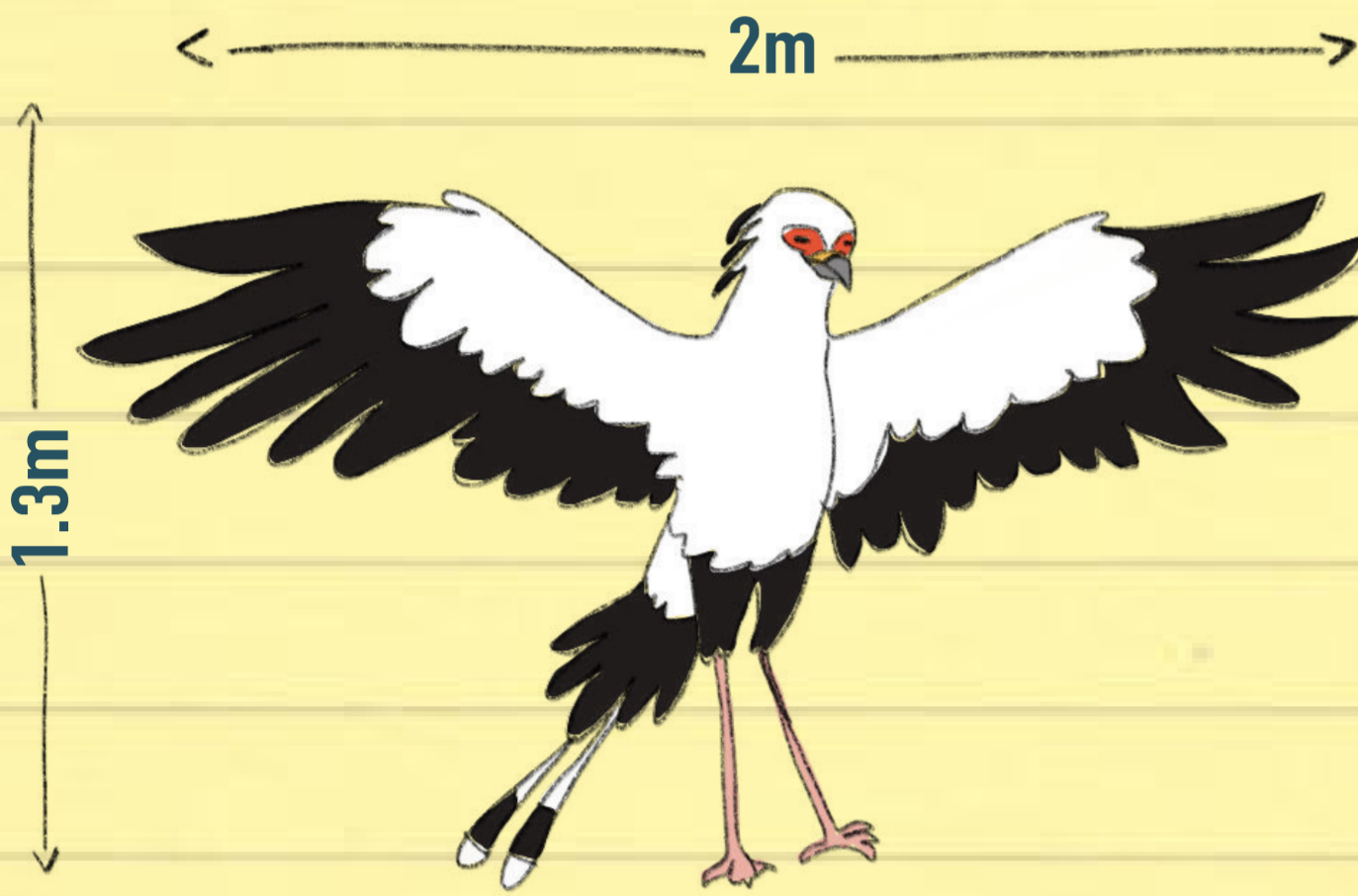


# 16 AWESOME FACTS ABOUT SECRETARYBIRDS



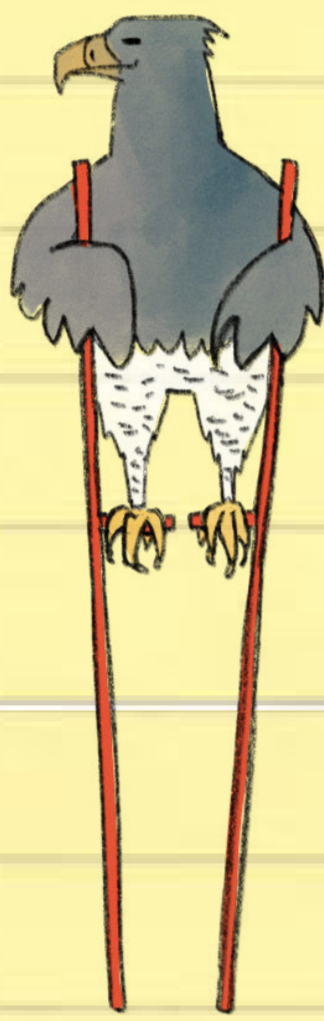
A **FLOATER** is a young bird leaving its natal territory.

Secretarybirds have a wingspan of  $\pm 2$  metres and are  $\pm 1.3$  metres tall.



The Secretarybird appears on South Africa's **COAT OF ARMS**. It is depicted holding the image of the setting sun between its outstretched wings. The Secretarybird