Local Conservation Networks – Learning lessons, sharing experience

Case Study: BirdLife South Africa’s Bird Clubs & Branches

Nick Askew
September 2009
About this report

The Important Bird Area (IBA) Programme of BirdLife International aims to identify, monitor and protect a global network of IBAs for the conservation of the world's birds and other biodiversity. IBAs are key sites for conservation – small enough to be conserved in their entirety and often already part of a Protected Area network.

Working in partnership with communities and other stakeholders at IBAs towards shared objectives of conservation and sustainable resource management is one of a range of different approaches being adopted by BirdLife Partners to help conserve IBAs. Working with people at IBAs helps to engage a mainly local constituency in IBA conservation. It builds on what are often strong connections – be they economic, cultural, and historical – between people and the sites where they live, work and engage in recreation.

The way in which BirdLife Partners work with, coordinate and support individuals and groups involved in the IBA Local Conservation Group (IBA LCG) approach varies across the BirdLife network, reflecting the diverse contexts of the over 100 countries where BirdLife Partners are working. However, shared features include: the attachment to a particular IBA, a commitment to support the IBA’s conservation and sustainable use, a link to the national BirdLife Partner, and being compromised mainly of volunteers. In Europe these local volunteers are known as IBA Caretakers, in Africa they are known as Site Support Groups, and other terms are used to describe them regionally and nationally within BirdLife.

Several BirdLife Partners are demonstrating success in establishing and coordinating Local Conservation Networks. This report is part of a project which aims to capture, document and disseminate these experiences and the lessons learned from them. The review is part of a project funded by the Aage V. Jensen Foundation.

The report has been written by Nick Askew (Communications Officer at the BirdLife International Secretariat at Cambridge) but is based substantially on information generously provided by BirdLife South Africa staff, and through interviews and surveys completed by local Bird Clubs and Branches.

Thank You

Numerous people generously gave their time to help me complete this review. I wish to thank the following people – in no particular order - for their kindness and support, and for making the work so enjoyable: Mark Anderson, Duncan Pritchard, Daniel Marnewick, Sadie Halhuber, Philip Calinkos, Andy Featherstone, Lance Robinson, Peter Sullivan, Lia Steen, Lesley Frescura, André Marx, Tim Wood, Les Underhill, Matthew Drew, Eugene Steyn, Dave Whitelaw, John Wesson, Vernon Head, John Broodryk, Ross Wanless, Martin Taylor, Chris Magin, Pam Barrett, Brenden Pienaar, Hayden Elliott, Nikki McCartney, Kristi Garland, André Steenkamp, Carolyn Ah Shene-Verdoon, Denise Holahan, Trish Strachan, John Carter, Drummond Densham, Gisela Ortner, Michael Kumako and Sbongiseni Mthembu.
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Introduction

This report forms part of a global review of Local Conservation Group (LCG) networks which aims to lead to some valuable lesson-learning, useful communications materials, and powerful advocacy regarding the importance of involving networks of local people in conservation and environmental management.

Effective networking of LCGs is a distinctive feature of BirdLife’s approach to working locally and several BirdLife Partners are demonstrating success in establishing and coordinating Local Conservation Networks. As part of a project funded by the Jensen Foundation, the aim of this work is to document these experiences and produce some communications outputs in order to:

- Demonstrate to those Partners that do not yet have experience the relevance and value of working with networks of local groups.
- Capture, document and disseminate experiences that can help guide (other) BirdLife Partners in their own efforts at establishing ‘Local Conservation Networks’, and provide information on how the Secretariat can best support the emergence of strong, sustainable, effective local networks.
- Initiate a process for the recognition of BirdLife’s approach to working locally.
- Compile a library of good photographic images illustrating Local Conservation Networks at work, for external communications purposes.
- Create awareness of BirdLife, and BirdLife’s approach to working locally, among policy-makers, donors, government, and other ‘external’ agencies.
- Provide information and examples through which to advocate for broad-based participation of civil society in natural resource management.

As part of the global review, Nick Askew from BirdLife International was chosen to undertake a review BirdLife South Africa’s LCG networks. BirdLife South Africa has a network of Bird Clubs/Branches – herein called Bird Clubs - of which undertake monitoring activities at IBAs, and are becoming increasingly motivated to undertake conservation action at these sites. Many of these Bird Clubs are networked through regional Fora, and representatives from these forums sit on BirdLife South Africa’s Council. The Bird Club model was therefore focussed upon for the purpose of this review. However, in addition to the Bird Club focus, Community Conservation Groups and Bird Guides are discussed as case studies.
BirdLife South Africa

The South African Ornithological Society (SAOS) was founded in 1930 as a scientific society for the study of ornithology. In 1995, the SAOS Council determined a new direction to develop education and conservation action programmes. The impetus and funding for action programmes increased with links to the BirdLife International partnership that began in 1996. The SAOS also changed its name to BirdLife South Africa.

BirdLife South Africa (BirdLife in South Africa) is one of South Africa’s largest non-governmental, non-profit conservation organisations. The organisation has approximately 6,000 members and more than 40 Bird Club/branches and affiliates nationwide. BirdLife South Africa’s constitution provides for a governing Council, which meets four times annually and includes regional representatives and designated members and an Executive Committee which meets monthly and manages the organisation’s operational issues.

"What sets BirdLife South Africa apart is our ability to network and deliver conservation at a local level" Duncan Pritchard – BirdLife South Africa’s Marketing and Membership Manager

BirdLife South Africa (BirdLife in South Africa) is structured into nine divisions as follows:

Avitourism - The mission of the Avitourism Division is to develop South Africa as the world’s leading birding destination for the benefit of birds, their habitats and communities through responsible avitourism.

Business - BirdLife South Africa’s Business Division is based at the organization’s headquarters, Lewis House, in Blairgowrie, Johannesburg. This division attends to BirdLife South Africa’s administrative work, especially relating to finances and human resources.

Community-based Conservation - BirdLife South Africa believes in real change, which leads to real benefits. All of BirdLife South Africa's people-orientated work aspires to make real change and benefits on the ground and in people’s lives.

Conservation - Conservation is the primary reason for BirdLife South Africa’s existence. While we engage in, promote and support other activities, such as birding and tourism, community-based conservation, and our education work, everything is geared towards achieving bird conservation goals.

Education - Education is a cornerstone of sustained conservation action, and BirdLife South Africa has developed an Environmental Education Division to contribute to this.

Events - Create awareness of BirdLife South Africa, birds and bird conservation

Marketing and Membership – This division handles the marketing activities of BirdLife South Africa and co-ordinates their membership schemes.

Policy and Advocacy - This division follows proactive and reactive strategies to ensure that development (in particular) and other human activities are done in a sustainable and environmentally acceptable manner.

Seabirds - BirdLife International’s Global Seabird Programme has four staff in this division, working on seabird conservation. Work is conducted nationally (e.g. Albatross Task Force and African Penguin work), regionally (e.g. Marine IBA programme) and globally (e.g. Regional Fisheries Management Organisations).
Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in South Africa

Because of the remarkable diversity of habitats present within South Africa, the country hosts about 850 bird species, equivalent to ca. 36% of Africa’s and 7% of the world’s avian species, despite the region accounting for only 4.2% of Africa’s and 0.8% of the world’s total land surface area. At least 600 terrestrial species breed within South Africa.

South Africa is the most economically developed country in the Afrotropics and its biological resources have been severely impacted by humans. Indeed, it is estimated that at least 25% of the land has been transformed, largely by agriculture, urban development, afforestation, mining and dams. In response to this biological impoverishment, South Africa has established numerous protected areas. In total, it has some 741 publicly owned protected areas, covering 74,956 km² and accounting for ca.6% of the country’s land surface area.

There are currently 102 IBAs in South Africa covering over 100,000 km²; equivalent to ca.8.3% of the land area. South Africa also has six Endemic Bird Areas, and a total of 36 Globally Threatened bird species including Rudd’s Lark *Heteromirafra ruddi* (Vulnerable), African Penguin *Spheniscus demersus* (Vulnerable), Blue Crane *Grus paradisea* (Vulnerable) and White-winged Flufftail *Sarothrura ayresi* (Endangered).

"IBAs are not static issues - agreed on, committed to paper and then forgotten. It is our aim that all IBAs, or at least significant parts of them, should gain some form of protected status – be it formal, legislated protection or through other site-based conservation mechanisms. And, of course, once we determine that a particular area is an IBA, we need to make sure that the reasons for designation do not change, or if they do, why. BirdLife South Africa has an ongoing programme to monitor and re-evaluate IBAs constantly” BirdLife South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwa Zulu-Natal</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>102</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bird Club Network

The mission of BirdLife South Africa is to promote the enjoyment, conservation, study and understanding of wild birds and their habitats. BirdLife South Africa employs a small number of conservationists which help achieve its mission. However this is greatly supported by a large group of people who assist in its conservation work. Central to this are the BirdLife South Africa’s Bird Club network. This network of over 5,000 volunteers provides a great resource for BirdLife South Africa’s conservation work.

The purpose of Bird Clubs is to engage local people in birding activities – through walks and talks – providing a forum for like minded people to share their passion for birds. Many clubs take this one step further and actively co-ordinate and undertake monitoring work, train
bird guides and much more. This allows BirdLife South Africa to achieve much more that it could through its dedicated staff alone.

Although many Bird Clubs are long established, the movement to independently align themselves with BirdLife South Africa’s mission is relatively recent, and is growing in momentum.

As an illustrative example, BirdLife South Africa has recently undertaken a series of workshops with their Bird Clubs to train their members in completing Important Bird Area (IBA) assessments. At the time of writing Bird Clubs had completed 67 out of 103 IBA assessments. These assessments have already been loaded into BirdLife International’s World Biodiversity Database and will be used to inform the continual process of implementing an analysis of state, pressure and response at each IBA.

In the context of this review, BirdLife South Africa’s Bird Clubs provide an ideal opportunity to understand how an established network functions for BirdLife South Africa, BirdLife International and BirdLife Partners around the world to learn from for their own work.

1.1 Background Information

BirdLife South Africa’s Bird Clubs run recreational birding programmes for their members with central elements being outings, indoor meetings and newsletters. Many branches also have monitoring, conservation and education programmes focussed at IBAs.

Bird Clubs which are affiliated to BirdLife South Africa receive administration support for membership and national programmes, fundraising, public relations and management of publications and formal meetings.

Any Bird Club must adhere to a written constitution as determined by BirdLife South Africa. A key aspect of this constitution is that a member of a Club must first become a member of BirdLife South Africa and not a member of a Bird Club.

As a member of BirdLife South Africa you are entitled to attend activities organised by BirdLife South Africa, and support the work that is being done for the conservation of birds and their environment.
BirdLife South Africa’s Bird Clubs are divided into eight regions. Some Bird Clubs may have satellite clubs associated with them (ca. 8/9). At present three of the regions have Fora which meet to share ideas and discuss joint issues and projects.

**Box 1 - BLSA Membership 2009 survey** (Source: BLSA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
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<tr>
<td>10-20 years</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-35 years</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-50 years</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-65 years</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 + years</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How long have you been a member of BirdLife South Africa?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never, just interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 + Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to be a member but did not renew my membership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*survey included non-members on their email distribution list*

*BirdLife* South Africa’s Bird Clubs are divided into eight regions. Some Bird Clubs may have satellite clubs associated with them (ca. 8/9). At present three of the regions have Fora which meet to share ideas and discuss joint issues and projects.

