

BirdLife

T H E M A G A Z I N E

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2020



BIRD'S EYE VIEW

What studying our feathered friends tells us about the planet's
past, present and future

Together we are BirdLife International Partnership for **nature** and **people**



www.birdlife.org

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



P.40
 WHAT IS 'HATCH',
 AND HOW WILL IT
 MAKE A WORLD OF
 DIFFERENCE?

THE EYES HAVE IT.

Eagle-eyed. Eyes like a hawk. The superior vision of raptors is so legendary it has found its way into our everyday speech. But can we take a moment to acknowledge the (as ever) unappreciated work of vultures? These sharp-sighted scavengers are able to spot an animal carcass from miles away, meaning they're first on the scene to clean up the mess before disease can spread. But their keen eye for a good meal has also contributed to their decline, as poachers poison their kills to avoid circling vultures tipping off rangers to their illegal activities. It's been five years since BirdLife began its campaign to raise awareness of the plight of Africa's vultures – turn to page 28 to find out how the needle has moved since then.

We can also benefit by viewing the world through the eyes of a bird. Our avian friends are extremely responsive to changes in the environment. Couple this with the fact that birds are one of the best studied animal classes on the planet, and that their mobility means they can be found almost everywhere, and it becomes clear that the data they provide has much to teach us about whether our stewardship of the planet is on the right path. Our findings begin on page 12.

Alex Dale, Editor

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE



STUART BUTCHART

Stuart is BirdLife's Chief Scientist. His team's remit is to develop the global scientific data and research that informs our conservation work. His team's latest report, *Birds & Biodiversity Targets*, takes a look at what birds can tell us about our progress towards the Aichi Targets – coverage begins on [page 12](#).



NOELLE KUMPEL

September was a busy month for the BirdLife Policy Team, even by their standards. After a summer of disruption September saw the launch of the Global Biodiversity Outlook report, and culminated in the UN Summit on Biodiversity. Noelle's thoughts can be found on [page 24](#).



MARK BOLTON

On [page 62](#), Mark, Principal Conservation Scientist at the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), explains how a paperclip-sized satellite tag gave us important new insights into the life of the small but tough European Storm-petrel, and how these discoveries can help us protect it.

SHARE THE LOVE

Give the gift of birds with a yearly subscription to
BirdLife: The Magazine.
 Delivering the latest conservation breakthroughs,
 discoveries and insights, straight from the field to your door,
 it's the perfect gift for the bird lover in your life.



www.birdlife.org/sharethelove

Photo: Ray Hennessy/Shutterstock

BirdLife THE MAGAZINE

OCT-DEC 2020
NUMBER 3
VOLUME 43
ISSN 2519-4658

EDITOR Alex Dale alex.dale@birdlife.org
DEPUTY EDITOR Shaun Hurrell

The views expressed are those of the contributors
 and not necessarily those of BirdLife International.

ART EDITOR Richard Hood
 Printed by On Demand Print Services Ltd
 Printed on processed chlorine-free paper made from at least 80%
 post-consumer waste recycled fibre.

To advertise in BIRDLIFE please contact Jim Lawrence,
 Mobile: +44(0) 7831 187 057
 Email: jim.lawrence@birdlife.org

To subscribe to BIRDLIFE please email membership@birdlife.org

BIRDLIFE is available by subscription from BirdLife International
 at the above address and from some Partner organisations.

CONTRIBUTORS: Stuart Butchart, Noelle Kumpel, Jessica Law, Mireia Peris, Cressida Stevens

SCIENCE CONSULTANTS Tris Allinson, Lenke Balint, Ian Burfield, Lucy Haskell, Melanie Heath, Anuj Jain, Lea Kaplani

FRONT COVER Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris*, Jessica Winter

OFFICERS OF BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

President Emeritus Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan
Honorary President Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado of Japan
Honorary Vice-Presidents Baroness Young of Old Scone (UK), Gerard A Bertrand (USA), A. P. Leventis (UK), Ben Olewine IV, Jane Fenton and Peter Johan Schei
Chief Executive Patricia Zurita, *Chairman* Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias *Treasurer* Nick Prentice

COUNCIL OF BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

Africa Achilles Byaruhanga (Uganda), Claudia Feltrup-Azafzaf (Tunisia) and Mark Anderson (South Africa), *Asia* Sarath Wimalabandara Kotagama (Sri Lanka) and Shawn Lum (Singapore), *Americas* David O'Neill (USA), Rosabel Miró (Panama) and Alberto Yanosky (Paraguay), *Europe* Gergő Halmos (Hungary), Vera Voronova (Kazakhstan) and Philippe Funcken (Belgium), *Middle East* Yehya Khaled (Jordan) and Assad Adel Serhal (Lebanon), *Pacific* Kevin Hague (New Zealand) and Paul Sullivan (Australia)

GLOBAL ADVISORY GROUP TO THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Chair Susan Orr, *Former Chair* Wendy Paulson, John S. Adams, Jane Alexander, Geoff Ball, Nathalie Boule, Nick Butcher, Appy Chandler, Christie Constantine, Sean Dennis, Scott Dresser, Joe Ellis, Warren Evans, John Gregory, Daniel Gauthier, Piyush Gupta, Richard Hale, Pamela Isdell, James Kushlan, Tasso Leventis, Hector Morales, Ben Olewine, Nick Prentice, Deb Rivel, Terry Townshend, Kurt Vogt, Barbara Young

BIRDLIFE is published quarterly by BirdLife International, The David Attenborough Building, Pembroke Street, Cambridge CB2 3QZ, UK
 Tel. +44 (0)1223 277318 | Fax +44 (0)1223 277200 | Email birdlife@birdlife.org | UK registered charity n. 1042125
 BirdLife International is a worldwide partnership of conservation organisations working to protect the world's birds and their habitats.



The production of BIRDLIFE is generously
 supported by the A. G. Leventis Foundation.



Partnership for
 nature and people



REGULARS

6 AROUND THE PARTNERSHIP
The latest news from every region

8 ONE TO WATCH
Golden White-eye

10 IRREPLACEABLE
Fraser River Delta, British Columbia, Canada

60 BCI
Peruvian diving-petrel in recovery, and other stories from Bird Conservation International, our quarterly peer-reviewed journal

62 SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT
New tracking technology reveals intrepid journey of UK's smallest seabird
Mark Bolton, Principal Conservation Scientist, RSPB (BirdLife in the UK)



COVER STORY

12 BIRD'S EYE VIEW
An in-depth look at our new Birds & Biodiversity Targets report
BirdLife Science team

20 BIRD'S EYE VIEW
What birds tell us about building a new framework for nature
BirdLife Science team

22 BIRD'S EYE VIEW
Targets are important, but implementation is key
BirdLife Science team

24 BIRD'S EYE VIEW
World Leaders: We're putting nature at the heart of a green recovery
Noelle Kumpel



8



12



22

28



48

52



FEATURES

28 PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS
Five ways we've helped vultures in the past five years
Jessica Law

32 IRREPLACEABLE
The Pantanal: world's largest tropical wetland is ablaze
Jessica Law

40 INTRODUCING HATCH
Hatching a future: our new initiative to support environmental civil society organisations around the world
Shaun Hurrell

48 NOT A BIRD
Reptile rescue: saving three globally threatened lizards from an oil spill in Mauritius
Jessica Law

39 FLYWAYS
Global Bird Weekend smashes two world records - for the benefit of conservation
Alex Dale

52 SPRING ALIVE
Small but fearless: meet the Common Ringed Plover, the latest flagship species of our youth engagement programme
Jessica Law

56 NOT A BIRD
A head-start for Loggerhead Turtles in Cabo Verde
Shaun Hurrell

58 NATURE & PEOPLE
Meet the female forest defenders
Kathleen Zambas, Haribon Foundation (BirdLife in the Philippines)

AROUND THE PARTNERSHIP

ALL THE LATEST NEWS, INSIGHT AND SUCCESS STORIES FROM 115 PARTNERS IN 112 COUNTRIES

KEY

- BIRDLIFE PARTNER
- BIRDLIFE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

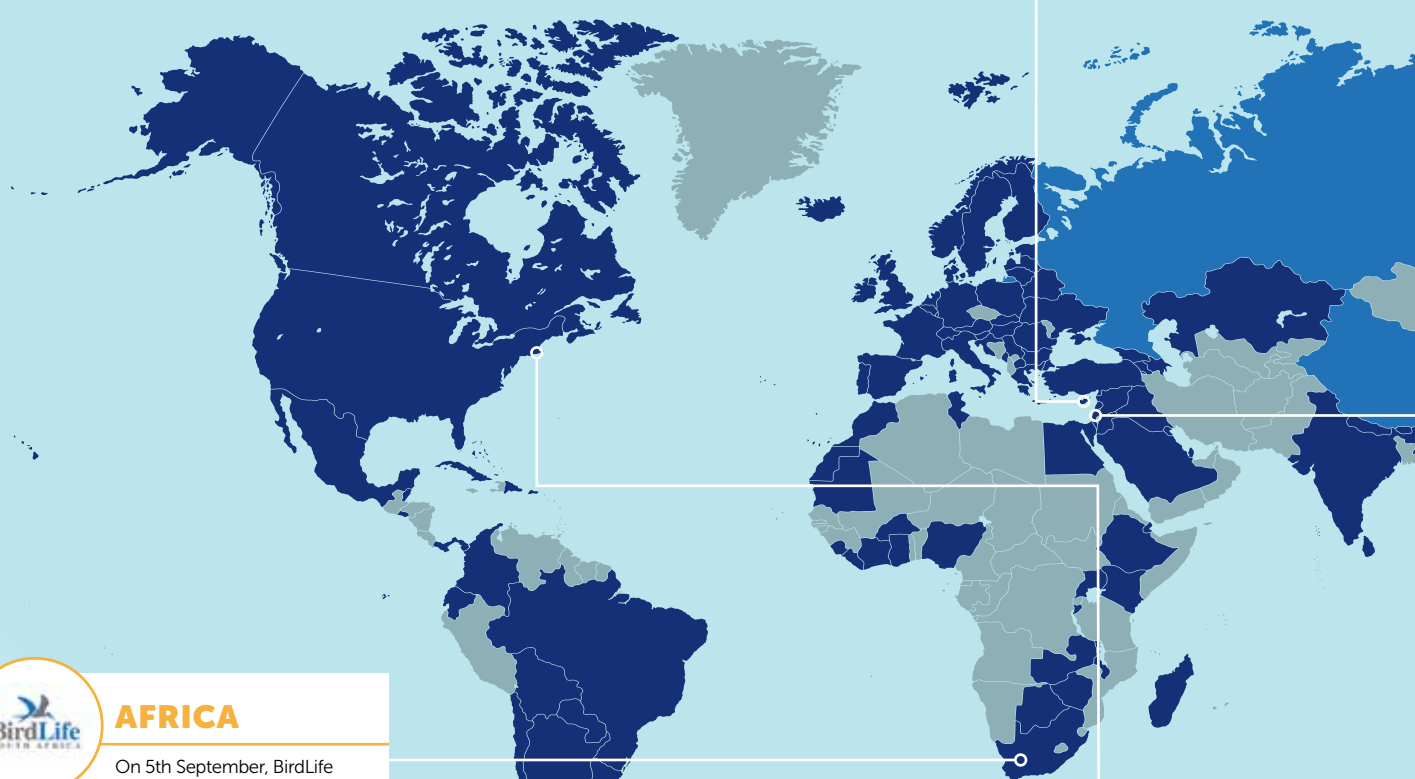


EUROPE

More than 73,000 White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* were spotted in Cyprus from mid-late August, using the island as a stopover during their journey from Europe to Africa. Migrating storks usually avoid the Mediterranean sea, as the rising air currents they soar upon do not usually form over water. However, this year they were probably forced to change course to avoid bad weather.



Photo Dave Walker/BirdLife Cyprus



AFRICA

On 5th September, BirdLife South Africa held a virtual African Bird Fair. The online event was a resounding success, bringing together thousands of attendees. Activities included virtual wildlife tours, panel discussions, presentations and exhibitions, involving multiple BirdLife Africa Partners. Session topics ranged from the African Bird Atlas Project to inspiring a new, young generation of African birders.



AMERICAS

The 2020 Audubon Photography Awards were announced this July. The award-winning entries were selected from more than 6,000 submissions from all 50 US states and seven Canadian provinces and territories. This is the second year the Plants for Birds Prize was included, which highlights the essential role of native plants and the natural habitat and food sources they provide for birds.



Youth prize Northern Jacana Photo Vayun Tiwari



MIDDLE EAST

A recent survey by SPNI (BirdLife in Israel) showed an unusually high density of Nubian Nightjars *Caprimulgus nubicus* in Sdom saltmarsh. However, this was far from good news. The birds were found to have fled from the nearby Fifa reserve in Jordan, where some of the most important habitats for the species had been bulldozed for unknown reasons in December 2019 or January 2020.



Photo Marcel Holyoak/Flickr



BIRD BULLETIN



EU WETLAND BIRDS WIN BATTLE AGAINST LEAD-BASED HUNTING

Every year, more than a million waterbirds across Europe die from ingesting toxic lead shot. On the 3rd of September, a critical milestone was reached when a European Commission committee, made up of representatives from all EU Member States, put forward a proposal to completely ban lead shot in wetlands. Eighteen countries, representing 90% of the EU's population, voted in favour of the proposal. This is only the first step: following the EU's legislative procedure, this proposal now needs to be approved by the European Parliament and Council. However, it is a life-saving breakthrough for wetland birds such as swans, spoonbills and flamingos, who often mistake lead shot pellets for grit which they swallow to grind their food. Since small stones are less prevalent in wetlands, birds in this environment are more vulnerable. Hopefully, hunters will soon be made to use safer alternatives for their ammunition, and the European Chemicals Agency is assessing a potential lead ban in terrestrial habitats other than wetlands, as well as a ban on fishing weights.

Bewick's Swan Cygnus bewickii Photo Yves Adams/Vida



ASIA

The Malaysian Nature Society (BirdLife Partner) celebrated its 80th anniversary with a difference this year, by launching its own mobile phone app. Available for free on Google Play, the Malaysian Nature Society app allows users to learn about their country's amazing wildlife, keep up to date with national events and conservation news, and even report environmental problems and wildlife spotted in their area.



Photo Malaysian Nature Society



PACIFIC

NatureFiji – MareqetiViti has been awarded US\$ 40,000 by the U.S. Embassy's Economic Resilience Grant, which aims to bolster local organisations that are finding creative solutions to the economic adversities caused by COVID-19. Our Partner will use this funding to set up ecotourism in some of the nation's Key Biodiversity Areas, to provide sustainable incomes to local people when visitors return to Fiji.



Photo US Embassy in Fiji





Gold versus Brown

In the middle of the Pacific Ocean, you will find buried treasure – not in the ground, but flitting through the forests of Saipan and Aguijan in the Northern Mariana Islands. The Golden White-eye *Cleptornis marchei* may weigh only 20 grams, but it is worth more than its weight in gold as part of the ecosystem. Feeding on insects, fruits and nectar, it pollinates many of the islands' plants, and helps another small bird species, the Rufous Fantail *Rhipidura rufifrons*, to find food by flushing out insects when foraging. The two species can often be spotted in an unlikely procession, with the fantail following along in the Golden White-eye's wake.

Unfortunately, for many years this species has been living in the shadow of extinction, as the threat of the invasive Brown Tree Snake *Boiga irregularis* slithered closer and closer to its shores. The carnivorous, nocturnal snake was accidentally introduced to the island of Guam by a US military cargo ship at the end of World War II. With no natural predators, the devastation was rapid. Surveys reported a 90% decline in most bird species within nine years of the snake's invasion, and three bird species went

extinct completely.

