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EDITORIAL

The African continent is home to an amazing 2,313 of the world's 9,917 bird species, of which just over 10% (234) are globally threatened. One of the significant threats to Africa's birds is the illegal trade in wild birds, and at a recent Council meeting of the African Partnership of BirdLife (CAP) it was agreed that a position statement on bird trade should be developed.

The factor prompting discussion about the bird trade was primarily its effect on the African Grey Parrot, and the BirdLife partnership has subsequently worked (successfully) towards achieving a total ban on trade in this species. However, numerous other species are negatively affected by the bird trade, for example the Grey Crowned Crane and Shoebill. (Closer to home, there has been some cross-border trade in Kori Bustards – one of our Birds of Concern). At the CAP meeting, partners were unanimous in opposing the trade in wild birds with one cautionary proviso – that an exception be made in cases where rural communities benefit from organised legal trade.

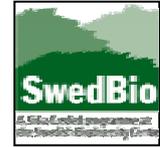
In Botswana, there is very little trade in wild birds, and certainly none undertaken by rural communities. Despite the small-scale capture and trade operations currently being carried out, problems have been experienced with determining sustainable offtake quotas and monitoring these operations. In view of this, and the potential the bird trade may have in spreading avian flu, it is BirdLife Botswana's contention that trade in any wild birds should be totally banned in this country. If you have any different views, or a contribution to make to this discussion, we'd appreciate hearing from you.

Pete Hancock



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

IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS PROJECT



BirdLife Botswana is participating in a Swedish Biodiversity Programme (SwedBio) funded project to improve the livelihoods of local communities by promoting the sustainable use of renewable natural resources through increased participation in biodiversity policy making and implementation. This project links the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of reducing poverty, directly with the WSSD Plan of Implementation which aims to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010. As such, it will contribute unequivocally to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which recognises that a healthy environmental base can contribute directly to employment, social and economic empowerment, and reduction of poverty.

The BirdLife/SwedBio project has pilot sites in each of three different countries – Botswana, Burkina Faso and Kenya – and is co-ordinated by the BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat in Nairobi. In Botswana, we are working with specific local communities associated with three of our Important Bird Areas (IBAs) which are also priority sites for biodiversity conservation – Mannyelanong, Lake Ngami and the Makgadikgadi Pans. At each of these IBAs, the communities have formed Site Support Groups – community-based organisations that have a vested interest in the birds (biodiversity) of 'their' area and wish to protect and conserve this resource by influencing policies and undertaking the advocacy work necessary to achieve this. The BirdLife/SwedBio project activities will help to achieve this by generating four critical results, as follows:

Result 1: To establish pilot projects managed by local NGOs, including Site Support Groups (SSGs), on the sustainable use of biodiversity that improves the livelihoods of local communities and enhances their involvement in the policy arena.

Result 2: To empower local communities to participate in biodiversity policy making and implementation at various levels.

Result 3: To strengthen the capacity of selected national NGOs in Africa (BirdLife partners) to support local participation in biodiversity policy making and implementation.

Result 4: To promote the participation of African NGOs and local community organisations, including Site Support Groups, in regional and international policy forums related to biodiversity.

All three Site Support Groups are using avi-tourism (tourism based on birds) to enhance their livelihoods thereby providing a direct incentive to conserve this component of biodiversity by whatever means necessary. Our Community Liaison Officer, Sehenyi Tlotlego, is working full-time with the SSG members to achieve the results outlined above. Future issues of this newsletter will provide updates as the project progresses.

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY

World Migratory Bird Day was celebrated for the first time on 8th April, 2006; this year it is being held on 12-13 May with the theme "Migratory birds in a changing climate". Climate change has severe consequences for these nomads of the skies: it causes the loss of essential bird habitats, changes migration patterns and increases the competition for food between migratory birds and residents.



Join us in celebrating World Migratory Bird Day this year. This global event needs the support of all bird enthusiasts around the world. Take action! Organise activities on 12-13 May that are linked to birds and encourage bird conservation, increase awareness through bird watching excursions, bird rallies, educational programmes or public events. Your participation will help to make this weekend a worthwhile one! See www.worldmigratorybirdday.org for more information.

IMPORTANT HABITATS

Much of northern Botswana is covered by the miombo/mopane biome, a very interesting (though largely neglected) savanna habitat. For instance, did you know that:

- the miombo/mopane woodlands host 4,600 endemic plants and 170 endemic vertebrates?

