

Downloading birdwatchers field lists records from the internet into a database for purposes of monitoring common bird species Kenya.

Report

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SUPPORTED BY:



African Bird Club



WORKING FOR BIRDS IN AFRICA



NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF KENYA

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1.1 Introduction and aims

Kenya's network of bird watchers – both local and foreign tourists- is expanding rapidly. This network of recreational and professional bird watchers can be useful in providing priceless data on records of bird observations throughout the country. In 2002 the mailing list *Kenyabirdsnet* was created by birdwatchers, primarily as a platform for them to exchange information on interesting and rare bird observations. The list has also improved communication among Kenyan bird watchers. Members of the mailing list upload information about their birding trips in prose format, which is interesting to read but difficult to refer to for record keeping and monitoring purposes. It is not easy to retrieve important information on observations of many rare and interesting birds from the birdwatchers field lists posted on mailing list. The lists can be used to develop a simple, cheap and effective method of monitoring bird populations in Kenya. The overall aim of this project is to convert these field lists including those from the Wednesday morning bird walk into a simple and effective database for collecting, storing and retrieving rare and interesting bird observations in Kenya. The *Kenyabirdsnet* mailing list and other field lists kept by birdwatchers including ad hoc sightings could provide information on population trends for these species spanning many years. The *Kenyabirdsnet* has over a 1000 lists uploaded by recreational and professional birdwatchers since 2002. In addition there are several field lists held elsewhere e.g. the Wednesday morning bird walk lists that we will also collect and store in the system. Properly stored, these records are potentially a valuable resource for mapping and monitoring bird distributions especially those not usually monitored systematically. They could also be used in estimating trends in species abundance and thus provide an early warning system for species that suffer severe declines in relatively short periods. Furthermore the process will be a good learning opportunity about bird species and their distributions in Kenya for the intern Mr Alex Syingi, who in the past few months has been collating the field lists.

1.2 Objectives

- a. extract all records posted on *Kenyabirdsnet* mailing list by birdwatchers over the past 8 years (2002 to 2010) into a simple database
- b. vet and verify all records of rare and interesting bird observations
- c. for each year publish in the journal *Scopus* all confirmed and verified rare bird observations including all range extensions

2.0 Main outputs of project

Objective a: Beginning September 2010, an intern begun the task of reading through all birdwatchers field lists uploaded on to the *Kenyabirdsnet* webpage and meticulously downloaded all records of birds listed on the site. There was a total of slightly over 1100 field lists on the site when the project started. The bird committee decided that rather than create a new database as previously suggested, all the records be up loaded onto the Kenya Birdfinder database (i.e. the world bird database initiative by BirdLife International). This task continued until July 2011. Mr Alex Syingi has now been employed by the National Museums of Kenya and has continued with

this task to date. A total of 2000 fieldlists have now been downloaded and bird records uploaded onto the Kenya Bird finder data base (see table 1.0 below)

Year	Month												Totals
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
2012	21	12	9	39	33	29	26	27	49	11			256
2011	4	27	23	20	31	22	20	28	15	40	28	20	278
2010	27	26	33	32	9	36	21	17	29	38	14	22	304
2009	22	18	22	18	23	11	26	31	25	22	37	24	279
2008	17	17	7	16	15	5	28	13	12	12	24	5	171
2007	4	8	11	13	17	5	8	9	10	16	16	12	129
2006	12	13	14	16	10	4	8	6	9	16	21	9	138
2005	15	4	7	8	6	9	9	5	5	11	7	8	94
2004	14	12	4	10	13	16	9	8	5	7	4	9	111
2003	11	16	14	14	16	14	11	8	5	16	15	7	147
2002	0	0	0	2	10	13	11	6	5	17	10	18	92

Table 1. The number of birdwatchers' field lists by month and year downloaded from Kenya birdsnet and records added into the Kenya Bird finder database by Mr Syingi since 2002

Objective b. *Publication in Scopus by year of observation all category A, B and X rarities (Os-c 1996: Check list of the birds of Kenya. Nairobi; East Africa Natural History Society Ornithological Sub-committee).*

Objective c. *Publication in Scopus by year of observation all records that are extension of the known range of species*

These objectives were overtaken by events since the new checklist for Kenya does not have this categories. However we still plan to publish all rarities records in future issues of *Scopus*

Objective d. *An intern trained in simple database operations and bird species distributions and occurrence in Kenya*

Mr Alex Syingi was trained and as a result was employed on a full time basis by the National Museums of Kenya



Figure 1. Mr Alex Syingi downloading field list from Kenyabirdsnet webpage

3.0 Details on project expenditure

Item description	Unit number	Unit cost (£)	Total costs (£)	comments
Desk top Computer (National Museums of Kenya specifications)	1	280.00	280.00	Computer was bought and is now being used for database purposed currently an intern is using it to input ringing schedules/returns
Stipend for intern	14 months	60.00	720	
Scopus publication	2	0.00	0.00	Yet to be done
Report production	2	0.00	0.00	NMK and/or Nature Kenya to pay costs