

Familiar Chat



Foreword...

Here we are again, still waiting for the summer rains. Will they come? Only the good Lord knows. In the meantime there have been some cloudy skies all over the country in the last few days and some good downpours in places too. We are all hoping that we will get enough precious rains to green-up our fragile lands and feed our cattle that are still looking decidedly thin in many parts of the country.

We are grateful for the lovely people who have so unwaveringly popped out articles over the last few editions. Of note, Mary Webb – someone who values the wild places of Botswana, and Harold Hester who visited the relatively new Muchenje Lodge (owned By Trish and Geoff Williams)

Our honourable ex-Education committee member for BirdLife Botswana, Doreen has continued the vulture series writing an article about the Egyptian Vulture, a visitor to Botswana.

This edition mostly gives information about camps and walks that have been taken by members showcasing the wonderful variety of places that can be visited across Botswana to be at one with nature and to enjoy the abundant birdlife.

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Titbits.....

Bird walks

... start at 0630 from Molopo Crossing car park on the Western by-pass, every first Sunday of each month. Come and join us please. Bring a snack for the ‘apres-bird’.

BirdLife South Africa

Our sister organisation is holding their annual ‘Flock’ at Langerbaan on the West Coast. You must book before 31st Jan. A fascinating conference is expected.

BPM

Are you one of the hundreds of people across Botswana who are counting birds twice a year? When you go for your February count take a friend with you please. Maybe they will become ‘BPMers’ too?!



Botswana reports alarming deaths of Mourning Doves



Source: Xinhua 2018-01-19

04:28:12 Editor: yan

GABORONE, Jan. 18 (Xinhua) -- Botswana's Environment, Natural Resources Conservation and Tourism Ministry has reported an alarming dying of Mourning Doves in some parts of the country.

The ministry's permanent secretary Jimmy Opelo on Thursday said a significant number of dead

Mourning Doves carcasses have been spotted in the country's central district in Shoshong village.

"There are unconfirmed reports that other bird species are also dying. However, the cause of death is not known at the moment, and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks and relevant stakeholders are working around the clock to establish the cause of these mortalities," said Opelo.

The ministry warned bird license holders not to hunt any bird until the cause of mortalities is established, adding that parents should protect children from eating the dead birds' carcasses.

Social media reactions to the posting by the Ministry of Environment have been varied. Some say it's the hot weather. Unlikely. (Birds are used to hot weather!?) Others are saying it could be an outbreak of Newcastle's disease, and others anthrax. We will find out in time....

Jolly bright this sunlight. Where do you buy the sunglasses?



AFRICAN VULTURES VANISHING

Africa's vultures are vanishing, according to a new report, posing a potential health risk to humans and livestock, since populations of other scavengers such as rats and jackals could rise as a result.

The assessment, carried out by the conservation group BirdLife International, found that six of Africa's 11 vulture species were at risk of extinction. Deliberate targeting by poachers is one of the reasons, as the birds, which circle the sites where they feed, can alert authorities to the carcasses of illegally killed animals.

Ross Wanless of BirdLife South Africa said: "Vultures are important. They come in, they clean up and they leave. Other scavengers like

rats and jackals will eat a carcass and then will go after livestock or become a pest to humans. In India and other places feral dogs are being kept alive by rotting carcasses, and they have been responsible for increasing the incidence of Rabies infections amongst people. If vultures are removed, their numbers can increase."

Vultures also help stem the spread of disease on the world's poorest continent by eating carcasses that would otherwise rot. Other reasons behind the decline of the big birds include indiscriminate poisonings and the popularity of vulture parts for traditional medicine. Since the late 1980s, 98% of west Africa's vultures outside protected nature areas have disappeared, while half the population of the Gyps vulture species in Kenya's Masai Mara park have gone, the report said. In South Africa, the number of Cape vultures has declined by 60-70% over the past 20-30 years.

The assessment was conducted for the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species, which is considered to be the most authoritative estimate of wild bird and animal populations.

Copied from: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/oct/29/vultures-nearing-extinction-in-africa>

Birding hotspot: Muchenje campsite and cottages



Harold Hester reports on a site 60km by road from Kasane.

