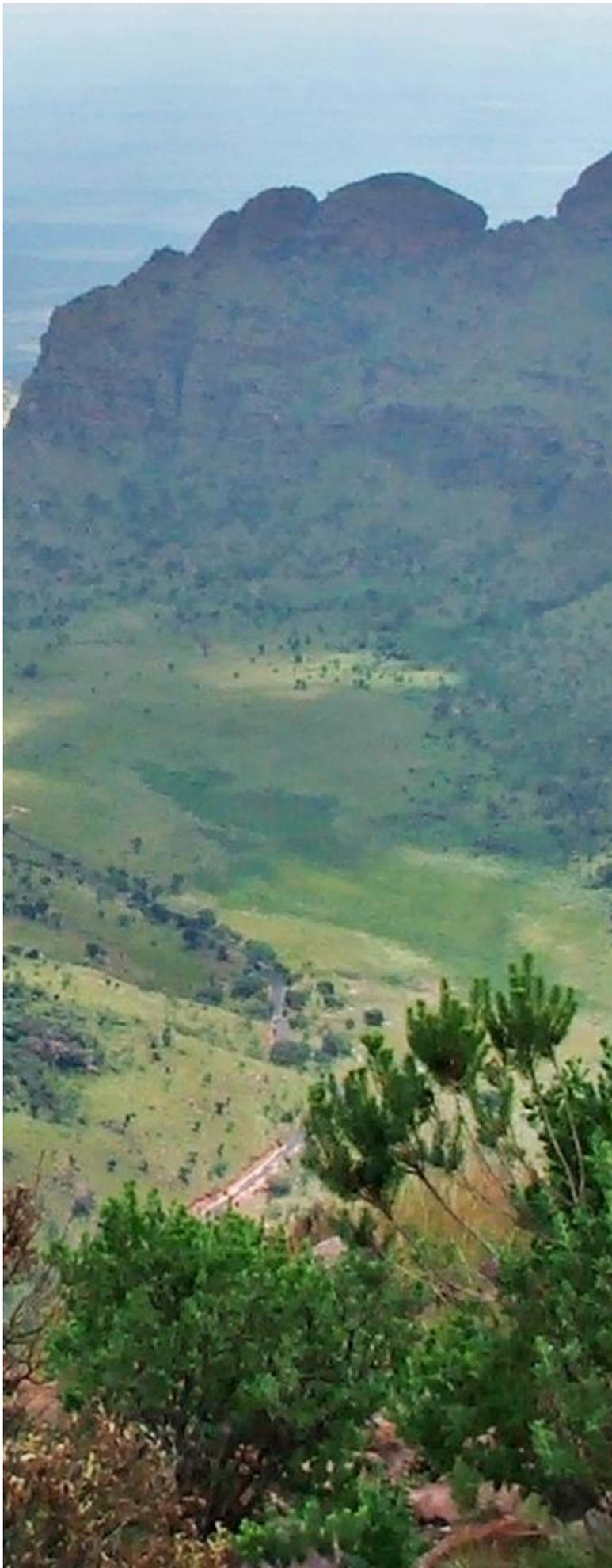




**WATERBERG**  
LANDSCAPE ALLIANCE

# **CONSERVATION IN THE WATERBERG ORGANISATIONS, PROJECTS AND RESERVES 2023**

The Waterberg (both the plateau area and the larger district) represent a significant area of the conservation estate of South Africa. The plateau, which almost in its entirety, is made up of game farms and reserves and is approximately 2 million ha in size, while the larger District is almost 4.5 million ha. The Waterberg bioregional plan indicates that at least 80% of the area, is in a natural state and the majority of this would qualify as conservation estate, due to the habitats and biodiversity it contains.



Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023

Version: Draft 1

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This document is a work in progress, please send any corrections, or additional information to the author above.

**Purpose of document**

To provide baseline information about conservation work being done and the conservation stakeholders involved, in order to assess if there are gaps, conservation is going in the right direction and how it can be strengthened.

This can help with setting a strategic direction, a unified approach and collective action.

**Disclaimer**

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The organisations and reserves listed do not own, do not endorse, nor are responsible for this document or its contents.

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Today globally only 15% of land, 15% of freshwater and 7% of oceans are protected. Protecting nature, our life support system, is critical for our survival and welfare.

So the good news is that countries around the world have signed the agreement at COP15 in December 2022, to protect 30% of land and water by 2030, to ensure nature and biodiversity can continue to provide essential ecosystem services to people.

Here in the Waterberg, we are incredibly fortunate that our story of conservation and the rewilding process to bring back biodiversity started decades ago and now the Waterberg is a place of immense conservation and biodiversity value that can contribute to the 30 x 30 deal for nature.

South Africa only has 9,27% of its land as protected areas and will therefore, need to increase this by 20,7% in the next 7 years to be able to meet this international target. The Waterberg has the potential to significantly assist in meeting this target.

This document provides summary details of conservation organisations, specific work or projects that are currently in progress in the Waterberg, as well as summary information for significant conservation reserves. This has been done as a desk-based study and is a work in progress. Part A lists various conservation organisations based by themes and part B provides information on reserves in the Waterberg.

The purpose of this document is to provide an information resource for the conservation undertaking and effort for the Waterberg District both for general use as well as an overview in order to assess and evaluate future conservation needs and direction to best serve the Waterberg.

**CONSERVATION ORGANISATIONS WITH GENERAL FOCUS**



Waterberg Biosphere Region  
[www.waterbergbiospherereserve.org](http://www.waterbergbiospherereserve.org)

The UNESCO Man and Biosphere has the following Strategic Objectives as defined by the MaB Strategy 2015-2025:

1. Conserve biodiversity, restore and enhance ecosystem services, and foster the sustainable use of natural resources
2. Contribute to building sustainable, healthy and equitable societies, economies and thriving human settlements in harmony with the biosphere
3. Facilitate biodiversity and sustainability science, education for sustainable development (ESD) and capacity building
4. Support mitigation and adaptation to climate change and other aspects of global Environmental change

Note: The work is being finalised for the WBR expansion to increase the size of the biosphere and modify zonation for submission to UNESCO. This spatial plan will have conservation implications and impact for most of the Waterberg plateau.



Waterberg Nature Conservancy  
[www.waterbergnatureconservancy.org.za](http://www.waterbergnatureconservancy.org.za)

The Waterberg Nature Conservancy was started in 1989 by Clive Walker for Waterbergers to communicate, meet and share information regarding issues of interest in the Waterberg. Its core principle is to promote a sense of community and the common interests of its members in the protection and conservation of wildlife, flora, fauna, and wilderness qualities of the Waterberg. There are five general meetings a year at which members and guests are enlightened on a wide variety of topics. Meetings are concluded with a braai and socialising over refreshments



Waterberg Development Initiative NPC reg. no. 2010/529160/08 PBO # 930994611  
 Directors: Kim Raaij • Syd Cilliers • Sean Heneman • Jacques Steyn  
[www.waterbergtourism.com](http://www.waterbergtourism.com)

Waterberg Development Initiative  
<https://waterbergtourism.com/>

Waterberg Development Initiative NPC (formerly Waterberg Tourism NPC), a registered non-profit company and public benefit organization seeking to promote and connect Waterberg conservation, community, and the local economy.

For the past three years their focus has been on tourism, and the promotion of the Waterberg as a conservation destination. They understand for the economy and tourism industry to succeed and to uplift the area, conservation (the economy resource) must be understood, and protected, while the local communities understand the relevance of conservation and biodiversity for the area. Some focus areas include promotion of community managed reserves, consumptive conservation and conservancies (greater areas).



Free-roaming African wild dogs (*Lycan pictus*) in the Waterberg. Endangered.

**SPECIES FOCUSED ORGANISATIONS**



**WATERBERG**  
LANDSCAPE ALLIANCE

Waterberg Landscape Alliance  
(previously Save the Waterberg Rhino)  
[www.waterbergla.org.za](http://www.waterbergla.org.za)

Previously known as the STWR the WLA is a local, grass roots, not-for-profit NGO, based in the Waterberg, Limpopo. It is managed by local people that are connected with rhino conservation, and works with a large network of locally based stakeholders that are creating locally based solutions to the rhino crisis.

STWR works with stakeholders to identify needs, raise funds, provide equipment and help set up and fund security enhancements for the area that contribute to protecting rhino.

It has also been instrumental in helping to create networks to maximise protection of rhino through sharing of information, expertise and resources as well as emergency security groups to help rhino owners, landowners and community members in emergency situations. This has resulted in increased security measures in and around protected areas as well as expanding that protection through community based approaches.

In 2023, a decision was made to increase the scope and impact and the organisation was renamed Waterberg Landscape Alliance (WLA).

The increased scope includes the promotion of biodiversity conservation at the landscape level as well as bring further benefits and be more inclusive to communities and residents.



Waterberg Wild Dog Initiative  
<https://www.waterbergwilddogs.org.za/>

The WWDI is a community-based, non-profit initiative dedicated to the conservation and survival of the Waterberg Wild Dog Population. Conflict mitigation assistance, raising awareness and providing education, being in constant contact with farmers and people of the area to inform them of the whereabouts of the wild dogs forms the main part of the work. They have collared a number of dogs and are keeping track of all packs in the Waterberg. They partner with EWT and WAG and provide a point of contact to landowners and other interested parties concerned with the wild dogs. They have successfully undertaken ecotourism project using denning wild dogs in an ecotourism based activity to raise funds to support the denning wild dog pack as well as to raise awareness and the profile of the Waterberg Wild Dogs.



