

Out of Africa

One of the prominent themes of the BTO's Strategy for 2009-14 is African migrants:

- Over thirty of our breeding species **winter in Africa**.
- **Two-thirds** of these species are declining; some, such as **Wood Warbler**, by as much as 10% per year.
- Huge numbers have already disappeared – five out of every six **Spotted Flycatchers**.
- **Migrants** face habitat change problems in Africa, in the UK and on their travels.
- We need to know more about what is happening in **West Africa** and during migration.



The Key Project



Although we can monitor changes in numbers in the UK and come up with some theories, the real challenge is to get involved in conservation within Africa.



Council has already agreed that the BTO should contribute to the first winter of a joint BTO/RSPB project to undertake survey work in Ghana and northwards into Burkina Faso. Many of our summer migrants spend the winter in West Africa. Transect work will help to identify which habitats are most important in each month of the winter. One of the first aims of the appeal is to find £90,000 for this winter; then we need to find money for at least another two years.

International Collaboration

We look forward to working with partners:

- In this country, the **Breeding Bird Survey*** is providing its partners with critical information.
- We want to be able to work with organisations across Europe to support conservation in countries such as Ghana, where many British **Garden Warblers** seem to winter.
- We want to work alongside young, local scientists in the field, continuing to develop the expertise of **African ornithologists**.



The Costs of Looking for Answers

Pied Flycatcher

Asynchrony – breeding at the wrong time – may be a real issue for African migrants. Do Nest Record data explain Pied Flycatcher problems?



Garden Warbler

We want to follow our Garden Warblers to Ghana, to look at winter habitat use. Numbers have dropped by nearly 20%.



Willow Warbler

BTO is supporting a PhD to understand Willow Warbler declines. A further £15K is needed for the next two years.



Swift

Is it a housing crisis? BTO data sets may well tell us if poorer breeding performance is to blame for Swift declines.



*The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (on behalf of the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, the Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

Photo credits: Grasshopper Warbler by Derek Belsey; Wood Warbler by Sean Gray www.grayimages.co.uk; Swallow by John Harding; Yellow Wagtail by Jill Pakenham; Spotted Flycatcher by John Harding; Nyameadiso, Ghana by Emily Coleman; Cuckoo with host by Derek Belsey. Front Cover: Willow Warbler by Sean Gray www.grayimages.co.uk & Nzulezo, Ghana by Emily Coleman.

Cuckoo

Analyses of BBS* and Nest Record data will investigate whether Cuckoo declines are linked to changes in populations of host species. Funded through the BTO/JNCC partnership.



Nightingale

An exciting project, underwritten from BTO funds, will track Nightingales to Africa and back again.



Spotted Flycatcher

A few volunteers have collected a wonderful series of Nest Record data. Will these help to explain an 83% decline since 1970?



What else can you do to help?

- Do you have **House Martins** nesting on your house? Take part in the survey by visiting www.bto.org/houseMartinSurvey or phoning Paul Stancliffe on 01842 750050.
- Garden BirdWatchers, surveyors, BirdTrackers, nest-recorders and ringers all contribute to our **knowledge of migrant birds**, by tracking their movements, monitoring arrival dates, assessing population changes, etc.
- There may be opportunities to help to **train local ornithologists** in Africa.

