



IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial
Botswana Tickbird Project
New BirdLife Botswana poster
Vulture information wanted
The Darwin Project
BirdLife partners secure funding
BirdLife's position: Avian flu in Africa
Single Species Action Plans
Bird guide training at Etsha
Chestnut-banded Plover counts
Profile: Bosele Lake Ngami Conservation Trust

EDITORIAL

The 12 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Botswana are vital for the long-term survival of Botswana's avifauna. Not surprisingly, since birds are well-known as useful environmental indicators, they are also increasingly being recognised as important reservoirs of biodiversity generally. This means that BirdLife Botswana, in its quest to improve the status of these IBAs, is making a valuable contribution to biodiversity conservation in the country, and helping to meet Botswana's commitments under the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD).

BirdLife has developed a scientific framework for monitoring IBAs, and this is being implemented by BirdLife Botswana and other partners. The monitoring strategy involves measuring the condition (or state) of the IBA, scoring the pressures (or threats) that exist, and ranking the response (conservation action taken to address the threats) in such a way that an overall score can be obtained for each IBA at a given time. By repeating this monitoring at prescribed intervals, and relating the score obtained to the previous score, it can be seen whether or not there has been an improvement in the state of each IBA.

The implication of this over-simplified description of BirdLife's IBA monitoring system is that there is now a simple, objective way of measuring the success (or otherwise) of biodiversity conservation activities. Although signatories to the CBD are obliged to show that they have made significant improvements to biodiversity conservation, this has not been easy to do in the absence of a credible, unbiased system. BirdLife has been breaking new ground and has developed one of the first workable models that will enable Governments to measure changes in the state of the environment based on their biodiversity conservation efforts. This is just one way in which BirdLife remains relevant to a wider audience, and contributes to addressing mainstream issues throughout the world.

Pete Hancock



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

BOTSWANA TICKBIRD PROJECT

The Botswana Tickbird project was successfully launched in Gaborone on 20th November by the Director of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Ms Rapelang Mojaphoko. Speaking at the launch, she encouraged everyone to participate in the scheme and thereby make a contribution towards monitoring and conserving birds in Botswana. The project was also introduced to birders in Maun and Kasane by Ms Rachel Roberts from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), one of the major partners in developing the project.

If you've not been into the website yet, do have a look – the more people who contribute, the more useful it will be to all.

[Enter your bird checklist – www.worldbirds.org/Botswana](http://www.worldbirds.org/Botswana)

NEW BIRDLIFE BOTSWANA POSTER



We have produced a full colour poster on the Lappet-faced Vulture to solicit information on this magnificent but globally threatened bird. The poster features a striking portrait of the bird taken by June Liversedge and we are grateful to her for allowing us to use the photograph at no charge. The printing of the poster has been financed by the GEF Small Grants Programme, as well as Letaka Safaris and Northern Building Supplies, two Maun-based companies that have a commitment to bird conservation. Our sincere thanks go to these donors for funding the poster.

If you are able to display one of these posters in a public place where it will be seen by many people, and are willing to help generate an interest in the plight of this bird, please contact your nearest BirdLife Botswana branch to arrange to get a copy (see contact details at the end of the newsletter).

VULTURE INFORMATION WANTED

As part of on-going research into the biology and ecology of vultures in Namibia, colleagues working there have fitted numerous vultures with colour rings and wing-tags *e.g.* 65 Lappet-faced Vultures were ringed in 2005 alone. All rings and tags have a unique number written on them.

Since vultures have huge home ranges, some of these birds undoubtedly move into or through Botswana. Anyone seeing one of the marked birds, should record the number on the ring/tag, the date and place where the bird was seen (GPS co-ords would be good!), and send the information to their nearest BirdLife Botswana office or directly to Holger Kolberg, holgerk@mweb.com.na, telephone +264-61-2842554, Private Bag 13306, Windhoek.



Photo: Endangered Wildlife Trust, Birds of Prey Working Group

THE DARWIN PROJECT

The UK Government is helping six of the world's most biodiversity-rich countries to meet their obligations under the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD).

An ambitious 3-year project will strengthen the scientific capacity of national conservation NGOs, enabling them to carry out the data gathering and analysis for effective implementation of the Convention. BirdLife partners from the following countries will be taking part: Bolivia, Botswana, Lebanon, Nepal, Palau and Russia. All are rich in biodiversity and hold important populations of threatened species.

"The project has been designed with impact and legacy very much in mind," said Alison Stattersfield, BirdLife's Head of Science, who is spearheading the project. "We have selected partners with great potential to develop their scientific capacity and thereby improve conservation outcomes. We will develop a training programme

and a set of activities which will become embedded into on-going programmes once the Darwin funding comes to an end."

"Birds are excellent indicators of biodiversity and the state of the environment because they are conspicuous, relatively easy to identify, found almost everywhere, and we have an understanding of their biology and life-histories from which we can infer changes. Furthermore, variations in bird populations and/or species composition provide useful indications of environmental changes."