symbolises **PROTECTION** and it is considered a **DIVINE MESSENGER BIRD**, as noted by its gold colour in the seal.

They are like **EAGLES ON STILTS** with legs twice the length of other ground birds of similar body mass.

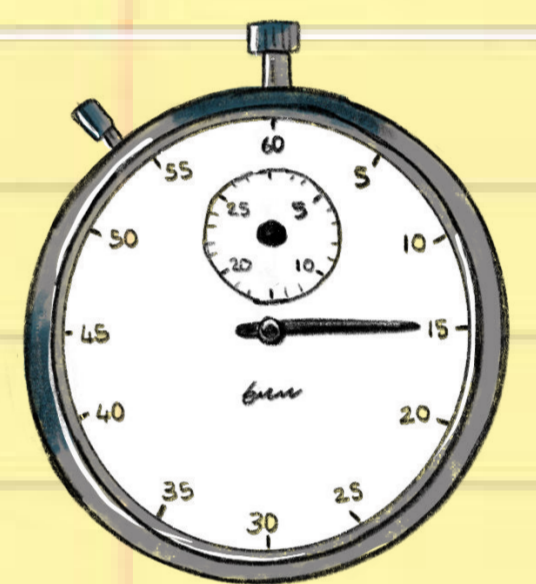


Their kicks deliver blows at **195** Newton, equivalent to **5 times** their own body weight.

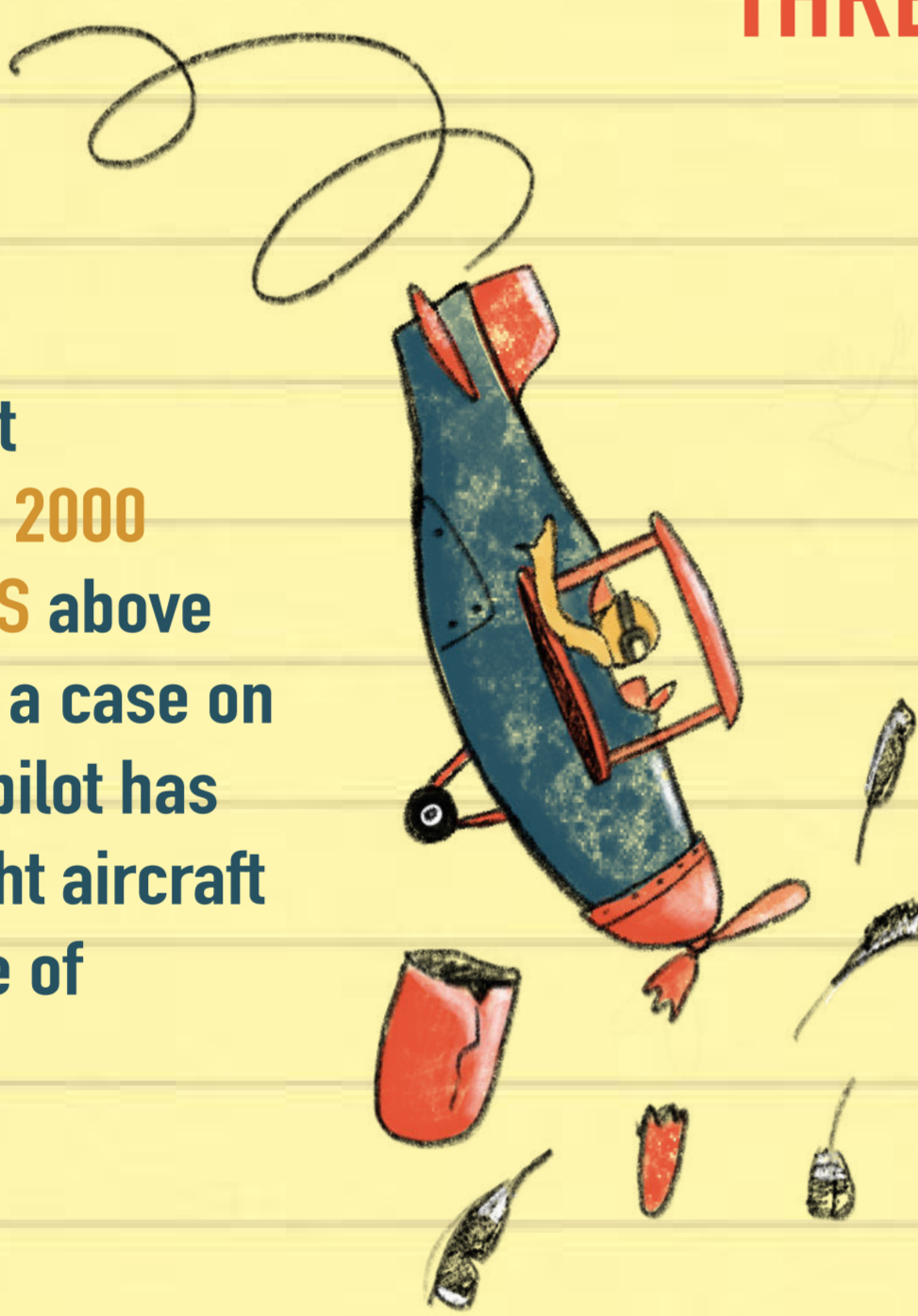
THEY WALK ON AVERAGE **20-30 km** A DAY.

