

INGULA - PARTNERING FOR CONSERVATION

Ingula is situated 55km from Ladysmith (20km northeast of Van Reenen's Pass), within the Drakensberg range, on the border between the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal.

Ingula is Eskom's third pumped storage scheme with an output of 1332MW used during peak-demand periods. The station is fully operational, with the last of its four units going on-line on 30 January 2017.

The environmental impact assessment (EIA) process attracted a number of objections based on the presence of high altitude wetlands that would provide the site for the upper and lower dams. It is also one of only nine known sites in South Africa where the critically endangered White-winged Flufftail (*Sarothrura ayresii*) is found.

One of the conditions specified by government, before the project could be constructed, was that Eskom had to purchase eight thousand hectares around the project, and manage it as a conservation area to compensate for possible damage to the environment. The mitigation measures put forward by Eskom resulted in the withdrawal of the objections.

Companies around the world have begun to recognise the value of addressing environmental concerns through positive discussion and the formation of sound environmental relationships with organisation leaders in respective environmental fields. Eskom formed The Ingula Partnership with conservation NGOs BirdLife South Africa and Middelpunt Wetland Trust. It became apparent that such a partnership could add immense value to the conservation of a very important biome, ensuring the protection of the critically endangered White-winged Flufftail, Wattled Crane, Southern Bald Ibis and other endangered species, and the habitat in which they exist. More than 3400 bird species have been sighted at Ingula.

The Ingula Partnership



**Middelpunt
Wetland
Trust**



The Ingula Partnership is an excellent example of how collaboration between two conservation NGOs and a corporate body. The Partnership is based on mutual trust and respect, which allows for considerable assurance and transparency on all related environmental matters. Since conservation is not Eskom's core business the input from various conservation specialists, provincial government departments and our partners has been invaluable in setting the foundation for a remarkable conservation achievement.



Critically endangered: Wattled Crane and White-winged Flufftail

In 2018 the area surrounding the Ingula Pumped Storage Scheme was declared a nature reserve and will now offer long-term protection to the important grasslands and wetlands which initially sparked this unlikely alliance. In recognition of the custodianship shown and the subsequent conservation success which has arisen from it,



The Ingula Partnership was declared the winner of the Stewardship category of the 2019 South African Wetland Awards on 10 October 2019.

Eskom's aspiration is that this site will form the core of a much larger conservation area and that in future, surrounding landowners will use this area for ecotourism related activities and enhance the biodiversity of their land. If this anticipated growth is achieved there would be added socio-economic benefits for the communities in the area.

The purpose of the Ingula Partnership is as follows:

- To ensure integration of environmental factors into the planning and implementation phases of the project
- To investigate the value of social, economic and environmental values of the area to users, and to measure the impact of the project on users.
- To effectively monitor and manage environmental impacts relevant to the partnership at the site, before, during and post construction.
- To initiate and monitor appropriate environmental projects.



Ingula Visitors Centre

Vulnerable: *Southern Bald Ibis*

Guided tours are conducted from the Visitors Centre during weekdays. Presentations can also be given off-site. and online via MS Teams. Booking in advance is essential. Contact: Tel. 036 342 3236 Email: ingulavisitorscentre@eskom.co.za

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For more information on Eskom related topics see the Eskom website (www.eskom.co.za).
Select "About electricity" and "Visitors Centres" (<http://www.eskom.co.za/c/article/54/ingula-pumped-storage-scheme/>)