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EDITORIAL

It is a peculiar quirk of many conservationists, shared by birdwatchers too, that they place an inordinate amount of emphasis and importance on Red Data books. Admittedly these doomsday books are useful for highlighting species requiring urgent conservation attention, but no-one seems to dwell much on their negative connotations or pay much attention to the fact that Red Data books are an indictment on our effectiveness in conserving birds. Countries with more globally threatened species are considered more important than those which have healthy bird populations – gone are the days of prevention being better than cure! This perversity is mirrored by birdwatchers who would rather go to a biologically impoverished area to see the few remaining individuals of a species, than visit a pristine environment such as the Okavango Delta which harbours a large number of more common birds. Similarly, donors seem more impressed by lists of Critically Endangered species than by requests for funding to maintain core populations of a large number of bird species. Against this background, Red Data lists seem to be continually expanding, reflecting our reluctance to remove birds from the list, and/or our inability to stem biodiversity loss?

In this light, I find the introduction by the BirdLife Africa Partnership of the “Common Bird Monitoring Programme” coupled with the “Wild Bird Index” especially refreshing. The decline of hitherto common birds such as the Barn Swallow, European Roller and Red-backed Shrike has surely provided a long overdue wake-up call. It is much more proactive to monitor common birds and detect declines early on, than discover their predicament when they are on the brink of extinction.

Of course a balance needs to be struck between the two approaches, and at last this seems to be happening. BirdLife Botswana will be embracing the Common Bird Monitoring Programme in the months ahead – we aim to ensure that our pristine bird areas remain that way.

Pete Hancock



ARE WE MAKING ANY PROGRESS?

The list of globally threatened birds seems to consistently get longer, to the extent that it is difficult to keep track of the globally threatened birds that are found in Botswana. The list below brings us up to date:

Globally threatened birds found in Botswana

Endangered:

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*

Basra Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis*

Vulnerable:

Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula*

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos*

Black Harrier *Circus maurus*

White-headed Vulture *Trionoceps occipitalis*

Wattled Crane *Grus carunculatus*

Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres*

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

Blue Crane *Anthropoides paradiseus*

Near threatened:

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*

Denham's Bustard *Neotis denhami*

White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*

African Skimmer *Rhynchops flavirostris*

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*

Latakoo (Melodious) Lark *Mirafra cheniana*

Chestnut-banded Plover *Charadrius pallidus*

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*

Great Snipe *Gallinago media*

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

European Roller *Coracias garrulous*

THINK PINK

Birders who have been following international bird news would be aware of the potential threat posed to the Lake Natron Lesser Flamingo breeding site in Tanzania by the soda ash extraction and processing plant proposed by Lake Natron Resources Limited, a joint venture of the Tanzania Government and the Indian company Tata Chemicals. Since Lake Natron is the most important breeding site for the Lesser Flamingo in the world (the only other sites where the flamingos breed are Makgadikgadi and Etosha Pans, both of which are ephemeral), conservationists were afraid that the entire population of a million Lesser Flamingos could be lost if the development went ahead.

However, the 2nd of November was an important day for the flamingos - a group of experts appointed by the Tanzanian Government met to review the findings of the study on the development of Lake Natron for soda ash extraction and recommended that Lake Natron Resources should consider other sites for soda ash extraction. At the meeting to assess the developer's obligatory environmental assessment for the extraction plant, of the 14 bodies present, including conservation groups, national parks and the EU (representing donors) most said that the development should be rejected because of the risk of driving away the flamingos, harming other species and irreversibly damaging Lake Natron, which is protected by international law.

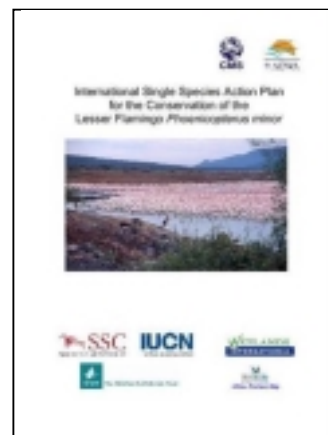
Dr Mike Rands, Chief Executive of BirdLife, said, "The proposal to develop Lake Natron for soda ash extraction is misguided and, while the decision is a victory for conservation and for common sense, the flamingos are not yet safe. The developers should choose another location for extracting soda ash".

BirdLife International

LESSER FLAMINGO ACTION PLAN

In September of last year, a Flamingo Specialist Group workshop was held in Nairobi, Kenya to assess the current population status, distribution, conservation status, threats and necessary measures required for the conservation of Lesser Flamingos. At the workshop, and in the past year since, Lesser Flamingo experts from all the range states in Africa (including Botswana) and India, provided input to establish priorities for conservation action.

