

## **MEETINGS FUTURE**

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.**

ZOS AGM on Saturday 29th March at 6 pm at the ZOS office in Chindo Road. AGM will be followed by the birding highlights of the year by Bob Stjernstedt and a short slide show on counting shoebills in the Bangweulu Swamps by Lizanne Roxburgh. Drinks and snacks will be provided.

### **BIRD WALK at Protea Safari Lodge on Sunday the 30th March.**

The Protea Safari Lodge forms the southern boundary of the Chisamba IBA, contains some nice woodland and a few dams, and makes a pleasant day's outing from Lusaka.

Directions: take the great north road out of Lusaka. Turn right at the Safari Lodge signpost, about 30-40kms out of town, and continue on the dirt road until you see the gated entrance to the safari lodge to your left. Enter, drive the few kms to the lodge, and park in the car park outside the entrance to the Lodge. Meeting at 8:30 for a three-hour walk. The drive from Lusaka takes about 1 hour.

For anyone who would like to stay for the buffet lunch afterwards, please call (01) 212 843 for booking and price. Pre-booking is recommended as the lunch is popular and there is no guarantee of a table if you don't. Please mention that you are coming for the ZOS walk too.

## **MEETINGS PAST**

### **NKWALI LODGE, SOUTH LUANGWA NATIONAL PARK.**

**15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

**Lizanne Roxburgh**

#### **Bloody Marys at Tamarind, oh, and something about a stork colony!**

Glorious sunny weather greeted us as we dropped down towards Mfuwe airport, with the sun glinting off the muddy Luangwa River. Carmine bee-eaters in their gaudy pink dress were the first to greet us. On our drive to Nkwali camp we had an excellent view of a bateleur perched in a tree close to an old nest. We saw plenty more of these during the weekend, but never as close as the first one. In the evening, we were ferried across the river into the park for an evening game drive. A young giant eagle owl awaited us on the other side. He was rather put out by the glare of our spotlights, but nevertheless stood his ground, and repeated his begging call for food from his parents. The roads were littered with Mozambique nightjars, three-banded coursers and crowned plovers. A few mammals did manage to grab our attention: a large group of banded mongoose (or geese) that were making their way to their night-time roost, a lone hyena that reluctantly left the dry road for the wet and flooded grass, a very fat, and probably pregnant, hippo, and a white-tailed mongoose.

After coffee and a light breakfast at a very early hour on Saturday morning, we headed up the Luangwa River in two boats, our destination: the yellow-billed stork breeding colony. Unfortunately about two hours into the journey the engine of one of the boats developed a problem. Fortunately we were near Tamarind lodge and made a concerted effort with one paddle

and a couple of bamboo poles to get ourselves to the riverbank somewhere near the camp, against the strong pull of the flooded river. We made our muddy way up the riverbank and thankfully sought shelter beneath the thatched roof after washing our feet in the swimming pool (which I must say was rather muddy after the recent flooding of the camp). Never to be defeated by the situation, we got out the bloody marys (in lieu of coffee and food which was in the other boat). As the hour wore on, the birding got more and more inventive. Meanwhile our guides tried in vain to get the engine going, and finally got hold of Nkwali camp to send up a mechanic.

The sun rose higher, the tomato juice flowed freely, and the conversation took some turns further and further away from birds! But still no luck with the engine. Finally the mechanic arrived and managed to get it going, and we set off after the first boat. By then they had reached the stork colony, after some serious trekking through the mud. Apparently most birds were in the nest-building and egg-laying stage. We met up with the other group to share lunch and very diverse reports on the morning activities at Nsefu Camp. The first group saw a large flock of common pratincoles, probably in excess of a 1000 birds, upriver from us.

Time did not allow those of us in the second boat to visit the colony because we had to return to camp on the croc and hippo-infested river before sunset. Somewhat despondently we made our way back down river after lunch, disappointed at our failure to see the stork colony, our main reason for coming on the weekend trip to Nkwali. On the return journey we were treated to a large flock of Abdim's storks that seemed to be settling down along the banks of the river for the night. A pair of skimmers elegantly glided above the water's surface past us. We stopped off at a heronry close to Nkwali camp to see great white egrets and a few openbills starting to breed in some partly flooded trees. A group of 14 crowned cranes flew in and landed nearby as we were leaving. We managed to do a waterbird count on the way down river from Nsefu to Nkwali, and the numbers are indicated in the table below. Champagne and cocktails awaited us at Nkwali, and somewhat compensated for missing the stork colony.

