



Red-billed Tropicbird © Biosfera

The Africa Report 2023



Acknowledgements

BirdLife International's work across the Africa Partnership is made possible due to support from donors, including governments, foundations, other NGOs including BirdLife Partners, companies and individuals. Many other donors have directly supported the work outlined in this report through funds provided to BirdLife Partners. On behalf of the BirdLife Africa Partnership, we wish to thank all the donors who continue to make this work possible.

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BirdLife Africa would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to the many donors who supported us in 2023 including:

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Thanks to all the photographers and picture agencies for permission to reproduce their photographs.

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BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation partnership. Together we are 123 BirdLife Partners worldwide covering all continents, landscapes and seascapes.

Find out more at www.birdlife.org/africa

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Message from the Chair, CAP



In 2023, the BirdLife Partnership in Africa continued delivering critical conservation outcomes around the continent. The year also marked the start of the implementation of the BirdLife 10- year strategy launched in 2022. Across the world, nature is in decline, coupled with climate change, among other environmental challenges; our work to save nature is more urgent than ever. During the year, we also welcomed the newest member of the BirdLife flock – Nature Rwanda – as we continued to spread our wings across Africa.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the BirdLife Africa Secretariat for its support to African Partners as they delivered conservation action during the year to achieve significant conservation results throughout the continent. As the 2023 Africa Report shows, the BirdLife Africa Partnership is well placed to continue delivering critical nature conservation outcomes in the coming years.

Julia Pierini
Chair, BirdLife Council for the Africa Partnership (CAP)

Message from the Regional Director, Africa



In 2023, the BirdLife Africa Partnership continued making great conservation strides on the continent. Some of the highlights included our sustainable fisheries in Cabo Verde, conclusion of the highly successful forest restoration work in Liberia and Sierra Leone, expansion of our vulture conservation work, advocacy against destruction of critical sites for nature especially in Southern Africa, enhanced BirdLife Africa Partner involvement in policy at national level and rolling out of tools to protect nature and biodiversity in Kenya and Ethiopia, in light of increasing energy developments on the continent, among others.

During the year, the BirdLife Africa Partnership expanded, welcoming Nature Rwanda as the 27th and newest BirdLife Partner in the continent. In this report, we showcase BirdLife Africa Partnership's work in 2023, highlighting key achievements over the past year demonstrating that even small actions at local and national level can go a long way in contributing to the global environment and development agendas.

As we celebrate these achievements, I take this opportunity to applaud the BirdLife Africa Partners. To our donors and strategic partners, we are immensely grateful for your continued support, as we seek to address the environmental challenges facing Africa.

Finally, I would like to share my deepest gratitude to all our staff around the continent whose diligence and dedication were instrumental to our success.

I wish you a happy reading of the 2023 Africa Report and thank you for being BirdLife.

Dr. Kariuki Ntang'ang'a
Regional Director, Africa - BirdLife International

2023 in Numbers

526

Number of community rangers from 14 conservancies in Maasai Mara and Mosiro in Narok County, southwestern Kenya who were trained by Nature Kenya on wildlife poisoning training

20,000

Number of waterbirds found at Lake Nasser, an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) and a breeding and wintering grounds for a number of threatened birds

20,000

Number of community members benefiting from the Community Revolving Fund(CRF) at household level in Tanzania

500

Number of community members who have been sensitized about conservation in Zambia's Barotse Floodplains

115,144

Number of trees planted in 2023 by Asity Madagascar, as part of restoring degraded landscapes, in Madagascar

6

Number of coral nurseries established by Nature Seychelles' Coral Reef Restoration project in Cousin Island Special Reserve

182

Number of power poles that were successfully retrofitted by the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS) in Ethiopia under the Migratory Soaring Birds (MSB) Project

2200

Number of households that benefitted from Nature Uganda's Climate Smart Agriculture initiatives in 2023

20

Size of degraded landscapes in hectares restored by ABN in Kibira, northwestern Burundi in 2023



© Nature Seychelles

Species

A key pillar of the BirdLife strategy is preventing extinctions. In 2023, the BirdLife Partnership in Africa continued taking action to halt the decline of endangered species and keep common birds common through conservation action to tackle threats and raise awareness in addition to continuous monitoring of populations.



Awareness walk by school kids © BirdLife Botswana

Partner Highlights

Vultures are at risk in southern and eastern Africa from feeding on carcasses that have been poisoned – either by pastoralists taking revenge on predators, or by poachers trying to hide their crime. **BirdLife Botswana** therefore organised a Wildlife Poisoning Scene Management training workshop for key stakeholders in and around Chobe National Park, as part of a two-year **BIOPAMA**-funded project, **Building Multi-Sectoral capacity in tackling wildlife poisoning** in the **Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area**, implemented from 2021 to September 2023 in partnership with other BirdLife partners including **BirdLife Zimbabwe** and **BirdWatch Zambia**.

The project focused on reducing vulture mortalities related to wildlife poisoning in the area. The training workshop, held in July 2023, focused on confirmation of a poisoning incident, sampling (collection of samples, packaging, labelling, storage, and transport for testing), marking of poisoning crime scene and collection of evidence, as well as clean up and decontamination of poisoning scene to avoid further poisoning. It was conducted by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and brought together various stakeholders, including the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, local NGO staff and community guides, and members of the Chobe Wildlife Poisoning Committee (CWPC) established in 2021.

BirdLife Botswana, in collaboration with the BirdLife Secretariat and other stakeholders, also hosted a **National Lead Poisoning Workshop**. The workshop, held in October 2023, brought together key stakeholders involved in Lead (Pb) trade, use regulation, disposal, and research from across different sectors including non-governmental organisations, wildlife and environment authorities, agriculture, army, health, law enforcement, academic institutions, lead ammunition dealers, farmers, and experts in ballistics.

During the workshop, the impact of lead on the environment, and specifically on vultures, was discussed. A draft 3-year National Lead Action Plan to reduce the threat of lead to vultures and other wildlife was drafted. The plan aims at identifying key issues to address to reduce lead exposure and poisoning on the environment, who are the responsible parties, and set targets and timelines to achieve these targets, with the plan set to be finalised and rolled out for implementation by early 2024.



Multi-stakeholder poisoning response training. © BirdLife Botswana

On **International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) 2023**, BirdLife Botswana in collaboration with stakeholders including the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, local NGOs and schools, organized an awareness march at Kachikau Village in Chobe District under the theme Toxic ties: Let's Unite Against Vulture Poisoning. Six schools took part in the commemoration with more than 80 students participating in the activities, which included a schools performances session attended by traditional and regional leaders in Chobe District.

The **Slaty Egret** (*Egretta vinaceigula*) is one of the flagship bird species for the KAZA TFCA (Kavango Zambezi TransFrontier Conservation Area). Classified as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red List, the bird is endemic to KAZA with only a few vagrant records elsewhere within Southern Africa. About 80% of the species' population is restricted within the Okavango Delta in Botswana. Over the years, the bird has been faced with an array of threats including human disturbances and habitat loss, among others. General knowledge on the species' populations and threat monitoring is limited.



Vulture conservation awareness march across Kachikau village led by school kids © BirdLife Botswana

In efforts to conserve the species, an International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) was developed in 2012 under the **African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)**. In September 2023, the first meeting of the **Slaty Egret International Working Group (SE IWG)** was convened with representation from the bird's range states, including South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. A 3-year implementation plan for the ISSAP was developed with BLB's Conservation Officer Mpho Williart elected as the SE IWG Coordinator.

Under **BirdLife Botswana's** Environmental Education Portfolio, as part of the global effort to raise awareness on safeguarding key habitats and stop over sites for migratory birds along flyways, the **2023 World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD)** was commemorated under the theme 'Water – fundamental to life in our planet' and in collaboration with Department of Wildlife and National Parks and other key stakeholders in the Okavango Panhandle.

WMBD was commemorated in June 2023 in Shakawe village, engaging school kids and members of the public on an awareness march across the village and day themed school performances from all schools from Primary to Junior Secondary within the Western Okavango Panhandle. The event was graced by regional leadership as well as the member of parliament for Okavango as the guest speaker.

In **Zambia**, BirdLife partner BirdWatch Zambia (BWZ) continued implementing its **Vulture Conservation Programme** in 2023. The Programme brings together various partners including Care for Conservation (C4C), Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), North Carolina Zoo (NCZ), African Parks (AP), BioCarbon Partners (BCP), Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), Conservation South Luangwa (CSL) and Conservation Lower Zambezi (CLZ), and undertook targeted activities aimed at stemming vulture population declines in seven Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) in the country.

BWZ took part in activities carried out in five of these areas including Liuwa National Park KBA, Chisamba KBA, Lower Zambezi National Park KBA, South Luangwa National Park KBA and Kafue National Park KBA. During the year, a total of 32 vultures were tagged with Telemetry Tracking Units, in addition to one Bateleur (*Terathopius ecaudatus*) and one Tawny Eagle (*Aquila rapax*)



In partnership with North Carolina Zoo (NCZ), BirdWatch Zambia established four additional vulture monitoring transects in Kafue National Park to enhance monitoring of the species in this landscape. BirdWatch Zambia and NCZ conducted **wildlife poisoning response training** in South Luangwa National Park, where a total of 20 wildlife officers received training on responding to wildlife poisoning incidences in line with the National Poisoning Response, bringing to **242** the number of individuals who have been trained to date.

The **White-winged Flufftail** (*Sarothrura ayresii*) is listed as a Critically Endangered bird endemic to Africa. It is considered one of the rarest and most threatened waterbird species on the continent. The total global population was estimated at no more than 250 breeding adults in 2013. **Ethiopia** and **South Africa** are the only two countries where White-winged Flufftails are known to breed. Population abundance and distribution have likely decreased over the years due to wetland destruction and degradation by various anthropogenic activities such as mining and agriculture.

The **Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS)** serves as national expert member in the International Working Group of the **AEWA International Single Species Action Plan**, tasked with the conservation of the bird. In 2023, EWNHS, together with Site Support Group (SSG) members, continued monitoring the Berga flood plain – the only suitable breeding site for the species in Ethiopia – to safeguard this critical site.

The Liben Lark (*Heteromirafra archeri*) is a Critically Endangered bird found in the Liben Plain in Southern Ethiopia.

Over the years, population growth, overgrazing, drought and soil erosion has degraded much of the grasslands, leading to the fragmentation of the Liben Lark's habitat, splitting populations from each other and putting additional pressure on this bird. In 2023, EWNHS and BirdLife designated conservation biologist Dr Bruktawit Abdu as the BirdLife Species Guardian for the Liben Lark, formalized by an MoU. During the year, an expert team led by Dr Bruktawit carried out a field assessment in Jigiga, in Eastern Ethiopia, made possible through a grant by Natuurpunt. The assessment and socio-economic appraisal indicated the suitability of the area as an alternative site for the survival of the species, and about 23 Liben Larks were encountered during the assessment.



Other highlights of **EWNHS** action in the area of threatened species is safeguarding of vultures, with special emphasis on the Endangered Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) which is mainly a wintering migrant from Europe, with a few resident populations in Ethiopia. EWNHS engaged with various stakeholders aiming to safeguard the environment from poisonous chemicals that are hazardous to vultures and other scavenging species. EWNHS is proactively involved in the process of establishing the **Eastern Africa Wildlife Poisoning Response Network (EAWPRN)** spearheaded by BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat. EWNHS also took part in the development of conservation plan for the Endangered **Northern Bald Ibis** (*Geronticus eremita*), as part of the International Working Group for the **AEWA International Single Species Action Plan**.

GREPOM, BirdLife Partner in **Morocco**, undertook several monitoring activities in 2023 as part of its Species Programme, focusing on species of national, regional, and global importance, in addition to the winter waterbird census. The Marbled Teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*), a species classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List, benefitted from monitoring aimed at shedding light on ecology of its movements between Spain and Morocco and identifying its nesting sites nationally to better develop management practices while strengthening the capacities of stakeholders involved in its protection.

During the year, two species breeding discoveries were made. In August 2023, members of GREPOM's Fes-Meknes Regional unit in Northern Morocco reported the breeding of the Slender-billed Gull (*Larus genei*) in the reservoir of Ahmed El Hansali dam. This is an important discovery since breeding of the bird in the country was last recorded in the mid-1980s. The second major discovery was the documentation of the **first ever breeding** of the Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) in Morocco. Across Morocco, Common Shelduck is considered a regular wintering bird. Over the last few years, numerous sightings of the bird were reported in the Marchica lagoon in the country's northeast. In May 2023, an adult Common Shelduck was observed with four ducklings swimming in the lagoon.

GREPOM also developed a **multi-species National Action Plan** for the conservation of migratory waders, notably four species of regional and international importance including the Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*), Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) and Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*). Monitoring of the four species was also carried out at three sites including the Khnifiss Lagoon, Bas-Loukkos Complex and the Sidi Moussa-Walidia Lagoon Complex.



Workshop to develop a Multispecies Action Plan © GREPOM

Guinée Écologie marked World Migratory Bird Day in October 2023 at Lambanyi in Conakry, as part of its efforts to raise awareness on the conservation needs of migratory birds and their habitats. The celebrations brought together more than 30 participants including UK Ambassador to Guinea John Marshall, and the Director General of the National Herbarium, Dr Sékou Magassouba. During the celebration, participants observed different types of birds on the beach. The head of biodiversity explained the background to the initiative to celebrate migratory birds around the world.