Mabula Ground-Hornbill Project  
<https://ground-hornbill.org.za/>

Their aim to safeguard the Southern Ground hornbill species in Southern Africa with a centre and focus in the Waterberg. They are working to slow the decline, while establishing new breeding groups in a range expansion programme. They undertake captive breeding and intense monitoring of the species. They are also trying to create a lead-free area to provide safe environment for released birds. They are actively performing reintroductions of new groups into areas where the species historically occurred but is now locally extinct. As well as research on threat mitigation, and designing ideal artificial nesting sites. They formed the National Poisoning Prevention Working Group, which is working collaboratively to eliminate the threat of poisoning for all African wildlife. They provide educational awareness and the project runs an extensive environmental education programme aimed to educate rural residents and learners of all ages about the threats facing the species, the mitigations that can be used to tackle each threat and how important every individual group is to the national population.



Southern Ground Hornbill (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*). Endangered.



Adventures with Elephants  
<https://adventureswithelephants.com/>

A centre where people can interact and experience African elephants.

The centre is used as a hub for research and education on elephants. Their aim is to increase awareness of the conservation issues facing wildlife in Africa and to promote understanding that wildlife needs to have value in order for it to survive.

The Rory Hensman Conservation Research Unit (RHCRU) aims to be the foremost elephant education and research centre within South Africa that promotes the potential benefits of elephants to human society, wildlife, and conservation efforts. Their goal is to secure a future for wildlife by identifying workable solutions to the issues facing both wildlife and conservationists in a modernising and overpopulating Africa. RHCRU also focuses on all aspects of elephant research and welfare and they are part of the Elephant Care Association of South Africa

Research; many researchers and various institutions are involved with the AWE.



Waterberg Rhino UK  
<https://waterbergrhino.org.uk/>

The aim of Waterberg Rhino UK (WRUK) is to raise funds and awareness to help protect the rhino population of the Waterberg, including the protection of other species of wildlife and habitat that are part of the overall environment. To bring support and funding to the community through education and social upliftment projects. Their current work includes working with the WBR on school vegetable gardens. They have also provided funding to Atherstone Provincial Reserve, WSI and Kruger.



International Rhino Foundation (IRF)  
<https://rhinos.org/>

IRF is based in the United States and operates on-the-ground programs in Africa and Asia where rhinos live in the wild, supporting viable populations of the five remaining rhino species and the communities that coexist with them.

There is a working partnership with them and StopRhinoPoaching.com where they have provided support and funding to the Waterberg via Welgevonden, to fund various elements including an analyst for the Waterberg.



Black rhino (*Diceros bicornis*) mother and calf.  
 Critically Endangered.



Baby Rhino Rescue  
<https://babyrhinorescue.org/>

There mission is “working together to save rhinos from extinction”. Baby Rhino Rescue was founded by Helena Kriel after volunteering at the Care for Wild Africa (C4WA) rhino sanctuary in 2014. BRR are a network of writers, teachers, media consultants, designers, editors, PhD’s, master gardeners, parents and young scholars in grade school. There aim to work with the real people on the front lines: the rangers in the bush, the vets caring for the injured orphaned rhinos, the sanctuary experts rehabilitating traumatized rhinos. Baby Rhino Rescue was formed so that everyone could be part of the solution to a catastrophe. They support a number of projects with focus on rhino.



Project Southern Cross

The purpose of the Integrated Wildlife Zone (IWZ) project in South Africa, is to ensure the best possible utilization of the full range of private and state resources to combat wildlife crime in public and privately owned protected areas, especially, but not exclusively, within the demarcated zones. The intended cooperation is aimed at protecting all wildlife, although with due focus on rhino, and benefitting all role-players operating in the IWZs by ensuring centralized coordination from an Environmental Enforcement Fusion Centre (EEFC), with decentralized execution by participants in the wildlife zone.

The Waterberg is one of the 7 integrated wildlife zones (IWZ) in the country, with all the necessary building blocks needed for combating wildlife crime. These 7 zones cover about 70 – 80% of the rhino population in the country.

AREA AND MEMBER SPECIFIC ORGANISATIONS



Nylsvley - Friends of Nylsvley  
<https://nylsvley.co.za/>

The Friends of Nylsvley are there to support the managing authorities of Nylsvley Nature Reserve and to encourage the co-operation of all stakeholders to promote the conservation and sustainability of the entire floodplain and its catchment.

They actively conserve the unique biodiversity of Nylsvley Nature Reserve and the Nyl floodplain through work parties and host a variety of short courses on biodiversity and conservation. They also perform the annual woodland bird census and provide information on bird numbers and flooding events.



SANParks Marakele Honorary Rangers  
<https://www.sanparksvolunteers.org/contact-us/regional-contact-information/marakele-region/>

This small group of Marakele SANParks Honorary Rangers undertake certain activities; these include birding in Marakele (November), the Marakele Marathon (the region’s main annual event grown to 1600 runners in 2019), Marakele Orientation courses (3 per year), camp duties, project Embrace – in collaboration with Marakele, in-park fences (old farm fences) are removed in collaboration with SANParks and other regions.

NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS WITH MEMBERS OR INTEREST IN THE WATERBERG



Wildlife Ranching SA  
<https://www.wrsa.co.za/>

An organisation representing the national and international interests of the wildlife ranching industry. This relates to the sustainable breeding, conservation, production and marketing of wildlife in South Africa.

WRSA’s purpose is to promote, serve and protect the interests of wildlife farmers and to enhance the economic viability and growth of the industry. Will have members in the Waterberg including the CEO of WRSA; Richard York a resident of the Waterberg.



Roan Antelope (*Hippotragus equinus*). Endangered (SA). Roan have increased in the Waterberg though its overall population is declining.

**NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS WITH MEMBERS OR INTEREST IN THE WATERBERG**



<https://conserv.earth/>

Due to the stress on our earth and the undeniable need to conserve the natural spaces we have left, Conserv Earth was founded to identify, support and establish projects that directly impact long term sustainable solutions for people and wildlife to exist on one planet. They believe that through collaborative efforts with the government, private sector, communities, individuals and non-profit organisations we can make a tangible difference.

Important Bird and Biodiversity programme and data collection for Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2.

Warwick Tarboton is involved with collecting annual bird data in the Waterberg to support these two projects. There is an idea to try and develop a birding tourism route in the Waterberg IBA.



Dendrological Society of South Africa  
<https://www.dendro.co.za/>

The Dendrological Society promotes the study, protection and propagation of trees and tree-dominated ecosystems as a contribution to effective environmental conservation and improvement in South Africa. The Waterberg has a number of branches. Waterberg (Modimolle) and Manketti (Bela Bela), Kieriekapper (Lephalale), Thabazimbi, Rooiberg, Kanniedood (Mookgopong), Kameeldoring (Mokopane).



Limpopo Wetland Forum  
[http://forums.wetlands.za.net/limpopo/limpopo\\_meetings.htm](http://forums.wetlands.za.net/limpopo/limpopo_meetings.htm)

A network of people and organisations that are interested in wetlands. They organise forum meetings usually once a quarter where members share information and knowledge. They also organise specific site visits to wetlands.



Birdlife South Africa  
<https://www.birdlife.org.za/>

Birdlife SA runs a number of programmes. Relevant for the Waterberg are;



You can find Allen's Gallinule at Nylsvley Nature Reserve (Ramsar site). Least Concern

**NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS LOCATED OUTSIDE THE WATERBERG WITH LIMITED CONNECTION IN OR TO THE WATERBERG**



Endangered Wildlife Trust  
<https://www.ewt.org.za/>

**Carnivore Conservation Programme**  
 For decades EWT has worked in the Waterberg to mitigate carnivore human conflicts. They partnered with WWDI in 2019 to set up an initiative that could carry on their work with more consistent effort. They are important partner in terms of knowledge and support as well as providing mentoring to WWDI.

The Livestock Guarding Dog (LGD) project is still ongoing. 68 dogs across the Waterberg (see also the work of Cheetah Outreach Trust re LGD below) have been placed and they are now breeding Maluti LGD dogs in Rebone where a full-time field officer Joseph Hlako is based (Email address - josephh@ewt.org.za). The main work is with the rural communities in the North of the Waterberg namely Moepel, Mmamatlakala, Masebe, and Rebone in assisting them with LGD's to protect their livestock from carnivore conflict. They also continue to work with commercial farmers throughout the Waterberg. The Cheetah Metapopulation Project remains active and the Waterberg is now the largest cluster in RSA with regard to cheetah numbers in reserves across RSA with 106 cheetahs across 18 reserves in the Greater Waterberg area. EWT keeps a cheetah sightings database outside of protected areas, but there are few free roaming in the Waterberg.



The Waterberg is an important place for leopards (*Panthera pardus*). Vulnerable.



Panthera  
<https://panthera.org/>

Panthera in conjunction with Welgevonden Game Reserve undertakes annual leopard census data using camera traps. This research forms part of a province wide research project run by Panthera, in partnership with the Limpopo Department of Economic, Development, Environment and Tourism (LEDET) and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, to monitor leopard populations in Limpopo. Camera trap surveys, are providing population dynamics of the resident leopard population as part of the larger Waterberg population.