Tucked away in northern Botswana, about 5kms from Ngoma Bridge, lies Muchenje Campsite and Cottages, keeping a low profile. It is not merely a birding hotspot, it is a mega hotspot, super-duper, extraordinary, incredible,



birding place to visit.

For anyone interested in birds, it should be the first go-to place on his or her list.

My wife, daughter and son and their spouses and our five grandsons have just visited the place and we were so impressed that I am moved to advertise it to the birding world.

What is so attractive about this site? Firstly, it is the birds. We identified three

Thrush Nightingales, about four Pink-throated Longclaws, a Swamp Nightjar, about a dozen Rufous-bellied Herons, a Marsh Harrier, Ovambo Sparrowhawk, Collared Sunbird, a White-backed Duck, Lesser Jacana, pair of Pygmy Geese, a Coppery-tailed and Senegal Coucal calling at the same time, all within twenty-four hours of our arrival. The variety of species has to do with the contrasting vegetation regimes, as in the Garden of Eden. There is dense riparian bush, tall trees like Jackalberry and spreading *Acacia tortilis*, the Chobe river and an assortment of ponds, large expansive flood plain and typical Botswana woodland. Altogether, in two days we identified 155 species in the pentad. With another day at our disposal we think we may have hit 180 species.

The fees are reasonable and one does not have to pay to enter the Chobe National Park to see all these species.

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

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

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

The contact details are: Muchenje Campsite and Cottages - Phone: +267 7500 7327

Email: bookings@muchenjecampsite.com - Web: www.muchenjecampsite.com





STOLEN FROM THE WEBSITE, (WITH PERMISSION!!!)

Muchenje Campsite & Cottages is a family owned and managed camp set in the Chobe Enclave, 7.2km from the Chobe National Park Ngoma gate (60km from Kasane, Botswana via tarred road and 80 km from Katima Mulilo Namibia).

A peaceful, secure and beautifully treed property on the borders of the National park provides a serene setting for your stay, and a perfect base from which to explore the less crowded western end of the National Park. It is a perfect stop over for 4x4 enthusiasts wishing to visit Linyanti and Savuti or to spend a night on your way to the Caprivi Strip in Namibia.