“I’m an amateur ornithologist, which means I love birds. I wanted to celebrate this important day with Guinée Écologie. I’m delighted to see that there’s an organisation that aims to raise

awareness of the importance of biodiversity in Guinea, including migratory birds. I saw a lot of birds, including redshanks, godwits and sandpipers. It’s an important site, remarkably close to Conakry”,

His Excellency John Marshall, UK Ambassador to Guinea

Ghana hosts precious forests, and the **Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS)** is implementing a project “Improving the Conservation Status of the Critically Endangered Endemic Tree Species *Talbotiella gentii* in Ghana using in-Situ Conservation Strategies”, funded by the Franklinia Foundation. Through this project, 42,100 *T. gentii* tree seedlings have been planted in an area of over 74.03ha, and 10,000 indigenous species associated with *T. gentii* have been planted to create the enabling conditions for the survival of *T. gentii*. Fifteen farmers were assisted in integrating 8,500 trees of *T. gentii* into their agroforestry systems.



Seedling of *Talbotiella gentii*
© Kwame Boafo GWS

The project has also educated and created awareness for about 1000 people in eight communities where *Talbotiella gentii* grows about the need to protect the species from extinction. Farmers have now minimized the exploitation of the wood for charcoal production and use as fuelwood.

Vogelbescherming Nederland (VBN) – BirdLife Partner in the Netherlands – continued its support to GWS to enhance **conservation of shorebirds** at Muni-Pomazde and Songor lagoons, two wintering grounds along the coast of Ghana, by reducing threats through monitoring, public education, and awareness creation as well as evidence-based citizen science.

In **Kenya**, BirdLife Partner **Nature Kenya** carried out a number of conservation actions in 2023 to improve the status of threatened and declining species. Working collaboratively with other stakeholders, Nature Kenya carried out **detailed species monitoring** for six birds: Clarke’s Weaver (*Ploceus golandii*), East Coast Akalat (*Sheppardia gunningi*), Fischer’s Turaco (*Tauraco fischeri*), Taita Apalis (*Apalis fuscicularis*), Taita Thrush (*Turdus helleri*) and Hinde’s Babbler (*Turdoides hindei*).

To conserve some of the habitat of the Clarke's Weaver (also called Kilifi Weaver as it is only found in Kilifi County – nowhere else in the world), Nature Kenya purchased another 288 acres of land, for a total of 2861 acres as Nature Reserves in Dakatcha Woodland Key Biodiversity Area (KBA).

IUCN Red List data for 79 species (10 plants, 16 herbs, 25 fish, 3 dragonflies, 9 butterflies and 12 small mammals) were consolidated and published in collaboration with National Museums of Kenya (NMK) taxon leads. In addition, Nature Kenya in partnership with the National Museums of Kenya and Kenya Wildlife Service coordinated and conducted the annual waterbird counts in the Great Rift Valley lakes and other sites.

To combat **wildlife poisoning**, Nature Kenya trained 526 community rangers from 14 conservancies in Maasai Mara and Mosiro in Narok County in southwestern Kenya on Rapid Response to Wildlife Poisoning. A total of 30 predator-proof bomas were constructed in Kajiado and Narok counties to mitigate **human-wildlife conflict**.

BirdLife Partner **Biosfera** continued carrying out **seabird conservation work** in various islets in **Cabo Verde**. In 2023, 65 seabirds were captured and recaptured on the Branco Islet while on Raso islet, 278 seabirds were ringed and 232 recaptured between January and October 2023. In addition, 82 Cape Verde Shearwater (*Calonectris edwardsii*) nests, 40 Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) nests, 40 Red-billed Tropicbird (*Phaethon aethereus*) nests, 133 Bulwer's Petrel (*Bulweria bulwerii*) nests, and 46 Cape Verde Little Shearwater (or *Boyd's Shearwater*) (*Puffinus boydi*) nests were monitored. During the year, a survey of active Cabo Verdean Shearwater nests on Raso Islet counted 8471 individuals.



A Cape Verde Shearwater at the Branco islet © Biosfera

Biosfera is involved in the elimination of **invasive species** in Santa Luzia Island, and in surveying for evidence of cat presence. This information will be crucial in taking the next steps such as building artificial nests and reintroducing seabird species on the island. Biosfera has been installing mouse traps on the island to control the mice population in

various areas, including fishermen camps. Local fishermen are being engaged in the control of rodents in their camps, which has been instrumental in helping them understand the importance of avoiding the introduction of alien species and their impacts on native wildlife.

In 2023, Biosfera carried out **fisheries bycatch surveys** on the Barlavento Islands. According to the survey the predominant species in bycatch are sharks (54.83 %) and seabirds (48.35). Among seabirds, shearwaters were the most captured, accounting for more than 48% of seabird bycatch.

Since the launch of the SOS EDU campaign in 2018 to raise awareness and protect Cabo Verde's seabirds, 180 birds have been rescued as at 2023, with 85% of the birds rescued being seabirds. In 2023, 55 birds were rescued until the end of November, the majority of which were seabirds. The species that was rescued the most were shearwaters at 48 percent"

Marine litter has serious consequences for marine and coastal ecosystems, especially for the species that inhabit them. On Raso islet, we found two Brown Booby chicks with pieces of net and ropes tied to their feet. This is a direct consequence of the amount of trash in our oceans. So, avoid throwing trash into the sea, because it is destroying our marine environment."

Stefan Antunes, Seabirds field team of Biosfera

During the year, Biosfera participated in the 11th Ornithology Congress of the **Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (SPEA)** and the 2nd Macaronesian Ornithological Conference in Ponta Delgada (Azores), Portugal, with support from **SPEA**, BirdLife Partner in Portugal.

In **Madagascar**, BirdLife partner **Asity Madagascar** began the **Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE)** project that focusses on 8 Malagasay species: Madagascar Pochard (*Aythya innotata*), Margot Marsh's mouse lemur (*Antafondro mouse lemur*) (*Microcebus margotmarshae*), Ahmanson's sportive lemur (*Lepilemur ahmansonorum*), the frogs *Boophis williamsi* and *Mantidactylus pauliani*, the fish (*Paretroplus dambabe*), and the trees (*Podocarpus capuronii*) and (*Schizolaena tampoketsana*) in five Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs): Itremo, Manjakatempo-Ankaratra massif, Bemanevika/Tsarattanana massif, Mahavavy-Kinkony Wetland Complex (CMK) and Ankafoabe.

Asity Madagascar will focus on developing conservation plans for five of these threatened species. Some species monitoring activities are being planned, while others are in progress, and habitat restoration activities are being undertaken. In Ankafoabe, tree nurseries are being developed for the propagation of *Schizolaena tampoketsana*.



A tree nursery in Ankafobe
© Asity Madagascar

Nature Seychelles, BirdLife Partner in **Seychelles**, continues its conservation activities, with endemic land birds populations on **Cousin Island** now classified as stable. Research on the Seychelles Warbler (*Acrocephalus sechellensis*) by the **Seychelles Warbler Research Group**, made up of evolutionary and conservation biologists who have been studying and helping in the conservation of the Seychelles Warbler since 1985, continued with five scientific papers on the bird published in 2023.

Dr Nirmal Shah, CEO Nature Seychelles, co-authored a study Tracking seabird migration in the tropical Indian Ocean reveals basin-scale conservation need that revealed a critical **gap in seabird protection**, particularly in the Indian Ocean. Unlike other, colder oceans with identified hotspots for predator gatherings, the Indian Ocean lacks concentrated feeding areas for seabirds. This deficiency raises concerns given the multitude of threats these birds face from human activities such as climate change, overfishing, and pollution.

Nature Seychelles continued its collaboration with Alessa Lavigne, a researcher who is investigating **reproduction failure in turtles**. Based at the Reproductive Behaviour and Physiology Research Group at the University of Sheffield, UK. Alessa is partnering with zoos, captive breeders, and conservation groups around the world to work with unhatched eggs from a variety of turtle species. Cousin Island contributed failed turtle and tortoise eggs. The island continues to be a critical site for **Hawksbill turtle** (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) nesting in the western Indian Ocean. Its **Green turtle** (*Chelonia mydas*) population, once decimated in Seychelles inner granitic islands, has increased, with nine individuals nesting on the island in the 2022-2023 nesting season.

In **Tanzania**, BirdLife Partner **Nature Tanzania** ran an inaugural Bird of the Year campaign in 2023. A nomination exercise of potential bird species was held, from which four species were selected: Lappet-faced Vulture, Common Barn Owl, Grey Crowned Crane, and Lesser Flamingo. Then voting was welcomed from members of Nature Tanzania and the public through an online link to the voting platform (opinion stage) was widely shared. A total of 1,467 votes were

received out of which the **Grey Crowned Crane** (*Baealica regulorum*) won by 37.01% with 543 votes.

The public and online campaign, creating awareness on the conservation of the Bird of the Year, kicked off in March, and four public events were organised in Arusha, Kilimanjaro, and Dar es Salaam regions during the year. These included presentations, kids' artistic classes, birdwatching, and distribution of awareness raising materials. At the College of African Wildlife Management, Mweka, in Moshi, the event was synchronised with the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the college in October 2023, thus reaching a wider audience. At the University of Dar es Salaam, the event was also synchronised with the 10th anniversary of University of Dar es Salaam Birdwatching Group.



Online campaigns were conducted through group emails and social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram and in WhatsApp groups. In addition to addressing conservation of the Grey Crowned Crane, the campaign also engaged people in dialogues to discuss and share possible solutions to the threats that affect biodiversity and humankind.

In June 2023, Nature Tanzania hosted the **East Africa Wildlife Poisoning Response Network (EAWPRN)** workshop in Arusha. The workshop, organized by BirdLife International, brought together stakeholders and conservation partners (government and non-governmental institutions) from Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda to discuss and draft a regional plan towards mitigating wildlife poisoning incidences. Follow-up discussions are planned in 2024.

Nature Tanzania's Biodiversity Training and Mentoring Program (BiMO) is an exemplary platform for capacity building for members of Nature Tanzania, university graduates, government and non-government employees. In 2023, a total of 22 trainees, including 10 women, were trained with financial support from Altezza Travel, USAID Tuhifadhi Maliasili Activity and NABU International Foundation.

The program is implemented by Nature Tanzania in collaboration with the Department of Zoology and Wildlife Conservation of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) and hosted by **Amani Nature Forest Reserve** in the East Usambara Mountains.

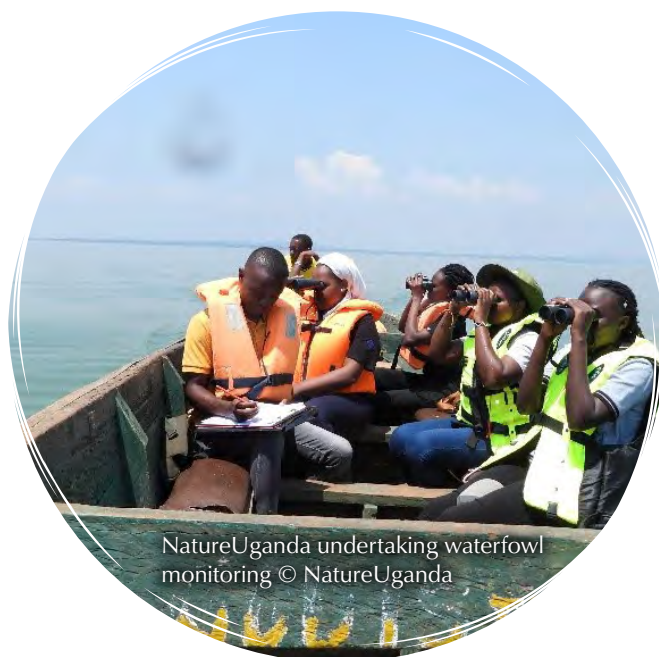
The BiMO program trains participants on field techniques for biodiversity research, with a focus on avian studies in forests and farmlands, using mist netting method to study the impacts of forest fragmentation and forest disturbances on avian diversity and abundances. Point counts are also used in established transects in farmlands to study pollination ecology and other ecosystem services provided by birds, sunbirds in particular. Trainees also get an opportunity to network and exchange working experiences and career opportunities.



5th cohort-Trainees BiMO Training © Nature Tanzania

Nature Tanzania continued to support the **International Waterbird Census (IWC)** in January 2023. The IWC is nationally coordinated by Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI), and Nature Tanzania mobilized its members to volunteer for field data collection from the identified sites.

NatureUganda is implementing its **Bird Monitoring Programme**, adopting a Citizen Science approach: bi-annual waterfowl counts, bi-annual Common Bird Population Monitoring and the Annual Road Raptor Counts. Since **Common Bird Population Monitoring** was established in 2009, sites have been monitored in January to February 2023 and July to August 2023. Currently, the scheme covers 130 sites across the country, with consistent monitoring in 24 sites. The scheme has **documented 830 bird species** and trained more than **300 local community members** in bird identification, guiding, and monitoring.



NatureUganda undertaking waterfowl monitoring © NatureUganda

Waterbird monitoring has been undertaken at 38 sites since inception, with consistent monitoring in 28 of the sites. To date, more than 130 species have been counted, with an average of 60 species per site. The program continues to play a crucial role in the designation of sites as wildlife reserves, Important Bird Areas, and Ramsar sites. The yearly **Road Raptor Monitoring Programme**, also established in 2009, covers 1700 kilometres of Uganda's major roads, with monitoring done by volunteers and NatureUganda staff. Through the programme, several scientific publications, mostly on the status of raptors and vultures in Uganda, have been produced.

Lake Nasser in Egypt is one of the largest man-made lakes in the world, formed as a result of the construction of the Aswan High Dam in the 1960s. It is about 496 km long, 300 km in Egypt and 196 km in Sudan, with an average width of 15kms. Its shorelines consist of a complex of shallow creeks called khors, which offer shallow waters capable of supporting aquatic plants and providing optimum breeding grounds for fish and waterbirds.

The banks of Lake Nasser feature rocky shores in the east and sandy beaches in the west, and the water level fluctuation in the River Nile according to the flood system provides suitable and dynamic habitats for wildlife. With rising water levels in winter, water inundates the shore vegetation and forms large swamps which provide attractive and safe feeding grounds for waterbirds.