A Lesser Flamingo Species Action Plan is now finally complete, and it is anticipated that the Plan will be endorsed at the fourth



Meeting of the Parties of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), later this year. Thereafter, the action plan will be official and the range states can then get started with its implementation.

Botswana is a primary range state, owing to Sua Pan being one of the most important breeding sites for the species throughout its range, and it regularly hosts the largest concentrations of Lesser Flamingos in southern Africa. However, because Botswana is not a member of AEWA, and the Convention on Migratory Species does not officially endorse action plans, it is unclear what mechanism should be used to get government support in Botswana for this plan. Normally, implementation is accomplished in each range state through the formation of a species working group and the development of a national species action plan that ties in with the international action plan. Birdlife Botswana will be leading this initiative and devising steps that best suit the accomplishment of the plan's implementation in Botswana.

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), in the UK has volunteered to take the lead in implementing six specific projects, outlined in the Action Plan, in all primary range states:

- * Develop a surveillance strategy for Lesser Flamingo.
- * Develop aerial survey techniques for monitoring Lesser Flamingos.
- * Model the long-term effects of climate change and disease.
- * Evaluate the relative importance of threats.
- * Understand the cultural importance of Lesser Flamingo.
- * Calculate the economic value of flamingos to nations and local communities.

WWT are waiting for the plan to be approved by AEWA before assigning someone to co-ordinate these projects, but in order to be effective, they would like and need to work through a national species working group in each range state, including Botswana. The completion of the Lesser Flamingo Action Plan is welcomed by Birdlife Botswana and while its implementation here poses a new and exciting challenge, it will go a long way to providing a long-term effective conservation strategy for the species in the country.

G McCulloch

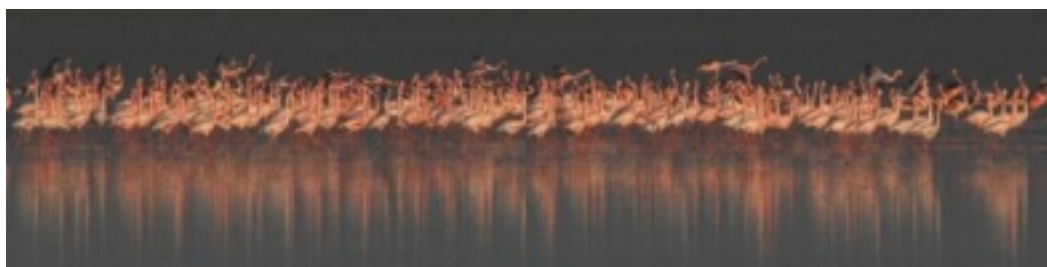


Photo: G McCulloch

THE MIGRATING KESTREL PROJECT

One of the strengths of the BirdLife network, being international and having active partners throughout the world, is that it can address bird conservation



Photo: G Verdoorn/BLSA

issues that span the globe. For example, migratory birds cannot be adequately protected by any one single country when they experience different threats in a range of countries through which they must transit. For this reason, it is vital that we in Botswana participate in the Migrating Kestrel Project, managed by Anthony van Zyl from the Birds of Prey Working Group in South Africa. The main focus of this project is on the Lesser Kestrel, a globally threatened species that visits Botswana

during our summer months – vital data required for this species are population size, and trend (are numbers increasing, decreasing or remaining stable?). In order to obtain this information, the Migrating Kestrel Project has identified all roosts used by this species in South Africa, and the kestrels are counted at these sites on a fixed day every year – this summer it will be Saturday 19th January, 2008. At present, BirdLife Botswana is not aware of any roosts in Botswana, and so we are not contributing to this worthwhile initiative. Do the birds transit through Botswana in singles and small flocks and roost individually, or are there large roosts that just haven't been brought to our attention (there are 74 documented roost sites in South Africa that were counted last year)? Roost sites are typically large trees, often the exotic *Eucalyptus*, and are used every year in succession.

If you know of any roosts for this species, please contact Pete Hancock (contact details at the end of this newsletter) **urgently** so that we can organise counters before 19th January.

The Migrating Kestrel Project also requires information on the Amur and Red-footed Falcons that migrate together with the Lesser Kestrel. In the case of these two species, individual sightings are valuable and can be entered directly into the Natural World website, the official database for the project – see www.natworld.org. In addition, a large number of Red-footed Falcons have been colour-ringed in Hungary – imagine how exciting it would be to spot one of these birds in Botswana! If you are fortunate enough to see one, please take careful note of the colour combination of the rings, record the date and precise locality

(preferably with co-ordinates) and send the information to the nearest BirdLife Botswana office.

Your participation will be an important contribution to the success of this project.

BOTSWANA TICKBIRD - WORLDBIRDS IN BOTSWANA

Support our web-based bird monitoring system.