ANDREW HESTER'S BIRD LASSER DOWNLOAD OF BIRDS RECORDED IN THE PENTAD

1. African Golden Oriole, 2018-01-02 07:15
2. Namaqua Dove, 2018-01-02 07:12
3. Cinnamon-breasted Bunting, 2018-01-02 07:09
4. Meyer's Parrot, 2018-01-01 18:34
5. Helmeted Guineafowl, 2018-01-01 18:28
6. Red-billed Quelea, 2018-01-01 18:27
7. Laughing Dove, 2018-01-01 18:20
8. Cape Glossy Starling, 2018-01-01 18:12
9. Red-billed Oxpecker, 2018-01-01 16:37
10. Wahlberg's Eagle, 2018-01-01 14:37
11. Crimson-breasted Shrike, 2018-01-01 12:46
12. Common Scimitarbill, 2018-01-01 12:09
13. Red-breasted Swallow, 2018-01-01 11:29
14. Tawny Eagle, 2018-01-01 11:29
15. Red-crested Korhaan, 2018-01-01 10:54
16. African Hoopoe, 2018-01-01 10:50
17. Southern Black Tit, 2018-01-01 10:41
18. Hooded Vulture, 2018-01-01 10:39
19. Yellow-throated Petronia, 2018-01-01 10:33
20. Stierling's Wren-Warbler, 2018-01-01 10:32
21. White-crested Helmetshrike, 2018-01-01 10:31
22. Amethyst Sunbird, 2018-01-01 10:31
23. Striped Kingfisher, 2018-01-01 10:31
24. Golden-breasted Bunting, 2018-01-01 10:31
25. Bateleur, 2018-01-01 10:23
26. Southern Carmine Bee-eater, 2018-01-01 10:18
27. Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, 2018-01-01 08:54
28. African Palm Swift, 2018-01-01 08:51
29. African Marsh Harrier, 2018-01-01 08:46
30. Black-chested Snake Eagle, 2018-01-01 08:41
31. African Sacred Ibis, 2018-01-01 08:41
32. Lesser Kestrel, 2018-01-01 08:35
33. Ovambo Sparrowhawk, 2018-01-01 08:30
34. Desert Cisticola, 2018-01-01 08:25
35. Coppery-tailed Coucal, 2018-01-01 08:21
36. Banded Martin, 2018-01-01 08:20
37. African Stonechat, 2018-01-01 08:15
38. Black-bellied Bustard, 2018-01-01 07:59
39. Southern Masked Weaver, 2018-01-01 07:57
40. Water Thick-knee, 2018-01-01 07:56
41. Red-billed Teal, 2018-01-01 07:48
42. Whiskered Tern, 2018-01-01 07:45
43. Rosy-throated Longclaw, 2018-01-01 07:36
44. Cape Wagtail, 2018-01-01 07:33
45. Black-winged Stilt, 2018-01-01 07:29
46. Levillant's Cuckoo, 2018-01-01 07:16
47. Chinspot Batis, 2018-01-01 07:15
48. Trumpeter Hornbill, 2018-01-01 07:09
49. Red-backed Shrike, 2018-01-01 06:16
50. Broad-billed Roller, 2018-01-01 06:15
51. Southern Ground Hornbill, 2018-01-01 06:15
52. Brubru, 2018-01-01 06:13
53. Cardinal Woodpecker, 2018-01-01 06:12
54. Wire-tailed Swallow, 2018-01-01 06:11
55. Cut-throat Finch, 2018-01-01 06:07
56. Violet-backed Starling, 2018-01-01 06:05
57. Speckled Pigeon, 2018-01-01 06:05
58. Swainson's Spurfowl, 2018-01-01 05:59
59. Crested Barbet, 2018-01-01 05:55
60. African Golden Weaver, 2018-01-01 05:54
61. Kurrichane Thrush, 2017-12-31 19:17
62. Yellow-billed Kite, 2017-12-31 06:25
63. Rattling Cisticola, 2017-12-31 06:23
64. White-browed Sparrow-Weaver, 2017-12-31 06:22
65. Willow Warbler, 2017-12-31 06:06
66. Long-billed Crombec, 2017-12-31 05:38
67. Grey-headed Bushshrike, 2017-12-31 05:35
68. Red-billed Spurfowl, 2017-12-31 05:12
69. Crested Francolin, 2017-12-31 05:11
70. Swamp Nightjar, 2017-12-31 05:11
71. Spotted Thick-knee, 2017-12-31 05:11
72. Pearl-spotted Owlet, 2017-12-31 05:10
73. Western Barn Owl, 2017-12-30 20:28
74. African Crane, 2017-12-30 20:18
75. Crowned Lapwing, 2017-12-30 20:08
76. Fork-tailed Drongo, 2017-12-30 19:12
77. African Darter, 2017-12-30 19:05
78. Senegal Coucal, 2017-12-30 18:59
79. Common Swift, 2017-12-30 18:59
80. Jacobin Cuckoo, 2017-12-30 18:49
81. Intermediate Egret, 2017-12-30 18:32
82. Luapula Cisticola, 2017-12-30 18:16
83. Grey Heron, 2017-12-30 18:12
84. Ruff, 2017-12-30 18:06
85. Lesser Moorhen, 2017-12-30 18:06
86. Reed Cormorant, 2017-12-30 17:52
87. African Pipit, 2017-12-30 17:50
88. Common Moorhen, 2017-12-30 17:48
89. African Snipe, 2017-12-30 17:47
90. Rufous-bellied Heron, 2017-12-30 17:43
91. Black-crowned Night Heron, 2017-12-30 17:43
92. Red-eyed Dove, 2017-12-30 17:36
93. Barn Swallow, 2017-12-30 17:25
94. Glossy Ibis, 2017-12-30 17:24
95. European Bee-eater, 2017-12-30 17:21
96. Little Egret, 2017-12-30 17:14
97. Blacksmith Lapwing, 2017-12-30 17:05
98. Jameson's Firefinch, 2017-12-30 17:01
99. Magpie Shrike, 2017-12-30 16:50
100. Common Buzzard, 2017-12-30 16:49
101. Little Bee-eater, 2017-12-30 16:47
103. White-backed Duck, 2017-12-30 16:45
104. Lilac-breasted Roller, 2017-12-30 16:45
105. Hartlaub's Babbler, 2017-12-30 16:45
106. White-browed Robin-Chat, 2017-12-30 16:45
107. Goliath Heron, 2017-12-30 16:44
108. Long-toed Lapwing, 2017-12-30 16:43
109. African Grey Hornbill, 2017-12-30 15:46
110. Common Greenshank, 2017-12-30 15:41
111. Wood Sandpiper, 2017-12-30 15:40
112. Black Crane, 2017-12-30 15:33
113. White-faced Whistling Duck, 2017-12-30 15:29
114. Orange-breasted Bushshrike, 2017-12-30 15:22
115. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, 2017-12-30 15:20
116. Green-winged Pytilia, 2017-12-30 14:17
117. Arrow-marked Babbler, 2017-12-30 14:17
118. Emerald-spotted Wood Dove, 2017-12-30 14:06
119. African Paradise Flycatcher, 2017-12-30 13:58
120. Southern Grey-headed Sparrow, 2017-12-30 13:57
121. Black-collared Barbet, 2017-12-30 13:57
122. Black-faced Waxbill, 2017-12-30 13:52
123. Southern Red-billed Hornbill, 2017-12-30 13:51
124. Collared Sunbird, 2017-12-30 13:49
125. African Pygmy Goose, 2017-12-30 13:46
126. Lesser Jacana, 2017-12-30 13:46
127. White-winged Tern, 2017-12-30 13:44
128. Spotted Flycatcher, 2017-12-30 13:43
129. Terrestrial Brownbul, 2017-12-30 13:42
130. Knob-billed Duck, 2017-12-30 13:41
131. Western Cattle Egret, 2017-12-30 13:40
132. Cape Turtle Dove, 2017-12-30 13:40
133. Great Egret, 2017-12-30 13:39
134. Squacco Heron, 2017-12-30 13:39
135. Black Heron, 2017-12-30 13:39
136. Grey Go-away-bird, 2017-12-30 13:39
137. Thrush Nightingale, 2017-12-30 13:36
138. African Openbill, 2017-12-30 13:28
139. African Jacana, 2017-12-30 13:26
140. Grey-backed Camaroptera, 2017-12-30 13:26
141. White-browed Scrub Robin, 2017-12-30 13:20
142. Red-billed Firefinch, 2017-12-30 13:20
143. Dark-capped Bulbul, 2017-12-30 13:20
144. Swamp Boubou, 2017-12-30 13:14
145. Zitting Cisticola, 2017-12-30 13:10
146. Blue Waxbill, 2017-12-30 13:10
147. Tawny-flanked Prinia, 2017-12-30 13:10
148. Red-faced Mousebird, 2017-12-30 13:09
149. Brown-crowned Tchagra, 2017-12-30 13:08
150. African Fish Eagle, 2017-12-30 13:01
151. Yellow-breasted Apalis, 2017-12-30 12:49
152. Brown-hooded Kingfisher, 2017-12-30 12:49

