

Bird of the Year 2024

Bateleur

Lesson 2

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| TOPIC: More about the Bateleur | |
| GRADE: 4-6 | |
| CRITICAL & DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES: Understanding the Bateleur | |
| LINKS WITH PREVIOUS LESSONS: Introduction and identification | LINKS WITH NEXT LESSONS: Habitat |
| FORMS OF ASSESSMENT: Worksheets | RESOURCES: Included worksheet/s |
| LEARNING ACTIVITIES & ASSESSMENT: | |
| <p>Background</p> <p>The Bateleur, particularly in its adult plumage, is often considered one of the most distinctive of all the raptors in the world. Whether perched or flying, adults or older immatures are quite unmistakable. The Bateleur can be distinguished even by inexperienced observers from the very differently-shaped and usually rather smaller-bodied and winged augur buzzards and jackal buzzards. These do not overlap with bateleurs in nearly all respects of form and structure, proportions nor flight actions. Nonetheless, both buzzards are sometimes mistaken for Bateleurs due to their own combinations of black, white, and chestnut, which are completely differently composed than those of the Bateleur.</p> <p>Despite this, some reports of Bateleurs from areas where they are currently gone are almost certain to have been misidentified Jackal Buzzards. Juveniles and immatures of up to two to three years old are hardly less distinctive in shape but could be confused, largely due to similar proportions of their large head, brown plumage, and whitish legs with certain snake eagles. The Brown Snake Eagle is perhaps the most similar to the juvenile Bateleur but it has yellow eyes, longer legs, much broader, shorter and differently shaped wings with the tips of wings reaching its banded tail.</p> <p>Bateleurs are usually silent for much of the year. The main call, uttered whether perched or in aerial display, or when pirating from other raptors, is a far-carrying, loud raucous <i>schaaaa-aw</i>. They may vocalize in a similar manner during courtship. Alternatively, Bateleur calls may consist of resonant barking calls, <i>kow-aw</i>. The barking call can be accompanied by half-spread wings and jerking of the body up and down or may too be uttered in flight, the latter in a similar manner to that of a fish eagle. Distraction displays are sometimes accompanied by subdued barking chatter, <i>ka-ka-ka-ka</i>. A not dissimilar call of <i>kau-kau-kau-koaagh-koaggh</i> has been described as given by perched birds. Other softer calls are uttered when perched near the nest. The young tend to engage harsh squealing call is <i>kyup-kyup keeaw keeaw</i>, usually as a hunger call at approach of parent with food. Also, the species' young may make a melodious <i>twip</i> call.</p> <p>The Bateleur is unusually conspicuous due to its propensity for gliding flights over favourable habitats in much of Africa. The bird spends a considerable amount of time in flight, particularly at low altitude. Due to this behaviour and colourful plumage, the Bateleur is frequently described as "one of the most beautiful and spectacular things that flies". This</p> | |

species tends to take off with unusually fast, shallow beats for a bird of this relatively large size. After take-off, the bateleur sails at a mean speed of about 50 to 60 km/h.

They often rock from side-to-side with the wings held in a strong dihedral with very limiting flapping. Dihedral flights refer to the angle of the wings from the horizontal axis or the tilt of the wings from the body. This makes the bird more stable, especially when they roll left to right. Although the species tends to fly low, Bateleurs can soar and circle quite high as well. Various flying add-ons occur nearly seasonally. Although not typically given to forward somersault nor to loop-the-loop, bateleurs may with some regularity perform a rapid 360 degrees sideways roll.

They often fly with more antics when in the presence of another Bateleur, even with juveniles provoking one another uncouple from breeding courtship or territorial displays. Typical home ranges of around 40 km² were reported per pair in Kruger National Park and these are considered unusually small by overall species standards. Intruders, when confronted with this behaviour, always submit. This is shown by retreating to a safe upper boundary or elevation. Males and females both display this behaviour in all stages of the breeding cycle which is mainly shown to members of the same sex and particularly to non-adults, as it is thought that they may have a greater ability to take over another bird's territory and a competitive ability for limited food resources.

The Bateleur is generally a solitary bird. However, juveniles may accompany one or both parents for about three months. Loose congregations of forty to fifty or more have been record of mainly immatures birds. These tend to be aggregations of otherwise unassociated immature bateleurs attracted to rich feeding areas such as newly-discovered carrion, bush fires, recently burnt areas or temporary floods and occasionally by termite emergences.

In the wild, Bateleurs are shy of human presence and sensitive to disturbance at the nest, easily abandoning the structure. Bateleurs are among a group of raptors that secrete a clear, salty fluid from their nares whilst eating. According to Schmidt-Nielson's 1964 hypothesis, this is due to the general necessity for birds to use an extrarenal mechanism of salt secretion to aid water reabsorption.

