

Project Update: January 2017

Reporting period from 8th January 2016 to 8th January 2017

Introduction

In Uganda, Victoria tilapia (*Oreochromis variabilis*) and Singidia tilapia (*Oreochromis esculentus*) are endemic to Lakes Victoria and Kyoga including the satellite lakes of Kayanja and Kayugi. These species have since disappeared from these main lakes and their survival in the two satellite lakes is threatened by various anthropogenic activities such as poor agricultural practices, wetland degradation, poor waste disposal, fishing pressure hence rendering them critically endangered (IUCN Red List, 2006).

The overall aim of this project was to contribute to the recovery of these species through engagement of local communities in conservation activities. During the above period, fishermen, pupils, teachers and researchers from National Fisheries Resources Research Institute (NaFIRRI) were engaged in various activities namely: a) Establishment of Fish Conservation Committee (FFCC), b) Fish surveys and mapping of the breeding and nursery habitats, c) Establishment and zoning of safe havens, and d) Awareness creation to achieve the aims of this project.

Main conservation outputs were: a) All the sites identified as breeding and nursery habitats of critically endangered cichlid fish species were mapped by researchers and FCC team, b) A total of eight safe havens for critically endangered cichlid fish species were established and mapped on both lakes, c) Fish Conservation Committees (FCCs) were established and empowered to conserve and protect native tilapia fishes and their habitat, and d) Fishermen, pupils and teachers were trained and highlighted on the need to conserve fish fauna and their habitats.

Main conservation achievements include: a) Increased chances for the recovery of native tilapia populations in these lakes, b) Enhanced conservation of other fish species, reptiles and birds such as the endangered crested crane with the help of the established safe havens on these lakes, and c) increased liaison and commitment of fishermen and relevant agencies to conserve and protect critical habitats of these fish species on lakes Kayanja and Kayugi.

Looking Ahead

- a) Monitor the recovery of native tilapia fishes in lakes Kayanja and Kayugi.
- b) Continue with awareness creation among relevant stakeholders.
- c) Continue working with fishermen to conserve and protect critical fish habitats and safe havens mapped on lakes Kayanja and Kayugi.



Left: Mapping of critical fish habitats on Lake Kayugi. Right: Endangered crested crane spotted on Lake Kayanja.