



# African Bird Club

Working for birds and conservation in Africa



CLUB NEWSLETTER <https://www.africanbirdclub.org> DECEMBER 2019

## GREETINGS

Welcome to your December 2019 Club Newsletter.

I am also very pleased to welcome Anne Varney, who has been newly co-opted to ABC Council as a trustee. Club News in the next *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* (Vol 27 No 1) will introduce her to you properly.

A warm welcome, too, to Tadele Travel, who have generously become a silver-tier corporate sponsor of the Club. If you would like to find out more about them, please visit their website - <https://tadeletravel.com/>

As ever, members of ABC and their guests are all most welcome to attend our next Annual Meeting, which will be held on 25 April 2020 at the world-famous Natural History Museum in London. The programme will be made available in good time before the event.

I hope you enjoy Christmas and I wish you all the best for the New Year.

*David*

David Fox

[chairman@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:chairman@africanbirdclub.org)

The bird pictured on the left is an Eastern Wattled Cuckooshrike (DD), one of only two out of almost 1,000 species on the checklists of Nigeria, Benin, Togo and Ghana of which the Birds of Africa App had been lacking photos. Our thanks to Mathias D'haen from African Parks for plugging this gap.



Photo: Mathias D'haen



Photo: Imogen Clark

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS AND RECRUITMENT

Many thanks to those of you who have already paid your subscriptions for 2020, and beyond in some cases. Membership renewal reminders will be sent out in the New Year, and it is an enormous help to us if these can be actioned early. As ever, if you have any difficulties paying online through the website, please let us know, with details of any problem encountered. ABC are continuing to attract new members, and naturally we are always keen to welcome more. Please can all members help us do that by each resolving to recruit one new member to the Club during the coming year?

## DONATIONS AND LEGACIES TO ABC

The late Marion Annie Vincent, who was a member of ABC, kindly left a legacy of £10,000 to the Club in her will, which we acknowledge with heartfelt thanks. In addition, Mark and Mo Constantine have generously donated £15,000 to our conservation fund. We extend our gratitude and appreciation to them and to all our other generous donors, without whom we could not continue to fund the diverse projects all over Africa that benefit from our conservation and expedition awards.

ABC are constantly on the lookout for new donors, and we are more than happy to accommodate donors' preferences to fund, for example, country-specific projects, and to meet any other reasonable conditions they attach.

If you are interested in becoming a regular or occasional donor, or if you know someone who is, you or they should feel free to contact me in confidence at [chairman@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:chairman@africanbirdclub.org)

*David Fox*

## OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

Huge thanks, as always, go to ABC's loyal corporate sponsors –

**GOLD:** AviFauna Nature Tours, Birding EcoTours, iGoTerra, Rockjumper

**SILVER:** Birding Africa, Limosa, Safari Consultants, Tadele Travel

**BRONZE:** Birdfinders, BirdQuest, Lawsons Safaris, Sunbird, WildWings

We are also very grateful to Birds & Birding Madagascar, and to Venture Uganda, for their continued and valuable support.

## ABC FIELD GUIDE APP – BIRDS OF AFRICA

We have made good progress on the development of Birds of Africa and we plan to publish the Android version in January 2020. An IOS version will follow several weeks later. The App has been undergoing extensive tests in the past few months and special thanks are due to Judy Albrecht, Dave Curtis, Thierry Helsens and Josiah Ibrahim for their help and feedback from Togo, Ghana, Benin and Nigeria, respectively. The first version of the App will contain all 972 species on the checklists of these four countries.

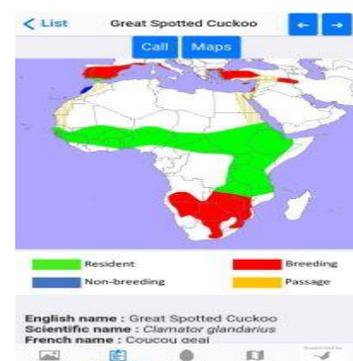
Many members have helped with content and we have photos of all but one of the species concerned – does anyone have a photo of Shelley's Eagle-owl (VU)? Peter Boesman and Bram Piot have provided access to their libraries of bird calls. If other members have collections of African bird calls which we can use, we would be delighted to hear from them.

In order to make the App more usable to people in Africa who are beginners to birdwatching, we have developed the option of Lite checklists for each country. These checklists will contain 50 or so of the more common species, those that are found in gardens, towns and villages. The content of the Lite lists will be much less to download than the full checklists, which will help in areas with limited WiFi capability. A further facility has been added to help French speakers, who can select a language setting which provides the species and family names in French.

Following the launch of the App, we will continue to develop content for other countries in West Africa and turn our attentions to other regions of the continent. This is a huge undertaking, so any offers of help would be most welcome. You can contact us on [app@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:app@africanbirdclub.org) One final point: the App is free for anyone to download!

*John Caddick*

The following screenshots show some of the facilities available in the App.



## HIGHLIGHTS OF BIRDFAIR 2019 FOR ABC

- Gloria Waswa from Nature Kenya delivered the well-received ABC Lecture on conserving Kenya's critical sites and species.
- The Club's Vice Chair, Paul Buckley, presented Gloria with our cheque for £17,500 towards WLT's appeal to save part of Dakatcha Woodland.
- ABC members voting at a special general meeting unanimously resolved to wind up our unincorporated charity and to transfer its assets to a CIO.
- Adam Riley of Rockjumper ably represented the Club in the Best Days Ever – The World Series contest.
- ABC Vice President Keith Betton also did us proud in the Bird Brain of Britain competition, winning £250 prize money in the process.
- An additional £861 was raised for our conservation fund from sales of Club merchandise, new member sign-ups and our ever-popular tombola.

