



AWARENESS TRAINING FOR STAKEHOLDERS, YOUTHS, STUDENT AND PUPILS AROUND TARGREEN COMMUNITY KAFUBULUM CHIEFDOM, LUNGI

Sierra Leone Nature Guide Association (SLNGA) in collaboration with the West Area Peninsula National Park Bird Club (WAPNAP) brought together a three-day awareness raising and capacity building workshop on the importance of bird conservation and its contribution to successful nature tourism in coastal zones. The workshop focused on the Kafubulum Chiefdom Targreen community in Sierra Leone.

DATE: 7th, 8th, 9th DECEMBER 2024.

VENUE: TARGREEN COMMUNITY KAFUBULUM CHIEFDOM, LUNGI.

THEME: *The importance of bird conservation and its contribution to successful nature tourism in coastal zones in Sierra Leone*



PROJECT REPORT

The project focused on raising awareness about bird conservation in Kafubulum Chiefdom Targreen, Lungi. Over the years, considerable numbers of migrant birds have been recorded at the Targreen Wetland, which is part of the Sierra Leone River Estuary and a RAMSAR site (the only one in Sierra Leone). Due to its importance, Lungi residents have benefitted from the knowledge and skills that have equipped them to be better environmental stewards who embrace sustainability and understand how conservation can contribute meaningfully to tourism and, consequently, their economy.

JUSTIFICATION

Sierra Leone is a biologically diverse country situated in the Upper Guinea Forest. Presently, the Upper Guinea Forest (UGF) and coastal areas form a highly fragmented system and remain one of the most severely threatened forest blocks in the world. The UGF and its coastal areas are of high global priority for biodiversity conservation, and Sierra Leone is a key component as one of the four countries over which it spreads.

The coastal zone of Sierra Leone is a key habitat for numerous bird species, including migratory and resident species. However, this region faces multiple environmental pressures, habitat destruction, overfishing, cutting down of mangroves and pollinations. Some bird population are declining; and many species are at risk.

The main objective of this project was to enhance local and national awareness of bird conservation issues and to promote the sustainable management of coastal bird habitats.

The training has enhanced raising awareness training among local residents, schools, and stakeholders about the importance of bird conservation at Kafubulum Targreen Lungi community coastal zone in Sierra Leone. Through bird clubs, more people will realise the possible benefits that can be derived from bird watching including conservation through monitoring, potential economic gain through ecotourism, citizen science and recreational value and enjoyment. This should lead to more people becoming involved and supporting a bird conservation awareness movement.

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project initiated a three day awareness training and capacity building workshop on the importance of bird conservation and its contribution to successful nature tourism in the coastal zones of Sierra Leone. This project was held in Kafubulum Chiefdom and Targreen coastal zone area. This project is one of the main activities that the Sierra Leone Nature Guide Association (SLNGA) has embarked on this year. There is a good relationship between SLNGA and the communities, so in 2024 SLNGA changed the dynamics of this by organizing an awareness training and workshop at Lungi Targreen Community Kafubulum Chiefdom, which is also part of coastal zone area.

The association decided aimed to raise awareness among stakeholders, youth, students, pupils and the local workforce, especially fishermen and farmers. We introduced them to the importance of birding watching, and highlighted its potential role in boosting the economy especially in the tourism sector. We identified Targreen Lungi community as a very suitable venue for stakeholders, youth, workers, students and pupils, who were the beneficiaries of this training workshop. This coastal zone has been used before for other training sessions, due to its valuable facilities, including its accessibility and proximity to wetlands, its extensive mudflats and mangroves and its position in the coastal zone.

KNOWLEDGE GAP

Many locals in Targreen were unaware of the importance of birds in maintaining healthy ecosystems. Additionally, there was limited knowledge about the threats facing bird populations and how local actions could contribute to conservation.

ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS

Coastal habitat degradation, including mangrove deforestation, sand mining, and pollution from plastic waste and oil spills, emerged as the major threats to bird habitats.

Community involvement

There was a strong desire among local communities to participate in the conservation effort. The facilitators helped the trainees to understand how to use the equipment, especially binoculars and field guides, and to name the birds in their local language.

DAY 1: 7th December

PRESENTATION: RAISING AWARENESS ON BIRD CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION IN OUR ENVIRONMENT

The training was mainly focused on the importance of bird conservation and its contribution to successful nature tourism in coastal zones in Sierra Leone. The first day started with registration of attendance on the list, sharing of books and pen. There was also an open prayer for both Muslim and Christian religions, which was done by the stakeholders. There was an introduction session done by everyone including SLNGA members, WAPNPA club representatives, the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), facilitators and trainees.



The first presentation by a CSSL facilitator focused on the importance of birds to our environment and the benefit community people will have derived if they chose to preserve birds and allow them to live in our community without hunting them. He went further and advocated to all participants to sensitize their people on the importance of birds and the economic benefits that birds can bring to the community if they choose not to hunt them and keep the environment sustainable for them.

The second presenter also reiterated on the importance of birds to the tourism sector in Sierra Leone. She also informed that some tourists are coming to particular countries for activities like bird watching, and she encouraged students and pupils to stop hunting birds and cutting down mangroves. She also denounced the practice of sand mining in the coastal areas. This was followed by a question and answer session, followed by lunch. Lunch was held for one hour, and the training ended by giving out allowances to the facilitators, participants and organizers.

DAY 2: 8TH DECEMBER 2024

IDENTIFICATIONS OF EQUIPMENTS AND PRE BIRD WATCHING TRAINING

As on the previous day the session started with registration of participants, prayers and tea break. This time the facilitator based his training on drawing the external part of a bird, and he called on participants to draw a bird, which was done perfectly by a student. The coordinator started to name the external parts of the bird, he also demonstrated how to count birds and introduced some of their names, especially migratory birds and forest birds, as well as how to use the field guides, binoculars and telescopes.

A pre bird identification exercise was done by the facilitators and experts outside the hall, which was located on the coastal axis, which made it easy for the trainees to come out and practice what they had learned.

After this rigorous training, lunch was served including water and non-alcoholic drinks, and the organizer shared allowance to all the participants and advocated for them to come to the last day, when certificates would be given to all participants.

DAY 3: 9TH December 2024

SESSION: PRACTICAL WORK ALONG THE COASTAL AREA AND CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

After bird identification training was given to participants in the second day of the workshop, we illustrated to them how to identify waterbirds, their topography descriptions and the use of field guide on the site. During this time all the participants including the experts came earlier around 7am and onboard the boat. Before boarding the boat, breakfast, water and non-alcoholic drinks were served. There was provision of life jackets for everyone in the boat. We also issued out notebooks, pens, pencils and field guides and printed waterbird fliers to all the participants presents on the field work.

Participants were divided into four groups and guided by SLNGA, WAPNP club and facilitators. The field work started by 10am when the tide has gone down in so many areas around the coastal zone, and participants were busy identifying and counting

different birds and looking at some of the threats in the wetland that were identified, such as mining, and degradation of the mangroves.

At around 2pm the practical field work came to an end, and we went for lunch break to our designated hall where the training started. As soon as the trainees, facilitators and organizers arrived, food, water and non-alcoholic drinks were served by the caterers.



The facilitators helped the four groups of trainees to identify the different bird species present. Group one identified 22 bird species, Group two identified 19, Group three identified 20, and Group four identified 18. The field visit was successful.