



# Biodiversity Observations

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**An electronic journal published by the Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town**

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## **NIGERIA BIRD ATLAS PROJECT: HOW FAR SO FAR? PROGRESS REPORT AUGUST 2016**

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Recommended citation format:

**Tende T, Ivande S, Ottosson U** 2016. Nigeria Bird Atlas Project: How far so far? Progress report August 2016. Biodiversity Observations 7.50: 1–3.

URL: <http://bo.adu.org.za/content.php?id=243>

Published online: 19 August 2016

## PROJECT REPORT

## NIGERIA BIRD ATLAS PROJECT: HOW FAR SO FAR? PROGRESS REPORT AUGUST 2016

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### Background

Knowing where species occur – species distribution – is a fundamental first step towards their effective conservation. The Nigeria Bird Atlas Project (NiBAP) aims therefore to update information about the distribution of birds across Nigeria through a coordinated and rigorous



Figure 1. Logo of the Nigeria Bird Atlas Project (NiBAP)

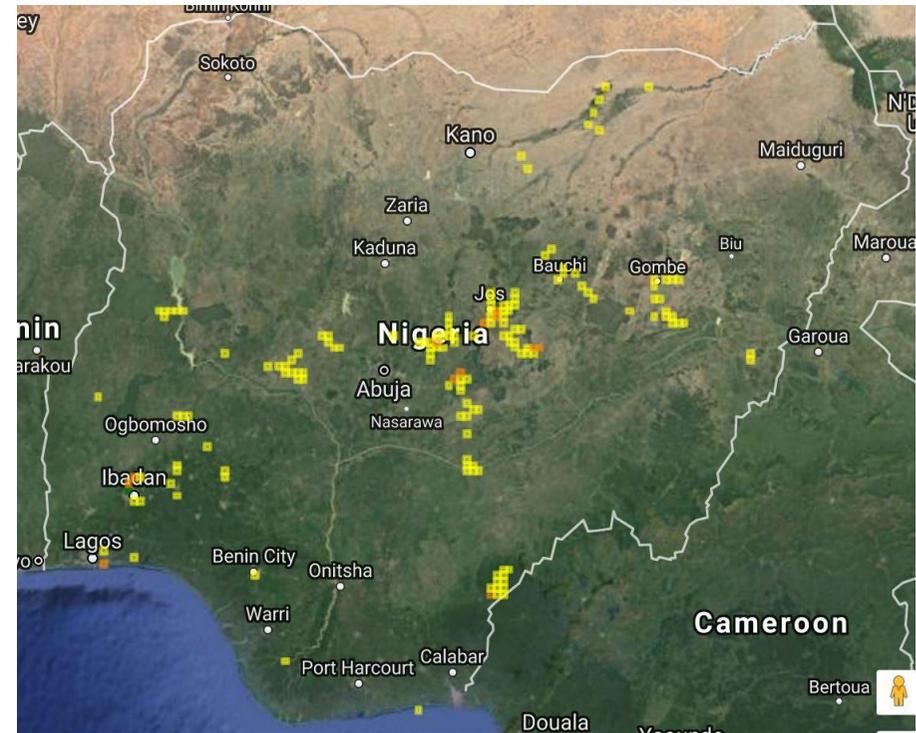


Figure 2. A map of Nigeria showing the distribution of all the pentads that have been surveyed as at 17 August 2016, when 159 pentads had been visited. Yellow squares represent pentads that have been surveyed just once and orange squares are pentads surveyed 2–3 times.

data collection approach and ultimately publish a bird atlas for Nigeria's birds (Figure 1). A bird atlas for Nigeria will contribute to guide proper conservation action for birds in the region. The project intends to achieve this with the valuable help and input of citizen scientists, i.e. volunteer members of the public who are keen to assist with 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.