Thanks to everyone who worked so hard for the Club over the three days in August, not least Helen Baker (pictured on the right, at the tombola).



## ABC MEMBERS' STORIES

The Club's supported membership scheme offers full membership to individuals resident in Africa who would benefit from ABC membership but who are constrained from joining by the cost. One of our supported members, Judith Mirembe, is Chairperson of the all-female Uganda Women Birders (UWB), a club which she founded in 2013. She has been instrumental in bringing about an increase in the number of women participating in nature guiding in Uganda, which is still a male-dominated profession. More about Judith and UWB will appear under Club News in the next *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* (Vol 27 No 1).

Our members and supporters who go birding in Africa can always provide important information on the current condition of sites that they visit, as well as interesting or noteworthy bird records. Nicholas Beswick visited Ghana in late August 2019 and found the Sakumo Lagoon Ramsar Site sadly neglected, although there were scores of Collared Pratincoles at the seaward end. Near Ada Foah, at the mouth of the Volta River, two Damara Terns (VU) were spotted in a mixed flock with Sandwich and Common Terns, and hundreds of cormorants, egrets and herons gathered to roost on an island. The Shai Hills Reserve appeared to be well protected by Forestry Department wardens, and the best find there was a Dwarf Bittern.

## SHARING YOUR CONSERVATION STORIES

Do you have a short story to tell relating to the conservation of African birds or their habitats that you think will be of interest to other members of ABC? If so, I would like to hear from you.

Please send your brief submission as a Word attachment by email to [chairman@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:chairman@africanbirdclub.org) together with any one or two good quality photographs if you wish. All submissions will be considered for publication in a future Club Newsletter, or the Club News section of a future *Bulletin of the African Bird Club*, however we cannot guarantee that any particular submission will be accepted. Any submission that is accepted will be subject to editing for length and clarity.

Let's try and make the most of something we all have in common – whether we are resident in Africa, the UK, mainland Europe or elsewhere in the world – our interest in the birds of Africa and their conservation.

*David Fox*

## NOTICEBOARD

ABC trustees receive information and requests from various individuals and groups, some of which they ask us to share more widely. Here are a few recent examples which we hope you may find of interest or useful, or which you might even be able to respond to yourself.

- Bruno Portier, a Forestry Officer and RESSOURCE Project Advisor with the Sustainable Wildlife Management Programme of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, asked us to share a link to a video produced by the Technical Support Unit to the AEWA (African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement) African Initiative: “*Waterbird Monitoring in Africa: the Chad Experience*”. Click [here](#) to see the video on YouTube.
- Nacho García, a Spanish ornithologist, would be interested to hear from anyone who has observed or recovered a ringed Booted Eagle in parts of Africa where the species winters, or who has recorded a video in 4k format of this migratory raptor in one of its wintering areas. You can email him at [isgdios@gmail.com](mailto:isgdios@gmail.com) You may also be interested in reading his blog – <https://aguillalcalzada.blogspot.com/>
- The BBC Natural History Unit asked us to suggest accessible and reliable specific locations in the Okavango Delta where they could observe and film African Jacanas without too much disturbance. They are working on “*Planet Earth III*”, a documentary series in production to be fronted by Sir David Attenborough, and one story they were keen on filming is how jacanas take care of their chicks. We have put them in touch with contacts in Botswana who can help them find the locations they were seeking.
- Manda Razakavonison of Cactus Tours Madagascar informed us that he and some local scientists founded the Madagascar Birding Association (MBA) in June 2019 mainly to promote the protection and preservation of Madagascar’s birds. MBA has since produced the first ever bird field guide in the Malagasy language entitled “*Ny Vorontsika eto Madagasikara*” – *Our Birds in Madagascar*. You can find out more about MBA and its activities by visiting its website – [www.madagascarbirding.org](http://www.madagascarbirding.org)
- World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD), celebrated every year in May and October, seeks to raise awareness of all migratory birds and the need to conserve them. In October 2019 various BirdLife partners across Africa celebrated WMBD, whose theme this year was “*Protect Birds: Be the Solution to Plastic Pollution!*” to highlight this threat to migratory birds and their habitats. Click [here](#) to read more about how partners marked WMBD.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Next year's **Annual Meeting of the Club** will be held on Saturday **25 April 2020**, and the venue once again will be the Flett Lecture Theatre, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

We are assembling a panel of distinguished speakers to deliver an interesting variety of presentations on the day, and details of the event's programme will be circulated as soon as these have been finalised.

We very much hope you can make it, whilst we quite understand that this is not easy for those of you who live outside the UK. But if you do come to the UK from time to time, perhaps you may be able to time your next visit to coincide with our Annual Meeting, and also take this opportunity to go to a nature reserve where migrating birds will be returning from Africa?

Why not also plan another visit to take in **Birdfair 2020** at Rutland Water Nature Reserve? The dates for that event are **21, 22 and 23 August 2020**.

## ABC ON SOCIAL MEDIA



You can keep in touch with the Club's news and views in real time.

Moderated by the Club's Communications Officer, Lynda Donaldson, ABC can be found on –

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/AfricanBirdClub/> - please join our group

Twitter <https://twitter.com/africabirdclub> - please follow us

Yahoo Groups - please sign up to the AfricanBirding group via our website - <https://www.africanbirdclub.org/club/yahoo-group>

As at the beginning of October 2019 –

ABC had 6,310 Facebook members from 99 countries across the world. The three countries with the highest number of members are all in Africa, namely Tanzania (641), Kenya (585) and South Africa (534). These are closely followed by the UK with 531 members.

ABC's Twitter handle had 1,108 followers and was following 295 others.

*Lynda Donaldson*