

INTRODUCTION

CONSERVATION IN AFRICA

On the face of things, Africa would seem to have much more important problems to solve than protecting its bird species—for example, crushing poverty and high external debts, low life expectancy linked to, among other things, rampant disease pandemics (HIV/Aids, malaria, etc.) and widespread civil conflicts (Anon. 2000). Why bother with birds?

The answer lies in the intricate linkages between all components of the Earth we live in. The poorest and most disadvantaged people on earth are usually the ones most directly dependent on natural ecosystems and resources (Wood 1997). Massive, short-term exploitation of resources, which depletes and degrades the environment, is patently not in their or anyone else's interest. Conversely, pristine preservation of potentially productive habitats, where these are in demand by local populations, is obviously detrimental to the interests of these communities. Currently, most habitats, ecosystems and conservation scenarios in Africa lie between these two extremes. Utilization, production, development and subsequent degradation are occurring in various African habitats at various levels. One of the critical keys to finding the balance between destructive exploitation and sensible utilization leading to sustainable development is an effective early-warning system that signals unsustainable levels of use. Indeed, such a system needs to pinpoint areas and habitats that should be avoided in our drive to develop and respond to the urgent need to improve the quality of life of African peoples.

This is where birds can stride, indeed fly, to centre stage. Birds are one of the best-researched and most reliable indicators of terrestrial biological richness and environmental conditions in the world (Bibby 1999). When used in association with data from other taxonomic groups and overlain with socio-economic analyses, birds have been shown to be very effective means of identifying priority areas for conservation action and mitigation measures in Africa (Brooks *et al.* 2001, Conservation International 1999). Furthermore, birds are vital for the natural ecological functioning of our environment (witness pollination, seed and fruit dispersal, scavenging offal and as predators of numerous insect and other pests). When natural ecological balances, some of which are delicately poised, are disrupted, there are increasingly severe consequences, like erosion, floods, drought, etc., which seriously threaten the livelihoods and indeed the very existence of the people who depend on these ecosystems (Diamond and Filion 1987).

Birds can provide significant direct and indirect economic value on a potentially large scale. There are over 2,300 bird species in the Africa region, a high proportion of which are endemic to the continent. Although this requires careful planning, it means that birds present huge opportunities. Nature tourism, for example, is one of the fastest-growing service industries in the world (Alexander 2001). At one end of this scale, ecotourism to some countries in Africa (e.g. Kenya, Seychelles, South Africa and Tanzania) undoubtedly contributes significantly to their national economies, and has the potential to do so in several other countries (Moran 1994, Wilkie and Carpenter 1999). In 1997, the economic impact in South Africa of local and foreign birders was estimated to be US\$13–27 million (Turpie and Ryan 1998). At the other end of the scale, small and focused ecotourism initiatives can bring direct benefits to local people quickly. Outstanding examples include Kakum National Park in Ghana where the construction of a canopy walkway has resulted in the park now receiving more than 20,000 visitors per year, many of them Ghanaian, including large numbers of school children (Schildkrout 1996, Brooks and Thompson in press) and Nature Kenya's 'Wednesday Morning Bird Walks', which have served as an informal training ground for local bird-guides (Ng'weno 2000).

The economic benefits from local ecotourism may not be large-scale, but perhaps more importantly, such activities often lead into, overlap with and contribute to issues of education, capacity-building, environmental awareness and nation-building in general.

In Sierra Leone and South Africa, national BirdLife Partner organizations (see below) have collaborated with education authorities to develop learning resources based on birds, ecology and sustainable development that have been integrated into national schools curriculum. BirdLife International's Africa Partnership (see below) has developed 'Site Support Groups' of interested local people for sites of high biodiversity significance (Box 5). The Pan-African Ornithological Congress is increasingly serving as a vehicle for the development and exchange of biodiversity conservation information between African scientists (Thompson 2001). Meanwhile, most African nations have now established bird clubs (Fanshawe 1994) which further stimulate, attract and provide recreational activity for young nationals.