BLB Camp on the Limpopo: Coombe farm, 18-20th Nov.'17 S23.21121° E27.66444°

There is a 'hardcore' group of birders in the BLB currently, who are actively getting out and contributing to the scientific data needed for our current and future scientific knowledge - 'citizen scientists' is often the term used. They made some interesting records on the Limpopo river towards the end of 2017. At this time most of the summer migrants have 'landed', less those that follow the rains, which by then had not



arrived.

Amongst the 122 species seen or heard, there were two types of Oriole (Black-headed and Golden), three plovers (Blacksmith, Three-banded and Crowned), 3 kingfishers (Woodland, Pied and Brown-hooded), 3 owls (Scops, Verreaux's and Pearl-spotted), 3 shrikes (White-crested, Red-backed and Crimson breasted), four starlings (Burchel's, Glossy, Meve's and Violet-backed - known to some of us as the Plum-coloured), no Village mynahs, three woodpeckers (Bearded, Cardinal and Golden-tailed), four hornbills (Yellow-billed, Red-billed, Ground and Grey), the Lesser Honeyguide, Burchell's Sandgrouse, a couple of Spurfowl (Natal and Swainson's), four swifts and swallows (Palm, Little, Barn and Lesser Striped), two vultures (Lappet-faced and White-faced) and plenty of other species to boot.

