

July-September 2006

In this e-bulletin:

- 1 CAP 2006 highlights
- 2 24th IOC in Germany
- 3 Aquatic Warbler summit
- 4 Data zone
- 5, 6 News from the network: Ramsar news
- 7 Job and funding opportunities
- 8 Upcoming events

Message from the CAP chair

Dear BirdLife family members,

It is now already over eleven years since I joined this vigorous family. During these years, we have met on dozens of occasions to consult and reach a consensus on affairs pertinent to the collective objectives and responsibilities of the BirdLife Partnership.

As communication is a matter of concern when working in partnership, I am hoping that the gaps seen at times in communication within the family will be bridged and strengthened in the near future. I would also like to urge members to build their capacities in communication.

As you may agree with me, the memory of the CAP 2006 meeting held in Addis is still fresh in our minds. May I take this opportunity to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for electing EWNHS as a host and determining to come to Ethiopia? Many thanks for your precious time and sharing with us your wealth of experiences during the indoor sessions and outdoor excursions.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my earnest appreciation to Dr. Erasmus Owusu for his excellent performance and strong dedication as the CAP Chair 2005/6.

Wishing you all the best of luck in your endeavors,

Mengistu Wondafrash, Chair of CAP

Regional Initiatives

BirdLife International Council for the Africa Partnership Meeting, CAP 2006

The 2006 meeting of the BirdLife Africa Partnership was hosted by the Ethiopian Natural History and Wildlife Society (EWNHS, BirdLife in Ethiopia) from 19th – 23rd June at the Ghion Hotel in Addis Ababa. Fifty-three delegates from 23 countries (19 in Africa) attended the meeting which was chaired by Dr. Erasmus Owusu of the Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS, BirdLife in Ghana).



CAP attendants in Ethiopia, June 2006

Key decisions were made on how to effectively pursue the conservation agenda in Africa. New office bearers were elected. Ato Mengistu Wondafrash, the Biodiversity Conservation & Research Team Leader of EWNHS, is the new CAP chair for 2006/7, while Lota Melamari, CEO / Coordinator of the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania, is the Vice-Chair. The next meeting is planned for October 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya.

For more information, please contact hazell.thompson@birdlife.or.ke

See also the article in the current edition of the *BirdLife Africa/Afrique newsletter*

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 at global, regional, national levels being organized within the network. Please send your contributions or comments to: antoinette.otieno@birdlife.or.ke.

BirdLife International Africa Partnership Secretariat

PO Box 3502, 00100 GPO Nairobi, Kenya

T: +254-20-8562246 **F:** +254-20-8562259 **E:** birdlife@birdlife.or.ke **W:** www.birdlife.org

24th International Ornithological Congress 2006, Hamburg Germany

A Round Table Discussion at the 24th International Ornithological Congress (IOC) underscores the importance of the Great Rift Valley for Palearctic Bird Migration and supports proposed plans to protect sites along it.

The 24th International Ornithological Congress was held in Hamburg on 13-19 August, 2006. Held every four years, IOC brings together bird scientists and conservationists from all over the world. This year's event was attended by over 1500 delegates from 80 countries.

A Round Table Discussion (RTD) on the Great Rift Valley, convened by Prof. Yossi Leshem, was attended by over 50 participants including Dr Mike Rands (CEO & Director of BirdLife International), Dr. Hazell Thompson (Head of the Africa Partnership Secretariat), Paul Nding'ang'a (Africa Species Coordinator), and Jacques Blondel (President of the 24th International Ornithological Congress).



Dr. Hazell Thompson giving his presentation during the RTD (photo Prof Yossi Leshem)

The Great Rift Valley straddles 22 countries from Turkey in the north to Mozambique in the south and is one of the most important global flyways in the world, used by billions of birds which migrate between Eurasia and Africa. The RTD stressed the urgent need to develop a network of researchers and conservationists to study various aspects of migration, fund raise for research and

develop an efficient network of researchers as a prerequisite to effective information sharing.

Dr. Mike Rands underscored BirdLife's commitment to the GRV project while Dr. Hazell Thompson spelled out the role of the BirdLife Africa network of Partners through the Important Bird Areas (IBA) programme in conserving sites along the Great Rift Valley. Over 50 Important Bird Areas are found along the Eastern Great Rift Valley. Some are protected, either as National Parks, Reserves, Ramsar sites or World Heritage sites. The UNESCO World Heritage Centre is currently in the process of evaluating the entire Great Rift Valley for nomination as a World Heritage Site. If this proposal is approved, for the first time ever a "mega site" including 22 countries and stretching across 7,100 km from the Taurus Mountains (Turkey) to Mozambique, will be protected. Such a mega site will have great potential for protecting migratory birds on the globally important "highway" between Europe, Asia and Africa.

