



Familiar Chat



Photos courtesy Rentaro Shimizu (Verraux's Owl) - Gabs Game Reserve, Ian White (Scaly Feathered Finch), Linda Taylor (Mr & Mrs. Hornbill) - Kasane.



In the next Edition of FC – The case of the Hornbill couple in Kasane – is there Hybridisation between Crowned and Bradfields? Hopefully we will get to the bottom of this....

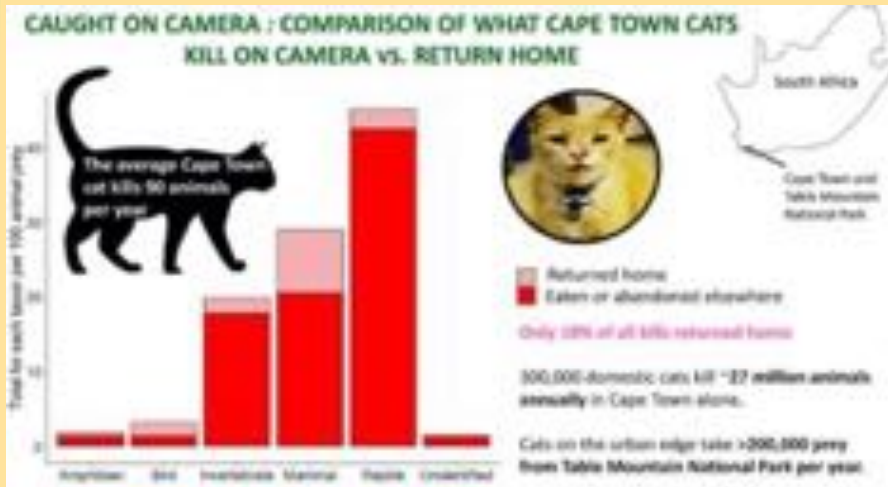
Contents of this edition:

DOMESTIC CATS AND THEIR IMPACT ON URBAN WILDLIFE

Following on from a large study done in the USA in our last edition of Familiar Chat, Seymour, Simmons et al. have recently released an interesting article about domestic cats in Cape Town and their night-time forays. Follow this link for an interesting article. If you are a member of our sister organisation BirdLife South Africa, you might also subscribe to the upcoming 'Conservation Conversation'.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2351989420307393?FB_PRIVATE_TRACKING=%7B%22loggedout_browser_id%22%3A%220612fff0e57d8ad6214349ae3048ad838a7db67d%22%7D&fbclid=IwAR3Yxzapujpiq4J551GELXUSqbjjPGpcVd34

- Page 2 – Sept. Monthly Birdwalk 'RAMOTSWA LANDS'
- Page 3-4 – Wind farms & BirdLife
- Page 4 – Javan songbird crisis
- Page 5-6 – How we can save the African Penguin
- Page 6 – Bird Beaks & Feet
- Page 7 – Ian White's LBJs (Little Brown Jobs)
- Page 8 – Fun Bird Facts
- Page 9 – Mass Vulture killing – again?
- Page 9 – ? + IBA's – what are they?
- Page 10 – BirdLife Botswana Membership Form
- Page 11 – Bird Search + BLB Board + BLB Contacts





September 2020, Beginning of Month Bird-walk – ‘RAMOTSWA LANDS’

Marico Flycatcher
Hadedra
Cape Turtle Dove
African Palm Swift
Crowned Lapwing
Back Sparrowhawk



White-Sabota Lark
Marico Sunbird

Blue Waxbill
Egyptian Goose
Namaqua Dove
Rattling Cisticola
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
Black-chested Prinia
Southern Red-billed Hornbill
Laughing Dove
Black-throated Canary
Fork-tailed Drongo
Crimson-breasted Shrike
Kalahari Scrub Robin
Southern Red Bishop
Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill
Southern White-crowned Shrike
Scaly-feathered Finch
Shaft-tailed Whydah
African Pipit
Burnt-necked Eremomela
Long-billed Crombec
Little Swift
White-backed Vulture
bellied Sunbird



African Red-eyed Bulbul
Lanner Falcon
Temminck's Courser
Groundscraper Thrush
Southern Grey-headed Sparrow
Southern Masked Weaver
Yellow Canary
Acacia Pied Barbet
Common Myna
Crested Barbet
Ant-eating Chat
Lesser Striped Swallow
Red-billed Oxpecker



The locality is at about S24 deg, 49", E25 deg, 51.5". It is between the Taung and Ngotwane Rivers, near the confluence of the two rivers.

