

## BirdLife Species Guardians: information factsheet

### The BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme

A total of 190 species are classified by BirdLife International as Critically Endangered on the 2008 IUCN Red List owing to their very small and declining population and ranges or very rapid population declines. To prevent further extinctions (one of BirdLife's strategic objectives), these species need urgent action.

In response to the large number of Critically Endangered species and their extremely high risk of extinction BirdLife has launched '**The BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme**'. This aims to appoint 'Species Guardians' (individuals or organisations who take on a formal role to implement, coordinate or promote conservation action for a particular Critically Endangered species) and Species Champions (donors who support the work to prevent extinctions by BirdLife, its Partners and Species Guardians). This factsheet provides background information on the role of Species Guardians for BirdLife Partners, potential Guardians and other interested parties.

### Who are BirdLife Species Guardians and what is their role?



Species Guardians are individuals or organisations who take on a set of responsibilities for a particular threatened bird species in a defined geographical area, usually a particular country. Their primary role is to **take and/or stimulate conservation action** for the species in question. They also **monitor** the status of the species.

Species Guardians' activities may include *some of the following examples*:

- Implement priority actions for the species, in particular those identified and listed in BirdLife's species factsheets ([www.birdlife.org/datazone](http://www.birdlife.org/datazone)), or in a Species Action Plan
- Develop a working Species Action Plan, if one does not yet exist, outlining the priority actions and projects required
- Facilitate the implementation of priority actions by other individuals or organisations
- Carry out or support fundraising through the BirdLife network organisation
- Liaise and communicate in an open and collaborative manner with all individuals and organisations involved in carrying out research and implementing action for the species
- Advocate for appropriate conservation measures to relevant authorities and institutions
- Monitor trends in the species' status through tracking observations, intensity of threats etc.
- Monitor the implementation and effect of actions by all parties involved in conserving the species; and identify new priorities for action.
- Report these data to BirdLife each year, and review and update the Birdlife species factsheet, including reporting on the actions implemented, their effect and new priority actions needed

For some Critically Endangered species, it may not be appropriate to appoint Species Guardians, e.g. species with no known population, or those whose conservation is already being adequately addressed by government agencies or other organisations.

## **How do Species Guardians relate to BirdLife Partners?**

Preventing extinctions, and hence conserving Critically Endangered species, are usually core activities of any national BirdLife Partner. Where a Partner has capacity and can commit to taking responsibility directly for conserving and monitoring a particular species, they may choose to be the Species Guardian for that species, nominating an individual staff member as the focal point. Alternatively, where there is a lack of capacity or expertise, the BirdLife Partner may appoint another individual or organisation (e.g. a local NGO) as the Species Guardian. When organisations are appointed, an individual is usually nominated to act as the focal point. Becoming a Species Guardian does not confer any exclusivity or sole rights: other Species Guardians may be appointed for the species, and other individuals and organisations often also take action and monitor the species. Species Guardians do not act as national representatives for BirdLife in countries outside the BirdLife network.

## **How are Species Guardians appointed?**

BirdLife Partners who appoint other individuals or organisations as the Species Guardian usually develop a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the Guardian. Such an MoA is not necessary where the BirdLife organisation takes on the role of Guardian themselves. In countries outside the BirdLife network, the BirdLife secretariat identifies potential Species Guardians, discusses these with relevant stakeholders, and proposed names are reviewed and approved by the relevant Regional Partnership Committee before MoAs are drawn up and appointments made.

Species Guardians usually take on the role as part of a longer term commitment. However, appointments are reviewed on an annual basis, covering progress, success, communication, support etc., from the perspective of both the Species Guardian and the Partner/Secretariat. Unless substantial issues emerge from the review, renewal of the Species Guardian appointment is automatic. Species Guardians appointed in countries with no BirdLife representation are managed by, and report to, the BirdLife Secretariat/Regional Partnership Committee. Either party may terminate the appointment at any time.

## **What are the benefits to becoming a Species Guardian?**

Species Guardians gain opportunities as well as responsibilities. Species Guardian status adds weight to fundraising proposals, conservation plans and action implementation. Raising funds to support the implementation of actions by Species Guardians is a priority for BirdLife, both from internal sources (e.g. the Americas Globally Threatened Bird Program) and from external sources (e.g. applications to foundations), as well as through influencing other funding sources (e.g. the BirdFair/RSPB Research Fund for Endangered Birds).

Staff in the BirdLife Global and Regional Secretariats also provide support to Species Guardians to carry out their role, e.g. through supporting the development of Species Action Plans, helping to facilitate actions, assisting with regional and global fundraising, publicising and promoting the needs and successes of Species Guardians and their activities (e.g. through press releases, web stories and other media), and by facilitating and taking advocacy actions at global and regional levels to support national or local advocacy work by Species Guardians.

## **Relationship between Species Guardians and other organisations**

BirdLife works collaboratively with many other conservation organisations, individuals and governments, and the BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme adds to, supports and complements conservation efforts carried out by others. Species Guardians are strongly encouraged to acknowledge the support from funders and other agencies in the most appropriate way (e.g. in press releases, publicity, reports, publications etc). It is often the case that a Species Guardian receives support from many different sources and agencies, and their role as the BirdLife Species Guardian is broader than that deriving from their role in specific projects funded by particular agencies.

## Examples of BirdLife Species Guardians

**Dwarf Olive Ibis** (and two other Critically Endangered species: Sao Tomé Fiscal and Sao Tomé Grosbeak) are endemic to Sao Tomé, a country outside the BirdLife network. The Associação dos Biólogos Santomenses (ABS) is the Species Guardian for all three species. ABS is advocating for designation of protected areas, proposing suitable boundaries, and carrying out awareness-raising activities, particularly to safeguard the ibis from hunting.



**Djibouti Francolin** is largely restricted to Forêt du Day, Djibouti, a country outside the BirdLife network. Houssein Rayaleh (Djibouti Nature) is the Species Guardian. Djibouti Nature are advocating for Protected Area status, setting up a community-run juniper nursery, and developing a Site Support Group.



**Belding's Yellowthroat** is found at a small number of fragmented marshes in Baja California, Mexico. The BirdLife Partner in Mexico, ProNatura, has taken on the role of Species Guardian. They are working at one of the most important sites and are facilitating action by two small local NGOs, including research, monitoring, a public awareness campaign, and protecting and enhancing the habitat.



**Restinga Antwren** has a very small range at Restinga de Maçambaba, Brasil. SAVE Brasil (BirdLife in Brasil), have appointed a local NGO at the site, Pingo D'Agua, as the Species Guardian. They are carrying out biological surveys, assessing the complicated land ownership situation, launching an environmental awareness and education campaign, and promoting the establishment of a protected area.



For further information, including enquiries from potential BirdLife Species Guardians, please contact: Stuart Butchart [stuart.butchart@birdlife.org](mailto:stuart.butchart@birdlife.org)



---

PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS