

April-June 2008

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Message from the CAP chair

*Dear BirdLife Africa family members,
I trust I find everyone in the BirdLife Africa Partnership well.*

The Africa Regional Committee (ARC) met from 21 and 22 April 2008 in Johannesburg South Africa, hosted by Prof. Gerhard Verdoorn, then Director of BirdLife South Africa and Vice Chair of CAP. See more about ARC and its role in BirdLife governance in the next article.

In May we celebrated World Migratory Bird Day with the theme 'Migratory Birds – Ambassadors for Biodiversity'. It was a day for Partners to showcase activities that highlighted the importance of birds as indicators of biodiversity. Read more about this on page 7.

The 12th Pan-African Ornithological Congress is coming up in South Africa, from 7-12 September 2008. I encourage as many of the Partners to endeavour to attend.

Finally, I wish you all the best in your activities.

*Dr. Chipangura Chirara,
Chair of the Council for the Africa Partnership (CAP) 2007/8*

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP NEWS

Africa Regional Committee meets

The BirdLife Africa Partnership is governed by a Council, comprised of all Partners, Partner Designates and Affiliates. The Council meets once a year and the last meeting was held in October 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya. However, in between Council meetings, an Africa Regional Committee (ARC) comprised of five people is charged with taking interim decisions on behalf of the Council.

An ARC meeting was convened on 21 and 22 April 2008 in Johannesburg South Africa, chaired by Dr. Chipangura Chirara of BirdLife Zimbabwe and hosted by Prof. Gerhard Verdoorn, then Director of BirdLife South Africa and member of the Committee.

Key decisions taken included plans for strategic growth of the BirdLife Network in Africa, the participation of the BirdLife Africa Partnership at the BirdLife World Conference slated for September 2008 in Argentina and finalization of the BirdLife Africa programme for 2009 – 2012.

Prof. Verdoorn has since left BirdLife South Africa leaving a legacy of unprecedented growth during his tenure at the helm of the organization. Gerhard's vision and guidance will be missed by the Partnership as a whole.



Prof. Verdoorn in his element with a recuperating vulture

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.

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BirdLife at the Conference of the ninth Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 9)

COP 9 was held from 17 – 25 May in Bonn, Germany attended by an estimated 5,000 delegates.



A BirdLife delegation of about 30 participants, including eight from Africa attended the conference. Key areas of interest to BirdLife were: Protected Areas, Invasive Species, Financial Resources, Marine and Coastal biodiversity, CBD strategic Plan, Monitoring and Indicators and Climate Change.

The BirdLife Africa Partnership convened a side meeting on conservation and livelihoods, which was attended by representatives from SwedBio and AECID, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development, key donors to the Partnership's livelihoods programme, and a broad spectrum of other participants.

BirdLife highlighted the importance of institutionalizing monitoring of biodiversity in Protected Areas, and developing effective partnerships in their management.

A significant development was the launch of the **LifeWeb initiative** by the German Government, a 0.5 billion Euro funding package targeting Marine and Terrestrial Protected Areas. As usual, commitments by western Governments to providing funding to support implementation of the convention in developing nations were made, with Germany pledging 500 million Euros from 2008 – 2013.

For more information, please contact jane.gaithuma@birdlife.or.ke

Data management for successful biodiversity monitoring in Africa

A recent Training of Trainers workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, hosted by Naturama (BirdLife in Burkina Faso) outlined how data management, analysis and presentation underpin effective conservation action and advocacy.

This was the second workshop by the EC-funded "Instituting effective monitoring of biodiversity in Protected Areas (IBAs) as a contribution to reducing the rate of biodiversity loss in Africa" project. The project is implemented by BirdLife Partners in eight African countries and managed by the RSPB with coordination support from the BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat. The project is committed to delivering the highest possible standards of training.



Participants at the workshop get a taste of fieldwork

The workshop was officially opened by Madame Kabore, a Technical Advisor in the Ministry of Environment in Burkina Faso. The workshop equipped project Partners in Africa with the requisite skills for handling data.

In welcoming participants to Burkina Faso and the workshop, Mr Idrissa Zeba, the Executive Director of Naturama (BirdLife in Burkina Faso and one of the implementing countries) emphasized the importance of the project by stating that "ecological monitoring is an essential activity for anybody who sincerely cares about bringing about sustainable management of natural resources".

Please contact thandiwe.chikomo@birdlife.or.ke if you would like to know more about this project.

BirdLife and the Niger Basin Authority

In March 2008, a three man delegation headed by the Executive secretary of the Niger Basin Authority (NBA) visited the BirdLife West Africa office as part of a worldwide mission to raise awareness about the Authority, present an investment plan for the basin and seek support for its implementation.