Rufous-naped Lark
Greater Honeyguide
Short-clawed Lark



Photos: Virginia Parker List: Chis Brewster. Maps: Google

BirdLife South Africa halts plans for dangerous wind farm

BirdLife supports renewable energy – but not when it comes at the expense of wildlife. In recent years, plans to build a wind farm near an important site for migratory birds have caused much concern among conservationists. Now, opposing action has put it on ice.



Wind power - key to protecting our climate but problematic for birds © Bildagentur Zoonar GmbH *By Cressida Stevens*

In a warming world, wind power is a hugely promising and much-needed solution to combat our over-reliance on fossil fuels. We know that wind farms are one of the most environmentally-friendly energy sources. Besides using a renewable resource, wind turbines release minimal amounts of carbon dioxide and actually take up very little land space since their structures occupy the air, rather than the land. However, for animals that need that air space, they can pose big problems.

The most obvious threat to birds and bats is direct and fatal collisions with blades. Besides this, turbines can affect their flight by disrupting air currents or displacing those birds that actively avoid turbines, such as geese, from their usual foraging areas. The Groot Winterhoekberg in the Eastern Cape is an ecologically important site, among other things it has a high density of raptors. The site is adjacent to a wilderness area as well as a portion of the Cape Floristic Region World Heritage site and under consideration for protected area expansion.

BirdLife South Africa was therefore devastated when, in April 2018, plans to build the Inyanda Roodeplaat Wind Farm in the Eastern Cape's Groot Winterhoekberg had been given the environmental go-ahead. The greater of two goods is clear in this case: this would be a major blow to Africa's biodiversity. Yet thankfully, this was not the end of the story.

The authorisation was granted in the midst of criticism and controversy. First, when the impact assessment for birds came out opposed to the wind farm, the applicant called for a reassessment by a different expert, who, whilst agreeing that it would have a detrimental impact on birds, argued that this could be mitigated. As well as this, there were allegations of misconduct

to bias the assessment, and even rumours of burning eagle nests and bird shootings to mask the site's importance to key species.

Research has shown that the bird group most likely to fatally collide with wind turbines are [birds of prey](#). Of particular concern would be the risk posed to the Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* (regionally Vulnerable), Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* (Vulnerable, regionally Endangered), and the Black Harrier *Circus maurus* (Endangered) which resides only in southern Africa. The proposed site for the turbines is on top of a mountain, in the direct line of flightpaths used by the birds. For this reason, BirdLife South Africa, along with four other stakeholders, strongly appealed against the decision to allow the development of the Inyanda Roodeplaat Wind Farm.

Although BirdLife South Africa is in favour of wind energy, it is against the development of wind farms in or close to protected areas or sites where they may jeopardise populations of threatened species. To help developers avoid these areas, BirdLife International coordinates the [BirdLife International Bird Sensitive Areas](#). Established by the Convention on Migratory Species, this aims to identify cost-effective locations where renewable energy structures can be built without harming birds.

In fact, BirdLife partners across the world are creating detailed bird sensitivity maps which highlight areas where renewable infrastructure will conflict with wildlife. These tools are now available in many countries, including Scotland, Greece, Slovenia and South Africa. BirdLife South Africa has also written guidance to help insure that impacts on species at risk are adequately assessed and mitigated. With these resources available, it was very disappointing that the Inyanda Roodeplaat Wind Farm has been given such consideration.

Despite the bleak outlook, good news came in late April of this year when Ms L. Zulu, the Acting Minister of the Department of Environmental Affairs in South Africa, upheld BirdLife's appeal – a major victory for the environment. The matter has been remitted to the Department for further consultation and reconsideration. Although the application remains in contention, BirdLife South Africa is now very optimistic that logic will prevail and the proposal will be declined.

The story acts as a reminder of the need for perseverance in complex issues of conservation – in a seemingly lost cause, there is always a chance of a turnaround. BirdLife hopes that in the future, renewable energy will continue to expand, with developers increasingly referring to the Energy Task Force to select sites that will not endanger wildlife and mean that there need be no compromise between protecting birds and combating climate change.