**Eastern Cape**
- BirdLife Eastern Cape
- BirdLife Plettenberg Bay
- Lakes Bird Club

**Free State**
- BirdLife Eastern Free State/Oos Vrystaat
- BirdLife Free State
- BirdLife Vaaldam

**Gauteng***
- BirdLife Feather Friends
- BirdLife Inkwazi
- BirdLife Northern Gauteng
- BirdLife President Ridge
- BirdLife Sandton
- Rand Barbet Bird Club
- Witwatersrand Bird Club

**Limpopo**
- BirdLife Polokwane
- BirdLife Soutpansberg
- Phalaborwa Bird Club

**KwaZulu-Natal***
- BirdLife KZN Midlands
- BirdLife Northern Natal
- BirdLife Port Natal

**Mpumalanga**
- BirdLife Lowveld

**North West**
- BirdLife Harties
- BirdLife Rustenburg
- BirdLife Wesvaal

**Western Cape***
- BirdLife Overberg
- BirdLife Stellenbosch
- BirdLife Walker Bay
- BirdLife Worcester
- Cape Bird Club
- Tygerberg Bird Club
- West Coast Bird Club

* = has a regional forum

In addition to the above Bird Clubs, there are a number (ca. 10) of clubs which are not affiliated with BirdLife South Africa.

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**BirdLife International’s online survey of South Africa’s Bird Club Network**

To collect information on the Bird Club/Branch Network prior to the visit, and to broaden the scope of the review, an online survey was created and circulated to key Bird Club/Branch representatives.

The survey asks questions about:

- Their membership
- How they communicate with other Clubs/Branches
- Their main achievements and challenges
- Their feelings about the strengths and weaknesses of the Bird Club/Branch network in South Africa

A total of twelve clubs undertook the online survey, of which eight completed all the questions.

Reasons for affiliating to BirdLife South Africa fall broadly into three main areas:

**Help with managing members:** All Clubs are run by volunteers who give their time freely. They are therefore limited by their capacity and gain a large advantage from outsourcing their membership management to BirdLife South Africa. However, this can cause tensions between BirdLife South Africa and a Bird Club if accurate membership information is not made readily available upon request. This is being avoided by developing and maintaining an accurate membership database.

"BirdLife Northern Gauteng is affiliated with BirdLife South Africa because the infrastructure to manage our members is a big advantage. Also, to feel part of a bigger network is important and if issues arise it gives us somebody to call upon" Philip Calinkos – BirdLife Northern Gauteng Chairperson

**Part of a bigger conservation picture:** A number of Clubs spoke of the importance of being part of a larger network, both within South Africa and internationally by being part of the BirdLife International family.

"It's important to be part of a national and international network. Small local groups don't have as much clout as a national organisation” Andy Featherstone – Witwatersrand Bird Club SABAP2 co-ordinator

**Access to information and advice:** Being affiliated with BirdLife South Africa gives the Club access to expert staff and information who can offer support and advice. It also helps to keep Clubs informed on matters affecting bird conservation, along with helping to participate in birding events. This is greatly valued by the Bird Clubs.

Co-ordination of the Bird Club network in South Africa is dealt with by the Marketing and Membership division. However, Sadie Halbhuber - Events Division Manager for BirdLife South Africa – has played an important role in upgrading the membership database. The coordination is financed through membership fees.

### 1.2 Membership Information

"Volunteers are key - I work more with birders than birds” Lance Robinson – Chairman of the Witwatersrand Bird Club.

At the time of writing BirdLife South Africa had a membership of ca. 6,700 and growing, of which about 74.8% were also members of a Bird Club (ca. 5,011). Results of the online survey showed that Bird Clubs varied greatly in size from 30 to 850 members (mean = 338).

The average age of a Bird Club member is between 50 and 60 years old. The large majority of members are white, middle-income people with a secondary or university education. However, BirdLife South Africa is actively seeking to recruit a membership which better reflects South Africa’s population.

"One of the first things I said when I become Chairman was we need more black members and children” Peter Sullivan – Chairman of BirdLife South Africa.
"We’d like to have younger members and black members. Members are our foot soldiers”
Mark Anderson – Executive Director of BirdLife South Africa.

Unlike many Bird Clubs around the globe, in South Africa a high proportion of members are women. In the online survey most Clubs estimated their membership to be around 25.9% women, in BirdLife South Africa’s membership database suggests that around 55-60% of members are female, and at a talk I attended in BirdLife Northern Gauteng there were 36 women and 15 men.

The reason behind this seems to be personal security: “People in South Africa have a strong link to wildlife. Children leave home and we like the outdoors. We can’t bird alone because of safety issues, so we join a club to help our empty nest syndrome.” Lia Steen – Witwatersrand Bird Club. "People join to be able to participate in local birding activities without worrying too much about personal security”, Lesley Frescura - BirdLife Port Natal. "Women feel comfortable in a group and feel more secure on outings”, André Marx - BirdLife Northern Gauteng Laniarius Editor.

BirdLife South Africa has asked all clubs to change their names to BirdLife xxxx. Not all Clubs have achieved this, and some are deemed to have old-fashioned, colonial-style names which may serve to put some new members off.

“We wanted to change our name from the Witwatersrand Bird Club to BirdLife Witwatersrand but members voted against it. There are lots of examples of old names which are very unhelpful”, Lance Robinson – Chairman of Witwatersrand Bird Club.

“Most Bird Club’s memberships are declining because they are volunteer driven with no time to promote themselves. Some clubs are also considered old-fashioned and colonial names don’t help” Duncan Pritchard – BirdLife South Africa.

Bird Clubs raise funds through their membership fees, sponsorship and by selling merchandise. However, Philip Calinikos - BirdLife Northern Gauteng Chairperson – noted: “Membership fees only cover minor costs. We also sell books, checklists, cards, tapes and CDs at their meetings to raise funds.”

1.3 Communications within the Bird Club network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship between BirdLife South Africa’s Council, Regional Fora and Bird Clubs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BLSA Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Fora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Fora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird Club</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3.1 Council

Fora manage the Clubs, and Fora representatives sit on the BirdLife South Africa’s governing Council. Clubs without Fora can still attend Council. This empowers Clubs and gives them influence in key decisions affecting BirdLife South Africa and themselves. It also allows the Chairpersons ideal opportunities to meet and exchange ideas and information.

The council meets at least twice a year and quorum for the meeting is 50% of the members of Council.

1.3.2 Fora

BirdLife South Africa’s Bird Clubs are divided into eight regions, of which three currently have a regional Forum.

The objectives of the fora are identical to the constitution for BirdLife South Africa and Bird Clubs, to: ‘promote the enjoyment, understanding, study and conservation of birds and their environments’.

Each Forum has a Chairperson in addition to representatives from each of their Bird Clubs (often a Bird Club Chairperson). Fora also have a Vice-Chairperson, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer. The Fora are governed by BirdLife South Africa.

Fora meet to exchange information and to designate jobs. Half (50%) of the regions have a Forum, and 100% of survey respondents had representation on a Fora. This indicates that the more engaged clubs responded to the survey, and that Clubs without a Forum may suffer from being less well networked. Up to six representatives from each club attend a Forum meeting (average ca. 2).

Fora help to co-ordinate joint projects between Bird Clubs within each region. For example, the Western Cape Forum helps to organise a number of joint projects as follows:

- Junior Bird Club – produce an active calendar of event for young members.
- Flaminkvlei-Berg River Development – this area is under threat and the Forum is establishing an action plan.
- Strandfontein IBA – The Forum’s sub-committee are working to resolve an invasive non-native species problem at the wetland.
- SABAP2 – has a regional co-ordinator on the Forum to organise and promote this monitoring work (see more later).
- Organising a Festival entitled Save Our Seabirds.

Feedback from Fora to members is via Club meetings and newsletters. However, it was felt that feedback from Council to members could be improved. At present BirdLife South Africa send Council minutes to Bird Club Committee members.

As a point of interest, Fora were initially encouraged because Council often didn’t have enough Bird Club representatives at Council meetings to pass quorate votes. Fora were therefore set up with voting rights on behalf of their respective Bird Clubs. In a country as vast as South Africa, this was a good solution to the problem of asking Bird Clubs to travel regularly to a central point to participate in a Council meeting.
1.3.3 Committee

The Bird Club constitution states that: "The affairs of the Branch shall be managed by a Committee comprised of at least FIVE (5) elected members. At its first meeting after election, the members of the Committee shall elect: a Chairman; Vice-Chairman; a Secretary; a 'Treasurer'. Committees meet as often as is necessary and require 50% of Committee members to be quorate.

1.3.4 Meetings

Clubs hold regular – usually monthly - meetings for their members which often involves an invited guest delivering a bird-related talk. Some Clubs communicate with each other in order to share resources and speakers, and to exchange ideas on venues and clubs. Specific examples from the online survey follow.

Question: For which purposes does your Bird Club communicate with other Clubs?

- **Witswatersrand Bird Club**: “many issues under discussion including membership, conservation initiatives and special projects”.

- **BirdLife Sisonke**: “Communication is regular with all other clubs in KZN (Kwazulu Natal), for forum purposes and for planning atlas activities”.

- **BirdLife Harties**: "regarding North West Birding Route with Westvall Bird Club and Rustenburg Bird Club”

1.3.5 AGM

Bird Clubs organise and meet at an annual general meeting. All members are invited and about 200 turn up (of ca. 4% of BC members).

1.3.6 Newsletters

Many Bird Clubs produce their own newsletters, and seven have their own websites. BirdLife Lowveld produces their own quarterly magazine and has commercial sponsorship for design, layout, printing and distribution. It was mentioned that some clubs – especially smaller ones – can struggle for newsletter content.

1.3.7 Magazines and other media

BirdLife South Africa publish news in the last eight pages of Africa Birds and Birding which has a circulation of about 18,000 copies, and is sent to all members and sold in book shops. Clubs sometimes use newspapers and radio to advertise their activities and attract new members.

1.3.8 Visits by BirdLife South Africa staff

BirdLife South Africa aim to visit each Club to give a talk each year. In September 2009 staff had given 82 talks – of which 39 were to Birds Clubs. This is very important for both the Club and BirdLife South Africa.
"It’s very useful. After talks we’ve had legacy enquiries and recruited many new members”
Mark Anderson – Executive Director of BirdLife South Africa

"It’s staying in touch with the grass roots” Peter Sullivan – Chairman of BirdLife South Africa.

Many respondents to the online survey indicated how useful they found visits by BirdLife South Africa staff.

1.3.9 Communications between Bird Clubs

With distances between Clubs often considerable, many Clubs communicate using the phone, email and by other means. Only 33% of Bird Clubs visit other Clubs. The purpose of these visits and communications is for many reasons. For example: to share speakers, to co-ordinate trips and surveys, to organise Fora meetings and to ask for help and advice.

