Introduction

Important Bird Areas in Africa

The Important Bird Areas (IBA) Programme[1] of BirdLife International[2] is a worldwide initiative aimed at identifying and protecting a network of critical sites for the conservation of the world's birds. The value of the IBA approach is that it sets local conservation efforts in a regional and international context, enabling networks of people to conserve networks of sites for birds and other biodiversity across the globe.

The first IBA inventory to cover a whole continent was published for Europe in 1989 (Grimmett and Jones 1989). Facilitated since 1990 by a coordinator at the BirdLife International Secretariat and, increasingly, by national IBA coordinators in individual countries, the actions of many individuals and organisations have coalesced into a large-scale IBA Programme in many parts of the world. So far, this has resulted in the production of 40 national IBA inventories worldwide (including 12 in Africa), as well as regional inventories for Africa (Fishpool and Evans 2001), Europe (Heath and Evans 2000) and the Middle East (Evans 1994)[3]. Building on these inventories, the IBA Programme for the last decade has addressed site-oriented research and action, encompassing habitat management, monitoring, education, advocacy, and national and international legal protection.

A total of 1,230 IBAs have been identified in Africa currently. A large amount of data has been collected by the Africa BirdLife Partnership and other experts, across seven core variables used to indicate the conservation status of these IBAs (Table 1). Many of these data are available in Fishpool and Evans (2001), and (from 2003) at **www.birdlife.net**.

The geographical extent of Africa, as considered in this report, is shown in Figure 1 and encompasses the whole of continental Africa, Madagascar, the western Indian Ocean islands of Seychelles, Mauritius (with Rodrigues), Réunion (with Iles Eparses), the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, and Mayotte, together with the French Southern Territories of Crozet, Kerguelen, Amsterdam and St Paul Islands, the Norwegian Dependency of Bouvetøya (Bouvet Island), the UK Overseas Territories of St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Cape Verde. Prince Edward and Marion Islands, belonging to South Africa, are also included. Excluded, however, are the Canary Islands (Spain), Madeira archipelago (Portugal) and the island of Socotra (Yemen).

Identifying potential Ramsar Sites

The method used in this report for selecting potential Ramsar Sites has been applied, not to all wetlands in Africa, but to

Indicator type	Data type	Description	No. of records in WBDB*
State	Site boundary	Description of each IBA boundary and a measure of the site's area (hectares)	1,230
	Habitat	Inventory of all primary habitats (10 types) that cover >5% of each IBA	2,500
	Key bird populations	Population size of each bird species for which each IBA was selected (average of 4 species per IBA)	4,609
	Land-use	Inventory of all land-uses (12 types) that cover >5% of each IBA	2,343
Pressure	Threats	Inventory of key threats (26 types) within each IBA	2,921
Response	Protection status	Inventory of statutory protected areas that overlap with each IBA, and the extent of overlap (in hectares) with each protected area	1,052
	Management plan	Whether each IBA is (partly or wholly) covered by an existing management plan	111

Table 1. The core types of data used for assessing the conservation status of IBAs in Africa, and the availability of data.
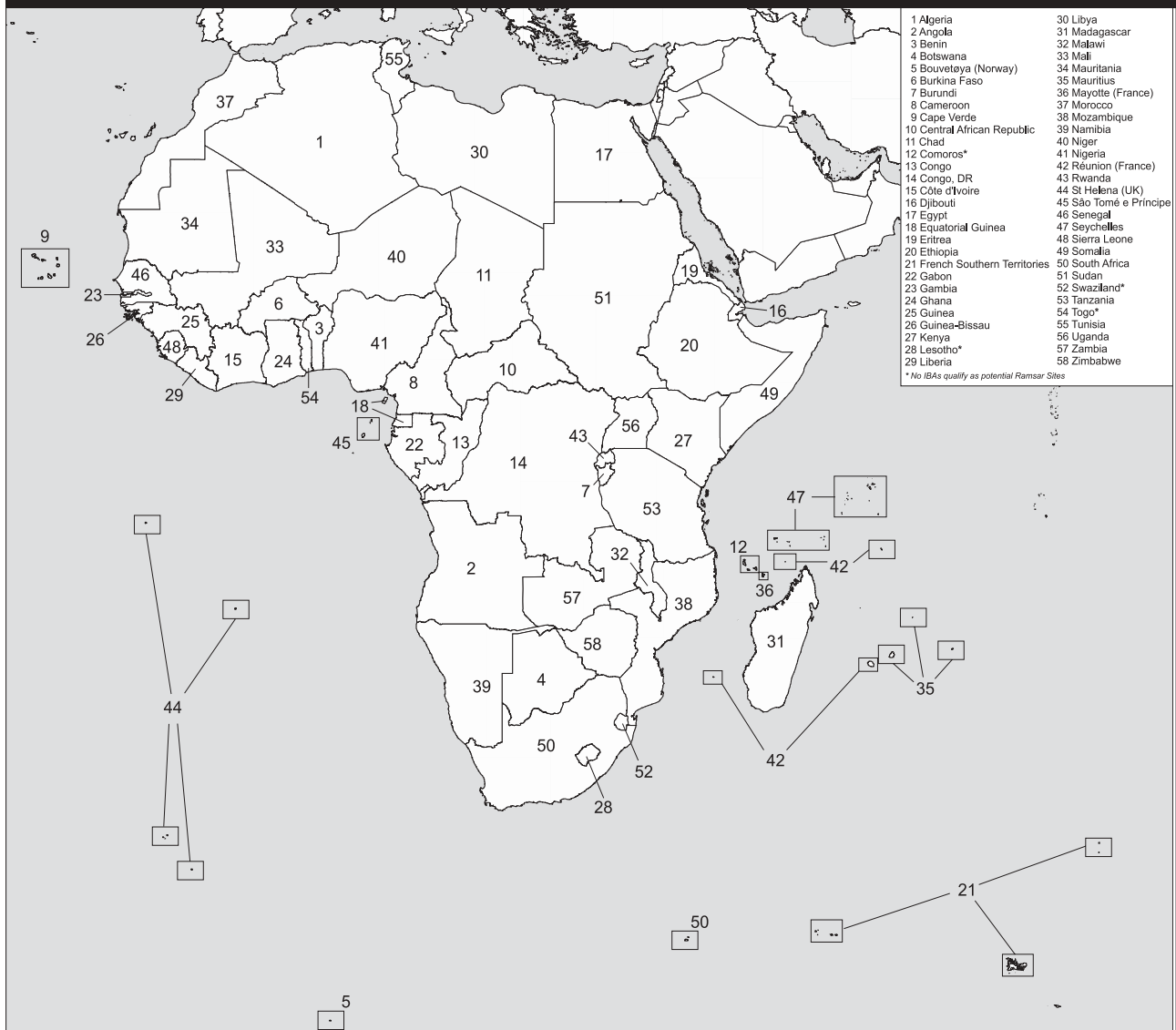
*WBDB — the BirdLife International World Bird Database, a purpose-built database that is used for the management, analysis and reporting of data held by BirdLife International.

