



# African Bird Club

Working for birds and conservation in Africa



CLUB NEWSLETTER <https://www.africanbirdclub.org> DECEMBER 2020

## GREETINGS

I am delighted to welcome to ABC Council three new trustees, namely Susie Squier (who has also taken over as Club Secretary from Stephen Pringle), Sam Ivande (who will continue as our representative in Nigeria), and Janet Faden (who becomes ABC's Communications Officer). We will introduce them all to you properly in the next edition of the ABC Bulletin.

A warm welcome, too, to Kevin Ravno, who has been appointed the Club's Website and Technical Manager and is in the process of taking over John Caddick's responsibilities as Webmaster. Kevin will also be working on the planned redevelopment of the ABC website next year, enabling John to focus on completing our Birds of Africa field guide app (see p.5 below).

Welcome to your December 2020 Club Newsletter. I hope that you enjoy reading it and seeing what is behind the hyperlinks. Please stay safe and after the year we have had, may the New Year bring us all we hope for.

All the best,

*David*

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

The bird pictured to the left of me – Böhm's Bee-eater – was one of four to be identified in an impromptu "mystery bird" competition that was part of the Club's first ever virtual AGM (see p.4 below).



Photo: John Caddick



Photo: Imogen Clark

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS AND RECRUITMENT

Many thanks to those of you who have already paid your subscriptions for 2021, 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 is 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? Thank you so much for your continued support, we really appreciate it.

## GIVING TO ABC

The [March Conservation Fund of the Tides Foundation](#) has once again generously made a grant of \$20,000 to ABC's conservation programme. The [Bird Conservation Fund](#) and Caroline Adams have newly donated funds for conservation awards made this year. We are immensely grateful to all our donors and legators, without whom we could not continue to fund the diverse projects all over Africa that benefit from our conservation and expedition awards.

ABC is 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 our Chair, David Fox, in confidence at [chairman@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:chairman@africanbirdclub.org)

If you would like to support the Club's work by leaving ABC a gift in your will, as past and present members have kindly done, we would be most grateful but do ask that you get your own professional advice first please.

## OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS

Huge thanks, as always, go to ABC's loyal corporate sponsors, in extremely difficult times for them –

**GOLD:** AviFauna Naturresor, Birding EcoTours, iGoTerra, Rockjumper

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

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

## MOBILIZING OUR COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES

Our network of country representatives is an important part of ABC's structure and has been successful in raising the profile of and support for the Club. With a view to the network becoming more active and effective, we have clarified the role and our expectations of country representatives and updated their terms of reference. We have also held, on 22 August 2020, the first ever meeting of country representatives, in which 17 of them participated via Zoom along with four trustees. The meeting was well received, and we agreed to virtually get together every six months.

Representatives will continue to play an important role in recommending candidates for supported membership of the Club and in identifying suitable projects in their country for ABC conservation awards, including support for establishing local bird clubs. They will also let us know about any local campaigns and appeals concerning conservation threats or opportunities (e.g., an important site for birds in their country which is threatened with development) which Council can then decide whether it furthers ABC's charitable purposes for us to publicise. In many cases we will support other organisations in raising awareness, but we welcome country representatives' advice on how we can help with lesser-known threats and issues (see p.6 below). We also welcome any help they may be able to give us with updating their country pages on the ABC website.

Council are committed to providing appropriate mentoring and training to country representatives, and we will regularly review their contributions with a view to encouraging turnover where appropriate. We will also look for ways to better support those who want to step up and do more.

Council have recently appointed six new country representatives, to all of whom we extend a very warm welcome. They are – Michael Mills (Angola), Thomas Lehmborg (Denmark), Jerry Garteh (Liberia), Simba Munyambo (Mozambique), Emmanuel Mgimwa (Tanzania), and Julia Pierini (Zimbabwe), who will partner with Togarasei Fakarayi for the time being. We thank Thomas's and Jerry's predecessors – Uffe Sørrensen and Moses Massah, respectively – for their past services to the Club and wish them both well.

Council have also agreed to a proposal for our Country Representatives Coordinator, Paul Buckley, to share this role with Nonie Coulthard, who has kindly volunteered her time and skills to us. Being bilingual in English and French, she will be able to liaise with representatives in francophone countries in Africa. We warmly welcome her, too.

