

# FAMILIAR CHAT

December 2005



Newsletter of Birdlife Botswana  
Private Bag 003 #348, Mogoditshane, Gaborone

IF ANYONE CAN **Canon** CAN

# December 2005

Dear Friends

2005 has been a very eventful year. We have increased our staff one hundredfold welcoming Keddy Mooketsa to BLB as Administrative assistant. We also opened our offices in Kgale Siding and our patron Sedia Modise agreed to join us. 2006 will see another member of staff as we are joined by a Japanese volunteer who has been seconded to us for a two year period, we wish her a successful stay. Another visitor in our midst, not a member of staff but definitely a member of the bird community is an Osprey. It has been seen at the Gabs Yacht club and was here about the same time last year for about 3 weeks. Sadly we will be saying goodbye to Avril and Eldrid Kasner shortly who have been strongly supportive of BLB whilst living in Lobatse. We have also recently learned that Brenda and Brian Webster also from Lobatse will be leaving us after a very short relationship with BLB. Gremlins – or Santa’s elves were up to their usual mischief and my computer would not switch on after Xmas and the Chat was obliterated and had to be “reformatted”. I was unable to obtain some of the pictures that had been sent with articles and apologise to authors some of whose pictures have not been included.

The Editor  
Daphne Goldsworthy  
Email  
daf@botsnet.bw

*Illustrations by kind permission of Kenneth Newman*

## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Birdlife Kasane</i> <i>Mike Lakin</i>	3
<i>National Bird</i> <i>Nikki Bousfield</i>	4
<i>Nnwane Dam</i> <i>Anita Gilbert &amp; Anthony Vodraska</i>	5
<i>Depletion of the Planet</i> <i>Quiz</i>	6
<i>Avian flu</i> <i>Birdlife International</i>	11
<i>Chobe visit</i> <i>Lucinda Briddes</i>	14
<i>Bird Ringing lake Ngami</i> <i>Peter D’Arcy</i>	15
<i>Committee members</i>	17
<i>Events Gaborone-Maun-Kasane</i>	18



*Bird Count and Breakfast at Nnwane Dam*

## Report on the Inaugural weekend of *Birdlife Botswana* branch in Kasane

Mike Laikin

Over the weekend 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> November 2005 *Birdlife Botswana* launched a new branch in Kasane. Chairman Harold Hester accompanied by Mike and Elsie Lakin flew up midday Friday and were immediately whisked away by Geoff and Trish Williams who were the main contacts for the extension, to a boat on the Chobe River where they were joined by some of the inaugural members.

Some good sightings were recorded along the river and the free spirit of the new birding group was not dampened by the storm, which forced us to pull into a creek for shelter. This led to more fellowship amongst potential members and we all ended up being soaked outside and pretty wet inside too! Thanks to those who made our inaugural cruise a memorable one.

On the Saturday the same group plus additional prospective members met at the Mowana Lodge. Again, no sooner did we set off on our inaugural bird walk, the rain (which by no means is unwelcome at anytime in Botswana) poured down again. The walk has a hide in a pretty bad state of repair, but it is an enjoyable meander along the Chobe River. The path was cleared for nature lovers by the Cresta Mowana Lodge.

Once we were more or less dried out *Birdlife Botswana* chairman Harold Hester gave a presentation on *Birdlife* – its history, current functions and aspirations for the future.

The Gaborone contingent stayed at Elephant Valley Lodge and there we were fed well in comfortable surroundings – itself a renowned local birding spot.

We wish the new *Birdlife* branch well. Harold and *Birdlife Botswana* are grateful to Trish and Geoff Williams, Lyn Francey, Rex Kelly and Marda Meyer, and to all prospective members who turned out on the weekend. Harold must also be thanked for all his input – always renowned for his guiding he can be congratulated on guiding the new *Birdlife* group in the very north of Botswana to its inception! Trish and others are already planning great new things for the New Year and she will keep us all informed.

(Please note, Elsie kept the list of species sighted (or heard) and this list will be kept by Trish in Kasane. Trish also has some colour prints of some birds taken by Mike on the boat trip and walk.



## **Birdlife Botswana Camping Weekend at Nnwane Reservoir**

Reported by: Anita Gilbert and Anthony Vodraska

The weekend of October 21 - 23, Birdlife Botswana (BLB) sponsored its quarterly camping trip at Nnwane Reservoir, just south of Otse on the Lobatse road. The land and the reservoir lay on property belonging to the Freeman family, and now under the direction of Mark and Jane (Freeman) Bing. The South side of the water has been set aside as a National Wildlife Preserve and as such is under protection from casual camping, fishing and hunting. It provides a valuable protected sanctuary for water fowl. BLB had special permission for the campout as we were on a mission to make the first recorded count of the water fowl species and their numbers at the Nnwane Reservoir.

Friday afternoon, Bird Club members gathered on the shore of the Reservoir. We had no mosquitoes and no flies! See what good birds do! 14 members made camp the first night. They include Brenda and Brian Webster of Lobatse, John and Inga D'alziel and Roz and Rod Wyer of Ruretse, The Hester's and the Goldsworthy's of Notwane surrounds, and Anita Gilbert and Anthony Vodraska from Gabs. The extended shoreline from the prolonged drought made for effortless bird walks to do the initial survey of the water fowl. It was a superb sunset and twilight.