**HABITAT LOSS** IS THEIR **BIGGEST THREAT**.

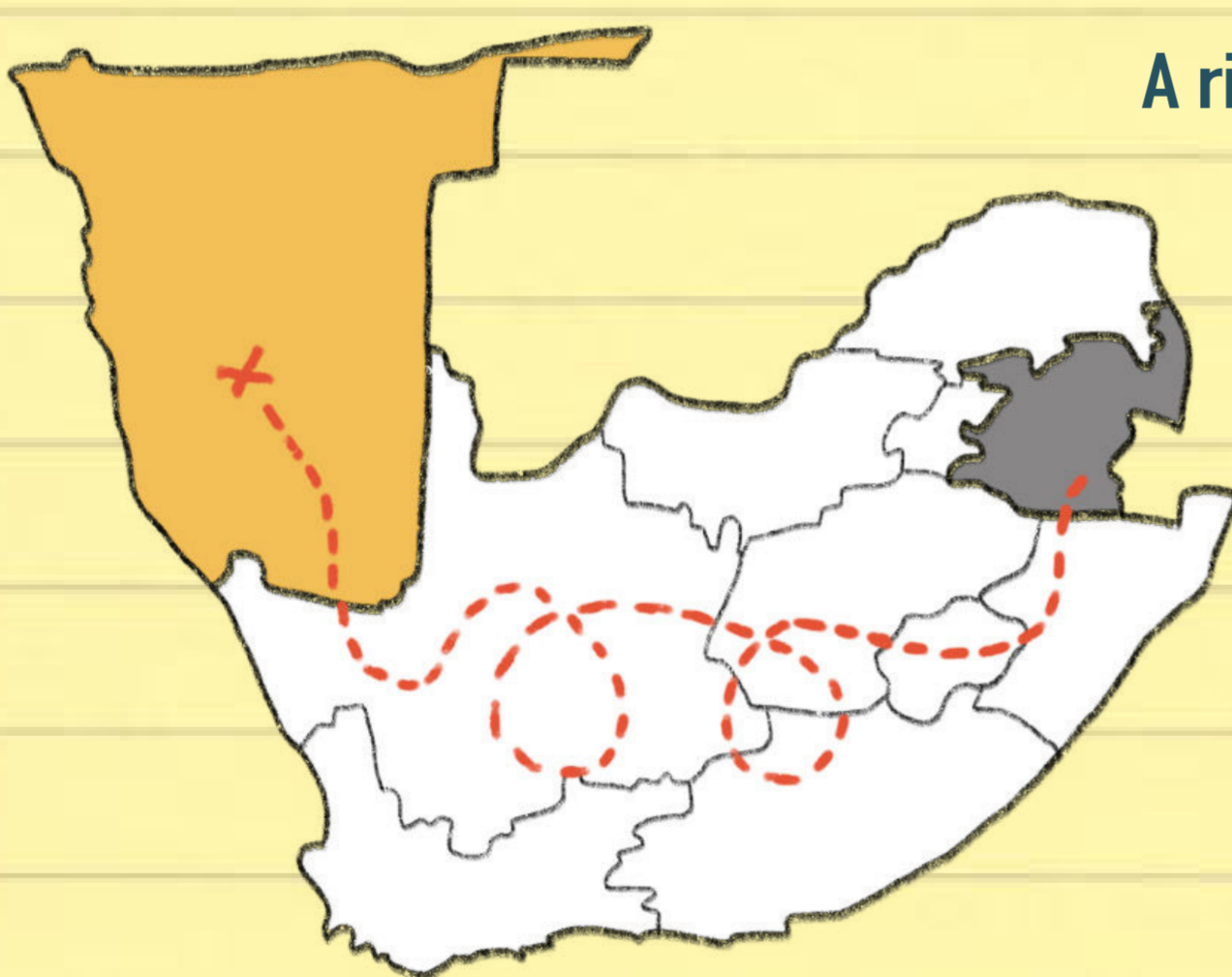
The peak force of strike is very high and fast when a Secretarybird kicks, taking less than **15 MILLISECONDS**.



