

BIRDS AND PEOPLE

No. 24

DECEMBER, 2009

BirdLife Botswana's Bird Conservation Newsletter



IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial

Botswana to host CAP 2010 meeting

Wildlife Clubs of Africa project

Migrant White Stork

From monitoring to action

CBM gains momentum

GEF-SGP funding for CBM

African Waterbird Counts coming up

Update on poisoned vultures

Improvements to Maun office

Photo of the month



EDITORIAL

One of the challenges of conserving birds in a semi-arid country like Botswana is that many species, especially waterbirds, are highly nomadic and mobile, and react to the occurrence of locally favourable habitat conditions. Thus it is that waterbird numbers in Botswana have recently burgeoned with the return of high flood levels in the major rivers in the northern part of the country, and the increased extent of flooding.

The Zambezi and Kwando-Linyanti systems attained the highest flood levels on record, rejuvenating the Chobe floodplains, Linyanti Swamps, Lake Liambezi and the long-dry Savuti Channel (water flow stopped a few kilometres short of the Savuti Marsh in Chobe National Park). The Okavango River reached the highest flood level since 1959, with the Delta virtually doubling in size and the distal distributaries penetrating hundreds of kilometres into the dry fringing Kalahari areas - for example, the Boteti River reached Rakops, over 200 kilometres south of Maun. The southern part of the Mababe Depression flooded for the first time in decades, and Lake Ngami filled to over 115 km² (compared to 50 km² in recent years).

The abundance of water created suitable waterfowl habitat and attracted waterbirds from all over Southern Africa. However, more importantly, new breeding colonies of herons, egrets, storks and other birds were created, boosting the numbers of these species far beyond what could be achieved by any human-initiated conservation



Birds and People # 24 - December, 2009

www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw

measures. Even dryland species like sandgrouse are thought to have benefited from the opening up of traditional breeding areas within flying distance of the Boteti River.

This is wonderful for the birds, but ironically poses unexpected challenges for BirdLife Botswana: Important Bird Areas such as Lake Ngami will wax and wane with these cycles in waterflow, masking changes in bird numbers due to anthropogenic threats; places like Lake Xau (currently dry) might qualify sporadically as IBAs when water is present; avi-tourism businesses conducted by Site Support Groups might crash as the ephemeral waterbodies evaporate. This does not mean to say that we are unhappy with the return of the higher flood levels – water is life in Botswana – we just need to adjust our activities, and our thinking, to accommodate these fluctuations. We look forward to the 2010 floods with keen anticipation.

Pete Hancock



BOTSWANA TO HOST CAP 2010 MEETING

Every eighteen months to two years, all twenty-two African partners of BirdLife International, together with the Secretariat, gather in one country. In March 2010 it will be Botswana's first turn to host this event. Kasane has been chosen as the venue, and about sixty delegates are expected to take part in the proceedings.

Major items for discussion will be:

Saving Species:

Preventing extinctions and improving the status of Africa's globally threatened species.

Keeping Africa's common birds common.

Protecting sites:

Continue to identify and monitor Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in Africa.

Conserve, protect and restore the network of IBAs in Africa and promote these sites as Key Biodiversity Areas.

Safeguarding habitats:

Identify and monitor African habitats of international importance for birds, the environment and people.

Safeguard priority habitats for birds and people.

Working with people:

Grow and empower an Africa-wide indigenous constituency of people and grass-roots conservation organisations who care for birds and their natural environment.

Promote and foster linkages between biodiversity conservation and people's livelihoods.

There will also be discussions on the Flyways project in North Africa, as well as discussions on climate change.

Harold Hester

If you are an invited participant, and are interested in a pre- or post-conference birding tour, I suggest that you visit the following websites:

Letaka Safaris: www.letakasafaris.com

Richard Randall Safaris: <http://www.bonasafari.com> or www.birdingbotswana.com

Editor



WILDLIFE CLUBS OF AFRICA PROJECT

Linking African children to the global conservation community - for the benefit of nature and people

The BirdLife International Africa Partnership recently assessed its partner NGOs, and found that there was an urgent need to enhance BirdLife's operations in the area of educating the youth on environmental issues. Therefore, a project was developed, entitled "***Linking African children to the global conservation community - for the benefit of nature and people***". This project received funding for an initial one year from the Jensen Foundation in the United Kingdom.



