

The Gompou

The Bustard SSP Newsletter

January 2019, Volume 16

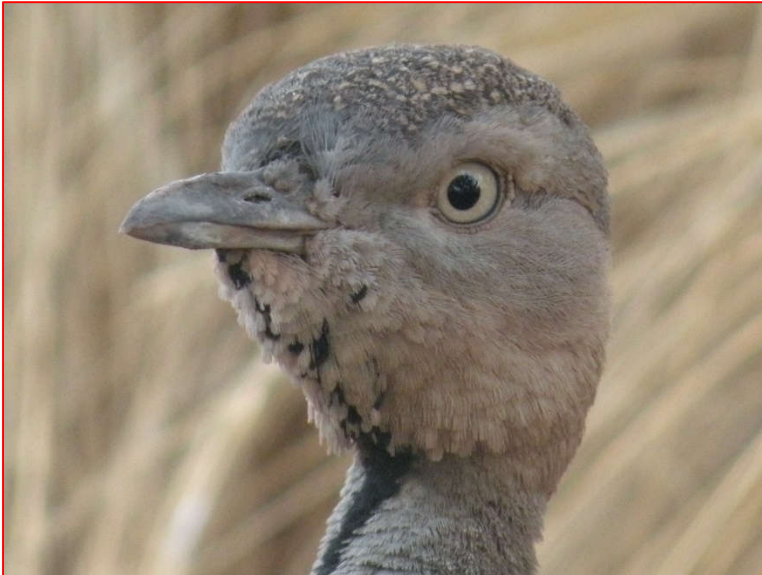


Photo by Amanda Donagi, Arizona Center for Nature Conservation/Phoenix Zoo



Photo by Tara Sprankle Arizona Center for Nature Conservation/Phoenix Zoo

The Gompou is an annual newsletter of the AZA Kori Bustard and Buff-crested Bustard Species Survival Plan

It is edited by Kori Bustard SSP Representative Lisa Murphy and Buff-crested Bustard SSP Coordinator Taylor Rubin

<http://www.koribustardssp.org/>

News from Africa

High power line collision mortality of threatened bustards at a regional scale in the Karoo, South Africa

Jessica M. Shaw, Tim A. Reid, Maurice Schutgens, Andrew R. Jenkins & Peter G. Ryan.

Abstract: Quantifying avian collisions with power lines at large spatial scales is difficult, but such mortality is of serious conservation concern for many bird species worldwide. To investigate effects on the Endangered **Ludwig's Bustard** (*Neotis ludwigii*) and two other bustard species, mortality surveys were conducted quarterly along high-voltage transmission lines at five sites (total length 252 km) across the Karoo for 2 years and one low-voltage distribution line site (95 km) for 1 year. Thirty bird species were found, with Ludwig's Bustards constituting 69% and other bustards a further 18% of carcasses ($n = 679$ birds). Significant explanatory variables of Ludwig's Bustard collisions were season (likely in winter), rainfall (less likely in drier areas) and year on transmission lines (highlighting variability between years). Season and proximity to roads were significant variables on distribution lines, with collisions more likely during winter and away from roads.

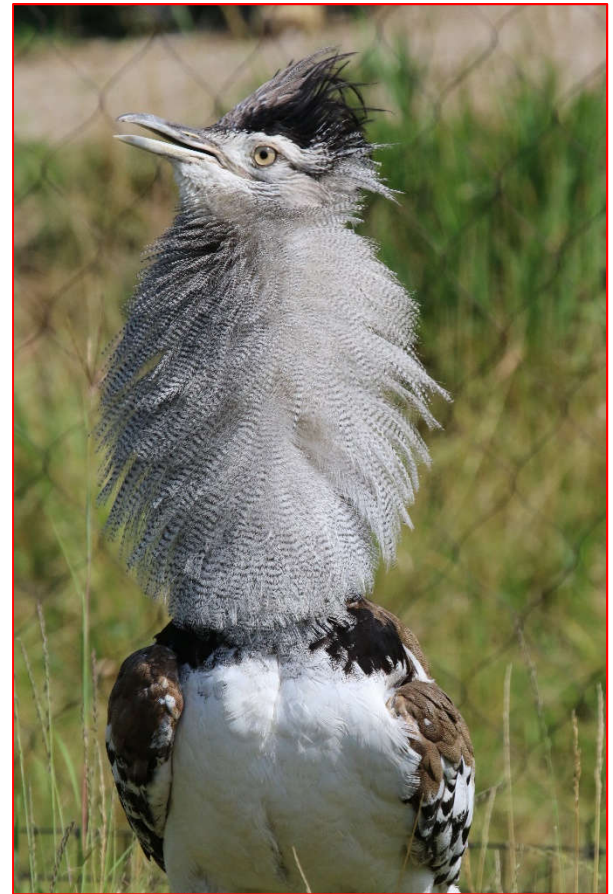


Ludwig's Bustard. Photo by Hans Hillewaert.

