

Birdwatch

ISSUE 1 - OCTOBER 2021

Through the birder's lens

EVENTS, NEWS,
AND INFORMATION
ABOUT BIRD WATCHING
IN UGANDA.



Editor's Note

Growing up enjoying the sights and sounds of the diverse birdlife in Uganda pushed me to share these joys with the world out there. Being a bird guide and researcher was still not enough without documenting the escapades and experience therein.

Birdwatch Uganda will provide a platform for passionate bird and nature lovers to share ideas, news and insights about birds and nature such as; migration status, threats, new sightings and many others. I would like to appreciate the efforts by the team for their support in this development. All photos except those acknowledged were taken by our in-house team led by Kanzira Mushabe Alex

I am excited watching this initiative finally take off and I would like to congratulate the team on this milestone achieved!!! Stay tuned as we keep you aloft with the bird watching world in Uganda.

Yours truly,

Judith Mirembe
Editor

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Introduction of the Newsletter

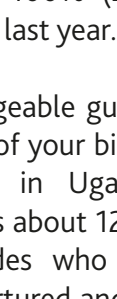
Warm greetings from Birdwatch Uganda and welcome to Birdwatch Uganda, the first Newsletter of its kind with a major aim of giving you insights and updates about Uganda's bird watching world.

The Newsletter will be published 4 times a year (January, April, July, October), highlighting events, news, and giving our readers information about bird watching in Uganda.

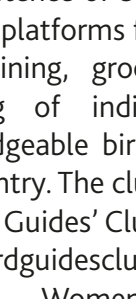
This Newsletter is intended to keep our dear readers in close sync with nature and aware of all activities that will be taking place in the world of birding in Uganda. Join us on this journey as we keep you informed and entertained!!!

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Our partners:



SHOEBILL WATCH
Your Watchful Eyes



Uganda Bird Guides Club

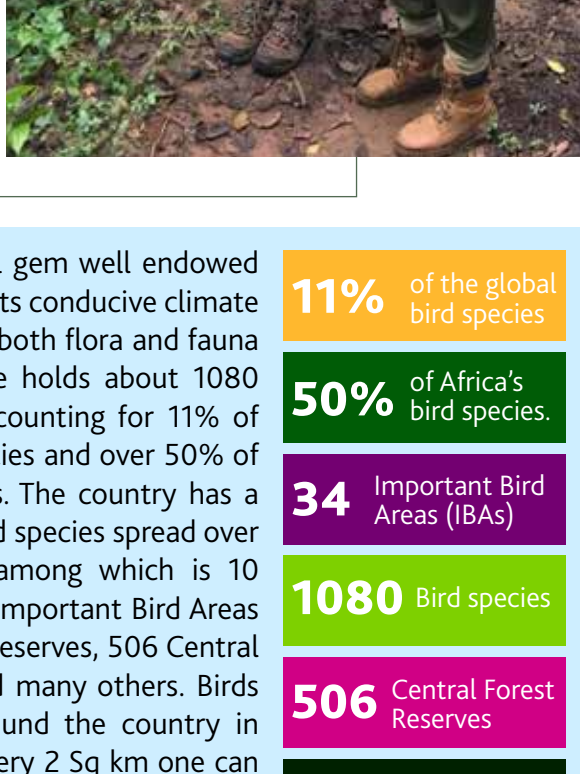
STATUS OF BIRD WATCHING IN UGANDA

Birdwatching has expeditiously grown in Uganda as indicated by the July 2021 eBird Report. Despite of the pandemic, Uganda's bird watching continues to grow and as such is listed among the countries that have grown by more than 100% (230.88%) over July of last year.

A knowledgeable guide is key to success of your bird watching Safari in Uganda. The country has about 120 professional guides who are well trained, nurtured and selected on merit to lead bird watching safaris. They are spread all over the country and this great network makes birding around easy, meaningful and rewarding. The guides include both National as well as Site Guides. The Site Guides are

based at the sites and possess a great deal of information about the wildlife within a given site i.e information on nests, local distributions and movements, other wildlife within and etc.

The existence of birding clubs provide platforms for mentoring, training, grooming and inspiring of individuals to knowledgeable bird guides in the country. The clubs include: the Bird Guides' Club (Overall) www.birdguidesclub.com, Uganda Women Birders (initiative to introduce and mentor women into bird watching) www.ugandawomenbirders.org, Young Birders' Club (initiative to introduce the young generation into bird watching) and the Destination Birders.