The next morning we went for a bird-oriented game drive in the park. The highlight in our vehicle was a good view of a calling emerald cuckoo, sporting his brilliant green plumage and bright yellow belly. Rumours of a Narina trogon sighting were later refuted! We had nice views of tawny, martial and brown snake eagles, and lappet-faced and white-backed vultures coming down to feed on something hidden in the vegetation. Lesser gallinules were abundant, but rather hard to see, in the flooded pans in the park. Oh yes, and somebody did spot a lion.

Thanks to ZOS members who attended this fun weekend and to the Nkwali guides and Fiona Trewby for taking good care of us!

#### List of birds seen\*

Reed Cormorant 2	White-crowned Plover 45	Black-collared Barbet
Cattle Egret 3	Blacksmith Plover 1	European Sand Martin
Green-backed Heron 4	Crowned Plover	Lesser Striped Swallow
Yellow-billed Egret	Greenshank 2	Wire-tailed Swallow
Great White Egret 138, breeding	Common Sandpiper 6	European Swallow
Grey Heron 33	African Skimmer 2	African Pied Wagtail
Black-headed Heron 3	Cape Turtle Dove	Yellow-bellied Greenbul
Goliath Heron 1	Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	Terrestrial Bulbul
Hamerkop 1	Brown-necked Parrot	Common Bulbul
Yellow-billed Stork 22, excluding breeding colony	Meyer's Parrot	Heuglin's Robin
Openbill Stork 50	Purple-crested Turaco	African Moustached Warbler
Abdim's Stork 500	Grey Lourie	Rattling Cisticola
Woolly-necked Stork 1	Jacobin Cuckoo	Red-faced Cisticola
Saddle-billed Stork	Red-chested Cuckoo	Tawny-flanked Prinia
Sacred Ibis 3	Black Cuckoo	Bleating Bush Warbler
Hadada	Emerald Cuckoo	Paradise Flycatcher
African Spoonbill 2	Didric Cuckoo	Collared Sunbird
Fulvous Whistling Duck 8	Giant Eagle Owl	Scarlet-chested Sunbird
White-faced Whistling Duck 38	Pearl-spotted Owlet	European Golden Oriole
Egyptian Goose 75	Gaboon Nightjar	Red-backed Shrike
Spur-winged Goose 4	Bat-like Spinetail	Southern Puffback

Knob-billed Duck 5  
 African Fish Eagle 4  
 Hooded Vulture (1)  
 White-backed Vulture (10)  
 Lappet-faced Vulture (4)  
 Brown Snake Eagle (1)  
 Western Banded Snake Eagle (1)  
 Bateleur (10)  
 Tawny Eagle (3)  
 Booted Eagle (1)  
 Martial Eagle (2)  
 Red-necked Falcon (1)  
 Red-necked Francolin  
 Helmeted Guineafowl  
 Lesser Gallinule  
 Southern Crowned Crane 15  
 African Jacana  
 Water Dikkop 20  
 Three-banded Courser  
 Common Pratincole (1000+)  
 Senegal Wattled Plover

African Palm Swift  
 Little Swift  
 Horus Swift  
 African White-rumped Swift  
 Red-faced Mousebird  
 Malachite Kingfisher 2  
 Brown-headed Kingfisher  
 Chestnut-bellied Kingfisher  
 Senegal Kingfisher  
 Striped Kingfisher  
 Giant Kingfisher  
 Pied Kingfisher 58  
 Little Bee-eater  
 White-fronted Bee-eater  
 European Bee-eater  
 Lilac-breasted Roller  
 Broad-billed Roller  
 Scimitarbill  
 Red-billed Hornbill  
 Crowned Hornbill  
 African Grey Hornbill

Black-crowned Tchagra  
 Tropical Boubou  
 Orange-breasted Bush Shrike  
 Grey-headed Bush Shrike  
 White-throated Nicator  
 Fork-tailed Drongo  
 Greater Blue-eared Starling  
 Southern Long-tailed Starling  
 Wattled Starling  
 Red-billed Oxpecker  
 S. Grey-headed Sparrow  
 Red-billed Buffalo Weaver  
 White-browed Sparrow-weaver  
 African Masked Weaver  
 Village Weaver  
 Red Bishop  
 Melba Finch  
 Blue Waxbill  
 Village Indigobird  
 Long-tailed Paradise Widow  
 Yellow-fronted Canary

\*For waterbirds, numbers indicate birds seen on the river, between Tena-Tena and Nkwali on Saturday afternoon. For raptors, numbers indicate total seen in two days.

