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African Emerald Cuckoo

Photo: Ian White



African Finfoot

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Front Cover: Wattled Starling, Photographer: Ian White



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World Conservation Union (IUCN),
White Ian.

Editorial

I was sad to hear of the death of Michael Irwin in Zimbabwe aged 92 in September 2017. He was a huge figure in African ornithology.

There are so many bad news stories for birds that it was heartening to read of some good news. Back in November 2012 we were made aware that an estimated 100,000 Amur Falcons were netted and killed for food in Nagaland in north-east India when migrating to southern Africa. Happily BirdLife partners notably the Bombay Natural History Society and ministers in India have put an end to this slaughter through education and laws. We should see now more of these falcons surviving to reach Botswana.

BirdLife, as IUCN's Red List authority recently updated the threat categories of bird species worldwide. Of 62 species that are doing worse than in the previous Red List three are found in Botswana. Two are only rarely recorded – Black Harrier that has gone from Vulnerable to Endangered and Mountain Pipit from No Concern to Near Threatened. The third species however, is Maccoa Duck, found in eastern and southern Africa. This duck, still not uncommon in southeast Botswana, has gone from Near Threatened to Vulnerable on account of recent rapid declines in parts of its range. All records of this duck are needed so if you see any Maccoa Duck anywhere in Botswana please let Chris Brewster, the BirdLife Botswana Recorder, know (number of birds, location and date). Usually they are noted on various dams and sewage ponds but they disperse to widely scattered pans when breeding.

I cannot believe that this issue is the 33rd that I have edited. I took on the role as Editor with some trepidation after Marc Herremans left back in 1997. *Babbler* No. 32 was my first effort and this is now No.64 and 21 years have passed. As I am no longer living in Botswana and so cannot as easily solicit articles and notes, I believe that there should be a new younger editor who is Botswana-based. Having said that, I do enjoy seeing all the articles that do come my way and the bird records and I hope that you find this issue of interest.

Firstly there is a fascinating atlas of birds in Kasane by Grzegorz Kopij from Namibia, showing detailed distribution maps for the various species around the town. Then Dieter Oschadleus responds to my note on the status of Orange-breasted Waxbills and he appeals for photos of nests of weavers and other species that are used by these waxbills. Chris Brewster as usual has supplied me with notes on all manner of things from Yellow-bellied Greenbills at Kanye where Tracy Buchan, Andrew Hester and I discovered them back in 1999, to a wetland on the Metsemotlhaba River near Gaborone that he 'discovered' this year.

He also writes on a trip he made to the south-west of Botswana during July and August 2018 and on the status of Palaeartic migrants in south-eastern Botswana in the summer of 2017/2018. Chris also has put a lot of work into the Category A Rarity records, Category B and Interesting Records and the Breeding Records. Thanks Chris.

Stephanie Tyler (Editor)



Diderick Cuckoo
Photo: Ian White

Atlas of Birds of Kasane, NE Botswana

Grzegorz Kopij

Abstract. In 2014-2016, an urban atlas on birds breeding in the town Kasane on Chobe River, north-east Botswana, was conducted. All recorded breeding pairs of all species were mapped and their population densities were calculated. A total of 76 bird species were recorded as breeding in the town of Kasane. Five species were classified as dominants, viz. Grey-headed Sparrow, Black-eyed Bulbul, Blue Waxbill, Laughing Dove and Cape-turtle Dove. Together they comprised more than half (50.7%) of all breeding birds. Except for the Red-eyed Bulbul, all the dominant species were granivores. Another six species, the Cape Glossy Starling, Feral Pigeon, Fork-tailed Drongo, Southern Masked Weaver, Paradise Flycatcher and White-browed Robin-Chat were classified as subdominants, and comprised together 17.3% of all breeding birds.

Key words: urban ecology, urban ornithology, urban atlas, population densities.

Introduction

The urban atlas is a way of presenting the distribution and numbers of selected groups of flora or fauna in a town/city. Such a presentation is on a network of squares (grids), the size of which depends on the size of a town/city studied. In smaller towns, occupied territories (=breeding pairs) of particular bird species are often plotted directly on the map.

The first urban bird atlas in the world was produced for London (Montier 1977). It was followed by atlases in numerous European cities and towns (Dunn & Weston 2008, Magle *et al.* 2012, Luniak 2017). In Africa, the first such atlas was produced for Bloemfontein, South Africa (Kopij 2001, 2015). The atlas was actually confined to the inner part of the city (67 squares 1 x 1 km; total surface area covered - 51 km²) and was carried out in 1997. It presents distribution maps for 51 species which were breeding residents in the city; information for further 32 rare, localized and irregular breeders were also provided in the main body of text. Since then, a few provisional and partial urban bird atlases were also published for Maseru, Lesotho (Kopij 2000), and Katima Mulio, Namibia (Kopij 2016). The presented publication on birds of Kasane constitutes the first urban bird atlas in Botswana (Penry 1994).

Since the town of Kasane directly borders the renowned Chobe National Park, it has become a popular tourist destination; in fact it is the Mecca of Safari.

What attracts tourists to this Africa's Four Corners (close to the town, in the neighbouring Kazangula village, where four countries meet, viz. Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe,) is a rich and diverse wildlife in the wide and picturesque Chobe River valley (Kopij 2006). However, the ecotourists visiting Kasane in large numbers every year are almost exclusively interested in animals living in their natural environment in the national park. From the ecological point of view, how the animals from the natural habitats interact with the highly transformed urban and rural habitats in and around the town of Kasane is of interest. So far, no attempt has been made to undertake such studies. I was, therefore, motivated to initiate research on urban wildlife ecology in this attractive site in southern Africa.

Study area

Kasane town (17°49'S, 25°09'E) lies on the bank of the Chobe River in NE Botswana, opposite the Namibian Impalila Island; 200-300 m a.s.l. It was originally a Subiya village, which gradually became the administrative centre of the Chobe District. In 2001, it had a population of 7,638, which grew to 9,008 in 2011. The climate in Kasane is classified as semi-arid.

The study on birds was restricted to the main part of the town, with a surface area of 160 ha, stretching along the Chobe River from Chobe Safari Lodge (including) to the Golf Course (excluding), then uphill to Mabele Road running up on the town's outskirts towards Chobe Safari Lodge.

The study area may be divided into three plots:

Plot A: a strip c. 2.5 km long and 100-300 m wide along the river bank with lush tree and shrub vegetation, designed mainly for safari tourism, with numerous lodges and camp sites and tourist services.

Plot B: a stretch c.1.6 km long and 0.3 km wide on the hillside in the southern part of the area; this is occupied mainly by official buildings, like school, police station, clinic, etc.

Plot C: rural residential area, a block 1.2 km x 0.6 km, with densely distributed, small and cheap buildings, fruit trees and shrubs. It is also situated on a rocky hill in the northern part.

The lush vegetation in Kasane is a mixture of Kalahari *Brachystegia* Woodland (Kalahari Miombo Veld) on the plateau and riverine woodland along the river front. More common trees in the riverine forests are *Bauhinia petersiana*, *Kirkia accuminata*, *Acacia erioloba*, *Lonchocarpus capassa*, *Gardeia folkensii*, *Garcinia livingstonei*, *Trichelia emetica*, *Diospyros mespiliformes*, *Kigalia africana* and *Acacia galpinii*. In the *Brachystegia* Woodland the main trees are *Pterocarpus angolensis*, *Kirkia accuminata*, *Julbernardia globiflora*, *Baikiaea plurijuga*, *Azelia quanzensis*,

Brachystegia boehmii, *Piliostigma thonningii* and *Schinziophyton rautanetii*. The natural vegetation is now mixed with some exotic and fruit trees, such as mango, peaches and other species.

Methods

A simplified version of the territory mapping method (Bibby *et al.* 1992) has been employed. The whole area was surveyed four times: twice in the dry and twice in the wet season. In order to cover the whole study area two mornings were required. Counts were conducted on 12 July and 13 July 2014 (first survey in dry season) and on 28 August and 29 August 2015 (second survey in dry season), on 27 January and 28 January 2016 (first survey in wet season) and on 5 May and 6 May 2016 (second survey in wet season).

Only birds showing breeding (e.g. birds with nesting material or food in bill) or territorial behaviour (i.e. singing males) were counted. During each survey all such birds seen and/or heard were plotted on a map 1: 10 000. Especially valuable were records of simultaneously singing males, as they were most useful in determining the number of occupied territories. Each occupied territory was regarded as one breeding pair.

Records of an individual of the same species at the same site made on at least two surveys were interpreted as occupied territory, which equals to one breeding pair. In the case of a few polygynous males, e.g. Southern Masked Weaver, it may also represent a breeding unit (e.g. one male with three females).

Dominant species is defined here as comprising at least 5% of all breeding pairs, subdominant – 2-4.9%. Systematics and nomenclature of bird species follow Hockey *et al.* (2005). Both common and scientific names of species are listed in Table 1. In the main body of text, scientific names are given only of those species which are not listed in this table.

Results and discussion

A total of 76 bird species was recorded as breeding in the town of Kasane. A further three species (Giant Kingfisher *Ceryle maxima*, Malachite Kingfisher *Alcedo cristata*, Paradise Whydah *Vidua paradisaea*) were breeding in a close proximity to the study area. The real number could have been even higher as some species could have passed undetected along the water front. A few species can breed in Kasane erratically, in some years only, and it is possible that just during the study period they were not breeding.

Five species were classified as dominants, viz. Grey-headed Sparrow, Black-eyed Bulbul, Blue Waxbill, Laughing Dove and Cape-turtle Dove. Together they comprised more than half (50.7%) of all breeding birds. Except for the Red-eyed Bulbul, all the dominant species were granivores.

Another six species: Cape Glossy Starling, Feral Pigeon, Fork-tailed Drongo, Southern Masked Weaver, Paradise Flycatcher and White-browed Robin-Chat were classified as subdominants, and comprised together 17.3% of all breeding birds.

Among the more interesting species recorded as nesting in Kasane were Trumpeter Hornbill (nesting in the Chobe River Camp), Green-backed Heron, Little Bittern, Klaas's Cuckoo, Collared Palm Thrush, Hartlaub's Babbler, and Golden Weaver. All were recorded in the riverine woodland. Raptors were represented by African Fish Eagle, Yellow-billed Kite, Little Sparrowhawk and Barn Owl. The latter species was also recorded in nearby Tembe Camp and Kazungula.

A number of bird species recorded in Kasane were non-breeding Palaearctic migrants. Single Greater Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* and Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* were recorded on the Chobe River, while three territories of Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* and 11 territories of Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* were located in the whole town. There was also a non-breeding Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea* flock of ca. 40 birds wintering in the town.

A number of bird species only visit Kasane, but nest outside the town, e.g. Darter *Anhinga melanogaster*, African Reed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*, Hammerkop *Scopus umbretta*, African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*, Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Great White Egret *Egretta alba*, Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* and White-faced Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*.

The avian species diversity recorded in Kasane (N=76 resident breeding species) is comparatively high. In Bloemfontein, Free State, South Africa, in a much larger area (51 km²), the number of resident breeding species was 51, and in Maseru – 73 (Kopij 2000). However, in the town of Katima Mulilo, situated on the large River Zambezi, only ca. 120 km from Kasane, 122 resident breeding bird species were recorded in 2013 (Kopij 2016). The following were dominant species in Katima Mulilo: Grey-headed Sparrow, Black-eyed Bulbul, Laughing Dove and Blue Waxbill (together 42.5%). In Kasane, all the above-mentioned species were also dominants, but in addition Cape-turtle Dove was also in this group (in Katima Mulilo, it was classified as subdominant).

In Katima Mulilo the proportion of *Streptopelia* doves was as follow: Laughing: 0.54, Cape-turtle: 0.17, Red-eyed: 0.17, Mourning: 0.13 (N=265); in Kasane the proportion was not much different: 0.53: 0.33: 0.07: 0.07 (N=89). Strikingly the proportion of Laughing Dove is exactly the same, as was also the proportion between Red-eyed and Mourning Dove.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* was not recorded in Katima Mulilo nor in Kasane. It was also not recorded in Rundu, Kavango Region, N Namibia (pers.obs.). It appears, therefore, that it still has not developed a resident population in this part of southern Africa.

Birds living in Kasane can be classified into three groups: urban avoiders (e.g. woodpeckers and ground-nesting species), suburban adaptable (e.g. Mourning Dove, White-browed Robin-Chat) and urban exploiters (e.g. Grey-headed Sparrow, Blue Waxbill, Laughing Dove). It is interesting to note that canaries, crows, and starlings are still not well-adapted to the urban environment in Kasane.

The presented atlas show that birds are, in general, well-adapted to live in urbanized environments within the riverine forest and Kalahari *Brachystegia* woodland. However, quantitative studies on avian communities should also be undertaken in the Chobe National Park to demonstrate the dynamic of the urbanization process taking place in Kasane.

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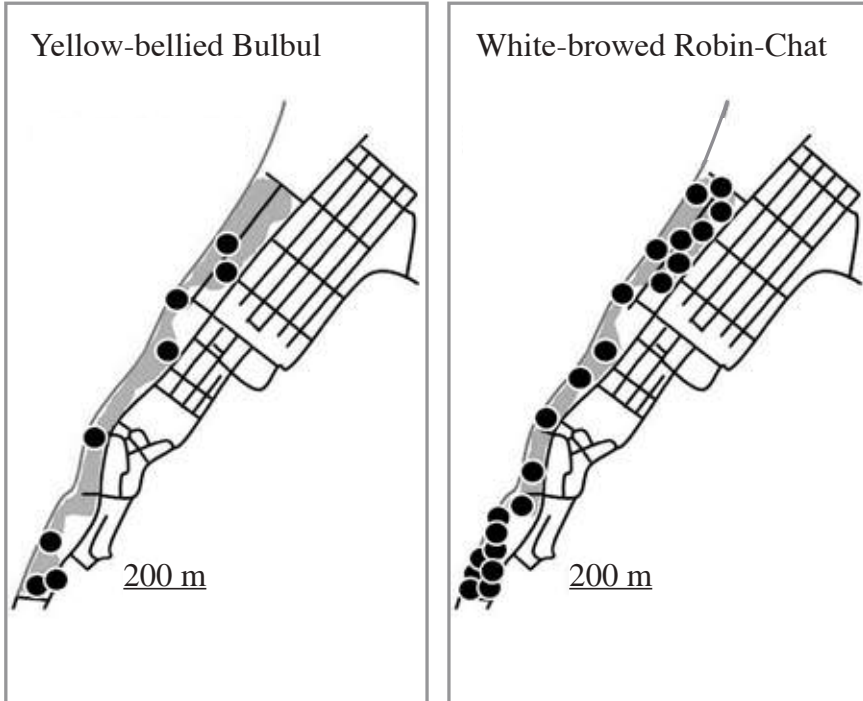
Appendix 1. Number of breeding pairs recorded in Kasane (160 ha) in 2014-2016.

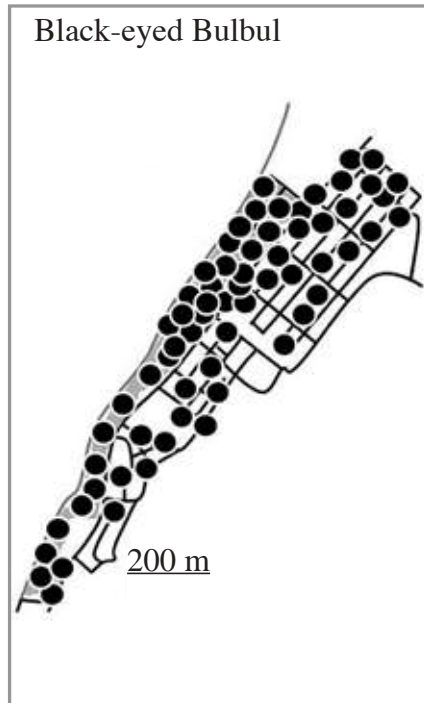
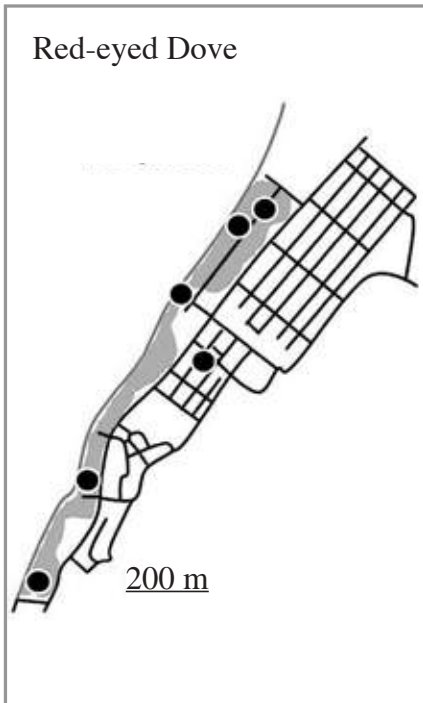
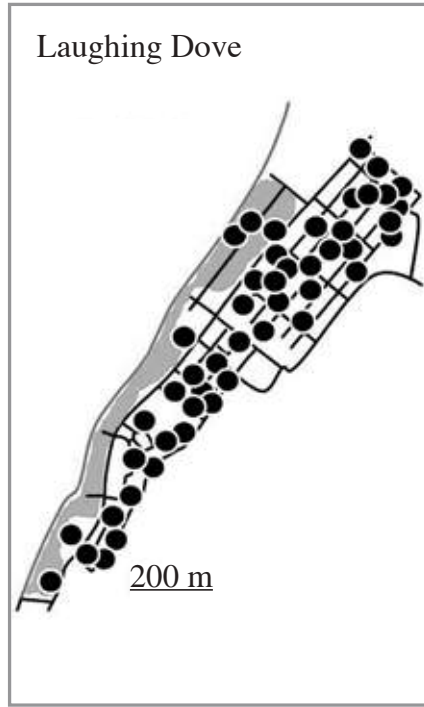
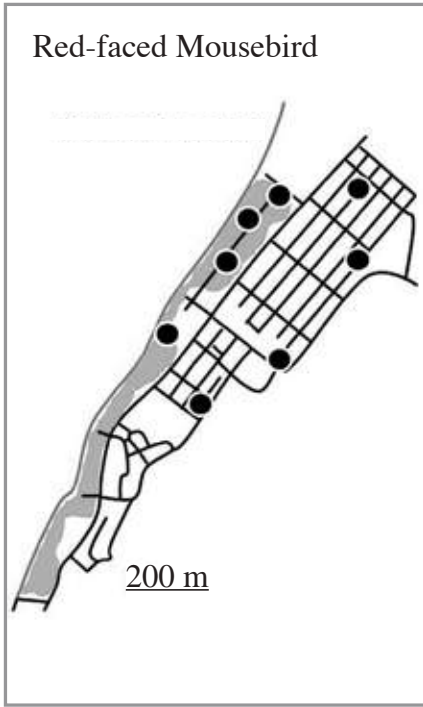
Dominant species are indicated with bold case. N – number of breeding pairs, D – density (pairs per 10 ha), D% – dominance (percentage of breeding pairs of given species in relation to all breeding pairs of all species recorded).

