

NOTES

A short note on Kori Bustard occurrence

Kori Bustards *Ardeotis kori* were counted in Makgadikgadi Pans Game Reserve and Nxai Pan National Park from 18–22 April 1990. The two areas are located in the north central region of Botswana, the southern border of the Park being 30 km from the northern boundary of the Reserve. The area surveyed in Makgadikgadi Pans Game Reserve was characterized by huge expanses of thick grassland with trees and game occurring in low densities; while the grasslands surveyed in Nxai Pan were shorter and had a substantially higher number of large trees and game.

The results of the survey are as follows:

Makgadikgadi Pans Game Reserve

166 km were covered revealing five individual Kori Bustards (three sightings: two groups of two and one lone bird). Thus one bustard was seen in every 33 km.

Nxai Pan National Park

76 km were covered revealing four individual Kori Bustards (three sightings: One group of two, and two lone birds). Thus one bustard was seen in every 19 km.

It appeared that the bustards occurred more numerous in Nxai Pan National Park than in Makgadikgadi Pans Game Reserve. This may be due to the much higher density of trees in Nxai Pan. Kori Bustards are known to use trees for shade on hot afternoons and for protection from danger. D. Allan (pers. comm.) points out that the Kori Bustard range throughout southern Africa coincides with those areas that have at least some trees present. Thus Makgadikgadi Pans Game Reserve with a much lower density of trees than Nxai Pan National Park, may represent a less suitable habitat.

Also of interest from this survey, was the difference in the abundance of Black Korhaans *Eupodotis afra* in the two areas. These relatives of the Kori Bustard were seen and heard on countless occasions in the Makgadikgadi Pans Game Reserve, however they were heard only once at Nxai Pan. Again this could be explained by the difference in habitat, with the Black Korhaan preferring lower tree densities and longer grass.

The southern subspecies of Kori Bustards *A. k. kori* has suffered a major population decline throughout most of its range: a result of increasing human disturbance, habitat loss and hunting pressure (Brooke 1984). The status of the Kori Bustard in Botswana is probably quite healthy, however a serious effort in monitoring this species could be undertaken. Large expanses of suitable habitat coupled with low human densities makes Botswana an oasis for this vulnerable and poorly-understood bird. Provided that these conditions continue, Botswana's Kori Bustards should remain relatively secure.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Nigel Ashby of Nata Lodge for the use of a vehicle and for providing petrol, to Dean Karageorgiades for help throughout the patrol and to Peter Mundy for help with this note.

Reference

BROOKE, R.K. 1984. Southern African Red Data Book - Birds. South African National Scientific Programs Report 97. C.S.I.R. Pretoria.

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