



June 2019 newsletter

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# FAMILIAR CHAT

**EVER HEARD OF WORLD SWIFT DAY?** It is celebrated on 7 June. Check out information below about ‘the astounding swift’.

What about World Sparrow day? World Migratory Bird Day(s)? World Sea-bird Day? World Curlew Day? Increasingly as birds become more endangered, and as we mess with our environment and bird numbers are plummeting, individuals and groups are bringing people’s attention to the world of birds by celebrating in any manner possible..

Next edition expect to be informed about such days and when to celebrate them.

## The astounding swift

### BAROMETER

#### of climate change

Season creep and extreme weather undermine the swift’s sole food source -- small flying insects

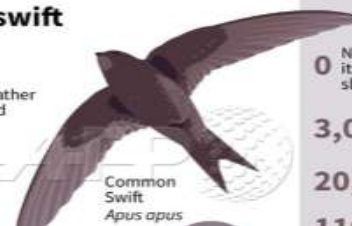
#### of biodiversity

Building cavities, where swifts nest, also provide homes for sparrows and bats



### MASTERS OF MIGRATION

— Common Swift round trip  
— Beijing Swift return data not available



### RECORD BREAKER

- 0** Number of times a swift lands during its life, other than to nest. Eats and sleeps entirely on the wing
- 3,000 m** Altitude at which a swift dozes
- 20,000** Number of insects this pest controller eats a day
- 110 kph** Top speed when flapping
- 22,000 km** Distance *apus apus* covers on migration
- 97** times round the world  
Distance a swift flies over its lifetime (3.8 million km)

Sources: worldswiftday.org, RSPB, BTO, swift-conservation.org, commonswift.org



## Editorial ..

Thanks to John, Harold, Gihan, Virat, Dikabelo, Ian, Mike & Daphne amongst others who are making contributions to Familiar Chat.. Please keep such information flowing in so we have lovely pictures, articles and bird lists to share with our members. Keep this up! It is amazing.... As always: Doreen.. thanks for checking over...



(.. not sure who to accredit the above cartoon to.. looks like Angry Birds copyright..)



## Baby Birds Out of the Nest

When you come across a helpless-looking baby bird out of its nest, it's hard to resist the overpowering urge to come to the rescue. But most of the time it's best to do nothing. Many birds that people try to rescue are still being cared for by their parents and should be left alone. *Remember:* Young birds face naturally tough odds. Only 30 percent of young songbirds survive their first year of life. This is nature's way of maintaining population sizes that the environment can support.

Here's a primer on when to take action for songbirds (baby ducks or geese require a different approach);

### Assess for Injury

The first thing to do when you find a baby songbird is to figure out if it's injured. Baby birds can naturally look weak, but if you see blood or other obvious damage contact a licenced veterinarian or find someone who rehabilitates such animals. (Not easy in Botswana).

### Determine Age

Baby birds go through three stages:

- **Hatchling (usually 0-3 days old).** It hasn't yet opened its eyes, and may have wisps of down on its body. It's not ready to leave the nest.
- **Nestling (usually 3-13 days old).** Its eyes are open, and its wing feathers may look like tubes because they've yet to break through their protective sheaths. It's also not ready to leave the nest.
- **Fledgling (13-14 days old or older).** This bird is fully feathered. Its wings and tail may be short, and it may not be a great flyer, but it can walk, hop, or flutter. It has left the nest, though its parents may be nearby, taking good care of it.



### Help Hatchlings and Nestlings

If you find a hatchling or a nestling on the ground and you can see its nest, you should try to safely return it. Contrary to popular belief, birds do not have a well-developed sense of smell. Therefore, the parents won't know if a young bird has been touched by people and will not abandon their young.

If there's no nest, you can make one by fastening a small wicker basket (sides no higher than 4 inches) to a branch. Cut two pieces of wire to 50 cm lengths and thread them up through the bottom of the basket and down again. Line the basket with dry grass, and securely wire it to the top of a branch in the same tree or shrub as the nest. Place the bird inside the basket.

### Give Fledglings Room to Grow

If you find a fledgling, the best course of action is to leave it alone. As awkward as a fledgling bird may look, this is natural stage, and the parents are most likely nearby, hunting for food and keeping watch. If the bird's in immediate danger, you can put it in a nearby bush or tree.

### Don't Raise Baby Birds Yourself

It is illegal to bring a baby bird home and try to raise it. Most young birds won't survive if cared for by well meaning but inexperienced people. Those that do survive will be at a disadvantage. They'll have missed important lessons that they would have learned from their parents, such as how to find food and water in the wild and how to avoid predators.

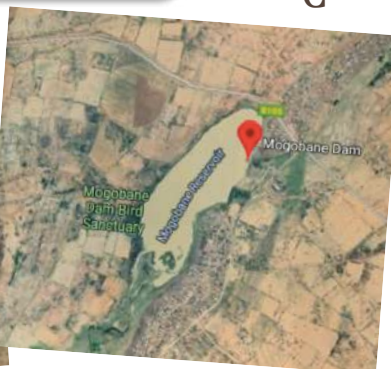
### Protect Baby Birds from Cats

While all birds are threatened by outdoor cats, baby birds are especially vulnerable. Birds should never be removed from the wild to protect them from cats or other predators. If there is a baby bird on the ground and a cat nearby, put the cat indoors until the bird is able to fly. If the cat belongs to a neighbour, ask the owner to remove the cat or, when the owner is not known, spray the cat with water to encourage it to leave the property.