"Renewable energy is an important part of our climate change mitigation strategy", concludes BirdLife South Africa, "but it should not be at the expense of resilience to climate change. Resilience depends on healthy, intact environments. Through our work, we help achieve that balance".

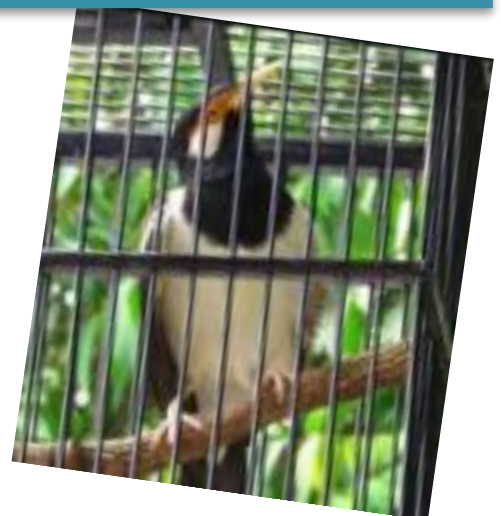
https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/great-news-birdlife-south-africa-halts-plans-dangerous-wind-farm?utm_source=BirdLife+International+News+Notifications&utm_campaign=a99f69d96f-Top_news_notification&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_4122f13b8a-a99f69d96f-131700825&mc_cid=a99f69d96f&mc_eid=4ce5c20c65

More caged birds than wild: Javan songbird crisis revealed

In Java, there are now more songbirds in cages than in forests. Fierce demand for lucrative song competitions is driving multiple species to the brink – but in a region where bird-keeping is a cultural mainstay, complex solutions are required.

<https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/more-caged-birds-wild-javan-songbird-crisis-revealed>

<https://twitter.com/orientbirdclub/status/1293568370294566912>



Oriental Bird Club @orientbirdclub · Aug 12, 2020

"There are only fifty Javan Pied Starling left in the wild - and ONE MILLION in cages!" #WednesdayThoughts 🙄💔

African penguins are heading towards extinction – here's how we can save them

By Lewis Pugh • 1 December 2020

African penguins walk on rocks on Boulders beach in Simon's Town. (Photo: EPA-EFE / Nic Bothma)

The science is clear: the African penguin is likely to be functionally extinct on the west coast in less than 15 years, unless we take immediate action.

There's a magical moment of transition when a penguin crosses from land to water. Earth-bound, they are slow and cumbersome; as soon as they enter the ocean, they become sleek and agile, diving with torpedo precision to forage for life-sustaining fish. That is, assuming there are fish to be had.

Last week I drove out to Stony Point near Hermanus to assist the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (Sanccob) with a release of rehabilitated African penguins. As I opened one box and watched its eager occupant waddle towards the water, fat and glossy with good health, I was struck by the difference between him and some of the resident birds.

I heard the despair in Sanccob marine scientist Lauren Waller's voice as she pointed out birds that likely wouldn't make it through the next few days. I've visited penguin colonies all over the southern hemisphere, but until now, I've never seen a starving penguin. It was eerily reminiscent of the malnourished polar bears I've seen in the north.

Competing for food

Many of these wild penguins were moulting – something penguins do every year. The birds stay ashore for up to 21 days to shed and regrow their protective feathers. Because they can't swim during their moult, they need to eat plenty before they come ashore to make it through their fast. These birds should have been at their fattest, but a good number of them were seriously emaciated, their breastbones pointing through their feathers when they fanned their wings.

The resources in our oceans are not endless, and they are no longer abundant, thanks to the combined threats of global warming, pollution and industrial overfishing. Standing on that rocky shoreline it became clear to me how acutely the African penguin is feeling these changes.

Some of these birds may have swum hundreds of kilometres to find food. Marine researchers from BirdLife South Africa recently discovered premoulting penguins



from Dassen Island turning up in De Hoop nature reserve some 350km away. Swimming such a long distance around Cape Point is not the best strategy when you're trying to put on weight, but these birds have no choice.