The case for conservation and sustainable development in Africa may therefore seem unambiguously positive. The history and methods of conservation, however, are certainly not unambiguous. Old-style 'preservation' was practised in a harsh colonial environment of 'fences and fines': policing, eviction and misanthropy (Adams and Hulme 2001). This generated enormous hostility among local constituencies that is still hampering conservation efforts in many parts of Africa (Thompson 2001). In the post-colonial era, biodiversity conservation in Africa has been based primarily on the 'conventional conservation project'—a set of activities limited in time, space, money and number of beneficiaries, and geared toward delivery of measurable outputs. Some critics have pointed out that this approach has several drawbacks and that despite considerable effort and expenditure, biodiversity loss in sub-Saharan Africa is continuing to accelerate.

Major drawbacks of conservation projects have been cited as: a lack of sustainability ('honey-pot effect'; 'boom and bust cycles'); a perception that projects are invariably donor-driven and pursuing external agendas; failure to leverage policy; and that the stated duration of most projects is usually too short to attain their objectives or to have a lasting effect (Kiss 1999). Most recently, 'community conservation' (CC) or 'community-based conservation' (CBC) has become a major paradigm of conservation work in Africa and, indeed, other parts of the world. This encompasses the principles that conservation cannot and should not be pursued against the interests and wishes of local people, should be participatory, must treat protected-area neighbours as 'partners', and preferably must be organized to yield economic returns for local people, and contribute to sustainable livelihoods (Adams and Hume 2001, Kothari 2001, Western 2001). Surely, there can be nothing wrong with these principles, which seem to mirror ideas about democracy and good governance. Nonetheless, it has been pointed out that there are circumstances in which community conservation cannot be the answer for conservation policy, e.g. where there is no wildlife resource that can yield a sustainable revenue flow or the market is not sustainable (Adams and Hume 2001). Whatever the merits of these criticisms, it is self-evident that conservation action on the ground will only be sustainable in the long-term if it is undertaken with and by the people living in and around the high-biodiversity areas. This belief is at the heart of BirdLife International's work in Africa and the key to the continued growth and increasing success of the BirdLife African Partnership.

THE BIRDLIFE AFRICAN PARTNERSHIP

BirdLife International is a global conservation network present in 105 countries, with 65 autonomous Partner organizations. Global membership currently exceeds 2.5 million, with an additional 2 million children involved in conservation activities each year. The strength of BirdLife lies in its voluntary association of nationally-based organizations who, as part of a world-wide partnership, take a national responsibility for the long-term conservation of birds and their habitats in their countries.

Box 1. The BirdLife International Partnership in Africa.

Botswana	BirdLife Botswana
Burkina Faso	Fondation des Amis de la Nature (NATURAMA)
Burundi	Association Burundaise pour la Protection des Oiseaux
Cameroon	Cameroon Ornithological Club
Egypt	Mr Sherif Baha el Din (BirdLife Affiliate)
Ethiopia	Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society
Ghana	Ghana Wildlife Society
Kenya	Nature Kenya
Nigeria	Nigerian Conservation Foundation
Rwanda	Association pour la Conservation de la Nature au Rwanda
Seychelles	BirdLife Seychelles
Sierra Leone	Conservation Society of Sierra Leone
South Africa	BirdLife South Africa
Tanzania	Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania
Tunisia	Association 'Les Amis des Oiseaux'
Uganda	Nature Uganda
Zambia	Zambian Ornithological Society
Zimbabwe	BirdLife Zimbabwe

In Africa, the BirdLife International Partnership currently comprises 17 autonomous organizations (Partners, Partners Designate and Affiliates) in 18 African countries (Box 1), with over 300 staff and 30,000 members. Over 200,000 children from 5,000 wildlife clubs are involved in activities with the African Partnership every year. This continental network, involved in conservation, education and sustainable development, has been described as unique in Africa and as having the potential to produce future leaders of African conservation (Hagen *et al.* 2000).

BirdLife International's regional policies and programmes in Africa are formulated, supervised and reviewed by the BirdLife Council for the Africa Partnership (CAP). CAP comprises representatives from all African Partnership organizations. The Council meets annually and elects an annual Chairperson. Two members of CAP currently sit on the BirdLife Global Council to ensure linkage between the African and global programme and policies. An African Regional Committee serves as a decision-making body between CAP meetings. The Committee comprises the current Chair of CAP, the immediate past Chair and the two Global Council members from Africa.

BirdLife's Africa Programme aims to achieve conservation through the identification and development of national BirdLife

Box 2. Four ways of conserving biodiversity.