As the project progresses, host country co-ordinators will begin to act as regional 'hubs' for training staff from other national BirdLife Partners. Key project activities will be the identification of scientific work needed to support each country's implementation of the CBD and appropriate training requirements to undertake it; the establishment of demonstration projects to develop the national datasets needed for scientific analyses; cross-regional workshops to pass on the lessons learned to other BirdLife partners; websites making project outcomes widely available (the results will be widely disseminated through the CBD's Clearing House Mechanism, of which BirdLife is an International Thematic Focal Point); and an "Analysis Guide" that will ensure future scientific analyses can be carried out under the same parameters and are therefore comparable.

According to Kabelo Senyatso, who leads the project in Botswana, "BirdLife Botswana's contribution will centre on developing simple monitoring systems for Botswana's birds—with a focus on threatened species such as Wattled Crane *Mogolori* and Kori Bustard *Kgori*, and promoting them as indicators of the general trends in biodiversity levels."

BIRDLIFE PARTNERS SECURE FUNDING FROM THE EU

Along with seven other BirdLife partners in Africa and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), BirdLife Botswana is celebrating a recent grant award of EURO 1,886,172 from the European Union, to support conservation action in Africa. This 4-year project seeks to promote effective monitoring and conservation action at Important Bird Areas (IBAs) as a contribution to reducing the rate of biodiversity loss in Africa. The expected outputs from the project are: (1) Appropriate capacity built for conducting and sustaining all stages of biodiversity monitoring at IBAs; (2) Biodiversity monitoring institutionalised as a core activity of management authorities, NGOs and local communities, and effectively co-ordinated; (3) Data on the condition of selected IBAs collected, analysed and disseminated with the involvement of stakeholders; and (4) Information from monitoring effectively availed to influence management of IBAs by local, national and global actors. Key project partners will be



members of DWNP, who are the overall authority for protected areas in Botswana. The project is expected to commence in early February 2007.

BIRDLIFE'S POSITION: AVIAN FLU IN AFRICA

Even though there were some cases of avian outbreaks of H5N1 in some countries in Africa, BirdLife believes that it is unlikely that migratory wild birds carried the virus to Africa. There is strong circumstantial evidence that movements of poultry and poultry products are responsible. The timing and location of these outbreaks do not match the movements of migratory birds. Moreover, in countries such as Egypt and Nigeria, poultry outbreaks occurred almost simultaneously in multiple, large-scale poultry operations, indicating that migratory birds were an unlikely agent of the transmission. If H5N1 was carried by wild birds, outbreaks should have occurred in key wetlands for migratory birds, especially in East Africa where there has been surveillance of wild birds in place. (Source: BirdLife International Africa Partnership e-bulletin).



Photo: G Atkinson

SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLANS

Several International Species Action Plans (SAPs) have been produced recently or are under production – these are blueprints for the conservation of the species concerned. The formulation of these Action Plans involves all stakeholders, and for species which occur in Botswana, it is our collective responsibility to implement the recommended conservation measures. It goes without saying therefore that we need to know the key elements of these plans, and these are outlined below:

[International Action Plan for the Lappet-faced Vulture](#)

According to this Action Plan, “the distribution, population size and trends of the species need to be determined, and the impact of human activities at key sites minimised”. BirdLife Botswana will be embarking on a major project to address these issues (see Bird Conservation Newsletter # 11, September, 2006). Our intention is to produce and then implement a national Action Plan for the Lappet-faced Vulture, within the framework provided by the International SAP; the gaps in our knowledge highlighted in the international plan must be filled so that locally relevant conservation measures can be developed.

International Action Plan for the Corn Crane



The Corn Crane is a migratory species that breeds in Eurasia, where it faces many threats. It comes to Southern Africa during our summer, but little is known about its numbers and distribution in Botswana except that Botswana is part of its core area. We need to gather information on its status and threats (if any) in Botswana, and we must ensure that its habitat in Botswana remains intact (it prefers tall grasslands and is quite secretive – two were recently recorded right in Maun near Matlapaneng not far from the Thamalakane River, so it may be easily overlooked). Finally the SAP also recommends that legal protection for the species is provided in Southern Africa.

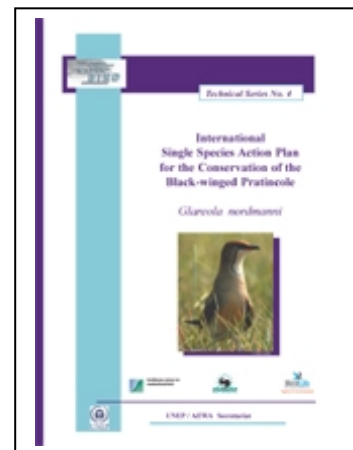
International Action Plan for the Maccoa Duck

Zenzele Mpofo from DWNP represented Botswana at the workshop to develop this Action Plan. Some of the actions that need to be taken in Botswana are as follows:

- Improve legal protection for the species
- Improve the protection status of key areas where it occurs

International Action Plan for the Black-winged Pratincole

As with the Corn Crane, the Black-winged Pratincole is a migrant to Botswana, this time mainly from Russia where it has undergone a precipitous decline. Botswana is one of three countries that support the largest over-wintering population. The Action Plan makes some recommendations about how we can contribute to the conservation of the species, but the most important is the development, endorsement and implementation of a National Action Plan for the species. We do not know what threats may face the birds when they are here in Botswana, so we need to monitor all the areas they utilise and identify any potential threats.