The river-bed was dry but the braai stations were well watered with a lovely selection of Botswana meat being gently prepared in the evening light. The intrepid team who braved the Botswana bush included Floris and Gail Fortgens, Lea Roodt, Ian White, Mike and Daphne Goldsworthy, Geraldine and Harold Hester, Craig Britz, Mary Webb and Janet Woods

who kindly

supplied these photographs. Sincere thanks to the Bings for availing such a magnificent site.



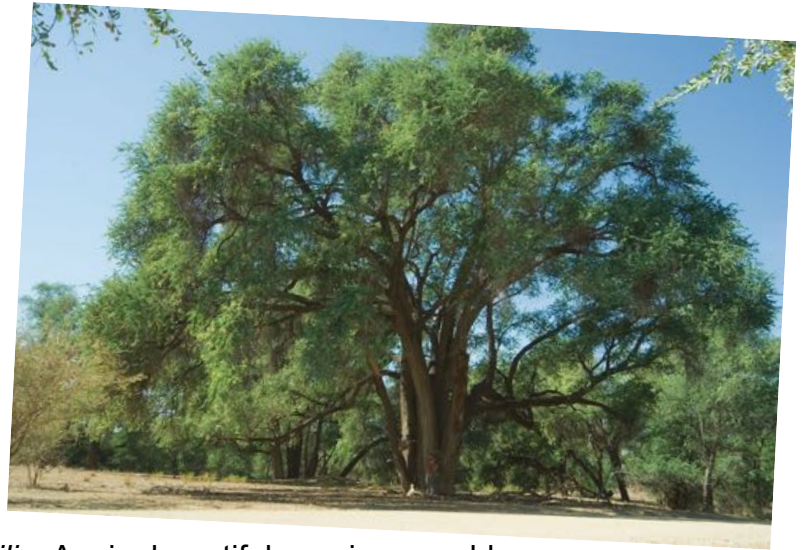
(COOMBE FARM CAMP CONTINUED) *Mary Webb writes..*



You should have been there! You missed a simply wonderful weekend camping with BirdLife Botswana on a beautiful stretch of the Limpopo River at the southern end of the Tuli Block. The farm belongs to the Freeman family, and Mark and Jane (nee Freeman) Bing hosted us. We were 11 campers in all, it was lovely to have some new blood as part of the company, and as always with these camps it was a very congenial and fun filled group.

Some of the most beautiful of the Tuli Block, the trees were simply

overwhelming in their beauty, in their size and in their number. They almost out-shine the birds in the dominance they play in memories of the weekend. Predominantly *Faidherbia albida* along the river's edge, they were dropping their honey-coloured, tangled seed pods so the ground was carpeted with a rich golden glow. The trees reached up in grand majesty, beautiful boughs weaving themselves together overhead, and the light, lace-like foliage let through a brightness that was just magic. We camped well back from the river on a black cotton soil flood plain which was equally wooded, but this time with *Acacia tortilis*. Again, beautiful specimens, old and twisted and grand and food for the soul. We did more birding than is usual, spurred on by Mark's



enthusiasm! As well as the early morning hikes on both mornings, over Saturday lunch we drove some way north to a further stretch of the river (their frontage is 34km!) which was equally beautiful and awe-inspiring. We sat on a high bank over-looking the river and let the birds come to us through the heat of the day, and then set off walking still further north along both sides of the river.

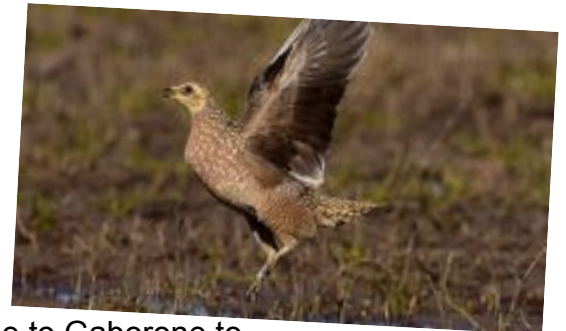
There was not a lot of water in the river, just occasional pools. In all we clocked up 112 species in the 36 hours of being there that



made for invigorating birding to compliment the beauty of the

setting.