As it grew dark, the star gazers among us were treated to a magnificent dark sky. Venus, Mercury and Mars were all visible with numerous meteors crisscrossing the sky. Even the International Space Station made its appointed display crossing the Northwest sky as a bright fast moving light. As we drifted off to our tents the waning moon lit up the night sky and reflected off the lake providing a much needed change from the heat and drought ambiance we were all feeling, whether we live in the bush or the city. While sleeping, the wind surprised us all and took on near gale force intensity around 1:00 AM as it was channeled up the reservoir between the high adjoining hills. Some literally had to hold on to their tent throughout the night.

The morning was cooler than anyone expected and remained blustery, so much so that we retreated to the protection of the tree line for

breakfast and remained content there through the heat of the day with occasional forays for bird counting. From the cover of the bush it was difficult to see the birds and Mike educated us by playing bird calls on his little handheld computer that sounded like the real thing. We can all now distinguish the Swainson's Francolin bird call from the Natal Francolin. Well some can.

The early morning count was unfortunately affected by the windy conditions. The water fowl huddled into tight groups, making counting accuracy difficult. However, it was not without its highlights. John had heard a Black-crowned Night Heron and went into the woods to flush it from its daytime bed. He was successful! The beautiful and illusive bird made three accommodating circles around our group. It seemed to be saying, "get a good look, then leave me in peace!" Also we had front row seats to a territorial battle. It was a knock down, drag out fight between two pairs of Egyptian Geese. The males attracted our interest with a display of noise aerial sparring. As we watched, they engaged each other in flight and literally fell crashing, into the water clutched together. They continued to hold each other by the neck, wings splashing wildly for some minutes. We were riveted. Even the females sparred (?) in flight over head. The defending male succeeded in overpowering the encroacher, who barely had enough strength to lift himself from the water to escape this thrashing. The victorious couple had other challenges to their chosen nesting sight. But they seemed quite determined and always won out.

A midmorning walk through the wooded shoreline yielded a wonderful range of sightings. Most notable from the woodland walk the Emerald Spotted Wood Dove, Threestreaked Tchagras, Kurrichane Thrush, Goldenbreasted Bunting and many more, and in the marsh lands behind the reservoir, the Quailfinch and Zitting Cisticola (Fantailed) grabbed our attention. In the distance, half way up a hill, a Fish Eagle kept a watchful eye on us. We were surprised not to hear any Cuckoos, and agreed that the migrants were late and must have missed the first bus.

Saturday the camp was joined by 3 more members. Avril and Eldred Kasner of Lobatse and Chris Brewster of Gabs. The wind died down to make our original camp perfect for an

evening gathering around the campfire. We were joined by our hosts, Mark and Jane Bing and enjoyed a sumptuous meal under the stars. Though this is not Bird club news, I feel compelled to report that the stargazers persisted in their quest to find the ever so faint Uranus and Neptune. Geraldine and Anthony went back and forth between detailed star charts, their binoculars and a telescope until they were convinced that some point of light too faint to be seen by the naked eye was in fact their first sighting of these planets in their lifetime! By that time nearly everyone else had gone to bed leaving only the two of them to appreciate the significance of their sighting. Another priceless night!

Sunday the official counters took to the job in earnest desiring to earn their breakfast. The largest population was of the Whitefaced Duck at 350. Other water fowl in abundance, Yellowbilled Duck: 160, Southern Pochard: 45 +, Redbilled Teal: 30. Of particular note, it was good to see 3 African Black Duck in residence, and there were a few Knobbilled Duck beginning to show up for their summer residency. The low water and sparse water conditions do assist bird counters by forcing populations to congregate in the few remaining lakes and reservoirs. Nnwane Reservoir has become such a haven. Nearly 40 species of birdlife in the woodland areas and

\*\*\*\*\*

another 25 species of waterfowl on the reservoir were identified. There is great satisfaction in having these sightings actually tabulated.



*Kudu seen at Nnwane Dam*

The Bird Society is a fluid community. This camp outing was the last for Avril and Eldred, as they are retiring to Cape Town and we will miss them. We welcomed first time BLB campers Brenda and Brian, already on their way to being very busy with the Club representing Lobatse. What a lovely atmosphere had prevailed at the camp and we can't wait for the next one in 2006.



### **National Bird of Botswana**

Nicky Bousfield

I vote for the **Wattled Crane** to be the National Bird of Botswana.

My reasons are as follows:-

- 1) The largest population in the world is found in Botswana.
- 2) This is a highly endangered species which deserves maximum protection – which it would get if it qualifies as the national bird.
- 3) The publicity the Wattled Crane would receive would be a draw card for tourists – especially the ever grieving “birding” tourists.
- 4) The National Bird of *South Africa* is the *Blue Crane* – the National Bird of *Uganda* is the *Crowned Crane* – so that it is appropriate the Botswana claims the rarest of all African Crane – the **Wattled Crane** – as its National Bird.