Ludwig's Bustard collision rates (corrected for survey biases) were higher on transmission (1.12; 95% confidence interval (CI) 0.40–2.58 bustards/km/year) than on distribution lines (0.86; 95% CI 0.30–1.96), but these smaller lines are four times as extensive in South Africa and so probably kill more birds. Despite being much less abundant, **Kori Bustards** (*Ardeotis kori*) were the second most commonly recovered species, with collision rates of 0.10 (95% CI 0.05–0.19) on transmission lines in the Nama Karoo alone. Collision rates are highly variable but suggest mortality suffered by these two species is worryingly high. This adds to growing concern about the impacts of power lines on bustards globally, so given ongoing expansion to the power grid, collision mitigation measures should be implemented at all new power lines.

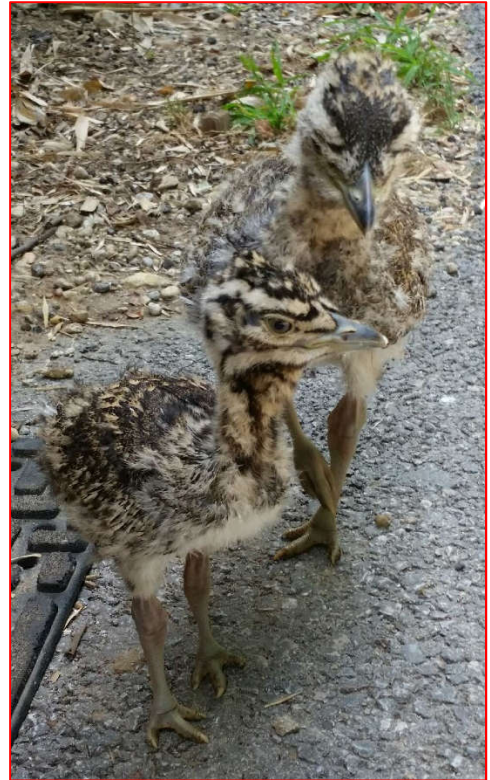
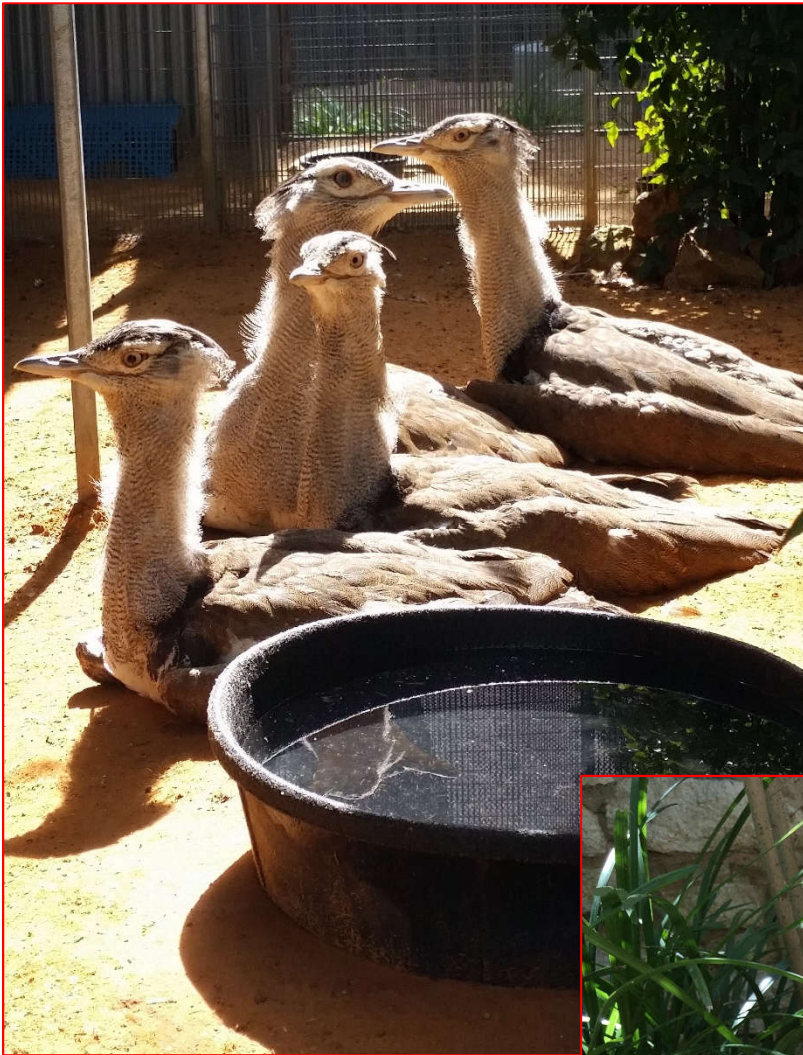
SSP News

Blank Park Zoo's Kori Bustard, Mosi, laid her first clutch of eggs this year! She is 9 years old now and housed with our male, Maana, who is 11. During the summer months, our Koris are on exhibit with two African Spurred Tortoises that occupy different levels of the exhibit but the Koris can get down to check out the tortoise's diet from time to time. In the winter months, the pair is housed in holding with chickens and guineas, and all get along well. Our Koris love being thrown insects and hoppers and occasionally catching live voles and other rodents on exhibit, to the bemusement/disgust of visitors.



