The Status and Distribution of Freshwater Biodiversity in Southern Africa

Trapa natans L. © William Darwall

Southern Africa's wetlands are amongst the most diverse both physically and biologically of any in the world.

Of the 1,285 species assessed at the regional scale, just over 7% are regionally threatened. When compared with the global level of threat to those taxonomic groups which have been comprehensively assessed (e.g. birds, 12% threatened; amphibians 32% threatened; mammals, 23% threatened), this figure appears relatively low. This relatively low level of threat is most likely a reflection of the current low level of development throughout the region. The exception is South Africa where development has been more extensive and this is reflected in the higher numbers ed (e.g. b62( )1(l)-5(ev)7(el)-5( )15s ed (ichigher nuw wow 8

is therefore expected that the overall status of southern Africa's freshwater biodiversity will worsen as development pressures on natural resources increase. Indications from other more developed parts of the world are that the impact on freshwater ecosystems and their associated biodiversity will increase as development proceeds. In the Mediterranean basin, for example, the level of threat to freshwater species is extremely high (e.g. 59% of endemic