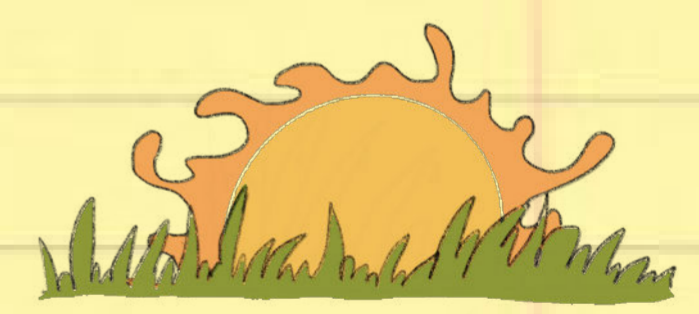
Secretarybirds have been known to fly on thermals at great heights between **2000 and 3800 METRES** above ground. There is a case on record where a pilot has died after his light aircraft collided with one of these birds.



Groups of up to **50** Secretarybirds can be seen around waterholes in arid areas.



A ring recovery of an immature Secretarybird showed a dispersal distance of at least **1,537 km** in less than **4 months** (from Sabi Sands in Mpumalanga to Namibia).



Secretarybirds stay in their nest in the morning until the grass is dry, after the sun has been up for at least **2 hours**.

Snakes are only **1%** their diet as they eat mostly **ARTHROPODS**.



They live about **10-15 YEARS** in the wild and even a few years longer in captivity.



It may look like Secretarybirds have long eyelashes but, in fact, these are actually **small modified feathers** without barbs.

**96%** OF THEIR TIME IS SPENT **OUTSIDE OF PROTECTED AREAS** WHICH MAKES THEM **VULNERABLE TO THREATS**.

Find out more on the BirdLife South Africa website at [birdlife.org.za/events/bird-of-the-year](http://birdlife.org.za/events/bird-of-the-year) or visit the Facebook page @BirdLifeSouthAfrica  
Design and Illustrations: Chrissie Cloete @ChrissieCanDraw

SOURCES: Dean, WRJ, Ryan PG (eds) Roberts - Birds of Southern Africa (VIth Ed) Cape Town: The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund. I Hofmeyr SD, Symes CT, Underhill LG (2014) Secretarybird Sagittarius serpentarius Population Trends and Ecology. Insights from South African Citizen Science Data. PLoS ONE 9(5): e96772. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0096772 I Sherman, P. 2007. Sagittarius serpentarius (On-line). Animal Diversity Web. Accessed December 29, 2018 at [https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Sagittarius\\_serpentarius/](https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Sagittarius_serpentarius/) I Whitecross, M.A., Retief, E.F. and Smit-Robinson, H.A., 2019. Dispersal dynamics of juvenile Secretarybirds Sagittarius serpentarius in southern Africa. Ostrich, 90(2): 97-110.