The formation of an Expert Committee on this issue was recommended. Such a committee will formulate a plan for young students from Great Rift Valley countries to become enthused and involved in the project; develop a network of ringing stations along the Great Rift Valley, establish one database and define, in more detail the main research, education and conservation priorities. An expert follow up meeting is slated for December 2006 - January 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya, to chart the way forward.

"I have been deeply impressed by the quality and the scientific level of the discussions which, without any doubt, are strong supportive arguments for the initiative to propose this unique region of the world as a UNESCO World Heritage Site" said Prof Blondel.

For more information, please contact hazell.thompson@birdlife.or.ke

The Great Rift Valley flyway



Summit meeting to protect one of the World's rarest songbird: Aquatic Warbler



(Photo: Alexander Kozulin)

Aquatic Warbler

Global range

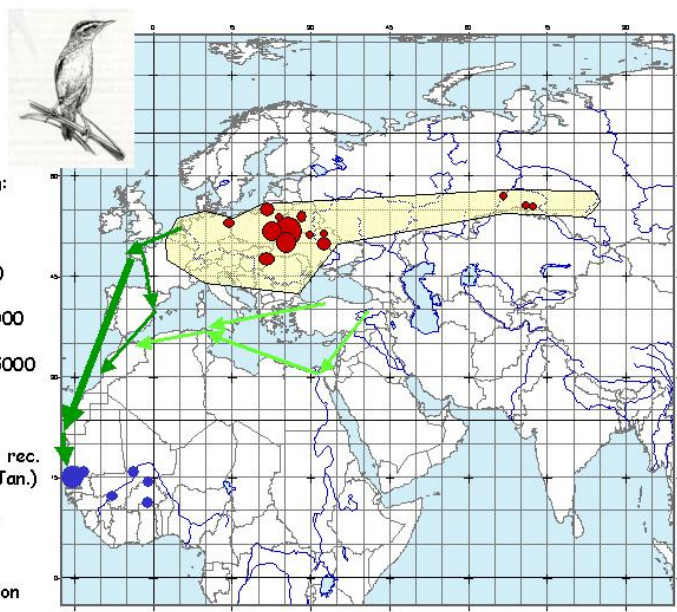
current breeding:

- <50
- 50-200
- 200-1000
- 1000-5000
- >5000

• Winter rec. (Dec., Jan.)

former range

migration



World distribution of the Aquatic warbler

The Aquatic Warbler is the only globally threatened species of songbird breeding in mainland Europe. It winters in western Africa, probably especially in Senegal, Mauritania and Mali, and migrates mainly through Morocco. It is currently listed as Vulnerable under the IUCN red list. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the conservation of this species was signed in 2003 under the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). Since then it has been signed by Senegal, so far the only African range state to sign the agreement.

This June, the first review meeting of this MoU was held in Germany, again with participation from Senegal. One of the main findings of this meeting was that the breeding sites and distribution of the species in Europe are now well known. However, there is scanty information on exactly where the species winters and whether those sites in Africa are acutely threatened or not. Therefore, the BirdLife International Aquatic Warbler Conservation Team (AWCT), supported by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, BirdLife in the UK) are planning to intensify the search for and the protection of the African wintering sites of the species. A first expedition is planned together with Senegalese colleagues for January 2007, in order to investigate sites along the lower course of the Senegal River

Since the beginning of the last century, the current world breeding population of the Aquatic Warbler has plummeted by 95 per cent to only 16,000 males in just seven countries, making this robin-sized bird rarer than the African elephant. In the mid 1990s, it was believed the Aquatic Warbler could face extinction within the next decade.

The meeting concluded that the main success of the joint efforts of governments, BirdLife International and CMS over the past years is the stabilization of the core breeding population of the species in its largest breeding sites, while the loss of smaller breeding sites is highly alarming. Work now needs to intensify in key countries of West Africa, like Senegal, to find the elusive wintering sites of the species, as this would be critical for the effective protection of the Aquatic Warbler throughout its range.

Robert Hepworth, Executive Secretary of CMS, said: "This bird could have a bright future in Europe and Africa if the right decisions are taken to conserve it. The CMS Memorandum will provide the basis for governments, other organisations such as BirdLife International, and scientists to work together to save the Aquatic Warbler and its unique habitats."

