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Terrestrial Animal Site Sensitivity Verification and Species Specialist Assessment Report

Proposed vegetation clearing on the remainder of Farm Schalkenbosch 229, Tulbagh, Western Cape.

Prepared for: Enviro EAP (Pty) Ltd

July 2026

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Preliminary Faunal Scoping Assessment and Sensitivity Analysis: Proposed Residential Development on Portion 6 of the Farm 407, Caledon, Western Cape.

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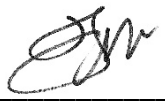
- At the time of conducting the study and compiling this report, we did not have any interest, hidden or otherwise, in the proposed development that this study has reference to, except for financial compensation for work done in a professional capacity;
- Work performed for this study was done objectively. Even if this study results in views and findings that are not favourable to the client/applicant, I will not be affected in any manner by the outcome of any environmental process of which this report may form a part, other than being members of the general public;
- We declare that no circumstances may compromise my objectivity in performing this specialist investigation. We do not necessarily object to or endorse any proposed developments but aim to present facts, findings and recommendations based on relevant professional experience and scientific data;
- We do not have any influence over decisions made by the governing authorities;
- We undertake to disclose all material information in my possession that reasonably has or may have the potential of influencing any decision to be taken concerning the application by a competent authority to such a relevant authority and the applicant;
- We have the necessary qualifications and guidance from professional experts in conducting specialist reports relevant to this application, including knowledge of the applicable Act, regulations and any guidelines that have relevance to the proposed activity;
- This document and all information contained herein is and will remain our intellectual property. This document, in its entirety or any portion thereof, may not be altered in any manner or form for any purpose without the specific and written consent of the specialist investigators.
- All the particulars we furnished in this document are true and correct.



_____ 8 July 2026

Signature Date

Executive Summary

This Terrestrial Animal Site Sensitivity Verification and Species Specialist Assessment Report evaluates the potential faunal impacts associated with the proposed vegetation clearing on the remainder of Farm Schalkenbosch 229, Tulbagh, Western Cape. The site is situated within a modified agricultural landscape south-east of Tulbagh, where historically ploughed fields, grazing areas and active agricultural lands occur within a broader matrix of fynbos and renosterveld associated with the Witzenberg foothills. The proposed clearing area is approximately 81 ha and consists mainly of historically modified old fields, brush-cut areas, servitude-line vegetation and secondary renosterveld.

The DFFE Screening Tool identified the Animal Species Theme as Medium sensitivity and flagged Sensitive Species 19, Mute Winter Katydid (*Brinckiella aptera*) and Peringuey's Meadow Katydid (*Conocephalus peringueyi*) for assessment. Additional species of conservation concern considered in the assessment include Grey Rhebuck, Leopard, Cape Clawless Otter, Blue Crane, African Darter, Hamerkop and Yellow-billed Egret. Field surveys recorded several faunal species within the development site and surrounding habitats, including Cape Clawless Otter, African Darter, Hamerkop and Yellow-billed Egret.

The main faunal constraint identified in the assessment is the Agterstekamp faunal landscape corridor. This area retains semi-natural secondary renosterveld, drainage-line habitat and a functional linkage with the Witzenberg Nature Reserve within an otherwise transformed agricultural valley. The corridor provides movement, cover and refuge opportunities for fauna and contributes to connectivity between the adjacent protected area, remnant natural vegetation, riparian features and broader foothill / mountain habitats. The faunal landscape connectivity receptor is assessed as having High Site Ecological Importance, and loss or narrowing of this corridor is the most important faunal impact risk associated with the proposed clearing.

A second important receptor is the secondary renosterveld that may provide marginal potential habitat for Sensitive Animal Species 19. The species is Critically Endangered and the site occurs within the broader Tulbagh–Worcester regional context. However, the habitat on site is secondary, historically ploughed, modified, located more on foothill slopes than preferred valley-bottom habitat, and no individuals were recorded during the field survey. The best remaining secondary renosterveld in Agterstekamp and parts of Damkamp is therefore assessed as Medium SEI, while disturbed old fields, cultivated areas, dwellings, gardens and other transformed habitats are assessed as Low SEI for this receptor.

The remaining species-habitat receptors are generally assessed as Low significance in relation to the proposed clearing footprint. Blue Crane and Grey Rhebuck are likely to use the broader agricultural and open habitat mosaic opportunistically. Yellow-billed Egret, African Darter, Hamerkop and Cape Clawless Otter are mainly associated with farm dams, drainage lines, riparian vegetation and wetland-edge features, which can be retained through no-go areas, watercourse buffers and corridor protection. Mute Winter Katydid and Peringuey's Meadow Katydid are considered unlikely to occur within the proposed clearing footprint, and no likely or confirmed habitat receptor was identified for these species.

The overall Site Ecological Importance for the proposed clearing footprint and PAOI is assessed as High, primarily because of the faunal landscape connectivity receptor associated with the Agterstekamp corridor and its linkage with the Witzenberg Nature Reserve. The impact assessment compares a No Clearing option with the Clearing option. The No Clearing option would retain the existing faunal habitat mosaic, while the Clearing option could result in habitat loss, reduced shrubland structure, narrowing of movement habitat and reduced ecological function if not carefully controlled.

The proposed clearing can be supported from a faunal specialist perspective only if the key avoidance and mitigation measures are implemented. The most important requirement is to retain the 100 m critical faunal corridor associated with the Agterstekamp drainage-line system and to avoid clearing, ploughing, soil disturbance or fencing barriers within this corridor. Further requirements include protection of drainage-line and riparian habitat, maintenance of watercourse buffers, strict footprint control, avoidance or minimisation of clearing in higher-value secondary renosterveld, demarcation of no-go areas, prevention of snaring, hunting and dog-related disturbance, and allowing fauna to move away from active work areas. With these measures in place, the most significant faunal impacts can be avoided or reduced to acceptable levels; without them, residual impacts on faunal landscape connectivity could remain Medium to High.

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Introduction

This Terrestrial Animal Site Sensitivity Verification and Species Specialist Assessment Report has been prepared for the Environmental Impact Assessment process for the proposed vegetation clearing on the remainder of Farm Schalkenbosch 229, Tulbagh, Western Cape Figure 1.

A screening report conducted with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) screening tool in February 2026 identified the site as having a 'Medium' sensitivity for the Animal Species Theme (Hanekom 2026) Table 1 and Figure 2. Areas designated with high sensitivity require a Site Sensitivity Verification, and, depending on the results, either a Terrestrial Animal Species Compliance Statement or a Terrestrial Animal Species Specialist Assessment Report must be submitted. This report has been prepared in accordance with the protocol established by the DFFE (2020) and presents the findings of a site visit conducted within the proposed development area (the study area). The site visit aimed to verify the presence, or potential presence, of Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) as identified by the DFFE screening tool. Three animal species of concern were identified through the screening tool and are listed in Table 1.

Figure 1: The location of the property investigated during the site visit

Table 1: Animal species of concern identified by the screening report (Hanekom 2026).

Sensitivity	Species name	Common name	Order	Regional Red List Status
Medium	*Sensitive Species 19*	-	-	CR
Medium	*Brinckiella aptera*	Mute winter katydid	Insect	VU
Medium	*Conocephalus peringueyi*	Peringuey's Meadow Katydid	Insect	VU

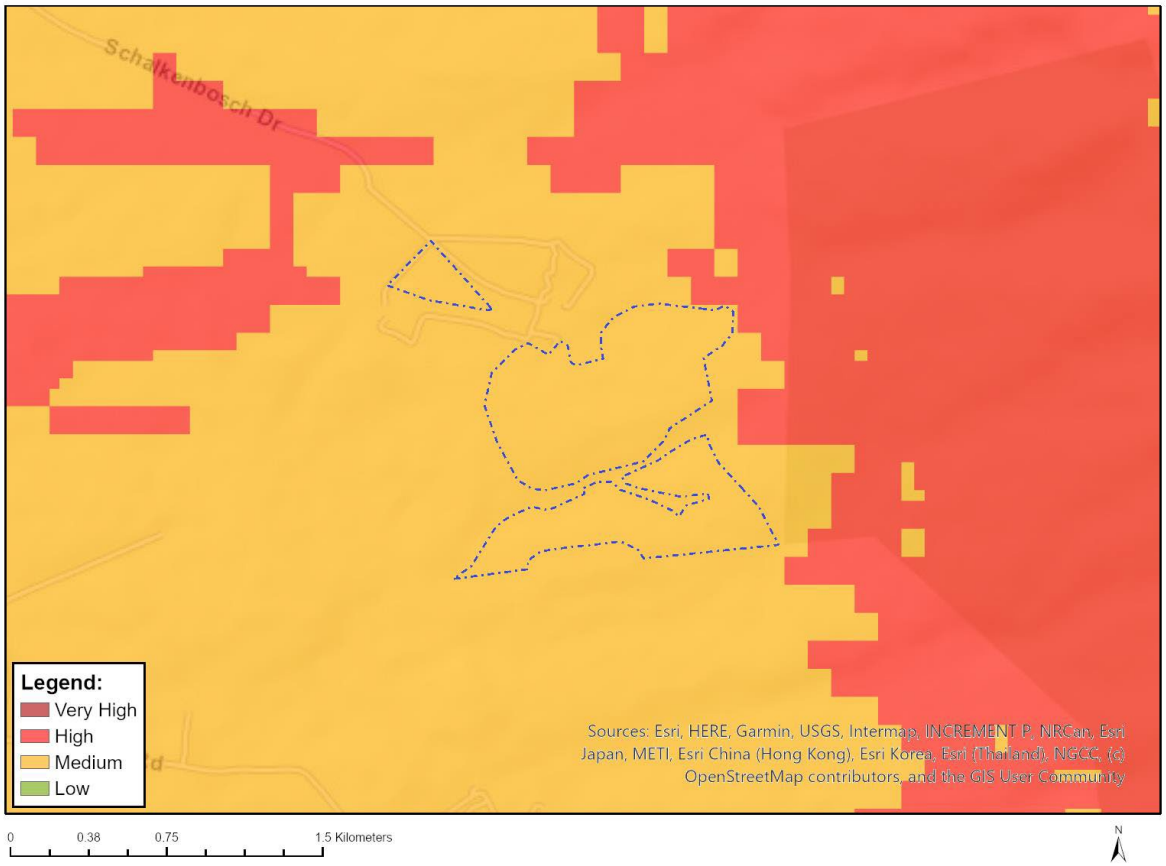

Figure 2: Map of the relative animal species theme sensitivity, indicated as 'Medium' as per (Hanekom 2026)

This report follows the legislative requirements set out by the National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998 and specifically the regulations listed in the Government Gazette Notice No. 1150, Protocol for the specialist assessment and minimum report content requirements for environmental impacts on terrestrial animal species (SANBI 2026).

Study Area

The Farm Schalkenbosch 229 is situated immediately adjacent to the south-east of the town Tulbagh in the Western Cape Province (33° 19'05.54"S; 19° 12'06.14"E) Figure 1. The site is a modified agricultural landscape consisting of historically ploughed fields that have been left fallow and are now used mainly for livestock grazing (Keet 2025). Vegetation has regenerated

unevenly, ranging from degraded old-field areas dominated by alien grasses to denser secondary renosterveld dominated by renosterbos (Keet 2025).

Methods

We followed the prescribed protocol for performing a Terrestrial Animal Site Sensitivity Verification Report according to the Government Gazette Notice 320 (Government Gazette 43110, 20 March 2020) and amended in Government Gazette Notice 3717 (Government Gazette 49028, 28 July 2023). Our approach was guided by the SANBI (2026) species environmental assessment guidelines.

This report's findings are based on:

- A desktop study to determine the presence of animal species of concern (as listed in Table 1) and other species at the study area; and
- 1 x Field site visit.

The desktop study included the use of iNaturalist and Global Biodiversity Information Framework (GBIF) records as well as reports, field guides and scientific literature. These records were used to determine the species recorded in the area and the presence of potential SCC, with particular emphasis on the SCC listed by the screening tool.

During the site survey, all animal species observed, as well as signs of presence such as calls, tracks, scats and other field evidence, were recorded. Surveys were undertaken by two experienced observers and included meandering searches on foot and by vehicle across the development site and surrounding habitats, supplemented by 30-minute point searches at selected survey locations. Targeted acoustic surveys for Striped Flufftail were also undertaken by playing territorial calls at suitable locations and listening for vocal responses. Invertebrate sampling included sweep-netting and butterfly-netting at survey locations, as well as two evening light traps using a UV light and white-sheet setup, operated for 1.5 hours after dark between 19:30 and 21:00. Where suitable photographic or other verifiable evidence was obtained, records were submitted to iNaturalist.

The main purpose of the site visits was to confirm whether:

- any of the listed SCC were present in the proposed development area;
- the proposed site for the development would act as a corridor for any of the SCC highlighted by the screening tool;
- whether the habitats at the proposed development site likely supports undetected individuals or populations of the SCC highlighted by the screening tool; and
- there are any SCC present at the site that were not highlighted by the initial screening.

To aid in record-keeping of the site and species observed, photographs were taken during the site visits.

Property investigation

The areas on the property intended for development are ~81 ha in size. We covered the majority of the property by vehicle and completed more intensified searches and surveys at 9

locations covering all the habitat features the site offered Table 2, Figure 3. Visibility was clear (>75 m) due to the open nature of the site vegetation features.

Table 2: Field survey photo site coordinates

Site	Coordinates
Location RL1	33°18'55.7"S; 19°11'55.7"E
Location RL2	33°19'04.6"S; 19°12'01.9"E
Location RL3	33°18'57.6"S; 19°12'01.6"E
Location RL4	33°18'59.2"S; 19°12'30.8"E
Location RL5	33°19'00.4"S; 19°12'25.2"E
Location RL6	33°19'11.5"S; 19°12'36.7"E
Location RL7	33°19'22.0"S; 19°11'57.5"E
Location RL8	33°19'15.2"S; 19°12'02.2"E
Location RL9	33°18'48.7"S; 19°11'40.5"E

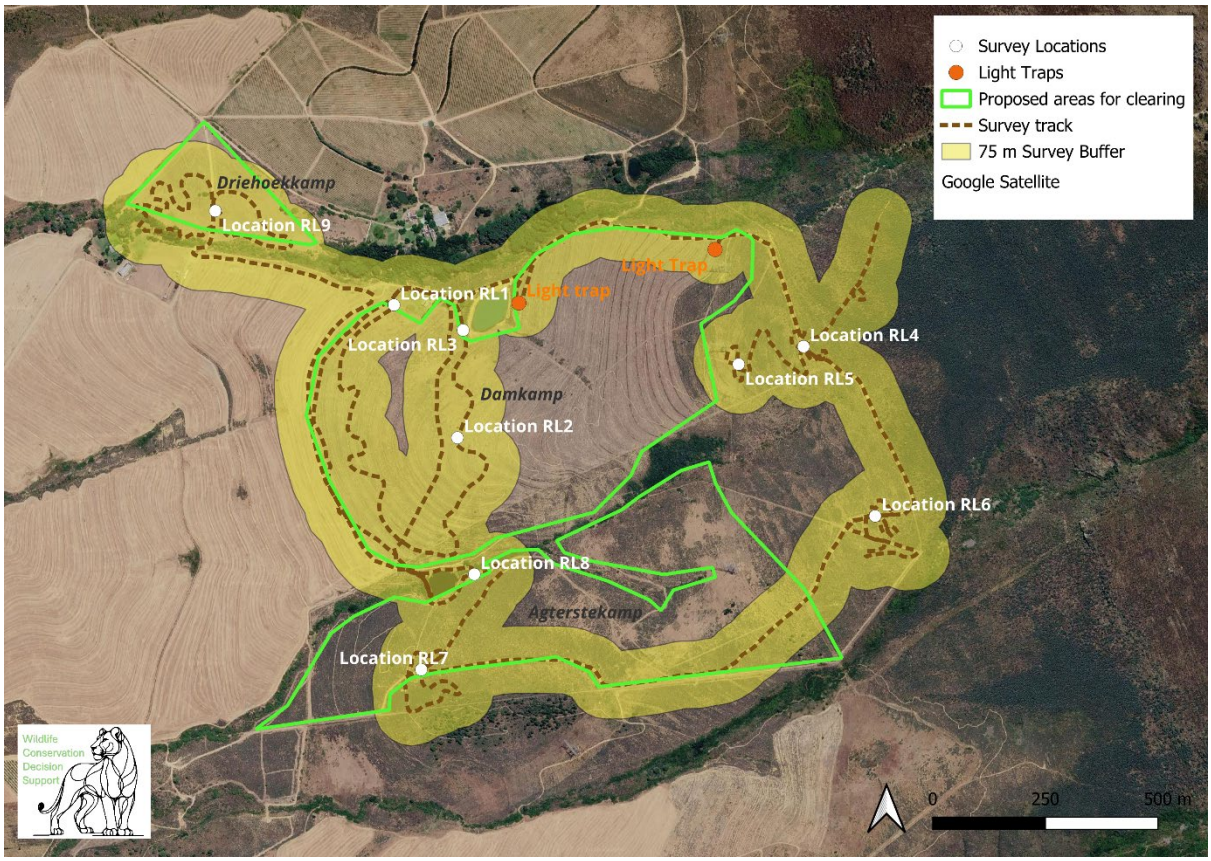

Figure 3: A map indicating the areas within the property investigated during the site visit.