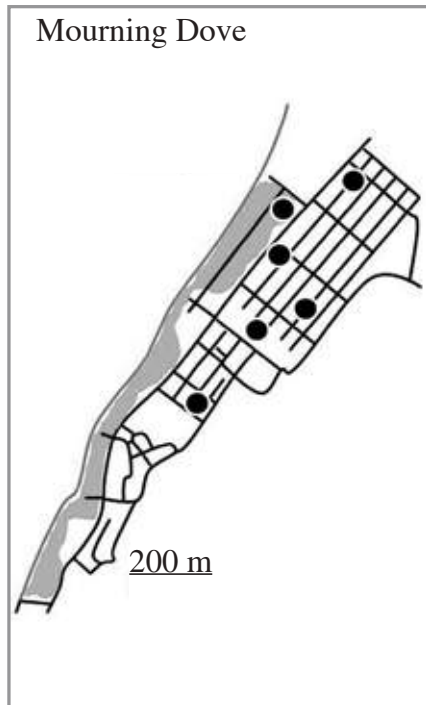
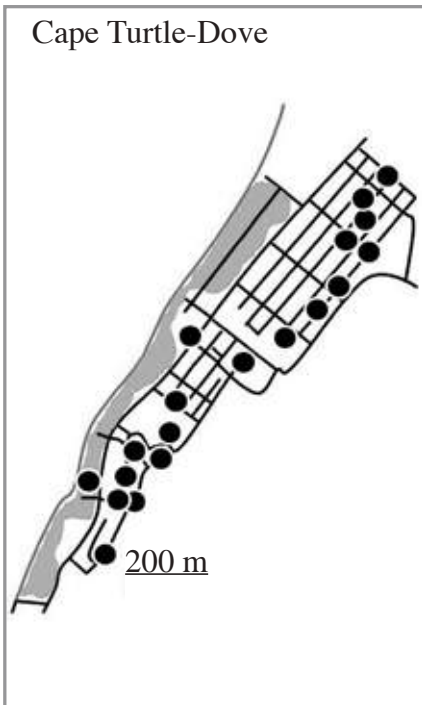
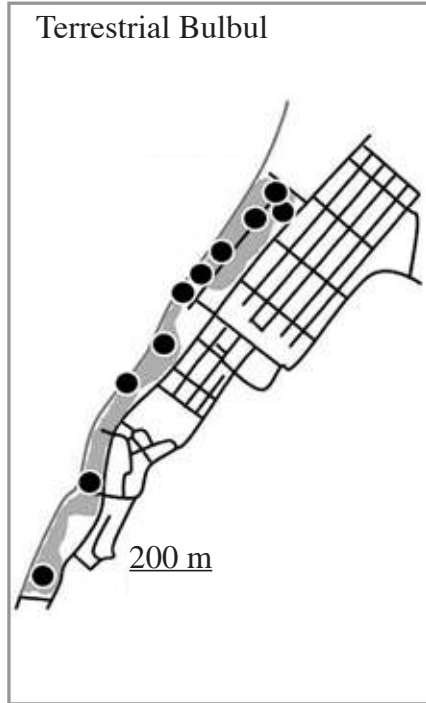
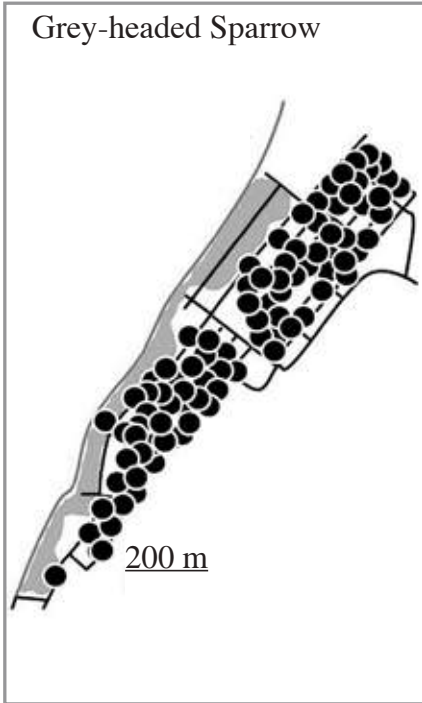
Common species name	Scientific species name	Total		
		N	D	D%
<i>Accipiter</i> sp.	<i>Accipiter</i> sp.	2	0.1	0.4
African Fish-Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	1	0.1	0.2
African Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus auratus</i>	7	0.4	1.3
African Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i>	4	0.3	0.7
Arrow-marked Babbler	<i>Turdoides jardineii</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Bearded Scrub Robin	<i>Erythropygia quadrivirgata</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Black-chested Prinia	<i>Prinia flavicans</i>	8	0.5	1.5
Black-collared Barbet	<i>Lybius torquatus</i>	3	0.2	0.5
Black-throated Seed-eater	<i>Serinus atrogularis</i>	4	0.3	0.7
Blue Waxbill	<i>Ureoginthus angolensis</i>	47	2.9	8.6
Bradfield's Hornbill	<i>Tockus bradfieldi</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Brown Firefinch	<i>Logonosticta nitidula</i>	3	0.2	0.5
Bronze Mannikin	<i>Spermestes cucullatus</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Brown-throated Weaver	<i>Ploceus xanthopterus</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Cape Glossy Starling	<i>Lamprotornis nitens</i>	15	0.9	2.7
Cape Turtle-Dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>	29	1.8	5.3
Cardinal Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicus fuscescens</i>	2	0.1	0.4
Crested Barbet	<i>Trachyphonus vaillantii</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Diederick Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Emerald-spotted Dove	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>	3	0.2	0.5
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia f. domestica</i>	17	1.1	3.1
Fork-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	14	0.9	2.6
Golden Weaver	<i>Ploceus xanthops</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Greater Honeyguide	<i>Indicator indicator</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Green-backed Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Grey Hornbill	<i>Tockus nasutus</i>	3	0.2	0.5
Grey Go-away Bird	<i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>	4	0.3	0.7
Grey-headed Sparrow	<i>Passer griseus</i>	87	5.4	15.9
Hartlaub's Babbler	<i>Turdoides leucopygius</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Jacobin Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Klaas Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Kurrichane Thrush	<i>Turdus libonyana</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	48	3.0	8.8

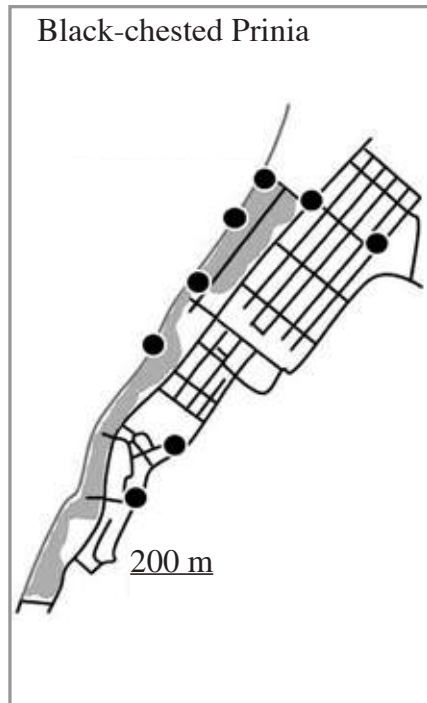
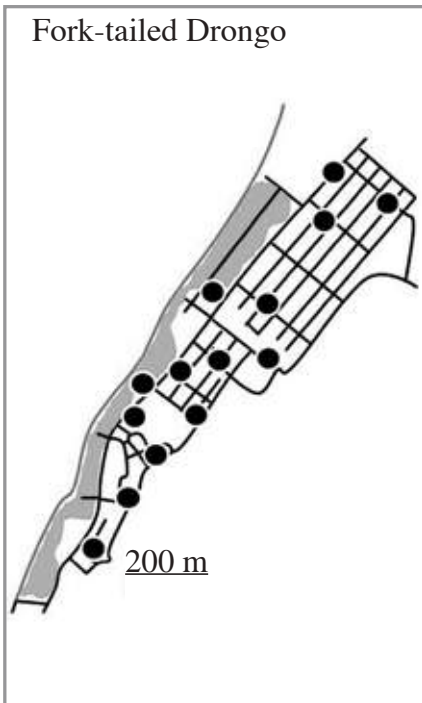
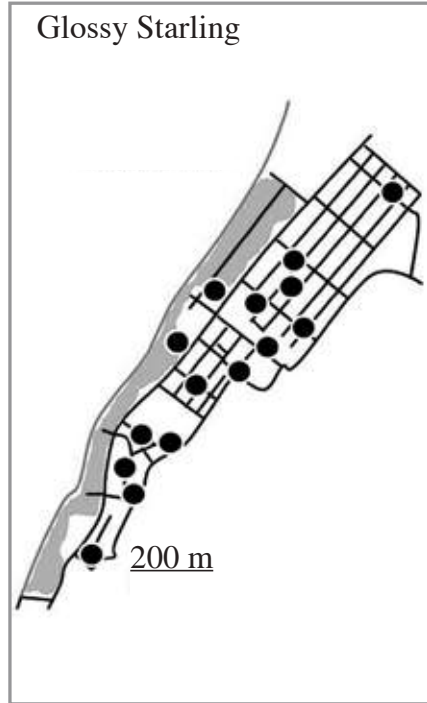
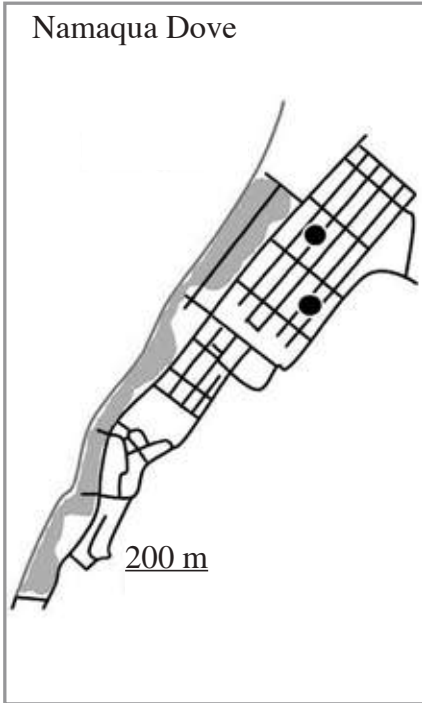
Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Hirundo Abyssinica</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Lilac-breasted Roller	<i>Coracias caudatus</i>	2	0.1	0.4
Little Bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Little Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter minullus</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Long-billed Crombec	<i>Sylvietta rufescens</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Marico Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia mariquensis</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>	16	1.0	2.9
Meyer's Parrot	<i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>	3	0.2	0.5
Mourning Dove	<i>Streptopelia decipiens</i>	6	0.4	1.1
Namaqua Dove	<i>Oena capensis</i>	2	0.1	0.4
Orange-breasted Bush-shrike	<i>Telophorus sulfureopectus</i>	5	0.3	0.9
Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	6	0.4	1.1
Palm Thrush (Collared)	<i>Cichladusa arquata</i>	2	0.1	0.4
Paradise Flycatcher (African)	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	11	0.7	2.0
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	2	0.1	0.4
Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Pied Wagtail (African)	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>	2	0.1	0.4
Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>	8	0.5	1.5
Rattling Cisticola	<i>Cisticola chiniana</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	3	0.2	0.5
Red-billed Spurfowl	<i>Francolinus adspersus</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Red-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Red-billed Woodhoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>	3	0.2	0.5
Black-eyed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	66	4.1	12.1
Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	6	0.4	1.1
Red-faced Mousebird	<i>Urocolius indicus</i>	8	0.5	1.5
Scarlet-chested Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Sparrow-weaver (White-browed)	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>	2	0.1	0.4
Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>	8	0.5	1.5
Speckled Weaver	<i>Ploceus ocularis</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Swainson's Spurfowl	<i>Francolinus swainsonii</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Terrestrial Bulbul	<i>Phyllastreus terrestris</i>	10	0.6	1.8
Tropical Boubou	<i>Laniarius aethiopicus</i>	10	0.6	1.8
Trumpeter Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes bucinator</i>	1	0.1	0.2
White-throated Swallow	<i>Hirundo albigularis</i>	2	0.1	0.4
White-browed Robin-chat	<i>Erythropygia leucophrys</i>	22	1.4	4.0
Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Yellow-bellied Bulbul	<i>Chlorocichla flaviventris</i>	8	0.5	1.5
Yellow-billed Hornbill	<i>Tockus flavirostris</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus parasiticus</i>	1	0.1	0.2
Total		547	34.2	100.0

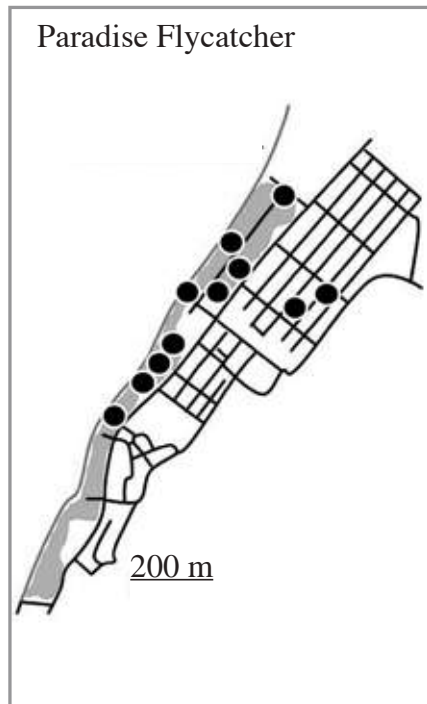
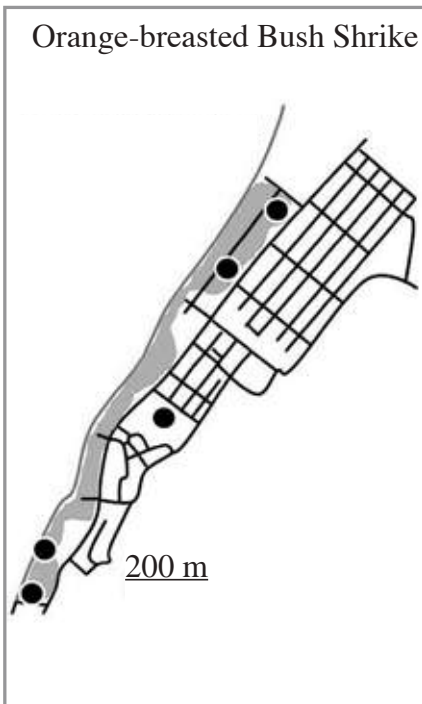
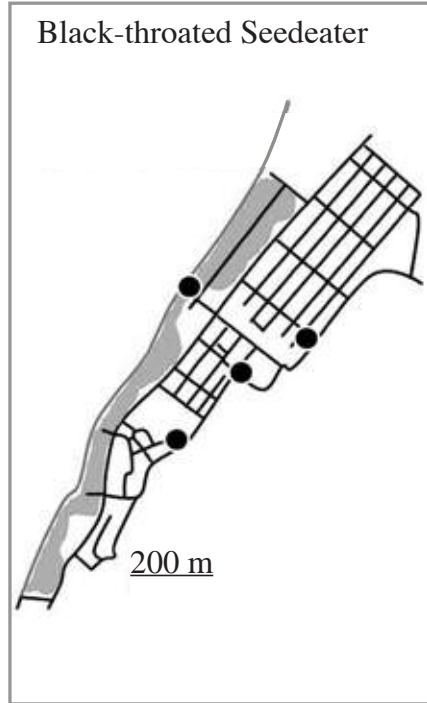
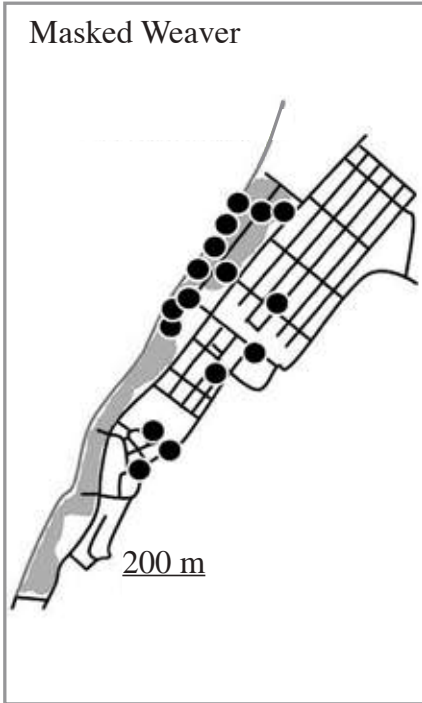
Department of Integrated Environmental Science, University of Namibia,
Ogongo Campus, Private Bag 5520 Oshakati, Namibia e-mail:
gkopij@unam.na