For more information, please contact lars.lachmann@rspb.org.uk

Data Zone

Remote sensing

Remote sensing as a monitoring tool has a great potential for use in the IBA monitoring process because of its ability to integrate information across large spatial scales and allow long-term, continuous biodiversity monitoring data collection. Conventional monitoring data collection methods, even though they generate highly accurate measurements, are labour-intensive and hence ideal only for local scale studies.

Remote sensing provides access to remote area of the universe, where gathering comprehensive, routinely updated data on the ground can be impossible. Again, increases in spatial, spectral and temporal resolution at a declining cost per unit area has revolutionized the use of this technique and currently a few commercial satellites have spatial resolutions of 1m or less. Remote sensing as a technique is therefore able provide realistic, cost-effective means of acquiring data over large areas and satellite data are increasingly being used to monitor biodiversity.

Remote sensed data still needs validation from ground-based personnel or researchers. As part of the regional initiative to develop and promote the use of remote sensing as a tool to monitor IBAs in Africa, we are in the process of selecting a subset of Important Bird Areas (at least 20 of the 1230 IBAs in Africa) over which habitat change will be mapped to showcase the potential use of remote sensing to monitor IBAs. This does not mean that ground-based monitoring by Partners, Site Support Groups and other collaborative institutions will cease. In fact their input in terms of providing ground-truthed data will become even more fundamental. It is envisioned that by integrating ground-based monitoring with remote sensing, the IBA monitoring process will become more robust, efficient, sustainable and cost-effective.

We will be consulting the BirdLife Partners in Africa shortly. Please be part of and own the process! For more details, contact george.eshiamwata@birdlife.or.ke

World Bird Festival

The 3rd BirdLife International World Bird Festival is currently being held all-over the world and across Africa.



The World Bird Festival brand functions as a global umbrella for events that celebrate birds, raise awareness about conservation and raise the profile of participating organisations. It is an opportunity to link local event to a global network of events.

The World Bird Festival is an important opportunity for the BirdLife Africa Partnership to raise awareness and educate the public about birds and their cultural, economic and ecological values.

See also:

www.birdlife.org/news/news/2006/09/wbf_2006.html

and for Africa:

www.birdlife.org/action/awareness/world_bird_festival/africa.html

In Africa, seven countries are participating in the World Bird Festival, which will have a particularly high profile in Sierra Leone where His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone is expected to join in.



This year, the Festival is being used to raise the profile of IBAs. This may involve excursions and events at IBA sites. With a new brand for IBAs, there are new opportunities to promote and protect them. You can download the IBA logo from the BirdLife website: www.birdlife.org/styleguide

For further information, please contact the Africa regional focal person, edith.onyango@birdlife.or.ke or the global World Birdwatch Co-ordinator 2006, Itziar Olmedo at itziar.olmedo@birdlife.org

NEWS FROM THE NETWORK

Partner Ramsar news

Uganda

Nine new Ramsar sites designated

Uganda has added nine wetlands to the List of Wetlands of International Importance designated under the Ramsar Convention, bringing the national total to 11 sites covering a total of 354,803 ha. The sites range from Uganda's largest tract of swamp forest to extensive papyrus beds and an impressive waterfall system. They are: Lake Bisina, Lake Mburo-Nakivali, Lake Nakuwa, Lake Opeta, Lutembe Bay, Mabamba Bay, Murchison Falls-Albert Delta, Nabajjuzi and Sango Bay-Musambwa Island-Kagera.



Shoebills live at several of the new Ugandan Ramsar sites (photo Keith Barnes/Tropical Birding)

"This is a wonderful step for conservation in east Africa," said Achilles Byaruhanga, Executive Director of NatureUganda, BirdLife in Uganda. "We warmly congratulate the Ugandan government, and thank all those who have worked hard to help bring this about, especially the BirdLife Secretariat, WWF's Global Freshwater Programme, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, BirdLife in the UK)."

See also:

www.birdlife.org/news/news/2006/09/ugandan_ramsar.html

Liberia

Good news: four new Ramsar sites

Liberia has also designated four new Wetlands of International Importance, bringing its total of designated sites to five. The four new sites are:

Gbedin Wetlands (Ramsar site no. 1628)

Has a great ornithological importance because it is a feeding ground for many bird species including Palearctic and Nearctic migrants, as well as resident breeders such as the Bar-tailed Godwit and the Forbes' Plover. It is envisioned that this new status will grant it some immunity from the current human pressure, which includes subsistence farming (rice), hunting and fishing, logging and mining, as well as multiple crop farming. However, the sustainable use of the wetlands to meet the economic needs of the adjacent communities must be ensured.

