



West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
Africain



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The African Bird Image Database (AFBID): status, capabilities and plans

AFBID (<http://www.birdexplorers.com/afbid/index.php>) was created by Bird Explorers (a non-profit entity established to promote bird conservation and provide a clearing house of bird and wildlife photographs and information for museums, NGOs, Community Groups and other conservation organizations in developing countries) in collaboration with the African Bird Club (ABC) and Birding Africa (a birding tour operator based in Cape Town). The objective was to bring together quality photographs of as many bird species from the African continent and associated islands as possible. This is a concerted effort to promote awareness and conservation of the colourful and varied birdlife of Africa.

The database covers the same region as ABC and *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands* (Collar, N.J. & Stuart, S.N. 1985, ICBP, Cambridge): continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, including Madagascar and the Mascarenes, and Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, including the Tristan group, Azores and Canaries.

AFBID has been operational since September 2005. From the outset, it has been popular with contributors and users and has grown to become a leading database of photographs of species in the region. Over 500 photographers have submitted more than 11,000 images of wild birds, all taken in the African Region. Over 1840 species are represented on AFBID at present. The full list of species recorded in the region, the taxonomic sequence and nomenclature are those of the ABC Checklist. All images have been provided by photographers free of charge in support of bird conservation in Africa.

AFBID was designed with a simple interface that allows photographers to add their images easily and users to see the collection of photographs as a freely available resource. Users can see the most recent images, select a random image or search for families or individual species. One WAOS member wrote that: "I myself use the database primarily when I have an identification problem, when it can be quite helpful to have a number of different photographs to compare with, rather than just bird guide images." Although there are still many species gaps, there are plenty of images on the database to help with identification. Table 1 shows statistics up to April 2009 for some families that are well represented in West Africa.

Recently, we have added French species names and the capability to search for images using French names. Since the introduction of French names, there has been a welcome increase in web traffic from francophone countries. There is also a new search capability which allows a user to search for all images that have been taken in a selected country; or show all images of a particular species in a selected country. The following countries in West Africa have over 200 images on the database: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gabon, The Gambia, Mali and Senegal. At the other extreme, there are no images from Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritania and Togo.

Table 1. AFBID African image holdings of selected bird families.

Family	Total species	Species with images	Total images
Musophagidae	23	23	122
Bucerotidae	24	24	252
Campephagidae	13	8	31
Pycnonotidae	64	44	147
Cisticolidae	95	76	284
Muscicapidae	38	31	158
Platysteiridae	30	24	87
Picathartidae	2	2	14
Nectariniidae	87	66	303
Malaconotidae	46	39	169
Estrildidae	79	64	288

We are in the process of developing a further capability whereby AFBID will respond to a search request from a third party website, say that of WAOS or ABC, to allow images from AFBID to display on its own pages. This could be a random image, a species image or an image from a specified country. In addition, we wish to continue to upgrade the quality of the images. As new and higher quality images are loaded, we remove some of the older and less good ones. We also try to ensure the accuracy of the identifications, and we are helped in this task by a small number of experts.

We look forward to more WAOS members loading their images from West African countries, and hope that they will find in AFBID a valuable resource.

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New website of the West African Bird Migration Network

The West African Bird Migration Network has a new website: <http://www.africanbirdmigration.org/>. You will find on the website the scope of the network and a list of projects with descriptions and contacts in western Africa and Europe. There are details of how to subscribe and take part in a discussion group about bird migration from, to and within West Africa. There is also an option to post requests for information and help with migrant research work within West Africa.

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