[1] For full details of the BirdLife International IBA Programme, see **www.birdlife.net**

[2] In Africa, BirdLife International comprises 17 organisations in 18 countries that together have over 30,000 members and more than 300 paid staff.

[3] Much of the information used for the compilation of this report is drawn from Fishpool and Evans (2001).

1 Algeria	30 Libya
2 Angola	31 Madagascar
3 Benin	32 Malawi
4 Botswana	33 Mali
5 Bouvetøya (Norway)	34 Mauritania
6 Burkina Faso	35 Mauritius
7 Burundi	36 Mayotte (France)
8 Cameroon	37 Morocco
9 Cape Verde	38 Mozambique
10 Central African Republic	39 Namibia
11 Chad	40 Niger
12 Comoros*	41 Nigeria
13 Congo	42 Réunion (France)
14 Congo, DR	43 Rwanda
15 Côte d'Ivoire	44 St Helena (UK)
16 Djibouti	45 São Tomé e Príncipe
17 Egypt	46 Senegal
18 Equatorial Guinea	47 Seychelles
19 Eritrea	48 Sierra Leone
20 Ethiopia	49 Somalia
21 French Southern Territories	50 South Africa
22 Gabon	51 Sudan
23 Gambia	52 Swaziland*
24 Ghana	53 Tanzania
25 Guinea	54 Togo*
26 Guinea-Bissau	55 Tunisia
27 Kenya	56 Uganda
28 Lesotho*	57 Zambia
29 Liberia	58 Zimbabwe

