

ISSN 1012 - 2974

BABBLER

Journal of BirdLife Botswana



Number 66



August 2020

BIRDLIFE BOTSWANA



African Pygmy Goose
Photo: Ian White

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Journal of BirdLife Botswana



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Front Cover: Red-throated Twinspot, Photographer: Lyn Francey



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Red-headed Finch

Photo: Ian White

It is always exciting to find a species new for your patch or for your country so the discovery of a pair of Red-throated Twinspots at Chobe Bush Lodge at Kasane must have been a real bonus for the Viviers in late October 2019 (please read the first article in this issue of *Babbler*). How long have the twinspots been there – have they been overlooked or had they recently moved to the area with drought in their main range?

In the last 10 years some 13 new species have been discovered in Botswana from strange vagrants such as Greater Frigatebird at Ghagoo Mine to Lesser Yellowlegs in Moremi Game Reserve, Buff-breasted Sandpiper north-west of Rakops and an African Pitta in Maun. Other rarities have been seen again, for example a second sighting of Long-tailed Jaeger, well away from its marine haunts, in Moremi Game Reserve and also the third record of Cloud Cisticola, at Kgoro Pan (see separate note by Chris Brewster in this issue). We are lucky in having resident and visiting birdwatchers who keep their eyes and ears open for anything unusual and with luck, photograph whatever they find. A photograph makes assessing a rarity report so much easier.

This issue includes a short article by a visiting researcher from Australia. Roxane Francis was based in Kasane for two years investigating waterbirds' abundance in relation to water flows but is now home in Sydney. She provides some useful counts from the heronry at Kasane Rapids and from two heronries in the Okavango Delta. There are notes on a visit to the western Kalahari in December 2019 by Chris Brewster, an account of the expansion of South African Shelduck in Botswana by me, a report of waterbird counts carried out in the Ghanzi District by Modiege Bakane and a breeding record of Carmine Bee-eaters in Mashatu Game Reserve by Duncan McKenzie, well away from their usual nest sites in northern Botswana. Some exciting records from the January waterbird counts are given, among them Pygmy Geese and African Skimmers at sites in south-east Botswana. The good rains have meant that waterbirds have been dispersing widely to pans to breed. It is of note too that January 2020 saw 30 years since waterbird counts began in Botswana. Chris Brewster, during lockdown in April 2020 at Crocodile Pools, Notwane, observed birds coming to drink and he describes the results in his article. He writes too, on counting waterbirds at Gaborone Dam and on an influx of Black-chested Snake Eagles into south-eastern Botswana in January 2020.

As usual, recently accepted Category A rarities and sightings of B rarities are provided. Everyone could contribute by sending in your sightings to add to the picture. We are aware that many records are posted on local forums such as the excellent Maun Bird Forum but it is important to embrace as many of these records as possible and put them in print for posterity.

It is so depressing to read of further vulture poisoning incidents such as the 1,000 vultures poisoned in Guinea-Bissau in West Africa, probably by strychnine used to poison feral dogs at rubbish dumps.

Stephanie Tyler, Editor



A species new for Botswana – the Red-throated Twinspot

Hypargos niveoguttatus

Records Sub-Committee

Penry (1994) in his monumental *Bird Atlas of Botswana*, listed 37 species in an appendix which he thought may turn up in Botswana. Since he wrote that, at least 15 of these species have indeed been recorded, mainly in the Kasane area, and added to the Botswana list which now stands at 600 species. However, the birds first seen by Joe and Ryan Vivier at Chobe Safari Lodge at 17h00 hrs on 26 October 2019 were not on Penry's list of possible species and add yet another species to the Botswana list. The species occurs in East Africa down through southern DRC, Zambia and Malawi to southern Africa where it is found in northern and eastern Zimbabwe and central Mozambique with a coastal population further south in Mozambique between the Save and Limpopo Rivers.

The account from Ryan Vivier is as follows:

“We were birding the camping site to the west of Chobe Safari Lodge when my wife Joe noticed a male and female Red-throated Twinspot feeding in the leaf litter on the edge of the small drainage line that goes through the campsite. She called me and we both confirmed the sightings with our binoculars and then set up our ‘scope to try to get some images for Trevor Hardaker. Immediately we could see the bright red throat and neck with tiny white spots on the belly.”

Ryan added that he was very experienced with the species, having seen it multiple times in Mozambique over many years. He and Joe are also very familiar with the other two species of twinspot as their home is in Kwazulu Natal in a game reserve where they are common.

Other birders soon visited and saw and/or photographed the twinspots which were still there in early December 2019. One visitor was local ornithologist Modiegi Bakane, who with a group, searched for the twinspots at Chobe Bush Camp on 9 November at 07:00 hrs.

Modiegi Bakane wrote: “The month of November is the month for conducting Common Bird Population Monitoring or Common bird counts. Most of the birds observed were the common and familiar ones we have recorded before such as Blue Waxbills *Uraeginthus angolensis*, Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala*, Collared Palm-Thrush *Cichladusa arquata*, White-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris talatala* and White-Browed Robin Chat *Cossypha heuglini* among others.



After several counts and recordings, we went and sat on the banks of an artificial waterhole and patiently proceeded with the recordings. Several birds were observed and bird calls were heard in the vicinity. Just before 10:00hrs a high-pitched trill call was heard. When we looked behind our shoulders, 'lo' it was a pair of foraging Red-Throated Twinspots. Red Throated Twinspots are predominately seed eaters but to a lesser extent insectivores. The name 'Twinspot' emanates from two white spots on each feather, one on either side of the feather shaft. A female is distinguished from the male by a female exhibiting grey-brown face and rufous-orange upper breast plumage while the male has a deep red face, throat and breast, grey crown and white flank spots."

Lyn Francey then took some excellent photos of the pair on the morning of 9 November 2019 (see front cover).

Penry H. 1994. *Atlas of Birds of Botswana.* Pietermaritzburg: Univ. KwaZulu/Natal Press.



Photos of the male and female Red-throated Twinspot

Photo: Modiegi Bakane

Changing status of South African Shelduck (Cape Shelduck) *Tadorna cana* in Botswana

Stephanie J. Tyler

This attractive shelduck is a common to locally abundant southern African endemic in the south and west of the continent. The total population was estimated as 42,000 birds in 1981 (Brown *et al.* 1982) but it has been increasing and the Wetlands International population estimate now stands at 50,000. It is of Least Concern in the IUCN Red List of threatened birds.

In Botswana the species has expanded its range since the nineteenth century, when it was unknown in the country. Beesley & Irving (1976) had just two records in the Gaborone area, both from the summer months – one flying over Gaborone Dam on 26 February 1974 and one at a sewage works for a few days in mid-January 1975. Smithers (1964) had reported birds at Bathoen Dam near Kanye. In the 1980s and 1990s it was seen more frequently and Wilson (1984) regarded the species as an austral winter visitor and Penry (1994) also noted that it was mainly present in Botswana in the dry season (winter) when it bred. Skinner (1997) similarly described it as a mainly austral winter breeding visitor to the extreme south-east corner of Botswana although he did add that some birds stayed throughout the year.

There were few documented records of the species in early issues of the *Babbler*, the journal of Botswana Bird Club (later BirdLife Botswana) apart from an occasional sighting or breeding record. In April 1979 and March 1980 a pair was seen at Mogobane Dam and at Ngotwane S.P. in June and July 1980 and three at Tsholofelo S.P. in late June 1980. One to three birds were reported from Tsholofelo in February, May and June 1981 and two pairs at Good Hope pan (Kgoro Pan) in June 1981 and four there two weeks later with a male displaying. There were breeding records at Masotswana, south of Kanye in September 1982 and 1983 and at Pelotshetla in September 1983 (Hunter 1983 and records by Hunter & Bushell in early *Babbler* issues).

Once regular waterbird counts began for the African Waterbird Census (in 1991 to the present day – see Tyler 2011) at a range of sites the status of the species became evident. The South African Shelduck, at the supposed northern limit of its southern African range in south-east Botswana, was considered frequent throughout the year by Tyler & Borello (1998) in contrast to earlier reports. Bishop & Tyler (1998) noted that one or two pairs were regular at Phakalane Sewage Ponds, with a maximum of 12-14 in the dry and wet seasons. In 1999 two sewage lagoons sites at Maru-a Pula and Ngotwane were lost, both regular sites for South African Shelduck, with breeding having been recorded at Ngotwane S.P. (Tyler 2000a).

The species in the last 30 years has been recorded from all sewage ponds in and around the Gaborone area and also at Ramotswa and further afield at Lobatse, Mahalapye and Jwaneng. Penry (1994) noted that it rarely occurred at sewage ponds but these habitats are now the most favoured. It has however, also occurred on all the larger dams in the area, including Gaborone, Gamoleele, Bokaa and Mogobane Dams and Leporung Dam along the Molopo River, as well as on smaller dams such as at Thagale, Mosopa and Bathoen and at Jwaneng Golf Club pools and pans in Jwana Game Park. It occurs too at seasonal pans such as Kgoro Pan, Maolagane, Tswaiing and Tshwaane Pans (see below) and Thakatokwane Pan.

It is usually found singly, in pairs or small groups of fewer than ten birds but sometimes larger numbers occur (see table below). AfWC data showed clearly that South African Shelduck in southeast Botswana now occurs throughout the year in small numbers. In some years it appeared to be more common in July but in other years January counts were higher (Table 1 and 2). Although the South African Shelduck is considered basically sedentary, seasonal movements do occur related to moulting and to water availability. Hockey *et al.* (2005) noted that in South Africa movements of South African Shelduck are widespread across its range with 13 birds having moved over 900km and one of these well over 1,000 km. Birds move to favoured large freshwater wetlands to moult between October and the end of February, mainly November and December.

When pans in south-east Botswana fill after rain, Shelduck are soon attracted to them. That Shelduck move between sites is shown by the birds turning up in good numbers at sites where they were normally scarce or absent, for example, Mosopa, Gamoleele and Mogobane Dams. Counts at Gamoleele and Mogobane Dam were usually of one to two birds, often none, but 21 were seen in July 2008 at the former and 14 in Jan 1994 and 12 in July 1992 at the latter. Tsholofelo S.P. counts reached double figures in just three counts (Tables 1 and 2). An unusually large count was made at Mogobane Dam in April 2007 when 51 were counted.

Although total numbers counted in any year only occasionally reach or exceed 100, not all sites were covered each year and many small sites remained uncounted. In March 2008 some 28 birds were seen at Tswaiing Pans (2524B2) and in April 2008 a count at just two sites, Leporung Dam on the Molopo (28) and a large usually dry pan, Thakatokwane Pan (32) on the edge of a village in 2424A2, reached 60 birds. In early April 2010 there were 19 at Tshwaane Pan (2323D3) and a pair was seen flying along the main road between Kang and Okwa; in mid-April there were 48 at Tswaiing Pan and two nearby pans whilst in mid-February 2011 there were 84 at Tswaiing Pans and 18 there in January 2020.

As well as the count of 84 at Tswaing Pans the next highest counts at any site were of 80 birds at Jwaneng S.P. in January 2010 when a total of 174 birds were seen around Gaborone and 92 at Jwaneng SP in January 2012. The sewage ponds at Jwaneng were the best site for numbers of the species anywhere in Botswana, especially in the wet season. Numbers dropped to seven in July 2012 after a mass poisoning incident when many waterfowl died but in August of that year 30 were counted. Sadly few counts have been made there in recent years.

The south-east Botswana population is probably in the order of at least 200 to 300 birds so although no single site in Botswana holds regionally important numbers (250 birds = 0.5% of estimated global population) regionally important numbers do occur in south-east Botswana as a whole.

Table 1. January counts of South African Shelduck at some sites favoured by the species in south-east Botswana from 1991-2020 (Blank = site not counted or in the case of Kgoro Pan, dry). Counts of 40 or more in bold.

	Bathoen Dam	Bokaa Dam	Jwaneng SP	Ramot. SP	Phakal SP	Lobats SP	Kgoro Pan	Mosupa Dam	Tsholo SP	Totals all sites
1991			2		2				0	4
1992		15	2	0	5				0	31
1993	0	0		0	12		1		0	16
1994	0	2		0	4	0	3	1	2	43
1995	0	1			13				4	25
1996		0	12		0		3		2	19
1997		0			2		0		1	6
1998	0	1	21		0		2		7	34
1999	0	8	40		4	0	0		2	56
2000	0	0	28	0	0	4	6		3	39
2001	2	13		0	0	4		0	10	32
2002		1		6	2	0	0		0	9
2003		6	44	0	0	3	2		0	13
2004	12	0	60	0	0				0	85
2005	30	22	39		0				0	92
2006	2	0	26	3	0		2	0		35
2007	20	3	58	18		0		0		100
2008	0	0	70	18		14		0	3	107
2009	0	23			0		2	27		54
2010		23	80	22		2	6	28		174
2011	0	3	54	0			11	0		152
2012	0	4	92	5				0		107
2013	0	2	19	2		0		0	0	28
2014	2	0	27	6		2	16	0		64

2015	0	2	2	14		4	24	1		51
2016	0	4	3	4		5	16	0	0	35
2017	0	0	8	2		2	0	2	1	15
2018	0	31		10		0		0	1	42
2019	2	3		12		2		0	0	20
2020	0	0		12			2	0	0	36

Table 2. July counts of South African Shelduck at some sites favoured by the species in south-east Botswana from 1991-2020 (Blank = site not counted or in the case of Kgoro Pan, dry).