The Niger Basin Authority was established in 2002 in Abuja, Nigeria by all the countries in the Niger Basin, who developed a shared vision for the sustainable management and development of the Basin. This was followed in 2004, by a Paris Conference at which multilateral donors and other international partners pledged financial and technical support to NBA. The investment plan is worth over five billion Euros has three main components; Socio-economic and infrastructure development, restoration and protection of ecosystems and capacity building of stakeholders.

On 15 October 2003, BirdLife international in collaboration with three other international NGOs (IUCN, WWF and Wetlands International) signed a cooperation agreement with the NBA for the conservation and sustainable development of the Niger Basin. It is in the context of this agreement that NBA officials visited the BirdLife office.

As an outcome of this visit, BirdLife will be represented at a technical and fund-raising donor conference scheduled from 23-30 June 2008 in Niamey, Niger aiming to raise 800 million Euros.

More information from Paulinus on birdlife-ghanawild@4u.com.gh

Wings over Wetlands gets to the ground in Africa

Starting from lofty scientific discussions and analysis, the critical sites network strand of the Wings over Wetlands project (see www.wingsoverwetlands.org) has started working on the ground, especially in the Horn of Africa. Mr. Abdi A. Jama, the interim National Coordinator for the Africa Waterfowl Census in Somaliland visited Mr. Houssein Rayaleh, the

National Coordinator for Djibouti in an exchange visit aiming to gain on the ground training on organizing and conducting waterbird counts. Subsequently, surveys to fill gaps in the knowledge on wetlands and waterbirds covering parts of the Red Sea shoreline in northern Somaliland were done.



Separately, a training course in waterbird census and wetlands conservation was organized for the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife Conservation and Tourism staff from the government of Southern Sudan. The training included doing a census on a trans-boundary wetland on the Nile River between the Uganda and Sudan at Nimule.

For more information on waterbirds and the Africa Waterfowl Census, please contact oliver.nasirwa@birdlife.or.ke

Implementing the Flyways approach in conservation of birds in West Africa

Over the past two years, the BirdLife Africa Partnership has been implementing a project, funded by Vogelbescherming (BirdLife in The Netherlands) seeking to promote the flyway approach in the conservation of birds, particularly in West Africa – http://www.birdlife.org/regional/africa/africa_in_action.html. A brochure to support awareness-raising for the project has been produced.

Get your copy by contacting Dr Paulinus Ngeh birdlife-ghanawild@4u.com.gh.

PARTNER NEWS ROUNDUP

Emerging threats to IBAs rear their ugly head again

.....at the Kenyan Coast

The internationally important Tana River Delta (IBA KE022) in Kenya is in the sights of developers seeking to drain some 20,000 hectares and convert this to sugar cane for biofuels and food crops. This site holds internationally important populations of 22 migrant waterbirds, which would certainly be displaced by this development. Nature Kenya is sounding the alarm and with support from RSPB (BirdLife in UK) has undertaken an economic analysis of the proposal which shows that the EIA exaggerated the economic benefits to the area and ignored biodiversity values and economic losses accruing to pastoralist communities. Good coverage has been secured on the issue internationally, though on the ground, the recent political crisis is still uppermost in people's minds.

..... in South Africa

BirdLife South Africa (BLSA) and other organisations are fighting a major campaign on the Eastern Grasslands where a number of major coal mining proposals are emerging, notably around the BLSA reserve and avitourism centre of Wakkerstroom and at the Chrissies Pans IBA (IBA ZA 015). The organisations have taken the case to court in respect of the failure to take environmental issues into account. The stakes are high considering that South African legislation gives little power to the Environment Ministry to counter their colleagues in the extractive industries.

Meanwhile BLSA's advocacy effort in the Ramsar site around Langebaan on the Western Cape coast is bearing fruit. The Government is now formally investigating the impact of port and industrial operations on the West Coast National Park (IBA ZA 084).

Top level training in Nigeria rolls on

In March 2008, the Nigeria Conservation Foundation (NCF BirdLife in Nigeria) welcomed Dr Hazell Shokellu Thompson, head of BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat to deliver Bird Conservation lectures to MSc students at the A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute

(APLORI) in Jos. This is part of a collaborative agreement between APLORI and BirdLife. Mr Ademola Ajagbe of NCF delivered lectures on the Nigerian IBA programme and assisted Hazell with field work and practical exercises on IBA monitoring.



Ademola Adjabe (extreme right) participates in a demonstration of bird ringing in Burkina Faso. Looking on is Samuel Osinubi (in foreground), an APLORI alumni.