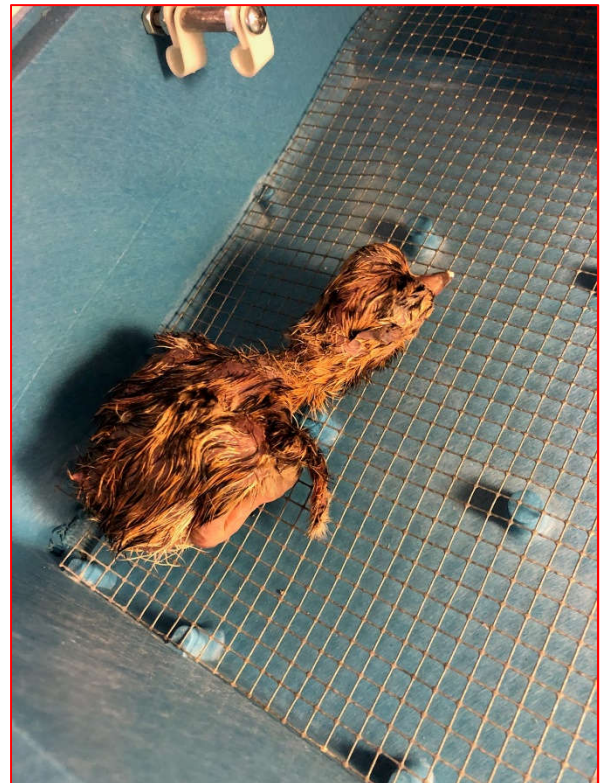
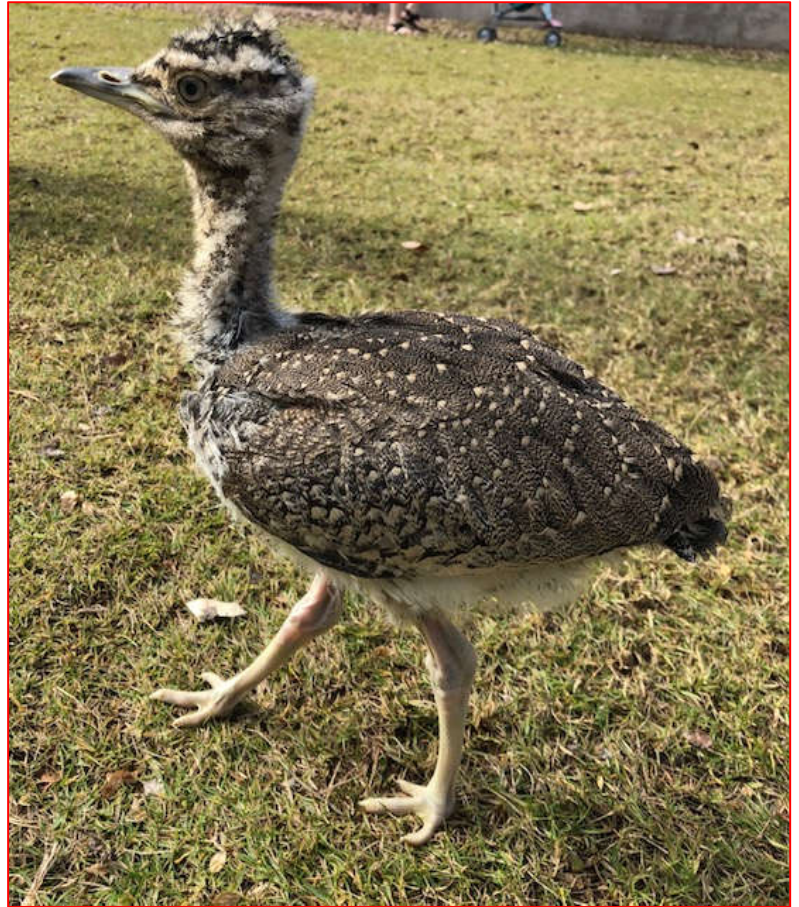
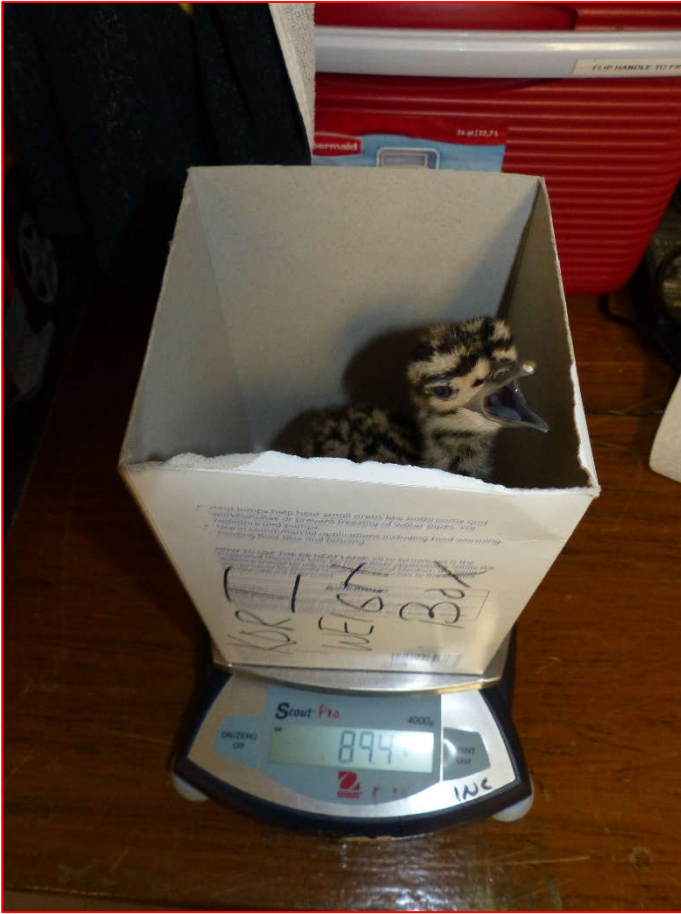
Photos sent by Megan Stegmeir

Fort Worth Zoo had chicks this year!



