

BirdLife Botswana
Bird Conservation Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

Botswana's Important Bird Areas (IBAs), of which there are currently 12, have been identified on the basis of objective international criteria and, together with other sites worldwide form a network of areas, at a biogeographic scale, critical for the long-term viability of naturally occurring bird populations. Not surprisingly, given that birds are good environmental indicators, these IBAs are also sites of high biodiversity importance. Thus the recognition and establishment of IBAs is a direct contribution to biodiversity conservation in Botswana, and IBA monitoring will go a long way towards meeting Botswana's obligations as a signatory of the Convention on Biodiversity.

Birds, perhaps more than any other life-forms, lend themselves to monitoring, and the BirdLife partnership has developed a global monitoring framework for IBAs that can be applied across the board – again using objective, scientifically defensible criteria, the status and trends of our IBAs can be measured. BirdLife Botswana is currently formalising its monitoring protocols for IBAs and will soon be in a position to report on any changes in bird diversity in these areas. Pressures on our IBAs will be identified, and appropriate conservation action taken to address these. The monitoring system will also allow us to measure whether or not the response to particular threats has been successful in mitigating them. The IBA monitoring framework is thus a valuable tool to have and will ensure that BirdLife's activities result in tangible improvements to biodiversity conservation efforts in the country.

As always, we recognise the power of partnerships and invite any like-minded organisations and individuals to join hands with us in our quest to improve biodiversity conservation in Botswana. In this way, we will make the world a better place for both birds **and** people. Together we can, and do, make a difference!

Pete Hancock




BirdLife Botswana is the **BirdLife** partner in Botswana.
INTERNATIONAL
Together for birds and people

LESSER FLAMINGO ACTION PLANNING WORKSHOP

An action planning workshop, jointly organised by the IUCN-SSC/Wetlands International Flamingo Specialist Group, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the BirdLife Africa Partnership, was recently held in Nairobi, Kenya (25-29 September) to produce an international Lesser Flamingo Action Plan for submission to the fourth Meeting of the Parties (MOP 4) of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and the ninth Congress of Parties (COP 9) of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). The workshop aimed to assess the current population status, distribution, conservation status, threats and necessary measures required for the conservation of Lesser Flamingos. Based on input from range-state Lesser Flamingo experts from all over Africa and India, the main objective was to establish priorities for conservation action. Botswana, an important range-state for Lesser Flamingos and home to one of three main breeding sites for the species in Africa, was represented by Zee Mpofo from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks and resident flamingo expert, Dr Graham McCulloch.

The workshop consisted of three full-day work sessions, during which delegates from nine key range-states or regions (SW Asia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and West Africa) presented reports on the population status and distribution of the Lesser Flamingo, the main conservation threats, the current conservation provisions and the required conservation actions in their respective countries or geographic regions. Knowledge gaps were identified and an ideal knowledge/research needs situation was defined. Following the range state presentations, the workshop facilitator, Szabolcs Nagy of BirdLife Europe, led the delegates in an analysis of the problems and the threats, identified the root causes of the threats and developed a 'Problems Tree'. Identification of the objectives of the Action Plan was then conducted and, working in sub-population groups, the range-state delegates defined the conservation actions at the regional, national and site levels.

From the process above, some of the most important objectives of the action plan became apparent:

1. all critical sites for Lesser Flamingos be maintained in good ecological condition, which would be achieved through actions such as designating key

- sites as protected areas, identifying management needs of these sites, and develop and implement integrated management plans for these sites;
2. ensure that breeding colonies are not disturbed, by protection status and zonation enforcement, raising awareness, and helping local communities to identify alternative livelihood practices;
 3. reduce the impact of poisoning and disease causing current mass die-offs in the population, particularly in East Africa, by establishing health surveillance programmes, ensuring anti-pollution policy and legislation are implemented and enforced, and identifying root causes and carry out mitigation actions.

With Botswana hosting one of the most important breeding sites for the species in Africa, many of the proposed actions will target specifically, among other important sites throughout the species range, Sua Pan and the surrounding Makgadikgadi wetland system.

