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In this e-bulletin:

- 1 Message from the Regional Director
- 2 Soaring Birds projects flies higher!
- 3-6 Partner news: updates from across the continent – including celebrations!
- 7 SOS for SOS Forêts; Announcements
- 8 Opportunities and Events

Message from the BirdLife International Regional Director for Africa



Dear readers,
Time flies. We are approaching the end of what has been a busy year with mixed fortunes; great achievements on various fronts but also many challenges that we have had to face. Good news first.

Thanks to the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (BirdLife in Sierra Leone), supported by the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), the Gola Forest in Sierra Leone has been declared a National Park. This will spur the Transboundary Peace Park project forwards, towards achieving a similar feat by the Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (BirdLife in Liberia) to protect the even larger Gola Forest in Liberia. Read the article on our website at: www.birdlife.org/community/2011/12/sierra-leone-protects-climate-by-saving-its-largest-forest-for-the-world/. 2011 also saw increasing cross-regional partnerships to protect migratory birds through a series of projects addressing soaring birds in the Great Rift Valley, passerines in the Sahel, and coastal migrants in West Africa. Support from the BirdLife Partners in the north, particularly VBN (Netherlands), RSPB (UK), SPEA (Portugal) and LPO (France) complements the efforts of the BirdLife Africa Partners and contact NGOs across Africa to safeguard birds. At the recent meeting of the

Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals in Norway, BirdLife International registered major 'flyway' successes, including through the adoption of a resolutions to develop an Africa-Eurasian land birds Agreement (*see also bottom of page 5*).

In 2011, the BirdLife Africa Partnership worked closely together with two major donor agencies to help coordinate the development of strategies that will guide their investments in biodiversity conservation in two specific regions of Africa. The BirdLife Partners involved worked their socks off to ensure as wide consultation as possible. Thank you!

The Africa Partnership continues to grow, albeit very slowly, with civil society organisations in Morocco, Mauritius and Namibia preparing to join the network.

At the UNFCCC COP in Durban, BirdLife Africa Partners, especially those accredited to government delegations, have been pushing hard for the recognition of ecosystems-based approaches in adaptation planning. We also organized a side event to spread the message: www.birdlife.org/community/2011/12/governments-urged-to-recognise-the-role-of-ecosystems-and-biodiversity-in-climate-change-adaptation-and-mitigation/

However, we cannot afford to be complacent. If the recent review of the Red List is anything to go by, the status of birds in Africa is still on the decline as a result of habitat loss and other human induced threats. Key sites for biodiversity continue to face pressure from developers, and the local communities' vulnerability to consequences of climate change is rising. However, as we look forward to 2012, we know that we will triumph if we remain focused on our mission and pursue our objectives without tiring.

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a prosperous and successful New Year.

Dr Julius Arinaitwe

CONTRIBUTION OF ARTICLES

We welcome contributions to the e-bulletin from the BirdLife Africa network about bird species, sites, habitats and people. We would also be happy to know about conservation-related events being organized within the BirdLife network. Please send your contributions for the next issue to: antoINETte.otieno@birdlife.org by 15 February 2012

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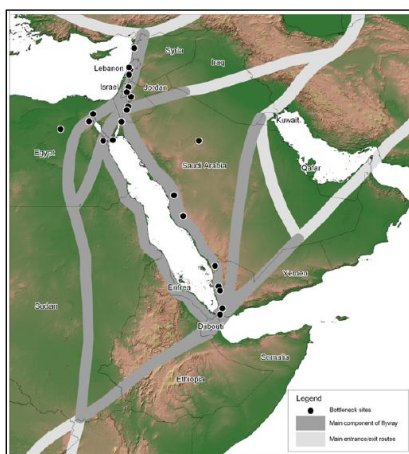
REGIONAL NEWS

Planning for mainstreaming conservation of Migratory Soaring Birds into key productive sectors

Bird migration is a global phenomenon involving spectacular mass migrations of birds over long distances from their breeding to their wintering grounds. However, populations of long-distance migratory soaring birds are declining rapidly along flyways due to various human-induced threats.

The Rift Valley/Red Sea flyway is the second most important flyway in the world for migratory soaring birds (raptors, storks, pelicans and some ibises), with 37 different soaring bird species using it, five of which are globally threatened.

As part of efforts to address the plight of migratory soaring birds along this flyway, BirdLife International is implementing a cross-regional project across eleven countries in Africa and the Middle East that aims to "mainstream" migratory soaring bird considerations into the productive sectors along the flyway. It focuses on those sectors that pose the greatest risk to safe bird



migration – principally hunting, energy, agriculture and waste management – while promoting activities in sectors which could benefit from these birds, such as ecotourism.

During a recent project meeting in Lebanon, the implementing partners discussed how to achieve the project's mainstreaming goals. It was agreed that, first, it will raise awareness about the flyway and alter social and cultural behaviours, such as irresponsible hunting behaviours. Secondly, the project will increase and strengthen national and regional capacity to effect mainstreaming of the flyway concept and of migratory soaring birds conservation.

Thirdly, efforts will be made to develop, deliver, promote and mainstream content and tools to enhance "flyway sensitive practices" into sector processes and programmes. Last but not least, lessons learnt and experiences will be captured and distilled to ensure their replication to promote adaptive management.

The project meeting was held back-to-back with a workshop that discussed the issues related to hunting in more detail, leading to a regional declaration on hunting and a set of guidelines for mainstreaming migratory soaring bird conservation into the hunting sector along the Rift Valley/Red Sea flyway.

Ongoing efforts to protect migratory soaring birds include, first, the development of a sensitivity atlas which will highlight environmentally sensitive areas and provide locational guidance to planners when making decisions about investments in the energy sector and other productive sectors. Secondly, guidelines and best practices are being developed as tools to promote 'migratory soaring bird-sensitive' development in the energy sector – particularly the power transmission lines, wind energy and solar energy. For instance, Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE, BirdLife in Egypt) is working with the energy sector in Egypt to mainstream soaring bird considerations in planning and implementation of their activities.

This project is being funded by the Global Environment Facility through UNDP in Lebanon. See also www.birdlife.org/community/2011/10/experts-reach-agreement-on-mainstreaming-migratory-soaring-birds-conservation-into-the-hunting-sector-in-the-rift-valleyred-sea-region/

For more details, contact the Flyway Officer for Africa, Regional Flyway Facility, BirdLife/UNDP/GEF Migratory Soaring Birds Project, at george.eshiamwata@birdlife.org



Long-legged Bustard is one of the migratory soaring birds using the Rift Valley/Red Sea Flyway (© O. Fadhill)

PARTNER NEWS ROUND UP**The Ngovayang Forest Project in Cameroon – for people and nature**

The Bagyeli/Bakola are nomadic communities without land or permanent assets. Initially a hunter-gatherer community, the Bagyeli/Bakola have been marginalised in Cameroon for a long time. However, with support from the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID), the Cameroon Biodiversity Conservation Society (BirdLife in Cameroon), in partnership with the Cameroon Government, has been working to support the empowerment of the Bagyeli/Bakola communities in the Ngovayang Forest, one of the highest-biodiversity sites of Cameroon.

Through the Ngovayang Forest Project (NFP), Bagyeli/Bokola people have been issued with birth certificates and national identification cards, which make them eligible to exercise their democratic rights by taking part in electoral processes such as voting. Income-generating as well as health-improving activities have been implemented, which are already showing results.

In addition, the Bagyeli/Bakola children in the Ngovayang Forest are encouraged to go to school, and most of them can now read and write. With increased levels of literacy, this community will be fully empowered socially and economically, and will be in a better position to protect the unique forest they live in.

For more information, contact Feussom T. Augustin at cbcs_cam@yahoo.fr

HOT NEWS FROM THE BIRDLIFE COMMUNITY

WorldBirds, the birdwatching database set up by BirdLife to record the observations of professional and citizen scientists all over the world, has passed the **three million records milestone**. See www.birdlife.org/community/2011/12/worldbirds-database-is-building-the-bigger-picture-from-birder's-notes/ for the details!

The "Forêt du Day" Ecosystem in Djibouti under threat

The French Institute *Arthur Rimbaud* recently hosted a conference on the "Forêt Day Ecosystem - an Important Bird Area and its associated threatened birds". The conference highlighted the essential role played by the site in hosting more than 65% of Djibouti's fauna and flora and the main stronghold of the endemic flagship bird, the Djibouti Francolin, which is Critically Endangered according to the 2011 IUCN Red List.



Houssein with the Government Project Manager, a community representative and a HoA/REC expert at the site (©Houssein Rayaleh)

According to Houssein Rayaleh, BirdLife Species Guardian for the Djibouti Francolin and the Executive Secretary of Djibouti Nature (BirdLife in Djibouti), the ecosystem has deteriorated in the last 20 years due to human encroachment and settlement around the forest. This, coupled with overgrazing has affected the regeneration process of juniper trees.