- they cover about 1.2 million km² of southern Africa spread over 11 countries, and form arguably the single largest block of contiguous tropical dry woodlands in the world?
- there are 109 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) within the 'miombo/mopane belt' spread over these 11 countries?
- the miombo/mopane biome includes 938 different bird species, including 67 biome-restricted species (birds that are not found in any other habitats), and that out of these, 11 are of global conservation concern?
- six of the 11 miombo/mopane countries are included in the list of the world's top 50 ranking countries for bird biodiversity – the so-called 'mega-biodiversity countries'?
- 24 out of the top 100 unprotected Important Bird Areas for globally threatened species are located in the 11 countries that form the miombo/mopane ecoregion?
- there are BirdLife NGOs in six miombo/mopane countries - BirdLife Botswana is one.

So, all in all, the miombo/mopane habitat is an area of extreme regional and global biodiversity importance. (Source: BirdLife International Africa Partnership e-bulletin, October – December, 2005).



NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Reiko Iitsuka, originally from Japan, joined BirdLife Botswana as a JICA (Japan Overseas Co-operation Agency) volunteer in January 2006 and will be working with us until the end of November 2007.



Her main assignments with BirdLife Botswana are to assist on two main projects, the UNDP/GEF/BirdLife *Enhancing Local Capacities for Sustainable Biodiversity Action in Africa* project and the BirdLife/SwedBio Project, and to support other on-going activities including instigating measures to increase the number of BirdLife Botswana's members, especially local citizens. She is based in Gaborone.

She has a Masters of Environmental Management with a focus on natural resource economics and policy, and a Masters of Forestry from Duke University in the US. She has work experience with Japan National Institute for Environmental Studies as an assistant researcher, Forest Trends (an NGO based in Washington DC), the World Bank's forestry team as a consultant, and FAO's regional office in Thailand as an intern. Her primary interest is to promote community based natural resource management. This is her first time to stay and work in Africa and she believes that working with BirdLife Botswana will be a good opportunity to strengthen her expertise on the ground level.

Sehenyi Tlotlego has recently joined us as Community Liaison Officer, and is working mainly with Site Support Groups at Mannyelanong, Makgadikgadi and Lake Ngami Important Bird Areas. He operates from the Maun office.



He was born and raised in rural Seronga - a remote village on the north-eastern side of the Okavango Delta, Botswana. From this background, he has worked hard to improve himself, and in 2004 completed a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science at the University of Botswana. He was top of his class and attained a 1st class pass in his major (Physical Environmental Science), and an award for this outstanding achievement.

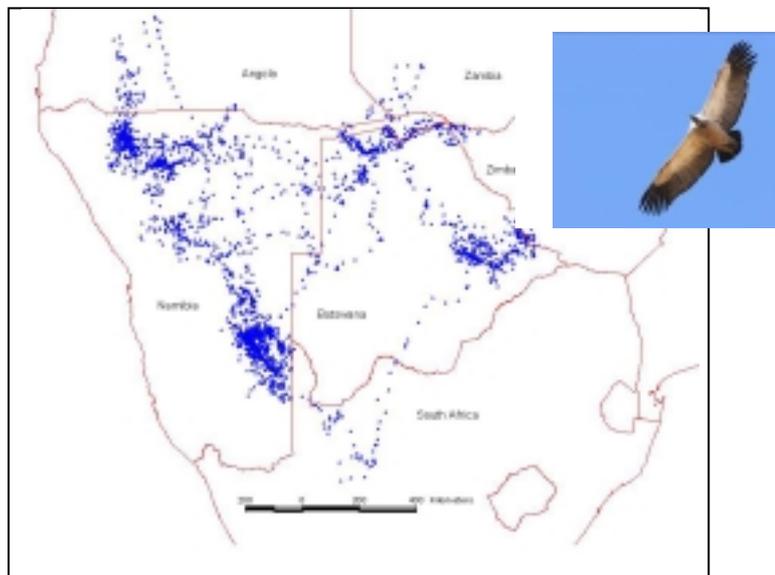
He has vast experience (accumulated over 10 years) in the tourism industry, environmental management and community development. His experience in community development has been through working with numerous communities in Ngamiland including Gudigwa (Gudigwa Cultural Village), Okavango Polers Trust (Mbiroba Camp) Khwai (the Khwai Development Trust) and XaiXai (CgaeCgae Tlabololo Trust), to name just a few. His wealth of knowledge in community-based natural resources management is largely based on practical experience and short courses and training workshops undertaken during his time with environmental conservation NGOs, private companies (safari and consultancy companies) and learning institutions in Botswana. These institutions include the Okavango Peoples Wildlife Trust, Conservation International (Okavango Programme), internationally renowned EcoSurv Consultants, Ecotourism Support Services, Ntingana Consulting and the University of Botswana's Harry Oppenheimer Okavango Research Centre.