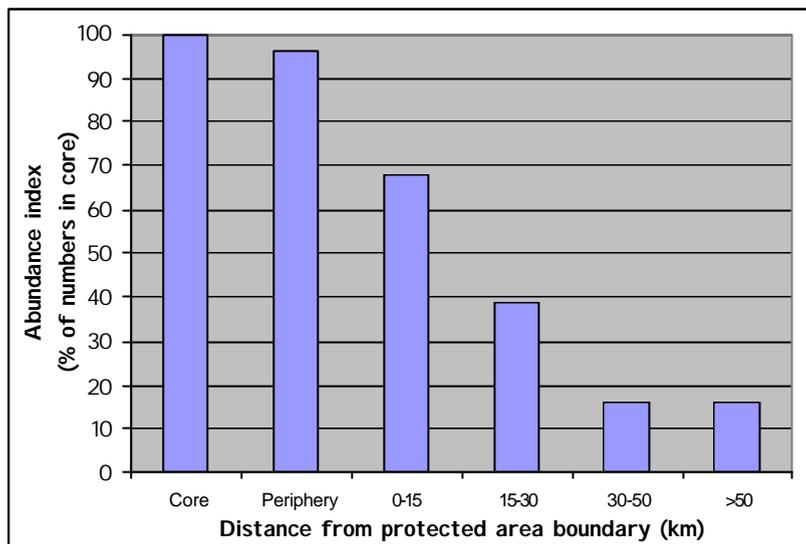
In addition to achieving the main objective of the workshop, several talks were given on various interesting issues relating to Lesser Flamingos, which included current work being carried out on algae toxins in Kenya and their affect on flamingo health, detailed work on the presence and affects of heavy metal poisons in Lesser Flamingos, and the conception, planning and recent construction of a flamingo breeding island on Kamfers Dam in South Africa. Delegates were also treated to a very pleasant trip to Lake Nakuru that, on occasions, held a large proportion of the continent's population (>1 million birds).



Flamingos at Lake Nakuru, Kenya. Photo: G McCulloch

RAPTORS FARING POORLY

The large wilderness areas in Botswana are one of the strongholds for raptors in southern Africa. Nevertheless, outside protected areas, many raptor species still have an unfavourable conservation status according to work done by Marc Herremans, former DWNP Ornithologist. A survey of raptor distribution in the country's woodlands between 1991 and 1995 found a notable decline in raptor abundance with increasing distance from protected areas, especially during the dry season.



The analysis was based on 9,964 records of diurnal raptors of over 40 species. Large (>2kg), non-migratory eagle species showed the most marked reduction in numbers away from protected areas, but similar (though less extreme) patterns were also observed among various species of smaller raptors (e.g. kites, sparrowhawks, kestrels). For certain species, there was also a clear 'edge effect' within protected areas, with the abundance of large eagle species almost 45% lower in the peripheral zone (within 30km of the boundary) than in the core.

The poor conservation status of raptors in Botswana seems mainly due to widespread depletion of biomass and biodiversity (including potential prey), as a result of structural changes to the vegetation caused by livestock grazing. The relative scarcity of woodland raptors outside protected areas is even more acute in more densely populated regions of southern Africa, with agricultural practices also implicated in these declines. Information from 'State of the World's Birds - 2004'.

Did you know?

A Barn Swallow ringed by Bennie van den Brink on 31st January, 2003 in Notwane, Gaborone, was caught and released on 17th September, 2005 at Kinroor, Province of Brabant, Belgium. Distance apart = 8667 kilometres.

THE LAPPET-FACED VULTURE - A FLAGSHIP SPECIES

During 2007, BirdLife Botswana will be embarking on a study of the Lappet-faced Vulture. It is a globally threatened bird, but we know virtually nothing about its status in Botswana and whether the population is increasing, static or declining. To start with, before we can even develop an Action Plan for conserving the species, we need to gather basic information on the Lappet-faced Vulture - its distribution, major source of food, breeding areas, potential and real threats and, finally, causes of mortality. Consequently we are requesting all concerned people in Botswana to send us information on the bird, as follows:

- ✍ All observations, with date, number of birds at each sighting, and GPS co-ordinates (in decimal degrees, WGS 84).
- ✍ Nest records with precise GPS co-ordinates (this information will be regarded as confidential and not made available to anyone else)
- ✍ Record of food items, and their origin *e.g.* giraffe carcass (killed by lions), dead donkey (road kill)
- ✍ Observed threats *e.g.* human disturbance, poisoning, collision with powerlines *etc.*
- ✍ Observed causes of mortality *e.g.* hit by car on main road, shot by farmer *etc.*



Photo: G Verdoorn

While collecting information on the Lappet-faced Vulture, we can also easily collect similar information for a wide range of other raptors, with very little extra effort or expense. In this way, the Lappet-faced Vulture will be a flagship for all raptor species in Botswana.