BIRDWATCHING HOTSPOTS IN UGANDA (PART ONE)

Birds are widespread around the country in that, at least for every 2 Sq km one can register over 60 Species of birds.

Uganda is a natural gem well endowed by nature owing to its conducive climate that ensures life of both flora and fauna and no wonder she holds about 1080 species of birds accounting for 11% of the global bird species and over 50% of Africa's bird species. The country has a high diversity of bird species spread over different habitats among which is 10 National Parks, 34 Important Bird Areas (IBAs), 12 Wildlife Reserves, 506 Central Forest Reserves and many others. Birds are widespread around the country in that, at least for every 2 Sq km one can register over 60 Species of birds.

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50%	of Africa's bird species.
34	Important Bird Areas (IBAs)
1080	Bird species
506	Central Forest Reserves
60	Species of birds per 2 km ²

BOTANICAL GARDENS, ENTEBBE

With just a 9-15 minutes' ride from Entebbe International Airport, this birding area will kick start your bird watching trip in Uganda. Originally a natural forest, the Botanical gardens were started in 1898 by Mr. A Whyte as a research ground for the introduction of exotic fruits and ornamentals in Uganda. The 2.6 Sq Km sized gardens are now a home to a collection of different plants species and shrubs both indigenous and exotic provide an opportunity to take a relaxed walk after a long flight to cool off the stress of hectic and long travel. The gardens are a home to many of not only common birds found in Uganda but also other spectacular and eye catching species such as the Great Blue Turaco, Ross's Turaco, the sought after African Grey Parrot, Woodland, African Pygmy and Pied Kingfishers, Variable, Scarlet-chested and Red-chested sunbirds, the range-restricted Orange Weaver that nests by the lake shores and many others.

The gardens are also ideal for Nature photography and picnics due to a relaxed environment and a cool breeze from the shores of Lake Victoria, coupled with melodious bird calls.

NKIMA FOREST

Named after the Red-tailed Monkey locally known as "Nkima" amongst the Luganda speaking people of central Uganda, the small patch of forest flourishes with these monkeys swinging in the trees of the forest that harbors the secretive White-spotted Flufftail, the Red-chested Cuckoo, Gray-throated Barbet, and many other forest species. Overlooking the Mabamba Wetland, Nkima Forest gives you spectacular views of the expansive Mabamba Wetland and Lake Victoria. The Nkima forest gives you sights and sounds of a typical African jungle dream trip. A night or two at Nkima Forest Lodge in the heart of Nkima forest complements the experience.

LAKE MBURO NATIONAL PARK

Being one of the smallest savannah national parks does not stop this park from having a long list of birds. Standing at about 370 sq. km, Lake Mburo NP is known to have over 350 species of birds, notable among these is the Striped, Giant and Shining-blue Kingfishers, Barbets (Crested, Black-collared, Red-faced and Spot-flecked), Violet-tipped Courser, Coqui Francolin, an Intra-African Migrant Brown-chested Lapwing, Long-tailed Cisticola, Blue-spotted and Emerald-spotted Wood-Doves and others will satisfy your visual cravings.

A boat cruise on the Lake Mburo will grace you with sightings of the shy African Finfoot, Giant and Shining-blue Kingfishers, White-backed Night-Heron, Goliath Heron, Papyrus Gonolek not forgetting large schools of Hippos. This is the closest conservation area to both Kampala and Mbarara cities also known as the home of the Impala, an antelope from which the capital Kampala derives the name. It is also known to inhabit the Elda antelope along with Zebras, Topi, the globally threatened Rothschild Giraffes and others. This Park provides one of the most exciting night game drives in Uganda. You simply have to try this out!!!!

MPANGA FOREST

With a coverage of about 453 hectares, Mpanga Forest supports an impressively diverse forms of life for such a small forest. It has over 300 species of birds, 500 species of trees and shrubs, 97 species of butterflies, 112 species of moths, 3 species of primates (Red-tailed Monkey, Vervet and Black-and-white Colobus monkeys and plenty of other wildlife.