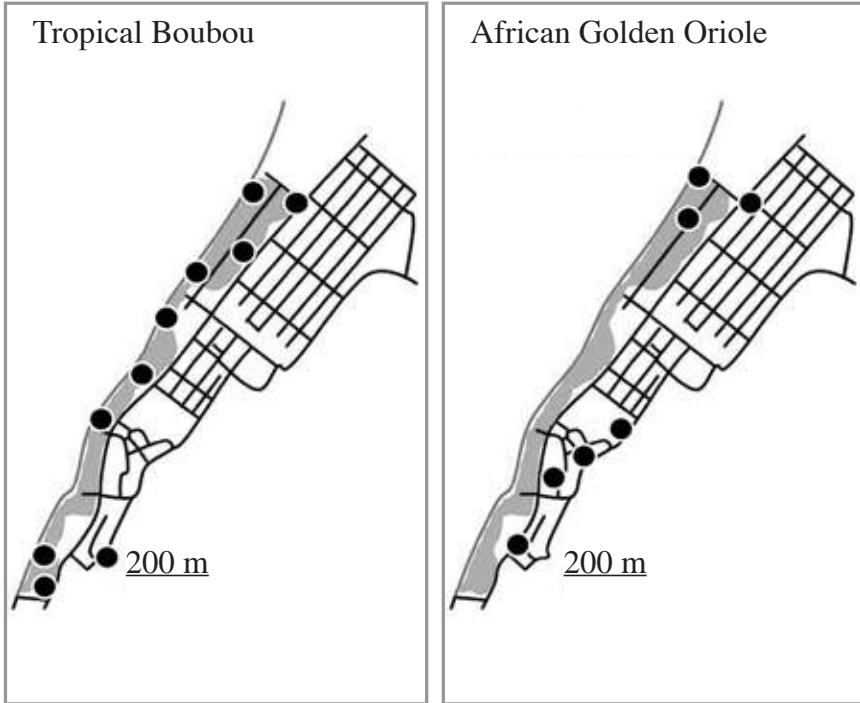












Black Harrier
Photo: Grzegorz Kopij

The Orange-breasted Waxbill and weavers in Botswana

H. Dieter Oschadleus

Tyler (2017) suggested that the Orange-breasted Waxbill *Sporaeginthus subflavus* has decreased in Botswana in recent years, possibly due to drought. In South Africa this species has seen a decline through much of its range; Underhill & Brooks (2014) compared SABAP1 and SABAP2 data and listed the Orange-breasted Waxbill as one of 125 species showing the most severe decreases. As a result of this decline, it was chosen as the 2015 flagship species of the Rare Finch Conservation Group (<http://www.rarefinch.org>).

Nest use by Orange-breasted Waxbills

While it occasionally makes its own nest, this waxbill usually takes over domed nests built by other grassland species, particularly *Euplectes* bishops and widows (Colahan 1982). Colahan (1982) provided some evidence that the Orange-breasted Waxbill only builds its own nest when other suitable vacant nests are not found. Tyler (2017) listed several records of juvenile waxbills in Botswana as the only known breeding records, so there is no information on frequency of self-built nests or host nest preferences in Botswana.

Table 1 shows a summary of total original published records of Orange-breasted Waxbills nesting in weaver nests anywhere in its range in Africa – nests of non-weavers (like cisticolas) were not included. None of these records is from Botswana, but the last column indicates host species that overlap with the waxbill's range in Botswana. I have not found published records of the Orange-breasted Waxbill using Fan-tailed Widow nests but this is a likely host. The waxbills may also use the nests of other weaver species in Botswana that nest in reeds, e.g. Southern Brown-throated Weavers, even though such records have not yet been published. Most published records of nest adoption by the Orange-breasted Waxbill are for nests of the Southern Red Bishop, and the nests of this bishop are the most likely source of nests for breeding by the waxbill in Botswana.

As Stephanie Tyler requested sightings of the Orange-breasted Waxbill, please also try to determine which nests were used (self built, or built by a weaver, cisticola, or other species). Any sightings of juveniles could include a search nearby for potential nests. Observers could look out for adult waxbills carrying nest lining into nests built by other species. These records could be published and/or submitted to PHOWN (PHOTOS of Weaver Nests, <http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown.php>). As an example, see photos of this waxbill adding lining to a Thick-billed Weaver nest in Kenya, at http://weavers.adu.org.za/phown_vm.php?vm=27377.

Table 1. Number of published records of nest adoption by the Orange-breasted Waxbill, using nests of weavers;

N	Species	Latin	Weaver occurs in Botswana
3	Thick-billed Weaver	<i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>	yes
1	Red-billed Quelea	<i>Quelea quelea</i>	yes
1	Yellow-crowned Bishop	<i>Euplectes afer</i>	yes
3	Red-collared Widowbird	<i>Euplectes ardens</i>	
24	Southern Red Bishop	<i>Euplectes orix</i>	yes
1	Black-winged Bishop	<i>Euplectes hordeaceus</i>	
1	Yellow Bishop	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>	
1	Yellow-mantled Widowbird	<i>Euplectes macroura</i>	
8	White-winged Widowbird	<i>Euplectes albonotatus</i>	yes
1	Long-tailed Widowbird	<i>Euplectes progne</i>	yes
2	Southern Masked Weaver	<i>Ploceus velatus</i>	yes
2	Holub's Golden Weaver	<i>Ploceus xanthops</i>	yes

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H. Dieter Oschadleus, email: doschadleus@gmail.com

Birding in south-west Botswana

Chris A. Brewster

A few days birding in south-western Botswana at the end of July / beginning of August 2018 was productive and enjoyable.

The first birding was done along the track between Kokotsha and Mabuasehube. Along this track several hours were spent birding and two pentads were atlased for SABAP2. The absence of doves, apart from an occasional Cape Turtle Dove *Streptopelia capicola*, was noticeable; there was not a single dove in one pentad. Only one Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*, and no other large raptors, was noted in several hours of birding. The commonest species, like at Mabuasehube, were Scaly-feathered Finch *Sporopipes squamifrons* and Fawn-coloured Lark *Calendulauda africanoides*. The only Red-billed Spurfowl *Pternistes adspersus* and Barred Wren-Warbler *Calamonastes fasciolatus* of the trip were recorded along the track, these species becoming sparse further west.

Much of Mabuasehube was looking very fine with good grass cover, as there must have been adequate rain in late summer. Two nights were spent camping here, one night at Khiding Pan and one night at the beautiful Bosobogolo Pan. Raptors are of particular interest at Mabuasehube. Of the larger raptors, four Tawny Eagles *Aquila rapax*, seven Bateleurs, 12 Lappet-faced Vultures *Torgos tracheliotos* and five White-backed Vultures *Gyps africanus* were seen; no other large raptors were noted. All the vultures and Bateleurs were seen on the ground at the water holes at Monamodi, Lesholoago and Mpaathutlwa Pans. Of the smaller raptors, Pale Chanting Goshawks *Melierax canorus* were common and a few Gabar Goshawks *Micronisus gabar* and Greater Kestrels *Falco rupicolides* were seen.

A total of 55 species were recorded at Mabuasehube. The attractive Violet-eared Waxbill *Uraeginthus granatinus*, Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis* and Pirit Batis *Batis pririt* were widespread. White-backed Mousebirds *Colius colius* were noted a few times both at Mabuasehube and also between Kokotsha and Mabuasehube; this species was unrecorded in the area by Penry (1994) and it is likely that its range has extended northwards in recent years. The only Cape Penduline-tits *Anthoscopus minutus* were on the edge of Monamodi Pan. Two Southern Fiscals *Lanius collaris* were seen; this species is sparse in the Kalahari. Unexpectedly, there was an African Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus* at Khiding Pan; unlike in the east and north of the country, this species is seldom seen in the Kalahari. No sunbirds at all were seen, presumably because no trees or other plants were in flower.

At Khiding Pan, after roaring loudly some 100 metres away, a lion appeared in front of the camp site while breakfast was being prepared. When it turned into the camp site and came to smell the cool box a retreat into the vehicle had to be made; it eventually moved away along the road, continuing to roar.

Along the 110 km drive from Mabuasehube to Tsabong there is much beautiful natural habitat typical of the 'Western Woodlands'. A single Bateleur was noted along this road and near Tsabong, some Black-faced Waxbills *Estrilda erythronotos*; this species is uncommon in southwestern Botswana. Just outside of Tsabong, beside the road to Middlepits, there was a congregation of around 100 White-backed Vultures and five Lappet-faced Vultures at a dead cow, an encouragingly large number in these days of declining vulture populations. A pair of Kori Bustards *Ardeotis kori* was surprisingly noted close to Kolonkwaneng village and another single bird further west, beyond Gakhibane. Most unexpectedly, there was an African Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* in the Molopo Valley some 50 km south of Tsabong; the locality is far outside its expected range in Botswana, but not so far west of its known range in South Africa.

Three days were spent in the Nossob Valley, mainly between Bokspits, Struissendam and Two Rivers. Most of the time was spent outside of Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, where birding is easier as it can be done on foot, though one afternoon was spent birding in the lower Nossob Valley in the Park. Between Bokspits and Struissendam, the road does not follow the Nossob valley, as it passes over the dunes, but the old road along the Nossob Valley between the two villages, no longer used by vehicles, can be walked. This old road is beautiful, passing through tall acacias along the river and flanked by a low rocky escarpment along the valley with the red dunes behind.

Relatively few raptors were seen in this area. The only large raptors were a White-backed Vulture on a nest in a tall acacia near Bokspits and a Tawny Eagle, though of the smaller raptors, a Jackal Buzzard *Buteo rufofuscus* was seen in the Nossob Valley north of Rooiputs and Pale Chanting Goshawks, Gabar Goshawks and Pygmy Falcons *Polihierax semitorquatus* too, the latter in the vicinity of Sociable Weaver *Philetarius socius* nests..

Apart from three water bird species at Bokspits desalination plant, a total of 61 species were recorded in this area. Of particular interest were Dusky Sunbirds *Cinnyris fuscus*, which were quite common around Bokspits and were feeding at the parasitic *Tapinanthus oleifolius* which was in flower. Golden-tailed Woodpeckers *Campethera abingoni* were recorded at two localities south of Struissendam. In contrast to Mabuasehube, where none were recorded, Namaqua Doves *Oena capensis* were fairly common. The beautiful calls of Namaqua Sandgrouse *Pterocles namaqua*, a feature of

this area, were heard as birds flew to drink in the morning. Some Sabota Larks *Calendulauda sabota* and Familiar Chats *Emarginata familiaris* were noted in the vicinity of the low rocky escarpments along the Nossob Valley. The Sabota Larks in this area are larger billed than in the rest of Botswana while the Familiar Chats appear paler and greyer than those in the east of the country. Yellow Canaries *Crithagra flaviventris* were common but no White-throated Canaries *Crithagra albogularis* were seen, the latter species is unrecorded in Botswana, but, on the basis of South African records, should occur in this area. Bokmakerie *Teylophorus zeylonus*, which should occur in this area, were also unrecorded.

About 3 km south of Two Rivers, a farm gate provides access to a very sandy track, which leads to the cattle post of Tshane Tshane and onwards to the village of Khawa, This track provides access to the dune land, which following late summer rains, was covered with long grass. This track was followed some way and soon provided views of Cape Penduline-tit and, further on, the sound of displaying Eastern Clapper Lark *Mirafra fasciolata*. When this track to Tshane Tshane was followed some years ago a number of Pink-billed Larks *Spizocorys conirostris* were found in dune slacks on the way (Tyler and Brewster 2008).

In the Nossob Valley northwards from Two Rivers, several Zitting Cisticolas *Cisticola juncidis* were unexpectedly seen in the river bed of the Nossob Valley, outside of the expected range of the species, but probably having moved into the area after good later summer rains.

Lastly, of non-birding interest, is the old hand-powered well which is still going strong in Struissendam. While the old well at Bokspits has been fenced off and preserved, the old well at Struissendam in the floor of the Nossob Valley is still kept in good use to water livestock.

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Chris A. Brewster, P O Box 26292, Gaborone

Yellow-bellied Greenbuls near Kanye

Chris A. Brewster

On 30 June 1999 at least three Yellow-bellied Greenbuls *Chlorocichla flaviventris* were recorded close to Bathoen Dam, Kanye, south-east Botswana (Buchan, Hester & Tyler, 2000). The birds were recorded in well-developed mixed woodland at the base of the escarpment of the hill on top of which the village of Kanye is situated. This record was about 200 km away from where the species was known to occur along the Limpopo River in riparian woodland, where it is a resident.

On 14 April 2018, the area was again visited. As soon as I arrived, at the same location as that where the birds were recorded in 1999, I heard the distinctive call of Yellow-bellied Greenbuls. I soon was able to obtain reasonable views of at least two birds in indigenous woodland, behind the blue gums woodland that fringe Bathoen Dam, near the upstream end of the dam.

On 29 May 2018 I returned to the area and, after hearing birds calling, located at least two Yellow-bellied Greenbuls 300-400 metres further to the west in riverine woodland along the dry Mmakgodumo River.

On 1 June 2018 I visited Polokwe, about 7 km to the north. At Polokwe there is a steep hill on the main road from Kanye to Gaborone where the road drops down the escarpment. About one kilometre to the west of this steep hill there is a kloof in the escarpment with some well-developed woodland. In this kloof, after being alerted by the distinctive calls of the species, I saw two Yellow-bellied Greenbuls.

The records of the species in 1999 and then again in 2018 indicate that Yellow-bellied Greenbul is resident in the Kanye area. Penry (1994) states that in Botswana its preferred habitat is rich and tall stands of riparian evergreen forest, but such habitat is very restricted in the Kanye area and, also, what little exists, is in danger of being depleted and cleared due to human pressure, particularly as Kanye is a large expanding village. It is possible that the species will be found at other sites around Kanye, but the numbers of Yellow-bellied Greenbul present in the Kanye area must be very low.

Buchan, Hester & Tyler (2000) stated that the birds observed in Kanye in 1999 probably formed a small relict population. While it is possible that these records in the Kanye area are a result of a range expansion, it seems more likely that, as stated, a small relict population exists there. It is possible that the distribution of Yellow-bellied Greenbul once extended

continuously up the Limpopo and Ngotwane river catchments as far as Kanye.

There have been an increasing number of sightings of Yellow-bellied Greenbul in the Gaborone area (Tyler and Brewster 2015) though the species was unrecorded by Tyler & Borello (1998). It is likely that it is now resident in the Gaborone area. The recent records in this area are not in the natural habitat of riparian forest but are typically in gardens. It is likely that the development of Gaborone in recent years with its increasing number of well-vegetated gardens has attracted Yellow-bellied Greenbuls to the area. Presumably Yellow-bellied Greenbuls first appeared in the area after moving up the Limpopo and Ngotwane Rivers.

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Chris A. Brewster P.O. Box 26292, Gaborone

Wetland along the Metsemotlhaba River

Chris A. Brewster

In south-east Botswana there are a relatively large number of wetlands. In the Mmathethe / Good Hope area there are many seasonal pans, mostly small, which, when there is sufficient rainfall for them to be inundated, attract a variety of waterbird species (Tyler & Tyler 2002). Further north, in the catchment of the Ngotwane River, there is, due to topography, a lack of pans, with the notable exception of Mmabe Pan south of Mochudi. Mmabe Pan is occasionally inundated in summers with good rainfall, such as in 2016. Nearly all the wetlands in the Ngotwane River catchment are man-made, mainly either dams or sewage ponds. There are two large dams, namely the Gaborone Dam and Bokaa Dam, and numerous smaller dams. There are sewage ponds in the vicinity of Gaborone and all other towns and large villages. Many of these dams and sewage ponds are important for waterbirds.

The river courses in the catchment of the Ngotwane River are generally unimportant for waterbirds. These rivers mostly only flow for a short time in wet periods and the watercourses of the rivers are generally narrow, being constrained by steep banks. However, water can remain in pools in these rivers for some months after rivers have flowed, particularly where the river flows over impermeable rocks. While other rivers in the area only flow for short periods after rains, there is a flow of water along much of the Ngotwane River below Gaborone all year due to water flowing downriver from Glen Valley Sewage Works in Gaborone. Though waterbirds found along these rivers are few, two characteristic species, of these rivers are African Black Duck *Anas sparsa* and Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*. These two uncommon species favour pools along the rivers.

