

STATE OF AFRICA'S BIRDS

Indicators for our changing environment

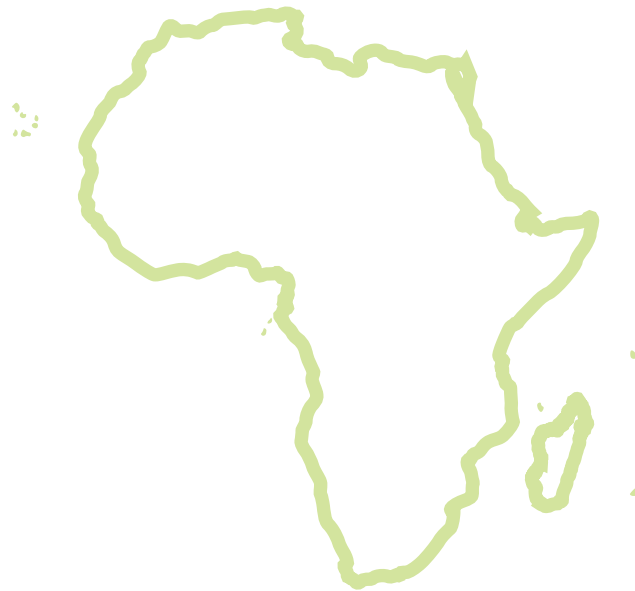


Sokoke Scops Owl.
(PHOTO: ©John Mwacharo)



STATE OF AFRICA'S BIRDS

Indicators for our changing environment





FOREWORD

Biodiversity includes animals, plants and micro-organisms, the genes within them, the ecosystems in which they live, and the interactions among them.

Birds are indicators of the environment: this means environmental changes can be detected by changes in the natural behaviour of bird species. In some parts of Africa, the presence of birds like Abdim's stork *Ciconia abdimii* is associated with rain. Raptors or flesh-eating birds are high on the food chain and tend to accumulate pollutants deposited in the environment, making them suitable indicators for monitoring environmental pollution. Also, some bird species help identify priority areas where anthropogenic activities need to be carefully managed.

The African continent's rapid development had brought with it different changes and needs. These include high demand for space, road and rail networks, electricity and industrialization, more broadly. Burgeoning human populations have led to expanding and unsustainable agriculture and other forms of land use. Across the continent, the threats to birds and biodiversity have been increasing and the environment faces a matrix of challenges due to the changes that have followed development.

Africa has a great need for infrastructure to spur development, whose role out should maximise the benefits of a rightly planned development. For example, the growing need for power and electricity to match Africa's rate of development leads to increase in electricity power lines and wind farms (inspired by green energy). However, if these are not sited properly, they can cause harm to several African and migrant bird species through collision challenges. While there are benefits of having roads, ports or windmills constructed, the location of such infrastructure should be carefully put into consideration.

Another growing concern is hunting and trapping of birds for traditional medicine, belief-based reasons (African vulture species in particular), domestic pets (for example African Grey Parrots) or game. These threats are pertinent across the continent. Poverty and inadequate appreciation of nature have also been cited as underlying challenges facing conservation in Africa. Many disenfranchised communities and the majority of the development sector are directly dependent on ecosystem services such as wood, water and arable land.

This publication intends to put the spotlight on, and emphasize the need to conserve Africa's biodiversity and ecosystem services. It demonstrates the possibilities for conserving biodiversity even in the midst of rapid development, and highlights efforts of the BirdLife Partnership in Africa to conserve biodiversity, empower people and promote sustainable development in Africa. This publication presents practical examples that convey the effects of unsustainable development, the benefits of conserving and sustaining biodiversity, and ways to achieve it.

I would like to encourage other African Governments to join hands and promote sustainable developments while conserving Africa's biodiversity and ecosystems in their respective countries. This will contribute to improved livelihoods and reduced poverty in Africa, especially in the rural communities that depend on natural resources for their survival.

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AEWA	African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement
AfDB	African Development Bank
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
AWF	African Wildlife Foundation
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEPF	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
CFA	Community Forest Associations
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
COP	Conference of Parties
EbA	Ecosystem based Adaptation
EBA	Endemic Bird Area
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GMA	Game Management Area
IBA	Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas
IWT	Illegal Wildlife Trade
KBAs	Key Biodiversity Areas
NAPs	National Adaptation Plans
NBSAPs	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
NDC	National Development Corporation
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
ONP	Obô Natural Park
QAS	Quality Assurance System
REC	Regional Economic Commissions
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
RSBP	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSG	Site Support Group
TRAFFIC	Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WBI	Wild Bird Indices
WWF	World Wildlife Fund



Fork-tailed Drangos.
(PHOTO: ©Malcolm Gladman)



INTRODUCTION: The Importance of birds and biodiversity

WHAT ARE SDGS?

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal set of goals, targets and indicators that UN member states are expected to use to frame their agendas and political policies (including environmental policies) over the next 15 years.

<https://tinyurl.com/hepclrn>

WHAT ARE AICHI TARGETS?

Aichi Targets are part of the 2011-2020 Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The targets include “to improve the status of biodiversity by safeguarding ecosystems, species and genetic diversity.”

<https://tinyurl.com/h3tc23p>

Context of conservation in Africa

Africa is rich in biodiversity. It is home to a quarter of the global biodiversity and hosts the world's largest intact mammal population. Of the 2,477 bird species in Africa, 1,400 (57%) are endemic to the continent. A network of 1,248 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) has been identified in Africa, covering a combined area of two million km², roughly seven per cent of the continent.

Because of human actions, however, much of Africa's biodiversity is under threat. As Africa's population grows, so does demand for natural resources. This has led to agricultural expansion and intensification, urban and industrial growth and infrastructure developments, resulting in unsustainable use of natural resources from both land and sea. Civil unrest may also lead to environmental destruction and loss of livelihoods. Poor consideration of policies and weak enforcement of environmental legislation further contribute to the challenge.

Africa is advancing. There is massive development taking place across the continent as a result of regional strategies, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development's (NEPAD) comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development programme and the African Development Bank's (AfDB) programme for infrastructure development. If undertaken without considering the environment, these developments could cause further damage to Africa's biodiversity and ecosystems. There is an urgent need to establish enabling policies that promote inclusive growth and sustainable development. African governments are increasingly aware of the damaging effects that poorly planned developments can have on the environment and natural resources, and some are already taking measures to mitigate these effects. Such measures include strategies that place emphasis on people benefiting from a well-developed yet healthy environment.

In 2013, during the 50th anniversary of the African Union, presidents of member States declared and implemented a strategic framework called Agenda 2063. This Agenda calls for socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years and seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development. Similarly, in 2015 at a historic UN Summit, world leaders agreed on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals came into force in January 2016, committing countries to mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring all African countries participate fully. Efforts by African Governments to achieve the SDGs should take into consideration the value and needs of biodiversity. Since the 10th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP-10) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2010, 40 African countries have revised their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). All NBSAPs are now in line with the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and have integrated the 20 Aichi biodiversity targets. However, implementation is key.

SOURCE UNEP-WCMC. 2016. *The State of Biodiversity in Africa: A mid-term review of progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets*. UNEP-WCMC, Cambridge, UK. August, O. 2 March 2013. *A hopeful continent*. *The Economist*. Retrieved from <http://econ.st/1edo1Ja>
The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) website. Retrieved from <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/>



INTRODUCTION: The Importance of birds and biodiversity

BirdLife International is partnering with other non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and government agencies to achieve its aim of conserving birds, their habitats and global diversity by working with people towards the sustainable use of Africa's natural resources. Through the four main pillars of BirdLife's strategy – Species; Sites and Habitats; Ecological Sustainability and People – the BirdLife Africa Partnership emphasizes developing positive linkages between birds, biodiversity and the livelihoods of people. In addition, BirdLife's strategy 2013-2020 supports the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, and BirdLife has been working with the CBD towards the Plan's implementation through various COPs. The BirdLife Partnership also supports the parties to the CBD to develop and implement the NBSAPs in order to attain the 20 Aichi biodiversity targets. Using birds as indicators of the environment, and BirdLife data, many African Partners have contributed to the development of their countries' NBSAPs. For example, BirdWatch Zambia (BirdLife Partner) successfully advocated inclusion of information from Zambia's 42 IBAs into the country's second NBSAP (2015-2025), implying that IBA conservation will be mainstreamed into future environmental conservation policies in the country.

SOURCE The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) retrieved from <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/zm/zm-nbsap-v2-en.pdf>



Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex*, one of the rare and localised species in Africa. (PHOTO: ©Helene Hoffman)

INTRODUCTION: The Importance of birds and biodiversity

Why we value birds

Birds inform us about the rest of the natural world, but we value them for much more than this. Over the millennia, and across all cultures, birds have given human beings inspiration, imagery and companionship.

Nowadays, birdwatching is a major economic force in many places. Birds are an important source of food for many communities, and the ecological services that birds provide to us are crucial and irreplaceable.

SOURCE Sekercioglu, C. H. 2006. Increasing awareness of avian ecological function *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 21:464-471.



White-eyed Slaty flycatcher *Melaenornis fischeri* foraging on invertebrates, possibly aphids from kale plant. (PHOTO: P.K. Ndang'ang'a)

The ecological importance of birds

Birds are important in many ways. They provide aesthetic enjoyment by adding life, sound and colour to our lives. They are a source of economic growth, providing income and an incentive for conservation through ecotourism. They have cultural significance in myths, legends, symbols, ceremonies (such as the ceremonial use of feathers), art and names. Most importantly birds have important ecological values. They control pests and disperse seeds. Sunbirds (*Nectariniidae*) and Madagascar's endemic sunbird asities (*Neodrepanis* species) pollinate plants. Vultures clean up the environment by feeding on carcasses and other waste. Honeyguides lead people to honey, thus providing them with food and a source of income. In myriad ways, intact bird-rich ecosystems result in tangible benefits to people.

SOURCE Whelan C. J., Sekercioglu C. H., Wenny D. G. 2015. Why Birds Matter: From economic ornithology to ecosystem services. *Journal of Ornithology* 156:227-238.

Birds control crop pests

Insectivorous birds help to control pest infestations in farm crops. A recent study showed a significant contribution of birds to pest control in agricultural fields in Kenya. The study revealed how birds reduce the number of aphids and thrips found on kale plants, which is an important vegetable in Kenya – more leaf damage was witnessed on the vegetables from which birds were experimentally excluded.

SOURCE Ndang'ang'a P. K., Njoroge J. B. M., Vickery J. 2013. Quantifying the contribution of birds to the control of arthropod pests on kale, *Brassica oleracea acephala*, a key crop in East African highland farmland *International Journal of Pest Management* 59 (3): 211-216.

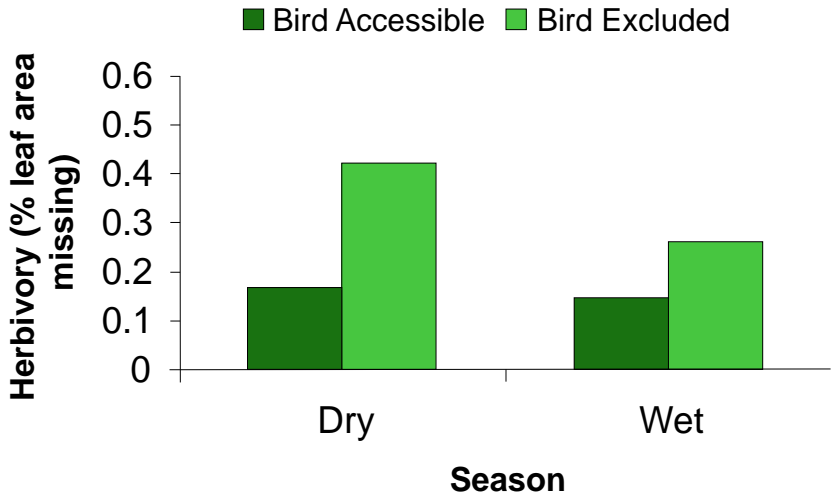


FIG 1: Comparing proportion of pest-damaged kale leaf area between bird excluded and bird accessible plants in Nyandarua, Kenya (Source: Ndang'ang'a et al., 2013)



INTRODUCTION: The Importance of birds and biodiversity

Vultures: nature's clean-up crew

Vultures are a group of scavenging birds adapted to exploit food sources that many other animals are unable to use. They are quick to detect and pick clean carcasses before disease spores can take hold, thereby helping to control outbreaks of deadly diseases such as rabies, botulism and tuberculosis. Although they may not receive the same adulation as elephants and lions, they are a vital part of Africa's ecosystems. The loss of the sanitation services they provide would have adverse ecological, public health and economic effects, with wide ramifications. They have earned the name "nature's clean-up crew" because of this essential ecological role. A study in Laikipia, Kenya, demonstrated that, in the absence of vultures, animal carcasses are taking longer to be consumed, increasing the risk of disease transmission. These remarkable birds are, in effect, a fast-acting biological recycling unit, providing waste disposal services per individual estimated to be worth around US\$11,600 over a lifetime.

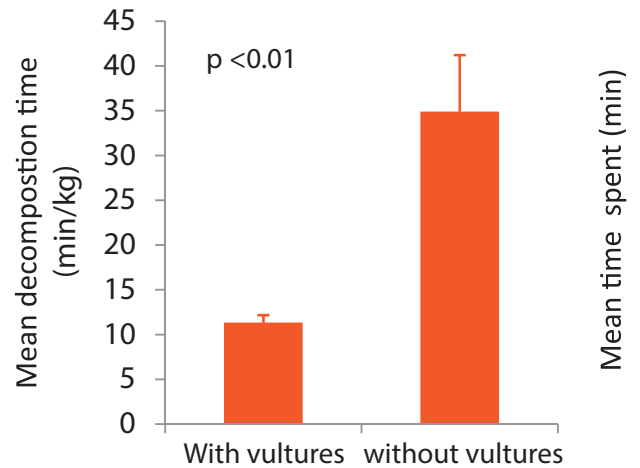


FIG 2: Effects of vulture absence on carcass decomposition time.

