

AFRICAN BIRD CLUB STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2020

Introduction

The African Bird Club was formed in 1994 to provide a nexus for those with an interest in African birds. From its small beginnings it has grown to a membership of around 1,200 in 70 countries. The focus on Africa is provided by the biannual *Bulletin of the African Bird Club*, which is now considered to be one of the foremost publications on African ornithology. It presents unrivalled coverage of the region with a mix of current news and high quality notes and papers.

Other resources provided by the Club include checklists, images of African birds (the African Bird Image Database available via the website now has more than 22,500 images of 2,136 species contributed by 193 photographers) and sound recordings (Xeno-canto contains 8,962 recordings of 1,517 African species contributed by 147 recorders).

Since 1996 a major role of the Club has been awarding small grants for conservation work. As of January 2015 had raised over £225,000 to support nearly 200 projects in 38 African countries and 4 biogeographically affiliated territories - Tristan da Cunha, Madeira, the Azores and the Canary Islands.

The 2014 Strategy refresh

2014 saw the 20th anniversary of the Club. It was over ten years since the Club's strategy was last reviewed. In that time the threats to Africa's birds and their habitats have continued to grow. Over the same period our income has also increased. Although it is still small compared to the nature of the challenges, the Club has an important role as a catalyst of change. It was timely to review our strategy for the coming years so we can make the most of our potential to be a force for conservation in Africa.

A brand strapline

The African Bird Club – working for birds and conservation in Africa

This strapline is intended to be used on ABC publications, displays and papers. It is intended to summarise in a simple phrase what the ABC stands for and to bring attention to our work.

A vision

We are the charity dedicated to the conservation of birds across Africa. We work with people in Africa providing support for the study of birds and conservation with the aim of improving the status of both migratory and resident species.

We work with individuals and local groups throughout Africa supporting and promoting:

- *Conservation projects with a focus on researching, monitoring and protecting African birds and their habitats*
- *conservation education*
- *Surveys and assessments of lesser-known regions*
- *the effective communication of information about African birds*

This vision does not replace our official constitution or other modus operandi. It is intended to encapsulate in a short, easily understood statement what the ABC seeks to achieve, usually in a generic sense, rather than being very specific or time bound.

Key outcomes

Here we identify the main **outcomes** that we wish the African Bird Club to achieve in the period to 2020. The main outcomes are the major objectives that we seek to achieve which will either directly further our conservation mission or else enhance our capacity and strength to do so. These are ends objectives.

For each of these major outcomes, we have identified the major actions we would need to undertake in order to achieve our outcomes.

External focus – things we do to promote our vision

1. By 2020 we will be funding at least 20 high quality, high visibility reviewed conservation projects per year
2. We will be working actively with a range of other public and private agencies to promote conservation and conservation awareness in Africa
3. We will have achieved the mentoring and building capacity of African conservationists
4. We will make ABC a recognised source of knowledge about African birds

Internal focus – how we organise ourselves to be able to do them

5. Membership will have increased by 25% in UK and Europe/rest of the world (to 1,250) and reaching 1,000 named individuals in Africa
6. We will maintain the current level of support for ABC operations, and 10% expansion of conservation grants
7. The best person in each African country (and other represented countries) is representing ABC well to their citizens
8. We will maintain current high standards of Governance and improve membership administration

Key outcomes and necessary actions

(External focus – things we do to promote our vision)

- 1. By 2020 we will be funding at least 20 high quality, high visibility reviewed conservation projects per year**

We will continue to seek to support high quality and effective conservation projects throughout Africa, especially in areas that have not been well-studied or which have suffered from under investment in conservation. We will seek to promote both the existence of the fund and results of successful projects across Africa and in places where there is support for African conservation, especially Europe

1.1 Continue to review the award of grants through the operation of the conservation committee

1.2 Improve writing-up/reporting back to us, especially if suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed journal

1.3 Publicise the outcomes and success of ABC projects through press releases, facebook, articles in magazines, twitter etc