Worryingly, all goods imported to the Northern Mariana Islands are shipped through Guam, since both are overseas territories of the USA. When the snake established itself on islands near Saipan – the Golden White-eye's biggest stronghold – conservationists feared that it would become another on the long list of avian casualties. Sightings of the dreaded snake around Saipan's port seemed to confirm these fears. This looming threat led to the species being classed as Critically Endangered in 2004.

However, recent reports show that there have been no confirmed records of Brown Tree Snake on Saipan for 20 years. It seems that biosecurity measures put in place to prevent the snake's spread are working, and the predicted disaster has not come to pass. This, combined with the successful translocation of an "insurance population" of Golden White-eyes to the nearby island of Sarigan, means the bird's future may not be as bleak as previously thought. It isn't completely in the clear – it still has a very small range, and habitat degradation is a growing concern – but hope springs eternal. ■

GOLDEN WHITE-EYE *Cleptornis marchei* (Critically Endangered)
Photo Peter/Flickr

IRREPLACEABLE

Fraser River Delta British Columbia, Canada



The value of a tract of land can look very different depending on what your priorities are. If you're a business mogul, you'll know the Fraser River Delta as Canada's 'Gateway to Asia' – a major transport and trading hub serviced by industrial shipping, rail and road networks. But for millions of migratory birds, this fertile estuary has a far more important role as the gateway to their breeding grounds on the arctic tundra. Every year, thousands of waterfowl and waders stop to rest and refuel on their spring migration, feasting on crustaceans, molluscs and 'biofilm' – slimy sheets of microbes that are found on the vast mudflats of the Fraser River Delta.

During late summer and early autumn, the delta becomes an important hideaway for moulting grebes and sea ducks, at their most vulnerable (and least glamorous) time of year. Then in winter, the banks of the estuary become carpeted with the plump, downy outlines of swans ducks and geese huddled against the cold. But these wetlands don't just offer year-round hospitality to migratory birds – they also acts as a gateway inland to Canada's largest migration of wild salmon. And that's not to mention the gateway to happiness and wellbeing it has provided to humans, inspiring countless Canadian citizens to love and respect the natural world.

Given this information, you may be shocked to learn that this area of rare ecological importance has already lost 80% of its natural habitat. Now, the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority is proposing a mega-expansion of a shipping terminal at Roberts Bank: a proposal which has been criticised by a federal review panel as having significant adverse effects on the delta's species. BirdLife Partners Nature Canada and Birds Canada, along with local NGO BC Nature, are campaigning for those in power to put in place a Fraser Estuary Management Plan before any more development can occur, and are calling for public support. It's up to us to decide what kind of gateway we'd like Fraser River Delta to be – [visit **e-activist.com/page/64289/action/1** to make your voice heard.](https://www.birdlife.org/partners/naturecanada/birdscanada/visit-e-activist.com/page/64289/action/1) ■



Photo Camuckle



Photo Mick Thompson | Flickr

WESTERN SANDPIPER

Calidris mauri

Most of the global population of Western Sandpipers stop in the Fraser River Delta during spring migration. The fatty acids found in biofilm are a vital nutrient source for this tiny wader, giving it the energy to journey another 3,000 kilometres and start breeding. Without the Fraser, the entire species could be at risk.



Photo USFWS headquarters

CHINOOK SALMON

Oncorhynchus tshawytscha

As well welcoming migrating adult salmon, the delta is also an important salmon “nursery”, where juvenile Chinook Salmon feed and grow before setting off on their first trip to the Pacific Ocean. Adult Chinook are the primary food source for the highly threatened southern resident Killer Whale population, now down to around 75 individuals.

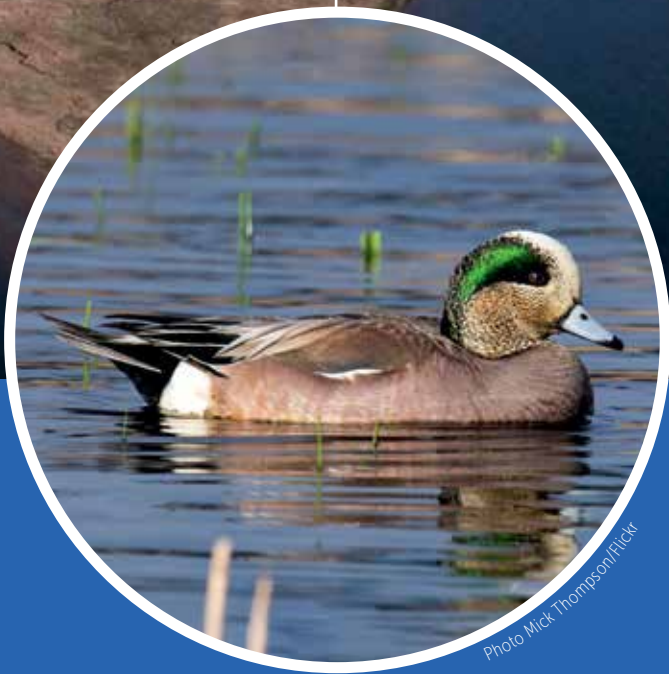


Photo Mick Thompson/Flickr

AMERICAN WIGEON

Mareca americana

Two percent of the world’s American Wigeon population overwinter at Fraser River Delta. This small, compact duck upends itself in search of aquatic plants or grazes on marshland and farm fields. Although familiar and widespread, its population dropped by 65% between 1966 and 2015 – with loss of habitat a major factor.



BIRD'S EYE VIEW

As the best studied and most mobile class of animals on the planet, birds are excellent indicators of our planet's health. Our latest report explores what birds tell us about society's progress (or lack thereof) toward meeting global targets to save biodiversity – and why, despite it all, there is hope for the future



You may have seen the recent news coverage surrounding the world's catastrophic failure to meet global targets to save biodiversity. In 2010, Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted 20 'Aichi Biodiversity Targets' to tackle nature loss. Ten years later, this is now being seen as a missed opportunity to tackle the biodiversity crisis, and the inevitable humanitarian cost of a degraded environment.

The CBD's fifth Global Biodiversity Outlook, released in mid-September, published bleak figures showing that none of the 20 Aichi Targets to save nature had been fully met, and in fact only six have been partially achieved. Many of these conclusions were informed by figures on bird populations acquired through BirdLife's data and research. Meanwhile, the WWF's Living Planet Report estimates that globally, populations of nearly 21,000 species of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians plummeted by an average of 68% between 1970 and 2016.

While it is easy to be pessimistic about this information, a deeper dive into our data on birds shows that there is cause for hope. Thanks to their visibility and popularity, birds are some of the best indicators of environmental health, showing us where global commitments towards nature have failed, and where they have succeeded. Case studies from the BirdLife Partnership show that there have been numerous successes over the past decade that demonstrate how achievable – and affordable – nature conservation can be with sufficient political investment.

On 30th September, BirdLife released our report, *Birds and Biodiversity Targets*, which uses our extensive global datasets and research to provide a road map to ensure the 2020s are not just another "lost decade for nature". This publication brings a message of hope to the world, using bird conservation successes to show that solutions exist for the problems facing the biosphere, and that nature can recover when these are enacted.

The report aims to dispel the idea that the governments failed because the targets were unachievable, outlining the solutions needed to plot a course where, by 2050, nature and humanity can live in harmony. Over the next few pages, we'll be showing you just a few examples of what birds tell us about the shortcomings of the past ten years, and inspiring opportunities that could help us to get it right this time.

**AAGE V.
JENSEN** 
**CHARITY
FOUNDATION**

This report was made possible thanks to the generous ongoing support of the Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, for which we at BirdLife International are very grateful.

BIRDS SHOW US... THE WORLD NEEDS TO DO MORE

Our key findings paint a stark picture of humanity's stewardship of the planet – we continue to pollute and destroy natural habitat at an unsustainable rate, and measures put in place to protect our nature are clearly inadequate



Photo Nicky Kenny/ Shutterstock.com



Photo Swayamsiddha Mohapatra



Photo Pablo Rodriguez Meriel

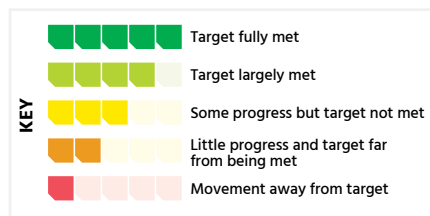


Photo lam zews/ Shutterstock

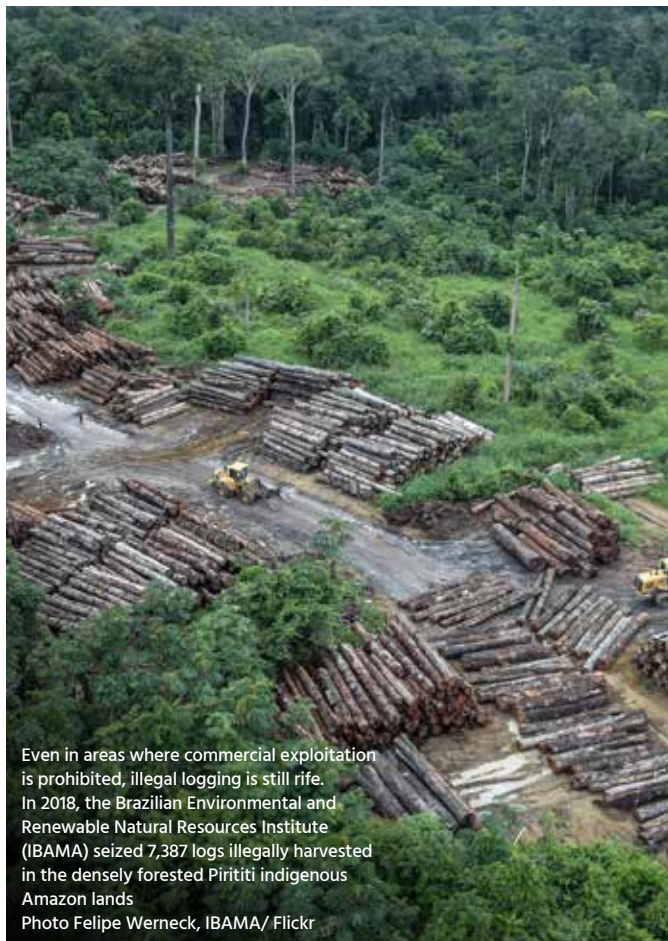


Photo Age fotostock/ Alamy

■ **Data from birds suggest that we have failed to meet any of the 20 Aichi Targets in full.** Thirteen targets have seen some progress but were not met, and five have seen little progress and are far from being met. Two were not assessed.

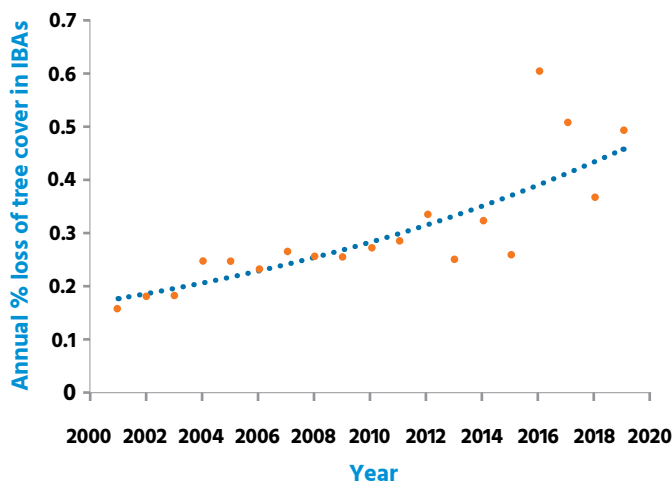


	<p>Strategic Goal A</p> <p>Target 1 – Raising awareness of the value of biodiversity</p> <p>Target 2 – Mainstreaming biodiversity values</p> <p>Target 3 – Reforming incentives</p> <p>Target 4 – Achieving sustainable production and consumption</p>
	<p>Strategic Goal B</p> <p>Target 5 – Reducing habitat loss and degradation</p> <p>Target 6 – Sustainable fisheries</p> <p>Target 7 – Ensuring sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and forestry</p> <p>Target 8 – Reducing pollution</p> <p>Target 9 – Tackling invasive species</p> <p>Target 10 – Minimizing pressures on coral reefs and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change</p>
	<p>Strategic Goal C</p> <p>Target 11 – Protecting and conserving biodiversity</p> <p>Target 12 – Preventing extinctions</p> <p>Target 13 – Maintaining genetic diversity in crops, livestock and wild relatives</p>
	<p>Strategic Goal D</p> <p>Target 14 – Safeguarding and restoring ecosystems that provide essential services</p> <p>Target 15 – Enhancing ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks</p>
	<p>Strategic Goal E</p> <p>Target 18 – Traditional knowledge</p> <p>Target 19 – Improving and sharing knowledge of biodiversity</p> <p>Target 20 – Mobilising resources for implementing the CBD</p>



Even in areas where commercial exploitation is prohibited, illegal logging is still rife. In 2018, the Brazilian Environmental and Renewable Natural Resources Institute (IBAMA) seized 7,387 logs illegally harvested in the densely forested Pirititi indigenous Amazon lands
Photo Felipe Werneck, IBAMA/ Flickr

■ **Protected area networks are yet to provide adequate coverage of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs), with 36% of IBAs being entirely unprotected.** What's more, 74% of IBAs are threatened by factors that degrade habitat, including unsustainable agriculture and commercial and residential development. Since 2000, 5.6% of forest cover has been lost from IBAs identified for forest-dependent birds, and 3.4% has been lost since 2010.



Total annual percentage tree cover lost between 2000 and 2019 within Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas identified for forest-dependent bird species. Increased losses in 2016 were driven by expanding agriculture, plus forestry and fires. Source: Hansen Global Forest Change v1.7 (2000-2019); <http://earthenginepartners.appspot.com/science-2013-global-forest>.

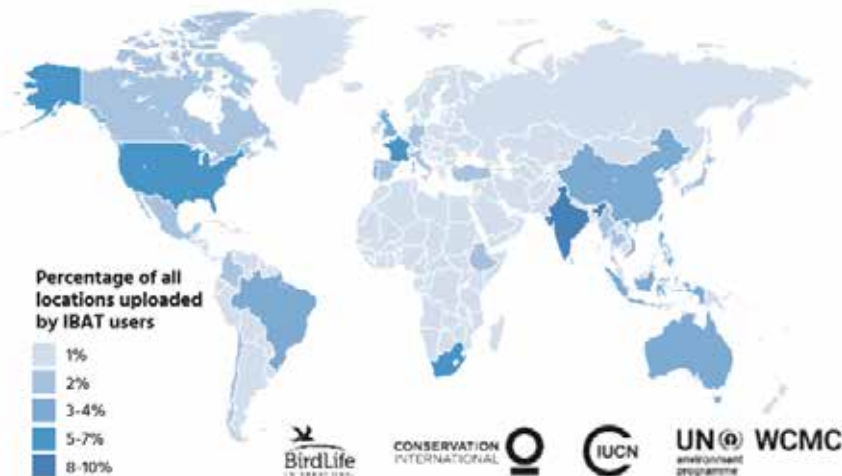
■ **The underlying drivers of loss of nature remain, with biodiversity still not yet adequately mainstreamed across all sectors.** Despite some encouraging progress, we are often still treating the symptoms of nature loss rather than the causes. In order to prevent damage before it happens, nature conservation needs to be integrated into the planning stage of all government and private sector ventures. Conservation policies need to be enacted through a 'whole-of-government' approach, including at the local level, and involve women, youth and Indigenous Peoples.



