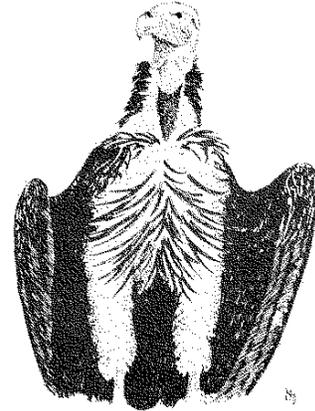




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EDITORIAL

BirdLife Botswana is an organisation on the move. Since 2002, our staff complement has increased to seven full-time employees (including one Japanese volunteer). Our annual income has also increased - almost fifty-fold, from a mere P20,000 *per annum* to close to P1 million in 2006 as our efforts to conserve Botswana's birds have escalated.

A great deal of the success of our organisation is directly attributed to the efforts of (among others) Kabelo Senyatso who, in 2002, was identified by the BirdLife Botswana Committee in Gaborone as its first full-time employee. He subsequently received a scholarship from BirdLife Botswana to undertake an MSc in Conservation Biology at the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology at the University of Cape Town. Since completing in 2004, he has made BirdLife Botswana his calling in life. He has been working tirelessly to set the organisation's direction and to generate bird conservation projects and secure funding while at the same time building partnerships with other stakeholders.

It is therefore appropriate that Kabelo has been appointed as the first Director of BirdLife Botswana as from May this year. I hope that all readers of this newsletter will join with me in congratulating him on his well-deserved promotion. In addition to his workload as Director, he will be embarking on his PhD early in 2008.

Pete Hancock



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

HYBRID EAGLES IN BOTSWANA

Ornithologists in Poland have fitted several Greater and Lesser Spotted Eagles (*Aquila clanga* and *A. pomarina*) with satellite transmitters and two birds, which are hybrids (*A. clanga* x *A. pomarina*), have been tracked to North-eastern Botswana and the Caprivi Strip. Keen birders should keep a look out for these birds during our summer months.

(Information from Raptors Namibia, February 2007)

BIRDLIFE GUIDING COURSE AT NATA SANCTUARY

Traditionally, guides have been absent from the Nata Bird Sanctuary, a community run initiative on the edge of Sua Pan, Makgadikgadi. If you required local knowledge of the area and/or its birdlife, or merely wanted to do something different like a guided walk, you were forced to hire a guide from a nearby private lodge. Recently, however, an intensive twelve-day bird guide training course, funded by the Swedish Biodiversity Foundation and TUSK Trust, was conducted by BirdLife Botswana. The aim of the training programme was to give individuals from the local communities an opportunity to become bird guides and increase the activity base of Nata Sanctuary. In addition, it was aimed at improving individual livelihoods.

Over fifty interested applicants, from the four villages surrounding Nata Sanctuary, turned up to be interviewed for the course, from which twelve were finally selected. The training was conducted by Dr Graham McCulloch of Sua Pan and Tsogo Maiphetho from BirdLife Botswana's office in Maun. During the twelve day course, the trainees improved dramatically in their bird identification skills as well as gaining a great deal of knowledge about bird feeding, breeding, and migration behaviour. The trainees were also given a lot of information about the Makgadikgadi wetlands itself, its origins and its current physical and hydrological characteristics. An important element of the training programme also comprised gaining practical experience in the use of birding equipment (binoculars, telescopes and field-guides) and grasping the important principles and techniques of guiding.





Dr Graham McCulloch (far right) with trainees on a field practical

With the course completed and some basic infrastructure set up, these newly 'fledged' bird guides will now begin actively taking part in the Botswana Wildlife Training Institute Course, in Maun to become fully-fledged professional guides. The information learned during this bird guiding course will, however, form a large part of their skills and knowledge base necessary to work in Nata Sanctuary and it is hoped that they will soon begin imparting their knowledge to some of the many tourists who pass through Nata Bird Sanctuary. Bird guiding will not only broaden the activity base, it will generate more income opportunities for these individual guides. It is hoped that their success as guides will encourage others in the community to see the potential for direct benefit from Botswana's growing tourism industry and realise the value of the preservation and effective management of their natural resources and birdlife.