1.4 Seek to identify good projects in countries and sites that have previously suffered under-investment in conservation

1.5 Better publicise the availability and objectives of the fund itself (in Africa and Europe)

2. We will be working actively with a range of other public and private agencies to promote conservation and conservation awareness in Africa

The ABC has an excellent reputation for producing high-quality materials but is not as well known as it should be. We are in a position to use our high-quality products, such as the Bulletin, and our proven success in supporting conservation projects to encourage other agencies – donors, corporate, individuals, to join us and do more for African conservation. We should play a greater role in raising awareness of African conservation issues and successes, both in Africa and elsewhere

2.1. Disseminate materials from completed projects to other institutions and link those institutions with potential project implementers

2.2 Use ABC's reputation and contacts to identify and seek support from new individuals and organisations that can assist conservation in Africa

2.3 Use partners and representatives to identify and support effective projects that will improve awareness of and active engagement in conservation within Africa

3. We will have achieved the mentoring and building capacity of African conservationists

ABC has a unique network of people interested in Africa from across the continent and from Europe (and elsewhere). The range of experience and ability offers a chance to build capacity among African conservationists. We have primarily achieved this through support to African conservationists attending the premier African ornithological event (PAOC). We should continue to do this and seek to facilitate support from other organisations and donors. We should also look for other ways of achieving capacity building whether this be by supporting other forms of training or experience, or by setting up an initially small coaching and mentoring scheme within the ABC membership. We should consider appointing a member of Council to be responsible for this area of work.

3.1 Support at least 5 African students to attend each PAOC and provide guidance to project proponents (prioritising those likely to speak to and publish their work)

3.2 Lobby British Council and other EU institutions to provide conservation studentships for PAOC and other projects

3.3 Seek to establish a mentoring scheme linking emerging African conservationists with mentors from within or outside Africa

4. We will further enhance the reputation of ABC as a recognised source of knowledge about African birds

A strength of ABC is our high quality information, especially those provided by our bulletin and website. These are listed here as single projects but are the product of an extraordinary degree of commitment by skilled and dedicated individuals. Maintaining the existing quality and improving it still further will be a challenge and may require additional support by members of Council and the wider ABC. We can use these media outlets to further promote and solicit support for the wider conservation and education work of ABC

4.1 Continue to maintain and improve the ABC website

4.2 Continue to maintain and improve the ABC Bulletin

4.3 Continue to maintain and improve the collection of African bird images

- 4.4 Continue to produce and promote innovative methods of increasing awareness and knowledge of African birds eg African bird ID challenge
- 4.5 Identify and produce other timely and relevant publications and materials
- 4.6 Publish and promote Case studies about successful projects
- 4.7 Promote ABC, especially through annual attendance at the BBWF and through an event at the PAOC
- 4.8 Link ABC website to others eg BirdLife partners, BLI

(Internal focus – how we organise ourselves to be able to do them)

5. Membership will have increased by 25% in UK and Europe/rest of the world (to 1250) and reaching 1000 named individuals in Africa

Membership is the life-blood of any effective NGO. ABC does not anticipate mass membership but does rely strongly on its membership for financial, political and practical support. We will look for modest growth in Europe and elsewhere but in particular must look to be better represented in Africa itself. We should seek significant growth in African membership, acknowledging that in the short term some members there may not be able to afford a full subscription and that this should be supported – while focusing primarily on electronic communication so as to reduce costs

- 5.1 Split membership role in two – administration (potentially a funded role) and promotion
- 5.2 Achieve more memberships given by tour operators
- 5.3 Seek to persuade each member to get another member
- 5.4 Organise some meetings around the UK (or abroad) – through our members doing the work
- 5.5 Get commercial sponsorships for the free membership scheme – companies and other organisations with links to Africa
- 5.6 Give Council members responsibility to contact members to secure their assistance and support
- 5.7 Issue a Chair's email message to members 1-2x/year referring to key events/website links
- 5.8 Produce an enhanced 'welcome pack' to new members and consider enhanced services to members such as 'members only' web pages
- 5.9 Provide more free memberships in Africa but electronic to reduce costs of their provision, and look for sponsorship for this
- 5.10 Promote membership through enhanced presence on Facebook and Twitter
- 5.11 Give representatives clear remit and responsibility on membership
- 5.12 Improve activity by and for members in Europe and elsewhere (for example US, Australia)
- 5.13 Encourage students/next generation birders to join and/or become involved in ABC?