	Bathoen Dam	Bokaa Dam	Jwaneng SP	Ramotswa SP	Phakal. SP	Lobatse SP	Kgoro Pan	Tshol. SP	Totals all sites
1991	NC	0			4			2	15
1992	0	7		0	2			0	31
1993	2	3		0	13	2		0	45
1994	0	2		0	4		2	3	33
1995	0	0			3			0	25
1996	0	0	21		2		1	1	39
1997		2	19		12		0	6	23
1998	2	12	27		14	2		5	71
1999	2	10	31		6	3		4	58
2000	1	0	14	0	0	0	2	13	52
2001	0	0	30	0	4	3		8	60
2002		1		6	5			0	26
2003		2		0	0	1		3	74
2004	0	15	14	0	0	12		2	55
2005	5	11	22		3	2		11	89
2006	15	5	16	5	0	0	0	0	42
2007	3	44	23	4					80
2008	2	22	21	12				3	91
2009	12	8	28	11	0	2	0	0	96
2010	2	22	19	14		6	3	4	89
2011	0	18	20	25			6		120
2012	2	5	7*	7		4			89
2013	0	0	2	4		0			16
2014	0	0	8	18		2			86
2015	2	9	5	26		0		1	62
2016	0	3	0	11		4		2	39
2017	0	6	0	4		2	6		28
2018	0	22		8		2			45
2019	0	12		21		2			52

Eastern and northern records

Penry (1994) noted that the furthest north that South African Shelduck has been found from their south-east stronghold was Moshaneng (2425C) and Gaborone (2425D). In the last 20 years more sightings have been made away from the south-east of the country. Chris Brewster noted one at Shadishadi Pan in April 2004 to the north of Molepolole and four at nearby Sojwe Pan in April 2004, eight there in January 2010 and two in late March 2020.

Peter D'Arcy saw two at Mahalapye Sewage Ponds on 22 July 2013 and two again on 2 February 2014. Ian White reported a pair over-wintering at Malema Pan in the Khama Rhino Sanctuary in 2009. Two were seen at Francistown S.P. by Nicky Bousfield in the dry season of 2002. Although none had been reported at Shashe Dam between 1993 and 2000 (Tyler 2000), two were seen at this large dam by Pat Nurse and Ray & Val Lovett on 21 September 2011 and then by Nicky Bousfield on 13 September 2012. Further east in Botswana none have been seen (Brewster 2001, 2004).

In the Makgadikgadi system South African Shelduck are rare. There was a record of a pair at Rysana Pan on 22 January 2001 (S.J. Tyler in Flatt *et al.* 2001). Then in April 2004 Ralph Bousfield reported one from west of Jack's Camp on Ntvetwe Pan and in early January 2015 one was noted by the salt mines on Sua Pan.

Apart from the records at Jwaneng in the Kalahari, three pairs were seen by Ian Guthrie on a pan at Kang on 23 May 2018 and as noted above one was seen between Kang and Okwa in April 2010.

Further north a single male was seen on 28 January 2001 on the Thamalakhane River in Maun, well outside the species' known range in Botswana (Flatt *et al.* 2001). On 4 February 2008 two males and a female were seen at Lake Ngami (Tyler & Tyler 2008), 30 years after Mark Muller reported seeing one there from the air. Phil Zappala reported one in the Chobe floodplain near Ngoma Gate in late April 2012.

Breeding

In South Africa shelduck breed mainly in the dry season, from June to September with a few as early as March and as late as December. Hockey *et al.* (2005) noted that birds in the north of the range breed one to two months earlier than those birds further south.

Table 3. Some breeding records of South African Shelduck in Botswana

Site	Date	Evidence	Estimated month of laying	Obs.
Masotswana 2525A	Sept 1982 and 1983		July	Nigel Hunter
Pelotshetlha 2525A	18 Sept 1983	Five ducklings	July	Nigel Hunter, Brian Bushell
Kanye	27 October 1991	Two ducklings, ca. 10 days	September	Torben Larsen
Jwaneng	November 1994	6 very small ducklings	Late September/October	MS
Phakalane SP	September 1990s	Ducklings	July	DRB, SJT
Phakalane S.P.	October 1990s	Ducklings	August	DRB, SJT
Below Ngotwane Dam	28 February 2004	Eight small ducklings	December/January	DG, MGG
Lobatse S.P.	21 July 2004	Three small ducklings	Early June	SJT
Lobatse S.P.	12 January 2008	Four half grown ducklings	November	CAB
Ramotswa S.P.	26 June 2011	Five ducklings ca. 10 days	Early May	CAB
Mosupa Dam	5 August 2015	Six small ducklings	Early to mid-June	MGG, DG, HH
Thagale Dam	4 September 2017	Three ducklings ca. 10 days	July	CAB
Seathlhane Dam	4 August 2019	Seven small ducklings	Early to mid-June	BLB
Bokaa Dam	29 October 2011	One duckling ca. 10 days	August	CAB

Skinner (1997) noted that the species was mainly a breeding visitor with egg-laying May to October. No nests with eggs have been reported in Botswana but pairs with ducklings have been seen in the late dry season with occasional broods seen up to February, in the middle of the wet season. Estimated egg-laying from these broods appears mainly to be June to October.

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South African Shelduck

Photo: Ian White

Heronries and water flows - a PhD in Botswana

Roxane Francis

After finishing my honours in 2015 in Sydney, Australia, my supervisor at the University of New South Wales mentioned he was working on developing some connections and project opportunities in Botswana. He knew dropping the 'B word' would work, and two years later I was tapping on his office door enquiring about the project. That is how I ended up in Botswana, working for nine months across 2018 and 2019 on waterbird responses to river flows.

Initially I had a clear project path, and so based myself in Kasane, working with the help of 'Elephants Without Borders', the Okavango Research Institute and BirdLife Botswana. I quickly learned that doing fieldwork in Botswana is very different to Australia, and although we have a reputation for scary, venomous and dangerous critters, nothing compares to stumbling into a herd of buffalo, the splash of a crocodile darting into the water, or seeing evidence of big cats in your study sites. So, my project adapted, and I found ways around the dangers. I used a licensed drone to count waterbirds on the Chobe River, and from the fortnightly photos managed to calculate reproductive success indices of the Kasane breeding heronry.

The Kasane heronry as many of you know is located on the rapids in the Jackalberry *Diospyros mespiliformis* and Water Berry *Syzygium guineense* trees, making it especially difficult to survey with normal methods (see Tyler & Hancock 2006 and Brown 2012). Of course, the drone was flown at a height and speed where there was no observable disturbance to the birds, with parents not even leaving the nests as the drone passed above. From the drone photos I counted over 4,400 birds in this heronry and the surrounding trees, with most of these being African Openbills *Anastomus lamelligerus*. Unfortunately, with the low river levels in 2019 the heronry was drastically reduced in size, with only a few Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis* nests present when I arrived (which I do not think produced any successful offspring).

Table 1. Maximum count by species in September 2018 at the Kasane Heronry

Species	Adults	Nests
African Darter <i>Anhinga rufa</i>	393	164
Reed Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>	879	536
White-breasted Cormorant <i>P. lucidus</i>	33	22
African Openbill <i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>	2,696	1,787
Yellow-billed Stork <i>Mycteria ibis</i>	190	158
African Spoonbill <i>Platalea alba</i>	338	194

(Brown (2012) gave counts at the Kasane Rapids heronry for September 2011). I performed similar counts at the Kanana heronry in September 2018 and 2019 (see Muller & Flatt 2016) and Xugana heronry on the Maunachira River in Jere Jere Lediba in September 2018 in the Okavango Delta (Tyler & Hancock 2006). There I witnessed a similar trend; reduced heronry sizes in relation to water level. During my visit in 2018 to the Xugana heronry we counted 43 Great White Egrets, 13 African Openbills, 3 African Darters and 13 African Spoonbills, two of which were sitting on eggs. Unfortunately we were told by guides that the heronry had been raided by baboons and so was reduced in size.

Table 2. Counts by species at the Kanana heronry September 2018 and 2019

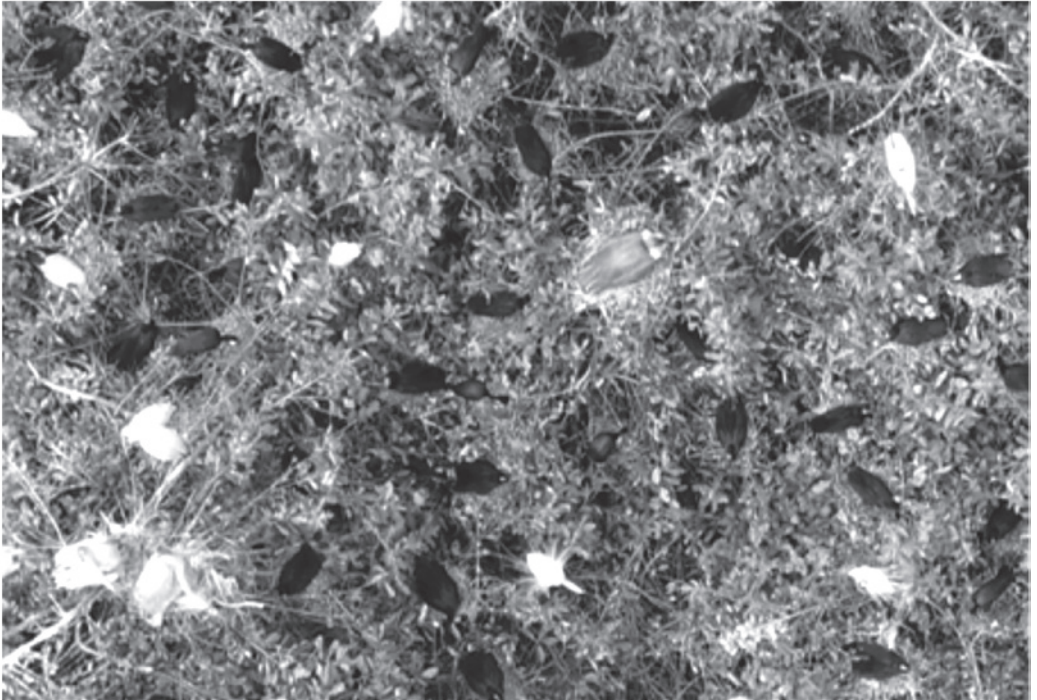
Adult count	2018	2019
Pink-backed Pelican <i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>	59	0
egret, mainly Yellow-billed Egret <i>Egretta intermedia</i>	737	0
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	50	1
Marabou Stork <i>Leptoptilos crumenifer</i>	154	105
Yellow-billed Stork <i>Mycteria ibis</i>	407	178
African Openbill <i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>	3,600	0
African Sacred Ibis <i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	24	0

Using the drone imagery from the densely packed Kanana heronry we are developing automated counting methods that are able to identify and count five or more target species on a range of complex backgrounds, contributing to the continued monitoring of bird heronries worldwide and providing time efficient image processing methods.

With the help of Lyn Francey, who I'm sure is known to most *Babbler* readers (and deserves a special thank you) I learnt to identify the avian species of the Chobe Region. Our regular transect counts are being used to explore the effect of large herbivore disturbance on bird diversity, highlighting many mutualistic relationships between herbivores and birds (e.g spurfowls in elephant dung or spoonbills foraging alongside hippos). My work also explores another form of disturbance, the human kind, looking at the effects of landfill feeding on the Marabou Stork. With the help of volunteers and friends we collected Marabou Stork feathers across Botswana at differing distances from landfill sites, and are exploring the feather elemental compositions and how these change according to distance.

Finally, with the help of Birdlife Botswana, in particular *The Babbler* publications I am exploring changes in waterbird abundance, diversity and distribution across the Okavango Delta, and historical counts at the Kasane breeding heronry.

I am now writing this from my desk in Sydney, as my time in Botswana has come to an end. I think of my wonderful experiences and the people who became my friends and family every day, and most importantly, I hope my research will contribute to the on-going protection of the invaluable birdlife of Botswana.



The densely packed Kanana heronry in 2018, showing breeding Marabou Stork, egrets, pelicans, Yellow-billed Storks and African Openbills. This photo is taken with a drone, under strictly controlled flying parameters, and readers can see birds show very little sign of disturbance and do not fly off the nests.

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If you would like to know more about me or my research please send me an email.
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Photo by Lyn Francey of a Red-billed spurfowl and her chicks foraging through elephant dung, highlighting just one of the important relationships between birds and large herbivores.

Southern Carmine Bee-eaters breeding in the Limpopo system

Duncan R. McKenzie

Southern Carmine Bee-eaters *Merops nubicoides* breed in Botswana in the Okavango, Chobe, Kwando and Savuti River systems, with eggs being laid usually in September to October, occasionally in November (Hockey *et al.* 2005, Penry 1994, Skinner 1996).