Graham McCulloch

LOOK OUT FOR K070

On 18th October, 2006, Abrie Maritz was sitting at the top of a long stepladder at the nest of an African White-backed Vulture in Vanzylsrus District in the Northern Cape of South Africa. His objective was to put a patagial (wing) tag on the vulture chick, which he succeeded in doing. This chick, tagged K070, later fledged successfully, and flew off into the unknown.

On 25th May, 2007, David Dugmore was checking the waterhole in the Boteti Riverbed at Meno-a-kwena in the Makgadikgadi area when he noticed an immature White-backed Vulture sporting a bright yellow wing tag. Closer investigation revealed that it was numbered K070 - some 760 kilometres from 'home!' David managed to take a clear photo of the bird and sent it to BirdLife Botswana (see overleaf) - this enabled the bird's origin to be traced.





Wing tags are conspicuous and legible (Photo: D Dugmore)

Previous issues of this newsletter have alerted people to the fact that wing tagged vultures from neighbouring countries are going to be seen with increasing frequency throughout Botswana. There are already sightings of Cape Vultures, tagged in the Magaliesberg in South Africa, pitching up at Mannyelanong Cape Vulture colony near Otse in South-East District, and now K070 is the first wing tagged White-backed Vulture to be seen. Please report all future sightings to your nearest BirdLife Botswana office.

BIRDLIFE BOTSWANA PATRON'S TRUST FUND

The Patron of BirdLife Botswana, Mr Sedia C Modise established a Patron's Trust Fund to specifically support outreach programmes and activities that would enhance a better understanding of bird conservation and the natural environment. We would like to acknowledge the recent generous donation made to this fund by Mr J Broekhuis. Groups wishing to access this fund for educational purposes are advised to contact Kabelo Senyatso at the BirdLife Office in Gaborone.

SHORT-CLAWED LARK PROJECT

The Short-clawed Lark is one of the twelve species of lark that occur in Botswana. Though it is often common where it occurs, the Short-clawed Lark has quite a restricted range in Botswana, being found only in the south-east of the country. Its known range extends north as far as Lephepe and Kodibeleng, south to Ramatlabama and Leporung and east to the South African border at Ramotswa and Sikwane. It extends in the west to the edge of the Kalahari at Lethlakeng and Moshaneng. It is largely restricted to areas where there are



traditional agricultural practices and it favours areas of fallow land and other open, usually overgrazed, areas.

The Short-clawed Lark is a large species of lark. For a lark it has a relatively long and slender bill and a relatively long tail. It is similar in colouration to a Sabota Lark but is clearly larger and more pipit-like than that species. It most closely resembles the Rufous-naped Lark, but it has a more slender bill, longer tail and darker colouration than that species. The calls of the Short-clawed Lark and Rufous-naped Larks are rather similar, but the two calls can be easily distinguished with practice.

Short-clawed Larks are endemic to southern Africa. The majority of Short-clawed Larks are found in south-eastern Botswana, with smaller numbers being found across the border in South Africa in the Northern Cape, North West and Free State Provinces and also around Polokwane (Pietersburg) in Limpopo Province. A recent survey in South Africa by D Engelbrecht, J Grosel and S Dippenaar found that there appeared to be a reduction in the range and numbers of Short-clawed Larks in the Northern Cape, North West and Free State Provinces of South Africa.

In the early 1990s, Marc Herremans (then ornithologist with DWNP) made a study of the species and estimated that over 10,000 pairs might occur in south-eastern Botswana. There has been no fieldwork done on the species in Botswana in the last fifteen years and it is unknown whether or not the numbers of Short-clawed Larks are stable here. In view of the apparent reduction in the numbers in South Africa and the species' restricted range, it is felt that there is a need for a survey to establish if there has been any change in its status in south-eastern Botswana.