 Talks given by BLSA staff in 2009:

- Flamingo conservation at Kamfers Dam
- Raptor conservation in the Northern Cape
- Ludwig’s Bustard and Blue Crane conservation in the Eastern Karoo
- Wakkerstroom Centre – updates, tourism and community projects
- What does BirdLife South Africa Do?
- Swallows and Swifts
- Southern Bald Ibis Projects
- Myths and legends about Owls
- The Shearwater, the pig, the albatross and the rabbit: Clarion Island conservation
- Saving our seabirds
- Flamingos and vultures
- Bird conservation
- Waterbirds
- Avitourism
- National birds and birds along the walking trail
- Birding routes through South Africa
- Birds and birding in South Africa
- Birds and business
- Birds and people
- A wealth of seabirds – our heritage under threat
- Albatrosses flying high
- Africa and the albatross task force
- Keeping our seabirds off the hook
1.4 Activities

Pro-active conservation of IBAs is becoming an increasing important priority for Bird Clubs in South Africa. For example, the KwaZulu-Natal Forum meets every six months for two days per meeting. The first day is focussed on conservation and monitoring activities within the 26 IBAs covered by the six Clubs in the Forum. The second day is for all other business.

"We want to focus all our monitoring activities at IBAs because they have been identified as priority sites" André Marx - BirdLife Northern Gauteng newsletter Editor and Member of BirdLife South Africa Council for 15 years.

"IBAs are a very important part of our Forum discussions at present" Philip Calinkos – Chairperson of BirdLife Northern Gauteng

"We’re thinking of revamping our regional Forum to be more devoted to IBA conservation. We need more commitments from Bird Clubs" Tim Wood – BirdLife South Africa Council members

"Bird Club Chairmen are moving towards IBA conservation, and are working on how to align better with BirdLife South Africa’s IBA conservation work. Clubs have always done monitoring at IBAs, but now have a change in thinking and want to help conserve them. [Why?] BirdLife South Africa staff are now on the Council and interact directly with Council members – many of which are Chairmen of Bird Clubs. The Council shift has made a huge
BirdLife South Africa has recently undertaken a series of workshops with their Bird Clubs to train their member in completing Important Bird Area (IBA) assessments. At the time of writing Bird Clubs had completed 67 out of 103 IBA assessments. These assessments have already been loaded into BirdLife International’s World Biodiversity Database and will be used to inform the continual process of implementing an analysis of state, pressure and response at each IBA.

In addition to the growing focus by Clubs on IBA conservation, many Bird Clubs and members undertake co-ordinated monitoring which provides valuable data for identifying IBAs and setting their conservation priorities.

The main co-ordinated avifaunal surveys in South Africa are:

- Southern African Bird Atlas 2 (SABAP2)
- Coordinated Avifaunal Roadcounts (CAR)
- Coordinated Waterbird Counts (CWAC)
- Birds in Reserves Project (BIRP)
- Bird Ringing (through SAFRING)

1.4.1 Southern African Bird Atlas 2 (SABAP2)
SABAP2 is an update and refinement of the first Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP1) which ran from 1987-1991 and culminated in the publication in 1997 of two volumes on the distribution and relative abundance of southern African birds.

SABAP1 largely achieved its objective of providing the first quantitative description of the distribution of all bird species in southern Africa, and represented a “snapshot” of the distribution of each species during the late 1980s to early 1990s. It also involved a large number of lay people as citizen scientists and made a huge contribution to the public understanding of science, participation in biodiversity data collection and public awareness of birds.

The SABAP2 project has two broad aims:

1. A scientifically rigorous, repeatable platform for tracking through time and space the impacts of environmental change on southern African birds, through standardized data collection on bird distribution and an index of abundance.

2. Increased public participation in biodiversity data collection, and public awareness of birds, through large-scale mobilization of citizen scientists.

SABAP2 involves recording the presence or absence of species within a grid cell (Pentad) and is funded through the South African National Biodiversity Institute and BirdLife South Africa and is managed and run by the Animal Demography Unit (ADU), University of Cape Town and BirdLife South Africa.

“The ADU and BirdLife South Africa have a great partnership - we’re dependant on each other” Mark Anderson – Executive Director of BirdLife South Africa

SABAP2 is a five year project and 580 observers are registered of which ca. 400 are members of a Bird Club. Many Bird Clubs have SABAP2 co-ordinators and run workshops on how to undertake a survey, and 100% of clubs contacted partake in SABAP2 surveys. It has been enormously successful, and in just three years over 1,000,000 records have been submitted and 30% of pentads have been covered.

“I’m very proud of the Atlassing (SABAP2) project particularly” Lance Robinson – Chairman BirdLife of Witwatersrand Bird Club.
A popular aspect of the SABAP2 project which helps to motivate people to visit new pentads is the ‘Chameleon challenge’. For this points are awarded to registered atlassers who visit new pentads – thus changing the colour of a pentad online - and this feeds in to a league table which is regularly updated.

Interview with Prof. Les Underhill - Director of the Animal Demography Unit and BirdLife South Africa Council Member

What’s the background to the SABAP2, and how is it co-ordinated?

"The first atlas published in 1997 (covering 87-91), and now ADU has grown a lot and covers butterflies, lizards and frogs. Essentially, the ADU provide science and data-processing and BirdLife South Africa provide the promotion”.

How important are the data?

"Atlassing provides substance to the conservation. First Atlas was the fundamental resource for South Africa’s Red Data and IBA books. The data has also been used in many PhD theses, and have been used in studies published in Science and Nature”.

What’s the secret of SABAP’s success?

"A secret of our success is that we make the data available freely and the website is instantly updated – so you can see your impact. Valuing participants is extremely important. We respond to their needs quickly and give them feedback with datasets updated every three hours online. People want to see their contributions valued - volunteers meet our data needs so we must meet theirs. In this way, they feel part of a team making a difference and feel valued. We also hold regular meetings to show them what their data are being used for”.

How important are Bird Clubs in SABAP?

"ADU has set up regional Atlas committees with many Bird Club members, and of the 600 registered atlassers, 400 belong to a club. At the regional Atlas committees they discuss how to get to remote areas and assess the outlying records”.

Why do people atlas?

"People do it because it is a different type of birding experience”.

How has the SABAP work made a difference to conservation?

"When we published the Atlas 1 data we found that almost every previous field guide map was wrong! For example, for Rudd’s Lark we realised just how small the range was – it was a real eye opener”.

How do you fund it?

"For each rand the sponsors give us, volunteers spend 20 on things such as fuel. At present the sponsorship covers three salaries, but we need to reach the point where we are self-sufficient”.
"In just 12 months I've seen 420 species and visited 104 pentads" Andy Featherstone – SABAP2 co-ordinator of the Witwatersrand Bird Club and forth place in the SABAP2 Chameleon Challenge.

"I love atlassing – I'm an amateur researcher" Lia Steen - Witwatersrand Bird Club member and second place in the SABAP2 Chameleon Challenge.

1.4.2 Coordinated Avifaunal Roadcounts (CAR)

About 60% of Bird Clubs undertake Coordinated Avifaunal Roadcounts (CAR) to monitor large and conspicuous birds from vehicles covering fixed routes. This approach was pioneered in July 1993 in a joint Cape Bird Club/ADU project to monitor the populations of two threatened species: Blue Crane Anthropoides paradiseus and Denham’s Bustard Neotis denhami.

CAR has since spread rapidly to other provinces and now monitors over 20 species of large terrestrial birds (cranes, bustards, korhaans, storks, Secretarybird and Southern Bald Ibis) along 360 fixed routes covering over 19,000 km. Fourteen of these species appear in the Red Data Book.

Routes have been grouped into clusters called precincts. Local Precinct Organisers play a vital role in organising counts in their areas. Currently there are 42 precincts in seven provinces. CAR has thrived on the enthusiastic, voluntary participation of members of Bird Clubs and farming communities, conservators, schools and interested members of the public. Every six months, over 750 people travel along bumpy country roads, making this one of the largest birder-participation projects in Africa.

1.4.3 Coordinated Waterbird Counts (CWAC)

The Coordinated Waterbird Counts (CWAC) project was launched in 1992 as part South Africa’s commitment to International waterbird conservation. This is being done by means of a programme of regular mid-summer and mid-winter censuses at a large number of South African wetlands.

All the counts are conducted by volunteers – many of which are members of Bird Clubs. It is one of the largest and most successful citizen science programmes in Africa, providing much needed data for waterbird conservation around the world. Currently the project regularly monitors over 400 wetlands around the country, and furthermore curates waterbird data for over 600 sites. About 90% of Bird Clubs undertake CWAC surveys.

1.4.4 Birds in Reserves Project (BIRP)

The Birds in Reserves Project (BIRP), started in 1992. The primary aim of the project is the collection of bird occurrence data, specifically inside South African protected areas (PAs – of which many are IBAs).

The process is fairly simple; volunteers go out to any PA and simply make a list of all the bird species observed. Data can be collected up to a maximum of seven days. This project is well suited for people that simply want to contribute their sightings (within protected areas) to a worthwhile cause. Equally, the BIRP project can serve as an avifaunal baseline
monitoring tool for all Protected Areas, whether big or small. The data is submitted to the ADU, processed and made available on the website.

The data collected serves a variety of users; private, recreational, institutional and academic. The project is supported and endorsed by both the South African National Biodiversity Institute as well as BirdLife South Africa. About 70% of Bird Clubs undertake BIRP surveys.

1.4.5 Bird Ringing

Bird ringing is a scientific method for identifying birds individually and the term always implies the use of metal leg-rings, stamped or engraved with a serial number and the address of a recognised ringing organisation. The numbered rings make it possible to recognise each bird individually if it is found dead or recaptured at a later date.

The South African Bird Ringing Unit (SAFRING) administers bird ringing in southern Africa, supplying rings, ringing equipment and services to volunteer and professional ringers in South Africa and neighbouring countries.

The traditional objective of SAFRING is to establish a database of recoveries of southern African birds that can be used to establish information about movement and survival. Every bird ringed, no matter what species or where it was ringed has the potential to contribute to the SAFRING recovery database.

There are currently 130 active ringers operating in South Africa and neighbouring countries and ca. 70,000 birds are ringed annually. Ringers, both amateur and professional, have to pay for all rings used.

About 70% of Bird Clubs ring birds; often helping to fund the provision of rings and equipment for their members to carry out this important conservation monitoring work.

1.4.6 Participation in the development of Birding Routes

Avitourism (birding’s ecotourism) is proving to be one of BirdLife South Africa’s most powerful conservation tools. Tourism has outperformed all other sectors in South Africa’s economy, with two popular ‘Birding Routes’ generating an estimated US$6.4 million annually for local people.

Birding Routes provide tourists with suggested itineraries, trained Community Bird Guide and birder-friendly accommodation within areas of spectacular avian diversity. This successful combination is providing sustainable conservation, increased bird awareness and vital employment opportunities for local communities.

More than 140 Community Bird Guides have been trained by BirdLife South Africa to date, creating a new generation of conservationists in some of the country’s poorest areas.

“Bird Clubs help to mentor Bird Guides to work with them and hone their birding skills. From earning nothing they can earn ZAR 100 per month with is massive to them” Sadie Halbhuber – Events Division Manager for BirdLife South Africa.

Bird Clubs are involved in a number of aspects of Birding Route development, one of the most important is the mentoring of Bird Guides. Training a Community Bird Guide involves undertaking a one-month accredited course training course followed by an intensive period
of mentoring. Mentoring a Community Bird Guide involves improving their bird identification and communication skills. Many Bird Clubs have helped to mentor Community Bird Guides and develop their local Bird Routes (80%).