1. Conservation of species

This is the protection of species through conservation action, such as the species recovery programme for the critically endangered Seychelles Magpie-robin *Copsychus sechellarum*, being implemented by BirdLife Seychelles, and the monitoring and research programme in Morocco for Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* (also critically endangered) which is being executed by staff of Souss-Massa National Park and other local organizations, with support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the BirdLife Partner in the UK. Conservation action may take many forms, including legislation, monitoring, research, prioritization, management of populations, and the acquisition and management of land. Such an approach is often taken for species of economic or cultural importance, and increasingly for species that are threatened with extinction at a local, national or global level.

BirdLife International has identified those species that are threatened with extinction or are otherwise of global conservation concern (Collar *et al.* 1994, BirdLife International 2000), of which some 340 species are extant in the African region (Appendix 3). The African Partnership has set up an African Species Working Group to promote cross-border species conservation, based on the interest of the Partners in the conservation of particular species. The group currently supervises the implementation of a regional project to develop action plans for globally threatened bird species in Africa. The project, with support from the RSPB and the Darwin Initiative, aims to build the capacity of government officials and BirdLife Partners to develop action-plan-based approaches for the conservation of threatened birds in 17 African countries.

2. Conservation of sites

This is the protection of sites to conserve species and habitats and to maintain the integrity of ecosystem processes, by designating areas for the conservation of natural resources, and regulating and managing them according to the needs of the biodiversity which they contain. Many people in Africa depend on biodiversity and ecosystem functions for their livelihoods—fuelwood, timber, medicinal plants, food gathered from the wild, and water supply that relies on forested watersheds, for example. Apart from the long-term benefits gained by conserving biodiversity, sites also have other important functions for society, including education and research, and have non-material and non-monetary values as well as providing the focus for local or national pride. In moving towards a more sustainable society, all these functions will be increasingly highly valued. The protection and conservation of sites is an integral part of any attempt to achieve sustainability.

BirdLife International's Important Bird Area (IBA) Programme (Box 3), a global initiative aimed at identifying and protecting a network of critical sites for the world's birds, aims to facilitate the conservation of birds via this approach. Site-based projects managed by BirdLife Partners are working with local communities to integrate conservation with the development needs of local people. Examples of such projects can be found in Mount Oku, Cameroon (IBA CM012)

where capacity is being built amongst local communities, government and local NGOs for sustainable management of remaining patches of montane forest, and at Wakkerstroom Vlei in South Africa (part of the Grassland Biosphere Reserve, IBA ZA016) where the BirdLife Partner is focusing conservation and local development around a guide-training centre. Several other BirdLife Partners (including Ghana Wildlife Society, Nigerian Conservation Foundation, BirdLife Seychelles, Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania, and Nature Uganda) manage site-based conservation projects based around key IBAs.

3. Conservation of habitats

A great threat to birds and to biodiversity in general, lies in the continuing erosion of the quality and extent of habitats across the entire landscape ('the wider environment'). The loss and degradation is driven by the increasing intensity of human uses of the environment. The conservation of habitat extent and quality across the landscape cannot be achieved solely by the protection of representative areas: a wider approach is needed. National governments and regional or local authorities can favour and encourage the conservation of the wider environment in the way that they formulate and use their laws, policies, plans, programmes, initiatives, subsidies, taxes, funds, inter-governmental relations and other broad measures. Ideally, these should be fully integrated into land-use policies, regulations and plans, across all sectors of the economy and at all scales. BirdLife International has recently outlined a strategy for conserving birds and their habitats in the wider environment in Europe over the next 20 years (Tucker and Evans 1997) and will, it is intended, agree common policies and plans for key habitats in the African region in the near future. Analysis of the threats affecting the network of IBAs identified under the biome (A3) criterion (see next chapter on 'Methodology'), as documented in this publication, will be an important contribution to this. At a national level, BirdLife Partners in Africa have begun the process of integrating conservation and sustainable development into wider habitat and land-use policy and plans. Most Partners have been involved in the development of national Environment Action Plans, national Biodiversity Strategies and national reports to the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Box 5).

4. Working with people

A consistent theme underlying all BirdLife International programmes is the over-riding need to work with and for local people, by building national capacity for biodiversity conservation, empowering site-adjacent communities to have a say in the management of high-biodiversity sites and strengthening a continent-wide network of conservation organizations and a general public that values wild birds, biodiversity and the wider environment. The BirdLife Partnership in Africa works with and for people by, for example, producing and executing regional plans for advocacy, communication, education, training and fund-raising and by all Partners undertaking activities to build awareness of the importance and value of birds.

