

## **Project Update: September 2022**

### **Background**

Blue-winged goose (*C. cyanoptera*) is one of the endemic waterfowl species in Ethiopia. It is the only member of the genus *Cyanochen* and has a tiny distribution range (361,000 km<sup>2</sup> breeding/resident) in the alpine highlands of the country. The species primarily inhabits freshwater bodies, pastures and high-altitude shrubland, usually between 2100 - 4500 m asl. Once remained commonly abundant and widespread, its population is supposed to persistently decline over the last few decades, roughly equating to 3,000-7,000 mature individuals. It is likely one of the African bird species that will struggle with climate change consequences due to their limited distribution ranges and many interrelated anthropogenic pressures. The species is less studied in the country. They received less research attention and conservation efforts throughout their ranges. As a result, little is known about the ecology, population status, trends, distributions and behaviour of the species. Potential threats to the species and their habitats are also not well documented and urge further conservation efforts to ensure the future existence of the species and its native habitats.

**Objectives:** the present study aimed to:

- Estimate the current population size of the blue-winged goose in the Sululta Plains, central highlands of Ethiopia.
- Assess the possible conservation threats of the species and their habitats in the area.
- Enhance local communities' awareness and understanding of the conservation significance of the blue-winged goose and its habitats.

### **Methodology:**

Total population counting and camera trapping (Victure Wildlife Camera 1080P Full HD 12MP) techniques were used to estimate the population size of the species. The possible conservation threats and local community knowledge and attitudes towards the species were assessed through direct inventory, questionnaire-based survey, semi-structured interview, focused group discussion and informal communications.

### **Progress of activities:**

- Preliminary surveys have been carried out.
- Field data collection and population surveys for the dry season have been collected.
- An ecological survey for the wet season data is underway.
- A total of 176 questionnaires have been collected from about 269 participants.
- Formal communications and structured interviews have been made with about eight focal groups selected from communities living and working in the surrounding area.



Figure 1. Flocks of Blue-winged Geese (*C. cyanoptera*) and cattle encroachments at Sululta Plains (©Yihenew, 2021).

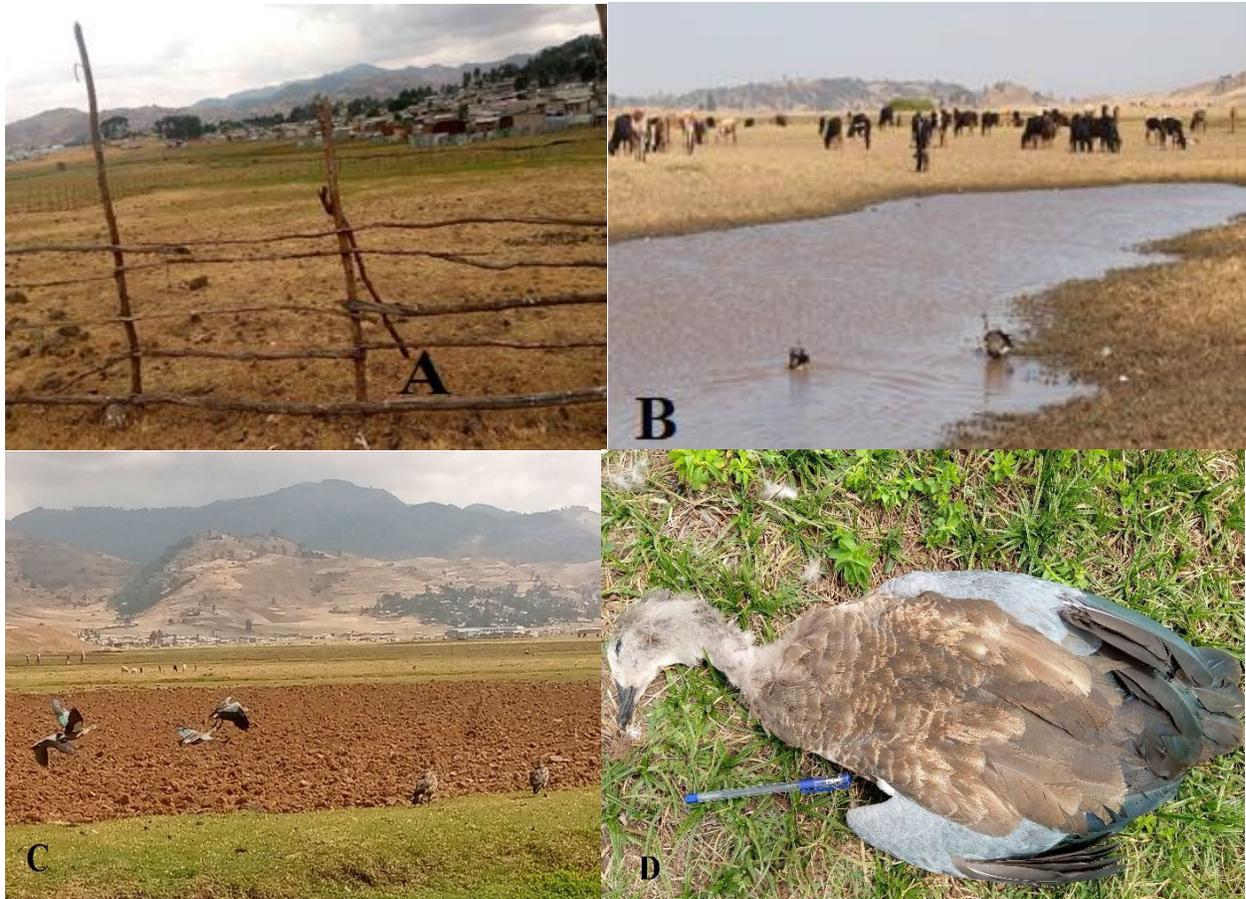


Plate 1. Possible conservation threats of the species and their habitats (A = Urbanization and investment expansion, B = Cattle encroachment and overgrazing, C = Agricultural expansion, D = Direct percussion).