"Linking bird guides to IBAs will form a strong bond between the site and the local community” Matthew Drew – BirdLife South Africa Bird Route Manager.

Training Community Bird Guides provides a direct link between avian diversity and local people’s income. This often make guides passionate ambassadors for the conservation of their local environment, and gives BirdLife South Africa strong links with local communities around IBAs.

"I am taking bird guiding as my career path. Not only has my family benefited from bird guiding, but the whole of Nyoni village now thinks twice about birds. I am fully involved with the community conservation programme” Shusisio Magagula – Community Bird Guide.

Community projects often fail in their early years due to a lack of support and resources for marketing, managing and fundraising. Part of the Birding Route’s success has been setting up of local offices which facilitate joint marketing, bookings and support of the guides, whilst also providing a single point of information and resources for the guide’s clientele.

More information can be found at: www.birdingroutes.co.za

1.4.7 Individual conservation and education projects

Bird Clubs are also involved in a huge number of diverse conservation and education projects in and around IBAs. These involve setting up school clubs (Eco-schools), managing IBAs, fighting threats, helping to declare Protected Areas and increasing the size of existing Protected Areas. Select results of an online survey are presented below:

"We’re currently involved in development of Birding Route and local projects for the protection and development of local wetlands like the Bitou wetland, Robberg Vlei wetland and Keurbooms Estuary”, Eugene Steyn – Chairman BirdLife South Africa - Plettenberg Bay branch.

"The Club manages the President Ridge Bird Sanctuary in Randburg. Groups of school children visit the Sanctuary to learn about birds and the environment”, Denise Holahan – BirdLife President Ridge.

"We have developed a Bird Pack with the Orimary Science Programme for primary schools, and have helped in the staffing and supplying of material support to a number of educational institutions”, Dave Whitelaw – Cape Bird Club.

"Work is underway in monitoring Yellow-throated Sandgrouse populations and we are trying to finalise genetic studies on the Short-toed Rock-thrush in our region and that of Namibia”, Lance Robinson – Chairman of the Witwatersrand Bird Club.

"We’re involved in Eco Schools; Magaliesberg Biosphere Project; NW Conservancy Association; Hartbeespoort Dam Remediation Project” John Wesson - BirdLife Harties.
1.5 Achievements of the network

Some achievements of the network – resulting from discussions with Bird Clubs and the online survey - are presented below:

“Strandfontein IBA continues to be a major focus of the clubs’ conservation sub-committee. We are beginning to sort out the tremendous Water Hyacinth problem. This will depend upon weather conditions and the acquisition of specialised equipment by the municipality”, Vernon Head – chairman of the Cape Bird Club (925 members).

“We have trained five locals as bird guides and play an active part in promoting tourism with a focus on birding in our community”, Eugene Steyn – Chairman BirdLife South Africa - Plettenberg Bay branch. “Our current initiative to establish a Birding Route for the Garden Route arose from contacts with other branches and a visit to Wakkerstroom and KZN”.

“We're assisting in developing the North West Birding Route, training of Bird Guides, involved with eco schools, and aim to train field rangers if adequate sustainable funding available”, John Wesson - BirdLife Harties. “We've also blocked a number of EIA [Environmental Impact Assessments] applications to develop on the Magaliesberg Biosphere Project, and we've created a number of conservation areas and conservancies around important bird habitats”.

“Kgomo-Kgomo Wetland is being encroached by local villages and over-grazing is a big problem. We’re working on the [Gauteng] forum to train a Bird Guide to help communicate the importance of conserving the wetland to the local community, and to encourage birders to visit the reserve. The forum is now considering how best to fund, identify and train a local guide. We’re also working with the Wits [Witwatersrand] Bird Club at Elandsvlei wetland which belongs to 3-4 farmers and is a natural dam important for migrant waders such as Pectoral Sandpiper. We’re trying to get the land-owners to conserve the area and have received support and advice from BirdLife South Africa”, Philip Calinkos – Chairperson of BirdLife Northern Gauteng.

“Witwatersrand Bird Club have helped to set up a CAR route at Wakkerstroom, along with training a local Bird Guide and providing a birder shelter at the reserve. We are also organising the 2009 AGM at Wakkerstroom for all the Bird Clubs in South Africa and have asked other Bird Clubs in the Gauteng forum to help”, Lance Robinson – Chairman of the Witwatersrand Bird Club. "Furthermore, we're proud of the collaborative effort in addressing the mining issues in the Wakkerstroom area, and the collaborative effort in providing money, based on membership levels, toward the new BirdLife South Africa membership data system”.

“BirdLife Port Natal is part of the Mt Moreland Wetland Forum [ACSA/BirdLife South Africa/BLPN/Mt Moreland Wetland Forum] set up to ensure the protection of the 3,000,000 Barn Swallows that roost in the Lake Victoria Wetland every summer. The forum came into existence with the development of the new airport at La Mercy. Monthly bird counts are undertaken and a specially designed radar unit has been installed”, Lesley Frescura – BirdLife Port Natal.

“We’re directly involved in: having Rietvlei [Wetland Reserve IBA] declared a Protected Area; having Strnadfontein [IBA] included in the False Bay Ecopark; having Zandvlei increased in size; initiated the CAR; working with the ADU in having Intaka Island preserved”, Dave Whitelaw – Cape Bird Club.

Ca. 70% of Bird Clubs found that being part of a Bird Club network has provided benefits when attempting to influence policy or planning decisions. Being part of a network
affiliated to BirdLife South Africa provided numerous advantages to the individual club. It allowed:

- Access to experts in the field and information regarding birding events and issues in South Africa and elsewhere
- Keeps Bird Clubs dated on matters affecting the conservation of birds in South Africa.
- Allows clubs to be at the forefront of current thinking and initiatives in bird and or habitat conservation
- Access to a larger network of contacts
- Participation at a national level through our representative
- Access to advocacy & lobbying
- Centralisation of membership

"Being part of the bigger picture of conservation in SA is very important, being affiliated to BLSA means that we are part of the main body, receiving advice on issues bigger than what the branch can handle", Trish Strachan - BirdLife Sisonke.

"[We get] strength in numbers, international clout, Conservation issues, opportunities to work towards a common goal", Gisela Ortner - Witwatersrand Bird Club.

"[We attend] ... the Plett Eco Forum meetings where all new developments in the area and their possible impact on resources and the environment are discussed. (Eskom powerlines, wetland encroachment etc)”, Eugene Steyn – Chairman BirdLife South Africa - Plettenberg Bay branch.

"We were directly involved in the coalition which successfully fought to have a road which would have bisected Strandfontein stopped. We are involved in attempting to have a Nuclear Power Station at Bantamsklip stopped. This area being pristine Limestone fynbos. We are involved in having an EIA for a development at Flamienkvlei - declaring that Permission for the development was declined", Dave Whitelaw - Cape Bird Club.

1.6 Constraints and Opportunities

1.6.1 Geography and Fora

"Fora have greatly improved communication between Bird Clubs and BirdLife South Africa by pulling in smaller branches and helped to give them an extra voice", said André Marx - BirdLife Northern Gauteng newsletter Editor and former member of BirdLife South Africa’s Council. "They can then approach council with issues and problems. It’s been a big success. Before Fora they didn’t have a voice because they are so geographically isolated”.

The benefits of having regional Fora are clearly identified; however half of the regions don’t have a Forum at present. With the Bird Club network presently growing, this may issue may also continue to grow. The main reason for the lack of Fora in some regions is one of geographic isolation - physically getting together is a major barrier for many clubs in such a vast country as South Africa. For example, Branches and Satellite Clubs in Mpumalanga would take over 3 hours drive to meet. “250km to the next club and tolls alone would be ZAR 250 (£20)”, said John Broodryk - Chairman of BirdLife Lowveld. Distances in the Eastern Cape were also similar.

Helping to pay the mileage at attend Fora removes a barrier, but funding is limited. Holding meetings less frequently may also help regions to set up Fora. A solution to the problem of isolation, and lack of co-ordination within the regions, would be holding Fora over the phone, or via the web using conference-type calls or video conferencing. Skype is
free and offers the functions for Clubs to virtually meet face-to-face without the need to be in the same room.

“I feel people should enter the digital age, but many don’t want to try something new. Perhaps we need to be more proactive and solve their problems for them by building online Fora” Sadie Halbhuber – Events Division Manager for BirdLife South Africa.

Many clubs have an ageing membership, and may not be web-savvy or confident with new technologies. This could be a major limitation with online networking of the clubs. It would therefore be important to provide support and training to ensure that Bird Clubs feel happy with any solutions which are chosen. Simple telephone discussion Fora might be the best solution in the short-term.

1.6.2 Membership and motivation

Clubs are dependent upon volunteers; relying on the skills, knowledge, self-sufficiency and time of their membership. This limits capacity for undertaking conservation action, and many clubs noted that it is difficult to get their members motivated to take part in activities.

“A single individual can make a big difference. Having an active chair and pro-active membership manager has made a big difference for some clubs” Duncan Pritchard – BirdLife South Africa.

Most Clubs have a declining membership which is thought to be a result of an aging membership coupled with a lack of capacity for self-promotion leading to low recruitment rates. Interestingly, two of the largest Clubs with a growing membership are run by pro-active chairpeople under the age of 40.

“Clubs with younger members tend to get involved, older members don’t tend to get involved as much”, Andy Featherstone – Witwatersrand Bird Club.

A key challenge for the clubs is therefore to attract new and younger members, and to advance these members onto their Committees. Understanding what younger members would want from a Bird Club will help their recruitment. This demographic group tend to be more solitary in their bird watching habits, and respond well to challenges and competitions. Activities such as SABAP2 and reporting rarities may be more popular with this age group than the more mature membership.

“Sanderton [Bird Club] advise that maintaining their members interest and participation in club’s activities is a challenge as activity at present is at a very low level. Average age of members 60+. They will attempt to bring new blood onto the committee at next AGM in Jan 2010. BLNG [BirdLife Northern Gauteng] advise that the attraction of new members remains a challenge. BLNG have also developed a new club brochure for distribution and their website is subject to ongoing improvement” Lance Robinson - from Gauteng Forum report.

Personalities of the leaders are the driving force behind the effectiveness of the Bird Club network. However, it’s very hard to replace a Chairman, and many have been in their roles for a number of years.

Feedback from the online survey suggested that some Clubs would like to see more involvement with local communities by creating a new membership level for people on lower incomes. It was also mentioned that the policy of electing branch representatives
onto the BirdLife Council could be more democratic, and would benefit from enacting a gender policy to get more female members onto the board.

1.6.3 Communications

Communication between the Clubs, and with BirdLife South Africa is important to exchange information, co-ordinate activities, motivate members and respond to issues. It also remains a key challenge for many networks.

Maintaining the main lines of communication are important – newsletters, staff visits and talks, Fora, AGMs, websites and magazines. Editors frequently mentioned that sourcing information for their newsletters, for example, can often be difficult – especially for smaller clubs with fewer members to write articles and activities to promote. Clubs also shared a feeling that it is important to hear from BirdLife South Africa, and to feel connected to their work and priorities.

Visits by BirdLife South Africa staff – especially the Executive Director - made a huge difference to Clubs, who all reported benefits from these visits and wished to receive more. Again geography and time are key constraints.