Near Mosopa three rivers, the Mosopa, Hatsatlatladi and Monname Rivers, converge to form the Metsemotlhaba River, which flows eastwards eventually reaching Bokaa Dam and, below Bokaa Dam, the Ngotwane River. The course of the Metsemotlhaba River is mostly narrow and sandy with steep banks and few pools rendering it unattractive to waterbirds. However, south west of Kopong, the river ceases to flow between steep banks and spreads out over a flood plain. For several kilometres, past Kopong, the river then follows a poorly defined course across a floodplain, and three seasonal wetlands develop when the river flows. One of these wetlands is a seasonal lagoon with open water, a few hundred metres across, and fringed with emergent vegetation, on the north side of the Metsemotlhaba River, the eastern end of which is at 24°30.4'S, 25°52.95'E. This lagoon retains water for several months after the river has flowed. It is difficult of access when the river has water when it is probably best accessed from the village of Matsieta off the main road to Kopong. A second, larger, wetland, about 1.5 km long, is found south-west of Kopong, again on the north side of the river. This wetland lacks open water and it is characterised by emergent vegetation; it is attractive to a variety of waterbirds when inundated. When the river is flowing it is difficult of access from Kopong, but the north side of the wetland can be accessed at 24°29.95'S, 25°53.01'E to the south west of Kopong. A third wetland, not visited, apparently develops on the south side of the river to the south of Kopong. As the Metsemotlhaba River has an extensive catchment and flows most years, these three wetlands are inundated most summers.

The existence of these seasonal wetlands was not realised until the area was visited on 6 March 2018. There is no reference to these wetlands, or to the bird species which occur there, in the ornithological literature, which is surprising considering their proximity to Gaborone. The wetlands are also not clearly marked on the 1:50 000 maps of the area.

On 6 March 2018, when the area was visited, the larger wetland south-west of Kopong had water, though water levels were dropping. The wetland was probably inundated as a result of heavy rainfall in late January when the

Metsemotlhaba River flowed. Though it was not possible to make a count of waterbirds due to the tall emergent vegetation, about 30 Yellow-billed Storks *Mycteria ibis*, seven Black Herons *Egretta ardesiaca* and three Yellow-billed Egrets *Egretta intermedia* plus a variety of other waterbirds were seen. The lagoon, which lies slightly further west and which had open water, was also visited; fewer waterbirds were seen there, though the lagoon and the emergent vegetation around it were not explored thoroughly. When the area was visited again on 23 July 2018, there was still a little water left in this lagoon, though it was drying up; two Avocets *Recurvirostra avoseta* were seen there.

These wetlands, which are likely to be inundated most summers, certainly merit further investigation. Unlike other nearby wetlands in the Ngotwane River catchment, which are man-made, these wetlands develop naturally on a river floodplain. The waterbird and non-waterbird species that occur there are likely to be of interest.

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Chris A. Brewster, P.O. Box 26292, Gaborone

Some observations of palaeartic passerine migrants in south-eastern Botswana in the 2017-2018 summer

Chris A. Brewster

Fourteen palaeartic passerine migrant species are believed to regularly occur in south-eastern Botswana in summer. This total excludes River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* and Thrush Nighthingale *Luscinia luscinia*, which have been only occasionally recorded in south-eastern Botswana. This total also excludes Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*. Tyler & Borello (1999) considered it to be uncommon to frequent in the Gaborone area, but this species has been unrecorded for at least the past three years and it appears that its status in the area may have changed and that it no longer regularly occurs. While palaeartic passerine migrants are generally present from about November to March, for a few species, notably Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, arrival can take place as early as late September and departure as late as early May (Skinner 1985).

A considerable amount of time was spent in the field in south-eastern Botswana throughout the 2017-2018 summer, typically two or three days a week, and some interesting observations of palaeartic passerine migrant species were made. These observations are discussed.

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Three or four birds were heard in song west of Olifants Drift in 2426B1, but no other birds were noted subsequently until one was seen near Mogonye in 2425D3 on 13 Dec 2017. Including this last sighting there were nine records of the species between December and March; the last one was west of Thamaga in 2425C2 on 28 March 2018. At Crocodile Pools, Notwane (2425D4), where regular observations were made throughout the summer and where Brewster (2014) considered it to be common, there was only one record of a single bird on 10 March 2018. Most of the few birds recorded were in more lush vegetation, typically in the vicinity of water. Tyler & Borello (1999) considered it to be common in the Gaborone area and Brewster (2017) found it to be fairly common in any woodland in south-eastern Botswana in the 2016-2017 summer, but this was not the case in the 2017-2018 summer when numbers present were clearly reduced.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

The only record of the species was one at Broadhurst Sewage Ponds, Gaborone on 19 Jan 2018. Tyler & Borello (1999) considered, in the Gaborone area, it to be uncommon to locally frequent and may be more numerous in years of good rainfall.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

There were three records of the species, one at Broadhurst S.P., Gaborone on 19 Jan 2018, one along the Metsemotlhaba River near Kopong in 2425D2 and one near Gakgatla in 2425D1 on 18 Mar 2018. Tyler & Borello (1999) considered the species to be uncommon to frequent in the Gaborone area. The numbers of this species in eastern and south-eastern Botswana vary from year to year dependent on the amount of summer rainfall and its effect on the vegetation, and it appears that in the 2017-2018 summer relatively few birds were present in south-eastern Botswana.

Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum*

Tyler & Borello (1999) considered it to be fairly common in the Gaborone area and Brewster (2017) found it to be fairly common and predictable in acacia thicket in south-eastern Botswana in the 2016-2017 summer. The lack of records in the 2017-2018 summer was striking; the only record in south-eastern Botswana was one near Gasita in 2524B2 on 7 Feb 2018.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

There were only two records of Icterine Warbler in south-eastern Botswana in the 2017-2018 summer. One was recorded along the Metsemotlhaba River near Mosopa in 2425C4 and another was recorded along the Metsemotlhaba River near Kopong in 2425D2 on 2 March 2018. Tyler & Borello (1999) considered it to be frequent in the Gaborone area and Brewster (2017) also found it to be frequent in south-eastern Botswana in the 2016-2017 summer. It is evident that relatively few Icterine Warblers reached south-eastern Botswana in the 2017-2018 summer.

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

One bird was heard singing in a dense thicket and then seen along the Gakgatla watercourse near Gakgatla in 2425D1 and one was heard singing and then seen in an acacia thicket beside a small dam west of Thamaga in 2425C2 on 2 April 2018. Garden Warbler is one of the most difficult species to find in Botswana. Its song is not easily recognisable and it can generally only be located if heard singing from a dense thicket where it can only be seen with difficulty, if at all. It is very likely that this species is overlooked and it is probable that it is more common than the rather few records suggest. Tyler & Borello (1999) considered it to be rare in the Gaborone area.

Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*

None was recorded in the 2017-2018 summer. Tyler & Borello (1999) considered it to be uncommon in the Gaborone area. Several were recorded in savanna in 2426A1 north of Malotwana in March 2017 (Brewster 2017) but when the same locality was visited on 28 Feb 2018, none was recorded. South-eastern Botswana appears to lie at the southern edge of its range in Botswana and it is generally common in *Grewia flava* bush savanna, just slightly further north in eastern Botswana.

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

The earliest record of Spotted Flycatcher in the 2017-2018 summer was one at Crocodile Pools, Notwane on 7 Dec 2018. This is a very late arrival for this species as Skinner (1985) recorded it as arriving from mid-October and to be continually present in south-eastern Botswana from early November. At Crocodile Pools one was present throughout January 2018 but not subsequently and one was then seen, presumably a bird on passage, there on 31 March 2018. Brewster (2014) considered it to be common at Crocodile Pools, but this was clearly not the case in the 2017-2018 summer. Elsewhere there were eight records of the species, though this included one record of five single birds on a 2 km transect near Mogonye in 2425D3, which is a typical number of birds to be recorded on this transect in February. Tyler & Borello (1999) considered it to be common in the Gaborone area and Brewster (2017) found it to be common in woodland in south-eastern Botswana in the 2016-2017 summer. It could not, however, be considered to be common in the 2017-2018 summer and it is probable that reduced numbers of Spotted Flycatchers were present in south-eastern Botswana compared to previous years.

Discussion

418 mm of rainfall were recorded at Crocodile Pools in the 2017-2018, which is below the average of 511 mm for the Gaborone area (Tyler & Borello 1999). Rainfall in the 2017-2018 summer was not well-distributed throughout the summer. The main period of rainfall in the 2017-2018 summer only commenced on 24 January 2018 and prior to this date only

89 mm of rainfall were recorded at Crocodile Pools. From 24 January to 10 April 2018 there were 312 mm of rainfall recorded at Crocodile Pools, which was well above average for the period. The rainfall recorded at Crocodile Pools in the 2017-2018 summer was typical of what was recorded elsewhere in south-eastern Botswana.

The very dry conditions throughout November and December until the arrival of the main rains on 24 January had a very negative effect on vegetation which clearly affected birdlife. For example, January 2018 was notable for the almost total lack of calling cuckoos of all species; typically cuckoos are very vocal in the month of January. It was difficult, though, to ascertain the extent that cuckoos had left the area or had just simply ceased to call. A few cuckoos started to call in February, but it was notable that no Black Cuckoos *Cuculus clamosus* at all were heard calling at Crocodile Pools from January to April; usually they are common there during these months. It seems likely that many cuckoos left the area in December and January.

While Willow Warblers are unobtrusive, they are typically located when their contact call, which is uttered frequently, is heard, so are not easy to overlook. Olive-tree Warblers and Icterine Warblers are invariably located when their distinctive songs are heard, so if they are not in song, they would be almost wholly overlooked. However, these two species appear to sing throughout the non-breeding season, so the lack of records in the 2017-2018 summer is presumed to indicate their absence. It is possible nevertheless, that these two species were overlooked simply because they were not in song. Spotted Flycatchers are easily seen and, even if they are not located on sight, they can generally be located when their distinctive alarm call, which is uttered regularly, is heard. Spotted Flycatchers, therefore, are not easily overlooked.

The lower numbers of Willow Warbler, Olive-tree Warbler, Icterine Warbler and Spotted Flycatcher recorded in south-eastern Botswana in the 2017-2018 summer compared to previous years seems most likely to due to the very dry conditions in early summer, from late October to mid-January. However, to be more certain that this is the case, it would be necessary to make a comparison with records in a future year with higher rainfall.

The numbers of Spotted Flycatchers and Olive-tree Warblers breeding in Europe are considered to be stable, while the numbers of Icterine Warblers breeding there is considered to be increasing; numbers of Willow Warblers, in contrast, are considered to be in decline (Staneva & Burfield 2017). Nevertheless Willow Warbler is the most numerous of all passerine migrants to Africa breeding in Europe (Staneva & Burfield 2017). The great majority of Icterine Warblers and Olive-tree Warblers breed in Europe but a significant proportion of Willow Warblers and Spotted Flycatchers breed further east in the Eastern Palaearctic (Harrison 1982). The core of the non-breeding distribution of Olive-tree Warbler is in Botswana and the

Limpopo Province of South Africa, with few birds spending the non-breeding season elsewhere (Herremans 1997). Thus it is unlikely that a decline in the numbers of Olivetree Warblers, Icterine Warblers and Spotted Flycatchers can be attributed to declining breeding numbers in Europe.

Observations of two species, Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* have not been included. These two species are the most numerous palaeartic passerine migrants in south-eastern Botswana in summer. Tyler & Borello (1999) considered Barn Swallow to be abundant in the Gaborone area and Red-backed Shrike to be common to abundant. As these two species are so numerous, it is more difficult to discern any differences in the numbers visiting south-eastern Botswana from year to year.

Barn Swallow, like European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, another common palaeartic migrant to south-eastern Botswana, is an aerial feeder which is mobile, probably quickly moving to areas with improved feeding conditions following periods of rainfall. While it was not possible to note any difference in the numbers of Barn Swallow in the 2017-2018 summer, compared to previous years, it was noted that European Bee-eater appeared to be less evident in the 2017-2018 summer than in the previous summer. Red-backed Shrike in contrast to the mobile Barn Swallow has been shown to have high site-fidelity in the Gaborone area (Herremans *et al* 1995), and, accordingly, numbers of this species are less likely to vary greatly from year to year. The numbers of Red-backed Shrike breeding in Europe are considered to be stable, while the numbers of Barn Swallows breeding in Europe are considered to be decreasing (Staneva & Burfield 2017). The great majority of Red-backed Shrikes breed in Europe (Harrison 1982) and Botswana is at the core of its non-breeding distribution (Herremans 1997). It is likely that the Barn Swallows that migrate to Botswana comprise mainly birds that breed in Europe (Earle 1997).

The palaeartic migrants that spend the non-breeding season in Botswana comprise an important part of Botswana's avifauna. Climate change is taking place rapidly and man's activities are having an increasing effect on the natural environment. The effects of climate change and man's activities have the potential to have a great impact on these palaeartic migrants as they utilise eco-systems in their breeding areas, on passage and in their non-breeding areas. Palaeartic migrants in Botswana need to be monitored closely so any changes in their populations can be recognized as early as possible.

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Chris A Brewster, P. O. Box 26292, Gaborone

Birding hotspot: Muchenje campsite and cottages

Harold Hester

Tucked away in northern Botswana about 5kms from Ngoma Bridge, lie Muchenje Campsite and Cottages. This is not merely a birding hotspot, it is a mega hotspot, super-duper, extraordinary, incredible, birding place to visit. For anyone interested in birds, it should be the first go-to place on his or her list. My wife, daughter and son and their spouses and our five grandsons visited the place in late December 2017 and we were so impressed that I am moved to advertise it to the birding world. What is so attractive about this site?

Firstly, it is the birds. We identified a Swamp Nightjar *Caprimulgus natalensis*, about a dozen Rufous-bellied Herons *Ardeola rufiventris*, a Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, an Ovambo Sparrowhawk *Accipiter ovampensis*, a White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotus*, a pair of Pygmy Geese *Nettapus auritus*, Lesser Jacana *Microparra capensis*, a Coppery-tailed *Centropus cupreicaudus* and Senegal Coucal *C. senegalensis* calling at the same time, a Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris*, three Thrush Nightingales *Luscinia luscinia* and about four Pink-throated Longclaws *Macronyx ameliae*, all within 24 hours of our arrival. The variety of species has to do with the contrasting vegetation regimes, as in the Garden of Eden. There is dense riparian bush, tall trees like Jackalberry *Diospyros mespiliformis* and spreading *Acacia tortilis*, the Chobe River and an assortment of ponds, large expansive flood plain and typical Botswana woodland. Altogether, in two days we identified 155 species in the pentad. With another day at our disposal we think we may have hit 180 species.

Secondly it is about the camping site itself. There are ten spacious campsites in all on a 4-hectare plot so it is not over-crowded, and most are covered by ninety per cent shade for the hottest part of the day. Each site has a power point, water from a tap into a basin, the ubiquitous braai, a braai working surface and access to four spotless ablution blocks with piping hot water, toilet and basins which service the site. Added to that there is a wi-fi hotspot and small shop which sells freshly grown salad packs from their own garden, firewood, cold drinks and a limited selection of meat. For birders there is a deck with chairs, overlooking the floodplain and sundry water holes; for others there is a small swimming pool allowing one to cool off on those intensely hot days. There are also three cottages and three permanent tents are being installed. The campsite was obviously designed by experienced campers and is maintained by people who care to set high standards.

Thirdly, the fees are reasonable and one does not have to pay to enter the Chobe N. P. to see all these species.

Lastly, a tarred road leads to the campsites gate. So, the site is accessible from all surrounding countries by tar and one does not need a four-wheel drive vehicle to get there.

Trish and Geoff Williams acquired the site about five to six years ago. It had been ravaged by cattle which had over-grazed the area and there was much soil erosion in evidence. By dint of hard work, levelling the ground, planting indigenous trees and shrubs, the bush has been returned to pristine condition. One can hardly believe it had been trashed before. Nature is indeed a wonderful healer. Now all the eco-systems are in place and the site has its quota of frogs and chameleons and spiders and dragonflies and butterflies and - - - . Daughter Bronwyn and her husband Haydn now operate and maintain this fantastic birding hotspot are pleased to help with their local knowledge of the area.

It should be noted that they are closed in February during the rainy season and the flood plains are covered by the Chobe River from about April to September.

The contact details are: Muchenje Campsite and Cottages - Phone: +267 7500 7327 - Email: bookings@muchenjecampsite.com - Web: www.muchenjecampsite.com

Collared Palm Thrush in the Linyanti

On a trip late last year to the Linyanti concession (NG15) I found a nesting Collared Palm Thrush. It was my first and my colleague Mike Fitt mentioned that you might be interested in the nest location. It is just south of Duma Tau camp, called Kubu Lagoon Island, not far from Zibadianja Lagoon. The GPS co-ordinates are as follows: 18°33'28.94" S 23°33'01.59" E

Kind Regards,

Baz Sandenbergh
Sustainability Coordinator,
BazS@wilderness.co.bw

Editor: Collared Palm Thrushes are best known at Mowana Lodge at Kasane where they are resident, Other records have come from Nata. Please see back cover for photograph.

Report from the Records Subcommittee: Category A Records

Compiled by Chris A. Brewster

The following records were assessed by Chris A. Brewster, Andrew Hester, Richard D. Randall, Grant Reed and Stephanie J. Tyler. Records were assessed on the basis of majority vote. Observers did not vote on their own records.