The lake is an **Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA)** and a breeding and wintering grounds for a number of threatened bird species including the Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*), Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*), Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*), Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*), and more than 20,000 waterbirds. Other species recorded at the site include the Yellow-billed Stork (*Mycteria ibis*), Pink-backed Pelican (*Pelecanus rufescens*), Three-banded Plover (*Charadrius tricollaris*), African Skimmer (*Rynchops flavirostris*) and African Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla aguimp*).

Threats facing this important lake include developmental projects near the lake and poor agricultural practises, among others. The lake is also considered a bird hunting destination, with shooting of waterbirds common in autumn and winter, particularly by hunters from Malta. Lack of law enforcement is one of the main challenges in Lake Nasser, due to the massive area, remote location, and poorly defined hunting regulations.

In 2018 **Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE)** organized a national workshop to discuss the drafting of the **Annual Ministerial Hunting Decree** by the Ministry of Environment. This decree updates the restrictions and regulations for the hunting season. Since then, the workshop has been an annual event where NCE advocates against bird hunting and promotes alternative sources of income for local tour operators. In the 2022-2023 hunting season, NCE led an investigation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and **BirdLife Malta**, to gain a better understanding of the situation of hunting tourism in Lake Nasser.



The study revealed the extent of hunting in the region, and led to the decision to ban hunting activities in Lake Nasser by the Egyptian Government, thus safeguarding thousands of wintering and resident birds at Lake Nasser, and marking a wildlife conservation milestone in Egypt following years of advocacy by NCE. Noting that the ban would impact the livelihoods of local tour operators, NCE is working on a program to provide alternative incomes for local communities. The program involves promoting birdwatching tourism, facilitating partnerships and collaborations between local tour operators and agencies, and building the capacity of local tour operators.



Retrofitting of a powerline in Ethiopia © EWNHS

Programme Highlights

Migratory Birds and Flyways Programme

Africa is at the heart of the **African Eurasian Flyway region**, and every year it hosts billions of migratory birds as they journey between the two continents. However, these birds continue facing various direct or indirect threats to their survival. BirdLife's strategy for saving migratory birds aims at addressing conservation challenges at species & sites levels, and ensuring migratory corridors are kept safe by engaging stakeholders along the Flyway.

Action for migratory birds along East Atlantic Flyway (EAF)

In 2023, the **East Atlantic Flyway Initiative (EAFI) Task Force** continued to implement its new strategy for Flyway-wide conservation along the **East Atlantic Flyway**, providing leadership, networking, and funding. Through the collaborative efforts of BirdLife International, Wetlands International, and the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative, and coordinated by Sovon, the Dutch Centre for Field Ornithology, simultaneous waterbird counts took place in 18 African and 18 European countries along the flyway.

Monitoring of breeding birds including the Royal Tern (*Thalasseus maximus*), Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) and Slender-billed Gull (*Larus genei*) was also conducted in West Africa in May 2023 in Mauritania, Senegal, and Guinea Bissau. **VBN** supported the waterbird counts through funding as well as optical equipment used in the count. **VBN** has also been instrumental in supporting capacity building for the identification, monitoring, and conservation of migratory birds in the Ehotilé Islands National Park in Cote d'Ivoire.



Field training on monitoring of birds and Habitat in Eotile Islands © SOS-Forêts

Implementing the Cooperation Agreement with the Great Green Wall

The implementation of the cooperation agreement between BirdLife and the **Pan African Great Green Wall (PAGGW)** was advanced with the development of joint proposals and progress on the development of Biodiversity Indicators and the establishment of National Biodiversity Monitoring Groups. From 22nd January to 2nd February 2023, BirdLife participated in the Great Green Wall (GGW) residential seminar to develop the Operational Plan for 2023 and the GEF–UNEP Program for the GGW in Bamako, Mali. Later that month, the PAGGW and BirdLife organised the steering committee meeting in Nouakchott and developed the roadmap for 2023.

In May 2023, BirdLife and the PAGGW, with the support of **VBN**, participated in the Sahel & Sahara Interest Group (SSIG) meeting in Almeria, Spain, organised by Sahara Conservation; and a workshop organised by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on the development of a regional project to strengthen adaptation to climate change in GGW countries for submission to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

During the year, **NATURAMA** (BirdLife Partner in Burkina Faso) and **Nigerian Conservation Foundation** (BirdLife partner in Nigeria), in collaboration with their respective National Agencies of the GGW, organised workshops to develop biodiversity indicators and establish National Biodiversity Working Groups that will support the monitoring and integration of biodiversity into GGW projects and activities.

Management of Critical Sites

Nature-Communautés-Développement (NCD), BirdLife Partner in Senegal, with the support of the BirdLife Secretariat in Africa and a grant from the Alstom Foundation, completed a project on strengthening participatory reforestation and green enterprises and supporting community resilience in the **Tocc-Tocc community reserve**,

Sénégal. This work was expanded to include the wider Lac De Guiers IBA through support from the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, as part of a programme funded by the French development agency (AFD), and led by French BirdLife Partner, Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO), which was launched in March 2023.

In addition, BirdLife and partners including Wetlands International and the Partenariat Régional pour la Conservation de la zone côtière et Marine (PRCM) secured a final tranche of funding from the MAVA Foundation for the conservation of wetlands and coastal bird protection in **Mauritania, Senegal, and Guinea Bissau**.

Biodiversity mainstreaming in the Energy Sector – for migratory birds

With funding from the German Investment Corporation and Dutch Development Bank, work was initiated in 2023 to bring both Egypt and Kenya biodiversity data into the **Avian Sensitivity Tool for Energy Planning (AVISTEP)** to help in pre-screening of energy projects.

In October 2023, a regional energy conference to build closer ties and mutual understanding between the energy industry and the conservation community along the African-Eurasian Flyway was held in Egypt, bringing together participants from government, non- governmental organisations and the private sector. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between BirdLife International, the Arab Union of Electricity and the Arab Renewable Energy Commission were signed. The African Development Bank also participated in a panel discussion. Further engagements to forge collaborations have been held with Power Africa/USAID which is supporting power development projects in Africa.

BirdLife also participated as a panellist at the **2023 African Conference on Linear Infrastructure and Ecology Conference** held in September in Kenya. The conference sought to promote sustainability in infrastructural development that is ballooning in Africa. Mainstreaming bird conservation into major sectors continued with implementation of the UNDP/GEF **Migratory Soaring Birds II Project** in which BirdLife is a key implementing partner.

In the energy sector, mainstreaming efforts yielded great results in Egypt, Ethiopia, and Djibouti with the following notable successes: In Djibouti, the Ghoubet Wind Farm management developed an **integrated bird management and monitoring programme** to protect birds against impacts of the wind farm. In Egypt, all the private and government agencies involved in wind power production are required to submit **regular monitoring reports** on birds and their wind farms as a measure to reduce negative impacts. In Ethiopia, a collaborative agreement was secured between four municipalities, the national power distributor and environment protection agency; and, in collaboration with the national BirdLife Partner, **the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS)**, the national power distributor **retrofitted a total of 182 killer poles** as a mitigation measure.



A hooded vulture perched on a retrofitted powerline © EWNHS

Protection for declining migratory landbirds and action against illegal killing of birds

Initiatives that focused on land birds included BirdLife's support to scale up and replicate the experience of the **Birds, Bees and Business (BBB) project**, initiated by BirdLife's Dutch Partner **Vogelbescherming Nederland (VBN)**, and BirdLife Partner in Burkina Faso, **NATURAMA**. Following the conclusion of the project funded by the Dutch Postcode Lottery, **VBN** has continued to support the initiative, including a strong representation, with BirdLife, at the Global Shea Alliance global conference in Cote d'Ivoire in June 2023. Constructive meetings with a number of large-scale buyers of shea, as well as the Global Shea Alliance, cemented the intention to expand this work, including a proposed MoU with the Global Shea Alliance and BirdLife, including the BBB consortium. **VBN** supported other **NATURAMA** project activities during the year, in addition to monitoring work planned for 2024.

BirdLife continued to support the implementation of the **AfriEvolve project**, led by **Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU)** – BirdLife partner in Germany – and funded by the German government. The project component in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire included capacity building combined with climate resilient agriculture pilots focused on savannah landscapes which also support populations of migratory land birds.

BirdLife support continued combating **illegal killing of migratory birds (IKB)** in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. In both Morocco and Egypt, BirdLife Partners were supported to generate national plans to address IKB, focussing on 'black spots' identified nationally. In Egypt, previous efforts resulted in banning bird hunting at Lake Nasser by the government. In Tunisia, **Les Amis des Oiseaux (AAO)**, BirdLife Partner, has been engaging national agencies to contain illegal and unsustainable hunting against a backdrop of strong hunting groups. Furthermore, BirdLife initiated a [fundraising campaign](#) to fight against IKB.

Saving Vultures in Africa

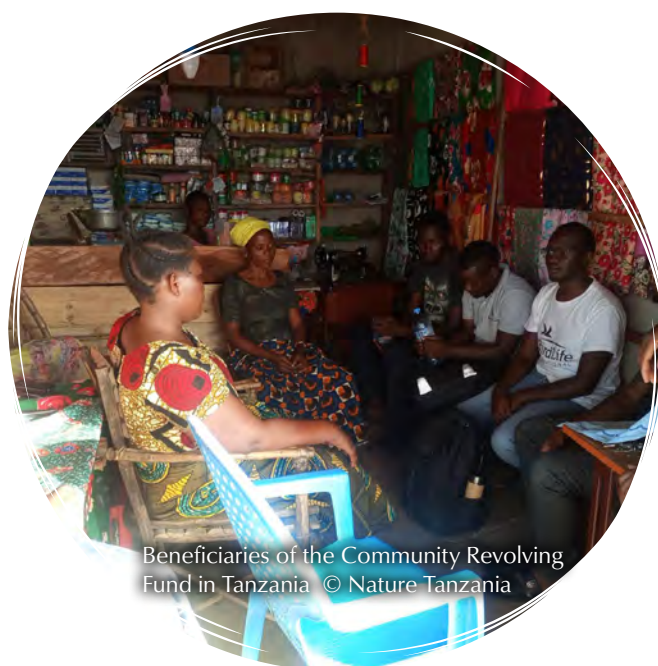
Africa's Vultures are some of the most endangered birds globally, with **seven of Africa's vulture species on the edge** of extinction, categorised as globally Endangered or Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Six of these species only occur in Africa, nowhere else in the world. Over the last 50 years, African vulture populations have declined by between 80 and 97% (over 92% for five species), driven by a myriad of factors including poisoning (responsible for 61% of recorded vulture deaths across Africa), killing for belief-based use (29%), and electrocution by poorly sited energy infrastructure (9%).

BirdLife Africa's **culture conservation strategy** is built on **four pillars** focused on addressing these threats through building knowledge and understanding, raising awareness at all levels, advocating for policy and legislative changes, and implementing direct conservation actions on the ground. In 2023 the programme made several achievements as highlighted below:

Tackling Belief-Based Use in East Africa

In East Africa's **Mara - Serengeti Ecosystem**, BirdLife and Partners are working to **tackle belief-based use**, which accounts for 29% of vulture deaths across the continent. In **Tanzania's Makao Wildlife Management Area (WMA)**, **Nature Tanzania** is engaging local communities, including traditional healers, who use vulture body part for traditional belief practices.

This engagement promotes vulture conservation through promoting **plant-based alternatives** as substitutes for vulture parts, and improving livelihoods. An alternative based on the plant *Biophytum crassipes* (kiloto) has already been identified as an alternative for vulture body parts. To improve community livelihoods, a **Community Revolving Fund (CRF)** has been established in the Makao WMA. The CRF supports conservation by providing soft loans to support environmentally sustainable businesses, reducing environmental pressure while improving community livelihoods.



Beneficiaries of the Community Revolving Fund in Tanzania © Nature Tanzania

With financial support from Darwin Initiative through BirdLife International, Nature Tanzania has incorporated five thousand pound (£5,000) to support the Community Revolving Fund. In 2023, the first batch of loans was dispatched with 56 people (37 men and 19 women) benefited from the loans. The beneficiaries went through entrepreneurship training business capacity building to enable them to run small businesses well, improving their livelihoods and reducing pressure on the environment and wildlife. The following were the thematic areas of training – meaning and characteristics of an entrepreneurship, challenges in entrepreneurship and how to deal with them, marketing, business record keeping, loans and financial management. This training will help the beneficiaries to improve and expand their business, and by reducing poverty reduce pressure on the environment and support community awareness creation on the importance of vultures in the ecosystem. Monitoring the business progress of the beneficiaries is underway, indicating positive progress and potential to start paying back the loans soon.

Vulture Conservation Efforts in Southern Africa

Following the poisoning of vultures in Botswana and South Africa in September 2022, BirdLife initiated **engagements with the Southern African Development Community (SADC)** to assist with the conservation of vultures in the region. This engagement resulted in a declaration by the Ministerial Committee on Natural Resources in July 2023 for a **Regional Bird Conservation Strategy** and a **Vulture Conservation Strategy** to be developed. Consequently, BirdLife International and the SADC Secretariat have started on the process of developing the Vulture Conservation Strategy.

Through the work of its partners and other scientists, BirdLife International has realised the negative impact that Lead (Pb) from ammunition has on vultures. Thus, a decision was made to raise awareness on the subject as well as advocate for a change in ammunition to lead-free ammunition. A regional plan to reduce exposure of vultures to lead is also being developed. In January 2023, BirdLife and Partners held a meeting in South Africa attended by stakeholders from **Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe**. The stakeholders included representatives from the Ministries of Environment, Defence Forces, The Police, Hunters Associations and BirdLife Partners. The meeting raised awareness and consulted the stakeholders on the way forward. To ensure consultation of more stakeholders, meetings are being held in countries in the SADC region. During the year, meetings were held in Malawi, Botswana, and Zambia, with plans to hold more meetings in 2024.

