

Birds of Africa App Content Templates

Introduction

We have developed templates which will define a set of rules for naming and building the content of our Birds of Africa app. The purpose of this section is to specify those rules so that multiple people can develop content to a consistent format and standard. The app will not display content correctly unless these rules are followed.

Checklists

For each country under development, there will be a checklist of the birds which have been recorded in that country and documented in scientific and peer-reviewed publications. It is important that the country checklist is agreed at the outset and made available to anyone working on the content for that country. The checklist will be developed under the taxonomic structure and naming conventions of the [IOC](#).

Species names

A simple form of species name is used in the app referred to as SimplifiedName. The format of the SimplifiedName is "Family_species" but hyphens, apostrophes, space bars, umlauts and other accents, and ascii characters have been removed.

Examples of SimplifiedNames for a few of the species on the Nigeria checklist are Dove_redeyed, Heron_whitebackednight and Stormpetrel_wilsons. Species with a single name such as Shikra and Garganey should remain as is.

SimplifiedNames will be provided as part of the country checklist.

The use of SimplifiedNames is necessary from a technical perspective in that it provides a consistent reference for populating the various content databases. For example, at the time an app is built, photos, calls, text and maps can be brought together for each species on the country checklist.

Photographs

Photographs can be displayed in both portrait and landscape formats within the app.

Portrait is the primary view and we should aim for at least one portrait photo for each species if possible. However, it is important to try and use

the format which shows the bird to its best advantage, e.g., birds standing on a branch are possibly best in portrait format and birds in flight in landscape, but it is a matter of judgement.

If the photos are available, we should try and provide views of males, females, and juveniles and in breeding and non-breeding plumage where relevant, and front and back views where possible.

Portrait photos will be required for the app at 1220 x 1800 pixels and landscape at 2048 x 1120 pixels. Numerous tests have shown these to be the best dimensions to fit the available space on smartphones. All photos should be processed as high-resolution jpg files at a size of about 1mb. Birds should not fill more than 60%-70% of the photo, which will leave a border around the bird to ensure that it will fit the variety of screen shapes and sizes in the market today. In addition, space is required to allow information such as the photographer's name to be added as can be seen in this [screenshot](#).

The following are examples of photos - [Mauritius Bulbul](#), [Mauritius Cuckooshrike](#), [Western Cattle Egret](#) and [Common Greenshank](#).

Calls

Calls for each species can be loaded into the app if available. A song or call of up to 30 seconds' duration and file size of 150kb maximum in mp3 format is required. Most recordings are much longer and larger than this and editing is required to reduce the length, remove noise and extraneous sounds, and set suitable sound levels. This work is being done paying regard to the Code of Practice for Birders endorsed by ABC. To avoid disturbance to birds, we suggest that the volumes are set accordingly and in the case of threatened species with few known locations, to low levels.

A free software download, [Audacity](#), is recommended for call processing and this has been used successfully to develop the calls in the required form for the app so far.

Text

The text for each species uses a standard format with the following headings - English name, Scientific name, French name, Size (from tip of bill to tip of tail), FIELD GUIDE (Similar Species), IDENTIFICATION DETAILS (MALE, FEMALE, IMMATURE, Subspecies including range and description, Voice and General habits), Status and Distribution and

Reference. It is written using a plain text editor such as Notepad. The template and examples are shown below.

It is essential that the template is followed verbatim as it is used as input to a converter programme which translates the plain text to html format for use in the app. ABC has a licence to use text from the 8-volume *Birds of Africa* series. This is the only publication which can be used as a reference to develop the field guide text and *Birds of Africa* can only be used for this purpose. The text for each species should occupy about two smartphone screens and thus will need limited scrolling by the user.

You can download the [TEXT TEMPLATE](#) and some examples - [Little Bittern](#), [Common Crane](#), [Bush Petronia](#) and [Thick-billed Weaver](#).

Maps

The provision of maps is being carried out by a specialist.

File names

File naming will adhere to the following standards - Photographs: SimplifiedName.index_subspecies, Calls: SimplifiedName.index, Text: SimplifiedName.

Index is a sequence number which specifies where the photo or call comes in relation to other photos and calls. Typically, the numbering system will be 10, 20, 30, etc., which leaves gaps for future additions as required.

Subspecies is the subspecies of the bird in the photo if known.

Further information is required to describe photos and calls. For photos, the photographer's name, the location where the photograph was taken and a description of the image, e.g., adult female, are required. For calls, the recorder's name, the owner (note that extra details are required if the call has been taken from xeno-canto), the location where the recording was made, and a description of the recording, e.g., adult calling at nest, are required.

Tips and hints

Please ensure that you have written e-mail permission from the owner of the copyright of the image or the call before you use it for the app. Set up files on your computer for each species to store and archive original and final material as well as work in progress files. Note that each species will be developed once and then used for other countries or

territories where it occurs. All content will be checked and texts proofread before being added to the central databases from which the apps will be built and kept up to date.

Help

Email us at app@africanbirdclub.org for help with any of the tasks relating to the preparation of content. The app is free to download so if you have a smartphone, you will be able to download a current version and see how the content appears in situ.