BIG BIRDING DAY

Connecting Birds to People and Nature

UGANDA BIG BIRDING DAY REPORT: June 2009

NatureUganda in collaboration with UWA, honorary wardens and other partners including NFA and Uganda Bird guides club organized the Big Birding Day in commemoration of the 100years of Nature conservation by NatureUganda. This event was a 06:00am to 06:00pm bird watching exercise with the overall aim of documenting how many bird species can be recorded in a single day in our rich country Uganda.

Records from all parts of the country were then collected and the "winners" were awarded during the Nature Gala Night, on the 19th of June 2009 at Serena Hotel. On this day, UWA and NFA granted free entry for all participants bird watching in National Parks, Wildlife Reserves and Forest Reserves. The winner of the birding race was Mr. Johnnie Kamugisha, who received an award at the Nature Gala Night, a corporate event organized as part of the centenary celebrations.

The five-year strategic plan for the ministry of Trade, industry and tourism aims at improving tourism contribution to the GDP from the current four per cent to six per cent, number of visitors from the baseline of 642,000 to 1,500,000, the number people employed in the tourism sector from the baseline of 95,000 to 200,000, investment from the current baseline of $64 million to $200 million and the number of domestic tourism which is still under developed reaching 3,000,000 by the year 2013. Tourism is one of the most important sectors in developing our economy as it is a major source of foreign exchange earnings. This calls for more training of guides and awareness campaigns on the tourism potential of the country in order to promote tourism.

Uganda has more species than any other country in Africa and compares very well with the top countries in South America. However, very few Ugandans are aware of this rich diversity of birds present in this country. For this reason, NatureUganda aimed at improving this awareness through the "Uganda Big Birding Day" and also promoting avi-conservation and avi-tourism. Avi-tourism is one of the products and services of ecotourism and contributes significantly to conservation and as well as economic growth. Although avi-tourism is developing in Uganda, it is mainly by tourists and very few locals. For this reason, we hope that the Uganda Big Birding Day will create more awareness and thus improve on local tourism.

How the Bird-Watching Was Organized

The event included guided nature walks through out the country with expert ornithologists and/or bird guides from among ***Nature***Uganda membership and Uganda Bird Guides Club leading participants at various locations to a competition on Bird watching through out the country. The event involved selecting groups each with at least 2 members who are experienced bird watchers/guides to confirm the species identification. The selected sites are among the important bird areas of Uganda and are well known for their rich diversity of birds. They also represent the different vegetation types of Uganda and thus catter for all the species that can be recorded in the country. These sites included; Bwindi Impenetrable NP, Kibimba Rice Scheme, Echuya FR, Kilak FR, Amuru-Gulu, Kasyoha Kitoni FR, Kidepo Valley NP, L. Mburo NP, Lutembe Bay, Mabamba, Mabira FR, Makerere University, Nabajjuzi Wetland, IUIU Mbale, Nyamitanga & Rwizi- Mbarara, Mt. Elgon and Nabugabo Wetland. The main Launch was held at the Rain Forest Lodge in Mabira FR. Other mini events were held in Mbarara, Mbale and Gulu Universities.

Results

A total of 386 species were recorded in the 17 sites covered during the Uganda Big Birding Day 2009. The highest number of species was 156 recorded in Buhoma in Bwindi Impenatrable NP, followed by Mabamba bay. Some of the significant species include the Wattled Crane that was recorded in Kibimba Rice Scheme Eastern Uganda, the Shoebill recorded in Mabamba and the Osprey in Kilak FR, Gulu.



The species recorded included 12 species of Global conservation concern with one vulnerable, one endangered and two neat threatened species among others. 39 species of regional conservation concern were recorded, the majority of these being near-threatened. Five afro-tropical migrants and Ten Pale-arctic migrants were recorded. The majority of species recorded were those breeding in the region as most migrants had already set off back to their breeding grounds. The majority of species recorded were forest specialists, followed by the wetland species mainly because most of the sites visited were forests, including the site for the main launch of the Big Birding Day.

Numbers of species recorded in the sites covered during the Uganda Big Birding Day 2009. Sites are arranged in order of numbers of species recorded

Site	District	Number of species
Buhoma-Bwindi	Kabale/Kanungu	156
Mabamba Bay	Wakiso	99
Bushenyi	Bushenyi	87
Lake Mburo National Park	Mbarara	84
Mabira Forest Reserve	Mukono	76
Nabajjuzi wetland & Kumbu Forest Reserve	Masaka	63
Lutembe Bay	Wakiso	58
Kilak Central Forest Reserve	Amuru/Gulu	56
Botanical Gardens Entebbe	Wakiso	41
Nkokonjeru site	Mbarara	41
Echuya Forest Reserve	Kabale	39
Nyamitanga site	Mbarara	34
Makerere University	Kampapa	31
Kibimba rice scheme	Bugiri	30
Mt Elgon NP	Mbale	29
Lake Nabugabo	Masaka	21
Rwizi site	Mbarara	4
Total		386

Categories of species recorded during the Uganda Big Birding Day 2009

Category	Number of species
Global threat status	
Vulnerable (G-VU)	1
Endangered (G-EN)	1
Near-threatened (G-NT)	2
Regional Responsibility (G-RR)	8
Regional threat status	
Vulnerable (R-VU)	12
Endangered (R-EN)	2
Near-threatened (R-NT)	14
Regional Responsibility (R-RR)	11

Migration status	
Afro-tropical Migrant (AfM)	5
Pale-arctic Migrant (PM)	10
Breeds in the Region (RB)	45
Habitat	
Forest Specialist (FF)	20
Forest Visitor (f)	13
Wetland Species (W)	15
Grassland species (G)	3