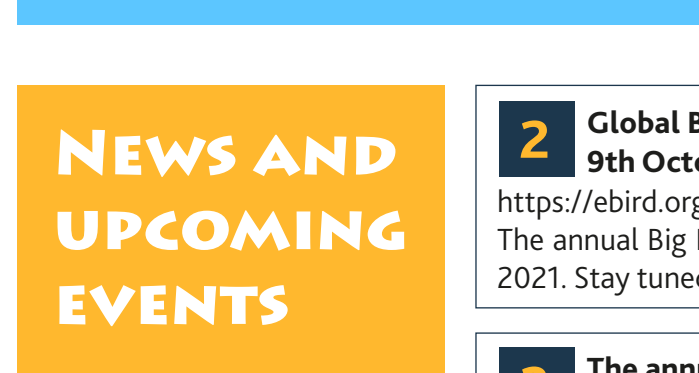
The fruiting trees in the forest attract a number of hornbills such as the African Pied, Black-and-white Casqued and the Crowned Hornbills not forgetting the many barbets such as the; Yellow-spotted Barbet, Grey-throated and the Yellow-billed Barbets as well as the Turacos (Black-billed, Great Blue and Ross'). Turacos are beautiful and the Narina Trogon is the one to lookout for while in this small indigenous forest patch. There is also a number of small mammals including; Banded Mongoose, different species of squirrels, Pottos, the globally threatened Pangolin, Bushabies and others. A night at Mpanga Forest exposes you to a chance of spotting the rare nocturnal pottos, African Wood-Owls and bushabies.

QUEEN ELIZABETH NATIONAL PARK

Queen Elizabeth National Park has the highest number of bird species at over 600 owing to the diversity of habitats within the park ranging from salt lakes, to fresh water, wetlands, forests and the grasslands. Birds like Red-capped, Rufous-naped and Flappet Larks, Collared Pratincole, Common Quail-quail, Harlequin Quail, Black-chinned Quail-Finch, Crowned Lapwing, Temminck's Courser are easy to see in the plains of the park. Other bird species include; African Crane, Greater Painted-snipe, Lesser flamingos, African Crowned Eagle, Pallid Harrier, Bateleur and others. The boat on Kazinga Channel, a 40km water stretch joining Lakes George and Edward is one of the highlights of your trip to the park.

The Channel is dotted with flocks of birds such as; Pink-backed and Great White Pelicans, Long-tailed and Great Cormorants, Yellow-billed Storks, African Spoonbills as well as animals such as herds of elephants, Buffaloes quenching their thirst thus providing good photographic opportunities. Other than the Kazinga Channel, other places to watch out for birds at Queen Elizabeth National Park include; the Maramagambo forest, Lake kikorongo, Mweya Peninsula, Lakes Katwe and Munyananya, Kasenya plains and Crater.

The Ishasha sector also part of the park is an incredible place for birding with good chances of the famous "Tree Climbing Lions".



ACCOMMODATION

At the end of a long bird watching day, every birder desires to rest in a cool relaxing environment where melodious natural African whispers of the night remind you of the sweet goodnight lullaby in grandma's voice and this is what the accommodation does. Accommodation is well situated close or within bird watching areas to maximize bird watching opportunities. With the diversity of birds in Uganda, one can register a good number of species simply seated by their cottage. The mornings are filled with sweet songs whereas the nights are filled with calls from owls and night jays the mornings start sweet with sweet songs from the resident African Thrush, African Pied Wagtail

NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

1 Rescue of the Shoebill at Makanaga Wetland

Wildlife trafficking is one of the fastest growing and profitable trades globally. This selfish venture is driving most of the world's species to extinction and the Shoebill even with its limited distribution and dwindling numbers has not survived this.

On the 22nd August, 2021, a Shoebill was rescued by local guides from malicious people at Makanaga Wetland who had captured and tied it for over 14 days waiting for a buyer. Makanaga Wetland is one of those little explored hidden treasures on the shores of Lake Victoria with the prehistoric Shoebill and many other species. Building of capacity of the local people around Mkanaga in areas of conservation of birds is important as it will provide alternative and sustainable sources of livelihoods through eco-tourism www.shoebillwatch.org.

The Shoebill was taken to the Uganda Wildlife Education Center (UWEC) and is currently undergoing rehabilitation. For all animal rescue, contact UWEC 0414320520

2 Global Big Day, 9th October, 2021

<https://ebird.org/news/obervation-big-day-2021>
The annual Big Birding Day, is scheduled to take place this November 2021. Stay tuned on how to participate.