Functionally extinct

The science is clear: the African penguin is likely to be functionally extinct on the west coast in less than 15 years, unless we take immediate action. Functionally extinct means that a population has declined to the point where it is no longer viable and can no longer produce a new generation.

When surveys began in the early 1900s there were three million African penguins. Since then we have lost 95% of the population, and their numbers continue to drop. In 2000, there were an estimated 53,000. Today, there are just 17,700 breeding pairs.

They are now more vulnerable than the white rhino, the polar bear or the giant panda.

Oil on water

If the situation wasn't dire enough on the west coast, a new threat has emerged on the east coast, with offshore fuel ship-to-ship bunkering in Algoa Bay, close to the largest remaining African penguin colony at St Croix Island. The inherently risky operation of transferring fuel from one vessel to another at sea has already resulted in two oil spills.

Action plan

We are now at the point where every bird counts. Conservation agencies are doing everything they can to protect this iconic species.

Three crucial actions from our government could make all the difference to the African penguin's survival:

- Creating a No-Take Fishing Zone of at least a 20km radius around penguin colonies and their foraging grounds, so that the penguins are not competing with fishing companies.
- Shifting offshore bunkering away from penguin colonies. Why take the risk? Why allow ships to transfer oil from one vessel to another in such close proximity to South Africa’s biggest African penguin colony in Algoa Bay?
- As long as ships carry oil, there are likely to be oil spills. This is especially the case off South Africa’s coast, which is a major sea route and has some of the roughest seas in the world. Therefore, we must ensure that all vessels transiting around South Africa are required by law to have a wildlife response plan to mitigate the impact of oil on marine wildlife in the event of a spill.

Sea blind

It’s a little known fact that South Africa is actually more sea than land. Our exclusive economic zone (EEZ) stretches 200 nautical miles from our shores. That gives us 1.5 million km² of ocean, compared with 1.2 million km² of land – and yet we fail to recognise or properly protect our ocean resources. It is as if we are sea blind.

Our coast is a prime tourist destination. Visitors come from all over the world to see our magnificent beaches,



<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-12-01-african-penguins-are-heading-towards-extinction-heres-how-we-can-save-them/>

whales, penguins and sharks, providing a crucial boost to our economy. Yet South Africa has designated less than 15% of its coastline as a protected area – less than half the international recommendation. And less than 1% is classified as “fully protected”.

Repeating history

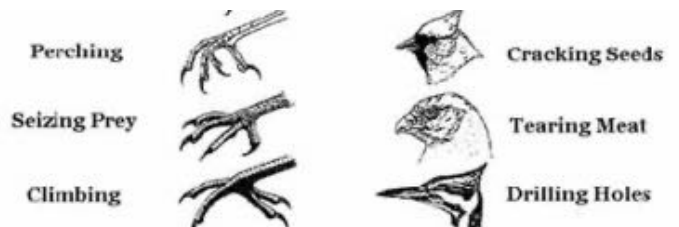
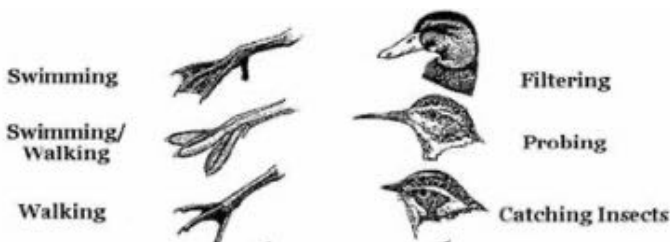
Hermanus in springtime is idyllic. With the fynbos in bloom, the flowers seem to flow down the slopes of the Hottentots Holland range to meet the sea. It’s easy to see why tourists love to come here, particularly during the whale-watching season, when the Southern Rights come in close to shore with their calves to breach and tail lob. But we should not forget that this was once the site of an ecocide, when humpback whales and Southern Rights were hunted to the brink of extinction. We pulled back just in time; whaling was banned and whale numbers are recovering. Now the local economy relies almost entirely on its natural wildlife. And yet we seem intent on repeating our folly. We may not be actively hunting the penguin, but by failing to put protective measures in place, we are sealing their fate through inaction.

Fighting chance

Hopelessness and despondency are one of the greatest threats to our wildlife – another reason we simply cannot afford to lose the African penguin. This year has been dominated by Covid-19 and the economic crisis. But we must not let this distract us from protecting the environment on which we all depend.