On the 5 December 2019 I was walking with 12 birding students along the bed of the Motloutse River in the Mashatu Game Reserve in eastern Botswana, about 13km west of the Pont Drift border post. Our group stopped to observe a known large breeding colony of White-fronted Bee-eater *Merops bullockoides* in the river bank at the confluence of the Motloutse and Limpopo Rivers on the national border with South Africa. We then heard calls of Southern Carmine Bee-eaters overhead. These birds are annual non-breeding visitors to Mashatu. However, we realised that some of the birds appeared to be carrying food and we watched some flying up to the White-fronted Bee-eater colony and perching in overhanging bushes before flying into nest burrows in the banks. As we suspected that they were breeding but had no evidence we returned to the colony a few days later.

On 9 December we sat in the riverbed some 60m from the colony and watched the colony for half an hour. A flock of c. 25 adult Southern Carmine Bee-eaters perched in a large *Philenoptera violacea* tree on the top of the river bank; about 30m away from the nest holes where they had entered previously. Within a few minutes, adults arrived with prey (mostly cicadas) and carried the food to the entrance of the burrows where they left it before flying away. As the bank contained many active White-fronted Bee-eater nests at first we were unsure whether the Carmine Bee-eaters were feeding their own chicks or those of White-fronted Bee-eaters. However, we then saw a pale Southern Carmine Bee-eater chick, not far from fledging age, peering out of a burrow and this proved that the adults were indeed feeding their own chicks. Well-grown chicks were seen in at least three of the nests. When we made another visit to the colony on 12 December, the river was flowing strongly and although we saw several adult Carmine Bee-eaters we did not see any fledged juveniles.

I believe that this is the first confirmed breeding record of this Southern Carmine Bee-eater in the Limpopo drainage system away from the known northern breeding sites in Botswana. Additional colonies could be present along the Motloutse or Limpopo Rivers and birds may also be breeding in the banks on the South African side of the border.

Acknowledgements

I thank Adrian Kohli, EcoTraining's Head Instructor at their Mashatu Camp, for his logistical assistance and Chris Brewster of BirdLife Botswana for his comments and inputs.

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- Duncan R. McKenzie, Terrestrial Ecologist: Digital Earth, Mbombela, South Africa**
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Editor: *Carmine Bee-eaters are intra-African migrants and although they only breed in northern Botswana they move down the eastern side of the country to 'winter' further south, including areas around Gaborone such as the Ngotwane River.*



Southern Carmine Bee-eater

Photo: Ian White

A visit to the western Kalahari in December 2019

Chris A. Brewster

In mid-December a visit was made to the western Kalahari. The areas visited were around Kaa, where the northern entrance gate to Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park is situated, and, further north, around Masetleng Pan and Ukwi Pan. The visit took place a few days after there had been very heavy rain in these parts of the western Kalahari (132 mm in 24 hours at Kaa). The large pans at Kaa, Masetleng and Ukwi were partly filled with water though drying up rapidly.

The veld from Zutshwa up to Kaa was almost devoid of any ground vegetation, probably due to a lack of rain the previous summer rather than over-grazing as there is no livestock in the area. The surfaces of some pans though were starting to turn green and, away from the pans, green shoots were just starting to emerge from the bare sand. Around Masetleng Pan, the vegetation was in a better condition, with some ground cover, which probably accounted for the greater number of birds recorded there than at Kaa and Ukwi. At Ukwi, where there is a village, the sand was also bare and lacking in ground vegetation, presumably due to overgrazing.

Two nights were spent at the Kaa gate to Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Around Kaa, away from Kaa Pan, there were relatively low numbers of birds and it was hard work to record a reasonable variety of species. The lack of, or low numbers of, some species that are expected in the area, was probably due to the lack of ground vegetation resulting from drought. Hardy Kalahari species such Black-chested Prinia *Prinia flavicans*, Fawn-coloured Lark *Calendulauda africanoides*, Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler *Sylvia subcoerulea*, Kalahari Robin *Cercotrichas paena*, Brubru *Nilaus afer* and Sociable Weaver *Philetairus socius* were present in small numbers. Scaly-feathered Finch *Sporopipes squamifrons*, a very common species in the Kalahari, was sparse, indicating that it probably had largely vacated the area. There were a few Lesser Grey Shrikes *Lanius minor*, but only a single Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* was seen.

At the campsite at Kaa gate, a very vocal Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler, mimicked a wide variety of species and its repertoire included the calls of Diederik Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx caprius*, Pririt Batis *Batis pririt* and Red-faced Mousebird *Urocolius indicus*, none of which were recorded on this visit to the western Kalahari. That the bird knew the songs of these species indicated that these species do occur in the area when conditions are more favourable. No Violet-eared Waxbills *Uraeginthus granatinus* were seen around Kaa either, despite the area been within the expected distribution of the species, indicating that it may have, at least partially, vacated the area.

A handful of Southern Masked Weavers *Ploceus velatus* were seen, including males in breeding plumage, and it is likely that these birds had moved into the area immediately following the heavy rainfall as the species largely vacates the Kalahari in dry periods. Small numbers of doves, mainly Cape Turtle Doves *Streptopelia capicola*, but also a few Namaqua Doves *Oena capensis*, were seen coming to drink at two waterholes, but none were seen far from water. Raptors seen around Kaa included a Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*, a Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* and a Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*. The latter species was also seen at Kaa Pan, Masetleng Pan and Ukwi Pan and, together with Pale Chanting Goshawk *Melierax canorus*, appeared to be the most widespread and predictable raptors of the area.

At Kaa Pan, some 20 km east of Kaa Gate, the presence of water in the pan attracted a greater variety of birds. Around the pan small numbers of Stark's Larks *Spizocorys starki*, Lark-like Buntings *Emberiza impetuani* and Grey-backed Sparrow-Larks *eremopterix verticalis* were seen, either flushed from the vegetation on the margins of the pan or seen coming to drink. These three species were seen at all pans visited in the western Kalahari and it was clear that there had been an influx of them. A few Shaft-tailed Whydahs *Vidua regia* and Red-headed Finches *Amadina erythrocephala* were also seen coming to drink. One Bateleur *terathopius ecaudatus* and two Lappet-faced Vultures *Torgos tracheliotos* were seen perched beside the pan, presumably attracted by the water, while a Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius* was seen on the margins of the pan. The only waterbirds seen were seven Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* and a single Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*.

From Kaa it was a long drive along the corrugated track to Zutshwa, then on a well graded road to Ngwatle and westwards on the narrow track to Masetleng Pan. On the way to Zutshwa a pan was passed, completely full with water, where Lark-like Buntings were numerous and a single Bateleur was perched beside the pan.

Masetleng Pan is a large pan that has high sand dunes with scattered trees on its southern side. The northern side of the pan is an extensive open area with low shrubs. It is a beautiful place that receives few visitors. There is a campsite on the southern side of the pan that BirdLife Botswana has been upgrading as part of project to assist communities in the western Kalahari.

There was water in the eastern part of Masetleng Pan, but the western part was muddy. Arriving at the eastern end of the pan from Ngwatle, a large number of raptors were visible on the western part of the pan, but these raptors rose into the air as they were approached, without my being able to identify all of them, as they were against the sun. Fortunately the next morning these raptors returned to the pan and a total of 15 Bateleurs and 10 Tawny Eagles *Aquila rapax* were counted on the pan, an impressive congregation of birds.

It was clear that there was a greater variety of bird species at Masetleng Pan than at Kaa and a total of 66 species were recorded in the pentad that includes Masetleng Pan.

There was a good variety of bird species in the sand dunes on the southern side of the pan, including two species of woodpecker, Bearded *Chloropicos namaquus* and Cardinal *Dendropicos fuscescens*. There were plenty of birds in the open shrub savanna on the northern side of the pan, including, notably, a single Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*, unexpected in the area. To the west of Masetleng Pan a pair of Violet-eared Waxbills and a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* were seen, the only records of these species on the trip. An African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis* was seen there too, the only cuckoo recorded on the trip.

A few km to the west of Masetleng Pan are two small and attractive pans at Poswane. On the first of these two pans were five Lappet-faced Vultures, three White-backed Vultures *Gyps africanus*, a Tawny Eagle and a pair of Secretarybirds. Between Masetleng and Poswane Pans there is a track which goes northwards, to the Ngwatle – Ukwi road. This track passes through a beautiful area of open savanna with tall camelthorn *Acacia erioloba* trees and in this area the only Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills *Tockus leucomelas* and Burchell's Starlings *Lamprotornis australis* of the trip were seen.

Ukwi is one of the largest pans in the Kalahari. It is a large salt pan, with mainly steep sides and largely lacking the open areas of shrub savanna that are found on the margins of the pans at Masetleng and Kaa. There was a lot of water in the pan and in the middle of the pan was a flock of 30 Black-winged Stilts; it is evident from the presence of this species at Ukwi and Kaa that this species moves quickly into the Kalahari when pans receive water after rains. Near the pan, there was little ground vegetation due to overgrazing and it was evident that there were generally fewer birds than at Masetleng, where the veld was in a better condition. Around the edge of the pan, like at the other pans visited, Grey-backed Sparrow-larks, and Stark's Larks were seen in small numbers coming to drink. In the north-east corner of the pan, fringed by steep calcrete banks, was a pool of water which was clearly more attractive to livestock and birds, including many Shaft-tailed Whydahs and Larklike Buntings, coming to drink, than the water of the open pan. There was a dead cow on the sloping side of the pan, near this water, which had attracted a congregation of 36 White-backed Vultures and three Lappet-faced Vultures. Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* were seen in small numbers at this pool; this species was not seen elsewhere on this trip apart from a few birds at Masetleng Pan. Raptors were also attracted to this pool to drink and included a pale Tawny Eagle and two very interesting buzzards, which were not positively identified at the time.

On the road east from Ukwi to Ncaang, when for the second time that day a wheel was being replaced due to a puncture, large numbers of Common Swifts *Apua apus* were noted overhead. At Manong, on the road from Ncaang to Hukuntsi, a dead goat on Manong Pan had attracted 24 White-backed Vultures, 2 Lappet-faced Vultures and a Pied Crow *Corvus albus*. The latter species is largely absent from the western and south-western Kalahari in Botswana and this was only record of the species on the trip.

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Collared Pratincole
Photo: Ian White

Waterbird counts in Ghanzi District

Modiegi Bakane

From 8 to 16 January 2020, staff from the Research and Statistics Office in Ghanzi embarked on waterbird counts in the Ghanzi District. The main aim of the waterbird survey was to provide a checklist and inventory of waterbirds in Ghanzi District. The data can be resourceful in understanding environmental changes, migratory birds and bird population trends in the Ghanzi District.

Western Botswana is an arid area with no permanent surface water and only, exceptionally, after periods of heavy rainfall, do natural pans hold water (Brewster 2017). Birds are excellent indicators for environmental health. Ponds and Pans are a magnet in the Ghanzi region for immigration, feeding and roosting habitats for waterbird fauna. With limited, and scarcity of, natural wetlands in the Ghanzi District, the waterbirds have become increasingly reliant on artificial aquatic habitats in the farms and Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) artificial waterholes for wildlife. Sewage/wastewater treatment ponds are among such man-made wetlands found to be useful for waterbirds in the Ghanzi District. This is because sewage/wastewater treatment plant has a high density of zooplankton therefore, supports filter-feeding waterbirds at the end of treatment plant. They also have higher densities of invertebrates including insects and their larvae; fish, frogs, tadpoles and aquatic plants therefore offering foraging ground for waterfowl.

Methodology and Justification:

This waterfowl survey was conducted in January. This was strategic in order to accommodate migratory birds in and out of the Ghanzi District. Only water birds were recorded and terrestrial birds omitted.

The counts were conducted in the early mornings between 07h00 and 12h00. There were two observers who were recording and driving. Each time a waterbird species was sighted we stopped and recorded each bird to species level using reference books from Pete Hancock & Richard Randall as well as Hugh Chittenden. Global Positioning system (GPS) coordinates were recorded.

Results and Discussion

1. Ghanzi Water Utilities Sewage Ponds (S 21° 42. 590', E 021° 40.119')

The starting point for the Ghanzi Water Utilities Sewage Ponds was S 21° 42. 590', E 021° 40.119' and ended at location S 21° 42.538', E 021° 40.095'. The area covered 1.7 km, which was the total perimeter around seven large sewage ponds.

The Ghanzi Water Utilities Sewage Ponds had a total of 225 birds of 19 species (Table 2). Red-billed Teal dominated (29% of the total count) seconded by Little Grebe (13.3%) while some species only had one bird recorded (e.g. Fulvous Duck).

