



Save Our Seabirds (SOS) Festival

Title

BirdLife South Africa (BirdLife Partner) is at the forefront of seabird conservation action, locally and internationally. The SOS Festival is a National Marine Month initiative from BirdLife South Africa's Seabird Division. It will run from 11–17 October 2010, in partnership with the Department of Environmental Affairs and the Iziko South African Museum. The aim of the festival is to focus public awareness on seabird conservation problems and the work currently being done by BirdLife South Africa and other organisations to address these issues.

A major SOS Festival highlight is the 'Oceans of Life' photographic competition. A selection of the top photographs and the winning images will be on exhibit at the Iziko Museum for the duration of the week-long festival. Other activities include a series of three evening lectures at the Iziko Museum. Entrance is free (although booking is essential) and complimentary cheese and wines will be served afterwards. Monday evening (11 October) features the launch of SOS Festival and a lecture by Professor Peter Ryan titled *The good, the bad and the ugly of seabird conservation*, followed by a book signing for the newly launched "Birds of Africa south of the Sahara", by Ian Sinclair and Peter Ryan.

Monday will also feature the launch of the BirdLife South Africa-endorsed wine from Diemersfontein, 'For the Birds'. On Wednesday 13 October, Dr Samantha Peterson will give a talk titled *Sustainable Fishing: Oxymoron or opportunity? WWF's SASSI programme*. The lecture will be followed by an Owl Award presentation. The Friday lecture will be given by Steve Kirkman about *Seals and Seabirds: Incompatible parts in an unwholesome ecosystem?* The lecture will be followed by the announcement of the winner of the photographic competition.

The SOS Festival is being held to raise awareness and funds for seabird conservation. Seabirds are the most threatened group of birds in the world, and almost one third of all seabird species are threatened with some extinction risk. We risk losing iconic birds such as the African Penguin and the majestic albatrosses that roam the southern oceans. BirdLife South Africa is at the forefront of seabird conservation, nationally and globally and its acclaimed Albatross Task Force has made huge strides towards reducing the mortalities of albatrosses during commercial fishing. The Seabird Division is actively involved with helping to save the African Penguin. But we need to step up our efforts to protect seabirds, because the current losses for many species are not sustainable. The Festival aims to educate people about the threats.