BirdLife?s action through insight

Title

The BirdLife Partnership builds upon its unrivalled combination of conservation science and practical experience of reconciling the interests of people and biodiversity at the local level to deliver innovative solutions to conservation challenges.

This year we contributed to a study which identified ten global priority regions for targeted funding. *Global Climate Change Adaptation Priorities for Biodiversity and Food Security*, details areas where adapting to the impacts of climate change would provide the greatest benefits both to small farmers and to the natural ecosystems that support life on Earth.

Another important study involving BirdLife International scientists identified the protected areas most critical to preventing extinctions of birds, mammals and amphibians, as well as providing practical advice for improving the effectiveness of protected areas in conserving global biodiversity. The study showed that 93% of the sites had already been identified as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas by BirdLife Partners, emphasising the effectiveness of the IBA network for capturing important sites for other wildlife.

But does formal protection work? An analysis led by conservation scientists from the BirdLife Africa Partnership and the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) has provided the most robust evidence yet. Annual rates of loss of natural land-cover in protected IBAs were less than half of those in IBAs with no legal protection. This work is a vital contribution to the Convention on Biological Diversity target to increase total coverage of land in Protected Areas from 13% to 17% by 2020.

Of the world's 22 albatross species, 17 are considered threatened, mainly because of the impact of fisheries, particularly long-line vessels whose baited hooks are fatally attractive to the slow-breeding seabirds. BirdLife's Global Seabird and Marine Programme has been working with UK-based engineering company Fishtek to develop an innovative mitigation measure for longline fisheries. The result, the Hook Pod, encloses the barb of the hook until it sinks out of reach of foraging seabirds. BirdLife's Albatross Task Force is currently helping conduct trials of the Hook Pod in South Africa and Brazil. Results so far indicate the Pod has no negative effect on fish catches, and the fishermen like using it.

The BirdLife Partnership are committed to halting extinction and have a special focus on Critically Endangered species. Our State of the World's Bird report released at the BirdLife World Congress reveals that BirdLife International has taken action for 60% of the world's 197 Critically Endangered bird species through its Preventing Extinctions Programme (PEP).

Through PEP, BirdLife has been working with the people best equipped to devise and deliver the right conservation solutions - Species Guardians. In 2013, the largest fully wild population of Critically Endangered Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* had its second most successful breeding season on record, fledging 148 young. Management and conservation of this Moroccan population is supervised by SEO/BirdLife (BirdLife in Spain) in conjunction with Moroccan government agencies and GREPOM (BirdLife in Morocco), with funding from HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, the Species Champion, through the BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme.

Record numbers of another Critically Endangered Species, White-shouldered Ibis *Pseudibis davisoni*, were found by surveys involving BirdLife and local NGOs in Cambodia. Since coordinated counts began in 2009, the known population of this species has been increasing every year, partly as a result of conservation actions, such as nest protection to improve chick survival, and partly due to increased survey effort and better knowledge of roost locations.

Until this year, there were only two known breeding colonies of the Critically Endangered Chinese Crested Tern *Sterna bernstein*i. An innovative tern colony restoration project appears to have succeeded in re-establishing another, on an islet in the Jiushan Islands. The restoration team, which included members from a number of Chinese agencies, BirdLife International and HKBWS (BirdLife in Hong Kong), expected it would take years before there was any hope of attracting the birds back. Yet by late September, a substantial new colony of Great Crested Terns had raised hundreds of young and, among them, at least one Chinese Crested Tern chick also successfully fledged.

The Critically Endangered Tahiti Monarch *Pomarea nigra* has also enjoyed its most successful breeding season since Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie (SOP-Manu; BirdLife Partner in French Polynesia) began an intensive programme of nest protection in 1998. Ten young fledged, representing a four-fold increase on previous years, and seven new territories were established.

The main threat to the Tahiti Monarch is nest predation by Black Rat. Rats and other invasive alien species are responsible for the declines of many small island endemic birds, and the loss of much other biodiversity. BirdLife's new Invasive Species Programme was launched at the World Congress in June. The BirdLife Pacific Partnership, which has successfully removed rats and other introduced predators from more than 30 islands in five Pacific countries and territories, is sharing its experience of reducing the impact of invasive species on the natural environment and local livelihoods by developing community-managed eradication, control and biosecurity.

The development of sustainable power generating capacity in North Africa and the Middle East will improve the lives of the human population, but has the potential to threaten the large numbers of raptors, cranes, storks and other large soaring birds which migrate through the region. BirdLife's Migratory Soaring Birds project (MSB) has been working in 2013 with governments and industry sectors in the region to minimise these impacts. Most recently, the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA), and the New and Renewable Energy Authority (NREA), signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the MSB project to incorporate and promote the conservation of migratory soaring birds and other biodiversity within the energy sector in Egypt.

The MSB project has in 2013 prompted another government to deal with one of the longest-standing threats to migratory raptors in the region. Following an MSB workshop, the government of Sudan has undertaken to replace the notorious Port Sudan "killer line", which is estimated to have killed hundreds and perhaps thousands of Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* since it was constructed in the 1950s.

There is also good news from a country which too often features as a blackspot for migratory birds. BirdLife Malta has announced that the Malta-Gozo Channel has been confirmed as Malta's first Marine Important Bird Area (IBA), in recognition of its international importance for two globally and one regionally threatened bird species. Malta already has 13 terrestrial Special Protection Areas, all of which were first identified as IBAs. BirdLife hopes that Malta will continue this practice by nominating the Gozo Channel as its first Marine Special Protection Area.

These are just a few examples from the work of the BirdLife Partnership in 2013. We believe our focus on conservation science delivers practical solutions to tackle the most pressing conservation issues of today.