

BirdLife Botswana
Bird Conservation Newsletter

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www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw



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EDITORIAL

April 9th marks the first World Migratory Bird Day when people all over the globe will be celebrating the miracle of bird migration. I imagine a small warbler weighing less than 10 grams travelling thousands of kilometres from the northern hemisphere to the south and back again – a marvel of physical endurance coupled with awesome navigational skills! Or, the well-known Barn Swallow, which during its short lifetime, may travel over 100,000 kilometres! Bird migration is truly one of the wonders of the natural world.

Equally incredible is the ease with which we take our migratory birds for granted! In fact, far from treating migratory birds with the respect they deserve, we have often made their arduous migrations even more hazardous by adding man-made obstacles to the many challenges they already face. In recent years, many people have even come to denigrate them as the harbingers of bird flu, despite the absence of any concrete evidence implicating them in the spread of the disease.

In flying between the northern hemisphere and the south, from continent to continent, and across many different countries, migrating birds link people and nations. They are not mere birds – they are part of our world heritage, and symbolise the finiteness and inter-connectedness of all parts of the globe, thereby reminding us that Planet Earth is home for all of us.

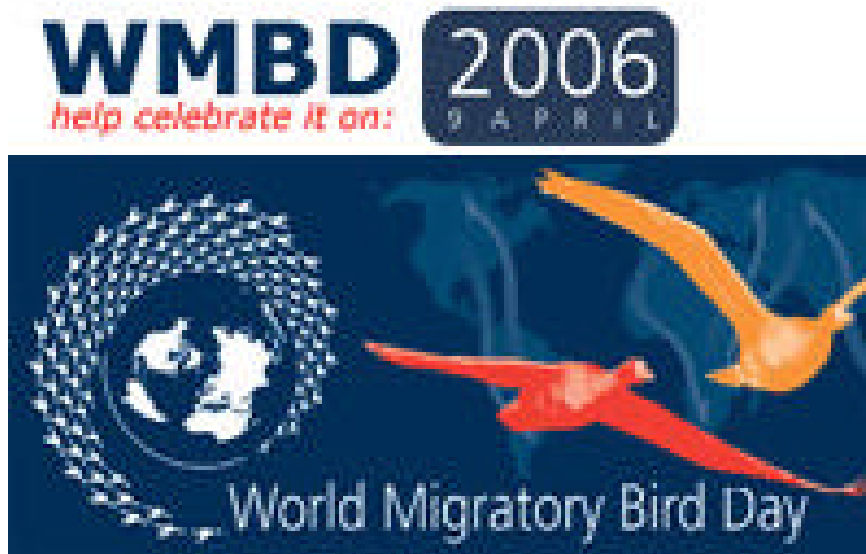
Pete Hancock

BirdLife Botswana is the  partner in Botswana.

Together for birds and people



REPORT MIGRATORY BIRDS - WIN PRIZE



In honour of World Migratory Bird Day, BirdLife Botswana would like anyone who sees a migrant bird on 9th April to report to BirdLife Botswana by e-mailing blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw or by telephoning 3190540 during working hours, informing us where the bird was and identifying it. The most interesting sighting will receive a prize and recognition from the Society. This is the time when many migrants are leaving Southern Africa, so keep a look out for those species that are making the trip!

BIRDLIFE BOTSWANA CORPORATE MEMBERS

BirdLife Botswana appreciates the support of the following companies that are currently Corporate members:

CCAfrica	Desert and Delta Safaris
Helicopter Horizons	Mulbridge Transport
Ngami Toyota	Ngamiland Adventure Safaris
Nxamaseri Island Lodge	Okavango Wilderness Safaris
Orient Express Safaris	Waterways (Pty) Ltd

Apart from the financial contribution made by these organisations, their moral support is also greatly appreciated. BirdLife Botswana is still a young organisation in the process of establishing its credibility and track record, and for these companies to 'throw their lot in' with us is an indication of their faith in what we are doing. This is highly motivating to those of us working to conserve Botswana's birds! Le ka moso!