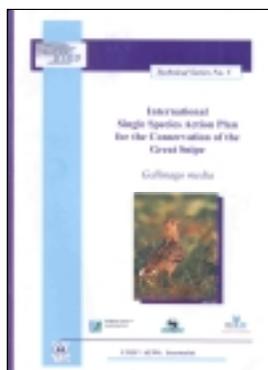
BirdLife Botswana is intending to survey a part of the range of the Short-clawed Lark in south-eastern Botswana during the forthcoming summer, particularly from November to January, when the birds are most vocal and easily located. The intention is to find out how many pairs are present in a sample of 15 minute x 15 minute (quarter degree) squares within the known range of the species in south-eastern Botswana. It is estimated that the species is a common or fairly common resident in about 44 quarter degree squares and it is the intention to survey at least six of these squares. A quarter degree square is approximately 25 km by 27 km, but it will be only necessary to survey those parts of the square where there is suitable habitat. Areas of, for example, dense bush or rocky hills, need not be surveyed as Short-clawed Larks are unlikely to occur in these habitats.



BirdLife Botswana is looking for volunteers to take part in this survey during the forthcoming summer. If you feel able to survey any part of the range of the Short-clawed Lark in south-eastern Botswana, we would like to hear from you. If you enjoy looking at birds and you would like to put your observations to good use by participating in this survey, please contact either Kabelo Senyatso (blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw) or Chris Brewster (cbrewster@botsnet.bw).

Chris Brewster

GREAT SNIPE ACTION PLAN



The Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), in conjunction with stakeholders, has produced an International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Great Snipe. This bird, which migrates to Southern Africa during our summer, is globally threatened and has shown a significant long-term decline. This bird should be strictly protected in Botswana. More information is needed on the areas it uses – is a major part of its range in Botswana within protected areas, or does it occur in unprotected habitats that are degrading?

We simply don't know. Readers are requested to please send in any information that they have on this bird.

MORE THREATENED BIRDS

BirdLife International and IUCN have uplisted a number of bird species because of declining or vulnerable populations. In Botswana, species affected are:

- **Maccoa Duck** *Oxyura maccoa* – now uplisted to Near Threatened.
- **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* – a rare species in Botswana, now uplisted to Endangered.
- **White-headed Vulture** *Aegypius occipitalis* – now uplisted to Vulnerable.
- **African White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* – now uplisted to Near Threatened.
- **Chestnut-banded Plover** *Charadrius pallidus* – now uplisted to Near Threatened.

The Red Data list is ever-growing and is an indictment on our ability as conservationists – the **challenge** is for us to implement successful conservation programmes that lead to the recovery of species so that they can be removed from the List.



CAPE VULTURE ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB WORKSHOP

On 8th May 2007, the Cape Vulture Environmental Club (CVEC, a Site Support Group at the Mannyelanong Hill Important Bird Area) and BirdLife Botswana, hosted a one-day workshop at the Mannyelanong Hill Game Reserve Environmental Education Centre. The overall aim of the workshop was to enable members of CVEC (an Otse-based youth group) to jointly evaluate some of the major constraints and opportunities for the club (based on a SWOT analysis), develop an advocacy and communication plan for the club, and document some of the training needs for the club as a whole and for individual members. The workshop was also meant to help CVEC to initiate relationships with the Association of Environmental Clubs of Botswana (AECB), the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, and other stakeholders, including community leaders and the business community.



Cape Vulture Environmental Club members at the workshop

Some of the main workshop findings were that the SSG's strengths include that club members are young, active and have similar interests (which reduces incidences of conflict). In addition they are the only environmental youth club in Otse. Their main weaknesses were their failure to implement projects promptly due to poor time management, and the fact that all members are volunteers (who are at the same time looking for full-time employment elsewhere).

On the other hand, the youth group has many opportunities, which include access to youth grants and technical support offered by government departments and other agencies; their proximity to South Africa (which would enable them to benefit from the Soccer World Cup in 2010); and plentiful tourist attractions in the village (which include one of only two Cape Vulture colonies in the country). The group also acknowledged key threats to their operations, primarily the relocation of the Cape Vultures or dramatic declines in the population number as



a result of poisoning, both of which will render the site less attractive as a tourist destination.