Photos sent by Shelly Collinsworth and Brad Hazelton.

And so did the Phoenix Zoo!



Koris!

New at Gladys Porter Zoo.

Colette Adams, Deputy Director Gladys Porter Zoo

It was about ten years ago at an AZA conference. I departed from my comfort zone (anything about reptiles) and sat in on a workshop about birds. My “take away” message came from National Zoo’s Sara Hallager. She did a great job making a passionate point about kori bustards. “These magnificent birds deserve their own exhibit space in zoos,” she said. “They are NOT additional cage furniture for large mammals. We need to move away from that mindset.”

Perhaps it was the “mother tiger” in her voice, but I never forgot her words. I was soon-after promoted to a general animal position at my zoo, and obviously had to expand my focus. So, in late 2017 when one of our exhibits that had previously housed hoofstock came open, I looked her up and asked if I could possibly accommodate one or two of these uniquely designed birds that looked to me like curious oversized roadrunners.

What happened next was delightful and a little bit terrifying. Firstly, she said “yes.” Secondly, as Sara patiently poured over the photo I had sent her of our prospective display for koris, I got a crash course in the athletic abilities and the kamikaze tendencies of these potentially explosive creatures. At her suggestion, retaining walls went higher, exposed limestone terracing was overplanted with grass so no toes could get stuck and the bamboo in the yard was groomed to avoid an accidental impaling. Clumps of soft grass were added to provide seclusion. Plans were made to “soften” the concrete wall at the front of the exhibit when the birds were placed in the yard.



Humble beginning: Exhibit before koris

Drew Foster at the Phoenix Zoo was very helpful as well. The birds, Jambo and Ngoma, a non-breeding pair housed at Phoenix, were selected for the trek to Gladys Porter Zoo. As they emerged from their shipping crates, I could not believe how sharp and charismatic they were!

After a long quarantine (Jambo needed toe surgery after startling in his stall one unexpectedly windy night), the day of the public debut approached. The yard was ready. The heated night house with the low ceiling was ready.



Temporary visual screen for introduction to exhibit

We kept the introduction to the new yard very low key because we had no idea what to expect. But, thanks to Sara and Drew, there were no surprises. It is amazing to me how calm a kori bustard can be when all seems well in their world.



A new challenge was posed as cool weather approached this winter. Although Jambo has been trained to station on a rubber mat, he never fully settled down when the mat was placed in his night house. The bird staff were not sure it was really safe to lock him in there on the occasional cold, rainy nights ahead. We already knew, first hand, what crazy things can happen when koris get nervous. They jump straight up and risk injury to themselves . . . either on the way up, or on the way down. So, learning from the experiences of others (thank you, Brad Hazelton, Ft. Worth Zoo!), we came up with a design that I hope

will work: A 4' infrared radiant heater was mounted in an aluminum shroud on the back side of the rear retaining wall of the exhibit right where Jambo prefers to spend his time. To create a drizzle- proof zone



near the heater, a waterproof canvas tarp supported by a 2" x 2" lumber frame was attached on the wall above the heater. Our carpenters created a sloped wooden eave just above where the tarp is attached, to keep water from getting between the tarp and the wall. And finally, to avoid kori-collisions, the support for the rain shield was placed up against a palm tree.



Close-up view of heated shelter. Previous photo shows the shelter as well.

Jambo's training mat is being moved closer and closer to the new rain shield, as is the dry food feeder. Fortunately, we have not yet experienced a really cold rainy night, but by the time we do, I have confidence that Jambo will feel comfortable with his new accommodations. Kori bustards are fantastic animals. Our visitors absolutely love them and so do our bird keepers. Sara was right, they totally deserve their own realm.



The Centro de Cría de Aves Esteparias, Spain <http://www.avutardas.com/Inicio.html> has been breeding kori bustards since 2014 from wild caught stock. In 2018, they hatched 14 chicks! The 2014 edition of The Gompou described their breeding success with koris. The Centro de Cría de Aves Esteparias is the only facility in Europe breeding kori bustards. In addition to breeding kori bustards, The Centro de Cría de Aves Esteparias has also bred great bustard, little bustard and white bellied bustard.



Remembering 'Miami'

Kirby Pitchford, Animal Care Professional II – Lorikeets and Interpretation



The bird team at Birmingham Zoo said goodbye to our oldest male kori bustard, Miami. After months of intensive care by both the bird staff and animal health team the decision was made to euthanize him on October 26, 2018. His initial leg injury was a swollen foot that occurred in early May during a bout of aggression with male conspecifics. He was moved to a holding yard at our animal health center where he spent several months undergoing frequent blood draws, radiographs, and daily doses of meloxicam. Once his appetite picked back up he was brought back to the bird department to an off-exhibit holding area. He never readjusted and had noticeable problems walking; only doing so occasionally for food. He started developing 'bed sores' on his keel from perpetually sitting, and coupled with his severe limp, swollen joints, and decreased appetite, a quality of life decision

was made.