Furthermore, the RSPB (BirdLife in UK) and NCF have signed a contract for funding a Nigerian student for a PhD study on the impacts of exotic species such as typha grass on the ecology of the wildfowl in wetlands. The student study will be conducted through APLORI.

For more information about APLORI, please contact gmwansat@yahoo.com.

BirdLife in Rwanda and Germany start a collaborative programme

What started as a visit by members of Nature And Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU, BirdLife in Germany) to Rwanda, coordinated by the Association pour la Conservation de la Nature au Rwanda (ACNR, BirdLife in Rwanda) is growing into a rich relationship of joint efforts to enhance environmental education around Nyungwe National Park (IBA RW007) in Rwanda. This collaborative project worth Euro 16,000 aims to capitalize on the immense biodiversity richness of this IBA to raise the much needed awareness and mobilize public support towards the conservation of this IBA.

Find out more from Serge at nsengimanaserge@yahoo.fr

An African Pitta *Pitta angolensis* pays a visit to Buhanga relict forest, Rwanda

For the second time, an African Pitta "*Pitta angolensis*" was sighted in Buhanga Relict Forest in Northern Rwanda. The last recorded sighting here was in May 2006 and at the nearby Musanze town (formerly called Ruhengeri).

The **African Pitta**, *Pitta angolensis*, is a migrant bird that breeds in central Tanzania, Malawi, southeast Democratic Republic of Congo, eastern Zambia, Zimbabwe, and possibly northern South Africa. During the non-breeding season, individuals migrate north into northern Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Uganda, and coastal Kenya.



The African pitta is a really beautiful bird

In the morning of 17 May, Léonard Seburanga of Karisoke Research Center, Marcell from the tour company Elegant Africa Ltd and I were birding in Buhanga Relict Forest and we spotted the African Pitta on stretch of rocky path. I visited this patch everyday after this and the bird was recorded until 28 May.

Earlier records of the pitta in Rwanda include sightings by Father Jean Paul Lebel of four individuals on 1 May 1986, two individuals on 25 March 1987 and again two individuals on 5 May 1988.

Find out more from Claudien Nsabagasani, claudienn@yahoo.fr.

CONSERVING SPECIES

BirdLife's Preventing Extinctions Initiative gains traction in Africa.



Over the past year, BirdLife has been implementing twin initiatives to scale up conservation action of (critically) threatened species, namely the Species Guardians – individuals or organizations taking a leading role in promoting research, monitoring and action for a species, and Species Champions, - individuals or organizations that will mobilize resources required for conservation of a specific species – see

http://www.birdlife.org/action/campaigns/species_champions/index.html

We are happy to announce that a further three new guardians have been identified for Critically Endangered species in Africa namely Nature Seychelles for the Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher, Dr Mwangi Githiru for the Taita Thrush and Taita Apalis and Mr Jasson John for the Uluguru Bush-shrike.

Furthermore, thanks to the British Bird Fair, funding has been secured for supporting three existing Species Guardians to enable them to take action for Djibouti Francolin (Guardian: Houssein Rayaleh), Dwarf Olive Ibis (Guardian: Associação dos Biólogos Santomenses) and Long-billed Tailorbird (Guardian: Norbert Cordeiro).



Female Djibouti Francolin, one of the species benefiting from this programme

Please contact paul.ndanganga@birdlife.or.ke if interested to participate in this programme.

**Species Action Plans developed:
...for the Madagascar Pond-heron**

The Endangered Madagascar Pond-heron *Ardeola idae* has received much-needed attention from all its range states. Delegates from nine African countries met in late April 2008 in Nairobi, Kenya to develop a Species Action Plan to reverse the heron's alarming population decline that puts it on the IUCN Red List of threatened species.

The Madagascar Pond-heron breeds in Madagascar, Aldabra, Europa and Mayotte - all Western Indian Ocean Islands. Outside the breeding season it migrates to mainland Africa, where it frequents small, tree-lined freshwater pools.

In his opening remarks to the workshop, Dr Hazell Shokellu Thompson (Regional Director for Africa, BirdLife International) highlighted the need, not only for an action plan, but also for concerted effort to implement the recommendations.

The Action Planning workshop was organised by the Africa Partnership Secretariat of BirdLife International - in liaison with the Secretariat of the Agreement on the conservation of Africa-Eurasian Waterbirds (AEWA). Financial support was provided by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) represented by UNEP-CMS Secretariat.

http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2008/05/madagascar_pond_heron.html

...for the elusive White-winged Flufftail

Currently categorised as 'Endangered' by the global IUCN Red List, the enigmatic White-winged Flufftail, *Sarothrura ayresi*, was the centre of focus at a recent workshop held from 26 to 28 May 2008 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Its aim was to develop an International Species Action Plan for the flufftail under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and of the Agreement on the conservation of Africa-Eurasian Waterbirds (AEWA).