Species	Square	Date	Comments
African Goshawk <i>Accipiter Tachiro</i>	1821B4	24- 26.6.18	One heard calling and seen at Shakawe (A. Hester).
Black Harrier <i>Circus maurus</i>	2620B2	10.4.18	One seen and photographed near Kij Kij, Nossob Valley (P. Bartho).
African Finfoot <i>Podica senegalensis</i>	1822C1	12.11.17	One seen near Sepupa (A. van de Wetering). First accepted record for Okavango Delta / Panhandle
Olive Woodpecker <i>Dendropicos griseocephalus</i>	1725C3	28.7.18	One seen and photographed at Kasane. (L Francey). Second accepted record for Botswana.
Croaking Cisticola <i>Cisticola natalensis</i>	1825D1	31.12.17	Two birds, suspected breeding pair, seen at Pandamatenga (W. De Vos). Fifth accepted record for Botswana.
Pied Starling <i>Lamprotornis bicolor</i>	2525D1	27.8.17	One seen at Ramatlabama (R. Balt). First accepted record for Botswana.
Northern Grey-headed Sparrow <i>Passer griseus</i>	1923C4	3.11.08	One trapped and photographed at Maun (U. Franke). Second accepted record away from Chobe District.
Mountain Wagtail <i>Motacilla clara</i>	2227C2	28.9.17	One seen at Moremi Gorge (C. A. Brewster). Considered to be same bird present 3-31.7.16 (Brewster 2016). Third accepted record for Botswana.

REFERENCE

Brewster, C.A. 2016. Report from the Records Subcommittee: Category A Records. *Babbler* 62: P. 33.

Chris A. Brewster, Record Subcommittee, BirdLife Botswana

Summary of Category B Records

Compiled by Chris A. Brewster & Stephanie J. Tyler

Records are mainly from late 2017 and up to the end of August 2018.
G.R.=Game Reserve, F.R.=Forest Reserve, N.P.=National Park, R.S.=Rhino Sanctuary, S.P.=Sewage Ponds. K.T.P= Kalahari Trans-Frontier Park

African Black Duck *Anas sparsa*

A pair was at Thagale Dam on 2 Oct 2017 (IW). One was at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan 2018 and three on a pool below Bathoen Dam, Kanye on 16 April (CAB). One was seen along the edge of Gaborone Dam on 6 May (BLB). A pair seen regularly along the Ngotwane River near Ramotswa from 28 May to 2 Sept (CAB).

Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*

One female was at Thagale Dam on 3 Sept 2017. 29 were at Shadi Shadi Pan near Sojwe on 11 Dec 2017 and one male at Sojwe Pan on the same date. Singles were seen at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan 2018, at Lobatse S.P. on 17 Jan and at Broadhurst S.P. on 19 Jan. Nine were present at a dam between Thamaga and Molepolole in 2425D1 on 25 Mar. On 28 Mar eight were present at a dam west of Thamaga in 2425C2 and at another small dam nearby a pair was seen. On 2 April ca. 25 were seen at another dam in 2425C2, west of Thamaga. On 16 April there were 24 at a dam 10km north-west of Kanye in 2425C4 (CAB).

A very unusual sighting was one on the Chobe River (17.852S 24.825E) near Kasane on 24 Feb, well outside the normal range of this species (GB, MB).

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

One was brought in by a cat, at Notwane on 7 Aug (HH).

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Five were at Shadi Shadi Pan on 11 Dec 2017. A pair with one young was on a dam between Thamaga and Molepolole (2425D1) on 25 Mar 2018 and three were at a dam west of Thamaga in 2425C2 on 28 Mar (CAB).

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*

A single was at Shadi Shadi Pan on 11 Dec (and a single Greater Flamingo too), three at Thagale Dam on 12 Jan (CAB), ca. 500 at Nata Sanctuary on 3 July (VI), and ca. 30 at Bokaa Dam on 3 July (CAB).

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

Two were in flight at Mashatu G.R. on 26 Aug 2017 (Paula da Cruz), one along Ngotwane River near Ramotswa on 28 May 2018 and one on Metsemotlhaba River near Kopong on 23 July (CAB).

Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia microscelis* (formerly *episcopus*)

Ten were noted in Savute on 19 Nov 2017 (GB, MB), singles on the Khwai River (-19.240, 23.955) on 23 Dec, flying over Savute Camp (18.566, 24.062) on 24 Dec and at the edge of Savute Marsh (-18.642, 24.083) on 29 Dec (AH, HH *et al.*). Six were at Pandamatenga, late Dec (WdeJ).

Two were at Mashatu G. R. (2229A1) on 16 Feb 2018 (CAB), one west of Maun at Kwapa (1923C3) in mid-Feb (UF) and three at Savute on 24 to 26 March (JF).

White-backed Night Heron *Gorsachius leuconotos*

Six were seen on Okavango River near Shakawe on 7 Dec (JC) and one at Puku Flats, Chobe floodplain on 25 April (VI).

Yellow-billed Egret *Egretta intermedia*

One was at Thagale Dam on 11 Oct 2017, three at Shadi Shadi Pan and four at Sojwe Pan on 11 Dec. Three were at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan 2018, five at Broadhurst (Tsholofelo) S.P./Gaborone G.R on 19 Jan (CAB) and one at Mogobane Dam on 31 Jan (MGG, DG, HH).

Further north one was at a water hole at Khama R.S. on 18 Dec and one at a water hole in southern Nxai Pan on 20 Dec (AH, HH *et al.*). One was in Mababe Village (1923B2) and one along Khwai River in 1023B2 on 20 Dec and two along Thamalakane River at Maun on 15 Dec (JR), one near Toteng in 2022B4 on 3 Feb (UF), one at Sexaxa, Maun (1923D3) in Feb (FMH), three along Metsemotlhaba River at Kopong on 6 Mar (CAB) and two at Khutse G.R. on 4 May (IW).

Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula*

One was on Okavango River floodplain in 1822A3 on 25 Sept (MBen). Three singles were seen at Lake Liambezi on 2 Aug and two singles on 24 Feb and another single on 25 Feb along the Chobe floodplain between Kasane and Ngoma (GB, MB). Three were along Khwai River in 1923B2 in mid-Dec (JR) and one at Third Bridge, Moremi G.R. on 16 Aug (PN).

Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius*

Two were at Savute on 9 Jun (VI), two at Monamodi Pan, Mabuasehube and one at Lesholoago Pan, Mabuasehube on 11 Sept (IW) and one at Shashe Farm in 2229A1 on 11 Feb (CAB).

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

One was at Kasane on 7 Dec and two at Shakawe on 7 Dec (JC). An adult was seen on 24 June on Chobe River near Muchenje (VI)

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

One was seen at Gabane, near Gaborone on 12 Mar (CAB).

African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*

One was seen on 21/22 Oct at Mogothlo Lodge near Maun (MM, AF).

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*

An immature was at Savute in 1824C1 on 2 Nov (HK), two singles at Savute on 19 Nov (GB, MB) and two along Khwai River in 1923B2 in mid-December (JR). One was in the Forest Reserve immediately south of Ngoma Bridge on 1 Jan 2018 (AH, HH *et al.*), two at King's Pool, Linyanti on 8 Feb (BS) and two juveniles roosting in tree at Xakanaxa, Moremi G.R. on 2 June (HK).

White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*

No. birds	Date	Location	Obs.
3	7 Jun 17	Nxai Pan	CM
10	29 Jul	Between Kasane and Ngoma	GB, MB
5	30 Jul	Near Kasane	GB, MB
2	2 Aug	Near Muchenje (1824B1)	GB, MB
460	4 Aug	Savute (1824C1)	GB, MB
3	5 Aug	Savute (1824C1)	GB, MB
2	6 Aug	Savute (1824C1)	GB, MB
1	6 Aug	Mababe in 1923B2	GB, MB
1	7 Aug	Mababe in 1923B2	GB, MB
3	8 Aug	South of Gweta in 2025A4	GB, MB
3	8 Aug	Between Gweta and Nata	GB, MB
4	8 Aug	West of Sowa Pan in 2025B4	GB, MB
1	9 Aug	West of Sowa Pan in 2025D2	GB, MB
8	9 Aug	Between Mosu and Tlapana in 2126A1; four nests noted	GB, MB
1	10 Aug	Near Tlapana in 2126A1	GB, MB
122	10 Aug	At dead cow near Mmea in 2126A2	GB, MB
1	25 Aug	Khutse G.R. in 2324B3	RB
67	26 Aug	Monamodi Pan, Mabuasehube	CN, KN
1	3 Sept	Thagale Dam	CAB
5	6 Sept	Ramatlabama	CAB
1 ad	6 Sept	Nest at Sheep Farm in 2525C2 with one young	CAB
40	10 Sept	At cow carcass near Jwaneng	IW

21	11 Sept	Monamodi Pan, Mabuasehube	IW
80+	25 Sept	Elephant carcass on Zimbabwe side of Tuli Circle in 2229A1	DK
19	26 Sept	Cow carcass north of Mahalapye	CAB
8	28 Sept	Near Tamasane (2227A4)	CAB
1	21 Oct	Near Ngotwane River in 2426A4	CAB
1	31 Oct	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	CAB
13	2 Nov	Between Ngoma and Kasane	GB, MB
7	3 Nov	Kasane area	GB, MB
55	18 Nov	Savute area (1824A3)	GB, MB
61	19 Nov	Savute area (1824C1)	GB, MB
9	21 Nov	Linyanti area (1823B4)	GB, MB
8	22 Nov	Linyanti area (1824A3)	GB, MB
1	22 Nov	Near Ngoma	GB, MB
1	22 Nov	Near Sita Pan in 2524B3	CAB
19	26 Nov	Kgoro Pan	CAB
80	26 Nov	Hildavale (2525B3)	CAB
15	5 Dec	Hildavale (2525B3)	CAB
1	21 Dec	Nxai Pan	AH, HH
2	22 Dec	Nxai Pan	AH, HH
25	26 Dec	Savute Camp (1824C1)	AH, HH
11	28 Dec	Savute Marsh (1824C1)	AH, HH
1	31 Dec	Chobe River near Kasane	AH, HH
1	2 Jan '18	Nata to Kasane Road in 1926C3	AH, HH
2	3 Jan	Near Martin's Drift	AH, HH
Ca.30	7 Jan	Between Jwaneng and Sekoma	JduP
2	29 Jan	East of Thamaga	CAB
1	1 Feb	Metlojane (2525B2)	CAB
11	7 Feb	Sita Pan (2524B1)	CAB
Ca.15	12 Feb	Shashe Farm (2229A2)	CAB
22	13 Feb	Mohembo	BM
Ca.15	15 Feb	Shashe Farm (2229A1)	CAB
Ca.15	16 Feb	Mashatu G.R. (2229A1)	CAB
5	19 Feb	South of Kuke (2122A2)	UF
17	24 Feb	Chobe River Floodplain in 1724D4	GB, MB
2	24 Feb	Chobe River Floodplain in 1725C3	GB, MB
14	25 Feb	Chobe River Floodplain in 1725C3	GB, MB
Ca.100	28 Feb	Cow carcass south of Artesia in 2426A2	CAB
1	8 April	Gabane, near Gaborone	BLB
3	17 Jun	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	CAB
1	23 Jun	Between Sekoma and Jwaneng	AH
1	3 Jul	Bokaa Dam	CAB
1	6 Jul	Thagale Dam	CAB
17	17 Jul	Kweneng (2325D4)	CAB

11	27 Jul	East of Jwaneng	CAB
1	27 Jul	Near Khakhea	CAB
5	28 Jul	Monamodi Pan, Mabuasehube	CAB
Ca.100	31 Jul	Cow carcass near Tsabong	CAB
20	31 Jul	Molopo Valley in 2622A3	CAB
3	31 Jul	Molopo Valley in 2621D3	CAB
1	31 Jul	Adult on nest in Nossob Valley near Bokspits	CAB
3	3 Aug	Roosting on pylons between Sekoma and Jwaneng	CAB

Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres*

One was at Hildavale (2525B3) on 26 Nov (CAB).

White-headed Vulture *Aegypius occipitalis*

No. birds	Date	Location			Obs.
2	4 Jun 2017			Sunday Pan, CKGR	CM
2	7 Jun			Nxai Pan	CM
1	4 Aug	18.5949	24.0750	Savute area	GB, MB
1	5 Aug	18.556	24.0699	Savute area, Chobe N.P.	GB, MB
1	6 Aug	18.6845	24.0778	Savute Area	GB, MB
1	6 Aug	10.1263	23.8772	Savute area	GB, MB
3	11 Sept			Monamodi Pan, Mabuasehube	IW
1	19 Nov	18.6752	24.0778	Savute area	GB, MB
2	19 Nov	18.682	24.0720	Savute area	GB, MB
1	20 Dec	19.934	24.783	S Nxai Pan	AH, HH
1	21 Dec	19.904	24.724	W side Nxai Pan	AH, HH
1	29 Dec	18.566	24.062	Savute Camp	AH, HH
1	28 Feb			Sibuyu F.R.	DH
1 ad	23 June			Savute	AW

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos*

No. birds	Date	Location	Obs.
1	4 Jun '17	Sunday Pan, CKGR	CM
1	29 Jul	Near Kasane	GB, MB
1	5 Aug	Savute	GB, MB
7	10 Aug	At cow carcass near Mmea in 2126A2	GB, MB
1	25 Aug	Khutse G.R. in 2324B3	R Balt

13	26 Aug	Monamodi Pan, Mabuasehube	CN, KN
1	3 Sept	Thagale Dam	CAB
18	11 Sept	Monamodi Pan, Mabuasehube	IW
1	11 Sept	Lesholoago Pan, Mabuasehube	IW
5	25 Sept	Elephant carcass in 2229A1 on Zimbabwe Side of Tuli Circle	DK
2	18 Nov	Savute area (1824A3)	GB, MB
4	19 Nov	Savute area (1824C1)	GB, MB
1	26 Nov, 5 Dec	Hildavale (2525B3)	CAB
1	Mid-Dec	Mashatu (2229A1)	DM
3	19 Dec	At cow carcass near Mogobane	IW
2	21 Dec	Nxai Pan	AH, HH
1	28 Dec	Savute Camp	AH, HH
3	15 Feb	Near Sehithwa (2022B4)	UF
5	28 Feb	Cow carcass south of Artesia in 2426A2	CAB
6	1 Jul	Lion kill in Moremi G.R. (1923A4)	VI
11	29 Jul	Monamodi Pan, Mabuasehube	CAB
2	29 Jul	Lesholoago Pan, Mabuasehube	CAB
4	31 Jul	Cow carcass near Tsabong	CAB
1	31 Jul	Molopo Valley in 2622A3	CAB
1	31 Jul	Molopo Valley in 2621D3	CAB

Bateleur Terathopius ecaudatus

No. birds	Date	Location	Obs.
1	4 Jun '17	Sunday Pan, CKGR	CM
3 singles	29 Jul	Near Kasane	GB, MB
2 singles	30 Jul	Near Kasane	GB, MB
1	2 Aug	Between Katchikau and Savute in 1824A3	GB, MB
1	2 Aug	Linyanti area in 1823B4	GB, MB
2 singles	3 Aug	Linyanti area in 1823B4	GB, MB
5 singles	4 Aug	Savute area in 1824C1	GB, MB
3 singles	5 Aug	Savute area in 1824C1	GB, MB
4 singles	6 Aug	Savute area in 1824C1	GB, MB
6 singles	5 Aug	Mababe area in 1824C2/1823D4	GB, MB
4 singles	6 Aug	Mababae area in 1923C2	GB, MB
2 pairs and 4			

6 singles	7 Aug	Mababae area in 1923C2/1923C4	GB, MB
5	28 Feb	Cow carcass south of Artesia in 2426A2	CAB
6	1 Jul	Lion kill in Moremi G.R. (1923A4)	VI
1	25 Aug	Khutse G.R. in 2324B3	RB
10	26-27 Aug	Mabuasehube	CN, KN
4 ad, 6 imm	11 Sept	Monamodi Pan. Mabuasehube	IW
3 ad, 1 imm	11 Sept	Lesholoago Pan. Mabuasehube	IW
4 singles	2 Nov	Between Ngoma and Kasane	GB, MB
Pair and single	18 Nov	Near Katchikau in 1924A2	GB, MB
2 singles	19 Nov	Savute area 1824C1	GB, MB
3 singles	20 Nov	Savute area 1824C1	GB, MB
1	21 Nov	Savute arewa 1824C1	GB, MB
2 singles	22 Nov	Between Savute and Katchikau 1824A3	GB, MB
1	22 Nov	West of Katchikau 1824A2	GB, MB
1	Mid-Dec	Mashatu G.R.	DM
1	18 Dec	Kama Rhino Sanctuary	AH, HH
1	20 Dec	Nxai Pan	AH, HH
1	23 Dec	Khwai Community Camp 1923B2	AH, HH
1	26 Dec	Savute Marsh	AH, HH
1	28 Dec	Savute Marsh	AH, HH
1	31 Dec	Chobe floodplain near Kasane	AH, HH
1	1 Jan 2018	Ngoma	AH, HH
1	2 Jan	Pandamatenga	AH, HH
1	3 Jan	North of Nata in 1926B3	AH, HH
4	8 Feb	King's Pool, Linyanti	BS
1	Mid-Feb	Kwapa, west of Maun in 1923C3	UF
1	18 Feb	Matswere 2124A1	OT
1	25 Feb	Khutse G.R. in 2324B3	SH
1 Imm	28 Feb	Sibuyu F.R.	DH
1 ad	19 May	Kang	AvZ
2	9 June	Savute	VI
1 ad	16 June	Kasane	VI
1	23 June	Near Lone Tree in 2222C3	AH
1 ad	1 July	Moremi G.R. in 1923B3	VI
2 singles	6 July	Between Pandamatenga and Nata in 1925B2 and 1926D1	VI
1 ad	28 July	West of Kokotsa in 2422D3	CAB
1 ad,	29 July	Lesholoago Pan, Mabuasehube	CAB

1 imm			
2 ad, 2 imm	29 July	Monamodi Pan, Mabuasehube	CAB
1 imm	30 July	Mpaathutlwa Pan. Mabuasehube	CAB
1 imm	30 July	Between Mabuasehube and Tsabong in 2522C2	CAB

Bat Hawk *Macheiramphus alcinus*

One was seen at Notwane, Gaborone at dusk on 17 Oct 2017 (HH, GH) and one west of Maun at Kwapa (1923C3), mid-Feb (UF).

