



## Media release

For immediate use

# Birds connect our world.

**Johannesburg, 10 October 2020:**

Imagine undertaking a journey like no other, a pilgrimage covering thousands of kilometres twice a year, every year... This is exactly what migratory birds do! On Saturday 10 October 2020, on World Migratory Bird Day, we celebrate the incredible journey these birds make, the threats they face and their importance in our world today.

This campaign is led by the United Nations (UN), and organized by a collaborative partnership among two UN treaties, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), and Environment for the Americas (EFTA), a non-profit organisation. The annual celebrations occur on the second Saturdays of May and October annually, to accommodate the cyclical nature of these long-haul migrations. The aim is to highlight the importance of migratory birds and the urgency of international cooperation to conserve them.

Migratory birds undertake journeys of extreme magnitude for their size, with the Bar-tailed Godwit known to go on a nine day non-stop flight, flying over 11 000 kilometres without feeding or resting, while the Arctic Tern undertakes annual record-breaking trips, covering around 90 000 kilometres, from pole to pole, in search of the summer sunlight. No wonder they inspired the BirdLife logo!

*“Approximately 1 800 of the world’s 11 000 bird species migrate across numerous country boundaries and rely on interconnected, healthy stop-over sites along their journey”* said Bronwyn Maree, BirdLife South Africa’s East Atlantic Flyway Initiative (EAFI) Project Manager. *“It is therefore critical that a flyway-wide approach is taken, to address the numerous threats these species face and to ensure that the sites these birds use along their journey are adequately protected”*, she said.

The East Atlantic Flyway (EAF) is one of the main flyways utilized by millions of shorebirds and landbirds which migrate annually from their northern breeding grounds in Eurasia to wintering areas in western and southern Africa. Unfortunately, many of the bird populations in this flyway are in decline. The threats faced by these birds along the EAF are diverse and include habitat loss and degradation as a result of urbanization, infrastructure development and agricultural expansion. This year’s theme, ‘Birds Connect Our World’ highlights these migratory species that move across the globe, connect countries, people and continents through their migration routes. The theme was chosen to highlight the importance of conserving and restoring the ecological connectivity and integrity of ecosystems that support the natural movements of migratory birds and which are essential for their survival and well-being.

It is clear that a coordinated conservation approach is required to ensure the stop-over sites along the arduous migratory route, which these species rely on to refuel, as well as for breeding and overwintering, are identified and protected for the future of these birds. The EAFI Project Manager, funded by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, will be working in the southern Africa countries of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe to identify and address the threats faced by priority species and sites along the flyway, as well as conserve and connect these ecologically important areas, through regional cooperation and transboundary biodiversity conservation.

*“Collaboration is key to achieve a healthy flyway in order to provide a safe space for these migrants to visit southern Africa. Next time you see one of these special birds, consider how far they have travelled and what they have had to endure to get here, the end point on a very long journey.”* concludes Bronwyn Maree.



Image: Arctic Terns undertake the longest migration of any animal on earth, covering over 90 000 kilometres annually. They are a fairly common Palearctic passage migrant and summer visitor to coastal and oceanic waters around southern Africa.

**Ends**

**Notes for editor:**

BirdLife South Africa’s East Atlantic Flyway Initiative Project Manager is funded by Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the local country partner of BirdLife International in the UK  
For more information contact BirdLife South Africa’s East Atlantic Flyway Initiative Project Manager, Bronwyn Maree at [bronwyn.maree@birdlife.org.za](mailto:bronwyn.maree@birdlife.org.za), 082 364 9281, or visit our website <https://www.birdlife.org.za/what-we-do/regional-conservation-programme/what-we-do-rcp/#1584957040525-a099c375-29ef>

### **About BirdLife South Africa**

BirdLife South Africa is the local country partner of BirdLife International, a global partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, by working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership with 113 BirdLife Partners worldwide, 8000 staff and 7 million supporters. BirdLife South Africa is the only dedicated bird conservation organization in South Africa. It relies on donor funding and financial support from the public to carry out its critical conservation work.

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### **About the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)**

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals aims to conserve terrestrial, aquatic and avian migratory species throughout their range. It is an intergovernmental treaty concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale. Since the Convention's entry into force in 1979, its membership has grown steadily to include 130 Parties from Africa, Central and South America, Asia, Europe and Oceania.

For more information: [www.cms.int](http://www.cms.int)

### **About the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)**

The Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) is an intergovernmental treaty dedicated to the conservation of migratory waterbirds that migrate along the African-Eurasian Flyway. The Agreement covers 255 species of bird ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle. The treaty covers 119 Range States from Europe, Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia and Canada. As of 1 March 2020, 79 countries and the European Union have become a Contracting Party to the agreement.

For more information: [www.unep-aewa.org](http://www.unep-aewa.org)

### **Environment for the Americas (EFTA)**

EFTA is a Colorado-based non-profit organization that provides bilingual educational materials and information about birds and bird conservation to raise awareness of migratory birds and to promote actions that protect migratory birds throughout the Americas.

For more information: [www.environmentamericas.org](http://www.environmentamericas.org)

Global World Migratory Bird Day website: [www.worldmigratorybirdday.org](http://www.worldmigratorybirdday.org)