

## GAZETTED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

**TERRESTRIAL ANIMAL SPECIES****PROTOCOL FOR THE SPECIALIST ASSESSMENT AND MINIMUM REPORT CONTENT REQUIREMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ON TERRESTRIAL ANIMAL SPECIES****1. SCOPE**

This protocol provides the criteria for the specialist assessment and minimum report content requirements for impacts on terrestrial animal species for activities requiring environmental authorisation. This protocol replaces the requirements of Appendix 6 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations<sup>1</sup>.

The assessment and reporting requirements of this protocol are associated with a level of environmental sensitivity identified by the national web based environmental screening tool (screening tool) for terrestrial animal species. The relevant terrestrial animal species data in the screening tool has been provided by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).

The screening tool can be accessed at: <https://screening.environment.gov.za/screeningtool>

**2. SITE SENSITIVITY VERIFICATION AND MINIMUM REPORT CONTENT REQUIREMENTS**

Prior to commencing with a specialist assessment, the current use of the land and the potential environmental sensitivity of the site under consideration, identified by the screening tool, must be confirmed by undertaking a **site sensitivity verification**<sup>2</sup>.

2.1 The site sensitivity verification must be undertaken by an environmental assessment practitioner or a specialist.

2.2 The site sensitivity verification must be undertaken through the use of:

- (a) a desk top analysis, using satellite imagery;
- (b) a preliminary on-site inspection; and
- (c) any other available and relevant information.

2.3 The outcome of the site sensitivity verification must be recorded in the form of a report that:

- (a) confirms or disputes the current use of the land and environmental sensitivity as identified by the screening tool, such as new developments or infrastructure, the change in vegetation cover or status etc.;
- (b) contains a motivation and evidence (e.g. photographs) of either the verified or different use of the land and environmental sensitivity; and
- (c) is submitted together with the relevant assessment report prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014, as amended, and as promulgated under Section 24(5) of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998).

<sup>2</sup> The site sensitivity verification is to confirm the actual use of the land on the ground versus that which has been identified by the screening tool. The site sensitivity verification will confirm or refute the need to employ the various specialists as identified in the screening report. The site sensitivity report does not form part of the specialist report, but is to be submitted together with the relevant assessment reports.

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**3. SPECIALIST ASSESSMENT AND MINIMUM REPORT CONTENT REQUIREMENTS****TABLE 1: ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING OF IMPACTS ON TERRESTRIAL ANIMAL SPECIES****1. General Information**

- 1.1 An applicant intending to undertake an activity identified in the scope of this protocol, on a site identified by the screening tool as being of “very high” or “high” sensitivity for terrestrial animal species must submit a **Terrestrial Animal Species Specialist Assessment Report**.
- 1.2 An applicant intending to undertake an activity identified in the scope of this protocol on a site identified by the screening tool as being of “medium sensitivity” for terrestrial animal species must submit either a **Terrestrial Animal Species Specialist Assessment Report** or a **Terrestrial Animal Species Compliance Statement**, depending on the outcome of a site inspection undertaken in accordance with paragraph 4.
- 1.3 An applicant intending to undertake an activity identified in the scope of this protocol on a site identified by the screening tool as being of “low” sensitivity for terrestrial animal species must submit a **Terrestrial Animal Species Compliance Statement**.
- 1.4 Where the information gathered from the site sensitivity verification differs from the screening tool designation of “very high” or “high”, for terrestrial animal species sensitivity and it is found to be of a “low” sensitivity, then a **Terrestrial Animal Species Compliance Statement** must be submitted.
- 1.5 Where the information gathered from the site sensitivity verification differs from the screening tool designation of “low” terrestrial animal species sensitivity and it is found to be of a “very high” or “high” terrestrial animal species sensitivity, a **Terrestrial Animal Species Specialist Assessment** must be conducted.
- 1.6 If any part of the development falls within an area of confirmed “very high” or “high” sensitivity, the assessment and reporting requirements prescribed for the “very high” or “high” sensitivity, apply to the entire development footprint. Development footprint in the context of this protocol means, the area on which the proposed development will take place and includes the area that will be disturbed or impacted.
- 1.7 The **Terrestrial Animal Species Specialist Assessment** and the **Terrestrial Animal Species Compliance Statement** must be undertaken within the *study area*.
- 1.8 Where the nature of the activity **is not** expected to have an impact on species of conservation concern (SCC) beyond the boundary of the preferred site, the study area means the proposed development footprint within the preferred site.
- 1.9 Where the nature of the activity **is** expected to have an impact on SCC beyond the boundary of the preferred site, the *project areas of influence* (PAOI) must be determined by the specialist in accordance with *Species Environmental Assessment Guideline*<sup>3</sup>, and the study area must include the PAOI, as determined.

**VERY HIGH SENSITIVITY RATING – for terrestrial animal species:**

1. Critical habitat for range-restricted species<sup>4</sup> of conservation concern, that have a global range of less than 10 km<sup>2</sup>.

