



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

BIRDS AT THE FOREFRONT OF TRANSFORMATIVE TOURISM IN AFRICA

6 April 2023 – BirdLife South Africa recently won two awards at the prestigious Responsible Tourism Awards, presented at World Travel Market Africa in Cape Town, for their inclusive and transformative work in the tourism sector. These annual awards are presented to projects and organizations across Africa who are working towards socially and environmentally sustainable travel and tourism. BirdLife South Africa received a Gold Award in the category for Diversity & Inclusion and a Silver Award for Nature-positive Tourism. These awards recognise the pioneering role that BirdLife South Africa has played for over two decades in transforming tourism and creating local community benefits through birds and conservation.

The Gold Award for Diversity & Inclusion centred on BirdLife South Africa’s Community Bird Guide Project, which has graduated over 200 previously disadvantaged people from local communities as professional bird and nature guides, and the South African Names for South African Birds (SANSAB) Project, which is compiling lists of names for South African birds in local languages to facilitate more inclusive approaches.

The Silver Award for Nature-positive Tourism recognized BirdLife South Africa’s efforts to link tourism and conservation through the Community Bird Guide Project, the Ingula Partnership (BirdLife South Africa, Middelpunt Wetland Trust, and Eskom Holdings (SOC) Ltd) at Ingula Nature Reserve, and the Wakkerstroom Tourism and Education Centre, which supports environmental education in local schools.

Andrew de Blocq, BirdLife South Africa’s Avitourism Project Manager, was in Cape Town to collect the awards. “We do not do our work to receive awards and recognition, but it is encouraging when our efforts are recognized by our peers in the industry, and we hope that the resulting publicity for our projects will further benefit the community bird guides who derive a living from guiding and inspire others to do similar work.”

He added “At BirdLife South Africa, we believe that tourism and conservation should be inclusive of local communities, as this is the way in which birds, other biodiversity and natural habitats will be protected.” Andrew further stated that “Birdlife South Africa will continue to do whatever it can to realise that vision, whether it is breaking down language and cultural barriers or changing the face of tourism and conservation through local guide training and community education and empowerment.”



Above: Andrew de Blocq (Avitourism Project Manager, BirdLife South Africa) accepts the Gold Award for Diversity & Inclusion on behalf of BirdLife South Africa. Picture supplied: World Travel Market Africa 2023.

The Gold Awards from each of the regional World Travel Market events go through to the international awards in London, UK, in November, where responsible tourism projects stand the chance of global recognition. BirdLife South Africa will therefore feature again in the Diversity & Inclusion category at that event.

BirdLife South Africa would like to thank its supporters and sponsors, especially Swarovski Optik, Whylo Distributors, Eskom Holdings (SOC) Ltd, and Nick & Jane Prentice, who all contribute significantly to the Avitourism Project. We would further like to acknowledge the pioneers of this work, including the late Ben de Boer and Joe Grosel, as well as others including Sue Anderson, Nigel Andersen, Warwick Tarboton, Duncan Pritchard, and Martin Taylor. Last, but certainly not least, we would like to thank our Community Bird Guides who have been pioneers in the tourism industry and ambassadors for BirdLife South Africa and bird conservation in their communities.

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Editor's notes

Further reading

For full award citations, see <https://responsibletourismpartnership.org/africa-awards-2023/>.

BirdLife South Africa Community Bird Guides [webpage](#).

South African Names for South African Birds Project [webpage](#).

Wakkerstroom Tourism and Education Centre [webpage](#).

The Ingula Partnership [webpage](#).

About BirdLife South Africa

[BirdLife South Africa](#) is the 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 partners operate in more than 120

countries worldwide. BirdLife South Africa relies on donor funding and financial support from the public to carry out its critical conservation work.

About BirdLife South Africa's 'Empowering People Programme'

BirdLife South Africa's Avitourism Project is housed within the Empowering People Programme. The Empowering People Programme uses birds to provide development opportunities for people through education, livelihoods, tourism, and conservation. The programme is complementary to the organization's conservation work through ensuring the inclusion and empowerment of local communities in the landscapes in which we work. By empowering local communities, we create a conservation ethos, local benefits, and ensure that people can live harmoniously with birds and their natural environment.

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