



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate use

Movements of a Secretarybird tracked for more than two years!

Johannesburg, 16 April 2015: Taemane, a Secretarybird tracked with a sophisticated satellite tracking device, became the first Secretarybird ever to be tracked for more than two years. The information obtained from this bird will be of immense value to conservationists in their work to conserve the globally *Vulnerable* Secretarybird.

Ernst Retief, one of BirdLife South Africa's Regional Conservation Managers, reported that the bird, a male, was fitted with a tracking device on 5 April 2013 on a farm near Warden in the Free State. The bird was estimated to be about 49 days old at the time. He left his nest on 7 April and remained in the area of the nest until 30 July when he was about 114 days old. Taemane then visited various parts of the Free State before moving south to the KwaZulu-Natal south coast, before moving inland and settled for a few months on a farm near Ixopo. From there he moved back to the Free State where he then continued to spend time in the grasslands south of Memel.

Since the tracking device was fitted to Taemane, more than 9 000 location points, each accurate to within 10 meters, have been obtained. Dr Hanneline Smit-Robinson, Terrestrial Bird Conservation Manager at BirdLife South Africa, stated that the data, together with the data received from tracking devices fitted to ten other Secretarybirds, will allow researchers to better understand the movement patterns and habitats used by this species. Even though the project is still in the data collection phase, valuable discoveries have already been made. The data show that most of the immature birds moved long distances from their nest site and then returned to their natal areas a few months later. Ernst Retief commented that BirdLife South Africa hope to receive tracking data from these birds for many years to come. The information will contribute to the conservation of the Secretarybird.

BirdLife South Africa is grateful to E. Oppenheimer and Son for the sponsoring Taemane's tracking device. Taemane means diamond in Setswana and Sesotho. Dr Duncan MacFadyen, Manager: Research and Conservation at E. Oppenheimer and Son, said that the research is providing information about the habitats used by Secretarybirds, dispersal patterns of juvenile birds, and also helping to identify threats to these birds.

In addition to this research on Secretarybirds, BirdLife South Africa has also initiated a project to determine the impact of fences on birds. This was done after a number of records were received of Secretarybirds that had died after colliding or after becoming entangled in fences. Information for this project can be submitted to: <http://www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/important-bird-areas/fence-mitigation-project>

For more information, images or interviews please contact:

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Notes for Editors

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, 7000 local conservation groups and 7400 staff. Find out more at www.birdlife.org or www.facebook.com/BirdLifeInternational

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.

About the Secretarybird project:

- In 2011 BirdLife South Africa launched a project to study the Secretarybird. The research project was initiated in the same year that the threatened status of the Secretarybird was changed to globally Vulnerable. In the past three years we have gained a better understanding of the biology and conservation of the Secretarybird, including the vast distances they travel after leaving the nest and the numerous and significant threats they face. The aim of our study is to determine the species' preferred habitat, the dispersal patterns of juveniles, and to identify the threats responsible for the apparent high mortality rate of Secretarybirds.

- To make a contribution towards the Secretarybird project, please contact Linda van den Heever at linda.vdheever@birdlife.org.za or +27 (11) 789 1122.
- This work would not be possible without the support of the BirdLife International Preventing Extinctions Programme through funding from the two national Species Champions, Petra Diamonds and Airports Company South Africa. Read more on the BirdLife International Preventing Extinctions Programme at <http://www.birdlife.org/extinction/> and <http://www.birdlife.org.za/conservation/threatened-species>