BIG BIRDING DAY

Connecting Birds to People and Nature

UGANDA BIG BIRDING DAY 2010 REPORT

NatureUganda in collaboration with Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), Sustainable Tourism in the Albertine Rift (STAR-Uganda), Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), Uganda Bird Guides Club (UBGC), and Uganda Community Tourism Association (UCOTA) came together to organize a three-day Birding event known as the Big Birding Day (BBD) to coincide with the World Bird Festival. The events included the launch of the Big Birding Day on 14th October, The Big Birding Day on 15th October and the Big Birding Festival on 16th October.

Launch of the Big Birding day was on 14th October at the Uganda Museum where a presentation was made on birds and birding in Uganda. It was clearly noted that tourism promotion in Uganda must be holistic but emphasizing products that Uganda has comparative advantage over other species. Birding is probably the biggest of these products. The big birding day is a birding race. It is one innovation to raise awareness about birds in Uganda and promote birding as an important tourism product, added to the gorillas.



The Big Birding Day on 15th October 2010 was a 24-hour bird watching exercise beginning at midnight on 15th October 2010 to midnight on 16th October 2010. It involved teams recording birds in different parts of the country including all National Parks, Wildlife reserves, Important Bird Areas, Ramsar sites, Forest reserves, areas around Kampala and many other sites. Each team chose a site where they conducted the birding race. The organizers assigned some sites to ensure full coverage of important birding sites. The teams comprised at least 2

people (lead birder and a recorder) who have good knowledge of birding and many others who joined. Each group was equipped with at least a pair of binoculars, a guide book and a note book. The teams recorded all the birds seen and heard calling in their sites at anytime of the day. The team leader then submitted the results from the birding by either email or on phone.

The organizing committee set up a tally centre at ***Nature***Uganda to receive all records from all participating sites. The tally centre was equipped with six computers fully connected with internet, three telephone lines and nine people. Results were received at the tally centre beginning Friday evening to Saturday morning. Our strategy was to work out the best itinerary that a tourist would take to record the highest number of species in Uganda.

Participants were organized in 41 groups covering 33 sites in all regions of Uganda. The teams included community groups from Katwe, Ruboni in Rwenzori, Echuya Forest Reserve, Conserve Uganda in Katakwi, Mabamba bay, Kashoha Kitomi and Kyambura Reserve, Tourist teams, teams of NatureUganda members, teams in all national parks in Uganda, UBGC members and other interested parties.

The results were announced in a ceremony on the day after the birding day 16th October, code named **"The Big Birding Festival".**

RESULTS

From the results, a total of 606 species were recorded on that day. The highest record came from the Kampala-Entebbe area with 175 species. This was followed by Murchison Falls National Park with 163 species, Queen Elizabeth National Park with 160 species, Kidepo Valley National Park with 149 species, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park with 137 species, Mabira Forest Reserve with 136 species, Makanaga Bay on Mabamba Ramsar site with 136 species, Mpanga-Sangobay area with 133 species, Bahai temple-Park Alexander with 126 species, Mabamba Bay with 119 species, Kibale National Park with 110 species and Lake Mburo National Park with 110 species.

SITE	SPECIES	BIRDERS
MURCHISON FALLS NP	163	6
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY	40	16
RWENZORI MT NP	81	15
NAMULONGE-KAWANDA	73	3
LUTEMBE BAY	82	20
MABAMBA BAY	119	15
MUSAMBWA ISLANDS	16	1
ENTEBBE AREA	175	3
LAKE MBURO NP	110	15
KIBIMBA	33	35
NABAJUZZI	67	82
KASOHYA KITOMI	72	21
BAHAI-PARK ALEXANDER	126	30
ARUA AREA	19	1

MBARARA AREA	94	11
MAKANAGA	133	7
BUDONGO FR	41	2
MIGYERA-KAFU AREA	80	5
KATWE QENP	10	4
KIDEPO VALLEY NP	150	4
ECHUYA FR	69	33
KIBALE NP	110	3
BWINDI IMPENETRABLE NP	137	3
MPANGA-SANGOBAY	211	1
MABIRA FR	136	17
SEMLIKI NP	40	1
LAKE OPETA	15	2
QUEEN ELIZABETH NP	160	8
MGAHINGA NP	63	3
LUSANJA-MPERERWE	37	1
NKURINGO CULTURAL SITE	56	3
MT. ELGON NP(MATHENICO)	107	4
TOTAL	**622**	**375**

There were a number of key species recorded during this exercise that are of particular interest to the birders. These include species that have not been documented on the Ugandan list for over 50 years and were about to be removed from the list, species that are not on the Uganda list at all and those that have over time extended their ranges to areas where they have not been recorded before. These species are listed in the table below.

Table: Unusual sightings recorded during the UBBD 2010 (According to the East African Rarities Committee- EARC)

Species	**Site**	**Comment**
African Cuckoo	Murchison Falls NP	African Cuckoo usually arrives in late November
Yellow Crowned Canary	Rwenzori NP	According to the Atlas does not occur in Rwenzori
Orange Tufted Sunbird	Mabamba	Not recorded in last 50 years (according to EARC)
Black Swift	Mabira	More of an upland species possibly
Narrow-tailed Starling	Mabira	Only occurs in extreme W and SW forests
White-browed Crombec	Semliki	Forest on Hills i.e. Echuya
Purple Headed Starling	Mbarara	Usually in good forest
Grey-headed Social Weaver	Mbarara	Semi arid acacia Moroto and Kidepo
Grey headed Kingfisher	Makanaga	Not ideal habitat possibly woodland
Black casqued Hornbill	Bwindi	Only recorded from Semliki
Shelley's Rufous Sparrow	QENP	Occurs NW Uganda-MFNP perhaps
Yellow Streaked Greenbul	Budongo Forest	Only recorded from Bwindi according to Atlas
Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse	Kidepo	Only 2 old records from NE Uganda.
Black throated Barbet	Kidepo	3rd Ugandan record
Grey-headed Batis	Kidepo	2nd Uganda record
Western Black headed Oriole	Kidepo	Good forest species
Red-rumped Swallow	Nabajjuzi	Upland species
Broad tailed paradise weaver	Nabajjuzi	Normal range is south of L.Victoria –its host species Orange winged Pytilia extremely scarce

The Big Birding Festival on Saturday 16th October 2010 was the climax of the three-day events in Uganda. It began with a morning bird walk around the Katomi area and members later assembled for a ceremony where presentations and announcements of the results from the BBD exercise were made. Speakers included representatives from the USAID Mission, Uganda Wildlife Authority, ***Nature***Uganda and the Ministry of Tourism Trade and Industry. There was entertainment from Railways Primary School and Sacred Heart Primary School Bugonga and from local artists like Joab, Aziz Azion and Rabadaba. Other activities for the day included face painting, competitions and quizzes by the MCs Roger Mugisha and Straka Mwezi.

NatureUganda and the Big Birding Festival organizing committee would like to appreciate and thank all the sponsors and supporters of this festival who include but are not limited to;

- Katomi Kingdom Resort
- The Vice President of Uganda for supporting the event
- Uganda Wildlife Authority - in addition to financial and technical support, offered free entrance to all Protected Areas for bird watching on this day
- USAID STAR- programme for financial and technical support
- National Forestry Authority for free entrance to all forest reserves
- Uganda Community Tourism Association
- Uganda Tourism Board
- Uganda Birds guides club
- Pride Microfinance
- Rwenzori Bottling Company
- Jane Goodal Institute
- Daily Monitor
- SMS Media