

## 9. Verlorenvlei

**Geographical Coordinates** 32°24'S 18°26'E

**Area** 1,700ha

**Location** Between the towns of Eland's Bay and Redelinghuys, about 12km north-west of the town of Redelinghuys, on the western shore of Cape province, south-western South Africa.

**Date of Ramsar Designation** 28 June 1991.

**Other International Designations** None.

**National Designations** None.

**Principal Features** One of the largest, oligotrophic lakes along the west coast of South Africa (and one of the country's few coastal freshwater lakes), with associated fynbos scrub, karroid shrubland, dune systems, marshland and extensive reed beds (dominated by *Phragmites australis* and *Typha latifolia*). The submergent vegetation includes extensive beds of *Myriophyllum spicatum*. Water depth averages 2-3m (pH 6.7-9.6), but levels fall in summer, resulting in temporary mesotrophic conditions. A sand bar isolates the lake from the Atlantic Ocean, but occasional intrusions of sea water occur. The lake is fed mainly with fresh water, from the river Verlorenvlei and from ground-water seepage. The zooplankton is dominated by Copepoda, notably the abundant estuarine species *Pseudodiaptomus hessei* and the fresh water species *Diaptomus purcelli*. The site is an important staging area for wading birds, and an important feeding area for the rare *Pelecanus onocrotalus* (212<sup>\*</sup>). During dry periods large numbers of flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber roseus* and *P. minor* may occur. Breeding birds include *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, *Podiceps cristatus*, *Phalacrocorax carbo*, *P. capensis*, *Anhinga melanogaster*, *Bubulcus ibis*, *Platalea alba*, *Alopochen aegyptiacus*, *Tadorna cana*, *Anas capensis*, *A. smithii*, *Fulica cristata*, *Haematopus moquini*, *Vanellus armatus*, *V. coronatus*, *Charadrius pecuarius*, *Gallinago nigripennis* and *Sterna bergii*. The site is an important moulting area for *Alopochen aegyptiacus*, *Anas undulata* and *A. smithii*. Notable fish include the rare species *Barbus burgii*, which occurs in the river Verlorenvlei. Botanically, the site is an ecotone between the karroid and fynbos vegetation types, and supports a diverse flora. Notable plant species include *Ferraria foliosa*, *F. densepunctulata* and *Cullumia floccosa*. (1a,2a,2b,2c,3b)

<sup>\*</sup>Figure refers to March 1982.

**Conservation Issues** The lake is State owned, whilst the surrounding farmland is privately owned. There is no over all management authority or specific management plan for the site. About 3ha of *Phragmites australis* are cut each year for use in sand stabilization schemes. Water is pumped from several areas of the lake for irrigation purposes, and the marshland is used for cattle grazing. Potential threats include increasing water abstraction, agricultural intensification and recreational developments. Motor boats above 5 horsepower are prohibited. The introduced fish *Cyprinus carpio*, *Oreochromis mossambica*, *Tinca tinca* and *Tilapia sparrmannii* occur in the lake.