



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Embargo: immediate**

### **Put the BIG into Birding Big Day**

**Johannesburg, 11 September 2012:** The annual Birding Big Day is an important event on BirdLife South Africa's calendar. It is a fun, yet competitive day for South Africa's bird-watchers, both beginners and competitive twitchers alike. The event raises awareness about birds, allows for the collection of data, while at the same time raising much needed funds for the organisation's important bird conservation and monitoring work. The 28<sup>th</sup> BirdLife South Africa Birding Big Day runs for a 24-hour period (midnight to midnight) on Saturday 24 November 2012

Conservation of birds and their habitats is the primary reason for BirdLife South Africa's existence. While BirdLife South Africa engages in, promotes and supports other activities, such as birding tourism and education work, everything is geared towards achieving critically important bird conservation goals. Serious birders can take part in the Open Category, a competitive category where birders attempt to see as many bird species as possible in a predefined area", says Mark Anderson, Chief Executive Officer of BirdLife South Africa. "Participation in the Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2 (SABAP2) is also encouraged as this information is used to map the distribution of birds and is useful for conservation planning and climate change studies. Birders must follow the Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2 protocol ([www.sabap2.org](http://www.sabap2.org)) and need to be registered atlasers, with Animal Demography Unit observer numbers.

For backyard or beginner birders, the prospect of birding for 24 hours may be a bit daunting. The Garden Birder category is ideal for the ever-increasing number of backyard birders interested in this fantastic pastime, which is available for everyone to enjoy. So, as we head into late spring and early summer, when our gardens are reawakening after the frosty winters, gardeners, their friends and their family are encouraged to take part and experience the joy of garden birds. The information can be submitted online through the MyBirdPatch project.

This year, a portion of funds raised during Birding Big Day will go towards BirdLife South Africa's Secretarybird project and the Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2.

The Top 3 teams in each category will receive certificates of recognition and Birding Big Day cloth badges will be issued to the members of teams who raise R250 and more in sponsorship or donations to BirdLife South Africa. Besides being part of this popular birding event and doing their bit by keeping track of birding data for conservation, teams and individuals who raise R250 or more will be eligible for the lucky draw. Prizes include weekend getaways, books, bird feeders and much more.

Birders should not feel intimidated and think that one needs to get large species lists or raise big sponsorship. The emphasis is on the fun aspect, the BIG in Birding Big Day. The BIG is all about getting many South Africans excited about watching birds and enjoying the birds around them. BirdLife South Africa wants BIG participation - beginners, backyard birders and twitchers alike.

More information on how to enter BirdLife South Africa's Birding Big Day, a full list of prizes and sponsors, and the entry form is available at [www.birdlife.org.za](http://www.birdlife.org.za). Although bird lists can be submitted in any format, the official BirdLife South Africa checklists (in both English and Afrikaans) are available for download from the website. More information, the entry form and checklists are also available from BirdLife South Africa (011-789-1102, [info@birdlife.org.za](mailto:info@birdlife.org.za)).

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**For further information, please contact:** Nikki McCartney, +27 (0)83 636 1060 (mobile) or email: [events@birdlife.org.za](mailto:events@birdlife.org.za)

**Notes for the editor:**

1. The mission of BirdLife South Africa is to promote the enjoyment, conservation, study and understanding of wild birds and their habitats.
2. BirdLife South Africa is the country partner of BirdLife International, a global alliance of 117 Partners who promote sustainable living as a means to conserve biodiversity
3. BirdLife South Africa contact details: Lewis House, 239 Barkston Drive, Blairgowrie, P.O. Box 515, Randburg, Johannesburg, South Africa, Tel. +27-11-7891122, Fax. +27-11-7895188, e-mail address: [info@birdlife.org.za](mailto:info@birdlife.org.za), website: [www.birdlife.org.za](http://www.birdlife.org.za)