Marine Programme

The BirdLife Africa Marine Conservation Programme is focused on reducing the mortality of birds in fisheries, safeguarding critical marine and coastal habitats, strengthening Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) management, and developing capacity for research on and monitoring of seabirds, as well as addressing their main threats on land. In 2023, the programme achieved important milestones as highlighted below:

In efforts to empower communities for ocean stewardship and safeguarding marine resources, the **Guardians of the Sea (GoS) program** has been expanding rapidly to multiple

islands of **Cabo Verde**. In this archipelago located in the Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of **West Africa**, BirdLife International is supporting the extension of this innovative citizen science approach, developed by a local NGO, to empower members of the artisanal fishing communities to take actions for marine conservation. This is done through the project “Empowering Cabo Verde communities towards responsible practices in artisanal fisheries”, a conservation initiative coordinated by BirdLife International with financial support from the UK Government’s **Darwin Initiative**.



Guardians of the Seas program training certification © APB

In 2023, the GoS program, as part of the Cabo Verde conservation projects of BirdLife International, has engaged, recruited, equipped, and trained **130 fishers to collect standardized data** and properly handle marine **megafauna bycatch**, monitor artisanal fishing activities including their movements, and report fishing incidents such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. These efforts raised the number of GoS in the archipelago to around **300 fishers**. In addition to monitoring fishing activities, the GoS play a crucial role in empowering communities. Further, the Cabo Verde seabird conservation efforts contributed to better monitoring and understanding of the nature and impacts of other forms of threats, on land and at sea, compromising the survival of the seabird population in Cabo Verde.

At the regional level, the Marine Programme has undertaken advocacy activities to increase its profile among the conservation actors of the region and support the science-policy interface by fostering the uptake of data and information in policy fora. To this end, BirdLife International's work to minimise the bycatch of marine megafauna in West African fisheries has been profiled during the **International Scientific Symposium on the Canary Current Large Marine Ecosystem (CCLME)** held in Guinea Bissau in November 2023.

This initiative, organised by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), brought together scientists, researchers, policymakers, industry players, and non-governmental organizations to discuss and share their knowledge, experience, and ideas to address priority transboundary issues relating to declining fisheries resources, habitat degradation, associated marine biodiversity, and deteriorating water quality, based on scientific findings. The BirdLife Africa Marine Programme was represented at the symposium, presented scientific research, and submitted an article to be published by the symposium on bycatch in the region entitled: Understanding and addressing bycatch of vulnerable species of marine megafauna (seabirds and sea turtles) in West African fisheries based on the previous MAVA Foundation funded bycatch projects.



Seabird monitoring activities in Cema Islet © APB

To strengthen advocacy to protect marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, a new project entitled Leveraging NGO Networks to Achieve Ratification of the **UN High Seas Treaty** by 2025 was approved to support African Partners in advocacy efforts towards ratification of the **High Seas Treaty**. The project will start in 2024 and will initially focus on a first batch of about 6 partners in Africa. The High Seas Treaty, a ground-breaking international agreement aimed at preserving the biodiversity of the world's oceans, which opened for signing and ratification at the United Nation's General Assembly in New York on the 20th of September 2023, represents a monumental step for collaborative ocean governance beyond national jurisdiction.

To provide information on the High Seas Treaty, a webinar was held in October 2023 for the Africa Partnership with about 40 participants, and featured presentations from experts from the High Seas Alliance as well as BirdLife Africa partners. In particular, the High Seas Treaty provides a legal framework for the establishment of area-based management tools, including marine protected areas and a comprehensive and modern framework to conduct environmental impact assessments on human activities.

Noting the need for strategic alliances to ensure significant conservation impact, BirdLife took an important step in building alliances to better protect marine ecosystems in West Africa. In an open letter sent to Senegal's Fisheries minister, BirdLife joined other members of civil society in calling for better regulation of bottom trawling activities which affect marine biodiversity and jeopardise coastal communities' livelihoods.

The [*Seabird Conservation Handbook for West Africa*](#) was launched in September 2023, to provide the latest scientific data and information for the conservation of seabirds, one of the most globally threatened group of birds, including on the management of their threats, habitats and key sites for their conservation. The launch took place on the sidelines of the **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) Marine Megafauna Week of the Atlantic Coast of Africa**, an event that brought together decision-makers, governmental representatives, and international and regional non-governmental organizations from Africa and elsewhere. The handbook, developed with the support of the MAVA Foundation and the UK Government's Darwin Initiative, will be instrumental in advancing the conservation of seabirds in the region.

Continuing and extending the work on the bycatch of **marine megafauna in Africa** is a priority for our Marine Programme. BirdLife International is therefore pleased to announce a new project called **REDUCE (Reducing bycatch of threatened megafauna in the East Central Atlantic)**, funded under the EU Horizon programme for a period of four years starting in 2024. Its main aim is to promote more sustainable fisheries management and reduce the bycatch of some of the most threatened marine wildlife including seabirds, sea turtles, sharks, rays, and marine mammals on European long-distance fisheries operating in the East Central Atlantic.

“REDUCE has come at just the right time to consolidate and build on the achievements of past initiatives, while at the same time expanding and strengthening our scientific knowledge of bycatches of vulnerable species which is needed to inform action and policy for the sustainability of marine resources in this region”.

Tabea Zwimpfer, Africa Marine Coordinator



Maintenance of firewalls in newly protected areas © Asity Madagascar

Sites

Africa has over 1,300 identified Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). IBAs are also Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs): vital habitats for nature, birds, and all species. BirdLife Partners across the continent are ensuring the integrity, protection, conservation, and restoration of these sites, in addition to continuous assessments and establishing National Coordination Groups (NCG) in Partner countries.



Restoration activities in Burundi © ABN

Partner Highlights

BirdWatch Zambia is actively involved in two habitat restoration projects currently funded by the World Wide Fund for Nature Zambia (WWF-Zambia). These projects focus on **controlling invasive plant species** in the Barotse Floodplains and Lukanga Swamp, two key KBAs in Zambia.

In the **Barotse Floodplains**, the project aims at tackling the threat posed by *Mimosa pigra*, an invasive plant species, to biodiversity and livelihoods in the region. As at December 2023, more than **80 hectares** of the targeted 100 hectares had been cleared, creating employment opportunities for 37 local community members. **Community engagement** has been a key aspect of the project. Approximately 500 community members living on the Barotse Floodplains have been sensitized about the importance of birds, the need for conservation, and the adverse effects of invasive species on the landscape.



Local community members clearing invasive species in the Barotse Floodplains © BWZ

The project has trained 10 community members (4 women and 6 men) as community bird guides, enhancing local expertise and involvement in bird conservation efforts. The project has also provided support to four MPhil students at Copperbelt University, ensuring the completion of their studies by covering various expenses including tuition, stipend, and research fees.

The **Lukanga Swamp's** project's primary objective is to control *Salvinia molesta* – an invasive weed species – for improved biodiversity and livelihoods. The project builds on previous interventions including a Darwin Initiative funded project which was implemented from 2017-2021. In 2023, the project introduced weevils at 25 additional locations to control the spread of invasive plants. Monitoring efforts on the Lukanga Swamp indicate that the weevils have successfully covered over 90% of the swamp, showcasing the effectiveness of the intervention.

Located in northeast **Morocco**, the **Sebkha Bou Areg** commonly called Marchica is the second largest lagoon on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. The 14,000-hectare lagoon has a great avifaunal diversity and is a regular wintering site for several species of birds of international importance. As part of the World Wetlands Day celebrations in February 2022, **GREPOM**, BirdLife Partner in Morocco, with the support of its two partners National Agency for Water and Forests (ANEF) and the Marchica Agency, installed a floating raft to encourage nesting of birds at the site, particularly terns. This activity, part of the Contribution to the conservation of the avian biodiversity and support of the local population for the development of ecotourism in the lagoon of Bou-Areg project, supported by the Small Grants Programme of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), saw the first nesting on the raft in June 2023. The nesting was of a Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) – only known to breed at two sites in the past.

Within the **Massa Estuary** in the south of Morocco, GREPOM is leading on the **restoration efforts** in this RAMSAR site, and established a small island to encourage the nesting of several shorebird species. In April 2023, 39 eggs were counted in 13 nests of the Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) testifying to the success of GREPOM's restoration actions.



A Common Shelduck with chicks at the Marchica lagoon in 2023 © Said Azaouagh

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are the most important places in the world for species and their habitats. As part of the **Ghana Wildlife Society (GWS)** efforts to identify and safeguard these sites, the Society, with support from the **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)**, brought together taxa experts from Universities in Ghana, research organizations, representatives from the government, NGOs and Civil Society Organizations in a workshop to broaden the understanding of the KBA process and assessment, and facilitate the creation of a National Coordination Group (NCG) for KBAs in Ghana. The Ghana NCG was created and inaugurated to lead the identification and nomination of sites as KBAs.

Ghana Wildlife Society is also leading the charge to propose the **Nyamibe Bepo Forest Reserve**, a site located east of the New Edubiase township in the Ashanti region of Ghana, as a KBA, to help the conservation of the **Vulnerable White-necked Rockfowl** or **Picathartes** (*Picathartes gymnocephalus*). This reserve is known for its abundant and diverse bird life, including the African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*) and the White-necked Picathartes, which attract tourists. To promote sustainable tourism, the Society trained local tour guides to boost ecotourism in the area.



White-necked Picathartes nesting at Nyamibe Bepo Forest Reserve © Joseph Afrifa GWS

During the year, GWS began a habitat restoration project, supported by **RSPB**, in northern Ghana. The work is part of a wider restoration programme supported by the Ecological Restoration Fund (ERF) to create exemplary landscapes by habitat restoration along the **East Atlantic Flyway**.

Asity Madagascar, BirdLife Partner in Madagascar, is involved in restoring degraded landscapes, particularly in Tsitongambarika. In 2023, **115,144 trees** were planted, with over **28ha** of land restored. Asity prioritized establishment of fire control measures in Protected Areas in **Tsitongambarika**. During the year, 65 km of firewalls were maintained, and 25 km of new firewalls established. Further, Asity is updating information on two Ramsar sites managed by the organization, located in **Torotorofotsy** and **Lake Kinkony** Protected Areas.

In 2023, **Nature Seychelles'** Coral Reef Restoration project in Cousin Island Special Reserve achieved several notable milestones, including establishing six coral nurseries with **24,180 fragments from six genera**; successfully out-planting **8,442 corals**; and rehabilitating 0.45 hectares of the reef. Construction began of the **Assisted Recovery of Coral (ARC)** facility – an aquaculture facility capable of growing 5,000 coral fragments annually. Specialist equipment has been procured and delivered, and 25 coral reef restoration practitioners have undergone training. This is part of a regional project funded by the Adaptation Fund through UNDP and the Seychelles Government.

In **Tanzania**, **Nature Tanzania** undertook an IBA assessment in the **Makao Wildlife Management Area** in Simiyu region in north-central Tanzania. The findings contributed to the designation of Makao as the 81st IBA in Tanzania. This new IBA hosts more than 185 bird species including 7 threatened bird species (87.5% being vultures) and four Tanzania endemics. The findings were presented during the 14th TAWIRI International Scientific Conference in Arusha in December 2023 and are also available online in BirdLife Datazone and World Bird Database.

In **Kenya**, **Nature Kenya** has continued to work towards the integrity of key sites across the country. In the **Tana River Delta KBA**, 6,500 hectares of degraded landscapes was restored during the year. In 2023, 101,971 ha in the Tana River Delta KBA were put under Participatory Forest Management (PFM). In Western Kenya, Nature Kenya supported communities in **Yala Swamp KBA** to restore 1,100 ha of papyrus through direct planting (500 ha) and natural regeneration (600 ha).

With support from corporate partners, Nature Kenya saw the planting of 96,000 trees in critical KBAs across the country including Mount Kenya, Aberdare Range and Mau Complex forests; and 12 **Community Forests Associations (CFAs)** were engaged to review and update their Participatory Forest Management Plans (PFMPs).

About, **2,300 households** and **32 climate-smart schools** in or near five KBAs (Tana River Delta, Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, Dakatcha Woodland, Taita Hills forests and Mt. Kenya Forest) were supported to adopt energy-saving cook stoves to ease pressure on fuel wood. Nature Kenya distributed 2,000 fruit trees (avocado and macadamia) to farmers in Taita Hills and 50,000 agroforestry trees to communities living adjacent to the Mida Creek, Arabuko-Sokoke Forest and Sabaki River Estuary KBAs.



One of the farmers in the Taita Hills who received tree seedlings from Nature Kenya © Gilbert Obuya

In 2023, **NatureUganda** continued implementing the **People Partner with Nature for Sustainable Living (III)** programme funded by **Dansk Ornitologisk Forening (DOF)**, BirdLife Partner in Denmark, to secure the integrity of the 433 square kilometre **Katsyoha Kitomi Central Forest Reserve** in southwestern Uganda.

NatureUganda, together with the lead agency National Forest Authority (NFA), engaged local communities in a process that culminated in the signing of four collaborative forest management agreements (CFMs) with the local communities adjacent to the forest.

A joint team of stakeholders comprised of NatureUganda, National Forest Authority (NFA), Local government and CFM members have been mobilized by NatureUganda to conduct **Locally-based Monitoring (LbM)** and undertake joint forest patrol in the forest. As a result of community members being engaged in the process, understanding and appreciation of the forest and its services to them is now well articulated. This has warded off encroachment and other illegal activities. The patrols and monitoring teams also provide useful data on which to base sound management of the forest under the CFM model. Forest degradation has greatly been reduced, and Katsyoha Kitomi CFR is gradually regaining its former glory, save for a few areas where gold mining is still going on under government licencing. So far, forest regeneration is gradually taking shape and canopy cover in some parts of the forest stands at 85%.

