

Nigeria Bird Atlas Project

Annual Report 2016

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Background

The need to understand the abundance and distribution of birds across Nigeria through sound science to guide towards their proper conservation is the sole aim of the Nigerian Bird Atlas Project. Through rigorous data collection; the project intends to publish a bird atlas for Nigeria with the valuable help and input of citizen scientists i.e. volunteer members of the public that are keen towards the conservation of birds in Nigeria. By engaging citizen scientists, the project seeks to contribute to improve local, regional and national capacity and increase conservation and environmental awareness. The methods employed in the fieldwork here is adapted from the ongoing South African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2); where the unit of data collection is small grid square known as a 'pentad' which measures 5 x 5 minutes of latitude and longitude which translates to 9 km x 9 km. There are 11,141 pentads across Nigeria. A minimum of two hours is spent on each pentad to record every bird species seen as well as those heard, though observation can exceed two hours. Species are recorded in the order that they are encountered, and from as many habitats within the pentad as possible. The observations can be logged with the app BirdLasser, which also tells you the pentad you are in, and when finished you just upload your records to the database. If not using the Birdlasser the collected data can be manually uploaded on our webpage: <http://nigerianbirdatlas.adu.org.za/content.php?id=26>

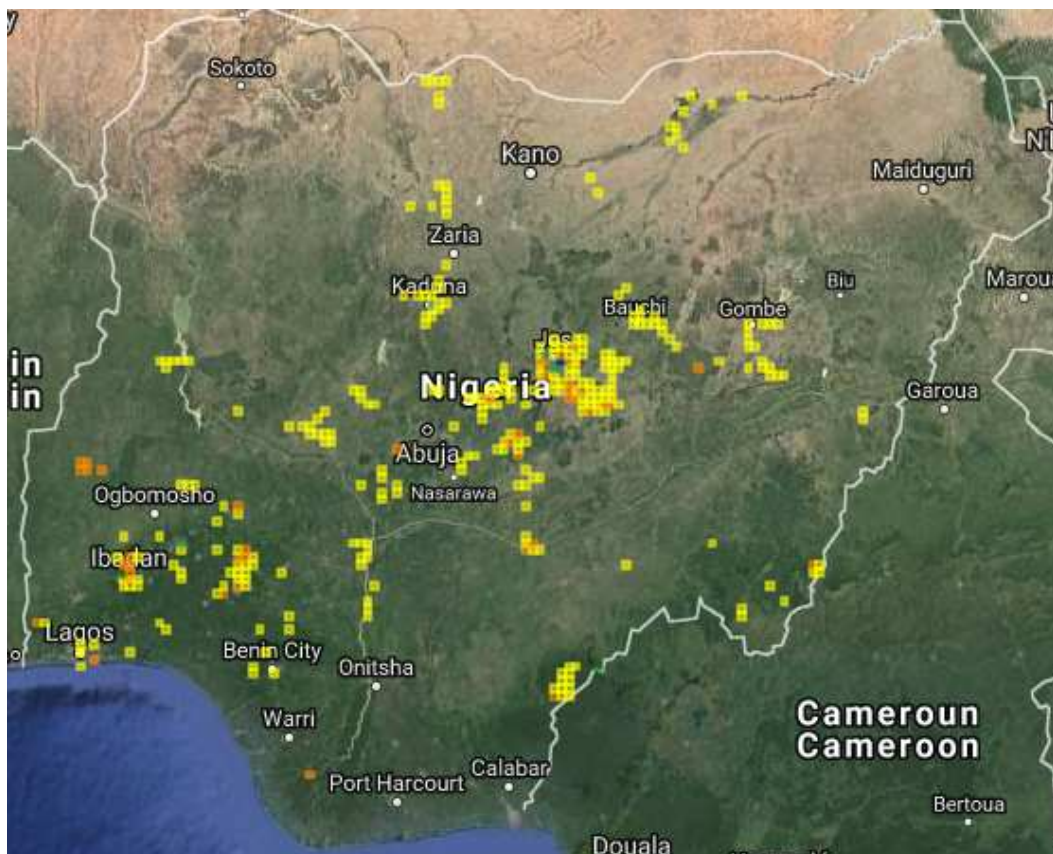


Figure 1: A map of Nigeria showing the distribution of all the pentads that have been surveyed as at 31st January 2016. Yellow squares represent pentads that have been surveyed just once and orange square are pentads surveyed 2–3times.

