

INTRODUCING: THE EWT'S WILDLIFE AND TRANSPORT PROGRAMME

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The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is proud and excited to announce the development of its highly successful, groundbreaking Airport Wildlife Programme (AWP) into a vastly expanded Wildlife and Transport Programme (WTP). Based on expressed interest from key role-players in various transport sectors, and the increasing need to address biodiversity conservation in the rapidly growing, but potentially impactful transport industry, the EWT has decided to build on its experience working in the aviation sector to increase the scope of the AWP to encompass the broader transport industry. This will ensure a more integrated and comprehensive conservation approach. To better reflect the expanded scope of the programme, its name has been changed to the Wildlife and Transport Programme.

Collisions between aircraft and birds have posed a serious safety concern to the aviation industry for many years, due to the potentially serious consequences for people, the industry and biodiversity. As a result of this concern, the EWT established the AWP in 1999 out of a partnership with Airports Company South Africa (ACSA). The Programme developed risk assessment and monitoring systems, a policy framework and best practice to guide mitigation strategies to reduce strikes. In addition, skills development and training of airports staff as well as awareness raising of the importance of the issue amongst all stakeholders was undertaken. For over 10 years the AWP has assisted airports to manage their airfields in an environmentally sensitive manner whilst addressing passenger safety concerns.

Air transport is not, however, the only component of the transport industry to impact on wildlife. Wildlife mortality resulting from vehicle collisions has been recognised as the fifth greatest threat to wildlife. Similar incidents with trains and marine vessels are also common although grossly under reported. In addition to collisions, transport infrastructure development such as road and railway networks, ports and harbours, also impact on ecosystems and wildlife, through impacts such as habitat loss and fragmentation. To date, little attention has been paid to these concerns and even less has been done to address the threat in southern Africa.

The WTP will work to address the identified concerns in the transport sector, through:

- # Undertaking risk assessments (including research projects to inform the identification, quantification and prioritisation of risks);
- # Policy and best practice research and development;
- # Assisting and guiding the identification, development and implementation of mitigation strategies relevant to the South African context;
- # Training and capacity building;
- # Awareness raising; and,
- # Performance assessment.

The WTP will work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders throughout the transport industry, in both the public and private sectors. It will also use its existing network of international experts in this area to guide interventions and provide expertise and support. In addition, the Programme will facilitate the establishment of relevant forums and networks of stakeholders in this area to ensure their effective engagement and involvement in the solutions.

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