



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Africa welcomes feathered globetrotters!

Wakkerstroom, 19 September 2013. BirdLife South Africa, the only national, dedicated bird conservation non-governmental organisation and member of BirdLife International, is preparing to welcome back the African-Eurasian migratory birds. Among the millions of birds migrating to Africa for the summer, one can observe representatives of five species ⁽³⁾ impatiently awaited by participants of Spring Alive ⁽⁴⁾, a long-term educational campaign of BirdLife International. Its African edition, with the record breaking number of eleven participating countries, has just begun.

The participants of the Spring Alive campaign in Africa expect to observe the first arrivals of Barn Swallows, White Storks, Common Swifts, Common Cuckoos and European Bee-eaters, which in August and September leave their European and Asian breeding areas. Some of the individuals will have to cover several thousand kilometres and may encounter many dangerous situations before reaching the wintering grounds of Africa. This year, the residents of as many as eleven African countries will watch the sky in Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zimbabwe and, for the first time, in Kenya, Zambia and Rwanda.

“The schools currently involved in BirdLife South Africa’s Grasslands Environmental Education Programme (GEEP) in Mpumalanga and Free State are already watching the skies enthusiastically. The fact that these birds have flown thousands of kilometres to South Africa is fascinating for these young learners. GEEP’s educational resources, like the ‘migration game’ takes on a new meaning for these learners” says Kristi Garland, BirdLife South Africa’s GEEP manager.

“The Spring Alive initiative provides a unique and interesting educational platform for African children, youth and bird lovers to learn more about the value and beauty of nature through its five flagship species. The project’s focus on outdoor activities in particular makes it very

attractive to African children who have a strong feeling for nature” explains Callistus Akachabwon Agbaam of the BirdLife International African Division.

The campaign also lives online, as the observations are registered on the www.springalive.net website, where the Spring Alive participants can also follow news on bird related issues and manage invitations to Spring Alive events, watch the dynamics of birds’ flyways, as well as play interactive bird games.

During this season, the young participants are encouraged not only to register their first observations of the five species but also to consider how people can make contributions to assist their feathered friends. Having thought it over, children should grab pencils or paints and take part in the drawing contest “How Can I Help Birds?”⁽⁷⁾ and illustrate these reflections.

Along with the seasonal activities of Spring Alive, the preparations for the pilot edition of “Spring Twins” programme will be undertaken. The action aiming at strengthening the cooperation between Europe, Asia and Africa is due to start next year.

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For further information, please contact: Ms Kristi Garland, Spring Alive Officer, BirdLife South Africa, Mobile: 083 227 0128, E-mail: kristi.garland@birdlife.org.za. For images, please Kristi Garland. For more information please visit www.springalive.net.

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.
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, website: www.birdlife.org.za
3. The five spring migrating bird species are: White Stork, Barn Swallow, Common Swift, Common Cuckoo and European Bee-eater.
4. Spring Alive is an international project organised by BirdLife International, a worldwide organisation for the protection of birds. The campaign is designed to promote children’s interest in nature and its conservation through tracking the arrival of spring. The core component of Spring Alive is the website www.springalive.net with contributions from participants in over 40 countries in Europe and Africa. All citizens, but specifically children and families, are encouraged to observe and record the arrival of five migratory bird species each year: White Stork, Barn Swallow, Common Swift, Common Cuckoo and European Bee-eater.
5. The Spring Alive project is originally from Germany. In 1987 in Bavaria, the first programme campaign was led by the German Birdlife Partner. Since then, Spring Alive unfolded both in

terms of number of countries involved and observations made. At the moment the project is conducted by BirdLife Partners in over 40 countries across Europe and Africa

6. The Spring Alive project would not be possible without the great support of The Mitsubishi Corporation Fund for Europe and Africa (MCFEA), Spring Alive's main sponsor. The aims of the MCFEA are to encourage the appreciation and conservation of flora and fauna with an emphasis on endangered species. The campaign is also financially supported by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB; BirdLife in the UK).
7. For more information on the Spring Alive drawing contest please go to www.springalive.net.
8. BirdLife South Africa is currently the National Communication Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Focal Point for South Africa. This CEPA designation is held under AEWA (African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement) and is on behalf of the National Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) in South Africa. As CEPA Focal point, BirdLife South Africa is responsible for coordinating the official "Welcoming back of migrant birds" and World Migratory Bird Day events which will become permanent fixtures on the DEA Environmental Calendar.