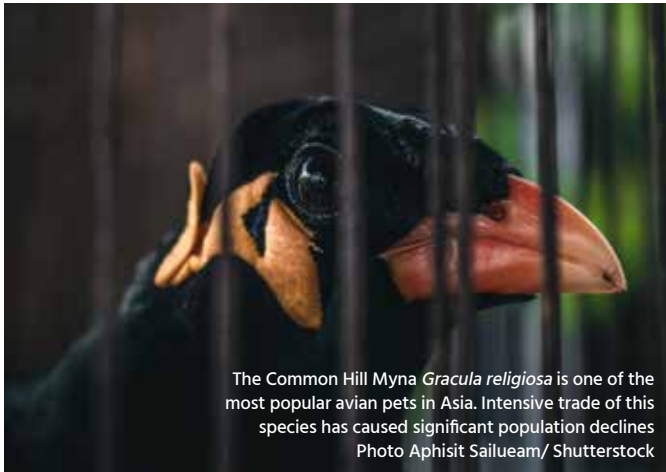
Photo STRIX



-  **22,523** locations in 228 countries assessed by IBAT users
-  **5,341** reports downloaded in 2019
-  **3,502** users on the IBAT platform

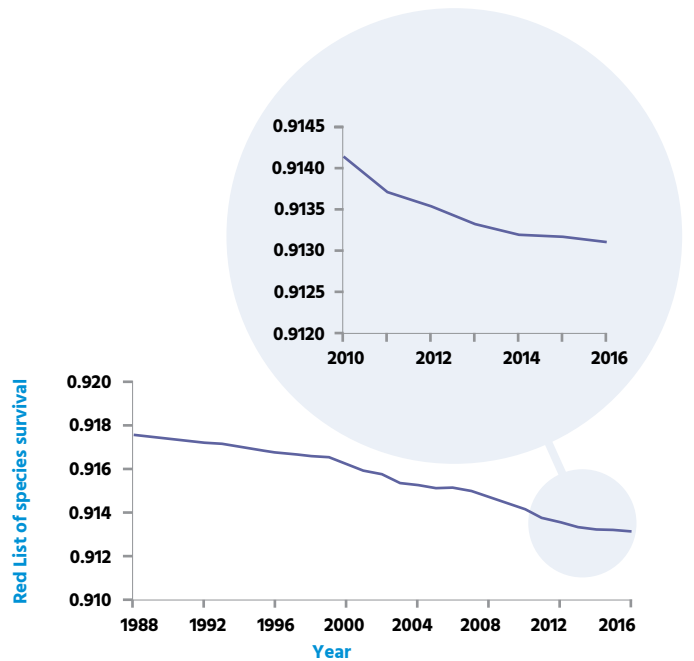


The Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool is widely used by the private sector to integrate biodiversity values into planning and reporting.



The Common Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa* is one of the most popular avian pets in Asia. Intensive trade of this species has caused significant population declines
Photo Aphisit Sailueam/ Shutterstock

■ **Species continue to be driven towards extinction, with declines of common species undermining delivery of ecosystem services such as pollination.** Birds are important pollinators for flowering plants in 65 families, including at least 50 crop and medicinal plant species. Over 1,000 bird species (including hummingbirds, honeyeaters, sunbirds and white-eyes) have been identified as pollinators. However, the status of these species is declining, with more species moving toward extinction than away from it.

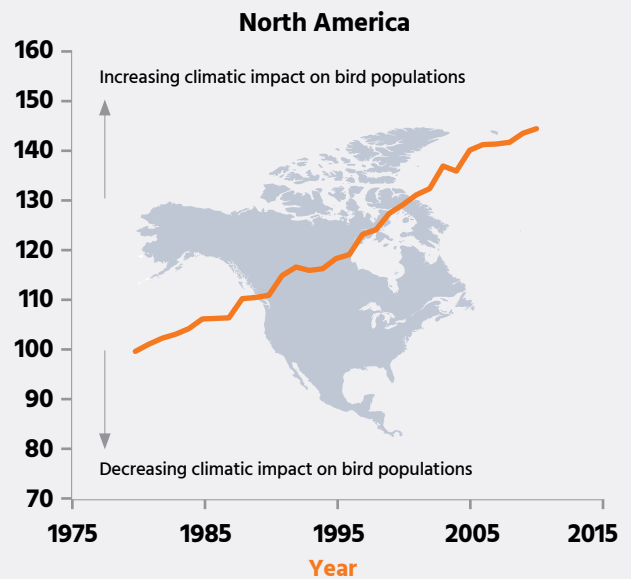
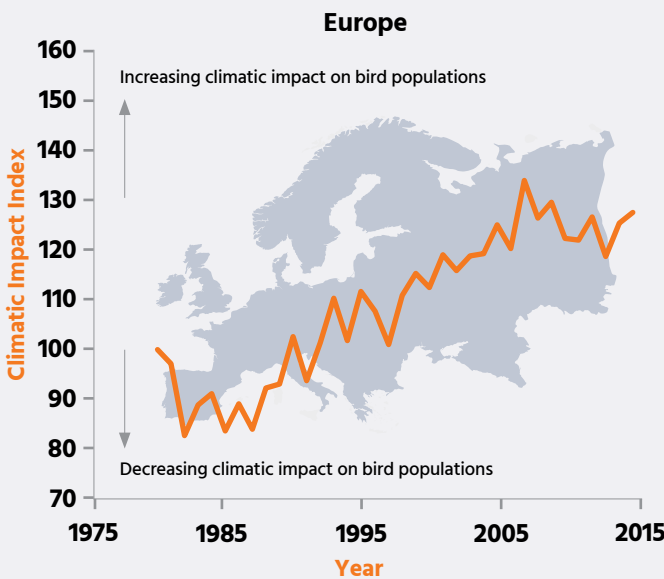


Red List Index of species survival for pollinator birds (1,089 species). A value of 1.0 indicates that all species are Least Concern, while a value of 0 indicates that all species have gone extinct.

Black Skimmer /Rynchops niger/ Photo Carol Rizkalla/Flickr



■ **Pollution, invasive alien species and climate change are growing threats to birds and other biodiversity.** There is already evidence that climate change has affected birds in North America and Europe since 2010, with cold-adapted species declining. Projections show that almost 50% of the world's land area will experience a change in bird communities in the future, even with modest levels of greenhouse gas emissions. At-risk species include the Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger*, which nests on sandy beaches, islands and shell banks – habitats vulnerable to sea level rise.



Climatic Impact Index for Europe and North America. Source: Stephens et al. (2016) based on data from EBCC/Durham University/RSPB/University of Cambridge/BirdLife International and North American Breeding Bird Survey (courtesy of John Sauer USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center).

■ **Agriculture, forestry and fisheries continue to be managed unsustainably, driving habitat loss and degradation.**

For example, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) remains heavily biased in favour of intensive farming. A 2018 study for the Czech Republic showed that farming intensified and farmland bird populations declined steeply after the country joined the EU in 2004, and similar results have been found in other EU countries. Incentives for growing biofuels have also led to increased use of land for maize, oilseed and other monocultures.

The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) continues to reward intensively managed farms while offering much poorer deals to wildlife-friendly farming systems. Only 25% of CAP spending goes to rural development, while just 4% is spent on agri-environment schemes.
Photo Fotokostic/ Shutterstock



The abundance of farmland bird populations declined as farmland yields increased following the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy after the Czech Republic joined the EU. Bars show means with 95% confidence intervals. Abundance is shown relative to 1982 levels, comparing 1993-2004 and 2005-2017. Yield is shown as the mean per hectare yield of wheat, comparing 1993-2004 and 2005-2016.

Source: data from Reif & Vermouzek (2019).

BIRDS TELL US... THERE IS STILL HOPE

Despite insufficient progress towards each target, birds provide hope, with examples of positive trends for particular aspects, species or locations. These success stories should inspire world leaders to adopt bold goals for a post-2020 plan for nature.

Photo Guam Dept. Agriculture



■ **Over the past ten years, conservation efforts have prevented up to 18 bird species from going extinct, and have slowed the effective extinction rate of birds by at least 40%.** For example, following a successful captive breeding programme, the Guam Rail *Hypotaenidia owstoni* (Critically Endangered) was released onto Rota and Cocos islands, and is now breeding in the wild for the first time in more than 30 years.

Photo Nahuel Chavez



■ **Mitigation measures are reducing bycatch of seabirds in fisheries, while action to reduce pollution is benefiting many species.** BirdLife's Albatross Task Force works alongside fishers on board their vessels to establish safer fishing techniques, and has helped to introduce seabird bycatch regulations in nine out of ten of its target fisheries. This has led to a 99% reduction in albatrosses killed in the South African hake trawl fishery since 2004-2005, with similar figures in other fleets.

■ **Unsustainable hunting practices are being eliminated through community conservation efforts in some locations.** A far-reaching community engagement campaign ended the capture of >100,000 Amur Falcons *Falco amurensis* each year in Nagaland, India. Local people were employed to patrol the area and to start eco-clubs through churches, schools and other community groups. Many former hunters have become guardians of the falcons, and there have been no reports of falcon hunting in the area since 2013.



>100,000 Amur Falcons

Counted during a transect of Doyang Reservoir by BNHS in 2018



>500 children

Currently take part in eco-clubs run by BNHS across 6 villages in Nagaland



>2,500 tourists

Visited home stays in Nagaland set up for bird tourism since 2015

Photo Tim Meiling/ Flickr



■ **Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas worldwide contain 300 gigatonnes of carbon, almost 9% of the world's carbon stocks, so their conservation also contributes to climate change mitigation.** Peatlands cover only around 3% of the earth's surface, yet store twice as much carbon as the world's forests. The number of IBAs formally recognised as protected areas has increased in the past decade, with their average coverage growing from 43% to 46% since 2010.



BirdLife's Soaring Bird Sensitivity Mapping Tool

■ **Data on birds are being used to mainstream biodiversity across sectors, such as for financial institutions and businesses to screen for biodiversity risks when planning projects and developments.** The renewable energy sector is increasingly using information on birds to avoid sensitive locations. BirdLife's Soaring Bird Sensitivity Mapping Tool is used throughout the Mediterranean, Middle East and Northeast Africa to identify areas where conflict between renewable energy and birds is likely to occur.

Aves Argentinas, Latin America's oldest environmental organisation and BirdLife Partner, organises several education and engagement programmes to raise awareness of birds and biodiversity, including birdwatching courses, a "Guardians of Nature" programme, and Argentina's School of Naturalists.

Photo Andrea Filadoro



■ **Birds help people to develop an awareness of nature and the biodiversity crisis.** Thanks to the beauty and popularity of birds, growing numbers of people are supporting civil society organisations focused on nature conservation. For example, the number of members of Natagora (BirdLife in Wallonia, Belgium) and Aves Argentinas (BirdLife in Argentina) have each more than doubled since 2010. As well as engaging people, birds increasingly inspire them to donate and take action to conserve biodiversity.



Download the full 64-page report at: www.birdlife.org/sowbtargets

WHAT BIRDS TELL US ABOUT BUILDING A NEW GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR NATURE

As well as quantifying progress (or failure) and highlighting successes and good news stories in relation to the Aichi Targets, data from birds can inform the development and implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and its targets

The rich data from birds show that while we have failed to meet most of the Aichi Targets – and indeed the overarching mission to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2020 – there are also positive examples and success stories, with encouraging trends in particular places, for subsets of species, or for particular aspects. These results also provide valuable insights for the next set of biodiversity commitments: the goals, targets and implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that is under negotiation through the Convention on Biological Diversity. Here we summarise the key implications.



The health of our planet is dependent on the development of clear, ambitious, outcome-orientated goals which address the needs of both nature and people. Photo via NASA

- 1. The new framework needs a clear, communicable, overarching aim,** comparable to the Paris Agreement's goal to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C. The 2020 document was lengthy, lacked the clarity needed to focus political attention and was insufficiently ambitious. The stakes are now far higher, and only transformational change across society will enable us to achieve the 2050 vision of living in harmony with nature. The new mission must be clear that we must not only halt the loss of biodiversity but start to recover it by 2030, in order to ensure full recovery by 2050.
- 2. There needs to be a clear 'theory of change' mapping a pathway to achieve this mission,** distinguishing outcome-focused aims – which should deliver against the three over-arching goals of the Convention (conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of genetic benefits of biodiversity) and the three levels of biodiversity (ecosystem, species and genetic) – from action-orientated targets and a set of enabling conditions.
- 3. Ultimately, the plan needs to prevent extinctions, recover the abundance and diversity of life, and retain and restore ecosystem integrity** with KBAs at the core, so that all people and nature can thrive.
- 4. New targets must not only be more ambitious in certain areas, but critically much more 'SMART'** – specific, measurable, ambitious, realistic and time-bound – so the action needed is clear and progress trackable.

Download the full report at birdlife.org/SOWBtargets to read our specific recommendations for each focal area.



the rare
bird club
of BirdLife International

Take your support to new heights

For individuals who want to make a difference to bird conservation, through higher level support

Join and gain access to exclusive webinars, dinners, events and birding trips as part of our Rare Bird Club family

Contact Sarah Proud at
rarebirdclub@birdlife.org
or +44 (0)1223 747524
to find out more

The joining donation of the Rare Bird Club is £5,000, followed by a minimum annual donation of £1,000 to continue your membership.

RECEIVE
A BESPOKE
OIL OR
WATERCOLOUR
PAINTING OF THE
BIRD OF YOUR
CHOICE WHEN
YOU JOIN

TARGETS ARE IMPORTANT, BUT IMPLEMENTATION IS KEY



Patricia Zurita, CEO of BirdLife International, highlights the importance of birds as ambassadors for nature at the 2018 High-Level Political Forum. Photo Franz Dejon/IISD

While our report shows that ambitious, focused, 'SMART' targets are critical, the greatest failure of the current Strategic Plan for Biodiversity has not been the targets themselves, but the lack of implementation. The following set of enabling conditions must be addressed if we are to have any hope of reversing biodiversity loss:

Monitoring, reporting and verification

1. An improved and transparent means of planning, monitoring, reporting and verification is needed to ensure the framework as a whole is delivered.
2. Global targets and indicators must be translated into measurable and binding national equivalents so that we can add up and track the contributions of individual countries towards shared goals.

Adequately resourced implementation strategies

3. Clear implementation strategies are essential to map out the route to achieve individual targets, identifying actors, actions, milestones and resources needed, supported by capacity development and funding.

Finance and funding

4. The underlying core biodiversity datasets, such as those on Key Biodiversity Areas and the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and the monitoring programmes that underpin them, such as those for threatened and common species, require specific resourcing, as well as spatially explicit national conservation and development strategies to guide planning and implementation by governments and business.
5. More widely, governments and the private sector must incorporate the true value of nature into economic systems and redirect financial flows away from activities that harm biodiversity towards those that protect, restore and manage it sustainably, removing harmful subsidies, valuing natural capital and investing in nature-based solutions.

A framework for all

6. Biodiversity must be 'mainstreamed' more effectively across society. The post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework is intended to be a 'framework for all' of society (governments, business and citizens, including women, youth and Indigenous Peoples and local communities) and through a 'whole-of-government' approach, including at local level. Both inter- and intra-generational equity is needed to ensure that decision-making and implementation are inclusive and effective.

Nature for climate and development

7. While being developed under the CBD, the new framework is envisaged as a UN-wide plan, and needs to transform how we value nature and unlock its full potential in underpinning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on climate, both developed in 2015 with 2030 as a key milestone.
8. The new framework should commit Parties to incorporate nature-based solutions to climate change that protect and restore



Delegates to the 13th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species applaud the signing of the Gandhinagar Declaration
Photo Franz Dejon/IISD

biodiversity and ecosystem integrity into both National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to meet the Paris Agreement. Where relevant, targets and indicators should replicate or build on those used for the SDGs. Implementation of the new framework must be central to the upcoming UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and UN Decade of Action on the SDGs.

International cooperation

9. Synergies between the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and other global policy processes are essential because biodiversity loss, climate change, land and marine degradation, the deprivation of human rights and unsustainable development are inseparable challenges caused by interdependent drivers. Parties and others therefore need to work together to raise the profile, relevance and integration of the framework with such processes, such as:

- The 'Gandhinagar Declaration' of the Convention on Migratory Species, which highlighted the importance of international cooperation through the post-2020 framework to ensure that conservation and development is undertaken considering ecological connectivity, including across national boundaries or along entire flyways.
- International coordination on conserving biodiversity in the high seas (areas beyond national jurisdiction, which cover nearly 50% of the planet and 70% of the oceans), including through a new UN treaty currently under negotiation.