The government is collaborating with civil society organizations to initiate appropriate interventions, with mixed results. Already there is an ongoing project to safeguard the integrity of Forêt du Day as a key biodiversity site and protected area.

Houssein stressed the need for community involvement in conservation efforts in order to change attitudes and protect the Forêt du Day. Contact Houssein for more information at naturedjibouti@gmail.com

What did "Durban" do for birds? See www.birdlife.org/community/2011/12/roadmap-to-a-new-global-agreement---what-did-durban-deliver-for-our-climate/

Spinning and weaving to conserve birds in Kenya

Nature Kenya (BirdLife in Kenya) works with 18 Site Support Groups (SSGs) at more than 20 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) across the country. One of these IBAs is Kinangop Grasslands, the stronghold of Sharpe's Longclaw, a highly threatened Kenya endemic bird species. Conversion of the grassland to cropland is the main threat affecting the habitat of this species.



Conversion of the grassland to farm land at Kinangop (©Samuel Bakari)

With the help of the local SSG - the Friends of Kinangop Plateau (FoKP) -, NatureKenya has been monitoring the Sharpe's Longclaw on 160 farms over the past eight years. In addition, local income sources have been diversified through "grasslands conservation-friendly" income generation activities. Of these, wool spinning and weaving have been most successful based on its popularity with farmers who own big flocks of sheep and cattle. They set aside pastures for the sheep and cattle, which is good for the Sharpe's Longclaw as this is its most desirable habitat.

Since 2004, earnings from the wool spinning and weaving products have increased from KSh 25,000 to over KSh 200,000 (about USD 2,400) in 2011. The initiative is also paying real dividends in terms of securing the population of the Sharpe's Longclaw, which has remained stable on the farms where wool has been bought since 2004.

For more details, contact Fred Barasa, Conservation and IBA Monitoring Coordinator, at cpo@naturekenya.org

New partnership for Seychelles' iconic bird

Nature Seychelles (BirdLife in the Seychelles) and the Seychelles National Park Authority (SNPA) have joined forces to work on a new project to help protect one of Seychelles' iconic bird species: the Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher. A Memorandum of Agreement to this effect was signed on 19 October 2011 at the Nature Seychelles headquarters by the CEOs of the two organisations, Dr Nirmal Shah and Mr Denis Matatiken.

The new project, to be carried out on La Digue Island, is part of BirdLife's Preventing Extinctions Programme and is supported by Viking Optical Ltd, the Species Champion who helps raise vital funding needed for the conservation of this bird.

The Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher is Critically Endangered because of its small population and small range, limited mostly to La Digue. A previous project funded by the UK Government's Darwin Initiative resulted in the successful translocation of 23 birds to Denis Island to create "a safety net" population there. It established a second breeding population of flycatchers on Denis and marked a major milestone in the Species Action Plan for the Flycatcher, aimed at removing it from the endangered list.



Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher (©Gary Ward)

The new partnership will focus on further enhancing the population on La Digue which is threatened by habitat loss, invasive alien species and encroaching urbanisation.

For more information, contact Elizabeth Mwambui, Nature Seychelles Communications Manager, at liz@natureseychelles.org

Vulture populations in Malawi are plummeting

In Malawi, vultures are known as the “masters of the skies”. Palm-nut, Hooded, White-backed, Lappet-faced and White-headed Vultures are the species that have been found in Malawi.

However, despite providing their ‘cleaning services’ to the ecosystem, vultures are increasingly facing human-induced threats. According to Alhipus Lipiya, Park Manager of Kasungu National Park, this park hosted many vultures in the 1980s. But poachers hated them because the birds gave them – and their kill – away to patrolling rangers. The poachers decided to avenge, and started systematic poisoning by lacing their kills, deliberately left behind, with chemicals such as Temic or Logo (*Dimethoate*). Coupled with a scarcity of prey and habitat loss, this led to a population crash of vultures in the park. It is now three years since a vulture was last seen in Kasungu NP.

In a recent country-wide survey conducted by the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (BirdLife in Malawi), only the Palm-nut, the White-backed and the Lappet-faced Vultures were recorded – painting a grim picture on their conservation status in the country. Threats facing vultures in other parts of Africa include poisoning using *diclofenac* and electrocution by power lines. Deliberate killing for use in traditional medicines has also been recorded in some parts of Africa, including in Malawi.