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

BIRD ACTIVITY BOOK LAUNCHED

One of the noteworthy achievements of BirdLife Botswana during 2007 was the production and launch of a bird activity book for schoolchildren, by well-known author Doreen McColaugh – who has made a sustained contribution to environmental education in Botswana over the past two decades. The book, which was designed to accompany the “Beginner’s Guide to Birds of Botswana” (produced by BirdLife Botswana last year), was launched at the National Museum in Gaborone on 11th October.



Mrs Doreen McColaugh, author of the Bird Activity Book speaking at the launch.

The Bird Activity Book is aimed at assisting Botswana school teachers and other environmental education (EE) practitioners to encourage children to use the “Beginner’s Guide to Birds of Botswana” more effectively, and in doing so, to inculcate an appreciation of Botswana’s birds. It is an outstanding book which fills an important niche in children’s curricula. The production and printing of the Bird Activity Book was financed by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives and the Global Environment Facility/Small Grants Programme.

The book was officially launched by Mr Steve Monna, Director of the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). He expressed his gratitude to BirdLife Botswana for responding to the call to work closely with the Ministry of Education and the National Environmental Education Committee based at DEA to support the practice and infusion of EE into the national curriculum.



Part of the audience at the launch.



The book is being distributed free of charge to schools throughout the country, via their environmental clubs. It is already proving very popular and is another feather in the author’s cap.

DID YOU KNOW?

Approximately 160 vultures per year are sold for traditional medicine in eastern South Africa – these birds are obtained from all over Southern Africa. This trade is not sustainable.

For more information see Survey of the Trade in Vultures for the Traditional Health Industry in South Africa, by M Mander, N Diederichs, L Ntuli, K Mavundla, V Williams and S McKean. March 2007.

NEW STAFF MEMBER

Mooketsi Mfolwe

Mooketsi Mfolwe is a young Motswana, 26 years of age who has just completed his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Humanities. He holds a BA major in Sociology from the University of Botswana (UB). His association with BirdLife Botswana started in 2005 when he worked on a voluntary basis during the UB long vacations. During this time, Mooketsi assisted with the survey for Setswana bird names for the "Beginners Guide to Birds of Botswana", and was also involved in a baseline survey on the socio-economic conditions at Otse, related to the Mannyelanong Hill Important Bird Area. He has a particular interest in environmental education and also contributed towards environmental clubs projects in schools around Gaborone.

Mooketsi has now been appointed as our Community Liaison Officer based in Maun. He will be working with two of our active Site Support Groups; Bosele Lake Ngami Conservation Trust and the Nata Sanctuary as part of the SwedBio project.

DID YOU KNOW?

- There are 9,956 bird species in the world (with a further 155 under review)
- See The BirdLife Checklist of the Birds of the World - www.birdlife.org/datazone/species/downloads/BirdLife_Checklist_Version_0.xls

NEW PROJECT LAUNCHED

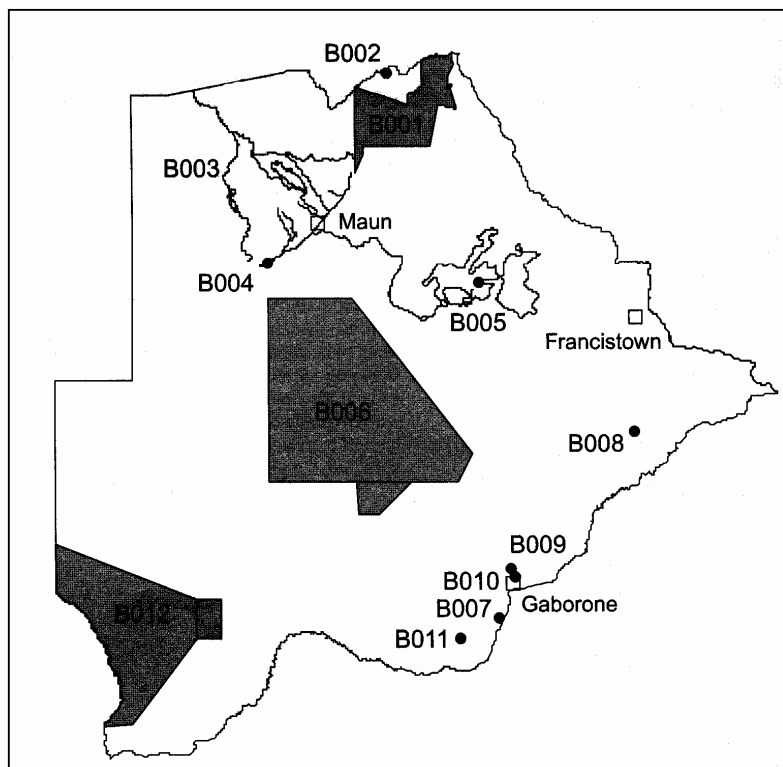
The EU/RSPB project on **Instituting Effective Monitoring of Protected Areas** (Important Bird Areas) was launched regionally during July this year, and in Botswana on 11th October. The project, which has the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) as the main applicant, is being undertaken by 8 African Countries (Botswana, Burundi, Bukina Faso, Tunisia, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and focuses on instituting biodiversity monitoring in protected areas as a contribution to biodiversity loss. The four year project will primarily be administered by BirdLife Botswana, the Department of Wildlife and National Parks and the Department of Environmental Affairs. The action will focus on protected areas that are also IBAs (Important Bird Areas). The IBA monitoring framework developed by the RSPB and the BirdLife partnership will be the main tool used in this project - it is suitable for application to the African context where technical capacity, funding and institutional conditions are generally low.