WIN SOME AND LOSE SOME

BirdLife International keeps track of globally threatened birds, and in 2000, published the definitive work on the subject – Threatened Birds of the World. Since then, the listing of a few species that are found in Botswana has changed. The good news is that the Locustfinch has been downlisted to Least Concern – this means that at present it is not threatened with extinction. This is not actually a result of an improvement in its status, but information is now available showing that it is more common and widespread than previously thought.

By contrast, the Black-winged Pratincole has changed to Near Threatened (from Data Deficient). This is a similar, although negative, change to that of the Locustfinch – there were insufficient data available previously to be certain of its status, but now that information has been gathered, the picture looks worse than expected. The same applies to the Black-tailed Godwit which was originally placed in the category “Least Concern”, but which has been uplisted to Near Threatened.

There are several other birds which occur in Botswana and which are presently under review. They are:

- ? Maccoa Duck – under consideration for uplisting to Near Threatened
- ? Chestnut-banded Plover – under consideration for uplisting to Near Threatened
- ? White-headed Vulture – under consideration for uplisting to Vulnerable
- ? Egyptian Vulture – under consideration for uplisting to Near Threatened or Vulnerable
- ? White-backed Vulture – under consideration for uplisting from Least Concern

To classify these species appropriately, BirdLife would be very grateful for information and expert opinion on each species' status, population, trends, range and threats. If you have relevant information, please make it available to one of the Conservation Officers at BirdLife Botswana, or participate directly in an online discussion forum at:

<http://208.185.149.227/Globally%20Threatened%20Bird%20Forums/Threatened%20African%20Birds/>

For more general information about the Globally Threatened Bird Update, please visit:

http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/global_species_programme/gtb_forum_s.html

One of the strengths of the BirdLife partnership is its ability to tap a huge network of people on the ground, so if you do have a contribution to make, please link into the system.



MIGRATING KESTREL PROJECT

BirdLife Botswana has had a request for information on the location of roosts (in Botswana) of Lesser Kestrels, and Amur and Red-footed Falcons. This comes from the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Birds of Prey Working Group, which is conducting a study of these migratory raptors when they are in the southern hemisphere. The Lesser Kestrel is a globally threatened species due to threats that it faces in Europe where it breeds, and it is apparently declining in numbers. When in Southern Africa, the birds roost in huge flocks mainly in tall Eucalypt (Gum) trees, and researchers are conducting regular counts at these sites to monitor population trends. The Amur and Red-footed Falcons, although not globally threatened, are candidates for possible inclusion in the Botswana Red Data Book for Birds, but are both regarded as Data Deficient, that is, there is not enough information on these birds to be sure of their status. If these birds habitually roost at any sites in Botswana, it would be important to include them in the Southern African counts. Anyone knowing the location of any should please contact Kabelo Senyatso or Pete Hancock (see contact details at the end of this newsletter).

BEGINNERS BIRD BOOK - RE A ITIRELA!

BirdLife Botswana has produced the first bird book in Setswana and English, for Botswana. A Beginners Guide to Birds of Botswana (I thute Dinonyane tsa Botswana), is meant to introduce all Batswana and others living in Botswana to the most common birds in this country. With over 580 different bird species in Botswana, it can sometimes be difficult to tell these feathered creatures apart. But not any more!

The book, which is edited by Kabelo Senyatso, is suitable for young and old alike, and its layout is useful for both the novice and expert. Key features of the book, that make it especially useful, are the following:

- ? Each bird species is described in Setswana and English
- ? Only the most common birds are described
- ? There is a full-colour illustration and descriptive account for each bird
- ? Similar species are mentioned, pointing out key differences with the species described
- ? Both the old and new English bird names are given, together with the Setswana name



The production of the book was sponsored by the German Embassy, the African Bird Club, Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (the BirdLife partner in France) and BirdLife International, thereby making the book affordable to everyone.

EXCITING SUMMER BIRDING

The good rains experienced over most of Botswana this summer have produced interesting sightings of some special birds. One of the highlights was a Red Phalarope (previously called the Grey Phalarope) seen at Deception in the Central Kalahari, and another (possibly the same bird) seen subsequently in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. A third sighting, this time of a different bird, was reported from Nxai Pan National Park, by Nic Polenakis who took the very clear photo below.