Evaluation of Site Ecological Importance (SEI)

In order to spatially assess the different areas of importance for a species for the proposed development site we used the SEI approach, see SANBI (2026) for identifying the site-based ecological importance for species, in relation to the proposed PAOI. The SEI is a function of the biodiversity importance (BI) of the receptor (e.g. species of conservation concern, the vegetation/fauna community, habitat type or ecological process present on the site) and its resilience to impacts (receptor resilience [RR]) and is calculated as follows (SANBI 2026):

$$SEI = BI + RR$$

BI in turn is a function of conservation importance (CI) and the functional integrity (FI) of the receptor is calculated as follows:

$$BI = CI + FI$$

Conservation importance (*CI*) is evaluated in accordance with recognised established internationally acceptable principles and criteria for the determination of biodiversity-related value. Conservation importance is defined here as (SANBI 2026) Table 3: *"The importance of a site for supporting biodiversity features of conservation concern present, e.g. populations of IUCN threatened and Near Threatened species (CR, EN, VU and NT), Rare species, range-restricted species, globally significant populations of congregatory species, and areas of threatened ecosystem types, through predominantly natural processes."*

Functional integrity (*FI*) of the receptor (e.g. the vegetation/fauna community or habitat type) is defined here as the receptors' current ability to maintain the structure and functions that define it, compared to its known or predicted state under ideal conditions. Simply stated, FI is (SANBI 2026) Table 4: *"A measure of the ecological condition of the impact receptor as determined by its remaining intact and functional area, its connectivity to other natural areas and the degree of current persistent ecological impacts."*

Table 3: Conservation importance (CI) criteria (SANBI 2026)

Conservation importance	Fulfilling criteria
Very High	Confirmed or highly likely occurrence of CR, EN, VU or Extremely Rare23 or Critically Rare24 species that have a global EOO of < 10 km2. Any area of natural habitat of a CR ecosystem type or large area (> 0.1% of the total ecosystem type extent) of natural habitat of EN ecosystem type. Globally significant populations of congregatory species (> 10% of global population).
High	Confirmed or highly likely occurrence of CR, EN, VU species that have a global EOO of > 10 km2. IUCN threatened species (CR, EN, VU) must be listed under any criterion other than A. If listed as threatened only under Criterion A, include if there are less than 10 locations or < 10 000 mature individuals remaining. Small area (> 0.01% but < 0.1% of the total ecosystem type extent) of natural habitat of EN ecosystem type or large area (> 0.1%) of natural habitat of VU ecosystem type. Presence of Rare species. Globally significant populations of congregatory species (> 1% but < 10% of global population).
Medium	Confirmed or highly likely occurrence of populations of NT species, threatened species (CR, EN, VU) listed under Criterion A only and which have more than 10 locations or more than 10 000 mature individuals. Any area of natural habitat of threatened ecosystem type with status of VU. Presence of range-restricted species. > 50% of receptor contains natural habitat with potential to support SCC.
Low	No confirmed or highly likely populations of SCC. No confirmed or highly likely populations of range-restricted species. < 50% of receptor contains natural habitat with limited potential to support SCC.
Very low	No confirmed and highly unlikely populations of SCC. No confirmed and highly unlikely populations of range-restricted species. No natural habitat remaining.

Table 4: Functional Integrity (FI) criteria (SANBI 2026)

Functional integrity	Fulfilling criteria
Very High	Very large (> 100 ha) intact area for any conservation status of ecosystem type or > 5 ha for CR ecosystem types. High habitat connectivity serving as functional ecological corridors, limited road network between intact habitat patches. No or minimal current negative ecological impacts with no signs of major past disturbance (e.g. ploughing).

High	Large (> 20 ha but < 100 ha) intact area for any conservation status of ecosystem type or > 10 ha for EN ecosystem types. Good habitat connectivity with potentially functional ecological corridors and a regularly used road network between intact habitat patches. Only minor current negative ecological impacts (e.g. few livestock utilising area) with no signs of major past disturbance (e.g. ploughing) and good rehabilitation potential.
Medium	Medium (> 5 ha but < 20 ha) semi-intact area for any conservation status of ecosystem type or > 20 ha for VU ecosystem types. Only narrow corridors of good habitat connectivity or larger areas of poor habitat connectivity and a busy used road network between intact habitat patches. Mostly minor current negative ecological impacts with some major impacts (e.g. established population of alien and invasive flora) and a few signs of minor past disturbance. Moderate rehabilitation potential.
Low	Small (> 1 ha but < 5 ha) area. Almost no habitat connectivity but migrations still possible across some modified or degraded natural habitat and a very busy used road network surrounds the area. Low rehabilitation potential. Several minor and major current negative ecological impacts.
Very Low	Very small (< 1 ha) area. No habitat connectivity except for flying species or flora with wind-dispersed seeds. Several major current negative ecological impacts.

Receptor resilience (RR) is defined here as (SANBI 2026)Table 5: *"The intrinsic capacity of the receptor to resist major damage from disturbance and/or to recover to its original state with limited or no human intervention."* The fulfilling criteria to evaluate RR are based on the estimated recovery time required to restore an appreciable portion of functionality to the receptor.

Table 5: Resilience criteria (SANBI 2026)

Resilience	Fulfilling criteria
Very High	Habitat that can recover rapidly (~ less than 5 years) to restore > 75%28 of the original species composition and functionality of the receptor functionality, or species that have a very high likelihood of remaining at a site even when a disturbance or impact is occurring, or species that have a very high likelihood of returning to a site once the disturbance or impact has been removed.
High	Habitat that can recover relatively quickly (~ 5–10 years) to restore > 75% of the original species composition and functionality of the receptor functionality, or species that have a high likelihood of remaining at a site even when a disturbance or impact is occurring, or species that have a high likelihood of returning to a site once the disturbance or impact has been removed.
Medium	Will recover slowly (~ more than 10 years) to restore > 75% of the original species composition and functionality of the receptor functionality, or species that have a moderate likelihood of remaining at a site even when a disturbance or impact is occurring, or species that have a moderate likelihood of returning to a site once the disturbance or impact has been removed.
Low	Habitat that is unlikely to be able to recover fully after a relatively long period: > 15 years required to restore ~ less than 50% of the original species composition and functionality of the receptor functionality, or species that have a low likelihood of remaining at a site even when a disturbance or impact is occurring, or species that have a low likelihood of returning to a site once the disturbance or impact has been removed.
Very Low	Habitat that is unable to recover from major impacts, or species that are unlikely to remain at a site even when a disturbance or impact is occurring, or species that are unlikely to return to a site once the disturbance or impact has been removed.

Evaluation of the SEI in the context of the proposed development activities are then categorised in a final risk category (SANBI 2026)Table 6.

Table 6: Interpreting SEI in the context of the proposed development activities (SANBI 2026)

Site ecological importance	Interpretation in relation to proposed development activities
Very High	Avoidance mitigation – no destructive development activities should be considered. Offset mitigation not acceptable/not possible (i.e. last remaining populations of species, last remaining good condition patches of ecosystems/unique species assemblages). Destructive impacts for species/ecosystems where persistence target remains.
High	Avoidance mitigation wherever possible. Minimisation mitigation – changes to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted; limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities.

Medium	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Low	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Very Low	Minimisation mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable and restoration activities may not be required.

Conditions, limitations, and assumptions

The findings and recommendations of this report are based on WCDS best scientific and professional knowledge, literature and other data sources. WCDS reserve the right to modify aspects of the report, including the recommendations and conclusions, if additional relevant information becomes available.

The conditions, e.g. weather and otherwise, during the assessment period could have a significant influence determining whether animal species will be found on site or not. An animal species absence during field assessments does not necessarily mean it is not present at assessment locations. At WCDS we use an evidence-based approach to provide the best possible assessment of species presence and potential impacts.

Results

Field survey conditions

The site visit was performed on the 26th and 27th of June 2026. During the visit conditions were cool, sunny and suitable for detecting most target SCC's. These conditions (winter period) were not ideal for detecting Sensitive Species 19 (see relevant species section later in the report)

Project area of influence (PAOI)

The PAOI covers the whole of the development area and beyond Figure 4 and Table 7.

Table 7: The PAOI was set considering main SCC likely to be present on or close to the development footprint.

Species/Group	PAOI Buffer size	Notes
General mammals and raptors	250 m	Foraging and breeding habitat
Small mammals, herpetofauna and insects	50 m	Foraging and breeding habitat

Habitat descriptions.

Introduction

At a broader landscape scale, the site occurs within a highly transformed agricultural valley landscape on the lower slopes south of Tulbagh, where old cultivated fields, grazing areas and active agricultural lands are embedded within a surrounding matrix of fynbos and renosterveld vegetation associated with the Witzenberg foothills (Keet 2025).

The regional vegetation mapping identifies Breede Shale Fynbos, Breede Shale Renosterveld and Breede Alluvium Fynbos, all listed as endangered ecosystem types, although the botanical

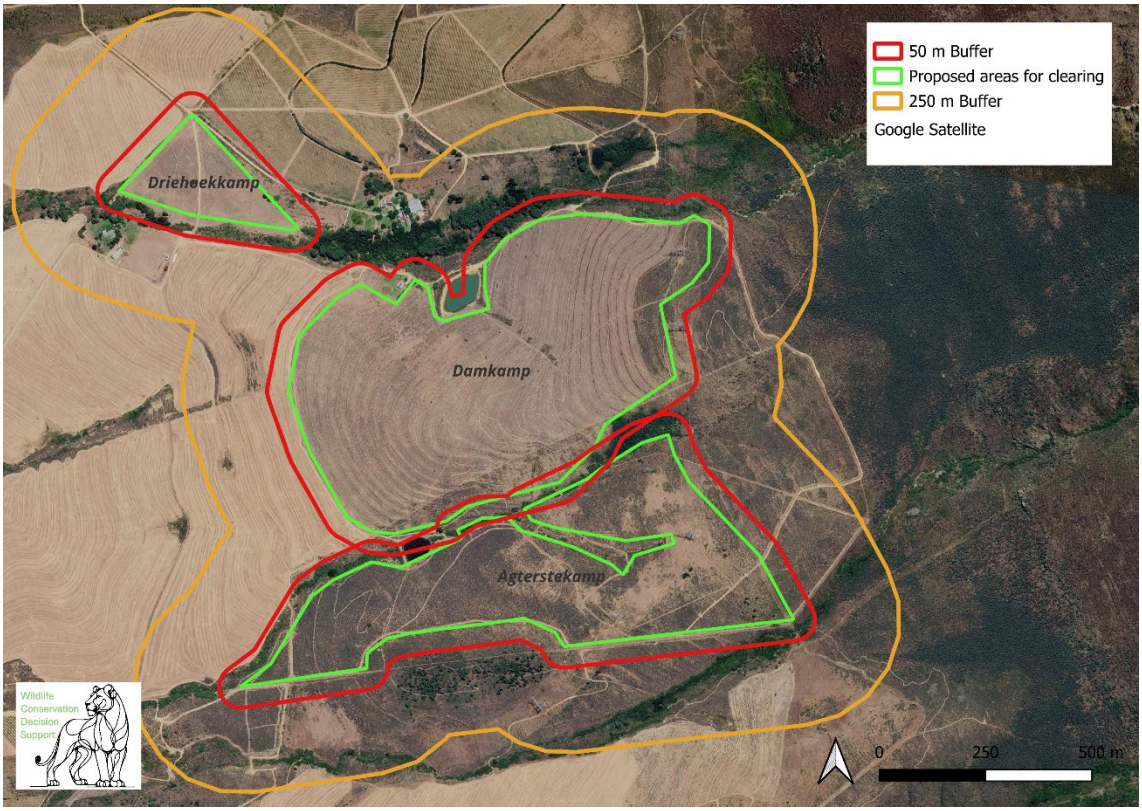

Figure 4: The PAOI was set considering main SCC likely to be present on or close to the development footprint (see Table 7 for buffer distances).

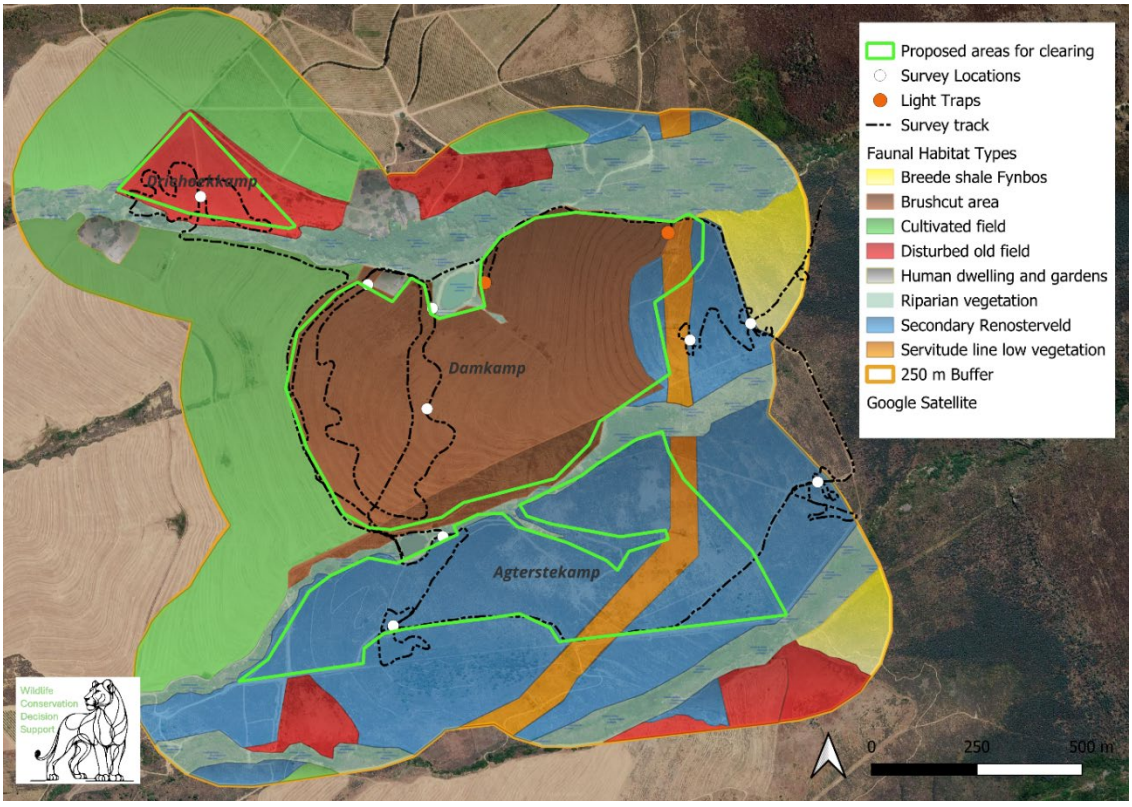

Figure 5: The broad faunal habitat units in the study area

The regional vegetation mapping identifies Breede Shale Fynbos, Breede Shale Renosterveld and Breede Alluvium Fynbos, all listed as endangered ecosystem types, although the botanical field assessment found that the proposed clearing areas themselves are mainly modified old fields and secondary renosterveld rather than intact examples of these mapped units (Keet 2025).

The faunal habitat assessment followed a landscape- and structure-based classification, using the botanical habitat mapping as a foundation (Keet 2025) and adapting it to reflect the habitat units relevant to the animal assessment. The broader site and surrounding area comprise a mosaic of Breede Shale Fynbos (on foot slopes), Secondary Renosterveld, brush-cut areas, servitude-line low vegetation, disturbed old fields, cultivated fields and vineyards, riparian vegetation, and human dwellings with associated gardens Figure 5. These units were classified based on their vegetation structure, land-use history, disturbance levels, and position within the broader landscape.

Breede Shale Fynbos (Location RL4)

Breede Shale Fynbos occurs in the broader landscape, particularly upslope to the east of Damkamp and Agterstekamp, although the botanical assessment found that it is not present within the proposed clearing footprint itself Figure 4. It is described regionally as a moderately tall, dense shrubland associated with steeper lower mountain slopes, with restioid, proteoid and asteraceous fynbos components Figure 6.

Brush-cut Areas (Location RL 1 & 2)

Brush-cut areas occur where dense renosterbos cover has been mechanically reduced, particularly below or adjacent to parts of the secondary renosterveld Figure 5. These areas are more open and disturbed than the surrounding shrubland, with reduced vegetation structure and exposed or sparsely vegetated patches where follow-up vegetation recovery may vary Figure 7.

Cultivated Fields and/or Vineyards

Cultivated fields and vineyards form part of the broader agricultural matrix surrounding the site Figure 5. These areas are largely transformed for crop production or viticulture and are characterised by regular soil disturbance, simplified vegetation structure, and limited natural ground cover outside field margins and drainage lines.

Disturbed Old Fields (Location RL9)

Disturbed old fields occur mainly in Driehoekkamp and represent historically modified agricultural land that is still used for livestock Figure 5. The vegetation is dominated by alien grasses and weedy species, with scattered indigenous shrubs and forbs, and does not conform to the mapped natural vegetation types of the area Figure 8.