Table 1. Waterbirds at Ghanzi WUC Sewage Ponds in January 2020

Species		Number
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	30
Striated Heron	<i>Butorites striata</i>	1
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	4
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	1
Hammerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	1
Fulvous Duck	<i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i>	1
Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>	2
Red-billed Teal	<i>Anas erythrorhyncha</i>	66
Hottentot Teal	<i>Anas hottentota</i>	10
Red-knobbed Coot	<i>Fulica cristata</i>	5
African Jacana	<i>Actophilornis Africana</i>	3
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	23
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	8
Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>	23
Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>	4
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleuca</i>	17
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	5
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	9
White-winged Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	12

Sewage ponds provide a crucial habitat and foraging grounds for most waterfowl. This is because there is permanent water in the WUC ponds all year round, therefore WUC ponds serve as a refuge when natural ponds dry out. More importantly these ponds are alive with frogs, terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, zooplankton and aquatic vegetation for birds to forage. Ponds also serve as breeding sites for some species, for example in Ghanzi Water Utilities Sewage Ponds four Little Grebes were nesting in the ponds. The nest is a floating heap of plant material. This is important because most waterbirds species recorded in the Kalahari ecosystem are deemed to be non-breeding migrants (Chris Brewster, pers.comm.). Some species that were not recorded during this survey but often migrate into the areas included African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*. Birds also utilized the ponds as breeding site because ponds were secured by the perimeter fence and therefore there was minimal human disturbance and less predation. Red-knobbed Coot and Little Grebe were previously recorded regionally by Brewster (2015, 2017) at Tsootsha in April 2015 and March 2017.

2. Thakadu Bush Camp Artificial Pond (S21° 44.312' E021° 40.714')

The only waterbirds found and recorded at Thakadu bush camp were Blacksmith Lapwing and Striated Heron. Due to the recent local rains, water birds at Thakadu could have dispersed to other natural ponds as some visitors or migrants were historically recorded but not in this survey. (*Editor:* e.g. Haggett (2005) found an African Crake *Crex egregia* at Thakadu and Grant (2009) noted a Black Crake *Amauornis flavirostris* there. Other waterbirds at Thakadu have included a Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* and Lesser Moorhen *Gallinula angulata* (see Tyler 2011)).

3. The GAT Pond (S21° 43.735' E021° 36.685')

The Gat pond was initially a quarry, but during the excavation and mining process, an aquifer was discovered and water filled up the pond. Currently the pond is used for recreational activities such as swimming. There is good birdlife, but due to human disturbance, most birds fly in for few minutes or land there while in transit. Only one Reed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus* was recorded there in January and this appeared to be a resident. The pond was stocked with some Cichlids mainly tilapia species therefore, the Reed Cormorant forage on fish fingerlings in the pond.

4. The Water Utilities Cooperation Water Treatment plant Pond at New Xade (S22° 08.212' E022° 25.605')

The New Xade Water Treatment Plant is about 109 km from Ghanzi Township. A water treatment plant was constructed in New Xade in June 2013 to provide portable water to New Xade residents.

In the New Xade WUC Water treatment plant pond seven birds were recorded of four species of waterbird, inclusive of a Blacksmith Lapwing chick. (see Table 2).

Table 2. Waterbirds recorded at New Xade Treatment plant pond in January 2020.

Species		Number
Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	2
Blacksmith Lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>	3
Three-banded Plover	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>	1
Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	1

Conclusions and recommendations

There is evidence that sewage ponds, treatment plants and artificial watering ponds play a crucial role in supporting resident and migratory waterbirds in the Ghanzi District as elsewhere (see Tyler 2011). Therefore, detailed regular studies on waterbirds in the Ghanzi District should be conducted including artificial watering holes in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve and all large pans.

Challenges

These include a shortage of manpower, shortage of transport and shortage of camping equipment

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Editor

*Any species of waterbird may turn up in arid areas provided there are pools after rain. I remember the early part of 2000 in the northern part of the CKGR when Fulvous Duck were swimming on flooded tracks and Greater Painted Snipe wading at the edges (see Brewster, C.A. & Tyler, S.J. 2000. Summary of Category B Records. *Babbler* 37: 53-68).*

A few exciting records from the January 2020 waterbird counts

Stephanie J. Tyler

There was good coverage of dams, sewage ponds (S.P.) and pans in south-east Botswana thanks to Chris Brewster, Harold Hester, Ian White and Mike and Daphne Goldsworthy. Much rain during January resulted in many dams and pans full to overflowing. Sadly, some major sites such as Phakalane S.P., Broadhurst S. P. and the adjacent area of Gaborone Game Reserve, Lobatse S.P. and also Jwaneng S.P. were not counted this time.

Thanks also are due to Modiegi Bakane who sent some counts from four sites in the Ghanzi District, an area largely neglected by waterbird counters. (See Modiege's article in this issue of *Babbler*).

The waterbird counts in Botswana began in 1991 and we now have long runs of data for some sites. Unfortunately not all sites are counted in every year but the most-counted site is **Bokaa Dam** with January counts in 29 of the 30 years.

Some 65 species and a total of 5,579 birds were counted in south-east Botswana in January/early February 2020. Top of the list in terms of numbers was **Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiacus* (730), followed by **Red-knobbed Coot** *Fulica cristata* (605) and **Ruff** *Philomachus pugnax* (542). The site with the highest number of waterbirds proved to be **Gaborone Dam** (see note by Chris Brewster below). **Sojwe Pan** came next with over 900 birds including 100 **Little Grebes** *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, 300 **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus minor* and 250 **Pied Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta*.

A pair of **Pygmy Geese** *Nettapus auritus* was seen by Chris Brewster at **Taueshele Dam** near Mosupa on 26 January; this is a rare vagrant to south-east Botswana where the first record was of two birds at Bokaa Dam in October 1994, with two then noted at Phakalane S.P. in January 1997. There have been none since but there are occasional records in Gauteng and adjoining areas of South Africa. Chris suggests that may appear outside of their usual range in very wet periods.

Chris Brewster and Ian White saw a single **Goliath Heron** *Ardea goliath* at **Bokaa Dam** on 9 January and Chris noted one at **Gaborone Dam** on 14 January. Harold Hester saw a single **Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* at **Mosupa Dam** on 19 January.

At **Dihudi Pan** south of Mmathethe eight **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis* were seen on 22 January by Chris Brewster. He also made a very high count of 245 **Cape Teal** *Anas capensis* at **Ramotswa S.P.** on 3 February; the highest number recorded there or indeed anywhere else in Botswana.



Also of note were **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* sightings - five at **Bokaa Dam** seen by Chris and Ian on 9 and 10 January and seven at **Kgoro Pan** on 22 January. This species is uncommon in south-east Botswana.

The sightings of 12 **Maccoa Duck** *Oxyura maccoa* scattered in three sites are given in the report on B Records; so too other records of **Lesser Flamingos** *Phoeniconias minor*.

Stephanie Tyler, AEWA Waterbird Count co-ordinator for Botswana.

A waterbird count at Gaborone Dam

Waterbirds on Gaborone Dam were counted on 13 January 2020. I covered the great majority of the dam, only missing rocky areas which for the most part had few or no birds. It was difficult to judge water levels but the dam was probably 60 - 70% full. In the morning, before the sun appeared at midday it was cloudy with light rain, very pleasant indeed, and rain not heavy enough to interfere with counting. Large numbers of white butterflies were migrating as I undertook the count. There was a large Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* roost on a rocky outcrop near the dam wall, so I probably missed a lot of them which were presumably roosting on the back of the rock (unseen). I did however count 170 of these ibises.

Other abundant species were Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* with 405 noted including a pair with four tiny goslings and another pair with two goslings about two weeks in age, Marabou Storks *Leptoptilos crumeniferus* (121), Blacksmith Lapwings *Vanellus armatus* (101) and White-winged Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* (190). In all 34 large waterbird species were seen with the total number of birds being 1,423 excluding Giant Kingfishers *Megaceryle maxima* and Pied Kingfishers *Ceryle rudis* and Cape Wagtails *Motacilla capensis* and African Pied Wagtails *Motacilla aguimp*.

Of note were a Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*, a Black Egret *Egretta ardesiaca*, five Yellow-billed Storks *Mycteria ibis*, 27 Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus roseus* and 41 Common Ringed Plovers *Charadrius hiaticula*.

Raptors included an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, an African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*, a Lanner *Falco biarmicus*, a Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus* two Steppe Buzzards *Buteo vulpinus*, a Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans* and a Little Sparrowhawk *Accipiter minullus*. Gaborone Dam is much the best place in south-east Botswana for raptors.

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Editor: There were 14 January counts between 1991 and 2010 with the only count higher than in 2020 being January 2003 (1,664 of 33 species) when White-breasted (155) and Reed Cormorants (313) and White-faced Ducks (600) dominated the count, and January 2019 (1,528 of 38 species) with Marabou Stork (376), Egyptian Geese (231) and White-winged Terns (450) the most numerous species.



Cut-Throat Finch
Photo: Ian White

Cloud Cisticola *Cisticola tetrrix* at Kgoro Pan

Chris A. Brewster

I was undertaking a bird population monitoring transect close to Kgoro Pan in the Pitsane grasslands of south-east Botswana on 22 January 2020 when I heard a bird calling repeatedly which I was unable to identify. On finishing the survey I walked round the large pan and as I was moving away from the pan, I heard the call again. I concentrated on locating the bird that was uttering the call. Looking high up, I saw the bird circling above, maybe 30-40 metres above ground, and calling. It was a very small bird and its short black tail, edged with white on tips and sides of tail, could be seen clearly. The bird appeared to be otherwise a pale brownish colour, somewhat similar to a Desert Cisticola, *Cisticola aridulus* but the short black tail was somewhat hanging down, so was visible. The call was a repeated whistle and clicks (not wing snaps) could be heard also as it called. A Desert Cisticola was calling at the same time some distance away (I know the call of Desert Cisticola very well) and the two calls could be heard together. The calls of the two birds were similar, in that they were whistles which were repeated at about the same rate, but otherwise the whistles sounded quite different, being pitched at a different level. I watched and listened until the bird eventually dropped quietly to the ground. The mystery bird was a Cloud Cisticola *Cisticola tetrrix*.

I have undertaken transect monitoring at this location in every November and February since 2010 and there has been no indication of the presence of this species previously. This summer the area has received good rainfall and the vegetation is green and lush, similar to the conditions when the species was recorded by me at Tlharaseleele on 11 January 2006 and nearby Pitsane on 11 March 2006 (Brewster 2007, 2008). The January 2020 record is therefore the third accepted record for Botswana.

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Bird species recorded coming to drink water at Crocodile Pools, Notwane during April 2020

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In April and early May 2020, Botswana was 'locked down' and everybody, apart from essential workers, was confined to home. Being confined to home provided an opportunity for me to have a close look at the birds which frequent the plot in Crocodile Pools, Notwane where I live. The plot is situated in mixed acacia / broad-leaved woodland, though there are some developments on nearby plots which have affected the composition of species in the area. Water is provided in a bird bath in front of the house, surrounded by an acacia thicket and large numbers of birds, of a great variety of species, were observed coming to drink or bathe at the bird bath. No bird food is provided. Some hours were spent every day watching the birds coming to the bird bath. The species composition and the relative abundance of the species coming to drink and bathe are listed and discussed.

The numbers of birds and the variety of bird species coming to drink at the bird bath vary greatly throughout the year and from year to year. More use is typically made of the water by birds in the dry season than in the months when rainfall occurs and when it is hot than when it is cooler. The number of birds coming to drink water is also related to the availability of food in the surrounding area. When there is a greater availability of food resources, then, typically, a greater number of birds come to drink. In a dry season that follows a summer with good rainfall, there is a greater availability of food than in a dry season that follows one with relatively little rainfall. This affects the numbers of birds seen. At the start of the dry season there is always more available food than at the end of the dry season. As food resources deplete through the dry season, so generally does the number of birds coming to drink. Conversely, for a few species, there is probably a lesser need to drink water at the start of the dry season, when their diets supply adequate sustenance, than at the end of the dry season, when it is very dry, and they need to supplement their diet with water. For such species, a larger number of birds may be seen coming to drink at the end of the dry season, compared to the beginning.

The 2019-2020 austral summer was one of normal rainfall in south-eastern Botswana, following two summers with below normal rainfall. In April 2020, at the start of the dry season, the availability of food resources was, therefore, good, resulting in relatively large numbers of birds being present and seen daily coming to water. Unexpectedly, on 28 April 2020, there was a heavy downpour and 61 mm of rainfall was recorded. Following this heavy fall of rain, fewer birds came to visit the water. This account of birds coming to water mainly describes the period before this unexpected heavy rainfall, though a few records for early May are also included.



A total of 46 species were seen coming to drink in April and early May 2020. These species are considered by how numerous they were.

Very common species

The most numerous species coming to drink water was clearly Blue Waxbill *Uraeginthus granatinus*, a species that is dependent on the availability of surface water as it drinks readily (Barnard and Herremans 1997). The large numbers coming to drink indicated that many birds were flying from well outside the plot. Typically this species is most numerous at water at the start of the dry season, as in April 2020, with numbers declining through the dry season as food resources deplete. At the end of the previous dry season, in October 2019, that followed a summer with drought conditions, it had almost disappeared from the area as it also did in 2007 (Brewster, 2009).