The three measures outlined here are not unreasonable. Each one is easily doable; together they can change the future of the African penguin. What we are asking for is the protection of less than 0.5% of South Africa’s waters.

Sadly, we will not be able to save every bird. But we can still give this beloved South African species a fighting chance. I urge the government to take action today. **DM**



BIRD BEAKS AND FEET

SOME OF THE LBJ'S FROM IAN WHITE'S BUSH ESCAPADES...



CHOOSE FROM THESE FOR YOUR ANSWERS!
Sabota Lark, Buffy Pipit, Dusky Lark,
Red-throated Pipit,
Rufous-naped Lark w. Juv., Lark-like Bunting,
Chestnut-backed Sparrow Lark,
Shaft-tailed Whydah, Spike-heeled Lark, + S-h Lark Juv

FUN BIRD FACTS

- Birds have feathers, wings, lay eggs and are warm blooded.
- There are around 10000 different species of birds worldwide.
- The Ostrich is the largest bird in the world. It also lays the largest egg and has the fastest maximum running speed (30 kph).
- Scientists believe that birds evolved from theropod dinosaurs.
- Birds have hollow bones which help them fly.
- Some bird species are intelligent enough to create and use tools.
- The chicken is the most common species of bird found in the world.
- Kiwis are endangered, flightless birds that live in New Zealand. They lay the largest eggs relative to their body size of any bird in the world.
- Hummingbirds can fly backwards.
- The Bee Hummingbird is the smallest living bird in the world, with a length of just 5 cm (2 in).
- Around 20% of bird species migrate long distances every year.
- Homing pigeons are bred to find their way home from long distances away and have been used for thousands of years to carry messages.



Bones are both hollow and spongy.



<https://www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/animals/bird.html>

<https://www.reddit.com/r/Dinosaurs/>

<https://www.toppr.com/ask/content/story/amp/aves-general-characters-72390/>

<https://en.encyclopedia.co/wiki/File:HomingPigeon.jpg>

Mass poisoning of Critically Endangered vultures in Botswana

BirdLife Botswana has reported a suspected poisoning of Critically Endangered White-backed Vultures in the north of the country.

At least 55 vultures were found dead at Mmadikola, near the Boteti River, on 22 October, 2020 BirdLife Botswana, Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Raptors Botswana and other conservation organisation have team up to further investigate factors surrounding the incident. This is not the first time a significant number of vultures has been found dead in the immediate area, and deliberate vulture killing remains a huge problem across the country as a whole. For example, in June 2019, at least 537 vultures were poisoned near Chobe, with the slaughter linked to elephant poaching.

Studies have indicated that threats to vultures from poisoning and trade link to traditional medicines account for 90% of reported vulture deaths across Africa. Seven species of African vulture are now listed by IUCN as Critically Endangered.

The incident has led to renewed calls for agrochemicals used illegally to poison vultures, especially carbofuran-based substances, to be banned, and the use of safer alternatives encouraged. Although the Agrochemicals Act of 1999 and subsidiary 2003 legislation are in place to manage agrochemicals in Botswana, there is relatively little capacity to enforce.

Botswanan law prohibits killing of vultures and a perpetrator could face US\$500 fine, a year in prison or both, but action is rarely taken against culprits. <https://www.birdguides.com/news/mass-poisoning-of-critically-endangered-vultures-in-botswana/#>

IBAs - IMPORTANT BIRD (and Biodiversity) AREAS

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

Areas identified using an internationally agreed set of criteria that are globally important for conservation of bird populations.

Sites are developed and identified by BirdLife International.

There are over 13,000 IBAs worldwide.

IBAs often form part of a country's existing protected area network, and are protected under national legislation

Some countries have a National IBA Conservation Strategy, whereas in others protection is completely lacking.

To be listed as an IBA, a site must satisfy at least one of the following rating criteria:

- **A1. Globally threatened species**

The site qualifies if it is known, estimated or thought to hold a population of a species categorized by the IUCN Red List as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable. In general, the regular presence of a Critical or Endangered species, irrespective of population size, at a site may be sufficient for a site to qualify as an IBA. For Vulnerable species, the presence of more than threshold numbers at a site is necessary to trigger selection.