Cheetah Outreach Trust  
<https://www.cheetah.co.za/>

Their primary goal is to promote the survival of free ranging, South African, cheetah. Livestock Guarding Dog Project Manager – Deon Cilliers (who has worked for both De Wildt Cheetah Project and EWT), runs both the LGD project and the cheetah research programme.

The LGD programme has placed 300+ dogs on South African farms since 2005 to provided non-lethal means of predator control resulting in about 472,000 hectares of cheetah/predator safe areas. They participate in farmer and wildlife forums.

The majority of the cheetah outside protected areas in the Waterberg are in the Steenbokpan and Thabazimbi areas and further into the North West. They plan to do a first of its kind census in cheetah range, focused on areas outside of protected areas.



Vulpro

[www.vulpro.com](http://www.vulpro.com)

While not in the Waterberg (based in Hartbeespoort dam) they do amazing work with injured vultures. They collect injured vultures from anywhere in the country, and provide them with veterinary care and rehabilitation before releasing those that can go back into the wild. They have collected more than 1000 birds and have been able to release more than 500 back into the wild.

Although they are out of our area, they provide a valuable service to Waterberg Vultures, the Waterberg holds the largest Cape Vulture breeding colony in SA. Vultures have experienced a 90% decline in numbers over the past 30 years and are a species critical for healthy ecosystems.



White-backed Vulture (*Gyps africanus*).  
Critically Endangered.

**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOCUSED**



Lapalala Wilderness School

<https://www.lwschool.org/>

Environmental education school running resident 3 and 5 day courses.

To help the children and youth of South Africa to discover the true value of biodiversity of the natural world and our place within it, and to identify and nurture Africa’s future conservation champions. Founded more than 30 years ago by Clive Walker, more than 150,000 children have passed through the school.

The aim is to provide a unique, enriching educational experience to visitors of all ages, particularly the youth, by bringing together the past and the present through established and conserved living, organic and anthropomorphic collections. Providing education experience to school children from the region.

They have collaborated with STWR and WEAP and provided an educational experience for more than 515 children.

Welgevonden Education Awareness Program (WEAP)

<https://www.welgevonden.org/programmes/#environmentalawareness>

Aims to introduce and expose learners, and others in the local community, to the natural environment.

The purpose of the programme is to create an awareness and appreciation of the environment and to highlight the value of environmentally important areas in a social and economic sense locally, nationally and internationally. Groups of young people are taken to reserves where they can experience nature first hand.



Waterberg Living Museum

Waterberg Living Museum

<https://themuseum.org.za/>

A unique museum experience showcasing the natural history of the Waterberg.



WESSA Bushpigs

<https://wessa.org.za/our-work/schools-programme/wessa-eco-schools/>

Eco-Schools is the largest global sustainable schools programme.

The programme is aimed at creating awareness and action around environmental sustainability in schools and their surrounding communities as well as supporting Education for Sustainable Development. Bushpigs is their dedicated environmental education centre for school children in the Waterberg. However, the facility is currently closed.



Waterberg Living Museum and WEAP collaboration providing environmental education to local schools.

RESEARCH FOCUSED



Waterberg Research Support Centre (NPC)  
Website coming soon

A newly set up NPC with the following goals; to develop a coordinated Waterberg Research programme and to start an educational content development program and to provide a communication and awareness platform.

Ecology management in the Waterberg, a predominantly sourveld region, is generally based upon publications and research done mainly in mixed sweetveld systems. Given the unique ecology, soil and plant communities of the Waterberg, its ecological processes and ecosystems will not respond or adapt similarly. This creates a great lack of specific knowledge about the Waterberg ecology and its immense biodiversity which deserves to be comprehensively documented, protected, conserved, and effectively managed.

This NGO will collate research literature, create a website based database, and liaise with universities and students to help direct and organise relevant research for the Waterberg.



University of Pretoria FBIP – Waterberg Biodiversity Project

<https://fbip.co.za/news/waterberg-biodiversity-project-reminds-us-what-programme-is-about/>

This project started in November 2021. So far 12 reserves, overlapping 12 quarter degree grids have had pilot biodiversity surveys completed. Teams from all taxonomic groups collecting baseline data have undertaken surveying and are now planning their intensive data collection trips.

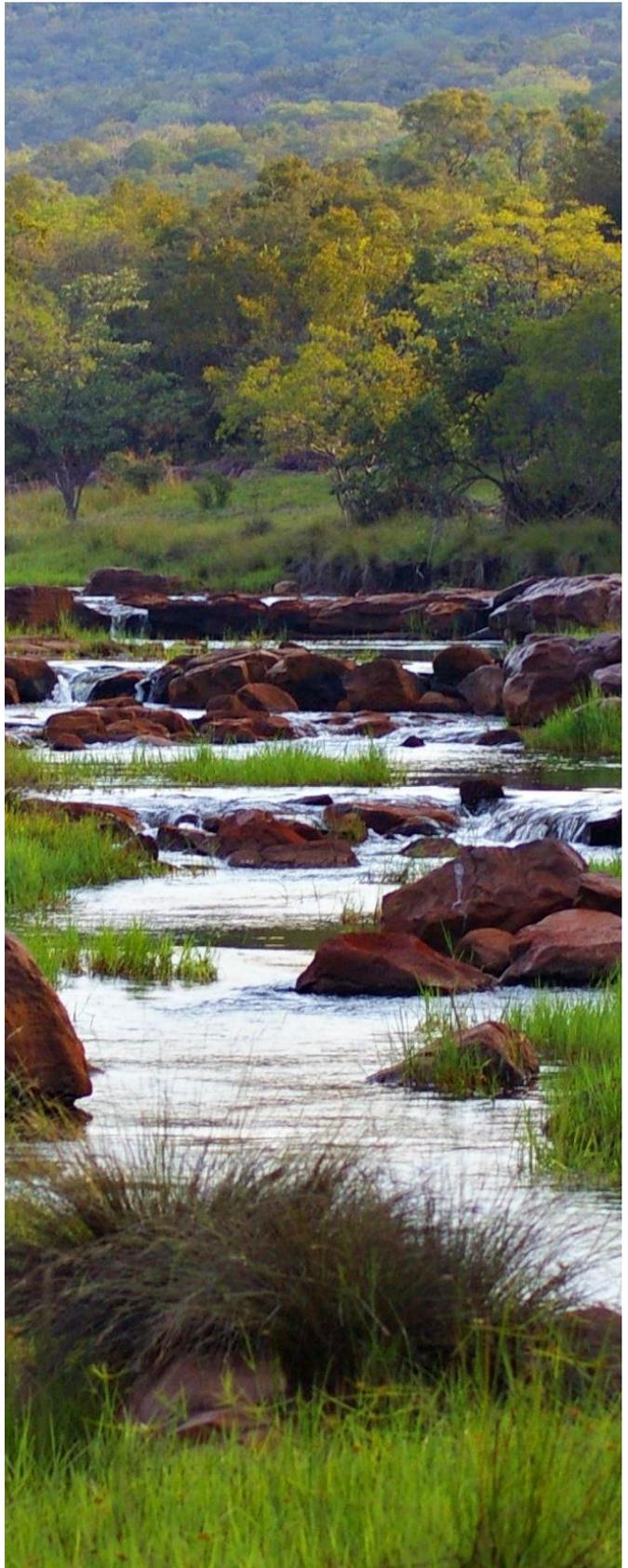
The Waterberg Mountain Complex (WMC) is a discrete geological entity, it falls within the Waterberg Biosphere Reserve and also declared a Bioregion with a Bioregional Plan.

The area houses three provincial reserves and one national park. Proposed coal mines and related infrastructure projects on the northern and southern borders of this area represent a major potential environmental conflict and will impact the ecological integrity of the Waterberg Mountain Complex (WMC). It is a region of special conservation concern and there has never been a comprehensive and structured biodiversity survey of the WMC.

The Waterberg Project plans to change that. Along with biodiversity research and DNA barcoding the project will liaise and collaborate with Waterberg stakeholders and organisations involved in biodiversity conservation and management. They plan to provide and make freely available all data and information to all stakeholders. Community engagement through education and citizen science will be set up and they will analyse floristic and fauna levels of endemism and biogeographic affinities.



The Waterberg has a wealth of biodiversity from many different taxa.



The Waterberg is an important water catchment. Tamboti River.

**ZOOS AND REHABILITATION CENTRES**

Zoos and rehabilitation centres have been included because of the potential conservation service they provide to rescue and treat injured wild species. South Africa has a huge number of rehab centres all over the country, and the level of expertise and successful/ real rehabilitation varies considerably. Rehab centres, especially those focused on predators have received negative reputations in recent years as many were set up as tourism businesses rather than rehab centres. The following organisations listed here are those that are found in the Waterberg. No evaluation is given as per their legitimacy or success.



**Cheetah Experience**  
[www.cheetahexperience.com](http://www.cheetahexperience.com)

A cheetah breeding and rehabilitation centre.

To raise awareness of the vulnerability of South African species and other endangered species through educational experiences, as well as breeding cheetahs in captivity for release into protected areas.



**Sondela Rehab Centre**  
<https://sondela.com/facilities-and-activities/wildlife-centre/>

Rehabilitation and species reintroduction.

A rehabilitation centre for injured or orphaned wildlife that can be later reintroduced into the wild or taken care of at the centre. The centre does try to protect abused and injured animals.