**AAGE V. JENSEN
CHARITY FOUNDATION**

The project is being implemented in the following seventeen African countries: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

The BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat (BLAPS) in Kenya and the West African Regional Secretariat Office (WARSO) in Ghana are co-ordinating the project. The overall goal is to combine biodiversity conservation with education and sustainable development initiatives. The project will use bird conservation to help bridge the digital divide in Africa. It aims at contributing to the implementation of Millennium Development Goals numbers 7 and 2 - to ensure environmental sustainability, and to achieve universal primary education by 2015 - by integrating conservation and sustainable use into education programmes (formal and non-formal) through the provision of education opportunities that particularly target communities that are poor and overly dependent on natural resources.



Wildlife Clubs of Africa Project implementing country representatives at the project start up workshop held in Ghana. BirdLife Botswana's Keddy Mooketsa, is third from the right (in blue blouse).

The project seeks to assist in the following:

- ✍ Getting 400,000 African children and environmental educators to network with each other and the rest of the world
- ✍ Learning to communicate effectively to share their information and experiences
- ✍ Mainstreaming environmental education into school syllabi/curricula and ensuring that it is efficiently applied by teachers
- ✍ Ensuring that teachers educate **about**, **in** and **for** the environment.
- ✍ Promoting wildlife/environmental club sustainability.

Through this initiative, a Clearing House Mechanism (CHM - regional electronic network) and a Wildlife Clubs Electronic Manual to promote environmental education across Africa have been developed

(See http://groups.google.com.ng/group/WCAP_CHM?hl=en).

The CHM intends to create a mechanism to translate the outputs of the project into action. The Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) envisaged in this project will focus on educating the youth in African in relation to biodiversity conservation using birds as indicators. The CHM will also facilitate access to, and exchange of, information on environmental education in relation to biodiversity conservation efforts around the world with particular emphasis on good practices such as adaptation and mitigation measures being applied by the BirdLife Partnership and various stakeholders on the continent, and with links to other sites involved in environmental education.

Therefore BirdLife Botswana, as one of the implementing partners, is engaging school environmental clubs from different levels (primary, secondary, tertiary, community *etc.*) in bird activities and awareness raising campaigns – this is being done through partnerships with stakeholders in Botswana, with Wildlife Clubs of Africa project financial support. These activities include a bird art competition, developing bird feeders, monthly bird walks and quarterly camps, and celebrating World Migratory Bird Day annually. Through this project, we have already produced a vulture awareness raising poster (see Birds and People #23).

Keddy Mooketsa



BOTSWANA TICKBIRD - WORLDBIRDS IN BOTSWANA

Support our web-based bird monitoring system.

Enter your bird checklist – www.worldbirds.org/Botswana

WHITE STORK FROM POLAND

Odirile Kgotla from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks found and reported a dead White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* in Letlhakane earlier this year bearing a ring numbered VN 1641. Oscar Noels from SAFRING kindly tracked down its origin for us – it was ringed as a chick in Chociemysl, Kotla, Dolnoslaskie, Poland in July 2007, and had travelled a minimum distance of 8,190 kilometres since then.



FROM MONITORING TO ACTION

Training of Trainers Advocacy Workshop – Entebbe, Uganda

The project 'Instituting effective monitoring of Protected Areas (Important Bird Areas) as a contribution to reducing the rate of biodiversity loss in Africa' is a four-year project that commenced in April 2007 and is funded by the European Commission. The project is managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and co-ordinated by the BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya.