## How much does your lifestyle contribute to the planet's depletion?

Are you aware of the impacts of your activities — and what you can do to reduce your footprint on the Earth?

Answer the following and test how much you know about some of the issues involved. You'll find the answers below, with tips on how to reduce your footprint.

**1) Which one of the following species can you include in your fish and chips with a clear conscience?**

- Snoek
- Tuna
- Hake
- Shark
- Sole

**2) What is a problematic ingredient from tropical forests used in these products?**

- Soaps
- Chocolate bars
- Ice cream
- Ready-to-eat meals
- Margarine

**3) Crisps use how much more energy to cook than home-cooked potatoes?**

- Four times
- The same amount
- 20 times
- Less
- 10 times

**4) There are six greenhouse gases that cause global warming. The biggest offender is:**

- Nitrous oxide
- Carbon dioxide
- Methane
- Sulphur hexafluoride
- Halocarbons

**5) Which of these is not regarded as endangered in South Africa?**

- Penguins
- Elephants
- Impalas
- Lions
- Riverine rabbits

**6) A full city bus replaces how many vehicles on the road?**

- None. One bus = one car.
- Eight
- 22
- 40
- 60

**7) Chemical garden pesticides and fertilisers are a source of greenhouse gas because they contain:**

- Nitrous oxide
- Methane
- Ethanol
- Halocarbons
- Oxygen

**8) The best time of day for watering lawns to reduce water consumption is:**

- Late evening
- Early morning
- Midday
- Late afternoon
- Night

**9) Which of the following materials can be recycled?**

- Tyres
- Glass
- Cardboard
- Plastic
- All of the above

**10) Upgrading your insulation can reduce your heating bill by as much as:**

- 5%
- 15%
- 30%
- 50%
- 60%

### **1) Become a steward**

Answer: Snoek is one of the few fish that you can still eat with a relatively clear conscience. Many linefish, including sole, are going extinct because there are too many seafood restaurants. Tuna and a lot of hake are caught on long lines that trap and drown endangered birds such as albatrosses. Sardines, caught in nets and plentiful in South Africa, calamari and kingklip are also still okay.

In an attempt to counter dwindling fish stocks in the world's oceans, an international Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) was set up five years ago. It has certified 14 fisheries as sustainable, including South Africa's hake fishery. Certified fisheries place MSC labels on their products, meaning you can buy them in the knowledge that you are not irreversibly harming the species.

Another global stamp of sustainability to watch out for is the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Formed in 1993, the FSC endorses sustainable forests in more than 40 countries.

Locally, Cape Nature has introduced the concept of stewardship to privately owned land that is used in support of conservation objectives. Conservation stewardship is extended to private owners who use their land sustainably and to advance the economy, livelihoods and quality of life.

### **2) Buy green**

Answer: Palm oil is the common ingredient used in a variety of every-day consumer items — including soaps, shampoos, chocolate bars, ice cream, ready-to-eat meals and margarine.

It has a hefty environmental price tag. The palm oil industry's growth in the past two decades is responsible for the rapid clearing and burning of tropical forests, putting pressure on endangered species that live in the forests and creating serious human respiratory problems in Southeast Asia.

Soon you'll be able to find labels letting you know which items contain palm oil that doesn't have such a negative impact on the planet. In November 2005, an international group called the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil set in motion criteria for the responsible production of palm oil.

When you're out shopping this festive season, look out for green labels like planet-friendly palm oil. Green labels allow you to be a consumer with a clear conscience.

Western Cape wine-makers are working with conservation organisations to produce "green" wines that protect the biodiversity of the Cape Floral Kingdom. Wines boasting they are part of this Biodiversity & Wine Initiative should become available in 2006.

Energy Star ratings on household appliances indicate that they use energy efficiently, saving you money and reducing climate change-causing greenhouse gas emissions.

Look out for toiletry products and cosmetics that specify they aren't tested on animals. The Body Shop is always a good choice, plus they promote fair trade principles.

Organic labels on foodstuffs and clothing products indicate they are likely to be healthier for you and the planet. Buying badger-friendly honey helps promote initiatives to stop honey farmers killing badgers.

### **3) Eat simple**

Answer: Potato chips use four times more energy to produce than home-cooked potatoes.

The more complicated and ready-made foodstuffs are, the heavier they are on the planet. Microwave-ready food uses up 10 times more resources than normal food. Make an effort to eat simple food — it's healthier for you and the planet.

Eat food grown or produced close to home. The typical mouthful of food now travels at least 2 000km to your mouth, with all the energy — processing, refrigeration and transport — that takes up.

When you're in the supermarket, seek out foods that are organic, free-range, country-reared — all alternatives to factory-farmed, which is generally environment-hostile and unkind to animals.

South Africans tend to love red meat, but besides health repercussions meat consumption is bad for the planet. The protein we get from beef requires 25 times more energy to produce than a comparable amount of protein from grain, and it requires 500 times as much land to produce a kilogram of beef as a kilogram of vegetables.

