



SIERRA LEONE NATURE GUIDE ASSOCIATION (SLNGA)

**COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS (CEPA) TRAINING
WORKSHOP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE /YOUTH AMONG THE YAWRI BAY
COMMUNITIES**

17th ,18th 19th NOVEMBER 2023

**VENUE: KENT COMMUNITY WESTERN PENINSULAR
FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE**



Project Report

Osman Camara

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Introduction & Justification

The Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Training Workshop for young people/ youth of the Yawri Bay Communities in Sierra Leone involved 90 people including Tutors, members from SLNGA and CSSL and different community representatives to the three-day workshop.

Bird conservation will only be sustainable if individuals at the national level drive the process, and young people become involved on a rolling basis. These “national movements” need to be able to operate at an effective level with minimal external funding. This workshop aimed to promote a national Migratory bird conservation movement in their flyways in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone is a biologically diverse country situated in the Upper Guinea Forest (UGF) – an Endemic Bird Area (EBA). Presently, the Upper Guinea forest and Coastal areas are highly fragmented systems and the forests are severely threatened. The UGF and its coastal area is a high global priority for biodiversity conservation, and Sierra Leone is a key component as one of the four countries over which it spreads.

This highlights the bird conservation importance of Sierra Leone and the pressing need to develop a national bird conservation constituency. Currently, there are probably less than 10 consistent national bird watchers in the country. Consequently, bird conservation efforts are driven by just a few individuals and by foreigners. This is not sustainable. The shortage of national birdwatchers means that there is inadequate up-to-date information on birds and on the general flora and fauna, i.e., which species are present, where they are and what they do.

This workshop has helped to build a national bird conservation constituency for Sierra Leone and address the current inadequacy of national bird data. Through Bird Clubs, more people will see the possible benefits that can be derived from bird watching including conservation (through monitoring), potential economic gain (ecotourism), citizen science and recreational value and enjoyment. This should lead to more people becoming involved and support a bird conservation movement.

Summary

This was the first CEPA Training workshop for young people/ youth in Sierra Leone, and we also commemorated the World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) as part of the project by targeting youth in communities around the Yawri Bay wetland area along the western peninsular and the Sierra Leone River Estuary. This program was one of the main activities that the Sierra Leone Nature Guides Association (SLNGA) embarked on this year. Since this association already held a WMBD event last year, there is a good relationship between SLNGA and the communities, so this time the SLNGA was also planning to change the dynamics by organizing this CEPA Training workshop. The training commenced on 17th and ended on 19th November 2023.

The association decided to undertake this training at Kent village in the Western Peninsular near Tissana Wetland in order to raise awareness to our young people/youths and school going children around coastal wetland areas and by providing basic training in birds and their conservation, and also to introduce them to ecotourism and illuminate them to the role of nature guides.

We identified the Tissana wetland as a very suitable venue for the young people/youths, student and community elders, who were the beneficiaries of this CEPA workshop. This wetland has been used before by other training sessions, due to its valuable facilities pertaining to the needs of the training requirements, including accessibility and proximity to wetlands, its extensive mudflats and mangroves and roosting sites close to Yawri Bay wetland communities and the Sierra Leone River Estuary.

Highlights of the workshop are provided below.

DAY 1

Opening and introductions

The training aimed mainly to educate and to raise awareness about the protection of migratory birds, their habitats and their flyways to young people/youths of the Yawri Bay. The first day started with registration of attendance on the attendance list, and an open prayer in the two main religions from the Muslims and Christians. After an introduction of communities' representatives, we then went for a 20-minute tea break and then continued according to the program agenda (Annex 1).

The majority of participants were youths from different communities and Tertiary institutions, especially from the communities along the Yawri Bay wetland, Fourah Bay College (FBC), the Milton Maggai College (MMTEC), and both Primary and Secondary schools from Kent Village. We focused on building their interest and encouraging them through awareness raising in conserving their environment, especially the wetland in their locations for the protection of migratory birds. We introduced birds counts and bird identification for participants to have a good test of bird nature and how to guide people in their locations in terms of identified wetland birds and even terrestrial birds that are close to the wetland areas.



