

## FACTSHEET – Kori Bustard

The Kori Bustard is the world's heaviest flying bird, but this superlative has not contributed to its survival or well-being. Far from it – the Kori Bustard is a prized target for illegal hunting, as a mature male can weigh close to 20 kilograms, and killing one fills the larder for many a day. Long regarded as a 'royal bird', whose meat was fit for chiefs alone, this taboo too has not been sufficient to protect the Kori Bustard into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Recent studies by BirdLife Botswana have shown that there is a complete disregard for the ritual of having a chief or tribal medicine man 'treat' the meat before consumption. Coupled with the illegal hunting is the threat of live capture of the birds for unlawful trade with neighbouring countries.



Photos: J Bestelink

Thus, although not yet regarded as globally threatened, the Kori Bustard's future in Botswana is cause for concern. Like most large birds, it seems fated to an existence in protected areas alone - fortunately viable populations do exist in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Central Kalahari Game Reserve and Chobe National Park.

A detailed study of the ecological requirements and population dynamics of this species is being conducted by BirdLife Botswana's Director, Kabelo Senyatso, to provide information that will contribute to its improved management and long term survival. In addition, a public awareness and education campaign would go a long way towards increasing appreciation for this species – it is after all one of the very few birds whose Setswana name has become entrenched in the English language, and it is an integral part of our culture. If Botswana had a national bird, it could well be the Kori Bustard; such an appellation would increase its status and ensure that Botswana remains one of the strongholds for the species.