Progress so far

The Nigerian Bird Atlas Project kicked off with field work around Jos on 1st December 2015 by the core team consisting of three individuals (Dr Ulf Ottosson, Dr Samuel Ivande and Dr Talatu Tende). Over the course of the project so far, the project has recruited about 50 more citizen scientists/volunteers who are regularly doing atlasing and 33 have uploaded data to our database. In the first year 12 states have been visited during our outings, a total of 431 cards have been submitted from 331 pentads (Table 1), this is almost 3% of the total number of pentads in Nigeria. The places that have been surveyed include within and around the Jos Plateau, Lagos, Ibadan, Makurdi, Lafia, Akwanga, areas around Kafanchan, Kagoro, Kwoi, Zonkwa and Bade. Other places visited are habitats around Kogi State, Katsina State, Bauchi and Gombe States, Obudu cattle ranch and as far as Hadejia Nguru wetlands in the North. The pentads that were surveyed around the Hadejia Nguru wetlands was conducted in collaboration with the Nigeria Conservation Foundation (NCF) field team. Several places have also been surveyed within and around Nassarawa State, Niger State such as; Bida, Minna, New Bussa, Mokwa and their environs just to mention a few.

Table 1. Overview of the number of Observers, Records, Cards and Pentads done in 2016.

	Observers	Cards	Records	Pentads
All years	33	431	17286	331

So far we have recorded about 620 species, about 65% of the total number of species in Nigeria, with interesting sightings such as the Brown-necked parrot (*Poicephalus fuscicollis*) sighted close to Pankshin and a range extensions of the Rock firefinch (*Lagonosticta sanquinodorsalis*) sighted in Tula Mountains in Gombe State, half-way between Bauchi and Yankari Game Reserve and Neumann's Starling (*Onchognathus neumanni*) sighted in Gombe state, just to mention a few.

During the field trips, a few APLORI graduates and past IT students, have come along to learn the protocols in order to contribute their own part in the project. Several people have come across the project through our field outing posts on social media; Facebook. Already we have almost 650 followers on Facebook that have developed keen interest in the project. Some of such people have volunteered to be part of the project in places where they are based so as to contribute their part through atlasing. The Core Team was invited to a workshop at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan as part of the Leventis-funded Ornithological Monitoring project there. The Atlas project participated in this workshop with a session to introduce the project and protocol to workshop attendants as well as to survey some pentads in the area.

Especially encouraging is that, as described above, in the wake of the atlas work, groups of citizen scientists have started to go out on their own on atlasing campaigns, most noteworthy is the group in SW emerging from the Ibadan Bird Club and who have been covering a large number of pentads. Embryo to such groups have also been established in Kaduna, Benin,

Abuja and Lagos. In Jos, the Jos Bird Club has emerged from and among students and staff at AP Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI).

Further planned work

The project will continue with monthly field trips to designated areas around Nigeria. More workshops are also planned as part of the activities for the year in addition to the planned field trips. These workshops will mainly target some universities and other academic institutions as well as the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) camps in order to introduce the Atlas protocol and to start up Bird Clubs.

Wednesday, 8 January 2017



Photos from fieldwork. **(A) L-R:** Akwashiki (a former intern at APLORI) participating in atlasing in Lafia, Nassarawa State with Ulf, Talatu and Sam. **(B)** Dr. Tende (middle) with Mr. Musa Jidankat (Left) and Mr. Samson Da'an (Right) atlasing in Mangu. **(C) L-R:** Dr. Ottosson, Dr. Tende (NiBAP team) with Miss Mercy - a volunteer wildlife management undergraduate student, University of Agriculture Makurdi and Miss Grace Torkura (APLORI MSc graduate atlasing in Makurdi, Benue State. **(D) L-R:** Dr. Taiwo and Miss Rahila (APLORI graduates) with Dr. Ottosson atlasing in Tula Mountains, Gombe State. All pictures from the NiBAP facebook page: <https://web.facebook.com/groups/NigerianBirdAtlas/>