The East Atlantic Flyway Routes for Birds

The first presentation topic was the East Atlantic Flyway, delivered by Momoh Sesay.

Biodiversity loss

Biodiversity loss is rapid and ongoing over the last 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems faster and more extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history. Species are going extinct at a rates 1,000 times the background rates typical of Earth's past. The direct courses of biodiversity loss – habitat change, overexploitation, the introduction of invasive alien species, nutrient loading and climate change - show no sign of abating. Every year, between 18,000 and 55,000 species become extinct.

Migration

Migration remains one of the most compelling aspect of the avian world, with millions of birds migrating vast distance across the globe. The journeys of many birds, including of the East Atlantic Flyway, follow a predominantly north-south axis, linking breeding grounds in the Arctic and temperate regions with non-breeding sites in temperate and tropical areas.

Many species migrate along broadly similar well-established routes known as flyways. Recent research has identified eight such pathways, including the East Atlantic Flyway, the Mediterranean/Black Sea Flyway, the West Asia/East Africa Flyway and the Central Asia Flyway.

Many key sites for migratory birds have been identified as Important Biodiversity and Bird Areas (IBAs). Along the flyway, there are some critical sites or routes, such as:

- The Wadden Sea of The Netherlands, Germany and Denmark, which is a major staging area for waterbirds, with extensive mudflats. It also supports breeding and non-breeding birds.
- The Strait of Gibraltar is the narrow stretch of sea between Europe (Spain / Gibraltar) and Africa (Morocco). It is a well-known migratory bottleneck site, especially for birds of prey and other soaring birds.
- The Djoudj Wetlands, Senegal Delta are important for many thousands of migratory birds, including ducks, flamingos and pelicans, which also breed there.



Threats Along the Flyway

We emphasized that many of the world's migratory birds are in decline, and many characteristics of migratory birds render them particularly vulnerable to a variety of threats. Undertaking such dramatic movement pushes birds to the limits of endurance. They exist on an energetic knife-edge reliant on favorable weather conditions and the presence of adequate food resources at multiple sites throughout their migratory journey. Wader populations along the flyway have also fared badly, with an estimated 37% of populations of migrant waders in decline. They depend on high quality feeding opportunities throughout their entire migration and consequently are highly susceptible to the loss and deterioration of all sites they depend on along their routes.

Climate Change

Climate change is also likely to result in more hazardous journeys for migrant birds, for example, with droughts and desertification predicted for the Sahel, trans-Saharan migrants will be forced to endure longer and more arduous journeys.

Threats to Sierra Leonean Wetlands

Threats to wetlands in Sierra Leone were presented and discussed together, especially for sites between Freetown and Yawri Bay, such as Aberdeen Creek, Tissana Wetland, Tombo Wetland and the entire Yawri Bay and Shebro River. Threats were mainly due to over-use of wetlands by people, including converting wetlands for urbanization and agriculture. There was also a major pollution / litter problem at some sites, especially around the fishing ports, such as Tombo.

How to Use the Working Materials

During the workshop, Charles Showers introduced the different kinds of working materials for bird watching, especially field Guides, binoculars and telescopes, and went through good bird watching techniques.

DAY 2

Practical Field Trip to Tissana Wetland



After bird identification training was given to participants in the first day of the workshop, we showed everyone how to identify waterbirds, make their topography description, and use field guide on the site. We issued out note books, pens, pencils field guide and printed waterbird flyers to all the participants present. The participants were divided into three groups and guided by SLNGA Trained birds guides on the field.