Despite only having graduated relatively recently, he has a wealth of experience in environmental (both social and physical) research and has been part of numerous surveys such as perception surveys, socio-economic baseline surveys, and various management and tourism development plans. He has enjoyed executing most of the

above mentioned tasks either as a member of a team of full time staff or of a team of experienced consultants, with whom he has worked well over the years. Mr Tlotlego is not new to BirdLife Botswana, having worked as a consultant to facilitate the registration of the Lake Ngami Community Trust, a task he completed successfully during 2006.

NO PASSPORT REQUIRED

In a previous newsletter (# 6), we reported on the movements of a Cape Vulture that had been fitted with a satellite transmitter in Namibia, and which subsequently moved into southern Angola and thence into Botswana. This bird has now covered a sizeable area of southern Africa, having been in six countries! The straight line distances covered from point to point (these are recorded each hour) indicate that it has flown at least 64,000 kilometres. These distances do not include circling and meanders flown between each hourly location.



Map and information courtesy J Mendelsohn.

While many of the vulture's movements appear nomadic, the following features are interesting:

- it has repeatedly returned to several, perhaps favoured, foraging areas;
- most of its time in Botswana was spent along the Panhandle, and in the Linyanti and Savuti area – it was not reported by anyone during this time!
- it has passed close to the Tswapong Hills breeding site in eastern Botswana, and has therefore almost certainly mixed with birds that breed there;
- since this bird has traversed most of Southern Africa, it shows that the Cape Vulture population is probably a meta-population that is made up of inter-related sub-populations – they should be monitored and managed as one.

AFRICAN WATERBIRD COUNTS – SUMMER 2007

Because of the generally low rainfall over the country, water levels in some dams in the south-east such as Bokaa Dam, Bathoen Dam and Gamoleele Dam were very low. By contrast, in the Makgadikgadi system at Nata Delta there was still much standing water, to a depth of 0.5m, making access to the delta itself difficult.

South-east Botswana

As usual, Bokaa Dam surpassed all other sites in terms of overall numbers of birds and of species. Of particular note were about 1,500 White-faced Duck and 210 Black-winged Pratincoles. (Whilst a good count for Bokaa, the number of Black-winged Pratincoles there was a fraction of the 76,500 counted at Vaaldam in SA last year). Lobatse Sewage Ponds held over 1,100 birds including a high count of about 500 Southern Pochard and 8-12 African Wattled Lapwings. However, other smaller sites did produce some good individual species counts. For example, there were 58 South African Shelduck and 55 Maccoa Ducks at Jwaneng Sewage Ponds, 18 South African Shelduck and 16 Maccoa Ducks at Ramotswa Sewage Ponds, 19 Maccoa Ducks at Mogobane Dam and 10 Yellow-billed Storks and a Green Sandpiper at Gamoleele Dam. There was no count at Phakalane Sewage Ponds but Chris Brewster reported that there were very few birds there other than some fish-eaters as White-breasted Cormorants and Little Egrets and a few Blacksmith Lapwings, Egyptian Geese and Spur-winged Geese.

Eastern Botswana

Heavy rain on the count morning and the lack of a boat meant that only about 50% of Shashe Dam was counted. However, over 1,500 birds were noted including 12 African Fish-Eagles and two White-fronted Plovers.

Makgadikgadi Pans

An excellent count was made at Nata Sanctuary of over 7,000 birds including 3,206 Great White and 49 Pink-backed Pelicans, 34 Grey Herons, 181 Yellow-billed Storks, 12 Grey Crowned Cranes and no fewer than 1,093 Whiskered Terns. The high Sua Spit count was dominated by flamingos – over 5,000 Greater and over 100,000 Lesser.

Okavango Delta

Whilst separate from the Delta, Maun Sewage Ponds often provides something of interest. January was no exception with the two species of flamingo present as well as 12 Pied Avocet, and eight White-fronted Plovers.

As always (except for Lake Ngami), the Boteti and Thamalakane Rivers at the southern edge of the Delta were the most productive sites for diversity (57 species on the two rivers) and numbers (almost 7,000 birds). Highlights were over 700



White-backed Ducks on these rivers and 38 African Skimmers. Jao Flats produced 56 Wattled Cranes. Elsewhere in the Delta numbers were quite low. Unfortunately no count was made at Lake Ngami in January or February.

Chobe River

The short section from the park boundary eastwards to Mowana Lodge between Kasane and Kazungula was covered and a team of observers covered the long section from the Park boundary to Ngoma Bridge and found almost 4,000 birds but no species in very high numbers. Nine African Crakes were of note.