3 The annual African Birding Expo December 10th -12th, 2021

The annual African Birding Expo 2021 scheduled to take place in December 10th-12th, 2021. Check out how to participate on www.africanbirdingexpo.com

4 The International Conference for Women Birders (IC4WB) 6th-8th December 2023

The International Conference for Women Birders (IC4WB), a first of its kind is happening in Uganda between 6th-8th December 2023 and is geared towards empowering women for an eco-birding world. For details check www.ic4wb.com

RARE BIRD SIGHTINGS

This section gives you updates on the rare and unusual sightings reported in Uganda's birding areas. The text is enhanced by information from the Birds of Africa South of the Sahara, Birdlife International Website, Avibase and eBird records

Striped Pipit *Anthus lineiventris*

Area of Sighting (2nd reporting): Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Ruhijja Section
Reported by: Akankwasa Hillary
Date: 29th July, 2021
This Pipit has boldly streaked wings extending to the belly plus the yellow-edged part feathers which make it distinct from the other Pipits. It is native to rocky hills with some woodland habitats of Africa south of the equator in Angola, Botswana, Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The 1st reporting (27th Jan, 2020) was from Lake Mburo National Park at Mihingo Lodge a dry area compared to the second sighting made from Ruhijja area in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park

Reithra's (Striaped-breasted) Seed-eater *Certhya richardi*

Area of Sighting: Moroto, North Eastern Uganda
Reported by: Brian Lokutae (bird guide)
Date: 26th July, 2021
This is a good addition to the Uganda's bird species' list!!!! This heavily-streaked breasted Seed-eater is much smaller than the Striaped Seed-eater with more breast streaks and no bold malar stripe. The species is known to inhabit Miombo woodland and the wooded escarpments. According to the Birds of Africa, it has been reported in South Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia close to the Ugandan border. It is also found in Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique.

Dusky Lark *Pinarocorys nigricans*

Area of Sighting: Lake Mburo National Park
Reported by: Deo Muhumuza (Bird Guide)
Date: 17th July 2021
The intra-African migrant is known to inhabit open woodlands especially freshly burnt areas. In Africa, it has been recorded majorly from the southern part of Africa in parts of Tanzania, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Zambia, Angola, Namibia, Botswana, South Africa.



Photo credit; Deo Muhumuza

Livingstone's Turaco *Turaco livingstonii*

Area of Sighting: Lake Mburo National Park,
1st Reporting: Herbert Byaruhanga, 12th April, 2021
2nd Reporting: Harriet Kemigisa, 3rd July, 2021
3rd Reporting: Johnnie Kamugisha, 10th July, 2021
4th Reporting: Arshley Brian, 20th July, 2021
When the first reporting of this bird was done, it sparked off a search by other bird guides and hence the subsequent reporting of the bird with all observations made close to or at Rawakobo Rock Lodge in Lake Mburo National Park. This Turaco is found East of the Rift valley except for the isolated population in North Western Tanzania and Burundi. The bird inhabits forest and dense riparian habitat

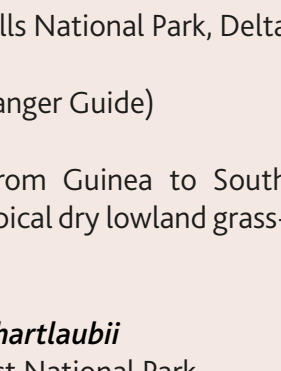


Photo credit: Herbert Byaruhanga

Sun Lark *Galerida modesta*

Area of Sighting: Murchison Falls National Park, Delta near hippo pool.
Reported by: Taban Bruhan (Ranger Guide)
Date: 30th Jun, 2021
Its range majorly extends from Guinea to South Sudan in dry savannah and tropical dry lowland grasslands.

Hartlaub's Duck *Pteronetta hartlaubii*

Area of Sighting: Semiliki Forest National Park
Reported by: Joseph Mutebi and Alex
Date: 9th August, 2021
The Hartlaub's Duck is one of those difficult to find birds. This dark chestnut colored duck is known to inhabit lowland tropical evergreen green forests of Central Africa and west of Nigeria particularly in areas along small rivers and streams within a primary forest. It was reported by Joseph Mutebi while leading a bird watching safari close to the oxbow lake in Semiliki Forest National Park.

Eastern Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris mediocris*

Area of Sighting: Moroto, North Eastern Uganda
Reported by: Brian Lokutae
Date: 11th August, 2021
It is endemic to East Africa in two countries; Kenya and Tanzania majorly occurring in montane forests and forest edge.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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