Miami came to Birmingham from Zoo Miami in September 2014 and until his injury lived in our Kori Kountry exhibit (a large, re-purposed kangaroo yard) along with up to nine other koris, white storks, blue duikers, a black crowned crane, and a blue crane. He was wild-caught with an estimated hatch date of 1998 (putting him at around 20 years old) and sired one egg in May 2017 that didn't hatch. Fortunately, we were able to harvest many of his feathers for the kori bustard feather project. His keepers were very fond of him and will always remember his easy-going demeanor, impressive breeding displays, and sonorous booms.

To quote Golden Girls, "Miami, Miami, you've got style."

Fund Raising

Karaoke for Conservation: Sing to Benefit Birds!

Melissa King, CIGT

Education Advisor, Kori Bustard SSP

Manager of Public Programs, Zoo Atlanta

*I am pleased to share that the Karaoke for Conservation: Sing to Benefit Birds fundraiser generated **\$1,188.17** in donations for BirdLife Botswana! After several years of hosting internal fundraisers at Zoo Atlanta with staff and volunteers and our button fundraiser during Kori Bustard Awareness Day, we wanted to branch out and host an event in the community that was open to the public. The result was a well-attended karaoke night on June 29, 2018, at Cameli's Pizza, a local restaurant. The evening included an on-site and online silent auction on 32auctions.com, a signature cocktail, and a percentage of restaurant sales for the evening. Here are a few things I learned along the way:*

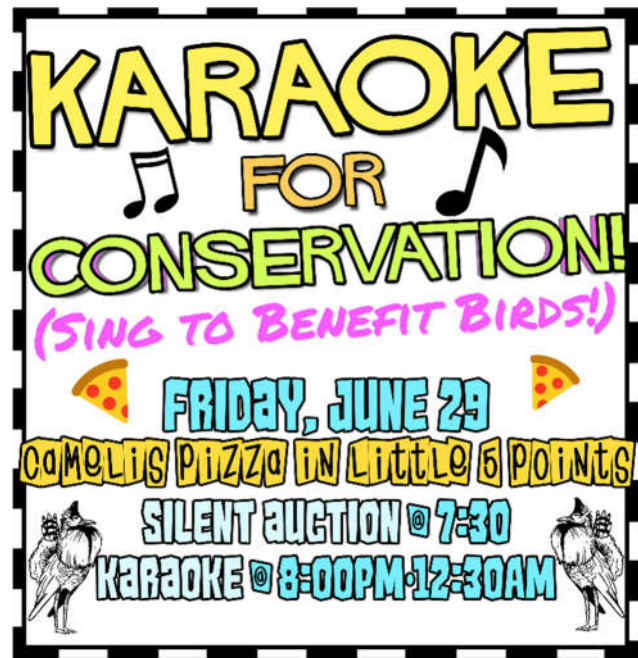


Photo by Laryssa Ferrara.

Make your purpose clear

Identify where the funds are going. Why should anyone donate to this cause when there are so many important issues that need our attention? The goal for this fundraiser was to support a conservation organization that did field work that directly benefitted kori bustards. The BirdLife Partnership, “strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.” As part of the BirdLife partnership, BirdLife Botswana works directly with the conservation of kori bustards. This in addition to the fact that the SSP already has a positive relationship with BirdLife Botswana with Kabelo Senyatso as our contact, they were a good fit. In promoting the event and throughout the evening, we reminded our audience of the threats to kori bustards and the work that BirdLife Botswana does in the field.

Set realistic expectations

Who will attend? What is your goal for amount to raise? This was my first time organizing a fundraiser that would be in a public place outside of the Zoo. I didn't know what to expect in terms of attendance, what silent auction donations we would receive, or how much we would raise. I was honestly incredibly nervous. I looked into how much money other conservation-based fundraisers hosted by Zoo staff had made and also did internet research about karaoke, trivia, movie, and dine-out nights hosted by schools or small groups to see what their advice was and how much they raised. I set our initial goal at \$500, which I now can see was low and will aim higher next time.

Use your connections

Do you know someone that works in a restaurant, music venue, or movie theater? Do you know anyone with special knowledge or talents that could be a part of your fundraiser? What do you enjoy doing? I love going out to karaoke with friends, and as a result have a connection with a fantastic karaoke host (I say he's the "best karaoke host in the Atl.") I sent him an e-mail explaining the purpose of the fundraiser and asking if he would be interested in hosting a karaoke night with the Kori SSP, to which he agreed.

Reach out to your community

How can the community participate or help? Finding a location was my main obstacle. I had the entertainment, but where would it take place? It needed to be somewhere not too far from the Zoo and in a high-traffic area to draw in the general public. I sent e-mails explaining the purpose of the fundraiser to several restaurants that I knew had hosted karaoke nights in the past, and heard back from Cameli's Pizza in Little 5 Points. They were wonderful to work with! They were excited to be part of our event to support a good cause. It would also bring in additional customers and provide an activity for the evening.