SOURCE Ogada, D. L., Torchin, M. E., Kinnaird, M. F., Ezenwa, V. O. 2012. Effects of vulture declines on facultative scavengers and potential implications for mammalian disease transmission. *Conservation Biology*. 26 (3): 453-460.

Ishwar, N. M. 2016. The economics of ecosystems and biodiversity - India initiative Page 6 Website retrieved from <https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz2015-en-ecosystems-biodiversity-interim-report-india.pdf>



White-backed Vulture *Cyps africanus*, Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* and Rüppell's Vulture *Cyps rueppelli* feeding on carcass. (PHOTO: ©Peter Steward)



INTRODUCTION: The Importance of birds and biodiversity

Key species help to identify key sites

Over the last four decades, the BirdLife Partnership has produced the foremost worldwide inventory of sites important for birds—the Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). These sites have been identified on land and at sea using a standardized set of criteria. The approach has been so successful that it has now been extended to cover other taxa and been adopted as a global conservation standard known as Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). Through preserving these globally significant sites, African nations can achieve their Sustainable Development Goals and meet Aichi targets.

SOURCE Dias, M., Dossa, J. & Lecoq, M. 2016. Identification of marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas along the West African coast. Methodology and results. Alcyon project report. BirdLife International. Advanced version.

Identification of critical marine hotspots in West Africa – an opportunity for marine conservation

Seabirds are among the most mobile creatures on earth. They may be born on land, but they spend their lives at sea. Some species carry out annual trips of over 100,000 km, returning year after year to breed. To thrive, they require safe places to breed, feed and rest. This is the case of West African waters – a key region for the conservation of various Arctic, European, West African and sub-Antarctic seabirds. Huge numbers congregate here to take advantage of the abundant small pelagic prey sustained by the upwelling system of the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem. Terns, skuas, gulls, shearwaters, storm-petrels and gannets abound here, sharing these waters with sea turtles and marine mammals.

Since 2014, using data collected and analyzed through the Alcyon project funded by the MAVA Foundation, BirdLife has identified the 13 most important foraging sites for seabirds as marine IBAs, covering 7,264,608 ha. This information is now being used to inform the designation of more marine protected areas and improve marine spatial planning. The Alcyon project has also provided the capacity and opportunity to advance spatial planning and manage threats, as well as proactive tools to help shape appropriate responses. By guiding West African governments on how to effectively conserve key species and sites, this approach is also aiding them to fulfil their CBD commitments and Aichi targets.

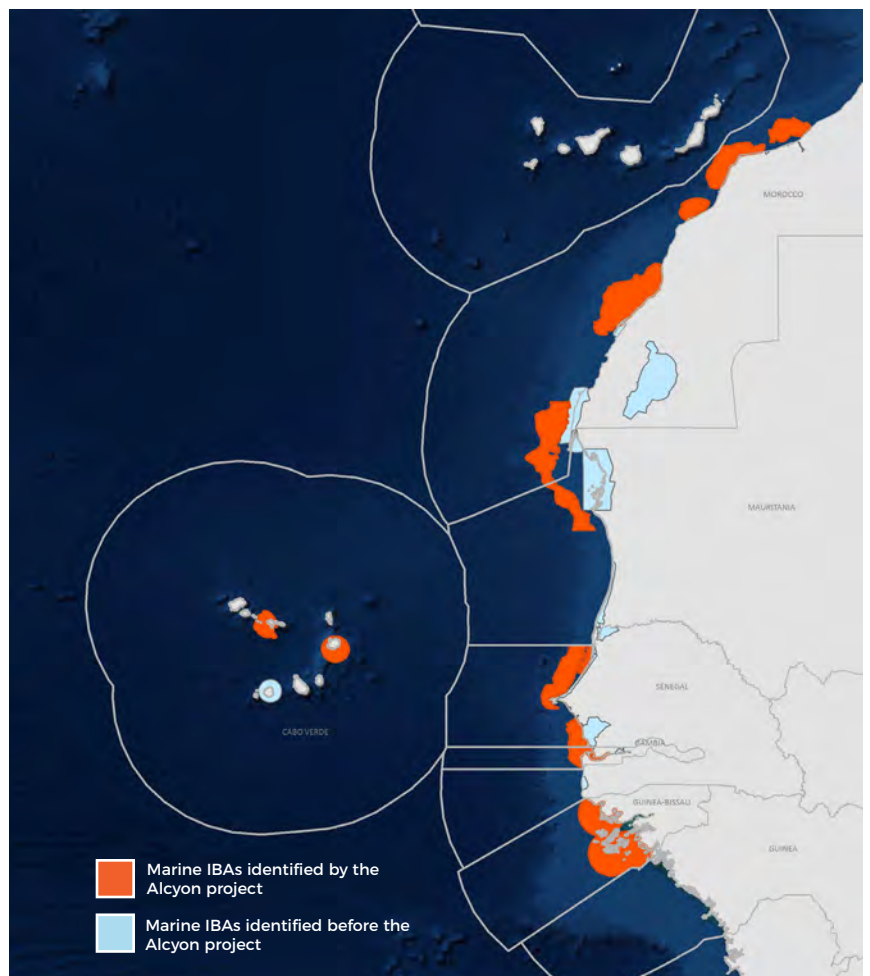


FIG 3: West African marine IBAs ©Maria Dias *et al.* 2016



INTRODUCTION: The Importance of birds and biodiversity

Key Biodiversity Areas

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are sites contributing significantly to the global survival of biodiversity. The KBA standard builds upon existing approaches to identifying areas of greatest importance for biodiversity, notably Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs), which are KBAs of international importance for birds identified by BirdLife International. In Africa, nearly 2,000 KBAs have been identified so far, of which the majority (62%) are IBAs. The new global KBA standard was only adopted by IUCN – International Union for the Conservation of Nature, which produces the Red List of threatened species – in 2017. Therefore the new set of criteria has not yet been systematically applied to all taxonomic groups and ecosystems. It is expected that as new efforts are invested in applying the standard to various forms of biodiversity, the number of KBAs will increase. To coordinate and facilitate this process, eleven international conservation organizations formed a KBA Partnership which was launched at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September 2016. The KBA Partnership, now 12 partners, will implement a KBA Programme with the stated goal of developing, maintaining and promoting an up-to-date list of KBAs.

Currently, only about half of all KBAs have at least partial protection and only one-fifth of them are fully protected. The SDGs and Aichi Targets provide a timely opportunity to secure the long-term protection of KBAs as the most important sites for maintaining global biodiversity. KBAs should also guide government and investment decisions to promote sustainable development and avoid harmful infrastructure and land use changes through adequate safeguard mechanisms, land use planning and certification schemes.

SOURCE Analysis of BirdLife data (2016). IUCN (2016). A Global Standard for the Identification of Key Biodiversity Areas Version 1.0 First edition. Gland, Switzerland Retrieved from <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/Rep-2016-005.pdf>



Nearly 2,000 KBAs have been identified in Africa so far. (PHOTO: ©BirdLife International)

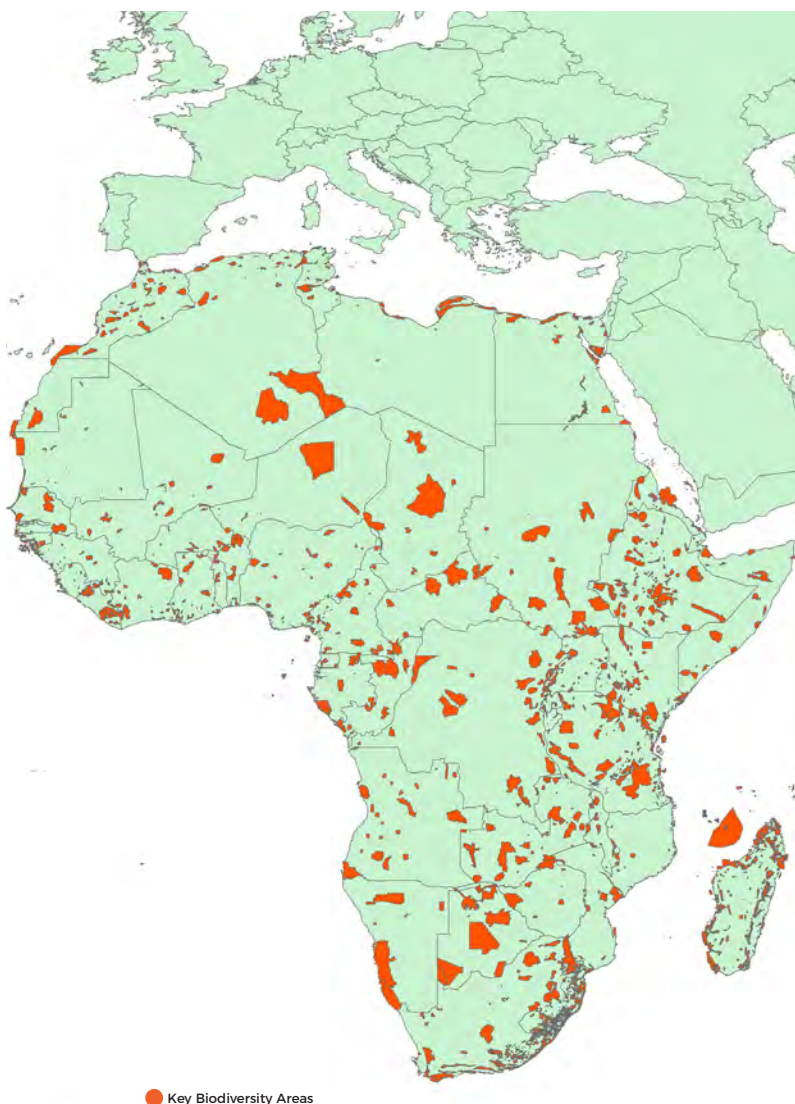


FIG 4: Key Biodiversity Areas in Africa



STATE: What we know about the changing state of birds

Many bird species are close to extinction

It's a race against time. Once, vultures were an integral part of the savannah landscape and the predator-prey food chain; now they are fighting for their lives. Once, Grey Parrots were counted in the thousands at their roosts in the forest; now there are only a handful.

Many bird species are still close to extinction

BirdLife International is the Red List Authority for birds and classifies the extinction risk of all the world's birds using the criteria and categories of the IUCN Red List. In 2017, BirdLife also completed a taxonomic review of birds that distinguished 11,122 species worldwide, a quarter of which (2,477) are found in Africa. The 2017 assessment concluded that 276 of the species in Africa are globally threatened with extinction, because they have small and/or declining populations and/or ranges. Of these, 29 species are considered Critically Endangered, meaning that they face an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

Amongst the bird groups represented by high numbers and/or proportions of globally threatened species in Africa are vultures, albatrosses, cranes, picathartes (rockfowl), cuckoo-shrikes, white-eyes and finches, as well as two bird families endemic to Madagascar, the mesites and ground-rollers.



White-breasted Mesite endemic to Madagascar. (PHOTO: ©Ken Behrens)

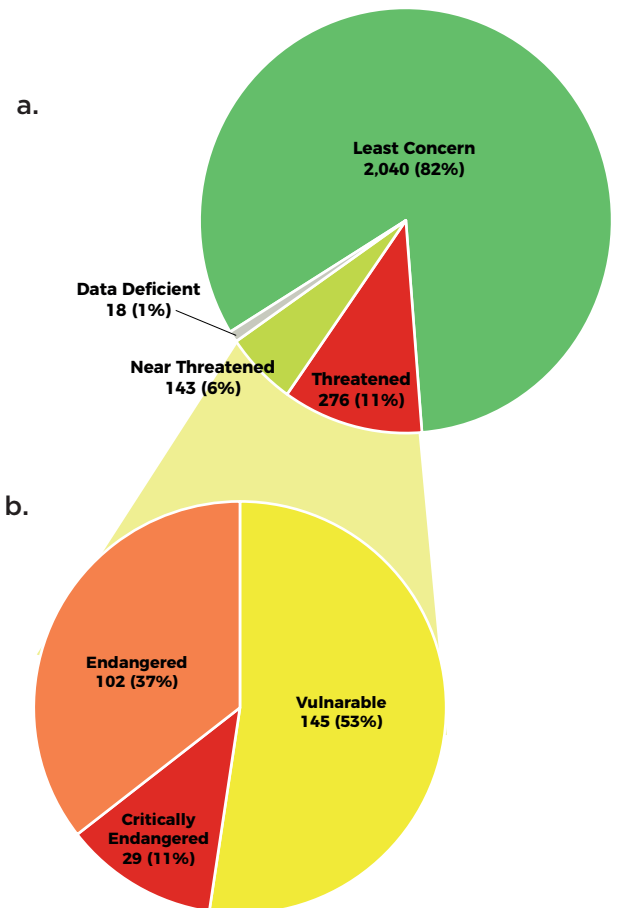


FIG 5: IUCN Red List status for (a) all birds in Africa, (b) globally threatened birds in Africa.

SOURCE Analysis of BirdLife's data (2016).



STATE: What we know about the changing state of birds

More bird species are becoming threatened

Vulture declines in Africa

Today, Africa's vultures are disappearing at a devastating rate. Assessment of vulture declines over 30 years showed that populations of seven African vulture species have fallen by 80-97% (over 92% in five species) in the last three generations. The need for action to reverse the decline of Africa's vultures is urgent. The ecological effects are already being felt today across the continent. In the Masai Mara National Reserve, Kenya, vulture numbers have plummeted by over 60% in just a couple of decades; and in parts of West Africa, vulture populations have declined by over 97% outside protected areas.

