
GOVERNMENT NOTICE

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM

No. 174

22 February 2006

INTENT TO DESIGNATE WETLANDS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONVENTION ON WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE ESPECIALLY AS WATERFOWL HABITAT

The Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Marthinus van Schalkwyk intends designating the wetlands set out in the Schedule for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar List) as referred to in Article 2 of the text of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat.

Members of the public are invited to submit to the Minister, within **30 days** of the publication of this notice in the Gazette, **written** comments, inputs and/or objections to the proposed designations.

Please submit comments, inputs and/or objections to:

The Director-General
Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
Private Bag X447
PRETORIA
0001

Enquiries can be directed to Mr Edward Netshithothole, Tel.: (012) 310 3417, or e-mail: enetshithothole@deat.gov.za, fax: (012) 320 7026

Full proposal documents for the designations are available at the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism at the above address.



Ms Pam Yako
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM

SCHEDULE

1. MAKULEKE WETLANDS

Makuleke Wetlands are found on the northeastern corner of Kruger National Park, in the Makuleke region, an area owned by Makuleke community, on the confluence of Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers. These wetlands are bordered by Zimbabwe to the north and Mozambique to the east. On the World Wetlands Day 2002 in Makuleke, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Ms Mabudafhasi highlighted the fact that should these wetlands be designated to the Ramsar List, it would be the first community-owned Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar site) in the country, and as such represented a new approach to wetland management.

To be considered for inclusion in the Ramsar List, a wetland needs to comply with at least one of the eight listed Ramsar Criteria as adopted by the Conference of the Contracting Parties. Makuleke Wetlands qualify to be listed because they comply with four of the eight Criteria as follows:

Criterion 1

The proposed wetlands form an excellent example of a floodplain type characteristic of the northern part of South Africa and the eastern part of Mozambique. The floodplains of Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers and associated network of pans represent the only wetland of this type in South Africa, and more specifically, in the Lowveld region of South Africa.

Criterion 2

Many rare mammals, reptiles and birds that occur in the area are at some stage associated or dependent on wetlands. The rare samango monkey, four-toed elephant-shrew and African civet occur in the riparian areas along Limpopo and Luvuvhu Rivers. The area has a scarce nesting record for waterbirds in South Africa, such as the black, yellow-billed, marabou and open-billed storks, and three-banded courser are from this site.

Criterion 3

The wetland system supports a high diversity of species, some of which have their centres of distribution in the area. Others have only been recorded from this area and it is therefore possible that they are confined to this area.

Criterion 7

The wetlands act an important refuge for breeding stocks of fish that recolonise the floodplain by migrating upstream during flooding events. Stocks for the river are protected within the reserve. The reserve also provides an important stopover and breeding and feeding site for migrating waterbirds along the north/south migration route in the eastern part of southern Africa. The Ramsar wetland site has exceptional ecological features that are unique

for South Africa as a country. A number of species occur here and nowhere else in the country. Bats like Rüppels bat, Swinny's horseshoe bat, the Madagascar large free-tailed bat and Cammerson's leaf-nosed bat are only known in the country from specimens collected in the areas adjacent to, and constituting, the Ramsar site.

2. PRINCE EDWARD ISLANDS

The Prince Edward Islands comprise two islands, the larger Marion and the smaller Prince Edward, and a few offshore rocks and stacks. Biogeographically, the islands are classified as sub-Antarctic, by, *inter alia*, the absence of woody plants. The islands are volcanic in origin and exposed lava flows and scoria cones are noticeable features. Three major terrestrial habitats exist: 1. unvegetated upland (Marion Island only), 2. well-drained vegetated slopes, and 3. poorly-drained vegetated coastal plains. The islands support large numbers of breeding seabirds and seals. The most significant wetland is non-forested peatland (much of which is made up of swamps and bogs) on the coastal plains, which support numerous breeding seabirds, notably Wandering Albatrosses, burrowing petrels of a number of species, and fur seals. Intermittent streams with waterfalls and numerous small fresh-water ponds are present, especially on Marion Island. Some scoria cones have small crater lakes. Kelp beds border both islands, which have rocky marine shores with sea cliffs and offshore rocky stacks. A few sand shores are comprised of black volcanic sand. The Islands meet the following Ramsar Criteria:

Criterion 1

There are few sub-Antarctic islands, with a total area that is dwarfed by the Southern Ocean in which they occur. They support a form of peatland that is restricted to the sub-Antarctic biogeographical region, with a high level of endemism of plants. These peatlands, with the exception of a few species of introduced plants, are unaltered by past or current human activities - such as farming, mining or construction. The Prince Edward Islands support a representative example of sub-Antarctic non-forested peatlands in near-pristine condition, especially on Prince Edward Island, where only three species of alien plants have been recorded.

Criterion 2

The Prince Edward Islands support a number of IUCN-threatened species of breeding seabirds as set out below:

Gentoo Penguin *Pygoscelis papua* Lower Risk/Near Threatened
 Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome* Vulnerable
 Macaroni Penguin *E. chrysolophus*
 Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* Vulnerable
 Grey-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrysostoma* Vulnerable
 Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross *T. carteri* Endangered

Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca* Endangered
Light-mantled Albatross *P. palpebrata* Lower Risk/Near Threatened
Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* Vulnerable
Northern Giant Petrel *M. halli* Lower risk/Near threatened
White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis* Vulnerable
Grey Petrel *P. cinerea* Lower Risk/Near threatened

Criterion 3

The peatlands of the coastal plains of the Prince Edward Islands are maintained by organic fertilization from avian and marine mammal products, most especially guano from seabirds, but also moulted feathers and fur, egg shells and from corpses of adults and young. Burrowing petrels, especially Blue Petrels *Halobaena caerulea*, support lush growths of tussock grass *Poa cookii*, as do Wandering Albatrosses *Diomedea exulans* and Southern Giant Petrels *Macronectes giganteus* on the boggy plains. On vegetated slopes burrowing petrels of the genera *Procellaria* and *Pterodroma* and *Pachyptila* manure the vegetation and aerate the peat.

The kelp beds surrounding the islands calm wave action and support a rich benthic flora and fauna, that includes many species endemic to the biogeographical region.

Criterion 4

The coastal peatlands of the Prince Edward Islands support seabirds and marine mammals during their breeding and (for penguins and seals) moulting periods, and thus offer an essential refuge to these species.

Criterion 5

The Prince Edward Islands support several million waterbirds. These include 1.4 million penguins of four species and 45 000 albatrosses of five species (annual breeding adults, see Table in Criterion 6 below). Seven other species of surface-nesting seabirds number about breeding 5000 adults. In addition populations of burrowing petrels, although not clearly known, number in the tens if not hundreds of thousands for some species.

Criterion 6

Thirteen of the 16 taxa of surface-nesting seabirds breeding at the Prince Edward Islands have populations that exceed 1% of their global populations at either the specific or subspecific level (see table below). Because nearly all the taxa are endemic to the sub-Antarctic region, these percentages may be regarded as applying to the biogeographical population as well. It is most likely that populations of burrow-nesting seabirds also exceed the 1% biogeographical and/or global levels for most species, but accurate census information is lacking to be certain.