The cherry on top was being served with pancakes to celebrate Mark's birthday on Sunday morning, handed round the gathering by Emily with her captivating charm! Next time a camp is planned for this venue, be sure to join us. Bush camping with no conveniences is not an ordeal, especially just for 2 nights, and this venue is conveniently close to Gaborone to make for a wonderfully relaxing, undemanding weekend.



Bird photos courtesy of (who else but..) our very own BLB Chairperson Ian White. Check out: https://www.flickr.com/photos/ian_white/

HOLD ON! Who said Doreen McColaugh, has finished her articles on vultures?! Was it *moi? Ga ke dumela!* Here is some fascinating information on the Egyptian Vulture.
(Next edition – the Palm Nut Vulture)

EGYPTIAN VULTURE

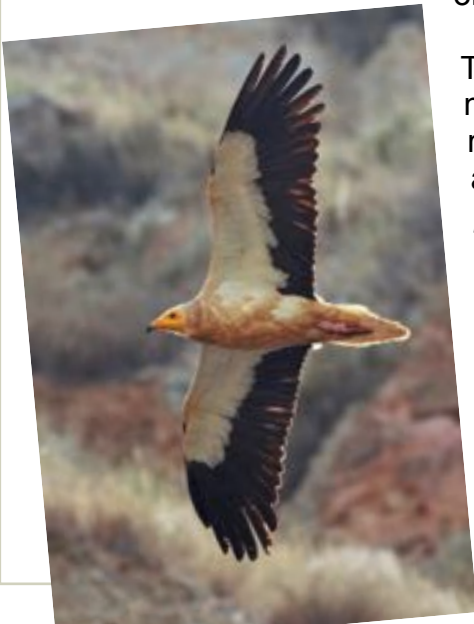
(*Neophron percnopterus*)

The five resident vultures in Botswana (Lappetface, Cape, Whitebacked, Whiteheaded and Hooded) have all been described and discussed in this series. However, two other interesting species of vultures occasionally visit Botswana. They are the Egyptian Vulture and the Palm-nut Vulture. They will also be described and discussed but as they are only occasional visitors and do not breed here, those details will not be included.



The Egyptian Vulture is a small, beautiful and distinctive looking vulture. As per its name, it was once very common and numerous along the Nile River in Egypt. Ancient Egyptians revered it and included it in their unique artwork that can still be seen today. This led to it being called the “Pharaoh’s chicken”. Although now not numerous as it was in those years, it still has a wide distribution and ranges from southwestern Europe to northern Africa and on to India. Sadly, it is now said to be rare in parts of Egypt and other habitat areas. In their drastic declines they are suffering from most of the same things causing declines in all vulture species – poisoning, declining wild animal food sources, misuse of the drug Diclofenac used to treat domestic livestock, mortalities at power lines and wind machines and use in “traditional medicine”. It is now classified as Endangered.

Unique to European and African vultures, it has colonized off-shore islands such as Cape Verde and the Canary Islands, among others (Mundy, et al. p 187). Also different from other vultures it is highly migratory, sometimes traveling 500 km (310 mi) in a day during its 5,500 km (3,400 mi) migratory journey from Europe or North Africa to the tip of the continent in South Africa and back home again (Wikipedia/Egyptian Vulture p 3). And, occasionally one makes a stop-over in Botswana when coming or going on its migration!



The Egyptian Vulture is the only species in its genus. The scientific name *Neophron percnopterus* is from Greek. Neophron, of Greek mythology, was considered to have carried out some deceitful acts and so Zeus turned him into a vulture. In the species name *percnopterus*, *percno* means dusky and *pterus* means wing, which is very descriptive when this vulture is seen in flight (Mundy, et al. p 184).

Photographs sourced from:

<https://www.hbw.com/ibc/photo/egyptian-vulture-neophron-percnopterus/adult-bird-flying-along-cliff>

Courtesy Ivan Sjogren

<https://www.hbw.com/ibc/species/52993/photos>

Courtesy Deepak Sankat

<http://www.photomazza.com/?Neophron-percnopterus>



EGYPTIAN VULTURE CONTINUED...

