



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate use

Weatherman appointed to senior position at BirdLife South Africa

Johannesburg, 3 February 2014:

Simon Gear has taken up the position of Policy & Advocacy Manager at BirdLife South Africa, with Mark D. Anderson, CEO of BirdLife South Africa saying that “We’re exceptionally pleased with this appointment”. “Not only does Simon bring a wealth of knowledge about important environmental matters to our organisation, but he is also *au fait* with our country’s environmental legislation”. Simon is currently completing his Masters’ Degree in Environmental Science at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Although he made his name as the SABC’s weather guy, spending more than a decade on our TV screens, Simon has always been an environmental scientist and conservationist at heart. While working in media he grew his own consultancy and has worked on a number of different environmental projects across South Africa. “When the opportunity came up to work with BirdLife South Africa, I jumped at it”, he said, “I’ve always wanted to work in conservation, and so the chance to do strategic level work with an organisation with the international credibility of BirdLife was too good to pass up.”

Simon looks forward to continuing and extending the policy and advocacy work of BirdLife South Africa. “When we conserve birds, we’re often conserving sites and landscapes as well, so protecting a bird species has a knock on effect of better water, cleaner air and more robust ecosystems for all of us. Biodiversity needs champions at national and international level and BirdLife South Africa provides an opportunity to do that. I can’t think of anything more important I could be doing with my time.”

Simon’s responsibilities will include liaison with various levels of government on subjects such as the implementation of multi-national environmental agreements, including Ramsar and the Convention of Migratory Species.

According to Daniel Marnewick, Manager of BirdLife South Africa’s Important Bird & Biodiversity Area (IBA) Programme “Simon and the IBA team will work together to ensure that unsustainable developments do not impact on our country’s 122 IBAs and their birds”. Simon will also contribute to BirdLife South Africa’s renewable energy work and provide inputs into the numerous threats which affect our birds, from fracking in the Karoo and the impact of lead used by hunters on ducks and vultures.

Simon's position is funded by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), BirdLife South Africa's UK partner. BirdLife South Africa's policy and advocacy work in South Africa is not done in isolation, and there is regular interaction with the RSPB and BirdLife International.

Despite his fulltime commitments to BirdLife South Africa, Simon will continue in his media roles with Primedia Broadcasting and 50|50 on SABC 2.

Ends

For further information, please contact: Simon Gear at advocacy@birdlife.org.za (011 - 789 1122) or Mark D. Anderson at ceo@birdlife.org.za (011 - 789 1122).

Notes to Editors:

- BirdLife South Africa's vision is to promote the conservation, research, understanding, observation of and enjoyment of natural birds, and their habitats. BirdLife South Africa is the largest non-profit bird conservation organization in the country. It 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.
- The RSPB is the largest nature conservation organisation in Europe with over one million members in the UK. The RSPB is part of BirdLife International and works in support of a number of BirdLife partners, including BirdLife South Africa. For more information on RSPB visit www.rspb.org.uk.