Cook with gas if you can — it's much more environmentally friendly than electricity, or wood.

### **4) Plant a tree**

Answer: Carbon dioxide is the greenhouse gas that is responsible for about 80% of global-warming pollution. Trees absorb carbon dioxide. Feel free to chop down an exotic pine for your Christmas tree, and plant an indigenous tree to herald the new year. Exotic trees, apart from being in the wrong place, tend to be water-guzzlers.

### **5. Adopt an endangered animal**

Answer: Impalas are the only animals mentioned that are not listed as endangered in South Africa. At least 247 mammal species are listed in the Red Data Book of the IUCN-World Conservation Union.

Apart from putting money into conserving endangered species by supporting tourism initiatives, you can help individual species by "adopting" them. Various conservation outfits offer animals for "adoption", which usually means you get a certificate and photo. The concept makes for a feel-good gift.

Options include adopting a penguin at The Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds in Cape Town, a cheetah at the De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Centre in North West, or one of a number of species at the Johannesburg Zoo. Prices usually range from R250 to R5 000.

Another great gift is to buy a brick from the My Acre of Africa initiative. My Acre of Africa is an endowment fund that sponsors educational initiatives in South African National Parks.

## **6) Save energy**

Answer: A full city bus replaces 40 vehicles on the road. Public transport is a far more energy-efficient mode of transport than cars. During this year of natural disasters, an increasing number of people became aware that we all need to save energy in order to cut down on the air pollution that is destabilising the climate.

From January 1 2006, leaded petrol will no longer be available in South Africa, which will help to reduce vehicle emissions and improve urban air quality. But if your vehicle is not regularly serviced, noxious gases and particulates will still be emitted.

An issue you can't do much about at the moment is the amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions you are responsible for each time you catch an aeroplane. The Democratic Alliance's Gareth Morgan calculated that a return trip to Germany would total 2,7 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> and that most MPs who are frequent flyers are responsible for the emission of at least 19,46 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> each year.

International efforts to offset carbon emissions are in an embryonic stage and are restricted to large business deals. Individual offset deals will no doubt soon be common, but in the best thing you can do to offset aeroplane travel emissions is to plant a tree or two each time you fly anywhere.

Bicycles and walking are still the cheapest, most energy-efficient and most planet-friendly way of getting around.

Other ways to cut down on your energy consumption include using a microwave instead of a stove, using fans instead of air conditioners, cleaning the air conditioner's filter monthly and switching off your air conditioner during winter months.

Use sunlight and wind, rather than a tumbledrier. Instead of an electric blanket, use a hot water bottle. Switch off electrical appliances when you aren't using them. Energy-saving light bulbs are usually more expensive, but they last a lot longer and can save up to three-quarters of energy used to light up your home.

All these measures will help you save on your electricity bills, in addition to reducing the rotten gases that you help pump into the air from coal-powered electricity generation.

## **7) Cut out chemicals**

Answer: Chemical garden pesticides and fertilisers are a source of greenhouse gas because they contain nitrous oxide. If you create a balanced ecosystem in your garden, you'll find little need for pesticides. Rather work on attracting birds, which happily wolf down worms and aphids.

In the home, use baking soda and vinegar for cleaning rather than more expensive commercial brands that use dodgy chemicals.

## **8. Save water**

Answer: The best time of day for watering lawns is early morning. Watering the lawn uses up to 700 litres of water in half an hour. Watering gardens has been banned in many regions of the country, and we are in the middle of a full-scale drought cycle.

Try grouping plants with similar water needs so that you don't have to water the entire garden all the time. Use indigenous plants that are adapted to your region — they will need less water than exotics.

Showering uses much less water and energy than bathing. Washing dishes by hand uses much less water than a dishwasher.

### **9) Reduce, recycle, re-use**

Answer: All the materials mentioned can be recycled. Even polystyrene is now being recycled. Search for companies such as Enviromark, Petco, EnviroServ, Waste-Tech and Buyisa-e-Bag on the Internet to find out where your closest recycling depot is.

It is still a good idea to reject goods that have a lot of packaging. Refuse plastic bags unless you really need them. Use both sides of paper, and recycle used paper. Pass on magazines to schools and community projects.

Glass is the most environmentally friendly packaging because it can be endlessly recycled, and comes from sand — a limitless resource.

### **10) Make your home eco-friendly**

Answer: Upgrading your home's insulation can reduce your electricity bill by as much 30%. Insulate your attic and walls, preferably with recycled content and minimal chemical emissions.

Solar heating panels are becoming increasingly affordable and practical. Use natural lighting and ventilation to further cut down on energy usage.

In our water-stressed country, it is advisable and helpful to invest in rainwater storage tanks.

Minimise use of carpets. Chemically treated carpets, adhesives and backings can emit numerous chemicals.

If you're building or renovating, try to use products with recycled content. Also try to reuse and refurbish existing building components before you replace them with new materials.