<https://www.massaudubon.org/learn/nature-wildlife/birds/baby-birds-out-of-the-nest>

# Mogobane Dam

## March Bird Walk



Map snippets Courtesy Google maps :

A ————— = 10km

B ————— = 5km

C ————— = 1km



86 Bird Species were spotted on the walk, 39 of which were waterbirds. (8 of which were ducks, teals & geese, and 11 that were different sorts of storks & egret species). Of particular interest was the sighting of two Great Crested Grebes, B-listed Rarities in Botswana. 3 different sorts of Tern, 5 different sorts of Swifts and Swallows... what a feast of birds in 4 hours!



Dam photos courtesy of Gihan Langakoon, Pied Kingfisher, White-winged Tern & Little Stint courtesy of Ian White (Flickr)

- 1 Acacia Pied Barbet
- 1 Chinspot Batis
- 4 European Bee-eater
- 1 Southern Red Bishop
- 1 Black-throated Canary
- 1 Rattling Cisticola
- 10 Red-knobbed Coot
- 1 Reed Cormorant
- 1 White-breasted Cormorant
- 1 Black Crake
- 1 Long-billed Crombec
- 2 Pied Crow
- 1 African Darter
- 1 Laughing Dove
- 2 Yellow-billed Duck
- 20 Comb Duck
- 20 White-faced Duck
- 1 African Fish Eagle
- 1 Yellow-billed Egret
- 4 Little Egret
- 8 Western Cattle Egret
- 1 Burnt-necked Eremomela
- 2 Scaly-feathered Finch
- 1 Marico Flycatcher
- 1 Go-away-bird
- 12 Spur-winged Goose
- 15 Egyptian Goose
- 2 Great Crested Grebe
- 2 Helmeted Guineafowl
- 1 Black Heron
- 1 Black-headed Heron
- 1 Squacco Heron
- 4 Grey Heron
- 2 Hadeda Ibis
- 4 African Sacred Ibis
- 1 African Jacana
- 1 Pied Kingfisher
- 1 Yellow-billed Kite
- 1 Crowned Lapwing
- 8 Blacksmith Lapwing
- 1 Sabota Lark
- 20 Common House Martin
- 1 Red-faced Mousebird
- 2 Common Myna
- 4 Red-billed Oxpecker
- 10 Speckled Pigeon
- 3 Kittlitz's Plover
- 6 Three-banded Plover
- 4 Southern Pochard
- 2 Black-chested Prinia
- 2 Tawny-flanked Prinia
- 1 Black-backed Puffback
- 1 Kalahari Scrub Robin
- 4 Ruff
- 1 Common Sandpiper
- 10 Wood Sandpiper
- 2 South African Shelduck
- 1 Crimson-breasted Shrike
- 1 African Snipe
- 1 Cape Sparrow
- 1 Great Sparrow
- 2 Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
- 4 African Spoonbill
- 1 Cape Glossy Starling
- 4 Little Stint
- 2 Yellow-billed Stork
- 2 Amethyst Sunbird
- 2 Marico Sunbird
- 1 Barn Swallow
- 1 Greater Striped Swallow
- 5 Lesser Striped Swallow
- 1 Little Swift
- 1 White-rumped Swift
- 6 Red-billed Teal
- 1 Whiskered Tern
- 10 White-winged Tern
- 1 Groundscraper Thrush
- 1 Chestnut-vented Tit-babbler
- 2 White-backed Vulture
- 3 Cape Wagtail
- 1 Sedge Warbler
- 2 Black-faced Waxbill
- 2 Blue Waxbill
- 1 Southern Masked Weaver
- 4 White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
- 2 Pin-tailed Whydah

## Khama Rhino Sanctuary (KRS)

We just love Botswana, especially its natural heritage.

The magnificent variety of game, trees, insect life, reptiles, birds, flowers, unpolluted night skies and the rest keep us amazed by their wonder and beauty. Added to that is the sheer scale of the place and that an adventure or interesting interaction with nature lies around every bend in the road. If we were asked which was our favourite destination, we would be hard-pressed to make a decision. Would it be the remote Western Woodlands with their tall camelthorn trees and waving grass, the Mababe grass plains in Savuti, stocked with herds and herds of zebras and elephants, the water front of the Chobe River, the quietness of being paddled in a mokoro through the Delta, our reverie being disturbed only by the grunts and snorts of a nearby hippo, the silence of the Central Kalahari with its unspoilt starry skies or a quiet section of the Limpopo River with the call of an Orange-breasted Bush Shrike or Woodland Kingfisher? To these options we have to add the Khama Rhino Sanctuary with its huge herds scattered randomly on the grassy pans. Of all the countries in the world, Botswana must approach the original Garden of Eden more closely than any other. It is special.

But I want to write about Khama Rhino Sanctuary. Situated about twenty-two kms north of Serowe and a comfortable four-hour drive from Gaborone, this little piece of Heaven is run and operated by the local community. It is an excellent example to other communities as to what can be achieved by good management and attention to detail.