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*

One was at Nxai Pan on 7 June 2017 (CM), a sub-adult in Khutse G.R. in 2324B3 on 25 Aug (RB) and one at Monamodi Pan, Mabuasehube on 11 Sept (IW). Singles – on 5 Aug at 18.5734 24.0991 at Savute, on 8 Aug at 20.2295S 24.9841E west of Gweta and on 2 Nov at 17.9222S 25.0372E near Kasane and then singles on 19 and 21 Nov in Savute (GB, MB). Two were near Charleshill in 2220A2 on 1 Dec (UF).

One was seen 30 km north of Kang on 7 Jan (JduP). In SE Botswana one was at Bathoen Dam near Kanye on 31 Jan (MGG, DG, HH), an immature south of Artesia in 2426A2 on 28 Feb (CAB) and one at Bokaa Dam on 3 March (BLB).

An adult was in the Abu Concession (1922B3) on 31 March, an adult between Kasane and Ngoma on 29 June (VI) and an adult north of Maun in 1923C4 on 25 Jun (DC, MC).

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*

One was seen in Savute on 19 Nov (GB, MB) and one or more at Pandamatenga in Dec (DH). Five were at Pandamatenga in late Dec (WdeJ). Four to six were along the Khwai River in 1923B2 on 18 - 19 Dec and also several south of Mababe on 21 Dec (JR). Two were seen along the road between Khwai and the southern gate of the Chobe N. P. (-19.215, 23.986) on 24 Dec, ca. 15 birds on the eastern edge of Savute Marsh on 28 Dec when they appeared to be feeding on a termite emergence and ca. 10 birds on the eastern edge of Savute Marsh on 29 Dec (AH, HH *et al.*). Three or four were at Mashatu in mid-Dec (DM) and a sub-adult west of Maun in 1923C4 on 5 Feb (UF).

Booted Eagle *Aquila pennata*

One was at Crocodile Pools, Notwane on 23 Oct (CAB), one on 19 Nov in Savute (GB, MB) and another at Shadi Shadi Pan on 11 Dec (CAB). Two were along the Metsemotlhaba River at Kopong on 6 Mar and two at Gabane, near Gaborone on 12 Mar (CAB).

Steppe Eagle

One adult was seen at Mashatu (2228B2) in mid Dec (DM). On 19 Dec one was seen along Khwai River in 1923B2 and on 24 Dec 2017 a single, probably the same bird, was in the Khwai area (-19.212, 23.994). On 28 Dec at least two birds on the eastern edge of Savute Marsh and on 2 Jan 2018 a single was in Pandamatenga maize fields (-18.701, 25.61) (AH, HH *et al.*). Then ca. 100 were seen at Pandamatenga in late Dec (WJ). One was at Shashe Farm (2229A1) on 16 Feb (CAB).

Western Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

On 31 Dec 2017 a single bird was seen over the Chobe floodplain at western end of Chobe N. P. at -17.881, 24.786 (AH, HH *et al.*) and one was at Impalilla Island, Kasane on 2 April (IW).

African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus*

One was in the Chobe area at 17.9642S 24.6651E on 2 Aug 2017 (GB, MB) and a juvenile on Okavango floodplain in 1822A3 on 25 Sept (MBen). Another was seen on the Okavango River opposite Shakawe River Lodge on 23 Aug (PN).

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*

Two singles were seen in Savute on 19 Nov (GB, MB); one in the Nossob Valley, KTP in early Dec (per TH) and an immature at Talana (2228B2) in mid Dec (DM).

A single adult male was immediately west of Kwando Pan (west of Savute Marsh) (-18.611, 24.060) on 27 Dec, two adult males on the eastern side of Savute Marsh (-18.677, 24.113) on 28 Dec, a single adult male in Savute Marsh (-18.641, 24.082) on 29 Dec and another at Pandamatenga maize fields (-18.692, 25.612) on 2 Jan (AH, HH *et al.*).

Jackal Buzzard *Buteo rufofuscus*

One at Kij Kij, lower Nossob Valley on 2 Aug (CAB).

Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*

On 19 Nov 2017 in the Savute area in 1824C1 three singles were seen, seven groups of two birds, one group of three and one of four birds and on 20 Nov two singles and another single on 22 Nov (GB, MB). Up to five were on the pan at Khama R.S. on 18 Dec, up to 10 on Nxai Pan on 20 Dec, up to five around Harveys Pans north of Savute on 26 Dec and up to 20 at and around Savute Marsh on 27 Dec (AH, HH *et al.*). Three singles were noted along the Chobe floodplain between Kasane and Ngoma on 24 and 25 Feb (GB, MB).

A pair was seen at Kgoro Pan on 1 Feb (CAB); this species is seldom recorded in south-east Botswana.

At Shashe Farm two were seen in 2229A2 on 12 Feb and four were seen in 2229A1 on 15 Feb (CAB).

One was near Mabutsane in 2423B3 on 25 Feb (TR), a single bird on 23 June near Sekoma in 2423B4 (AH), two on Puku Flats, Chobe N.P. on 23 May, four, including one juvenile, there on 23 June and three at Savute on 9 Jun (VI).

One was north of Khokhotsa on 27 July, three at Monamodi Pans, Mabuasehube on 29 July, a pair near Kolonkwaneng (2622C1) on 31 July, one near Struizendam on 2 Aug, four singles in lower Nossob Valley in 2620B on 2 Aug and one along Molopo Valley in 2621C4 on 3 Aug (CAB).

Denham's (Stanley's) Bustard *Neotis denhami*

A single was seen on two occasions at different sites in Savute on 19 and 21 Nov 2017 (GB, MB), a single on Savute Marsh in company with a few Kori Bustards on 28 Dec (CH) and one on the Chobe floodplain between Kasane and Ngoma on 24 Feb 2018 (GB, MB).

Red-chested Flufftail *Sarothrura rufa*

One was calling from papyrus swamp along the Okavango River on 25 June (AH).

African Rail *Rallus caerulescens*

One was at Lobatse S.P. on 17 Jan (CAB), a pair at Gaborone G.R. on 14 Mar (IW) and single birds calling from two different locations near Shakawe on 23 and 24 June (AH).

African Crake *Crecopsis egregia*

One was seen in vicinity of Khwai Community Camp in 1923B2 in mid-Dec (JR) and a single bird called there while flying over at night. (-19.239, 23.945) on 25 Dec 2017, another called while flying over Savute Camp at night (-18.566, 24.062) on 27 Dec, a single was seen on the Chobe Flooplain in front of Muchenje Campsite (west of Ngoma bridge) (-17,953, 24.677) on 30 Dec and one along the Chobe River in Chobe N. P. (western end) (-17.901, 24.741) on 31 Dec (AH). One was at Puku Flats, Chobe floodplain on 30 Jan (VI) and one at Savute, 24 to 26 Mar (JF).

Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum*

Two were seen during Dec 2017 at Pandamatenga (DH, WdeJ). One was at Qorokwe Camp 5km south of Chitabe in the Okavango Delta over several days at the end of Jan 2018 (DdeV). Two at Kasane on 31 May (VI).

Wattled Crane *Grus carunculatus*

Three (2 ad + 1 juv) were seen along Khwai River in 1923B2 on 18 Dec (JR), two west of Maun at Kwapa (1923C3), mid-Feb (UF) and six flying over reedbeds near Shakawe on 25 June (AH).

White-fronted Plover *Charadrius marginatus*

One was at Thagale Dam on 15 Oct (IW) and one at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan (CAB). Two pairs along lower Shashe River in 2229A1 on 12 Feb (CAB). One at Kang on 23 May (IG).

Chestnut-banded Plover *Charadrius pallidus*

On 18 Aug 2017 two were seen on the south-eastern shore of Sowa Pan, at 21.0068S 26.2168E and one nearby on the same date at 20.9864S 26.2459E (GB, MB). Ca.50 were at Nata Sanctuary on 28 Nov (JC). Two were at Kang on 23 may (IG).

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Two were at Sojwe on 11 Dec and 310 at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan (CAB).

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

One was at Thagale Dam, south-east Botswana on 2 Oct (IW).

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

One was at Broadhurst Sewage Ponds, Gaborone on 8 Oct (IW).

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

One was seen on 17 Jan on the Ngotwane River below Ramotswa (CAB) and another on 11 Feb at Gaborone G.R. (IW).

Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

One was west of Nata on 30 Oct (HK).

Three-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus cinctus*

A pair was at Mashatu (2228B2) mid-Dec 2017 (DM) and one at Puku Flats, Chobe floodplain on 25 April (VI).

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*

On 18 Nov 2017 50 were seen on the floodplain near Kachikau at 18.0771S 24.5794E, At Savute, on 19 Nov 500 were at 18.64S 24.09456E, 300 at 18.6876 24.10779E and 30 at 18.6799S 24.07412E and on 21 Nov there were 10 at 18.2971S 23.9052E (GB, MB).

DH reported 100s to 1000s at Pandamatenga farms during Dec 2017. Ca.150 bird were in Nxai Pan (-19.922, 24.765) on 20 Dec and ca. 50 birds at Harvey Pans, north of Savute (-18.552, 24.082) on 27 Dec (AH, HH *et al.*).

About 30 were at Thagale Dam on 19 Nov (IW), two at Sojwe Pan on 11 Dec 2017, 46 at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan 2018 and one at Thagale Dam on 12 Jan (CAB).

About 20 were at Mashatu G.R. (2229A1) on 15 Feb, outside of expected range of species (CAB) and ca.25 at Savute on 25 March (JF).

African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*

Three were seen on 29 July 2017 on the Chobe floodplain (17.8283S 24.9799E), one there on 30 July (17.8267S 25.1346E), 13 at 17.8357S 25.1018E, three at 17.8363S 25.0998E and two at 17.8404S 25.0796E on the same date and then three on 2 Nov at 17.8148S 24.9459E (GB, MB). Three were on the Chobe River floodplain immediately west of Kasane (-17.827, 25.12) on 31 Dec (AH, HH *et al.*).

Two on Okavango River at Shakawe on 15 Aug (CN, KN) and five were there on 25 Sept (MBen) and on 6 Nov (HK). There were 20 on the Chobe floodplain near Kasane on 21 Aug (six on nests) and four on Okavango River at Shakawe on 23 Aug (PN).

Two were at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan 2018 (CAB), outside of the expected range of the species.

African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus*

One was near Maun, where the Boro and Thamalakane Rivers join on 25 Feb 2016 (per UF) and one was heard on 25 Oct near Maun (FMH).

Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

One, a hepatic morph, was near Kachikau on 18 Nov (GB, MB), another hepatic morph at Kalahari Rest, Kang on 14 Dec (JR) and one, near Ngoma on 24 Feb (GB, MB).

Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius*

One was seen on the Chobe floodplain between Kasane and Ngoma on 25 Feb (GB, MB).

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

Two were seen over Gaborone Botanic Garden on 3 June and five were seen there on 4 June (CAB, IW).

African Black Swift *Apus barbatus*

Two at Gabane, near Gaborone on 8 April (CAB).

Horus Swift *Apus horus*

One was at Kumakwane (2425D1) on 7 April (CAB).

European Roller *Coracias garullus*

A total 19 were seen at Savute in 1824C1 on 20 and 21 Nov and a group of 12 and a group of 4 were seen at Savute in 1824A3 on 22 Nov (GB, MB). One was at Gaborone, near SSK Airport on 7 Dec (CAB), three at Mashatu GR, mid-Dec (DM), one at Bokaa Dam on 3 Jan (IW), one at Sita Pan (2524B1) on 7 Feb (CAB), ca.10 at Shashe Farm (2229A1/2229A2) from 11 to 16 Feb, two near Baine's Drift (2228B3/2228D1) on 16 Feb and one west of Zanzibar in 2228C2 on 17 Feb (CAB).

Singles recorded west of Maun at Kwapa in 1923C3 on 10 Feb, near Maun in 2023A2 on 19 Feb, near Bodibeng (2022C2) and near Kuke in 2022C4 on 19 Feb (UF).

African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina picta*

One was seen in Maun on 17 Feb (UF).

Southern Ground-Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri*

Two were in Kasane F.R. Extension on 5 Feb (BL) and reported from Kwapa (1923C3), mid-Feb (JvdM). Two were seen on the Chobe floodplain between Kasane and Ngoma on 25 Feb (GB, MB). Three near Kasane Airport on 23 June, one between Kazengula and Pandamatenga in 1825A2 on 25 June, three in Moremi G.R. in 1923B3 on 1 July, four adults and two juveniles near Pandamatenga on 4 July, two between Kazungula and Pandamatenga in 1825D4 on 4 July and two between Pandamatenga and Nata in 1825D3 on 6 July (VI).

Brown-backed Honeybird *Prodsticus regulus*

One was calling west of Maun at Kwapa (1923C3), mid-Feb (JvdM, UF); an elusive species, seldom recorded.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumannii*

One was in Khutse G.R. in 2324B3 on 19 Mar 2017 (SH). On 19 Nov 2017 three and two were seen in the Savute area respectively at 18.6559S 24.10907E and 18.6804S 24.11215E. Up to five birds were on a pan at Khama R.S. (-22.227, 25.698) on 18 Dec, up to five birds on Nxai Pan (-19.923, 24.765) on 20 Dec, up to 20 on Savute Marsh (-18.676, 24.112) on 28 Dec and up to 10 on the Chobe River floodplain in front of Muchenje Campsite (-17.951, 24.671) on 1 Jan 2018 (AH, HH *et al.*). On 24 Feb 2018 another group of three and two singles were noted along the Chobe River between Kasane and Ngoma (GB, MB).

Four to six were at Talana (2228B2) in mid-Dec (DM). In SE Botswana, two were seen at Metlojane (2525B2) on 1 Feb, two near Gakgatla (2425D1) on 25 Mar and one near Kubung in 2425C2 on 2 April (CAB).

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*

25 were seen in Khutse G.R. in 2324B3 on 19 Mar 2017 (SH).
A flock of ca.20 was in Chobe N.P. near Kasane on 30 Nov (JC). On 18 Dec 2017 five were seen at the southern end of the Pan in Khama R.S. (-22.228, 26.697), a single at the southern end of Nxai Pan (-19.937, 24.781) on 22 Dec, up to 10 birds at Khwai Community Camp (-19.239, 23.945) on 23 Dec and up to 25 at Savute Marsh (-18.679, 24.114) on 28 Dec (AH, HH *et al.*).

30-50 were at Talana (2228B2) in mid Dec 2017 (DM).

Ca.100 birds were at Bokaa Dam on 6 Jan (IW). Two were seen at Thagale Dam on 12 Jan, one at Bokaa Dam on 12 Jan, two near Thamaga on 29 Jan. (CAB) and one at Bokaa dam on 4 Mar (BLB).

A male was on the Chobe River floodplain west of Kasane on 24 Feb (GB, MB).

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subuteo*

Two were seen along the Khwai River (-19.23, 23.965) on 24 Dec 2017 (AH, HH *et al.*) and one along the Chobe floodplain between Kasane and Ngoma on 25 Feb 2018 (GB, MB).

African Hobby *Falco cuvierii*

One was seen at Shakawe on 7 Dec (JC).

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

One was seen on the Chobe River floodplain (-17.864, 24.811) on 31 Dec (AH, HH *et al.*)

Fairy Flycatcher *Stenostira scita*

One at Sheep Farm, 2525C2, 6 Sept 2017

Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paudicola*

12+ were seen at Shakawe on 15 Aug 2017 (CN, KN) and several hundred there on 7 Dec (JC). Five were over Okavango River near Shakawe on 24 June and ten were there on 25 June (AH)

Mosque Swallow *Cecropsis senegalensis*

One was seen near Ngarange (1822A3) on 25 Sept (MBen). Two were seen at Drotsky's Camp, Shakawe on 25 June (AH)

Pearl-breasted Swallow *Hirundo dimidiata*

One was at Lobatse S.P. on 14 Aug (CAB).

South African Cliff-Swallow *Hirundo spilodera*

About 100 were at an active colony at Ramatlabama on 6 Sept 2017. One was seen at Ramotswa S.P. on 31 Aug (CAB).

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

One was west of Maun at Kwapa (1923C3), mid-Feb (UF), One at Gakgatla (2425D1) on 18 Mar and one west of Thamaga in 2425C2 on 2 April (CAB).

Bearded Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas quadrivirgata*

There was a pair at Shashe Farm (2229A1) on 15 Feb (CAB).

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

Up to five birds were heard in a Chobe River thicket at Muchenje Campsite where birds called almost constantly (-17.953, 24.678) on 30 Dec 2017 (AH). One was noted on 24 Feb and two on 25 Feb along the Chobe floodplain between Kasane and Ngoma (GB, MB).

Dusky Sunbird *Cinnyris fuscus*

Fairly common around Bokspits from 31 July to 3 Aug (CAB).

