



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Birding Big Day 2016

South African birdwatching record smashed!

Johannesburg, 1 December 2016

On 26 November 2016, BirdLife South Africa hosted its 32nd annual Birding Big Day (BBD). During this BBD, teams of birdwatchers attempted to see as many of South Africa's bird species as possible in a 24-hour-period. This annual event is also used to raise much-needed funds for BirdLife South Africa's conservation work. BirdLife South Africa is an organisation dedicated to the conservation of our country's birds, especially the species which are threatened with extinction.

The previous record, during BBD 2015, saw 606 bird species being recorded in South Africa. This record was smashed during BBD 2016 when 654 birds were seen! This is 77.2% of the 847 bird species which have been recorded in South Africa. This amazing achievement is due to the effort of 810 birders who participated in 265 teams. Each team can consist of up to four birders. In total 32 290 bird sightings were recorded during the day. Each team logged the birds seen on BirdLasser, a mobile app, and the sightings were uploaded to an online map where people could view the progress of teams.

Just over 60 additional teams participated in a more informal way, and this means that about 1 000 birders participated in BBD 2016.

The most common species recorded were Hadedda Ibis, Egyptian Goose, Cape Turtle Dove, Blacksmith Lapwing and Laughing Dove.

The team record of 325 species, set in 2008 by team Zonke Inyoni, was equalled by the same team; an amazing achievement! This total was achieved despite some bad weather experienced in the morning. The second team was Team Hamerkop who saw 305 species. Wat-Kyk-Jy recorded 282 species.

Not only was the South African record broken during BBD 2016, but it will also be remembered for many other successes. Awareness was raised about bird conservation, over 300 birders downloaded the BirdLasser app, and it is hoped that many of them will soon contribute valuable data to citizen science projects such as the Southern African Bird Atlas Project. Above all, the day was about celebrating the wonderful bird diversity we have in our country.

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>

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 D. Anderson, CEO of BirdLife South Africa:

BirdLife South Africa is very appreciative of all the support it received during this year’s Birding Big Day. Awareness was created about birds, funds were raised for bird conservation, and birdwatchers spent an enjoyable day watching our country’s birds.

Henk Nel/Will Harris: BirdLasser would like to thank the more than 800 birders and their supporters who made BBD2016 such a massive success. During the lead-up to this event, more than 1 300 people downloaded the app and it is our hope that many of these people will keep on birding and contributing their data to conservation.

ENDS

For more information:

Ernst Retief

BirdLife South Africa

082 325 6608 or ernst.retief@birdlife.org.za

Henk Nel

BirdLasser

083 400 6091 or henk@birdlasser.com

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.