The adult Egyptian Vulture is described as having all white plumage that is highly contrasted by its black flight feathers. This is well-demonstrated in photographs of these birds that have been raised in captivity. However, in the wild the plumage is an off-white with the feathers seemingly soiled with a rusty or brown shade, thought to be caused by mud or iron-rich soil they rub themselves in ([www.4vultures](http://www.4vultures.com) p 1). The feathers on the back and sides of the neck are long and narrow and can be raised. The bare face, and front of the neck, is a wrinkled bright yellow and the black beak is long and narrow with a hooked tip. Adults' feet are pink. In flight the long, narrow, pointed white tail is diagnostic as are the pointed wings. It takes a young bird four to five years to obtain full adult plumage as it goes through several changes of plumage - with a juvenile being all brown with the skin on the face a bluish-grey, and an immature with a mix of brown and paler feathers and grey feet. The occasional vagrant seen in Botswana is likely to be an immature. (Hancock, p 78).

This vulture is known some of its food, picks up a rock its beak and then throws the rock at break on the first until the egg breaks 19th century ostrich suffered losses of (Ginn, et al. p 122), area as the White diet and in addition vegetable matter, even small animals reptiles and fish. It is also quite at (Wikipedia p 4).



for using “tools” to obtain which includes ostrich eggs. It (preferably a rounded one) in raises its head and strongly the egg. If the egg doesn't throw, it will repeat the action and it can eat the contents. farmers in South Africa eggs from the Egyptian Vulture which was then known in the Crow. This vulture has a varied to eggs it eats carrion, mammal faeces, insects, and such as birds, frogs, small home in garbage dumps

The Egyptian Vulture prefers very open semi-arid habitats, but is said to drink a lot of water and like to bathe. Alone or with others, it roosts on trees, ledges of cliffs, telephone poles and electricity pylons or even on the ground. As a vagrant in Botswana it is likely to be found in a variety of habitats.

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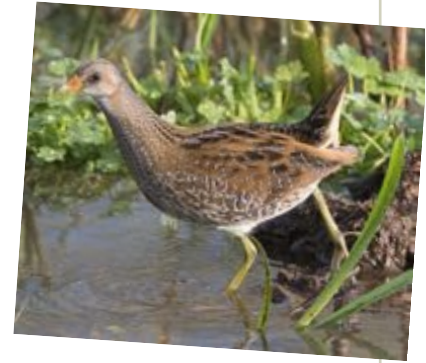
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ABNORMAL SIGHTINGS. By Mary Webb

The past couple of years have been marked in the birding world by surprising sightings of birds way out of their range. In early 2016 we were thrilled to see a Spotted Crake in Kasane, only to hear of their occurrence again and again throughout the region and as far south as Cape Town. Later that year a Mountain Wagtail topped our list of sightings at Moremi Gorge near Palapye, its first appearance in the gorge for about 15 years. Any subscribers to African Birdlife will have been able to follow this effect



of climate change on the avian sector of our world. The Yellow-throated Leaflove was of particular interest to me, being familiar with it from my years in Nigeria. This bird had many twitchers and photographers rushing up to the Zambezi near Katimo Mulilo to record its strange appearance, and furthermore its nesting there.

Not as dramatic, but worthy of recording, have been quieter abnormal occurrences right on our doorsteps. Spring last year, sitting in my flat, a new evening call had me prowling the neighboring greenway for several frustrating evenings. 'Nightjar' slowly rose in my consciousness and, on playing the calls I was able to identify it as the Freckled Nightjar.

Not uncommon, but described as 'preferring bare granite and boulder-strewn hillsides surrounded by broadleaved woodlands' (Roberts), the center of Gaborone is a startling deviation. I expected it to pass through quickly but it stayed the whole season, becoming quiet during the winter months. With the arrival of another spring, the return of its calls to my evenings has prompted me to write this article. Could it be using the rooves of the houses as its 'bare granite hillsides'? With Gaborone's proximity to its favoured natural environment of broken, rocky terrain, its appearance in suburbia cannot be accounted for by climate change.



