BIG BIRDING DAY

Connecting Birds to People and Nature

2013

Report

By

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BIG BIRDING DAY 2013

The theme for the BBD 2013 event was: Connecting Birds to People and Nature. This theme was very relevant to this year because, if harnessed properly, people could substantially improve their welfare and the country could benefit from the value chain of the birding cycle in Uganda. However, we need to conserve the natural environments and habitat for these birds in order to realize these tangible benefits. The sub theme for this BBD was "**Birding, Our Livelihood, Our Economy**".

How the Big Birding Day 2013 Events were organized

The Big Birding Day was organised as a three day event on the 18th, 19th and 26th October 2013. The events included the launch of the Big Birding Day on 18th October, the Birding Day on 19th October and the Big Birding Festival on 26th October.

The launch was a small event to announce the schedule of all activities and set off the birders to conduct birding the following day. It was in form of a public talk with Mr. Raymond Engena, Director for Tourism in the Uganda Wildlife Authority as the guest speaker talking about birds, economic development and conservation in Uganda.

The birding event included guided nature walks throughout the country with expert ornithologists and/or bird guides from among ***Nature***Uganda membership, UWA staff and other interested birders leading participants at various locations to a competition on Bird watching throughout the country. The event was a 24 hour bird watching contest throughout the country, from midnight to midnight the following day. All birds seen and heard calling within the sites was recorded by the group at that site.

Birding sites

Birding sites included all national parks and forest reserves, Important Bird Areas and Ramsar sites and other private sites. These sites were selected to represent the different vegetation types of Uganda and thus different species in these habitats are expected to be recorded.

Participants' registration

Everybody was invited and called upon to participate in this National event. **To participate**, you were required to register with Nature Uganda at their office on Plot 1 Katalima Crescent, Naguru or at their **website www.natureuganda.org**, or at their branches at the Universities in Gulu, Mbarara and Mbale and at all National Parks, Wildlife Reserves and Forest Reserves.

Collection of results

A tally centre was set up at ***Nature***Uganda to receive all records from all participating sites. The tally centre was equipped with computers fully connected with internet, telephone lines and personnel. Results from the birding event were received at the tally centre beginning as soon as teams start leaving the birding sites. The strategy was to receive, compile and analyze all the

data and come up with a summary from all the participating sites before the Big Birding Festival on which these results were to be announced.

The Birding Festival

The Big Birding Festival was the climax of the Big Birding Day events. It began with a morning bird walk around a selected site and members later assembled for a ceremony where there were speeches, presentations in form of songs, mimes, skits and poems, from the seven participating schools and announcements of the results from the Birding exercise. Awards were given out to the business sponsors and the best birding teams. Uganda Wildlife Authority also awarded participating school as a way of appreciating and encouraging the participation of the young generation in conservation and tourism issues in the country.

The organizing Committee

The organizing of the BBD events is done by a National committee made of ***Nature***Uganda partners that come together to plan and fundraise for the BBD events. The following institutions have been the organizing partners in the BBD 2013 events;

1. NatureUganda (NU)
2. Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA)
3. Tourism for Biodiversity project (USAID-AWF-T4B)
4. Diary of a muzungu
5. Guide2Uganda

RESULTS

The over 489 participants who participated in the birding race, covered 73 sites in the 32 general conservation areas and recorded 708 bird species. This makes this birding race the best ever for the life of the activity. The number of species recorded represents 67.4% and an increase of 51 species from last BBD 2012. We recorded 386 in 2009, 622 in 2010, 569 in 2011 and 657 in 2012. The list of birds recorded in all the BBD 2013 sites can be got from appendix II.

Mt. Elgon National Park recorded the highest number of species with 275 (88.1% of the total species of the park) the highest for any site since the BBD started. It was followed by Murchison Falls National park with 267 species (55.7% of total species for the park) and then Queen Elizabeth National Park with 250 species (44.1% of total known for the site). Generally, protected area (PA) sites recorded more species than non-protected sites (Table 1).

Interestingly, the lowest number of species for the PA sites (Table 2) was the same as that for the non-PA sites (Table 3). Among the non-protected area sites, Team Jinja recorded the highest number of species (180), followed by Mabamba Bay (114) and then Masaka-Nabajjuzi area with 104 species (Table 3). This indicates the value of the non protected sites, which implied that they also need some form of protection as important habitats for the conservation of species in the country.

This year, we have had very good counts with most teams recording species numbers higher than the previous BBDs. We had 21 sites recording 200 species not recorded in any other site (Table 4). Notably are Mt. Elgon NP (54 species), Murchison Falls NP (30) and Bwindi Impenetrable NP with 29 unique species (Table 4).

Among the interesting species recorded for the day is the Shoebill; an important species for tourist attraction, recorded in five sites (Appendix II). The 183 species of conservation concern recorded during the race (Appendix III) include the Ruddy Turnstone (QENP), Karamoja Apalis, Bamboo Warbler, Moorland Francolin (MENP), African Black-duck and White bellied Robin-Chat (BINP), Jackson's Hornbill and Singing Bush Lark (KVNP). We also had species that are yet to be confirmed on the Uganda list like the White-crowned Lapwing (KVNP), Wahlberg's Honeybird (LMNP), Thick-Billed Honeyguide (MENP & QENP) and Eastern Double-collared Sunbird (MENP) (yet to be approved for the Uganda Checklist by the EARC). Other interesting species can be seen in appendix I.

