



## **World Migratory Bird Day, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> May**

### **BirdLife South Africa calls on signatories of the United Nations Convention on Migratory Species to ban lead shot.**

This weekend sees the annual World Migratory Bird Day being celebrated around the world on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> of May.

Migratory birds represent an unusually tough conservation dilemma because they range across vast areas of the earth's surface, meaning that for a conservation plan to be successful, it often needs to include the cooperation of a number of different organisations and governments. Furthermore, the large trips that these birds make expose them to a wide range of threats, from natural predation and adverse weather, to manmade threats like windfarms, exposure to poisons and pesticides, and habitat destruction.

Birds that may be well protected at either end of their journey are often exposed to the dangers of unregulated or illegal hunting between their winter and summer roosts. Even hunting that is well regulated and sustainable may still end up having a negative impact on birds through lead poisoning.

Sport hunters of waterbirds typically employ lead shot to bring down their targets. Over time, wetlands where regular hunting takes place see a build up of lead in the ecosystem, gradually poisoning all manner of species, even those not intended as the targets of hunting in the first place. Lead poisoning is seen mostly in wildfowl and raptors.

To this end, scientists working with the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP)'s Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) have called on the world's nations to take decisive action in banning lead shot from use where its accumulation could result in the poisoning of non-target species. This proposal, in which BirdLife South Africa's umbrella body, BirdLife International had a key hand drafting, calls on all signatories to the CMS to agree to the banning of lead ammunition by sport hunters.

This call is included in a proposal that will be tabled before the CMS Scientific Council in Bonn, Germany in July and thereafter, hopefully adopted at the CMS Conference of the Parties (COP) when they meet in November in Quito, Ecuador.

BirdLife South Africa supports this call for a ban on lead shot and looks forward to working with our partners in the hunting fraternity in southern Africa to ensure the sustainability of our migratory bird species for generations to come.

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**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. BirdLife South Africa is the largest non-profit bird conservation organization in the country.
2. 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)
3. World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) was initiated in 2006 and is an annual awareness-raising campaign highlighting the need for the protection of migratory birds and their habitats. On the second weekend each May, people around the world take action and organize public events such as bird festivals, education programmes and birdwatching excursions to celebrate WMBD (<http://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org/2014/>).
4. The Southern African Wingshooters Association ([www.wingshooters.org.za](http://www.wingshooters.org.za)) support the call for the replacement of lead shot with the more environmentally friendly bismuth shot, although they do not necessarily endorse the view that lead poisoning from shot poses a threat to birdlife.
5. Royalty-free images available on request