Human Dwellings and Gardens

Human dwellings and gardens occur around farmstead areas and associated infrastructure in the broader landscape Figure 5. These areas are structurally modified and typically include buildings, access tracks, planted garden vegetation, lawns, ornamental plants, disturbed edges and small patches of secondary or weedy vegetation.

Riparian Vegetation (Location RL 8 & 9)

Riparian vegetation is associated with small drainage lines and watercourses around the site, particularly near Driehoekkamp and Agterstekamp Figure 5. This habitat is generally denser and more woody than the surrounding open fields, with native shrubs and small trees mixed with some alien tree species along the drainage-line margins Figure 9.

Secondary Renosterveld (Locations RL4, RL5, RL6, RL8, & RL9)

Secondary renosterveld occurs mainly in Damkamp and Agterstekamp and has regenerated on historically ploughed land that has been fallow for approximately two decades Figure 5. It is dense shrubland dominated by renosterbos, with clayey soils, steep slopes, high shrub cover and a mix of indigenous shrubs, geophytes and forbs, although it does not fully represent intact Breede Shale Renosterveld Figure 11.

Servitude Line / Low Vegetation (Location RL5)

The servitude-line low vegetation unit is a more open, regularly disturbed subset of the secondary renosterveld system Figure 5. Regular clearing has suppressed dense renosterbos dominance, resulting in lower and more open vegetation structure compared with the adjacent dense secondary renosterveld.

Figure 6: Breede Shale Fynbos occurs in the broader landscape, particularly upslope to the east of Damkamp and Agterstekamp

Figure 7: Brush-cut areas occur where dense renosterbos cover has been mechanically reduced, particularly below or adjacent to parts of the secondary renosterveld

Figure 8: Disturbed old fields occur mainly in Driehoekkamp and represent historically modified agricultural land that is still used for livestock

Figure 9: Riparian vegetation is associated with small drainage lines and watercourses around the site, particularly near Driehoekkamp and Agterstekamp

Figure 10: Secondary renosterveld occurs mainly in Damkamp and Agterstekamp and has regenerated on historically ploughed land that has been fallow for approximately two decades.

Animal Species Observed on site

The animal species recorded during the site survey are listed in Table 8 , based on direct observations, calls, tracks, scats, light-trap records, sweep-netting, butterfly-netting and other field evidence obtained within the development site and surrounding habitats.

*Table 8: Faunal species observations on Farm Schalkenbosch 229. Species marked with * are additional research grade iNaturalist records.*

Group	Common name	Species	Status
Mammals	**Cape clawless otter**	***Aonyx capensis***	***NT***
	Cape porcupine	*Hystrix africaeastralis*	*LC*
	Common mole rat	*Cryptomys hottentotus*	*LC*
	Cape Golden Mole	*Chrysochloris asiatica*	*LC*
Amphibians	Clicking stream frog	*Strongylopus grayii*	*LC*
	Southern caco	*Cacostermum australis*	*LC*
Reptiles	Parrot-beaked Tortoise	*Homopus areolatus*	
Aves	**African Darter**	**Anhinga rufa**	**NT**
	African Olive Pigeon	Columba arquatrix	LC
	African Stonechat	Saxicola torquatus	LC
	Bokmakierie	Telophorus zeylonus	LC
	Cape Bulbul	Pycnonotus capensis	LC
	Cape Canary	Serinus canicollis	LC
	Cape Spurfowl	Pternistis capensis	LC
	Cape Sugarbird	Promerops cafer	LC
	Cape Wagtail	Motacilla capensis	LC
	Cape Weaver	Ploceus capensis	LC
	Cape White-eye	Zosterops virens	LC
	Egyptian Goose	Alopochen aegyptiaca	LC
	Fiscal Flycatcher	Melaenornis silens	LC
	Hadada Ibis	Bostrychia hagedash	LC
	Hamerkop	**Scopus umbretta**	**NT**
	Helmeted Guineafowl	Numida meleagris	LC
	Jackal Buzzard	Buteo rufofuscus	LC
	Karoo Chat	Emarginata schlegelii	LC
	Karoo Prinia	Prinia maculosa	LC
	Laughing Dove	Spilopelia senegalensis	LC
	Orange-breasted Sunbird	Anthobaphes violacea	LC
	Pied Crow	Corvus albus	LC
	Ring-necked Dove	Streptopelia capicola	LC
	Southern Boubou	Laniarius ferrugineus	LC
	Southern Double-collared Sunbird	Cinnyris chalybeus	LC
	Southern Fiscal	Lanius collaris	LC
	Speckled Mousebird	Colius striatus	LC
	Speckled Pigeon	Columba guinea	LC
	Yellow Canary	Crithagra flaviventris	LC
	Yellow-billed Egret	**Ardea brachyrhyncha**	**NT**
Invertebrates	*Millipede*	*Ommatoiulus moreleti*	
	Greenhouse slug	*Milax gagates*	

Animal species of concern

A total of three animal species of concern were identified by the screening tool (Hanekom 2026) Table 1. Seven additional animal species of potential concern were observed/confirmed on or close to the site Table 9. The following section deals with the site's potential importance for these species and the probability of them being present in habitats in the development area.

Table 9: Additional SCC identified likely to occur on site

Species name	Common name	Group	Regional Red List Status
Pelea capreolus	Grey rhebok	Mammal	NT
Panthera pardus	Leopard	Mammal	VU
Aonyx capensis	Cape clawless otter	Mammal	NT
Grus paradisea	Blue Crane	Aves	VU
Anhinga rufa	African Darter	Aves	NT
Scopus umbretta	Hamerkop	Aves	NT
Ardea brachyrhyncha	Yellow-billed Egret	Aves	NT

Faunal Landscape Connectivity

At a landscape scale, the study area is situated within a largely transformed agricultural matrix, with natural and semi-natural habitat remaining mainly along the slopes, drainage features and protected-area interfaces. The most important connectivity feature is associated with Agterstekamp, where mapped CBA1 Terrestrial habitat and associated wetland / drainage-line features occur adjacent to the Witzenberg Nature Reserve. The intact secondary renosterveld in this part of the site functions as a supporting area for the adjacent protected area.

This area is important from a faunal perspective because it forms part of a broader habitat linkage through an otherwise transformed agricultural landscape. The Agterstekamp corridor provides a likely movement route between the adjacent nature reserve, remnant natural vegetation, riparian features and the protected areas to the west. Such linkages are particularly important for maintaining movement opportunities for small mammals, reptiles, birds, invertebrates and other less mobile species that may be restricted by cultivated lands, vineyards, fences, farm roads and dwellings.

The botanical report indicates that the CBA1 classification in Agterstekamp is somewhat over-stated from a vegetation condition perspective, as the area has been historically ploughed and has regenerated as dense secondary renosterveld (Keet 2025). However, the report also recognises that these areas remain functional, support species of conservation concern, and are better interpreted as ESA1 because they buffer and support surrounding natural vegetation. This interpretation is also relevant to fauna, as structurally intact secondary renosterveld can still provide cover, refuge and movement habitat even where the vegetation is no longer pristine.

By comparison, Driehoekkamp and most of Damkamp do not form part of the main faunal connectivity corridor. Driehoekkamp is highly modified and was not mapped as contributing meaningfully to biodiversity targets, while Damkamp has more localised value in its eastern and upper secondary-renosterveld portions rather than functioning as the main landscape

linkage. The key connectivity concern is therefore the potential narrowing, fragmentation or disturbance of the Agterstekamp linkage, especially where it interfaces with riparian vegetation, mapped CBA1 / ESA1 areas and the Witzenberg Nature Reserve.

In the context of the Tulbagh valley floor, where much of the natural vegetation has been transformed by cultivation, vineyards, grazing and associated farm infrastructure, remaining CBA1 habitat becomes disproportionately important for maintaining landscape connectivity. The mapped CBA1 area in Agterstekamp provides one of the few remaining semi-natural linkages through this agricultural matrix, connecting the adjacent Witzenberg Nature Reserve and associated foothill habitats with other natural mountain habitats and protected areas to the west. Even though the botanical report indicates that the vegetation condition is better interpreted as functional ESA1 rather than intact CBA1, the area still provides cover, refuge and movement habitat within a landscape where natural habitat is otherwise fragmented and limited. Loss or narrowing of this corridor would further isolate faunal populations and reduce movement opportunities between protected and semi-natural habitat patches.

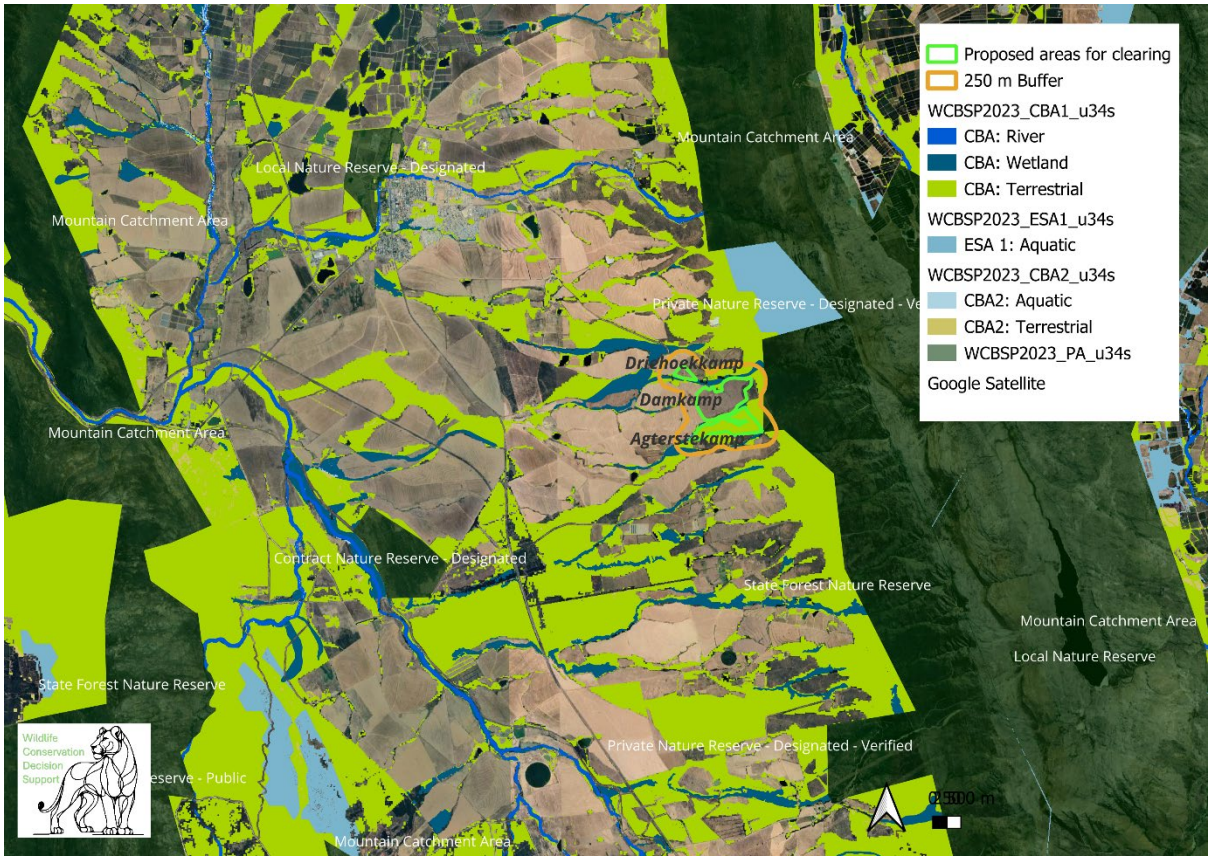

Figure 11: The development footprint in relation to critical biodiversity and ecological support areas

Site Ecological Importance (SEI) – Faunal Landscape Connectivity

The faunal landscape connectivity receptor is evaluated as having High Site Ecological Importance in the Agterstekamp corridor area. This rating is driven by the corridor's functional role in maintaining faunal movement through a transformed agricultural valley landscape, its connection with the adjacent Witzenberg Nature Reserve, and the low resilience of the receptor to destructive clearing or ploughing. Although the botanical assessment indicates that the mapped CBA1 status is better interpreted as functional ESA1 because the vegetation

is secondary and historically disturbed, the area remains important as one of the few remaining semi-natural movement linkages through the valley bottom. Development activities that would remove or substantially narrow this corridor should therefore be avoided where possible, with any unavoidable impacts requiring strict minimisation and restoration measures consistent with a High SEI receptor.

Table 10: Evaluation of site ecological importance (SEI) in terms of connectivity (the receptor) for faunal landscape connectivity for the proposed development, see evaluation criteria (SANBI 2026). SEI is classified as 'High'

Biodiversity importance		Conservation importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Functional integrity	Very high	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	High	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very low	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)		Biodiversity importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Receptor resilience	Very low	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	Low	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very high	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)	Interpretation in relation to proposed development activities
Very high	Avoidance mitigation – no destructive development activities should be considered. Offset mitigation not acceptable/not possible (i.e. last remaining populations of species, last remaining good condition patches of ecosystems/unique species assemblages). Destructive impacts for species/ecosystems where persistence target remains.
High	Avoidance mitigation wherever possible. Minimisation mitigation – changes to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted; limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities.
Medium	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Low	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Very low	Minimisation mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable and restoration activities may not be required.

Sensitive species 19

Conservation status

Sensitive Animal Species 19 is treated in this report as a Critically Endangered species. The Red List assessment lists this species as Critically Endangered and indicates that past and projected future population reductions are estimated to exceed 90% over three generations, mainly because of declining habitat quality and contraction of its extent of occurrence (Tolley et al. 2023). The assessment also identifies increased predation, wildfire mortality in small relict subpopulations, overgrazing, dense unsuitable invasive vegetation and increasing drought frequency as important threats.

Population status

Sensitive Animal Species 19 has a small, severely fragmented distribution in the low-lying parts of the extreme south-western Western Cape. The Red List assessment indicates that the species has become locally extinct from parts of its historical range after natural habitat was converted to agriculture. More than half of the distribution has been lost, and the remaining distribution is severely fragmented. The estimated extent of occurrence has declined by just over 70%, from approximately 9 800 km² historically to 2 750 km², with an interpreted current distribution of approximately 399 km²(Tolley et al. 2023).

The broader regional context is relevant to this assessment because historical distribution work recorded the species from the Western Cape lowlands, including the Worcester and Ceres valleys, and noted that its distribution range was still contracting (Baard 1993). Historical locality data also included several Tulbagh and Worcester farm localities, confirming that the Tulbagh–Worcester valley system forms part of the broader regional context for the species (Baard 1993). Eberle (2003) further identifies the Worcester–Tulbagh Valley as one of the isolated geographical areas where the species is known to persist.

The population trend is considered declining. The Red List assessment states that more than 90% of the original habitat has been irreversibly converted to agriculture, that western subpopulations are now extinct, and that remaining eastern subpopulations are small and fragmented. Some isolated subpopulations are considered unlikely to be viable, particularly where small population size and poor connectivity limit recovery after catastrophic events such as fire (Tolley et al. 2023).

Habitat and ecology

Sensitive Animal Species 19 is associated mainly with shrubby fynbos vegetation, particularly renosterveld, at elevations of approximately 70–700 m a.s.l. The Red List assessment states that the species does not tolerate transformed landscapes and is now confined to small, fragmented patches of remaining natural habitat (Tolley et al. 2023). During hot, dry summer conditions, individuals use slightly damp microhabitats beneath dense vegetation as refuges.

Habitat studies indicate that the species is strongly associated with lowland renosterveld rather than transformed agricultural land. Baard's habitat analysis describes suitable habitat as low-lying, relatively open renosterveld in the 350–600 mm annual rainfall range, with a combination of shrub, restioid, annual herbaceous and perennial grass cover. The same study indicates that habitat suitability is linked to low-lying, well-drained areas, appropriate shrub cover, food-plant availability and suitable microhabitat conditions.

The site contains secondary renosterveld in parts of Damkamp and Agterstekamp, but this habitat is not pristine. The botanical assessment describes this vegetation as regenerated shrubland on historically ploughed land that has been fallow for approximately two decades, with dense renosterbos dominance and high shrub cover (Keet 2025). This provides some structural resemblance to shrubland habitat, but it differs from intact lowland renosterveld and is considered marginal potential habitat for Sensitive Animal Species 19.

The position of the property also reduces habitat suitability. The species appears to be more strongly associated with low-lying valley-bottom renosterveld systems, while the proposed

clearing areas occur more on higher foothill slopes. This topographic position, combined with historical ploughing, grazing, secondary vegetation recovery and dense renosterbos dominance, reduces the likelihood that the site represents core habitat. No individuals were recorded during the field survey.

Space-use studies also show why remaining habitat patches and connectivity are important for the species. Hofmeyr et al. found that annual space use can vary widely, with areas used by individuals ranging from 1.02 to 44.85 ha, and that habitat degradation can alter home-range structure (Hofmeyr et al. 2012). The same study concluded that conservation planning should secure sufficiently large habitat areas and maintain corridors between patches to support viable populations.