Two other species, Southern Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer diffusus* and Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* were also very common. That Southern Grey-headed Sparrow was very common was unexpected, as it had not previously been regarded as so common in the area. Brewster (2014) regarded it as fairly common at Crocodile Pools and usually only small numbers of this species are to be found in the area. The high numbers of this species recorded in April 2020, indicate that it possibly undertakes movements and that there had been an influx. Southern Masked Weaver is a common breeding species in summer at Crocodile Pools, although the numbers coming to water in April 2020, were far greater than were present then than when breeding. It was apparent that large numbers were coming to drink from well outside the plot. After the heavy rain on 28 April 2020, the large majority of these Southern Masked Weavers dispersed and many fewer birds were then seen coming to drink. This species disperses from where it breeds after breeding. It is generally less numerous in the dry season than in the summer breeding season and many birds vacate south-eastern Botswana entirely, particularly in dry years (Craig 1997).

Common species

Cape Turtle Dove *Streptopelia capicola*, Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* and Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos* were all observed to be common at water. Of the three dove species, Cape Turtle Dove was generally the least numerous at water, despite being the most common dove species in the area. Evidently only a small proportion of the Cape Turtle Doves in the area were coming to drink and it was apparently less dependent on water during April 2020, than the other two species. Of these three common dove species, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove appeared to be the most water dependent, with single birds coming to drink throughout the day.

Grey Go-away-bird *Corythaixoides concolor*, and African Red-eyed Bulbul *Pyconotos nigricans* were both common at water. Both of these species appeared to be travelling some distance, from well outside the plot, to drink. Grey Go-away-bird is dependent on the availability of water to drink (Johnson 1997). Unlike Grey Go-away-bird, which is confined, in Botswana, to the eastern and northern parts of the country, African Red-eyed Bulbul has an extensive distribution in Botswana and is therefore less dependent on the availability of water.

However, there is a movement of this species out of drier areas of the country at the start of the dry season, and it appears to become more dependent on water in the dry season than in summer. It is more numerous at Crocodile Pools in the dry season than in summer (Brewster 2014).

Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonosticta rhodopareia* and Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba* were both common at water. Jameson's Firefinch requires the availability of water to drink, together with long grass which provides cover and sufficient grass seed as food (Nuttall 1997). The plot provides both water and long grass so it is favoured by this species, though birds were clearly also coming to drink from well outside the plot. While common in April 2020, numbers of this species recorded at Crocodile Pools vary greatly. In some years, such as in 2019, due to the depletion of food resources, it can disappear entirely from the late dry season until early summer, when grass cover starts to develop again (Brewster 2014). Green-winged Pytilia was common in April 2020. The numbers recorded at Crocodile Pools, however, are variable and, while it is common in some years, it is also often unrecorded for long periods, particularly in the late dry season into early summer, in other years. While it has different habitat requirements to Jameson's Firefinch, its numbers appear to fluctuate in a similar pattern. Like Jameson's Firefinch, Green-winged Pytilia requires, at least in the dry season, the availability of water (Barnard and Herremans 1997)

Cape Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis nitens* was recorded fairly commonly at water but was less numerous than other species considered as common and appeared to be present in the area in lower numbers than the other species. It is likely that it was flying some distance from outside the plot to drink.

Resident species that regularly utilised water

Species considered here were resident on the plot or nearby. A resident pair of Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata* was seen to drink daily. A resident pair of Brown-hooded Kingfisher *Halcyon albiventris* was seen drinking and bathing regularly throughout the day. Acacia Barbet *Tricholaema leucomelas*, probably just one resident pair, was regularly seen coming to drink. Crested Barbet *Trachyphonus vaillantii*, also probably just one resident pair, was seen daily coming to drink water. Two adult and one immature Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* came to drink regularly; this species is a breeding resident on the plot. A pair of Southern Black Tit *Parus niger* also regularly came to drink. A group of six Arrow-marked Babblers *Turdoides jardeneii*, resident in the area, regularly came to drink and bathe. A pair of Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*, resident on a neighbouring plot, came to drink daily, usually around midday. A pair of Kurrichane Thrushes *Turdus libonyanus*, resident in the vicinity of the water, regularly came to drink and bathe. A White-browed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys* was seen regularly coming to drink in the morning; this species occurs at high density in the area, but it was unexpected that this species would be regularly utilising the water.

Species seen coming to drink water infrequently or rarely

Red-faced Mousebirds *Urocolius indicus* are often very common at Crocodile Pools though numbers vary (Brewster 2014). In April 2020 it was relatively less numerous and was not recorded daily. During some periods, particularly in the dry season, Red-faced Mousebird is recorded commonly coming to drink water at Crocodile Pools, but during April 2020 it was not recorded coming to drink, though it was seen coming on a few occasions to drink at the start of May 2020. Presumably in April 2020 its diet was adequate and it did not need to supplement it with water. A single flock of Speckled Mousebird *Colius striatus*, a rare visitor to the area, was also seen coming to drink water at the start of May.

A male Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator* was seen drinking on three occasions. Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor* and Greater Honeyguide are both uncommon residents at Crocodile Pools (Brewster 2014), and most records are of birds coming to drink. It was, however, surprising that, despite the amount of time that was spent observing the bird bath, there were only three sightings of Greater Honeyguide, all probably involving the same bird, and none of Lesser Honeyguide.

Violet-backed Starlings *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* were seen drinking on a few occasions until 10 April but not subsequently. Violet-backed Starling is a migratory species and it is presumed to have vacated the area after this date. A Southern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina* was seen on one occasion to come and drink; this species is a fairly common resident in the area (Brewster 2014) but is only rarely seen to drink water. There is a resident pair of White-throated Robin-chat *Cossypha hunderalis* in the vicinity of the bird bath, but only on one occasion was a single bird seen to drink.

While numerous for most of the year, sunbirds are uncommon at Crocodile Pools from February to June, due to the lack of flowering plants. During these months White-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris talatala*, often the only sunbird species present in the area, is uncommon, compared to other times of the year when it is generally very common. White-bellied Sunbirds were occasionally seen coming to drink and on one occasion a Marico Sunbird *Cinnyris mariquensis* was seen, it also came to drink.

Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow *Gymnoris superciliaris* is rare at Crocodile Pools, though with records scattered throughout the year, it is presumed to be resident. There were three sightings of birds coming to drink water, giving good views, showing their yellow throat spot.

Red-billed Buffalo Weaver *Bubalornis niger* was previously considered to be a rare visitor at Crocodile Pools (Brewster 2014) but recently it has become established as a fairly common resident, breeding on electricity pylons. After breeding it disperses and becomes less evident and there was only one record of birds coming to drink. White-browed Sparrow-Weaver *Plocepasser mahali*, which breeds on an adjacent plot, was seen coming to drink on two occasions.

Southern Masked Weavers as previously noted commonly came to drink in large numbers. Amongst these weavers other weaver species were occasionally noticed. Lesser Masked Weavers *Ploceus intermedius*, in non-breeding plumage, were occasionally noted amongst them, positively identified by their blue-grey leg colouration. There were also a few sightings of Village Weaver *Ploceus cucullatus* in non-breeding plumage, identified by their heavier bill, compared to Southern Masked Weaver, and red eye. About three pairs of Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* breed in summer on the plot, but after the last young had fledged at the end of March 2020, the birds dispersed, as they do every year, before returning in the late dry season. Nevertheless, single Red-headed Weavers were occasionally seen coming to drink.

Red-billed Queleas *Quelea quelea* were often seen flying over the plot in small flocks. However, only occasionally were birds seen coming to drink.

Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata*, an unobtrusive species, is rare at Crocodile Pools and has been unrecorded there since 2014 when it bred (Brewster 2015). There were two records of birds coming to drink, one being a group of four and the other being a single male. Red-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta senegala* is an uncommon and irregular visitor at Crocodile Pools (Brewster 2014). There were a few records of this species, which is dependent on water, coming to drink. Violet-eared Waxbill *Uraeginthus granatinus* is uncommon at Crocodile Pools, with few records in recent years, so it was a surprise to see a male coming to drink to two occasions. There were a few records of Black-faced Waxbill *Estrilda erythronotos* coming to drink; this species is an uncommon and sporadic visitor at Crocodile Pools (Brewster 2014). There was a single record of a breeding male Purple Indigobird *Vidua purpurascens* coming to drink. Purple Indigobird is a rare summer visitor at Crocodile Pools (Brewster 2014) and all previous records have been of singing males. It was unrecorded in the previous two dry summers, so this record was a pleasant surprise. There was also a single record of a breeding male Long-tailed Paradise Whydah *Vidua paradisaea* coming to drink; this species is an uncommon summer visitor (Brewster 2014), more evident in wet summers than in dry summers.

Yellow-fronted Canary *Crithagra mozambica* is a common resident at Crocodile Pools though numbers decline in the dry season (Brewster 2014). There were only a few records of birds coming to drink, which was unexpected for a species regarded as common and often seen drinking water. Eventually it became apparent that it was indeed common as expected, but was not generally utilising the water, probably because its diet at this time of year was adequate and it not need to supplement it with water. There was a single record of a pair of Yellow Canary *Crithagra flaviventris* coming to drink. This record was presumably of a pair wandering from nearby cultivated lands, where it is often seen; it is unexpected in the woodland habitat of Crocodile Pools. There was a single record of Streaky-headed Seedeater *Crithagra gularis* coming to drink. This record was very surprising as this species was previously unrecorded at Crocodile Pools.

Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza flaviventris* was only seen coming to drink on one occasion though it was present in the area in small numbers. This species is a fairly common resident at Crocodile Pools, though it undertakes movements and is generally less numerous in winter, particularly after dry summers (Brewster 2014). At times, particularly in the dry season, it can be seen regularly coming to drink, but presumably, in April 2020, its diet was adequate and it did not need to supplement it with water.

Discussion

Some of the species which were most numerous at water, and appear the most dependent on water, such as Grey Go-away-bird, Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, Blue Waxbill, Green-winged Pytilia and Jameson's Firefinch, are confined, in Botswana, to the east and north of the country, where surface water is generally available, and are absent from the Kalahari. Species such as Laughing Dove, African Red-eyed Bulbul and Southern Masked Weaver, that were also common at water, have an extensive distribution in Botswana, including the Kalahari. Such species largely retreat from the Kalahari in the dry season, when they become more dependent on water. Southern Grey-headed Sparrow, which was very common, does not fall into either category and is generally considered to be sedentary, but the unexpectedly large numbers recorded indicate that it may undertake movements.

Most of the species that were common or very common are primarily or partially seed-eaters. Notable exceptions are Grey Go-way-bird and African Red-eyed Bulbul which feed primarily on fruits, leaves, shoots and petals.

Ten species were listed as resident species that regularly utilised water. All these species, with the possible exception of Common Myna, are presumably not dependent on water, as they are often found far from water and are not seen flying to water. They were presumably just utilising water because it was available. They are likely also to be territorial and unlikely to tolerate other birds of the same species making use of their territories.

A relatively large number of species were seen to come to drink infrequently. Some of these species, such as Yellow-throated Bush Sparrow, Cut-throat Finch, Long-tailed Paradise Whydah and Streaky-headed Seedeater, though expected to come to drink, are uncommon or rare in the area. A few species, such as Red-faced Mousebird, Yellow-fronted Canary and Golden-breasted Bunting, were only occasionally seen drinking water, but seem likely to make a greater use of the water later in the dry season.

In conclusion, a great variety of species and large numbers of birds were observed in April 2020 coming to drink water at Crocodile Pools. Clearly the provision of water was beneficial to the birds. For anyone with an interest in birds, it was evidence, if any is needed, that the regular provision of water is, in Botswana, probably the easiest way to attract and observe birds.

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Apparent influx of Black-chested Snake Eagles *Circaetus pectoralis* in south-eastern Botswana in January 2020

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Penry (1994) considered Black-chested Snake Eagle *Circaetus pectoralis* to be a fairly common to common resident in all regions of Botswana, including south-eastern Botswana. Tyler and Borello (1998) considered it to be frequent in the Gaborone area. In recent years, however, there has been a change of status of this species in south-eastern Botswana and it has become less common as have most large raptor species. The reasons for these declines are not fully understood.

At Crocodile Pools, Notwane, south of Gaborone, the number of records of Black-chested Snake Eagles has reduced in recent years. In 2006 and 2007 it was regularly recorded at Crocodile Pools with records in nearly all months. Thereafter it was recorded progressively less frequently and it has not been recorded at all there since 2016. The decline in sightings at Crocodile Pools reflects the decline in sightings in south-eastern Botswana over the same period.

Ten years ago there were frequent sightings of Black-chested Snake Eagle in south-eastern Botswana and its status appeared to be unchanged from the status in the 1990s as indicated by Tyler and Borello (1998). By 2019 it was only being recorded irregularly. For example, there were only three records of mine for 2019 for south-eastern Botswana, despite regular visits, once or twice per week, to many different areas. These records are one near Logogwe Pan (2425C3) on 17 Jan 2019, one near Mogojogojo (2525A4) on 20 and 25 Mar 2019 and one at Sita Pan (2524B1) on 5 Nov 2019.