This secretive bird is mainly known from Ethiopia and South Africa, with scanty records from Zimbabwe. Evidence of breeding has been found in three wetlands in the highlands of Ethiopia (in July/August) and the highly

secretive Rail has been recorded at nine wetlands in South Africa from November to March. Whether a single population migrates between Ethiopia and South Africa, or each country hosts its own sub-population, is not yet known.

Three days of intensive work (including visits to two of the breeding sites) generated a realistic and achievable international species action plan, as well as a renewed sense of urgency and vigour for the activities needed to ensure the continued survival of this threatened species.

Ato Geremew Gebre Selassie of the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS) commented that "The marshes occupied by this species in Ethiopia are an integral part of the livelihoods of resident communities - mainly providing pasture for dairy cattle and hence cannot therefore be secured without full engagement of these communities."

The action planning workshop was commissioned by the secretariats of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), with funding from the Italian Ministry for the Environment.



The workshop was convened by the Africa Partnership Secretariat of BirdLife International and hosted by EWNHS.

Please, contact paul.ndanganga@birdlife.or.ke for more details.

WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY SPECIAL

Since 2006, this e-bulletin has carried in its May/June issue, an article on the globally important World Migratory Bird Day, and this year will be no different. Here is a brief round-up of what transpired across the Partnership. This year's theme was "**Migratory birds- Ambassadors for Biodiversity**".



Botswana

"We had an excellent day on Saturday 10 May. We had about sixty children and ten teachers at the Gaborone Game Reserve. There was much enthusiasm for birds among the children. Many of them signed up as members of BirdLife Botswana", reported a visibly excited Harold Hester, President of BirdLife Botswana. "It is a pity that the date selected is well after all our migrants have left which dents the spectacle. We in the Southern Hemisphere ought to have a day in our spring which coincides with the arrival of migrants. That would be a fitting celebration".

Find out more about this from BirdLife Botswana
blb@birdlifebotswana.org.bw

EGYPT

Nature Conservation Egypt celebrated the 2008 World Migratory Bird Day by organising a birdwatching outing on 10 May at Ayn Sokhna, Gulf of Suez, a bottleneck site of world repute for migratory raptors/soaring birds. "It was a good occasion for getting together, exchanging information and having some fun. The beginning of the day did not look so promising for soaring birds, however the longer we stayed, the more things we saw (as usual) including seven Bottle-nosed Dolphin" reports Ahmed Riad.

Get more from Dr. Hala Barakat
halabarakat2002@yahoo.com

LIBERIA

The Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL, BirdLife in Liberia) organized visits to two communities, one at Fiamma and the other at S. K. Doe Boulevard bordering the Mesurado Wetland. "We arranged some birdwatching and created awareness of the importance of the Mesurado wetland for migratory birds and other taxa, as well as for the communities themselves", says Flomo Morubah, IBA Coordinator of SCNL. Participants came from Mercy Corps- Liberia and the Forestry Development Authority (FDA).

For more information, contact Flomo on
scnlib2001@yahoo.com

Sierra Leone

Staff of the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), volunteers and an intern from Njala University used the World Migratory Bird Day to mount a campaign against the planned construction of a "China Town" at the Aberdeen Creek. The creek is located at the western end of the Sierra Leone River Estuary, the only Ramsar site in Sierra Leone.

"Birdwatching, speeches, interviews with local people, as well as an excursion for students featured on this important day" reports D D Siaffa, the Executive Director of CSSL.

Get more of this story from Daniel D. Siaffa
ddsiaffa@yahoo.co.uk



South Africa

World Migratory bird Day was celebrated at BirdLife South Africa's Wakkerstroom Centre, with participants drawn from students of Indwe Environment Club, Uthaka High School and their teachers. Hasco Banda - Wakkerstroom Centre Manager, Sakhamuzi Mhlongo -

Avitourism Division and Xolani Ngobese – Community Based Conservation Division were on hand to deliver the day's programme. This included a presentation on the Mpumalanga Birding Route, a slide presentation about grasslands and waterbirds, a discussion on the importance of the Wakkerstroom wetland to surrounding communities, and a presentation on migratory waterbirds and the flyway approach. To cap it all, a visit was made to the Flufftail hide to see some of Wakkerstroom's specials.

For more details, please contact Hansco Banda wakkerstroom@birdlife.org.za

Tunisia.