Since 2022, the project has worked with National Forestry Authority (NFA) to identify agroforestry trees that farmers could plant in farmland, with the most preferred species being *Calliandra* because of its multiple advantages including nitrogen-fixing, fodder for animals, fast growing and easy to propagate. Other tree species preferred included *Grevillea robusta*, *Prunus africana* and *Warburgia ugandanensis*, chosen based on their medicinal values or providing shade and mulch.

To date, farmers have been supported with **50,000 assorted tree seedlings**: 30,000 *Calliandra*, 12,000 *Grevillea robusta*, 4,000 *Prunus africana* and 4,000 *Warburgia ugandanensis* seedlings. A tree nursery service provider was engaged to train the farmers on the relevant silviculture practices such as alley cropping, hedgerows, contour planting, bunds for stabilization of trenches, and boundary planting specifically for banana plantations or homesteads as windbreaks. Survival rates are encouraging and stand at 92%.



In **Nigeria**, BirdLife Partner the **Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF)** together with **NABU**, launched a three-year forest management and livelihood improvement project

in Cross River State. The project, being implemented within the buffer region of the Cross River National Park – part of the **Guinean Forests of West Africa (GFWA)** – has the support of Cross River Forestry Commission, Cross River National Park, and community-based organizations (CBOs) as key working stakeholders in the region. The forest is part of the designated Cross River National Park IBA/KBA.

The project targets eight local communities in the area: *Iko Esai community*; *Agoi Ekpo community*; *Owai community*; *Iko Ekperem community*; *New Ekuri Clan community*; *Ifumkpa community*; *Old Ekuri community*; and *Agoi Ibami community*. It will benefit a wide variety of species, especially primates such as galagos and Potto, medium-sized monkeys of the genus *Cercopithecus* and *Cercocebus*, and large primates such as chimpanzees and lowland gorillas, as well as forest elephants, buffaloes and countless bird species that are also found in the forest.

Further, the project aims to re-establish community-based mechanisms for forest conservation and utilisation, through the **promotion of sustainable agricultural practices**, capacity building for women who are collectors of **Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP)** on sustainable harvest and trade to improve their income, and the sensitization of local people on sustainable forest use and enhanced value addition.

To achieve this, 50 Eco-Guards were recruited, trained, and equipped with tools and mobility items to ensure forest protection and improved forest surveillance and monitoring. The eco-guards are youths from the 8 represented communities, who act as rangers for the forest patrols.

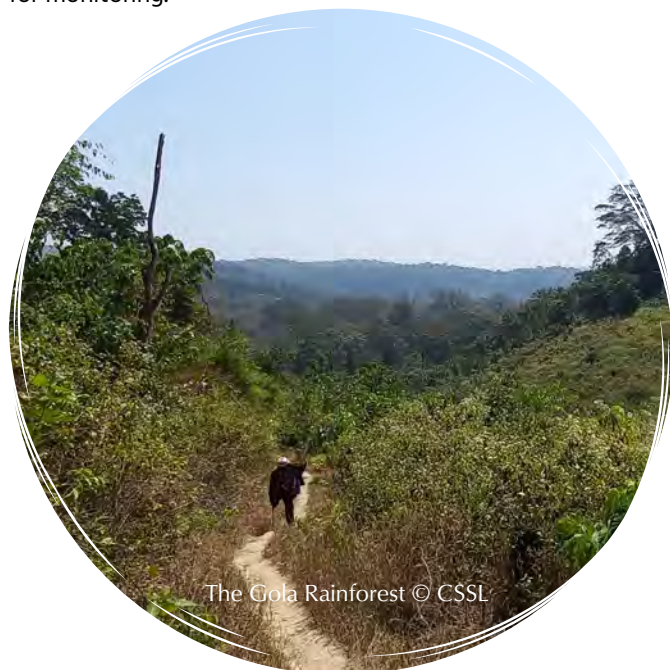
Community Forest Committees (CFCs) consisting of village heads were established to provide legislative support to the eco-guards through forest by-laws prepared and agreed with village members in a participatory process.

In **Liberia**, the **Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL)** established two community forests, Normon and Tonglay, totaling to an area of 120,076 ha of forested land area in the Gola Forest National Park. SCNL is also in the process of establishing **Foya** (104,000 ha) and **Kpo** (27,000 ha) as Protected Areas. With support from Rainforest Trust, SCNL intends to establish four additional PAs.

Located in western Liberia, **Lake Piso**, also known as Fisherman's Lake, is Liberia's largest lake, measuring 103 square kilometres. It is characterized by five main vegetation groups, including tropical evergreen forest, mangrove swamp forest, and coastal savannah. Fishing constitutes the main livelihood of the population, who are also involved in subsistence farming by slash and burn agriculture. Though the site has been protected since 2011, subsistence farming through shifting cultivation and cutting down of forests for charcoal production have been the driving forces for degradation.

With funding from the TerraFund for AFR100, SCNL rolled out the **Lake Piso Agroforestry** project in 2022.

The project aims at restoring degraded areas around the lake, while developing an agroforestry scheme with a mix of cocoa, coconut and temporary food crops planted to improve livelihoods for five communities surrounding the lake, Robertsport, Tosor, Sembehum, Latia and Fallie, thus enhancing conservation and protection of the landscape. It is estimated that 66,600 cash crops will be planted by October 2026 when the project ends. As of October 2023, about 51,972 trees had been planted, with the project employing 45 beneficiaries (15 men and 30 women) working as community casual laborers. SCNL is on course with the planting target and hope to achieve all targets by the end of the project planting period, with the remaining years used for monitoring.



The Gola Rainforest © CSSL

Côte d'Ivoire's coastline, decorated with magnificent **mangrove forests**, represents an ecosystem of exceptional richness, sheltering nearly **1,500 wild species**, from fish to birds. These mangroves, beyond their beauty, play a crucial role as natural ramparts, reducing the impact of waves by 5 to 30%. They are therefore essential guardians for coastal protection against rising water levels. In addition, their ability to capture up to 5 times more carbon than terrestrial forests places them at the heart of the fight against climate change, as powerful allies in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

This exceptional natural treasure is today threatened by various human practices, such as the use of mangrove wood for cooking, itinerant agricultural clearings, and rapid urbanization. These anthropogenic pressures have caused a significant reduction in mangrove areas in recent years. The complexity of the ecological functioning of the coastline makes any disturbance worrying, because it can have repercussions on the overall balance of the ecosystem. Aware of this reality, BirdLife Partner **SOS-Forêts**, as part of its policy to combat climate change, has adopted a holistic approach focused on the preservation of forests. This strategic orientation has generated concerted actions to raise awareness, restore, build capacity and implement innovative solutions, aimed at ensuring the sustainability of these essential ecosystems.

In Adiake Department, Comoë District in southeastern Côte d'Ivoire, where coastal lands are coveted by real estate developers, **SOS-Forêts** has undertaken restoration efforts, favouring reforestation. Thanks to the project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), **4,000 mangrove seedlings** have been prepared and are being planted, contributing to the preservation and regeneration of this vital ecosystem.

SOS-Forêts is also implementing agroforestry initiatives on the riparian lands near the Azagny National Park with the AfriEvolve project financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and **NABU**. Working with Site Support Groups (SSGs) in the Azagny area, **SOS-Forêts** has raised community awareness of the issues of climate change, and loss of mangroves due to the use of mangrove wood as firewood for households and the production of *attiéké* (grated fermented cassava) and salt, among others.

Through the **AfriEvolve** project, salt producers are using environmentally friendly **solar salt production** techniques. This method generated the weekly production of 50 to 100 kilos of salt during the short dry season, providing an average income varying between 100,000 and 200,000 CFA francs. Nearly 200 hectares of mangroves have been preserved, while providing capacity building to around 100 women in the locality of Azagny, thus constituting a lever for their empowerment.



Salt Production © SOS-Forêts

In **Kouibly** locality in western Côte d'Ivoire, SOS-Forêts has been carrying out restoration initiatives since 2022, through a TerraFund for AFR100 funded project. The project aims at planting **150,000 trees** by 2024 in cocoa farms to improve the cocoa yield while tackling deforestation.

To achieve this, SOS-Forêts set up five **Local Conservation Committees (LCCs)** to assist with the maintenance of nurseries and planted trees, watering of trees, marking of trees with warning tapes (red and white), haymaking, tree

planting, and public awareness, among others.

With the help of LCCs and farmers, a total of **82,679 trees** (7000 more than the original plan), were planted in **seven villages** in Kouibly including Baou, Koulayéré, Makaïbly, Pombly, Ouonséa, Ouyably-Gnondrou and Taobly in the Kouibly department in the Guémon region.

The trees combine perfectly with cocoa farming for a good yield. Further, two community forests are being developed, including five ha in Ouyably-Gnondrou and three ha in Pombly.

In addition, the communities grouped into LCCs were trained on the cultivation of edible mushrooms followed by the establishment of a mushroom production unit to improve livelihoods for local communities. The management (harvesting, drying and sale of mushrooms) of this mushroom farm is entrusted to women members of the LCCs. The strategy of empowering women in the development of this income-generating activity will further push the local community to take ownership and popularize the project. This is why the head of the village of Makaïbly, the Honorable Guei Eloi, during an interview stated: "This project, which involves women, will undoubtedly absorb the entire population (young people and men) of the village".

"This project, which involves women, will undoubtedly absorb the entire population (young people and men) of the village."

Honorable Guei Eloi, Head of Makaïby Village



SOS-Forêts, through the Local Conservation Committees, has created part-time jobs. The Makaïbly LCC, during the construction of the mushroom farm (masonry, carpentry, etc.), employed members of its community. LCC members pay community members to help them maintain the nurseries, to transport the trees by motorbikes and bicycles to the planting sites and to carry out the digging and staking. In addition,

volunteers from the community are helping in building the tree nurseries and planting and watering the seedlings. Already there is significant change in the landscape, with the trees first planted growing well, underlining the importance of community participation in restoration activities.

In **Burundi**, BirdLife Partner **Association Burundaise pour la protection de la Nature (ABN)** is involved in the **Kibira Peace Sanctuary and Nature Conservation project** funded by the United Nations Capital Development Fund, implemented by a consortium of five organizations in northwestern Burundi. The project seeks to restore degraded areas in the region, while improving people's livelihoods. In 2023, ABN restored over **20 ha** of Kibira with the African Cherry (*Prunus africana*) and demarcated 13km of the restored area. To protect riverbanks, 15km of common bamboo (*Bambusa vulgaris*) was planted, and a 20km watershed was developed to reduce soil erosion. To restore degraded landscapes in the region, 80,000 *Grevillea robusta* trees were distributed to local communities for planting on-farm.



In **Sierra Leone**, the **Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL)** continued implementing the EU funded PAPFor (support programme for the preservation of forest ecosystems in West Africa) project in its final year. Launched in 2020, it tackled the problem of forest degradation by working with rural communities to create awareness about the importance of protecting the forest while at the same time promoting alternative livelihood activities. A key element of the project was sustained sensitization activities through community engagement sessions across the chiefdom, encouraging local communities to desist from practicing unsustainable farming, poaching, and logging in the community forest.

The messages convinced the local authorities and led them into galvanizing support from all the communities that have ownership of the forest to work collaboratively with the PAPFor project.

Consequently, hunters and loggers have taken up alternative livelihoods including agriculture: inland valley swamp farming and mono-cropping with three-month crop varieties including rice, potatoes, garden eggs (African eggplant), cassava and pepper. Since the formal establishment of the Gaya-yei Community Forest in 2021 – one of the **six community forests** established by CSSL under PAPFOR – six communities have been enjoying uninterrupted water supply from running pipe-borne water sourced from the Gaya-yei Community Forest through a gravity system. In addition, a pure water company that has provided employment to nearly 50 young people was recently established in Joru, one of the six communities.

nine villages including Bird Hunters associations, school-based Wildlife Clubs, Beach Village Committees and District government who will benefit from capacity building and data.

Located in central **Malawi**, **Chia Lagoon** is the largest inland body of standing water in the country, covering about 17 square kilometres, and home to more than 70 bird species. However the lagoon has faced human pressures over the years, which have led to its degradation. In 2023, BirdLife Partner **Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM)** launched the *Community Approach to Waterbird Resources Management Project* in an event that attracted community members, government officials, environmentalists, traditional leaders and other key stakeholders including beach village committees, fisheries associations and other non-governmental organisations' representatives, with the Director of Fisheries, Dr. Hastings Zidane. as the guest of honour.



Dr. Hastings Zidane, Director of Fisheries giving his speech during the WESM project launch. © Temwanani Kalulu

The project, funded by UK Darwin Initiative through BirdLife International, seeks to manage and restore this vital lagoon ecosystem, reverse declines in vulnerable and declining bird species and improve livelihoods, by working with local communities. WESM will establish bird sanctuaries and community-based sustainable hunting groups to better manage waterbirds, restore habitats, and provide biodiversity data for the site's assessment as a Key Biodiversity Area. The project is expected to benefit waterbird species in and around the Chia Lagoon and other wildlife, 1,020 people indirectly, and **14,000 people** from



Training session w Agents of Change about biodiversity protection, endemic and introduced species © BirdLife

Programme Highlights

Forests Programme

BirdLife Africa's Forests programme seeks to protect forests in Key Biodiversity Areas, tackle drivers of deforestation in priority landscapes, create sustainable local economies that preserve forests and advancing forest restoration approaches that can deliver a greener future. In 2023, BirdLife Africa's Forests Programme focused on key areas of intervention as below.