Samuel Kamoto – Acting CEO, WESM, samkamoto@africa-online.net



Palm-nut vulture – one of the species in decline (©Werner Schlupe)

Common Bird Monitoring Scheme in Kenya

Birds are very good indicators of the state of the environment. The Common Bird Monitoring (CBM) scheme is a generic monitoring approach covering a wide suite of common and widespread species. The main aims of the scheme are to provide information on changes in population levels for a wide range of birds across a variety of habitats, improve our understanding of their population biology and promote bird conservation through the involvement of large numbers of volunteers.

The scheme surveys are quick, simple and, most importantly, enjoyable bird watching exercises. The basic principle of the CBM schemes is to survey the same sites, spread throughout the area of interest, twice each year.



Common Bulbul is one common species to be monitored through the CBM programme (©Peter Hills)

In Kenya, a CBM exercise was carried out in July 2011; 12 participants had registered to participate but only seven managed to take part. In total, 1591 individual birds were either seen or heard, with a record of 158 species at one of the seven sites visited. So far 28 people have confirmed participation in the February 2012 surveys.

If you are willing to participate in Common Bird Monitoring in Kenya, contact Fred Barasa through cpo@naturekenya.org or office@naturekenya.org

Read about BirdLife’s successes at the CMS CoP on www.birdlife.org/community/2011/11/birdlife-team-secures-adoption-of-resolutions-for-conservation-of-migratory-landbirds/

CELEBRATION TIME**Nature Seychelles celebrates World Environment Day**

Nature Seychelles (BirdLife in the Seychelles) observed World Environment Day with its General Assembly, rallying members and stakeholders to celebrate the last three years of great work. Chief Executive Officer Nirmal Shah, and Director for Strategic Operations, Kerstin Henri, presented some of the association's wonderful results.

Antoine Marie Moustache, Nature Seychelles' Council Chair, said the organisation's council is extremely pleased with its achievements, implemented by the highly dedicated staff. Permanent staff now number 20 and include a high percentage of women - more than 60% - ranging from field based wardens to senior technical officers.

Nature Seychelles has been vigorous in conducting its mandate to improve the conservation of biodiversity through scientific, management, educational and training programmes. Highlights for the period under review included the translocation of the Seychelles Magpie Robin and Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher to Denis Island. The translocation of the Flycatcher resulted in its breeding for the first time outside of its stronghold of La Digue Island. And, in 2010, Cousin Island became the world's first Carbon Neutral Reserve.

In terms of financial resources, a number of donors have been providing grants to Nature Seychelles for various projects. Among them are the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which supports the restoration of corals damaged by climate change, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which supports protected areas management, including for the Cousin Island Special Reserve. Nature Seychelles has also invested heavily in infrastructure development at its headquarters in Mahe and on Cousin Island Special Reserve.

For more details about Nature Seychelles' work, contact Elizabeth Mwambui, Communications Manager, at liz@natureseychelles.org

International Year of Forests celebration in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Institute of Biodiversity Conservation, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (BirdLife in Ethiopia) celebrated the 2011 World Biodiversity Day and the International Year of Forests at the Ghion Hotel in Addis Ababa. The event was graced by H.E Girma Woldegiorgis, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.



H.E. Girma Woldegiorgis, President of Ethiopia, graced the occasion (©EWNHS)

The President underscored the key role biodiversity plays in agriculture, which is Ethiopia's mainstay. Earlier, Mr. Kassahun Embaye, Acting Director General of the Institute of Biodiversity Conservation, had stressed the role of biodiversity in ecosystem services and economic development. Mr. Sileshi Getahun, the State Minister for Agriculture, called for concerted efforts in the conservation of biodiversity. The climax of the event was a panel discussion between various experts. For more information, email ewnhs.ble@ethionet.et



School environmental club performing during the event (©EWNHS)

The aftermath of post-election violence: SOS for SOS Forêts

The recent post-election conflict in Ivory Coast has had a devastating impact on SOS Forêts, BirdLife in Ivory Coast.



Books and other important documents were looted

The SOS Forêts office was completely looted and vandalized. Books, computers and other equipment disappeared. The roof was ripped off and all the roofing material was stolen. All staff are currently working from their homes.



A section of vandalised SOS Forêts office

However, SOS Forêts is crawling back to its feet and is making an appeal for donations to re-roof their office and re-equip it. Donations are welcome in the form of books, computers, binoculars, field equipment and any other resources. *Please help!* Contact Mathieu Wadja Egnankou, Campus Université de la Cocody, 22 BP 918 Abidjan 22; Tel: +225 (0) 776 9202, or email sosforets@hotmail.com or sosforets@aviso.ci

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 13th Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC XIII): "Birds in a Changing Environment"

The next PAOC will take place between 14 and 21 October 2012 in Arusha, Tanzania. The BirdLife Africa Partnership has in the past used this gathering to move forward its bird conservation agenda, showcase its work, and share successes, lessons learnt and challenges in its efforts to conserve birds and their habitats. BirdLife Africa Partners are therefore encouraged to plan to attend the PAOC in Tanzania!