Kpatawee Wetlands (Ramsar site no. 1629)

The site serves as a wintering ground for large numbers of common Sandpipers and Palearctic migrant species such as Little Ringed Plover and Greenshanks. Human activities include palm wine production, rice farming, hunting, fishing, basket making, bathing and other domestic uses. We hope this new status will abate the potential threats to the site from the proposed development of a hydropower scheme.

Marshall Wetlands, Ramsar site no. 1630.

The site is of great conservation value. A number of bird species listed by the Convention on Migratory Species appear in the area, such as the Glossy Ibis, Lesser Kestrel and Common Pratincole. Besides its ecological roles (control against flooding and as a sediment trap), the site is important as it contributes to people's livelihoods by providing fish and other valuable wetland resources. However, the uncontrolled harvesting of the mangrove forest and dynamiting of fish by local people might undermine the sites integrity to play its ecological and economic roles. Measures need to be put in place to ensure sustainable use of the wetland, reduce industrial pollution from companies upstream, and control the spread of an invasive alien species.

Mesurado Wetlands, Ramsar site no. 1631

Located in Monrovia, the site is particularly important for the protection of three mangrove species which are threatened by intense charcoal burning and fuel wood collection. It provides a favourable habitat and feeding ground for several species of birds including the African Spoonbill, Common Pratincole and Curlew. It also hosts the Vulnerable African Dwarf Crocodile, the Nile Crocodile and the African Sharp-nosed Crocodile and plays an important role in shoreline stabilization and sediment trapping. As an urban site, it is susceptible to a lot of human pressures including fuel wood collection, its use as a dumping site, car washing site, and fishing to meet the demand for the urban dwellers. Pollution from the industries around the site, including an oil refinery and paint factories is also a major issue of concern.

Now that these sites have been designated as Ramsar sites, we believe that management plans will be developed and implemented in the near future.

For more information, contact scnlib2001@yahoo.com

or visit: www.ramsar.org/wn/w.n.liberia_four_new.htm

About the Ramsar Convention

The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. There are presently 153 Contracting Parties to the Convention, with 1629 wetland sites, totaling 145.6 million hectares, designated for inclusion in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance. Its mission is the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local, regional and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world (Ramsar COP8, 2002).

See also www.ramsar.org

São Tomé & Príncipe

Now a signatory to Ramsar

São Tomé and Príncipe has become the 153rd Contracting Party to the Convention on Wetlands. The new Party's obligatory first Wetland of International Importance has been named as Ilots Tinhosas, two small rocky islands - Tinhosa Grande (20 ha) and Tinhosa Pequena (3 ha) - unvegetated and uninhabited by humans, laying about 22km south-southwest of Príncipe. The site supports an important community of seabirds and serves as a breeding site for more than 300,000 migratory waterbirds, including Brown Gannet, Sooty Tern, Brown and Black Noddy, and in lesser numbers, Yellow-billed Tropicbird.

See also: www.ramsar.org/wn/w.n.saotome_joins.htm

Considerable assistance to the accession procedure was provided through small grants from the Ramsar Secretariat and from a Wetlands International project funded by the government of the Netherlands, including a field mission to survey potential Ramsar sites.



Members of the Ramsar field mission, September 2005

Because of its conservation value, there has been a lot of focus on São Tomé and Príncipe (see last issue of the e-bulletin). BirdLife International has already made a scoping mission and with support from Vogelbescherming Nederland (VBN, BirdLife in the Netherlands), is currently implementing a project to generate information that will determine the conservation status of the São Tomé Ibis.

For more information, contact paulinus@africaonline.com.gh

JOB OPPORTUNITIES, INTERNSHIPS and SCHOLARSHIPS

UK: Cambridge University Student Conference on Conservation Science (SCCS) / BirdLife International

Application deadline: 23 October

Delegates from developing countries and Eastern Europe can be supported to spend up to one month after the SCCS conference in Cambridge, UK, working on a conservation research project with a UK-based NGO (which can be the BirdLife Secretariat), agency or university department. Interns must attend the conference (which in 2007 is 27–29 March) – see also www.sccs-cam.org/.