## ABC VIRTUAL AGM

The 26<sup>th</sup> and first virtual Annual General Meeting of the Club was held on 19 September 2020 and went well, all things considered. Many thanks to all 34 members in 13 countries who managed to join and take part in the meeting online, commiserations to those with interconnectivity problems on the day (we hope to see you next time), and congratulations to Shimelis Aynalem, who won the “mystery bird” competition. Club News in the next edition of the ABC Bulletin will include a full report of the AGM, covering the business dealt with at the meeting.

Council are keen to build on this new experience for ABC. Virtual meetings of all kinds are here to stay, and we would welcome any ideas members may have for how we might get more of you virtually interacting with us and one another more regularly, which please feel free to email to David Fox at [chairman@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:chairman@africanbirdclub.org)

## ABC AT TWO BIRD FAIRS

The Club was an exhibitor at both [Virtual Birdfair](#), which took place online from 18 to 23 August in lieu of the annual British Birdwatching Fair, and BirdLife South Africa’s first ever [Virtual African Bird Fair](#), which was held online on 5 September 2020. We hope you managed to see some of the live and pre-recorded talks and events that were on offer. If you did not get a chance to visit the ABC stand, you can still do so by clicking [here](#). ABC’s virtual presence at both fairs also included a video presentation by our Youth Engagement Officer and representative in South Africa, John Kinghorn. Entitled “A New Generation of African Birders”, it gives insights into the obstacles faced by young people in Africa with an interest in birds and explains why more of them are now pursuing birding and careers in conservation and avitourism.

## BIRDLIFE AFRICA NEWS

It is always a pleasure to share all the latest news about the work of [BirdLife Africa Partners](#) across the continent, which you can read [here](#). We also encourage you to sign BirdLife International’s petition to make it a United Nations-recognised human right to live on a healthy planet. You can sign the petition [here](#). ABC is proud to be an official #1Planet1Right supporter.

## ABC APP UPDATES

We have made good progress to expand and improve the ABC app, Birds of Africa, in the past six months. The app now includes more than 1,200 bird species on the checklists of Annobon, Benin, Bioko, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Togo. The most recent checklist added is Cameroon with 948 species. Please contact friends and colleagues in these countries and let them know about the availability of this birding resource, which is also intended as an aid to conservation.

In addition, 17 LITE checklists are included. These show the 50-100 most common species which can be found around towns and villages and represent a starter set for novice or younger birders and local bird clubs. We can add LITE lists reasonably quickly. So, if you think this would be useful for your country, please let us know and we will endeavour to include one with your help and local knowledge.

Nigeria was one of the pilot countries for the app and we were delighted to see the video produced by Sam Ivande and colleagues showing how the app is used by the growing number of local bird clubs in the country. You can view this short video [here](#), and keep up to date with app progress at <https://www.africanbirdclub.org/news/abc-app-birds-africa-1>

The next steps will be to complete West African countries before working on Ethiopia (for which a LITE list has been included) and other countries in East Africa. If you are able to make a donation to assist this work, it would be very much appreciated. You can donate [here](#).

John Caddick [app@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:app@africanbirdclub.org)

## ABC BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

Council have resolved that Triodos Bank UK Ltd be appointed as bankers to ABC. But we will retain the Club's UK account with Barclays Bank plc, so members who already pay their subscriptions by direct debit do not need to alter their existing arrangements.

Having an additional account with Triodos will better support ABC's needs as it specifically caters for charities. Triodos also has ethical credentials and sustainable values, mirroring our own.

Anne Varney [abc\\_treasurer@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:abc_treasurer@africanbirdclub.org)

## SHARING YOUR CONSERVATION STORIES

Momoh Sesay has brought to our attention the urgent need to stop the encroachment that has been going on in the [Western Area Peninsular National Park](#) on the Freetown Peninsula. If you want to help Conservation Society of Sierra Leone's campaign to protect this IBA in danger, please email Dr Sheku Kamara at [cssl\\_03@yahoo.com](mailto:cssl_03@yahoo.com)

Separately, Abubakr Mohammad has alerted us to a disturbing issue in Sudan where ringed or tagged birds seem to be being deliberately shot – either for the materials, which are believed to be valuable, or because they are wrongly suspected of posing some sort of security threat. If you have knowledge of such killings in other African countries, please email details to us at [info@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:info@africanbirdclub.org)

We congratulate Dailus Laurence, Chief Warden of [Cousin Island Special Reserve](#) managed by Nature Seychelles, who has won the 2020 African Ranger Award, promoted by the Alibaba Foundation and Paradise Foundation, in recognition of his role in a conservation success story.

