World Migratory Bird Day Celebration Promoting Botswana?s Diverse Culture

Title BirdLife Botswana (BirdLife Partner) in collaboration with Department of Wildlife and National Parks celebrated World Migratory Bird Day with more than five hundred school children, forty-eight teachers and over fifty Mogobane community members on Saturday 29th May 2010 at Mogobane village kgotla. The theme for the celebration was Migratory Birds: Promoting Cultural Diversity in Botswana. The day was attended by Mogobane village Chief Mr Nobi Moilwa who welcomed everybody to the celebration and also applauded BirdLife Botswana for organising this event in his village. He mentioned that he hoped the event will not only serve as an entertaining and educational tool for his community but will also motivate them to start conserving the waterbirds at Mogobane Dam. In the main address Ms Arabang Kanego of the Department of Environmental Affairs mentioned that this World Migratory Bird Day Celebration was appropriate as it contributed to mark the year 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. She also said that it is good that BirdLife Botswana is developing Botswana?s future ornithologists by making school children the key role players in celebrating World Migratory Bird Day. The celebration was sponsored by Embassy of The United States of America which was represented by Mrs Victoria O?Connell who gave a speech on behalf of the Ambassador. In her speech she mentioned that each year hundreds of thousands of people observe International Migratory Bird Day. She continued that this year we join people throughout the world who are connecting with nature by celebrating International Migratory Bird Day in town squares, community centres, schools, parks, and refuges across the planet to learn more about wild birds, to take action to conserve birds and their habitats, and to simply have fun. She also said that increasingly, birds are teaching us more and more about our environment. For example, migratory bird patterns can teach us much about climate change and changes in weather patterns. She gave an example of what is happening currently in the United States, and said that we are all learning more and more about the extent of the damage of the Gulf oil spill to the Gulf Coast, but US Fish and Wildlife Service experts are working around the clock to rescue the birds affected by the spill in order to release them back to a safer habitat. In concluding her speech Mrs O?Connell mentioned that abundant and diverse birdlife enriches our cultures, provides immeasurable eco- system services that benefit our economies, and serves as a sensitive barometer of changes to our environments. And lastly she said today we have the opportunity to interact with our friends, our neighbours, our educators, and the wonderful experts of BirdLife Botswana as we all connect with nature through birds. The audience was then wonderfully entertained by twenty-four school environmental clubs including AIDS schools and associations, three youth groups and one tertiary club. They performed traditional dances, acted out bird dramas which they had produced, recited poetry, played on their marimbas and brought messages depicting the culture and migratory birds of Botswana. What was particularly enjoyable were the many songs written specially for the occasion and then sung delightfully by the children. Importantly, the day was educational in that all twenty eight participants performed their acts in both Setswana (local language) and English. The acts sent various messages on migratory species of Botswana, how birds are associated with culture and messages on AIDS prevention. All present were given World Migratory Bird Day promotional t-shirts which featured the Woodland Kingfisher, one of Botswana?s beautiful migrants. The event was closed by Mogobane village councillor, Mr Samuel Nong who thanked the children for their active participation in their migratory bird, culture and AIDS educational acts. The councillor acknowledged BirdLife Botswana for celebrating the event in his village and the community for their attendance. He noted that the celebration was very important in the sense that it highlighted the need for him and his community to take note of birds around them. He was pleased that BirdLife Botswana had combined with the Mogobane community to arrange a popular event at the Kgotla because of birds, which he considered unusual. To conclude, the Chairman of BirdLife Botswana, Mr Harold Hester, presented certificates of participation to all the performers.