The booking office is efficient as is the office at the front gate; the camping facilities are basic and acceptable with excellent shady campsites under manketti trees. All in all, one immediately feels welcome.

A few kms down a sandy road to test one's four-wheel drive, brings us out onto the pans. There one is met by a vista of animals unmatched anywhere else except in a zoo. Here there are no fences to keep the animals apart.



One's first instinct is to look for rhino. Our initial search yielded eighteen of these mammoths including calves.

Included in this first amazing scanning were impala, springbok, oryx (gemsbok), zebra, wildebeest (gnu), giraffe, waterbuck, eland, ostrich, warthog, Secretary Bird and Kori Bustard. What an array! Then there were the frequent arrivals and departures of Burchell's

Sandgrouse with our favourite call of *choc-lit, choc-lit!* (As a chocoholic, the thought crosses one's mind: just as the honeyguide leads one to honey, does this sandgrouse lead one to chocolate?)

Further searching of the Sanctuary yielded steenbok and duiker. Others claimed to have seen a leopard. Then it was back to camp with its attractive manketti trees (*Schinziophyton rautanenii*). In camp one is hosted by starlings and hornbills of several descriptions. With some luck one will be visited by Meyer's Parrots and possibly a Pearl-spotted Owlet.

Then there are always the squirrels, dragonflies, lizards and skinks to keep one amused in the hot mid-day.

A return trip to the pans in the afternoon may yield a convocation of eagles and a wake of vultures. A close-up of a Bateleur is always a rewarding sighting. Then there are always the littlies which give so much pleasure; the Scaly-feathered Finches, the Violet-eared Waxbills, the Pin-tailed Whydahs always rounding up their harems, the firefinches and on and on.

Truly, Khama Rhino Sanctuary is one of Botswana's uncrowded tourist hotspots, always ripe for a revisit.

It is so good for the soul and so soothing to just sit there gazing over the pans and take in the harmony and beauty of nature. Our thanks and appreciation go to all those, past and present, who have had a role

to play in establishing and maintaining KRS.



Harold  
Hester

# BirdLife calls for Urgent High-level Support for African Vultures

28 June 2019

BirdLife Botswana strongly condemns the recent poisoning of vultures in the country, and calls on the government to take action to prevent further similar incidents

By BirdLife Botswana



For some reason, these new birds didn't seem as interested in William's bird seed.

Copyright: Phil Selby 2007 -<http://bigeyedeer.wordpress.com>

BirdLife Botswana (BirdLife Partner) is unequivocally condemning the **recent poisoning of 537 highly endangered vultures** by elephant poachers in the Central District of Botswana. This devastating incident has resulted in the country's highest recorded death toll of vultures associated with a single poisoning incident and is one of the worst killings of vultures on the continent, rivalling a similar incident in the Caprivi area of Namibia in 2013, where between 400-600 vultures were killed.

Although the Botswana government appears to be stepping up its anti-poaching initiatives, catastrophic vulture mortality continues to occur because of poisoning by poachers. Poachers poison vultures to stop them circling above carcasses — thus signalling their illegal activity. Targeted and non-targeted poisoning of vultures is escalating at an alarming rate across the continent, with a high number of incidents focused on southern Africa.

These incidences are devastating," says Motshereganyi Virat Kootsositse, BirdLife Botswana's Executive Director. "Agrochemicals used illegally to poison vultures should be banned, and the use of safer alternatives encouraged. Although legislation is in place to manage agrochemicals in Botswana, enforcement is lacking, resulting in widespread misuse. The government should up its efforts to revise and enforce legislation and increase public awareness of the use of hazardous chemicals."

Vultures are invaluable as a species due to the incredible public health services they provide. By eating rotting carcasses, they prevent the spread of diseases such as tuberculosis, rabies and anthrax. BirdLife Botswana works tirelessly to tackle vulture poisoning in the country. In collaboration with other BirdLife partners and organisations in the Kavango-Zambezi (KAZA) region, they are working to address increasing elephant poaching; the main threat to the region's declining vulture populations. Improving cross border collaboration, enforcement and building capacity for wildlife crime prosecution and improving the availability of information are crucial to these efforts.

However, illegal poisoning is something that community support systems, education and awareness alone may not be able to combat. The government needs to use legislative action to help save vultures and wildlife in Botswana, and across the KAZA region.

"If such catastrophic episodes continue to occur across Africa, we may lose the race to save these iconic and vitally important species," says Beckie Garbett from the BirdLife International Africa Partnership Secretariat. "Vultures are currently not receiving the global conservation support and recognition that many other highly threatened species are, which puts them on a back foot in terms of conservation organisations having the capacity to halt and reverse their declines."

<http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/>

## Bird-killing, cancer-causing 5G is the internet's new favourite conspiracy theory

Anti-5G activists claim the upgrade to mobile networks will cause cancer, infertility and autism, but there's no proof. And the level of misinformation is growing <https://www.wired.co.uk/article/5g-health-risks-concerns>

By **SABRINA WEISS** Wednesday 12 June 2019

**CLAIM AND COUNTER-CLAIM.. WHO TO BELIEVE?**

Seven years after the arrival of 4G, EE has finally switched on the UK's first 5G networks in six UK cities – and more are coming. The upgrade promises much faster data connections but conspiratorially-minded online activists are convinced that the new technology will bring with it something much more sinister than an end to video buffering.

