

Project Update: May 2007

The survey started on the 29th of November 2006 with the training of the rangers/locals that will participate in the survey. They were taken through various field techniques for the survey of wetland birds. They were also trained on the use and maintenance of field equipments.

During this time the communities in close proximity to the Reserve that have water bodies were visited and educated on the need to conserve these water bodies in their communities. The fadama farmers (dry season irrigation farmers) were educated on the need to shift their farming activities away from the water bodies to reduce upland activities that might subsequently result to siltation in future. The fishermen were also talked to about the danger of fishing using chemicals. The communities were told the future consequences of the activities carried out around the water bodies and they saw the need to cut down these activities as their livelihood depends on this natural resource.

During these visits to the communities prior to the bird survey it was discovered that some of the water bodies within the communities in close proximity to the Reserve were completely dry and without any bird or bird activities so the survey work concentrated within the Reserve only.

The different sites for the study of the wetland birds were surveyed together with the trained rangers/locals. The survey sites were demarcated and photographed for documentation purpose. Ten wetland survey sites were selected for the research within the Reserve.

Dry season survey

The dry season survey kicked off in the month of December 2007 on the demarcated survey sites within the Reserve. Two sessions were conducted at all survey times.

A morning session which lasts from 06:00am to 10:00am and an afternoon session that lasts from 15:00 to 18:00. During the survey wetland birds and all birds and other big animals that utilize the wetland were recorded. Site size, water level, water pH and animal impacts on sites were taken note of.

During the survey several different kinds of birds (waders such as Sandpipers, Jacanas, Snipes were seen. Also Herons: Goliath Heron (*Ardea goliath*), Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*), Storks such as Saddle-billed Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*), Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*), Woolly-necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*) were recorded. Raptors like African White-backed Vultures (*Gyps africanus*), Palm nut vultures (*Gypohierax angolensis*), Grasshopper Buzzard (*Butastur rufipennis*) were encountered regularly at wetland areas either foraging or taking a drink. Animals like primates Dog-faced Baboons (*Papio anubis*), lions (*Panthera leo*), African Elephants (*Loxodonta africana*), African Buffaloes (*Syncerus caffer*), hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) were not left out of the wetland utilization. For instance during one of the survey days a pride of lion (6 in number) were encountered to have made a kill close to the site and they come down to drink water after

their good meal. This work though interesting, has lots of risks involved, but with the rangers properly guiding risk is minimized.



Left: A female lion (*P. leo*) taking a drink after a good meal. Right: African Buffaloes (*S. caffer*) grazing.

A total of 95 bird species comprising of 10 Palearctic migrants, 12 species of waders, 2 species of bee-eater, 6 Species of Herons, 4 species of Storks, 6 species of Kingfishers, 13 species of birds of prey and 4 species of Egrets were recorded during this period of survey.



Left: African Openbill Stork (*Anastomus lamelligerus*). Right: Woolly-necked storks (*C. episcopus*) foraging

A photographic record of the water level of each survey sites during the various visits showed a decrease in the water level as the dry season persists, but this did not seem to affect the species of birds or animals utilizing the wetland as recorded by the survey.