Title South Africa is flooding, and the extent of destruction in some areas is unprecedented. Lives have been lost, families uprooted and livelihoods destroyed. The money required to repair the devastation runs into millions of Rand. It would be fair to question why BirdLife South Africa is promoting the celebration of World Wetlands Day with the link between wetlands and water during these trying times. Wetlands are very important components of ecosystems that support many life forms on earth. World Wetlands Day is an annual event on the Ramsar Convention?s calendar, and is celebrated internationally on the 2nd of February every year. This year?s theme of Wetlands and Forests is linked to the United Nations (UN) International Year of Forests. According to the Ramsar Secretariat?s World Wetlands Day 2011 leaflet, forests provide a whole range of benefits for people, including watershed and local flood control, protection from wind and soil erosion, air pollution filtering and storm protection in coastal areas. Wetlands provide important ecosystem services including water catchment, flood control, groundwater replenishment, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, to mention but a few. During extended periods of heavy rainfall, wetlands? important role is absorbing the water and slowing the flow to rivers. This important characteristic is somehow forgotten when a wetland represents an obstacle to development and is simply drained to make way for a new building or mine. The groundwater replenishment capacity of many wetlands is also being nullified by the impact of mining and other unsustainable activities that lead to pollution of these important ecosystems, and this has far reaching consequences. According to Carolyn Ah Shene-Verdoorn, Policy & Advocacy Manager for BirdLife South Africa, ?the importance of wetlands must be disseminated as far and as widely as possible, and importantly needs to include government to ensure that better informed decisions are made when considering development applications?. ?Uncontaminated water is required for basic human survival and to support all other living organisms in the environment. We do recognise that economic growth and job creation is very important in the South Africa, but it needs to be sustainable with due regard to the short-, medium- and long-term impact on our water resources?, says Ah Shene-Verdoorn. Limited clean water supply equals limited water security and threatens everything from health and food security, to energy production and other industries dependant on clean water. Wetlands play a critical role in the supply of this water requirement. South Africa currently has 20 Ramsar sites, 19 of which are Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The protection of the IBAs, along with the bird species dependant on them is a top priority for BirdLife South Africa. This is more so with the IBAs that are also Ramsar sites. BirdLife South Africa will continue offering support to the national Department of Environmental Affairs in the administration of the Ramsar in South Africa, as well as to the management authorities responsible for the management of the sites. Creating an awareness amongst all South Africans, especially children, about the importance of wetlands is also a priority for BirdLife South Africa, and this commitment will ensure that the annual World Wetlands Day celebrations forms part of the BirdLife South Africa annual calendar of activities for a very long time.