



# IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS (IBAs) IN BOTSWANA



The Important Bird Area (IBA) Programme of BirdLife International, and its country BirdLife partners, is a worldwide initiative aimed at identifying, documenting and protecting a network of sites critical for the conservation of the world's birds.

The IBA programme in Africa is addressing site-orientated research and action, encompassing management, monitoring, education, advocacy, and national and international legal protection. Botswana currently has twelve (12) IBAs.

Illustrations and habitat photos reproduced with kind courtesy of Kenneth Newman. Habitat photos by other photographers are indicated.

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Photograph: S. Hensley

## 1 CHOBE NATIONAL PARK

The park borders Kasane, Chobe river, and the Linyanti swamp in the north and Moremi Game Reserve in the south. The vast central part of Chobe also includes the dry grassland around Savuti which has a range of habitats that support the highest densities of many raptors found anywhere in southern Africa.

(Illustration - Bateleur Eagle, *Terathopus ecaudatus*)



Photograph: Department of Tourism

## 2 LINYANTI SWAMP / CHOBE RIVER

The Chobe River rises in the highlands of Angola and in Botswana forms the boundary between the Caprivi Strip in Namibia and Chobe National Park in Botswana. The main habitats are riparian woodland, floodplain grasslands, swamp vegetation and some *Baikiaea* woodlands away from the river. Key threats include deliberate fires, poaching and disturbances to breeding birds due to inconsiderate boat use.

(Illustration - Slaty Egret, *Egretta vinaceigula*)



Photograph: K. Newman

## 3 OKAVANGO DELTA

The Okavango Delta, being the largest wetland and largest Ramsar Site in southern Africa, is undoubtedly the region's most important site. The Okavango Delta has a greater range of habitats than any other wetland in the region. These include clear water, permanent swamp, seasonal swamps and river floodplain that together form a complex mosaic of lagoons, swamp vegetation, channels, islands, seasonally flooded depressions (pans), riparian woodland and drier woodland and grasslands.

(Illustration - Wattled Crane, *Grus carunculata*)



Photograph: C. Bensch

## 4 LAKE NGAMI

South-west of the Okavango Delta, Lake Ngami occupies part of a shallow sedimentary basin. Formerly it flooded seasonally, but has been dry for several years until in 2004 when it filled. In years of flooding the lake is highly productive and full of fish. In these times, several species of waterfowl occur in large numbers, and key threats include human disturbance and egg removal.

(Illustration - Blackwinged Pratincole, *Glareola nordmanni*)



Photograph: W. Beentje

## 12 K GALAKGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK

This relatively new transfrontier park was created by joining South Africa's Kalahari-Gemsbok National Park and Botswana's Gemsbok National Park and Mabuasehube Game Reserve. The large semi-arid area comprises vast areas of dunes and sandy flats covered by open shrub or tree savanna. Poaching and increased incidences of wild fires constitute key conservation problems.

(Illustration - Kori Bustard, *Ardeotis kori*)