Four African vulture species - Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*, White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*, Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppelli* and White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis* - were uplisted to Critically Endangered in the 2015 IUCN Red List, indicating that if no immediate action is taken, they may become extinct within our lifetime.

SPECIES	2017 IUCN RED LIST CATEGORY
White-headed Vulture <i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>	Critically Endangered
Hooded Vulture <i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	Critically Endangered
White-backed Vulture <i>Gyps africanus</i>	Critically Endangered
Rüppell's Vulture <i>Gyps rueppelli</i>	Critically Endangered
Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Endangered
Cape Vulture <i>Gyps coprotheres</i>	Endangered
Lappet-faced Vulture <i>Torgos tracheliotos</i>	Endangered
Bearded Vulture <i>Cypaetus barbatus</i>	Near Threatened
Cinereous Vulture <i>Aegypius monachus</i>	Near Threatened
Griffon Vulture <i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Least Concern
Palm-nut Vulture <i>Cypohierax angolensis</i>	Least Concern

Fig 6. Africa's Vultures and their IUCN Red List status

SOURCE Africa's Vultures and their IUCN Red List status.



Site of poisoned vultures and elephant carcass
(PHOTO: ©Hugo van der Westhuizen)



White-backed Vultures eating a dead wildebeest.
(PHOTO: ©Magnus Kjaergaard)



White-headed Vulture, one of the species uplisted to Critically Endangered. (PHOTO: ©Klaus Rudloff)



STATE: What we know about the changing state of birds

Grey Parrots decline across Africa

The Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* is one of the most popular avian pets. Unfortunately, the excessively high demand for this species by the cage-bird trade means that it is now disappearing fast in the wild. According to a study involving BirdLife scientists, in the last two decades Ghana has lost 90-99% of its Grey Parrots. They noted the near-total loss of the major roosts in Ghana previously known in 1992. There was almost a tenfold reduction in the rate of birds observed from the 1990s to 2014, and 96% of almost a thousand residents interviewed during the study perceived a similar decline. Dedicated searching, including visits to roosts that held as many as 1,200 individuals 20 years ago, yielded just a handful of Grey Parrot sightings.

The situation for Grey Parrot is not only grim in Ghana, but in most of the West African region. The problems the species faces seem to be different in each country. It is faring better in the Congo Basin, but with thousands of birds trapped annually in the region, the Grey Parrot's presence could eventually fade there too. Already, the large flocks that previously occurred around DR Congo's capital, Kinshasa, are now reportedly gone. In 2016, BirdLife uplisted the species to Endangered on the IUCN Red List, and it was also added to CITES Appendix I, meaning that all international trade of wild caught birds should cease.

SOURCE Annorbah, N. N. D., Collar, N., Marsden, S. J. 2016. Trade and habitat change virtually eliminate the Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* from Ghana *Ibis* 158: 82-91



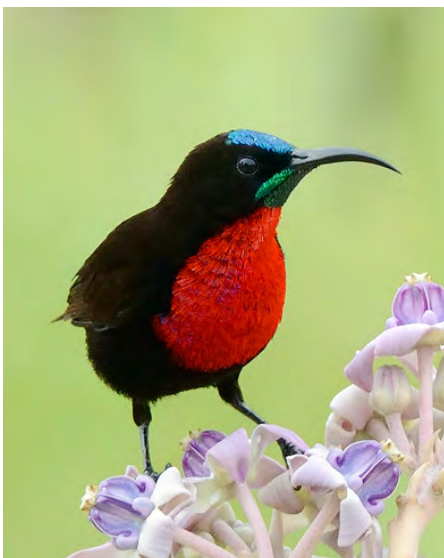
Wild-caught African Grey Parrots in a cage. (PHOTO: ©Lwira Sanctuary)



STATE: What we know about the changing state of birds

Common bird trends in Africa

A few years ago, scientists were surprised to find catastrophic declines in some birds considered "common" in Europe and America. Now scientists and conservationists are keeping track of the populations of common birds in Africa, too.



Scarlet-chested Sunbird, one of the most widespread birds in Uganda. (PHOTO: ©Riaan Marais)

State of common and widespread birds in Botswana and Uganda

Over the last decade, BirdLife has established systematic schemes to monitor populations of common bird species in three African countries: Botswana, Uganda and Kenya. Support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, BirdLife in the UK) has helped Partners in all three countries to involve hundreds of people in counting wild birds, generating data that have been used to produce the first Wild Bird Indices (WBIs) for Africa. The provisional WBIs for Botswana (2010 to 2015) show a strong increase, with good increases in generalists, grassland, savanna and migrant species. WBIs for Uganda (2009 to 2015) show a small decrease, with moderate increases in farm and grassland species and moderate declines in forest species. Indices for Kenya, where monitoring started later, will become available in 2018.

Challenges encountered included recruiting, training and retaining survey volunteers, and securing long-term funding. However, with technical support and modest investment (~US\$30,000 per scheme per year), meaningful biodiversity indicators can be generated in African countries. Sustained resourcing for the existing schemes, and replication of this approach across other parts of Africa and other regions, would represent a cost-effective investment in improving understanding of biodiversity trends, and in measuring progress towards national, regional and global environmental targets, which can be used to inform environmental decision-making.

SOURCE Wotton, S. R., Eaton, M. A., Sheehan, D., Munyekenye, F. B., Burfield, I. J., Butchart, S. H. M., Moleofi, K., Nalwanga-Wabwire, D., Ndang'ang'a, P. K., Pomeroy, D., Senyatso, K. J. and Gregory, R. D. 2017. Developing biodiversity indicators for African birds. *Oryx* doi.org/10.1017/S0030605317001181

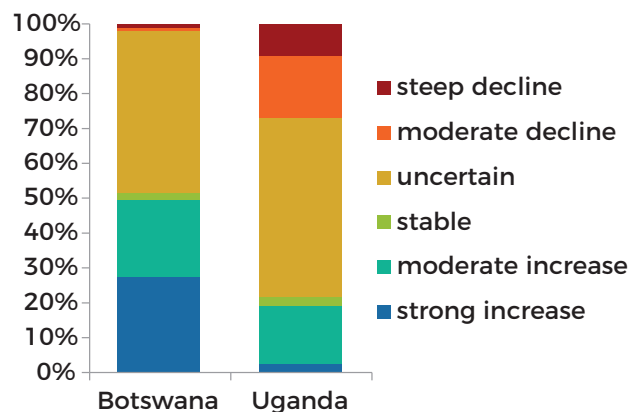
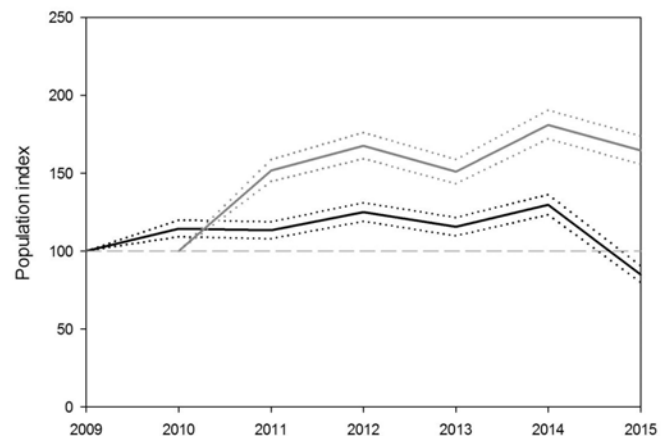


FIGURE 7: Provisional trends of wild bird populations in Botswana (grey line) and Uganda (black line) shown using Wild Bird Population Indices (dotted lines show 95% confidence limits of the estimates). For Botswana and Uganda, 95 and 78 species respectively were used in the analysis. For each of the countries, the proportions of the number of species facing different trends are also shown in the bar chart. Trend indices are generated using computer software known as TRIM (Trends and Indicated for Monitoring data) **SOURCE:** (Wotton *et al.*, 2017).



STATE: What we know about the changing state of birds

Many IBAs are in an unfavourable state

Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) in Africa are under severe pressure of imminent damaging developments and human activities. More than half lack protection status.

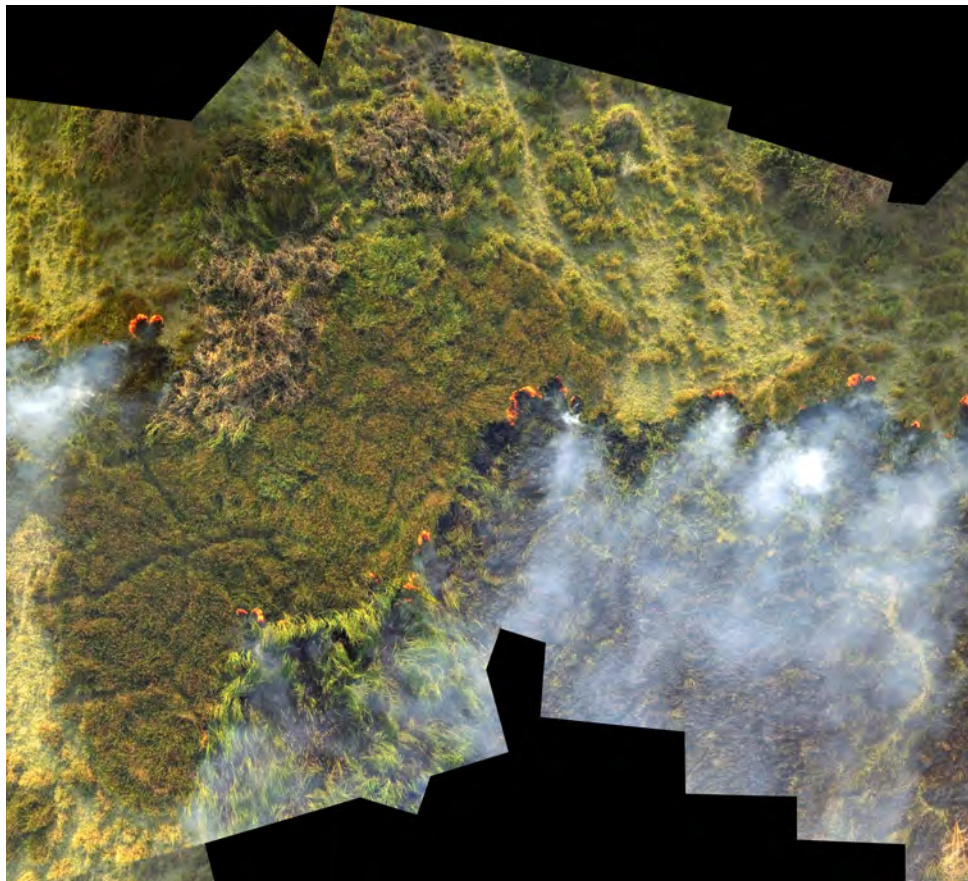
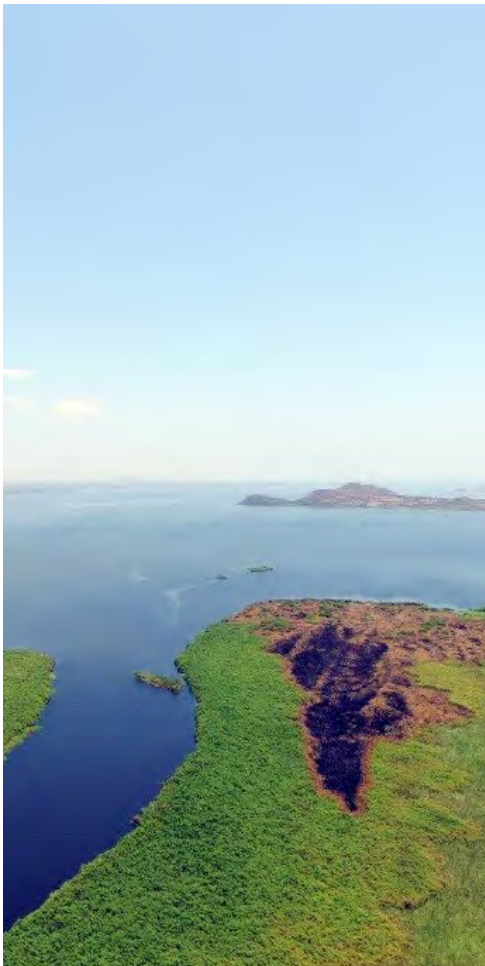
The smoking tears of Mara Wetland

The Mara Bay and Masirori Swamp is an IBA located on the lower part of the Mara River basin in Tanzania. The Mara River basin is recognized as a World Heritage Site because of the annual wildebeest migration. Mara Bay supports globally significant populations of Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* (categorized as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List), and migratory birds, mainly White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, vast papyrus swamps, as well as many other plants and animals, and provides essential ecosystem services, including food and water supply. It also serves as a source of income to the local people.

Faced with rising socio-economic challenges and the need to earn a living, communities around the IBA have turned to the local natural resources. Fire has become a tool for hunting and to access open water. The fires have massively destroyed the wetland's biodiversity. There has been a steep decline in populations of papyrus-endemic passerine birds, bird nesting areas and fish nurseries. Sadly, people have died in the wetland in the course of burning.

Measures are underway through BirdLife International's project *Sustainable use of critical wetlands in Lake Victoria basin* - to create awareness and train local communities on sustainable use of critical wetlands in the Lake Victoria basin. Through local conservation groups such as South and North Mara Water Users Association, papyrus weaving groups have been formed to provide knowledge on sustainable harvesting of papyrus and skills in different methods of making papyrus crafts. The papyrus craft business acts as a livelihood support initiative to the community and will promote the sustainable use of the Mara wetlands.