Ask for help!

This event would not have been possible without the enormous amount of support from other Zoo staff, especially our Bird Department, volunteers, and my friends and family. Any help that was offered, even if people could only commit to a short amount of time, I enthusiastically accepted. I put out a call for silent auction items to Zoo staff and volunteers and received quite a few items from art like framed kori footprints, a needle felted kingfisher, and paintings, to an Aldabra tortoise encounter. From arriving early that day to set up silent auction tables or just simply explaining the purpose of the fundraiser to other attendees, there was a lot to do in planning and hosting a successful evening.

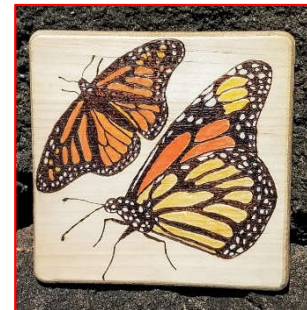


Promote your event

If you host an event, you are going to be putting in a lot of time and energy. For that to pay off, literally, it needs to have attendees, so promote, promote, promote! My husband created a flyer (he's very talented in editing and design...see "Use Your Connections" above) that was posted on social media and around the community, I created a Facebook event with regular updates leading up to the date, and Cameli's also promoted the event online.

I would be remiss if I did not include a THANK YOU to the following people for their help in planning and carrying out this fun and successful event: Huey Castaneda (our karaoke host), Sarah DiGioia (General Manager of Cameli's Pizza in Little 5 Points), Kyle Loomis, James Ballance, Jennifer Iacono, Taylor Rubin, Michelle Elliot, Kelsey Hughes, Lyndsay Newton, Jessica Titshaw, Stephanie Earhart, Rebecca Bearman, Christina Lavallee, and Kyle King.

If you have questions about our event or would like to collaborate in the future, please e-mail me! mking@zooatlanta.org





Kori bustard day is
March 23rd, 2019

<http://www.koribustardssp.org/>

KORI BUSTARD

SPECIES SURVIVAL PLAN

About the SSP

About Koris

GENERAL KORI INFO



General information about kori bustards, including physical characteristics, diet, and reproduction.

CONSERVATION & RESEARCH



Information about kori bustard conservation, including threats, conservation status, and research projects.

EDUCATOR'S NEST



Resources for kori education in the classroom, at home, or environmental education institutions.

HOW TO HELP



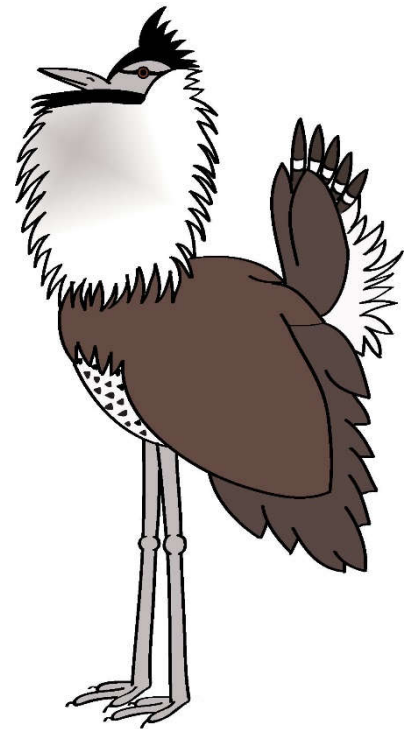
Want to help these amazing birds? Visit this section to learn more!

SSP BLOG



The latest updates and news from the SSP and an inside look at careers working with animals.

Is your Zoo conducting kori bustard keeper talks or other educational opportunities? Melissa King, Kori Bustard SSP Education Advisor, is creating a database of other Zoos' kori bustard education. If you don't have something currently, but would like to get started, feel free to reach out to us for resources! **Our goal is to have five zoos that are actively promoting kori bustards as an education focus in a regularly recurring program or talk that we can use as models for other institutions and also to create more educational resources.**

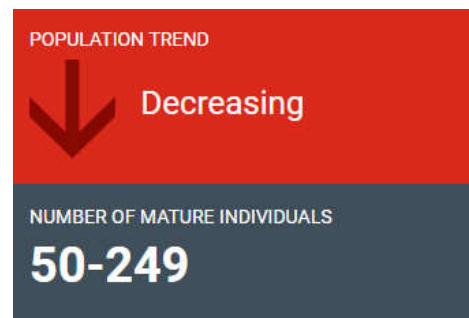
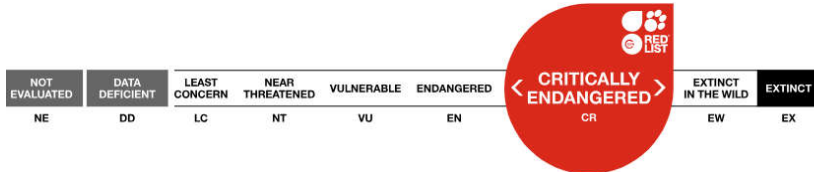


Kori Bustard SSP



In memory of "Moja", National Zoo 2013 – 2018. Photo by Janice Sveda

News of Other Bustards – Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*)