"THE COMING YEARS WILL BE A VITAL PERIOD TO SAVE THE PLANET AND TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT"

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTONIO GUTERRES

As this report demonstrates, individual successes show that we have the knowledge and tools to turn things around, but transformative change, through stronger and sustained political commitment and coordinated action across society, is urgently needed to safeguard and restore the biodiversity on which we depend. We are at a pivotal moment in human history. The UN Secretary-General recently warned that "the coming years will be a vital period to save the planet and to achieve sustainable, inclusive human development". An ambitious, effective post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework is absolutely essential to ensure that this coming decade is the one in which we change our relationship with nature, for the sake of all people and the planet. ■

International cooperation is vital for conserving the biodiversity of the high seas, which provide feeding grounds to a wide range of marine species.

Photo Humpback Whale *Megaptera novaeangliae*, Francois Gohier/ Alamy

UN SUMMIT ON BIODIVERSITY: WORLD LEADERS' PLEDGE FOR NATURE

Ahead of September's UN Summit on Biodiversity, world leaders pledged to put nature at the heart of a transformational green recovery – but will this be enough to transform our relationship with nature before it is too late?

Dr Noelle Kumpel
Head of Policy, BirdLife International

Nature underpins the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, our systematic disregard for the environment, alongside deep-rooted societal inequalities, is jeopardising progress towards sustainable development. Continued loss of nature threatens over half of global GDP as well as human lives and well-being, with the poorest and most vulnerable the first and hardest hit. This has been brought into sharp focus this year, with the roots of the current, devastating COVID-19 pandemic linked to our mismanagement of nature.

While an economic and societal tragedy, COVID-19 presents an unprecedented opportunity to reset humanity's relationship with nature and to catalyse the transformative change necessary in our political, economic and financial systems. The UN Summit on Biodiversity, held on 30th September as part of the high level segment of the 75th UN General Assembly, with a theme of "urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development", provided a similarly unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate collective ambition.

OUR CALL TO WORLD LEADERS

As part of an unprecedented, coordinated set of calls to action, representing tens of millions of people and hundreds of businesses around the world, BirdLife International, with 15 other environment and development organisations, coalitions and foundations, called for world leaders at the Summit to recognise the value of nature, not just as the foundation of a healthy and resilient economy, but as the basis for human wellbeing, peace and security, and to put nature at the core of their agenda. We urged governments to adopt a global goal for nature by the end of this decade, as part of an



equitable, carbon-neutral, nature-positive world. The delivery of this nature-positive goal requires immediate, effective actions to both conserve nature and address the causes of its decline by 2030, as detailed on page 27.

THE UN SUMMIT ON BIODIVERSITY

There was a huge amount of energy in the lead-up to the Summit, with a series of hard-hitting panel sessions taking place as part of the Nature for Life Hub, supported by a consortium including BirdLife. We participated in sessions on a new accord for nature, conservation and human rights and spatial mapping, as well as the Voices for Nature civil society segment of the Summit itself. We also supported the Leaders' Pledge for Nature, signed by over 70 Heads of State and Government including the EU and launched at a Hub session just ahead of the Summit. This commits signatories to collective ambition for nature, climate and people.

The Summit was originally envisioned as the occasion where world leaders would commit to ambitious action a month before signing the

↑ Indigenous people protesting ongoing destruction of the Amazon rainforest, Paris, 2019. At this year's summit, Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro continued to vocally defend his decision to exploit the Amazon
Photo Gert-Peter Burch

MORE INFO

Read all the civil society calls to action at naturepositive.org/callstoaction

Read the Leaders' Pledge for Nature and watch BirdLife International CEO Patricia Zurita's video of support at leaderspledgefornature.org



← The UN Biodiversity Summit 2020 was switched to a semi-remote format, with some key representatives attending the New York headquarters in person, and many others joining virtually
Photo CBD



new ten-year global biodiversity framework in China. But with COVID-19 delaying the negotiations and signing of the deal by up to a year, and forcing the Summit to switch to a semi-remote format, we saw an understandable change in dynamics, with some positive, and less positive, outcomes.

THE POSITIVE

The Summit saw a record-breaking number of Heads of State and Government requesting to speak. There was wide recognition that biodiversity loss and our mismanagement of nature is causing ecological breakdown, exacerbating climate change and driving the emergence of zoonotic diseases, and that transformational change, including through a green recovery, is needed to turn things around. Many countries, such as Kenya and Croatia, echoed our call for an carbon-neutral, nature-positive world. The need for collective action and the importance of multilateralism was reinforced by countries such as China, Canada and France. The UK and European Commission called for clear, measurable targets that allow countries to hold each other to account. France, Jordan, Slovenia and Ecuador all highlighted the links between nature protection or nature's



↑ Since 2017, supported by BirdLife Partner Nature Kenya, local communities have planted 650,000 trees to restore Mount Kenya's forest ecosystem, which stores carbon, purifies water and prevents soil erosion"

Photo via UNEP

↪ UN Secretary-General António Guterres, pictured here in 2018, opened the Summit, stressing that "Much greater ambition is needed, not only from governments but also from all actors in society."

Photo Alexandros Michailidis

← At the Summit, Costa Rica's President Carlos Alvarado Quesada championed nature-based solutions as key to a more equitable and sustainable development model. Costa Rica is the first tropical country to have reversed deforestation, while sustaining economic growth

Photo Louis-Michel Desert

rights and human rights, and Pavan Sukhdev, speaking on behalf of civil society organisations, stated that the right to a healthy environment must be recognised as a fundamental right. The High Ambition Coalition, led by Costa Rica and France, called for protection of 30% of the planet by 2030, with a similar target for the oceans advocated by the Global Oceans Alliance.

THE LESS POSITIVES

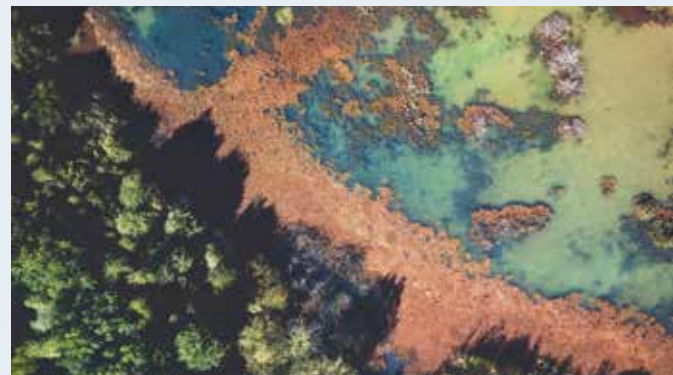
Few countries came up with concrete proposals (with the US notably absent). China, having just committed to become carbon-neutral by 2060, unveiled no equivalent new pledges for nature. Brazil vocally defended national sovereignty and decried "international greed" towards the Amazon. Guyana, speaking on behalf of the G77, called for developed countries to allocate increased resources for developing countries to implement the post-2020 framework. The indigenous youth representative from India warned against human rights violations associated with an increase in protected areas.

WHAT NEXT?

The Summit and associated meetings highlighted the need for further discussion, bridge-building and commitment regarding concrete targets and actions. The Leaders' Pledge forms a strong basis for this, and we will be working with Parties and other stakeholders in the coming months to ensure the post-2020 global biodiversity framework succeeds in safeguarding people and planet for future generations. ■

OUR CALL TO ACTION FOR AN EQUITABLE, CARBON-NEUTRAL AND NATURE-POSITIVE WORLD

Leaders of 16 global environment and development organisations, coalitions and foundations, including BirdLife International, called on Heads of State and Governments at the UN Summit on Biodiversity to set nature on the road to recovery by 2030, for an equitable, carbon-neutral and nature-positive world, including through the following actions:



A quarry's impact Photo Ivan Bandura/Unsplash

1. RETAIN AND RESTORE ECOSYSTEM

We must effectively protect, conserve and restore at least 30 percent of land, inland waters, coasts and oceans of most importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services by 2030. These protected and conserved areas must be equitably governed and with appropriate recognition, protection and land tenure security assured for all lands and waters traditionally governed by Indigenous Peoples and local communities for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. Such areas must be adequately and sustainably resourced and not undermined by legal changes. Areas important for biodiversity and that allow for

species movements in response to climate change should be prioritised, including Key Biodiversity Areas, as well as those areas which are ecologically intact and/or deliver ecosystem services. This requires integrated, biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning across the entire planet, at ecologically-relevant scales (including in areas beyond traditional boundaries and national jurisdictions) through spatially-explicit National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), Strategic Environmental Assessments and national development plans.



Songbirds for sale, Hong Kong Photo imageBROKER / Alamy

2. SAFEGUARD THE DIVERSITY AND RECOVER THE ABUNDANCE OF LIFE



Photo Michael Potter

We must address illegal and/or unsustainable wildlife exploitation, trafficking and trade and implement intensive species management actions where necessary, to help halt the decline of genetic diversity, prevent extinctions and start to recover wildlife populations.



Photo Tyler Casey/Unsplash

3. TRANSITION TOWARDS AN EQUITABLE NATURE-POSITIVE ECONOMY

Governments must recognise that nature lies at the heart of a sustainable, resilient, green transition that "builds forward", to mitigate future economic and societal shocks. We must mainstream biodiversity into public and private decision-making (e.g., green recovery plans), halve the footprint of production and consumption across all sectors and redirect financial flows away from activities that harm biodiversity towards those that restore, conserve and manage it sustainably. Our food systems must be transformed as well as key productive sectors such as forestry, fisheries

and infrastructure. Governments and the private sector must value natural capital, invest in nature-based solutions, require sustainable supply chains, and, critically, incorporate the true value of nature into economic systems, while ensuring that social and environmental safeguards are fully enforced, so that both public and private sector actions have an overall positive impact on nature and society.



Sustainable shea butter, Burkina Faso Photo Seydou Nacro

4. ENSURE A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR HEALTHY SOCIETIES

Rights, equity and justice must lie at the heart of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Governments must recognise the universal right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and put in place legislation and actions to achieve this. Both intergenerational and intragenerational equity are needed to ensure that decision-making and implementation by state and non-state actors is inclusive and that decision-makers are held accountable. In particular, the role and rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and girls as stewards and defenders of nature must be recognised, protected and supported.



Gola cocoa project Photo Katie Sims

5 WAYS
WE'VE HELPED
VULTURES
IN THE PAST
5 YEARS

Egyptian Vulture *Neophron
percnopterus*
Photo Ivostyle/Shutterstock

F

ive years have passed since BirdLife International made an announcement that sent shockwaves through the conservation community: Africa's vultures are on a steep slide towards extinction. In all, six of Africa's 11 vulture species were placed in a higher extinction risk category – reflecting sharp population declines that brought to mind the catastrophic collapse of Asia's

vultures in the 1990s. Although the reasons behind the population collapses were different from continent to continent, the end result, if action was not taken, would be the same; the disappearance of one of the world's most charismatic and recognisable bird groups from our skies, and the loss of the valuable ecological benefits these efficient scavengers provide.

While the situation is still stark, important gains have been made,

both on the ground and in terms of raising awareness of the plight of vultures. When our first campaign to save African vultures started in 2015, global awareness and political recognition of these majestic raptors were in their infancy. Discover just a few examples of the fantastic achievements that BirdLife supporters helped to kick-start, and find out how you can help us step up our action to the next level.



THANK YOU!

BirdLife International would like to thank everyone who has supported our vulture work over the years, including:

Pamela and Neville Isdell and Cara Isdell-Lee | The Isdell Family Foundation | A. G. Leventis Foundation | Tasso Leventis Foundation | BirdLife Rare Bird Club | BirdLife Species Champions for African vultures: Sean Dennis and Barry Sullivan | BAND Foundation | Fondation Segré | US Fish and Wildlife Service | EU LIFE+ | Supporters of the BirdLife Gala Dinners, Japan | Champions of the Flyway | and, of course, the many supporters who have responded to our appeals!

Much of the work reported here, particularly but not only in Asia through the SAVE consortium, has been supported both technically and financially by the RSPB, BirdLife in the UK.



BirdLife's work on vulture poisoning in collaboration with other organisations was made possible through its membership of the Restore Species partnership, which works to prevent extinctions caused by illegal and unsustainable trade and hunting, and poisoning.

Learn more: restorespecies.org



1

VULTURE-SAFE ZONES ESTABLISHED IN NEPAL AND BEYOND

↑ Captive-reared White-rumped Vultures in Nepal, awaiting their first taste of freedom

Photo Devendra Chapagain

Everyone needs a safe space, and vultures are no exception. One of the biggest causes of Asia's catastrophic vulture decline is veterinary diclofenac – a painkiller often used on livestock, but which is deadly to vultures that scavenge on their carcasses. In the 1990s, 99% of the Indian subcontinent's vultures were wiped out by the drug. To prevent further tragedy, Bird Conservation Nepal (BirdLife Partner), working under the Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (SAVE) consortium, set up a network of "Vulture Safe Zones", using community engagement and advocacy to end the sale of veterinary diclofenac, which had been banned in 2006 but was still stocked by many outlets.

This strategy was accompanied by a community programme called the Jatayu Restaurant, involving the purchase of elderly cattle at the end of their working lives, saving local people from feeding or abandoning an animal that is otherwise a burden – especially since Nepal's large Hindu population respects cattle and have a strong cultural appreciation for cows. The cattle are allowed to live out their natural lives in comfort, and afterwards provide much-needed non-toxic food for vultures. As many as 150 vultures have been spotted feasting at Nepal's "vulture restaurants".

The results soon became apparent. A study released this year found that Slender-billed

Vulture *Gyps tenuirostris* numbers had started to increase in 2012, with White-rumped Vultures *Gyps bengalensis* following suit in 2013. Undercover investigations in pharmacies reported that sales of diclofenac had also been successfully phased out around this time. Then, in a landmark moment for conservation history in 2017, six captive-reared White-rumped Vultures were released into a wild that, for the first time in decades, could be truly vulture-safe. Today, the number has risen to thirty vultures, which have since travelled far and wide.

Vultures are long-distance foragers that don't just stay in one country, and the Vulture Safe Zone model has been rolled out across Asia. This month, BNHS (BirdLife in India) released eight captive-reared White-rumped Vultures in Haryana, India. Like their Nepalese counterparts, they were fitted with satellite tags to monitor their movements, health and survival.

The concept is also being adapted for Africa, where the first Vulture Safe Zones have already been declared. BirdWatch Zambia (BirdLife Partner) has been leading the charge with a growing number across the country and more in the pipeline. The model also spread to Zimbabwe, South Africa and more. Participating landowners have agreed to stop baiting carcasses with poison and address belief-based use with a focus on awareness-raising and positive messaging.