Observed smoke from burning papyrus in Mara wetland.
(PHOTO: ©Paolo Paron)



Mara river mouth before Lake Victoria. (PHOTO: ©Paolo Paron)



STATE: What we know about the changing state of birds

Irreplaceable Cross River National Park

Cross River National Park is a large lowland and submontane rainforest in south-east Nigeria which is contiguous with Cameroon's Korup National Park. One of Nigeria's most diverse sites, it holds over 350 bird species including the Vulnerable Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* and Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*. Hence its recognition by BirdLife as an IBA. It holds no less than 18 primates species, including the critically endangered Lowland Gorilla *Gorilla gorilla*.

The National Park is threatened by plans to construct the Cross River super highway. Conservationists are concerned that the highway which, according to the current design, will pass through the heart of the pristine Ekuri rainforest, is likely to attract farming, logging and hunting on a massive scale. This will destroy the area's extraordinary biodiversity and affect surrounding communities whose livelihoods are dependent on the ecosystem services the forest provides.

The construction, which started without an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), was opposed by communities and conservation organizations. The Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF, BirdLife Partner) and other national and international NGOs, sent a protest letter to the Nigerian president, Mohammmadu Buhari, which led to the suspension of the construction.

An EIA and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) were developed by a consultant for the Cross River state government. These were found to be unsatisfactory and inaccurate. For example, some bird species were listed as reptiles or mammals. Mammals not found in Africa were listed as resident species. The report also claimed that international conservation NGOs such as BirdLife and Fauna and Flora International were consulted during report development, a claim they refuted. A panel set by the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Environment rejected both documents. The documents were revised but errors were still found in 2017 in the revised documents. The Cross River State government and the consultant agreed to rewrite both reports, do a professional job and have wider consultation with all stakeholders including the affected communities. Meanwhile the call by NCF, BirdLife and other civil society organizations for the state government to relocate the super highway to avoid damaging Cross River National Park continues.



Grey-necked Picathartes found in Cross River National Park. (PHOTO: ©A.P. Leventis)



The rare Cross River gorilla. (PHOTO: ©Pixabay)



PRESSURE: Why birds are declining

Human actions are putting pressure on species, sites and habitats

Many bird species are still close to extinction

As human activities expand across the globe, natural habitats are reduced and fragmented. Food production – agriculture, fishing and ranching – becomes more and more intensive, putting immense pressure on bird species that are uniquely adapted to their particular habitat. Economic development is “fast-tracked” without considering the environment, thus fragmenting unique habitats and causing unintended damage through pollution and electrocution.



FIG 8: Main threats to globally threatened birds in Africa

SOURCE Analysis of BirdLife's data (2017).



Wildlife poisoning

Vulture poisoning in Africa

Africa's vultures find themselves threatened by a complex web of threats. These include direct and indirect poisoning, habitat degradation, persecution for belief-based use of their body parts, and electrocutions and collisions caused by poorly planned powerlines and wind farms. Poisoning accounts for over 60% of recorded vulture deaths in Africa. A single baited cattle carcass can kill over 150 vultures, while a laced elephant carcass, left undiscovered, can kill up to 500 vultures. These incidents are related to three major factors:

- **Unintended poisoning:** As a result of human-wildlife conflict, livestock herders lace carcasses with pesticides to eliminate predators. In January 2016, on a ranch in Laikipia, north central Kenya, 32 White-backed Vultures *Gyps africanus* and Rüppell's Vultures *Gyps rueppelli* were killed through three poison-laced cattle carcasses, while in the greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier conservation area, Zimbabwe, 41 White-backed Vultures were killed through a single poisoned cattle carcass. In August 2016, 120 vultures were killed through two poison laced cattle carcasses in Botswana.



A live vulture inside a basket at a market in Osun state, Nigeria (PHOTO: ©NCF)

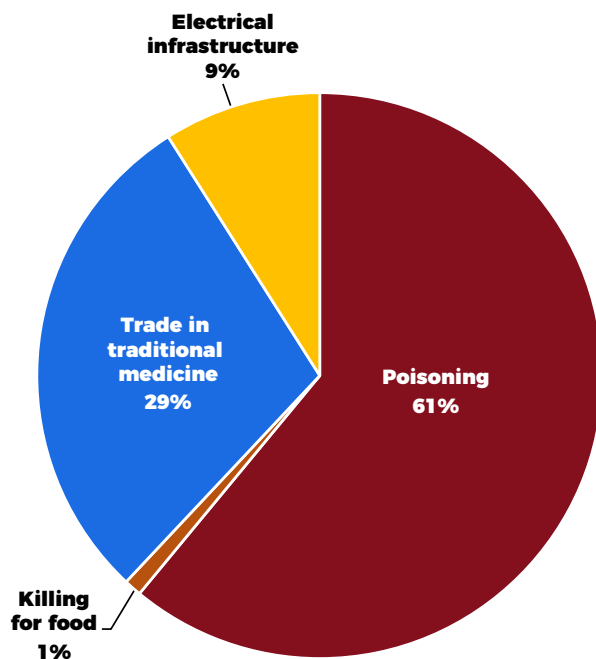


FIG 9: MAJOR THREATS TO VULTURE POPULATIONS

Four quantitative factors constitute a serious threat to African vulture populations in 26 countries. "Poisoning" includes dead vultures that are victims of intentional or unintentional poisoning. "Trade in traditional medicine" indicates the number of vultures found dead without their heads, or the number of vultures or their parts counted on sale in markets. "Killing for food" indicates the number of dead vultures or their parts counted either when traders were observed at markets or after they were arrested. "Electrical infrastructure" is the number of vultures found electrocuted below power lines or other electrical infrastructure.



- **Elephant poaching:** Because of vultures' excellent vision, they are often aware of poaching activities long before park rangers are, and poachers fear that circling vultures will give away their illegal activities. As a result, poachers have been known to deliberately lace poached elephant carcasses with poison, killing vultures almost instantly. In 2016, 105 vultures died from feeding off an elephant laced with poison in Zambia's South Luangwa valley. Similarly, in May 2017, 94 White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* died as a result of feeding off a poisoned elephant in Zimbabwe. Although the elephant tusks were removed, it is not certain if the incident resulted from accidental secondary poisoning or deliberate carcass lacing.
- **Trade in vulture body parts:** The sale of vulture parts for belief-based uses is also a significant problem. It is particularly popular in West Africa; it is estimated that within the region, 73% of carcasses were traded in Nigeria, 21% in Benin and 5% elsewhere.

Although the use of poison to kill wildlife is illegal in over 80% of African countries, regulations and law enforcement are weak, and most poisoning incidents go unreported. However, a rapid response to these incidents could make all the difference. If poisoning events are effectively managed when discovered, the deaths of vultures will likely be in the tens or less, instead of the hundreds.

SOURCE Ogada, D., Shaw, P., Beyers, R. L., Buij, R., Murn, C., Thiollay, J. M., Beale, C. M., Holdo, R. M., Pomeroy, D., Baker, N., Kruger, S. C., Botha, A., Virani, M. Z., Monadjem, A., Sinclair, A. R. E. 2015. Another continental vulture crisis: Africa's vultures collapsing towards extinction. *Conservation Letters* 0(0):1-9.

Ogada, D. L., Torchin, M. E., Kinnaird, M. F., Ezenwa, V.O. 2012 Effects of vulture declines on facultative scavengers and potential implications for mammalian disease transmission. *Conservation Biology*. 26 (3): 453-460.

Ogada, D., Botha, A., & Shaw, P. 2016. Ivory poachers and poison: Drivers of Africa's declining vulture populations. *Oryx* 50(4):593-596. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605315001209>

Buij, R., Nikolaus, G., Whytock, R., Ingram, D. J., Ogada, D. 2015. Trade of threatened vultures and other raptors for fetish and bush meat in West and Central Africa. *Oryx* 50(4):606-616. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605315000514>



Vultures poisoned near Masai Mara, Kenya. (PHOTO: ©Kasaine Sankan)



Grey Crowned-cranes poisoned in South Luangwa National Park, Zambia

Use of organophosphate in farmland was reported to kill 43 Grey Crowned-cranes *Balearica regulorum* in one of Zambia's most prestigious national parks, South Luangwa, in 2015. The park has three large salt pans surrounded by vast grasslands with fringes of Mopane woodlands; a perfect habitat for Grey Crowned-cranes. It is a prime tourist destination and is surrounded by a large Game Management Area (GMA), which supports a sizeable human population. People living in the GMA engage in a number of agricultural activities as livelihood options. Cranes, as well as other wildlife from the park, have been reported to wander into the GMA and eat from agricultural fields. Samples collected from the dead birds indicated poisoning by organophosphates. Organophosphates have so far been observed to be the most commonly used poisons; they are easily obtained from the national agricultural support programmes funded by government and the private sector. These broad spectrum pesticides are also sold cheaply over the counter in shops.

Surveys conducted in 2016 by BirdWatch Zambia (BirdLife Partner), in partnership with the International Crane Foundation, revealed that cranes were not only poisoned because they were pests in agricultural fields, but were killed for food. The fact that cranes occur in large flocks makes them extremely vulnerable to large-scale losses, as food or water hole poisoning are the preferred methods used.

Zambia has no restrictions on the use of organophosphates, despite reports submitted to the environmental management agency, documenting the impacts of these pesticides on both biodiversity and human health.

Poisoned Grey Crowned-crane.
(PHOTO: ©BirdWatch Zambia)





PRESSURE: Why birds are declining

Forest loss is one of the major threats to biodiversity

Africa has a diversity of forest types: vast open miombo woodlands, tropical forest, remnant coastal forests and mountain forest which are home to flora and fauna species. Unfortunately, the forests are under high pressure mainly from human related activities including increase in human population, agriculture, forest conversion, as well as unregulated and often illegal extraction of timber which puts wildlife, local people and economies at risk.

Agricultural practices around the forest blocks.

(PHOTO: ©Mariana Carvalho)



Forest loss and degradation affects survival of endemic bird species of São Tomé

The island of São Tomé (Gulf of Guinea, Central Africa) is home to 20 endemic bird species – birds found nowhere else in the world. Nine of São Tomé's endemic bird species are currently classified as threatened, including three which are listed as Critically Endangered: Dwarf Olive Ibis *Bostrychia bocagei*, São Tomé Fiscal *Lanius newtoni* and São Tomé Grosbeak *Neospiza concolor*. These birds are dependent on forest for their survival, mostly in the centre and south-west of the island and within the island's only protected area, the São Tomé Obô Natural Park (ONP), which, despite its legal recognition, is poorly protected.

Forests in São Tomé are under high pressure: lowland old growth and secondary forests are lost as abandoned agricultural plantations are brought back into use for the cash crop industry; and much of the secondary forest falls within a proposed buffer zone for ONP, which is under threat from large-scale agricultural development. The Dwarf Olive Ibis, for example, occurs in lowland forests with large tree stands, areas threatened by hunting, logging and deforestation. In the breeding season the ibis seems to be concentrated to the south-west of ONP, of particular concern since this region is being targeted for development, including a recently implemented 30 km² oil palm monoculture and a proposed large hydroelectric dam. The São Tomé Fiscal too is restricted to native forest.

Increasing the effective protection of ONP is key to ensuring the long-term survival of São Tomé's most threatened avifauna and native forest ecosystems.

SOURCE De Lima, R. F., Sampaio, H., Dunn, J. C., Cabinda, G., Fonseca, R., Oquiongo, G., Oquiongo, J., Samba, S., Santana, R., Soares, E., Viegas, L., Ward-Francis, A., Costa, L. T., Palmeirim, J. M. and Buchanan, G. M. 2016. Distribution and habitat associations of the critically endangered bird species of São Tomé Island (Gulf of Guinea). *Bird Conservation International* DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959270916000241>

De Lima, R. F., Sampaio, H. and Buchanan, G. 2013. Survey of critically endangered birds south of the São Tomé Obô Natural Park Unpublished report. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.

Ndang'ang'a, P. K., Ward-Francis, A., Costa, L., de Lima, R. F., Palmeirim, J., Tavares, J., Buchanan, G., Carvalho, M., Melo, M., Dallimer, M., Valle, S. 2014. International action plan for the conservation of critically endangered birds on São Tomé: 2014-2018 Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.

Azevedo, F. P. 2015. How many Dwarf Olive Ibises *Bostrychia bocagei* are there in São Tomé? Use of distance sampling and plot sampling to estimate the population of a critically endangered endemic bird Msc thesis. Évora University, Portugal.



Infrastructure development is a growing problem

IBAs are close to development corridors

A large proportion (38%) of IBAs in East Africa are close (0-10km) to major development corridors (BirdLife International, 2016). This is of great concern, since such major planned developments, which include roads, railways, oil pipelines and ports, are likely to pose threats to these IBAs. Relatively smaller proportions of IBAs are close to development corridors in Central (18%), Southern (16%) and West Africa (13%).