Avoid using building materials with chemical emissions such as formaldehyde, solvents, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). These compounds can be found in particle board, paints, vinyl floor and wall coverings, certain types of carpet and insulation. Look out for building materials with minimal chemical emissions, such as ceramic tiles, linoleum, formaldehyde-free particle boards, low-VOC paints and sealers, low-VOC adhesives and non-toxic cleaners.

An eco-friendly home reduces your exposure to sick building syndrome, in addition to being healthier for the planet. What's good for the Earth is good for you too!



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION ON AVIAN INFLUENZA

[http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/avian\\_flu/index.html](http://www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/avian_flu/index.html)

### **What is avian influenza (bird 'flu or poultry flu)?**

There are at least 144 strains of avian influenza, many of which circulate in wild birds at low levels, but which can occur more frequently in waterbirds. Most have mild effects on poultry and are designated 'Low Pathogenicity Avian Influenza' (LPAI). But the H5 and H7 'subtypes' can cause massive mortality in poultry and are designated 'High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza' (HPAI).

These HPAI viruses do not normally occur in wild birds. They arise in poultry,

where intensive rearing and crowded conditions allow the virus to evolve to a highly pathogenic form. Hence HPAI is also called 'poultry flu'. There have been around 21 HPAI outbreaks in poultry flocks worldwide since 1990.

Wild birds can also be infected with, and killed by, HPAI viruses. They appear to acquire the virus through contact with infected poultry or with facilities used by them.

### **What is H5N1?**

The H5N1 virus currently circulating is a High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI). This strain of the virus first appeared in Hong Kong in 1997. It evolved in poultry from Low Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (LPAI) viruses that were probably acquired from wild birds.

Conditions in poultry flocks (such as crowding, especially in mixed species groups, and prolonged contact with faeces, saliva and other bodily secretions) keep the viruses circulating

as they evolve. The current series of outbreaks began in 2003 in South-east Asia, where a dramatic increase in intensive poultry production is sometimes combined with poor hygiene and bio-security in small "backyard" enterprises. Domestic ducks are commonly turned out to feed in rice fields alongside wildfowl during the day, and confined with other poultry at night, and birds from different areas are brought together in networks of poultry markets.

### **Do migrating wild birds carry H5N1 from country to country?**

There is no concrete evidence that migratory birds have helped transmit the disease between countries or regions, but the possibility cannot be ruled out.

The spread of H5N1 within and beyond South-east Asia appears attributable to movements of infected poultry. The patterns of spread are not consistent

with the timing and direction of movements of wild birds.

However, recent outbreaks in Europe have occurred along migratory flyways (including the Danube delta, a great gathering place for migratory waterfowl) during the autumn migration.

At present H5N1 has not been isolated from healthy wild birds, only those that were dead or dying. This suggests that it is highly lethal and that most infected birds would not be capable of migration.

Avian influenza viruses appear to survive best when temperatures fall below 20°C. Outbreaks that coincide with southward, autumn migration may represent resurgences of viral transmission in already affected areas as temperatures decline.

### **How is the virus spread, if not by wild birds?**

There are several ways through which H5N1 might be transmitted, including movements of poultry (and feathers), migrating birds, the trade in wild-caught birds, and the movement of soil/mud on wheels and feet. The relative importance of each of these factors in the transmission of H5N1 is unknown, but to date, all outbreaks that have been investigated have been traced back to poultry movements.

Within south-east Asia, movements of poultry and poultry products are known to have been involved in the virus's

spread among flocks and between countries. Outbreaks in China, Kazakhstan and southern Russia are connected by major road and rail routes. The outbreaks in Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Russia occurred in summer, when most wild birds would be moulting and not undertaking long migrations. The involvement of wild birds in these outbreaks thus seems highly unlikely. The source of recent outbreaks in Europe is not known, but movements of poultry and poultry products provide a plausible explanation as transmission by wild birds.

### **Can people catch H5N1 from wild birds?**

There is no evidence that H5N1 infection in humans have been acquired from wild birds. Human infections have occurred in people who have been closely associated with poultry. Given the number and

distribution of outbreaks in domestic poultry and waterfowl, the number of human cases is very small, indicating that the transmission of the virus from poultry to man remains inefficient.

### **So why are there concerns for human health from H5N1?**

Although H5N1 can cause serious disease in people, the virus is hard to catch and so far does not seem to spread from person to person. The concern is that it might evolve into a form that is transmitted easily between people.

influenza A, which killed many people around the world. It is thought that these deadly virus strains arose when bird flu and human influenza viruses came together, possibly in pigs, and reassorted their genetic material. Continued outbreaks of H5N1 increase the chances of this happening again.

In the last 100 years there have been four major pandemics of human

### **What wild bird species are affected by H5N1?**

Primarily ducks, geese and swans (Anseriformes), also gulls.

### **Does H5N1 threaten endangered birds?**

The virus at present appears to be lethal to some species of wild birds, and its infection of endangered species could be catastrophic. It is estimated that up to 10 % of the world population of Bar-headed Geese died at Lake Qinghai in China. The main risk to endangered birds will be to those whose small populations concentrate in areas where the virus has become established,

especially in poultry that use the same water and food supplies.