On social media, forums and online blogs, anti-5G activists are attributing a bewildering range of maladies to 5G, including cancer, infertility, autism and Alzheimer's. In November 2018, a viral Facebook post blamed a 5G test mast for the [mysterious death of 300 birds](#) in the Netherlands (the test actually took place months earlier), while people in anti-5G groups share tips on how to smash down telephone masts. But how did an incremental upgrade in mobile networks turn into the internet's favourite new conspiracy theory?

Perhaps the most prominent in the anti-5G movement is Dutch UFO researcher "Stop5G" Facebook group which now has more than 20,000 members and was the ground zero of the bird death myth, including one Californian wildfires punishment by the state's failure and other theories, suggesting that the "ruling elite" because of in November 2018 were a "ruling elite" because of to roll out "mass 5G".

Kuhles' main group has spinoffs, including "Stop 5G UK", which has countless smaller groups that worry about 5G their own city or town. In being rolled out in Glastonbury residents have already appealed to the local council to halt EE's plans to rollout 5G at the music festival later this month. On Twitter, anti-5G acolytes share posts around the hashtag #Stop5G while on Instagram accounts share questionable images of people in hazmat suits working on what are supposed to be 5G masts.



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Despite this, there is no solid evidence that 5G – or any mobile communications network – can have a harmful effect on human health. The upgrade is based on similar technology to preceding mobile networks, and so far no study has found a link between mobile phones and cancer, although research into the area is ongoing.

But that hasn't held back the anti-5G movement, which started ramping up in earnest in 2018 when major mobile networks were starting to roll-out their 5G trials in earnest. Since May 2018, RT America, the US arm of the Russian broadcaster has aired more than a dozen news segments warning of cancer, nosebleeds, and other health risks using sensationalist phrases such as "5G apocalypse" or "an experiment on humanity", telling viewers 5G "might kill you".

Whether or not these form part of a disinformation campaign by the Russians against the US in the global race to introduce 5G networks, as suggested in a recent *New York Times* article, RT America's claims have fuelled existing consumer concerns and have been picked up by hundreds of smaller news sites and blogs in the last couple of months. But fears around radiowave radiation of the sort used in the mobile industry are nothing new. "The actual conspiracy theories are kind of rehashed from 4G and everything else before," says David Grimes, a physicist, cancer researcher and science writer. High-voltage power lines and mobile phones, he says, already caused health concerns in the late 1980s and 90s, when they were linked with brain tumours and other cancers – claims that have been extensively researched, and debunked, by scientists over the last few decades.

In the UK, for instance, the number of mobile phone users increased 500 per cent between the 1990s and 2016, while the number of brain tumour diagnoses only went up by 34 per cent, an increase that is attributed to better detection and reporting. "What we are seeing now is a slight repackaging of [theories], but that is not surprising because we see that with vaccinations as well," says Grimes. Every time a new vaccine comes out, he explains, old myths about different vaccines are repackaged and pushed out. And like many new technologies, 5G sparks concerns even though the underlying technology is largely identical to 4G.

[Continued on page 7]

[From page 6, continued..]

## 5G'S HARMFUL EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

RT America and many online discussions refer to the emitted signals as “radiation”, seemingly associating them with ionising rays at the far end of the electromagnetic spectrum, such as X-rays and ultraviolet rays, which can break apart DNA and trigger genetic mutations that lead to cancer. But not all radiation is bad. The low-energy radio waves used in telecommunications lie at the opposite end of the spectrum with frequencies between 300 MHz and 300 GHz. And they bear an unfitting name. “Microwave radiation as a concept is very misunderstood. Where people get mixed up is when they think of microwaves, they think of a microwave heater,” says Grimes, and adds that, because people rely but do not fully understand how the technology works, there is a gap of misunderstanding and misinformation.

Joseph Uscinski, a University of Miami professor and editor of the book *Conspiracy Theories and the People Who Believe Them*, says these beliefs chime with people who are already prone to believing in conspiracy theories. “For people who already believe in a lot of conspiracy theories, every new thing is just going to fit into their paradigm,” he says. “People who are buying into this 5G stuff are probably people who have very high levels of conspiracy thinking. When they seek out information, they will go to places that cater to their beliefs.”

While conspiracies generally tend to diffuse slower than scientific news, online they may well spread further and faster. A study in the scientific journal *Science* found that false news was 70 per cent more likely to be retweeted than true stories. “It is much easier for people to find that kind of information and find it compelling, and more importantly, find a community around it that makes them feel like they belong to a group of people that have figured out the truth,” says John Kelly, CEO of Graphika. His New York-based social media analysis firm analysed online discussions around 5G and found they were mostly focused on health effects of the technology. Conspiratorial content, Kelly says, is primarily pushed by social media accounts that also promote narratives about anti-vaccination, flat Earth or chemtrails.