Lesser gallinule



## IBA NEWS

### World Wetlands Day

Chris Wood

In Zambia this year the annual World Wetlands Day (2<sup>nd</sup> February) was held at the village of Nansenga Primary School about 40km from Kabwe. It was organised by WWF in conjunction with ZAWA under the slogan “Healthy Wetlands for Healthy People” The crowd of between and 200 and 300 people attended and was kept entertained by traditional dancers and entertainers while waiting for the start of proceedings.

Opening speeches were made by WWF and ZAWA reps. WWF intends to start a big development project in the area working closely with the government. This aims at sustainable development and livelihoods.

The main speech was delivered by Director of Conservation Mr. Edwin Matokwane. Some of the points he raised were that the swamps are home to 250 000 people & have a population growth rate of 3.5%. He felt that expansion of large-scale industrial agriculture should proceed slowly and with caution because of problems associated with water abstraction and chemical runoff. Subsistence agriculture is less demanding of water. The government wants to limit new settlements in the area, and prevent the expansion of large-scale agriculture round the swamps

Lukanga Swamps should be seen as an integrated natural factory and care should be taken not to harm it. The shallow waters of the swamps allow light to permeate to the bottom and this results in a high level of photosynthesis and the high productivity of the swamps. However, fish production has halved in recent years, from 2.6 tonnes to 1.3 tonnes.

He raised as problems to be dealt with, water abstraction, the over-exploitation of fish stocks and the destruction of woodlands by charcoal making.

To achieve these ends the government intends to restock the swamps with both fish stocks and mammals such as red lechwe and sitatunga; establish Community Resource Boards (CRBs) (there are none in the area at present); establish partnerships with communities and with NGOs and civil society. These should aim at promoting the Millennium Development Goals.

Tourism is the government's second highest priority for development and Lukanga has important potential and the government wishes to promote it in the area.

After this speech a reply was made by the senior chief speaking through his representative, answering some of the points raised in the speech and raising the problem of bribery by some local officials.

I spoke with a number of people before and after the official speeches. One most interesting thing I learnt, as far as ZOS is concerned, is that many fishermen catch birds both to eat and to sell. I was not fully clear as to whether this was just during the closed fishing season, but one informant said that some fishermen had given up catching fish and now concentrated on birds.

HIV/Aids is a major problem in the area with 25% testing positive of those tested so far this year. There was an outbreak of cholera in the area last year.

## **Conclusion**

We are planning to work in the Lukanga area as part of the IBA programme. However the WWF are starting a big project there and there is no point in "competing" with them. Nevertheless, Lukanga swamp covers a big area and there is scope for cooperation with WWF. Possibly we could work with them to establish a biodiversity monitoring initiative.

It seems that at least part of the Lukanga is to be proclaimed a Game Management Area and ZAWA are starting consultations with communities to affect this.

## The EC Monitoring Programme

The EC biodiversity monitoring programme, “*Instituting Effective Monitoring of Protected Areas (Important Bird Areas)*” is being implemented in eight African countries, Botswana, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Tunisia, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The programme focuses on those Protected Areas (PAs) that are also Important Bird Areas (IBAs). There are 32 such areas in Zambia, and ZOS is the implementing agency with our new staff member, Joseph Mwenya, as the Project Manager.

The goal of the programme is to institutionalize biodiversity monitoring in government departments and NGOs working in, or responsible for, those areas as well as in the local communities who are dependent on the natural resources these PAs provide for their livelihoods and development. As a first step towards this it may be necessary to build capacity to effectively conduct and sustain the monitoring.

Monitoring biodiversity is necessary in order to:

- Detect threats before they become irreversible
- Provide a basis for actions to counter those threats
- Assess the effectiveness of conservation efforts and actions.
- Provide a sound basis for advocacy.