The Guinean Forests of West Africa (GFWA) strategy was launched in August 2023 at the Gola Transboundary Technical Sub-Committee Meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The objective of the GFWA strategy is to efficiently manage and restore ten priority forest landscapes, strategically identified with BirdLife Partners, by 2032. The main goals include safeguarding and restoring critical biodiversity habitats, promoting sustainable practices, building a network of partners and stakeholders, and ensuring consistent long-term financing.

In **Guinea**, the l'Occitane Foundation funded project, *Ensuring a sustainable future for Mount Béro Classified Forest*, was launched in June 2023 with **Guinée Ecologie**, BirdLife Partner in the country. The project establishes the foundation for sustainable management of the rich but threatened biodiversity of Mount Béro classified forest. This is being achieved by filling knowledge gaps about its biodiversity, strengthening local capacity to improve natural resources management, sustaining adoption of environmentally friendly practices from regenerative agriculture to green value chains, and restoring the degraded forest to recover its full ecological functions for the benefits of people and nature.

In the **Greater Gola Landscape, in Sierra Leone** and Liberia, the PAPF or Gola Project, within four years of implementation, was able to establish several platforms for improvement in capacity to manage protected areas and community forests, mobilize and strengthen transboundary collaboration based on the **Peace Park** agreement, create and strengthen opportunities for sustainable financing, including carbon financing, and laid the foundation for improved land use planning to embrace connectivity between critical conservation sites and community forests. Key achievements include the following:

Support to **build capacity** included the establishment of governance and land use management for **10 Community Forests** with an area of 79,286 hectares, to enhance connectivity value in the transboundary landscape; building the capacity of civil society and government institutions by training **9 postgraduates in universities in Africa**; and support to management and governance of **5 Protected Areas** in Liberia and Sierra Leone, covering a total area of 297,000 hectares.

The use of **new technology** for conservation involved establishing a standard for effectiveness in managing protected areas through **IMET (Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool)** by training staff of relevant government institutions, protected area staff and civil society groups at **5 Protected Areas**; pioneering OECM (Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures) IMET as a global first kit, and setting pace for OECM IMET in West Africa in two community forests – Gaura and Koya Chiefdom in Sierra Leone; and establishing a standard for biomonitoring using **SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time Bound)** and Camera Trap technologies across the Greater Gola Landscape.

Efforts to consolidate the **transboundary collaboration** between **Liberia and Sierra Leone**, based on the implementation of the Peace Park agreement between the two countries, included support to the preparation and implementation of management plans and co-management plans for improving the management of the Greater Gola Landscape. **Land use plans** were developed for 5 Community Forests (three in Liberia and two in Sierra Leone) and for 4 Protected Areas – **Kambui, Gola Rainforest National Park, Gola Forest National Park (co-management only)** and **Tiwai (co-management implementation only)**.

Outreach and awareness raising involved pioneering and mobilizing support for ecotourism development at the **Elephant Falls** Ecotourism site in **Liberia**; support to **Tiwai Island Sanctuary** for a solar power water system for the research and visitor station in Tiwai Island, **Sierra Leone**; and establishing **6 Nature Clubs** with 120 members in schools across Sierra Leone and Liberia, including preparation and validation of **a Teachers Manual for School Nature Clubs**.

Funding for conservation is always a critical issue. This was addressed by developing a 10-Year Action Plan for **Sustainable Financing** for forest conservation and rural development in the Greater Gola Landscape; and support for the trial of **sustainable timber management** as part of land use planning in one community forest in Liberia as a test for

sustainable forest management.

In the framework of the **Guinean Forests Integrated Programme (GFIP)**, an innovative approach to forest management in West Africa which seeks to combat forest loss through a regional approach, the BirdLife Secretariat has been identified as the Executing Agency of the **Regional Coordination and Learning Project**. The project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through Conservation International-GEF agency. BirdLife and partners held a Regional Design and Validation Workshop in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in October 2023. BirdLife is further supporting the Project Preparation Grant for Child Projects in Guinea and advocated for Partners' roles and responsibilities in Child Projects in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

During the year BirdLife revived the **West Africa Forest Working Group** which involves seven Partners working on forest issues. The Working Group provides a platform for Partners to encourage and inspire each other and build capacity through sharing information, knowledge, experience, lessons learnt, approaches, innovative tools and technology for conservation, sharing and promoting best or good practices and success stories in forest conservation work, and agreeing on forest priorities and opportunities in the GFWA. In September 2023, the group held a meeting where partners provided updates on ongoing conservation initiatives in their regions, highlighted successes, challenges, and lessons learned, explored collaborative opportunities within the group and insights on funding sources for conservation projects and capacity building opportunities.

São Tomé and Príncipe

In São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) archipelago, BirdLife International has been actively working with local state partners, the private sector, civil society, and communities for over 10 years to protect the archipelago's rich biodiversity which includes unique bird species. The STP programme is based on eight main objectives described in the BirdLife São Tomé and Príncipe's Strategic Plan for 2021-2030, translating into actions ranging from a wide scale landscape perspective to local level implementation on both islands, through a portfolio of projects, in particular the EU funded Landscape Project which focuses on **STP's landscape management**; the UNDP-GEF funded Biodiversity Project, directed towards improving **biodiversity conservation**, and the Darwin Initiative DEFRA funded project to help **regulate hunting in STP**.

The **Sustainable Hunting** project, which began in 2022, is implemented in collaboration with other partners, including the Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity, the Responsible and Sustainable Tourism Platform (PTRS), the Centre for Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Changes (CE3C) and Biopolis-Cibio. It aims to support the necessary social and institutional change to help conserve STP's biodiversity, while promoting sustainable livelihoods for hunters.



STP's hunting law contains a number of loopholes, especially regarding management of hunting seasons and species, and if implemented as it is now, it can have negative impacts on endemic species. In addition, there is a lack of understanding among hunters and the public about the dual conservation issues of preserving endemic birds and managing introduced mammals. From November 2022 through end 2023, 18 theoretical and practical training and awareness-raising sessions were held for national institutions, civil society organizations, governmental agencies and representatives of the private sector, and most importantly, for local hunters and consumers of hunting products.

A study was conducted to better understand which alternative activities would be of interest to the hunters. Ten awareness-raising sessions were held, as part of a massive awareness campaign targeting the public on the importance of STP's biodiversity. A total of 249 hunters and consumers participated in the campaign, which included an interactive theatre piece performed in seven hunter-based communities, reaching 475 people; and a mini-documentary showcasing the unique biodiversity of STP and how hunting can help regulate it. As a result, a group of 19 former hunters known as **"Hunting Protectors"** was formed to champion biodiversity conservation. Besides actively participating in the project's activities, they proved to be excellent mobilisers of community engagement. Through this initiative, other hunters became more aware of their role in regulating biodiversity, and more favourable to develop alternative, more sustainable activities such as farming or providing Eco-guide services to tourists or researchers.

Based on the interests of the hunters, a mentorship programme will be developed in 2024 to help evaluate, in a participatory manner, viable alternatives for economic income generation that justify abandoning the hunting of endemic species. It will include capacity building on financial resource management, small nature-based enterprises, business planning, marketing and communication. In 2024, the outcomes of the project will be presented in a stakeholders'

round table to demonstrate the existing gaps on the current hunting law, and how it can be revised to improve conservation of the endemic species of STP.

"Hunters can act as real regulators. Their co-operation with the Directorate of Forests and Biodiversity, for example, could have an extraordinary impact on the conservation of biodiversity, especially fauna. And we mustn't let the lack of access to information jeopardise this potential."

Bárbara Campos, Programme Manager at BirdLife International in STP and Project Manager



Tsitongambarika, Madagascar

The Forests Programme has been working to support Tsitongambarika Protected Area, in southeast Madagascar, for many years. A significant increase in investment and effort to conserve this highly biodiverse landscape has been underway since 2020, funded through the Hempel Foundation and Rio Tinto partnership, including increased forest protection effort, undertaking restoration, scaling-up community livelihood support and enabling the strengthening of the community-based management and governance structure. In 2023, significant progress included two new community management transfers, strengthening of development learning centres, and increased forest patrols. For the REDD+ project, the Government was engaged to secure the authorisation, which is still in progress. A number of project assessments were undertaken to inform project design. Capacity strengthening for Asity Madagascar, the BirdLife Partner, and significant scale-up in financing is planned in 2024-2029.

Forest Impact Accelerator

Supported by the Forest Impact Accelerator, **BirdWatch Zambia** is conducting early-stage scoping and feasibility for several Sustainable Forestry Initiatives (SFIs) in the Machile-Simungoma landscape.

In collaboration with local communities, the aim is to identify options to stop illegal logging, increase sustainability of forest and non-forest products, as well as enable climate change adaptation.

IBA Programme

In 2023, a major highlight of the Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) programme was the identification and confirmation of **18 new IBAs** across the continent. **Fifteen IBAs** were identified in **Cabo Verde**, with the work led by **Biosfera**, BirdLife Partner in Cabo Verde.

In **Algeria**, the **55 ha** Boussedra Marsh, located in Annaba Province in northeast Algeria and home to more than 20 nesting populations of water birds, was confirmed as an IBA. Five of the species found in the marsh are classified as globally threatened including the White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*), Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*), Marbled Teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*), and the Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*). Up to 960 White-headed Ducks were recorded in February 2018, which is **7-12% of the total world population**.

In **Ethiopia**, the **Mille-Serdo Wildlife Reserve North**, located in the country's north-eastern region of Afar, was designated as an IBA and is part of a critical wintering ground for the Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) in Ethiopia, with up to 2000 birds congregating in the area annually. The IBA also hosts other globally threatened species including the Hooded Vulture (*Necrosyrtes monachus*), Rüppell's Vulture (*Cyps rueppelli*) and White-backed Vulture (*Cyps africanus*).

In **Tanzania**, the **Makao Wildlife Management Area (WMA)**, located in north-central Tanzania, in Meatu District, Simiyu Region, is now an IBA. Makao WMA, established in 2007, is a biodiversity-rich area and home to mammals such as lions, leopards, elephants, roan antelopes and buffalos, among others. It serves as an important ecological linkage between Maswa Game Reserve, Ngorongoro Conservation Area, and Serengeti National Park.

IBAs also qualify as **Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs)**. During the year, a number of **KBA National Coordination Groups (NCGs)** were established in partner countries; in Madagascar an NCG was formed while in Algeria the process of establishing one is ongoing. **KBA Trainings** were carried out in the Congo Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Gabon under the Bezos Earth Fund funded KBA project.

Since May 2023, efforts have been put in place to provide scientific and technical support to BirdLife partners in Africa on updating and documenting sites and species against the IBA criteria and KBA standards through online training. Eight partners including the **Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL)**, **Nature Mauritania**, **Nature Tanzania**, **Association Burundaise pour la protection de la Nature (ABN)**, **Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE)**, **Association Les Amis des Oiseaux (AAO) (BirdLife in Tunisia)**, **GREPOM (BirdLife in Morocco)**, and **BirdLife Zimbabwe** have undergone training in data capture using a global standardized monitoring form, which captures

information on the status, pressures, and responses at the IBAs/KBAs.

More partners including **NatureUganda**, **Nature Tanzania**, **Birdwatch Zambia** and **Asity Madagascar** are scheduled to undergo training in 2024. Further, partners have received training on updating the above collected information into the World Bird/Biodiversity Database (WBDB), as well as carrying out analysis of this data.

Lastly, 909 globally threatened taxa (793 species, 74 subspecies, 42 varieties) of animals and plants in the **Eastern Arc Mountains and Coastal Forests of Kenya and Tanzania (EACF Region)** and the sites in which they occur, based upon a review of the 2015 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, were uploaded and updated into the World Bird Database. The review was based on the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) exhaustive surveys of the EACF region including its natural resources, its threatened species, and their protection status.



© Nature Rwanda

Systems

Under the Systems Pillar, the BirdLife Partnership in Africa is working to address the systemic drivers of the biodiversity loss and climate change crises, and thus promote a nature positive and carbon neutral world.



Tree planting activities © Nature Rwanda

Partner Highlights

In **Ethiopia**, the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS) has been instrumental in improving the status of migratory birds, key habitats, and sites along the Red Sea-Rift Valley Flyway. A major threat faced by these birds is the increasing energy developments along the Flyway, which threaten birds and biodiversity. Like many countries in Africa, Ethiopia is faced with an energy access deficit, characterized by low electrification levels, dependency on traditional energy sources, and low standards of energy efficiency. The high demand for energy in the country has led to increasing focus on renewable energy sources, with the concern that development of energy infrastructures pose the risk of negatively impacting biodiversity, particularly migratory bird species.

With support from the **Migratory Soaring Birds (MSB) Project**, EWNHS signed an MoU in November 2020 with the energy companies and other relevant stakeholders, including Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP), Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU) and the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA). EWNHS then embarked on intensive awareness enhancing endeavours, alongside of which field assessments were carried out and dangerous infrastructure (power lines and poles) screened for retrofitting action in **Oromia** and **Afar Regional States**, in Central and Eastern Regions of Ethiopia. Dangerous, killer energy infrastructure was identified in various areas including **Koka, Metahara, Logia, and Samara**. Consequently, a total of 182 faulty poles (119 wooden, 59 concrete and 4 metal) were successfully retrofitted in 2023.



The MoU signed with stakeholders is aimed at fostering harmony between energy infrastructural development and the conservation of Migratory Soaring Birds and other vulnerable birds in Ethiopia.

“This collaboration is already proving to be an inspirational first step towards development of nature-safe energy in the country”

Mengistu Wondafrash, Executive Director of EWNHS

An **Ethiopian Energy Working Group** has been established with EWCA as the convener. The overarching objective of the Working Group is to enhance awareness and facilitate the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the process of reconciling energy sector developments with nature.

