

FACT SHEET – Chestnut-banded Plover

It is difficult to imagine a more hostile environment than the open salt flats of the Makgadikgadi Pans system, where there is no drinking water or shade and where temperatures may soar to over 45° Celsius during early summer. Yet it is here that the diminutive Chestnut-banded Plover thrives.



Unfortunately these specific conditions are in short supply, and apart from the population at the Makgadikgadi Pans, substantial numbers of this species are found at only seven other sites in southern and eastern Africa. The world population stands at about 17,850 birds, and although this sounds like quite a substantial number, it is considerably less than the number of people found in Maun!

Photo: W T arboton

The relatively low numbers and restricted distribution have led to the species being regarded as Near Threatened. On the positive side, there is no evidence that the total population is declining; however, some of the most important sites in Tanzania and Namibia are faced with mounting threats, and it is important to ensure that the birds are adequately protected in Botswana. The Nata River delta (one of the strongholds in Botswana) is protected in the Nata Sanctuary, but Mea and Rysana Pans are without formal protection. The species would also benefit from an improved protection status in terms of the Wildlife Conservation and National Parks Act – it should be classified as a protected animal.

BirdLife Botswana monitors the numbers of Chestnut-banded Plovers at the three major localities in the Makgadikgadi Pans; in this way, an early warning system exists to detect any unfavourable changes in the numbers of this easily overlooked but important species.