There is an abundance of misinformation available online: if an individual searches whether microwave radiation is carcinogenic,

various dubious websites will confirm those fears. Google’s search results will often point users to the most sensationalist – and factually dubious – information out there. To put it simply, it’s easier for people to absorb the information that’s close at hand than it is for them to reach for more reliable content. And that’s the main problem, according to Grimes. “The biggest single thing individuals can do is to learn how to part a reputable source from a non-reputable one,” he says.

But teaching and courses in critical thinking could offer a

solution. “We can learn from the scientific method. Our default position should always be scepticism,” says Grimes. But this will require a sea change in the way both young and adult generations think about the world. He warns, however, blaming the spread of conspiracy theories on the internet alone would be an oversimplification. “We have had conspiracies, extremism and conspiracy-driven violence long before there was an internet. The internet may spread an idea quickly, but the willingness for people to believe in it is already there.” He points out that more than half of the US population believed in assassination conspiracy theory is shortly after president John F. Kennedy was killed in 1963. To avoid conspiracy theories getting out of hand, he stresses government officials, industry and the media should be prepared to tell the public when information is wrong.

And that might just be working. In response to the worried residents of Glastonbury, EE – the first mobile network operator to have launched 5G in the UK – has reached out to the local council and offered to take part in community meetings. The company says it also responding to social media posts and letters expressing health concerns, reaching out to the public via traditional media, and has published a dedicated blog to address people with fears about 5G. Howard Jones, head of network communications at EE says: “It is hugely important that we are on record setting the record straight because without the voice from us and the industry to explain what this [technology] really is, then the misinformation is left unchecked.”

(Well that’s the technologist’s viewpoint. But there are always two sides to the story. Can anyone give us another perspective?) – Ed.

## PUBLIC HEALTH WARNING

**ALL WIRELESS DEVICES EMIT MICROWAVE RADIATION—a known biological hazard**



**EVERY TIME YOU USE A WIRELESS DEVICE, YOU ARE EXPOSED TO MICROWAVE RADIATION.**

The World Health Organization (WHO) labels this radiation a Class 2B possible cancer-causing agent in the same category as lead, DDT, and chloroform. Cell phones, cordless phones, tablets, laptops, ‘smart’ meters—the more you are around these devices, the more radiation you get.

**MICROWAVE RADIATION IS HARMFUL TO YOU.** Scientists link this radiation to diseases, both long-term and short-term: cancer, infertility, DNA damage, damage to fetuses, sleep problems, memory and behavior problems, heart problems and many others.

**MANY PEOPLE HAVE BECOME “ELECTRO-HYPER-SENSITIVE” (EHS)** and cannot tolerate even low exposures, seriously impacting their health, job, housing, and social lives.

**GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS DO NOT PROTECT YOU.** FCC guidelines were written decades ago and ignore current science linking microwaves to human disease. Cities like San Francisco have tried to introduce mandatory health warnings on cell phones but the wireless industry has suppressed these efforts with lawsuits and economic boycotts.

## Take on Nature: Tweet some good news about the birds

**This article about birds from across the British Isles, reported in the Irish News, a Northern Ireland newspaper exemplifies that there is some good news out there for our feathered friends.**

BIRDS are great recyclers and at this time of year you can see them plucking and pulling at discarded items to use for nest-building. It is not just traditional materials such as twigs, dead grass and leaves, but strands of human junk – elastic bands, bits of paper and torn material.

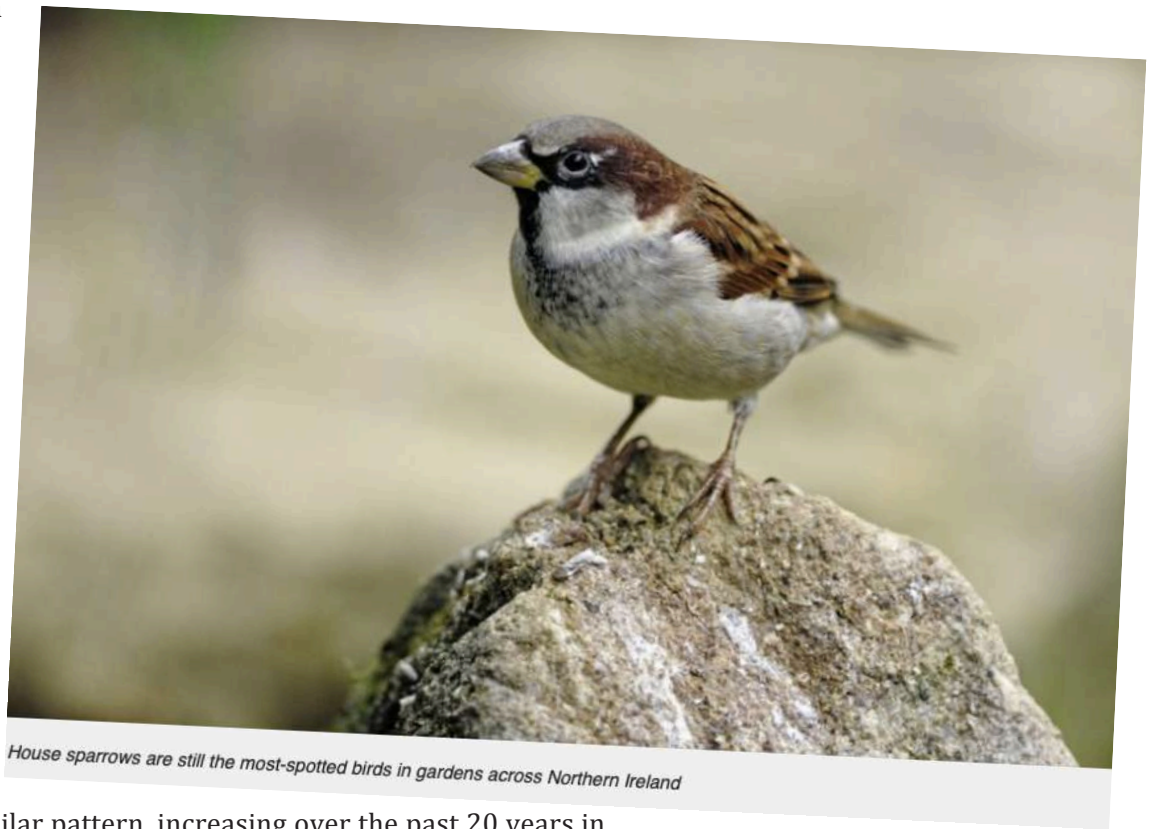
Those who cut their hair at home, or trim bushy beards can help by leaving their cut-offs out in the open, while pet owners can also help by leaving hair shed by dogs and cats in their garden for the nest-builders.

