

BirdLife Botswana  
**Bird Conservation Newsletter**

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[www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw](http://www.birdlifebotswana.org.bw)



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## EDITORIAL

This edition of the newsletter is dedicated to Brian Graham and Andre Maartens of the Selinda Reserve, who have been submitting detailed monthly reports of Birds of Concern in their area since newsletter # 1 was published in 2000.

While it is probably unwise to single out a particular individual(s) among the many people who regularly contribute information to the BirdLife Botswana database, special mention just has to be made of the wealth of information that has been submitted by these two individuals. A month has not passed in the four years since BirdLife Botswana initially requested information, without a letter arriving in the post with the now familiar Selinda logo – a Great White Pelican – on the envelope. I always look forward to reading the contents, as their report is not restricted only to Birds of Concern – the occasional rarity or unusually large congregation of waterbirds or other remarkable observation always makes for interesting reading. If we had more regular contributors of this calibre, the number of 'data deficient' birds (birds for which we have insufficient information) encountered in the development of Botswana's own Red Data Book for Birds would have been negligible (see Newsletter #2).

There are many other people who regularly send in vital information too, and this note is not intended to be a slight on your valuable contributions. Let's all work together to conserve Botswana's birds!

Pete Hancock



## BIRDLIFE BOTSWANA GABORONE OFFICE OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

April 21<sup>st</sup> 2005 was a happy day for BirdLife Botswana, as we launched our Gaborone office and formally introduced our projects and programmes to an audience comprising government officials, the donor community, corporates, academia, other conservation NGOs, the media, and the general public. While the organisation was formed in 1980 as a branch of the Botswana Society, it was a predominantly voluntary social club until 2000 when we joined BirdLife International, and began the transformation to a more formal institution.

The ceremony, which was partly sponsored by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the UK Partner of BirdLife, comes almost one year to the day since BirdLife Botswana employed their first permanent staff member. During most of 2004, the organisation was engaged in re-evaluating its aims and objectives, developing and prioritising its strategic goals, creating and in some cases strengthening its partnerships, and fundraising for its Strategic Programme for 2004 – 2008.

Officiating at the launch, Hon. Kitso Mokaila, Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, Botswana Government, expressed his delight at having a BirdLife partner in the country. "This office, and what emanates from it, is an indication that Botswana is taking its place in the world community as a society that cares for birds, their habitats and people who depend on them for a living. I am very impressed to see that BirdLife is not just about bird conservation, but also about people empowerment, and this is summed up neatly in their motto, "**Together for birds and people**"", he said.

Given the global significance of Botswana in the conservation of some globally threatened birds, such as the Slaty Egret *Egretta vinaceigula*, Wattled Crane *Grus carunculatus* and Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres*, as well as globally significant sites, such as the Okavango Delta – the largest RAMSAR site in the world – there is a lot that rests on this fledgling NGO, and we are equally eager to meet the challenges head-on. We of course would not have got this far without your support, and we sincerely thank you, and look forward to a sustained, mutually-beneficial relationship.

Kabelo J Senyatso

## SLATY EGRET STUDY AWARDED TO BIRDLIFE BOTSWANA

During December last year, BirdLife Botswana signed a contract with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, to undertake a one-year baseline study of the globally threatened Slaty Egret. The project aims primarily to document the key breeding and feeding areas of this little-studied species, and to input this information into the Okavango Delta Management Plan (ODMP) process. The study is in fact part of the



ODMP, as the Slaty Egret is one of the species that qualifies the Okavango as a Ramsar site – a wetland of international importance. The ODMP is being developed in partial fulfillment of the Ramsar requirements.

The study is a top priority for BirdLife Botswana at present, and will ultimately lead to the development of a Slaty Egret Action Plan (similar to that for the Wattled Crane) – a blueprint for the monitoring and conservation of this important species.

BirdLife Botswana welcomes the participation of all interested parties in the project. Professional guides, amateur birdwatchers, wildlife officers and tsetse control personnel who spend a great deal of time in the field are all invited to send in observations of this species during 2005. The information required for each observation is: date, number of Slaty Egrets seen, activity (feeding, flying, nesting *etc.*), and locality with GPS co-ordinates. The co-ordinates must be in decimal degrees and the datum must be set for WGS 84 (if different, please specify).

Please send your information, with your name, to the BirdLife Botswana office in Maun (Tel: 6862481/6865618 E-mail: [pete@info.bw](mailto:pete@info.bw)). Your contribution is vital to the success of the project – you cannot send in too many observations!

Pete Hancock

## **BOTSWANA'S BIRDS ON DVD**

Every person interested in birds (and more especially those who are not!) should obtain a copy of "The Fascinating World of Birds" – a DVD produced by well-known Maun film-maker and BirdLife member, Ken Oake. The series of six DVDs (of which the first three are on the market) focuses on some of Botswana's Important Bird Areas, as follows:

- Vol. 1 – Birds of the Upper Okavango
- Vol. 2 – Birds of the Lower Okavango
- Vol. 3 – Birds of the woodlands surrounding the Okavango

The remaining 3 DVDs, to be completed soon, feature:

- Vol. 4 – Birds of the Makgadikgadi and outlying pans
- Vol. 5 – Birds of Tswapong Hills
- Vol. 6 – Birds of the Chobe River

The DVDs are outstanding, and include interesting behavioural footage of birds that the average birder has never even seen! To mention some of them would be to spoil your viewing of the DVDs – buy your own copies!



