



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate use:

BirdLife International Global Red List update for birds: what it means for South Africa:

Johannesburg, 25 July 2014: BirdLife International, the custodian of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Bird Species, has recently completed a review of the conservation status of the world's bird species. According to Dr Stuart Butchart, BirdLife's Head of Science, "the 2014 Global Red List is crucial not only for helping to identify those species needing targeted recovery efforts, but also for focusing the conservation agenda by identifying the key sites and habitats that need to be saved, including Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas".

This review is unique from previous years as it included the first of a two-part comprehensive taxonomic review focusing on non-passerines including raptors, seabirds, waterbirds and owls leading to the recognition and addition of 361 new species to the global bird species list. Previously, these birds were treated as subspecies or races of other forms. This revision has seen the number of non-passerines rise to 4 472, a 10% increase from previous years. "Put another way, one tenth of the world's bird species have been flying below the conservation radar", said Dr Stuart Butchart.

The new criteria for determining which taxa qualify as species has enlarged the scope of BirdLife International's conservation focus and brings an added precision to identifying places most important for birds, nature and people; the areas of the planet that we need to urgently protect and save. It is of concern that more than 25% of these newly recognised birds have been listed as threatened on the IUCN Red List, compared with 13% of all birds, making them urgent priorities for conservation action.

Nine species occurring in South Africa are included in the taxonomic splits recognised by BirdLife International, although the majority of these were inconsequential in terms of Red listing processes. Of interest to South African conservation organisations is that Hottentot Buttonquail *Turnix hottentottus*, one of the newly recognised species, is now listed as globally Endangered.

BirdLife South Africa currently utilises the BirdLife South Africa 2014 checklist, based upon the global checklist provided by the International Ornithologist's Union (IOU), as the basis for its Red List process, resulting in discrepancies between the two organisations. For instance, BirdLife International does not recognise the Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* as a separate species. This parrot is recognised by BirdLife South Africa and, following the precautionary approach, has been included at Endangered in the 2014 Regional Red List for South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland.

As well as assessing newly recognised species, the 2014 global Red List also re-assesses the status of some existing species. Thanks to successful conservation efforts, the Bearded Vulture *Gypaetus barbatus*, a regionally Critically Endangered bird, is recovering in Europe, but globally it is declining because of poisoning, disturbance and collisions with powerlines, resulting in it being uplisted to globally Near Threatened. The Taita Falcon *Falco fasciinucha*, another regionally Critically Endangered species and one of the species on which BirdLife South Africa focuses its research and conservation efforts, has been uplisted to globally Vulnerable.

The 2014 global assessment also raises the importance of several threatened bird hotspots. Many of the newly recognised species are found in South-East Asia, where biodiversity is highly threatened. Parts of this region have already been identified as globally important areas of endemism (holding many species that occur nowhere else on Earth). These areas need immediate conservation attention to protect the remaining habitat and safeguard the future of Critically Endangered birds.

The *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*TM (or the IUCN Red List) is the world's most comprehensive information source on the global conservation status of plant and animal species and the updated 2014 Global Red List for birds will help set future conservation and funding priorities.

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Notes for Editors

1.) Total number of species recognised by BirdLife in the 2014 Red List update is 10 425. Number of species by category as follows: Extinct 140; Extinct in the Wild 4; Critically Endangered 213;

Endangered 419; Vulnerable 741; Near Threatened 959; Least Concern 7 886; Data Deficient 62. To find out more about threatened birds visit <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/sowb/spotthreatbirds>

2.) BirdLife South Africa is the local country partner of BirdLife International. BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership with 120 BirdLife Partners worldwide and growing, with almost 11 million supporters, 7 000 local conservation groups and 7 400 staff. Find out more at www.birdlife.org/ www.facebook.com/BirdLifeInternational

3.) The taxonomic review involved an examination of published research and museum collections, and looked at the distinctiveness of bird populations by comparing characteristics such as plumage, measurements (biometrics) and songs. The review is based on: Tobias J.A., Seddon, N., Spottiswoode C.N., Pilgrim J.D., Fishpool, L.D.C. & Collar N.J. 2010. Quantitative criteria for species delimitation Ibis, doi: 10.1111/j.1474-919X.2010.01051.x

4.) The BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme is counteracting an increasingly diverse array of threats to birds by delivering conservation action, underpinned by science, where it is most needed. <http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/programmes/preventing-extinctions>
BirdLife is the Red List Authority for birds for the IUCN Red List.

5.) The HBW and BirdLife International *Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World* will be published in August. For more details go to <http://www.lynxeds.com/product/hbw-and-birdlife-international-illustrated-checklist-birds-world>

6.) Species are assigned to one of eight IUCN Red List categories of threat based on whether they meet criteria linked to population trend, population size and structure, and geographic range. Categories include: Critically Endangered (facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild), Endangered (facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild), Vulnerable (facing a high risk of extinction in the wild), Near Threatened (close to qualifying for Vulnerable) and Least Concern (species not qualifying for the other categories, including widespread and abundant species). Species are assigned to categories using criteria with quantitative thresholds for population size, population trend, range size and other parameters. For more information visit: <http://www.iucnredlist.org>. Species listed as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable are collectively described as 'Threatened'.

7.) The IUCN Red List is a joint effort between IUCN and its Species Survival Commission, working with its Red List partners: BirdLife International; Botanic Gardens Conservation International; Conservation International; Microsoft, NatureServe; Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Sapienza University of Rome; Texas A&M University; Wildscreen; and Zoological Society of London.

IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges by supporting scientific research; managing field projects all over the world; and bringing governments, NGOs, the UN, international conventions and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. www.iucn.org.

8.) The vision of BirdLife South Africa is to promote the conservation, research, understanding, observation and enjoyment of natural birds and their habitats. BirdLife South Africa is the largest non-profit bird conservation organisation in the country, and relies on donor funding and financial support from the public to carry out its critical conservation work. For more information, visit www.birdlife.org.za.

For all the changes, see: <http://www.birdlife.org/globally-threatened-bird-forums/>