What is to be monitored will vary from site to site. In general, key or indicator species or assemblages will be monitored. These will include:

- Waterbird populations
- Terrestrial bird populations
- Mammal populations
- Habitat conditions
- Key individual species

The monitoring method used is a robust and relatively simple tool that can be used easily by communities and SSGs at all of Zambia’s IBAs, as well as by government departments and NGOs. It is a “Pressure - State – Response” method designed to highlight emerging threats.

**Pressure** – threats to the site or the focus (key species) of monitoring effort

**State** – the condition of the site or focus of the monitoring effort

**Response** – Actions to be taken to counteract or limit the threat.

The Pressure, State, and Response are scored on a simple 3-point scale at individual sites, and the results compared between monitoring assessments. This enables trends at the site to be recognized, and the effectiveness of actions to counter them to be assessed.

The results from the monitoring will be made available to other stakeholders and organisations to use in their own programmes. However, it is of little use gathering the information if no action is taken when threats are identified. This must be the primary aim of the programme; to arrest threats to biodiversity in Zambia before it is too late. This may necessitate coordination of efforts between government, NGOs and local communities.

Although this programme has specific objectives and is confined to the 32 IBAs which are also protected areas, it has obvious synergies and overlaps with other ZOS programmes, the IBA Programme and the Wings over Wetlands. It is hoped that other organisations will take part in this programme. The wider the participating organisations the more effective conservation efforts will be.

## **BINOCULAR DONATION FROM VBN**



In October last year, VBN (Vogelbescherming Nederland or BirdLife Netherlands) kindly made a donation of optical equipment to ZOS. We received a spotting scope and tripod for our waterbird counts, a new pair of binoculars for our IBA schools coordinator, Pius Lilanda, and 10 second-hand pairs of binoculars for some of our IBA schools.

We used the scope for the first time in January at the waterbird count on Huntley Farm in Chisamba. Pius Lilanda has started to distribute the binoculars to schools, and some of the binoculars were also used for the first time by schoolchildren at the waterbird count.

Thank you to VBN for this kind donation.



Pius Lilanda looks on as children and the club patron from Steven Pende School, Chisamba IBA, try out the new scope and binoculars



## UPDATES

### LAST CHANCE TO SEE COLOUR-RINGED RED-FOOTED FALCONS!



Red-footed falcons (*Falco vespertinus*) are starting to leave Zambia to return to their breeding grounds in Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe. After breeding, they start to gather together in flocks in October, and begin their remarkable 7000 km migration to reach southern Africa between November and December. They start to leave southern Africa again in February, and arrive back in their breeding grounds in April-May.

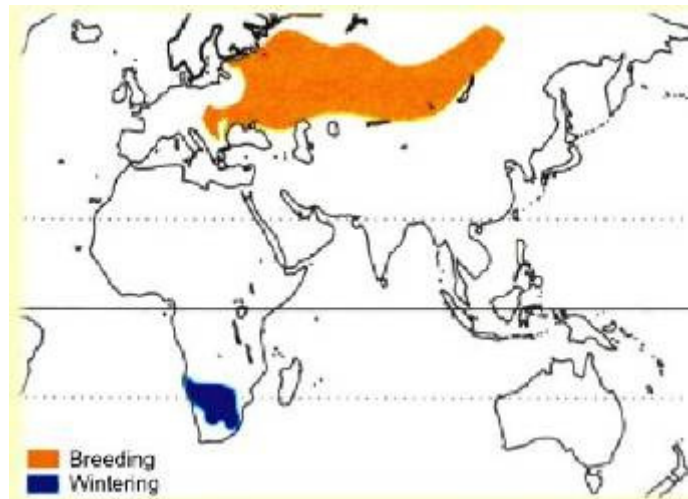
Their population is steadily declining, and a conservation program was initiated in Hungary in 2006. The project's main aim is to increase and maintain the breeding population of the species in Hungary and in western Romania. As part of this project, nestling and adult red-footed falcons are marked with individual colour ring combinations. The project relies on a widespread network of birdwatchers, project participants and volunteers to collect enough recovery data to study movements and mortality. Especially important is the contribution from observers in Africa. The wintering grounds are in Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola, as on the map shown.