Threats

The main threats to Sensitive Animal Species 19 are:

- **Loss and fragmentation of lowland renosterveld / shrubland habitat**, particularly through agricultural transformation. The Red List assessment records that more than half of the species' distribution has been lost and that the remaining distribution is severely fragmented (Tolley et al. 2023).
- **Irreversible conversion of natural habitat to agriculture**, with more than 90% of the original habitat already converted. This has resulted in population decline, local extinctions and small isolated subpopulations (Tolley et al. 2023).
- **Habitat degradation**, including overgrazing, declining habitat quality and dense unsuitable invasive vegetation. These pressures are identified in the Red List assessment as current or emerging threats (Tolley et al. 2023).
- **Invasive alien vegetation**, which can reduce habitat quality by excluding important food plants and altering renosterveld structure. Baard (1993) identified invasive alien shrubs and alien grasses as important factors in the deterioration of natural renosterveld habitat.
- **Wildfire in small habitat fragments**, where fire can cause high mortality and where small isolated subpopulations may have limited recovery capacity (Tolley et al. 2023). Baard (1993) also noted that unplanned and uncontrolled wildfires in renosterveld habitat threaten populations, particularly where fires are too frequent.
- **Predation pressure**, including increased predation by Pied Crows and invasive feral pigs (Tolley et al. 2023).
- **Loss of connectivity between remaining habitat fragments**, which reduces the long-term viability of small populations. The Red List assessment recommends evaluating how connectivity between existing small habitat patches can be established (Tolley et al. 2023).
- **Direct mortality during clearing or ploughing**, where individuals may be injured or killed by machinery if present within the clearing footprint.
- **Further loss of marginal habitat in a transformed agricultural landscape**, particularly where secondary renosterveld patches are removed and converted back to cultivated land.

Site ecological importance

The impact receptor assessed here is potential habitat for Sensitive Animal Species 19. The species is Critically Endangered, and the site occurs within the broader regional context of the Tulbagh–Worcester valley system. However, the on-site habitat is assessed as marginal potential habitat, rather than confirmed or high-quality habitat.

The main areas of potential relevance are the secondary renosterveld portions of Agterstekamp and parts of Damkamp, where semi-natural shrubland structure remains. These areas have greater habitat value than the disturbed old fields, cultivated lands, gardens and other transformed features. However, the secondary renosterveld has developed on historically ploughed land, is structurally and compositionally modified, and does not represent pristine lowland renosterveld. The site is also positioned more on higher foothill slopes, whereas the species appears to be more strongly associated with low-lying valley-bottom renosterveld habitats. No individuals were recorded during the site survey. However, the season (winter) could have constrained detectability.

The Sensitive Animal Species 19 habitat receptor is evaluated as having Medium Site Ecological Importance within the secondary renosterveld portions of Agterstekamp and the more structurally suitable parts of Damkamp Table 11. The conservation importance of the receptor is elevated by the species' Critically Endangered status and the location of the site within the broader Tulbagh–Worcester regional context. However, this is moderated by the site-specific habitat condition. The habitat is not pristine lowland renosterveld, has regenerated on historically ploughed land, is embedded within a transformed agricultural landscape, and occurs more on foothill slopes than in the low-lying valley-bottom renosterveld habitats generally associated with the species. No individuals were recorded during the site survey. Functional integrity is therefore considered low to medium, while receptor resilience is low because clearing and ploughing would remove the shrubland structure and recovery to functional habitat would be slow and uncertain. A Medium SEI rating is therefore appropriate for the best remaining secondary renosterveld habitat, while disturbed old fields, cultivated areas, dwellings, gardens and other transformed habitats are assessed as Low SEI for this receptor.

Table 11: Evaluation of site ecological importance (SEI) in terms of impact on the habitat (the receptor) for 'Sensitive species 19' for the proposed development, see evaluation criteria (SANBI 2026). SEI is classified as 'Medium'.

Biodiversity importance		Conservation importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Functional integrity	Very high	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	High	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very low	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)		Biodiversity importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Receptor resilience	Very low	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	Low	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very high	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)	Interpretation in relation to proposed development activities
Very high	Avoidance mitigation – no destructive development activities should be considered. Offset mitigation not acceptable/not possible (i.e. last remaining populations of species, last remaining good condition patches of ecosystems/unique species assemblages). Destructive impacts for species/ecosystems where persistence target remains.
High	Avoidance mitigation wherever possible. Minimisation mitigation – changes to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted; limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities.
Medium	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Low	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Very low	Minimisation mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable and restoration activities may not be required.

Mute Winter Katydid (Brinckiella aptera)

Conservation Status

The Mute Winter Katydid *Brinckiella aptera* is currently listed as Vulnerable (VU) under criterion B1ab(iii) on the South African National Red List (Bazelet and Naskrecki 2014). The assessment notes a small extent of occurrence and a continuing decline in habitat quality, which underpins the threat status. Distribution is restricted to parts of the Western Cape, with a naturally patchy, localized occurrence, and populations linked to suitable micro-habitat patches (Bazelet and Naskrecki 2014).

Population status

Published work on the genus *Brinckiella* indicates that species typically occur as scattered, localized populations associated with discrete patches of their preferred host plants (Naskrecki and Bazelet 2009, Bazelet and Naskrecki 2014). Where suitable host stands are dense, local densities can be high (≈5–10 individuals per m^2), but occupancy across the broader landscape is discontinuous. Adults in the Cederberg region have been collected mostly in September–October, implying a late-winter to early-spring activity peak. The genus is apterous (flightless), which implies poor dispersal and a strong tendency for populations to be isolated at small spatial scales.

Habitat and ecology

Brinckiella species are documented exclusively from the Fynbos and Succulent Karoo biomes (Naskrecki and Bazelet 2009). They show host-plant specificity, are most often encountered resting and feeding directly on their host plants, and are cryptic, nocturnal/crepuscular insects that do not produce calling songs (hence “mute”)(Naskrecki and Bazelet 2009). This combination of narrow habitat/host requirements and limited vagility explains the genus’ highly micro-endemic distributions and sensitivity to changes in vegetation structure (Naskrecki and Bazelet 2009). A population near Stanford associated with short to medium tall grasses adjacent to taller shrubs (van Wyk 2025, Venter 2025). In fact, all records of this population were of *B. aptera* individuals resting, perching or sunning themselves close to shrubs but in the grasses that fringe these shrubs (van Wyk 2025). Not a single B. aptera was found on the actual shrubs at the site. It seems they prefer the lower stratum by keeping to the low-lying vegetation near the ground (van Wyk 2025).

Threats

Consistent with the Red List rationale (criterion ab(iii)), the principal risk factor for *B. aptera* is ongoing degradation and loss of habitat quality within its already small range (Bazelet and Naskrecki 2014). In the Cape Floristic Region and adjoining Succulent Karoo, declines in habitat quality commonly result from invasive alien plant encroachment and altered fire regimes, which change vegetation structure and fire intensity; in more arid margins, overgrazing and land transformation can further reduce suitable host-plant patches. The species' flightlessness and host specificity likely amplify vulnerability to fragmentation and slow recolonisation after disturbance (Naskrecki and Bazelet 2009).

Likelihood of occurrence

The Mute Winter Katydid (Brinckiella aptera) was identified by the Screening Tool as a Medium sensitivity invertebrate feature for the site. The species is associated with the Fynbos and Succulent Karoo biomes, where it occurs primarily on low herbaceous shrubs and is most detectable during its adult activity period from July to October.

The likelihood of occurrence on the site is assessed as Low. No individuals were detected during the field survey, despite the survey being undertaken during the species' expected peak activity period and including active searching, sweep-netting, butterfly-netting and evening light trapping. No nearby records were identified during the desktop review, and the habitats within the proposed clearing footprint are considered unsuitable or marginal for the species. The site is dominated by historically disturbed agricultural habitats, dense secondary renosterveld, brush-cut areas, disturbed old fields and cultivated / grazed areas, rather than the low, structurally suitable herbaceous shrub habitat typically associated with the species. The species is therefore considered unlikely to occur within the proposed development footprint, and no species-specific impact is expected, provided that general mitigation for invertebrates and natural habitat is implemented.

Peringuey's Meadow Katydid (Conocephalus peringueyi)

Conservation status

Peringuey's Meadow Katydid (*Conocephalus peringueyi*) was identified by the DFFE Screening Tool as a Medium sensitivity invertebrate feature for the site. The species is listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List assessment and is also listed as Vulnerable in the SANBI Species Environmental Assessment Guideline.

The species is poorly known. The available conservation information is sparse, and there appears to be little published ecological or population information beyond broad distributional and habitat notes. The SANBI guideline lists no adult activity-period data for the species, indicating that even basic seasonal detectability information is currently unavailable.

Population status

The population status of *C. peringueyi* is poorly understood. Available occurrence information appears to be based on a very small number of historical records. The desktop review identified five GBIF records, all sampled in 1917, and no iNaturalist records were found. No recent, verifiable public occurrence records were identified during the desktop review or web search undertaken for this assessment.

The absence of recent records should be interpreted cautiously because many invertebrate species are under-sampled and may be difficult to detect without targeted survey effort. However, in this case the combination of historical-only records, no recent citizen-science records, no nearby records, and limited ecological information provides reasonable confidence that the species is unlikely to be present within the proposed development footprint.

Habitat and ecology

Habitat and ecological information for *C. peringueyi* is limited. The SANBI guideline describes the species as "only known from mountains in the Fynbos biome, South Africa", but does not provide adult activity-period data, host-plant associations, microhabitat detail, or survey-season guidance. The same guideline reports a relatively broad occurrence area for the species, which may explain why the species can be triggered by the Screening Tool at a broad spatial scale despite weak site-specific evidence.

Unverified notes suggest a possible preference for mountain habitats, but this does not appear to be supported by detailed empirical habitat studies. For the present assessment, this information should therefore be treated as indicative rather than conclusive. The proposed clearing footprint is dominated by historically disturbed secondary renosterveld, old fields, grazed agricultural areas and transformed habitat, rather than intact mountain fynbos. Based on the available information, the site does not appear to provide suitable or likely habitat for the species.

Threats

The threats to *C. peringueyi* are not well documented. Based on its Vulnerable status, apparent rarity, and limited known distribution, the following threats are considered most relevant:

- **Habitat loss and transformation**, especially where natural fynbos or mountain-fynbos habitats are converted or degraded.
- **Habitat fragmentation**, particularly if the species is restricted to specific mountain-fynbos habitat patches.
- **Inappropriate fire regimes**, although the species-specific response to fire is unknown.
- **Climate-related changes**, especially where these affect montane fynbos structure, moisture regimes or vegetation composition.
- **Lack of recent survey information**, which limits confidence in its current distribution, population status and habitat requirements.
- **Potential localised impacts from vegetation clearing**, if suitable habitat is present, although the proposed footprint is not considered likely habitat for this species.

Likelihood of occurrence

The likelihood of occurrence of *Conocephalus peringueyi* within the proposed development footprint is assessed as Very Low. The species is poorly known, with sparse ecological information and no adult activity-period data provided in the SANBI guideline. Available information indicates that it is only known from mountains in the Fynbos biome, while the proposed footprint does not represent suitable mountain-fynbos habitat.

The desktop review found no recent public records, no nearby records and no iNaturalist observations for the species. The available occurrence information appears to be historical, and the species was not recorded during the field survey despite active invertebrate sampling. The Screening Tool trigger is therefore interpreted as a precautionary broad-scale model output likely site occupancy.

Because the likelihood of occurrence is assessed as Very Low, no likely or confirmed habitat receptor for *C. peringueyi* was identified within the PAOI. A formal SEI evaluation is therefore not undertaken for this species, and no species-specific impact is expected.

Blue Crane (Grus paradisea)

Conservation Status

The Blue Crane is currently listed as Vulnerable on the 2025 BirdLife South Africa regional Red List (Craig 2025). BirdLife South Africa notes that the species was previously assessed as Near Threatened when the regional population appeared to be increasing, but more recent analyses indicate that the population is now in decline, warranting uplisting. The species is also globally listed as Vulnerable.

Distribution and population

The Blue Crane is a near-endemic southern African crane, with the overwhelming majority of the global population occurring in South Africa (Craig 2025). Historically, the main strongholds were the eastern grasslands and Karoo, but substantial declines in those natural-range populations were partly offset by colonisation of the Western Cape wheatlands (Craig 2025). Approximately half of all Blue Cranes are now found in the Western Cape wheatlands, including the Overberg and Swartland, where the species has become strongly associated with agricultural landscapes. Recent work estimates the South African population at roughly 51 000 birds (range 34 000–68 000), but trend analyses indicate that although Blue Crane numbers increased over the long term, the trend in the Western Cape changed after about 2010, with the Overberg showing a marked decline from 2011 to 2019 (Craig 2024).

Habitat and Ecology

Blue Cranes favour open habitats with short vegetation and good visibility. In the Western Cape they rely heavily on transformed agricultural landscapes, especially a mosaic of cereal croplands, post-harvest stubble and grazing pastures that structurally resemble grassland habitat (Davis 2018, Bouwer 2023). In the Overberg, grazing pastures and post-harvest cereal fields are particularly important nesting and foraging habitats, while the broader agricultural matrix supports daily movement and seasonal habitat use (Davis 2018, Bouwer 2023). The species is monogamous, with pairs maintaining strong pair bonds, and breeding generally takes place from spring into summer, with many nests in the Western Cape occurring in agricultural fields during the harvest period (Bouwer 2023).

Threats

Major threats to the Blue Crane include:

- **Powerline collisions**, which remain one of the most important documented sources of mortality in both the Overberg and other core regions (Craig 2024).
- **Fence entanglements**, especially in agricultural landscapes (Craig et al. 2026).

- **Reduced breeding productivity and recruitment** in the Western Cape wheatlands, raising concern that some agricultural areas may function as an ecological trap (Craig et al. 2026).
- **Nest disturbance associated with agricultural operations**, particularly harvesting during the breeding season (Craig et al. 2026).
- **Chick mortality**, including drownings in water troughs and other farm-associated hazards (Craig et al. 2026).
- **Habitat transformation and agricultural intensification**, which have historically driven declines in the species' former core range and continue to influence habitat suitability (Craig et al. 2026).

Likelihood of occurrence

The likelihood of occurrence of Blue Crane at the property is considered high. The site occurs within the Tulbagh valley floor wheatlands which comprises open agricultural habitat of the type widely used by Blue Cranes in the Western Cape. The fallow crop fields on site are consistent with foraging habitat used by the species in this region. A flock was observed approximately 3 km north west of the property. The site therefore constitutes confirmed foraging habitat for the species within the local agricultural landscape.

Site Ecological Importance (SEI) – Blue Crane Habitat

The Blue Crane receptor is evaluated as having Low Site Ecological Importance Table 12 for the proposed activity. Although the species occurs in the broader agricultural landscape and a flock was observed approximately 3 km north-west of the property, no Blue Crane were recorded within the proposed clearing footprint and no evidence of nesting, roosting or regular site dependence was observed. The species is expected to make use of the broader transformed agricultural matrix rather than depend specifically on the proposed clearing areas, and the loss of habitat within the footprint is therefore unlikely to materially affect local habitat availability for Blue Crane. A Low SEI rating is therefore considered appropriate, with standard precautionary mitigation required to avoid disturbance to any birds that may be present during site preparation or clearing.

Table 12: Evaluation of site ecological importance (SEI) in terms of impact on the habitat (the receptor) for Blue Crane for the proposed development, see evaluation criteria (SANBI 2026). SEI is classified as 'Low'.

Biodiversity importance		Conservation importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Functional integrity	Very high	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	High	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very low	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)		Biodiversity importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Receptor resilience	Very low	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	Low	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very high	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)	Interpretation in relation to proposed development activities
Very high	Avoidance mitigation – no destructive development activities should be considered. Offset mitigation not acceptable/not possible (i.e. last remaining populations of species, last remaining good condition patches of ecosystems/unique species assemblages). Destructive impacts for species/ecosystems where persistence target remains.
High	Avoidance mitigation wherever possible. Minimisation mitigation – changes to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted; limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities.
Medium	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Low	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Very low	Minimisation mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable and restoration activities may not be required.

Yellow-billed Egret (Ardea brachyrhyncha)

Conservation Status

According to the BirdLife South Africa regional Red List account, the Yellow-billed Egret is currently listed as Near Threatened in South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini (Ehlers Smith 2025). BirdLife South Africa notes that although the species has a large regional extent of occurrence and area of occupancy, the regional population is inferred to be relatively small and may be declining, but uncertainty in the available data supports a precautionary Near Threatened listing rather than a threatened category (Ehlers Smith 2025). Globally, the species is listed as Least Concern (Ehlers Smith 2025).

Distribution and population

The Yellow-billed Egret is a widespread Afrotropical waterbird occurring across much of sub-Saharan Africa, where it is associated with freshwater wetlands, floodplains, pans, rivers, dams and seasonally inundated grasslands (Ehlers Smith 2025). BirdLife South Africa indicates that the South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini region contains only a relatively small proportion of the modelled range, with the regional population estimated at roughly 1 386–5 536 birds (Ehlers Smith 2025). The species is generally nomadic or locally mobile in response to rainfall, flooding and wetland conditions, and local occurrence may vary seasonally depending on water availability and prey resources (Ehlers Smith 2025).

