



MEDIA RELEASE

NEW BIRD SPECIES DISCOVERED IN SOUTH AFRICA Beautiful new bird species causes flutter in birding community.

Johannesburg, 29 August 2015 – This past week a striking new bird species was discovered near Mapungubwe, South Africa. It is believed that this bird has been overlooked by ornithologists because it has a very small population, occurs in remote parts of the country, and is perhaps secretive in its habits. It is an impressive-looking bird, and the fact that it has until now evaded detection has surprised the experts. Researchers believe this bird fills an important ecological niche.

The striking species was spotted and photographed on a five-day ornithological expedition to the Mapungubwe region in the Limpopo Province. The bird was reportedly first sighted in 2013 in the Tuli Block, Botswana, and until now subsequent surveys have not recorded any sightings of the species. It has subsequently been named the 'Tuluver', and its scientific name will be revealed in an article in a prestigious ornithological journal.

The eye-catching bird has been described by the birding community as 'beautiful', owing to its striking size, brightly-coloured plumage, and a crown of feathers protruding from its head.

Based on initial findings, it appears that the Tuluver is an important ecological lynchpin. "From the shape of its beak, we can determine that this is a scavenging species and that it feeds on disease-carrying carrion in the arid parts of southern Africa," says Mark D. Anderson, CEO of BirdLife South Africa. "If these Tuluvers were not feeding on these carcasses, it could otherwise lead to the spread of diseases such as anthrax, botulism and rabies, at significant human and economic cost," explains Anderson.

Unfortunately, although its existence has only just been confirmed, the Tuluver is already being listed as an endangered species owing to preliminary estimates of its population size. This could be attributed to long breeding cycles with only one egg per clutch.

BirdLife South Africa is currently conducting further investigations to understand more about this rare and enchanting species and how to conserve it.

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BirdLife South Africa is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the conservation of birds and their habitats. BirdLife South Africa is a member of BirdLife International, the world's largest conservation partnership. See www.birdlife.org.za

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