



## MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

### South Africa gets its first biodiversity tax incentive

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BirdLife South Africa's Fiscal Benefits Project was launched in 2015 with the aim of testing biodiversity tax incentives as a benefit for landowners declaring Protected Areas, through the Biodiversity Stewardship model. The Fiscal Benefits Project began with the achievement of introducing a new tax incentive, section 37D, into the Income Tax Act. Section 37D gives landowners a tax deduction for their conservation commitment. It allows the value of a Nature Reserve or National Park to be deducted from taxable income, reducing the tax owed by a landowner. Section 37D provides a fiscal benefit for the long term protection and effective management of areas vital to conservation and ecosystem functioning.

This was achieved on behalf of a landowner for the very first time in South Africa at the end of 2016. This tax incentive is a national first and creates the first fiscal reward for biodiversity conservation in South Africa. This historic appropriation belongs to one of the Fiscal Benefits Project's pilot sites, where testing of the incentive has taken place. This achievement now paves the way for other privately-owned Protected Areas to receive financial recognition.

The Fiscal Benefits Project is now in the process of mainstreaming the effectiveness of section 37D and is working towards introducing tax skills into the conservation sector. Part of this process is the provision of high-level summaries and technical tax overviews.

South Africa's biodiversity tax incentives and work on Privately Protected Areas is highly innovative and has received international recognition. It is the collaborative effort of the National Treasury, the South African Revenue Service, the Department of Environmental Affairs and the Biodiversity Stewardship community of practice in both the public and private sectors.

***BirdLife South Africa's Fiscal Benefits Project is a novel approach to biodiversity finance and leads the way in the use of biodiversity tax incentives. The Project is funded by the Global Environment Fund in partnership with SANBI with catalytic seed funding received from the WWF Nedbank Green Trust.***

**ENDS**

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**About BirdLife South Africa**

- BirdLife South Africa is the local country partner of BirdLife International. BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership with more than 120 BirdLife Partners worldwide and almost 11 million supporters.
- 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.
- Vision: BirdLife South Africa wishes to see a country and region where nature and people live in greater harmony, more equitably and sustainably.
- Mission: BirdLife South Africa strives to conserve birds, their habitats and biodiversity through scientifically-based programmes, through supporting the sustainable and equitable use of natural resources and through encouraging people to enjoy and value nature.
- Birds are important environmental indicators, the proverbial "canaries in the coal mine". By focusing on birds, and the sites and the habitats on which they depend, BirdLife South Africa's IBA Programme aims to improve the quality of life for birds, other wildlife, and ultimately for people.
- For more information, visit [www.birdlife.org.za](http://www.birdlife.org.za)