2

RAPID-RESPONSE VULTURE RESCUE PROTOCOLS IN KENYA

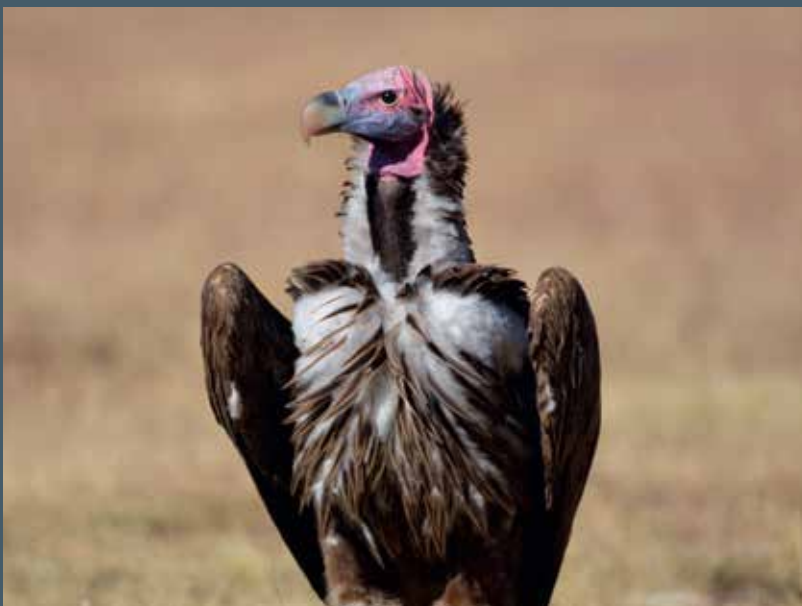
↑ Meet the 'Buffalo Dancers' - raising awareness of vultures across Kenya
Photo Rebecca Ikachoi

↓ Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotos*
Photo Ben Jobson

The problems African vultures face are more diverse. In Kenya, where human populations often come into contact with wild animals, farmers may put out poisoned bait to kill predators such as lions that may have taken their livestock. The vultures that scavenge on these carcasses are poisoned in turn. But if people act fast, hundreds of vultures can be saved. In 2016, Nature Kenya (BirdLife Partner),

working with the Kenya Wildlife Service and The Peregrine Fund, introduced a rapid response protocol whereby a poisoned carcass could be spotted and disposed of before it could cause any more deaths. They trained 89 rangers across the Masai Mara to deal with the source of poisoning, get veterinary help for sick animals, and even gather evidence to find and prosecute perpetrators. The rangers went on to train 117 more colleagues, sharing their knowledge far and wide.

To spread the word further, Nature Kenya embarked on a large-scale publicity campaign. In villages across the Mara, rangers attended regular barazas (village meetings) to talk to local people. Performance groups such as the Buffalo Dancers raised awareness at markets, and a "Vanishing Vultures" documentary was aired on national television. At every opportunity, residents were told who to contact and what to do if they witnessed a poisoning. Almost instantly, the campaign began to prove invaluable: researchers, rangers and local community members called the rapid response unit into action on numerous occasions, saving hundreds of vultures every time. Furthermore, poisoning itself became less common. From 2017-2019, the planned poisoning of two lion prides was averted, and the overall poisoning of vultures in the Masai Mara dropped by more than 50%.





3

LANDMARK POLICY RESOLUTION ON VULTURE-TOXIC DRUGS

➤ Bearded Vultures in Europe are still under threat from diclofenac

Photo Michael Ninger/ Shutterstock

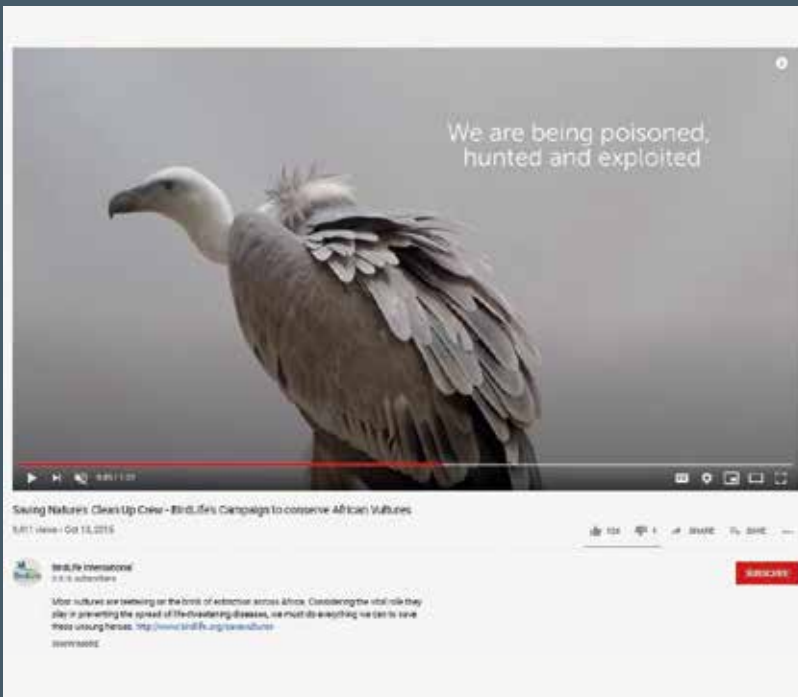
➤ Vulture poisoning was very much on the agenda at the CMS COP 13 in India earlier this year.

Photo BirdLife Policy

For several years, BirdLife has been pushing for a strong intergovernmental policy on the veterinary use of diclofenac and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) that could also be deadly to vultures. Finally, in February this year, a resolution adopted by the UN Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) covered their use and regulation as never before, offering new hope. The resolution, which was adopted at the thirteenth CMS Conference of Parties, outlined four key actions that perfectly reflect what we have been calling for: tests on all existing

veterinary NSAIDs to determine which are harmful to vultures and which are safe; withdrawing licencing from those that are vulture-toxic; safety-testing new veterinary NSAIDs before they are licenced; and identifying and promoting safe alternative drugs. According to Roger Safford, Senior Programme Manager in BirdLife's Preventing Extinctions Programme, the safety-testing of both new and existing NSAIDs is particularly vital: "We need to look at all the veterinary anti-inflammatories and withdraw from veterinary use the ones that are toxic to vultures. If we replace diclofenac with another drug that is just as toxic to vultures, then we just perpetuate the problem." Once we know which drugs are harmful, governments of vulture range states can ban their use on livestock and suggest safe alternatives. Our next step is to ensure that governments follow up on this commitment, against the powerful pharmaceutical lobby. This could be difficult – despite knowing the risks, several European countries approved diclofenac for use on livestock in 2014. Such a precedent increases the chances of similar licensing in Africa. However, we know we are up to the task. In 2017, in the face of intense lobbying from pharmaceutical companies, BNHS and SAVE persuaded the Indian government to uphold the ban on large vials of diclofenac which were being misused for veterinary purposes.





4 VASTLY IMPROVED PUBLIC AND POLITICAL AWARENESS

On this page you'll find various products designed by BirdLife's communications team – which not only generated sympathy for these magnificent raptors, but also strengthened our advocacy efforts.

Be honest – what used to be your first impressions of vultures? Sinister harbingers of death? Tough, common scavengers that can look after themselves? Over the past five years, vultures have undergone a huge image transformation in a wide range of sectors. In science, new research resulted in 15 vultures being listed as globally threatened on the IUCN Red List. Most of them have also been added to Appendix I of the CMS, placing additional

obligations on Governments to protect them. Numerous studies have advanced our understanding of these fascinating creatures and how best to help them. On a political level, speaking out for vultures at high-profile meetings has led to some promising breakthroughs. In 2017, the CMS Parties adopted a Multi-species Action Plan for African-Eurasian Vultures which BirdLife helped to develop. This action plan provides a roadmap for businesses, landowners, NGOs and governments in all 128 African and Eurasian vulture range states, outlining the steps needed to protect all 15 threatened species. In 2019, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) added West African vultures to their highest-priority list due to the trade in vulture parts [see next page]. They mandated the formation of a working group to research this pressing concern and put forward policies to combat it. Many of these policies are based on the aforementioned Multi-species Action Plan. But sometimes, awareness-raising can boil down to something as simple as social media. Our global #LoveVultures campaign showcased the intelligence and beauty of these raptors, as well as the vital clean-up services they perform for us. Every positive image we put out there helps increase the public's sympathy and concern for these creatures.





5

THE NEXT STEP: TACKLING ILLEGAL TRADE

↑ The demand for vulture body parts for belief-based healing is a pressing issue in West Africa
Photo EV New Life project

➤ The head of a White-backed Vulture is offered for sale at a Nigerian market
Photo J. Onoja

↓ BirdLife's delegation at a CITES conference, 2019

It was only when we expanded our work into West Africa that we became aware of the true impact of illegal trade on vulture populations. Here, vulture body parts are often sold for 'belief-based use', in sadly misinformed attempts to treat a range of physical and mental diseases, or to bring good fortune. In fact, 29% of vulture deaths in Africa were estimated to be due to this practice. This will be our next challenge, and it's one the BirdLife Partnership is already making in-roads into. In May 2019, our Partner, the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF), kicked things off by launching a new countywide project

to end vulture poaching. Birdlife in Africa announced ambitious plans to reduce illegal wildlife trade in Nigeria by 20% by 2021. This is a particularly urgent concern, since the illegal wildlife trade has become the second highest criminal revenue generator in the country, after the illicit drug trade. As well as decimating Nigeria's own vulture populations, the demand in Nigeria is placing pressure on the vultures of neighbouring countries. What's more, citizens risk ingesting remnants of poisoned vultures. Encouragingly, attendance at the launch conference was extremely broad, including belief-based practitioners, academics, law enforcement, hunting associations and the media – evidence that there is a strong constituency within Nigeria dedicated to protecting vultures. Next, NCF began working with traditional healers directly, holding workshops to raise awareness of the vultures' plight and promote plant-based alternatives to vulture parts. So far, more than 80 traditional healers have taken part in these workshops. The goal is to create a manual on wildlife-friendly medicine practices published in local languages. According to NCF, attendees are now openly using plant-based alternatives, and are encouraging more healers to do the same. NCF has formed a social media group to promote and share experiences of vulture-safe options.



WORLD'S LARGEST TROPICAL WETLAND

ABLAZE

This year, the South American Pantanal has seen three times as many fires as 2019, exacerbated by climate change and probably started by humans. The BirdLife Partnership is calling on the Brazilian and international governments to urgently increase action

Jessica Law





Last summer, the news of the burning Amazon rainforest captured mass media attention and sparked worldwide outcry. But the worrying truth is that these fires never completely went out. In fact, this year, it seems that the whole of the Americas are ablaze. In California, huge wildfires are turning San Francisco's skies an apocalyptic orange. In South America's Southern Cone, the Dry Chaco forests and iconic Pampas grasslands are going in smoke.

Worst of all, 2020 has seen catastrophic fires in the Pantanal, the world's largest tropical wetland, located mostly within Brazil but extending into parts of Bolivia and Paraguay. Spanning 210,000 square kilometres – larger than the whole of Great Britain – this verdant, incredibly biodiverse ecosystem is home to the



largest aggregation of wildlife in South America, including rare species such as the Giant River Otter *Pteronura brasiliensis* (Endangered), Jaguar *Panthera onca* (Near Threatened) and Hyacinth Macaw *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus* (Vulnerable). From 1 January to 23 July, Brazil's national space agency counted 3,682 fires in the Pantanal – three times greater than last year, and the highest number since records began in 1998. In total, 12,000 square kilometres have been devastated so far, and the number is rising.


You may be wondering how a wetland can burn so rampantly. While smaller wildfires often occur in the dry season, this year's exceptional drought in the Pantanal (which is most probably a consequence of climate change and deforestation of the Amazon in recent years) left vegetation and underground peat tinder-dry. Even more worryingly, sources state that these fires were deliberately started by humans – most likely to clear land for agriculture.

These fires have terrible social repercussions as well as ecological ones, destroying the livelihoods of communities who already earn a sustainable living from the Pantanal, for example from ecotourism, fishing or nomadic cattle ranching. The fires have entered the land of indigenous peoples, endangering their traditional way of life and destroying their rightful home. What's more, the air pollution from the smoke causes severe respiratory problems in settlements for miles around. More widely, in destroying one of the world's most important carbon sinks, we are losing a

↖ Jaguar on a Pantanal riverbank
Photo Leonardo Ramos

↗ Hyacinth Macaw *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*
Photo MePixels

BIRD
FACTFILE



HYACINTH MACAW
Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus

RED LIST STATUS:
Vulnerable
Range: Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay

THREATS: Illegal trade, hunting, habitat destruction

FAST FACT: World's largest parrot, measuring one metre from head to tip of tail



substantial defence against climate change – which could lead to a vicious circle of decline.

One of the most important ecological refuges threatened by the fires is Fazenda São Francisco de Periguara, a traditional cattle ranch in Brazil, which plays host to around one thousand roosting Hyacinth Macaws and dozens of nests every year. The threatened parrot benefits from the dense population of palms, which produce nutrient-rich nuts. A large part of this ranch has already been burned and still faces the risk of more fires.

In Brazil, state and federal forces have been deployed to fight the fires. However, containing the inferno has been difficult as some areas of

↖ Pantanal landscape in the Mato Grosso state, Brazil
Photo Filipe Frazao

↑ Giant river otters
Photo Charles J Sharp/Sharp Photography

→ Chestnut-bellied Guan *Penelope ochrogaste*
Photo Bernard Dupont



IBA FACTFILE

PRIVATE RESERVE OF NATURAL HERITAGE SESC PANTANAL AND SURROUNDINGS

LOCATION: Midwestern Brazil

TYPE: Wetland

SIZE: 5,066 km²

TRIGGER SPECIES: Greater Rhea, Chestnut-bellied Guan, Hyacinth Macaw



WHAT MAKES IT A HOME? Bordered by three rivers, this fertile floodplain supports a diverse mosaic of savannah, forest and swampy grasslands, and is home to eleven bird species found only in the Cerrado ecosystem, including the Chestnut-bellied Guan (Vulnerable).

ANY THREATS? Natural vegetation is being replaced by cattle pastures, which cause soil erosion. A hydroelectric dam upstream is increasing droughts, and the use of fire to manage pastures on neighbouring farms is a serious concern.

WHAT ARE WE DOING? The site contains the largest privately-owned protected area in Brazil, classed as a Ramsar wetland of international importance. Since its purchase 22 years ago, it has been safeguarded by local rangers. Today, it hosts numerous research projects and supports local livelihoods through ecotourism.

the Pantanal are completely inaccessible by land, and can only be reached by helicopter. This would be less of an obstacle if the Brazilian government had not dramatically cut resources and funding for the environmental agencies responsible for tackling the fire. President Jair Bolsonaro, who has been notoriously vocal about his opposition to environmental protection, recently defunded the federal departments tasked with protecting the Pantanal and Amazon.

In July, the Brazilian government banned burning for agricultural purposes across the Pantanal and Amazon for four months. However, the enforcement of this law has been similarly compromised by lack of resources.

The BirdLife Partnership strongly denounces this catastrophic destruction of nature. We are calling on the Brazilian and international authorities to urgently increase their efforts to contain fires and strengthen the enforcement of anti-burning laws, for the good of both nature and people. ■

Blue SkyTM Wildlife

Unique Global
Wildlife Experiences

An alternative way to search
www.blueskywildlife.com



Connect with local wildlife specialists to book your next

wildlife tour & ecotourism holiday

directly making it better for them and their local economy

- Over 400 unique wildlife tours on offer
- 70 local wildlife specialists listed and growing
- 38 destinations worldwide
- Read independent Wildlife Reviews
- Search for tours by species name
- Tours available throughout the year
- Supporting grass roots conservation initiatives
- Special offers also available

100% Traveller Protection*



* Only for travellers who are contracted to and have paid Blue Sky Wildlife. Refer to: <https://www.blueskywildlife.com/booking-terms>

Proud to be recognised as a



supporting



Hatching a future

**Making a world of difference by nurturing
capacity and innovation in conservation**

By Shaun Hurrell





Introducing Hatch

A new initiative from the BirdLife Partnership that supports the growth and performance of environmental civil society organisations around the world

Today, it is almost unimaginable that there once were no BirdLife Partners in countries such as Madagascar, Brazil, Indonesia, Fiji, Morocco. To think of these countries without the vital work of these independent, national conservation organisations is harrowing and, in just a couple of short decades, the difference they've made for birds, habitats and local people is striking. What do they have in common? The BirdLife Partnership has helped them develop from small operations into highly successful organisations that qualify as BirdLife Partners. SAVE Brasil, for example, began as a BirdLife Country Programme in 2000, focused on the Atlantic Forest. Now it has grown into a fantastic, independent, national NGO with its own members, public profile and 20 full-time staff.