In late January 2020, in contrast to the relative lack of records in 2019, there were five records. These records are one near Mogonye in 2425D3 on 17 Jan 2020, two at Taueshele Dam (2425C3) on 26 Jan 2020, two at Maologane Pan (2425C3) on 26 Jan 2020, one at Tswaing Pans (2524B2) on 26 Jan 2020 and one at Sita Pan on 28 Jan 2020. While Taueshele Dam and Maologane Dam are in close proximity and the same birds could have been recorded at both localities, the different plumages of the birds seen indicated that at least three birds were involved in the sightings at these two localities. Mogonye has been visited regularly in recent years and this is the first record of the species there.

The number of sightings in January 2020 was unusual, considering how irregularly the species has been sighted in recent years. Penry (1994) considered it to be resident in Botswana. Boshoff (1997), however, stated that the species may undertake some movements in southern Africa, moving in mid-summer, from the north-east of the sub-region, e.g. Zimbabwe, and possibly also from further north, to more arid areas to the south-west. These movements may differ in wet and dry cycles. They are probably a result of the species avoiding areas of long grass which develop in areas with high rainfall in summer and which makes hunting for snakes more difficult, in preference for drier areas with little grass cover.



There was average to above average rainfall in south-eastern Botswana from November 2019 to January 2020. It seems likely that the unusual numbers of Black-breasted Snake Eagles that were seen in late January 2020 were part of an influx of the species from areas further east or north where there had been good rainfall, encouraging the growth of long grass.

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Black-chested Snake Eagle
Photo: Ian White

Red list of Birds in Botswana

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) periodically assesses the status of all species in the world. BirdLife International helps the IUCN assess all the species of birds. The most recent assessment from 2016 to 2019 places a number of new species in one of the most threatened categories. Africa fares better than many other countries in terms of the numbers of threatened species but ideally no species should be under threat.

A critically endangered species is one whose numbers have decreased or will do so by 80% within three generations and are hence facing a very high risk of **Extinction in the wild**.

Critically Endangered is the most alarming status. Worryingly three vultures found in Botswana are now on the Critically Endangered list – **Hooded Vulture** *Necrosyrtes monachus*, **White-backed Vulture** *Gyps africanus* and **White-headed Vulture** *Trigonoceps occipitalis*. These are included for reasons which will be obvious to people in Botswana – notably the large number of vulture deaths from eating carrion from poisoned carcasses and from lead poisoning from ingesting spent hunters' ammunition as well as mortality due to the use of vulture parts in traditional medicine and due to collisions with power lines and other structures.

An Endangered species is one whose population is at risk because it has few individuals or is threatened by environmental and predation parameters. These species face a high risk of Extinction in the wild. In Botswana the list of Endangered Species includes three more vultures: **Cape Vulture** *Gyps coprotheres*, **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotos* and the rare **Egyptian Vulture**. It also includes **Black Harrier** *Circus macrourus* and **Ludwig's Bustard** *Neotis ludwigi* which are rare in Botswana and usually only seen in the Nossob Valley, and **Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*, a Palearctic migrant raptor.

Other **Endangered Species** are the **Grey Crowned Crane** *Balearica regulorum* which is uncommon in Botswana, mainly occurring in the Makgadikgadi Pans, and **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis*. The latter is only a rare Palearctic migrant to southern Africa. Its real threats lie in its breeding grounds in marshes in Iraq and northern Israel.

Vulnerable species are those which are likely to become Endangered in the future unless circumstances threatening their survival and reproduction improve.

In Botswana one duck, the **Maccoa Duck** *Oxyura maccoa* is on the Vulnerable list although its numbers in this country appear to be stable and its problems mainly lie in other parts of its range. The **Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceigula* which has most of its world population in the Okavango Delta is also listed as **Vulnerable** because of its small and possibly declining population.

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*, a very rare visitor to Botswana is also on the Vulnerable list as too **Secretarybird** *Sagittarius serpentarius*, **Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus* and **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* as well as **Wattled Crane** *Grus carunculatus*, **Blue Crane** *Anthropoides paradisea* and **Southern Ground Hornbill** *Bucorvus leadbeateri*. The **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*, a rare Palearctic visitor to the country is rapidly declining in Europe and is now listed as **Vulnerable** too.

The **Near-threatened category** includes species likely to be threatened in the near future.

In Botswana there are many species on this Near-threatened list: **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus minor* and **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni*, a Palearctic migrant sometimes occurring in large numbers especially in northern Botswana.

Some other waders are now on this list including **Curlew Sandpiper** *Calidris ferruginea*, once a common Palearctic migrant at wetlands throughout Botswana as well as four that are rare in Botswana – **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media*, **Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* and **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa*, both up-listed from Least Concern and **Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* which is suffering large declines in Europe. Another wader, the **Chestnut-banded Plover** *Charadrius pallidus* of the Makgadikgadi Pans, is also considered Near-threatened. So too **Denham's Bustard** *Neotis denhami* and **Kori Bustard** *Ardeotis kori*, three raptors - **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco verspertinus*, **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* and **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* (the latter on this list for the first time), **African Skimmer** *Rhynchops flavirostris* and **Mountain Pipit** *Anthus hoeschi*.

The **Least Concern category** includes all those not at present believed to be under threat.

This category comprises most of the species of bird found in Botswana. It now includes amongst many others: Grey-headed Parrot *Poicephalus fuscicollis*, European Roller *Coracias garrulus* down-graded from Near-threatened, African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus*, Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*, Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* also down-graded, Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*, Black Coucal *Centropus grillii*, Melodious Lark *Mirafra cheniana* and Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana*.

Priorities of BirdLife Botswana

Clearly a major priority is trying to minimise the threats that are facing all five species of vulture and BLB is already very active in this respect. The three resident eagles (Martial, Tawny and Bateleur) on the Red List are as vultures, threatened by eating poisoned carcasses and possibly ingesting lead from ammunition.

We can do little for the Palearctic migrants whether Steppe Eagles and Red-necked Falcons or the various waders because their problems are largely on their breeding grounds or on migration to southern Africa. For most of the others whether cranes, Slaty Egret, bustards, Southern Ground Hornbill, Lesser Flamingo, African Skimmers or Chestnut-banded Plovers we must continue to monitor their numbers and their breeding sites and colonies and try to ensure threats are minimised – whether from disturbance, collision with pylons and other transmission lines, hunting and possibly from fires that could destroy reed-beds for Slaty Egrets and old trees with nest holes for Southern Ground Hornbills. Monitoring is crucial to demonstrate whether the bird populations are stable or declining and everyone can play a part by submitting sightings and breeding records of all the listed species.

Stephanie J. Tyler,
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Southern Ground-Hornbill
Photo: Ian White

Report from the Records Subcommittee: Category A Records

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>Accipter tachiro</i>	2228B 2	17- 11.19- 23.11.1 9	One adult along Motloutse River near Solomon's Wall (R. Hawkins).
Augur Buzzard <i>Buteo Augur</i>	1824C 1	15.10.1 9	One adult photographed at Savute (C. Sagell). Fourth accepted record for Botswana.
Baillon's Crake <i>Porzana pusilla</i>	2027D 3	7.10.19	One adult photographed at Tantabane Ranch, near Tsamaya (S. James).
Eastern Nicator <i>Nicator gularis</i>	1725C 3	28.1.19- 11.2.19	Pair at Mowana Lodge, Kasane (S. James). Second accepted record for Botswana.
Cloud Cisticola <i>Cisticola Cisticola textrix</i>	2525A 4	22.1.20	One at Kgoro Pan (C.A.Brewster). Third accepted record for Botswana.
Northern Grey-headed Sparrow <i>Passer griseus</i>	2026A 1	25.10.1 9	One photographed at Nata (R. Geyser). Third accepted record away from Chobe District.
Red-throated Twinspot <i>Hypargos niveoguttatus</i>	1725C 3	26.10.1 9- 9.11.19	Pair of adults photographed at Kasane (R. Vivier, L. Francey, M. Bakane). First accepted record for Botswana.

The species below have been removed from the Category A list to the Category B list because a total of ten or more records have been accepted by the Records Subcommittee:

African Goshawk *Accipter tachiro*
Corn Crake *Crex crex*

Chris A. Brewster
Records Subcommittee, BirdLife Botswana



Summary of Category B Records

Chris A. Brewster & Stephanie J. Tyler

Records are for the period from April 2019 to April 2020.
CKGR = Central Kalahari Game Reserve.

African Black Duck *Anas sparsa*

A pair was seen along Molopye River near Mogobane on 15 Nov 2019 and pair at Bathoen Dam, Kanye on 19 Jan 2020 (IW, HH).

Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa*

Eight were seen at Sojwe Pan on 2 Jan 2020 and on 27 Mar, there was a total of 24 there. Three males were seen at Dihudi Pan south of Mmathethe in south-east Botswana on 22 Jan and a male was seen at Taueshele Dam, west of Mosupa on 26 Jan (CAB).

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

At Dihudi Pan south of Mmathethe eight were seen on 22 Jan and on 21 Mar an adult and a juvenile were there. At Sojwe Pan there were four on 26 March (CAB, IW).

Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*

Circa 60 at Thagale Dam on 30 Nov 2019 and ca.300 at Sojwe Pan, with 20 Greater Flamingos *P. ruber*, on 2 Jan 2020; a single at Tswaiing Pans on 26 Jan, two at Ramotswa S.P on 3 Feb and three at Sojwe Pan, with 90 Greater Flamingos, on 24 March (CAB).

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

One was at Mogobane Dam on 17 Oct 2019 (IW), one on the lower Motloutse River in 2228B2 on 8 Dec and two were seen over Gaborone West on 5 April 2020 (IW, DM).

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

Two were at Talana (2228B2) on 8 Dec 2019 (Duncan Mackenzie). Singles were seen south of Mababe Village and along Khwai River in mid-December Dec (JRI). There were three sightings in Kwedi Concession, in 1822D4, from 16 to 20 Jan 2020 (MB).

White-backed Night Heron *Gorsachius leuconotos*

Two were seen along Limpopo River south of Martin's Drift in 2327B2 on 25-26 Oct 2019 (BLB).

Yellow-billed Egret *Egretta intermedia*

One was at Murutsha (1922C2) on 19 Nov 2019 and one was seen along Khwai River on 17 Dec 2019 (WvS, JR).

Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula*

Singles were seen at Murutsha (1923C2) on 20 Nov 2019 and along Khwai River on 17 Dec (WvS, JR). There were estimated totals of ten at Linyanti, in 1823D1 and 1823B4, from 11 to 16 Jan 2020 and 30 in Kwedi Concession, in 1922B2, 1822D4 and 1823C3, from 16 to 21 Jan 2020 (MB).

Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius*

One was seen at Kaa Pan (2420B3) on 11 Dec 2019 and there was a pair at Phoswane Pan (2320D2) on 13 Dec (CAB). One was seen in Kwedi Concession in 1822D4 on 21 Jan 2020 (MB).

Western Osprey *Pandion haliaeetus*

Singles were seen at Shakawe on 28 Oct 2019 and 14 Dec, at Murutsha (1923C2) on 19 Nov, along Khwai River on 19 Dec, at Gaborone Dam on 13 Jan 2020, at Zibadianja Lagoon, Linyanti on 15 Jan and in Kwedi Concession, in 1822D4, from 16-18 Jan (MC, JC, WvS, JR, CAB, MB).

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Singles were seen at Shakawe on 29 Oct 2019 and at Maun on 18 Dec (MC, LC per TH).

African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*

One was found dehydrated at Drotzky's Cabins, Shakawe on 28 Oct 2019 and released the next day (MC).

Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*

One was seen at Murutsha (1923C2) on 20 Nov 2019 and an estimated 12 were seen at Linyanti in 1823B3/4 from 10 to 16 Jan 2020 (WvS, MB).

White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*

Most records are of single birds or small groups and it is evident that this species has become less numerous in recent years.