The great Indian bustard stands on the brink of extinction

<https://india.mongabay.com/2018/05/11/the-great-indian-bustard-stands-on-the-brink-of-extinction/>



- Once in the running to become India's national bird, the great Indian bustard (GIB) is now fluttering for survival. Earlier found across several states of India, it is now on the brink of extinction

- The bird's future is in peril. Its population has been on a continuous decline from an estimated 1,260 in 1969 to 300 in 2008 recording a decline of about 75 percent. At present, its population is estimated to be of less than 200 across Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh

- The fall in the population of the GIBs has been consistent over the decades. The biggest threat to their shrinking habitat has been industrialization, mining, intensive agricultural practices, mortality due to collision with electricity transmission lines, and stray dogs which are known to attack the bustard's eggs and chicks

Description	English: A Great Indian Bustard walking in Naliya grasslands, Kutch, India
Date	22 December 2011, 17:25:23
Source	Own work
Author	Prajwalkm

Buff-crested bustards

Hi, I'm Taylor Rubin and I'm the new buff-crested bustard SSP program leader and studbook keeper. I just wanted to write a quick blurb to introduce myself!

I've been in the Bird Department at Zoo Atlanta for the past three years where I've had the opportunity to work—and fall in love—with many different bird species. I'm part of two other TAGs (I'm an education advisor for the Raptor TAG and on the steering committee for the Parrot TAG), and I am really excited to be part of the Gruiformes TAG. Before becoming a card-carrying bird nerd, my background was mostly focused on primates (we all make mistakes, ok?). I've worked as a field researcher in Ecuador, Argentina, and Uganda and I received my master's degree in neuroscience and animal behavior from Emory University.

I can't wait to hear more from you all about your wonderful buff-crested bustards, and please feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns, comments: trubin@zooatlanta.org. I especially want to hear from you if you're interested in adding what is, in my completely unbiased opinion, the Best Bird of All Time to your collection.

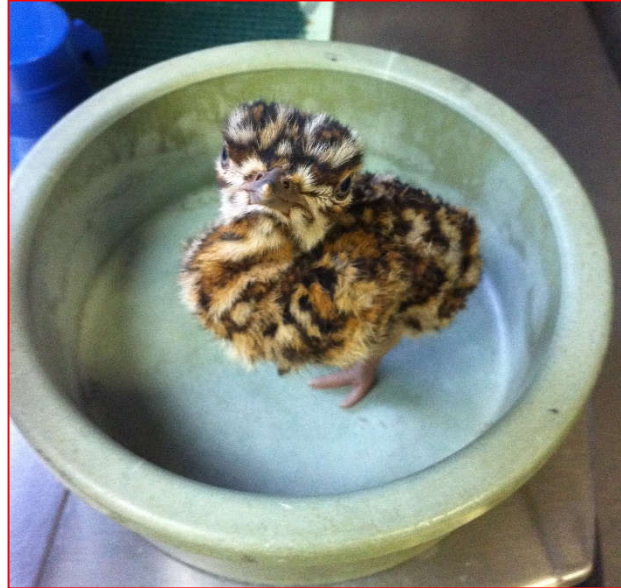
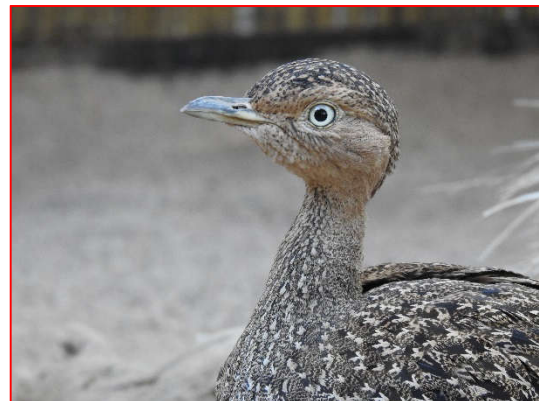


Photo credit: Dallas Zoo



Photos by Kyle Waites, Arizona Center for Nature Conservation/Phoenix Zoo.