Table 2. Waterbirds counted during January and February 2007 (excluding kingfishers and wagtails)

Site	No. counted	No. spp.		No. counted	No. spp.
South-east Botswana	8822	61	Makgadikgadi Pans	112,658	55
Bathoen Dam	180	12	Sua Spit, Sua Pan	105,387	34
Bokaa Dam	4183	45	Nata Delta, Sua Pan	7271	47
Gamoleele Dam	670	29			
Jwaneng Sewage Ponds	423	20	Okavango Delta	9,829	78
Kgoro Pan	Dry		Gadikwe Lediba	186	15
Lobatse Sewage Ponds	1188	25	Gcobega Lediba	72	15
Mogobane Dam	567	24	Xakanaxa Lediba	123	16
Moshupa Dam	563	18	Maunachira River	46	14
Ngotwane Dam	266	25	Boteti River	3,202	49
Ramotswa Sewage Ponds	782	19	Jao/Kwetsane Flats	601	36
			Khwai River	369	28
Eastern Botswana	1,517	43	Lake Ngami		
Shashe Dam	1,517	43	Thamalakane River	3,718	44
			Okavango River	979	25
Chobe River	4,090	41	Maun Sewage Ponds	533	22

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to everyone who helped with the summer counts.

In south-east Botswana: Chris Brewster, Ian Draycott, Keddy Mooketsa, Mike & Daphne Goldsworthy, Harold Hester with, at various times, Mpho Bowie and Giles & Lauren Calenborne carried out the counts.

At Shashe Dam: A team comprising Peter D'Arcy, Guy Brina, Tess & Maggie Brina, Nicky Bousfield, Lesley Hagon, Dave & Tracy Buchan, George Herd and Helen Williamson counted from the shore in early February 2007.



In the Makgadikgadi Pans: Graham and Anna McCulloch carried out the summer count at Nata, together with Ali Flatt, Mark Muller and Richard Randall, whilst Graham surveyed Sua Spit in Sua Pan too.

In the Okavango Delta: Kutlwano Banda, Hannelore Bendsen, Florian Bendsen, Ali Flatt, Pete Hancock, Elizabeth Harcourt, Jost Kabozu, John Kgami, Tsogo Maiphetho, Mendy Makwati, David Mapodise, Zee Mpofu, Mark Muller, Jargon Nchunga, Richard Randall, Wago Sarefo, Jakes Tembwe and Justin Wootton were the volunteers.

Along the Chobe River: Richard Randall, Mark Muller, Ali Flatt and Elizabeth Harcourt covered the long section from the park boundary at Kasane to Ngoma Bridge whilst Mark Vandewalle surveyed the section from the park boundary to Mowana Lodge.

Stephanie Tyler

2007 FLOODS

Despite below average rains in the north of the country, the major rivers are flooding strongly and rather earlier than usual. The Zambezi and Chobe Rivers have exceptionally high water levels for this time of the year, and some lodges in Kazungula are partially flooded. Recent rain in the catchment of these rivers means that the water levels will probably rise further, with the distinct possibility of Lake Liambezi also becoming flooded.

Although the Okavango River has a different catchment, it too is flooding earlier and at the time of writing, water levels in the panhandle are a metre higher than normal for this time of year. Although it is not certain which of the distributaries of the Okavango will carry most water, it is highly likely that Lake Ngami will fill to a larger extent, and earlier than recent years – this is likely to trigger large-scale breeding among waterbirds. All in all, 2007 should be a good year for waterbirds!

NEW IMPROVED NERCS

The Nest Record Card Scheme (NERCS) has been in existence since before Botswana's Independence in the mid-1960s, and thousands of bird breeding records have been accumulated to date. Tsogo Maiphetho has been computerising these records and has made good progress in entering them into an MS Access database. We have upgraded the system to bring it into line with that currently being used by the Avian Demography Unit in South Africa (to ensure that all records for Southern Africa will be compatible), and in this regard acknowledge the support of the ADU – in particular that of Marius Wheeler who has been assisting us. We are now in a position to actively canvas new records, so if you are interested in contributing to the



system, please contact the BirdLife Botswana office in Maun to register as a participant and receive copies of the new nest record form and a copy of the booklet "Collecting information on nesting birds in Southern Africa" (free of charge).

People who have old, unused nest record cards should discontinue using them, and obtain the new form. The new form is more comprehensive and useful, and easier to computerise. All forms should be submitted to the Maun Office.



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 Babblers 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
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Address: _____

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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:

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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

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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

