



BirdLife to work with the Nairobi Convention

In August 2011, BirdLife International entered into a collaborative agreement with Nairobi Convention Secretariat on a project titled: Enhancing the Protection of Birds in the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Nairobi Convention. The main objective of this joint initiative is to develop a regional synthesis report on birds and their habitats in the Nairobi Convention area to be launched at the Convention's Conference of the Parties (COP) in April 2012. The eight month collaborative project is focused on reviewing the bird listed in the Convention's 'Protocol Concerning Protected Areas and Wild Fauna and Flora in the Eastern African Region. Over the years, the biodiversity in the Convention Area has come under intense threat resulting from increasing population pressure, overexploitation and conversion of coastal habitats for other uses such as agriculture, aquaculture, port/harbour expansion and urban development. Such unsustainable developments, in turn, have led to the destruction of vital coastal and marine habitats such as mangrove forests, among others. In this regard, BirdLife International was engaged to review the status of birds listed in the Protocol as indicators of marine and coastal ecosystem health. The project was kicked-off with an inception workshop which was held in August at the White Sands Hotel in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The workshop was attended by National Focal Points for the Nairobi Convention from the participating countries, namely: Comoros, France (Reunion), Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa and Tanzania; BirdLife partners, experts/researchers from the participating countries; and representatives of BirdLife International and the Nairobi Convention United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The aim of the workshop was to establish links between experts and Nairobi Convention National Focal Points for broad ownership of the process and the project outputs. Essentially, the national implementation teams, National Task Forces (NTFs), comprising BirdLife Partner (lead organisation), National Focal Point for Nairobi Convention, conservation NGO and research institution/academia, will review the updated birds list availed by BirdLife International. Thereafter, status information with tabular, graphic and spatial illustrations will be compiled into a national report for each bird species as well as information on the habitats. These national reports will be synthesised into a regional report. One of the key milestones that this project will seek to achieve is the identification and prioritisation candidate marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs) that will be proposed for designation as Marine Protected Areas in the Western Indian Ocean. It is expected that the project will: 1) increased awareness on the status of birds and their habitats in the protocol area; 2) strengthened knowledge base of the National Focal Points on ecosystem service in the implementation of the general obligations of the Protocol concerning Protected Areas and Wild Fauna and Flora in the Eastern African Region; and 3) enhanced up to date information on the status and trends of birds species and their habitats listed in the protocol for managers and decision makers.