There are a large number of globally-threatened waterbird species in South-east Asia and several in South-east Europe whose populations have already been reduced by habitat loss and over-hunting, for which H5N1 could pose an additional risk to their future

### **Should wild birds be culled to stop the disease spreading?**

Evidence for the involvement of wild birds in spreading the disease is weak. Even if wild birds were found to be playing a major part in spreading the H5N1 virus, attempts to exterminate entire bird populations –by shooting, poisoning, netting and trapping or even explosives- have hardly ever succeeded in eliminating a problem. In fact, such attempts could spread the virus more widely, as survivors disperse to new places, and healthy birds become stressed and more prone to infection.

you cannot even begin to design a culling program.

Control of a wildlife disease through culling is likely only to be successful for diseases with low transmission rates that occur in one species, and where the outbreak is confined to a small area. None of these conditions are met with H5N1: a) avian influenza is highly infectious, b) multiple species are being infected, and c) the disease is spread across much of Central and South East Asia.

Species that die from the virus are unlikely to carry the virus long distances, so the reservoir of infection is more likely to be a species showing few or no clinical signs, rather than the ones observed to be sick and dying. Without knowing which species are the reservoir,

The World Health Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organisation and OIE (the World Organisation for Animal Health) agree that control of avian influenza in wild birds by culling is not feasible, and should not be attempted.

### **Should wetlands be drained to deter waterbirds?**

Absolutely not. Apart from their extremely high conservation value, wetlands provide vital ecosystem services like flood control, water purification and nutrient recycling, and the livelihoods of many communities depend on them.

Draining wetlands is not only environmentally disastrous, but also likely to be counterproductive for the

same reasons that culling is more likely to spread the Avian Influenza virus than control it. Birds will seek alternative staging places on their migration routes, and wildfowl forced to fly further and endure more crowded conditions along their migration route will become stressed and exhausted, and more prone to infection.

### **So what should be done to prevent the spread of H5N1?**

The key steps are to improve bio-security. In the first instance, this means keeping wild birds apart from poultry, enhanced monitoring and control of poultry movements and markets, and swift culling of infected flocks. Countries currently free of the disease should

consider a ban on imports of domestic poultry and wild birds for the pet trade from affected regions. Preventive measures should be focused especially on places where poultry, wild birds, and humans gather.

# A NEW BIRD BOOK FOR BOTSWANA!

Are you tired of calling all flying feathered things  
"that bird"?

Do you want to know the difference between a sparrow  
and a sparrowhawk?

Do you struggle with identifying even the common birds  
you see almost daily?

Are you interested in a cheap, durable and  
simple bird guide?

If the answer to all of the above is YES, then you are in  
luck!

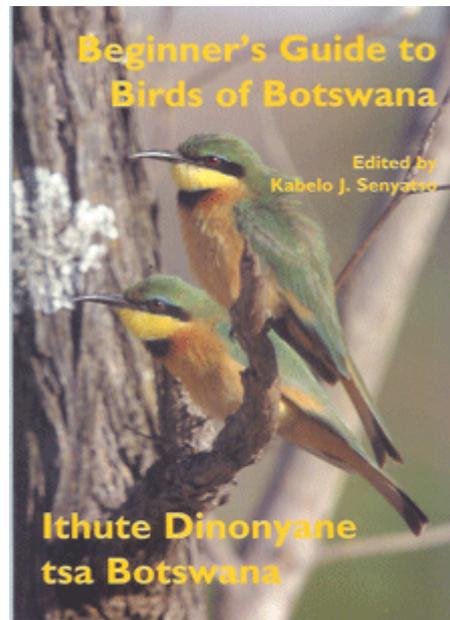
BirdLife Botswana announce the publication of a  
**Beginners' Guide to Birds of Botswana.**  
This is the first of its kind, a bi-lingual book, in Setswana  
and English, which documents over 200 of the most  
common birds in Botswana.

The book introduces you to Botswana's birds in the  
following nine habitats: Deserts, Grasslands, Savanna and  
Bushveld, Forests and Woodlands, Hills and Kopjes, Cities,  
Towns and Villages, Farmlands, Rivers and Streams,  
Lakes, Lagoons and Sewage Ponds at  
P50.00 per copy

Please contact BirdLife Botswana if you would like to  
purchase a copy for yourself, or buy it as a special gift for  
that person who has expressed interest in knowing their  
birds. Please call

**+267 3190540 or +267 3190615**  
to place an order, or for more information.

Alternatively, send us an e-mail at  
[blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw](mailto:blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw)



\*\*\*\*\*

CHOBE VISIT - NOVEMBER 2005

*Lucinda Briddes*

You could have knocked me over with a wren's tailfeather when the winner of the Birdlife Botswana annual dinner raffle was announced and details of the prize given. Two return air tickets to Kasane, courtesy of Air Botswana, and two nights Bed and Breakfast courtesy of Chobe Marina Lodge. In the event it proved impossible to get flight reservations compatible with a midweek two night stay and we (Bill and myself) opted to stay another night at the lodge. We flew to Kasane via Maun on Tuesday the 1st November and returned via direct flight on Friday 4th November.