**2. Terrestrial Animal Species Specialist Assessment**

- 2.1 The assessment must be undertaken by a specialist registered with the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP) with a field of practice relevant to the taxonomic group (“taxa”) for which the assessment is being undertaken.

<sup>3</sup> Available at <https://bgis.sanbi.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Species with a geographically restricted area of distribution

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<p>2. SCC listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species<sup>5</sup> or on South Africa's National Red List website<sup>6</sup> as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable according to the IUCN Red List 3.1. Categories and Criteria or listed as Nationally Rare.</p> <p>3. Species aggregations that represent ≥1% of the global population size of a species, over a season, and during one or more key stages of its life cycle.</p> <p>4. The number of mature individuals that ranks the site among the largest 10 aggregations known for the species.</p> <p>These areas are irreplaceable for SCC.</p>	<p>2.2 The assessment must be undertaken in accordance with the <i>Species Environmental Assessment Guideline</i><sup>7</sup>; and must;</p> <p>2.2.1 identify the SCC which were found, observed or are likely to occur within the study area;</p> <p>2.2.2 provide evidence (photographs or sound recordings) of each SCC found or observed within the study area, which must be disseminated by the specialist to a recognized online database facility<sup>8</sup>, immediately after the site inspection has been performed (prior to preparing the report contemplated in paragraph 3);</p> <p>2.2.3 identify the distribution, location, viability<sup>9</sup> and provide a detailed description of population size of the SCC, identified within the study area;</p> <p>2.2.4 identify the nature and the extent of the potential impact of the proposed development on the population of the SCC located within the study area;</p> <p>2.2.5 determine the importance of the conservation of the population of the SCC identified within the study area, based on information available in national and international databases, including the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, South African Red List of Species, and/or other relevant databases;</p>
<p><b>HIGH SENSITIVITY RATING</b> – for terrestrial animal species:</p> <p>1. Confirmed habitat for SCC.</p> <p>2. SCC, listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species or South Africa's National Red List website as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable, according to the IUCN Red List 3.1. Categories and Criteria and under the national category of Rare.</p> <p>These areas are unsuitable for development due to a very likely impact on SCC.</p>	<p>2.2.6 determine the potential impact of the proposed development on the habitat of the SCC located within the study area;</p> <p>2.2.7 include a review of relevant literature on the population size of the SCC, the conservation interventions as well as any national or provincial species management plans for the SCC. This review must provide information on the need to conserve the SCC and indicate whether the development is compliant with the applicable species management plans and if not, include a motivation for the deviation;</p> <p>2.2.8 identify any dynamic ecological processes occurring within the broader landscape that might be disrupted by the development and result in negative impact on the identified SCC, for example, fires in fire-prone systems;</p> <p>2.2.9 identify any potential impact of ecological connectivity in relation to the broader landscape, resulting in impacts on the identified SCC and its long term viability;</p> <p>2.2.10 determine buffer distances as per the <i>Species Environmental Assessment Guidelines</i> used for the population of each SCC;</p> <p>2.2.11 discuss the presence or likelihood of additional SCC including threatened species not identified by the screening tool, <i>Data Deficient</i> or <i>Near Threatened Species</i>, as well as any undescribed species<sup>10</sup>; or roosting and breeding or foraging areas used by migratory species where these species show significant congregations, occurring in the vicinity; and</p> <p>2.2.12 identify any alternative development footprints within the preferred site which would be of "low" or "medium" sensitivity as identified by the screening tool and verified through the site sensitivity verification.</p>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.iucnredlist.org/>

<sup>6</sup> This category includes the categories Extremely Rare, Critically Rare and Rare

<sup>7</sup> Available at <https://bgis.sanbi.org/>

<sup>8</sup> The preferred platform is iNaturalist.org but any other national or international virtual museum

<sup>9</sup> the ability to survive and reproduce in the long term

<sup>10</sup> Undescribed species are to be assessed as "High Sensitivity"

