

## Final Evaluation Report

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Your Details	
<b>Full Name</b>	Yihenew Aynalem
<b>Project Title</b>	Population Status, Threats and Conservation of the endemic Blue-winged Goose ( <i>Cyanochen cyanoptera</i> ) in Sululta Plain, Central Highlands of Ethiopia
<b>Application ID</b>	34124-2
<b>Date of this Report</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> December 2022

**1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.**

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Estimate the current population status of the Blue-winged Goose in the Sululta Plains				The population size of the endemic blue-winged goose ( <i>Cyanochen cyanoptera</i> ) is estimated in the area through total counting surveys considering the spatial-temporal gradients.
Assess the possible conservation threats of the species and their habitats				The potential conservation threats to the species and their habitats were assessed and characterised by using direct inventories and questionnaire-based survey techniques. To this matter, the species and their habitats in the area under immense anthropogenic pressure owing to threats including agricultural intensification, natural habitat modification, overgrazing, pollution of wetland and freshwater habitats, direct percussion and related disturbances. Moreover, indirect communications were also employed in a way to assess the practices of hunting these birds and collecting eggs for consumption since such information is quite sensitive to silicite.
Enhance public understanding and raise local communities' awareness about the conservation significance of the Blue-winged Goose and its habitats.				The knowledge, awareness and attitude of the surrounding communities was assessed through questionnaire-based survey, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. However, it urges further research effort and conservation action to enhance public understanding in the area.

**2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.**

- a).** The current population size of the blue-winged goose in the Sululta Plains is well estimated.
- b).** The possible conservation threats of the species and their habitats in the area are assessed and characterised.
- c).** Local communities' attitude and perception about the conservation significance of the blue-winged goose and the IBA was assessed.

**3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.**

The main difficulty we have faced is the Covid-19 pandemic which impacted the fieldwork schedule and implementation of community education activities related to travel bans, gathering restrictions and lockdowns to consistently collect field data consistently which later resulted in an increase in workloads and related expenses, too. The second unexpected situation was the socio-political circumstances which were very disappointing not only for carrying out fieldwork as planned but also put prohibitions on the use of field equipment like binoculars, and GPS and related apparatus. However, these were attempted through discussions with authorities, and agreement was reached to register this equipment, relying on potential prevention methods and safety guidelines while delivering group discussions and community education activities.

**4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.**

Local community members have participated in the project activities. For instance, selected study participants were part of the questionnaire-based activities, focused group discussions and interviews. Moreover, selected participants were also involved in the community education and awareness-raising interventions. They have benefited by sharing information, particularly about the conservation status, endemicity and taxonomic classification of the species which, they previously considered as a duck species rather than a goose which was one of the very amazing dialogues and astonishing elements of the project activities. Those participants have been paid a compensation fee. In addition, three local community members were involved throughout the study and were responsible to assisting during the fieldwork activities and supporting in the translation of questionnaires data collection and facilitating the interviews and focus group discussions as well as facilitating the community education interventions. They acquired significant experience in field data collection skills and received financial support. The key important lesson here is that these local guides were trained in bird watching and identification techniques, in which they eagerly participated and gained basic skills for future fieldwork and participation in related research activities.

**5. Are there any plans to continue this work?**

Sure! It is planned to continue working on research and conservation activities to assess the population status of the blue-winged goose including other areas, and strengthen community education and awareness-raising interventions to enhance public knowledge about the conservation significance of the species and maintain their natural habitats.

**6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?**

The results will be published in a scientific journal, which is currently under preparation, in the fields of ornithology and conservation, to disseminate the outputs

of the study to the wider conservation community. I also have a plan to present the findings at scientific research conferences to disclose the results of the study and research information.

**7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?**

The most important step ahead is to further study the other ecological attributes of the species in a way to produce tangible evidence and baseline information applicable to developing sustainable species conservation action plans in a way to maintain the populations of the species and protect their natural habitats throughout its range in the region. Furthermore, we are convinced that there is a pressing need for community education and awareness-raising interventions to better enhance public understanding of the conservation significance of the species and protect their natural habitats.

**8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?**

Certainly! The logo of The Rufford Foundation was included in every correspondence related to the project activities including interim reports and promotional materials. It is also promptly used in the community education and awareness-raising sessions of the project activities. The Rufford Foundation is also well recognised in publication of research articles. Furthermore, the logo of the foundation was well promoted and acknowledged in the oral presentation at the 15<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Ornithological Congress (PAOC15) which was held between 21-25 November 2022, in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

**9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.**

**Yihenew Aynalem:** Project team leader and principal researcher.

**Tsigereda Dessalegn:** Team member and species surveyor.

**Chalache Teshager:** Team member and data collector.

**Anbssaye Tekelu:** Field assistant and facilitator.

**Dr. Bezawork Afework:** Addis Ababa University was our in-country supervisor and supported us in every possible way to successfully accomplish the intended activities of the study as well as managed the project fund promptly.

**10. Any other comments?**

As the lead leader, I am grateful to the Rufford Foundation for supporting this project.

Thank you once again for your invaluable contribution!



Flocks of blue-winged geese at Sultta Plain.