An opportunity to increase the communication with the Bird Clubs and their members may be for BirdLife South Africa to provide materials for incorporation into their newsletters and magazines. It could take the form of ‘a message from Mark Anderson’ or similar, and be a regular and personal communication informed of BirdLife South Africa’s work, whilst also helping to value the work of the members, and motivating them to do more. This could even take the form of a monthly audio or video message played at each club’s meeting, and be either emailed to the club, or posted on BirdLife South Africa’s website from where it can be downloaded. This would also motivate clubs to keep visiting BirdLife South Africa’s website.

Websites are the primary information resource in the modern world. However, only 20% of Bird Clubs have their own website. An opportunity could be for BirdLife South Africa to host a page, or sub-site, at www.birdlife.org.za for each club, from where they could manage their own content and promote their activities. The club would benefit by having a website with an existing large audience, and BirdLife South Africa would benefit by attracting more visitors – especially members – to their website, and allow them to be more connected to their clubs.

Connecting clubs with each other and BirdLife South Africa staff could also be improved by setting up a private online network. This could be a sub-site of www.birdlife.org.za – or using a free social network tool such as www.Ning.com - where members and staff log in to access:

- Discussion forums to share information and help one another.
- Contact lists and staff / member portfolios – find and contact the right person quickly and easily.
- Key resources such as file downloads.
- Events diaries.
- Image database.
- Membership lists.
- Contacts for speakers and sharing of articles for newsletters.
- Announcements.
- Lots more...
“It would be good to have more contact with other clubs, but South Africa is so large it is hard to travel. Technology and telephones can help. Hosting an exchange scheme for Bird Club members who travel could be great. Could have a centralised place to share information and interact. A private social network for members to share information, chat, find others etc...” Andy Featherstone – Witwatersrand Bird Club.

1.6.4 Network Growth and Club Autonomy

Growing the Bird Club network will increase its capacity for undertaking conservation work. However, new clubs must be sustainable; if new clubs die it looks bad. It is therefore important that new clubs get support from BirdLife South Africa and other clubs. They should be approved and then encouraged to join their regional Forum.

"It’s important there is organic growth. If it goes wrong our name (BirdLife South Africa) is muddied” Ross Wanless – BirdLife South Africa.

"Satellite clubs need the support of the main club to get more members. They need the support or otherwise it falls apart quickly and is bad for BirdLife South Africa and the Bird Club’s image” Lance Robinson – Witwatersrand Bird Club Chairman.

"All new clubs need a big brother. We don’t want to dampen their enthusiasm” Peter Sullivan – Chairman of BirdLife South Africa.

Some Bird Clubs voiced a need for more autonomy from BirdLife South Africa. They want the unified identify of being affiliated with BirdLife South Africa in terms of what they undertake and support, especially relating to conservation initiatives. However, they also wanted be able to retain their own individual club ‘flavour’. One club suggested that BirdLife South Africa head office should: “provide broad and clear guidelines on what is expected from a club, and then let it get on with its own affairs”.

1.6.5 IBAs

Bird Clubs are restructuring their aims around IBA conservation, but there was a feeling that clubs need more support to fill in their IBA monitoring forms, and for more overall project co-ordination.

Bird Clubs support IBA conservation in a number of ways; from undertaking monitoring activities, to direct management, to training local guides. Key to their success is support from other Bird Clubs and BirdLife South Africa (and BirdLife International) where necessary. Support can only be given if clear communication and co-ordination is continued to be improved. Also important is the continued focus upon training of Bird Club members in activities such as completing IBA assessments. Where joint projects can be formed across the network, proposals could be produced to fund larger, co-ordinated projects. This is in addition to local fund-raising efforts already underway.

1.6.6 Birding Route and Bird Guides

Mentoring Bird Guides is an important aspect of training a guide in the skills needed to work with tourists and providing a sustainable livelihood for the guide. Many clubs already help to mentor and train guides, and this is something they are rightly proud of. This
success should continue to grow and more clubs should take ownership of mentoring guides.

"It would be good to get Bird Clubs even more involved with the mentoring of Bird Guides”
Martin Taylor – BirdLife South Africa.

Information on bird populations and locations is a key piece of the jigsaw when developing a Birding Route. The data from SABAP2 is freely and easily available and could be used in providing species lists for the routes.

"Avitourism can get species lists for pentads which is very useful information for birders. By making use of the data they get more people involved” Les Underhill – Director of the Animal Demography Unit and BirdLife South Africa Council Member.

1.6.7 Links with BirdLife South Africa staff

“Bird Clubs without representatives on a forum or BirdLife South Africa Council don’t have a clear link with IBA conservation. There is a need to visit these clubs regularly to stay networked” Sadie Halbhuber – Events Division Manager for BirdLife South Africa.

Visits by BirdLife South Africa staff are highly valued by the clubs. It gives encouragement to the committees and strengthens the membership base. Along with talks, it was felt that where possible, it would be beneficial to have more staff as regular members of Bird Clubs, to help build links and get members more informed about BirdLife South Africa’s work.

Summary of Lessons Learned

- Bird Clubs gain benefits from being affiliated to BirdLife South Africa through receiving help with managing members, being part of a bigger conservation picture, and gaining access to information and advice.
- Regional Fora allow Bird Clubs to meet, share ideas and co-ordinate their activities.
- Having representatives on BirdLife South Africa’s Council empowers the Bird Clubs and provides them access to key decisions taken by their parent organisation. It also offers an opportunity for Clubs representatives from different regions to meet one another.
- Visits by BirdLife staff to the Bird Clubs are highly valued by both parties.
- IBAs are becoming an increasingly important focus for conservation activities by Bird Clubs.
- Co-ordinated monitoring activities – such as SABAP2 – have proven extremely successful at engaging regular members in IBA conservation and provides a wealth of data to national and international partners.
- Bird Clubs are involved in a number of aspects of Birding Route development, one of the most important is the mentoring of Bird Guides.
- Bird Clubs undertake a diverse range of conservation and education projects in and around IBAs such as: setting up school clubs (Eco-schools), managing IBAs, fighting threats and helping to declare Protected Areas.
- Growing the Fora network is an important challenge which may require using technology to overcome the barrier of geography.
- Clubs are dependent upon volunteers; relying on the skills, knowledge, self-sufficiency and time of their membership. This limits capacity for undertaking conservation action, and many clubs noted that it is difficult to get their members motivated to take part in activities.
Bird Clubs have an ageing membership with a high proportion of women compared to other clubs around the world.

Younger members tend to be more active, and a single member can make a huge difference to a Club’s activities and membership.

A key challenge for the clubs is to attract new and younger members, and to advance these members onto their Committees.

Communication between the Clubs, and with BirdLife South Africa is important to exchange information, co-ordinate activities, motivate members and respond to issues.

Visits by BirdLife staff – especially the Executive Director - made a huge difference to Clubs, who all reported benefits from these visits and wished to receive more. Again geography and time are key constraints.

An opportunity to increase the communication with the Bird Clubs and their members may be for BirdLife South Africa to provide materials for incorporation into their newsletters and magazines.

Only 20% of Bird Clubs have their own website. An opportunity could be for BirdLife South Africa to host a page - or sub-site - at www.birdlife.org.za for each club, from where they could manage their own content and promote their activities.

Connecting clubs with each other and BirdLife South Africa staff could be improved by setting up a private online social network.

Growth of the Bird Club network must be sustainable and organic. Smaller clubs benefit from support and advice from other clubs.
Annex 1: Stories and Case Studies

Birding for conservation in South Africa

The sign read: ‘You may encounter dangerous animals – stay in your vehicle’ and behind us was a long line of traffic jostling for the best views. They were going to be disappointed, but we certainly weren’t.

Andy and I were in South Africa’s Pilanesberg National Park and were thrilled to be looking at a Crimson-breasted Gonolek *Laniarius atrococcineus*. Perched on top of a small bush, its jet-black head, back and tail contrasted beautifully with a stark red chest. “Its belly is larva red”, said Andy. It certainly was.

Pilanesberg National Park lies 160 km north-west of Johannesburg and is a ring-complex of concentric hills – known locally as koppies – which were formed by volcanic eruptions some 1300 million years ago. It is the country’s fourth-largest Protected Area, and in the early 1980s was repopulated with around 6,000 animals during ‘Operation Genesis’. Described as the largest game resettlement programme in the history of the country, Pilanesberg is now home to a rich array wildlife – much of which is capable of nibbling any visitor foolish enough to venture from their car.

The traffic behind us soon realised we hadn’t seen a Lion or Leopard and started to move on. “We’ve got the SABAP2 signs on the car, but people always assume we’ve seen one of the Big Five”, Andy chuckled.

The Southern African Bird Atlas Project 2 – or SABAP2 for short – encourages members of the public to record birds within South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland using a simple and scientifically sound method. It’s very popular amongst Bird Club members, and many have their own atlas co-ordinators like my guide for the day, Andy Featherstone - SABAP2 co-ordinator of the Witwatersrand Bird Club. “I love atlasing, it makes me an amateur researcher”, said Andy. “Since I started atlassing, I’ve recorded 420 species and travelled across South Africa to help increase the coverage of the project”.

SABAP2 is a partnership between the University of Cape Town’s Animal Demography Unit (ADU), the South African National Biodiversity Institute, and BirdLife South Africa (BirdLife Partner). The Witwatersrand Bird Club is one of over 40 Bird Clubs and Branches affiliated with BirdLife South Africa, providing a wealth of volunteers willing to atlas. “It would be impossible to employ professional ornithologists to achieve the results of these citizen scientists”, said Mark Anderson, Executive Director of BirdLife South Africa.

“BirdLife South Africa’s members are very involved in this project. Some of our members have become very passionate about SABAP2 and their contributions to the project and ultimately to bird conservation is invaluable”.

SABAP2 is a five year project and 670 observers are registered of which about 70% are members of a Bird Club. Many Bird Clubs have SABAP2 co-ordinators and run workshops on how to undertake a survey, and all clubs have members who partake in SABAP2 surveys. It has been enormously successful, and in just three years over 1,500,000 records have been submitted and 34% of grid cells have been covered.

It would be hard to underestimate the impact of the first atlas (SABAP1 – published in 1997) on bird conservation within southern Africa, and beyond. “When we published the Atlas One
data, we found that almost every previous field guide map was wrong”, said Professor Les Underhill - Director of the ADU and BirdLife South Africa Council Member.

“Atlasing provides substance to the conservation. For example, for Rudd’s Lark [Heteromirafra ruddi] we realised just how small the range was – it was a real eye opener”. As a result of this finding, this small endemic bird is now categorised as Vulnerable by BirdLife on behalf of the IUCN Red List, and is the focus of conservation attention by BirdLife South Africa to improve its status.

The first Atlas was a fundamental resource for South Africa’s IUCN Red Data and IBA books. It helped to identify Pilanesberg as an Important Bird Area, holding more than 300 bird species and being globally significant for resident Blue Crane Grus paradisea and wintering Cape Vulture Gyps coprotheres – both classified as Vulnerable. The data that Andy and I were collecting will inform future reviews of Pilanesberg’s avian health, and will help conservationists identify and react to any threats. Thanks to an army of volunteers who love to watch birds, IBAs in southern Africa have an increasing wealth of information about their globally important populations of birds.