Too often we take our more common birds for granted and yet they are an indicator of the health of our environment. Many species have shown alarming levels of decline in recent decades – to the point of near extinction in the case of birds such as the corncrake whose decline is a direct result of modern farming.

Yet there are positive stories out there. In Britain, herring gull numbers have fallen to such an extent that the species is now on a red list and in need of conservation action. However, the gulls have recovered slightly in Northern Ireland and there has been an increase in their population.

And, according to Katherine Booth Jones, scientific officer at the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Northern Ireland office, the amber-listed lesser black-backed gull and common gull are

both showing a similar pattern, increasing over the past 20 years in the north while numbers continue to decline in Britain.



*House sparrows are still the most-spotted birds in gardens across Northern Ireland*

"It is good to see that there is room for optimism, with some of our breeding gulls and puffins holding their own, and that puffins are now returning annually to the new colony on the Copeland Islands," Ms Booth Jones said.

However, the same report notes concern about our sandwich tern population.

Monitoring of this species began in Northern Ireland in 1969 and is ongoing, making it the longest running of any seabird in Northern Ireland.

The BTO said that although the population fluctuates from year to year, it has remained stable since 1986. However, the very low breeding success of tern species is a cause for concern. Breeding has been badly affected by predation and from extreme weather events, such as last year's Storm Hector. [TO PAGE10]



# Darnaway Camp

## 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019

Whilst the temperature going to the camp was nearly 40 and we were met by construction vehicles on every corner of the new access road, on arrival we were greeted in the camp by tranquillity and shade from large *Acacia albida* (now known as *Faidherbia albida*), *Acacia tortillis* and *Acacia nigrescens* (Knobthorn) and a delicious but short lived chocolate birthday cake.

Twelve members and little Ula joined the camp. The nights were very pleasant surprisingly cool and NO snoring witnessed!

Whilst the number of birds seen was average the sightings and sounds were great including Scops and Pearl Spotted Owlett, Fiery-necked Nightjar, Woodland, Brown-hooded and Grey-headed Kingfishers, Fish Eagle, White-backed Vulture, a Brown Snake Eagle and at least three Greater Honeyguides combing a swarm of bees, hanging from the bow of a large acacia, waiting for an opportunity to get a meal. At the same time there was an immature African Golden Oriole seen by all lucky enough to be present, Swallow-tail, European, Blue-cheeked and White-fronted

Bee-eaters were also ever present as were Willow Warblers.

The day before Janet encountered a large python and Craig, even without a weapon, was ready to take the serpent on if need be. With Janet being his priority he made it clear that should the need arise he would man handle the python and even gnaw at it to save his better half. This is when Inga realised that we had our very own equivalent of, or alias for, Crocodile Dundee being Legavaan Labuschagne (or 'Leg-over' for short).



John enjoying his birthday cake!!

We also found leopard spoor near camp on the Sunday morning, and plenty evidence of Porcupine. A Brown Hyena was also seen by three of the intrepid explorers on a night drive.

The only complaint was made by Harold when he mentioned that perhaps Gail and Floris should not be invited on future camps as they were too quiet, which was met with a huge uproar from the majority of the campers as their company on camps is always enjoyed. Harold (who was without Geraldine) enjoyed his moment of bachelor-hood but definitely also enjoyed (Geraldines')



coffee and homemade cookies as much as I did.

On exiting the farm a Black-breasted Snake Eagle was seen diving hunched up to the ground for potential prey but unfortunately due to its proximity to one of the vehicles it was disturbed and flew off from the ground almost as quickly as it arrived.