Habitat and Ecology

Yellow-billed Egrets are strongly associated with shallow freshwater habitats, especially pans, marshes, floodplains, farm dams, wet grasslands and the margins of rivers or wetlands (Ehlers Smith 2025). They forage mainly in shallow water or saturated ground, feeding on aquatic and semi-aquatic prey such as fish, frogs, crustaceans, aquatic insects and other small animals (Ehlers Smith 2025). The species is typically encountered singly or in small groups when foraging, although larger aggregations may occur where feeding conditions are favourable. As with other egrets, it may roost communally, but breeding is usually associated with colonies in trees or reedbeds near suitable wetland habitat (Ehlers Smith 2025).

Threats

Major threats to the Yellow-billed Egret include (Ehlers Smith 2025):

- **Loss, degradation or modification of wetlands** through drainage, abstraction, infilling and altered hydrology.
- **Declining water quality**, including pollution and eutrophication affecting prey availability and habitat quality.
- **Disturbance at feeding and breeding sites**, particularly where wetland margins are heavily modified or subject to human activity.
- **Dependence on variable wetland systems**, making local populations sensitive to drought and changing rainfall patterns.

Likelihood of occurrence

The likelihood of occurrence of Yellow-billed Egret on the farm is considered high. The species was recorded during the site assessment and the farm dams, open fields on the property provide suitable foraging habitat for this species. However, its use of the site is most likely limited to opportunistic foraging and temporary utilisation of wetland margins rather than breeding. The property is therefore considered to provide suitable local habitat for the species, but it is unlikely to represent an important breeding site or a key habitat area at a landscape scale.

Site Ecological Importance (SEI) – Yellow-billed Egret

The Yellow-billed Egret foraging habitat is evaluated as having Low Site Ecological Importance *Table 13* for the proposed activity. Yellow-billed Egret was observed foraging on site in association with farm cattle, confirming that the grazed agricultural areas provide opportunistic foraging habitat for the species. However, the proposed clearing footprint does not contain breeding, roosting or core wetland habitat for the species, and similar foraging opportunities are available within the broader agricultural landscape. The main mitigation requirement is to avoid direct disturbance to birds present during clearing and to maintain watercourse buffers, riparian vegetation and wetland-edge habitats.

Table 13:Evaluation of site ecological importance (SEI) in terms of impact on the habitat (the receptor) for Yellow-billed Egret for the proposed development, see evaluation criteria (SANBI 2026). SEI is classified as 'Low'.

Biodiversity importance		Conservation importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Functional integrity	Very high	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	High	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very low	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)		Biodiversity importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Receptor resilience	Very low	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	Low	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very high	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)	Interpretation in relation to proposed development activities

Very high	Avoidance mitigation – no destructive development activities should be considered. Offset mitigation not acceptable/not possible (i.e. last remaining populations of species, last remaining good condition patches of ecosystems/unique species assemblages). Destructive impacts for species/ecosystems where persistence target remains.
High	Avoidance mitigation wherever possible. Minimisation mitigation – changes to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted; limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities.
Medium	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Low	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Very low	Minimisation mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable and restoration activities may not be required.

African Darter (Anhinga rufa)

Conservation status

African Darter (*Anhinga rufa*) is listed as Near Threatened in the 2025 regional Red List assessment for South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini, under criterion A2c (Radue et al. 2025). The species is listed globally as Least Concern, and the 2025 regional listing is based on evidence of regional decline rather than global extinction risk.

Population status

The regional population size is currently unknown, although the 2025 assessment indicates that available count totals do not support a regional estimate of more than 10 000 mature individuals. The global population is estimated at 25 500–127 000 individuals. The regional population trend is assessed as decreasing, with both Coordinated Waterbird Counts and Southern African Bird Atlas Project data indicating steep declines across the region.

The species had not previously been regionally assessed in 2000 or 2015. Its inclusion in the 2025 assessment was prompted by preliminary screening of waterbird count data showing a significant decline in the number of African Darters counted per year. The assessment also notes that population estimates are complicated by local movements of individuals as habitat conditions change, and that confidence in regional population-size estimates remains low.

Habitat and ecology

African Darter is a waterbird associated with freshwater and brackish aquatic habitats. It requires close proximity to shallow lakes, swamps, lagoons and slow-moving rivers, especially where these are bordered by trees, reeds or mangroves suitable for roosting. It generally avoids fast-flowing rivers, areas with dense floating aquatic vegetation, and open marine environments.

The species is a diving piscivore and feeds mainly on fish, although it may also take crustaceans, frogs, insects, molluscs, small terrapins and aquatic snakes. It is generally a solitary feeder, but roosts communally in trees, bushes or reedbeds, often with other waterbird species. Breeding is usually colonial, often in association with other waterbirds, and may occur seasonally or in response to rainfall. The regional assessment notes that breeding-success data for South Africa are lacking.

Within the project area, African Darter is relevant mainly to aquatic and riparian habitat, rather than the terrestrial vegetation-clearing footprint. The botanical assessment describes

riparian vegetation along small watercourses around the site and recommends that these riparian areas be treated as no-go areas. The botanical assessment also recommends excluding watercourse buffers from the proposed activity where water-use authorisation is not pursued.

Threats

The main threats to African Darter are (Radue et al. 2025):

- **Regional decline in area of occupancy and reporting rates**, with waterbird count and bird atlas data indicating a regional decline.
- **Destruction and degradation of aquatic habitats**, including loss of suitable foraging, roosting and breeding habitat.
- **Environmental pollution**, which may affect water quality, prey availability and aquatic ecosystem condition.
- **Potential loss or degradation of breeding grounds**, especially where wetland, reedbed or tree-lined waterbody habitats are disturbed.
- **Historical persecution**, linked to perceived impacts on trout and other recreational fish species; the 2025 assessment indicates that it is unknown whether this remains an active regional threat.
- **Poor protection in the regional protected-area network**, with the assessment noting that the species would benefit from watercourse restoration and preservation.

Likelihood of occurrence

African Darter was recorded during the bird survey in the farm dam between Damkamp and Agterste Kamp, confirming that the species occurs in the local landscape. However, the proposed vegetation-clearing footprint is primarily terrestrial and does not provide core aquatic foraging, roosting or breeding habitat for the species.

The species' relevant habitat on or near the site is limited to watercourses, riparian vegetation, farm dams or other aquatic features, where present. These features should be protected from clearing, sedimentation, pollution and unnecessary disturbance. The riparian vegetation and watercourse buffers recommended as no-go areas by the botanical assessment are therefore also relevant to the faunal assessment.

Site ecological importance

The impact receptor assessed for African Darter is aquatic and riparian foraging / roosting habitat, rather than the terrestrial clearing footprint itself. African Darter is regionally Near Threatened, with BirdLife South Africa reporting a decreasing regional population trend and regional declines in area of occupancy and reporting rates. This gives the species moderate conservation relevance in the local assessment. However, the proposed activity is primarily vegetation clearing in terrestrial old-field and secondary-renosterveld habitats, while African Darter is dependent on freshwater and brackish aquatic systems such as shallow lakes, swamps, lagoons and slow-moving rivers with trees, reeds or similar roosting structure.

On this site, suitable habitat for African Darter is limited to watercourses, riparian vegetation, farm dams or other aquatic features where present. These habitats occur outside or on the

margins of the proposed clearing footprint and are already recommended for avoidance through riparian no-go areas and watercourse buffers. The terrestrial footprint does not provide breeding habitat, regular roosting habitat or important foraging habitat for the species. Functional integrity for this receptor is therefore considered low to medium, because limited aquatic / riparian habitat may support occasional use, while the development footprint itself has little direct value for the species.

The African Darter habitat receptor is therefore assessed as having Low Site Ecological Importance Table 14 within the proposed vegetation-clearing footprint. This rating recognises the species' Near Threatened regional status, while also reflecting the low site-specific dependence of the species on the affected terrestrial habitat. Provided that riparian vegetation, drainage lines, watercourse buffers and farm-dam margins are retained and protected from sedimentation, pollution and unnecessary disturbance, the proposed activity is unlikely to result in a significant impact on African Darter.

Table 14: Evaluation of site ecological importance (SEI) in terms of impact on the habitat (the receptor) for African Darter for the proposed development, see evaluation criteria (SANBI 2026). SEI is classified as 'Low'.

Biodiversity importance		Conservation importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Functional integrity	Very high	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	High	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very low	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)		Biodiversity importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Receptor resilience	Very low	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	Low	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very high	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)	Interpretation in relation to proposed development activities
Very high	Avoidance mitigation – no destructive development activities should be considered. Offset mitigation not acceptable/not possible (i.e. last remaining populations of species, last remaining good condition patches of ecosystems/unique species assemblages). Destructive impacts for species/ecosystems where persistence target remains.
High	Avoidance mitigation wherever possible. Minimisation mitigation – changes to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted; limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities.
Medium	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Low	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Very low	Minimisation mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable and restoration activities may not be required.

Hamerkop (Scopus umbretta)

Conservation status

Hamerkop (*Scopus umbretta*) is listed as Near Threatened in the 2025 regional Red List assessment for South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini, under criteria A2c; C1 (Rose and Paul 2025). The species remains listed as Least Concern globally, so the conservation concern in this assessment relates to its regional decline rather than global extinction risk.

Population status

The regional population is estimated at fewer than 10 000 mature individuals, while the global population size is listed as unknown (Rose and Paul 2025). The regional population trend is assessed as decreasing. The 2025 assessment indicates that Hamerkop was not assessed in the 2015 regional Red List assessment, but was included in 2025 because preliminary screening of Coordinated Waterbird Counts indicated a significant decline in the number of Hamerkop counted per year (Rose and Paul 2025).

BirdLife South Africa reports that the species has suffered an estimated decline of at least 20% in Area of Occupancy over the last three generations, approaching the threshold for Vulnerable under criterion A. The cause of the decline is not well understood and has not ceased, but is thought to be associated with increased aridity in the western part of the region, which may reduce the availability of suitable wet habitats.

Habitat and ecology

Hamerkop is associated with a range of aquatic habitats, including estuaries, rivers, ponds, lakesides and irrigation systems, and may occasionally occur along rocky shorelines. The species requires trees for nesting and roosting. It is generally sedentary, although local movements may occur in response to rainfall.

The species feeds mainly on amphibians, including adults and tadpoles, but also takes small fish and invertebrates. It usually hunts by wading in shallow water, although prey may also be taken from the water surface during flight. Hamerkop is also notable for constructing very large stick nests, usually in the fork of a tree, and a pair may construct multiple nests, some of which may remain unused.

Within the project area, the species is relevant mainly to aquatic, riparian and wetland-edge habitats, rather than the terrestrial vegetation-clearing footprint. The botanical assessment describes riparian vegetation along small drainage lines around the site and recommends that these riparian areas be treated as no-go areas. The same assessment recommends excluding watercourse buffers from the proposed activity where water-use authorisation is not pursued.

Threats

- The main threats to Hamerkop are (Rose and Paul 2025):
- **Regional population decline**, reflected in waterbird count data and a reduction in modelled Area of Occupancy.
- **Extended drought and increasing aridity**, particularly in the western parts of the region where drying of wet habitats may reduce habitat suitability.

- **Degradation of freshwater habitats**, including rivers, wetlands, ponds, irrigation systems and associated riparian habitat.
- **Loss of nesting and roosting trees** near aquatic habitats, as the species requires trees for nesting and roosting.
- **Limited species-specific conservation action**, as no species-specific conservation measures are currently listed for the species, and BirdLife South Africa identifies the need for improved protection of freshwater wetlands.

Likelihood of occurrence

The likelihood of occurrence of Hamerkop within the broader project area is assessed as High. The species was observed on site during the field survey, including individuals feeding in brush-cut areas and flying towards the Schalkenbosch 'forest'. These observations confirm that the site and immediate surroundings are used by the species for foraging and local movement.

The proposed clearing footprint itself does not represent core aquatic habitat, but the brush-cut and open disturbed areas may provide opportunistic foraging habitat, particularly where amphibians, invertebrates or other prey are exposed or concentrated. The larger ecological receptor for the species is the combination of foraging areas, drainage lines, riparian vegetation, farm dams or other aquatic features, and large trees in the Schalkenbosch riverine system. Given the availability of large trees in riverine areas such as Schalkenbosch, breeding in the broader local area is considered possible.

Site ecological importance

The impact receptor assessed for Hamerkop is aquatic, riparian and wetland-edge foraging / nesting / roosting habitat. The species has regional conservation relevance because it is listed as Near Threatened and shows a decreasing regional trend. However, the proposed activity is focused mainly on terrestrial vegetation clearing in old-field and secondary-renosterveld habitats, while Hamerkop is dependent on shallow aquatic habitats and nearby trees for foraging, nesting and roosting.

Suitable habitat on or near the site is therefore restricted to watercourses, riparian vegetation, farm dams, irrigation features and associated trees, where present. These features occur outside or along the margins of the proposed clearing footprint and should be protected through the recommended riparian no-go areas and watercourse buffers. The proposed clearing footprint does not represent core Hamerkop habitat and no nest or regular roosting site has been identified within the affected terrestrial areas.

The Hamerkop habitat receptor is therefore assessed as having Low Site Ecological Importance Table 15 within the proposed vegetation-clearing footprint. This rating recognises the species' Near Threatened regional status, while reflecting the limited direct functional value of the terrestrial footprint for the species. Provided that riparian vegetation, drainage lines, watercourse buffers, farm-dam margins and large trees near aquatic habitats are retained and protected from sedimentation, pollution and disturbance, the proposed activity is unlikely to result in a significant impact on Hamerkop.

Table 15: Evaluation of site ecological importance (SEI) in terms of impact on the habitat (the receptor) for Hamerkop for the proposed development, see evaluation criteria (SANBI 2026). SEI is classified as 'Low'.

Biodiversity importance		Conservation importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Functional integrity	Very high	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	High	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very low	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)		Biodiversity importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Receptor resilience	Very low	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	Low	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very high	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)	Interpretation in relation to proposed development activities
Very high	Avoidance mitigation – no destructive development activities should be considered. Offset mitigation not acceptable/not possible (i.e. last remaining populations of species, last remaining good condition patches of ecosystems/unique species assemblages). Destructive impacts for species/ecosystems where persistence target remains.
High	Avoidance mitigation wherever possible. Minimisation mitigation – changes to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted; limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities.
Medium	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Low	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Very low	Minimisation mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable and restoration activities may not be required.

Cape Clawless Otter (Aonyx capensis)

Conservation status

The Cape Clawless Otter is currently assessed as Near Threatened in the 2025 regional Red List assessment, with a declining regional population trend and no change from the 2016 category (Power et al. 2025). Power et al. (2025) notes that the most likely population estimate for the assessment region is 21,500–30,276 individuals, of which 11,825–19,377 are considered mature, but also emphasises that systematic density estimates remain limited.

Distribution and population

Cape Clawless Otter is the most widely distributed otter species in Africa. Its range extends from Senegal and Mali through much of West, Central-East and southern Africa to the southern tip of South Africa, although it is absent from the Congo Basin where it is replaced by the Congo Clawless Otter. Within South Africa it is widely distributed and has been recorded from a broad range of aquatic environments (Nel and Somers 2007, Power et al. 2025).

Although widespread, the species is often described as patchily distributed, and available evidence suggests that local abundance declines where riparian habitat is transformed, rivers are canalised, water quality deteriorates, or disturbance increases. The EWT assessment notes documented local declines and reduced abundance in more disturbed river systems, while also pointing out that robust long-term density data remain sparse (Nel and Somers 2007, Power et al. 2025).

Habitat and ecology

Cape Clawless Otters occur in a wide variety of freshwater, estuarine, and coastal habitats, from rivers, streams, wetlands and freshwater lakes to the marine littoral, provided that freshwater is available and prey resources are sufficient. They are semi-aquatic predators that usually forage close to shores or banks and are well adapted to capturing prey by touch as well as by sight (Somers 2000, Nel and Somers 2007).

The species uses freshwater habitats extensively, but also forages in marine habitats, especially along rocky shores. Marine use appears to be closely associated with the availability of nearby freshwater, which is important for drinking and washing salt from the fur. In marine systems, the diet is dominated mainly by crustaceans such as shore crabs, rock crabs and rock lobster, with fish also an important prey category. More recent dietary work shows that the species is an opportunistic feeder capable of exploiting locally available prey and showing substantial spatial variation in diet among coastal sites (Somers 2000, Jordaan et al. 2015).

Habitat-use studies in South Africa indicate that otters tend to use areas with rocky banks or shores, dense riparian or shoreline vegetation, shallow nearshore water, and reliable freshwater access. In riverine systems, areas with dense reed beds and rocky substrates appear to be used particularly intensively, probably because they support higher prey biomass and provide shelter (Nel and Somers 2007).