Working to protect nature invariably involves working with people. That's why BirdLife puts local people and civil society at the heart of conservation. It may sometimes have taken a back seat in our communications, but this work is crucial; a global network of effective environmental organisations and trained professionals is a vital force to protect

and sustain the world's nature and people.

A core focus of BirdLife's work is establishing national conservation organisations in countries (especially those rich in biodiversity) where there are none present. Whilst there are over 100 BirdLife Partners around the world, there is still a lot of work to be done. Or – if you will – more NGOs to hatch...

The trouble isn't just the lack of organisations, though. Often very little funding for environmental conservation goes beyond projects to include the lifeline needed to support the growth and sustainability of its existing organisations and leaders, let alone give them the space for creativity and to find new solutions.

Now the world needs conservationists more than ever: with at least one million species of plants and animals now threatened with extinction, the challenge is increasing every day.

To respond, they need our support. So we've upped the ambition of our hitherto behind-the-scenes work with people and organisations, and we're calling it Hatch.

Imagine the change possible if BirdLife Partners and local groups were even

stronger? What if they were able to expand their efforts to protect more species and landscapes? What if they were able to work with more local communities and constituencies?

"We believe that networks of skilled, committed, and entrepreneurial individuals and organisations are the key to unlocking the transformative change needed for a sustainable future for our planet", says Lenke Balint, Head of Communities & Capacity Development at BirdLife. "But the resources needed to address complex conservation challenges are limited, particularly in some of the most biologically rich areas in the world. Hatch harnesses the power of the Partnership to close this resourcing gap by investing in the people and organisations that make conservation happen."

So let's take a brief tour of previous successes of the Partnership's work to support people and organisations by looking at the three core areas of Hatch. Read on to find out how we're strengthening the BirdLife Partnership, developing future conservation leaders, and mobilising civil society at the grassroots.

Strengthening the BirdLife Partnership



FROM ONE PERSON: PROTECTING MAURITANIA'S NATURE

Nature Mauritanie is a great example of the amazing power of the BirdLife Partnership in supporting national conservation organisations in countries with rich biodiversity and emergent civil society. Working in close collaboration with Vogelbescherming Nederland (BirdLife in the Netherlands) as well as BirdLife Secretariat, in less than a decade Nature Mauritanie has transformed from a one-person operation to a pioneering, effective, national organisation that became a BirdLife Partner in 2016. Currently, they work at seven key, biodiversity-rich wetland sites with seven full time staff, and have a new, clear and ambitious strategy that plans engagement and positive influence on regional and international issues.

"Hatch's strength lies in the supervision and technical support of the BirdLife Partnership at all levels", says Djibril Diallo, Founder & Executive Director of Nature Mauritanie. "We see Hatch as the ONLY opportunity to move towards technical and financial empowerment."

Developing future conservation leaders

The Conservation Leadership Programme: nurturing tomorrow's innovators

Thirty years ago, BirdLife launched the Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP), a ground-breaking training initiative that has invested in some of the most promising early-career professionals in conservation. Working in partnership with Fauna & Flora International and the Wildlife Conservation Society, we provide grants, training, mentoring and internships to individuals who represent the future of conservation.

To date, the programme has nurtured the careers of over 2,500 people in more than 100 countries, who now make up a thriving global community of conservation leaders. Collectively,

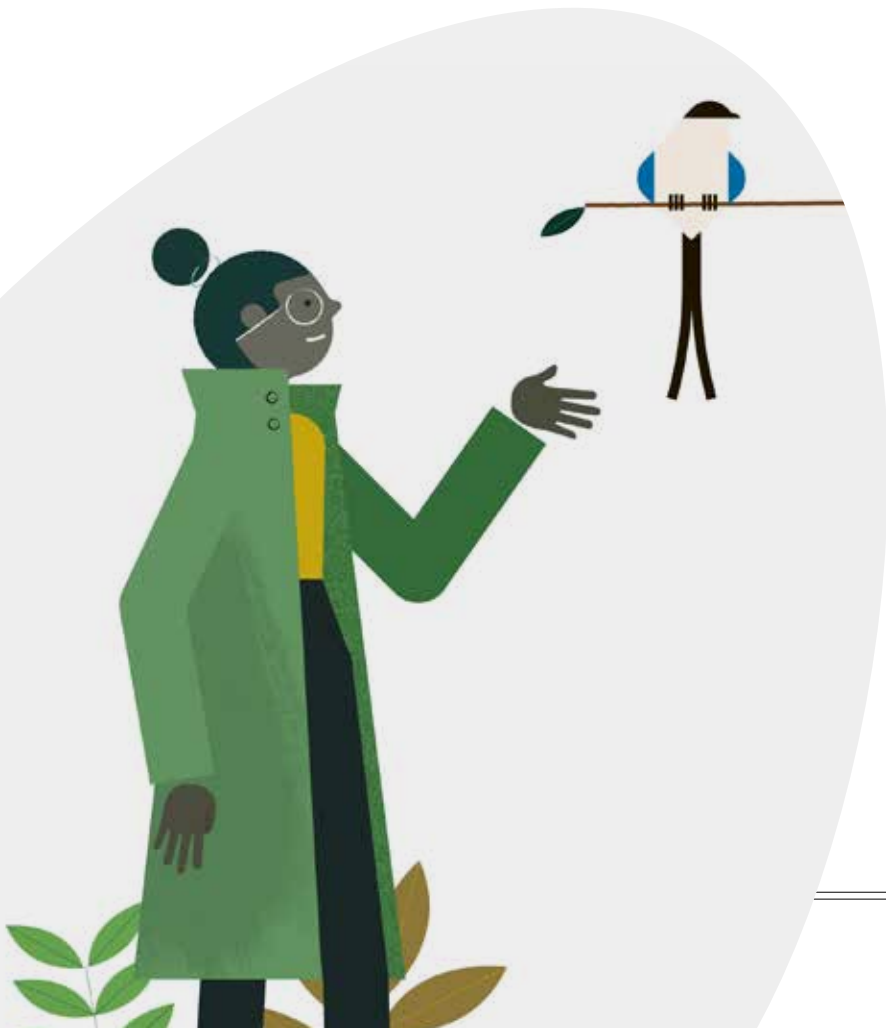
these trailblazers have discovered or rediscovered 130 species, helped protect 75 globally important sites for nature and founded at least 25 civil society organisations. Many are now pre-eminent figures in their fields. Tatiana Pongiluppi now runs a birdwatching company in Brazil, and leads ecotourism expeditions all over the country. Thirteen years ago, she had just graduated university and started a CLP-funded internship with SAVE Brasil (BirdLife Partner), where she travelled around the country, educating local communities about bird conservation and conducting bird surveys. Through this internship, she became an expert in bird identification,

and in 2009 was granted a CLP Future Conservationist Awards to set up an Education Centre for bird conservation in Serra do Urubu, an IBA in one of the last significant remnants of Atlantic Forest in northeast Brazil. In 2014, she received a CLP Follow-Up Award to promote Serra do Urubu through ecotourism, birdwatching and community awareness, seeing tourism as an effective way of connecting people with nature and linking conservation with economic development and social justice in local communities. Her company has grown and now leads birdwatching expeditions all over Brazil. Tatiana credits much of her success to the CLP.

// The CLP-funded Conservation Management & Leadership course in China was a life-changing experience and I really wish every young biologist could have this incredible opportunity. Meeting the CLP management team, trainers and other participants gave me a wider view of the conservation world and inspired me to use different, creative ways to deal with conservation problems here in Brazil. All the skills that I developed during the course, such as leadership, mentoring, self-confidence, strategic thinking and communication, are still helping me today in my daily life. //



TATIANA PONGILUPPI
CLP GRADUATE



Mobilising civil society at the grassroots

KENVO: empowering local communities to protect their forest for decades to come

For conservation to be sustainable in the long term, it needs to run by the people living closest to the habitats under threat. Kijabe Environment Volunteers (KENVO) is a community-based organisation that perfectly embodies this sense of ownership. Community members living adjacent to the Kikuyu Escarpment Forests in Kenya formed KENVO in the 1990s, when they realised that human threats to the forest were increasing and the ecosystem was being degraded. With support from BirdLife between 2000 – 2005, KENVO has grown from a small team into an influential force for nature, improving community livelihoods, reducing threats to biodiversity, working with government, and developing youth leadership programmes. Furthermore, through networking opportunities with other local groups via Nature Kenya (BirdLife Partner), KENVO has shared its knowledge and experience across the country and the wider BirdLife Partnership. To date, KENVO has restored 500 hectares of formerly degraded forest, planted over 80,000 trees through their schools programme, and supported local community members to manage their own tree nurseries and contribute to reforestation. In addition, as a result of community patrols and improved forest management, poaching has declined to almost zero.

Thanks to KENVO's strong partnerships with local Community Forest Associations, the Kenya Forest Service and a wide range of other stakeholders, the future of the Kikuyu Escarpment forest seems secure. ■

hatch.birdlife.org



Power (and planting) to the people.
Photo: Providence Akayeze

Imagine the positive change possible if these people and organisations, and more like them, were even stronger.

The BirdLife Partnership launches Hatch on 11th November. Go to hatch.birdlife.org for more details and to support this vital work.



EXPERIENCE NATURE LIKE A VIKING.

A special offer for BirdLife: the Magazine readers: immerse yourself in ancient Norse culture, and experience bewitching wildlife encounters, in a magical tour of Iceland and Greenland that follows a route made famous by vikings

We are delighted to collaborate with Adventure Canada, the award-winning, family-run company of experts in small-ship expeditions, for their upcoming voyage, Iceland to Greenland: In the Wake of the

Vikings. On this incredible journey, you'll be joined by illustrious author, Margaret Atwood, and Ian Davidson, BirdLife Americas' Regional Director, as we sail west towards spectacular, surprising Greenland. Breathtaking fjords define this seldom-seen region,

and whales and seabirds are in great abundance. You'll have the chance to bask in geothermal springs, explore Norse archaeological sites, learn about Inuit culture firsthand and much more during the course of this once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

Up to \$2,000 USD of each booking fee will be donated back to BirdLife International

Book Before January 28, 2021 and Save 15%



Photo: Jessie Brinkman Evans



Photo Dennis Minty



Photo Dennis Minty

ICELAND TO GREENLAND: IN THE WAKE OF THE VIKINGS

DETAILS:
JULY 14–25, 2021

Starts: Reykjavik, Iceland
Ends: Toronto, ON, Canada

Aboard the Ocean Endeavour
From \$3,495 to \$14,795 usd per person

Solo cabins based on availability
Charter flights available

ITINERARY:

- Day 1:** Reykjavik, Iceland
- Day 2:** At Sea
- Day 3–4:** East Greenland
- Day 5:** Ikerassuaq (Prince Christian Sound)
- Day 6:** South Greenland
- Day 7:** Hvalsey
- Day 8:** Brattahlíð
- Day 9:** Sermersooq
- Day 10:** Nuuk
- Day 11:** Kangerlussuaq Fjord (Evighedsfjorden)
- Day 12:** Kangerlussuaq, Greenland



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Sail with Special Guest, Margaret Atwood and BirdLife International’s Regional Director, Ian Davidson, in support of the Graeme Gibson Fellowship and BirdLife International
- Search for whales while following the Viking route across Denmark Strait to Greenland
- Experience east Greenland’s pristine, stunning fjords
- Get close to glaciers, and calving mighty icebergs
- Experience village life in Greenlandic fishing hamlets
- Visit the Norse ruins at Hvalsey, abandoned in the 1400s
- Visit Erik the Red’s former estate at Brattahlíð
- Explore Greenland’s newest UNESCO World Heritage Site, the fertile farmlands of Kujataa
- Wander the streets of Nuuk, Greenland’s dynamic capital

To find out more and reserve your space, contact Sheryl Saint at Adventure Canada at +1 905-271-4000 ext 224 or Sheryl@adventurecanada.com
Or visit: advcan.ca/bird-life

About our travel partner



**ADVENTURE
CANADA**

Adventure Canada is an award-winning family-run travel company with more than thirty years’ experience, specializing in small-ship expeditions to the world’s more remote coastlines. We engage, educate, and entertain by connecting people to each other and the land through travel. Our pioneering approach to small-group experiences and ship-based expeditions emphasizes wildlife, culture, learning, and fun.



“As Special Guest on Adventure Canada’s 2021 journey *Iceland to Greenland: In the Wake of the Vikings*, I am delighted to invite you to join me as we explore this remarkable environment that is threatened so acutely by the climate crisis. Together, we will experience volcanic and glacial landscapes, and see wildlife that is now, without the crucial interventions of organisations like BirdLife International, perilously close to disappearing forever.

This trip is particularly special for me as it will see the launch of a programme of Fellowships at BirdLife International, aimed at fostering the next generation of conservation leaders. My late partner Graeme Gibson and I were for many years co-Presidents of BirdLife’s Rare Bird Club, and I am honoured that these Fellowships are being established in his memory.

Birds, Graeme once wrote, “are imagination and longing and spirit”. For Graeme and I, paying attention to birds impressed upon us the urgency of safeguarding their wonder and beauty for future generations. It also alerted us to the precarious balance between birds, their natural habitat and the human world.

I hope that, by accompanying me on this journey, you too will have the opportunity to be moved by the extraordinary life of birds.”

Margaret Atwood

Adventure Canada itineraries may be subject to change without notice due to weather, ice, and sea condition

REPTILE RESCUE

When an oil freighter ran aground within a few kilometres of Mauritian nature reserves, local conservationists rushed in to rescue three globally threatened lizard species found nowhere else. The reptiles were moved to a captive breeding programme that could provide a vital lifeline

By Jessica Law

Dr Nik Cole collecting
Bojer's Skinks on Ile
de la Passe
Photo Mauritian
Wildlife Foundation



Overview of MV Wakashio on 12 August 2020, a few weeks after the crash
Satellite image via Maxar Technologies



Skins come across as pretty tough lizards. With short, stocky legs and no neck to speak of, they wedge themselves into burrows and cracks that are hard to penetrate. If a predator does manage to extricate them, they will simply shed their tail, leaving it wriggling in the unsuspecting carnivore's mouth, before calmly growing a new one. Skink-like lizards first appear in the fossil record about 140 million years ago, around the same time as *Tyrannosaurus Rex* – so they must be doing something right. But there are some dangers even a skink can't wriggle its way out of. When the MV Wakashio freighter ran aground on 25th July, leaking 1,000 tonnes of fuel into nearby nature reserves, a manmade problem needed a manmade solution.

Bojer's Skink *Gongylomorphus bojerii*, Bouton's Skink *Cryptoblepharus boutonii* and the Lesser Night Gecko *Nactus coindemirensis* can only be found on a handful of islands in southeast Mauritius. Obliterated elsewhere by invasive species and habitat loss, only a few hundred remain. Since oil pollutants are extremely toxic to lizards, the recent disaster could have driven them to extinction, if it hadn't been for the fast and decisive rescue mission organised by the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (MWF, BirdLife Partner) and the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, and assisted by BirdLife, the National Parks & Conservation Service of Mauritius, and the

Forestry Service. Scientists evacuated 30 Bojer's Skinks, six Bouton's Skinks and 30 Lesser Night Geckos to mainland Mauritius. In September, they were airlifted out to Jersey Zoo on Jersey, in the English Channel.

"This rescue is our chance to save these unique Mauritian species and secure a lasting gene-pool, so that they can be re-introduced one day", says Dr Vikash Tatayah, MWF Conservation Director. Dr Nik Cole, Islands Restoration Manager for the Durrell Foundation, explains why Jersey Zoo was the only choice for the lizards, despite its distance from Mauritius: "Jersey Zoo... has over 40 years' experience maintaining Mauritian reptile populations in captivity and has world-class herpetological and veterinary expertise. This is their only chance of survival as the facilities to maintain these reptiles and keep them safe from predators, foreign parasites and disease, long-term, are not currently available in Mauritius. Two of these species have never been held in captivity before, which highlights the expert care required for these animals."