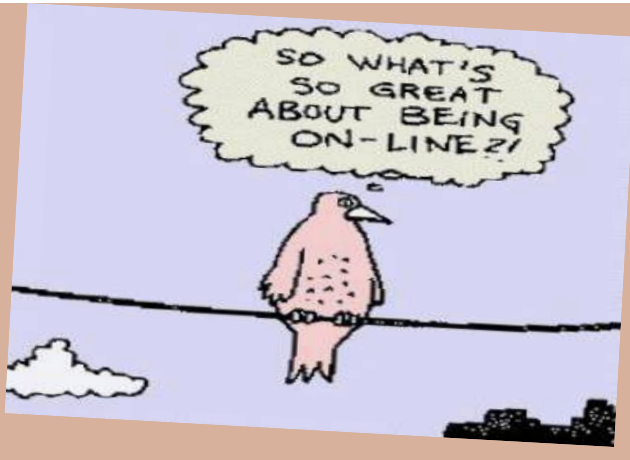
We feel that all those present really enjoyed the walks, tranquillity of the camp and humour and we look forward to the next adventure.

Thank you very much to Kevin, Lindy, Ula and Megan for a wonderful camp, Harold for organising it and Daphne for recording the sightings.



Relaxing and enjoying the tranquillity of camp

*John Dalziel*



I cannot find the copyright for the above cartoon.. (help please...)

[FROM PAGE 8..]

Roseate terns plummeted in number in the early 1990s and now only a single pair breeds annually at Larne Lough. Meanwhile, according to the RSPB, house sparrows are still the most-spotted birds in gardens across Northern Ireland.

Almost 14,000 in Northern Ireland spent an hour watching the birds that visit their garden or outdoor space as part of the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch. Sightings in the north included great spotted woodpeckers, yellowhammers, sparrowhawks, goldcrests and fieldfares.

The RSPB birdwatch, held over the last weekend in January, revealed that there was a decrease in sightings of wrens and long-tailed tits, two of our smallest species.

Long-tailed tits decreased by 28 per cent and wrens by 17 per cent in 2019, after being counted in particularly large numbers in 2018. Populations of both species may have been affected by last year's 'beast from the east' as small birds are more susceptible to spells of cold weather, but it's too early to say if this is a one-year blip or the beginning of a trend.

RSPB conservation scientist Daniel Hayhow said: "Over its long lifetime, the survey has shown the increasing good fortunes of birds including goldfinches and wood pigeons and the alarming declines of house sparrows and starlings.

"While the overall decline in house sparrow numbers, reported by participants, since the Big Garden Birdwatch began is 56 per cent (1979 to 2019), in the most recent decade (2009 to 2019), numbers appear to have increased by 10 per cent.

"This gives us hope that at least a partial recovery may be happening," Mr Hayhow said.

**Tony Bailie**

13 April, 2019

<https://www.irishnews.com/lifestyle/2019/04/13/news/take-on-nature-tweet-some-good-news-about-the-birds-1592970/>

**7 great dads of the bird world**

The recent (2019) Father's Day was all about celebrating the great dads out there – and there are plenty in the bird world. Who knows, one of these feathered fathers might remind you of someone you know...

**1 Emperor penguin** – (Antartica)

Balances an egg on it's feet for two months throughout the winter, at temperatures of -40° until it hatches

**2 Namaqua Sandgrouse** – (arid regions of South-West Africa)

In the Southern African deserts it travels up to 30 km every morning to fetch water, soaking up water in its belly feathers, so the hatchlings can drink from the plumage

**3 Greater Rhea** – (South-Eastern South America)

These guys can tend up to 80 eggs in one nest. They all hatch within 36 hours of each other. Imagine the pandemonium at this birthday party!!

**4 Village weaver** – (Sub-Saharan Africa)

Our brothers can make up to 20 hanging nests for their lady friends. She surveys his handiwork and picks her favourite.

**5 Grey-headed albatross** – (Circumpolar Southern ocean)

After he completes the 72 day incubation he is also solely responsible for the next 6 months to feed his chick more that half a kg of food a day, until the chick fledges

**6 Thick-billed Murre** – (Arctic waters across the globe)

After throwing itself off the cliff where it was born - a third the size of its parents and unable to fly properly - dad stays right by the chick's side. One father-youngster pair was tracked together for 3000km, for at least 8 weeks, or until the precious progeny can fend for itself.

**7 Human dads who take their kids bird-watching**

Ask almost any bird lover how they got started, and they'll be able to single out a special encounter – no matter how small – that really opened their eyes to birds. In today's world, children are becoming increasingly separated from nature and the health and happiness it provides. Dads who show their children the wonders of the natural world are helping to create the conservationists of tomorrow – people who will make sure birds continue to be loved and protected for generations to come.

<http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/7-great-dads-bird>



**Every year, millions of migratory birds are unlawfully killed as they embark on their epic journeys between their homes in Europe and Africa.**

Every March, the European turtle-dove has starts its journey back to its breeding grounds. Populations have been wiped out by up to 49% in the last 16 years. With its survival at stake, it is now critical that we end the illegal slaughter of this globally threatened species before it's too late.

The Greek islands seem like paradise – for birds and people alike. They are a very important resting site for turtle-doves who arrive in Europe starved and exhausted after their long and hazardous crossing of the Saharan desert followed by the Mediterranean Sea. Tragically, each spring they are greeted with a shower of gunshots.

Over 70,000 turtle-doves are estimated to be illegally slaughtered in Greece each spring, making it one of the worst bird killing blackspots along the entire African-Eurasian flyway. And they are crossing this dangerous area over the last three months.

