Using low key monitoring to promote community conservation of the Blue Swallow, *Hirundo atrocaerulea* in Mabamba Bay, a Key Biodiversity Area, North of Lake Victoria, in Uganda

Stakeholders' Workshop Report, Mabamba bay 9th July 2016

By Dianah Nalwanga & Judith Mirembe,

NatureUganda

Introduction

On 9ᵗʰ July, 2016, a team from *Nature*Uganda (NU) set out to Mabamba Bay for a Stakeholders Meeting on the Blue Swallow. NU is implementing a project in Mabamba, "Using Low Key Monitoring to promote community conservation of the Blue Swallow, in Mabamba Bay." The meeting was purposely to introduce the project to the stakeholders mainly the community members as well as connecting it to the other conservation Programmes in Mabamba. It was attended by members of the Mabamba Wetland Eco-tourism association (MWETA), local community leaders as well as other stakeholders. The meeting started off with a canoe ride on the Bay to check on the status of the general habitat for the participants and the local leaders guided by the Bird guides from MWETA where we had a successful sighting of the Shoebill stork, a globally threatened species. Similar to the Shoebill, the Blue Swallow is a globally threatened bird species which migrates to this site during its wintering seasons.

The aims of this meeting were;

1. To recap on the conservation programmes of the Mabamba community
2. Introduce the Blue Swallow project to the community and other stakeholders
3. Propose a plan of action for project implementation.

After the canoe ride we had a presentation by Mr. Achilles Byaruhanga, Executive Director NatureUganda, on the existing conservation programmes at Mabamba and connecting them to this Blue Swallow project. Nature Uganda has run a number of projects in Mabamba among which involved capacity building of the members in Bird identification and Monitoring. MWETA members participate in the Waterfowl Counts, one of the oldest bird monitoring programmes run by Nature Uganda. It is conducted annually in the months of January and July. These Community members will therefore be of great help in the monitoring of the Blue Swallows and their habitat.

The Blue Swallow project funded by Rufford Foundation

A presentation on the Blue Swallow project was made by Dr. Dianah, highlighting the role of the community members in the project especially in monitoring the threats faced by the species. An overview of the species and the threats it is faced with was given. It also highlighted the project expectations and the roles to be played by the various partners. Focal persons for the Shoebill and Blue Swallow were elected and among their duties are;

1. Monitoring the habitat condition, threats as well as the number of the individuals of these species.

2. Monitoring and following up on the tourists' movements and report as required.
3. Identify and report on the threats to both the species and habitats.
4. Designing and advising on monitoring forms needed for the activities.

These focal persons were tasked to give weekly reports to the Chairperson of MWETA on the status of these species. The Blue Swallow project work plan was reviewed and adopted and the community members welcomed the project and emphasized their readiness to cooperate with the project team and NatureUganda. Judith Mirembe from NatureUganda was tasked to follow up on the community roles in this project.

Participants

The participants invited to the workshop included The MWETA community members, the Wetland Management Department in the Ministry of Water and Natura resources-WMD, Nature Palace Foundation, Uganda Wildlife Authority -UWA, Wakiso District Local Government, Land Owners of Mabamba, Uganda Community Tourism Association- UCOTA, Fauna & Flora International- FFI and Hope /Ecological Christian Organisation.

Way forward

1. Focal persons to investigate the presence of these species and the sites they are in -Immediately.
2. Intensive survey of the Blue Swallow in the Mabamba landscape starting with monitoring transect set up- Last week of July

============================END============================