Partner NGOs, coupled with a programme of selected, high-priority conservation initiatives encompassing field action (integrated conservation and development), research, training and institutional development and advocacy. Underpinning all these activities is an approach to the conservation of birds in the African region, which, as elsewhere, is founded upon four separate strands:

1. Conservation of species
2. Conservation of sites
3. Conservation of habitats
4. Working with people

Each approach is essential for the effective conservation of a large number of species and, while different, each is complementary to (and interdependent on) the others. Box 2 summarizes the rationale behind each approach. BirdLife attaches great importance to the identification of priorities, to set targets and guide conservation action on species, sites and habitats. The BirdLife International Partnership has therefore conducted baseline studies across Africa to identify the conservation priorities for species and sites and, in the near future, intends to do the same for habitats (Box 2). This publication defines the priority sites for bird conservation in Africa.

The BirdLife Africa programme depends vitally on the building of indigenous capacity at a national level in support of national conservation action. Within this wider context, each national Partner in Africa carries out its own programme of conservation activities, for species, sites, habitats and people. The approaches of individual African Partners reflect local culture, politics, resources and priorities. Most Partners in Africa have a wider conservation and environmental agenda than birds, encompassing other fauna and flora, and also salient social issues, such as desertification in the Sahel, bush-fires in the Equatorial region, land rights in the south and invasive species on islands. Nonetheless, the identification and conservation of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) is a major common theme in the Africa programme.

THE IMPORTANT BIRD AREA PROGRAMME IN THE AFRICAN REGION

The Important Bird Area (IBA) Programme in Africa seeks to identify, document and work towards the conservation and sustainable management of globally important areas for bird conservation (Box 3).

The IBA programme in Africa is part of a global initiative, which began in Europe in the 1980s (Grimmett and Jones 1989), where it has since made a major contribution toward realizing a bird conservation strategy for the continent. The most recent development has been the publication and launch of the second edition of *Important Bird Areas in Europe* (Heath and Evans 2000). IBAs have been used by conservationists, ornithologists, governmental and non-governmental agencies, policy makers and planners to guide practical management and actions at IBAs and target political and legal mechanisms to achieve their protection.

Box 3. The Important Bird Area Programme of BirdLife International.

- The function of the Important Bird Area (IBA) Programme is to identify, protect and manage a network of sites that are important for the long-term viability of naturally occurring bird populations, across the geographical range of those bird species for which a site-based approach is appropriate.
- The continued ecological integrity of these sites will be decisive in maintaining and conserving such birds. Legal protection, management and monitoring of these crucial sites will all be important targets for action, and many (but not all) bird species may be effectively conserved by these means. Patterns of bird distribution are such that, in most cases, it is possible to select sites that support many species.
- The IBA Programme is global in scale, and it is anticipated that up to 20,000 IBAs will be identified world-wide, using standard, internationally recognized criteria for selection.
- The sites are identified on the basis of the bird numbers and species' complements that they hold, and are selected such that, taken together, they form a network throughout the species' biogeographic distributions.
- This network may be considered as a minimum essential to ensure the survival of these species across their ranges, should there occur a net loss of remaining habitat elsewhere through human, or other, modification. Therefore, the consequences of the loss of any one of these sites may be disproportionately large.
- The programme aims to guide the implementation of national conservation strategies, through the promotion and development of national protected-area programmes. It is also intended to assist the conservation activities of international organizations and to promote the implementation of global agreements and regional measures.

With the endorsement of its African Partnership, BirdLife International launched the African IBA Programme in 1993. The main objectives of this programme are to:

- Identify and document globally important places for bird conservation in Africa based on inclusion of endemic avifaunas, threatened species, concentrations of numbers of individuals or species and representation of regionally characterized bird assemblages.
- Promote, develop and involve national organisations and contributors in the implementation of the programme.
- Increase national contributions to the programme through the promotion of institution-building, network development and training as appropriate.
- Publish and distribute widely a continental directory of sites, *Important Bird Areas in Africa and associated islands*.
- Promote the publication of national IBA directories in appropriate languages.
- Establish a database containing the critical IBA information in a way that can be maintained, updated and made available in individual countries and to the wider conservation community.

Box 4. National inventories of Important Bird Areas in Africa that have been published.