Golden-winged Pytilia *Pytilia afra*

Pair adult + 3 young at Moeng, Tswapong on 11 Aug: two males present there on 27 Sept (IW, CAB). There are only a handful of records of this species in eastern Botswana.

Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis*

One was seen near Sepopa, Okavango Panhandle on 11 Nov (AvdW).

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*

One was seen at Lobatse on 18 Dec (CAB).

Bushveld Pipit *Anthus caffer*

A pair was at Lobatse on 18 Dec (CAB).

Streaky-headed Seedeater *Crithagra gularis*

One at Lobatse on 18 Dec, two near Mosopa in 2425C4 on 29 Dec, two singles near Lotlhakane in 2525A2 on 18 Jun and on 13 July (CAB).

Interesting and Unusual Sightings
Compiled by
Stephanie J. Tyler and Chris A. Brewster

This section does not cover rarities but rather interesting observations of more common birds. It might report on a species seen out of its usual range or on notably large numbers of a species. Observations on breeding or feeding behaviour are also welcomed. Records are mainly from 2017 and up to August 2018 unless otherwise stated.

Fulvous Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

Three were seen at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan 2018 (CAB) and four there on 3 March (BLB). On 3 July 32 were noted at this dam (CAB).

White-backed Duck *Thassalornis leuconotus*

Five were at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan 2018 (CAB).

Egyptian Goose *Alpochen aegyptiaca*

Several at Kang on 23 May (IG).

South African Shelduck *Tadorna cana*

Only 42 were counted in south-east Botswana during January 2018 – 31 at Bokaa Dam on 10th, 10 at Ramotswa S.P. on 17th and one at Broadhurst S.P. on 19th (CAB). Three pairs were at Kang on 23 May (IG).

Hottentot Teal *Spatula hottentota*

Eight at Kang on 23 May (IG); this species is unexpected in the Kalahari.

Cape Teal *Anas capensis*

30+, with many young, at Kang on 23 May (IG).

Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*

There was a high count of 970 at Bokaa Dam on 12 Jan 2018, an internationally significant number (CAB). The threshold for 1% of the southern African population is 500. This was exceeded at Bokaa Dam in 1997 (970 birds), 2001 (1,478) and 2012 (1,600) so the 2018 count equals the third highest count at the dam.

Swainson's Spurfowl *Pternistis swainsonii*

Two were in Khutse G.R. in 2324B4 on 25 Feb (SH).

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

20+ at Kang on 23 May (IG)

Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus (ruber)*

A single bird was at ShadiShadi Pan on 11 Dec, 300 at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan and five at Thagale Dam on 12 Jan (CAB).

Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*

There were 12 at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan 2018 (CAB) and 20 there on 3 March (BLB) and ca.30 along the Metsemotlhaba River near Kopong on 6 Mar (CAB).

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*

One was observed at Coombe Farm on the Limpopo on 20 Nov (BLB).

Dwarf Bittern *Ixobrychus sturmii*

One was at a small pool in a dry river bed near Mosopa in 2425B2 on 5 Jan (CAB).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

One was at Shadi Shadi Pan on 11 Dec (CAB).

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*

One at Kgalapitse Dam, Oodi on 10 Sept 2017, one at Bokaa Dam on 3 July and two at Mochudi S.P. on 6 July (CAB)

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*

One was at ShadiShadi Pan on 11 Dec 2017, one at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan 2018 and three at Broadhurst S.P/Gaborone G.R. on 19 Jan (CAB). One was at Mogobane Dam on 31 Jan (MGG, DG, HH) and seven along Metsemotlhaba River near Kopong on 6 Mar (CAB).

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

Three were seen at Thagale Dam on 12 Jan (CAB).

Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens*

Three were at Bokaa Dam on 3 July (CAB).

Reed Cormorant *Microcarbo africanus*

One at Kang on 23 May (IG); this species is unexpected in the Kalahari.

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax lucidus*

An uncommon bird in the northern wetlands so one seen on the Boteti River in Maun on 27 Dec was of note (AH, HH *et al.*).

African Harrier-Hawk *Polyboroides typus*

One seen between near Morwamosu in 2423A1 on 1 May (IW).

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*

One was in the Nossob Valley, KTP from 8-10 Dec (per TH).

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

10+ were at Kang on 23 May (IG).

Blacksmith Lapwing *Vanellus armatus*

Three to four pairs were at Kang on 23 May (IG).

African Wattled Lapwing *Vanellus senegallus*

Six were on Taung floodplain in 2425D4 on 1 July (BLB) and one along Notwane River, near Ramotswa SP on 24 Aug (CAB).

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

A count of 26 was made at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan 2018 (CAB),

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

One at Kang on 23 May (IG).

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*

Three were seen at Bokaa Dam on 10 Jan (CAB). A small flock was at Tale Pan near Toteng, Maun in late Feb 2018 (KO).

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

One was at Khutse Pan, Khutse G.R. on 25 Aug (RB).

White-winged Tern *Chidonias leucopterus*

Ca. 1,200 were at Broadhurst Sewage Ponds, Gaborone on 19 Jan (CAB).

Grey Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides concolor*

Three were at Kang on 19 May (AvZ). This species is unexpected in the Kalahari.

Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*

One was at Nata Lodge on 28 Nov (JC), outside the expected range of the species.

Levaillant's Cuckoo *Clamator levaillantii*

One was at Kang Rest, Kang on 14 Dec (JR).

Southern White-faced Owl *Ptilopsis granti*

One found dead on the road at Sebele, Gaborone on 7 Dec (CAB).

Pel's Fishing Owl *Scotopelia peli*

One was seen out of range on 10 April roosting in a tree on John Mackenzie School Fields on Blue Jacket Street in Francistown (per TH).

White-backed Mousebird *Colius colius*

Three at Deception Valley, CKGR on 4 Aug were well out of the expected range of this species (KN).

Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*

An out of range bird was seen at Shadi Shadi Pan near Sojwe on 11 Dec 2017 (CAB).

Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*

One was at Bathoen Dam, Kanye on 29 May (CAB).

Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*

One was calling on 28 March at Thakadu Camp, Ghanzi, well outside the known range of the species in the north and east of Botswana (JF).

Bennett's Woodpecker *Campethera bennettii*

One north of Malotwana in 2426A1 on 28 Feb (CAB); this species is uncommon in south-east Botswana.

Grey-headed Bush-Shrike *Malconotus blanchoti*

One was at Pandamatenga in 1825B2, late December (WdeJ), outside the expected range of the species.

Black Cuckooshrike *Campephaga flava*

Winter record: one near Lotlhakane in 2525A2 on 18 Jun (CAB).

Yellow-bellied Greenbul *Chlorocichla flaviventris*

One was at Notwane, south of Gaborone in Nov and Dec (JDay, MGG) and also seen at Pandamatenga Farm in Dec 2017 (DH).

Lesser Striped Swallow *Cercropis abyssinica*.

Winter records: eight at Notwane on 28 May, five at Ramotswa S.P. on 4 Jun and two at Notwane on 21 and 28 Jun (CAB).

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*

Early date: one at Moremi Gorge on 28 Oct 2017 (CAB).

Burnt-necked Eremomela *Eremomela usticollis*

Recorded near Morwamosu in 2423A1 on 23 May (IG); there are few records of this species in the Kalahari.

Common Mynah *Acridotheres tristis*

Four were at Khumaga on 6 Aug 2017 (KN), one at Pandamatenga, late Dec (WdeJ) and two at Mamuno (2220A3) on 2 Feb (UF). GB and MB noted ones and twos near Kasane where now regular, in Aug and Nov 2017.

Violet-backed starling *Cinnyrcinclus*

Winter records: six near Lotlhakane in 2525A2 on 18 June (CAB) and one at Bokaa Dam on 25 Jun (IW).

Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus*

Recorded on 9 Aug 2017 in 2126A1 east of Mosu, south of its known range (GB, MB).

Karoo Thrush *Turdus smithi*

A pair was seen at Palapye on 27 Sept (CAB) and one at Maun on 15 Oct (NL). Both records are well out the expected range of species.

Grey Tit-Flycatcher *Myioparus plunbeus*

In SE Botswana singles were recorded at Mogonye on 2 Feb, along Metsemotlhaba River at Mosopa on 4 Feb (BLB), at Kumakwane on 7 April, north-west of Kanye on 16 April and at Polokwe north of Kanye on 1 June (CAB).

Pale Flycatcher *Melaenornis pallidus*

One was seen at Polokwe north of Kanye on 1 June (CAB).

Plain-backed Pipit

Pair at Manyana village 14 Dec (CAB)

Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullatus*

A flock of 14 was seen at Gaborone Botanic Gardens on 3 June (BLB).

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Stephanie J. Tyler & Chris A. Brewster,
c/o BirdLife Botswana, P O Box 26691, Game City, Gaborone



Alpine Swift
Photo: Ian White



Northern Black Korhaan
Photo: Ian White

Contributors of Records

AH	Andrew Hester	JF	John Fincham
AvdW	Ard van der Wettering	JR	John Randell
AvZ	Arden van Zwieten	JvdM	Jamie van der Merwe
AW	Ansun Welman	KN	Karin Nelson
BL	Babusi Latwa	KO	Ken Oake
BM	Bagobogile Motsokwe	LC	Lyn Cassidy
BR	Brent Reed	LH	Lex Hes
BS	Baz Sandenburgh	LO	Leo Ouzman
CAB	Chris Brewster	MB	Marjorie Blair
CH	Caleb Hester	MBen	Martin Benadie
CM	Charles Moore	MC	Merle Chalton
CN	Craig Nelson	MGG	Mike Goldsworthy
DC	Derek Chalton	MK	Martin Kays
DG	Daphne Goldsworthy	MM	Mark Muller
DH	Dean and Ellen Hatty	MW	Mary Webb
DK	Doug Kok	NL	Nivek Leonard
DM	Duncan Mackenzie	OT	O Tshwelar
FMH	Frances Murray-Hudson	PN	Pat Nurse
GB	Gavin Blair	PD'A	Peter D'Arcy
HH	Harold Hester	PH	Pete Hancock
HK	Hartmut Kolb	RB	Renier Balt
HP	Hennie Peters	RF	Rikta Franken
ID	Inga Dalziel	SH	Stephen Hanley
IG	Ian Guthrie	TH	Trevor Hardaker
IW	Ian White	TR	Thatayaone Rabakane
JC	Japie Claassen	UF	Ursula Franke
JduP	Johann du Preez	VI	Victoria Inman
JD	John Dalziel	WdeJ	Wouter de Jos
JDay	Jim Dayton		

Some Breeding Records in 2017/2018

Stephanie J. Tyler & Chris A. Brewster

All records are for 2017 unless specifically noted for 2016 or 2018

Species	Date	Location	Nest site; nest contents	Obs.
Common Ostrich <i>Struthio camelus</i>	2 Aug 2018	Nossob Valley near Rooiputs	Pair ad + 13 young, ca. one month old	CAB
Crested Francolin <i>Dendroperdix sephaena</i>	12 Nov	Crocodole Pools, Notwane	Ad + 3 young, ca. one week old	CAB
White-faced Duck <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	22 Mar	Gaborone Game Reserve	Pair adults + 6 young, ca 10 days old, also pair adults + 2 young, ca. 5 days old	IW
White-faced Duck	28 April	Rakelobopile Pan, near Magoriapitse	Pair adults + 6 tiny young	CAB
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	4 Sept	Thagale Dam	Pair ad + 2 young, ca. 1 week old	CAB
Egyptian Goose	12 Jan 2018	Bokaa Dam	Pair ad + 1 young ca. 10 days old	CAB
Egyptian Goose	28 Mar 2018	Dam west of Thamaga	Pair ad + 6 young, ca. 1 week old	CAB
South African Shelduck <i>Tadorna cana</i>	4 Sept	Thagale Dam	Pair ad + 3 young ca. 10 days old	CAB
Cape Teal <i>Anas capensis</i>	23 May 2018	Kang	Many young with adults	IG
Red-billed Teal <i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>	14 Mar	East of Kedia	Adult leading nine tiny ducklings across a road through dry bush	CAB
Red-billed Teal	18 Mar	West of Ghanzi in 2121C1	Pair adults + 6 young, ca. 1 week old, also pair adults + 8 young, ca 2 weeks old	CAB
Red-billed Teal	19 Mar	Kalkfontein	Adult + 8 tiny young, also adult + 1 tiny young	CAB
Natal Spurrow <i>Pternistes natalensis</i>	27 May	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult with one young, ca. 15 days old	CAB

Natal Spurrow	25 May 2018	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Pair ad + 3 one day old young	MGG
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	31 Oct 2016	Broadhurst Ponds	Adult incubating on nest	IW
Little Grebe	3 Mar	Small dam near Magoriapitse	Adult with 3 young ca.10 days old	CAB
Little Grebe	28 April	Sehikile Pan near Magoriapitse	Adult +3 young ca. 10 days old	CAB
Little Grebe	17 Jan 2018	Lobatse sewage ponds	Ad +3 young, ca. 10 days old	CAB
Little Grebe	2 April 2018	Dam west of Thamaga	Pair ad + 2 young ca. 2 weeks old	CAB
Black-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	11 Mar	Mmea Pan	Adult on nest	CAB
Black-necked Grebe	24 Mar	Dihudi Pan	Pair + 2 tiny young, also adult +one young, ca 10 days old	CAB
Black-necked Grebe	25 Mar 2018	Dam between Thamaga and Molepolole	Pair + 1 tiny young < 1 week old	CAB
Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	4 Sept	Thagale Dam	3 pairs each with 1 young ca. 15 days old	CAB
Great Crested Grebe	6 Jul 2018	Thagale Dam	Adult + 1 young, ca. 2 weeks old	CAB
Goliath Heron <i>Ardea goliath</i>	24 June	Darnaway Farm, Dovedale	Adult feeding fully fledged immature at top of tree	BLB
White-breasted Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax lucidus</i>	3 Jul 2018	Bokaa Dam	Six active nests	CAB
White-breasted Cormorant	6 Jul 2018	Thagale Dam	Three active nests, all with well-grown young	CAB
White-backed Vulture <i>Gyps africanus</i>	6 Sept	Sheep Farm, 2525C2	Ad on nest with 1 young ca. 3 weeks old	CAB
African Crake <i>Creccopsis egregia</i>	24 Mar	Savute 1834C1	Pair adults +2 chicks	JR
African Swamphen <i>Porphyrio madagascariensis</i>	24 Feb	Near Vumbura airstrip 1822D3	Pair adults + at least two chicks	LH
Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	18 Mar	West of Ghanzi in 2121C3	Pair adults + 3 young, ca. 3 weeks old	CAB
Red-knobbed Coot <i>Fulica cristata</i>	19 Mar	Kalkfontein	Adult on nest	CAB
Red-knobbed Coot	28	Moletse Pan	Adult and one young	CAB

<i>Fulica cristata</i>	April	near Magoriapitse	ca. 10 days old	
Red-knobbed Coot	6 Jun	Mmabe Pan near Mochudi	Adult + one young, ca. 1 week old	CAB
Common Buttonquail <i>Turnix sylvaticus</i>	6 Jun	Mmabe Pan, near Mochudi	Adult +2 small young, ca. 1 week old	CAB
Blacksmith Lapwing <i>Vanellus armatus</i>	2 Jul	Mmabe Pan near Mochudi	Three eggs in scrape on ground	MGG
Blacksmith Lapwing	19 Jan 2018	Gaborone G.R.	pair ad + 2 young, ca. 10 days old	CAB
African Jacana <i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	1 Mar	Gaborone Game Reserve	Adult with young, ca. 1 week old	IW
African Skimmer <i>Rynchops flavirostris</i>	6 Nov	Okavango River near Shakawe	Adult with one chick	HK
African Skimmer	21 Aug 2018	Okavango floodplain near Kasane	Six adults on nests	PN
Whiskered Tern <i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	24 Jan	Kgoro Pan near Goodhope	Building	CAB
Whiskered Tern	3 Mar	Dihudi Pan near Mmathethe	Dive-bombing observer to protect nest	CAB
Red-eyed Dove <i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	12 Nov	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult incubating on nest in <i>Acacia erubescens</i>	CAB
Laughing Dove <i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	23 Nov 2016	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult incubating on nest in fork of tree	CAB
Laughing Dove	4 Sept	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult incubating 2 eggs	CAB
Grey Go-away-bird <i>Corythaixoides concolor</i>	22 Jun 2018	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Ad + 1 young, ca. 2 weeks old	CAB
Grey Go-away-bird	8 Aug 2018	Gaborone	One recently hatched young	CJ
Black Cuckoo <i>Cuculus clamosus</i>	13 May	Maruapula, Gaborone	Immature being fed by adult Crimson-breasted Shrike <i>Laniarius atrococcineus</i>	SJ
Lilac-breasted Roller <i>Coracias caudatus</i>	17 Nov	Goodhope	Adult feeding two begging, fledged juveniles	CAB
African Grey Hornbill <i>Tockus nasutus</i>	16 Jan	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult feeding young in nest-box; just ready to fledge	CAB
African Grey Hornbill	27 May	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult feeding young in nest-box; just ready to	CAB

			fledge	
African Grey Hornbill	30 Dec	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Sole young emerged from nest box, flying weakly; incubation probably commenced on 8 Oct	CAB
Chinspot Batis <i>Batis molitor</i>	1 Oct	Nthlanthe S24.97605 E25.69730	Nest with 2 eggs	DCh
Black-backed Puffback <i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>	2 April	Along Taung River, south of Boatile	Adult with dependent young	MW
Black Cuckooshrike <i>Campephaga flava</i>	5 Feb	Kopong Hills	Adult f on nest, cup of lichen on branch of <i>Peltophorum africanum</i> , 8 m above ground	MGG
Magpie Shrike <i>Corvinella melanoleuca</i>	17 Jan 2018	Lobatse sewage ponds	pair feeding two recently fledged young	CAB
Grey-rumped Swallow <i>Pseudhirundo griseopyga</i>	26 Jun 2018	Mmataikgadu Island in Okavango Delta, north of Maun	Pair entering one of two holes in termite mound with nest material and leaving by other hole	DC, MC
Southern Fiscal <i>Lanius collaris</i>	26 Jan	Ramotswa	Adult incubating on nest 3m above ground in <i>Acacia tortilis</i> in yard in village	CAB
Fork-tailed Drongo <i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	7 Jan 2018	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Pair ad + 2 recently fledged young	CAB
African Paradise Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	7 Dec	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult female incubating on nest (egg-laying late November)	CAB
Yellow-bellied Greenbul <i>Chlorocichla flaviventris</i>	16 Mar	Sitatunga Camp, Maun	Adult feeding begging young	CAB
Terrestrial Brownbul <i>Phyllastrephus terrestris</i>	25 Oct	Maun	Dependent juveniles	FMH
Arrow-marked Babbler <i>Turdoides jardeneii</i>	25 Jun	Bokaa Dam	Nest with chicks being fed by ad female	IW
Cape White-eye <i>Zosterops capensis</i>	26 Mar	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult +3 Chicks	MGG
Cape Glossy Starling <i>Lamprotornis nitens</i>	30 Dec	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult feeding young in nest in hole of <i>Aloe marlothii</i>	CAB
Violet-backed Starling	19 Dec	Baratani Hill, Otse	Immature begging from adult female	CAB