Activities:

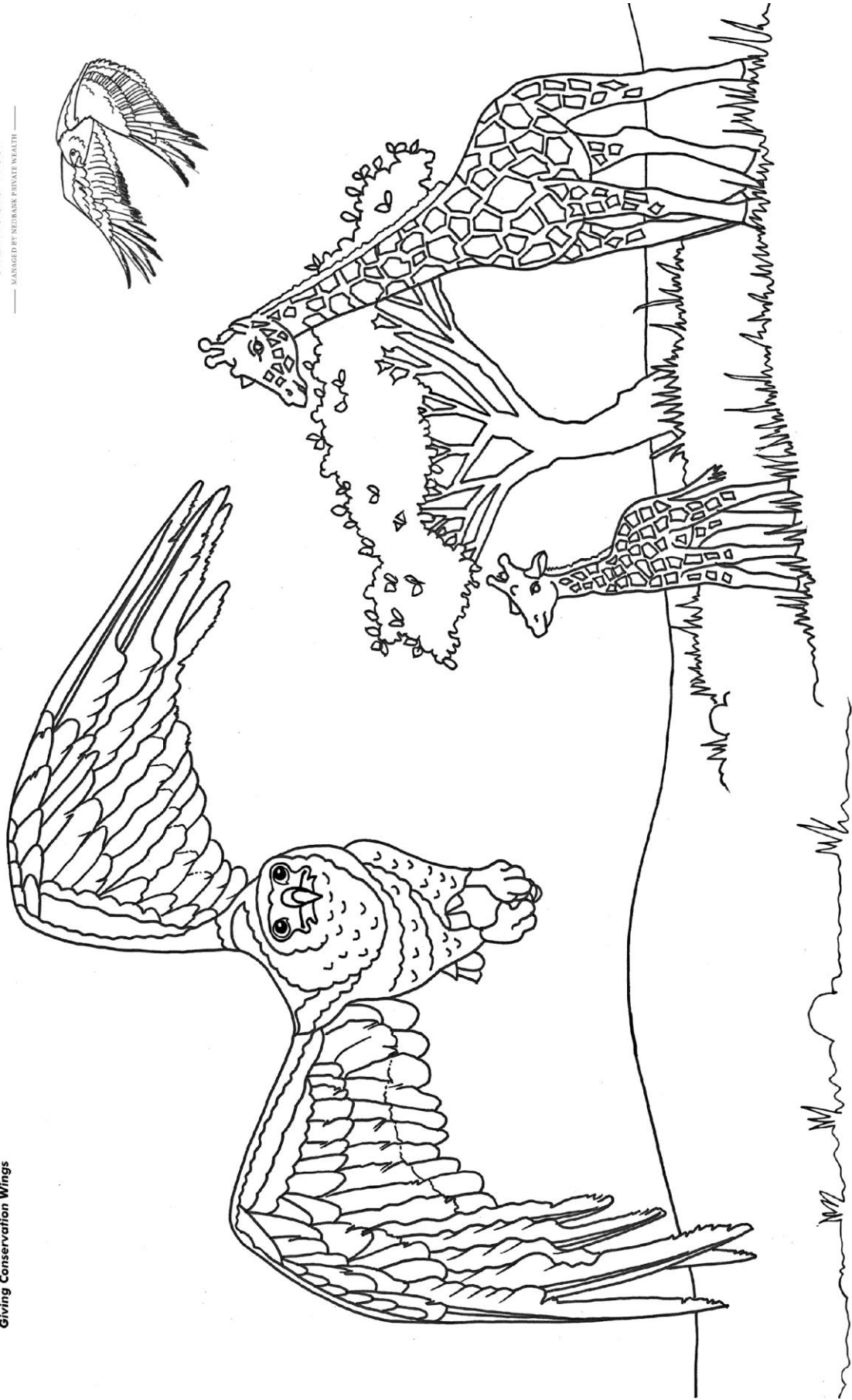
1. Juniors – using the information gained over the last two lessons, have the learners colour-in the supplied artwork on the following page. The learners should, as much as possible, match the description of the Bateleur in terms of colour and markings. The Fact sheet and Infographic, available for download can serve as an additional guide for this activity.
2. Seniors – ensure sufficient copies of the senior workshop are made available for the learners or groups. This activity further builds on the vocabulary concerning the Bateleur.





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Senior Vocabulary Activity

Conspicuous -

Display / displays -

Dihedral -

Extrarenal mechanism -

Home range -

Low attitude/s -

Misidentification -

Plumage -

Solitary -

Vocalisation -
