



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Birding Big Day 2016

South African birdwatching record attempt

Johannesburg, 12 November 2016

A remarkable 847 bird species occur in South Africa, which is about 9% of the world's birds. On 26 November, during BirdLife South Africa's 32nd annual Birding Big Day (BBD), teams of birders will attempt to see as many of these bird species as possible in a 24 hour period. The South African record for such an effort is 606 bird species.

Individual teams will also attempt to break the record for the number of bird species seen by an individual team in 24 hours. The current record, established in 2008, was made by team Zonke Inyoni, and they saw 325 species in 24 hours.

BBD is however much more than an attempt to break records; it is also a day when hundreds of birders will celebrate the wonderful bird diversity we have in our country. This annual event is also used to raise valuable funds for BirdLife South Africa's conservation work. BirdLife South Africa is an organisation dedicated to the conservation of birds in South Africa, especially the species which are threatened with extinction.

In 2016, BirdLife South Africa will also showcase BirdLasser. This exciting mobile app is used by hundreds of birders every day to log their bird sightings. The progress of the teams on BBD will be available live on an interactive map. Progress during the day will be published on social media and communicated to the public on radio. Members of the public are invited to follow the progress of teams on this interactive online map <http://www.birdlasser.com/events/bbd2016>

It is anticipated that up to 150 teams will participate in this year's BBD. Each team consists of up to 4 birders, and this means that about 600 birders will crisscross the country to record as many species as possible in the 24 hour period. Some teams even going out to do so at sea!

Birders, from beginners to experienced birders, are invited to participate. Birders need to register beforehand and also download the mobile app BirdLasser.

For more information about the event see <http://www.birdlife.org.za/events/birding-big-day> or on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/events/179752395770520/>

The link to the interactive map is <http://www.birdlasser.com/events/bbd2016> - the date will be reset on the day – the current map show test data.

For more information about BirdLasser see www.birdlasser.com and to download and install the app search for "birdlasser" on the Google Playstore and the App Store.

QUOTES

Mark Anderson, CEO for BirdLife South Africa: Birdwatching is one of the world's most popular pastimes. In South Africa the economic value of birdwatching is more than R1 billion per annum. Importantly, it is growing. BirdLife South Africa's main goal is to conserve birds and their habitats, and Birding Big Day contributes indirectly to these conservation goals. Awareness is created about birds and their conservation, and funds are raised for BirdLife South Africa's important conservation work.

Henk Nel/Will Harris: BirdLasser is extremely proud to be associated with Birding Big Day 2016. Together with hundreds of birders, we are excited to affirm the wonderful bird diversity we enjoy in South Africa. BirdLasser is committed to providing a tool which aims to make the collection of bird distribution data as easy as possible and recently celebrated our 2 millionth sighting, with 3 million scheduled for February 2017. Birds are the finest indicators of the state of nature, and this high quality information is of enormous value to conservationists. This uniquely South African miracle is making a huge difference, and is fun! So please get out into nature this BBD2016, and spot, plot and play a part.

ENDS

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About BirdLife South Africa

- BirdLife South Africa is the local country partner of BirdLife International. BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership with more than 120 BirdLife Partners worldwide and almost 11 million supporters.
- BirdLife South Africa is the largest non-profit bird conservation organization in the country. It relies on donor funding and financial support from the public to carry out its critical conservation work.
- Vision. BirdLife South Africa wishes to see a country and region where nature and people live in greater harmony, more equitably and sustainably.
- Mission. BirdLife South Africa strives to conserve birds, their habitats and biodiversity through scientifically-based programmes, through supporting the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources and through encouraging people to enjoy and value nature.
- Birds are important environmental indicators, the proverbial "canaries in the coal mine". By focusing on birds, and the sites and the habitats on which they depend, BirdLife South Africa's Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas Programme aims to improve the quality of life for birds, for other wildlife, and ultimately for people.
- For more information, visit www.birdlife.org.za

About BirdLasser

- BirdLasser is a real time mobile app which allows birders to log their sightings of birds seen while in the field. The name of the bird is recorded by the user, while the date, time and exact co-ordinates is added automatically.
- The data are used for citizen science projects such as the Southern African Bird Atlas project and also in support of many conservation causes.
- For more information see www.birdlasser.com
- BirdLasser's main objective is to share your observation data with conservationists and researchers to better understand bird behaviour and distribution, providing a valuable "temperature" of the state of the environment.
- BirdLasser strives to use technology for good, by bringing more people to nature, and nurturing human communities focused on making a difference.