Even though less than five percent of the lizards' populations were captured, they act as an important reserve in case wild populations suffer severe losses from the oil spill. The lizards will be bred in captivity in the hope that their offspring or grandchildren can be released once the oil toxins have broken down.

MAURITIAN REPTILES AT JERSEY ZOO: PAST SUCCESSES



A captive population of Telfair's Skinks resides at Jersey Zoo, originating from ten individuals collected on Round Island in 2008 to study the species and promote reptile conservation in Mauritius.



In 2017, with permission from the Government of Mauritius, hatching Telfair's Skinks were sent from Jersey Zoo to London Zoo to generate further awareness and support for Mauritian reptile conservation.



A captive breeding programme for Lesser Night Geckos was established from 30 individuals collected on Ilot Vacoas in 2008. It produced 109 geckos and 45 eggs, which all were sent back to Mauritius.



A biosecure population of Orange-tailed Skinks was established from 22 individuals collected at Gunner's Quoin in 2011, following their extinction on Flat Island. They are breeding well and await reintroduction.

Telfair's Skink Photo Nik Cole

Telfair's Skink Photo Jacques de Spéville

Lesser Night Gecko Photo Nik Cole

Orange-tailed Skink Photo Nik Cole



Bojer's Skink
Gongylomorphus bojeri
Photo Nik Cole

As an island nation, Mauritius is famed for its unusual and unique wildlife, which evolved independently over millions of years of isolation. As well as the intrinsic value of this wildlife, the tourism revenue generated by Mauritius' fascinating fauna is one of the principal sources of income for the country. Preserving genetic diversity, even within a single species, is extremely important in order to maintain healthy levels of variation and avoid inbreeding. Bojer's Skink is one of the most genetically distinctive



Threatened plants being removed from Ile aux Aigrettes' nursery
Photo Martine Goder



Mauritius Fody
Photo ysmad

MWF IN THE OIL SPILL CRISIS RESPONSE

When the oil spill hit, MWF also evacuated twelve Mauritius Olive White-eyes *Zosterops chloronothus* (Critically Endangered) and six Mauritius Fodies *Foudia rubra* (Endangered) from Ile aux Aigrettes, to be kept at the National Parks & Conservation Services' Black River Aviary facilities until the conditions improve. Similarly, 4,000 endemic plants from the island's nursery – including very rare species – were transferred to the mainland and are being kept at the Forestry Services' Mahebourg premises. MWF staff have been using *The Kestrel*, the organisation's ecotourism boat, to tirelessly support oil pumping efforts, carrying oil to the mainland to be disposed of daily. Additionally, MWF has rallied volunteers through social media.

skinks in the world. It is the only species in its genus, and diverged from its closest relatives 30 million years ago (in comparison, humans did so less than seven million years ago). An omnivore that eats both insects and fruit, it plays a vital role in the ecosystem by keeping down insect levels and dispersing seeds in its droppings. Whole areas of forest may not have regenerated had it not been for this fruit-loving roamer. Bouton's Skink prefers coastal areas, where it chows down on marine crustaceans and insects. This lizard has radiated into a huge variety of different sub-species spread out across the different islands, all of which are important to preserve.

Then we come to the Lesser Night Gecko, which is remarkable for its absolutely miniscule size. This Lilliputian lizard grows to only six centimetres in length (including the tail) and lay eggs weighing just 0.2 grams. While not quite being able to dance on the head of a pin, the whole lizard can comfortably sit atop the average fingertip. This adaptation could have come about as a result of 'island dwarfism' – the process by which species on isolated islands become smaller and smaller due to limited space and food supplies. There is still so much to discover about these wonderful creatures and these efforts have bought the species valuable time. "It shows what we can all achieve, in spite of circumstances, to safeguard the precious natural environment by collaborative effort between conservationists, government and supporters", says Patricia Zurita, CEO of BirdLife International. ■



The reptile rescue was made possible with the support of the Jean Boule Group, whose generous and timely backing enabled the lizards to be transported to Jersey Zoo. Their involvement further builds upon their history of conservation in Mauritius and worldwide. The first Jean Boule Group conservation project with MWF supported restoration of the wild Mauritius Kestrel population at the property now known as "Kestrel Valley". Today the Jean Boule group is a strong supporter of conservation and anti-marine pollution initiatives. Specifically, it has worked alongside experts on reptiles in the 19 islands of the Saint Brandon archipelago and with MWF, ECOSUD and BirdLife International towards conservation and eco-awareness in Mauritius. The Jean Boule Group has also been actively involved in supporting wildlife and with sustainability programmes in a number of other territories beyond Mauritius, including: education in conservation and replanting in Madagascar, anti-poaching initiatives in Zambia, support with BirdLife's work on IBAs, the conservation of Critically Endangered albatrosses and extensive participation in the South Georgia Heritage Trust's island invasive species program. A Founder Patron since 2007, Nathalie Boule was honoured to receive the BirdLife President's Medal in 2013 from HIH Princess Takamado of Japan in gratitude for many years of service to conservation.

jeanboulegroup.com

TWO WORLD RECORDS SMASHED IN LANDMARK BIRDING EVENT

The inaugural Global Bird Weekend inspired over 38,000 nature lovers from 169 countries to pool their bird spotting talents together, for the benefit of conservation

Two world records were set over the weekend of 17th-18th October during the inaugural Global Bird Weekend (GBW) – an event that brought together more than 38,000 passionate nature lovers from all over the world to participate in what was dubbed “The Biggest Birdwatching Event in History”.

In all, birdwatchers from 169 countries (and all seven continents!) pooled together to record an incredible 7,101 avian species on eBird (more than three quarters of the world’s total) on the Saturday, beating the previous one-day world record of 7,060 set in May 2018. The next day, a further 180 species were added to the total, bringing the final number to 7,281 and securing a second world record in as many days.

The event, the largest of its kind to focus on the Autumn migration, was organised by Tim Appleton MBE, co-founder of the British Birdwatching Fair. “I was amazed at the response considering we only launched Global Birding in August 2020”, says Appleton. “Being able to unite a worldwide community for Global Bird Weekend by asking them to ‘Go Birding

Alex Dale



Together for Conservation’ went beyond my wildest dreams and has already produced significant scientific data and inspired new networks of communication”.

The numbers are all the more impressive considering they were achieved in the midst of a pandemic, with participants encouraged to minimise their global footprint and stay near home. The first sighting, if you are curious, was a Pacific Golden Plover in Vanuatu. The most species were recorded in Colombia (1,289) ahead of Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Kenya and India.

Far from a mere frolic, the event had tangible conservation impact, with over £24,000 raised for BirdLife’s Stop Illegal Bird Trade appeal (so far). And just as importantly, an incredible 50,383 photographs and 1,101 audio recordings found their way onto eBird, making the event a tremendously successful citizen science project. ■

Global Bird Weekend is staged by Global Birding, in association with Swarovski Optik, powered by eBird and supporting BirdLife International. To find out more, visit: globalbirding.org



eBird



The first sighting, if you are curious, was a Pacific Golden Plover (alongside a Barn Owl), submitted by Dominik Maximilian Ramik in Vanuatu at 00:04am on the first day. Thanks to the magic of time zones, the day ended with nocturnally calling White Terns and Tristram’s Storm-Petrels from Midway Atoll, considerably longer than 24 hours later.



SMALL BUT FEARLESS

As bird lovers across Africa welcome this year's influx of migratory birds, we explore the fascinating behaviour of the Common Ringed Plover, the new focal species of our Spring Alive children's programme

Have you ever looked at a migratory bird and imagined where it came from, and all the places it passed through to get to where it is here, today? In 2020, most of us have experienced more restrictions on our lives and movements than ever before. Throughout this time, birds have never been a more powerful symbol of connectivity. Unlike us, they are still free to cross national borders, oceans and continents, and by appreciating their journey and the nations we share them with, they unite us despite everything.

During this difficult time, countless people have turned to nature as a source of comfort and solace. With our 2020 theme "how to be a good birdwatcher", our children's programme Spring Alive has guided budding birdwatchers on the basics, promoting best-practice guidelines

Jessica Law

to ensure an enjoyable, safe and bird-friendly experience. And though public events have been cancelled and schools closed, we've still been hard at work online, sharing nature-themed educational activities to keep children interested and engaged.

But while life has lost its variety for many of us, the natural world is always changing. It's now the time of year when Europe says goodbye to the migratory birds it has cherished throughout the spring and summer, and wishes them safe passage to Africa. As African bird lovers welcome the influx of new arrivals, we'd like to introduce this year's brand new Spring Alive focal species: the Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*.

We chose this small, adorable wader in order to expand the Spring Alive world to an exciting new habitat: wetlands. The iconic species can be easily spotted along coastlines, marshes, rivers

↑ Common Ringed Plover
incubating its eggs
Photo Arnoldius



and lakes throughout Southern Africa – in fact, you may well have seen it already. But you might not be aware of the fascinating and fearless behaviours that are packed into this tiny but feisty bird. Here are just a few things to look out for as you venture out on your next birdwatching trip.

One of the most distinctive quirks you may notice about this bird is its robotic, hyperactive feeding style, constantly scurrying around and then stopping abruptly like a demented clockwork toy. But there's method in the madness: the species feeds on insects, crustaceans and worms scattered across the shoreline. To pick off prey on the surface, it uses its excellent eyesight, standing stock still and watching for signs of movement, then quickly running forward and pecking, before screeching to a halt and watching again. To get at worms underground, it deploys an even more ingenious technique called "foot-trembling". Standing on one leg, it taps the other foot rapidly on the mud, imitating rainfall and encouraging the moisture-loving worms to slither to the surface.

But you're not going to see just one Common Ringed Plover. Oh, no. This highly social wader collects in flocks of at least 50 – but sometimes as many as 1,500 birds. It gets even more impressive when you realise that they've travelled thousands of kilometres from their breeding sites along the Arctic coast of northern Europe and Canada, to overwinter in southern Africa. Which makes it all the more important not to disturb them when you're birdwatching – because they're recovering from a pretty packed schedule.

The adventure starts in spring at their breeding grounds, where they lay up to four eggs in a very shallow "scrape" on the shoreline. A paragon

↪ A (pre-COVID) educational excursion to a wetland Photo Ghana Wildlife Society

➤ Common Ringed Plover in winter plumage Photo Zeynel Cebeci

➔ The plover's broken wing display distracts predators Photo Melling /Flickr



FACTFILE



SPRING ALIVE

Spring Alive is a project organised by BirdLife International, which aims to inspire and educate children across Africa and Eurasia about the wonders of nature and bird migration. Through workshops, school activities and family events, this initiative strives to create the next generation of conservationists. The 2020 Spring Alive season was made possible with the support of HeidelbergCement.

springalive.net

of gender equality, both parents have similar plumage and split incubation duties equally, fiercely defending the nest from interlopers. If the threat gets too great, they have another, more risky trick up their sleeves – they will feign a broken wing, staggering in the opposite direction to lead predators away from the nest.

So now you can see that, while wetlands may look like a huge empty expanse of mud, they're filled with drama and intrigue. They're also a lifeline for the birds that call them home. Sadly, some people don't see it that way. The Common Ringed Plover's population is declining as wetlands are polluted or drained to make way for agriculture – a common theme on every step of its migratory journey, including Africa.

"Ghana has a number of wetlands, but unfortunately, these wetlands are seen as wastelands, leading to encroachment. It is thus important to raise awareness about these sites, restore and rehabilitate them", says Louisa Kabobah, Conservation Education Officer at Ghana Wildlife Society (BirdLife Partner). We hope this brave, feisty little bird will become an ambassador for wetland conservation, helping to raise awareness and support for these vital habitats. ■



the birdlife collection



an exclusive range of stunning, ethically-sourced, products showing unique hand-drawn sketches & highlighting vulnerable, endangered & critically endangered species of birds



20%
FROM EACH SALE
GOES TO BIRDLIFE
INTERNATIONAL

The collection features the
Hook-billed Hermit Hummingbird,
the Yellow-crested Cockatoo and the Sarus Crane.

All of these birds are on The International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List.



get 10% off




Use the code: BIRDLIFE at the checkout

Available now at

www.curatedpieces.com

CURATED PIECES

*Terms and Conditions: The Coupon code will be valid from October 15th - January 15th.
Each Coupon code will be one use per customer and applies to the entire order transaction.



A range of beautiful bone-free tableware featuring all the birds in the collection



Exquisite prints on sustainable paper



Available now at

www.curatedpieces.com

Keep your eyes peeled as additional products will be added to the collection over time.

CURATED PIECES

*Terms and Conditions: The Coupon code will be valid from October 15th - January 15th. Each Coupon code will be one use per customer and applies to the entire order transaction.





A HEAD-START FOR LOGGERHEADS

Stretchers, drones, hatcheries, law enforcement or COVID: what made 2020 an exceptional nesting season for Loggerhead Turtles in Cabo Verde? The answer: dedication

With flailing flippers and sandy, narrowing eyes, a large turtle lies exposed on a Cabo Verdean beach in the dark. The Atlantic Ocean spray smells tantalisingly close, but this female Loggerhead is stranded on her back, helpless to her fate. Suddenly: a peculiar whirring sound, then the scuffling of approaching footsteps. Human hands flip her over and she is free to claw her way back to the safety of the sea.

This was the moment a drone saved the life of a turtle. Operated by conservationists Adilson Ramos and Albert Taxonera from Projeto Biodiversidad (a local NGO based on Sal island), their beach monitoring succeeded in scaring away a poacher, who had flipped the turtle – sadly, a common method used locally to tire and render turtles easier to carry and kill for meat later. Spotted through the drone’s thermal-imaging camera, the man appears orange-red with anger as he curses at the buzzing drone, before setting the turtle right and scurrying off.

She was just one of many Loggerhead Turtles that managed to nest successfully in the western

Shaun Hurrell

**“ THIS WAS THE
MOMENT A DRONE
SAVED THE LIFE OF
A TURTLE ”**

↑ Loggerhead Turtle
Caretta caretta
Photo Willyam Bradberry/
Shutterstock

African archipelago of Cabo Verde this year in what has been a record-breaking season. In the 2000s, less than 10,000 nests were counted per year on Boa Vista, the country’s largest nesting island. Numbers grew in the last decade to over 100,000 for the whole of Cabo Verde in 2018, with the official 2020 count coming in at over 170,000 nests. “Even adjusting for the increase in data over the last few years, this year has been truly exceptional”, says Aurélien Garreau, Programme Officer for Cabo Verde, working as part of the BirdLife Regional Implementation Team for the CEPF*.

Loggerhead Turtles *Caretta caretta* don’t have it easy. They’re globally Vulnerable to extinction and face threats such as development and disturbance of their nesting beaches, bycatch in fisheries, illegal trade, pollution (including plastic and light), climate change, and poaching for their eggs and meat (in Cabo Verde, where the species is nationally Endangered, this is usually by poachers wanting to sell meat illegally, or consumption as a ‘treat’). Plus, with only one in a thousand turtle hatchlings known to mature to adulthood, increasing nesting success is vitally



important to saving the species. But on hot Cabo Verdean beaches, patrolling and scientific monitoring work is not easy. 'Headstarting' is also important – involving moving vulnerable nests to simple beach hatcheries protected from dogs, predation and flooding, giving hatchlings the best possible chance of making it to the ocean.

Media attention has recently credited a lack of tourists for increased turtle nesting success elsewhere in the world. Whilst that may be a factor for some Cabo Verdean beaches, many are in more remote areas where COVID restrictions on group numbers and the usual support of international volunteer schemes actually made it harder for NGOs to patrol. Thus, the innovative use of a drone clearly had a positive impact on Projeto Biodiversidad's work.