<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>				
Marico Flycatcher <i>Bradornis mariquensis</i>	1 Aug 2018	Near Struizendam	Adult + 2 dependent juveniles	CAB
Fiscal Flycatcher <i>Sigelus silens</i>	29 Dec	Along Metsimothaba River, near Mosopa	Adult with dependent young	CAB
Ashy Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa caerulescens</i>	25 Oct	Maun	2 dependent juveniles	FMH
White-throated Robin-chat <i>Cossypha humeralis</i>	26 Mar	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult +one chick	MGG
White-throated Robin-chat <i>Cossypha humeralis</i>	2 Nov	Gaborone North	Nest with 3 small young	IN-S
White-throated Robin-chat <i>Cossypha humeralis</i>	17 Jan	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult with begging juvenile	CAB
White-bellied Sunbird <i>Cinnyris talatala</i>	16 Oct	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult + 2 fledglings	MGG
Golden Weaver <i>Ploceus xanthops</i>	25 Oct	Maun	Dependent juvenile	FMH
Green-winged Pyilia <i>Pytilia melba</i>	2 Sept 2018	Near Ramotswa	Pair adults + 4 Young	IW
Bronze Mannikin <i>Spemestes cucullatus</i>	Mid-June	Botswana Accountancy College, Gaborone.	Pair adults with young	IW
Bronze Mannikin	4 Jun 2018	Gaborone Botanical Gardens	Adults with young	IW
Yellow-fronted Canary <i>Crithagra mozambicus</i>	26 Mar	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult +2 chicks	MGG
Yellow-fronted Canary	31 May	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Young begging from adult	CAB

Nest Observers: CAB Chris Brewster; CJ Chris Johnson; DCh Dean Chalmers; DC Derek Chalton; FMH Frances Murray Hudson; HH Harold Hester; IG Ian Guthrie; IN-S Ian Nuttall-Smith; IW Ian White; LH Lex Hes; MC Merle Chalton; MMG Mike Goldsworthy; MM Mark Muller; MS Mike Soroczynski; MW Mary Webb; PN Pat Nurse; SJ Sally Jobson

Botswana's "common birds" are doing well...so far

A press release on 26 March 2018

BirdLife Botswana had the honour to attend the 5th African International Conference on Statistics at the University of Botswana Conference Centre during March 19-22, 2018. The conference, the first ever in Botswana, was jointly organized by the Department of Statistics at the University of Botswana and by the Department of Mathematics/Statistics at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC). The central theme of the conference was **Solutions for a Complex World: New Generation Statistics**. The conference had a total of 90 participants from all parts of the world.

BirdLife Botswana presented a paper at the conference titled "Developing Indicators for African birds" authored by a team from international collaborators and BirdLife Botswana, using the information collected from Botswana, Uganda and Kenya by volunteers. The key results were that the encounter rate of common and widespread birds in Botswana has increased by 65% during 2010-2015 and only two species showing a significant decline. In Uganda, the overall trend between 2009 and 2015 was stable, but showing a small recent decline, and 21 species showing a significant decline. This suggests tentatively that common bird populations are faring better in Botswana than Uganda. In Botswana, the most frequently recorded species was the Cape Turtle-Dove (present in 84% of transect counts). The most abundant species was the Red-billed Quelea *Thaga* (an overall count of at least 40,250 from 483 records during 2010-2015).

Papers of interest in Botswana

Natalie dos Remedios, Clemens Küpper, Tamás Székely & Patricia LM Lee 2017. **Genetic isolation in an endemic African habitat specialist. *Ibis* 159: 792-802.**

The Chestnut-banded Plover *Charadrius pallidus* is a near-threatened shorebird species endemic to mainland Africa. We examined levels of genetic differentiation between its two morphologically and geographically distinct subspecies, *C. p. pallidus* in southern Africa (population size 11 000-16 000) and *C. p. venustus* in eastern Africa (population size 6 500). In contrast to other plover species that maintain genetic connectivity over thousands of kilometres across continental Africa, we found profound genetic differences between remote sampling sites. Phylogenetic network analysis based on four nuclear and two mitochondrial gene regions, and

population genetic structure analyses based on 11 microsatellite loci, indicated strong genetic divergence, with 2.36% mitochondrial sequence divergence between individuals sampled in Namibia (southern Africa) and those of Kenya and Tanzania (eastern Africa). This distinction between southern and eastern African populations was also supported by highly distinct genetic clusters based on microsatellite markers (global F_{ST} : 0.309, $G'ST = 0.510$, $D = 0.182$). Behavioural factors that may promote genetic differentiation in this species include habitat specialisation, monogamous mating behaviour and sedentariness. Reliance on an extremely small number of saline lakes for breeding and limited dispersal between populations is likely to promote reproductive and genetic isolation between eastern and southern Africa.

The authors suggest that the two Chestnut-banded Plover subspecies may warrant elevation to full species status. To fully assess this distinction, additional sample collection will be needed, with analysis of genetic and phenotypic traits from across the species' entire breeding range.

Wooton, S.R., Eaton, M.A., Sheehan, D. & Barasa
Munyekenye, F. 2017. **Developing biodiversity indicators
for African birds.** *Oryx* published online 27 November 2017

Biodiversity indicators are essential for monitoring the impacts of pressures on the state of nature, determining the effectiveness of policy responses, and tracking progress towards biodiversity targets and sustainable development goals. Indicators based on trends in the abundance of birds are widely used for these purposes in Europe and have been identified as priorities for development elsewhere. To facilitate this we established bird population monitoring schemes in three African countries, based on citizen science approaches used in Europe, aiming to monitor population trends in common and widespread species. We recorded > 500 bird species from c. 450 2-km transects in Botswana, > 750 species from c. 120 transects in Uganda, and > 630 species from c. 90 transects in Kenya.

Provisional Wild Bird Indices indicate a strong increase in bird populations in Botswana and a small decrease in Uganda. We also provide comparisons between trends of habitat generalists and specialists, of birds within and outside protected areas, and between Afro-Palearctic migrants and resident birds. Challenges encountered included recruiting, training and retaining volunteer surveyors, and securing long-term funding. However, we show that with technical support and modest investment (c. USD 30,000 per scheme per year), meaningful biodiversity indicators can be generated and used in African countries. Sustained resourcing for the existing schemes, and replication elsewhere, would be a cost-effective way to improve our understanding of biodiversity trends globally, and measure progress towards environmental goals.

Richard P. Reading, Botilo Tshimologo and Glyn Maude 2017. **Coprophagy of African Wild Dog faeces by Hooded Vultures in Botswana. *Vulture News* 72: 34.**

While tracking African Wild Dogs *Lycaon pictus* as part of a behavioural study in the Okavango Delta region of Botswana, the authors observed coprophagy behaviour by Hooded Vultures *Necrosyrtes monachus*. Hooded Vultures often accompanied wild dogs in northern Botswana. In March, 2010, while with a pack of dogs that had recently killed a male Greater Kudu *Tragelaphus strepsiceros*, we observed several Hooded Vultures. While the dogs rested near the kill, the vultures picked at scraps of the carcass and followed the dogs to quickly consume their faeces, including liquid stool, whenever the dogs vacated.

The authors hypothesize that Hooded Vultures obtain undigested nutrients from consuming wild dog faeces, although they may well be obtaining rare nutrients as well or instead. If vultures practice coprophagy primarily for nutrition, African wild dogs provide Hooded Vultures with food from their kills and their faeces.

Jessica M. Shaw, Tim A. Reid, Maurice Schutgens, Andrew R. Jenkins and Peter G. Ryan 2018. **High power line collision mortality of threatened bustards at a regional scale in the Karoo, South Africa. *Ibis* 160 (2). 431-446**

Power line collision mortality of birds is a serious conservation issue worldwide. The authors at the FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology in South Africa undertook extensive surveys along high-voltage transmission and low-voltage distribution lines to examine effects on the endangered Ludwig's Bustard and two other bustard species. In these surveys they found over 600 carcasses from 30 different bird species, with Ludwig's Bustards comprising 69% and other bustards a further 18% of carcasses. Collision rates for Ludwig's Bustard averaged 1.12 and 0.86 bustards/km/year on transmission and distribution lines, respectively. However, the smaller distribution lines are four times as extensive in South Africa and so probably kill more birds. Despite being much less abundant, Kori Bustards were the second most commonly recovered species on transmission lines indicating their vulnerability to this source of mortality. This study adds to growing concern about the impacts of power lines on bustards globally, and therefore Shaw *et al.* recommend that collision mitigation measures are implemented at all new power lines.

Colin M Beale 2017. **Trends and themes in African ornithology, *Ostrich***, DOI: 10.2989/00306525.2017.1407834

Author's abstract: Ornithology in Africa has a long history. I review trends in the ornithological literature since 1990 within the context of the 14th Pan-African Ornithological Congress. Using full text searches of papers on PubMed and abstracts from main ornithological journals I found that most papers referencing African bird species are focused on medical related research questions. Restricting the literature search to journals African ornithologists are most likely to publish in, I found 2 279 relevant papers. These describe work on 29% of African bird species from 82% of African bird families, in all but two African countries. Overall output has increased slightly over time, with more papers tackling more research topics. Most popular research topics were demography, conservation and climate, with disease ecology, physiology and ecological processes the least researched topics. I found that while many authors with African affiliations publish papers, outside of South Africa very few African-based authors reliably publish in the international research literature, perhaps indicating difficulties in establishing a productive research career in much of Africa. I conclude with a call to overseas ornithologists working in Africa and to organisations funding research in Africa to work together to build capacity outside of the few established research centres.

Rebecca Garbett, GlynMaude, Pete Hancock, David Kenny, Richard Reading and Arjun Amar. 2018. **Association between hunting and elevated blood lead levels in the critically endangered African white-backed vulture *Gyps africanus*. *Science of the Total Environment*.**

Authors' abstract: Lead (Pb) toxicity caused by the ingestion of Pb ammunition fragments in carcasses and offal is a threat to scavenging birds across the globe. African vultures are in critical decline, but research on whether Pb exposure is contributing to declines is lacking. In Africa, recreational hunting represents an important economic activity; however, Pb in leftover hunted carcasses and gut piles represents a dangerous food source for vultures. It is therefore important to establish whether recreational hunting is associated with Pb exposure in African vultures.

We explored this issue for the critically endangered white-backed vulture (*Gyps africanus*) in Botswana by examining their blood Pb levels inside and outside of the hunting season, and inside and outside of private hunting areas.

From 566 birds captured and tested, 30.2% birds showed elevated Pb levels (10 to 45 µg/dl) and 2.3% showed subclinical exposure (≥45 µg/dl). Higher blood Pb levels were associated with samples taken inside of the hunting season and from within hunting areas. Additionally, there was a significant interaction between hunting season and areas, with Pb levels declining more steeply between hunting and non-hunting seasons within hunting areas than outside them. Thus, all our results were consistent with the suggestion that elevated Pb levels in this critically endangered African vulture are associated with recreational hunting. Pb is known to be highly toxic to scavenging birds and we recommend that Pb ammunition in Botswana is phased out as soon as possible to help protect this rapidly declining group of birds.

Below is a copy of a press release sent by the University of Cape Town about lead poisoning in vultures sent out in mid March that refers to the above paper.

BIG GAME HUNTERS IN AFRICA URGED TO DROP THE LEAD TO HELP SAVE VULTURES!
Lead bullet fragments in carcasses left by hunters are poisoning endangered African vultures, a new study has found.

A third of all vultures caught and tested in the Botswana study showed elevated levels of lead in their blood, most likely due to ingesting lead bullet-contaminated flesh. Hunters' bullets shatter inside their prey and can then be absorbed into the blood stream of the vultures when they feed on these animals or their remains. This ingested lead is highly toxic to birds.

"We were all shocked by how widespread lead poisoning was for this population and just how clearly these elevated levels were associated with recreational hunting activity", said Dr Arjun Amar, Associate Professor from the University of Cape Town's FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, who supervised the research.

The study, published this week in the international journal *Science of the Total Environment*, is based on tests of nearly 600 critically endangered African White-backed Vultures. Higher lead levels were found in the blood of vultures in the hunting season and in hunting areas, suggesting that the source of the lead in their blood stream was lead bullets used for hunting. "The only logical explanation for the patterns of lead poisoning we observed is if lead bullets were the source of this contamination" said the study's lead author Beckie Garbett, who conducted the research as part of her PhD.

The four-year study was conducted jointly with Raptors Botswana, a conservation NGO. It has prompted a call for a national ban on lead bullets in the hope of minimising negative impacts on vulture populations, which are declining throughout Africa. Previous vulture studies linked declines in several species across the continent to mass poisoning, usually by farmers trying to kill other predators, or poachers deliberately trying to kill vultures for fear they might give away their location.

Researchers believe alternative non-lead ammunition, already adopted in some countries, could provide a helping hand to vultures. “Whilst lead poisoning may not be the main driver for the declines in vultures across Africa, it is something that can be tackled more easily through simple legislation, as compared to stopping the illegal actions of livestock owners or poachers” Amar said.

Lead poisoning was one of the main reasons for the near extinction of the Californian Condor and is known to increase mortality and reduce breeding performance in birds. Thus, shattered fragments of bullets left in the carcasses of big game animals on the African savannahs could also be accelerating the decline of vultures.

The latest research also suggests that the 2014 ban on hunting on government owned land in Botswana has had no effect on the lead levels in vultures. Lead levels in vultures actually increased after the ban, and the researchers believe vultures may have shifted their foraging to private game farms where hunting is still allowed: “Hunting may have become more concentrated after the ban and this might explain the increase in lead levels in vultures following the ban, since the vultures may have tapped more into this food supply. We also need to consider that because vultures range so widely, they are exposed to lead use throughout the region, therefore mitigation of this issue needs to be addressed at a regional level” Garbett said.

The authors of the study have called for greater awareness among policy makers of the threat that lead ammunition may pose to vultures. The Convention for Migratory Species (CMS) has also urged all signature countries to phase out the use of lead ammunition. Whilst Botswana is one of the few countries yet to sign the convention, the authors urge policymakers there to implement this call. “To do so is particularly important for species like vultures that range widely across international borders,” the study said.

Rebecca Garbett, Marc Herremans, Glyn Maud, Richard P. Reading & Arjun Amara 2018. **Raptor population trends in northern Botswana: a re-survey of road transects after 20 years. *Biological Conservation* 224:87-99.**

Across Africa, many raptor species, especially vultures, are in steep decline. Botswana is regionally important for numerous raptor species including vultures, but recent population trends of raptors within this country are totally unknown. In 2015–2016 we repeated road transects for raptors across northern Botswana that were first conducted in 1991–1995. In total, we re-surveyed 20,712 km of transects. From these data we explored changes in abundance of 29 species. Fourteen species (48%) showed significant declines. Of these, 11 species declined by > 50% and three species declined by 37–50%. Non-significant declines of > 70% were shown for four species, of 30–65% for six species and of < 10% for a further two species. In contrast only three species, all large eagles – Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*, Brown Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinereus* and Black-chested Snake Eagle *Circaetus pectoralis*, showed significant but small increases of between 6 and 15%. For most species, population trends were similar both inside and outside of protected areas, with only two species showing significantly different trends. Declines of Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* were lower inside protected areas. In contrast, Brown Snake Eagles showed stable populations inside protected areas but large increases outside of protected areas. These re-surveys suggest extremely worrying trends for multiple raptor species in Botswana, and highlights the benefit of repeating historical surveys to understand population trends in countries that lack systematic monitoring of wildlife populations.



Yellow-bellied Greenbul

Photo: Ian White



Orange-breasted Waxbill
Photo: Ian White



Marico Sunbird
Photo: Ian White



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Collared Palm Thrush
Photo: Ian White

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