SABAP2 uses innovative technologies, where the submission of bird records, the verification of the data, and the subsequent preliminary analyses are all electronic. “A secret of our success is that we make the data available freely to all, and the website [http://sabap2.adu.org.za] is instantly updated – so you can see your impact”, said Professor Underhill. “Valuing participants is extremely important. We respond to their needs quickly and give them feedback with datasets updated every five minutes online. In this way, they feel part of a team making a big difference. We also hold regular meetings to show them what their data are being used for”.

The public interest and involvement from atlasing has also helped to launch other projects such as the Coordinated Waterbird Counts, Birds In Reserves Project and Coordinated Avifaunal Roadcounts. Beyond these bird-focused projects, others have also been developed for frogs, reptiles and butterflies.

During the past 15 years bird distributions in southern Africa have continued to change, possibly more rapidly than during the previous 30-40 years. Large-scale landscape changes, resulting in widespread habitat loss, transformation and fragmentation, and in some cases habitat creation, coupled with climate change and invasion have contributed to changing bird distributions.

BirdLife South Africa and the ADU believe monitoring these distributional changes is crucial if we are to put in place proper and effective management plans to conserve bird populations and diversity in southern Africa into the future, especially as changing landscapes and climate patterns will continue.

In order to ensure the project keeps going from strength to strength, the ADU has set up regional Atlas committees with many Bird Club members. They meet to discuss how to get to remote areas to undertake monitoring, and assess the validity of unusual records to maintain high data quality standards.
Thanks to the efforts of early atlassers, Pilanesberg IBA was identified as important for foraging Cape Vulture from breeding colonies at nearby Magaliesberg and Waterberg IBAs. Identifying these sites as IBAs for Cape Vulture threw the spotlight on the area and the widespread and indiscriminate use of poison by small-stock farmers locally to combat mammalian predators such as black-backed jackals, caracals and feral domestic dogs which pose a major threat to raptors – especially vultures. In order to reduce this threat a vulture restaurant has been established within Pilanesberg, where poison-free food is provided for the birds giving them a safe supply of meat for themselves and their chicks.

Looking into the sky above Pilanesberg, Andy and I didn’t spot any vultures and were distracted by plumes of smoke billowing from hills within the park. A fire was spreading fast. Waves of fleeing grasshoppers were leaping across our dirt track and were quickly hoovered up by the resident hornbills. “Perhaps that larva red belly of the gonolek was an omen”, said Andy. “You never know what you’ll see when you go atlassing”. He wasn’t wrong.

Local Conservation Groups - Birds provide benefits to communities

Community-based conservation is internationally recognised as a critical conservation action which provides sustainable benefits for wildlife and local people. This is the approach of BirdLife International’s Local Conservation Groups (LCG) model, which engages local people in conserving and monitoring critical sites for birds. “We’re moving people from destroying to conserving their environment”, said Daniel Marnewick – BirdLife South Africa’s Community Based Conservation Division Manager.

BirdLife South Africa’s (BirdLife Partner) Community Based Conservation Division ensures better protection for Important Bird Areas (IBAs) by linking social benefits to the continued conservation of a site. “We’re relying less and less on fences to conserve our critical sites for nature and replacing it with conservation for people, with people”, said Daniel. Established in 2006, the division can
already boast a number of successful projects at their core IBAs of Ongoye, Cata and Wakkerstroom.

The small town of Wakkerstroom is well known as one of the best birding destinations in South Africa. The large grassland and wetland area is home to Globally Threatened birds like Endangered White-winged Flufftail *Sarothrura ayresi*, and Vulnerable Wattled and Blue Crane (*Grus carunculatus* and *paradisea*). Accommodation has sprung up around the town offering over 350 beds to cater for tourists.

However, despite this development, local eSizamaleni people have enjoyed minimal benefits from birders visiting the IBA until recently. As the local population grows and exerts increasing pressure on local natural resources, threats such as cattle grazing, hunting of birds and uncontrolled fires looked set to increase.

To address this, Daniel and his team have used the Local Conservation Group model to develop an integrated development plan for Wakkerstroom designed to benefit local people through tourism, conservation and livelihoods. Central to this is the formation of committees of local people who are empowered to make decisions on how to best manage their critical wetland and its surrounding watershed.

"A key to our local conservation group success is having a balanced group of stakeholders empowered to make decisions about their site", added Daniel Marnewick. "The results have been great. At Wakkerstroom we’ve already had fewer accidental fires in the wetland area under the Committee’s control which is great news for the birds”.

Another important aspect of sustainable conservation involving local people has been the creation of income-generating activities (IGAs) by supporting the development of small local enterprises like bead making, reed weaving and wood carving. "I never thought that wood carving could be linked to tourism and bird conservation, but this example is evidence that it can”, said Muzi Makhubu from the Indalo Carving Project.

Muzi is a talented wood carver in Wakkerstroom who’s life-size wooden decoys –made from local invasive alien trees obtained from local farmers - attracts wintering Grey Crowned Cranes to feed within the wetland for the tourists to enjoy. "Muzi’s wooden art work is so good it fools most bird-watchers at first glance, and his smaller models have become very sought-after souvenirs”, said Daniel.

The Indalo Carving Project business is just one of many supported by BirdLife South Africa who provide training, seed-funds to buy materials, and practical help to market their products. "Wakkerstroom is built on tourism”, added Daniel. "Local people understand that the sale of an item depends upon a healthy wetland which draws tourists”.

Another feather in BirdLife South Africa’s Local Conservation Groups cap is how it works with youth-based environmental clubs and sets up Eco-Schools in impoverished communities. In Wakkerstroom they helped to start the Indwe Environment-Club. "Our motto is ‘act locally and think globally’” said Kristi Garland - BirdLife South Africa’s co-manager at Wakkerstroom. "We run fun activities for local kids to learn about the environment, like bird identification and
monitoring skills, which focus on the importance of wetlands in the water cycle for birds and people”.

The Indwe - a Zulu name for Blue Crane - Environment-Club is proving to be a big success and their members are being used to undertake regular monitoring of the larger grassland IBA. “Through trial and error we’ve learnt what works and are expanding quickly into local schools”, added Kristi. They are now visiting 600 local school-children every week, and their work is changing local attitudes to the wetland.

“Through The Indwe Environment-Club and our Eco-Schools projects we have been able to influence a major mining threat to the area because the children speak to their parents about the importance of the wetland”, said Kristi. These successes are being repeated elsewhere.

The Xhosa community of Cata IBA is located in South Africa’s Eastern Cape Province. The indigenous forests at Cata provide habitat for the endangered Cape Parrot (*Poicephalus robustus*). There are only approximately 1,300 individuals of this Brown-necked Parrot subspecies remaining in the wild. Cape Parrots depend on Yellowwood trees for nesting sites and as a source of food. Diminishing Yellowwood forests due to historical and present illegal commercial harvesting, and indiscriminate harvesting by impoverished local people for timber and firewood, threaten the Cape Parrot with extinction. Cape Parrots are also targeted by the illegal bird trade in South Africa.

BirdLife South Africa’s Community Based Conservation Division is working with the Cata community to explore opportunities to develop a tree nursery and an avitourism industry that enhances their livelihoods, while enabling them to conserve their local indigenous forest and the Cape Parrots that depend upon it.

“We are making IBA custodians of the community”, said Monde Ntshudu – BirdLife South Africa’s Cata site manager. “Our Pecan nut plantation provides incomes for local people, and a food source for the parrot”. This has resulted in a big change in how people think about the birds in their forest. “They used to shoot them - now they enjoy looking at the birds through binoculars”.

The Mzimela community at the Ongoye forest IBA are also benefitting from BirdLife South Africa’s Local Conservation Group approach. Ongoye Forest is a large remnant patch of coastal scarp forest - nearly 4,000 ha in size - and lies along a ridge of hills overlooking the Indian Ocean. It is famed by birders for being the only place to see Green Barbet (*Stactolaema olivacea*) in southern Africa, and forms part of the Zululand Birding route.

Staff have been working with the Mzimela people to establish a birders lodge and to train local people as bird guides. Like at Wakkerstroom, staff are also growing Eco-Clubs to engage young people in the future of Ongoye. These activities mean that local people are becoming guardians of the forests in communities who could otherwise profit from its illegal trade.

“We’re moving local people from destruction of the environment to conserving their environment”, said Michael Blose – BirdLife South Africa’s Zululand Birding Route manager. The Ongoye ecotourism project gets the community more involved in eco-tourism. “We’re helping local people to make a sustainable living from their forest”.

The success of the local guides has encouraged the local municipality at Ongoye to include avitourism in its integrated development plan. The project has also helped to deal directly with issues such as illegal dumping, pollution, habitat degradation and invasive alien species.

In all, BirdLife South Africa’s community conservation projects have already assisted in establishing 21 small community-owned businesses which have earned $US 21,000 over the last 18 months, benefiting 700 community members. They have also helped to set up 3 Eco
Clubs, 10 School projects and train 7 bird guides. “These people and their families are now directly benefiting from the conservation of the respective habitat”, concluded Daniel Marnewick. “They get a say in how the habitat is managed, but more importantly they begin to see the value in the conservation of forests, wetlands and grasslands”.

By linking conservation and community development at its sites, BirdLife South Africa has begun to engender serious support for conservation among local communities by involving them in management and decision-making and by providing benefits to offset the opportunity costs of conservation. Now local communities are actively engaged not only in birdwatching, but also in the conservation of birds and their habitats. The support from local communities through these types of projects has given BirdLife South Africa the ability to increase its conservation action for priority habitats and threatened species.

Birds guide the way for people and wildlife in South Africa

"Not long ago, I had nothing”, said Michael Kumako as he scanned the surrounding cliffs next to the Abel Erasmus Pass for one of rarest breeding birds in South Africa. Then he spotted it. "Taita Falcon [Falco fasciinucha] coming in from the right". Quick as a flash a small agile bird flashed its way through the clear blue sky and landed on the cliff face. Only seven pairs of Taita Falcon are known to breed in South Africa, and this special bird has helped to turn Michael’s life around.

Michael is from the local community and is a self-taught and knowledgeable bird-watcher. Realising his potential, BirdLife South Africa (BirdLife Partner) recruited him to their Avi-Career Programme which is creating a new generation of conservationists in some of the countries poorest areas.

BirdLife South Africa realise that young men and women - especially from rural communities - could offer a significant contribution to the conservation of many of South Africa’s Important Bird Areas (IBAs).

“People that previously relied on sensitive natural areas for food, firewood and building materials now rely on the survival of birds and their habitats for their income thanks to our Avi-Career Programme”, said Brenden Plenaar - Project Manager of the Kruger to Canyons Birding Route.

The Avi-Career Programme focuses on training local people as bird guides; providing them with knowledge in bird identification, leading a group and first aid. The training is very practical and involves a period of mentoring with BirdLife South Africa staff or with experienced birders from one of their affiliated Bird Clubs.

When they are ready, a trainee bird guide then has to undertake a two day assessment to test their skills. “To successfully complete the training course, trainees have to take their assessor on a guided birding walk to prove their competency as a bird guide”, said Brenden.

Since completing his training Michael has been pointing out the Taita Falcons to passing tourists, and has been able to create a sustainable livelihood for himself thanks to BirdLife
South Africa. "I enjoy my work so much, I do not want to work anywhere else”, Michael confirmed.