Country	Year	Citation
Botswana	1998	Tyler, S. J. and Bishop, D. R. Important Bird Areas of Botswana. Pp. 333–354 in K. N. Barnes, ed. <i>The Important Bird Areas of southern Africa</i> . Johannesburg: BirdLife South Africa. 394 pp.
Egypt	1999	Baha El Din, S. <i>Directory of Important Bird Areas in Egypt</i> . Cairo: Palm Press. 113 pp.
Ethiopia	1996	EWNHS. <i>Important Bird Areas of Ethiopia</i> . Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society. 300 pp.
Kenya	1999	Bennun, L. and Njoroge, P. <i>Important Bird Areas in Kenya</i> . Nairobi: Nature Kenya. 318 pp.
Lesotho	1998	Barnes, K. N. Important Bird Areas of Lesotho. Pp. 281–294 in K. N. Barnes, ed. <i>The Important Bird Areas of southern Africa</i> . Johannesburg: BirdLife South Africa. 394 pp.
Madagascar	1999	Projet ZICOMA. <i>Les Zones d'Importance pour la Conservation des Oiseaux à Madagascar</i> . Antananarivo: ZICOMA. 266 pp.
Namibia	1998	Simmons, R. E., Boix-Hinzen, C., Barnes, K. N., Jarvis, A. M. and Robertson, A. Important Bird Areas of Namibia. Pp. 295–332 in K. N. Barnes, ed. <i>The Important Bird Areas of southern Africa</i> . Johannesburg: BirdLife South Africa.
South Africa	1998	Barnes, K. N., Johnson, D. J., Anderson, M. D. and Taylor, P. B. Important Bird Areas of South Africa. Pp. 25–272 in K. N. Barnes, ed. <i>The Important Bird Areas of southern Africa</i> . Johannesburg: BirdLife South Africa.
Swaziland	1998	Barnes, K. N. Important Bird Areas of Swaziland. Pp. 273–279 in K. N. Barnes, ed. <i>The Important Bird Areas of southern Africa</i> . Johannesburg: BirdLife South Africa.
Uganda	2001	Byaruhanga, A., Kasoma, P. and Pomeroy, D. <i>Important Bird Areas in Uganda</i> . Kampala: Nature Uganda.
Zimbabwe	1998	Childes, S. L. and Mundy, P. J. Important Bird Areas of Zimbabwe. Pp. 355–384 in K. N. Barnes, ed. <i>The Important Bird Areas of southern Africa</i> . Johannesburg: BirdLife South Africa.

Box 5. The African NGO – Government Partnerships for Sustainable Biodiversity Action Project.

The African NGO – Government Partnerships for Sustainable Biodiversity Action is a collaborative effort by African BirdLife Partners to enhance biodiversity conservation in Africa. The five-year project (1998 to 2002) is being implemented in 10 countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda) with substantial financial resources from the Global Environment Facility and co-funding from BirdLife International Partners in Africa and Europe.

The project aims to enhance biodiversity conservation in Africa through local and national NGO – government partnerships in the Important Bird Area programme.

The project strategy is based on the Important Bird Area programme and focuses on building local and national government partnerships to identify IBAs across the continent, prioritize them for conservation action, and plan and take forward conservation action for those at which it is most urgently required.

The key elements for building these partnerships are:

- strengthening of the national implementing NGOs, including enabling them to leverage funds for conservation action and policy changes at key sites;
- the formation of Site Support Groups, to raise awareness in site-adjacent communities and to monitor biodiversity at sites and threats to it;
- the establishment of National Liaison Committees (see below), which bring together NGOs, Government, universities, UNDP and other national stakeholders to plan, advocate for and undertake national IBA conservation programmes.

Contributions of the project to the IBA programme in Africa

New methodologies

The project has developed methodologies for taking the IBA process beyond the identification phase. These new methods include prioritization of the need for conservation action at sites, monitoring and building sustainability through National Liaison Committees (NLCs), National IBA Conservation Strategies (NIBACS) and Site Support Groups (SSGs), described briefly below:

1. **Prioritizing IBAs for conservation action**
All IBAs are important, but not all require the same level of conservation action. Some are already well-protected and managed, whilst others are under imminent threat of destruction or modification. Therefore, an objective, quantitative system for prioritizing the need for conservation action at IBAs has been developed, based upon, among other things, biodiversity importance and level of threat. The BirdLife Partner in Kenya, Nature Kenya, has played a key role in developing this system.
2. **National and regional IBA monitoring**
Mechanisms are needed to assess the effectiveness of the IBA network at conserving the species and populations for which the sites were identified. As such, monitoring guidelines have been devised at both national and regional levels. These protocols address the need for sustainability (including the participation of Site Support Groups and National Liaison Committees—see below) and for regional compatibility.
3. **National Liaison Committees**
National Liaison Committees (NLCs) are composed of representatives from national governments, NGOs, UNDP and community groups. They form an important channel of communication between the highest levels of national policy-making and site conservation action. These committees oversee the implementation of the IBA programme through meetings and field visits. The most notable impacts of the NLCs to date include:
 - the inclusion of project personnel and IBA considerations in government policy discussions and actions;
 - the inclusion of project personnel in government delegations to the Conferences of the Parties of the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification (see Appendix 1 for details of these Conventions);
 - invitations to serve on the planning and steering committees that are developing National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans;
 - inclusion of project personnel in national policy and legislation reviews.

4. **National IBA Conservation Strategies (NIBACS)**

Conservation of IBAs in Africa poses serious challenges, because of the large size of many IBAs, their number and diversity and the complexity of threats they face. NIBACS are being developed in attempts to bring together all key stakeholders to act collaboratively for the protection of IBAs. NIBACS are flexible framework documents containing goals, objectives, priorities and mechanisms for IBA conservation that define the roles of all main players and help guide them to undertake the actions required.

5. **Site Support Groups**

Site Support Groups (SSGs) are members of site-adjacent communities who actively promote the conservation of IBAs. To date, 49 SSGs have been formed in all 10 implementing countries.

The main activities of SSGs are:

- Advising local communities on the wise use of natural resources and the importance of IBAs for conserving biodiversity. SSGs also help to establish and/or strengthen environmental education programmes in schools around sites. Examples include the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Guides Association in Kenya (IBA KE007, Arabuko-Sokoke forest) and the Menagesha-Suba Forest Site Support Group in Ethiopia (IBA ET031, Menagesha State Forest).
- Monitoring the status of key species and habitats in their sites and the human activities going on at sites, and reporting illegal or destructive activities to the relevant authorities. Examples include the Bird Guides and Drivers Association in Uganda (IBA UG017, Mabamba Bay).
- Starting environmentally-friendly conservation-linked projects that help communities generate income (for example, bee-keeping, tree nurseries, ecotourism) and providing services, such as assisting researchers and tour-guiding at IBAs. Examples include the Friends of Kinangop Plateau, Kenya (IBA KE004, Kinangop grasslands) and the Dar-Es-Salaam Wetland Site Support Group.
- Working with NGOs and government agencies to rehabilitate degraded habitats, for example by tree planting. Examples include the groups active at Kaboré Tambi National Park, Burkina Faso (IBA BF006, Kaboré Tambi–Nazinga–Sissili complex).
- Providing a means for local communities to participate in negotiations and decisions that affect the sites that are their concern.

Capacity building

The project is enhancing the capacity of the African Partnership to handle conservation challenges from the grassroots to the international level. The SSGs have received training in the significance of group dynamics, IBA monitoring, ornithology, tour-guiding and other income-generating activities, project management and fund-raising. The groups have also been empowered to advocate the conservation of ‘their’ sites in local and national fora.

At the national level, the capacity of the Partners to coordinate complex multi-stakeholder projects has been enhanced. Training workshops have been organized to address Partner and project skills needs. As a demonstration of the capacity that has been built within the Partners, although the project does not provide funding for site action, largely as a consequence of it, site-based IBA conservation projects worth over US\$ 4,200,000 have been established in all ten countries.

Contribution to the African Partnership

Although the project has been operating in only 10 countries, it has benefited the wider African Partnership by providing the resources for annual meetings of the Council for the African Partnership (CAP), planning and undertaking annual training and capacity-building workshops, by the employment of sub-regional coordinators (who have responsibilities outside project countries), and by generating and disseminating information on new methodologies and experiences. It is hoped that similar projects will soon be in operation, bringing in additional countries.

- Inform relevant national authorities, where appropriate, of the programme and seek their acceptance of its concept, aims and progress at the national level.
- Inform decision-makers at all level of the existence and significance of Important Bird Areas.
- Encourage and initiate conservation actions at Important Bird Areas throughout the continent.

