

Project Update: May 2020

This fieldwork was conducted before the COVID -19 pandemic. The work was conducted in two wetlands (Barijag and Nyander wetlands) situated around the project site to assess bird species.

Barijag wetland

Before reaching the wetland, there is a small village called Matar serving as administrative center for Wanthowa district. This village is about 20 km away from Barijag wetland. There is a big river called Makuey located adjacent to the village and goes up to Barijag wetland. In the community, this river is serving as source for fish, water and transportation means. So, a lot of local boats are waiting for travellers and goods to carry them from this village to other villages where there is no road for vehicles (See the picture below).



Local boat at Makuey river at Matar

After traveling 20 km from Matar village, we reached Barijag wetland which is crossed by Makuey river. The picture below shows a bridge on the river, this river is the main source of water for the wetland and also a source of fish in the area.

Barjag wetland covers a huge area and known for its fish, birds, snack and other wildlife resources. Because of its large size it is very challenging to capture with my camera, but you can see its part in the pictures below.



Part of Barijag wetland

Bird identification in the wetland

During our 3-day stay at Barijag wetland, 33 bird species were recorded from the wetland and some pictures of birds are also presented below. In addition, a complete list of the birds recorded in Barijag and Nyander (also 3-day survey) wetlands are presented in table below (See Table 1 below). These birds include a list of least concern, vulnerable and endangered species. Generally, from both Nyander and Barijag wetlands 65 bird species were identified. Bird abundance assessment and species identification works will be continued for both dry and wet seasons. Look at some of the birds in the picture below.

Table 1: Average number of birds counted in Nyander and Barijag wetland (three-day survey at each wetland)

| S. No | English name | Scientific name | Two sample wetlands (average #) | |
|-------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | | Nyander wetland | Barijag wetland |
| 1 | Abdim's stork | <i>Ciconia abdimii</i> | 50 | 0 |
| 2 | African Darter | <i>Anhinga rufa</i> | 0 | 10 |
| 3 | African Fish-eagle | <i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i> | 9 | 3 |
| 4 | African Jacana | <i>Actophilornis africanus</i> | 2 | 16 |
| 5 | African paradise flycatcher | <i>Terpsiphone viridis</i> | 2 | 0 |
| 6 | African Pygmy Kingfisher | <i>Ispidina picta</i> | 8 | 0 |
| 7 | African Sacred Ibis | <i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i> | 16 | 0 |
| 8 | African Wattled Lapwing/Plover | <i>Vanellus senegallus</i> | 22 | 7 |

| | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|--|-----|----|
| 9 | African/Grassland Pipit | <i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i> | 2 | 0 |
| 10 | Black Crown Crane | <i>Balearica pavonina</i> | 158 | 27 |
| 11 | Black Kite | <i>Milvus migrans</i> | 21 | 29 |
| 12 | Black-headed Gonolek | <i>Laniarius erythrogaster</i> | 2 | 0 |
| 13 | Black-headed Heron | <i>Ardea melanocephala</i> | 7 | 5 |
| 14 | Black-winged Bishop | <i>Euplectes hordeaceus</i> | 5 | 0 |
| 15 | Blue-cheeked Bee-eater | <i>Merops persicus</i> | 0 | 9 |
| 16 | Cattle Egret | <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> | 135 | 25 |
| 17 | Common Fiscal | <i>Lanius collaris</i> | 0 | 1 |
| 18 | Cut-throat Finch | <i>Amadina fasciata</i> | 7 | 0 |
| 19 | Dark Chanting-goshawk | <i>Melierax metabates</i> | 3 | 0 |
| 20 | Glossy Ibis | <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i> | 35 | 0 |
| 21 | Grasshopper Buzzard | <i>Butastur rufipennis</i> | 4 | 0 |
| 22 | Great Egret | <i>Ardea alba</i> | 13 | 32 |
| 23 | Great Spotted Cuckoo | <i>Clamator glandarius</i> | 2 | 0 |
| 24 | Great White Pelican | <i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i> | 60 | 72 |
| 25 | Greater Blue-eared Starling | <i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i> | 10 | 0 |
| 26 | Grey Backed Fiscal | <i>Lanius excubitoroides</i> | 0 | 2 |
| 27 | Grey Heron | <i>Ardea cinerea</i> | 18 | 2 |
| 28 | Hadada Ibis | <i>Bostrychia hagedash</i> | 5 | 0 |
| 29 | Hamerkop | <i>Scopus umbretta</i> | 16 | 7 |
| 30 | Hooded Vulture | <i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i> | 2 | 0 |
| 31 | Isabelline Shrike | <i>Lanius isabellinus</i> | 0 | 5 |
| 32 | Lappet-faced Vulture | <i>Torgos tracheliotos</i> | 6 | 0 |
| 33 | Lizard Buzzard | <i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i> | 2 | 0 |
| 34 | Long-legged Buzzard | <i>Buteo rufinus</i> | 17 | 0 |
| 35 | Long-tailed Fiscal | <i>Lanius cabanisi</i> | 15 | 0 |
| 36 | Long-tailed Paradise- whydah | <i>Vidua paradisaea</i> | 0 | 5 |
| 37 | Marabou | <i>Leptoptilos crumenifer</i> | 500 | 41 |
| 38 | Mourning Collared dove | <i>Streptopelia decipiens</i> | 20 | 0 |
| 39 | Namaqua Dove | <i>Oena capensis</i> | 17 | 6 |
| 40 | Northern Wheatear | <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i> | 0 | 22 |
| 41 | Pied Crow | <i>Corvus albus</i> | 7 | 0 |
| 42 | Pied kingfisher | <i>Ceryle rudis</i> | 6 | 7 |
| 43 | Purple Heron | <i>Ardea purpurea</i> | 0 | 2 |
| 44 | Red-cheeked Cordon- bleu | <i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i> | 4 | 0 |
| 45 | Red-naped Bush-shrike | <i>Laniarius ruficeps</i> | 2 | 0 |
| 46 | Red-tailed Shrike | <i>Lanius phoenicuroides</i> | 0 | 7 |
| 47 | Rüppell's Starling | <i>Lamprotornis purpureoptera</i> | 0 | 2 |
| 48 | Saddlebill stork | <i>Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis</i> | 2 | 0 |
| 49 | Senegal Coucal | <i>Centropus senegalensis</i> | 2 | 2 |
| 50 | Silverbird | <i>Empidonax semipartitus</i> | 2 | 0 |
| 51 | Spotted Thick-knee | <i>Burhinus capensis</i> | 0 | 9 |

| | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|----|
| 52 | Spur-winged Lapwing/plover | <i>Vanellus spinosus</i> | 33 | 48 |
| 53 | Squacco Heron | <i>Ardeola ralloides</i> | 40 | 2 |
| 54 | White-tailed Lapwing | <i>Vanellus leucurus</i> | 0 | 7 |
| 55 | Tawny-flanked Prinia | <i>Prinia subflava</i> | 0 | 11 |
| 56 | Village Indigobirds | <i>Vidua chalybeata</i> | 200 | 0 |
| 57 | Wattled Ibis | <i>Bostrychia carunculata</i> | 3 | 0 |
| 58 | Western Yellow Wagtail | <i>Motacilla flava</i> | 4 | 64 |
| 59 | White Wagtail | <i>Motacilla alba</i> | 7 | 4 |
| 60 | White-backed Vulture | <i>Gyps africanus</i> | 5 | 0 |
| 61 | White-faced Whistling Duck | <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i> | 0 | 2 |
| 62 | White-headed mousebird | <i>Colius leucocephalus</i> | 4 | 0 |
| 63 | White-headed Vulture | <i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i> | 2 | 0 |
| 64 | Woolly-necked Stork | <i>Ciconia episcopus</i> | 4 | 6 |
| 65 | Yellow-billed kite | <i>Milvus aegyptius</i> | 7 | 55 |

Apart from the above interesting findings, a few dead kites were found in Barijag wetland. The local community said the birds are killed by people when they come to eat fish meat that are exposed to sun light for drying.



Dead Yellow billed kite



Dead Yellow billed kite at Barijag wetland

As clearly seen in the picture below, after catching fish the local community place the fish meat in open arid to dry using sun light and the birds are flying on sky to peak the fish exposed to sun light.



Yellow billed kites flying on the sky
open air

Fishing meat dry on



Dried fish meat ready for sale

As compared to Nyander wetland, Barijag wetland has lots of fish and fishing is important in the area. The fish harvested by the local community are sold and sometime exported to Sudan. The merchant (exporters) comes to fishing site and

buy fish with very low price (10-20 birr/kg which is 0.3-0.6 USD/kg) from the local community and exports to Soudan.

Snake

Beside fish, Barijag wetland is home for different types of snakes that may feed on fish. During this trip two live and five dead snakes are observed. We found the first live snake when it was trapped with fish net and hid itself in the grass (see the picture below). This snake is very big (may be up to 4 m long), when we saw it all of my team members were shocked because we came across the wetland. The second first live snake was observed when it was travelling on the water (see the picture below) in Makuey river at Barijag wetland.



The second snake, travelling on water, about 3m long snake killed at Barijag wetland



The snake trapped with fish net



A big snake, trapped with fish net

The local community kills snakes when they found it because of fearing of snake biting that causes serious damage and death to people.



A snake killed and thrown in Makuey river at Barijag wetland



Dead snake at Barijag wetland

Nyander wetland

During the field visit, in terms of size, biodiversity and stability Barijag wetland is better than Nyander, because at Barijag the level of water is high during the trip and at Nyander about 50% of the water has gone. Consequently, livestock herder starts burning grasses at some parts in Nyander wetland.



Burned part of the wetland



This part of the wetland has water during the visit water

Regarding birds, the list of species recorded in the wetland is provided in Table 1. The numbers of black crowned crane observed in the wetland is few as compared to our last year visit. Because during the visit time they may be at breeding and not moving in large flocks.



Pair of back crowned crane

Potential threats of wetland



Large scale agriculture in the wetland area near to Gambella National Park



Riverbank degradation