Table 1: Number of species recorded, participants and number of sites covered for all the major birding sites

	SITE	SPECIES	TYPE*	PARTICIPANTS	SITES
1	MT. ELGON NATIONAL PARK	275	PR	11	7
2	MURCHISON FALLS NATIONAL PARK	267	PR	7	4
3	QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK	252	PR	12	8
4	BWINDI IMPENETRABLE NATIONAL PARK	206	PR	2	1
5	KIBALE NATIONAL PARK	183	PR	11	3
6	TEAM JINJA	180	UP	7	3
7	LAKE MBURO	152	PR	6	5
8	KIDEPO VALLEY NATIONAL PARK	127	PR	6	2
9	MABAMBA BAY	114	UP	23	1
10	RUBONI	103	PR	7	2
11	MASAKA-NABAJUZZI AREA	103	UP	123	3
12	BUDONGO FOREST RESERVE	96	PR	26	1
13	ENTEBBE PENINSULA	94	UP	15	2
14	KATSOHYA KITOMI	92	PR	7	3
15	KAWANDA & NAMULONGE- GAYAZA RD	82	UP	3	3
16	SEMLIKI NATIONAL PARK	82	PR	3	1
17	MABIRA FOREST RESERVE	81	PR	9	1
18	ECHUYA FOREST RESERVE	74	PR	11	4
19	ZIIKA FOREST & KAJJANSI FISH FARM	67	UP	25	2
20	OPETA-BISINA	60	UP	7	2
21	TOORO SEMLIKI WILDLIFE RESERVE	59	PR	3	1
22	MAKANAGA BAY	58	UP	7	2
23	MBARARA UNIVERSITY	58	UP	44	1
24	LUSANJA	58	UP	1	1
25	BAHAI & PARK ALEXANDER	56	UP	3	2
26	KATWE -KASESE	46	UP	3	1
27	KATONGA WILDLIFE RESERVE	38	PR	2	1
28	MGAHINGA GORILLA NATIONAL PARK	37	PR	6	1
29	GULU- PAKWACH	34	UP	78	1
30	KIBIMBA RICE SCHEME	33	UP	13	2
31	RWENZORI MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK	33	PR	5	1
32	MAKERERE UNIVERSITY	33	UP	3	1
	TOTAL SPECIES	**708**		**489**	**73**

PR= Protected Area UN=Non-protected Area

Table 2: Protected Area Teams Ranking

SITE	SPECIES
MT. ELGON NATIONAL PARK	275
MURCHISON FALLS NATIONAL PARK	267
QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK	252
BWINDI IMPENETRABLE NATIONAL PARK	206
KIBALE NATIONAL PARK	183
LAKE MBURO	152
KIDEPO VALLEY NATIONAL PARK	127
RUBONI	103
BUDONGO FOREST RESERVE	96
KATSOHYA KITOMI	92
SEMLIKI NATIONAL PARK	82
MABIRA FOREST RESERVE	81
ECHUYA FOREST RESERVE	74
TOORO SEMLIKI WILDLIFE RESERVE	59
KATONGA WILDLIFE RESERVE	38
MGAHINGA GORILLA NATIONAL PARK	37
RWENZORI MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK	33

Table 3: Non- Protected Area Teams Ranking

SITE	SPECIES
TEAM JINJA	180
MABAMBA BAY	114
MASAKA-NABAJUZZI AREA	103
ENTEBBE PENINSULA	94
KAWANDA & NAMULONGE- GAYAZA ROAD	82
ZIIKA FOREST & KAJJANSI FISH FARM	67
OPETA-BISINA	60
MAKANAGA BAY	58
MBARARA UNIVERSITY	58
LUSANJA	58
BAHAI & PARK ALEXANDER	56
KATWE -KASESE	46
GULU- PAKWACH	34
KIBIMBA RICE SCHEME	33
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY	33

Table 4: Number of unique species recorded during the Big Birding Day 2013

SITE	UNIQUE SPECIES
MT. ELGON NP	54
MURCHISON FALLS NP	30
BWINDI IMPENETRABLE NP	29
QUEEN ELIZABETH NP	15
SEMULIKI NP	14
KIDEPO VALLEY NP	11
LAKE MBURO NP	11
BUDONGO FR	8
KIBALE NP	5
RUBONI	5
OPETA-BISINA	4
JINJA	3
KIBIMBA RICE SCHEME	2
MGAHINGA GORILLA NP	2
ECHUYA FR	1
LUTEMBE & ENTEBBE AREA	1
MAKANAGA BAY	1
GULU- PAKWACH	1
KATONGA WR	1
LUSANJA	1
TOORO SEMILIK WR	1
TOTAL	**200**

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the organizing committee BBD 2013, ***Nature***Uganda would like to extend their heartfelt appreciation to all BBD 2013 sponsors and supporters, especially to Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) for their undivided commitment towards promoting and supporting birding activities and the Big Birding Day in Uganda. This year, the BBD teams in national parks made the birding very competitive and full of excitement as they were all targeting being in the winning team and this spirit should be maintained. The other organizing committee members; Diary of a Muzungu, Guide to Uganda and USAID's Tourism for Biodiversity project, thanks for your support and valuable time put into BBD. To the participants, there would not be BBD without you, thank you for your birding spirit and keep it up.