

FACTSHEET – Martial Eagle

The Martial Eagle is one of Southern Africa's largest eagles, and it has large space requirements too. Territories are huge, with the result that the bird is sparsely distributed and nowhere common; coupled with this is the fact that in many areas it is directly persecuted by people who believe that it kills their poultry and small stock, so that many suitable territories are vacant. A series of raptor road counts throughout Botswana, including Martial Eagles, conducted by Herremans and Herremans during the early 1990s showed that already these birds are becoming confined to large protected areas, and that their former range has shrunk considerably. This is a feature of most large birds in Southern Africa, and is possibly a precursor of worse to come.

For this reason, BirdLife Botswana regards the magnificent Martial as a Bird of Conservation Concern. This is notwithstanding the fact that globally it is classified as Least Concern – other countries within its extensive range may have healthy populations, but there is no room for complacency in Southern Africa, particularly since the Botswana situation is mirrored in other neighbouring countries.



Photo: G Atkinson

In some parts of the southern Kalahari (in neighbouring South Africa), an awareness programme run by a progressive local farmer - for other farmers - has resulted in a dramatic shift in attitude towards this bird (and other raptors), and many farmers now regard it as a privilege to have them breeding on their farms. Where are our Species Champions and Species Guardians (people who are prepared to take action for the conservation of this species, or provide the necessary funding for conservation work)? If the same attitude could be encouraged in Botswana, this would go a long way towards securing the future for this bird – all it takes is a few committed individuals who are prepared to make a difference....