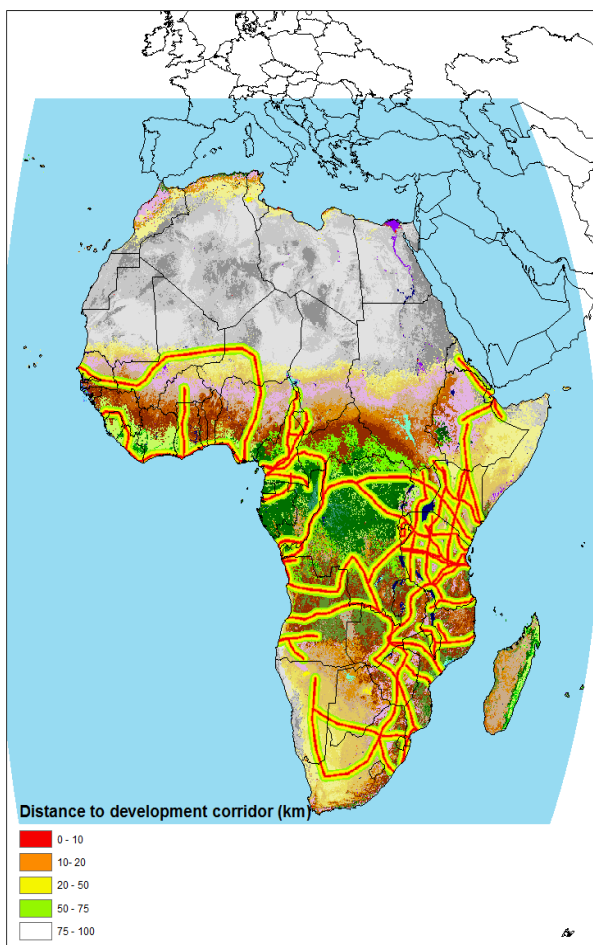


FIG 10: Map of African IBAs and their proximity to development corridors

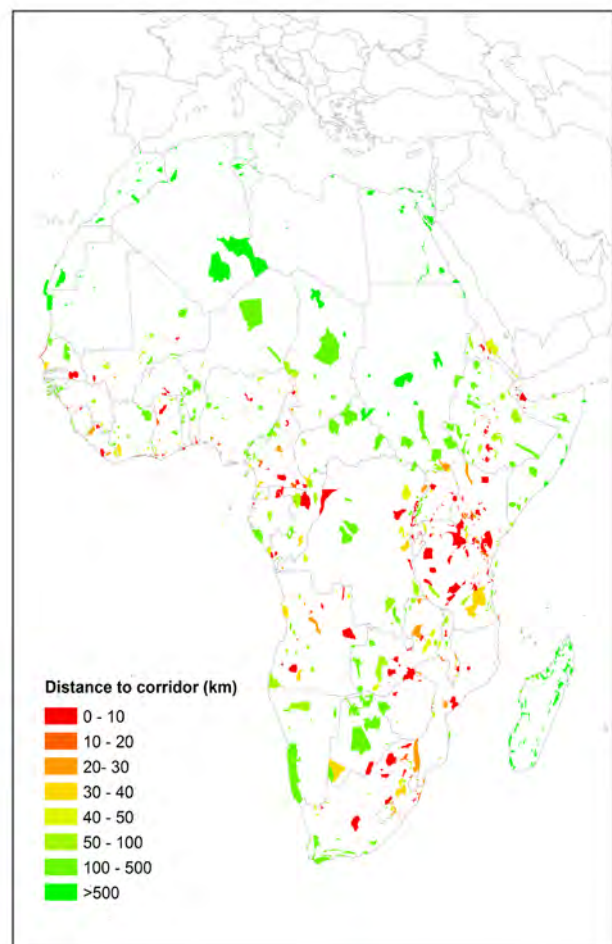


FIG 11: Map of Africa showing IBA distances to development corridors

SOURCE The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Data



PRESSURE: Why birds are declining

Energy infrastructure is posing a threat to migratory birds

Africa is lighting and powering up rapidly. Governments and investors are digging in and the push to develop economically is immense. This push also involves countries along the Red Sea/Rift Valley Flyway Region including Sudan, where millions of migratory birds could be dying due to electrocution

Energy production: how many more killer powerlines are there in Sudan?

Rapid economic and social development in Africa has triggered the need for more power. Over the years, poorly laid out and uninsulated powerlines have posed a severe threat to migratory birds. In 2014, a Sudanese “killer powerline” was shut down and insulated after about 60 years of killing birds, particularly Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus*. Apparently, this was not the last dangerous powerline in the country, as was confirmed by a joint study by the Sudanese Wildlife Society (BirdLife project partner) and the Sudanese Electricity Transmission Company. This study was conducted in three Sudanese states: Al Gazeira, Al Gadarif and Kassala. The bird species with the most fatal interactions were: Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus aegyptius*, Abdim's Stork *Ciconia abdimii*, Greyish Eagle-owl *Bubo cinerascens*, White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* and Pied Crow *Corvus albus*. The study, conducted in June-July and December 2015 and January 2016, along a total of 174.4km of power lines, recorded 47 bird deaths in Al Gazeira, 209 in Al Gadarif and 96 in Kassala, excluding those that might have been scavenged upon. This work was made possible through BirdLife's Migratory Soaring Birds project, funded by GEF/UNDP, which has supported biodiversity mainstreaming work in productive sectors in countries in the Red Sea/Rift Valley Flyway.

With launch of Phase II of the project it is hoped that further cooperation in Sudan will help to address this issue.



Birds killed by electrocution and collision with powerlines in Kassala State Sudan. (PHOTO: ©Ibrahim Hashim)



PRESSURE: Why birds are declining

Pollution remains a serious concern

West African marine biodiversity suffers from high levels of plastic waste from domestic use, lost nets and fisheries lines.

SOURCE UNEP 2016. Marine plastic debris and microplastics - Global lessons and research to inspire action and guide policy change. United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi.

SOURCE Jambeck, J. R., R. Geyer, C. Wilcox, T. R. Siegler, M. Perryman, A. Andrady, R. Narayan and Law, K. L. 2015. Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean. *Science* 347(6223): 768-771

Plastic bottles and other wastes cover a beach after being washed ashore near the port of Abidjan, Cote de Ivoire.
(PHOTO: ©Issouf Sanogo/AFP)

Rubbish and solid waste are an increasing problem

Marine litter is one of the most obvious examples of marine pollution. In many coastal African countries, there is lack of appropriate waste management, with solid waste commonly ending up in rivers and the ocean. Increasing population growth in West Africa (estimated at 2.3% a year) poses a considerable challenge to reducing plastic pollution, as waste will continue to grow with increased population growth and per capita consumption associated with economic growth. While no accurate estimate of the total quantity of plastic in the ocean has been made so far and the impacts on the wider oceanic food web are not yet well understood, concerns are growing about the possible role of plastics as an important source of bird mortality.

Plastics are very slow to degrade. Larger plastics generate microplastic particles (measuring one to five millimeter) that can travel long distances in oceanic surface currents. Many are denser than seawater so will sink once any initial buoyancy is removed. Drifting plastic debris has several adverse effects on seabirds and other species, and is killing marine life all over the globe. The plastic waste is eaten, leading to suffocation or intestinal blockage; birds become entangled in lines and other large plastic waste, and even carry the plastic to their nests where it may cause further damage.

“Ghost fishing” by Abandoned, Lost or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) can be particularly detrimental for marine life. Plastics in the marine environment contribute to the transport of non-indigenous marine species, thereby threatening marine biodiversity and the food web. More importantly, they pose a threat to human health that can include injury and death, as well as significant economic losses in several sectors, such as blocking the drainage system thus exacerbating the impacts of flooding, and reducing the beauty and value of tourist sites.

Improving waste collection and management presents the most urgent solution to reducing plastic pollution in this region. Global priorities should include development and design of plastics and replacement materials to improve recoverability and reduce plastic pollution, as well as innovation in plastic products to limit their harmful effects on the environment.





Future offshore oil and gas production: an emerging threat to seabirds in West Africa

The exploration and exploitation of oil and gas in West Africa, although increasingly seen as an opportunity for rapid development and economic growth, has potentially serious negative consequences for the entire marine ecosystem. Over the last decade, the discovery of valuable oil and gas reserves in several West African countries has brought the attention of the oil industry to this region.

Internationally important seabird populations are found breeding on oceanic islands in Cabo Verde (e.g. endemic shearwaters and petrels) and along the mainland coasts from Mauritania to Guinea (e.g. terns and gulls), making the region of outstanding importance for seabird conservation. In the event of a catastrophic oil spill, seabirds like the Royal Tern *Thalasseus maximus*, of which the world's largest breeding colony is in Saloum Delta National Park in Senegal, might be at considerable risk.

Research carried out by BirdLife and its partners between 2013 and 2016 has extensively documented the use of the West African continental shelf by breeding and wintering seabirds. Tracking data of Royal Terns has shown that feeding ranges are close to recently discovered oil fields. Data also show that significant numbers – and sometimes even entire European populations – of certain seabird species use these waters (e.g. Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris edwardsii* and Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*). Furthermore, marine IBAs identified in West Africa also show a considerable overlap with commercial oil and gas exploration blocks. This highlights the importance of oil companies adhering to best practices, particularly when their operations overlap in distribution with critical biodiversity. In this context, BirdLife is engaging with the Abidjan Convention Secretariat to support the development of environmental standards that can take into account the demonstrable risks to marine biodiversity.

Royal Tern colony breeding Delta du
Saloum National Park Senegal.
(PHOTO: ©VEDA PHOTOGRAPHY)

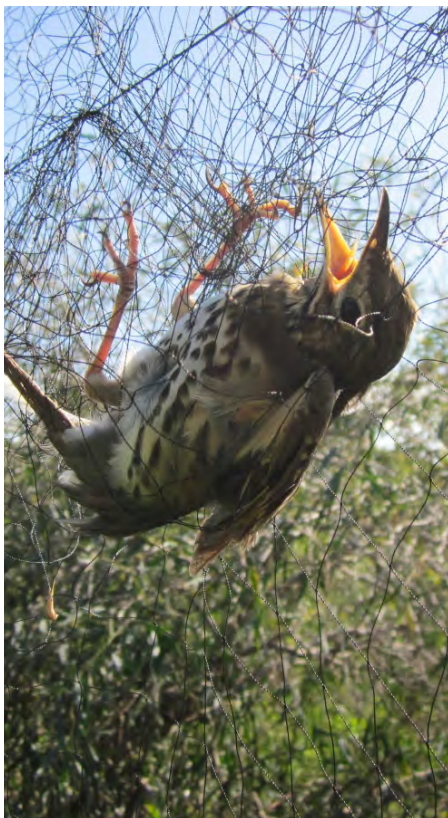




PRESSURE: Why birds are declining

Overexploitation affects many bird species

Overexploitation is one of the main threats to globally threatened bird species worldwide. It often occurs as a result of unsustainable harvest and use. It also results from illegal activities such as poaching, trapping and shooting.



Caught in nets - one of the cruel ways birds are being killed illegally in the Mediterranean.

(PHOTO: ©BirdLife Cyprus)

Illegal killing of birds along Egypt's Mediterranean Coast

Illegal trapping and killing of birds occurs along Africa's Mediterranean coast and other parts of North Africa. It is known to be an issue in Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. But the highest killing rates are in Egypt. Egypt lies at the heart of several migratory routes for birds, connecting Africa with Eurasia. On average, an estimated 0.3 - 10.6 million birds are reported to be killed illegally in Egypt each year, arguably making this country the most dangerous place for migratory birds in the Mediterranean.

Indiscriminate hunting has become commonplace in Egypt, with a large number of migratory species caught as illegal incidental catches during legal trapping of Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Common Coot *Fulica atra*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* and Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* are all illegally killed in large numbers. Illegal practices are widespread along three quarters of the Egyptian Mediterranean coast, including within protected areas, Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance) and other IBAs, illustrating the extent of the problem. Some areas are particularly badly affected by the illegal killing of birds because of their geographic importance in attracting large numbers that have just crossed the desert or the sea. In addition, the legal framework in place to regulate trapping and hunting is complicated and not always fully understood by trappers and hunters.

A plan of action to address the illegal killing of birds, clarify the hunting legislation and raise awareness among local communities in Egypt has been agreed on by Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE, BirdLife Partner) in collaboration with the BirdLife Partnership and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). Also, new monitoring programmes have been put in place to assess the occurrence of illegal hunting activities along the coast, as well as to improve estimates and track changes in the numbers of birds being caught.

SOURCE Brochet, A., Van Den Bossche, W., Jbour, S., Ndang'ang'a, P., Jones, V., Abdou, W., ... Butchart, S. (2016). Preliminary assessment of the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds in the Mediterranean. *Bird Conservation International*, 26(1), 1-28. doi:10.1017/S0959270915000416

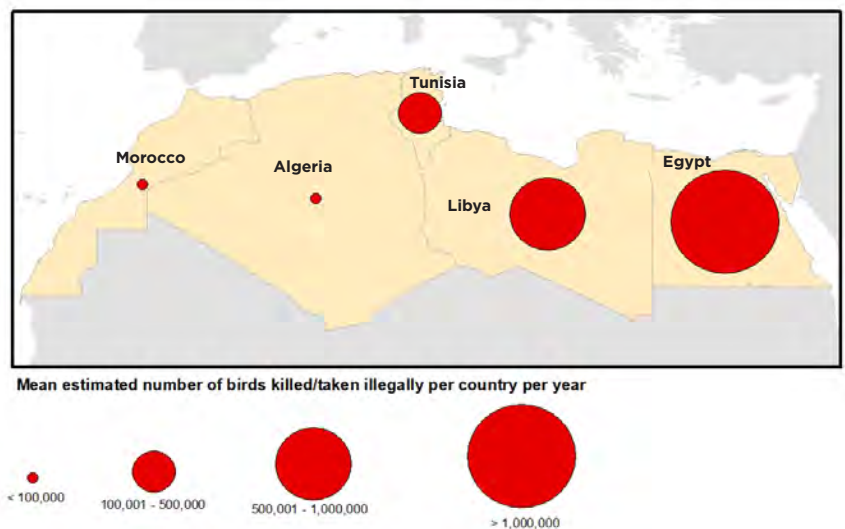


FIG 12: Mean estimated number of birds killed per country per year

SOURCE BirdLife, 2016



PRESSURE: Why birds are declining

Threats to biodiversity may have deeper causes

Poverty can undermine conservation, especially when people are highly dependent on ecosystem services, which can lead to the unsustainable use of natural resources. It is important to create alternatives first, otherwise conservation actions will be of no use.