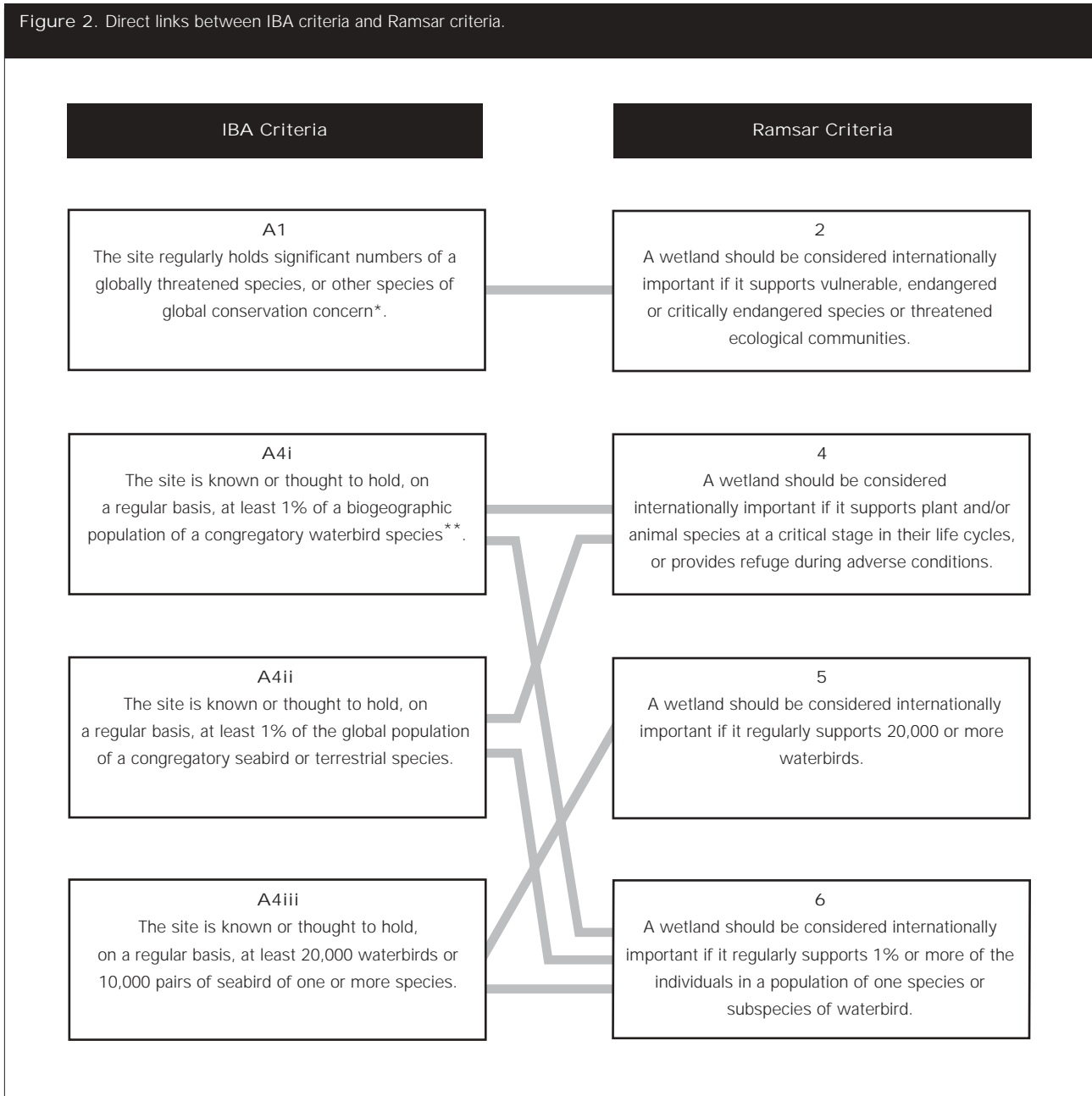** No IBAs qualify as potential Ramsar Sites*

those sites identified by BirdLife International as Important Bird Areas (Fishpool and Evans 2001). Ten criteria have been developed for the selection of IBAs in Africa (Barnes 1998, Fishpool and Evans 2001). These allow the identification of IBAs based on a site's international importance for:

- Bird species of global conservation concern;
- Assemblages of restricted-range bird species;
- Assemblages of biome-restricted bird species;
- Congregatory bird species.

A number of the criteria for the selection of IBAs are related directly to the criteria for the selection of Ramsar Sites (Figure 2). Hence, potential Ramsar Sites of international importance for wetland-dependent birds can be identified with relative ease from IBA inventories. For the present report, this was done step-wise:

1. A list was compiled of all bird species that are ecologically dependent on wetlands and whose natural range includes areas of Africa (see Appendix 1).

2. Using the BirdLife International World Bird Database, data on the 1,230 IBAs in Africa and 4,609 key bird populations at these sites were analysed to compile a preliminary list of all IBAs in Africa that are internationally important for the wetland-dependent bird species under the IBA criteria shown in Figure 2.

3. All IBAs not containing wetland habitat (according to the Ramsar definition of 'wetland', for which see Appendix 2) were excluded from the site list (e.g. grassland IBAs important for the globally threatened Wattled Crane *Grus carunculatus*).

4. Ramsar designation of wetland habitat within each qualifying IBA, as of July 2002, was categorised as:
   - Complete – all wetland habitat important for key wetland birds (i.e. birds that trigger the IBA and Ramsar criteria listed in Figure 2) within the IBA is included currently within one Ramsar Site or more.
   - Partial – some wetland habitat important for key wetland birds within the IBA is included currently within

* See Appendix 3 for a list of the 87 'species of global conservation concern' in Africa that are wetland-dependent and the 'significant numbers' threshold for each species.

** For a very few waterbird species, the '1% of population' numerical threshold used for IBA criterion A4i is lower than that used for Ramsar criterion 6. In these cases, where the A4i-qualifying count at an IBA is lower than the Ramsar threshold, Ramsar criterion 6 has been treated as unmet.

one Ramsar Site or more, but expansion of current (or designation of new) Ramsar Site(s) is needed to cover excluded areas within the IBA.
- Lacking – no wetland habitat important for key wetland birds within the IBA is included within any Ramsar Site.

With regard to identifying key sites that hold 1% or more of the population of a wetland bird species, the IBA A4i criterion applies to biogeographic populations (i.e. Afrotropical or Palearctic) whereas the Ramsar Criterion 6 can be applied to smaller populations within Africa, such as subspecies or flyway populations. As a result, the numerical thresholds ('1% of population') for A4i tend to be higher than those for Ramsar Criterion 6. Thus, key sites chosen under A4i nearly always meet or exceed the 1% threshold for Ramsar Criterion 6.