■ Implementation

The programme has, since 1993, involved every country in Africa. National IBA inventories have been compiled through in-country programmes involving targeted fieldwork, where possible or, where not, thorough reviews of existing literature, etc. (see next chapter on ‘Methodology’). Compilation of the national accounts has led to the publication of national and sub-regional directories in appropriate languages. To date, 11 national IBA inventories have been published (see Box 4) and more are in preparation. This volume, for the entire African region, is a major output of the programme.

The international cooperation, institution-building, training and research that have been necessary for the compilation of many of the national IBA inventories have been essential components of the programme’s implementation, and have had a profoundly positive impact on the capacity of the BirdLife Partnership in Africa. A network of skilled grassroots conservationists has been formed across the continent that will play a major role in sustainable management of the continent’s wildlife resources for years to come. This increased capacity has greatly strengthened each Partner’s ability to achieve conservation action and has developed their relationships with the government bodies responsible for the management of natural resources in these countries.

In 1998, BirdLife Partner organizations in 10 African countries secured funding from the Global Environment Facility, through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to turn their Important Bird Area inventories into national plans of action and advocacy, moving the process on from identification to the conservation that protects sites. Implementation of this project, the African NGO – Government Partnerships for Sustainable Biodiversity Action Project, has resulted in the development and operationalization of innovative participatory conservation concepts and techniques, including guidelines for prioritizing conservation action at IBAs, National Liaison Committees, National IBA Conservation Strategies, and Site Support Groups (Box 5). The project is regarded as having attained considerable achievements to date (Hagen *et al.* 2000), including the establishment of 49 Site Support Groups (see Box 5) comprising people living next to IBAs who are now actively involved in their conservation and management. Similar initiatives are planned for additional countries throughout the region.

■ Programme coordination

On behalf of the BirdLife Africa Partnership, an Africa IBA Coordinator, Dr Lincoln Fishpool, has coordinated the project from the BirdLife Secretariat. His work has been overseen by a 10-person steering committee (now known as the Technical Advisory Committee or TAC), comprising five members of the African BirdLife Partnership and additional members from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife Partner in the UK), Wetlands International, the European Topic Centre for Nature Conservation and the BirdLife Secretariat. This committee has met approximately annually since 1993 and has been responsible for establishing and endorsing many of the technical aspects of the programme, detailed in the following chapter and the appendices and for monitoring its progress.

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IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS IN AFRICA AND ASSOCIATED ISLANDS

This book presents essential information on all known sites of global importance for the conservation of birds in Africa. It is targeted at a number of audiences:

- Decision-makers and policy-makers.
- Donors.
- Land-use planners and regulators.
- Land owners and managers.
- Conservationists.
- Birdwatchers and ornithologists.
- Environmental consultants.
- Academic and research bodies.

■ Objectives of the inventory

The principal objectives of this book are:

- To identify, document and promote awareness of the most important sites in the African region for the conservation of birds.
- To help direct conservation activity and available funding towards these sites.
- To present the ornithological value of each site in a standardized, reliable way.
- To provide a tool for planning and management, at practical and political levels, through the presentation of key information on birds, habitats, threats, legal protection and conservation status.
- To develop networks of local experts, fieldworkers and volunteers, and motivate them to monitor and protect IBAs.
- To stimulate national and international cooperation and coordination in conserving the most important sites for birds in the African region.
- To establish a more rigorous baseline for measuring success (or otherwise) in conserving Africa’s most important sites for birds.
- To facilitate the comparison of information at local, national and regional scales.
- To promote the value of a site-based approach to the conservation of birds and biodiversity.

■ Components of the inventory

This publication is divided into four main sections:

1. Introductory chapters

- Methodology: information on how data were collected and classified and on how sites were selected using agreed criteria.
- Data presentation: how to use the book.

2. Overview, discussion and recommendations

- Pan-African summary analysis of the data gathered.
- From this, an outline of main trends, conclusions and recommendations.

3. Country chapters: inventory of IBAs by country or territory

For each country or territory, presented alphabetically, there is:

- An introduction to the main features of the country, its ornithological importance and a national overview of its IBAs.
- A detailed site account for each IBA.

4. Appendices

- A series of appendices give more detailed information and descriptions in support of the introductory and overview chapters.

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