The visit was an unqualified success. We particularly enjoyed watching a resident Giant Kingfisher fishing from a low branch directly in front of the lodge. Any fish too small for him to notice was taken by a Brownhooded kingfisher. Very much at home in the lodge grounds were a group of

banded mongooses, squirrels, vervet monkeys and a mother warthog with four piglets. Another rather noisy resident was a Trumpeter Hornbill.

On Thursday afternoon we joined a boat cruise which took us all the way round Sedudu Island. We saw large numbers of elephant, buffalo and crocodiles. A Goliath heron very close, Marabou storks, several fish eagles including a juvenile, and new for us Red Lechwe, Puku, Long toed plovers and African skimmers. While cruising gently along the boat accidentally touched a submerged hippo. He surfaced with a tremendous upheaval and gave all of us a very dirty look. In the lodge grounds we saw a red billed wood hoopoe, Heuglins robins and the redbilled helmet shrike (two more firsts). There were many other more familiar animals and birds.

## Bird ringing at Lake Ngami

Peter D'Arcy

Between the third and the seventeenth of December 2005, about twenty people, half of whom were ringers, came together on the Northern side of Lake Ngami about 100km East-southeast of Maun.



Collecting biometrics

Amongst the locals who attended were Pete Hancock and Tsogo Maiphetlo of the Regional Office of Botswana Birdlife, Zee Mpofu and Ms Sebege from the Wildlife Department and Ken and Mel Oake from Maun, who added a touch of civility to our otherwise extremely basic existence by inviting some lucky 'chosen few' to share the delights of a decent evening meal whose name did not include "greasy fry-up" (which was the middle name of most of the recipes which the rest of us were conjuring up). Thanks a lot Ken and Mel and we look forward to you (and your kitchen?!) joining us again next time.

Peter D'Arcy, Nicky Bousfield and Graham Maculloch and his fiancée attended from Francistown and Sua Pan. There were also visitors from South Africa and Zimbabwe and two people came from as far away as Europe, one from Germany and one from the UK. The person from the UK, Richard Hearn, is an employee of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust - an international wetland conservation charity whose mission is to conserve wetlands and their biodiversity. His visit to us was sponsored by AEWA (a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) organisation involved in getting countries in Africa and Europe to come together to ensure conservation and freedom of passage of migratory birds. Chris Brewster, of our Birdlife Rarities Committee, spent four days with us doing a careful count of the waterbirds right around the lake and estimated that there were around twenty-five thousand of them. However he said it was a much smaller number than at the same time last year.



The lake was still chock-a-block' with waterbirds

The idea was to spend some days trying to get information about the birdlife in and around Lake Ngami. We did not do too badly, having identified 241 different species of bird within the lakebed area and having rung more than 1,000 birds of 75 different species. The most common birds on the lake were Red-billed Teal which accounted for about 20% of all the birds counted followed by Ruff (and Reeves) plus Little Stints which made up more than another 20%. As might be expected, there were a good number of unusual birds which were seen or heard by more than one of the group. This made the time spent at the lake a little bit more special for the twitchers amongst us. Green Sandpipers, a Long-legged Buzzard, Slaty Egrets, Black-tailed Godwits, Yellow-billed and White-backed Ducks to mention just a few of them (- although what seems like a 'special' bird for some of the group was 'common as muck' for others).



Mist netting in the early morning

The water body, which extended for about six kilometres at its longest point and two at its widest, was receding having been a couple of kilometres longer at its peak at the end of September. At the spot which Pete Hancock chose as our base camp on the Northeast side, the small amount of rain which had fallen before we arrived had turned the area into what anywhere else would have been called a park - swathes of green flat land covered in large stately *Acacia* trees and very beautiful as a result. On three occasions we had thunderstorms which almost brought the project to a halt. Those who stayed until Saturday 17th were nearly stuck in the cotton soil by the lake as a thunderstorm hit the campsite as they were packing up. The lack of running water and electricity did 'get to' some of the group and put some of them off from staying longer. One or two of us almost literally got flooded out of our tents during one rather nasty downpour about a week into the session.

Despite this it was clearly a very rewarding (and tiring) two weeks. Next time - with luck the Wildlife Department will grant us another - we will let you know much further in advance and hopefully more members of Birdlife Botswana will join us to contribute sightings, chill out and enjoy the unique environment and have a go at ringing as well perhaps?

\*\*\*\*\*

What did the little bird say to  
the big bird?