**De Wildt Shingwedzi Cheetah Ranch**

A cheetah breeding and rehabilitation centre.

The aim of the Centre is to maintain a viable genetic pool of not only the cheetah but also the African wild dog (second most endangered carnivore in Africa), for release back into their natural habitat as and when space becomes available, to safeguard these species from extinction.



**Rhino orphanage**  
<https://therhinoorphanage.org/>

The Rhino Orphanage was the first-ever specialised, non-commercial centre dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, raising and release of orphaned rhinos back into the wild. It was created as a result of the recent poaching crisis. Not open to the public.



**Rhino orphanage**

<https://www.rhinopridefoundation.org/>

A registered wildlife rehabilitation facility that rehabilitates any wildlife, big and small, but specialises in rhino, having a special intensive care unit for rhino.

Rhino Pride Foundation also run a sanctuary that looks after a number of rhino orphans who mostly have lost their mothers due to poaching.

**ZOOS AND REHABILITATION CENTRES**



**Bambelela Wildlife Care and Vervet  
Monkey Rehabilitation Centre**  
<http://www.bambelela.org.za/>

Bambelela rescues, rehabilitates and releases members of three of the five South African Primate species. The species are The lesser bushbaby, chacma baboon and vervet monkey. Tourists can also visit the centre as part of their educational programme.

**Feracare Wildlife centre**

[https://www.facebook.com/Feracare/?\\_rdc=2&\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/Feracare/?_rdc=2&_rdr)

Feracare is dedicated to preserving and breeding cheetah and other wildlife.



**Schrikkloof Nature Reserve and the Lion  
Foundation**

<https://www.schrikkloof.com/>

The Lion Foundation has set up a lion sanctuary where Lions came from Stichting Leeuw in the Netherlands to rehome to Africa these lions were unwanted circus and zoo lions.



National Zoological  
Garden, Pretoria

**Mokopane Biodiversity Conservation  
Centre**

<https://www.pretoriazoo.org/mokopane-biodiversity-conservation-centre/>

Mokopane Biodiversity Conservation Centre was established in 1979 and opened to the public in October 1981, as a satellite station of the National Zoological Garden, Pretoria Zoo (NZG). In 2004 the NZG was proclaimed as a National Facility.



**Jugomaro**

<https://jugomaro.co.za/>

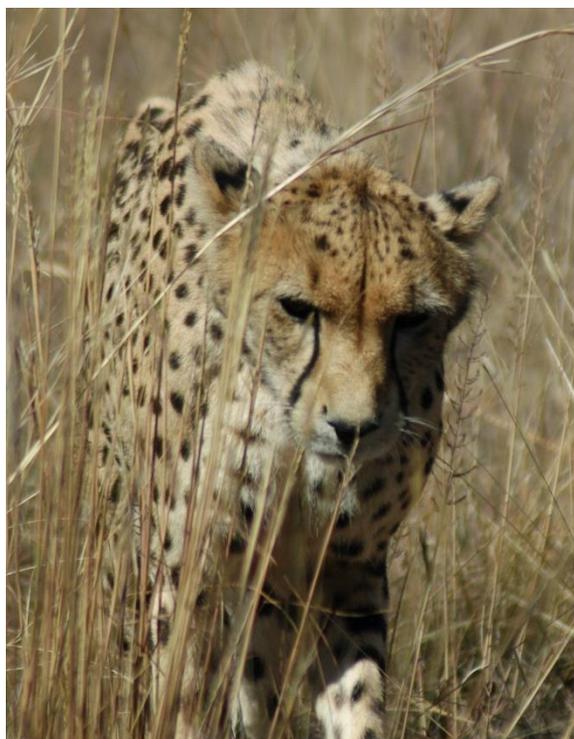
A home for unwanted or abused large cats.  
Open to the public.



**Waterberg Wildlife Rescue**

<https://waterbergwildliferescue.org.za/>

Waterberg Wildlife Rescue is an animal rescue centre situated in Limpopo, South Africa, that provides an optimum home for previously abused and displaced animals that cannot be returned to the wild. Here, they can spend the rest of their lives free from discomfort and distress.



A number of rehab centre focus on Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*). Vulnerable.

BIODIVERSITY AND CITIZEN SCIENCE



Waterberg Bioquest

<https://www.waterberg-bioquest.co.za/>

This is a website managed by Dr. Warwick and Michele Tarboton, that lists, illustrates and documents the occurrence of much of the Waterberg's biota. It aims to cover as much fauna and flora as possible. The area of the Waterberg that is covered is the plateau area in the centre of the district. The website also includes a range of different maps, as well as various photos of the Waterberg landscape.



iNaturalist

<https://www.inaturalist.org/>

iNaturalist is a joint initiative of the California Academy of Sciences and the National Geographic Society. iNaturalist's mission is to build a global community of 100 million naturalists by 2030 in order to connect people to nature and advance biodiversity science and conservation. iNaturalist is an online social network of people sharing biodiversity information to help each other learn about nature

It is also a crowdsourced species identification system and an organism occurrence recording tool. You can use it to record your own observations, get help with identifications, collaborate with others to collect this kind of information for a common purpose, or access the observational data collected by iNaturalist users.

While there are a number of projects for the Waterberg such as the Waterberg Biodiversity Project as well as general observations, the Waterberg has many data gaps and lacks data for certain areas.

Wildflowers focus

<https://www.waterberg-bioquest.co.za/wildflower%20book%20sample.pdf>

<https://welgevondenflowers.wixsite.com/>

The Waterberg has seen a recent focus in wildflower recording and documentation. The Waterberg has a surprising diversity of wildflowers that is usually overlooked.



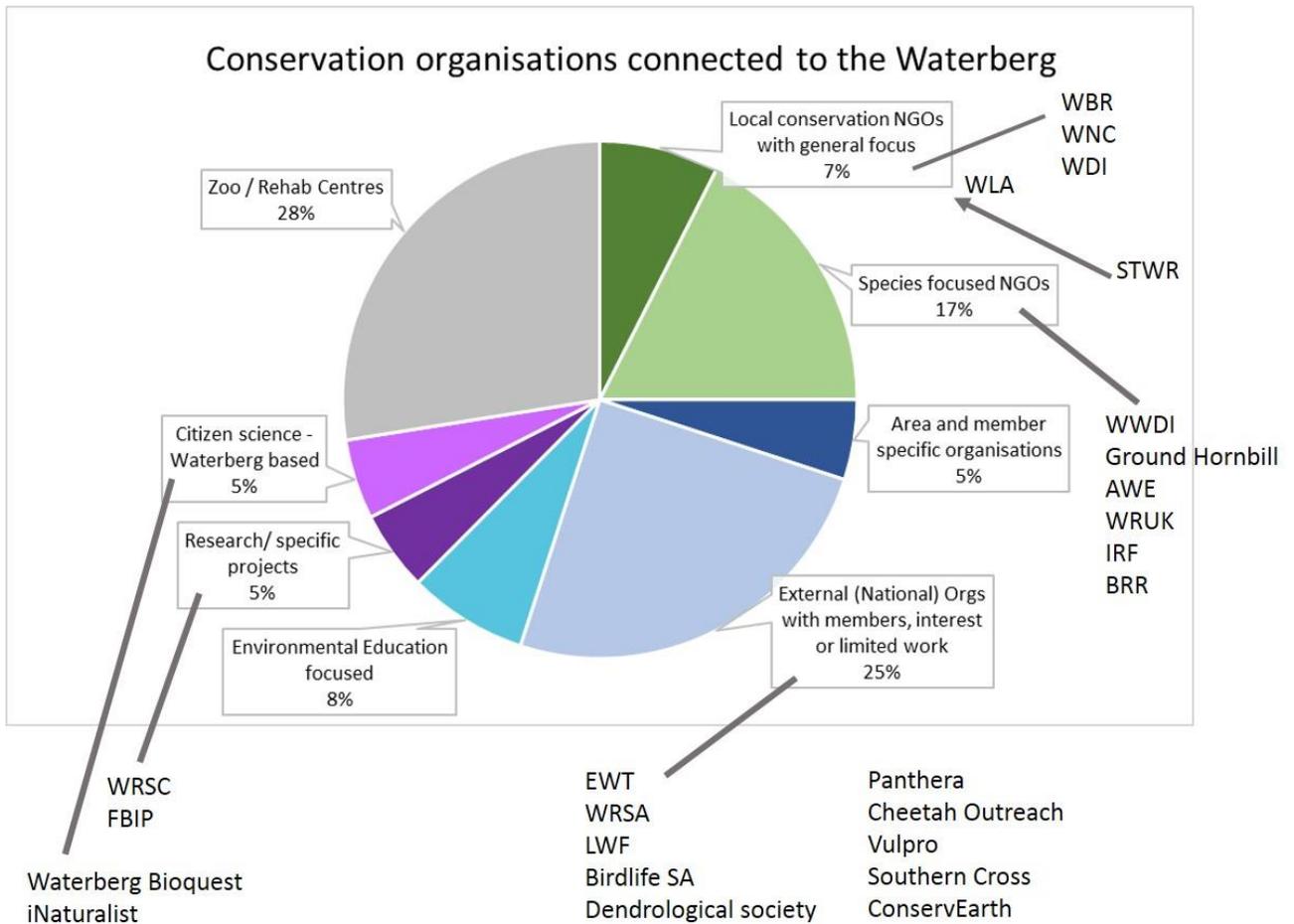
*Waterberg hibiscus (Hibiscus waterbergensis) is an Limpopo endemic, species range from Waterberg to Mapungubwe.*



The Waterberg is rich in biodiversity. Above from left to right; Waterberg Flat Lizard, Tok-tokkie, Brown-hooded Kingfisher, Black-headed Centipede-eater, CMR Beetle, Shy Dayflower

**SUMMARY OF CONSERVATION ORGANISATIONS**

- Just over 40 organisations or specific projects are connected to the Waterberg.
- A large proportion of these, though, are rehab centres or national / external organisations that have limited work or connection to the Waterberg.
- The number of actual organisations actively involved in conservation in the area is therefore, quite low, considering the size of the area and the conservation significance.
- Some of the Waterberg specific organisations have limited impact because of capacity and funding.
- For the conservation value and significance of the area the area deserves more conservation focus and impact.
- Most of the conservation focus is from species focused organisation with rhinos and predators receiving the most attention.
- The Waterberg currently lacks a conservation specific organisation that oversees the larger conservation vision for the area and for the future.
- The change from STWR to WLA can offer this area a conservation focused organisation that can support, encourage, facilitate and increase the conservation vision and action in the area.



### LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION

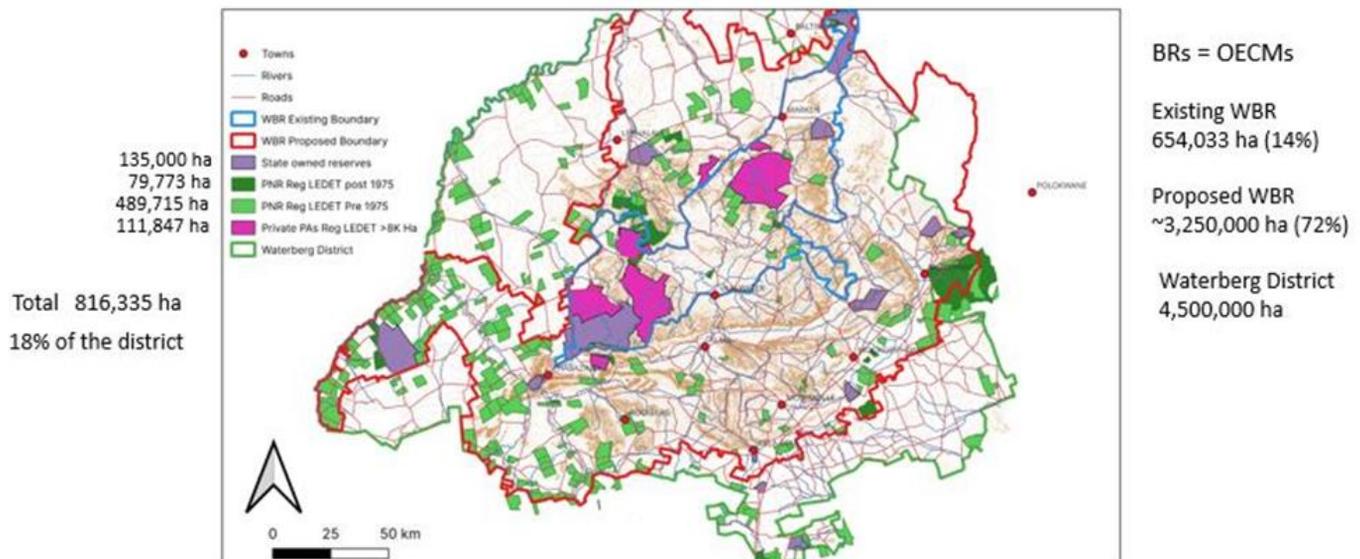
Organisations are only part of the picture of conservation in the Waterberg an important aspect is at the landowner level or landscape level.

- In the Waterberg, most biodiversity conservation is at the reserve or landowner level.
- Land under conservation includes size of properties, as well as specific work or projects being undertaken on that land.

Land under conservation comes in different categories, largely to do with the aspect of level of protection. These include;

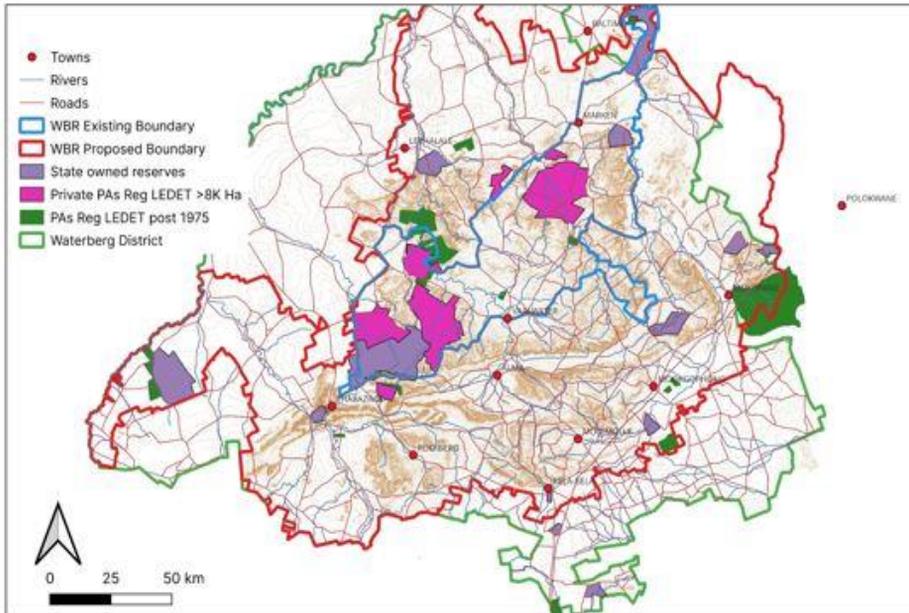
- State-owned (SANParks and LEDET) reserves
- LEDET registered Private Nature Reserves
- Large conservation properties (not protected) >8000ha
- Medium to small properties (game farms)
- Biosphere Reserve which is classified as an Other Effective area based Conservation Measure (OECMs).

Formal Protected Areas in the Waterberg



- Formal protected areas include state owned reserves, large private conservation reserves which include Marataba Contraction National Park, Welgevonden Game Reserve, and Lapalala Wilderness and a network of small private nature reserves that are scattered around the district.
- This totals 816,335 ha or 18% of the district.

Formal Protected area minus pre 1975 PNRs



135,000 ha  
111,847 ha  
79,773 ha

Total 326,620 ha  
8% of the district

Pre 1975 PNR – 10%

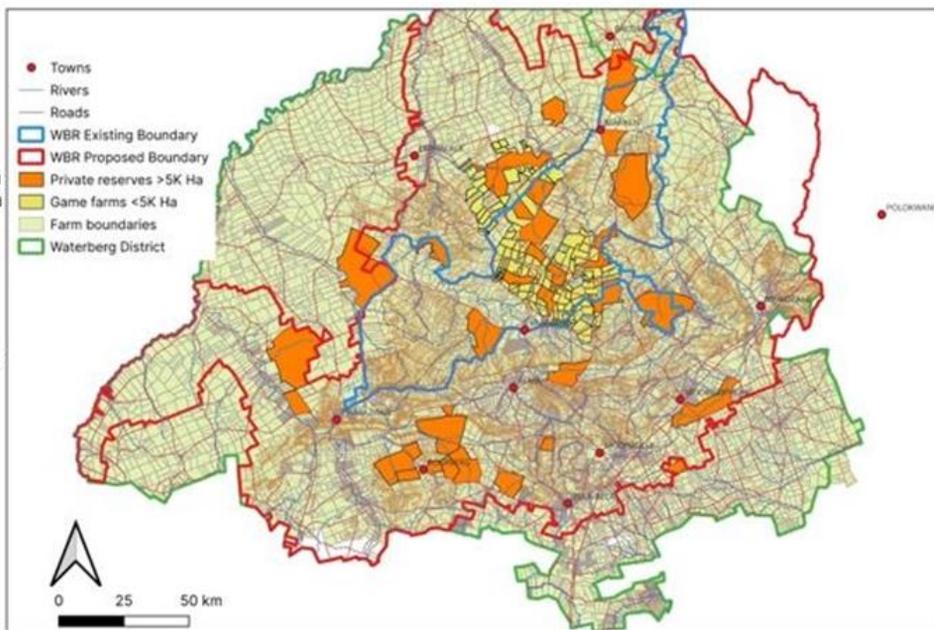
Existing WBR  
654,033 ha

Proposed WBR  
~3,250,000 ha

Waterberg District  
4,500,000 ha

- The district has a large number of small private nature reserves registered with LEDET. However, the majority of these were registered pre 1975.
- These pre 1975 registered reserves amount to a significant total of district / national protected areas at almost 490,000 ha.

