

### 3. De Mond (Heuningnes Estuary)

**Geographical Coordinates** 34°43'S 20°07'E

**Area** 918ha

**Location** About 25km south of the town of Bredasdorp, in the south-west of Cape Province, south-west Republic of South Africa.

**Date of Ramsar Designation** 2 October 1986.

**Other International Designations** None.

**National Designations** Nature Reserve (De Mond, 918ha).

**Principal Features** A 6.5km section of Indian Ocean coast, embracing the Heuningnes Estuary and associated sand dune systems and salt marsh. The landward part of the site is surrounded by agricultural land. The area is important for breeding birds, including\* *Plectropterus gambensis*, *Anthropoides paradisea*, *Haematopus moquini*, *Charadrius pecuarius*, *Larus dominicanus* (300 pairs), *Sterna caspia*, *S. balaenarum* (5-7 pairs), *Ceryle rudis* and *Prinia maculosa*. A minimum of 30 *Sterna balaenarum* use the estuary as a feeding area. The site is seasonally important for locally migrant water birds, including *Bubulcus ibis* and *Threskiornis aethiopicus*. Wintering and staging birds include *Calidris minuta*, *C. ferruginea* and *Philomachus pugnax*. Notable aquatic invertebrates include the crustaceans *Scylla serrata* and *Penaeus japonicus*, and the gastropod *Nerita albicilla*. Reptiles include *Bradypodion pumilum*, while *Tatera afra* and *Proteles cristatus* are amongst the mammals present. The occurrence of the sea horse *Hippocampus* is noteworthy. (1a,2a,2b,2c,2d,3b)

\*Figures quoted in literature provided by the South African authorities in 1992.

**Conservation Issues** State owned. Fishing and public access are controlled. Populations of the marine annelid *Arenicola loveni* have decreased in the estuary due to over-collection for fishing bait. The Heuningnes Estuary is becoming isolated from the sea by shifting sand dunes. However, the mouth of the estuary has been kept open by artificial means since 1976, mainly to prevent the flooding of agricultural land. This has been achieved by stabilizing sand dunes on either side of the estuary by planting with the introduced grass *Ammophila arenaria*, which is later succeeded by native vegetation. Threats to the site include pollution from oil and pesticides, input of nutrients from agricultural land, and erosion of the sand dunes and disturbance to wildlife caused by the recreational use of motorcycles and dune-buggies.