These DVDs have been produced in association with BirdLife Botswana. By buying copies you will also be supporting BirdLife's important bird conservation work since 10% of the sales in Botswana go to BirdLife Botswana. The DVDs can be obtained from BirdLife Botswana – contact [blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw](mailto:blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw) or phone 3190540/1 if you are in Gaborone, or [pete@info.bw](mailto:pete@info.bw), telephone 6865618 if you are in Maun.

Pete Hancock

## BIRDS OF CONCERN POSTER REPRINT

The popular and informative 'Birds of Concern' poster is currently being reprinted by courtesy of **BP and BP Filling Station and Express Shop**, Maun. We are grateful to our sponsors for their support of this project.

If you would like to participate in collecting information on the 'Birds of Concern', and require a poster depicting the bird species, contact your nearest BirdLife Office.

## LATEST ON LAKE NGAMI GAZETEMENT

The Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, the Hon. Kitso Mokaila, has gazetted Lake Ngami as a no-hunting area – effective from 15<sup>th</sup> November. This action has been welcomed by BirdLife Botswana which has been striving to secure some formal protection for waterbirds at the Lake since it started filling with water in June last year.

Lake Ngami is of international importance for waterbirds, and is recognised as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International, a global alliance of NGOs working together for people, birds, and overall biodiversity conservation. When the lake has water, it is home to populations of globally threatened species such as the Wattled Crane and Slaty Egret, as well as large numbers of congregatory waterbirds. Its value to the conservation of southern Africa's waterbirds far exceeds its relatively small size, and cannot be overstated.

BirdLife Botswana believes that communities residing near biodiversity-rich areas such as Lake Ngami can diversify their livelihood base through birds, thereby developing mutually beneficial relationships between birds and people. To this end, BirdLife Botswana will be working with local communities to explore ways of achieving this, for example, through the training of specialist bird guides who can establish viable businesses based on avi-tourism.



BirdLife Botswana has been monitoring the build-up of birds at Lake Ngami since it started filling with water in June, 2004, with financial assistance from **Wetlands International** and the **Wilderness Safaris Wildlife Trust**. The results of the monitoring will be published as a special edition of *Babbler* by mid-2005. Many thanks to our sponsors for their support.



## TRAINING LOCAL BIRD GUIDES

The past few years have seen a growth of birding tourism – or avitourism as it is known in birding circles – in Southern Africa, with BirdLife South Africa (BLSA) taking the lead in training local bird guides. Based on this experience, BirdLife Botswana invited Andre Botha, then Training Manager for BLSA, to assist with customising the BLSA bird guide training course to suit Botswana's situation. With BirdLife South Africa's agreement and support, this has been done, and BirdLife Botswana recently conducted its first specialised bird guide training course.

The course was held in Khwai Village on the border of Moremi Game Reserve, and was run by Richard Randall and Pete Hancock. The two-week course focussed primarily on bird identification and basic bird guiding techniques and was attended by 14 participants from all parts of the country. The Rufford Small Grants programme provided financial support for the whole programme.

Training local bird guides is an integral part of Birdlife Botswana's drive to promote avitourism as a way of involving local citizens in bird monitoring and conservation. Further courses will be conducted in the future, linked to the now established Okavango/Chobe Birding Route which encompasses two of Botswana's Important Bird Areas and some of the finest birding in Southern Africa.

BirdLife Botswana is grateful to BirdLife South Africa for sharing their experience and expertise, and to the Rufford Small Grants for making the project possible through its financial support.

Pete Hancock





Photo: R Randall

The Rufford  
Small Grants for  
Nature Conservation

BirdLife  
SOUTH AFRICA

Participants on the bird guide training course spent time in the Khwai concession viewing some of the Okavango's special birds.

## LOCAL SPONSORS COME TO THE FORE

This short note acknowledges the support of some of our current local sponsors, without whom BirdLife Botswana would not be able to operate.

- **BP and BP FILLING STATION AND EXPRESS SHOP, MAUN** are thanked for sponsoring the reprinting of the 'Birds of Concern' poster.
- Special thanks to **DYNABYTE** for sponsoring the E-mail/Internet for the Ngamiland Branch – [cranegroup@dynabyte.bw](mailto:cranegroup@dynabyte.bw)
- We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of our partners, **NGAMI TOYOTA, MULBRIDGE TRANSPORTERS** and **DESERT AND DELTA SAFARIS** for providing core funding for the BirdLife Office in Maun.



