

African Skimmers in Botswana

Title For the past several years, the Independence Day fishing competition at the end of September has been held in the Okavango Panhandle, coinciding with the peak breeding time for the Near Threatened African Skimmer. This species nests on exposed sandbanks along the Okavango River, and the presence of a large number of fishermen and their boats has had a negative impact on its breeding success. This year however, the fishing competition is under new management, and the organiser, Heather Clark from Bush Boutique in Maun has agreed to move the venue to Chanoga on the Boteti River. BirdLife Botswana (BirdLife Partner) commends Bush Boutique for this change of location, and we hope that this year's competition is a great success. We are not against people who enjoy fishing (it's much better than watching television!), and we believe that there is a place for birds **and** fishermen in the vastness of the Okavango; the upcoming fishing competition will be a test of whether this is true or not. Incidentally, we also applaud the 'catch and release' approach to the fishing competition, and Bush Boutique's efforts to guarantee that fishermen adhere to the 'Code of Conduct for Responsible Fishing in the Okavango Delta' and other regulations introduced to protect the environment, thereby ensuring a 'win-win' situation for all involved.