Poverty, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources at the Ruvubu National Park Ecosystem

Poverty levels around the 50,800 ha Ruvubu National Park in Burundi have made it quite challenging to conserve. The Park is dominated by grassy savannah, shrubs and gallery forest and is home to many species including the globally endangered Grey Crowned-crane *Balearica regulorum*. Communities on the fringes of the park depend on its valuable ecosystem services and farmed its fertile land to produce food before its gazettement and still depend on its valuable ecosystem services. Now the park's ecosystem is threatened by bush fires set mainly by poachers, affecting key species such as the Grey Crowned-crane and buffalo. The park also faces erosion, sedimentation and water shortages because the watersheds are affected by fire. This has contributed to degradation of the IBA and undermined conservation.

Unless the root cause of poverty is addressed, efforts by the Association Burundaise pour la protection de la Nature (ABN, BirdLife Partner) and the Burundian government can have limited effect. People will still continue to poach, collect firewood, burn the park and graze the buffer areas. There is urgent need for economic empowerment and environmental education of these communities on the benefits of protecting and conserving the Ruvubu National park.

Part of Ruvubu National Park after bush fires.
(PHOTO: ©ABN)





State of Africa's Birds

“Migration” - a natural phenomenon where birds move predictably and cyclically from one place to another.

Communication, education and public awareness about the movements and conservation of migratory landbirds is an important pillar in saving them and their habitats along their flyways.

Friends of the Landbird Action Plan (FLAP) is an online platform created to facilitate information sharing, awareness and public education on the conservation of migratory landbirds.

The Action Plan for Migratory Landbirds of Africa and Eurasia (AEMLAP)

AEMLAP is a flyway-wide plan to guide coordinated efforts to conserve migratory landbirds. The Plan was approved by the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (UNEP/CMS) in 2014. It seeks to address threats to migratory birds, including:

- (i) habitat loss and degradation
- (ii) trade and harvesting
- (iii) other threats - diseases and collisions with man-made infrastructure.

AEMLAP calls for urgent action and plans measures to address the population decline of this group of birds.

FLAP is an Action Plan for Migratory Landbirds of Africa and Eurasia (AEMLAP) which aims to support and promote the implementation of AEMLAP whose objective is to improve the conservation of migratory landbirds.

Who can join FLAP?

FLAP is an online social networking platform linking diverse stakeholders around the world to share knowledge and information about migratory landbirds and how their conservation could be improved.

The FLAP forum connects interested people, including farmers, students, professionals, legislators, policy makers, specialists, conservation organizations, institutions, programmes or projects, researchers, educators, bird watchers and all those interested in promoting the conservation of migratory landbirds. This is achieved using the following online communication platforms:



Friends-of-Landbirds-Action-Plan-FLAP



@FLAP_Landbirds



+254 720787289

'Like' the FLAP Facebook page, follow FLAP on Twitter or WhatsApp and share relevant information. Raise awareness, educate others and participate in discussions to promote landbird conservation.

Carmine Bee-eater, one of the
migratory landbirds.
(PHOTO: ©Andrew Schoeman)

More information

<http://www.birdlife.org/africa/friends-landbirds-action-plan-flap>

<http://www.birdlife.org/africa/projects/african-eurasian-migratory-landbirds-action-plan-aemlap>

Contact at BirdLife:

Alex Ngari (alex.ngari@Birdlife.org) or

Vincent Otieno (conservation.nairobi@birdlife.org)

Contact at CMS Secretariat:

Borja Heredia (borja.heredia@cms.int)





RESPONSE: Conserving biodiversity

Investing in conservation is essential

As in so many other aspects of our lives, money is needed to conserve biodiversity successfully.

Many actions are underway but need to be significantly scaled up

Twenty-two BirdLife Partners in Africa are actively participating in conservation actions related to saving species of global concern (100%), protecting sites (100%) and working with local conservation groups to improve lives (100%). This data is from a 2015 survey (22 out of 25 Partners responded) by Quality Assurance System (QAS), a custom-made management tool developed by BirdLife International to support the monitoring of progress towards achieving the BirdLife Conservation Strategy targets. However, financial constraints and ecological differences may limit Partner participation.

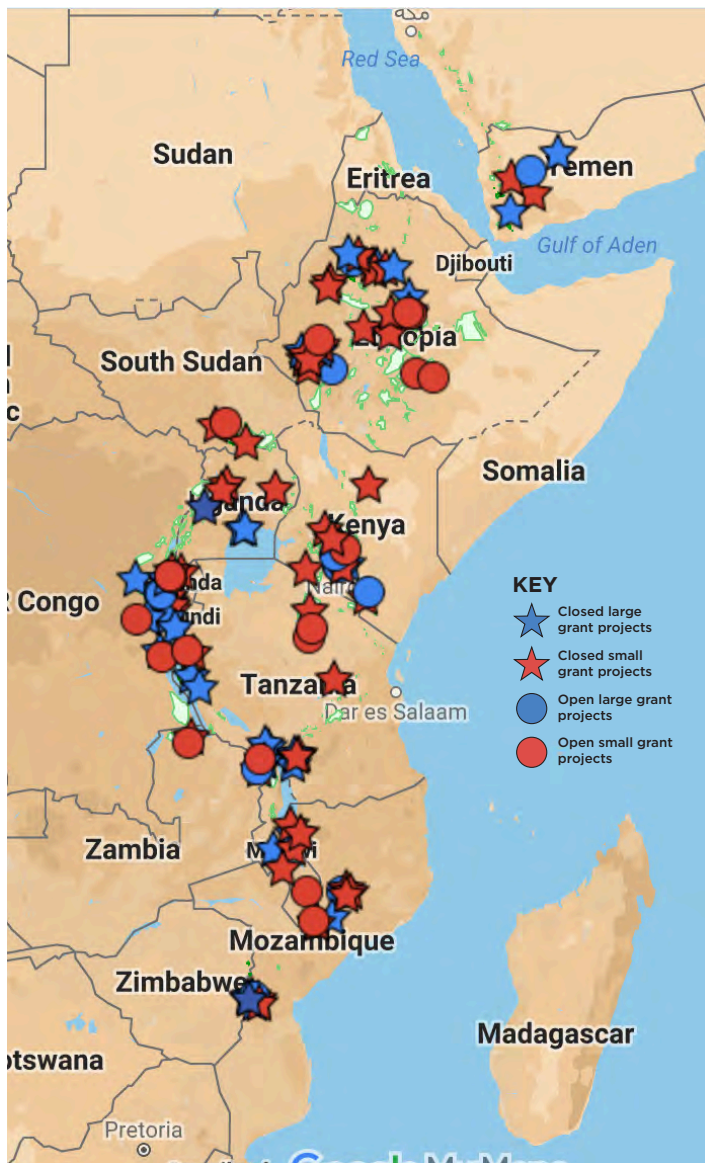


FIG 13: Map showing the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) Eastern Afrotropical biodiversity Hotspot - Grant distribution. The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

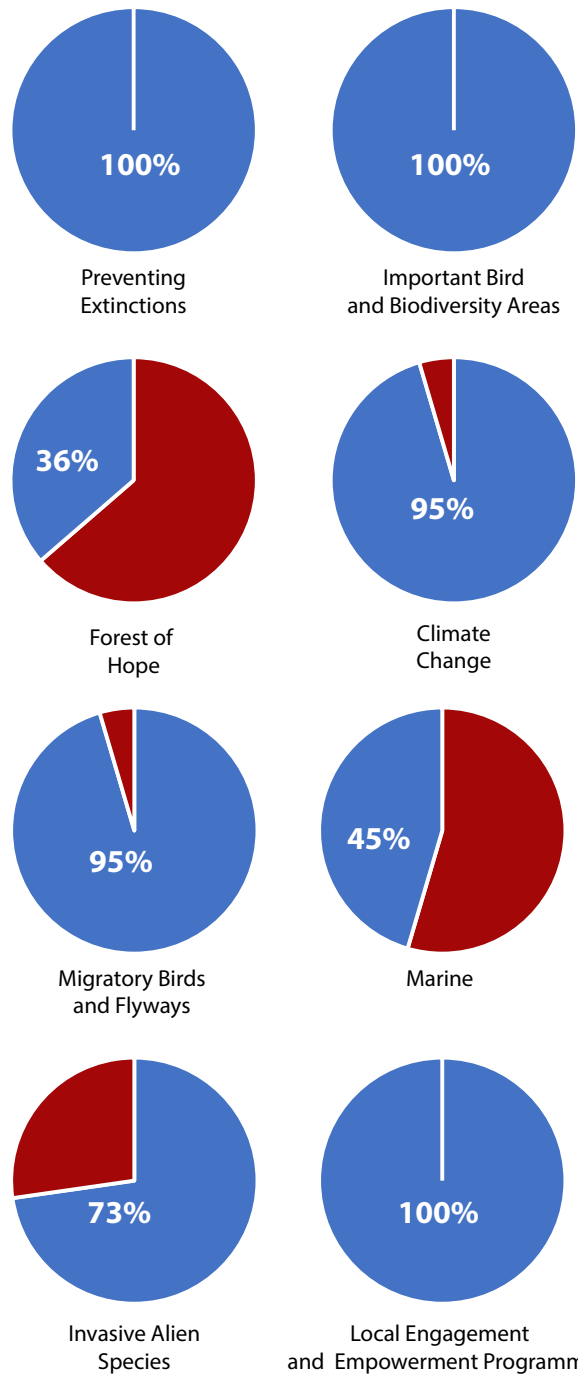


FIG 13: Involvement of BirdLife Africa Partners in various BirdLife Programmes. Blue indicates the percentage of Partner involvement in BirdLife Programmes



RESPONSE: Conserving biodiversity

Sustainable funding for conservation can be delivered through a variety of mechanisms



Local people enjoy the benefits as a result of conserving Gola forest.
(PHOTO: ©M. Hulme)

Awareness raising with school children on the importance of forests.
(PHOTO: ©H. Chisholm/RSPB)

The greater Gola landscape: connecting forest and people

For the first time in West Africa, a biodiversity conservation project has entered the world of carbon trading. The Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) Gola Forest project prevented the emission of 1.19 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) between 2012 and 2014. After five years, it has earned carbon credits and created social benefits for local communities, having been successfully validated and verified by independent auditors. Now, a company or individuals that have already made significant efforts to reduce their emissions can offset their remaining emissions by purchasing Gola's verified carbon credits on the voluntary carbon market. It is intended that this mechanism continues to finance sustainably the globally important work of conserving the Gola Rainforest.

REDD+ is a vital mechanism for countries with biologically and carbon rich tropical rainforests but that rank low on life expectancy, education and income per capita. Poor developing nations need to achieve economic development without exhausting their forest resources such as timber. A mechanism such as REDD+ puts a financial value on forest carbon which can be internationally traded; sales are used to pay for conservation of the forest, its wildlife and the livelihood development of the local communities.

The REDD+ Gola Forest project focused not only within but also outside the Gola Rainforest, where threats to the forest will emerge and extremely poor people live. Approximately 24,000 people living in 122 forest edge communities are directly dependent on the natural resources the forest provides. Empowering them as stewards of the forest with economic security improves their livelihoods. This will increase their income by marketing their rainforest-friendly cocoa plantations' output, improving other agricultural practices and setting up microcredit schemes and education. These are small but encouraging beginnings towards sustainable development. In addition to their carbon conservation importance, areas around the Gola Rainforest act as corridors between forest fragments, critical to wide ranging species such as Forest Elephants.





Building local community capacity on Payment for Ecosystem (PES) services for watershed protection

Mt. Kenya's ecosystem provides fundamental ecosystem services, which includes water. It is Kenya's largest "water tower", feeding two major river basins; Ewaso Nyiro North and Tana River. Its water service, valued at USD 20.4 million/year, provides an opportunity where forest-adjacent community groups (water sellers) can be engaged in watershed protection and rehabilitation with financial support from downstream water users (buyers). Nature Kenya is building the capacity of Community Forest Associations (CFA), comprising forest-adjacent communities legally recognized under Kenyan law. By recognizing Payment for Ecosystem Services as a form of resource mobilization, CFAs mainstream their conservation actions to watershed rehabilitation in partnership with local or national private sectors. Using a site-specific business case approach, CFAs identify and implement conservation programmes at their sites while taking into consideration ecosystem conservation importance. It is envisioned that this approach will lead to enhanced management of water catchment areas and improved water quantity and quality.

This is a model for sustainable business operations in Kenya. This intervention will enable companies to demonstrate commitment to environmental management, build strong relationships with stakeholders who are the water producers and, importantly, replenish the water. Sustaining water flow equates to business sustainability.



Nature Kenya Executive Director Dr. Paul Matiku (second from right) receiving Kenya shillings eight million from Kenya Breweries Ltd to support rehabilitation of degraded Mt. Kenya. (PHOTO: ©J. Mwacharo)



RESPONSE: Conserving biodiversity

Decision-making should consider and integrate biodiversity

One of the ways to integrate biodiversity into decision-making is by the successful implementation of Action Plans. Sound science, collaboration, awareness raising, effective influencing and communications are powerful tools in eliciting appropriate responses to save threatened species.



(African) Grey Parrots.
(PHOTO: ©Reto Kuster)

Stakeholders call for a lasting solution to end unsustainable land use in West Africa

Having identified unsustainable land use as a key threat to biodiversity conservation in the West African region, representatives of the governments of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal, United Nations organizations, World Agroforestry Centre, academia, research organizations and civil society, including the BirdLife Partnership, came together to tackle this issue.

In November 2015, the Abuja Declaration on Sustainable Land Use for People and Biodiversity in West Africa was adopted in November 2016, at a workshop hosted by the Government of Nigeria in Abuja and sponsored by the Government of Switzerland. This declaration recommends a participatory approach to land use planning and supports agro-ecological farming practices such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, climate smart agriculture, integrated pest management and invasive species control. Population growth, economic growth and poor land governance have been cited as the key drivers that have led to land degradation and destruction of habitat for species, which may be contributing to declines of populations of migratory landbirds, including those that winter in the West African region.