By training bird guides, links are forged between local people and their biodiversity. The more their livelihoods depend upon birds, the greater their need to protect it. Often bird guides become proactive ambassadors for conservation within their local communities.

To support their bird guides, BirdLife South Africa’s Avi-tourism division also focuses on promoting the wealth of over 800 bird species found in their country to attract more tourists.

“South Africa has yet to realise its full potential when it comes to birding tourism”, said Martin Taylor – BirdLife South Africa’s Avitourism division manager. According to 2009 figures from the Department of Trade and Industry size of South Africa’s current avitourism market is between 40,000 and 80,000 tourists annually. Collectively, these avitourists spend an estimated R927m to R1.725bn on birding trips, support services and equipment annually. “Clearly avitourism plays an important role in South Africa’s growing ecotourism sector but more importantly in the livelihoods of emerging guides”, added Martin.

There are currently 102 IBAs in South Africa covering over 100,000 km²; equivalent to ca.8.3% of the land area. South Africa also has six Endemic Bird Areas, and a total of 36 Globally Threatened bird species including Rudd’s Lark Heteromirafra ruddi (Vulnerable), African Penguin Spheniscus demersus (Vulnerable), Blue Crane Grus paradisea (Vulnerable) and White-winged Flufftail Sarothrura ayresi (Endangered).

To attract tourists to their wealth of Important Bird Areas (IBA), and to provide clients for their bird guides, BirdLife South Africa set up eight birding routes across the country. Routes provide information to visiting birders on what birds there are to see in the area and the best places to see them. They also connect the tourists with local bird guides and ‘Birder Friendly’ accommodation. Important stuff if you want breakfast before 6am.

Their timing is spot on. “Birding tourism is growing at an unprecedented rate on a global level”, added Martin Taylor. “Birders are typically affluent, well educated, eco-minded and travel widely in the pursuit of their hobby. The use of community guides in the pursuit of their hobby has the potential for significant community gains whilst their support of conservation organisations bodes well for the future protection of habitats and species”.

In addition to just promoting avitourism, birding routes also have a positive impact on local communities through various community development, education and conservation initiatives. Michael and his Taita Falcons are part of the Kruger to Canyons Birding Route – an area covering three IBAs and a growing number of community driven conservation projects.

BirdLife South Africa has set up 17 Eco Schools within the Kruger to Canyons Birding Route and work with over 2,000 children each year. "We visit schools almost every day and take local children into Kruger National Park IBA twice a month”, said Brenden. "Most of the kids live within 5 km of the park and have never been inside. They love it!"

In addition to talks and trips, Eco Schools also get to work on conservation projects - like wetland clean ups - alongside the bird guides. “The children really look up to the guides. It’s really helping to create the next generation of conservationists”, added Brenden.
Experience across the Birding Route network is showing that by linking bird guides to IBAs helps to achieve BirdLife South Africa’s mission to promote the enjoyment, conservation, study and understanding of wild birds and their habitats.

At the Ntsikeni Nature Reserve IBA is home to Wattled Crane *Grus carunculatus* and Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres* (both Vulnerable) and forms part of the Southern KwaZulu-Natal Birding Route. The globally important wetland was threatened by overgrazing by wild horses and cattle. Identifying the potential of the IBA, Birding Route stakeholders came together under the guidance of BirdLife South Africa to manage the site for birds and tourism. A bird guide was trained, two birder friendly accommodations set up and a purpose-built mobile bird hide fabricated to transport tourists around the 9,200 ha site.

"It’s taken three years hard work, but the infrastructure is now ready to support tourism and provide a safe future for Ntsikeni’s local people and its wildlife”, said Martin Taylor.

BirdLife South Africa’s vision is to develop the country into the world’s leading birding destination for the benefit of birds, their habitats and communities through responsible avitourism. They’ve made great steps in turning round the lives of people like Michael Kumako whilst also conserving their ecological wealth. “I want my children to be bird guides”, said Michael as we said goodbye. With BirdLife South Africa’s Avitourism division behind them, their future looks bright.

The Kruger to Canyons Birding Route is a project supported by the Palabora Mining Company/Palabora Foundation, Rio Tinto and the European Union.
Annex 2: Selected Images

High res available on CD – Copyright Nick Askew / BirdLife International

SABAP Survey work
Kruger to Canyons Birding Route and Bird Guide
Annex 3 - BirdLife South Africa’s constitution - Revised March 2006

1. NAME
The name of the association shall be "BirdLife South Africa" (referred to as the Organisation).

2. LEGAL STATUS
The Organisation shall have legal personality distinct from its members who shall have no right to the assets of the Organisation or any of its Branches. The liability of members shall be limited to the amount of the unpaid subscriptions, if any, owing to the Organisation or any of its Branches.

3. OBJECTIVES
The mission of the Organisation is to promote the enjoyment, understanding, study and conservation of birds and their environments.

4. PUBLIC BENEFIT ORGANISATION – SPECIAL CONDITIONS
The Organisation shall comply with the following requirements of the Commissioner: SARS or any additional requirements or amendments hereafter imposed.

4.1 The sole object of the Organisation is to carry on one or more public benefit activity as defined in Section 30(1) of the Act, in a non-profit manner.

4.2 Such public benefit activity/activities (or substantially the whole thereof) shall be carried out in the Republic.

4.3 At least three of the persons who accept fiduciary responsibility for the Organisation shall not be connected persons, as defined in the Act.

4.4 No funds will be distributed to any person (other than in the course of undertaking any public benefit activity).

4.5 The funds of the Organisation shall be used solely for the objects for which it was established, or shall be invested with registered financial institutions as defined in Section 1 of the Financial Services Board Act 1990 (Act No 97 of 1990) or in securities listed on a stock exchange as defined in the Stock Exchanges Control Act 1985 (Act No 1 of 1985).

4.6 The Organisation shall not carry on any business undertaking or trading activity unless specifically permitted in terms of Section 30 (3)(b)(iv) of the Act.

4.7 On dissolution of the Organisation the remaining assets shall be transferred to:

4.7.1 any similar public benefit organisation which has been approved in terms of Section 30 of the Act.

4.7.2 any institution, board or body which is exempt from the payment of income tax in terms of Section 10(1)(cA)(i) of the Act, which has as its sole or principal object the carrying on of any public benefit activity, or

4.7.3 any department of State or administration in the national or provincial or local sphere of government in the Republic contemplated in Section 10(1)(a) or (b) of the Act.

4.8 No donation will be accepted which is revocable at the instance of the donor for reasons other than a material failure to confirm to the designated purposes and conditions of such donation, including misrepresentation with regard to the tax deductibility thereof in terms of Section 18A : Provided that a donor may not impose any conditions which could enable such donor or any connected person in relation to such donor to derive some direct or indirect benefit from the application of such donation.

4.9 A copy of all amendments to the constitution of the Organisation shall be submitted to the Commissioner for the South African Revenue Service.

4.10 No remuneration will be paid to any employee, office bearer, member or other person which is excessive having regard to what is generally considered reasonable in the sector and in relation to the service rendered.

4.11 The Organisation shall submit the required Income Tax Returns together with the relevant supporting documents.

4.12 In the case that the Organisation provides funds to any association of persons contemplated in paragraph (b) (iii) of the definition of “public benefit activity”, reasonable
steps will be taken to ensure that the funds are utilised for the purpose for which it has been provided.

4.13 The Organisation shall within such period as the Commissioner may determine, register in terms of Section 13(5) of the Non-profit Organisations Act, 1997 (Act No.71 of 1997), and comply with any other requirements imposed in terms of that Act.

4.14 Where the Organisation has been approved in terms of Section 18A of the Act, 75% of the funds received by or accrued to the organisation by way of donations which qualify for a deduction, will be distributed (or an obligation will be incurred to so distribute) within twelve months from the financial year end during which such donations were received.

5. POWERS
Subject to the Special Conditions in paragraph 4, the Organisation may do all things required to achieve the objectives of the Organisation and without limiting its general powers, the Organisation may operate in South Africa and through like minded organisations elsewhere and may:
5.1 purchase, acquire, invest in, lease and let out, improve, pledge, mortgage and alienate movable or immovable property; or rights
5.2 lend and borrow money, with or without security, and on such terms of interest, if any
5.3 employ, pay and indemnify agents, trustees and advisers of every description, and establish trusts, corporations and associations;
5.4 engage in legal proceedings of every description and sue or be sued in its own name;
5.5 open and operate on accounts at reputable banks and other financial institutions under the signatures of not fewer than two persons authorised thereto by council,
5.6 engage in educational activities relating to ornithology and the environment;
5.7 co-operate with and assist other environmental and educational organisations;
5.8 authorise the formation of Branches;

6. MEMBERS
6.1 The members of the Organisation shall be the persons or organisations admitted to membership in defined categories with rates of subscriptions determined by Council, except for: Honorary Life members who shall be natural persons not more than 20 in number who in the opinion of the Council, endorsed by a resolution passed at an Annual General Meeting, have made a significant contribution towards the work of the Organisation
6.2 All members or organisations shall have a single vote each.
6.3 Application for Membership
6.3.1. Application for membership may be submitted to a Branch committee and shall be forwarded to Council or may be submitted direct.
6.3.2. A person applying for or accepting membership shall be deemed to have agreed to be bound by the constitution and amendments thereto. A copy of the constitution shall be available for inspection at the offices of the Organisation and a copy shall be made available to the member on request.
6.4 Register of Members A register of members reflecting their names, addresses and category of membership shall be maintained by the Organisation. The contents of the register shall be deemed to be correct and members shall be responsible for ensuring that the information on the register is correct.
6.5 Membership Fees Council shall from time to time prescribe the membership fees payable by any category of members or class within a category and the time and manner of payment.
6.6 Membership Categories. The Council will from time to time determine the different membership categories and membership benefits.
7. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP
Membership shall terminate when:
7.1 a member has not paid the annual subscription within two months after due date, provided that the organisation shall have the right to re-instate membership on such terms as it may impose.
7.2 the Secretariat receives written notice of resignation from a member;
7.3 a member acts in a manner inimical to any of the objectives of the Organisation as determined by Council and after due and proper enquiry, is expelled.

8. COUNCIL
8.1 The Council shall comprise the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer who shall be elected at each Annual General Meeting and hold office until the next when they shall be eligible for re-election provided that the Chairman shall hold office for a maximum consecutive period of four years.
8.2 Proposed, seconded and accepted nominations shall be lodged prior to the meeting.
8.3 Forthwith after the Meeting the Council shall co-opt as full members the following persons who shall hold office until the next meeting:
8.3.1 one representative for each of at least six regional groupings of Branches as agreed by Council. This representative will preferably be elected by the Chairmen of each regional grouping. acting on the instructions of the branches in the regional grouping. Branches having
10 to 200 members shall be allocated 1 vote. Branches having 201 to 400 members shall be allocated 2 votes. For each additional 200 members above the 400, a branch shall be allocated a further vote.
8.3.2 one representative to represent each of the following three positions: the Director of the Percy Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology; the Director of the Avian Demography Unit and the Honorary Editor of Ostrich.
8.3.3 any other person or persons for the particular expertise that may be brought to the Organisation
8.4 Should the office of any elected or co-opted member become vacant, Council shall appoint another person to fill the relevant office until the next meeting.
8.5 The elected and co-opted members shall appoint a Director of the Organisation for such period as they shall determine and replace the Director when necessary. The Director shall be an ex-officio member of Council.
8.6 Members shall appoint an Honorary President of the Organisation for three years at the AGM and fill any vacancy for the residual period. The President shall be an ex-officio member of Council.
8.7 Members of Council shall be members of the Organisation in good standing and shall cease to hold office should they cease to be a member.

9. MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL
Council shall meet not less than twice a year and shall determine its own procedures provided that:
9.1 unless the meeting is urgent, the Director shall give Council members not fewer than 10 days notice of the agenda of the meeting;
9.2 the quorum for the meeting shall be 50% of the members of Council;
9.3 Council shall elect a member to act as Chairman in the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman;
9.4 the Chairman of the meeting shall have a casting and a deliberative vote.
9.5 the President shall not have the right to vote.

10. POWERS AND DUTIES OF COUNCIL
The Council shall manage the affairs of the Organisation and do whatever it considers appropriate to achieve the objectives of the Organisation.

In particular, Council:

10.1 may appoint committees and determine their terms of reference and composition and the conditions under which they shall operate;
10.2 may delegate any of its functions;
10.3 shall keep full and proper records of its affairs;
10.4 shall determine regional groupings of the branches.

11. GENERAL MEETINGS OF MEMBERS

11.1 Council shall each year convene an Annual General Meeting within 6 months of the end of the financial year. The business of the Annual General Meeting shall include:
- confirmation of the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting and any General Meetings
- consideration and adoption of the annual report of the Director;
- consideration and adoption of the annual report of the Chairman;
- consideration and adoption of the audited annual financial statements;
- election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and President (when necessary)
- appointment of the auditor;
- consideration of resolutions submitted by a member or a Branch, notice of which has been submitted to the Director not fewer than 2 months before the meeting;
- any other business allowed by the Chairman.

11.2 The financial year of the Organisation shall be the 12 month period preceding 31 December in each year.

11.3 Notice of any General Meeting of members shall be posted to members not fewer than 4 weeks before the meeting and shall be deemed to have been received if posted to the address of the member as recorded in the register.

11.4 The quorum for a meeting shall be 30 members present and entitled to vote.

11.5 If insufficient members are present to constitute a quorum a meeting may be adjourned for not more than 60 days and notice of the adjourned meeting shall be despatched to all members within 14 days after the original meeting.

11.6. If within 30 minutes of the time fixed for the adjourned meeting insufficient members are present to constitute a quorum, the adjourned meeting shall be deemed to form the requisite quorum.

11.7. The Secretary shall on receipt of a requisition signed by 100 members or 10% of the membership whichever be the lesser, convene a General Meeting. A General Meeting convened in this manner shall be subject to the provisions of this constitution relating to General Meeting, mutatis mutandis.

11.8 Proxy forms and nomination forms for the posts of Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and President (when necessary) shall be included with the Notice of the Annual General Meeting.

12. VOTING

12.1 Unless otherwise provided in this constitution, the vote of the majority of those members present and entitled to vote at any meeting shall prevail. Voting shall be by show of hands unless a ballot is demanded by a majority of those present in person or by proxy who are entitled to vote.

12.2 The Chairman presiding at the meeting shall have a deliberative vote and a casting vote.

12.3 A person entitled to vote may appoint another member for one meeting as his proxy, to represent him and to vote. This proxy shall be delivered in writing to the Chairman before a Meeting. The proxy form shall be signed by the member and shall specify the date of the meeting and the name of the proxy.
13. BRANCHES
13.1 Branches of the Organisation may be established with the written approval of Council subject to the terms and conditions set out below
13.1.1 A Branch shall be an independent legal entity
13.1.2 A Branch constitution shall adhere to the guidelines issued by the Organisation and its name together with any amendments shall be approved by the Organisation.
13.1.3 The Branch shall be a member of the Organisation.
13.1.4 Members of a branch shall at all times be members of the Organisation.
13.1.5 The Branch shall record in its correspondence and all publications the fact that it is "A Branch of BirdLife South Africa". A Branch which ceases to be a member shall be prohibited from using the name "BirdLife" in any way.
13.1.6 The financial year end of the branch shall be on the 31st December each year.
13.1.7 Within 4 months of the end of the financial year a branch shall submit to the Organisation a copy of the annual financial statements and its chairman's report.
13.1.8 A Branch may not establish a sub-branch without the written approval of the Organisation.
13.1.9 A branch shall be entitled to levy its own members for enrolment fees, subscriptions and charges for publications.
13.1.10 In the event of a breach of any of the above terms and conditions, after due and proper enquiry the Organisation shall endeavour to resolve such breach with the Branch but shall be entitled to suspend or de-register the Branch in its entire discretion.

14. AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION / DISSOLUTION.
The constitution may be amended or the Organisation may be dissolved by a resolution passed by two-thirds of the members present in person or by proxy at a General Meeting of members, provided that the notice of the meeting shall have set out the proposed amendments and the reasons therefore or the proposed dissolution and the reasons therefore as the case may be. The provisions of paragraph 4.7 shall apply in the case of dissolution.
Annex 4 - BirdLife South Africa’s Bird Club constitution - Revised March 2006

1. **NAME**
The name of the association is **STATE BRANCH NAME**, a branch of BIRDLIFE SOUTH AFRICA (hereafter called “BLSA” and the branch hereafter called “the Branch”).

2. **STATUS AND AFFILIATION**
   2.1 The Branch is a voluntary association being an independent legal entity with capacity, **inter alia**, to own immovable property and movable property and to sue and be sued.
   2.2 The Branch shall be a member of and affiliated to BLSA and all correspondence, invoices, communications and publications of the Branch shall record that it is “A Branch of BLSA”. Should it cease to be a member of BLSA for any reason, then its affiliation shall cease and it shall not be entitled to record the said branch status.
   2.3 The Branch shall not directly or indirectly establish a sub-branch without the prior written consent of BLSA.
   2.4 The financial year of the Branch shall coincide with BLSA.

3. **AREA OF ACTIVITIES**
The Branch shall be located in the town or district referred to in the preamble for the purposes of serving the interests and activities of its members in that area.

4. **OBJECTIVES**
The objectives of the Branch shall be identical to those in the BLSA Constitution, being Appendix I hereto.

5. **PUBLIC BENEFIT ORGANISATION – SPECIAL CONDITIONS**
In the event that the Branch desires to register as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) in order to obtain taxation exemptions, it shall be obliged to adhere to the special conditions imposed by the Commissioner SARS in the BLSA constitution, Appendix I hereto.

6. **POWERS**
The powers of the Branch shall be identical to those in the BLSA Constitution, Appendix I hereto, save that it shall not have the power to form branches or sub-branches without the prior written consent of BLSA.

7. **MEMBERS**
   7.1 No person or organisation shall be admitted as a member of the Branch until first admitted as a member of BLSA. Any member who subsequently ceases to be a member of BLSA for any reason, shall automatically cease to be a member of the Branch.
   7.2 Save for para 7.1 the provisions relating to membership shall be identical to those in the BLSA Constitution, Appendix I hereto. Any reference to “Council” shall be deemed to refer to the “Committee” of the Branch and any reference to the “Organisation” shall be deemed to refer to the “Branch”. Applications for membership shall be submitted to the Branch and also forwarded by the Branch to BLSA if the Applicant is not already a member of BLSA. In particular, a Branch may determine its own membership fees.

8. **TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**
The provisions relating to termination of branch membership shall be identical to those in the BLSA Constitution, Appendix I hereto. Again, reference to “Council” shall be deemed to refer to the “Committee” and reference to the “Organisation” shall be deemed to refer to the “Branch”.
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9. **COMMITTEE**
9.1 The affairs of the Branch shall be managed by a Committee comprised of at least FIVE (5) elected members.
9.2 The Committee shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Nominations shall preferably be in writing and a nominee shall consent in writing or in person at the meeting.
9.3 The Committee shall be entitled to co-opt additional members.
9.4 Committee members, including co-opted members, shall hold office until the following AGM when they shall retire but be eligible for reelection. Subject to agreement and approval at the Branch AGM a member may hold office as a Committee member for more than FOUR (4) consecutive years. (Amendment 2007 AGM)
9.5 At its first meeting after election, the members of the Committee shall elect:
9.5.1 a Chairman;
9.5.2 a Vice-Chairman;
9.5.3 a Secretary;
9.5.4 a Treasurer.
9.6 The Committee shall meet so often as is necessary. The quorum for a meeting shall be at least FIFTY PER CENT (50%) of the Committee members.

10. **POWERS AND DUTIES OF COMMITTEE**
10.1 The powers and duties of the Committee shall be identical with those of the Council in the BLSA Constitution, Appendix I hereto, save that the Committee shall not determine regional groupings of any subbranches.
10.2 In addition to the aforesaid, the Committee shall:
10.2.1 submit a copy of its Annual Financial Statements to BLSA within FOUR (4) MONTHS of the financial year end together with a copy of the Chairman’s report;
10.2.2 conduct an audit of its financial affairs or its Annual Financial Statements when requested by BLSA and furnish a report thereon to BLSA; 
10.2.3 open banking or savings accounts or investments referred to in the Special Conditions in the BLSA Constitution, which accounts or investments shall be operated under the joint signature of the Treasurer and one other member.

11. **GENERAL MEETINGS**
11.1 The AGM shall be held no later than THREE (3) MONTHS after the close of the financial year. At least FOURTEEN (14) DAYS’ notice of the meeting shall be sent to all members.
11.2 The business of AGM shall be to:
11.2.1 read and confirm the minutes of the previous AGM and any Special General Meetings;
11.2.2 receive the Chairman’s report;
11.2.3 consider and approve the Annual Financial Statements;
11.2.4 elect the Committee for the coming year;
11.2.5 appoint an auditor if required by BLSA;
11.2.6 consider and vote upon any necessary business.
11.3 The Committee may call a Special General Meeting whenever it thinks fit and shall call a meeting when requested in writing to do so by not less than TEN (10) members of the Branch. Not less than FOURTEEN (14) DAYS’ notice of a Special General Meeting shall be given.
11.4 Voting at an AGM or Special General Meeting shall be on a show of hands unless the Chairman determines that a ballot shall be held.
11.5 The quorum at an AGM or Special General Meeting shall be TEN (10) members. Should a quorum not be attained the meeting shall stand adjourned and not less than FOURTEEN (14) DAYS’ notice shall be given to all members of the adjourned meeting at which the members present shall be deemed to constitute a quorum.
11.6 The Committee may in its discretion permit proxies to be appointed by members who are unable to attend meetings.”

12. **AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION**
12.1 No amendments to the Constitution shall be approved without the prior written consent of BLSA and the resolution of two-thirds of the members of the Branch in attendance at a Special General Meeting.
12.2 It is in the interests of each branch of BLSA to operate under a standard constitution, and it is envisaged that amendment will only occur in order to improve the internal administration of all the branches.

13. **RIGHTS AND LIABILITIES OF MEMBERS**
13.1 The Branch Members shall have no rights to any money or assets of the Branch.
13.2 The liability of Branch Members shall be limited to the amount of unpaid subscriptions.

14. **DISSOLUTION**
In the event of the Branch being dissolved, any remaining assets shall be transferred to BLSA.