Secretarybird (*Sagittarius serpentarius*)

**Conservation Status:** Vulnerable

The secretarybird is a very large and distinctive terrestrial raptor. They have exceptionally long, bare legs, a long, graduated tail, and distinctive long, black-tipped, erectile nape feathers. Their plumage is generally gray with some white and black feathers. They have a relatively small head, a bare, orange to red face, a gray-white beak, a long neck, and an eaglelike body.

**Fun Facts**

1. The secretarybird was supposedly given its common name because it resembles an old-fashioned secretary carrying quill pens tucked behind her ears.
2. Some people refer to the secretarybird as “Africa’s marching eagle.” It earns this title because it prefers to move on the ground, and an individual can cover 30 km a day on foot.

**Habitat**

Secretarybirds prefer open savannas and grasslands; however, they also live in semideserts and lightly wooded or scrub areas.

**Diet**

mostly snakes; also grasshoppers, lizards, rodents, and nestling birds

**Predators**

Crows, ravens, ground hornbills, and birds of prey will all feed on eggs and young chicks.

**Behavior**

Secretarybirds prefer to move around on foot and easily cover between 20 and 30 kilometers in a single day as they hunt for food. They spend most of their time looking for food, periodically stopping and stomping the ground. They will usually crush their prey underfoot or repeatedly kick it before swallowing it whole. Secretarybirds are generally seen alone or in pairs.

**Breeding**

Secretarybirds are monogamous and thought to pair for life. Following a courtship that is performed in flight and includes pendulum displays and calling, the female secretarybird will lay a clutch of one to three eggs.Eggs are incubated for 42 to 46 days, with the entire nesting period typically lasting between 65 and 106 days. They often raise two young at a time. After fledging, the young are dependent on the parents for another 62 to 105 days, after which juveniles will leave the parental territory.

**Size**

Length: 1.4 m

Height: 1.2 m

**Weight**

2.3-4.27 kg

**Life Span:** around 18 years

**Incubation Period:** 42 to 46 days

**Average number of offspring:** 2