Conservation reserves not protected



313,200 ha  
140,000 ha

Total 453,200 ha  
10 % of the district

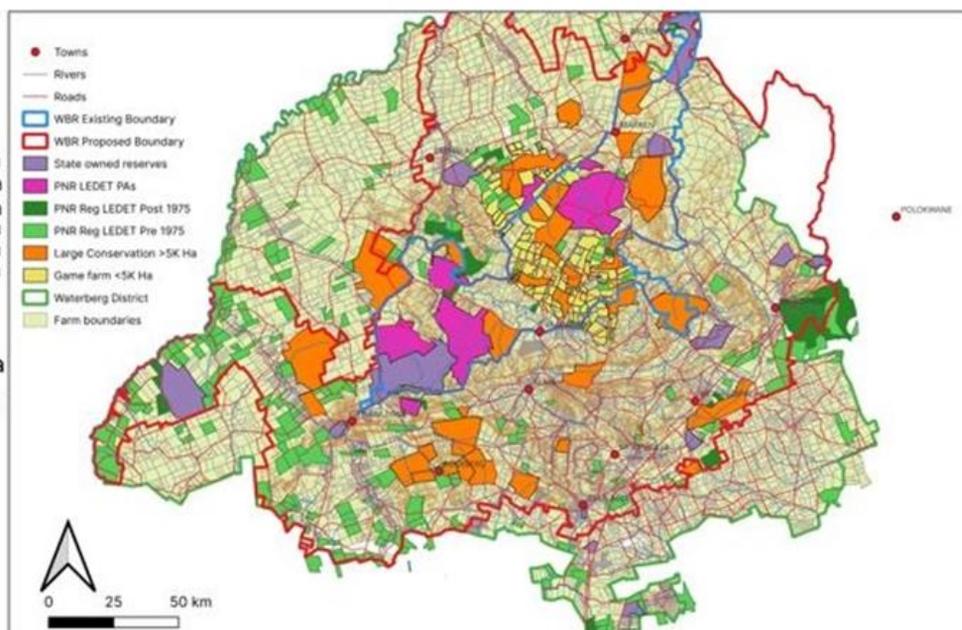
Existing WBR  
654,033 ha

Proposed WBR  
~3,250,000 ha

Waterberg District  
4,500,000 ha

- There are also many reserves that have significant conservation value but have no protected status. Many of these reserves probably have better levels of functional biodiversity than many formal protected areas.
- This total 423,200 ha or 10% of the district. If these areas came under some sort of protection status this would add a significant amount of land towards the 30% target for nature that could be recognized.

Protected Areas and Conservation Reserves in the Waterberg



135,000 ha  
111,847 ha  
79,773 ha  
489,715 ha  
313,200 ha  
140,000 ha

Total 1,169,535 ha  
26 % of the district

Existing WBR  
654,033 ha

Proposed WBR  
~3,250,000 ha

Waterberg District  
4,500,000 ha

- The district also has many smaller reserves and game farms that add to the overall conservation estate and provide a network of land for biodiversity.
- Overall, the district can provide more than 30% of the land for biodiversity.

Another aspect is the biosphere reserve. The Waterberg Biosphere Reserve is currently at 654,033 ha but a proposed expansion has been submitted to UNESCO which would increase the biosphere to approximately 3.2 million ha. This would incorporate much land at the smaller game farm level but other than being categorised into core, buffer and transition it is unknown what conservation action would be forthcoming. While the biosphere produces a spatial map for the area with development guidelines the spatial map and status have no legal weight unlike the bioregional plan for the Waterberg which has been gazetted into legislation.

However, while the biosphere does not provide for legal protection it is still a useful accolade and leverage for the area. In fact, as an internationally recognized status the WBR should be used by all stakeholders to motivate for more action and benefits for the area. Having a huge mandate to fulfil from UNESCO as part of the Man and Biosphere programme, the WBR by necessity must rely on a network of stakeholders, who have specific focus to help fulfil this mandate. WLA with a dedicated conservation aim for the Waterberg can provide the necessary biodiversity conservation focus and action needed by UNESCO.

**CONSERVATION ESTATE; STATE OWNED PROTECTED AREAS AND RESERVES**

The Waterberg contains a number of government run reserves, these combine to contribute 135,000 ha of conservation estate and protected areas. The largest and most significant of these is Marakele NP, which contains important habitats, as well as the highest point within the Waterberg (1830m) and the largest colony of breeding Cape Vultures. Unfortunately, many of these reserves are underfunded and under capacity.

Name	Local Town	Ha	Management	5 / P	P A					
Marakele NP	Thabazimbi	67,000	SANParks		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
<a href="https://www.sanparks.org/parks/marakele/">https://www.sanparks.org/parks/marakele/</a> <a href="http://www.marakelenationalpark.co.za">www.marakelenationalpark.co.za</a>			Largest colony of Cape Vultures.							
Atherstone NR	Dwaalboom	23,500	LEDET	4 of	✓			✓		✓
<a href="https://www.safarinow.com/destinations/atherstone-nature-reserve/naturereserves/atherstone-nature-reserve.aspx">https://www.safarinow.com/destinations/atherstone-nature-reserve/naturereserves/atherstone-nature-reserve.aspx</a>			Important breeding colony of White-backed vultures.							
Wonderkop NR	Marken	16,100	LEDET		✓			✓		✓
<a href="https://www.sa-venues.com/game-reserves/wonderkop.php">https://www.sa-venues.com/game-reserves/wonderkop.php</a>			Has important populations of roan and sable.							
D’Nyala NR	Lephalale	8,000	LEDET		✓					
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%27nyala_Nature_Reserve">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%27nyala_Nature_Reserve</a>										
Doorndraai NR	Mokopane	6,850	LEDET		✓					✓
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doorndraai_Dam_Nature_Reserve">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doorndraai_Dam_Nature_Reserve</a>										
Mogol Dam NR	Vaalwater	5,120	LEDET		✓					✓
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mokolo_Dam_Nature_Reserve">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mokolo_Dam_Nature_Reserve</a>										
Witvinger NR	Mokopane	4,500	LEDET		✓					
Masebe NR	Marken	4,400	LEDET		✓					
<a href="https://www.sa-venues.com/game-reserves/masebe.php">https://www.sa-venues.com/game-reserves/masebe.php</a>										
Nylsvley NR	Modimolle	4,000	LEDET		✓		✓			✓
<a href="https://nylsvley.co.za/">https://nylsvley.co.za/</a>			Largest inland floodplain in SA, Ramsar site and IBA							
Percy Fyfe	Mokopane	2,470	LEDET		✓			✓		
<a href="https://percyfyfe.org/en/">https://percyfyfe.org/en/</a>			Roan population.							
Ben Alberts	Thabazimbi	2,000	LEDET		✓					
<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Alberts_Nature_Reserve">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ben_Alberts_Nature_Reserve</a>										
Rust de Winter NR	Settlers	1,665	LEDET		✓					
<a href="https://www.sa-venues.com/game-reserves/rust-de-winter.php">https://www.sa-venues.com/game-reserves/rust-de-winter.php</a>										
Bothasvlei NR		1,510	LEDET		✓					
Hetbad NR	Bela Bela	700	LEDET		✓					

Key:

P Protected area Game breeding Research / Projects Endangered species Community outreach Tourism

Big Five Plains game

**CONSERVATION ESTATE; PROTECTED AREAS AND PRIVATE RESERVES**

The Waterberg has many private reserves, some have protected area status but most have no formal protection. That said, many of these reserves have contributed to the massive undertaking of rewilding the Waterberg has experienced over the last few decades. These unofficial conservation areas offer the opportunity for SA to increase its international conservation estate to be able to meet the 30% conservation areas as OECMs (other effective area-based conservation measures). Most private reserves use tourism to provide funds to run the reserves. In total private reserves over 8,000ha in size contribute 344,000ha to the conservation estate of the Waterberg and have huge conservation value.

Name	Local Town	Ha	Management	BIG 5 / Plains game	P A			EN		
Lapalala Wilderness	Marken	48,000	Private		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<a href="https://lapalala.com">https://lapalala.com</a>			PhD student projects, predator and elephant research, habitat rehabilitation.							
Thaba Tholo	Thabazimbi	37,000	Private			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<a href="https://thabatholo.co.za/">https://thabatholo.co.za/</a>			Rhino conservation, consumptive conservation – game meat.							
Welgevonden GR	Vaalwater	36,000	Private		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
<a href="https://www.welgevonden.org/">https://www.welgevonden.org/</a>			Leopard, Blue Crane, biomonitoring research. WEAP.							
Moepel Farms	Marken	28,000	Private		✓					
			12 Community owned farms by 3 communities; Motse (6), Molekwa (4), Legata (2). Potential to be set up as a community owned reserve.							
Marataba PGR	Thabazimbi	22,000	Private		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
<a href="http://www.marataba.co.za">www.marataba.co.za</a>			Privately managed part of Marakele NP.							
Entabeni	Mokopane	22,000	Private				✓	✓		✓
<a href="https://www.entabeni.co.za/">https://www.entabeni.co.za/</a>			Predator and biodiversity research, rare game breeding, habitat restoration.							
Shelanti GR	Marken	20,000	Private	3 of		✓		✓		✓
<a href="https://shelanti.co.za/">https://shelanti.co.za/</a>			Vulture restaurant. Rare game breeding.							
Ka’Ingo & Mokolo NR	Vaalwater	16,600	Private		✓		✓	✓		✓
<a href="https://www.kaingo.org/">https://www.kaingo.org/</a>			Archaeology, wildflowers, trees, arachnids, mammals, bats, reintroductions / relocations, elephant impact, leopard monitoring, ecological monitoring, habitat rehabilitation.							
Nyl river Floodplain	Modimolle	16,000	Private			✓		✓		✓
<a href="http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/nyl-river-floodplain-iba-south-africa">http://datazone.birdlife.org/site/factsheet/nyl-river-floodplain-iba-south-africa</a>			Collection of farms that cover the Nyl floodplain, the largest floodplain in SA. Ramsar site and Birdlife’s IBA							
Qwabi PGR	Rooiberg	15,000	Private			✓		✓		✓
<a href="https://newmarkhotels.com/accommodation/qwabi-private-game-reserve">https://newmarkhotels.com/accommodation/qwabi-private-game-reserve</a>			Game breeding.							
Nyati GR	Vaalwater	12,500	Private	3 of		✓				✓
<a href="https://www.nyatiwilderness.com/">https://www.nyatiwilderness.com/</a>			Game breeding.							
Elandsberg NR	Rooiberg	12,000	Private			✓				✓
<a href="https://elandsberg-safaris.com/">https://elandsberg-safaris.com/</a>			Rare game breeding.							
Mabula GR	Bela Bela	10,000	Private				✓	✓		✓
<a href="https://mabula.com/">https://mabula.com/</a>			Home to the Ground Hornbill Project. Cheetah and wild dog relocation.							

