

## **African Bird Club Conservation Fund Projects**

The following reports give information and news of some ABC funded projects.

### **Dunga wetlands protection, Kenya**

This is a project to develop a grassroots site group for the conservation of Dunga swamp in western Kenya. Akwany Leonard Omondi received £800 for this work on behalf of Lake Victoria Sunset Birders who are responsible for the conservation of Dunga Swamp, one of 60 Important Bird Areas (IBA) in Kenya. The award will specifically help to train volunteers of the site conservation group so that they will be better able to undertake effective and efficient conservation research, monitoring and action.

The following conclusions and recommendation have been received.

The training was a great milestone and provided the necessary empowerment for the grass-root site conservation groups towards the proactive management of Lake Victoria Wetlands and their Birds which are currently under immense anthropogenic threats. The themes covered: Ecological Survey and Basic Research, Conservation Action and Management and Institutional Capacity Building will enable grass-root restoration and conservation of Dunga Swamp and its Birds. Likewise the successful restoration, sustainable utilisation and conservation of Dunga Wetland will provide a perfect model to be replicated in other Lake Victoria Wetlands.

The following recommendations will suffice:

The need for trained conservation groups to proactively implement the acquired knowledge, skills, tools, methods and approaches for the conservation of Dunga Swamp and its Birds and by extension Lake Victoria Wetlands and their Birds.

The need for Lake Victoria Sunset Birders to replicate the training to other Lake Victoria Wetlands site conservation groups for purposes of capacity building and associated multiplier benefits

### **Bearded Vulture surveys, South Africa**

This project, kindly funded by our sponsor Avifauna, made a slow start because of a lack of resources but we are pleased to hear that the project has progressed satisfactorily based on the following short report from KZN Wildlife in South Africa.

"We have appointed a student, Kirsten Oliver, to undertake the GIS analysis for the Bearded Vulture project. She started work about one month ago, and has been working hard to collate data on land cover change and on livestock densities. A key parameter that she needs to collect still is the average mortality rates for different farming systems.

I anticipate that she will complete the analysis before the end of January 2007, after which we will ensure that the results are written up and hopefully submitted for publication."

## **Yabello expedition, Ethiopia**

One award was for a Glasgow University expedition to study two endemic species: Stresemann's Bush Crow *Zavattariornis stresemanni* and White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis*, in the Yabello area of southern Ethiopia. Richard Mellanby was the applicant on behalf of the University Group that worked closely and collaboratively with the Ethiopian Wildlife & Natural History Society. Some 418 observer/days of fieldwork were undertaken with point counts and line transects being used to assess bird numbers. Stresemann's Bush Crow has been declining in the area for some time and this may be directly linked to the reduction in grazing and an increase in cultivation. White-tailed Swallow was found on only 27 days and mainly in areas of Acacia scrub. Man-made features such as river embankments were favoured sites. The opportunity was also taken to survey the avifauna of the Yabello Sanctuary where 250 species were observed. The project team are creating a visitor guide for the Yabello area and working with local communities to better conserve the birds of this area.

## **Highlands of Ethiopia**

Merid Nega Gabremicael received £850 for studies to establish the status and distribution of Harwood's Francolin *Francolinus harwoodi*, Yellow-throated Seedeater *Serinus flavigula* and Ankober Serin *Carduelis ankoberensis* in the Ethiopian Highlands. His award was kindly made possible by a donation from Julian Francis.

## **Mauritius Fody translocation**

An award of £500 was made to the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation to help with the costs of a translocation programme for Mauritian Fody *Foudia rubra*. The fodies were transferred to a predator free island – Ile aux aigrettes.

Translocation of Seychelles Warbler and Seychelles Fody.

This award of £750 to Nature Seychelles, kindly funded by Avifauna, helped establish new populations of two globally threatened species - the Seychelles Fody *Foudia sechellanum* and Seychelles Warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis*, on predator-free Denis Island.

We were delighted to hear in May 2006 that Seychelles Fody has been down-listed to near-threatened. The project moved 47 Seychelles Fodies and 58 Seychelles Warblers to Denis Island. The Fody is now breeding on Denis Island and has a self-sustaining population.