

## Conservation of threatened intra - African Migrant blue Swallow *Hirundo atrocaerulea* in Western Kenya



### Introduction

Blue Swallow is globally Vulnerable intra-African migrant bird and listed in Appendix I and II of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). Its range spans ten African countries where it breeds in seven while it winters in Uganda, Kenya and DR Congo. It is regionally Endangered in East Africa and in Kenya, this rare species winters in Busia Grasslands and Ruma National Park, both Important Bird Areas (IBA). The ecology and population status of the species is little known yet it faces several threats including poor local conservation action in its non-breeding range. This study assessed its wintering population, local threats, formed local site conservation groups and built their capacity for conservation.

### Methodology

- Study areas were the unprotected Busia Grasslands and Ruma NP IBAs in western Kenya
- Intensive species surveys using line transects, total counts and opportunistic observations were used to determine species populations and local threats.
- Training workshops for local community and relevant stakeholders were conducted.
- Perceptions of local community on conservation were sought using focus group discussions with local stakeholders.

### Key Results

- 87 Blue Swallows were counted cumulatively in Busia Grasslands and Ruma NP IBAs.
- Key threats: habitat loss due to land degradation from overgrazing and poor farming practices; local hunting of Blue Swallows for food; wetlands drainage for sugarcane production and subsistence farming
- Ruma Site Conservation Group was formed and together with Busia Environmental Conservation and Education Programme (BECEP) their capacity for local conservation was built through field based trainings and workshops
- The established site conservation groups were networked with national IBA programme.
- Lake Victoria Birds Working Group (LVBWG), a community based organisation was formed by the project team to co-ordinate the activities of the newly formed site conservation groups in both Ruma and Busia.
- The project also documented the perceptions of local people towards conservation.

### Future Work

- Annual Blue Swallow population surveys to determine population trends and basic ecology
- Learning exchange programme for local communities with other communities who have succeeded in community-based management of natural resources
- Conservation awareness activities including the involvement of schools and village-based theatre
- Improve local governance by building local capacity and training local youths to promote natural

### References

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