The Association « Les Amis des Oiseaux » (AAO), the BirdLife Partner in Tunisia, started celebrations for the World Migratory bird Day on Friday 9 May with the distribution of a press release that was immediately published in the media and aired on national radio. On Sunday 11 May, AAO organised an excursion to the picturesque site of Sidi Ali El Mekki on the northern coast of Tunisia, launch pad for migratory soaring birds crossing the Mediterranean in direction of Italy during spring time. "We organized a raft of activities including a quiz and games about bird migration, birdwatching and a challenging hike to Sidi Ali El Mekki, which, once conquered, offered stunning views of a landscape of breathtaking beauty" reports Claudia Feltrup-Azafzaf, AAO Programme Coordinator. "Birds were aplenty with groups of Honey Buzzards, White Storks and Bee-eaters circling above. The trip was rounded-up by a visit of the archaeological site of Utica before we went back to Tunis".



Not to be outdone, AAO's regional branch in Gabes also organized their own celebration by bringing pupils of the "Ibn Khaldoun Secondary

School" to visit Bou Hedma National Park on Friday 9 May and on Saturday 10 May AAO volunteers carried out awareness raising activities in the "Khawarezmi Primary School". AAO Gabes closed the WMBD 2008 programme with a bird watching excursion to Sebkheth Makhadha and a reception for its members on Sunday 11 May.

Get more details from <http://www.aao.org.tn/mainmenu.html>.

Uganda

"The venue for our celebrations this year was Lutembe Bay, an Important Bird Area (IBA) and Ramsar site and home to various species of migrant terns, gulls and waders" reports Ambrose Mugisha, Nature Uganda's Deputy Executive Director. This is in addition to many resident species including the majestic Shoebill. The event was aimed at creating awareness and inspiring the various stakeholders to conserve birds. Currently, migratory birds are being unfairly portrayed as the carriers of disease (Avian Influenza) and their habitats, including at this site, seriously threatened.

Over 80 people attended and the main activities carried out include a nature walk and boat ride around Lutembe Bay, a brief talk from the local community SSG about the plight of Lutembe bay and the need for concerted effort to make the site safe for birds and as a source of livelihoods for the local people, a presentation by the Uganda Bird guides Club about the strategic location of Lutembe for tourism and its contribution to the overall birding and bird watching industry, a brief talk on migratory birds by NatureUganda to create awareness on the need to conserve birds and their habitats, and a NatureUganda Makerere University Students' Members Finalist Bash to mark their contributions to nature conservation.

The occasion was covered by the leading daily print media and a half page article about the event appeared in The Monitor Newspaper of Wednesday 14th May 2008 page 20. www.monitor.co.ug.

Find out more about this event from NatureUganda through caroline.aguti@natureuganda.org

Invitation to attend PAOC 12 Symposium on “Using land bird monitoring to develop biodiversity indicators”

As part of promoting ‘common’ bird monitoring in Africa, a special symposium will be held at PAOC 12. Interesting presentations and discussions are foreseen within this session. Don’t miss them – Attend the symposium! Experiences from elsewhere will be shared and options explored for Africa. Are we overlooking widespread birds? Do we know more about trends of rare species than common ones? How can birds show us how the environment is changing and what can they tell us about the sustainability of current human lifestyles? How can we use monitoring schemes of familiar species to raise awareness on biodiversity issues in Africa? These and more issues will be discussed.

Request for information on Shoebills

The shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* is one of the most unique birds in Africa, occurring in scattered swamps and other wetlands from Southern Sudan to northern Zambia. This large bird particularly favours extensive swamps. It is threatened by a number of factors, including habitat degradation, floodplain fires, agricultural development, disturbance and capture for trade.

At the forthcoming Pan African Ornithological Congress in September 2008, a Round Table Discussion (RTD) about this species is planned. The objective of the discussion is to identify conservation priorities, and hence develop a proposal and mandates for advancing a species action plan.

As part of preparations for this RTD, we are requesting for information that you may already have on the species that may contribute towards a better understanding of the current status of this bird.

The information required covers the following aspects:

- Existence of laws that protect shoebills and whether or not they are effectively implemented.
- Information on numbers general distribution, seasonality and preferred habitat used by shoebills including breeding.
- Research, monitoring and conservation activities that have been carried out/ ongoing to protect shoebills
- Lists of publications including information on shoebills
- Types of threats facing Shoebills and their severity
- Conservation measures that you would recommend in order to effectively conserve Shoebills in your country,

Please send your input to Tim Dodman: tim@timdodman.co.uk or Julius Arinaitwe julius.arinaitwe@birdlife.or.ke if possible by Friday 1 August 2008