Key:

- P  
A Protected area
- Game breeding
- Research / Projects
- Endangered species
- Community outreach
- Tourism
- Big Five
- Plains game

CONSERVATION ESTATE; PROTECTED AREAS AND PRIVATE RESERVES

Name	Local Town	Ha	Management	BIG 5 / Plains game	P A			EN		
Keta PNR	Marken	11,000	Private			✓				✓
<a href="https://www.facebook.com/KetaPrivateNatureReserve/">https://www.facebook.com/KetaPrivateNatureReserve/</a>										
Shambala PGR	Vaalwater	10,000	Private			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<a href="https://shambalaprivategamereserve.co.za/">https://shambalaprivategamereserve.co.za/</a>			Partnered - EMS Foundation to undertake community and conservation work.							
Mabalingwe GR	Bela Bela	9,500	Private					✓		✓
<a href="https://www.mabalingwe.co.za/">https://www.mabalingwe.co.za/</a>										
Rhinolands	Lephalale	9,000	Private	4 of 		✓				✓
			Game breeding.							
Dinaka	Mookgphong	8,000	Private			✓				✓
			Game breeding.							



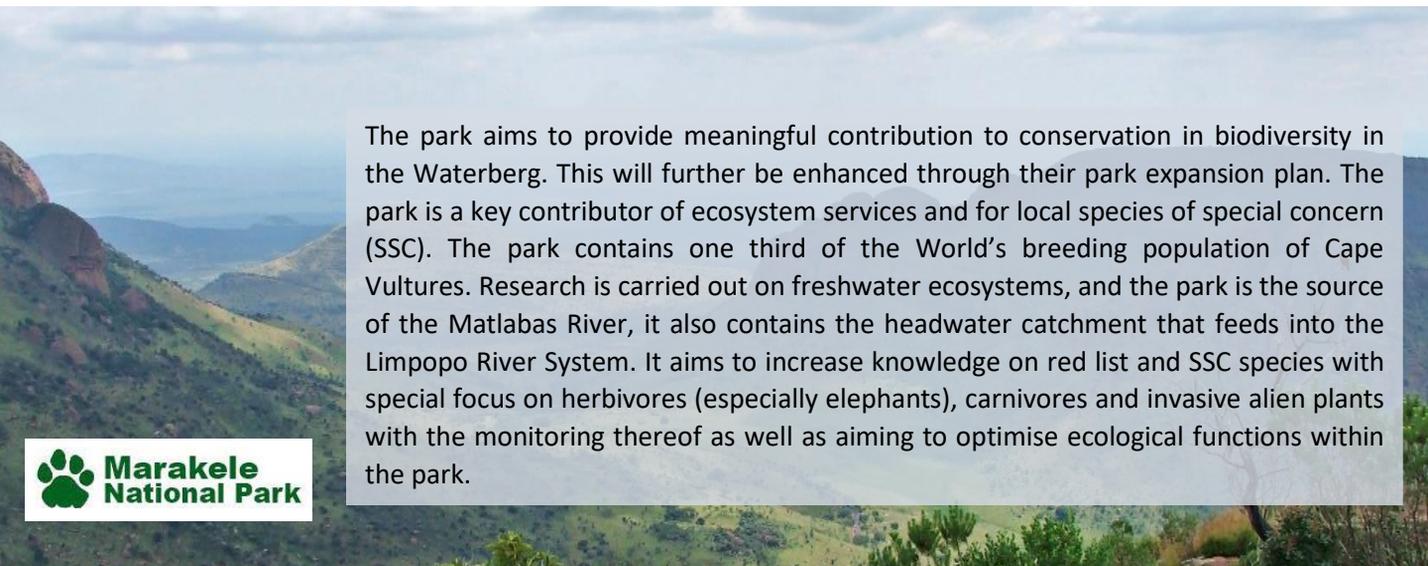
View of Waterberg Mountain Bushveld. Endemic vegetation type.

Key:

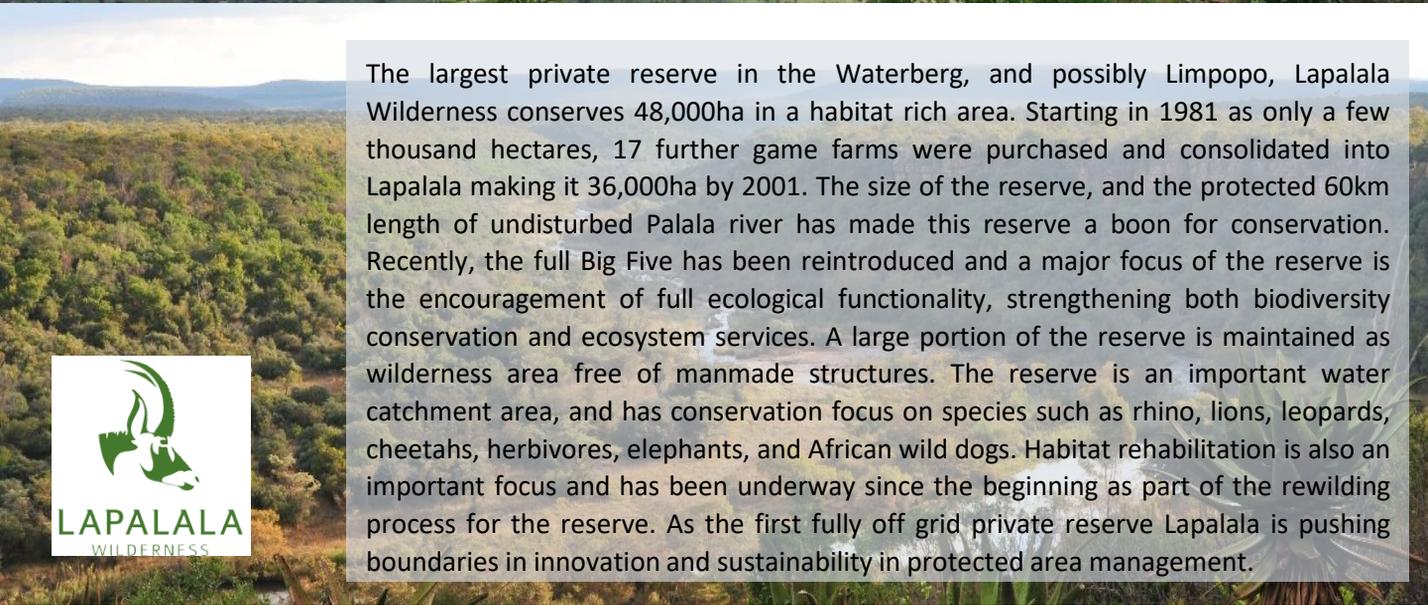
- P Protected area
-  Game breeding
-  Research / Projects
- EN Endangered species
-  Community outreach
-  Tourism
-  Big Five
-  Plains game