The Pan-African Ornithological Congress is an organisation of professional and dedicated amateur ornithologists. It aims to: (a) Further the study of African birds; (b) Promote the preservation of African birds as an integral part of the African heritage; (c) Foster the appreciation of birds and discussion of African birds in relation to man, and (d) Disseminate information on African birds through appropriate international meetings (Congresses) and publications (Proceedings of the Congresses).

For more information on the PAOC, contact Colleen Downs at Downs@ukzn.ac.za and/or Adrian Craig at A.Craig@ru.ac.za. A website dedicated to the event (www.paoc-africa.org) is also being developed.

Translation of African Bird Club website into French begins

A few pages of the African Bird Club website have been translated into French in order to reach and engage a wider community of bird enthusiasts in Africa. This is good news for the French speakers among us! Visit www.africanbirdclub.org/club/aboutABC_fr.html and www.africanbirdclub.org/sales/sales4_fr.html. Plans are underway to translate the same few pages into Portuguese. The African Bird Club is therefore seeking any Portuguese speakers who would like to volunteer to help with this work. If you can help, contact John Caddick at John.Caddick@care4free.net.

Job and Training Opportunities

6 January 2012: PhD positions in Conservation Ecology, University of Utah.

Visit: www.biology.utah.edu/graduate/eeob/

13 January 2012: Workshops Coordinator vacancy, Tropical Biology Association. Send applications to courses-africa@tropical-biology.org. For more details visit: www.tropical-biology.org

15 January 2012: Full scholarships for 4-month (April to July 2012) training in modern beekeeping for developing countries. Email: itpbeekeeping@ugent.be. Visit: www.itpbeekeeping.ugent.be/.

20 January 2012: Designing Research Projects in the field training workshop (28 February - 2 March 2012) in Kenya. For details, contact: Dreca-Ke@tropical-biology.org. For an electronic copy of the application form, Visit: www.tropical-biology.org/

30 March 2012: Masters in Conservation Leadership, Cambridge University, UK. Contact: Emily.chenery@geog.ac.uk. Visit: www.geog.cam.ac.uk/graduate/mphil/conservation

30 May 2012: MSc in Environmental Governance, UN University. Visit www.ias.unu.edu/masters. NB **28 February 2012 is the deadline for applicants seeking financial support!**

Funding Opportunities

27 January 2012: Concept notes for Proposals for Field Research – Earthwatch Institute. Visit: www.earthwatch.org/aboutus/research/scientistopp/reqresprop/

29 January 2012: International Foundation for Science (IFS) Research Grant. Visit: www.ifs.se/index.asp

Upcoming Events

27-27 February 2012: Regional Workshop for Africa on updating the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Contact: secretariat@cbd.int or visit: www.cbd.int

20-22 March 2012: Student Conference on Conservation Science, Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge, UK. Contact: sccs@zoo.cam.ac.uk or visit: www.sccs-cam.org

26-30 March 2012: BirdLife International Council for the Africa Partnership Meeting. Nairobi, Kenya. Contact Julius Arinaitwe at julius.arinaitwe@birdlife.org

21-23 May 2012: Global Conference on Oceans, Climate Change and Security, Boston, USA. Contact: info@gcoocs.org or visit: www.gcoocs.org

6-15 September 2012: IUCN World Conservation Congress 2012, Jeju, Republic of Korea. Contact mail@iucn.org or visit: www.iucn.org

8-19 October 2012: Convention on Biological Diversity Eleventh Meeting of the Conference of Parties (CBD COP 11), Hyderabad, India. Contact: secretariat@cbd.int or visit: www.cbd.int

14-21 October 2012: The 13th Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC XIII), "Birds in a Changing Environment". Arusha, Tanzania. Contact: Colleen Downs at Downs@ukzn.ac.za and/or Adrian Craig at A.Craig@ru.ac.za

This e-bulletin was compiled by George Eshiamwata and edited by Maaïke Manten and Julius Arinaitwe

The BirdLife International Africa Partnership e-bulletin editorial team wishes all readers a very good 2012 full of new opportunities and events!