- 6. We will maintain the current level of support for ABC operations, and 10% expansion of conservation grants

ABC does not seek a significant change in the current style of management and therefore of its operational costs. Our efforts at increasing funding should primarily focus on raising money for our successful conservation projects (although we need to ensure continued capacity to service our existing services such as Bulletin, website etc we may wish to seek a paid officer in conjunction with other organisations – see governance below)

- 6.1 Seek one new major (£1,000+) individual or corporate sponsor per year

- 6.2 Produce and implement a plan to look after our top donors
- 6.3 Seek one 5 figure donation each year
- 6.4 Produce the club products/materials that we want, worrying less about profit as it is minimal
- 6.5 Help to sell/market African produced goods, which are linked to conservation
- 6.6 Improve sales figures of each raffle
- 6.7 Seek to expand corporate sponsors beyond tour operators eg binocular companies, Africa-based companies
- 6.8 Clarify process for and promote legacies to ABC

7. The best available person in each African country (and other represented countries) is representing ABC well to their countryfolk

Our network of African (and to an extent other countries, especially European) national representatives is an important part of ABC's structure and has been successful in building the profile, knowledge of and support for the Club. Their contribution is variable, reflecting their varying skills, experience and time but also the extent to which they have been guided and managed to perform the role, and then supported to do so. We will seek to build up the clarity around the structure of this role, the skills required and support given. In doing this, we should ensure a mutual contract of good support to and service given by the reps, and thus ensure that we are able to attract the best possible candidates to perform the role

- 7.1 Clarify the role and our expectations of representatives
- 7.2 Research the best options for people in each country
- 7.3 Use our members to identify the best people
- 7.4 Secure 'contract' and agreed term of operation
- 7.5 Provide mentoring and training in the role
- 7.6 Work out and express to them what's in it for them
- 7.7. Give them targets and materials

8. Maintain current high standards of Governance and improve membership administration

The ABC has been well governed and managed over the past 20 years by a dedicated group of volunteers. This should continue to be the main way by which we are governed, although we recognise that some roles are becoming more onerous, particularly those of servicing and promoting the membership, managing our funds and supporting the website. We should give more support to these functions which could include seeking some paid support, perhaps in partnership with like minded sister organisations. Wherever possible, we should seek to involve more people from Africa in the governance of the organisation, and seek a better balance in the gender of those involved.

- 8.1 Provide better support to Treasurer, Membership Officer and website Officer
- 8.2 Get 3 African members of Council within a year (1 in UK, 2 Africa-based)
- 8.3 Consider option to employ admin person jointly with other organisations
- 8.4 Appoint additional Voluntary posts where appropriate and if the right people become available eg. Sales, Membership Promotion, Capacity Development.
- 8.5 Organise the Annual General Meeting and look for opportunities to better record/promote it via video links and web promotion etc

8.6 Improve the governance of ABC to deliver the new elements of the strategy through development and management of a series of identified projects

8.7 Maintain close contact with the Charity Commission and occasionally review our constitution and policies to ensure adherence to the highest standards

Implementation of and monitoring of the strategy

At this stage of the ABC's development, we have deliberately not attached firm targets to most of the activities. The next stage will be to produce annual work programme setting out annual objectives based on the outcomes identified, milestones for reaching them, timing, responsibilities and costs. This will be concise and will form a guide not a dictat. For some of the newer and more ambitious items in the strategy, we will aim to start slowly, testing and acting according to our resources and capacity.

The Council will monitor the progress of the strategy annually (and more often as necessary) and will adapt our plans based on outcomes and experience. As we do this, we will need to consider whether changes to the organisations' capacity, structure or governance are necessary in order to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves.