

Fifteen years of the African Bird Club

Since its formation in 1994, the African Bird Club has maintained a close relationship with BirdLife International and its partners across Africa. The Club now has around 1200 members in over 60 countries, and runs several local membership schemes enabling members to join through the local BirdLife Partner.

The Bulletin of the African Bird Club is published twice a year, and a copy is sent to every African BirdLife Partner. With over 120 pages per issue, the Bulletin has become a major source of ornithological data for African ornithologists. Each issue contains papers on a wide variety of issues ranging from scientific discoveries to conservation challenges, regional profiles and identification keys. There is also an extensive round-up of news and comment on African ornithology.

The Club's website www.africanbirdclub.org contains a wealth of information, including detailed country profiles and a searchable database of more than 12,000 photographs of 1870 species. A Checklist of African Birds (English and French) is regularly updated, and this has become the authoritative source for those wanting to understand the latest taxonomic thinking.

ABC is a strong supporter of the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, funding publication of the seminar abstracts, and assisting a number of delegates with their cost of attendance.

Since its formation the African Bird Club has supported numerous projects in Africa, with awards totaling in excess of £80,000 (\$130,000) to date. For example, in the last seven years ABC has given more than 50 awards for work in 20 African countries. These have included Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Botswana and South Africa, as well as Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and the islands of Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles and Comoros.

Priorities for ABC's Conservation Fund are support for research on threatened species, and surveys of Important Bird Areas or little known areas. Generally most awards are between £500 and £1000. In most years ABC also gives an expedition award of £1000. For more information, contact Steph_tyler2001@hotmail.com

Recently the Club has helped to fund work on, among other species, the Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus*, Nahan's Francolin *Francolinus nahani* in Uganda, Congo Peafowl *Afropavo congensis*, Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* in Ethiopia, Cape Vulture *Gyps Coprotheres* in Namibia, Taita Falcon *Falco fasciinucha*, Madagascar Plover *Charadrius thoracicus*, Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* in Kakamega forest, Zambian (Chaplin's) Barbet *Lybius chaplini*, Sakalava Rail *Amaurornis Olivieri* in Madagascar, Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana* in Botswana, Amani Sunbird *Anthreptes pallidigaster* in Kenya, Blue Swallow *Hirundo atrocaerulea* in Malawi, Sharpe's Longclaw *Macronyx sharpei* and Abbott's Starling *Cinnyricinclus femoralis* in Kenya and Jackson's Widowbird *Euplectes jacksoni* in Tanzania. Surveys have included the Namanga Hills in Kenya, wetlands in Mali, Sudanian gallery forest, vultures in Somalia and birds in the Yabello area of Ethiopia.

ABC also encourages educational and community projects, and has contributed to a beginners' bird book in Setswana (the main language in Botswana), as well as educational material in Madagascar, material for community awareness-raising in the Lake Victoria Basin, and posters and other material for a vulture awareness day in Kenya. Other awards have gone to a survey of Socotra Cormorants *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*, translocation of the Mauritius Fody *Foudia rubra* and Mauritius Olive White-eye *Zosterops chloronothus* to predator-free islands in Mauritius, control of House Crows *Corvus splendens* in South Africa, and a study of the impact of oil and gas flares in the Niger delta, as well as small grants for student projects in Uganda. A ringing course in Zambia and a scheme involving road counts of large birds in South Africa have also benefited from the ABC's Conservation Fund. The African Bird Club wants to work with BirdLife Partners to expand its work even further – particularly to enable local birdwatchers to have access to the Club's publications. In particular ABC is interested in establishing more local membership schemes, and any partner who has ideas for further co-operation is invited to contact the Club's Chairman, Keith Betton chairman@africanbirdclub.org.