As part of the implementation of the AfriEvolve project, whose main objective is to strengthen the organisational capacities of green NGOs in Africa, **NATURAMA** from **Burkina Faso**, **SOS-Forêts** from **Côte d’Ivoire** and **Ghana Wildlife Society** from Ghana signed a **tripartite collaboration protocol** in 2023 in which the three BirdLife member organisations in West Africa undertake to promote consultation and the development of joint initiatives in favour of the PoCoMo (Po, Nazinga and Sisili (PoNaSi) / Comoé / Mole complex.

In **Kenya**, **Nature Kenya** conducted a survey in 2023 to ascertain impacts of **bird electrocutions and collisions with power lines** around Lake Elmenteita KBA, and the report was shared with relevant stakeholders. Survey data contributed to the Avian Sensitivity Tool for Energy Planning (AVISTEP).

To promote **Nature-based Solutions (Nbs)** and Sustainable Production and Supply Chains, Nature Kenya catalysed the development of the Tana River County Trade and Investment Policy to promote green investment at the Tana River Delta; and helped to establish 16 co-operative societies in Tana and Yala deltas to promote investment in green value chains. On

the climate front, 5,887 households were engaged on climate change resilience and adaptation, supported by DOF and the GEF. To build capacity, Nature Kenya facilitated training of 36 County Agricultural Extension Officers and 500 farmers in Tana River, Taita Taveta and Kilifi counties on climate-smart agriculture.

Located in **western Rwanda**, Butare and Bweyeye sectors of Rusizi District are part of the Lake Kivu and Rusizi River basin bordering **Nyungwe National Park**, fringed by high mountains in Rwanda and Burundi. The region, with a population of over 43,590 people, has been negatively impacted by years of unsustainable land use on steep slopes, leading to serious soil erosion, sedimentation of rivers, and reduced agricultural productivity – challenges that are exacerbated by climate change.

Since 2022, Nature Rwanda and BirdLife International have been carrying out a six-year **TerraFund for AFR100** funded project to enhance communities’ capacity for climate resilience and restore degraded agricultural land in the area. The project aims at restoring 500 ha, through planting 300,000 trees, including 15,000 fruit trees and 285,000 agroforestry and fodder trees. As of December 2023, the project had successfully planted **215,000 trees** of 8 different species, created jobs for 392 community members, and mobilized **2,417 households** for tree planting and maintenance, emphasizing the importance of trees on farms.



The project encountered challenges during the initial tree planting season, including limited community awareness about the importance of indigenous trees and unpredictable weather patterns. Acknowledging these obstacles, the **“Community Tree Stewards”** played a vital role in community mobilization and tree monitoring. Adaptive strategies are being employed to overcome setbacks and ensure project success. As the project advances, strategic planning, adaptability, and continued community engagement are deemed crucial for ensuring long-term ecological resilience and well-being of communities in the project area.

“The skills I gained in the project, from nurturing seedlings to managing resources, proved invaluable in my journey. The project not only gave me a sense of purpose but also ignited a passion for balancing environmental consciousness with economic sustainability”.

Marie Claire Iradukunda, a Community Tree Steward

Since 2019, a sustainable fishing project in **Cabo Verde** led by various partners including BirdLife’s partner in the country **Biosfera**, has made significant progress in engaging fishing communities and restaurants. In 2023, the project held training workshops for fishermen to deepen knowledge of sustainable fishing in these communities. The **Guardians of the Sea (GoS) Program** was presented to fishing communities in various islands, including three fishing communities in São Vicente, four fishing communities in São Nicolau, and five 5 fishing communities in Santo Antão. Following the presentation, **29 fishers** in São Vicente island joined the Guardians of the Sea program, and four workshops were held on various topics including seabird and sea turtle bycatch, waste and sea pollution management, among others, targeting the 29 fishers.



A fisherman at sea © Biosfera

The Biosfera team has started a labelling process for the restaurant partners of the project. **Five restaurants** that subscribed at the beginning of the project have been recruited and will work together with the sustainable fishing project, selling the labelled fishing products and participating in the labelling process, complying with the procedure manual. Communication tools have been installed in the fish market to sensitize the final consumer about minimum landing size. In addition, the project team had a meeting with the *Instituto de Gestão da Qualidade e da Propriedade intelectual* (Institute of Quality and Intellectual Property Management) on the production and development of sustainable fishing legal certification for the fishing product.

Nature Seychelles, through the **Tech4Nature** project supported by Huawei and IUCN, have implemented tech-driven activities to enhance conservation efforts in the **Seychelles**. Two pioneering off-the shelf devices named NEST and DREAM, were developed with a local tech company, OceanLabs Seychelles (the 2023 winners of the Seychelles Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) most Creative Establishment in the “Environment and Innovation” category).

The **NEST** (Nest Electronic Surveillance of Turtles) device monitors and transmits turtle nest environmental data including temperature, humidity, oxygen, and movement in real time, and is being using during the 2023-24 Hawksbill turtle nesting season on Cousin Island Special Reserve. The Diver Reef Evaluation Assisted Monitoring (**DREAM**) is a self-contained, fully automated sensor platform for the monitoring of sea water parameters that is being used by the Reef Rescuers in the coral reef restoration project.



One of the challenges facing turtles is beach erosion © Nature Seychelles

The project also improved internet connectivity on Cousin Island through a microwave datalink with Praslin Island. This is enhancing data exchange between the reserve and Nature Seychelles centres on Mahe and Praslin. This will also speed up the delivery of media aimed at marketing Cousin for ecotourism, a critical financing mechanism for the island. Additionally, a green energy photovoltaic (PV) solar power system now powers the nature reserve.

“We wanted to see if a home-grown Seychellois tech company could, while understanding our needs, develop such a non-invasive device using off-the-shelf parts. And secondly if the prototype they developed could successfully collect data on these parameters. OceanLabs Seychelles succeeded in doing both, albeit with a number of challenges.”

Dr Nirmal Shah, Nature Seychelles’ Chief Executive Officer

In **Morocco**, BirdLife Partner **GREPOM** is working with **SPEA** on information exchange and exploring opportunities to build the capacity of GREPOM to address bird mortalities as a result of powerlines.

As part of the implementation of the “People Partner with Nature for Sustainable Living” (PPN III) programme in **Uganda**, **NatureUganda** enhanced the sustainability and climate change resilience of local community land-use and livelihoods through Climate Smart technologies including Energy Saving Stoves, Climate Smart Agriculture practices, and Climate Smart Schools.



Patience Kyosimiire a resident of Buzenga parish using her Energy Saving Stove © NatureUganda

NatureUganda supported communities in the Katsyoha Kitomi Central Forest Reserve in western Uganda with improved cook stoves. As of December 2023, 320 Rocket Lorena stoves were constructed and **200 movable stoves** provided to the communities. The use of the Energy Saving Stoves is beginning to achieve positive impacts by reducing the number of times the communities go to the forest for firewood collection. One member of the community has reported a 50% reduction in the amount of firewood used per week. Other benefits reported included less smoky kitchens and more time to focus on other activities as opposed to looking for firewood. Communities have therefore requested for more support with stoves and NatureUganda has already secured 250 more stoves to provide to them.

In terms of **Climate Smart Agriculture**, NatureUganda optimized sustainable banana harvest yields targeting **2200 households**, and so far, 1673 farmers (894 women and 779 men) have been identified and engaged. The farmers were trained on good agricultural practices (GAPs) such as banana plant spacing, de-suckering, pruning, integration with multipurpose trees (especially *Calliandra*), manure application, disease management and soil and water conservation (SWC).

In terms of **Climate Smart Schools**, NatureUganda engaged two schools, Buzenga primary school and Butoha primary school, into piloting Climate Smart activities which include nursery beds, rainwater harvesting and energy saving stoves. Each of the pilot Climate Smart Demonstration Schools established a nursery bed, and 12,000 *Calliandra* seedlings were raised and distributed through pupils to neighbouring community members adjacent to the schools. The schools were supported to construct and use energy saving stoves, thus demonstrating reduced biomass energy use to the neighbouring communities. Rainwater harvesting infrastructure was set up in the schools, which has gone a long way in reducing soil erosion as a result of runoff, with this water being used by communities adjacent to the schools.



Nature Seychelles is enhancing community involvement in natural areas management through the LEAP Project
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Society

Across Africa, the BirdLife Partnership is engaging, influencing, and mobilising people to support conservation and contribute to a just, equitable, rights-based society where nature is fundamental to our wellbeing.



Educational talk at the BWZ conservation hut at Lusaka National Park © BirdWatchZambia

Partner Highlights

The '**Mogaka wa Tikologo**' – Setswana for 'Environmental Champion' – award was established by **BirdLife Botswana** under its Environmental Education Portfolio in recognition of the organisation's long serving patron, the late **Mrs Doreen McColaugh**, who made an immense contribution to environmental education in Botswana. This award was established to recognise school going kids all over the country who are contributing to the protection and conservation of the natural environment through their original initiatives.



Award winner with the US Ambassador to Botswana
© BirdLife Botswana

Since its inception, the award has grown to have over 70 school entrants by its second edition. The award ceremony's second edition was held in Mokolodi, Gaborone, in December 2023, with winners recognised with awards according to age categories. The award ceremony was graced by Ambassador Howard Van Vranken of the United States of America to the Republic of Botswana.

BirdWatch Zambia (BWZ) continued with efforts to ensure young children and community members participate in conservation activities. In line with the 2023 environmental education and awareness theme **"Beat Plastic Pollution and Deforestation,"** BWZ conducted activities with children in schools in and around Chisamba, Kafue Flats, Mutulanga and Lower Zambezi KBAs. The activities included classroom sessions, plastic picking, and tree planting as a way of demonstrating how to make the environment bird-friendly, as well as participate in the fight against climate change.

BWZ also conducted bird walks with the children, as BWZ believes that the best way to make children appreciate nature is by allowing them to interact with it and learn from it. In 2023, **25 schools** were engaged, culminating in a total of **1,662 students** actively participating in bird conservation activities, with students sharing their experience through drawings, paintings and articles which the organization publishes in its termly school newsletter to encourage other learners to share their experiences and learn from one another.



Bird watching © BirdWatch Zambia

Another highlight of the year was the opening of the **BWZ education centre** at Lusaka National Park. In 2022, one of BWZ's partners, Game Rangers International (GRI), opened a unique and immersive **Wildlife Discovery Centre (WDC)** at Lusaka National Park. The centre provides free conservation education to children and doubles up as a renowned elephant nursery. With support from the Elephant Charge, a local Zambian NGO, BWZ opened an education centre in a hut at the WDC in 2023, where various programs run by the organization are displayed, raising awareness of bird and habitat conservation in Zambia to tourists and young children

visiting the park. The education centre, which features interactive displays and exhibits to highlight conservation issues, is open to local and international visitors and has proven to be a very important resource in BWZ's education and awareness activities. The organization is planning more exciting activities from 2024 going forward.

In **Morocco, GREPOM** is supporting local populations to improve their livelihoods as part of the Contribution to the conservation of the avian biodiversity and support of the local population for the development of ecotourism in the lagoon of Bou-Areg project in the **Marchica Lagoon** and the **Soussa Massa National Parc**. GREPOM has set up several tourist circuits in both sites to promote ecotourism in the region while bringing together tourism professionals. The project is improving the **livelihoods of local communities** particularly in Marchica, through transition from artisanal fishing to birdwatching-based ecotourism practices, thus generating income for local fishermen. Further, GREPOM and partners have carried out trainings for the fishermen and donation of equipment for bird observation and rescue, as part of promoting ecotourism in the area.



Workshop for tourism operators, ecoguides and civil society at the Oued Massa Ramsar site © GREPOM

The **Mole National Park** is the largest national park in **Ghana**, and an important stopover and wintering site for several migratory bird species. As part of the **Ghana Wildlife Society's (GWS)** effort to conserve species, protect habitat for species and support the livelihoods of communities in the Mole landscape, the Society partnered with **NABU** under the **AfriEvolve** project to construct and donate a solar-powered drip irrigation system for the **Mognori community** located in the West Gonja Municipality of the Savannah region that fringes the Mole National Park.

This system also serves as a training hub for climate-smart agriculture. So far, over 200 **Community Resources Management Area (CREMA)** members within the Mole landscape have received training on climate-smart agriculture technologies to empower them and promote sustainable agriculture that helps in the conservation of habitat for birds and other wildlife. The 200 trained women are now able to

cultivate a variety of vegetables, including tomatoes, okra, and garden eggs (African eggplant), even during the dry season, for home consumption and sale, thus improving livelihoods while reducing dependence on the natural resources within the landscape.



The Climate-smart Agriculture training hub at Mognori © Joseph Afrifa GWS

In 2023, **Nature Kenya** continued to work at influencing policies, legislation and Institutional Frameworks for **ecosystem resilience**. During the year, Nature Kenya made 67 submissions to influence development policies at county and national levels. Nature Kenya submitted 28 reviews of national policies, regulations and plans to the National Assembly, the Senate, ministries and government departments, including the Natural Resources Benefit Sharing Bill 2022, the Wildlife Conservation and Management Bill 2022 and the Climate Change (Amendment) Bill 2023.

Nature Kenya is also developing grassroots networks, with **30 Site Support Groups (SSGs)** in 25 KBA sites helped to deliver site-based conservation actions. Twenty-two SSGs submitted letters to National and County governments, and memoranda to influence County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) in 20 counties. The SSG network has been instrumental in linking Nature Kenya conservation work with local communities. Expansion of the SSG network in Kenya progressed with the establishment of a new SSG for Chyulu Hills forest KBA. In 2023, 21 SSGs in 20 KBAs were engaged in policy and advocacy work, environmental education and awareness creation, reaching out to over 52,000 people.