Photo: N Polenakis

The Red Phalarope is a migrant to the coastal areas of Southern Africa, and is infrequently seen inland. It is a category A rarity, which means that it has been seen less than 10 times in Botswana, so these three sightings are quite significant. Many thanks to those birders who saw these birds, were able to identify them, and recognised them as something out of the ordinary, and reported them. They took the trouble to complete the BirdLife Botswana Rare Bird Form (available off our website), the correct way to get an unusual sighting accepted by our Records Subcommittee.

PATRON'S TRUST FUND

The BirdLife Botswana Patron, Mr Sedia Modise, has established a Patron's Trust Fund to support Environmental Education activities for disadvantaged sectors of Botswana society. This reflects his lifelong interest in and commitment to



Environmental Education, and is a tangible contribution to BirdLife Botswana's mission.

The Patron's Trust Fund will only support environmental education or awareness projects that:

1. Have birds as the main focus/area of interest.
2. Are based in remote/rural settlements. In urban or peri-urban areas support will be limited to institutions used by the less privileged.
3. Are targeted towards or implemented by the youth, with emphasis on primary schools or similar institutions.

The Patron's Trust Fund WILL NOT support:

1. General administrative costs of BirdLife Botswana or that of the recipient institutions (e.g. rent, telephone bills, staff costs etc.), unless they are directly related to the project activities, and only at the discretion of the Patron's Trust Fund Administrators.
2. Travel to seminars, workshops, conferences or any such meetings, unless those meetings have a direct bearing on project activities supported by the Patron's Trust Fund.
3. Individuals, profit-making entities, unethical projects, and those that have a negative impact on the environment and/or birds (e.g. keeping bird pets).

The BirdLife Botswana Patron, Chairman, Treasurer and Conservation Officer have constituted a committee called the Patron's Trust Fund Administrators (PTFA), to oversee disbursements made from this Fund. The PTFA will meet as and when needed, and approve support to qualifying projects by consensus.

All donations to the Patron's Trust Fund will be acknowledged in the BirdLife Botswana newsletters. In addition, upon receipt of a donation, an acknowledgement letter will be sent to the benefactor within a period of two weeks. The Treasurer will maintain records of all expenditures, and will produce annual audited reports of the Patron's Trust Fund alongside the overall BirdLife Botswana financial reports, thereby maintaining transparency and accountability.

The Patron and his Family and the BirdLife Botswana Chairman have both made initial donations of P2,000.00 each to kick-start the Patron's Trust Fund. To make a donation, or to check whether a potential or existing project qualifies for support from this Fund, or if you wish to know more about the Patron's Trust Fund or BirdLife Botswana, please contact one of the Conservation Officers (contact details overleaf).



STOP PRESS

A report has just come in of a new Slaty Egret breeding colony from the Xigera area of the Okavango Delta! Teko Kethogetswe, a guide at Xigera Camp, found a small colony of Slaty Egrets breeding together with Rufous-bellied Herons on a Tsaro Palm island. We are grateful to him and staff of Great Explorations for making this information known to us - once again, it illustrates the value of citizen science whereby 'ordinary' people can and do make a valuable contribution to our knowledge of species such as the Slaty Egret. Professional guides operating in the Delta have an exceptional coverage of the area, and collectively are an indispensable source of information.

CONTACT ADDRESSES

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BirdLife Botswana
PO Box 20463
Maun

birdlifemaun@ngami.co.za

6860252
6860525

Ngami Toyota
off the Maun/Sehithwa 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 pete@info.bw



Membership Details

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

Rates

- Resident - entitles you to both Babbler issues and the quarterly Familiar Chat (per family): P120.00
- Corporate - (4 families): P2000
- Professional – rangers and guides (Babbler and Familiar chat): P60.00
- Bona fide students: P15.00
- Life - P2000
- Schools/Clubs - nil
- SADC Region - P150
- Overseas (and outside SADC) – P200

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 6860252

Guy Brina
Private Bag F12
Francistown

or phone Guy to
collect 2412913

OFFICIAL USE

Card _____ 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	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 pete@info.bw.

