



Final Report

Participatory awareness for the conservation of migratory birds in Songor Ramsar and Biosphere Reserve, Ada, Ghana



Project financed by the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative (BMUB).

Completion Report - November 2014

Introduction

Ghana is on the boundary of at least two flyways – the East Atlantic and the Mediterranean flyways. The coastal wetlands of Ghana therefore receive significant numbers of waterbirds, of which at least 15 species occur in internationally important numbers.

Though these birds exist in large numbers, they are unevenly distributed within the sites based on species, available feeding and roosting habitats. Some habitats are close to human settlements. Occasionally bird activities are interrupted through human disturbances and some are even trapped. The habitats of some birds are threatened by encroachment and unsustainable resource exploitation due to population growth, community expansion, inadequate awareness, pressure on already stressed resources and inadequate alternatives.

Ghana's coastal wetlands were designated as Ramsar Sites to preserve the ecological integrity of wetlands through appropriate management prescriptions while at the same time enhancing their socio-economic benefits to the local communities. There are however limitations in carrying out some of the mandates to protect birds and their habitats.

Objective

The main project objective was to undertaken within the Songor Ramsar site and fringe communities that receive migratory birds, comprehensive awareness and sensitization outreach activities to facilitate support to protect migratory birds and their habitats.

Description of activities that were undertaken and some results achieved

Communities, schools and collaborative institutions were mapped out after obtaining the list from the field, appropriate agencies and secondary sources for the awareness and sensitization program. The list was categorized and the visit schedule was arranged based on location within the site and responses from earlier notification. A tailor-made power point presentation, film show on nature conservation and interactive forum constituted the main program activities. Awareness was created in four communities fringing the lagoon, and three collaborative institutions were sensitized within the Reserve. Nine basic, three Junior High and nine Primary schools were educated on the need to protect migratory birds and their habitat.

The interactions promoted the pupils' interest in bird conservation. Three new clubs were formed and a training workshop organized for 60 selected club leaders and members using a simple information and conservation manual developed during the project.

To promote bird watching amongst different school groups ten binoculars (TASCO 10x25) were acquired and were first used by the selected club leaders and members who attended the training workshop. They had adequate field guide and training on the binoculars as well as on the use of the data.

Information sharing was critical for the protection of the birds. 1,889 brochures and stickers were developed and printed. The posters and the stickers were distributed as education materials to promote awareness of the threats to migratory birds.

To promote the project visibility and adequately share knowledge on migratory birds, five information boards with adequate information and images of birds were developed and erected in strategic areas within the reserve.

Impacts of the project

Generally the project impacted positively on the conservation of biodiversity especially on migratory birds through the following:

- improved relationship between wildlife staff and some communities in the core zone;
- improved active participation of communities and pupils in all processes and programs undertaken;
- some pupils had the opportunity of seeing and using binoculars to closely view birds, ultimately whipping up interest in the conservation of the species;
- for the first time within a short duration, the quantum of schools, communities and institutions were visited and sensitized to support conservation programs;
- information signs, stickers and posters tremendously improved the visibility of the project and the wildlife division;
- improved communication and information sharing on the conservation of migratory birds between the wildlife division, communities, schools and institutions visited;
- a feedback mechanism through lessons learnt has been developed to improve the work plan and to sustain the awareness program with schools in particular.

Appreciation

The Wildlife Division of The Forestry Commission is grateful for the funds, which were very timely. They played a significant role at that particular moment to support the effort of migratory bird conservation. The project received tremendous publicity and visibility through radio interactions, posters, stickers and information boards and a World Migratory Bird Day celebration in the village. Moving from one community to the other to undertake the program, it was obvious that the kids and community members close to the lagoon now think that migratory birds deserve better treatment on their flyway routes.

Way forward

Most of the activities were undertaken within the core area and sections of the buffer-fringing schools and communities located on the eastern portions of the reserve. The western section of the reserve that also receives equally significant numbers of migratory birds would be targeted to promote the conservation of the species and their habitat.

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Overview table: Activities, objectives and outputs

No.	Brief description of activities implemented	Objective	Required inputs	Output	Outcome	Remarks / Way forward
1	Participatory awareness and sensitization for communities, opinion leaders, agencies and institutions	Share and disseminate broad information on migration, conservation status and threats to migratory birds and their habitat	Fuel for vehicle, generator, LCD projector, Tailor-made presentation	Awareness created in the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 communities fringing the lagoon (population 730) • 3 collaborative Institutions sensitized within the Reserve (population 121). 	Enhanced collaboration and commitment by stakeholders to support the protection of migratory birds	Ongoing Ongoing
2	Participatory awareness and sensitization in schools	Share information on the threats along the migratory route of birds and other bird habitats	Fuel for vehicle, boat and generator	Awareness created in the following categories of schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic School (Primary /Junior High combined) 9 • Junior High – 3 • Primary – 9 • Total population – 5,165 • Teacher population – 226 	A call for more responsive and attitudinal change by kids	There are over 165 schools within the reserve. Schools within sensitive areas shall be visited as a continual and sustainable program.
3	Training for school club leaders, selected students and teachers	Upgrade and share knowledge on birds, their habitat, threats and conservation strategies	Manuals, conference hall, refreshment, lunch, transport allowance, field trip / hands on demo	The following were strategically selected from 3 communities within the core zone and bird concentration areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 school club leaders, • 33 selected students and • 12 teachers 	Sense of commitment and continual information sharing established	Similar training program for other schools at the western section of the reserve could be undertaken

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4	Acquire equipment to promote research on birds including counting amongst school kids	Improve knowledge on migratory birds at the site to enhance conservation of the species and its habitat	Binoculars	Ten (10) Tasco 10x25mm binoculars acquired to facilitate research and organize bird watching for school club members.	Interest in bird watching well promoted	
5	Development and production of information boards	Indicate project visibility and share prohibitive information on conservation of migratory birds and their habitats	Contract, Design of information board	Five (5) (1.5mx 1.0m) information boards produced and erected in communities and bird concentration areas	Information shared on project objectives and bird conservation	
6	Development of posters, leaflets and stickers	Share handy information on the need to protect migratory birds	Contract, Design of posters and stickers	1889 posters and stickers produced and shared during awareness and sensitization meetings	Information shared on birds and migratory route to enhance protection	Distribution of posters on going in schools during awareness program