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

**Rates**

- Resident - (per family) P120.00
- Corporate - P2000
- Professional – Rangers and guides - P60.00
- Life - P2000
- Students under 18 studying in Botswana – P15
- Schools/Clubs - nil
- SADC Region - P150
- Overseas (and outside SADC) – P200

The following details are required:

I/We/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms: \_\_\_\_\_  
wish to become members of BirdLife Botswana

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Home/Cell

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Work

phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email (please

PRINT): \_\_\_\_\_

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'**

Please return this form with your subscription to the address's given below:

The Secretary (membership)  
BirdLife Botswana  
P/Bag 003  
Suite 348  
Mogoditshane  
Gaborone, Botswana

Pete Hancock  
PO Box 20463  
Maun  
  
or phone Pete to  
collect 6862481

Guy Brina  
Private Bag F12  
Francistown  
  
or phone Guy to  
collect 2412913

Geoff Williams  
Private Bag K4  
Kasane

**OFFICIAL USE**

Card \_\_\_\_\_

Data base \_\_\_\_\_

## BIRDLIFE BOTSWANA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>e-mail</u>
Chairman	<b>Harold Hester</b>	P.O. Box 329 Gaborone	3161766	haroldh@info.bw
Vice Chairman				
Secretary	<b>Susan Ocaya</b>		3926929 Cell 71656476	ocayaa@yahoo.com
Hon Treasurer	<b>Daphne Goldsworthy</b>	Private Bag BR 335 Gaborone	3165204(H) 3930782(W)	daf@botsnet.bw
Members	<b>Stephanie Tyler</b> (Editor Babbler) (Records sub Committee)	(left Botswana but e-mail still operational)		steph_tyler2001@hotmail.com
	<b>Mike Goldsworthy</b> (Membership)	P. Bag BR335 Gaborone	3930782(W) cell 71300005	mgg@botsnet.bw
	<b>Daphne Goldsworthy</b> (Editor Familiar Chat)	P. Bag BR335 Gaborone	3930782(W)	daf@botsnet.bw
	<b>Doreen McColaugh</b> (Environmental Education)	P. Bag 0457 Gaborone	cell 71607540	bdmac@info.bw
	<b>Chris Brewster</b> (Rarities)			cbrewster@botsnet.bw
	<b>Guy Brina</b>	P. Bag F12 Francistown	2412913	gltm@botsnet.bw
	<b>Glen Stephen</b>	P. Bag 114 Maun	6801052	glen@dynabyte.bw
	<b>Geoff &amp; Trish Williams</b>	P. Bag K4 Kasane	6250341	williams@botsnet.bw

**Birdlife Botswana**  
**Gaborone Calendar of events for 2006**

Date	Event	Remarks
Jan 17	Talk	HCH: identifying birds in Gaborone
Feb 5	6.30 am Walk	CB: Ramankga Hills
Feb 11	Strategic planning meeting	Khama Rhino sanctuary: Committee members from all branches
Feb 14	Talk	D Heathcote on Uganda
Feb 25-26	<b>Quarterly Camp</b>	<b>Darnaway farm</b>
March 5	6.30 am Walk	CB: Kopong Hills
March 21	Committee meeting	
March 21	Talk	
April 2	6.30 am Walk	Manyana
April 18	Committee mtg	
April 18	Talk	
May 7	8.00 am Walk	Metsimotlhabe River
May 16	Committee mtg	
May 20	<b>AGM</b>	
May 16	No meeting	
June 4	8.00 am Walk	Boatle/Notwane
June 20	Committee mtg	
June 10/11	<b>Quarterly camp</b>	<b>To be decided</b>
June 20	Quiz	Goldsworthys
July 3	8.00 am Walk	Gabane
July 18	Committee mtg	
July 18	Talk	
August 6	8.00 am Walk	Phakalane
August 15	Committee mtg	
August 15	Talk	
Sept 3	8.00 am Walk	Mogobane
Sept 19	Committee mtg	
Sept 19	No talk	
Sept X	<b>Annual dinner</b>	Speaker: ROY COWGILL .
Oct 1	6.30 am Walk	Bokaa Dam
Oct 17	Committee mtg	
Oct 17	Talk	
Oct 21/23	<b>Quarterly camp</b>	<b>Stevensford</b>
Nov 5	Little birding day	HCH to organise, Tea at Gem Nursery
Nov 21	Committee mtg	

Nov 21	Talk	Walk with D.McColaugh
Nov 26	Birding Big day	
Dec 3	6.30 am Walk	
Dec 12	Committee mtg	
Dec 19	No talk	

1. Gaborone Bird walks start at 06:30 October to April and 08:00 May to September. Meet at the museum.
2. All Gaborone talks take place at the Botswana Accountancy College at 19:30.
3. Francistown Branch will hold their meetings on the second Thursday of each month, meetings will take place at the Supa-Ngwao Museum. The museum is located at the corner of the first turn to the left as you travel from the Bulawayo roundabout towards the light industrial area.

**Birdlife Botswana: Maun Branch**

**Maun Calender of Events January 2006 - March 2006**

Jan 18	Meeting and talk (Details to be announced)	Audi Camp Conference Centre: 19.00
22 Jan	<b>Bird count along Thamalakane River, Maun</b>	Meet at Maun Lodge 06.00
15 February	Meeting and talk (Details to be announced)	Audi Camp Conference Centre: 19.00
18/19 February	<b>Weekend outing to Ghanzi area</b>	Details of camp site to be announced
15 March	Meeting and talk (Details to be announced)	Audi Camp Conference Centre: 19.00
18/19 March	<b>Weekend outing to Qudum and Matsibi areas</b>	Details of camp site to be announced