No. Birds	Date	Location	Obs.
95	7 Oct 2019	Tantabane Ranch, 47 km north of Francistown	SJ
5	26 Oct	South of Martin's Drift in 2327B2	BLB
1	2 Nov	Near Mogobane	BLB
1	11 Nov	Between Mochudi and Olifant's Drift in 2426A4	CAB
15	19 Nov	Good Hope (2525A4)	CAB
1	19 Nov	Gathwane (2525B3)	CAB
Quite numerous	19-21 Nov	Murutsha (1923C2)	WvS
20 – 30	16-25	Regularly seen at Mashatu G.R.	RH

No. Birds	Date	Location	Obs.
3	26 Nov	North of Malotwana 2426A1	CAB
40	3 Dec	At eland kill in Mashatu G.R.	DM
1	4 Dec	Bobonong	DM
9	9 Dec	Between Sekoma and Jwaneng	CAB
40	9 Dec	At dead donkey near Morwamosu in 2423A1	CAB
1	10 Dec	7 km south of Kang	CAB
3	10 Dec	Between Zutshwa and Kaa in 2420B4	CAB
1	11 Dec	Near Sekoma	JR
14	11 Dec	At road kill near Mabutsane in 2423B3	JR
36	12 Dec	At road kill near Lone Tree in 2322A2	JR
3	13 Dec	Phoswane Pan (2320D2)	CAB
36	13 Dec	At dead cow at Ukwi (2320D1)	CAB
35	13 Dec	At carcass near Mabutsane in 2423B3	IG
24	14 Dec	At dead cow at Manong Pan (2321D1)	CAB
1	16 Dec	South of Mababe	JR
Several	17 Dec	Along Khwai River	JR
1	21 Dec	Near Kang, in 2322D1	JR
20+	22-24 Dec	Jao Reserve	MB
3	27 Dec	Between Jwaneng and Sekoma	WP
8	2 Jan 2020	Moiyabana (2226C2)	CAB
1	4 Jan	Gamoleele Dam area	MGG, DG
2	7 Jan	Near Lone Tree in 2322A4	IG
Estimated 14 In total	10-16 Jan	Linyanti	MB
Estimated 21 In total	16-21 Jan	Kwedi Concession (1922B2/1923A1/1823C3/1822D4)	MB
3	19 Jan	Bathoen Dam	HH
17	22 Jan	Good Hope	CAB
5	1 Feb	Mosopa	BLB
14	14 Mar	Near Dithopo in 2325B1	IW
	April 2020	Single birds regularly seen flying over Gaborone West	IW

Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres*

Two birds, one of which was a sub-adult, were seen at Mashatu G.R. from 21 to 25 Nov 2019. Single birds were regularly noted over Gaborone West in April 2020 (IW).

White-headed Vulture *Aegypius occipitalis*

No. birds	Date	Location	Obs.
Pair	16 April 2019	Kwetsani Camp (1922B3)	JP
One	7 Oct	Tantabane Ranch, 47 km north of Francistown	SJ
Pair	8 Oct	Kwetsani Camp	JP
Adult male	17 Dec	Khwai River	JR
2 (adult, imm)	17-18 Jan	Kwedi Concession (1923A1/1823C3)	MB

Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos*

No. birds	Date	Location	Obs.
8	7 Oct 2019	Tantabane Ranch, 47 km north of Francistown	SJ
2	19 Nov	Gathwane (2525B3)	CAB
1	19 Nov	Murutsha (1923C2)	WvS
2	21-25 Nov	Mashatu G.R.	RH
2	3 Dec	At eland kill at Mashatu G.R.	DM
2	11 Dec	Near Kang in 23422D1	JR
2	11 Dec	Kaa Pan (2420B3)	CAB
5	13 Dec	Phoswane Pan (2320D2)	CAB
3	13 Dec	At dead cow at Ukwi (2320D1)	CAB
1	13 Dec	At carcass near Mabutsane in 2423B3	IG
2	14 Dec	At dead cow at Manong Pan (2321D1)	CAB
1	22 Dec	Jao Reserve	MB
2	2 Jan 2020	Near Moiyabana (2226C2)	CAB
2	18 Jan	Kwedi Concession (1922B2)	MB
1	28 Jan	Gasita	CAB
4	14-16 Mar	Drinking and bathing at Kalahari Plains Camp in northern CKGR (2124A3)	HP
2	14, 27 Mar	North of Sojwe in 2325B1	IW, CAB
2	15, 25 April	Over Gaborone West	IW

Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*

No. birds	Date	Location	Obs.
Pair adults + one imm	20 Oct 2019	Seen regularly at Kwetsani Camp (1922B3)	JP
1 adult	28 Oct 2019	Shakawe	MC
1 imm	29 Oct 2019	Shakawe	MC
Regularly seen	19-21 Nov	Murutsha (1923C2)	WVS
1 adult	11 Dec	Near Mabutsane in 2423A4	JR
1	11 Dec	Kaa Pan (2420B3)	CAB
1	12 Dec	Between Kaa and Zutshwa in 2420B2	CAB
15	13-14 Dec	At Masetheng Pan (2320D2) with 10 Tawny Eagles	CAB
1 imm	17 Dec	Along Khwai River	JR
1 adult	21 Dec	Jao Reserve	MB
1 imm	24 Dec	Jao Reserve	MB
Estimated total of 18	10-16 Jan 2020	Linyanti	MB
Estimated total of 25	16-21 Jan	Kwedi Concession (1822D4/1922B2/1923A1)	MB
1 imm	8 Feb	Northern CKGR in 2123B4	RT
1 adult	10 Feb	Northern CKGR in 2123B4	RT
1	14 Mar	Near Dithopo in 2325B1	BLB
1	28 Mar	Near Dithopo in 2325B1	CAB

Bat Hawk *Macheiramphus alcinus*

Singles were seen in Maun on 22 Sept (MM per MBF), at Kwetsani Camp (1922B3) on 5 Oct 2019 (JP) and in Maun on 8 March (GW per MBF).

Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*

No. Birds	Date	Location	Observer
1	8 Jun 2019	Kwetsani Camp (1922B3)	JP
1	22 Sept	Khumaga	PR (per MBF)
1	11 Dec	Kaa (2420B3)	CAB
1	2 Jan 2020	Between Sekoma and Jwaneng	IW
1	11 Jan	Linyanti	MB

Long-crested Eagle *Lophaetus occipitalis*

One was seen at Chobe Safari Lodge on 15 Aug 2019 (WvS); one was at Xaro Lodge, near Shakawe in 1821B4 on 25 Feb 2020 (MC).

Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina*

One was seen at Mashatu G.R., 21-25 Nov 2019 (RH). One was at Thagale Dam on 30 Nov (CAB). Several were along Khwai River from 16 – 20 Dec and three or four south of Mababe on 20 Dec (JR). One was in Jao Reserve on 21 Dec (MB). Three were seen at Pandametenga on 25 Dec (IW). An estimated 25 were seen in Linyanti from 10 to 16 Jan 2020 and 10 in Kwedi Concession (1822D4/1922B2/1823C3) from 16 to 20 Jan (MB).

Ayre's Hawk Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresii*

There were several records at Maun: one on 22 Sept 2019, one on 5 Jan 2020, when seen eating an African Green Pigeon *Treron cavus*, two on 2 April, one of 7 April and two sub-adults on 19 April (MM, GW, per MBF). One was seen in Gaborone West on 26 Feb (IW).

Steppe Eagle *Aquila nepalensis*

One sub-adult was seen at Mashatu G.R. on 13 Dec 2019 (DM). One was in Jao Reserve on 24 Dec (MB). Five were seen at Pandamatenga on 25 Dec (IW).

African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus*

At Shakawe, there was one on 28 Oct 2019, two on 14 Dec, and two on 25 Feb 2020 (MC, JC). Elsewhere singles were seen at Ncamasere (1822C1) on 7 Oct 2019, at Murutsha (1923C) on 21 Nov, at Linyanti in 1823D1 on 15 Jan 2020 and at Kwedi Concession in 1822D4 on 19 Jan (WvS, MB).

Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*

At Mashatu G.R. two adults seen daily and a single bird on one occasion from 16 to 25 Nov 2019 and many were seen from 3 to 14 Dec (RH, DM). One was seen at Nata Sanctuary on 5 Dec (JC). There was one near Morwamosu in 2423A1 on 9 Dec 2019, one at Kaa (2420B2) on 12 Dec, two at Kaa Pan (2420B3) on 12 Dec and two near Masetlheng Pan on 13 Dec (CAB). One was along Savuti Channel at Linyanti in mid-January 2020 (MB). Two singles were seen in northern CKGR in 2123B4 on 8 and 10 Feb (RT).

Red-chested Flufftail *sarothrura rufa*

One heard calling at Kwedi Concession in 1922B2 on 18 Jan 2020 (MB).

African Crane *Creccopsis egregia*

One was seen at Khwai Airstrip on 18 Dec 2019 and there was one at Jao Reserve, 23 Dec (JR, MB). Three were seen in Linyanti, in 1823D1 from 13 to 16 Jan 2020 and two in Kwedi Concession, in 1822D4, from 16 to 20 Jan (MB).

Wattled Crane *Crus carunculatus*

In the Jao Reserve, two pairs were regularly seen in October 2019, there was a loose flock of ten on 22 Dec and there were two on 29 Feb 2020 (JP, MB, RT). Three were seen near Shakawe on 14 Dec (JC). There was a family part of two adults, with juveniles at Khwai River, 17 Dec (JR). Six were seen in Linyanti, in 1823B4, on 11 Jan 2020 and 10 in Kwedi Concession, in 1822D4 and 1823C3, from 16 to 20 Jan (MB).

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

There were singles at Murutsha (1923C2) on 21 Nov 2019 and at Nata Sanctuary on 25 Nov (WvS). On 15 Dec, singles were seen at Gaborone Dam and at Shakawe (IW, per TH).

Chestnut-banded Plover *Charadrius pallidus*

One was at Ramotswa S.P. on 22 Jan 2020 (HH).

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*

Globally this species is now considered vulnerable because of declining numbers.

At Bokaa Dam, where often common, there were only three, due to high water levels, on 10 Jan 2020. Elsewhere, there were 14 at Thagale Dam on 10 Jan, four at Gaborone Dam on 13 Jan, two at Ramotswa S.P. on 3 Feb and 18 at Sojwe Pan from 26 to 28 Mar (CAB).

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

One was seen at Gaborone Dam on 12 Oct 2019 (IW).

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Seven were seen on sand bars on Okavango River near Shakawe on 29 Oct 2019 (MC).

Three-banded Courser *Rhinoptilus cinctus*

Two birds were heard calling at Mashatu G.R. in 2228B2, from 21 to 25 Nov 2019 and pair was seen there on 13 Dec (RH, DM).

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*

Two were seen at Thagale Dam on 30 Nov 2019 and there two at Talana (2228B2) on 2 Dec (CAB, DM). There were 45 at Sojwe Pan on 2 Jan 2020 (CAB).

African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris*

There was a breeding pair at nest on a sandbank near Ncamasere in 1822C1, on 7 Oct 2019 (WvS). There were ca. 50, in two groups, near Shakawe on 28 Oct 2019 (MC). One was at Murutsha (1923C2) on 21 Nov (WvS). One was seen at Bokaa Dam on 9 Jan 2020 (CAB). One was along Savuti Channel at Linyanti on 14 Jan (MB).

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*

Five were seen at Gaborone Dam on 1 March (BLB).

Black Coucal *Centropus grillii*

Two were seen in damp area with long grass in Kwedi Concession, in 1822D4, 18 Jan 2020 (MB).

Thick-billed Cuckoo *Pachyococyx audeberti*

One was seen and heard calling at Kwedi Concession in 1822D4 on 20 Jan 2020 (MB).

African Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus*

Heard calling at Island Safari Camp, Maun, 12-16 Dec 2019 (JR). One was heard calling in Maun on 11 Jan and subsequently there by several observers up to 25 Mar (MM, AF LC, DE per MBF).

European Roller *Coracias garrulus*

Two were seen in Jao Reserve on 24 Dec 2019 (MB). One was south of Boatlaname in 2325D1 on 15 Mar 2020 (IW) and one in northern CKGR in 2123B4 on 15 Mar (HP).

African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ispidina picta*

Reported from Kwetsani Camp (1922B3) in late Nov 2019 (JP).

Southern Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri*

In the Jao Reserve, there was a group of five at Kwetsani Camp on 20 Oct 2019, there were three on Hunda Island on 24 Dec and there was a group of three on 29 Feb 2020 (JP, MB, RT). Heard calling at Murutsha (1923C2) on 21 Nov 2019 and five were seen near Khwai River, 17-18 Dec (WvS, JRI). There were four at Linyanti, from 10 to 16 Jan 2020 and three in Kwedi Concession, in 1822D4 from 16 to 20 Jan (MB).

Brown-backed Honeybird *Prodosticus regulus*

One was seen at at Crocodile Pools, Notwane on 3 and 17 Oct 2019 (CAB). There were two sightings in mopane woodland at Linyanti, in 1823B2 and 1823D1, in mid-January 2020 (MB).

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumannii*

Several were seen in Jao Reserve on 23 Dec 2019 (MB).

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

Three were seen near Lone Tree, in 2322A2, on 7 Jan 2020 (IG).

Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*

Several were seen along Khwai River on 16 Dec 2019 (JRI). One bird was at Jao Reserve on 23 Dec (MB). A small flock was seen along the river in Maun on 2 Jan 2020 (MM per MBF). One was at Moiyabana (2226C2) on 2 Jan (CAB). Circa 75 were roosting in Linyanti (1823B3) on 11 Jan and there were two records of single birds in Kwedi Concession in 1822D4 on 21 Jan (MB).

Eurasian Hobby *Falco subuteo*

There were four records of single birds at Linyanti from 10 to 16 Jan 2020 (MB).

African Hobby *Falco cuvierii*

One was seen on 7 Nov 2019 at Gidichaa Lodge 60km WNW of Nokaneng (LO per TH).

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

An adult of the palaeartic *calidus* race was seen at Mashatu G.R. on 3 Dec 2019 (DM). A pair was seen and photographed at Gaborone Dam on 22 Dec and one was seen there on 13 Jan 2020 and on 1 March, also in Gaborone West on 27 Feb (IW, CAB, HH, GH).