In the next edition of the ABC Bulletin, we will profile two supported members of the Club, namely Clara Cassell and Ben Freeman, who are both from Liberia and alumni of the A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI).

Do you have a short story to tell about something you or others have been doing to help conserve African birds and their habitats that you think will be of interest to other members of ABC? If you do and you have time on your hands, 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.

Let us 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.

## ABC MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

Many thanks to all 161 members, from all over the world, who took our anonymous online survey that was publicised in your June Club Newsletter. Council appreciate your feedback and in the next edition of the ABC Bulletin, we will share with you results of the survey and actions being taken by us in response.

## INAUGURAL GLOBAL BIRD WEEKEND

Were you one of the more than 38,000 people from 169 countries who took part in this event, which must rank as one of the greatest citizen science projects ever undertaken? A world record 7,243 species on the Clements Checklist were recorded by participants over the weekend of 17 and 18 October 2020. They submitted their lists to the [eBird](#) portal, and uploaded thousands of photos and audio recordings.

An impressive 815 species, the highest number in Africa and the fifth highest in the world, were recorded by participants across Kenya. Among them was Washington Wachira, whose [TED talk](#) was featured alongside John Kinghorn's presentation at the Virtual African Bird Fair. Click [here](#) if you would like to watch a YouTube video of Washington's participation in the count. Corporate sponsors of ABC and several NGOs and clubs in Africa were among over 150 groups that fielded [teams](#). Team Tanzania with 655 species were the top global national team, and Team Rockjumper with 1,852 species were the top international team.

Participants were encouraged to minimise their carbon footprint and with prevailing pandemic restrictions, stayed close to home. In addition to the valuable data they gathered, many collectively donated over £24,000 towards BirdLife International's appeal to [stop the illegal bird trade](#).

## CHANGES IN HOW WE WATCH BIRDS

Prof Piotr Tryjanowski from Poznan University of Life Science and Prof Christoph Randler from the University of Tübingen supervised a non-commercial study of how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the ways people in different countries watch birds. We asked you in June to help the researchers by answering a few simple questions. The results of the survey have now been published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, and you can read the full article [here](#).

## PAINTINGS FOR SALE

A number of original plates and limited edition prints of African raptors by the artist, Rob Davies, are available for sale [here](#). Rob is co-author (with William S Clark) and illustrator of *African Raptors*, part of the Helm Identification Guides series.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

It has been, and still is, difficult for us all to plan ahead in these uncertain times. But the organisers of the postponed 15<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Ornithological Congress still expect to put on a physical Congress in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, on 15-19 November 2021. At present they do expect all symposia and the original programme to go ahead as planned. Please check the [PAOC15](#) website for updates and take note of the 2021 registration dates. ABC look forward to supporting BirdLife Zimbabwe in hosting a successful Congress next year.

We are currently planning to hold next year's Annual General Meeting of the Club as a "hybrid" meeting on the margins of the Congress and will keep you informed about our plans as they develop.

The dates for [Birdfair 2021](#) have been announced by the organisers. They are currently planning for the event to take place at Rutland Water Nature Reserve on 20, 21 and 22 August 2021. ABC will be keen to attend if the event can go ahead as planned.

## ABC ON SOCIAL MEDIA



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

Moderated by Nanchin Kazeh and Becky Jimam Lar from APLORI, ABC can be found on –

**Facebook** –

<https://www.facebook.com/African-Bird-Club-105725097832405> - please like or follow our page.

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

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

As at the beginning of December 2020 –

ABC's Facebook group had 8,338 members from over 100 countries across the world.

ABC's Twitter handle had 1,402 followers and was following 460 others