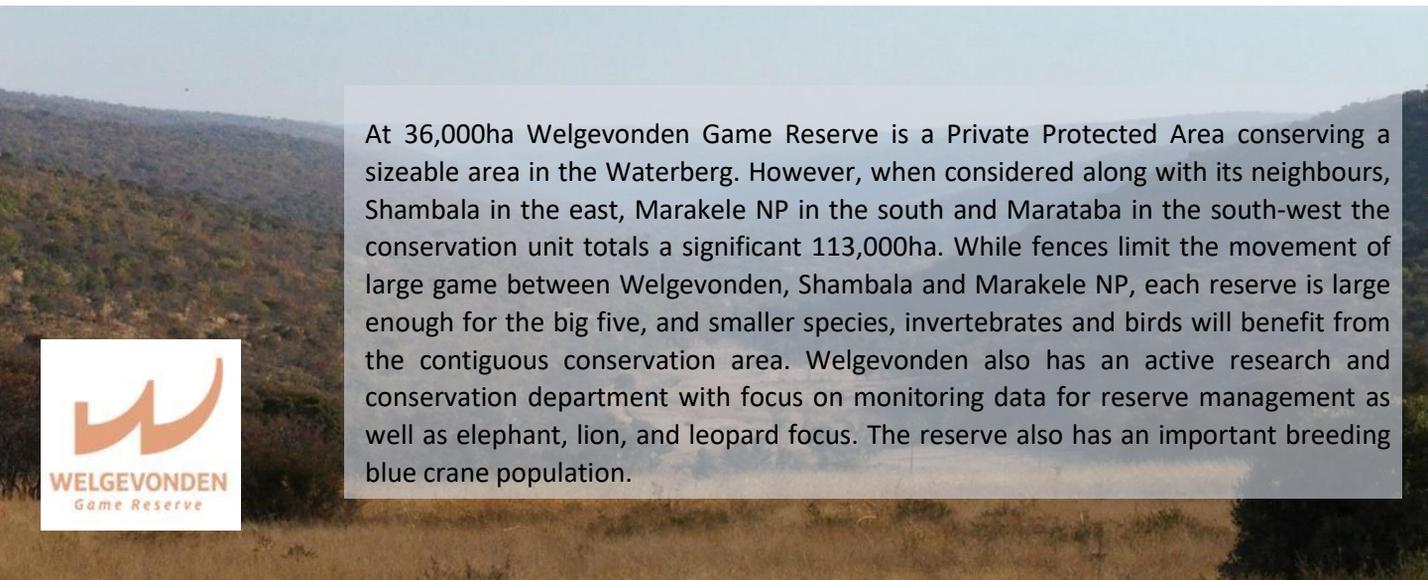
TEN AREAS OF CONSERVATION SIGNIFICANCE



The park aims to provide meaningful contribution to conservation in biodiversity in the Waterberg. This will further be enhanced through their park expansion plan. The park is a key contributor of ecosystem services and for local species of special concern (SSC). The park contains one third of the World’s breeding population of Cape Vultures. Research is carried out on freshwater ecosystems, and the park is the source of the Matlabas River, it also contains the headwater catchment that feeds into the Limpopo River System. It aims to increase knowledge on red list and SSC species with special focus on herbivores (especially elephants), carnivores and invasive alien plants with the monitoring thereof as well as aiming to optimise ecological functions within the park.



The largest private reserve in the Waterberg, and possibly Limpopo, Lapalala Wilderness conserves 48,000ha in a habitat rich area. Starting in 1981 as only a few thousand hectares, 17 further game farms were purchased and consolidated into Lapalala making it 36,000ha by 2001. The size of the reserve, and the protected 60km length of undisturbed Palala river has made this reserve a boon for conservation. Recently, the full Big Five has been reintroduced and a major focus of the reserve is the encouragement of full ecological functionality, strengthening both biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services. A large portion of the reserve is maintained as wilderness area free of manmade structures. The reserve is an important water catchment area, and has conservation focus on species such as rhino, lions, leopards, cheetahs, herbivores, elephants, and African wild dogs. Habitat rehabilitation is also an important focus and has been underway since the beginning as part of the rewilding process for the reserve. As the first fully off grid private reserve Lapalala is pushing boundaries in innovation and sustainability in protected area management.



At 36,000ha Welgevonden Game Reserve is a Private Protected Area conserving a sizeable area in the Waterberg. However, when considered along with its neighbours, Shambala in the east, Marakele NP in the south and Marataba in the south-west the conservation unit totals a significant 113,000ha. While fences limit the movement of large game between Welgevonden, Shambala and Marakele NP, each reserve is large enough for the big five, and smaller species, invertebrates and birds will benefit from the contiguous conservation area. Welgevonden also has an active research and conservation department with focus on monitoring data for reserve management as well as elephant, lion, and leopard focus. The reserve also has an important breeding blue crane population.



TEN AREAS OF CONSERVATION SIGNIFICANCE



Marataba is a contractual National Park through an unique public-private partnership with Marakele NP, providing an innovative conservation model. Marataba is uniquely situated where lush bushveld gives way to the drier Kalahari Sands. It also contains the restricted sweetveld habitats much loved by herbivores. The reserve is Big Five and has undertaken habitat and biodiversity rewilding since its formation. The Marataba – Marakele unit is the largest unfenced conservation area in the Waterberg totalling 67,000ha. Along with Marakele NP, Marataba is home to the largest breeding colony of Cape Vultures in South Africa. The reserve also provides an opportunity for guests at their conservation camps to experience hands on conservation through a unique and immersive experience.



Thaba Tholo is a 37,000ha private reserve that has achieved sustainable and equitable conservation through the successful implementation of the biodiversity economy model. The reserve was established in the late 1980s by consolidating a number of game farms and rewilding the reserve with Big Five, rare and other naturally occurring species. The reserve funds much of the conservation work via game sales and processed game meat and biltong that are sold locally. The reserve has a special focus on rhino conservation and offers a special hands on experience on their rhino conservation programme.



Entabeni has implemented a number of conservation projects in the Waterberg in the last few years. Particular emphasis has been on restoring and rehabilitating the reserve area and its incumbent wildlife species. Entabeni has also instituted three predator research projects with lion and cheetah reintroductions and the ongoing leopard survey. Further work is being done with disease-free buffalo breeding, as well as sable and roan projects on other reserve areas. Furthermore, surveys are under way focusing on smaller species found on the reserve.



Shambala Private Game Reserve aims to maintain an ideal ecosystem throughout the wider reserve area, and to achieve a harmonious and ecologically sound environment. They are actively involved in wildlife conservation with a number of projects. In addition to the Big Five, Shambala, is home to the endangered sable antelope, black impala, tsessebe, and black rhino, as well as disease-free buffalo. The population of each species is carefully monitored to maintain a combination that not only ensures unique game viewing, but also creates a natural and beneficial balance between species.

TEN AREAS OF CONSERVATION SIGNIFICANCE



Mabula Private Game Reserve has been the home of the award-winning Mabula Ground Hornbill Project since 1999. This project aims to change perceptions – and the fortunes – of this iconic but endangered species, through multi-disciplinary and evidence-based conservation techniques. The Southern Ground-Hornbill (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*) are culturally important as the ‘thunder’ or ‘rain’ birds and are a flagship species for the savannah biome (along with cheetah, white rhino and several vulture species). Currently, Southern Ground-Hornbills are considered internationally as ‘Vulnerable’ throughout their range in Africa by the IUCN, but within South Africa and Namibia they have been classified as Endangered with their numbers outside of formally protected areas declining. Mabula is also part of Endangered Wildlife Trust’s Cheetah Metapopulation Project that seeks to reintroduce cheetah to areas where they have been driven out by conflict from farmers as well as habitat loss. The project manages cheetah population throughout the country to protect against genetic issues within small reserves to prevent inbreeding.

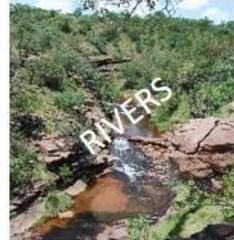


As a declared Nature Reserve with a primary objective of natural resource conservation, the reserve is run along pure, sustainable management and development principles, with an exceptionally low developmental and tourism footprint, with the slogan ‘conservation first’. The reserve employs a holistic approach, laying the groundwork for long-term ecological and economic viability, and creating a model of conservation supported by ecotourism that will create long term sustainability. Research is a vital part and Ka’Ingo has been involved in numerous research projects in collaboration with various academics from local and international universities. Research has been on archaeology, wildflowers, trees, arachnids, mammals, bats, reintroductions / relocations, elephant impact, leopard monitoring, ecological monitoring, and habitat rehabilitation.



While only 4000ha Nylsvley NR is rich in biodiversity, resulting from its mosaic of habitats. Nylsvley is a Ramsar site, a wetland of international importance for the protection of waterfowl. The reserve contains over 800 plant species, almost 400 species of birds (one of SA most bird rich reserves for its size) including 102 species of waterbird (more than any other wetland in SA). It also contains the threatened roan and tsessebe as well as other antelope species, other mammals (79), reptiles (58) and amphibians (19). Nylsvley is probably the most researched site in the Waterberg with research starting in 1974 as part of the Savanna Biome Research Project. Nylsvley forms part of the ephemeral Nyl Floodplain that spans 70kms in length. When fully inundated it covers 16,000ha and forms part of Birdlife’s Important Bird and Biodiversity Area. On flood event years around 80,000 birds come for breeding including rare and locally threatened species such as Rufous-bellied Heron, Dwarf Bittern and Allen’s Gallinule. The dominant floodplain grass *Oryza longistaminata* is virtually absent elsewhere in the country.

CONSERVATION AT A GLANCE  
THE WATERBERG FOCUS



## LANDSCAPE FEATURES OF THE WATERBERG; PROVIDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

The Waterberg has an escarpment of massive sandstone buttresses and outcrops, stretching for 150 km in a long arc from Thabazimbi in the West, to Mokopane in the east.



Although many think the Waterberg indicates abundant water, the name reflects the seasonal nature of the area. Summer rains bring many springs and streams creating the illusion of plentiful water. These streams, however, do form a critical water catchment in this arid area.



The Waterberg has remarkable wilderness quality, with vast open vistas with no signs of people for as far as the eye can see.



The Waterberg is unique due to its geological formations and represents a bio-physical region found nowhere else in South Africa. A fascinating feature of the rocky hillsides is the abundance of plants related to the Cape Fynbos kingdom found hundreds of kilometres away in the Western Cape.



The Waterberg is the southernmost extent for the Baobab, Anaboom and Paperbark false thorn, while it is the northernmost extent for the Sugar Bush and Real Yellow-wood.