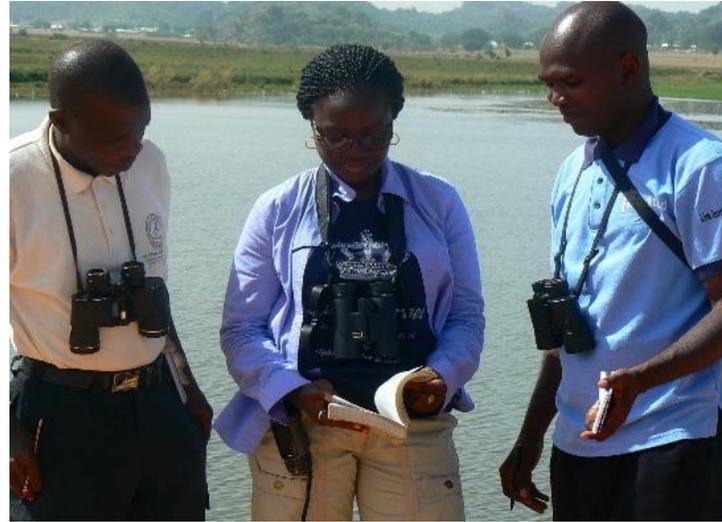


Figure 3. The NiBAP team members atlasing with other volunteer APLORI graduates and associates in some of the surveyed areas. (A) Left to right: Akwashiki (a former intern at APLORI) participating in atlasing in Lafia, Nassarawa State, with Ulf, Talatu and Sam. (B) Dr Tende (middle) with Mr Musa Jidankat (left) and Mr Samson Da’an (right). (C) Left to right: Dr Ottosson, Dr Tende (NiBAP team) with Miss Mercy, a volunteer wildlife management undergraduate student, Univer-sity of Agriculture Makurdi and Miss Grace Torkura (APLORI MSc graduate atlasing in Makurdi, Benue State. (D) Left to right: 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/>

The methods employed in the fieldwork here are adapted from the ongoing Second Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP2); where the spatial unit of data collection is a small grid square known as a 'pentad' which measures 5×5 minutes of latitude and longitude which translates to 9 km × 9 km. There are 11,141 pentads across Nigeria. A minimum of two hours is spent in each pentad to record every bird species seen as well as those heard, though the observation period can exceed two hours. Species are recorded in the order that they are encountered, and from as many habitats within the pentad as possible. After the fieldwork the collected data are uploaded to the NiBAP webpage: <http://nigeriabirdatlas.edu.org.za/>

### Progress so far

The Nigerian Bird Atlas Project got underway with fieldwork around Jos on 1 December 2015 by the core team consisting of three individuals (Dr Ulf Ottosson, Dr Sam Ivande and Dr Talatu Tende). Over the course of the project so far, the project has recruited about eight more citizen scientists/volunteers who are regularly helping to collect and upload data in other places (Lagos, Benin and Ibadan). So far 11 states have been visited during our outings, 70 areas have been covered with 178 cards submitted within 159 pentads (Figure 2). Surveyed areas include sites within and around the Jos Plateau, Lagos, Ibadan, Makurdi, Lafia, Akwanga, Kafanchan, Kagoro, Kwoi, Zonkwa and Bade. Other places visited are areas around Bauchi and Gombe States, Obudu cattle ranch and as far as Hadejia Nguru wetlands in the North East. The pentads that were surveyed around the Hadejia Nguru wetlands were done in collaboration with the Nigeria Conservation Foundation (NCF) field team. Other places that also have been surveyed within and around Niger State include Bida, Minna, New Bussa, Mokwa and their environs.

So far we have recorded about 480 species, with interesting sightings such as the Brown-necked Parrot *Poicephalus fuscicollis* sighted close to Pankshin and a range extension of the Rock Firefinch *Lagonosticta*

*sanquinodorsalis* sighted 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, some APLORI graduates and past internship students, have participated in fieldwork to learn the protocols in order to contribute to the project (Figure 3). Six APLORI graduates and a former intern have participated in the project.

The project has also set up a Facebook page as an outreach to interested members of the public.

<https://web.facebook.com/groups/NigerianBirdAtlas/>

Interesting updates from fieldwork are posted via this page and the page now has close to 600 followers who have developed keen interest in the project. Some individuals from this group have volunteered to be part of the project in places where they are based in order to also participate to the atlas project. Further outreach opportunities were made available when the 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.

### Further planned work

The project will continue with monthly field trips to designated areas around Nigeria, as well as more visits to states which have already been visited to cover areas within these states which have not yet been covered. Additional funding is being sought in order to facilitate more workshops which are also planned as part of the activities for the next 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.