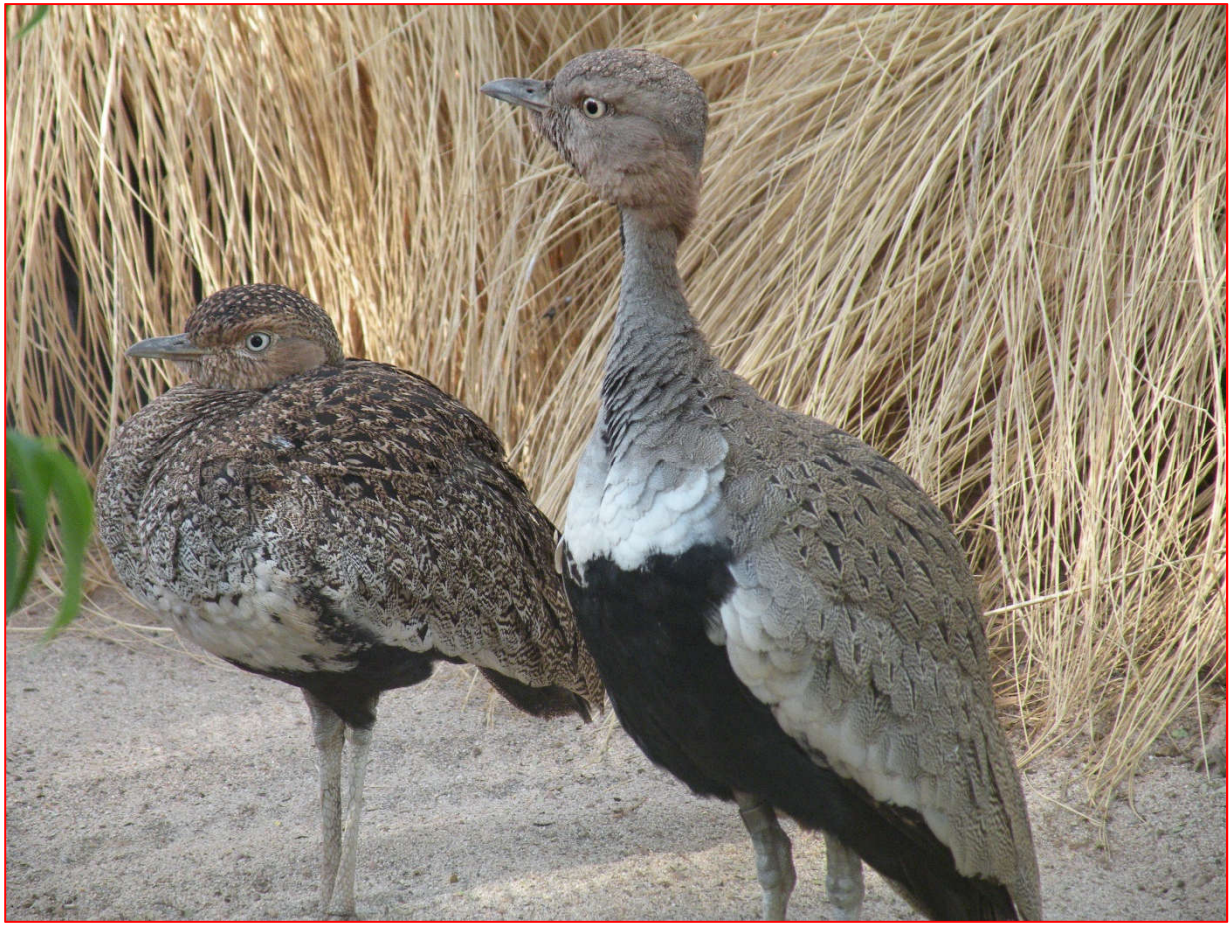


Photo by Amanda Donagi Arizona Center for Nature Conservation/Phoenix Zoo

Buff-crested Bustards

Lisa Murphy - Senior Keeper, Arizona Center for Nature Conservation/Phoenix Zoo

I have loved the years I've spent working with Buff-crested Bustards. If you've worked with Kori Bustards, these are 18-inch versions of those giant beauties. All that attitude given to you from less than knee-height. Watching our female give me the spread-wing, Sun Bittern-style threat display when she's incubating or raising chicks makes me want to give her a bear hug. Probably not her intention. Outside of this, most of our bustards have been very calm and easy to work around. They work well with other species in smaller exhibits – we've had them in with starlings, barbets, and turacos. They like to have bushes or grass clumps to hide around, but are happy lying next to it in full view of visitors. Our female even chooses to nest right up front next to the pond, no matter how unhappy she is every time I clean it. The male has a fantastic visual display, just make sure he has some open space to execute those tall jumps. You and your guests can hear his escalating calls from quite a distance. Up close, it actually hurts!

2018 Kori Bustard Keeper of the Year

Gwen Cooper is a Bird Keeper at the Smithsonian's National Zoo, Washington DC. Gwen joined the Zoo in 1993 and has worked in the bird department since that time, primarily with flamingos, ratites, waterfowl and bustards. She especially loves working with the Zoo's flock of kori bustards. Since the late 1990's when the National Zoo began its breeding program, Gwen has been instrumental in rearing nearly 60 kori bustard chicks. She developed a quick and easy way to assess hydration in chicks by looking at the tightness of the skin on their legs (tight skin = dehydrated; loose skin = hydrated). She is one of the best kori catchers I have ever seen!

I asked Gwen what it was about koris that she liked so much. She said she finds these large birds simply fascinating. She loves their different and larger than life personalities, and thinks more zoos should have these amazing birds because they make excellent exhibit birds, especially the males when they display. She likes their physical attributes, such as their large size, tiny feet and beautiful brown feathers that are tinged pink when suddenly shed. She loves mimicking their habit of eating gum from acacia trees by smearing peanut butter on trees and finding novel ways to enrich their natural curiosity. Gwen said she enjoys talking to guests about the kori fly tying program and how zoos are helping to save koris by sending naturally molted feathers for fly tiers to use in their craft. She loves how incredibly powerful these birds are (and yet so fragile!) and wishes she could see these birds flying in the wild.

It is rare to have a keeper work with koris for 25+ years and because of her dedication and experience, Gwen knows kori bustard behavior better than just about anyone. **Kudos to Gwen Cooper, 2018 kori bustard keeper of the year!**

Interview by Sara Hallager, Smithsonian's National Zoo, Washington DC