In **Madagascar**, one of the approaches for biodiversity management is the **“Management Transfer”**, which is a contract between Government and the local community called **COBA** that allows local communities to manage natural resources surrounding them. In the **Tsitongambarika Protected Area**, 12 management transfer renewals were done in 2023, while around 100 households continue to be supported by Asity Madagascar with alternative livelihood projects including rice production, honey production and vegetable farming.

In **Burkina Faso**, BirdLife Partner **NATURAMA** continued implementing a project to improve biodiversity conservation, food and nutrition security in the country’s Centre-Sud Region in Bazega Province. The project, undertaken with the German NGO **Welthungerhilfe**, is financed by **BMZ (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)**, and seeks to support six women’s co-operatives in market garden production. Currently, the project involves about 90 women and focusses on developing market gardening areas, training women, providing seeds, advising and monitoring. Through the project, a woman’s average annual income has risen from 44,207 CFA francs (72 USD) to 75,827 CFA francs (124 USD).



Harvesting onions in a market garden in the commune of Doulougou © NATURAMA

In **Tanzania**, spice farming communities at Amani Nature Forest Reserve in the East Usambara Mountains continued benefitting from Climate Smart agricultural practices under the AfriEvolve project with **Nature Tanzania**. Since 2021, spice farming communities in Shebomeza, Mbomole and Msasa-IBC villages have been trained on improving their farming activities – processing, branding, and marketing, mainly at farm level – to increase the value chain of spice products. As of December 2023, more than 200 spice farmers and entrepreneurs had been trained and supported to improve their business.

A successful linkage of conservation and community economic development is through scaling and replicating the **Community Revolving Fund (CRF)** model. In 2023, a total of Tsh.46,869,120 (17,800 USD) was invested in the CRF including Tsh.36,769,120 (13,900 USD) at Amani in Tanga region, and Tsh.10,100,000 (3900 USD) at Makao in Simiyu region) with support from BMZ and NABU of Germany and Darwin Initiative of UK. At Amani Nature Forest Reserve, **93 spice farmers** and entrepreneurs were awarded soft loans at 6% interest, with repayment deadline in 9 months, and at Makao Wildlife Management Area, **47 entrepreneurs** (68% women) were awarded soft loans at 5% interest, with repayment deadline in nine months.



The awarded loans had multiplier impact to more than **20,000 members of the communities** at household level. While improving livelihoods, the projects ensured that the conservation elements are integrated in the loan recipient's business plan; for instance, at Amani, all loan beneficiaries were required to practice agroforestry in their farmlands as one way of supporting biodiversity survival. In both areas, the CRF is managed by a CRF Committee, which is constituted of representative from local village governments, district councils, local community-based organisations, and Nature Tanzania.

The CRF system has been designed in a way that it is owned by the communities, is sustainable, transparent, and integrates biodiversity conservation components. In support of the Community Revolving Fund, **Nature Tanzania** deposited Tsh.4,900,000 as contribution to scaling up the ongoing CRF at **Lake Natron Ramsar Site** and Tsh.13,900,000 was deposited to the CRF account by **Engaresero Eramatare Community Development Initiative (EECDI)** for the same purpose.

In Seychelles, **Nature Seychelles** pioneered co-management in Seychelles through the **Locally Empowered Area Protection (LEAP)** project in 2023. A co-management committee for the Baie Ternay and Port Launay Marine National Parks has been established, involving local stakeholders in the management process. The LEAP project, funded by the German International Climate Initiative (IKI), supported by IUCN, and implemented in collaboration with the Seychelles Parks and Gardens Authority, emphasizes community engagement. Nature Seychelles is further enhancing community involvement through the **Leap Junior Clubs** in local schools, public and community meetings and activities, conservation and livelihoods training, and setting up livelihood kiosks in collaboration with two government ministries.

As part of implementation of the People Partner with Nature for Sustainable Living (PPN III) programme in Uganda, funded

through **DOF** (BirdLife partner in Denmark), **NatureUganda** established two site-wide and sustainable enterprises through apiary (beekeeping) and fruit wine production from bananas. A **market value chain assessment** study had been conducted for the two selected enterprises, which deemed them viable options. Four wine making groups have been established, comprising of a total of 84 active members (25 men and 59 women). In 2023, overall wine production was 2,650 litres, of which 800 litres were sold fetching Ugsh4,000,000 (\$1052).

Beekeeping has been a traditional activity in the **Katsyoha Kitomi landscape**. To enhance production of honey, NatureUganda profiled a total of 125 apiary farmers (91 men and 34 women) and provided them with training in the enterprise, including value addition techniques; and 400 Kenya Top Bar (KTB) standard quality beehives were provided to the beekeeping groups. In total, the beekeepers have 4,538 beehives of which 2,985 are colonized by bees and 1,553 were set in the wild where they can easily attract bee colonization. In September 2023, 3,910 kg of honey were harvested, fetching the groups Ugsh39,100,000 (\$10,235). This is significant income to the beekeeping households. One group has started value addition to the bee products by making wax candles and extraction of propolis, courtesy of the training offered to them by **NatureUganda** through a service provider called House of Bees.



In **Senegal**, BirdLife Partner **Nature-Communautés-Développement (NCD)** was instrumental in the establishment of a **Master's in Ornithology Conservation Development (MOCD)** course at the Université Gaston Berger (UGB) in Saint-Louis, Senegal, after 10 years of waiting. The establishment of the course was made possible with the support of BirdLife international, **VBN**, **RSPB**, and the Leventis Foundation, which has been supporting the same **A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI)** Master's programme in Jos, Nigeria, for several years.

At the beginning of 2023, the Master's programme, which is organised into three streams (**ornithology, management, and development**) and taught mainly in French, welcomed 22 students, including 5 foreign students, from Mauritania (3), Democratic Republic of Congo (1) and Gabon (1), and 4 professionals from the National Parks Department (DPN) and the Community Protected Marine Areas Department (DAMCP). All the students in this first cohort received a scholarship, distributed as follows: seven from **VBN**; nine from the Leventis Foundation and the **RSPB**; and six from NCD.



A beneficiary of the masters programme © NCD

In **Nigeria**, the **Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF)** and **NABU** launched a three-year forest management and livelihood improvement project in Cross River State in 2023. The project is implemented within the buffer region of the Cross River National Park – part of the Guinean Forests of West Africa – has the support of Cross River Forestry Commission, Cross River National Park, and CBOs as key working stakeholders in the region. To enhance livelihood and household income, **2,240 farmers** will benefit from provision of improved crop varieties like cocoa, cassava, plantain, and spices as well as receive training on modern and sustainable agricultural practices that minimize land expansion and forest degradation.

To bridge the poor job opportunities and employment gap in the communities, the project is working with 30 youths per 8 beneficiary communities to build their capacity through Tree Grow and Trade on tree nursery establishment, and connect them to markets, particularly through the growing interest in forest restoration brought about by the newly passed climate change act mandating corporate organizations to offset carbon emissions. Women who are collectors of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) will also be trained and supported with a micro-credit financial scheme, and provided with start-up kits to increase their income. This improved livelihood support will be a mutually beneficial intervention for the forest, the communities and the state in general.

In **Liberia**, BirdLife Partner **Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL)** reached out to 622 students from 15 schools as part of environmental education awareness through the Liberia Nature Talk Program, a quarterly biodiversity conservation awareness platform. Some of the themes covered by the Nature Talks included Knowing the Status of Protected Animals Species in Liberia, Insight on Wetlands and Conservation in Liberia.

At **COP28** of the United Nations Climate Change conference, SCNL, in partnership with the **Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia (EPA)** and the Forestry Development Authority (FDA), hosted a high-level side event on December 8, 2023. The event titled “Leveraging Conservation for Climate Action: Exploring the Benefits and Synergies” shed light on the multifaceted benefits of conservation efforts in mitigating climate change and fostering sustainable development. The side event served as a platform for fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange, emphasizing the imperative of integrating conservation efforts into climate action agendas.

In **Sierra Leone**, BirdLife Partner **Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL)** has been working with the Big Water Community in the Western Area Peninsula in western Sierra Leone for several years, supporting the community in the sustainable use of the forest close to the community. Many of the community members depend on selling firewood and making charcoal to make a living.

CSSL is engaging women's groups, youth groups and other members of the community to develop alternative livelihoods. Currently, 136 people are benefiting from the alternative livelihoods project. As part of CSSL's input six pigs, 10 goats and 50 local breed chickens were supplied by CSSL as start up, in addition to six bags of groundnut seeds which were planted on a nine-acre piece of land at the Big Water Community.



Pigs supplied to the Big Water Community by CSSL © CSSL



© NCD

Programme Highlights

Partnerships, Communities and Capacity Development (PCCD) Programme

In 2023, we welcomed a new partner in East Africa, **Nature Rwanda**, and the elevation of **SOS-Forêts of Côte d'Ivoire** in West Africa from affiliate to full partner status. As a result, our partnership now boasts **27 Partners in Africa**, with potential partners in Cameroon, Namibia and Comoros engaged.

PCCD's engagements in Africa encompassed delivery of academic training in bird conservation to nine MSc students at **A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI)** in Nigeria, capacity assessment and hands-on capacity development (e.g., GIS training) for six partners in West Africa with the HATCH III (Hatch Institutional Capacity Development) project, updating the strategic plans of two partners (BirdWatch Zambia and SOS-Forêts in Côte d'Ivoire), and dealt with ongoing governance and staffing concerns within Nature Mauritania, Naturama in Burkina Faso and Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society (EWNHS). We also engaged with local communities in understanding the REDD+ project in Tsitongambarika in Madagascar. The before and after training test results showed that the local community understanding of climate change and carbon credits had increased by 50%.

Online and in-person regional hub meetings were organized to discuss transboundary collaboration and peer to peer exchange and learning, one of the objectives of BirdLife International during the current strategy.

The North African hub is focusing on the Sahara Desert's oasis conservation, the West African and East African partners on forest, savanna, and river and lake watersheds, the Southern African Partners on the **KAZA (Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area)** and the Indian Ocean Partners on capacity development and coastal and marine ecosystem conservation.

As part of the third phase of the Hatch Institutional Capacity Development project, funded by Hans Wilsdorf Foundation, A **Geographic Information System (GIS)** training took place in Dakar in October 2023, with participation from BirdLife Partners **Biosfera** of Cabo Verde, **Nature-Communautés-Développement (NCD)** of Senegal, **Nature Mauritanie**, and **BirdLife Africa staff**. The need for more GIS skills was identified by partners as a priority, and will contribute to enhance their overall capacity, for instance in monitoring important conservation sites (KBAs, IBAs). The training was facilitated by two officers of the Department of National Parks in Senegal, and sought to support Partners' scientific work in mapping and data analysis,



RSPB was among sponsors of the Regional Partnership meeting held in the Eastern Highlands, Zimbabwe. The meeting brought together BirdLife Partners including **BirdLife South Africa, BirdLife Botswana, BirdLife Zimbabwe, BirdWatch Zambia, Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM)**, as well the **Namibian Nature Foundation**. The main outcome of the 4-day meeting is a revised and strengthened Regional Workplan focusing on three key work areas (Species, KBAs/**Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)** and Policy & Advocacy) common to partners in the region, including transboundary initiatives

Support from BirdLife Partners in other countries was instrumental to success. **VBN** (BirdLife in the Netherlands) supported several BirdLife partners in Africa including **GREPOM, Nature Mauritanie, NATURAMA, Association "Les Amis des Oiseaux" (AAO) and BirdLife Zimbabwe**. In addition, VBN, in collaboration with NABU and the BirdLife Secretariat, facilitated a strategy development workshop for **SOS- Forêts** in Cote d'Ivoire, and a meeting for North Africa Partners including **GREPOM, AAO, Nature Mauritania** and **NCE** to strengthen collaboration among themselves.

2023 Policy engagement for biodiversity and climate

Influencing policy is a key cog in the global effort to move the needle to address the biodiversity and climate crises. The Africa Partnership and Secretariat continued to plug into various policy processes to ensure biodiversity is put at the heart of development processes.

In 2023, the Secretariat developed and administered a questionnaire to assess partner priorities for engaging in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The survey checked the progress partner countries are making in the review of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). The results show that a majority of partners are playing a key role in the process of NBSAP review in their countries, which for the most part are at the initial stages. Most partners prioritise goals and targets that deal with protection of IBAs/KBAs and species conservation. Partners support needs include capacity building, resource mobilization and communication and advocacy.

Safeguarding of sites through the **African Sites Casework in Emerging Threats Taskforce (ASCET)** – the Africa sites advocacy forum – continued. At least 35 sites in 20 partner countries were on the ASCET radar. The team provided intensive advocacy for at least 10 sites facing the highest pressure from damaging development. The most notable ongoing threat to IBAs/KBAs include agricultural expansion, big hydropower dams, mining, oil and gas exploration, urban expansion, exclusion of protected sites through legislation and potential oil spills.

In most of the sites, threats have been put on hold. In a number of them, especially in South Africa, litigation is ongoing.



Science Media Café held
in August 2023 © BirdLife

In August 2023, the Policy and Comms team participated at the inaugural **Science Media Café** organised by Media in Environment, Science Health and Agriculture (MESHA) in Nairobi, Kenya. The purpose of the Science Café was to raise awareness of journalists on key environmental and climate issues. The BirdLife team showcased our climate work featuring restoration of degraded ecosystems in Kivu-Rusizi in Rwanda. The team also shared an [opinion](#) piece ahead of the Africa Climate Summit in September 2023, and a [piece](#) on requirements for COP 28 in Dubai to move the needle for the climate crisis, in the lead up to the meeting.

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