The BirdLife Secretariat offers to help staff from BirdLife Partners take advantage of this opportunity by helping you with your application. Eligible projects include analysing data, preparing a policy document, or producing a paper for publication. They could focus on the threatened bird species or Important Bird Areas in your country.

If you are interested, please contact ali.stattersfield@birdlife.org with your ideas by **23 October 2006**. She can then work with you on your application (deadline 15 November).

Belgium: Scholarships for study visits in African Zoology and Wood biology at the Royal Museum for Central Africa

Application deadline: 31 December

An opportunity for doctoral students or experts in African biodiversity living in Sub-Saharan Africa to consult and study the important biological collections of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, between 01/06/2007 and 28/02/2008 (duration of two to eight weeks).

All the necessary information on scholarship conditions and application forms can be downloaded from the following site: www.africamuseum.be/research/cooperation or contact Muriel Van Nuffel at muriel.van.nuffel@afriamuseum.be

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Equator Prize (EP)

Application deadline: 31 October

Awarded biennially, EP recognizes five community-based projects that demonstrate extraordinary achievement in reducing poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the equatorial belt. Prize winners receive international recognition for their work and an opportunity to help shape international policy and practice in the field, as well as a monetary award of US\$30,000 each. Adding to the excitement of this year's EP, one 2006 finalist will be selected to receive a renowned Rare Pride Campaign, supported by the new Equator Initiative partner, Rare.

For details on the criteria for the EP, info on the award process and the online nomination system, visit: www.equatorinitiative.org

Whitley Fund for Nature: Whitley Awards

Application deadline: 31 October

Whitley Awards are intended for individuals who are the leaders of nature conservation projects. Grassroots initiatives from individuals working in locations where international funds are hardest to raise, most needed, and will make the largest conservation impact are given priority over others.

For application guidelines, see www.whitley-award.org/application_process.php

International Foundation for Science

Application deadline: 31 December

This is the second cycle in 2006 for IFS grants (maximum USD 12,000) for research by young scientists on the sustainable management, use or conservation of biological or water resources. Even though the deadline is 31 December, you are advised to apply at least 1 month earlier.

See also www.ifs.se/

UPCOMING EVENTS

2006:

October, everywhere: World Bird Festival – *the global BirdLife event to celebrate birds is still on!*
Contact: edith.onyango@birdlife.or.ke for more information about the festival in 2006.

30 October-2 November 2006: 6th African Association of Remote Sensing of the Environment (AARSE) Conference
Cairo, Egypt. Conference on Earth Observation and Geoinformation Sciences in support of Africa's development.
Contact: Tsehaie Woldai (woldai@itc.nl)
Visit: www.narss.sci.eg/aarse2006/

1-3 November 2006: International Seminar on Forests, Forest Products and Services: Research, Development and Challenges Ahead
Srinagar, Uttaranchal, India.
Contact: forestseminar@rediffmail.com

6-17 November 2006: 12th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and 2nd Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol
United Nations Office at Nairobi, Kenya. Second meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP 2), in conjunction with the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention (COP 12).
Contact UNFCCC: secretariat@unfccc.int
Visit: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

11 December - 15 December 2006: International Workshop on Climate and Land Degradation
Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, organised by the UNCCD
Contact: UNCCD Secretariat at secretariat@unccd.int

12 December - 15 December 2006: African Regional Workshop on Sustainable Use
Nairobi, Kenya, organised by the CBD
Contact: CBD Secretariat at secretariat@biodiv.org

2007:

16-27 April 2007: 7th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests
New York, USA.
Contact UNFF Secretariat: unff@un-org

3-15 June 2007: 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES
The Hague, Netherlands.
Contact CITES Secretariat at cites@unep.ch

October 2007: Council for the Africa Partnership Meeting (CAP 2007)
The tenth CAP meeting, in conjunction with the BirdLife Global Council Meeting
Nairobi, Kenya.
Contact: hazell.thompson@birdlife.or.ke

1 November 2007: 8th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (COP-8)
Spain.
Contact: UNCCD Secretariat at secretariat@unccd.int

The editorial team wishes to thank George Eshiamwata for his work towards the BirdLife Africa e-bulletin over the last two years. Antoinette Otieno has now taken over from him, but George has offered to remain involved as an advisor to us. Thanks George!

The next e-bulletin will be a 'lessons learned' special

Please share your lessons learned, successes and mistakes with the rest of the Africa Partnership!

Send them to:

antoinette.otieno@birdlife.or.ke
**** before 26 November 2006 ****