Threats

The main threats to Cape Clawless Otter include:

- **Riparian and freshwater habitat degradation**, including loss of riverbank vegetation and wetland transformation (Power et al. 2025).
- **Pollution** and declining water quality in freshwater systems (Okes 2017, Power et al. 2025).
- **Canalisation, impoundments, and hydrological alteration** of rivers, which reduce shelter, prey availability and habitat suitability (Power et al. 2025).
- **Urban and coastal development**, especially where this increases disturbance and transforms riverine or coastal edge habitat (Okes 2017, Power et al. 2025).
- **Conflict with fisheries and poultry farmers**, including retributive killing and accidental capture (Okes 2017).
- **Road mortality**, which is a recognised threat where otters move through human-modified landscapes (Okes 2017).
- **Dogs and other human-associated disturbance factors** in transformed environments (Okes 2017).

- **Harvest for skins, body parts, food or traditional medicine** in parts of the range (Okes 2017).

Likelihood of occurrence

The likelihood of occurrence of Cape Clawless Otter within the broader project area is assessed as Confirmed / High. Otter tracks were recorded in the drainage line between Damkamp and Agterstekamp, confirming that the species uses the site or immediate PAOI. This drainage line therefore represents a functional local movement and/or foraging corridor for the species.

The species is widely associated with freshwater, estuarine and coastal habitats, provided that freshwater, prey resources and suitable cover are available. Habitat-use studies in South Africa indicate that Cape Clawless Otters often use areas with dense riparian and reliable freshwater access. This is consistent with the field evidence recorded on site, as the tracks were found in a drainage-line setting. These drainage-line and riparian features are therefore the key habitat units for Cape Clawless Otter within the PAOI.

The proposed clearing areas themselves are largely terrestrial and do not represent core otter habitat. However, any clearing, disturbance, sedimentation, erosion, pollution or loss of cover along the drainage line between Damkamp and Agterstekamp could affect a confirmed otter movement / foraging route. The species should therefore be treated as present in the PAOI, with the drainage line and associated riparian vegetation forming the relevant impact receptor.

Site Ecological Importance

The impact receptor assessed for Cape Clawless Otter is the drainage-line and riparian habitat used for movement and occasional foraging, rather than the surrounding terrestrial clearing footprint. Otter tracks recorded in the drainage line between Damkamp and Agterstekamp confirm that the species uses the PAOI. However, the available evidence indicates use of the drainage line as part of a broader movement network, rather than dependence on the site as core habitat. No den, resting site, breeding site or regular feeding area was recorded.

The conservation importance of the receptor is considered Low to Medium. Cape Clawless Otter is regionally Near Threatened and declining, but it remains widespread and is able to move across broader aquatic and riparian networks. The site does not appear to support a locally important population or critical habitat feature for the species. Functional integrity is also considered Low to Medium, as the drainage line remains sufficiently functional to support movement, but occurs within a transformed agricultural landscape and is likely to provide limited and intermittent habitat value. The surrounding terrestrial clearing footprint has little direct functional value for the species.

Receptor resilience is assessed as Medium. Cape Clawless Otters are mobile and can use alternative drainage lines, farm dams and riparian corridors in the broader landscape. The drainage-line habitat itself would be sensitive to direct disturbance, sedimentation, pollution and removal of riparian cover, but if the drainage line and buffer are retained as no-go areas, the limited movement and foraging function is expected to persist.

The Cape Clawless Otter habitat receptor is therefore assessed as having Low Site Ecological Importance Table 16 within the proposed vegetation-clearing footprint, with local sensitivity concentrated along the drainage line between Damkamp and Agterstekamp. The key management requirement is to retain and protect the drainage line, riparian vegetation and watercourse buffer from clearing, sedimentation, pollution, bank disturbance and unnecessary disturbance. Terrestrial habitats away from the drainage line are assessed as Low SEI for this species.

Table 16: Evaluation of site ecological importance (SEI) in terms of impact on the habitat (the receptor) for Cape Clawless Otter for the proposed development, see evaluation criteria (SANBI 2026). SEI is classified as 'Low'.

Biodiversity importance		Conservation importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Functional integrity	Very high	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	High	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very low	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)		Biodiversity importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Receptor resilience	Very low	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	Low	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very high	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)	Interpretation in relation to proposed development activities
Very high	Avoidance mitigation – no destructive development activities should be considered. Offset mitigation not acceptable/not possible (i.e. last remaining populations of species, last remaining good condition patches of ecosystems/unique species assemblages). Destructive impacts for species/ecosystems where persistence target remains.
High	Avoidance mitigation wherever possible. Minimisation mitigation – changes to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted; limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities.
Medium	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Low	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Very low	Minimisation mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable and restoration activities may not be required.

Grey Rhebuck (Pelea capreolus)

Conservation status

Grey Rhebuck (*Pelea capreolus*) is assessed as Near Threatened in the 2025 regional Red List assessment and is considered close to meeting the threshold for Vulnerable A2bd under a precautionary interpretation (Taylor et al. 2025). The species is endemic to South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini, where it occurs in rocky grassland and associated open upland habitats (Taylor et al. 2025).

The 2025 assessment retained the Near Threatened listing because recent data were not robust enough to revise the trend estimate, and because the available evidence still indicates

an estimated continuing decline. The assessment relies strongly on previous long-term data from 1999–2014, which suggested an approximately 20% decline over three generations across 13 formally protected areas (Taylor et al. 2025). Further long-term data are required, and the species may qualify for a more threatened category if future reliable data confirm stronger declines (Taylor et al. 2025).

Population status

Grey Rhebuck remains widely distributed across parts of South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini, but its distribution is patchy and linked to suitable open rocky and grassy habitats. Although the species still occurs in protected areas and on private land, occupancy has likely been reduced by agricultural transformation, human settlement expansion and illegal hunting (EWT 2025).

The current population size is unknown. The 2025 assessment notes a minimum of approximately 2 000 individuals in formally protected areas, but indicates that further research is needed to determine whether the total population exceeds 10 000 individuals across the range (Taylor et al. 2025). The current population trend is assessed as declining, with continuing decline in mature individuals attributed mainly to hunting, poaching and increased predation rates, with possible contribution from Allee effects in small subpopulations (Taylor et al. 2025).

The level of fragmentation is also uncertain. Grey Rhebuck are discontinuously distributed and naturally patchy, but they can occur outside protected areas and move through suitable private-land landscapes. They are capable jumpers and can cross some fences, although agricultural transformation and settlement expansion can still reduce landscape permeability and increase hunting pressure (Taylor et al. 2025).

Habitat and ecology

Grey Rhebuck are associated with rocky hills, grassy mountain slopes and plateau grasslands in the eastern part of their range. In the south and south-west, they are associated with rocky hills in mountain Fynbos and the Little Karoo (Taylor et al. 2025). The species generally occurs from approximately 500 m a.s.l. to above 2 800 m a.s.l. (Taylor et al. 2025).

The species is a selective mixed feeder, often feeding on forbs, especially the flowers and leaves of plants. Jansen van Vuuren et al. (2022) similarly describe Grey Rhebuck as selective mixed feeders with a preference for forbs. They require adequate grass cover within their home ranges for shelter and predator avoidance, but may feed in steep open areas with relatively little cover.

Grey Rhebuck can also use transformed agricultural landscapes. In the Overberg Renosterveld, Jansen van Vuuren et al. (2022) examined the diets of five small antelope species, including Grey Rhebuck, in a highly transformed agricultural landscape. The study found a high ratio of anthropogenic to natural vegetation in the diets of Grey Rhebuck, bushbuck and steenbok, indicating substantial use of crop and other anthropogenic food resources. The dominant components of Grey Rhebuck diets in that study were the anthropogenic plants *Chenopodium album* and *Hordeum vulgare*, with Fabaceae also important.

This is relevant to the Schalkenbosch site because the PAOI includes a transformed agricultural valley landscape with secondary renosterveld, brush-cut areas, old fields, grazing lands and agricultural edges. These habitats are unlikely to represent core Grey Rhebuck habitat in the same way as rocky grassland or mountain-fynbos slopes, but they may provide opportunistic foraging habitat where open vegetation, crop edges, weeds, forbs and fallow areas are available.

Threats

The main threats to Grey Rhebuck are (Taylor et al. 2025):

- **Illegal sport hunting with dogs and bushmeat hunting**, identified as the primary suspected threat in the 2025 assessment.
- **Incidental snaring and poaching**, particularly where subpopulations occur close to rural settlements, urban edges or accessible protected-area boundaries.
- **Feral and domestic dogs**, including direct killing and increased disturbance, with documented concern around packs of dogs in or near protected areas.
- **Increased predation rates**, particularly where mesopredator abundance is elevated or where poor carnivore management affects predator–prey dynamics.
- **Habitat degradation**, including bush encroachment, inappropriate fire regimes, overgrazing and land-use change in rocky grassland and open fynbos / renosterveld systems.
- **Agricultural transformation and human settlement expansion**, which reduce occupancy, fragment suitable habitat and increase exposure to hunting pressure.
- **Reduced conservation-management capacity**, particularly in state-run conservation areas where control of poaching, dogs and habitat degradation may be weakened.
- **Localised barriers and fragmentation**, especially where fencing, intensive agriculture and settlement reduce movement between open upland habitats, protected areas and private-land refuges.

Likelihood of occurrence

The likelihood of occurrence of Grey Rhebuck in the broader PAOI is assessed as Likely. Although no individuals, tracks or dung were recorded during the field survey, the landowner reported that Grey Rhebuck are present on the property. Given that the species is a conspicuous medium-sized antelope and is known to use agricultural and semi-natural landscapes in the Western Cape, this local report is considered credible evidence of occurrence in the broader property.

The proposed footprint contains open secondary vegetation, brush-cut areas, old fields, grazing areas and agricultural edges that may provide opportunistic foraging habitat. Grey Rhebuck are associated with rocky hills, grassy mountain slopes, plateau grasslands and, in the south-western Cape, rocky hills in mountain fynbos and the Little Karoo (Taylor et al. 2025). They are also known to use agricultural lands in the Western Cape (Taylor et al. 2025). This is supported by Jansen van Vuuren et al. (2022), who found that Grey Rhebuck in the Overberg Renosterveld made substantial dietary use of anthropogenic vegetation in transformed agricultural landscapes. The dominant dietary components recorded for Grey

Rhebuck in that study included the anthropogenic plants *Chenopodium album* and *Hordeum vulgare*.

The site should therefore be treated as part of the local foraging and movement landscape for Grey Rhebuck. However, the available information does not indicate that the proposed clearing footprint supports a resident herd, breeding area or key refuge habitat. The species is likely to use the broader property opportunistically, especially open areas, crop edges, brush-cut areas and the foothill interface, while the most important habitat is expected to occur in the broader open foothill and mountain-edge landscape rather than the disturbed clearing footprint itself.

Site Ecological Importance

The impact receptor assessed for Grey Rhebuck is open foraging and movement habitat, including brush-cut areas, old fields, open secondary renosterveld, grazing areas, crop edges and foothill-interface habitats. The receptor is assessed as having Low–Medium Site Ecological Importance in the broader PAOI, and Low SEI within the proposed clearing footprint itself.

The conservation importance of the receptor is Medium, because Grey Rhebuck is a Near Threatened regional endemic to South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini, with a declining population trend and suspected continuing decline linked to illegal hunting, poaching, hunting with dogs, increased predation and habitat degradation. The landowner confirmed that the species occurs on the property.

Functional integrity is assessed as Low to Medium. The broader property provides some usable habitat for foraging and movement, particularly open areas and the foothill interface, but the proposed clearing footprint is historically modified and does not represent core rocky grassland, plateau grassland or high-quality mountain-fynbos habitat. The species appears able to exploit transformed agricultural landscapes where suitable forage is available, as shown in the Overberg Renosterveld diet study.

Receptor resilience is assessed as Medium. Grey Rhebuck are mobile and can use a mosaic of open natural, semi-natural and agricultural habitats. Local habitat function is therefore unlikely to be lost entirely if clearing is restricted to already disturbed areas and if broader movement routes remain permeable. However, cumulative loss of open semi-natural vegetation, increased fencing barriers, dog activity or disturbance could reduce local habitat value.

On this basis, the Grey Rhebuck habitat receptor is assessed as Low SEI for the broader property and foothill-interface habitat, with Low SEI for the specific proposed clearing footprint where habitat is transformed and no direct evidence of concentrated use was recorded Table 17. Mitigation should focus on retaining landscape permeability, avoiding unnecessary fencing barriers, maintaining drainage-line and natural-vegetation corridors, preventing hunting or dog-related disturbance, and allowing any individuals encountered during clearing to move away unharmed.

Table 17: Evaluation of site ecological importance (SEI) in terms of impact on the habitat (the receptor) for Grey Rhebuck for the proposed development, see evaluation criteria (SANBI 2026). SEI is classified as 'Low'.

Biodiversity importance		Conservation importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Functional integrity	Very high	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	High	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very low	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)		Biodiversity importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Receptor resilience	Very low	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	Low	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very high	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)	Interpretation in relation to proposed development activities
Very high	Avoidance mitigation – no destructive development activities should be considered. Offset mitigation not acceptable/not possible (i.e. last remaining populations of species, last remaining good condition patches of ecosystems/unique species assemblages). Destructive impacts for species/ecosystems where persistence target remains.
High	Avoidance mitigation wherever possible. Minimisation mitigation – changes to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted; limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities.
Medium	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Low	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Very low	Minimisation mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable and restoration activities may not be required.

Leopard (Panthera pardus)

Conservation status

Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) is assessed as Vulnerable C1 in the 2025 regional Red List assessment for South Africa, Eswatini and Lesotho (Mann et al. 2025). The listing is based on the species' small regional mature population size and an estimated continuing decline of at least 10% over three generations. Although Leopard remains widespread and ecologically adaptable, the 2025 assessment emphasises that severe threats persist, particularly outside protected areas, where most suitable Leopard habitat in South Africa occurs (Mann et al. 2025).

The most systematic regional estimate cited by Mann et al. (2025) is 2,813–11,632 Leopards in South Africa, equivalent to approximately 1,688–6,979 mature individuals if a 60% mature population structure is assumed. These estimates are treated cautiously because they are based on habitat-suitability models and older occurrence data collected between 2000 and 2010 (Mann et al. 2025). The overall regional population trend remains negative, with long-term monitoring studies indicating an approximate 3% annual decline, equivalent to an

estimated 27% decline over a 10-year period, although trends vary among regions (Mann et al. 2025).

In the Western Cape, Leopard conservation has additional regional importance. Tensen et al. (2026) found that Western Cape Leopards are genetically distinct from other African Leopards and diverged from northern South African Leopards approximately 20,000–24,000 years ago. The same study argues that Cape Leopards should be considered an evolutionarily significant unit because of local adaptation and divergence in both mitochondrial and nuclear genomes.

Population status

Leopards remain widely but patchily distributed in South Africa, with extensive historical range loss and local extinction from areas of high human density or extensive habitat transformation (Mann et al. 2025). Within the assessment region, Leopards occur across most provinces, including the Western Cape, although they are now rare or absent from some parts of their historical range, including the Free State and Lesotho (Mann et al. 2025).

Leopard population size and density are difficult to estimate because the species is cryptic, wide-ranging and expensive to monitor. Mann et al. (2025) notes that all subpopulations in South Africa are estimated to contain fewer than 1,000 mature individuals, except those in the bushveld and lowveld regions of Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West Province. Little systematic long-term monitoring has been undertaken in the Cape provinces, although available monitoring from the Little Karoo and Cederberg suggests relatively stable local trends in those monitored areas (Mann et al. 2025).

Leopards occur at particularly low densities in the Western Cape. Mann et al. (2025) reports Western Cape density estimates of approximately 0.17–1.96 individuals / 100 km², and notes that Cape Leopards occupy very large home ranges compared with savanna populations. Tensen et al. (2026) similarly note that Cape Leopards have much larger home ranges than savanna Leopards, with males averaging approximately 300 km² in the Cape compared with substantially smaller home ranges in savanna systems.

At the scale of the present assessment, the proposed clearing footprint cannot be interpreted as population-supporting habitat for Leopard. Its relevance is linked to the way it contributes to landscape permeability, especially where semi-natural habitat, drainage lines and protected-area interfaces maintain movement opportunities through the transformed Tulbagh agricultural matrix.

Habitat and ecology

Leopards have a broad habitat tolerance and occur in woodland, savanna, grassland, mountain habitats, coastal scrub, shrubland and semi-desert, with densely vegetated and rocky areas generally preferred (Mann et al. 2025). In the Western Cape, suitable Leopard habitat is strongly associated with rugged, elevated and protected-area-linked landscapes (Mann et al. 2025). Tensen et al. (2026) also note that, because of extensive agricultural land use and human population pressure in the Cape, Leopards have largely retreated to montane areas.

The Cape Floristic Region Leopard population occurs in a landscape that differs ecologically and anthropogenically from many savanna systems. Tensen et al. (2026) describe Cape Leopards as using a unique landscape characterised by variation in prey availability, vegetation structure and human pressure. This is relevant to the Tulbagh context, where agricultural transformation has reduced continuous natural habitat and where remaining mountain, foothill, riparian and semi-natural vegetation linkages become important for maintaining faunal movement.