They feed mostly on insects, grasshoppers, locusts, dragonflies, and bugs. Vertebrate prey includes small mammals, amphibians and reptiles and occasionally small birds. Swarming termites are an important prey on the African wintering grounds.

The red-footed falcon is listed 'near threatened' in the IUCN Red List. The world population is estimated between 26 000-39 000

pairs. A significant decline in population occurred during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Causes are uncertain, but may be due to loss of nesting sites through illegal logging, loss of breeding habitat through intensifying agriculture, electrocution on powerlines, road-kills, or increased mortality during migration. Please look out for colour-ringed falcons. If you are lucky enough to spot one of these birds, carefully note the ring colours, and contact ZOS, or visit their website to report your sighting directly [www.falcoproject.hu/en/](http://www.falcoproject.hu/en/)

A postscript from Bob notes that in March 2005 local farmers recorded large numbers around Choma, and he reported a huge flock coming in to roost on the gum tree opposite the bus station on 26<sup>th</sup> March. He estimated 4,000 birds, but it may have been anywhere between 1,000 and 10,000! (10,000 has been recorded for Harare in the past)



 Lizanne Roxburgh

## SIGHTINGS

### JANUARY 2008

January this year was the most hopeless I can ever remember for birdwatching; it rained non-stop the whole month! My little Sinde River reached its record height on 31<sup>st</sup>, up to the steps JUST below the house.

**Thrush Nightingales** heard singing on Bovu Island and various places round Livingstone but not so much as usual – I think they are put off by the rain. Interestingly we get the Thrush Nightingale, otherwise known as Sprosser, but not the true Nightingale from England which migrates to Africa but more in the west and not so far south. Ours comes from a bit further east. In Sweden they are Thrush Nightingales, which is where Linnaeus was, so he named it *Luscinia luscinia*, and the classic English Nightingale is *Luscinia megarhynchos*. Nightingales hold winter territories and sing here to defend these, but they never sing at night here, perhaps the African night is just too dark! One has the impression that they have more spits and crackles in their song than the English Nightingale, I am not sure whether this is a difference between the two species or the difference between a winter song and a breeding song.

**Green Sandpiper** As usual one hanging around the Sinde River all month. Last year it was here till very late in the year at a time when it should really be up in the north, breeding.

**Cuckoo Finch.** I spent a day or two at John Robjent's farm where Dr Claire Spottiswoode is doing fascinating work on this brood parasitic bird which is abundant on John's farm. They use the nests mainly of Tawny-flanked Prinias and Red-faced Cisticolas to lay their eggs, but interestingly NOT the Rattling Cisticola, perhaps the commonest Cisticola. This species seems to have won the host-parasite battle and has learnt to recognize the parasite's eggs and so kicks them out. Claire has been playing tricks on the birds, swapping eggs around so as to study the acceptance or rejection of "planted" eggs

**Willow Warbler** A dry morning on 17<sup>th</sup> (it didn't last long!) seemed to stimulate Willow Warblers round my house to start singing, in preparation for the long journey back north. It makes the place sound like an English spring (or anywhere in the Palaearctic; the Willow Warbler is the most populous of all northern birds, there are an estimated billion of them, all in Africa at the moment. Hence in the miombo at this time of year Willow Warbler is often the commonest bird although most people don't notice them, they are so small and inconspicuous.

**European Grey Cuckoo.** One on top of a dead tree on Huntley Farm where we were doing the Wetlands count on 19<sup>th</sup>. This bird is difficult to distinguish from the African Grey Cuckoo. The clinching feature in this case was the spotted rather than barred under-tail. Of course the European Cuckoo NEVER calls when here, and the African one does a tuneless and much less arresting version: "Coo-cuk"

Bob Stjernstedt [bob@zamnet.zm](mailto:bob@zamnet.zm) Livingstone, 29<sup>th</sup> February 2008

## IBA KIDS CORNER

A game to play by Pius Lilanda.

**Guess the right names for the following birds:-**

Breakfast Snake Eagle  
Guineaflovers  
Ladida Ibis  
Scared Ibis  
Ground Thornbill  
Dish Eagle  
White-black Duck  
Double-banded Sandmouse  
Shoobill  
Money Buzzard  
Battled Crane  
Mouse Sparrow

## FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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