This is central to the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the CBD Aichi Targets and the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). There will be both economic and environmental benefits for the region if West African countries, with support from civil society, comply with the recommendations of this declaration.

Influencing key policy mechanisms to save vultures and parrots

Illegal wildlife trade and poaching costs Africa an estimated \$200 million annually. Vultures and Grey Parrots are examples of how illegal trade and exploitation can drive species to near extinction. African States, through the African Union have embarked on addressing illegal wildlife trade by developing the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) Strategy, initially developed during the International Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade held in Brazzaville in April 2015.

The action plan for implementing the African Strategy on Combatting Illegal Exploitation and Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora in Africa (IWT Strategy) was adopted in April 2016, during the Sixth Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) in Cairo, Egypt. This paved the way for its implementation, and providing a high level commitment for advancing vulture conservation in Africa. During AMCEN, BirdLife, in collaboration with the African Union, IUCN, Trade Records Analysis of Flora and Fauna in Commerce (TRAFFIC), World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), succeeded in raising awareness and highlighting illegal wildlife trade issues regarding African vultures. The vultures' case was again highlighted at the Conference of Parties (COP17) of CITES – the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora – in South Africa in September 2016. The event considered use of vulture parts and poaching as possible reasons for the future uplisting of threatened vultures from Appendix II to I of CITES.

In response to the Grey Parrot crisis, BirdLife and others successfully advocated for the uplisting of Grey Parrot from Appendix II to Appendix I of CITES at COP17, thereby outlawing all international trade.

This demonstrates that sound science, collaboration, awareness raising, effective influencing and communications are powerful tools in eliciting appropriate responses to save threatened species.



Biodiversity underpins well-being and livelihoods

People depend on the environment for their very survival. Policy consideration for climate change adaptation and protection of environmental services helps to safeguard human well-being.

Ecosystem conservation for Climate Change Adaptation in East Africa

BirdLife Africa Partners are working to ensure that the role and needs of ecosystems in climate change adaptation are integrated. They engage at different levels: locally, as in county development plans; nationally, as in National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plans (NBSAPs); and internationally, as in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change UNFCCC; Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN); and Regional Economic Commissions (REC) policies. These efforts have been achieved through a variety of mechanisms.

Integrating ecosystem considerations into policies

Two BirdLife Partners, Association Burundaise pour la protection de la Nature (ABN) and Nature Uganda (NU), have integrated ecosystem considerations into national policies through a review of existing policies and those under development, to assess the extent to which they support Ecosystem based Adaptation (EbA) approaches to climate change. In collaboration with their respective governments, they have developed more robust policies that include ecosystem considerations regarding climate change. For example, NU facilitated the development of five by-laws on soil and water conservation for four sub-counties in Echuya Forest Reserve, Uganda. Following a participatory vulnerability assessment with Serukubeze community for the Mpungwe Mountain Chain IBA, ABN worked with the community and local government to integrate EbA into the main municipality development plan in Ruyigi, Burundi.

View of Mpungwe Mountain, Burundi.
(PHOTO: ©BirdLife)





Promoting cross-sectoral collaboration

Ecosystem based Adaptation (EbA) is a cross-cutting issue that requires engagement of stakeholders from a variety of sectors. BirdLife Partners can play a role in bringing these stakeholders together. For example, ABN negotiated with the Burundi government to establish a multi-stakeholder working group on EbA. This group comprised 20 individuals including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Focal Point, CBD Focal Point, Adviser on Environment to the President, indigenous peoples groups' representatives, Adaptation Focal Point, REDD+ Focal Point, Head of Sanitation Department from Ministry of Public Health, representative from Ministry of Trade, Industries and Tourism, and NGOs. The group has been endorsed by the Cabinet; and the UNFCCC focal point has used this forum to communicate national positions prior to UNFCCC meetings.



Local communities should be empowered to sustainably manage their natural resources as key stakeholders.

(PHOTO: ©BirdLife International)



RESPONSE: Conserving biodiversity

People can be empowered for positive change

When empowered with information and appropriate skills, local communities are able to protect important sites from harmful development.

Training young seabird officers and conservationists in West Africa (Cabo Verde)

“Protecting Threatened and Endemic Species in Cabo Verde: a Major Island Restoration Project”, funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), trained local staff on fieldwork techniques, data management and report writing, among other actions. Sociedade Portuguesa Para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA - BirdLife in Portugal) and Biosfera, an NGO from São Vicente (Cabo Verde) collaborated on the project from 2013 to 2015.

The training involved workshops, fieldwork supervised by researchers from SPEA and RSPB (BirdLife Partners in Portugal and the UK) and Coimbra University, and included visits to other international projects. Several officers from Biosfera, including biologists, financial and administrative staff, as well as local fieldworkers benefited from it.



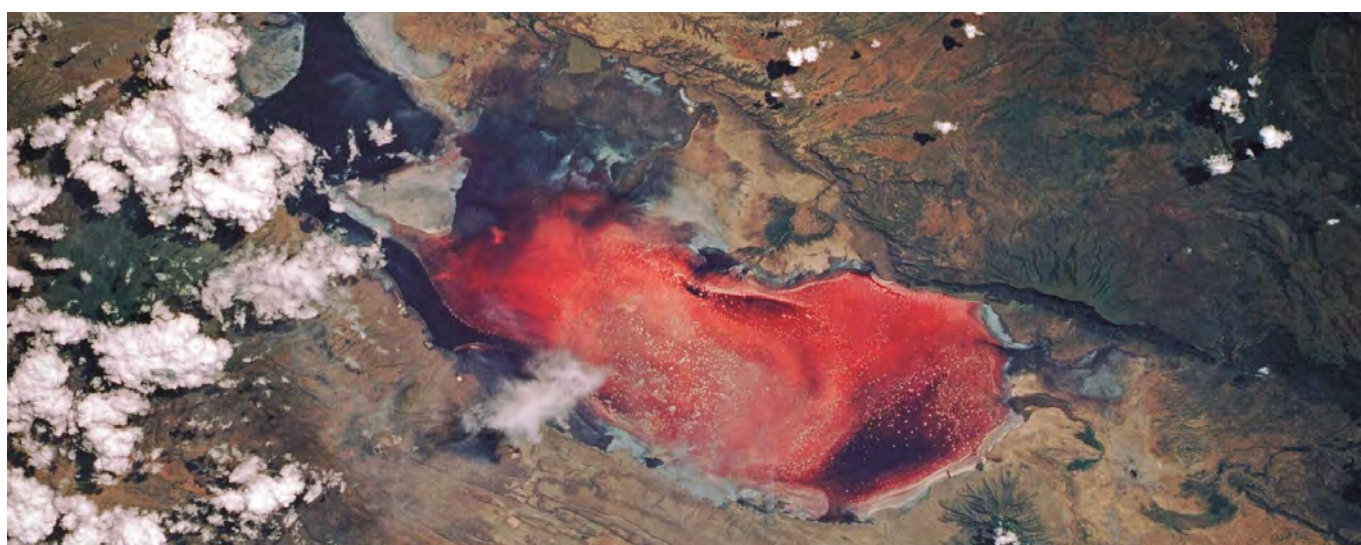
Researcher from Coimbra University teaching bird sampling techniques to Biosfera staff. (PHOTO: ©Pedro Gerales)



Empowered communities promote sustainable use of Lake Natron

In 2006, Tata Chemicals Ltd of India, in conjunction with the Tanzanian Government through the National Development Corporation (NDC), proposed to build a soda ash factory worth \$450 million at Lake Natron. Following international advocacy against the project, Tata withdrew in 2008. In spite of that, the Government of Tanzania remained committed to developing a soda ash plant at Lake Natron whenever an investor became available.

Following Tata's pull-out, BirdLife embarked on initiatives to build the capacity of the local community to conserve the lake as well as boost their livelihoods through ecotourism. One of the elements of capacity building was land rights training, which empowered the community to make sound and informed decisions in view of competing land uses, such as the proposal to mine soda ash. Since 2014, BirdLife has conducted successive land rights training at Lake Natron, reaching over 90 participants in four wards, with 70 men and 24 women trained. Knowledge of land rights has empowered communities to reject soda ash mining proposals, which NDC has attempted to revive, in their villages. As a result, Lake Natron remains safe from the long-term plan to mine soda ash and the flamingos continue to breed in safety.



A bird's eye view of Lake Natron. (PHOTO: ©NASA Johnson/Flickr)



School pupils use pictures to illustrate the beauty of flamingos. (PHOTO: ©Semanini/Lebaraka)



Lutembe residents empowered to have a voice in determining development within their wetland

Lutembe Bay is an IBA and RAMSAR site on the shores of Lake Victoria in Uganda, where large concentrations of Palearctic and Afrotropical migrant birds like the White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* congregate. Developments such as large scale flower farms may have economic benefits, but they threaten the IBA's wetland ecosystem because of the high levels of chemicals used. This is also a potential threat to the people who depend on the wetland's services and who lack alternative sources of income.

In 2013, Nature Uganda (NU) together with the Lutembe community, led by the Local District Chairman, protested against the expansion of a flower farm, which was already underway. This was influenced by the regular trainings provided by NU in ecosystem services assessment, ecosystem health and valuation, and the concept of wise use and alternative income generating activities. The flower farm operator was charged over illegal filling of the wetland, thereby degrading the fragile ecosystem serving Lake Victoria and surrounding habitats. The Ministry of Water and Environment, through the Wetlands Management Department and Lutembe Wetland Users Association leadership, signed an agreement with the flower farm operator, whereby the flower farm committed to implement recommendations from an official environmental audit.

The flower farm, along with the National Environment Management Authority, have also been sued by a number of civic society organizations (CSOs) for breaching the right to a clean and healthy environment for the local community and other Ugandans, as required by the constitution. The hearing started in April 2014 and is ongoing. On each occasion when the site has been threatened, local residents have alerted relevant officials; and their efforts have maintained the ecological integrity of this valuable wetland IBA and Ramsar site.



Encroachment into Lutembe Bay for flower farming is a threat to its ecosystems. (PHOTO: ©BirdLife)



Conserving IBAs and KBAs

Important Bird Areas and Key Biodiversity Areas focus conservation action on the most critical sites. They guide the designation of protected areas and the implementation of other area-based conservation mechanisms, including using social media for conservation action.

“Local action - global impact” through Site Support Groups

The Mare d'Oursi (Lake Oursi) Site Support Group (SSG) in Burkina Faso is turning to social media to save their local wetland. Members are using smart phones to respond immediately to fires and poaching. The group is composed of volunteers entrusted to care for Lake Oursi – an important wetland in landlocked Burkina Faso, where large numbers of Palearctic bird species migrating within the region congregate annually. Some 16,000 people also depend on it for their livelihoods. Unfortunately, this globally important wetland is facing many threats, including overgrazing, siltation, eutrophication, deforestation, poaching of birds and collection of birds' eggs. These have led to a rapid decline of migratory birds in the area.

BirdLife, in collaboration with NATURAMA (BirdLife in Burkina Faso), have trained the Mare d'Oursi Site Support Group on the types, uses and impacts of social media for conservation. Through this empowerment, timely communication among group members has helped to save a number of wild ducks, changed perceptions in local communities around Lake Oursi about conserving biodiversity and enhanced the relationships between the SSG and international partners such as RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), Vogelbescherming Nederland (VBN, BirdLife in The Netherlands) and Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, BirdLife in France). It has also resulted in the creation of an official Facebook page for the Mare d'Oursi SSG.

The widespread use of social networks has provided a powerful tool for groups conserving IBAs to spread their messages and build communities that share a common vision.



Women of the Mare d'Oursi SSG participating in training for production of clean stoves. (PHOTO: ©Oumar Baro)



Increasing areas under protection in Africa

In 2015, three IBAs in Madagascar were given permanent protection by the Government of Madagascar. They are the Mahavavy-Kinkony Wetland Complex, Mangoky-Ihotry Wetland Complex and Tsitongambarika Forest. Together they protect almost 800,000 ha of Madagascar's ecosystems and host an array of endemic and threatened species and habitats. They protect 18 threatened and eight Near Threatened bird species, including the Endangered Sakalava Rail *Zapornia olivieri* and the Vulnerable Brown Mesite *Mesitornis unicolor*. This success was achieved largely by the efforts of Asity Madagascar (BirdLife in Madagascar).

Across the continent in Liberia, in 2016 the Gola Forest IBA, covering almost 900 km² and holding over 300 bird species, was officially declared a National Park. The Lofa-Gola-Mano Complex IBA is home to numerous species including Yellow-bearded Greenbul *Criniger olivaceus*, Western Wattled Cuckooshrike *Campephaga lobata*, Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata* and White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus*—all are categorized in the IUCN Red List as Vulnerable. Despite facing threats that include mining and quarrying, charcoal production and bushmeat hunting, this new level of protection should mean that the Gola National Park will be safe for these and other threatened species, such as the Forest Elephant *Loxodonta cyclotis*.

Tsitongambarika forest, Andriamandranto Ravoahangy.
(PHOTO: ©Asity Madagascar)





RESPONSE: Conserving biodiversity

Sustaining birds and biodiversity in the wider landscapes

Children with a connection to nature are much more likely to care for their environment as they grow into adults – helping support the biodiversity that supports their future. Children can make a change, let us show them how.

Connecting young people across Africa

The Wildlife Clubs of Africa project funded by the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation combined biodiversity conservation with education and sustainable development initiatives. It successfully linked over 350,000 African children with the rest of the world through a network of school-based wildlife clubs. This network integrated African children across the participating countries into the global conservation community through environmental education. The project had two phases: one involving 16 African country partners (2008-2011); the second involved five countries, namely Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. About 5,862 African schools took part in wildlife club activities in the first phase. These included growing and supplying saplings to local communities, bird counting and school greening among other activities like art, lectures and drama. This also connected school children across these nations. Approximately 2,000 wildlife clubs were created in the second phase with a combined membership of almost 150,000 children between 2012 and 2014.