The proposed clearing footprint consists mainly of historically disturbed old fields, secondary renosterveld, brush-cut areas and agricultural/grazed habitats. These habitats do not represent core Leopard habitat, denning habitat or a likely regular foraging area. However, the broader PAOI is adjacent to the Witzenberg mountain system and associated protected / semi-natural habitats. The most important site feature for Leopard is therefore the Agterstekamp / Witzenberg connectivity corridor, where secondary renosterveld, drainage-line features and the protected-area interface contribute to movement permeability through the transformed valley landscape.

The botanical assessment (Keet 2025) indicates that the eastern part of Agterstekamp is associated with the Witzenberg Nature Reserve context and that the intact secondary renosterveld in this part of the site supports surrounding natural vegetation. This habitat has already been identified in the faunal assessment as the key landscape-connectivity feature on the property. For Leopard, its value is best understood as occasional movement and landscape-linkage habitat, rather than as core site-level habitat.

Threats

The main threats to Leopard relevant to this assessment are:

- **Habitat loss and fragmentation**, particularly outside protected areas where much of South Africa's suitable Leopard habitat occurs (Mann et al. 2025).
- **Direct persecution**, including legal and illegal killing linked to real or perceived livestock depredation and damage-causing animal control (Mann et al. 2025).
- **Illegal harvest for skins and body parts**, including demand for cultural regalia and traditional-use markets (Mann et al. 2025).
- **Bushmeat poaching and snaring**, which may kill Leopards directly as bycatch and indirectly reduce natural prey availability (Mann et al. 2025).
- **Poisoning, gin traps and predator-control measures**, especially in agricultural landscapes where control actions aimed at other predators may also injure or kill Leopards (Mann et al. 2025).
- **Road and rail mortality**, including collisions in movement bottlenecks such as mountain passes and transport corridors (Mann et al. 2025).
- **Reduced tolerance on private land**, especially where conflict, uncertainty around hunting regulations, livestock losses or perceived predation risk increase pressure on Leopards (Mann et al. 2025).

- **Loss of landscape connectivity**, particularly in the Western Cape where Leopards occur at low densities, use large home ranges and rely on functional linkages between montane, foothill, riparian and agricultural mosaic habitats.

Likelihood of occurrence

The likelihood of Leopard occurring in the broader landscape is assessed as Possible to Likely, given the property's position near the Witzenberg mountain system, adjacent protected / semi-natural habitats and the broader network of foothill and mountain habitat in the Tulbagh area. The likelihood of regular use of the proposed clearing footprint itself is assessed as Low.

No Leopard tracks, scats, camera-trap records or direct observations were recorded during the site survey. The landowner reported leopard activity (tree scratch marks) form the past. The proposed clearing areas do not provide core Leopard habitat and are unlikely to function as denning, resting or regular foraging habitat. However, Leopards are wide-ranging and occur at low densities in the Western Cape, with large home ranges and potential movement through agricultural and foothill mosaics. The species' relevance to the PAOI is therefore associated primarily with the Agterstekamp corridor, where semi-natural vegetation, drainage-line features and the Witzenberg Nature Reserve interface provide landscape permeability through the transformed agricultural valley.

The species should therefore be treated as potentially present in the broader PAOI, with the main concern being the retention of functional movement linkages rather than direct site occupancy within the clearing footprint.

Site ecological importance

The impact receptor assessed for Leopard is landscape connectivity and occasional movement habitat, especially the Agterstekamp / Witzenberg corridor, rather than core Leopard habitat within the proposed clearing footprint. Leopard is regionally Vulnerable, occurs at low density in the Western Cape, uses very large home ranges, and Cape Leopards have additional conservation importance as a genetically and evolutionarily distinctive regional unit.

The proposed clearing footprint itself has Low SEI for Leopard because it does not provide confirmed denning habitat, regular resting habitat, or an important foraging area, and no direct field evidence of Leopard was recorded. However, the Agterstekamp corridor has greater site relevance because it forms part of a broader faunal movement linkage through the Tulbagh agricultural matrix. This corridor connects the Witzenberg Nature Reserve, drainage-line habitats, secondary renosterveld, remnant semi-natural vegetation and other protected / mountain habitats to the west.

For Leopard, the Agterstekamp corridor is best interpreted as supporting movement habitat within a much larger home-range and dispersal landscape. Its importance is strengthened by the scarcity of remaining semi-natural linkages in the transformed valley floor and by the species' dependence on landscape permeability between rugged mountain and foothill habitats. The Leopard-specific SEI is therefore assessed as Medium for the Agterstekamp / Witzenberg corridor and Low for the remainder of the proposed clearing footprint Table 18.

This species-specific rating should be read together with the broader High SEI assigned to the faunal landscape connectivity receptor. The broader High SEI remains appropriate because the same corridor supports movement opportunities for multiple taxa and represents one of the few remaining semi-natural linkages through the transformed agricultural valley. For Leopard specifically, mitigation should focus on retaining the Agterstekamp corridor, avoiding unnecessary fencing barriers, maintaining drainage-line and natural-vegetation linkages, preventing snaring or predator-control activities, and ensuring that clearing does not narrow or sever the functional connection between the Witzenberg Nature Reserve and surrounding protected / semi-natural habitats.

Table 18: Evaluation of site ecological importance (SEI) in terms of impact on the habitat (the receptor) for Leopard for the proposed development, see evaluation criteria (SANBI 2026). SEI is classified as 'Medium'.

Biodiversity importance		Conservation importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Functional integrity	Very high	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	High	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very low	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)		Biodiversity importance				
		Very high	High	Medium	Low	Very low
Receptor resilience	Very low	Very high	Very high	High	Medium	Low
	Low	Very high	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Very low
	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Very low
	Very high	Medium	Low	Very low	Very low	Very low

Site ecological importance (SEI)	Interpretation in relation to proposed development activities
Very high	Avoidance mitigation – no destructive development activities should be considered. Offset mitigation not acceptable/not possible (i.e. last remaining populations of species, last remaining good condition patches of ecosystems/unique species assemblages). Destructive impacts for species/ecosystems where persistence target remains.
High	Avoidance mitigation wherever possible. Minimisation mitigation – changes to project infrastructure design to limit the amount of habitat impacted; limited development activities of low impact acceptable. Offset mitigation may be required for high impact activities.
Medium	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Low	Minimisation and restoration mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable followed by appropriate restoration activities.
Very low	Minimisation mitigation – development activities of medium to high impact acceptable and restoration activities may not be required.

Overall SEI for Farm Schalkenbosch 229, Tulbagh

The overall Site Ecological Importance for the proposed clearing footprint and associated PAOI is assessed as High Table 19, primarily because of the faunal landscape connectivity receptor associated with the Agterstekamp corridor and its linkage with the Witzenberg Nature Reserve and surrounding semi-natural habitats. Most individual species-habitat receptors are assessed as Low or Medium, reflecting either marginal habitat suitability, opportunistic use, mobility of the species, or the availability of similar habitat in the broader agricultural landscape. However, the Agterstekamp corridor has broader ecological importance because it retains

semi-natural vegetation, drainage-line features and protected-area connectivity within an otherwise transformed agricultural valley. The overall High SEI classification is therefore driven by the need to avoid further narrowing, fragmentation or functional loss of this corridor, while applying appropriate minimisation and restoration measures to species-specific habitat receptors elsewhere in the footprint.

Table 19: The overall SEI for Farm Schalkenbosch 229, Tulbagh

Habitat/Process Receptors	Conservation Importance	Functional Integrity	Receptor resilience	Site ecological importance
Faunal Landscape Connectivity	Medium: The corridor supports movement through a transformed agricultural valley and links semi-natural habitat with the Witzenberg Nature Reserve.	Medium: The corridor remains functionally important because it retains semi-natural vegetation, drainage-line features and protected-area connectivity.	Very Low: Clearing or ploughing would substantially reduce corridor function and recovery as a movement linkage would be slow and uncertain.	**High**
Sensitive Species 19 (CR)	High: The receptor is marginal potential habitat for a Critically Endangered sensitive species within the broader Tulbagh–Worcester regional context.	Low: The habitat retains shrubland structure but is secondary, historically ploughed, modified and located more on foothill slopes than preferred valley-bottom habitat.	Low: Clearing and ploughing would remove the shrubland structure and recovery to functional habitat would be slow and uncertain.	**Medium**
Mute Winter Katydid (VU)	**Very Low** Likely not present			
Peringuey's Meadow Katydid (VU)	**Very Low** Likely not present			
Blue Crane (VU)	Medium: The receptor has conservation relevance because Blue Crane is Vulnerable and occurs in the broader agricultural landscape.	Medium: The footprint provides only occasional open agricultural foraging habitat, with no nesting, roosting or regular site dependence recorded.	High: The species is mobile and similar foraging habitat occurs in the surrounding transformed agricultural matrix.	**Low**
Yellow-billed Egret (NT)	Medium: The receptor supports opportunistic foraging by a Near Threatened species recorded on site.	Low: The habitat is limited to grazed agricultural areas and does not include breeding, roosting or core wetland habitat.	Medium: The foraging function is expected to persist in the broader agricultural and wetland-edge landscape if aquatic buffers are retained.	**Low**
African Darter (NT)	Medium: The receptor has moderate conservation relevance because African Darter is regionally Near Threatened and declining.	Low: Suitable habitat is limited to watercourses, riparian vegetation, farm dams or other aquatic features outside or along the margins of the footprint.	Medium: Habitat function should persist if riparian vegetation, watercourse buffers and farm-dam margins are retained and protected.	**Low**
Hamerkop (NT)	Medium: The receptor has conservation relevance because Hamerkop is regionally Near Threatened and was observed using the site.	Low: The site provides opportunistic foraging habitat and nearby riparian / riverine habitat may support roosting or nesting, but the clearing footprint is not core habitat.	Medium: The receptor should remain functional if riparian areas, large trees, watercourse buffers and wetland-edge habitats are protected.	**Low**

Cape Clawless Otter (NT)	Medium: The receptor is used by a Near Threatened species, but the site appears to form part of a broader movement network rather than critical habitat.	Low: The drainage line between Damkamp and Agterstekamp is functional for movement or occasional foraging, while the surrounding terrestrial footprint has little direct value.	Medium: Otters are mobile and can use broader aquatic networks, but the drainage-line function depends on retaining cover, water quality and bank stability.	**Low**
Grey Rhebuck (NT)	Medium: The receptor has conservation relevance because Grey Rhebuck is Near Threatened, endemic to South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini, and reported by the landowner.	Low: The broader property provides usable open foraging and movement habitat, but the clearing footprint is modified and not core rocky grassland or mountain-fynbos habitat.	Medium: Grey Rhebuck are mobile and can use open natural, semi-natural and agricultural mosaics if landscape permeability is retained.	Low
Leopard (VU)	High: The receptor supports potential movement for a Vulnerable large carnivore in a Western Cape landscape where Cape Leopards have added conservation significance.	Medium: The Agterstekamp / Witzenberg corridor retains movement value, although the clearing footprint itself is not denning, resting or core foraging habitat.	Low: Corridor function would be sensitive to narrowing, fencing, snaring, clearing or loss of drainage-line and natural-vegetation linkages.	Medium

Faunal Habitat Ratings

The faunal habitat ratings map was developed by assigning a functional faunal sensitivity rating to each mapped habitat unit, based on habitat condition, vegetation structure, degree of transformation, and expected value for animal movement, refuge, foraging and breeding Figure 12. Highly transformed areas associated with human dwellings and gardens were rated Very Low, while cultivated fields, disturbed old fields, the servitude-line low vegetation and brush-cut areas were rated Low because these areas are modified, structurally simplified, and provide limited faunal habitat value. Secondary renosterveld was rated Medium because, although historically ploughed and no longer representative of intact renosterveld, it retains shrubland structure, cover, refuge habitat and some ecological function for fauna. Breede Shale Fynbos was rated High because it represents more natural foothill vegetation with higher structural and ecological integrity, and occurs in closer association with the Witzenberg foothill habitat system.

A further functional connectivity layer was added by creating a 100 m buffer from the drainage line into Agterstekamp, which was classified as a critical faunal corridor Figure 12. This corridor rating reflects the importance of drainage-line and adjacent semi-natural vegetation as a movement and refuge feature within a largely transformed agricultural matrix. The corridor links riparian habitat, secondary renosterveld, the Witzenberg Nature Reserve interface and surrounding foothill habitats, and is therefore expected to support movement by a range of fauna, including small mammals, reptiles, invertebrates, birds and wider-ranging mammals such as Leopard. The 100 m corridor was applied as a precautionary functional width to reduce edge effects, retain cover and maintain movement permeability, rather than treating the drainage line only as a narrow watercourse feature.

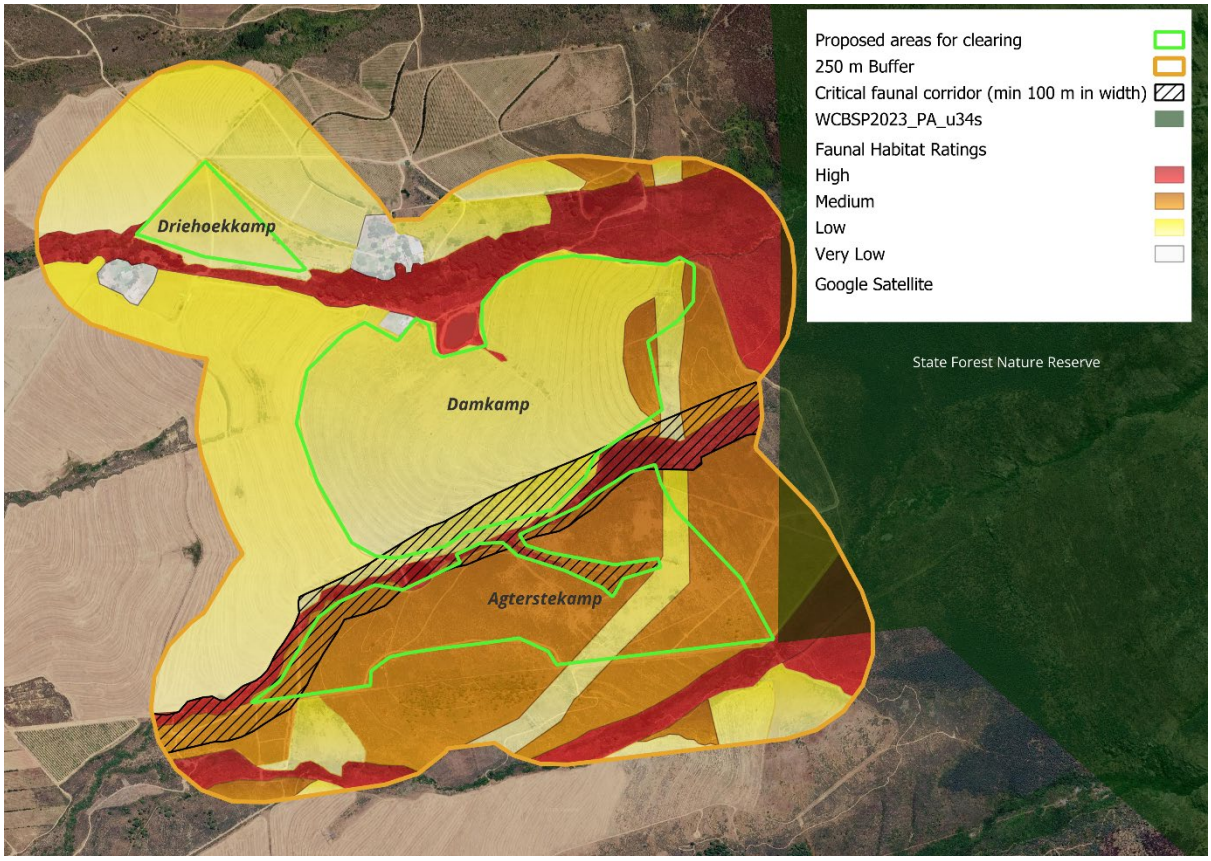

Figure 12: Faunal habitat ratings map for Farm Schalkenbosch 229, showing the relative faunal habitat sensitivity of mapped habitat units and the 100 m critical faunal corridor associated with the Agterstekamp drainage line. Habitat ratings were assigned based on vegetation structure, degree of transformation, ecological function and expected value for faunal movement, refuge, foraging and breeding. The critical corridor highlights the drainage-line and adjacent semi-natural habitat linkage between Agterstekamp, riparian features and the Witzenberg foothill / protected-area landscape.

Impact Assessment

Predicted faunal impacts under alternative clearing scenarios

The impact assessment is based on the habitat and ecological-process receptors identified through the site verification, desktop review, field survey and SEI assessment. The assessment assumes that the proposed activity will involve vegetation clearing and potential reinstatement of old agricultural fields within the proposed footprint, with the main direct impacts relating to vegetation removal, disturbance of soil and ground cover, loss or modification of secondary vegetation structure, and potential disturbance to fauna during clearing. No major new infrastructure, water abstraction, irrigation, fencing or road construction is assumed beyond the activities described for the proposed clearing footprint.