In response to the killing, BirdLife International has launched Flight for Survival, a campaign raising awareness of this issue globally, with particular focus on seven illegally killed bird species. Our new campaign aims to raise awareness of this relatively little-known crisis. We are following the migration journey of seven species – the Egyptian Vulture, European Turtle-dove, European Honey-buzzard, Eurasian Blackcap, Eastern Imperial Eagle, Common Quail and White Stork – as they travel from Africa to their spring breeding grounds in Europe, exposing the different dangers as they pass through some of the worst illegal killing “blackspots”.

Please visit our campaign hub, to see the conservation work being undertaken and how your donations can help.

[Continued on page 12]

Courtesy BirdLife International



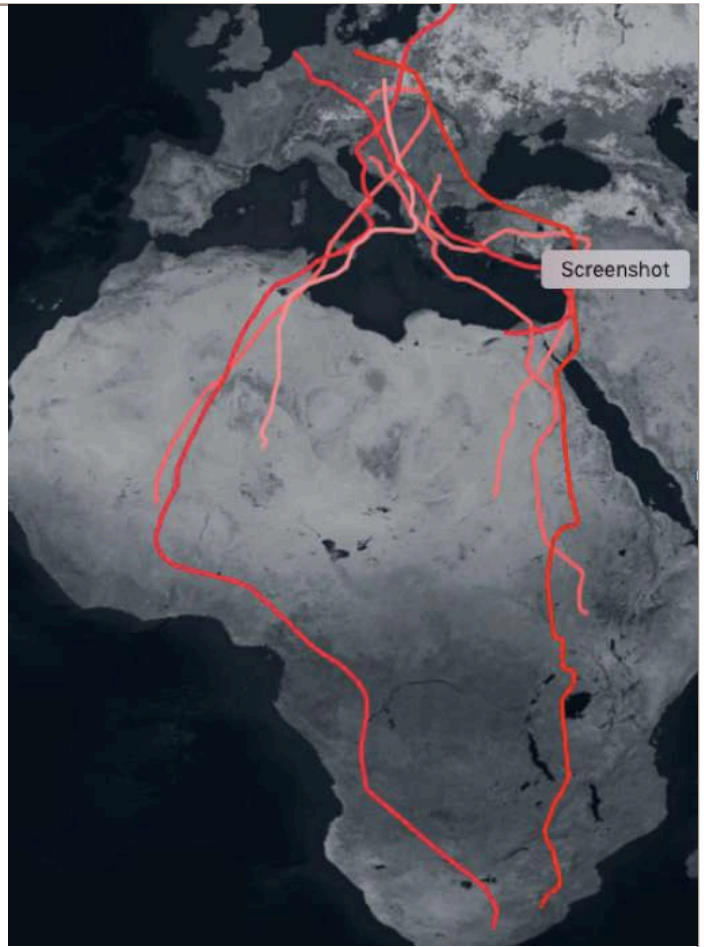
BirdLife International has exposed the illegal mass slaughter of migratory birds across the Mediterranean, Northern Europe and the Caucasus. Every year, an average of 25 000 000 birds are unlawfully shot, trapped or poisoned, from the smallest songbirds to the most powerful birds of prey. Endangered species, already hit hard by habitat loss and climate change, are being pushed closer to extinction – and all in open defiance of the law.

We are following the spectacular migratory journeys of these seven birds and exposing the different dangers they face at some of the worst illegal killing blackspots along the African-Eurasian flyway.

[Continued from the previous page]

Satellite image of the seven species listed above showing their migratory routes from Europe to their 'wintering' sites in Africa.

BirdLife International, and specifically the HOS (Greek BirdLife Partner) are hoping to raise money to fit satellite trackers on these species to further study their migratory routes and enhance their ability to protect the mass slaughter of these species.



**Some information you may have missed:**

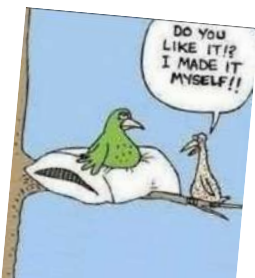
Summer bird walk meetings are at 0630hrs at Molapo crossing on the first Sunday of each month. Members will receive an email and a reminder goes out on the BirdLife WhatsApp page. Please bring chairs and refreshments for relaxing after the walk. Beginners are especially welcome. For those of you involved in the BirdLasser Gaborone Challenge, continue adding your birds to the site. (See last issue of FC for more information about our challenge.)

Due to extenuating circumstances, we decided to close our shop at the end of April. We have the remaining stock at our offices at Kgale Mews, down by the dam (behind St. Joseph's Senior Secondary School).

Sarah Coleman, the daughter of Steve and Sue Coleman, is launching a new quarterly magazine on gardening in the next few months. She is generously allocating a page to BLB to publicise birds in gardens. Please support Sarah and contribute to her magazine, specifically the "Birds in the garden" column. More details will follow, so watch this space.

The fledgling Astronomical Society of Botswana is hosted a visiting astronomer, Michael Poll, from SA recently. Michael talked about "The birth, life and death of Stars."

Have you paid your subs or taken out life membership? If not, we suggest you get 'a round tuit'.



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"Save the cranes"