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	<p>2.3 The findings of the assessment must be written up in a <b>Terrestrial Animal Species Specialist Assessment Report</b>.</p> <p><b>3. Terrestrial Animal Species Specialist Assessment Report<sup>11</sup></b></p> <p>3.1 This report must include as a minimum the following information:</p> <p>3.1.1 contact details and relevant experience as well as the SACNASP registration number of the specialist preparing the assessment including a curriculum vitae;</p> <p>3.1.2 a signed statement of independence by the specialist;</p> <p>3.1.3 a statement on the duration, date and season of the site inspection and the relevance of the season to the outcome of the assessment;</p> <p>3.1.4 a description of the methodology used to undertake the site sensitivity verification, impact assessment and site inspection, including equipment and modelling used where relevant;</p> <p>3.1.5 a description of the mean density of observations/number of sample sites per unit area<sup>12</sup> and the site inspection observations;</p> <p>3.1.6 a description of the assumptions made and any uncertainties or gaps in knowledge or data;</p> <p>3.1.7 details of all SCC found or suspected to occur on site, ensuring sensitive species are appropriately reported;</p> <p>3.1.8 the online database name, hyperlink and record accession numbers for disseminated evidence of SCC found within the study area;</p> <p>3.1.9 the location of areas not suitable for development and to be avoided during construction where relevant;</p> <p>3.1.10 a discussion on the cumulative impacts;</p> <p>3.1.11 impact management actions and impact management outcomes proposed by the specialist for inclusion in the Environmental Management Programme (EMPr);</p> <p>3.1.12 a reasoned opinion, based on the findings of the specialist assessment, regarding the acceptability or not of the development and if the development should receive approval or not, related to the specific theme being considered, and any conditions to which the opinion is subjected if relevant; and</p> <p>3.1.13 a motivation must be provided if there were any development footprints identified as per paragraph 2.2.12 above that were identified as having “low” or “medium” terrestrial animal species sensitivity and were not considered appropriate.</p> <p>3.2 A signed copy of the assessment must be appended to the Basic Assessment Report or Environmental Impact Assessment Report.</p>
<p><b>MEDIUM SENSITIVITY RATING</b> – for terrestrial animal species:</p> <p>1. Suspected habitat for SCC based either on historical records (prior to 2002) or</p>	<p><b>4. Medium Sensitivity Species of Conservation Concern Confirmation</b></p> <p>4.1 Medium sensitivity data represents suspected habitat for SCC based on occurrence records for these species collected prior to 2002 or is based on habitat suitability modelling.</p> <p>4.2 The presence or likely presence of the SCC identified by the screening tool must be investigated through a site inspection by a specialist registered with the</p>

<sup>11</sup> The actual name of the sensitive species may not appear in the final EIA report nor any of the specialist reports released into the public domain. It should be referred to as a sensitive plant or animal and its IUCN extinction risk category should be included e.g. Critically Endangered sensitive plant or Endangered sensitive butterfly.

<sup>12</sup> Species Environmental Assessment Guideline

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<p>being a natural area included in a habitat suitability model for this species<sup>13</sup>.</p> <p>2. SCC listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species or South Africa's National Red List website as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable according the IUCN Red List 3.1. Categories and Criteria and under the national category of Rare.</p>	<p>SACNASP with a field of practice relevant to the taxonomic groups ("taxa") for which the assessment is being undertaken.</p> <p>4.3 The assessment must be undertaken within the study area.</p> <p>4.4 The site inspection to determine the presence or likely presence of SCC must be undertaken in accordance with the <i>Species Environmental Assessment Guidelines</i>.</p> <p>4.5 The site inspection is to confirm the presence, likely presence or confirmed absence of a SCC identified within the site identified as "medium" sensitivity by the screening tool.</p> <p>4.6 Where SCC are found on site or have been confirmed to be likely present, a <b>Terrestrial Animal Species Specialist Assessment</b> must be submitted in accordance with the requirements specified for "very high" and "high" sensitivity in this protocol.</p> <p>4.7 Similarly, where no SCC are found on site during the site inspection or the presence is confirmed to be unlikely, a <b>Terrestrial Animal Species Compliance Statement</b> must be submitted.</p>
<p><b>LOW SENSITIVITY RATING</b> – for terrestrial animal species:</p> <p>1. Areas where no natural habitat remains.</p> <p>2. Natural areas where there is no suspected occurrence of SCC.</p>	<p><b>5. Terrestrial Animal Species Compliance Statement</b></p> <p>5.1 The compliance statement must be prepared by a SACNASP registered specialist under one of the two fields of practice (Zoological Science or Ecological Science).</p> <p>5.2 The compliance statement must:</p> <p>5.2.1 be applicable to the study area;</p> <p>5.2.2 confirm that the study area, is of "low" sensitivity for terrestrial animal species; and</p> <p>5.2.3 indicate whether or not the proposed development will have any impact on SCC.</p> <p>5.3 The compliance statement<sup>14</sup> must contain, as a minimum, the following information:</p> <p>5.3.1 contact details and relevant experience as well as the SACNASP registration number of the specialist preparing the compliance statement including a curriculum vitae;</p> <p>5.3.2 a signed statement of independence by the specialist;</p> <p>5.3.3 a statement on the duration, date and season of the site inspection and the relevance of the season to the outcome of the assessment;</p> <p>5.3.4 a description of the methodology used to undertake the site survey and prepare the compliance statement, including equipment and modelling used where relevant;</p> <p>5.3.5 the mean density of observations/ number of samples sites per unit area<sup>15</sup>.</p> <p>5.3.6 where required, proposed impact management actions and outcomes or any monitoring requirements for inclusion in the EMP;</p>

<sup>13</sup> The methodology by which habitat suitability models have been developed are explained within the Species Environmental Assessment Guideline

<sup>14</sup> An example of a what is contained in a Compliance Statement for Animal Species Impact Assessment can be found in the Species Environmental Impact Assessment Guideline

<sup>15</sup> Refer to the Species Environmental Assessment Guideline

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	5.3.7 a description of the assumptions made and any uncertainties or gaps in knowledge or data; and
	5.3.8 any conditions to which the compliance statement is subjected.
	6. A signed copy of the <b>Terrestrial Animal Species Compliance Statement</b> must be appended to the Basic Assessment Report or the Environmental Impact Assessment Report.