In the meantime, please send the information requested above to one of the BirdLife Botswana addresses at the end of the newsletter. If you would like a Lappet-faced Vulture poster to be sent to you, please indicate this when you submit your information.

BOTSWANA TICKBIRD

Worldbirds, a web-based bird monitoring system is being officially launched in Botswana on 20th November in Gaborone and 21st November in Maun. Botswana is the second African country to log into this system, and our local version is called Botswana Tickbird. If you are interested in birds, you should attend the launch to find out more about the system, and how it can benefit YOU - it is interactive and participants can get just as much information OUT of the system as BirdLife

Botswana can. All the information from the Bird Atlas of Botswana has been entered in Botswana Tickbird, so you can generate checklists for any areas in which you are interested. Other uses of the system include the following:

- ✍ You can produce updated lists of recent sightings of interesting birds e.g. Pel's Fishing-Owl (or any bird or group of birds)
- ✍ Create your own maps
- ✍ Store and manage your own observations

If you would like to attend the launch in Gaborone, contact Kabelo Senyatso at telephone 3190540. For details of the Maun launch, contact Pete Hancock at 6865618.

The BirdLife Botswana website

The BirdLife Botswana website is undergoing a major overhaul in terms of the information available on the site, and its presentation – it will soon be better than ever. Work will be complete by end November - www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw

SCAVENGING GROUND HORNBILLS?

The photo below was sent in by Moamogedi Monwela, one of the regular contributors of information to our database. He photographed this group of Southern Ground Hornbills in the Jao Concession, picking at a zebra carcass that was about a month old.



ENHANCING LIVELIHOODS PROJECT

BirdLife Botswana, in partnership with five other BirdLife partners (in Malawi, Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia and Nigeria) and the respective Biodiversity and Protected Area authority in the six countries (Dept. of Environmental Affairs and Dept. of Wildlife and National Parks respectively for Botswana), and with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), are spearheading a project by which they intend to strengthen civil society groups and Protected Area (PA) authorities and facilitate a process through which they (and other interested stakeholders, such as the private sector) could engage in constructive partnerships to improve management effectiveness of Protected Areas, with a focus on "small" sites. In Botswana, the Nata Sanctuary has been chosen as the demonstration site.

In a bid to engage stakeholders in national Protected Area problem analysis, BirdLife Botswana conducted two workshops, in Gaborone (27th July 2006; for key government officers and other Non-Governmental Organisations) and Nata (3rd August 2006; for local community representatives). The main objectives of the workshops were:

1. To identify and analyze urgent issues regarding protected area management both at the national and local level (Nata Sanctuary)
2. To develop project activities to tackle those issues with a focus on Makgadikgadi Pans area and specifically Nata Sanctuary
3. To identify key barriers that act against effective management of the sanctuary and to develop possible solutions to the identified barriers
4. To explore and forge linkages between project activities of this *Enhancing local capacities for sustainable biodiversity action in Africa* initiative and on-going/planned projects and programmes at the local (site) and national level

A total of sixteen people (comprising stakeholders from different environmental Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), government departments, and representatives of different divisions within the United Nations) attended the Gaborone meeting, while the Nata meeting was attended by 34 people drawn from a broad spectrum of stakeholders that included representatives from all the Nata Sanctuary Trust participating villages, government departments and the private sector.

At both workshops, participants developed and discussed Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) to small Protected Areas in general and Nata Sanctuary in particular; then picked of some of the strengths (to build on) and some weaknesses that the project could address. Moreover, barriers to achieving desired outputs were identified; and similarly potential collaborators on the requisite project activities recognized - if you are reading this then there is a role you can play in this project!



The project proposal (based primarily on input from the two workshops) is due for submission to the GEF/UNDP at the end of December 2006, and if successful, implementation will commence sometime in 2007. We are at this stage consulting as widely as possible to ensure the project meets Botswana's needs, and are thus open to input from anyone who may have an interest in this initiative. To get a copy of the workshop proceedings or find out more about the project, contact the National Project Co-ordinator, Mr Kabelo Senyatso (see contact details provided on page 9.)



BirdLife makes a difference

During 2006, the number of birds considered threatened with extinction in Africa dropped from 234 to 230, according to the IUCN Red Data Book for Birds. This is largely due to the work done by some BirdLife partners in Africa, implementing conservation measures for Red Data species.