Last evening on my evening walk I was caught unawares by another surprising arrival in this built-up area, that of an Orange-breasted Bush-shrike. It was in a rather sparse park area a few hundred meters from my flat, an environment so unconducive to this species that I doubted my identification of it. Known to favour dense growth, what has brought it to an area where dense growth is uncommon, even in the most overgrown of gardens?

Furthermore, this morning I woke to the call of a Black Sparrowhawk which was another of last year's surprises, being resident for some weeks in large trees within sight from my lounge. Again, it is described as preferring forests which Gaborone can't claim to have. Is it the same bird now returned with the first fall of rain of the season? And what has sent this usually shy raptor into our midst?



Adaptability as the key to survival, these sightings bode well for these species. The less flexible species find their names on the steadily growing lists of threatened members to our global avian community.

Perhaps these sightings in town are not all that abnormal at all?? Feedback from our birding community would be interesting to follow.

Photographs downloaded from from:

<https://focusingonwildlife.com/news/spotted-crake/> Courtesy Simon Colenut

<https://www.hbw.com/ibc/photo/mountain-wagtail-motacilla-clara/dead-limb-over-water> Courtesy of Butcher

<https://in.pinterest.com/pin/434315957806393000/> Courtesy Brendon White

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_sparrowhawk



If you do not have the 2018 BLB calendars, they are still available at the BLB shop at the Kgale Hill shopping centre (near Game City), a few doors from Spar. Or you may choose to visit the BLB offices at Kgale Siding - past the entrance to St Joseph's College, across the railway line. 'Desktop' or A2 versions are available.



Waterbirds of Botswana

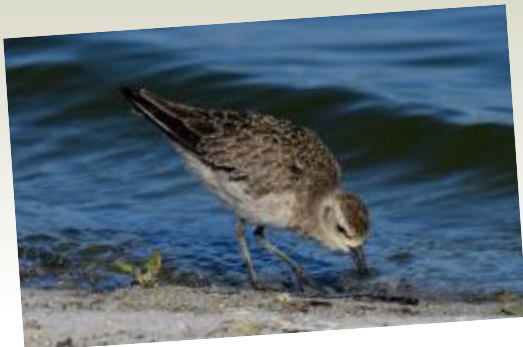


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PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF THIS CALENDAR WILL GO TOWARDS BIRD CONSERVATION IN BOTSWANA

BLB Board members elected at the AGM of May 2017:

- Chairman – Ian White
- ViceChairman – Mike Barclay
- Treasurer – Kosala Wijesena
- Secretary – Peter D’Arcy
- Records Sub Committee Chairman – Chris Brewster
- UB Rep. – Dr. Marks Ditlogo
- DWNP Rep. – Dr. Michael Flyman
- Media Rep. – Moremi Gabagore
- Additional Member (Letlhakane BLB Staff Team Lead) – Motshereganyi Virat Kootsositse
- Ex-Officio member (Director BLB) – Dr. Kabelo Senyatso



Which wader species is shown in the above picture? What are the identifying features?

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Across:
9: Bird found in maze.

Down:

Created by Yanito Freminoshi and surrendered to the public domain on December 31st 2014.

Birds Word Search Puzzle

C V D R I B G N I M M U H D I
I J B L U E B I R D V O Y I B
P Z W R E N D U C K G D W V I
N E V A R W P A R R O T H V H
H L T P R E H S I F G N I K C
N C R G C H I C K E N X R N N
I N I C V M C R A N E V V B I
U O Q R D R I B K C A L B G F
G E D K T B N K D R A L L A M
N G A Z V S W A T E R F O W L
E I K N I L O B O B B K I W I
P P P Y L Y R A N A C L Y O D
S R E K C E P D O O W B P R E
N H A W K C O C A E P Q Y C R
E T A G I R F P E S U O R G I

- BLACKBIRD
- BLUEBIRD
- BOBOLINK
- CANARY
- CHICKEN
- CRANE
- CROW
- DUCK
- FINCH
- FRIGATE
- GROUSE
- HAWK
- HUMMINGBIRD
- KINGFISHER
- KIWI
- MALLARD
- OSTRICH
- PARROT
- PEACOCK
- PENGUIN
- PIGEON
- RAVEN
- WATERFOWL
- WOODPECKER
- WREN