Overall, and despite COVID, it's the consistency and dedication of the work of many local civil society organisations both on and off the beach that has made the difference for this year's

↪ **Biosfera field team weigh a hatchling on Santa Luzia**
Photo Liz Smith / BirdLife

← **Drone training**
Photo Projeto Biodiversidad

↑ **Monitoring work for nesting Loggerhead Turtles on Sal**
Photo Projeto Biodiversidad

record nesting success. A total of five such Cabo Verdean NGOs have been supported by CEPF*, with Biosfera also supported by BirdLife directly (for drone training, now underway, and organisational development). Year after year, they have been out on beaches, talking over tea with fishermen, raising awareness in schools and tourist complexes, being interviewed on national TV, and meeting government officials. You may be wondering why the poacher turned the turtle back over; work by these NGOs successfully persuaded the Cabo Verdean government to pass a breakthrough law against turtle poaching in 2018, with prison sentences. This has been fundamental to enforcement, with the police even counting on NGO patrols for convictions.

But don't let this paint an 'NGO versus local people' picture because that's far from the truth. Local people are much involved with beach patrols in Marine Protected Areas on Sal, Santa Luzia and Boa Vista, and the NGOs develop opportunities for fishing communities such as ecotourism (homestays, guiding) and activities on sustainable fishing. "Thanks to awareness and engagement work, there has been a change in the Cabo Verdean societal vision of turtles", says Garreau, "to one of pride, and their relation to economic opportunities too", says Garreau.

Loggerheads take over 20 years to reach maturity and return to the same beaches to nest. The immense effort and selfless dedication put in by these NGOs to increase hatching success and community support today will hopefully continue to pay off in years to come. ■

THE REALITY OF A CABO VERDEAN BEACH PATROL

Conservationists patrol every day and night during the June to October nesting season

Wake up at 4 AM to begin beach patrols by moonlight (or red torchlight, so turtles aren't disorientated). Feeling anxious about potential interactions with poachers. Five kilometres of beach and five hours of walking and nest monitoring later, you're in the scorching sun with no shade and an empty bottle of water. Then you spot a turtle behind the sand dunes 300 m from the ocean, lost and exhausted after nesting and clambering over piles of plastic debris. It takes two of you to use a specially-made 'turtle stretcher' to carry the 100 kg dying animal back to the ocean. Is it worth it? Yes. A life is saved, and if the turtles feel safe, they will come back to lay 80-90 eggs 2-3 times in a season.



Volunteers carry a rescued turtle back to the sea
Photo Biosfera

BiosCV, Biosfera, Fundação Tartaruga, Projeto Biodiversidad, and Projecto Vito have all been supported by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF).

Find out more at birdlife.org/cepf-med

MEET THE FEMALE FOREST DEFENDERS

Kathleen Zambas, Training Specialist with the Haribon Foundation (BirdLife in the Philippines), introduces us to some of the inspirational women defending their right to a healthy environment, facilitated by our Asia-Pacific Forest Governance Programme*

While on a bus to Tandag City, I noticed a kid beside me reading the text on my t-shirt: *Forest Defender*. Upon reading the words, the child asked, "What is a forest defender? Who are they?" I told her that forest defenders are brave people who protect the forest from destroyers. "Aren't they the people with big shields? Those men who roam

around the forest with a bow and arrow?" she asked again, possibly out of curiosity.

This is the perception that many people have about forest defenders: that they are men who patrol and guard the forest against wrongdoers. While this may be true in certain places, Indigenous Peoples in the Philippines challenge this popular notion by demonstrating that it takes all sorts of

skillsets to protect a forest.

Among them are three amazing women who are leading their communities in preserving their natural heritage, as well as actively learning to become better forest managers themselves - and all in their remarkable ways. Let's meet these forest defenders, known as *Bantay Gubat* (or *Bantay Banwa* in Mindanao).

MORE INFO

*Find out more about the 2017-2022 European Commission-funded Asia-Pacific Forest Governance project, *Strengthening non-state actor involvement in forest governance in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea* at:

www.birdlife.org/forest-governance



Mount Irid-Angelo, Philippines
Photo Kathleen Zambas

BAE VIRGILIA

THE VOCAL DEFENDER



Melinda Gates said, “A woman with a voice is by definition a strong woman”, and Bae Virgilia Juagpao perfectly embodies that definition, using her voice to create positive change. As the tribal leader, and former Barangay Indigenous People’s Representative (IPMR) of the Mamanwa-Manobo tribe, her voice propels her community.

She is one of the six women who are part of her tribe’s *Bantay Banwa* group, where she actively speaks on behalf of her fellow Mamanwas during consultations on forest governance. Bae Virgilia also represents her tribe in training and discussions on protection and law enforcement within their forest home.

“I will voice this out on behalf of the others who couldn’t speak,” says the forest defender, whose voice inspires her whole community to find theirs as well.

BAE ELMA

THE INFLUENTIAL DEFENDER



The patriarchal system in the Manobo tribe did not stand in the way of Bae Elma helping her community to conserve the forests of Mount Hilong-Hilong, one of the priority sites for the project. Bae Elma is the sole woman in their *Bantay Banwa* group, where she holds responsibility for a variety of duties. Besides serving as the group’s secretary, she helps to organise the members’ training activities and facilitates discussions and workshops.

“I don’t need to be in an official capacity to be able to serve for our ancestral domain,” says Elma, whose influence resonates beyond the *Bantay Banwa* group to the whole community of Manobo.

This reminded me of something the late Senator Miriam Santiago said: “If you want to make a difference... you need to be a leader on your own... You do not need to have a title or be a boss to become a leader.” This certainly rings true in the life of Elma, who leads her community despite not being a title-holder in her tribe’s council.

KA NINGNING

THE FRONTLINE DEFENDER



Ka Ningning is a woman who was born to lead the Dumagats of Nakar in defending their forest. Being the tribal chieftain of Sitio Tinipak, Ka Ningning puts herself on the frontlines to protect their land and their rights as indigenous people.

She is a female leader among the *Kaksaan* (chieftains), and leads discussions on establishing a *Bantay Gubat* group within their community. She also takes the helm during consultations on current issues that pose threats to their forest, for example the proposed development of Kaliwa Dam, which puts the tribe in danger of being displaced.

Ka Ningning says she is willing to sacrifice her life “in the name of service for our environment.” She is leader paving the way for her community to make their stand in defending what is rightfully theirs.

These three remarkable women stand as living proof that women are more than capable of doing what many people mistakenly think of as “men’s jobs”. Ultimately, they are great leaders willing to go above and beyond for their community, and an inspiration to women everywhere to be bold in protecting their human rights.

OUR CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT FOREST DEFENDERS LIKE THE BANTAY GUBAT

The Philippines is one of 156 UN member states that have legislation to facilitate the right to a healthy environment, but implementation is often insufficient. With the global environmental crisis looming, we are calling on the UN to recognise the universal human right to a healthy environment, and so provide greater support to invaluable forest defenders such as the *Bantay Gubat*.

Read more and join us at 1Planet1Right.org

Photo Albert Balbutin



HOT OFF THE PRESS

The latest scientific breakthroughs from BirdLife's quarterly peer-reviewed journal

HIGHLIGHTS PERUVIAN DIVING- PETREL IN RECOVERY

Great news for this Endangered seabird, which could soon see a return to its former glory thanks to protection of its island breeding grounds. The Peruvian Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides garnotii* used to have a large population of around 100,000 breeding pairs on offshore islands along the coasts of Peru and Chile. However, by the 1980s numbers had dwindled to a mere 1,000 pairs, its nesting sites invaded by guano miners, hunters and introduced predatory rats and dogs. In Chile, the bird now breeds on just five islands. Three of these are legally protected, but only two have management plans. In their survey, researchers found that the petrel's Chilean population had experienced recent rapid growth and now numbers 12,500 breeding pairs, 95% of which were found on Choros Island, the only island with adequate protection. This study shows what can be achieved when seabirds are allowed to breed in peace and safety, and the importance of expanding this model to other islands. ■



Peruvian Diving-petrel
Photo Pablo Caceres Contreras

SAN CRISTÓBAL MOCKINGBIRD ADAPTING TO CHANGE

What do you do when humans invade your island and modify vast swathes of habitat? For the San Cristóbal Mockingbird *Mimus melanotis* (Endangered), the answer would appear to be “keep calm and carry on.” When surveying the highly degraded Galápagos island of San Cristóbal, researchers found this endemic bird species was far more widespread than previously thought, and seems to have had a stable population since the 1980s. Although the original vegetation had been degraded by grazing goats, human settlements and non-native plants and animals, it seems the mockingbird has been able to adapt and tolerate change better than some of its relatives on neighbouring islands. Local eyewitnesses also suggest that the Least Vermilion Flycatcher *Pyrocephalus dubius* (currently presumed Extinct) persisted until very recently – and may still survive somewhere on the island. ■



San Cristóbal Mockingbird
Photo Mike's Birds



White-backed Vulture
Photo Laszlo Csoma

AFRICAN WHITE- BACKED VULTURES IN POISONING CRISIS

The African White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* is Critically Endangered, in large part due to poisoning across its range. Unlike Asian vultures, which are often poisoned accidentally, much of this poisoning is deliberate. For example, ivory poachers may douse elephant carcasses in pesticides to kill vultures that may otherwise gather around the remains and draw attention to their illegal activities. Other vultures are poisoned for the belief-based use of their body parts. Aerial surveys of the species in north-central Botswana showed that nesting numbers had declined by more than half between 2006 and 2017, and breeding success was also significantly lower in 2017 than it was ten years earlier. Projections suggest that if recent high poisoning rates continue, this population could be extirpated from the area in the next 13 years. ■

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- > Drivers of population change in common farmland birds in Germany
- > Conservation status of the threatened and endemic Rufous-throated Dipper *Cinclus schulzi* in Argentina
- > Long-term declines in common breeding seabirds in Japan

AND MUCH MORE...

GET THE LATEST UPDATES STRAIGHT TO YOUR INBOX AT:

WWW.CAMBRIDGE.ORG/BCI/SUBSCRIBE

FOLLOW THE LATEST ADVANCES IN OUR RESEARCH ON TWITTER: @BCI_JOURNAL



New tracking technology reveals intrepid journey of UK's smallest seabird



Mark Bolton, Principal Conservation Scientist at the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), explains how a paperclip-sized satellite tag gave us important new insights into the life of the small but tough European Storm-petrel, and how these discoveries can help us protect it.

Why had researchers been unable to track the European Storm-petrel until recently?

European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* are extremely small – the size of a sparrow, and the second smallest seabird in the world. High-precision GPS tags for such a tiny species have only become available in the last few years. The trackers we used weigh less than a gram and can record the bird's location to a precision of a few metres, anywhere in the world. Over a four-year period, we tracked 42 Storm-petrels nesting on the island of Mousa in the Shetland Isles, UK.



What were your most important findings?

We found that although storm-petrels have a large foraging range, regularly travelling more than 200 kilometres from the colony, they consistently used a relatively small area of sea, much of which has already been identified as a Marine Protected Area due to its importance for other species. With our new data, we determined that the storm-petrels' daytime foraging area, and the waters immediately adjacent to the colony where birds commuted back and forth, both met the criteria to be considered as marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). Since storm-petrels only visit their colony during darkness, their 'commuting areas' would not have been detected using conventional visual survey methods.

Were there any surprises?

One of the birds we tracked was caught in a strong gale and blown across the North Sea to Norway, taking shelter in a fjord just north of Stavanger. When I caught it following its return, I found that it had gained weight during its trip and that its chick had been fed. So the bird had not merely survived being storm-driven to Norway, but had managed to find food en route, both for itself and its nestling. It is likely that all the birds out feeding on that day endured the same conditions. In fact, storm-petrels are so-called because they are usually only sighted near land during strong winds.

How can this study help protect the European Storm-petrel and other seabirds?

The birds we tagged are part of the largest colony of storm-petrels in UK, which is an internationally important protected area. In principle, all storm-

petrels breeding at this colony are therefore also protected when they are feeding at sea. However, if we don't know exactly where they feed, it is very difficult to assess potential impacts of marine activities and enact this protection. This study provides the information we need to do so. Furthermore, the areas that qualify for marine IBA status can now be recommended for statutory protection. Both areas coincide with Marine Protected Areas designated for other reasons, emphasising the importance of certain sites for a whole range of marine biodiversity. ■

*GPS tracking reveals highly consistent use of restricted foraging areas by European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* breeding at the largest UK colony: implications for conservation management is published in Bird Conservation International.*

All the Birds of the World

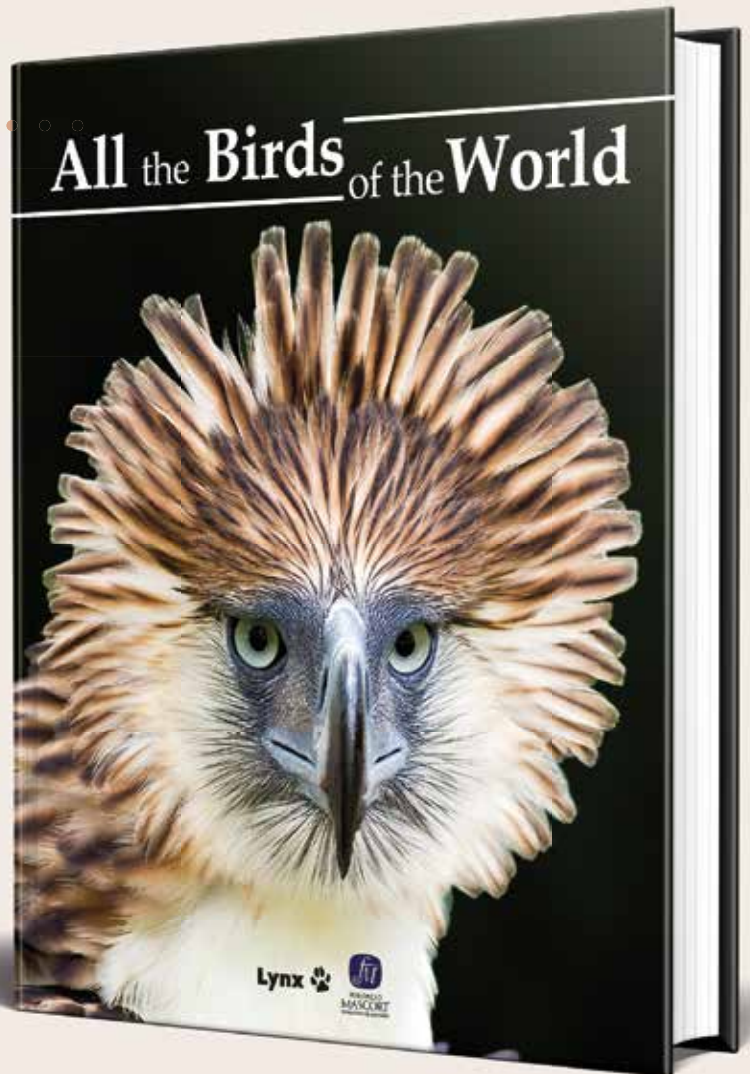
One Book

All the Birds

The best gift of the year!

Want to explore **ALL** the birds of the world?

Now you can in a single volume. The easiest and most enjoyable way to browse and compare every living species in the world.



- 11,524 species, including 162 extinct
- 20,865 illustrations
- 11,558 distribution maps
- IUCN/BirdLife International global conservation status given for each species
- 968 pages, 9.45 x 12.20 in

Get it now at the launching offer of 65.00 € (c. £59) and save 24%!

FREE DOWNLOAD for readers of BirdLife: The Magazine!

Get an attractive PDF file of the Checklist of the One-country Endemic Birds of the World at:

www.lynxeds.info code: **ABW-BL**

Lynx Edicions - Online orders at www.lynxeds.com – lynx@lynxeds.com

Lynx



BY APPOINTMENT TO
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II
SWAROVSKI OPTIK
SUPPLIER OF BINOCULARS



115-MM OBJECTIVE MODULE
GREATNESS
IN THE SMALLEST
DETAIL

SEE THE UNSEEN



SWAROVSKI
OPTIK