The framework is based on the State-Pressure-Response model adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and has already been used by BirdLife Botswana in unprotected IBAs. The system will provide an objective measure of trends in biodiversity conditions as early warning systems to inform decision makers when conserving these ecosystems for the benefit of people, especially those living in and around these areas. The CBD program obliges nations to make sure that by 2010, national and regional systems are established to enable effective monitoring of protected area coverage, and to determine status and trends at a national, regional and global scale, and to assist in evaluating progress in meeting the global biodiversity targets.

Objectives of the project

The overall objective of the project is to empower biodiversity-rich and resource-poor African countries to meet their CBD obligations, and the target to reduce biodiversity loss by 2010. The specific objective of the Botswana component is to institute effective national biodiversity monitoring that delivers information on biodiversity trends in protected areas that are Important Bird Areas.



This project focuses on the following IBAs:

- B001** – Chobe National Park
- B003** – Okavango Delta (Moremi Game Reserve)
- B005** – Makgadikgadi Pans (National Park)
- B006** – Central Kalahari Game Reserve
- B007**, **B007** – Mannyelanong Game Reserve
- B012** – Gemsbok National Park

Important Bird Areas of Botswana

Expected results are:

- Appropriate capacity built for conducting and sustaining all stages of biodiversity monitoring at protected areas;
- Biodiversity monitoring institutionalized as a core activity of management authorities, NGOs and local communities;
- Data on the condition of selected protected areas collected, analyzed and disseminated with the involvement of stakeholders;
- Information from monitoring effectively availed to influence management of protected areas by local, national and global actors;
- Project management, monitoring and evaluation procedures in place and mechanisms for sustaining monitoring beyond the action operational.

Any enquiries about the project could be directed to Virat Kootsositse at ibamanager@birdlifebotswana.org.bw.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are 588 species on the official Botswana bird list.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Photo: R Self

Rose-coloured Starling – reported on 8th September, 2007 around 16h30 from Mowana Golf Course in Kasane where it was seen by Robert Self in the company of Wattled Starlings. This individual represents only the second record of this species from Southern Africa, and the first for Botswana. The observation is currently under review by the BirdLife Botswana Rarities Committee.

OBI TUARY



TSOGO MAIPHETO

We were shocked and dismayed to learn of the unexpected passing away of Tsogo on 16th December, 2007, in a motor vehicle accident between Gaborone and Molepolole.

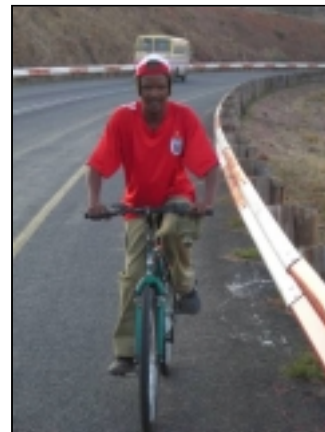
Tsogo has been working for the BirdLife Botswana office in Maun for the past two years, but I have known him for much longer than that, and regard him more as a friend than a work colleague. He has been a stable rock in the foundation of BirdLife Botswana where his quiet efficiency and reliability has earned him the respect and appreciation of all with whom he came into contact. His basic honesty and trustworthiness singled him out as a special person.

Tsogo made rapid strides as a birdwatcher and ranks among the best citizen birders in the country. He has developed to such an extent that I was able to rely on him to conduct arduous tasks such as the Trans-Okavango transect, conducted across the whole Delta by boat, and the complete organisation and conducting of a recent bird guide course. The Trans-Kalahari Bike Ride during June this year, where he and colleagues rode 1,000 kilometres to raise money for the environment, is also testament to his dedication and commitment to creating a better world for all. While every person is unique, the likes of Tsogo are hard to come by. It will be a long time, if ever, before the void in our lives left by his passing will be relieved.

Pete Hancock



Tsogo on the Trans-Okavango transect



Riding to raise funds

CONTACT ADDRESSES

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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

- 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 20463
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

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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@botsnet.bw