Through this project, a simple but robust mechanism of State, Pressure and Response is used to monitor the Protected Areas (PAs/IBAs) as a contribution to reducing biodiversity loss. However, for maximum results to be realized the information gathered has to be communicated to decision makers so that appropriate and timely action is taken. The project-implementing partners have identified advocacy targets and developed a communication and advocacy strategy, which is however yet to be implemented for the benefit of translating biodiversity monitoring results into action.

As part of the project, a regional training of trainers workshop '**Translating biodiversity monitoring results into action through advocacy at local, national and international levels**' was held in Entebbe, Uganda from 5th to 9th October 2009. There was a strong presence of representatives from 32 countries in

Africa, 22 of these having a BirdLife partner. Amongst the delegates were Ugandan Minister for Environment, Honourable Jessica ERIYO, Regional Director for BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat, Dr Hazell Shokellu THOMPSON, Dr Chris MAGIN of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, as well as Dr Lucas Pius RUTINA from Botswana's Department of Wildlife and National Parks. Dr Thompson, in his opening address, described BirdLife's approach with its focus on Species, Sites (IBAs), Habitats and People. He stressed that despite having a large number of IBAs in Africa (1,250 sites), many of these are threatened. This is why it is important to collect information on the status of biodiversity in these areas, the threats they face and how people are benefiting from them, in order to guide decision-making. He noted that the workshop came at the right time as there are a number of emerging issues such as climate change, oil and gas exploration, bio-fuels, and even the increasing purchase of land in Africa by northern companies at the expense of the poor. He noted that there are many opportunities for BirdLife partners to address these issues, and stressed that BirdLife's approach is not to stand and shout, but to work in partnership with different stakeholders, including governments, to address these challenges.



Hottentot Teal (Photo: W Tarboton)

The workshop was an eye-opener for me as it was my first week with BirdLife Botswana, and I learnt a lot about current conservation issues, including how BirdLife works.

The overall objective of the Training of Trainers Workshop was to increase the capacity, skills and knowledge of BirdLife Africa NGO representatives to translate the results of monitoring into conservation benefits on the ground. The specific objectives were to:

1. Articulate the meaning of advocacy and how to campaign effectively,
2. Enhance better understanding of advocacy approaches and techniques and how to apply these to the issues affecting IBAs in Africa,
3. Discuss mechanisms to forge positive working relationships and linkages with target audiences in order to influence change,
4. Discuss possible effective messages with a focus on IBAs,
5. Explore tools to communicate the message at all levels,

6. Develop mechanisms to translate the regional IBA framework into individual country advocacy actions,
7. Develop mechanisms for assessing the performance of the communication and advocacy strategy for the benefit of PAs/IBAs.

Advocacy and why advocate for protection of these sites?

The word advocacy has its origins in law and is defined by most dictionaries as the process of '*speaking on behalf of someone*' or advocating on behalf of the voiceless. Advocacy is the work undertaken by individuals, civil society, development agencies and even policy-makers, to bring about change, which may or may not require legislation. It encompasses a range of activities focusing on a process of change, from change of attitudes and political will, changes in policy and decision-making, policy implementation, people's awareness of policies, and monitoring policy implementation.

IBAs are a reference point for biodiversity and monitoring enables us to detect any changes in our environment through the use of birds as trigger species or early warning signs. These areas can also be used to improve livelihoods and reduce poverty amongst communities living adjacent to them.



Red-billed Oxpeckers (Photo: I White)

It is for the above reasons that we have to develop and renew capacity for advocacy of conservation of Protected Areas. Advocacy is important due to the many challenges we face in Africa such as poverty and ignorance of the importance of biodiversity. The challenge of poverty is big, therefore we need concerted efforts. Advocacy can be used as a solution to protection of IBAs. BirdLife can influence environmental policy at the local level by empowering the communities living within and adjacent to IBAs through involvement in the formulation of Management Plans. Nationally, civil society can be mobilized to work in synergy with government. Joint venture partnerships between local communities and the private sector in concession areas is one such example. Engagement could also be at regional and international level through coalitions, since BirdLife has a network of members doing work across the globe. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meetings and other fora should also be used as an opportunity for lobbying and advocacy.