- **JACANA ENTERPRISES** and Lee Ouzman are thanked for assistance with our Geographical Information System (GIS)



- **REMI AND WENDY BORELLO** provided substantial funding for the printing of our well-known journal Babbler
- **BARLOWORLD BOTSWANA** made a donation for general administrative expenses and our Important Bird Area programme



- We have recently produced leaflets on BirdLife Botswana, with sponsorship from **DEBSWANA DIAMOND COMPANY**
- **DEBSWANA DIAMOND COMPANY, BARLOWORLD BOTSWANA and THE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT GROUP** are thanked for their contribution towards general administrative expenses for the Gaborone office
- **LESEDI MOTORS** continues sponsoring our website
- **THE GERMAN EMBASSY** made a contribution towards the translation costs of the Beginners Bird Book that BirdLife Botswana is developing



Embassy  
of the Federal Republic of Germany  
Gaborone

- Our project "Towards a Red Data Book for birds of Botswana" is sponsored by the **GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY/SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME**



- We continue sharing space for our shop with **HAZELLWOOD**

**PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS!**



## MACCOA DUCK ACTION PLAN

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2005, ornithologists from South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania flocked to Wakkerstroom in South Africa to put together a Species Action Plan for the Maccoa Duck. The workshop was organised by the African Game Bird Research, Education and Development Trust (AGRED.) under the directorship of Aldo Berruti. The aim of the species action plan was:

By 2010, stabilise or increase natural populations of Maccoa Ducks as indicators of sustainable wetland management for the benefit of people in Africa

Some of the activities covered during the workshop were: defining what is meant by a Species Action Plan, identifying threats affecting Maccoa Ducks, and group work documenting conservation actions to solve the threats.

In Africa there are three populations of Maccoa Ducks, which are in Ethiopia, Eastern Africa and Southern Africa. The species occurs in 18 countries with a range of 4.2 million square kilometres (BirdLife International, 2005). The estimates vary from 0 in Sudan and Uganda to around 10,000 in South Africa. The Maccoa Duck is listed in column A, category 1c of Table 1 of the African-Eurasian Migratory Water Bird Agreement. It is classified as "Least Concern" in Threatened Birds of the World (BirdLife International, 2005). In Botswana, BirdLife Botswana has included it in its proposed Red Data list. However, it doesn't have any official special protection. The Important Bird Areas where Maccoa Ducks occur in Botswana are the Phakalane Sewage ponds and Bokaa Dam.

What we know about Maccoa Ducks in Botswana, is that they occur mainly in the east. They are fairly common in Jwaneng, further north, they are sparse and unpredictable, although they may be more common in Makgadikgadi in years of high rainfall. The estimated population is around 1,000 and increasing. More information is needed on the Maccoa Duck population in Botswana. So if you see them, please send the usual details:

Date – number of birds – GPS – locality – activity

Send this information to your nearest BirdLife Office.

The conservation of this duck is important because Maccoa Ducks can be used as a keystone species to support general wetland protection. BirdLife Botswana needs to



be instrumental in helping to develop the Species Action Plan for Maccoa Ducks in Botswana and the rest of Southern Africa. We rely on you to help us gather the information needed to meet one of the objectives that came from the workshop, which was to improve population estimates of Maccoa Ducks in Southern Africa.

## Reference

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL, 2005. Species Fact Sheet: *Oxyura maccoa*.  
www.birdlife.org

By Zenzele Mpofu – Maun

## UPDATE ON THE KORI BUSTARD STUDY

Just a note to let you know that we have just undertaken the second (and last) of the field surveys, into western Kgalagadi (to seven settlements near the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park). We are still analysing the data, but initial indications are that there are other dimensions to Kori Bustard poaching that we did not find out during the first leg e.g. in settlements near the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, there was less poaching as the bird is considered a bad omen, and it is also only eaten by the elderly.

In Kgalagadi, a higher proportion of the respondents reported that they had eaten Kori Bustards, or seen it poached. Also more disturbing were reports that some live birds are caught (up to 10-15 birds in some cases), and exported to farms in neighbouring South Africa, where the South African farm owners and their labourers consider them a delicacy. In fact, there was a considerable number of people who said they had first tasted Kori Bustards whilst working on South African farms, and that the bird is more freely eaten that side than in Botswana.

Added to this were large areas of degraded lands, possibly due to overgrazing by cattle, but exacerbated by lack of/very low rainfall. In fact, a lot of the respondents suggested drought/food shortage is the main threat facing Kori Bustards in the district, which means conservation plans need to address the livestock overstocking issue, in addition to poaching, in these areas.

While the field studies have been completed, we still welcome observations, comments or any other information on the illegal consumption of Kori Bustards, and what could be done to remedy the situation, as well as sightings of live birds (see newsletter #4 for the format to use). For more information on the Kori Bustard Project Report, contact me at [blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw](mailto:blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw) or tel:3190450/1.

Kabelo J. Senyatso



## BIRDLIFE BOTSWANA MISSION

BirdLife Botswana aims to conserve birds and important bird habitats, by creating awareness, carrying out research and promoting beneficial relationships between birds and people.

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This newsletter appears quarterly. If you would like to contribute an article on your field observations or bird conservation project, please send it to [pete@info.bw](mailto:pete@info.bw)