BIRDS CAN FLY!

A Great White Pelican ringed as a chick on an island in the Hardap Dam in Namibia on 15th May, 2005, was recovered dead on 22nd July, 2005 15 kilometres south-west of Maun. This represents a post-juvenile dispersal of 760 kilometres (minimum).

BIRD GUIDE TRAINING AT ETSHA

Recently a Basic Bird Guide Course was held in Etsha for members of the Okavango Jakotsha Trust. The course was conducted by Bathusi Letlhare and Tsogo Maiphetho, and was attended by people from each of the five villages that comprise the Trust. The Netherlands Committee of IUCN provided the funds that made the course possible, and we are grateful to them for this assistance.

The course focused mainly on basic bird identification and guiding skills, and involved both practical field and classroom sessions.



The participants showed a lot of enthusiasm and there were no absentees throughout the duration of the course. Twelve participants scored over 50% on the written tests and did very well on the practical assessment.

BirdLife Botswana is now working to help market the services offered by these guides. A brochure has been produced providing information on local bird guides, with contact details, and may be obtained from any BirdLife Botswana office. The western panhandle area is rich in 'Okavango specials' such as Pel's Fishing-Owl, Slaty Egret and Wattled Crane, and well worth a visit. The course participants know the area intimately, and most have their own mekoro. Contact Pete Hancock or Tsogo Maiphetho at the BirdLife Botswana office in Maun if you'd like more information on local bird guides.

CHESTNUT-BANDED PLOVER COUNTS

Bird species that show obvious population declines or exist in small numbers are relatively easy to categorise as globally threatened under IUCN red list criteria. However species that are highly concentrated at very few inaccessible sites under threat are more difficult to deal with. The [Chestnut-banded Plover](#) occurs in only

three major sites (Walvis Bay and Sandwich Harbour in Namibia and Lake Natron in Tanzania), and may be an overlooked globally Near Threatened species. More information is needed on the species in Botswana – it occurs in low numbers, apparently, at the Nata Delta (Sua Pan), and at Rysana and Mea Pans. One percent of the global population is only 178 birds and should any of these sites greatly exceed this number, they would be vitally important for the species. Anyone prepared to count Chestnut-banded Plovers at one or more of these localities, during January and July, should please contact Pete Hancock.

PROFILE: BOSELE LAKE NGAMI CONSERVATION TRUST

The Bosele Lake Ngami Conservation Trust is a Site Support Group (SSG) established to enable the communities around Lake Ngami – an Important Bird Area (IBA) – to work together towards the conservation and sustainable utilisation of resources found in and around the lake, for the overall betterment of the communities. The communities concerned are those resident in the Lake Ngami IBA *viz.* Sehithwa, Bothatogo and Legothwana.

Among other activities, the Trust will be promoting avi-tourism as a way of benefiting from the rich birdlife at the lake, thereby giving it a value to local people and at the same time creating an incentive to protect and conserve it. As part of the marketing of avi-tourism operations, the Trust will promote Lake Ngami as part of the Okavango Delta Ramsar site and as an internationally recognised Important Bird Area. Already there are trained bird guides in the communities, and 2007 will see further developments and activities in this area.



Aerial view – Lake Ngami IBA (Photo: H Oake)

SUA PAN - CRITICALLY IMPORTANT FLAMINGO BREEDING SITE

During early 2006, following good summer rains, Greater and Lesser Flamingos bred in large numbers in Sua Pan. Aerial surveys were conducted by flamingo specialist Dr Graham McCulloch, and the numbers of birds breeding were counted from photographs taken from the air. The Lesser Flamingo numbers peaked at 90,690 pairs! This astonishing number is the highest recorded breeding event for this Near Threatened species at Sua Pan, and for southern Africa. These numbers have only been exceeded in East Africa during the previous century.

CONTACT ADDRESSES

BirdLife Botswana
Private Bag 003
Suite 348
Mogoditshane

blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw

Tel: 3190540

Fax: 3190540

Physical address:

Unit C1

Kgale Siding

Plot 1069 KO

(the old TEBA complex near St Joseph's College)

BirdLife Botswana

PO Box 20463

Maun

birdlifemaun@ngami.co.za

6865618/6860252

6860525

Ngami Toyota

off the Maun/Sehithwa Road

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 <i>e.g.</i> 1923C4	Area <i>e.g.</i> NG 19	Locality <i>e.g.</i> 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://birdlife.org/botswana), PO Box 20463, Maun, BOTSWANA. Alternatively, please e-mail us at birdlifemaun@ngami.co.za

