

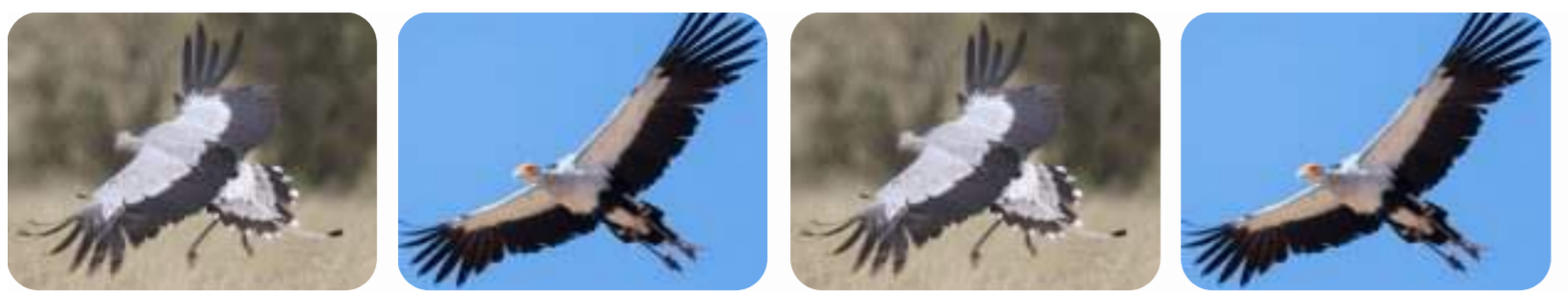


# Sagittarius serpentarius

Common name: Secretary Bird

Latin name: *Sagittarius serpentarius*

Local name: صقر الجديان



## ECOLOGY

### Type:

Wild

### Role in Ecosystem:

These birds prey on a wide range of large invertebrates and small to medium-sized vertebrates but do not seem to have a great overall effect on these populations in the wild.

Smaller, localized populations may be affected by predation from this species if hunting increases, especially during breeding season.

Several predators occasionally take the vulnerable nestlings of secretary birds as food.

## HABITAT

Open grasslands, shrublands, and savannas of the sub-Saharan region (fig1)

The species inhabits open landscapes, ranging from open plains and grasslands, to lightly wooded savanna, but is also found in agricultural areas and sub-desert.

It ranges from sea-level to 3,000 m.

Sedentary in some parts of its range and nomadic in others as they follow rainfall and the resulting abundance of prey.

Terrestrial, spending most of its time on the ground  
The species typically nests in a flat-topped Acacia or other thorny tree, where it constructs a flattened stick structure  
Prefers short open grassland with scattered Acacia thorn trees for roosting and nesting  
It avoids areas where the grass is too dense or tall



### Food

Carnivore

A variety of prey is consumed, with insects forming 86% of the diet.

Rodents, other mammals, lizards, snakes, eggs, young birds, and amphibians also form part of the diet



### Movement and Communication

Courtship displays take place both in the air and on the ground.

They perform aerial courtship displays, similar to other raptors, called "pendulum flights."

The bird will swoop down, then up again, repeating the undulating pattern.

On the ground, a pair may dance around each other including a mutual display of chasing each other with wings spread up and backward much like they perform when chasing ground prey.

Courtship displays include making a deep croaking wail or a growling sound.



### Social Habits

Solitary

It is monogamous which means mate for life

Mated pairs occupy territory together

Both parents care for their hatchlings

Chicks leave their parents when mature



### Reproduction

Oviparous

Breeding occurs throughout the year although there are peaks in breeding from August to March.

Mating occurs either on the ground or in their large nests high in Acacia trees.

The female usually lays one to three blue-green eggs, which both parents incubate.

When the eggs hatch after about 50 days, both parents care for the chicks, including feeding them regurgitated prey.

After about 6 weeks they feed them larger prey items to tear and eat themselves.

Once fledged, after around three months, parents will train chicks to hunt.

### Attributes

#### Length:

150,90"

#### Wingspan:

200cm,80"

## INTRODUCTION

The name Secretary bird as used in Sudan, may be derived from Arabic (Saqr Eltier) meaning hunter-bird.

The Secretary bird has a distinctive appearance. It is a large striding grey-and-black bird with a bare orange-red face and an eagle-like bill. Its flight feathers are black and they have black feathers on the thighs and on the back of their heads. Their legs are long with black feathering and it has two long, black-tipped tail feathers. The male and female are alike with distinctive crests of black-tipped spatulate feathers.

## LIVELIHOODS AND CULTURE

### Human interaction

No information available.

### Cultural value

The Secretary Bird is famed for being the prominent emblem of Sudan and South Africa and appears on both nation's coats of arms.

### Cultural expression

No information available.

## THREATS

This species has been classified as Endangered because its population is experiencing a severe decline. Secretarybirds are threatened by a number of factors, which include:

- Habitat fragmentation and degradation through the spread of agricultural development and commercial forestry.
  - Collisions with power lines and fences and road kills.
  - Excessive burning of grasslands which suppresses populations of prey.
  - Intensive livestock grazing which leads to degraded habitats.
  - Secondary poisoning and direct hunting, nest-raiding, capture and trade of a small number of birds.
- They are protected under Appendix II of CITES, meaning that trade of this species is controlled.

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