



COMMUNITY TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE (TEK) ABOUT WATERBIRDS AROUND LAKE EDWARD, LAKE MUNYANYAGE, AND THE KAZINGA CHANNEL PROJECT REPORT.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is crucial for biodiversity conservation, providing insights into waterbird species and habitat changes. This study examines the knowledge of local communities around Lake Edward, Lake Munyanyage, and the Kazinga Channel to integrate TEK into modern conservation strategies. By merging Indigenous knowledge with scientific research, we can strengthen community involvement, promote sustainable ecosystem management, and preserve the cultural heritage linked to waterbirds in Uganda's Queen Elizabeth National Park

OBJECTIVES

1. To document the traditional ecological knowledge of waterbirds among local communities around Lake Edward, Lake Munyanyage, and the Kazinga Channel.
2. To analyse the role of CTEK in conserving and managing waterbird species.
3. To assess the potential for integrating CTEK into formal conservation strategies



Figure 1: Focus Group Discussions Held during the study



Figure 2: Some of Key Informant Interviews from the study

FINDINGS

Key Cultural Insights that are significant for conservation

- Some birds, like **Hammerkop (Kamuzinzi)** and **Shoebill (Omunwa gw'ekeinto)**, are associated with cultural myths, influencing their conservation status.
- Birds like the **Saddle-billed Stork** are linked to national identity, reinforcing the importance of their protection.
- The **Pelican's historical** migration to Lake Bunyonyi was considered a blessing, but due to climate change, these movements have ceased.
- Birds like the Marabou Stork are natural indicators of environmental changes.

Sacred & Respected Birds

- Hammerkop (*Kamuzinzi*) - Destroying its nest is believed to bring bad luck or even death.
- *African Widetile Bird* - If killed, it must be buried like a human; people avoid harming it due to this myth.
- Pelican (*Enzikeri/Nyamunyonyi*) - Historically migrated to Lake Bunyonyi, believed to bring blessings.
- Various bird species are totems for different ethnic groups

Birds as Weather & Seasonal Predictors

- Marabou Stork (*Karoli*) - A large gathering signals an upcoming rainy season.
- *Lesser Flamingos* - Their arrival in the dry season predicts a good salt harvest at Katwe Salt Lake.
- *Swallows (Entaratambi)* - Their large numbers indicate the dry season is approaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

1. **Leverage Local Knowledge:** Incorporate the ecological expertise of local communities surrounding Lake Edward, Lake Munyanyage, and the Kazinga Channel into conservation plans. Their insights regarding water bird behavior, habitat changes, and seasonal cycles can significantly enhance the development of effective management strategies.
2. **Honour Cultural Values:** Recognize the cultural significance of water birds within local traditions and beliefs. Highlight sacred species or those that symbolize seasonal changes in conservation initiatives. This approach will resonate with community values and encourage local support.
3. **Tackle Key Threats:** Formulate targeted strategies to address the primary threats to waterbird populations, including habitat loss, climate change, pollution, and harmful human activities. Focus on habitat restoration, pollution mitigation, and the promotion of sustainable land use to protect critical waterbird habitats.

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