

## News & Comment — Nouvelles & Commentaires

### **Request regarding possible future studies of the Lanner Falcon subspecies *Falco biarmicus abyssinicus***

Among the Lanner Falcon's subspecies, there is a lack of basic studies on the biology and ecology of *Falco biarmicus abyssinicus*. Knowledge of its distribution in West Africa has greatly improved in the last 20 years, but no papers have been completely devoted to this race in spite of its large range. For instance, there are no papers on feeding preferences and diet, nesting biology or habitat requirements. I invite ornithologists or students to consider carrying out a study of this race in a West African country. I can freely supply bibliography and also help with methodology and data analysis. Data collected and then published will be very useful both for conservation purposes in Africa but also in the Palaearctic where the Lanner is a threatened species.

Giovanni LEONARDI

Via Stazzone, 235 - 95124 Catania, Italy <areleo@yahoo.com>

### **The 14th Pan-African Ornithological Congress**

The 14th Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC) was held at Hotel Ngor Diarama, Dakar, Senegal, 16–21 October 2016, with the theme “Global changes — threats and opportunities for birds”. Around 250 participants, including several WAOS members, converged for the four days of plenaries, symposia and round-table discussions, a mid-congress excursions day and various workshops and meetings before and after the event. The Congress opened on Sunday 16 Oct with a series of training workshops, and an evening cocktail party with a lively local dance troupe, courtesy of the Ministry of Environment. The main auditorium was bursting at the seams for the formal opening on 17 Oct, with addresses by the Minister of Environment, the Dutch Ambassador and others. There was a good mix of plenary presentations and symposia, covering a range of themes. Of particular note was the “Vultures in Africa” symposium, which was followed by a three-day vulture workshop at the same venue. There were also substantial symposia on seabirds and waterbirds, and others addressing different aspects of migration. A number of posters showcased work underway in the region, with several on vultures and seabirds — both great topics for the venue, which hosted a small roost of Hooded Vultures *Necrosyrtes monachus* in the hotel grounds, whilst a range of seabirds were seen offshore. WAOS had a table in the poster area, with copies of *Malimbus* and a new society leaflet displayed and available to take away.



**From L to R: Hooded Vulture in venue grounds; view from the PAOC venue; student prize-winner Ngoné Diop; Congress Chair Abdoulaye Ndiaye.**

The PAOC aims to promote the study, conservation and appreciation of African birds, and disseminate information through the congresses and published proceedings. Congresses take place every four years, and this was the first in a francophone country of West Africa. One of its key features was simultaneous translation throughout, significantly increasing the sharing of ideas and information between Africa's regions. *Malimbus* will join other African journals in publishing the congress proceedings in 2017.

The PAOC is always an important event for students, and for many it is their first major conference. The prize for the best student presentation went to Ngoné Diop of Senegal, on the feeding ecology of Red-billed Tropicbirds *Phaethon aethereus* on two islands in the tropical Atlantic: Iles de la Madeleine (Senegal) and St Helena.

It is never easy organising a major congress in Africa, and PAOC14 was no exception. But despite the challenges, the event came together very well. There was a good mix of delegates from across Africa and further afield, a wide variety of quality presentations, excellent excursion options and a welcoming atmosphere. The Chair of the Congress, Abdoulaye Ndiaye, and his team deserve a strong vote of thanks for never giving up and for securing the necessary financial support.

The Congress will have made a good impact in Senegal, where many exciting developments in ornithology and bird conservation are underway, including the launch of a Masters course in Ornithology, Conservation and Development at the University of Gaston Berger in Saint-Louis. The Minister of Environment was very keen for the Congress to have a lasting message; this has been formulated as the "Dakar Declaration", which calls on the African Union to promote and coordinate government responses to continent-wide declines in vultures, amongst other actions.

Finally, thanks go to the main sponsors of the Congress, notably the MAVA Foundation, plus the Netherlands Embassy in Senegal, the Senegal Government, the PRCM (West African Regional Marine and Coastal Conservation Programme), the Tour du Valat, the African Bird Club and the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative.

Further information about the congress is available at <[www.paoc-africa.org](http://www.paoc-africa.org)>.

Tim DODMAN