Brown-throated Martin *Riparia paudicola*

Two were seen near Francistown on 5 Dec 2019 (JC). Singles were seen at Sojwe Pan on 28 March 2020 and at Upper Gamoleele Dam (2425C2) on 2 April (CAB).

Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis*

One was seen at Linyanti in 1823D1 in mid-January 2020 (MB).

Pearl-breasted Swallow *Hirundo dimidiata*

Singles were seen in the Kalahari at Morwamosu (2423A1) and at Kaa (2420B3) on 10 Dec 2019 (CAB). Two were seen in Jao Reserve on 21 Dec (MB).

South African Cliff-Swallow *Hirundo spilodera*

There was an active breeding colony with circa 50 birds at Gathwane (2525B3) on 19 Nov 2019 (CAB).

Stark's Lark *Spixocorys starki*

There were four at Sita Pan on 5 Nov and 18 were there on 21 Nov 2019. In the western Kalahari small numbers, up to ten at each locality, at a pan in 2420B2 on 10 Dec, at Kaa Pan (2420B3) on 11 Dec, at Masetlheng Pan on 13 Dec and at Ukwi Pan on 14 Dec (CAB).

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*

One was seen at Sesung (2425D4) on 24 Nov 2019, there was one at Notwane on 24 Dec and there were two along upper the Gamoleele River, in 2425B4, on 2 April 2020 (CAB).

Collared Palm Thrush *Cichladusa arquata*

A breeding pair was observed at Linyanti in January 2020; a breeding pair has been present at the locality for several years (MB).

Dusky Sunbird *Cinnyris fuscus*

Three birds (two males and one female) were seen and photographed in a flowering acacia bush in northern CKGR in 2123B4 on 8 Feb 2020 (RT). This record is well outside of the expected range of this species in south-western Botswana.

Orange-breasted Waxbill *Amandava subflava*

Three were seen at a marsh in Mashatu G.R., in 2228B2, from 21 to 25 Nov 2019 (RH). There was a small flock at Gaborone Dam on 22 Dec (IW).

Cuckoo Finch *Anomalospiza imberbis*

An adult male seen in Jao Reserve , in 1922B1, on 23 Dec 2019 (MB).

Bushveld Pipit *Anthus caffer*

One was seen in display flight and a pair was flushed at Lokgokgotho Hills (2425D3) on 12 Nov 2019 (CAB).

Streaky-headed Seedeater *Crithagra gularis*

One was seen at Crocodile Pools, Notwane on 12 April 2020 (CAB).

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- | | | | |
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Some breeding records in 2019/2020

Compiled by Stephanie J. Tyler & Chris A. Brewster

Species	Date	Location	Nest site: nest contents	Obs.
Common Ostrich	21 Nov 2019	Sita Pan	Pair adults + crèche of 45 young circa 1 to 2 month old	CAB
White-faced Whistling Duck <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	3 Feb 2020	Ramotswa S.P.	Adult + 3 tiny ducklings	CAB
White-faced Whistling Duck <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	16 Mar 2020	Thagale Dam	Pair adults + 8 tiny young	CAB
White-faced Whistling Duck <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	2 April 2020	Upper Gamoleele Dam (2425C2)	Pair adults + 6 two week old young	CAB
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	2 Nov 2019	Molopye River, near Mogobane	Pair adult + 8 tiny young	BLB
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	13 Jan 2020	Gaborone Dam	Pair adults + 4 tiny goslings, also pair adults + 2 two week old young	CAB
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	26 Jan 2020	Taueshele Dam (2425C2)	Adult incubating on nest on bare tree in water, also pair adults + 3 two week old young	CAB
Egyptian Goose <i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	16 Mar 2020	Thagale Dam	Pair adults + 6 ten day old young	CAB
Red-billed Teal <i>Anas erythrorhynchos</i>	25 Mar 2020	Sojwe Pan	Adult + 5 tiny young	CAB
Natal Spurrow <i>Pternistis natalensis</i>	9 April 2020	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Pair adults + 5 young four weeks old	MGG DG
Natal Spurrow <i>Pternistis natalensis</i>	9 April	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Pair adults + 1 young one week old	MGG DG
Little Grebe	ca. 10	Ghanzi	Four adults on nests of	MB

Species	Date	Location	Nest site: nest contents	Obs.
<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Jan	Sewage Ponds (S.P.)	floating vegetation	
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	2 April 2020	Upper Gamoleele Dam (2425C2)	Pair adult + 2 young, just hatched	CAB
Black-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	21 Mar 2020	Dihudi Pan, south of Mmathethe	Pair adult + 1 juvenile	IW
Shikra <i>Accipter badius</i>	12 Nov 2019	Lokgokgotho Hills (2425D3)	Adult incubating on nest 5 m above ground, in clump of acacias	CAB
Blacksmith Lapwing <i>Vanellus armatus</i>	20 Oct 2019	Mogobane Dam	Pair adult + one week old young	CAB
Blacksmith Lapwing <i>Vanellus armatus</i>	Ca.10 Jan 2020	New Xade Treatment works	Adult with chick	MB
Blacksmith Lapwing	10 Mar 2020	Xaxanaka	Adult with recently hatched chick	LO
Crowned Lapwing <i>Vanellus coronatus</i>	5 Nov 2019	Sita Pan	Pair adult + one recently hatched young	CAB
Temminck's Courser <i>Cursorius temminckii</i>	12 Nov 2019	Lokgokgotho Hills (2425D3)	Pair adults + 2 young, circa 2 weeks old	CAB
African Skimmer <i>Rynchops flavirostris</i>	7 Oct 2019	Ncamasere in 1822C1	Adult incubating on nest on sandbank	WvS
Whiskered Tern <i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	21 Mar 2020	Dihudi Pan south of Mmathethe	5 dependent young with adults	IW
Yellow-throated Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles gutturalis</i>	11 Oct 2019	Maokamatshwane Dam, south of Ramotswa	Adult + 3 recently fledged young	IW
Red-eyed Dove <i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	16 Oct 2019	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult incubating on platform of twigs 4 m above ground	CAB
African Palm Swift <i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	8 April 2020	Gaborone West	Adult bringing food to nest in palm	IW
Speckled Mousebird	28	Gaborone	Juvenile with adults	IW

Species	Date	Location	Nest site: nest contents	Obs.
<i>Colius striatus</i>	April 2020	West		
Southern Carmine Bee-eater <i>Merops nubicoides</i>	5 & 9 Dec 2019	Motloutse River, Mashatu Game Reserve	Leaving food at nest holes; well-grown chicks seen in three holes	DRM c
Southern Red-billed Hornbill <i>Tockus rufirostris</i>	14 Jan 2020	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult started incubating: one young then fledged on 7 April, second young fledged on 19 April	CAB
Southern Red-billed Hornbill <i>Tockus rufirostris</i>	21 April 2020	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	2 juveniles out of nestbox	MGG , DG
African Grey Hornbill <i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>	18 Feb 2020	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Pair adults + 2 juveniles	MGG , DG
Crested Barbet <i>Trachyphonus vaillantii</i>	22 Jan 2020	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Pair adults + 2 juveniles	MGG , DG
Black-headed Oriole <i>Oriolus larvatus</i>	13 April 2020	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult + 1 juvenile	MGG , DB
Cape Penduline Tit	21 Nov 2019	Near Sita Pan (2524B1)	Active nest: bird flew out of nest	CAB
Dark-capped Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus tricolor</i> and Jacobin Cuckoo <i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	6 Feb 2020	R.Boro, Maun	Adult Dark-capped Bulbul feeding a juvenile Jacobin Cuckoo	KO per MBF
Yellow-bellied Greenbul <i>Chlocichla flaviventris</i>	6 Feb 2020	R.Boro, Maun	Nest with two eggs; one chick fledged	KO per MBF
Arrow-marked Babbler <i>Turdoides jardeneii</i> and Levillant's Cuckoo <i>Clamator levillantii</i>	3 May 2020	Maun	Party of Arrow-marked Babblers feeding juvenile Levillant's Cuckoo	JS per MBF
Arrow-marked Babbler and Levillant's Cuckoo	21 May	Near Moshaneng in 2425C3	Juvenile cuckoo with the babbler party; a late date for this cuckoo	CAB
Hartlaub's Babbler	10	Maun	Nest with 3 young,	KO

Species	Date	Location	Nest site: nest contents	Obs.
<i>Turdoides hartlaubii</i>	May 2020		being fed by adult	per MBF
Cape White-eye <i>Zosterops virens</i>	10 April 2020	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult + 3 juveniles	MGG, DG
Common Myna <i>Acridotheres tristis</i> and Great Spotted Cuckoo <i>Clamator glandarius</i>	5 April 2020	Notwane	Adult Myna feeding juvenile Great Spotted Cuckoo	PJ
Cape Glossy Starling <i>Lamprotornis nitens</i>	13 Feb 2020	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult + 1 juvenile	MGG, DG
Kurrichane Thrush <i>Turdus libonyanus</i>	11 Jan 2020	Crocodile Pools, Notwane	Adult + 1 juvenile	MGG, DG
Marico Flycatcher <i>Melaenornis mariquensis</i>	20 Oct 2019	Mogobane Dam	Pair adult + one recently fledged young	CAB
Southern Masked Weaver <i>Ploceus velatus</i> and Diederik Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>	10 April 2020	Gaborone West	Adult Southern Masked Weaver feeding juvenile Diederik Cuckoo	IW
African Pipit <i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>	7 Mar 2020	Thagale Dam	Adult bringing food to young in nest	IW

Observers: BLB; BirdLife Botswana; CAB Chris Brewster; DG Daphne Goldsworthy; DRMc Duncan McKenzie; IW Ian White; JS James Stenner; KO Ken Oake; LO Lee Ouzman; MB Modiegi Bakane; MBF Maun Bird Forum; MGG Mike Goldsworthy; PJ Paul Judd; WvS Wouter van Spijker

RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON BIRDS OF RELEVANCE TO BOTSWANA

Four of the authors in the following paper are based at the University of Botswana and Kabelo Senyatso and Keddi Moleofi contributed data to the paper.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Indicators of Rain: Evidence from Rwenzori Region, Western Uganda

Nkuba, M.R., Chanda, R., Mmopelwa, G., Mangheni, M.N., Lesolle, D. & Kato, E.

Abstract

This study investigated the abiotic and biotic environmental indicators used among pastoralists and arable farmers to predict the onset and cessation of rain as well as to make short-term and seasonal forecasts in the Rwenzori region of Western Uganda. We used a mixed-methods approach that included surveys of 907 households, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. The results indicate that resident birds such as white-browed coucals and turacos and migrant birds such as eagles and swallows were important indicators of the onset of rains. Butterflies were an important indicator for the cessation of rains, and red ants were an indicator for the onset of rains. Among the abiotic indicators, winds, clouds, earthquakes, and cloud formation on Mount Rwenzori were important indicators. Behavior of cattle at the onset of rains was important among the pastoralists, and flowering of coffee plants was important among the arable farmers. The behaviour of the biotic indicators was driven by the availability of food, water, or other necessities. An attempt to explain the phenology underlying the behavior of biotic indicators and the meteorological science underlying some of the abiotic indicators is made. Although biotic environmental indicators are rudimentary and their accuracy is influenced by external factors such as climate change, they provide climate information within the locality of the farmers. Our results suggest that the indicators used in indigenous forecasting could be incorporated in national meteorological systems in a bid to improve the accuracy of rainfall forecasts and their use among farmers and pastoralists in rural Africa.

Distribution and density of oxpeckers on giraffes in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe

Roxanne Gagnon, Cheryl T. Mabika & Christophe Bonenfant 2020. *African Journal of Ecology* Vol.58 (2):172-181.

Abstract

Oxpeckers (*Buphagus* sp.) are two bird species closely associated to large mammals, including giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis*). We tested whether oxpeckers distributed themselves at random across individuals or aggregated on individual giraffes, and whether birds select the host's body parts with the expected greatest amount of ticks. By counting oxpeckers on giraffe's body from photographs, we quantified the distribution of birds per hosts and over predefined zones on the giraffe body. Oxpeckers displayed a strong aggregation behaviour with few hosts carrying many birds while many carried a limited number or no bird, a pattern that was most exaggerated for males. Oxpeckers were disproportionately found on the mane and back, where the density of ticks is presumably the highest. This high aggregation level of birds is typical of parasitic species and could suggest that oxpecker distribution may mirror the distribution of ticks, their primary food resource, on giraffes. Abundance of ticks appears as a major driver of the oxpecker foraging behaviour, and the oxpecker–large herbivores system proves to be highly relevant for the study of host–parasite dynamics.



Lesser Moorhen
Photo: Ian White



African Marsh Harrier
Photo: Ian White



Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Photo: Ian White

Goliath Heron
Photo: Ian White





BABBLER

Journal of BirdLife Botswana

Red-throated Twinspot
Photo: Lyn Francey



Cover Design by: **Impression House**
Printing by **Impression House**