

Out of Africa: For how much longer?



Nightingale – Thanks to the 1998 Nightingale Appeal, we know that scrubby places with peaty soils have taken over from woodland as key areas for the species in the UK, but year-to-year changes may well be linked to conditions in Africa.



Pied Flycatcher – There is concern that the removal of cork oaks in northern Portugal may be threatening Pied Flycatchers, but are they also finding it harder to judge when to breed, because of our changing climate? One of the **Out of Africa** projects will focus on Nest Record data collected by BTO volunteers.



Ring Ouzel – Here's a species that does not cross the Sahara but that is still in decline. We need more people to take on BBS squares in upland areas to monitor numbers of this crag-loving bird.

Sedge Warbler – Pioneering work by BTO scientists (who analysed survey data collected by members and other volunteers) showed that rainfall levels in countries such as Senegal influence the numbers of birds that return to the UK each spring.

Turtle Dove – The decline in the 1970s was linked to changing farming practices in the UK, but is agricultural intensification in countries south of the Sahara also having an affect? And what about the effects of hunting in southern Europe?

Yellow Wagtail – Potato fields in some areas of England provide replacement breeding areas for Yellow Wagtails. These were once birds of wet grassland, but there are almost certainly problems in Africa too.



Wood Warbler – Having lost two-thirds of our Wood Warblers in just fifteen years, there is a desperate need to collect even the most basic of information. Where do these archetypal birds of oak woodland spend the winter?



Willow Warbler – BTO surveys are already showing that Willow Warblers in southern Britain are doing much more poorly than ones in the north. Do different populations winter in different parts of Africa? Is the situation complicated by changing weather patterns in the UK?



Cuckoo – Here's a species with a complicated life-history. Are females out of synch with their key host species? Where, within Africa, do our Cuckoos spend the winter? Is it harder to find juicy, big caterpillars wherever these birds find themselves?



Spotted Flycatcher – In the 1970s, summer motoring was punctuated by stops to clean squashed insects off the windscreen. Where are they now? Are Spotted Flycatchers warning us of catastrophic changes in insect numbers? One **Out of Africa** project will look at how nesting success has changed in the last forty years.

Garden Warbler – It's really hard to link the species we see in the UK to their wintering grounds. We have identified a hot-spot in Ghana for Garden Warblers, thanks to a cluster of records of ringed birds. We hope to learn more about the population drivers for Garden Warbler.



House Martin – Many people think that House Martin numbers have fallen dramatically, but we don't really know – yet. We think that our birds winter south of the Equator, but we don't even know that for sure.



Swift – It is harder to find nesting Swifts these days. Are there fewer suitable nesting sites or just fewer birds? One of the proposed **Out of Africa** projects could involve looking at decades of data on breeding success and survival rates to try to work out where the problems lie for this species.



Swallow – We know more about this species than we do about almost any other migrant, partly thanks to work funded through the 2002 Swallow Appeal. Thousands of nesting pairs have been lost from eastern England, where there are fewer cows and sheep – and fewer insects and farm buildings.

The BTO's African Experience



Although the **Out of Africa Appeal** will provide new impetus for migrant work, the BTO is already involved in African issues:

- Climate change poses particular problems for migrants. BTO led on a recent study for the UK Government: *Climate Change and Migratory Species* was presented at the 8th Conference of the UN Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species, in Nairobi.
- BTO staff have supported the training of students at the A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute in Jos, Nigeria.
- Money provided by Defra, through the Darwin Initiative, has enabled BTO to use skills developed in the UK to quantify impacts of changing farming policy on birds, plants and pollination in Uganda. Capacity building is a key element of the **Out of Africa Appeal**.
- And we only know about the linkages between these islands and Africa because we've been ringing birds and studying migration since 1909 – a time when Red-backed Shrike was a widespread summer migrant.

Photo credits: Cuckoo by Edmund Fellowes; Garden Warbler by Tommy Holden; Nightingale & Swift by David Tipling www.davidtipling.com; Pied Flycatcher, Swallow & House Martin by John Harding; Red-backed Shrike by Paul Sterry; Ring Ouzel, Sedge Warbler & Willow Warbler by Sean Gray www.grayimages.co.uk; Spotted Flycatcher by George H Higginbotham; Turtle Dove by Mike Weston; Wood Warbler by Jez Blackburn; Yellow Wagtail by Jill Pakenham.

