

Bird of the Year 2024

Bateleur

Lesson 4

TOPIC: The Bateleur’s habitat – what is happening in these areas?	
GRADE: 4-6	
CRITICAL & DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES: Understanding the impacts on the survival of the Bateleur	
LINKS WITH PREVIOUS LESSONS: More about the Bateleur	LINKS WITH NEXT LESSONS: Habitat happenings
FORMS OF ASSESSMENT: Dabate structure	RESOURCES: Included worksheet/s
LEARNING ACTIVITIES & ASSESSMENT:	
<p>Background</p> <p>As we have learnt in previous lessons, the Bateleur is a species that inhabits a wide range across the African continent. The species has shown a decline or reduction in numbers over the last three generations or forty-six years. From estimates in the 1990s and working on a home territory of an average of 150 km² per pair, it was projected that the total population could have been around 180,000 birds including young or juvenile birds. However, it is likely that the species numbers far lower than that. Currently, the IUCN estimates tens of thousands of individuals in 2020. (BirdLife International. 2020. <i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>. <i>The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species</i> 2020: e.T22695289A174413323.)</p> <p>Throughout the Bateleur’s range, the species is considered much more common in protected areas. However, even in several protected areas across the continent, where their numbers are decreasing. The decline of the species are almost entirely due to anthropogenic causes – referring to environmental change caused or influenced by people, either directly or indirectly. These include but are not limited to habitat destruction, the poisoning of carcasses, persecution through shooting and possibly pesticide use.</p> <p>Poisoning of carcasses is a major concern for majority of scavenging animals, especially birds like vultures, in Africa. The poisoning may be deliberate, which by be the case in Zambia, Eswatini, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. Due to the Bateleur's wide foraging areas and their ability to locate small pieces of carrion, this makes them highly vulnerable to poison-laced carcasses even from a small percentage of farmers who use poisons. Bateleurs and other eagles are not usually the direct target of these poisoning acts, which may be directed to unfavoured mammals like jackals or directed towards vultures by poachers to hide their illegal wildlife killings.</p> <p>The decline of the South African Bateleur is primarily linked with poisonings, from large-scale farming operations using pesticides and herbicides, as well as tribal small stock farming communities. Ongoing persecution is both serious and unsustainable. Ongoing shooting and trapping are additional threats to the species. Trapping of the species occurs for its feathers which are used in medicine by traditional healers for predicting future events. Less is known about declines linked with the birds flying into manmade objects including wire / electrical / telephone line collisions, reservoir drownings and road-kills.</p>	

Shrinking habitat has been found to be a widespread threat to Bateleurs. This is due to expanding human settlements and the rising of livestock agriculture which use the grassland and thornbush habitats. Added to this, the effect from regular or any human disturbance at nest sites, which causes the breeding success rate to fall.

No large-scale actions are underway. It has been proposed, to implement education and awareness campaigns across the Bateleur's range to reduce the use of poisoned baits. Regular population monitoring is conducted in known areas of location.

Activity:

This activity has two sections. Section 1 is more applicable to younger learners whereas Section 2 is for higher grades.

Section 1 – Split the learners into three groups – conservationists, landowners, and traditional healers. Have each group design a poster that best represents their use of and functioning in the Bateleur's habitat. Debate between the different land users which is more pro toward the Bateleur, and which does more harm to the Bateleur's habitat and survival.

Section 2 - Structure your side of the debate using the following formula:

1. Introduction which expresses your message and why it is important to you
2. Statement of fact
3. Confirmation or proof
4. Refutation – proving a statement or thought to be wrong or false
5. Conclusion

Each group should thoroughly prepare for their debate by using the lesson on habitat use and further researching the topic of using the Bateleur's habitat. Decide on a time allocation for each side's speaker. Allow for structured responses from each side.

How to judge a debate:

Consider which group directly addressed the topic, understood the basic issue, clearly explained their position, made a convincing case – with evidence, explained the other side's weakness, and responded to the other side's critique.