Our cabinet, parliamentarians, the media as well as the public, should advocate for government to gazette and protect IBAs such as Lake Ngami. We should also lobby academic institutions such as the University of Botswana and Botswana Wildlife Training Institute to include the IBA concept and conservation into the institutional curriculum. As a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the government of Botswana should take the lead in funding and mainstreaming sustained IBA monitoring activities so as to continue delivering this information beyond the four-year project period.

Translating the results of advocacy into action:

There is need for provision of clear, scientifically proven and sound data to the responsible authorities. Technical policy-related issues should be translated into simple and comprehensible language. The results of advocacy should be a pillar for our credibility. Having a good archive of information in our institutions, both government and private, is still a weakness, therefore there is need for allocation of more resources towards conservation of our resources. Nevertheless, opportunities are unprecedented as we begin 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity.

The absence of advocacy:

Studies have revealed that a larger proportion of the effects of adverse climatic change will be felt in Africa due to, for example, the production of biofuels by big companies seeking land in order to feed their own people. This will result in deforestation and wetland reclamation – the destruction of vital habitats that act as carbon sinks and reduce the rate of climatic change. Without advocacy to protect these sites, there will be an irreversible impact on biodiversity as mineral and natural resources at large are exploited.

I would therefore like to call upon policy makers to influence government's decision to allocate adequate resources towards enforcement of BirdLife's conservation policy.

Justin Soopu



COMMON BIRD MONITORING GAINS MOMENTUM

BirdLife Botswana's Common Bird Monitoring (CBM) project aims to establish trends in the numbers of birds in Botswana, even those which are not globally or nationally threatened, to provide an indication of the status of biodiversity in the country. It is anticipated that the information gathered will be useful for the Convention on Biological Diversity as well as within the country where it will inform conservation priorities in terms of species and issues.

The monitoring is conducted during February and November every year, and the November session has just been completed. Transects were conducted mainly throughout the Chobe, Ngamiland and Ghanzi Districts with lower coverage of other areas, and our sincere thanks go to all who participated. The good returns from the northern part of the country are largely due to the CBM co-ordinators within the Department of Wildlife and National Parks: Mothusi Jenamiso, assisted by BirdLife Botswana member Pete Laver, in Kasane; Zee Mpofu in Maun; and Lucas Matthys and Gloria Ndobano in Ghanzi. Danae Sheehan from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) assisted some of the census teams, and is thanked for her encouragement and support.



The Red-backed Shrike is a migrant that has declined in parts of Europe (Photo: P Hancock)

The project only really started in February of this year, and since then the number of participants has increased markedly. However, it is too early for any trends to be determined; these will only become apparent after several years of data collection. Consequently **we urge participants to prepare themselves for**

the February 2010 monitoring period. New participants are always welcome, to increase the national coverage. The counts are fun, and only take a morning twice a year. If you are interested in contributing, contact one of the co-ordinators mentioned above, or Justin Soopu at the BirdLife Botswana office in Gaborone (3190541) or Pete Hancock at the BirdLife Botswana office in Maun (6865618/74654464). We especially need more transects done in Central and Kgalagadi Districts.

Special thanks to the following for assistance with the November counts: Danae Sheehan (RSPB), Rumbidzai Kaparadza, Mothusi Jenamiso, Baldwin Mashaba, Thatayaone Rabakane, Kabo Kgopa, Cruise Mollowakgatl, Cedric Somotanzi, Martin Kays, Johnny Mowanji, Kambango Sinimbo, Kevin Grant, Lorraine Boast, Birthe Gjern, TJ Lesifi, Eugenie and Mark Skelton, Zee Mpofu, Mendy Makwati, Batsile Batsile, N Sebege, Gloria Ndobano, Pete Laver, Mike Soroczynski, Nicky Bousfield, Harold Hester, and Oreemetse Dingake.



