THE UGANDA BIG BIRDING DAY 2015

***Nature*Uganda, Kampala Uganda** – The BBD is a birding activity that was organized by NatureUganda in collaboration with The Uganda Tourism Board (UTB), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), and Uganda Wildlife Education Centre (UWEC) and with support from other partners. The activity combines avian conservation with awareness and tourism development aimed at use of bird conservation to help promote domestic tourism in the country and to promote Uganda as a global birding destination as well as bridge the information gap by linking up all bird watchers, tourism promoters and conservationists with each other and the rest of the world in an exciting event.

The BBD 2015 was launched on 12th November 2015 at the Uganda Museum. The guest of honor, the commissioner of Uganda Tourism Board officiated and launched the BBD 2015. The event saw a number of presentations. Mr. Kaddu from USAID informed participants the importance of birding. In his words "birding earns millions of dollars to economies as a tourist activity". Dr. Julius Arinaitwe the CEO of BirdLife Africa brought to awareness the fact that the vultures are indeed disappearing from the skies of Africa and in Uganda as well.

The birding race which was conducted on 14thNovember 2015 was coordinated by *Nature*Uganda. The race attracted an incredible competition from 25 birding teams and over 271 participants across the country. This produced698 bird species compared 731 from the previous BBD 2014. This event has gained participation from local and international participants over the years among the dedicated souls of birders, tourism promoters and conservationists in Uganda. The highest record for the day was 357 species from Queen Elizabeth National Park, followed by 292 species from Murchison Falls National Park, and then Kidepo valley National Park followed with 239 species and Bwindi Impenetrable National Park 190 species.

The Birding festival was held at the Serena Hotel Kampala. This was the climax of the BBD. Presentation of the results, awards and recognition to the teams for participation are done. It saw speeches from distinguished guests including speakers from all the organizing partners. In his remarks, at the BBD festival, UTB informing od developing tourism clusters in all parts of the country, UWA making tourism enjoyable by ensuring that material parks are meant to have are available and particularly those meant for birding. *Nature*Uganda's Chairperson Dr. Robert Nabanyumya emphasized the need of not deviating from the original intention of BBD which was creating awareness and doing conservation. The Birdlife CEO talked about the Vultures and the need to protect them Uganda Birdlife Club emphasized the need of training of quality guides.With this number of bird species both in and outside protected areas, a birding trip around Uganda is the most rewarding in east and central tropical birding destinations, he continued to emphasize.

*Nature*Uganda would like to thank its members and partners for taking part in the birding exercise. Above all, the organisation remains committed to carrying out more bona fide research thereby contributing to biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management by promoting the understanding, appreciation and conservation of nature.