The field work started at about 11:30am when the tide started going down. Participants were busy recording birds, trying out counting techniques and looking at some of the threats in the wetland that we identified, such as sand mining and degradation of the mangroves. At about 1:15pm, the practical field work stopped, and we went for a lunch break. At 2:15pm participants were taken back to Kent, where each group gave their presentation and recommendations. Group 1 identified 20 species of birds, Group 2 17 and Group 3 identified 18 species.



DAY 3

Concert Skit Play



The concert session started about 12:20pm when all percipient and others community representatives were present including the village headman, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), Marine officers, both the Kent village Harbor Masters and the Tombo fishing communities Harbor Master.

The skit play session was mainly focused on a polite, respectful guide who was protecting the birds in the wetland and there was a bad boy with his colleagues whose intention was to move around the wetland and kill migratory birds. The boys in the skit met some birds along their route through the wetland which were busy feeding on the mudflats, and these bad boys from the community tried to kill the birds with their catapults, because their mothers had asked them to get some birds for food since there was no catch of fish at sea. The good guide boy stopped them and asked them not to kill the birds.

He explained to them the importance of migratory birds in their community, and also their migratory route to Africa, and he begged them not to hunt and kill them because there will come a time when tourists will come to visit their community if these birds are still around. He also told them that these birds were indicators of good signs and were very important for their ecosystems. The boys accepted his advice and agreed to join the guide to go around and spread the message of raising awareness to others.

Close of the workshop

The workshop organisers presented school materials to the headmistress, and to the skit performers for their good performance in the workshop. A vote of thanks was given from the school headmistress, who was with us throughout the three-day workshop with her school children.

Food and drinks were served to everyone for lunch, and a stipend was given for transport to all the participants to return to their different localities or communities. And that was the end!



Annex 1: SIERRA LEONE NATURE GUIDE ASSOCIATION (SLNGA) ORGANIZE A THREE DAYS COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS (CEPA) TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE /YOUTH AMONG THE YAWRI BAY COMMUNITIES (DATE: 17th ,18th 19th NOVEMBER 2023)

VENUE: KENT COMMUNITY WESTERN PENINSULAR FREETOWN

ACTIVITY	DAY 1	TIME	PERSONS RESPONSIBLE
Arrival and Registration of Participants		09:30 – 10:30 am	Abu Bakarr Turay
Call to Order		10:30 – 10:45 am	Samuel Kargbo
Prayer: Both Muslim/Christian		11:00 – 11:10 am	All
Individual Introduction		11:15 – 11:30 am	All
Purpose of the Workshop		11:35 - 11:40 am	Mr. Osman Kamara
Breakfast		11:45 – 11:50 am	
East Atlantic Flyway Route of Waterbirds		12:15 – 1 :30 pm	Mr. Momoh Bai Sesay
Lunch		1:35 - 2:00 pm	
Birdwatching techniques		2:30 - 3:15 pm	Charles Showers
Questions from Participant		3:30 – 4:00 pm	All
Vote of Thank & Announcements		5:00 pm	Mrs. Olivette
	DAY 2		
Birdwatching Field Trip to Tissana			
Departure for Tissana (Breakfast and Packed lunch)		7:00 – 8:30	Mr. Osman Kamara
Birdwatching exercise at Tissana mudflats (Identifying waders)		10:30 – 11:00	All
How to attract birds		11:00 – 11:30	Charles Showers
Continue with birdwatching exercise at Tissana mudflats		11:30 – 12:30	SLNGA TEAM
Group presentations		12:30 – 13:30	All
Evaluations of Group Presentations		13:30 – 14:00	Charles Showers
Vote of Thanks		14:00	Mrs. Olivette
	Day 3		
A Play by Participants			
Arrival of Participants		7:30 – 8:30	Alex Kamara
Prayer both Muslim & Christian		8: 30 – 8: 40	Mr. Osman Kamara
Breakfast		8:40 – 9:00	
School Performance		9:00 – 10:00	All
Presentation of Prize to School		10:00 – 10:30	Mr. Momoh
Vote of Thanks		10:30	Mrs. Olivette