Still counting (Photos: D Sheehan)

**GEF - SMALL
BIRD**



**GRANTS PROGRAMME FUNDS COMMON
MONITORING**

We are grateful to the Global Environment Facility – Small Grants Programme for funding a two year project to involve members of rural communities in Common Bird Monitoring. This will greatly improve the national coverage of the project, and widen our network of ‘citizen scientists’ – people from all walks of life who acknowledge the importance of biodiversity conservation and want to make a personal contribution.

The project will commence in earnest in early 2010 with the training of community members in bird identification and the procedures for Common Bird Monitoring. If you are a community member and wish to participate, please contact your nearest BirdLife Botswana office.

AFRICAN WATERBIRD COUNTS COMING UP

The biannual African Waterbird Counts take place during January and July every year. This is a reminder to all participants to get ready to undertake their counts at their favourite waterbody or stretch of river/waterway. New participants are always welcome; as with Common Bird Monitoring (see previous article) a small individual commitment twice a year adds up to a significant amount of data when information from a large number of counters is pooled. Some of the transects have been conducted twice annually for close on 20 years now, and represent a valuable dataset.



Great White Pelican (Photo: P Hancock)

If you would like to find out more, with a view to participating, contact Stephanie Tyler at steph_tyler2001@hotmail.com or Pete Hancock at birdlifemaun@gmail.com

POISONED VULTURES - AN UPDATE

Many readers of the previous issue of the newsletter (#23) expressed their concern over the vultures that were poisoned on the fringes of the Okavango Delta.



By way of an update, one of the suspects was arrested on 13th October, but the others, including the main suspect, are still at large. The case has been handed over to the Department of Intelligence Services as the suspects have gone 'underground'.

Concerned people in Maun met to develop a strategy to prevent this type of incident from recurring; proposed actions include improved enforcement of pesticide legislation in Botswana, implementation of protocols to improve reaction from Anti-poaching Unit, public awareness of law enforcement officials and safari operators in the field, and monitoring of the prosecution system to ensure that culprits are appropriately discouraged from continuing these activities. Since the problem of poisoning is so widespread throughout Africa, the BirdLife Africa Partnership will look into addressing this issue at its next meeting in March 2010 (see article on page 2 of this newsletter).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special thanks to Joyce Bestelink and Simon Paul for providing most of the photographs in this issue of the newsletter.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE MAUN OFFICE

Special thanks to 'friends' who have assisted to improve the BirdLife Office in Maun:

- ? Fridge Air – for a much-needed air conditioner
- ? Nature Zone for constructing a car port for the BirdLife vehicle

Thank you! Le ka moso!

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

A Secretarybird pummels a snake to death





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 1529
Maun
birdlifemaun@botsnet.bw

6865618/6865272
6860525
Old HOORC site
off new tarred Disaneng 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@botsnet.bw



Membership Details

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

Rates

- Ordinary - P120.00
- Corporate - Minimum P2000.00
- Professional – Rangers, guides and SSG members - P60.00
- Life - P2000.00
- Students studying in Botswana - P15.00
- Schools/Clubs - nil
- SADC Region – P200.00
- Overseas (and outside SADC) – P300.00

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 1529
Maun

or phone Pete to
collect 6865618

Guy Brina
Private Bag F12
Francistown

or phone Guy to
collect 2412913

Geoff Williams
Private Bag K4
Kasane

or phone Geoff 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 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	Maccoa Duck	Wattled Crane	Grey Crowned Crane	Lesser Flamingo
Cape Vulture	White-headed Vulture	Lappet-faced Vulture	Hooded Vulture	White-backed Vulture
Bateleur	Martial Eagle	Lesser Kestrel	European Roller	Pallid Harrier
Kori Bustard	Southern Ground Hornbill	African Skimmer	Chestnut-banded Plover	
Black-winged Pratincole				

Breeding records for these species would also be invaluable.

Please send this information to:

BirdLife Botswana, PO Box 1529, Maun, BOTSWANA. Alternatively, please e-mail us at birdlifemaun@botsnet.bw

