

# Africa's Threatened Birds

by Jack Clinton-Eitniear  
San Antonio, Texas

Only one species of parrot is considered at risk on the African continent, that being the Black-cheeked Lovebird. With the most restricted range of any agapornid, the Black-cheeked is a lowland bird inhabiting river valleys in southwest Zambia along the Zambesi River. While Forshaw documents its sporadic occurrence at Victoria Falls in far northwestern Zimbabwe, other authors claim it is now extinct in Zimbabwe. As is the fate of most parrots, trapping for the live bird trade has contributed greatly to its current threatened status. While not common in aviculture in the United States, several small colonies do exist in private collections.

While finches have been exported in large numbers from the African continent, only two waxbills and eight weavers seem not to be faring well. The Anambra Waxbill is found along rivers and lagoons in southern Nigeria. The other threatened waxbill is the Black-lored Waxbill that inhabits the grassy plains along the Lu-laqba River and along Lake Upemba in southern Zaire. As with the multitude of weavers to follow, the waxbills seem to occur in a very small range making them extremely vulnerable to habitat destruction.

Threatened African birds of interest to aviculturists (from: ICBP World Checklist of Threatened Birds, Misc Pub. No. 8 Collar and Andrews, editors): Swierstra's Francolin, Wattled Crane, Northern Bald Ibis, Marbled Teal, White-headed Duck, Houbara Bustard, Black-cheeked Lovebird, Price Ruspoli's Touraco, Ankober Serin, Yellow-throated Serin, Ethiopian Brush-crow, White-breasted Guineafowl, Abbott's Starling, Jackass Penguin, African Green Broadbill, Congo Peacock, Marungu Sunbird, Rockefeller's Sunbird, Anambra Waxbill, Black-lored Waxbill, Lake Lufira Weaver, Golden-naped Weaver, Yellow-legged Weaver, Black-chinned

Weaver, Loango Slender-billed Weaver, Clarke's Weaver, Bannerman's Weaver, Bates' Weaver.

Of the eight species of weavers, four occur in Zaire, again with small ranges. Some, such as the Loango Slender-billed Weaver, seem to be disappearing without obvious threat.

Few of the remaining species on the list are known to aviculturists. Prince Ruspoli's Touraco also has a small range in southern Ethiopia. It may also face risk from competition from the White-cheeked Touraco. The Marbled Teal's range spans from north Africa to Spain, Pakistan and Iraq yet it is considered one of the rarest of European ducks. It is however, considered widespread and well established in captivity. The other rare African species of waterfowl also has a wide range. The White-headed Duck breeds along the western Mediterranean and winters in north Africa. While considered declining in many areas, it is not well established in captivity except at the Wildfowl Trust and in a few additional collections.

Additional species of concern in Africa include two species of serins and sunbirds, as well as a starling, crow, penguin, broadbill, peacock (the only peacock in Africa), bustard, crane, ibis and francolin.

With the exception of South Africa which has well over a hundred professional ornithologists, the rest of Africa seems to exhibit the same wildlife conservation challenges as most developing or third world nations. What conservation work is being done is coordinated through the various universities, museums and zoos that can afford such activities. The Pan African Ornithological Congress and Pan African Association of Zoological Gardens, Aquaria and Botanical Gardens serve to pull it somewhat together. As with the rest of the world, birds of prey and parrots are dealt with to a greater degree than insect or fruit eating species. Foreign

researchers play an important roll bringing expertise and funding to deal with species that otherwise would not be studied. While a great deal of conservation work needs to be done in west African countries, few ornithologists are willing to risk "life and limb" for such a cause.

In South Africa both conservation and avicultural organizations are well represented, the Endangered Wildlife Trust being one such forward-thinking conservation body. Aviculturists have both the Avicultural Council of South Africa as well as the excellent avicultural publication "Avizandum".

With imports dwindling in the near future many will likely focus on Australian and South American species. Particularly with the finches, our actions today will determine the diversity available to "fledgling" aviculturists tomorrow. We can only hope that it will always be possible to add a touch of Africa to our aviaries. Who knows, perhaps along the way we may develop the methodology needed to save a weaver or lovebird or serin from planetary extinction as well. ●

Greenwings  
Buffon's  
Hyacinths  
Militarys  
Blue and Golds  
Scarlets  
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Joanne Abramson  
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