As a way forward, it was suggested that the club instigate fund-raising activities *e.g.* handicrafts, membership subscription and approaching local corporates for support. To publicize the club and its objectives, there will be a need to produce leaflets describing the club, and organize regular meetings with village decision makers (Chief, Councillor, Village Development Committee) and other potential supporters outside Otse. All these will be done within the ambits of a Swedish Biodiversity Foundation-funded BirdLife International Improving Livelihoods Project, being piloted in Botswana, Kenya and Burkina Faso. The Botswana Department of Wildlife and National Parks also supports the Cape Vulture Environmental Club, and the contributions of all supporters are gratefully acknowledged. For more information on the Botswana component of this project, visit BirdLife Botswana at www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw, e-mail birdlifeclo@botsnet.bw or blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw. Alternatively telephone + 267 686 5272 or +267 3190540.

AVIAN FLU UPDATE

Extensive waterbird monitoring around the globe, much of it in H5N1-infected countries, has failed to provide a single, documented case of a wild bird carrying the virus.

GASE (AKA JAKE) FLIES FREE

Although BirdLife Botswana is not an animal welfare organisation or a bird rehabilitation centre, for purely humanitarian reasons we responded positively to a request from the District Wildlife Office in Maun to take care of an injured Great White Pelican. The pelican in question had been rescued by an enlightened taxi driver from certain death by stoning by a group of schoolboys, and turned out to be a young bird. It was soon nicknamed "Gase" after Gaseitsiwe Masunga, the head of the Research Division at DWNP Maun, and taken to the BirdLife office in a large cardboard box. Since Great White Pelicans in Botswana only breed at the Nata Sanctuary, it was surmised that this bird had made the 300 kilometre trip from Nata to the fringes of the Okavango Delta, to fish with its parents, and had arrived exhausted. Not having had any experience with caring for pelicans, our first 'port of call' was SANCCOB, the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds where we were fortunate to connect with Vanessa Strauss who provided useful advice that ultimately saved the bird. According to her, first priority was to rehydrate the bird, and this was



easily done over a period of several days by pouring the required amount of liquid down a tube inserted into the back of its throat. It was initially force-fed fresh fish three times a day, without much difficulty due to its exhausted and passive state. A key to its successful rehabilitation however was housing it in the Ngami Toyota swimming pool – pelicans have extensive air sacs on their breast and belly and these become damaged if the bird lies on the ground for extended periods – apart from this, the bird immediately perked up on being released in the water (unfortunately, this arrangement was not very good for the pool which turned rather murky!).



Gase in the swimming pool

Soon the pelican was eating fish freely and regaining its strength, so our thoughts turned to releasing it before it could become too habituated to people. Marta de Ponte Machado, the pelican expert at the Avian Demography Unit in Cape Town kindly sent us a complete set of rings so that the bird can be recognised if found again – obviously we are keen to know whether our efforts have been fruitful, even though rehabilitating a single bird is not necessarily a great contribution to the conservation of the species. It has a white and a pink plastic ring with the letters JA and KE respectively (hence the alternative name JAKE) on its left leg, and a conventional SAFRING metal ring on the right.



Mark Muller from BirdLife Botswana sets the pelican free (Photo: A Flatt)



Gase was released on 21st June by Mark Muller and Alison Flatt, near to a large flock of adult pelicans, and immediately flew over to join them. Later, when the flock took to the air, Gase was among them, thermalling high up until they were all out of sight

STOP PRESS - ENVIRONMENTAL BIKE CHALLENGE

As this issue of the newsletter was being finalised, six cyclists participating in the Environmental Bike Challenge were approaching Maun on their long ride from Gaborone.



Only 250 kilometres to go!

The ride, organised by Zenzele Mpofu, is a personal contribution by the cyclists to create an awareness of the importance of environmental conservation, and to raise funds for four non-governmental organisations that are making a contribution to environmental and personal health issues in Ngamiland in particular – they are Bana ba naga, BirdLife Botswana, the Maun Tree Planting Foundation and Women against Rape. BirdLife Botswana is represented on the ride by Tsogo Maiphetho.

Readers who would like to make a financial contribution to this project are advised to contact Zenzele Mpofu on cell 72142399. More of this in the next issue of the newsletter.





These stunning photos of a Red-chested Flufftail, seen recently at Drotsky's in Shakawe, were sent in by photographer Piet Scheepers.

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

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6860525
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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 6865618

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 issued? _____

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://www.birdlife.org/botswana), PO Box 20463, Maun, BOTSWANA. Alternatively, please e-mail us at birdlifemaun@ngami.co.za