The predicted faunal impacts were assessed using a comparative alternatives-based approach, following the same structure applied in the Wilderness faunal assessment, where each receptor is considered under a 'No Clearing option' and a 'Clearing option', with impacts assessed before and after mitigation. For the present assessment, the comparison is framed as a No Clearing option, where the existing secondary renosterveld, drainage-line features and

faunal corridor functions are retained under current land-use pressures, and a Clearing option, where vegetation removal and possible reinstatement of old agricultural fields may alter habitat structure, reduce corridor width, disturb soil and ground cover, and affect the functional value of habitat receptors. The assessment focuses on the receptors identified through the SEI process, with greatest emphasis on the Agterstekamp faunal landscape corridor Table 20 and the secondary renosterveld habitat that may provide marginal potential habitat for Sensitive Animal Species 19 Table 21. Other species receptors are assessed in relation to their expected habitat use, mobility, dependence on the footprint, and the extent to which their habitat can be protected through drainage-line buffers, corridor retention and standard mitigation. Each impact table therefore considers the potential impact or risk, the nature of the impact, extent and duration, significance before mitigation, recommended mitigation, residual impact, and significance after mitigation.

Most other species considered in this report are expected to use the site opportunistically, occur mainly in the broader agricultural landscape Table 23, or depend primarily on aquatic, riparian or wetland-edge features that can be retained through no-go areas, watercourse buffers and corridor protection measures Table 22. The impact ratings therefore give greatest weight to effects that may reduce habitat connectivity, remove structurally intact secondary renosterveld, disturb drainage-line and riparian habitat, or reduce the functional value of the 100 m critical faunal corridor. Standard mitigation is considered sufficient for species that are mobile, occur opportunistically, or use habitat types that are not directly targeted by the proposed clearing.

The ratings are applied using a precautionary approach, especially where species detectability is seasonally constrained or where suitable habitat is marginal but cannot be fully excluded. Absence of a species during the field survey is therefore not treated as proof of absence. However, the likelihood of occurrence, habitat suitability, quality of available habitat, field evidence, landscape context and expected dependence on the proposed footprint were all considered when determining impact significance. The impact tables consequently distinguish between impacts on the clearing footprint itself and impacts on functional habitat linkages, particularly the Agterstekamp corridor, drainage-line habitat and adjacent secondary renosterveld.

The mitigation hierarchy applied in this assessment is avoidance first, followed by minimisation, rehabilitation and management controls where avoidance is not possible. For this site, the key avoidance requirement is to retain the 100 m critical faunal corridor and avoid unnecessary clearing or narrowing of the Agterstekamp linkage. Further mitigation includes protecting drainage-line and riparian features, maintaining watercourse buffers, limiting disturbance during clearing, allowing fauna to move away from active work areas, avoiding unnecessary fencing barriers, and preventing snaring, hunting, dog-related disturbance or predator-control activities that could affect faunal movement through the landscape.

Table 20: Impact summary for Faunal Landscape Connectivity

Assessment criterion	No Clearing option	Clearing option before mitigation	Mitigation	Residual impact after mitigation	Significance after mitigation
Potential impact / risk	Existing faunal movement routes through Agterstekamp remain intact and continue to link secondary renosterveld, drainage-line habitat and the Witzenberg Nature Reserve.	Clearing or ploughing could narrow, fragment or weaken the Agterstekamp corridor and reduce faunal movement through the transformed agricultural matrix.	Retain the **100 m critical faunal corridor** as a no-go area; avoid clearing, ploughing, soil disturbance and fencing barriers within the corridor; protect drainage-line and riparian vegetation; demarcate no-go areas before clearing.	Corridor function should remain largely intact if the 100 m corridor is retained and managed as semi-natural habitat, although some edge effects may remain along cleared margins.	**Low**, provided the 100 m critical corridor is retained; **Medium** if the corridor is narrowed, cleared or functionally severed.
Nature of impact	Neutral.	Negative direct and indirect impact on habitat connectivity, movement permeability, cover and refuge habitat.	Maintain continuous semi-natural vegetation between the drainage line, secondary renosterveld and Witzenberg interface.	Reduced negative impact, with movement function retained.	Low
Extent	Local to landscape scale, because the corridor links the site to the broader protected-area and foothill habitat network.	Local to landscape scale, because loss of the linkage would affect movement through the Tulbagh agricultural matrix.	Apply corridor protection across the full Agterstekamp linkage, not only along the drainage line.	Localised residual edge effects only.	Low
Duration	Ongoing retention of current function.	Long-term to permanent if cleared or ploughed.	Avoid clearing within the corridor and maintain it as semi-natural habitat.	Long-term corridor function retained.	Low
Significance before mitigation	**Very Low / Neutral**.	**High**, because this receptor drives the overall High SEI for the site.	—	—	—

Table 21: Impact summary for Sensitive Animal Species 19 potential habitat

Assessment criterion	No Clearing option	Clearing option before mitigation	Mitigation	Residual impact after mitigation	Significance after mitigation
Potential impact / risk	Secondary renosterveld in Agterstekamp and parts of Damkamp remains available as marginal potential habitat.	Clearing could remove secondary renosterveld structure that may provide marginal habitat, refuge cover and microhabitat for Sensitive Animal Species 19.	Avoid or minimise clearing of the best remaining secondary renosterveld, especially within Agterstekamp and the more structurally suitable parts of Damkamp; retain the 100 m critical corridor; conduct a pre-clearing walk-through; allow any individuals found to be handled only by appropriately authorised persons.	Loss of marginal habitat can be reduced if the best secondary renosterveld is retained, but any cleared shrubland would represent a long-term reduction in potential habitat.	**Low to Medium**, depending on the extent of secondary renosterveld retained.
Nature of impact	Neutral.	Negative direct habitat loss and reduction in shrubland structure.	Retain structurally intact secondary renosterveld where possible and avoid clearing within the corridor.	Reduced negative impact, with remaining habitat concentrated in retained semi-natural patches.	Low to Medium.
Extent	Local, within secondary renosterveld patches.	Local, mainly Agterstekamp and suitable parts of Damkamp.	Prioritise avoidance in higher-value secondary renosterveld and corridor areas.	Local residual loss if clearing proceeds outside retained areas.	Low to Medium.
Duration	Ongoing retention of current marginal habitat function.	Long-term to permanent where shrubland is cleared and ploughed.	Prevent conversion of retained habitat to cultivated land and maintain shrubland structure.	Long-term residual impact where clearing occurs.	Low to Medium.
Significance before mitigation	**Very Low / Neutral**.	**Medium**, because the receptor is marginal but linked to a Critically Endangered sensitive species.	—	—	—

Table 22: Impact summary for aquatic, riparian and wetland-edge habitat receptors. Relevant species: Yellow-billed Egret, African Darter, Hamerkop and Cape Clawless Otter.

Assessment criterion	No Clearing option	Clearing option before mitigation	Mitigation	Residual impact after mitigation	Significance after mitigation
Potential impact / risk	Drainage lines, riparian vegetation, farm dams and wetland-edge habitats remain available for opportunistic foraging, movement and local use.	Clearing could indirectly affect aquatic / riparian habitat through disturbance, sedimentation, erosion, pollution, bank disturbance or loss of cover near drainage lines.	Retain drainage lines, riparian vegetation, watercourse buffers and farm-dam margins as no-go / low-disturbance areas; prevent sedimentation and pollution; avoid machinery movement through drainage-line habitat; maintain cover along the Damkamp–Agterstekamp drainage line.	Aquatic and riparian habitat function should remain intact if buffers and drainage-line protection are implemented.	**Very Low**.
Nature of impact	Neutral.	Mostly indirect negative impact; direct impact only if drainage-line or riparian habitat is disturbed.	Maintain buffers and prevent clearing or disturbance of riparian features.	Minor residual disturbance only.	Very Low.
Extent	Local, associated with drainage lines, farm dams and riparian features.	Local, concentrated around watercourse margins and drainage-line habitat.	Apply protection to all drainage-line and riparian features, especially the corridor through Agterstekamp.	Localised residual risk only.	Very Low.
Duration	Ongoing retention of current habitat function.	Short- to long-term depending on whether erosion, sedimentation or vegetation loss occurs.	Maintain buffers and rehabilitate any disturbed edges immediately.	Short-term and local if mitigation is implemented.	Very Low.
Significance before mitigation	**Very Low / Neutral**.	**Low** mainly if buffers are not respected.	—	—	—

Table 23: Impact summary for open agricultural / opportunistic foraging and movement receptors. Relevant species: Blue Crane and Grey Rhebuck.

Assessment criterion	No Clearing option	Clearing option before mitigation	Mitigation	Residual impact after mitigation	Significance after mitigation
Potential impact / risk	Open fields, grazing areas, crop edges and semi-natural margins remain available for opportunistic foraging and movement.	Clearing may temporarily disturb individuals using open areas and may reduce some semi-natural cover or movement value along field margins.	Avoid disturbance to any birds or mammals present during clearing; allow mobile fauna to move away unharmed; avoid unnecessary fencing barriers; retain natural-vegetation and drainage-line corridors; prevent hunting and dog-related disturbance.	Similar open foraging habitat remains widely available in the surrounding agricultural matrix, and movement function should persist if corridors are retained.	**Very Low**.
Nature of impact	Neutral.	Low negative impact through temporary disturbance and local habitat modification.	Maintain landscape permeability and avoid unnecessary disturbance.	Minor residual impact.	Ver Low.
Extent	Local to broader agricultural landscape.	Local, within the clearing footprint and immediate field margins.	Retain permeability between agricultural fields, drainage lines and foothill habitat.	Localised residual disturbance only.	Very Low.
Duration	Ongoing current use.	Short-term disturbance during clearing; longer-term change in vegetation structure where shrubland is converted to open agricultural land.	Keep clearing restricted to approved areas and retain corridor / semi-natural margins.	Low long-term effect because similar habitat occurs nearby.	Very Low.
Significance before mitigation	**Very Low / Neutral**.	**Low**.	—	—	—

Summary of impact assessment

The No Clearing option would retain the existing faunal habitat mosaic, including the Agterstekamp corridor, drainage-line habitat, riparian features and secondary renosterveld. Existing agricultural pressures would remain, but there would be no project-related loss, narrowing or fragmentation of the key faunal habitat receptors identified in this assessment.

Under the Clearing option, the most important impact risk is the potential loss, narrowing or fragmentation of the Agterstekamp faunal landscape corridor. This receptor is the primary driver of the overall High SEI and should be treated as the main avoidance priority. The second most important impact relates to the potential loss of secondary renosterveld habitat that may provide marginal habitat for Sensitive Animal Species 19. Although the habitat is secondary, historically disturbed and not considered core habitat, it retains shrubland structure and occurs within the broader Tulbagh–Worcester regional context for the species.

The remaining faunal receptors are expected to have Low residual significance if appropriate mitigation is implemented. Blue Crane and Grey Rhebuck are likely to use the broader agricultural and open habitat mosaic opportunistically, while Yellow-billed Egret, African Darter, Hamerkop and Cape Clawless Otter are mainly associated with farm dams, drainage lines, riparian vegetation and wetland-edge features. These habitats can be retained through the recommended no-go areas, watercourse buffers and corridor protection measures.

No impact-rating table is provided for Mute Winter Katydid or Peringuey's Meadow Katydid, as these species are considered unlikely to occur within the proposed clearing footprint and no likely or confirmed habitat receptor was identified for them. General mitigation for vegetation clearing, invertebrate habitat and retention of semi-natural vegetation is therefore considered sufficient.

With full implementation of the recommended mitigation, especially retention of the 100 m critical faunal corridor Figure 12, protection of drainage-line and riparian habitat, avoidance or minimisation of clearing in higher-value secondary renosterveld, and strict footprint control, the proposed clearing can be managed to avoid the most significant faunal impacts. Without these measures, the residual impact on faunal landscape connectivity could remain Medium to High, which would be difficult to justify given the High SEI assigned to that receptor.

Recommended mitigation

The following mitigation measures must be incorporated into the EMPr and implemented under ECO oversight. The mitigation hierarchy must be applied, with avoidance of sensitive faunal receptors as the primary management requirement, followed by minimisation, rehabilitation and ongoing management where disturbance cannot be fully avoided.

General mitigation measures

1. The 100 m critical faunal corridor associated with the Agterstekamp drainage-line system must be retained as a no-go area, see Figure 12. No clearing, ploughing, soil disturbance, dumping, stockpiling or unnecessary vehicle movement may occur within this corridor.

2. The corridor must remain functionally connected to the drainage-line habitat, secondary renosterveld, riparian vegetation and the Witzenberg Nature Reserve interface. The corridor must not be narrowed, fragmented or blocked by impermeable fencing.
3. All no-go areas, including the 100 m critical faunal corridor, watercourse buffers, drainage-line vegetation and riparian habitat, must be clearly demarcated before clearing starts. Demarcation must remain in place for the duration of clearing activities.
4. Clearing must be restricted to the approved footprint. No ad hoc expansion of cleared areas, turning areas, access tracks, laydown areas or stockpile areas may occur without prior approval from the ECO and relevant specialist input where required.
5. The better-quality secondary renosterveld in Agterstekamp and the more structurally suitable parts of Damkamp must be avoided or minimised as far as possible, particularly where it overlaps with the faunal corridor.
6. A pre-clearing ecological walk-through must be undertaken by the ECO or suitably qualified faunal specialist immediately before clearing. The purpose must be to identify visible fauna, burrows, nests, refuges, tortoises, reptiles or other animals that may be injured during clearing.
7. Clearing must proceed slowly and directionally, allowing mobile fauna to move away from active work areas. Clearing should move away from retained natural habitat and towards already transformed areas where practical, so that displaced fauna are not driven into active machinery or fenced barriers.
8. If any individual of Sensitive Animal Species 19, tortoise, snake, small mammal or other slow-moving fauna is encountered, work in the immediate area must stop. The animal may only be moved by an appropriately authorised and competent person, and any handling must comply with relevant conservation authority requirements.
9. Drainage lines, riparian vegetation, farm-dam margins and wetland-edge habitats must be protected from sedimentation, erosion, pollution, bank disturbance and unnecessary vegetation removal. These features are important for Cape Clawless Otter, Hamerkop, African Darter and Yellow-billed Egret, and also contribute to general faunal movement through the landscape.
10. Soil disturbance must be minimised, especially on slopes and near drainage lines. Exposed soils must be stabilised as soon as possible to prevent erosion and sediment movement into watercourse or riparian areas.
11. No hunting, trapping, snaring, poisoning, predator control or persecution of wildlife may be permitted on the site as part of clearing or subsequent land management. Any snares encountered must be removed and reported to the ECO.
12. Any fencing associated with future agricultural use must remain permeable to small and medium-sized fauna where feasible. The 100 m corridor must not be blocked by fencing that prevents movement by mammals, reptiles or other ground-dwelling fauna.
13. Alien invasive plants should be controlled in retained corridor and drainage-line areas, but clearing must be done carefully to avoid unnecessary loss of indigenous cover and faunal refuge habitat.

14. Disturbed edges adjacent to retained natural habitat, drainage lines or the critical corridor must be rehabilitated with locally appropriate indigenous vegetation where natural recovery is unlikely. Rehabilitation must aim to restore ground cover, shrub structure, soil stability and movement permeability.
15. The ECO must monitor compliance with the faunal no-go areas and mitigation measures during clearing. Any non-compliance affecting the corridor, drainage-line habitat, riparian vegetation or potential Sensitive Animal Species 19 habitat must be recorded and corrected immediately.

Receptor-specific emphasis

The most important receptor-specific mitigation requirement is the retention of the Agterstekamp faunal landscape corridor, because this receptor is the primary driver of the High overall SEI and has low resilience to clearing or ploughing. The second priority is the avoidance or minimisation of clearing in secondary renosterveld that may provide marginal potential habitat for Sensitive Animal Species 19. Aquatic, riparian and wetland-edge receptors must be protected through drainage-line buffers, riparian no-go areas and sediment / pollution control. Open-habitat and opportunistic foraging species are expected to remain at Low residual significance if the above measures are implemented.

Conclusion

The proposed vegetation clearing on Farm Schalkenbosch 229 is located within a modified agricultural landscape where much of the original natural vegetation has already been transformed, but where remaining secondary renosterveld, drainage-line habitat and protected-area interfaces still provide important faunal function. The assessment identifies the Agterstekamp faunal landscape corridor as the primary ecological constraint and the main driver of the overall High SEI, with secondary renosterveld habitat for Sensitive Animal Species 19 representing the second key concern. The remaining species considered in the assessment are expected to be affected at Low residual significance if drainage-line, riparian and wetland-edge habitats are protected and standard mitigation is implemented. From a faunal specialist perspective, the clearing can be considered acceptable only if the 100 m critical faunal corridor is retained as a no-go area, drainage-line and riparian habitat are protected, clearing in higher-value secondary renosterveld is avoided or minimised, and all recommended mitigation measures are incorporated into the EMPr and implemented under ECO oversight. If the Agterstekamp corridor is narrowed, cleared or functionally severed, the residual impact would remain difficult to justify because it would compromise the main faunal connectivity receptor identified for the site.

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