- **A2. Restricted-range species**

The site forms one of a set selected to ensure that all restricted-range species of an Endemic Bird Area (EBA) or a Secondary Area (SA) are present in significant numbers in at least one site and preferably more.

- **A3. Biome-restricted species**

The site forms one of a set selected to ensure adequate representation of all species restricted to a given biome, both across the biome as a whole and for all of its species in each range state.

- **A4. Congregations**

i This applies to 'waterbird' species **ii.** seabird species **iii.** Wetlands of international importance. **iv.** The site is known or thought to exceed thresholds set for migratory species at bottleneck sites.



BirdLife Botswana Membership Form

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

I/We/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms:

--	--

Wish to become members of BirdLife Botswana

Postal Address:					
Residential Address:					
ID/Passport No:					
Mobile		Home		Work	
Email (Please print)					

	No. male	No. female		<16	17-30	30-50	>50
No. of individuals covered by membership			No. in age class (yrs):				

Please tick type of membership applying for – rates as indicated:

- Standard P 170.00 / year Family membership
- Corporate P 2 500.00 / year Includes 4 nominated members
- Student P 15.00 / year Botswana students
- Professional Guides P 60.00 / year
- School Clubs P 50.00 / year Club members P5.00 min of 10
- SADC P 350.00 / year
- Life Membership P 2 500.00
- Overseas P 450.00 / year Outside SADC



I acknowledge that my family dependents, invitees and I take part in the BirdLife Botswana organised events entirely at our own risk. I, in my personal capacity and as representative of my spouse, children, dependents, and invitees hereby keep BirdLife Botswana, its committee, members and agents indemnified and hold them harmless against all loss, injury, or damage to person or property from any cause (including negligence) arising as a result of our participation in events organised by BirdLife Botswana.

Signed		Date	
--------	--	------	--

Please make your cheque payable to 'BirdLife Botswana' or EFT to: First National Bank Botswana, Kgale View 284567, Account # 57110052562, Swift FIRNBWGX

Forms can be handed to any staff member, faxed to 3190540 or Emailed to admin@birdlifebotswana.org.bw with proof of payment

BLB Board members elected at AGM, Nov. 2020

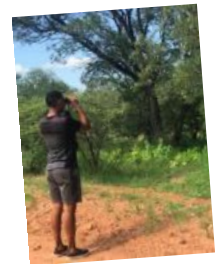
Chairman – Ian White
 Vice Chairman – Mike Barclay
 Treasurer – Kosala Wijesena
 Secretary – Peter D’Arcy
 Records Sub Committee Chairman – Chris Brewster
 UB Rep. – Dr. Marks Ditlogo
 DWNP Rep. – Malebogo Somolekae
 Ex-Officio (Director BLB) – Motshereganyi Virat Kootsositse
 Additional members: Harold Hestor, Baboloki Tlale, Micheal Flyman



Ayers hawk taken over Gabs Game Reserve

CLUES TO THE WORD SEARCH BELOW:

BLUE JAY CANARY CRANE CROW DOVE DUCK EAGLE EGRET
 EMU FALCON GOOSE GULL HAWKHERON IBIS KINGFISHER KIWI
 LARK LOON MACAW MAGPIE ORIOLE OWL PELICAN PENGUIN
 PUFFINQUAIL QUETZAL RAVEN ROBIN STORK SWALLOW SWAN
 TERN TOUCAN TURKEY WREN



Light as a Feather

Find all of the hidden words and the letters that remain spell out a funny saying about our feathered friends.



<https://www.puzzles-to-print.com/printable-word-search/light-as-a-feather.pdf>

Anne Mary Gollifer and team doing their February 2021 **BPM (Bird Population Monitoring)** exercise. This is what we BLB birders do on a weekend to entertain ourselves! It may look a bit weird, but it is great fun, especially if you are part of a team!!

BirdLife Botswana, P O Box 26691, Game City, Gaborone, BOTSWANA

Tel: +267-3190540 **Fax:** +267-3190540;

Email: blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw

Website: www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw

Facebook: www.facebook.com/BirdLifeBotswana

Twitter @KgoriBustard

Or the Editor at: peterdarcybotswana@gmail.com

