

## To rescue a Secretary bird is no administrative task

Posted on May 04, 2023



Recently a juvenile Secretary bird (*Sagittarius serpentarius*) was found collapsed in the Mabula Private Game Reserve by a ranger. Members of the **Mabula Ground Hornbill Project** NPO collected it and rushed it through to the Faculty's Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital's (OVAH) veterinary wildlife clinic. Apart from being collapsed it was severely dehydrated.

With veterinary wildlife specialist, Prof Katja Koeppel in the lead, the bird was stabilised and the team ran some basic blood tests. It was found to be severely anaemic with a blood parasite (Leucocytozoon). On arrival the bird had no white blood cells to fight infection so it was started on antibiotics until his white blood cells recovered.



*A blood transfusion was administered for the collapsed secretary bird (day 2).*

Under observation it was further stabilised through the night and received a blood transfusion the next day. The bird made a remarkable recovery. The haematocrit level (the ratio of the volume of red blood cells to the total volume of blood) increased from 7% to 17% within a week and to 24% within 10 days. The normal haematocrit level in a raptor is 35% to 55%.

Radiographs also showed that it had a fractured clavicle (collar bone), which will require five to six weeks rest to heal before it can fly long distances.

After two weeks in the OVAH's wildlife bomas, the bird was moved to the Dullstroom Bird of Prey & Rehabilitation Centre for recovery and flight training so it can be released back into the wild.



*On day 14 the Secretary bird was moved to Dullstroom Bird of Prey & Rehabilitation Centre by Elaine Bratt (left) of the Mabula Ground Hornbill Project. On the right is Prof Katja Koepfel, veterinary wildlife specialist in the Faculty.*

- Author CvB/KK