For the full story, see Africa/Afrique newsletter July, 2006 (the newsletter of the BirdLife Africa Partnership)

STOP PRESS

Just as this issue was being finalised, we heard the good news that the Global Council of BirdLife had approved BirdLife Botswana's application to be upgraded from an Affiliate member (the lowest membership category, assigned to new members) to Partner Designate (the intermediate category en route to full Partner). In response, Harold Hester, BirdLife Botswana Chairman, had this to say "It is a big day in our short history. We are simultaneously humble and proud; humble at what we still need to do and proud to be accepted by BirdLife International for what we are." He also acknowledged all the support that BirdLife Botswana has had from our partners – among others, the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, and the Department of Environmental Affairs – and from the donor community, including the Corporate sector.

CONTACT ADDRESSES

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Visit our website <http://www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw/>

BIRDLIFE BOTSWANA MISSION

BirdLife Botswana aims to conserve birds and important bird habitats, by creating awareness, carrying out research and promoting beneficial relationships between birds and people.

This newsletter appears quarterly. If you would like to contribute an article on your field observations or bird conservation project, please send it to

birdlifemaun@ngami.co.za



Membership Details

Membership is due in *January of each year*, as the subscription runs from January to December.

Rates

- Resident - entitles you to both Babbler issues and the quarterly Familiar Chat (per family): P120.00
- Corporate - (4 families): P2000
- Professional – rangers and guides (Babbler and Familiar chat): P60.00
- Bona fide students: P15.00
- Life - P2000
- Schools/Clubs - nil
- SADC Region - P150
- Overseas (and outside SADC) – P200

The following details are required:

I/We/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms: _____
wish to become members of BirdLife Botswana

Address: _____

Home/Cell Phone: _____

Work phone: _____

Email (PRINT please): _____

I acknowledge that my family dependents, invitees and I take part in the BirdLife Botswana organised events entirely at our own risk. I, in my personal capacity and as representative of my spouse, children, dependents, and invitees hereby keep BirdLife Botswana, its committee, members and agents indemnified and hold them harmless against all loss, injury, or damage to person or property from any cause (including negligence) arising as a result of our participation in events organised by BirdLife Botswana.

Signed _____

Date: _____

Please make your cheque payable to 'BirdLife Botswana'

Please return this form with your subscription to one of the addresses given below:

The Secretary (membership)
BirdLife Botswana
P/Bag 003
Suite 348
Mogoditshane
Botswana

Pete Hancock
PO Box 20463
Maun

or phone Pete to
collect 6860252

Guy Brina
Private Bag F12
Francistown

or phone Guy to
collect 2412913

Trish Williams
Private Bag K4
Kasane

or phone Trish to
collect 6250341

OFFICIAL USE

Card _____ Data base _____



Birds of Concern Reporting Sheet

BirdLife Botswana is very interested in collecting information on Birds of Concern – they are species that are either globally or nationally threatened. **Please use the format below when submitting sightings to make computerisation of the data easier.**

Note that the co-ordinates of each sighting are essential – it is convenient to get these from a GPS but of course they can be read off any good map. If you have a GPS, please set the datum to WGS 84 and the position format to decimal degrees. If you use any other datum/format, please just let us know what it is. Information in **bold** in the table below is the most important, if you cannot collect it all.

Species (see list below)	GPS co-ords		Quarter degree square e.g. 1923C4	Area e.g. NG 19	Locality e.g. 2 km west of Machaba	Date	Time	# of birds	Ad. M	Ad. F	Ad. ?	# of Imm.	Observer (your name)	Comments
	S	E												

The species that we are interested in are the following:

Slaty Egret	White-backed Night-Heron	Wattled Crane	Grey Crowned Crane	Lesser Flamingo
Cape Vulture	White-headed Vulture	Lappet-faced Vulture	Hooded Vulture	Pallid Harrier
Bateleur	Martial Eagle	Long-crested Eagle	Lesser Kestrel	Pel's Fishing-Owl
Kori Bustard	Southern Ground Hornbill	African Skimmer	Rosy-throated Longclaw	
Black-winged Pratincole				

Breeding records for these species would also be invaluable.

Please send this information to:

[BirdLife Botswana](http://birdlifemaun@ngami.co.za), PO Box 20463, Maun, BOTSWANA. Alternatively, please e-mail us at birdlifemaun@ngami.co.za