Similarly, Spring Alive Africa is present across 14 African countries. This approach aims at developing children's interest in nature and the conservation of migratory birds. It also encourages them to take action for wildlife and birds by participating in events organized by BirdLife Partners, such as the celebration of World Migratory Bird Day, International Vulture Awareness Day, World Environment Day and World Wetlands Day.



School pupils engaging in birdwatching and being trained how to use binoculars and telescopes. (PHOTO: ©Nature Uganda)



Taking birds and biodiversity conservation to greater heights across frontiers in the Chimanimani Mountains Key Biodiversity Area (KBA)

BirdLife Zimbabwe (BLZ, BirdLife Partner), in collaboration with MICAIA Foundation (a Mozambican NGO), is demonstrating the important role played by local stakeholders and communities in the conservation of birds and biodiversity in the trans-boundary Chimanimani Mountains Key Biodiversity Area (KBA). A joint project funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), which promotes local collaboration and improved knowledge of birds and biodiversity in the Chimanimani KBA is being implemented by both organizations. Some 36 individuals representing 12 institutions, living and/or working within the Chimanimani Mountains from both Mozambique and Zimbabwe,

have improved their skills and knowledge in bird identification and IBA/KBA monitoring, as well as a practical application of the IBA Monitoring Framework and Management Effective Tracking Tool (METT).

In an effort to strengthen local networks among stakeholders, the Foundation has brought together local stakeholders in the Chimanimani Mountains through joint meetings where potential areas for collaboration such as species monitoring, education and awareness programmes, community livelihood improvement and birding ecotourism promotion were explored. Through this project, BLZ and MICAIA have highlighted the importance of Chimanimani Mountains Trans-frontier Conservation Area (TFCA) as a biodiversity hotspot to TFCA officers. Although neglected for a long time, the Chimanimani Mountains now have active support at the local level following interventions by BLZ and MICAIA.



Participants from Chimanimani, Zimbabwe completing the IBA and METT monitoring forms during a practical field exercise on habitat monitoring. (PHOTO: ©BLZ)



Community and park rangers identifying a bird species during a training in Mozambique. (PHOTO: ©BLZ)



Threatened species can be saved

There are a variety of human activities that contribute to species becoming threatened, including habitat destruction, fragmentation, and degradation, pollution, introduction of non-native species, disease, climate change, and over exploitation. These activities are pushing many species to the brink of extinction. But some of these species are now thriving, thanks to conservation actions being carried by various organizations.

Vulture restaurant Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. (PHOTO: ©Ara Monadjem)

Preventing and mitigating poisoning to save Africa's vultures

BirdLife Africa is piloting techniques to develop and test a rapid response system that enables local authorities to contain incidents of poisoning swiftly and effectively when detected.

Poisoning response training workshops aimed at local wildlife authorities and conservation organization staff have already been conducted as part of the rapid response system in Zimbabwe, Botswana and Kenya. The training workshops provide participants with practical experience on how to handle a poisoning crime scene effectively and safely, in order to ensure: 1. a poisoning incident is accurately identified; 2. the site is contained to prevent further poisoning related fatalities; and 3. evidence is appropriately collected and analyzed for prosecution. In Kenya, a poisoning response protocol was developed in collaboration with national stakeholders to outline basic procedures to follow in response to a poisoning incident. These activities are under projects funded by Fondation Segre, BAND Foundation and funds raised by BirdLife International through various vulture appeals.

Vultures need suitable habitat with food sources, in addition to protection from poisoning. BirdWatch Zambia (BirdLife Partner) has been educating farm owners, managers and workers who operate within Zambia's Chisamba IBA (55,000 ha) on the importance of protecting natural habitats from man-made threats in a bid to secure a safe haven for endangered vultures. Over 72% of the IBA falls within private farms. Cattle ranching, game ranching, dairy farming and crocodile farming attract hundreds of vultures to these farms. The area's large trees serve as suitable perching, roosting and breeding sites. Large privately owned commercial farms and ranches are a major attraction due to the waste from meat processing and crocodile harvesting. BirdWatch Zambia has secured 15,000 ha of the Chisamba IBA for the benefit of vultures and natural ecosystems in general. A dialogue with private farm owners in Chisamba to create a Vulture Safe Zone (VSZ) in the properties within the IBA is in progress, since vultures move between farms depending on the feeding opportunity. There is an education and awareness campaign in the area targeting school children and their parents who either own, manage or work in surrounding farms, with the aim of changing local perceptions about vultures and encouraging positive farm management practices.





RESPONSE: Conserving biodiversity



Taita Apalis. (PHOTO: ©Peter Steward)

Taita hills landscape.
(PHOTO: ©Lawrence Wagura)

Land lease and purchase to conserve the Critically Endangered Taita Apalis

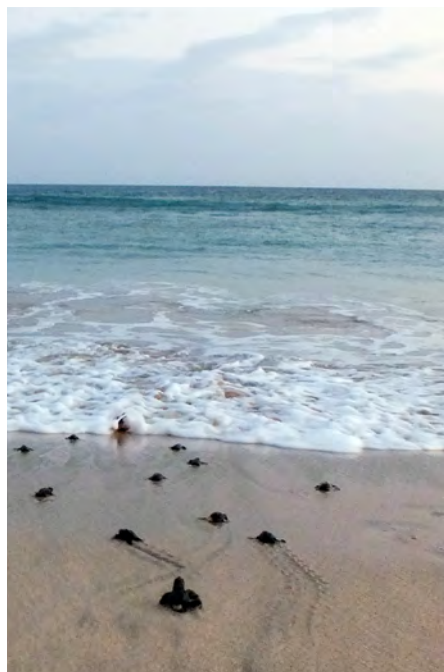
Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis*, is one of the most endangered birds in the world, with potentially fewer than 160 individuals remaining. Without swift action, Taita Apalis is predicted to be extinct within 10 years; this would be Africa's first mainland bird extinction. It is functionally confined to four small forest fragments in the Taita Hills in south-eastern Kenya, part of the Eastern Arc Mountains, a Global Biodiversity Hotspot and KBA. Through an existing partnership initiative between Nature Kenya (BirdLife Partner), BirdLife Species Guardian Mwangi Githiru, the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), BirdLife International and the National Museums of Kenya, research has identified the need to protect and restore unprotected forests, while preliminary trials of forest restoration has begun. Priority forest areas for restoration in one of the locations occupied by the Taita Apalis has already been identified, and similar studies will be required in the other sites where the species is present or could recolonize.

As a means of protecting critical habitat for the Taita Apalis, the partnership led by Nature Kenya secured a 25-year lease for six ha of indigenous forest fragment, thanks to funding from the African Bird Club, RSPB and World Land Trust. This fragment was under threat from clearance and is known to support approximately 5% of the species' global population. In addition, in 2016, Nature Kenya, with support from the Rainforest Trust, started the process of negotiating land purchase of 12 ha of priority forest corridor, supporting 15% of the global population of Taita Apalis. The partnership will also mobilize local community groups and the Kenya Forest Service to restore 50 ha of priority exotic plantations to increase indigenous forest cover, by March 2019.





Birds and biodiversity do not recognize political boundaries



Loggerhead Turtle hatchlings heading to the sea in Santa Luzia.
(PHOTO: ©Tommy Melo)

Sherman traps in Santa Luzia to prevent rats coming ashore following a shipwreck.
(PHOTO: ©Pedro Geraldes)

Ecological restoration of Santa Luzia (Cabo Verde): time to move for the Critically Endangered Raso Lark

Santa Luzia, Branco and Raso islets are part of the largest marine protected area in Cabo Verde, a KBA of exceptional importance for several endemic species. It holds the entire world population of the Critically Endangered Raso Lark *Alauda razae* and is a stronghold for the endemic Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris edwardsii*. It supports important communities of endangered marine reptiles such as loggerhead turtles *Caretta caretta*. The lark is currently confined to the small Raso islet, with its population in the past 35 years fluctuating between 18 and 125 pairs, but it has recently risen to 1,558 birds in response to several consecutive rainy years. This makes the timing perfect for a translocation attempt in order to establish a second population on the nearby Santa Luzia Island, where it historically occurred.

A project is underway to support the restoration of Santa Luzia's terrestrial ecosystems through the eradication of invasive alien species, providing a model for integrated marine and coastal management in the region. Biosfera, a local environmental NGO, the Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA, BirdLife in Portugal) and RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), with support from CEPF and MAVA Foundation, developed a project to kick-start a surveillance programme for the reserve and to implement some priority actions of the management plan.

Removing cats and reintroducing the Raso Lark to Santa Luzia will spread the species' global population across two islands, thereby help to reduce its extinction risk. It will also contribute to the restoration of the island's terrestrial ecosystems to their condition prior to human settlement. With appropriate protection, the surrounding waters will gradually assume their former role as a nursery for fish populations.

The project also aims to improve knowledge about the status of seabird colonies in Raso and promote recolonization of Santa Luzia by seabirds. After this project, the reserve will be better managed with logistical facilities to accommodate wardens and technical staff.



**Record high numbers of Critically Endangered Northern Bald Ibis**

The Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* has had an eventful and turbulent relationship with humans, resulting in a sharp decline in its population in the last century. Thankfully, recent breeding successes resulting from the work of BirdLife Partners and the Government of Morocco gives hope for a harmonious relationship again in the future. The large, glossy-black bird once had an extensive range that spread across North Africa; it was idolized by humans as a symbol of fertility and virtue. Ironically, human pressures caused a decline in breeding success, and its subsequent dramatic range reduction resulted in its current classification as Critically Endangered. In 1997, the population reached an all-time low with only 59 breeding pairs remaining.

Today, 99% of the remaining wild birds are found in Morocco, where the Northern Bald Ibis population in Morocco increased to a record high of 601 individuals at the end of the 2016 breeding season. This is thanks to the continuous surveillance of the breeding sites at Souss-Massa National Park and Tamri by local guards, which protected the ibis from any disturbance and played a very important role in maintaining this population. Activities on the ground are coordinated by Groupe de Recherche pour la Protection des Oiseaux au Maroc (GREPOM, BirdLife in Morocco) and the Moroccan Government.

The colonies at Souss-Massa National Park and nearby Tamri, both IBAs in south-west Morocco, held the record number of 122 breeding pairs when two more new breeding sites were discovered: a very significant sign of an expanding population. Support from several institutions, notably the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation: the BirdLife Species Champion, more recently joined by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund and Zeiss, has contributed to conservation of this iconic bird.

Northern Bald Ibis. (PHOTO: ©Francisco Herrera)





RESPONSE: Conserving biodiversity



Liben Lark. (PHOTO: © Nikk Borrow)

Rangeland management benefits livestock, pastoralists and Critically Endangered lark

Poverty and drought has led to the fragmentation and degradation of the Liben Plain. It is part of the South Ethiopian Highlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA), and one of the few fragments of open grassland surviving in East Africa; only 7,500 ha of degraded grassland remains. This is driven by overgrazing, soil erosion, scrub encroachment, and the conversion of grasslands to crops.

Using Participatory Rangeland Management techniques deployed by project partners (Ethiopian Wildlife Natural History Society; SOS Sahel; BirdLife International; Coventry University; Manchester Metropolitan University), local people are supported to create communally managed grassland reserves known as “Kallos” across the plain to improve the quality and extent of native grasslands. Identified Kallo Management Committees manage these grasslands under a set of agreed customary pastoralist by-laws. By December 2016, approximately 300ha of Kallos had been established and approximately 650-670 ha of scrub cleared to increase the area of grassland.

Sustainable rangeland management in the Liben Plains is already proving to benefit livestock, the local pastoralist community, the Liben Lark *Heteromirafra archeri* and other grassland biodiversity. This is thanks to lessons gained and trials made from previous (2011-2015) projects funded by the British Birdwatching Fair and other supporters, and the current (2016-2018) project funded by the Darwin Initiative “Sustainable management of an Ethiopian rangeland for biodiversity and pastoralists”. This project aims at enhancing the livelihoods and food security for thousands of Borana pastoralists across the Liben Plain, whilst also preventing the extinction of Liben Lark.



Fencing Kallos with Euphorbia. (PHOTO: ©Yilma Abebe)



State of Africa's Birds

BirdLife Africa

The BirdLife Africa Partnership is a growing network of 25 conservation organizations, with a combined total of more than 500 staff and 87,000 members. Through projects, BirdLife is active in a further 15 countries, hence overall working in a total of 39 countries.

BirdLife Partners in Africa are supported by the BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat with offices in Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, Rwanda and Tanzania. The Secretariat exists to ensure that the BirdLife Partners in Africa have access to financial and technical resources and have the profile and connections necessary to deliver the BirdLife programme in Africa.

To learn more about BirdLife in Africa visit: <http://www.birdlife.org/africa>

BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation partnership. Through our unique local-to-global approach, we deliver high impact and long-term conservation for the benefit of nature and people. Together we are 120 BirdLife Partners worldwide – one per country or territory – and growing.

BirdLife's vision is to see a world rich in biodiversity, where people and nature live in harmony. We are driven by our belief that local people, working for nature in their own places but connected nationally and internationally through our global Partnership, are the key to sustaining all life on this planet. This unique local-to-global approach delivers high impact and long-term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

BirdLife is the world leader in bird conservation. Rigorous science informed by practical feedback from projects on the ground in important sites and habitats enables us to implement successful conservation programmes for birds and all of nature.

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Partnership for
nature and people

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Volunteers from Nature Kenya conducting waterbird counts at the Dandora ponds in Nairobi.
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