

## **11<sup>th</sup> Pan African Ornithological Congress**

During November 2004 more than 200 ornithologists flocked to the Island of Jerba, Tunisia, to attend the 11<sup>th</sup> Pan African Ornithological Congress (PAOC). These four-yearly African ornithological congresses have come a long way since the first meeting in Livingstone, Zambia, in 1957.

The Jerba conference was very competently organized by the Association "Les Amis des Oiseaux" and held in the luxury, but very reasonably priced, Vincci Alkantara Thalassa Hotel. The delegates were treated to excellent food and entertainment at both the opening and closing functions, with the traditional belly dancers being the highlight of the various social events!

The conference was attended by delegates from 37 countries, with 23 African countries being represented. Unlike previous PAOCs, there was a strong delegation from North Africa (especially Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) and it was very pleasing to hear about the good ornithological conservation and research that is being conducted north of the Sahara Desert.

The theme of PAOC 11 was "Birds crossing borders, linking people and habitats" and therefore several sessions focused on migration studies. One of the highlights of the formal proceedings was an outstanding plenary talk by Dr Peter Jones from the University of Edinburgh entitled "Migration in Africa". In his extremely informative talk he showed how African bird species respond differently to seasonal climate changes and variations in food supply. The standard of the 130 papers and 75 posters was very high and one cannot notice the high standard of ornithological work that is conducted in many African countries, especially Kenya and Uganda, but also several West African countries. The paper and poster topics ranged from behavioural ecology and genetics to applied conservation biology. Evening round table discussions addressed the future of waterbird ringing in Africa and the need for an integrated and standardized vulture monitoring programme.

Mark Anderson presented (with Steven Piper as co-author) a paper entitled "Powerlines and the demise of large terrestrial birds in the eastern Karoo, South Africa". He also chaired the vulture monitoring round table discussion.

Mid-conference field trips took conference delegates to several interesting localities on Jerba and further afield, including the Douz region (just north of the Sahara Desert) and Bou Hedma National Park. Many special birds were seen, including Marbled Duck, Moussier's Redstart and Fulvous Babbler.

PAOCs are certainly the most important event on the African ornithological calendar. PAOC 12 will be held in South Africa in 2008 and everyone with an interest in African birds is encouraged to attend this conference.

Mark Anderson is grateful to the Northern Cape Department of Tourism, Environment & Conservation and Professor Steven Piper for sponsoring his attendance of the PAOC.



Some of the 14 southern African delegates who attended the 11<sup>th</sup> Pan African Ornithological Congress (photograph: Mark D. Anderson).



Bou Hedma National Park, with an *Acacia radiana* in the foreground (photograph: Mark Anderson).



Mark Anderson at the El Jem colloseum (photograph: Doug Harebottle)



The conference hotel (photographs: Mark Anderson)