

# Bird of the Year 2024

## Bateleur

### Lesson 3

<b>TOPIC:</b> The Bateleur's habitat	
<b>GRADE:</b> 4-6	
<b>CRITICAL &amp; DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES:</b> Understanding habitats and requirements of the species	
<b>LINKS WITH PREVIOUS LESSONS:</b> More about the Bateleur	<b>LINKS WITH NEXT LESSONS:</b> Habitat happenings
<b>FORMS OF ASSESSMENT:</b> Worksheets and monitoring data	<b>RESOURCES:</b> Included worksheet/s
<b>LEARNING ACTIVITIES &amp; ASSESSMENT:</b>	
<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>The Bateleur is a common to fairly common resident or nomadic bird of the relatively open savanna country and woodland in Sub-Saharan Africa. During breeding, the species tends to require closed-canopy savannah-woodland habitats, including Acacia savanna, mopane and miombo woodlands. They may also adapt to thornveld and various fairly shrubby areas. This raptor, tends to rarely occur in heavily forested or mountainous habitats, in pure deserts, which lack tree-like plants and tropical rainforests.</p> <p>Bateleurs are seldom to be found around widespread wetlands however they may regularly be found near watering holes. In Kenya, Bateleurs have not been reported in areas where the rainfall is under 250 mm annually, probably because it limits the growth of the leafy trees that they need for nesting. In Ethiopia, they tend to be associated with well-wooded areas. The Bateleur habitats tend to be most intensively studied in southern Africa. They are mostly a common occurrence in broad-leaved woodland in the Okavango Delta in Botswana. In Namibia, the Bateleur is often found in tall woodland near drainage lines, and over rivers, which have flowing water during or for a short period after rainfall, in north-eastern Namibia and within the more arid Etosha National Park. In Zambia, the Bateleur is found in a variety of habitats from woodlands to open plains but steers away from densely wooded areas.</p> <p>Reports from Malawi, this species is often associated with forest-savannas and is regularly seen over cultivated areas, and even seen flying over large cities. However, in Mozambique they avoid areas with a dense human population. The species can occur from sea level up to 4,500 m, but not normally a mountain-dwelling species and occurs below 3,000 m. In Zimbabwe, the Bateleur is a common species but appears to avoid the hilly and rugged areas in the country.</p> <p>As in most raptors found as breeding residents in Africa, the Bateleur is considered sedentary (found in one area and do not migrate) and territorial. It is a species that requires a large home range. Both immature and adult Bateleurs are considered clearly nomadic. At times, they are even regarded as an 'irruptive' or local migrant. Some regular north-to-south movements occur in West Africa and occur trans equatorially in East Africa to avoid the heavy rain seasons. In the Kruger National Park, immatures are driven out by an adults' territory during the breeding season. These young birds often wander widely before returning for the non-breeding season. Recoveries of juveniles in southern Africa show that individuals</p>	

have been recovered at varying distances from their nests of origin ranging from as far as 30 to 285 km away. In some cases, heavier rainfall may have caused farther afield dispersals.

Bateleurs seem to devote an exceptional amount of time to thermoregulation (maintaining a steady internal body temperature despite the changes in external conditions), spending much of its day sunning, to warm up, and bathing, to cool off. Bateleurs are often seen entering waterbodies for a bath, then opening their wings to sunbathe. Standing upright and holding their wings straight out to the sides and tipped vertically, a 'phoenix' pose as they turn to follow the sun. Bateleurs will stand on the ground with their wings spread, exposing the feathers to direct sunlight, warming the oils in the feathers. The bird will then spread the oils with its bill to improve its aerodynamics (a shape that reduces the drag from air moving past, like an aeroplane's shape).

In some countries, local nicknames of the species may include as the "Conifer eagle" or "Pine eagle" due to its feathers resembling a conifer or pine cone when fluffed up and engaging in thermoregulatory behaviour, described as a "heraldic posture." Bateleurs may strike a "praying" behaviour. This allows ants to crawl over the wings and feathers, collecting bits of food, dead feathers, and skin material. When covered in ants, the Bateleur then ruffles its feathers, startling the ants, which react by secreting formic acid as self-defence. This in turn, kills ticks and fleas, ridding the host of its parasites.

#### Activity:

1. Using the map of Africa, the fact sheets, and infographics as well as the background information provided, mark where the Bateleur is located across the continent and list the habitat / ecosystem type.
2. During this lesson, we learnt that the Bateleur spends lengthy periods in the sky and can perform amazing arial tricks. This activity focuses on monitoring the varying clouds, and formations, at various times during the day and over a predetermined period. Cloud cover impacts on how much of the land the Bateleur can see whilst flying. For younger learners, use the design of a 'cloud camera' which will assist the learners in recognising the clouds. Both juniors and seniors can use the same record sheet to collate their observations found on the following pages. Select a period during which to monitor the cloud cover and weather conditions. A suggestion – once a week or when the weather drastically changes from one day to another. For the juniors, use the cloud camera found on the following pages. Print or copy this onto cardboard for easy handling.



## Location of the Bateleur in Africa



**Clouds and cloud cover monitoring sheet**

**Date:**

**Time of observation:**

**Weather conditions: (circle one choice in each of the following)**

**Wind:** None / light breeze / windy / strong wind

**Cloud cover:** clear / light cloud / cloudy / overcast

**Major cloud type visible:** cumulus / Stratocumulus / stratus / nimbostratus / cumulonimbus / altocumulus / altostratus / cirrocumulus / contrails / cirrus

**Temperature:** cold / cool / moderate / hot & humid / extremely hot

**Date:**

**Time of observation:**

**Weather conditions: (circle one choice in each of the following)**

**Wind:** None / light breeze / windy / strong wind

**Cloud cover:** clear / light cloud / cloudy / overcast

**Major cloud type visible:** cumulus / Stratocumulus / stratus / nimbostratus / cumulonimbus / altocumulus / altostratus / cirrocumulus / contrails / cirrus

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CUT OUT  
this section

