



Preserving our biodiversity



The Lesotho Highlands Development Authority in collaboration with local and regional bird enthusiasts participated in the Bird Atlas Bash Project from the 7th to the 10th February 2025 targeting the eastern region of Mokhotlong and Ha Lejone in the western area near Katse Dam. The aim of this study was to review the status of Lesotho's endemic and or threatened bird species,

A Bird Atlas Project is a large-scale bird monitoring initiative designed to map the distribution and abundance of bird species over a specified geographical area. These projects aim to gather data on where bird species are found, how their populations are changing, and how they are distributed throughout different seasons and habitats. Bird atlases play a critical role in conservation by providing baseline data that can be used to track changes in bird populations over time.

While explaining how Atlasing is done and how and why it should be, Ms Refiloe Ntsohi, the Senior Biodiversity Officer, explained that there are several processes that are involved in Atlasing. The first one is to break a country into smaller and more manageable areas or units called Pentads. The second step is to make a recording of all species observed in the area, noting the number of times each species was seen. The third step is to create maps that show where each species is located and how widespread it is. The fourth step is to identify species that are in decline or areas that lack bird diversity, the data can guide habitat protection, restoration efforts etc.

Hailing the last step as being the trademark of all the processes as public participation, “Many bird atlas projects rely on the involvement of birdwatchers, volunteers, and the public. They allow people of all skill levels to contribute to scientific research and gain a deeper understanding of birdlife in their area”, Ntsohi concluded.

It was during the February Atlasing that various threatened and endemic species were recorded. These included the Drakensberg Rockjumper, Drakensberg Siskin, African Rock Pipit, Bearded Vulture, Cape Vulture, Verreaux’s Eagle, Black Stork, Southern Bald Ibis and Mountain Pipit. Also, of interest was recording many species at the very eastern edge of their arid range, such as Black-headed Canary, White-throated Canary, Karoo Scrub Robin, Layard’s Warbler and Grey Tit.