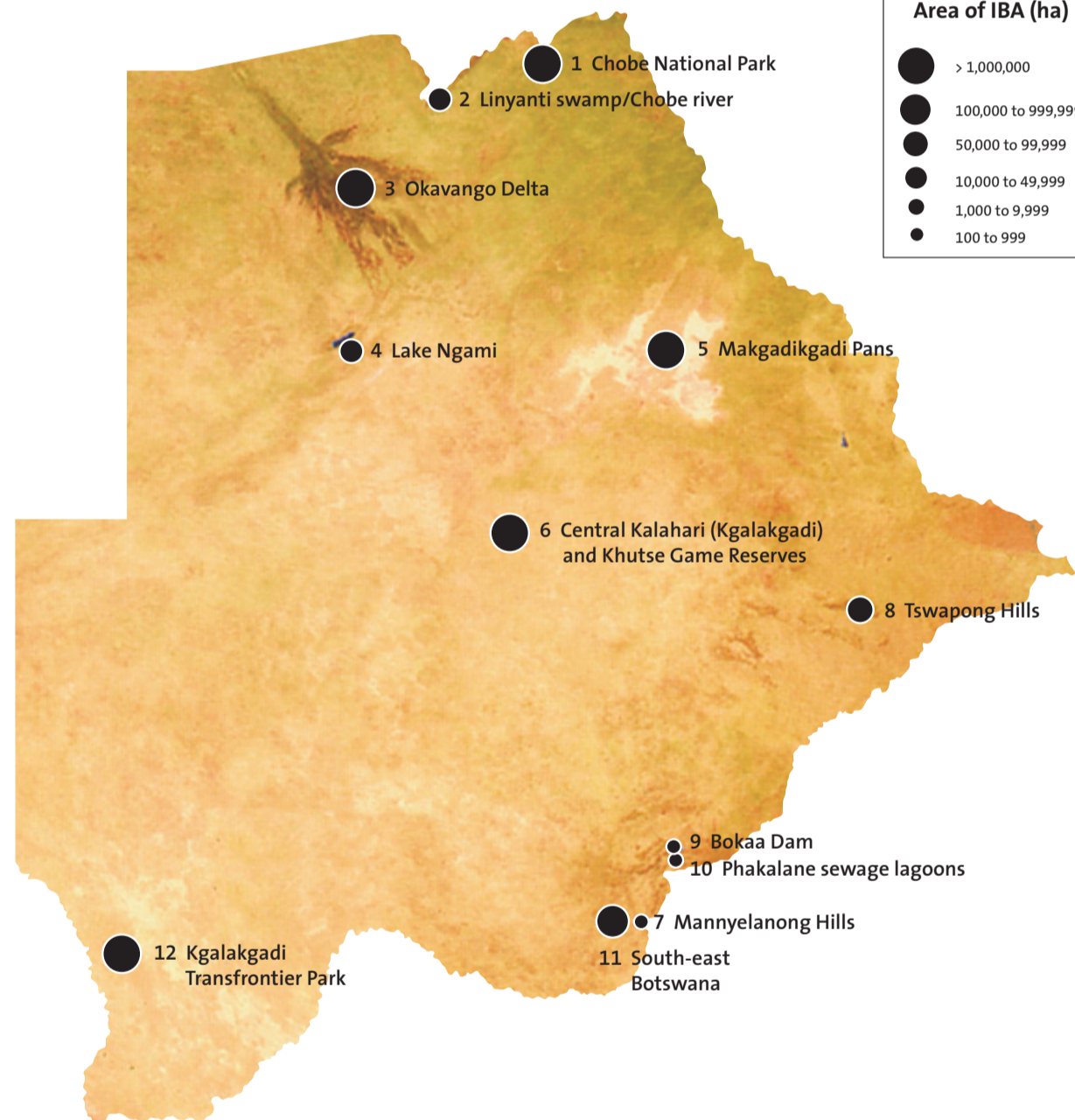


Photograph: D. Austin

## 11 SOUTH-EAST BOTSWANA

The Pitsane grasslands as well as mixed savanna, low rolling hills and farmland are included in this extensive site which stretches from the Ramatlabama border with South Africa to Gaborone and Bokaa and then around to Thamaga and Kanye and back south to Good Hope. Several pans including Kgoro Pan and Kgajane Pan retain water in winters following good rains. Much of the pasture and savanna is used for grazing by livestock but there are also some small intensively cultivated areas.

(Illustration - Shortclawed Lark, *Mirafra chuana*)



### How are IBAs chosen?

A site is recognised as an IBA only if it meets certain criteria, based on the occurrence of key bird species that are vulnerable to global extinction or whose populations are otherwise irreplaceable. The IBA criteria are internationally agreed, standardised, quantitative and scientifically defensible. Ideally, each IBA should be large enough to support self-sustaining populations of as many as possible of the key bird species for which it was identified or, in the case of migrants, fulfil their requirements for the duration of their presence.



Photograph: D. Bickert

## 5 MAKGADIKGADI PANS

Once the flat bottom of the ancient Kalahari Lake, this large diverse area comprises seasonally inundated salt pans, surrounded by grasslands, low tree-and-bush *Acacia* savanna and stunted mopane woodland. The two main pans, Sua Pan (fed by the Nata River) and Ntwetwe Pan are alkaline flats. The Nata Delta section of Sua Pan rarely dries out completely and is therefore particularly important for waterfowl. When flooded, Sua Pan attracts the largest breeding colonies of both Greater and Lesser Flamingos in Southern Africa, as well as Pelicans.

(Illustration - Lesser Flamingo, *Phoenicopterus minor*)



Photograph: K. Newman

## 6 CENTRAL KALAHARI (CKGR) AND KHUTSE GAME RESERVES

Situated in the centre of Botswana, these two adjoining Game Reserves form part of the Kalahari Basin, the world's largest continuous stretch of sand. Although there are large open grasslands, the Game Reserves are both largely covered with semi-arid shrub savanna and scrub. There are strips of *Acacia* woodland and larger areas of *Terminalia* sandveld. Pans, shallow depressions periodically containing water, are widespread.

(Illustration - Burchell's Sandgrouse, *Pterocles burchelli*)



Photograph: S. Tyler

## 10 PHAKALANE SEWAGE PONDS

The four large sewage-treatment lagoons cover an area of 70 ha. The site lies adjacent to the Ngotwane River only 15 km from Gaborone. These ponds form part of a series of artificial wetlands along the Ngotwane River that lie outside this IBA. They are interlinked in that all are used by waterfowl which frequently move from one dam or sewage pond to another. Phakalane sewage ponds and the other nearby artificial wetlands provide habitats for a diversity of waterfowl, whose population are disturbed primarily by dogs, both stray and those accompanying joggers.

(Illustration - Maccoa Duck, *Oxyura maccoa*)



Photograph: S. Tyler

## 9 BOKAA DAM

This water reservoir, constructed in 1990/91 on a tributary of the Ngotwane River, stretches 6 km or more. It is surrounded by *Acacia* savanna that is used for grazing by many sheep, goats, donkeys and cattle. Although there is a perimeter fence, it is broken in many places and domestic stock has access to much of the reservoir edge with resulting expansive bare mud areas. Still, it is an important waterfowl site just 20 km from Gaborone, especially for the Southern Pochard.

(Illustration - Southern Pochard, *Netta erythrophthalma*)



Photograph: G. Brna

## 8 TSWAPONG HILLS

The Tswapong Hills are mainly sandstone. There are gorges with precipitous cliffs and seasonal streams, and exposed rock faces around the edge of the hills and along some watercourses. The Cape Griffon Vulture currently breeds at three sites within the hills. Direct persecution, human disturbance and predation by Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxi* are some of the threats responsible for the observed low breeding success of Cape Vultures on these hills.

(Illustration - Verreaux's Eagle, *Aquila verreauxi*)



Photograph: S. Unger

## 7 MANNYELANONG HILL

This sandstone hill with a sheer, high cliff-face at its southern end lies just south-east of the village of Otse in the hardveld of south-east Botswana. The entire hill was declared a Game Reserve in 1965 and the cliff and its lower wooded slope was fenced off to protect the important nesting population of Cape Griffon Vultures. There is no public access within this area except by permission from the Department of Wildlife and National Parks. Although the Cape Griffon Vulture once nested on nearby, similar sandstone hills, at present the only other breeding colonies in Botswana are in the Tswapong Hills.

(Illustration - Cape Griffon Vulture, *Cyps caprothersi*)