industry.
- Activity 1.11.** Develop vegetable garden.
- Activity 2.1.** Develop crane feeding site to attract wintering cranes.
- Activity 2.2.** Produce wooden decoy cranes to attract cranes
- Activity 2.5.** Implement crane outreach programme for local farm workers.
- Activity 3.1.** Develop waterbird monitoring system.
- Activity 3.2.** Manage habitats to maximise biodiversity.
- Activity 3.3.** Create an island and floating platforms as waterbird areas
- Activity 3.4.** Run local schools wetland and education programmes.
- Activity 3.5.** Rehabilitate erosion damage.
- Activity 4.1.** Document and make available information on projects.
- Activity 5.1.** Creation of project team and steering committee.
- Activity 5.2.** Supervision and financial administration of implementation.
- Activity 5.3.** Reporting.

Annex B

Model Progress Reports (Including report on the use of funds)

B.1 Quarterly Report

B.2 Semi-annual Report

Annex C

Model of Final Report (Including final report on the use of funds)