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Member of IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).
Reg No: 001 – 298 NPO
PBO Exemption No: 930004518

05 July 2023

Dear South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions,

The fourth and last quarter of my mentorship involved a final wetland vegetation identification workshop with Anton Linstrom and drafting of my main assignment, the Middelpunt Nature Reserve management plan. Anton spent most of the day going through common wetland plant species and their suggested ecological implications if present in a wetland. A resulting action from the workshop is the development of a species list for high-elevation systems and their respective threat status to become familiar with key wetland plants applicable to our research and conservation work. The greatest challenge and achievement of the quarter was the drafting of the management plan. The contents are comprehensive as they need to factor in each stakeholder's requirements including that of several legislative acts. Guidelines for wetland management in terms of grazing, burning, invasive species monitoring/clearing, etc. needed to be developed based on the knowledge and experiences gained during the course of the mentorship. It was essential to have the correct guidelines in place to ensure the long-term sustainability of the only confirmed breeding site of the Critically Enangered White-winged Flufftail in the southern hemisphere. Participation at the Mpumalanga Biodiversity Stewardship Forum meeting, a stewardship workshop between BirdLife South Africa's Landscape Conservation Programme and Conservation Outcomes (CO) and a management plan workshop led by CO assisted with the drafting. The development of the management plan was also the most enlightening experience of the quarter, as it demonstrated just how much landowners are committing to when persuing protected area declaration and we as NGOs can assist. Formulating guidelines for wetland management was stimulating as a precursor for the proposed "Best Practise Guidelines for High-elevation Wetland and Peatland Management in southern Africa" that we are writing. The management plan has since been submitted to stakeholders for comment after which it will be submitted to the Mpumalanga MEC for signing. Additionally, I helped prepare [media articles](#) for the designation of Middelpunt Nature Reserve as a Ramsar Site, was interviewed by two journalists, two [radio stations](#) and a podcast, and designed a signboard for the reserve. I was invited by the Agricultural Research Council to present at the Biodiversity Climate-Nexus for Wetlands Management about the benefits of species conservation for farmers.

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Figure 1: Presenting about BirdLife South Africa’s wetland conservation work at the Mpumalanga Biodiversity Stewardship Forum. Photo: Marlize Muller



Figure 2: Discussing biodiversity stewardship mechanisms and challenges at the Overberg Renosterveld Conservation Trust training centre. Photo: Melissa Whitecross



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The mentorship has helped equip me with the skills and knowledge needed to research and conserve wetlands for the benefit of biodiversity and people. The opportunities afforded through short courses and in-field training has broadened my understanding of these complex and dynamic systems. I am now able to not only develop and refine my project objectives, but can help landowners better manage wetlands on their properties to improve and maintain ecosystem service delivery. Anton has been an excellent mentor and very generous in sharing his time and wealth of knowledge with me. The resources provided by the SACNASP Candidate Mentorship Phase (CMP) Programme have made this possible. I would like to thank SACNASP, SAWS and Anton Linstrom for giving me the opportunity to better myself as a wetland ecologist.

Sincerely,

Dr Kyle J. Lloyd